

**CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL APPROACH TO PUBLIC
CONSULTATION ON THE BUSINESS PLAN**

To: Communities and Partnerships Committee

Meeting Date: 15th February 2018

From: Sue Grace: Director of Corporate and Customer Services

Electoral division(s): All

Forward Plan ref: Not Applicable **Key decision:** No

Purpose: To outline to Communities and Partnerships Committee the findings for the 2018/19 Business Planning consultation.

Recommendation: That the Committee note the findings.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 At its meeting on the 26th October 2017 the Communities and Partnerships Committee agreed the approach taken to the consultation on the Business Plan proposals for 2018/19. This paper summaries the final findings of that consultation.

2. METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 The consultation involved two stages:

- Stage 1 – focus groups, to take a deep look at issues residents considered important in relation to how the County Council approached business planning.
- Stage 2 – a representative household survey and open web survey on draft business plan proposals and options for council tax.

- 2.2 For Stage 1 there was one focus group per District with each group being representative of one aspect of the County's demography.

- Young professionals / young families (Cambridge)
- Young professionals / young families (Cambourne)
- Middle age / older families (Ely)
- Middle age / older families (St. Neots)
- Older people (Wisbech)

- 2.3 An independent, professional research company (MEL Research Limited) was commissioned to carry out both aspects of the project. Council officers worked with the Communities and Partnerships Committee (in a workshop format) to develop the questions for the household survey; these were then circulated for further comment prior to MEL starting Stage 2.

- 2.4 MEL organised the household survey to ensure that a randomised, representative household survey (as has been done in previous years) of approximately 1,100 residents was carried out so the results will be significant at a County level.

3. KEY RESULTS

Focus Groups

- 3.1 As focus group findings have already been presented to this committee in a Member's Seminar on 30th November 2017, they will be discussed only in brief here.
- 3.2 People were unaware of many of the challenges facing the Council as well as struggling to understand what services are County level, as opposed to district or national.
- 3.3 All groups discussed fairness in terms of service delivery, charging for services, and potential increase in Council Tax.
- 3.4 Approaches to Business Planning:

- There was positive feedback regarding measures for prevention over the long term, and for building resilience through the use of measures such as the Innovate and Cultivate Fund.
- Participants rejected selling land for revenue generation, preferring retention for income generation. They were also against a Council Tax increase, acknowledging the need for greater communication on where it is spent and why services seem to be decreasing.

3.5 Overall groups could not agree on which Business Planning measure should be prioritised, but the key should be to spell out how the Council is tackling current problems and will continue to do this in the longer term.

Household Survey

3.6 Residents were first asked, on average per month, how many hours they spend giving unpaid help to groups, clubs, or organisations in their community. Overall, 16% of residents provided unpaid help and support; of which almost two fifths (38%) provided on average 5 hours or less per month.

- Age structure and household size were similar across those that did give unpaid help and those that did not, although there were less lone parent families.
- Residents who volunteered were more likely to live in detached home and more likely to own their home (particularly compared to those in social housing).
- Residents who volunteered were also more likely to have higher levels of income and be from a high income social grade.

3.7 Residents were asked what activities they supported through unpaid help. The activities with the greatest support 21% volunteered at local schools, 20% were involved in local social groups, and 16% supported local charities. When asked if they could give more time to support activities 88% said 'no'.

- Significantly fewer residents in Fenland and East Cambridgeshire were willing to provide unpaid time compared to other districts.
- Significantly fewer residents aged 65-84 were willing / unable to provide additional unpaid time compared to other age groups, particularly 25-44 and 55-64.

3.8 Residents were asked what they thought the top three barriers were to other people being more involved in their communities, as well as themselves personally. The top barrier was felt to be 'lack of time'. The next most commonly stated barrier was 'not knowing what opportunities are available'. Thinking about other people in general the third most common barrier identified was an 'unwillingness amongst communities', but for individuals themselves it was a combination of reasons such as health and age.

3.9 Residents were asked about their quality life scored out of 10. They reported very high levels of satisfaction with their local community and their life nowadays with a mean of 8.2. Residents reported their level of happiness with a mean score of 7.6, just about the national average of 7.5. Satisfaction with financial well-being had a mean score of 7.2, and residents reported relatively low levels of anxiety with a mean of 1.5 against the national average of 2.9. Generally, residents who volunteered gave higher scores on quality of life, and lower level of anxiety.

3.10 Residents were asked how much they felt County Council service contributed to their own lives and the wider community. 17% felt council services contributed greatly to their own quality of life, and 16% felt that council services contributed greatly to the wider community.

- Residents in Huntingdonshire and East Cambridgeshire were significantly more likely to feel the Council contributed to quality of life in the wider community than those in Cambridge City. The other districts matched the county average.
- One person households were significantly less likely to feel that Council service contributed towards their own quality of life compared to the rest of the sample.

3.11 Residents were asked about their willingness to accept an increase in Council Tax. 71% supported the increase currently in the business plan of 1.99% (the Adult Social Care Precept). 36% of residents supported an increase of 3.99%, and 24% supported an increase over 3.99%.

- Residents in Fenland were significantly less likely to support an increase in Council Tax of 3.99% or above, particularly compared to those in East Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire.
- 18-24 year olds were more likely to support an increase of 1.99% than 35-44 year olds.
- Those without a disability or longstanding illness were significantly more likely to support any increase in Council Tax than those with a disability or longstanding illness. Additionally residents who identified as carers were significantly more likely to support an increase over 3.99%.
- Those in work were significantly more likely to support an increase of 1.99%. Residents living in households of two or more people were significantly more likely to support an increase of 3.99%.

3.12 An analysis of support for different levels of Council Tax increase based on volunteering shows that those who volunteer were more likely to support any increase in Council Tax.

		Support or fully support	Object or strongly object
Increase the County Council's part of the Council Tax bill by 2% to help pay for care for adults, particularly the elderly	Don't volunteer	69%	31%
	Volunteer	83%	17%
Increase its part of the Council Tax bill by a further 1.99% (just under a 4% increase in total) to support other services	Don't volunteer	34%	66%
	Volunteer	46%	54%
Increasing the County Council's part of the Council Tax by over 3.99% which would require a referendum of all voters in the County to approve the move	Don't volunteer	23%	77%
	Volunteer	31%	69%

- 3.13 Residents were asked if they would support a scheme where they could opt to pay an extra voluntary contribution to services alongside their Council Tax (aimed at wealthier residents). 58% supported this idea. Significantly more people in Cambridge City supported this compared to Fenland, and younger age groups (18-34) supported the idea compared to those 35 and over.

4. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:

4.1 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all

Robust and meaningful consultation provides a benefit to the local economy by ensuring that we support and promote local economic activity that has been identified by citizens themselves.

4.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives

Citizens and service users are 'experts by experience' and are therefore best placed to decide what kind of support is going to make them more healthy and independent. This consultation has been designed to ensure that we have a meaningful input from citizens into decisions about how the Council's budget is spent and how services should be delivered.

4.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people

Consultation is about listening to people's views on priorities and on business plan proposals about our services to support and protect vulnerable people, to make sure that they are as effective as possible.

5. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Resource Implications

The resource implication for the consultation was £33,000. No further expenditure is expected.

5.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

5.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

The consultation was designed to ensure that the Council meets its statutory and legal obligations to consult on its plans.

5.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

The consultation took a representative sample of the county's population. The

communications package supporting the consultation was designed to support the aim of representativeness and inclusion.

5.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

The consultation approach allowed for large-scale engagement and consultation, with an associated communications package, which took place between September – December 2017.

5.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

Members of the Communities and Partnership Committee were involved in shaping the approach to this consultation and the content of the household survey. All Members can support consultation activity by promoting consultation opportunities at events, on social media etc.

5.7 Public Health Implications

There are no significant implications relating to public health.

Implications	Officer Clearance
Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance?	Tom Kelly, Head of Finance
Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the LGSS Head of Procurement?	Yes
Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by LGSS Law?	Quintin Baker, LGSS Law
Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?	Sue Grace, Director, Corporate and Customer Services

Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?	Christine Birchall, Head of Communications and Information
Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact?	Adrian Chapman, Director, Communities and Safety
Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health	N/A

Source Documents	Location
Business plan consultation: Budget Consultation Survey, MEL Ltd 2017	Attached as an appendix

