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Summary of Consultation

Introduction

The Council regularly seeks the views of residents and partners on the priorities for investment, service provision and improvement through a variety of means to enable participation in the development of the budget. This includes using the Peoples Panel, which has now run for nearly ten years, the Budget Challenge, and individual service consultations.

The timelines for this year's Council's Budget report were first published in the Forward Plan on the 18 September 2020. Finance and Value for Money Overview and Overview Scrutiny Commission and Cabinet have considered proposals put forward at a number of meetings during the Autumn, with full summary of the proposals being confirming General Fund budget proposals on the 22 January 2021 and 25 January 2021 respectively. Formal comments on the proposals were invited to be submitted to David Bell, Director of Finance and Transformation by 17 February 2021.

The current pandemic placed the restrictions on public meetings and alternative arrangements were put in place to enable the feedback on the proposals from the City's business community, voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors, and young people. Online meetings were held with the business community and young people with the views of the voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors sought through an online consultation. The main aims of each strand was to raise awareness of the Council's financial situation, proposed priorities for investment, improvements and savings, together with the potential impacts relevant to their areas of interest. The key points raised at each meeting are detailed below.

Finally, in addition to inviting comment on the specific budget proposals relating to 2021/22, the Council continues to engage with residents through the People's Panel on the provision of Council services and their relative priorities. This provides insight into the importance that residents place on different services and an understanding of the priorities of our customers.

During the most recent People's Panel survey, residents identified their overall city priorities as:

- Improving infrastructure, roads and transport
- Encouraging new businesses to invest and support established businesses to be successful
- Increasing the availability of secure, well-paid jobs
- Reducing crime and improving community safety
- Increasing affordable, quality housing and reducing homelessness

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Whilst residents identified their local neighbourhood priorities as:

- Roads and Pavements
- Clean Streets
- Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour
- Traffic Congestion
- Availability of Parking

Youth Representatives - Meeting to be held on 15 February 2021 online

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Transformation, with the support of Children Young People and Families and the Director of Finance & Transformation met with young people and their representatives to consider the issues affecting young people relevant to the future of the city.

The themes discussed during the meeting included:

- maintaining services and protecting jobs
- supporting Adult Social Care and workers in the Hull
- providing expensive care for looked after children and to all children in Hull
- impact of Council Tax rises but with support for lowest paid
- capital investment in leisure centre, museums, Queen's Gardens, housing, highways and bridges

In addition the young people discussed the long term funding for the Council and the Government's decisions around tax increases, cuts in spending and need for equitable funding based on need.

The priorities and concerns raised by young people included the following areas:

- provision of city centre facilities
- overall 'youth offer' including better / replacement for Kingston Youth Centre
- Council commitment to Green Agenda and specifically Carbon Neutrality
- concerns over school commitments to recycling and the tensions created by the academy structure
- importance of mental health support for young people and need for a follow on from the Headstart programme with young people being very concerned about mental health at the moment along with a recognition that the programme doesn't reach everyone
- value and investment in green spaces / parks, including as places for young people to sit down within their own communities
- funding of good community based activity and ideas and the potential use of Community Initiatives Budget– a focus on funding city wide projects such as Love Staying Safe or future Young Mayor campaigns.

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- need for equality and the Council's commitment to support the LGBT+ community
- investment into making sure there are places for homeless people to sleep

The young people also commented that Covid-19 highlighted the need for preventative health measures including mental health and that the importance of libraries as both educational and community facilities along with providing safe spaces for young people in the city centre whilst recognising that libraries, leisure centres or youth centres do not meet all of young people's social needs.

Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector

Over 100 voluntary, community and social enterprise sector organisations were invited via email to provide feedback on the priorities for the Council and also to raise any issues or concerns in relation to future funding on the 4 February 2021. Consultation with this sector raised a wide range of queries, comments and concerns.

The themes that were raised in the feedback received included:

- significant financial and social impacts on the sector from the pandemic and the closure of facilities and services due to the lockdown all of which placing heavy strain on individual organisations ability to deliver
- impacts of reduced funding on the management of service demands together with the potential tightening of eligibility criteria to target the most critical need may mean that those on the edge may fall through the net
- inability of the sector to absorb any reductions in funding and that any reductions in funding would jeopardise the contribution that it makes and the safety net it provides to the most vulnerable residents of Hull
- benefits from non-domestic rates relief and the Small Business Rate Relief grants offered by the Council along with a desire for these to be extended for at least the next 12 months (or longer) whilst the sector tries to recover from this period of lost income
- development of funding available for creative and cultural organisations as part of a Covid Recovery Plan
- impacts of delayed recommissioning of contracts due to the pandemics with some contracts being suspended and / or extended for up to 18 months, which led to uncertainty within the sector
- inclusion of the leisure stock in the Council's priorities for the capital programme as a priority due to its role in the current and long term Covid-19 recovery plans as well its critical role in Hull having a fit and healthy population
- recognition of the local voluntary physical activity and sport network of local clubs and organisations across the city as a priority in the health and wellbeing of children and young people

Business Sector – Meeting on the 11 February 2021 online

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The Leader, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Transformation, and the Director of Finance and Transformation are met with the Hull and East Yorkshire Business Engagement Board to consider the issues relevant to the future of the city faced by the Council and the nature of its response.

The themes discussed during the meeting included:

- short and long term issues from Covid-19 and the impacts of Government grants
- services that have been affected by Covid-19 causing additional strains on Public Health, Children's and Adult Care due to ageing population and children in care (increasing by over 100 to reach 915, additional £10m pa).
- opportunities in economic development and job creation for 18-24 year olds.
- Capital Programme of £350m over next three years, which included proposals to focus on
 - Investing in Carbon Neutral – District Heating / Wind Turbines / Housing Stock Improvements
 - Maintaining Infrastructure - Highways / Bridges
 - Regeneration - Maritime Museum, Queens Gardens, Albion Square
 - Delivery of 500 new build homes over next five years
 - Supporting young people back to work as part of Kick Start Programme
 - Programme will be reviewed as funding and post COVID world becomes clearer

It was noted that whilst there is expected to be some financial stability this year there is still significant uncertainty from 2022/23 onwards. Government White Papers / plans are expected to follow regarding future funding of Social Care and the publication of plans for the Shared Prosperity Fund and Devolution.