

24th October 2013

**REPORT OF THE LEADER
BUDGET CONSULTATION 2014/15**

EXEMPT INFORMATION

There is no exempt information.

PURPOSE

To inform Cabinet of the outcomes arising from consultation undertaken with residents, businesses and the voluntary sector in accordance with the corporate budget setting process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet endorse the report and take account of the findings along with other sources of information when setting the 2014/15 Budget.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Tamworth's focus on working with partners to 'Aspire and Prosper' is visibly supported in the 2014/15 budget consultation responses. Working with businesses to create employment opportunities and providing the conditions to enable businesses to grow and develop were viewed as important by all. Businesses further recognised the need to raise the aspirations of young people and highlighted the importance of creating the technology and infrastructure required to encourage and support growth.

Clear support for a 'Healthier and Safer' Tamworth is also apparent. Most noticeably so from residents, with the below priorities being particularly important for Tamworth residents:

- Tackling crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Tackling youth crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Protecting the vulnerable.

Support for the vision and priorities is further evidenced in people's commentaries with low crime, job prospects and health services being viewed as key indicators of what makes somewhere a good place to live. Residents felt two of these indicators (job prospects and crime levels) needed improving in Tamworth and the implementation of the vision and priorities for Tamworth will be key in realising these improvements.

In terms of spending on services, respondents were broadly supportive of keeping the level of spending the same. There were however four cost areas where increased spending was supported and these are outlined below:

- Tackling anti-social behaviour.
- Improving the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of Tamworth.
- Street cleaning.

- Housing.

It is notable that the top three priority areas for increased spending have remained largely unchanged over the last year. However, housing has now replaced parks and open spaces as the fourth most important cost area for increased spend.

Clear messages were also apparent on service charges and decreased charges would be supported for parking fees and town centre market and shop rentals. This was further evidenced through respondents' comments and through these, respondents recognised the positive effects that these decreased charges would have on the regeneration of the town centre economy. Whilst increasing fees is rarely a popular option, increasing fees for leisure and public open spaces would be most tolerable and would receive the least resistance from respondents.

In a similar vein, residents would be most receptive to minimal increases in the level of council tax with the overriding message being that the smaller the increase in council tax, the greater the level of resident support. Whilst this is a view commonly expressed by residents, in times of austerity, the message is even more pertinent with smaller increases and finding more efficient ways to deliver services receiving clear support.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

There are no resource implications arising from this report.

LEGAL/RISK IMPLICATIONS BACKGROUND

It is a statutory duty to consult before the development of the budget. Budget consultation ensures our compliance with this.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no sustainability implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As part of an annual process Tamworth Borough Council reviews its Council Tax and Charges strategy for the development of the budget. This process ensures that funding is put into areas of highest priority. An important element of this process is to understand the views of residents, businesses, and local voluntary groups on what these priorities are.

REPORT AUTHOR

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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

APPENDICES

Budget consultation 2014/15 – Full report