

WILTSHIRE COUNCIL

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

7 FEBRUARY 2013

BUDGET SCRUTINY – EXPLANATION OF PROCEEDINGS

Purpose of the Report

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

Background

2. The meeting provides an opportunity for non-executive councillors to hear from the Director of Finance on the process and key issues of updating the Financial Plan for 2013/14 and to question the Leader and Cabinet on the draft budget before it is formally put to the full council.
3. The intended outcome of the meeting is to submit a summary of the views expressed and for these to be considered by Cabinet on 12 February and taken into account by Council on 26 February 2013 when the 2013/14 budget is agreed.

Evidence and Informed Discussion

4. Councillors will be familiar with the need for any discussion, conclusions and recommendations arising from a scrutiny exercise to be informed and evidence based.
5. Consequently, if any councillor wishes to make a proposal on the content of the draft budget, he/she should be able to demonstrate credible evidence for the proposal. The case for a proposal will need to be strong enough to convince the committee to support such a recommendation, and to stand up to challenge at the Council meeting on 26 February.
6. Councillors will also be familiar with the need to focus their questions on strategic and policy matters when considering the budget. Any “political” comments are best left for full Council and localised issues taken up elsewhere directly with the Cabinet Member or Service Director.

Roles and Responsibilities

7. The Director of Finance will be invited to explain the technical aspects of the budget report and the budget setting process.
8. The Leader of the Council will then be invited to introduce the draft budget and to briefly provide the context and rationale for the proposals. Although Cabinet has not yet formally met to recommend 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 Corporate Directors.

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 updated Business & Financial Plan 2013-15, which includes budget proposals for 2013/14 and budget book have been circulated to all Councillors in preparation for the setting of the 2013/2014 budget. Councillors are asked to bring their copy with them to the extraordinary meeting.

Order of Debate & Procedure

12. Normal rules of procedure and debate as set out in the Council's Constitution will apply as necessary.

13. The meeting has been structured on the basis of the content of the Financial Plan:

(1) the Director of Finance will explain how the budget was compiled and respond to questions on technical aspects of the budget report and budget setting process

(2) the Leader of the Council will introduce the overall draft budget for 2013/14 and respond to questions on the context and rationale

(3) the Chairman of the committee will invite questions and comments from councillors on the Financial Plan 2013-14: this will be done section by section

14. The Chairman will run the meeting based on the order described above and will clearly give prominence to the members of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group and the Management Committee in asking questions. At the conclusion of the debate the Chairman will look to highlight and summarise and key themes and seek the endorsement of the Committee.

Conclusion

15. A summary of the comments made at this meeting will be submitted to Council for consideration on 26 February as part of the budget setting debate, and will be made available to Cabinet on 12 February when it determines its budget recommendation.

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