



BUDGET SCRUTINY TASK GROUP

REPORT OF MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 15 SEPTEMBER 2008 AT COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE

Present:

Task Group:	Tony Molland, Patrick Coleman, Peter Fuller, William Moss, Jeff Osborn, and Ricky Rogers.
Officers:	Ceri Williams (Scrutiny Support Officer), Carlton Brand (Director of Resources), Caroline Bee (Head of Financial Planning)
Members	Pat Rugg

1. REPORT OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The task group noted the report of the meeting held on the 14th July 2008. This was following clarification from the Corporate Director that he would be reporting to the IE and JOSTB in relation to the £7m 'one council' savings to be found in 2009/10 (6 (c)).

BUDGET MONITORING

2. Revenue Budget & Service Standard Monitoring (July 08)

Members considered the latest revenue budget and service standard monitoring paper. In doing so, the following key points were highlighted and discussed:

- a) The projected position for the 2008-09 revenue budget was a £157,000 overspend, which contained a number of departmental variations.
- b) The many different demands on the Community Services Budget. Members were assured that improvements in procurement of services via the Commissioning Strategies and FOCUS Project would lead to a more stable budget.

- c) The implications on the Children and Education Budget of increasing the number of hours of free education for 3/4 year olds and possible future extension of the school leaving age.
- d) Clarification that the 1.48% increase in attendance for Early Years, if continued, would result in an overspend of up to £0.400k.
- e) The impact of the delay of the Lakeside contract and how this had fortuitously balanced the reduced income from 106 agreements and the cost increases faced by Passenger Transport.
- f) Members' clarified that para 25 which related to the calculation of Demand Responsive Bus Journeys did not have budget implications.
- g) The Area Based Grant had been allocated along the similar lines as the previous ring fenced grants. The final 7k would be distributed shortly. The ABG had been included within the gross budget lines but not within the net. This would be changed for future meetings, following national guidance received.
- h) The Audit Commission was satisfied with the reported Available Balances.

AGREED:

- To thank the officers for the briefing
- To invite technical officers from the Department of Community Services to the next meeting of the Task Group to discuss the individual elements of their budget

4. Capital Planning and Monitoring

Members considered the report which had been requested to assist the task group in beginning its new role in scrutinising the capital budget and programme. Members also considered the monthly capital budget monitoring update. In doing so, the following key points were highlighted and discussed:

- a) There had been a dovetailing of the Capital and Revenue Programmes, which enabled member involvement much earlier in the process of agreeing the Capital Budget. Members' also discussed the potential involvement of Scrutiny at the Capital Assets Board Level.
- b) The Task Group voiced concern about the isolated position of Scrutiny within the Capital & Asset Board Management (Structure B).
- c) Discussions took place about the Section 106 agreements in place across the 5 Authorities and the need for these to be transparent to the members. These in future would be captured on the new BMP/SAP system which would enable tracking. It was acknowledged that Section 106 Agreements was an area that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee already had considered within its work programme.

AGREED: The Task Group to consider the minutes from the next meeting of the Capital Assets Board and agree on how it would like to proceed in Scrutinising CAB's work.

OVERVIEW OF THE BUDGET SETTING PROCESS 09/10

5(a). How to Overview the Budget Setting Process 2009/10

Members discussed a paper proposing how the task group will carry out its overview role of the 2009/10 budget setting process, bearing in mind the activities of the Implementation Executive (IE), the IE budget working group and the Joint Overview & Scrutiny Transition Board (JOSTB). This report also referred to the intention to hold a special meeting of the JOSTB to consider the draft 2009/10 budget in February 2009.

The Task Group discussed the involvement of District Members in future scrutiny. After debate it was accepted that the Joint Overview & Scrutiny Transitional Board had district representation and would provide the mechanism for contribution to scrutiny of the 09-10 budget.

- AGREED:**
- **To note that formal overview and scrutiny of the budget setting process for 2009/10 will be carried out by the JOSTB**
 - **That the Budget Task Group will support JOSTB in this work**
 - **To note that arrangements for the next joint scrutiny meeting will be developed over the coming months in the form of a special meeting of the JOSTB.**

5(b). 2009/10 Financial Plan

Members considered the Financial Plan 2009/10 which was tabled at the 15th July Cabinet meeting. In doing so the Corporate Director confirmed that the BMP savings would be £2million as detailed in the report.

At the November meeting, the task group will receive the updated position to this Plan for further discussion.

AGREED: To note the plan.

NEXT MEETING

The next Task Group would take place on Wednesday 19th November 2008 at the amended time of 2.00pm.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am to 12.05pm)

The Officer who produced this report is Ceri Williams, Scrutiny Support Officer, Corporate Services, directline: 01225 713 079