



Briefing for:	Budget Scrutiny	Item number	
Title:	Budget Scrutiny – considerations for the budget scoping process		
Lead Officer:	Kevin Bartle Lead Finance Officer (Deputy CFO) Kevin.Bartle@Haringey.gov.uk		
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1. Background

- 1.1. The Scrutiny Protocol states that the scoping meeting should comprise the scrutiny review panel, Cabinet Member for Finance and senior officers, who will select three themes and identify any initial information required to be provided by services for the scrutiny panels.
- 1.2. Scrutiny panel meetings, one for each of the three themes, are scheduled for:
3 November;
7 November; and,
14 November 2011.
- 1.3. Budget scrutiny recommendations will be ratified by Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 12 December and are planned to be considered by Cabinet on 20 December 2011.

2. Choosing themes and areas of focus within the themes

- 2.1. Preliminary discussions agreed that the budget scrutiny process should be constructive, so that it is useful to services and enables Scrutiny to contribute to the budget setting process. The choice of themes should allow the Scrutiny panel to make a meaningful contribution. The definition of the information requirements is vital so as to ensure that services provide specifically what is required.
- 2.2. The budget scrutiny process should not require services to provide large amounts of detailed additional information in preparation for panel



meetings. This would be difficult for Directorates to achieve, within tight timescales and with reduced resources.

2.3. When choosing the themes consideration should be given to the importance of the service and/or crosscutting area for the council, and for which there is available relevant information and data to facilitate the scrutiny process.

2.4. As outlined in the paper; *Proposals for Budget Scrutiny 2012* (provided by Councillor Winskill and attached) , it is proposed that the three chosen themes will be explored by focusing on two of the elements listed below:

- Cost to provide the service
- Choice
- Impact on local economy
- Capital investment
- Local control

2.5. The choice of the above will depend on the theme chosen, and will be appropriate to the subject. It is suggested that these should be considered taking account of relevant advice from the Lead Finance Officer.

2.6. If a crosscutting area is chosen for the third theme, consideration should be given to the scale of the undertaking, so that it does not place an undue burden on Directorates to collate the required information. It is suggested that an example of a potentially wide ranging and time consuming theme to explore in-depth would be *Partnerships*, as this comprises many aspects of the council's services of varying complexity.

3. Related reports:

- Budget Scrutiny 2012 – Proposal for November Budget Scrutiny Review Panel.
- The report for Financial Planning 2012-2013 to 2014 – 2015 mid year budget update will be discussed by Cabinet on 4 October. *Link:* [Financial Planning 2012-13 to 2014-15](#)

4. Recommendations

4.1. That three clearly defined themes are identified for scrutiny by the budget scrutiny panel.

4.2. That the identified themes are allocated to services as early as possible in order to provide the maximum time to compile reports before the panel meetings.