

REPORT TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 14 NOVEMBER 2005

REPORT ON: REVENUE BUDGET 2006/07 CONSULTATION WITH COUNCIL TAXPAYERS

REPORT BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (FINANCE)

REPORT NO: 696-2005

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report details proposals on the approach to take on consulting the public on the 2006/2007 Revenue Budget and Council Tax level.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- 2.1 the Budget consultation process as detailed in the report is carried out during late November/early December 2005.
- 2.2 an advertisement is placed in the local press advising members of the public that they can access the questions and make their comments online or at local libraries, community centres and other Council offices in the city.
- 2.3 a supply of leaflets be made available at Councillors surgeries so that constituents may be reminded that the exercise is taking place. Posters should also be prominently displayed at the Council's main customer contact points.
- 2.4 the Council continues to further develop its Budget Consultation exercise for the 2007/08 Revenue Budget.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Any costs associated with this report are minimal and can be contained within the 2005/06 Revenue Budget.

4 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

This report has an impact on the following Agenda 21 theme -

"All sections of the community are empowered to participate in decision-making."

5 EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IMPLICATIONS

None

6 BACKGROUND

- 6.1 The Council agreed at the Policy and Resources meeting of 18 October 2004 that the budget process for 2005/06 would be opened up to comments from members of the general public who would be able to make comments on the budget and the provisional Council Tax level on-line, using the Internet either at home or at local libraries and learning centres and main customer contact points. Provision was also made for members of the public to make written comments on forms held on these premises.

- 6.2 To this end a number of pages were set up on the Council's website giving details of the Provisional Revenue Budget and the Council Tax Calculation for 2005/06 together with an easy to use form on which members of the public could type in their views and send these automatically to the Council. The commencement of the consultation process was advertised in the press and posters were put up in main customer contact points to draw people's attention to this new initiative.
- 6.3 The 2005/06 Revenue Budget consultation process ran from 29 October 2004 to 10 December 2004 ie 6 weeks. It is proposed that for 2006/07 the consultation exercise should be for a shorter period of 3 weeks during late November/early December 2005.
- 6.4 The proposed 2006/07 Budget consultation which may be completed manually is noted in Appendix 1. The taxpayer is asked to answer 4 simple questions which have been intentionally designed not to incorporate any detailed figures. Copies of the Revenue Budget, the Council Plan and the Performance Report will be made available at main customer contact points for reference purposes.
- 6.5 The proposed 2006/07 Budget consultation which may be completed electronically will broadly follow that which was employed last year and will include the same questions noted in Appendix 1. Hyperlinks will be built in to the Internet pages to enable the user to access the Revenue Budget, the Council Plan and the Performance Report which are already on the website.
- 6.6 This report recommends the continuation and further development of the Budget consultation process for the 2007/08 Revenue Budget.

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 Engagement with stakeholders continues to be a priority issue for the government and it is therefore important that the Council consults the public prior to setting the 2006/07 Revenue Budget and Council Tax level.

8 CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Assistant Chief Executive (Community Planning) and the Director of Leisure & Communities have been consulted on this report.

9 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Policy and Resources Committee Report 714-2005 - Revenue Budget 2005/06 - Consultation with Council Taxpayers.

DAVID K DORWARD
DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (FINANCE)

07 NOVEMBER 2005

Revenue Budget Consultation

Introduction by Fraser Macpherson, Finance Convener

Dundee City Council is committed to extending communication with council tax payers and obtaining comments prior to preparing detailed expenditure plans for 2006/07.

Over the 5 years to 2005/06 Dundee's Council Tax has gone up by 11.7 % compared to the Scottish average increase of 23.5%, representing one of the lowest increases in Scotland.

We have already made a commitment in our Council Plan for 2003-2007 to make every effort to limit annual council tax increases to a maximum of 5% over the period of the Plan. This will not be an easy task as the Council is facing many expenditure pressures but we intend to take all reasonable steps to achieve this commitment.

Over the next few months we will be scrutinising departmental budgets in order to deliver the services required by our constituents, taking account of expenditure pressures and the Council Plan objective of restricting council tax increases. The Scottish Executive is due to announce our grant figures in December 2005 and the Council will set its Revenue Budget and Council Tax for 2006/07 on 9 February 2006.

This is your opportunity to comment on the process and make the Council aware of your views.

If you wish you can record your views electronically by visiting our website at www.dundee.gov.uk. If you have any queries please contact the Finance Department on 433359.

Question 1

When making decisions about its budget for next year, do you think the Council should:

- Maintain services at current levels, even if this means an increase in Council Tax.
- Improve the level of services, even if this means a greater increase in Council Tax.
- Cut services to keep the Council Tax increase to a minimum.

Question 2

In your opinion, are there any services on which you think the Council should spend less?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	If so, which	<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"><tr><td> </td></tr><tr><td> </td></tr><tr><td> </td></tr></table>			
No	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Question 3

If the Council does save money on some of its services, do you think this should be:

Re-directed to other, more important, services

Used to minimise the Council Tax increase

Question 4

The Council is committed to maximising efficiency. We would welcome any suggestions on how we might achieve this.

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Thank you for completing the questionnaire.

It is essential that comments on the Budget Process are provided only by City Council Taxpayers and accordingly you are required to provide your Name and Council Tax Reference Number (as per your Council Tax book or letter). This information is only to ensure that you are a Council Taxpayer and your comments will be treated in the utmost confidence.

Name Tax Reference or Address	
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