

# Part 4 – Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules

## BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK PROCEDURE RULES

### 1. THE FRAMEWORK FOR EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Council will be responsible for the adoption of its budget and policy framework as set out in Article 4. Once a budget or a policy framework is in place, it will be the responsibility of the Cabinet to implement it.

NB – When the phrase ‘budget and policy framework’ is used here, it also refers to any constituent plan or strategy.

### 2. CABINET LEADS PROCESS; OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE INVOLVEMENT WITHIN CABINET CONSULTATION PROCESS; DIFFERENTIAL VOTING ON DISPUTES REGARDING BUDGET AND POLICY PROPOSALS

- (a) The Cabinet will publicise by including in the forward plan a timetable for making proposals to the Council for the adoption of any plan, strategy or budget that forms part of the budget and policy framework, and its arrangements for consultation after publication of those initial proposals. All Members of the Council, including the chairmen of scrutiny committees will also be notified. The consultation period shall in each instance be not less than 6 weeks.
- (b) At the end of that period, the Leader will then draw up firm proposals having regard to the responses to that consultation. If a relevant scrutiny committee wishes to respond to the Cabinet in that consultation process then it may do so. It is open to the Scrutiny Committees to investigate, research or report in detail with policy recommendations before the end of the consultation period. The Leader will take any response from a Scrutiny Committee into account in drawing up firm proposals for submission to the Council, and its report to Council will reflect the comments made by consultees.
- (c) Once the Leader has discussed his/her proposals with the Cabinet and Cabinet has approved the firm proposals, those proposals will be presented by the Leader to Council for decision.
- (d) In reaching a decision, the Council may adopt the Leader’s proposals, or may amend them, refer them back to the Cabinet for further consideration, or substitute its own proposals in their place.
- (e) If it accepts the recommendation of the Leader without amendment, the Council may make a decision which has immediate effect. Otherwise, it may only make an in-principle decision. In either case, the decision will be made on the basis of a simple majority of votes cast at the meeting.
- (f) The decision will be publicised in accordance with Article 4 and a copy shall be given to the Leader.
- (g) An in-principle decision will automatically become effective at least 5 days from the date of the Council’s decision, unless the Leader informs the proper officer in writing within 5 days that [he/she] objects to the decision becoming effective and provides reasons why.

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- (h) In that case, the proper officer will call a Council meeting within a further 2 days. The Council will be required to re-consider its decision and the Leader's written submission within 5 days. The Council may:
  - (i) approve the Leader's recommendation by a simple majority of votes cast at the meeting; or
  - (ii) approve a different decision which does not accord with the recommendation of the Cabinet by a simple majority.
- (i) The decision shall then be made public in accordance with Article 4, and shall be implemented immediately.
- (j) In approving the budget and policy framework, the Council will also specify the extent of virement within the budget and degree of in-year changes to the policy framework which may be undertaken by the Executive (Cabinet), in accordance with paragraphs 5 and 6 of these Rules (virement and in-year adjustments). Any other changes to the budget and policy framework are reserved to the Council.

### **3. DECISIONS OUTSIDE THE BUDGET OR POLICY FRAMEWORK**

- (a) Subject to the provisions of paragraph 5 (virement) the Cabinet, a committee of the Cabinet, individual members of the 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 wish 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 4 below.
- (b) If the Cabinet, a committee of the Cabinet, individual members of the 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) The Cabinet, a committee of the Cabinet, an individual member of the 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 full Council;

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- (ii) the chair of a relevant Scrutiny Committee agrees that the decision is a matter of urgency (In the absence of the chair of a relevant Scrutiny committee the agreement of the Speaker of the Council or in the absence of both, the agreement of the Deputy Speaker will be sufficient); and
- (iii) after appropriate advice/consultation has been taken from the Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer, Chief Finance Officer and the relevant Director.

The reasons why it is not practical to convene a quorate meeting of full Council and why the chair of the relevant Scrutiny Committee consent to the decision being taken as a matter of urgency (in the absence of the chair of a scrutiny committee the consent of the Speaker of the Council or in the absence of both the consent of the Deputy Speaker will be sufficient) must be noted on the record of the decision.

- (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

- (a) The Council shall have budget heads which are set by full Council when approving the Council's annual budget in accordance with the Financial Rules in Part 4 of the Constitution.
- (b) Steps taken by the Cabinet, a committee of the Cabinet, an individual member of the 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 within budget heads in accordance with the Financial Rules, ie up to £500,000. Approval to any virement across budget heads shall require the approval of the full Council, subject to the Financial Rules.

### 6. IN-YEAR CHANGES TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

The responsibility for agreeing the budget and policy framework lies with the Council; any decisions by the Cabinet, a committee of the Cabinet, an individual member of the 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) which will result in the closure or discontinuance of a service or part of service to meet a budgetary constraint;
- (b) necessary to ensure compliance with the law, ministerial direction or government guidance;
- (c) in relation to the policy framework in respect of a policy which would normally be agreed annually by the Council following consultation, but

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where the existing policy document is silent on the matter under consideration;

- (d) which relate to policy in relation to schools, where the majority of school governing bodies agree with the proposed changes; or
- (e) for which provision is made within the relevant policy

### 7. CALL-IN OF DECISIONS OUTSIDE THE BUDGET OR POLICY FRAMEWORK

- (a) Where a Scrutiny Committee is of the opinion that an executive decision is, or if made would be, contrary to the policy framework, or contrary to or not wholly in accordance with the Council's budget, then it shall seek advice from the Monitoring Officer and/or Chief Financial Officer.
- (b) In respect of functions which are the responsibility of the Cabinet, the Monitoring Officer's report and/or Chief Financial Officer's report shall be to the Cabinet with a copy to every member of the Council. Regardless of whether the decision is delegated or not, the Cabinet must meet to decide what action to take in respect of the Monitoring Officer's report and/or Chief Financial Officer's report and to prepare a report to Council in the event that the Monitoring Officer or the Chief Finance Officer conclude that the decision was a departure, and to the Scrutiny Committee if the Monitoring Officer or the Chief Finance Officer conclude that the decision was not a departure.
- (c) If the decision has yet to be made, or has been made but not yet implemented, and the advice from the Monitoring Officer and/or Chief Financial Officer is that the decision is or would be contrary to the policy framework or contrary to or not wholly in accordance with the budget, the Scrutiny Committees may refer the matter to Council. In such cases, no further action will be taken in respect of the decision or its implementation until the Council has met and considered the matter. The Council shall meet within 7 days of the request by a Scrutiny Committee or consider the matter at its next meeting depending on urgency of decision. At the meeting it will receive a report of the decision or proposals and the advice of the Monitoring Officer and/or Chief Financial Officer. The Council may either:
  - (i) endorse a decision or proposal of the executive decision taker as falling within the existing budget and policy framework. In this case no further action is required, save that the decision of the Council be minuted and circulated to all councillors in the normal way;

Or

- (ii) amend the Council's financial rules or policy concerned to encompass the decision or proposal of the body or individual responsible for that executive function and agree to the decision with immediate effect. In this case, no further action is required save that the decision of the Council be minuted and circulated to all councillors in the normal way;

Or

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- (iii) where the Council accepts that the decision or proposal is contrary to the policy framework or contrary to or not wholly in accordance with the budget, and does not amend the existing framework to accommodate it, require the Cabinet to reconsider the matter in accordance with the advice of either the Monitoring Officer/Chief Financial Officer.