

**AGENDA ITEM 9
ES/26/09**

Committee	Executive Scrutiny Committee	
Date:	27 October 2009	

The 2010/11 Budget Process

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The attached documents were provided at the 25 September meeting of the County and Unitary Scrutiny Officers Network by the Local Authorities named.

These may assist the Committee in developing the budget scrutiny process for 2010/11.



COUNCIL AND BUDGET PRIORITIES TASK GROUP

Purpose of the group

- In the lead up to the publication of the 2010-11 draft budget, to advise the cabinet on council and budget priorities including
 - Building our future (BoF) programme efficiencies
 - unavoidable commitments
 - service pressures
- To help the cabinet develop sound council and budget priorities for 2010-11 based on a realistic assessment of financial pressures and the results of the budget consultation process.
- To respond to the cabinet once the 2010-11 draft budget is published
- To advise the cabinet on council and budget priorities for future years

Timeline – October 2009 to January 2010

Meeting 1 – 6 October

Confirm the scope of the review (Simon Harper), Gloucestershire context (John Forster), council priorities (Rob Ayliffe), financial position (Mark Spilsbury) and BoF programme (Alan Richell)

Meeting 2 – After 19 October but before the end of October (day session)

Service presentations from group directors/directors – to include service performance, financial position and BoF efficiencies.

Meeting 3 - by mid November

On the basis of the information gathered, to identify the headline issues to be included in a report to the cabinet.

Report initial findings to cabinet members (by the end of November)

Formal report to the Scrutiny Management Committee on 9 December and subsequently to the cabinet on 16 December.

Meeting 4 – By mid January

To consider a response to the cabinet on its draft budget proposals

Report to the Scrutiny Management Committee on 26 January and subsequently to the cabinet on 10 February.

Budget Scrutiny: Buckinghamshire County Council

Context

Buckinghamshire County Council is a conservative council with a large majority. It is rated as excellent by CPA and is a floor authority, with one of the lowest formula increases of any County Council. As with many councils, finances are restricted and set to worsen significantly in the medium term

Budget Scrutiny- A Brief History

The scrutiny of the budget at Buckinghamshire County Council was historically undertaken as a majority group challenge which was neither politically balanced nor in the public domain. For the 2006/07 budget round, a time limited Task & Finish Group was established at the last minute to review the findings of the majority group challenge. This achieved little real change and excited minimum interest in the general public or press.

For the past two years the majority group have continued to hold a challenge panel behind closed doors. However, in addition to this, scrutiny has played a more explicit part in the challenge process.

For the 2008/09 and the 2009/10 budget rounds, scrutiny committee members began building their understanding about the budget in the December meeting, including a discussion with the senior finance officer (The detailed programme is shown below). Two days were dedicated to the examination of the budget in public when individual Cabinet Members were invited to the committee to answer questions in three broad areas

- Performance against targets and budget in the current year.
- Anticipated impact of service reductions and investment proposals in both revenue and capital budget
- Risk

The committee then spent time drawing their conclusions together before the report was written and circulated to committee members and cabinet members.

2009/10 Budget Timeline

The following table outlines the process that was undertaken for the last round of budget scrutiny, it is envisaged that the rough timetable will hold true for scrutiny of the 2010/11 budget.

Date	Activity
15 th December	Cabinet agrees a draft medium term financial plan and draft budget
13 th /14 th January	Examination of the budget in public
15 th January	Wash up session – key themes identified
16 th January	Draft OSC report completed & circulated to portfolio holders & members of Committee
23 rd January	Final papers issued for Cabinet 2 nd February
2 nd February	Cabinet recommends budget for 2009/10- 11/12
19 ^h February	Council agrees budget for 2009/10- 11/12

Each year the committee decide on an overarching question to guide their deliberations. The question for the 2009/10 budget scrutiny meetings was set in the context of the worsening economic climate both nationally and globally:

“Is the proposed budget settlement adequate to deliver Council priorities defined in the Corporate Plan, in the context of the impact of the economic downturn?”