

Implementation Plan - Comments from Overview and Scrutiny Committee (2 and 3 April 2012)

Item No	Summary of Proposals	Comments from Overview and Scrutiny Committee
1.	Budget and Council Plan Study Group to be abolished.	This will be decided in due course by Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
2.	Finance Sub Committee to undertake an impact assessment on the impact of on-going 0% council tax rises on the Council's base budget	Sub-Committee to undertake this work.
3.	Create a politically balanced working group to oversee a review of the Council's management structure. Review to be undertaken by the Strategic Directors.	<p>The Committee queried whether Cabinet had responsibility for senior management structure reviews. They were advised that the Local Authority (Standing Orders) Regulations 2001 governed the position. The Committee asked to be provided with a copy of the Regulations.</p> <p>The Committee asked that Cabinet be requested to create a politically balanced working group to oversee a review of the Council's senior management structure.</p>
4.	The appointment of consultants will be approved by Full Council, including the renewal of consultant call off contracts. (Council Plan)	<p>The Committee noted that Council had responsibility for Contract Standing Orders and that it was open to the Council to undertake a review of these. The Committee therefore recommended that full Council set up a politically balanced group to undertake a review of Contract Standing Orders.</p> <p>The Committee requested clarification as to the legal basis for the Mayoral veto within the Constitution on constitutional amendments (other than in relation to overview and scrutiny).</p>
5.	Create a politically balanced Board to oversee Cabinet is Responsible for the work on the Business and Technical packages.	The Committee asked that Cabinet be requested to create a politically balanced working group to oversee the work on the Business and Technical packages.

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	management and delivery of the packages.	
6.	Full Council to agree the recommendations re. The Business and Technical packages at appropriate times.	The Committee considered that the contract itself would have to come to full Council for approval due to its value. The Committee reconfirmed their suggestion at Item 5 that Cabinet be requested to create a politically balanced working group to oversee the work on the Business and Technical packages.
7.	The Council's Financial Regulations will apply to any financial management of this budget, except for the following: Any virements above £50,000, revenue or capital, to be approved by Full Council with effect from 1 April 2012, pending a full review of the Financial Regulations to be reported to Council by October 2012.	The Committee requested that this proposal be taken forward without reference to the Constitutional Task Group.
8.	Delay the Business Package	The Committee queried whether no action on this item would amount to virement of the relevant budget, and were given assurance that there was no proposal to move money by formal virement. The Committee indicated that it considered that, by going ahead with the package without the suggested period of delay, Cabinet was showing disregard for working jointly with the Council. The Committee also asked to be provided with a full note on the Council's virement policy.
9.	Increase CEI contingency provision	

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10.	Reduce CEI reserve due to cessation of Community Based Trust and the delay in the implementation of the Business Package	
11.	Defer Capital projects funded from borrowing and not yet committed for 12 months	<p>The Committee noted that the minutes of the Cabinet meeting on 28 March 2012 at which the draft Implementation Plan was approved did not reflect consideration of specific items in the Plan and queried the validity of the decision making process in this regard.</p> <p>The Committee queried the implications such a delay would have on service delivery and noted that a report on such implications was due to be considered by Cabinet in May. The Committee noted that this item links with Item 52 in relation to the proposed deferral of expenditure on the North Shields Customer First Centre for 12 months.</p> <p>The Committee also requested a summary of how the deferred capital items had been funded in the Cabinet's original Budget proposals.</p>
12.	Reserve capital schemes will be presented to Full Council for approval before moving from the reserve list. (Council Plan)	
13.	Savings on third party payments through better control of waivers	
14	Voluntary reduction by 10% of those salaries over £50,000 per annum, with a floor of £50,000	

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15.	Introduction of a 36 hour working week	The Committee requested that a politically balanced working group be established to support the Chief Executive in taking forward discussion with the trades unions, and that the Chief Executive contact the Group Leaders to agree proceeding with this approach.
16.	Reduce officer mobile phones by 20%	
17.	Defer expenditure for 12 months on ICT Strategy (Capital Plan)	
18.	Reduce the current levels of sickness by a minimum of 10%. (Council Plan)	
19.	Introduce a local procurement policy to reduce the Council's carbon footprint and create /support local employment opportunities. (Council Plan)	The Committee noted that a report was due to be considered by Cabinet in May and requested that the proposed policy be shared with the Committee.
20.	Use renewable energy in our public buildings to minimise our energy costs. Support the private sector, by allowing them to take advantage of the low costs while using local companies to manufacture the components (Council Plan)	The Committee noted that activity in this area was already underway and requested that a report on that work be shared with the Committee.

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21.	Research and develop options for renewable energy in Council and across Borough	The Committee suggested that any associated strategy emerging from the work on the Technical package would need to be referred to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny sub-committee, and noted that if an alternative approach were achievable the £25,000 expenditure may not be required.
22.	Seek out best value contracts via negotiation, and offering longer periods for discounted rates which should reduce overheads in annual renewals. (Council Plan)	
23.	Look for opportunities to expand our service delivery into the public and private sectors. (Council Plan)	The Committee considered that there was significant scope for income generation from expanding service delivery, using the Council's in-house expertise and skills. The Committee queried the impact that any such activity would have on the ability of the Business and Technical packages to generate income, and were advised that it would have no particular effect.
24.	The Cabinet will continue to have representatives from our key partners including the trade unions at Cabinet meetings of the Council. (Council Plan)	The Committee asked that the Mayor reconsider inviting trades union representatives to attend meetings of Cabinet.
25.	Introduce new ways to encourage the Council's own staff to bring forward new ideas for modern ways to pay for and deliver services (Council plan)	The Committee requested that quarterly reports be submitted to Overview and Scrutiny detailing the staff suggestions received and any actions taken in follow up to these.

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	Chief Executive's Office	
26.	Terminate contract for Interim Chief Executive from 1 April 2012	<p>The Committee considered that this matter falls within the “inclusion/exclusion” scenario discussed at the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 19 March and requested that clarification on this point be obtained from James Goudie QC. They also queried Cabinet’s power to appoint on a consultancy basis to interim senior management posts, which in their view circumvented the role of Council in relation to appointments to senior management posts.</p> <p>The Committee also requested a full note from the Monitoring Officer and the s.151 Officer (1) explaining why this item is a “no action” item in the Implementation Plan; and (2) explaining the reallocation of the funding in question and where savings have been made to ensure this post is retained. The Committee also requested a written explanation from the Mayor to justify the need for the post to manage the business of the Council.</p>
27.	Review of the Strategic Projects Team	The Committee queried where the £50,000 would come from if “no action” is proposed, and suggested that the Strategic Projects team should look at how it operates and balance its budget to meet the £50,000 reduction. The Committee also noted that the “inclusion/exclusion” clarification would also be relevant to this item.
28.	Voluntary reduction in the Mayoral Allowance (Council Plan £50,000)	The Committee asked the Chief Executive to write formally to the Mayor to ask if the reduction will be taken up.
	Strategic Services	
29.	Review the way we involve residents and businesses to involve greater numbers of our population (Council Plan)	
30.	Create Ward Forums with devolved Area Forum	This matter was discussed in conjunction with Items 31 and 32. The Committee queried why £150,000 (at Item 30) still appeared to be included when it did not form part of the Budget agreed on 1 st March. They

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	budgets (revenue and capital)	<p>considered that decisions of this nature are Council matters. The Committee asked to be provided with a briefing note on two issues: (1) (in relation to Item 30 only) why the £150,000 is still in the Budget, and (2) (in relation to Items 30 to 32) why it is considered that the development of proposals are a matter for Cabinet. They also considered that there should be no spend on these budgets until these matters were clarified.</p> <p>The Committee also noted that the “inclusion/exclusion” clarification would also be relevant to these items.</p>
31.	Create a ward community budget (Capital Plan)	As Item 30.
32.	Delete Widening Horizons (Capital Plan)	As Item 30.
33.	Cessation of all advertising in the News Guardian. Advertising to be restricted to publications that cover the whole borough. (Council plan)	The Committee considered that this very specific proposal fell firmly within the “inclusion/exclusion” scenario and noted that clarification on the point was to be obtained.
34.	Merge all council publications into one which will be self funding through advertising (Council Plan)	
35.	Additional advertising income	
36.	Use assets to generate income from marketing and advertising (Council Plan)	

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37.	Delete subscription to Local Government Association (give notice from 1 April 2012)	The Committee considered that affiliation with the Local Government Association was a matter full Council had agreed, and requested that minute records be checked for this purpose. They also requested that officers check whether a 2012/13 subscription had been put in place and the notice period for termination.
38.	Delete Local Government Association Conference attendance	
39.	Review NTSP to determine effectiveness, value for money, representation and areas of work (Council Plan)	The Committee queried whether review of the NTSP was an Overview and Scrutiny responsibility, and requested that this point be clarified. In addition they requested information on who had undertaken the review described in the Implementation Plan, and where it had been considered.
	Community Services	
40.	Create Adult Social Care Repair Fund	The Committee considered that this matter was one of Council policy, queried why this matter is referred to in the Implementation Plan as a Cabinet responsibility, and considered that taking “no action” was negating Council policy. They also considered that the “inclusion/exclusion” clarification would be relevant to this item.
41.	Remove the establishment of a Community Based Trust	The Committee considered this item to be a matter of Council policy rather than a Cabinet responsibility. The Committee noted that a report to consider alternative options was due to be submitted to Cabinet in April 2012. They also considered that the “inclusion/exclusion” clarification would be relevant to this item.
42.	Remove the proposed above inflation increase in fees and charges for Sports and Leisure	The Committee considered that the “inclusion/exclusion” clarification was relevant to Items 42 to 46 relating to fees and charges, and noted that in each case a report to Cabinet in April 2012 was awaited.
43.	Remove the proposed above inflation increase in Arts Services fees and	As Item 42.

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	charges removed	
44.	Remove proposed increase in fees and charges for visitors and schools included in the alternative management options for the Rising Sun Country Park and review staffing	As Item 42.
45.	Remove the proposed above inflation increase in allotments income	As Item 42.
46.	Remove the proposed subsidy reduction for Sports Pitches and Bowling Greens	As item 42.
47.	Keep the Kids Club at Battle Hill	The Committee noted the proposal to review the implications for Kids Clubs generally, and questioned whether it was proposed to divert the associated funding away from Battle Hill. The Committee requested that the report due to be submitted to Cabinet in May should be kept specific to Battle Hill.
48.	Delete the provision of a pool car	
49.	Delete Mouth of the Tyne contribution	The Committee noted that the “inclusion/exclusion” clarification was relevant to this item.
50.	Reduce the Events Team	As in relation to Item 27, the Committee considered that the Events Team should look at how it operates and balance its budget to meet the £30,000 deficit. In addition the “inclusion/exclusion” clarification would also be relevant to this item.
51.	Delete Killingworth Lake	The Committee noted that the “inclusion/exclusion” clarification was relevant to this item.

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	Area Improvements	
52.	Defer expenditure for 12 months on North Shields Customer First (Capital Plan)	The Committee questioned which alternative funding sources may be available to take forward the project. The Committee asked to be provided with a list of the items in the Council's Capital Plan, including those items included and those items held in reserve. The Committee also noted that the "inclusion/exclusion" clarification was again relevant to this item.
53.	Ringfence any capital receipt from the sale of the existing Wallsend Boys Club Site and give a capital grant to the Wallsend Boys Club of that amount to help them towards a new facility (Council Plan)	The Committee noted that a report on this matter was due to be submitted to Cabinet in May and would await this.
54.	Work with Northumbria Health Care NHS Foundation Trust and the emerging GP Commissioning Consortia to enhance health and well-being across the Borough by providing additional financial resources for additional jointly funded activities. (Council plan)	The Committee noted that the Implementation Plan indicated this work was ongoing, and requested that information on the work undertaken be shared with Overview and Scrutiny.
	CYPL	
55.	Freeze School Meal prices	The Committee considered that the "inclusion/exclusion" clarification was relevant to Items 55, 56 and 58.
56.	Freeze Meals on Wheels prices	As item 55.

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57.	Reduce Committee teas	
58.	Remove apprenticeships (including Armed Forces return to employment)	As Item 55.
59.	Defer expenditure for 12 months on Youth Facilities (Capital Plan)	The Committee considered its comments in relation to Item 52 applied equally here.
60.	Review youth provision and create a new youth provision strategy for submission to full council (Council Plan)	The Committee considered its comments in relation to Item 52 applied equally here.
61.	The Multiversity partnerships with universities in Britain and Europe, will offer training and education from apprenticeship to post doctorate levels. Companies will benefit from the research provision at the multiversity (as a centre of excellence for research and development in renewable offshore energy provision and engineering) and associated universities (Council Plan)	<p>The Committee commented as follows on the Items relating to the Multiversity (Items 61 to 64).</p> <p>In relation to Item 61, the Committee queried whether the wording matched up with reality; for instance, whether it was proposed that education up to doctorate level would be provided.</p> <p>The Committee also sought clarification, in relation to the Capital Plan, as to which elements are comprised in the Multiversity proposal, and which in the Enterprise Zone.</p> <p>The Committee considered that as two thirds of the Council had agreed the name Multiversity for the development, that this should be its proper title.</p> <p>The Committee also requested that they be provided with clarification on the above issues before any further decisions are made.</p>

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62.	Multiversity -The Council will provide appropriate infrastructure and support investment in buildings and seek endowments and collaborations between universities and companies in an innovative partnership (Council plan)	As Item 61.
63.	The Multiversity will offer opportunities for local companies to up skill their own staff and offer work experience. (Council Plan)	As Item 61.
64.	Schools and colleges will collaborate with the Multiversity and local employers to develop their curriculum appropriately (Council plan)	As Item 61.
65.	Present a travel plan for 16 to 18 year olds to September Council. (Following discussions with TWITA to minimise the cost of travel for 16 to 18 year olds attending further education and training.)(Council Plan)	

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66.	Make representations to the Government to bring forward aid to help with the condition of our school buildings. (Council Plan)	The Committee noted the proposal in the Implementation Plan that the Cabinet consider ongoing representations to Government, using the Mayoral Task Group work as the basis for representations. The Committee requested that Council be informed if such representations were not made through that route, as it would be open to Council to make such representations if Cabinet did not.
67.	Encourage non member schools to join the learning trust (Council Plan)	The Committee noted that “no action” was proposed and considered that it would be open to the Council to instruct the Chief Executive to write to schools for this purpose.
68.	Encourage our schools to invest in renewable energy to reduce their day to day energy costs (Council plan)	The Committee expressed disappointment in the way that current activity in this area was referred to in negative terms, in the use of the words “no action”, rather than emphasising that positive work is already underway.
	Development	
69.	Offer the Council’s 52 empty business premises to new start up and existing businesses rent free.	
70.	Defer expenditure for 12 months on Coastal Developments (Capital Plan)	The Committee considered its comments in relation to Item 52 applied equally here.
71.	The Council will work collectively to improve the viability of all of our Town and Local Shopping centres (Council Plan)	The Committee considered that the proposals relating to deferring items on the Capital Plan had been misunderstood and that it was not the intention to try to stop projects in the Capital Plan going forward, for instance if new sources of funding became available and to ensure that adequate resources were provided taking into account the overall financial position of the Council. The Committee considered that the Council working collectively to improve the viability of town and shopping centres was a sensible approach and should be taken forward. The Committee also noted it was to be provided with clarification on the content of the current Capital Plan.

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72.	Provide additional council housing (Council Plan)	
73.	Promote use of brown field sites for affordable and rented homes (Council Plan)	
74.	Support private sector to make home improvements to support vulnerable people (Council Plan)	Clarification was provided that the reference in this item was to the public sector renewal grants budget of £400,000 in the Capital Plan, which therefore is already included in the Budget.
75.	Introduce a service to manage privately rented accommodation (Council Plan)	The Committee requested that, instead of “no action”, Cabinet reconsider introducing such a service, since it could present a significant trading opportunity for the Council.
76.	Mould Core Strategy to encourage more building on brown field sites to protect green spaces (Council plan)	
77.	River Tyne – seek innovative and diverse opportunities to create local jobs (Council plan) Cabinet decision. Already acting on Growth Strategy to create local jobs. No further action required.	

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78.	Investigate having a City Region Taxi and Private Hire Regulation Body (Council plan)	The Committee considered that any such joint arrangement would be a matter for Council. The Committee noted that a report on this matter was due to be submitted to Cabinet in June and would await this.