

**Labour Budget Workshop
7 November 2013**

General Comments

- There was general concern that longer term proposals were not being discussed, especially as the group had many suggestions for these at the September workshops.
- Members would like an update on the Careline proposals that were agreed last year and a presentation for members in general about the good work that Careline does to improve awareness

Ref No	Description of Proposal	Comments from Labour Members
E1	Winter closedown of Broadway Fountain	A concern was raised whether there would be additional maintenance costs once the fountain went back spring, due to frozen pipes from lack of use. Officers explained that the fountain would be completely drained which would help to avoid maintenance problems. After this was explained there was general support.
E2	Cease the production of bin hangers to advertise service changes for Christmas and other holidays	Concern that some residents may not be able to use text alerts, but if collections times were to be advertised then this was resolved. In general this was supported as members didn't think the hangers were used. The group wanted to know how many complaints or queries we receive from residents not knowing collections times are or the availability of the information?
E3	Proposed incorporation of Hertfordshire CCTV partnership	There was general support for this proposal.
E4	Undertaking a backlog enhancement capital programme for buildings to reduce pressure on maintenance budgets	There was general support for this proposal.
E5	Reduction in Grant paid over to the Parish, Town and Community Councils for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme	No comments on this proposal.
E6	Reduction in Area Committee discretionary grants by the same percentage as the reduction in the Council's Start Up Funding Assessment (currently estimated at 12% for 2014/15)	Members thought that the rationale did not match the proposal and that it is not clear what the proposal is. Thought this was at odds with giving more power to Area Committees. The Area Committees discretionary not a large budget anyway and a lot of community groups see this funding as a safety net. In general this was not supported.
E7	No further carry forward of unspent Area committee discretionary grant budgets	Members commented that if the proposal was approved then Community Development Officers would need support from finance in order for budgets to be spent, as CDO's are not finance professionals. Wrong time for proposal as chairman for each committee should have been told that no carryforwards were allowed at the beginning of the year.
Income Generation		
I1	New crematorium in Wilbury Hills. Capital costs are not yet known until the business case has been developed and agreed but is circa £1m-£3m	There was general support for this proposal.
I2	Increase in parking charges of 13.45% (lost years of inflation related increases)	Members didn't think that an inflation catch up was appropriate as salaries have not caught up with inflation increases. Should make it easier for people to stay longer in the car parks, as this will attract more people who would shop for longer. Should maybe think about some free parking in different time slots, for example 3.00 or between 12 and 2. Also Letchworth has a lot of off street free parking but other towns, such as Hitchin, do not. Would not support a blanket increase in prices, need to look at it on an individual car park basis. If prices are to remain, then could not support such a high increase straight away. Should increase by inflation each year then spread the catchup inflation over the next 3-5 years, so there is a longer lead in period.
I3	Increase in parking charges of 3.2% (estimated inflation increase for 2013/14)	Should consider increasing by CPI rather than RPI, as generally CPI is lower and this is what central government use. Policy of increasing in inflation should be reinstated permanently.
Revenue Investment		
R1	Local Plan Production, Examination and Delivery	Members supported this and were happy the document was going to be electronic.

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R2	Production of Neighbourhood Plans	Cllr Billing spoke about a neighbourhood plan that the Triangle residents group created, but the plan did not go anywhere. Could this plan be looked at as part of this work, how could the plan be adopted? HOS Plan the process and how they could do this.
R3	Explore options for the provision of an Economic Development Officer	There was general support for this proposal.
R4	Outdoor Sports Facility Study	No Comments
Capital Investment		
C1	Bancroft Park - Lottery funded refurbishment of Bancroft Gardens.	Members were confused why C1 and C7 were listed separately, are these not the same scheme?
C3	Replacement changing rooms at Baldock Road Recreation Ground.	Members made a comment that we are planning on handing over the asset to the Sunday Football league to maintain, why are we not doing this for C6 & C8?
C5	Installation of electronic gates in some NHDC Green Spaces.	A comment was made about the gates in Gt Ashby. Would the parkland fall within Stevenage's boundary could we split the cost of the gates with Stevenage Borough Council?
C13 & C14	Walsworth Common Pitch Improvements & Swinbourne Playing fields improve disability access.	The description of the proposals seem wrong. Both proposals repeat same description, looks like the cuts have gone wrong. Need to confirm description with officers.
C15 & C18	Bush Spring Play Area & Baldock Cemetery construction of pathways and roadways.	Members asked if this could be done in 2015/16. Officers responded saying that the Green Space Strategy need to be revisited.
C19	New Wheeled sports facility, Baldock	Members commented that the wording does not make sense. It says that pathways are in poor condition then why poor condition? Wording needs to be looked at.
C37	Letchworth Multi Storey Structural Investigations.	Members commented that a lot of money has been spent on the car park. Should the structural investigations have been done first.
C39 - C43	IT reserve schemes.	Comment was made that it is not up to members to agree on what is spent from the IT reserve, it's a decision for officers. However if members are to make decisions, then commentary should include what the potential savings are.