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Councillor John Guy
Chair
Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee
Newport City Council
Civic Centre
Newport
NP20 4UR

16 October 2018

Dear Councillor Guy

Thank you very much for your letter dated 22 September 2018 detailing recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee regarding public engagement. As you know, ensuring that the public have the opportunity to engage in decisions that affect the services that they value is incredibly important to the Cabinet. Whilst I feel we have made significant progress I do recognise that we have some way to go with this agenda.

Officers have undertaken a comprehensive review of engagement across the Council and will be reporting back to the Committee in due course. I believe that the recommendations contained within that report provide answers to the questions you pose. However, below I have provided an additional response to each of your three questions.

OSMC Recommendations

1. Make necessary plans to put in place arrangements to ensure that the public consultation of the budget proposals begins as early as possible this year.

Response

When and how we consult on budget proposals is somewhat constrained by the timing of the final budget allocation from Welsh Government, which tends to be towards the end of December. I have, however, asked officers to undertake a 'pre-budget' engagement exercise to gather views of the public on a range of services. This work has already begun and will continue through the autumn.

We will of course, wherever possible, undertake early engagement and consultation on proposals when able.

2. Consider and plan how the Council will move up the Hierarchy of Engagement, and monitor the progress towards implementing this. The Committee considers that involving the public in the budget saving process was a key priority for developing how it engages with the public.



City of Newport

Response

Within the review of engagement, officers have proposed a number of recommendations, which will be presented to the Committee. I think this offers an opportunity for the Committee to provide additional insight and challenge to ensure that the Council is doing all it can to make progress in this area.

3. Establishes and develops relationships with the Universities in Newport, to establish links with relevant students who may be interested in undertaking research on behalf of the Council as part of their degree programmes.

Response

Thank you very much for this suggestion. I have asked officers to look into this potential opportunity and to report back in due course.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Debbie Wilcox', written in a cursive style.

Cynghorydd / Councillor Debbie Wilcox
Arweinydd / Leader
Cyngor Dinas Casnewydd / Newport City Council