



**Corporate Policy and
Resources Committee**

Thursday, 18 June 2020

Subject: Budget Consultation 2020

Report by:	Strategic Finance and Business Support Manager
Contact Officer:	Tracey Bircumshaw Strategic Finance and Business Support Manager tracey.bircumshaw@west-lindsey.gov.uk
Purpose / Summary:	To present members with the 2020 Budget Consultation process

RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. That members accept the Budget Consultation process.
2. That a copy of the consultation video is sent to all members of the Committee

IMPLICATIONS

Legal: None From this report

Financial : FIN/22/21/TJB

The cost of the budget consultation will be met from within existing budgets.

Staffing : None from this report

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights : An Equality questionnaire will be available to complete at the end of the survey

Data Protection Implications : None from this report

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:

There will be a saving of CO2 car emissions as face to face events will not be held.

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations: None from this report

Health Implications: None from this report

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report :

Risk Assessment :

We have assessed the risk of holding face to face events and consider that in line with the Government's guidance on not holding group events, the Covid-19 risk outweighs the benefit of holding such an event.

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

No

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

No

1. Background

- 1.1 Each year a consultation is undertaken on the following year's budget prior to it being set. Although there is no legal requirement to undertake this the Authority has a legal requirement under the Local Government Act 1992 section 65 to consult ratepayers who are persons or bodies appearing to be representative of persons subject to non-domestic rates within the district, and it must be about the Authority's proposals for expenditure.
- 1.2 West Lindsey District Council (WLDC) are members of the Consultation Institute and in accordance with best practice we ensure that all consultations are legal and appropriate processes are in place to lower the risk of a judicial review. Consultation according to the Consultation Institute is the dynamic process of dialogue between individuals or groups, based upon a genuine exchange of views, with the objective of influencing decisions, policies or programmes of action.
- 1.3 Before 1985 there was little consideration given to consultations until a case (R v London Borough of Brent ex parte Gunning). This case sparked the need for change in the process of consultations when Stephen Sedley QC proposed a set of principles that were then adopted by the presiding judge. These principles, known as Gunning, were later confirmed by the Court of Appeal in 2001 (Coughlan case) and are now applicable to all public consultations that take place in the UK. These outline the principles which all consultations must abide and are:
 - **When proposals are still at a formative stage**
Public bodies need to have an open mind during a consultation and not already made the decision, but have some ideas about the proposals.
 - **Sufficient reasons for proposals to permit 'intelligent consideration'**
People involved in the consultation need to have enough information to make an intelligent choice and input in the process.

- **Adequate time for consideration and response**
Timing is crucial – is it an appropriate time and environment, was enough time given for people to make an informed decision and then provide that feedback, and is there enough time to analyse those results and make the final decision?
- **Must be conscientiously taken into account**
Think about how to prove decision-makers have taken consultation responses into account.

The risk of not following these principles could result in a Judicial Review.

2. Proposal

- 2.1. To undertake this work it is proposed that multiple routes are taken to consult with our stakeholders.

Due to the current guidelines from the Government in relation to avoiding public gatherings, it is felt inappropriate to host face to face events this year. We will however, be producing an online video, online and paper surveys and written submissions. The responsible officer for this work is Tracey Bircumshaw, Strategic Finance and Business Support Manager with the accountable officer being Katy Allen, Corporate Governance Officer.

- 2.2. The objectives of the engagement are to:
- Raise awareness of the financial challenges
 - Raise awareness of the diversity of services the Council provides
 - Identify what areas of the Corporate Plan and the Business Plan should be prioritised.

3. Who and how we will engage

- 3.1. The stakeholders which we would hope to consult with on this subject would be:
- Business Rate payers
 - Residents
 - Citizen Panel members

Data from this consultation will go on to inform Councillors of WLDC who will take this information into consideration when setting the 2021/22 budget.

- 3.2. To ensure we are as inclusive as possible and allow as many residents as possible to participate;
- Online and paper survey – to ensure there are as many views on the consultation as possible there would be an online and a matching paper survey which would be available to those on the citizen panel and any other resident that wishes to take part

through requesting a survey, completing a survey on our website or through an invite to the Citizen Panel.

- Events – Not due to be held due to Covid-19 risks.
- Written Submissions – Although written submissions are not advertised as being accepted we would accept them. They are not advertised due to the amount of time analysis of these submissions take compared to other routes.

3.3 The communications strategy will include;

- Video – a short video presentation, the aim of which is to promote the council and what it does for our customers (residents/businesses). We have updated the 2019 video to save costs and due to the Covid-19 lockdown have been unable to include any new interviews, but the long term objectives of the Council. The video also includes the corporate plan objectives, successes, challenges and finances. It will be published on social media and the Council's website.

Key challenges will include:

- Impact of funding reductions
 - Areas of the district are among the most deprived in UK and how we are supporting these vulnerable areas
 - Importance of economic growth and housing regeneration
 - Recovery from Covid-19
 - Continuing to provide excellent services and meeting the expectations from residents.
- Social Media – we would advertise the consultation on both Twitter and Facebook to try to spread the chance for residents to take part as wide as possible.
 - Citizens' Panel – all panel members will be contacted and asked to participate
 - Website – prominent notice on our front page with link to access to video and survey.

4. Timescales

- 4.1. The timetable for the consultation and future reporting is included at Appendix A.

5. Survey contents

- 5.1. A copy of the survey can be found at Appendix B.

Appendix A – Proposed Timescale

Action	Start date	Finish Date	Responsible Officer
Details of consultation to Corporate Policy and Resources Committee		11 June 2020	Tracey Bircumshaw
Video to Corporate Policy and Resources Committee members		7 July 2020	Tracey Bircumshaw
Open consultation	15 July 2020		Katy Allen
Close consultation		27 July 2020	Katy Allen
Inputting of data	28 July 2020	7 August 2020	Katy Allen
Analysis	10 August 2020	14 August 2020	Katy Allen
Draft report		19 August 2020	Katy Allen
Chairs Brief CP&R		2 September 2020	Tracey Bircumshaw
Report to Corporate Policy and Resources Committee		17 September 2020	Tracey Bircumshaw

Appendix B

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

1. Last year you told us that the top 5 key corporate objectives were;

- Economy – to ensure that economic regeneration in West Lindsey is sustainable and benefits all of our communities.
- Finances – to remain financially sustainable
- Public Safety and Environment – to create a safer, cleaner district in which to live, work and socialise
- Customer – to put the customer at the centre of everything we do
- Vulnerable Groups and Communities – to create strong and self-reliant communities and promote positive life choices for disadvantaged residents

Taking into account the recent Covid-19 pandemic do you agree that these should continue to be our key priorities?

2. In ensuring we align resources to the delivery of our Corporate Plan objectives (document link: <https://www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/my-council/how-the-council-works/key-plans-policies-and-strategies/corporate-plan/>) our Executive Business Plan details the actions we will take to deliver these initiatives;

We are committed to supporting our communities, spending a net £3.7m annually on our Place initiatives.

How important are these factors to you?

- A Neighbourhood plans
 - B Community Safety measures
 - C Enforcement activity
 - D Economic Growth
 - E Affordable Housing
- Comment:

3. As a rural district we have a number of challenges around supporting rural communities

What are your key challenges in living in a rural location?

A Broadband (we are investing in a Rural Broadband Officer to help improve connectivity in rural locations)

B Transportation (In conjunction with transport providers we grant fund or work in partnership to deliver better connectivity)

C Job opportunities (We are working with schools and businesses to create apprenticeships, we continue to support schemes which attract inward investment and create jobs)

D Housing (We enable housing through working with landowners, developers and registered providers to attract funding to deliver key housing sites and with others to deliver a better housing choice)

E Isolation (We assist and encourage communities to support vulnerable residents and ensure their wellbeing)

F Other

4. The impact of climate change has now been deemed by the UK Government to be a major national and international issue. A target of 100% reduction in emissions by 2050 has been set.

How do you consider this might best be achieved in West Lindsey?

- A. Reduce waste through recycling and reuse initiatives
- B. Better use of land to mitigate climate change impact and nature loss
- C. Reduce emissions from transport and support more sustainable transport solutions
- D. Support the growth and use of renewable energy
- E. Ensure the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change e.g. flooding, are protected
- F. Encourage energy efficiency in privately-owned homes and new developments

5. The running of the Council and its commercial activities costs £5.9m per annum. We need to invest in initiatives that will provide future efficiencies, generate income look at reducing service provision to save money to enable us to be sustainable. What do you think would be our best approach?

- A. Invest in new technology to achieve efficiencies and cost savings
- B. Identify commercial projects which will generate additional income
- C. Reduce provision and performance of services to reduce costs
- D. Stop delivering some services

6. Council Tax Income funds around 50% of our overall budget. With annual increases in costs of around 3%. What level of Council Tax would you support for 2021/22?

0%, 1%, 2% 3%

7. How do you consider the Council, as leader of our communities, has performed during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Communications

Those individuals needing support through this crisis

Support for Businesses

Supporting communities

Don't Know

5 being Excellent, 1 being Poor

If rated as poor what could the Council have done better

8. We are hoping to host an online question and answer event during the consultation period. If you have a question which you would like to be addressed please detail below:

QUESTION: