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## **BUDGET COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 2021/22**

**Report by the Executive Director, Finance & Regulatory Services**  
**SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL**

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**25 FEBRUARY 2021**

### **1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Council of steps taken to engage with stakeholders as part of a consultation exercise on the budget.**
- 1.2 The paper highlights the budget Communication Strategy used and provides feedback gathered from the Scottish Borders Budget Challenge. This feedback has been considered as part of the 2021/22 Financial Planning process.
- 1.3 As part of the budget consultation exercise on the Council's updated Financial Plan, the Scottish Borders Budget Challenge was made available to members of the public on the Council website from early November 2020 to 31 January 2021. Members of the public were notified that in February 2021 we will set our next budget and early in 2021 we will also be reviewing and refreshing our Corporate Plan. The public were given a limited number of points to allocate across seven of the biggest high-level challenges facing the Council and the Scottish Borders area. The more points you allocate the higher the priority. The aim was for the public to use this online Points Simulator tool to let the Council know what their priorities are for the Scottish Borders.
- 1.4 As at the 31 January 2021, 314 members of the public completed the Simulator and gave us their views on prioritisation of high-level challenges the Council is facing.

### **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 It is recommended that Council notes:**
- (a) the budget Communication Strategy used; and**
  - (b) the feedback from the Scottish Borders Budget Challenge.**

### **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 As part of the financial planning process for 2021/22, the Council committed to engaging with staff, partners, stakeholders and the Scottish Borders community.
- 3.2 The forms of engagement have included:
  - An online Points Simulator tool, made available from early November 2020 to 31st January 2021 to all members of the public, allowing the Council to gain valuable feedback on how individuals in the Scottish Borders prioritise seven of the biggest high-level challenges facing the Council;
  - Consultation with all Trade Unions as part of the budget process;

### **4 DIALOGUE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOOL AND AREA PARTNERSHIP MEETINGS**

- 4.1 As part of the budget Communication Strategy, the Points Simulator tool was again used as a way of engaging with communities on their spending priorities. The Simulator was made available to members of the public via the Council website with the following aims of:
  - helping the Council understand what local residents think we should be prioritising, both as part of the budget and as part of our longer term Corporate Plan, by prioritising seven of the biggest high-level challenges facing the Council and the Scottish Borders
  - allowing communities to also think about how they could contribute to the #yourpart campaign in shaping our next budget and Corporate Plan and future priorities by telling us what their priorities are
- 4.2 In practical terms the approach taken to collecting feedback on priorities was to launch the budget simulator with the requirement for participants to move dials up and down with 20 points to allocate across seven priority areas. This meant that each person could go in and quickly select their local area and spread their points across the services providing a prioritised list from higher priority to lower priority for each locality for those priorities included in the consultation. Participants also had the facility to add additional comments if they wished.

The areas selected for prioritisation were seven of the biggest high-level challenges facing the Council and the Scottish Borders areas as follows:

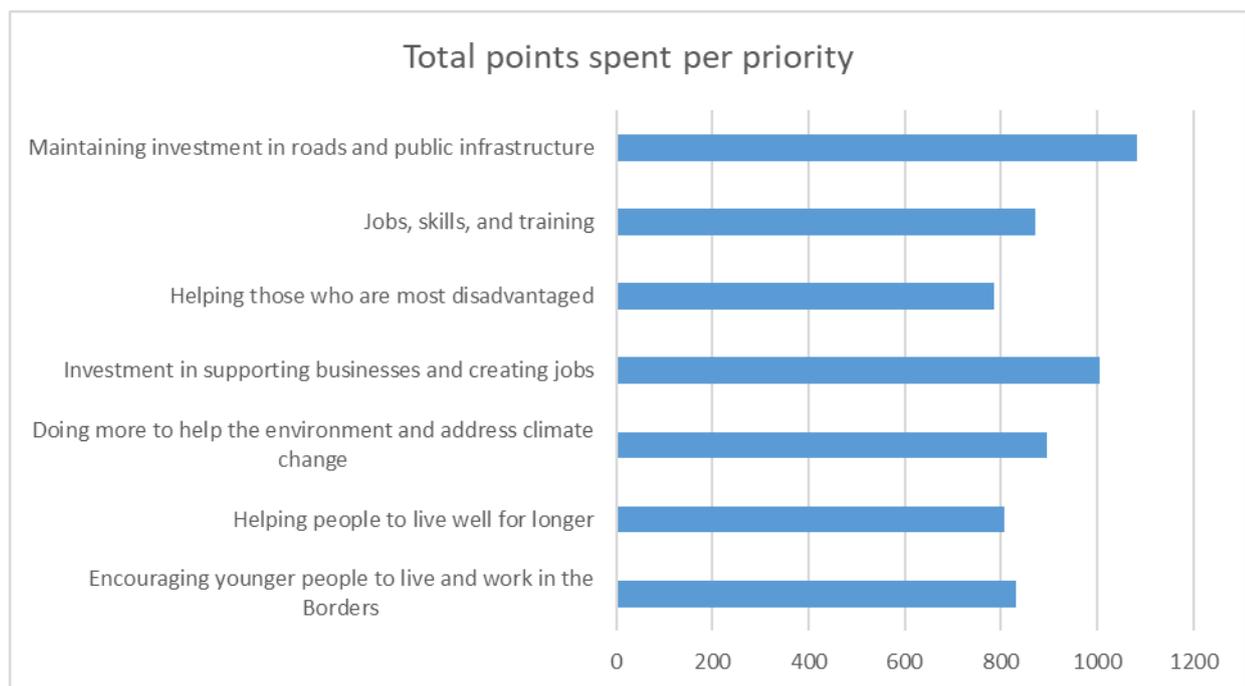
- Encouraging younger people to live and work in the Borders
- Helping people to live well for longer
- Doing more to help the environment and address climate change
- Investment in supporting businesses and creating jobs

- Helping those who are most disadvantaged
- Jobs, skills and training
- Maintaining investment in Roads and public infrastructure

4.3 Up to the date the consultation closed on the 31 January 2021, 314 respondents gave feedback on their prioritisation with 25 leaving specific comments. Specific comments received are included at Appendix 1. The summarised results were made available to Elected Members for consideration in forming the Council’s budget proposals.

4.4 The output from the budget simulator shown in the table below reflects the highest 4 priority areas as:

- Maintaining investment in Roads and public infrastructure
- Investment in supporting businesses and creating jobs
- Doing more to help the environment and address climate change
- Jobs, skills and training



## 5 IMPLICATIONS

### 5.1 Financial

There are no direct financial implications resulting from this report.

### 5.2 Risk and Mitigations

By conducting various engagement programmes regarding the Financial Plan, the Council demonstrates a commitment to gathering stakeholder

