

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

COMMUNITY FOCUSED EFFICIENT COUNCIL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**RESPONSE TO THE SERVICE AND FINANCIAL PLANNING 2011/12-
2013/14 STRATEGY**

The Community Focussed Efficient Council (CFEC) Scrutiny Committee is a politically balanced Committee of six elected members and two co-opted members of the public. The Committee has responsibility for overall scrutiny of the Council's budget strategy.

The Cabinet launched its budget consultation process on 31st December 2010 with the release of proposals in respect of the investment package, savings, use of balances and the strategy for council tax. The proposals were agreed by Cabinet on 11th January 2011.

A Members' Information Seminar on local government finance was held on 4th January. Scrutiny committee members received a copy of the budget proposals and identified lines of enquiry which were sent to Cabinet Members and senior officers so that they could prepare the answers.

The CFEC Scrutiny Committee has met twice to consider the proposals, and each of the six other Scrutiny Committees have met once to hear the responses to their questions and to discuss the proposals relating to their priority area. Each Scrutiny Committee submitted their comments to the CFEC Scrutiny Committee, and these comments were considered as part of the process and informed the final response. The Committee was advised that no alternative proposals would be submitted by opposition groups.

The Scrutiny Committees met with Cabinet Members for each priority area, relevant Heads of Service, Service Delivery Managers and finance officers. The list of participants is attached as Appendix i.

The members of the Committee would like to extend their thanks to the range of Members and officers that assisted them by attending meetings or providing written responses to questions.

The Committee considered the Service and Financial Planning Strategy put forward by the Cabinet, and understood the necessity for making the level of savings required by the reduction in Government grant.

However, the members of the Committee had a number of comments that they would like the Cabinet to consider prior to finalising their proposals, and would like a written response from Cabinet to demonstrate how these comments have been taken into account:

1. Members of the Committee considered the use of one-off balances to bridge the budget gap during 2011/12. They found this approach acceptable given the fact that the savings required are unavoidable.
2. Members of the Committee noted the additional assurances relating to the value of capital receipts, but remained concerned that there were significant risks attached to achievement of the projected capital receipts and the exposure this would cause.
3. Members of the Committee welcomed the Community Engagement strategy on the budget, but emphasised that members of the public should be made aware of changes to services as soon as possible.
4. Further, the Committee members recommended that as decisions are made about savings in health and social care, that safeguards are put in place to ensure people who are most vulnerable and with the greatest need receive appropriate support. Any reduction in service should be fully explained to service users.
5. Members of the Committee recommended that the Council continues to work very closely with the PCT and existing and emerging NHS structures to ensure that in a time of great change signalled by the Health White Paper, services are delivered as efficiently and effectively as possible and the best possible use is made of money available within the Borough.
6. Some members of the Committee shared the confidence of the Housing, Regeneration and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee that the Council could achieve the proposed savings from the reduction in grants to the voluntary sector, but were concerned that voluntary organisations may not be able to make the necessary changes to their culture or operation that the grant reductions would require for them to continue current levels of service with reduced funding.

However, some members of the Committee noted that a grant reduction to the voluntary sector could result in a disproportionate reduction in services.

7. Members of the Committee recommended that within the revenue budget for rights of way, the budget for legal services is protected to maintain the level of service to process modification orders.

The Committee members would also like the Cabinet to take account of the comments of all the Scrutiny Committees in their proposals and further work, and these comments are attached as Appendix ii. The list includes some requests for clarification on specific points, and Cabinet Members are invited to provide a response to these questions as set out in the table appended.

Report prepared by Fiona Bottrill, Scrutiny Manager, Tel. 01952 383113 and Stephanie Jones, Scrutiny Officer, Tel. 01952 383114.

Appendix i

Members and officers attending scrutiny meetings

Cllr. Stephen Bentley	Cabinet Member, Active Lifestyles, Leisure & Culture
Cllrs. Stephen Burrell	Cabinet Member, Children & Young People
Cllr. Eric Cater	Cabinet Member, Housing, Regeneration & Prosperity
Cllr. Jayne Greenaway	Cabinet Member, Children & Young People
Cllr. Miles Hosken	Cabinet Member, Environment & Rural Area
Cllr. Sean Kelly	Cabinet Member, Community Focused Efficient Council
Cllr. Adrian Lawrence	Cabinet Member, Environment & Rural Area
Cllr. Jacqui Seymour	Cabinet Member, Adult Care and Support
Paul Clifford	Corporate Director, Active Lifestyles – Leisure & Culture, Adult Care & support
Meredith Evans	Corporate Director, Housing, Regeneration & Prosperity and Environment & Rural Area
Richard Partington	Assistant Chief Executive
Michael Barker	Head of Housing & Planning
Ken Clarke	Head of Finance
Jonathan Eatough	Head of Governance
Laura Johnston	Head of Safeguarding
Clive Jones	Head of Family & Community Services
Jonathan Rowe	Head of Environmental Services
Peter Smith	Head of Economy & Skills
Paul Taylor	Sector Specialist, Social Care
Alan Fox	Estates and Investments Manager
Stuart Freeman	Service Delivery Manager – Highways and Transport
Julia Copus	Senior Finance Manager
Pauline Harris	Senior Finance Manager
Richard Peach	Senior Finance Manager
Tracy Smart	Senior Finance Manager

**Scrutiny Committee Recommendations and Comments on
Service and Financial Planning Proposals for 2011/12 – 2013/14.**

Active Lifestyles - Leisure and Culture	Response
1. The Committee was satisfied that the process to consider and agree the service and financial planning proposals for 2011/12 – 2013/14 has been an open and transparent process.	No response required.
2. The Committee recognised that significant savings must be made during 2012/12 and 2013/14 and recommend that consultation on these savings should be carried out. The Scrutiny Committee will expect to have a key role in this consultation process.	Work underway to co-ordinate work of Scrutiny Committees regarding Service Reviews / Restructures.
3. The Committee welcome the additional funding for the Town Park. Members were assured that the issues below have been included in the funding bid. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Appropriate lighting is installed, b. Wardens are available during park opening hours c. Better signage including contact information for wardens and security is available d. Pathways are maintained so they do not become overgrown e. Gateways to define entry into Park NB. Note that friends of Town Park Volunteers will have training to cover the Town park in a voluntary capacity to work with the wardens	No response required.
4. Members recognise that the Council does not have the resources to fund the feasibility study on the proposal to develop further sporting facilities within the town park e.g. rugby, hockey, archery and cricket. However Members recommend: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The Cabinet Member for Active Lifestyles meets with the Scrutiny Member who raised this issue 	Update to future Active Lifestyles Scrutiny Committee meeting

<p>b. The Cabinet Members for Active Lifestyles considers the work undertaken the committee which previously started discussions with partner organisations</p> <p>c. The Cabinet Members for Active Lifestyles investigates the lease of the land used in town park for sporting facilities</p> <p>d. That partner organisations e.g. the national sporting bodies are approached to consider investment opportunities in the Town Park to develop sporting facilities.</p> <p>Members of the Committee recognise that in the current financial circumstances the Council does not have the resources to fund or match fund investment in sporting facilities in the Town Park. However the Committee recommends that the Council be the catalyst to bring together organisations that could contribute to funding a feasibility study if necessary and further sports facilities. The Scrutiny Committee requests update reports in the progress of this work.</p>	
<p>Adult Care and Support</p>	<p>No response required.</p>
<p>1. The Committee was satisfied that the process to consider and agree the service and financial planning proposals for 2011/12 – 2013/14 has been an open and transparent process.</p>	<p>No response required.</p>
<p>2. The Committee recognised that a significant proportion of the savings for 2011/12 are based on efficiencies already achieved and through one off savings. The Committee support this process to enable further consideration to be given to the major changes that will be required to make the further savings necessary during 2012/13 and 2013/14.</p>	<p>Work underway to co-ordinate work of Scrutiny Committees regarding Service Reviews / Restructures.</p>
<p>3. The Committee welcome that the Council will consult the public, service users and the Scrutiny Committee on the proposal for future savings and the impact this will have on service provision.</p>	<p>Work underway to co-ordinate work of Scrutiny Committees regarding Service Reviews / Restructures.</p>
<p>4. The Committee recognised the increase in personalisation and personal budgets will be a key part of the redesign of adult care services through which savings will be made. It was recognised that while individuals will have greater freedom to buy the services that best meet their needs the amount of money available will be reduced.</p>	<p>No response required.</p>
<p>5. The Committee recommends that as decisions are made to make further savings that safeguards</p>	<p>Issue regarding informing service</p>

are put in place to ensure people who are most vulnerable and with the greatest need receive appropriate support. Any reduction in service should be fully explained to service users.	users about changes to services to be picked up in Cabinet response.
6. The Committee support the renegotiation of contracts to find further efficiencies and ensure that the services provided are more personalised to individual needs. The contract should specify the quality of service to be provided and this should be carefully monitored.	No response required.
7. The Committee support the inclusion of funding for further development of Extracare provision in the Borough. Members requested clarification on the number of Schemes that could be supported by the provision made in the budget for 2011/12 (£ 1,200,000) and 2012/13 (£ 1,000,000)	Information about number of schemes to be circulated to ACS Committee Members by 31.02.11
8. The Committee recommends that the Council continues to work closely with the PCT and NHS organisations to ensure that in a time of great change that services are delivered as efficiently and effectively as possible.	Updates to Active Lifestyles Scrutiny Committee on development of GP consortia, Health and Wellbeing Board and transfer of public health.
9. The Committee recommend that the £2.1 million funding that will be transferred from the PCT to the local authority is effectively monitored.	Update to future Adult Care and Support meeting.
Children & Young People	No response required.
1. With regard to the proposed combined savings of £71k across the Schools Multicultural Development Service and Speech and Language Therapy, the scrutiny committee noted the minimal impact and understood the reasons for making the savings. However, the members requested further clarification on how the £50k non-staff savings were being made to the Schools Multicultural Development Service (Appendix 5, item 17) and requested a copy of the Equality Impact Assessment on the changes to the service. The Committee reserved the right to monitor the impact of the savings in the future.	Clarification of savings, and a copy of the equality impact assessment for this saving to be circulated to CYP Committee members by 28.02.11
2. The committee was concerned about the impact of the proposed saving on non-mandatory milk and how evidence of wastage had been gathered. The committee requested that further investigation is done into the wastage figure, and would prefer that a non-carte blanche approach is taken.	Information regarding wastage figures and how they had been arrived at to be circulated to CYP Committee Members by 28.02.11

3. The committee understands the financial and budgetary constraints around children in care, but also understands the corporate parenting responsibility of all elected members for children in the authority's care and that this should always take precedence.	No response required.
4. The committee accepts the overspend on children in care, and understands the reasons for it. The committee acknowledged that there are great strides being taken to reduce costs, and that overspend on children in care is an annual occurrence which has to be recognised.	No response required.
5. The committee recommended that information about what underlies the cost of placements should be made more readily available to members, and reinforced the previous recommendation that corporate parenting training is made mandatory for all members.	No response required.
Community Focused Efficient Council (12th January)	
1. The Committee remained concerned about the non-provision of the reserve for Single Status in 2011/12, although recognised that the risk of the one-off non-provision was counter-balanced by the opposing risks to the delivery of services subject to the major Service Reviews.	No response required.
2. On the matter of the delay to the Single Status programme, the Committee would like to hear the views of the Unions before drawing any conclusion.	No response required.
3. The Committee was concerned about drawing on reserves and the level of remaining balances, and the potential effect that risk mitigation may have on reserves and balances. However, the members were assured that the Chief Financial Officer was satisfied that the Council's approach to reserves and balances within the total financial strategy was robust. The members requested any further assurance on the robustness of the process which could be provided by the Corporate Risk Register, the Audit Committee or external auditors (KPMG).	No response required.
4. The Committee remained concerned about the risk of not realising the projected value of capital	Issue regarding risk of not realising

<p>receipts and the potential exposure this would cause.</p> <p>The members asked whether any additional assurance could be provided on this issue. The Disposal Programme 2010-2016 and the notes of the CFEC meeting which reviewed capital receipts will be re-circulated to the Committee.</p>	<p>capital receipts to be included in Cabinet response.</p>
<p>5. The Committee welcomed the fact that Equality Impact Assessments were being done on the proposed budget arrangements and looked forward to receiving a report on this.</p>	<p>No response required.</p>
<p>6. The Committee noted with congratulations that the change to Treasury Management in bringing some of the function in-house had resulted in savings and improved performance.</p>	<p>No response required.</p>
<p>7. The Committee welcomed the Cabinet Member's commitment to consulting on the budget proposals with small traders in Ironbridge and looked forward to receiving a report on the outcome.</p>	<p>No response required.</p>
<p>8. The Committee noted that the proposed non-staff savings of £400k for Governance included the £300k dividend from WMS, and were assured by officers that on past performance WMS was likely to sustain a similar level of dividend going forward.</p>	<p>No response required.</p>
<p>Community Protection & Cohesion</p>	
<p>There were no comments from the committee.</p>	
<p>Environment & Rural Area</p>	
<p>1. The Committee recognised the circumstances that lead to the savings that need to be made.</p>	<p>No response required.</p>
<p>2. The Committee wanted assurance that the most disadvantaged members of the communities would not be disproportionately affected. Members raised the point that when considered individually the savings set out may not have a large impact – but when the combined effect of savings are considered this may affect vulnerable groups.</p>	<p>This issue has been referred to the impact assessment process for the savings identified in the budget proposals.</p>

3. There was a range of views from Members of the Committee regarding the removal of the concessionary bus fare for senior citizens from 9.00-930. Most members of the Committee agreed with the proposal but one Member felt particularly strongly that this proposal would disadvantage older people.	No response required.
4. Members recognised that the cost of the replacement of refuse and recycling bins should not automatically fall to the Council - but Members questioned if there are instances where this cost should be the responsibility of the waste contractor.	Response requested by 28.02.11 to be circulated to ERA Scrutiny Committee Members
5. Members suggested that discussions could be held with supermarkets to see if they would be able to continue to provide Bring Bank recycling facilities.	Response requested by 28.02.11 11 to be circulated to ERA Scrutiny Committee Members
6. Members commented that it is an efficient use of resources to ensure that the road repairs are carried out to a high standard to avoid the unnecessary costs of subsequent repairs.	No response required.
7. Members commented on the potential increase in risk relating to the proposals to reduce the number of inspection of spoil mounds, reduce the number of inspections of pools and reservoirs and the reduction in land drainage schemes. Members requested assurance that appropriate risk assessments are, and will be, regularly carried out.	Response requested by 28.02.11 11 to be circulated to ERA Scrutiny Committee Members
8. Members recommend that within the revenue budget for rights of way the budget for legal services is protected to maintain level of service to process modification orders.	Issue regarding maintaining budget for modification orders to be included in Cabinet response.
9. Members recommend that the Council maintains dialogue with the Rural Forum to monitor the impact of the proposed changes to rural transport and respond to gaps identified.	Update to future meeting of the ERA Scrutiny Committee
10. The Committee suggested that Parish Councils and voluntary groups are involved in rights of way maintenance projects, but that this work should be co-ordinated by the Rights of Way team.	Update to future meeting of the ERA Scrutiny Committee
11. Members recommended that discussions take place with taxi firms and taxi drivers operating in Telford and Wrekin regarding the use of taxi tokens to ensure that these are a viable form of	Update to future meeting of the ERA Scrutiny Committee

payment.	
Housing, Regeneration & Prosperity	
1. The Committee recognised that meeting the necessary budget reductions with the front-loading for 2011/12 would be a challenge for the Council.	No response required.
2. The Committee welcomed the fact that in spite of the extreme budget pressures, there was a clear commitment to protecting the budget for the regeneration programme and to delivering the planned schemes.	No response required.
3. The Committee was assured that the projected staff savings targets for Housing and Planning could be met, but remained concerned by the potential impact that staff reductions could have on the delivery of services when the detailed re-structure proposals were not yet available. The Committee requested that the re-structure proposals for Housing and Planning are brought to the Committee after they are launched in March 2011.	Work underway to co-ordinate work of Scrutiny Committees regarding Service Review / Restructure.
4. The Committee welcomed the focus on Tourism and the fact that the service had been brought in-house under One Telford, and further welcomed the joined-up approach that was being taken to tourism, to link it with business development and regeneration.	No response required.
5. The Committee welcomed the more cost-effective approaches to marketing Telford and Wrekin as a leisure and business destination by being very selective about attending conferences so that resources are effectively targeted, and by focusing more on web-based marketing tools.	No response required.
6. The Committee was pleased that potential income from the New Homes Bonus Scheme had not been factored into the budget for 2012/13. The Committee accepted that the implications of the scheme are unclear as the details are still to be announced, but remained concerned about any potential impact the scheme may have on housing developments and budgets. The Committee therefore requested that the New Homes Bonus Scheme comes to scrutiny once details have been announced.	Update to future meeting of the HRP Scrutiny committee.

7. The Committee was confident that the Council could make the proposed savings from the reduction in grants to the voluntary sector, but were concerned that voluntary organisations may not be able to make the necessary changes to their culture or operation that the grant reductions would require for them to continue with reduced funding.	Issue regarding grant reductions to voluntary sector to be included in Cabinet response.
8. The Committee was concerned that there is additional uncertainty due to the fact that budget strategy could potentially change after the May election, and highlighted that there were no alternative budget proposals to cover this scenario.	No response required.
9. The Committee noted that in the Capital Programme, £34k had been allocated to Brookside for 2011/12, but nothing for later years and requested clarification on whether this was total allocation and if this means that nothing will be spent in future years.	Response requested by 28.02.11 to be circulated to Members of HRP Scrutiny Committee
10. The Committee noted that no funding had been allocated in the Capital Programme to regeneration schemes in Randlay and asked for clarification of how schemes would be funded.	Response requested by 28.02.11 to be circulated to Members of HRP Scrutiny Committee