

Budget Scrutiny Process

The role of scrutiny in the financial process is to ensure that the budget is set in a transparent and accountable manner and that it supports Council priorities.

The Overview and Scrutiny Commission receives regular Targeted Budget Management (TBM) reports throughout the year.

During the budget setting process for 2009-10 budget proposals were published a couple of days before a specially arranged meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission (OSC) on the 3 February.

This year draft budget strategies have been published prior to cabinet on the 9th December giving scrutiny considerable opportunity to evaluate the proposals.

Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee will have the opportunity to scrutinise the budget proposals as they relate to their area of responsibility and forward comments to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission on the 26th January.

At each meeting the relevant Cabinet Member(s) and Director(s) will be present to answer questions about the draft budget strategies.

The Commission will produce a single scrutiny response to the draft budget strategies that will be considered at Cabinet alongside a number of other budget related items on the 11th February.

Budget timetable

Item	Meeting	Date
Budget Strategy	Cabinet	9 th December
Scrutiny of CT&E elements of the budget strategy	CTEOSC	14 th December
Scrutiny to consider the central services, equalities and sustainability elements of the budget strategy	OSC	15 th December
Scrutiny of E&CS elements of the budget strategy	ECSOSC	18 th December
Scrutiny to consider ASC&H elements of the budget strategy	ASCHOSC	21 st December
Scrutiny to consider C&YPT elements of the budget strategy	CYPOSC	5 th January
Council tax base	Cabinet	14 th January
Summary scrutiny meeting taking comments from all committees and agreeing a scrutiny response to the budget. This will be tabled at Cabinet on the 11 th February.	OSC	26 th January
Housing Revenue Account	HMCC	8 th February
General Fund Revenue Budget and Council Tax	Cabinet	11 th February
Housing Revenue Account	Cabinet	11 th February
Capital Reserves and Capital Investment	Cabinet	11 th February
Budget to be agreed	Council	25 th February

Possible Issues to Consider

1. What do you see as the principle risks in your service area budgets for 2010/11? What action is planned to mitigate these risks?
2. How has the under/overspend for 2009/10 been reflected in budget proposals for 2010/11?
3. What are the most significant pressures affecting your budgets? Are these fully accounted for in your proposals?
4. How are efficiency targets going to be delivered? How have they been delivered during 2009/10 – can you provide examples?
5. Can you summarise the staffing proposals including vacancy management within your department? What are the potential service implications? Indicating the anticipated reductions in terms of full time equivalents (FTEs)?
6. What are the major areas for service improvements with your budget? How are you reprioritising funds?
7. What other options were considered including efficiency or service reductions and why were they rejected?
8. What are long term financial risks to the authority and what action is being taken to mitigate them?
9. How does the local authority's budget allocation to specific service areas compare with similar Authorities?
10. Is there evidence of funding being directed towards the authority's/LSPs priorities?
11. Is the authority providing services above the statutory minimum standard that were not local priorities? What is the annual budget spent on this service as a percentage of the council's total budget? Is the service a priority for the local community?
12. Have any alternative forms of service delivery been considered such as partnership working in order to reduce costs?
13. Are financial/service plans aligned with the human resources/ICT/accommodation policies plans and strategies?
14. Are the local authority's financial reserves sufficient to guard against medium-long term financial risks?
15. Who was consulted in the development of the current budget programme and how robust was this consultation?
16. How does the selection of capital projects link to the council's corporate priorities?
17. In what ways has good practice been sought and implemented in the management of the capital programme?