

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

To: Communities and Partnerships Committee

Meeting Date:

From: Sue Grace: Director of Corporate and Customer Services

**Electoral
division(s):** All

Forward Plan ref:

Key decision:
No

Purpose:

- To set out some options for the Committee to consider regarding the approach to the consultation to inform the Council's Business Plan.

Recommendation:

- a) The Committee considers the options for consultation on the Business Plan, in order to provide a recommendation to General Purposes Committee.
- b) The Committee endorses the proposed Council strategy on consultation and engagement.

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1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 At the meeting of the Communities and Partnerships Committee on 6 July 2017, the Committee requested a further paper detailing the approach to the consultation to inform the Council's Business Plan.
- 1.2 This paper sets out some options for the Committee to consider, in order to support the Committee to make a recommendation to General Purposes Committee (GPC) as per the request made by GPC at its meeting on 13 June 2017.
- 1.3 As discussed at the July meeting there are two aspects to a consultation on the Business Plan – firstly, to survey what priorities people think are most important for the Council to focus on, and secondly to consult on the proposed Business Plan itself at an appropriate time. This paper presents two options for delivering a consultation on these topics.

2 BUSINESS PLAN SURVEY PROPOSAL – OPTION 1

- 2.1 This option focuses on maintaining a continuity of approach with 2016/17. It allows for comparable results to be produced, but also extends the consultation work to reflect comments made by GPC last year, and the previous Communities and Partnerships Committee meeting on this topic. This option would have two stages:
 - Stage 1: A survey to inform the consideration of the Business Plan priorities by the General Purposes Committee.
 - Stage 2: A specific consultation on the proposals contained within the draft Business Plan.
- 2.2 The following survey design for Stage 1 is proposed:
 - A paid for household survey of approximately 1,300 residents so the results will be significant at a County level. The sample will be a stratified, random sample. That is to say participants will be randomly selected within the criteria of having a final sample that reflects the age / location structure of the County's population. This gives the best chance that the results of the survey can be said to be true of the population of the county as well as the sample. The survey would be competitively tendered with a guide price of about £25,000.
 - An accompanying digital / on-line consultation, using the same questionnaire. This allows anyone to participate but the results can be analysed separately from the household survey so any bias can be controlled for.
 - An accompanying programme of public facing community engagement, where Members and officers can speak to people.
- 2.3 The survey questions are proposed to be largely the same as last year.

These questions were developed with the involvement of a Member working group. Last year's questions were focused on identifying priorities for the Council and understanding residents' views on changes to Council Tax. Maintaining the same set of questions means that comparison to previous years is possible. The questionnaire and script used in 2016 is included at Appendix 1. We are able to tweak and amend the questions but doing so will reduce the ability to provide year on year comparisons.

- 2.4 Doing a random and representative household survey is a good opportunity to extend and develop our evidence base about people in Cambridgeshire. It is therefore proposed to introduce a new question about quality of life, which allows us to start to develop some quantitative and qualitative information about how people feel about their life and what is affecting them. Two possible options for this question are included in Appendix 2. The first is from the Adult Social Care User Experience Survey – this would allow comparison between the general public and social care service users. The second option is from the Office for National Statistics' work to measure quality of life and personal well-being – this would allow comparison to UK analysis of well-being by age and other demographic factors.
- 2.5 It is proposed to remove question 12, which asks whether there are any aspects of services people particularly value. In the previous analysis, we found that many people did not answer this question, and of those who did, the most common answers corresponded to the information they had just been given. This means that the value of the question was low. This could be replaced with a question which seeks information on all public services and reflects the Council's transformation work. Options for this question are included in appendix 2. The addition of this question reflects comments made by GPC in 2016 requesting that the consultation reflect the Council's transformation and improvement agenda, as well as the Council's focus on increasing partnership working and reducing silos between different organisations.
- 2.6 This methodology follows the methodology used in 2016 closely. The results of this work are available in the notes of the GPC meeting of 29 November 2016 (<https://cmis.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/ccclive/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/184/Committee/2/Default.aspx>).
- 2.7 Members also requested that the results of previous consultations should be taken into account. It is proposed that a short summary report, detailing the key headlines from the previous 12 months' consultation and engagement work, is shared with Members in mid-October.
- 2.8 Stage 2 of the consultation proposal will be focused on the specifics of the Business Plan proposal. Service Committees are timetabled to consider drafts of proposals in early November. It is suggested that a consultation on this set of proposals could be launched. This consultation would provide a summary overview of the key proposals, and ask some simple straightforward questions about the degree of support for the proposals and requesting other

comments. This is a balance between giving people a clear set of proposals to respond to and giving a meaningful amount of time for them to respond. The model of the recent consultations on the St Neots Bridge and Children's Centres, i.e. straightforward questions, promotion to key groups using all communication channels, will be used to promote it.

2.9 The proposed timeline is shown in Appendix 3. This timeline allows for Members to receive results informally of the Stage 1 survey on priorities and Council Tax in mid-November, and the results of Stage 2 on proposals in January.

2.10 There are some risks with option 1:

- *The timescales are too short to complete a thorough survey, high quality analysis and meet key report deadlines.* The suggested timeline tries to provide a balance between these factors but the timescales are very tight.
- *The stage 1 / stage 2 approach causes 'survey fatigue'.* Stage 2 is proposed here as an option – if Members are concerned about 'survey fatigue' then this stage does not have to be done in order to demonstrate meaningful consultation in line with statutory requirements.
- *Stage 2 does not take into account the results of Stage 1.* Since the results of Stage 1 will not be available until mid-November, the proposals consulted on in Stage 2 will not be informed by these results. This may be mitigated by moving Stage 2 to later in the year, but that will mean the consultation is open over the Christmas holiday period in late December and analysis may be too late to inform decision-making.

3 SURVEY PROPOSAL – OPTION 2

3.1 This option breaks continuity with 2016/17 but potentially allows for richer information to be gathered. This option would also involve two stages:

- Stage 1 – focus groups to take a deeper look at residents' priorities
- Stage 2 – household / representative / web survey on the draft proposals considered by Committees in November

3.2 The focus groups would be commissioned from a market research company and could be specified as follows:

- Participants pre-selected by market research company, 8-12 people per focus group, in five district areas.
- Participants' demographics as follows:
 - Two people from younger age groups 18 – 30
 - One person from mid-range age groups 30 – 55
 - Two people from older age groups 55+
 - Equal numbers of men and women – mix of working, unemployed, retired, students etc.
- One GPC Member or other appropriate Member to attend each, not identified to participants, to watch/listen to discussion only – not to take part.
- Discussion to last roughly 2 - 3 hours, possible morning, afternoon and

evening sessions.

- 3.3 The focus groups would cost approx. £2,000 per group, with total cost of approx. £10,000. This would be competitively tendered.
- 3.4 The content of the sessions would need to be scoped out in detail with the successful bidder, but an example session could focus on understanding participants' views on the question 'what are councils for – and how do you think they need to change?'. This would be approached in two ways – by understanding participants' existing awareness of issues facing the Council, then by exploring different proposals. For example:

Information and awareness building:

- What do you know about the responsibilities of county councils – what services do they provide?
- Information about the Council budget– and how this is made up and will change in next few years.
- Information about Cambridgeshire – how many older people, school aged children, how many miles of roads, how this will change in next few years.
- What do they know about the costs of different services – what's spent on a residential bed for an older adult, children in care, building or mending roads, running a library etc.
- What do they think about this? Any surprises, concerns?

Proposals and options for the future

- All Councils talk a lot about coping with reducing funding with rising demand – various options for this are being looked at, we want to know your views.
- Focusing on those most in need – what level of need are we talking about/where do you draw the line?
- Communities taking more action locally, supporting people closer to home – what areas of services would suit this most comfortably, what more could be done, who by?
- Spending more on early help – what is being done/could be done more to prevent people needing more expensive services.
- Raising income – examples like Soham solar farm/housing company, selling land, or services. What else could we do?
- Level of council tax – what various bands pay per week/per month, what an extra 1% means.
- Campaigning for additional national funding – Is this the role for councillors/MPs/local people to get more involved in?
- Efficiencies – buying better, reducing staffing costs (breakdown of job roles of 5,000 council staff), costs of buildings, business mileage etc. Suggestions.

- Working with partners – where is it most important we work together with other organisations, where are the priority areas for improvement across the public sector?
- 3.5 From this research, we could get a good understanding about different groups' views on subjects such as independence, early help, community resilience and self-support, and the role which a council should play when finances are tight and demand is increasing.
- 3.6 This would be followed up by Stage 2, which would be a consultation on the specific draft proposals discussed in early November by Committees. This could be done as a randomised, representative household survey in the manner discussed in option 1 above, which would incur similar costs, or it could simply be a web-based survey, using the same model as the current consultation on Children's Centres for example. This would be similar in approach to the option discussed above, i.e. a simple summary of the key proposals with a scale for support and comments invited. This could also include questions on quality of life, priorities for transformation and partnership working, and Council Tax, as per the discussion in option 1. The precise detail of the questionnaire would need to be worked up to allow for it to be completed in a reasonable amount of time. This consultation would be driven by a communications package to promote it.
- 3.7 Stage 2 of this option would also be supported by engagement with the public at community events and with Partnership Boards for service users, focusing on the specific Business Plan proposals.
- 3.8 The timeline for this option would allow for Members to receive the results of the focus groups in October, in time to support discussion at Committees in November, then receive results of the consultation on specific proposals in January ahead of GPC.
- 3.9 There are risks associated with option 2:
- *The timescale for Stage 2 is too short to allow for meaningful consultation and thorough analysis.* Although this option allows for the specific proposals to be the subject of consultation at Stage 2, the timescale is such that the analysis will have to be done very quickly over the Christmas period in order to be shared with Members ahead of key decision-making points in January.

4 GENERAL APPROACH TO CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Recently work has been undertaken to bring together two separate statements about the Council's approach to consultation, the 'Working Together Commitment' and the Consultation and Engagement Strategy 2016. The document is included as Appendix 4.
- 4.2 The Working Together Commitment was co-produced with service users, originally in 2015 and was reviewed in May 2017. The idea behind the development of the original 'Working Together' commitment was to have a

shared set of values and good practice that the Council could work with and be held accountable to. During the past two years local groups and organisations have looked at the Council's engagement and consultation activities and have been able to challenge our practice and act as a critical friend because they have the commitment to refer to. There has also been positive feedback received about Council practice (in line with the commitment) and the commitment has been shared with other organisations as an example of good practice that they should be aspiring to.

- 4.3 The Consultation and Engagement Strategy was reviewed and approved by GPC in 2016. It reflects the Council's aspirations, describes best practice in consultation and the role of consultation in decision-making.
- 4.4 Bringing these two documents together simplifies the statement of the Council's approach to consultation and engagement and ensures that the voice of service users is clearly reflected in our strategy around consultation and engagement. The July paper to the Committee noted that the Council would increasingly be seeking to use co-production approaches to service design and delivery. The new statement of the Council's approach to consultation and engagement is intended to provide a solid basis for that work to take place.

5 QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 5.1 This paper has presented a number of options for discussion by the Committee. Questions that the committee may want to reflect on include:
 - a) Is Option 1 or Option 2 preferable overall?
 - b) What parts of each option are required?
 - c) Which of the proposed additional questions would it be most helpful to include?
 - d) Any other comments on the options discussed here

6 ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

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

6.1 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all

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

6.2 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 proposal is 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.

6.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people

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

7 SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Resource Implications

There is a resource implication if members wish to administer a full household survey as part of the consultation framework. The average cost of this has been around £25k for previous surveys. There is also a resource implication if Members wish to commission focus groups of an estimated £10k. Existing officer capacity will be utilised to implement the other activities described, albeit that some are more resource intensive than others.

7.2 Statutory, Legal and Risk

This proposal is designed to ensure that the Council meets its statutory and legal obligations to consult on plans.

Wherever there is a duty to consult, there is a duty to engage in lawful and therefore fair consultation. The level and form of the consultation required will depend upon factors including the nature and impact of the decision to be taken, the practicalities of the situation and whether there are imperatives of urgency or national security. Further principles are:

- a. The consultation must be at a time when proposals are still at a formative stage.
- b. The Council must give sufficient reasons for any proposal to permit intelligent consideration and response. Those consulted should be made aware of any criteria that will be applied when considering proposals and which of those criteria will be considered decisive or of substantial importance.
- c. Adequate time must be given for consideration and response.
- d. The product of the consultation must be conscientiously taken into account in finalising any proposals

7.3 Equality and Diversity

The proposal in this paper describes taking a representative sample of the county's population. The communications package supporting the consultation will be designed to support the aim of representativeness and inclusion.

7.4 Engagement and Communications

The proposal describes a piece of work to allow for large-scale engagement

and consultation, with an associated communications package, which will take place from September – December 2017.

7.5 Localism and Local Member Involvement

Localism and member involvement are at the heart of effective consultation with members acting as the champions and advocates for communities and playing a lead role in consultation activities. Members can support the proposed consultation activity by promoting it at events, on social media etc. The programme of attendance at community engagement events also offers an opportunity for Member involvement which has been successful in the past.

7.6 Public Health

There are no significant implications relating to public health.

Implications	Officer Clearance
Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance?	Tom Kelly
Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by Finance?	Tom Kelly
Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by LGSS Law?	Richard McAdam
Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?	Sue Grace Yes
Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?	Christine Birchall Yes
Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact?	Sue Grace Yes
Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health	N/A

Source Documents	Location
<p>GPC minutes and report on consultation 29 November 2016</p> <p>GPC minutes 13 June 2017</p> <p>Communities and Partnership Committee July 2017</p>	<p>Room 117</p> <p>Shire Hall,</p> <p>Cambridge</p>