



North Tyneside Council



2012-2015 Service and Spending Review Process:

Council Strategic Plan and Budget Engagement Summary

18 January 2012

horizons widening

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Council Strategic Plan and Budget Engagement Summary

1. Introduction

The engagement strategy for the Council Strategic Plan and Budget 2012/13 was agreed at Cabinet on 12 September 2011. The strategy is now well established in line with best practice. Each year the Council aims to improve on previous years' engagement processes and several changes have been made this time around.

This year it has been even more important to follow a robust engagement process given the scale of efficiencies that the Council has to make in response to the 2010 Spending Review as outlined in detail elsewhere in this report to Cabinet. It has been important to ensure that the Council engages with a broad range of residents and other stakeholders to fully assess the impact of its proposals and to ensure that the Council Plan priorities address the issues which are key and can insure improved outcomes for the people of North Tyneside.

The aim of the engagement process was to seek views on the Council Plan priorities, proposals for delivery and how the Council plans to deliver against its efficiency savings. The financial plan includes £47.7m of savings to be achieved over the four year period from 2011-2015. Of this, £16.2m is planned to be delivered in 2012/13 as set out in more detail elsewhere in this report to Cabinet. The engagement process sought views on the potential impact of the proposals and to understand how this could be managed as well as considering any suggested alternatives.

This part of the report to Cabinet provides

- an overview of the engagement process and activities (section 2)
- a themed summary of the areas raised through the engagement (section 3)
- a summary of the areas raised in each activity of the engagement process (section 4)

The engagement process itself is continuing until 31 January to ensure the broadest participation possible in the Council Strategic Plan and Budget proposals.

2. Engagement Process

This year's engagement process follows the strategy agreed by Cabinet on 12 September 2011. Improvements to the process this year include having a broader range of events with key interest groups, having more information in the Council's Widening Horizons magazine and the introduction of a feedback facility on the Council's website. This has ensured a wider contact with community groups and individual residents and has given people a range of different opportunities to provide their views.

An overview of the types of engagement activity followed is set out below.

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Widening Horizons and the Council's Website

As one of the most popular sources of Council information for residents, the Widening Horizons magazine is an important part of the Council's approach to engaging with residents. The magazine was used to share information on Council priorities and proposals and provided residents with a way to provide feedback and suggestions.

Throughout the process, updated information on the Council Strategic Plan and Budget proposals has been included on the Council's website. In December, this was supplemented by a short questionnaire to seek specific feedback on the proposals in addition to the usual feedback facility.

Residents' Panel

The Residents' Panel consists of around 1,000 members of the public who are randomly selected. During the engagement process, two sessions were held with members of the panel on 4 October and 14 December 2011 to discuss the Council's proposals. The first session focussed on proposed priorities for the Council Strategic Plan and the second provided the Panel members with more information on the detail of the Strategic Plan delivery actions as well as budget proposals. At each, Panel members took part in discussions to provide feedback and alternative suggestions.

Area Forums

The Area Forum meetings are one of the key ways in which residents are involved in decision making throughout the year. During the engagement process, two sessions were held with each Area Forum during September and December 2011. The first session focussed on proposed priorities for the Council Strategic Plan and the second provided the Area Forum with more information on the detail of the Strategic Plan delivery actions as well as budget proposals. At each, residents took part in discussions to provide feedback and alternative suggestions.

Business Community

The statutory consultation with the business community has formed a key aspect of our Council Plan and Budget engagement strategy for a number of years. This involves several meetings with the North East Chamber of Commerce (North Tyneside representatives), including the statutory budget engagement meeting which took place on the 13 January 2012. For this year, we have continued the process we started last year and also engaged with a wide range of business community representatives through the North Tyneside Business Forum to ensure that we have been able to consider a diverse range of business community views.

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The Young Mayor and Cabinet

An engagement event was held with the Young Mayor and Cabinet on 8 October 2011. This considered the proposed Council Plan priorities and resource allocations. Information has also been provided in the council's young people's magazine Mag4U to raise awareness of the continuing engagement and to let people know where they can get involved. In addition contacts have been made with a number of small voluntary young people's clubs and organisations to ensure that children and young people were able to comment on the proposals.

Schools

Engagement with schools is centred around the Schools Forum where attendees can provide feedback on the Council Plan and Budget proposals both generally but also specifically in relation to education. This year the meeting took place on 14 December 2011. To ensure that we had views from a broad range of education representatives, there were also engagement events for the chairs of schools governors and headteachers. A briefing event for headteachers was held on 2 December 2011 and meetings with the chairs of school governors event took place on 9 and 10 January 2012.

Older People

This year we have ensured that older people have had a wide range of engagement opportunities. This has included the Area Forums and also through the Older People's Engagement Network (OPEN) meetings, which are facilitated by Age UK.

Partners

Engagement with our key strategic partners is a key aspect of the engagement process. A specific meeting of the North Tyneside Strategic Partnership was held on 9 December 2011 where partners discussed the Strategic Plan and Budget proposals. In addition, focused events with key partners on specific service areas are ongoing, for example a market place event for social care providers on 15 December 2011.

Voluntary and Community Organisations

Engagement with the voluntary and community sector has centred around the quarterly events which the Council holds for representatives from these organisations. Two such sessions were held in September and December 2011. The first session focussed on proposed priorities for the Council Strategic Plan and the second provided more information on the detail of the Strategic Plan delivery actions as well as budget proposals. At each, attendees members took part in discussions to provide feedback and alternative suggestions. In addition, meetings have been held with individual organisations to ensure that they and their members know how to provide feedback on the Council's proposals. This has included direct access to all web based information from the VODA (the Voluntary Organisation Development Agency) website which is well used by organisations in the sector.

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Trade Unions

An initial meeting was held with the Employee Joint Consultative Forum (EJCF) on 15 December 2011 and meetings continue to be held as the processes of changing services continues.

Minority Groups.

Engagement meetings have been held during December 2011 and January 2012 with specific minority groups such as the Bangladeshi Community Association and people using the refugee services.

Elected Members

Engagement with Elected Members is fundamental to the process. Four all member briefing sessions were held during September, October, November and December for this year's process. This gave an opportunity for all Members of the Council to receive information on the initial Council Strategic Plan and Budget proposals and to raise specific issues.

Throughout December 2011 detailed information on the Council Strategic Plan and Budget proposals was also provided to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Budget and Council Plan Sub Group. Each year, the group scrutinises the service and spending review process, and make specific recommendations on the process for further consideration. This process has continued this year with Overview and Scrutiny convening a sub group to review the Council Strategic Plan and Budget 2012-15 initial proposals and supporting business cases. The sub group met with Strategic Directors from 5 to 20 December 2011 to consider the these proposals.

Staff

This year staff meetings have been arranged to discuss the proposals, particularly in service areas where operational changes are being proposed. Information on the proposals was also given to the Council's Leadership Forum on 15 December 2011. This Forum involves all third tier managers from across the authority.

Service Users

This year, additional meetings have been held with specific groups of service users by operational service areas including environmental services, customer and cultural services, adult social care and children's' services. These meetings have focused on specific service changes in more detail to ensure those people who use the service were able to provide feedback on the proposals.

3. Themed summary

Set out below is a themed summary of the main areas raised during the engagement process together with information on what the Council is doing to address them.

- **Delivering sustainable growth and delivering excellent education, skills and employment opportunities**

There is strong support for the emphasis on growth and ensuring that North Tyneside has a prosperous future and can address the issues caused by the current economic situation, through job creating and training. There was also support for improvement to be made to local areas as a way to support economic growth. There was support for the Learning Village to be a key part in the strategy for growth to support people to develop life skills and for those who are capable of it, to go on into further education.

The Council Strategic Plan includes proposals to make improvements to the coastal area to support a growth in tourism as part of the local economy, to develop enterprise and employability skills and to work with the Local Enterprise Partnership to help deliver a strengthened and skilled workforce. The Council Plan also includes proposals to increase and broaden access to quality vocational education pathways. The Council is committed to developing the Learning Village and as the new Enterprise Zone is established, the Council will also undertake infrastructure improvements to facilitate major investment in the marine and offshore wind sector. This will have a significant impact on the business and employment prospects for the Swan Hunter site, the Port of Tyne North Estate and broader River Tyne North Bank, delivering an extensive improvement of the local economy.

- **Supporting people to be healthy and independent and protecting the vulnerable**

Throughout the engagement process, there have been positive discussions about the proposals regarding enablement, but there is a need to be clear with service users and stakeholders about how this will work in practice. Regarding personal budgets, views have been expressed that whilst this may work for the majority of clients there will be a need for additional support for the more complex or specialist cases. Some concerns have been expressed that the level of care packages should not reduce significantly under the Resource Allocation System and that quality of service must be preserved.

One of the most raised issues was being able to find, accessible information about care services. Other concerns were about how the council will monitor care services, which are provided by other sectors. Priorities 3 and 7 of the council strategic plan will address these issues. The council will be developing a health and wellbeing website, which will provide information on health and social care services in addition to our customer first programme that will include establish a “golden contact number” for our customer services. The Council’s Adult Social Care services have a well established approach for the commissioning of services from other sectors, with robust safeguarding systems in place to ensure services are of a good quality and safeguard vulnerable clients. Safeguarding of vulnerable people is a priority within the council strategic plan as well as continuing to work with the social care market to increase the choice of services available to customers using a Personal Budget or Direct Payment. Through the

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proposals in the Council Plan the Council will also increase and broaden access to quality vocational education pathways, as part of the commitment to reablement and providing support to those with learning disabilities.

The Council plans to increase the number of services users using a personal budget to pay for social care support. This is intended to promote independence and increase choice and control for service users and their families. This allocation of personal budget will be carried out through a points based resource allocation system. The Council will continue to promote the use of personal budgets to enable vulnerable people to have more choice and control over the services they receive or the activities they wish to take part in. It will continue to promote independence and choice, leading the way on the personalisation of Adult Social Care services so that all of their customers receive a personal budget by 2013.

The Council will also ensure that its services are targeted and accessible to everyone and also help the social care market to respond by diversifying provision. In doing this the Council will continue its journey to strengthen the Council's commissioning of services focussing on quality and keeping people safe.

- **Creating safe and secure communities**

Feedback was that the council's proposals to continue to make North Tyneside a safe place for all residents and visitors are good. There are some key issues that people would like the council and its partners to focus on as follows

- tackling antisocial behaviour people need to have better information about how best they can report incidents.
- tackling alcohol related crimes and behaviours

The Council will continue to work with its partners to ensure that North Tyneside is a safe place to live.

- **Protecting and enhancing the environment**

There have been mixed views about environmental issues throughout the engagement where some residents raised questions over the changes in floral displays and others have asked for more wild flower areas. There has been support for community groups to be able to take responsibility for their own neighbourhoods and to maintain their own flowers or plants to instil a sense of pride in the neighbourhood.

Some concerns have been raised around the proposed introduction or increase in certain waste charges but there is broad support for the need to protect and maintain the green areas across the borough.

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Positive feedback was received in relation to the proposals around street lighting in certain areas of no or low footfall. However, local people value a safe community as the basis of a good place to live and it is felt that good street lighting is key to this. It was suggested savings could be made in reducing streetlighting costs in the borough.

The Council will continue to involve local communities through campaigns such as the Big Spring Clean campaign, North Tyneside in Bloom and the Autumn campaign.

The Council continues to look at the issue of waste management and to reduce the cost burden of disposing of the borough's waste it will revise its arrangements with its waste disposal partner. The Council will also bring into use additional energy from waste capacity to ensure the need for landfill is reduced. The Council is exploring with its PFI provider, options to reduce the energy consumption and the costs of streetlighting.

- **Helping people to make a positive contribution**

There is positive support for the Area Forums which are seen as a good opportunity for involving residents in decision making. Similar to the responses to the Residents Survey, people were keen to get more involved in decision making and supported the Council's plans to provide a broad range of engagement opportunities.

The Council will continue to develop the Area Forum meetings and to improve the range of information sharing. This will include closer working with the Police and Health organisations. It will also look at ways to increase the numbers of young people attending area forums alongside the range of involvement opportunities already in place for young people.

- **Making change happen, improving customer service and facing up to our financial challenges**

People are in favour of moving forward with a Community Based Trust but there have been some concerns expressed about potential closures such as smaller branches of libraries and one of the Tourist Information Centres, prior to establishing the Trust.

In line with other local authorities across the country, North Tyneside Council has reviewed the way library services are provided across the borough. It is proposed that North Tyneside will continue to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service, using a 'hubs and spokes' model, to offer a range of services in different ways, in each part of the borough. There will be three tiers of library provision across North Tyneside, Area Library, Community Library and Library Express offers. All models will be supported by the development of a virtual library, which will provide online services, such as an interactive catalogue, online membership and renewals, downloadable resources, virtual activities and online retail and bookings facilities. Significant investment in the library services is planned with

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£10m for improvements to the central library and the new Joint Service Centre in Whitley Bay.

Discussions are ongoing with residents in relation to the proposed library closures to explore alternatives. With regard to tourist information provision across North Tyneside, this is currently only available at the Tourist Information Centre offices in Whitley Bay and Royal Quays. The new model for tourist information provision in the borough will expand the availability of tourist information by offering facilities in the four area town centre libraries/Customer First Centres (North Shields, Whitley Bay, Killingworth and Wallsend), seasonal facilities in Whitley Bay and/or Tynemouth together with express facilities in local attractions. The Council's tourism advice team will also continue to meet ferries as they dock at Royal Quays. Discussions are ongoing with residents in relation to the proposed closure of the centre at Royal Quays.

The Council is continuing to explore the proposal to establish a Community Based Trust for the services incorporating sports, arts, play, leisure and community centres, libraries, tourism, events/festivals, museums, heritage, parks and allotments. This will allow these services to access additional national funding opportunities and be more tax efficient and commercially agile.

4. Engagement Activity Summary

As outlined in section 2, the engagement process this year has included a broad range of activities and events. Feedback suggests that residents welcomed the opportunity to be involved. Whilst some found it difficult given the complexity of the information provided on occasion, there has been an appreciation of the scale of the financial challenge facing the Council in common with all other local authorities. A summary of the areas raised during the engagement activities is set out below.

Area Forums

Each Area Forum raised issues relating to their area. Consistent areas across all were : the protection of services that provide environmental services e.g. floral displays; personal budgets were seen as a good idea but there was some concern to ensure that services are monitored for quality; regarding the proposed new ways to deliver some services across the Council in partnership there was some concerns about needing to ensure that the Council can still control the quality of services provided; support for the learning village and the need for opportunities such as apprenticeships to support people to get into employment.

The results of the exercise that identified order of importance of priorities across the Area Forum groups were:

- Delivering excellent education, skills and employment opportunities
- Supporting people to be healthy and independent and protecting the vulnerable
- Delivering sustainable growth
- Creating safe and secure communities
- Protecting and enhancing the environment

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- Helping people to make a positive contribution
- Making change happen, improving customer service and facing up to our financial challenges

An overview of the areas raised in each Area Forum is set out below.

North Shields

Residents felt that growth was important but effective infrastructure needs to be put in place. They suggested that the town should have an improved integrated transport service. The Council should also encourage more providers to come into shopping units that are currently vacant. The Forum would like to see the success of Silverlink replicated to make the centre of North Shields more attractive another suggestion was a central market.

Residents welcomed the Council's priority on protecting the vulnerable and they also felt that there should be additional support for people with high level and complex needs.

Some thought the proposals around safe and secure communities were good but the communication from the Council is lacking in terms of crime figures, especially youth crime. It was felt that more information is needed about how residents can report crime and that more could be done to ensure that elderly people feel more secure. There was concern over off licences selling alcohol to underage people and that their opening hours are too long. It was felt that people would feel safer with increased information about the joint working with the Police and more safety road shows and events to spread the way the Council can work with the residents such as enforcing the 20mph zones effectively.

Improving all roads and pavements with much more investment was highlighted as a key issue. The discussion also went on to suggest that the council should maintain green areas and keep parks well maintained to attract visitors as a priority. There was also concern over the proposed changes to floral displays. However there were no strong objections to garden waste charges.

There was positive feedback about the Area Forum meetings, however some people disliked being in Ward Groups. There was an acknowledgement that increasing volunteering would be hard but we should be trying to increase participation in the Forums.

There were some concerns over the proposals to partner with other organisations to deliver services. Some of the reasons were : the risk that the quality of services could decline, the potential for staff redundancies, whether there is sufficient market competition available to deliver the services, whether there would be an increase in costs for residents and how the council can monitor contract delivery to ensure performance is maintained.

Wallsend

The growth proposals were welcomed and there was a lot of interest in how the North Bank of the Tyne developments were to progress. There was support for

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more affordable housing, which was accessible to all family groups, especially those with disabilities.

There were some concerns about the development of the Community Based Trust in relation to : the safeguarding of assets, what would happen if the Trust was not successful and the need for councillors to be involved.

There were discussions on the national changes proposed for the funding of Council housing provision.

There were some concern that the level of adult learning opportunities should not reduce as this supports people to obtain employment.

There was broad support for resources to be focused on children and young people who are in hard to reach groups with improved partnership working needed across education, Social Care and Health to raise the life chances of these children and young people.

The Learning Village is seen as a positive development. The view is it needs to be a site where we can support people with their life skills and those who are capable of achieving in further education.

There were concerns that personalisation within adult social care could impact most on older people and people with learning disabilities . There were also concerns that the contracting of service providers might reduce quality standards and that the council will not be able to hold them to account.

North West

Residents were supportive of the proposal for a five year plan and process to improve the quality of schools in the borough.

Residents thought it was sensible that the review of children's centres should seek to concentrate limited resources in those areas of greatest need.

There were a number of comments about personalisation within adult social care and about how services to older people would be maintained and not deteriorate. It was felt that more improvements were needed on the amount and type of information available for service users, not just information on websites.

The Forum felt that more detail was needed on the subscription charge for garden waste collection service. There was positive feedback in relation to doing different things with street lighting services with no concerns raised about switching lights off in certain areas of low footfall. There were questions raised in relation to the proposed changes in floral displays.

The Area Forum felt that the proposals might mean that funding was not allocated fairly across the whole of North Tyneside and asked that this be taken into account by the Council. There was support for the way in which the the Area Forum budget was allocated to each ward ensuring a fair geographical distribution.

Whitley Bay

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There was a positive reaction to planned developments along the coastal strip which was seen to enhance business prospects for small businesses in the area. There was a discussion around the Highpoint Hotel and the Avenue. It was also felt that derelict buildings should be improved.

Residents felt that children centres should be available across the borough.

There was support for the proposals to focus resources spend in preventative services which help people to stay in their own homes. Some residents felt that the eligibility criteria and support costs could be simplified as it can be complicated for some people to understand. It was felt that the Council should invest in giving information about how to get in touch with the right people for help. In addition staff should be trained to help people help themselves.

There was some concern that any charges for garden waste might result in an increased amount of fly-tipping so this will need to be monitored.

There was support for the proposals around street lighting, especially switching off lights at night on roads or waggonways where there is not high footfall. Residents were open to more naturalised areas in terms of habitat but this would need to be supported by public education.

Residents felt that safeguarding is a clear priority as is the safety of young people. It was also felt that the Council should continue to tackle the issue of sales of alcohol to underage children.

Residents Panel

The Residents Panel highlighted a number of areas of interest and concern. Participants welcomed the Community Based Trust approach but wanted to ensure that the quality of services would be provided and that the impact on existing staff was positive. It was also felt that it would be helpful if information was available at a central point to access the services involved. Other areas raised by the Panel members included the need to maintain environmental services such as roads and pavements and floral displays and the continued need for coastal development and tourism to support Small and Medium Businesses in the borough. The panel welcomed the business and job opportunities of the Enterprise Zone on the North Bank of the Tyne. However, there was concern about the potential impact on the infrastructure and local businesses if this is not carefully managed.

Community and Voluntary Sector

A number of issues were raised by the community and voluntary sector including the proposals around bowling greens, floral displays, garden waste charges and the need for better partnership working to support local voluntary and community organisations.

Young Mayor and Cabinet

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Key messages from young people were that a good education is essential for future life prospects and should be a priority for the council and its partners, although living in a safe environment is also essential.

Business Sector

One of the key issues emerging from the earlier engagement with the business sector was in relation to procurement and processes in place to allow local businesses to work with North Tyneside Council. It was suggested that improvements could be made to the procurement process to make it easier for local businesses to participate. It was felt that encouragement was needed for local businesses to work with the Council and that it was important as part of the strategic partnering programme that local businesses felt they could bid for aspects of this. Engagement with the business sector is ongoing.

Schools

Some members of the Schools Forum raised concerns about the proposals in relation to new or raised charges for services provided by the Council.

In addition the Forum members also asked for advice on budget figures that they should assume for schools for planning purposes. In order to assist schools, information was provided to all schools on 21 December. This note also included details of the proposed changes to the local school funding formula developed during the Autumn term and discussed at the Schools Forum on 14 December 2011.

Further meetings of the Schools Forum will be held in January and February in order to ensure the details of the budget proposals can be worked through and a collaborative approach taken.

Briefings with Chair and link school governors took place on 9 and 10 January 2012. This group echoed the concern regarding new or increased charges for services and approved of the continued involvement with the Schools Forum on this matter.

Trade Unions

This part of the engagement process raised questions about the proposals for new ways of working and the impact on staff. The unions advised they would like time to review the information and would feed comments into future meetings.

Overview and Scrutiny's Budget and Council Strategic Plan Study Group

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee's recommendations following its scrutiny of the process are contained in detail in a separate report to Cabinet. An overview is set out below

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- there is a need to ensure consistency between messages in the Council Strategic Plan and proposals in the budget
- need to demonstrate the capacity of the Gateway to cope with additional demand that may be generated by withdrawal of housing related support
- need to elaborate on the shape of the corporate core and the skills within that core, in the event that outsourcing proposals go ahead and to understand the fallback position in the event that outsourcing does not succeed
- need for a geographical impact assessment of the proposals as a whole; and the potential for individuals or groups to be multiply affected by the proposals
- need to ensure ongoing and meaningful consultation

Elected members

A number of points were raised during the all member briefings on : housing self-finance, engagement of minority groups, business rate reform, quality homes for older people, car parking and Community Based Trusts.

North Tyneside Strategic Partnership

Key points made by the partnership were:

- very enthusiastic about the plan to grow North Tyneside
- there were some concerns about the potential impact of the Community Based Trust on other local charities and the wider voluntary and community sector
- the opportunity to use the NTSP to market North Tyneside to new partners
- the Residents' Survey showed that local people value a safe community as the basis of a good place to live – issues such as good street lighting will need to be considered in the light of the rising costs of energy

Voluntary and Community Sector

The following is an overview of the comments received from the voluntary and community sector during the engagement to date based on the Council Strategic Plan priorities

Delivering Excellent Education, Skills and Employment opportunities

These proposals were positively received but more partnership work should be done in delivering the priority with the community and voluntary sector.

The groups put forward suggestions on how the impact of these proposals could be managed for certain groups

- in the case of hard to reach families, officers should signpost them to facilities which voluntary and community groups provide.

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- continue to work in partnership to increase access to activities and provision for young people possibly where facilities are unused for a lot of the time they could be used to provide services for the Council. It was felt that more networking events and communication with the sector could be improved to allow for a joined up approach.
- there were suggestions for community or voluntary sector facilities to be shared with schools, particularly primary schools
- there was a call for support with transport to help people to get to facilities and services on offer across the sector
- the representatives from the black and ethnic minority community did not agree with an increase in the cost of school meals, whilst small they felt that there might be a risk that this could result in more children not having school meals.

Supporting people to be healthy and independent and protecting the vulnerable

The key messages were

- the Council Plan should address the issues with families with complex needs through its preventative agenda
- the Council should maintain its brokerage role as there are concerns about conflict of interest where organisations act as broker and provider
- there is a risk that those most affected by the changes are the vulnerable who might not be adequately safeguarded within private sector'
- there was a call for more co-ordination across the voluntary sector in terms of what it does
- there needs to be measures to ensure that any tendering of services does not lead to a democratic loss with associated high levels of compensation
- it was felt that there needed to be improved information with accessible help from people to navigate them through the system.
- the representatives from the black and ethnic minority community supported the need to focus services on people in greatest need, they felt services must be fair and were concerned that people with social care needs might not have these met if resources were more limited.

Creating safe and secure communities

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- there were concerns raised to ensure that older people can raise any issues about antisocial behaviour. There should be more support for people who might want to report incidents to the police or more information about what support is out there already. A street meeting approach works well in some areas of the borough
- more should be done to let young people know what activities are available
- there was support for a more joined up approach across different organisations to deal with the harm caused by alcohol

Protecting and enhancing the environment

- it was felt that more could be done to reduce waste with a number of suggestions including the council burning its own waste or increasing the recycling of metals especially at the tip sites
- there was support for neighbourhoods to get involved more such as planting flowers
- there was a suggestion that there could be reduced grass cutting and support for the growth of wild flowers
- there was support for reducing the energy used in street lighting and turning lights off at certain times in particular areas
- there was some concern over the impact on elderly people of the proposed garden waste charges – particularly those living in rural areas of the borough and those who recycle their garden waste on the basis that it might be difficult for some people to get to the recycling sites
- representatives from the black and ethnic minority community supported the need to increase charges for some services but were concerned that there would be additional charges (for waste collection) for small businesses, particularly the restaurants / take-away sector.

There were also suggestions about how the council could reduce the impact of its proposed changes as set out below

- providing cheaper equipment and flower bulbs etc for local groups to be able to afford to look after their own floral displays
- maintaining the Environmental Budget for Area Forums
- providing safety advice if some lights are to be turned off at night
- communications activity to advise residents about the proposals

Helping people make a positive contribution

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The general feedback was positive and included

- support for good quality volunteering is really important particularly outside office hours
- support for the Community Resource Bank with a call to widen it to include resources (e.g. filing cabinets, furniture etc)
- volunteering can be used as an opportunity for people to develop their skills (pre-work) as well as people giving something back to their local community
- it is important to maintain and develop local relationships
- call for how to continue and/or improve the use of community buildings as a place to meet, learn, use etc.
- the need to get more people along to the Area Forums, and in order to do that, possibly changing the time of the meeting as well as letting people know how they can engage if they are unable to come along to the meeting. There was also support for ways in which local people can be more involved in setting the agenda for the Area Forum meetings

Staff

In the engagement events with staff there have been questions raised around whether there is potential for redundancies and the impact of new ways of working. The proposals for staff car parking charges were considered to be unfair if it is only to be introduced at one site.

Service Users

As well as being part of the corporate engagement events outlined above, council services have held a large number of specific consultation events with service users. These meetings have focused on specific service changes in more detail to ensure those people who use the service were able to have a dialogue with staff members who had expertise in the relevant areas.

Schools

In general there was a positive reaction to the children's service proposals however, there were some concerns regarding the introduction of waste charges for schools.

Adult Social Care

General agreement with the principles for enablement but concerns about whether private organisations that are looking to make a profit may not be the best services that achieve value for money. There was a call for various methods of communicating how services are changing to ensure people are aware of what is happening. There was a view that people need to access services in their local area. There needs to be longer term planning of what support will be available when family members are unable to care for someone who has a learning disability. There were discussions around the role of the Community Learning Disability Team.

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It was felt that there are too many engagement groups which mean information can be missed and it is difficult to get to them all.

There were concerns that the proposals around personalisation may mean more people with a learning disability become isolated as they buy services on an individual basis. There was a suggestion that a more co-ordinated approach to personal assistants might be beneficial.

Care providers

Key messages from the engagement with providers of services were:

- positive feedback about the gateway process with a need ensure that we ensure quality control across providers
- there was some concern regarding over-reliance on telecare type solutions which may not be reliable
- need to get the Resource Allocation System right which can be difficult with examples of where this has been taken forward nationally (including where there have been legal challenges)
- there was positive support for the vital role of advice and information sources but need these to be accurate, consistent across all agencies, consistent with NHS sources of information and accessible in a range of ways - not too much emphasis on web access only
- there was some discussion about the proposals for Dorset House or Cedars given the quite specific contribution of each but there was an acknowledgement that this was inevitable. Some providers suggested that the resources offered by both services might be offered in one alternative building/service in future
- it was felt that improved access to Housing Related Support Services and Crisis Response will be effective methods of offering low level support services and that these changes will have little or no detrimental impacts on service users.

Cultural Services

A large number of meetings and individual contacts have been held regarding the development of the Community Based Trust, remodelling of the Library Service, Tourist Information Service and the remodelling of management in Community Centres. This provided the following key points of feedback

- concerns regarding the proposed closures of Monkseaton library and the Royal Quays Tourist Information Centre
- on the development of the Community Based Trust, there have been some concerns about the level of projected savings and the protection of staff.

APPENDIX B

Environmental Services

A number of meetings were been held with business groups and smaller community groups who have an interest in the environment and their local area. There was a general acceptance for the Council's proposals.

Housing

A number of meetings have been held with housing tenants at area and borough level. Tenants were given detail on the proposed changes to the housing finance system and talked through how the changes will affect the service in North Tyneside. Key points raised were:

- some concern around the potential rent increase but an understanding of why rents would need to increase
- concern about further reductions in the warden service and whether this would mean there will be less support for tenants in the future
- views that the council should pursue opportunities to build more council houses

Website Feedback

During the consultation period there have been opportunities for residents and stakeholders to comment on the council strategic plan and budget proposals via the Council's website. The key points raised via this route are set out below

- the proposed closure of Monkseaton library
- the proposals to remodel The Tourist Information Service
- the proposals around the future provision of the refugee service
- the increase in residential parking charges for third cars
- bringing empty properties back in to use rather than build new to help young people get on the housing ladder
- some concerns about the increase in social housing rents

5. Equalities

Equality impact assessments have been completed on all Council Plan and Budget proposals. Through the very broad ranging engagement process, the full spectrum of different minority groups have had the opportunity to respond and provide feedback on the proposals. Relevant responses have been outlined elsewhere in this report as part of the summary of feedback received during the engagement process.