

Appendix G

Two focus groups were held at the Council House on the 23 January 2007. Each focus group was given the opportunity to discuss a range of budget options being considered by Cabinet and then rank them high, medium or low priority. These rankings have been converted to scores and are set out below.

Number of respondents voting high, medium or low as to whether the proposed scheme should go ahead. The average was calculated using: **High = 10, Medium = 5, Low = 0**

Factor	Group 1 Rating - HIGH	Group 1 Rating - MEDIUM	Group 1 Rating - LOW	Group 1 Rating - AVERAGE	Group 2 Rating - HIGH	Group 2 Rating - MEDIUM	Group 2 Rating - LOW	Group 2 Rating - AVERAGE	OVERALL AVERAGE
Area Committees	1	6	2	4.4	4	4	2	6	5.2
Customer feedback	1	5	4	3.5	0	0	8	0	1.9
Queue management	1	4	2	3	NA	NA	NA	NA	3.0
Longbridge Consultants	0	5	4	2.8	0	2	7	1.1	1.9
Smoke Free Legislation	0	1	6	0.7	0	1	8	0.6	0.6
Tree Survey	0	6	4	3	NA	NA	NA	NA	3.0
CCTV Rubery	6	3	0	8.3	0	6	0	5	7.0
Vehicle replacement	5	1	3	6.1	NA	NA	NA	NA	6.1
Grants to landlords - housing	7	1	1	8.3	9	0	0	9	9.1
Grants to landlords – elderly care	9	0	1	9	8	1	1	8.5	8.8
Sanctuary Domestic Violence	7	0	1	8.75	NA	NA	NA	NA	8.8
Alcohol free zones	NA	NA	NA	NA	0	1	7	0.6	0.6
Bandstand	1	3	5	2.7	NA	NA	NA	NA	2.7
Christmas Lights	NA	NA	NA	NA	0	6	5	2.7	2.7
Passport to Leisure	1	7	1	5	NA	NA	NA	NA	5.0
Disability Audit	NA	NA	NA	NA	8	0	0	10	10
(Stop the) Chauffeur	9	0	0	10	NA	NA	NA	NA	10
(stop/charge more) Bulky Waste collection	0	4	4	2.5	3	8	1	5.8	4.5
(Increase charges) Car parking	0	3	5	1.9	2	4	3	4.4	2.6

Factor	Group 1 Rating - HIGH	Group 1 Rating - MEDIUM	Group 1 Rating - LOW	Group 1 rating - AVERAGE	Group 2 Rating - HIGH	Group 2 Rating - MEDIUM	Group 2 Rating - LOW	Group 2 rating - AVERAGE	OVERALL AVERAGE
(Charge for) Bonfire	4	0	4	5	2	8	1	5.5	5.3
(Stop Subsidy) Artrix	0	3	5	1.8	0	3	7	1.5	1.7

These scores are re-ordered below by preference:-

Disability Audit	10
(Stop the) Chauffeur	10
Grants to landlords (housing)	9.1
Grants to landlords (elderly care)	8.8
Sanctuary Domestic Violence	8.8
CCTV Rubery	7.0
Vehicle replacement	6.1
(Charge for) Bonfire	5.3
Area Committees	5.2
Passport to Leisure	5.0
(Stop the/charge more) Bulky Waste	4.5
Queue management	3.0
Tree Survey	3.0
Bandstand	2.7
Christmas Lights	2.7
(Increase charges) Car parking	2.6
Customer feedback	1.9
Longbridge Consultants	1.9
(Stop Subsidy) Artrix	1.7
Smoke Free Legislation	0.6
Alcohol free zones	0.6

The following comments were recorded by the focus group facilitator:-

Area Committees:

- Need influence / accountability – how much influence will they have?
- Residents need to take a positive attitude (the British like to moan).
- Not sure about the areas – Alvechurch too small.
- Cost?
- Who are the members / committees? Need to be a true cross section / representative.
- Might attract 'extremes'.
- Will councillors be involved? What input would they have?
- Will they replace parish council committees?
- Concern about logistics.
- Need to listen to all residents in all areas now.
- Listen to criticisms.
- Local committees – better idea of what is needed.
- Chosen 2 very different areas.
- Similar to parish councils? These are currently being cut back.
- Council needs to get closer to the public.

Customer feedback system:

- As long as not too much money. No problem if up to £1000.
- What maintenance costs.
- Why is it needed?
- What is current system?
- Would help to identify main complaints and act on them.
- Resolve major issues first – look at patterns.
- Needs to be used effectively, not just about the software.
- Can't this be done in excel, at no cost?
- Don't need specific software – a spreadsheet will do this.
- Need to look at why they can't cope currently – it's not the software, it's them.
- This is an in-house decision not for a focus group.

Queue Management System

- Never a queue.
- But confusing when you go in – people standing and sitting.
- Don't need to spend money to sort it out.
- Have a numbers system in Redditch that works well and you know how long you will have to wait approximately.

Longbridge

- Privately owned site – shouldn't be spending public money on it.
- Affordable housing good – needed.
- May need help with planning.
- Paying for consultancy may save money in the long-term – OR cost more? Depends on consultants – how chosen etc.
- Can the council do anything other than approve the plans?

- No right to build unless compulsory purchase.
- They need the professional help – no expertise to do it internally.
- Bromsgrove should work with Birmingham Council and Vantage West. Midlands, the other 2 partners concerned. If they work together they won't duplicate the effort.
- The houses really do need to be affordable.
- Make sure doesn't creep onto Green Belt.

Smoke Free Legislation

- It's the law – shouldn't need officer monitoring.
- Not a council issue.
- Up to landlord.
- It will police itself, self regulating.
- How will they enforce it? If like community police – they have no powers.
- Is this a temporary appointment? Until people get used to the new laws.
- Isn't it the role of environmental health?
- There should be a phone number for complaints instead.
- Or integrate into community policing.
- There is no need to spend money on a person for this.
- It is good to have one person/central point responsible for monitoring this, rather than different units who don't talk to each other.
- Don't want police involved.

Tree Survey

- Waste of time / money.
- Need to do it for insurance – could fall on roads etc. leads to council tax. increase due to costs.
- Dangerous if don't do it.
- In the past, trees deemed safe still fall.
- Obligated to do it.
- Every 3 years sounds OK.
- Necessary evil.
- What action will be taken after the survey?
- Just more money to contractors.

CCTV Rubery

- If it tackles crime – fine.
- As long as it works.
- The one in Bromsgrove doesn't work.
- Needs to be part of bigger initiative.
- Depends on cost.
- What area will it cover?
- More cost efficient to have community officers patrolling? – But no influence or powers of arrest.
- What happens afterwards? Who is monitoring cameras?
- Need to work 24 hours a day otherwise pointless.
- Is it going to move the problem to somewhere else?

- Need to give youths other things to do.
- Need good quality film so can see who they are.
- Already put in CCTV and had it stolen.
- Just moves the problem somewhere else.
- Need to look at what issues are and deal with those.
- Improve lighting?
- Part of the park is a skateboard park, so encouraging the youth.
- Kids are savvy to CCTV – just put hoods on.
- Is there a community police office in Rubery?
- Police station is probably closed after 5.00pm.
- Need to get the people who use the park to look after it.

Vehicle replacement

- Just done recently? Only had them 3 years?
- Made a mistake with the type of vehicle they purchased.
- Currently wasting money hiring vehicles.
- If don't replace them – what are the maintenance costs?
- Would leasing be cheaper?
- What state are current vehicles in?
- Will it be a graduated replacement?

Grants to Registered Social Landlords – Affordable Housing

- 50/50 split is a good idea to help people onto property ladder.
- New housing needed.
- Step up for people.
- Incentive to look after property.
- Housing associations create waste – council needs to ensure money not wasted. Tight control.
- Need to learn from mistakes.
- Also need affordable rented housing not just shared ownership.
- Good idea.
- Hard to get on the housing ladder for the young.
- Housing associations are not very effective.
- Need to ensure they can't be bought as 2nd homes or by property developers.
- There is already legislation to build affordable housing.
- Is this going to be new housing or from existing stock?

Grants to Registered Social Landlords – Care for elderly residents .

- Very good – as long as not ripping the elderly off?
- As long as reasonably priced.
- They deserve it.
- Not keen.
- Generations should be integrated.
- Should be spending money helping people to live in their own homes.
- Good idea, as people get lonely on their own.
- More and more older people, so need facilities for them.

- Need to offer them a choice – not everyone wants sheltered accommodation.
- Need to ask the people involved – ask the older people.
- Is a gym the best idea? Will they use it?

Sanctuary Scheme for Domestic Violence

- Yes, no one could object
- Do victim support not already do this?
- Who will run this?

Alcohol free zones

- Only just begun to notice signs - so have they replaced them already?

Bandstand Programme

- No – it should be voluntary – no cost involved.
- Shouldn't be covered by council tax.
- But it is important for our heritage.
- Insurance costs for council?

Christmas Lights

- They only worked for about 3 days last year.
- Need to get sponsorship again if possible.
- Assess how effective they were this year.
- Do need to keep them going! Need the shoppers.
- Go 50/50 with the private sector?

Passport to leisure

- Good idea
- But could divide people – if on low income but not on benefits?
- Will price go up for others?
- How is low income defined?
- Will it apply to teenagers?

Disability Audit

- Work has got to be done – no choice

Chauffeur for Chairman

- Stop this!

Bulky items

- No – should keep.
- Could put price up nominally, from £10 to £15 maximum.
- Need it to stop people dumping things / fly tipping – already a problem.
- Pensioners can't afford and often don't have a car.
- Would rather pay a bit more than have it stopped.
- People would dump stuff.
- Need to keep service.
- Limited to what can take to the tip.

- It's OK to charge a bit more.
- Scale the charge depending on the item?
- Can the elderly afford it? Low income households? Need discount or free of charge.
- Don't want to see it stopped.

30 minute charge for Car parking

- No – this will deter people from shopping in Bromsgrove.
- Will go to Morrison's instead.
- 15 mins free is good -but not enough time to do anything.
- Currently pay until 10.00pm – should only be until 6.00pm
- Already expensive for disabled parking.
- Need more parking and to encourage people to use the shops.
- Current scheme annoying if going to cash machine.
- Should be free at the start.
- Should be free after 5.30pm/6pm, not 10pm.
- Time is usually limited to 2 hours, this should be longer.
- Redditch has free parking on Sunday and bank holidays – Bromsgrove residents go to Redditch.
- Don't increase the price – need to encourage shoppers and help firms.
- Sell car park to Asda.
- Annual pass for local residents?
- If parking goes up, people will go to Morrison's at lunch time.
- Shouldn't charge at the train station.

Charging for the bonfire

- Yes – should charge.
- But how will it be enforced – so many entrances to park.
- Good event.
- Family ticket? Children free?
- As long as not too expensive or it will put people / families off.
- £2 per person fine, some places charge a lot more.
- Fine to make a charge.
- Can access be restricted?
- £3-4 per person.
- £2 per adult, kids for free.
- Don't want to put people off.
- Good event so don't want it to disappear.

Subsidy to the Artrix

- No – needs the subsidy.
- Needs encouragement.
- Many staff already voluntary.
- Really good facility for the town, very important it continues.
- Can it survive with out a subsidy?
- Should increase the subsidy and make it more effective – make sure it is spent properly.