

## TRAFFORD COUNCIL

**Report to:** Scrutiny Committee  
**Date:** 30<sup>th</sup> October 2013  
**Report of:** Democratic Services Manager

### Report Title

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE EXECUTIVE'S DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2014-15 – PROCESS UPDATE**

### Summary

The Executive's initial budget proposals are due to be agreed for consultation purposes at a Special Meeting of the Executive on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2013. This report sets out an update on the proposed arrangements for Scrutiny to review these proposals and provide feedback to the Executive.

### Recommendation(s)

1. That the content of the report be noted.
2. That Scrutiny Members identify which Directorate-based topic groups they would wish to participate in, and notify the respective Chairmen accordingly.
3. That authority to finalise the Budget Scrutiny Report be delegated to the Democratic Services Manager in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of this Committee.

### Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

**Name:** J.M.J. Maloney  
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Background Papers: None.

## Background

### Timescale

The Executive's initial budget proposals will be determined at its Special Meeting on 18/11. There will be considerable advantages in holding the budget scrutiny exercise as promptly thereafter as possible.

The Director of Finance has advised that "scene-setting" presentations have already been made to the political Groups; and Members who are intending to participate in this year's budget Scrutiny are encouraged to attend the Special Executive Meeting, as further relevant background will be presented then.

The aim is to complete the detailed budget scrutiny as promptly as possible, to allow the maximum opportunity for any feedback to be referred to Executive in a timely manner, in order to enhance the potential for Scrutiny to influence outcomes. It is therefore intended that the report will be formally presented to Executive in January 2014.

### Process

Members have already agreed that the broad pattern from last year was successful, and should be followed, subject to any necessary amendments, for the current year. This will involve a range of directorate-based pre-meetings of Scrutiny Members, to determine a focussed list of key issues (essentially a draft agenda) to take forward in Topic Group sessions with Executive Members. For both "pre-meetings" and Topic Groups, the four-session format, with each headed by a Topic Group Chairman, was effective and efficient, and will be adopted, if at all possible, this year.

### Directorate-Based Scrutiny

The balance of Directorates has changed in the past year, including via the major reorganisation of Children's and Adults' Services into a single directorate. However, there remain significant advantages in retaining a four-session format. The following division is therefore proposed:

- 1 & 2: CWB Directorate, split into 2 separate sessions: Children's and Adults' Services
3. ETO / EGP
4. T&R

### Topic Groups

The Topic Groups will be chaired by the four existing Chairmen – Councillors Chilton, Holden, John Reilly and Mrs. Young. Councillor Shaw will allocate Chairmen to the various directorates.

In order to allow arrangements to be made and included firmly in Members' diaries, **all Scrutiny Members are encouraged to identify their participation preferences as soon as possible, and notify these to the respective Chairmen.** It will be the Chairmen's discretion to determine the maximum workable size for each group.

## Budget Scrutiny Sessions

It is envisaged that there will be 4 pre-meetings on 2 evenings (2 sessions each, as last year) as soon as possible after the Special Executive Meeting, followed by the Topic Group Scrutiny sessions, following a similar pattern, about a fortnight later. **Last year Members were asked to commit to attending both the pre-meeting and topic group for their preferred directorate(s), in order to promote understanding and continuity; this was helpful last year, and the request is reiterated for the current exercise.** The interval between pre-meetings and Topic Groups will allow Executive Members to attend Topic Groups with fully informed responses to Scrutiny. Dates for these meetings will be canvassed as soon as arrangements for Topic Groups and Chairing are agreed.

## Budget Scrutiny Report

As last year, the respective sections of the report will be signed off by Chairmen on behalf of the topic groups, and combined into a unified report. In order to allow the maximum time for the Executive to respond, **the Committee is requested to approve delegation of authority to finalise this report to the Democratic Services Manager in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman.** This will permit the finalised report to be presented to the Executive in January 2014, thus allowing maximum scope for it to be considered and to influence the Executive's final proposals which will then be brought to Executive / Council in late February.

## Reasons for Recommendation(s)

To secure agreement for, progress arrangements for, the Budget Scrutiny 2014/15 exercise.