

23 FEBRUARY 2023

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 recent survey. This feedback has been considered as part of the 2023/24 Financial Planning process.
- 1.3 As part of the budget consultation exercise on the Council's updated Financial Plan, a survey was made available to members of the public on the Council website from late December 2022 to the end of January 2023. Members of the public were asked to complete a new survey and help shape the next Council budget, due to be set in February 2023. The survey also provides Borderers with the opportunity to provide feedback on a number of other areas, including public transport, health and social care and the development of local plans within communities.
- 1.4 As at the end of January 2023, 866 members of the public gave us their views on how they think resources should be prioritised to address the challenges the Council is facing.
- 1.5 A further consultation on the draft council plan for 2023/24 has also be undertaken with communities and partner organisations.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Council:**
 - (a) Notes the budget Communication Strategy used; and**
 - (b) Considers the feedback provided by respondents to the survey in setting the Council's budget for 2023/24 and subsequent financial years.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 As part of the financial planning process for 2023/24, the Council committed to engaging with staff, partners, stakeholders and the Scottish Borders community.
- 3.2 The forms of engagement have included:
- An online survey, made available from late December 2022 to the end of January 2023 to all members of the public, allowing the Council to gain valuable feedback on how individuals in the Scottish Borders prioritise a number of key services areas.
 - Consultation with all Trade Unions as part of the budget process.
 - At the same time, a public consultation on the new Council plan, which sets out the priorities to be funded by the budget, has been undertaken with communities and community planning partners. This plan is aligned to the revenue and capital budget and included elsewhere on the agenda.

4 'HAVE YOUR SAY' SURVEY

- 4.1 As part of the budget Communication Strategy, the survey was used as a way of engaging with communities on their spending priorities. The survey was made available to members of the public via the Council website with the following aims of asking participants to:
- complete a new survey and help shape the next Council budget, due to be set in February 2023.
 - provide feedback on a number of other areas, including public transport, health and social care and the development of local plans within communities.
- 4.3 Up to the date the consultation closed, 866 respondents gave feedback on their priorities. A summary of the feedback and a 'you said – we did' analysis are included at Appendices 1 & 2. The results were made available to Elected Members for consideration in forming the Council's budget proposals.

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 linked to the Financial Plan, the Council demonstrates a commitment to gathering stakeholder views to inform decision making. This helps to mitigate risks around failing to engage with stakeholders & communities on services and decisions that directly affect them, therefore aiding in the reduction of stakeholder resistance and lack of buy-in, both of which could delay the delivery of proposed strategies and associated savings and have a negative impact on the Council's

reputation. This is further enhanced by the “You said, We did” analysis which helps to increase transparency and signpost specific strategies and activities that have been or are being implemented. In addition to this, the Budget Communications Strategy has a positive bearing on community empowerment through its ability to complement t process.

5.3 **Integrated Impact Assessment**

All forms of budget communication have been inclusive, easily accessible and available in a range of formats.

5.4 **Sustainable Development Goals**

There are no economic, social or environmental effects from this report.

5.5 **Climate Change**

There are no direct effects on carbon emissions resulting from this report. Several of the questions contained within the survey asked respondents to prioritise specific activities aimed at tackling climate change. As Council declared a Climate Change Emergency in September 2021 these questions have provided an opportunity for residents of the Scottish Borders to have their say on the development of some mitigating actions. Furthermore the inclusion of such questions has helped to raise the profile of climate change and highlight that the Council is actively looking to develop strategies that will have a positive impact on the environment.

5.6 **Rural Proofing**

This report contains no implications that will compromise the Council’s rural proofing policy.

5.7 **Data Protection Impact Statement**

There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

5.8 **Changes to the Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

This report does not result in any changes to the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director (People Performance & Change), the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications are being consulted on this report and any comments will be reported at the meeting.

Approved by

Suzy Douglas
Acting Chief Financial Officer

Signature.....

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Background Papers: N/A
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