

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

**REPORT TO: Corporate Leadership Board 4/9/13
Corporate Scrutiny Committee 10/9/13
Cabinet 15/10/13**

Date of Meeting:	
Report of:	Interim Chief Operating Officer
Subject/Title:	Budget Setting Engagement Process 2014/2017
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Raynes

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 This report builds on the Budget Setting Process agreed by Cabinet on 22nd July by providing further details on the Budget engagement plans and particularly the involvement of elected Members.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 To note and comment on the Budget engagement plans for the 2014/2017 Budget.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 The Council has an agreed process to set a budget for 2014/2017. However, the Council needs to consider the approach to consultation and engagement to ensure a robust Budget is set that cannot be challenged as a result of failure to adequately consult.

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 Not applicable.

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 Not applicable.

6.0 Policy Implications

- 6.1 Not applicable

7.0 Financial Implications

- 7.1 Not applicable, although there may be small costs relating to arranging the events.

8.0 Legal Implications

- 8.1 The Council should have robust processes so that it can meet statutory requirements and fulfil its fiduciary duty.

9.0 Risk Management

- 9.1 Failure to adequately consult and engage on the Council's Budget could lead to legal challenge and potentially mean the proposal is delayed or cannot be delivered. This timetable will enable the Council to manage that risk.
- 9.2 The Budget Setting Process itself has been reviewed in terms of equality impact. The conclusion is that the process does not disadvantage any of the groups with protected characteristics. Setting and approving the Budget is a democratic process which involves all elected Members (representing all communities within Cheshire East). The Council also places information on its website to inform and engage with all service users.

10.0 Background and Options

- 10.1 Cabinet agreed the Budget Setting Process for 2014/2015 to 2016/2017 at its meeting on 22nd July 2013. This included a high level timetable which is attached at **Appendix A**. It is normal practice for the high level timetable to be developed into a more detailed version. This report provides that more detailed version for consideration at an early stage.
- 10.2 The aim is to schedule a series of meetings to cover:
- Member involvement through all Member briefings, Corporate Scrutiny Committee, Finance Policy Development Group, Cabinet, Council, and Party Group Meetings.
 - Staff through the Staffing Committee, Trades Unions Briefings, Team Talk and CEntranet.
 - Representatives from other stakeholder groups, (ie groups who are interested in changes to Council services) including the business community, schools forum, third sector and town and parish councils.
- 10.3 These will follow the established route of
- | | |
|-----------|--|
| November: | Consultation on budget process, forecast funding levels and key areas under review. Generally using existing meetings. |
| January | Consultation on draft Budget proposals using a mix of existing meetings, the website and a number of dedicated events. |
- 10.4 A detailed timetable is provided at **Appendix B** setting out the expected dates, any intended actions and issues to be covered.
- 10.5 Some of the outstanding issues include:

- Does the Council want to engage with town and parish councils using the conference in November and / or arranging a session in January ?
- Does the Council want to hold engagement meetings with the third sector / partners in November and / or January ?

(dedicated meetings for these groups have not been held recently)

Are there any other events or groups that should be included?

10.6 Corporate Scrutiny Committee are asked to comment on this timetable in advance of consideration by Cabinet.

11.0 Access to Information

11.1 The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

Name:	Rachel Musson
Designation:	Interim Chief Operating Officer
Tel No:	01270 685882
Email:	rachel.musson@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Appendix A ~ The Budget Setting Process ~ extract from Budget Setting Process Report to 22nd July 2013 Cabinet

	Set Parameters		Gather Evidence / Develop Proposals		Consult / Refine				Approve
Date	Central Finance Group	Business Planning Group	Portfolio Holders	CMT	Project Management Process	Finance Policy Development Group	Corporate Scrutiny Committee	Stakeholders	Council
July 2013	Financial Assumptions	Budget Setting Process	All Member Briefing (23/7)	Agree and launch process					
August / Oct			Review Programmes and budgets and develop additional savings proposals						
November / January				High level overview	Gate 1 challenge	Advice on funding policies	Review in year performance	Briefing on key themes Comment on proposals	
February 2014									Agree Budget

Appendix B ~ Detailed timetable of Member involvement in the Budget Setting Process

Date	Meeting title	To consider
September		
10	Corporate Scrutiny Committee	Detailed Budget Setting Timetable
12	Finance Policy Development Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Business Rates data - Charging and Trading Strategy - Credit Unions
Late	All Member Briefing Session	Update on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Budget Setting - Budget Book - Financial Resilience - Audit of accounts
October		
8	Corporate Scrutiny Committee	
14	Finance Policy Development Group	Capital Strategy
15	Cabinet	Detailed Budget Setting timetable
November		
4	Town and Parish Councils	Does the Council want to use part of this as an Engagement meeting and is a further session required in January ?
TBA	Third Sector / Partners	Does the Council want to hold an Engagement meeting with this group and is a further session required in January ?
11	Corporate Scrutiny Committee	Tax base and mid-year Review

Date	Meeting title	To consider
12	Cabinet	Tax base and mid-year Review
13	Corporate Trade Unions	Engagement meeting (1)
14	Finance Policy Development Group	Scenario issues
TBA	Business Representatives	Engagement meeting (1)
Mid	All Member Briefing Session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Budget setting progress - Mid-year review
December		
4	Schools Forum	Engagement meeting (1)
10	Cabinet	Tax base Report (potential)
12	Council	Tax base Report
Mid/late	Provisional Finance Settlement Released	
January 2014		
W/c 6	Publish Pre-Budget Report	
8 and 9	All Member briefing Sessions – two repeat sessions (Probably Macc and Sandbach)	Briefing on Provisional settlement, Pre-Budget Report and Three Quarter Year Review. [To include briefing on options that did not go forward]
W/c 13	Corporate Scrutiny Committee	Review Pre-Budget Report – round 1
16	Staffing Committee	Engagement meeting (2)
TBA	Party Group Meetings	Engagement meeting (2) – this will be offered as part of the

Date	Meeting title	To consider
		process.
TBA	Corporate Trade Unions	Engagement meeting (2)
TBA	Meeting with Business Representatives	Engagement meeting (2) Potentially three meetings with local Chambers of Commerce.
TBA	Town and Parish Council	Is an Engagement meeting required ?
TBA	Third Sector / Partners	Is an Engagement meeting required ?
Late	Corporate Scrutiny Committee	Review Pre-Budget Report – round 2
30	Schools Forum	Engagement meeting (2)
Late	Final Settlement Released	
February		
3	Corporate Scrutiny Committee	Budget Report and Three Quarter Review
4	Cabinet	Budget and Three Quarter Review
27	Council	Budget Report

Notes

- 1) Engagement meeting based on general briefing on estimated funding levels and potential changes to services.
- 2) Engagement meeting based on updated financial position and Pre-Budget Report.