

CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL APPROACH TO PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE BUSINESS PLAN

To: **General Purposes Committee**

Meeting Date: **19th September 2017**

From: **Director of Corporate and Customer Services**

Electoral division(s): **All**

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

Purpose: **To outline to General Purposes Committee the proposal for the 2018/19 Business Planning consultation as recommended by the Communities and Partnership Committee.**

Recommendation: **General Purposes Committee is:**

- **recommended to endorse the proposed option for consultation on the Council's Business Plan; and**
- **asked to recommend to Council (via Constitution and Ethics Committee) that the terms of reference of the Communities and Partnership Committee be amended to give it responsibility for the Council's Consultation Strategy and its approach to future Business Planning consultation.**

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1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 At its meeting on 13 June 2017, General Purposes Committee requested that the Communities and Partnerships Committee consider options and recommend an approach to the consultation on the Business Plan proposals for 2018/19. Communities and Partnership Committee discussed the consultation approach at its meeting on 24 August 2017, and this paper presents their recommendation.

2 CONSULTATION PROPOSAL

- 2.1 Communities and Partnerships Committee decided to recommend an option that would involve two stages:
- Stage 1 – focus groups, to take a deep look at residents' priorities;
 - Stage 2 – a representative household and open web survey on the draft proposals considered by Service Committees in November.
- 2.2 For Stage 1 there would be one focus group per District and we would ensure these groups were representative of the demography of the area.
- 2.3 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 a council should play when finances are tight and demand is increasing.
- 2.4 This would be followed up by Stage 2, which would be a consultation on the specific draft proposals that will be discussed in November by Service Committees. This would be done as a randomised, representative household survey (as has been done in previous years) of approximately 1,300 residents so the results will be significant at a County level.
- 2.5 The questionnaire will set out the key proposals in simple terms and asking the extent to which people support these proposals in the context of the overall budget challenge. The questionnaire would also include questions on Council Tax, as has been done in previous years, and questions about quality of life. This consultation would be driven by a communications campaign to promote engagement with the survey. More detail on the methodologies to be used for the Focus Groups and the Household Survey are set out in **Appendix One.**
- 2.6 The focus groups and the household survey would be commissioned from a market research company. The focus groups would cost approx. £2,000 per group, with total cost of approx. £10,000. The guide price for the household survey is £25,000. However, this work would be competitively tendered to ensure we get the best price and value for this activity. This programme of formal market research and surveying would also be supported by engagement with the public at community events and with existing networks and Partnership Boards for feedback from partners and service users.

- 2.7 At its meeting on 24 August the Communities and Partnership committee also endorsed the proposed Council strategy on consultation and engagement (see <http://tinyurl.com/ycy3hm9f>, item 4, Appendix 4). Given the remit of the Communities and Partnership Committee it is recommended that in future this committee takes responsibility for the Council's strategy on consultation and engagement, including the approach taken to consultation on the Council's Business Plan.

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 Whilst the timing of Business Planning consultation is inevitably tight this proposal allows for results of the initial focus groups to be shared with Members whilst the budget proposals are in the early stages of discussion in Service Committees. The results of the household survey will be shared with Members as soon as possible following completion of fieldwork at the end of November. This is likely to be in the Christmas period or shortly afterwards.
- 3.2 The need for the consultation overall to be representative and robust was emphasised by the Communities and Partnership Committee, this will be taken into account in the design.

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 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.

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 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.

4.3 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.

5. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Resource Implications

The resource implication is estimated at a maximum of £35,000. However, tendering for the focus groups and household survey together will encourage more competitive pricing. Existing officer capacity will be utilised to implement the other activities described.

5.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

As detailed in 5.1.

5.3 Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications

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

5.4 Equality and Diversity

The proposal takes 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.

5.5 Engagement and Consultation Implications

The proposal describes a piece of work that allows for large-scale engagement and consultation, with an associated communications package, which will take place from September – December 2017.

5.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

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.

5.6 Public Health

There are no significant implications relating to public health.

Implications	Officer Clearance
Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance?	Tom Kelly: Head of Finance
Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by Finance?	Tom Kelly: Head of Finance
Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by LGSS Law?	Richard McAdam: 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?	Cllr Steve Criswell & Communities and Partnership Committee Members
Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health	N/A

Source Documents	Location
GPC minutes and report on consultation 29 November 2016 GPC minutes 13 June 2017 Communities and Partnership Committee July 2017 Communities and Partnership Committee August 2017	https://cmis.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/ccclive/Committees.aspx

CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE BUSINESS PLAN: METHODOLOGY

To ensure the public consultation on the Council's Business Plan is carried out in accordance with best practice we will engage a professional market research company, with a track record of working with the public sector, to carry out the two core elements of this years' consultation:

- The District based focus groups
- The Household Survey

Stage One – Focus Groups

Introducing Focus Groups into the Business Planning consultation process will allow us to take a deeper look at residents' priorities. The focus groups will be specified as follows:

- Participants will be pre-selected by market research company there will be 8-12 people per focus group with one focus group in each of the five district/City areas
- Participants' demographics will be broadly as follows, being mindful of the demographic profile of each area:
 - 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.
- Discussion will last approx. 2 - 3 hours, with possible morning, afternoon and evening sessions.
- The detailed content of the sessions will be scoped out 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?

From this research we would get a good understanding about different groups' views on subjects such as independence, early help, community resilience and self-support, and the role a council should play when finances are tight and demand is increasing.

We would ask the market research company to demonstrate how they ensure participants are not unduly led by the way questions are framed. We would also asked them to demonstrate how they will achieve a good representative cross-section of people in each group.

Stage Two – Household Survey

For the household survey we will maintain a continuity of approach with 2016/17. In summary the methodology will be:

- A 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. This household survey will be carried out by the professional market research company.

- As we have done previously this household survey will be accompanied by a digital / on-line consultation using the same questionnaire. This allows anyone to participate but these results will be analysed separately from the household survey so any bias can be controlled for.
- Where relevant the survey questions will be based on those used last year. Maintaining some of the same set of questions will mean that comparison to previous years will be possible.
- The questions will include understanding residents' views on changes to Council Tax and seeking feedback on our key budget proposals for the coming year.
- To achieve this the consultation will 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. The model of the recent consultations on the St Neots' Bridge and Children's Centres, i.e. straightforward questions so that people can provide a clear response, will be used here.
- Doing a random and representative household survey is a good opportunity to extend and develop our evidence base about people in Cambridgeshire. Therefore we intend to introduce a new question about quality of life which will allow us to start to develop some quantitative and qualitative information about how people feel about their life and what is affecting them. The question we intend to use is from the Office for National Statistics' work to measure quality of life and personal well-being as this would allow comparison, by Local Authority area, to this UK analysis of well-being by age and other demographic factors.
- To reflect comments made by GPC in 2016, which requested that consultation should reflect the Council's transformation and improvement activity and its focus on working with partners, we will add a question about people's experience of the public sector and what is important to them.
- The questionnaire and script used in 2016 can be accessed at <http://tinyurl.com/ycy3hm9f> item 4 Appendix 1.

As we have done previously we will complement this activity with an accompanying programme of public facing community engagement, where Members and officers can speak to people. We will also engage with Partnership Boards and other networks to obtain feedback from service users, partners and stakeholders.

All this activity will be supported by promotion of the online version of the survey to key groups using all communication channels.

As requested by Members the results of previous consultations will be taken into account in the final report. Therefore a short summary report, detailing the key headlines from the Council's previous 12 months' consultation and engagement work will be shared with Members during the Business Planning process this Autumn.