

## **Terms of Reference**

### **Scrutiny Budget Review Group 2026/27**

#### **1. Purpose**

The Budget Review Group is a time-limited task and finish sub-group of the Scrutiny Committee. It is constituted to undertake focused review of the Council's draft budget proposals for the forthcoming financial year, and the Medium-Term Financial Plan covering the subsequent period.

#### **2. Status**

The Budget Review Group is a non-decision-making body established under the delegated authority of the Scrutiny Committee. Its role is to provide detailed scrutiny and advisory oversight of the Council's budget and wider financial matters. The Group reports its findings and recommendations to the Scrutiny Committee for formal consideration and approval, with onward reporting to Cabinet and the Council as appropriate.

#### **3. Scope of Work**

The Budget Review Group will:

- Review the Council's draft budget proposals, including revenue and capital allocations, savings, and growth bids
- Contribute to the development of the Council's annual budget-setting process
- Examine financial performance and data, identifying areas of underperformance or concern
- Scrutinise the financial performance and strategic direction of Council-owned companies
- Review income streams and asset portfolio management, including council-owned buildings, commercial property, and car parks
- Assess the Capital Programme with a focus on project delivery, risk management, prioritisation, and alignment with the Council's strategic objectives
- Make evidence-based recommendations to support robust decision-making and financial oversight

#### **4. Membership**

Membership will be set by the Scrutiny Committee and drawn from all non-executive members. It is not required to reflect the Council's political make up.

For continuity, both membership and chairing of the Budget Review Group will mirror that of the Finance and Performance Working Group, consisting of four councillors.

The quorum shall be 2 members. Substitution will be allowed.

## **5. Chairing**

The Chair will be responsible for leading meetings and reporting the Group's findings and recommendations back to the Scrutiny Committee. The Chair may also be invited to present these outcomes to Cabinet or Full Council.

In the absence of the Chair, members present shall elect an acting chair for that meeting.

## **6. Meetings and ways of working**

- The Scrutiny Committee will agree the scope of work of the Budget Review Group and therefore has final agreement on its recommendations.
- The agenda will be issued in advance, however the usual requirement for 7 days' notice do not apply.
- The Budget Review Group will meet 5 times during December 2025 and January 2026, aligned with the key stages of the Council's budget cycle. Meetings will be thematically structured to enable in-depth scrutiny of directorate budgets, council-owned companies, and financial assets:
  - Meeting 1 – Introductory session with Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management and the Group Finance Director
  - Meeting 2 – Review and examination of service directorate, council-owned companies, and council assets
  - Meeting 3 – Review and examination of service directorate, council-owned companies, and council assets
  - Meeting 4 – Review and examination of service directorate, council-owned companies, and council assets
  - Meeting 5 – Agreement of final recommendations and review of the draft Budget Review Group report
- Additional meetings may only be held with the approval of the Monitoring Officer.
- Members are expected to review papers in advance and contribute constructively to discussions with a focus on evidence-based scrutiny.
- Written questions may be submitted in advance via the Scrutiny and Governance Advisor.
- Meetings are not legally required to be held in-person and are not subject to the Local Government Act 1972 requirement to be held in public.

## **7. Attendees**

Officers or Cabinet Members shall attend the meetings where their input is required to inform the work of the Budget Review Group.

Directors and Company Secretaries of Council-owned companies may be invited to attend for relevant items relating to their companies.

Members of the Housing and Homelessness Working Group may be invited to contribute to the review of housing-related budgetary matters; however, they do not have powers to formulate or agree recommendations of the Budget Review Group.

Members of the Climate and Environment Working Group may be invited to participate in the examination of budgetary issues related to environmental sustainability but do not have powers to formulate or agree recommendations of the Budget Review Group.

## **8. Access to information**

The Budget Review Group will have access to relevant papers, including financial papers and information concerning Council-owned companies. It may request additional information as necessary to support its work.

## **9. Confidentiality**

Meetings of the Budget Review Group will involve the consideration of information that may be personal, confidential or commercially sensitive. All such information must be treated confidential by those in attendance unless otherwise agreed in advance with the Chief Executive or the Monitoring Officer, following a request to share information outside of the meeting.

## **10. Relationship with Scrutiny**

The Budget Review Group supports the broader work of the Scrutiny committee. It acts in an advisory and investigative capacity, with its outputs feeding into the formal scrutiny process through the submission of a final reporting of its recommendations for the Committee's consideration.

This page is intentionally left blank