

# Working with you to shape Stirling's future

Communications and  
Community Engagement Report

February 2015



# Working with you to Shape Stirling's Future - Priority Based Budgeting

## Communication and Community Engagement Report

### Background

This report provides background to, and an overview of, the communication and community engagement activity undertaken to date in support of the preparation of the Council's 5-year budget and business plan. It includes the principles adopted in undertaking communication and engagement, a record of the form in which that communication and engagement took place and the feedback gained that has influenced the outcomes in completing the 5 year Priority Based Budget Report.

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## 1. Introduction

Stirling Council is committed to delivering high quality services that meet priorities and outcomes that have been agreed with our communities.

As such, engagement with staff, the public and with partners is a critical part of the council's approach to the preparation of its 5-year priority based budget and its business plan. The contributions from the engagement last year were very valuable. They were considered carefully by elected members and they did directly influence the decision making and the final budget. It is our continuing aim to ensure that all stakeholders can be actively involved in the budget process and that all budget options can be identified, discussed and fully considered.

Key messages for the process are:

- Stirling Council invests around £200million every year in the delivery of its services.
- Stirling Council wants to ensure that this expenditure is used in the most effective way to deliver the agreed priority services.
- All local authorities in Scotland require to generate significant savings in real terms over the next five years.
- Stirling Council requires to achieve an estimated £21 million of savings over the five years from 2015/16 to 2019/20.
- To achieve this, the Council is continuing to develop the business planning process called Priority Based Budgeting which aims to help it to shape its Business Plan for the next five years. The overall objective of this process is to ensure that the Council's strategic priorities are achieved within its planned budgets for the next five years
- Options for improvement are identified and categorised as either transformational change, efficiency, or stop/reduce. Stop/reduce savings options will only be carried forward as a last resort where transformational and efficiency options are not capable of closing the budget gap.

- The Council is committed to open and transparent engagement with all its partners and members of the public to ensure that it takes account of their views on what services should be prioritised and how these services will be delivered.
- It is anticipated that this approach will also allow for more collaboration with partners, making the most of our combined resources, skills and expertise.

## **2. Summary of Communication and Engagement Events and Activities**

The Communication and Community Engagement process targeted the following key areas:

- Our Employees - staff have a key role in both shaping and implementing the business plan and the budget
- Our Communities – it is essential that the people who receive our services, can contribute to shaping the nature and level of services delivered
- Our Young People – it is important that young people feel they have a voice and that we listen to that voice
- Our Stakeholders - private and public sector partners, our community planning partners and other stakeholders will support us in delivering services over the next 5 years
- Our Digital Engagement – we will continue to take advantage of electronic means to support our engagement process.

### **Our Employees**

Presentations were given to all Heads of Service and Service Managers at Managers' Forums on 4 June 2014 and 8 October 2014. Copies of the presentations are contained in Appendices A.1 and A.2.

PBB formed an integral part of the agenda for the Leadership Development Programme held on 22 August 2014. This involved all Heads of Service, Service Managers, Team Leaders and Supervisors.

Service briefings to staff were held during June, October and December.

A session with the Communications and Engagement Forum was held on 10 November 2014, attended by 13 members of staff. Notes are contained in Appendix A.3.

Staff drop-in sessions were held in the Municipal Buildings, Teith House, Old Viewforth and Endrick House during December 2014. 18 members of staff attended.

Two Colleague Conversations were held in Old Viewforth on 16 January 2015, attended by 14 members of staff. Notes are contained in Appendix A.4.

A consultation meeting was held with Trade Union representatives on 26 November 2014, involving 4 trade union representatives and 6 other officers.

Notes are contained in Appendix A.5.

A payslip message was distributed to all staff in September 2014 encouraging staff to contribute ideas and highlighting how this could be done.

In addition, PBB has been a standing item on many regular service management and team meetings.

Staff have also had an opportunity to contribute directly to the process through a range of channels which are also open to members of the public. These are noted in the section Our Communities below. The Online Survey noted below has been set up to allow differentiation between contributions from staff and those from members of the public.

## **Our Communities**

The following **information** has been made available for staff, stakeholders, communities and members of the public, and their feedback sought:

Draft Report October 2014, issued on 24 October 2014. This document was published in pdf format on the Council's internal and external websites and was also made available in hard copy form at subsequent meetings and in Council public buildings.

Theme 1 – Education and Children, Option Pack, issued on 24 October 2014.

Theme 2 – Our Environment, Option Pack, issued on 24 October 2014.

Theme 3 – Community Life and Business, Option Pack, issued on 24 October 2014.

Internal Efficiencies Pack, issued on 24 October 2014.

The above four documents were published in pdf format on the Council's website.

All of these documents are still available on the Council website at <http://my.stirling.gov.uk/services/council-and-government/shapingstirling>

In addition to the provision of this information a series of 'Community Conversations', open to all, were arranged for October and November, following the publication of the PBB Draft Report:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
27 Oct	Killin Primary School	10 (+ 1 councillor)
30 Oct	Stirling High School	17 (+ 1 councillor)
4 Nov	McLaren High School	13 (+ 1 councillor)
6 Nov	Dunblane High School	14 (+ 1 councillor)
11 Nov	Wallace High School	34 (+ 5 councillors)
13 Nov	Bannockburn High School	26 (+ 3 councillors)
25 Nov	Balfron High School	62 (+ 3 councillors)

At the request of some attendees two further 'Education Conversations' were arranged to focus on and allow more detailed discussion around the Education options:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
1 Dec	Balfron High School	25
8 Dec	Bannockburn High School	8

The sessions included a continuous power point presentation (contained in Appendix B.1) that provided information on the background to PBB, the financial context, the three themes and the Draft Report, including the key messages as noted in Section 1 above. This was followed by round table discussions based around the three main themes and also the background and financial context for PBB. Attendees were also invited to raise and submit any comments, questions or suggestions at the meeting or through:

- A specific email address - [shapingstirlingsfuture@stirling.gov.uk](mailto:shapingstirlingsfuture@stirling.gov.uk)
- A standard pro forma
- An online survey (survey monkey) - paper copies also available
- A prioritisation sheet of the Council's services

Notes capturing the detail of the conversations are contained in Appendix B.2.

An Engagement Sounding Board was established from volunteer members of the community. This provided valuable feedback on the format of last year's draft report and this influenced improvements to the style and format of this year's report.

A Community Council Conversation was held, involving all Community Councils, on 14 June 2014, which included a presentation and discussion on PBB. In addition, following the publication of the Draft Report, all Community Councils were sent a template to allow them to feedback their views on the options being considered and described in the report. Eight Community Councils returned either the template or a letter (copies of these responses are contained in Appendix B.3). Three Community Councils chose to submit their thoughts through the online survey rather than through the template. These views are included in the report in Appendix E.2.

There were a number of other community engagement opportunities. Officers attended a range of community groups to share with them details of the financial challenge, the contents of the Draft Report and directing them to how they could ask questions offer comments and suggestions. Copies of the report, the pro forma, the survey and the prioritisation sheet (referred to above) were distributed. A list of the groups attended is contained in Appendix B.4.

## **Our Young People**

The Education Service held a Student Forum on 18 November 2014, to engage with a number of our young people, to share with them the challenges and proposals being considered and to seek their views. A note of this forum is contained in Appendix C.1.

Schools were asked to encourage their young people to attend the Community Conversations being held in the high schools. A number of young people did attend and contribute to these conversations.

A Youth Session was held with a group of young people from the Wallace High School Cluster and the Council's Chief Executive and other officers on 15 January

2015. The young people had been on a '*Journey to understanding PBB*' where they had undertaken preparatory work. At our session, they demonstrated the learning they had experienced in terms of how the Council receives its funding, how it delivers its services and how it needs to make decisions based on funding available, statutory requirements and the needs of local communities.

The young people shared their thoughts, comments and ideas on the current PBB options. They also told us about the activities they are involved in with regards to Youth Services as well as other learning and development activities they are engaged with and gave us a flavour of what it is like to be a young person living in Stirling. There was a good discussion between the young people and the council officers. The material that the young people had prepared for the session is contained in Appendix C.2.

## **Our Stakeholders**

The council's key stakeholders were communicated with as follows:

- Briefings from Services to their specific stakeholders at the time of the issue of the PBB Draft Report to ensure that anyone who could be influenced, directly or indirectly, by any of the proposals were made aware of this.
- Further briefings have been ongoing with key stakeholders since the publication of the report.
- A Breakfast Briefing was held on 7 November 2014 to provide key stakeholders with the background to and contents of the PBB Draft Report. The Leader of the Council introduced the Breakfast Briefing and the presentation used at the Community Conversations was also shared (Appendix B.1). Thereafter, most of the session involved round table discussions allowing stakeholders to discuss the report and its key issues with Council officers, elected members and each other. Key points from the discussions can be found in Appendix D.1.

## **Our Digital Engagement**

The Council has tried to make use of electronic means to make engagement by the public as easy for them as possible.

A specific email address ([shapingstirlingsfuture@stirling.gov.uk](mailto:shapingstirlingsfuture@stirling.gov.uk)) has been set up to allow anyone to feed in comments, questions and suggestions at any time. This mailbox is checked daily. Every submission is acknowledged and a response is given to every question received. A summary spreadsheet of all comments, questions and suggestions received is contained in Appendix E.1.

An online survey was developed which provided employees, members of the public, organisations and stakeholders with the opportunity to feedback views on the options being considered and described in the report. The survey monkey went live at the same time as the Draft Report was published in October 2014 and remained open until 9 January 2015. A report on the results of the online survey monkey is contained in Appendix E.2.

Use has also been made of Facebook and twitter to inform the public of meetings taking place.

### 3. Feedback

A key commitment of the PBB process is that it should be open and transparent and will include engagement with all its partners and members of the public. This is to ensure that their views on priorities and service delivery are fully considered as part of the decision making process on the budget.

The Council needs to ensure that it is able and willing to receive feedback and to make use of that feedback in shaping its decision making processes.

Feedback received through all the means described above has been recorded and is included in the Appendices to this report. This report will be circulated to all Councillors as information prior to the Council meeting at which the budget will be set on 19 February 2015.

Feedback received has been categorised as follows:

**Comments** – these have been recorded so that stakeholders' views are clear to elected members and considered as part of their decision making.

**Questions** – responses have been or will be sent out to all people or groups raising questions through a means where contact details are given. Questions raised through any anonymous means have not been responded but have been recorded for consideration.

**Suggestions** – through the engagement process staff, stakeholders and members of the public have raised suggestions for improvements to service delivery and potential budget savings. These have been and will be considered by council officers and treated in one of the following ways:

- The suggestion already exists as a Service Option and is included in the Draft Report. In this case, the suggestion will be marked with a reference to the Service Option that exists.
- The suggestion has been forwarded to the relevant Service and given consideration but has been judged not to be able to generate any budget savings.
- The suggestion has been forwarded to the relevant Service, given consideration and as a result a Service Option has been or will be developed that will feed into the budget setting process for consideration at the appropriate time.

Feedback to the PBB process was as follows:

209 people attended the nine Community Conversations  
70 Submissions were made to the email address by the end of January 2015  
7 Members of staff responded to the Online Survey  
108 Members of the public and organisations responded to the Online Survey  
11 Community Councils provided formal responses  
137 People attended other Community Engagement Opportunities.  
40 Stakeholders attended the Breakfast Briefing

## Key Comments - Summary

Comments, questions and suggestions submitted by staff members, the public and stakeholders was wide ranging as the appendices show. However there were a number of issues that recur throughout the communication and engagement process and these are highlighted below:

- Very significant concern about the review of commissioning of music and art therapy services (EDU020 and EDU021) and the feeling that this review may result in a reduction of service to some of our most vulnerable children.
- Some concern about withdrawal from commissioning for Riding for the Disabled (EDU022) with the question being would the Council reconsider support if RDA were able to recommence their operations in the future.
- Significant concern about the review of the delivery of the Music and Physical Education services in primary schools (EDU054 and EDU055) and the feeling that this review may result in a reduced or poorer service to pupils.
- Support for the review of secondary school timetables (EDU069).
- Concern about the reduction of Additional Needs Support Teachers in Secondary Schools (EDU073), again on the basis that this would affect our most vulnerable children.
- Significant concern about the review of the winter service priority routes (ENV034 and ENV037) and the impact on safety.
- Support for the pilot to explore civic sponsorship opportunities (ENV075).
- A number of people raised concerns about the cost of the continued support of the Big Noise project.
- Mixed response to the proposals in relation to waste and recycling (ENV005, ENV074, ENV076 and ENV077) with strong opposition in some circles and strong support in others.
- General support for the Community Life and Business options with particular support for the reduction in the civic budget (GOV027).
- Strong support for the Internal Efficiency options.
- A significant number of people suggested that savings could be made through energy efficiency in relation to Council buildings including schools, with particular mention of buildings being too hot and lights left on at nights.
- A number of people suggested that street lights could be turned off for between midnight and 5am.
- There was quite strong support for an increase in Council Tax levels in preference to a reduction in services.
- There were a number of suggestions around closing small schools and also joint headships for pairs of schools.
- A number of people suggested that efficiencies could be gained by re-shaping the school week or re-shaping schools holidays.
- Re-negotiation of the schools PPP contract was raised by a number of people.
- A number of people felt that the Council should not subsidise events such as Hogmanay.
- Mixed views were expressed around shared services.
- Some people mentioned that the Council should seek ways of generating income.