

5. PROTOCOL FOR INPUT OF STANDING COMMITTEES TO BUDGET SCRUTINY REVIEWS

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The purpose of this report is to confirm a protocol for the relationship between the Budget Scrutiny and Audit Committee and Standing Committees.

At the February Council meeting, the Budget Scrutiny and Audit Special Committee recommended a protocol which would deal with the way in which Standing Committees provided input into reviews undertaken by the Budget Scrutiny and Audit Special Committee. The Council deferred considering that report pending a meeting of the Chairpersons of Standing Committees with the Chairperson of the Budget Scrutiny and Audit Special Committee.

That meeting of the Chairs has now been held, and a protocol was agreed and is outlined in the steps below.

The main change from the original protocol is that the conclusions and recommendations of the Budget Scrutiny and Audit Special Committee are now referred to the Standing Committees for their consideration and recommendation to the Council. That recommendation to the Council is to include the recommendations that were received from the Budget Scrutiny and Audit Special Committee, so that differences (if any) can be debated at the Council meeting. This is different to the original proposal, which had the Budget Scrutiny and Audit Special Committee considering views raised by Standing Committees, and the Budget Scrutiny and Audit Special Committee reporting its recommendations directly to the Council.

The revised protocol is considered to be better because, while it retains the independence of the Budget Scrutiny and Audit Special Committee to undertake reviews and reach conclusions and recommendations (taking into account input from the Standing Committees), it is then the responsibility of the Standing Committee to consider and make recommendations to the Council on those proposals. It is, after all, the Standing Committees which will eventually be responsible for implementing the results of this process, subject of course to the work of the Annual Plan Subcommittee.

The new protocol recommended from the meeting of the Chairpersons of the Standing Committees and the Chairman of the Budget Scrutiny and Audit Special Committee, is as follows.

Step 1

Budget Scrutiny and Audit Special Committee considers and approves the terms of reference for the significant activity review project, with input sought from the Chairperson of the relevant Standing Committee.

Step 2

Issues and opportunities are explored and identified by a review team, and presented to a seminar meeting(s) of the Budget Scrutiny and Audit Special Committee.

Step 3

The Budget Scrutiny and Audit Special Committee holds a joint seminar(s) with the relevant Standing Committee(s) to seek their views on the identified issues and opportunities.

Step 4

The Budget Scrutiny and Audit Special Committee considers the issues and opportunities and reaches its own conclusions and recommendations, and passes these to the relevant Standing Committee(s).

Step 5

The Standing Committee considers these conclusions and recommendations, and makes its recommendation to the Council. This report to the Council is to include the original recommendations of the Budget Scrutiny and Audit Special Committee.

Step 6

Implementation of the recommendations adopted by the Council is the responsibility of the relevant Standing Committee(s) and Council Units. Where the changes result in changes in service levels, or to significant projects included in the Annual Plan, then the proposal is included in the next available Annual Plan, or a separate special consultation procedure is undertaken.

Recommendation: That the above protocol determining the relationship between the Standing Committees and the Budget Scrutiny and Audit Special Committee be adopted.