

Northampton Borough Council

Draft Budget Proposals 2013/14: Consultation results

Report author:

Silvina Katz
Corporate Policy and Consultation Manager
01604 837573
skatz@northampton.gov.uk

Report owner:

Isabell Procter
Director of Resources

February 2013

1 Executive summary

In December 2012 the Council launched a consultation which looked at the budget proposals for 2013/14. The consultation ran for 6 weeks, closing on 31 January 2013.

This year, the budget consultation focused on whether council tax should be frozen for a further year. People were invited to comment on the budget options for savings, investments and growth.

Key results

- Nearly 2,000 residents visited our dedicated budget information during the consultation;
- 120 completed online surveys;
- In excess of 150 comments were received expressing views about the budget; and
- Three out of every four respondents agreed that council tax levels should be kept the same for 2013/14.

A list of the organisations which responded can be found at Appendix 1

2 Introduction

- 2.1 Cabinet approved the draft budget proposals for 2013/14 and the forecast budgets for 2014/15 and 2015/16 for the General Fund Revenue Budgets, the Housing Revenue Account, the Capital Programme and the Capital Strategy for consultation on 19 December 2012.
- 2.2 The consultation process covering all these areas was carried out from 20 December 2012 until 31 January 2013. The aim of this consultation was to find out people's views on the draft budget proposals presented.
- 2.3 Completed questionnaires were accepted up to 31 January 2012.
- 2.4 The consultation period will formally close on the date the budget is approved in February 2013.
- 2.5 This consultation followed the principles set out in the Council's Consultation Toolkit and industry standard guidance on best practice in consultation.

- 2.6 This report contains the results to the draft budget 2013/14 consultation. They will be used to by the Council as part of the process for informing priorities for the Council's Corporate Plan and for setting a balanced budget (including a capital programme).

3 Methodology

- 3.1 Residents, businesses, and other stakeholders were invited to provide feedback on the proposals for the draft budget during the consultation period and support was made available to maximise involvement and understanding of the proposals.
- 3.2 People were able to engage in a range of ways:
- Open public meeting held at the Guildhall on 24 January 2013;
 - Council's budget proposals debated at Community Forums Special Meeting (Diverse Community Forum, LGB People's Forum, Pensioners and Disabled People's Forums) on 22 January 2013;
 - Public Surgeries led by the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Finance on 28 and 29 January 2013.
 - On-line survey;
 - Paper copies of the questionnaire available upon request;
 - Consultation proposals and questionnaire were available to download and complete on-line (via the Council's website). An e-mail address, freepost address and consultation phone line were set up to receive comments/views etc.
 - Staff via intranet and trade unions;
 - Invitation for Residents Panel to participate;
 - Invitation to the business community via the Chamber of Commerce, their network and the Federation of Small Businesses;
 - Invitation to members of the Sounding Board (tenants);
 - Engagement with the voluntary and community sector via their various networks ;
 - Posters displayed at local libraries;
 - Engagement with our key stakeholder and partners ;
 - Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 31 January 2013;
- 3.3 The consultation was advertised through the media including mail shots, press releases and radio to raise awareness. Social media, including twitter alerts and reminders, were used during the consultation period.
- 3.4 Interim weekly consultation reports containing full details, including potential impacts and alternative proposals, were circulated to Senior Management and relevant cabinet members to maximise awareness and action in relation to issues and concerns arising during the consultation.

4 Results

- 4.1 During the consultation period **1935** people visited the website to view budget information. A total of **120 online** responses were received as at 31 January 2013. (In 2011 we received 149 questionnaires and 272 in 2012).
- 4.2 Respondents also provided in excess of **155** comments, including details about specific proposals, concerns about potential impacts that were considered to affect various sectors of the community and also about alternative proposals for efficiencies. These have been circulated to Senior Managers and to Cabinet members for their input and consideration.
- 4.3 Full consultation results are available in Appendix 3.
- 4.4 The profile of respondents by gender, age and ethnicity, available at Appendix 1, is representative of the wider community profile according to the 2011 Census. This can be seen as an indicator of a fair survey.
- 4.5 It should be noted that additional activity relating to the budget was undertaken independently of this consultation during the period of consultation including local press, public meetings, forums, etc and that the views expressed during such events are not included in this report.

5 Draft Budget Proposals Consultation-Results and Analysis

5.1 Findings

Below are the questions asked, the response achieved and a summary of the key points raised by those that took part;

5.2 Consultation Questions

Question 1-Council Tax Levels

Despite the significant financial pressures faced by the Council, Council Tax levels were not increased last year. **The Council is considering keeping council tax levels the same for 2013/14. Do you agree or disagree with this approach?**

Total agree: 73% (87)

Total disagree: 27 % (32)

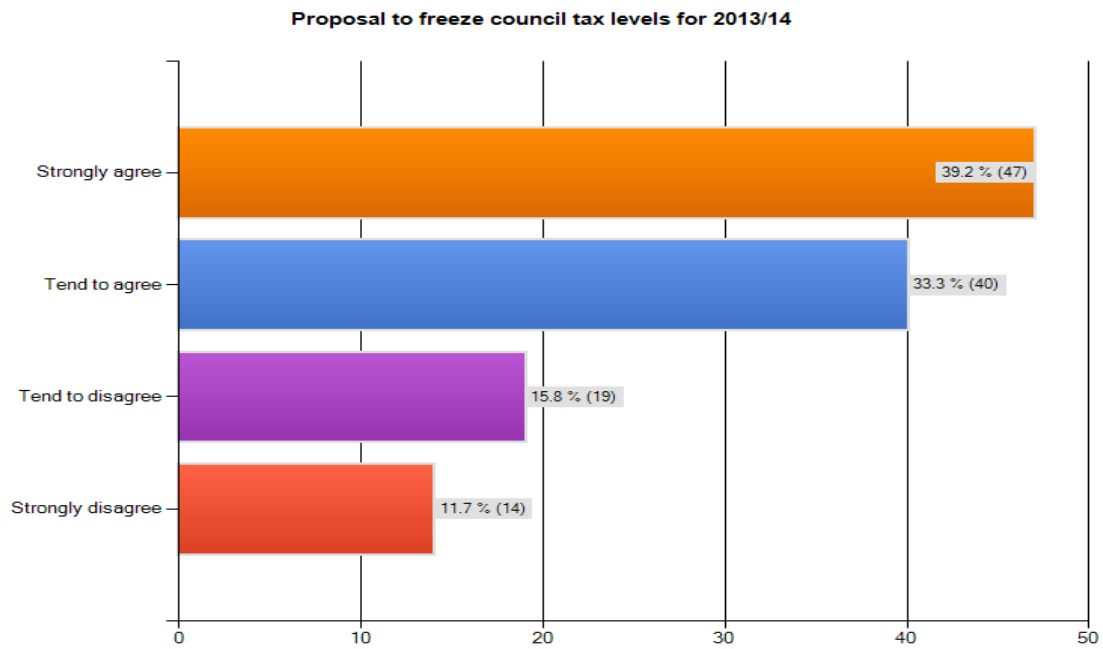


Table 1. Proposal to freeze council tax

Number of additional free-form comments received: **40**

Key points:

- Concerns about perceived pressures from Government to keep Council Tax levels low and the potential problems caused in the long term
- Some people would be prepared to pay more to preserve essential services.

Question 2-Options for Savings

Comments, including concerns about how our specific proposals may impact on individuals or any sector of the community and if appropriate, how we can minimise any such impact.

Received **50** comments

Question 3-Options for Investment and Growth

Comments, including any concerns about how our specific proposals may impact on individuals or any sector of the community and if appropriate, how we can minimise any such impact.

Received **40** comments

Question4-Alternative proposals, including anything else we could do to achieve savings and/or any other comments in respect of budget options for 2013/14?

Received **24** comments

6 How comments received will be used

- 6.1 Where comments relate to service specific issues that relate to the usual business of the organisation, these will be forwarded to the relevant service area.
- 6.2 Where issues raised are not our responsibility, such as street lighting, the state of the roads or about social work, the comments received will be forwarded to the relevant organisation as appropriate.
- 6.3 In relation to the budget, the Cabinet will consider all responses alongside the need to set a balanced budget. Any changes arising from the consultation will be detailed in the Council Wide General Fund Revenue Budget 2013/14-2015/16 Report.
- 6.4 Findings have been used to inform priorities for the Council's Corporate Plan 2012-15 (update 2013).

7 Equalities

- 7.1 The Cabinet will consider the results of this consultation and of all relevant impact assessments which were developed to make an informed decision regarding the Council's budget.
- 7.2 Equality and Diversity were considered as part of the budget build process and an equality impact assessment or screening was completed as part of each option submitted.
- 7.3 Where issues have been identified and the option is approved, the detailed equality impact assessment will be used to inform the implementation of the budget option.
- 7.4 An Equality Impact Assessment for this consultation process is available at Appendix 2.

Appendices

Appendix 1	Demographics and organisational respondents
Appendix 2	Consultation Equality Impact Assessment
Appendix 3	Full results and comments

Appendix 1

Demographics

Gender			
Options	Response %		Response Count
Male	51%		38
Female	49%		36
Age			
Options	Response %		Response Count
Under 16	1.40%		1
16-24	18.90%		14
25-34	14.90%		11
35-44	25.70%		19
45-54	23.00%		17
55-64	14.90%		11
65-74	1.40%		1
75 or above	1.40%		1
Ethnicity			
Main categories	Response %		Response Count
White	88%		66
Asian/Asian British	1%		1
Mixed	1%		1
Black/Black British	4%		3
Other	3%		2
Prefer not to say	3%		2
About Respondents			
Options	Yes	No	Response Count
I live in Northampton	98.6% (71)	1.4% (1)	72
I work in Northampton	66.7% (38)	33.3% (19)	57
I study in Northampton	12.5% (4)	87.5% (28)	32
I have a business in Northampton	29.4% (10)	70.6% (24)	34
I am employed by Northampton Borough Council	12.1% (4)	87.9% (29)	33
I am responding on behalf of an organisation/group	11.1% (3)	88.9% (24)	27

Organisational responses were received from:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northampton Door-to-Door Service including Northampton Shopmobility Northants Police Northampton Volunteering Centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rectory Farm Pocket Park Group Northants Gardens Trust
--	---

Appendix 2

Equality and Community Impact Assessment

Budget 2013/4 Consultation Programme

What are we looking to achieve in this activity?

This consultation was designed using the principles established in our Consultation Toolkit to make sure that it was accessible to local people, to businesses, to partners, to the voluntary and community sectors and to any other interested parties and that all groups can participate and respond meaningfully.

How will the decision be made?

Cabinet will consider the results of this consultation and of all relevant impact assessments to help it make an informed decision regarding the Council's budget and priorities. The Council will agree its Corporate Plan and set its Budget for the forthcoming 2013/2014 in February 2013.

What information exists already to assist with making the judgments above? Has any consultation been undertaken on this or any other related issue? Are any reports or relevant documents available internally or from partners or other sources?

Screenings and Impact assessments have been carried out for all options developed.

Who is/ will be the main beneficiaries/people affected by this activity?

Everybody living, working, studying or otherwise engaged with the town or its people may be potentially affected by the choice of priorities and budget plans. This includes businesses, employees of the Council as well as, partners and contractors. Some efficiency savings will impact on staff and could lead to redundancies and changes in service provision, not the level of service received by the public. Where this is appropriate, consultation will be undertaken in accordance with council policy and all those affected will be able to have a say in the process.

Does the activity have the potential to cause adverse impact or to discriminate against different groups in the community or to make a positive contribution to equalities?

The testing challenges caused by the general economic environment, and the credit crunch in particular, are already having a significant impact on our communities and also on our budget, creating added pressure and increase demand for our services.

With limited resources, service provision will need to be reviewed and this may affect the services we provide, the people who deliver them and those who receive them. It is critical when making decisions that may affect people that their views are

sought and considered so that we can understand what matters to them, what they consider priority and what areas are in need of improvement and how the choices made may impact on their lives.

Impact

Proposals that will lead to efficiency savings have been screened for impact against the protected characteristics groups. Where proposals involve staff changes and rationalisation, appropriate consultation in line with council policy will be followed and outcomes monitored for any disproportionate and adverse impacts on individual groups.

Any savings with impact on services will have the issues and risks raised through their individual assessments and evaluations taken into account in the implementation and monitoring of the options.

Issues and concerns identified during this consultation have been used to inform priorities for the Council's Corporate Plan.

Appendix 3
Full Budget 2013/14 Consultation Results

Strongly agree	39.2%	47
Tend to agree	33.3%	40
Tend to disagree	15.8%	19
Strongly disagree	11.7%	14

Comments received

Q1. Comments made in response to the proposal not to increase council tax level

1. A modest rise would help to fund outstanding works which are constantly being put off - Road resurfacing/potholes for example.
2. A small rise is better than a large rise to catch up in a year's time
3. An increase in line with the rate of inflation would be acceptable - at some point the freeze will have to end if we are to continue to provide local services. I would prefer a stepped increase over several years rather than a massive increase in one year.
4. Being cheap is great but not necessarily value for money. Streets are dirty, public bins overflow with litter, leaves don't get swept very often, potholes EVERYWHERE, and parks are basic but could be so much more with a bit of investment in their upkeep rather than the bare minimum.
5. Council Tax cannot keep rising every year. Some residents pay more in council tax than rent or mortgage and although I think everyone should pay towards council services continual increases above inflation were not fair or acceptable. There are savings to be made both in NBC and NCC and I think some services should be paid for by those that use them. This will make it fairer for those that subsidise others at the moment.
6. Cuts will have to be made, I'm sure, but people need to now be encouraged to take more responsibility themselves to help keep costs down such as cutting grass verges outside their homes, keeping streets clean, etc.
7. Freezing council tax instead of protecting the council's base budget against the effects of inflation by increasing the council tax in line with inflation will only store up problems for future years, as has been proven time and again.
8. Gas, electric, water, phone, etc. ... all bills go up, so should the council tax to ensure services are delivered.
9. I agree that tax should not increase but not at the expense of valuable services. If a small increase, say 1%, was applied and this was used to fund vital services, then I would not mind.
10. I am a pensioner and receive no benefits although my pension is very small £9000 per year
11. I believe that increasing tax slightly to ensure the continuation of essential services is acceptable
12. I think a lot of us in work would be happy to pay up to 2% extra to preserve services for the needy and to give public sector workers a little bit of a pay rise to make them feel wanted and motivated
13. I think council tax should be reduced to help the poor but increased for the wealthy.

14. I think that the Council should clearly state how much could be raised by increasing the tax levels to allowed % and give the opportunity to either make a specific saving or pay a higher sum that would offset such a saving.
15. I think that this is a false economy that will create long term problems that will only be resolved by cuts to essential services.
16. I would consider a small increase per household to be reasonable
17. I would not mind paying a bit more though if survival of critical services depended on it.
18. I'd like to see the tax reduced.
19. If every household had to pay £5 more per month, how much could you offset your cuts?
20. If it means a poorer service & more outsourcing such as the disastrous Enterprise contract, I'd rather pay a little more
21. It would be better to raise council tax in line with inflation than to cut services too heavily.
22. It would be helpful for all if this could be done and it would give time for folk to become tuned to the idea of an increase for the following year. It cannot be said then that the Council was just hiking up the prices just for the sake of it.
23. It's hard to see how they could be reduced which is the only viable option.
24. Keeping Council Tax levels the same means that there is less money available in real terms and thus it will be difficult to maintain services at current standards.
25. Newly parished areas will see a rise though which is just a sneaky way of raising council tax and more unwanted councillors meaning more expenses etc.
26. People are finding it a struggle to keep their heads above water in the current economic situation
27. Pressure from central government to keep it low. Would not be popular at a time when public are being squeezed.
28. services need to be protected and improved
29. Sometimes you still need to raise the tax levels to maintain and perhaps reinstate services
30. Stop cutting services to those of us that need it! A small increase in council tax will help provide the services we need. By having such low council tax we are rapidly becoming a very poor county when it comes to the quality of services provided.
31. Tax the rich, please.
32. The cost of government and civil bodies in this country is excessive, the aim should be a reduction in spending in real terms year on year.
33. The decision not to raise Council Tax is being made for party political reasons. The interests and well-being of the people of the town are of no importance to the decision makers which makes this consultation tokenistic at best.
34. There is no improvement to any services offered across the borough therefore we should not pay more for less.
35. whilst appreciating that financial times are difficult I would certainly be prepared to pay slightly more Council tax if it meant that levels of Council services could be maintained or even improved
36. Whilst it is important to keep tax as low as possible in these times it shouldn't be at the cost of essential services. If a small rise is needed then so be it.
37. would not mind an increase to protect services
38. Would rather it was used more efficiently
39. Yes - families are experiencing significant hardship in the current economic climate and increasing council tax will only serve to contribute to this. It will be important to try and maintain the same level of services provided as this will be appreciated by many.
40. You need to raise funds for all sorts of things - a small increase won't hurt.

Q2. Comments made in respect of proposed options for savings

1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Reviewing senior management and restructuring support departments - I agree with this •Reviewing a number of staff terms and conditions - essential car user allowance for Senior managers, payment of professional fees and free car parking scheme - I agree with this •Sharing services by joining the Local Government Shared Service (LGSS) programme - this is fine as long as there is a proper consultation
2.	1. SHARING SERVICES. OK. 2. REVIEWING SENIOR MANAGEMENT. OK. 3. REVIEWING A NUMBER OF STAFF TERMS AND CONDITIONS OK. 4. REDUCE STAFF AND CUUNCILLOR TRAINING NO. 5. ENDING SUPPORT TO GROUNDWORKS PROJECT, IF THIS IS IN HOUSING, IE TREES? AND GRASS CUTTING. NO. 6. REVIEWING NON DOMESTIC RATES ECT, ECT. OK. 7. REVIEW CCTV? DO WE NEED ANY MORE, IF NOT DO NOT EN-STALL ANY MORE.
3.	100% rate relief from Charities in purpose built facilities which cannot be shared should be continued.
4.	After reading the proposals, based on the facts quoted, all of the above sound reasonable except the removing of free parking for staff. Most office based staff have free parking at work (indeed most are outside of a town centre environment). Surely this change in terms and conditions would be very detrimental to staff who would then have to pay for parking and the council would be at risk of losing some key personnel to other organisations as it would effectively be enforcing a pay cut. Why would someone work for the council when they could work elsewhere with better benefits and money?
5.	as a nurse I have no idea why the council pays for staff professional fees, I have always had to pay my own fees to the NMC staff posts should be reviewed before 'deletion' (dreadful term) it's no use just deleting posts as this may be a false economy
6.	CCTV: Recently had my bicycle vandalised and parts stolen in the town centre. I was shocked to discover that despite being on a main road with council offices on one side and Royal & Dergate on the other, there was no CCTV covering the area. We need to stop people doing all the unconstructive stuff, dog fouling, dropping litter, vandalising, anti-society behaviour and if you haven't got lots of police or wardens on the streets then CCTV seems to be a way to see more. Walk the Talk: If we're all in it together, if difficult decisions are to be made then start at home. Reduce the number of councillors, reduce and address the waste and do things properly first time without taking short cuts (fountain).
7.	Discretionary relief would mean people could end up homeless. Working to make staff more efficient to get a more reasonable amount of work done to get more value for money from wages, Particularly maintenance staff. For instance, a neighbour had some vine growing up side of their one bed bungalow. Took two men three days to clear which should have only taken one, mostly due to the fact they were spending an average of 3 hours a day sitting in their van reading a newspaper
8.	Effective management is essential. subsidised car parking should be maintained
9.	Ending support to Groundwork Northamptonshire programme This programme has been great but support for it could be temporarily suspended until the financial climate improves.
10.	Happy to see the Council is working in partnership with the LGSS but would like to know what services will be kept by NBC and how these will be serviced by the new contract(s).
11.	Having reviewed the Groundwork website, this organisation appears to make a positive contribution to the natural and built environment, and community development. Withdrawing support would appear, in this case to be a poor option. The consultation mixes the internal budgetary issues such as terms and conditions with the external environment implications of changes to partner funding. I believe they should be considered separately.
12.	I am concerned that although the parks will be patrolled, the quality of their maintenance would decrease.
13.	I am worried about the magnitude of savings from internal restructuring. Why now?

<p>14. I broadly support the proposal for sharing of back office services. I have serious concerns that the proposals for the review of staff terms and conditions have not been fully thought through. It is my understanding that the withdrawal of essential user car allowance will apply to all staff, not just senior managers. There is a significant risk that projected savings may not be achieved as staff may take action such as parking on street to avoid paying the proposed parking charge and undertake additional journeys to increase their mileage claims. In times of reducing staff numbers it is also important those staff that remain within the Council are properly trained to undertake their roles, including periodic updating training to ensure that they have relevant current knowledge and the proposed cuts in training budgets are potentially false economies.</p>
<p>15. I can't find out exactly what The Groundwork Northamptonshire programme is, but in my work which takes me into every street of Northampton and surrounding towns. The main issue with folk on the 'ground' is the state of their environment. E.g.; Rubbish, potholes, no street lighting etc.; in my opinion if people aren't happy in their 'living space' They are not inclined to be responsive to other plans on council agendas.</p>
<p>16. I do not understand how the shared services will provide improvements. It worries me that decisions will be made by people who are too remote and lack local knowledge.</p>
<p>17. I feel that in all areas there is a surplus of upper management who are paid far too much</p>
<p>18. I fully support all the proposals, as I think they are all good and most will have a low impact on many residents. LGSS is a great idea and should have been done years ago. Reviewing senior managers is also good because most staff do not need constants meetings and reviews to see how they are doing. It just wastes time. Also there are too many meeting with little outcome. Most of the NCC managers seem to have meetings on most days, if they were not managing staff they would have very little to do. Reviewing a numbers of staff terms and conditions - again a good idea. Why should Council tax payers pay for some of the perks, particularly professional fees and free car parking.</p>
<p>19. I note that this is not listed above, but I strongly disagree with the proposals to end all Class A & C Council tax discounts for unfurnished or uninhabitable properties. More enlightened councils are proposing to still give a 25% discount for a period of six months. Recognising the additional administration expense involved for collecting for short empty periods between tenancies in the rental sector particularly, they are still allowing a one month empty exemption period too. Does the Northampton Council really expect to keep track of & collect money in for such short periods? A response would be appreciated</p>
<p>20. I strongly support reducing levels of CCTV surveillance. I do NOT support reducing rates relief for charities nor the ending of support to Groundworks I support reviewing senior management levels and remuneration with a view to making savings (especially no over-generous redundancy payments for staff to be shed.</p>
<p>21. I support joining the LGSC. It's is good practice to review staff terms and conditions ensuring training is providing value for money. Non-discretionary relief and charitable support will impact on vulnerable groups. Sharing premises makes good business sense. Does CCTV prevent or support crime reduction and safer streets if so then it should be left as is.</p>
<p>22. I think saving money wherever possible is key - why should managers get a car user allowance? Every other council worker (myself included) has to use their own car for work purposes. Getting rid of middle management will cut costs - every other company has to do it. But get rid of ridiculous pay-offs as well. If someone chooses to leave a job, they get no pay-off. If they do a crap job, there should be no pay-off - why should you reward bad performance?</p>
<p>23. I would have liked to have seen details of what will happen to the council after the shared services arrangements are in place....who will be there to provide what I need? How will I know who to contact for help?</p>
<p>24. If most savings will be made from staff reduction, would it not be reasonable to state where and how service will be affected? If no change, why did you not make savings earlier?</p>
<p>25. If you want to save money then all areas should have their budgets slightly reduced - they are all important and an across-the-board small reduction will keep everyone happy (ish).</p>

<p>26. In any cost cutting programme it is important for the basic and essential services to be maintained at the highest level for residents. Therefore, the biggest cuts should be made in the less beneficial (That is to the majority of citizens) services and programmes such as diversification and support for minorities just because they are minorities, Also in order to demonstrate to the public that the cuts affect every part of the organisation there should be cuts of at least twenty five per cent in Councillor's pay and allowances and senior executive salaries. Radical but both visible and workable!!</p>
<p>27. Keep Charity subsidies, as pressure is on them to perform I like the idea of sharing services under LGSS, provided they are still locally accountable</p>
<p>28. LGSS IS GOOD REVIEWING ALSO EFFECTS</p>
<p>29. LGSS: I would prefer it if the borough council started to sell its services to other local authorities rather than buying them in. NBC needs to up its game if it wants to become a unitary; it seems silly to attempt this by being absorbed into NCC. Management restructure: This seems reasonable given recent comments in the media about NBC being top heavy. T&Cs: As long as this does not compromise the council's ability to retain and attract good quality employees. At this point in time it seems local government is struggling to offer any benefits to encourage people to consider a career in the public sector. Training: This seems short-sighted as it is cheaper to have a training budget that allows you to recruit internally than having to advertise externally. Groundwork: While this is a shame, it is not something NBC should be supporting when money could be better used elsewhere. NNDR: Perhaps charities should be encouraged to use premises outside of the town centre? Offering subsidies there may be an option, but I worry that forcing these shops to close will only mean more empty shop fronts in the town centre. CCTV: I do not think this goes far enough, I am sure there are more cameras that could be switched off with little or no noticeable difference.</p>
<p>30. Local working only works if each authority has the same goals and political agendas do not take hold. Should be encouraged where a clear business case can be presented and is quick and not costly/ time consuming to implement.</p>
<p>31. Mng't and support functions - there is frequently a raft of experienced and skilled personnel held-down by more senior mng't, who, if 'released' can flower into more effective managers/supervisors, with freshened ideas tempered by real work experience. While being given some incentive in the 'higher' positions, there should still be savings to be had from reduced seniority, pensions etc. Conferences are seldom cost-efficient, and severe limitations on attendance or creation should be observed. REAL value might be judged by attendance in 'own' time and VERY limited expenses - this would sort-out those who only go for the 'jolly'. Non-Domestic Rates Relief - in order to encourage lazy owner/landlords to actually get something done with empty properties, the relief should be axed or clearly linked to loans enabling development and re-use of the property, since lack of finance is the usual response re. Empty premises.</p>
<p>32. Non Domestic Rates Discretionary Relief Reduction in discretionary rate relief for charities will cause them funding problems and sharing of premises is not as simple as it sounds. Charities help the community and I understood from one of the consultation meetings the possible NBC saving was small compared to the total NBC budget expenditure.</p>
<p>33. Reduce senior management, if LGSS is put in place there will be no need for a full time Chief Executive. Reduce Training a good idea. Charging staff for car parking should not be needed, as car parks are already empty, charging will make it worse. Barclaycard, Nationwide, Carlsberg etc. do not charge.</p>
<p>34. Reduce the amount of departments Car allowances can be reduced for local employees, use public transport. Why is there free parking, nobody else who works in the town centre gets that benefit.</p>
<p>35. Reducing staff and councillor training may not be the best way of keeping staff and councillor effective in a challenging environment.</p>
<p>36. Senior management should be streamlined, and held to account for poor results. They should also share secretarial support. Staff Terms and Conditions should be bought into the 21st century: Professional fees should only be met by the authority if expressly required by the role. Why are Senior Managers "essential" car users? Surely this implies extensive travel as part of the role? They should be "Market" or "Status" allowances at reduced rates. The first two days of each period of sickness should be unpaid.</p>

<p>37. Sharing services by joining the Local Government Shared Service (LGSS) programme There is no evidence that LGSS is capable of producing any savings. It fails to produce any meaningful data to assess its effectiveness which has more to do with the paranoid insecurity of the Conservative administration at County Hall. Reviewing senior management and restructuring support departments The council pursued the 'headless chicken' approach once before and ended up being branded the 'Worst council in the country'. If there are senior posts that are no longer needed then they should go. The organisational structure should be driven by the delivery plans which flow from the corporate plan. This seems to me to be an ideologically driven proposal rather than a well thought through management decision.</p>
<p>38. Sharing services is a good idea in principle but may result in a poorer service for Northampton residents if the service provider is based in another local authority area. A staff review usually means dispensing with some posts and sharing the workload of the now defunct position amongst other members of the team; this can only result in a less efficient service. Less training = a less informed staff = poorer service (Do you see a pattern forming here?) A workforce that is 100% directly employed by NBC would have pride in the services that they are helping to supply whereas people employed by an outside contractor are, in all probability, only interested in how little they can do in order to collect a wage.</p>
<p>39. Sharing services is inevitable to assist with cost savings. However, this must ensure that the views and needs of local people are considered, so as not to have decisions being made by individuals in another part of the region. Senior management structures and benefits should be reviewed to ensure that they are not excessive and staff at these levels is proving value for money. Contribution to Charities should be reviewed so that this also presents value for money. It will be important to maintain key services of policing, education and environmental management.</p>
<p>40. Sharing services may save money but will mean job losses affecting many of the Council employees & their families. Soon there will be nothing left for the Council to do as most of their responsibilities will be outsourced! Restructuring always costs money & means large redundancy packages. It puts stress on the remaining staff, causing more sickness & greater stress on those left to cope. Senior Managers should not get all the perks such as free car parking, but those on lower salaries should get free parking. Reducing staff & Councillor training is a short-sighted measure, as personal development should enable staff & Councillors to do their job better. Perhaps catering for training events should be curtailed, as long as there are places nearby where trainees can purchase food. When I was a Councillor, I felt that a lot of food was wasted when buffets were provided e.g. before Full Council & for training days. Charities & other VSO's are already receiving fewer grants, but in many cases there work is increasing because of the financial situation. If further pressure is put on them by not having NNDRDF they may be forced to close. CCTV cameras act as a deterrent as well as identify criminals; they also give members of the public a sense of community safety which will be lost if CCTV is stopped especially in the smaller local centres in the town. I have already responded about the proposal at Lings Local Centre, as Brookside Residents' Council campaigned for cameras there & there has been less trouble with anti-social behaviour & drug dealing outside the shops since they were installed.</p>
<p>41. The council should do everything it can to help charities during these difficult times. Charities are already feeling the pinch because of reduced grant funding from local councils and a drop in income from their own fundraising efforts. The proposal to end support to GroundWorks is a prime example. This should not be carried through. Removing charities' rates relief will add insult to injury and make it difficult for some smaller charities to continue. Suggesting that charities share premises is purely political spin; meant to sound like a rational, common sense suggestion but in fact unworkable in many instances. Reductions in training budgets are often the first steps taken to reduce costs and have been proven to be a false economy. No CCTV cameras should be switched off. We already have fewer police officers and PCSOs on our streets because of last year's council cuts. No more! You should reinstate the police funding, keep CCTVs and stop giving our money to the town's professional sports teams.</p>
<p>42. The loss of Essential Users would have a huge impact on staff within the Housing Dept. here at Westbridge, especially the Rent Income Officers and the Housing Officers. It would financially put them in an impossible situation. PLEASE SERIOUSLY RECONSIDER THIS COURSE OF ACTION. We have staff who are single parents who could not manage this loss.</p>

43. The main concern here is that it is not clear what restructures will achieve and which areas will be impacted so it is hard to make an informed choice. I would urge caution to ensuring that organisational memory is retained and proper arrangements for skill transfer are in place.
44. The review of staff terms and conditions seems harsh, I can understand removing one or perhaps two benefits from non-contractual t&cs but to hit staff with a triple whammy in the face of the third year of pay freezes seems unfair and disproportionately affects those expected to provide services in an increasingly difficult environment.
45. These seem reasonable
46. Will a review of terms and conditions backfire? Will people want to work for this Council?
47. With the loss of neighbourhood wardens the work of Groundwork in bringing together communities is even more important. Not only do they provide support they are also able to attract external funding to community projects. There was talk last year of employing an External Funding Officer to bring in funds for projects, if this has not been approved then Groundwork are even more important
48. Working with public sector partners to realise economies of scale
49. Worried about impact on staff. How much can people take before service is seriously affected?
50. You must maintain services - this is your statutory duty. You should be charging staff AND Councillors for parking, the Public will be amazed at this perk! Changing T+C's will only demotivate your staff. Do you need Directors AND Heads of Service?

Q3. Comments made in respect of proposed areas for investment and growth

1. * Providing vehicles to some staff whilst cutting the support offered to others to enable them to provide transport to do their job seems to me unfair.
2. •Programme for external painting and repairs - I think that this is essential as it will make the town look better for everyone
3. 1. THAT HAS TO BE, HEALTH AND SAFTY, OK? CONTRACTORS MY BE THAY ARE RESPONSIBLE. 2. NO WAY, NOT IN MY STREET, I AM SICK OF BALLS BOUNCING AND IT IS MOSTLLY BASKIT BALL, AND IF YOU NO AYNTHING ABOUT THAT, IT IS A POUNDING THAT GO'S RIGHT THROUGH THE WALLS AND CLOSED WINDOWS, AND THERE IS NO WERE, THAT IT WILL BE SAFE FROM TRAFIC, AND THE PARKED CARS, IN LONDON WERE I USED TO LIVE THEY TOOK ADVANTAGE OF SCHOOL PLAY GROUNDS, TO DO THIS, CAN WE NOT PUT THIS IN TO A WARDEN CONTROL PRODJECT, AND MOST OF THEM HAVE A CCTV TO KEEP AN EYE ON THINGS. 3. SEEK SPONSORSHIP OK. 4. PROVIDE VEHICLES FOR PARK RANGERS/ WARDONS THIS COULD BE USED AS-WELL TO MONITOR THE BALL PARKS AS WELL AS THE PARKS.OK. 5. CAPACITY TO ANALYSE, ECT, ECT. OK. 6. PROVIDE FLOATING SUPPORT. OK. 7. PROGRAMME FOR EXTERNAL PAINTING AND REPAIRS. OK.
4. Agree to all proposals above.
5. All of the above are very important for growth in Northampton. The last one on external repairs is very important as MANY areas in Northampton look VERY run down which adds to the general lack of care many people take of their homes and environment
6. All of these sound sensible to me.
7. Are two vehicles needed for park rangers? As the four part time rangers work in particular parks surely they don't need a vehicle, it is just the full time ranger covering a number of parks that needs transport.
8. External painting and repairs makes everyone feel better about where they live and is the most effective option on this list. Street football schemes are positive and worthwhile. Sponsorship keeps the costs down.
9. find a way to promote small and local businesses at high profile events

10. Great ideas. Although not popular the securing of Greyfriars will be costly but by demolishing it new opportunities for development can occur and it won't continue to be a burden.
11. Greyfriars: I would assume this is a health and safety responsibility rather than optional investment in the town centre. Football: These schemes have worked well, but does an hour a week really make an entire estate safer? Surely something could be done to partner with schools to offer after school sessions every night? Sponsorship: This seems sensible, although corporate sponsorship in the current climate is very difficult and requires a lot of investment for often little pay off. Perhaps this is something that NEP should be tasked with achieving? Rangers: It depends on the vehicles, off-road cars or quad bikes? Park rangers should not be performing the role of a PCSO, so perhaps the money would be better invested in community safety. CSP: This is something the police should be responsible for. Vulnerable tenants: This seems like something a local authority should be doing. Repairs and painting: If this is for the council's housing stock then perhaps it should wait until after the stock transfer decision is made?
12. Happy to support the most vulnerable. If the Council did not, who would?
13. How is employing security officers for the bus station an investment in growth? It is an expense. This is simply political spin. Give the park rangers mountain bikes! You are cutting car allowances and free car parking for everyone else. Inconsistent and lack of joined-up thinking. "Increase capacity to analyse issues and plan for action in community safety partnership" Gobbledygook! What you need to do, in plain English: put more PCSOs on our streets!
14. How much will securing Greyfriars cost & if it is going to be demolished anyway, should you spend on security? Street football has had a good uptake & has been really successful in diverting some young people from ASB. If sponsorship can be found for events that is good as long as ticket prices do not exclude local people. Perhaps the Northampton Card should be re-introduced so that people living in the Borough could get automatic reductions to events. Why can't park rangers have bikes, much cheaper, & less harmful to the environment? Why are there no resident group representatives on the Community Safety Partnership? Localism seems to have been lost in the Council as our Neighbourhood Partnerships, Neighbourhood Managers & the groups they held have all been lost. I agree with support for vulnerable residents, whether they are tenants or not. Surely there is an on-going programme for external painting & repairs from HRA.
15. I am unconvinced of the value for the street football initiative - too narrow a focus. The rest seem sensible.
16. I do not support street football.
17. I like the idea of giving young people something to do, but more options than just football. Need to engage all young people, give them activities which they would like, e.g. drop in centre at Abington Park
18. I support all of these
19. If Greyfriars is vandalised prior to demolition would it matter? It's coming down anyway! Street football scheme is an excellent idea but make sure that its availability is well publicised. Yes to sponsorship...vehicles for park rangers...more help for community partnership...support vulnerable tenants and have a programme for external repairs and painting
20. In the current economic climate these items are low priority, except for painting and repairs, Demolish Greyfriars before the vandals have a chance. Street football!!!!? You must be joking. Parental control works much better. Why spend money on trying to attract people to a town centre as run down as Northampton? Send the wardens out more often in the vehicles they already have. Another committee and its related costs!! Direct "vulnerable Tenants" to C A B, age U K and Community law service.
21. Invest in street football scheme to divert young people from anti-social behaviour. Any investment in young people will be worth it to encourage them to use their free time in a positive way.
22. Is that it... that is all you have for "investment and growth"? I would say that painting and repairs / securing Greyfriars and making park rangers more efficient is business as usual isn't it?
23. leave community safety to the PCC
24. no comments in these areas

25. No expenditure on Greyfriars just get on and demolish it. Street football project should be closed. No help for tenants just make sure they pay or remove them and give them to Northampton people who need them and who have lived here all their life.
26. Not sure about street football on its own. I am concerned that this may be a pet initiative. I think this type of thing would be better provided by the voluntary and third sector.
27. Programme for external painting and repairs Prolongs the life of property and stops it looking shabby
28. Regarding the repair programme, I feel more use needs to be made of the community payback scheme to keep employment costs down. If you got these people doing basic painting and litter picking jobs regularly you would save a lot of money having to employ staff to do it
29. Secure Greyfriars - Why not let the police do this? There are a number of things that get ignored already at the bus station. It is a non-smoking building and yet passengers and drivers still smoke and never get challenged even when there are supposed to be fines, whoever gets fined? It is either against the law or it isn't, so why not let the police patrol the building at nil cost to NBC. It is against the law to vandalise buildings, so let the police convict some of the vandals. I have no views on the others points.
30. Secure Greyfriars from vandalism? Have you seen Greyfriars recently?? Let the Cobblers run Street Football. You have a statutory duty to care for vulnerable people - why are you asking?
31. SECURE THE GREYFRIARS
32. Sponsorship might be extended from only high-profile events, to the provision of small vehicles for Park Rangers with associated advertising. Property repairs and maintenance - how about trying to encourage out of work tenants (and I observe plenty drinking lager on their front steps in good weather!), to undertake their own painting and simple maintenance under the guidance of a skilled artizan who is contracted commercially to lead and mentor the tenant on his own or neighbour's properties? Sure there will be insurance problems, but nothing is achieved without some risk. 'Trained' tenants might hen be employed on other properties to the general good of employment and self-esteem.
33. support for the vulnerable is important
34. Surely playing football in the street is anti-social?
35. The cost of securing Greyfriars should be met by the developer High profile events should either be sponsored, or self-funding Park Rangers should patrol using Mountain Bikes, as this would make them more accessible The newly elected PCC should provide fund any analysis into community safety. Stop creating extra layers which do nothing but complicate the issue.
36. The council should provide some investment for the footpaths in the open spaces in East Hunsbury which are in an advanced state of disrepair.
37. Think these are all very positive
38. Why secure a building from vandalism if it is about to be demolished. Get those who cause the vandalism to take of the external painting and repairs No need to increase park rangers, let the police do the job which we pay them to do.
39. Why secure bus station if it will be demolished? a waste
40. Working with public sector and voluntary partners to align services based on needs and priorities

Q4. Any other comments or proposals for savings:

1. A) The employment of staff that live elsewhere in the COUNTRY ... not County...and yet are continually given hotel accommodation whilst working here. B) Consultancy Fees The above two areas are in need of an overhaul please.
2. Again in my job.... if I'm ill I don't get any pay. I hear people in the street complaining of all the 'sick' days taken in government offices. Lots of money paid out for no return. Yes help men and women with real health problems but be bold don't pay any money for those first five days and see how much will be saved in the first year!

3.	Although it is difficult in the current economic climate, I would like to see NBC take on a greater community leadership role. Love Northampton and Northampton Alive are a start, but there needs to be something for the wider community - big society needs to be embraced and supported, helping people to make a difference. The council has a great many resources at its disposal, but it needs to make greater use of them. NBC needs to start taking on some of the work of other councils and not the other way around. The LGSS idea shows NBC has a lack of confidence in the services it delivers.
4.	Apart from above, I think you have got it about right this time. Well done.
5.	Continue with savings on lighting. However, maybe spread it out as some places are pitch black and others far too light.
6.	Cut out all refreshments. Cut out all payments for people that attend meetings. It is up to them to get involved.
7.	Do not agree with spending anything other than the essential, mandatory and legally committed funds.
8.	do social workers need payment for having students, as a nurse it is part of my role and contract to train nurse of the future, why are social workers different?
9.	Employ an External Funding Officer to help community groups to bring in funds that are not directly available to the council.
10.	Ensure that any officers do not claim excessive an expenses ad that any visits/events attended by officers are beneficial to the county and a tangible return on investment can be seen. Reduction in non-important civic functions and events. Encourage sustainability and recycling initiatives. Vulnerable groups in our society need be protected and supported, and investment in these should be maintained as far as is practically possible, encouraging private investors to recognise their social responsibilities.
11.	I read that the leader of the council employs a staff of spin doctors. Sack them all and save money that way. Focus on looking after the most vulnerable in society and pay more attention to the public.
12.	Increase Council Tax by 1.9% Increase NBC rents by £1.50 per week Restructure Heads of Service/Directors into single posts.
13.	Increasing the support for Neighbourhood Wardens could possibly make long term savings in other ways.
14.	Invest in skills and growth where possible.
15.	Is the council paying for the ice rink in the market square? I very rarely see anyone on it; surely this is being run at a loss...
16.	Make people a little more responsible for their property, we have a council house but unless the jobs are too dangerous or involve the gas, water etc, we do it ourselves
17.	MY OVER ALL CONCERN IS, THAT WE MAKE THE RIGHT CUTS IN THE RIGHT PLACES,, THIS IS BEST JUST BECAUSE IT LOOKS GOOD.
18.	No comment
19.	Reducing staff numbers is not always effective in the long-term. Effective management can promote efficiency and delivery of services. Where unnecessary management occurs however it should be cut/ combined. Rent parts of the guildhall to other bodies. Charities, NHS services even business to help reduce running costs/ provide income. Kettering Borough Council is in a strong position compared to NBC. Open dialogue with them. Obvious savings such as not providing plastic cups, paper towels etc. all add up.
20.	Seek sponsorship from Motor-Manufacturers for the Mayoral Car, which must be getting a little long in the teeth by now. Such companies might also provide or employ the chauffeur. Sponsor apprenticeships, both craft and 'student' at the local University, Colleges and Silverstone/Daventry/Corby, in order to grow own future skills with commitment to locality.
21.	Tenants involved in the stock options review are being fed and watered; they could bring their own sandwiches and save several hundreds-if not thousands-of pounds. As Tesco are wont to say; 'every little bit helps'!

22. The council should actively pursue a reorganisation into a unitary Council serving Northampton, with a separate unitary council for the rest of the county. This is the model adopted in Wiltshire where they have a Swindon Unitary Borough, and a County Unitary for the rest of the county. This has helped achieve 10 million savings per annum for the taxpayers of Wiltshire.

23. Time to scrap the town show. It is so underfunded that it is embarrassing.

24. Where to start? Improve public transport - make more affordable, increase usage and remove stigma associated with using the bus. Consider an orbital route in Northampton connecting Brackmills, Hunsbury, Sixfields, Duston, Kingsthorpe, Weston Favell Shopping Ctr, Riverside. Invest in cycle lanes and pathways to make it easier and improve safety for cyclists. The market square should be a hub of activity - the street entertainers at the Frost Fair should be regular visitors with other similar things - license or arrange for quality buskers / small acoustic music groups to bring people in and make their time in the town more of an experience. Do what you can to encourage the independent and artisan identity of St Giles Street into other parts of the town centre. Public art and exhibitions in space by All Saints, Market Square? Give higher profile to our hidden gems - the museum, No78 Derngate, All Saints Church, St Peters Church, Becket's Park. Exeter and Oxford for me are two examples of how a town centre works well. Northampton has so much potential if only investment and the vision was there to realise it. I am really passionate about this, I think it's a wasted opportunity currently.