
Meeting of the Select Committee on Children's Services - 21st January 2009

Joint Report of the Interim Director of Children's Services and Director of Finance

Revenue Budget Strategy 2009/10

Purpose of Report

1. To consult the Select Committee on the proposed Revenue Budget Strategy for 2009/10 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2009/10 - 2011/12.

Background

2. At its meeting on 7th January 2009, the Cabinet proposed a preliminary budget strategy for further consultation, including consultation with Select Committees, in accordance with the Constitution. In framing their responses to these budget proposals, Select Committees have been asked to consider both the spending and funding implications (including the impact on Council Tax) of any observations they may wish to make.
3. In formulating the Council's Budget Strategy and tax levels for 2009/10, Members will need to consider carefully:
 - (a) the levels of Government support allocated to the Council and Ministerial statements about potential "capping levels";
 - (b) spending pressures, opportunities to free up resources (including efficiency savings) and Council Plan priorities;
 - (c) the implications of spending levels in later years as part of the Council's medium term financial plan;
 - (d) the views of consultees;
 - (e) the external factors and risks inherent in the Strategy;
 - (f) the impact on Council Tax payers, and particularly balancing what needs to be spent to provide services with what it is reasonable to ask local Council Tax payers to pay.

4. When the Revenue Budget and Council Tax for 2008/09 was approved, the Council endorsed a Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) which recognised that with regard to 2009/10 and 2010/11, having taken into account:

- expenditure forecasts;
- risks and uncertainties;
- notified levels of Government support;
- the potential to generate further balances;

it would be necessary to generate further efficiency and other savings, in addition to those already identified, to ensure Council Tax increases are within capping limits and at politically acceptable levels. In order to ensure that the Council can properly manage its financial affairs over the medium term, the strategy therefore needed to continue to:

- (a) ensure spending in the remainder of 2007/08 and in 2008/09 is managed within approved budget levels;
 - (b) review spending priorities and the allocation of resources in line with Council Plan priorities;
 - (c) seek further efficiency and other savings;
 - (d) maximise opportunities for additional external funding;
 - (e) take action to replenish General Balances;
 - (f) review risks and uncertainties and other relevant factors.
5. A number of risks and uncertainties were identified when the Council approved the 2008/09 Budget Strategy and MTFS, some of which have had a significant impact on the management of the Council finances in the current year.

The Council's Current Financial Position

6. Headline measures of general inflation, particularly RPI, have so far exceeded forecasts in 2008/09 and energy cost inflation has been significantly higher. The 2008/09 staff pay award has currently gone to ACAS for arbitration (the employers having offered 2.45% which was rejected) and the final settlement could well exceed the amount provided for. Although there have been recent significant reductions in interest rates, they remained higher than originally forecast in the first part of the year which, combined with better than anticipated cash flows, will produce better than budgeted interest earnings. There was also unbudgeted expenditure on the Leaps and Bounds project, the unforeseen cost of relocating ICT staff and equipment from Tower Street, and costs arising from the Dudley Mosque planning appeal.
7. At its meeting on 10th September 2008, the Cabinet approved total net additional budget allocations of £295,000, funded from increased general balances resulting from the 2007/08 outturn.

8. The latest budgetary control information, produced in accordance with the Council's approved Financial Management Regime, identifies the following further variations:-

	£'000	£'000
Additional investment income	341	
Purchasing rebates and finance staff vacancies	275	616
	<hr/>	
Reduced Land Charges fee income	195	
Further expenditure on Leaps and Bounds and other minor variations	100	295
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Net underspend – earmarked to meet any additional costs of 2008/09 pay award		321
		<hr/>

9. Despite the effects of a number of significant financial pressures, total spending in the current year will be only about £0.3m more than the total original budget of £226.9m, subject to any unforeseen major variations in the remainder of the year,
10. The effect of the approved budget variations on the level of General Balances is set out in the following table:-

	Original Budget 2008/09 £m	Revised Budget 2008/09 £m
Balance at 31st March 2008	7.6 CR	7.6 CR
Effect of 2007/08 Outturn		0.3 CR
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	7.6 CR	7.9 CR
Less: Originally estimated use 2008/09	6.0 DR	6.0 DR
Net Additional Allocations 2008/09	-	0.3 DR
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Estimated Balance 31st March 2009	1.6 CR	1.6 CR
	<hr/>	<hr/>

11. The Council's approved MTFS assumed that all of the General Balances would be required to support spending in 2008/09 and 2009/10. It was, however, recognised that there was likely to be a shortfall in resources in the medium term and one of the key elements of the financial strategy has been to take action to replenish General Balances and this is dealt with in paragraph 22.

Provisional Formula Grant Settlement 2009/10 - 2010/11

12. Details of the Provisional Formula Grant Settlement for 2009/10 and indicative figures for 2010/11 were announced by the Government on 26th November. The figures for Dudley remain as originally indicated last year as part of the 3-year settlement - with an increase of 3.5% in 2009/10 and 3.0% 2010/11. The budget strategy set out below assumes a further increase of 3% in 2011/12 - on the basis that any underlying tightening of support will be offset by fallout of damping. (For 2009/10 and 2010/11, damping continues to restrict Dudley's Formula Grant to around £5m per year less than what it would otherwise be.)
13. In his statement to the House of Commons when announcing the provisional Formula Grant Settlement, the Minister made the following comments in relation to capping:

“Last year, I made clear that the Government expected the average council tax increase in 2008/09 to be substantially below 5%. The actual increase was 3.9% – the lowest increase for 14 years and the second lowest ever. We also kept our promise to deal with excessive increases by taking capping action against eight authorities. For 2009/10 the Government again expects the average council tax increase in England to be substantially below 5%. And again, we will not hesitate to use our capping power as necessary to protect council tax payers from excessive increases.”
14. In a subsequent letter to Local Authority Leaders, the Minister for Local Government reiterated this point, and added that:

“it would be unwise for any authority to assume that the capping principles set in previous years will be repeated”.
15. The majority of specific grant allocations, including Area Based Grant (ABG), for 2009/10 and 2010/11 have also been confirmed broadly in line with the indicative figures given a year ago. Although Supporting People grant will not formally be included in ABG until 2010/11, rather than 2009/10 as previously anticipated, it will not be ringfenced in 2009/10 so will effectively be treated as if it were part of ABG. These allocations are reflected in the forecasts set out below.

Public Consultation

16. As part of the ongoing consultation process to inform Budget and Council Tax proposals, the Council undertook a further public consultation exercise during August and September, using the Citizens Panel and the Internet. Details of the responses are shown at Appendix C. There was a total of almost 1000 responses and the results can be summarised as:
 - (a) over 90% of respondents thought overall spending on Council services should stay the same or be increased;
 - (b) but only 40% thought that the Council Tax increase should be more than inflation if necessary to maintain and increase spending on important services.

Base Budget Forecasts 2009/10 and 2011/12

17. Preparing the detailed Base Budget forecasts for 2009/10 and later years has proved to be particularly difficult this year, given the potential impact of the recession on service demands and cash flow and the uncertain effects of the current economic situation on future interest and inflation rates and pay awards. The following key assumptions have been made (and are also referred to in the risk analysis in paragraph 27):-
- (a) General inflation will reduce substantially by 2009/10 and energy costs will fall back to levels similar to those pertaining when this year's contracts were agreed;
 - (b) With RPI anticipated to reduce substantially, but subject to the outcome of the current year's ACAS arbitration, pay awards over the MTFS period are anticipated to be lower than in recent years;
 - (c) Interest rates will continue to reduce, but better than anticipated cash flows will partly offset the adverse impact on existing levels of interest earned;
 - (d) Whilst the final costs of Single Status and Equal Pay Back Pay (EPBP) still remain uncertain, new pay and grading structures will be introduced during 2009/10 and the cost of EPBP will be capitalised. Likely costs are reflected in the Base Budget forecasts and a review of the levels of reserves previously set aside. At this stage it has been assumed that any costs relating to schools will be funded from school resources;
 - (e) The potential impact of the recession on service demands can be managed by reprioritisation or the use of additional external resources.
18. Details of Base Budget Forecasts for the next three years are set out below.

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
	£m	£m	£m
2008/09 Base	247.9	247.9	247.9
Pay Inflation at 2.25% for 2009/10 and 2% in later years	4.1	7.6	11.1
Price Inflation at (generally) 2%	2.6	4.8	7.0
Capital Programme	1.0	1.9	2.9
Other Adjustments	1.1	-0.7	0.7
Base Budget Forecasts	256.7	261.5	269.6
% increase year-on-year	+ 3.5%	+ 1.9%	+ 3.1%

Additional Spending

19. Having reviewed existing budgets in the light of Council Plan and Local Area Agreement (LAA) Priorities, and taking account of additional legislative requirements, desirable developments and service pressures, and public consultation, the following package of additional spending over the next three years (including items provisionally agreed as part of the 2008/09 strategy) is proposed:

	2009/ 2010 £'000	2010/ 2011 £'000	2011/ 2012 £'000	Main Council Plan Theme Supported	Main LAA Priority Supported (**)
<u>Urban Environment</u>					
• Increased Recycling & Waste Disposal costs, inc. Landfill Tax	250	470	715	Environment	Environment
• Lighting Column replacement programme*	25	50	75	Environment	Environment
• Parks Maintenance Improvements		60	90	Environment	Environment
• Economic Regeneration Initiatives	10	20	20	Regeneration	Wealthy
• Increased resources for Tree Strategy	100	100	100	Environment	Environment
	385	700	1000		
<u>Children's Services</u>					
• Increased fees for foster carers and enhanced support network	400	400	400	Caring	DCSF Statutory
	400	400	400		
<u>Adult, Community and Housing</u>					
• Increased Residential and nursing fees.	200	400	400	Caring	Healthy
• Increasing number of clients with dementia and improved services for elderly	292	492	692	Caring	Healthy
• Increasing numbers of Adults with learning difficulties	1200	1480	1904	Caring	Healthy
• Increasing number of mental health clients	200	300	400	Caring	Healthy
• Adult Safeguarding / Valuing People Now	100	100	100	Caring	Healthy
• Relocation of Archives Service*	8	228	504	Learning	Wealthy
	2000	3000	4000		

Chief Executive's

• Support to DCVS	60	60	60	Quality	Safe &
	60	60	60	Service	Cohesive

Finance, ICT and Procurement

• Relocation of ICT from Tower Street	200	150	150	Quality	Support to
	200	150	150	Service	all priorities

Law and Property

• Property Maintenance Programme*	25	50	75	Quality	Support to
	25	50	75	Service	all priorities

Total Proposed Growth

3070	4360	5685
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Notes: * Includes revenue costs of increased Capital Investment

** The LAA priorities being Wealthy Communities; Healthy Communities; Environmentally Aware; Safe and Cohesive Communities; and the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) statutory indicators.

Efficiency and Other Savings

20. Following a detailed budget review process, which considered the need to redirect resources to the spending pressures and priorities set out in paragraph 19, a range of efficiency and other savings (including items provisionally agreed as part of the 2008/09 strategy) have been identified from existing budgets. Details are set out at Appendix B and summarised in the following table:

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
	£m	£m	£m
Finance, ICT & Procurement	500	768	778
Chief Executive's	175	190	220
Law and Property	262	343	385
Urban Environment	665	900	900
Adult, Community and Housing	1390	1565	1617
Children's Services	799	1599	1599
	3791	5365	5499

21. The 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review set all public services a target of achieving at least 3% net cash-releasing value for money gains per annum over the period 2008/09 to 2010/11. For 2008/09, largely by being able to utilise carried forward "surplus" Gershon cashable efficiencies from the previous 3 year Comprehensive Spending Review, the Council is estimating it will exceed its target. For 2009/10, about 50% of the savings identified in paragraph 20 will count towards our efficiency target, which together with redirections within services, including the HRA and Capital spend, should produce cashable efficiency savings equivalent to 75% of the national target.

Review of Reserves

22. As paragraph 4 says, the existing approved MTFS includes reference to the need to take action to replenish General Balances. As anticipated when the current MTFS was approved, a total of £3m can be transferred to General Balances from previously earmarked reserves as at 31st March 2009 (including £0.8m for Capital projects that can instead be funded from Prudential Borrowing). It would not be unreasonable to expect a future review of earmarked reserves to generate a further £1m of transfers to General Balances as at 31st March 2010. The level of estimated General Balances and the proposed use is summarised in the following table:-

	As at 31/3/09	As at 31/3/10
Balances in hand b/fwd	1.6	Nil
Transfers from Earmarked Reserves	3.0	1.0
	<hr/> 4.6	<hr/> 1.0
Proposed use in following year	4.6	1.0
Balance c/fwd	<hr/> Nil <hr/>	<hr/> Nil <hr/>

Summary

23. The following table summarises the budget proposals for 2009/10 - 2011/12:

	2009/10 £m	2010/11 £m	2011/12 £m
Base Budget Forecast	256.7	261.5	269.6
Council Plan Priorities & Pressures	3.1	4.4	5.7
Efficiency & Other Savings	-3.8	-5.4	-5.5
Service Spend	<hr/> 256.0	<hr/> 260.5	<hr/> 269.8
Area Based Grant (inc. Supporting People)*	(21.2)	(20.4)	(20.8)
Use of Balances	(4.6)	(1.0)	
Budget Requirement	<hr/> 230.2	<hr/> 239.1	<hr/> 249.0
	<hr/> + 4.2 %	<hr/> + 3.9%	<hr/> + 4.1%

* Assuming 2% increase in 2011/12

24. An analysis of the resulting service expenditure for 2009/10 of £256.0m, showing how this compares with the current year's base budget is shown at Appendix A and an Analysis of Provisional 2008/09 Budget by Division of Service is shown at Appendix D. .
25. Based on the provisional Formula Grant Settlement, and preliminary estimates of the 2009/10 Council Tax Base and Collection Fund Surplus, a Budget Requirement of £230.2m would imply a Council Tax increase of just under 5% for 2009/10. This is subject to a number of issues, including the risks and external factors set out in paragraph 28.

26. It should be noted that at this stage, the budget forecasts and resource levels set out in this report for 2009/10 are based on a number of provisional figures and preliminary estimates, which may change prior to the final setting of the budget and Council Tax, namely:
- (i) Formula Grant figures are provisional and will not be finalised until the end of January 2009.
 - (ii) The actual levels of the PTA levy still need to be formally determined.
 - (iii) The outcome of ACAS arbitration in relation to the 2008/09 pay award may affect pay award assumptions in 2009/10 and later years.

Estimates, Assumptions & Risk Analysis

27. In addition, the proposals in this report are based on a number of estimates, assumptions and professional judgements, which may need to be reviewed and amended either before the budget and Council Tax for 2009/10 is set, during the course of that year, or indeed over the term of the MTFS. These may lead to further increases in expenditure and, therefore, the need to identify alternative funding sources, and include:
- (a) Single Status and EPBP costs are no more than estimated;
 - (b) LABGI income is forthcoming as assumed;
 - (c) general levels of inflation, including energy cost inflation, and interest rates do not vary materially from current forecasts;
 - (d) there will be no other unplanned expenditure - or shortfalls in income - which cannot be met from reserves;
 - (e) income from fees, charges and other sources, including Airport Company dividends, are maintained in accordance with current projections;
 - (f) demographic pressures, particularly as they affect services to adults and children, are no greater than currently assumed and estimated;
 - (g) the effects of the recession on service demands and cash flow can be managed within proposed budget levels and there is no significant impact on the Council Tax Base;
 - (h) Government "capping levels" are not significantly reduced.

Medium Term Financial Strategy

28. Decisions about spending, funding and council tax levels in any one year need to be made in the context of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), recognising that medium term projections need to be reviewed and revised on a regular basis.

29. The MTFS assumes that up to a further £1m will be available in General Balances to support spending in 2010/11. Although increases in the projected Budget Requirement in 2010/11 and 2011/12 are well within current capping criteria, the implied levels of annual council tax increase may be considered unreasonably high and, depending on prevailing economic and other conditions at the time, may not be politically acceptable. Any further increased spending pressures and/or significant adverse variations from key budget and forecast assumptions will, of course, either increase the level of savings required or further increase the pressure on council tax levels.
30. In order to ensure that the Council can properly manage its financial affairs over the medium term, and ensure resources are available to deal with new spending pressures and other unforeseen eventualities, the strategy must therefore be to continue to:
- (a) ensure spending in the remainder of 2008/09 and in 2009/10 is managed within approved budget levels;
 - (b) review spending priorities and the allocation of resources in line with Council Plan priorities;
 - (c) seek further efficiency and other savings;
 - (d) maximise opportunities for additional external funding;
 - (e) take action to replenish General Balances;
 - (f) regularly review risks and uncertainties and any other relevant factors.

Implications for services covered by the Terms of Reference of this Select Committee

31. An additional £0.4m in 2009/10 will enable the Directorate to address weaknesses highlighted within the 2008 fostering inspection. This will be achieved by ensuring that the foster carers' remuneration is set at an appropriate level, with the positive outcomes of recruiting a sufficient number of carers in order to offer placement choice to appropriately meet individual children's needs.
- a. The investment will increase the number of level 2 carers who will be eligible to care for children with more complex needs thus reducing the reliance on expensive out of borough placements. The investment will also aid recruitment and retention of foster carers.
 - b. Three additional posts will be required in order to strengthen and support foster carers thus minimising the risk of fostering placement breaking down.

Some redirection of funding has been achieved already within existing resources to enable carers to be remunerated for higher skill levels.

32. Ongoing preventative work in the area of children's social care is expected to release savings of £0.2m in 2009/10 and a further £0.8m in 2010/11 in respect of previous year's growth allocated as 'spend to save' initiatives. This will be achieved through a reduction in respect of external residential placements and other payments for looked after children.

33. The service contract with Black Country Connexions will be remodelled from 2009, reducing costs by £0.055m.
34. The Directorate has reviewed a number of activities funded by Area Based Grant, such as the Children's Fund, Extended Schools, SEN and Care Matters and has identified that costs reflected in the increase in funding for 2009/10 can be addressed from within existing resources; this will save £0.43m.
35. Economy and efficiency measures will be implemented across the Directorate, including utilising alternative sources of funding, to the value of £0.114m.

Consultation

36. Details of public consultation already undertaken are set out in paragraph 16 above.
37. The Council is required by law to consult with representatives of Business Ratepayers before the final budget and Council Tax are agreed, and this will be scheduled to take place in February before the Cabinet recommends a final budget.

Finance

38. This report is financial in nature and relevant information is contained within the body of the report.

Law

39. The Council's budget setting process is governed by the Local Government Finance Acts 1988 and 1992 and the Local Government Act 2003.
40. The Local Government Act 2003 requires the Director of Finance to report on the robustness of estimates made for the purpose of final budget calculations, and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves and this will be included in the final budget report.
41. The Local Government Finance Act 1992 gives the Secretary of State power to determine that an authority's Budget Requirement is excessive. This may result in "designation" (possibly leading to recalculation of the Budget Requirement and Rebilling) or "nomination" which either pre-sets a Budget Requirement limit for a future year or a notional budget for the current year against which future years' Budget requirements will be measured for capping purposes.
42. As set out in paragraph 13, the Minister for Local Government had already indicated when announcing the provisional RSG Settlement:

"For 2009/10 the Government again expects the average council tax increase in England to be substantially below 5%. And again, we will not hesitate to use our capping power as necessary to protect council tax payers from excessive increases."

Equality Impact

43. These proposals comply with the Council's policy on Equality and Diversity, as far as it is possible within existing and future resource levels.
44. With regard to Children and Young People:
- The proposed budget for the Directorate of Children's Services (including the additional spending detailed) will be spent wholly on maintaining and improving services for children and young people. The expenditure of other Directorates' budgets will also have a significant impact on this group.
 - All members of the public, including children and young people, had the opportunity to take part in the Internet consultation to inform the proposals in this report.
 - There has been no specific involvement of children and young people in developing the proposals in this report.

Recommendations

45. That, subject to approval by the Cabinet at its meeting on 7th January 2009, the Select Committee:
- (a) considers the Cabinet's Revenue Budget Strategy proposals for 2009/10 and Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2009/10 - 2011/12;
 - (b) identifies both spending and funding implications (including the impact upon Council Tax) of any observations the Select Committee wishes to make.



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List of Background Papers

Provisional Formula Grant Settlement (DCLG website)

Appendix A

Service	2008/09 Base Budget (*)	Inflation, Capital Programme, etc.	Budget Increase Proposals	Budget Reduction Proposals	2009/10 Proposed Budget
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Children's	62.1	1.7	0.4	-0.8	63.4
Adult, Community & Housing	99.1	2.3	2.0	-1.4	102.0
Urban Environment	53.5	1.4	0.4	-0.7	54.6
Finance, ICT and Procurement	20.6	1.8	0.2	-0.5	22.1
Chief Executive's	10.9	1.2	0.1	-0.2	12.0
Law & Property	1.7	0.4	-	-0.2	1.9
Total Service Spend	247.9	8.8	3.1	-3.8	256.0

(*) Adjusted to reflect transfers of services between directorates, and other accounting changes.

Appendix B

EFFICIENCY AND OTHER SAVINGS

	2009/10 £'000	2010/11 £'000	2011/12 £'000
<u>Finance</u>			
• Efficiencies from Homeworking	50	125	125
• Effect of additional service lines in DC+	300	400	400
• Revised Staffing Arrangements	119	182	192
• Other efficiencies	31	61	61
	500	768	778
<u>Chief Executive's</u>			
• Personnel Service restructuring	125	125	125
• Other Savings and Efficiencies	50	65	95
	175	190	220
<u>Law and Property</u>			
• Staffing and Management Review	211	216	258
• Increased Income from Licences	21	57	57
• Reduced Property costs	25	45	45
• Increased Delegations and other savings	5	25	25
	262	343	385
<u>DUE</u>			
• Review of Leisure Facilities.	300	300	300
• Revised Staffing Arrangements	113	228	228
• Review of Museum services		120	120
• Review of fees, charges and other income	220	220	220
• Other Savings and Efficiencies	32	32	32
	665	900	900
<u>Adult, Community and Housing</u>			
• Revised Meals on Wheels Provision	100	150	150
• Further development of Extra Care Housing provision	230	480	480
• Staffing and Management Review	350	225	225
• Intermediate Care – Review funding arrangements	100	100	100
• Reconfigure Equipment & Occupational Therapy service	100	100	100
• Grange House reprovision	390	390	390
• Other Savings and Efficiencies	120	120	172
	1390	1565	1617
<u>Children's Services</u>			
• Looked After Children - Invest to Save Programme	200	1000	1000
• Review use of ABG and other grant funding	430	430	430
• Remodel Connexions Service Contract	55	55	55
• Review Management, Admin, Contract & Support costs	50	50	50
• Other Savings and Efficiencies	64	64	64
	799	1599	1599
TOTAL	3791	5365	5499

Budget 2009/10 Questionnaire Results (2008/09 in brackets)

Q1. Overall, do you think spending on services should:

Be increased 32% (34)	Stay the same 60% (59)	Be reduced 9% (8)
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Q2. Now, looking at the main services the Council provides, please indicate for each one whether you think spending should increase, stay the same, or be reduced. (*Rankings obtained by comparing balance of "increase" and "reduce" responses.*)

	Spend should increase	Spend should stay the same	Spend should be reduced	Ranking
Schools	36% (35)	60% (61)	4% (3)	7 (9)
Support to Schools	31% (36)	61% (56)	8% (8)	11 (11)
Youth Service and Community Centres	37% (45)	56% (50)	7% (5)	8 (6)
Adult Education	16% (18)	70% (71)	14% (13)	16 (16)
Libraries / Archives	18% (19)	72% (70)	10% (10)	15 (15)
Refuse Collection, Disposal & Recycling	39% (39)	58% (59)	3% (2)	6 (7)
Street Cleaning & Litter Removal	45% (50)	53% (49)	2% (1)	4 (5)
Maintenance of Roads & Footpaths	59% (59)	38% (39)	3% (2)	2 (3)
Reducing Traffic Congestion	38% (42)	51% (51)	11% (8)	10 (8)
Arts & Entertainment	6% (6)	60% (62)	34% (32)	18 (18)
Museums & Heritage	7% (8)	66% (68)	27% (23)	17 (17)
Parks & Open Spaces	27% (30)	66% (66)	8% (4)	14 (12)
Sports Facilities & Leisure Centres	30% (31)	62% (60)	8% (8)	12 (13)
Helping Create New Jobs & Businesses	40% (41)	49% (45)	11% (11)	9 (10)
Care & Support for Children & Families	29% (31)	61% (58)	10% (10)	13 (14)
Care & Support for Older People	53% (60)	44% (38)	3% (2)	3 (2)
Care & Support for People with Mental Health Problems, Learning or Physical Disabilities	45% (51)	52% (47)	3% (2)	5 (4)
Crime Prevention & Public Safety	63% (65)	35% (34)	2% (1)	1 (1)

Q3. Bearing in mind your answers to questions 1 and 2, which of the following statements best reflects your views on next year's Council Tax:

- a. Overall spending on services should be maintained or increased even if this means an increase in Council Tax well above the rate of inflation.
16% (17)
- b. Spending on important services should be maintained at the expense of other services, even if this means a Council tax increase above the rate of inflation. **26% (31)**
- c. The Council Tax increase should be no more than the rate of inflation, even if this means significant reductions in spending on services.
58% (52)

Q4. Are there any other issues we should take into account when considering next year's budget and Council Tax?

Responses relating to specific service issues have been circulated to Directors for consideration.

Q5. To help us analyse the responses to this questionnaire, it would be helpful if you could tell us:

Your age: 18-24 **2%** (2) 25-44 **22%** (24)
45-64 **47%** (45) 65+ **28%** (28)

Where you live: Dudley	19% (18)	Brierley Hill	21% (21)
		Halesowen	23% (23)
		Stourbridge	25% (23)
		Sedgley/Coseley/Gornal	12% (14)

Is your Council Tax bill reduced by Benefit? Yes **17%** (17) No **83%** (83)

Note: For all questions, nil responses have been excluded from analysis. Totals may not sum to 100% due to roundings.

Analysis of Provisional 2009/10 Budget by Division of Service

	£000
Children's Services	
Schools (Asset Rents & Strategy costs etc. not funded by DSG)	20,590
Youth Service	6,932
Children & Families Social Services	33,811
Other Children's Services	2,069
	<u>63,402</u>
Adult, Community and Housing Services	
Care & Support for Older People	45,115
Care & Support for People with a Physical or Sensory Disability	8,363
Care & Support for People with a Learning Disability	24,091
Care & Support for People with Mental Health Needs	6,439
Libraries, etc.	5,587
Other Adult and Community Services, inc. Neighbourhood Management	2,395
Private Sector Housing	9,244
Homelessness & Welfare	421
Contribution to Housing Revenue Account for Community Expenditure	318
	<u>101,973</u>
Urban Environment	
Environmental Health & Consumer Protection	3,843
Street Cleansing	2,585
Waste Collection & Disposal	15,771
Cemeteries & Crematoria	-550
Traffic Management & Road Safety	2,001
Flood Defence & Land Drainage	212
Highways Maintenance (inc. capital charges, etc.)	13,916
Other Engineering & Transportation Services	-200
Planning, Building and Development Control	2,546
Economic Regeneration	1,826
Environmental Initiatives	388
Culture and Heritage	2,480
Recreation & Sport and Open Spaces	9,765
	<u>54,583</u>

£000

Chief Executive's

Elections & Electoral Registration	563
Economic & Community Development	929
Community Safety	1,430
Corporate & Other Costs	9,106
	<u>12,028</u>

Finance, ICT and Procurement

Tax Collection & Benefits	3,554
Transport Authority Levy	16,324
Flood Defence Levy	103
Treasury, etc.	1,664
Corporate & Other Costs	462
	<u>22,107</u>

Law and Property

Licensing, Registration & Courts	549
Democratic Costs	1,460
Other Legal & Property Services	-94
	<u>1,915</u>

TOTAL	256,008
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