

Scrutiny Budget Review 2021/22 – Scoping Document

Review Topic	Budget Review 2021/22 and Medium Term Financial Plan to 2024-25
Lead Member Review Group	Councillor James Fry
Other Review Group Members	<p>Councillor Chewe Munkonge Councillor Craig Simmons Councillor Roz Smith</p> <p>Members of the Housing Panel will be invited to scrutinise Housing-related budgetary items:</p> <p>Councillor Nadine Bely-Summers Councillor Shaista Aziz Councillor Mike Gotch Councillor Sian Taylor Councillor Elizabeth Wade Councillor Dick Wolff Tony Buchanan (tenant co-optee)</p>
Officer Support and allocate hours	Scrutiny Officer support – approx. 2-3 days per week from mid-December 2020 to mid-February 2021. Additional support from the Head of Financial Services, Management Accountancy Manager and other Senior Officers.
Background	<p>The Finance Panel is responsible for scrutinising finance and budgetary issues and decisions, including the Budget 2021/22 decision.</p> <p>The Budget 2021/22 paperwork will be published for consultation on 01 December 2020, ahead of a final decision by full Council on 17 February 2021. Scrutiny has formed a Budget Review Group to scrutinise the budget proposals in detail before reporting to Cabinet in February.</p>
Rationale	To scrutinise the Council's draft budget for 2021/22 and medium term financial plan for the following three years, and provide public assurance of the Council's budget setting processes and decisions.
Key lines of inquiry	<p>Areas of focus for the Budget Review Group this year to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of the impact of Covid-19 on the Council's finances during 2019/20, and the expected impact over the course of the Medium Term Financial Plan to 2024/25 • Assessment of overall strategy and individual proposals to mitigate lost income and to reduce costs • Government support and other external funding • Planned borrowing levels, contingencies and earmarked reserves • Deliverability of the Capital Programme and its relation to previous iterations of the Medium Term Financial Plan

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The contribution to the Council's finances of its companies and joint-ventures, Oxford Direct Services Ltd, Oxford City Housing Ltd, Barton Park LLP and OxWED. • Service area budget proposals including planned savings and efficiencies, cost pressures and staffing (FTE) impacts. • The impact of Brexit and other macroeconomic factors • The Council's resourcing and management of homeworking as an ongoing way of working post-Covid
Indicators of Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robust independent scrutiny of budget proposals; • Detailed consideration of key lines of inquiry; • The production of an evidenced based report with recommendations; • Broad agreement on conclusions and recommendations amongst Review Group members; • The majority of recommendations are agreed by the Cabinet.
Methodology/ Approach	<p>Evidence gathering to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A budget briefing by the Chief Executive and Head of Financial Services; • Reviewing Budget 2021/22 paperwork, including options or bids presented to members; • Submitting written questions to Senior Officers and reviewing their responses; • Meetings with Executive Directors, Assistant Chief Executive and Heads of Service.
Specify Witnesses/ Experts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Executive • Assistant Chief Executive; • Executive Director – Development; • Transition Director; • Executive Director – Communities and Customer (Interim) • Interim Director of Housing; • Head of Financial Services; • Head of Housing Services; • Head of Planning Services; • Head of Community Services; • Head of Business Improvement; • Head of Law and Governance (subject to appointment) • Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety • Head of Transformation • Head of Regeneration and Economy • Head of Commercial Property • Management Accountancy Manager.
Out of scope	<p>Detailed estimates in relation to ODS and OCHL company business plans are out of scope, but not their overall impact on the Council's budget and Medium Term Financial Plan.</p>

Projected start date	03 December 2020	Draft Report Deadline	27 January 2021 for Finance Panel
Meeting Frequency	4 meetings in January 2021	Projected completion date	By 10 February 2021 Cabinet

Draft outline of meetings

Meeting one – 4 January 2021, 6:00 – 8:00pm	
Introduction to the budget and its context (Cllr Ed Turner, Gordon Mitchell and Nigel Kennedy)	
<p>Introductions to service area budget proposals and questions from Review Group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistant Chief Executive (Caroline Green) • Law and Governance (TBC) • Financial Services (Nigel Kennedy) • Transformation (Claire Freeman) 	
Meeting two - 6 January 2021, 6:00pm - 8.00pm	
<p>Introduction to budget proposals and answering Review Group questions from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Improvement (Helen Bishop) • Regulatory Services (Ian Wright) • Community Services (Nadeem Murtuja) • Sustainable Development (Tim Sadler) 	
Meeting three – 11 January 2021, 6:00pm - 8.00pm	
<p>To consider draft recommendations from previous meetings, to consider budget proposals and form draft recommendations for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning (Adrian Arnold) • Housing Services (Paul Leo) • Development (Tom Bridgman) • Regeneration and Economy (Carolyn Plosynski) • Head of Commercial (Jane Winfield) <p>Members of the Housing Panel will be invited to participate in the Scrutiny of the Housing element of this meeting.</p>	
Meeting Four – 27 January 2020 (as part of Finance Panel)	
To consider the draft review group report.	

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