

BUDGET ENGAGEMENT

Introduction

This paper sets out how the Council will engage on its future priorities and delivery of services within a reduced budget of over £27m (or over 10% of total budget). Of that £27m, £19m of savings have still to be identified and the vast majority of that must be removed from budgets during 2024/25.

With savings of £58m since 2010/11 and significant elements of our budget that are pre-determined and cannot be reduced, that represents an unprecedented level of savings over a very short timeframe. It's likely that services will have to be reduced and that we may have to target them to meet greatest need. We will have to think very differently about what and how we can provide services that are financially sustainable and we want to engage our community in what Moray Council of the future should be like.

Aim

To build understanding and relationships between the council and the community helping both to understand and take action on the needs or issues that communities experience in a way we can afford.

We want our engagement and consultation to lead to decisions that make the best we can of our resources to:

- deliver efficient and effective value for money services
- better align services to meet essential needs
- better reflect community values and improve outcomes
- have a greater likelihood of effective implementation

Approach

Our engagement with Moray's communities will flow through a number of stages as the issues develop and become clearer. There will be some urgency in some of the measures we need to consider, especially for 2024/25 but there are also some

longer term changes and transformation that we can work together on. We will be clear at each stage and with each topic under consideration whether we are:

- Engaging – where there is scope for the community to influence and be involved so that we can work together on how the issue progresses
- Consulting – where we have proposals and are inviting views on these so that we understand the impact, views and any further options before deciding upon the final solution
- Informing – where we are clear how we plan to act but want to communicate effectively to ensure that people are informed about what we plan to do

Outcomes

This engagement is taking place during a time of increasing needs and declining financial resources. Delivering priorities and services in that context will mean that the Council can do less than it does now, that standards may have to reduce and that we have to focus services on the most vulnerable: targeted to those experiencing greatest inequalities or with the highest needs. It is also likely that charges such as council tax will have to go up by more than in the past. Whilst this is not a welcome position, it is one that the Council wants to hear views on to ensure that community perspective and the experience of service users is built into how these difficult decisions are taken and implemented within the time and budget we have.

Stakeholders

We recognise that this will be a difficult time of change for our workforce, partners and communities and we are committed to communicating effectively with all stakeholders over the period of change. Where our workforce is affected, we will make every effort to ensure that this is handled sensitively and confidentially with those directly affected ahead of any wider communication and we will fully involve trade unions in this process.

Timing of workforce communications is cross referenced in this plan but there is a separate parallel plan to deal with workforce engagement and consultation.

Workforce	Partners	Community	Poss Dates	Issues to Cover	Audience	Purpose and Points to test	Feedback focus	Approach/ Tools
STAGE 1: Awareness & Understanding			Late Aug/Sept					
		Engagement	Late Aug/Sept	Corp plan - transition from old to new - priorities - Vision and values - Future focus as £ shrinks Financial Planning - Awareness - Income appetite - Savings preferences ensure key services specifically included	Public – all Community councils and groups	Awareness & Understanding of financial situation Views on what priorities should transition/ remove from current plans so can narrow focus Create appetite for future involvement Test tolerance for increased charges Test tolerance for service reductions	Council Tax – views on max increase Charges Reduced services waste, roads, leisure	Online tools
		<i>Engagement (Other)</i>		<i>Learning Estate – Forres ASG engagement</i>		<i>Already planned and outcomes available will be used to inform Stage 2</i>		
		<i>Engagement (Other)</i>		<i>Local Development Plan</i>		<i>Already planned and outcomes available will be used to inform Stage 2</i>		
STAGE 2: Involvement and Influence			Timing tbc					

Workforce	Partners	Community	Poss Dates	Issues to Cover	Audience	Purpose and Points to test	Feedback focus	Approach/ Tools
			Late Oct/ Nov/Dec?					
		Engagement	Late Oct/ Nov/Dec	Transformation: Place based?				
		Engt or cons?	Late Oct/ Nov?Dec	Future Planning Big Conversation on Big Change services: topics to be confirmed as budget work progresses but examples could be i. Learning Estate (all asgs?) ii. Leisure and Culture iii. Waste? Roads?	Public – all Interest groups	Understanding and views of need to focus resources and shrink commitments for specific services Contribution to service design for the future Understanding and views/contributions to options for lower cost future services Feedback on priorities for these services – what want to see within future budget parameters Scope for community transfers/involvement/ delivery Options to increase community self-service, resilience Increased or structured charging	Priorities for future services Strengths to retain Where reductions are tolerable How income can increase Views on significant change	Online information and survey Citizens Panel? Focus groups
		Consultation	Late Oct/ Nov	Consultation on Specific Service proposals: tbc	Service Users and interest groups	Understand impact of proposals, consider mitigations	Response to specific proposals	Online information

Workforce	Partners	Community	Poss Dates	Issues to Cover	Audience	Purpose and Points to test	Feedback focus	Approach/ Tools
				Equalities: on specific proposals		Identify/consider alternatives Soundings and input on delivery method	Information on mitigations and impacts Alternatives for in service savings Points to address in implementation	n and surveys Directed comms to specific groups/users In person service led
		Information		Charges?	Service users	Awareness of changes to charges and when will commence	None	Online Point of Service Information
STAGE 3: Implementation and Developing Future			Maybe Dec 23 or Jan/Feb 24					
		Engagement		Transformation and change development – how to proceed, develop specifics	Public – all Service users and interest groups			
		Consultation		Consultation (if ready/required) on developments/propos	Service users and interest groups	You said, we decided Any further points or feedback on impacts,	Further points in implementation,	Online informatio

Workforce	Partners	Community	Poss Dates	Issues to Cover	Audience	Purpose and Points to test	Feedback focus	Approach/ Tools
				als from Big Conversation Big Changes service redesign engagement Decisions/significant changes/development /expansion of earlier proposals		adjustments, mitigations, etc Understand impact of proposals, consider mitigations Identify/consider alternatives Soundings and input on delivery method	mitigations, alternatives, etc Response to specific proposals Information on mitigations and impacts Alternatives for in service savings Points to address in implementation	n and surveys Directed comms to specific groups/us ers In person service led
		Information		Decisions on earlier proposals Implementation plans	Service Users and interest groups	Awareness of changes to services and when will commence Any specifics re implementation	None	Online Service led with users Point of Service info