

Budget Engagement Exercise 26.01.24

On Friday 26th January a workshop was held with local residents and representatives from local groups to engage with them on the draft budget. An exercise was undertaken to understand the priority areas of spend and to gather feedback that can be used when determining the final budget. Using the priority headings in the budget consultation survey, three teams discussed their priorities for funding and why and also share the impact of services on local residents.

The workshop was well attended, with 24 participants from the local community (including some council tenants), supported by council officers to help with any questions. Participants were invited by local charity EveryOne who are experienced in facilitation and co-production and have established links with residents and organisations who can share views from different backgrounds which helps with the Council's Public Sector Equality Duty.

Each group provided feedback their top priority / highest funded areas and why, which then allowed for further discussion. These were then reviewed again when the budget was reduced.

Group Feedback

- Supporting Vulnerable People was a top priority across the groups and the teams grouped together some of the themes that contribute towards this and the interdependencies – including affordable housing, cost-of-living and that by focusing resource on supporting vulnerable people early and robustly there will be a ripple effect on demand for the voluntary sector, benefits advice, homelessness, community safety. Looking at root causes was important.
- The voluntary sector were seen as important when supporting vulnerable people although there was awareness that this was unsurprising as there were representatives from groups supporting local residents in the session.
- Resourcing education around climate change and also recycling (contamination)/ clean environment was an important topic. Again, this looked at the interdependencies between education, behaviour change and the outcomes – investing in education activities reduces demand later.
- All groups could see the value in each of the priorities but placed higher value on work supporting vulnerable people, addressing climate change and a clean environment and education / prevention activities.
- There was some discussion that the city centre had a lot of action and things in progress and that there would be benefit in looking at 'growth' and services closer to local communities further from the city centre. Feeling a lack of connection with the City Centre came up at a couple of tables.
- There was a lot of passion for green spaces and cultural events and also an awareness that there needed to be a balance with other services.
- Overall, there was a priority on services for people who need them most.
- There was also a view that if services for people are right and the most vulnerable are supported, growth will then happen.

- There was discussion about the role of the voluntary sector and how the system works together, the relationship between the third sector and public sector and the best use of resources.

Group Discussion – Key Points and feedback

- Impact on residents who do not own or know how to use mobile phones and don't have internet access.
- Some feel detached from City Centre and those residents who aren't very mobile are finding things difficult as local shops and services in their neighbourhoods are closing – post office and library access was also cited. Some feel 'placed out' of the city centre.
- Some local shops do not have ramps, or temporary ramps that can be used.
- Some residents don't identify as 'vulnerable' but identify as 'struggling'.
- Access to employment to older people was a concern – some feel 'written off' by employers and struggle to find work.
- Priority for the City being clean and tidy because people are more respectful and take care of their area if it's nice. Having pride in a cleanliness of an environment leverages more pride.
- Bins in public spaces being full was a concern as people then dumping from their homes.
- Wheelchairs and pushchairs are impacted by wheeling through dirty streets with rubbish or dog fouling.
- Recycling is undermined by the levels of cross contamination. Education is important. There needs to be collective responsibility but need some of the resources allocated on dealing with the issues to be spent on education and campaigns. Tackling climate change is collective responsibility.
- Accessible green spaces is more than just the availability of the spaces, it's how we make those spaces welcoming. Having adequate toilet facilities is very important to families and young people, café spaces / covered spaces are also important.