



North Tyneside Council

Appendix B

Final

Budget Engagement 2014/15

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Introduction

The process to set the Council's budget for the next three years from April 2014 started on 26 November 2013 when the Elected Mayor and Cabinet agreed their initial budget proposals.

The proposals were in line with the priorities of the Our North Tyneside Plan that was developed after an extensive consultation exercise during the summer of 2013.

North Tyneside Council is committed to ongoing engagement with residents. Therefore this work compliments the other engagement exercises that have taken place throughout the year and which have been used during the development of the budget proposals for 2014/15. For example in November 2013 the Council took part in the National Take Over Day when 26 young people gave their views on Council services to the Deputy Chief Executive.

The focus of this period of engagement was to consult with residents and other stakeholders to identify any issues in relation to the budget proposals as well as any other suggestions for budget changes.

Purpose of this report

The period of engagement began on 26 November 2013 and is due to end on 7 February 2014. The purpose of this report is to inform the Cabinet discussion on 15 January 2014 with the feedback that we have received so far.

The findings in this report take account of the responses gathered from 26 November 2013 until 20th December 2013.

A further report will be produced for the Council meeting on 20 February 2014.

Methodology

In order to gather the views of residents from across North Tyneside, it was decided that a short quantitative survey would be the most appropriate methodology to be used for this piece of work.

Residents were asked to answer the following questions in relation to the proposals:

- Are there any issues which will need to be considered when taking the proposals forward?
- If yes, what could be done to address these?
- Do you have any other proposals to help the council to achieve its priorities within the financial challenges it faces?

The survey was hosted on the council's website.

Alongside the online survey, it was also decided to hold a series of group discussions with representatives of the resident population of North Tyneside. The group discussions all focused on the same set of questions asked in the online survey. The group discussions were held with

- The council's Residents Panel on 5th December 2013. A total of 25 Residents Panel members attended the meeting.
- The North Tyneside Strategic Partnership , which includes representatives from the Police, Fire and Rescue Service, Clinical Commissioning Group, TyneMet College, the Voluntary Sector, the Business Forum and the Chamber of Commerce.
- The Working With The Voluntary Sector forum. 36 members of the community and voluntary sector attended session.
- North Tyneside Homes' Service Development Groups on 9th December 2013. 35 tenant members of Service Development Groups attended.

The rest of the report provides detail of the results gathered from the online survey (inclusive of 26th November to 20th December 2013), and the feedback gathered from the group discussions (as detailed on page 3).

Findings

This section of the report provides details of the findings gathered so far from the consultation exercise. The findings focus on the online consultation exercise and those obtained from the two group discussions.

Section A: Feedback from online consultation

Number of people who think there are issues that need considering when taking the proposals forward (10 responses)

Seven respondents to the online survey said they believe there are issues that need to be considered when taking the proposals forward, whereas three respondents believe there are not.

Ideas suggested by respondents to address the issues (7 responses)

Those respondents who said they think there are issues that need considering when taking the proposals forward were asked to outline their ideas for how the issues could be addressed. These ideas included:

- Expanding the Healthy Hearts programme, making it available to all residents of the borough
- Creating suitable cycling tracks at the coastal area of North Tyneside
- Improving the road markings on the borough's roads
- Retaining council staff "at all costs" so that services can continue to be delivered – "even back office staff"
- Having more consultation with a wide as possible selection of the population on the proposals
- Providing modest investment in community organisations to alleviate the impact of spending reductions, thus compensating for the reductions in council staffing.
- The importance of going ahead with the boat launch revamp at Tynemouth Haven

Other proposals suggested by respondents to help the council achieve its priorities within the financial challenges it faces (7 responses)

Respondents were asked to suggest any other proposals they may have that will help the council to achieve its priorities within the financial challenges it faces. These other proposals included:

- Expanding the Healthy Hearts programme
- Develop the boat launch at Tynemouth Haven to generate money
- Reduce street cleaning on Sundays to cover the main centres of Wallsend, Whitley Bay, North Shields and Tynemouth only
- Stop planting flowers – concentrate on improving the lives of vulnerable people and keeping children healthy and educated
- Sell assets such as Wallsend Town Hall, Harvey Coombe and Swans
- Concentrate on dealing with the current financial circumstances
- Engage more creatively with Third sector organisations, and change the way residents are engaged with to a more proactive approach.

Section B: Feedback from Group Discussions

All the group discussions focussed on questions 2 and 3, which, from the answers obtained, were amalgamated into one discussion. Therefore, the answers below cover both questions 2 and 3.

The answers gathered from the two group discussions tended to focus on eight themes. These being:

- Apprenticeships and Employment
- Education
- Energy and the Environment
- Engagement and Communications
- Health and Social Care
- Housing
- Leisure and Tourism
- Transport.

The answers to the questions are outlined below and fall within each of the eight themes listed above.

Responses to questions 2 and 3:

Q2). “What could be done to address any issues when taking the proposals forward?”

Q3). “Do you have any other proposals to help the council achieve its priorities within the financial challenges it faces?”

Apprenticeships and Employment:

- “Encourage businesses to invest in North Tyneside, which will solve a lot of our problems”
- “Need to work with businesses and other providers to ensure availability of good quality apprenticeships that lead to employment”
- “Need to invest in our young people”
- “More job hubs needed. Fund these projects”
- “Expand training offers and have specific, quality training with recognised qualifications”
- “Extra in depth review around employment to cover people missed in other two reviews”
- “Need to be realistic about growth in employment opportunities”
- “Place a little more emphasis on the community and voluntary sector, perhaps with more funding, to help people with skills development geared towards gaining future employment”.

Education:

- “Be careful about closing schools as we may not have enough, in the right places of the right quality to meet a growing population. Larger classes will lead to poorer results. It could cost more to transport children to school”
- “Surplus school places - we don’t want to abolish surplus places now, only to build extra housing that will require more school places. Need to link to the wider picture”
- “Good schools should be a priority along with proper apprenticeships and training”.

Energy and the Environment

- “Invest in renewable energy from waste”
- “Green technology could be used to save money”
- “Is council energy efficient enough?”
- “Turn off lights, heating etc in areas not open or being used”.

Engagement and Communication:

- “Residents want to see more information on what is being achieved by the Council”
- “Need more Council Staff ‘on the ground’ interacting with and encouraging communities to come/work together”
- “There is a perception that the Council doesn’t listen to residents – there needs to be more feedback on what the Council has done in response to residents concerns/suggestions (newsletter, website etc)”
- “When carrying out consultation produce easy to understand information”
- “need to keep face-to-face contact for residents to speak with council officers regarding issues/concerns rather than moving information to the web”.

Health and Social Care:

- “Council should reduce the costs of the gym to keep people healthy”
- “If those with relatively minor needs are not supported their needs may escalate”
- “Reduce Adult social care budget”
- “Do more preventative work”
- “Save money in health”
- “Reduce hospital admissions for our residents”

Housing:

- “Look at low cost home ownership options”
- “Build homes in the right place not just where we can”
- “New build homes should be green”
- “North Tyneside Homes Sheltered Housing have carried out a pilot project can we roll this out?”
- “New build should be at a price people can afford considering the average earnings in the borough”
- “Make sure we publicise efficiently and rent out empty properties and rent rooms”
- “Change empty buildings into homes”.

Leisure and Tourism:

- “Need to attract more people to our tourist sites i.e. Segedunum by improving our marketing”
- “If you get the Dome sorted you will see lots more which could be moneymaking e.g. bars etc which will increase tourism”
- “Make the most of tourism, encourage people to come here, promote it overseas and in Scotland”
- “Stop cleaning the beaches in the winter time, the tide will do it”
- “Community facilities are important”
- “Keep libraries. Think mobile”
- “Leisure facilities are important – maximise fees and charges where possible”.

Transport:

- “Need to make sure that the infrastructure is right for cycling when the new homes are built”
- “Need simple signage for cycling paths between Tynemouth and Whitley Bay so that people know which side they should be on”
- “Need to improve public transport in the North West of the borough”

- “One of the benefits of a combined authority might be better co-ordination of road repairs”.

Other Suggestions:

- “Need more futuristic thinking to deal with sheltered accommodation. People want to be more independent”
- “Reduce parking charges in town centres to encourage people”
- “The council could offer gas services to private owner-occupiers and people would pay for it (like British Gas)”
- “Spend money on priorities”
- “Invest in customer first centres”
- “Reduce postage costs”
- “Consider sharing services – share buildings and work more closely with the voluntary sector”
- “Research in new ideas and partnerships”
- “More IT training and free IT use back in libraries”
- “Cut down on unnecessary mail. Do more on line and by telephone”
- “Introduce more hot-desking, home working and mobile working with mobile technology”
- “Do we have too many offices for staff as they are expensive especially Quadrant – cut down on the number of council buildings”.