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## **SHARED APPROACH TO BUDGET COMMUNICATIONS**

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### **1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1** The public sector is facing a time of significant financial pressure with unprecedented budget reductions anticipated. This will have an impact on partner organisations and their budget planning process. The community planning partnership has an important role in ensuring that good communication is in place both between partners and with our communities during this period.
- 1.2** This paper updates the partnership on the actions being taken to ensure good communication is in place across the partnership.

### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1** The partnership notes the joint working that is taking place to ensure good communication at a time of significant financial pressure and a joint message is given to the public.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1** The public sector is facing time of significant financial pressure. The Council has taken an early approach to budget consultation, issuing a document 'Difficult Choices for Difficult Times' in August 2010. This document has been widely distributed and is available on the Council's website.
- 3.2** The executive sub group of community planning agreed in August that a joint approach should be taken to budget consultation to ensure that the public was clearly aware that the public sector partners in particular are in close communication during the budget setting process.
- 3.3** It was agreed that the Forward Together events, to be held in each of the four areas of Argyll and Bute, would feature a budget presentation led by the council and informed by the other partners. At each of the events, the budget presentation has included council budget information presented by a member of the Strategic Management Team, NHS budget information, presented by an NHS representative and some information on other partners' budgets. This has enabled participants to hear a joint presentation

on the budget situation locally. An important element of this is to demonstrate that the global financial situation will ultimately have a direct impact on the public sector in Argyll and Bute and may impact on services.

**3.4** The executive sub group also agreed that the organisations' communications managers would meet and develop a set of key budget messages to be used by all partners during the budget communications. These are currently being considered by members of the executive sub group and are:

- Budget cuts will impact all areas of the public sector. Some services will change, some will disappear.
- We have an opportunity to change the way we deliver services, sharing some of our resources and skills to reduce cost.
- Public sector organisations are already talking to each other about the impact budget cuts in one area could have on the others.
- We need to work hard to make the public understand the reality of budget cuts and prepare them for changes to public sector services.
- Community planning partners are ideally placed to lead these changes and raise awareness.

**3.6** Further agreement on additional communications will take place as necessary and in response to feedback received. Discussions on budget proposals are also being progressed on a regular basis at the executive sub group.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

**4.1** Joint communication on the current challenging financial situation is an important role for community planning. It enables our communities to understand that partners are working together and assists in getting a difficult message across to the widest possible audience.

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