

Corporate Scrutiny Committee
27 November 2024

2025-26 Budget and 2025-29 MTFP Budget Consultation Plans

Report of the Statutory Scrutiny Officer

1 Purpose

- 1.1 To update the Committee on the public and staff consultation for the 2025-26 budget and 2025-29 MTFP proposals. Consultation on the Council's budget proposals helps the Council meet its statutory duty to consult and can enable public contribution to the formation of the final budget.

2 Action required

- 2.1 The Committee is asked:

- 1) To make any comments or recommendations in response to the information presented at the meeting.
- 2) To consider whether any further scrutiny of the issue is required.

3 Background information

- 3.1 Public consultation on the proposed budget for 2025-26 and wider 2025-29 MTFP will take place over a four-week period from Tuesday 17th December to Monday 13th January.
- 3.2 Consultation on the Council's budget proposals takes place annually as part of the planning and preparation for budget setting and sign-off. Consultation enables the Council to fulfil its statutory obligations to consult, both Best Value and common law requirements (legitimate expectation). Section 65 of the 1992 Local Government Act prescribes a legal obligation for local authorities to consult with business ratepayers on the draft budget and draft capital programme. Beyond that, the doctrine of legitimate expectation and the circumstances giving rise to a duty to consult is summarised below:

The legitimate expectation applies:

- When there has been a clear promise of consultation
- Where official guidance or policies imply a promise to act in a particular way
- Where there is a withdrawal of a benefit with significant impacts to be considered
- Where the nature of the relationship would create unfairness if there were to be inadequate consultation.

- 3.3 Essentially, where people have come to legitimately expect a process of consultation, for example, with local authority budget cuts or healthcare changes, there are grounds for a judicial review should a public consultation not take place. The Gunning Principles are used in Judicial Review proceedings to determine whether consultation has been planned and carried out in a fair, transparent and accessible manner.
- 3.4 This year's budget consultation will be set within the context of the Medium-Term Financial Plan 2025-29, which aims to deliver a balanced and sustainable budget based on a four-year planning horizon. The MTFP sets out our anticipated funding gap and will contain several proposed elements to achieve financial sustainability including:
- 2025-26 budget proposals
 - Assumptions around the contribution of the ongoing Transformation Programme to deliver significant savings over the medium-term
 - Assumptions around the assumed level of funding from the Local Government Settlement and any proposed changes in basic council tax from April 2025
- 3.5 The report sets out in further detail the general consultation approach to be undertaken following agreement at Executive Board (17 December) of the proposed budget.

4 List of attached information

- 4.1 Report of the Research, Engagement and Performance Manager.

5 Background papers, other than published works or those disclosing exempt or confidential information

- 5.1 None

6 Published documents referred to in compiling this report

- 6.1 None

7 Wards affected

- 7.1 All

8 Contact information

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