

Part 3E

Budget and Policy Framework

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1. The framework for executive decisions

The Council will be responsible for agreeing the budget and policy framework as set out in Article 4. Once the budget or policy framework is agreed, Cabinet is responsible for implementing the agreed policy framework within the set budget.

2. Process for developing the framework

Cabinet is responsible for leading the development of the policy framework and putting forward proposals for the draft budget, plans and strategies for the Council to consider. A full list of the plans and strategies adopted as part of the policy framework is appended to this part of the constitution.

3. Decisions outside the budget or policy framework

- (a) Subject to the provisions of paragraphs 4, 5 and 6 below Cabinet, committees of Cabinet, individual members of Cabinet and any officers, area committees 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 paragraphs 4, 5 and 6 below.
- (b) If Cabinet, committees of Cabinet, individual members of Cabinet and any officers, area committees or joint arrangements discharging executive functions want to make such a decision, they shall take advice from the Monitoring Officer and/or the Chief Financial 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) Cabinet, a committee of Cabinet, an individual member of Cabinet or officers, area committees 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 chair of 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 chair of Scrutiny Committee 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 chair of Scrutiny Committee, the consent of the respective vice-chair 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

Steps taken by Cabinet, a committee of Cabinet, an individual member of Cabinet or officers, area committees or joint arrangements discharging executive functions to implement council policy shall not exceed those budgets allocated to each budget head. However, such bodies or individuals shall be entitled to vire across budget head where each individual virement does not exceed £50,000. Beyond that limit, approval to any virement across budget heads shall require the approval of the Council.

For the purpose of clarity, the term 'budget head' means:

- (i) the headings set out in the annual budget and resources book, such as 'direct employment costs', 'maintenance' or 'running expenses' for revenue budgets; and
- (ii) each capital programme scheme set out in the annual budget and resources book.

6. In-year changes to policy framework

The responsibility for agreeing the budget and policy framework lies with the Council and decisions by Cabinet, a committee of Cabinet, an individual member of Cabinet or officers, area committees 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) necessary to ensure compliance with the law, ministerial direction or government guidance;
- (b) 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.

- (c) in relation to a decision of Cabinet to approve a supplementary budget of up to £50,000 on any one budget head.

Where changes are made to any policy and strategy in accordance with either (a), (b) or (c) a report shall be made to the next available meeting of the Council giving details of the change or changes made and the reasons for them.

ANNEX

Plans and Strategies adopted as part of the Budget and Policy Framework

Corporate Strategy
Best Value Performance Plan
Sustainable Community Strategy
Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy
Local Development Framework
Food Service Plan
Statement of Licensing Policy
Housing Strategy
Local Agenda 21 Strategy
Medium Term Financial Strategy
Capital Strategy
Asset Management Plan
Customer Services Strategy