

Audit Committee**27 April 2018****Finance Scrutiny Panel****Purpose of Report:** Progress report

The Finance Scrutiny Panel reviewed proposals for the 2018/19 and 19/20 budgets. However the FSP was frustrated by the lack of information on the budget until late in January which compromised its ability to provide effective scrutiny. The FSP continues to support the development of 5 year budget plans but the lack of detail going forward poses a substantial risk to the delivery of savings.

The FSP are pleased that there will be a thorough review of the Medium Term Financial Strategy but remain concerned that the 2018/19 budget has been balanced by use of one off inputs and technical accounting practices.

The Authority is to proceed, as part of a WLGA pilot scheme, with using the CIPFA financial model to independently assess the current financial robustness of the organisation, and to benchmark the organisation's financial performance against best practice. This process should highlight strengths and weaknesses in the Council's financial management systems and will form the basis for future improvement.

At its most recent meeting, consideration was given to the budget approach for 2019/20 and noted that services are required to submit proposals for initial consideration by a Panel, comprising senior Cabinet Members and Officers, by early May prior to their consideration by Cabinet. The FSP were keen that deliverability of proposals be a key consideration.

Members will be aware that a review of scrutiny arrangements is underway. It is suggested that the FSP should continue for the time being but that a review be carried out to determine the way forward in light of the final decision regarding the committee structure.

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Group Membership: County Councillors J G Morris (Lead Member), M Dorrance, J Gibson-Watt, D R Jones, P Roberts, D A Thomas, E Vaughan, A Williams, G Williams and Mr J Brautigam