



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 provided 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 A) 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 savings 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 give 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

Topic Area	Comment	Frequency
Management Consultants/ interim Managers/ Agency staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stop using consultants 	54
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 	1 2 1 1 1 2 1 1 4 1 2

Topic Area	Comment	Frequency
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cut revenues and benefits • 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>1 4 2 5 1 1 6 1 4 1 1 1 1 1 1 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 1 1 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 3 4 1 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.

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