

Consultation and Communication Plan – 2018/19 Budget proposals

Version 1.0

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1. Background

In February 2018 Full Council will consider a 2018-19 budget based on savings of £25m, along with proposals for the next five years.

A formal public consultation, detailing proposed savings to service budgets, will help inform this budget-setting exercise and development of final options presented to Full Council for consideration.

This plan describes the proposed consultation and engagement approach and timescales.

2. Aims

- i. To support a legal, transparent and inclusive budget-setting process.
- ii. To involve the city and its people in any proposed major changes to services.
- iii. To encourage accurate media reporting which contributes to including people in the various consultation processes.

3. Objectives

- i. Formally consult on selected 2018-19 budget proposals for six weeks from Monday 6 November to Sunday 17 December, attracting at least 3,000 formal responses to help inform Full Council budget decision in February 2018.
- ii. Enable timely implementation of any agreed savings by ensuring consultation is legally robust and substantively addresses major proposals so that further consultation is not necessary during 2018/19.
- iii. Achieve a proportionate balance of responses which accurately reflect the diverse publics and stakeholders within the city.
- iv. Ensure 90+% of mainstream media coverage is balanced in tone and content, with 100% of inaccuracy challenged within four hours (or sooner where possible) of publication or broadcast.

4. Stakeholders

The nature of a city-wide process effectively brings all of the council's stakeholders in to scope although with a greater local and regional focus than national or international.

However, because this will be a focused consultation on proposals which require it, rather than a general budget consultation, it will be essential to target the particular stakeholders most closely connected to the specific proposals. Therefore each proposal will need to include a clear stakeholder map and a plan from the responsible service for how to reach these groups and consult them.

Our communications will particularly focus on providing additional resource and effort to engage communities that have been underrepresented in past budget consultations:

- BAME communities
- LGBT communities
- Disabled people
- Young people

Communications must be inclusive and bear in mind that there are at least 45 religions, at least 187 countries of birth represented and at least 91 main languages spoken by people living in Bristol.

A stakeholder mapping grid (shown in Appendix I) categorises stakeholders by their expected levels of interest and influence, and identifies how communications will be targeted to categories of stakeholder with the greatest interest and influence.

5. Risks

Risks associated with consultation methodology and implementation have been detailed more fully in a risk log. However, key risks to be aware of and mitigate are:

- The council does not set a legal, balanced budget because it does not run an effective consultation.
- Potential judicial review successfully challenges budget consultation process.
- Bristol's residents and other stakeholders will have consultation fatigue because of the two other large consultations that have taken place in the last 12 months.
- Residents and other stakeholders will lose confidence in BCC's ability to be an effective and high-performing council because of the continually bleak financial picture and need to make savings.
- Timelines and capacity make it difficult for BCC to deliver a consultation as detailed in this plan.

6. Consultation methodology/approach

The consultation will engage as many people as possible online, as that is what they expect and it keeps costs down and increases response rate. An online survey (optimised for mobile devices) will have a core introductory and cumulative impact narrative.

For this type of controversial consultation it is best to use tried and tested survey methodologies, ensuring the information and response method are accessible to equalities groups (which is not usually the case with new apps). This enables us to give enough information for people to make an informed response and provide useful data on citizens' views to inform decision makers.

Key considerations: Feedback and learning from previous consultations, most specifically the Your Neighbourhood consultation (June – Sept 2017), have posed the following considerations for the consultation approach:

1. Information provided about budget proposals should be succinct and easy to understand to enable people to respond. Legal advice will be sought on the level of information required to ensure respondents have sufficient detail to form a view on the proposals.

NOTE: Feedback to the Your Neighbourhood consultation suggests that the comprehensive and lengthy information provided in the spirit of transparency also created a potential barrier.

2. To enable proportionate representation from demographic groups, resources will be focused on direct engagement with specific groups.

NOTE: Costly, large scale public events, as staged as part of the 'Your Neighbourhood' consultation, although carefully programmed and managed can be resource/cost inefficient to the groups and individuals that are latterly represented in consultation responses.

- a. There are low response rates to the Your Neighbourhood consultation from a number of under-represented demographic groups.

	% of consultation respondents	% in population
Age		
Under 18	0.4%	21%

18 – 24	2%	14%
25-44	43%	32%
45-64	34%	20%
65-74	13%	7%
Over 75	4%	6%
Ethnicity		
White British	81%	78%
Other white background	6%	6%
Mixed/dual heritage	2%	4%
Black/Black British	0.4%	6%
Asian/Asian British	1%	6%
Other ethnic group	0.6%	1%
Disability*		
Yes	11.2%	17%
No	88.8%	83%

**The series of Your Neighbourhood consultation proposals that could affect disabled people (eg. Bristol Community Links, Supporting People) may have inflated the response rate in comparison to other consultations.*

- Although online is the default consultation and engagement approach, offline methods should be easily available for groups likely to be digitally excluded.

Alternative Formats / Accessibility

Paper copies of consultation materials and various other alternative formats will be available. These will be available at libraries and our Citizen Service Point.

To increase inclusivity of the online survey, we also intend to produce a short introductory video with subtitles and BSL. This will be embedded in the survey and signpost people on how to access information in alternative formats.

Limited runs of signposting and marketing material will be available in alternative languages (five most widely spoken/read in Bristol).

7. Overview of consultation and engagement activities

The following list comprises the key consultation and engagement channels and events to be used for this consultation. This is summary information and each event or activity may have additional milestones or preparatory work associated with it.

Event or channel
Online public survey Posted on Consultation Hub and optimised for use on mobile devices.
Budget simulator A complementary engagement tool which enables people to try balancing the budget themselves and explaining the consequences of choices. With integrated social sharing of results.
Council website Full background information on the website, including a simplified budget briefing (how much

we spend and what on, reference to services we have to provide, where money comes from and savings needed), substantive budget proposals explained as clearly as possible, using infographics and including EqlAs/Relevance checks.

Video introduction

Mayor talking about the ambition of the city, the budget, difficult choices, the need for services to change through redesign and creativity as well as the opportunities and what we aim to achieve as a city. Designed for sharing to social media platforms.

Paper response option

Background information in paper format – available on request.

Accessible formats

Braille, BSL videos, Large Print, Easy Read – available on request. Quantities will be assessed based on total requests received for each accessible format during Your Neighbourhood consultation.

Scrutiny

- Continued engagement with MTFP Working Group.
- Promote, attend and webcast relevant scrutiny meetings.
- Engage with OSMB and respond to their recommendations regarding public scrutiny (meetings etc) by members of the budget proposals

Business consultation *(pending further details on proposals that could affect business sector)*

- Email to LEP, Federation of Small Businesses, Business West, Institute of Directors. Includes full budget info, invitation to meet and discuss, link to surveys.
- Follow up with link to the Cabinet report on Budget when available.
- BusinessWest engagement event for facilitated Q&A or discussion with business attendees.
- Direct email to database of Business Rate customers (approx. 3,000 on file)

Voluntary and community sector consultation

- Direct email to VCS and community groups.
- Direct communication with a variety of equalities groups and contacts within the city and ask for assistance promoting the consultation (including internal staff led groups).
- Themed smaller engagement events for key groups including young people, Bristol Women's Voice, Older People's Forum, Bristol Disability and Equality Forum, BME Voice, LGBT Bristol, Internal Staff led groups.

Face-to-Face

Recognising the need to run an inclusive process, a range of face-to-face engagement activity should be included.

The following options are proposed:

Targeted roadshows – in areas and networks with higher proportion of demographic groups we want to target. High profile, engaging roadshows staffed by council colleagues fully conversant with proposals who can help people complete online survey (via computers/laptop/tablet) and in paper format. Partner agencies could also be invited to

attend to act as advocates for members of the public.

Focus groups – with demographic groups we want to target. Designed to examine and discuss proposals and get a better understanding of what factors shape their views. Hosted by trained facilitators (which may need to be resourced externally). Video welcome and introduction from the Mayor (Mayor and Cllr Cheney may also attend some focus groups). Attendees offered assistance to complete online or paper survey.

Bespoke events with partners whose networks reach target groups – e.g. VOSCUR, Equalities Forum, multi-faith forum, youth council.

Mayoral Roundtable meetings with city partners – to share budget challenge and pool ideas for partnership and collaboration.

Internal

- Engagement with Trade Unions via DJCC meetings
- Regular internal news updates and progress reporting via Source and email.
- Promotion via workplace screens, posters, Source and email.
- Management Briefs and subsequent team briefings by managers.
- Team engagement toolkits including. Ambassador scheme for staff to help promote consultation (inc. posters, copy-blocks for social media etc.)

Political

- Member Briefings. Aligned to launch to explain budget and proposals.
- Party Group Leader one-to-ones.
- Party Group Briefings. Scheduled post-launch for Section 151 and other officers to attend and brief party groups.
- MP meetings. Invitation for MPs to meet Mayor and Section 151 Officer for briefing and discussion.
- Engagement toolkit provided to all Members to help them promote consultation.

Media relations

- Press releases linked to all milestones including general reminders to participate.
- Journalist 121s with Mayor and Cabinet Member (at least one per main political correspondent).
- Direct feature pitches to hyper-local and community publications.
- Council publication features including Housing News and Our City News.
- Radio phone-ins with Mayor on Radio Bristol, BCFM, Ujima.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reactive PR support for media enquiries throughout consultation.
<p>Other promotional activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social media promotion across multiple channels and events, including targeting of influencers to disseminate messages and encourage participation in surveys. Paid social media advertising to target under-represented demographics. Information/consultation packs available at libraries, CSP and community buildings. Poster promotion in these venues including library PC toppers. Information/consultation packs to councillors, community groups, colleagues and key partners. Optional radio advertising (to be reviewed against response rates) Attending key public and partner events to promote consultations – ‘roadshow’ approach. Email to Council Tax and Housing Benefit list (18,357 addresses) Email to Ask Bristol Bulletin (13,000 addresses) Consultation Hub (1,000 subscribers) Email to VCS organisations and community groups Surveys sent directly by email to Citizens Panel (approx. 1,000 participants)
<p>Reporting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interim report at three weeks. To keep decision makers up to date with responses. Analyse open ended comments throughout consultation process. Use final interim report to start shaping any revisions to proposals, with these confirmed following final report in January.

8. Timeline

The consultation follows the agreed budget timeline. Key dates are:

Activity	Date
Final draft proposals agreed and provided to comms, consultation and legal	Monday 23 October
SLT and Exec Board review of proposals	Tuesday 24 October
SLT paper dispatch – final proposals, consultation (inc. all wording)	Friday 27 October
SLT final approval of proposals, consultation (inc. all wording)	Tuesday 31 October (AM)
Exec Board approval of proposals, consultation (inc. all wording)	Tuesday 31 October (PM)
Deadline for print / alternative formats (No changes after)	Tuesday 31 October
Consultation opens	Monday 6 November

Scrutiny – MTFP/Budget working group	Thursday 28 November
Scrutiny – MTFP/Budget working group	Wednesday 13 December
Scrutiny of Budget – TBC post OSMB feedback	
Consultations close	Sunday 17 December
Consultation reports completed	Thursday 4 January 2018
Professional review of SLT papers inc. consultation reports	Thursday 4 January 2018
SLT paper dispatch	Friday 5 January 2018, 12pm
SLT – Consultation report, Budget papers for Cabinet, Corporate Plan for Cabinet	Tuesday 9 January 2018
Cabinet papers published	Monday 15 January 2018, 6pm
Cabinet	Tuesday 23 January 2018
Full Council paper dispatch	Monday 12 February 2018
Full Council	Tuesday 20 February 2018

9. Indicative costs

Definitive costs for the 2018/19 budget consultation production are dependent on the number of budget proposals to be consulted on and agreement on how they will be presented. Therefore the costs for the Your Neighbourhood consultation listed below which had a similar city wide reach give an indication of the budget required.

Indicative production and delivery costs for the 2018/19 budget consultation:	£40k-£45k
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and print of hard copy surveys, EQIAs and any supporting information. • Translation, design and production of accessible formats: BSL videos, Braille, Large Print, Easy Read (as required) • Contingency for translations (on request) • Design and print of promotional materials (posters, postcards etc) • Design and production of social media toolkit for members and partners • Data Analysis • Data Entry – aim will be to resource free of charge in house but may require external support depending on ABW available resource. • Paid-for promotions – e.g. texts to council tenants, targeted Facebook advertising (if required) • NOTE: Additional budget will be required if promotional activity such as bus shelter/billboard advertising is required. 	
Additional costs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted outreach activities: (e.g. focus groups, targeted roadshows) - including venue hire, PA, independent facilitators (if required), specific access requirements for attendees (e.g. BSL interpreters, speech to text writers) 	Est £5K
Nil cost activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online survey design • Media promotion – e.g. news releases, media interviews with Mayor and Cabinet members, targeted features in mainstream local media and hyperlocal publications • Social media campaign 	Nil

