



COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL

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| Council name | COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL |
| Name and date of Committee | CABINET - 4 JANUARY 2021 |
| Report Number | AGENDA ITEM 10 |
| Subject | BUDGET CONSULTATION FEEDBACK |
| Wards affected | ALL |
| Accountable member | Cllr Mike Every / Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance Email: Mike.Every@cotswold.gov.uk |
| Accountable officer | Jenny Poole, Chief Finance Officer Tel: 01285 623313 Email: Jenny.Poole@cotswold.gov.uk |
| Summary/Purpose | This report provides feedback to Cabinet from the recent consultation on the Administration's budget proposals. |
| Annexes | Annex A – Responses to the online survey Annex B – Email and letter responses to the budget consultation |
| Recommendation/s | <i>That Cabinet considers the feedback from the consultation.</i> |
| Corporate priorities | The budget set out the financial envelope for the Cotswold District Council Corporate Plan, which details how the Council will deliver against all of its adopted aims, priorities and principles. |
| Key Decision | No |
| Exempt | No |
| Consultees/ Consultation | A webinar for Town and Parish Councillors took place in November. An online survey was available to all residents and businesses in the District and a hard copy of the survey was available on request for completion and distributed to 18,000 homes across the District. |

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. Cabinet considered a refresh of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and draft budget proposals for 2021/22, as a basis for consultation with the community, on 7 September 2020. This report sets out feedback from the consultation for Cabinet to consider.
- 1.2. In November 2020, the Government announced the outcome of the Spending Review 2020. The Spending Review covers the 2021/22 financial year only. The Government is planning to announce a longer-term Spending Review during 2021. The Spending Review sets out the spending limits for Government departments and enables the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to determine the funding for individual local authorities. The Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, was announced on 17 December 2020. Consultation on the Settlement runs until 16 January 2021, the Final Local Government Finance Settlement is expected to be announced at the end of January 2021 or early in February 2021.
- 1.3. In January 2021, the Chief Finance Officer will update the MTFS and 2021/22 budget with the outcome of the Local Government Finance Settlement, along with any further adjustments identified since Cabinet considered the draft budget in September.
- 1.4. Cabinet will consider the MTFS and 2021/22 budget on 8 February 2021. Cabinet will recommend the MTFS, 2021/22 budget and the associated Capital, Investment and Treasury Management Strategies to the Council for debate and agreement on 24 February 2021.

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1. Consultation on the draft budget proposals ran from 4 November to 11 December 2020. The Council promoted its consultation on its website and by using signage in car parks across the District, inviting Town and Parish Councils to attend a webinar, delivering a dedicated leaflet to 18,000 homes across the District and through "CDC Live".
- 2.2. As the leaflet drop took place later in the consultation period than planned, the online survey period was extended by three days to 11 December 2020 to ensure that as many residents as possible had the opportunity to have their views considered.
- 2.3. The budget survey questions were included in the leaflet. As the leaflet drop took place late in the consultation period, some residents may complete the hard copy and return it to the Council after the extended deadline of 11 December 2020. Should this be the case, Cabinet will receive an update at its meeting on 4 January 2021.
- 2.4. The Council has received 345 responses to the consultation, an increase of 57 responses from the consultation on the 2020/21 budget. Feedback from the online survey is included at **Annex A**. In addition to the online survey, the Council has also received other correspondence, included at **Annex B**.

2.5. The main findings from the consultation are set out below.

Q1 - Having read our spending priorities, to what extent do you agree with them?

2.6. The response was positive to this question. 46% agreed or strongly agreed with the Council's spending priorities. This compares to 37% who disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Q2 - The Council charges for many of the services it provides, including car parking, planning advice and garden waste collection. We will charge for these services in line with private companies, to ensure they are not subsidised by other taxpayers. The Council may, however, decide to subsidise some fees and charges. Reasons for this will be clearly set out and decided by Councillors. Do you agree with this approach?

2.7. The response was also positive to this question. 55% agreed or strongly agreed to the proposed approach to setting fees and charges. This compares to 30% who disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Q3 To support our priorities, we plan to increase Council Tax by 10p a week (£5 a year) for a Band D property. Do you agree with this?

2.8. The response was similarly positive to this question. 52% agreed or strongly agreed to the proposed increase. This compares to 36% who disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Q4 We continue to play an important role in the District's recovery from Covid-19. Rank from 5 (highest) to 1 (lowest) your priority for these efforts:

2.9. The survey respondents ranked their priority for the Council's response to Covid-19 as follows (highest priority to lowest priority):

5. Working with community organisations to support vulnerable people
4. Supporting businesses to stay open
3. Supporting people in financial hardship
2. Making sure town centres and businesses are safe to visit
1. Providing support to keep our leisure centres and museum open

Q5 - The Council holds funds for investing in projects which support its priorities. We plan to make one-off investments in 2021/22 on those listed below. Please rank these from 5 (highest) to 1 (lowest) in order of importance to you.

2.10. The survey respondents ranked investment in priority services as follows (highest to lowest in order of importance):

5. Providing help for individuals with complex needs who are facing homelessness to access secure accommodation and support for their needs.
4. Developing and planning for better and greener ways to travel around the District.
3. A refresh of the local plan to ensure all new development in the District helps us tackle climate change.

2. Reviewing open spaces on new developments - to support residents dealing with developers about the maintenance of public open space.
1. Investments that will provide additional income to the Council to fund spending on our priorities

Q6 - We have developed a Recovery Investment Strategy which will see the Council: charging for services in line with private companies (see Q2); investing in developing the local economy (including help for local businesses to recover from Covid-19) and in green technologies; delivering housing for local people at rents they can afford; and working with partner councils and contractors to make our services more efficient. Do you agree with the principles of the Recovery Investment Strategy?

- 2.11. The response was positive to this question. 57% agreed or strongly agreed with the Recovery Investment Strategy approach. This compares to 23% who disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Q7 - Are there any comments you would like to make on our priorities or any other aspect of the Council's spending and service delivery?

- 2.12. There were 196 free format responses to the online survey. These responses are detailed in Annex A.
- 2.13. A response from Weston-sub-Edge Parish Council and other narrative responses are included at **Annex B**.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. There are no financial implications arising from this report. Any changes to the 2021/22 budget arising from consideration of the consultation feedback will be included in the report to Cabinet on 8 February 2021.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1. The MTFs and Budget 2021/22 report to be considered by Cabinet in February 2021 will contain a risk assessment.

6. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 6.1. This report provides the Cabinet with the opportunity to consider amendments to the budget proposals for 2021/22 or longer term in the Medium Term Financial Strategy. Any changes to the 2021/22 budget arising from consideration of the consultation feedback will be included in the report to Cabinet on 8 February 2021.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1. None
(END)