

Report of:	Strategic Director of Finance, Governance and Support Executive Member for Finance and Governance
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Submitted to:	Executive, 4 September 2018
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Subject:	Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel – Council Budget 2018-2019 and Proposed Savings
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Summary

Proposed decision(s)
That Executive approves the directorate response to the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel’s review of the 2018/19 budget setting process.

Report for:	Key decision:	Confidential:	Can be called-in:
Decision	No	No	Yes

Contribution to delivery of the 2018-22 Strategic Plan		
Business Imperatives	Physical Regeneration	Social Regeneration
The Scrutiny Panel recommendations rightly recognise the importance of engaging the public in the democratic processes of the town, in this case the budget setting process. The recommendations will ensure the Council continues to encourage public participation in the budget consultation process.	Not applicable	Not applicable

Ward(s) affected
Not applicable

What is the purpose of this report?

1. The purpose of the report is to seek approval of the directorate response, appended to this report, which has been prepared in response to the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel's recommendations around future budget setting processes.

Why does this report require a Member decision?

2. The Council's constitution sets out that scrutiny recommendations, along with directorate responses should be considered by the Executive.

Report Background

3. During the 2018-2019 budget setting process, the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel was engaged at an early stage to enable it be involved in the budget setting process.
4. Consultation on the Mayor's budget for the Council in recent years has followed the following process:
 - November / December – Announcement of draft proposals to deliver a balanced budget for the future years
 - December – February – mix of general public consultation undertaken via the Council's website, presentations for all elected members, involvement of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel from an early stage, consultation with the business sector, alongside targeted consultation where necessary because of the nature of one or more of the draft proposals
 - February – Executive endorse the draft budget
 - March – Full Council approves the budget.
5. The Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel's engagement in this exercise, led to a review by the Panel to scrutinise the budget setting consultation process. As a result of this the Panel have made several recommendations around the Council's approach to consultation on the budget, which are outlined in detail within the Panel's report.
6. Appended to this report is a suggested response to those recommendations. The Panel's focus has been to identify potential ways in which more residents could be encouraged to engage in future budget consultation activities.
7. The proposed response to these recommendations is that three additional actions are included in the 2019/20 consultation plan. Between now and December when the 2019/2020 consultation plan will be developed further, officers propose to explore whether the remaining scrutiny recommendations could be delivered within existing resources. Progress on this will be shared with the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel in October as per the second recommendation made by the Panel.

What decision(s) are being asked for?

8. That Executive approves the directorate response to the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel's review of the 2018/19 budget setting process.

Why is this being recommended?

9. This approach is being recommended because it will enable a consultation plan to be developed alongside the budget proposals which will ensure the plan takes a proportionate approach to consultation, reflecting the content of the draft proposals. This will enable consultation to be scaled appropriately and targeted consultation as well as universal consultation undertaken if necessary e.g. if there was a proposal to close a service, appropriate consultation with current users of the service would be undertaken in addition to the usual budget online consultation.

Other potential decisions and why these have not been recommended

10. The option to reject these recommendations is not recommended because the Panel's ambition to encourage more people to participate in local democratic processes should be welcomed and a commitment to take the additional steps outlined in the proposed response can be made at this point in time, within existing resources.

Impact(s) of recommended decision(s)

Legal

11. No impact. The council's current approach to consultation is legally compliant, the proposed actions would strengthen compliance.

Financial

12. The proposed actions in response to the recommendations can be supported within existing resources at this time with costs minimised. If as a result of the work to develop the consultation plan, additional actions are included, this would have a resource implication which would have to be considered at that time.

Policy Framework

13. Not applicable. The report does not propose an amendment to the policy framework.

Equality and Diversity

14. Not applicable.

Risk

15. The Council's budget setting processes positively contribute to the management of a number of risks within its Risk Registers, in particular:
 - legal compliance, organisational effectiveness and / or delivery of strategic objectives are impacted negatively by the failure to operate an effective corporate governance framework;
 - failure to respond effectively to legislative changes; and
 - failure to deliver transformation of services to achieve cultural change and savings required.

Actions to be taken to implement the decision(s)

16. If agreed, the plan for 2019/2020 budget consultation will be developed to include the following additional actions:

- promotional material within the hubs to signpost people to the online consultation;
- provision of promotional material resources available for members to use to promote the online consultation; and
- press releases to local media to signpost to the proposals as well as to the online consultation.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Scrutiny Panel Final Report

Appendix 2 – Draft Action Plan

Background papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.