

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **SPECIAL POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 23 JANUARY 2001**

#### **BUDGET CONSULTATION ARRANGEMENTS**

##### **Report by Chief Executive**

#### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1** To propose arrangements for public consultation on the Council's General Services Revenue Budget and Housing Revenue Account 2001/2002.

#### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1** At the Special Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 25 January 2000, new arrangements for public consultation were adopted which were designed to make it easier for the public to receive information about the budget consultation process and easier for them to comment on it. The new consultation arrangements were also designed to increase the employee involvement in the process. The new process, at the same time as being more effective, was also more cost efficient.
- 2.2** Based on the overall evaluation of the consultation last year it was clear that more people were involved in that consultation than in any previous budget round.
- 2.3** The budget consultation arrangements this year, are therefore based on last year's arrangements.

#### **3. BUDGET CONSULTATION PROPOSALS**

##### **3.1 Consultation Period**

- 3.1.1** The consultation period on the Council's proposals would be from 23 to 31 January 2001 for the Housing Revenue Account and 23 January to 6 February 2001 for the General Services Budget. It is considered appropriate that the consultation period for the General Services Budget be extended to allow fuller consultation to be undertaken.

##### **3.2 Public Meetings**

- 3.2.1** It is proposed that there are two public meetings, advertised in local newspapers, by posters and on local radio. The arrangements for these meetings are:-
- Northern Area, Irvine Valley and Kilmarnock Local Committee Areas - Monday 29 January 2001 at 1900 hours within the Meeting Room, Council Headquarters, London Road, Kilmarnock.

- Cumnock Area and Doon Valley Local Committee Areas - Tuesday 30 January 2001 at 1900 hours within Cumnock Town Hall, Glaisnock Street, Cumnock .

### **3.3 Resident's Budget Telephone Service (Budget Line)**

- 3.3.1** As per last year, it is proposed that a dedicated resident's comments telephone line, advertised in newspapers, posters and radio should be established. Using this telephone line (which will be subject only to standard telephone charges) members of the public will be able to listen to information on forthcoming public meetings, request detailed information and leave any comments that they may have on the budget for the year 2001/2002. This service would be available 24 hours a day through the Council's existing voicemail system.

### **3.4 Voluntary Organisations**

- 3.4.1** Following consultation with the Council of Voluntary Organisations (East Ayrshire) it is proposed that there is no requirement to have a separate meeting with voluntary organisations and that in co-operation with the CVO, voluntary organisations be invited to come to the two public consultation meetings.

### **3.5 Local Committee Representatives**

- 3.5.1** A meeting with Local Committee Community Representatives is proposed for Thursday 25 January 2001 at 1400 hours within the Meeting Room, Council Headquarters, London Road, Kilmarnock.

### **3.6 Eastwords**

- 3.6.1** Again as per last year's arrangements, it is proposed that the Council produces a special budget edition of Eastwords, the Council's magazine for employees. This would summarise the budget proposals and would be available to all Council employees.

### **3.7 Employees Budget Telephone Service (Budget Line)**

- 3.7.1** This Service was available last year to provide a dedicated employee telephone comment line. This would be available 24 hours a day through the Council's internal telephone system and externally at standard telephone call charges. Using this telephone line, employees will be able to listen to information on forthcoming public meetings, request detailed information and leave any comments that they may have on the budget for the year 2001/2002.

### **3.8 Internet and e-mail**

- 3.8.1** The budget proposals would also be available on the Council's Internet website for viewing or for download. There would also be a dedicated e-mail address to allow people to send budget comments direct to the Council. The

package would also be available on the Council's intranet site, which is available to many Council employees.

### **3.9 Libraries and Local Offices**

**3.9.1** Details of the budget proposals will again be available from Libraries and Local Offices.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

**5.1** Members have recognised over the years that difficulties have occasionally been experienced in securing wide-ranging public involvement in the budget setting process. Last year's arrangements ensured that the public and employees had access to information at a time and in a format that suits them, and also enabled them to provide comments on the Council's proposals 24 hours a day throughout the consultation exercise.

**5.2** It is proposed that last year's arrangements be again adopted.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

**6.1** The total cost of the consultation arrangements can be accommodated within existing budgets.

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**7.1** It is recommended that:-

- (i) the Council adopt the consultation arrangements outlined within Section 3 of the report;
- (ii) the outcome of the consultation process on the Housing Revenue Account is reported to the Special Housing Committee on 31 January 2001; and
- (iii) the outcome of the consultation process on the General Services Revenue Account including an evaluation of effectiveness of the consultation arrangements, is reported to the Special Policy and Resources Committee on 6 February 2001.

David Montgomery  
Chief Executive

17 January 2001  
JA/SM

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS - NIL**

Any person wishing further information on this report should contact Fiona Lees, Depute Chief Executive on Tel No (01563) 576019.

**AGENDA**