

Report to: Cabinet
Date of Meeting: 30 October 2019
Public Document: Yes
Exemption: None
Review date for release: None



Subject: Careful choices consultation

Purpose of report: This report outlines the proposed consultation to support the 'careful choices' the council will need to make in the coming years.

Recommendation: That Members agree the detail of the consultation.
That Members consider the consultation period which is suggested as 11 November until Monday 7 January 2019,

Reason for recommendation: To help engage residents and businesses in the financial issues facing council.

Officer: Karen Simpkin Strategic Lead for Organisational Development, Transformation and Equalities.

Financial implications: The outcome of this consultation will help the Council shape its future budgets to ensure its limited financial resources are directed those areas which reflect are residents priorities.

Legal implications: There are no direct legal implications requiring comment.

Equalities impact: Low Impact
This consultation in itself has a low equalities impact but any proposals in relation to public services will require impact assessments.

Climate change: Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk

Links to background information: .

Link to Council Plan: Continuing to be an outstanding council

Report in full

The council has a £2.7m budget deficit which needs to be dealt with over the next 2-3 years in order to be able to produce a balanced budget. The council's strategy includes developing a strategy for commercialisation, ensuring the council is 'fit for purpose' to deliver the Council Plan and additionally making 'careful choices' about the services we provide.

The consultation will be supported with press releases and social media activity and will use this short film to help illustrate the issues:

<https://animoto.com/play/LhiJITzSisUq51kkvCZdmQ>

It is proposed that this consultation is sent to 3000 residents on a random basis; to Town and Parish Councils and placed on-line.

This is the best way to get a higher response rate. For example if this survey was only online, even if letters are sent out to advertise the survey, it might achieve a response rate of 2-5% but one sent out in the post might achieve 25-35%. Average response rates nationwide can vary over factors which we cannot predict. Various publicity and other methods will be employed to try to ensure as high a response rate as possible.

By post is currently the only way to reach a truly random selection of households, which is what allows us to extrapolate the results to the whole population of East Devon. We have every households postal address so can select a random sample from those. We'll only be able to send out a survey to a random sample of the population by email once we have every residents email address, so all of them have an equal chance of receiving a copy.

Our aim is to receive back a minimum of 400 responses from the random questionnaires which will provide us with a statistically reliable body of feedback which can then be extrapolated to be representative of the views of the district. Other feedback will help support those findings.

Results are statistically reliable if there are more than 400 representative respondents to a question (due to being able to be around +/-5% confident of the true figure if you surveyed the entire population). For example, if 85% of the random sample surveyed are satisfied with the council overall, you can be confident that the true figure if you surveyed everyone in East Devon would be between 80% and 90%.

Relatively few completed questionnaires can provide precision. Ipsos MORI, the leading UK research company uses polls of just over 1,000 people to accurately infer the opinions of the entire UK population as a whole.

How else the questionnaire will be used

In addition, the questionnaire will be made available online for other residents and town and parish councils. The data and results from these questionnaires will need to be kept separate from the data from the random mail-out, so the data from the random mail-out can be used to extrapolate to the whole population of East Devon.

This process will help raise awareness of the council's financial situation and the findings will help support Member decision making going forward.

The cost of this process will be £3020 and this includes printing and postage costs as well as the cost for SNAP to collate the answers from the postal questionnaires.