Report for: Culture, Community Safety & Environment Scrutiny Panel

Item number: **7**

Title: Scrutiny of the 2027/28 Draft Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2027/2032

Report authorised by: Ayshe Simsek, Democratic Services & Scrutiny Manager

Lead Officer: Fola Irikefe, Principal Scrutiny Officer

Ward(s) affected: N/A

Report for Key/ Non Key Decision: N/A

1. Describe the issue under consideration

1.1 To consider and comment on the Council's Draft 2027-28 Budget and 2027-2032 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) report proposals relating to the Scrutiny Panels' and Scrutiny Committee remit.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the Panels and Committee scrutinise the proposals presented in the report and appendices and provide recommendations on the Budget proposals to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) Committee on 18th January 2027.

2.2 That the Panels and Committee give consideration to the Corporate Delivery Plan 2026-2028 (Appendix 5) which sets out the strategic priorities of the Council as part of the scrutiny of the Budget proposals.

3. Background information

3.1 The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules (Constitution, Part 4, Section G) state: "The Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall 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".

3.2 Also laid out in this section is that "the Chair of the Budget Scrutiny Review process will be drawn from among the opposition party Councillors sitting on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall not be able to change the appointed Chair unless there is a vote of no confidence as outlined in Article 6.5 of the Constitution".

4. Overview and Scrutiny Protocol

4.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Protocol lays out the process of Budget Scrutiny and includes the following points:

- The Council's budget shall be scrutinised by both the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and each of the Scrutiny Panels. The role of the Committee shall be to scrutinise the overall budgetary position and direction of the Council and strategic issues relating to this, whilst each Scrutiny Panel will scrutinise areas that come within their terms of reference. Any individual areas of the budget that are not covered by the Panels shall be considered by the Committee.
- The Overview and Scrutiny Procedure rules at Part 4 Section G , paragraph 1.5 of the Council's Constitution advises that the Budget scrutiny process will be set out in a protocol and paragraph 7.4 advises that chairing of the budget scrutiny process will be drawn from opposition party members sitting on the Committee.
- Each Scrutiny Panel shall hold a meeting following the release of the Cabinet report on the new MTFS. The Committee will also meet to consider proposals relating to any areas within the MTFS that are not covered by individual scrutiny panels. Each Panel and the Committee shall consider the proposals in this report for their respective areas, in addition to their budget scrutiny already carried out. Relevant Cabinet Members will be expected to attend these meetings to answer questions relating to proposals affecting their portfolios as well as senior service officers. Scrutiny Panels and the Committee may also request that the Cabinet Member for Finance and/or senior officers attend these meetings to answer questions.
- Recommendations from the Panel will be finalised by early December and then referred to the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee scheduled to take place on 18th January 2027.
- The Overview & Scrutiny Committee will consider and make recommendations on the overall budgetary position and direction of the Council and the MTFS. Each Scrutiny Panel and the Committee shall also submit their final budget scrutiny report to the meeting for ratification, containing their recommendations/proposals in respect of the budget for the areas within their terms of reference.
- The recommendations from the Budget Scrutiny process that have been approved by the Committee shall be referred to the Cabinet. As part of the budget setting process, the Cabinet will clearly set out its response to the recommendations/proposals.

5. 2027/28 Draft Budget and MTFS 2027/32 – List of Documents

5.1 The following documents are including with this report:

- Cabinet report (10th Nov 2026) – Draft 2027-28 Budget & 2027-2032 MTFS
- Appendix 1 – Agreed Pressures
- Appendix 2 – Agreed Savings
- Appendix 3 – New Pressures Proposals
- Appendix 4 – New Savings Proposals for Consultation

    - Appendix 4a – 4k – Details of New Savings Proposals
- Appendix 5 - Corporate Delivery Plan 2026-2028

6. Contribution to strategic outcomes

6.1 The Budget Scrutiny process for 2027/28 will contribute to strategic outcomes relating to all Council priorities.

7. Statutory Officers comments

Finance

7.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. Should any of the work undertaken by Overview and Scrutiny generate recommendations with financial implications then these will be highlighted at that time.

Legal

7.2 There are no immediate legal implications arising from this report.

7.3 In accordance with the Council's Constitution (Part 4, Section G), the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should undertake scrutiny of the Council's budget through a Budget Scrutiny process. The procedure by which this operates is detailed in the Protocol, which is outside the Council's constitution, covering the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Equality

7.4 The draft Borough Plan sets out the Council's overarching commitment to tackling poverty and inequality and to working towards a fairer Borough.

7.5 The Council is also bound by the 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.

7.6 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. Marriage and civil partnership status applies to the first part of the duty.

8. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

None.