

Cabinet – 18 January 2006

Recommendations of Resources Scrutiny following 2006/7 + Budget Decision Conference

Portfolio: Cllr J O'Hare – Deputy Leader

Service Area: All Service Areas

Wards: All

Forward Plan: Yes

Summary of report

This report summarises the decisions made by the panel at the budget decision conferencing events held on 30 November and 15 December 2005 and provides recommendations to Cabinet on the draft 2006/7+ budget proposals.

Recommendations

- 1 That cabinet consider the following recommendations of resources scrutiny panel as stated below and determine whether to accept these:
 - a). That investment bids categorised by resources scrutiny panel as “green”, shown in Appendix 1, be recommended to cabinet for consideration, in order of priority (3 stars to be first call on available resources, then 2 stars, then 1 star bids).
 - b). That all bids below a de-minimus of £75k not be recommended for funding, and that alternative funding of efficiencies be identified by directorates to allow these to go ahead.
 - c). That all efficiency options identified at Appendix 2 are approved, subject to the comments included in this report.

Resource and legal considerations

The consideration of the draft budget reports by the scrutiny panels is an integral part of the council's budget setting process.

The panel agreed that all bids below a de-minimus level of £75k not be considered for recommendation, but that in order to allow these to go ahead, that directorates find alternative funding or efficiencies to implement these.

The panel acknowledged the challenging nature of the budget process this year and agreed that all identified efficiencies included in Appendix 2 be put forward to cabinet for approval. Some members of the panel expressed concerns about reducing funding for those areas supporting LNPs (efficiency number 39). The panel also sought assurances that efficiency number 41 in respect of grounds maintenance would not see a fall off in services provided in the borough. Officers gave this assurance.

The panel expressed concerns about efficiencies relating to car park maintenance (no 44) and a number of requests for further information were requested, including ensuring officers can mitigate the risk of this reduction having a detrimental impact on the service, and exploring alternative facilities (park and ride).

The panel agreed to prioritise the investment bids as green – high priority through to red – low priority. In addition, as the panel advised that funding additional investment bids in 2006/7 will be challenging, to further prioritise those green investment bids into 3 stars – highest priority to be funded, through to 1 star, lowest priority.

The panel further made the following comments:

- Investment bid 1 (green – 1 star): the panel requested that WHG be approached to determine if they were willing to part fund the shortfall. In addition, the panel requested that an exit strategy be looked into.
- Investment bid 14 (de-minimus): the panel requested that external funding be sought and that after year 1, this should be self-funding.
- Investment bid 15 (green – 3 stars): officers were asked to look at opportunities for franchising the markets service and for providing a more varied and value for money markets service. Officers reported that a review of markets was underway, and that the outcomes and recommendations of this review would be communicated to the panel.
- Investment 18 (green – 1 star): the panel felt that the Council should seek a balance between litter picking and street cleansing and increased enforcement activity.
- Investment 23 (green – 3 stars): the panel asked for clarification on the possibility of realigning staff numbers to offset this loss of income, if land searches and therefore workloads are reducing. Officers confirmed that a restructure of planning and transportation was being looked at and consideration would be given to reviewing staffing.
- Investment bid 25 (de-minimus): the panel requested this be re-phased and found from existing resources.
- Investment no 28 (de-minimus): the panel queried why park staff do not do grounds maintenance work and would this offer an opportunity to identify efficiencies within the service. Officers confirmed a green spaces and parks review was taking place and this could be covered in that review.
- The panel also requested that park managers be asked as to whether they required rangers specifically, of just additional members of staff within parks.
- Investment no 35 (de-minimus): the panel advised that alternative funding should be sought for this.

The panel acknowledged the challenging nature of the budget process this year, including that further savings and efficiencies above those already identified may need

to be found and asked officers to review the following areas for consideration of further efficiencies or additional funding;

- Sponsorship for council services, where feasible, and appropriate
- Review of office accommodation and council assets – officer confirmed this was in scope of the partnership.
- Review of working from home and any efficiencies this may generate. Officers confirmed a workforce strategy is being drafted and agreed to ask if this issue was included.
- A suggestion to consider ceasing funding to the art gallery was proposed by one panel member – it was agreed that a review of the charging policy and catering facilities should be encouraged.
- Additional income generation opportunities.

Citizen impact

The budget is aligned with service activity within service plans across the council. Investment has been targeted at service improvement, stability and user demand.

Community safety

The draft budget proposals provide funding for community safety activities.

Environmental impact

Budget decisions may affect the council's ability to deal with environmental issues. Investment bids for 2006/7 onwards include a number of bids targeted at improving the environment and supporting environmental improvements.

Performance and risk management issues

The council's scrutiny function sits within the performance management service. Investment choices are considered in the context of service targets and outcomes. As part of the budget setting process, a corporate financial risk assessment is undertaken to determine key risks, and their impact on the budget.

Equality implications

Services consider equalities issues in setting budgets and delivering services. Irrespective of budgetary pressures the council must fulfil equal opportunities obligations.

Consultation

The resources scrutiny and performance panel considered draft investment bid and savings proposals as part of the draft budget process for 2006/7+ at a decision conference on 30 November and 15 December. All 5 scrutiny and performance panels have received budget presentations in respect of the services falling within their remit, and will receive and consider the draft corporate revenue budget and draft capital programme reports during January 2005, providing an opportunity to make recommendations to cabinet. This enables their comments and recommendations to be considered by cabinet in making the final budget recommendations to Council.

Consultation on the budget has also taken place more widely, including with key partners and stakeholders.

Vision 2008

The budget and each investment bid and saving is assessed as to its contribution to the delivery of the Council's vision.

Budget Decision Conference 30 November & 15 December 2005

On 30 November and 15 December 2005, an evening budget decision conference was held, to which members of the resources scrutiny panel were invited. The Finance management team were in attendance. The aims and objectives of the event were:

- To scrutinise and challenge the draft investment proposals to be considered by cabinet in determining the draft corporate budget requirement and council tax level for 2006/7 onwards.
- To prioritise investment proposals with a view to making recommendations on investment which the panel wish to support and those it recommends should not be supported in the 2006/7+ budget setting round.
- To review proposed efficiencies and savings options and prioritise them, with a view to making recommendations to cabinet.

The conference was undertaken on a workshop basis.

Background papers

Various financial working papers.

Resources scrutiny panel decision conference 30 November and 15 December 2005

Author

Vicky Crowshaw - Head of Corporate and Strategic Finance, ☎ 01922 652349

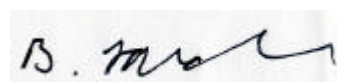
crowshawv@walsall.gov.uk



Signed:

Executive Director: Carole Evans

Date: 20.12.05



Signed:

Cllr B. Sanders – Chair of Panel

Date: 20.12.05

Appendix 5

No.	NEW INVESTMENT	2006/07 £000 ORIGINAL POSITION	FIGURES AGREED AT DC £'000	2007/8 £000 ORIGINAL POSITION	FIGURES AGREED AT DC £'000	PRIORITY
8	Direct payments support	150	150	150	150	G***
15	Walsall Markets	110	110	110	110	G***
23	Local land charges searches	180	150	180	150	G***
30	Borough wide garden waste collection	110	110	110	110	G***
31	Borough wide garden waste collection - further expansion	200	200	200	200	G***
34	Community associations	200	200	200	200	G***
	Sub-total -3 star greens	950	920	950	920	
4	Learning disabilities - client demand growth future years	426	426	1,220	1,220	G**
9	Relative and friend carer allowances	150	150	150	150	G**
29	Household waste recycling centres	500	500	500	500	G**
	Sub-total - 2 star greens	1,076	1,076	1,870	1,870	
1	Fall out of NCO grant	150	150	150	150	G*
6	Direct payments support service (adults)	150	150	150	150	G*
18	Enhance litter hit squad - 1 squad	90	90	90	90	G*
	Sub-total - 1 star greens	390	390	390	390	
2	Further fall out of asylum grant - supported housing	80	80	80	80	A
32	Waste reduction and recycling campaign plan	55	55	55	55	A
	Sub-total - ambers	135	135	135	135	
11	Increasing the frequency of Walsall pride	13	13	13	13	R
13	Securing Website development - further enhancement of	36	36	36	36	R
16	Memorial safety	100	100	100	100	R
19	Enhance litter hit squad - additional 1 squad	90	90	90	90	R
20	Enhance litter hit squad - additional 1 squad	90	90	90	90	R
	Sub-total - reds	329	329	329	329	

De-Minimus - All bids below £75k are not recommended for additional funding - but to be implemented via alternative efficiencies to be found within directorates

3	Additional housing advice officer	30	0	30	0	<75k
5	Direct payments financial auditors (1.5 FTE) & infrastructure	9	0	29	0	<75k
7	Contract and transport payments	40	0	40	0	<75k
10	Planning Support to produce integrated children's plan	35	0	35	0	<75k
12	Securing Website development	30	0	30	0	<75k
14	Town Centres Management (TMC)	75	0	100	0	<75k
17	Streetly cemetery	15	0	15	0	<75k
21	Safety fence repairs	25	0	25	0	<75k
22	Gritting of footways	25	0	25	0	<75k
24	Traffic signal maintenance	50	0	50	0	<75k
25	Highways maintenance procurement strategy taken out as<75k - bid had been reduced at previous session to 60k	125	0	100	0	<75k
26	Highways assest management planning	75	0	50	0	<75k
27	Olympic scholarship	20	0	20	0	<75k
28	Parkforce initiatives	60	0	60	0	<75k
33	Ready Steady Summer	50	0	50	0	<75k
35	Mainstream of community safety	40	0	40	0	<75k
	Sub-total De-Minimus	704	0	699	0	
	TOTAL	3,584	2,850	4,373	3,644	

Appendix 5

No.	BUDGET REDUCTION / EFFICIENCIES	2006/07 £000 ORIGINAL POSITION	FIGURES AGREED AT DC £'000
1	Supported housing - reduce investment in repairs & refurbishment	-30	-30
2	Learning disabilities - reduction of respite block contract	-72	-72
3	Learning disabilities - termination of SLA with older peoples services	-74	-74
4	Younger adults - reduction in posts - 2.5%	-38	-38
5	Support services - domiciliary care FYE of procurement efficiencies	-75	-75
6	Support Services - Departmental budget, publicity and promotions - Additional 1.5%	-23	-23
7	Strategic housing - Increase agency fee by 0.9%	-55	-55
8	Children's - Reduction of Agency staff - LAC team - 1 % saving	-30	-30
9	Children's - Establishment analysis and control - match growth	-300	-300
10	Children's - Deletion of 1 senior practitioner post - match growth	-40	-40
11	Children's procurement savings - external residential placements 2.5% growth	-140	-140
12	Children's - Reduction of 4 external placements - at £2k pw - 2.5%	-400	-400
13	Children's - Contributions from YOS partnership for NSPCC project - 2.5%	-14	-14
14	Children's - Establishment analysis and control - 2.5%	-46	-46
15	Reduce support for WBSP - in context of new NRF funding until March 2008	-85	-85
16	Black Country Consortium	-182	-182
17	Legal executive post - vacant post deleted	-28	-28
18	Increase in section 106 income	-10	-10
19	Law to charge time to capital programme	-31	-31
20	Performance - scrutiny manager delete post	-49	-49
21	Performance - knowledge mgt or PM deletion of post	-32	-32
22	Special projects team - self funding	-20	-20
23	Finance - supplies and services	-20	-20
24	Rescheduling of debt from treasury management	-100	-100
25	Reduction in external audit fee base	-4	-4
26	EMT - income from fees	-5	-5
27	Charging officers time to capital schemes	-20	-20
28	Extension of insurance renewals agreement - more favourable	-30	-30
29	Deletion of vacant post - accountant	-30	-30
30	Additional income planning application fees	-235	-235
31	Increased income from events admission fees	-30	-30
32	Increased fees & charges - sports facilities, pitches etc	-15	-15
33	Additional income from textiles recycling	-20	-20
34	Coroner - impact of partnership working	-15	-15
35	Testing fees sampling - food samples and non-food samples	-15	-15
36	Works in default	-10	-10
37	General service reductions/efficiencies - arts events and tourism	-25	-25
38	General service reductions/efficiencies - art gallery	-20	-20
39	Reduction in LNP consultancy costs	-10	-10
40	Car parks water rates	-5	-5
41	General service efficiencies - grounds maintenance and street cleansing	-130	-130
42	Reduction in CCTV operative budget	-40	-40
43	Increase fees & charges - licensing / pest patrol	-20	-20
44	Car park maintenance	-20	-20
45	Skips income	-5	-5
	TOTAL	-2,598	-2,598

2007/8 £000 ORIGINAL POSITION	FIGURES AGREED AT DC £'000
-20	-20
-72	-72
0	0
-38	-38
-150	-150
-23	-23
-45	-45
0	0
-300	-300
-40	-40
-140	-140
-400	-400
-14	-14
-46	-46
-85	-85
-182	0
-28	-28
-10	-10
-31	-31
-49	-49
-38	-38
-20	-20
-20	-20
-100	-100
-4	-4
-5	-5
-20	-20
-30	-30
-30	-30
-235	-235
-30	-30
-15	-15
-20	-20
-15	-15
-15	-15
-10	-10
-25	-25
-20	-20
-10	-10
-5	-5
-130	-130
-40	-40
-20	-20
-20	-20
-5	-5
-2,555	-2,373