

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL

CABINET

21 FEBRUARY 2008

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE

2008-09 BUDGET – CITIZENS PANEL CONSULTATION OUTCOME

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To report to Cabinet on the outcomes of the 2008 budget Citizens Panel consultation exercise held at the Civic Centre on the 28 January 2008.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet note the preferred level of Council tax of 2.4% derived from the Citizens Panel consultation exercise as detailed in Annex 3 to this report.
- 2.2 That Cabinet take into account the Citizens Panel consultation outcomes detailed within annex 3 of this report when considering which Policy Options are to be recommended as part of the 2008-09 budget.
- 2.3 That Cabinet consider further potential options raised by the Public Consultation attendees as part of the 2008-09 or 2009-10 budget as detailed in annex 4 of this report.

3. Key Issues

- 3.1 As part of the 2008-09 Delivering Change process, Cabinet consulted on all the potential budget changes based upon an indicative 5% Council Tax, which may result in a change in Policy.
- 3.2 An additional exercise was also undertaken with chosen members of the Citizens Panel. The Citizens Panel was split into 6 groups, each of a varying number (minimum of 6) and were required to:
1. Consider and prioritise all the policy options within the public domain (attached as annex 1)
 2. Consider a Council Tax percentage rise that the Citizens Panel would view as acceptable for 2008-09 and
 3. To re-prioritise the policy options considered in order to achieve their acceptable Council Tax increase for 2008-09.
- 3.3 Annex 1 of this report details the growth and saving options prioritised by the groups. Pre-Council tax setting, the top 3 growth options that the Citizens Panel wished to be considered as part of the budget are:

1. Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour
2. Provision of In-House Advice Service – Housing Needs
3. Licensing & Enforcement of Houses in Multi-Occupational – Private Sector

The top 3 saving options that the Citizen Panel wish to be considered as part of the budget are:

1. Removal of the Catering Subsidy
2. Cease Production of the State of Cannock Chase
3. Rationalise Bus Shelter Provision

Annex 1 shows that the initial prioritisation exercise resulted in an overall saving being 'preferred' within each group.

3.4 Options not supported by the group were as follows:

Growth

- Appointment of Sustainability Officer
- Implementation of Equality and Diversity Action Plan
- Health and Safety – Cemeteries
- Staffs and Stoke-On-Trent 2012 Olympics Co-ordinator
- Enhanced Maintenance of Street Furniture
- Improved Planning Application Processing Timescales

Saving

- Museum – Reduction in Visitors Services
- Reduction in Discretionary Rate Relief
- Reduction in Grants to Major Voluntary Organisations
- Reduction in Grants to Voluntary Organisations
- Food Hygiene – Rationalisation of Inspections
- Private Sector Housing – Enforcement Action
- Home Security Grants – Reduce

3.5 Members may also wish to note that there was only 1 saving option that all the groups did not want to be considered at all as part of the budget process. This was the 'Museum – Reduction in Visitors Services'.

3.6 Members should note that based upon priorities a Council Tax increase of 2.6 % would be required.

3.7 The second part of the process was to ascertain from each group an acceptable level of Council Tax increase, including the base budget increase already set at 4%. Annex 2 details by group what the acceptable rate of Council Tax increase would be. This averages out to circa 2.4%, currently 1.6% below the budgeted base increase.

3.8 Within the groups the current level of Council Tax was then calculated based on the options identified as essential growth or required saving as part of exercise 1 (annex

1). Where there was a difference between the revised Council Tax rise and the acceptable Council tax rise the members of the group were asked to re-visit the policy options to arrive at a balanced budget. This was done by removing growth and / or including saving options where an additional saving was required or increasing growth and / or removing saving options where additional growth was required. For each circa £50,000 total growth that was required an assumed 1% would be added to the Council Tax base, and for every circa -£50,000 total saving that was required an assumed 1% would be taken off the Council tax base budget increase.

3.9 For example, of the total preferred options within group 1 amounted to circa -£50,000, the assumed Council Tax increase for 2008-09 would therefore reduce from 4% (base budget) to 3%.

3.10 The resultant revised Policy Options priorities are included within Annex 3 of this report. Post-Council tax setting, the top 3 growth options that the Citizens Panel wished to be considered as part of the budget remained at:

1. Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour
2. Provision of In-House Advice Service – Housing Needs
3. Licensing & Enforcement of Houses in Multi-Occupational – Private Sector

The top 3 saving options that the Citizen Panel wish to be considered as part of the budget remained at:

1. Removal of the Catering Subsidy
2. Cease Production of the State of Cannock Chase
3. Rationalise Bus Shelter Provision

There were, however, some priority changes further down the saving option list. Members may wish to note that there is still 1 saving option that all the groups did not want to be considered at all as part of the budget process. This was the 'Museum – Reduction in Visitors Services'.

3.11 Following the exercise outlined above, the members of the Citizens Panel were also asked to propose any options that they would like to be considered as part of the budget process. These are detailed within annex 4 of this report.

4. Feedback

4.1 Feedback from Members of the Citizens Panel on the night was positive about the process they had undertaken. They said that it had given them in insight into how the Council operates, the services that are provided and they were appreciative of the chance to submit their proposals for Cabinet to consider as part of the overall budget process.

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Section 1

Background

On the 28 January 2008 the Council undertook a consultation exercise with Members of the Citizens Panel on the proposed Policy Options being considered as part of the 2008-09 budget process.

The exercise was split into 4 parts:

1. Initial prioritisation of the Policy Options available into; (a) To be included; (b) To be considered if required; (c) Not to be considered.
2. What a considered acceptable Council Tax increase would be.
3. Revised prioritisation of the Policy Options in order to achieve the accepted Council Tax increase.
4. Feedback from members of the Panel on any options they wish to be considered as part of the budget.

The results from the exercise are included within this report for Cabinet to consider as part of the overall budget.

Section 2

Details of Matters to be Considered

The details of the results of the exercise for Members to consider are included within the Annexes of this report. They are:

1. Annex 1 – Citizens Panel Prioritisation of Policy Options – Initial View
2. Annex 2 – Citizens Panel – Acceptable Council Tax Increase
3. Annex 3 - Citizens Panel Prioritisation of Policy Options – Setting the Council Tax
4. Annex 4 - Citizens Panel – Additional Options for Consideration

Section 3

Contributions to CHASE

All the options contained within this report have already been 'scored' against the CHASE objectives.

Section 4

Section 17 Implications

There are no Section 17 (Crime Prevention) implications arising from this report.

Section 5

Human Rights Implications

There are no Human Rights implications arising from this report.

Section 6

Data Protection Implications

There are no Data Protection implications arising from this report.

Section 7

Risk Management Implications

The risk management issues have been considered within each option and as this report is an information only report there are no Risk Management implications arising from it.

Section 8

Legal Implications

There are no Legal implications arising from this report.

Section 9

Financial Implications

The financial implications have been considered within each option and as this report is an information only report there are no financial implications arising from it.

Section 10

Human Resource Implications

The Human Resource implications have been considered within each option and as this report is an information only report there are no Human Resource implications arising from it.

Section 11

Conclusions

Members of the Citizens Panel felt that this consultation exercise was useful to them to better understand part of how the Council arrives at a budget and Council Tax and that their views, as members of the public, would be considered by Cabinet in the setting of the budget.

Following both prioritisation exercises, the top 3 growth items that the Citizens panel would include within their budget would be:

1. Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour

2. Provision of In-House Advice Service – Housing Needs
3. Licensing & Enforcement of Houses in Multi-Occupational – Private Sector

And, the top 3 saving options that the Citizen Panel would include within the budget would be:

1. Removal of the Catering Subsidy
2. Cease Production of the State of Cannock Chase
3. Rationalise Bus Shelter Provision

None of the Citizen Panel groups supported the option to 'Reduction Museum Visitors Services'.

The average Council Tax rise acceptable by the Citizens Panel was 2.4%.

Citizens Panel Prioritisation of Policy Options - Initial View - Growth Options

Growth Options									Summary		
Option	Value	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6	Priority	Essential	Desirable	Not Supported
Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour	27,000	1	2	2	2	1	2	10	4	2	0
Provision of In-House Advice Service - Housing Needs	11,000	1	2	1	0	2	2	8	3	2	1
Licensing & Enforcement of Houses in Multi-Occupation - Private Sector	18,000	1	2	1	1	1	2	8	2	4	0
Continuation of Xmas Lights Service	24,000	2	1	1	0	0	2	6	2	2	2
Provision of Streetscene Response Team	59,000	1	0	2	1	1	1	6	1	4	1
Tackling Fuel Poverty - Decent Homes	8,000	2	1	1	1	1	0	6	1	4	1
Business Continuity and Emergency Planning	19,000	2	1	0	1	1	1	6	1	4	1
Providing Recycling Facilities - Town Centres	5,000	1	1	1	0	1	1	5	0	5	1
Promotion & Education for Recycling & Waste Minimisation	22,000	2	0	0	1	0	1	4	1	2	3
Improved Planning Application Processing Timescales	31,000	0	1	1	0	1	0	3	0	3	3
Enhanced Maintenance of Street Furniture	17,000	1	0	0	0	1	1	3	0	3	3
Staffs & Stoke-On-Trent 2012 Olympics Co-ordinator	5,000	0	2	1	0	0	0	3	1	1	4
Health & Safety - Cemeteries	21,000	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	2	4
Implementation of Equality & Diversity Action Plan	20,000	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	2	4
Appointment of Sustainability Officer	28,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Total Value of Top Priorities (1)		73,000	61,000	86,000	27,000	11,000	80,000				

Key

Priority 2 - Growth Option to be included

Priority 1 - Growth Option to be considered if required

Priority 0 - Growth Option not to be considered

Assumptions On Priority

Scoring 0 - 3 = Option not Support

Scoring 4 - 8 = Potential Options for Consideration

Scoring 9 - 12 = Essential Options

Citizens Panel Prioritisation of Policy Options - Initial View - Saving Options

Saving Options									Summary		
Option	Value	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6	Priority	Essential	Desirable	Not Supported
Catering - Subsidy Removal	50,000	2	2	2	2	2	2	12	6	0	0
Cease Production of State of Cannock Chase	9,000	2	2	2	1	2	1	10	4	2	0
Rationalisation of Bus Shelter Provision	22,000	0	2	2	2	2	2	10	5	0	1
Press Cutting Collation Service - Deletion	7,000	2	2	1	2	0	1	8	3	2	1
Contact Centre - Amended Opening Hours	1,000	0	2	2	2	0	2	8	4	0	2
Allotments - Reduce Subsidy	6,000	1	2	2	2	0	1	8	3	2	1
Reduce Grounds Maintenance at Closed Churchyards	8,000	1	2	0	2	0	2	7	3	1	2
Non-Pay and Display Car Parks - Reduce Maintenance	14,000	2	2	0	2	0	1	7	3	1	2
Reduction in Partnership Activities	6,000	1	1	1	2	1	1	7	1	5	0
Hednesford Public Toilet - Close	14,000	2	0	0	2	0	2	6	3	0	3
Air Pollution	4,000	1	2	0	2	0	1	6	2	2	2
Closure of 2 Bowling Greens - Hednesford Park and Cannock Park	28,000	1	1	1	2	0	0	5	1	3	2
Shrub Beds - Remove Subsidy to SCC	15,000	2	1	0	2	0	0	5	2	1	3
Station Car Parks - Introduce Pay & Display	20,000	0	2	1	0	0	2	5	2	1	3
Promotion of Local Economy	21,000	1	1	0	1	1	1	5	0	5	1
Home Security Grants - Reduce	9,000	0	1	0	2	0	0	3	1	1	4
Private Sector Housing - Enforcement Action	6,000	2	0	0	0	0	1	3	1	1	4
Food Hygiene - Rationalisation of Inspections	4,000	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	5
Reduction in Grants to Voluntary Organisations	3,000	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	5
Reduction in Grants to Major Voluntary Organisations	13,000	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	5
Reduction in Discretionary Rate Relief	8,000	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	5
Museum - Reduction in Visitors Services	6,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Total Value of Low Priorities (1)		115,000	145,000	88,000	184,000	81,000	115,000				

Key

Priority 2 - Saving Option to be included

Priority 1 - Saving Option to be considered if required

Priority 0 - Saving Option not to be considered

Assumptions On Priority

Scoring 0 - 3 = Option not Support

Scoring 4 - 8 = Potential Options for Consideration

Scoring 9 - 12 = Essential Options

Citizens Panel Prioritisation of Policy Options - Initial View - Council Tax Level

Summary							
	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6	
Growth Options to be Considered	73,000	61,000	86,000	27,000	11,000	80,000	
Saving Options to be Considered	115,000	145,000	88,000	184,000	81,000	115,000	
Net Growth / -Saving	-42,000	-84,000	-2,000	-157,000	-70,000	-35,000	
Council Tax Percentage Adjustment (%)	-1.0	-1.5	0.0	-3.0	-2.0	-1.0	Average
Revised Council Tax Increase (%)	3.0	2.5	4.0	1.0	2.0	3.0	2.6

Citizens Panel - Acceptable Council Tax Increase

Acceptable Council Tax Increase							
	Average	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6
Acceptable Council Tax Increase	2.4	3.0	2.5	3.5	1.0	2.0	2.5

Citizens Panel Prioritisation of Policy Options - Setting the Council Tax - Growth Options

Growth Options									Summary		
Option	Value	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6	Priority	Essential	Desirable	Not Supported
Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour	27,000	1	2	2	2	1	2	10	4	2	0
Provision of In-House Advice Service - Housing Needs	11,000	1	2	1	0	2	2	8	3	2	1
Licensing & Enforcement of Houses in Multi-Occupation - Private Sector	18,000	1	2	1	1	1	2	8	2	4	0
Continuation of Xmas Lights Service	24,000	2	1	1	0	0	2	6	2	2	2
Provision of Streetscene Response Team	59,000	1	0	2	1	1	1	6	1	4	1
Tackling Fuel Poverty - Decent Homes	8,000	2	1	1	1	1	0	6	1	4	1
Business Continuity and Emergency Planning	19,000	2	1	0	1	1	1	6	1	4	1
Providing Recycling Facilities - Town Centres	5,000	1	1	1	0	1	1	5	0	5	1
Promotion & Education for Recycling & Waste Minimisation	22,000	2	0	0	1	0	1	4	1	2	3
Improved Planning Application Processing Timescales	31,000	0	1	1	0	1	0	3	0	3	3
Enhanced Maintenance of Street Furniture	17,000	1	0	0	0	1	1	3	0	3	3
Staffs & Stoke-On-Trent 2012 Olympics Co-ordinator	5,000	0	2	1	0	0	0	3	1	1	4
Health & Safety - Cemeteries	21,000	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	2	4
Implementation of Equality & Diversity Action Plan	20,000	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	2	4
Appointment of Sustainability Officer	28,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Total Value of Top Priorities (1)		73,000	61,000	86,000	27,000	11,000	80,000				

Key

Priority 2 - Growth Option to be included

Priority 1 - Growth Option to be considered if required

Priority 0 - Growth Option not to be considered

Assumptions On Priority

Scoring 0 - 3 = Option not Support

Scoring 4 - 8 = Potential Options for Consideration

Scoring 9 - 12 = Essential Options

Citizens Panel Prioritisation of Policy Options - Setting the Council Tax - Saving Options

Saving Options									Summary		
Option	Value	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6	Priority	Essential	Desirable	Not Supported
Catering - Subsidy Removal	50,000	2	2	2	2	2	2	12	6	0	0
Cease Production of State of Cannock Chase	9,000	2	2	2	1	2	1	10	4	2	0
Rationalisation of Bus Shelter Provision	22,000	0	2	2	2	2	2	10	5	0	1
Press Cutting Collation Service - Deletion	7,000	2	2	2	2	0	1	9	4	1	1
Contact Centre - Amended Opening Hours	1,000	0	2	2	2	0	2	8	4	0	2
Allotments - Reduce Subsidy	6,000	1	2	2	2	0	1	8	3	2	1
Reduction in Partnership Activities	6,000	1	1	1	2	2	1	8	2	4	0
Closure of 2 Bowling Greens - Hednesford Park and Cannock Park	28,000	1	1	2	2	0	2	8	3	2	1
Reduce Grounds Maintenance at Closed Churchyards	8,000	1	2	0	2	0	2	7	3	1	2
Non-Pay and Display Car Parks - Reduce Maintenance	14,000	2	2	0	2	0	1	7	3	1	2
Hednesford Public Toilet - Close	14,000	2	0	0	2	0	2	6	3	0	3
Air Pollution	4,000	1	2	0	2	0	1	6	2	2	2
Promotion of Local Economy	21,000	1	1	0	1	2	1	6	1	4	1
Shrub Beds - Remove Subsidy to SCC	15,000	2	1	0	2	0	0	5	2	1	3
Station Car Parks - Introduce Pay & Display	20,000	0	2	1	0	0	2	5	2	1	3
Home Security Grants - Reduce	9,000	0	1	0	2	0	0	3	1	1	4
Private Sector Housing - Enforcement Action	6,000	2	0	0	0	0	1	3	1	1	4
Food Hygiene - Rationalisation of Inspections	4,000	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	5
Reduction in Grants to Voluntary Organisations	3,000	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	5
Reduction in Grants to Major Voluntary Organisations	13,000	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	5
Reduction in Discretionary Rate Relief	8,000	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	5
Museum - Reduction in Visitors Services	6,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Total Value of Low Priorities (1)		115,000	145,000	123,000	184,000	108,000	143,000				

Key

Priority 2 - Saving Option to be included

Priority 1 - Saving Option to be considered if required

Priority 0 - Saving Option not to be considered

Assumptions On Priority

Scoring 0 - 3 = Option not Support

Scoring 4 - 8 = Potential Options for Consideration

Scoring 9 - 12 = Essential Options

Citizens Panel Prioritisation of Policy Options - Setting the Council Tax - Council Tax Level

Summary							
	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6	
Growth Options to be Considered	73,000	61,000	86,000	27,000	11,000	80,000	
Saving Options to be Considered	115,000	145,000	123,000	184,000	108,000	143,000	
Net Growth / -Saving	-42,000	-84,000	-37,000	-157,000	-97,000	-63,000	
Council Tax Percentage Adjustment (%)	-1.0	-1.5	-0.5	-3.0	-2.0	-1.5	Average
Revised Council Tax Increase (%)	3.0	2.5	3.5	1.0	2.0	2.5	2.4

Citizens Panel – Additional Options for Consideration

Saving

- Bowling Greens – Instead of closing 2 bowlings greens, ascertain whether there would be the demand from a private club, currently established or not, to take over the complete maintenance and upkeep of a bowling green for their use.
- Housing Benefit – More checks on Housing Benefit, say every 3 months, to deter fraud.
- Utilities Contract – Negotiation of the utilities contract to ensure a cheaper, better service.
- Wind Turbines – Benefits from having Wind Turbines within the District through securing more benefits for residents e.g. cheaper utility bills, charges for turbines etc.
- Nuclear Waste – Processing plant for Nuclear waste within the District which would create jobs and economic development and the Council could apply an additional levy on the facility.
- Prince of Wales Theatre – Remove subsidy.

Growth

- Bin Collection – Stop the collection of the Brown Wheelie bin during winter months and concentrate on emptying the Green Wheelie bins only.
- Community Support Officers – Increase funding to allow Community Support Officers to work after 5pm.
- Streetwardens – Increase the number of Streetwardens so that they are more visible throughout the District.
- Community Safety Patrols – Increase Community Safety Patrols, in particular on Friday and Saturday nights.
- Teenage Programmes / Play Areas – Approve a programme for young people of teenage years so as to keep them occupied and to allow small children greater use of play areas.
- Recycling / Charity Donations – Employ an officer to review Council skips and remove any waste that could be recycled or passed on to charity shops for re-sale.
- Housing Estate Walkways – Increased maintenance.
- Dog Mess – Prosecution of Dog Owners who allow their dogs to mess in public places.
- Recycling – Better service ('pick up properly'). This option concentrates on investing more money into the Domestic Recycling scheme to ensure that all the recycling bins are collected throughout the District.
- Stadium – Keep Cannock Stadium open.
- Parks / Football Pitches – Increase the maintenance on the Parks and Football pitches.
- Enforcement Action – Increased enforcement action throughout the whole of Environmental Health / Services (e.g. litter prosecutions, HBT, sale of alcohol etc)