

Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules

1. 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.

2. 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 forward plan a timetable for making proposals to the Council for the adoption of any plan, strategy or budget that forms part of the budget and policy framework, which shall include consultation with the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
- (b) At the end of the consultation period, the Cabinet will then draw up firm proposals having regard to the responses to that consultation. If a relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee wishes to respond to the Cabinet in that consultation process then it may do so. As the Overview and Scrutiny Committees have responsibility for fixing their own work programme, it is open to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to investigate, research or report in detail with policy recommendations. The Cabinet will take any response from an Overview and Scrutiny Committee into account in drawing up firm proposals 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 firm proposals, the Chief Operating Officer will refer them at the earliest opportunity to the Council for decision.
- (d) In reaching a decision, the Council may adopt the Cabinet's proposals, amend them, refer them back to the Cabinet for further consideration, or in principle, substitute its own proposals in their place.
- (e) If it accepts the recommendation of the Cabinet without amendment, the Council may make a decision which has immediate effect. Otherwise, it may only make an in-principle decision. In either case, the decision will be made on the basis of a simple majority of votes cast at the meeting.
- (f) The decision will be publicised and a copy shall be given to the Leader.

- (g) An in-principle decision will automatically become effective five working days from the date of the Council's decision, unless the Leader informs the the Chief Operating Officer in writing within five working days that he/she objects to the decision becoming effective and provides reasons why.
- (h) In that case, the Chief Operating Officer will call a Council meeting within a further five working days. The Council will be required to re-consider its decision and the Leader's written submission within ten working days. The Council may:
 - i) approve the Cabinet's recommendation by a simple majority of votes cast at the meeting; or
 - ii) approve a different decision which does not accord with the recommendation of the Cabinet by a simple majority .
- (i) The decision shall then be made public, and shall be implemented immediately;
- (j) 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 policy and budgetary framework are reserved to the Council.
- (k) The provisions of paragraphs 2 (b) to 2 (i) above shall apply in respect of the Cabinet's proposals for the Budget, Capital Programme and Council Tax levels only where those proposals are submitted to the Council before the 8th February in the financial year preceding that for which the proposals are made.
- (l) Where a decision of the Council involves amendments to the Cabinet's proposals and is urgent in the interests of the efficient execution of the Council's responsibilities, it may have immediate effect if the Leader or in his/her absence the Deputy Leader or in his/her absence a Cabinet Member authorised by the Leader, indicates at the meeting that he/she agrees the amendments made.

3. Decisions outside the budget or policy framework

- (a) Subject to the provisions of paragraph 5 (virement) the Cabinet, committees of the Cabinet, individual members of the Cabinet and any officers, or joint arrangements discharging executive 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 4 below.

- (b) If the Cabinet, committees of the Cabinet, individual members of the Cabinet and any officers, or joint arrangements discharging executive functions, want to make such a decision, they shall take advice from the Monitoring Officer and/or the Chief Finance 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 4 (urgent decisions outside the budget and policy framework) shall apply.

4. **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 executive 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 Council; and
 - ii) if the Chairman of a relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee agrees that the decision is a matter of urgency.

The reasons why it is not practical to convene a quorate meeting of the Council and the Chairman of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee'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 a relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee the consent of the Mayor and in the absence of both the Deputy Mayor 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.

5. **Virement**

- (a) The Council shall have detailed budget information produced each year in its Budget Book .
- (b) Steps taken by the Cabinet, a committee of the Cabinet, an individual member of the Cabinet or officers, or joint arrangements discharging executive functions to implement Council policy shall not exceed those budgets allocated to each budget head. However, Service Heads shall be entitled to vire across budget heads where each individual virement does not exceed £25,000. Chief Officers and Section 151 Officer £50,000. The Cabinet can approve virement in the revenue and capital budgets of up to

£100,000, where the new activity accords with the Council's Policies and Objectives. Such virements cannot be aggregated to achieve a sum for an issue in excess of £100,000. Beyond that limit, approval to any virement across revenue and capital budget heads shall require the approval of the Council.

6. 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 executive 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.

7. Call-in of decisions outside the budget or policy framework

- (a) Where an Overview and Scrutiny Committee 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 Chief Finance Officer.
- (b) In respect of functions which are the responsibility of the Cabinet, the Monitoring Officer's report and/or Chief Finance 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 Chief Finance Officer conclude that the decision was a departure, and to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee if the Monitoring Officer or the Chief Finance 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 Chief Finance 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 Committee 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. The

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

- i) endorse a decision or proposal of the executive 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 executive 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 to accommodate it, require the Cabinet to reconsider the matter in accordance with the advice of either the Monitoring Officer/Chief Finance Officer.