

**Budget Scrutiny
Scoping meeting
10th October 2011**

Panel Members present: Cllr Winskill (Chair), Cllr Bull, Cllr Diakides, Cllr Alexander (substitute for Cllr Engert), Cllr Browne

Others attending: Cllr Goldberg, Cllr Strang, Stuart Young, Kevin Bartle, Christine Piscina, Melanie Ponomarenko

Agenda Item	Subject/decision
1.	<p>Apologies for absence</p> <p>Bernie Ryan Cllr Engert (substituted by Cllr Alexander)</p>
2.	<p>Urgent Business</p> <p>None</p>
3.	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>None</p>
4.	<p>Budget Scrutiny process</p> <p>Two papers for discussion were introduced in line with the new budget scrutiny protocol following the Governance review.</p> <p>Noted that the process has been discussed prior to this formal meeting and that papers presented were for discussion and agreement as to a way forward.</p> <p>Agreed that the work of the Budget Scrutiny Panel should add value to the work of the Council and that requests for information on the three chosen themes would be as specific as possible in order for the departments to provide the information.</p> <p>Agreed that the panel would consider other aspects of the Medium Term Financial Plan report, potentially not covered within the three chosen themes, outside of this process and would raise any further concerns in writing to the Cabinet Member. Members noted that such a document would not incur additional officer time.</p> <p>Noted that panel members concern that the protocol had been drafted with no input from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee</p>

	<p>with a request that any future changes would consider the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>Noted that there is a need to take into account public perception when considering the areas for example, where do the public perceive there to be an issue?</p> <p>Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ That three clearly defined themes are identified for scrutiny by the budget scrutiny panel. ▪ That the identified themes are allocated to services as early as possible in order to provide maximum time to compile reports before the panel meetings. ▪ That the budget scrutiny panel scrutinises two service/directorate areas and one cross-cutting area as its three themes for budget scrutiny.
5.	<p>Selection of themes</p> <p>Discussion on themed selection was based on the Medium Term Financial Plan report approved by Cabinet on 4th October 2011 which was presented to the Budget Scrutiny Panel as part of the papers for the meeting.</p> <p>Noted that the areas suggested in the briefing provided by the Chair (as per Item 4) were not exhaustive but were a starting point for discussion which could be added to by Members of the panel.</p> <p>Areas discussed for consideration under the service/directorate themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation ▪ Looked after children and associated legal costs ▪ Economic regeneration, specifically worklessness. <p>Noted that economic regeneration as a whole is a very large area and would include considering capital budgets which are not yet known.</p> <p>Noted that there is a current scrutiny review on worklessness, specifically in relation to 18-24 year olds and this review could consider any concerns in this area throughout the review.</p> <p>Agreed that a themed area would be homelessness and temporary accommodation. Areas to be considered are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Commentary on local and national policy ▪ What is the turnover of the homeless population? ▪ Where are the homeless population coming from? ▪ What are the demographics of the homeless population?

- How are we housing people e.g. private and council owned properties?
- Where are we housing people e.g. in borough, London wide and nationally.
- What are the cost implications of over and under occupancy?
- What are the future threats to reducing the number of people in temporary accommodation?
- What is the likely impact of the Housing Benefit changes?
- What is the position of our statistical neighbours?

Agreed that a themed area would be looked after children, specifically relating to legal costs and considering the following questions:

- What are the drivers - cost and otherwise?
- Commentary on local and national policy behind LAC and
- What is the process of taking someone into care?
- What reports are commissioned by magistrates which local authorities have to provide?
- What is the Legal service role in the LAC process?
- What early intervention takes place?
- Statistical neighbours

Agreed that this would be considered at the last budget panel meeting in light of the new Director for Children and Young People joining the Council in November.

Areas discussed for consideration under the cross-cutting theme:

Council income, specifically the use of buildings and income generated from these.

- Partnership working
- Fees and Charges
- Carbon reduction

The Panel were informed that a wholesale piece of work is currently being undertaken on property use which will be completed within the municipal year. Cllr Goldberg stated that he was happy to share this with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to gain their input.

Noted that Partnership working as a theme would be very large given the extensive number of partners the Council works with. Any work in this area would need to focus on a small and specific group of partners.

Agreed that a themed area would be carbon reduction considering the following questions:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Commentary on local and national policy ▪ What is our current position with regards to reducing CO2 emissions? ▪ NI186 and NI185 information and local performance (LA/Council property emissions and all emissions in borough) ▪ What is the impact in the reduction of estates? ▪ Information on the Sustainable Investment Fund e.g. how much, what is this being spent on, what will it contribute to the 40:20 target? ▪ £15 million solar panel investment – what will this contribute? ▪ Commentary on transport ▪ Contract obligations e.g. with waste authority? ▪ Planning permissions e.g. loft installation requirements when planning permission is granted? ▪ What advice is being given to householders? <p>Noted that it would be difficult to give a budget base in this area.</p> <p>Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ That the three areas of focus for Budget scrutiny will be: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Looked After Children including the associated legal costs; 2. Homelessness/Temporary Accommodation; and, 3. Carbon Reduction (cross cutting theme). ▪ That where relevant the five areas (Cost to provide service, choice, impact on local economy, capital investment, local control) would also be covered within the three themed areas. ▪ That the Lead Finance Officer (Deputy CFO) and the Assistant Chief Executive would collate a 2-3 page paper outlining the resource requirements for the process and the scope of each theme.
6.	<p>New Items of Urgent Business</p> <p>None</p>
7.	<p>Future meetings</p> <p>3rd November 6.30pm – Carbon reduction 7th November 6.30pm -Homelessness 14th November 6.30pm – Looked after children</p>