

**Response to recommendations from General Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

<b>Recommendation</b>		<b>Response</b>
1.	That the final bullet point on paragraph 20.1 of the Cabinet report is amended to 'The budget proposals will be considered by Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee General Overview and Scrutiny on 13 January 2014.	New paragraph 35 of the report addresses this point.
2.	That before the budget comes to full Council all of the impacts identified within the equalities impact assessment are accompanied by the appropriate mitigations.	The purpose of equality impact assessments (EIAs) is to ensure that decision-makers are informed and may take account of the potential impacts (positive and negative) of any particular course of action including whether any mitigation is available –which will not always be the case.
3.	That the robustness of all equality impact assessments in the budget appendices be considered.	EIAs are living documents which are maintained throughout any policy or funding change process to ensure that when decisions are taken decision makers can take account of the potential impacts of their decisions and, once a decision has been taken, that consideration is given to whether or not there have been any unintended impacts. The range of EIAs providing background to the overarching budget EIA relate to proposals which are at varying stages within the decision-making/implementation process and therefore should not be regarded as 'final' documents; they will, where appropriate, continue to be updated to ensure they are as robust as possible.
4.	That an equality impact assessment for funding for the Citizen's Advice Bureau be reviewed prior to submission at Council.	The budget proposals being considered by Council do not impact the CAB in 2014/15; the EIA regarding potential changes to funding for CAB will continue to be updated and used to inform any decision when taken.

5.	That a robust budget monitoring system be put in place, and that exception monitoring reports be submitted to the appropriate Scrutiny Committee where there are deviations from budget of more or less than 5%. This can be submitted electronically for distribution.	Robust budget monitoring is in place with particular emphasis on the high risk areas identified in the budget report. Regular reports are made to Cabinet on the budget position during the year. Scrutiny can request monitoring information for their meetings and deviations of material amounts can be reported by exception.
6.	That the words 'are not national organisations' should be removed from the draft savings proposals for discretionary business rate relief from April 2014 for charities that are locally based.	<p>In April 2013 a revised discretionary rate relief policy was approved. Discretionary rate relief is available as a 20% "top up" of mandatory relief which is 80% funded. New claimants are now assessed on the revised policy, but existing recipients were served notice (12 months) and then have to reapply for 2014-15 under the new criteria. The 2014-15 budget shows the financial effect of this policy change.</p> <p>The revised criteria include "Charities that are locally based (are not national organisations) and which provide facilities that benefit the wider community of Herefordshire and are of a social/welfare nature".</p> <p>If the policy was changed an equivalent saving would need to be identified elsewhere.</p>
7.	That the Task and Finish Group Report on Cultural Services should be considered as part of the report to Council on the budget for the service.	Although the Task & Finish Group report on Cultural Services was only received as the budget proposals were being finalised, the report recommendations have been taken into consideration in relation to decisions affecting cultural services as reflected in reports elsewhere on Cabinet agenda.
8.	That there should be a clear articulation of the statutory regulations for the provision of library services in Herefordshire.	The statutory requirement is for the provision of a comprehensive [and effective] local library service. The legislation does not define this requirement in more detail. The Cabinet believes it is working within the legal framework when making decisions for the future of the service.

9.	That effective consultation is undertaken with Parish Councils at the earliest opportunity, prior to the commencement of the devolution of services to the parishes.	This has, and will continue to take place on a case by case basis with examples of considerable success across the county including community asset transfers and local service delivery across a range of services including the lengthsman scheme, community libraries, community toilets, tourist information and others.
10.	That a clear communication is sent out to the general public about the consequences of the changes proposed in the budget.	This has and will continue to happen but the support of all members is sought in helping to ensure clear and consistent messages are given which enable residents to understand both the impacts and how they may contribute to mitigation of those impacts enabling the taxpayers' resources to continue to support priority services.