

Report of	Meeting	Date
The Leader of the Council on behalf of the Executive	Council	7 th March 2006

EXECUTIVES RESPONSE TO BUDGET SCRUTINY

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- To inform Councillors of the Executive Cabinet's response to the issues raised by the Scrutiny Committee in relation to its review of the budget.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- The budget is the representation in financial terms of the Council's aspirations for its residents. The delivery of its corporate priorities is dependent upon resources being allocated to meet those priorities.

RISK ISSUES

- The issue raised and recommendations made in this report involve risk considerations in the following categories:

Strategy	√	Information	
Reputation	√	Regulatory/Legal	
Financial		Operational	
People		Other	

- The key risk to the Council is that it does not deliver its priorities resulting in it not delivering on its strategies and jeopardising its reputation as an organisation that delivers on its promises.

BACKGROUND

- For 2006/07 a new approach was adopted in terms of budget scrutiny. Detailed reviews were undertaken of particular elements of the budget that constituted a significant element of Council expenditure and that were also highlighted by the Audit Commission as part of its Use of Resources review as spending more than other corporate Councils.
- The aim of the exercise was to try to establish the reasons for the additional spending but as importantly for Members to form a view as to whether the Council was meeting its objectives for these particular services, and what resource implications this may have.
- The individual Scrutiny Panels had the opportunity to question the Executive Member and Officer on relevant issues. The outcome of that work has been directly fed into the Executive through the budget consultation process.

8. I have therefore taken the opportunity to respond to the issues raised by Scrutiny and set out in this report are the actions and responses to be taken by Executive as part of the 2006/07 budget consideration.

RESPONSE TO ISSUES RAISED BY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

9. **Recommendation 1** from **each** panel - That the Executive Cabinet be requested to pursue the provision of more detailed comparative data from the Audit Commissions' 'family tree' authorities, particularly in relation to the output, cost and quality of services, in order to enable a more reasonable value for money assessment of the whole of the Council's environmental service.

Answer

This is a problem for all Councils. The Executive have recognised that delivering value for the residents of Chorley is paramount, therefore the Councils Corporate Strategy key projects for 2005/06 includes "Develop and implement Use of Resources and VFM action Plan". This is not an issue that can be resolved in one financial year. It requires a measured and planned approach and the action plan is the start of that process.

Environment Panel

10. **Recommendation 2** - What steps will the Executive Cabinet take to achieve a better understanding of the perception gap in the measurement of residents satisfaction with standards of cleanliness within the Street Cleaning Contract.

Answer

The key to answering this question is having intelligence/knowledge. The area forum pilots will enable the Executive/ Council to gather this information. In addition the 2006/07 Investment plans include communication with local people in a more constructive way that will hopefully allow the Executive/Council to understand local issues better and address them where appropriate.

11. **Recommendation 3** - The Executive Cabinet is requested to examine the quality of design of litter bins and the capability of the contractors Cleanaway to emptying the litter bins whilst on collection rounds, and **Recommendation 7** - The Executive Cabinet is requested to examine the need for improved co-ordination of services to bring efficiency. Particular attention should be paid to problem areas and neighbourhoods as well as a wider promotion of the hot line number.

Answer

The Executive have recognised that the coordination of streetscene services is something that could be improved. The start of this process is the proposal contained in the Chief Executives senior management restructure that brings together the streetscene services under one Director. The second phase is delivering better coordination. This process is linked to the Council efficiency agenda and an action plan will be produced in 2006/07 with proposals to improve coordination and efficiency in areas such as litter bin emptying, litter picking, etc. A key element of this review will be looking particularly at the types of litter bin in the borough and the frequency and timing of the emptying of those bins.

12. **Recommendation 4** - The Executive Cabinet is requested to ensure that high profile cases on enforcement are publicised.

Answer

The Executive agrees with the point that the Council should both enforce and publicise its approach and action in relation to offenders. The investment proposals for 2006/07 include more resources to ensure that:

- preventative enforcement and an education campaign are undertaken to discourage fly tipping, dog fouling, graffiti etc

13. **Recommendation 5** - The Executive Cabinet is requested to ensure the enforcement of the management of the Cleanaway contract and that they clean up whilst waste collecting.

Answer

The Executive have requested that the Chief Executive deal with this issue as a matter of urgency and steps are already underway to improve the situation with regard to the performance of the contractor.

14. **Recommendation 6** - The Executive Cabinet is requested to introduce policy targets for the Neighbourhood Wardens relating to their street scene duties.

Answer

Identifying policy targets for the wardens streetscene activities is difficult given the reactive nature of most of their work however consideration will be given to introducing some local targets that reflect their contribution to priorities perhaps in terms of enforcement, fly-tipping etc and enables some measure of performance to be established.

Customer Panel

15. **Recommendation 2** - What steps will the Executive Cabinet take to ensure that the high-quality service the public is receiving from the Benefits service is maintained when the service moves into the Contact Centre.

Answer

The intention is to actually improve the service to customers. To ensure service quality is maintained a number of things have already been agreed or are underway, including:

- The range of services transferred to the contact centre to ensure only those questions that can be dealt with in the contact centre are in fact transferred in
- Transfer of staffing resources to the contact centre both on a permanent basis and as a temporary measure during the implementation
- A performance agreement between the contact centre and the Benefits service will be agreed

16. **Recommendation 3** - The Executive Cabinet is requested to undertake a consistent and measured review of all services via the Procurement strategy for the delivery of value for money services.

Answer

The Executive has not been afraid to make decisions regarding the best way of delivering Council service. In fact the 2006/07 budget includes two good examples of this with the Duxbury Golf Course market testing and the property services outsourcing

The Use of resources and VFM action plan referenced earlier will require that the Councils procurement strategy is delivered. Part of that strategy includes looking at all the council's services on a consistent and structured basis to establish how best to continue delivering those services so the local community receives good value from those services.

Community Panel

17. **Recommendation 2** - That action be taken to introduce effective performance indicators for planning enforcement work.

Answer

Identifying policy targets and indicators for planning enforcement is difficult given the reactive nature of most of the work however consideration will be given to introducing some local targets that reflect the contribution to priorities and enables some measure of performance to be established

CONCLUSIONS

18. I hope that through the responses given, the Council is able to see that the Executive have taken on board the views and issues raised during Scrutiny and that appropriate action is being taken to address these issues.
19. Finding solutions to the issues raised within the constraints contained in the budget is not always easy as difficult choices have to be made. The Executive has hopefully been able to deliver a budget that continues to address the issues that Members have raised and that reflect the aspirations of our residents articulated in the Community Strategy.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

20. That the Council note the responses made to the issues raised by Scrutiny Committee during the budget consultation process.

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DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

There are no background papers to this report.

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
Gary Hall	5480	28 February 2006	ADMINREP/REPORT