

Budget Scrutiny Challenge 2012: progress on recommendations (6 months – August 2012)

T&F Group Chairman: David Shakespeare

Lead Scrutiny Officer: Sara Turnbull

Date reported to Cabinet: 6 February 2012

Lead Cabinet Member for response: Martin Tett

Lead Officer for response: Richard Ambrose

Recommendation	Yes or No	Cabinet Response including proposed action	Cabinet Member	Lead Officer	Action by date	Progress update
<p>1. We recommend that the starting point for the budget-setting process should be the priorities of residents and delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan. Therefore, as part of the Draft Budget report Cabinet Members should set out how proposals will deliver the Council's and their own priorities.</p>	Yes	<p>The budget proposals do align to the Council's Corporate Plan and to Cabinet Member priorities. There will be a fundamental review of the Corporate Plan in time for 2013 and future budget reports will set out how proposals will deliver these priorities.</p>	Leader	Service Director (Finance & Commercial Services)	Dec 2012	<p>6 months (August 2012) An updated Corporate Plan is currently being drafted and will be consulted upon in late September / October. Focus groups have recently been held to follow up on the results of the Residents Survey. New budget proposals are being aligned to corporate and portfolio priorities.</p>
<p>2. We recommend that Equality Impact Assessments are fully completed by services when budget proposals are developed. All Equality Impact Assessments should be published either before or alongside the publication of next year's Draft Budget.</p>	Yes	<p>Understanding the equality impact of proposed budget changes is critical and due regard to these impacts must be carefully considered.</p>	Cabinet Member for Community Engagement	Service Director (Localities & Community Safety)	Dec 2012	<p>6 months (August 2012) Member Portfolio Teams are being asked to complete an early equality impact assessment screening to assess the impact of all budget proposals. Full equality impact assessments will be completed for those saving proposals that are deemed to have an impact and will be published alongside the publication of the draft budget.</p>
<p>3. We recommend that officers are made aware of</p>	Already in	<p>Officers already take this seriously and fully understand</p>	Cabinet Member for	Service Director	Dec 2012	<p>6 months (August 2012) Complete - already in place.</p>

<p>the importance of Equality Impact Assessments and that services give greater prioritisation to equalities in their work, including ensuring that dedicated officer time within each service is allocated to undertaking Equality Impact Assessments where needed. In addition, Cabinet should assess whether the level of corporate resource allocated to this work is sufficient.</p>	<p>place</p>	<p>the importance of Equality Impact Assessments. It is felt that the level of corporate resource is sufficient.</p>	<p>Community Engagemen t</p>	<p>(Localities & Community Safety)</p>		
<p>4. We recommend that a corporate decision is taken on the approval of any in-year contingency spend and a process established to ensure that there is robust internal challenge from Cabinet members to requests.</p>	<p>Alrea dy in place but to be exten ded</p>	<p>A corporate decision-making process is already in place as currently the release of contingency budget must be approved by the Leader, the Chief Executive and the Service Director (Finance & Commercial Services). In the future this will be extended with the Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources and the Service Director (Finance & Commercial Services) considering and challenging all requests for contingency spend before going through the current approval process.</p>	<p>Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources</p>	<p>Service Director (Finance & Commercial Services)</p>	<p>April 2012</p>	<p>6 months (August 2012) Complete - extended process set out is already in place.</p>
<p>5. We recommend that the timing of next year's budget consultation is improved so that there is a shared understanding of residents' priorities earlier in the year so that this can shape the</p>	<p>In princi ple</p>	<p>We recognise that this is an ideal and will consider this as part of the MTP / Corporate Planning process.</p>	<p>Cabinet Member for Community Engagemen t</p>	<p>Service Director (Policy, Performanc & Communica tions)</p>	<p>June 2012</p>	<p>6 months (August 2012) Consultation on the new proposed corporate plan will take place in late September / October. Focus Groups following up the results of the Residents Survey have recently taken place.</p>

development of budget proposals.						
6. We recommend that the public consultation on the Draft Budget is completed in time to feed into the Budget Scrutiny process.	In principle	Although agreed in principle this may be difficult to achieve due to the tight timelines and Christmas period. Further consideration will be given on how best to achieve this as part of the review of the MTP process.	Cabinet Member for Community Engagement	Service Director (Policy, Performance & Communications)	Jan 2013	6 months (August 2012) This will not be possible due to the late notification of the Local Government Finance Settlement, which is not due until December 2012. Therefore, the draft budget will not go to Cabinet until January 2013. However, feedback from the public consultation will be taken into account by the Cabinet on the 18 th February before final approval by Council on the 21 st February.
7. We recommend that a common approach and definitions of terms are agreed for financial planning across the Council. This includes ensuring that there is a consistent approach to the definitions of service reductions and efficiencies.	Yes	This will be built into the MTP process to ensure clarity and consistency across Portfolios.	Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources	Service Director (Finance & Commercial Services)	June 2012	6 months (August 2012) Complete - definitions have been agreed and communicated across Portfolio's to ensure clarity and consistency.
8. We recommend that questions are incorporated into the full Equality Impact Assessment to test the impact of proposals on the Voluntary and Community Sector. Cabinet Members should then set out a statement on the overall likely impact of their portfolio budget proposals on the Voluntary and Community Sector.	Yes	We highly value the contribution of the Voluntary and Community Sector. This has been evidenced by the fact that we have protected grants provided to the Voluntary & Community Sector. Questions will be developed around the impact of proposals on the Voluntary & Community Sector.	Cabinet Member for Community Engagement	Service Director (Localities & Community Safety)	Dec 2012	6 months (August 2012) Questions around the impact of proposals on the Voluntary and Community Sector have been incorporated into both the Equality Impact screening and assessment templates.

<p>9. We recommend that Members of the Budget Scrutiny Task & Finish Group are invited to advise on the best way of presenting the Draft Budget to make it as accessible as possible.</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>This is a decision for the Cabinet. However, early engagement with Members of the Budget Scrutiny Task & Finish Group is welcomed to better understand their information requirements.</p>	<p>Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources</p>	<p>Service Director (Finance & Commercial Services)</p>	<p>Dec 2012</p>	<p>6 months (August 2012) N/A</p>
<p>10. We recommend that all decisions on property assets should be taken corporately after consultation with services, including the declaration of property to be surplus. All property assets should be centralised to achieve better value for money from the Council's estate.</p>	<p>To be reviewed</p>	<p>The Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources has agreed to carry out a review of the Council's current Strategic Property Strategy and the implications of adopting a more robust and proactive corporate property approach.</p>	<p>Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources</p>	<p>Service Director (Place Services)</p>	<p>Dec 2012</p>	<p>6 months (August 2012) A corporate review of property assets is taking place. Member Portfolio teams have been specifically tasked with reviewing any assets within their Portfolio's.</p>
<p>11. We recommend that the Capital Programme is based on realistic knowledge of expected capital receipts, as well as properties already declared surplus. Targets should be set corporately, in consultation with services, on capital receipts.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Final budget proposals presented to Cabinet in February have included targets relating to the agricultural properties. Future targets will need to take into account expected market conditions.</p>	<p>Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources</p>	<p>Service Director (Finance & Commercial Services)</p>	<p>Dec 2012</p>	<p>6 months (August 2012) The Business Investment Group is tasked with ensuring that the capital programme is based on a realistic expectation of capital receipts and not just those properties already declared surplus.</p>
<p>12. We recommend that the Achieving Outstanding Performance (AOP) Board reviews the real vacancy levels across the organisation. The results of</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Vacancies are currently monitored across the organisation and will now be reported on a quarterly basis to the AOP Board. Monitoring data will also be</p>	<p>Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources</p>	<p>Service Director (Human Resources)</p>	<p>April 2012</p>	<p>6 months (August 2012) Complete – first quarter information on vacancy levels was reported within the 'Blue Book' at the Council meeting in July 2012.</p>

<p>this review should be reported to full Council via the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources entry in the 'Blue Book'.</p>		<p>included in the Blue Book report of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources.</p>				
<p>13. We recommend that Cabinet reconsiders the following proposed service reductions:</p> <p>Health and Wellbeing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meals on Wheels service charging increases - £200k by end 2014/15 - Respite Services - £171k by end 2014/15 <p>Education and Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Educational Psychology Service - £47k by end 2014/15 - Preventative Services - £163k by end 2014/15 - Reductions in social care training/charging - £50k by end 2014/15 <p>Children's Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Carer's payment- £60k by end 2014/15 	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Full consideration has been given to the proposed service reductions including the completed equality impact assessments relating to the reductions. Many of the proposed savings have been reinstated into the final budget proposals (see Appendix 4 of the Cabinet report).</p>	<p>All Cabinet Members</p>	<p>Service Director (Finance & Commercial Services)</p>	<p>Feb 2012</p>	<p>6 months (August 2012) Complete – taken into account when setting the 2012/13 budget at Council in February 2012.</p>
<p>14. We recommend that Cabinet considers increased investment in the Independent Domestic Violence Advocates in light of the strong business case</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Cabinet have reviewed the business case and added £95k into the final budget approvals in order to increase the number of Independent Domestic Violence Advisors from two to four.</p>	<p>Cabinet Member for Community Engagement</p>	<p>Service Director (Localities)</p>	<p>Feb 2012</p>	<p>6 months (August 2012) Complete – taken into account when setting the 2012/13 budget at Council in February 2012.</p>

provided.						
15. We reiterate the recommendation made by the Transport for Bucks Task & Finish Group that “the Strategic Client should be sufficiently resourced to ensure resilience and capacity, and challenge to the contractor.”	Yes	Cabinet have reviewed the Strategic Client capacity within the new Place Service and have increased the resource available over the next 2 financial years to the Cabinet Member for Planning & Transportation. This is to ensure contract performance and quality standards are met during a period of significant increased capital expenditure on our roads.	Cabinet Member for Planning & Transportation	Service Director (Place Services)	Feb 2012	6 months (August 2012) Complete – taken into account when setting the 2012/13 budget at Council in February 2012.
16. We recommend that the government community transportation grant is used for its intended purpose, with consideration for expenditure on community buses.	Yes	Cabinet have reviewed how best to use this non ring-fenced grant and agree that it should be used for its intended purpose.	Cabinet Member for Planning & Transportation	Service Director (Place Services)	Feb 2012	6 months (August 2012) Complete – taken into account when setting the 2012/13 budget at Council in February 2012.