

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET MEETING ON 22ND FEBRUARY, 2007

Consultation On The Cabinet's Financial Strategy 2007/2010

| AN OPEN ITEM | |
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| COMMUNITY STRATEGY THEME: | - |
| CORPORATE PLAN THEME: | Improving Corporacy & Performance |
| KEY PRIORITY: | Financial & Asset Management |
| STRATEGY: | Budget & Policy Framework |
| CABINET MEMBER: | Councillor John Campion |
| RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: | Head of Financial Services |
| CONTACT OFFICER: | K. Bannister Ext. 2100 keith.bannister@wyreforestdc.gov.uk |
| APPENDIX 1 | Public Representations |

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To report on the outcome of the Financial Strategy consultation exercise.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is asked to DECIDE :-

- 2.1 **That the report be noted.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In 2002 the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) issued guidance designed to assist local authorities in consulting the public on council tax and budget issues.
- 3.2 The Cabinet on 21st December 2006 agreed to undertake a consultation on the proposed Financial Strategy as follows :-
- Public Meeting - invite members of the public to attend the Cabinet on 25th January 2007 for a presentation by the Cabinet Member for Finance & Corporate Affairs and to give their views;
 - Parish Councils – Invite representatives to Cabinet on the 25th January 2007 for their views;
 - Media Release;
 - Web Site;
 - Business Ratepayer Statutory Consultation;
 - Finance and Corporate Affairs Policy and Scrutiny Panel/Budget Review Group.

- 3.3 A consultation press release was produced highlighting the major proposals and inviting feedback on the Cabinet's Budget Strategy.
- 3.4 A press release was issued and appeared in editions of the Express and Star and Kidderminster Shuttle/Times newspapers respectively, inviting members of the public to respond to the consultation exercise by either attending a meeting of the Cabinet on 25th January 2007, or writing/e-mailing the Chief Executive with their views.
- 3.5 Parish/Town Council Clerks were contacted directly to request their involvement in the consultation process.
- 3.6 The statutory Business Ratepayer consultation process was carried out involving a web advertisement, the forwarding of Budget proposals to groups of Business Ratepayers and an invitation to meet with the Council for consultation purposes.

4. OUTCOME

- 4.1 Four representations were received in respect of the Consultation process and these are enclosed as Appendix 1. The Council's Website received 69 individual hits on the Budget Consultation 2007/2008 page, and 887 hits on Have Your Say on Council Budget Plans 2007/2008.
- 4.2 The Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Affairs gave a presentation on the Cabinet's Financial Strategy 2007-2010 at the 25th January 2007 Cabinet Meeting. Three Members of the general public attended this meeting and there were several questions raised in respect of the detail of the proposal following the Cabinet Member's presentation.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None.

6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Council's consultation on Council Tax and Budget Issues has been carried out in accordance with guidance issued by ODPM in 2002.
- 6.2 The Local Government Finance Act 1992 from the Section 65 placed a statutory duty on Local Authorities to consult Business Ratepayers.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 None.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The Cabinet will need to consider points raised in the Consultation exercise in determining the final Financial Strategy.

9. CONSULTEES

- 9.1 Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Affairs and CMT

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 Cabinet Financial Strategy 2007/2010
10.2 Consultation Press Release
10.3 OPM Consultation Guidance 2002
10.4 Local Government Finance Act 1992

PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS

Chief Executive
Budget Consultation.

Dear Sir ,

As suggested in the item on page 5, in the Shuttle dated January 11th, I am writing to let you know what are feel are very important concerns for Bewdley town in the budget proposals.

1) Bewdley Museum is of paramount importance to our town. It holds and displays our cultural heritage for both the local population, and visitors to the town. Very important to us today , and for the future.I would urge you to give financial support, for building works, improvements and maintenance.

2) The Lax Lane Craft Centre is part of the towns history, and I think it should be improved, and kept as an asset to our town.

3) The floral displays do much to enhance to appearance ot the town, both hanging baskets the tubs, and also plantings on the Wribbenhall riverside, and in Jubilee Gardens.

The three items above all play a part in enhancing the attractions of the town to visitors and tourists, who all contribute to our local economy.

I also feel that we need to do as much as possible for the next generation.

This could mean improving sports and play facilities.

4) What an asset a local pool would be! A valuable contribution to the health and fitness of the local children. This could be used by the schools, and the adult population.

Not everyone can afford private leisure club fees.

Thank you for the opportunity to have my say , as a council tax payer, and a Bewdley resident

To: sjclee
Sent: Monday, January 15, 2007 1:11 PM
Subject: WFDC Consultation on Budget

Dear Stephen

I understand there was a consultation paper in the Shuttle last week and unfortunately I have recycled my copy before replying to the consultation document. So here goes:

We would support

1. The provision of a swimming pool in Bewdley (at the Leisure Centre?) Such a pool would be a great asset to be used by young and old alike. As an "oldie" I love to swim but I don't want to travel to Kidderminster or Stourport. The health benefits for all would be terrific.
2. Lax Lane Craft Centre to be "sold" to Bewdley Development Trust for the benefit of the town and local jobs
3. The provision of more recycling. Those of us who live along Severnside and in the courtyards still have a weekly refuse collection and communal facilities to recycle paper and glass only. There are no plans to increase recycling for us and so most of our refuse is now plastic and we are taking the tins to the recycling centre at Dog Lane. A lot more could be done in this regard, including a kerbside collection of garden refuse.
4. The provision of hanging baskets makes the town look lovely but these need to be maintained and watered daily otherwise there is no point
5. Disabled access to the Town Hall, now essential to be DDA compliant.

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I have been reading the Shuttle and it would appear that yet another proposal to raise taxes by over 5% is in the offing.

I am concerned that OAPs will become even more impoverished and also wonder what services are being provided at such vast cost. How do you meet a tax bill of this magnitude out of a state pension?

Please consider reducing or dispensing with services and making any that you keep more viable.

It seems that "Government" does not need to consider efficiency and productivity! I wonder why?

I also believe that state pensions paid to police and all other government employs should match those in the private sector and as they have been drastically reduced since 1997 the state pensions should follow suit while we attempt to restore the OAP state pension to some usable level. This would save taxes.

I find it difficult to see what I am paying £1,500+ per year for. My rubbish does not get fully collected, The roads are congested and dual carriageways reduced to single lanes, My property gets vandalised and my family are abused and go un-protected.

I am asking myself what is the County and District doing to help me? Not much I think.

If the services you provide had to be sold on a commercial basis you'd be out of business.

Thanks for your time and please reduce taxes

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In response to your request for suggestions and comments etc, I would make the following:

Although there are many large scale things which would be desirable, there are many small, relatively cheap policies which would also improve the general ambience pof the area.

Amongst the large items could be a swimming pool, as a long term plan for Bewdley. It is the only one of the three towns which has no pool of any sort. The traditional pool at Stourport is a bit dated, that at the Glades is not aa pool for serious swimmers as opposed to a slightly different leisure activity. A modern traditional pool in Bewdley would benefit the entire area, and I suggest this as a long-term plan.

On a smaller scale, speedier responses to minor damage, attention to broken signs, litter bins etc would be helpful. I am thinking of having 'handymen' available solely for these purposes so that there can be immediate response. Removal of flyposting, and the debris therefrom, street signage (e.g. one or two on Marlpool estate are missing) - you have to drive past to see the one on the other side, etc. Additional litter bins. For instance (I know an additional one has just been provided) after the entrance to the pumping station on Stourport Road in Bewdley there is only one - notwithstanding that there are two schools, a sports ground, a leisure centre and a youth club. I know they will be vandalised, I know they will still be ignored by a large percentage of the offending community, but if they are not there - there must be plenty of them - you cannot begin to make an impact.

Additionally, many people (school-children mostly, but far from exclusively) use the riverside path from Beales Corner to the playing fields at the leisure centre. Could bins be provided every hundred yards or so along here?

These are examples - I am suggesting investing money to improve the general appearance of the entire area, by more provision and faster repair to street furniture etc.