

16. Budget and Policy Framework procedures

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16.1 Responsibilities for the budget and policy framework

Council sets the budget and policy framework the Cabinet and officers must act within it.

16.2 Developing the budget and policy framework

- (a) The amount of consultation on the budget and policy framework must reflect the importance of the proposal. Consultation must last at least four weeks and will include consultation with a scrutiny committee.
- (b) Any reports to the Cabinet must say what consultation there has been and what the results were. The Cabinet will consider the response to the consultation and draw up firm proposals. The report to Council will reflect any comments made during the consultation and the Cabinet's response.
- (c) The Cabinet's proposals will go to Council as soon as possible.
- (d) Council can:
 - Accept the Cabinet's proposals
 - Refer the proposals back to the Cabinet, or
 - Change the proposals, for example by adopting proposals of its own.
- (e) If Council accepts the Cabinet's proposals without any changes, the decision will come into force immediately.
- (f) If Council changes the Cabinet's proposals, it will be an in principle decision only.
- (g) The Leader will be given a copy of an in principle decision. The in principle decision will come into force unless the leader objects in writing to the Head of Law and Governance within five clear working days, giving reasons.
- (h) If the Leader object to an in principle decision, Council will meet again within 10 further working days. At the meeting, Council can accept the Cabinet's proposals or change them.
- (i) Council's decision will come into force immediately.
- (j) When Council sets the budget, it will also say how much the Cabinet and heads of service can move between cost centres (Part 18.10(b)). Any other changes must be made by Council.

16.3 Decisions outside the budget or policy framework

- (a) The Cabinet, and any officers carrying out executive responsibilities, can only take decisions if they are:
- in line with the budget and policy framework
 - allowed under 16.4 (urgent decisions)
 - allowed under Part 18.10(b) (moving money between cost centres)
 - necessary to obey the law or ministerial directions or government guidance.

Any other decisions must be recommended to Council.

- (b) The Cabinet or officers carrying out executive responsibilities will seek the Monitoring Officer or Chief Finance Officer's advice if it is unclear whether proposals are in line with the budget and policy framework.

16.4 Urgent decisions outside the budget or policy framework

- (a) The Cabinet or officers carrying out executive responsibilities can take a decision that is outside the budget or policy framework if:
- it is urgent
 - it is not practicable to arrange a Council meeting
 - the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee agrees that the decision is urgent. (If the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee is absent, the Lord Mayor can agree that the decision is urgent. If the Lord Mayor is absent, the Deputy Lord Mayor can agree).
- (b) The record of the decision must say why it was not practicable to arrange a meeting of Council. It must also say that the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee (or Lord Mayor or Deputy Lord Mayor) agreed that the decision was urgent.
- (c) The decision taker must take a full report to the next ordinary Council meeting explaining the decision. This must say why the decision was taken, why it was urgent and why it was not practicable to arrange a meeting of Council. If the next meeting is within seven days of the decision being taken the decision taker will report to the next meeting after that.