

Report to: Council

Subject: Proposed amendment to the Constitution: removal of the requirement to refer the Council Budget to Policy Scrutiny for consideration.

Date: 25 April 2012

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1. Purpose of the Report

To propose removal of the requirement to refer the annual budget to Policy Scrutiny Committee for consideration as part of the budget consultation process.

2. Background

2.1 Part 4 of the Council's constitution: Budget and Policy Framework Procedure and Rules (Part 2.01(c)) currently sets out the requirement to invite the Policy Review Scrutiny Committee to give views on priorities and suggestions for growth as part of the annual Budget and Policy Framework consultation process.

2.2 At recent Policy Scrutiny Committee meetings, Members have questioned whether the process adds any value to the consultation process, given that any comments on the budget are likely to fall along party political lines, and as such should be made at the Budget Council meeting itself rather than within Scrutiny Committee, which is apolitical.

2.3 A working group was convened comprising of the Chairs of the Overview and Policy Scrutiny Committees, the Leaders of the three political groups and the Chief Financial Officer to consider the issue.

2.4 At a working group meeting held on 26 March 2012, it was unanimously agreed to propose that the requirement to refer the Budget to Scrutiny be removed from the Council's constitution.

2.5 It should be noted that the proposed amendment does not preclude the Scrutiny Committees from undertaking a review of the budget at any time they see fit, as set out in Part 2 of the constitution: Article 6 (6.03) Specific functions of Scrutiny Committees.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1 It is recommended that the requirement to refer the annual budget to Policy Scrutiny Committee for consideration as part of the budget consultation process be deleted and the Council Solicitor and Monitoring Officer be authorised to make the appropriate change to the Constitution.