

KETTERING TOWN COUNCIL

REPORT FOR DECISION

Item No:- FC22/036

Committee:-	Finance and Governance Committee
Date:-	28 th September 2022
Author:-	Martin Hammond, Clerk
Report Title:-	Budget Consultation 2023-24 Budget
Wards Affected:-	All

1. Purpose of Report

To seek views and secure agreement on the consultation process for the 23/24 budget and on aspects of the budget itself.

2. Recommendations

Members views are sought on:-

- The timetable and consultation process set out below
- A desirable ceiling on any increase in the precept for 23/24 year
- The extent to which the corporate plan should be revised for next year and the need for consultation about such revisions

3. Process, consultation and engagement

3.1. The following timetable was agreed at the last meeting:-

Event	Date	Purpose
Finance and Governance Committee	28 th September 2022	Agree principles to inform budget preparation Provisionally identify new or changed areas of expenditure.
Budget preparation period	15 th September to 12 th October 2022	Period for members to make proposals for items to be included within budget

Council	19 th October 2022	Council to a) consider likely 2022/23 budget out-turn b) consider a draft budget for 23/24 for consultation c) consider any changes to the corporate plan d) agree consultation process for both budget and corporate plan
Finance and Governance Committee	26 th October 2022	Consider any recommendations from Council which have budgetary implications.
Consultation period	27 th October to 6 th December 2022	Consultation period over 6 weeks – nature to be agreed
Town Meeting	16 th November 2022	Consultation meeting to gather views from stakeholders as part of the consultation
Council	14 th December 2023	Consider consultation responses and agreed broad shape of budget; agree revisions to the corporate plan.
Council	18 th January 2023	Agree final budget and precept
NNC deadline	20 th January 2023	Deadline for submitting precept request to NNC

3.2. This report addresses item 1 in the table and describes the proposed consultation process. It also seeks members views about the need to make any significant change to the corporate plan.

3.3. An email was sent out on 15th September inviting members to consider changes to the budget for next year, so that these ideas can be fed into the process starting at October Council.

3.4. Budget preparation principles

3.4.1. Last year, the budget was developed on the basis that the Town Council was growing into its role and focused on new areas of spending, principally

- The market
- Grants
- Public toilets
- Events
- Community infrastructure.
- Allotments

- Raising the Town Council's profile, developing a logo, increasing its use of social media
- 3.4.2. Most of these spending programmes have been developed out during the year, the exception being the provision of public toilets where decisions are awaited from NNC on land transfer and allocating some S106 monies from Hanwood Park.
- 3.4.3. The Council took on a second employee to manage events and improve communications. However, it is increasingly clear that there is significantly more work and opportunity than existing resources can cope with. The internal auditor, in her end of year report in May did also suggest that "in the coming year the staffing committee considers workflows and capacity. If the council is to move forward with the ambitious objectives identified in the corporate plan it is highly likely that the clerk will need further administrative support". A meeting of the Staffing Committee is to be convened to consider proposals to address the shortfall in staffing resource, in time for proposals to be considered at an early stage of the budget process.
- 3.4.4. Early indications are that NNC will not provide Christmas lights in 2023 and that this council will be asked to take on this responsibility. Further detail is required but an initial estimate is that this will add £30,000 to the Town Council's costs.
- 3.4.5. The Council currently charges under £20 a year in precept for the average household. This is in line with the other two new large Town Councils created in 2021 in Northamptonshire but significantly below the average across all parishes, which is in the region of £60 per Band D property. Members views on the ceiling for any increase in precept will be tested at Council in October, but an indication of views at this meeting would be helpful to the budget preparation process.

3.5. Consultation process

- 3.5.1. At the last meeting it was agreed to reproduce the "qualitative" consultation with key stakeholders that had taken place in 2021, and to supplement it with a public consultation event (s) during the consultation period.
- 3.5.2. The qualitative consultation can take the shape of a summary document and consultation questionnaire sent to local organisations and individuals in the voluntary, community and business sectors as well as NNC members and senior managers. It can be sent out once Council has agreed a way forward for the budget in October.
- 3.5.3. For a wider public consultation, people can be alerted to the consultation via social media and the website and through the print media, but also by creating a drop in venue in the town centre. The Newlands Centre has agreed in principle to provide a shop unit for our use on two Fridays during November. It is proposed that we have such a unit on the 18th and 25th November for several hours in the morning and early afternoon (eg 10-2pm) . It would be beneficial if members could participate in these sessions and a rota

giving members an hour or two in store over those two dates could be created, with perhaps three members at any one time, plus officers. (An alternative – using a market stall – was considered but it is unlikely an outdoor event in November would attract many people to stay long enough to engage or given them enough space to chat). It would be necessary to get some materials together for this mini -exhibition format and authority is sought to incur costs for this purpose.

3.6. Corporate Plan revision

- 3.6.1. The corporate plan was adopted in January 2022 and was intended to be a framework and living document. The plan can be found here. [kettering-town-council-corporate-plan-4.pdf \(ketteringtowncouncil.gov.uk\)](https://ketteringtowncouncil.gov.uk/kettering-town-council-corporate-plan-4.pdf) . Whilst it will clearly be necessary to update it to reflect what has and hasn't happened in 2022, and to reflect any brand new aspects of the budget, members may consider that the overall shape of it can be left as it is and that any consultation on it is relatively light touch. Views are sought.

4. Finance, Legal and Resource Implications

- 4.1. The Council's precept is currently £325,000 and the likely annual turnover is £350,000. The precept amount translates as a band D average of £19.56 per household.
- 4.2. For illustrative purposes only a precept of £400,000 would generate a band D average cost of about £23.50 – an increase of under £4 or about 20%, assuming the tax base is about 17000 Band D properties.

5. Policy Implications

The Corporate plan says that the Councils exists :-

- To understand what local people want and aspire to
- To provide services not already delivered by statutory bodies, where there is an unmet need
- To represent its area to other service providers
- To provide leadership to its community
- To provide civic pride and presence

Two of its policy objectives are

- the Council will function as efficiently and effectively as it can, as a steward of the public money with which it is entrusted.
- The Council will set out to explain what it is seeking to do, and why, and will listen to what local people have to say to it about their needs and aspirations.

Background Papers

Reports to Council and Finance and Governance Cttee July 2022
Internal audit report

