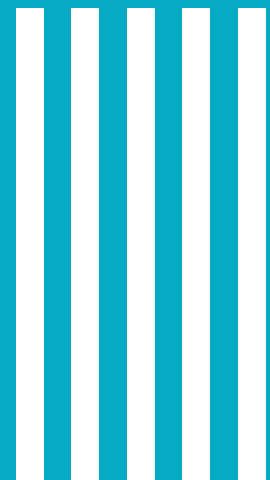


Delivering for our communities

Our medium-term financial
plan for 2023-24 to 2025-26

Appendix 3 - Consultation and
engagement plan

Draft



Introduction

This plan describes how Newcastle City Council will consult and communicate about our medium-term financial plan for 2023-2024. It tells you about:

- What our short-term and long-term goals are for making sure we engage with everyone
- The ways in which we will communicate with people about what's happening
- How we will listen to people's views and thoughts about what we intend to do
- The timeline for communication and consultation

Short-term goals

These are our goals for our budget consultation over November 2022 – January 2023, based upon the recommendations of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group from October 2021.

1. **Diversity of engagement channels** – making sure we communicate and engage with people in a range of different ways so that everyone has the best possible opportunity to give us their views.
2. **Promote inclusive information sharing** – working to ensure that everyone can access the same information about what we propose in a format that meets their needs.
3. **Publish the objectives of the consultation process publicly and in advance** – we are publishing this plan so that it is clear to everyone what we are asking, what we want to achieve, and how we will do it.
4. **Use language that promotes engagement** – we will emphasise what we can achieve for residents and highlight opportunities and possibilities; however, alongside this we will be realistic about the impact of local government funding pressures.
5. **Highlight the impact of the consultation process in any final documentation** – when we report on our final proposals, we will make sure that details of any changes or alterations to them as a result of feedback received are easy to find.

Long-term goals

These are our goals for our consultation and engagement with Newcastle residents and stakeholders over the next 12-24 months and beyond.

1. Working with everyone and showing people how this is relevant to them

We will ensure everyone has the opportunity to engage in our consultations on our proposals. In particular, we will use and build on our existing partnerships with the voluntary and community sector to reach and consult with groups within our local area who have not always engaged with us about this in the past.

2. Return to neighbourhood conversations – local conversations

The Council's leadership has set out a clear commitment to put residents at the heart of what we do and ensure our services work better for all our neighbourhoods. This includes reviewing how we increase our service engagement within neighbourhoods and how we listen better to and hear more from communities.

3. Create an ongoing process – continuous conversations

Our annual consultation on our proposals in winter each year is only one part of the ongoing process of developing our strategic priorities and the medium-term financial plan which supports it. We will ensure that we explicitly state how our proposals are developed, the evidence they are based on, including feedback from engagement activities, and how we continue to develop them over the months following the budget consultation.

How we will communicate

These are the different ways we will provide information to people about what we propose to do, and how they can give us their views.

Communication channel	Goals
Citylife magazine	To improve people's understanding of the budget challenge, our proposals and how they can have their say. To support people who are not online to take part in the budget process.
Community noticeboards	To provide an easy way for residents in neighbourhoods to find out about the consultation.
Community champions	Enable us to reach a range of groups of people, including individuals and their families, friends, and broader networks.
Connected Voice and voluntary & community sector organisations	Work with voluntary and community sector organisations to use their channels and relationships to raise people's awareness and encourage them to give us their views. Work with Connected Voice to spread information about the budget to them and have discussions at the Voluntary Sector Liaison Group.
Newcastle City Council website	Make sure people can find information about our budget online and know how to give us their views.
Newcastle City Council social media channels – Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram	To improve people's understanding of the budget challenge and process of gathering people's views. To make sure that people can access information in different formats to meet their needs.

Communication channel	Goals
Partners including regional and local professional associations, such as the North East Chamber of Commerce	Reach as many people and organisations as possible with information about our proposals. Ensure we effectively engage and consult our statutory partners and taxpayers.
Press releases	Engage with local journalists to help people understand our budget challenge and the process for gathering people's views.
Staff briefing	Ensure staff are fully aware of our draft proposals and how this might affect them, and how they can also support people to take part in the consultation.
Voluntary Sector Liaison Group	We will support dissemination of information to voluntary and community sector representatives and opportunity to discuss proposals with cabinet members at the meeting.
Written information in community centres	Provide different ways for residents to find out about the consultation, both digital and not digital.

People we will engage with

There are many different groups of people within Newcastle who may have particular interests and needs when it comes to getting involved in discussions around our budget, including people living in different areas of Newcastle, people on low incomes, and people who cannot easily go online. We want to hear from everyone, and as part of this, we have tried to think of groups who we want to ensure are included in our consultation. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Businesses
- Carers
- Children and young people including care leavers, young carers, those with special educational needs and disabilities, and those who are looked-after
- Deaf and hearing-impaired people
- Disabled people
- Ethnic minorities
- Faith communities
- Homeless and vulnerably housed people
- Learning disabilities and autism – adults
- LGBTQI+ people
- Older people
- People using our services
- Parents and carers
- Refugees and asylum seekers
- Residents
- Tenants and people living in social housing
- Visually impaired people
- Voluntary and community sector

How we will engage with people

These are our engagement channels; how we will listen to the views of local residents and organisations and have conversations with them.

Description	Goals
<p>Community and voluntary sector organisations: Engage as widely as possible with voluntary and community sector groups drawing on our knowledge of the sector and working with Connected Voice and service leads</p>	<p>Engage with a wider range of groups representing people in different areas, and people with different issues, to hear as wide a range of views as possible</p>
<p>Council services' engagement activities: Staff will use their knowledge of people who use their services to engage with them and gather their feedback.</p>	<p>Raise awareness of and gather feedback on proposals about particular services, especially about the impact of changes on people who currently use them, of those who might use them in future, and people such as friends and family who support them.</p>
<p>Engagement events and meetings for 'communities of identity'</p>	<p>Work with groups with particular needs and / or who may be particularly affected by proposed changes to our services ('communities of identity') such as disabled people, carers, older people, and other communities who have particular communication needs.</p>
<p>Let's talk Newcastle Online: Online surveys on both our specific proposals and our medium-term plan as a whole, including approach for how we'll develop proposals for future years</p>	<p>Online surveys designed to gather feedback on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • proposals that affect how we will deliver services in 2023-24, • our overall financial proposals for 2023-24, and their cumulative impact, • our proposed approach for developing such proposals for 2024-25 and 2025-26.
<p>People's Budget: An online budget simulator asking participants: "How will you balance the city's budget?"</p>	<p>Increase awareness of the challenges we face. Understand more about what residents and organisations' broad priorities for the city are. We will also look at how people can do this offline, for example in engagement events and activities with people who use our services, and 'communities of identity'.</p>
<p>Emails, letters, and social media</p>	<p>People are welcome to send us their views by email to letstalk@newcastle.gov.uk, writing to FREEPOST Letstalk, or commenting on our social media posts.</p>

Timeline for Communication and Consultation

Action	Deadlines
Consultation: November 2022 – January 2023	
1. Stakeholder Mapping: All staff involved in budget communication and consultation process to review and update stakeholder list and consult with Connected Voice to identify and fill any gaps.	27 October 2022
2. Publish Proposals: Publication of budget savings proposals, draft budget report, and communications and consultation plan	11 November 2022
3. People’s Budget: Launch the People’s Budget.	22 November 2022
4. Let’s Talk Newcastle online: Online consultation on proposals and the medium-term financial plan to go live.	22 November 2022
5. Communications: Ongoing communication through the channels identified in the table above.	22 November 2022 – 11 January 2023
6. Staff briefings: Ensure all relevant officers are fully briefed on the reviewed approach and their role within it, including targeted, service- or proposal- specific consultation where appropriate.	December 2022
7. Ward councillors: Look at how the products and tools for budget consultation can be shared with ward councillors via a briefing.	December 2022
8. Voluntary and Community Sector Engagement: The Voluntary Sector Liaison Group meets on 8 December, and we will also promote meetings and consultations in the Connected Voice fortnightly ebulletin, website and social media.	8 December 2022
9. Directorate Engagement: Staff in directorates will use their knowledge of their service users to engage with them and gather their feedback. We will use our list of key external stakeholders to maximise our reach.	22 November 2022 – 11 January 2023
10. CityLife: Distribution to all households in Newcastle from late November to early December	November 2022
Reporting Consultation and Engagement Findings: February-March 2023	
11. Feedback on changes: Ensure it is explicit within the post-consultation documentation about what has changed since the draft proposals were published – both as a result of consultation responses and government announcements that impact upon our financial position.	21 February 2023
12. Publicising post-consultation plan: Promote the publication of the post-consultation medium-term financial plan to using all communication and engagement channels used throughout the consultation period.	21 February 2023
13. Written Responses: Continue to provide written responses where it is practical and proportionate to do so, for example, to written stakeholder representations.	March 2023

Action	Deadlines
14. Neighbourhood Conversations: Continue to engage with residents and stakeholders at a neighbourhood level, reflecting the recommendation from Scrutiny Task and Finish group that the budget consultation continue to be part of a process of ongoing conversations about priorities for Newcastle.	Ongoing in 2023