

**Agenda Item No 7**

**Special Sub-Group**

**21 October 2013**

**Report of the  
Deputy Chief Executive**

**2014/15 Budget Consultation**

**1 Summary**

- 1.1 This report presents a questionnaire for use in consulting on the Council's budget for 2014/15.

**Recommendation to the Sub-Group**

**That the questionnaire is approved for inclusion in North Talk.**

**2 Introduction**

- 2.1 Work has started on the preparation of the Council's budget for 2014/15. As part of this exercise, consideration has been given to the consultation to be undertaken.
- 2.2 It is some years since a wider consultation exercise was carried out. An issue of North Talk is due out at the end of November, which could be used to distribute a questionnaire to residents of the Borough.

**3 Consultation Proposed**

- 3.1 A questionnaire on the services that the Council provides has been drafted and is attached at Appendix A. The front page aims to put the Council's financial position into context, whilst the remaining pages seek views about which services residents value and the level of council tax increase they would be prepared to pay. There are also opportunities to make additional comments on the budget and services.
- 3.2 It is proposed to include the questionnaire in the middle of North Talk, so it can be pulled out. Further work will be done on the page layout, so that the address and a freepost number can be put on the final page. This would allow residents to send the questionnaire back without an envelope. Alternatively, the questionnaire gives the option for residents to complete the survey on the Council's website.

**4 Report Implications**

#### 4.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications

4.1.1 There will be an additional cost of printing and delivery amounting to £2,250. There will also be a cost for any questionnaires returned by Freepost, but this will depend on the level of responses. The Consultation budget will be used to cover these additional costs.

The Contact Officer for this report is Sue Garner (719374).

#### Background Papers

Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D, as substituted by the Local Government Act, 2000 Section 97

Background Paper No	Author	Nature of Background Paper	Date

## Your chance to have your say about next year's budget

The Council Tax you pay is just part of the income we use to fund Borough Council services. The rest comes from fees and charges – for example, for using our leisure centres or arranging bulky waste collections - and also from a grant from Central Government. It's this last area that has been cut over the years and it's even more than we expected for 2014/15.

So, the Council is facing some tough times ahead and now it's your chance to have your say. On the next few pages, we've listed our services, some of which we have to provide by law. We're asking you whether we should cut spending or introduce or increase charges.

We're very fortunate in North Warwickshire in that, up to now, we've protected our key services and still provide free car parking and a free Borough Care 'lifeline' service for people over 62. We've also managed to freeze the level of Council Tax for the last two years. But this may have to change and this is where your views count.

### Here are some financial facts to help you with the questionnaire

We send out the Council Tax bills every year but Borough Council services only amount to **13%** of the total. Here's the breakdown for 2013/14.

Warwickshire County Council	<b>73%</b> e.g. schools, highways, Social Services, Trading Standards
North Warwickshire Borough Council	<b>13%</b>
Warwickshire Police	<b>11%</b>
Town/Parish Councils	<b>3%</b>

**The Borough Council's share is £3,963,870. Put simply, someone living in a Band D property will pay £207.30 in 2013/14 or just £3.99 a week.**

We reduced the 2010/11 Band D charge of £209.39 by 1% in 2011/12 and froze it at £207.30 for the following two years. This meant that income to pay for services was reduced by £285,000 each year.

As we've said, the grant from Central Government has reduced in recent years and will continue to do so, putting more pressure on our finances. We received **£5.102** million in 2010/11 but we are only expecting **£3.207** million for 2014/15. This is an overall reduction of **£1.895 million or a massive 37%**.

We've managed to cope so far by reducing our spending on goods and services, sharing services with other councils and not filling vacant posts. Since 2010/11, we've shaved off just over £2 million but we now need your help to decide what we do next.

**So now what to do? It's over to you!**

**Complete the questionnaire on the next few pages and return it in an envelope using our Freepost address.... No stamp required.**

Or go to [www.northwarks.gov.uk](http://www.northwarks.gov.uk) and complete the questionnaire online.

**QUESTION 1** Council Services

**Q: To what extent do you think the Council should make reductions in the services listed below?**

Please provide a response for each service in turn. **Please select ONE box per row.**

The amount spent on each service, after fees and charges, and the percentage of the Borough Council’s total budget is shown in brackets.

**Communications and Access to Services**

**£529,220 (5%)**

Reduce: A great deal    Reduce: To some extent    Reduce: Not very much    Reduce: Not at All    Don't Know

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Outreach and Access to Services £124,700</b> includes the use of the Branching Out Bus and community hubs, so that residents outside Atherstone can access Council services more easily</li> </ul>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Corporate Communications £82,790</b> the production of council information, the promotion of services and the production and distribution of North Talk to all households in the Borough</li> </ul>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Community Strategy £151,990</b> includes work on the priorities of the Sustainable Community Strategy and community safety</li> </ul>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Consultation £20,320</b> used for public consultation, focus groups and the maintenance of the Citizens Panel</li> </ul>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Customer Contact £149,880</b> providing reception facilities and a single point of contact for residents at the Council House</li> </ul>					

**Democratic Services :**

**£791,940 (8%)**

Reduce: A great deal      Reduce: To some extent      Reduce: Not very much      Reduce: Not at All      Don't Know

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Democratic Arrangements £719,440</b> this is the administration of Council business, including the operation of Board and Council meetings, Members Allowances and the officer time involved with the democratic process. It also includes the costs of the Mayor.</li> </ul>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Election Costs and the Registration of Electors £73,180</b> maintaining a register of those eligible to vote, and the organisation of local and national elections</li> </ul>					

**Environmental Health:**

**£545,000 (6%)**

Reduce: A great deal      Reduce: To some extent      Reduce: Not very much      Reduce: Not at All      Don't Know

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Commercial Pollution Control £335,800</b> including monitoring and dealing with noise nuisance, air pollution and contaminated land issues, ensuring suitable standards are maintained in pubs, cafes and shops selling food and dealing with health and safety issues in business premises</li> </ul>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Domestic Pollution Control £111,350</b> including monitoring empty homes within the Borough and assisting in bringing them back into use, enforcing health and safety requirements in private sector housing and advising on drainage and environmental issues</li> </ul>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Licensing £12,020</b> includes licences for the sale of alcohol, events, animal boarding facilities, pet shops, street trading, taxis, gaming premises and machines</li> </ul>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Animal Control £86,300</b> deals with rats, mice and wasps in domestic and non-food business premises, as well as providing a stray dog and fouling service</li> </ul>					

**Housing Services:****£979,370 (10%)**

Reduce: A great deal	Reduce: To some extent	Reduce: Not very much	Reduce: Not at All	Don't Know
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Homeless Persons £131,960</b> a service for homeless people, including temporary accommodation in some cases</li> </ul>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Borough Care £597,500</b> a free 24/7 emergency alarm and mobile warden service available to all residents aged 62 or over, within the Borough</li> </ul>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Housing Benefit £250,760</b> the administration of and assistance towards the cost of both private and council housing. The costs are largely reimbursed by the Government</li> </ul>					

**Income Collection :****£233,840 (2%)**

Reduce: A great deal	Reduce: To some extent	Reduce: Not very much	Reduce: Not at All	Don't Know
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Non Domestic Rates £39,830</b> the collection of rates from businesses in the Borough, and the allocation of a proportion of those rates to other organisations</li> </ul>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Council Tax Collection £194,210</b> the collection and allocation of council tax to ourselves, the County Council, the Police Authority and town and parish councils</li> </ul>					

**Leisure and Community Development :****£2,599,370 (26%)**Reduce:  
A great  
dealReduce:  
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some  
extentReduce:  
Not very  
muchReduce:  
Not at  
AllDon't  
Know

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Sports Centres and Swimming Pool £1,140,050</b> providing a range of leisure activities</li> </ul>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Community Development Schemes £546,870</b> including activities such as healthy living programmes, leisure opportunities for young and older people in their local areas and activities that address anti-social behaviour and which help communities to feel safer</li> </ul>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Parks, Playing fields and Open Spaces £795,250</b> including grass cutting and grounds maintenance, play areas, allotments and local nature reserves</li> </ul>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Memorial Hall, Atherstone £119,440</b> provides entertainment and leisure opportunities</li> </ul>					

**Planning and Development :****£814,080 (8%)**Reduce:  
A great  
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muchReduce:  
Not at  
AllDon't  
Know

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Planning Control £456,310</b> determines planning and listed building applications and the enforcement of contraventions of Planning Acts</li> </ul>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Building Control £83,240</b> ensures the health and safety of building occupants through acceptable standards of building work</li> </ul>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Conservation, Built Heritage and Landscape £65,680</b> maintaining the historical built heritage and natural environment within the Borough</li> </ul>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Local Development Framework £209,550</b> this pulls together a Plan for the Borough which looks at areas such as housing and business needs and the capacity of the road network available for use by residents and businesses, so that Council decisions in the future will reflect what is needed</li> </ul>					

**Waste Management :****£2,322,230 (23%)**

Reduce: A great deal    Reduce: To some extent    Reduce: Not very much    Reduce: Not at All    Don't Know

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Domestic Refuse Collection and Recycling £1,572,070</b> the collection of domestic refuse and clinical waste, and a range of recycled items as well as the free collection of garden waste</li> </ul>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Amenity/Street Cleaning £752,160</b> street cleaning and road sweeping throughout the Borough, as well as site clearance of tipped rubbish</li> </ul>					

**Miscellaneous:****£692,680 (7%)**

Reduce: A great deal    Reduce: To some extent    Reduce: Not very much    Reduce: Not at All    Don't Know

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Public Conveniences £125,380</b> the provision of public conveniences at four locations in the Borough</li> </ul>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Concessionary Fares £34,150</b> a scheme providing taxi vouchers to people of a pensionable age claiming a high rate disability allowance who have no access to a car or public transport</li> </ul>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Car Parks £61,570</b> to maintain car parks owned by the Borough Council, which are provided free of charge</li> </ul>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Broadband Delivery £53,700</b> a contribution towards a Coventry, Warwickshire and Solihull project to see high speed broadband deliver to all parts of the Borough</li> </ul>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Land Maintenance £56,280</b> to provide assistance to residents on flooding and land drainage, the replacement of street furniture, repairs to the Council's un-adopted roads and the costs of Atherstone market</li> </ul>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Community Safety £45,740</b> work with partners on tackling community safety issues</li> </ul>					



**Miscellaneous:**

**£692,680 (7%)**

Reduce: A great deal    Reduce: To some extent    Reduce: Not very much    Reduce: Not at All    Don't Know

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>CCTV £123,810</b> the provision of a closed circuit television scheme in Atherstone, which is also used by Atherstone Town Council and Warwickshire Police Force.</li> </ul>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Council Tax Support £192,540</b> the cost of administering the Council Tax Support scheme</li> </ul>					

**QUESTION 2 Council Tax**

Council Tax has been frozen or reduced by the Borough Council for the last three years. The Borough Council is planning to increase Council Tax by 2% for 2014/15 and the following three years. The Council Tax bill for Borough Council services in 2013/14 is currently £207.30 per year for a Band D property. An increase of 2% will mean an average increase in Council Tax of £4.15 per year (8p per week) on that bill.

Every additional 1% increase in Council Tax generates an additional £39,580 of income over the next four years and reduces our total savings requirement. Every additional 1% costs each household in a band D property on average an additional £2.07 per year (4p per week) on their Council Tax bill.

Non	1%	2%	Above 2%
	4p per week*	8p per week*	

<p><b>Q: What annual Council Tax increase would you be prepared to pay over the next few years?</b> Under current Government rules a local referendum would need to be held for any increase above 2%.</p>				
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*\*Increases relate to a Band D property. Residents in Band A, B or C properties would pay a lower increase than this.*

**QUESTION 3**      **Charging for Services**

Are there any free services where you feel a charge should be made, or any services where you think the charge should be increased?

**QUESTION 4**      **Other Comments**

Please use the space below to let us have any comments and any specific suggestions for reducing the Borough council's costs. For example, increasing fees and charges on specific services or charging for services that are currently free.

We would like to know if you have any concerns about any potential changes and if any reductions in particular services would impact adversely on you or your family.

***Please complete the following:***

Name *(optional)*.....

Address *(optional)*.....

Postcode.....