

THURSDAY, 23 OCTOBER 2014

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**BUDGET CONSULTATION 2015/16****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.

RECOMMENDATION

That Cabinet endorse the report and take account of the findings along with other sources of information when setting the 2015/16 Budget.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Tamworth Borough Council's vision to 'aspire and prosper' and to be 'healthier and safer' is strongly endorsed by Tamworth's residents. This is evident in their views on 'what makes somewhere a good place to live' and 'what most needs improving to make Tamworth a better place to live'.

'Low levels of crime', 'a good health service' and 'good job prospects' were considered universally important by residents. All three of these factors have remained consistently important to Tamworth's residents in recent years. Despite progress, residents were clear that Tamworth would be a better place to live if improvements continued to be made to all three.

Businesses however had their own priorities and to enable them to flourish/expand and support Tamworth's vision, the majority of business respondents felt that a reduction in business rates and other charges would most assist their businesses and the wider economy.

Whilst support for the vision was clearly evident, the ways in which efforts should be focused can be understood more clearly by examining the priorities which sit beneath.

Working with businesses to create more employment opportunities locally was considered important by the majority. This was closely followed by creating opportunities for business growth and raising aspirations and attainment levels of young people. All of the priorities under 'aspire and prosper' were considered important by over half the respondents. Considered least important was 'branding and marketing Tamworth as a great place to live life to the full'.

Similar levels of support were expressed for the priorities under 'healthier and safer'. All of the priorities were supported by over half or more of respondents. However, the level of support was varied. Whilst over three quarters felt 'tackling crime and anti-social behaviour' was important, far fewer felt 'tackling alcohol abuse' was important.

Respondents were invited to indicate whether Tamworth Borough Council should spend more, the same or less on a wide range of key services. Respondents' views on spending varied greatly. Spending more on tackling anti-social behaviour and improving the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of Tamworth were supported by over half whilst spending more on events was supported by far fewer, just over one in ten would spend more on this.

Spending on refuse collection and recycling should remain the same or be increased. There was zero support for reduced spending on this service which is reflective of the importance of this universal, frontline service to Tamworth residents. There were services however where some support for reduced spending was apparent. This included spending less on housing advice and grants, and on grants for voluntary organisations and charities.

The consultation results reflected that there was a high level of support for increasing charges for leisure and other activities. Conversely residents clearly expressed their views on both town centre rentals and car parking, with decreased charges supported for both by two thirds or more respondents.

Whilst views were divided on an acceptable level of Council Tax increase, there was most support provided for the smallest rise offered. 38% supported a 0.6% rise.

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 2015/16 – Full report