

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION 20 September 2016

Council Tax Consultation

Comments from Cllr Jeff Hanna

1. The Constitution appears to make it a matter for the Cabinet to consult, not the Leader nor the officers :

“After consulting stakeholders in a manner appropriate to the matter under consideration, the Cabinet will draw up initial proposals in relation to any plan, strategy or budget which forms part of the Council’s budget and policy framework.”
4-C.2(a)
2. Officers repeated failed to set out the constitutional basis by which they were proceeding with the consultation; withheld the fact of seeking counsel’s opinion; failed to address the specific query relating to 4-C.2(a) above; declined to seek counsel’s view on that query; delayed responding until the consultation had commenced.
3. The consultation fails to make clear to residents
 - i. The fact that the government will reduce grant in future years on the assumption that council tax has been increased, regardless of whether the increase takes place.
 - ii. The amount that the 1.99% and 2.00% increases mean for the Band D Council Tax payer – some £2.00 a month in each case.
4. The document states that the Council promises to freeze council tax until March 2019, which
 - i. Implies that the council is able to maintain services until then without any increase in council tax.
 - ii. Renders the consultation itself pointless.
5. The Response form is overly complex and off-putting to residents.
6. Question 6 is set out so as to minimise the likelihood of residents requested any increases through
 - i. The order of the possible choices, where the ‘continue to freeze’ option appears first.
 - ii. The repeated use of “Increase my council tax” phrase rather than “Reduce cuts” or “Protect council services”

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