

## Appendix 7b - Opening the Books Review

SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION	CONCLUSIONS	DEPARTMENT AND CABINET MEMBER RESPONDING	ACCEPTED / PARTIALLY ACCEPTED / REJECTED (inc. reasons for rejection)	IDENTIFIED OFFICER	ANY FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS IF ACCEPTED (ie Action Plan)	DATE OF SCRUTINY MEETING TO REPORT BACK
<b>Report:</b> Opening the Books Review (Considered by Scrutiny & Overview Committee on 21 July 2022)							
<p>1. It was recommended that the project to maximise the functionality of the Fusion Oracle financial software should be treated as a priority and resourced accordingly, given the potential high level of risk in the Council budget.</p>	<p>It was noted that Council's financial software, Fusion Oracle had been successfully used at other local authorities and that there was a separate project underway to full embed the Fusion Oracle finance system across the Council. The Committee agreed that this work should be a priority, as it would be part of the bedrock for delivering robust financial monitoring systems, that could allow the identification of issues at an early stage. If the outcome from this project was less than optimal there was a significant risk that the budgeting errors of the past could be repeated.</p>	<p>Cllr Cummings, Cabinet Member for Finance</p>	<p>Partially Accepted</p> <p>Agreed in principle, but there will be cost implications from the changes envisaged and will need to be agreed and accepted as part of Spend Control panel processes.</p>	<p>Jane West, Corporate Director of Resources</p>	<p>Financial implications will become clearer once the scope of works is agreed with the Council's delivery partner.</p>	<p>Key improvements to the financial monitoring processes being discussed with the Council's delivery partner envisage a go live for April 2023</p>	
<p>2. It was recommended that the Administration engages in pre-decision scrutiny at an early stage in the budget setting process to consult on significant changes to service provision.</p>	<p>It was recognised that it was very likely some extremely difficult choices would need to be made to deliver the level of savings required by the Council. It was highlighted that Scrutiny could be used by the Administration as a resource to test any significant service changes to or the discontinuation of services.</p>	<p>Cllr Cummings, Cabinet Member for Finance</p>	<p>Accepted</p> <p>Please see the timescales for engagement</p>	<p>Jane West, Corporate Director of Resources</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>The scrutiny work programme includes:</p> <p>Budget Scrutiny - 6 December 2022</p> <p>Budget deep dive – 10 January 2023</p> <p>Final budget scrutiny session – 14 February 2023</p>	

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<p>3. It is recommended that a robust training plan is prepared on the budget setting process for Members to ensure all have the requisite skills and knowledge to make an informed judgement on the proposed budget at the Budget Council meeting.</p>	<p>Given there had been a significant influx of new Councillors following the election in May, there was a need to provide training for all Members on the budget setting process and should include the production of a guide mapping out the process.</p>	<p>Cllr Cummings, Cabinet Member for Finance</p>	<p>Accepted</p> <p>The Local Government Association have agreed to provide Budget scrutiny training and will seek to expand to all Members</p>	<p>Jane West, Corporate Director of Resources</p>	<p>A budget already exists for Member training.</p> <p>A session for Scrutiny Members is planned as part of the Budget Scrutiny programme.</p> <p>There may be no additoinal cost to opening the session to all Members, or the LGA may fund a session.</p>	<p>November / December 2022.</p>	