On February 4, 2020 Council directed staff to research and recommend an open budget process that would be implemented for the 2021 budget.

An open budget process offers citizens an opportunity to learn about the municipal budget process, provide input on priorities and influence the allocation of public resources. Transparent and inclusive budgeting facilitates citizen understanding of issues and government processes, ensures transparency and accountability, improves the quality of decisions made and increases support for the decisions made. Information and outreach are essential components of any budget engagement strategy.

Staff have reviewed a variety of budget engagement strategies, tools and techniques utilized by other municipalities. Leveraging best practices and customizing an approach that is guided by the City’s Public Engagement Framework, this report outlines a phased approach to a comprehensive open budget process.

Certain elements of the engagement plan as presented will need to be amended to adapt to a more virtual setting as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2021 budget engagement process will also provide the opportunity to engage the community on specific COVID-related
impacts and how best to provide services and support the community in a post pandemic setting.

Recommendation:

That Council endorse the budget engagement plans as outlined in Council Report Number 20-098.
Authorization Signatures:

Desiree Kennedy, Chief
Financial Officer & City Treasurer

Lanie Hurdle, Chief
Administrative Officer

Consultation with the following Members of the Corporate Management Team:

Paige Agnew, Commissioner, Community Services  Not required
Peter Huigenbos, Commissioner, Business, Environment & Projects  Not required
Brad Joyce, Commissioner, Corporate Services
Jim Keech, President & CEO, Utilities Kingston  Not required
Sheila Kidd, Commissioner, Transportation & Public Works  Not required
Options/Discussion:

On February 4, 2020, Council passed the motion that City staff research and recommend an open budget process that could be implemented during the budget process for the 2021 budget which takes place in November 2020:

Whereas the City of Kingston’s guiding principles in decision making, policy development and resource allocation includes fiscal responsibility and accountability to create efficiencies and synergies, balance tax and non-tax revenue, and manage debt effectively; and

Whereas successive Councils have supported open and transparent government; and

Whereas public interest is best served by a process that embraces transparency, accountability and openness; and

Whereas these guiding principles should ensure better public engagement to collect diverse perspectives and to act fairly, sustainably, responsibly and equitably on behalf of our citizens; and

Whereas members in our community have asked for opportunities to engage in the budget planning process; and

Whereas Cities such as Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton and Guelph have embraced participatory budgeting;

Therefore Be It Resolved That staff research and recommend an open budget process that can be implemented in the budget process for the 2021 budget which takes place in November 2020; and

That the recommended processes include:

- public meetings, web and social media postings to inform citizens about municipal financial sources, choices and services, and where possible in an interactive format; and

- a consultation process to gather suggestions on how to use the municipal budget to further improve services and performance; and

- feedback to citizens regarding suggestions received and the rationale for decisions made.

Phased Approach to Budget Engagement

An open budget process offers citizens an opportunity to learn about the municipal budget process and to influence the allocation of public resources. A successful budget engagement plan is built using a two-way process that involves listening and interaction with the objective of generating mutual benefit. Citizen engagement and feedback can help to improve performance
by better understanding what the public wants and expects from its government, adjust service levels more closely to citizens’ preferences in the context of limited resources, and understand public priorities in planning, budgeting, and managing services.

While Council’s motion requests a proposed open budget process that could be implemented for the 2021 budget, this report lays out a proposed three-year phased approach for a budget engagement process.

Information and outreach are essential components of a public engagement strategy. To successfully engage citizens in the budgeting process and to ensure that interaction is effective and feedback is constructive, it is important that the engagement plan incorporate a comprehensive informative element to ensure that citizens have appropriate and accessible information about the budget process and a solid understanding of service levels, budget constraints, and other relevant fiscal measures.

Recognizing this, the City’s Public Engagement Framework has been used to guide a phased approach using a continuum of engagement levels. Using this Framework, the budget engagement plans will focus initially on informative outreach with some consultative engagement, moving incrementally along the continuum each year to the mid-level of public engagement. The approach will continue to be reviewed and modified annually.

The ‘inform’ level of engagement provides residents with balanced and informed information to deepen their knowledge of the budgeting process. The objective of the ‘consult’ level is to obtain feedback from residents on specific budgetary priorities and alternatives. As we move to an ‘involve’ level, the focus will be on engagement initiatives that work directly with residents to ensure their goals and objectives for city budgets are understood and considered.

Participatory budgeting is discussed later in this report. This engagement technique is not scheduled for implementation before phase 3 of the budget engagement process but it will move the City farther along the continuum supporting a higher level of public engagement by partnering with the public in each aspect of a decision and incorporating the advice and recommendations into final decisions to the maximum extent possible.
The proposed budget engagement approach will:

- Engage citizens in the budget planning process and inform citizens about the City’s operating and capital budget processes.

- Illustrate the linkage between budget and Council’s Strategic Priorities, which inform the budget process.

- Consult citizens on defined aspects of the City budget and generate ideas to further improve services and performance.

- Inform citizens about the connection between budgets and property taxes.

- Provide feedback to citizens throughout the budget engagement process and build trust and support for plans.

**Best practices**

Municipalities are implementing a number of different methods of public engagement as part of their budget process. The levels of engagement and range of methodologies utilized varies widely, but there are several commonly employed techniques and tools:

- The use of engagement pages (similar to Kingston’s Get Involved Kingston platform) that utilize surveys, Q&A’s and public forums.

- Videos and infographics on public websites to inform citizens about how municipal budgets work.

- Social media strategies.

- Use of budget simulation and budget allocator tools.

- Budget open house and pop-up events to encourage public participation.

- Live streaming of budget meetings and other events and social media coverage.

- Infographics and budget summaries on public website to illustrate approved budgets and priorities.

Many municipalities organize budget town hall/open house events and/or pop-up events to encourage public participation. Ottawa, Oshawa, Sudbury, London, and Guelph have all conducted surveys, developed Q&A’s, and utilized public forums on their website engagement pages. Ottawa and London have utilized effective videos and infographics on their websites to inform citizens about how City budgets work. Ottawa, Barrie, and Sudbury have built and utilize budget allocator tools and simulations.
A more comprehensive summary of tools and techniques utilized by other municipalities is included on Exhibit A to this report.

What have we been doing?

The proposed budget engagement plan has been built on a number of existing engagement initiatives that have focused the last few years on ensuring that residents are informed on the City’s budgeting processes and related property tax information.

A comprehensive budget report and detailed budget summaries and budget presentations are available to the public and budget deliberations are recorded for future access. The City’s website includes a Budget and Financials webpage that helps to inform residents on budget related processes and other financial information. Information available on this webpage has been expanded over the last few years to include current year budget overviews and presentations, approved operating and capital bylaws, audited financial statements, credit rating information, links to the property tax webpage and prior year budget and financial statement archives. The City’s webpage is recognized on the Province of Ontario’s “Engage the community in long-term financial planning” landing page for maintaining an on-line repository of previous budgets, audited financial statements and performance measures.

Both the Budget and Financials and Property Tax webpages are scheduled to be updated and changes will be coordinated with the budget engagement plan including linkages to the new Get Involved Kingston Budget Page described below.

Scope of Budget Engagement

The first step of any public participation processes is to establish a tangible purpose or objective for the engagement. Determining the purpose is critical because the purpose becomes the foundation for deciding who to involve, how to connect with them, what activities they will be involved in, what information will be collected, and how the City will use the information. Not only is the municipal budgeting process a broad concept but there are many inputs into that process that can benefit from public input. The focus of engagement within an open budget process will need to be clearly identified and well-defined. Different aspects of the budget process will be selected for engagement, focusing on a variety of different elements:

- Strategic priorities and investment - understanding the level of support for Council’s priorities and the level of desired investment in moving those priorities forward;

- Service levels - closely aligning services to citizens’ preferences - adjusting existing service levels and adding new services in the context of limited resources and effective service delivery;

- Performance – generating ideas to further improve services and performance – creative ideas and solutions for revenue generation, cost savings and efficiencies.
- Project specific – understanding the linkage between preferences and investment and how to allocate fixed resources.

Exhibit B provides further detail on preliminary budget engagement plans developed to date in consultation with Communications and Customer Experience. Staff will launch and/or expand these various elements over the three phases, as applicable, utilizing a balanced approach to education and consultation.

**Phase 1: 2021 Budget Engagement**

While this phase will focus on a strategy more heavily weighted to informing citizens on the municipal budgeting process, related service levels and priorities, it will also implement a consultation component which will provide new opportunities for citizens to interact with staff and Council regarding specific aspects of the operating and capital budgets.

Online engagement is a good opportunity to raise awareness, engage and educate the community on budget related matters. The engagement process will leverage the Get Involved Kingston platform, existing networks such as community associations and a strong City social media presence.

The following engagement tools will be utilized during the first phase of the City’s budget engagement process.

**Get Involved Kingston ‘Budget’ Page**

A new Get Involved Kingston budget page will be launched for budget engagement purposes. This new page will provide the tools to both inform and consult on municipal budgets. It will be used to provide informative budget information, allow citizens the opportunity to learn about the budget process, engage with City staff and access information relevant to the budget process including timelines and opportunities for engagement. Exhibit C to this report illustrates a mock-up of the budget landing page that is currently under development.

Content on the Get Involved Budget Page could include elements such as:

- Specific financial information using infographics & chart formats
- Videos of the budget process (what is a budget, how it works)
- A ‘who’s listening’ section with City staff contacts and dedicated email address
- Budget timelines and key dates
- Frequently asked questions
- Links to supporting information (strategic plan, audited financial statements, credit rating information, annual municipal debt limit report)
- Property tax information and webpage links

The new budget page will utilize existing features on the Get Involved platform. Residents might submit questions to City staff about the budgeting process, review an FAQ, and/or answer specific poll or survey questions.

The Get Involved Kingston platform offers expanded functionality to implement an interactive budgeting tool. There are various forms of interactive simulator products available for budget engagement.

The Taxpayer Receipt module was developed by Balancing Act, a company that has partnered with Bang the Table, the provider of the Get Involved Kingston platform. It is an effective way to demonstrate to taxpayers how their tax dollars are being utilized. Property owners can input their property’s assessment value and generate a customized estimate of property taxes paid and how those tax dollars have been spent. Budget simulations can also allow the taxpayer to develop their own recommended municipal budget and be able to see the financial impacts of various service level decisions. A more targeted budget simulation would be to engage on the budget planning for a specific capital project such as the development of new park.

Staff are currently reviewing options for simulator functionality and developing specific scenarios with a plan to launch a pilot simulation in phase 1 and to expand the use of interactive budget simulation tools in phases 2 and 3.

**Budget Website**

In addition to the Get Involved Kingston budget page, the City’s dedicated budget website will be re-launched and will include comprehensive budget information that will support the Get Involved Kingston budget page. This page currently posts budget overviews and presentations, budget bylaws and frequently asked questions.

**Social Media**

As in the past, citizens will be encouraged to follow and interact with the City on Facebook and Twitter regarding various aspects of the budget process. Utilizing existing communication channels will ensure that the City leverages existing social media following on Twitter and Facebook.

**Live Streaming of Budget Meetings**

Staff will work with the City Clerk to review options to leverage existing technology for live stream viewing of Council budget meetings and deliberations. Events will be advertised across various City communication channels, both on and offline.

**Budget Open Houses and Pop Ups**

Open houses provide an effective, innovative approach to stimulating citizen participation. They provide the opportunity to reach a broad range of citizens and they can be structured in such a
way that they appeal to a variety of people and foster both small group and on-on-one communications. A traditional engagement tool for sharing information, a budget open house can also incorporate interactive stations that encourage participation and input into the budget process.

While budget open houses were a key component of the first phase of budget engagement, initial strategies will need to be amended to adapt to a virtual setting as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The use of interactive stations that focus on both informative and consultative components will have to be reconfigured, however the content will remain relevant as outlined further below.

Interactive stations focusing on the following elements:
- Display boards - budget process flowchart, Council strategic priorities infographic, property tax information
- Videos – budget process, how your property tax is calculated, property assessment
- Surveys and interactive opportunities – evaluate and rank budget priorities and capital spending proposals, open ended request for comments, suggestions for future budget engagement processes
- Interactive booths that allow for one-on-one discussions with various City staff for selected services as well as budget, financial planning and property taxation
  - Ask the CAO, City Treasurer, Commissioner…
  - Display boards indicating service information; outlining upcoming activities and projects

Phase 2 and 3: 2022 and 2023 Budget Engagement

Phases 2 and 3 of the Budget Engagement plan will continue to expand on activities initiated in phase 1. A more detailed engagement plan will be developed based on lessons learned and feedback received from previous phases. These phases will expand on the level of engagement allowing for increased and more targeted consultation and feedback.

The phase 3 budget engagement plan will not only inform the 2023 budget development but might also consider elements that could help inform the new Council’s Strategic Priority setting process anticipated for later in 2023.

Expanded use of the Get Involved Kingston Budget Page

It is expected that Phase 2 and 3 of the budget engagement process will include expanded use of the interactive budget simulation tools on the Get Involved platform. A simulation concept will need to be fully developed with considerations for use with both operating and capital budgets.
Expanded use of the budget simulator tool can be used in future phases to allow citizens to consider specific scenarios, utilizing various thresholds, constraints and parameters.

**Closing the Feedback Loop**

An important step in any public engagement process is ‘closing the loop’. Participants must feel that their participation is valued and useful and reporting back to citizens is the best way to demonstrate the City’s dedication to the public engagement process.

The City’s Public Engagement Framework supports a process for summarizing and reporting feedback through a variety of methods including emails to survey responders, social media posts, the City’s Get Involved page and council reports. Consistent with other City engagement processes, the budget engagement process will ensure appropriate citizen feedback is provided including examples of how input has been used to inform the budget development process.

**COVID-19 Impacts**

Considering the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, phase 1 of the budget engagement plan outlined below will need to be adjusted to recognize the limited ability of the municipality to hold the traditional in-person events. While some of the tools and strategies, such as the online platforms, electronic surveys and interactive tools, can be implemented as outlined, public events will need to be modified and/or deferred to the 2022 budget engagement phase.

Staff is bringing a separate report to Council recommending strategies to address the restrictions associated with public meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2021 budget engagement process will be developed in accordance with these strategies and the City’s Engagement During COVID-19 Tool Kit and Guidelines.

The 2021 budget development process will be significantly influenced by the fiscal and operational implications of the pandemic affecting the content of public engagement process. This will provide the opportunity to engage the community on specific COVID-related impacts and how best to provide services and support the community in a post pandemic setting.

Council has approved deferring the 2020 budget deliberations to early in 2021. This timeline is consistent with an election year budget process schedule and will allow staff to incorporate updated information with respect to the status of our 2020 financial position and the anticipated 2021 budget challenges as a result of COVID-19. The revised budget schedule will allow for greater public engagement later in 2020.

**Participatory Budgeting**

Participatory budgeting is a specific type of engagement process where citizens can propose and vote on community investment projects, based on defined parameters and available funding as determined by the municipality. Typically, citizens are asked to propose, discuss, prioritize and/or vote on municipal projects, and are ultimately empowered to make real decisions about how municipal funds are spent in areas that impact or benefit them.
While the methods and processes used in participatory budgeting can vary, they generally follow a series of steps as illustrated below:

- Community outreach and engagement
- Project proposal development
- Community voting process
- Reporting back
- Project implementation

Source: Participatory Budgeting Project (https://www.participatorybudgeting.org/what-is-pb/)

The City of Toronto and the City of Vancouver have both incorporated Participatory Budgeting methodologies into their budget processes. Toronto began its participatory budgeting pilot in 2015-2017 and invited residents to propose and vote on capital projects to improve their neighbourhoods. In 2018, the City of Vancouver initiated a participatory budgeting pilot project to involve residents in decisions on where to distribute additional revenue collected through parking permit fees.

The City has, in the past, utilized a form of participatory budgeting in allocating funds received from the Kingston Solar LP (Samsung) Renewable Energy Project – Community Benefit Program. Using the Get Involved project page and a survey tool, residents had the opportunity to rank preferred funding options.

City staff had the opportunity to discuss participatory budgeting and community engagement with teaching staff from Queen’s University Department of Political Studies. The discussion included the prospect of partnering on a pilot project with doctoral students using the principles of participatory budgeting to engage participants in the budget process by developing creative approaches and solutions to a topic being proposed. Staff will continue to review this opportunity.
As tools and information evolve during the phased budget engagement process, it is expected that suggestions for participatory budgeting projects will emerge and can be integrated into phase 3 of the budget engagement process.

**Existing Policy/By-Law:**

None

**Notice Provisions:**

None

**Accessibility Considerations:**

None

**Financial Considerations:**

Costs incurred to develop the citizen budget engagement tools will be absorbed in the existing 2020 budget. Any costs related to future phases will be incorporated into future years’ operating budget submissions as required.

**Contacts:**

Lana Foulds, Director, Financial Services 613-546-4291 extension 2209

**Other City of Kingston Staff Consulted:**

JC Kenny, Director, Communications & Customer Experience

Debbi Miller, Manager, Communications & Customer Engagement

Julielee Stitt, Communications Officer

Nicole MacKinnon, Financial Analyst

**Exhibits Attached:**

Exhibit A – Budget Engagement – Tools Used by Other Municipalities

Exhibit B - Draft Budget Engagement Plans

Exhibit C – Mock-up: Get Involved Kingston Budget Page
## Budget Engagement – Tools Used by Other Municipalities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Tools</th>
<th>Scope of Consultation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Offered 2020 “Budget Board”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Live streamed budget meetings</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Shared previous budgets &amp; timelines</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Promoted budget on website &amp; social media</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barrie</td>
<td><a href="https://www.barrrie.ca/City%20Hall/Budget/Pages/Budget.aspx">https://www.barrrie.ca/City%20Hall/Budget/Pages/Budget.aspx</a></td>
<td>- Divided allocator tool into nine service areas for the tax rate operating budget (Roads, Parks &amp; Forestry, Recreation, Transit, Environmental Operations, Creative Economy, Business Development, Planning Services, Fire &amp; Emergency Service).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Launched Budget Allocator Tool – choose to increase spending 5%, maintain existing service level, or decrease spending 5% (service implications were specified)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Building Barrie public engagement site</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Video</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oshawa</td>
<td><a href="https://connectoshawa.ca/budget2020">https://connectoshawa.ca/budget2020</a></td>
<td>- Asked residents to share 2020 City budget priorities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Offered online survey participants a chance to win an iPad in a draw</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Face-to-face with Council at ward town hall (total of 5)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Online on Connect Oshawa (Engagement platform); or on paper at Service Oshawa</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Used Bang the Table-type platform</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Budget allocator &amp; simulations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Short survey</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Videos (about 3 min. each) - How your municipal budget works; How property tax assessment &amp; taxation work; and How the budget works</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Promoted process via website/social media</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Organized by strategic area:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Asset Management and Service Excellence</td>
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<td>Business Attraction, Development and Retention</td>
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<td>Climate Change</td>
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<td>Economic Capacity &amp; Investment Readiness</td>
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<td>Housing</td>
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<td>Create a Healthier Community</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Strengthen Community Vibrancy</td>
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<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td>Tools</td>
<td>Scope of Consultation</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burlington</td>
<td><a href="https://www.getinvolvedburlington.ca/2020-budget?tool=survey_tool#tool_tab">https://www.getinvolvedburlington.ca/2020-budget?tool=survey_tool#tool_tab</a></td>
<td>2020 Budget, categorized under priorities:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Used a Bang the Table engagement site</td>
<td>- A City that Grows</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(News &amp; Survey)</td>
<td>- A City that Moves</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Held a “Food for Feedback” BBQ</td>
<td>- A Healthy and Greener City of Kingston</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Staff offered a Budget Overview Report</td>
<td>- An Engaging City</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Offered Budget Telephone Town Hall</td>
<td>- A Safe City</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Offered <a href="2020">Burlington Open Budget visualization tool</a></td>
<td>Telephone Town Hall event – live polling, and opportunity to ask questions about proposed budget priorities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- <a href="https://www.getinvolvedburlington.ca/2020-budget?tool=survey_tool#tool_tab">Budget Basics video</a> 2:40</td>
<td>Page indicated engagement is IAP2 “Inform and consult”</td>
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<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td><a href="https://www.london.ca/city-hall/budget-business/budget/Pages/Annual-Budget-Update-Key-Dates.aspx">https://www.london.ca/city-hall/budget-business/budget/Pages/Annual-Budget-Update-Key-Dates.aspx</a></td>
<td>- 2020-2023 Multi-year budget</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Get Involved-type platform and <a href="https://www.london.ca/city-hall/budget-business/budget/Pages/Annual-Budget-Update-Key-Dates.aspx">survey</a></td>
<td>- General Property Tax &amp; Water/Wastewater &amp; Treatment Budgets</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Open houses</td>
<td>- ‘Get Involved’ page offered business cases for which participants could vote “Yes” or “No” and/or provide comment.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Community Events</td>
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<td>- Ward meetings</td>
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<td>- Public participation meetings</td>
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<td>- Livestreaming budget meetings</td>
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<td>- Multi-year budget videos</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Promoted on website &amp; social media</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Opinion Research Survey</td>
<td>- Initiatives in three categories: Fixed costs; Filling service gaps and addressing risks; Investments to advance Council’s priorities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Talk Vancouver online survey</td>
<td>- Had a <a href="https://vancouver.ca/your-government/budget-engagement.aspx">Civic Service Satisfaction Report</a></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 3-1-1- Telephone</td>
<td>- Public engagement summary starts on <a href="https://vancouver.ca/your-government/budget-engagement.aspx">p. 457</a> of Draft budget</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Youth Outreach</td>
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<td>- Stakeholder Workshop</td>
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<td>- Online webinar</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Participatory budgeting pilot</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tools</td>
<td>Scope of Consultation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>- Offered DRAFT budget for input</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="https://engage.ottawa.ca/draft-budget-2020">https://engage.ottawa.ca/draft-budget-2020</a></td>
<td>- Resulting budget highlighted expenditures under strategic priority headings (i.e. A Caring City, A Prosperous City, A Sustainable City, An Affordable City)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Offered 4 min. video overview of “How your City Budget works” on a Bang-the-Table engagement platform</td>
<td>- Offered breakdown of taxes per $100,000 of assessed home value and location of home (i.e. urban, rural with reduced transit service and rural with Para Transpo Service only)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ask a Question, Build a Budget, Budget Survey on Engage Page (October to November)</td>
<td>- Offered reporting structure of City services</td>
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<td>- Submit a question</td>
<td>- Offered a comparison of Ottawa’s tax increase to those of other cities</td>
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<td>- Submit feedback using budget allocation tool</td>
<td>- Offered info on funding streams</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Fill out budget survey</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Submit ideas to <a href="https://engage.ottawa.ca/draft-budget-2020">Ward Councillor</a> (External link)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Follow and communicate on <a href="https://www.facebook.com/ottawacity">Facebook</a> and Twitter <a href="https://twitter.com/ottawacity">@ottawacity</a> (External link) using hashtag #ottbudget</td>
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<td>- Call ins for rural &amp; urban participants</td>
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<tr>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>- Residents offered opportunity to make deputations to Budget Committee at four locations. Presentations limited to 5 minutes, and Councillors on Budget Committee can ask questions of presenters following deputations.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Launched “Get Involved in the Budget” section of website:</td>
<td>- Public welcomed at all budget meetings and budget-related meetings of City Council.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/budget-finances/city-budget/how-to-get-involved-in-the-budget/">https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/budget-finances/city-budget/how-to-get-involved-in-the-budget/</a></td>
<td>- Residents encouraged to send budget feedback to specific email address, as well as traditional mail to either the City or Councillor.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Participatory Budget Pilot from 2015 to 2017:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/get-involved/participatory-budgeting/">https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/get-involved/participatory-budgeting/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>o Allowed residents in 3 wards (14+) to vote on capital projects which would take place in their communities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Promoted on various social media sites, and used #BudgetTO on Twitter</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Draft Budget Engagement Plans (2021 – 2023 Budget Process)

Elements below would be launched and/or expanded over the three phases as applicable, utilizing a balanced approach to education and consultation.

1. Launch Get Involved Kingston Budget page and update/expand Budget and Financials webpage on the City website to align with Get Involved Kingston page

   o financial information using infographics & charts
   o videos
   o council strategic priorities infographic
   o budget summaries
   o budget presentations
   o key dates
   o property tax information

   Video and/or Infographic on Budget Process (what budget is / how it works):

   – Sample video from City of Victoria website – what your city budget means to you:

   – Sample video and infographic from City of Ottawa website – how your city budget works:
- **Key Dates**
  - Budget Open Houses
  - Budget surveys
  - Committee and Council Meeting Dates

- **Who’s Listening?**
  - Communications Officer
  - Finance Representatives

- **Project Timeline**
  - Budget process timeline & approvals

- **FAQ’s (from current City of Kingston Budgets & Financials webpage)**
  - What is the operating budget?
  - What is the municipal utility operating budget?
  - What is the capital budget?
  - How does Council arrive at its yearly budget?
  - How does the budget balance financial restrictions with demands?
  - How does the City’s credit rating affect our ability to borrow money or issue debentures?

- **Links**
  - 2020 Capital Budget Bylaw
  - 2020 Operating Budget Bylaw
  - 2019 Financial Statement
  - Budget Archive
  - Kingston’s Strategic Plan (2019-2022)
  - Standard & Poor’s Credit Rating
  - Debt Report

- **Info on ‘How to Get Involved in City Budget’**

- **Breakdown of annual property taxes based on average assessment value:**

  The average residential tax increase in 2019 is 1.84%. For a residential property owner with an average assessment of $319,073, the annual property taxes would be approximately $4,114. Included in this total is $514 for education, which is set by the provincial government. The municipal portion is $3,600.

  When broken down, this amounts to $300 per month, for all municipal services. These services include:

  - **$41 Capital Infrastructure Investment**
  - **$6 Cultural Services**
  - **$35 Fire & Emergency Management**
  - **$10 Waste Management**
  - **$37 Other Agendas & Boards**
  - **$29 General Government**
  - **$24 Community & Family Services**
  - **$3 Planning, Licensing & Bylaw Enforcement**
  - **$50 Police Services**
  - **$10 Recreation Programs & Facilities**
  - **$7 Redevelopment Long-Term Care**
  - **$22 Transportation Services**
  - **$30 Roads, Sidewalks, Parks Maintenance & Winter Control**
- Council Strategic Priorities Infographic

![Council’s Strategic Priorities](image)

2. Create **dedicated email address** for budget questions (link on website and GIK ‘Budget’ project page (utilize existing Customer Service protocols)

3. Utilize the **Q&A IDEAS tool** on Get Involved Kingston page.

4. **Budget Open House(s)**
   - Interactive stations:
     - Display boards - budget process flowchart, Council strategic priorities infographic, property tax information
     - Videos – budget process, how your property tax is calculated, property assessment
     - Surveys and interactive opportunities – evaluate and rank budget priorities and capital spending proposals, open ended request for comments, suggestions for future budget engagement processes
     - Interactive booths that allow for one-on-one discussions with various City staff for selected services as well as budget, financial planning and property taxation

City of London:  [http://www.london.ca/city-hall/budget-business/budget/Pages/Annual-Budget-Update-Key-Dates.aspx](http://www.london.ca/city-hall/budget-business/budget/Pages/Annual-Budget-Update-Key-Dates.aspx)

5. **Launch Survey(s)**
   - Consider what information would be useful, effective and result in actionable feedback

Consultation scope

Understanding

How familiar are you with the City’s operating and capital budgets and how they are prepared?

Identify preferred options for future budget engagement methods and tools

Council priorities and investment

Where should the city focus strategic investment that will enhance quality of life?

Rank the following council priorities in order of importance to you

What are the most important issues facing the city today

Services and service level priorities

What services need to be improved and what tradeoffs could be made to fund these improvements?

How important do you think the following services/programs are to the community…list of services and degree - very important, important, neutral, little importance, not important

List of services – select options for increasing, decreasing or maintaining level of service

Rate the following services based on how well you think they are being delivered in our community… list of services and degree of effectiveness

Prioritize capital funding between a selection of projects or infrastructure classes
Tax rates

Desire for increased levels of service that would be paid for through property tax increases beyond the typical annual increase of approximately 1.5% reflecting the rate of inflation needed to maintain levels of service.

Would you support an additional % increase in property taxes to support increased levels of service (list) / council priority (list)

The following services currently receive funding from user fees. Please identify for each service whether or not you would support an increase in user fees to reduce reliance on property taxes

6. Launch/expand usage of **Balancing Act** (budget tool that interacts with Bang the Table) and make tool available on City’s ‘Get Involved’ Budget Project page

- Initial goal to inform/educate public on the budget & process
- Balancing the budget interactive activities
- Implement taxpayer receipt module for citizens to calculate what they pay for services based on their property assessment
- Implement a budget simulator tool to allow citizens to allocate financial resources to a project, services and/or priorities
  - Change allocations via $ amount, % (or combination)
  - Consider use of scenarios and thresholds/constraints

Budget Allocator tool (1)

Online budget allocation activity - designed to allow the taxpayers to determine the allocation of taxes by increasing, decreasing or maintaining funding for core service areas by increasing funding by 2.5%, maintaining existing funding or decreasing funding by 2.5%; budget updates as changes are made; opportunity to submit proposed budget.

Budget Allocator tool (2)

Alternative budget allocation activity - survey respondents provided with $ coins that represent the average amount of a homeowner’s monthly property tax bill. Respondents asked to allocate the coins to different tax supported departments by dragging and dropping the coins to the departments they wish to invest in.
Budget funding activity - select a mix of options for balancing the budget
- Increase property taxes
- Increase user fees for City services that currently have fees
- Introduce new user fees where possible for City services that currently have no user fees.
- Reduce level of City services such as hours or frequency of service
- Other suggestions

7. Encourage citizens to follow and communicate with City on Facebook and Twitter

8. Live stream budget meetings

9. Summarize feedback and annual report to Council and citizens

Sample websites


City of London: http://www.london.ca/city-hall/budget-business/budget/Pages/default.aspx (open houses, interactive, website)

Niagara Falls: https://letstalk.niagarafalls.ca/budget-engagement-2018 (website and survey)

City of Winnipeg: https://www.winnipeg.ca/Interhom/Budget/2019BudgetEngagement/default.stm#tab-documents (open houses, summary document, interactive)


City of Lloydminster: https://yourvoicelloyd.ca/2020-Budget (survey)

City of Ottawa: https://ottawa.ca/en/city-hall/budget/understanding-your-city-budget
Mock-up: Get Involved Kingston Budget Page

2021 Budget Engagement
Help shape the City’s 2021 annual operating and capital budgets! The budgets outline the City’s financial plan to implement Council’s short and long term goals and priorities. Budgets are organized by departments/divisions showing the operational and capital requirements by the programs and services provided. Opportunities to learn more about the budgeting process, service level policies, and other budget related factors will be highlighted on this page.