

# **Report to Overview & Scrutiny Review Task & Finish Panel**

**Date of meeting: 20 May 2013**



**Subject: Budget Monitoring by Overview & Scrutiny**

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## **Recommendations:**

**To review a proposed timetable of budget monitoring/review by OS.**

## **Report:**

### **Introduction**

1. The proposals agreed in principle in relation to budget monitoring are set out under the item on this agenda relating to the decisions in principle already approved by the Panel. These arise from a report to the last meeting which included a number of comments received after consultation. These are not reproduced here.

### **Current Proposals**

2. These are set out below:

(a) new timetable to be produced at the start of the budget-setting process to enable the OS to plan ahead.

(b) the timetable of the budget process should be publicised in the Council Bulletin;

(c) OS should examine the financial issues paper/medium term financial strategy prepared at the first stage of the budget and concentrate on the policy issues and emerging trends, problems and themes raised rather than all the detailed figures;

(d) the Finance Scrutiny Panel's Terms of Reference should be altered to avoid duplication with the work of the Finance Cabinet Committee. There should not be any more joint meetings with the Finance Cabinet Committee;

(e) the role of OS in reviewing the budget should not only cover future budgets but what only need to look at the up coming budget but also at what has gone before in previous years; and

(f) the Scrutiny Panel's role should be to focus on exceptions rather than on budgets for services which are on track, ignoring what is going well.

## **Budget Process**

3. With the assistance of the Assistant Director of Finance & ICT (Accountancy), the following review process has been prepared for a typical budget. The timescale reflects:

(a) an opportunity for OS to review the Director of Finance's budget issues paper and the draft four year medium term budget early in the budget cycle;

(b) an opportunity for OS to review and comment on broad issues relating to the budget without necessarily being involved in all the detailed figures; and

(c) time for OS to prepare and make representations on the budget during the process and prior to the Council's budget meeting.

4. The timetable is set out in the Appendix to this report. This timetable may not be the whole story as it will be necessary for OS to devise ways of carrying out research and preparing representations for discussion with the Cabinet, the Cabinet Committee or the Finance Portfolio Holder.

5. A copy of the Finance & Performance SSP terms of reference has been appended to the report on review of KPIs.