

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET – 19 DECEMBER 2007

DRAFT ESTIMATES 2008/09 BUDGET CONSULTATION

Report by the Executive Head of Finance and Asset Management

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval for the proposed budget consultation process on the 2008/09 Revenue Estimates and Rent levels.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The 2008/09 Outline Budget Strategy report to Cabinet on 3 October 2007 provided details of the methodology which will be used in the preparation of the 2008/09 Revenue Estimates. The timetable proposed included a requirement for the Cabinet to consider the budget consultation arrangements.

3 PROPOSED BUDGET CONSULTATION STRATEGY

- 3.1 Since that report was presented it has become clear that the grant settlement is likely to be more complex than in previous years and in order to allow time to ensure that all of the implications can be fully investigated it is proposed to present the draft budget to Cabinet on 24 January 2008 with public consultation commencing immediately after the Cabinet meeting and ending on 7 February 2008.
- 3.2 This would also allow the outcome of the Strategic Review of the Revenue Budget to be considered as part of the budget process and thus allow the Cabinet to have all of the available facts on the budget position and the options available for consideration at the same meeting.
- 3.3 From experience it is clear that certain consultation methods are more successful than others. With this in mind it is proposed that the following consultation opportunities should be put in place.
 - Budget information leaflet - this will include detailed analysis of the budget, how the budget was financed and also provide details of local and national spending priorities.
 - Telephone "Budgetline" (01563 576555) - Budgetline will be available 24 hours a day during the consultation period and can be used to request information or provide comments on the budget proposals.
 - Internet Budget Mailbox - comments on the proposals can also be emailed to budget2008@east-ayrshire.gov.uk where staff will be on hand to respond to the comments made.

- Consultation Meetings - it is proposed that meetings focussed on the portfolios of spokespersons be arranged with appropriate stakeholders. Spokespersons for the Management and Resources portfolio would have an interest in all these areas given their remit on the overall strategic budget position.

Portfolio	Date
Environment and Regeneration	tbc
Lifelong Learning	tbc
Community Wellbeing	tbc

- 3.4 The Head of Housing is proposing to meet with representatives from the Tenants Federation and other tenant and residents groups on 30 January 2008 to consult on rent levels for 2008/09. It is also proposed that the spokespersons for Community Wellbeing would attend the meeting.
- 3.5 A Special Cabinet meeting would be arranged for Wednesday 13 February 2008 when the final budget proposals and rent levels, taking account of feedback received during the consultation period, would be presented to Elected Members.
- 3.6 The Special Cabinet meeting would make recommendations on the 2008/09 rent levels, the revenue estimates departmental resource allocations and the level of Council Tax to be considered by the Council at a special meeting on 14 February 2008 which is the common council tax setting date recommended by COSLA.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 4.1 approve the proposals and outline timetable for budget consultation as detailed in the report;
- 4.2 otherwise note the contents of this report.

Alex McPhee
 Executive Head of Finance & Asset Management
 13 December 2007

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL

Members wishing further information should contact Alex McPhee, Executive Head of Finance & Asset Management, (01563) 576300.