

Members Comments at November 2011 Workshops

Efficiency Options

Ref	Description of Proposal	Conservative Group Comments	Labour Group Comments	Liberal Democrat Comments
		Broad acceptance to the proposal.	Broad acceptance to the proposal.	Queried which toilets would still be run by NHDC. Concerned that toilets that are closed would still attract costs such as rates, electricity etc, has the cost of the rates been taken into account and is there a way to limit these costs? Has there been discussions with other Parish Councils and if so what is the position.
		Officer comment: The three toilet facilities which are proposed to remain open are Fish Hill, Royston, Arena Parade, Hitchin and Howard Park, Letchworth. Ongoing maintenance costs for closed facilities have been considered and will be incorporated into the final budget.		
		Broad acceptance to the proposal.	Broad acceptance to the proposal.	Broad acceptance to the proposal. Has the cost of retaining an empty Hitchin Museum been factored into the saving?
		Officer comment: This proposal is for the temporary saving during the construction phase of the project. The savings which will result once the project is complete and the current museum buildings are no longer used as museums have not yet been incorporated into the budget.		
		Broad acceptance to the proposal.	Broad acceptance to the proposal.	Broad acceptance to the proposal.
		Officer comment: Officers will continue to pursue income generation opportunities.		
		Broad acceptance to the proposal.	Concern that any saving would be achievable when the Council contracts external auditors.	Proposal Supported. Comments that the amount of the estimated saving could be too modest.
		Officer comment: The Council has received a rebate of over £9k from the Audit Commission for the 2011/12 audit fees as part of the drive by the Audit Commission to reduce fees. The Audit fees consultation mentions an intended 10% reduction in fees and the Audit Commission has said they are hopeful they can reduce fees by more than this following the current procurement exercise. The budget will be reduced accordingly as and when we receive firm notification of a reduction in fees.		

APPENDIX 5

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Ref	Description of Proposal	Conservative Group Comments	Labour Group Comments	Liberal Democrat Comments
E5	Ceasing the Chairman's annual reception	<p>The annual reception should be retained.</p> <p>Members thought the actual cost is probably less than the budgeted £7k.</p> <p>Other options should be explored, such as sponsorship and Members paying for tickets and wine.</p> <p>Investigate whether this can be combined with other events such as civic awards to ensure the good PR for civic initiatives can be continued.</p>	<p>The annual reception should continue. Options for reducing net costs, by seeking sponsorship for example, could be pursued. If the Chairman's reception was stopped then alternative arrangements would need to be shown to be in place for equivalent fundraising for charity.</p> <p>Attendance at the LGA, CIPFA, and IRRV conferences should be considered before ceasing the Chairman's reception. Should also investigate the potential saving from not registering with IIP. Could the same outcome of IIP be achieved by benchmarking with other Authorities and having a reciprocal agreement for inspection, for example?</p>	<p>An alternative suggestion of charging Members to attend should be investigated.</p> <p>Members were also keen to know how much post Committee drinks cost on an annual basis. A view should be taken as to whether this should stop.</p>
		<p>Officer comment: Officers were asked to look into potential savings around the delivery of the Chairman's reception at the September Member workshops. With regards to conference attendance action was taken last year to reduce the cost of attendance at conferences and attendance is now a minimal number of officers and members. It is not a like for like comparison to compare the attendance at technical conferences, where there is opportunity to learn from other Authorities, to a civic event within the District.</p>		
		<p>Proposal not supported.</p> <p>How many people does the service assist?</p> <p>What would the cost implications be to NHDC Homelessness Service, if this proposal was implemented?</p> <p>Would like the narrative on the efficiency option to be reworded,</p>	<p>Proposal not supported. Has the HYHG been consulted on this proposal? If not this would need to be done before any decision is taken.</p>	<p>Proposal not supported. This could cost us more in the long term with negative impact on homelessness. Have HYHG been consulted on how this would impact on their service? Could S106 with regard to the amount allocated for Youth Provision be used to top up the grant for this Youth Charity?</p>

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		to emphasise the duty will fall back to NHDC.		
		<p>Officer Comment: The effectiveness of a prevention service is always going to be difficult to prove, particularly with regard to this client group. A report that contains information on the number of students that have benefited from the HYHG service so far this year, and feedback from the students is available and can be circulated to Members separately as required. In the period April to October 2011 a total of 91 students attended sessions in the North Herts area. In terms of use of s106 monies, regard would have to be had to the detailed agreement regarding use of the funds.</p>		
		<p>Proposal not supported. What is current usage? Concerns about what would happen if police required a noise abatement notice.</p>	<p>Proposal not supported. The Council's service provides key evidence for cases of dispute. A reduction would have a health impact. Would want to know what other service would be in place if the service was terminated.</p>	<p>Would need more information before decision on this can be made. Need information on how often the out of hours service is used. Could this be a shared service?</p>
		<p>Officer Comment: A reduction in the service from all year round to summer months only was approved as part of the 2011/12 savings programme. The proposal this year is to further reduce the service by terminating it. Activity data has been collated and in the period April to Sept 2011 there were 94 complaints received and 47 visits by Officers to premises. A graph with this data is available and can be circulated to Members if required. Sharing of the service may be difficult due to the need to attend the site and the potential travelling time for officers from other Councils.</p>		
		<p>Broad acceptance to the proposal.</p>	<p>Do not think this proposal would work unless an RSL could be found to undertake the work across the whole District and think this is very unlikely.</p>	<p>Broad acceptance to the proposal. Could Parish Councils fund cost of surveys?</p>
		<p>Broad acceptance to the proposal.</p>	<p>Support in principle but concerns about the change impact on businesses if the scoring of the national scheme is different to the current scheme. Suggest that consultation would be needed in the first year so any saving should be delayed for a year.</p>	<p>Broad acceptance to the proposal. Is the fee to food establishments a fixed fee or can we recharge them based on the cost of the service, so the service fully recovers it costs?</p>

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E10	Deletion of IT Consultancy Budget	Broad acceptance to the proposal.	Support this principle and also a cap on any other consultancy spend across the Council. Members need to be provided with more detail of consultancy spend and the justification for all the spend. Spend on consultancy should be explicitly linked to a member decision for the spend.	Broad acceptance to the proposal.
		Officer Response: This saving relates to one of very few remaining revenue consultancy budgets. The large majority of spend on external consultants will be relating to specific capital programmes which will have been approved by Members as part of the Corporate Business Planning process. The FAR Committee indicated they were satisfied with the information provided on consultancy spend at the last meeting.		
		Proposal supported.	Support this proposal and request that the same format is used for all surveys.	Broad acceptance to the proposal.