

Herefordshire Council

Budget Council meeting procedure

A. Introduction

A1. The council's constitution provides the following specific provisions relating to the budget meeting:

- Receive any questions from, and provide answers to, members of the public. In the case of extraordinary meetings and the budget meeting questions must relate to items on the agenda;
- Consider motions and debate those motions in the order in which they have been received, at the budget meeting motions must relate to the agenda or be time critical; and
- Receive any questions from and provide answers to members of the council. At the budget meeting questions must relate to items on the agenda.

A2. As questions must relate to items on the agenda it is appropriate to take them before those agenda items are considered.

A3. In relation to the debate on the budget the constitution includes a number of rules to ensure that all members have an opportunity to express their views within the time available. The chairperson remains responsible for the management of the meeting.

A4. This guidance is intended to remind members of those rules of debate and how the chairperson may use those rules to help ensure that all members who wish to do so have an opportunity to speak.

A5. In order to ensure that all members have the opportunity to contribute to the budget debate the chairperson will ask all speakers to be succinct and will use a timer to keep members within the following time limits:

- Leader of the council (or nominee) – up to 10 minutes proposing the budget;
- Seconder – up to 5 minutes seconding the proposed budget;
- Other group leaders – The leaders of each of the political groups speak on the executive's budget – up to 5 minutes each (The order of speaking is determined by size of the group and, in cases where the size is equal, in alphabetical order);
- Proposers of amendments, if any – up to 3 minutes each;
- Seconders of any amendments – up to 3 minutes each.
- All other members speaking in the debate – up to 3 minutes each
- Leader of the council (or nominee) – up to 5 minutes (right to reply to budget debate) and 3 minutes (right of reply to debate on amendments).
- Where specific questions have been addressed to a cabinet member, that cabinet member may have up to 2 minutes to respond.

B. Procedure

- B1. The leader (or nominee) will make their proposal speech (10 minutes).
- B2. The seconder may speak in support or reserve their right to speak later but before any amendment is heard (5 minutes).
- B3. The leader of the Liberal Democrat group may speak (5 minutes).
- B4. The leader of the Independents for Herefordshire group may speak (5 minutes).
- B5. The leader of The Green Party group may speak (5 minutes).
- B6. The leader of the True Independents group may speak (5 minutes).
- B7. All other members may speak and debate the cabinet's budget recommendations (3 minutes).
- B8. Where an alternative budget is being proposed, the proposing group or Member must have presented their proposals to the scrutiny committees and secured confirmation from the chief finance officer that the alternative budget meets statutory requirements at least six clear working days before the meeting of Council (by 4 February 2026) at which the item is to be considered. The alternative budget will be taken as the first budget amendment under the relevant agenda items.
- B9. Members intending to propose an amendment to the budget proposals must have consulted with the relevant directors to determine the context and possible consequences of the proposal and have secured confirmation from the chief finance officer and monitoring officer that the action proposed is deliverable. In order for the chief finance officer and monitoring officer to review an amendment it should be submitted to them by 5.00 p.m. on the Wednesday preceding the budget meeting (i.e. 11 February 2026). The chief finance officer will confirm if the amendment is deliverable by 1.00 p.m. on Thursday 12 February. If deliverable, members will then be required to confirm that they wish for their amendment to be considered at the meeting of Council. This will ensure: an accurate record of the content of amendments; detail as to when they were received; and the order in which they should be considered. Amendments confirmed as deliverable and the proposing member's approval to proceed to the Council meeting must be received by the monitoring officer by 9.30 a.m. on Friday 13 February.
- B10. Proposed amendments (if any) will be taken in the order in which they have been proposed to the monitoring officer having secured agreement of their deliverability from the chief finance officer. Confirmed amendments received by 5.00 p.m. of 12 February 2026 will be published by 6.00 p.m. Any received after 5.00 p.m. and up to 9.30 a.m. on 13 February 2026 will be published immediately prior to budget Council. All amendments will be published in the order they are received.

- B11. Each amendment will be dealt with as follows and using the time limits outlined above:
- i. The proposer will propose and speak in support (3 minutes).
 - ii. The seconder will second and may speak in support (or reserve their right to speak). (3 minutes)
 - iii. The chief finance officer has the opportunity to confirm whether or not each proposed amendment, if adopted, would result in the setting of a lawful and balanced budget; and gives any advice, felt to be appropriate, in relation to each proposed amendment.
 - iv. All other members, other than the proposer of the original motion and proposer/seconder of amendment, may speak (but not more than once on any one amendment). (3 minutes)
 - v. The seconder of the amendment (if they have reserved their right to speak) may speak. (3 minutes)
 - vi. The leader (as proposer of the original motion) may speak immediately before the vote on the amendment. (3 minutes)
 - vii. The proposer of the amendment shall have no right of reply to the debate on the amendment.
 - viii. The amendment is put to the recorded vote and members vote for, against or abstain on the amendment.
- B12. If an amendment has been carried then the budget as amended takes the place of the original budget proposals and if there are further amendments, the procedure at B11 (above) will be repeated until there are no further amendments to debate or vote on.
- B13. If there are no amendments carried, the leader has the opportunity to respond to the debate (5 minutes) and the original budget proposals will be put to the recorded vote.
- B14. If Council votes to accept the recommendations of cabinet without amendment, Council may vote on the substantive motion and make a decision which has immediate effect.
- B15. If there are an equal number of votes for and against any amendment or the substantive motion or the original motion the chairperson will have a second or casting vote.
- B16. If an amendment(s) to the Budget and Policy Framework has been submitted in accordance with Council's Constitution Part 4 Section 1 (Council and Committee meeting rules) and the Leader indicates, on behalf of Cabinet, that they accept the amendment(s), then the Budget and Policy Framework shall be deemed to include such amendments.
- B17. If any amendment is not accepted by the Leader as outlined in paragraph B16, Council cannot amend the Budget and Policy Framework until the following process has been followed. Council may however make an 'in principle' decision to amend the Budget and Policy Framework.

- B18. The budget is then put to the recorded vote without further debate and any member who has reserved their right to speak loses the opportunity to do so unless the chairperson exercises discretion otherwise.

Council shall vote on the substantive motion which can include:

- a. the original cabinet recommendations that have not been amended;
- b. any amendment(s) that have been accepted by the Leader as per B16 (if any); and
- c. and further amendment(s) that have not been accepted by the Leader (if any);

If passed and consists of B18 a. and B18 b. only, then this will be the decision of Council. If passed and contains B18 c. then it shall be an 'in principle' decision. Council will instruct Cabinet to reconsider the amendment to the Budget and Policy Framework.

If the substantive motion contains further amendments under B18c. then the substantive motion shall also specify the date that the response by Cabinet shall be provided (if motion is passed).

- B19. Council will specify a date by which the Cabinet may submit a response to Council in respect to the amended part of the Budget and Policy Framework. That date must be at least 10 working days after the date of the 'in principle' Council decision.
- B20. If Cabinet does not submit a response within the time specified, then the 'in principle' decision takes effect the day following the date specified by Council.
- B21. If Cabinet wishes to submit a response, then Cabinet will meet to consider Council's amended Budget and Policy Framework and may resolve to:
- a. accept Council's amendments and make no further submissions, in which case the 'in principle' decision of Council takes effect immediately; or
 - b. disagree with Council's amendments, in which case the Cabinet must inform Council that Cabinet disagrees with Council's amendments and explain why; or
 - c. make further amendments to the amended part of the Budget and Policy Framework, in which case Cabinet must submit any revised draft to Council together with Cabinet's reasons for those revisions.
- B22. If appropriate, Cabinet may wish to consult the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee (or in the case of urgency the Chair of the relevant Committee) in such reconsideration.
- B23. If Cabinet submits a response under para B21 b. or c. above then a further Council meeting will be held at least 5 working days after the date of submission of the response. The Chairperson of the Council shall set the date of the further Council meeting.

B24. At any further Council meeting, Council must then consider the submissions made by Cabinet before finally approving the Budget and Policy Framework.

Council shall approve either the Budget and Policy Framework:

- (i) as originally submitted by Cabinet to the first Council meeting;
- (ii) as amended by Council at the first Council meeting; or
- (iii) as recommended by any further Cabinet amendments. The decision shall then be made public and shall be implemented immediately.

Claire Porter
Monitoring Officer

February 2026