



Budget Panel
21st November 2007

**Report from the Director of
Policy & Regeneration**

For Action

Wards Affected:
ALL

Involving All Members in the Budget Panel

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report outlines proposals for involving all Members in the work of the Budget Panel.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Members of the Budget Panel agree the proposals set out in this report.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Introduction

At its meeting on the 31st October 2007 the Budget Panel agreed to develop a proposal to enable more Members to become involved in the work of the Panel and therefore gain a better understanding of the budget process, issues and options.

- 3.2 While the Budget Panel acknowledges that the new budget scrutiny process allows for a more in depth review of the issues and options than had previously been the case the Panel is keen to share its knowledge, inform the debate about the administration's budget proposals and open up the process.

3.3 **Current opportunities for Member involvement / influence**

Currently all members have the opportunity to discuss the Budget on two occasions:

- At Full Council First Reading Debate – the first reading of the policy framework and the budget usually at the end of November
- At Full Council budget setting meeting usually early March

3.4 The Budget Panel process follows the budget setting process and provides three opportunities for the Budget Panel to influence the administration and the overall debate. These are:

- The First Interim Report – sent to members of the Executive prior to them finalising their draft Budget – usually mid January
- The Second Interim Report – produced following the publication of the draft budget and sent to the Executive prior to them agreeing the budget
- The Final Report – produced following feedback from the Executive meeting and sent to all members of the council to inform the debate at the budget agreeing Full Council

3.5 **Proposal**

One of the main concerns of the Budget Panel is how to ensure that enough Members are aware of the budget issues and options to enable informed debate and challenge the Executive's budget proposals at Full Council. There are three ways that this can be achieved.

3.6 Firstly the Budget Panel would like to encourage all political groups to invite the Director of Finance and Corporate Resources to attend their group meetings in January 2008 to provide a presentation about the budget position and key issues.

3.7 Secondly the Budget Panel's First Interim Report will be distributed to all Members of the council as this will provide an overview of the evidence and main issues the Panel have encountered. This will inform debate when discussing the Executive's draft budget at the meeting below.

3.8 Finally all Members are formally invited to attend the Budget Panel meeting on 7th February when the Executive's draft budget will be discussed. This meeting will be held in committee room 1,2 and 3. The draft budget would be presented by the Leader & Deputy Leader of the council. The Budget Panel would lead the questioning with the chair ensuring that other members have time to ask questions from the floor. The Budget Panel would need to ensure sufficient time at the end of the meeting to agree recommendations, taking into account the views of all members, for their second interim report.

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 Minutes 31st October 2007

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