

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee	Cabinet
Date of Committee	07 September 2006
Report Title	Public Consultation on the 2007/08 Budget
Summary	The report seeks Cabinet's approval to the planned public consultation process on the 2007/08 budget.
For further information please contact:	Virginia Rennie Group Accountant Tel: 01926 412239 vrennie@warwickshire.gov.uk
Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework?	No.
Background papers	Report to Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee 25 July 2006

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:-

Details to be specified

Other Committees	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local Member(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Elected Members	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cllr Tandy, Cllr Roodhouse, Cllr Booth, Cllr Hicks - for information
Cabinet Member	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cllr Farnell and Cllr Cockburn – “approved for consideration”
Chief Executive	<input type="checkbox"/>
Legal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> David Carter - for information
Finance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dave Clarke - reporting officer
Other Chief Officers	<input type="checkbox"/>
District Councils	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health Authority	<input type="checkbox"/>
Police	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other Bodies/Individuals

☒ Resources, Performance and Development
Overview and Scrutiny Committee 25 July 2006

FINAL DECISION YES

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:

Details to be specified

Further consideration by
this Committee

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To Council

☐

To Cabinet

☐

To an O & S Committee

☐

To an Area Committee

☐

Further Consultation

☐

Agenda No

Cabinet - 07 September 2006

Public Consultation on the 2007/08 Budget

Report of the Strategic Director, Resources

Recommendation

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- Agree the proposals for public consultation on the 2007/08 Budget and Council Tax outlined in Section 3 of the report; and
- Support the recommendation, from Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee, that District/Borough Councils and the Police Authority are invited to participate in the discussions and presentations at the Area Committees.

1 Background

- 1.1 The budget is a statement, in financial terms, of the authority's plans for the forthcoming financial year. As such it is best practice to seek the priorities and views of all stakeholders in its preparation. This is done throughout the year as part of our corporate consultation processes. However, in recent year's we have also undertaken specific consultation exercises on the budget priorities and the level of council tax.
- 1.2 These processes have developed over time. Therefore, in considering the process for 2007/08, the report reviews the 2006/07 consultation process and proposes that a similar process is followed for 2007/08.

2 Review of the 2006/07 Public Consultation Process

- 2.1 The 2006/07 consultation process consisted of two broad strands:
- A set of questions relating to the 2006/07 Budget and Council Tax were included in a wave of the Citizen's Panel surveys and in the Public Satisfaction Survey (PSS).
 - Presentations on the 2006/07 budget were made to each Area Committee at which there was an opportunity for members of the public to comment on and respond to the presentations.

The results of the consultation were then presented to Cabinet to assist in the budget setting process.

2.2 Budget and Council Tax Survey

The questions posed through the Citizens Panel and PSS generated a large quantity of information on a wide range of issues, and formed the bulk of the feedback report to Cabinet. The response rates were high, with the Citizens Panel producing a rate of 64% and the PSS 34%. Including the questions on the budget issues within the broader surveys also enabled a more balanced response between the level of council tax and service priorities to be achieved. Overall it was felt that the inclusion of budget and council tax questions within the Citizens Panel and PSS was a relatively successful way of gaining the views of a wide section of the community.

2.3 Area Committee Presentations

The Area Committee presentations on the 2006/07 Budget and Council Tax took place early in 2006. At this point the political groups were well advanced with the preparation of their budget resolutions. Overall the presentations were well received. Members of the public who attended were able to ask a number of questions and all members had the opportunity to both hear the presentation and engage in discussion of any issues raised. Whilst the Area Committees cannot be considered to give a representative view of the public, members were able to identify specific issues that could be fed back into discussions within their political groups.

3 Proposals for the 2007/08 Public Consultation

3.1 It is proposed to maintain our two-strand approach to consultation for 2007/08 – including questions about spending priorities and council tax in the corporate consultation surveys and having a more open information and discussion session at Area Committees.

3.2 In terms of corporate surveys, we will contribute to and use:

- The Best Value User Satisfaction Survey 2006/07. This is a statutory survey required by the Department for Communities and Local Government that will be posted to 4,000 randomly selected Warwickshire residents at the end of August. Most of the questions in this survey are compulsory but, where possible, we have used the opportunity to add additional questions linked to spending priorities and the council tax.
- The Citizens Panel consultation. The current wave is “Value for Money”. The results from this should be available later this year. The next wave of the Citizens Panel survey is on “Community Engagement”. Preparation work for this survey began in August. Both of these surveys will provide information on the public perceptions of spending priorities and the balance between these and council tax levels.

- 3.3 The use of Area Committees will enable face-to-face consultation with the public on spending priorities and council tax levels. It is proposed to deliver presentations on the 2007/08 budget to the last meeting of each Area Committee in 2007. The proposed dates are listed below. These meetings will provide an opportunity for members of the public to comment and respond to the presentations. The earlier timing of the meetings in the budget process will allow the outcomes to be incorporated into the report to Cabinet on the 2007/08 Budget and Council Tax consultation.

Schedule of Area Committees for 2007/08 Budget Presentation	
Area Committee	Committee Date
North Warwickshire	29 November 2006
Nuneaton & Bedworth	29 November 2006
Rugby	23 November 2006
Stratford	22 November 2006
Warwick	21 November 2006

- 3.4 It is intended that results and analysis from the 2007/08 Budget and Council Tax consultation will be presented for consideration to Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny on 9 January 2007 and Cabinet on 11 January 2007. Whilst these dates are closer than would be ideal there is no real alternative. Reporting the results of public consultation to the subsequent Cabinet, on 1 February 2007 and only five days before the budget is agreed, would be too late. And the earlier meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee is before the results would be available.

4 Views of Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 4.1 At their meeting on 25 July to 2006 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a similar report on budget consultation. The Committee endorsed the proposals for public consultation on the 2007/08 Budget and Council Tax outlined in Section 3 of this report. In addition, the Committee proposed that an invitation be extended to the District/Borough Councils and the Police Authority to participate in the presentations and discussions at the Area Committees. Cabinet are asked to support this recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

DAVE CLARKE
Strategic Director, Resources

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03 August 2006