**Scrutiny Budget Review 2024/25 – Scoping Document**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Review Topic | Budget Review 2024/25 and Medium Term Financial Plan to 2027/28 |
| Lead Member Review Group | Councillor James Fry |
| Other Review Group Members | Councillor Dr Hosnieh Djafari-Marbini Councillor Chris JarvisCouncillor Dr Christopher SmowtonMembers of the Housing and Homelessness Panel will be invited to scrutinise Housing-related budgetary items:Councillor Lizzy Diggins (Chair)Councillor Paula DunneCouncillor Laurence FouweatherCouncillor Jabu Nala-HartleyCouncillor Rosie RawleCouncillor Jo Sandelson |
| Officer Support and allocated hours | Scrutiny Officer support – approx. 2-3 days per week from mid-December 2023 to mid-February 2024. Additional support from the Head of Financial Services, Management Accountancy Manager and other Senior Officers. |
| **Background** | The Finance and Performance Panel is responsible for scrutinising finance and budgetary issues and decisions, including the Budget 2024/25 decision. The Budget 2024/25 paperwork will be published for consultation on **05 December 2023** ahead of a final decision by Full Council on **21 February 2024**. Scrutiny has formed a Budget Review Group to scrutinise the budget proposals in detail before reporting to Cabinet in February. |
| **Rationale** | To scrutinise the Council’s draft budget for 2024/25 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** | Areas of focus for the Budget Review Group this year to include:* The progress of financial mitigation strategies arising from COVID and the Council’s overall expectation of what the ‘new normal’ looks like financially
* The interaction, robustness and financial impact of the financial returns to the Council from Oxford Direct Services and OX Place business plans
* Specific consideration of the Council’s planning regarding macroeconomic factors such as inflation and the cost of living crisis
* The robustness of plans and risks to the Council’s anticipated income streams, particularly relating to parking, commercial property and the Council’s companies
* The robustness of the HRA Business Plan
* Assessment of overall strategy and individual proposals to mitigate lost income and to reduce costs
* Planned borrowing levels and the impact of the changes arising from Minimum Revenue Provision
* Levels of contingencies and earmarked reserves
* Deliverability of the Capital Programme and its relation to previous iterations of the Medium Term Financial Plan
 |
| **Indicators of Success** | * 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** | Evidence gathering to include:* A budget briefing by the Chief Executive and Head of Financial Services;
* Reviewing Budget 2024/25 paperwork, including options or bids presented to members;
* Submitting written questions to Senior Officers and reviewing their responses;
* Meetings with Executive Directors and Heads of Service.
 |
| **Specify Witnesses/ Experts** | * Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management
* Chief Executive
* Executive Director (Development)
* Executive Director (Communities and People)
* Executive Director (Corporate Resources)
* 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
* Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety (*tbc*)
* Community Safety Manager
* Head of Corporate Strategy
* Head of Regeneration and Economy
* Head of Corporate Property
* Management Accountancy Manager
 |
| **Out of scope** | Detailed estimates in relation to ODS and OX Place company business plans are out of scope, but not their overall impact on the Council’s budget and Medium Term Financial Plan. |
| **Projected start date** | 05 December 2023 | **Draft Report Deadline** | 19 January 2024 for Finance and Performance Panel on 22 January 2024 |
| **Meeting Frequency** | 4 meetings in January 2024 | **Projected completion date** | By 07 February 2024 Cabinet |

Draft outline of meetings (*all held remotely*)

|  |
| --- |
| Meeting one – Wednesday 03 January 2024, 6:00 – 8:00pm |
| Introduction to the budget and its context (**Cllr Ed Turner, Caroline Green and Nigel Kennedy**)Introductions to service area budget proposals and questions from Review Group:* Corporate Resources (**Tom Hook**)
* Law and Governance (**Emma Jackman)**
* Financial Services (**Nigel Kennedy**)
* Business Improvement (**Helen Bishop**)
* Corporate Strategy (**Mish Tullar**)
 |
| Meeting two – Thursday 04 January 2024, 6:00pm - 8.00pm |
| Introduction to budget proposals and answering Review Group questions from:* Development (**Tom Bridgman**)
* Planning Services (**David Butler**)
* Regeneration and Economy (**Carolyn Ploszynski**)
* Corporate Property (**Jane Winfield**)*to include a report on income from Council assets*
 |
| Meeting three – Tuesday 09 January 2024, 6:00pm - 8.00pm  |
| To consider draft recommendations from previous meetings; introduction to budget proposals and answering Review Group questions from: * Housing and Communities (**Peter Matthew, Nerys Parry, and Ian Brooke**)
* Regulatory Services and Community Safety (**Richard Adams**)

Members of the Housing and Homelessness Panel will be invited to participate in the Scrutiny of the Housing element of this meeting.  |
| **Meeting four – Monday 15 January 2024, 6.00pm - 8.00pm [prior to Finance and Performance Panel on 22 January 2024]** |
| To consider the draft Review Group report.  |