COMMITTEE REPORT

Subject:	*Proposed Planning Manager – New Post*
Committee:	*Full Council*
Item Number:	*20*
Date:	*9 November 2026*
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Report status:	*Decision*
Confidential / Exempt:	*No*

1. Report Summary

1.1 This report asks Full Council to establish and fund a Planning Manager post in 2026/27, as recommended by the Communities Committee and the Planning Committee. The post would give Salisbury a professional voice in the planning decisions that shape the city.

1.2 Salisbury City Council does not decide planning applications, but it is consulted on them and on the Wiltshire Local Plan, and its influence depends on the quality of what it says. Most of its responses do not currently cite the relevant planning policies or evidence, so they carry little weight. This matters more since 31 October 2026, when Wiltshire Council began applying the National Scheme of Delegation, under which most applications are decided by its officers.

1.3 The post is needed now to take three conditionally prioritised Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) projects through assurance to a final award, and to prepare the Council's evidence before the Local Plan consultation opens on 7 April 2027. Without it, CIL allocation will pause and the Council cannot follow up its Local Plan scoping response.

1.4 The post is estimated to cost £56,000 a year, partly offset by reducing the Neighbourhood Development Plan budget, giving an estimated net cost of £34,500 in 2027/28 and £41,500 a year from 2028/29. Costs are subject to a job evaluation of the post to confirm the pay grade. Option 1, creating the post now, is recommended.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that Full Council:

2.1 Approves the establishment of one full-time [permanent] Planning Manager post, reporting to the Head of Corporate, with the grade to be set by job evaluation and recruitment to begin immediately.

3. Background

3.1 Committee recommendations and budget setting

3.1.1 On 12 October 2026, the Communities Committee considered the CIL Process Review, Risk and Resourcing report. It noted that relying on the Corporate Manager's overtime is not sustainable and recommended that Full Council bring the post forward rather than defer it to the 2027/28 budget.

3.1.2 On 19 October 2026, a motion at the Planning Committee to leave the post to the 2027/28 budget was not carried. The Committee resolved to support, alongside the Communities Committee, a recommendation that the post be established and funded in 2026/27.

3.1.3 The Senior Management Team has identified the post as the top priority in the 2027/28 budget bids. Through that route it would not be in place before April 2027, and funding is not guaranteed. This report is therefore a request to approve a new post, not to bring forward one already agreed.

3.2 The Council's role in planning

3.2.1 Wiltshire Council is the local planning authority and decides planning applications. Salisbury City Council is consulted on applications and on the Wiltshire Local Plan, and its influence depends on the quality of what it says. At present most of the Council's responses simply support or object, without citing the relevant planning policies or evidence. Objections made on that basis carry little or no weight in planning terms, so Salisbury's views are too easily set aside.

3.2.2 Since 31 October 2026 Wiltshire Council has applied the National Scheme of Delegation, under which most applications are decided by its officers and Wiltshire councillors can no longer call in an application for committee consideration simply by requesting it. This makes the City Council's role as a consultee even more important. Its responses must identify the relevant development plan policies and explain clearly how a proposal affects Salisbury. Without this, its views may carry little weight, limiting its ability to influence decisions and represent the priorities of its communities.

3.3 Wiltshire Local Plan

3.3.1 Wiltshire Council withdrew its previous Local Plan in May 2026. Its new timetable includes consultation on content and evidence from 7 April to 19 May 2027, with a draft plan expected in spring 2028. The new Plan will shape where and how Salisbury grows.

3.3.2 The Council responded to the scoping consultation in September 2026, setting out eight priority asks of Wiltshire Council. The response asked Wiltshire Council to complete four priority studies for Salisbury, on cumulative transport and infrastructure, River Avon water and nutrients, heritage capacity and brownfield capacity, in time for the April 2027 consultation. It also offered, subject to resources, to provide local evidence and review Salisbury-specific evidence. Without the post, the Council cannot do this work or follow up what it has asked for.

3.3.3 The Council has held several meetings with neighbouring parishes in the build-up to the Local Plan.

3.4 **Community Infrastructure Levy**

3.4.1 Full Council approved the CIL allocation framework on 9 March 2026. The first assessments under it showed that a project can be eligible and score well while scope, land, permissions, costs, procurement, match funding and maintenance are still unresolved.

3.4.2 At its meeting on 12 October 2026 the Communities Committee endorsed a strengthened process in which a project given conditional priority is checked by the Planning Manager before returning to the Committee for a capped final award. The same evening it gave conditional priority to three projects: Coldharbour Lane Footpath, Harnham Memorial Hall and Making Broken Bridges Accessible.

3.4.3 These projects now need checks on costs, land, consents, funding, delivery, maintenance and risk before a capped final award can be made. Without the post, this work and all further CIL allocation will pause.

3.5 **Development, land and mapping**

3.5.1 Early meetings with developers are where section 106 contributions, land, open space and allotments for the Council, and the money to maintain them, are secured. Without the post, these opportunities will be missed, or land taken on without the money to maintain it.

3.5.2 Work has started on mapping the land the Council owns or maintains, using Land Registry records. It cannot be developed further with current resources. The post would build on this mapping to support the Council's asset and property work.

3.6 **Current arrangements**

3.6.1 The report to the Planning Committee set out the wider planning work the Corporate Manager has been carrying out: coordinating the Council's responses to Wiltshire Local Plan consultations, meeting developers about infrastructure needs, progressing the Greyfisher appeal, responding to other planning consultations and dealing with councillors' planning enquiries.

3.6.2 All of this work, together with the CIL assessments and the land mapping, has been carried out to date by the Corporate Manager alongside other duties, partly through overtime, which is not sustainable. No other officer time is assigned to it.

4. Proposal

4.1 The proposal is to create one full-time Planning Manager post, reporting to the Head of Corporate, to act as the Council's professional planning lead. Its main responsibilities would be to lead the Council's input to the Wiltshire Local Plan and the Salisbury Neighbourhood Development Plan; assess planning applications against policy and prepare plan-led representations for the Planning Committee; lead the Council's neighbourhood CIL procedure, project assurance, monitoring and statutory reporting; maintain spatial evidence, GIS mapping and land records, and monitor growth and infrastructure needs; engage with developers and Wiltshire Council on major proposals, infrastructure, section 106 and land for the

Council; and advise Members, the Chief Executive and Council services, including on authorised appeal work.

4.2 Both committees asked for the post to be brought forward from the 2027/28 budget so that CIL work can continue and the Council has planning capacity before the Local Plan consultation.

4.3 The post would achieve the following:

- **CIL funding released safely.** Each project is checked for costs, land, consents, funding, delivery, maintenance and risk before a capped final award, with payments in arrears and recovery if a project fails.
- **A CIL programme that keeps moving.** The three conditionally prioritised projects are taken through assurance, and a full CIL procedure, applicant guidance and infrastructure pipeline are prepared for the Communities Committee.
- **Better support for the Planning Committee.** Clear assessments and recommended representations before each meeting, regular updates on significant applications and Wiltshire Council's decisions, and impartial advice and training for councillors.
- **Plan-led objections.** Every application is tracked against its 21-day deadline, and representations cite the relevant Neighbourhood Development Plan and Local Plan policies, explain any conflict and give evidence-based reasons.
- **Follow-through on the Local Plan.** The Council delivers what it offered in its scoping response, supplying local evidence, commenting on the scope of the four priority studies and reviewing Salisbury-specific evidence, and has its response ready for the April 2027 consultation.
- **Neighbourhood Development Plan review.** The postholder reviews the Salisbury Neighbourhood Development Plan alongside the Local Plan, so the Council is ready to update it as the new Local Plan takes shape.
- **Joint working with neighbouring parishes.** Local Plan responses are aligned with neighbouring parish councils, and the Council could offer them planning advice on a cost basis, subject to agreement and to confirming its power to charge (paragraph 7.5).
- **Land, open space and allotments with maintenance secured.** Where development proposes open space, allotments, play areas or community facilities, the postholder agrees early with developers whether the Council should take them on and secures a commuted maintenance sum or other funded arrangement, subject to Member approval and whole-life costing.
- **Infrastructure secured from development.** A schedule of Salisbury's infrastructure needs is put to Wiltshire Council and developers while section 106 terms can still be influenced, and delivery is monitored.
- **More from development.** Early work with developers, backed by plan-led evidence, secures more section 106 contributions for Salisbury, and joint working with Wiltshire Council brings shared CIL benefits by directing more of its CIL to Salisbury projects.
- **External grants.** Bids to Wiltshire Council's CIL-funded Locally Identified Infrastructure Projects and other plan-led grants for local infrastructure, community facilities and place-shaping projects.
- **Reliable evidence and records.** Growth is monitored, and the land mapping already started is developed into GIS mapping and a land register of the land the Council owns or maintains, supporting its asset and property work.

- **A sustainable arrangement.** The work no longer depends on the Corporate Manager's overtime, and the Corporate team can focus on its other priorities, including the IT Roadmap and the review of Standing Orders.

4.4 Action is needed now because the three CIL projects are waiting for assurance, the Council's Local Plan evidence must be prepared before the consultation opens on 7 April 2027, and applications are already being decided under the National Scheme of Delegation. If approved, recruitment would begin straight away; the Communities Committee report suggested a start between mid-December 2026 and early January 2027.

5. Options Considered

5.1 Option 1 – Preferred Option – Create and fund the post now

5.1.1 Full Council establishes and funds the post in 2026/27, as both committees recommend.

5.1.2 **Advantages:** the three conditionally prioritised CIL projects can be checked and brought back for a final award, and CIL allocation continues. The Council has a planning lead in post before the Local Plan consultation opens on 7 April 2027, can deliver what it offered in its scoping response, and can make plan-led objections under the National Scheme of Delegation. Early meetings with developers can secure land, open space and allotments for the Council with funded maintenance. The work no longer depends on overtime.

5.1.3 **Disadvantages:** commits the Council to a recurring staffing cost ahead of the 2027/28 budget process, and the final cost depends on job evaluation.

5.1.4 **Financial effect:** an estimated £56,000 a year from 2027/28, subject to job evaluation, partly offset by the Neighbourhood Development Plan budget reduction; an estimated net £34,500 in 2027/28 and £41,500 a year from 2028/29.

5.2 Option 2 – Alternative Option – Leave the post to the 2027/28 budget

5.2.1 The post stays as a budget bid, to be considered with other bids when Full Council sets the 2027/28 budget in January 2027.

5.2.2 **Advantages:** avoids an in-year staffing decision and lets Members weigh the post against other budget priorities.

5.2.3 **Disadvantages:** the bid may be accepted, amended or refused, so funding is not guaranteed, and the post could not be in place before April 2027. Until then no overtime or officer time is assigned to the work. CIL allocation would pause, leaving the three conditionally prioritised projects waiting, and only essential monitoring and statutory reporting would continue. The full CIL procedure and applicant guidance would not be developed. The Council would go into the Local Plan consultation without its evidence prepared and unable to deliver what it offered in its scoping response. No new or additional planning work would be taken on, including meetings with developers, so opportunities to secure land, allotments and maintenance funding from development could be missed.

5.2.4 **Financial effect:** no additional cost in 2026/27; an estimated £56,000 a year from 2027/28, subject to job evaluation, if the bid is approved.

5.2.5 The Planning Committee considered this option, and a motion to adopt it was not carried.

5.3 **Option 3 – Do Nothing – Do not create the post**

5.3.1 The post is not created and no additional planning capacity is provided.

5.3.2 **Advantages:** avoids the cost of the post.

5.3.3 **Disadvantages:** no overtime or other officer time is assigned to this work. All CIL allocation would pause indefinitely. The three conditionally prioritised projects could not receive a final award, and unspent neighbourhood CIL would risk missing its spending deadline, after which Wiltshire Council may seek repayment. The Council's ability to engage properly in the planning process for Salisbury would be hampered. Local Plan responses, developer meetings, appeal work and councillors' planning enquiries would stop. The Council could not follow up its scoping response or prepare plan-led objections. It would have less influence over development, section 106 and future investment in Salisbury, and could miss land, open space and allotments offered through development, or take them on without funded maintenance.

5.3.4 **Financial effect:** avoids an estimated £56,000 a year, subject to job evaluation, but the planned £17,500 increase in the Neighbourhood Development Plan budget for 2027/28 would still be needed for the Local Plan work, and opportunities for section 106, commuted maintenance sums, shared CIL and grant funding would be lost.

5.4 Option 1 is recommended. It reduces the risk of CIL being paid to projects that are not ready, gives the Council the capacity to influence the Local Plan and planning decisions, secures land and its maintenance from development, and is partly funded by the Neighbourhood Development Plan budget reduction.

6. Financial Position

6.1 The 2027/28 budget bid estimates the cost of the post at £56,000 a year, including employer National Insurance and pension contributions. The actual cost is unknown until job evaluation is completed; the bid is based on a Grade 9 post at £42,839 plus on-costs.

6.2 There is no provision in the current budget. The post would be funded from the 2027/28 base budget. The Neighbourhood Development Plan budget was due to increase by £17,500 in 2027/28, but the review has been delayed by the postponed Wiltshire Local Plan review, and the planning work needed in response to the Local Plan could be carried out by the Planning Manager. The Neighbourhood Development Plan budget can therefore be reduced by £21,500 in 2027/28 and £14,500 a year from 2028/29, partly offsetting the cost of the post.

6.3 This is a recurring staffing cost. The estimated net additional cost is £34,500 in 2027/28 and £41,500 a year from 2028/29, subject to job evaluation.

6.4 The Council currently pays for consultants to meet its planning needs. It has spent £17,539 on these since the start of 2025/26.

6.5 The Communities Committee report noted that dedicated capacity should improve value for money by reducing the risk of CIL projects failing and funds having to be recovered. The post should also bring in additional funding for Salisbury through

section 106 contributions, shared CIL benefits with Wiltshire Council, including bids to its Locally Identified Infrastructure Projects, other plan-led grants, and commuted sums for the maintenance of land, open space and allotments transferred to the Council.

7. Legal and Governance Considerations

7.1 Section 112 of the Local Government Act 1972 allows the Council to appoint the officers it considers necessary to discharge its functions.

7.2 The National Scheme of Delegation is set by the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended by the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025, and the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026. Wiltshire Council remains the local planning authority, responsible for deciding applications, enforcement and section 106 agreements. Under section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, it must decide applications in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The City Council's representations inform those decisions but do not determine them, and it has no call-in power.

7.3 Neither committee has authority to create or fund a post. This is a decision for Full Council.

7.4 The main governance risk identified in the Communities Committee report is that a CIL project is treated as funded before its delivery conditions are secured. If a project fails, the Council may remain accountable to Wiltshire Council for CIL already paid, and a funding agreement does not guarantee recovery.

7.5 Any planning advice offered to neighbouring parish councils would be a discretionary service. Any fee would be set by the CEO, in line with the Council's arrangements for fees and charges.

8. Implications

Implication Area	Impact	Comments / Mitigation
Financial	Medium	An estimated £56,000 a year, subject to job evaluation, partly offset by the Neighbourhood Development Plan budget reduction; an estimated net £34,500 in 2027/28 and £41,500 a year from 2028/29.
Legal	Medium	Power to appoint under section 112 of the Local Government Act 1972. Wiltshire Council remains the local planning authority.

Implication Area	Impact	Comments / Mitigation
Risk	High	Without the post, no overtime or officer time is assigned to this work, so CIL allocation would pause and the Council's ability to engage properly in planning for Salisbury would be hampered. Its planning responses would continue to carry little weight. The Council would also have less influence over future development, reduced oversight of section 106 opportunities and weaker engagement in the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Development Plan, and could lose opportunities to secure investment and community benefits from development. Land and allotments offered through development could be missed, or taken on without funded maintenance. Releasing CIL without proper checks would leave the Council accountable to Wiltshire Council for funds paid to a project that fails.
Personnel	High	One new full-time post reporting to the Head of Corporate. The grade will be set by job evaluation; the budget bid is based on Grade 9.
Environmental Impact	Low	No direct effect. The role may strengthen the Council's representations on environmental matters.
Equalities Impact Statement	Low	No direct service impact. Recruitment will follow the Council's equality and employment procedures. Members must have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty when deciding.
Community / Public Impact	Medium	Supports clearer progress on CIL projects, plan-led planning representations and new allotments and open space for residents. It cannot guarantee a particular planning decision.
Procurement / Contractual	Low	Recruitment will follow the Council's employment procedures.
Property / Asset	Medium	No immediate asset change. The role would secure land, open space and allotments from development with funded maintenance, subject to Member approval, maintain the Council's land records and advise on Council land.
Data Protection	Low	Planning and project records, including contact details, are covered by existing data protection controls.