

Results of budget engagement

100 Day Budget Survey

Who did we consult?

Throughout September we carried out some wide ranging consultation with the local community on the proposed changes to this year's budget. This comprised a 2 sided questionnaire which focused on the proposals that would have most of an impact on the community. The survey was made available for people in the following ways:

- An online survey on the Council's website (www.telford.gov.uk/budgetsurvey)
- A postal survey to just over 1000 local residents who are members of our Community Panel.
- Engagement events at various locations across the borough. This included markets, shopping centres, fun days (like Park Live and the World Heritage Festival), Mecca Bingo, Princess Royal Hospital, Telford Bus Station and the Odeon Cinema.
- Meetings with a range of internal and external groups/forums

To support this we promoted the survey in the Your Views Matter leaflet which was distributed to 68,500 households across the borough – a joint distribution with the electoral papers. The survey was also promoted from the Your Views Matter homepage on the Council's website at www.telford.gov.uk/yourviewsmatter and press releases went out in the local papers.

Responses

- A total of 669 responses were received by the closing date of 30 September 2011.
- Of those responses, 525 were from members of the Community Panel (a 49.8% response rate) and 144 were from other borough residents.
- Responses were received from residents of all of the borough's 33 wards, with the highest levels of participation coming from Ketley & Oakengates (7.9%), Wrockwardine (4.8%) and Hadley & Leegomery (4.5%). The lowest levels of participation were in Malinslee, Arleston and Dothill (all 1.3%).
- Of those that provided personal details:
 - 40% were female and 46% were male (14% did not divulge this information).
 - The largest number of respondents (19.6%) came from the 65 – 74 age group
 - Some 21% (142 respondents) indicated they had a longer term illness

What did people tell us?

The survey focused on 7 proposals that were most relevant to the general public. For each proposal, respondents were asked to indicate from a range of options how strongly they agreed or disagreed. The below table sets out briefly what these proposals were along with the responses to each proposal:

Proposal	Positive support (Agree/ strongly agree)	Negative support (Disagree/ strongly disagree)	Net Score (positive less negative)	Neither	Don't Know
Invest more in maintaining roads and pavements over the next 2 years	88.9%	5.4%	83.5%	4.8%	1.0%
With other local business people, set up a loans fund of £250,000 to support small local businesses (the Council will contribute £25,000 towards the total)	76.2%	10.7%	65.5%	11.1%	2.0%
Not going ahead with building a new Civic Offices in the Town Centre	75.3%	18.4%	56.9%	4.0%	2.3%
Revise the Town Centre redevelopment scheme. The main changes are to add a new multi-storey car park and to keep Meeting Point House in its current location.	73.2%	15.0%	58.1%	8.9%	2.9%
Reinstate free swimming for under 16s with a flexcard	67.3%	21.1%	46.2%	9.9%	1.7%
Revised regeneration work in Newport (some but not all of the original proposals)	65.7%	14.3%	51.4%	12.4%	7.6%
Revised regeneration work in Oakengates (not including the original proposal to demolish a number of units to create a new approach to the Theatre from Market Street)	64.5%	12.4%	52.1%	13.8%	9.3%

Summary of these results:

- All proposals received a minimum of 64% approval from those responding
- The highest level of support (88.9%) was for the proposal to invest more money in maintaining roads and pavements. Most of the comments received in this area were supportive with many respondents suggesting additional improvements. There was a feeling that maintenance of roads was more of a priority than traffic management projects.
- The majority of respondents supported the revised regeneration schemes for Oakengates (64.5%) and Newport (65.7%) but of those that did not agree with the proposals:
 - For Newport there was dissatisfaction with the perceived 'scaling back' of regeneration plans, and wider concerns about additional housing and retail developments.
 - For Oakengates some welcomed the regeneration scheme but felt more help was required to stimulate businesses and trade. A small number thought that the investment was a waste of money.

Both these proposals also attracted the greatest level of 'neutral' responses, i.e. 'Don't Know' or 'Neither'.

- The majority of respondents supported the proposal to restore free swimming for Under 16 (67.3%) but it also attracted the largest 'negative' response (21.1% disapproval). Out of all the proposals in this survey, this was the one that people queried the most given the current

financial climate. Of those that didn't agree with the proposal, it was felt that parents/schools should pay, or that free swimming should be available to other groups e.g. senior citizens or that a nominal fee should be charged for all.

- The majority of respondents supported the proposal not to build a new Civic Offices (75.3%). Of those respondents that commented, some felt the Council should utilise existing empty office space by council staff, whilst some wanted to know if there would be inefficiencies from not having council staff in one central location. A small proportion also perceived the need for a 'flagship' civic building in the borough.
- The majority of respondents supported the revised plans to the Town Centre redevelopment (73.2%). There was some agreement with the utilisation of Meeting Point House and some respondents felt there was a need for private enterprise in the redevelopment. Others didn't feel the need for additional car parking.
- The majority of respondents welcomed the proposal to set up a Small Business Loans Fund, (76.2%). Comments largely reflected the need for encouragement and support. A small number of respondents felt that the Banks should provide loans, rather than the local authority.

Suggestion Box

This is work in progress. To date we have received over 700 suggestions from people telling us how they think the Council could save money, do things differently or more efficiently. When looked at overall, these suggestions fall into 5 main categories:

- Reducing costs associated with employees/Councillors;
- Reducing/changing services;
- Getting the best price for services;
- Bringing in more money;
- Efficiencies – cutting out red tape/waste

These suggestions have been brought together with suggestions made by employees and have been reviewed by the Senior Management Team. Heads of Service and Members are now identifying which suggestions can be taken forward as additional savings options.

Our aim will be to publish our responses to the suggestions received as part of the 12/13 Budget Strategy (to be considered by Cabinet on 22 December 2011).

Budget Calculator

We received approximately 100 responses to this. The online tool allowed people to have a go at balancing the Council's budget against their own priorities, seeing the impact these changes had on Council Tax levels and possible changes to service delivery. Participants were also able to adjust levels of income (fees and charges) and borrowing and were asked to prioritise areas of capital spend. Headline results show that:

- On average, participants reduced the average total net budget by £1.82m (from £128m to £126.18m);
- On average, participants reduced Council Tax by 3.97%;
- The 3 areas where the highest % of participants increased spend were Roads & Transport (43%), Children's & Families Service (25%) and Jobs & Skills (25%);

- The 3 areas where the highest % of participants decreased spend were Leisure & Culture (43%), Housing & Planning (40%) and Jobs & Skills (37%) NB so a higher % of participants decreased than increased spend on jobs and skills;
- On average, participants slightly increased levels of income by £0.39m (from £82 m to £82.39m);
- On average, participants reduced levels of borrowing by £11.85m (from £55m to £43.15m);
- The areas that the highest % of people identified in their 'Top 3' areas of capital spend were repairs to roads and footpaths (77%), improving schools (49%) and improvements to borough towns (46%).

Shaping the Future

This Borough wide consultation asked approximately 2,800 local people what matters most to them about the Borough, what are the main problems/worries for people and what they felt needed to change. The results of this major programme of public consultation has influenced the shared draft Vision for the Borough.

The questionnaire was made available for people in the following ways:

- An online survey on the Council's website (www.telford.gov.uk/yourviewsmatter)
- A postal survey to just over 1000 local residents who are members of our Community Panel.
- Engagement events at various locations across the borough e.g. community days and events, markets, shopping and town centres.
- Key places that people go to e.g. Mecca Bingo, Princess Royal Hospital, Telford Bus and Train Station, the Ice Rink and the Odeon Cinema.
- Meetings with a range of internal and external groups/forums.
- Faith settings.
- A wide range of children and young people's groups and clubs.
- Through schools and youth clubs and support services for children and young people.

To support this we promoted the survey in the Your Views Matter leaflet which was distributed to 68,500 households across the borough – a joint distribution with the electoral papers. The survey was also promoted from the Your Views Matter homepage on the Council's website at www.telford.gov.uk/yourviewsmatter and press releases went out in the local papers.

We also ensured we targeted Black and ethnic minority people, children and young people, disabled people and older people as well as employees, parish and town and ward councillors and partners.

Headline results show that:

The things the respondents most liked about the Borough were:

- Green spaces - the green open spaces in the Borough and the proximity to the countryside wherever you live and the parks and play areas.
- Heritage and history – from the Gorge through to the market towns and the Borough Towns too.
- Shopping and leisure opportunities – the choice and range of facilities.

The view of children and young people was very similar, as well as green spaces and shopping and leisure opportunities, they identified Telford Town Centre as one of the best things about the Borough – in terms of a place to go and activities available there.

The biggest worries and problems in the Borough were:

- Crime and anti-social – although crime and anti-social behaviour rates have fallen, people told us that this was still a major concern across the Borough.
- Jobs and the economy – there is a real concern about the impact of the recession and the need for the local economy to grow to provide jobs for local people.
- Maintenance of the environment – making sure that the Borough and its neighbourhoods and streets are clean, roads in good repair, graffiti removed etc.

Children and young people highlighted these same three issues they wanted to see improved in the Borough.

The key areas that respondents wanted to see change were:

- Improved rates of crime and anti-social behaviour.
- More things for children and young people to do.
- Maintenance of the Borough's and neighbourhood's environment – cleanliness of streets and neighbourhoods, roads in good repairs, graffiti removed etc.

Children and young people highlighted these same three issues they wanted to see improved in the Borough.

The following pages of 'infographics' visually highlight the findings of the consultation. This is a technique know as Wordle - the larger the word the more people said it.