



SCRUTINY COMMISSION – 30TH OCTOBER 2019

CONSULTATION ON THE COUNTY COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE RESOURCES

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to update Scrutiny Commission members on the outcome of the recent consultation exercise, on the County Council's priorities, and outline how these will be used to inform decisions taken as part of the refresh of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The views of the Commission are sought regarding how the consultation results can be used to shape and inform the process of updating the MTFS.
2. The full report of the consultation findings will be taken to Cabinet on 22nd November 2019.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

3. The MTFS for 2019/20 to 2022/23 was approved by the County Council in February 2019. The MTFS is currently being reviewed and updated in light of latest information including key themes and issues identified through the consultation exercise.

Background

4. The financial position faced by the County Council remains both serious and extremely challenging. This is particularly so for a low funded authority such as Leicestershire as room for further savings is limited given that tough decisions have already been taken, with £200m having been saved since 2010.
5. Increased demand for services, especially around social care and special educational needs and disabilities, coupled with general inflationary pressures including the impact of continued increases to the National Living Wage means that spending pressures will continue to grow at a rate in excess of resources available. As such further savings will be required. The existing MTFS identified a need for a further £75m of savings to be identified by the end of the fourth year. The MTFS is currently being updated in light of recent and emerging information. However, this is unlikely to significantly alter this long-term savings target.
6. The County Council performs an annual consultation on the draft budget. However, it is important to periodically assess the views of the public, staff and

stakeholders that can be used to inform the County Council's future financial priorities. The nearly 13-week consultation exercise included:

- a questionnaire – online and sent to households in a special edition of the residents' newsletter Leicestershire Matters
 - an online, interactive tool enabling people to explore the council's budget in more detail
 - residents focus groups/workshops
 - information events with stakeholder organisations
 - information events with council staff and managers
 - public events in each district
7. The County Council last undertook a budget consultation on this scale in 2013. It is important that local authorities engage with their local communities and key stakeholders. They have a right to be consulted about the way public money is spent to influence the collective decisions and prioritisation that is being made on their behalf.
8. A key finding from the consultation is that respondents feel support for vulnerable people should be protected. Residential and community support for older people and mental health – plus special educational needs and disabilities, child protection and children in care – are in the top 10 services people don't want to see reduced.
9. Over 4,300 people took part in survey which also shows:
- 82 per cent of people support a Council Tax rise in line with inflation (2 per cent) or above
 - 81 per cent agree with reorganising local government to make savings
 - 86 per cent support protecting the environment by using renewable energy and reducing carbon
10. More detail on the approach taken to engagement as part of the consultation, together with the key findings and outputs are summarised in the appendices

Resource Implications

11. The MTFS is the key financial plan for the County Council. This covers not only the allocation of resources but also how the transformation activity, which allows the County Council to respond to the financial challenge, will be funded. Any resource implications that arise from the outcome of the consultation will be considered when the MTFS is updated in the autumn.
12. The consultation will also be used to influence non-financial elements of service delivery. Departments will consider the results of the consultation when performing service planning.

Timetable for Decisions

13. The Cabinet will be asked to approve the draft MTFS for consultation in December 2019. All Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the Scrutiny Commission will consider the MTFS in late January 2020 and the Cabinet will then make a final recommendation to the County Council in February 2020.

Equality and Human Rights Implications

14. Departments will complete Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessments (EHRIA) on the 2020-24 four-year MTFS as detailed proposals are developed. A review of the overall impact of the proposals will also be undertaken as part of the MTFS to ensure any cumulative impacts on protected groups has been identified.

Background Papers

Report to County Council -20 February 2019 – Medium Term Financial Strategy 2019/20 to 2022/23

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/documents/s144416/Report%20of%20the%20Cabinet%20-%20MTFS.pdf>

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/documents/s144417/MTFS%2019-23%20-%20Cab%208-2-19%20v4%20final.pdf>

Appendix

Appendix A – Summary of the Consultation process and results.

Appendix B – Summary of findings from the workshops

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

None.

Officer to Contact

Mr C Tambini, Director of Corporate Resources,
Corporate Resources Department,
☎0116 305 6199 E-mail Chris.Tambini@leics.gov.uk

Mr D Keegan, Assistant Director (Strategic Finance and Property),
Corporate Resources Department,
☎0116 305 7668 E-mail Declan.Keegan@leics.gov.uk

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