

BUDGET STRATEGY WORKING GROUP

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In 2008, the Corporate Services Panel set up a Budget Working Group to consider issues in relation to Member involvement in the budget process and scrutiny / overview of the Council's strategic approach to its budget. Over the years, the role of the group has been adapted to reflect changes to the way the Council deals with its finances and the requirements of Members. At recent meetings, Members have raised issues regarding the development of the role of the group and this report proposes that, following a review, the Terms of Reference should be expanded and it becomes a Cabinet group.

2 BACKGROUND TO NEW APPROACH

- 2.1 Members of the Group have recently discussed the potential for expanding the Group's role so that it would add more value. In this context, it has been suggested that the Terms of Reference could cover the development and delivery of the 8-Point Plan and the themes within it. This would enable each of the strands of the 8-Point Plan to be considered, with the group "drilling down" into the areas identified for detailed examination.
- 2.2 The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services has also joined the group and his input has provided a new dimension and a link with the strategic work carried out by the Cabinet. It is proposed that this link should be developed further to enable the Group to make recommendations directly to the Cabinet on service and policy issues. This will help the Cabinet in preparing and monitoring budgets and to assess progress against objectives and priorities. To achieve this, it is therefore proposed that the Group is renamed as the 'Budget Strategy Working Group' and it becomes a sub-group of the Cabinet.

3 WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

- 3.1 The proposed Terms of Reference for the new Group are attached. The issue was raised at the last meeting of the Corporate Services Panel on 4th June 2015 where the approach was supported, although it was suggested that the new group should consist of all the Members of the group from 2014/15 (Chairman of the Corporate Services Panel and Crs. Lyon, Jones, Bell, Crawford, Clifford and Barbara Hurst). These have been allowed for in the proposed membership together with two Cabinet Members.
- 3.2 The Group will meet on a regular basis and will make recommendations to

the Cabinet directly and through the officer reports it receives on budget and finance issues. A reporting mechanism can also be established with the Corporate Services Panel if required.

4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 The Budget Working Group has provided an effective forum for Members to examine budget issues for many years. However, the proposed new group will enable it to have a more extensive role and have a more direct link to the decision making process.

4.2 Members are recommended to:-

- i) Set up a Budget Strategy Working Group and agree the Terms of Reference attached to this report; and
- ii) Appoint Members to the Group for 2015/16 on the basis of the Members appointed in 2014/15, the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and another nominated Cabinet Member.

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Corporate Director

BUDGET STRATEGY WORKING GROUP

TERMS OF REFERENCE

A. FUNCTIONS

- To monitor the delivery of the 8 – Point Plan against the objectives relating to income, savings and efficiencies
- To examine and provide input into the development of projects of the 8 – Point Plan
- To review the process for setting priorities and preparing the budget, including Member engagement in the process
- To monitor the Council’s Medium Term Financial Strategy and progress towards achieving financial sustainability

B. REPORTING

The Group will report and make recommendations to the Cabinet on the outcomes of its work.

As requested, reports will be made to the Corporate Services Panel on the outcomes from the Group.

C. MEMBERSHIP

A cross-party group of councillors appointed by the Cabinet, including:

- The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services (Chairman)
- One additional Cabinet Member
- The Chairman of the Corporate Services Policy and Review Panel
- Three other Conservative Group Members
- Three Minority Group Members

Other Members may be invited to join meetings for discussion on issues relating to specific projects.