

LOCAL AREA FORUMS

PROGRAMME AREA RESPONSIBILITY: CORPORATE STRATEGY AND FINANCE

CABINET

16TH DECEMBER, 2004

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To receive feedback on the November 2004 round of Local Area Forums, Budget Consultation. To note issues raised by the community and to continue to identify ways to improve and develop public consultation at Local Area Forums.

Key Decision

This is not a Key Decision

Recommendation

THAT the report be noted.

Reasons

Cabinet agreed the principles for new arrangements for LAFs in October 2003. Issues raised at the meetings are to be relayed to Cabinet after each round of Local Area Forums.

Considerations

Background

1. The LAFs were held at a variety of locations over a three week period in November. The meetings were arranged through Member Services within the County Secretary and Solicitors Department. The Forums were solely dedicated to the budget consultation and each meeting lasted for approximately two hours. Public participation was very good at every meeting, but the numbers of attendees was lower than anticipated at some of the meetings, in particular Central Herefordshire where there were only 13 members of the public present.

General Issues

2. A meeting is to be held on 8th December, 2004 with all LAF Chairmen, Cabinet Members and the Leader, to discuss the recent round of Forums.

Summary of Agenda Item

3. *Budget Consultation* – Speakers; Councillor Roger Phillips (Leader of the Council), Mr Neil Pringle (Chief Executive), Mr Ian Hyson (County Treasurer).
4. Each meeting commenced with a short introduction from The Leader of the Council, who discussed the reasons for the budget consultation and the background events that had informed the consultative process. The main areas of discussion were the Council's obligation to consult, the budget deficit, areas of greatest challenge namely Adult Social Care and the ways in which the Council is considering addressing the shortfall. The Chief Executive then followed with a presentation (*copies of which are available on request*) that focused on the following topics;
 - Why the Council has to choose;
 - Building on success;
 - Getting more for your money;
 - What choices are there?
 - Your views matter;

The focus, in particular, was on the ways in which the funding gap could be met, outlining the internal areas where efficiency savings could be made and discretionary service areas which would need to be reassessed in the light of any deficit.

Local Interest Items

5. The Chairmen gave responses to questions that had been raised prior to the meetings and for those carried forward from the last round of forums. These are detailed at Appendix 1.

Summary of the Issues Raised at Meetings

6. Appendix 1 provides a summary of the issues raised at each of the Local Area Forums.

Alternative Options

There are no alternative options.

Risk Management

None.

Consultees

Local Area Forums' Chairmen and Cabinet Members and the Leader of the Council.

Background Papers

None identified.