

Open Report on behalf of Pete Moore, Executive Director of Finance and Public Protection

Report to:	Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee
Date:	18 December 2014
Subject:	Review of Council's Priorities - Consultation Feedback

Summary:

This report provides a summary of the public consultation feedback received by the Council during November 2014, around what the Council's priorities should be in a climate of reducing available budget.

Actions Required:

That the report be noted and any comments be passed onto the Executive for consideration when making the budget proposals for 2015/16 onwards.

1. Background

Background

- 1.1. Recent government announcements have indicated the council will receive a 14% reduction in government funding (Revenue Support Grant) for 2015/16 with an expected downward trajectory in funding of around 8% p.a. through to at least 2018/19. To accommodate this funding reduction, the current projection is that a saving of £90m relative to the current year base budget will need to be made from the Council's budgets for this period 2015/16 – 2018/19. To compound this funding reduction, the Council is also facing new cost pressures mainly in relation to inflation and demography increases. This will add to the saving requirement.
- 1.2. In the summer the Council started a fundamental review of service priorities and associated budgets (the FBR) to identify how these savings could be made. The first stage of the process was to assess the relative priorities of the services the Council delivers which was shared with all County Council members at a seminar on the 8th October 2014.
- 1.3. The FBR exercise has been undertaken to reflect the structure of the Council as approved by full Council in May 2014 and thereby reflects the 17 commissioning strategies that form the basis of that structure and the activities within them.

1.4. This initial assessment identified the following areas as high priority for the Council, so savings from these areas should be limited to less than 10%.

- Safeguarding children & adults
- Maintaining & developing highway infrastructure
- Managing flood risks
- Supporting our communities to support themselves
- Fire & Rescue Service

1.5. There are three levels of priority that have been assigned to activities that comprise each commissioning strategy. These are outlined below together with the range of savings options required to be exemplified for each strategy/activity

- High Priority = 91% - 100% of the current budget
- Medium Priority = 71%, 80% & 90% of the current budget
- Low Priority = 0%, 40% & 70% of the current budget

Following on from the initial review of these strategies in the summer, all adult care services were moved from medium priority to high priority. (See Appendix A for commissioning strategy priority levels)

Consultation

1.6. As part of this exercise consideration has been given to the extent and nature of consultation activity that is required both internally and externally. There is merit in distinguishing consultation on the Council's priorities from consultation on the detailed budget proposals. There are three elements to the consultation on the Council's priorities that are contained within this report.

- Open responses to the County News article and press release, received via e-mail and a freepost address.
- Questionnaire listing specific services to protect / reduce used with the Citizen Panel (via the Customer Service Centre)
- Questionnaire listing specific services to protect / reduce used on Children's Takeover Day

1.7. The consultation was launched in County News and via a press release in November on the priorities the Council intends to adopt going forward into the budget setting process (see Appendix B). Over 80 responses were received and were quite varied in content (see summary Appendix C). A large number of responses were received from specific interest groups as a result of other correspondence they had received about budget changes.

1.8. The Citizen Panel produced 66 responses (see Appendix D). Of these responses the areas of **high priority** were identified as;

- care services for old people;
- child protection services
- fire & rescue services
- roads and pavements.

Services identified as being **low priority** were identified as;

- parking enforcement
- promoting tourism
- promoting economic growth
- registration & celebratory Services.

1.9. Of these respondents 65% agreed to an increase in council tax (with 35% not agreeing to an increase), and 86% voted for an increase to be up to 2% (with 14% voting for an increase to be above 2%).

1.10. The Community Engagement team hosted Children's Takeover Day on the 21st November which involved 22 children from Saxilby Primary and Priory LSST Academy coming to County Offices to 'takeover' for the day. The opportunity was taken to lead a morning session with them, looking at the services LCC provides. This used the format of the citizen panel questionnaire and asked them to vote for services to protect and not protect. The results were not too dissimilar to the citizen panel outcomes (with the exception of roads not featuring in their priority list – see Appendix E).

High priorities included;

- fostering & adoption
- child protection
- support for old people and those with disability
- tackling crime and economic growth

Low priorities included;

- cultural services
- promoting tourism
- library services.

1.11. The feedback from these consultation exercises will be used to inform the budget proposals made by the Executive.

1.12. There will be separate consultation on the budget proposals in early 2015 once a provisional budget has been set by the Executive. The Local Government Settlement for next year will not be published until mid-December so it is proposed to take the budget proposals to the 6th January 2015 Executive.

2. Conclusion

The responses received during this consultation highlight the areas of priorities for the Council whilst reviewing its budget proposals.

3. Consultation

a) Policy Proofing Actions Required

n/a

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Commissioning Strategy Priority Levels
Appendix B	County News Article (Sept 2014)
Appendix C	Open consultation responses - summary
Appendix D	Citizen Panel Survey Outcome
Appendix E	Children's Takeover Day Survey Outcome

5. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Michelle Grady, who can be contacted on 01522 553235 or Michelle.Grady@Lincolnshire.gov.uk.