

# **Appendix G**

## **Bromsgrove District Council**

### **Budget Focus Groups**

**November 2007**

### **Draft Report**



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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

Officers at the council have submitted a number of budget bids for consideration in the forthcoming negotiations over the budget. In order to help inform these negotiations, it was decided that a number of these bids should be submitted for testing by residents in focus groups. It is hoped that by inviting residents to consider the bids, decision-makers at the council will be able to more accurately reflect the needs of the community when allocating funds.

## 1.2 Methodology

Snap Surveys was invited to facilitate two focus groups on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2007. The groups were hosted at the council offices in Bromsgrove.

A topic guide was developed that covered 14 budget bids. It should be noted that more than 14 budget bids had been submitted, but it was considered expedient not to include all bids, for the sake of brevity and also to keep respondents interested. The council decided which bids should be included in the research.

The focus groups lasted an hour and a quarter each and were recorded for analysis purposes. Respondents were also given a 'respondent pack', this included a number of exercises for the respondents to complete during the course of the groups.

The recruitment of the groups was out-sourced to a third party. Potential respondents were stopped in the street and invited to participate. Willing residents were asked a number of questions about themselves (including where they lived, age group and socio-economic group) so that a wide range of residents were recruited.

As a thank you for participating each member of the group was given an envelope containing £25 cash. In total there were 8 respondents to the first group and 10 in the second group.

## 1.3 Analysis of results

The analysis of qualitative data is by its very nature a subjective exercise. This should not be considered a weakness of qualitative research, but it is an important issue for the reader to consider. In particular, not all quotes from each individual have been included in this report, and some individuals may have been quoted here more frequently than others.

The findings from focus groups are not truly quantifiable, groups are not randomly selected and are not truly replicable, as such it is very important to

note that findings here are therefore not statistically valid, and focus groups should not be analysed in statistical terms.

#### 1.4 Structure of this report

This report has been structured in a way that is similar to the structure of the group:

- Demographics
- What the council should spend more/less on
- Culture and community services
- Planning and environment services
- Financial services
- Street scene and waste management
- E-Government and customer services
- Final comments

## 2 DEMOGRAPHICS

### 2.1 Introduction

Normally focus groups are made up of people from similar demographic and socio-economic backgrounds, this helps to improve the group dynamic and makes it easier to draw out comparisons between different sub-groups. Unfortunately, due to time and budget constraints, this was not possible for these groups, so a mix of people from the area were recruited.

### 2.2 Demographics

The key demographic characteristics of the first group were as follows:

Gender	AGE	Marital Status	Children living at home?	Housing Status	SEG	Ethnic Origin	Area
Female	55-64	Married	No	Owned	Retired	White British	Hagley
Male	65+	Married	No	Owned	B	White British	Hagley
Female	55-64	Separated	No	Owned	C1	White British	Bromsgrove
Male	35-44	Single	No	Privately renting	C1	White British	Bromsgrove
Male	65+	Married	No	Owned	Retired	White British	Wythall
Female	25-34	Married	under 12	Privately renting	C2	White British	Stoke Prior
Female	45-54	Divorced	12 & 18	Owned	C1	White British	Bromsgrove
Male	25-34	Married	12 & 18	Renting council	C1	White British	Catshill
Male	45	Married	under 12	Privately renting	B	White British	Bromsgrove

The key demographic characteristics of the second group were as follows:

Gender	AGE	Marital Status	Children living at home?	Housing status	SEG	Ethnic Origin	Area
Male	35-44	Single/ Cohab	under 12	owned	A	White British	Wythall
Male	65+	Married	none	owned	B	White British	Wythall
Male	35-44	Married	under 12	owned	A	White British	Wythall
Male	25-34	Single	1x under 12 1x over 12	owned	C1	White British	Rubery
Female	45-54	Divorced	1x under 12 1x over 12	owned	D	White British	Hagley
Female	65+	Widowed	none	owned	Retired	White British	Hagley
Male	35-44	Married	under 12	owned	A	Asian	Sidmore
Female	35-44	Single	none	owned	B	White British	Stoke Heath
Female	35-44	Divorced	none	privately renting	B	White British	Bromsgrove
Female	35-44	Married	under 12	owned	C1	White British	Blackwell



### 3 THE COUNCIL SHOULD SPEND MORE/LESS ON

#### 3.1 Introduction

As a warming up exercise, respondents were asked what they thought the council should spend more or less money on.

#### 3.2 What the council should spend more on

There was some confusion over what services the council provides and what services are provided by the county council and parish councils. In order to help overcome this, respondents were read a list of council services.

Responses to the question focused on operational areas, in particular:

- ✓ Waste and recycling
- ✓ Crime prevention and antisocial behaviour
- ✓ Affordable housing
- ✓ Activities for young people

This is summarised by some of the following quotes:

*"General environmental issues e.g. make the Spadebourne Stream by the bus station in Bromsgrove cleaner" – Female 55-64*

*"Crime prevention – working with other organisations – police to reduce anti-social behaviour – remove graffiti. Making Bromsgrove a better environment – street cleaning, not just town centre. Bring shops into town, keep existing shops there, reduce rates. More accountable" - Male 45-54*

*"Recycling for large families. Traffic calming!. Local villages outside Bromsgrove"*

*"Facilities for young people e.g. play areas. Better lighting in some areas. Cleaning leaves from footpaths. Cutting back overhanging trees in local roads. Improving facilities for the elderly including sensible old people and young people housing. Local bus services and make bus passes free to all pensioners in the council area." – Male 65+*

In addition, a number of respondents from outside Bromsgrove itself said that they felt that the council focuses most of its energy and resources on Bromsgrove, at the expense of the outlying areas. This particularly related to transport services, (for which Bromsgrove District Council is not responsible).

One respondent highlighted the fact the Bromsgrove Council is in special measures and suggested more money should be spent on recruiting high-profile officers to give the council a clearer strategic direction.

### 3.3 What the council should spend less on

Whilst it was easy for respondents to identify areas where they would like to see investment, identifying areas where less money should be spent was a more difficult task.

Responses tended to centre on the arts as several respondents suggested that the council should seek more sponsorship arrangements for events and services such as museums and the fireworks display. Other respondents felt that more money could be saved on the internal processes within the council; in particular on councillors and bureaucracy.

Some felt that the council was guilty of wasting money by not seeing through some major projects, and also unnecessarily spending on others, such as the re-development of the recently re-developed market hall.

*"No more CCTV needed in Hagley Park" – Female 55-64*

*"Arts – get private sector to help funding to reduce costs on front line services. Less managers" – Male 45-54*

*"Councillors salaries. Affordable housing for older adults, just to get the central government funding" – Female 35-44*

*"Internal politics"*

*"Arts development in Bromsgrove Town, if necessary reduce street activities" – Male 35-44*

*"Arts, museums, B.D.H.T, refuse"*

*"Changing the centre of Bromsgrove – when other areas appear to be watching. In planning, make sure that shops are made to serve the public of the area, too many hot food shops" – Male 65+*

*"Allowing fairground rides and circus in the area. CCTV-generate fear. Paper" – Male 65+*

*"Replacing the market hall, which does not need doing. Useless website" – Female 25-34*

*"Car parks. Council functions, i.e. fireworks" – Male 35-44*

## 4 CULTURE AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

### 4.1 Introduction

Culture and community services is responsible for Sports services, parks and open spaces, arts development and community safety. Officers at the council have submitted a number of budget bids to council for improving these services, in particular to spend money on sports development officers, a CRB vetting system, expansion of street theatre, more neighbourhood warden and additional staff in the CCTV control room.

### 4.2 Sports development officers

Respondents were told that the council would like to hire two new sports development officers to provide additional sports activities and diversionary projects for children and young people.

The reaction to this bid was largely positive, with people recognising that there was a need to give children and young people more to do and some respondents spontaneously suggesting that it could help to reduce anti-social behaviour. The following helps to illustrate this:

*"Great idea if it works and can maintain the interest of the kids" Female – 25-34*

*"Fantastic. Get the kids off the street corners. Less crime, less drinking in the streets, less litter, kids will be fitter" – Female – 45-54*

*"Local children need more things to do- hopefully reduce antisocial, will need auditing to ensure more children take up." Male – 45-54*

*"Will take children off the streets" – Male 25-34*

However, other respondents, whilst recognising the benefits, felt that this activity was the sort of thing that the community and voluntary sector should lead on, and that fostering the CVS would be a more sustainable way of delivering this service:

*"Scouts and Guide groups do a wonderful job in this respect" Female – 55-64*

*"Should look to organisations such as youth sports trusts who can provide this anyway" – Male 35-44*

*"Good idea but needs to be processed via schools and local projects" - Male 35-44*

Only one respondent felt that this was not something that the council should be investing in, giving the following comment:

*"Won't work. Needs to be something permanent in the village. Remember Youth Clubs that used to give young people base? Needs to be done locally" - Female 35-44*

### 4.3 CRB vetting system

Respondents were told that the council would like to strengthen its' CRB checks and make them more robust. Some respondents felt that the council should be doing this anyway and that there was little point in testing this initiative with them as the cost is low in the overall context of the council's total budget:

*"If required do it but at £5k and £2k ongoing, its really not worth asking us" – Male 65+*

Other respondents felt that they would have benefited from more detail about the types of checks currently in place compared to the new checks being proposed.

Overall the reaction as to whether money should be spent on this were very mixed (with the majority not giving a strong opinion). One respondent in particular felt that the budget bid should be supported, and gave the following reason:

*"Yes important. We need to keep our children and other vulnerable people safe. (Must be enhanced disclosure)" – Female – 45-54*

Not all respondents were convinced that this should be a priority, as is illustrated by the following comment:

*"Good idea but I think there are more urgent issues to deal with" – Female 25-34*

### 4.4 Expansion of street theatre programme

Respondents were asked whether or not they were familiar with the street theatre programme, in both groups there were some people who were aware of the initiative, although not all were aware that it was a council initiative. Those that were aware of the street theatre programme were all from Bromsgrove itself rather than the surrounding areas. When they explained to the rest of the group what the street theatre scheme involved many people felt that it was a positive initiative, recognising the benefits that such projects bring to the community.

*"Great idea, love the street theatre with young people" – Female –35–44*

*"Excellent project for local community. Needs to ensure it reaches all areas and be well advertised" – Male – 35-44*

*"Enables outlying areas to feel part of District" – Female 35-44*

However, the positive reaction was not unanimous, with some respondents questioning whether a four-week programme of events would deliver value for money:

*"Enjoyed by local children at the moment. (10K a bit too much to extend it to surrounding areas). Children in villages are usually from well off families" – Female – 45-54*

*"Don't think it will be cost effective" – Male 45-54*

#### 4.5 Neighbourhood wardens

Respondents were told that the Culture and Community Services team was bidding for a budget allocation to employ 2 new neighbourhood wardens. All respondents were familiar with the roles that neighbourhood/community wardens play, however, very few had anything positive to say.

The main reasons for criticising the initiative were cost...

*"Two people is not enough – at £22k per annum each is far too much money. When I qualify to be in paramedic I would not earn that much" – Female – 25-34*

*"Too much money for two people, good idea though" – Male 25-34*

...and a lack of faith in their effectiveness:

*"A drop in the ocean, waste of time, neighbourhood watch more effective" – female 45-54*

*"Money better spent on things for kids to do" – Male 35-44*

*"Local people should report any incidences via neighbourhood watch groups" – Female 55-64*

There was some debate about the effectiveness of neighbourhood wardens, with many people's knowledge of them being informed by national media coverage criticising the initiative as ineffective "plastic policemen".

*"What authority do they have? They are pointless"*

*"They are not taken seriously, they don't have the same respect as police officers"*

One lady, who was involved in her local neighbourhood watch criticised neighbourhood wardens because they did not appear to show a genuine interest as they did not even turn up to the neighbourhood watch meetings.

However, some recognised that the presence of officials in uniform and high visibility jackets does have a positive impact on antisocial behaviour.

*"It has a psychological effect- it has had an impact"*

#### 4.6 Additional staff in the CCTV control room

Respondents were told that the council would like to recruit more staff for the CCTV control room to monitor the screen and help man the Lifeline. CCTV was an issue that split respondents, who tried to balance the issue of civil liberties and a 'big brother' society against the benefits that CCTV brings in terms of reducing antisocial behaviour and increasing the bank of evidence for prosecution.

Several respondents felt that the CCTV infrastructure should be improved before recruiting new staff to monitor it. Some claimed to know that not all the CCTV cameras in the town work, and that it would therefore be more important to repair the network than to increase the number of staff manning it:

*"Better spent on repair of existing cameras" – Male – 35-44*

*"Council needs to ensure existing cameras work (all the time) – Females 45-54)*

*"Ensure cameras already in place working" – Male – 45-54*

Others felt that the council should be careful about over-relying on CCTV since they felt that CCTV was replacing the traditional 'bobby on the beat'.

## 5 PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

### 5.1 Introduction

Planning and Environmental Services are responsible for a range of services, including planning applications and building regulations, Environmental Health, Housing Services, Economic Development and promoting quality of life. The Planning and Environmental Services Directorate had five bids tested in the focus groups, these were:

- ✓ 'Scores on the doors',
- ✓ The development of Bromsgrove town centre
- ✓ Employing disabled facilities grants staff on a permanent basis
- ✓ Improving housing services by commissioning a housing market assessment update, employing new housing staff and launching a night-stop programme
- ✓ Appointing an Assistant Drainage Engineer.

### 5.2 Scores on the doors

Respondents were told that the Environmental Health Team would like to introduce a system whereby their inspection assessments are clearly visible to customers of catering outlets. This would take the form of putting stickers on the doors of all cafes, restaurants, takeaways and pubs in the area, and also publishing the scores on the council website.

Some respondents commented that a scheme of this cost was not worth testing with the public, ("*£7K is peanuts!*") and others were confused as to how the scheme would operate. Overall the reaction was mixed, with some feeling that scores on the doors was something of a 'quick win' in protecting the public, whilst others felt that it was an unnecessary expense. These feelings are summarised by the statements below taken from the respondent packs:

*"Environmental Health important for protection of public. Star rating a good idea, to improve quality and performance of local businesses" – Female 45-54*

*"Not worth that much money for stickers" – Male 25-34*

*"Service is already provided so why duplicate" – Male 65+*

*"Not a priority, these measures are already in place so I don't really think it is that important" – Female – 25-34*

*"Good idea – but thinking of council budget, more major concerns""- Male 45-54*

*"Why do we need it? They do it anyway"*

### 5.3 Bromsgrove town centre development

At the beginning of the groups many people, especially those that lived in Bromsgrove commented on the town centre. Most said that they were worried about the increasing number of shops closing (often citing business rates and expensive parking as the key reasons for this) but others said that they had noticed an improvement in recent times.

*"I like the town centre but if there are lots of shops closing it will need discussion to invigorate the centre" – Female 55-64*

*"Main popular shops need to stay – Woolworths would be a loss. But smaller shops can only be supported by chains-which is good! E.g. La Senza, Subway." – Female 45-54*

However, there was a broad level of consensus that improvements to the town centre were required. Many spontaneously suggested that the council should seek investment from private companies in order to achieve this, partly due to a lack of faith in the councils ability to deliver on major projects and partly because they recognised that a substantial investment would be required for a satisfactory outcome.

Respondents were told that Planning and Environmental Services recognised that residents wanted change in this area, and that they would like a one-off payment to help 'get the ball rolling' by exploring partnerships to help develop the town.

Responses were generally positive, although due to the strategic nature of the bid, some respondents were confused as to what the money would buy- e.g. would it pay for a new member of staff, would it cover the cost of meetings and functions, etc.

*"Is this the £60 grand for a new planning officer I heard of?"*

*"I don't know what to expect from £60K"*

One or two respondents from outside the city, whilst recognising that Bromsgrove town Centre would benefit from improvements, felt that it would be of little benefit to residents who shop elsewhere:

*"Waste of money for persons living out of Bromsgrove" – Male 65+*

#### 5.4 Making permanent disabled facilities grants staff

Residents were told that the council currently employs two members of staff on a temporary basis to administer grants for the adaptations to the homes of disabled people.

The majority of respondents recognised the importance of looking after disabled people, and one respondent criticised the council for being behind schedule in making buildings DDA compliant.

*"Especially relevant to those who are disabled and need adaptations to maintain a standard of life" -Male 35-44*

*"Excellent idea! We need to help people with disabilities here" – Female 35-44*

However, some people thought that employing staff on a permanent basis, when the job is already being carried out by temporary staff would add unnecessary expenses in 'on' costs (e.g. pensions, holidays, sickness etc) and that the council as an employer has more flexibility when employing temporary staff:

*"Keep temporary. Quality not necessarily going to be better"*

*"Especially relevant to those who are disabled and need adaptations to maintain a standard of life" - Male 35-44*

*"Long term temporary is fine. A change in employment status is not going to bring improvements in quality of performing the job" – Female 35-44*

#### 5.5 Housing Market Assessment update, Nightstop programme and more housing staff

Many respondents brought up the issue of affordable housing in the warm-up session, and it was universally recognised as an issue that needs addressing, especially for young people. Some were aware that there is a long waiting list for those needing affordable housing, and were worried that local people might not always get priority.

Respondents were told that there were three separate elements of a bid, including the need for a housing assessment update, the nightstop programme and new staff.

In terms of the Housing market assessment update, generally speaking respondents were surprised that the council would not have that information readily available and most conceded that such a report would be required in order to inform any sort of affordable housing strategy. There was also some disappointment that the report would have to be outsourced, as opposed to undertaken in-house.



The nightstop programme was considered to be a good idea in principle, but some respondents felt that the programme might be difficult to deliver, and that it might be dangerous for both host and guest.

*"A nice idea to get youngsters of the streets and give them some sense of security"*

*"If people do not get help it could cost the community more in the long term" – Male 35-44*

*"Great idea to help homeless young people"- Female 35-44*

## 5.6 Appointment of Assistant Drainage Engineer

The proposed appointment of an assistant Drainage engineer to support the officer in the current role was proposed. Whilst many had been effected by recent flooding or were aware of it as a key issue *"for the future"*, few felt that the bid would deliver value for money.

The main reasoning behind this was temporary staff could be employed or that the private sector could be called upon in times of crises:

*"Outsourcing would be cheaper" – Male 25-34*

*"If required why not buy service from outside sources if and when required" - Male 65+*

*"Bromsgrove building too many houses, no where for rain to go when flooding occurs, employ someone as required (agency). – Male 45-54*

## 6 FINANCIAL SERVICES

### 6.1 Introduction

Only one bid from the Financial Services team was submitted for testing- this was for Aspirin IT software for benefits claims

### 6.2 Aspirin IT software

Aspirin IT software would be used to help allocate benefits to those eligible and to reduce overpayments and fraud. A description of the software was read to respondents to test their reaction. At this stage in the second group, some respondents reacted quite negatively, not to the bid proposal itself, but due to the fact that it was more of a strategic bid which respondents found hard to relate to.

Most of the reaction to the purchase of an Aspirin licence was positive, largely because it was seen to be capable of paying for itself by reducing fraud and because it reallocated the money to more vulnerable people:

*"If a one of payment and not an annual contract to use the service. I would expect back within 6 months!" – Male 35-44*

*"May quicken up procedure and process and simplify paperwork. (Often correspondence coming out of the office is difficult to understand). Often need help to understand the procedure".*

*"Good. Needs to be justified and correct monitoring to ensure value for money" – Male 35-44*

*"Will savings be put forward to overall council tax payments? Needs to be"*

## 7 STREET SCENE AND WASTE MANAGEMENT

### 7.1 Introduction

Only one bid from the Street Scene and Waste Management service area was submitted for testing at the focus groups- this was for 2 additional staff for a streets hit squad.

### 7.2 Two new members of staff for a 'Hit Squad'

Respondents were told that the streets hit squad would drive around the area responding to fly tipping, littering incidents etc. Most respondents were in agreement that litter was a problem in the area, (*"Something's got to be done about it"*) in particular in the centre of the town.

*"Always need more street cleaners" – Male 25-34*

*"Bromsgrove does require additional cleaning, litter removal, removing graffiti. People feel better when environment is clean and tidy. When I lived in Catshill the new litter picker really made a big improvement. Also when bin men collect rubbish, when they drop litter they do not always pick it up" – Male 45-54*

*"Litter problem is huge and depressing for everyone. Local businesses need to be encouraged to follow McDonalds example, e.g. all wrappers "please dispose of this responsibly". Campaign for every household to take some responsibility for helping to clean up for everyone's benefit. (Cleanest street competition". Supply replacement lids for recycle boxes as paper blows down the street". – Female 45-54*

Respondents who were not from Bromsgrove itself were concerned that the officers would focus predominantly on the town rather than on outlying areas:

*"In Hagley please, especially for alleyways where school children constantly working."*

*"Will they cover the whole council area, if so good and useful;" – Male 65+*

*"This is required and if they perform district wide and not just in the Bromsgrove contract area" – Male 65+*

Not all respondents felt that the additional funding in this area was warranted, this is mainly because either litter was not an issue in their area, or because they felt that the community itself should be encouraged to do more to keep their environment clean and tidy:

*"We should all be more responsible for looking after our own streets /environment. We are all capable of picking up a piece of litter if we see some" – Male 35-44*

*"2 people couldn't cover the whole area. Individual people should take responsibility. Already people pick up litter they see around their locality" – Female 55-64*

*Street hit squad-good idea and is a need for fly tipping etc but not seen as a priority as the local area seems to be on top of this regarding the particular area I live in" – Male 35-44*

Finally, a couple of respondents suggested that a proportion of the litter was down to the council's own doing- because recycling bins are not always distributed with fitting lids, or because bins are too small for some families, or because *"the binmen drop litter and don't pick it up"*.

## 8 E-GOVERNMENT AND CUSTOMER SERVICES

### 8.1 Introduction

The E-government and Customer Services team included two bids for consideration by the focus groups. These were for more customer service staff at the call centre, and to make improvements to internet access and IT equipment for councillors.

### 8.2 Two additional customer service centre staff

When this bid was introduced to respondents, few claimed to have had any problems actually getting in contact with the council:

*"Pleased with call centre service. Do not see a need." – Female 35-44*

*"Not had any problems" Female 65+*

*"Service delivery and customer service has been good" – Male 35-44*

Most who had contacted the council claimed that the problem was not accessing a council employee it was getting that employee to take ownership of the issue and/or call them back:

*"Try and improve internal efficiencies"*

A few said it was easier to contact the council than their bank. One respondent also mentioned that they expect a wait when they contact the council.

However, it was noted that customer service is important and that it was good that the council recognised this:

*"Look after your customers! Should look to identify peak times that staff will be needed" – Male 35-44*

### 8.3 Improvements to internet access and IT equipment for councillors

Respondents were asked whether an investment in the IT equipment for councillors was a worthwhile expense. A very mixed response was received, with some saying that this area was not a priority, whilst others claimed that it is a necessary expense, and that an upgrade is worth doing sooner rather than later to prevent a larger bill in the future:

*"Need to keep up constantly with info. Tech, will cost more next time"*

*"In sufficient to make any significant progress-would end up being far more costly-needs watching closely" – Male 65+*

*"Needs implementing but could changing processes reduce this cost/saving? Is 15K a realistic cost?" – Male 35-44*

## 9 FINAL COMMENTS

Respondents were invited to write down any final comments for the council in their respondent packs for officers at the council to read first hand. These are listed below:

*"I like Bromsgrove very much. It has a small town feel to it and supplies all my needs very adequately. I prefer to come here from Hagley than to go anywhere else. I enjoy the Artrix centre, the library and the pedestrianised high street. I always come on the bus which is very reliable and pleasant to use" – Female 55-64*

*"I was born and bred in Bromsgrove – please look after my town – keep it clean and safe. Bring shops etc into town centre. How many empty shops already? And how many more are going to leave Bromsgrove. It is still a nice place to live but could be so much better" male – 45-54*

*"Interesting evening, all the bids need to be thought about in a lot more detail" – Male 35-44*

*"Please let PACT/NHW – know exactly who is responsible for alley ways – Stokeheath. Please give financial support to children in Charford. Bigger recycling boxes - keep weekly bin emptying. Please invest in town centre. Increase in leisure activities for over 60's" – Female 35-44*

*"Would definitely like to see Bromsgrove Council taking more part in Hagley village with Pavement (resurfacing, cleansing, leaf clearing). Roads to and from schools. Policing. Planning applications – taking more notice of Hagley objectives. Also, suggest Bromsgrove quarterly reports not put in free post for delivery but delivered separately. Would be noticed more."*

*"Take ownership. Plan properly. See projects through to the end. If you want to create a market town that is thriving : \*Attract business by covering rates \* Improve access by roads \*Why did we build a single lane bypass? \* We need a bypass for West Bromsgrove too!" – Male 35-44*

*"Please be more transparent with your costs, e.g. post in local paper. This meeting was excellent for informing us about potential council expenditure, but it is the first time I've had any knowledge of budgeting" – Male 35-44*

*"There has been a little improvement in Bromsgrove Council. More contact with various offices, prompt action and replies to letters" – Female 65+*

*"I would like to find out what the councillors do with our information as it has been great to be involved. Thank you for inviting me to attend." –Female 35-44*

*"Reduce car park charges, they are ridiculous. We need green bins collected all year round. The leaves have not finished falling yet and it is November and the bins are not being collected. I still have loads of leaves in my garden which need to be collected" – Female 25-34*

*"Needs more money spent on the youth to stop them hanging around. More money for regeneration of the town centre" – Male 25-34*