

Aberdeen City Council Costed 5-year Business Plan Briefing Note and Invitation to Participate

Rationale

Aberdeen City Council is taking the wise and business-like step of planning now for the serious economic challenges faced by the public sector right across the UK over the next few years.

The council is engaged in drawing up a five-year business plan, which will pinpoint our priorities and ensure we continue to deliver the essential services that the people and businesses of Aberdeen need.

All the evidence suggests, however, that we will have to achieve this with significantly less money over the coming years. We are working with projections that indicate we can expect a reduction of £80 million or more in government grant funding to Aberdeen between now and 2014/15 – so it is essential that we start planning now for the delivery of those services in new, imaginative and more cost-effective ways.

The City Council cannot do this on its own. We will be working closely with our citizens and all of our private and public sector partners because it will be up to all of us, working together, to ensure we have robust plans to deal with the inevitable reduction in funding coming into the council from central government.

We must be clear too, that some of the services which we have delivered in the past may not be possible in the future. It is up to the whole of the Aberdeen community to think very hard about what our priorities are and to work together to ensure we have plans in place to spend our public money wisely and efficiently.

Context

- The council has made significant budget savings for the last three years to stabilise its finances.
- Continuing financial pressures due to external economic conditions mean that substantial savings will have to be made for several more years.
- We are not alone in this – the entire UK public sector is facing similar challenges.
- Doing nothing / doing the minimum in response to the reduced finance available to the council is not an option.

- Living within our financial means will require a fundamental re-think of the way the council operates and the range of high-quality services it provides in future.
- This will necessitate new ways of working, workforce reductions, outsourcing of services, forging links with public and private sector partners to deliver shared services, and the delivery of services by the third sector.
- Lobbying of the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities for a fairer funding formula will continue.
- The senior management structure of the council has already been streamlined and restructuring within directorates will continue in order to create a well-managed organisation which can deliver on its priorities.
- We are preparing a costed five-year business plan in order to be ready to meet the financial challenges.
- We are using priority based budgeting so that our service delivery is priority-led.
- We are engaging with staff, the public, businesses, the voluntary sector and partners; all will have an influence on the finalised plan.

Our priorities – as set out in the Council Leader’s budget speech on 11 February 2010

- The services we provide and secure for the most vulnerable members of our community.
- The opportunities we provide for all our school children to attain and achieve to the very best of their potential.
- The arrangements we make to encourage an increase in recycling as a means to address the challenge of the city’s waste.
- The framework we establish to encourage the building of new affordable housing within the city.
- The support we put in place to ensure the sustainable economic future of the city.
- To continue to ensure that our internal support services are modernised to underpin efficiently and effectively the council’s delivery of outcomes for the people of Aberdeen.

What will the impact be of what we are doing?

For citizens

- The redesign of council services will mean focusing on a fewer number of services.
- Citizens will be able to see what services will be provided over the five year period.
- Services will be prioritised according to need and the available funding, with citizens having the opportunity to engage with the process of developing and revising the council’s business plan.

For our partners

- Partners will have the opportunity to input into the redesign of council services. Engagement will develop over the five year period of the plan.
- The redesign will mean that a number of our existing services will be withdrawn, refined or delivered differently with our partners.
- The face of public service is changing and we need to work together more effectively to deliver public services to the people of Aberdeen.

For staff

- Staff have a real opportunity to get involved and engage with the development and subsequent revision of the council's business plan.
- The redesign of council services will bring many opportunities for new ways of working.
- The prioritisation of the services the council will deliver will create a more effective fit between staffing resource in terms of skills and numbers

Next Steps

Work is ongoing in developing the Council's business plan on foundations established through priority based budgeting. We would like to receive your thoughts and feedback so that we can try to ensure that we are doing the right things well over the coming years.

You can visit the Council's website at www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/thenextfiveyears and give us your views there or you can e-mail us direct at thenextfiveyears@aberdeencity.gov.uk You can also follow us on twitter at www.twitter.com/aberdeenc and in addition other engagement and feedback activities will be developed and put in place over the coming weeks across the City.

Further briefing meetings will be held later in the summer at which we will share with you the early outputs from our priority based budgeting work and the first draft of the business plan. We will also show you at these meetings how we are making use of the major themes that are emerging from what we are being told by you and other stakeholders.

Key to the success of our new business plan will be an ongoing commitment to engage proactively with the people the Council serves and further engagement activity will be a feature of the process leading to the setting of the Council's budget for 2011/2012 and beyond. Regular updates on this will be posted on the dedicated webpage.