Item

Glasgow City Council

Executive Committee

Report by the Chief Executive

Contact: Anne Connolly   Ext: 75678

Budget Conversation 2017 – 2018: Summary of Responses

Purpose of Report:

This report provides a summary of the responses to the Budget Conversation carried out between 5th September and 16th October 2016.

Recommendations:

The Executive Committee is asked to:

(1)   consider the issues emerging from the budget conversation;

(2)   note that feedback will be provided to participants; and

(3)   agree that the report is made available to all members to allow them to consider the issues raised when setting the budget for 2017 – 2018.

Ward No(s):   Citywide: ✓

Local member(s) advised: Yes ☐ No ☐   consulted: Yes ☐ No ☐

1.0   Background

1.1   This report provides a summary of the Budget Conversation carried out between 5th September and 16th October 2016. The conversation included four different elements:

- Three community events (community groups)
- Two public events (general public)
- An online discussion tool (www.glasgow.gov.uk/budget)
- A dedicated email account (budget@glasgow.gov.uk)

1.2   The three community events were carried out in the North West, North East and South areas of the city. Participants at the public events, which were both held in the City Chambers, were identified through their involvement in the 2016 Glasgow Household Survey. These events allowed participants the opportunity to hear about the current and future financial challenges and to suggest areas or ideas for improvement and how the council could support them. This was part of the ongoing budget conversation which began in January 2016.

1.3   Over 190 people attended the events (community – 109, public – 82) with a further 38 ideas made online (Dialogue – 30, email – 8) which generated 150 comments. Those invited to the community events included Community Councils, Housing Associations, Voluntary and Community Groups, covering a wide range of interests (e.g. care, sports, art, equalities, culture, etc.). Ipsos Mori were used to contact and invite members of the public which ensured that those who were involved were a representative sample of Glasgow residents.

1.4   All elements of the conversation, considered the same questions:

- Do you have any other priorities to add to those identified in January 2016, particularly any gaps?
- If people in your street or neighbourhood could come together to improve or achieve one thing, what would it be?
- How could the council, its partners and other organisations support you to do that?

1.5   This report provides a summary of responses to the questions asked at the community and public events, along with details of the ideas and suggestions submitted through Dialogue and email.

Do you have any other priorities to add to those identified in January 2016, particularly any gaps?

2.0   Existing Priorities

2.1   The majority of participants agreed that the priorities previously identified during the last budget conversation in January 2016 and from the Glasgow Household Survey 2016 were still those which they would like to see protected. These include:

- Vulnerable groups – services for children and young people, older people and disabled people.
- Early intervention – prevent people from becoming vulnerable in the first place, which would help reduce the need for support services.
- Local environment – street cleaning, refuse collection, graffiti removal, road maintenance and recycling.
- Voluntary and community groups – protect the Integrated Grant Fund (IGF) given to the third sector.

2.2   Participants also agreed that a number of areas previously identified as a priority should be further developed. These included:

- Shared services – particularly back office functions, not only across local authorities, but between the council and community / voluntary groups.
- Community hubs – greater use of libraries as hubs to deliver services from different organisations and agencies.

2.3   The continued protection of community groups through the Integrated Grants Fund (IGF) was again highlighted as playing an essential role in levering in additional funding from other sources (Lottery and European Funding, etc.), which is used to provide essential services within local communities.

2.4   It should be noted that a number of community groups did comment that the council had listened to them after the last budget conversation and protected their funding as much as possible.

2.5   Community Groups were more likely to identify the vulnerable groups that they worked with as a key priority, whereas members of the public saw the local environment as particularly important. When asked if there were any gaps, a number of other areas were identified, which are detailed below.

Gaps

3.0   Reduce isolation and better integration within communities

3.1   Improving integration and reducing isolation within communities was seen as a priority by community groups and members of the public. Participants wanted more to be done to encourage greater involvement from the wide range of groups which make up Glasgow's diverse population. Specifically

mentioned were asylum seekers, refugees, older, younger and disabled people. There were no additional ideas on this topic submitted online.

4.0   More accessible and joined up transport

4.1   Accessible transport, particularly for disabled people, was highlighted as a priority at both the community and public events. Public transport was seen as being necessary in preventing social isolation and better connecting communities to local facilities and services. The need for public transport was seen as essential in providing the means for residents to access the wide range of events, venues, facilities and services available within local communities and across the city. There were no additional ideas on this topic submitted online.

4.2   Another priority was the creation of a more joined up public transport infrastructure. Participants highlighted the Transport for London model as an example of good practice, with all aspects of roads and transport integrated, making it easier to use, better regulated and more responsive to the needs of users and residents. It was suggested that the introduction of a single multimodal ticketing smart card would help support this aim.

5.0   Improved road and pavement maintenance

5.1   The issue of road and pavement conditions was mentioned as a priority. Participants believed that road and pavement conditions were poor, reflecting the findings of our annual Household Survey, and that maintenance and repair work carried out was not effective.

5.2   Within local communities, people also wanted more to be done to make roads safer, for example through introducing additional traffic calming measures.

6.0   Better quality and more accessible community facilities and open spaces

6.1   Another priority highlighted at the community events was community facilities and stalled spaces projects. Again, these were seen as essential in fostering community spirit, reducing social isolation and facilitating localised service delivery.

6.2   Participants expressed the view that they want more involvement in the development and management of facilities and open spaces, as they were more aware of what was required and needed in their local area. It was acknowledged that if the council was not involved there could be issues of running costs and ongoing maintenance. It was suggested that the council should do more to maintain existing facilities within local communities. There were no additional ideas on this topic submitted online.

7.0   More streamlined and efficient services.

7.1   Participants mentioned the need for the council to be more streamlined and efficient in how it delivers its services. It was suggested by community groups that a number of functions around enforcement and environmental services could be combined to provide a more focused and comprehensive provision.

7.2   Participants gave the example of Aberdeen City Council, which has combined the roles of parking, litter and dog fouling enforcement with officers now able to issue penalty notices for a range of offences. Participants thought more could be done in terms of cleansing, road and pavement maintenance, refuse collection as well as parks and open spaces.

7.3   It was also perceived that some staff were restricted in what they could do by their job role and suggested that staff should be freed up to use their skills and initiative, which, in turn, would reduce duplication and increase efficiency. There were no additional ideas on this topic submitted online.

8.0   Income Generation

8.1   Participants at the community and public events highlighted and suggested ways the council may wish to consider to increase and generate additional income. These included:

- charging non-city residents for admission to museums and galleries
- increased parking fines
- increased litter fines
- introduce a tourism tax (e.g. £1 per person per night)

8.2   Council tax was an area identified at the community and public events, and also online that could be looked at to help increase income. Participants supported a rise of up to 3% to council tax rates to help generate income. It was also suggested that the council should focus on improving its recovery rates for council tax that has not yet been paid and is overdue, and perhaps introduce a surcharge for non-payment.

If people in your street or neighbourhood could come together to improve or achieve one thing, what would it be?

9.0   Increase Civic Pride and Community Spirit

9.1   The issue of civic pride and community spirit was mentioned extensively at all community and public events, and was seen as central to maintaining existing and developing new thriving communities. This issue impacts significantly on most, if not all, of the issues and priorities highlighted including reducing isolation, improving the environment and developing partnership working.

9.2   It was suggested the council could have a lead role in trying to develop and promote civic pride and community spirit. In doing so residents and communities would be more likely to follow their example and respect their surroundings and each other. There were no additional ideas on this topic submitted online.

10.0   Improve Local Environment

10.1   The environment was seen as an area where people would like to see an improvement in their local area, specifically:

- More dog bins
- Ensuring people use dog bins
- Litter bins in areas with biggest footfall
- Regular collection of waste from litter bins
- Improved maintenance of common areas/open spaces
- Less chewing gum on streets
- Tackle fly tipping in back courts and lanes
- Missed bin collections

10.2   It was acknowledged that environmental issues differed across different communities and that a localised approach would be needed. Community groups highlighted that they could take the lead in raising awareness over environmental issues in local areas and try to promote civic pride. Participants believed that publicising how much it costs to keep the city clean may have a positive impact on people's attitudes as a substantial proportion of the council's budget is allocated each year to deal with these issues. Educating children at an early age over environmental issues and trying to influence them to have pride in their local area was seen as extremely important.

10.3   Community clean-ups were also seen as a way of improving the local environment, whilst also fostering better community spirit among residents and neighbourhoods. Participants expressed the view that if communities were to get involved more in maintaining their local area, it would encourage a greater sense of pride and further discourage individuals from continuing to disregard the local environment in the future.

10.4   Personal responsibility was continually mentioned and it was suggested that more could be done by individuals, businesses and communities to maintain the areas where they live and work.

10.5   Greater enforcement of existing penalties for litter, dog fouling and fly tipping was also highlighted as an effective deterrent, along with greater use of CCTV.

11.0   Better Partnership Working

11.1   Community groups believed that partnership working was a key area which would lead to improvements locally. Specifically mentioned was bringing

together complementary services provided in local areas, through co-location in prominent and accessible facilities. The increased use of libraries to host a range of services was highlighted as a positive change. Participants not only suggested partnership working between the council and community groups, but also a more joined-up approach between community and voluntary groups within local areas.

11.2 For example, as a result of the last budget conversation, specific community groups in the North East arranged to meet to discuss what events, activities and services each is involved in and has planned for the future. This has resulted in less duplication and more opportunities for joint working. This has recently been expanded to include other public agencies i.e. NHS, GHA and other housing associations. There were no additional ideas on this topic submitted online.

How could the council, its partners and other organisations support you do this?

12.0 Initiate and Facilitate Community Involvement

12.1 Community groups believed that the council should play a central role in initiating and facilitating the communities' involvement in their local area. The Council could use its marketing and promotions channels to inform residents of events and initiatives and then help with the provision of equipment and resources. The examples given were gloves, bags, bins/skips, etc. as part of a community clean up event.

12.2 Although communities acknowledged that they would require support and assistance in getting started and getting people involved, it was clear that they would prefer to become self-sufficient where possible. There were no additional ideas on this topic submitted online.

13.0 Support community groups (HR, procurement, finance, governance etc.)

13.1 Local community groups believed that working together with the council and receiving support would help them to continue providing valuable services. Some smaller community groups highlighted that they lacked the capacity to carry out back office functions, such as HR, procurement, finance, governance, funding etc. and would welcome support from the council and other larger public agencies.

13.2 Other groups stated that although they had capacity they lacked the necessary expertise and would benefit from additional training in these areas. It was noted that previously the Community Planning Partnership had facilitated free development support workshops for Integrated Grant Funded groups. This allowed groups to operate more efficiently and provide a more effective service.

13.3 IGF funded groups stated that improvements to funding arrangements would have a positive impact on the long-term services they provide. They mentioned that the processes in applying for council funding (IGF) was seen as bureaucratic and needed to be more proportionate. They stated there should be a greater awareness of the capacity of community groups to complete the application process.

13.4 They highlighted that groups are funded currently on a yearly basis but longer-term funding arrangements, perhaps for up to three years, would provide more stability and allow for future planning of their service provision. It would also act as core funding when applying for additional external funds.

13.5 Performance monitoring was also highlighted as a particular area which groups indicated was overly bureaucratic with multiple agencies asking for the same, or very similar, monitoring information, and could be streamlined.

14.0 Better Communication, Engagement and Information Sharing

14.1 Participants at the community and public events perceived that more could be done to promote the variety of activities, facilities and services which exist in local communities and that this would help to reduce social isolation and further promoting community spirit. Ideas included promoting what opportunities there were, who was involved, who is responsible, and who to contact.

14.2 The believed that improved community engagement and involvement would help make services more appropriate and demand driven, give communities greater ownership and further enhance civic pride.

14.3 Examples were given of where previous campaigns and information sharing had been successful such as the Clean Glasgow campaign which was credited with improving the local environment. There were no additional ideas on this topic submitted online.

15.0 Promote Innovative and Creative Service Delivery

15.1 The Thriving Places model of localised services which have been identified, designed and developed in partnership with local communities, as well as participatory/community budgeting were put forward as examples of where alternative delivery models were successful, although only on a small scale in selected areas.

15.2 Community groups highlighted a lack of understanding about the council's transformation programme and its role in alternative service delivery models and saw this primarily as service cuts and budget savings.

16.0 ADDITIONAL IDEAS AND SUGGESTIONS

16.1 Participants who got involved through the online discussion tool highlighted and suggested ways the council may wish to consider to increase and generate additional income and to achieve additional savings. It should be noted that the vast majority of those suggestions submitted online were by staff and had been raised at the previous Budget Conversation in January 2016.

16.2 New and additional charges submitted online as a way of generating further income included:

- congestion charges / road toll charges for motorists entering the city centre
- charge residents and businesses for bulk uplifts

16.3 Selling council assets was a view also expressed online as a way of generating additional income. Participants perceived that only a small percentage of Glasgow's art collection was on show at any one time, is rarely rotated and some has never been shown in public. They thought that some of these art pieces could be sold to generate income. There was also a suggestion that some libraries, open spaces and parks (or part of parks) could be sold to housing developers. This would help generate income and help reduce maintenance costs in the longer term.

17.0 Savings

17.1 Participants who submitted suggestions online felt there were further opportunities for the council to make savings in the way it operates and provides services. A suggestion was made that all procurement contracts should be renegotiated to save money and provide better value. Some perceived that the council paid inflated prices for items procured via Pecos, and that these items could be sourced locally at a reduced price.

17.2 Participants also perceived that the council spends a considerable amount of money on contractors and consultants. Views were expressed that savings could be made in this area by using the skills and resources that already exist within the current workforce.

17.3 Comments were also received that the number of rented properties used by the council should be reduced, with greater emphasis and more efficient use made of GCC owned properties to generate savings.

18.0 Policy and Resource Implications

Resource Implications:

Financial:	Linked to the budget setting process
Legal:	No legal implications
Personnel:	No personnel implications
Procurement:	No procurement issues

Council Strategic Plan: Making best use of our resources

Equality Impacts:

EQIA carried out: No
Outcome: Not applicable

Sustainability Impacts:

Environmental: No impact
Social: No impact
Economic: No impact

19.0   Recommendations:

19.1   The Executive Committee is asked to:

(1) consider the issues emerging from the budget conversation;

(2) note that feedback will be provided to participants; and

(3) agree that the report is made available to all members to allow them to consider the issues raised when setting the budget for 2017 – 2018.