

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL



COUNCIL

Tuesday, 13 February 2007

YOU ARE SUMMONED TO ATTEND A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL, WHICH WILL BE HELD AT THE GUILDHALL NORTHAMPTON ON TUESDAY, THE THIRTEENTH DAY OF FEBRUARY, 2007 AT SIX THIRTY O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING WHEN THE FOLLOWING BUSINESS IS PROPOSED TO BE TRANSACTED:-

1. MINUTES (COPY TO FOLLOW).

To approve the minutes of the proceedings of the Meeting of the Council held on MeetingDate.

2. APOLOGIES.

3. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

4. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES.

5. BUDGET 2007/08 - 2009/10 (REPORT HEREWITH)

6. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET 2007/2008 (REPORT HEREWITH)

7. MATTERS OF URGENCY WHICH BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES THE MAYOR IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED.

The Guildhall
Northampton
5th February 2007

M.McLean Chief Executive



NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Name of Committee	Council
Directorate:	Governance and Resources
Director:	Ian Thompson
Date:	13 th February 2007

Report Title	Budget 2007/08
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Key Decision	Yes
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1. Recommendations

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the comments of the Acting Section 151 Officer set out in the report, particularly in relation to the robustness of the estimates and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves. 2. Note the results of the budget consultation exercise (circulated separately). 3. Approve the Revenue Budget for 2007/08 as recommended by Cabinet and as set out in the appendices. |
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2. Summary

<p>The report covers the budget for 2007/08 recommended by Cabinet on 5th February. Prior to approving the budget, Council is required to have regard to the outcome of the consultation exercise together with the advice of the Council's Section 151 officer as to the robustness of the estimates and the adequacy of the level of general reserves to be retained in support of the budget.</p>

3. Report Background

Introduction

- 1.1 As part of the budget preparation process, during December 2006 and January 2007 Cabinet received a sequence of reports outlining the requirement to set a balanced budget for 2007/08 and later years and suggesting a range of options for bringing draft budgets in line with forecast available resources. These reports also made reference to the statutory framework for establishing a budget that is both robust and balanced as well as the requirement to consult widely on the budget and related service delivery proposals and to have regard to the response.
- 1.2 Cabinet on 8th January agreed a schedule of optional service reductions that was subsequently used as the basis for an extensive albeit time-limited consultation exercise involving staff, partners and the general public. The schedule amounted to £3.95m. in total and reflected the identified requirement to meet a funding shortfall of £3.15m. after incorporating into the base budget an efficiency savings target of £1.115m. (subsequently revised to £1.465m.).
- 1.3 The results of the consultation exercise were summarised and reported to Cabinet on 29th January. The same information has been made available to all Council members in advance of this key Council meeting of 13th February together with a copy of the high level Equalities Impact Assessment carried out in relation to the cabinet budget proposals of 29th January. In addition, Cabinet received verbal representation from members of the public and representatives of interested groups at its meetings of 29th January and 5th February.
- 1.4 This report now carries forward the formal recommendation of the Cabinet meeting of 5th February in relation to setting a balanced and robust budget for 2007/08.

Statutory and Policy Framework

- 1.5 In terms of process, the Council's Constitution incorporates the 'Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules'. These state that at the end of the appropriate budget consultation period, the Cabinet will draw up firm proposals for consideration by Council having regard to the consultation responses. Provision is made for Council to amend the proposals and in such a case, there is a grace period of five days after which the Council decision becomes effective. The exception to this is where the Leader may enter a formal objection within three days of the Council amendment and in such circumstances, a further meeting of council is required in order to finally determine the budget.
- 1.6 The timing of this Council Budget Meeting has regard to the above and in particular the need to formally determine the Council Tax no later than the end of February in order to facilitate the printing and distribution of bills. This in turn is time critical in that adequate notice has to be provided to instalment payers if the April 1st instalment collections by direct debit are to be valid. Any delay has significant cash flow implications for the Council.
- 1.7 In terms of officer responsibilities, there are two key legislative requirements. The Council's Financial Procedure Rules refer to the Local Government Finance Act 1988 which imposes a responsibility upon the 'Section 151 Officer' to ensure that budgeted expenditure does not exceed total resources available. In addition, the Local Government Act 2003 requires the officer to report on the 'robustness' of the budget and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves

and for the Council to have regard to that report accordingly. This is covered in more detail below.

Budget Preparation Process

- 1.8 It can be recalled that as part of the 2006/07 budget preparation process, a major exercise was undertaken to realign budgets with discrete areas of management responsibility for the first time. This was seen as a fundamental basis for securing accountability for resources on the part of service managers. One of the benefits has been more effective hands-on budget management and monitoring as the financial year has progressed together with an increased level of confidence in the financial forecasts.
- 1.9 However, it has also become clear over the course of the year that the agreed budget for 2006/07 incorporated a number of risks that had not been fully appreciated. In some cases, for example, it has emerged that underlying base budgets brought forward from previous years did not adequately reflect levels of service commitment or achievable income. This is disappointing in that there were a number of areas where such discrepancies *had already* been identified and the budget for 2006/07 realigned accordingly.
- 1.10 The budget preparation process for 2007/08 has therefore taken into account any identified areas where such additional discrepancies have come to light. Having said that, it must be acknowledged that a number of budgeted services are subject to fluctuating or uncertain demand and the level of general reserves to be retained in support of the budget has regard to this.
- 1.11 As indicated above, the budget finally considered by Cabinet identified a requirement for £3.15m. of service reductions in addition to an efficiency savings target of £1.465m. Having considered the financial position and having had regard to the consultation exercise, Cabinet on 5th February recommended a balanced budget based on £2.91m of service reductions and other adjustments (see Appendix 3) supported by identified efficiency savings of £1.64m with a further £50k to be identified. However, as these savings are not achievable in full until 2008/09, there is a requirement to contribute £817k from reserves to bridge the funding gap for 2007/08. This position is summarised in the appendices and it can be noted that additional efficiencies in support services have been included to meet the required £50k (see Appendix 4).
- 1.12 It can be noted here that included in the schedule at Appendix 3 is a recommendation for Northampton Borough's council tax increase to be 4.95%, within the Government guideline limit of 5%. The draft base budget was prepared on a working assumption of a council tax rise of 3%, broadly in line with inflation. The additional increase of 1.95% generates an additional £260k (approx.) of revenue.

General Fund Reserves

- 1.13 The 2006/07 budget monitoring report presented to Cabinet on 19th December 2006 forecast that the year end position would be an overspend relative to the approved budget of £1.9m. The consequence would be that the council's general fund reserves would be reduced to the order of £1m. However, the report also identified that there were a number of one-off actions that would release an additional £1m thereby enabling the reserves to be restored to £2m.

in support of the 2007/08 budget.

- 1.14 Given the risks inherent in the draft budget, however, it was recognised that a sum of this order would not be sufficient. It was considered prudent to make provision for a contribution to reserves of a further £1m and this was built into the overall budget presented for consideration by Cabinet on 19th December. The budget recommended for approval by Council includes this sum, identifiable as the 'Additional Contingency Provision' at Appendix 1.
- 1.15 In addition to the above, it became clear on closing the council's 2005/06 accounts that the earmarked Insurance Reserve was in surplus by about £1.3m. However, it was considered prudent to retain this to offset a number of unfunded liabilities that had also become apparent, not least the potential clawback of overpaid benefit subsidy from previous years. During the current financial year, work has continued to finalise the sums owed and the current estimate of subsidy clawback is about £0.5m. The balance of £0.8m. is therefore available to supplement the council's general reserves.
- 1.16 Paragraph 1.11 above identifies the requirement to contribute £817k from reserves in 2007/08 in order to balance the budget position pending the full year impact of efficiency savings and service reductions being realised in 2008/09. This can be achieved therefore without compromising the requirement to retain a prudent £3m. of reserves in support of the 2007/08 budget.

Robustness of Budget

- 1.17 Paragraph 1.7 above refers to the responsibilities of the council's 'Section 151' officer under the terms of the Local Government Act 2003. Whilst it would never be possible to be completely satisfied that the annual budget is without some element of risk and uncertainty, the extent to which the budget can be regarded as robust is influenced by the degree of direct engagement in the process of key budget managers working closely with finance support staff.
- 1.18 In particular, there has been close involvement of all budget managers in determining the options for service reductions and efficiencies and, subject to formal approval by Council, the management arrangements have been set in place to ensure that these are delivered in practice with corporate directors taking a leading role. Where the budget monitoring for 2006/07 has identified overspending relative to the agreed cash limit, budgets have been adjusted accordingly. The extent of any residual risk has been assessed and this is reflected in the provision within the base budget of an additional £1m. contingency sum.
- 1.19 However, it is important to note that there are other risks facing the council that it is not possible to quantify at this stage. In particular, the Cabinet report of 29th January drew attention to risk of retrospective claims arising from the Pay & Grading Review. There is also a need to undertake a review of the basis for internal recharges between the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account, recognising that this has not been scrutinised for some time, with the attendant risk that this may have a detrimental effect on the General Fund.
- 1.20 One further issue concerns the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), the relationship to service plans and the overall 'value for money' strategy that in turn impacts on the 'Use of Resources' assessment and the council's Comprehensive Performance Assessment. It will be necessary to revise the MTFP in the light of having agreed a robust balanced base budget for 2007/08

and in doing so, to have regard to the potential level of available financial resources in future years and Government expectations of future efficiency targets.

1.21 Taken overall, the view of the Acting 'Section 151' officer is that the budget recommended by cabinet for 2007/08 can be regarded as robust, in particular having regard to the target level of reserves of £3m.

Recommendation of Cabinet

1.22 Cabinet on 5th February recommended that the budget set out in the appendices to this report be adopted by Council and that the target level of reserves to be retained in support of the budget should be not less than £3m.

Other Matters

1.23 This report deals only with the Council's budget and the level of council tax increase that results. A further meeting of Council has been arranged for 28th February to deal, inter alia, with the formal setting of the Council Tax. This is necessary because of the requirement to incorporate into the overall bills the precepts levied by the county Council, the Police and the parish councils within the Borough.

1.24 The opportunity will be taken to present to the next meeting the detailed budget analysed across key service areas and incorporating the changes approved by this meeting.

4. Options and Evaluation of Options

An extensive public consultation exercise on a range of options for service reductions etc. has been conducted as a key part of the budget exercise.

5. Resource Implications (including Financial Implications)

The recommended budget can be regarded as 'balanced' and deliverable within the total resources estimated to be available to the Council.

6. Risk and Opportunity Issues

The report highlights a number of areas of risk and uncertainty and recommends that the level of reserves in support of the budget be not less than £3m.

7. Consultees (Internal and External)

Internal	Staff and trades unions.
External	Extensive consultation with the public and key stakeholders.

8. Compliance Issues

A: How Proposals Deliver Priority Outcomes

Recovery Plan
A balanced budget is fundamental to the delivery of the recovery plan.
Corporate Plan
As above.

B: Other Implications

Other Strategies
N/a

Finance Comments
Included in the report.

Legal Comments

9. Background Papers

Title	Description	Source

Ian Thompson ext 8744

Name	Signature	Date	Ext.
Author			
Corporate Manager	N/a		
Director			
Monitoring Officer or Deputy (Key decision only)			
Section 151 Officer or Deputy (Key decision only)			

Appendix 1:
General Fund Revenue Budget - Future Years Budgets 2007 - 2010

	2007/08 £000's	2008/09 £000's	2009/10 £000's	Note
Medium Term Financial Plan				
Medium Term Financial Plan - Appendix 2	1,115	1,350	1,600	A
Plus Reinstated Savings Target (to avoid double counting)	233	233	195	B
	1,348	1,583	1,795	
Community Safety, Leisure & Community Operations				
Balloon Festival	47	47	47	1
Community Safety	-187	-199	-199	2
Town Centre Management	45	45	45	3
Events, Arts and Museums	-53	-53	-53	4
Leisure Centres	-70	-70	-70	5
Car Parking	446	446	446	6
Customer Services				
One Stop Shop	182	190	199	7
Print Services	-50	-50	-50	8
Finance & Asset Management				
Cliftonville House, Industrial Units and Investment Property	114	114	114	9
Audit Fee/Internal Audit	-84	-84	-84	10
Markets Income Adjustment	204	162	160	11
Pensions Added Years Costs	140	140	140	12
Governance & Recovery				
Members Expenses and Meeting Services	129	129	130	13
Elections	217	0	0	14
Landcharges Income Shortfall	109	109	109	15
Savings for Licence Income and Communications Staff	-104	-105	-105	16
Planning & Environmental Health				
Private Sector Improvement and Repairs & Health & Safety At Work	-66	-36	-32	17
Development Control	170	170	170	18
Regeneration & Growth				
Regeneration and Growth	-70	-70	-70	19
Concessionary Fares	200	200	200	20
Performance and Improvement				
IT	-57	-57	-57	21
Streetscene & Property Maintenance				
Highways Revenue Account	357	356	351	22
Domestic Refuse Collection and Recycling	143	143	143	23
Trade Refuse Collection	271	355	318	24
Human Resources				
Pay and Grading Review	-400	-100	100	25
Training	-200	-200	-200	26
Housing				
Homelessness	-160	-160	-160	27
Additional Capacity Revenues and Benefits	250	250	250	28
Total Continuing Impact on Future Years Budgets	1,523	1,672	1,842	
Additional Future Years Budget Pressures				
Additional Debt Charges	350	350	350	29
Excess Inflation - Principally Energy	294	179	221	30
Legal, Statutory and Health & Safety - Trees Maintenance	100	100	100	
Total Additional Future Years Budget Pressures	744	629	671	
Additional Contingency Provision	1,000	1,000	1,000	31
Less Value For Money / Efficiency Target as per Medium Term Financial Plan	-1,465	-2,350	-3,350	32
Total	3,150	2,534	1,958	

Appendix3 : Savings Recommended by Cabinet 5th February 2007

	Recommended Savings		Savings Not Proposed	
	2007/08 £000	Later Years £000	2007/08 £000	Later Years £000
Council Tax Increase to 4.95%	260	260		
Private Sector Housing	10	15		
Environmental Health	10	15		
District Offices	3	5		
Housing & Money Advice Merger	100	130		
Street Cleaning	150	150		
<i>Street Cleaning</i>			225	400
Weeds	30	30		
Grounds	150	250		
<i>Grounds</i>			160	260
Graffiti	60	120		
<i>Graffiti</i>			60	120
Park Rangers	150	240		
Public Conveniences other	100	130		
<i>Public Conveniences (public parks)</i>			50	50
Public Conveniences Sheep Street	50	100		
<i>Community safety</i>			40	50
ASBU	50	50		
Health Wellbeing Access	35	50		
<i>Neighbourhood Wardens</i>			475	560
Community Centres	50	100		
Community Grants	50	50		
<i>Community Grants</i>			500	450
<i>Lings Closure</i>			150	225
Leisure Centre Charges (retain Lings)	150	150		
Leisure Centres energy costs	100	100		
Arts Development & Events	380	380		
Tourism	205	275		
<i>Sports Development</i>			80	140
Xmas Lights	80	80		
Royal & Derngate grant	200	200		
<i>Royal & Derngate grant</i>				100
Civic newspaper	23	30		
sub total	<u>2396</u>	<u>2910</u>	<u>1740</u>	<u>2355</u>

Target Saving

3150

Appendix 4 : Efficiency Savings2007/08 Full Year
£000 £000**Christine Stevenson**

Pvt Sector Housing: deletion of vacant posts plus possible redundancy 175 175

Chris Cavanagh

Delete vacant posts in Planning, rationalise grants admin and community development 122 164

Howard CrabtreeReduce Training Provision 100 100
Restructure Human Resources Division 66 151**Kay Atkinson**Delete vacant posts in Customer Services 164 164
Customer Access non -staffing efficiencies 37 37
Admin Services non-staffing efficiencies 50 50**Finance & Asset Management**Cease external insurance cover of low risk areas (including terrorism) 71 71
Procurement Efficiencies and Joint Working with other councils 20 40
Finance & Asset Management freeze vacancies 45 45
Cease post delivery within buildings 10 18**Nicci Marzek**Restructure Admin Support and delete vacant posts 273 384
Reduce Advertising Budget 20 20**Miscellaneous**Postages - increased use of electronic mail 10 10
Revise Office Cleaning Specification 15 20
Window cleaning reduced frequency 4 9
Hospitality (excluding Mayoralty and residual corporate provision) 15 15
Print Unit 10 10**Dale Phillipson**HR/Payroll replacement system 20 20
IT System Efficiencies 0 49
Electoral System implementation 7 0
Freeze 2 vacancies - Performance + Analyst/Programmer 63 63**Carl Grimmer**

Managed vacancy factor/savings on use of Agency staff 45 45

Thomas Hall

Town Centre Management and community safety efficiencies/income 45 45

Total

1387 1705**Target Saving****1465**



Northampton Borough Council

BUDGET & COUNCIL TAX CONSULTATION IN NORTHAMPTON – 2007/2008

Results

1.0 INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Northampton Borough Council is committed to working with local people to improve the services that it provides and to deliver them in the most efficient way. One of the Council's priorities is to improve its interaction with the public and to listen to local people and provide the services they need. In that spirit, the budget consultation process for setting the budget for 2007/08 has been more wide reaching than in previous years. We will learn from our experiences this year and continue to improve our consultation techniques and how we use this information year on year.
- 1.2 Northampton Borough Council currently estimates a budget shortfall of £3.15 million for the services that it plans to provide in 2007/2008. This leaves the Council with some difficult decisions to make in order to address that shortfall.
- 1.3 The Council's Administration has produced a range of proposed savings totalling approximately £4 million. These proposals have formed the basis of the budget consultation process.
- 1.4 The results of the consultation process are contained within this report. They will be used to help guide the Council in setting a balanced budget.

AIMS OF THE EXERCISE

- 1.5 The aim of this consultation exercise was to gain an insight into local people's views so that the council can take them into account when setting a balanced budget.
- 1.6 The consultation exercise set out to find out opinion regarding which services, from a range of options local people would view as important to them and conversely those that were not.
- 1.7 The options were developed by senior managers and Councillors considering which non-statutory services could be cut, reduced or provide in a different way, in light of the strategic priorities that have been set for 2007-2008.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 The methods used to capture views were a questionnaire, workshops, open meetings and staff briefings. There are many methods of conducting research and in this instance we did not undertake this consultation exercise using sampling methods and therefore the results do not statistically represent the views of the population of Northampton. However, given the nature of the budget proposals and the number of responses, whilst the results may not be statistically significant they are indicative of the views of the people and organisations within Northampton.

WHAT DID WE DO?

2.2 The following groups of people were included within the process:

- General public
- NBC employees
- Business Community
- Local Strategic Partnership and other agencies
- Area Partnerships and Community Forums

2.3 A questionnaire was developed based upon the proposed policy options for budget savings and the possible impact on the community.

2.4 The questionnaire (Appendix) and 'Policy Options for Budget Savings' document were available to download and complete on-line via the Council's website and intranet. An e-mail address, freepost address and consultation telephone hot-line were set up to receive comments/views etc.

2.5 The workshops, open meetings and staff briefing were designed to present the options and to note views, comments and questions. It was an opportunity for the Council to gather alternative ways of making savings.

2.6 Two workshops were conducted with the members of the Council's Area Partnerships and Community Forums. The Council's Community Forums include representation from old people, young people, disabled people, ethnic minorities, gay, lesbian and bisexual people.

2.7 Representatives from 26 groups, Council partners, businesses and agencies attended two meetings where their views were gathered.

- 2.8 The consultation exercise was well advertised through the media. The media attended both public open meetings.
- 2.9 The Chronicle and Echo newspaper ran a campaign to gather views. The results of that campaign have not been submitted to the Council, therefore they do not form part of the results.
- 2.10 The results from the questionnaire have produced quantitative and qualitative data, whilst the feedback from the various meetings in the form of support, non-support and comments has produced qualitative data. The results from both the quantitative and qualitative data are detailed within this report.

WHAT RESPONSE DID WE GET?

- 2.11 The following meetings were attended and responses made:
- Approximately 350 staff attended 5 information sessions.
 - Approximately 150 local people attended the public open meetings.
 - 377 completed questionnaires
 - 935 comments were made via letter, phone call and e-mail.
 - Petitions/campaigns were received from the following:
 - Lings Forum
 - Kingsthorpe Community College (supporting Lings)
 - Thorplands Primary school (supporting Lings)
 - Bellinge Primary school (supporting Lings)
 - Ecton Brook primary School (supporting Lings)
 - Royal & Derngate Theatres
 - Neighbourhood Wardens
 - Welfare Rights
 - Tourist Information Centre/N'pton Enterprise Ltd

3.0 KEY FINDINGS

3.1 The results and findings from the consultation exercise are presented in two sections:

1. Results from the questionnaire, and
2. What people had to say

RESULTS FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRES:

3.2 The results from the questionnaires are collated in two ways:

- those who responded that the services in question were very important to them, and
- those who ranked the service as not very important.

3.3 These two values viewed together enable an impression to be formed of their relative importance within each service category.

3.4 The values below are a numerical representation of how people ranked each service option. The ranking was not exclusive and people could rank any number of services as equally important or not, it is not possible to provide a meaningful percentage

Question 1:

3.5 We asked people to prioritise from a list of services identified for possible savings, the order of importance of those services to them.

3.6 The following table shows how those services were ranked. We have shown in bold type where there are strong views either way.

Housing Services & Money Advice	Most important	Least important	Street Cleansing & Grounds Maintenance	Most Important	Least important	Parks & Public Amenities	Most Important	Least important	Community Safety & Wellbeing	Most Important	Least important	Community Centre & Community Grants	Most Important	Least important	Tourism, Arts, Leisure & Sport	Most Important	Least important	Civic News-paper	Most important	Least important
	91	127		247	21		193	19		178	36		91	98		129	91		15	322

Points for noting:

- 3.7 People had a strong view about the importance of street cleansing, parks & public amenities and community safety. The scores above show that these areas were most importance to them whereas housing services & money advice, and community centres & community grants did not show a strong view either way, which may indicate that those who use the service valued it highly and that those who did not use the service did not value it greatly. Those using the service may also be thought of as vulnerable and as a group of people responding to the questionnaire, the proportion of people using the housing & money advice, and the community centres may well be lower than those who do not.
- 3.8 People had a strong view about discontinuing the civic newspaper.

Question 2:

- 3.9 We then went on to ask people to prioritise within service areas those areas most important to them. The following table shows how people responded for each service category. We have shown in bold type where there are strong views either way:

Housing Services and Money Advice	Most Important	Least important
Private Sector Housing	133	195
Environmental Health	289	55
District Offices	89	242
Housing & money Advice Centre	146	180
Street Cleansing and Grounds Maintenance		
Street Cleansing	328	29
Weed Spraying	107	228
Grounds Maintenance	211	131
Graffiti Removal	184	155
Parks and Public Amenities		
Park Ranger	149	190
Public Toilets	197	152

Community Safety & Wellbeing		
Community Safety	250	92
Anti-social Behaviour Unit	210	135
Health, Wellbeing & Access	114	220
Neighbourhood Wardens services	163	176
Community Centre and Community Grants		
Community Centres	222	123
Community Grants	93	243
Tourism, Arts, Leisure and Sports		
Leisure Centres	248	32
Arts Development	51	120
Events	74	50
Licensing & Supervision of Community Events	59	83
Tourism	76	71
Sports Development	128	55
Christmas Lights	40	219
Community Grants – Royal & Derngate	115	119

Points for noting:

- 3.10 People had strong views about the importance of street cleaning, environmental health, community safety, leisure centres and sports development.
- 3.11 People had strong views about support for the discontinuance of district offices, community grants, Christmas lights, the civic newspaper and arts development.
- 3.12 Almost equal numbers ranked the community grant for the Royal and Derngate either as very important to them or least important to them.
- 3.13 People completing this questionnaire may be from a cross section of the population of Northampton, who wish to express their opinions about the range of options for savings. The Royal and Derngate has passed onto the Council a petition containing 5,357 signatures in support of maintaining NBC funding. It should be noted that whilst the petition shows strong support to maintain NBC grant, amongst many users of the Royal and Derngate, the questionnaire completed by users and non-users does not show a clear result either way for the theatre.

3.14 A number of other petitions were also submitted, the most significant being that supporting Lings Forum. 2,855 signatures were received. The petition shows strong support amongst the many users of Lings Forum and the cinema to keep it open, the questionnaire completed by users and non-users mirrors this support.

Question 3:

3.15 We asked people about an increase to the Council Tax. We asked that they choose between a rise of 3% and 5%. The increase in Council Tax for 2007/08 is budgeted at 3%. Council Tax could be increased to 5%. Each additional 1% represents £130,000. Therefore raising the Council Tax by 5% could raise an additional £260,000. This would reduce the number of saving that we need to make.

3.16 The results were as follows:

Increase on Council Tax		
3%	198	53%
5%	153	40%
No response	26	7%

Points for noting:

3.17 People commented that they would not object to an increase in Council Tax if there were no cuts.

WHAT PEOPLE HAD TO SAY

3.18 People's comments are recorded in this report in three ways:

- Comments made from the questionnaires, workshops, public meetings, e-mails, letters and telephone calls that relate to the specific proposal contained within the Policy Options Budget Savings document.
- Comments made about savings in other areas.
- Petition and campaigns

3.19 The following tables show the comments that were made that related directly to the services areas within the questionnaire.

Service Area		Keep	Cut
Housing Services & Money Advice	Private Sector Housing	0	3
	Environmental Health	5	2
	District Offices	3	3
	Housing & Money Advice Centre	4	2

People also said:

- If District Offices are cut then alternative arrangements for vulnerable people would need to be made.
- Any move of the H&MAC to the OSS should be supported by alternative funding arrangements
- Any move may compromise the perceived independence of the service.
- Any cut in the service would need to be commissioned to the voluntary sector.
- If the Visitor Centre was moved then the H&MAC could relocate and Fish Street could be sold.

Service Area		Keep	Cut
Street Cleaning & Grounds Maintenance	Street Cleaning	21	3
	Weed spraying	5	1
	Grounds Maintenance	10	2
	Graffiti Removal	11	2

People also said:

- Increased enforcement
- Streamline/rationalise service
- Charge NHS/PCT for collection of clinical waste
- Increase bulk collection
- Increase refuse shift length
- Reduce grounds maintenance or fund privately
- Use probationers/community service for Graffiti removal
- Reduction in graffiti removal affects the perception of safety
- Adverse impact on Council priority 'Cleaner, Greener'

Service Area		Keep	Cut
Parks & Public Amenities	Park Rangers	5	2
	Public Conveniences	16	4

People also said:

- Keep Sheep Street loos open and close others
- Close underused toilets but keep the park ones open
- Make a small charge and keep open
- Private funding perhaps from shops
- Use probationers/community service to clean
- Park Rangers contribute to community safety and loss may increase crime and anti-social behaviour in parks

Service Area		Keep	Cut
Community Safety & Wellbeing	Community Safety	5	1
	ASBU	8	1
	Health, Wellbeing & Access	2	0
	Neighbourhood wardens	35	3

People also said:

- Parents should pay for anti-social children
- ASBU not effective
- NW need to enforce litter laws – not just report
- Partnership approach would be weakened
- Possible increase in anti-social behaviour
- Public confidence in crime reduction such as anti-social behaviour maybe weakened.
- Loss expertise in ‘designing out crime’.
- Adverse impact on Council priority ‘Safer, Stronger Communities’
- Loss of expertise to meet Disability Discrimination legislative requirement

Service Area		Keep	Cut
Community Centres and Community Grants	Community Centres	15	4
	Community Grants	41	6

People also said:

- Tender service
- Maintenance to be carried out by community members
- Charge for use
- Give centres to the community to manage
- Give support only to disabled people
- Impact assessment needed

- Welfare Rights is an invaluable source of information and help and is available to the most vulnerable in our town
- Loss of grants would mean loss of match funding which may result in closure of the service
- Loss of Community Grants would put most vulnerable at risk
- Adverse impact on the development of a strong and viable voluntary and community sector

Service Area		Keep	Cut
Tourism, Arts, Leisure & Sport	Leisure Centres	279	4
	Arts Development	224	5
	Events	108	14
	Licensing & supervision of Community Events	1	0
	Tourism	8	5
	Sports development	44	2
	Christmas Lights	4	11
	Community grants Royal & Derngate	257	16

People also said:

- Find alternate providers for Events, Festivals, Lings
- Get lottery funding
- Keep Lings open-close Mounts
- Increase charges e.g. pay for admittance to museums to raise revenue
- Consider efficiencies, e.g. reduce pool temperatures
- Lings is unique provider. E.g alternative cinema, affordable swimming lessons, facilities for special needs, only public squash courts in the town
- Closure of Lings would have a knock on impact on many clubs, the police service, NHS, & of the Royal and Derngate an impact on students/university
- Impact Assessment needed
- Impact on health e.g. tackling obesity, life-style diseases
- Impact on anti-social behaviour and youth offending
- Use Fish Market for Arts Development
- Use commercial sponsorship/tender out

- Private/ Self Funding
- Bring back Npton show (and charge entry fee)
- Loss would damage communities e.g. Lings seen as heart of the community, many can not afford private facilities, not able to travel.
- Leverage on other tourism partners would be damaged
- Think about the Olympics
- Impact on the cultural and sporting life of Northampton, beacon/oasis of culture
- Businesses to support the Royal & Derngate/Find sponsors for Royal & Derngate
- Theatres part of town regeneration, attracts tourists, supports employment
- Why was funding for Lings and Royal & Derngate refurbishment allowed
- Loss of grants would mean loss of match funding which may result in closure of the Royal and Derngate
- Once these facilities are gone they are difficult if not impossible to get back

Service Area		Keep	Cut
Civic news paper	Civic Newspaper	0	14

3.20 No support was received regarding the civic newspaper

3.21 The next set of tables shows the comments that were made about savings in other areas.

Topic Area	Comment	Frequency
Management – Chief Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Remove/ resign ▪ Reduce Support staff ▪ Live in locality ▪ Reduce income 	12 1 1 4
Management – Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work together and take responsibility ▪ Trust your staff and support them – don't vie contradictory orders ▪ Get rid off all/ reduce/ do not stand for re-election ▪ Proved 7 years of own accounts before elected (to show money management) ▪ Slash expenses/ donate 	3 1 10 1 15
Management – Senior Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduce their salaries and pay off clauses ▪ Employ better supervisors ▪ Use operational managers to deliver/ have more people on the ground ▪ Reduce (Cost of 2 Corp. Managers = 1% Council Tax increase) ▪ Sack/ restructure ▪ Get rid of those who made financial decisions creating current problems/ employ people who can budget properly ▪ Stop awaydays and expensive meals ▪ Have proper financial plan/ have the guts to put things right without deferring responsibility ▪ Produce a full organisational tree for each area 	16 3 5 5 2 5 2 3 1
Management – Middle Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduce 	1
Management – Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stop negative press and be open and honest ▪ Stop talking and listen 	1 2
Management – morale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Boost 	1
The Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Become a unitary Council ▪ Transfer facilities/ ownership of Community centres to parish Councils e.g. Blacky More Community Centre (could produce savings of £9,000 in capital charges) ▪ Downsize 	2 3 1
Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stop using consultants 	54

Topic Area	Comment	Frequency
Consultants/ interim Managers/ Agency staff		
Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide free to shoppers ▪ Privatise (NCP) 	1 1
Council Cuts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Look at internal savings rather than public services ▪ Stop making people redundant ▪ Stop making people redundant and then re-employing them ▪ Stop bonuses for refuse workers 	3 1 1 3
Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use substation ▪ Hire generates ▪ Use trade fuels (BIFFA) 	1 1 1
Contractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stop using 	1
Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Only statutory 	2
Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Defer – concentrate on performance whilst planning for the future 	1
Housing – Voids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduce void properties to increase rent income ▪ Don't worry about government/ audit requirements 	3 1
Sell off the land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dispose of depots ▪ Bus station ▪ Dispose of council house 	2 1 3
Staff/ Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce Press and PR expenses as not working • Cut support services - not front line - contract legal/IT • Withdraw professional fees as individuals can offset against tax but council cannot • Reduce wages unless value for money • Improve website and online services (this would allow for staff reductions) • Administer only mandatory services • Freeze pay • Reduce publicity • Raise revenue options/Use industry to fund/ include waste contracts for waste removal from businesses • Use flexible hours to rationalise staffing levels • Reduce spending on homelessness • Cut revenues and benefits 	1 2 1 1 1 2 1 1 4 1 2 1

Topic Area	Comment	Frequency
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete root and branch and reconsider usefulness • Cut Staff Counselling Services • Stop using Mears • Remove Political assistants • Make Customer Services a Corporate responsibility and mainstream • Charge for parking at Council Offices • Gauge interest in voluntary redundancy for all staff • Stop funding Christmas/Diwali • Stop minibus service for employees • Use better procurement • Cut frequency of office cleaning/ promote in-house cleaning • Get rid of essential car users allowance • Join up departments • Use approved suppliers 	<p>4</p> <p>2</p> <p>5</p> <p>1</p> <p>1</p> <p>6</p> <p>1</p> <p>4</p> <p>1</p> <p>1</p> <p>1</p> <p>1</p> <p>1</p> <p>1</p>
Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower fees • Allow free parking on set days to revitalise shops • Charge for illegal verge parking • Increase fees 	<p>1</p> <p>1</p> <p>1</p> <p>1</p>
In House facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop bottled water/milk • Reduce/cut hospitality • Improve energy efficiency and cut waste (turn lights out and turn equipment off, etc) • Charge for rubbish bags • Better use of office space and sites to rent out free space created 	<p>3</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>1</p> <p>3</p>
Printing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop using glossy brochures/ print double sided 	<p>1</p>
Chewing gum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fine culprits 	<p>7</p>
Translating facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop wasting money on this 	<p>1</p>
Statues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not contribute to these 	<p>1</p>
Asylum seekers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop housing 	<p>5</p>
Surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use only email versions to save money 	<p>3</p>
Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capitalise on Raw Data regulations to cover costs (Ass. Land Charges Register) 	<p>1</p>
Environmental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain why only £10k saving proposed out of £1.1m budget 	<p>1</p>

Topic Area	Comment	Frequency
Cobblers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop funding them 	1
Suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce a car levy to every car owner 	1
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contract out maintenance 	1
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subcontracting-defer until budget agreed 	1
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cut out fraud and waste 	2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change boxes to bins to stop litter 	1
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training using internal resources 	1
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check with other councils who have balanced their books to see how they have done it 	1
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Join councils -become unitary 	4
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close Cliftonville building 	1
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covered market could be used for antiques 	2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise own lottery scheme 	1
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outsource accounting 	1
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop using corporate credit cards 	1
Mayoralty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up Budget Busters Team to investigate high expenditure 	1
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider if this is needed 	2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayor to drive himself 	1
Social Club	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sell off mayor's number plate 	2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider need 	1
Godwin Room chairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sell to raise money 	1
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploit history 	1
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask for more funds 	3
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask for intervention 	1
16/17 year olds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renegotiate with NCC 	1
Partnership working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second staff to 3rd sector agencies to assist in provision of solutions etc. 	1
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check commitment to deliver LAA outcomes 	9
Telephones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review mobile phone/ all phones 	2

3.22 The following shows the number of signatures received from petitions and campaigns:

○ Lings Forum	2531 signatures
▪ Kingsthorpe Community College (supporting Lings)	16 signatures
▪ Thorplands Primary school (supporting Lings)	23 signature
▪ Bellinge Primary school (supporting Lings)	218 signatures
▪ Ecton Brook primary School (supporting Lings)	67 signatures
Sub total	2,855 signatures
○ Royal & Derngate Theatres	5357 signatures
○ Neighbourhood Wardens	77 signatures
○ Welfare Rights	44 signatures
○ Tourist Information Centre/N'pton Enterprise Ltd	85 signatures
TOTAL	9,752 signatures

4.0 PARTNERS AND KEY ORGANISATIONS

- 4.1 A meeting for the Council's partners and key organisations was held at the Guildhall on the 17th of January 2007. 26 organisations were represented. The minutes can be seen at appendix B
- 4.2 A meeting for the business community, arranged via the Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce was held at the Guildhall on the 19th of January 2007. Unfortunately only two organisations were represented. The minutes can be seen at appendix C. A selection of letters from some of the Council's partners are attached at appendix E.

5.0 TRADE UNIONS

- 5.1 The Trade Unions attended the staff meetings. Their collective comments can be viewed at appendix D.

6.0 QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

- 6.1 Two open meetings for the public were held at the Guildhall on the 18th of January 2007. In total approximately 150 people attended. The media was also present at both these meetings.
- 6.2 During these sessions members of the public requested that all the questions raised are recorded along with the answers and both made available in the final consultation results report. These questions and answers will be made available on the Council website along with this document.

7.0 EQUALITIES

- 7.1 From its inception the consultation process was designed to make sure that it was accessible to all local people, businesses, partners of the Council and the voluntary community (the third sector). The methods and groups of people included in the consultation plan are detailed in section 2 but specifically, we paid attention to those communities that may be adversely affected by the policy options for budget savings proposed by the Council.
- 7.2 In light of this, information on the proposals was circulated to the members of the Council's Area Partnerships and Community Forums. This included approximately 2000 organisations and individuals. Many of the members of these groups have their own

networks that they feed information onto therefore the ripple effect of this means that many more would have had access to the information.

- 7.3 Members of the Area Partnerships and Community Forums were also invited to attend two workshops held at the Guildhall on the 9th January 2007 in order to gather their views as to the impact that the proposals may have on them or their organisations. In addition written submissions were also received. The results of these workshops have been include with the section that deals with comments.
- 7.4 The public were made aware of the Council's proposals and the consultation process through invitations to specific vulnerable groups as mentioned above via the Area Partnerships and Community Forums, and through press releases. The media coverage to the proposals and various meetings has been and continues to be extensive. The local press has run its own campaign and this plus the very nature of the proposals means that people know about it and have access to the information being consulted upon.
- 7.5 Cabinet is due to meet on the 29th of January and they will be considering the results of the consultation process and then they will be making recommendations to Full Council. Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out on these recommendations as appropriate. The results of these assessments and any mitigation will be made available to Councillors at Full Council when the budget will be set on the 13th of February 2007.

8.0 LESSONS TO BE LEARNT

- 8.1 During the consultation process a number of comments were made about the way in which this exercise has been undertaken. In summary they are:
- People said that there was a need for Councillors to be present at all the consultation meetings to answer questions
 - People felt that there was not enough information available at the meetings
 - It was felt that there was not enough detail available about the various options being proposed.
 - Overwhelmingly people felt that the consultation period was not long enough.
 - People said that the public meeting were held too close to the consultation deadline
 - People were unclear about the decision making process
 - There was generally some wariness about how people's views would be captured and reported
 - Some people felt that the presentation of the proposals was difficult to understand
 - Some people said that they would like a draft budget to consider, that contained the Cabinet preferred choice and a number of alternatives.

- People said that they would like meetings to be spread across a number of different dates

8.2 At the start of this document it was stated that the Council is committed to working with local people and to listening to what they have to say. The views and opinions expressed about the process will be taken on board when we carryout all future consultation and in particular when we come to the budget consultation period again next year.

**Report authors: Simone Wade & Silvina Katz
Governance & Policy**



Consultation on policy options for budget savings

We are seeking your views to guide the council in setting its budget for the next financial year (April 2007 to March 2008).

We have some very difficult decisions to make because currently there is an estimated budget shortfall of £3.15 million. In order to address the shortfall a range of budgetary options totalling approximately £4 million has been compiled. The options range from increasing council tax, cutting back on the frequency of services such as graffiti removal and street cleaning, reducing grants to external bodies, discontinuing some services and further centralising some customer services.

The causes of the shortfall range from a higher than expected take-up of the concessionary fares scheme, increases in energy prices through to some services achieving lower levels of income than expected.

The council has already taken action by reducing management staff costs saving £3 million and we are now looking for a further £1.1 million saving to be achieved through a value for money and efficiency initiative. This value for money drive includes improved procurement of necessary purchases, sharing costs with other councils and partners through more efficient partnership working and using technology to best effect.

This consultation process is more important than ever. Your views will help guide the council in making policy and setting a balanced budget on which to build a secure and sustainable future.

Thank you for taking part in the consultation. If you would like to express a view, put forward different ideas or make a suggestion as to how we might better deal with these issues, this is your opportunity. If you need more time and space to do so, then email us at budget@northampton.gov.uk or contact to us on (01604) 838569 or write to us at:

Northampton Borough Council, Governance office, 2nd floor,
Freepost MIDI 7237, Northampton, NN1 1WJ

Full details of the Budget Consultation Option Savings for 2007/08 can be found at www.northampton.gov.uk/budgetconsultation

**Thank you for your contribution to our budget setting process.
Please return by 22 January 2007**

Service Areas where proposed savings have been identified

Options for savings are being proposed in the areas below. Please prioritise the following services you receive in order of importance to you. Please use 1 (most important) to 7 (least important)

Areas where savings are being proposed/ ranking (1-7)

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| Housing Services and Money Advice Centre | <input type="checkbox"/> | Community Centres and Community Grants | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Street Cleaning and Grounds Maintenance | <input type="checkbox"/> | Tourism, Arts, Leisure and Sport | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Parks and Public Amenities | <input type="checkbox"/> | Civic Newspaper | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Community Safety and Wellbeing | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |

We will have to make cost savings in some of the following service areas. To help us prioritise please indicate below which service areas are most important to you. (1 = most important)

1. Housing Services and Money Advice

- Private Sector Housing Environmental Health District Offices
Housing & Money Advice Centre

2. Street Cleaning and Grounds Maintenance

- Street cleaning Weed Spraying Grounds maintenance Graffiti removal

3. Parks and Public Amenities

- Park Rangers Public Conveniences

4. Community Safety and Wellbeing

- Community Safety Anti-Social Behaviour Unit Health, Wellbeing & Access
Neighbourhood Warden Service

5. Community Centres and Community Grants

- Community Centres Community Grants

6. Tourism, Arts, Leisure and Sport

- Leisure Centres Arts development Events
Licensing & Supervision of Community Events Tourism Sports Development
Christmas Lights Community Grants-Royal & Derngate

7. Civic Newspaper (please ✓ if you think we should continue to publish)

- Civic Newspaper

Increase on Council Tax

The increase in council tax for 2007/2008 is budgeted at 3%. Council tax could be increased to 5%. Each additional 1% represents £130,000. Therefore raising the council tax by 5% would raise an additional £260,000. This would reduce the number of savings we need to make.

Council Tax Increase: 3% 5% (please tick one option)

Your Ideas, Comments and Suggestions:

**NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
BUDGET CONSULTATION 2007/08**

**NOTES OF MEETING HELD ON 17TH JANUARY 2007
8.30am – 10.00am**

PRESENT

Ian Thompson Nicci Marzec Cllr Brian Markham	NBC NBC NBC / Northampton Local Strategic Partnership
Ann Bodsworth Peggy Shelson Chris Starmer David Randall Jack Knowles Sandra Bell Dennis Attfield	Northampton Womens Aid Northampton Womens Aid Northampton Womens Aid Northamptonshire Enterprise Ltd Ability Northants Ability Northants Ability Northants (Northamptonshire Shopmobility)
Ann Gilbert Ruth Light Donna Munday Peter Storey	Northampton Volunteering Centre Northampton Volunteering Centre Royal and Derngate Theatres Northants YMCS / Northampton Voluntary & Community Sector Forum
Derry Miller	Age Concern N'ptonshire / N'ptv & CSF / Comm Member Welfare Rights Enterprise Training Project
Rosemary Hadaway Keith Goodwin Mary Clarke Liz Carroll -Wheet	Northampton Door to Door Service Doddridge Centre Northampton Irish Support Group & Northampton Carnival Consortium Manna House Counselling Service Chair – The Manna House Trust CVS Northamptonshire
John Nightingale Vic Winchcombe Paul Chaplin Martin Lord	Northampton & District Citizens Advice Bureau Doddridge Centre
Sue Hutchings Julie Silver	Welfare Rights Advice Service Northampton
Paul Phillips Brian Mutlow	Northants Police Northamptonshire CDA Ltd

1.	Presentation on Budget Consultation 2007/8 Presentation by Ian Thompson, Interim Finance Director at NBC, to provide an overview to attendees regarding the funding gap of £3m on a budget of £65m.	

2. A summary of points raised during the discussion following the presentation.

- Concern that there were no specific references to the actual grants that might be affected in the consultation document and the Public need to be aware of the potential service cuts they face as a result of the reduction in funding to Voluntary Services. It was suggested that a list of grants should be published, as people do not understand what “Community Grants” means and how cuts in funding to this area might directly affect them.
- The economic and social impact of reducing any Voluntary Sector services should be considered by the Council
- There was criticism regarding the consultation paper, which was put out for discussion too late.
- Councillors should have a strategy about what services they are looking to have in the Community and from that consider each service individually.
- Had the Council considered the detrimental impact on the revenue NBC would receive from parking if the Royal and Derngate Theatres closed as a result of a reduction in funding.
- The process that would be used by the Council to present the Consultation information to Councillors was questioned, and whether there would be procedures in place to ensure that Councillors see all the views that are received. [The response was that a summary of key themes emerging from the consultation would be presented as an appendix to the report for 29th January and that all detailed comments received would be made available as background documentation.]
- It was suggested that there is a lack of foresight regarding the impact that reducing grants to Voluntary Sector organisations would have on Northampton. Without the support of these organisations it is likely that Northampton will see a rise in anti social behaviour and, for example, problems such as graffiti – The YMCA advised that without the funding they would be unable to assist in helping the Council recover from such problems.
- It was questioned whether NBC had lost a significant amount of its’ customers in the town centre to Milton Keynes (and therefore seen reductions in Car Park revenue). It was requested that the Council consider the redevelopment of the town, or as a result of the funding problems it is likely that the town will deteriorate.
- Concern that if a Voluntary Organisation is forced to become insolvent as a result of a reduction in funding by NBC, that it would be impossible to get funding in the future; Organisations need to prove financial viability. The Council needs to ensure it considers the value attached to voluntary organisations that is the volunteer element. With reducing the funding available to Voluntary Organisations the Council may be able to make savings but in trying to provide these services internally would incur much higher costs.

- Paul Philips, Area Commander for Northamptonshire Police advised that while he empathises with the problems arising due to Budget issues, The Police can't easily promote and improve Community Safety without the help of all the organisations present at the Consultation meeting. It was also identified that the Police would experience greater pressure without the support and assistance of the Neighbourhood Wardens and Park Rangers.
- With regards to the strategy for recovery (to which NBC have given a 3 year time horizon) – it was put forward that 3 years is long enough to put an end to a voluntary service (maybe in some cases even 1 year), and it was argued that these services cannot be resurrected simply by re-starting the funding at a later date.
- It was requested that the Council considers the implications of reducing funding on the financial support that some of these organisations receive from other businesses. It was identified that NCC recognises this.
- Had the Council considered the implications on their customers if the Housing Money Advice Centre is moved to The One Stop Shop? The Council must consider that one of the benefits at present is its semi-independence, and in moving to the One Stop Shop it may not be able to maintain its' LSC quality mark. The Council should consider the potential savings that could be made if these services were passed to the independent sector.
- With regards to Corporate Regeneration, it was asked whether the Council had considered the credibility of this strategy and how other major partners would view it when they savings options affecting Arts and Culture, Tourism and Leisure. The Council needs to consider that it will affect funding with other partners in the future.
- Criticisms were expressed about the exclusion of Northampton Door to Door Service from the savings options; it was argued that it is totally inappropriate to exclude one organisation.
- It was contended that if these Organisations have to close and are not present within the community to help people through their problems then the progress that has been made so far will start to go backwards.
- The Council should consider looking at whether buildings are being used efficiently enough and whether there are savings to be made.
- Community centres have been identified as an area where savings could be made. However, it was argued that they are key to the community and there already isn't enough space at present.
- The Council needs to consider its statutory duty with regards to the Disability Discrimination Act and the Council's own Equality and Diversity Policy. Ability Northants (Shopmobility Northampton) advised that without funding they would contact the Disability Equality Commission and would be legally challenging the Borough Council 's consultation arguing that the consultation is flawed.

Further additional points made after the meeting:

“1. On several occasions the notes refer to the Voluntary Sector, when they should refer to the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS).

2. At the meeting I pointed out that we had not been provided with enough information as to how the areas proposed had been chosen, as opposed to other areas, which could well have been less of a priority.

2.1 I gave previous examples of the £400k spend on redevelopment of the Cliftonville House reception area and also the £10m committed to capital spend with partners such as West Northants Development Corporation, which some might not have seen as priorities.

2.2 The reply was that this was capital and not revenue spend but my subsidiary point was that capital - based initiatives such as the Milton Keynes South Midlands Expansion would, in view of the increase in population, create a higher demand for community and voluntary sector groups and services, not a lower demand, making the proposed cuts even more short-sighted.

3. Another VCS representative asked who had drafted the proposals and was told that Officers had drafted them.

4. I raised the issue that the consultation exercise was flawed because people had not been given enough time or information to enable them to make informed decisions.

4.1 I read directly from a "Forums and Local Area Partnerships Budget Consultation 2006" invitation letter, quoting: " *There is no material to be sent out prior to the day and no preparation required from participants*".

4.2 Officers explained that Elected Members only had sight of the proposals on 8th January and in view of the fact that the first Consultation meeting was set for the 9th January, there had been no possibility of providing better consultation.

4.3 One of the VCS representatives countered that Elected Members were due to have met at a pre-Cabinet Meeting on 18th December to discuss the proposals, but had been prevented from doing so because the figures were not available to them; hence the fact that the public had been provided with only 2 weeks notice to comment on the proposals.

5. Several people expressed dissatisfaction that none of the Cabinet Members were present.”

**NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
BUDGET CONSULTATION 2007/08**

**NOTES OF MEETING HELD ON 19TH JANUARY 2007
8.30am – 10.00am**

PRESENT

Ian Thompson
Nicci Marzec
John Peet

Pauline Henderson

NBC
NBC
Partner – Shoosmiths Solicitors and a
Director of Northamptonshire Chamber
Policy Adviser at Northamptonshire
Chamber of Commerce

1.	Presentation on Budget Consultation 2007/8 Presentation by Ian Thompson, Interim Finance Director at NBC, to provide an overview to attendees regarding the funding gap of £3m on a budget of £65m.	
2.	<p>A summary of Points raised during the discussion following the presentation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern regarding the number of people who shop and use leisure facilities outside of Northampton (primarily in Milton Keynes). Had the Council considered the detrimental effect this would continue to have on the revenue of car parks in the town. • Concern regarding the inertia in Northampton – this is worsened by the fact that Milton Keynes has improved significantly over the last 5 years. Development of the Grosvenor Centre is key to the town. • Had the Council looked at performance management and efficiency through its' staff? It was suggested that the Council should to think creatively of new ways to work and use office space in order to be more efficient – the current methodology needs to be looked at very critically. • Had the Council considered a reduction in the general use of temporary staff, as much this is an expensive means of providing staff. • Concern that businesses already find it difficult to attract staff to Northampton from areas like London; it was contended that Northampton is a town that lacks charisma. • Concern regarding cuts to leisure services – this is what people want and is crucial in making Northampton a more vibrant place. Areas like this need to be developed in order to gear up for further growth in the population in the future. • Had the Council considered sharing services with NCC or other district/borough councils to share back office services in order to save money? It was identified that Kettering and Wellingborough Borough 	

Council's share legal services in order to save money.

- It was suggested that the Council needs to do more work in order to attract people who stay in the town. While it was argued that development around the edges of the town is good, work needs to be done in order to ensure this isn't just town that people use 'as a place to sleep'. Brown-field developments may be beneficial but houses don't necessarily bring positive elements to the area if the service levels and local facilities/amenities are poor.
- Had the Council considered the image of the town and how it would look if the Royal and Derrigate Theatres were forced to close, having invested money in its refurbishment.
- Concern that the Council should be giving people what they want in terms of local services and not take them away so that they are forced to travel outside the town.
- There was criticism regarding the way in which businesses were invited to the consultation meeting, not giving people enough notice and not publicising the meeting widely enough.

TRADE UNION COMMENTS ON BUDGET PROPOSALS

As Trade Unions representing a significant number of members across all services of the Council we find ourselves yet again in a position where, due to the operation of the Council's finances our members are facing insecurity and threats to their jobs.

We are concerned that this is becoming a regular cycle and recall that within the last 2 years Northampton Borough Council employees were issued with Redundancy Notices, which were subsequently withdrawn. Since that time employees have gone through a Root and Branch Restructure, which was difficult and painful for many, the ongoing uncertainty being a source of demoralisation.

Despite this we remain confident that our members will continue to expedite their duties in a professional manner. For some time, staff in the Council's Finance department, many of whom are Trade Union members, reported to the Council, issues relating to ongoing budgets. Included in this process were recommendations to address the financial deficits within the budgets. We were and are disappointed that the Council chose to largely ignore these recommendations.

We believe that before any strategic decisions are taken which could lead to cuts in services, there should be independent and robust examination of the Council's finances.

The Trade Unions have sought financial information to support the Council's analysis but are disappointed that the information received provides little more detailed information than that in the budget proposals.

The Trade Unions are opposed to any Compulsory Redundancies and will be demanding that immediate measures are considered to ensure that any subsequent decisions on savings can be taken without employees being dismissed.

Street Cleaning

This service deals regularly with broken glass and discarded needles it is felt that there is a risk of injury to the public and children in particular if these are left lying around for a number of weeks. A dirty town would fly in the face of Healthy Living and other corporate priorities, businesses would not want to operate here and visitors would not chose to shop here. The cost impact on the town far outweighs any saving.

Employees feel that there should be more enforcement against littering, graffiti and fly tipping, this would produce some income but would be a deterrent against such behaviour and allow Street Cleansing to improve their service.

Grounds Maintenance

The Grounds Maintenance program is currently being run at an absolute minimum necessary, a reduction in manpower could mean that some areas become unmanageable and unusable. In the growing season regular cuts are essential or the mowers will not cope with the grass length. The loss of sports pitches would be another detriment to the health of the people and the future of Northampton. The service is currently able to respond to some emergency

requests from Councillors but this would no longer be possible if proposed cuts were made. Bushes and shrubs not maintained to a low height could impact on crime within the town.

Graffiti Removal

If graffiti is not kept under control at its current rate and the image of the town deteriorates, businesses in the town may consider relocating and new businesses may not want to come here, the potential loss of jobs to Northampton far outweighs the savings.

Why do 2 mobile cleaners who are agency staff cost us £180,000? Can the toilets be retained but cleaned in a more economic way by employed staff?

Anti Social behaviour Unit and Sports Development

Many of the diversionary activities these teams carry out save NBC money by keeping some of our more challenging young people positively active. Hundreds of children in Northampton's most deprived neighbourhoods will be affected. It would be naive to think that some of these young people will not be the source of much of the damage to NBC housing stock and other ASB once they are not alternatively engaged.

Neighbourhood Warden Service

If the Warden provision is to be removed then Housing Management and Estate Management would need to be reviewed as wardens spend a great deal of their time chasing related works and issues. Housing Officers would need to work more with the local communities. Perhaps Housing Officers could be upgraded to Neighbourhood Managers/Officers who cover such cross-cutting issues; this may mean a higher grade for each officer but could serve to partially mitigate the loss of the wardens in a number of key neighbourhood management areas.

Community Grants:

The total value of Community Grants (if large grants and small grants programmes are added together) is approximately £682K. Some £630K for large grants and nearly £53K for small grants.

Impact:

Reducing the commitment by 50% to approximately £382K will impact on smaller front line organisations. This is because the reduced budget would have to go on the larger more strategic organisations. This may be no bad thing given the amount of Borough residents catered for but government statistics show that in the UK 140 general charities account for over 60% of the total income of the sector as a whole despite 70% of the voluntary sector being made up of small front line local organisations.

Northampton Borough Council currently funds approximately 23 general charities through the large grants pot which itself constitutes some 92% of the total budget whilst the remaining 8% is given to small grants to Community organisations of various kinds. I would argue, and so too would the logic of Neighbourhood Renewal and LAA's that engaging the public at the grass roots level through direct grants is at least as important as engaging the public indirectly through large grants to larger organisations. Therefore, if the budget is reduced by 50% then

the split in funding between larger and smaller organisations needs to be rebalanced from the existing 92/8% to 60/40% or similar.

The further proposal to reduce the budget to nil would simply decimate the voluntary and community sector in Northampton. I would like to make recommendations for efficiency measures that in my view would save a lot of money each year and speed up processes and services to the voluntary sector. At present the small grants budget is made up of Arts, Sports and Community elements. Arts and Sports Development Teams also have their own separate development budgets to disperse in the form of grants at their discretion. The grants I administer are subject to open and accountable criteria, none of the others are.

Lings

This proposal would not appear to deliver any savings and may in fact cost the Council as the proposal states "Improvement of other facilities across the Borough". Lings Leisure centre is located exactly where it is needed, at the heart of the Eastern District. It has just achieved yet another award for service – QUEST –the highest quality accreditation for leisure. It works closely with the Health Service on the health of the people of Northampton. It runs swimming lessons every evening and Saturdays. It is used by 20 schools and 52 different groups, pensioners and disabled people. The cinema is a source of education and culture. Combined, the two are a unique and valuable resource to a huge area of the town, its loss would have a very negative impact on a great portion of the population of the town, it is likely the Council could never afford to replace it. The deed covering the gift of the land to the Council states that it is to be used for Leisure purpose only.

Arts Development and Events

The cutting of arts development and events seems a bad idea to me. Events like the Balloon festival are time consuming and costly to put on but they also put Northampton on the map and bring income and people into the town. If events like this are cut, what will the tourist and economic result be? Also look at how much external funding has been brought into the town through the cultural departments?

In light of recent development and proposed cuts is that considering that the Cultural and arts development departments have come out of recent reports as strong and successful parts of the council, why is it being proposed that these departments should be completely cut? Apparently the county council is also cutting their arts posts so that there will be no arts development left in Northampton whatsoever. Surely looking at the recent vision for Northampton, this is going to leave Northampton as a town without any aspirations. I understand that statutory services have to be kept but it strikes me that if you have a council depleted of everything but statutory services, what will actually be left to inspire, motivate and allow our residents to trust and have faith in us?

The Royal and Derngate Theatre Trust:

According to Agresso the approved Budget is £641.580K not £640 as specified in the consultation paper. According to Financial services this budget is over spent by £25K.

Impact of Reduction:

The Theatres Trust would lose some money but given that its grant is almost 100% of the total value of all remaining grants to the Voluntary Sector it is right that it should shoulder a greater burden. I do not know what the audience demographics are but I would wager that the bulk of the audience is NOT made up of Northampton Residents. Therefore the per capita effect will be negligible. The paper recommends that such a reduction would be dependent upon other funders increasing their share. This is not very realistic. Why would other funders want to increase their share and allow NBC to reduce its share? What motivation is there? It should not be dependent upon this. The reduction should go ahead and then the Theatres Trust should worry about how it intends to make up the difference.

Use of Consultants

The use or rather the abuse of public money for some consultants is appalling. I appreciate that a number of consultants are carrying out essential change management within the organisation but too many are learning their trade at NBC's expense. It has become clear in some areas that some consultants charging NBC between £500 and £1,000 per day for front line roles require training on basic systems they themselves are trying to introduce to NBC. This results in Consultants training their fellow Consultants on how to use a system they recommend. Meanwhile NBC pays £1,000s per day for the privilege.

Now we need to make cuts in the budget but it is still acceptable to pay Chief Exec costs to front line gap fillers who stay for 7 or 8 months and more. In many cases senior managers justify this by saying they are struggling to recruit to the roles in question. Proper investigation will show that this is not proven. In some cases jobs have only been advertised on one occasion before this excuse has been given. Who is monitoring the validity of such reasons? Would NBC employ some of the individuals they have accepted as consultants on a full time basis in the same role?

Further Proposals for Consideration

Highways

The Highway dept is currently carrying out non-statutory work for Atkins on behalf of the County Council. This generates an external income of £4m. Approximately £300,000 of that contributes to the Borough Council's on-costs and is identified in the budget as a cost the Council would have to carry if this arrangement ceased. In addition, the DLO makes a net profit of between £150,000-200,000, which would also be a loss to NBC. In short, the cost of closing the current Highways arrangement in June is £550,000 plus redundancy payments for the 40 staff and any on-costs incurred due to the early termination of lease vehicles and equipment. In recent weeks Atkins has had its contract extended until March 2008 and as a result has offered to extend the existing arrangement with the Borough Council. Unfortunately, NBC is deemed to be trading illegally by its legal team and has continued trading under the 'well-being' act. This could be rectified at NIL cost to the County Council if they were to state that the work is being carried out directly for them, but is overseen by Atkins. We therefore ask that the political party involved in running the 2 councils enter into urgent discussions to rectify the situation and, if necessary, ask Central Govt for its support, through the MP. This would give a net saving to the budget of £800,000 and would enable a profit-making department to continue trading, with added-value to the people of Northampton with its emergency call-out service.

Use of Technology

By providing people with better technology and more pc memory, could there be a point when hard copies and paper filing could be obliterated. This would help to lower stationary and printing costs, whilst also improving employees' use of their time. Less contractors, consultants and temps should be used - we should be monopolising on the skills and knowledge that already exist within the council and its current workforce.

Office Cleaning

Review the contracts for office cleaning with a view to reducing the frequency and costs, at the same time encourage staff to keep their own areas tidy.

Indoor Market

Let the Indoor market to a business who will pay a commercial rent for the property even on a short term basis.

Contractors

Review the use of contractors in all areas, discuss with staff how to incorporate the work at lesser costs.

Derngate Theatre

We understand that the Derngate Theatre actually receives £640,000 in funding we feel that the people of Northampton would not see this as such a high priority as street cleaning, grounds and parks maintenance and a Leisure Centre.

We are very concerned at the huge costs currently incurred by the use of inefficient advertising of posts in the national press, e.g an advert for one post cost £13,000 and yet we failed to recruit and consequently the post is to be re-advertised. Similarly, a group of regeneration posts were advertised at a cost of £9,000 and it was only after this that it was realised that there were internal staff who had the necessary skills and the adverts were pulled. At this current time there should be a full freeze on all external recruitment until this process is over. In addition there should be an evaluation of the costs of recruiting to all posts, which should establish whether firstly internal applicants have the required skills, followed by a local recruitment campaign.

Is this the Future?

Cutting front line services will make it almost impossible for us to improve in the eyes of the CPA and the people of Northampton, our streets will be littered with rubbish, glass and needles, our parks and open spaces unused and uncared for and our Leisure Centres closed. Graffiti and fly tips will make our estates unsightly, with nowhere for the young to go and nothing to be proud of. Neighbourhood wardens would not be there to help improve our environment and the quality of life of our tenants.

We urge the Council then, not to be the Council that goes down in history as the one who started Northampton on the slippery slope to hopelessness and despair, but the Council who strives for that higher vision of what our town could be, a town of hope and optimism.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ON BUDGET CONSULTATION FROM UNISON BRANCH

- Public Conveniences - Correction to Page 9 of Budget Savings Options – The 2x Mobile Toilet Cleaners are employed by NBC. They are not agency workers.
- Public Conveniences - There are 2 FTE on mobile toilets. If they stop this service it will affect this group of workers. There is confusion over the difference between static/mobile toilets.
- Trade Waste Service – If this service is not cost effective ie. Not making profit, then why was it not included in the Options.
- District Offices – Could close Spring Boroughs Housing Office as residents could use Guildhall. Do not close Kings Heath Housing Office, as this is located within an isolated and deprived area already. There is no Post office, public house or bank in this area. The Housing Office is a key part of the community. Closing district offices could have a negative effect on residents paying rent, ctax, etc. Use some foresight - developers are soon to build 1000's of houses on Dallington Grange. A Housing Office is a vital resource and is not expendable.
- Abandoned Vehicles - Incorporate the abandoned vehicle duties into the Neighbourhood Warden Service. Wardens are trained on the inspection and removal of abandoned/untaxed vehicles.
- Housing & Money Advice Centre – This serves the most vulnerable people in the community. How will the reconfiguration of this service happen? How did they arrive at the financial figures?
- Where is the detail/source of the financial figures?
- Where is the detail on the impact of these service cuts?
- Why are there cuts to services that effect the most vulnerable (as with NCC cuts) – the poor, elderly, young, disabled.
- The Public Consultation exercise was a farce.
 - The public (Trades Council) called a motion of no confidence in the consultation process and there was a unanimous show of hands.
 - Councillors/officers not available to answer public questions.
 - No copies of budget documents available.
 - Some Councillors left early as BBC question time was more important, did not stay the full course, Cllr Hadland attended 2nd hour only
 - No answers given on what may happen to Lings land considering the covenant on it
 - Improved advertising of public meeting.
 - Members of NBC staff unable to take copies of questionnaires filled in by public as could not trust themselves to hand them to Governance
 - Media not allowed in
 - Leisure income is £2.2m divide this by the 3 centres means Lings bring in approx £669k, closing Lings would save £250k max. Have been adverts to employ staff at other leisure centres when staff at Lings could be at risk

- Questions could not be answered, instead were collated – how will these be responded to?
 - Poor advertising of consultation and short period advertising it, had it been better advertised more members of the public would attend
-
- Why has the budget deficit only just come to light?
 - Why are they rushing through such ill-thought out/ill conceived plans?
 - Finance – Interim Finance Director oversaw the decisions that created the problems. He has now been brought back to sort out his own mess.
 - Pay & Grading – Will this ever finish? Speed it up. When completed we will know where better savings can be made ie. Salaries/posts.
 - Modernise computer systems. Decrease expensive bureaucracy.
 - Look at efficiencies in offices ie. Recycle resources this could include stationery, office furniture, PC's, etc.
 - WNDC – Does this quango have the right to make a profit, is it a business? As NBC has now lost income from planning applications. Can or does NBC make a charge or claim for services that we have provided to WNDC?
 - Scrap expensive catering at meetings.
 - Make all Managers pay for parking like the rest of the workforce (Guildhall).
 - Closure of the theatres will lose income from parking.
 - Make far better use of the public space in the market. Hold events and raise money to create more trade.
 - Use other agencies such as Probation Service to carry out environmental work eg. removal of graffiti, flytipping, etc.
 - Less corporate propaganda ie. Glossy framed pictures with 'our priorities' cost £40 each.
 - Who came up with the financial figures? Corporate Managers/Corporate Accountants or Service Managers?
 - Can NBC sell unused land to developers? Ie. Rat Island an area of waste ground, a Town Centre eyesore that has been left to degrade for many years.
 - Training – Keep this in-house, cut down on expensive consultants.
 - Consultants – Are these really necessary, use in-house skills, knowledge, etc. Trust Your Employees.

- Use of green energy sources for NBC office and buildings – Could save huge amounts. Also Guildhall too hot, windows permanently open
- If they cut theatre funding, the Arts Council will follow suit and they will close.
- Is anyone within NBC actively/sufficiently applying for external funding/grants?
- Scrap the Mayor's vehicle/necklace/pomp and ceremony.
- Cut the use of temporary workers across the council. Employ people on proper contracts, short contracts if necessary, this would save money. Would also improve loyalty, team building and the ultimately the service.
- It is felt that there is no unity or sense of common purpose amongst the political parties. Too much silo working, divisiveness, we should all 'Pull together in tough times'.
- Derrnate – Members of the public have mentioned reducing the price of tickets and drinks to create more revenue so that the Derrnate are less reliant on our funding. Should be more accessible to the majority not the minority
- Leisure – Could look at increasing prices for hiring out of facilities e.g. squash court
- Employment, in certain areas more cost effective to employ permanent staff than temporary staff, some areas have temporary staff for very long periods
- Loss of school playing fields – Where will our children go if Lings close as playing fields are also being sold, could we invest in this and get extra income
- Mears – this should be looked at now rather than wait til end of contract when rush decisions need to be made
- Councillors and management should stop using hotel conference facilities. Furthermore bar bills should not be paid by tax payer
- Look at whether taxi service would be better for Chief Exec and Mayor. In considering a green strategy for the Council it would be a good set a good example if the Mayor travelled in an environmentally friendly vehicle than a Jaguar with an expensive number -plate. Furthermore the Mayor should be setting an example to the young that success is not measured by having an expensive car but by what you contribute to society
- Should have a recruitment freeze and if posts need filling out of necessity a transparent method should be used
- Catering within the Council – could savings be made
- Pay rises should be given at same time as employees
- Review of car parking charges

- Better use of hire cars, make people pool hire cars rather than individuals who are based in same building using several to a meeting in the same place
- Parks – training could be better delivered, waste of resources
- PCs – all monitors need replacing to flat screens due to energy costs
- Need to become more energy efficient to save electricity costs – pcs and photocopiers etc not turned off when not used
- Councillors broadband, should we be paying for all costs
- Re look at trade waste
- Swimming pools – heating – there are no covers so the heat evaporates at night
- Water coolers – remove and have a system where water is cooled from the mains
- Majority of Guildhall has no air conditioning – could the area that does have air con do without? Possible links with air con and sickness, better to have fresh air and to reduce heat by ensuring pcs are switched off at night and adequate shading used
- Debts (arrears and repairs) written off when tenants abandon properties is not properly prioritised for collection, more could be done to chase these debts
- Utilities – we are billed on void properties
- Mobile phones – could we have an amnesty

22nd January 2007

Directorate	Customers & Service Delivery	Section	Housing Services	Person Responsible for the assessment	Fran Rodgers		
Name of the Policy/Strategy/Service/ Function to be assessed	Closure of District Offices at Kingsheath and Spring Boroughs		New or Existing	Existing	Date of the assessment	01/02/07	
Describe aims/ objectives and purpose of the policy/function to be assessed	Consider the effects of such closure - closure includes ending of the Council Tax counter payment facility.						
Are there any associated objectives associated with this function/policy? If so state							
Who is intended to benefit from this function/policy and in what way?	budget						
Who is responsible for this policy/function?	Fran Rodgers		Who implements this policy/function?		Tim Ansell Interim Housing Services Manager		
What outcomes are wanted from this function/policy?	save money and rationalise services						
What factors could contribute to inequality?	Kingsheath is a deprived area which lacks a number of services. Closure of the office may result in more marginalisation. However, bus services into town make it accessible. The main issue arising is possible costs implications for getting into town to obtain services. Website capabilities may need to improve to facilitate e-access.						
Are there any concerns that the policy/function could have a negative differential impact on the equality groups? What evidence do you have in each relevant case?	Race - No	Disability - No	Gender - No	Sexuality - No	Religion/Belief - No	Age - No	
Could the differential impact identified above give cause to a potential for adverse impact in this function/policy?	Yes	No	Explain - no differential impact identified from 2001 Census information. The services provided from both offices are currently available at the Guildhall which is within reasonable walking distance of Spring Boroughs and served by regular bus services from Kings Heath. For housebound customers the service will continue to offer a home visiting service.				
Can any adverse impact identified be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or any other reason?	Yes	No	Explain				
Should this policy/function proceed to a partial impact assessment?		No	If yes, is there enough evidence to proceed straight to a full impact assessment? Yes/ No - Please give date on which Partial or Full impact assessment will be carried out				
Signed (completing officer)		Signed (Policy officer)		Date:	Comments:		

Directorate	C & SD	Section	Housing	Person Responsible for the assessment	Fran Rodgers	
Name of the Policy/Strategy/Service/ Function to be assessed	Reconfigure to relocate & integrate with One stop Shop		New or Existing	Existing	Date of the assessment	07/02/07
Describe aims/ objectives and purpose of the policy/function to be assessed	To reconfigure delivery of the service currently provided by the Housing & Money Advice Centre, Fish Street through the One Stop Shop Delivery of housing advice and homeless assessment services					
Are there any associated objectives associated with this function/policy? If so state	Homeless prevention - Access to affordable housing - Debt advice					
Who is intended to benefit from this function/policy and in what way?	Vulnerable households					
Who is responsible for this policy/function?	Madeline Spencer		Who implements this policy/function?		Linda Brede	
What outcomes are wanted from this function/policy?	1. Reduction in use of Temporary Accommodation especially B&B 2. Quality housing advice 3. Compliance with homeless legislation 4. Improved access for disabled customers					
What factors could contribute to inequality?						
Are there any concerns that the policy/function could have a negative differential impact on the equality groups? What evidence do you have in each relevant case?	Race - No	Disability - No	Gender - No	Sexuality - No	Religion/Belief - No	Age - No
Could the differential impact identified above give cause to a potential for adverse impact in this function/policy?	/	No	The reason for the move to the One Stop Shop is in order to provide a consistent, high quality service to all citizens of Northampton, not a two tier approach			
Can any adverse impact identified be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or any other reason?	Yes	/	Fish Street does not provide a safe, clean and appropriate environment for the public to access services			
Should this policy/function proceed to a partial impact assessment?	Yes		If yes, is there enough evidence to proceed straight to a full impact assessment? Yes/ - Please give date on which Partial or Full impact assessment will be carried out 26/02/07			
Signed (completing officer)		Signed (Policy officer)		Date:	Comments:	

Directorate	People, Planning & Regeneration	Section	Development-Building Control & Environmental Health	Person Responsible for the assessment	Christine Stevenson		
Name of the Policy/Strategy/Service/ Function to be assessed		Budget Reduction to Public Sector Housing		New or Existing	Existing	Date of the assessment	01/02/07
Describe aims/ objectives and purpose of the policy/function to be assessed		Administration of energy efficiency grants/works					
Are there any associated objectives associated with this function/policy? If so state		Only administer the statutory elements					
Who is intended to benefit from this function/policy and in what way?		Budget					
Who is responsible for this policy/function?		Christine Stevenson		Who implements this policy/function?		Steve Eisey	
What outcomes are wanted from this function/policy?		Save money					
What factors could contribute to inequality?		The remaining statutory service is provided to all groups					
Are there any concerns that the policy/function could have a negative differential impact on the equality groups? What evidence do you have in each relevant case?		Race NO	Disability NO	Gender NO	Sexuality NO	Religion/Belief NO	Age NO
Could the differential impact identified above give cause to a potential for adverse impact in this function/policy?			NO	Explain			
Can any adverse impact identified be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or any other reason?			NO	Explain			
Should this policy/function proceed to a partial impact assessment?			NO	If yes, is there enough evidence to proceed straight to a full impact assessment? Yes/ No - Please give date on which Partial or Full impact assessment will be carried out			
Signed (completing officer)		Signed (Policy officer)		Date:	Comments:		

Directorate	Customer Service & Delivery	Section	Street Scene & Property Maintenance	Person Responsible for the assessment	Carl Grimmer		
Name of the Policy/Strategy/Service/ Function to be assessed	Reduction in level of estate cleaning and extension of response time on fly-tipping		New or Existing	Existing	Date of the assessment	02/02/07	
Describe aims/ objectives and purpose of the policy/function to be assessed	To reduce the cost of service provision in these areas by extending the service provision/response intervals						
Are there any associated objectives associated with this function/policy? If so state	One of the Councils key priorities is to make Northampton a cleaner, safer and greener place to live. This service is a key contributor to the Local Area Agreement and is measured through national and local indicators.						
Who is intended to benefit from this function/policy and in what way?	Budget						
Who is responsible for this policy/function?	Carl Grimmer		Who implements this policy/function?		Tony Spiezick		
What outcomes are wanted from this function/policy?	Reduction on expenditure						
What factors could contribute to inequality?	Reduction in service level on housing estates could impact unequally on deprived areas compared to service levels to more affluent areas						
Are there any concerns that the policy/function could have a negative differential impact on the equality groups? What evidence do you have in each relevant case?	Race - No	Disability - No	Gender - No	Sexuality - No	Religion/Belief - No	Age - No	
Could the differential impact identified above give cause to a potential for adverse impact in this function/policy?	Yes	x			A reduction in the level of cleanliness could result in a perceived deterioration within quality of life		
Can any adverse impact identified be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or any other reason?	Yes	x			All areas of the borough will receive equal reduction in service levels although fly tipping occurs more frequently in deprived areas		
Should this policy/function proceed to a partial impact assessment?			No		If yes, is there enough evidence to proceed straight to a full impact assessment? Yes/ No - Please give date on which Partial or Full impact assessment will be carried out		
Signed (completing officer)	Signed (Policy officer)		Date:		Comments:		

Directorate	Customer Service & Delivery	Section	Street Scene & Property Maintenance	Person Responsible for the assessment	Carl Grimmer		
Name of the Policy/Strategy/Service/ Function to be assessed	Reduce service from 4 sprays a year to 2 (+ spot treatment of problem areas)		New or Existing	Existing	Date of the assessment	02/02/07	
Describe aims/ objectives and purpose of the policy/function to be assessed	to reduce cost of service						
Are there any associated objectives associated with this function/policy? If so state	One of the Councils key priorities is to make Northampton a cleaner, safer and greener place to live. This service is a key contributor to the Local Area Agreement and is measured through national and local indicators.						
Who is intended to benefit from this function/policy and in what way?	Budget						
Who is responsible for this policy/function?	Carl Grimmer		Who implements this policy/function?		Tony Spiezick		
What outcomes are wanted from this function/policy?	To reduce the cost of the service with minimal impact on residents.						
What factors could contribute to inequality?	None						
Are there any concerns that the policy/function could have a negative differential impact on the equality groups? What evidence do you have in each relevant case?	Race - No	Disability - No	Gender - No	Sexuality - No	Religion/Belief - No	Age - No	
Could the differential impact identified above give cause to a potential for adverse impact in this function/policy?		No	This service will be delivered in a more efficient manner with minimal impact to existing standards				
Can any adverse impact identified be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or any other reason?		No	This service will be delivered in a more efficient manner with minimal impact to existing standards. All areas will receive the same service levels				
Should this policy/function proceed to a partial impact assessment?		No	If yes, is there enough evidence to proceed straight to a full impact assessment? Yes/ No - Please give date on which Partial or Full impact assessment will be carried out				
Signed (completing officer)		Signed (Policy officer)		Date:	Comments:		

Directorate	Customer Service & Delivery	Section	Street Scene & Property Maintenance	Person Responsible for the assessment	Carl Grimmer		
Name of the Policy/Strategy/Service/ Function to be assessed	Reduce Grounds Maintenance Service to all parks and public open spaces		New or Existing	Existing	Date of the assessment	02/02/07	
Describe aims/ objectives and purpose of the policy/function to be assessed	To reduce the cost of the service						
Are there any associated objectives associated with this function/policy? If so state	NBC may be obliged to maintain some areas of public open space under S106 agreements. One of the Councils key priorities is to make Northampton a cleaner, safer and greener place to live. This service is a key contributor to the Local Area Agreement.						
Who is intended to benefit from this function/policy and in what way?	Budget						
Who is responsible for this policy/function?	Carl Grimmer		Who implements this policy/function?		Tony Spiezick		
What outcomes are wanted from this function/policy?	Reduction in costs of service						
What factors could contribute to inequality?	None as all parks and public open spaces are affected.						
Are there any concerns that the policy/function could have a negative differential impact on the equality groups? What evidence do you have in each relevant case?	Race - No	Disability - No	Gender - No	Sexuality - No	Religion/Belief - No	Age - No	
Could the differential impact identified above give cause to a potential for adverse impact in this function/policy?	Yes		A reduction in the level of grounds maintenance could impact upon the enjoyment of the facilities contained within the open space areas. Furthermore, a reduction in shrub pruning and maintenance could give rise to overgrown areas having a detrimental effect on anti social behaviour issues.				
Can any adverse impact identified be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or any other reason?	Yes		Whilst all areas will receive a reduction in service, the outlying open spaces will be maintained to a lesser degree to allow provision of a comparable higher level of service to premier parks. This will therefore impact to a greater degree on the enjoyment of these open spaces within the locality.				
Should this policy/function proceed to a partial impact assessment?		No	If yes, is there enough evidence to proceed straight to a full impact assessment? Yes/ No - Please give date on which Partial or Full impact assessment will be carried out				
Signed (completing officer)		Signed (Policy officer)		Date:	Comments:		

Directorate	Customer Service & Delivery	Section	Street Scene & Property Maintenance	Person Responsible for the assessment	Carl Grimmer							
Name of the Policy/Strategy/Service/ Function to be assessed	Reduction in graffiti removal - continue to prioritise removal of sensitive material		New or Existing	Existing	Date of the assessment	02/02/07						
Describe aims/ objectives and purpose of the policy/function to be assessed	To reduce the cost of the service whilst retaining the response level to sensitive material											
Are there any associated objectives associated with this function/policy? If so state	One of the Councils key priorities is to make Northampton a cleaner, safer and greener place to live. This service is a key contributor to the Local Area Agreement and is measured through national indicators.											
Who is intended to benefit from this function/policy and in what way?	NBC - through achieving a balanced budget and residents through the protection of other services that can be maintained within a balanced budget											
Who is responsible for this policy/function?	Carl Grimmer		Who implements this policy/function?		Tony Spiezick							
What outcomes are wanted from this function/policy?	Reduction in costs											
What factors could contribute to inequality?	Location of graffiti											
Are there any concerns that the policy/function could have a negative differential impact on the equality groups? What evidence do you have in each relevant case?	Race	Yes	Disability	Yes	Gender	Yes	Sexuality	Yes	Religion/Belief	Yes	Age	Yes
Could the differential impact identified above give cause to a potential for adverse impact in this function/policy?	Yes				The location and perceived degree of sensitivity of graffiti will impact on the councils ability and response times to remove							
Can any adverse impact identified be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or any other reason?	Yes				The perceived or agreed levels of sensitivity determining removal may cause impact on different groups							
Should this policy/function proceed to a partial impact assessment?	Yes				If yes, is there enough evidence to proceed straight to a full impact assessment? Yes - To be determined once implemented and actual impact can be assessed							
Signed (completing officer)	Signed (Policy officer)		Date:		Comments:							

Directorate	Customer Service & Delivery	Section	Street Scene & Property Maintenance	Person Responsible for the assessment	Carl Grimmer							
Name of the Policy/Strategy/Service/ Function to be assessed	Removal of Park Ranger Service		New or Existing	Existing	Date of the assessment	02/02/07						
Describe aims/ objectives and purpose of the policy/function to be assessed	To reduce costs in this area											
Are there any associated objectives associated with this function/policy? If so state	The function of the Park Ranger Service is that of a visible presence within public open space areas which contribute towards a reduction in anti social behaviour issues and environmental crime. Part of this service will be merged within the functions and duties carried out by the Neighbourhood Warden service and as such reductions in service minimised.											
Who is intended to benefit from this function/policy and in what way?	Budget											
Who is responsible for this policy/function?	Carl Grimmer		Who implements this policy/function?		Tony Spiezick							
What outcomes are wanted from this function/policy?	Reduction in costs to assist the Council achieve a balanced budget											
What factors could contribute to inequality?	Park users may feel less safe											
Are there any concerns that the policy/function could have a negative differential impact on the equality groups? What evidence do you have in each relevant case?	Race	Yes	Disability	Yes	Gender	Yes	Sexuality	Yes	Religion/Belief	Yes	Age	Yes
Could the differential impact identified above give cause to a potential for adverse impact in this function/policy?	Yes						A reduction in the level of service provided may potentially impact upon enjoyment of the open spaces associated with a decrease in the ability to control anti social behaviour					
Can any adverse impact identified be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or any other reason?	Yes						A reduction in the level of service may impact more on minority groups associated with anti social behaviour					
Should this policy/function proceed to a partial impact assessment?	Yes						If yes, is there enough evidence to proceed straight to a full impact assessment? April 2007					
Signed (completing officer)			Signed (Policy officer)			Date:	Comments:					

Directorate	Customer Service & Delivery	Section	Street Scene & Property Maintenance	Person Responsible for the assessment	Carl Grimmer		
Name of the Policy/Strategy/Service/ Function to be assessed		Closure of all Public Toilets except those in parks where no alternative provision exists		New or Existing	Existing	Date of the assessment	02/02/07
Describe aims/ objectives and purpose of the policy/function to be assessed		To reduce the costs of provision of this service					
Are there any associated objectives associated with this function/policy? If so state		None and this is a discretionary service.					
Who is intended to benefit from this function/policy and in what way?		NBC - through achieving a balanced budget and residents through the protection of other services that can be maintained within a balanced budget					
Who is responsible for this policy/function?		Carl Grimmer		Who implements this policy/function?		Tony Spiezick	
What outcomes are wanted from this function/policy?		Reduction in expenditure on this service to help Council achieve a balanced budget.					
What factors could contribute to inequality?		Accessibility of alternative shop/store based provision in town centre for the less able and parents with children in buggys					
Are there any concerns that the policy/function could have a negative differential impact on the equality groups? What evidence do you have in each relevant case?		Race - No	Disability - No	Gender - No	Sexuality - No	Religion/Belief - No	Age - No
Could the differential impact identified above give cause to a potential for adverse impact in this function/policy?		No		Other facilities are available			
Can any adverse impact identified be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or any other reason?		No		Other facilities are available			
Should this policy/function proceed to a partial impact assessment?		No		If yes, is there enough evidence to proceed straight to a full impact assessment? Yes/ No - Please give date on which Partial or Full impact assessment will be carried out			
Signed (completing officer)		Signed (Policy officer)		Date:	Comments:		

Directorate	Community Safety, Leisure & Town Centre Operations	Section	Community Safety	Person Responsible for the assessment	Thomas Hall		
Name of the Policy/Strategy/Service/ Function to be assessed	Realignment of Community Safety/ASBU services		New or Existing	Existing	Date of the assessment	07/02/07	
Describe aims/ objectives and purpose of the policy/function to be assessed	To achieve cost reductions through realigning Community Safety and Anti Social Behaviour Unit services						
Are there any associated objectives associated with this function/policy? If so state	Reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour is a corporate plan priority and is within the Strategic Improvement Plan.						
Who is intended to benefit from this function/policy and in what way?	NBC - through achieving a balanced budget and residents through the protection of other services that can be maintained within a balanced budget						
Who is responsible for this policy/function?	Thomas Hall		Who implements this policy/function?		Debbie Ferguson		
What outcomes are wanted from this function/policy?	Delivery of the Community safety and ASBU services at a similar level to 2006/07 at reduced cost						
What factors could contribute to inequality?	Community safety services tend to be directed disproportionately at certain sectors of the community where victimisation and offending are higher than average.						
Are there any concerns that the policy/function could have a negative differential impact on the equality groups? What evidence do you have in each relevant case?	Race	Disability	Gender	Sexuality	Religion/Belief	Age	
	possibly	possibly	possibly	possibly	possibly	possibly	
Could the differential impact identified above give cause to a potential for adverse impact in this function/policy?	Yes		Explain A marginal effect, through inability to act on or react to demands for new or different services, or to assess disproportional impact of services.				
Can any adverse impact identified be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or any other reason?	Yes		Explain effects are hypothetical and minor. Cost reductions are necessary to achieve a balanced budget and hence other goals.				
Should this policy/function proceed to a partial impact assessment?		No	If yes, is there enough evidence to proceed straight to a full impact assessment? Yes/ No - Please give date on which Partial or Full impact assessment will be carried out				
Signed (completing officer)	<i>Thomas Hall</i>		Signed (Policy officer)	Date:	Comments:		

Directorate	Community Safety, Leisure & Town Centre Operations	Section	Community Safety	Person Responsible for the assessment	Thomas Hall		
Name of the Policy/Strategy/Service/ Function to be assessed	Discontinuation of the Health Wellbeing & Access service		New or Existing	Existing	Date of the assessment	07/02/07	
Describe aims/ objectives and purpose of the policy/function to be assessed	To achieve cost reductions through deletion of a service and post.						
Are there any associated objectives associated with this function/policy? If so state	BVPI 157; outcomes within the HCOP block of the LAA						
Who is intended to benefit from this function/policy and in what way?	NBC - through achieving a balanced budget and residents through the protection of other services that can be maintained within a balanced budget						
Who is responsible for this policy/function?	Thomas Hall		Who implements this policy/function?		Debbie Ferguson		
What outcomes are wanted from this function/policy?	Reduction in costs						
What factors could contribute to inequality?	Discontinuation of the service without alternative arrangements for discharging the Council's duty to promote equality for disabled people carries a risk of preserving inequalities in access and other areas for this group.						
Are there any concerns that the policy/function could have a negative differential impact on the equality groups? What evidence do you have in each relevant case?	Race	Disability	Gender	Sexuality	Religion/Belief	Age	
	No	Yes	No - except reduces number of female managers	No	No	Yes	
Could the differential impact identified above give cause to a potential for adverse impact in this function/policy?	Yes		Explain Not yet clear how Council's duty to promote equality for disabled people would be discharged - potential adverse effect on improving physical access to buildings and facilities, giving disabled people a voice in decision-making, ensuring accessibility of communications and addressing discrimination.				
Can any adverse impact identified be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or any other reason?	Yes	Possibly	Explain Need to deliver a balanced budget through cost reduction a prerequisite for delivering any service. Potential to provide the essential aspects of the service in other ways.				
Should this policy/function proceed to a partial impact assessment?	Yes		If yes, is there enough evidence to proceed straight to a full impact assessment? Don't know				
Signed (completing officer)	<i>Thomas Hall</i>		Signed (Policy officer)	Date:	Comments:		

Directorate	People, Planning & Regeneration	Section	Development-Building Control & Environmental Health	Person Responsible for the assessment	Christine Stevenson		
Name of the Policy/Strategy/Service/ Function to be assessed		Budget Reduction to Environmental Health		New or Existing	Existing	Date of the assessment	01/02/07
Describe aims/ objectives and purpose of the policy/function to be assessed		Consider the effects of discontinuing activity in non mandatory fields eg cycle routes and healthy eating					
Are there any associated objectives associated with this function/policy? If so state		Reduce the cost of the service					
Who is intended to benefit from this function/policy and in what way?		Budget					
Who is responsible for this policy/function?		Christine Stevenson		Who implements this policy/function?		Steve Eisey	
What outcomes are wanted from this function/policy?		Reduce the cost of the service					
What factors could contribute to inequality?		Many of these non-statutory services are provided by other agencies/organisations.					
Are there any concerns that the policy/function could have a negative differential impact on the equality groups? What evidence do you have in each relevant case?		Race NO	Disability NO	Gender- NO	Sexuality NO	Religion/Belief NO	Age NO
Could the differential impact identified above give cause to a potential for adverse impact in this function/policy?			NO	Explain			
Can any adverse impact identified be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or any other reason?			NO	Explain			
Should this policy/function proceed to a partial impact assessment?			NO	If yes, is there enough evidence to proceed straight to a full impact assessment? Yes/ No - Please give date on which Partial or Full impact assessment will be carried out			
Signed (completing officer)		Signed (Policy officer)		Date:	Comments:		

Directorate	People, Planning & Regeneration	Section	Regeneration, Growth and Community Development	Person Responsible for the assessment	Chrstopher Cavanagh		
Name of the Policy/Strategy/Service/ Function to be asseessed	Reduction in Financial support for CommunityCentres		New or Existing	Exisitng	Date of the assessment	12/02/07	
Describe aims/ objectives and purpose of the policy/function to be assessed	To reduce costs of this service by either transferring responsibility for operation of centres to community groups (with a comensurate reduction in coucil financial support), generating increased income from self managed and NBC managed centres and/or closure of (some) centres.						
Are there any associated objectives associated with this function/policy? If so state							
Who is intended to benefit from this function/policy and in what way?	NBC - through achieving a balanced budget, and residents through the protection of other services that can be maintained wthin a balanced budget. If centre mangemanet is transferred then the community gain a higher stake by way of community ownership of council asset(s).						
Who is responsible for this policy/function?	Chrstopher Cavanagh		Who implements this policy/function?		Sean Silver; Lindsey Cameron		
What outcomes are wanted from this function/policy?	Reduction in costs of service. Increased ownership by the community of Community Assets.						
What factors could contribute to inequality?	Reluctance of community groups to take on responsibility; Loss of facility to the community if centres closed.						
Are there any concerns that the policy/function could have a negative differential impact on the equality groups? What evidence do you have in each relevant case?	Race -	Disability	Gender	Sexuality	Religion/Belief	Age	
Could the differential impact identified above give cause to a potential for adverse impact in this function/policy?	Yes		Explain - Yes centres used by supplementary schools offering services to various BME communities; Religious groups use centres for worship; Groups offering support/services to disabled people; Older people and youth activity engaged through centres;				
Can any adverse impact identified be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or any other reason?		No	Explain				
Should this policy/function proceed to a partial impact assessment?	Yes		If yes, is there enough evidence to proceed straight to a full impact assessment? Yes/ No - Please give date on which Partial or Full impact assessment will be carried out				
Signed (completing officer)	Sean Silver	Signed (Policy officer)		Date:	Comments:		

Directorate	People, Planning & Regeneration	Section	Regeneration, Growth and Community Development	Person Responsible for the assessment	Chrstopher Cavanagh		
Name of the Policy/Strategy/Service/ Function to be assessed		Reduction in Community Grants budget of £50,000		New or Existing	Exisitng	Date of the assessment	12/02/07
Describe aims/ objectives and purpose of the policy/function to be assessed		To reduce costs in this area whilst continuing to provide grants to the voluntray sector under Council's grant framework.					
Are there any associated objectives associated with this function/policy? If so state							
Who is intended to benefit from this function/policy and in what way?		NBC - through achieving a balanced budget, and residents through the protection of other services that can be maintained within a balanced budget.					
Who is responsible for this policy/function?		Chrstopher Cavanagh		Who implements this policy/function?		Sean Silver; Lindsey Cameron	
What outcomes are wanted from this function/policy?		Reduction in expenditure on community grants.					
What factors could contribute to inequality?		The grant framework, number and range of applications for grant and determination of grants outside the grant framework. The apparent prpotection of the grant to Dial-a-ride?					
Are there any concerns that the policy/function could have a negative differential impact on the equality groups? What evidence do you have in each relevant case?		T	Disability	Gender	Sexuality	Religion/Belief	Age
Could the differential impact identified above give cause to a potential for adverse impact in this function/policy?			No	Explain - the grants process addresses issuea around equality and is scrutinsied by the Community Enabling Fund Advisory Panel whose memebrrship includes all party support and Voluntary Sector engagment.			
Can any adverse impact identified be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or any other reason?		yes		Explain - Grants could be focused to particular groups or to groups providing service to particular sectors of the community as overseen by the Community Enabling Fund Advisory Panel			
Should this policy/function proceed to a partial impact assessment?			No	If yes, is there enough evidence to proceed straight to a full impact assessment? Yes/ No - Please give date on which Partial or Full impact assessment will be carried out			
Signed (completing officer)	Sean Silver	Signed (Policy officer)		Date:	Comments:		

Directorate	Community Safety, Leisure & Town Centre Operations	Section	Leisure	Person Responsible for the assessment	Thomas Hall		
Name of the Policy/Strategy/Service/ Function to be assessed	Increase revenue income for three leisure centres		New or Existing	Existing	Date of the assessment	07/02/07	
Describe aims/ objectives and purpose of the policy/function to be assessed	To reduce net expenditure (including costs of the 2006/07 rise in energy costs) for the service by raising prices						
Are there any associated objectives associated with this function/policy? If so state	To continue to provide Leisure Centre Services on current sites; health outcomes within HCOP block of LAA						
Who is intended to benefit from this function/policy and in what way?	NBC - through achieving a balanced budget and residents through the protection of other services that can be maintained within a balanced budget						
Who is responsible for this policy/function?	Thomas Hall		Who implements this policy/function?			Ian Redfern	
What outcomes are wanted from this function/policy?	Increased income to reduce net expenditure and offset increased costs. Maintenance of services.						
What factors could contribute to inequality?	Nature and range of Leisure Centre Users - possibly a disproportionate impact of any increase in charges on low income users. Leisure centres provide specific services and opportunities for certain groups eg disabled, women, ethnic minority groups.						
Are there any concerns that the policy/function could have a negative differential impact on the equality groups? What evidence do you have in each relevant case?	Race	Disability	Gender	Sexuality	Religion/Belief	Age	
	Possibly	Possibly	Unlikely	Unlikely	Unlikely	Possibly	
Could the differential impact identified above give cause to a potential for adverse impact in this function/policy?	Yes		Explain Impact likely to be on low-income groups rather than directly on 'equality' groups above - but income levels can be associated with race, disability and age. So these groups may find it more difficult to access affordable services.				
Can any adverse impact identified be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or any other reason?	Yes		Explain Effect relatively minor; need to achieve balanced budget through cost reduction or increased income.				
Should this policy/function proceed to a partial impact assessment?		No	If yes, is there enough evidence to proceed straight to a full impact assessment? Yes/ No - Please give date on which Partial or Full impact assessment will be carried out				
Signed (completing officer)	<i>Thomas Hall</i>		Signed (Policy officer)	Date:	Comments:		

Directorate	Customer & Service Delivery	Section	Community Safety, Leisure & Town Centre Operations	Person Responsible for the assessment	Thomas Hall		
Name of the Policy/Strategy/Service/ Function to be assessed	Recovery of costs in Arts Development and Events services		New or Existing	Existing	Date of the assessment	07/02/07	
Describe aims/ objectives and purpose of the policy/function to be assessed	To reduce net expenditure on these services through increased income generation and cost reduction						
Are there any associated objectives associated with this function/policy? If so state							
Who is intended to benefit from this function/policy and in what way?	NBC - through achieving a balanced budget and residents through the protection of other services that can be maintained within a balanced budget						
Who is responsible for this policy/function?	Thomas Hall		Who implements this policy/function?		Ian Redfern		
What outcomes are wanted from this function/policy?	Reduction of net expenditure in this area to zero, while maintaining a Balloon Festival and some arts co-ordination activity.						
What factors could contribute to inequality?	Some events may have a role in promoting community cohesion.						
Are there any concerns that the policy/function could have a negative differential impact on the equality groups? What evidence do you have in each relevant case?	Race	Disability	Gender	Sexuality	Religion/Belief	Age	
	Unlikely	No	No	No	Possibly	Possibly	
Could the differential impact identified above give cause to a potential for adverse impact in this function/policy?	Yes		Explain May affect support for religious festivals eg Diwali. Possible reduction in activities for young people.				
Can any adverse impact identified be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or any other reason?	Yes		Explain Effects are hypothetical and minor. Cost reductions are necessary to achieve a balanced budget and hence other goals.				
Should this policy/function proceed to a partial impact assessment?		No	If yes, is there enough evidence to proceed straight to a full impact assessment? Yes/ No - Please give date on which Partial or Full impact assessment will be carried out				
Signed (completing officer)	<i>Thomas Hall</i>		Signed (Policy officer)	Date:	Comments:		

Directorate	Customer & Service Delivery	Section	Community Safety, Leisure & Town Centre Operations	Person Responsible for the assessment	Thomas Hall		
Name of the Policy/Strategy/Service/ Function to be assessed		Discontinue financial support for tourism via grant to "Explore Northamptonshire"		New or Existing	Existing	Date of the assessment	07/02/07
Describe aims/ objectives and purpose of the policy/function to be assessed		To assist with achieving a balanced budget by ending expenditure in this non-statutory area					
Are there any associated objectives associated with this function/policy? If so state		Possible effect on growth, in that tourism promotion helps to boost the attractiveness of Northampton to potential investors.					
Who is intended to benefit from this function/policy and in what way?		NBC - through achieving a balanced budget and residents through the protection of other services that can be maintained within a balanced budget					
Who is responsible for this policy/function?		Thomas Hall		Who implements this policy/function?		Thomas Hall	
What outcomes are wanted from this function/policy?		Cost reduction					
What factors could contribute to inequality?		None identified					
Are there any concerns that the policy/function could have a negative differential impact on the equality groups? What evidence do you have in each relevant case?		Race	Disability	Gender	Sexuality	Religion/Belief	Age
		No	No	No	No	No	No
Could the differential impact identified above give cause to a potential for adverse impact in this function/policy?		Yes	No	Explain - No differential impact identified			
Can any adverse impact identified be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or any other reason?		Yes	No	Explain - No adverse impact identified			
Should this policy/function proceed to a partial impact assessment?		No		If yes, is there enough evidence to proceed straight to a full impact assessment? Yes/ No - Please give date on which Partial or Full impact assessment will be carried out			
Signed (completing officer)	<i>Thomas Hall</i>	Signed (Policy officer)		Date:	Comments:		

Directorate	Customer & Service Delivery	Section	Community Safety, Leisure & Town Centre Operations	Person Responsible for the assessment	Thomas Hall		
Name of the Policy/Strategy/Service/ Function to be assessed	Discontinue provision of town centre Christmas lights by Council		New or Existing	Existing	Date of the assessment	02/02/07	
Describe aims/ objectives and purpose of the policy/function to be assessed	To reduce expenditure by discontinuing provision of Christmas lights by Council; explore alternative funding from the business community						
Are there any associated objectives associated with this function/policy? If so state							
Who is intended to benefit from this function/policy and in what way?	NBC - through achieving a balanced budget and residents through the protection of other services that can be maintained within a balanced budget						
Who is responsible for this policy/function?	Thomas Hall		Who implements this policy/function?			Ian Redfern	
What outcomes are wanted from this function/policy?	Reduction in expenditure on this non-statutory function						
What factors could contribute to inequality?	None identified						
Are there any concerns that the policy/function could have a negative differential impact on the equality groups? What evidence do you have in each relevant case?	Race	Disability	Gender	Sexuality	Religion/Belief	Age	
	No	No	No	No	No	No	
Could the differential impact identified above give cause to a potential for adverse impact in this function/policy?	Yes			Explain - No differential impact identified			
Can any adverse impact identified be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or any other reason?	Yes	No	Explain - No adverse impact identified				
Should this policy/function proceed to a partial impact assessment?		No	If yes, is there enough evidence to proceed straight to a full impact assessment? Yes/ No - Please give date on which Partial or Full impact assessment will be carried out				
Signed (completing officer)	<i>Thomas Hall</i>		Signed (Policy officer)	Date:	Comments:		

Directorate	People, Planning & Regeneration	Section	Regeneration, Growth & Community Development	Person Responsible for the assessment	Chris Cavanagh		
Name of the Policy/Strategy/Service/ Function to be assessed		Reduction in grant support to Royal & Derrgate Theatre Trust		New or Existing	Existing	Date of the assessment	02/02/07
Describe aims/ objectives and purpose of the policy/function to be assessed		To reduce Council's expenditure in this non-statutory area whilst continuing to support the Trust					
Are there any associated objectives associated with this function/policy? If so state							
Who is intended to benefit from this function/policy and in what way?		Budget					
Who is responsible for this policy/function?		Chris Cavanagh		Who implements this policy/function?		Chris Cavanagh	
What outcomes are wanted from this function/policy?		Reduction in expenditure in this non-statutory area					
What factors could contribute to inequality?		Reduction in grant, if not replaced by alternative sources of funding, may lead to higher ticket prices which would impact disproportionately on lower income users of the facility.					
Are there any concerns that the policy/function could have a negative differential impact on the equality groups? What evidence do you have in each relevant case?		Race - No	Disability - No	Gender - No	Sexuality - No	Religion/Belief - No	Age - No
Could the differential impact identified above give cause to a potential for adverse impact in this function/policy?		Yes	No	Explain - No differential impact identified			
Can any adverse impact identified be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or any other reason?		Yes	No	Explain - No differential impact identified			
Should this policy/function proceed to a partial impact assessment?		Yes	No	If yes, is there enough evidence to proceed straight to a full impact assessment? Yes/ No - Please give date on which Partial or Full impact assessment will be carried out			
Signed (completing officer)		Signed (Policy officer)		Date:	Comments:		

Directorate	Governance, Resources & Improvement	Section	Governance, Resources & Communications	Person Responsible for the assessment	Nicci Marzec		
Name of the Policy/Strategy/Service/ Function to be assessed	Cease production of Civic newspaper		New or Existing	Existing	Date of the assessment	02/02/07	
Describe aims/ objectives and purpose of the policy/function to be assessed	To end expenditure on this non-statutory publication						
Are there any associated objectives associated with this function/policy? If so state							
Who is intended to benefit from this function/policy and in what way?	Budget						
Who is responsible for this policy/function?	Nicci Marzec		Who implements this policy/function?			Nicci Marzec	
What outcomes are wanted from this function/policy?	Financial saving on Council's budget.						
What factors could contribute to inequality?	None - adequate alternative means of communication already exist						
Are there any concerns that the policy/function could have a negative differential impact on the equality groups? What evidence do you have in each relevant case?	Race - No	Disability - No	Gender - No	Sexuality - No	Religion/Belief - No	Age - No	
Could the differential impact identified above give cause to a potential for adverse impact in this function/policy?	Yes	No	Explain - No differential impact identified				
Can any adverse impact identified be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or any other reason?	Yes	No	Explain - No adverse impact identified				
Should this policy/function proceed to a partial impact assessment?	Yes	No	If yes, is there enough evidence to proceed straight to a full impact assessment? Yes/ No - Please give date on which Partial or Full impact assessment will be carried out				
Signed (completing officer)		Signed (Policy officer)		Date:	Comments:		



NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Name of Committee	COUNCIL
Directorate:	Citizens, Finance, and Governance
Corporate Manager / Director:	Ian Thompson
Date:	13 th February 2007

Report Title	Housing Revenue Account Budgets 2007/08 to 2009/10
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Key Decision	Yes
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1. Recommendations

1.1	That an average rent increase of 4.76% per dwelling per week (on a 48 week basis), in line with the Government's rent restructuring regime, to take effect from 1 April 2007 be approved;
1.2	That Warden and Call Care charges (excluding Eleanore House) are increased in line with the Sheltered Housing Review (detailed on another report on the agenda) (as shown in Appendix 5);
1.3	That Heating and Eleanore House service charges are increased by 3.6% (as shown in Appendix 5);
1.4	That garage charges are increased by 5% (as shown in Appendix 5);
1.5	That the budgets for 2007/08 set out in Appendices 1 and 2 be approved subject to the results of the HRA re-basing exercise being brought back to a future meeting of Cabinet; and
1.6	That the potential re-prioritisation of services (detailed at Appendices 3 and 4) be considered.

2. Summary

<p>This report requests that Council agrees the HRA rent increases for 2007/08 and that Council considers and approves overall HRA budgets for 2007/08 and the forecast budgets for 2008/09 and 2009/10.</p>
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3. Report Background

Background

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is a ring-fenced account that represents the costs of holding the Council housing stock. There are strict rules surrounding the costs and income that can be charged to this account. Much of the income and expenditure is dictated by legislation and regulation leaving the Council with direct control over a limited number of these budgets. Rental income, by far the largest single budget within the HRA, is calculated by applying the rent restructuring formula as defined by the Government.

Budgets within the HRA are currently being 're-based' (essentially re-evaluated from first principles) to reflect current service provision.

Rents and Rent Restructuring

Rents within the HRA are currently being restructured in line with the Government Rent Restructuring formula. The intention of this restructuring is to have a consistent approach to rental charges across the whole of the Public Sector housing stock.

The average rent increase and the methodology by which rents on individual properties move towards the calculated (formula) rent is determined by the Government Rent Restructuring formula, which has been allocated for 2007/08 in line with the DCLG's three-year review. The percentage change in rental charges will vary from property to property depending on the formula rent calculation. Revised rents will take effect from 1st April 2007. The table below shows the range of rent increases for 2007/08: -

Rent Increase	No of Properties	Percentage of Total
Above 7%	317	3%
6% to 7%	1,092	9%
5% to 6%	3,392	27%
4% to 5%	5,307	42%
3% to 4%	1,948	16%
2% to 3%	299	2%
Less than 2%	168	1%

Until the introduction of rent restructuring in the 2001/02 financial year, the Government set a 'limit rent' which defined the maximum amount of rent rise on which a Council would receive rent rebate subsidy. This was colloquially known as the 'rent cap'. Councils could therefore raise rents by more than the level set by the Government, an approach adopted by Northampton, but would receive a financial penalty for doing so. This had an impact in the year of the rent rise and continues to have an impact on into future years.

Through rent restructuring,

- the rent levels within the subsidy calculation,
- the limit rent for rent rebate subsidy purposes, and
- the actual rent charged to tenants are all being brought into line.

Councils which raised rents by more than the amounts specified by the Government

and benefited by doing so are now gradually seeing the corresponding benefit being removed through the rent restructuring process. This will continue to put additional increasing pressure on the HRA until the point at which all rents have been restructured.

HRA Subsidy

The subsidy budget is based on a determination received from DCLG. There are two major elements to the changes in subsidy between 2006/07 and 2007/08. These are: -

- Management and Maintenance Allowances which tend to decrease the amount of money paid to the Government. The calculation of these is formula based around types of properties and is intended to reflect the impact on HRA costs of different types of dwelling;
- Notional income from rents which tend to increase the amount of money paid to the Government. The calculation of this is formula based and forms part of the overall move to restructure rents towards a standard level for subsidy purposes and the actual rent charged to HRA tenants.

Also paid through the subsidy system is the Major Repairs Allowance which is used as part of the financing of the HRA capital programme.

The summary below shows the estimate for 2007/08 compared to 2006/07.

	2006/07	2007/08	Changes in Subsidy
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Management and Maintenance	-18,817	-19,241	-424
Major Repairs Allowance	-7,488	-7,611	-123
Capital Charges	-1,010	-1,041	-31
Allowances for Admissable Set Aside	-30	0	30
Interest on Receipts	7	5	-2
Notional Income for Rents	34,501	36,617	2,116
Rental Constraint Allowance	-13	0	13
HRA Subsidy Entitlement	<u>7,150</u>	<u>8,729</u>	<u>1,579</u>

HRA Budget

The Housing Revenue Account budget includes the effect of rent increases and charges increases outlined above. The detailed budget figures are contained in Appendix 1 to 2.

HRA Budget 'Re-basing' exercise

An HRA budget re-evaluation exercise is currently underway. Some effects of this have been built in to the budgets shown within this report and Appendices. For service areas where the re-basing exercise has not been fully completed, an allowance for the anticipated impact has been built in. It is anticipated that revised figures including the results of the re-basing exercise will be reported to the March

meeting of Cabinet.

The incidence of charges between the HRA and the General Fund is still under review and there may be some effects to budgets arising from this which will impact in future years.

Sheltered Housing

Sheltered housing charges have recently been reviewed. The results of this review are considered in another report on this agenda. The effects of this review will not affect 2006/07 and have been built into the HRA Budgets for 2007/08 onwards.

Un-pooling of service charges

The Government set a policy for social housing rents in the December 2000 policy statement, 'The Way Forward for Housing'. This policy included separating certain charges for service from the standard rent in order to make the charging policy to tenants clearer and fairer for the tenants of housing authorities. There are a number of these service charges which are still charged through rent including caretaking and cleaning. Work is currently underway to assess the effects of the un-pooling and it is currently anticipated that un-pooling will be implemented with effect from the 2008/09 financial year.

Housing Repairs Account

A Housing Repairs Account is used to keep a separate record of income and expenditure relating to the repair and maintenance – but not the supervision and management – of an authority's HRA houses or other HRA property. It operates within the HRA ring-fence and, as such, no transfers can be made to or from any accounts other than the HRA. Other key points are:

- (i) the account must be kept in accordance with proper practices;
- (ii) the account must be kept to **avoid a debit balance** in any year;
- (iii) authorities may make **transfers** to the account from the HRA and, in practice, will need to do so to avoid a deficit. They may also transfer some or all of any balance from the account to the HRA;
- (iv) the account must cover the **whole** of an authority's HRA stock;
- (v) if the account is closed, any balance must be transferred to the HRA.

From 2006/07 Northampton has operated a Housing Repairs Account. The Housing Repairs Account is intended to equalise the effect to the HRA of Housing Repairs and can carry its own balance from one year to another. The transfer to the Housing Repairs Account is now under the control of the Corporate Manager for Housing Services. The Housing Repairs Account itself is under the control of the Corporate Manager for Street Scene and Property Maintenance. This arrangement will provide additional control over Housing Repairs expenditure.

Contingency and Re-prioritisation

As identified above, there is an HRA re-basing exercise currently being undertaken. Since this budget report is being produced prior to completion of this exercise, a contingency against potential changes to budgets is required in order to ensure that a balanced budget is being set. For clarity this is shown as a separate line within Appendix 1.

Also included as a separate line are potential re-prioritisation items for 2007/08

which will also have an impact into subsequent years. This re-prioritisation is detailed at Appendix 3.

Summary of Overall Position

A summary of the overall position (shown in more detail at Appendices 1 and 2) is given below.

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Housing Services			
Housing Services	13,736	14,311	14,669
Targetted Dwellings	104	107	110
Sheltered Housing	1,812	1,869	1,916
HRA Subsidy	8,729	9,763	10,797
Housing Rents and Other Income	-42,050	-43,163	-44,179
Rent Rebates Subsidy Limitation	1,800	1,440	1,080
Community Development	85	87	89
Net Expenditure (Cash Limit)	-15,784	-15,586	-15,518
Net recharges to General Fund	6,015	6,165	6,320
Contingency	900	900	900
Potential Service Re-Prioritisation	187	62	62
Major Repairs Allowance	7,611	7,801	7,996
Interest & Financing Costs	1,772	1,772	1,772
Net Transfer From / To Working Balance	701	1,114	1,532
Working Balance 1st April	-4,516	-3,815	-2,701
Working Balance 31st March	-3,815	-2,701	-1,169

The financial pressure on the HRA is increasing over time. This arises from a number of factors, the main ones being: -

- Rents pressure through the rent restructuring process;
- The sale of council houses through Right to Buy whereby, broadly speaking, the better quality housing stock will be sold; and
- Repairs costs through the pressure to meet and maintain the decent homes standard.

Capital Programme

The budget for 2007/08 includes £7.6m for the Major Repairs Allowance. This can only be used to finance HRA capital expenditure. Also included within the HRA budgets within the Interest and Financing Costs budget for 2007/08 to 2009/10 is an amount of £2m Revenue Contribution to Capital Expenditure (RCCE). The use of this financing is reflected in the HRA draft capital programme.

4. Options and Evaluation of Options

N/a

5. Resource Implications (including Financial Implications)

Included above

6. Risk and Opportunity Issues

N/a

7. Consultees (Internal and External)

Internal	
External	

8. Compliance Issues

A: How Proposals Deliver Priority Outcomes

Recovery Plan
N/a
Corporate Plan
N/a

B: Other Implications

Other Strategies
N/a

Finance Comments
None additional to the above.

Legal Comments

9. Background Papers

Title	Description	Source

Name	Signature	Date	Ext.
Author	Bill Lewis Technical Finance Manager	07/02/2007	7167
Corporate Manager	N/a		
Director	Ian Thompson	07/02/2007	8744
Monitoring Officer or Deputy (Key decision only)			
Section 151 Officer or Deputy (Key decision only)	Bill Lewis Technical Finance Manager	23/01/2007	7167

**Appendix 1:
Housing Revenue Account**

	2007/08 £000's	2008/09 £000's	2009/10 £000's
<u>Housing Services - Appendix 2</u>			
Rent, Rates and Taxes	139	144	148
General Management	3511	3587	3677
Communal Heating and Lighting	545	567	581
Caretaking and Cleaning	322	333	341
Lifts	63	65	67
Maintenance of Greens and Shrubs	146	150	154
Environmental Enhancement	119	123	126
Television and Wireless	94	97	99
Single Persons Accomodation	71	73	75
Transfer to Housing Repairs Account	8,726	9,172	9401
	13,736	14,311	14,669
Targetted Dwellings	104	107	110
Sheltered Housing	1,812	1,869	1916
Housing Rents and Other Income	-42,050	-43,163	-44,179
Rent Rebates Subsidy Limitation	1,800	1,440	1,080
HRA Subsidy	8,729	9,763	10,797
	-15,869	-15,673	-15,607
<u>Regeneration, Growth and Community Development - Appendix 2</u>			
Community Development	85	87	89
Contingency	900	900	900
Potential Re-prioritisation Items - Appendix 3	187	62	62
	1,087	962	962
Net Expenditure	-14,697	-14,624	-14,556
Net Recharges to the General Fund	6,015	6,165	6,320
Major Repairs Allowance	7,611	7,801	7,996
Interest & Financing Costs	1,772	1,772	1,772
<u>Net Transfer From / (To) Working Balance</u>	701	1,114	1,532
Working Balance b/f	-4,516	-3,815	-2,701
Working Balance as at 31st March	-3,815	-2,701	-1,169

Appendix 2
Housing Revenue Account
Housing Services

	2007/08 £000's	2008/09 £000's	2009/10 £000's
<u>Housing Services</u>			
H086 Rent, Rates and Taxes	139	144	148
H087 General Management	3,511	3,587	3,677
H088 Communal Heating	305	317	325
H089 Communal Lighting	240	250	256
H090 Caretaking and Cleaning	322	333	341
H091 Lifts	63	65	67
H092 Maintenance of Greens and Shrubs	146	150	154
H093 Environmental Enhancement	119	123	126
H095 Television and Wireless	94	97	99
H097 Single Persons Accomodation	71	73	75
Transfer to Housing Repairs Account	8,726	9,172	9,401
	13,736	14,311	14,669
<u>Targetted Dwellings</u>			
H102 Targetted Dwellings	104	107	110
	104	107	110
<u>Sheltered Housing</u>			
H098 Community Rooms	77	80	82
H099 Supporting People	1,706	1,759	1,803
H100 Wardens	29	30	31
	1,812	1,869	1,916
<u>Housing Rents and Other Income</u>			
H021 Dwelling Rents	-39,135	-40,170	-41,107
H024 Non Dwelling Rents	-1,366	-1,400	-1,435
H026 Charges for Services	-1,749	-1,793	-1,837
H029 Contribution to Expenditure	0	0	0
H108 Provision for Bad Debts	200	200	200
H420 Rent Rebate Subsidy Limitation	1,800	1,440	1,080
	-40,250	-41,723	-43,099
<u>HRA Subsidy</u>			
H031 HRA Subsidy	8,729	9,763	10,797
	8,729	9,763	10,797
Total Housing Services	-15,869	-15,673	-15,607

Appendix 2
Housing Revenue Account
Regeneration, Growth and Community Development

Community Development

H083 Tenant Participation

2007/08 £000's	2008/09 £000's	2009/10 £000's
85	87	89
85	87	89

Appendix 3**Potential Service Re-Prioritisation**

	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010
	£000	£000	£000
Tenants Handbook	25	0	0
Service Training Budgets	20	20	20
NTACT Mystery Shopping	10	10	10
Satisfaction Survey	5	5	5
Advertising for Rent Income	15	15	15
Ombudsman Complaints	12	12	12
HRA Asset Management Strategy	100	0	0
Total Potential Re-Prioritisation	187	62	62

Potential Service Re-Prioritisation

Brief Explanations

1. Tenant Incentive/Reward and Recognition

As part of the housing services improvement agenda a range of incentives aimed at improving efficiency/performance and ensuring tenants adhere to tenancy conditions need to be introduced. These incentives will be joint developed with tenant representatives themselves (from N-Tact). Examples of incentives will be: -

- 25/25 incentive – allowing pre-termination access – this will significantly contribute to improved performance of key BVPI 212 (top priority for NBC). In addition the undertaking of a satisfaction/exit survey will allow us to collect and analyse qualitative data about reasons why people are leaving which will assist the service to plan future sustainment plans and also demonstrates commitment of a “spend to save” nature.
- Maximising “take –up” of Direct Debits - the new IBS system, which is due to go live in April 2007 provides the Housing Service with an opportunity to accept direct debit as a form of payment towards rent. Encouraging existing tenants to change their current preferred method of payment will require some form of initial incentive to obtain maximum “sign-up”. It is envisaged that the introduction of Direct Debits will significantly contribute to improving Rent income BVPIs which are currently in the bottom quartile, allowing staff to concentrate resources on other priority areas.
- “Golden Goodbyes” – it is generally considered as current best practice within the housing profession to have some form of “golden goodbye “ incentive. This is a one-off payment to a tenant who must satisfy certain conditions at the point when vacant possession is given to the Council as the landlord (e.g. property left clear and tidy, rent payments up-to-date etc). This incentive again links in with the “spend to save “ philosophy, as less expenditure at the time of the property inspection will result.
- Under-occupation incentives – There is a significant shortage of general family sized accommodation (i.e. 3 – 4 bedrooomed properties), available to house an ever-increasing number of families on the housing register. Incentives will need to be offered to encourage single people/couples who are currently “under-occupying” their present property to move into smaller accommodation.

- Rent Payment/Community Chests – there are a range of other incentives that we will be looking to develop in 2007/08 to ensure tenants comply with their tenancy agreement and which will assist in various community initiatives – e.g. prize draws for those tenants with a clear rent account etc.

2. Housemark/Housing Quality Network

In order for the housing service to deliver improved outcomes and performance in addition to accelerating the pace of change required, it is essential that we keep abreast of current national and local good practice affecting our service provision and that we are able to benchmark our current services in terms of value for money, efficiency and performance. To achieve this, membership of professional benchmarking clubs provides a valuable tool in comparing a range of factors with peer organizations and the ability to learn and adopt good practice from better performing and more effective organisations is viewed as an essential element of the 'prospect for improvement' criteria outlined by the Audit Commission. The annual cost of Housemark amounts to 10k and other membership costs of additional professional bodies equates to 3-4k per annum.

3. Tenants Handbook (set-up costs)

The 25k projected for 2007/08 represents all costs associated with the publication of a Tenants handbook in April 2007. The handbook is currently 150-160 pages long will be sent to all 12,000+ tenants (in addition to new tenants after the publication date) and again is evidence of best practice within the profession. The continuing absence of a handbook for tenants has been an area of concern for the Audit Commission. There will be on-costs associated with the handbook after the publication and this will be in the form of regular amendments.

4. Service Training Budgets

Although there is a corporate budget for training it was felt that there should be a service specific budget for future training and development of staff. As part of our service improvement agenda it is imperative that we undertake a number of reviews which will result in re-engineering business processes in order to deliver change and a more effective / better performing service and the re-training and development of staff will be a key factor in achieving success. A specific housing service training budget will enable Service Managers to have more influence in determining the most appropriate training required to ensure that staff are equipped with the skills and knowledge to deliver a professional service that meets customer needs.

5. N-Tact Mystery Shopping

Following the recent publication of the Housing service standards to all 12,000 + tenants it is crucial to have a process of independent assessment and evaluation of the nature, quality and effectiveness of the standards that have been set. Mystery shopping is an ideal way for our standards and our ability to meet the targets contained therein to be assessed and the recipients of our service (i.e. our tenants) should be the people involved in the monitoring and assessment of our activities. The recent tenant Involvement strategy and the tenant involvement pledge both

contain numerous references to mystery shopping exercises. Again, this will be a plus point for any future Audit Commission inspection, as it constitutes best practice. The budget will include training and literature connected with this process.

6. Mediation Service

A mediation service was introduced in October 2006 for two-year period .The annual costs, as part of the current contract amount to 17.5 – 18 k per annum and we need to ensure that there is sufficient funding during 2007/08 and part of 2008/09. There has been a raft of legislation in recent years, which have given Local Authority Housing Depts more tools to deal with ASB in an effective manner. The use of a mediation service is widely acknowledged as a valuable preventative tool to assist with the reduction of ASB.

7. Translation Service

Current provision – to continue

8. Satisfaction Survey

Housing services need to know and values the views and opinions of its customers. In order to continually improve outcomes, we need to gauge views and opinions concerning a range of service issues and over the next 3 years there will a range of surveys and information-gathering exercises conducted in order to achieve this.

9. Advertising Rent Income

Current provision – to continue

10. Ombudsman Complaints

Required for compensation/"time and trouble" payments – Housing Services, as a major front-line service receive a high level of comments and complaints. A culture shift is required within the service area whereby complaints are used as an effective learning tool and pro-actively utilised to improve the service. Effective complaint handling also determines that you admit when the service has got it wrong but takes steps to ensure that similar incidents do not re-occur.

APPENDIX 5

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED RENT AND CHARGES INCREASES

	Present £	Proposed £
Garages (+VAT in some cases)	6.07	6.37
Commuter surcharge on garages (+VAT in some cases)	9.77	10.12
Communal Heating	7.09	7.35
Sheltered Charges per Review		
- Level 1 Low		5.53
- Level 2 Medium		12.01
- Level 3 High		17.64
Eleonore House - Category C Call Care		
- Prior to 31/3/03	8.72	9.03
- After 31/3/03	62.04	64.27
Lifelines		
- In Borough	3.52	3.65
- Outside Borough	3.82	3.96
Reduced Lifeline Environmental Health Monitoring Only	0.81 1.16	0.84 1.20
Lifeline Installation Charge #		
- In Borough	40.00	41.44
- Outside Borough	49.00	50.76

Notes

N.B The final charges may differ slightly due to roundings

Agenda Item 7



**NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Item No.
7. Matter of Urgency

Name of Meeting:	COUNCIL
Meeting Date:	13 February 2007
Directorate:	Governance, Resources & Improvement
Corporate Manager:	Francis Fernandes
Author/Contact Officer	Jim Inch 01604 837335
Agenda Status:	(Private/Public part of Agenda)

Report Title	Formation of an Employment Committee
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Recommendation

1. That a Committee of the Council be established to be called the Employment Committee with the following terms of reference:-
 - (a) To determine the terms and conditions of service on which staff hold office.
 - (b) In respect of all employees, to take any decisions which are required and which are not appropriate to be taken by an officer within delegated powers, in relation to superannuation benefits and contributions, extensions of service, gratuities, settlements, applications to serve beyond retirement age, or any other personnel matter which falls outside the functions of the Council's executive.
 - (c) To be the Committee referred to in rules 3 and 4 of the Council's Employment Procedure Rules. (Appointment of Head of Paid Service and Appointment of Chief Officers and Certain Other Officers).
2. That provided no member votes against the Committee consist of 3 members (one from each of the political groups)
3. That the Committee structure and operation is reviewed in May 2007, as part of a wider review of committees. Such review to be considered by the constitutional review working group.
4. That Council nominates three Councillors to the Committee or delegates the nomination to Group Leaders.

Background

Most personnel matters are excluded from being a function of a local authority's executive. Therefore if not delegated to an officer or to a Committee all decisions have to be made by the full Council. Of course the vast majority of such decisions are delegated to officers. However from time to time matters will arise that are not. With the present budgetary position and the various challenges arising from this, there is an urgent need to establish a decision making body at member level. It needs to be noted that the employment committee decisions will not change current arrangements and practises in relation to normal consultative processes, for example with trade unions but will provide a legal mechanism for decisions to be implemented, without the need for Full Council to commence when such decisions are required.

Presently it is suggested that this be in the form of a Committee of 3 Councillors (one from each party). This could be reviewed after the election. However such a Committee would not be politically proportionate, and can only be appointed on that basis if no member of the Council votes against it.

Background Papers

Council's Constitution
Relevant Legislation