

REPORT OF THE LEADER

BUDGET CONSULTATION 2016/2017

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To inform Policy Committee of the indicative timetable and approach for the 2016/2017 budget consultation process and to seek approval for the proposed methodology.

Information and Advice

- 2 Budget consultation is a statutory requirement that aims to balance the various interests and needs of the Council and its stakeholders, and to produce a soundly based financial plan for the future. The budget process is set against the background of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy, which, in turn, uses information from the Government's spending reviews.
- 3 Consultation is undertaken to engage with and listen to local people to help the Council make informed decisions on difficult and challenging issues.
- 4 The consultation process aims to deliver the following outcomes:
 - Raise awareness of the financial challenge and how the Council is dealing with budget reductions
 - Ensure residents and local businesses understand the full range of services provided by the Council
 - Obtain views on specific budget proposals that have been collectively put forward
- 5 The consultation best practice principles of Integrity, Visibility, Accessibility, Transparency and Disclosure will be adopted at all times.
- 6 The consultation will attempt to reach the following groups in Nottinghamshire:

- Young people
- Older people
- Families
- Public Service organisations
- Borough and District Councils
- Town and Parish Councils
- Disability groups
- Business Community
- Service users
- Voluntary and Community sector
- Nottinghamshire citizens' panel
- Council employees
- Hard to Reach groups
- Black Minority Ethnic, and new communities making Nottinghamshire their home

7 The budget consultation methodology will ensure that anyone who wants to contribute their views can do so. It will also seek to ensure that residents are able to find out what the Council is proposing in terms of any service changes.

Consultation Timetable

8 It is anticipated that the overall consultation campaign will take place between the 9 December 2015 and 5 February 2016, with awareness raising taking place in the three weeks leading up to the start of the consultation to generate interest and awareness. The timetable is as follows:

| Activity | Timescale | |
|---|------------------|---------------------|
| | Commence | Close |
| Budget consultation – to raise awareness of the start date | 16 November 2015 | |
| Consultation on budget proposals launched following Policy Committee's approval | 9 December 2015 | 5 February 2016 |
| Reporting: | | |
| Consultation returns, collected, analysed and considered | | w/c 8 February 2016 |
| Budget proposals considered by Full Council | | 25 February 2016 |

Consultation methodology

- 9 The overall budget narrative will reinforce key messages about why the Council is having to take some challenging decisions.
- 10 A detailed methodology together with anticipated outcomes is detailed in **Appendix A**.
- 11 This year's consultation will use more digital channels than previous years which will ensure it is more cost effective, targeted and easier to evaluate. The Council's website has been recently re-launched so that residents can now access it more easily from their smartphones and tablets. This is helping the Council provide access to services and consultations in a more cost-effective way. Offline methods (e.g. calling the Customer Service Centre, taking part in community events or completing paper surveys) will be available for those residents that do not have digital access.
- 12 The Council has a specific statutory duty to consult with the Business Community regarding expenditure plans for the coming financial year. It is proposed that this is conducted through: the Business Engagement Group (which includes the Federation of Small Businesses and the Chamber of Commerce); Business Clubs, and a range of digital channels.

- 13 All comments received by the Council will be taken into consideration and dealt with according to the “Internal protocol for responding to correspondence”.

Other Options Considered

- 14 The County Council has a legal duty to consult on the setting of its budget.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

- 15 To outline and obtain approval on how the Council will meet its statutory obligations with regard to consultation on the annual budget.

Statutory and Policy Implications

- 16 This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, the public sector equality duty, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service 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

- 17 It is envisaged that the 2016/17 budget consultation can be undertaken at a maximum cost of £4,000 and will be met from the 2015/2016 Communications budget.

Equalities Implications

- 18 Equalities implications have been considered as part of compiling this report. As there are no negative impacts on any protected group, an Equality Impact Assessment has not been deemed necessary. However, all individual budget proposals will be considered on their own merits, and where appropriate specific Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Policy Committee:

1. Endorses the consultation timetable and approach
2. Approves the proposed methodology

Councillor Alan Rhodes
Leader of the Council

For any enquiries about this report please contact:
Martin Done, Service Director, Communications and Marketing

Constitutional Comments (SLB 16/09/2015)

Policy Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report.

Financial Comments (SES 16/09/15)

The financial implications are set out in the report.

Background Papers

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.

Internal protocol for responding to Budget Consultation Correspondence

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected:

All

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Appendix A – Consultation Methodology

CONSULTATION METHODOLOGY FOR 2016/17 BUDGET PROPOSALS

| Methodology | Output |
|---|---|
| General information/awareness raising | |
| <p>Information about the financial challenge will be placed on the Council's website. This will be supported by a paper version.</p> <p>An online form will be created to allow residents the opportunity to give their views.</p> <p>Offline information will be placed in libraries and residents will also be able to ring the Customer Service Centre.</p> <p>Information will also be sent schools, children's centres, colleges, public information points etc.</p> <p>There will also be community/neighbourhood meetings arranged to allow for further contributions.</p> | <p>The financial context for the proposals is understood.</p> <p>Residents have their say on specific budget proposals.</p> <p>Residents who do not have digital access can have their say on specific budget proposals</p> |
| Social media | |
| <p>Social media will be used to support the budget consultation with the following channels:</p> | <p>Engagement of those residents who use social media.</p> |
| Local community groups/community organisations/voluntary sector/other agencies | |
| <p>Use pre-existing community activities to promote and encourage engagement with the budget consultation. Many of these will include residents in the 'hard to reach' category.</p> <p>The consultation will also be promoted via local community newsletters/community information sheets and sent to voluntary and community organisations</p> | <p>Using established networks will encourage residents who do not normally engage to get involved.</p> <p>Community and voluntary sector will be engaged with the consultation.</p> |
| Budget workshops in schools across the county / engaging with young people | |
| <p>Schools will be encouraged to take part via the 'schools portal'.</p> <p>Engagement with young people will also take place via posters in youth centres, directing them to the Council's website.</p> | <p>Students and young people will get be directed at material that will encourage them to learn about the financial challenges and to have their say</p> |
| Engaging with older people | |
| <p>Existing networks, such as the Older People's Advisory Group and local community groups will be used to encourage participation.</p> | <p>Older people will get the opportunity to discuss the financial challenges within their own group</p> |
| Engaging with Hard to Reach Groups | |
| <p>Existing databases used to directly reach local groups that receive grant aid from the Council.</p> | <p>Awareness of the challenges facing the Council raised among Black and Ethnic Minority communities</p> |

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| Engagement with Business Community | |
| Engagement via the Business Engagement Group and Business Clubs. | Business better understands the financial challenge. |
| Engagement with Town and Parish Councils | |
| Posters on parish notice boards informing residents on how they can get involved. The consultation questionnaire will also be sent to all town and parish councils. | Residents living in rural and isolated areas of Nottinghamshire will get involved. |
| Engagement with Nottinghamshire citizens' panellists who have provided email addresses | |
| Emails will be sent to 1,500 panellists directing them to the website. | Value for money return |
| Engagement with members of the public who have provided us with an email address and expressed a wish to be informed of Nottinghamshire County Council events and campaigns | |
| Emails will be sent pointing them to the website | Value for money return |