

THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE'S BUDGET

Executive Summary

This report sets out proposals for the management and oversight of the annual budget of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This follows the decision of the Committee on 13 September to put in place management arrangements for the release of, reporting on and audit of the Scrutiny budget.

The proposals within this report have been drawn up in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee. Subject to the adoption of the arrangements by the Committee, the management arrangements will be included in the revised version of the Council's Scrutiny Toolkit, to be brought forward to a future meeting of the Committee.

Recommendations

The Committee is requested to:

RESOLVE That the protocol for the management and oversight of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's budget, as set out in the appendix to this report, be agreed.

The Committee has the authority to determine the recommendation(s) set out above.

Background Papers:	None.
Reporting Person:	Councillor James Sanderson Email: cllrjames.sanderson@woking.gov.uk
Contact Person:	Frank Jeffrey, Head of Democratic Services Email: frank.jeffrey@woking.gov.uk , Extn: 3012
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Ayesha Azad Email: cllrayesha.azad@woking.gov.uk
Shadow Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Ann-Marie Barker Email: cllrann-marie.barker@woking.gov.uk
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1.0 Introduction

1.1 At its meeting on 30 July 2021, the Council received an update on Council decisions following the independent investigation into the Woking Football Club and associated developments. Included in the recommendations from the independent investigation was proposal that “WBC should allocate a reasonable budget to Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their work”.

1.2 The Council resolved to set aside an annual budget of £20,000 for the Committee and in September the Committee resolved that:

“A report be brought to a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee proposing the adoption of management arrangements for the release of, reporting on and audit of, the Scrutiny budget, the proposals to be drafted in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee.”

1.3 A draft proposal was subsequently drawn up for consideration by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee. Attached now at Appendix 1 is the final draft proposal which incorporates the changes requested by those consulted in its drafting. The Committee is asked to consider the proposed provisions set out in the appendix and adopt the protocol to clarify the oversight and management of the budget going forward.

2.0 Corporate Strategy

2.1 The use of the budget is to be determined by future meetings of the Committee. However, the overall purpose is to give the Committee the freedoms and flexibilities to fully engage with local communities as part of its overview and scrutiny responsibilities, one of the key elements of achieving the objectives of the Council's Corporate Plan. Such engagement may be around ensuring residents know who and where to go to discuss issues or make changes in their community, encouraging residents to play a greater role in supporting their communities, and helping residents to identify and make use of all the resources available to them.

3.0 Implications

Finance and Risk

3.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. The Protocol seeks to minimise any risks around the management of the Committee's substantial budget and clarify the reporting procedures. Once agreed by the Committee, the Protocol will be incorporated into the Council's Scrutiny Toolkit.

Equalities and Human Resources

3.2 There are no equalities or human resource implications arising from this report.

Legal

3.3 This report has been reviewed by Legal Services who haven't raised any issues.

4.0 Engagement and Consultation

4.1 The draft Protocol has been discussed with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee, the Lead Officer for Overview and Scrutiny (Giorgio Framallicco), the Finance Team and the relevant Business Support Manager in Financial Services (Steve Hook). The comments of those consulted have been incorporated in the version now before the Committee.

REPORT ENDS

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Account Protocol

Management arrangements for the release of, reporting on, and audit of, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's budget.

The Budget

The annual budget for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been set at £20,000 for each financial year (1 April to 31 March). Any unused funds will be returned to the Council's Reserves.

Any funds allocated to a specific project or cost, which have not been used in the financial year within which they were allocated, will be accrued to the following year.

(The budget was agreed by Council at its meeting on 30 July 2021.)

Allocation of Funds

Examples of expenditure include professional fees by a third party, venue hire costs, public engagement and promotional costs.

Any request to allocate a sum of money from the budget to cover expenditure incurred in the activities of the Committee and its Task Groups is to be set out in a report to the next available Committee. The report, to be drawn up by the Member seeking funds, is to outline what the funds would be used for, the timescale for the use of the funds, the impact of the request on the overall budget and any financial risks associated with the proposal. Any Member of the Council may be appointed to a Scrutiny Review Task Group and accordingly any Member of the Council may submit a request for the allocation of funds from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's budget.

Where possible, requests for the allocation of funds should be accompanied by evidence of the expenditure wherever possible such as a quote or an invoice.

Retrospective requests for the release of funds, where expenditure has already been incurred, will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

Whenever a Scrutiny Topic Form is completed, the Lead Member should consider what, if any, funds may be needed in order to support the work of the Scrutiny Task Group. The financial implications of the scrutiny review are to be reviewed concurrently with the topic proposal. If necessary, requests for additional funds will be considered by the Committee for existing projects.

Release of Payments

The release of funds to third parties or dealt with by internal transfer, where previously approved by the Committee, is to be requested by the Chairman of the Committee, the Chairman of the relevant Task Group or, in their absence, the respective Vice-Chairman. The request should be made to the Lead Officer for Overview and Scrutiny (Giorgio Framalitto) and/or the Scrutiny and

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Democratic Services Officer (Aadam Ahmed) who will arrange for the payment to be made through the Finance Team.

Any requests for the release of funds should be accompanied with evidence of expenditure such as receipts or invoices. Any invoices should be addressed to Woking Borough Council and should be proper tax invoices. All invoices should be sent to the Scrutiny and Democratic Services Officer (Aadam Ahmed, aadam.ahmed@woking.gov.uk) for checking against Committee's approved expenditure for the year, before they are passed electronically to Finance via E-Invoice@woking.gov.uk.

The Scrutiny and Democratic Services Officer will preauthorise the invoice and send it to the Head of Democratic Services for authorisation on Integra, at which point payment will be made in the Council's payment run prior to the due date of the invoice.

Oversight of Expenditure

A record of all expenditure incurred will be kept by the Scrutiny and Democratic Services Officer and will be available for inspection on request.

An outline of the year's expenditure and the status of the annual budget will be included in the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (published in March), setting out the projects on which funds were expended and any accruals for the following financial year. A full record of all expenditure will be held by the Finance Team for audit purposes.
