

**COMMITTEE:** REGENERATION & CITIZENSHIP SCRUTINY  
**DATE:** 5<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2007  
**SUBJECT:** BUDGET SCRUTINY  
**REPORT BY:** DIRECTOR OF SCRUTINY  
**CONTACT OFFICER:** GEOFF. BOCUTT 01582 546073

**IMPLICATIONS:**

LEGAL	COMMUNITY SAFETY
EQUALITIES	ENVIRONMENT
FINANCIAL	CONSULTATIONS
STAFFING	OTHER

**WARDS AFFECTED: NONE**

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**PURPOSE**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide each of the Scrutiny Committees with information about the budgets for services that come within their remits that are going to be considered by the Executive on 12<sup>th</sup> February and, subject to any amendments, by the Council on 21<sup>st</sup> February.

**RECOMMENDATION(S)**

2. All Scrutiny Committees are recommended to consider the information submitted and to ask questions about the services and service budgets that come within their remit.

## **BACKGROUND**

3. The Performance, Resources and Assets Scrutiny Committee and the Executive have agreed a protocol for the scrutiny of the budget. The committees have seen the protocol before (it was appended to the reports to the meetings on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2006); however it is attached as an appendix to this report for ease of reference. At the meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2006 the Council approved changes to the calendar of meetings in order to allow for all of the scrutiny committees to meet on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2007 to consider the budget proposals before the budget meeting of the Executive which has been put back to 12<sup>th</sup> February 2007.
4. Performance Resources and Assets Scrutiny committee will be meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> February to consider the overall budget for 2006-07 and the medium term financial outlook together with the capital programme for the next five years. All Members of the Council have been invited to attend.

## **REPORT**

5. The protocol is attached as appendix A. The key points of the protocol are:
  - An agreement that the scrutiny committees will respect the confidentiality of information that is provided to them on this basis
  - An agreement that the Executive will release certain information at certain stages in the process
  - An agreement that the scrutiny of the budget will not become a party political process but that party politics will be reserved for debate in the Council Chamber
  - A statement of principles about the purpose of the budget scrutiny process
  - A timetable for the process
6. We are now at stage 3.2 of the process and the information being submitted to the scrutiny committees at this stage is the draft budget for services for 2007-08 and those variations (growth and savings) from the base budget that are being recommended for inclusion by the Corporate Leadership Management Team following consultation with Executive Portfolio Holders.
7. The draft service level budgets now submitted to each of the scrutiny committees represent, in aggregate, a balanced budget and therefore, if this position is to be maintained, any variations to what is now presented will need to be offset elsewhere in the budget.
8. In these circumstances the scrutiny committees would not be fulfilling their role as 'critical friend' if they were simply to recommend rejection of the recommended options for balancing the budget without proposing alternatives.

9. The draft budget before adding or deducting any of the proposed growth and savings is set out in the 'green book' and the proposals for growth and savings are listed separately for each committee.

### **PROPOSAL/OPTION**

10. The service areas for each committee to scrutinise have been aligned with the responsibilities of Heads of Service as follows:

<b>SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>	<b>SERVICE AREAS COVERED</b>
Environment & Non-Executive Functions	Environment & Regeneration Department excluding Regeneration and Environmental and Consumer Services
Children and Young People	Children & Learning Department
Performance, Resources & Assets	Corporate and Customer Services Department
Regeneration & Citizenship	Regeneration Environment & Consumer Services Leisure and Community Chief Executive's Department
Social Inclusion	Housing and Community Living Department excl. Leisure and Community

Directors and Heads of Service will be present to respond to Members questions of fact and to support Executive Portfolio Holders in responding to questions of policy. The service areas for committees to scrutinise do not align precisely with all of the executive portfolios and it may therefore be necessary for some executive Members to respond to questions on behalf of other executive Members.

11. Members may ask whatever questions they wish about the services that come within the remit of their committees and the proposed budgets for next year; however it is suggested that the focus of questions should be on strategic issues such as:
- Growth pressures arising from demand led services
  - Growth pressures from legislative changes
  - Policy driven service changes and developments
  - The implications of proposals for change on progress towards the Council's goals for 2011
  - Service standards and value for money and the connection between investment and performance
  - Responsiveness to the needs, wishes and priorities of local people

- The absolute and relative impacts on clients and customers of proposed changes to services

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

12. There are no legal implications to this report and this has been agreed by the relevant solicitor in Legal Services on 24 January 2007.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

13. The financial implications are covered in the information submitted in the Green Book.

### **APPENDICES**

14. The following appendices are attached to this report:

Appendix A - Budget protocol

Appendix B – Draft budget 2007-08 – the ‘green book’ incorporating additions to (growth) and deductions from (savings) the draft budget

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

#### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972, SECTION 100D**

Budget prospects report submitted to the September/October cycle of scrutiny committee meetings.

‘In the spotlight’ briefing note prepared for and published by the Centre for Public Scrutiny.

Reports and base budgets submitted to the scrutiny committees when they met on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2006