

FULL COUNCIL – 14 OCTOBER 2015

Written question from Councillor Geoff Lumley to Councillor Dave Stewart, Chairman of Scrutiny Committee

At the September meeting of your Committee, a decision was made to suspend the well-established Budget scrutiny task and finish group, led by me and including Cllr Hutchinson, due to our new involvement in assisting the administration with their Budget on the newly created cross-party Budget and Policy Liaison Group (BPLG). Given the number of Scrutiny Committee members who are not members of the BPLG (seven in total) is this not an abdication of responsibility?

Can you explain when Budget scrutiny will resume under your chairmanship?

Response

Thank you for your question

Scrutiny of the budget by the scrutiny committee has not been suspended but as you have indicated in your question the direct involvement of two members of scrutiny committee task and finish group in the newly established budget and policy liaison group necessarily required a different approach to be taken by the scrutiny committee.

At the last scrutiny committee I therefore proposed halting the current budget task and finishing group and deferring this work back to the main scrutiny committee which the committee supported.

Consequently I am now leading personally on budget scrutiny and since our last meeting I have engaged with the chair of the Health & Wellbeing scrutiny, the chair of the Children's Services committee and our senior scrutiny officer to agree a different approach.

In summary this approach will now involve aligning budget scrutiny with scrutiny of delivery of corporate plan priorities through the three committees following the approval of the enhanced scrutiny function recommended to full council today

In addition and in the meanwhile I have been holding meetings with council finance officers and at the forthcoming scrutiny committee meeting we will be receiving a report on the latest budget position of the council which all members of the committee will then be able to scrutinise under my leadership. I shall also be inviting other members of the committee to undertake specific work in relation to the budget although for the reasons stated your role in this aspect will need to be managed.

When any strategic budget proposals from the budget task and finish liaison group are received these will also then be subject of scrutiny by the committee - including

proposals regarding use of the ASDA capital receipt from the sub group which you are leading and where again any perceived conflict of interest will need to be managed

We will also continue to scrutinise decisions of the executive in accordance with the committees work programme and undertake pro active scrutiny of specific areas such as engagement with Town and Parish Councils, engagement with the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership, service delivery of Planning, outcomes and savings arising from the work of the Organisational Change Team and maintaining an ongoing overview of key contracts such as the Broadband Contract, the Waste Contract and the Island Roads Contract - all of which have significant budget implications in their own right.

Overall I can assure Councillor Lumley the committee will continue to fully exercise its function of scrutiny of budget, policies and service performance of the council and make recommendations to the executive in accordance with article (5) of the committee's terms of reference.