



Not for Publication by virtue of paragraph [??] of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)

Title: Budget Consultation

Is the information in this report available to the public? Yes

Wards Affected: All Wards in Torbay

To: Overview and Scrutiny On: 14th December 2011

Contact Officer: Joanne Beer

☎ Telephone: 207894

✉ E.mail: Joanne.beer@torbay.gov.uk

1. Key points and Summary

- 1.1 The consultation on the budget has been open since 29th September 2011, allowing members of the public to have their say on their priorities and the proposals which have been put forward to date.
- 1.2 To date approximately 200 residents have given their views through public meetings, caravan events and the online budget simulator.
- 1.3 Preliminary findings from the public meetings show that there is general support for increasing charges to reduce the impact of service cuts.
- 1.4 Views regarding council tax were split, with half supporting the government's incentive of no increase, while half were prepared to see a greater increase in council tax (5%), losing the government's incentive and reducing the impact of service cuts.
- 1.5 While appreciating the need for savings, respondents wanted to see more protection for the budgets for Adult Social Care and Children's Services. However, there was support for the proposals which have been put forward under these areas including:
 - Supporting people to live in their homes and reducing the number of care home placements (73.6% support)
 - Reviewing the delivery of learning disability services through new partnership arrangements (63.1% support)
 - Reviewing criteria for urgent support payments made to parents and improving signposting to enable them to maximise welfare benefit (57.1% support).
- 1.6 Further consultation will need to be carried out with regards to the proposals for Adult Social Care and specifically those client groups who may be affected by the proposals. Business Services are continuing to work with the Care Trust to support this activity.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 Over the past year there has been an increase in the number of cases brought against local authorities with regards to the decisions they are making on their budgets.
- 2.2 Torbay Council needs to ensure it is making 'fair' financial decisions and the lessons learnt from recent legal challenge is an integral part of our planning, both in terms of assessing the impact of the proposals and consultation.
- 2.3 The proposals which have been forward to date have been subject to challenge from Business Services and where further information is required about some proposals this has been requested. Those proposals which have been categorised as 'major decisions' are required to be subject to an impact assessment which determines the potential impact on service users and the level of consultation required.
- 2.4 To date consultation activity has included public meetings in each town, an online budget simulator, caravan events and a libraries specific consultation which has been running alongside the general consultation.
- 2.5 Approximately 200 have had their say on the budget consultation, this includes 130 at public meetings (including a specific meeting with Torbay Voice) and approximately 70 responses so far to the online budget simulator. Each public meeting was attended by representatives of SPOT (Speaking Out Torbay).
- 2.6 Preliminary findings, as outlined above, demonstrate that respondents understand the need to make savings. While respondents are prepared to see savings across each service area, Children's Services and Adults Social Care should take a smaller proportion of savings.
- 2.7 Preliminary feedback from the online budget simulator shows that respondents wanted to see savings made each service area, with the TDA and Support Services taking the bigger proportion of savings with Adults Social Care and Children's Services taking a smaller proportion of the savings required.
- 2.8 A questionnaire has been sent to the ViewPoint panel regarding the overall proposals. A general questionnaire is also available for all residents to complete.
- 2.9 A libraries specific consultation has been carried out alongside the general consultation. Information on how people use their local library as well as their views on how we can deliver the savings for this service have been collected. This consultation is on-going and will close on 23rd December. This consultation to date has received a response in excess of 1,500.
- 2.10 Consultation is on-going and will continue throughout December following the publication of the Mayor's Provisional Spending Targets 2012/13.
- 2.11 Throughout the consultation there have been requests for further information to be published regarding the details of some of the proposals, particularly those relating to Adult Social Care. Business Services are working with the Care Trust to collate

further information and ensure that the services users who may be affected by the proposals are consulted and involved in any changes to service delivery

Mark Bennett
Executive Head Business Services

Appendices

N/A

Documents available in members' rooms

N/A

Background Papers:

N/A