
Budget Consultation 2019/20

Reason for this Report

1. To provide a policy development opportunity for the Committee to review developing practice and methodologies for budget consultation.

Background and Context

2. The Committee's Terms of Reference confer responsibility for scrutiny of the Council's citizen engagement and consultation activity. Therefore in December 2018 Members considered the Council's approach to budget consultation, following which they made representation to the Cabinet that they considered there was opportunity for improvement in the Council's methodological approach.
3. The Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation & Performance responded to Members concerns positively, highlighting that timescales are short between the announcement of the Local Government Settlement in October and publication of the budget consultation survey in November, but that he was committed to exploring opportunities for working with the Committee on the development of the 2020/21 budget consultation document. The correspondence that sets the context for this scrutiny is attached at **Appendices 1a and 1b**.
4. All five Scrutiny Committees routinely scrutinise budget proposals in February, and regularly monitor the Council's financial performance throughout the year. Each year the analysis of the results of the annual budget consultation is presented alongside the budget proposals.

Issues - key developments

5. Attached at **Appendix 2** is a presentation the Committee will receive outlining the Council's consultation programme from September 2019 to January 2020 in preparation for the Council setting its 2020/21 budget in February 2020.
6. In a departure from last year, the 2019-20 consultation programme will separate the Ask Cardiff Residents Survey 2019 from the Changes for Cardiff Budget Consultation 2020-21.
7. Members may be aware that the Ask Cardiff 2019 Residents Survey, attached at **Appendix 3** is currently live, and this will close early in November.
8. Alongside the Ask Cardiff Survey the Child Friendly City survey of Cardiff schools seeking the views of all school pupils is also live and closes on 25th October 2020.
9. The intention is that the Budget Consultation will be launched in November 2019 and run until early January 2020. However Welsh Government has indicated there is the possibility of a delay in the Local Government Settlement, which will have an impact on both methodology and timescales for the budget consultation.
10. The consultation will be electronically distributed via social media and email, with paper copies available at libraries and hubs, supplemented by engagement events targeting underrepresented groups and areas face to face.

Previous Scrutiny

11. In addition to this Committee's concerns raised in December 2018, there were concerns raised from several other scrutiny committees when considering the budget consultation in February 2019. Common concerns centred on reaching 'seldom heard' groups, the use of plain English, informed judgement versus information overload, and pre-publication testing and scrutiny.

12. The Scrutiny Chairs Liaison Forum consequently requested that the Cabinet Member and officers brief them on the development of the budget consultation, and were advised in September that:

- The 10 week Ask Cardiff consultation has got off to a positive start.
- The Child Friendly City survey mirrors the themes of the Ask Cardiff survey.
- The budget consultation will be digital by default with the majority of responses expected from the online surveys, and be supplemented with targeted events.
- A midpoint review will be undertaken to ensure that a balance is achieved in terms of demographic and geographic responses.
- The surveys will be promoted with known networks, partners and faith groups.

13. Following the Forum Scrutiny Chairs raised the following concerns and proposals:

- The BAME community needs to be effectively identified in planning for the consultation to ensure successful engagement, acknowledging that a range of denominations exist within faith groups. Elected members offered to provide contact information for relevant faiths groups within their wards to promote the consultation.
- It is important that the methodology encourages equality of responses from both the Southern Arc and North of Cardiff.
- Engaging young people could be supported with the use of Schools Councils.
- Members who are School Governors are able to promote the surveys within schools.

Scope of the Scrutiny

14. This item will give Members the opportunity to consider and comment on the methodology developing for the 2020 budget consultation, Changes for Cardiff.

15. To facilitate the scrutiny in attendance will be:

- a. Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation & Performance, Councillor Chris Weaver,
- b. Corporate Director Resources, Christopher Rees,
- c. Head of Performance and Partnerships, Gareth Newell, and
- d. Operational Manager, Cohesion and Community Engagement, Sian Sanders.

16. Sian will give a presentation on the budget consultation, and the panel will answer Members questions.

Legal Implications

17. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

Financial Implications

18. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct financial implications

at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

19. The Committee is recommended to:

- i. Note the proposed approach to the 2020 budget consultation;
- ii. Consider whether it wishes to relay any comments or observations for consideration by the Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation & Performance and the consultation team.

DAVINA FIORE

Director, Governance & Legal Services

10 October 2019