

Subject:	Financial Cuts – Consultation and Engagement Update	Status:	For Publication
Report to:	Policy Scrutiny Committee Cabinet	Date:	26 th November 2012 28 November 2012
Report of:	Director of Customers and Communities	Portfolio Holder:	Leader of the Council
Key Decision:	<input type="checkbox"/> Forward Plan	General Exception <input type="checkbox"/>	Special Urgency <input type="checkbox"/>
Community Impact Assessment:	Required:	No	Attached: No
Biodiversity Impact Assessment	Required:	No	Attached: No
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1.	RECOMMENDATION(S)
1.1	Members are asked to note progress on consultation and engagement around financial cuts, and feedback to date.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To update members on a range of consultation and engagement on financial cuts carried out to date and feedback so far.

3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 3.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities:
- **A Healthy and Successful Rossendale** – supporting vibrant communities and a strong economy, this priority focuses on health inequality, building resilient communities and supporting businesses.
 - **A Clean and Green Rossendale** – creating a better environment for all, this priority focuses on clean streets and well managed open spaces.
 - **Responsive and value for money local services** – responding to and meeting the different needs of customers and improving the cost effectiveness of services.

4. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Undertaking appropriate engagement and consultation on potential service changes is essential to help us understand the impact of potential changes and inform decision making. Importantly, this also reinforces a culture of engagement and empowerment, and will mitigate the risk of challenge.
- 4.2 There is a risk that results of engagement and consultation will be seen as a democratic vote. This is not the case. These results give us an indication of public opinion and help us to understand the impact of proposals on certain groups, so that we can mitigate the impact where possible, but residents agreeing or disagreeing with proposed service changes does not mean that they must or must not be implemented as a result.
- 4.3 Not reviewing the way that we currently run our services would leave The Council at risk of not being able to meet the challenges of the Medium Term Financial Strategy to make the £1.3m cuts required by 2014/15.

5. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

5.1 Following the report to Cabinet on 27 June 2012, setting out the Medium Term Financial Strategy challenges going forward, Cabinet approved the commencement of consultation on a range of proposed service changes. A comprehensive plan was developed and this report provides a summary of the work carried out and the responses received to date.

5.2 Making Ends Meet Survey Citizens Panel

5.2.1 The Making Ends Meet Citizens Panel in Rossendale comprises 768 residents who have told us that they are happy for us to contact them to ask for their views on a range of issues. The composition of the panel is representative of the demographic make-up of The Borough and the addresses are spread across all of the wards in Rossendale.

5.2.2 The latest survey was developed following the Cabinet decision in June and discussions about the most appropriate methods of consultation for a range of proposed service changes.

5.2.3 The survey was sent to all 768 residents on the Citizens Panel, and in addition was sent to around 580 community groups and contacts via the database held by Rossendale Enterprise Anchor Ltd (REAL) and a representative of the 'DIY Binmen' group. Questionnaires were also given to clients by the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and on the Services To A Neighbourhood (STAN) bus, were available on our website, and were promoted across The Borough via posters on our notice boards, and in health centres, libraries, Children's and Family Centres, the markets, Bacup Hub, Whitworth Civic Centre, Rawtenstall Post Office and Bacup Job Centre. The poster was also very helpfully posted on the 'About My Area' website. Customers who received a One Stop Shop questionnaire were also encouraged to fill in a Making Ends Meet Citizens Panel survey. A total of 485 completed questionnaires were returned.

5.2.4 There were a higher number of responses from the Haslingden area than other areas (81 in and around Haslingden Town Centre, compared to the next highest of 52 in and around Rawtenstall Town Centre). This is probably a reflection of the issues mentioned in the questionnaire, and in particular the issue of Haslingden Swimming Pool. Because of this, the overall results are slightly skewed towards the opinions of Haslingden residents, so further analysis has been carried out in relation to some issues to understand the spread of opinion across the Borough.

5.2.5 In summary, overall residents told us that, in order to save money:

- 88% agree that The Council should consider a change in bin collection day;
- 94% agree that The Council should move to an 'on demand' garden waste collection service over the winter months;
- 73% agree that The Council should consider moving to one election every 4 years;
- 84% agree that The Council should consider a reduction in the number of Councillors;
- 78% think The Council should have a Mayor, and 73% of those think it should be a Modern Mayor;
- In addition to the 47% who don't use it, 38% would use the One Stop Shop just the same or more often, and 16% would use it less, if it moved to Bacup from Rawtenstall;

- Those who would use it less live in the west of The Borough and those who would use it more live in the east of The Borough.
- 60% agree that The Council should consider options for reducing the opening times of the Museum;
- 72% agree that The Council should consider inviting other interested parties to run the Museum at their expense;
- 56% agree that The Council should consider options for reducing the running costs of Haslingden Pool;
- 68% agree that The Council should consider inviting other interested parties to run one or more of the swimming pools at their expense;
- 39% agree that The Council should consider closing Haslingden Pool as a last resort (57% of those who do not swim agree, 16% of Haslingden Pool users agree).

5.3 Clinical Waste

5.3.1 In order to understand the current need for the clinical waste service, we wrote to the residents at 195 properties which currently have a specialist clinical waste collection service. To date, we have received 172 responses and are currently sending reminders and visiting the remaining 23.

5.3.2 Following the letters, 44 customers confirmed that they no longer need this service and the responses from the remaining 128 are being analysed according to the five groups of clinical waste which are identified in the Safe Disposal of Clinical Waste (Health Services Advisory Committee 1999) document.

5.3.3 At this stage, around 83% of the waste identified falls into the Group E category, which can safely be placed in general waste bins alongside other similar waste such as nappies and sanitary products.

5.3.4 The customer engagement is continuing.

5.4 One Stop Shop (OSS)– OSS Usage Survey

5.4.1 In relation to the proposal to move the One Stop Shop (OSS) from Rawtenstall to Futures Park in Bacup, in addition to the Making Ends Meet Citizens Panel, a questionnaire was developed for people who attended/visited the OSS in September and October 2012, to allow us to understand the impact of any potential move on them.

5.4.2 Customers were encouraged by Customer Service Staff to fill in the questionnaires whilst they were on the premises, either in paper format or online at the terminal which was provided for this purpose.

5.4.3 In total, 107 completed questionnaires were received. The analysis of the results is informing the Equality Impact Assessment for this proposal. In summary customers told us that:

- 62% come to the OSS to ask a question, seek advice, make a payment or log a compliment or complaint.
- Almost half of visitors attend in relation to Housing and Council Tax Benefit (48%);
- Nearly half of visitors attend at least monthly (46%);
- 58% would still attend if they were asked to make an appointment first;
- 54% would visit the OSS just the same or more often, and 45% of users would visit

less if it moved to Bacup from Rawtenstall; and

- 47% use their own car and 27% use the bus to visit. 16% travel on foot.

5.4.4 In addition to engaging customers who attended the OSS, questionnaires were also sent to 18 regular business customers of our Planning and Land Charges services. 22% of questionnaires were returned (4), and the results are attached at Appendix 5. Overall, the customers who responded told us that they would visit just the same if the OSS moved from Rawtenstall to Bacup.

5.4.5 We also aimed to engage with equality groups to understand if there was any particular impact of this move on them. This feedback is being used to inform a detailed Equality Impact Assessment which accompanies the report on Accommodation at this Cabinet meeting.

5.4.6 In addition, we invited our partner organisations who use our OSS for customer contact to comment on the proposals, and met with the CAB Board to discuss their views. There was a mixed response in that some agencies felt they still needed to have a presence in Rawtenstall, and others didn't.

5.4.7 The proposals for the Customer Service Review, including the proposed move of the OSS to Futures Park in Bacup were discussed at the Policy Overview and Scrutiny meeting on Monday 10 September 2012. It was noted that "...overall everyone was in favour of the new proposals and the centralisation of services."

5.4.8 The consultation results were presented to the Accommodation Task and Finish Group in November 2012 and they noted the following resolution:

1. That the Accommodation Task and Finish Group recommend to Cabinet the move to Futures Park of the One Stop Shop with additional use of STAN to the West of the Borough.
2. That taking into account the long term future of STAN, consideration be given to exploring the possibility of outreach services in Rawtenstall.

5.5 Localisation of Council Tax Support

5.5.1 Given that these changes will impact on most people of working age who currently claim Council Tax Benefit, information and questionnaires were sent directly to 4,140 people who currently claim (100% of current claimants of working age) and 2,869 were sent to a random sample of residents who are not currently claiming CTB, in order to generate a wide range of responses from people with different interests.

5.5.2 Questionnaires were also given to clients by the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and on the Services To A Neighbourhood (STAN) bus, were available on our website, and were promoted across The Borough via posters on our notice boards, and in health centres, libraries, Children's and Family Centres, the markets, Bacup Hub, Whitworth Civic Centre, Rawtenstall Post Office and Bacup Job Centre. The poster was also circulate to community groups and very helpfully posted on the 'About My Area' website. In addition, a press release was issued to publicise the consultation and an article was printed in the Lancashire Evening Telegraph. The proposals were also discussed with the CAB Board at a special meeting and the Chief Executive briefed Whitworth Town Council.

- 5.5.3 The questionnaire was also on the RBC website 'Have Your Say' consultation pages and people were signposted to it via the letter that went to the Citizens Panel (Making Ends Meet Survey and the One Stop Shop Usage questionnaire).
- 5.5.4 The questionnaire set out a number of options for how the scheme may be implemented locally and asked people which options they would support. The questionnaire was accompanied by a booklet which provided further detail on the proposals, which clarified that pensioners would be protected from any changes.
- 5.5.5 A total of 596 completed questionnaires were returned and results were weighted to accurately reflect the demographic make-up of The Borough.
- 5.5.6 In summary, the results were as follows:

Option	% agree	% disagree	% don't know
Option A – the proposed scheme	59%	34%	7%
Option B – increasing the disregard	51%	38%	11%
Option C – protecting young families	36%	54%	10%
Option D – protecting all families	29%	63%	8%
Option E – protecting the disabled	46%	46%	8%

5.6 Community Grants and Commissioning

- 5.6.1 All 11 groups which were successful in securing a Rossendale Council Grant in June 2011 were contacted by the Communities Manager with a view to arranging face to face meetings to discuss the replacement of the grant allocation process with a commissioning model; and the potential reduction in funding available. To date, meetings with 10 groups have been held.
- 5.6.2 Common themes from the feedback received are:
- An acceptance and understanding that The Council needs to make cuts;
 - Developing a commissioning model is a robust approach to issuing funding against achieving agreed outcomes;
 - The third sector is also finding it increasingly difficult to remain sustainable;
 - All the current recipients of Rossendale Council Grant are looking at their present business model trying to identify resources/different ways of working;
 - Although the impact varies significantly across all of the groups, they all expressed that should they not be successful in securing funding from The Council post 31 March 2014, it would have an impact to a greater or lesser degree on their ongoing operation;
 - Some groups identified a number of equality groups that could potentially be impacted should Council funding not be secured beyond 31 March 2014;
 - Don't lose the good points from the present funding criteria, just adapt to a new commissioning framework;

- All of the groups were positive about being involved with the ongoing development of a commissioning model.

5.7 Discretionary Business Rate Relief

5.7.1 Officers wrote to all 54 individual organisations currently in receipt of NNDR discretionary rate relief and a notice and response facility was placed on The Council's website. Of the 54 organisations, 18 (33%) responded by email or letter. One private response was received via the online website

5.7.2 The organisations who responded receive 52% of the total value of the NNDR discretionary rate relief allocated by The Council.

5.7.3 In summary, the respondents told us that:

- They acknowledge The Council's current financial pressures;
- The voluntary sector offers good value for money; and
- Loss of any financial support will put severe pressure on the organisations who have limited or no income generating sources.

5.8 Leisure

5.8.1 In addition to the Making Ends Meet Citizens Panel questions, a Pool User Group has been established by the Chief Executive of RBC, Lead Member for Regeneration and General Manager of Rossendale Leisure Trust (RLT). It is attended by a number of swimmers from Haslingden Pool, as well as members of the Community Leisure Association of Whitworth, who manage Whitworth Pool, in an advisory capacity. This group have met a number of times since June 2012 and have been collectively supporting the Leisure review.

5.9 Museum

5.9.1 In addition to the Citizens panel questions, further results from which are detailed in the separate report officers have met with members of the Friends of Whitaker Park Museum group to begin discussions about potential areas for cost savings, how the options may be developed and further consultation necessary.

5.10 Street Cleansing

5.10.1 A Task and Finish Group met between August and October 2012 to consider a review of street cleansing services. Members recognised the pressures of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and have recommended that officers look at a number of opportunities for saving costs, including prioritising hotspot areas, utilising staff time in different ways, and extending working arrangements with other Local Authorities. However, the members also stated that where possible any decisions on changes should not be to the detriment of the cleanliness of the Borough.

5.10.2 The recommendations of the Task and Finish Group will be considered alongside the work to review the refuse and recycling service and further consultation will be planned in as necessary.

5.11 In addition to the consultation set out above, many of the issues raised in the Cabinet report on 27 June have also been discussed via the democratic process. Links to the various papers and minutes are set out in the 'Background Papers' section below.

6. COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

6.1 SECTION 151 OFFICER

6.2 The consultation process and feedback will form part of the Member decision making as they seek to balance Corporate Priorities with finite financial resources and in particular as Members set the: 2013/14 Revenue Budget, Council Tax, new Council Tax Support Scheme and the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

7. MONITORING OFFICER

7.1 No additional comments.

8. HEAD OF PEOPLE AND POLICY (ON BEHALF OF THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE)

8.1 The Equality Act 2010 requires the Council to have due regard in the exercising of its functions to three considerations. The need to :

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it.

The amount of regard that is "due" is set out in the Act and will depend on the circumstances of the case. Under the general equality duty there is a requirement to engage with people with protected characteristics and to have an adequate evidence base for Council decision-making.

The duty to inform, consult or involve requires that the council must involve communities and those directly affected at the most appropriate and proportionate level in 'routine functions, in addition to one-off decisions.' Further, under the duty of Best Value the Council is required to consult representatives of a wide range of local people; this should include local voluntary and community organisations and small businesses in such consultation.

9. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

9.1 Consultation is detailed in the report.

10. CONCLUSION

10.1 This report sets out the feedback received from engagement and consultation on a range of proposed service changes to date. It is important to note that this feedback does not represent a democratic voting process, but rather provides an indication of public opinion to help us to understand the impact of proposals on certain groups, so that we can mitigate the impact where possible.

10.2 The results of this feedback are informing detailed Equality Impact Assessments on each of the proposals and residents agreeing or disagreeing with proposed service changes does not mean that those proposals must or must not be implemented as a result.

Background Papers

Document	Place of Inspection
Cabinet– 27 June 2012 - Medium Term Financial Strategy – achieval of budget reductions	http://www.rossendale.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/707/cabinet
Cabinet– 27 June 2012 – minutes of the meeting	http://www.rossendale.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/707/cabinet
Cabinet – 5 September 2012 – item C1: Abolition of Council Tax Benefit and Replacement with a Local Scheme	http://www.rossendale.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/720/cabinet
Cabinet – 5 September 2012 – item C3: Refuse, Recycling and Street Cleansing Review	http://www.rossendale.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/720/cabinet
Cabinet – 5 September 2012 – item C4: Contract Review – Whitaker Park Museum	http://www.rossendale.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/720/cabinet
Cabinet – 5 September 2012 – item D1: Commissioning and Grants	http://www.rossendale.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/720/cabinet
Cabinet – 5 September 2012 – item D6: Rossendale Leisure Trust – Efficiencies Update	http://www.rossendale.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/720/cabinet
Cabinet – 5 September 2012 – item D7: Discretionary Business Rates Relief	http://www.rossendale.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/720/cabinet
Cabinet – 5 September 2012 – minutes of the meeting	http://www.rossendale.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/720/cabinet
Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 10 September 2012 – Item D1: Customer Service Review Report	http://www.rossendale.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/682/policy_overview_and_scrutiny_committee
Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 10 September 2012 – Item D 3: Changes to the Democratic Process	http://www.rossendale.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/682/policy_overview_and_scrutiny_committee
Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 10 September 2012 – minutes of the meeting	http://www.rossendale.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/682/policy_overview_and_scrutiny_committee
Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 15 October 2012 – Item D1: Accommodation Options Report	http://www.rossendale.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/684/policy_overview_and_scrutiny_committee
Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 15 October 2012 – minutes of the meeting	http://www.rossendale.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/684/policy_overview_and_scrutiny_committee