

BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK PROCEDURE RULES

1. Definitions

In these Rules:

"Cabinet" and "Leader" have the same meaning as "executive" and "executive leader" in Part II of the Local Government Act 2000; and "plan or strategy" and "working day" have the same meaning as in the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001.

2. The framework for Cabinet decisions

The Council will be responsible for the adoption of its Budget and Policy Framework as set out in Article 4. Once a Budget or a Policy Framework is in place, it will be the responsibility of the Cabinet to implement it.

3. Process for developing the Framework

The process by which the Budget and Policy Framework shall be developed is:

- (a) The Cabinet will publicise, by including in the Work Programme, a timetable for making proposals to the Council for the adoption of any plan, strategy or budget that forms or will form part of the Budget and Policy Framework, and its arrangements for consultation after publication of those initial proposals. The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board will also be notified. The consultation period shall in each instance be not less than 4 weeks.
- (b) At the end of that period, the Cabinet will then draw up a draft plan or strategy having regard to the responses to that consultation. If the Overview and Scrutiny Board wishes to respond to the Cabinet in that consultation process then it may do so. As the Board has responsibility for fixing its own work programme, it is open to the Board to investigate, research or report in detail with policy recommendations before the end of the consultation period. The Cabinet will take any response from the Board into account in drawing up the draft plan or strategy for submission to the Council, and its report to Council will reflect the comments made by consultees and the Cabinet's response.
- (c) Once the Cabinet has approved the draft plan or strategy, the proper officer will refer them at the earliest opportunity to the Council for decision.
- (d) In reaching a decision, the Council may:
 - (i) adopt the Cabinet's draft plan or strategy, in which case, the Council may make a decision which has immediate effect; or

- (ii) agree minor amendments to the Cabinet's draft plan or strategy, and in which case the Council may make a decision which has immediate effect.
- (e) Where the Cabinet has submitted a draft plan or strategy to the Council for its consideration and following consideration of that draft plan or strategy, the Council has significant objections to it, the Council must take the action set out in paragraph (f).
- (f) Before the Council
 - (i) amends the draft plan or strategy; or
 - (ii) approves, for the purpose of its submission to the Secretary of State or any Minister of the Crown for his approval, any plan or strategy (whether or not in the form of a draft) of which any part is required to be so submitted; or
 - (iii) adopts (with or without modification) the plan or strategy,

it must inform the Leader of any objections which it has to the draft plan or strategy and must give to him/her instructions requiring the Cabinet to reconsider, in the light of those objections, the draft plan or strategy submitted to it.
- (g) Where the Council gives instructions in accordance with paragraph (f), it must specify a period of at least 5 working days, beginning on the day after the date on which the Leader receives the instructions on behalf of the Cabinet, within which the Leader may
 - (i) submit a revision of the draft plan or strategy as amended by the Cabinet (the "revised draft plan or strategy"), with the Cabinet's reasons for any amendments made to the draft plan or strategy, to the Council for the Council's consideration; or
 - (ii) inform the Council of any disagreement that the Cabinet has with any of the Council's objections and the Cabinet's reasons for any such disagreement.
- (h) Where the period specified by the Council, referred to in paragraph (g), has expired, the Council must when
 - (i) amending the draft plan or strategy or, if there is one, the revised draft plan or strategy;
 - (ii) approving, for the purpose of its submission to the Secretary of State or any Minister of the Crown for his approval, any plan or strategy (whether or not in the form of a draft or revised draft) of which any part is required to be so submitted; or

(iii) adopting (with or without modification) the plan or strategy,

take into account any amendments made to the draft plan or strategy that are included in any revised draft plan or strategy, the Cabinet's reasons for those amendments, any disagreement that the Cabinet has with any of the authority's objections and the Cabinet's reasons for that disagreement, which the Leader has submitted to the Council, or informed the Council of, within the period specified.

- (i) Subject to Paragraph (m) below, where, before 8th February in any financial year, the Cabinet submits to the Council for consideration in relation to the following financial year:
 - (i) estimates of the amounts to be aggregated in making a calculation (whether originally or by way of substitute) in accordance with any of sections 32 to 37 or 43 to 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992;
 - (ii) estimates of other amounts to be used for the purposes of such a calculation;
 - (iii) estimates of such a calculation; or
 - (iv) amounts required to be stated in a precept under Chapter IV of Part I of the Local Government Finance Act 1992,

and following consideration of those estimates or amounts the Council has any objections to them, it must take the action set out in paragraph (j).

- (j) Before the Council makes a calculation (whether originally or by way of substitute) in accordance with any of the sections referred to in paragraph (i) (i), or issues a precept under Chapter IV of Part I of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, it must inform the Leader of any objections which it has to the Cabinet's estimates or amounts and must give to him instructions requiring the Cabinet to reconsider, in the light of those objections, those estimates and amounts in accordance with the authority's requirements.
- (k) Where the Council gives instructions in accordance with paragraph (j), it must specify a period of at least five working days beginning on the day after the date on which the Leader receives the instructions on behalf of the Cabinet within which the Leader may -
 - (i) submit a revision of the estimates or amounts as amended by the Cabinet ("revised estimates or amounts"), which have been reconsidered in accordance with the Council's requirements, with the Cabinet's reasons for any amendments made to the estimates or amounts, to the Council for the Council's consideration; or

- (ii) inform the Council of any disagreement that the Cabinet has with any of the Council's objections and the Cabinet's reasons for any such disagreement.
- (l) When the period specified by the Council, referred to in paragraph (k), has expired, the Council must, when making calculations (whether originally or by way of substitute) in accordance with the sections referred to in paragraph (i) (i), or issuing a precept under Chapter IV of Part I of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, take into account -
 - (i) any amendments to the estimates or amounts that are included in any revised estimates or amounts;
 - (ii) the Cabinet's reasons for those amendments;
 - (iii) any disagreement that the Cabinet has with any of the Council's objections; and
 - (iv) the Cabinet's reasons for that disagreement,which the Leader submitted to the Council, or informed the Council of, within the period specified.
- (m) Paragraphs (i) to (l) shall not apply in relation to -
 - (i) calculations or substitute calculations which the Council is required to make in accordance with section 52I, 52J, 52T or 52U of the Local Government Finance Act 1992; and
 - (ii) amounts stated in a precept issued to give effect to calculations or substitute calculations made in accordance with section 52J or 52U of that Act.
- (n) In approving the Budget and Policy Framework, the Council will also specify the extent of virement within the Budget and degree of in-year changes to the Policy Framework which may be undertaken by the Cabinet, in accordance with paragraphs 5 and 6 of these Rules (virement and in-year adjustments). Any other changes to the Budget and Policy and Framework are reserved to the Council.

4. Decisions outside the Budget or Policy Framework

- (a) Subject to the provisions of paragraph 6 (virement) the Cabinet, committees of the Cabinet, individual members of the Cabinet and any officers or joint arrangements discharging Cabinet functions may only take decisions which are in line with the Budget and Policy Framework. If any of these bodies or persons wishes to make a decision which is contrary to the Policy Framework, or contrary to or not wholly in accordance with the Budget approved by full Council, then that decision may only be taken by the Council, subject to paragraph 5 below.

- (b) If the Cabinet, committees of the Cabinet, individual members of the Cabinet and any officers or joint arrangements discharging Cabinet functions want to make such a decision, they shall take advice from the Monitoring Officer and/or the Section 151 Officer as to whether the decision they want to make would be contrary to the Policy Framework, or contrary to or not wholly in accordance with the Budget. If the advice of either of those officers is that the decision would not be in line with the existing Budget and/or Policy Framework, then the decision must be referred by that body or person to the Council for decision, unless the decision is a matter of urgency, in which case the provisions in paragraph 5 (urgent decisions outside the Budget and Policy Framework) shall apply.

5. Urgent decisions outside the Budget or Policy Framework

- (a) The Cabinet, a committee of the Cabinet, an individual member of the Cabinet or officers or joint arrangements discharging Cabinet functions may take a decision which is contrary to the Council's Policy Framework or contrary to or not wholly in accordance with the Budget approved by full Council if the decision is a matter of urgency. However, the decision may only be taken:
 - i) if it is not practical to convene a quorate meeting of the full Council; and
 - ii) if the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board agrees that the decision is a matter of urgency.

The reasons why it is not practical to convene a quorate meeting of full Council and the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board's consent to the decision being taken as a matter of urgency must be noted on the record of the decision. In the absence of the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, the consent of the Chairman of the Council, and in the absence of both the Vice-Chairman of the Council, will be sufficient.

- (b) Following the decision, the decision-taker will provide a full report to the next available Council meeting explaining the decision, the reasons for it and why the decision was treated as a matter of urgency.

6. Virement

- (a) In approving its revenue budget each year, the Council will decide the headings (services) into which the Budget is to be divided, and will allocate an amount for expenditure under each heading.
- (b) Steps taken by the Cabinet, a committee of the Cabinet, an individual member of the Cabinet, officers or joint arrangements discharging Cabinet functions to implement Council policy shall not exceed those amounts allocated to each budget head. However, the Cabinet shall be entitled to

vire across budget heads up to a maximum, and within a limit per individual virement specified each year by the Council under Rule 3 (n). Beyond those limits, approval to any virement across budget heads shall require the approval of the full Council.

7. In-year changes to Policy Framework

The responsibility for agreeing the Budget and Policy Framework lies with the Council, and decisions by the Cabinet, a committee of the Cabinet, an individual member of the Cabinet or officers or joint arrangements discharging Cabinet functions must be in line with it. No changes to any policy and strategy which make up the Policy Framework may be made by those bodies or individuals except those changes:

- (a) which will result in the closure or discontinuance of a service or part of service to meet a Budgetary constraint;
- (b) necessary to ensure compliance with the law, ministerial direction or government guidance;
- (c) in relation to the Policy Framework in respect of a policy which would normally be agreed annually by the Council following consultation, but where the existing policy document is silent on the matter under consideration.

8. Call-in of decisions outside the Budget or Policy Framework

- (a) Where the Overview and Scrutiny Board is of the opinion that a Cabinet decision is, or if made would be, contrary to the Policy Framework, or contrary to or not wholly in accordance with the Council's Budget, then it shall seek advice from the Monitoring Officer and/or Section 151 Officer.
- (b) In respect of functions which are the responsibility of the Cabinet, the Monitoring Officer's report and/or Section 151 Officer's report shall be to the Cabinet with a copy to every member of the Council. Regardless of whether the decision is delegated or not, the Cabinet must meet to decide what action to take in respect of the Monitoring Officer's report and to prepare a report to Council in the event that the Monitoring Officer or the Section 151 Officer conclude that the decision was a departure, and to the Overview and Scrutiny Board if the Monitoring Officer or the Section 151 Officer conclude that the decision was not a departure.
- (c) If the decision has yet to be made, or has been made but not yet implemented, and the advice from the Monitoring Officer and/or the Section 151 Officer is that the decision is or would be contrary to the Policy Framework or contrary to or not wholly in accordance with the Budget, the Overview and Scrutiny Board may refer the matter to Council. In such cases, no further action will be taken in respect of the decision or its implementation until the Council has met and considered the matter.

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The Council shall meet within 10 working days of the request by the Overview and Scrutiny Board. At the meeting it will receive a report of the decision or proposals and the advice of the Monitoring Officer and/or the Section 151 Officer. The Council may either:

- i) endorse a decision or proposal of the Cabinet decision-taker as falling within the existing Budget and Policy Framework. In this case no further action is required, save that the decision of the Council be minuted and circulated to all Councillors in the normal way; or
- ii) amend the Council's Financial Regulations or policy concerned to encompass the decision or proposal of the body or individual responsible for that Cabinet function and agree to the decision with immediate effect. In this case, no further action is required save that the decision of the Council be minuted and circulated to all Councillors in the normal way; or
- iii) where the Council accepts that the decision or proposal is contrary to the Policy Framework or contrary to or not wholly in accordance with the Budget, and does not amend the existing Framework or Budget to accommodate it, require the Cabinet to reconsider the matter in accordance with the advice of either the Monitoring Officer/Section 151 Officer.