

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Executive
Date: 25 January 2010
Report for: Consideration
Report of: Overview and Scrutiny Core Committee

Report Title

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY'S REVIEW OF THE DRAFT BUDGET FOR 2010/11

Summary

The report presents scrutiny's recommendations and findings arising from scrutiny of the draft budget for 2010/11.

Recommendation(s)

The Executive is requested to:

- **Consider the content of the report and agree as appropriate any further action**
- **Respond in accordance with the agreed protocols**

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: Samuel Martin, Principal Scrutiny & Improvement Officer
Extension: 4014

Background Papers: none

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF 2010/11 DRAFT BUDGET

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SCRUTINY REVIEW OF 2010/11 DRAFT BUDGET

1. Introduction

Overview and Scrutiny thanks the Executive, their supporting officers and Scrutiny Members who have contributed to a successful budget scrutiny round in 2010. The information presented by the Executive to budget scrutiny working groups and their willingness to answer questions was helpful and welcomed.

We appreciate that the adverse weather conditions and subsequent rescheduling of the meetings, some concurrently, caused significant inconvenience and thank everyone concerned for their perseverance and understanding.

Overview and Scrutiny's is committed to be 'always improving'. Building on last year's experiences, preparations for budget scrutiny this year included further workshops to increase Overview and Scrutiny's capacity around scrutinising the MTFP and financial questioning skills.

Overview and Scrutiny acknowledges that the economic situation makes this is a particularly challenging year for the Executive to set a fair budget. This is compounded by a significant increase in precepts and levies and the increase in demand for critical needs-led services. We recognise the commitments made to transform the way the council works to improve front-line services within available resources.

Councillor June Reilly
Chairman Overview and Scrutiny Core Committee
and
Councillor David Acton
Vice Chairman Overview and Scrutiny Core Committee

2. Objectives of the review

The agreed objectives of the review in relation to service budgets were to identify:

- Are the draft service budgets focussed on corporate/service objectives and priorities?
- What is the anticipated impact of the budget decisions in relation to performance?
- Have anticipated financial and other risks been taken into consideration and will they be effectively managed?
- How does the budget address/manage public expectation in relation to service delivery?

In addition to reviewing the service budget for Transformation and Resources, Overview and Scrutiny Core Committee also considered:

- Does the budget support the Medium Term Financial Strategy?

The objectives provided the framework for the lines of enquiry of the working groups.

3. Summary of comments and recommendations

Q1) Are the draft service budgets focussed on corporate/service objectives and priorities?		
<i>Directorate/service</i>		<i>Comments / Recommendations (bold)</i>
Workshop A) Transformation & Resources, Economic Growth and Corporate	A1.1	<p><i>At budget scrutiny in 2009 the Executive said that there would be scope within the transformation budget to use consultants if there were neither the expertise nor capacity within the council. Members are pleased that the council is not relying on external consultants to deliver efficiency savings.</i></p> <p><i>The working group noted that the Executive said a non-cashable benefit to the authority would be bringing in new staff with a specific skill set and appropriate skills transfer to embed these skills among other staff. With the new People Strategy focus on Always Improving, members consider it vitally important to embed these skills and expertise amongst relevant staff. Scrutiny will ask for more information about the skills transfer arrangements, and how the Transformation Team will support service transformation.</i></p>
	A1.2	Scrutiny wishes to be informed at an appropriate time of the council's plans to further review any non-financial rewards to staff, such as car allowances.
Workshop C) Adult Social Care	C1.1	<p><i>Scrutiny Councillors note that the proposed changes in provision of Transport Provision for Adult Social Service users support a focus on the national and service priority of providing self-directed services. Scrutiny considers, different communities have different needs and capacity to commission services, and in the interests of fairness recommend that the results of the Timperley pilot on transport provision, including an equality impact assessment, are shared with Scrutiny</i></p>
	C1.2	Scrutiny wishes to be kept informed of the consultation plans and implementation of the Mental Health Preventative Strategy
	C1.3	Scrutiny Councillors recommended that a volunteering and voluntary sector Scrutiny review should be undertaken for Trafford.
Meeting D) Community Safety, Culture & Sport, Education and Children's Social Services	D1.1	<i>The working group are pleased to note the two points of focus on improving the important Safeguarding service and on meeting future demand.</i>
	D1.2	<i>The Working Group understands the significant pressures facing Safeguarding as a demand-led service. It considers the increase in children requiring care to be a matter of public concern, and advises that Scrutiny is well placed to support any research into matters relating to children in care.</i>

	D1.3	<i>The working group were satisfied with the overall approach to managing the anticipated impact of the budget decisions in relation to performance and service provision and agreed that the present budget reflected this. The service has a history of staying within budget and achieving Performance Targets against its suite of Performance Indicators.</i>
Q2) What is the anticipated impact of the budget decision on performance, service provision?		
<i>Directorate/service</i>		Comments / Recommendations (bold)
Workshop A) Transformation & Resources, Economic Growth and Corporate	A2.1	Scrutiny councillors wish to be kept informed of where efficiencies are being found through the Transformation Programme and any impact arising on service delivery.
Workshop B) Highways, Environment and Transportation	B2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That information for the budget scrutiny process be as up to date as possible and that information be clearly marked as to what financial year it relates to. In addition it was also suggested that historical data be provided to show a directional of travel in terms of performance. That members be provided by the service, via the Scrutiny & Improvement team, with up to date information on the performance of national indicators within PPD.
Meeting D) Community Safety, Culture & Sport, Education and Children's Social Services	D2.1	<i>The Working Group welcomes the positive Ofsted inspection of CYPS and understands the pressures on the service. It would like Scrutiny to be kept informed of any improvement actions relating to the Ofsted recommendations.</i>
	D2.2	<i>The working group is pleased that School funding forum has agreed a claw-back scheme for excess school reserves and recognises that school balances was an issue highlighted by Budget Scrutiny in previous years.</i>
	B2.2	<i>The working group acknowledged that Community Safety, Culture and Sport has a clear focus and makes a successful direct contribution to the council priority of fighting crime and providing culture and sport services throughout Trafford. The working group commends the service area for receiving a green flag in the CAA Inspection</i>
Q3) Have anticipated financial and other risks been taken into consideration and will they be effectively managed?		
<i>Directorate/service</i>		Comments / Recommendations (bold)
Workshop A) Transformation & Resources, Economic Growth and Corporate	A3.1	<i>Members welcome the assurance that the procurement team consider they can make significant savings without impacting on service delivery. Scrutiny would like further reassurance that forecast savings from procurement will be realised and request periodic updates from the Executive.</i>

	A3.2	Scrutiny members would like to know further what the Executive's contingency plans are if wage pressures are higher than forecast
Workshop B) Highways, Environment and Transportation	B3.2	Scrutiny wishes to see examples of the transformation projects that are planned in PPD and how savings will be achieved.
Workshop C) Adult Social Care	C3.1	<i>Scrutiny should be informed formally about consultations and given the opportunity to comment. Scrutiny Councillors noted their concern that the reports relating to the consultation and equality impact assessment of the Older People's residential care review are being submitted to the Executive before Scrutiny. Scrutiny requests that the Executive engages with scrutiny at an earlier stage in such consultations as the residential care review.</i>
	C3.2	<i>Scrutiny advises the Executive to be cautious of showing planned savings in a budget when the saving is contingent upon a consultation or other factors outside its control. It recalls a similar situation arising from planned changes to Bus Pass entitlement in previous years</i>
Meeting D) Community Safety, Culture & Sport, Education and Children's Social Services	D3.1	<i>The working group were satisfied that savings in Home-School Transport were necessary and pleased that the service was striving to achieve this challenging target but wanted to be kept informed of how successful the service were delivering transport savings in 2011/12.</i>
	D3.2	<i>The working group understands that schools have the autonomy to set their own admissions procedures and were satisfied with the current arrangements for funding schools admissions procedures, but would support CYPS in working towards a single entrance test and want to be kept informed of future developments.</i>
Q4) How do budget proposals address/manage public expectations in relation to service delivery		
<i>Directorate/service</i>		<i>Comments / Recommendations (bold)</i>
Workshop A) Transformation & Resources, Economic Growth and Corporate	A4.1	<i>Members were satisfied with the approach taken to managing the reduction in income from Planning and Building Control charges. Some members were concerned about the impact on critical front-line services, such as social care, from this reduction in income. Scrutiny will make follow-up queries of the Executive and service on demand for development control services over the coming year. Scrutiny also wishes to consider whether planning advice should continue to be provided as a free service as a potential review area.</i>
	A4.2	Scrutiny members should receive further information about fees and charges when available in February

Workshop B) Highways, Environment and Transportation	B4.1	<i>That scrutiny is involved in examining and improving the methods by which the public's opinions on their priorities are canvassed, before the 2011/12 budget setting process begins. This will ensure residents are clear on the decisions to which they are influencing and that the budget reflects as accurately as possible, the needs and priorities of its residents.</i>
	B4.2	<i>To better understand how the transformation programme will impact on services provided by PPD, Members requested the following information to be provided to the Scrutiny Team for distribution amongst them:</i> <i>1. Details of all the cross cutting opportunities delivered through the transformation programme and how the risk to these service area , in terms of performance, will be mitigated</i> <i>2. How £58,000 is to be saved from the public protection budget next year; as well as the proposed saving of £25,000, and £117,000 in the following two years.</i> <i>3. How £250,000 is to be saved from highways, parks and countryside efficiencies;</i>
	B4.3	<i>That the proposed fees and charges be provided to Overview and Scrutiny Core Committee at the earliest opportunity to give Scrutiny Members the opportunity to inspect them.</i>
Meeting D) Community Safety, Culture & Sport, Education and Children's Social Services	D4.1	<i>The working group acknowledged the role of culture and sport and asked to be kept informed of changes to fees and charges within the service area and the Leisure Trust</i>
	D4.2	<i>The working group advised caution to the Executive on raising the cost of school meals as this may cause a significant reduction in uptake, particularly among more vulnerable children.</i>
Q5) Does the budget support the Medium Term Financial Strategy?		
<i>Directorate/service</i>		<i>Comments / Recommendations (bold)</i>
Workshop A) Transformation & Resources, Economic Growth and Corporate	A5.1	<i>Scrutiny would like to continue to monitor the asset disposal programme over the coming year.</i>
Meeting D) Community Safety, Culture & Sport, Education and Children's Social Services	D5.1	<i>The working group notes the ambitious nature of future planned budget savings in CYPS and understands they were in response to external pressures such as the reduction in central grants forecast for 2011/12 .The working group is pleased to hear that this can be done without impact on service provision but remains cautious and would like to be kept informed of developments.</i>

4. Approach

The approach adopted by overview and scrutiny was the similar to the previous year, with some changes designed to improve the process. This year the service budgets were reviewed by Directorate which resulted in four working group meetings, each led by a relevant scrutiny committee with all interested scrutiny members invited to participate:

Date of meeting	Service Area	Scrutiny Committee working group	Present at the meeting
11 January	Transformation & Resources and Corporate	<p>Core Committee members:</p> <p>Cllr Mrs Reilly (c) Cllr Acton (vc) Cllr Anstee Cllr Mrs Dixon Cllr Mrs Young Cllr Cordingley Cllr Lloyd Cllr Mrs Poole</p>	<p>Executive: Cllr Matthew Colledge Cllr Alex Williams Cllr John Tolhurst Cllr Michael Cornes</p> <p>Supporting officers: Janet Calendar, Chief Executive, Ian Duncan, Director of Finance Theresa Grant, Corporate Director Jayne Stephenson, Finance Mgr</p> <p>O&S Support: Adrian Bates Elaine Fisher Samuel Martin</p>
13 January	Education, Children and Families	<p>Community Wellbeing Committee members:</p> <p>Cllr Anstee (c) Cllr Kelson Cllr Candish Cllr Summerfield</p> <p>Other Scrutiny members: Cllr Acton</p>	<p>Executive: Cllr John Holden Cllr Christine Turner Cllr John Reilly</p> <p>Supporting Officers: Chris Pratt, Corporate Director Helen McFarlane, Director</p> <p>O&S Support: Andy Kershaw Samuel Martin</p>
13 January	Adult Social Services	<p>Health & Wellbeing Committee Members:</p> <p>Cllr Lloyd (c) Cllr Mrs Young (vc) Cllr Mrs Ward</p> <p>Other Scrutiny members: Cllr Shaw</p>	<p>Executive: Cllr M Young</p> <p>Supporting Officers: Anne Higgins, Director Jeremy Kay, Finance Mgr</p> <p>O&S Support: Victoria Moody, Danielle Lowy</p>

13 January	Environmental Services, Highways and Transportation	Sustainability Select Committee members: Cllr Lamb (vc) Cllr Taylor Cllr Ross Other Scrutiny members: Cllr Adshead Cllr Baugh Cllr Dixon Cllr Mrs Reilly	Executive: Cllr Coupe Cllr Mitchell Support Officers: Gary Pickering, Corporate Dir Jayne Stephenson, Finance Mgr O&S Support: Jack Howard Adrian Bates Helen Mitchell
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The draft service budgets were presented to Overview & Scrutiny Core Committee on 15 December 2009, providing time for scrutiny members to consider the matters to probe further at the working group meetings. At these meetings Members of the Executive and Corporate Directors answered the questions of the working group on the budget decisions within the draft service budget. As last year, the questioning framework was circulated to the Executive in advance of the meeting.

Following the meetings a summary of the main findings and working group recommendations were produced for each Working Group and used to inform this report.

5. Findings

As last year, scrutiny members found the budget scrutiny process to be valuable. Members were able to develop a better understanding of a broad range of issues impacting on the financial performance of the services, more extensive than the points resulting in recommendations, highlighted below,

At each meeting, the service and Executive members presented information around how they are using the budget to help the council meet customer expectations, mitigate financial and non-financial risks incurred, contribute to the medium term financial strategy and deliver value for money.

5a. Pressures

The working groups acknowledge a number of major pressures on the Council this year:

- The significant pressures arising from an increase in precepts and levies for which the council is liable [to £15m] and the impact of the recession.
- The current economic climate, making this is one of the hardest budgets the council has had to construct.
- The increase in demand for critical needs-led services, such as the national increase in demand for Children’s Services assessments, and an increase in life expectancy causing higher demand on Adult Social Care.
- The Government requirement to provide free home care for those assessed as critical and uncertainty in relation to how many people will be covered

5b. Mitigation

The working group heard about the steps the council is taking to address the various pressures including:

- How improvements in procurement were needed to mitigate future inflationary pressures.
- How this budget appears to have treated all directorates fairly and shared the required savings across the whole council, with Transformation and Resources leading by example in this.
- The ambitious savings to be achieved through the Transformation Programme, including better procurement.
- Appropriate provision being made for future demand.

5c. Common Themes

Looking across the findings of all working groups, it is possible to identify some recurring issues across all directorates and the corporate budget:

- Fees and Charges
- The Transformation programme including:
 - Procurement
 - Examples of transformation projects
 - Arrangements for skills transfer
 - The use of IT as an enabler

The following sections highlight the main areas leading to recommendations for further action.

Workshop A) Transformation & Resources, Economic Growth and Corporate

Q1) Are the draft service budgets focused on corporate/service objectives and priorities?

A1.1) Investment in Transformation Programme

Members raised concerns about the need to create 18 new posts, some of which have been filled by external applicants, to support council transformation, when it may be seen as the responsibility of service Directors and senior managers to ensure services are provided in an efficient and modern fashion. Executive members confirmed that this on-hand resource will exist to help services deliver changes in the way they provide services that they want to see.

They informed that this is not a measure intended to benefit Transformation and Resources or bring in any extra resource to the directorate as a result of savings from front-line services. All services would benefit from this resource. They explained that the skill set required for transformation is rare in local government and by creating these posts there was the opportunity to bring these skills in-house rather than use consultants. The executive restated that most savings should come from business-support and back-office efficiencies, without impacting on service delivery.

Comment: At budget scrutiny in 2009 the Executive said that there would be scope within the transformation budget to use consultants if there were neither the expertise nor capacity within the council. Members are pleased that the council is not relying on external consultants to deliver efficiency savings.

*Recommendation: The working group noted that the Executive said a non-cashable benefit to the authority would be bringing in new staff with a specific skill set and appropriate skills transfer to embed these skills among other staff. With the new People Strategy focus on Always Improving, members consider it vitally important to embed these skills and expertise amongst relevant staff. **Scrutiny will ask for more information about the skills transfer arrangements, and how the Transformation Team will support service transformation.***

A1.2) Job evaluation

Members queried why further resource had now been allocated to the job evaluation programme. The executive advised that this was to address the risk of potential claims against the authority under equal pay legislation, and the additional salary costs arising from appeals against the job evaluation results. The committee noted that the number of appeals faced by Trafford was favourable compared with our neighbours in AGMA. Members of the working group wished for further information about car allowances for staff, which are to be reviewed later this year.

*Recommendation: **Scrutiny wishes to be informed at an appropriate time of the council's plans to further review any non-financial rewards to staff, such as car allowances.***

Q2) What is the anticipated impact of the budget decisions in relation to performance?

A2.1) Cross-Cutting Efficiencies

Members sought assurance around the impact on services of £615,000 planned 'cross-cutting' efficiencies and the need to ensure that efficiencies are sustainable in the medium to longer term, not just the short term. The Executive was able to provide assurance that efficiencies were being sought in back-office functions such as IT support, HR, Payroll. Functions such as these are often carried out at a service or directorate level, resulting in duplication of resource. It may be more effective and efficient to take a centralised, corporate approach. Savings from any such efficiencies would be passed to the services. Exactly where these efficiencies will be found has yet to be confirmed.

Recommendation: Scrutiny councillors wish to be kept informed of where efficiencies are being found through the Transformation Programme and any impact arising on service delivery.

Q3) Have anticipated financial and other risks been taken into consideration and will they be effectively managed?

A3.1) Procurement

The working group queried the basis of the assumptions made around savings projected from procurement improvements. The executive provided assurance that the procurement team and their way of working would allow these savings to transpire.

Recommendation: Members welcome the assurance that the procurement team consider they can make significant savings without impacting on service delivery. Scrutiny would like further reassurance that forecast savings from procurement will be realised and request periodic updates from the Executive.

A3.2) Pay awards

Members asked what assumptions had been made around pay awards. The executive responded that the 09-10 settlement had been lower than budgeted. A 0% increase was forecast for 10-11, and that higher inflation was expected to necessitate further wage rises in 11-12.

Recommendation: Scrutiny members would like to know further what the Executive's contingency plans are if wage pressures are higher than forecast

Q4) How does the budget address/manage public expectation in relation to service delivery?

A4.1) Planning and Building Control Capacity

The Executive Member highlighted that there had been a reduction in revenue from planning and building control, due to lower demand for these services as a result of the current economic situation. The Executive confirmed that there was spare capacity in development control at the moment, but due to historical difficulties with ensuring the good performance of the service through appropriate staffing no reduction in staffing would be appropriate as a future upturn is

anticipated. Members noted the measures put in place to ensure revenue from Development Control, such as selling planning advisory services to other Local Authorities and private companies.

Comment:

- *Members were satisfied with the approach taken to managing the reduction in income from Planning and Building Control charges. Some members were concerned about the impact on critical front-line services, such as social care, from this reduction in income. Scrutiny will make follow-up queries of the Executive and service on demand for development control services over the coming year.*
- *Scrutiny also wishes to consider whether planning advice should continue to be provided as a free service as a potential review area.*

A4.2) Fees & Charges

Members of several working groups queried why projections on fees and charges had not been included in the draft budget. The executive advised that these figures had not yet been finalised, and would be available in February. Members considered it important to assess, amongst other things, the impact the fees and charges would have on vulnerable groups in Trafford.

Recommendation: Scrutiny members should receive further information about fees and charges when available in February

Q5) Does the budget support the Medium Term Financial Strategy?

A5.1) Capital programme

The working group asked about our response to the recession with regards to the council's planned programme of asset disposal, and in particular whether there was an opportunity to make counter-cyclical purchases or development. The executive confirmed that some sales have not been progressed due to falling property values, and that a counter-cyclical fund had been established, though not yet used, in order to take advantage of any investment opportunity.

Recommendation: Scrutiny would like to continue to monitor the asset disposal programme over the coming year.

Workshop B) Highways, Environment and Transportation

Q1) Are the draft service budgets focused on corporate/service objectives and priorities?

B1.1) Highways maintenance

Members were advised that the Council are in the process of developing a 'total road' approach to highways maintenance. By looking at all the maintenance work which could be undertaken at the same time, an entire scheme of improvements can be delivered at a lower cost and higher benefits for residents. In addition to this, the Council over the last few years has chosen to focus on those roads which might fail to meet the quality standard rather than those that are already failing. This approach has been credited with saving the Council thousands in a short space of time. This is one example of the type of approach to improving services that will be supported by the Transformation Programme.

Q2) What is the anticipated impact of the budget decisions in relation to performance?

B2.1) Combined Finance and Performance Information

Scrutiny Members were concerned that some performance information in the budget papers was out of date. This makes it harder for the working group to consider the impact of budget decisions in relation to current performance and service provision.

Recommendation:

- ***That information for the budget scrutiny process be as up to date as possible and that information be clearly marked as to what financial year it relates to. In addition it was also suggested that historical data be provided to show a directional of travel in terms of performance.***
- ***That members be provided by the service, via the Scrutiny & Improvement team, with up to date information on the performance of national indicators within PPD.***

Q3) Have anticipated financial and other risks been taken into consideration and will they be effectively managed?

B3.1) The risks of climate change

The working group queried how the PPD directorate planned to address the impact on services, particularly environmental operational services, from climate change.

Although severe weather conditions cannot be predicted during the budget setting process, contingency plans can and are put in place to mitigate risks. Scrutiny Councillors heard that The Council is able to draw from reserves to cope with unanticipated situations such as freak weather, and that by using staff flexibly, services can be maintained. An example was given in which grounds keepers at local cemeteries, once the cemetery was closed, were assigned the task of clearing town centres during the recent inclement weather, which proved very successful. Further to this, it was noted that in future the budget and general approach to combating climate change was to be more flexible in light of the

changing nature of weather, and that this was generally accepted across the Council.

B3.2) Transformation

The working group questioned how confident the Members of the Executive were around the delivery of the proposed savings through the transformation agenda.

Executive Members confirmed that PPD has committed itself to £3.4m worth of savings which in reality is a very ambitious target. However the Executive are confident that through a series of incremental improvements the target can be achieved. Further assurance was also provided through the clarification that the proposed budget has to be prepared with the aim of being robust, so a lot of prior thought and work has gone into ensuring that it is sustainable.

Recommendation: Scrutiny wishes to see examples of the transformation projects that are planned in PPD and how savings will be achieved.

Q4) How does the budget address/manage public expectation in relation to service delivery?

B4.1) Understanding public opinion

The Executive presented information about how the results of the Place Survey have helped them to better understand and focus on the priorities of Trafford residents. Scrutiny concurs that it is important and useful to understand resident needs and allocate funding so that those needs are met. One scrutiny member noted that the consultation approach used at Neighbourhood Forums to solicit local residents' opinions was regarded by some participants as overly complicated. The Executive Members concurred that there was an opportunity to examine such methods in the future.

Recommendation: That scrutiny be involved in examining and improving the methods by which the public's opinions on their priorities are canvassed, before the 2011/12 budget setting process begins. This will ensure residents are clear on the decisions to which they are influencing and that the budget reflects as accurately as possible, the needs and priorities of its residents.

B4.2) Efficiencies

The Executive Members presented information on the Transformation programme which will give the Council the opportunity to realise savings and efficiencies to ensure better value services.

Scrutiny members noted the potential improvements and savings to be made through the efficiencies but were also aware of the significant challenges of such a programme.

Recommendation: To better understand how the transformation programme will impact on services provided by PPD, Members requested the following information to be provided to the Scrutiny Team for distribution amongst them:

- 4. Details of all the cross cutting opportunities delivered through the transformation programme and how the risk to these service area , in terms of performance, will be mitigated**
- 5. How £58,000 is to be saved from the public protection budget next year; as well as the proposed saving of £25,000, and £117,000 in the following two years.**
- 6. How £250,000 is to be saved from highways, parks and countryside efficiencies;**

B4.3) Fees and Charges

Scrutiny members expressed disappointment to the Executive that the fees and charges were not available for Scrutiny Members to inspect. Of particular concern were fees and charges relating to bereavement services. Members agreed that there was an opportunity to look at this information to assess, amongst other things, the impact the fees and charges would have on vulnerable groups in Trafford.

Recommendation: That the proposed fees and charges be provided to Overview and Scrutiny Core Committee at the earliest opportunity to give Scrutiny Members the opportunity to inspect them.

Workshop C) Adult Social Care

Q1) Are the draft service budgets focused on corporate/service objectives and priorities?

C1.1) Transport provision for Adult Social Services

Scrutiny Councillors asked about the projected saving of £215k from changes to transport provision for Adult Social Services users; if is to be achieved at the expense of drivers; and the implications for different communities in Trafford. They were informed about the pilot project for self-directed or individualised transport provision in Timperley provided evidence that personalisation in transport provision represented an efficiency saving, hence the projections are robust. Councillors were assured that staff employed to drive are flexibly utilised and PPD will adjust the provision accordingly to need.

*Recommendation: Scrutiny Councillors note that the proposed changes in provision of Transport Provision for Adult Social Service users support a focus on the national and service priority of providing self-directed services. **Scrutiny considers, different communities have different needs and capacity to commission services, and in the interests of fairness recommend that the results of the Timperley pilot on transport provision, including an equality impact assessment, are shared with Scrutiny***

C1.2) Mental Health

The service informed members there is little reduction to the mental health budget; when benchmarked with other authorities Trafford's spend in the area of mental health is considered high. When long standing contracts reach the end of their contractual term contractors will have to go through the tendering process to meet the requirements of the revised framework and will only be accepted if they meet strict quality standards. The service is confident that this approach will reduce costs. The new arrangements in this case will apply mostly to long term support as the highest cost but will also encompass Putting People First.

To further support people at risk of Mental Health issues and allow them to access appropriate care before their need reaches a higher level, the Service Director wished to note that a consultation is ongoing to provide a fit for needs Preventative Strategy.

*Recommendation: **Scrutiny wishes to be kept informed of the consultation plans and implementation of the Mental Health Preventative Strategy***

C1.3) Volunteering

Scrutiny Councillors requested further detail about volunteering strategies for Adult Social Services. In addition Scrutiny Councillors queried if opportunities to deploy Trafford's bank of volunteers had been identified for other projects. Scrutiny Councillors also requested confirmation of any financial provision for respite opportunities for older carers.

The service confirmed a Volunteer Strategy for Adult Social Services is in place and a Partnership Group with the voluntary sector for social care meets to monitor

the delivery of the strategy. There is a project to get more volunteers to go into care homes estimated access to at least 500 volunteers. More money is being invested this financial year for carers of people with dementia.

Recommendation: Scrutiny Councillors recommended that a volunteering and voluntary sector Scrutiny review should be undertaken for Trafford.

Q2) What is the anticipated impact of the budget decisions in relation to performance?

Q3) Have anticipated financial and other risks been taken into consideration and will they be effectively managed?

C3.1) Older People residential care review

Scrutiny councillors expressed concern that they were not aware of the detail of the older people residential care review consultation process; Scrutiny Councillors would wish formally to be notified about the consultation and given an opportunity to respond.

All residential care homes for older people are under review and a report will be placed before the Executive at the end of February 2010. The consultation is about to finish. Ward Councillors were invited to comment on the consultation. An equality impact assessment is in progress which will be presented to the Executive in February 2010 also.

*Recommendation: Scrutiny should be informed formally about consultations and given the opportunity to comment. Scrutiny Councillors noted their concern that the reports relating to the consultation and equality impact assessment of the Older People's residential care review are being submitted to the Executive before Scrutiny. **Scrutiny requests that the Executive engages with scrutiny at an earlier stage in such consultations as the residential care review.***

C3.2) Harry Lord House

The working group noted that the draft budget implied a decision had already been taken with regard to Harry Lord House - the budget showing an anticipated saving of £500k in the next financial year. Scrutiny Councillors further queried the reason for spending funds on a refurbishment of Harry Lord House if the facility was in fact due to close.

The service noted no savings in the following financial year have been indicated owing to the pending outcome of the consultation on Older People's Residential Care. The service confirmed no decision has been made with regard to Harry Lord House and that potential options for day care services are not available owing to their publication potentially predetermining the consultation.

Comment: Scrutiny advises the Executive to be cautious of showing planned savings in a budget when the saving is contingent upon a consultation or other factors outside its control. It recalls a similar situation arising from planned changes to Bus Pass entitlement in previous years.

C3.3) Budget Pressures

The Director of Social Services highlighted a net reduction of £500k in the budget assumed for the next financial year. The main reasons are the inflation pay award and that a 0% increase in budget for care fees has been assumed. There may be some pressure towards an increase of c. £260k. Steps are being taken to manage the increase within the existing budget. In years 2&3 of the financial plan it becomes more difficult to estimate what the pay award will be. Efficiency savings are still assumed to be £2-3 million.

C3.4) Care Home Fees

Scrutiny was given assurance by the service of:

- whether the assumed 1% increase in care home fees is realistic.
- if there is a change in any of the process concerning service provision, for example, contractual third party changes how can it be ensured that services are not diluted
- how the efficiency and effectiveness of services is being monitored and how quickly and effectively will changes be implemented should something not work
- the assurances that are in place to ensure people are spending the money allocated to them correctly

Q4) How does the budget address/manage public expectation in relation to service delivery?

Q5) Does the budget support the Medium Term Financial Strategy?

Workshop D) Community Safety, Culture & Sport, Education and Children's Social Services

Q1) Are the draft service budgets focused on corporate/service objectives and priorities?

D1.1) Safeguarding

The Executive gave an overview at the request of the working group of the safeguarding function, which is subject to a £312,000 investment. In light of Baby Peter case in Haringey and to ensure that all children are safe within the Borough safeguarding is a high priority for the council. Trafford CYPS has a watching brief to protect children in Trafford and has seen an increase in the numbers of children coming into the care system in Trafford, as part of a Europe-wide trend

Comment: The working group are pleased to note the two points of focus on improving the important Safeguarding service and on meeting future demand.

D1.2) Referrals

The working group asked what increases to referrals had there been since last year. They were informed that there had been a 26% increase in referrals to the Multi Agency Referral and Assessment Team. This, with the general trend in referrals, gives an increase overall for the year from 200 to 270 children in care.

The working group were assured that the extra funding would ensure that the service would meet expectations and the increases in demand would be met in 2010/11.

In addition, the Southwark Judgement means that homeless young people aged 16 and 17 are now within the remit of the Children and Young People's Service care provision. This affects 17 individuals in Trafford. An additional £594,000 has been proposed to support homeless young people.

Comment: The Working Group understands the significant pressures facing Safeguarding as a demand-led service. It considers the increase in children requiring care to be a matter of public concern, and advises the Executive that Scrutiny is well placed to support any research into matters relating to children in care.

D1.3) Working with Partners

The working group asked how Community Safety Culture and Sport were working with its partner organisations to achieve its objectives and priorities. The working group was told that the service had an excellent relationship with its partners and had achieved a Green Flag in Trafford's CAA Report for its partnership work in reducing gun-related crime. Performance within the Community Safety service was exceeding expectations at low cost. In terms of cultural partnerships, the service said that the number of businesses in creative industries in the north of the borough was a notable success and evidence that Trafford was delivering against one of its key priorities

Comment: The working group were pleased and acknowledged the notable success of Partnership working within PPD, particularly in Community Safety.

Comment: The working group were satisfied that Community Safety was a standstill budget and that PPD will maintain investment levels within the key priority area of Safer Trafford.

Q2) What is the anticipated impact of the budget decisions in relation to performance?

D2.1) The effectiveness of CYPS

The working group how effective was the service in safeguarding children. The Executive responded with regard to the recent, positive Ofsted inspection which provides significant assurance that the service is effective. The service informed the working group that the effects of adult drug and alcohol abuse and family breakdowns was increasing demand for safeguarding services throughout Europe and extra resources were required to address these issues. The Ofsted Inspection did however highlight some areas for improvement, such as administrative support and the retention of social workers, and the service detailed how these areas were to be strengthened.

*Recommendation: The Working Group welcomes the positive Ofsted inspection of CYPS and understands the pressures on the service. **It would like Scrutiny to be kept informed of any improvement actions relating to the Ofsted recommendations.***

D2.2) School Balances

The working group asked for more information on school balances which have risen to a current figure £12m. The Corporate Director has endeavoured to find a way for schools to pool or align reserves in order to benefit Children and Young People in the borough, a matter of previous scrutiny discussions in this area. The Corporate Director informed the working group that the School Funding Forum has agreed a claw-back scheme where balances exceeding permitted tolerances are recovered.

Comment: The working group is pleased that School funding forum has agreed a claw-back scheme for excess school reserves and recognises that school balances was an issue highlighted by Budget Scrutiny in previous years.

D2.3) Community Safety

The working group were satisfied with the overall approach to managing the anticipated impact of the budget decisions in relation to performance and service provision and agreed that the present budget reflected this. The service has a history of staying within budget and achieving Performance Targets against its suite of Performance Indicators.

Comment: The working group acknowledged that Community Safety, Culture and Sport has a clear focus and makes a successful direct contribution to the council priority of fighting crime and providing culture and sport services throughout Trafford. The working group commends the service area for receiving a green flag in the CAA Inspection

Q3) Have anticipated financial and other risks been taken into consideration and will they be effectively managed?

D3.1) Home /School Transport

The working group asked the service to explain the differences in Home-School transport costs between this year and last. The Executive informed the working group that home school transport and bus pass provision has been an issue for a number of years and that there would be a significant decrease in Home/School transport provision in subsequent years if savings could not be achieved in these areas. The service were restricted in how they can make savings with bus passes as GMPTE regularly increased costs and there is no alternative provider for this service. However, significant cost savings could be achieved if CYPS changed the way it procured other elements of Home-School transport that have a high unit cost, e.g. personalised transport for children with Special Educational Needs. Trafford has joined a consortium of local authorities which will approach Home/School transport providers and sign up to block booking contracts to significantly reduce costs.

Comment: The working group were satisfied that savings in Home-School Transport were necessary and pleased that the service was striving to achieve this challenging target but wanted to be kept informed of how successful the service were delivering transport savings in 2011/12.

D3.2) Secondary School Admissions

The working group requested from the service information about the arrangements for funding school admissions and entrance tests. Trafford does not operate a single Entrance Test; rather Grammar Schools are funded to conduct their own tests. The Corporate Director informed the working group that foundation and aided schools have the right to set their own entrance tests and are outside education authority control but explained that significant efficiency savings might be achieved were all schools to administer a single entrance test. The service has tried previously to individual schools to accept a standard test.

Comment: The working group understands that schools have the autonomy to set their own admissions procedures and were satisfied with the current arrangements for funding schools admissions procedures, but would support CYPS in working towards a single entrance test and want to be kept informed of future developments.

Q4) How does the budget address/manage public expectation in relation to service delivery?

D4.1) Culture & Leisure fees and charges

The working group asked the Portfolio Holder and Head of Service what plans the Council had in 2010/11 for Fees and Charges. The working group was told that fees and charges applied to Waterside Arts Centre and the Trafford Leisure Trust. Waterside Arts Centre is a Council establishment as such fees and charges were set on the basis of remaining competitive against other venues (such as the Lowry) whilst supporting community access and increasing/maintaining usage of the Arts Centre. Fees and charges within the Trafford Leisure Trust were outside the direct control of the council. The Partnership Agreement and our close working relationship with the trust allowed the Culture and Sport service to have some

influence on discussions on fees and charges. The working group were informed that there was no indication from the trust that fees and charges would be increased for 2009/10.

Recommendation: The working group acknowledged the role of culture and sport and asked to be kept informed of changes to fees and charges within the service area and the Leisure Trust.

D4.2) Charges for School Meals

The working group asked the service for an explanation of future fees and charges for school meals. The Corporate Director informed the working group that there would be an increase of 5% for school meal charges in 2010/11. The Working Group were concerned that the increase was not too high as they wanted to ensure children were eating healthy meals at school and the increase in cost did not affect demand for the service

Comment: The working group advised caution to the Executive on raising the cost of school meals as this may cause a significant reduction in uptake, particularly among more vulnerable children.

Q5) Does the budget support the Medium Term Financial Strategy?

E5.1) Efficiencies in 2011/12

Within the MTFP a figure of £2.34m for cashable efficiencies in the Children and Young People's Service for 2011/12 has been produced. This is a significant figure and the Working Group asked the Executive Members/Service area how they would deliver this saving through the Transformation project. The working group were informed that the service has to achieve these savings in light of significant cuts to Government grants.

The following savings were explained to the working group;

- The efficiencies of CYPS operating as a multi agency service would allow shared back office processes for the Council, PCT and Healthcare Trust and realise significant efficiency savings.
- A further saving of £118k for children's placements which has been made possible by increased use of less expensive in house provision.
- Significant procurement savings of £300k would be achieved through the North West consortium of agency foster carers and a residential block contract agreement

These procurement/efficiency savings together with service re-alignment savings would allow the service to function more efficiently and not adversely affect service delivery.

Comment: The working group notes the ambitious nature of future planned budget savings in CYPS and understands they were in response to external pressures such as the reduction in central grants forecast for 2011/12. The working group is pleased to hear that this can be done without impact on service provision but remains cautious and would like to be kept informed of developments.