

Minutes

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

9th February 2011



Councillors	Present	Councillors	Present
J. Baugh	Yes	A. M. Meyer	Apologies
G. Cohen	Yes	R. Ramage	Yes
M. Dunn	Yes	D. E. A. Rice	Yes
Dr. R. L. Evans	Yes	A. F. Shelton	Yes
M. Gage (Chairman)	Yes	Mrs. J. Smith	Apologies
J. E. B. Gyford	Yes	F. Swallow	Apologies

Cllr. G. Butland the Leader of the Council was in attendance for item 5 of the Agenda regarding the final budget scrutiny session.

Officers Present: Mr. Trevor Wilson, Head of Finance
Mrs. Claire Thwaites, Marketing and Campaigns Manager

58. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr. G. Butland declared a personal interest in item 5 of the Agenda as he was a member of Essex County Council. He remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion.

59. QUESTION TIME

There were no questions asked or statements made.

60. MINUTES

DECISION: That the minutes of the meeting held on 26th January 2011 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

61. FINAL BUDGET SCRUTINY SESSION

The Committee had before it the Council Budget and Council Tax 2011/12 and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2011/12 to 2014/15 that was due to be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 14/2/11. An amended Appendix N General Fund Profile 2011/12 to 2014/15 was put round the table.

Cllr. Gage the Chairman welcomed Cllr. Butland and Officers to the final budget scrutiny session, and ran through the format for tonight's meeting. There would be an opening statement by Cllr. Butland the Leader, and then a presentation by Claire Thwaites concerning the results of the public consultation exercise into the budget proposals. There would then be an opportunity for the Committee to ask questions.

Cllr. Butland presented his opening statement and updated the Committee on changes that had taken place since the last budget scrutiny session. The Council had now received more detailed figures in respect of its allocation of government grant - in year 1 of the MTFs - 2011/12 - an additional £116,000 had been received, but in year 2 -2012/13 – £26,000 had been lost. These figures were reflected in the papers that the Committee had before it. However, yesterday the Council received notification that it had been allocated an additional £62,000 in 2012/13. The amended Appendix N General Fund Profile 2011/12 to 2014/15 incorporated this latest change which had in effect reduced the use of balances in 2012/13.

Further consideration had been given to the level of savings planned from shared services etc. and consequently the amount of savings had been reduced so that only those savings with a higher level of certainty of delivery would be included in the financial profile 2011/12 to 2014/15. Possible efficiency savings from shared services etc not now included in the financial profile would remain as efficiency targets.

Cllr. Butland also informed the Committee that he had met the Trade Union representatives this evening at the Joint Consultative Group to go through the budget proposals. The meeting had been very constructive. There are items that will need to be negotiated including changes to terms and conditions, but these are scheduled for 2012/13 which will give sufficient time for negotiations to take place with the Trades Unions.

Claire Thwaites then gave a powerpoint presentation highlighting the results of the budget public consultation exercise. A copy of the presentation is contained in the minutes.

Question by Cllr. M. Dunn

Who chose the spending options included in the public survey?

Answer by Claire Thwaites

These were based on the Cabinet's initial budget proposals.

Question by Cllr. D. Rice

Have you consulted with Officers on the budget proposals?

Answer by Claire Thwaites

There has been extensive involvement with Officers throughout the budgetary process, and opportunities made for Officers to give feedback. The Trades Unions have also been very involved.

Question by Cllr. Dr. R. Evans

Do you feel the 1290 surveys returned by households representing a response rate of 2% of the general population, is a sufficient basis on which to gauge public opinion on the budget proposals?

Answer by Claire Thwaites

The number of 1290 is statistically a valid sample to work from, and the results are almost

identical to feedback received from the Place Survey, and the People's Panel.

The People's Panel is very representative of the District in terms of age, demographics etc. and the feedback from that Group (47% response rate) was very similar to the responses returned by households.

Question by Cllr. J. Gyford

I understand that the structure of the People's Panel is designed to be representative. Do we know what the make-up of the respondents was – is that equally representative or is there a bias amongst the respondents that makes them less representative than the Panel as a whole?

Answer by Claire Thwaites

We have looked at the analysis of the People's Panel respondents and, apart from some small variations, they are broadly representative of the Panel as a whole.

Cllr. Dr. R. Evans

At Cabinet on 7/12/10, we were furnished with a draft summary of budget proposals indicating 18 separate items. However, the survey only included 13 questions – can you explain the difference?

Answer by Claire Thwaites

Some of the proposals were amalgamated into a single question on the survey. We did not include a specific question about the proposed cessation of funding to the Rural Community Council for Essex as it was felt that this would not have much meaning to the public and that it was more important to get the views of the Parish/Town Councils on that particular issue.

Question by Cllr. D. Rice

Was any time frame shown for the proposal to reduce the number of Councillors given that we have District elections this year?

Answer by Claire Thwaites

We made it clear in the survey that this particular proposal would be something that the Boundary Commission would ultimately be responsible for considering.

Cllr. Gage thanked Claire for her very helpful presentation and for answering the Committee's questions.

Cllr. Butland then resumed his opening statement. He referred to Cllr. Rice's earlier question concerning consultation, and highlighted that Appendix K in the budget papers summarised the consultation responses from the Trades Unions, and mentioned also that consultation meetings had been held by the Chief Executive and his Managers with staff. All staff resident in the District would also have been able to respond to the household survey if they so wished.

He also referred to Cllr. Evan's earlier question concerning the number of survey forms returned and hoped that the Committee would accept that the number returned was a statistically valid number.

Cllr. Butland highlighted that as a result of the consultation exercise there were four areas in respect of which the original proposals for savings had been reconsidered as follows:-

- Cemetery chapels and toilets are now proposed to remain open, but grounds maintenance in the cemeteries will be reduced;
- The Community Transport Service is now proposed to be expanded by transferring to that service the budget of £10,000 that would be saved through the stopping of the travel token scheme;
- The cessation of £20,000 funding of the Rural Community Council for Essex was now proposed to be delayed until 2012/13 to enable the completion of 12 parish plans;
- It was now proposed to continue with the:-
 - * Community Wellbeing programme, but with assistance being given to enable the programme to move towards a self-managed basis;
 - * Activity days scheme for children;
 - * Health policy work until 31/12/12 by match funding the additional funds offered by the Primary Care Trust.

The revised schedule of saving proposals was set out in Appendix D of the budget papers.

Cllr. Butland also informed the Committee that it was the intention of the Cabinet to establish an 'Enterprising Communities Fund' of £250,000 which will be financed from reserves. Consultations will be undertaken with partners and the voluntary sector concerning the details of how the fund will operate. In outline, the purpose of the fund will be to provide money to 'seed corn' initiatives to enable voluntary groups to take over either assets or services currently administered by the Council, on the basis that there will be some benefit to the Council (and the Tax Payers of the District) either through financial saving or by a better service, or a combination of both.

In conclusion, Cllr. Butland felt that the Cabinet's budget proposals were sensible, and that from the public consultation they appeared to be generally acceptable. He also felt that the Cabinet had responded on those proposals that had generated a significant number of comments. The Cabinet has also looked at how it could help local communities to move forward and take more responsibility and decision making locally. This had all been done against a background of not proposing any Council Tax increase for two years. There would also be no increase in fees and charges for the next two years apart from charges that the Council administers for others or the extra 2.5% increase on VAT (car park charges, however, will not increase for two years). There will also be no significant impact on frontline services.

Cllr. Butland indicated that the proposed budget could not have been achieved without the hard work of all Officers at all levels looking at ways in which we could provide services more effectively and efficiently, and wished to record his thanks to staff for their efforts.

Question by Cllr. Gyford

The Council is committed to no increase in its Council Tax for two years and will receive an additional grant from the Government equivalent to the sum that would have been raised if the Council had increased its 2010-11 Council Tax by 2.5%, but does this additional funding continue into the 3rd and 4th years regardless of whether the Council continues its Tax freeze into those years or does it cease if the Council ends the Tax freeze after year 2?

Is there any clawback mechanism if the Council Tax is raised after year 2?

Answer by Cllr. G. Butland/Trevor Wilson

The grant of £217,516 that will be received by the Council in each of the years 2011-12 to 2014/15 will not be affected if the Council decides to increase the Council Tax in 2013/14 and 2014/15.

We are not aware of any clawback mechanism should the Council Tax be raised in 2013/14 or 2014/15.

Question by Cllr. J. Baugh

In respect of the New Homes grant, is there any possibility of frontloading (similar to the way the cuts have been frontloaded) into the budget the estimated sum of £500,000 per annum that is expected over the next four years specifically bearing in mind the ravages of inflation?

Answer by Cllr. G. Butland

It will not be frontloaded. We are still awaiting the details of the scheme. It will require homes to be actually built before the Council receives the grant.

Question by Cllr. Gyford

To some extent, the Council is proposing to slow down the speed at which it deals with planning applications. That factor and the speed of completion of new homes will to some degree be working against one another on the margins. We are not embracing the 8 week target for processing planning applications as enthusiastically as we might have been previously. Can you comment?

Answer by Cllr. G. Butland

Most of the 8 week applications are unlikely to include significant developments. They are more likely to be those that come under the 13 week target.

Clearly, if you are slowing the process down there may be some impact on the margins.

However, the New Homes grant is based on completions and that will be very much dependent on how quickly developers implement the planning permissions that are granted.

I feel we are correct not to rely on that in terms of our revenue, because that would be an extremely dangerous approach. We will not be a hostage to fortune should any building recovery take longer than expected.

Question by Cllr. M. Dunn

There is reference in the budget papers to an allowance being provided for the 1% increase in Employers National Insurance contributions from April 2011, but I thought that had been abolished by the current Government?

Answer by Trevor Wilson

No. The increase still applies, but the Government have put in some compensatory adjustments to soften the blow.

Question by Cllr. R. Ramage

Reference is made in the budget papers (Appendix F) that for Community Transport there is a reduced budget due to predicted underspend during 2010/11 with a saving in 2011/12 of £10,000, but we are adding in an extra £10,000 from savings in 2011/12 on the travel token scheme. Can you explain this?

Answer by Trevor Wilson/Cllr. G. Butland

This is a separate item. The budget for the past couple of years has not been fully utilised so it is felt that it could be reduced. It is a management saving. The net impact of the input of the £10,000 from the savings from the travel token scheme will be that there is no reduction. The key to expanding the Community Transport Scheme will be if we can get more volunteer drivers. I understand the recent response to recruiting more drivers has been encouraging.

At this point, Cllr. Gage invited the Committee to ask questions on the total budget as contained in the budget papers.

Question by Cllr. G. Cohen

As regards the General Fund Revenue Profile, in November last year the base budget was £18.9m, but in the new revised profile (Appendix N) the figure is £17.9m. Can you clarify how you arrive at that figure of £17.9?

Answer by Trevor Wilson

The major change going into 2011/12 is that responsibility for concessionary fares has been passed over to Essex County Council. The Government grant that we are currently paid for concessionary fares has been reduced for 2011/12. The costs (just under £1m) that are paid to us by Essex County Council for running the scheme on its behalf are included in the £18.9m, but have been taken out of the base budget in 2011/12.

Cllr. Dr. R. Evans

1. Reference is made in the budget papers to provision being made for incremental progression for those Officers that are not at the top of their salary grade. Does this apply to blue collar workers as well?

2. As regards the proposed reduction of Councillors to 40, what criteria are we using to decide the number of Councillors for the District?

Answer by Cllr. G. Butland

1. Yes. All staff not at the top of their salary grade will receive an incremental progression.
2. For the size of the District, it is a suggestion that 40 members in single Member wards might be more appropriate, but that is not a saving that is within this budget. However, the Boundary Commission would be responsible for carrying out a review

Question by Cllr. M. Gage

How confident are you that the Council will be able to achieve the nil increase in the level of Council Tax for two years?

Answer by Cllr. G. Butland

I am very confident that we will be able to achieve that aim.

Question by Cllr. M. Gage

Can the Committee be reassured that there will be sufficient regulation and monitoring of the financial performance through the coming two years, and that the mechanisms are robust enough to ensure that that happens?

Answer by Cllr. G. Butland

Yes. I would make the point that there is still a lot more work to be done. Over the next four years we have to find those savings and efficiencies that we have put in the report, and so there is going to be a constant and rigorous evaluation. I feel that the proposed budget does make a coherent approach and does stand for a fair degree of rigorous scrutiny in terms of some of the assumptions that are made.

As regards the programmes and timescales that are set out, this is an area that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may wish to follow in a very proactive manner.

Question by Cllr. M. Gage

One of the Council's priorities is to build a certain number of affordable houses over the next four years. Do you feel confident that we are going to achieve those figures given the challenges of the comprehensive spending review?

Answer by Cllr. G. Butland

There are some concerns over whether we will reach the target for building affordable housing bearing in mind that we are not actually building the properties ourselves, and that we need developers to implement planning permissions for sites that involve affordable housing. From the Council's point of view, the New Homes Bonus should help to encourage affordable housing. I believe also that in some of the rural areas there is a changing view that Parish Councils would like a limited amount of affordable housing to keep younger people and life in the villages, and that is encouraging. We all hope that as the economy improves the building industry will pick up, but the number of affordable

houses will continue to be a challenge for us.

Question by Cllr. Gyford

As regards Appendix E page 12 of the budget papers regarding rationalising governance arrangements and in connection with the abolition of the Local Committees, you indicate that a replacement would be developed as part of the Neighbourhood Budget pilot. Can you clarify what is meant by Neighbourhood Budget pilot?

Answer by Cllr. G. Butland

The Government has been interested in introducing budgets which bring together the resources of all the areas. In this respect, we are working with Essex County Council on a Neighbourhood Budget pilot which will involve Parish and Town Councils, to bring together the resources within a particular area to see how they might be used more effectively. The Assistant Chief Executive is the District Council's lead Officer on this initiative and she is working with Officers at the County Council. The Officer spoke very briefly about this at the recent Members Training evening.

If this initiative develops, we will need to think of the governance arrangements. There is not a framework for this at the moment. The County Council is proposing to abolish its Area Forums. The governance arrangements for the Neighbourhood/Community Budget pilot will need to provide, for example, how elected members make an input. If there is a real commitment to take this initiative forward the Neighbourhood/Community budget will enable decisions to be made at a local level concerning the spending of substantial sums of money.

Question by Cllr. Gyford

As regards Appendix E page 12 of the budget papers regarding rationalising governance arrangements and in connection with the merging of the functions of the Overview and Scrutiny, Audit and Standards Committees to create a single Governance Committee, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has for many years complained about what it sees as inadequate resourcing of its functions and that is by no means unrelated to its staffing resources. My concern would be that this new arrangement would exacerbate that situation. In the impact on staffing, it indicates reductions and says proposed structure attached, but I have not been able to find that structure. What are the exact staffing implications for the carrying out of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny functions specifically, because my fear is that this merger may imply in effect the death of Overview and Scrutiny in this Council.

Would you please comment?

Answer by Cllr. G. Butland

This issue was considered at the Local Government Reform Cabinet Sub Group (LGRCSG) at its meeting on 7/2/11. As initial research had not produced an overwhelming case for a Governance Committee it was agreed to set up a Working Group comprising of five members – two Members from the Local Government Reform Cabinet Sub Group, the Chairmen of the Audit and Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the Leader of the opposition or his nominee – to undertake further work. The Working Group is due to report back to the LGRCSG at its meeting in April and I would expect that the issue of resources would be one of the items that the Working Group would examine. A final report will be

submitted to the Council's AGM on 26/5/11.

I understand your concerns and do not want to see the death or downgrading of overview and scrutiny, but we need to await the outcome of the work of the Working Group.

Question by Cllr. R. Ramage

As regards staff redundancies, has the latest grant settlement figures had any further impact on the number of redundancies?

Answer by Cllr. G. Butland

Appendix M page 94 of the budget papers sets out the predicted impact upon staff through the full 4 year period. Redundancies and retirements are broken down into the various tiers of staff. The numbers involved are quite small compared to many other authorities, but I would point out that the starting point for this authority is quite different to many others. However, we still feel that we can work more efficiently and effectively, and there will have to be some redundancies.

We will endeavour to be a good employer and help those staff move on.

Question by Cllr. J. Gyford

As regards the items in Appendix E – Budget Saving Proposals, each of the proposals contains a separate heading for Risks, but there seems to be a variety of understandings or assumptions about what is meant by risk. In some cases, the risks that are being identified are the risks of not being able to get the proposed changes adopted. Some of the other risks identified are what would be the risks if the policy was not adopted, and other risks identified are what might be the risks of actually adopting the policy.

There appear to be different understandings of what the risks are that are being identified.

I am not clear as to why all the different understandings are not addressed simultaneously?

Answer by Cllr. G. Butland

These assessments have been prepared by Managers and in hindsight it may be that the guidance needed to be more prescriptive as to the definitions/categories of risk that Managers needed to address to ensure a more uniform approach. We will look at this for future years.

Question by Cllr. Dr. R. Evans

As regards Appendix C (Summary of Bids for Additional Resources), there are one off costs (£250,000 in 11/12) to assist statutory and voluntary organisations to provide services locally.

Can you comment on who these voluntary organisations might be?

Answer by Cllr. G. Butland

The title of the fund 'Enterprising Communities Fund' means that they may be existing community organisations, or they may be new groups of people who come together to take

on a service or asset. Any group would need to have a clear aim and view of what it wanted to do, and the Council would want to look at the sustainability of any projects that are proposed. The fund would provide 'seed corn' money, and the Council would expect any proposed project to be accompanied by a proper business plan. I would not expect the fund to be used up in year 1, but to be utilised over a number of years. If there are financial savings to the Council as a result of any project, I feel such monies should be invested back into the fund.

The details and the protocols of the fund need to be worked out as part of the discussions that we have with other agencies.

Question by Cllr. M. Gage

Are the Town Centre Strategy Panels proposed for abolition?

Answer by Cllr. G. Butland

My understanding is that the Town Centre Strategy Panels are not part of the Council, but we do contribute £1000 per annum to each of them to assist with funding. The funding is included in the 2011/12 budget.

Question by Cllr. A. Shelton

In respect of Appendix D, the item relating to Member Services (Rural Policy and Development) refers to mainstreaming rural issues and engage with rural communities through a new locality model, can you explain what that means?

Answer by Cllr. G. Butland

It is at an embryonic stage, but we held a meeting with Parish and Town Councils in November and there is another meeting scheduled for the end of March. We are looking at how we can progress and mature the relationship between Parish and Town Councils and District Councils, and what areas Parish and Town Councils might be particularly interested in becoming involved. We recognise that the degree of involvement may vary according to the size of the Parish. We also want to look at whether some Parish/Town Councils might themselves want to take on services on behalf of other Parish Councils and provide them across Parish boundaries. There is also the wider aspect of the Community/Neighbourhood Budget pilot with Essex County Council which will also involve the Parish/Town Councils. That is where I believe the rural issues will become mainstream because these new locality models could develop into quite powerful action orientated bodies.

The County Council are keen to work with the District Council and the Parish and Town Councils on these models because Braintree District has a good mix of urban and rural areas.

Consideration would also be given as to the most appropriate governance arrangements for these models involving all three tiers of local government.

Question by Cllr. Gyford

As regards benefits and welfare advice, my recollection is that the role of the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) was previously raised together with the issue of the service level

agreement with the CAB. Could you tell us whether discussions have been taking place with the CAB and what the likely outcome will be given that CABs are suffering approximately a 40% reduction in grant.

Answer by Cllr. G. Butland

There is no change in terms of our financial support for the CABs. There may potentially be an opportunity to look at the rationalisation of buildings given that in Braintree, for instance, both the CAB and the Braintree District Voluntary Services Agency are not ideally located, and it would be helpful to provide a 'one stop shop' for both these bodies to provide better access by the public.

Question by Cllr. R. Ramage

As regards Braintree Museum, on page 23 of the first part of the budget papers under Balances and Reserves there is reference to a movement of £50,000 in respect of a grant to Braintree Museum Trust in 2010/11. Can you provide an update of negotiations with Colchester and Ipswich Councils concerning the future of the Museum?

Answer by Cllr. G. Butland

There are real challenges with the Museum and the Warner Archive. The cost to the Council is approximately £200,000 per annum, and there are also some complex legal issues.

The £50,000 grant was necessary to keep the Museum afloat in 2010/11.

We do need to find a resolution to the Museum.

Colchester and Ipswich Councils have been considering what part they might play. I have also been in contact with the County Cabinet Member for Libraries and Arts. We are soon to have a round table discussion with the County Council and Colchester and Ipswich Councils, the Braintree Museum Trustee Board and representatives of BDC to examine ways in which we may be able to move forward.

Question by Cllr. R. Ramage

I cannot find any reference in the budget papers to Business Development Services (BDS). It provides a very valuable service to business start ups.

Can you comment?

Answer by Cllr. G. Butland

BDS has been very successful in encouraging business start ups, and giving advice etc., and is currently housed in BDC accommodation at The Corner House, Market Square, Braintree. We contribute approximately £40,000 per annum to the funding of BDS.

Braintree Enterprise Acorn Units organisation (BEAU) based in Springwood Drive is an independent company with three Directors appointed by the Council and three independent Directors. Ideally, we would like to bring these organisations together so that BDS in terms of its business development etc would then also have management of the small industrial units. It would provide an income stream for BDS as well, and we think it would address

more effectively the continuing problems of how you move the starter businesses on to their next stage of premises.

Cllr. Harley has had discussions with the independent Directors of BEAU about the future. Although previous attempts to combine BDS and BEAU have not been successful, we hope that the proposal will be better received this time.

Question by Cllr. Dr. R. Evans

As regards Appendix N, why do the total savings over the next four years appear to exceed our Government grant shortfall for that period?

Answer by Cllr. G. Butland

The Government grant is reducing, but costs are still increasing. For example, a 2% increase in pay for both 2013/14 and 2014/15 has been built into the figures. At the same time, there are also incremental increases in pay which will have an impact.

From the budget papers, you will see that there will be some increases or assumptions made in terms of increased energy costs, motor fuel costs, general inflation etc.

Therefore, costs still increase, but grant goes down so you do not have a situation where total savings match exactly government grant shortfall.

We will provide members of the Council with a simple graphical explanation to make this more understandable.

Action Point

Trevor Wilson in association with the Leader to provide and circulate this graphical explanation.

Question by Cllr. J. Baugh

As regards the New Homes Bonus, do you know if work/life units would come under the criteria of a new home?

Answer by Cllr. G. Butland

We do not have that level of detail at the present time.

Question by Cllr. G. Cohen

Since the Green Heart campaign has been sufficiently successful to be extended for one year only, should it not become permanent?

Answer by Cllr. G. Butland

When we introduced the campaign, we did say that it would be undertaken for two years. At the end of year 2 we will consider whether or not the money that has been invested has made a difference, and whether the campaign should be continued.

Question by Cllr. R. Ramage

Do you anticipate that the County Council's recently announced budget cuts will have any impact on the District Council's services?

Answer by Cllr. G. Butland

There are some individual proposals which will have an impact on this District, and some of these are out to consultation including one on recycling facilities. We will want to look very closely at library services from the point of view of other services that are provided from libraries and what would be the impact on those.

At the end of the question and answer session, the Chairman invited Cllr. G. Butland to make a closing statement.

Cllr. Butland informed the Committee that Officers and the Cabinet had been working on the budget proposals since June last year. The proposed budget was not without risk and there were savings built in that have yet to be found, but the Cabinet had been prudent in its expectations from those projected savings. It does mean that the Council will be using some balances in the early years. Cllr. Butland indicated that the proposed budget showed that the Council was still investing in services, and that it would have a significant capital programme to help improve the infrastructure of the District which in turn would help to generate jobs. He felt that there were a number of extremely good questions at tonight's budget scrutiny session, and hoped that the Committee will have found the budget documentation and the answers provided to Members questions reasonably clear and helpful. Cabinet Members have all had to attend the Committee and explain and answer questions on their budgets. The timescales have been elongated this year because of the late receipt of the Government grant, but the administration had tried to be as open and transparent in compiling the budget.

In reviewing the budget scrutiny process, there was a general consensus that the format for this year with groups of Cabinet Members attending the Committee and providing written answers to the set questions, had worked well and that individual Cabinet Members had been better informed and focused. It was also felt that the Cabinet had been open and transparent in its formulation of its budget proposals. The format of the documentation that had set out the Cabinet's full draft budget and which had been the subject of tonight's scrutiny, was particularly well laid out and understandable, and the Committee commended the Cabinet and Officers for producing these budget documents in such a well thought out manner.

In conclusion, Cllr. Gage thanked Cllr. Butland and Trevor Wilson for attending tonight's session and for providing full answers to Members questions.

62. DECISION PLANNER – 17/1/11 TO 31/5/11

Members received the four month Decision Planner for the above period.

DECISION: that the contents of the Decision Planner be received and noted.

The meeting closed at 9.10pm.

M. Gage
Chairman

Your Council
tell us what matters to you

Your Say

Your Council Your Say Survey Method



- Survey in Contact Magazine (Dec/Jan) - 64,000 households
- Mailing to People's Panel - 420 people
- Emailings/ Letters to

Parishes

Schools

Equality groups and community groups

Funeral directors/Ministers

Partners

Travel token users

Leisure/Sports Clubs

Promoted online and in the press

Your Council Your Say - Method



- 64,000 households- population
- Total sample returned : 1290
- 1093 general population/197 People's Panel
- Response rate :
 - General population : 2%
 - People's Panel : 47%
- 95% confidence levels and +/-2.7% margin of error

Your Council Your Say – All results

1290 surveys from Contact Magazine. Including Peoples Panel

Proposal	Agree %	Disagree %	Neither Agree or Disagree %
Reduce allowances for councillors/merge committees	95%	3%	2%
Reduce our reception and call centre hours	90%	6%	3%
Reduce Contact Magazine	89% (57% x 1 issue 32% x 2 issues)	1% (stop completely)	n/a
Reduce number of councillors	84%	8%	7%
No increase in council tax	74%	17%	7%
Move to cashless payments	74%	19%	6%
Stop Travel Tokens	71%	17%	10%
Stop Benefits Surgeries	66%	22%	10%
Changes to Planning service	63%	22%	14%
Close chapels and toilets in cemeteries	54%	35%	10%
Generate greener energy with wind turbine	51%	33%	15%
Find premises for Halstead Senior Citizens/close hall	39%	43%	17%
Stop funding for leisure/sports activities	31%	58%	10%

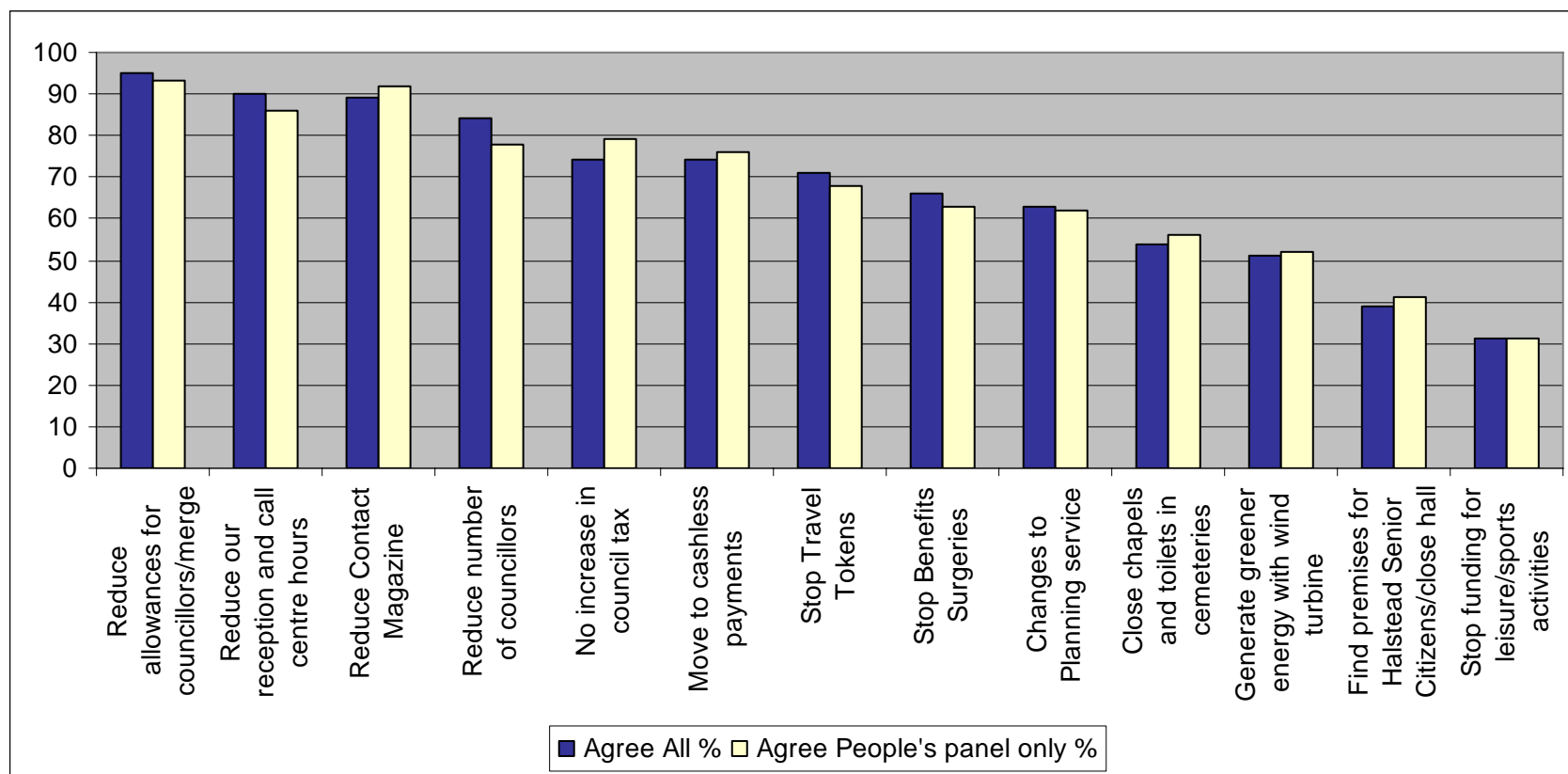
Your Council Your Say People's Panel



Peoples Panel results – 197 surveys

Proposal	Agree %	Disagree %	Neither Agree or Disagree %
Reduce allowances for councillors/merge committees	93%	3%	3%
Reduce Contact Magazine	92% (54% x 1 issue 38% x 2 issues)	2% (stop completely)	1%
Reduce our reception and call centre hours	86%	10%	3%
Reduce number of councillors	78%	10%	10%
No increase in council tax	79%	15%	4%
Move to cashless payments	76%	18%	4%
Stop Travel Tokens	68%	22%	8%
Changes to Planning service	63%	19%	17%
Stop Benefits Surgeries	62%	23%	13%
Generate greener energy with wind turbine	56%	27%	15%
Close chapels and toilets in cemeteries	52%	31%	16%
Find premises for Halstead Senior Citizens/close hall	41%	41%	17%
Stop funding for leisure/sports activities	31%	52%	15%

All respondents v People's Panel respondents



From Partners/Stakeholders...



- RCCE funding/post 9 letters from 5 parishes
1 from RCCE
- Walks for Wellbeing 48 emails (1 from PCT)
- Health Walks 23 letters (1 from 13 walk leaders)
1 meeting + petition to cabinet and council
- Sports Development 6 emails, 4 letters from clubs
- Travel Tokens 8 emails, 5 letters,
- Halstead CC 7 emails/letters (1 from CAB), piece in
HG
- Chapels/toilets 1 ltr from Funeral Director/3 ltrs Vicars