

Cabinet – 7 February 2007

Draft Budget 2007/08: Recommendations of Scrutiny and Performance Panels following budget consultation

Portfolio: Councillor John O'Hare – Resources

Service Area: All services

Wards: All

Key decision: No

Forward Plan: No

Summary of report

This report presents the final comments and recommendations of all 5 scrutiny and performance panels following consideration of the draft corporate budget reports at meetings held in January and February 2007. This will enable consideration by Cabinet before they make their final budget recommendations to cabinet.

Appendix 3 (including feedback from the Neighbourhood Services panel that takes place 1 February 2007) will be despatched "late" to enable cabinet to have all scrutiny feedback before them when making recommendations to council on the draft budget.

Recommendations

To note the recommendations of all five scrutiny and performance panels as detailed in the appendices and consider them when making final budget recommendations to council.

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. **Appendix 1** summarises feedback from the Health and Regeneration Panels held on 25 January and the Childrens and Corporate Services Panels held on 26 January and 29 January 2007 respectively. **Appendix 2** provides further detail on the recommendations of the Corporate Services Panel. **Appendix 3** (to follow) summarises feedback from the Neighbourhood Services Panel held on 1 February 2007.

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

None arising directly from this covering report.

Environmental impact

Budget decisions may affect the council's ability to deal with environmental issues.

Performance and risk management issues

Investment and savings 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 in setting budgets and delivering services. Irrespective of budgetary pressures the council must fulfil equal opportunities obligations.

Consultation

All 5 scrutiny and performance panels have received budget presentations in respect of the services falling within their remit, and the draft corporate revenue budget; opportunities to make recommendations to cabinet. In addition, the Corporate Services Panel received the draft capital programme; providing an opportunity to make recommendations to cabinet. This process enables the comments and recommendations of all scrutiny and performance panels to be considered by cabinet in making the final budget recommendations to council.

Vision 2008

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

Background papers

Various financial working papers.

Author

Dan Mortiboys Corporate Finance Manager
☎ 01922.652982 ✉ mortiboysd@walsall.gov.uk

Signed



Carole Evans – Executive Director
30 January 2007



Cllr John O'Hare – Resources
30 January 2007

Recommendations of the Children and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel

- 1) The panel welcomed the proposed reduction in external placements from £0.715m to £0.357m.
- 2) The panel once again recommended that the saving of £0.320m on children's social care should be removed from the budget.

Recommendations of the Corporate Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel

- 1) The panel recommended that the following savings, currently in cabinet's draft revenue budget are removed from the final budget:
 - Reduction in litter picking/sweeping frequency £0.172m
 - Discontinuation of the 'right to read' project £0.025m
 - Reduction in central library hours £0.039m
 - Discontinue grant to non council run museums £0.002m

That the above options, totalling £0.239m, be removed from the draft budget and substituted or replaced by all or a proportion of those listed below which are not currently in the draft revenue budget and were previously recommended by this scrutiny panel to include:

- Increase staff car parking charges in line with public increases of 20% £0.074m
- Introduction of on street car parking charges £0.050m
- Reduction in use of external placements £0.357m
- Reduction of in house home care service £0.100m
- Closure of a leisure and swimming facility £0.090m
- Reduction in mental health team by one staff post £0.035m

(NB: Details of these appear in Appendix 2 of this report)

Recommendations of the Health Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny and Performance Panel

- 1) The panel noted the report.

Recommendations of the Regeneration Scrutiny and Performance Panel

- 1) The panel expressed concern over the loss of the external funding post and recommended that the post of external funding officer not be removed.
- 2) The panel recommended that Cabinet give full feedback on future recommendations made.

Table 1: Proposals CURRENTLY in Cabinet Draft Budget NOT Recommended by Scrutiny for inclusion

PROPOSALS	ANNUAL NET COST 2007/08	DETAILS
Reduce the sweeping & litter picking frequencies	(172,000)	Reduce the sweeping & litter picking frequencies in all non town & district centres.. Current frequency is a combination of weekly, 2 weekly and 4 weekly. Proposal to streamline to 7 weekly litter picking frequencies.
Discontinue libraries "Right to Read " project	(25,000)	Discontinue libraries "Right to Read " project encouraging looked after children to read.
Central library - reduce hours	(39,450)	Central library to close on Sunday - currently open 1.00pm to 4.00pm
Discontinue grants to non council run museums	(2,200)	Discontinue grants to non council run museums - Jerome K. Jerome Birthplace - requiring possible closure
Total	(238,650)	

Table 2: Proposals NOT in Cabinet Draft Budget and Recommended by Scrutiny for inclusion

PROPOSALS	ANNUAL NET COST 2007/08	DETAILS
In line with public parking, council staff should be charged 20%	(74,000)	In addition to the 10% increase suggested for staff parking, that this should be increased to 20% in line with the recommendation for increased public parking costs.
Introduction of on-street parking charges	(50,000)	Introduction of charges for on-street parking in Walsall town centre.
Reduction in use of external placements	(357,000)	A reduction in independent residential placements and external foster care placements.
Reduction of in house home care services	(100,000)	Budget reduction for in house home care services by reducing enhancements and overtime payments for existing staff.
Sports - closure of a leisure and swimming facility	(90,000)	Closure of facility.
Reduction in staffing	(35,102)	Reduction in approved social workers (ASW) staffing involving one post from adult community mental health team reducing social work teams to extremely low levels to make savings.
Total	(706,102)	