

Cheshire East Council Budget Consultation 2009-10
Comments Received from Members of the Public

Introduction

The Budget Consultation process included the set up of a website and an opportunity for comments to be submitted to the email account budgetinfo@cheshire.gov.uk.

The following comments have been received to date and any subsequent correspondence is also included.

Comment 1 – Resident of Nantwich

Initial Comments:

Here is feedback - thanks for the opportunity

Public Consultation Briefing

Harmonisation - yes in favour and yes in favour of stability and less increases. Agree with Government on aim of unitaries to both improve services and deliver saving which should if possible be passed on to tax payers.

Harmonisation of prices - yes and consider where can free leisure (tennis courts etc) encourage use.

Capital Programme - agree schools and children services, commitment in Alderley Edge etc will no doubt be more controversial (use of resources across the county) - bids to the capital programme for future years need to be clear on how communities and Councillors access them, how prioritised and agreed to avoid accusation of bias. What are the other highway improvements and where?

Consultation - this is a great opportunity for the unitary to improve on the past. I am looking forward to being informed about what the plans are for my town, Nantwich and the wider area and also having the opportunity to contribute to them. I think Councillors should all have blogs - have training using them - and do email alerts to subscribers on new things happening - draft strategies to local performance. They should also have electronic consultation which links into new Council.

I think the Government community empowerment agenda and community leadership has a great opportunity here in Cheshire East - let's not have distant Councillors who have no support and who we never hear from. I think the electronic investment is both cheap and popular with younger electorate which will increase participation, knowledge and hopefully respect for local government.

People and Places Consultation

Roads and Transport - general view is that too much traffic in Nantwich and too many lorries. Need to use bypass and change behaviours of local people to using car for everything. I think there is a link to healthy walking, less noise, even less anti social behaviour (the responsible adults are on the street rather than in cars).

More on a new policy to improve the quality of life in major towns - introduce 20 mph blanket for traffic - the local authority where 20 in town is plenty (as the campaigns might say).

To improve condition of roads - spend money on softening them in towns, set targets to reduce traffic, get lorries out and publicity campaign. Should not increase capacity of networks but be explicit about reducing use and capacity.

Visitor economy and economic development - hard to say as no information on budget cuts and Tatton Park seems remote. East Cheshire is a lovely part of the country but would not thought of a mega bucks - so scale down appropriately - the walkers, cyclist and heritage people will come. Emphasis on local using local economy.

Response:

Thanks for your feedback e-mails.

Your comments will be considered as part of the Cheshire East Council Budget setting process.

Comment 2 – Bollington area

Initial Comments:

Dear Cheshire East,

It feels strange addressing an anonymous body. I have two questions I would like answered if possible.

It is very difficult to make comments on a budget that I cannot track down on the web site in any useable form. Could you send me a set of budgetary documents setting out the expenditure of the services in 2008/9 with your proposed expenditure in 2009/10 in a similar form to the Green and Yellow Books published by the County Council. That would be most helpful. I have two further questions.

1. With regard to the harmonisation of car parking charges can I confirm that there will be no wish to charge for car parking at Pool Bank in Bollington or at the two car parks designated for use by Middlewood Way walkers in the Town at Adlington road and Grimshaw Lane? We are very concerned to support visitors and customers for local business in the Town where we desperately need to support our shops, restaurants and pubs.

2. I understand that to supplement the finances for Cheshire East this year sums have been taken from the balances of the contributing authorities. Could you confirm whether that is the case and if so how much has been used from which authorities balances?

Many thanks

Initial Response:

Thanks for your comments.

For the 2009-10 budget setting round a huge amount of work is underway to merge budgets and create new service structures. While the overall financial envelope Cheshire East Council is working towards is fixed the detail behind this is still being refined and improved by the limited staff resources available to the Council. Therefore, the Council has not published a detailed set of Policy Options.

However, a high level narrative document based on the People and Places structure, which the new Council will be organising its services under, has been placed on the website for comments at :

<http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/CheshireEastCouncilBudgetConsultation/tabid/205/Default.aspx>
<http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=6nupOvE9klg%3d&tabid=205>

This sets out some of the major issues the new Directorates are considering and the issues they would like to consult on. Comments are always welcome. There is a clear intention by the Cheshire East Council Administration to consult on detailed budget options for the 2010-11 budget.

In terms of your specific points:

1. Car Park Charges - I am awaiting a response on this issue and will come back to you as soon as possible.

2. At the 31/3/2009 the Accounts of the seven demising authorities will be closed and a normal set of accounts produced. As part of this process the final level of reserve balances will be allocated to the new authorities i.e. Cheshire East Council will receive balances from Crewe & Nantwich BC, Congleton BC, Macclesfield BC and a share of the Cheshire County Council reserves. The fine detail is still to be agreed and the Accounts have not yet closed, therefore, I cannot say exactly how much this will be.

However, Cheshire East Council is developing a multi year financial scenario that ensures they will maintain an adequate level of reserves which is in line with Audit Commission recommendations.

Further Comments:

Many thanks for your response to my queries. Could you give me some idea when detailed budget lines might be finalised?

It seems from the information available that some things have been decided. e.g.

1. Levels of Council Tax 2009/10
2. Distribution of Government Grant
3. Funding for education.

I am concerned about:

1. funding and policy for looked after children
2. funding and policy for adults who need social support
3. funding and policy for people of pensionable age

Then some more specific areas such as

1. Gritting policy. There have been attempts in the past to reduce this budget which is vital to the life of Cheshire East
2. Leisure facilities for young people. We desperately need more challenging activities for teenagers.
3. Support for Connexions. This service took a cut last year. I would not like to see further cuts.
4. Maintenance for Rights of Way and funding for the rights of Way Improvement Plan.

When you have specific information on any of these areas I would be glad if you would let me know.

Further Response:

The detailed budgetary information will not be available until the Cheshire East Council Budget Book is produced, in the new financial year, given the time pressures of undertaking LGR.

Yes, a number of issues have been decided and are the subject of news releases (Council Tax) or Cabinet Reports such as the Medium Term Financial Strategy report in December 2008 at:

[http://onlineservices.congleton.gov.uk/ecminutes/Published/C00000241/M00002438/AI00003562/\\$081217CheshireEastCabinetMTFSLQ.docA.ps.pdf](http://onlineservices.congleton.gov.uk/ecminutes/Published/C00000241/M00002438/AI00003562/$081217CheshireEastCabinetMTFSLQ.docA.ps.pdf)

Re your specific comments - I'll pass these on to the Borough Treasurer and Head of Assets and relevant Directors.

Further Response:

Further to your earlier question re car parking, I can provide the following response.

The main thrust of harmonisation of car parking charging across Cheshire East will focus on the Congleton area where currently all car parks are free of charge. There may be some extension of charging in both Crewe and

Macclesfield areas but there are currently no plans to include Pool Bank or either of the 2 Middlewood way sites.

However, as all public car parks have an associated maintenance cost, where no direct charging for use currently exists at a site it is important to review the justification for this policy at regular intervals. Although the use of the sites mentioned is not likely to be charged for in the short term, no long-term guarantee can reasonably be given.

Comment 3 – Nantwich Resident

Initial Comments:

I now realise that the end date for this consultation was 26th January - but I have only just found out about it.

I hope you can take my comments into account.

Why so late? - Your website did not have an easily identifiable link to this consultation. I did not find this link until today.

One had to know that the Budget section had a reference to Consultation. Perhaps a link on the Home page to every consultation you do would help quicker navigation?

As regards comments:

- Yes, do have a balanced budget. Always advisable!

- A sustainable budget can mean several things. If sustainable can mean not wasting resources and prolonging their life - the new council should increase its budgets for Maintenance.

No point wasting existing buildings, roads etc by having poor (but cheap in the short term) maintenance schedules that simply hasten the demise of costly capital projects. Do not waste costly resources for short term budgetary gains. Poorly maintained council assets would be a terrible reflection on, and advert for, the image of the new East Cheshire.

- Council Tax must be harmonised as must service levels across East Cheshire.

Capital Projects that should be completed in Nantwich - where I live -

- Snow Hill Redevelopment needs to be progressed with full community consultation carried forward from C&N's start. The community has already stated its aims and preferences, so these principles should become key requirements in the development brief.

- Complete the link by-pass road from March Lane to the end of Welsh Row/ Canal Viaduct - it should have been completed years ago by the builders of the housing development. A planning obligation was in place but the builders seem to have wriggled out of it.

This new road link is vital to improving traffic and environmental conditions all over the town.

- Force the developers of the vast Stapeley housing estate to honour its planning obligation and build the new community centre - or spend an equivalent sum on improving the community facilities elsewhere in the town. Take over and/or encourage the Rotary/Round Table and Friends of the Earth's idea of a water turbine at Mill Island generating free power to the light up the Weaver Riverside, night-time illumination of buildings and also into the National Grid. How sustainable is this?!!

With regard to your ideas for Local Area Partnerships -

Yes - a good way of delivering local services in such a large County. However, the areas must be relevant to where and how people live.

The boundary of the Nantwich LAP Area needs careful drawing. I can't tell from the small scale plan I have seen but - please ensure - Nantwich remains separate from Crewe.

Nantwich already has the town council in operation and people are familiar with it. The town council can be improved and streamlined with whatever new influence East Cheshire can give it for local service delivery and community cohesion.

Your current map showing 8 LAP Areas looks good, especially as it has Nantwich and its rural hinterland parishes as a separate entity. Nantwich and the 18 or so parishes form a cohesive, natural area of rural market town character and with its own sphere of influence. The two towns of Crewe and Nantwich are very different and Crewe's character is markedly different from Nantwich. Crewe's special regeneration requirements need to be given consideration on their own and not be lumped with Nantwich as it has for the past 35 years.

- Bring Stapeley parish into the Nantwich Town's area. The new housing area is clearly part of the town so it should be within its local governmental jurisdiction and play its part in the community.

Make Nantwich the Western Jewel in East Cheshire's Heritage Crown!

We are a fine historic town with lots more to offer economic tourism than it currently displays. Investment and encouragement in its historic fabric and public realm will bring dividends to the new County's environmental and tourism portfolios. The town's real potential has been overshadowed by the genuine needs of Crewe but in this new world of East Cheshire it is a unique resource of top quality heritage and community cohesiveness that East Cheshire should invest heavily in.

Focus Groups and Citizens panels. These can be good ways of obtaining local views and advice but locally elected councillors must have the power over the advisory groups, in the end.

I would like to be considered for these, please.

I hope you can take my views into account and look forward to hearing from you.

Initial Response:

Thanks for your feedback.

Yes, there is time for your comments to be taken into account as part of the Budget setting process.

You have raised a number of points here which I will send off to the relevant people in Cheshire East Council.

In terms of a response, this may take longer than usual given the number of issues.