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|  | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Budget Panel</b><br/><b>17<sup>th</sup> July 2007</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Report from the Director of</b><br/><b>Policy &amp; Regeneration</b></p> |
| For Action  | Wards Affected:<br>ALL   |
| <p><b>Budget Panel 2007/8 – Work Programme</b></p>                                |  |

## 1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report provides a brief overview of the work of the Budget Panel in 2006/7. It also aims to assist the members with their discussions about the Budget Panel's work programme for 2007/8 and in identifying training needs.

## 2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Members identify and agree the Budget Panel's work programme and training for 2007/8.

## 3.0 Detail

### **Budget Panel 2006/7**

- 3.1 The Budget Panel was established in September 2006 as part of the review of Brent Council's overview & scrutiny structures. The constitutional changes and the delay in forming an administration meant that the Budget Panel started its work later than it would normally do. The Panel initially focused on influencing the development of the administrations draft budget and received evidence from many sources, including service departments. The Panel focussed on the following areas:

- Implementing the corporate strategy
- The budget gap
- Budget pressures

- Central Services
- The capital programme

3.2 Once the administration's draft budget was published the Budget Panel had the opportunity to question the lead member for resources on key elements of the proposals. This provided the opportunity for the Panel to make recommendations prior to the draft budget being agreed by the Executive.

3.3 During the budget scrutiny process the Budget Panel had three opportunities to make its views know. These were:

- **The First interim report** – prior to the draft budget being published.
- **The Second interim report** – this built on the first report and included recommendations on the draft budget prior to it being agreed by the Executive.
- **The Final report** – this report went to Full Council built on the second report and included recommendations on
  - The Executive's final budget prior to it being debated at Full Council;
  - The budget process; and
  - The budget scrutiny process

### **Work Programme for 2007/8**

3.4 At its final meeting in 2006/7 the Budget Panel spent some time assessing the impact of its recommendations. Up to date feedback on the recommendations has been provided by the Director of Finance elsewhere on this agenda. The Panel also recommended that the following areas be considered for the 2007/8 work programme:

- Monitor progress of medium term recommendations from 2006/7
- Further analysis of core budgets
- A more detailed look at capital budgets

In addition the Budget Panel may wish to consider the following:

- The implementation of the Children and Families spend to save bid
- Proposed savings prior to them being agreed by the Executive (October meeting)
- Changes to priority growth
- Stakeholder and community engagement in the

The attached work programme table is designed to assist members in planning what they would like to cover at each meeting and deciding what evidence they would like to receive.

3.5 One of the main difficulties the Budget Panel faced last year was that time constraints meant that there was little time between the budget proposals being published, the Panel's meeting and the meeting of the Executive at

which the budget was agreed. One of the Panel's recommendations was that they should be given more time to analyse reports and data from the Executive. In developing the timetable of meetings for this year officers have, as far as is possible, tried to build in extra time.

## **Training**

- 3.6 To 'kick start' the work of the newly established Budget Panel in 2006/7 Members of the Panel were invited to take part in a training session provided by the Institute of Public Finance on effective budget scrutiny. This provided members with an overview of the budget scrutiny process and helped with the development of the work programme.
- 3.7 This year the Budget Panel may wish to request subject specific, locally focussed, training that could be delivered at either a Members development session or at the start of a Panel meeting prior to that subject being investigated.
- 3.8 The Budget Panel 2006/7 recommended that officers explore the possibility of Brent Council hosting a budget scrutiny learning event in conjunction with the London Councils London Scrutiny Network (LSN). A bid was submitted to the LSN's Capital Ambition Programme but was not successful. It is however possible that budget scrutiny will form part of a London Scrutiny Network bid to develop an event about promoting scrutiny internally. The Budget Panel will be kept informed of progress.

## **4.0 Financial Implications**

- 4.1 None

## **5.0 Legal Implications**

- 5.1 None

## **6.0 Diversity Implications**

- 6.1 None

## **7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)**

- 7.1 None

## **Background Papers**

Budget Panel Final Report 2006/7

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