



SCRUTINY: FINANCE REVIEW GROUP

AGENDA ITEM 6

DATE OF MEETING: 18th March 2013

REPORT OF: Head of Policy and Performance

REPORT AUTHOR: Peter Headland
Consultation & Community Engagement Manager

SUBJECT: Community Debate update

PURPOSE:

1. This report provides an update of progress on the Community debate.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

2. That the Scrutiny Finance Review Group note this report

REPORT

Background

3. Phase 1 of the "Your Say" community debate involved realism about the level of influence that residents could have. There was a focus on understanding how budget proposals would affect residents and providing citizens with the opportunity to provide ideas about what could be done to reduce the impact. Officers went out to carry out face to face interviews with residents at community festivals, community groups, sheltered schemes and supermarkets. The Citizens Panel members were also asked to complete the survey. In total just under 800 residents completed surveys.
4. Phase 2 of the community debate had an emphasis on communications. This involved:
 - Informing residents of the results of phase 1 and how the Council will respond to the findings;
 - Explaining that the savings which the Council has to achieve have increased considerably.
5. Phase 3 is the current stage of the community debate and provides citizens with the opportunity to be involved in the consultations relating to specific savings proposals.

6. Phase 4 will have an emphasis on communications, providing feedback on the consultation findings and how these have influenced decisions.

Process

7. There is clearly a need to co-ordinate this process and make it manageable and meaningful for staff, residents, councillors and other stakeholders. This is being co-ordinated through the following process:
 - the “Your Say” website pages;
 - a simple template has been developed to explain each project in a consistent and clear way to the public;
 - a survey has been developed for residents and organisations to comment on the proposals. Residents tick which proposals they wish to comment on and answer questions such as: what they consider the impacts of the proposal to be, how the impacts could be mitigated, if they have any other concerns on the proposal;
 - copies of the proposals and survey form are available for people without internet access;
 - while it is not feasible or desirable to design surveys for individual proposals, there is considerable expertise within service areas about carrying out consultations with service users. For many proposals the survey is only one source of consultation with residents, and additional consultation as to how people can get involved is listed on the template. Qualitative methods such as meetings with service users can often provide “richer” information than just relying on a survey;
 - consultation on each budget proposal goes live subject to and after the Call In process for Executive meetings.

Update

8. At the time of writing (4/3/2013):
 - One budget proposal had closed and reported to Executive: school clothing grant;
 - The following budget proposals have closed and will be reported to Executive: community centres, school transport, meal services for older people, street cleaning, highways, parks, concessionary travel and children centres. It should be noted that while the survey period may have closed, service area led consultations were continuing for some proposals;
 - The following budget proposals are still open: youth services (closing date 15/3/2013), local bus services (22/3/2013), libraries (19/4/2013) and bulky waste (22/4/13).
9. Two open public meetings were arranged to discuss the “YourSay” budget consultation. These were held 2.00-3.30pm 11/2/2013 at Futures House and 6.30-8.00pm at Farley Junior School. These meetings were independently chaired and had a panel of Executive members. The comments made by residents will feed into the separate service area led consultations taking place. These were attended by a total of 50 residents. Notes are available from the “YourSay” website pages.