

ANNUAL BUDGET SURVEY – 2023

Purpose of the Report

1. To outline the proposed approach to undertaking the 2023 Budget Survey and to seek approval to launch the survey.

Budget Survey – Rising to the Challenge

2. The Nottinghamshire Plan, approved in November 2021, sets out the County Council's 10-year vision for a healthy, prosperous and greener future for everyone. This focuses on the below themes:
 - Improving health and wellbeing in all our communities
 - Growing our economy and improving living standards
 - Reducing the County's impact on the environment
 - Helping everyone access the best of Nottinghamshire.
3. The themes are underpinned by strategies and plans, including our Annual Delivery Plan (available on the Council website).
4. We have made positive progress against our Annual Delivery Plan (as evidenced in our Annual Report) and continue looking to the future and finding ways we can deliver the best for Nottinghamshire's communities, whilst ensuring value for money. Our budget is built on a foundation of solid financial management over many years, putting our Council in a relatively positive position, despite difficult national and international circumstances.
5. However, we still face financial challenges. As presented to Members at the February 2023 budget meeting, from 2024/25 onwards, the Council is projecting a budget shortfall of £30.8m across the duration of our Medium-Term Financial Strategy, to 2026/27. This means we need to continuously find ways to use our resources in the most effective ways and remain focussed on getting the maximum value for the people and communities of Nottinghamshire, for every pound we spend.
6. The Council regularly consults residents and other stakeholders to seek their views on a wide range of issues. The budget survey enables the Council to hear the views of residents and other key stakeholders, and for these to be considered when members make decisions as part of the budget setting process.

7. Building on the positive response from last year's survey, consideration has been given as to how the 2023 budget survey could be further developed, this has included a thorough review by Overview Committee. The full report ([29 June 2023](#)) is available on the Council's website and the response to the specific recommendations of Overview Committee members can be found in the relevant Cabinet report, earlier on this agenda. The recommendations have been considered in the design of this year's survey.
8. It is also to be noted that members of the Overview review group were in strong agreement that whilst some minor amendments to the questions included in the budget consultation survey may be needed each year, once a format had been agreed, the questions asked each year should remain largely unchanged. Members agreed that consistent questions asked over several years would enable detailed analysis on how residents' priorities were changing over time.
9. The 2023 survey sets out how the council spends its allocated budget and asks people for their views about our services, their priorities and opportunities to reduce spend or raise additional revenue. A draft paper copy is appended (appendix 1). Subject to Cabinet approval, the survey will launch via the Council website on 29 September 2023, closing on 12 November 2023.
10. The consultation will be publicised through a range of channels including:
 - a. Nottinghamshire County Council website
 - b. local and regional media
 - c. social media, including Twitter, Facebook and Instagram
 - d. email bulletins to the Council's subscribers
 - e. and in print at Libraries.
11. We will also be sharing our consultation with our partners, including groups representing the business community and other relevant stakeholders, including the trade unions at Central Joint Consultative and Negotiating Panel (JCNP).
12. Members are encouraged to share the survey with their communities.
13. Cabinet will take account of the consultation when drawing up firm proposals to the Council. Results will be communicated after the consultation has ended on the council's website.

Other Options Considered

14. Not to consult stakeholders – this would not enable the views of residents and other key stakeholders to be considered when members make decisions as part of the budget setting process. Therefore, this option has not been pursued.
15. To conduct a different type of survey – This was considered by Members of the Overview Review Group who discussed the potential that in future years the questions and their format could be amended to make them even more accessible and be presented in a more interactive way. Members agreed that whilst there could be some potential benefits of large-scale changes to the format of the survey, making such changes would take considerable time, put significant demands on resources and could be difficult to deliver as the Council does not

currently have a dedicated team for the management and delivery of consultation and engagement activity. Therefore, this option has not been pursued.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

16. To agree arrangements for the 2024/25 budget survey.

Statutory and Policy Implications

17. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

In addition to officer time in production of the survey, the approximate cost for the design costs for digital and printed items including the printing and distribution of paper items is £2,275. This will be met from existing budgets.

Data Protection and Information Governance

An outline Data Protection Impact Assessment has been completed and submitted to the Information Governance Team, with appropriate advice taken regarding any impacts identified.

Public Sector Equality Duty implications

In coming to a decision, Cabinet must have regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010. At this stage, the decision is to seek approval to commence a budget survey seeking the views from a wide range of residents and stakeholders and efforts have been made to address potential accessibility issues in the design of the survey and to report back on the outcomes of the survey to inform future decision making.

Further consideration of the Public Sector Equality Duty will be given as appropriate at each stage of the decision-making process, whilst a summary Equality Impact Assessment specific to the budget consultation, has also been completed.

Additional questions have been included in the 'About You' section of the survey.

Implications for Sustainability and the Environment

There will be a reduction to the number of paper copies produced. This reflects our commitment to being sustainable and environmentally friendly and that the vast majority of respondents are now completing the survey online. Printed posters and booklets will be sent to libraries to ensure the survey is accessible. Electronic versions of the posters and booklets shall be emailed to all elected members and children's centres, whilst paper copies will be available on request via our Customer Service Centre.

RECOMMENDATION/S

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 1) Agrees the changes and notes improvements to this year's survey.
- 2) Approves the launch of the 2023 Survey.

COUNCILLOR BRUCE LAUGHTON DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSFORMATION

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

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Constitutional Comments (HD 23/8/2023)

1. Cabinet is the appropriate body of Council to consider the report and its recommendations.

Financial Comments (KRP 23/8/23)

2. As noted in the report the anticipated cost of design and production is £2,275 and this will be met from existing budgets.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- Report of the Chairman of the Overview Committee 29 June 2023 - outcomes of the scrutiny review of council consultations and resident engagement
- Response to the recommendations from the scrutiny review of council consultations and resident engagement – 21 September 2023
- Appendix 1 – Draft Budget Survey 2023, paper version

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All