

Scrutiny Management Committee

28 November 2011

Report of the Assistant Director, Governance & ICT

SCRUTINY REVIEW SUPPORT BUDGET

Summary

1. This report sets out the current position in relation to available Council funding for overview and scrutiny review work.
2. Scrutiny Management Committee (SMC) has a constitutional right, under its delegated authority “to consider and recommend to Cabinet a budget for scrutiny”. This report seeks to consult SMC on any recommendations it may wish to make to Cabinet prior to the budget setting process for 2012/13.

Background

3. For the 2010/11 financial year, this Committee decided not to recommend any change to its then existing base scrutiny support budget, which stood at £15k. The Budget Council meeting, however, in February 2011, agreed to cut that support budget, as part of a savings exercise.
4. The Budget Council decision was taken against an understanding that there had, in reality, been little spend against the scrutiny support budget for the previous 3 to 4 years. This was with the notable exception of a consultation survey undertaken in relation to a scrutiny review into traffic congestion and its impact.

Analysis

5. SMC should be aware that, as a result of the Budget Council decision in February 2011, there is no longer a scrutiny support budget dedicated to undertaking research or consultative work associated with scrutiny reviews. The only remaining budget in connection with scrutiny is operational, ie. paying staff.
6. There has been no noticeable impact on scrutiny in York as a result of the budget saving. Clearly, there being no budget provision, no money has been spent in 2011/12 on marketing or research support, externally, for scrutiny reviews. That has not prohibited scrutiny reviews taking place. Following a combined working planning session with Cabinet and Scrutiny Members in the

summer, the Scrutiny Committees are proceeding with the following scrutiny reviews during the year:

Effective Organisation

Sickness Absence Review

Options for Future Use of the Guildhall

Health

End of Life Care – use and effectiveness of DNACPR form

Healthwatch Procurement Monitoring

Community Safety

Anti-social behaviour

Waste Review

Leisure & Culture

Demographics in Schools

Corporate Parenting

York Museums Trust

Economic & City Development

Reducing carbon footprint in privately rented sector

Ad-Hoc Scrutiny

City Centre Access

In addition, the Committees continue with a range of overview activities. In the case of Health and Community Safety, these Committees are also continuing with their statutory overview responsibilities in relation to health and crime and police affairs.

7. Members should also be aware that spend against this budget, when it was available, has historically been very little over the last 3 years. During these years, the combined spend against 'external consultancy' and 'market research' for scrutiny was:

2007/8 - £93

2008/9 - £620

2009/10 - £41 + £17k

2010/11 - £380

8. In 2009/10, a special carry forward to the budget was agreed by Council for the specific purpose of undertaking a public consultation survey in relation to an ongoing review at the time relating to traffic congestion.
9. Largely speaking, between 2007-2010, the amounts itemised above were spent on external site visits, venues and consultative meetings in communities. None of these – however minimal – have been possible in 2011/12 due to the lack of budgetary provision.

Consultation

10. No consultation is required on this report at this stage, given that it provides SMC with their constitutional opportunity to consider making a recommendation to Cabinet for a budget for scrutiny.

Options

11. (i) Having regard to the analysis section in this report, to note the information and make no further recommendation to Cabinet about re-instating a budget to specifically support external research and consultancy for scrutiny; or
(ii) to recommend Cabinet to re-instate budgetary support for external research and consultancy work, whilst providing a reason for making the request

Council Plan 2011-2015

12. Whilst this report does not in itself materially affect how the work of scrutiny can support and develop the Council's overall priorities set out in the Council Plan 2011-2015, how scrutiny organises itself, selects and conducts its reviews could have a significant impact on contributing to the Council's identified priorities.

Implications

13. **Financial** – There would, of course, be a financial impact on the Council were SMC to recommend reinstating a budget for scrutiny and if Cabinet supported that proposal. The degree of impact would depend upon any budget level set and what other 'priorities' the Cabinet, and ultimately Full Council, had to put to one side in order to provide the scrutiny budget support recommended.
14. There are no Human Resources, Equalities, Legal, ITT, Crime & Disorder or other implications associated with this report. Constitutionally, SMC has the right to 'recommend to Cabinet a budget for scrutiny.'

Risk Management

15. Clearly, this Committee needs to address what it believes the current and future needs of scrutiny may be, taking into account the actual history of spend in the area concerned and the impact (if any) on performance. Based on previous years level of spend in this area, there is a risk that any budget allocation made in the future could largely remain unused. That could, of course, have a reputational impact on the scrutiny function.

Recommendations

16. Members are asked to consider whether they wish to make a recommendation to Cabinet for a scrutiny support budget for use on external consultation/market research, and if so, to what level.

Reason: To address the constitutional right of SMC to comment to Cabinet on setting a scrutiny budget

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**Report
Approved**



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Specialist Implications Officer(s)

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Wards Affected:

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

None

Annexes

None