

Appendix 4

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE DRAFT BUDGET

12 January 2009

Report of Head of Legal and Democratic Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report contains a referral to the Executive from the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board.

This report is public

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended:

- 1) To note the workshop conclusions from the meeting on 9 December 2009 and to consider them as part of their final discussions on the draft budget; and
- 2) To note the request that officers ensure that in 2009 the process for scrutiny of the budgets involves members at an earlier stage and provides additional detail.

Executive Summary

Introduction

1.1 The Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board met on 9 December 2008 to consider the Draft Budget 1 and Service Plans 2009-2010.

1.2 The relevant extract from the draft minutes is set out below:

Councillor Clarke, Councillor Macnamara (Resources Portfolio Holder) and Councillor Wood gave a brief presentation which set out the wider context to the 2009/2010 budget and summarised the work of the Fees & Charges scrutiny review.

The meeting then adjourned and the members of the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board, along with the other councillors present, divided into three working groups to focus on (i) the capital programme; (ii) the fees and charges scrutiny proposals; and (iii) the efficiency/savings proposals. The main points raised in the workshops are summarised below:-

Capital programme

The members of the workshop were concerned that the prioritisation and allocation of capital programmes did not always reflect or serve the Council's corporate priorities. For example the introduction of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) may not fully address resident's concerns about anti-social behaviour. The workshop members looked at projects funded jointly with partner organisations and questioned whether there was scope to adjust the balance of contribution in some cases. They also asked whether the purchasing proposals for 09/10 took account of deflationary factors.

Fees & Charges scrutiny review

The workshop members endorsed the work and recommendations of the Fees & Charges scrutiny review. They agreed that this scrutiny review could have gone further if more detailed management information and alternative financial scenarios had been available. The absence of detailed information about the usage and income levels of Sunday parking was a case in point. The workshop members also suggested that there should be more work to explore potential sources of new income, for example, the introduction of a bin cleansing service and the sale of the graffiti clean up service.

Efficiencies/savings proposals

The members of the workshop were concerned that the proposed savings in the Housing Services B&B budget may not be realistic in the current economic climate. They noted that there was a risk of increased costs due to the potential collapse of the recycling materials market, and questioned whether the Council needed to include an amount in the estimates to cover this "risk" element. They suggested that maximising staff redeployment and reducing the number of agency staff rather than leaving established posts vacant might lead to further efficiencies. They identified a reduction in the volume of printing, especially papers for councillors, as a target area for savings. They asked whether the new flexi scheme had resulted in reduced overtime payments.

The workshop members considered whether the Council could attract additional rental income from its property holdings (e.g. old Bodicote House) and secure additional contributions towards the cost of Street Wardens from the private sector and other registered social landlords. Finally the workshop members felt that in future it would be useful to separate sports from arts when identifying priorities.

Draft Budget 1 and Service Plans 2009 - 2010 : Conclusions

The members of the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Panel reconvened to consider the proposals identified by the three workshops.

Resolved

- 1) That the Executive should note the workshop conclusions and consider them as part of the final discussions on the draft budget; and
- 2) That officers should ensure that in 2009 the process for scrutiny of the budget should involve members at an earlier stage and provide more detailed information.

Implications

- Financial:** There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.
Comments checked by Karen Curtin, Chief Accountant, 01295 221551
- Legal:** There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.
Comments checked by Liz Howlett, Head of Legal and Democratic Services 01295 221686
- Risk Management:** There are no risk implications arising directly from this report.
Comments checked by Rosemary Watts, Risk Management & Insurance Officer 01295 221566

Wards Affected

All

Corporate Plan Themes

An Accessible and Value for Money Council

Executive Portfolio

Councillor James Macnamara
Portfolio Holder for Resources

Document Information

	Title
Appendix	None
Background Papers	
Resources and Performance Board papers, 9 December 2009	
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