

Ryedale District Council - Budget Consultation 2010

1. Introduction

The Council has a number of statutory responsibilities to fulfill by engaging with its communities on the setting of the Council Tax and on the Financial Strategy and is considered to be an experienced practitioner in cost effective and innovative community engagement and this has been validated through various external inspections. The recent development of the citizens panel has provided the Council with the capacity to undertake more cost effective and regular engagement activity with and feedback from members of our communities. The Council manages this panel using resources entirely available in-house and is utilized by all of the councils services.

The outcomes we wanted to achieve through the budget consultation this year included:

- For the public understand the technicalities and the choices around budget-setting in an environment of diminishing resources and austerity
- To give people the greatest chance to influence the final decision
- To continue to develop the culture of engaging our communities in strategic policy and budget setting decision making

2. Key Findings



The Service areas featuring in the top 5 ranking for the lowest levels of cut were:

- 1 Tackling Crime and Anti-social behaviour
- 1 Waste Collection and Recycling
- 2 Street Cleaning
- 2 Public Conveniences
- 3 Supporting Voluntary and Community Sector
- 3 Homelessness and Housing Options
- 3 Playgrounds and open spaces

And the areas receiving the highest levels of cuts were:

- Supporting democracy
- Communications and information

Service areas most frequently chosen for:

-  Increase in funding = **Tackling crime and Anti Social Behaviour**
-  Decrease in funding = **Communication and Information (on line) and Supporting Democracy (off line)**
-  No change to current level of funding = **Playgrounds and Open Spaces**

These results, along with comments made, tell us that people continue to value the low levels of crime in Ryedale, the lowest in North Yorkshire, a County with one of the lowest crime rates in the Country. There is a strong emphasis expressed for services which maintain the quality of the immediate environment in which people live and that they experience every day. Once the immediate environment is resourced the focus appears to move towards the needs of those who are more vulnerable within our communities, with support for the voluntary and community sector, homelessness and playgrounds and open spaces. The focus for savings is clearly upon the way the council communicates and the way it runs as a local authority.

3. Methodology

People could use the online budget simulator to tell us how they think money should be allocated to different council services, whilst making an overall saving of 10% on the Councils total revenue budget of £8million.

The Budget Simulator explained the different services provided by the council and their share of the total budget. Respondents could then select how much they would like to spend on each service by increasing or decreasing the budget of particular services. The budget simulator then told respondents how their choices could impact on services and what it could mean for residents. The simulator required each participant to make a total saving of 10% on the total budget. The simulator was not used to test the tolerance for changes

to the level of Council Tax given the clear policy statements made prior to this exercise by the government in relation to freezing of council tax levels for 2011/12.

174 people responded and we thank them for their views. Submissions could be made online and by returning a paper offline version. These were also available through area offices and on request. The offline submissions were uploaded to the simulator for inclusion in the final results. The results from the budget simulator clearly show where peoples' priorities lie, and this information and the detailed comments submitted, will be used to support the budget decision this year and also to redesign services over the next 12 months, in order to meet the financial challenges facing the council in 2012/13. This report presents the results from this exercise and also findings from previous engagement activities which compliment this particular exercise.

We ran the simulator with a group of 50 business leaders from the tourism sector in Ryedale in a workshop environment and included these results in the final analysis.

The address for this public simulator is www.budgetsimulator.com/ryedale and this will run until April 2011.

3. Summary of Results Gathered

Results gathered through the simulator were analysed in two ways:

1. The level of savings selected based on mean values ranked from lowest levels to highest
2. The frequency with which service areas are selected for reduction, increase or no change to the level of spending.

The tables below illustrate the results gathered through the simulator from the different groups.

The level of savings selected based on mean values ranked from lowest levels to highest

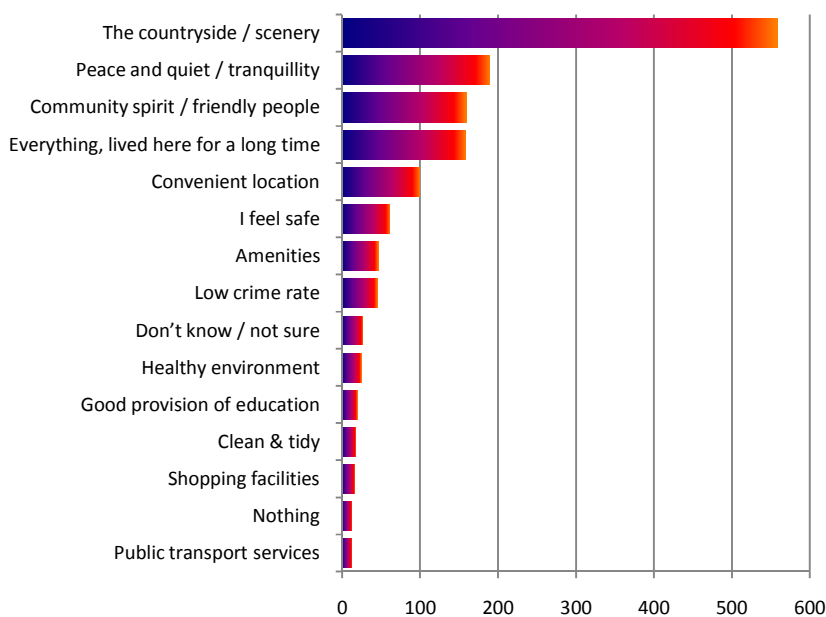
Citizens Panel Online (26)	%	Residents Online (56)	%	Citizens Panel All (118)	%
Tackling Crime and Anti-social behaviour	-2.5	Car Parking	-3.2	Tackling Crime and Anti-social behaviour	2.7
Waste Collection and Recycling	-6	Tackling Crime and Anti-social behaviour	-4.7	Waste Collection and Recycling	0.3
Car Parking	-6	Waste Collection and Recycling	-5.8	Public Conveniences	-0.3
Homelessness and Housing Options	-6.3	Supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector	-5.9	Street Cleaning	-0.9
Street Cleaning	-6.7	Public Conveniences	-6	Playgrounds and open spaces	-1.4
Public Conveniences	-7.1	Homelessness and Housing Options	-6.1	Supporting the local economy	-1.7
Playgrounds and open spaces	-7.3	Supporting the local economy	-7.1	Other Housing Services	-1.9
Environmental Health	-7.3	Street Cleaning	-7.8	Environmental Health	-2.2
Supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector	-7.5	Environmental Health	-8.1	Sport and Leisure	-2.4
Supporting the local economy	-7.5	Housing and Council Tax Benefit	-8.4	Homelessness and Housing Options	-2.6
Other Housing Services	-8.8	Playgrounds and open spaces	-8.8	Car Parking	-2.8
Sport and Leisure	-9.4	Other Housing Services	-9	Housing and Council Tax Benefit	-4.6
Housing and Council Tax Benefit	-10	Planning Policy - LDF	-10.4	Supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector	-4.7
Planning Applications and Development Management	-10.8	Sport and Leisure	-10.6	Planning Policy - LDF	-5.7
Planning Policy - LDF	-11.3	Customer Services	-10.9	Customer Services	-6
Customer Services	-13.5	Development Management	-11.9	Development Management	-6.8
Supporting Democracy	-15.6	Supporting Democracy	-17	Supporting Democracy	-9.1
Communications and Information	-16.7	Communications and Information	-18.7	Communications and Information	-9.7

The Service areas featuring in the top 5 ranking for the lowest levels of cut were:

- 1 Tackling Crime and Anti-social behavior, Waste Collection and Recycling
- 2 Street Cleaning, Public Conveniences
- 3 Supporting Voluntary and Community Sector, Homelessness and Housing Options, Playgrounds and open spaces

These results, along with comments made, tell us that people continue to value the low levels of crime in Ryedale, the lowest in North Yorkshire, a County with one of the lowest crime rates in the Country. Also there is a strong emphasis expressed for services which maintain the quality of the immediate environment in which people live and that they experience every day. Interestingly once their immediate environment is resourced the focus appears to move towards the needs of those who are more vulnerable within our communities, with support for the voluntary and community sector, homelessness and playgrounds and open spaces.

What do you like best about living in Ryedale?



This is supported by the results of one of the first questions asked of all 1100 members of the citizens panel upon recruitment in July 2010, the results of which are illustrated below. We asked people what they like best about living in Ryedale and the quality of the natural environment was a clear favourite with over 500 respondents choosing that answer.

The frequency with which service areas were selected:

The distinction needs to be made when comparing the results between the online submissions and others, this is because all online respondents were required to achieve an overall reduction in spending of at least 10%. Offline (or paper submissions) could not fulfill this requirement.

Service areas most frequently chosen for:

- ↑ Increase in funding = **Tackling crime and Anti Social Behaviour**
- ↓ Decrease in funding = **Communication and Information (on line) and Supporting Democracy (off line)**
- ↔ No change to current level of funding = **Playgrounds and Open Spaces**

A third of all respondents chose Tackling Crime and Anti Social Behaviour to receive some level of increase and all but one of the online submissions chose communication and information as an area for reduction in spending. The comments focussed on council publications such as the Ryedale News as being an appropriate target for saving money.

3. Previous Budget Consultation Outcomes

Please find below the topline results from a number of engagement exercises carried out over the past years, which provide further insight into the views of members of the public in Ryedale on those areas of service which are of highest value and merit increased resources if available. These results support those of the Budget Simulator and amount to the views of over 1000 residents.

a. Delib Budget Simulator 2006

The services which were prioritised for additional investment through the Budget Simulator exercise undertaken in 2006 were:

- 1 Housing;
- 2 Young People;
- 3 Economic Development
- 4 The Environment.

b. Simalto 2007

The Council conducted public consultation using the Simalto process in autumn in 2007, 111 people completed the survey. The survey tested a range of services and service levels. To achieve a budget that would maximise satisfaction the following re-prioritisation was desirable:

Enhancements Causing Increased Satisfaction

- **Waste recycling** – add plastics and cardboard
- Job creation
- **Homelessness**
- Tourism promotion
- **Voluntary grants**
- **Community safety**

Again these results are compatible with those received this year with the areas of consistency in each area emboldened.

c. Budget Consultation 2008

In 2008 the Council undertook consultation through the Place Survey, analysis of Parish Plans, workshops with Parish Councils and members of harder to reach groups. The results of the consultation were used to inform the development of the Council Plan and the financial strategy for 2009-2013 and are summarised below.

The Place Survey 2008

In response to the place survey, a questionnaire completed by over 1300 residents, it became clear that of those things for which the Council has direct responsibility or some influence the following were identified as the things that most needing improving:

- affordable decent housing,
- shopping facilities and job prospects,
- clean streets,
- wage levels and the cost of living

A Plan for Every Parish

The issues raised most frequently in Parish Plans are:

- traffic and road safety,
- improvements to and maintenance of the local Environment,
- community facilities and communication.

The priorities expressed by communities for their communities are consistent with those expressed by individuals in the budget simulator exercise.

d. Budget Consultation 2009

In December 2009 we circulated a survey to every household in Ryedale in the winter edition of the Ryedale News. We received 155 responses to this survey and the results were as follows.

Below are the Council's main priorities. What order of priority do you think they should be in?

Rank

- 1 Housing, Active & Safe
- 3 Environment
- 4 Economy
- 5 Transforming the Council

Which services do you think should be given extra resources if funds were available?

Affordable housing	(51.9%)
Recycling	(45.5%)
Community safety	(44.8%)
Clean streets	(39.0%)
Public toilets	(38.3%)
Crime reduction	(31.2%)

Whilst the question is in effect the reverse of the one posed through the budget simulator this year, the effect is the same – which services receive additional resources or which service receive the lowest level of cut. The outcome is similar as you will see above (in bold), the top six items are the same as those items receiving the lowest levels of cut through the simulator.