

**REPORT TO: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GROUP ON 18 FEBRUARY 2010**

**SUBJECT: MORAY BUDGET CONSULTATION**

**BY: COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGER, THE MORAY COUNCIL**

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1. To report to the Community Engagement Group on Consultation held on Moray Council's Budget proposals and to consider the initial evaluation of the process.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Community Engagement Group notes the evaluation of the Moray Council's budget proposal consultation**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 In October 2009 Moray Council's Administration Group decided that they wished to conduct a community consultation on budget proposals for the years 2010 – 2011 and beyond.
- 3.2 In November 2009 a meeting was held between representatives of Moray Council, Moray Joint Community Council, Moray Area Forum and MVSO. The aim of the meeting was to explore how best a partnership approach to consulting communities could be delivered in localities across Moray as part of the wider consultation exercise. Agreement was reached that Moray's Community Councils, Area Forums and MVSO would facilitate 7 meetings in Moray to include Forres, Speyside, Elgin, Laich, Milnes, Keith and Buckie. It was agreed to target specific community groups associated with the groups highlighted above within the designated communities.
- 3.3 A programme that included introductory council speakers such as Moray Council's Chief Executive, Chief Financial Officer and Senior Department Heads engaging in round table discussions was drawn up. Local chairpersons of the groups highlighted (with the exception of Buckie), agreed to chair the local events across the areas. Staff from within Moray Council's Community Support Unit were deployed to facilitate the round table discussions.
- 3.4 An evaluation of the public meetings element of the consultation was carried out to inform decision makers within Moray Council to gauge whether the process was a positive, inclusive experience for local people who took part, to learn what can be done to improve future consultation events and maintain an objective record to demonstrate active community engagement.
- 3.5 The evaluation identified a number of lessons learned but demonstrated positive feedback on the methodology used to consult the public and that the group work approach allowed everyone to have their say and also that having access to

senior management to discuss concerns was highly valued. A summary of the evaluation is attached at **appendix 1**

- 3.6 The budget consultation also used a range of mediums to engage and during the meetings there were opportunities for the wider public to give their views on the budget proposals. Comprehensive documentation on the budget and the proposals were available on the Council's internet site and extensive use of the media to highlight the consultation process was used. During the six-week consultation period more than 5,000 people visited the budget pages on the council's web site. There were 262 responses from individuals and 44 from groups and organisations. Half of all these were submitted online.

#### **4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

**(a) Single Outcome Agreement**

This initiative will contribute to National Outcome 11 in the Single Outcome Agreement; "we have strong resilient communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others" and to National Outcome 15; "our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs".

**(b) Policy and Legal**

The Local Government Scotland Act 2003 requires that the community Planning Partnership engage with community bodies and organisations as part of the Community Planning process. In April 2008 the Scottish Government (SG) and Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) issued a joint statement of commitment to community empowerment.

**(c) Resources**

The costs for the process were met by the Moray Council. I.e. .use of halls, staffing and printing costs

**(d) Consultations**

The consultations were done in Partnership with The Joint Community Councils of Moray, the Moray Forum and MVSO key community groups and organisations were invited to the consultation meetings. Information reached the press and members of the public were welcomed. In Buckie it was agreed that, in response to a request from the Forum and Community Councils, the meeting was public and that the format is adapted for the Buckie context.

#### **5. CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 The Moray Council undertook a consultation on its budget proposals. The meetings were organised in partnership with the Joint Community Councils of Moray, the Moray Forum and MVSO. It is recommended that the Community Engagement Group notes the evaluation of the process.**

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Background Papers:

Ref: