

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Scrutiny Committee
Date: 29th October 2014
Report of: Democratic & Performance Services Manager

Report Title

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE EXECUTIVE'S DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2015-16 – PROCESS AND TIMESCALES

Summary

The Executive's initial budget proposals are due to be agreed for consultation purposes at a Special Meeting of the Executive on 20th October 2014. This report sets out details of 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 service area reviews they would wish to participate in, and notify the respective Chairmen and officers accordingly.
3. That Scrutiny Members review the budget proposals for the service areas in which they are interested, identify focussed questions and notify the respective Chairmen and officers accordingly.
4. That authority to finalise the Budget Scrutiny Report be delegated to the Democratic & Performance 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
Extension: 4298

Background Papers: None.

Purpose

The Executive's initial budget proposals are due to be determined at its Special Meeting on 20/10/14. These proposals will be considered by Scrutiny Members, to identify any particular issues of concern or uncertainty, so that these can be communicated to the Executive and taken account in developing its final proposals to be considered by Executive and Council in February 2015. It will maximise the scope for Scrutiny to influence the development of the budget if its observations can be forwarded to the Executive as early as possible.

Timescale

The Executive's initial budget proposals are due to be determined at its Special Meeting on 20/10/14. The Leader of the Council and Director of Finance will give an initial background presentation to Scrutiny Committee (with Members of the Health Scrutiny Committee also invited) at its meeting on 29/10/14. Service-based Scrutiny sessions will then be held, with an opportunity to question relevant Executive Members, prior to mid-December. It is intended to forward Scrutiny's observations to the Executive informally prior to Christmas. **A delegation is therefore sought to officers, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of this Committee, to finalise this feedback to the Executive.** This Budget Scrutiny report will then be formally presented to the Executive at its meeting on 26/1/15. As in previous years, it is envisaged that the Executive's response will be incorporated into the Budget Report which will be presented to Budget Executive and Council in February.

Subject Areas

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman have identified a number of principal areas for Scrutiny focus:

- Major areas of EGEI directorate potentially subject to the Joint Venture process
- Areas of heavily demand-led budgets, primarily within CWB directorate
- The remainder of EGEI directorate and T&R directorate

The first of these is best treated as a discrete area; and the timing of the JV process does not fit well with the general budget scrutiny process. This Committee will therefore be reviewing this area as a separate exercise (see, for example, elsewhere on this agenda).

Process

It is envisaged that two substantive Scrutiny sessions will be undertaken, prior to mid-December, covering a) demand-led CWB budgets and b) Remainder of EGEI / T&R directorates. Dates will be notified in due course; though there are considerable constraints arising from existing meetings, Members' diaries and the locality-based budget consultation sessions.

Issues arising from these sessions and not immediately resolved in discussions with the Executive Members will be incorporated into a feedback report to be shared with the Executive, as set out above, as promptly as possible.

Personnel

As in previous years, all Members of Scrutiny and Health Scrutiny Committees are invited to be involved in the budget scrutiny process. Scrutiny Members are requested to retain and review the Budget Proposals report to Executive on 20/10/14, which has been supplied to all Members.

Members are also requested:

- 1. To determine which of the subject areas they wish to be involved in, and notify the respective Chairmen and the officers accordingly; and**
- 2. To identify focussed questions arising from their review of the budget proposals, and notify them to the Chairmen and officers as early as possible in advance of the scrutiny sessions.**

The Scrutiny sessions, depending on Members' availability, will have as their Chairmen / Vice-Chairmen Members selected from Councillors Mitchell, Cordingley and Lloyd, by agreement.

Budget Scrutiny Report

Unresolved issues and concerns arising from the Scrutiny sessions will be incorporated in a Budget Scrutiny report. In order to allow this to be forwarded as early as possible to the Executive, delegated authority is requested as set out above to finalise this report. It will then be formally 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 February.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

To secure agreement for, and to progress arrangements for, the Budget Scrutiny 2015/16 exercise.