

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee Resources, Performance And Development Overview And Scrutiny Committee

Date of Committee 25 July 2006

Report Title Public Consultation on 2007/08 Budget and Council Tax

Summary This report proposes a process for conducting public consultation on the 2007/08 Budget and Council Tax.

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Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework? No.

Background papers None

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:- Details to be specified

- Other Committees
- Local Member(s)
- Other Elected Members Cllr Booth, Cllr Hicks, Cllr Atkinson
- Cabinet Member Cllr Cockburn
- Chief Executive
- Legal David Carter - for information
- Finance Dave Clarke - reporting officer
- Other Chief Officers
- District Councils
- Health Authority
- Police

Other Bodies/Individuals

FINAL DECISION NO

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:

Details to be specified

Further consideration by this Committee

To Council

To Cabinet The public consultation process, including any comments from this Committee will be approved by Cabinet at its meeting on 7 September 2006.

To an O & S Committee

To an Area Committee

Further Consultation

Public Consultation on 2007/08 Budget and Council Tax

Executive Summary

1. Introduction

The report proposes a process for conducting public consultation on the 2007/08 Budget and Council Tax. Any comments from this Committee will be incorporated into the subsequent report to Cabinet on 7 September 2006.

2. Surveys

As a result of relatively high levels of response to the Citizens Panel and Public Satisfaction Survey (PSS) used in 2006/07, it is proposed to maintain a similar process for 2007/08 as for 2006/07 with only minor amendments. The planned surveys we will use for 2007/08 are the statutory Best Value User Satisfaction Survey 2006/07 and the next two waves of the Citizens Panel consultation on "Value for Money" and "Community Engagement".

3. Area Committee Meetings

It is proposed to continue to give presentations at Area Committee meetings on the Budget and Council Tax, as in 2006/07. However, they will be given at an earlier stage in the process in order for the results to be included in the feedback report to Cabinet.

4. Feedback

An analysis of the consultation responses will be presented for consideration to the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9 January 2007 and Cabinet on 11 January 2007.

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

Public Consultation on 2007/08 Budget and Council Tax

Report of the Strategic Director, Resources

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Committee:

- Comment on the proposals for public consultation on the 2007/08 Budget and Council Tax outlined in Section 3 of the report; and
- Make any observations they would wish to be included in the report to Cabinet, on 7 September 2006, when the process will be approved.

1 Background

- 1.1 The budget is a statement in, 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 will use the opportunity to add additional questions linked to spending priorities and the council tax.
- It has already been agreed that the subject of the next wave of the Citizens Panel consultation will be “Value for Money”. Work is already well advanced in developing the questionnaire. The subsequent wave of the Citizens Panel survey will be on “Community Engagement”. Preparation work for this survey will begin at the end of 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 timing of the meetings will allow the outcomes to be incorporated into the results and analysis of 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 this Committee is before the results of the surveys will be available.

DAVE CLARKE
Strategic Director, Resources

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Warwick

20 June 2006