

# Cabinet Agenda

**Monday, 7 February 2022 at 6.00 pm**

This meeting will be held remotely. Watch online here:  
<https://www.hastings.gov.uk/my-council/cm/>

For further information, please contact Democratic Services on 01424 451484 or email:  
[democraticservices@hastings.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@hastings.gov.uk)

		Page No.
9.	Consultation Summary feedback (01/02/22 -07/02/22) - post publication of the Budget Cabinet papers	1 - 6

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# Agenda Item 9

## Consultation Summary feedback (01/02/22 -07/02/22) – post publication of the Budget Cabinet papers

1. The consultation responses summarised in this document are those received or included since the publication of the Budget Cabinet papers. The budget Cabinet papers are available at the following link, where all other consultation responses received before the deadline for publication of these papers can be found in Appendix B:

[HBC Report \(moderngov.co.uk\)](https://moderngov.co.uk)

### Staff and Management Forum (Budget Consultation) - 27 January 2022

2. The Leader and Deputy met the Staff and Management Forum on 27<sup>th</sup> January.
3. Colleagues raised the impacts of making savings from vacant post reductions on staffing levels and capacity. Plans for succession planning and to ensure knowledge is not being lost were discussed. The Leadership also committed to ensuring that the increased workloads as a result of the pandemic do not become the norm and will commit to work with colleagues to ensure they are reasonable and sustainable in the longer term.
4. Councillors confirmed that any staff in posts at risk of redundancy will be taken through our re-deployment processes.
5. The meeting discussed a number of other items including the approach to addressing the housing and temporary accommodation crisis, the type of tenure of new houses that we are able to encourage developers to build and role that returning empty properties to use can have. SMF colleagues were also keen that we re-start the work to promote the services and work colleagues do across the breadth of activities.
6. The SMF has submitted a formal written response to the consultation.
7. In summary this response recognised the significant savings the Council has made through efficiencies and income generation to balance the budget and identified a need for central government to provide additional funding to restrict the ‘corroding’ of services.
8. The response identified the health impacts and pressure on all staff as a result of the budgetary challenges and the pandemic, conveying that services are likely to suffer should staff capacity reduce further and or experienced staff leave.
9. The hike in electricity and gas prices was also highlighted as an additional cost and stress for staff to bear as the majority of staff continue to work from home, as well as the uncertainties around further variants of the pandemic and the lack of time for staff to regroup was also flagged.
10. The response concluded by reflecting on a pending staff restructure, flagging the potential risks of replacing experienced staff with those on a lower grade and identifying the need to ensure associated staff are trained and supported appropriately.

11. The response noted that there has seemingly been no reduction in services the Council provides and this needs to be redressed by scrutinising essential services going forward so that other can either 'drop off' or be reduced.
12. Response: The Council are thankful for these views and are keen to continue the dialogue with Unison Hastings Branch and all our staff to collectively address the associated challenges. The Council is very mindful of the impacts of the pandemic and the budgetary challenges and continue to work closely with HR colleagues and managers to ensure all staff receive the support they require during a challenging time for everyone.
13. The budget report identifies the ongoing work to review all services carefully to identify scope for stopping and reducing services and minimising redundancies. This work will continue at pace into the new financial year. Associated restructuring will seek to ensure staff are engaged, supported and trained appropriately as the Council resets and reshapes to meet the needs of our residents.

### **Hastings Community Network Meeting (28/1/22)**

14. The Leader and Deputy Leader met HCN on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> January. The following questions and responses were forthcoming:

Question: Which of the cuts proposed will have the biggest impact on the poorest in our community?

Response: The cuts and savings proposed have been assessed for their impact on the Equality Act protected characteristics, this is included in the document K2 and has not identified areas of significant impact for the most deprived people in our town. The council also retains its focus on helping the most vulnerable e.g. policies such as Council Tax Support Scheme which benefits those with the lowest incomes.

Questions: The anti-poverty plan requires input from the voluntary sector – we deliver a lot of the things that you have said the plan will cover. The commitment in the corporate plan to work with the voluntary sector needs to include more engagement.

Response: Absolutely – this is what we want to happen. If this is not clear in the corporate plan we will make sure it is added and included.

Question: Aware that Hastings has grown in popularity, with lots of people moving down and buying second homes or homes to rent out on Air B&B. What can the council do around that? Have heard about Devon and Cornwall taking action and restricting this.

Response: We've been talking to Cornwall about what they're doing, and it hasn't been working as well as they'd hoped. We are very restricted about what we can do in law, and are campaigning to change this.

Question: Food poverty – need to make sure the work is linked together so people in Hastings aren't in food poverty – anti-poverty plan and strategy.

Response: Agree – happy to work together on this.

Question: Cultural events as they are starting to come back are finding funding very difficult to come by and everything is getting more expensive. Wanted to thank HBC for all support and advice – many other councils are not that good.

Response: We are redoing our Cultural Regeneration Strategy to work the other way around, not top down, but bottom up. That will be coming out to groups for consultation later this year, encourage everyone to get involved.

Question: Need to work with the churches as well for homeless prevention

Response: Yes, good idea to involve them.

Question: poverty and prevention – it's going to get worse. There are external factors that this corporate plan can't address. We've talked a lot about homelessness but it's at the wrong end, when people are homeless. The real work needs to be done to prevent it happening and that means a strong working relationship with the voluntary and community sector.

Response: Agree, we have to work together. We are looking to review our homelessness services and prevention is vital, we will take on board everything that has been said.

Question: We need to give feedback earlier next year. We've suggested a growing spaces area so people can grow their own food – can this be in the new Local Plan?

Response: We need to ensure we are working together more going forward – invitation from Kim/Paul and other Cabinet Members to attend relevant meetings for their portfolios to help and give feedback/ideas.

### **Further responses received via e mail**

15. A response was received from a long-term resident keen to raise a number of points: In terms of housing the suggestion was made for the Council to consider use of shipping containers to assist meet homelessness demand. The respondent also queried whether the Council could challenge the rise of Air B & Bs and potentially work with those with second and third homes to house our homeless.
16. This response queried progress with Council investment in commercial developments including, Dunelm, Aldi and the proposed hotel and restaurant on the previous public toilet site. The view was expressed that the budget information on such developments is difficult to find or understand on the budget papers.
17. In terms of building new houses, the respondent suggested minimising developments on green spaces, avoid high density housing, ensure proper infrastructure for any developments such as schools, doctors, community and leisure provision and to take more notice of petitions. And to include and support the improvement of public transport and traffic flow on the Ridge in particular.
18. The response suggested a need to better value residents and the third sector through discount schemes acknowledging the range of their work.
19. Response: The Council continues to work on a range of options to tackle homelessness demand including review of shipping containers and other temporary builds. This work is due to be taken forward by an emerging Council taskforce set up to specifically address the homelessness and temporary accommodation challenges the Council and town faces. This taskforce intends to pick up on much of what the respondent has raised in terms of housing and homelessness. The Council also intends to review best practice elsewhere in terms of

addressing the impacts of Air B & Bs as there is little legislative means to take any action in this regard.

20. This respondent's views on the budget documentation also chimes with views by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny meeting instigating commitment to presenting clearer simpler budget information in the future. Given the challenges of the pandemic many HBC Finance staff have had to facilitate Covid related grants to support local communities and businesses. This has meant there has been limited time to make the budget information as simple and clear as the Council would have otherwise liked.
21. The Council continue to endeavour to strike a balance between ensuring developments meet climate aspirations and housing need and that housing developments have the necessary infrastructure. This thinking forms part of the business case development for each. Where HBC is leading the development the new homes will be zero carbon and gas free.
22. The Council very much supports and values our local third sector. The Leader and Deputy of the Council continue to meet and offer opportunity for ongoing dialogue with our third sector and other partners to ensure we work together to tackle the challenges facing the town together.
23. Seven responses were received to the consultation inbox expressing concern with regards to proposed funding reductions to Locate East Sussex (including one from a representative of Locate East Sussex), outlining how this support had been very helpful and how this service is particularly valued within the current Covid climate.
24. Response: Given the scale of the budgetary challenges the Council faces, it is reviewing every aspect of every service to ensure it can continue to provide services residents need most. However there are no plans to reduce this funding in 2022/23, allowing time to consider the impact of these proposals fully.
25. A response was received urging a review of a Facebook slideshow on climate resilience.
26. Response: The email was noted and the link forwarded to the Executive.
27. Ten responses were received during the final weekend before the consultation closed to the consultation inbox with a specific emphasis on climate action. Views expressed a desire for climate action to be the main Council priority including:
  - Increased budget and smarter targets to support associated work
  - Be clear on what budget is available to support such work
  - Be clear on the pace and timeframe for associated work
  - Be honest as to the feasibility of climate commitments
  - Ensure the town is liveable in ten years' time
  - That the Council continue to press for clean seas
  - That the Council lobby ESCC for free or cheaper public transport
  - That local food production be encouraged

- To prohibit building on green space
  - That the Council support retrofits to help people keep energy costs down
  - Divest from fossil fuels
  - That the Council get more creative given that the Council has shown how it moved quickly to support pandemic challenges- the same is now required in terms of climate action.
28. Associated points also included the view that perhaps there is an over emphasis on pandemic activity given vaccination rates and the Council need to consider how it can help given the rise in food and energy prices.
29. Response: These points have all been noted and forwarded to the Executive for consideration. The Council does not invest in fossil fuels and has lobbied ESCC partners to divest in terms of staff pensions. The Council is fully committed to minimising environment and climate harm in all that we do as set out in our [corporate plan](#) and in associated commitments and activities:
- [Tackling climate change | Hastings Borough Council](#)
  - [Climate change background \(hastings.gov.uk\)](#)
30. The Council very much welcomes all views submitted and is keen to continue an ongoing dialogue on the important issue of climate action alongside those other priorities that the Council supports.
31. The Council acknowledges the point made by a number of respondents during this consultation that only by working together can we collectively tackle the challenges the Council and our town face.

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