

Report To:	JOINT MEETING EXECUTIVE CABINET / OVERVIEW PANEL
Date:	14 February 2024
Scrutiny Chair / Reporting Officer:	<p>Councillor Claire Reid – Chair of Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel</p> <p>Councillor Hugh Roderick – Chair of Children’s Services Scrutiny Panel</p> <p>Councillor Naila Sharif – Chair of Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel</p> <p>Sandra Stewart – Chief Executive</p>
Subject:	SCRUTINY BUDGET CONSULTATION
Report Summary:	To receive a summary and feedback based on recent scrutiny engagement on the budget position for 2024/25 and future planning.
Recommendations:	That Overview Panel is asked to note the content of the report and appendices.
Links to Corporate Plan:	Scrutiny work programmes are linked to the Council’s Corporate Plan. Scrutiny activity seeks to support effective decision-making and priorities across Tameside.
Policy Implications:	The work programmes comprise activity that seeks to check the effective implementation of council policies and if appropriate make recommendations to the Executive with regards to development, performance monitoring, outcomes and value for money.
Financial Implications: (Authorised by the Section 151 Officer)	<p>The report provides an update on the recent scrutiny engagement on the Council’s in-year (2023/24) budget monitoring forecast, together with the proposed plans for the Council’s 2024/25 budget that will be presented to full Council for approval on 27 February 2024.</p> <p>It is a requirement that scrutiny panels are consulted during planned budget conversations and engagement, as the independence of scrutiny enables Members to seek assurances on the Council’s budget planning, process and priorities.</p> <p>The report and supporting appendices provide details of the engagement and key issues raised by the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Chairs, together with the supporting responses from the First Deputy (Finance, Resources and Transformation) and Director of Resources (Section 151 Officer).</p> <p>Related details of further scrutiny engagement on the Council budget during 2024/25 will be reported accordingly to Members during the financial year.</p>
Legal Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)	<p>Overview and Scrutiny committees were introduced in 2000 by sections 9F to 9FI of the Local Government Act 2000 as amended by the Localism Act 2011.</p> <p>They have statutory powers to scrutinise and make recommendations in relation to decisions made and proposed to</p>

be made, in order to prove continuing improvement.

In particular, it is a requirement that Scrutiny Panels be consulted as part of planned budget proposals and that there be effective independent and constructive challenge to any such proposals, and which is of vital importance in considering the current budget forecast.

The appendixes to the report provide an overview of the material considerations and assurances sought by and provided to the Scrutiny Panel.

Risk Management:

Regular updates to Overview Panel provide assurance that Scrutiny is progressing with an effective work programme, supporting good decision-making and service improvement.

Access to Information:

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Paul Radcliffe, Policy and Strategy Lead by:



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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Council is required by law to set a balanced budget for the upcoming financial year. It is important to base proposals on a range of sound and sustainable assumptions about income and expenditure. There is an additional need to assess, project and monitor a range of known and unknown external pressures.
- 1.2 The authority also has a statutory duty to consult with businesses and other representatives of non-domestic ratepayers on its annual spending proposals. The Council instructs and delivers a timetable of engagement activity in order to seek and understand the priorities of individual services, residents, patients, service users and businesses alike.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 It is a requirement that Scrutiny Panels be consulted as part of planned budget conversations and engagement. Such arrangements have been in place in Tameside since Scrutiny Panels were established in 2000. The independence of scrutiny enables members to seek assurances on budget planning, process and priorities.
- 2.2 All scrutiny members are cordially invited to attend an annual budget consultation session in January each year, at which final budget proposals are presented in detail. The session provides a suitable opportunity for scrutiny members to provide feedback, raise questions and concerns. Scrutiny provides timely feedback to the Executive Member with responsibility for Finance, with discussion points and comments shared to inform and support the final budget report.

Scrutiny Annual Budget Meeting – 2024/25 Budget Proposals

- 2.3 The independence of Scrutiny enables members to seek assurances on budget planning, process and priorities for 2024/25 and beyond. It is also appropriate for budget priorities to inform future Scrutiny activity and work programmes.
- 2.4 All Scrutiny members, along with the Chair, Deputy Chair and non-executive members of Overview Panel, were invited to attend one of two budget briefing sessions held on 15 January 2024. This follows on from a mid-year budget position for 2023/24, received in November 2023.
- 2.5 The update on 15 January 2024 was provided by Councillor Jacqueline North (First Deputy – Finance, Resources & Transformation); and Ashley Hughes, Director of Resources (Section 151 Officer). Also in attendance was the Chief Executive and Directors. Scrutiny members received an overview of the 2023/24 financial outturn and budget planning for 2024/25.

- 2.6 A collective response letter of the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Chairs was sent to the First Deputy (Finance, Resources and Transformation); and Director of Resources (Section 151 Officer) - **APPENDIX 1**.

Scrutiny Mid-Year Budget Meeting - 2023/24 Budget Position

- 2.7 All Scrutiny members, along with the Chair, Deputy Chair and non-executive members of Overview Panel, were provided with an opportunity to attend one of two budget briefing sessions held on 6 November 2023.
- 2.8 The sessions provide members with the opportunity to receive a comprehensive appraisal, which included an overview of key financial assumptions, the current budget position and a forward view regarding risks and pressures. A collective response letter of the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Chairs was sent to the First Deputy (Finance, Resources and Transformation); and Director of Resources (Section 151 Officer) - **APPENDIX 2**.

- 2.9 The Chair of Overview and the Scrutiny Chairs received a direct response from the First Deputy and Director of Finance to the Scrutiny mid-year letter. The letter provided a detailed reply to the questions and comments shared in November. The letter has subsequently been shared with all Scrutiny members and is to be tabled at Scrutiny Panels in March 2024 - **APPENDIX 3.**

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 As set out on the front of the report.