

Summary of consultation with communities on County Council savings and the Budget 2011/12

Strategy for consultation

A variety of forums and methods have been utilised to seek the public's views on the County Council's efficiency programme and cost reduction proposals.

The methods used include:

- a) Ipsos Mori were commissioned to recruit participants and run a formal, representative and moderated consultation workshop with Hampshire residents on attitudes to cost saving proposals.
- b) Inviting online comments via Hantsweb (the County Council's Budget/financial information and news web pages) as an open opportunity for members of the public and employees to submit comments. The online consultation ran from 15 November to 10 December. Hampshire Now also included a feature on the forthcoming budget and financial pressures, signposting anyone who would wish to respond to the relevant Hantsweb pages. It also appeared as a feature on Hantsweb for the last week of the consultation. 70 comments were received electronically. This is around the 'norm' that has been received in past years prior to setting the budget.
- c) Dialogue with the voluntary and community sector.
- d) Dialogue with Trade Union representatives.
- e) Dialogue with senior managers and staff.

Summary of findings.

▪ From the community focus group

- Participants felt that Hampshire is a great place to live, with good transport access and nearby countryside.
- Priorities included transport, shops, open spaces, affordable housing, jobs and community safety. In particular, participants emphasised the importance of improving affordability in the county.
- In terms of Hampshire County Council's services, there was a general agreement that in some areas an individual or community could take greater responsibility for specific aspects of current services. Almost all services were seen as 'important', but participants did not feel that it necessarily followed that they should be provided and/or paid for by the County Council.
- There was a general unwillingness to see cuts in adult care and services that support children and young people, especially if they are vulnerable. The high spending values of these services also made respondents reticent about cutting or reducing expenditure.

▪ **Online comments via Hantsweb**

- There was no real consistency of theme to the comments made and the sample was small.
- A small number of comments related to reducing spending for particular services such as reform of concessionary fares and reducing literature produced by the County Council.
- A small number of comments related to staffing at the County Council regarding, for example, pay and “non-jobs”.

▪ **From the Voluntary and Community Sector**

- Informal dialogue between the County Council and sector representatives has taken place, building on the existing Partnership Framework, in order to develop the relationship and understand the impact of spending and service reductions.
- There are opportunities for the County Council and the voluntary and community sector to work together to respond to these changing and challenging times. Potential impacts on the sector need to be managed and options for different ways of working explored. For example, alternative models may include consortia working, social enterprise, community interest groups and improved contact with the business community
- It is important to recognise that the County Council and the voluntary and community sector have a similar public service ethos and serve the same communities.
- The next steps are being developed to maintain momentum and include identifying the most important areas for immediate action and clarifying who the right people are to contribute to ongoing dialogue.

▪ **From the Trade Unions**

- There has been a regular and ongoing programme of discussions and updates with Trade Unions.

▪ **From Hampshire County Council employees**

- There has been regular communications with senior management and the cascading of information about the Budget and the Efficiency Programme via managers.
- Staff were given the opportunity to submit views and ideas for consideration as part of the County Council’s Efficiency Programme via ‘The Big Idea’ online campaign. There were over 1100 comments, suggestions and ideas received during the campaign from 13 July until 20 September. Approximately 700 actual Ideas went forward for consideration by Departmental review teams. The Efficiency Programme has been informed

by comments from staff and has aided managers to understand the views of County Council employees. Examples of Big Ideas in action include:

- Moving the internal magazine 'the Hog' to a largely online distribution
- Establishing the Mottisfont Court energy saving pilot
- Challenging the 'meetings culture'