

Agenda Item No: 7
Report To: Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: 21 July 2015
Report Title: Budget Scrutiny Task Group
Report Author: Member Services and Scrutiny Manager



Summary:

The O&S Committee is asked to agree the set up and membership of a Budget Scrutiny Task Group which will scrutinise the Council's draft 2016/17 budget and report its findings and recommendations to the O&S Committee. The O&S Committee would then report to Cabinet on the soundness of the budget.

Key Decision: NO

Affected Wards: None

Recommendations: **The O&S Committee to agree the set up and membership of a Budget Scrutiny Task Group.**

Policy Overview: The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a duty to scrutinise the Council's draft Capital and Revenue budget.

Financial Implications: N/A

Risk Assessment No

Equalities Impact Assessment No

Other Material Implications: None

Exemption Clauses: N/A

Background Papers: None

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Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to propose the O&S committee agree to delegate the scrutiny of the Council's draft 2016/17 budget to a Task Group (the Budget Scrutiny Task Group) as it has done in the past. The Budget Scrutiny Task Group would report back to the main Committee.

Background

2. As set out in the Council's constitution the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a duty to scrutinise the Capital and Revenue budgets of the Council. In the past, the Budget Scrutiny Task Group has fulfilled this function by scrutinising the Council's draft Capital and Revenue budgets, making a judgement on them, and reporting back to the main O&S Committee.
3. There is now a need for a Task Group to be set up in preparation for the scrutiny of the draft 2016/17 budget.
4. The report from the Task Group may make recommendations to both the O&S Committee itself and also to Cabinet. Once endorsed by the main Committee the report is then forwarded to Cabinet.

Membership, Timetable and Meetings

5. The political make up of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group will be broadly politically balanced and comprise of five Members - three Conservative Members and two Members from the remaining groups on the Committee.
6. The provisional timetable for 2016/17 is as follows:-

Report on Draft Budget Proposals to Cabinet	3 December 2015
Budget Scrutiny Process	After 3 Dec 2015
Task Group to report back to O&S	26 Jan 2016
O&S Budget report to Cabinet	11 Feb 2016
Full Council – set council tax	18 Feb 2016

7. In 2015/16 the Budget Scrutiny Task Group met five times between 8 Dec 2014 and 13 Jan 2015, all the meetings took place during the day. Because of the Christmas break, this is quite an intense set of meetings. The Task Group reported back to the main O&S Committee on 27th January 2015. The final report from O&S to Cabinet, making two recommendations, was agreed by Cabinet.
8. With the help of Finance officers, Heads of Service and other officers, the Task Group examines all the Service budgets and reports back any areas of concern.

9. Any risks identified are put into a 'risk matrix' to show the likely probability of an issue occurring and the material impact it would have on the Council's budget if it did occur.

Conclusion

10. The O&S Committee is asked to agree to the setting up of a Task Group to scrutinise the Council's draft 2016/17 budget, and the following details of the Task Group :-
 - a. Membership to be broadly politically balanced (3 Conservative and 2 other), individual members of Task Group to be agreed
 - b. Substitutes be allowed
 - c. Other members of the Council may attend Task Group meetings and ask questions
 - d. The Task Group elects its own chairman
 - e. The Task Group may co-opt other Members (except members of the Cabinet) as non-voting members when it is considered appropriate
11. It is hoped that the membership of the Task Group can be decided at this meeting. Cllr Krause has already signified his wish to be a member of the Task Group and other Members are encouraged to contact the Member Services and Scrutiny Manager before the meeting if they wish to express their interest. (This would not mean that other Members would be unable to put themselves forward at the meeting itself.)
12. The Committee may also consider it desirable to arrange a briefing meeting of the Task Group with the Head of Finance and Service Heads?? in advance of the Budget Scrutiny process commencing. This has been done in the past following the elections and Members said at that time that they considered it to be beneficial.

Recommended that:

- (i) the Committee appoint a Budget Scrutiny Task Group comprised of 5 Members (3 Conservative, 2 Opposition) to review the 2016/17 draft budget.**
- (ii) agree the Members to be appointed.**
- (iii) consider whether a briefing session should be arranged with Service Manager prior to the commencement of the scrutiny process.**

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