

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

1.	Meeting:	Community Cohesion Delegated Powers Meeting
2.	Date:	26 June 2006
3.	Title:	Budget Consultation
4.	Programme Area:	Chief Executive's Department

5. Summary

This report provides a summary of the findings of a major consultation exercise undertaken earlier in the year to help inform the development of the Budget and more widely.

6. Recommendations

The Cabinet Member is asked to:

1. Note the main findings from consultation with the public about priorities for council spending for 2006/7
2. Consider and discuss the main findings from the report as outlined
3. Note that the findings have been used to develop the budget and more widely
4. Agree that the findings of the report continue be taken into account in further developing policies and services
5. Note the generally good feedback about the consultation

7. Summary

During January 2006 Chief Executives Office (Policy and Research) with support from the Performance and Finance sections in the Chief Executives Office and other programme areas undertook a major consultation exercise to help inform the development of the 2006/07 Budget and policy and service delivery more generally.

The consultation was designed around the key aims below:

- To feed views into the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) on the spending priorities for the Council based on the Priorities of the Community Strategy.
- Raise awareness of how council sets and agrees its spending priorities.
- Demonstrate to residents that the council wants to listen to their views
- To inform council decision making

The consultation was themed around the Council's Vision and priorities of the Community Strategy to ensure consistency with the early stages.

4. Summary of Consultation Results

The findings from the 2 stages were then brought together to provide a robust and detailed understanding of people's priorities for improvement.

A number of overall priorities emerged from the consultation:

1. **Town Centre** – There appears to be a general dissatisfaction with the retail and leisure facilities available in Rotherham Town Centre. Additionally there were issues around accessibility and design of the Town Centre.
2. **Economic Growth** - There was a high degree of emphasis placed on the retention of graduates, local high level career opportunities and career advice. A common message was that Rotherham needs to attract more high quality businesses and inspire young people to start up new businesses.
3. **Transport/Traffic/Parking** – Transport issues arose frequently with key issues around both public transport and traffic flow/parking. Community transport was cited as an area for improvement.
4. **Learning** – Barriers to the accessibility of provision was an issue. There was a clear demand for better provision and variety in the supply of provision to meet differentiated needs, particularly school age learning. It was felt that basic language skills needed more emphasis.
5. **Quality and provision of leisure activities/facilities** - A key theme raised was the quality and level of provision of sporting, recreational, cultural and leisure activities. Issues arose around information provision and the need to consult with residents in the design and planning of any future facilities in

Rotherham. The link between health and the outdoor living environment was identified with specific improvements around quality and cleanliness of parks and children’s play areas.

6. **Crime and Safety** – A major theme was that crime and especially the fear of crime was prevalent and a major concern. Fear of crime particularly in the town centre stemming from anti-social behaviour was highlighted. There was an emphasis on the importance of improving community relations and reducing anti-social behaviour generally.
7. **Environmental issues** - Issues arose around the quality and provision of green spaces, roads and pavements. Litter was a key theme with suggestions of more recycling facilities across the Borough.
8. **Housing** – Design was a key theme, and it was felt that residents should be more involved in the planning and design of new homes and commercial building projects across the borough. Housing affordability was identified as a growing issue.
9. **Democracy and Pride** - The need to feel ‘proud’ of Rotherham was a key theme with feelings that the ‘image’ of the borough could be improved. The importance of community consultation was a major theme.
10. **Community and voluntary sector** - A better understanding of the diverse communities in Rotherham was highlighted along with celebrating diversity. The voluntary and community sector were viewed as key players in promoting proud and active citizenship.
11. **Care** - More assistance needed and care tailored to specific community of interest groups.
12. **Customer Service** - Issues around customer service delivery and language barriers amongst council staff with residents.

The following table summarises the key messages from the consultation by Priority Theme:

Key Issues
Rotherham Achieving
Town centre
Transport
Economic growth and barriers to growth
Rotherham Learning
Education provision

Barriers to learning
Basic skills
Rotherham Alive
Quality and provision of leisure activities/facilities
Health information and provision
Support for vulnerable people
Rotherham Safe
Crime, fear of crime and community safety
Environmental
Housing
Rotherham Proud
Pride in the borough
Community and voluntary sector
Care

The following table highlights the main issues raised by the target communities that took part in the stage 3 focus groups, and stratified by group and the corresponding Priority Theme.

Overall priorities	Priority theme
YOUNG PEOPLE	
Cleanliness of the town centre	SAFE
More street lighting in the town centre	SAFE
Development of the town centre - shops/facilities/social activities	ACHIEVING
Respect of young people	PROUD
OLDER PEOPLE	
Advocacy and support for communities	PROUD

Health Provision	ALIVE
Crime and anti-social behaviour	SAFE
BME WOMEN	
Accessible faith learning classes	LEARNING
More provision for young people	ALIVE
Asian one stop shop centre	ALIVE
BME MEN	
Development of town centre shopping	ACHEIVING
Health awareness	ALIVE
Business and enterprise opportunities	ACHEIVING
Cultural awareness	PROUD
DISABLED PEOPLE	
Accessible transport	ACHEIVING
Safety	SAFE
Consultation, cross communication and information	PROUD
CARERS	
Carers centre	PROUD
Safety	SAFE
Housing	SAFE

The overall priorities for the budget and mid term financial strategy from the consultation are shown in the table below.

Table Summary of Key themes from Consultation broken down by Priority Theme

Key Issues
Rotherham Achieving
Town centre

Transport
Parking
Rotherham Learning
Education provision
Quality of Information
Basic skills
Rotherham Alive
Quality and provision of leisure activities/facilities
Health information and provision
Rotherham Safe
Crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour
Environment
Housing
Rotherham Proud
Pride in the borough
Care
Customer service

The findings were then fed into the Council's budget making process. They helped to guide and fine-tune the Council's total budget for 2006/07. They were a key input into the process, as reflected in the strong relationship between the final budget priorities, and the priorities identified as part of the consultation.

Rotherham Learning includes an extra £60,000 on education for vulnerable children and an extra £75,000 for the School Improvement Service to increase attendance;

Rotherham Achieving includes £450,000 in the Town Centre Renaissance programme and the Rotherham Regeneration Plan. There also £2.5m to help support a service to provide free transport for older people across the county;

Rotherham Alive includes money to support the start of £35m programme of building new pools and leisure centres at four venues in the borough.

- ❖ **Rotherham Safe** includes £740,000 into a new, Safer Neighbourhood Warden scheme for the borough and an extra £100,000 to tackle anti-social behaviour plus £175,000 to combat motorcycle nuisance in our woodlands and green spaces.
- ❖ **Rotherham Proud** includes £650,000 to support specialist placements for children and young people with complex needs and an extra £175,000 for more aids and adaptations to help make homes safer and easier to live in.

The findings are of wider interest and have also been used more widely, for example the findings of the Focus Groups have been used to develop the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, Mid-term Financial Strategy and Town Centre Social and Environmental Strategy.

8. Finance

The cost of the consultation was met from Chief Executive's Departments budget, on behalf of the authority.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

The main risk is that the findings will not be given the weight and consideration they warrant. Steps have been taken to ensure this.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The ODPM stress that local authorities should consult residents on appropriate budgetary developments.

The Audit Commission judge value for money from a community perspective as part of the CPA use of Resources Assessment.

The Modernisation Agenda supports both member and officer level decision making and drives forward public engagement which is a key driver of the modernisation agenda.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

The budget consultation proved very popular with residents and demand to be involved in any future budget consultation was high.

Feedback was also sought from those involved in the consultation. This was very positive, and most people stated that they would like to be involved in similar consultation exercises. For Examples of feed back please see appendix A:

All those taking part in the focus groups have been informed been provided with a report outlining the key findings from the consultation and how it has informed the budget setting process.

12. Contact Names:

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Appendix A: Examples of feedback

Feedback was also sought from those involved in the Focus Groups. This was very positive, and most people stated that they would like to be involved in similar consultation exercises. Examples of feedback received, include:

Jeanette from the Rotherham Carers Forum: **"This was one of the best consultation programmes I have been involved in 13 years. It was made very relevant to us and people felt empowered and totally part of it. It was not a tick box exercise and I was blown away by it."**

Mark (41) from Brinsworth, who is a member of the Rotherham Impaired Visual Users Group: **"It was very well organised and I think I found it quite useful. It was the first time I've been involved in anything like this and I found it was really friendly atmosphere."**

Fidel (40) from Greasbrough, a member of the BME Men's group: **"I found it useful to find out how the budget is being used in good ways to help people. I would definitely get involved again as it was made easier for me to get involved."**

Rose (82) from Broom Valley, is active in a range of volunteer projects: **"I found it useful in finding out more about what is happening and when in Rotherham. I have lived here for 42 years and seen some changes, some not always for the better."**

Youth cabinet members and Aston School classmates Charlotte (15), Sara (14) and Richard (15): **"I found it definitely useful as it is important that young people as a group should have their say about services and how money is spent. There might not be a difference in the generations as we might want the same things as older people,"** said Richard.

"We spoke about things that are happening and are important to us today. I enjoyed it," said Charlotte.

"It was good that we got an opportunity to talk about what money is spent on rather than the council saying young people will want this," said Sara.

Shazia (33) from Rawmarsh took part in the BME's women's group: **"I think it was a good idea and glad I took part in it. The fact that our views were asked for and considered in how to spend the budget made it a positive experience. I would get involved again."**