

Item 9 - Question Time

Response to Mrs M Davidson

To date (Tuesday 17 June) around 140 members of the public have attended the budget forums held. There remains one public forum plus a session with Highland Youth Voice to be held by the end of June.

The events have been promoted by a Highland-wide news release with all the budget events listed and a series of follow-up area-specific news releases as reminders for local media needs. All these press releases are posted on the web and then linked to Twitter and Facebook simultaneously.

Messages have also been pre-programmed on Twitter and Facebook for every budget forum a 24hour advance reminder saying budget event 'tomorrow' with date, time and location and on each morning of an event saying the same with reminder 'tonight'. Where an event is located e.g. #Invergordon it is hash tagged so that locals pick it up.

Locally, Ward Managers have circulated information about each forum to their key contacts including Community Councils, Parent Councils, voluntary bodies and equalities groups. Posters have been circulated to Community Councils and are also on display in service points and libraries. Where available, the information has been posted on local websites and promoted on local radio.

It is important to note that this is only one form of engagement in relation to the Council's future spending and good practice in consultation involves using a variety of methods to reach as many people as possible. Forthcoming mechanisms will include consultation with the Citizens' Panel and the new Communities Panel along with a series of focus groups with equalities and hard to reach groups. The Budget Blog is currently live and is being promoted with news releases and on social media. A Facebook chat event is also being considered for later in the year. An on-line questionnaire will also be available for anyone interested in expressing their views in that way.