

Questioner:	Ms Reid, Hereford
<p>Question:</p> <p>I note that at 9.20am on 11 January 2024 the following documents are not available on the webpage of the 16 January 2024 Scrutiny Management Board meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children and Young People Directorate Budget Task and Finish Group report• Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25 to 2027/28 report• Earmarked Reserves and General Fund Balance forecasts to 31 March 2024 report <p>I understand that reports should be available one week before the relevant meeting.</p> <p>I intended to ask a public question in respect of the Children and Young People Directorate Budget Task and Finish Group report. However, the deadline for public questions is 9.30am on 11 January 2024.</p> <p>How will the Scrutiny Management Board ensure that in the future reports etc are available on time before meetings?</p>	
<p>Response:</p> <p>The Local Government Act requires Herefordshire Council to give five clear working days notice of a meeting of a constituted committee such as Scrutiny Management Board. It also requires Herefordshire to ensure that any reports to be considered at a committee meeting to be made available to the public at the same time as committee members.</p> <p>Scrutiny Management Board ensures that it receives reports in time for meetings through regular planning sessions between the chair and supporting officers. This process is mostly successful in ensuring timely publication of reports.</p> <p>The timetable for scrutiny of the budget setting process is impacted by release of financial settlement information to councils by central government. This compresses the time frame for the production of documentation to a greater extent than is usual for committees. In such situations, Herefordshire Council instead publishes reports at the earliest possible opportunity before the meeting.</p> <p>The consequence of this is that it has not been possible to publish all supporting reports five clear days before the budget scrutiny meeting. This impacts on committee time to prepare and also upon the ability of the public to submit questions to scrutiny. This is unfortunate.</p> <p>The final version of the budget documentation pack will go to cabinet and to full council and will be available at both meetings for the public and councillors to submit written questions.</p> <p>In March Scrutiny Management Board will be reviewing learning from this year's process as part of developing a full year cycle of budget scrutiny work and will seek to reduce the impact that external factors have upon the role of scrutiny and upon the public's ability to engage with the democratic and governance process.</p>	