

My Ref: T: Scrutiny/PRAP/Comm Papers/Correspondence

Date: 26 January 2021

Councillor Chris Weaver,  
Cabinet Member, Finance, Modernisation & Performance,  
Cardiff Council,  
County Hall  
Cardiff  
CF10 4UW



County Hall  
Cardiff,  
CF10 4UW  
Tel: (029) 2087 2087

Neuadd y Sir  
Caerdydd,  
CF10 4UW  
Ffôn: (029) 2087 2088

Dear Chris,

### **PRAP Scrutiny Committee 20 January 2021: Budget Consultation 20221/22**

Thank you for attending Committee on 20 January 2021 to update us on budget modelling and the 2021/22 budget consultation. I would be grateful if you would pass on my appreciation to Chris Lee, Gareth Newell and Sian Sanders for presenting the position and answering Members questions at the remote meeting. I have been asked to pass on Members' comments and observations as follows.

#### **Budget update**

Thank you for your overview of provisional settlement headlines as part of this briefing. We note the better than expected 3.8% provisional settlement for Cardiff Council, increases in Social Services, Housing Support, and MEAG grants and that the Council has so far been allocated Covid-19 funding of £77.3m by Welsh Government. We acknowledge you still face a £16.4m budget gap and note that your budget modelling at this point makes no provision for a staff pay award, however you will be making an assumption to avoid pressurising services during the year.

#### **Budget consultation shaping the 2022/23 budget**

We note the pared back approach to this year's consultation requesting that respondents simply rank their top 3 and least important from a list of 11 priorities. We note also that Covid-19 restrictions have confined engagement to online only and that timelines are shorter than in previous years.

We note you are currently drafting the Corporate Plan alongside the budget and the budget consultation closes on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2020. We have budget scrutiny committees programmed to consider both budget proposals and the Corporate Plan

a week and a half later. The Committee is therefore keen to establish that the results of this consultation will shape discussions on the Corporate Plan and the budget. We note that in setting budget priorities you will be merging the results of all consultations undertaken throughout the year and you intend that it informs the Capital programme, the Financial Resilience Model and influences longer term budget planning.

### **A voice for younger residents**

The Committee notes that Ask Cardiff 2020 experienced a fall in the response rate for under 35's. Focussing on a voice for younger residents, Members highlighted the opportunity for children/schools/youth justice to have a clear channel to inform the budget consultation. We were concerned to hear that there is not a child friendly version this year, however the results of the Child Friendly Cardiff survey will be factored into budget discussions. We heard that you will be contacting schools to help you access young people's views. We suggest that you draw out and test ideas from the Child Friendly Survey to inform future priorities. The Committee therefore **recommends** that in future an accessible child friendly version is made available.

### **Improving response rates**

At the time of this scrutiny officers indicated that the response rate to the consultation had been positive at over 1,000 just one week on from its launch. We note also officer's views that you consider tailoring consultation channels to ensure a representative response is more important than the overall total number of responses. As you continue to tailor engagement to all demographics we wish to highlight the need for continual learning and development. The Committee considers it is important to monitor the relative response rates to advertising on different platforms (eg Instagram v Facebook) learning the lessons as to which platforms are most successful at enhancing response rates. We suggest that there is an opportunity for more creative copy text in designing adverts to encourage residents to complete the survey and we **recommend** that you address this in future surveys.

## **Member engagement & scrutiny of budget consultation**

This has been an unusual year, culminating in challenging timescales for administering the budget consultation due to the very late announcement of the provisional settlement. We note you are aware of the challenge ahead to incorporate consultation results into corporate plan priority and budget setting, and that you hope to achieve this. As we have previously requested, though it has not been possible this year, this Committee **recommends** that you improve Member consultation, by routinely factoring pre-publication scrutiny of the budget consultation into your budget planning.

### **Recommendations to be monitored following this scrutiny:**

- That you draw out and test ideas from the Child Friendly Survey to inform future priorities, and in future years an accessible child friendly version of the budget consultation is made available.
- That you examine the opportunity for more creative copy text in designing adverts to encourage residents to complete surveys.
- As previously requested you improve Member consultation, by routinely factoring pre-publication scrutiny of the budget consultation into your budget planning.

Finally, on behalf of the Committee, I wish to thank you and the officers for your continued support for the internal challenge of important issues that can improve the quality of services the Council is delivering to its customers.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Walker', written in a cursive style.

**COUNCILLOR DAVID WALKER  
CHAIR, POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

cc Members of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee;  
Chris Lee, Corporate Director Resources;  
Gareth Newell, Head of Performance and Partnerships; and  
Sian Sanders Operational Manager, Cohesion and Community Engagement,  
Alison Taylor, Cabinet Support Officer  
Joanne Watkins, Cabinet Business Manager;  
Andrea Redmond, Committees Support Officer.