

CABINET

Budget Community Engagement 31 August 2010

Report of Corporate Director (Regeneration)

PURPOSE OF REPORT				
To seek Cabinet's approval to timetable and process for the budget community engagement proposals to inform the 2011/12 budget.				
Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-Key Decision	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Referral from Cabinet Member
Date Included in Forward Plan				
This report is public				

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (1) To approve the timetable set out in the report to deliver the 2011/12 budget community engagement plan.
- (2) To delegate approval to the final format and content of the questionnaire to be used as the basis of the engagement exercise to the Leader of Council.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Last year the council carried out a high profile and engaging external budget consultation which aimed to:
 - raise the profile and educate people about what the council does
 - engage citizens and stakeholders in the financial pressures facing the council
 - and from this gain insight into where those participants felt savings could be achieved to inform the budget process
- 1.2 It comprised three main elements:
 - Town centre exhibitions
 - Registered workshops
 - Budget consultation booklet and questionnaire (online and printed copy)
- 1.3 Cabinet, at its meeting on the 27 July 2010, agreed to repeat the exercise in order to inform its budget setting exercise for the 2011/12 budget. Min.No. 32 resolved that:

- (1) That the budget community 2011/12 engagement plan be built into the budget and policy framework timetable.
- (2) That the budget community 2011/12 engagement plan is delivered as outlined in the report.
- (3) That community listening/have your say days be held at the end of September/early October 2010 in order to inform the priority setting process.
- (4) That a Total Place approach, as set out in the report, be supported where possible.

1.4 This report sets out more detail in respect of the approach outlined in the July report to Cabinet.

2.0 Proposal Details

2.1 A timetable for the budget engagement exercise is set out in Appendix A.

2.2 In order to meet the timetable for reporting the outcomes of the exercise to Cabinet on the 9 November, the exercise will close on the 29 October 2010. Members are asked to note that this date differs from the timetabled 5 November date set out in the Budget and Policy Framework report considered by Cabinet in July. (Min. No. 31 refers.

2.2 In order to meet the timetable for carrying out the budget engagement exercise and taking into account that the next meeting of Cabinet is scheduled for the 5 October, Members are also being asked to delegate approval to the final format and content of the questionnaire to the Leader of Council.

2.3 Members should note that it is likely that the content of the coalition government's Autumn Spending Review and its implications for public sector finance in the medium term will also be available to Members at this time.

2.4 The Coalition *Programme for Government*, published on 20 May 2010, stated that the Government would "give residents the power to veto high council tax increases." Members should note that the government is currently carrying out a 'technical consultation' with local government on these proposals to allow local referendums to veto excessive council tax increases as an alternative to capping by central government.

2.4 An illustrative timetable contained within the consultation document suggests that in late November /early December a provisional Local Government Finance Settlement will be published for consultation and council tax referendum principles announced.

3.0 Details of Consultation

3.1 Feedback has been sought from the 2009/10 budget consultation feedback. Corporate Management Team has been consulted on the proposed approach.

4.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

4.1 The decision to carry out the budget engagement exercise has been approved by Cabinet in July.

Option 1

The options presented in this report are to approve the timetable for carrying out the exercise and delegate final approval of the budget questionnaire to the Leader of Council.

4.2 Option 2

To approve an amended timetable and / or an amended scheme of delegation for approval of the budget questionnaire.

5.0 Officer Preferred Option (and comments)

5.1 Option 1 as this provides increased opportunities for local people to engage in the process, assisting the council in its decision making process

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 That an engaging budget community consultation takes place to ensure that together with emerging government policy and legislation the council is able to capture feedback from its communities and use this feedback to inform budget decisions and future service delivery.

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

The budget/priorities engagement plan will help to inform future corporate priorities and budget decisions.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

The budget/priorities engagement plan does not have an adverse impact on the community as it provides a number of opportunities for people to get involved and have a say. Targeted engagement and promotion may be considered to encourage seldom heard groups to take part although this will depend on capacity and resources.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Free/low cost venues would be used e.g. Marketgate, Lancaster Market Square, St Nicholas Arcade, Morecambe Arndale Centre and Carnforth Civic Centre.

Other costs for the budget consultation would include staff time for planning and manning events, limited design and printing for promotion and any information documents. Small initiatives may be considered. Last year's event costs were approximately £1,000. It is not expected this year's would cost any more than this figure, possibly less. The cost would be met from within existing budgets (Corporate Consultation Budget).

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The s151 Officer would advise that the content of the consultation should be determined in context of the prospects for public spending, to help manage expectations. Further reports (Quarter 1 financial monitoring and an interim financial strategy update) are scheduled to be included elsewhere on this agenda and these will provide more information on the Council's financial position and prospects.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

.There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has nothing further to add

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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APPENDIX 1

Budget consultation plan

27 Sept 2010	11 -15 Oct	18 Oct	19 Oct	20 Oct	21 Oct	22 Oct
Launch of online consultation, Facebook page, suggestions scheme	'Your District Council Matters' magazine distributed to every household	Briefings for staff helping out with exhibitions and community workshops	Morecambe town centre exhibition 10.30am to 2pm	Local democracy event	Lancaster town centre exhibition 1pm to 4.30pm	Carnforth exhibition 1pm to 4.30pm
			Morecambe workshop 2 pm to 4pm	Stakeholder workshop 7 to 9pm	Lancaster workshop 7 to 9pm	Carnforth workshop 7 to 9pm

W/c 25 Oct	29 Oct	2 Nov	1 - 4 Nov	5 Nov	8 Nov	9 Nov
Analyse information	Pull out headline information Close of budget consultation	Cabinet briefing	Finalise main report including detail	Add final results into report and get report signed off	Send results report outline to Cabinet	Cabinet consider results report