
Report To:	Policy and Resources Committee	Date:	17 September 2019
Report By:	Head of Organisational Development, Policy and Communications	Report No:	HR/17/19/GB
Contact Officer:	George Barbour	Contact No:	01475 712385
Subject:	Budget Consultation and Engagement		

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report highlights the proposals to consult and engage with the Inverclyde community as part of the council's budget decision-making for 2020/23.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Council budget consultation and engagement proposals set out in 4.0 and 5.0 highlights proposals for consulting with the Inverclyde community to help inform the Council's budget decisions for 2020/23 budget setting.
- 2.2 The proposals include the use of the online budget simulator and 'citizen space' to build on the successful use of digital engagement and the creation of a new 'consultation hub' to bring consistency to community engagement across the council.
- 2.3 It is proposed that budget engagement on savings proposals developed by officers will run from October to November following engagement with the Members' Budget Working Group with the consultation results reported to Members in December 2019.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 That the Committee approves the proposals for budget consultation and engagement set out in this report and that detailed officer options to be consulted on be progressed following engagement with the Members' Budget Working Group and recognises that the uncertainty over Brexit and/or a general election could involve Council officers promoting controversial information during a pre-election period.

Steven McNab
Head of Organisational Development,
Policy and Communications

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Council carried out budget consultation for the first time in Autumn 2012 to inform the 2013/16 budget with limited feedback. An enhanced method of budget consultation was carried out in 2014 and again in 2015 and 2017 with a more comprehensive approach to budget consultation particularly . In 2016 and 2018 a high level budget consultation took place with the principal mechanism used being an online survey setting out broad views on the Council budget.
- 4.2 The overall objectives of the consultation and engagement proposals are:
- To ensure a high level of engagement across all audiences in setting the Council's budget.
 - To demonstrate clearly to the local community that Inverclyde Council and its elected members welcome and are actively listening to the views of its key audiences.
 - To give all audiences and communities the opportunity to be involved, influence and to have a say in determining the Council's budget.
 - To seek feedback on the services Inverclyde Council needs to protect or reduce and views on specific budget savings proposals.
- 4.3 The key audiences for the Council's budget consultation and engagement are:
- Community
 - Council staff and trade unions
 - Politicians (internal and external)
 - Public sector partners, voluntary sector and community organisations
 - Business sector/Industry stakeholders

5.0 CONSULTATION ACTIVITY AND DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT

- 5.1 The key consultation mechanisms include consistent branding of all consultation and communications activity using the message: Inverclyde: your council, your say; presentation to Inverclyde Alliance Board and supporting material supplied to partner organisations to encourage staff and customers to engage with the budget process; staff cascade and briefings through heads of service/managers for those staff potentially affected by savings proposals and social media engagement using the hashtag #InverclydeYourSay to encourage residents to get involved in the consultation to promote organic engagement with a key focus being use of online tools.
- 5.2 To target key groups affected by any proposed savings and to identify and engage with 'seldom heard' or 'hard to reach' groups, engagement will take place through a range of Council services already engaging with groups such as young people and older people. Information will also be supplied to community partners who are actively engaging with local groups across Inverclyde to encourage further engagement.
- 5.3 It is also proposed that direct community engagement follows the 'drop in' model developed during the most recent budget consultation at the three main town shopping locations to carry out face-to-face engagement.
- 5.4 It is proposed that for each budget saving, the Council or the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) service responsible should directly communicate with organisations and clients potentially affected by the saving proposal to encourage individuals and groups to engage in the consultation.
- 5.5 The Scottish budget settlement is expected to be in mid-December 2019 and, as a member of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), the Council will, as part of its overall budget engagement support national campaigning to secure a fair funding settlement for Scottish local government.
- 5.6 The key budget consultation timescales have a number of dependences including the review of savings proposals by the Members' Budget Working Group but an outline timescale is set out at 5.7.

5.7 The proposed budget consultation timeline is:

Activity	Timescale
Launch of budget consultation	w/c 21 October 2019
Budget consultation closes	30 November 2019
Report back to members after budget settlement proposal from Scottish Government	Expected to be in December 2019 but may need to change depending on timing and detail of budget announcement.

- 5.8 In recent years the use of the innovative ‘budget simulator’ tool has been successful in taking a large number of individual savings options and promoting them in an easy to access format.
- 5.9 The budget simulator aims to showcase savings in the wider Council budget context and encourages users to select their preferred choices based on ‘balancing’ an imaginary budget.
- 5.10 The creators of the budget simulator have developed a new tool called ‘Citizen Space’ which is currently being used by a range of local authorities including East Renfrewshire Council and Clackmannanshire Council and the Scottish Government as an online consultation hub (see appendix 1).
- 5.11 Citizen space provides a consistent format space, branded for the organisation, as a location to manage all consultations and can be used to promote engagement on proposals which do not fit easily into the format of the budget simulator.
- 5.12 The citizen space product has the benefit of being adaptable and able to be used for all consultations carried out by the Council.
- 5.13 As part of the Council’s continued commitment to digital engagement, it is proposed that the Council uses both the budget simulator tool as in previous years and citizen space for the savings proposals that do not fit easily into the simulator format to encourage increased digital engagement. It is proposed that officers agree with the Members’ Budget Working Group which officer saving proposals are to be included in the simulator and which are to be included in citizen space.
- 5.14 Officers will also co-ordinate all consultations through the new ‘citizen space’ consultation hub and monitor its effectiveness in increasing engagement and providing consistency over the course of the next year.
- 5.15 While the political uncertainty over Brexit and/or a general election does not prohibit the Council from holding a public consultation, the decision to launch a consultation could involve Council officers publicising issues of a controversial nature during a pre-election period given the dates are both uncertain and outwith the Council’s direct control.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Finance

Financial Implications:

One off costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
			£18K	Budget earmarked reserve	Licensing costs for digital engagement packages and costs associated with marketing and promotion

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments

6.2 Legal

There are no direct legal implications within this report.

6.3 Human Resources

There are no direct implications within this report.

6.4 Equalities

This report assists wide community engagement and involvement in all Council priorities and policies.

(a) Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES (see attached appendix)
x	NO – This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, no Equality Impact Assessment is required

(b) Fairer Scotland Duty

If this report affects or proposes any major strategic decision:-

Has there been active consideration of how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome?

	YES – A written statement showing how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed.
x	NO

(c) Data Protection

Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES – This report involves data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.
x	NO

6.5 Repopulation

There are no direct repopulation implications within this report.

7.0 CONSULTATIONS

7.1 None.

8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

8.1 None.

Appendix 1: Look and feel examples of 'citizen space' consultation hub

The screenshot shows the top of the Scottish Government Consultation Hub. It features the Scottish Government logo (a white saltire on a blue square) and the text "Scottish Government Riaghaltas na h-Alba gov.scot". To the right is a search bar with the text "Search consultations" and a magnifying glass icon. Below the logo is a navigation menu with "Consultation Hub", "Find Consultations", and "We Asked, You Said, We Did". The main content area has a blue background with a white text box containing the following text:

Consultation Hub

The Scottish Government wants to make it as easy as possible for those who wish to express their opinions on a proposed area of work to do so in ways which will inform and enhance that work.

[You can view older Scottish Government consultations here, and view a list of archived consultations \(pre-2004\) here.](#)

Featured: A Consultation on Scotland's National Transport Strategy

The consultation is on the new draft National Transport Strategy (NTS) for Scotland, which aims to... [More](#)

Closes 23 October 2019

Open Consultations

Date Closes

[Children's Rights: Consultation on incorporating the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into our domestic law in Scotland](#)

28 August 2019

The screenshot shows the top of the East Renfrewshire Council Consultation Hub. It features the East Renfrewshire Council logo (a stylized green and blue leaf) and the text "East Renfrewshire COUNCIL". To the right is a search bar with the text "Search consultations" and a magnifying glass icon. Below the logo is a navigation menu with "Consultation Hub", "Find Consultations", and "About".

Welcome to East Renfrewshire's online consultation space

Open Consultations

Date Closes

[In-Service Days 1 & 2 August 2019](#)

28 August 2019

[Housing Services Customer Engagement Strategy Consultation 2019](#)

30 September 2019

[Gas Services Customer Satisfaction Survey](#)

10 April 2020