

WILTSHIRE COUNCIL

JOINT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SELECT COMMITTEE 10 FEBRUARY 2011

BUDGET SCRUTINY – EXPLANATION OF PROCEEDINGS

Purpose of the Report

1. To clarify the purpose of the meeting and how it will run.

Background

2. As experienced last year the meeting provides an opportunity for non-executive councillors to question the Leader and Cabinet on the draft budget before it is put to the full council.
3. Rather than create a burdensome and bureaucratic model for the coming together of the four scrutiny select committees, essentially the committees are meeting jointly to consider the draft budget. The first item of business will be for councillors to elect a chairman for the meeting.
4. The intended outcome of the meeting is to submit a summary of the views expressed and for these to be taken into account by Council at its meeting on 22 February 2011 when agreeing the 2011/2012 budget. However this year Cabinet has cancelled its meeting on 8 February and will now be considering the budget report on 15 February. Cabinet will take the opportunity to also consider the views of Scrutiny prior to report to Council.

Evidence and Informed Discussion

5. Councillors will be familiar with the need for any discussion, conclusions and recommendations arising from a scrutiny exercise to be informed and evidence based.
6. Consequently, if any councillor wishes to make a proposal on the content of the draft budget, s/he should be able to demonstrate credible evidence for the proposal. The case for a proposal will need to be strong enough to convince the joint meeting to support such a recommendation, and to stand up to challenge at the Council meeting on the 22 February.
7. Equally, councillors will be familiar with the need to focus their questions on strategic and policy matters when considering the budget. Any “political” comments are best left to full Council.

Roles and Responsibilities

8. The Leader of the Council will be invited to introduce the draft budget and to provide the context and rationale for the proposals. Although Cabinet has not yet met to approve the budget, the Leader has confirmed that she and her Cabinet colleagues are in full support of the proposals in the report.

9. Councillors will then be given the opportunity to question the Leader based on the evidence presented. She can be supported in answering questions by the Deputy Leader / or Chief Executive.
10. Councillors will then be given the opportunity to question the respective Cabinet members on the evidence presented. He/she can be supported in answering questions by the relevant portfolio holder(s) and / or Corporate / Service Director.

Budget Material

11. The Business Plan and appended Financial Plan reports have been circulated to all Councillors in preparation for the setting of the 2011/2012. Councillors are asked to bring their copy with them to the joint meeting.

Order of Debate & Procedure

12. The meeting will be based on the normal rules of procedure and debate as set out in the Council's Constitution.
13. In consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Organisation & Resources Select Committee, the meeting has been structured as follows:
 - (1) the Leader of the Council to introduce the 2011/12 overall draft budget and respond to questions on the context and rationale;
 - (2) the chairman of the joint committee to invite questions and comments from councillors on the budget proposals section by section;
 - (3) the chairman of the joint meeting to summarise the main points, and to close the meeting.

Conclusion

14. A summary of the comments made at this meeting will be submitted to Council for it to consider on 22 February as part of the budget setting debate, and be made available to Cabinet on 15 February when it determines its budget recommendation.

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