

Public Consultation on the Council's Budget 2014-18

The Cabinet has set out its initial proposals to address a £60 million budget gap over the next four years.

Following a special Overview & Scrutiny meeting on Monday 8th September and having deliberated alternative budget proposals put forward by councillors, the Cabinet will agree proposals for public consultation at its meeting on 24th September.

This paper sets out the strategy and action plan that will govern that public consultation.

Strategic objectives

The objectives of the consultation are:

- To promote a wider and deeper understanding of the Council's general budget proposals
- To gather the views of Havering residents, businesses and other stakeholders on the general budget strategy
- To undertake specific and robust consultation on those proposals that affect statutory services
- To provide the public and other stakeholders with the chance to put forward alternative proposals that could achieve the same level of budget savings

Approach

The consultation will take a two-tiered approach.

Tier 1: Public consultation on the entirety of the Council's budget strategy and proposals will be undertaken for three months

Tier 2: Specific statutory consultation will be undertaken where required to address proposals affecting statutory services. These will also last for three months each.

Tier 2 consultations will run concurrently, overlap with, or run later than the tier 1 consultation, depending on the timescales required for specific savings to be delivered. Plans are set out in separate appendices.

A budget consultation hub will be created on the Council's website, setting out the main proposals and any counter proposals, alongside more detailed documentation. The public will be asked to complete a questionnaire in response to the proposals.

This online channel will be supported with the use of traditional and social media and public meetings. Hard copies of the budget questionnaire will be distributed with a

special budget issue of *Living in Havering* and at public meetings - for return to a Freepost address.

Action Plan

Channel	Audience	Details	Timescale
Havering.gov.uk	All audiences	<p><u>Consultation hub:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of proposals • Detailed Cabinet report • Links to statutory consultations • Feedback forms 	Sept 29 th – Dec 29 th
Local media	All residents	Supporting communication to explain proposals and promote consultation mechanisms	Sept 29 th – Dec 29 th
Social media	All residents	Promotion of consultation mechanisms	Sept 29 th – Dec 29 th
<i>Living in Havering</i>	All residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of proposals • Description of stat. consultations • Localised summaries of impact by constituency • Promotion of mechanisms for feedback • Hard copy of questionnaire 	October
E-bulletins	Various audiences	The Council's e-bulletins will provide both general and targeted information and promotion of consultation activity. Audiences include local businesses	Sept - Dec
Public meetings	Attendees	<p>Three public meetings – by constituency:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Romford • Rainham & Dagenham • Hornchurch & Upminster <p>Attendance at various existing meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 50s Forum • Business Networks • Meetings by invitation 	<p>TBC during October & November</p> <p>TBC</p>

Questions

After setting out the Council's proposals, the consultation will ask the following questions on the budget strategy:

1. Do you agree with the choice of priority services to be protected? [yes/no]
2. To clarify this, please tick your top three priority services? [list]
3. These proposals are based on annual council tax increases of not more than two per cent. Would you be willing to pay higher increases in council tax to protect more services from cuts? [yes/no]
4. Do you have any other general comments on the budget strategy as a whole?
[text box]

As part of the questionnaire, respondents will be asked monitoring information, including postcode, age, gender, disability and ethnicity. This will help us ensure that the responses from the survey reflect the community at large and are not confined to certain geographical areas, age bands, or ethnicities. It will also allow us to ensure we have taken the views of people with disabilities into account.