

2021/22 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 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 through activities such as the Mayor Listens Events and Community Conversation activities. We also offer a broad range of both on-line and face to face engagement or consultation exercises on different key issues as well as our Resident Surveys.

In all 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 2021/22 Budget Engagement Strategy and this is available on request.

In line with the proposed 2021-2025 Financial Planning and Budget Process timetable as set out in Appendix B, engagement on Cabinet's initial budget proposals will take place from November 2020 to January 2021. 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 carers, older people, children and young people, 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)

Internal stakeholder groups:

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

Approach

Our 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
- 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 2021/22 budget will comprise

- providing clear information about the Financial Planning and Budget process in the Autumn edition of the Our North Tyneside magazine. This will include information about this engagement strategy and how people can have their say throughout the process including how to join the Residents Panel to do so;
- in November 2020, publishing information about Cabinet's initial budget proposals. This will be published online via the Council's website and at front line locations including the Community Conversation corners in the four Customer First centres, where these are available. 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 the media and social media to ensure that people know they can get involved in this way;
- there will also be opportunities for face to face engagement with lead officers and Cabinet members during November/December 2020. This year, considering COVID 19 and in line with the relevant government advice, these sessions will be adapted to take in the social distancing measures. Work has already begun with members of the residents panel to look at how we can

Appendix C

conduct engagement activity differently including through video calls. These will also be publicised via communications activity in the media and social media and at all key front-line outlets including libraries; Customer First Centres; community centres and leisure centres. These face to face sessions will comprise, where possible;

- drop-in events at community venues;
- three in-depth sessions with the Residents Panel (which any resident can join). These sessions will provide people with the opportunity to gain an understanding of the Council'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
 - older people
 - carers
 - groups representing people with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.