

## **Budget Protocol**

The budget setting process for the next few years is going to be more complex and more difficult for Members to achieve consensus.

This is likely to mean that proposals put forward for consideration at Council may well be proposals that some Members will feel unable to support without amendment.

It is necessary to consider how best to accommodate Members' legitimate rights to seek amendments of proposals.

The Council's Standing Orders allow a Member to move an amendment without prior notice as follows:

An amendment to a motion must be relevant to the motion and will either be:

- (i) to refer the matter to an appropriate body or individual for consideration or reconsideration;
- (ii) to leave out words;
- (iii) to leave out words and insert or add others; or
- (iv) to insert or add words,

as long as the effect of (ii) to (iv) is not to negate the motion.

Although it must be the case that Members are able to put forward amendments, the difficulty with the budget proposals is that a legal budget must be passed in February. It cannot be delayed or deferred.

Any proposal to remove or reduce one of the proposals will mean that an alternative saving or package of savings will have to be put forward to take its place in order to achieve the same overall result.

All of the proposals that will be recommended to Council will have been fully costed and been subject to a thorough impact assessment. Inevitably, the impact of alternative proposals put forward at a Council meeting will not be able to be assessed on the hoof, neither will there be enough time for finance officers to confirm that the alternatives will achieve the level of required saving.

In these circumstances, Members may not be confident in approving alternative proposals and, in some situations, statutory officers may have to advise Members at the meeting that they should not pass the alternative. This may mean that otherwise valid amendments or alternative choices will be defeated.

It is therefore in the interests of those who wish to move amendments to give adequate notice to officers in order that those proposals can be considered, costed and impact assessed. Members at the Council meeting will then have genuine options to consider.

Clearly, for Members to be able to properly consider what amendment, if any they would like to propose, they will need sufficient notice of the proposals that will come before them at Council.

In the current budget process Members are getting ample notice. There have been a series of workshops at which Members have been given detailed information and been able to question officers on their proposals. At the end of each workshop Members have been asked to confirm the list of items that they are prepared to put to the vote at Council.

This means that Members will have sufficient time from the end of the budget workshops until the publication of Council papers during which they can seek advice on any alternatives they may want to propose. Members can speak to officers individually or may invite officers to advise their groups on any proposals they may wish to explore.

Cabinet will be considering proposals for recommendation to Council at its meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> November. The list of proposals that they will be considering will be published in advance of this meeting. The Cabinet recommendations will be considered by Council on 9<sup>th</sup> December.

Any Member who wishes to propose an amendment to any of the proposals and, consequently, make an alternative proposal should submit their amendment and proposal with a seconder, in writing, to the Head of Finance and Assets by no later than 25<sup>th</sup> November in order that officers may cost the alternative and conduct an impact assessment. The amendment and proposal can then be included with the papers for Council on 9<sup>th</sup> December.

There will be a further budget workshop in December with further proposals being considered by Cabinet on 13<sup>th</sup> January for recommendation to Council on 3<sup>rd</sup> February.

The same procedure for amendments and alternative proposals will apply.

Members who wish to propose an alternative must do so by sending their proposal in writing, with a seconder, to the Head of Finance and Assets by no later than 20<sup>th</sup> January in order that it may be costed, impact assessed and included with the papers for Council on 3<sup>rd</sup> February.