

MAYOR AND CABINET			
Title	Response to the Public Accounts Select Committee - communicating the Council's budget position		
Key Decision	No	Item No.	
Ward	All Wards		
Contributor	Executive Director for Resources & Regeneration		
Class	Part 1	Date	10 January 2018

1. Purpose

- 1.1. At its meeting on 27 September 2017 the Public Accounts Select Committee held discussions on communicating the Council's budget position.
- 1.2. Mayor and Cabinet was advised of the comments and views of the Public Accounts Select Committee on 25 October 2017.
- 1.3. This paper sets out the response.

2. Recommendations

The Mayor is asked to:

- 2.1 Approve the officer response to the referral by the Public Accounts Select Committee on communicating the Council's budget position.
- 2.2 Agree that this report should be forwarded to the Select Committee.

3. Referral from the Public Accounts Select Committee:

- 3.1 At its meeting on 27 September 2017. the Public Accounts Select Committee held discussions on communicating the Council's budget position
- 3.2 The Committee recommends that Mayor and Cabinet tasks officers with developing a forceful communications campaign that focuses on the use of hoardings and billboards in innovative, large and visually captivating ways in order to reach Lewisham residents with messages about the budget.

Response:

In communications with residents about our budget in 2017 we have explained how Government's decision to cut 63% of its funding for Lewisham Council (2010-2020) has placed pressure on our services.

The Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, published by Department for Communities and Local Government in December 2017, will confirm how much funding Lewisham Council will receive in 2018 / 2019.

As discussed at the 27 September 2017 Public Accounts Select Committee meeting there is value in large scale campaigns around the Council's budget, such as the 'Big Budget challenge' we ran in 2014.

We are considering a range of options for communicating with Lewisham residents about future year's budgets and the financial pressures we are facing following reductions in government funding.

We are giving careful consideration to the use of poster advertising through JC Decaux poster sites in Lewisham, alongside a range of other communications to reach residents including our weekly e-newsletter, social media accounts, website, intranet, public meetings, the national, regional and local media and Lewisham Life magazine and the Mayor's letter that will go with council tax bills in March.

Successfully communicating the Council's budget position will require:

- Engagement with residents in 2018 to ensure our communications are successful.*
- Targeting to ensure we reach residents in all parts of Lewisham in communications across 2018*
- Integration of our budget messages across a range of channels throughout 2018 to communicate successfully.*

3.3. The Committee also recommends officers should also be tasked with considering options for the use of data about Lewisham households to target the Council's communications about its budget.

Response:

Targeting is essential for communicating the Council's budget position to our residents. We will consider options for using data about Lewisham households across all of our communications, including our budget in 2018.

Data about Lewisham households is available from a wide range of sources. We are carefully considering how this data can be used, including the potential benefits and costs and the requirements in the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity (2011) that says publicity by local authorities should be: lawful,

cost effective, objective, even-handed, appropriate, have regard to equality and diversity and issued with care during periods of heightened sensitivity.

4. Financial implications

- 4.1. The financial implications for communicating the Council's budget position in 2018 will be available when a final decision has been taken about the type of communications that will be used.

5. Legal implications

There are no further legal implications arising from the context of this report,

6. Crime and disorder implications

There are no specific crime and disorder implications.

7. Equalities implications

There are no specific equalities implications.

8. Environmental implications

There are no specific environmental implications.

9. Background documents and originator

- [Communicating the council's budget position](#) – report to the Public Accounts Select Committee (27 September 2017)
- [Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity \(2011\)](#)
- Joe Derrett – Head of Communications (020 8314 7816)