

Scrutiny involvement in the Budget Consultation Process: Arrangements for 2012/13 Scrutiny Budget Consultation Process

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 One of the key roles for Overview & Scrutiny Committee is to manage and co-ordinate scrutiny's involvement in the Council's budget consultation process.
- 1.2 Over the past five years this approach has been structured through a Scrutiny Budget Commission, set up to consider the budget consultation proposals and produce a co-ordinated response on behalf of the scrutiny function. The approach has been further developed with individual Panels now given the opportunity to meet in advance of the Commission to consider the budget proposals relating to their remits in more detail and refer any comments onto the Commission for consideration, as part of the overall scrutiny response.
- 1.3 Overview & Scrutiny Committee is being asked to confirm that it wants to continue with the above approach as a means of structuring scrutiny's involvement in the budget consultation process during 2012/13 and, on the basis of this assumption, consider the detailed arrangements for this years process.

2. Scrutiny Budget Commission 2012/13: Arrangements

- 2.1 The aims behind the Commission approach agreed by Overview & Scrutiny Committee in previous years were as follows:
 - To provide a more co-ordinated, structured & holistic approach towards consideration of the budget consultation proposals by the scrutiny function;
 - To allow more meaningful engagement with members and the public on the consultation proposals with an opportunity provided for stakeholders to focus on the particular areas within the consultation proposals relevant to their interests;
 - To avoid any repetition in terms of the way that the proposals were presented to scrutiny and in the responses generated from the consultation process.
- 2.2 In terms of this year's budget consultation process, Cabinet on 13 July 2011 agreed:

The budget consultation process will be different this year due to the fact that a four year balanced budget including associated savings plans has already been fully consulted on last winter and agreed at Council in March. The consultation

therefore will need to look at future service provision options and the associated costs rather than the traditional savings option paper. This type of consultation will be aimed at increasing customer and public understanding of the key financial decisions the Council faces each year. Plans have yet to be finalised but it is proposed that a questionnaire in the Council's magazine (Our Enfield) has worked particularly well in the past and should be continued this year.

2.3 Having taken account of the issues raised above Overview & Scrutiny is being asked to consider the following in terms of the arrangements for this year's process (based around the continuation of a Scrutiny Commission approach):

- (a) **Date, time & venue for Commission meeting:** A date has already been scheduled for a Commission meeting on Tuesday 31st January 2012 in the Conference Room at the Civic Centre. Last year the meeting was held between 7 – 9pm. **Are members happy to continue with the same arrangements for this year?**

Cabinet is due to consider the response from the budget consultation process at its meeting on 8 February 2012, before the final budget is considered by Council on a date to be agreed, so the above date has been scheduled to enable the Commission to meet as early as possible in order to ensure its response is available in advance of the Cabinet meeting. This will ensure that any comments made can be fully considered as part of the consultation response.

Dates for each of the Scrutiny Panels to consider the budget consultation proposals, and feed their comments back to the Commission, have been scheduled as follows:

Housing Growth & Regeneration -	Tuesday 10 January 12
Older People & Vulnerable Adults	Thursday 12 January 12
Children & Young People	Tuesday 6 December 11
Health & Wellbeing	Thursday 15 December 11
Crime & Safety & Strong Communities	Wednesday 7 December 11
Sustainability & Environment	Monday 16 January 12

Scrutiny Budget Commission - Tuesday 31 January 12

- (b) **Membership of the Commission** – as in previous years it is proposed that the Commission be made up by the members from Overview & Scrutiny Committee, with the Overview & Scrutiny Chairman serving as Commission chairman. **Are members happy to continue on the same basis this year?**
- (c) **Commission Programme** – Last year Overview & Scrutiny Committee agreed that the Commission's meeting should be based around a structured programme, with specific time built in to allow consideration of the proposals within the consultation document relating to each Council service area. **Are members happy to follow a similar programme for this years Commission**

meeting and to delegate authority to the Chairman to agree the detailed programme?

Details are awaited on the format for this years consultation document but in reviewing last years programme a need has been highlighted to ensure it is structured to ensure the maximum opportunity and time is made available for:

- scrutiny members as well as the public to participate and comment on the proposals; and
- any comments referred onto the Commission by individual Panels to be fully considered.

- (d) **Invitees** – The Leader & Cabinet Member for Finance, Human Resources & Facilities will be invited to attend this years Commission in order to present the consultation proposals and respond to comments raised. As in previous years the Directors from all other Council Departments, or an alternative senior officer who is able to deal with any detailed issues raised in relation to the consultation proposals within their particular service remits, will also be invited to attend.

In terms of scrutiny it is again proposed that all Panel members should receive a specific invitation to attend and participate in the Commission meeting.

The meeting will also be open for members of the public/representatives from local interest/stakeholder groups to attend, with specific publicity provided to encourage public participation including a press advert, & direct mailing. **Overview & Scrutiny Committee is asked to confirm they are happy with this approach and also consider any additional publicity methods they would like to see introduced to encourage public attendance at the Commission meeting.**

- 2.4 An initial steer on the above issues will enable officers to begin making the necessary arrangements for this year's Commission and will also ensure that all invitations & publicity can be issued well in advance of the meeting.

3. Recommendations

In order to assist in planning scrutiny's approach towards their involvement in the budget consultation process during 2012/13 Overview & Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

- 3.1 consider the issues highlighted in bold within section 2 above and confirm how they wish to proceed in terms of the final arrangements for the scrutiny's involvement in this years budget consultation process.
- 3.2 delegate consideration and approval of the detailed arrangements, structure and timetable for the this process to the Chairman of Overview & Scrutiny Committee, in consultation with the Head of Corporate Scrutiny & Community Outreach and any other members identified.