

Health and Social Care Committee

HSC(4)-03-11 paper 3

BUDGET SCRUTINY 2012/13

Purpose

1. One of the Health and Social Care Committee's ("the Committee's") roles is to scrutinise the Welsh Government's annual budget. The Committee's portfolio covers three budget areas: health, mental health and social services.
2. This paper seeks the Committee's view on the proposed approach to budget scrutiny.

Budget scrutiny process

3. The Finance Committee is the only committee which can recommend changes to the Government's budget.¹ However, any other committee can consider and report to the Finance Committee on the draft budget.² This is usually done through a committee report or a letter to the Finance Committee.
4. The Finance Committee launched a public consultation over the summer on the budget. The call for evidence³ was broad and went to a wide range of stakeholders, including health, mental health and social services organisations.
5. The committee time available for budget scrutiny is limited:

4 October	Government lays draft budget
12 October 20 October	Committee meetings available for evidence to be taken on the budget.

¹ Standing Order 20.11

² Standing Order 20.10

³ <http://senedd.assemblywales.org/documents/s2247/Consultation%20letter%20-%20Welsh%20Government%20draft%20budget%20proposals%20for%202012-13.pdf>

26 October	Date by which committee reports must be laid in order for the Finance Committee to take any committee views into consideration in their report on the draft budget.
8 November	Deadline for the Finance Committee's report on the draft budget.

Ministerial Scrutiny

6. The Minister for Health and Social Services and Deputy Minister for Children and Social Services are available to attend the Committee's meeting on 20 October for budget scrutiny.

Roundtable

7. The Committee is asked to consider a proposal to hold a 'roundtable' session with representatives from each of the three budget areas. This would be a short (1 hour) session on 12 October. The purpose of the discussion would be to identify key issues to consider when scrutinising the draft budget and to inform scrutiny of the Minister and Deputy Minister the following week.
8. As the purpose of this session would be to gather information, a detailed briefing would not be provided. Members would be encouraged to explore with the witnesses those areas which warrant further investigation with the Minister and Deputy Minister.
9. Due to the nature of the session, Members may feel that umbrella organisations would be best placed to provide an overview of the key issues which require further exploration with the Minister and Deputy Minister. In addition to umbrella organisations, the Committee may wish to consider inviting a witness who can provide a general overview on the financial situation facing the sector, such as a health economist or academic.
10. Possible witnesses could include:
 - NHS Confederation

- Association of Directors of Social Services
- National Programme Board for Adult Mental Health
- Academic

Future budget scrutiny

11. Budget scrutiny is an on-going responsibility for the Committee and further work can be undertaken throughout the year. To aid the Committee's ability to undertake future budget scrutiny, Members may wish to consider identifying 'expert advisers' who could help with future budget scrutiny.⁴ This would help mitigate the difficulty in recruiting witnesses who have the right balance of expertise in finance and policy and who are not already providing support within Wales.
12. Members are asked to suggest potential candidates to assist with budget scrutiny in the future. These could be academics/experts from outside Wales, who would agree to provide advice to the Committee for the 2013-14 budget round.

Action for the Committee

13. The Committee is invited to:
 - agree the approach to financial scrutiny for 2012-13 (paragraphs 6 – 10); and
 - give further consideration to the approach for future budget scrutiny (paragraphs 11 and 12).

⁴ Standing Order 17.55 permits committees to appoint advisers for the purposes of providing expert advice.