

Corporate Scrutiny Committee Monday 27 January 2025

Report Title	Budget Scrutiny Panel's Annual Report for 2025/26 (Corporate Scrutiny Committee's Budget Consultation Submission 2025/26)
Lead Member	Councillor Lyn Buckingham, Chair of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee and Budget Scrutiny Panel
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List of Appendices

Appendix A – Annual Budget Scrutiny Report for 2025/26

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To receive the Budget Scrutiny Panel's Report for 2025/26, which provides formal recommendations on the Executive's budget proposals for 2025/26.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The budget scrutiny process commenced on 28th October 2024 and concluded on 24th January 2025. The Committee is now being requested to determine its representation to the Executive for consideration at the Executive's meeting on 6th February 2025. The final budget proposals from the Executive will be forwarded to Full Council on 20th February 2025.
- 2.2. The report details the process undertaken by the Committee's Budget Scrutiny Panel in reviewing the proposed draft budget for 2025/26. The report requests that the Committee, having considered the budget proposals, indicates whether the proposals are robust, whether there are any areas of concern noted, and whether there are other priorities that the Committee wishes the Executive to consider. The Budget Scrutiny Panel's recommendations are set out in section 16 of the Annual Budget Scrutiny Report 2025/26 (Appendix A).

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. It is recommended that the Corporate Scrutiny Committee:
- a) Agrees the draft report from the Budget Scrutiny Panel at Appendix A;
 - b) Agrees that the report be submitted to the Executive as the Committee's response to the draft budget 2025/26.
- 3.2. *(Reason for Recommendations – To ensure that the Council complies with its Constitution and legislative requirements in setting the 2025-26 budget for North Northamptonshire Council.)*
- 3.3. *(Alternative Options Considered – None, as the Corporate Scrutiny Committee must fulfil its statutory role and is a required consultee in the budget setting process.)*

4. Report Background

- 4.1. The Executive, at its meeting on 14th November 2024, approved the 2025/26 budget-setting process and budget scrutiny arrangements.
- 4.2. Corporate Scrutiny has a critical role to play in scrutinising and reviewing the budget proposals, ensuring they are subject to rigorous and critical friend challenge. For the 2025/26 budget, this role was undertaken by the Committee acting as the Budget Scrutiny Panel.
- 4.3. Detailed scrutiny of the budget was carried out in two distinct phases by the Panel. Phase 1 was undertaken between 28th October and 21st November 2024 and looked at the current in-year position; detail of the current budget and activity; and general pressures and opportunities. Phase 2 took place between 2nd December 2024 and 21st January 2025, once the consultation process on the formal draft proposals commenced. The scrutiny sessions examined both proposed budget proposals and capital programme along with all key components. The Budget Scrutiny Panel's concluding session was held on 24th January 2025.
- 4.4. Specific in-depth scrutiny sessions were split across the main service areas:
- Adults, Health Partnerships and Housing, including the HRA
 - Children's Services
 - Enabling and Support Services
 - Place and Economy
 - Public Health and Communities

5. Issues and Choices

- 5.1. The main issues for the Committee to consider are detailed in the draft report at Appendix A.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1. Once approved by the Committee, the Annual Budget Scrutiny Report for 2025/26 will be forwarded to the Executive for consideration at their meeting on 6 February 2025. The final budget proposals will be considered by Full Council on 20 February 2025.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1. Resources, Financial and Transformation

- 7.1.1. The Corporate Scrutiny Committee is required to ensure that the draft budget is robust and to challenge any assumptions and proposals made which they feel are unreasonable. It is not the role of the Committee to develop an “alternative budget” but where the Committee feels that there are areas of potential income or expenditure that have not been fully explored or addressed, it is reasonable for the Committee to raise these with the Executive. The need to ensure the Council sets a balanced budget is paramount.

7.2. Legal and Governance

- 7.2.1 Under the Council’s Constitution (Part 7.1 Scrutiny Procedure Rules), the Committee are required to undertake the budget review process and ensure that budget proposals are subject to rigorous challenge.
- 7.2.2 The Committee should report its findings and deliberations to the Executive, prior to the Executive making its final recommendations to Full Council.
- 7.2.3 Senior officers of the Council have been available throughout the Committee’s scrutiny process to assist the Committee in its deliberations.

7.3. Relevant Policies and Plans

- 7.3.1. This report supports the delivery of the Council’s Corporate Plan.

7.4. Risk

- 7.4.1. It is important that any draft budget proposals ensure that they support the implementation of the Corporate Plan and satisfy all legislative requirements place on the Council.

7.5. Consultation

- 7.5.1. Executive Director Finance (Section 151 Officer); Director of Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer) were consulted in developing this report.
- 7.5.2. Executive Members, Members of the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and senior officers were present at scrutiny sessions throughout the process.

7.6. Consideration by Executive Advisory Panel

7.6.1. Not applicable as this is a Scrutiny report.

7.7. Consideration by Scrutiny

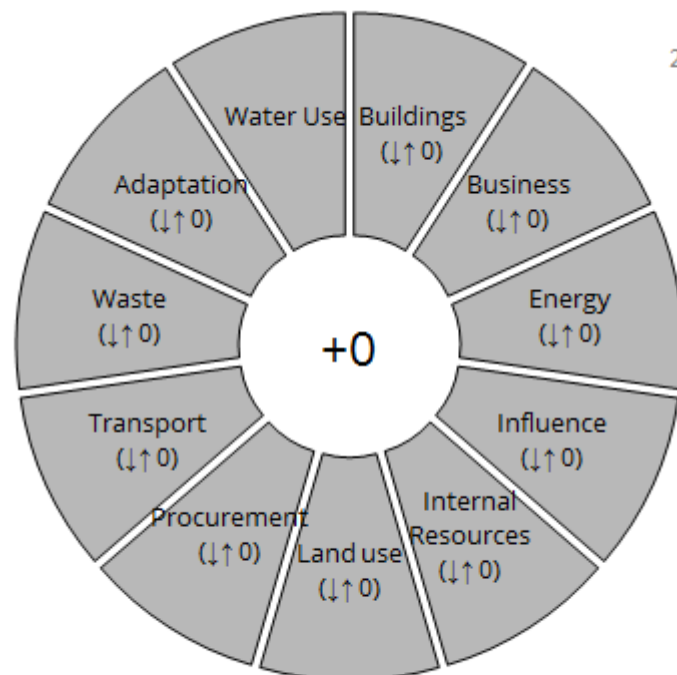
7.7.1. The Corporate Scrutiny Committee have been consulted on the budget proposals as required under the Council's Constitution.

7.8. Equality Implications

7.8.1 Equality Impact Screening has been conducted for the draft budget proposals and can be viewed at the following [link](#).

7.9. Climate Impact

7.9.1. There are no direct climate and environmental impacts arising from this report.



North Northamptonshire Council has committed to being a carbon neutral organisation by 2030, 4 yrs & 11 mos away.

7.10. Community Impact

7.10.1. There is no direct community impact arising from this report.

7.11. Crime and Disorder Impact

7.11.1. There are no direct crime and disorder impacts arising from this report.

8. Background Papers

- 8.1. Executive Report 14th November 2024 – Executive Report 14th November 2024 – [Indicative Budget Timeline and Scrutiny Process 2025-26](#)
- 8.2. Executive Report 19th December 2024 – [Draft Budget 2025/26 and Medium-Term Financial Plan](#)
- 8.3. Executive Report 19th December 2024 – [Housing Revenue Account Draft Budget 2025-26 and Medium-Term Financial Proposals](#)
- 8.4. Executive Report 19th December 2024 – [Draft Capital Programme 2025-29](#)
- 8.5. Executive Report 16th January 2025 - [Post-Financial Settlement Budget Update](#)