

2. Recommendations

First Interim Report

A. Recommendations reiterated from 2007/08

- 1) That given the current budget challenges and demands facing the council the administration should consider all options to ensure the delivery of high quality services to our residents. This includes:
 - The range of Council Tax increase available 0-5%
 - Efficiency gains
 - Savings
 - Phasing priority growth
- 2) That balances should be set at an adequate level. In deciding what the adequate level is we strongly advise the administration to be guided by the Director of Finance and Corporate Resources.
- 3) That long term budgetary and service delivery risks should be assessed and explained when making decisions on savings.
- 4) That the budget should be robust, realistic and predictive of future demand to avoid overspends.
- 5) That there should be no increases in planned levels of unsupported borrowing given the impact this has on the longer term financial prospects of the authority.
- 6) That members of the Budget Panel be given more time to analyse reports and data from the Executive at the equivalent periods in future years' budget cycles
- 7) That all members be encouraged to attend future meetings of the budget panel to raise awareness of the items within the budget and feed into the budget scrutiny process. The budget panel proposes that one of its meetings or a portion thereof be earmarked for the purpose of taking submissions from other members and that they be invited accordingly.

B. Further action required on recommendations carried forward from 2007/08

- 8) That the Budget Panel is provided with details of progress on delivering the priorities within the Corporate Strategy and the way in which the recommended 2008/09 budget will support continued delivery of the priorities particularly given the reductions in priority growth.
- 9) That the Executive commissions a strategic review of trading units within the council to ensure that the council is getting value for money from their services.
- 10) That, given on-going overspends in demand led budget areas, particularly adult care services, there is close monitoring of achievement of targets to reduce budget pressures included in both the children's and adult care transformation programmes.

- 11) That there is greater member scrutiny of the capital programme and that, as a first step, the Budget Panel carry out a strategic review of the capital programme and the outcomes it delivers.
- 12) That the Budget Panel be provided with more information on the measures that are being taken to ensure that utility companies are being held to account for the on-going condition of roads and pavements that they have made right following work carried out by them.
- 13) That members with an interest in budget scrutiny be encouraged to attend the budget scrutiny event being arranged by London Councils.

C. Other recommendations relating to our work on the 2008/09 budget

- 14) That the council works with London Councils to try to obtain a better financial settlement from central government in future.
- 15) That the council continues its efforts to establish the true number of residents in Brent and receive funding commensurate with this.
- 16) That, as part of recommendation 15, a full analysis is carried out of the impact of projected population change on the infrastructure and public services that are needed in Brent in the medium to longer term and the resources needed to ensure that the infrastructure and services are in place.
- 17) That the further provision of recycling facilities should be considered alongside the introduction of compulsory waste recycling as a way of increasing recycling rates and reducing waste going to land-fill.
- 18) That, in future, there should also be wider member involvement in the development of LAA priorities.
- 19) That the council makes all efforts to maximise commercial income.
- 20) That Performance and Finance Review Select Committee is provided with benchmarking information on the costs and staff numbers of core services.
- 21) That ward members should be provided with information about Section 106 money that relates to their areas and suggestions should be sought as to projects that would benefit from the funding.

Second Interim Report & Final Report

D. Recommendations following the publication of the draft budget

- 22) That fees and charges should be included in the Panel's work programme for 2008/09, including a presentation on how the council is going to develop a more focussed approach to maximising opportunities in the area of advertising and sponsorship. Work should be undertaken to look at the ways in which other local authorities successfully achieve this.
- 23) That as the Budget Panel views Adult Social Care as a high risk area in terms of potential overspend and the council's ability to implement the transformation programme to extract saving, the Adult Social Care budget should be closely monitored and remedial action taken as soon as necessary.

- 24) That, in light of the wider issues that will arise from both implementation of the review of day care and adult care transformational, and potential implications for the budget if they cannot be implemented, these reviews are referred to another panel of the council for consideration.
- 25) That there is greater transparency in relation to the implementation of the new Local Area Agreement and how and where the Area Based Grant is being spent. The Budget Panel should include this in its work programme for 2008/9
- 26) That the Budget Panel thanks the Executive for their feedback on the recommendations made in the first interim report. The Budget Panel would like to receive regular feedback on progress particularly on those recommendations that have not been implemented to date.
- 27) That given the continued deferment of priority growth, the Executive should provide information about progress made on delivering the Corporate Strategy priorities.
- 28) That the council should consult with other local authorities, who have made zero increases or reductions in council tax but have still delivered quality services to their local communities, to identify areas of good practice.