
Notice of Motion: Scrutiny of Strategic Budget Options – Briefing Note

Arrangements for savings decisions and budget preparation

It remains the responsibility of the County Council to agree the annual revenue budget. That will happen at the February Council meeting. The timetable is **set out at Appendix 1**, including a meeting for all members on 9 January and a full timetable of Select Committee meetings and of the Performance and Finance Select Committee to consider the draft budget proposals in January.

As in previous years specific savings proposals made by individual Cabinet Members have been published as soon as they are ready to be considered. Those are to be scrutinised by service Select Committees as explained when the Forward Plan was published at the end of August. The timetable for Select Committee meetings has not changed. No decisions have been rescheduled.

As was explained at the Performance and Finance Select Committee on 5 October there is significant pressure to bridge a potential budget gap for 2019/20 and so the Cabinet will continue to identify savings opportunities in advance of the final budget setting process in the New Year. All such proposals will be available for scrutiny in advance of any decision. All Select Committee members will be considering proposals on the context of the Medium Term Financial Strategy as published with the Performance and Finance papers for 5 October.

This does not constrain the authority of the Council in February to set a budget. The opportunity for members to propose alternative budget options at the February meeting will remain. This can include proposals to reverse savings decisions that may have been made by individual portfolio holders.

The timing of the meeting of all members in advance of the budget setting process has been scheduled for 9 January to follow the publication of the draft local government settlement, the completion of Cabinet proposals for savings and to precede the Select Committee meetings which lead up to the Council meeting on 15 February.

It would not be financially prudent to prevent or delay the taking of any individual service related savings proposals until the meeting of all members in January as this may create greater budget pressures than currently exist. It is not necessary or usual for full Council to approve or ratify spending or savings decisions taken by individual cabinet members in relation to their portfolio as this does not determine or inhibit the setting of the Council's budget.

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