

East Herts Council Budget Consultation 2010

East Herts Council is committed to effective consultation when setting each year's budget. The consultation activity with regard to setting the 2011/12 budget is detailed below. The objectives of the exercise were to:

- Get a steer from the public on what we should, and shouldn't be, spending money on as a council
- Gain an understanding of which service areas should be prioritised over others
- Consider areas where higher savings could be made
- Convey how difficult it is to make the budget balance.

Project outline and implementation

East Herts Council engaged with the public, businesses and Councillors around the budget through a series of consultation exercises;

- An online budget simulator (Delib) was placed on our website and promoted through various channels e.g. website, press releases, as well as a direct mailout to 1500 members of our Citizens Panel. It was available to all members of the public. A short video setting the scene was also available. At the time of writing the report the simulator is still open to the public.
- The Delib simulator was sent out to business contacts.
- Four focus groups were held with groups that have access issues and may therefore be affected if certain proposals were agreed, (The first focus group was conducted with representatives of the disabled community in East Herts (Hertford Action on Disability), and the second was held with the elderly at a Circle Anglia Sheltered Housing Scheme. The third focus group was held with the East Herts Ethnic Minority Forum. The final focus group was held at a sheltered housing scheme in Watton at Stone. We were unable due to timings to hold a meeting with Bishop's Stortford Action on Disability.
- A separate exercise was held with all Councillors. This was an online consultation which made available online all the budget options. Councillors were able to comment on each option in a web forum.

The consultation activity was carried out between November and December 2010. All groups (excluding the Councillors forum) were asked to discuss the following:

- Police Community Support Officers
- Community Grants and Funding
- Public Consultation/ Public meetings and Council meetings
- Public toilets
- Homeless help
- Support for museums, the arts and other cultural activities in East Herts.

Online Budget Simulator

The online budget simulator was open from 22 November and closed on 17 December.

We were limited as to the level of promotion we could undertake due to the pre election period from 7 October 2010 to 23 December 2010 which restricted local government publicity.

Articles did appear in the local press over the period 11 November 2010 to 16 December 2010. Coverage included articles in the Hertfordshire Mercury, the Hertfordshire Observer and the Bishop's Stortford Scene.

In total 173 responses were received. We had a good range of responses covering all major areas and age groups. The highest response rate was from Hertford at 27% (46). There were 38 (22%) responses from Bishop's Stortford. Our other towns made up 16% of the responses, Ware had 14, Buntingford 11 and Sawbridgeworth 4. 11% of respondents were from our rural areas and 23% did not state a location. A breakdown of responses by area can be seen below:

Area	Total responses
Bishop's Stortford	21.6% (38)
Hertford	26.2% (46)
Sawbridgeworth	2.3% (4)
Ware	8% (14)
Buntingford	6.3% (11)
Rural areas	10.8% (19)
Blanks	22.8% (40)

The majority, at 81% (140), of respondents classified themselves as White British. 4% (8) classified themselves as White Other. 0.6% (1) classified themselves as White Irish. 13.2% (23) did not state their ethnic category. This suggests the response rate from ethnic groups other than 'White British' is higher than the current known breakdown of the district.

The majority of respondents were male, 55% (95). 56 females responded, 32%. 2 (1.1%) respondents did not wish to say their gender and 20 (12%) left the section blank.

At 25% (44) the majority of respondents were aged between the 55- 64 age group. The lowest number of respondents were from the 18-24 age group.

Age	Total responses
18-24	1.14% (2)
25 – 34	8% (14)
35 -44	10.3% (18)

45 – 54	19.4% (34)
55-64	25.1% (44)
65+	22.2% (39)
Rather not say	1.14% (2)
Blanks	11.4% (20)

Police Community Support Officers

Three out of four respondents favoured making cuts to this spending area.

78% (135) agreed that spending could be reduced compared to 22% (38) who wished to maintain spending in this area. However the level of reduction varied – the highest preference at 28% (49) was to see spending in this area reduced by 100%.

This was followed by 9.8% (17) supporting a 10% reduction, 9.24% (16) supporting a 50% reduction, 8.7% (15) supporting a 20% reduction, 5.8% (10) supporting a 30% reduction, 4.04% (7) supporting a 60% and a 70% reduction, 3.5% (6) supporting an 80% reduction, 2.9% (5) supporting a 40% reduction and 1.7% (3) supporting a 90% reduction.

There was no significant area difference between those who wished to maintain the spending and those who agreed to a 100% reduction.

There was no significant gender difference between those who wished to maintain the spending and those who agreed to a 100% reduction. However the number of males that agreed to the 100% reduction was nearly double the number that wished to retain the spending.

Those aged 55+ were twice as likely to support a 100% reduction in this area than support a 100% retention.

Community Grants and Funding – Sports

Nine out of 10 respondents favoured making cuts to this spending area.

92% (160) agreed that spending could be reduced compared with 7.5% (13) who wished to maintain spending in this area. However the level of reduction varied – the highest preference at 22.5% (39) was to see spending in this area reduced by 100%.

This was followed by 16% (28) supporting a 50% reduction, 12.7% (22) supporting a 10% reduction, 10.4% (18) supporting a 20% reduction. 6.4% (11) supporting a 70% and 80% reduction, 5.8% (10) supporting a 60%

reduction, 4.6% (8) supporting a 40% and a 90% reduction, and 2.9% (5) supporting a 30% reduction.

There were no significant gender differences with the majority of both males and females opting to reduce the spending in this area by 50 or more percent.

Respondents in the West of the district were more likely to support a 100% reduction in this area.

Those aged 55 and above were ten times more likely to reduce the funding by 100% rather than retain it by 100%.

Community Grants and Funding – Supporting our towns and encouraging businesses.

Eight out of 10 respondents favoured making cuts to this spending area. There was no clear majority indicating a particular preference.

The percentage of people that wanted to retain 100% of spending at 16.2% (28) was the same as those that wished to cut it by 100%. 13% (23) of respondents wished to reduce spending by 50%.

This was followed by 11% (19) supporting a 60% reduction, 8.7% (15) supporting a 20% reduction, 7.5% (13) supporting a 70% reduction, 6.9% (12) supporting a 30% reduction, 6.3% (11) supporting a 40% and an 80% reduction, 5.8% (10) supporting a 10% reduction and 1.7% (3) supporting a 90% reduction.

There were no significant gender, age or area based differences.

Community Grants and Funding – Funding for the Arts

Nine out of 10 respondents favoured making cuts in this area.

92.5% (160) agreed that spending could be reduced compared with 7.5% (13) who wished to maintain spending in this area. However the level of reduction varied – the highest preference at 28.9% (50) was to see spending in this area reduced by 100%.

This was followed by 12.7% (22) supporting an 80% reduction, 9.8% (17) supporting a 50% reduction, 8.7% (15) supporting an 10% reduction, 6.9% (12) supporting a 70% reduction, 5.2% (9) supporting a 20% 30% 60% and 90% reduction and 4.6% (8) supporting a 40% reduction.

There was no significant gender difference; however the number of males that wished to reduce the spending by 100% (29) is significantly higher than those who wished to retain 100% of spending (2).

There were no significant age or area based differences.

Community Grants and Funding – Community Revenue Grants

Nine out of 10 respondents favoured making cuts in this area.

90.2% (156) who agreed that spending could be reduced compared with 9.8% (17) who wished to maintain spending in this area.. However the level of reduction varied – the highest preference at 26% (45) was to see spending in this area reduced by 100%.

This was followed by 12.7% (22) supporting a 50% reduction, 10.4% (18) supporting a 10% reduction, 8.0% (14) supporting an 30% reduction, 6.3 (11) supporting a 40% and an 80% reduction, 5.8% (10) supporting a 60% reduction, 5.2% (9) supporting a 20% and a 70% reduction and 4% (7) supporting a 90% reduction.

There were no significant gender, age or area based differences.

Community Grants and Funding – Museums

Nine out of 10 respondents favoured making cuts in this area.

90.2% (156) agreed that spending could be reduced compared with 9.8% (17) who wished to maintain spending in this area. However the level of reduction varied – the highest preference at 24.2% (42) was to see spending in this area reduced by 100%.

This was followed by 10.4% (18) supporting a 10%, 50% and 60% reduction, 7.5% (13) supporting an 80% reduction, 6.9% (12) supporting a 20% reduction, 6.3% (11) supporting a 30% reduction, 5.8 (10) supporting a 90% and a 70% reduction and 2.3% (4) supporting a 40% reduction.

There were no significant age or area based differences. The number of males that would support a 100% reduction is more than treble the number that wished to maintain 100% of spending in this area.

Community Grants and Funding – Festive Parties

Nine out of 10 respondents favoured making cuts in this area.

89% (154) agreed that spending could be reduced compared with 11% (19) who wished to maintain spending in this area.. However the level of reduction varied – the highest preference at 43% (74) was to see spending in this area reduced by 100%.

This was followed by 10.4% (18) supporting an 80% reduction, 8% (14) supporting a 90% reduction, 6.9% (12) supporting a 10% reduction, 4.6% (8) supporting a 50% reduction, 4% (7) supporting a 60% reduction, 3.5% (6) supporting a 20% and a 70% reduction, 2.9% (5) supporting a 30% reduction and 2.3% (4) supporting a 40% reduction.

There were no significant gender or area based differences. Those ages 55+ were significantly more likely to support a 100% reduction in this area rather than to retain 100% of spending.

Community Grants and Funding – Engagement with children and young people

Eight out of 10 respondents favoured making cuts in this area.

83.8% (145) agreed that spending could be reduced compared with 16.2% (28) who wished to maintain spending in this area.. However the level of reduction varied – the highest preference at 22% (38) was to see spending in this area reduced by 100%.

This was followed by 11% (19) supporting a 10% reduction, 10.4% (18) supporting a 50% reduction, 8.7% (15) supporting a 60% reduction, 7.5% (13) supporting a 30% and a 70% reduction, 4.6% (8) supporting a 20% 40% and an 80% reduction and 2.9% (5) supporting a 90% reduction.

There were no significant area, gender or age based differences.

Public Consultation

Nine out of 10 respondents favoured making cuts to this spending area.

91.3% (158) agreed that spending could be reduced compared with 8.7% (15) who wished to maintain spending in this area.. However the level of reduction varied – the highest preference at 22.5% (39) was to see spending in this area reduced by 100%.

This was followed by 14% (24) supporting a 50% reduction, 11% (19) supporting a 70% reduction, 9.2% (16) supporting an 80% reduction, 8.1% (14) supporting a 60% reduction, 7.5% (13) supporting a 90% reduction, 5.2 (9) supported a 20% reduction and 4.6% (8) supported a 10%, 30% and 40% reduction.

There was no significant gender difference between those who wished to maintain the spending and those who agreed to a 100% reduction. However the number of males that agreed to the 100% reduction at 22 was significantly higher than the number that wished to retain the spending at 2.

Those based in the east of the district were more likely to support a 100% reduction in this area than those in the west.

Council meetings

Nine out of 10 respondents favoured making cuts to this spending area.

91.3% (158) agreed that spending could be reduced, compared with 8.7% (15) who wished to maintain spending in this area.. However the level of

reduction varied – the highest preference at 28.3% (49) was to see spending in this area reduced by 100%.

This was followed by 11% (19) supporting a 60% reduction, 10.4% (18) supporting an 80% reduction, 8.7% (15) supporting a 70% reduction, 6.9% (12) supporting a 40% reduction, 6.4% (11) supporting a 30% and a 50% reduction, 5.2% (9) supporting a 90% reduction, 4.6% (8) supporting a 10% reduction and 3.5% (6) supporting a 20% reduction.

There was no significant gender difference between those who wished to maintain the spending and those who agreed to a 100% reduction. However the number of males that agreed to the 100% reduction at 22 was significantly higher than the number that wished to retain the spending at 2.

There were no significant age or area based differences.

Public meetings

Nine out of 10 respondents favoured making cuts in this area.

93.1% (161) agreed that spending could be reduced compared with 6.9% (12) who wished to maintain spending in this area.. However the level of reduction varied – the highest preference at 32.4% (56) was to see spending in this area reduced by 100%.

This was followed by 11% (19) supporting an 80% reduction, 8.7% (15) supporting a 70% reduction, 8.1% (14) supporting a 50% reduction, 6.9 (12) supporting a 60% reduction, 5.8 (10) supporting a 90% reduction, 5.2% (9) supporting a 10% 30% and 40% reduction and 4.6% (8) supporting a 20% reduction.

There was no significant gender difference between those who wished to maintain the spending and those who agreed to a 100% reduction. However the number of males that agreed to the 100% reduction at 32 was significantly higher than the number that wished to retain the spending at 3.

There were no significant age or area based differences.

Public toilets

Eight out of 10 respondents favoured making cuts in this area.

81% (140) agreed that spending could be reduced compared with 19% (33) who wished to maintain spending in this area.. However the level of reduction varied – the highest preference at 20% (35) was to see spending in this area reduced by 100%.

This was followed by 9.7% (17) supporting a 10% reduction, 8.6% (15) supporting a 70% reduction, 8% (14) supporting a 50% and 60% reduction, 7.4% (13) supporting a 20% reduction, 6.3% (11) supporting an 80%

reduction, 5.7% (10) supporting a 40% reduction, 3.4% (6) supporting a 90% reduction and 2.9% (5) supporting a 30% reduction.

Those based in the West of the district were more likely to support a 100% reduction than those in the East. There were no gender differences. Those aged 65+ were significantly more likely to support retaining 100% of spending in this area.

Homeless help

Seven out of 10 respondents favoured making cuts in this area.

77.2% (133) agreed that spending could be reduced compared with 22.8% (40) who wished to maintain spending in this area.. The highest preference was to retain 100% of spending in this area. However the level of reduction varied.

Out of the 77.2% that favoured making cuts, the highest preference 15.4 (27) was for a 50% reduction. This was followed by 14.8% (26) supporting a 100% reduction, 10.3% (18) supporting a 10% reduction, 7.4% (13) supporting a 60% reduction, 6.3% (11) supporting a 70% reduction, 5.1 (9) supporting a 30% and 40% reduction, 4% (7) supporting an 80% and 90% reduction and 3.4 (6) supporting a 20% reduction.

There were no significant age, area or gender based differences.

Support for museums, the arts and other cultural activities in East Herts

Nine out of 10 respondents favoured making cuts in this area.

93.7% (162) who agreed that spending could be reduced compared with 6.3% (11) who wished to maintain spending in this area.. However the level of reduction varied – the highest preference at 25.1% (44) was to see spending in this area reduced by 100%.

This was followed by 13.1% (23) supporting an 80% reduction, 11.4 (20) supporting a 60% reduction, 9.7% (17) supporting a 10% reduction, 8% (14) supporting a 50% reduction, 6.8% (12) supporting a 90% reduction, 6.3% (11) supporting a 70% reduction, 5.1 (9) supporting a 20% reduction, 4% (7) supporting a 30% reduction and 2.9 (5) supporting a 40% reduction.

There was no significant gender difference between those who wished to maintain the spending and those who agreed to a 100% reduction. However the number of males that agreed to the 100% reduction at 22 was significantly higher than the number that wished to retain the spending at 3.

There were no significant area based differences however respondents based in the East were significantly more likely to support a 100% reduction than to retain the spending at 100%.

There were no significant age based differences.

The proposals, ranked by highest preference for identifying savings is:

1. Support for museums, the arts and other cultural activities
2. Public meetings
3. Funding for the Arts/ funding for sports activities
4. Public consultation/ Council meetings
5. Funding for museums/ community revenue grants
6. Funding for Christmas parties
7. Engagement with children and young people
8. Public toilets
9. Police Community Support Officers
10. Homeless help
11. Support for our towns and encouraging businesses.

Other areas that were mentioned:

Areas suggested by respondents where savings could potentially be made include:

- Councillors allowances
- Reduce senior management numbers/ salaries

Business Consultation

The link to the online budget simulator was sent out to East Herts Council business contacts (approx 7 different organisations which represent a large number of people) with an introductory email which asked them to identify on the simulator if they were responding on behalf of a business.

The Federation of Small Businesses provided a response:

- Police Community Support Officers – Retain 100% of spending.
- Support for our towns and encouraging businesses – Retain 100% of spending.
- Homeless help – Reduce spending by 50%
- Engagement with children and young people – Reduce spending by 70%.
- Funding for museums – Reduce spending by 80%
- Public consultation – Reduce spending by 90%.
- Council meetings – Reduce spending by 90%.
- Public toilets – Reduce spending by 90%
- Support for museums, the arts and other cultural activities – Reduce spending by 100%.
- Public meetings – Reduce spending by 100%
- Funding for the Arts – Reduce spending by 100%.

- Funding for sports activities – Reduce spending by 100%.
- Community revenue grants – Reduce spending by 100%.
- Funding for festive party grants – Reduce spending by 100%

Focus Groups

East Herts Minority Ethnic Forum

Two officers attended the East Herts Ethnic Minority Forum to discuss the options. However the group is a new group and the turnout was low. This coupled with the short amount of time available on the agenda meant that officers could only present the options to the group and promote the use of the online budget simulator.

The chair of the meeting agreed to send out an email to the local contacts, approximately 150, explaining the online exercise and its importance to help promote the use of the tool.

Despite the response rate from ethnic minority groups being high compared to the district position, the response rate was still too small to analyse separately, therefore it is also important to refer to the overall findings.

Circle Anglia Sheltered Housing Scheme – Much Hadham

Four officers attended a meeting specifically set up to discuss the budget proposals at a sheltered housing scheme. The officers talked through the options and then noted the comments received for each proposal. In total there were approximately 25 participants.

Police Community Support Officers

- The group commented that they had not seen the current PCSOs and therefore questioned the value of retaining one.
- They felt that it was important to have in place sufficient community safety initiatives and therefore suggested that the funding could be ring fenced to this.

Community Grants and Funding

- The group felt it was important to retain spending on sports and the arts.
- They agreed that as the funding for the Christmas parties was only £1 per head that this would not achieve a lot and therefore this is an area where saving could be made.

Public Consultation/ Public meetings and Council meetings

- The group agreed that there were other ways the Council could communicate with residents without the need for public meetings.
- They recognised the value in consulting with the public however the group was open to cheaper alternatives.

Public toilets

- The group had mixed opinions on the need to retain public toilets. There was an agreement that the spending equated to a lot of money however they felt that it was still important to have some sort of toilet provision. They were keen that the Council continues to look for cheaper alternatives.

Homeless help

- Whilst the group saw this as an important pot of money they agreed that there should be an agree repayment time and a minimal interest rate applied.

Support for museums, the arts and other cultural activities in East Herts

- The group agreed that East Herts should look to step back from projects which were well established and where volunteer could run them instead.

Other areas that were mentioned:

- The group raised concerns over cuts to the Supporting People monies that provide assistance to individuals at their scheme. These were passed to the appropriate service.

Circle Anglia Sheltered Housing Scheme – Watton at Stone

Three officers attended a meeting specifically set up to discuss the budget proposals at a sheltered housing scheme. The officers talked through the options and then noted the comments received for each proposal. In total there were approximately 10 participants.

Police Community Support Officers

- The group agreed that Hertfordshire should make more use of specials
- The group felt that retaining one officer (or 2 part time equivalents) would mean that they were too thinly spread to make any impact.
- They did not believe that retaining the PCSOs would be value for money

Community Grants and Funding

- The group would support temporary cuts for the arts and museums.
- They agreed that it is more important to support businesses in Hertford
- Arts events could make more use of school halls to keep costs down
- They felt there was a need to support sports activities, especially with current obesity issues
- The recurring theme throughout the focus group was to keep grants for the “living” – ie people that are helped as individuals directly by support.

Public Consultation/ Public meetings and Council meetings

- The group stated that the council should look to do as much consultation in house as possible rather than paying for consultants to do it.
- The group felt that evening council meetings aren't accessible due to lack of public transport. For example buses in Watton stop at 7pm. Day time meetings would be easier for people to get to.

- The group agreed that public meetings are not a very cost effective method for getting the council message across.

Public toilets

- The group agreed that the Council should keep the toilets open until there is a partnership agreement.
- They also felt that there was a need to have disabled toilets too.

Homeless help

- The group were keen to retain spending in this area as it directly helps people. They would prefer to see spending here than in the arts.

Support for museums, the arts and other cultural activities in East Herts

- The group felt that there was a lot of spending in this area and that where possible the Council should look for more external funding.

Other areas that were mentioned:

- Support for the elderly who do not live in supported residential housing.

Hertford Action on Disability

Two officers met with representatives of the Hertford Action on Disability Group. The budget options were presented and then using the online consultation tool the participants fed back their opinions.

Police Community Support Officers

- The group wished to retain spending in this area.

Community Grants and Funding

- The group wished to retain spending in this area.

Public Consultation/ Public meetings and Council meetings

- The group agreed on a 100% reduction in public meetings and council meetings and a 50% reduction in public consultation spending.

Public toilets

- The group were most passionate about this area and wished to retain spending.

Homeless help

- The group wished to retain spending in this area.

Support for museums, the arts and other cultural activities in East Herts

- The group agreed a 100% reduction in spending in this area.

Other areas that were mentioned:

- The group raised concerns over highways maintenance which were passed to Hertfordshire County Council. They also had concerns that spending should be maintained for public parks and open spaces.

Councillors Forum

The forum was available to Members between 01 November and 26 November 2010. It contained all the 2011 budget proposals which were grouped under 14 service categories. The forum was promoted through the Members Information Bulletin and via email. Support was on hand should it

have been requested to help Members engage with the new scrutiny process. The Liberal Democrat Group replied collectively therefore the comments below may represent the views of an individual Councillor or a group.

Listed below are the responses provided for each budget option.

Revenues and Benefits

Further shared service savings

- Four questions were raised asking for more information on the implications for staffing and an explanation on how savings will be achieved. A response was issued by the Head of Service.

Discretionary rate relief

- One comment did not support the proposal.

Reduction in supplies and services – printing

- One question was raised asking for a breakdown of the £13,000 and the Head of Service responded.

Increase in recoverable over payment of housing benefits

- One comment indicated that the proposal was too speculative to be realistic. It also queried how the £100,000 was arrived at for 2012. A response was issued by the Head of Service.

Strategic Direction

Reduction in Public Consultation budget base

- Two comments supported the proposal that the expenditure on public consultation could be reduced without impacting negatively on the intelligence gained.

Deletion of Graduate Trainee Post

- One comment supported the proposal.

Reduction in Supplies and Services codes within the Chief Executive and Corporate Support Team

- One comment supported the proposal.

Reduction in Performance and Communications activities - service savings

- One comment 'regrettably' agreed with the proposal.

Customer Services and New Media

Reduce/consolidate ongoing web support

- One comment supported the proposal.

Community and Cultural Services

Reduce ancillary admin spend for Community and Culture

- There was one request for clarity. A response was issued by the Head of Service.

Reduction of total spend on community and culture, grants, subscriptions and discretionary commissioning by approx 5%

- Two comments expressed reluctance to cut more and instead wished to protect spending on the arts.

Reduce and consolidate senior management resource

- One comment agreed with the proposal.

Review the Hertford Theatre management structure with effect from June 2011

- One comment agreed with the proposal.

Rationalise and consolidate the range of community and culture activities and projects undertaken

- One comment stated "given that 39k has been already allocated and in view of "Big Government" proposals which will impact on the voluntary sector, to reduce further would be inappropriate at this time".

Environmental Services

Additional income from the sale of recyclables and from recycling credits

- One comment agreed with the proposal.

Review/reduce level of environmental co-ordination and advice

- One comment agreed with the proposal subject to it not affecting the service.

Reduce ancillary admin spend for environmental services

- One comment indicated that they found it difficult to comment as the savings to be made were not quantified. A response was issued by the Head of Service.

Increase Charges for Bulky Waste Collection Service Proposal

- A request for comparison cost figures was answered by the Head of Service.

Reduce total staff support across Environmental Services

- One comment agreed with the proposal.

Join consortium contract for the provision of textile banks Proposal

- One comment agreed with the proposal.
- One comment strongly disagreed with the proposal. A response was issued by the Head of Service.

Housing Options and Housing Strategy & Development

Reduction in Housing Resources Proposal

- One comment did not support the proposal as they could foresee this being an area which would require additional resources.

Reduction of Hours of Housing Development Officer and increase fees Proposal

- One comment supported the proposal.

Cease funding Home Improvement Agency core and associated services Proposal

- One comment stated it was the wrong time to tackle this.

Scale Back Rent Deposit Scheme Proposal

- One comment stated they cannot support this proposal due to the “likely impact of central government changes”.

Planning and Building Control

Building Control Fees Proposal

- One comment stated they felt it was difficult to comment as they did not have details of current fees and the percentage rise over inflation figures.

Development Control BPI Led Savings Proposal

- One comment stated that it was too early to comment on 2015 given no change in the period 2011 – 14 was proposed.

Development Control Misc Costs Proposal

- One comment stated that given such costs are market dependent and likely to increase above inflation, they could not see how these figures were achievable in 2013 and 2014.
- One generic comment stated “Not sure where to put this but...the vital importance to the character of our District is the conservation and care of the historic built environment and any reduction in resource in this area must be resisted”.

LDF Funding Proposal

- One comment supported the proposal.

Planning Administration Proposal

- One comment stated that it was too early to forecast, given the affects suggested on the service in 2011 to 2014.

Planning Policy Resources Proposal

- One comment stated that they cannot disagree with the proposal.

Community Safety, Environmental Health, Licensing and Emergency Planning

PCSOs - Cease Council Contribution Proposal

- There was one comment which was responded to by the Head of Service.

Restructure the services delivered by Licensing and Community Safety & Environmental Health leading to a reduction in resource Proposal

- No comments received.

Set taxi licence fees to recover full costs Proposal

- No comments received.

Taxi Marshals - withdrawal of funding for service Proposal

- One comment received indicating concern with the proposal.

People and Organisational Services

Reduce HR support

- Two comments supported this proposal.

Business Support Services

Internal Audit efficiencies from partnership working – Proposal

- One comment supported the proposal.

Reduce ICT contract payments

- One comment supported the proposal.

Democratic and Legal Support Services

Efficiency measures for electoral canvass

- There was one comment stating that 2015 is too early given no change in earlier years.

Land Charges - Revised Working Arrangements – Proposal

- There was one comment stating that due to the uncertainty of legislative proposals it was too early to forecast savings or otherwise in future years.

Financial Support Services

Review of Financial Support Services

- There was one comment stating that it was too early to forecast given no change proposed in previous years. The Head of Service provided extra information.

Executive

Reduce Corporate Management

- One comment supported the proposal.

Internal Services

Reduce and consolidate management resources

- One comment supported the proposal.

Conclusion

As stated as part of the review of the 2009 budget consultation exercise it was important that we held events in the west of the district which this year we achieved by consulting with Hertford based groups as well as those in Bishops Stortford.

The Councillors forum received a number of comments but usage was less than hoped for. Technically the forum worked well and all Heads of Services went in regularly to check whether any queries had been raised with regards to specific queries. There was ample promotion of the forum so if it is to be used again Councillors may need more training to ensure they feel comfortable using an online system.

The East Herts Ethnic Minority Forum had been established, however it is felt that more work needs to be done to develop this into an effective consultation group.

The online budget simulator was a successful introduction to our budget consultation process. Although we would have liked to have had more responses we still managed to increase our engagement by 150%. Concerns over certain age groups being left out by conducting an online exercise were unfounded as the breakdown of respondents shows that the majority were in the two older age groups.

The spring edition of Link will report on how the consultation findings helped to set the budget.