

Tendring District Council

Budget and Council Tax Setting Process Consultation Meeting for 2008/9

Friday 11th January 2008
10.30 am - 12.30pm
Princes Theatre
Town Hall
Clacton on Sea

Panel:

Cllr Robert Bucke	Chair and Financial Services Portfolio Holder
Cllr. David Lines	Executive Leader
John Hawkins	Chief Executive
Karen Neath	Head of Financial Services
Richard Barrett	Deputy Head of Financial Services
Jennifer Eames	Administrative Officer - Notes

Question and Answers Session - Notes

Mr R Barrett, Deputy Head of Financial Services, gave a Presentation on the Council Tax and Budget Setting Processes. As a consequence, a Questions and Answers Session was held. **A Summary of the session is listed below:**

Name	Question	Answer
Victor Brown Tendring Pensioners Group	Requested a copy of the presentation Requested a Summary of the discussions, outcomes and actions from today's meeting	R Barrett circulated copies of the presentation to the audience. KN informed the audience that the circulated information will also be available on the TDC website Cllr. D Lines stated that the notes taken at the meeting today will also be available to view on the TDC website. The notes will also be presented to next years meeting to demonstrate progress made
Victor Brown Tendring Pensioners Group	What is the process in establishing the Priorities for the use of funds?	Cllr. D Lines Generally speaking there are three stages to this process. 1. The process commences in August for the following years budget. Commencing the process early allows Officers

		<p>sufficient time to project a preliminary forecast.</p> <p>2. The second stage allows each Service to put forward their Cost Pressures which are then prioritised by importance.</p> <p>The Budget is presented to the Council's Corporate Management Committee in November (and again in January of the following year). The Committee examines the Budget meticulously to ensure every item is clearly established.</p> <p>3. Finally, we understand what we have to fund and what income is available. Cabinet will then look at various options.</p> <p>Cllr. D Lines stated that he was keen to get the community view on where money should be spent.</p> <p>The Budget proposals include a sum earmarked as SEED Funding which could be used to leverage additional money to help transform the District.</p>
<p>Victor Brown Tendring Pensioners Group</p>	<p>Will the public be involved in future decisions on Fixed Assets?</p>	<p>Cllr. D Lines stated that the opportunity for people to engage already exists. For example, through various groups, such as The Citizen's Panel, The Tenant's Panel, Parish Meetings, and Local Strategic Partnerships to name a few of the consultation routes.</p> <p>Cllr. D Lines is attending Parish Meetings - there are 27 Parishes in total - and he would like to see the public involved in the meetings. He would welcome engagement from residents.</p>

		Cllr. D Lines suggested that V Brown contact his Parish for details
Sylvia Hobbs Jaywick and Tudor Residents Association	When is Tendring District Council going to invest in Jaywick regeneration?	<p>Cllr. D Lines Tendring District Council requires the support of Partners, such as Essex County Council and EEDA in order to regenerate Jaywick. TDC cannot work in isolation but will willingly take the lead on this project for the Tendring District.</p> <p>Cabinet has made a commitment to put forward £1million for this project from future Capital Assets, when sold.</p> <p>Cllr. D Lines acknowledged that this is a slow process but this was a first step. It will take time and residents need to be involved to retain the good community spirit.</p>
Hugh Morrison Family Support	<p>The presentation given today did not show £1million investment in Jaywick - is this included?</p> <p>The local papers implied that Tendring District Council was placing £1million into Jaywick regeneration on the proviso that land is sold to fund this - Is this true?</p> <p>I am very impressed that you say a Leader is needed to take Jaywick forward. Could this be a member from the Church or a local person? An MP perhaps?</p> <p>Would you provide us with a time span?</p>	<p>R Barrett No, this will come from future Capital Receipts so therefore this is not included.</p> <p>Cllr. D Lines It is a Political Commitment that has not been identified in this years Budget. The idea is for Tendring District Council to put in their commitment to encourage others to follow.</p> <p>Cllr. D Lines The Lead must be the body which can undertake the Project Management.</p> <p>Cllr. D Lines 5,10 years but tail-end it could be 20 years</p>
Pat Goodwin Tendring Parish Council	What is a Capital Receipt?	K Neath explained that it is generated from the sale of an Asset such as Land or Buildings.

		<p>Cllr. D Lines Clacton Golf Club is an example. We have around 4000 assets across the District.</p>
<p>Irene Tracey Essex Adult Community Learning</p>	<p>I am pleased to see the investment of £1.3million in regeneration projects. What are they?</p> <p>I have funds that could be used to help deprived areas but no one has approached me. ECC donate a substantial amount of funds to me and I feel I am losing touch with the TDC Partnership. I would like to speak to someone about this please</p>	<p>Cllr. D Lines Presently, they are unspecified. Some of the funding is available to leverage other funding. Part of the process will be to find out what people want.</p> <p>J Hawkins TDC and LSP Priorities will need to be taken into account when distributing funds. Priorities such as Housing, Regeneration Projects, Corporate and Local Priorities will need to be considered.</p> <p>J Hawkins needs further discussions with Irene and suggested they arrange to meet.</p>
<p>Colin Ward TCVS & TMHS</p>	<p>I would like to congratulate TDC on its Fiscal Management.</p> <p>I represent the Voluntary Sector and would like to know how we could obtain Grants to help with the costs of the Sector</p> <p>The proposed increase in Council Tax is above the Chancellors inflation rates, why? There are many elderly and low wage earners and benefit claimants in the Tendring District and such increases are making people poorer, especially those who are struggling already. We are looking to TDC to consider an increase to Grants by at least the Council Tax increase.</p>	<p>Cllr. D Lines The additional support in the Budget for the Voluntary Sector is well beyond 4%.</p>

<p>Colin Ward TCVS & TMHS</p>	<p>There are approximately 120 volunteer organisations in the Tendring District and approximately 36,000 are supported through the Voluntary Sector. I think this will increase in the coming year</p>	<p>Cllr. D Lines We are doing as much as possible to achieve what we can with limited resources.</p> <p>We are very committed and involved in Partnerships which should provide growth throughout the District</p>
<p>John Cutting Little Clacton Parish Council</p>	<p>I would like to thank the Leader for going to the Parish Council Meetings</p> <p>Many people are unhappy about the prospect of land and property being sold throughout the District.</p> <p>In light of Irene Tracey's comments, there appears to be some potential for substantial income generation for the District but there seems to be no interest from TDC - why?</p>	<p>Cllr. D Lines Sometimes we do have to sell things to be able to invest in new so that it can benefit the District (Irene Tracey clarified that £2million is already spent in the District but that there could be increased input as to where this is directed).</p>
<p>Colin Ward TCVS & TMHS</p>	<p>The general public perception is that assets are being sold and funds are not put back into the community - Is this true?</p>	<p>R Barrett No. Everything sold goes straight back into Capital Assets - It is not spent on anything else other than what is stipulated, Capital Assets.</p> <p>Cllr. R Bucke Capital Receipts are only spent to support other Assets and not to pay for wages etc.</p>
<p>Hugh Morrison Family Support</p>	<p>What Reserves are in the Bank and how much borrowing did TDC do last year? It would also be helpful to have this information included in the presentation</p>	<p>K Neath The level of Reserves as at 31.3.07 was £11.4million and £7.5million is earmarked</p> <p>Just under £4million is uncommitted as this is set aside for emergencies.</p> <p>By the end of 2007/08 the predicted Reserve is £7.9million</p> <p>By the end of 2008/09 the predicted Reserve is £6.4million</p>

	What is a good/bad balance?	<p>K Neath There is no prescription of the level of Reserves but there is guidance. However, I am satisfied we have a proper level of Reserves.</p> <p>We also have to ensure that we have funds available to pay for any loans we may have, now or in the future.</p> <p>R Barrett In 2008/09 we do have borrowing plans for Housing Initiatives</p> <p>Cllr. D Lines The Audit Commission has rated TDC in the top 10 out of 330 Council's. High praise and credit must go to our Officers and previous administration for managing TDC funds.</p>
Pat Goodman Vice-Chair Tendring Parish Council	What is the Harwich Master Plan?	<p>Cllr. D Lines It is a Plan that states the Strategic Regeneration and Vision for Harwich. The Plan includes investment for items such as Affordable Housing and Jobs.</p>
Dave Bolton Tendring Community Transport	<p>The general public are not always aware of the positive things that are happening in the District. It is important that TDC promote positive marketing to digress from the negative press.</p> <p>Tendring Matters was a good publication but that seems to have ceased - Why?</p>	<p>Cllr. D Lines Thanked Mr Bolton. Of the view that often actions speak louder than words.</p> <p>Cllr. R Bucke Nigel Brown, TDC Communications Manager, does a lot to promote positive interest in TDC</p> <p>J Hawkins Tendring Matters is in circulation and is available on the TDC Website.</p>
Victor Brown Pensioners Association	I represent Pensioners, and many have to choose between eating and heating as everything is so expensive. Pensioners are lonely and vulnerable and barely get to see or	<p>Cllr. D Lines £1000 of the Council Tax goes to ECC so you may like to express your views to them. We should get away from silo thinking - the Council represents everyone.</p>

	<p>speak to anyone. How can we put this forward to be heard?</p> <p>The Leisure Centre has cost a lot of money to regenerate, which the Tendring residents have contributed to. However, it is too expensive for pensioners to use. Could reduced membership be introduced to help?</p> <p>Transport in and out of Clacton can be expensive and the services aren't too good - what can be done?</p>	<p>TDC has a responsibility to provide a centre for fitness activities to benefit the local community and aid the health of the residents of the Tendring District. Over 50's appear to be the most active group at the Sports Centre</p> <p>TDC are proactively doing everything we can. We do rely on subsidies from various partners so this will take some time</p> <p>Cllr. D Lines invited Mr Brown to put forward some suggestions. There are 10 Cabinet Members in place to represent all groups - the Council and the District. The District Pensioners are represented</p>
<p>Mary Powell Bereaved, Widowed and Divorced Group</p>	<p>The Housing Benefit does not cover the Private Sector Rents. Please could TDC do something about Landlords overcharging?</p> <p>Private Rental Property is usually in poor condition and rents are high.</p> <p>What can be done to help people in terrible situations, where their benefit does not cover the rent and they have nothing?</p>	<p>Cllr. D Lines Unfortunately, TDC does not have authority over the Private Sector.</p> <p>Tendring sits in the most prosperous area, next to London. However, there is a housing shortage so Private Sector Landlords have a market. We need to raise the prosperity of the District and we also need to make representation to MPs.</p> <p>Cllr. R Bucke Property Rental Information is fed into the benefit system so organisations do keep up with the market trends. However, this does not include Rates</p> <p>Cllr. D Lines Will meet with M Powell directly after this meeting</p>

<p>Len Christodoulides Brightlingsea Rotary Club</p>	<p>Is it usual procedure to use the previous years' budget?</p> <p>Concessionary Fares; is the System a Guesstimate or an Actual?</p> <p>Have the employee numbers increased or decreased at TDC, now they have the additional area of licensing?</p>	<p>K Neath Yes. This is a Standard Budgetary Practice used in Local Authorities.</p> <p>K Neath informed that It is a combination of the two. We use the Actual in the current year up to June 2007 then we predict after this period</p> <p>R Barrett The emerging costs for 2007/08 are presently going through but they will be closely monitored</p> <p>J Hawkins We have approximately 650 staff which is the highest cost to the authority but in comparison to many other authorities it is very low. We have invested heavily in IT to reduce staff numbers but not to the detriment of service We utilise our staff well; if new skills are required that we do not have then we will acquire such individuals TDCs Policy is to deliver a first class service whilst keeping staff numbers to a minimum.</p>
<p>Hugh Morrison Family Support</p>	<p>Would I be correct in saying that it is not the Council's wish to elect an Older People's Champion?</p> <p>Holland-on-Sea has had major seafront issues. Do we have the budget to address these issues if and when they arise again?</p> <p>Holland-on-Sea no longer has a Residents Association. After today, it seems the Parish Council's may be the way forward. Would the</p>	<p>Cllr. D Lines There are already Champions in the 60 elected Members.</p> <p>Cllr. D Lines Yes we do, we use money from our Reserve. We do have challenges claiming back from the Government though. We will continue to push Government for funding and for support for all Coastal Towns</p> <p>The Holland-on-Sea Residents Association had two candidates returned to the Local Elections in this year so there is representation.</p>

	<p>Leader get involved as we feel Holland-on-Sea residents are not represented?</p> <p>The paving keeps coming up, the Contractor needs to be approached.</p> <p>In terms of Jaywick, I would like to request that the Leader of the Council move forward on this please. It needs Leadership and you have said you would do this today, so please take this forward</p>	<p>Cllr. D Lines Yes, I will, you have my support for the Parish Council Meetings</p> <p>This will be passed to ECC. You may also like to raise this with your Local Councillor</p> <p>Jaywick will be judged by actions - we have taken the first step</p>
--	--	--

File Reference: Financial Services: F:/NDR Consultations/Jan 2008/11 Jan 2008 Questions and Answers taken by JE