

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	<b>30 January 2007</b>
<b>Title of Report</b>	<b>Budget Consultation Feedback</b>
Link to Corporate Priorities	All
Key Decision	No
Public Report	Yes

**Summary of Report**

To provide Council with feedback from recent budget consultation to help inform the setting of the Budget for 2007/08.

**Officer Recommendations**

**To note the budget consultation feedback and consider this when making decisions on the budget for 2007/08 in February 2007.**

Other than those implications agreed with the relevant Officers and referred to below, there are no other implications associated with this report.

Financial Implications	Legal Implications	Community & Environmental Implications	Human Resources Implications	Equality & Diversity Implications
NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE

<b>Contact Officer</b>	Sue Pangbourne, Strategic Manager 01249 706559 spangbourne@northwiltshire.gov.uk
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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This report sets out a summary of the feedback from the Council's budget consultation over the past few months. This feedback is being presented to Council at its January 2007 meeting, to allow members to consider the feedback before agreeing the budget for 2007/08 and beyond in February 2007.

## 2. Options and Options Appraisal

- 2.1. Option 1: To note the feedback from the budget consultation and consider it when setting the budget for 2007/08 in February 2007.
- 2.2. Option 2: To propose alternative views to that expressed through the budget consultation when setting the budget for 2007/08 in February 2007.

## 3. Background Information

- 3.1. The Council, in agreeing a revised Policy and Budget Framework in April 2006, agreed a timetable for budget consultation which identified two phases. In Phase One the People's Voice were surveyed by a postal questionnaire in September 2006 for their opinions on how important the Council's 25 pledges were to them. In Phase Two the Area Committees were used to facilitate a budget exercise which sought to identify areas for increasing income or making savings. The same exercise was set out on the Council's website as an online survey.
- 3.2. Over 600 people responded to the People's Voice Survey, 72 people participated in the Area Committee exercise and 100 people completed the website survey – a large increase in participation from last year.
- 3.3. In line with previous years, Phase 2 was designed to give specific results. Individuals were asked to choose from a list of real budget options for making savings or increasing income.
- 3.4. **Phase One – Peoples Voice Questionnaire**
- 3.4.1. Respondents were asked to assess the importance of each of the Council's 25 Pledges. The results are set out in Appendix 1. The most Pledges viewed as most important (with 80% or more people stating they were important) were:

Pledge	% who rated this important
Improving recycling	96%
Cleaning up grot spots	96%
High customer standards	95%
Removing abandoned vehicles	92%
Adapting homes for the disabled	91%
Bringing empty homes back into use	90%
Recycling green waste	89%
Improving access to services	88%
Making decisions based on feedback	88%
Improving home energy efficiency	84%
Creating a one-stop-shop	83%
Helping local projects	80%
Promoting local produce	80%

### 3.5. **Phase Two – Area Committees and Website**

3.5.1. The budget exercise carried out by individuals at Area Committees and on the website asked people to agree which income generation or savings options they were prepared to see the Council make in order to achieve a minimum of £500,000 of 'savings'.

3.5.2. The Area Committee results are set out in Appendix 2. The website results are set out in Appendix 3. The results can be summarised as follows:

#### 3.5.3. **Area Committees:**

Make savings on:

- North Wiltshire Festival: 81%

Increase income on:

- Car Parking Charges 74%
- Car Park season tickets 64%
- Second wheeled bins (annual charge) 71%
- New and lost wheeled Bins 60%
- Increase Council Tax 60%

#### 3.5.4. **Website:**

Make savings on:

- North Wiltshire Festival 67%
- Close Information Points 49%

Increase income on:

- Car Parking Charges 76%
- Second wheeled bins (annual charge) 60%
- Car Park season tickets 54%

3.5.5. It can be seen that there is a lot of similarity between the views expressed at the Area Committees (predominantly by parish, town and district councillors) and those expressed on the website.

### 3.6. **Member Policy Day**

3.6.1. A member Policy Day was held on 11 January 2007 to review the feedback from the People's Voice, the Area Committees and the website.

3.6.2. The aim of the Policy Day was to consider the evolving Corporate Plan in terms of priorities and non-priorities for the Council and to set out budget savings and growth in line with these views.

3.6.3. The member views from the Policy Day (attached as Appendix 4) were considered by the Budget and Strategic Planning Working Group on 18 January 2007 in making recommendations on the budget for 2007/08 to the Executive.

### 3.7. **Additional Consultation**

3.7.1. In addition to the above consultation, local businesses are being invited to let the Council have views on the budget proposals. This feedback is not yet available.

3.7.2. Following a recommendation from the Executive, an additional question was asked in the budget consultation on the website. People were invited to contact the Council (via a specific email address) to let us know whether, for one year only, the Area grants should be used solely to support community groups who are putting bids together to run local leisure centres. No feedback was received.

3.7.3. At the Area Committees and on the website, people were invited to let the Council know what other financial information about the Council they would like to receive and in what format. No specific points have been received. However, a number of comments about the budget consultation (both positive and negative) have been received, which will help to inform future consultation exercises.

#### 4. Risk Analysis

4.1. With any consultation, there is a risk that the results received are not representative of the whole of the population of the District. However, the People's Voice panel is demographically balanced to reflect the District's population. Also, the different approaches taken with the budget consultation provides a wide opportunity for people to give their views.

<b>Appendices:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Appendix 1: People's Voice Feedback</b></li> <li>• <b>Appendix 2: Area Committee Feedback</b></li> <li>• <b>Appendix 3: Website Feedback</b></li> <li>• <b>Appendix 4: Policy Day (11.01.07) Feedback</b></li> </ul>
<b>Background Documents Used in the Preparation of this Report:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>None</b></li> </ul>

#### Previous Decisions Connected with this Report

<b>Report</b>	<b>Committee &amp; Date</b>	<b>Minute Reference</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Policy &amp; Budget Framework</b></li> </ul>	Council: 25.04.06	C108