

Report for: Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 1 February 2024

Title: Scrutiny of the 2024/25 Draft Budget/5 Year Medium Term Financial Strategy (2024/25-2028/29) – Recommendations and additional information (First Phase of Budget Scrutiny)

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Ward(s) affected: All

Report for Key/ Non-Key Decision: N/A

1. Describe the issue under consideration

- 1.1 This report sets out the draft recommendations to Cabinet as proposed so far by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee as part of the first phase of the scrutiny process for the draft 5-year Medium Term Financial Strategy (2024/25-2028/29). It also includes details of additional information requested by the Committee/Scrutiny Panels arising from queries about the budget reports at previous meetings.
- 1.2 Members of the Committee are asked to consider the additional information that has now been provided and to agree any additions and/or amendments to the draft recommendations contained within this report. These recommendations will be considered by Cabinet on 6th February 2024, when they will also agree the final MTFS proposals that will be put to Council on 4th March 2024.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:
 - (a) Notes the additional information provided in response to queries from the Committee/Scrutiny Panels about the budget reports from previous meetings as outlined in **Appendix A**.
 - (b) Proposes any necessary amendments and/or additions to the existing list of draft recommendations on the 2024/25 Draft Budget & 2024/29 Medium Term Financial Strategy (**Appendix B**) and approves the final version of this list to be submitted to the Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on 6th February 2024.

3. Reasons for Decision

- 3.1 As laid out in the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules (Constitution, Part 4, Section G) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is required to undertake scrutiny of the Council's budget through a Budget Scrutiny process. The procedure by which this operates is detailed in the Protocol covering the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

4. Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 N/A

5. Budget Scrutiny Process

- 5.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Protocol lays out the process for Budget Scrutiny. This includes the following points:
- a. The budget shall be scrutinised by each Scrutiny Review Panel, in their respective areas. Their reports shall go to the OSC for approval. The areas of the budget which are not covered by the Scrutiny Review Panels shall be considered by the main OSC.
 - b. A lead OSC member from the largest opposition group shall be responsible for the co-ordination of the Budget Scrutiny process and recommendations made by respective Scrutiny Review Panels relating to the budget.
 - c. Overseen by the lead member referred to above, each Scrutiny Review Panel shall hold a meeting following the release of the December Cabinet report on the new Medium Term Financial Strategy. Each Panel shall consider the proposals in this report, for their respective areas. The Scrutiny Review Panels may request that Cabinet Members and/or Senior Officers attend these meetings to answer questions.
 - d. Each Scrutiny Review Panel shall submit their final budget scrutiny report to the OSC meeting in January containing their recommendations/proposal in respect of the budget for ratification by the OSC.
 - e. The recommendations from the Budget Scrutiny process, ratified by the OSC, shall be fed back to Cabinet. As part of the budget setting process, the Cabinet will clearly set out its response to the recommendations/ proposals made by the OSC in relation to the budget.

6. Budget Scrutiny to Date

First Phase

- 6.1 Following consideration by Cabinet, the four Scrutiny Panels met in December 2023/January 2024 to scrutinise the draft budget proposals that fall within their portfolio areas. In addition, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on 9th

January 2024 to consider proposals relating to Corporate Services, parts of Culture, Strategy & Engagement and parts of Environment & Resident Experience.

- 6.2 Cabinet Members, senior service officers and finance leads were in attendance at each meeting to present proposals and to respond to questions from members.
- 6.3 The Overview & Scrutiny Committee then met on 18th January 2024 to consider the draft recommendations that had been proposed from this series of scrutiny meetings. It also considered responses provided by officers following requests for additional information from these meetings. The list of draft recommendations was updated by the Committee and the latest version of this list is provided as **Appendix B**.
- 6.4 While responses to most requests for additional information was provided in advance of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 18th January 2024, a number of responses were still outstanding and so could not be considered by the Committee. This additional information has now been provided and the updated list is provided as **Appendix A**. This agenda item provides the Committee with the opportunity to add any final additions/amendments to the list of draft recommendations for the First Phase.

Second Phase

- 6.5 Additional budget proposals are expected to be provided in the agenda papers for the Cabinet meeting on 6th February 2024. The agenda papers are expected to be published on 29th January 2024 and the details will be provided to the Committee as soon as they are available.
- 6.6 Any additional budget proposals will be considered by the Committee as part of this agenda pack but are provided as a separate agenda item and are not included in this report.

7. Next Steps

7.1 The table below sets out the remaining steps in the budget scrutiny process:

Date	Meeting	Comments
29 January 2024	N/A	Agenda papers for Cabinet meeting (on 6 th Feb 2024) to be published. These will include details of any additional budget proposals.
1 February 2024	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	To consider any additions/amendments to the draft recommendations on the original budget proposals (First Phase) and to formally refer the final recommendations to Cabinet.

		To consider any additional budget proposals (Second Phase) and formally refer any new recommendations to Cabinet.
6 February 2024	Cabinet	Cabinet will set out its response to all recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
4 March 2024	Full Council	Final budget setting.

8. Contribution to Strategic Outcomes

- 8.1 The budget scrutiny process has contributed to each of strategic outcomes relating arising from the Borough Plan.

9. Statutory Officers Comments

Finance

- 9.1 There are no specific financial implications as a result of the scrutiny process but there may be an impact on the overall Council budget if recommendations are made for change. Any such implications would be considered as part of February's Cabinet MTFS report.

Legal

- 9.2 There are no immediate legal implications arising from this report. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is exercising its budget scrutiny function. This is part of the constitutional arrangements for setting the Council's budget, as laid out in Part 4, Section G of the Haringey Constitution.

Equality

- 9.3 The Council has a Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share those protected characteristics and people who do not;
- Foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not.

- 9.4 The three parts of the duty applies to the following protected characteristics: age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy/maternity; race; religion/faith; sex

and sexual orientation. In addition, marriage and civil partnership status applies to the first part of the duty.

9.5 The proposals in the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy are currently at a high level and will be developed further as service changes and policy changes are progressed. Equality impact assessments will be developed as part of this process.

9.6 The Committee should ensure it addresses these equality duties by considering them within its work. This should include considering and clearly stating;

- How specific savings / policy issues impact on different groups within the community, particularly those that share the nine protected characteristics;
- Whether the impact on particular groups is fair and proportionate;
- Whether there is equality of access to services and fair representation of all groups within Haringey;
- Whether any positive opportunities to advance equality of opportunity and/or good relations between people, are being realised.

10. Use of Appendices

Appendix A – Additional information provided in response to queries arising from the Budget Scrutiny process (First Phase).

Appendix B - Draft recommendations on the 2024/25 Draft Budget & 2024/29 Medium Term Financial Strategy (First Phase).

11. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

11.1 N/A