DEVELOPING NEW WAYS OF DELIVERING SERVICES

LOCAL AUTHORITY SAVINGS PLANS

FALKIRK COUNCIL

1. Can you describe the approach that your local authority has taken to both short-term and long-term budget planning since the onset of the financial crisis? For example, has your local authority taken a “zero-based” approach, or has it set out a range of options for savings? Please supply any relevant supporting documentation, for example copies of any budget planning exercises etc.

The Council is moving towards a budget approach which is based on priorities and the medium term rather than the traditional annual timeframe. This will allow a more strategic approach. This is deliberately being pursued in an evolutionary rather than “big bang” manner.

Savings options are presented by Services, reviewed by a high level Corporate Budget Working Group, then by Corporate Management Team, before going to Members for consideration.

A zero-based approach has certain attractions, particularly given the scale of the cuts that Councils are facing, but the practical and resources implications of its application in large multi-service organisations should not be underestimated.

2. Can you describe the consultation that your local authority undertook on your budget plans, both with stakeholders, and the general public?

The Council issues a bi-annual questionnaire along with the council tax billing. Views are also encouraged via the Council’s periodic public newspaper. Moreover, a Citizens’ Panel has been formed. Aligning with the comments at 1) the Council will be reviewing its approach to consultation with both stakeholders and the public.

3. How have the outcomes of your consultation fed into and influenced your budget plans?

Consultations, even with a relatively good response rate only capture a very small proportion of the electorate. Moreover, they may be skewed by, for example, age, gender, location or possibly by active interest groups and in consequence need to be interpreted with care. They, therefore, provide a reference point and context in considering budget options.

4. What involvement has there been from external consultants/advisers in your budget planning, and what influence has this involvement had on your final plans?
This Council has not involved external consultants/advisers but has visited and reviewed approaches adapted by other Councils to inform consideration of alternative models and best practice.