

Community Executive Advisory Board Report

Ward(s) affected: All

Report of Director of Finance

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Councillor involvement in the preparation of the Budget

Executive Summary

Annually since September 2016, both Executive Advisory Boards (EABs) have established a Joint EAB Budget Task Group (JEABBTG), comprising four councillors appointed by each EAB. The terms of reference of the JEABBTG were approved as follows:

To consider and review for submission to the EABs, Executive and Council:

- (1) the draft General Fund and Housing Revenue Account revenue budgets, and
- (2) the draft General Fund and Housing Revenue Account capital programmes, including growth bids to inform the evaluation process.

The chairman was elected from the eight members of the task group, and the former Lead Councillor for Finance and Asset Management attended meetings in an ex-officio capacity.

The JEABBTG met on 8 and 20 November 2018, when their comments against each of the bids were documented on a bid summary schedule and reported as part of the reports in respect of the outline budget and capital programme to the Joint EAB meetings in November 2018 and January 2019 and then to the Executive later in January 2019.

For 2019-20, each EAB is asked, once again, to appoint four councillors who, together, will comprise the JEABBTG.

All political groups were previously represented on the JEABBTG and it is recommended that this should continue. It is suggested that the political composition for 2019-20 should be:

3 x Liberal Democrats
2 x Residents for Guildford and Villages
1 x Conservative
1 x Guildford Greenbelt Group
1 x Labour

If the EABs are happy to continue with this arrangement, it is suggested, based on the political composition of the two EABs, that the Community EAB, at its meeting on 5 September, appoints two Liberal Democrat members and two R4GV members to the Task Group, and the Place-Making and Innovation EAB, at its meeting on 23 September, appoints to the Task Group one member each from the Liberal Democrat, Conservative, GGG and Labour groups.

The Joint EAB Budget Task Group for 2019-20 will meet twice in November 2019.

Recommendation:

That a Joint EAB Budget Task Group be re-convened, comprising eight councillors (four from each EAB) and that this EAB appoints four councillors (two members each from the Liberal Democrat and R4GV groups) to serve on the Task Group for the 2019-20 municipal year.

Reason for Recommendation:

To ensure backbench councillor involvement in the budget setting process.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To appoint councillors to the Joint EAB Budget Task Group (JEABBTG) for 2019-20.

2. Strategic Priorities

- 2.1 The budget is the financial expression of the Council's strategic priorities set out in the Corporate Plan. The preparation of the budget therefore underpins all of the strategic priorities.

3. Background

- 3.1 Following the review of governance arrangements in 2015, the Council established the two EABs and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The governance review findings specifically envisaged the EABs playing a vital role in budget preparation. In September 2016, both EABs agreed to the establishment of a JEABBTG with the following terms of reference:

"To consider and review for submission to the EABs, Executive and Council:

- (i) the draft General Fund and Housing Revenue Account revenue budgets, and

- (ii) the draft General Fund and Housing Revenue Account capital programmes, including growth bids to inform the evaluation process”.

- 3.2 Each EAB was asked to appoint four councillors to serve on the JEABBTG, and to elect a chairman from among the eight Task Group members. The former Lead Councillor for Finance and Asset Management was asked to attend meetings in an ex-officio capacity.
- 3.3 The Financial Services Manager, in conjunction with the Lead Councillor, set the agenda for each meeting of the Task Group. Other officers from Financial Services and other services attended as required.

4. Progress of the JEABBTG

- 4.1 The JEABBTG met twice in November 2018 and councillors had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the merits of each bid, and their comments were documented on a bid summary schedule which formed part of the reports in respect of the outline budget and capital programme to the Joint EAB and then the Executive in January 2019. The agenda items covered at the JEABBTG meetings were:
 - (1) Brief presentation on the Outline General Fund Revenue Budget
 - (2) Evaluation of the revenue Growth Bids
 - (3) Update on the Housing Revenue Account Budget
 - (4) Review of capital programme bids
- 4.2 The Joint EAB Budget Task Group for 2019-20 will meet twice in November 2019.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no financial implications associated with the proposals in this report.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 There are no legal implications associated with the proposals in this report.

7. Human Resource Implications

- 7.1 There are no HR implications associated with the proposals in this report.

8. Summary of Options

- 8.1 In summary, the options are as follows:
 - (1) To continue with the arrangements for a JEABBTG as recommended, in order to provide backbench councillor involvement in the preparation of the budget.

- (2) To discontinue such arrangements, which would mean that there would be no formal means by which backbench councillors could get involved in detail in the budget preparation.

9. Conclusion

- 9.1 The EAB is asked to confirm its agreement to the proposals outlined in this report to enable backbench councillors to continue to assist the Lead Councillor and officers in their work in respect of the preparation of the draft budget each year.
- 9.2 It would be very helpful if all relevant political groups could submit nominations in respect of this EAB's four nominees to the Task Group in advance of this meeting.

10. Background Papers

None

11. Appendices

None