

MEETING:	CABINET
DATE:	21 OCTOBER 2010
TITLE OF REPORT:	BUDGET CONSULTATION 2011/12
PORTFOLIO AREA:	RESOURCES

CLASSIFICATION: Open

Wards Affected

County-wide.

Purpose

To agree a timetable and consultation arrangements for the 2011/12 budget in line with the requirements of the Constitution.

Key Decision

This is not a key decision.

Recommendation(s)

THAT:

- (a) the approach to consultation and engagement with the public be approved; and
- (b) the proposed timetable attached at Appendix B to the report be approved.

Alternative Options

1. There are no alternative options.

Reasons for Recommendations

2. There is a need to engage with residents to explain the challenges facing the council.
3. It is important that the council meets its obligations as set out in sections 4.3.2.1 to 4.3.2.5 of the constitution. The wording in the Constitution is attached as Appendix A.

Introduction and Background

4. All local authorities face a challenging set of circumstances as the new coalition government has given a clear commitment to reduce the level of public spending. The services and organisations likely to receive some sort of "protection" do not include local authorities which means difficult decisions will have to be made. The likely level of funding reduction coupled

with the impact of the recession on the demand for council services, means that greater engagement with residents is required to explain the challenges facing the council when setting the 2011/12 budget.

5. The constitution requires a programme to consult on the 2011/12 budget and its key priorities. Consultation methods need to be adopted to ensure consultees are informed, engaged and given ample opportunity to give their views.
6. The shape and extent of the government cuts affecting local authorities will be confirmed in the weeks following the announcement on 20th October. This will lead to a full understanding of how the cuts will affect Herefordshire.

Key Considerations

7. There is a requirement to help residents understand why difficult decisions will be needed. In order to achieve this, dedicated budget pages will be available on the council's website. These can be updated as required and would include information on the budget setting timetable thus ensuring the timetable is also publicised.
8. The appropriate use of Herefordshire Matters will be a key part of the process given its wide distribution across the county. Information about the budget and engagement process can also be provided to the local press.
9. Regular budget bulletins will be made to employees who will be able to respond online or feedback to trade unions.
10. Public meetings remain a suitable means of engagement. Meetings should be held in locations that allow the maximum number of people to attend. It is important that rural areas are also covered in a series of events to be held during November and early December.
11. Other groups and bodies will need to be engaged and consulted as follows:
 - Trade Unions via meetings with the Leader and Deputy Leader.
 - Schools Forum to provide an overall update on the implications for schools.
 - Parish Councils will be offered an overall meeting and officers will attend individual meetings if required.
 - Voluntary and Community Sector will be consulted as part of the ongoing Third Sector Support Services Review
 - There is a requirement that the Business Community is consulted as part of the council tax setting process and this will be scheduled in consultation with the local Chamber of Commerce.
12. Internal consultation about the budget will involve Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the meetings on 29th November and 14th January will be used to consult with the committee so that their views can be fed back to Cabinet.
13. Briefings for political groupings and councillors will be held.
14. The attached timetable will be shared with Overview and Scrutiny and other scrutiny committees so that their work plans can include budget scrutiny in preparation for 2011/12.

Community Impact

15. Effective community engagement will increase the level of understanding about the challenges and choices facing the council.

Financial Implications

16. There will be some costs associated with the process and these will be met by the council's revenue contingency.

Legal Implications

- 18 There is a requirement to demonstrate the council has consulted about the process.

Consultees

19. The report outlines the groups to be consulted..

Appendices

- Appendix A – Extract from constitution
- Appendix B - Proposed dates for consultation

Background Papers

None identified.

Constitution Extract

- “4.3.2.1 The Cabinet will publicise a timetable for making proposals to the Council for the adoption of any plan, strategy or budget that forms part of the Budget and Policy Framework, and its arrangements for consultation after publication of those initial proposals.*
- 4.3.2.2 The Cabinet will provide a copy of the timetable to the Chairman of the Council, the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Chairmen of the Scrutiny Committees. The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall take steps to ensure that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Scrutiny Committee work programmes include any such plan, strategy or budget to enable scrutiny members to be consulted on the Budget and Policy Framework.*
- 4.3.2.3 The Cabinet will determine the methods to be used to publicise the timetable to ensure that the appropriate consultees are informed about the process and the timetable for adoption of any such plan, strategy or budget.*
- 4.3.2.4 Budget consultees should include Town and Parish Councils, the Local Strategic Partnership, Health partners, the Schools Forum, Business Ratepayers, Council Taxpayers, the Trade Unions, Political Groups on the Council, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and such other organisations and persons as the Leader shall determine.*
- 4.3.2.5 Following consultation and having had regard to the responses to the consultation, the Cabinet will draw up firm proposals for the plan, strategy or budget under consideration. “*

APPENDIX B**Schedule of Significant Dates for Consultation**

Cabinet – BUDGET CONSULTATION PAPER	21 st October 2010
Cabinet – VERBAL UPDATE ON CSR10 ANNOUNCEMENT	
MEMBER/NEDs EVENT FOR CSR10	28 th October 2010
Overview & Scrutiny Committee – BUDGET FRAMEWORK PAPER	29 th November 2010
PUBLIC MEETINGS	NOVEMBER – DECEMBER 2010
PARISH COUNCILS EVENT	DECEMBER 2010
BUSINESS COMMUNITY EVENT	DECEMBER 2010
SCHOOLS FORUM	DECEMBER 2010
Overview & Scrutiny Committee – BUDGET 2011/12 FOR COMMENT	14 th January 2011
Cabinet – 2011/12 BUDGET	20 th January 2011
COUNCIL– 2011/12 BUDGET	4 th February 2011
Cabinet – FEEDBACK COMMENTS FROM COUNCIL	17 th February 2011
COUNCIL – COUNCIL TAX SETTING	4 th March 2011