

Budget Setting Consultation Summary Results

December 2020

Introduction & approach

- ▶ 17 Zoom sessions with Parish Councils, community champions, Hereford 6th Form College, Hereford Disability United, Carers and Housing Association tenants and Businesses.
- ▶ 96 participants engaged.
- ▶ Set of standard questions using polls and facilitated discussions.
- ▶ Overall positive response to the opportunity to being consulted, however some participants would have welcomed more detail on specific proposals.
- ▶ Parish Councils would welcome a more open and ongoing dialogue with Herefordshire Council.

1. To what extent would you support the commissioning of services in order to access specialist knowledge and skills?

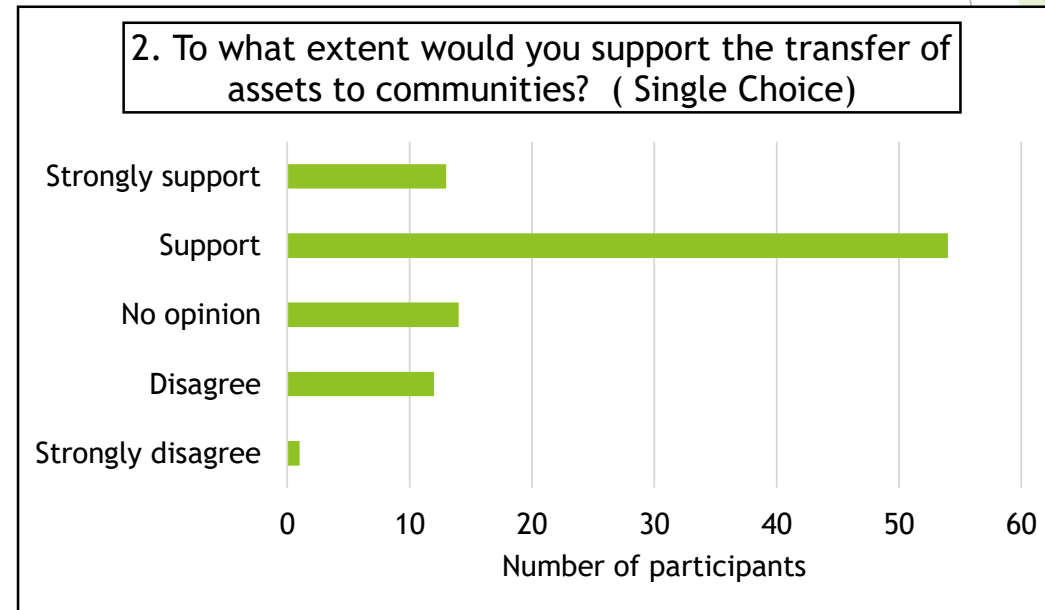
Any partnership arrangements should achieve the following:

- Best value for money
- Best outcomes for Herefordshire residents



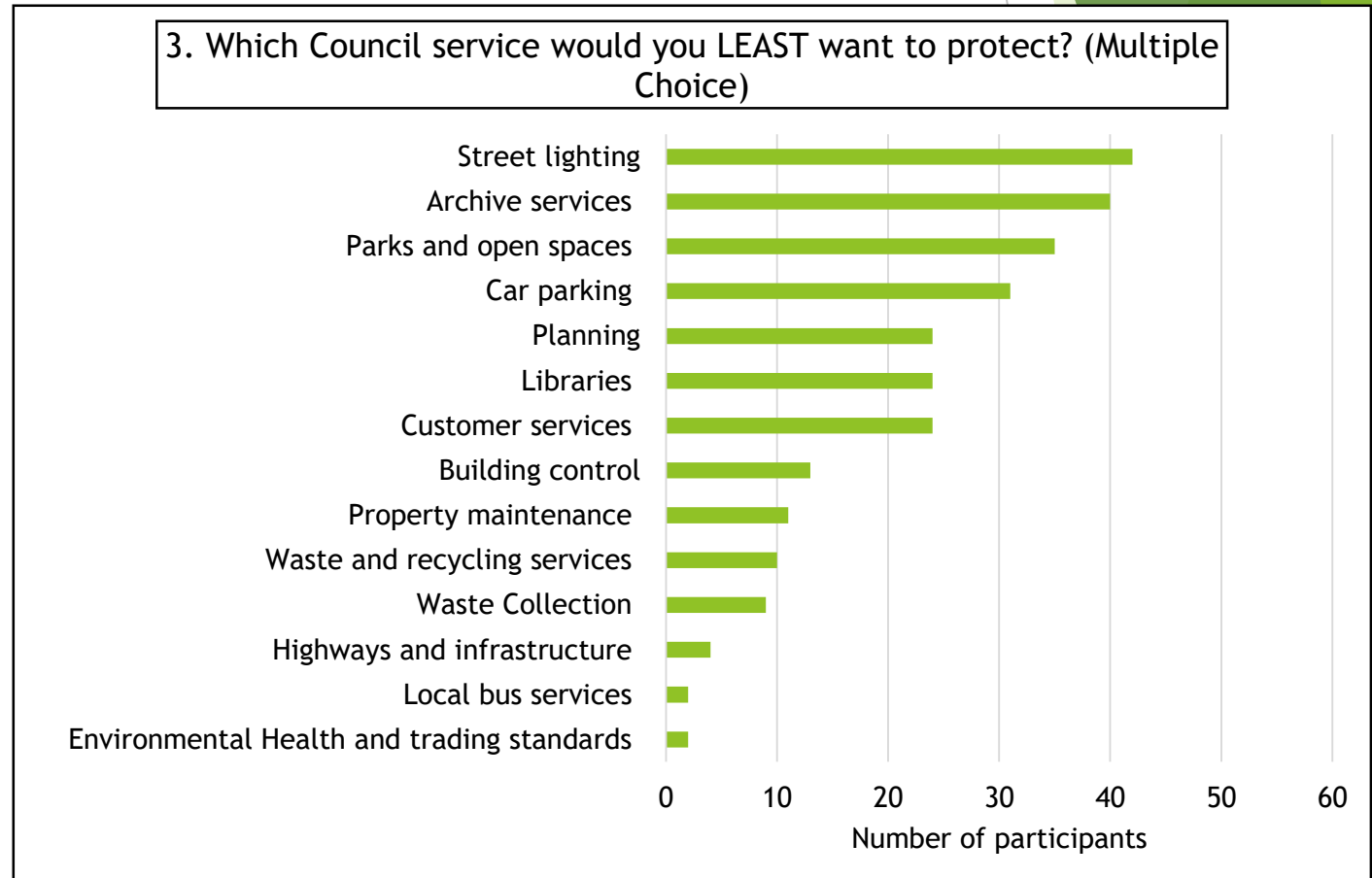
2. To what extent would you support the transfer of assets to communities? E.g. development and running of libraries (building and service) to communities.

- ▶ Where relevant, there was support in principle for transfer of assets HOWEVER, with some caveats.
- ▶ Conditional on the asset being in a good state of repair with an income attached or potential to generate income identified.
- ▶ Many rural PC areas have no assets or could not identify them.
- ▶ Barriers identified included:
 - ▶ Capacity of local volunteer base (numbers of people and skills required)
 - ▶ Long term sustainability of the asset (i.e. long term funding and ensuring it is an asset and not a liability)



3. An alternative option may be to reduce the level of some of the discretionary services currently run by the Council. Which Council service would you LEAST want to protect?

- ▶ A few people didn't want to select any as all services seen as important
- ▶ People didn't fully understand the implications of not protecting some services e.g. archive services
- ▶ Many participants were from rural areas and felt street lighting could be reduced, however this view was not replicated from participants in the City.



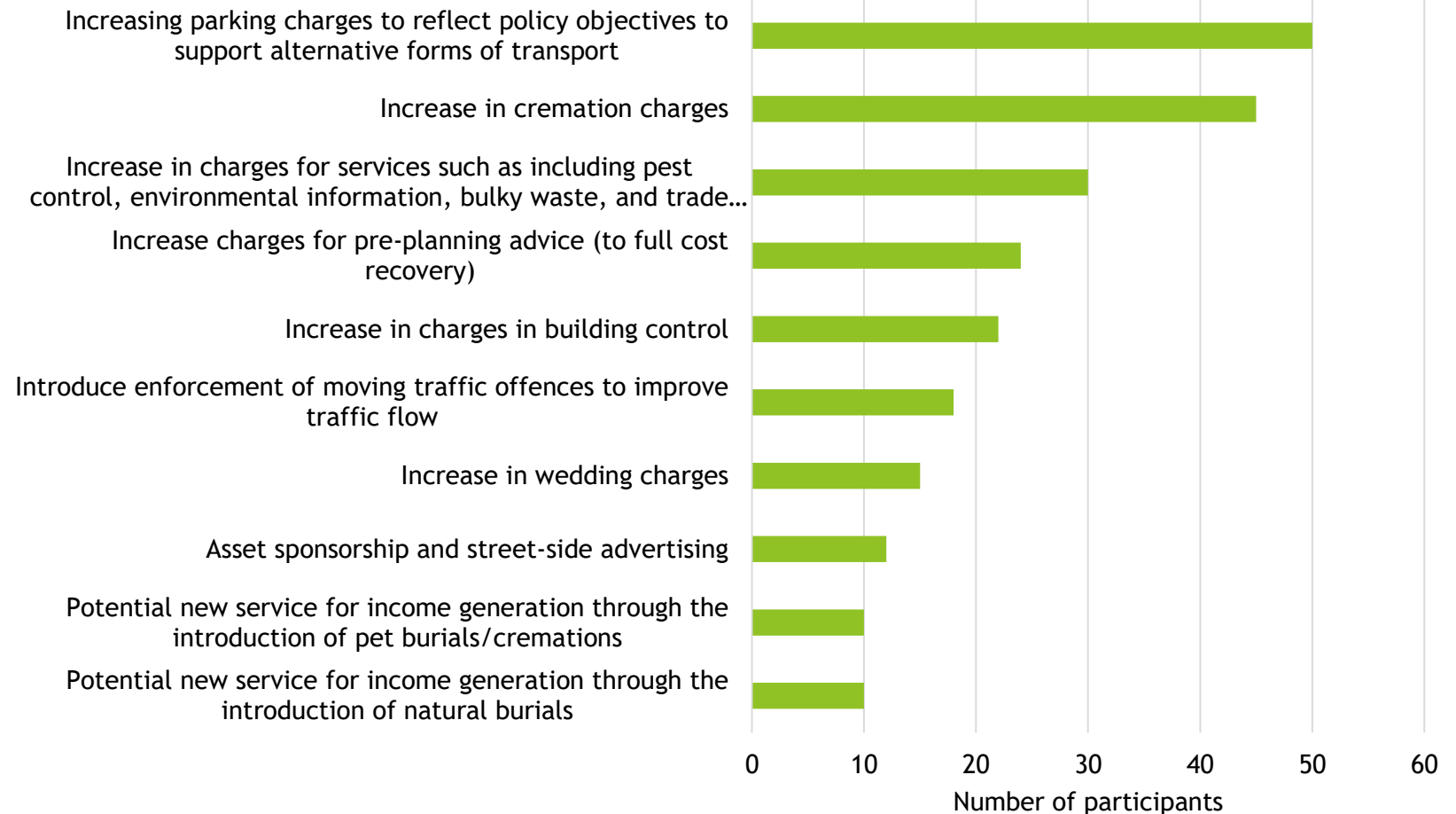
Services most wanted to be protected (open discussion)

- ▶ Difficult question - all important
- ▶ Buses (rural areas)
- ▶ Roads and highways
- ▶ Waste management

4. Which THREE of the following Council services would you NOT support increasing or introducing charges for?

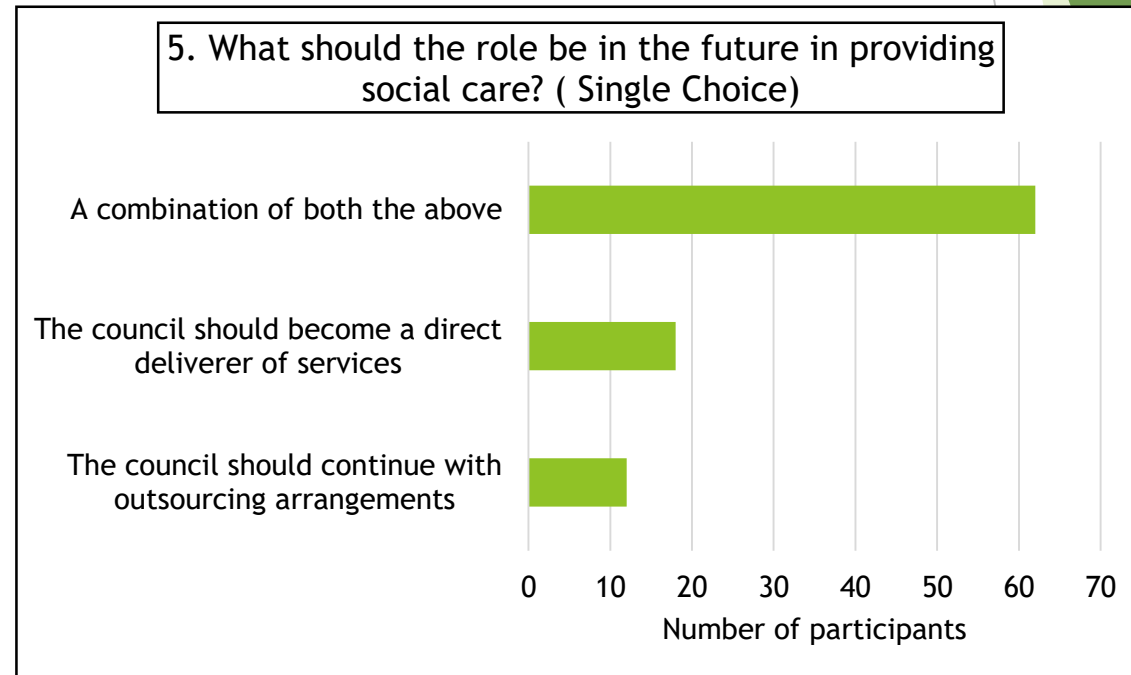
- ▶ The impact of increasing car parking seen as detrimental on retail etc
- ▶ Opinions about increasing in fees for building control and planning often split.
- ▶ Perceived link between increasing waste charges and increase in fly tipping.

4. Which THREE of the following Council services would you NOT support increasing or introducing charges for?(Multiple Choice)



5. The cost of social care to the Council is considerable. Currently the Council outsources many of its social care services, e.g. care home placements, support for people with complex needs. What should the role be in the future in providing social care?

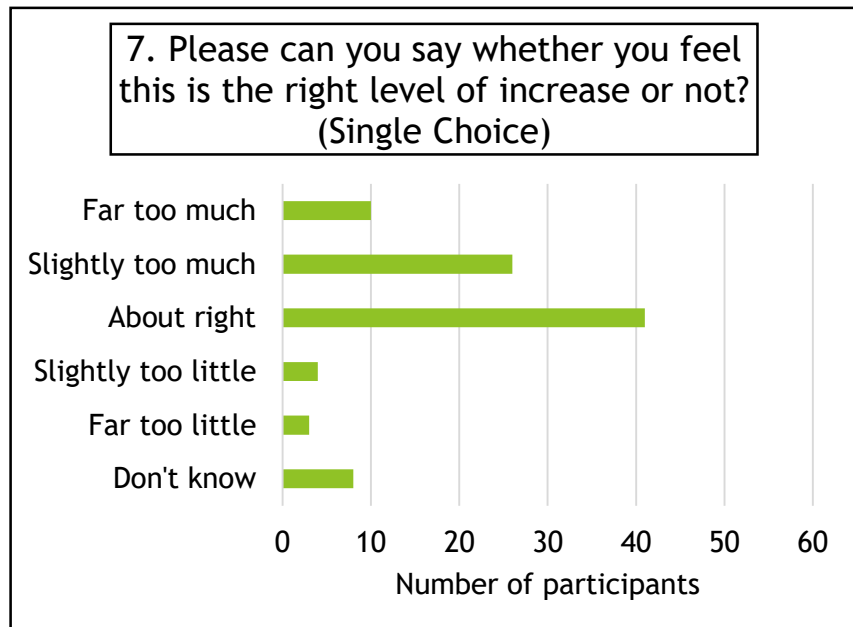
- ▶ Combination of both was identified
- ▶ However the bigger views were around:
 - ▶ Value for money
 - ▶ Good outcomes for clients



6. Herefordshire Council are proposing to increase use of technology to provide services online. For example, cashless car parking charges, online services for libraries/customer services. What do you think would be a good alternative use of technology?

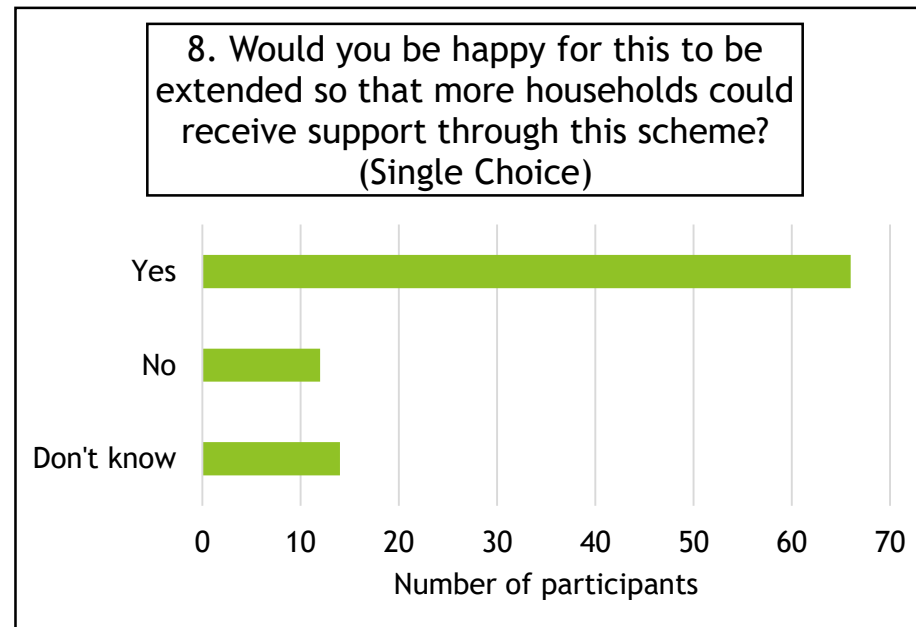
- ▶ Pragmatic to move to online services, however concerns were raised about this affecting access to those who are most vulnerable e.g. older people, disabled people, people living on a low income.
 - ▶ Big risk that it affects the most vulnerable of the community, and those who most need to use these services.
 - ▶ Wider access to IT: affordability and physical access (speed of connection).
 - ▶ Ability to use it, training needed particularly for older people.

7. Given the challenges that have been outlined and in order to protect vital frontline services such as social care, the Council is proposing a Council Tax increase of 4.99%.



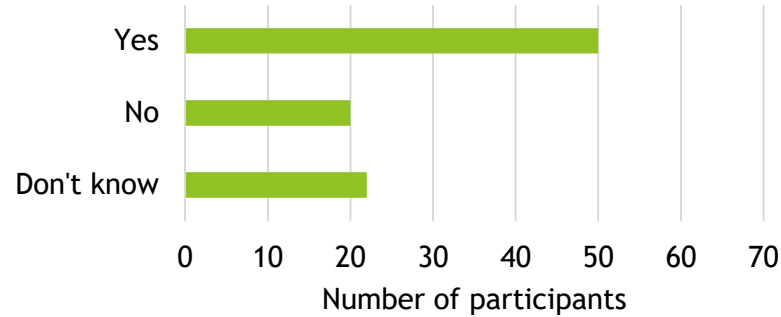
- ▶ Most resigned to there being this level of increase
- ▶ Concern raised around those experiencing financial difficulty, more so because of Covid-19.
- ▶ More information about what would be received in return in terms of services for the increase in CT.

8. Herefordshire Council provides financial support in certain circumstances to households that are in financial difficulty.

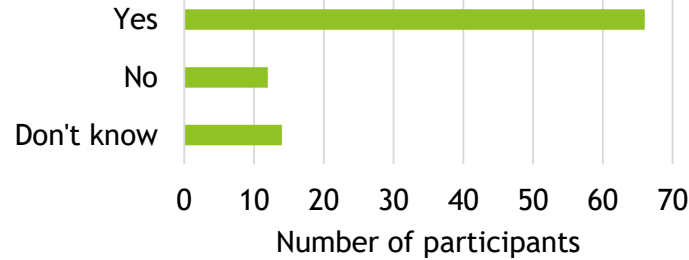


- ▶ There was a majority in support of additional support being given.
- ▶ Additional clarity over the scheme would have been useful to help people determine their response.

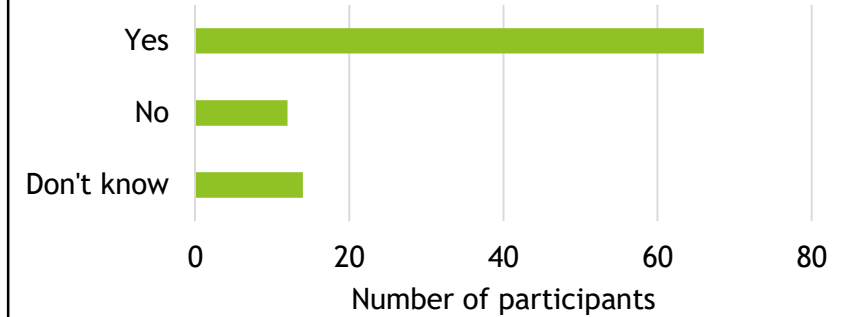
9. Would you support a Herefordshire Voluntary Community Contribution Scheme (Single Choice)



10. If such a scheme was introduced would you consider making a contribution? (Single Choice)



11. Would you support the establishment of a Herefordshire Community Lottery? (Single Choice)



- ▶ Strong support particularly for the Community Lottery, however there were strong views that this would sit better outside of Herefordshire Council.
- ▶ Openness and transparency about what projects would be funded was identified as key.
- ▶ A few expressed concern that those most likely to participate in a lottery may be those least able to afford it.

Business responses

- ▶ Herefordshire Council's role should aim to facilitate business, i.e., make it easier for business to grow, make processes easier not more difficult.
- ▶ Other points raised were:
 - There was a feeling that there needs to be better management of private contractors to ensure that they are delivering efficiently and effectively.
 - There is a need to be more open and transparent about developments and changes in services in order for businesses to plan.

Participants' principles - What should be considered when looking at making cuts or significant changes to services:

As participants felt that more detail on specific proposals was needed to make fully informed decisions, it was proposed that going forward it would be more useful to agree 'principles' that could be used to underpin decisions. The following principles were suggested by participants in the 4th session and tested out at all future sessions. There was unanimous agreement that if applied that it would increase confidence in decision making:

- ▶ Changes to services should not penalise the most vulnerable (and should have an anti-poverty aim)
- ▶ Invest to save.....invest in prevention to relieve the pressure on acute services – linked to this was the adopting an approach of helping people to help themselves
- ▶ Ensure changes to services impact positively on the environment
- ▶ Decisions should enable Herefordshire to become a vibrant economy - a place that encourages business to start and grow.
- ▶ The future of the County should always be considered – it should be considered attractive/possible for young people to work and live in Hereford

Further areas for improvement

In addition to the principles participants suggested the following as 'areas for improvement' in terms of approach and how decisions are made and communicated:

- ▶ Communication – let people know WHY decisions are made and that the impact of changes to services is fully understood.
- ▶ Ensure efficient and effective delivery of statutory services – undertake regular reviews and ensure that the Council itself is 'lean and fit for purpose'.
- ▶ Support the voluntary and community sector and let them do what they do best i.e. deliver effective services to those most in need (linked to this there needs to be a review of commissioning and procurement processes).

Recommendations

1. Impact to undertake feedback sessions to share results of budget setting consultation.
2. Consideration of principles to underpin decision making.
3. Feedback and future consultation features in Herefordshire Council's Communication Strategy and Engagement Framework.
4. Consultation with Parish and Town Councils around asset transfers and taking on new responsibilities (annual basis and in time for precept to be set).