

**Report title:** Consultation arrangements for 2014/15 - 2016/17 budget

**Wards affected:** Citywide

**Strategic Director:** Angie Ridgwell – Interim Strategic Director Business Change

**Report Author:** Mark Taylor – Service Director Finance

**RECOMMENDATION for the Mayor's approval:**

That the consultation proposals as set out in the report are approved.

**Key background / detail:**

**a. Purpose of report:** To outline proposals for the public consultation arrangements for the 2014/15 – 2016/17 draft budget and seek Cabinet approval in line with the council's constitution

**b. Key details:**

1. The Mayor and Cabinet are working closely with officers to examine all of the council's income and expenditure and agree a set of budget proposals that will be published for consultation by the Mayor on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2013.
2. The council has a statutory requirement to consult with the business sector only on its budget proposals. The purpose of the consultation is to allow the Mayor to listen and respond to feedback by way of a fully inclusive and meaningful consultation with members of the public, businesses, voluntary and community groups and councillors which will be open for six weeks.
3. **Consultation proposal**  
The following activities comply with the council's Code of Good Practice on Consultation and have been developed to ensure the consultation is accessible, cost effective and encourages as many people as possible to take part.

The consultation activity will comprise:

1. Public meetings – Mayor question-time event, awareness raising at Neighbourhood Partnerships and Forum meetings
2. Online consultation survey – background information, a survey to collect feedback and an opportunity to propose alternative savings.
3. Printed surveys – available through libraries, community buildings and customer service points and on request.
4. Public engagement activities for the Mayor – visits, radio phone-ins, social media
5. Business and partner engagement
6. Event to explore equalities impact of proposals

In addition, there will be a number of publicity activities to raise awareness of the consultation. This includes posters and postcards promoting how to get involved; online and social media promotions, articles in council and community newsletters, information for media, councillors and staff.

4. After the consultation closes on 30<sup>th</sup> December, the results will be collated and analysed ready for consideration at Cabinet on 16<sup>th</sup> January. The results will also be published on the council's website.

**BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL  
CABINET  
31 OCTOBER 2013****REPORT TITLE:****Consultation arrangements for 2014/15 - 2016/17 budget****Ward(s) affected by this report: Citywide****Strategic Director: Angie Ridgwell – Interim Strategic Director Business Change****Report author: Mark Taylor – Service Director Finance****Contact telephone no. 0117 922 2007****& e-mail address: Mark.Taylor@bristol.gov.uk****Purpose of the report:**

To outline proposals for the public consultation arrangements for the 2014/15 – 2016/17 draft budget and seek Cabinet approval in line with the council's constitution.

**RECOMMENDATION for the Mayor's approval:**

That the consultation proposals are approved

**Background**

The council is currently developing plans to prepare for a £90m funding gap over the next three years. The Mayor and Cabinet are working closely with officers to examine all of the council's income and expenditure and agree a set of budget proposals that will be published for consultation by the Mayor on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2013.

The purpose of the consultation is to allow the Mayor to listen and respond to feedback by way of a fully inclusive and meaningful consultation with members of the public, businesses, voluntary and community groups and councillors.

The following proposals exceed the council's statutory requirement to consult with the business sector on its budget proposals. A six week public consultation will meet the council's commitment to engage with citizens and seek their views to inform its decision making.

**Timeline**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>
18 <sup>th</sup> November 2013	Mayor publishes budget proposals. Consultation is open for six weeks
18 <sup>th</sup> November to 30 <sup>th</sup> December 2013	Scrutiny meetings
30 <sup>th</sup> December 2013	Consultation closes
16 <sup>th</sup> January 2014	Cabinet – recommendation to council for budget approval taking into account consultation results
18 <sup>th</sup> February 2014	Final budget at Full Council

## Consultation proposal

The following activities comply with the council's Code of Good Practice on Consultation and have been developed to ensure the consultation is accessible, cost effective and encourages as many people as possible to take part.

1. Public meetings
  - Question Time event with the Mayor to discuss budget proposals
  - Raise awareness of the consultation at Neighbourhood Partnership and Neighbourhood Forum meetings via information packs and invitations to take part
2. Online consultation survey
  - Citizens will have the opportunity to read detailed information about the budget proposals, along with an Equalities Impact Assessment for each proposal. There will be supporting information to explain how the council's budget is constructed and how the £90m budget gap is calculated. All the information will be in plain English, supported with graphical information and will be made available in alternative accessible formats or other languages on request
  - An easy-to-use online survey will offer citizens the opportunity to give feedback on any of the proposals using a scoring system. If they do not support the proposals, they can propose alternative savings from other areas of the council's discretionary spend, or make a suggestion of their own.
3. Printed survey
  - Printed versions of the budget information packs and survey (as featured on the website) will be made available at local libraries, customer service points and community buildings. Copies will also be posted to individuals on request.
4. Mayor's public engagement activities
  - Visits to different parts of the city to talk to people about the budget, listen to their views and encourage them to take part in the consultation
  - Radio phone-ins
  - Use of social media channels
5. Business and partner engagement
  - Statutory consultation with businesses via presentations and discussions at scheduled meetings
  - Discussions with partners and suppliers, including the voluntary and community sector
6. Equalities groups
  - An event co-designed with Voscur to explore the impact of the proposals on equalities groups

In addition, there will be a number of publicity activities to raise awareness of the consultation:

- Posters and postcards promoting how to get involved in the consultation - QR-coded (quick response codes) so smartphone and tablet users can directly access the survey
- Online and social media promotions including dedicated Twitter hash-tag of #bristolbudget
- Promotions via e-newsletter bulletins and direct emails
- Information packs for councillors, community groups and colleagues – to encourage people to take part in the consultation
- Articles in community newsletters
- Regular information for media, councillors and staff

### **Consultation results**

After the consultation closes on 30<sup>th</sup> December, the results will be collated and analysed ready for consideration at Cabinet on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2014 (when a final set of proposals must be agreed and recommended to Full Council). The results will also be published on the council's website.

### **Consultation and scrutiny input:**

**a. Internal consultation:**

SLT  
Consultation team  
Equalities team  
Neighbourhoods team

**b. External consultation:**

Not applicable

### **Other options considered:**

The Council has a statutory duty to consult with the business sector only, however the council's ambition is to be as open and inclusive as possible and the consultation is open for a period of six weeks to allow sufficient time for people to respond.

Alternative time periods for the consultation were considered. Six weeks provides the best fit with constitutional deadlines whilst still offering ample time for people to respond. This is based on previous years' experience where 90% of the total responses are received within the first three weeks.

A 'Budget Simulator' online tool was considered but ruled out as it would provide a different style of consultation which would look at people's priorities rather than specific proposals. This would be difficult to incorporate in to consultation analysis, came with a cost of approximately £4,500 and wasn't suitable for use on mobile devices. It was considered that this was not necessary at this time, and it would be better to focus efforts on doing one online consultation thoroughly rather than potentially confusing respondents with two versions.

## Risk management / assessment:

<b>FIGURE 1</b>							
<b>The risks associated with the implementation of the <i>Consultation arrangements for 2014/15 - 2016/17 budget decision</i> :</b>							
No.	RISK  Threat to achievement of the key objectives of the report	INHERENT RISK		RISK CONTROL MEASURES  Mitigation (ie controls) and Evaluation (ie effectiveness of	CURRENT RISK		RISK OWNER
		(Before controls)			(After controls)		
		Impact	Probability		Impact	Probability	
1	Failing to gain a representative response to the consultation	High	Medium	Targeting of hard-to-reach groups and community representatives.  Targeted work with niche media and other communication channels.	High	Low	Mark Taylor
2	Missing launch deadline for consultation	High	Medium	Included as part of programmed communications and consultation work which is properly resourced.	High	Low	Mark Taylor
3	Failing to meet legal consultation criteria	High	Medium	Consultation designed by experienced and qualified consultation professionals; checked by Legal.	High	Low	Mark Taylor

<b>FIGURE 2</b>							
<b>The risks associated with <u>not</u> implementing the <i>Consultation arrangements for 2014/15 - 2016/17 budget decision</i>:</b>							
No.	RISK  Threat to achievement of the key objectives of the report	INHERENT RISK		RISK CONTROL MEASURES  Mitigation (ie controls) and Evaluation (ie effectiveness of mitigation).	CURRENT RISK		RISK OWNER
		(Before controls)			(After controls)		
		Impact	Probability		Impact	Probability	
1	There would be a significantly shorter consultation or potentially no consultation, breaching the council's statutory duties and preventing it from running a legal budget process.	High	Medium	Appropriate time built in to design and deliver the consultation by 18 <sup>th</sup> November. Internal consultation on the consultation plan ensures it contains all legally required components.	High	Low	Mark Taylor

### Public sector equality duties:

It is a key aim of this consultation proposal to reach a representative group of citizens

- All proposals will have at least an equalities relevance check which determines whether a full Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) is required. At the point of consultation, proposals will have draft EqIA. The results of the consultation will be fed back into the EqIA process, informing final decision making.
- Any meetings organised to discuss the budget will adhere to the guidance for organising accessible meetings and producing accessible documents and publications
- The consultation report will include a full breakdown of the demographic profile of the respondents

### Eco impact assessment

Not applicable

**Resource and legal implications:**

**Finance**

**a. Financial (revenue) implications:**

The direct revenue costs are not expected to exceed £3,000. These together with staff costs will be contained within existing budgetary provision

**Advice given by** Robert Woollatt, Interim Head of Corporate Finance

**Date** 14<sup>th</sup> October 2014

**b. Financial (capital) implications:**

None

**Advice given by** Robert Woollatt, Interim Head of Corporate Finance

**Date** 14<sup>th</sup> October 2014

**Comments from the Corporate Capital Programme Board:**

Not applicable

**c. Legal implications:**

The Policy and Budget Framework Procedure Rules (PBR) in part 4 of the Council's constitution must be considered when formulating the Council's budget.

The consultation and timetable proposed meet the requirements contained within PBR2.

**Advice given by** Shahzia Daya, Service Manager: Legal

**Date** 18th October 2013.

**d. Land / property implications:**

Not applicable

**e. Human resources implications:**

Plans are in place to consult meaningfully with staff on changes as a result of the budget proposals which may impact upon them.

**Appendices:**

None

**Access to information (background papers):**

None

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