



North Tyneside Council

Appendix A

Final

Budget Engagement 2014/15

Contents Page

Introduction	3
Purpose of this report	3
Methodology	3
Findings	5
Addendum 1	10

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 complements 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 ended on 7 February 2014. The purpose of this report is to outline the findings of the budget engagement exercise.

Part 1 of the findings takes account of the responses gathered from 26th November 2013 to 20th December 2013. These findings helped to inform Cabinet's discussion on 15th January 2014.

Part 2 of the findings provides an update on the engagement exercise from the period of 21st December 2012 to 7th February 2014. This set of findings will be considered by Council at its meeting on 20th 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 council's Staff Panel and its Youth Panel.

The rest of the report provides detail of the results gathered from the online survey and the feedback gathered from the group discussions.

Please note: Part 1 of the findings was written to inform Cabinet's discussion on 15th January 2014 and these findings are inclusive of the dates of 26th November 2013 to 20th December 2013. **Part 2** provides an update to the engagement activity that was undertaken between the period of 21st December 2013 to 7th February 2014 and will be used to inform the discussion at Council on 20th February 2014.

Findings

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

Part 1 – Findings from the engagement exercise covering the period 26th November 2013 – 20th December 2013.

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”.

Addendum 1

Part 2 - Update to the engagement activity undertaken between 21st December 2013 – 7th February 2014.

This addendum provides an update to the engagement activity that was undertaken between the period of 21st December to 7th February. During this period a further 11 online questionnaires were submitted, bringing the total online submissions to 21. The findings of these additional 11 questionnaires are below:-

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

10 of the additional respondents to the online survey said they believe there are issues that need considering when taking the proposals forward.

Ideas suggested by respondents to address the issues (10 responses)

The 10 respondents were asked to outline their ideas for how the issues could be addressed. These ideas included:

- Revisiting the proposed definitions of what will constitute 'success' for North Tyneside e.g. the commitment to build up to 12,000 new build homes
- Reopening the public toilets in North Shields town centre
- Keeping down the cost of council tax (suggested by three respondents) and school dinners to affordable prices
- Support a sustainable night time economy e.g. by advertising that North Tyneside does not close down at night
- Sorting out schooling issues at Wellfield
- Tarmac the roads.

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

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

- Giving more thought to the possibility of renovating existing empty buildings
- Reopening public toilets
- Making Wellfield a three-class school for the first and middle schools
- Consider charging for 'residents only' parking permits
- The council needing to act intelligently "at all times"

- Making sure the council calculates the “minimum” of what people need, not what they want (e.g. benefits payments)
- Turning of the lights in council buildings when they are closed”.

Alongside the additional eight online questionnaires two further group discussions also took place. These took place with the council’s Staff Panel and North Tyneside Youth Panel. Like the first set of group discussions, these focussed on questions 2 and 3, which similarly were amalgamated into one discussion. Therefore, the answers below cover questions 2 and 3.

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

- Apprenticeships
- Environment
- Health and Social Care
- Housing
- Leisure and Tourism
- Regeneration
- Technology
- 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 more apprenticeships / jobs for young people rather than pushing for University”
- “Create a wide variety of local apprenticeships and have better advertisement about it”
- “there is a need to have better education about available jobs and the skills that are need for the local economy”

- “Promote re-training and adult learning in the borough to give older people the chance to gain skills needed for local jobs”
- There is a need to look at childcare for employees e.g. paying £15 per day to work until 5pm... if the council provide childcare that could be income for the authority”
- “A lot more work is required to encourage young people to start their own business and ensuring they get proper support” (this response was received via email from a member of the public).

Environment

- “Have recycling every week and home waste every other week, encouraging people to recycle more”

Health and Social Care

- “Spend more money trying to keep people healthy rather than spending on hospital equipment”
- “Look at how Adult Social Care commission home helps/carers to care for the elderly or disabled – there is not enough inspection of this”
- “The council should integrate adult, children and health services into one service to stop the “cross over”... working smarter”

Housing

- “Reconsider house building. If more do need building look at the sizes as so many are bought and put up for sale again”
- “Look at what savings Kier have contributed...the number of repairs has gone down they are being carried out at a greater cost”

Leisure and Tourism

- “Continue the maintenance and growth of the coast, which is a large factor in living and tourism in North Tyneside”

Regeneration

- “Spend money on regenerating local areas”
- “Stop closing places such as the ice rink”

Technology

- “Make the website easy for people for to use... creating fast responses”
- “Make phone services easy for everyone”

Transport

- “Have public transport that is cheap for 16 – 19 year olds”