

By: Overview, Scrutiny and Localism Manager

To: Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee – 11 February 2009

Subject: ***Policy Overview Committees (POC's) consideration of the Medium Term Plan***

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: To consider the different ways in which the POC's considered the Medium Term Plan (MTP) in November 2008 and to discuss how the Medium Term Plan should be considered in November 2009.

Introduction

1. (1) On 5 November 2008 all POC chairman and spokesmen were invited to a briefing on the Medium Term Plan (MTP) by Andy Wood, Head of Financial Management (CED).

(2) At this briefing the ways in which the MTP could be considered by POC Members was discussed. It was agreed that at each of the POC meetings, , in addition to having a general discussion on the MTP, the Committee would be given the opportunity to form an Informal Members Group to look in more detail at specific issues for that Directorate, the IMG was not intended to replace the policy discussion at the full POC.

Consideration of the MTP by POC's

2. (1) The November round of POC's dealt with the MTP in a variety of ways:-

(a) *Environment and Regeneration POC – 6 November 2008*

This POC did not debate the MTP at their meeting but established an IMG which met on 24 November 2008.

(b) *Communities POC – 12 November 2008*

This POC agreed that it would not establish an IMG to consider the MTP, instead it had a full debate which lasted approximately an hour and a detailed minute was produced

(c) Children, Families and Education POC – 13 November 2008

The C, F & E POC did not discuss the MTP at their meeting, instead they agreed to establish an IMG which met on 20 November 2008.

(d) Corporate POC – 14 November 2008

The Corporate POC had a 50 minute debate on the MTP and formed an IMG to look in detail at more specific issues which met on 19 November 2008.

(e) Adult Social Services POC – 18 November 2008

This POC had a 10 minute discussion on the MTP and formed an MTP IMG which meet on 20 November 2008.

(3) Notes from all the MTP IMGs, and Minutes from POC's which considered the MTP were taken into account in the development of the draft Budget and the budget report to each POC in January 2009 reflected on this contribution.

Consideration of the MTP in November 2009

3. (1) For those POC's who established MTP IMG's the timescale for them to meet was extremely limited (they needed to meet by 26 November 2008). As a consequence this meant some Members who would have like to have participated could not due to unavailability.

(2) It would be very helpful if the POCC reflected on the experiences gained from 2008 and gave guidance on how they think that this could most effectively be dealt with in 2009. Based on this a further report will be submitted to the first POCC after the County Council Elections (17 July 2009) where agreement can be reached and arrangements that need to be made to facilitate meetings can be done in good time.

POC – Budget IMG's

4. (1) At the meeting of the Children, Families and Education POC on 16 January 2009 in response to a request from Mrs Dean it was suggested that the POCC should consider whether POC's should establish IMGs, like the Cabinet Scrutiny Budget IMG, to receive regular reports outside of the main POC meetings.

(2) There are advantages and disadvantages in having the regular monitoring report considered by an IMG rather than the whole POC a couple of these are set out below:-

Advantages:-

- This would free up time at main POC meeting to discuss other items in more detail.
- It will enable small group of Members to gain expertise on their directorates budget;

Disadvantages:-

- It will reduce the knowledge base of the whole membership of the Committee, as the Minutes of the IMGs are not discussed in great detail when they are received at the POC;
- The financial monitoring reports which all of the POC's receive at each of the Policy Overview Committees, covering their portfolio/directorate areas has been helpful to highlight for Members of POC issues and concerns which they may wish to look at in greater detail. These reports have also increased Members familiarity with the budget for their POC's, which has hopefully helped with their consideration of their budget. These advantages could be lost if full consideration of these reports was limited to an IMG.
- It risks de-linking the budget and monitoring process from the policy overview process.

The POCC is requested to consider whether it wished to suggests to POC's that they consider setting up budget IMG's. If it is decided to do this then as good practice the POCC could review this a year after they are established.

Recommendations

10. The Committee is requested to :
- (a) give feedback on the value of POC's using an IMG to consider their MTP and whether this practice should be recommended to aid the consideration of the 2009 MTP; and
 - (b) to consider whether it wishes to suggests to POC's that they consider setting up budget IMG's and, if so, to review these after one year.

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Background Documents: None