

BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK PROCEDURE RULES

1. The Framework for Cabinet Decisions

The Council will be responsible for the adoption of its Budget and Policy Framework as set out in Article 4. Once a Budget or Policy Framework is in place, it will be the responsibility of the Cabinet to implement it.

2. Process for Developing the Policy Framework

The process by which the Policy Framework shall be developed is:

- (a) The Cabinet will publicise on the Council's website a timetable for making proposals to the Council for the adoption of any plan or strategy that forms part of the Policy Framework, and the Cabinet's arrangements for consultation after publication of those initial proposals. The Chairman of each Overview and Scrutiny Committee will also be notified. The consultation period shall in each instance be not less than 3 weeks.
- (b) At the end of that period, the Cabinet will then draw up firm proposals having regard to the responses to that consultation. If an Overview and Scrutiny Committee wishes to respond to the Cabinet in that consultation process then it may do so. The Cabinet will take any response from an Overview and Scrutiny Committee into account in drawing up firm proposals for submission to the Council, and its report to Council will reflect the comments made by consultees and the Cabinet's response.

Proposals from the Cabinet shall include recommendations regarding any aspects of the proposed plan or strategy that they consider full Council should delegate to the Cabinet the ability to vary.

- (c) Once the Cabinet has approved firm proposals, the appropriate Corporate Director will report them at the earliest opportunity to the Council for decision.
- (d) In reaching a decision, the Council may adopt the Cabinet's proposals, amend them, substitute its own proposals in their place or, with the exception of proposals in relation to the Corporate Plan, refer them back to the Cabinet for further consideration.
 - (i) If the Council decides not to adopt the Cabinet's proposals, the Council must inform the Leader of the objections which it has to the draft plan or strategy and instruct the Leader to require the Cabinet to reconsider the draft plan or strategy in the light of those objections.
 - (ii) Where the Council gives instructions in accordance with Rule 2(d)(i), it must specify a period of at least five working days beginning on the day after the

date on which the Leader receives the instructions on behalf of the Cabinet within which the Leader may:

- (1) Submit a revision of the draft plan or strategy as amended by the Cabinet (the “revised draft plan or strategy”), with the Cabinet’s reasons for any amendments made to the draft plan or strategy, to the Committee Services Manager for consideration; or
 - (2) Inform the Committee Services Manager of any disagreement that the Cabinet has with any of the Council’s objections and the Cabinet’s reasons for any such disagreement.
- (e) If it accepts the recommendation of the Cabinet without amendment, the Council may make a decision that has immediate effect. Otherwise, it may only make an in-principle decision. In either case, the decision will be made on the basis of a simple majority of votes cast at the meeting.
- (f) The decision will be publicised in accordance with Article 4 and a copy shall be given to the Leader.
- (g) An in-principle decision will automatically become effective on the expiry of the period specified in Rule 2(d)(ii) unless the Leader has submitted in writing to the Committee Services Manager a revision of the plan or strategy or informed them in writing of any disagreement that the Cabinet has with the Council in accordance with Rule 2(d)(ii).
- (h) In that case, the Chairman of the Council will call a Council meeting to be held on a date within 10 working days of receipt of the Leader’s written submission. The Council will be required to re-consider its decision taking into account the written submission provided by the Leader (which may either include a revised draft plan or strategy with reasons or the reasons for the Cabinet disagreeing with the Council’s objections to the draft plan or strategy). The Council may:-
- (i) approve the Cabinet’s recommendation by a simple majority of votes cast at the meeting; or
 - (ii) approve a different decision that does not accord with the recommendation of the Cabinet by a simple majority; or
 - (iii) approve the Cabinet’s proposed plan or strategy (whether in the form of a draft of revised draft) by a simple majority of votes cast at the meeting; or
 - (iv) approve a different decision that does not accord with the proposed draft or revised draft plan or strategy of the Cabinet by a simple majority.
- (i) The decision shall then be made public in accordance with Article 4, and shall be implemented immediately.

- (j) In approving the Policy Framework, the Council will also specify the degree of in-year changes to the Policy Framework that may be undertaken by the Cabinet, in accordance with paragraph 7 of these Rules. Any other changes to the Policy Framework are reserved to the Council.

3. Process for Developing the Budget

Subject to Rule 4 of these Procedure Rules, the process by which the Budget shall be developed is:

- (a) The Cabinet will publicise on the Council's website a timetable for making proposals to the Council for the adoption of the budget and the Cabinet's arrangements for consultation after publication of those proposals. The Chairman of each Overview and Scrutiny Committee will also be notified.
- (b) Prior to making any budget proposals in paragraph 3(a) above, the Cabinet will draw up a draft Financial Strategy/Forecast setting out the basis on which the budget proposals are intended to be formulated. The Cabinet shall consult the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the draft Financial Strategy/Forecast. The consultation period in this instance shall be not less than 3 weeks. At the end of that period the Cabinet shall agree the Financial Strategy/Forecast having regard to the response from that Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- (c) The Cabinet shall draw up and consult on proposals for the budget having regard to the draft or agreed Financial Strategy/Forecast. If the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee wishes to respond to the Cabinet in that consultation process then it may do so. The consultation period shall be not less than 2 weeks.
- (d) At the end of that period, the Cabinet will then draw up firm proposals having regard to the responses for that consultation. The Cabinet will take any response from an Overview and Scrutiny Committee into account in drawing up firm proposals for submission to the Council, and its report to Council will reflect the comments made by consultees and the Cabinet's response.
- (e) Once the Cabinet has approved the firm proposals, the Chief Financial Officer will report them at the earliest opportunity to the Council for decision.
- (f) In reaching a decision, the Council may adopt the Cabinet's proposals, amend them, or substitute its own proposals in their place.
- (g) If it accepts the recommendation of the Cabinet without amendment, the Council may make a decision that has immediate effect. Otherwise, it may only make an in-principle decision, unless the Leader of the Council having consulted the Chief

Financial Officer indicates at the meeting Cabinet's acceptance of the amended budget. The Chairman of the Council will adjourn the meeting to allow the relevant consultation to take place. In either case, the decision will be made on the basis of a simple majority of votes cast at the meeting.

- (h) Where the Council makes an in-principle decision, the Committee Services Manager shall immediately inform the Leader of any objections which it has to the Cabinet's proposals and shall give him instructions requiring the Cabinet, within 5 working days beginning on the day after the date on which the Leader receives those instructions, to reconsider in the light of those objections, the proposals submitted to it.
- (i) An in-principle decision will automatically become effective at the end of 5 working days beginning on the day after the date on which the Leader receives those instructions referred to in sub-paragraph (h) above, unless within that time the Leader:
 - (a) submits to the Committee Services Manager in writing a revision of the proposals as amended by the Cabinet ("the revised proposals") together with the Cabinet's reasons for any amendments made to the proposals; or
 - (b) informs the Committee Services Manager in writing of any disagreement that the Cabinet has with any of the Council's objections and the Cabinet's reasons for any such disagreement.
- (j) In that case, the Chairman of the Council will call a Council meeting to be held on a date within 6 working days of receipt of the revised proposals or the Cabinet's disagreement. The Council will be required to re-consider its decision and to take into account the revised proposals, the Cabinet's reasons for any amendments made to the proposals, any disagreement that the Cabinet has with any of the Council's objections and the Cabinet's reasons for any such disagreement.

The Council may by a simple majority of votes cast at the meeting:-

- (i) confirm its original decision; or
 - (ii) adopt (with or without modification) the original proposal or, if there is one, the revised proposal; or
 - (iii) amend the original proposal or, if there is one, the revised proposal; or
 - (iv) substitute its own proposals.
- (k) The decision shall then be made public in accordance with Article 4, and shall be implemented immediately.

- (l) In approving the budget, the Council will also specify the extent of virement within the budget that may be undertaken by the Cabinet. Any other changes to the budget are reserved to the Council.

4. Submission of Budget Proposals before 8th February

In the event of the Cabinet submitting their firm proposals for the budget to Council before 8 February in any financial year and the Council has any objections to those proposals, the actions set out in Schedule 2 of the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001 shall be followed.

5. Decisions outside the Budget or Policy Framework

- (a) Subject to the provisions of Rule 3(l) the Cabinet, individual members of the Cabinet and any officers discharging Cabinet functions may only take decisions which are in line with the Budget and Policy Framework. If any of these bodies or persons wishes to make a decision which is contrary to the Policy Framework, or contrary to or not wholly in accordance with the budget approved by full Council, then that decision may only be taken by the Council, subject to Rule 6.
- (b) If the Cabinet, individual members of the Cabinet and any officers discharging Cabinet functions want to make such a decision, they shall take advice from the Monitoring Officer and/or the Chief Financial Officer as to whether the decision they want to make would be contrary to the Policy Framework, or contrary to or not wholly in accordance with the budget. If the advice of either of those Officers is that the decision would not be in line with the existing budget and/or Policy Framework, then the decision must be referred by that body or person to the Council for decision, unless the decision is a matter of urgency, in which case the provisions in Rule 6 shall apply.

6. Urgent Decisions outside the Budget or Policy Framework

- (a) The Cabinet, an individual member of the Cabinet or Officers discharging Cabinet functions may take a decision which is contrary to the Council's Policy Framework or contrary to or not wholly in accordance with the budget approved by full Council if the decision is a matter of urgency. However, the decision may only be taken:
- (i) If it is not practical to convene a quorate meeting of the full Council; and
- (ii) If the Chairman of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee agrees that the decision is a matter of urgency.

The reasons why it is not practical to convene a quorate meeting of full Council and the Chairman of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee's consent to the decision being taken as a matter of urgency must be noted on the record of the decision. In the

absence of the Chairman of that Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the consent of the Vice-Chairman of that Overview and Scrutiny Committee will suffice. In their absence the Chairman of the Council's consent will suffice, and in their absence the consent of the Vice-Chairman of the Council.

- (b) Following the decision, the Leader will provide a full report to the next practicable ordinary meeting of the Council explaining the decision, the reasons for it and why the decision was treated as a matter of urgency.

7. Virement

The Council's budget can only be varied by the Council except as provided for in the Financial Procedure Rules. These rules make provision for:

- (a) Virements – the transfer of sums between budgetary heads
- (b) Supplementary Estimates – the provision from reserves or from a specific provision of sums to increase the overall budget or the approval of negative Supplementary Estimates for the specific purpose of reducing the Council's net expenditure.

These rules specify the limits and procedures governing approval of these budget variations and may be varied from time to time by the Council to meet changing service and portfolio operational needs.

8. In-Year Changes to Policy Framework

The responsibility for agreeing the Budget and Policy Framework lies with the Council, and decisions by the Cabinet, an individual member of the Cabinet or Officers discharging Cabinet functions must be in line with it. No changes to any plan or strategy that make up the Policy Framework may be made by those bodies or individuals except those:

- (a) which will result in the closure or discontinuance of a service or part of a service to meet a budgetary constraint; or
- (b) necessary to ensure compliance with the law, ministerial direction or government guidance; or
- (c) in relation to the Policy Framework in respect of a policy which would normally be agreed annually by the Council following consultation, but where the existing policy document is silent on the matter under consideration; or
- (d) relating to aspects of any plan or strategy where full Council has delegated to the Cabinet the ability to vary.

9. Call-in of Decisions outside the Budget or Policy Framework

- (a) Where an Overview and Scrutiny Committee is of the opinion that either a proposed decision or a decision which has been called-in under the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules is or would be, contrary to the Council's Budget and Policy Framework, or contrary to or not wholly in accordance with the Council's budget, then it shall seek advice from the Monitoring Officer and/or Chief Financial Officer.
- (b) The call-in procedures set out in Rules 13 and 17 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules must be adhered to.
- (c) If, having had regard to the advice of the Monitoring Officer and/or Chief Financial Officer, which will be summarised within the Report, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers the decision is contrary to the Budget or Policy Framework; the Committee may refer the matter to the next practicable meeting of the Council, subject to the provisions of the Council Procedure Rules.
- (d) Council will receive a written report of the decision or proposals and the advice of the Monitoring Officer and/or the Chief Financial Officer. The Council may either:
 - (i) endorse a decision or proposal of the decision taker as falling within the existing Budget and Policy Framework. In this case no further action is required, save that the decision of the Council be minuted and circulated to all Councillors in the normal way; or
 - (ii) amend the Council's Financial Procedure Rules or policy concerned to encompass the decision or proposal of the body or individual responsible for that Cabinet function and agree to the decision with immediate effect. In this case, no further action is required save that the decision of the Council be minuted and circulated to all Councillors in the normal way; or
 - (iii) where the Council accepts that the decision or proposal is contrary to the Policy Framework or contrary to or not wholly in accordance with the budget, and does not amend the existing framework to accommodate it, require the Cabinet to reconsider the matter in accordance with the advice of the Monitoring Officer and/or Chief Financial Officer.