

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 24 June 2016. Cabinet and the Finance and Value for Money Overview and Overview Scrutiny Commission have considered proposals put forward at a number of meetings from July through to January 2017, with full summary of the proposals being confirming General Fund budget proposals on the 24 January 2017. Formal comments on the proposals were invited to be submitted to David Bell Assistant City Manager - Corporate Finance by 20 February 2017. No comments have been received.

Alongside the formal feedback process, consultation on individual savings proposals were led by City Managers who engaged with relevant stakeholders regarding proposed budget reductions and this is detailed on Appendix B(ii).

In addition, the following consultation meetings have also taken place with representatives of the City's Business community, Voluntary Sector and young people. In summary the engagements were positive meetings which demonstrated both a shared understanding of the difficult financial environment in which the Council is operating and a willingness of all parties to work together for the overall benefit and prosperity of the City. The key points raised at each meeting are detailed below.

Finally, in addition to inviting comment on the specific budget proposals relating to 2017/18, the Council has also undertaken a wider exercise seeking the views of the City's residents regarding how the Council may respond to future budget reductions. A summary of the exercise and the responses is also provided below.

Youth Representatives - Meeting held 25 January 2017 at the Guildhall

The Leader, Deputy Leader, with the support of Children Young People and Families and the Interim Director of Finance & Transformation led a lively and positive debate with young people and their representatives covering many issues relevant to the future of the City, with the main focus of the discussions:

- endeavouring to maintain Council services with less funding available
- the need to create investment and job opportunities as a priority for the young people of the city
- the provision of, and access to, leisure and entertainment facilities in the City Centre
- the investment in public realm and cultural facilities designed to maximise the benefits of the City of Culture programme which has got off to a fantastic start and is now in full flight with many of the events designed with young people in mind
- the work and training opportunities provided by Green port and the Siemens investment
- minimising the impact on Youth facilities, opening times at youth centres and support with around 10% less funding

- the importance of high quality sporting venues
- the importance of maintaining transport links to ensure access to the city centre

Voluntary and Community Sector – Meeting held 26 January 2017 at the Guildhall

Over 70 voluntary and community sector organisations were invited to the budget briefing session at the Guildhall on Thursday 26th January. 32 representatives attended where the Leader and Deputy, accompanied by the Interim Director of Finance & Transformation and Assistant City Treasurer, presented the budget statement for 2017/18.

The Interim Director outlined the Council's budget process, which includes consultation with key stakeholders and explained that the Medium Term Financial Plan proposes £16.5 million of savings to balance the Council's 2017/18 budget and this will affect the delivery of many services.

The Leader explained that annual budget cuts place huge pressures on social services which in turn have a major effect on the National Health Service. He also acknowledged the valuable contribution VCS organisations make to providing services in the city.

The Deputy Leader confirmed that an increase in Council Tax next year will not be sufficient revenue to avoid budget cuts, primarily in adult and children services. Savings will need to be achieved by remodelling service provision, reviewing commissioning frameworks and tendering packages. However, following consultation, free charitable use of the Council's recycling waste centres will now not be put forward as a budget saving.

The Deputy Leader also emphasised that the £3 million the Council invested into the City of Culture Company for UK City of Culture 2017 has led to an additional £30 million of investment by the private sector which in turn is attracting more visitors and businesses to the city.

The Voluntary and Community Sector representatives raised the following issues:

- Revenue from Business Rates will not be sufficient for Hull and there is a need for Government to continue with revenue support grants
- Housing Related Support and need to engage with VCS to review the Council's framework.

The Leader and Deputy Leader stated that they would take on board the issues raised by the sector and in particular the need for the Council to engage and forward plan with the sector.

Business Sector – Meeting held 26 January with Hull Chamber of Commerce at the Guildhall.

The Leader and Deputy Leader, supported by the Interim Director of Finance and Transformation, briefed representatives of the Hull business community on the financial challenges faced by the Council and the nature of its response.

The key issues being:

- The ongoing significant cuts in the amount of funding received by the Council from Central Government

- The benefit of the 4 Year Financial Settlement in terms of certainty for financial planning purposes
- Devolution options for Hull and the Northern Power House
- The proposed increase in Council Tax of 4.99% including the proposed 3% “precept” to help meet the increasing costs of Adult Social Care
- The Council’s continued determination to invest in the City through the Visitor Destination programme in order to drive regeneration and economic growth
- Protection of statutory services and political priorities, such as the Charitable Waste Collections, and Museums, despite the need to make significant cost reductions.
- The Government’s proposed 100% Business Rates Retention system from 2020/21 and the impact this could have on Hull

Members of the Chamber then engaged in an interesting discussion which focussed on:

- The success of the first weeks of the City of Culture programme with the increased numbers of people in the City Centre
- Positive feedback regarding the Public Realm improvements
- Growing interest from organisations in investing in the city centre
- Potential growth around Market and Holy Trinity
- Need for joint working with Police to ensure security for people coming into City Centre
- Plans for the A63 and need to address concerns over vehicle breakdowns causing congestion.

The Chamber agreed to support the Council’s lobbying of Government in order to ensure that the proposed 100% Business Rates Retention system should protect councils like Hull who are reliant on funding ‘top up’ through the existing equalisation process.