

Budget Scrutiny: the future shape of council services

Proposal to establish Scrutiny Task Groups to carry out scrutiny into areas of major spend and service models

1. Establishing the Groups

It is proposed the Governance and Resources Scrutiny Commission (G&R) establish scrutiny task groups to consider the Council's budget saving proposals and models for the future shape of council services. Under the Constitution G&R has the power to establish such scrutiny task groups.

The panels will be established with defined membership, terms of reference and will be time-limited.

There will be 2 phases of work from the Groups. Phase 1 will consider the approaches to budget savings for 2016/17 to give Members an understanding of the direction of travel and where savings will come from.

Phase 2 will look at the budget savings for 2017/18 through to 2019/20 and help shape the priorities for budget savings in 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20.

2. Selection of service areas or topics

It has been proposed that the scrutiny task groups should focus on areas of significant spend, where there is potential to make savings of a magnitude that can contribute to the budget reductions being applied to 2016/17 – 19/20. The Scrutiny Task Groups will be aligned to ongoing officer work on the corporate cross cutting programmes. These programmes are looking at radically different ways of providing services in order to address the major commitments to improving services, and to promoting greater opportunity, set out in the administration's manifesto, while making substantial saving over the next three to five years. Taking into account officers' suggestions and the views expressed by Members the proposed scrutiny task groups to be set up are:

a) Scrutiny Task Group on Customer Services

This group will review how the Council is using its intelligence about service delivery and residents' needs to manage demand. Initial work to date has covered housing repairs, including responsive repairs and the repairs call centre, and the communal repairs service. The cross cutting programme will look at a wider range of Council services using a whole system approach from first customer contact to completion of the task; this is expected to include services such as Planning. In addition, improved processes for Council Tax, Business Rates and Housing Benefits are being developed, and are expected to generate savings of £2m.

b) Scrutiny Task Group on Public Realm

This group will look at all environmental cleansing functions, i.e. for streets, parks and estates, and how these should change over the next few years so that the Council can continue to maintain high standards as the population continues to increase and budgets reduce. This service plans to spend around £47.8m in 2015/16 to meet these aims and to provide services for Waste and Recycling, Street scene, Parking and Street Markets.

c) Scrutiny Task Group on Adult and Children Social Care

The Children's Social Care (CSC) Service plans to spend around £40.2m (gross expenditure) in 2015/16. The core focus of the Service is child protection, supporting families where their children are on the edge of care and securing positive long-term life chances of children permanently looked after by the Council.

The Adults Social Care Service plans to spend around £98.8m (gross expenditure) in 2015/16. Adult social care services are provided across a mix of internal and externally provided functions, covering the entire care process from safeguarding vulnerable adults, advice, signposting, referrals to universal services, initial assessment, to brokering and commissioning of individual packages of care for clients, to review and ongoing support. This includes clients with mental health issues, physical disabilities, learning disabilities and older people. This service also works closely with carers across the Borough to ensure they are supported in their caring role.

d) Scrutiny Task Group on Enforcement

This cross cutting programme is about taking a step back and re-stating the purpose of the Council's different enforcement functions. It aims to re-align the enforcement function to better achieve the Council's aims, while dealing with the additional demand arising from an increased population and economic growth, and at the same time also making savings.

The scope of the programme covers Building Control, Planning Enforcement, Trading Standards, Licensing, Environmental Health, Environmental Enforcement, Parking Enforcement, Parks, Markets, Hygiene Services, Street scene Enforcement, Shop Front Trading, Community Safety, including the Wardens Service, and Private Sector Housing; the gross budget for these services is over £29m. It is expected to identify potential savings of up to £2m for 2016/17.

3. Number of panels and Membership

It is proposed that further groups could be established on a rolling basis, as needed, once the initial work to look at the direction of travel for savings in 2016/17 is complete.

No more than four panels will be established at any one time, save for exceptional circumstances.

Once the topics have been approved, Members would be asked to volunteer to serve on a specific group. Because these are time limited, Members will be asked not to volunteer for a panel unless there is a reasonable expectation they can be present for all the meetings. Membership will be open to all backbench councillors not just those currently involved in scrutiny. The allocation of members to panels will be decided by each party. All Members would be encouraged to attend the meetings of the task groups, regardless of membership.

Through the party whips Members would be nominated to serve on each task group. The political make-up will be proportionate over all to the membership of the Council so for example, if 20 positions are available (if there are 4 groups of 5), there will be 1 Conservative and 1 Liberal Democrat position offered as a minimum. As the work of these groups would be a matter of public record, and they would meet in public, all Members would be encouraged to attend.

4. Mayor and Cabinet

Neither the Mayor nor Members of the Cabinet are eligible to be Members of the Scrutiny Task Groups. However, they will be invited to attend, particularly for discussion about service areas related to their portfolios.

5. Frequency and timing of meetings

It is envisaged that the outputs of these groups would contribute to reshaping of services but they would also, of course, contribute significantly to the budget setting process and therefore the aim would be to complete their initial work for 2016/17 *by November 2015* (ongoing timescale required to be confirmed with HMT).

Members would be made aware of the time commitment expected and would be offered both daytime and evening meetings.

It is expected that much of the work is completed on-line and by email but that a limited number of meetings (maximum three) are held in public either daytime or evening from September – October 2015.

As is usual for Scrutiny these are meetings held in public but they are not Public Meetings. Only those invited to give evidence would be allowed to contribute to the discussion. Residents or members of the public with specific interests would of course be encouraged to contact their ward councillor or a Task Group Member directly to make their own representation.

The following Membership is proposed:

Name	Membership	When it meets	Proposed meeting dates
Budget Scrutiny Customer Service	Cllr Rennison Cllr Louisa Thomson Cllr Tom Rahilly Cllr Nick Sharman (Cons / Lib Dem Member)	Daytime/Evening	9 th September 2015 TBC Oct
Budget Scrutiny Enforcement	Cllr Caroline Selman Cllr Peter Snell Cllr Richard Lufkin Cllr James Peters (Cons / Lib Dem Member)	Daytime/Evening	9 th September 2015 TBC Oct
Budget Scrutiny Adults and Children Social Care	Cllr Emma Plouviez Cllr Laura Bunt Cllr Clare Potter Cllr Susan Fajana-Thomas (Cons / Lib Dem Member)	Daytime/Evening	16 th September 2015 TBC Oct
Budget Scrutiny Public Realm	Cllr Margaret Gordon Cllr Chris Kennedy Cllr Jonathan Burke Cllr Rick Muir (Cons / Lib Dem Member)	Daytime/Evening	16 th September 2015 TBC Oct

Following confirmation of membership the Scrutiny Task Groups can agree their own preferred times to meet to suit the schedules of the councillors and officers involved. At the end of the task the Groups will be dissolved.

6. Officer support

The Groups will be supported by a combination of Overview and Scrutiny Team, the Programmes and Projects Team and Policy Team, as well as expertise from officers in the directorates of the service areas affected.

7. Task and Finish Group

There will be 2 phases of work from the Groups. Phase 1 will consider the approaches to budget savings for 2016/17 to give Members an understanding of the direction of travel and where savings will come from.

Phase 2 will look at the budget savings for 17/18 through to 19/20 and help shape the priorities for budget savings in 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20.

Task groups will seek to understand what modelling has been done to apply to 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/2020. On each Task Group, Members will be asked to emphasise the following lines of enquiry.

- a) The approach taken to savings to date
- b) Any barriers to delivering savings, impact and learning
- c) Approach to taken to transformation and the consideration given to the needs of communities, businesses and residents
- d) Priorities for delivering services over and above statutory services.

8. Statement of Outputs

The outputs of these Scrutiny Task Groups will inform budget decisions to be taken this year and the next three years.

The Governance and Resources Scrutiny Commission will receive updates on the progress of each group on an ongoing basis. The reports themselves will be limited to: addressing the lines of enquiry set out above, reflecting options for change, and making recommendations for future action.

All Members who served on the groups will be invited to discuss the process and to give their views on service configuration and how budget planning might be progressed.

9. Timetable for establishment of the Task Groups

Action	Date
Discussion at party groups	July
Identification of the four topic areas and agreement with the Mayor and Cabinet, the Chief Executive and the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources	July
Members to volunteer their service	July

Whips to agree proposed membership of the initial four Scrutiny Task Groups	July
Meetings of the initial four Scrutiny Task Groups	Sept – October 2015
Reports of each Scrutiny Task Groups in agenda for G&R	Earliest possible G&R meeting
Response from Cabinet Member for Resources to the work of the initial four Scrutiny Task Groups	December 2015
Meeting to review the process with all Members of the initial four Scrutiny Task Groups	January 2016

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