

Joint Budget Consultation Event

4th December 2007, 6:30pm at Loughborough Town Hall

- The Purpose of this event was to:
 - Identify positive action we have achieved in terms of joint working e.g. Partnership Action Weeks
 - Identify actions, linked to the budget and current priorities, in relation to what will be done in the next financial year.
 - Consult (light touch) with participants on priority services.
 - Promote the Community Forums and Charnwood Borough Council Citizen's Panel.
 - Communicate with what the plans are for all three partners for the coming year.
- A total of 26 people attended this event including individuals from the town council, local parish councils and the voluntary and community sectors.
- The panel was made up of Cllr Richard Shepherd (Leader, CBC); Brian Hayes (Chief Executive, CBC); Cllr Page (LCC); Pat Setoris, (Head of Strategic Finance, LCC); Chief Superintendent Daimon Tilley (North Area Commander, Leicestershire Constabulary), Inspector, Mark Cuddihy (Loughborough LPU) and Jo Cooper (Leicestershire and Rutland PCT)
- The format of the event was a series of presentations from CBC, County, the Police and the PCT followed by a question and answer session.
- The following is a summary of the questions asked at the event and the responses given by the panel.

Question One

“Where have county go in their fair funding campaign?”

Cllr Page Response: Cllr Parsons and others from county along with PCT have been down to London to speak to No 10, the treasury etc...to address under funding. So far haven't had any success. However, we feel we are making a success of our services even though we are under funded whilst other areas seem to get money thrown at them. Urban areas get more funding and we are not considered to have deprivation.

Cllr Shepherd Response: One of problems seems to be that the government see the county as rural, middle class and affluent.

Questioners comment: This should be your number one priority and we should be kept updated on how it progresses.

Question Two

“You talk about keeping council tax rises low. What evidence is there that people are not willing to pay more council tax?”

Cllr Page Response: The County did a survey about four years ago and people said they wanted council tax kept low.

Questioners comment: perhaps they would think differently now if shown the facts about funding shortfalls.

Question Three

“Students don’t pay council tax. This is a problem, especially in multi occupancy homes. Does the university give local authority anything to compensate for this?”

Brian Hayes Response: We are compensated to an extent by government which includes recognition of the gap in income because of this. This is done through the grant but can’t say if it is enough to fully cover the gap. Also, student landlords are taxed.

Comment

“Returning to council tax, if you present the finance situation to people, they may be more willing to pay council tax”

Cllr Snartt Response: You should also remember that we can’t raise council tax too high because the government caps it.

Question Four

“What are local MP’s doing about the funding problem?”

Cllr Page response: The county’s MP’s are part of the fair funding campaign. This is an all party approach.

Question Five (Cllr Snartt)

“There is a lot of concern about the walk in centre? What consultation is being done?”

Jo Cooper Response: we have been carrying out a month long survey at the walk in centre relating to transport issues if we move the centre. There is also an online feedback form. We are asking questions such as – “How travelled today”; “What if we moved”. We will take these responses into account when making our decision.

Moving the walk in centre would provide key strengths including prevention of duplication of resources and services.

Question Six (Daphne Besie)

“I used to get information from the old PCT but since the restructure this doesn’t happen and I feel the personal relationship has broken down. What’s going on?”

Jo Cooper Response: We have recognised this and looking at how we can address this. We can add people to our mailing list for the PCT bulletin.

Comment

“I feel that we are suffering at the whim of central government. They can alter funding at the last minute and we can’t do anything about it. Feel that local people don’t have a say anymore. It prevents accountable approach to local government”.

Cllr Page response: We expect the grant to be below the rate of inflation at the same time that service costs increasing above the rate of inflation. We need more money just to stand still.

Question Seven

A) “There are a lot of elderly people in the Sidings / Eastern Gateway area who would struggle to get to Epinal way if the walk in centre is moved. It would me changing buses or paying for a taxi which they can’t afford. Also, what will be done with the building?

Jo Cooper Response: Need to remember that nothing is decided and we are looking at a number options. We will take everyone’s views into account and if we do decide to move the centre we will work with the local authority to improve transport links. We have not yet decided what would be done with the current walk in centre site if we decided to move. At the moment – as plans are early – there is also no decision on any extension to the Epinal Way site and if this is needed it will be funded by capital money not revenue so services will not have to lose money to pay for it.

B) We don’t see the police on the beat in our area anymore.

Ch. Supt Tilley Response: We have been increasing visible policing. There are at least 1 police officer and 1 PCSO for every beat (Insp. Cuddihy confirmed that in this area there are 3 officers and 2 PCSO’s). However, the problem is often timing. The officer has to be walking past at the same time as you are walking by or looking outside. It is also the case that with limited resources we have to deploy officers where they are most needed.

C) The streets aren’t swept properly anymore and there are no rubbish bins. Also, we are near the tip and there are problems with waste being scatted about when people unload their rubbish from vehicles. You should come and walk around our areas sometimes and see the problems for yourselves!!!!

Cllr Shepherd Response: We are making progress on waste and have recently introduced free bulky waste collections.

Brian Hayes Response: Cleansing performance decreased last year and the start of this year due to a change in staff at the contractors. This is now improving quickly. We have also analysed the worst performing areas and fed this into identifying priority neighbourhoods. We will be introducing new machinery and cleaning schedules in these

areas soon. We also now have street wardens and an enforcement team working hard to reduce fly-tipping.

Cllr Shepherd Response: We will be holding meetings in communities and carrying out ward walks to identify and tackle local issues. We will also be opening up area forums to the public.

Question Eight

“What is the demonstration outside about? Are you privatising services?”

Brian Hayes response: We are looking at creating better economies of scale by seeing if some services can be provided more efficiently and effectively by external companies. This is being done for back office services rather than front line services. We already provide services through private companies including waste collection and leisure centres.

Cllr Shepherd response: Remember that your councillors will remain accountable to you in this process.

Question Nine

“I’m worried that this won’t work. It didn’t work in Cambridgeshire and they had to rid of it and also been problems in the Vale of White Horse”.

Brian Hayes response: We have been to the Vale of White Horse and it wasn’t the huge problem that was made out in the press. Also, there has been a number of mistakes, especially early on but these have been learnt from and shared services has been introduced successfully in a lot of councils across the country. We will still be accountable to ensuring this works and now they have listened to the potential providers more staff are comfortable with the idea.

Question Ten

“Is CCTV being used to replace police officers because of the cuts the police need to make?”

Ch. Supt. Tilley Response: CCTV compliments policing, it doesn’t replace it. It is a good resource for prevention of crime and public reassurance. Also useful for managing events such as markets days and the fair.

Cllr Snartt Response: We are looking to expand CCTV beyond Loughborough. At moment are looking to have CCTV in the Peel Drive area in response to local people not feeling safe. CCTV is integral to reducing the fear of crime. We are also using ANPR (automatic number plate recognition) technology in Loughborough and hope to expand this to other areas of the Borough. There is a strong demand for CCTV from Parishes and Villages.

Cllr Page Comment

We are in the process of bringing all our back office together to save money and talking to other councils about sharing services. We want to put money into the back office and invest in front line services. Also, it is the government who is pushing us to provide more and more services externally.

Question Eleven

“Recently I had a problem and tried to call the police. I didn’t get a response for half an hour – it kept ringing out. Can’t remember which number I called”.

Ch. Supt Tilley response: I’m very surprised by this as calls usually answered very quickly. There are only two numbers – 999 and 222 2222 and they are all managed through a 24/7 contact centre. 90% of calls to seven two’s answered in 30 seconds. 90% of calls to 999 answered in 15 seconds.

Question Twelve

“Why is police cutting CBC CCTV funding”.

Ch. Supt Tilley response: We aren’t. We are moving CCTV over from the police to local authority and as a part of this we are assessing resources and expectations. We will be meeting Steve Phipps and Peter Hinton at CBC shortly to discuss this.

Question Thirteen

The County commission some services to voluntary agencies. It (shared services) isn’t all about farming out to private companies. However, I am anxious about how services can be done cheaper and also how the council can monitor the companies – presume council will need to retain staff to do this. Will costs be cut by paying staff peanuts?

Brian Hayes Response: Companies have guaranteed no redundancies and will protect staff conditions of service. They tend to make savings because they can rationalise and streamline services through economies of scale. Also they can bring in work from elsewhere in the country and make money out of this. There is a lot of this happening in London / South East where there is a push to displace civil service further north (too many civil service jobs in the south).

Also, at the moment, shared services is just ourselves and Rushcliffe but we are looking at getting more councils from Leicestershire / Notts / Derbyshire on board.

Question Fourteen

“We have no GP in the Wolds. How will you bring improvements in terms of health care in this situation”?

Jo Cooper Response: The provision of GP’s is done on a formula and we are looking at how we can deliver services better on our current hospital sites.

Question Fifteen

“Will funding increase if the proposed 1000’s of new homes are built”?

County Response: This will have an effect on the grant we receive due to facts such as a need for more school places. We can also get developer (section 106) contributions from large scale developments, which is intended to pay for the extra infrastructure needed to cope with additional housing.

Comment from attendee: Can you take thanks back to your staff who have worked so hard to deliver services – especially in the evenings – including PCT, Police, Housing, and Cleansing. Concerned about the future of services but thankful for their hard work. A special note on this to mental health care at the walk in centre.

Comment from attendee: The Wolds want to thank the police because as a result of the work in their area and the fact that they listened to residents things in their area have improved. Personal thanks was asked to be sent to the police officers involved.

*It was noted that this came about through joining working between the police, county and Charnwood Borough Council who raised funding to support local policing through increasing the tax on second homes.