

Budget in a minute 2014/15

- Extended free parking including every Saturday and 2 hours free during the week
- Business incentive scheme
- Capital budget projects and investment
- Providing an additional neighbourhood warden, two park rangers and a new vehicle
- Increase opening hours of Northampton Borough Council's museums
- Maintaining the investment of small community grants
- Senior management savings and review
- Staff terms and conditions

Extended free parking including every Saturday and 2 hours free during the week

Proposal:

To provide more free parking to shoppers visiting the town throughout the year, including free parking every Saturday in multi-storey car parks (St John's, St Michael's, Grosvenor and Mayorhold) plus an extension of the previous one hour free stay to two hours in St John's, St Michael's, Grosvenor and Mayorhold.

Background:

- Northampton Borough Council is committed to providing convenient, safe and reasonably priced parking to help businesses, attract shoppers and visitors and improve the local economy
- In September 2011 Northampton Borough Council introduced cheaper parking in the town. Measures included: free parking on Sundays in all car parks; a stay of up to an hour free in the town's St John's, St Michael's and Mayorhold multi-storey car parks with two hour stays reduced by 25 per cent; and a 25 per cent reduction in the price of parking for two hours in Northampton's premier surface car parks and the Grosvenor Centre car park
- In summer 2013 and in the run up to Christmas, Northampton Borough Council offered free Saturday parking in the council's multi-storey car parks (St John's, St Michael's, Grosvenor and Mayorhold) plus free parking on Thursdays from 3pm in all NBC car parks and continued free Sunday parking in all NBC car parks also
- The extended free parking will start April 2014

Budget investment if approved:

Free Saturdays: £282,348

First two hours free: £382,435

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Business incentive scheme

Proposal:

There will be more help for businesses looking to grow or join our town centre. Working with town centre businesses we want to invest £250,000 in improving the business environment and making our town centre a more vibrant and attractive location for shoppers and investors.

Background:

- In consultation with businesses we will be looking at supporting existing businesses as well as attracting new enterprise to our town centre.
- We will set up a business incentive scheme, with an initial contribution of £250,000 to fund measures aimed to fill empty properties and encourage small businesses.
- The scheme would be in addition to the cap on business rate increases and doubling of Small Business Rate Relief that were announced in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement.
- The scheme could see money invested in improving the appearance of the town centre and shop fronts of both occupied and vacant stores.
- The Council will also be looking at a range of incentives for business to take over vacant shops and premises.

Budget investment if approved:

£250,000

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Capital budget projects and investment

The Council's Capital Budget is used for investments in land, infrastructure and equipment.

Proposals:

- Following the decommissioning of Greyfriars Bus Station work will start to demolish the building and free up land for redevelopment. The demolition programme will cost £3.5million and save the Council around £500,000 a year.
- The restoration work at Delapre Abbey will continue with over £1.1million being invested next year in essential work to restore the buildings and roofing.
- Work is also set to start on reopening Abington Street. Next year the Borough Council will invest £2.85million in supporting businesses and making it easier for shoppers and businesses to come into Northampton town centre.
- To support our Cultural Quarter we will be investing £2million in public realm improvements to establish the identity of the area, promote the features of the Quarter and make the area more welcoming to visitors who want to spend time enjoying what the area has to offer.
- This would include work to widen pavements for example, which would allow for street entertainment or pavement cafés

Budget investment if approved:

£13,663,567

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Providing an additional neighbourhood warden, two park rangers and a new vehicle

Proposal:

To provide one new post for a town centre warden, two new posts for park rangers and a new vehicle for park rangers' use so that parks across the town can be more effectively patrolled and monitored

Background:

- Northampton Borough Council is committed to helping look after the town's parks and make Northampton a better place to live and visit
- In September 2011 Northampton Borough Council introduced dedicated park rangers to work with other agencies and community groups to look after three of the town's premier parks (Abington Park, Delapre Park and the Racecourse)
- In 2012 the council committed to investing further in the service to recruit one more fulltime and one part-time park ranger to look after other parks and green spaces in the town.
- There are currently 14 wardens working for Northampton Borough Council and 3 park rangers
- The previous town centre warden was established by 'borrowing' a warden from another area. This new post will make the position permanent
- The new warden will be responsible for environmental issues and supporting proactive projects designed to improve local quality of life in the town centre
- The two new park rangers will also be responsible for environmental issues and coordinating projects that provide other interests and attractions in our parks
- The aim of this proposal is to get the greatest efficiency from park rangers by making them as mobile and visible as possible. The new vehicle will mean that they can cover a greater number of parks more quickly.

Budget investment if approved:

£121,750

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Increase opening hours of Northampton Borough Council's museums

Proposal:

To increase the opening times of Abington Park Museum on winter weekend afternoons and to re-open Northampton Museum & Art Gallery on Mondays.

Background:

- The current opening hours of Abington Park Museum are April to October on Thursday – Sunday 1pm – 5pm
- The current opening hours of Northampton Museum & Art Gallery are Tuesday – Saturday 10am – 5pm and Sundays 2pm – 5pm all year round
- The extended opening hours will help increase tourism to Northampton and raise the town's profile
- Many of the town's cultural venues are shut on a Monday and it would therefore be beneficial to open Northampton Museum & Art Gallery on this day
- Abington Park is used all year round and the museum is a favourite with locals. Extending the opening hours of Abington Park Museum in the winter will make for a more effective use of the building and provide facilities for visitors using the park throughout the year

Budget investment if approved:

£41,000

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Maintaining the investment of small community grants

Proposal:

To maintain the current investment of £50k to help community based projects in Northampton through the small based grants process.

Background:

- Northampton Borough Council recognises the excellent work being done by community groups and voluntary groups in the town
- So far in 2013/2014 the small grant scheme has helped 10 local community and voluntary groups
- The small based grants are administered by Northampton Community Foundation (NCF) on behalf of NBC
- The funding of the grants will be reviewed in the future

Budget investment if approved:

£50,000

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Senior management savings and review

Proposal:

The cost of senior management at Northampton Borough Council has reduced by more than 40% over the last three years. Since 2010/11, the number of senior managers has been cut from 21 to 10.

Background:

- These savings are a result of work to streamline the organisation and create efficiencies.
- Savings have been achieved through sharing back office functions such as HR and finance with other authorities through the LGSS scheme.
- Savings in the cost of senior management has helped to protect frontline services at the Borough Council.

Budget saving since 2010/11:

£850,000

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Staff terms and conditions

Proposal:

Consult staff and Trade Unions on the review of a number of terms and conditions of employment, which will be discussed with trade unions and employees starting today.

Background

NBC is having to make £2 million worth of savings in 2014/15. These are unprecedented times and we have very difficult budget choices to make.

Last year the council removed the essential car user allowance and ended payment of professional fees on behalf of employees. A proposal to charge for parking for NBC staff was agreed but deferred until April 2014 and will now be implemented.

We have no option other than to look at reducing employment costs, which currently stand at £19.5 million a year. In 2014/15 it is anticipated that we will need to reduce this figure by £365,000.

The alternative we face would be making further difficult decisions about reducing services and jobs.

Budget saving if approved:

£365,000

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