

**BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL
CABINET
3 NOVEMBER 2015**

REPORT TITLE:

For information - Arrangements for 2016/17 budget consultation

Ward(s) affected by this report: Citywide

Strategic Director: Max Wide – Strategic Director Business Change

Report author: Peter Gillett – Service Director Finance

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Purpose of the report:

To outline proposals for public consultation arrangements in relation to the 2016/17 draft budget.

RECOMMENDATION for the Mayor's approval:

Cabinet are asked to note the consultation arrangements as set out at paragraphs 4-10

BACKGROUND

1. The Council approved a comprehensive three-year financial framework/medium term financial strategy in February 2014 covering the period 2014/15 to 2016/17. This included detailed proposals to ensure a balanced budget requirement across all three financial years. This was updated and approved in February 2015.
2. Extensive consultation was undertaken on the financial plans when the three year budget was originally established. 2016/17 will be the third year of that approved framework, and other than the level of council tax, no significant changes are proposed.
3. A detailed review and update of the council's medium term financial strategy will be carried out in summer 2016, when full details of the Comprehensive spending review are known. This will be subject to a comprehensive consultation process.

2016/17 CONSULTATION ARRANGEMENTS

4. The proposals contained in the original approved 3-year budget framework were consulted on widely with the people of Bristol reaching significantly more people than any previous budget consultation. It is estimated that the promotional activity to raise awareness of the budget consultation reached an audience of over 50,000 people that in turn prompted approximately 10,000 views of web information and over 1,300 people to turn out in person to a public meeting. This led to a record response rate to the consultation (over 12 times the response in 2012) with nearly 3,900 people 'having a say' via paper and online surveys.
5. The approved financial framework was updated with some minor changes in February 2015, following a further period of 'light touch' consultation.
6. Consistent with the position adopted last year, there are no significant additional decisions anticipated at this stage as part of the budget consultation for 2016/17- other than the level of council tax. Accordingly a lighter touch consultation will again be undertaken on any proposed changes in respect of 2016/17 budget, the third and final year of the approved three year plan. A comprehensive consultation will take place when the Medium Term Financial Strategy is fully updated in the Summer of 2016.

TIMELINE

7. The Mayor will begin his budget consultation for 2016/17 on 23rd November for a period of 6 weeks, consisting of:
 - (i) Public website consultation (hard copies will also be available)
 - (ii) Business and partner engagement (meeting to be arranged to take place on 23rd November)
 - Statutory consultation with businesses via presentations and discussions at scheduled meetings
 - Discussions with voluntary and community sector partners
 - (iii) Frequently asked questions and updates will be provided through the consultation
8. After the consultation closes, the results will be collated and analysed ready for consideration by Cabinet in January before a proposed budget is submitted to Full Council in February and published on the council website.
9. The timetable will be as follows;

Date	Activity
23 November 2015	Consultation on Mayor's budget proposals commences. Consultation is open for 6 weeks and ends 6 th Jan excluding statutory holidays
15 December 2015	Full Council approval of Council Tax Band D equivalent properties for 2016/17 (Taxbase)
October 2015 - January 2016	Scrutiny meetings, including business change scrutiny

	on 4 th January 2016 and, if required, again before decision on 12 th January when Cabinet submits budget to full Council
12 January 2016	Cabinet key decision– recommendation to Council for budget approval taking into account initial consultation feedback (further scrutiny meeting to take place)
16 February 2016	Final budget Full Council

Consultation and scrutiny input:

a. Internal consultation:

- SLT
- Consultation team
- The Business Change and Resources Scrutiny Commission have considered the assumptions underpinning the budget. Further sessions are planned to review the budget following announcement of the Mayor's updated proposals.

b. External consultation:

N/A

Other options considered:

Consultation is a statutory requirement for businesses only.

A wider public consultation was considered. However, extensive consultation was undertaken on the financial plans, leading up to the approval of the current three year 3-year budget and MTFS, which was also updated with minor changes in 2015.

2016/17 is the third and final year of that approved framework and other than the level of council tax, no significant changes are proposed.

Risk management / assessment:

Public sector equality duties:

N/A as this is an information report. Any changes as a result of the budget proposals will be considered.

Eco impact assessment

N/A

Resource and legal implications:

Finance

a. Financial (revenue) implications:

Guidance:

The revenue costs of the consultation will be contained within existing budgetary provision.

Advice given by Kevin Buckerfield, Interim Service Manager Corporate Finance

Date 22 October 2015

b. Financial (capital) implications:

Guidance:

None

Advice given by Kevin Buckerfield, Interim Service Manager Corporate Finance

Date 22 October 2015

Comments from the Corporate Capital Programme Board:

N/A

c. Legal implications:

The report sets out the proposals for the Mayor's budget consultation for 2016/17. The proposals meet the public law duty to undertake proper public consultation particularly in relation to the requirement to set council tax, and the specific legal requirement to consult with business rate payers on its annual budget proposals. The proposals also comply with the Council's Budget and Policy framework requirements for consultation.

Shahzia Daya, Interim Service Director: Legal and Democratic Services

d. Land / property implications:

N/A

e. Human resources implications:

N/A