



meeting OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

date 19<sup>th</sup> January 2009

agenda item number

## **REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR – FINANCE**

### **CONSULTATION ON BUDGET PROPOSALS 2009/10**

#### **1. Purpose of the report**

- 1.1 To outline to Members the various strands of consultation that have taken place in formulating the budget for 2009/10 and to invite the Committee to comment upon the processes, and make recommendations to Cabinet, for consideration when finalising the budget proposals that Cabinet will then recommend to full Council.

#### **2. Background**

- 2.1 During the preparation of the County Council budget a wide range of partners and stakeholders are consulted and each year these arrangements are subject to scrutiny. This report highlights the arrangements that have been adopted in respect of the 2009/10 budget consultation and requests the Committee to make comments on these. It is not the purpose of this scrutiny review to consider the content of the budget as that debate will take place at full Council on 26<sup>th</sup> February. The review focuses on the style, coverage and content of the consultation processes.

#### **3. Consultations prior to Cabinet in December 2008**

- 3.1 In previous years the Council has adopted a variety of means of consulting the public and other stakeholders before making the first budget recommendations at the December Cabinet meeting. This has included focus groups, online surveys, MORI surveys, staff seminars and newspaper articles each of which have had varying degrees of success but generally fairly limited responses. In 2008 the budget consultation process for the first time utilised the facilities of the Nottinghamshire Listens citizen's panel and in the autumn of last year questionnaires were sent to over 6,000 consultees randomly selected by our partner organisation IPSOS/MORI. A copy of the questionnaire is attached for information as **Appendix A**. The response to the questionnaire was significant, with over 3,300 residents responding – a response rate of 55%. The view from our partners MORI indicate that this response rate to a questionnaire focused primarily on budget issues is surprisingly high and this would suggest that we can place a high degree of confidence in the views that have been expressed.

- 3.2 The outcomes of this consultation were reported to Cabinet on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2008 and an extract from that report is **Appendix B**. The highlight results from the survey were that 30% of those who responded would be prepared to pay a slightly higher (1%) Council Tax in order to pay for new services, and 42% would be prepared to pay a higher Council tax to avoid reductions in current services. In the majority of cases most respondents felt that the Council spends “about the right amount” on the services we provide. There were a small number of services where the public felt that the Council spent “too much” which included School transport, services for adults with learning disabilities, Children’s Social Care and the Library service. There were also another range of services where the public felt we should spend more and over 25% of respondents felt the Council should spend more on the following services:
- Developing the local economy and jobs
  - Community safety
  - Adults with mental health needs
  - Supporting Schools to improve pupil achievement
  - Highways maintenance
  - Public Transport
  - County parks, Arts and sports
  - Youth Service
  - Older people’s social care
  - Traffic management and road safety
- 3.3 In previous years Members of Scrutiny have commented on the presentation of survey questions and the range of services selected for comment. This year we have attempted to reflect all of the major services provided by the Council and have given respondents the opportunity to comment positively i.e. “spend more” or negatively i.e. “spend less” in respect of all service areas. It is considered that this provides the public with a wider opportunity to express their preferences.
- 3.4 In addition to the MORI survey an identical survey was included in the autumn addition of County News. This was part of a financial centre spread which reported on the 2007/8 final accounts as well as seeking views on the 2009/10 budget. A copy of the report and questionnaire is available as a background paper. The response rate to this questionnaire was somewhat disappointing with only 262 people responding even though the questionnaire was sent to all households in the County. Next year it is proposed that we should include a reply paid enveloped with the questionnaire and consider having some form of modest inducement to respond by way of a prize draw.
- 3.5 The same survey was also included on the County Council Internet site and visitors to that site were signposted from the homepage to the questionnaire. Again the participation was low with only 38 responses.
- 3.6 This clearly demonstrates that by far the most successful way of canvassing public opinion is through specifically targeted survey questionnaire. Given the low response rate to the County News questionnaire and the online questionnaire the analysis of the findings were combined and were also included in the report to Cabinet in December and which is appended to this report.

- 3.7 Last year the MORI survey questionnaire was sent to representatives of the business community who had previously requested an earlier involvement in the budget process. However, as only one organisation responded last year this part of the consultation process was not repeated. Instead we continue to meet formally with representatives of the business community and a meeting was held on the 12<sup>th</sup> January where representatives were invited to County Hall to comment on the proposals contained in the December Cabinet report.
- 3.8 The consultation on budget issues was the subject of a specific press release – see **Appendix C**. This led to some coverage in the local press.
- 3.9 The survey was also sent to Clerks to Parish Councils, a new addition to the consultation process and responses were included in the County News analysis.

#### **4. Consultations post Cabinet in December**

- 4.1 The report that was agreed at the 17<sup>th</sup> December Cabinet meeting has been widely circulated to partner organisations and other stakeholders seeking responses. The deadline for responses was 16<sup>th</sup> January and thus at the time of writing it was not possible to include these in this report. However, an oral update will be provided at the meeting.

The December report was sent to the formal representatives of the business community and also to a wide range of business contacts in the County. The formal statutory meeting with the representatives of the business community took place on the 12<sup>th</sup> January and the main points that arose will be reported to the committee.

- 4.2 Following the precedent set last year we have also consulted with all of the partner organisations in the Local Area Agreement – see sample letter at **Appendix D**. A similar letter was sent to all of the Nottinghamshire MP's.
- 4.3 For the first time this year, and in response to a suggestion at the Overview Committee last year, we have also circulated the budget proposals to Parish Councils and an update of responses will be provided at the meeting.
- 4.4 Consultation with the Trade Unions had taken place at the Formal Corporate Joint Forum in December and there have also been local discussions at departmental level regarding the specific departmental items. Letters were also sent to the Trade Unions enclosing the December report.
- 4.5 There was some press coverage arising from the budget proposals and an item was also included in the January edition of Team Briefing which is circulated to all staff.
- 4.6 All Corporate Directors have engaged in discussions or correspondence with key stakeholders and service users and whilst the list below is not exhaustive it indicates the type and range of organisations contacted:
- Primary Care Trusts
  - Supporting People Partnership
  - Learning Disability Partnership
  - Nottingham Regeneration Limited

- Nottingham Development Enterprise
- Job Centre Plus
- Arts Council
- Other local voluntary organisations
- Children's Services Executive Group
- Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children's Board
- Nottinghamshire Children and Young People's Partnership Board

- 4.7 In regard to schools budgets separate letters have been sent to all Head Teachers and all Chairs of Governing bodies informing them of the changes to the Dedicated Schools Grant. The distribution of this funding is determined by the County Council with advice from the Schools Forum.

## **5. Statutory and Policy Implications**

This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, personnel, crime and disorder, human rights and those using the relevant service. Where such implications are material they have been described in the text of the report.

## **6. Recommendation**

- 6.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the consultation process and offers advice to Cabinet.

**ALAN SUMBY**  
**SERVICE DIRECTOR FINANCE**

**Background paper available for inspection**  
**Report to Cabinet dated 17<sup>th</sup> December 2008 re Annual Budget**  
**Extract from Autumn County News**

# APPENDIX A

## Budget Questionnaire



**Nottinghamshire  
Listens**  
shaping the future of your services



**Nottinghamshire  
County Council**

**Ipsos MORI**

NAME  
ADDRESS 1  
ADDRESS 2  
ADDRESS 3  
ADDRESS 4  
ADDRESS 5  
POSTCODE

## Nottinghamshire Listens: Budget Consultation

Dear Panel Member

October 2008

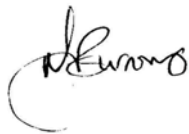
You may recall a recent letter thanking you for joining 'Nottinghamshire Listens'. This is a panel of Nottinghamshire residents who have agreed to help local councils by offering their views on issues affecting their area. The panel is organised by Nottinghamshire County Council with the assistance of Ipsos MORI, the opinion research agency. Thank you for taking part in the surveys we have sent you over the past few months, we very much value your time and input.

This time we are writing to you to ask for your views on how much we spend on different council services, and if you are prepared to pay a little more to increase or maintain existing services. We also want to determine which services are most important to you, as well as those you feel are less important. There are also a few questions about our recent A to Z guide and the County Council's newspaper *County News*. It is important that we hear your views. It will only take about 10 minutes to complete the survey.

Once you have completed the survey, please return it to Ipsos MORI in the FREEPOST envelope provided by **Friday, 7 November 2008**. You do not need a stamp.

We would like to reassure you that your comments and suggestions will remain strictly confidential. Ipsos MORI guarantees that only they will see your completed questionnaire. **Feedback from this survey will be published in the Nottinghamshire Listens newsletter as well as in your council newsletter.**

If you have any problems reading or understanding this questionnaire, please call Rachel Joseph at Ipsos MORI on 020 7347 3916 or you can send an email to [rachel.joseph@ipsos-mori.com](mailto:rachel.joseph@ipsos-mori.com). We would like to take this opportunity to thank you once again for your help.



Mick Burrows  
Chief Executive  
Nottinghamshire County Council

## **Budget Consultation**

### **Introduction**

This year (2008 – 09) the services that Nottinghamshire County Council pays for will cost £453m. An additional £420m is spent on schools, but this is funded directly by a grant from central government.

Councillors are now beginning to think about future spending priorities and are keen to try and keep Council Tax increase to just 3% this year.

However, you've seen the prices you pay for food, lighting and fuel go up – well it's been costing the Council more too.

We've experienced rising energy costs in our buildings. The Council runs services from over 500 buildings across the County including offices, libraries, residential homes and youth centres.

We're also paying more for street lighting, fuel costs and highway maintenance materials. Plus we've seen the costs for the food we serve in schools, day centres and residential homes go up.

In the next year we have to spend more money to meet the rising demand for social care services for some of the most vulnerable people in our society - older people and adults with a physical disability, learning disability or mental health issues and we'll be giving greater financial support to independent sector residential care homes.

### **You said - we did**

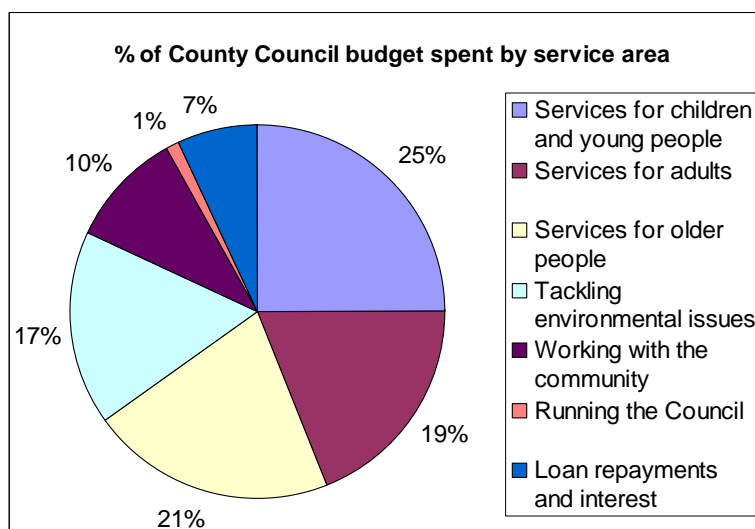
Last year we asked *you* about which County Council services you wanted us to invest in. You said:

- creating new facilities and activities for young people outside school
- increasing maintenance of roads and footpaths
- investing more in extra care housing schemes for older people

### **So we:**

- invested an additional £1.3m over two years on schemes and projects to support children and young people outside of school, plus we're building 5 new youth centres in the County
- invested an extra £900,000 and created a new taskforce to help us to respond more quickly to public reports of problems on roads and footpaths. We also spent more money on general maintenance and improving drainage on roads and footpaths - so they can better cope during heavy rainfall and help alleviate flooding
- reviewed the way we provide care for older people, and we're investing in new extra care complexes. We also allocated an extra £1.5m a year which allowed us to relax the assessment criteria for older people receiving homecare to include people with moderate needs. An extra 500 people have received homecare this year.

The following chart shows a break-down of how Nottinghamshire County Council's budget is currently spent by service area.



**We would like your views**

Nottinghamshire County Council is planning to increase Council Tax next year by approximately 3%. If the Council were to increase Council Tax by a further 1% (about 17p per week on a Band B property) this would bring in an extra £2.9m per year.

Q1. Would you be prepared to pay the additional 1% increase on your Council Tax to pay for new or additional services? PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY

Yes ☐

No ☐

Don't know ☐

Q2. Would you be prepared to pay the additional 1% increase on your Council Tax to avoid services being cut? PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY

Yes ☐

No ☐

Don't know ☐

The majority of homes in Nottinghamshire are in Council Tax bands A or B. The table overleaf shows the annual cost of a range of County Council services, based on council tax band B.



Q3. **Please tell us if you think we spend too much, too little or the right amount for each of these services? PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ON EACH ROW**

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE FIGURES IN THE SHADED COLUMN REPRESENT THE AMOUNT OF COUNCIL TAX FOR A BAND B PROPERTY WHICH GOES TOWARDS FUNDING EACH OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED BY NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

	Cost per band B property (£)	Too much	Right amount	Not enough	Don't know
<b>Services for children and young people</b>					
Children's social care	102	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supporting schools to improve pupil achievement	12	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Managing school buildings and pupil admissions	8	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth service	12	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School transport	21	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Services for adults</b>					
Adults with mental health needs	16	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adults with a physical disability or sensory impairment	39	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adults with learning disabilities	104	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Services for older people</b>					
Older people's social care	185	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Tackling environmental issues</b>					
Waste disposal	44	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Traffic management and road safety	9	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Street lighting	11	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Highways maintenance	52	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public transport	23	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Working with the community</b>					
Trading standards	8	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Library service	31	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community safety	9	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Developing the local economy and jobs	7	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Country parks, sports and arts	9	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q4. **Of the services listed, please choose the three that are most important to you?**  
PLEASE TICK UP TO THREE BOXES IN THE FIRST COLUMN

Q5. **And of the services listed, please choose the three that are least important to you? PLEASE**  
TICK UP TO THREE BOXES IN THE SECOND COLUMN

	Q4 Most Important	Q5 Least Important
<b>Services for children and young people</b>		
Children's social care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supporting schools to improve pupil achievement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Managing school buildings and pupil admissions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School transport	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Services for adults</b>		
Adults with mental health needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adults with a physical disability or sensory impairment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adults with learning disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Services for older people</b>		
Older people's social care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Tackling environmental issues</b>		
Waste disposal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Traffic management and road safety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Street lighting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Highways maintenance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public transport	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Working with the community</b>		
Trading standards	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Library service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community safety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Developing the local economy and jobs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Country parks, sports and arts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Don't know .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any other comments (PLEASE TICK BOX AND WRITE IN BELOW)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Communications

Q6. Are you aware of the County Council's campaign: 'In Notts? There's only one number to remember: 08449 80 80 80'?

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY

- |            |                          |
|------------|--------------------------|
| Yes        | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| No         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> |

PLEASE ANSWER QUESTION 7 IF YOU ARE AWARE OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL'S CAMPAIGN. OTHERS PLEASE GO TO QUESTION 8

Q7. You said that you are aware of the county council's campaign. In which, if any, of the following ways did you find out about this campaign?

PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLYS

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| A-Z of services guide  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Billboards   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Bus adverts  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| County News  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| County Council Vehicles  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Leaflets   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Local newspapers   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Nottinghamshire County Council's website<br>( <a href="http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk">www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk</a> ) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Posters  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Radio advertising  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Summer shows   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (PLEASE TICK THE BOX AND WRITE IN BELOW)   | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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- |               |                          |
|---------------|--------------------------|
| None of these | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Don't know    | <input type="checkbox"/> |

EVERYONE PLEASE ANSWER THE NEXT QUESTION

- Q8. **Have you contacted Nottinghamshire County Council for any reason within the past 12 months?** PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>

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PLEASE ANSWER THE NEXT QUESTION REGARDLESS OF WHETHER OR NOT YOU HAVE CONTACTED NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL WITHIN THE PAST 12 MONTHS

- Q9. **How easy or difficult would you say it is to contact Nottinghamshire County Council?** PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY

Very easy	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fairly easy	<input type="checkbox"/>
Neither easy nor difficult	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fairly difficult	<input type="checkbox"/>
Very difficult	<input type="checkbox"/>
Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>

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- Q10. **If you have any other comments about contacting Nottinghamshire County Council, please tell us in the box below.**  
PLEASE WRITE IN BELOW

- Q11. **Nottinghamshire County Council recently delivered an A-Z guide about the Council's services to every home in the county. Each copy of the guide cost 30p including design and delivery.**

**Did you receive a copy of the A-Z guide? PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY**

Yes ☐  
No ☐  
Don't know ☐

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PLEASE ANSWER QUESTION 12 IF YOU RECEIVED A COPY OF THE A-Z GUIDE. OTHERS GO TO QUESTION 13

- Q12. **Thinking about the A-Z guide, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?**

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ON EACH ROW

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
It has helped me to understand more about the different services the Council provides .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nottinghamshire County Council runs more services than I had realised .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have already used the guide to find out more about a County Council service .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I intend to keep my copy of the A-Z guide .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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EVERYONE PLEASE ANSWER THE NEXT QUESTION

- Q13. **How often, if at all, would you like Nottinghamshire County Council to publish an A-Z guide of services? PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY**

Once a year ☐  
Once every two years ☐  
Once every five years ☐  
Never ☐  
Don't know ☐

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**Nottinghamshire County News**

- Q14. **Nottinghamshire County Council produces the newspaper County News, distributed six times a year to each household in Nottinghamshire. Each copy costs 16p including design and delivery. The most recent edition went out in August 2008.**

**Do you recall receiving the most recent edition of County News?**  
PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	PLEASE ANSWER Q15
No	<input type="checkbox"/>	PLEASE ANSWER Q16
Don't know/ unsure	<input type="checkbox"/>	PLEASE ANSWER Q16

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PLEASE ANSWER Q15 IF YOU RECALL RECEIVING THE MOST RECENT EDITION OF COUNTY NEWS

- Q15. **Thinking about the August 2008 edition of County News, how much of the newspaper did you read? PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY**

All of it	<input type="checkbox"/>
Most of it	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some of it	<input type="checkbox"/>
None of it	<input type="checkbox"/>

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EVERYONE PLEASE ANSWER THE NEXT QUESTIONS

- Q16 **To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?**

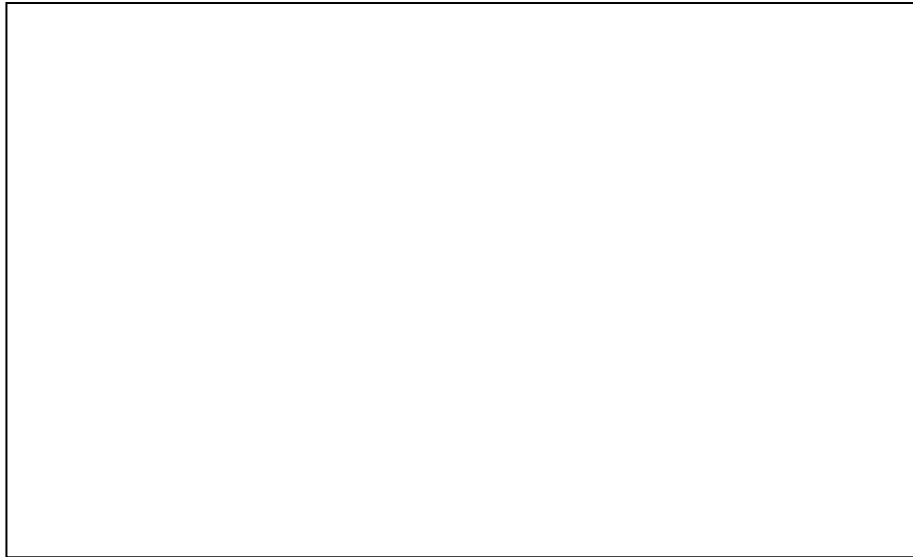
PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ON EACH ROW

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
I find County news interesting .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When reading County News I usually learn something of interest about Nottinghamshire County Council .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
County News really informs people about the services run or supported by Nottinghamshire County Council .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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- Q17. **Finally, is there anything else you would like to add?**

PLEASE WRITE IN BELOW



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THANK YOU FOR TAKING PART IN THIS SURVEY. PLEASE RETURN YOUR  
QUESTIONNAIRE IN THE FREEPOST ENVELOPE PROVIDED BY FRIDAY 7 NOVEMBER  
2008.

# **APPENDIX B**

**Extract from Cabinet Report of  
17<sup>th</sup> December 2008**



#### 4. **Consultation**

- 4.1 In the run up to the 2009/10 budget a variety of consultation methods have been used to inform decision making.

These have included:

- ❖ Use of the Nottinghamshire Listens Panel
- ❖ A briefing article and questionnaire in County News
- ❖ Via an online poll on the Council's website
- ❖ Direct consultation with partner organisations in the Local Area Agreement

- 4.2 Results from each of the strands of consultation are set out in the following paragraphs.

- 4.3 The Nottinghamshire Listens Panel is managed on the Council's behalf by the market research organisation IPSOS MORI. Briefing notes and a self completion questionnaire were sent to 6,060 members of the Panel in the Nottinghamshire area (excluding the City). Responses were received from 3,342 residents, a response rate of 55%. This is considered to be a good response rate for a budget consultation exercise.

- 4.4 At the highest level respondents were asked if they would be prepared to pay an additional 1% in Council Tax to pay for additional services, or an additional 1% in Council Tax to avoid services being cut. The results were as follows:

	Yes %	No %	Don't know %
Prepared to pay 1% more for new services	30	55	15
Prepared to pay 1% more to avoid cuts	42	42	16

These responses suggest that the public are more interested in protecting existing services than developing new ones.

- 4.5 The questionnaire then sought views on whether the Council spends “too much”, “not enough” or “the right amount” on a range of services. The results are set out in the following table:

	Too much	Right amount	Not enough	Don't know/not stated
<b>Services for children &amp; young people</b>	%	%	%	%
Children's social care	22	51	7	20
Supporting schools to improve pupil achievement	11	44	30	15
Managing school buildings and pupil admissions	8	52	22	17
Youth service	9	45	26	20
School transport	33	38	8	21
<b>Services for adults</b>				
Adults with mental health needs	4	46	31	19
Adults with a physical disability or sensory impairment	6	54	20	20
Adults with learning disabilities	26	43	11	20
<b>Services for older people</b>				
Older people's social care	11	49	26	13
<b>Tackling environmental issues</b>				
Waste disposal	11	67	12	10
Traffic management and road safety	11	53	25	11
Street lighting	16	67	8	10
Highways maintenance	12	48	29	11
Public Transport	10	51	28	10
<b>Working with the community</b>				
Trading standards	9	59	10	23
Library service	22	60	7	10
Community safety	6	44	35	15
Developing the local economy and jobs	6	38	39	17
Country parks, sports and arts	8	55	27	10

- 4.6 There were very few services where the public felt that the Council spends too much. Only four service areas received more than 20% of the vote in the “too much” category. These were

- School transport 33%
- Adults with learning disabilities 26%
- Children's social care 22%
- Library Service 22%

4.7 Although only 30% of respondents would be prepared to pay a higher Council Tax for new services there were a number of service areas where respondents felt the Council is not spending enough. Service areas where more than 25% of responses wished to see increased expenditure included:

- Developing the local economy and jobs 39%
- Community Safety 35%
- Adults with Mental Health needs 31%
- Supporting Schools to improve pupil achievement 30%
- Highways maintenance 29%
- Public Transport 28%
- County parks, sports and arts 27%
- Youth Service 26%
- Older people's social care 26%
- Traffic management and road safety 25%

4.8 Most people who responded felt that the Council is currently spending about the right amount in most service areas.

4.9 Finally, the Panel were asked to choose which three services were considered to be "most important" and which were "least important". The results are shown in the following table. The "most important" services included:

- Supporting schools to improve pupil achievement
- Older people's social care
- Waste disposal
- Community Safety
- Developing the local economy and jobs

4.10 The "least important" services were

- School transport
- Trading standards
- Library service
- Street lighting
- Youth service

4.11 The same questionnaire was used to gather views through County News which is delivered to all households in the County. The response to the questionnaire at the time of writing was 262 which is a little disappointing. In order to increase the response rate next year it is proposed to include a reply paid envelope and/or offer a modest

inducement by way of a prize draw for those responding. The response to the online poll via the internet site was also disappointing with only 38 responses. The overall results of the County News Survey and the internet survey were as follows:

	Yes %	No %	Don't know %
Prepared to pay 1% more for new services	17	79	4
Prepared to pay 1% more to avoid cuts	25	72	3

As can be seen there was less support for an increase in the Council tax than from the Nottinghamshire Listens Panel. There was however a similarity insofar as protecting services was more important than new services.

- 4.12 The “not enough”, “too much”, “the right amount” responses were as follows:

	Too much	Right amount	Not enough	Don't know/not stated
<b>Services for children &amp; young people</b>	%	%	%	%
Children's social care	52	34	4	10
Supporting schools to improve pupil achievement	35	43	16	6
Managing school buildings and pupil admissions	26	54	10	9
Youth service	30	45	16	9
School transport	57	30	4	9
<b>Services for adults</b>				
Adults with mental health needs	16	50	26	8
Adults with a physical disability or sensory impairment	21	53	16	10
Adults with learning disabilities	49	34	7	10
<b>Services for older people</b>				
Older people's social care	20	47	26	7
<b>Tackling environmental issues</b>				
Waste disposal	31	54	9	5
Traffic management and road safety	26	48	22	4
Street lighting	26	62	7	5
Highways maintenance	21	40	35	4

Public Transport	23	47	26	5
<b>Working with the community</b>				
Trading standards	26	59	7	8
Library service	39	52	6	3
Community safety	23	46	25	6
Developing the local economy and jobs	18	49	27	6
Country parks, sports and arts	28	45	23	4

4.13 The main difference between the Nottinghamshire Listens Panel and the respondents to the County News and internet questionnaire is that the Panel is selected on a random but structured basis by MORI in order to obtain a balanced and representative cross section of the local community whereas the respondents to the other two questionnaires were self selecting.

4.14 In response to the “too much” question the smaller sample was consistently higher across all services. The services where this group considered spending was too high included:

- School transport 57%
- Children’s social care 52%
- Adults with learning disabilities 49%
- Library Service 39%
- Supporting Schools to improve pupil achievement 35%
- Waste disposal 31%

4.15 Although the percentages were higher the top four services where people considered that the Council is spending “too much” were consistent with the MORI Nottinghamshire Listens survey albeit in a slightly different order.

4.16 This group were less supportive of additional spending but over 20% of those who responded felt that we do not spend enough on the following range of services:

- Highway maintenance 35%
- Developing the economy and jobs 27%
- Adults with mental health needs 26%
- Older peoples social care 26%
- Public transport 26%
- Community safety 25%
- Country parks, sports and arts 23%
- Traffic management and road safety 22%

4.17 Again there was a great deal of similarity between the samples with all of the above services having also been highlighted by the Nottinghamshire Listens Panel.

4.18 Finally in respect of the two smaller surveys the “most important” and “least important” results were as follows;

“Most important”

Older people social care  
Highway maintenance  
Waste disposal  
Public transport  
Community safety  
Developing the local economy

“Least important”

School transport  
Trading Standards  
Library Service  
Adults with Learning disabilities  
Country parks, sports and arts  
Street lighting

4.19 Again there are striking similarities between the two survey groups.

4.20 The full results will be taken into account when formulating the final budget proposals.

# **APPENDIX C**

## **Budget Press Release**

20<sup>th</sup> October

**It's your money – have your say!**

Nottinghamshire County Council want you to have your say on how much it spends on services and find out which of those services are most important to you.

You can do this by filling in the form published in the County Council's newspaper *County News* – which is out soon or visit [www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk). The Council will also be consulting with its Citizens Panel.

Coun Mick Storey, the Deputy Leader of Notts County Council, with responsibility for Finance and Property, explains: "This year the Council will be spending £453m of public money, with an additional £420m going direct to schools from central government. I hope that people will take an interest and have their say. We want to know which Council services are important to you.

"Councillors are thinking about future spending priorities and are keen to try and keep council tax increase to just 3% this year. We already know in the next year we have to spend more money to meet the rising demand for social care services for some of the most vulnerable people in our society - older people and adults with a physical disability, learning disability or mental health issues and we'll be giving greater financial support to independent sector residential care homes too.

"In addition we face the same the challenges as everyone else - rising energy, fuel and food costs. These are challenging times, but our goal is always to make Nottinghamshire a better place."

The deadline for all responses to the budget consultation is 14<sup>th</sup> November.

Ends



# **APPENDIX D**

## **Sample letter to LAA Partners**

All Local Area Agreement Partners

Dear Sir/Madam,

### **Budget Consultation 2009/10**

Each year the County Council consults with a range of partners, stakeholders and interested parties on the content of the forthcoming annual budget and capital programme and the proposed increase in the Council Tax. The feedback from Local Area Agreement Partners proved valuable and I feel it is important to seek your views on budget consultation once again.

I attach for your information a copy of the report that was announced for consultation by the County Council's Cabinet on 17<sup>th</sup> December. The report sets out a proposed Council Tax increase for 2009/10 of 3% per annum consistent with our Medium Term Financial Strategy approved in 2006.

As part of our long term financial planning process the Council had identified a number of significant budget pressures, mainly in relation to Adult Social Care and Health, inflation and pension costs. Given the recent dramatic economic circumstances additional budget pressures have since been identified which centre mainly on energy, fuel and capital receipt slippage, most attributable to recent events.

The Council consulted the general public as to their willingness to pay an additional 1% increase in their Council Tax to either fund new services or to avoid service cuts; the results indicated the public were interested in protecting the services currently offered (full details of the consultation response can be found in section 4 of the report). Taking the consultation findings into account Cabinet Members reprioritised areas of budget pressure and identified areas where savings could be used to offset the revised priorities. Savings identified are concentrated in areas where efficiency gains would have as low an impact as possible upon the Council's strategic priorities and quality of service delivery.

I have briefly summarised the efficiency savings identified:

- A saving of £2.45 million in respect of Adult Social Care and Health by improving the process for the Infocare Project, maintenance of healthcare contributions, improved vacancy management and amendments to service developments.
- Efficiency savings in Children and Young People's Services and amendments to Governors Services result in a saving of £0.72 million.
- Just over £0.4 million savings in Transport and Highways through capitalisation of road safety works and non staff budget management.

- Environment and Sustainability and Community Safety and Partnership will contribute joint savings of £0.236 million through strict vacancy management, efficiency savings, running cost controls and development control.
- Cultural and Regeneration services will provide £0.297 million of efficiency savings through reduced administrative costs, vacancy management and reductions to non staffing budgets.
- Streamlining structures, vacancy controls and new initiatives reductions will provide £0.17 million in savings within the Leader's portfolio.
- Deputy Leader and Finance savings will be addressed through recruitment efficiencies, reduced overheads and increased income levels resulting in savings in excess of £0.35 million.
- People, Property and Performance will contribute £0.21 million worth of savings through vacancy controls, adjustments to staffing levels and reductions in HR strategies.

The identified portfolio savings of £4.8 million will be utilised along with savings of £6.2 million from non-portfolio savings to provide a balanced budget along with the 3% Council Tax increase and the local formula increase of 5.9%. Cabinet Members feel this controlled approach to a balanced budget will help stimulate the local economy through capital expenditure while responding to and taking on board public consultation.

The County Council will be making firm proposals for its budget on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2009 but the final decision is being taken at the full County Council meeting on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> February. If you wish to comment on any of the information contained within the report, I would be grateful if you could write to me at the above address before Friday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2009.

Thank you very much in anticipation of your response.

Yours sincerely

**Alan Sumby,  
Service Director, Finance**