

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL ALL-FORUMS BUDGET CONSULTATION MEETING

Tuesday, 22 January 2013

18:30 in the Jeffery Room, Northampton Guildhall

Present: Christine Woodhams, Barbara Barber, Larry Barber, Roger Rumsey, David Hewitt, Lee Gilbert, Councillor Suresh Patel (NBC), Councillor Brian Oldham (NBC), Councillor Phil Larratt (PL) (NBC), Councillor Alan Botwood (NBC Cabinet Member for Finance) (AB), Isabell Proctor (NBC Director of Resources) (IP), Joe Biskupski (NBC Community Engagement Manager) (notes).

Introduction – Isabell Proctor introduced Councillor Botwood and herself.

IP explained the context of the Borough Council's budget. She said that only a relatively small share of Council Tax (CT) revenue goes to NBC, the largest amount goes to the County Council.

IP said that local government budgets are currently extremely stretched in the face of government cutbacks and the economic situation.

IP said that there is no transfer between the council's Revenue budget and its Capital budget.

Councillor Botwood made his presentation on the draft budget for the council. The following comments / questions were raised by those present:

- Q.** Ground Works – Councillor Botwood said that the council will get more value if the money spent in-house. Where will the money be spent?
- A.** If the service provided is directly under our control, we can get better value for money
- Q.** What impact will the NNDR review have on charities?
- A.** The council worked closely with charities developing the new scheme, and it is anticipated that charities will not be unduly impacted. There will be incentives for charities to share back office functions and facilities. For example, if a charity is co-located with another organisation, there will not be an increase in CT.
- Q.** Regarding the Ground Works scheme – if we didn't fund Groundworks, how can we continue providing the service, how can we save money?
- A.** (AB) There are a number of ways, including seeking sponsorship
- Q.** What will be happening with CCTV?
- A.** (AB) we review CCTV constantly, and work with the police to ensure that these are most appropriately located – e.g. near sheltered housing.

Comment: CCTV acts as a deterrent.

(IP) CCTV cameras that are in high activity areas are priorities to remain switched on.

Q. What monitoring is taking place?

A. (IP) CCTV cameras are recorded, but not everyone can watch all cameras at all times. If there is a crime, the police can request a recording.

Comment: Can we work smarter with the cameras that we have?

(AB) Yes

Comment: In Kingsley (Phippsville) there is no right turn into Kettering Road. However, there needs to be a policeman present to see the right turn into Kettering Road. Needs to be more joined-up working across a range of agencies.

Comment: (PL) In Nottingham the CCTV can identify people littering and Fixed Penalty Notices are issued.

IP will pass these comments on to people who are responsible for CCTV cameras.

Q. Can we issue Police Community Support Officers with cameras?

A. (IP) PCSOs are employed by the police – we cannot issue cameras.

(PL) Each Chief Constable can give PCOSs additional enforcement powers. In Northampton additional powers should be introduced by Chief Constable.

Cllr Oldham will ask Adam Simmonds to come to Pensioners' Forum.

Cllr Patel – Deputy PCC will be coming to next meeting of Diverse Communities Equalities Forum.

Comment: From a civil liberties point of view, we have more cameras per head of population than any other country.

Q. Greyfriars Bus Station won't be used to garage buses overnight. During period of darkness, will security be needed?

Comment: the bus station needs floodlights.

Q. Where will buses be garaged overnight?

A. Rothersthorpe Road – Stagecoach has a stopover place which can accommodate buses overnight.

Q. An item of growth is £12,760 for Park Ranger vehicles. How many Park Ranger vehicles can £12,000 buy?

A. (AB) The council is looking at sponsorship to contribute to the cost of vehicles.

(IP) The council is looking at contract hire of vehicles.

(AB) Greyfriars Bus station still being used as a station during the day.

Internal savings: AB said that internal reviews are being carried out all the time.

Q. What does moving services into LGSS mean?

A. The Borough Council will share services with LGSS. They will take over the administrative and back office functions currently undertaken by directly employed Borough Council staff.

Q. Is LGSS a profit-making organisation?

A. It is a collaboration between Northamptonshire County Council and Cambridgeshire County Council, to which other organisations join in.

(AB) if other Local Authorities join in later on, NBC will also benefit from any future savings.

Q. Is this similar to what's happening with Enterprise?

A. There are similarities, but Enterprise is a for-profit organisation, but LGSS is not done for profit.

Q. Is the contract only for 5 years?

A. The agreement is for 5 years, and will be reviewed, with an option to renew. The delegation agreed by the council needs to be robust. We delegate our services to LGSS on our behalf, and we can un-delegate them.

Comment. Savings mean people's jobs

Q. Why are we sticking stamps on envelopes? For example, letters were sent out regarding Housing Stock Transfer.

A. Sometimes we have to consult by letter. There are certain protocols we have to go through. We need to ensure that there is reliable communication.

Q. Are all staff Essential Car User Allowances being taken away?

A. (IP) it is beginning with senior staff. However, all staff will be affected over time, and negotiations are being carried out with trade unions.

Comment: In private industry, people pay their own professional fees. (IP) NBC have paid only professional fees if it is necessary to carry out the work. The proposal is to stop paying professional fees from 2014 to give staff time to adjust.

Q. When bin collections are made, if anything is spilt, it is frequently left on the street.

A. (IP) if this happens, customers should contact NBC and this will be passed to Enterprise to resolve.

Q. Who monitors the performance of Enterprise?

A. (IP) The Borough Council monitor performance via performance indicators and complaints received are part of this process.

Comment: We need to ensure that we get value for money from our refuse collection.

(AB) The contract is being monitored, and this is being addressed.

Q. Are inspections made of grass cutting work?

A. (AB) the contracts are monitored and Enterprise monitors the work they carry out, but they cannot inspect everything. They cannot collect and remove grass.

Cllr Larratt would like to propose that we do a session for all forums on the Enterprise contract.

Comment: Before the Enterprise contract, the Borough Council had a mower with a hopper. Why can't we do that now?

Q. What does providing floating support for tenants mean?

A. (IP) this means providing additional support for vulnerable people.

Q. Southfield children are being prevented from playing on playing fields by children from Goldings, particularly on local football pitches.

A. This is outside our control.

Comment: The skate park was money well spent.

IP concluded and thanked all for being present.

(AB) it is important to use your borough councillor to lobby.

(IP) budget surgeries are being carried out on Monday 28 January at 13.30, and on Tuesday 29 January from 18:00. A public consultation session is being held on Thursday 24 January at 18:00.

Q: 30% of the public do not have access to computers. They are excluded from consultation. How will the council address this?

A. (AB) we cannot know who has access to a computer. However, we do have computers in the One Stop Shop at the Guildhall.