

Cabinet – 18 January 2006

Recommendations of the Regeneration, Housing, Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny & Performance Panel following budget consultation

Service Area: Regeneration, Housing, Environment and Community Safety

Wards: All

Forward Plan: No

Summary of report

This report presents the comments and recommendations from the regeneration, housing, environment and community scrutiny & performance panel following consideration of the detailed service specific investment and efficiency choices at the meeting of the panel on 25 November 2005. This will enable consideration by cabinet before they make their budget recommendations to Council.

Recommendations

That cabinet consider the following recommendations of the panel as stated below and determine whether to accept these:

- (a) That investment bids categorised as of “high priority”, shown in **Appendix 1** be recommended to cabinet for consideration.
- (b) That efficiency options categorised as of “high priority”, shown in **Appendix 2** be recommended to cabinet for consideration.
- (c) That cabinet ensure that the LNPs are adequately funded to assist in delivering the priorities of the panel.
- (d) That efficiency bid number 5, reduction in revenue highways maintenance, is only approved if alternative funding is approved via the capital programme.

Resource and legal considerations

The consideration of the draft budget reports by the scrutiny panels is an integral part of the council’s budget setting process. The panel agreed their overall priorities for investment are:

- Strengthening community engagement
- The neighbourhood agenda
- Ensuring adequate funding for recycling initiatives

- Town centre management and
- LNPs.

The panel prioritised the investment and efficiency options and these prioritised lists are contained at **Appendix 1 and 2**.

The panel expressed the view that adequate funding for LNPs should be in place to demonstrate that the council is serious in its intention to engage the community. The panel also saw the opportunity for using the Local Area Agreement (LAA) to increase community engagement, although it expressed concerns that the community engagement link needed to be more strongly evident.

The panel welcomed the bid for ongoing ground water monitoring at Streetly crematorium, a prerequisite for a possible extension to the cemetery, as the panel were concerned that failure to extend the cemetery would have a detrimental impact on the Muslim community.

Citizen impact

The budget is aligned with service activity within service plans across the council. Investment is planned to be targeted at service improvement, stability and user demand.

Community safety

The panel expressed concerns about the impact of anti-social behaviour on the community and that there was no investment bid for crime reduction in the bid proposals.

Environmental impact

Budget decisions may affect the council's ability to deal with environmental issues. Investment bids for 2006/7 onwards include a number of bids targeted at improving the environment and supporting environmental improvements. The recommendations within this report have the potential to improve the visual environment and support environmental initiatives.

Performance and risk management issues

Investment and efficiency choices are considered in the context of service targets and outcomes. As part of the budget setting process, a corporate financial risk assessment is undertaken to determine key risks, and their impact on the budget. Each detailed investment and efficiency option is risk assessed.

Equality implications

Services consider equalities issues in setting budgets and delivering services. Irrespective of budgetary pressures the council must fulfil equal opportunities obligations.

Consultation

All 5 scrutiny and performance panels have received budget presentations in respect of the services falling within their remit, and will receive and consider the draft corporate revenue budget and draft capital programme reports during January 2005, providing an opportunity to make recommendations to cabinet. Cabinet may wish to consider the feedback contained within this report in formulating their final budget proposals.

Vision 2008

The budget and each investment bid and saving is assessed as to its contribution to the delivery of the council's vision.

Background papers

Various financial working papers.

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Signed: -----

Executive Director: Carole Evans

Date: 20.12.05



Signed: -----

Cllr I Shires - Chair of Panel

Date: 20.12.05

NEW INVESTMENT

Appendix 4

INVESTMENT No.	STRATEGIC CHOICE / INVESTMENT BID	ANNUAL NET COST			IMPACT ON STAFF No's	DETAILS OF INVESTMENT	Priority	CONSEQUENCES / RISK OF NOT GOING AHEAD
		2006/07 £000	2007/08 £000	2008/09 £000			H/M/L	
REGENERATION								
1	Town Centre Management (TMC) The proposal is for the establishment of new TCM team to develop and deliver an integrated high quality approach to the management of Walsall Town Centre and the key district centres.	75	100	100	3	Team comprising a TCM, & provide a 'seedcorn' budget to draw in other funding for marketing, events, customer res, etc. Appointment of Assistant TCM/support officer to dev. the initiative into the DC's. Ass. post critical to the ability of the team to support the DC's/Walsall TC. This to be progressed within the context of Walsall's LAA. The team will co-ordinate the full range of mgt & mtce activity. The main outputs will be appointment of team; £50k external conts;baseline customer survey and focus group; establish TC Bus.forum; Bus. Plan approval & defining targets 08/09. Achieve BID designation for WTC.	H	Loss of retailer and investor confidence in the town centre if the council does not use its best endeavours to secure TMC
4	Streetly cemetery	15	15	15	0	Environment Agency requires on-going ground water monitoring (@ approx. £15k pa) for a cemetery to continue to accept burials. This is to protect drinking water from contamination. This means that if the Council is to deliver the Streetly Cemetery extension, there needs to be on-going clear result for contamination.	H	The Council has almost no capacity for Muslim and general burials at Streetly. The Cemetery will have to be closed for new burials if the Council cannot develop the land earmarked for this purpose.
5	Enhance litter hit squad - 1 squad	90	90	90	2	Enhance the litter hit squad service, from removal of 'fly-tipping' from council land to;- include private owned land which is causing nuisance, prevent access to known sites for further tipping, increasing the involvement in the Borough Resource Allocation Group (BRAG) initiative by increase the number of tidy up days to clear grot spots with groups, provide skips for organised days and organise collection rounds for residents to remove rubbish which may prevent future fly tipping.	H	The number of incidents of fly tipping throughout the authority will continue to rise with the same number of areas being used. Resident groups and our partners will get frustrated over the time or lack of service the council will be able to provide. Numbers of complaints will raise and satisfaction levels will reduce, affecting the environment and authority CPA score.
6	Enhance litter hit squad - additional 1 squad	90	90	90	2	As above - additional team	H	The number of incidents of fly tipping though out the authority will continue to rise with the same number of areas being used. Resident groups and our partners will get frustrated over the time or lack of service the council will be able to provide. Numbers of complaints will raise and satisfaction levels will reduce, affecting the environment and authority CPA score.
7	Enhance litter hit squad - additional 1 squad	90	90	90	2	As above - additional team	H	The number of incidents of fly tipping throughout the authority will continue to rise with the same number of areas being used. Resident groups and our partners will get frustrated over the time or lack of service the council will be able to provide. Numbers of complaints will raise and satisfaction levels will reduce, affecting the environment and authority CPA score.

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8	Safety fence repairs	25	25	25	0	There is a high number of safety fences/barriers around the borough. Due to the nature of their use they do get damaged on a frequent basis. These then require to be repaired as a matter of urgency.	H	By not being able to repair damaged fencing, the council would be liable for any injury or damage caused from an accident.
11	Traffic signal maintenance	50	50	50	0	Costs of maintaining traffic lighting infrastructure.	H	Detrimental impact on BVPIs and congestion, and potential increase in road traffic accidents
12	Highways maintenance procurement strategy	125	100	25	0	The provision of highways maintenance in the borough is in need of a fundamental review and this money would facilitate a detailed options appraisal.	H	Inability to improve efficiency, deterioration in service delivery and a potential reduction in the councils CPA score and its ability to attain excellence.
13	Highways assets management planning	75	50	15	0	The need for a comprehensive AMP for all highway assets for July 2007 is a DfT requirement and incorporated into the LTP process. An annual AMP will need to be produced.	H	Non compliance with DfT requirement and potential loss of LTP resources.
14	Household waste recycling centres	500	500	500	0	Household Waste Recycling Ctre contract (currently managed by Biffa Waste Services), expires on 30th April 2006. The new contract will run for five years, 1 May 2006 to 31 March 2010. It will include the day to day management of 2 household waste & recycling centres, & transfer station - the council retaining ownership of materials and the contractor having responsibility for their transportation to reprocessing or disposal sites. Statutory waste management targets will put greater emphasis on the amounts of materials recycled and composted in order to reduce amounts of biodegradable waste	H	An increase in recycling is essential in the municipal and household waste streams as the UK is under a legal obligation under the European Landfill Directive to make a significant reduction in the amount of biodegradable municipal waste (BMW) sent to landfill. The Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme (LATS) came into effect in April 2005 and sets allowances that all Waste Authorities must adhere to or pay fines of £150 per tonne. Walsall's targets are detailed in below.
15	Borough wide garden waste collection	110	110	110		Approximately 42,000 low rise properties do not have access to a kerbside collection service of garden waste, although potentially 75% are eligible for the scheme. To operate at full capacity, 6 kerbside rounds collecting from 6,800 properties per week, would service 81,600 properties. Addressing the existing shortfall of 22,100 properties would cost £306,000. An initial phase to expand by 8,000 properties would cost £110,000, and would cater for known isolated locations on existing rounds and would respond to specific requests for the service, submitted to the council by residents.	M	With the introduction of the Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme (LATS) regulations within the Waste and Emissions Trading (WET) Act 2003, waste disposal authorities face financial penalties if they do not limit the amount of biodegradable waste going to landfill. Councils will be allowed to send decreasing percentages of waste to landfill, with surplus waste, if sent to landfill, being heavily fined (£150 per tonne over allowance). It is necessary therefore for all Councils, including Walsall, to continue developing their waste minimisation programmes.

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16	Borough wide garden waste collection - further expansion	200	200	200		b) A further £200,000 would facilitate full expansion of a kerbside collection service to all eligible properties i.e. the remaining 14,100.	H	With the introduction of the Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme (LATS) regulations within the Waste and Emissions Trading (WET) Act 2003, waste disposal authorities face financial penalties if they do not limit the amount of biodegradable waste going to landfill. Councils will be allowed to send decreasing percentages of waste to landfill, with surplus waste, if sent to landfill, being heavily fined (£150 per tonne over allowance). It is necessary therefore for all Councils, including Walsall, to continue developing their waste minimisation programmes.
17	Waste reduction and recycling campaign plan	55	55	55	0	To support the implementation and year on year development & delivery of the Waste Reduction & Recycling Campaign in order to better inform residents of services and positively promote and encourage waste reduction, recycling and re-use participation.	H	With the introduction of the Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme (LATS) regulations within the Waste and Emissions Trading (WET) Act 2003, waste disposal authorities face financial penalties if they do not limit the amount of biodegradable waste going to landfill. Councils will be allowed to send decreasing percentages of waste to landfill, with surplus waste, if sent to landfill, being heavily fined (£150 per tonne over allowance). It is necessary therefore for all Councils, including Walsall, to continue developing their waste minimisation programmes.
TOTAL - HIGH PRIORITY		1,500	1,475	1,365				
2	Walsall Markets This proposal corrects an ongoing shortfall in current income targets	110	110	50		It will enable the service to be modernised with a view to increasing income in future years. This proposal builds on the outcome of the recently completed markets review.	M	The service will continue to miss income targets leading to an inbuilt overspend. It will also affect the ability to transform the service which is urgently required.
9	Gritting of footways	25	25	25	0	Gritting of footways as part of winter maintenance duties for 2006/07 and beyond. Gritting of category 1 and 1a footpaths as part of winter maintenance legislation (footways leading to shopping areas). Period of gritting 1st November to 31st March and beyond if required.	M	Increase in injury insurance claims resulting in extra costs to the council. Non compliance with new legislation
18	Mainstream of community safety	40	40	40	2	External funding currently supporting the Community Safety team is due to fall out in 2006/07. This will facilitate the mainstreaming of those posts.	M	The Authority is required by section 17 of the Crime & Disorder Act 1998 to implement community safety policies.
TOTAL - MEDIUM PRIORITY		175	175	115				
3	Memorial safety	100	100	100	1	This requirement has arisen out of guidance provided by the Health & Safety Commission detailing concerns for memorial safety following fatalities around the UK. Memorials should be erected to National Association of Memorial Masons code of working practise meaning that when placing additional inscriptions on existing memorials adjacent headstones will have to be made stable and a Memorials Officer will be required to formulate and implement policies in relation to all aspects of Cemetery memorial management.	L	The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HSWA) requires Burial Authorities (as employers), to ensure not only the safety of their employees but also those not in their employment, that is members of the public, who might be affected by the way they conduct their undertaking. Also, the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require all employers to assess the risks to employees and non-employees, which are out of their undertaking.

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10	Local land charges searches	180	180	180	0	The amount of income from land searches has reduced due to a downturn in property purchases and competition from private search companies.	L	Potential loss of staff and down turn in performance of Walsall's path finding status in this area.
TOTAL - LOW PRIORITY		280	280	280				
TOTAL		1,955	1,930	1,760				

No.	BUDGET REDUCTION / EFFICIENCIES	ANNUAL NET COST			IMPACT ON STAFF No's	DETAILS OF BUDGET REDUCTION / EFFICIENCY	Priority H/M/L	CONSEQUENCES / RISKS OF BUDGET REDUCTION / EFFICIENCY
		2006/07 £000	2007/08 £000	2008/09 £000				
REGENERATION								
1	Reduce support for WBSP - in context of new NRF funding until March 2008	-85	-85	-85	0	Reduction in support to WBSP due to NRF funding	H	From March 2008 there are significant issues regarding the mainstreaming of the WBSP team if NRF does not continue
2	Black Country Consortium	-182	-182	-182	0	Reduction in contribution to Black Country consortium	H	The reduction is in line with Black Country Consortium's commitment from Walsall MBC
4	Additional income planning application fees	-235	-235	-235	0	Additional planning fees.	H	The amount of income is dependant upon the number and type of planning applications received and will be impacted upon by any downturn in economic activity which would result in the increased income level not being achieved.
5	Reduction in revenue funded highways maintenance	-450	-510	-510	0	Reduce revenue highways maintenance (this saving however assumes that the resources will be replaced via capital e.g. prudential funding)	H	Significant deterioration in revenue maintenance budget will have detrimental impact on the Councils ability to maintain the Councils highways network.
6	External sponsorship of traffic islands	-30	-30	-30	0	Planned to seek external sponsorship of road traffic islands - to be utilised by private companies for corporate advertising	H	N/A
7	Additional income from textiles recycling	-20	-20	-20	0	New strand of recycling materials not currently included within budget. Estimated 150 tonnes per year @ £115 per tonne	H	With the introduction of the Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme (LATS) regulations within the Waste and Emissions Trading (WET) Act 2003, waste disposal authorities face financial penalties if they do not limit the amount of biodegradable waste going to landfill. Councils will be allowed to send decreasing percentages of waste to landfill, with surplus waste, if sent to landfill, being heavily fined (£150 per tonne over allowance). It is necessary therefore for all Councils, including Walsall, to continue developing their waste minimisation programmes.
8	Increase in Fleet charges to external customers	-125	-125	-125	0	Increase in recharges to external customers.	H	Dependent on customer base being retained.
9	Coroner - impact of partnership working	-15	-15	-15	0	Cost efficiencies from working with other local authorities.	H	This is a demand led service so costs may exceed the available resources if there is an unexpected increase in the need for coroner services e.g. flu pandemic
13	Car parks water rates	-5	-5	-5	0	Actual costs are less than budget	H	N/A
14	General service efficiencies - grounds maintenance and street cleansing	-130	-130	-130	0	Carrying out additional works within current budget	H	N/A
15	Increase in charges for trade waste collection	-52	-52	-52	0	Trade waste service is currently subsidised to the value of £111k, rationalising trade waste collection charges would mean that this subsidy is no longer required as the service would be performing at a cost efficient rate.	H	Increasing charges for private businesses could result a reduction in demand for the service.
17	Reduction in CCTV operative budget	-40	-40	-40	1	Current budget is for 12 staff - budget only needed for 11	H	Potential impact on ability to provide comprehensive CCTV service.
18	Increase fees & charges - licensing / pest patrol	-20	-20	-20	0	Increase income from pest control and miscellaneous license fees.	H	Potential loss of business from higher fees.
20	Skips income	-5	-5	-5	0	New revenue stream from skip permits.	H	This will be dependent upon the number of applications received i.e. demand led.
TOTAL - HIGH PRIORITY/GO AHEAD		-1,394	-1,454	-1,454				
3	Increase in fees & charges - bereavement services	-115	-115	-115	0	Above inflationary increase in fees & charges	M	Without increased income the service will be unable to address both current cost demands e.g. memorial safety and future costs e.g. abatement equipment
12	Introduction of LNP based team working systems for grounds maintenance	-120	-120	-120	0	More costs effective operations enabling teams to undertake a range of tasks within one area, to raise quality of our prestige parks in line with customer expectations.	M	Potential impact on street pride operations and income, within the current contracted arrangements.
TOTAL - MEDIUM PRIORITY		-235	-235	-235				
10	Testing fees sampling - food samples and non-food samples	-15	-15	-15	0	Savings from microbiological testing fees.	L	The maintenance of a risk based food sampling programme is a component of BVPI No.166.
11	Works in default	-10	-10	-10	0	Reduction in works in default expenditure	L	More officer time to resolve certain complaints leading to long officer response times and a poorer service to public. Increased refuse in and around domestic premises.

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		2006/07 £000	2007/08 £000	2008/09 £000				
16	Re-tendering of winter maintenance service	-100	-100	-100	0	Alternative provision of Winter Maintenance service i.e. re-tendering contract in open competition	L	Re-tendering of the service may not generate the required level of savings
19	Car park maintenance	-20	-20	-20	0	Reduction in maintenance budget for council car parks.	L	Reduced standards of car parking facilities. Walsall's car parks are currently below the national standard and this represents 25% of the total budget. This reduction may hamper regeneration prospects and may lead to possible car park closures.
	TOTAL - LOW PRIORITY	-145	-145	-145				
	TOTAL	-1,774	-1,834	-1,834				