

“SERVING HAMPSHIRE – BALANCING THE BUDGET” - RESPONSE TO HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S CONSULTATION

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To acknowledge that the County Council is undertaking a significant public consultation to guide it through a process that will likely result in changes to the existing provision of local government services.
- 1.2 To help with a wider awareness of and increased participation in Hampshire County Council's budget consultation process.
- 1.3 To confirm the Council's response to the County Council's budget consultation.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The County Council is undertaking a public consultation on its budget – “*Serving Hampshire – Balancing the Budget*”. The closure date for responses is 21 August 2017.
- 2.2 The County Council anticipates it will face a budget shortfall of £140 million by April 2019, on top of the £340 million savings already delivered over the last nine years. This is due to ongoing national austerity measures; increases in demand for some services; reflecting demographic changes and inflationary pressures.
- 2.3 Through this public consultation, the County Council is seeking residents' and stakeholders' views on a range of options for balancing its budget. These include:
 - reducing and changing services;
 - introducing and increasing charges for some services;
 - lobbying central Government for legislative change;
 - generating additional income;
 - using the County Council's reserves;
 - increasing Council Tax; and
 - changing local government arrangements in Hampshire.
- 2.4 The County Council's consultation sets out all possible options for making savings, regardless of its policy position. At this stage, the County Council is setting out high-level, strategic options, and is not proposing specific changes to services. Any proposals will be informed by feedback from this consultation and subject to further, more detailed, public engagement. Therefore, only examples of potential service changes have been provided.

- 2.5 A detailed Information Pack, providing important background information about the consultation, is available on the County Council's website.:

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/aboutthecouncil/haveyoursay/consultations/balancingthebudget>

Residents and stakeholders are invited to respond to the consultation online.

- 2.6 Alternatively, paper copies of the Information Pack and Response Form can be requested by emailing insight@hants.gov.uk and will be available from Hampshire libraries.

3.0 RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION

- 3.1 The Council acknowledges the difficult financial position faced by the County Council and others in local government at this time.
- 3.2 It is noted that this stage of the County Council's budget consultation is very high level. It is not therefore possible to comment on the likely impact on specific areas of our community as they are not known. However, when the County Council is proposing to make specific changes to services it is requested that the views and knowledge of local people, including the district council, are sought prior to any formal decisions being taken.
- 3.3 From an operational perspective the Council is keen to explore the opportunities to work in partnership with the County Council in order to explore where tangible benefits to both local authorities can be delivered, including in areas that may generate new sources of income.

4.0 CRIME AND DISORDER, ENVIRONMENTAL, EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS.

- 4.1 None arising directly from this report. In the longer term the County Council's decisions may have implications for this District.

5.0 PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S COMMENTS

- 5.1 We accept the difficulties facing local government finances and would encourage local residents to respond to this high level consultation.

6.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 That the Cabinet approves the response to be made to Hampshire County Council's high level budget consultation – "*Serving Hampshire – Balancing the Budget*", as set out in Section 3 of this report.

For further information contact:

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Background Papers:

Published document