

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO COUNCIL

6 SEPTEMBER 2017

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR – OPERATIONAL AND PARTNERSHIP SERVICES

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY – BUDGET RESEARCH AND EVALUATION PANEL

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide details of the proposed Scrutiny Budget Consultation Process under the new Scrutiny Committee structure.

2. Corporate Improvement Objectives / Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 The key improvement objectives identified in the Corporate Plan have been embodied in the Overview & Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes. The Corporate Improvement Objectives were adopted by Council on 1 March 2017 which Council will seek to implement. The Overview and Scrutiny Committees engage in review and development of plans, policy or strategies which support all of the following Corporate priorities:

1. **Supporting a successful economy** – taking steps to make the county a good place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focused on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions of all people in the county.
2. **Helping people to be more self-reliant** – taking early steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services.
3. **Smarter use of resources** – ensuring that all its resources (financial, physical, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the development of resources throughout the community that can help deliver the Council's priorities.

3. Background

- 3.1 At the meeting held on 7 August 2012, the Corporate Resources & Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee approved the approach for the proposed 2013/14 Budget Consultation Research and Evaluation Panel (BREP). The primary purpose of such an approach was to:
- a) Achieve consensus on the direction of the budget over the life of the medium term financial strategy.
 - b) Achieve a detailed overview and assessment of the budget proposals where the expertise and knowledge pertaining to each Committee service area contributes to a Corporate understanding and appreciation of the draft budget proposals;

- c) Assist the Council to develop a budget for 2013/14 that aims to meet the needs of the communities of Bridgend County Borough;
 - d) To facilitate firmer understanding of the budget setting process and the draft proposals in order to assist the Committees in making informed comments, constructive challenge or recommendations to Cabinet as part of the budget consultation process.
- 3.2 In considering the challenges associated with continued budget reductions, Members of the 2013/14 BREP recognised the need for a 'whole Council' response to be adopted in managing anticipated cuts to services against a backdrop of increasing demand, public sector reform and the challenging financial outlook.
- 3.3 The 2013/14 Panel therefore recommended that a Standing BREP be established to engage members on budget proposals as well as to enable members to feed in community intelligence gained from their representative role and to engage in shaping future service provision. This recommendation was endorsed by both the Corporate Resources and Improvement Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet as part of the 2013/14 draft budget consultation process.
- 3.4 Previously it has been agreed that each Scrutiny Committee would nominate two members to sit on the Standing BREP.

Methodology

- 3.5 The Standing BREP previously held approximately six meetings, examining the Budget Strategy for the Council as a whole by means of semi-structured interviews with Directors and Officers.
- 3.6 The Panel focused their work on a few specific areas to examine in detail in order to assist with informing the budget proposals and also to ensure that there was no duplication between the work of the Panel and that of the individual Committees who considered budget proposals in detail for each Directorate.
- 3.7 As well as meeting with the Chief Executive early on in the Panel's meetings, the BREP also invited the Deputy Leader/Cabinet Member – Resources to attend each meeting to be part of the BREP process. This proved extremely beneficial in providing a strengthened link between BREP's views and their debate, and Cabinet. It also provided a real opportunity for BREP to help develop and shape Council policies on the delivery of services.

4. Current Situation / Proposal

- 4.1 Under the new Scrutiny Committee structure the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee (COSC) has the overall responsibility for budget monitoring throughout the year. As such it is proposed that it continues this role and appoints BREP with such Members of the COSC as it agrees to sit on the Panel.
- 4.2 The purpose of the Panel would be as above in para. 3.1 with minor amendments to points b) and c) to reflect the recent changes to the Scrutiny structure and the upcoming financial year:

- b) Achieve a detailed overview and assessment of the budget proposals where the expertise and knowledge of each Committee contributes to a Corporate understanding and appreciation of the draft budget proposals;
- c) Assist the Council to develop a budget for the forthcoming year that aims to meet the needs of the communities of Bridgend County Borough;

4.3 Each Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee (SOSC) would continue to receive an individual set of Directorate Budget proposals to scrutinise in December, as has previously been the case. The comments and recommendations from each Committee would then be consolidated along with the BREP's comments into one report which would be presented to Cabinet.

4.4 As with all Research and Evaluation Panels it is proposed that the Chair of BREP be appointed at the first meeting of the Panel. Council has not allocated a senior salary to the Chairperson of BREP and therefore no additional remuneration will be made for this role.

4.5 There is representation from all three SOSCs on the COSC. The knowledge and experience gained through their work can be utilised within the BREP process.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules

5.1 None.

6. Equalities Impact Assessment

6.1 There are no equality implications arising from this report.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 This report has no direct financial implications.

8. Recommendation

8.1 Council is asked to approve the process for the Scrutiny Budget Consultation Process under the new Committee structure as detailed in section 4 above.

Andrew Jolley

Corporate Director – Operational and Partnership Services

10 August 2017

Contact Officer: Rachel Keepins
Scrutiny Officer

Telephone: (01656) 643613

E-mail: scrutiny@bridgend.gov.uk

Postal Address: Democratic Services - Scrutiny
Bridgend County Borough Council,

Civic Offices,
Angel Street,
Bridgend,
CF31 4WB

Background documents

None