

CONSULTATION RESULTS FOR THE 2017/18 BUSINESS PLAN

To: **General Purposes Committee**

Meeting Date: **29th November 2016**

From: **Sue Grace, Executive Director: Customer Services & Transformation**

Electoral division(s): **All**

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

Purpose: **To inform the committee of the results of the business plan consultation for 2016/17.**

Recommendation: **General Purposes Committee is asked to note the results of the 2017/18 Business Plan consultation.**

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The approach to the 2017/18 Business Plan consultation was approved by General Purposes Committee (GPC) in May 2016. This paper reports back on the results of the consultation.

2. MAIN ISSUES

2.1 Methodology

Previously GPC approved the following methodology:

- To commission a household survey of approximately 1,300 residents so the results will be significant at a County level. The sample was a stratified, random sample. That is to say participants were randomly selected within the criteria of having a final sample that reflects the age / location structure of the County's population. The survey was competitively tendered and awarded to M-E-L Research.
- As with previous years there was an accompanying digital / on-line consultation with a short animation to explain the County Council's budget position.
- Officers took the opportunity to attend community events during the consultation time scale (September 2016) to talk to the public in detail about the budget options and the challenges faced by the organisation.

2.2 Results: Household Survey

Cambridgeshire County Council commissioned M·E·L Research to undertake a public survey to better understand residents views on council priorities and a proposed increase to council tax. In total 1,327 residents participated in a face-to face interview during the month of September 2016. The full written results from M·E·L Research are provided in **Appendix One.**

Awareness

- 44% were aware of the financial challenges facing the County Council
- 72% of respondents under 35 were unaware of the financial challenges
- 53% were worried about the financial challenges facing the Council
- Respondents over 35 were more likely (58%) to be worried than young people (18-34) (38%)

Priorities

All outcome priority areas for the council were rated highly; in order of importance (out of 10):

- 8.84—Children reaching their full potential
- 8.55—People with disabilities live well independently
- 8.37—People at risk of harm are kept safe
- 8.20—The road network is safely maintained
- 8.06—Older people live independently

- 7.86—The Cambridgeshire economy prospers to the benefit of all residents
- 7.86—People live in strong, supportive communities
- 7.75—People lead a healthy lifestyle and stay healthy longer

Valued Services

- 33% of respondents use libraries regularly, this was the most popular service used from those listed
- 47% did not use any of the services listed
- 56% 'particularly valued' a County Council service.
- 49% who valued a service, said they valued recycling and/or waste services (unprompted)
- 27% who valued a service, said they valued roads (unprompted)

Potential Changes to Council Tax

Respondents chose from 4 options

- 34% support no change in council tax (Option 1)
- 25% support a 2% increase for the Adult Social Care Precept (ASCP) (Option 2)
- 18% support a 1.99% general increase (Option 3)
- 23% support a 3.99 increase (includes 2% ASCP and 1.99% general increase) (Option 4)

Those who were aware of the financial challenges facing the Council were more likely (72%) to support an increase in council tax than those who were not aware (61%). Respondents who use council's services were more likely to support an increase in council tax (69%) than non-service users (62%). Working age respondents and those who live in more affluent areas (using ACORN profile, see **Appendix C** for details) tend to support Option 4 more than other groups.

Figure One: Consultation Results Comparison Table

	2017/18 Consultation Results			2015 consultation (on-line only) 668 residents	2014 consultation Household survey 1,179 residents
	Household Survey 1,327 residents	Community Events 342 residents	On-line Consultation 201 residents		
Option 1: no change in council tax	34%	14%	15%	People were able to select a range between 0% and 5% at ½ increments.	People were able to select a range between 0% and 5% at ½ increments.
Option 2 2% increase, the Adult Social Care Precept (ASCP)	25%	20%	16%	19% selected no increase	48.3% selected No increase
Option 3 a 1.99% general increase	18%	20%	21%	32% selected an increase of 0.5% to 1.99%	38.4% selected an increase of 0.5% to 1.99%
(Option 4) a 3.99 increase (includes 2% ASCP and 1.99% general increase)	23%	46%	48%	48% selected an increase of 2% or above	13.3% selected an increase of 2% or above

2.3 Results: Community Consultation

Council Members and officers talked with well over 350 people (some interviewed as part of groups) at five separate events around the County. 342 people were able to indicate the level of Council Tax increase that they would be happy with. This choice was made after people were shown information about the County Council's budget challenge and the current costs of services. The interviewers asked people why they were making their particular choice and which services were particularly valued.

Potential Changes to Council Tax

Respondents chose from 4 options

- 14% support no change in council tax (Option 1)
- 20% support a 2% increase for the Adult Social Care Precept (ASCP) (Option 2)
- 20% support a 1.99% general increase (Option 3)
- 46% support a 3.99 increase (includes 2% ASCP and 1.99% general increase) (Option 4)

Looking across all the responses (see individual sections) some clear themes emerge:

- A significant reason given for not increasing council tax was for issues of affordability. During the engagement sessions we spoke to people who didn't think that that could afford an increase because they were currently struggling with their household bills. We also met those that were against tax increases as a matter of principle. This group were generally sceptical about public services and linked together many disparate issues as reasons why public services 'couldn't be trusted'.
- Of particular importance was the balance between those opting for the Adult Social Care (ASC) precept (2%) or the general increase of 1.99%.
 - Those supporting the (ASC) precept did so because they had a clear understanding as to what the additional income was for and / or they could clearly identify with the demands arising from this service area through personal experience.
 - Those supporting the 1.99% general increase particularly spoke about the needs for children's services.
- Those seeking the maximum increase (option 4) were likely to comment about the need to 'protect' services or they expressed the 'value' that they felt services delivered for the community together with the feeling that there should be continued support. There were those who felt that they could happily afford an increase, particularly in Cambridge.

Further detail is supplied in **Appendix 2**.

2.4 Results: On-line Consultation

Unlike last year where the on-line survey was the main element of our consultation this year the approach was very much to see this as an additional activity. The on-line survey was

made available on the County Council's website. The survey was supported by a short animated video¹. The link to the survey and video were then promoted on the front page of the County Council's website, via mailing lists to organisations such as parish councils and via Facebook.

A total of 201 people responded to the survey. The following are the main points of the survey results.

- 15% support no change in council tax (Option 1)
- 16% support a 2% increase for the Adult Social Care Precept (ASCP) (Option 2)
- 21% support a 1.99% general increase (Option 3)
- 48% support a 3.99 increase (includes 2% ASCP and 1.99% general increase) (Option 4)

Further detail is supplied in Appendix 2.

3. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

3.1 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all

There are no significant implications for this priority.

3.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives

There are no significant implications for this priority

3.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people

There are no significant implications for this priority

4. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

3.1 Resource Implications

The commissioned survey cost around £18,000. Other consultation activity was met within the County Council's existing staffing / resources.

3.2 Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications

The County Council has a broad duty to consult in regard to major decisions such as the development of the Business Plan.

3.3 Equality and Diversity Implications

Effective consultation is one of the ways the County Council can meet its equality and diversity obligations.

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LE7E0raHStQ>

3.4 Engagement and Consultation Implications

This is the core subject of the paper.

3.5 Localism and Local Member Involvement

There are no significant implications within this category.

3.6 Public Health Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

Implications	Officer Clearance
Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance?	n/a
Has the impact on Statutory, Legal and Risk implications been cleared by LGSS Law?	n/a
Are there any Equality and Diversity implications?	n/a
Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?	n/a
Are there any Localism and Local Member involvement issues?	n/a
Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health	n/a

Source Documents	Location
Appendix One Business Plan Consultation: 2016 Public Survey, Cambridgeshire County Council. Produced by M-E-L Research, October 2016 Appendix Two Cambridgeshire County Council business planning consultation, results summary, Produced by the Research Group, November 2016	Room 015, Shire Hall, Cambridge E-mail Michael.Soper@Cambridgeshire.gov.uk for access.