



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

17TH OCTOBER 2019

ENGAGEMENT ON THE COUNCIL'S BUDGET 2020/21

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND COMMUNICATION, IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, CLLR M WEBBER.

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to inform Cabinet of the proposed approach to resident engagement and consultation in respect of the 2020/21 budget and new draft Corporate Plan 2020-2024.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Consider the success achieved through last year's approach to the budget consultation, with our ongoing commitment to face to face engagement and increased use of our online tools.
- 2.2 Consider the intention for the budget consultation to run alongside and complement a consultation on the new draft Corporate Plan, linking in where appropriate to avoid duplication, for example the events and forums will seek views on the budget as well as the corporate plan priorities.
- 2.3 Support the Council's statutory requirements regarding consultation on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Council Tax levels will be met via the proposed approach.
- 2.4 Support the budget consultation process taking place during the autumn of 2019, with the dates to be confirmed following clarification of the likely Welsh Government budget settlement timescales.
- 2.5 Authorise the Service Director – Democratic Services & Communications to plan the necessary timeline of engagement once the

details of the Provisional Local Government Settlement are known, in consultation with the appropriate Cabinet Member & Director of Finance & Digital Services.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To provide residents with the opportunity, via a range of methods, to provide feedback to the Cabinet on the 2020/21 budget setting process and new draft corporate plan.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 In previous years the Council has undertaken a comprehensive approach to its annual budget consultation, involving a large number of residents and key stakeholders.
- 4.2 The approach has developed to include a wide range of face to face events in the community across the County Borough, as well as the development of an online budget simulator which gives residents and service users the opportunity to set the budget themselves and engage in a more interactive way.
- 4.3 The number of people we have engaged with has increased as the methods of engagement have developed. The approach has seen the number of people involved in the process rise from 144 in 2016/17 to 1,560 in 2018/19, and this increasing to over 4,000 people in last year's 2019/20 consultation process.
- 4.4 The widespread approach we use and the range of views we capture provides senior managers and Cabinet with the necessary information they need to inform budget setting for the year ahead. In addition, we have found that the information we collect is also valuable for service managers to use for their service planning and development.
- 4.5 It is therefore proposed that the approach outlined in section 5 below is utilised for the 2020/21 budget consultation process.

5. PROPOSED APPROACH

- 5.1 The 2020/21 budget consultation will include:
- 5.2 The use of an online budget simulator providing information on the services the Council provides and the potential consequences of

increasing or reducing funding to services to set a legally balanced budget.

- 5.3 The use of social media to provide information to residents and service users and encourage engagement and feedback regarding the Council's budget and investment areas.
- 5.4 An online survey to collect responses on Council investments, the new draft Corporate Plan, Council Tax levels and the Council Tax Reduction scheme.
- 5.5 Face to face town centre, library, community hub and leisure centre roadshows. A number of these community drop in events will give residents the opportunity to engage with and speak to Cabinet Members and senior officers regarding the Council's budget and investment priorities.
- 5.6 Engagement with young people via Rhondda Cynon Taf's county wide Youth Forum.
- 5.7 Engagement with older people via the Older Persons Advisory Group.
- 5.8 A presentation and collection of views at the Disability Forum.
- 5.9 Consultation with the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee and the School Budget Forum.
- 5.10 In addition to the above, all members have had opportunity over recent months at Cabinet and through Full Council to engage in the ongoing work on the Council's Medium Term Financial Planning arrangements.

Council Tax, Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Investment Priorities

- 5.11 The proposed approach will ensure the Council's duty to consult regarding Council Tax and the Council Tax Reduction Scheme are met as well as providing residents and service users with the opportunity to feedback on the Council's investment priorities.

Corporate Plan Engagement

- 5.12 The Budget consultation will run alongside the Corporate Plan engagement. The Council launched its first Corporate Plan 'The Way Ahead' in 2016 and we have now drafted a new Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024 "*Making a Difference*" for consultation.
- 5.13 Views will be captured via a new website that will include details of the proposed priorities and a set of key commitments that will provide a

framework for the Council to follow. In addition, we will be linking the approach to the budget consultation and asking for views on the priorities at all budget engagement events and Forum meetings, as well as including a number of questions in our online budget survey.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. Opportunities to get involved in the budget consultation will be provided via a range of methods including online, at accessible roadshow events and specific engagement for young people and older people. The consultation will also involve the Council's Disability Forum.
- 6.2. The online budget simulator is accessible on mobile phones and tablet devices, and residents without internet access or smart phone/tablet devices can visit a local library to access the online budget simulator or request a hard copy of the budget consultation questionnaire.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1. The recommendations outlined in the report seek to ensure a range of engagement opportunities are provided to residents and service users as part of the budget consultation process.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 8.1. There are no financial implications directly aligned to this report.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 9.1. The Council has a statutory duty to consult on Council Tax and the Council Tax Reduction Scheme which will be met under the approach to budget consultation outlined in this report.

10. LINKS TO CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.

- 10.1. The budget setting process clearly impacts on the delivery of all Council services which will contribute in turn to the delivery of the Council's new Corporate Plan (when approved).
- 10.2. As discussed above, the consultation on the new draft Corporate Plan will run alongside the budget consultation and the feedback received will be taken into account as part of its development, with the plan being introduced from 2020 onwards.

11. CONCLUSION

- 11.1 The comprehensive approach undertaken in the last few years has led to increased engagement in the budget consultation process through a more interactive and varied approach.
- 11.2 The proposed approach for the 2020/21 budget consultation seeks to continue the positive work in this area by ensuring that all residents and service users have every opportunity to provide feedback on these important issues, including the new draft Corporate Plan, via a wide range of methods.
- 11.3 The results of the consultation will be presented to senior officers and Cabinet Members early in the new year to inform the construction of a proposed 2020/21 Revenue Budget Strategy and development of a new Corporate Plan.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee: Overview & Scrutiny & Finance and Performance

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