

Cabinet – 18 January 2006

Recommendations of the Community, Organisational Leisure and Culture Scrutiny and Performance Panel following budget consultation

Service Area: Community, organisational leisure and culture

Wards: All

Forward Plan: No

Summary of report

This report presents the comments and recommendations from the community, organisational, leisure and culture scrutiny & performance panel following consideration of the detailed service specific investment and efficiency choices at the meeting of the panel on 23 November and 8 December 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 cabinet ensure that the Local neighbourhood Partnerships (LNPs) are adequately funded to assist in delivering the priorities of the panel.
- (c) That cabinet ensure sufficient support and resourcing to increase community cohesion, as well as engagement.
- (d) That in respect of investment bid 4, community associations (CAs) older peoples funding, that funding is given direct to CAs and not to LNPs, and that CAs are made accountable for this funding. In addition, that further funding be made available to support under 13 year olds, as well as those over 19 years.

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 cohesion and engagement
- Parks
- LNPs.

The panel prioritised the investment options and the prioritised list is contained at Appendix 1. The panel decided not to prioritise the efficiency options, but made a number of comments about the proposals. These are included below.

The panel welcomed the proposed bid for Olympic scholarships, and requested that if successful, consideration should be given to review the overall funding with a view to increasing it in future years. The panel also requested further work be done in encouraging youth in this area, through offering an advisory service to potential future Olympians on sponsorship and other funding opportunities. In addition, closer ties should be forged by the Council with existing established sporting facilities and clubs and with partners to support Walsall youths.

In respect of Ready, Steady Summer, the panel welcomed funding being available, but were concerned about the limited funding proposal and the impact on the campaign if partners failed to identify match funding. The panel requested an update on the progress of discussions with partners at their February meeting, before making a final recommendation to cabinet.

The panel expressed a preference that in respect of investment number 4, that the funding go direct to community associations (CAs), rather than through LNPs. Some areas do not have CAs or the CA is not a member of the LNP.

The panel expressed the view that some LNPs were not working as effectively as they could and that adequate funding for LNPs should be in place to demonstrate that the Council is serious in its intention to engage the community and that in respect of the investment bid for community associations, Cabinet need to be clear that this funding is not specifically for LNPs. The panel requested further LNP based financial information for parks and libraries, for further consideration at their next budget meeting on 2 February 2006.

The panel expressed concerns about the level of efficiencies proposed relating to grounds maintenance (efficiency bid number 5) and the LNP consultancy budget (number 6). The panel requested further information on corporate wide consultancy budgets and corporate wide efficiency proposals in respect of consultancy costs for their February panel meeting.

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

Investment proposal bid 3, Ready, Steady, Summer, supports the community safety agenda.

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.

The panel requested a copy of the budget consultation questionnaire.

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.

Author

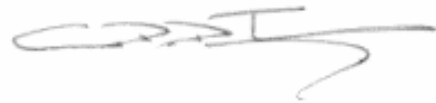
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Signed: -----

Executive Director: Carole Evans

Date: 20.12.05



Signed: -----

Councillor C Towe - Chair of Panel

Date: 20.12.05

BUDGET REDUCTIONS AND EFFICIENCIES

Appendix 1

No.	BUDGET REDUCTION / EFFICIENCIES	ANNUAL NET COST			IMPACT ON STAFF No's	DETAILS OF BUDGET REDUCTION / EFFICIENCY	CONSEQUENCES / RISKS OF BUDGET REDUCTION / EFFICIENCY
		2006/07 £000	2007/08 £000	2008/09 £000			
	NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES						
1	Increased income from events admission fees	-30	-30	-30	0	Reduce the events programme costs due to increased admission fees and supporting application for external grant income that is event related.	Potential for negative impact on event attendance, service profile and satisfaction.
2	Increased fees & charges - sports facilities, pitches etc	-15	-15	-15	0	Increases in fees and charges for use of council leisure facilities	Potential negative impact on inclusivity by pricing smaller clubs and organisations out of the service, reduced competitiveness and take up of services.
3	General service reductions/efficiencies - arts events and tourism	-25	-25	-25	0	Reduction in front line services and performance programmes.	Potential for negative impact on event attendance, service profile and satisfaction.
4	General service reductions/efficiencies - art gallery	-20	-20	-20	0	Removal of lighting maintenance from external contractor, reducing utility costs by efficiency monitoring, General maintenance saving, Reduce spend on the purchase of new artwork, General reduction on marketing, General reduction on audience development spend	The transfer of in house lighting maintenance will reduce the gallery technicians time for other duties. The reduction in planned maintenance may lead to higher repair costs in future years. Missing the opportunity to purchase new art work which is relevant and valuable to the collection. The risk of reduction in visitor numbers. The risk of missing out on the development of new audiences.
5	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.	Potential impact on street pride operations and income, within the current contracted arrangements.
6	Reduction in LNP consultancy costs	-10	-10	-10	0	General budget reduction in LNP budget for consultancy costs	Reduced capacity to bring in expertise relating to the development of LNPs
7	Increase in vacancy management for non PTCF leisure & culture staff	-115	-115	-115	0	Increase in vacancy management allowance within Leisure and Cultural Services staffing budgets	Levels of budgeted vacancy management not achieved but conversely impact on service levels if vacancies not filled.
	TOTAL	-335	-335	-335			

NEW INVESTMENT

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	
NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES								
1	Olympic scholarship	20	20	20	0	Bursary to fund development of local potential elite athletes towards participation in London 2012	H	None
2	Parkforce initiatives	60	60	60	2	Funding to comply with the CABESPACE "Parkforce" initiative to increase the park ranger workforce by 2 staff.	H	Potential for dissatisfaction with parks & open spaces, increased vandalism, leading to increased costs for maintenance and rectification.
3	Ready Steady Summer	50	50	50	0	To provide a co-ordinated programme of activities for children and young people, in all areas of the borough, during the summer holidays 2006. The programme aims to alleviate the boredom of the summer holidays and channel young people into positive activity thus offering experiences and opportunities which will improve, enhance life chances.	H	In the previous 3 years (2002 – 2005), the summer activities programme has been jointly funded by Walsall MBC (£200,000) and the Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership (£250,000) The commitment of the Borough Strategic Partnership has now come to an end and as yet no further support has been promised. A letter from the SBP received in July indicates that NRF funding "should not be relied on to support existing programmes and robust exit strategies should be identified".
4	Community associations	200	200	200	0	Programme of initiatives agreed through LNP's to improve activities and facilities for older people, following realignment of resources to support youth services.	H	CA's would be unable to offer services to older people in these locations.
TOTAL		330	330	330				