
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

1. Members will be aware consultation on the proposed MTFP continued until 14th February, 2008 which was after the despatch of the report. This paper is to update Members on further consultation material received.
2. Since the production of the report, the following have been received :-
 - (a) 132 letters and emails
 - (b) 50 consultation forms
3. Analysis of the above show in :-
 - (a) 124 writing to oppose the removal of bus subsidy for routes 19 and 97
 - (b) 3 requests for not withdrawing Parish Grants
 - (c) 11 expressions of support to retain Civil Advice
 - (d) 22 views that expenditure should be reduced to deliver a lower Council Tax and 5 expression of support and understanding of the proposed increase
 - (e) 8 opposing removal of bus passes prior to 9.30 (note, this was a separate Cabinet decision on 15th January, outside of the budget proposals)
 - (f) 10 requests for improved highways maintenance
 - (g) 18 views that efficiency should be improved and general unnecessary expenditure stopped
 - (h) 9 requests to improve Streetscene, environment and more recycling
 - (i) 6 views that spending on Children's services should be reduced
 - (j) 3 views supporting more spending on services for the elderly and other vulnerable groups and 2 it this should be reduced
 - (k) 6 views that spending on sport, leisure and arts should be reduced and one that it should increase. One letter opposing the proposal to cease support for the Ring-a-Ride service
 - (l) In reply to the question on the leaflet "Are you happy with the budget proposals" 39 ticked "no" and 3 ticked "yes". Eight respondents did not tick either box.

Several respondents included more than one issue in their comments.

4. In addition, a document has been received from the Conservative Group (attached) in response to the consultation process, the document is attached to this paper. The document proposes an alternative overall budget for Cabinet's consideration. Set out below are the observations and views of the Corporate Management Team (CMT).

- (a) A Partial Freeze on job replacements and a freeze on recruitment during 2008 - £1,020,000.

There is no detail accompanying this proposal. It must be assumed therefore that where vacancies arise they will not be replaced. Given the significant financial sum involved this would equate to a large number of posts being held vacant. This would have a significant impact on the Council's ability to deliver services, and would impact upon the Council's ability to achieve the Corporate Plan and the Sustainable Community Strategy.

Members may be aware that the current MTFP already includes £1.147m of planned staffing savings. These will mainly be achieved through vacancy management together with a review of current vacancies. The Corporate Management Team have proposed these savings and explained any impact on services.

It is the view of Officers that Members may not make a decision based on the information provided as it is insufficient to enable a proper judgement to be made on the implications. These would only be clarified as vacancies arose during the year (or didn't) If Members were to agree the proposed budget the amount would have to be underwritten by revenue balances in case Members are not willing to accept the implications of the recruitment freeze.

However it should be noted that balances are not sufficient to cover the sums required over the period of the MTFP and further reductions would have to be found or the projected level of Council tax increased.

- (b) Gershon Savings - £200,000

There is no detail on how this would be achieved. CMT has set a realistic and achievable target for savings within the draft MTFP based on the organisations capacity to deliver change and efficiency. In the absence of detail of how this extra saving can be achieved the comments are then the same as above, that is the £200,000 would have to be underwritten by balances.

- (c) Additional Energy Savings - £100,000

There is no detail on how this would be achieved. CMT have included a realistic estimate of energy savings within the MTFP. Without details of how this additional saving can be achieved, the sum of £100,000 would need to be underwritten by revenue balances.

- (d) Overall it is the professional view of CMT that the proposed amended budget is not supported by adequate detail of how savings will be achieved. If Members are to agree the amendments then provision must be made to utilise a further £1.3m revenue balances per annum. This approach would not be sustainable given the level of available balances and therefore Members would need to find further reductions in future years and/or increase Council Tax levels in order to balance the MTFP.

Corporate Management Team