
Report To: Policy and Resources Committee **Date:** 20 September 2022

Report By: Head of Organisational Development, Policy and Communications **Report No:** PR/22/22/GB

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Subject: 2023/26 Budget Consultation

1.0 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1 For Decision For Information/Noting

1.2 The purpose of this report is to propose a suggested approach to budget consultation to support the current year budget setting expected to cover the periods 2023 to 2026.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The Policy and Resources Committee agrees the approach and timing of budget consultation contained in the report.

Steven McNab
Head of Organisational Development,
Policy and Communications

3.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 3.1 Inverclyde Council's latest financial strategy was approved by the Council at its meeting on 30 June 2022 and it included mid-range estimated funding gaps of £15.2m (23/25) and £19.2m (23/26).
- 3.2 In recent years the budget consultation has been a key element of the council's budget setting process.
- 3.3 The budget consultation has ranged, depending on the requirements, from high level broad topic engagement to detailed specific savings proposals.
- 3.4 Face to face meetings and online engagement have been used at various budget consultations by the council including engagement through locality groups and the use of a dedicated budget simulator tool allowing residents to 'set' the budget as they examine detailed savings and the council has also used digital surveys to examine savings.

4.0 PROPOSALS

- 4.1 It is proposed that as part of the Council's budget setting process a budget consultation is launched based on savings proposal.
- 4.2 It is proposed that the budget consultation breaks down savings into easily manageable groups:
 - PEOPLE SAVINGS - These are savings that will affect people in our community. It could affect the wider community or particular groups of people such as families or young people.
 - PLACE SAVINGS - These are savings that will affect services delivered in specific parts of Inverclyde, such as the outdoor spaces or town centres.
 - CHANGES TO CHARGES - These are increases to existing charges or new charges for services which have previously been free.
 - COUNCIL TAX – This question will focus on possible increased rates of Council Tax and seeks views on what level of increase would be acceptable.
- 4.3 Appendix 1 outlines the arrangements for presenting the proposed savings/changes to charges setting out the detail of the saving and its impact. A test site is set out at: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/ZD7D6T/> (it should be noted that the subjects included in the test site and appendix are randomly chosen headings from proposed savings to give an idea of how content would look).
- 4.4 The main mechanisms proposed for the budget consultation would be:
 - Consultation page created on the council website consultation pages: www.inverclyde.gov.uk/yoursay setting out the savings proposed, timescales and background and link to an online survey and downloadable version of the savings and questions.
 - Creation of an online survey with savings and changes to charges proposals set out: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/ZD7D6T/>
 - Printed version of the savings list and survey available to download and also in each council library.
 - Printed posters distributed to every council run and owned property, workplace and facility to encourage residents, customers and employees to take part in the consultation.
 - Digital promotion through council website, intranet and social media
 - Press releases issued encouraging residents to take part in the survey

- Messages to council employees to encourage uptake and wider promotion
- Managers to support promotion of the survey to their service users/customers/clients affected or potentially affected by proposed savings or changes to charges taking account of hard to reach groups affected by savings proposals outline in the Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA) completed for each saving.
- Update issued to Inverclyde Alliance members
- Listening events arranged with locality groups
- Engagement with young people through Education and Communities directorate consultation group
- Messages to active community councils to encourage uptake and wider promotion to the community.
- Briefing offered to MP and MSPs.

The above list is not comprehensive and will be subject to change following completion of the full equalities impact assessments for each saving and increase to charges.

4.5 The proposed timescale for the consultation:

- Monday 10 October 2022 - Budget consultation launched.
- Monday 31 October 2022 – Budget consultation closes, result report compiled for review by Corporate Management Team and Members Budget Working Group in November/December.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation(s) is(are) agreed:

SUBJECT	YES	NO	N/A
Financial	X		
Legal/Risk	X		
Human Resources	X		
Strategic (LOIP/Corporate Plan)	X		
Equalities & Fairer Scotland Duty			X
Children & Young People's Rights & Wellbeing			X
Environmental & Sustainability			X
Data Protection			X

5.2 Finance

The budget consultation provides a direct support to the council's budget setting process and provides important input to the process for the council and councillors.

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
N/A					

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

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

5.3 Legal/Risk

While there is no specific legal duty to the council in failing to carry out a budget consultation, it has been the practice of the council to engage the community in the budget process since 2013.

5.4 Human Resources

The budget consultation process aims to support employee relations by ensuring that employees and trade union representatives are fully informed throughout the process.

5.5 Strategic

The overall budget position of the council is guided by its available resources and ability to support the community through those resources and budget engagement is crucial to ensuring awareness and involvement of the community in any savings, reductions or increases to charges.

6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 CMT and Trade Union Colleagues have been consulted on the proposals within this report.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 None

APPENDIX 1: CONSULTATION SURVEY QUESTIONS

It is proposed that the questions on each of the budget savings should be posed as set out below:

Savings will be grouped into the following headings:

- People savings
- Places savings
- Changes to charges
- Council tax

Questions in relation to three randomly chosen proposed savings are set out below which include space for a short description of each saving and its financial and staffing impact where relevant. The structure of the questions will provide a response from people completing the survey, ie. whether they agree or disagree or have no opinion on the survey.

While the proposal below sets out 'agree and disagree' as the main choices and when completed, the final report will naturally rank savings based on the number of people who agree or disagree, when the final list of savings are agreed a review of the layout will include an examination of whether ranking, (for example 1-5) for groups of savings may provide a different level of information.

PEOPLE SAVINGS

Name of service/saving area

Description of the saving inserted here to a maximum of two paragraphs for each saving.

Total cost saving: £1m

Impact on jobs: No council jobs would be lost.

Do you agree or disagree that this budget saving should be taken?

- Agree
- Disagree
- No opinion

2. Name of service/saving area

Description of the saving inserted here to a maximum of two paragraphs for each saving.

Total cost saving: £158,000

Impact on jobs: No council jobs would be lost.

Do you agree or disagree that this budget saving should be taken?

- Agree
- Disagree
- No opinion

Name of service/saving area

Description of the saving inserted here to a maximum of two paragraphs for each saving.

Total cost saving: £9,000

Impact on jobs: No council jobs would be lost.

Do you agree or disagree that this budget saving should be taken?

- Agree
- Disagree
- No opinion