

2024/25 Budget Engagement Strategy

North Tyneside Council is committed to being an organisation that works better for residents and to ensure that it listens and cares. This commitment includes giving residents and other key stakeholders an opportunity to be involved in the Authority's Financial Planning and Budget process.

The Authority's overall approach to engagement ensures that the public have opportunities to have their say throughout the year, through a series of different methods, including engaging with the Elected Mayor, Cabinet and ward members and through activities such as the Big Community Conversation.

In all of its engagement activity, the Authority is committed to ensuring that residents with protected characteristics, as set out in the 2010 Equality Act, can participate. In line with this, an Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken on the 2024/25 Budget Engagement Strategy and this is available on request.

In line with the proposed 2024-2028 Financial Planning and Budget Process, engagement on Cabinet's initial budget proposals will take place from November 2023 to January 2024. The engagement approach is set out below.

Target Audiences

The aim of the Budget Engagement Strategy is to reach different sectors of the population through an approach that encompasses engagement with residents as a whole and customers/users of services as well as particular groups of people, including those with protected characteristics. The approach also ensures reach with particular interest groups such as children and young people and council housing tenants.

The Engagement Strategy also ensures targeted activity with the following specific external and internal stakeholder groups:

External stakeholder groups

- North Tyneside Strategic Partnership
- Businesses
- Schools and education sector
- Voluntary and community sector (including faith groups)
- Ethnic Diversity Community Task Force
- Our North Tyneside Voice members

Internal stakeholder groups:

- Elected Members
- Staff
- Strategic Partners (Equans and Capita)
- Trade Unions

Approach

The Authority's approach aims for maximum reach by offering a range of different opportunities for people to have their say. In line with the Authority's corporate engagement strategy, the approach will be consistent with the following principles:

- Inclusive - making sure that everyone can engage in the process;
- Clear - being clear on the aims of the engagement activity at the outset and the extent to which residents and others can be involved;
- Integrated - ensuring that engagement activities are joined up with the relevant decision-making processes;
- Tailored - aiming to better understand our audience and using different methods appropriately to enable and encourage people to be involved;

- Feedback - giving feedback through agreed channels when engagement activity is completed; and
- Timely - aiming to give enough notice to make opportunities available to all and taking into account those times when it is more appropriate to engage depending on the target audience.

Budget engagement activity for the 2024/25 budget will comprise of:

- promotion of Our North Tyneside Voice in the Winter edition of the council magazine, highlighting upcoming budget engagement as something members of Our North Tyneside Voice will have the opportunity to have their say on.
- in November 2023, publishing information about Cabinet's initial budget proposals providing clear information about the Financial Planning and Budget process. This will be published online via the Council's website and at front line locations including the Community Conversation Corners in the six Community Hubs. Feedback will be able to be provided by residents and others via a questionnaire either on-line or at these front-line locations. This will be supported by communications activity via posters in key Council facilities, the media and social media and other relevant outlets to ensure that people know how they can get involved.

There will also be opportunities for face-to-face engagement with lead officers and Cabinet members. Building on the approach to engagement last year, these face-to-face sessions will comprise:

- two in-depth sessions with members of Our North Tyneside Voice (which any resident can join). These sessions will provide people with the opportunity to gain an understanding of the Authority's Budget and to be able to appraise in detail the initial budget proposals and then provide feedback; and

- engagement sessions for the following internal and external stakeholder groups
 - staff
 - businesses
 - schools
 - children and young people
 - community and voluntary sector
 - Trade Unions,
 - North Tyneside Strategic Partnership
 - Ethnic Diversity Community Task Force
 - groups representing people with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.