

Cabinet Meeting

3 February 2016

Report title	Scrutiny Board Comments – 2016/17 Draft Budget	
Decision designation	AMBER	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Andrew Johnson Resources	
Key decision	Yes	
In forward plan	Yes	
Wards affected	All	
Accountable director	Keith Ireland, Managing Director	
Originating service	Strategic Finance	
Accountable employee(s)	Mark Taylor	Director of Finance
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Report to be/has been considered by	Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel	24 November 2015
	Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel	25 November 2015
	Health Scrutiny Panel	26 November 2015
	Stronger City Economy Scrutiny Panel	1 December 2015
	Confident, Capable Council Scrutiny Panel	2 December 2015
	Vibrant and Sustainable City Scrutiny Panel	3 December 2015
	Scrutiny Board	15 December 2015

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Consider the comments from the Scrutiny Board in relation to the 2016/17 Draft Budget.

1.0 Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with:

- Scrutiny Board's feedback on the 2016/17 Draft Budget following its meeting on 15 December 2015.

2.0 Background and Summary

2.1 At its meeting on 21 October 2015, as part of the 2016/17 Budget setting process, Cabinet approved that Savings, Redesign and Income Generation proposals totalling £14.1 million in 2016/17 proceed to the formal consultation and scrutiny stages of the budget and that Financial Transactions and Base Budget Revisions of £7.1 million and other adjustments to the 2016/17 July budget projections totalling £2.0 million be incorporated into the 2016/17 Draft Budget.

2.2 These proposals were subsequently scrutinised by the relevant Scrutiny Panel(s) during October and November and each Panel's comments were reviewed by the Council's Scrutiny Board on 15 December for subsequent feedback to Cabinet. The purpose of this report is to consider that feedback.

3.0 2016/17 Draft Budget

3.1 An extract from the minutes of the Scrutiny Board meeting on 15 December 2015, detailing the resolutions arising from its consideration of individual Scrutiny Panel comments on the 2016/17 Draft Budget, is shown at Appendix A.

3.2 The reports to Scrutiny Board and individual Scrutiny Panels are listed at section 9.0 below.

3.3 More detailed information regarding the Council's latest budget and savings proposals can be found on the Council's website [via this link](#).

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 The financial implications are discussed in the body of the report and in the detailed reports to Scrutiny Board and the individual Scrutiny Panels. Should any of the savings proposals considered by Scrutiny Panels not be delivered, alternative savings will have to be identified.

[MH/22012016/N]

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. Cabinet's consideration of the items presented in this report is consistent with the Financial Procedural Rules outlined in the Council's Constitution.

[RB/20012016/N]

6.0 Equalities implications

6.1 There are no direct equalities implications arising from this report.

7.0 Environmental Implications

7.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report.

8.0 Human resources implications

8.1 There are no direct human resources implications arising from this report.

9.0 Schedule of Background Papers

Draft Budget 2016/17, Report to Scrutiny Board, 15 December 2015 ([link to report](#))

Budget Review - Draft Budget 2016/17, Report to Vibrant and Sustainable City Scrutiny Panel, 3 December 2015 ([link to report](#))

Budget Review - Draft Budget 2016/17, Report to Confident, Capable Council Scrutiny Panel, 2 December 2015 ([link to report](#))

Budget Review - Draft Budget 2016/17, Report to Stronger City Economy Scrutiny Panel, 1 December 2015 ([link to report](#))

Budget Review - Draft Budget 2016/17, Report to Health Scrutiny Panel, 26 November 2015 ([link to report](#))

Budget Review - Draft Budget 2016/17, Report to Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel 25 November 2015 ([link to report](#))

Budget Review - Draft Budget 2016/17, Report to Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel, 24 November 2015 ([link to report](#))

Relevant Extract from Minutes of the Meeting of the Scrutiny Board on 15 December 2015

Attendance

Members of the Scrutiny Board

Cllr Philip Bateman
Cllr Alan Bolshaw
Cllr Paula Brookfield
Cllr Craig Collingswood
Cllr Barry Findlay (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre
Cllr Peter O'Neill
Cllr Arun Photay
Cllr Rita Potter
Cllr Stephen Simkins (Chair)
Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman
Cllr Julie Hodgkiss
Cllr Andrew Johnson

Employees

Mark Taylor	Director of Finance
Abby Vella	Graduate Management Trainee
Adrian McCormick	Head of Transformation
Sue Handy	Head of Customer Service
Sarah Campbell	Complaints Manager
Anna Zollino-Biscotti	Senior Information Governance Officer
Gareth Payne	Policy Officer
Penny Williams	Interim Democratic Services Manager

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. Title

- 1 Apologies**
Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Angus who was represented by Cllr Hodgkiss.
- 2 Declarations of Interest**
There were no declarations of interest
- 5. Draft Budget 2016/17**
Councillor Andrew Johnson, Cabinet Member for Resources, introduced the report. He advised that although the provisional local government finance settlement was to be announced in due course, an additional £4.1 billion of expenditure cuts for local government was expected. The Cabinet Member for Resources outlined the Council's saving proposals and progress and reported that

it was working with a revised savings target of £24 million. These projections were to be confirmed once central government had released the local government finance settlement.

The Cabinet Member for Resources highlighted that seven million pounds had been saved through treasury management and financial transaction arrangements, without which, the impact of cuts on the Council would be much greater. He thanked the officers involved in making these savings.

Councillors discussed the need for additional funding to pay for the reshaping of Older People Services outlined on page 13 and the impact of this on savings proposals. The Cabinet Member for Resources and the Director of Finance advised that this was a subject of consideration in the budget process and further details would be reported to scrutiny once the settlement was announced.

A discussion took place between the Board and the Cabinet Member for Resources about the new funding formula for Public Health. Councillor O'Neill advised that these questions were asked at Health Scrutiny Panel and officers were going to investigate these details.

Referring to page 25 of the report, the Cabinet Member for Resources outlined proposals to ensure that City venues such as the Art Gallery, Bantock House and Bilston Art Gallery were generating considerable income. Councillor Collingswood was concerned about the length of time this was taking, since these City Venues formed part of Wolverhampton's cultural heritage. In response, the Cabinet Member for Resources advised that development proposals were being driven forward by officers. Councillors requested that these proposals come back to the relevant scrutiny panel.

Councillor Brookfield announced that she was unable to comment on the recommendations of other panels. Since these had already been scrutinised once, she was happy to accept the recommendations of other panels but felt unable to comment without all the details. The Chair requested that future budget reports have details of figures appended to the report.

A discussion took place about grounds maintenance reductions and efficiencies in service, in particular, ceasing annual bedding outside the City centre outlined on page 42 of the appendix. Following debate around the positive, visual impact the bedding had, Councillor Bateman was concerned that the reputation of the Council could potentially be compromised by this small saving. The Director of Finance advised that £22,000 would be saved over two years, with bedding converted into shrubbery or lawn. The Cabinet Member for Resources advised that this service was faced with financial saving necessity but would welcome the option of the relevant scrutiny panel re-visiting this. The Chair requested that the Chair of Vibrant and Sustainable City be informed.

Councillors suggested that the development of City sites, such as West Park, should be collated as a business proposition either by the appropriate officer, relevant scrutiny panel or particular champion. The Chair recommended that the

possibility of utilising the City's assets across the City, starting with West Park, be looked into.

A discussion took place between Councillors about the review of stray dog procedures outlined on page 45-46. Councillors requested that this come back to Scrutiny Board with further cost details of this procedure, that alternative provision be investigated and scoping of other local authorities be considered.

Councillors discussed the review of school crossing patrols on page 47 and whether schools could be charged to maintain this service. Cllr Johnson advised that advice would need to be sought regarding the statutory requirement for school patrols. Moreover, this would continue to be reviewed in light of schools moving out of local authority control.

Cllr Bolshaw enquired about the review of allotment costs outlined on page 47. Cllr Johnson advised that a mechanism needed to be implemented to charge residents realistically and incrementally.

In response to a question regarding the review of the council tax scheme and discount, the Cabinet Member for Resources clarified that the 21 day discretionary discount was to be removed following consultation.

The Board discussed corporate savings proposals, including charges for late payment of invoices and the review of staff training. The Director of Finance advised that the performance of paying invoices had greatly improved since the introduction of Agresso. He reported that there had been a reduction in escalated queries and it was being monitored closely. In response to the review of staff training, Councillors discussed the role of interim positions within the Council. The Cabinet Member for Resources highlighted that interim officers were highly beneficial and allowed time for the authority to find a suitable, permanent replacement.

The Chair requested an additional meeting to address the recommendations set out below once Cabinet had considered all consultation and scrutiny responses.

Resolved:

1. That the details of savings proposals on Older Peoples Services be reported back to scrutiny.
2. That Health scrutiny panel look into the implications of a new funding formula for Public Health.
3. That development proposals for City venues come back to Vibrant and Sustainable City scrutiny panel.
4. That future budget reports have details of figures appended to the report.

Appendix A

5. That the proposed cessation of annual bedding be revisited by Vibrant and Sustainable City and the Chair be informed.
6. That the possibility of utilising the City's assets across the City, starting with West Park be looked into.
7. That cost details of the review of stray dogs be reported, alternative provision be investigated and scoping of other local authorities take place.
8. That legal advice be sought regarding the statutory requirement for school patrols, in light of proposals to move schools out of local authority control.