

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Executive Director of Corporate Services

Council – 28 October 2009

Subject: Budget 2010/11 – Proposed Outline Timetable

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval for the preferred date for setting the 2010/11 council tax and housing rents.

2. Background

- 2.1 Historically, the council tax setting date has been mid-February, with most – if not all – Scottish local authorities meeting for this purpose on the same date. Recent times have seen a change to this 'national' date, with Councils agreeing a date to best suit their needs. The housing rent setting date follows the council tax setting date to enable the Council to manage its budgets in a similar fashion.
- 2.2 The budget 2010/11 timetable was originally reported to Members of the Strategic Finance Working Group (SFWG) with a proposed budget setting date of 11 February 2010 – in line with previous years. Members requested a revised timetable with a view to bringing forward the budget setting date. At the SFWG meeting on 21 September 2009, a preferred date was discussed, with consideration being given to the benefits and the challenges attached to bringing the date forward to 27 January 2010.
- 2.3 Under Section 93-2 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 a local authority has to set its council tax before 11 March in the financial year preceding that for which it is set. Accordingly, that would not restrict the Council from setting the council tax and budget at an earlier date than usual.
- 2.4 There is no reference within the Council's Standing Orders or the Financial Management and Control Code of Practice which requires the budget to be set on any particular date.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1 The main benefit of bringing the budget setting date forward is an earlier implementation of any actions the Council agree in order to achieve the budget and, as such, any financial benefits to the Council are maximised.

3.2 The main challenges identified in bringing the budget setting date forward have also been identified (which lie within the council tax area, rather than the housing rent area) :

- Finalisation of individual council financial settlements from the Scottish Government are not known until early December. This is required to finalise any budget gap the Council may face in the year being considered.
- Finalisation of joint board requisitions usually takes place in January. This is required to finalise any budget gap the Council may face in the year being considered.
- Adequate time is required to scrutinise departmental submission to finalise any budget gap. For 2010/11, the first draft figures are not due until 30 October 2009.
- Adequate time is required to identify a full saving option/efficiency package for Members' consideration.
- Sufficient time requires to be allocated for consultation, impact assessment and option appraisals before budget day.
- CoSLA has historically recommended a uniform budget day for all Scottish local authorities.
- January is traditionally a key month for CoSLA led pressure on Scottish Government for additional funding.

3.3 Officers have considered these risks and have updated the outline budget timetable with target dates which would require to be met to allow the date to be brought forward. Appendix 1 details the outline timetable in order to achieve a budget setting date on 27 January 2010.

3.4 After the 2010/11 process has taken place, the timetable would be reviewed and further updated as necessary in future years to ensure any higher risk dates to be met with further ease.

3.5 Any change of date in setting budgets would apply equally to council tax and housing rents.

4. Personnel Issues

4.1 Personnel resources would be required to be allocated to the consultation process and the risk and equality impact assessments and an earlier stage in the process and in previous years.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There are no direct financial implications from this report.

6. Risk Analysis

6.1 No additional risk analysis was required, beyond those listed in 3.3.

7. Officers' Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 This report outlines a proposed budget timetable to allow a January 2010 budget setting date.

7.2 Members are asked to agree the proposed date for setting the 2010/11 budget for both Council Tax and Housing Rents of 27 January 2010 and to note the interim target dates which require to be met in conjunction with this.

For Joyce White
Executive Director of Corporate Services
Date: 8 October 2009

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Appendix: 1 – Budget 2010/11 – Proposed Outline Timetable

Background Papers: Strategic Finance Working Group papers 21 September 2009

Wards Affected: All

| When? | What? | Who is involved? |
|--|--|--|
| April | Indicative budgets 2010/11 and 2011/12 updated from Council Tax setting | Executive Director of CS Head of Finance & ICT Manager of Accounting |
| April - June | Scrutiny of indicative budgets and update for further new pressures identified Draft Financial Strategy reported for comment & input to CMT | Executive Director of CS Head of Finance & ICT Manager of Accounting |
| June | Draft financial strategy reported to the Strategic Finance Working Group | Executive Director of CS |
| August | Strategic Finance Working Group provided with an update on the indicative budgets, as reported in the draft financial strategy. | Members Chief Executive Executive Director of CS Head of Finance & ICT Manager of Accounting |
| August/September | Planning and Budget Guidance sent to all relevant persons (Senior Managers Network) | Policy Unit Manager of Accounting CMT |
| 30 September: 30 October: 20 November: | Detailed revenue budgets to be received by Corporate Finance: 2009/10 probables 2010/11 2011/12 and 2012/13 | All Executive Directors Executive Director of CS Head of Finance & ICT Manager of Accounting |
| 1 September | Control assumptions agreed by CMT | Chief Executive Executive Director of CS Head of Finance & ICT Manager of Accounting |
| October/ November | Finance scrutiny of budgets. Compilation of consolidated reports and analyses. Control assumptions applied. | Manager of Accounting |
| November | CMT meet to consider budget/saving options. | CMT Head of Finance & ICT Manager of Accounting |
| 30 November | Savings and Efficiency Options package issued to all Members | CMT Executive Director of CS Head of Finance Manager of Accounting |
| November/ December | Directors meet individually with Chief Executive to discuss plans, budgets (including growth items & burdens). | Chief Executive All Directors Executive Director of CS Head of Finance & ICT Manager of Accounting |

| When? | What? | Who is involved? |
|--------------|--|--|
| December | Changes to settlement announced | Executive Director of CS Head of Finance & ICT Manager of Accounting |
| 16 December | Report to Council on draft budget 2010/11 Draft estimates book produced | Members Chief Executive Executive Director of CS Head of Finance & ICT Manager of Accounting |
| December | Members consulted on budget options | Members CMT Head of Finance & ICT Manger of Accounting |
| December | Public Consultation Meetings | Council Leader CMT Head of Finance & ICT |
| 8 January | Budget report to Members prepared. | Chief Executive Executive Director of CS Head of Finance & ICT |
| 27 January | Budget day. | All Members CMT Executive Director of CS Head of Finance & ICT Manager of Accounting |