

Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority

Precept 2007/08

Feedback



PUTTING SHROPSHIRE'S
SAFETY FIRST



Budget 2007/08

- Council Tax rise generally seen as justified, reasonable and about right
 - *Having heard all the points we think that this is a good budget*
 - *Should not compromise improved standards and ongoing improvements*
 - *The calculations justify the rise*
 - *It is justified because of the floor effect*
 - *It is about right...not wasting money and using it where it is needed*
- 4.35% increase thought to be reasonable given the FRS is a priority service
 - Some felt the Authority should not be too concerned with keeping the rise to 4%
 - *4.35% is only an extra £40,000 and it covers improvements*
 - *If the Service asks for too little it may backfire if Central Government cuts public spending in the future*
 - Others believed that every effort should be made to keep the increase at 4% as this makes the Authority look for savings that they may not do otherwise

PUTTING SHROPSHIRE'S
SAFETY FIRST



Budget 2007/08

- SWFA's second highest precept was thought unfair but accepted and understood
 - *[It] is not justified...it would be better if the figure was closer to the national average*
 - *Higher concentrations of population increases risk and it seems reasonable that 'urban' areas will receive a higher grant than those more rural in nature*
 - *The way the figures are worked out, particularly the Government funding regime, leaves the Fire Authority without overall control*
- Fire Formula Spending Share seen as unfair by some
 - *If [the] grant increase of 3.73% is after the Govt re-distribution it is still totally unfair*
 - *Didn't take into account the sparsity factor in this area*
 - *Argued that terrorist activity could occur in Birmingham that could affect this area*
 - *Money is allocated to London that should be redistributed to areas that have been under-funded*
 - *We feel that Shropshire is again under-funded which puts lives at risk*
- Others understood the reason for the reduced percentage (and were pleased that the rise is at least *higher than inflation!*)
 - *We would like more from Govt but recognise that it will take time to redress the balance*
 - *It is unfair but the adjustment made is sufficient*

PUTTING SHROPSHIRE'S
SAFETY FIRST



Budget 2007/08

- SWFA thought to represent excellent value for money, *given the small grant from Government*
 - *Performance indicators indicate an efficient service delivery and one that compares favourably with other FRSs in the country*
 - *At the amount of money paid a week per household we think it is marvellous*
 - *The Service is using money wisely and making improvements with a small budget increase*
 - *Good management and financial control allows for inadequacies in the league tables*
 - *It is trying to make savings without affecting the service provided*
 - *Delivering a good service with limited resources*
- All agreed that the Fire Authority should not attempt to go below an increase of 4% by delaying the implementation of the Tweedale changes
 - *Additional staff at Tweedale would increase fire safety and this should not be compromised*
 - *Start [the changes] now and not complicate things for next year*
 - *The staff will need time to be trained and if the money is available in this budget, use it*
 - *The staff will be needed...especially if we have a hot summer again*
 - *Not happy with a reduction on 4%...this could have repercussions for following years*
 - *Would affect service quality and next year's increase will not have to be so large*

PUTTING SHROPSHIRE'S
SAFETY FIRST



Capital Expenditure

- Areas and balance of spend generally endorsed
 - *Well-maintained equipment, vehicles and buildings are essential*
 - *Neglect on vehicles and buildings can increase expenditure over a period*
 - *[The FRS has] to invest in progress to retain the efficiency we have got to date*
 - *From the information supplied these items seem to be the right things to spend money on*
 - *Right things to spend money on...very acceptable*
 - *Can't cut corners too much as safety is an issue*
- Participants also accepted that the figures are not finalised and trusted that costs will be kept down as much as possible

PUTTING SHROPSHIRE'S
SAFETY FIRST



Capital Expenditure

- Most participants were pleased with all areas of spend, particularly...
 - Improved training for retained staff
 - *The FRS is employing more people and training them to higher standard*
 - Ford Rangers being equipped with RTC equipment
 - Telford Central improvements (e.g. moving sleeping areas to a lower floor)
 - Installing fire alarms at stations
 - Improved technology
- A minority questioned...
 - The high cost of the fire alarm installations
 - *Improved IT for pure spin!*
 - The cost of garaging at Oswestry (but they understood the location difficulties)
 - Telford Central improvements
 - Although accepting that Telford needs developing, one group at Ludlow felt that costs could be lower (although the group did not feel it had enough information on the proposed improvements to make a firm judgement)

PUTTING SHROPSHIRE'S
SAFETY FIRST



Capital Expenditure

- Capital expenditure thought to represent very good value for money
 - *Well-maintained vehicles, buildings and training always necessary*
 - *The spending is justified to make necessary improvements*
- Participants felt that they rely on and trust the Fire Authority to give them accurate figures and to make wise decisions with regard to areas of spend
 - *We feel we can trust Fire Authority to spend money wisely and make savings where possible*

PUTTING SHROPSHIRE'S
SAFETY FIRST



Efficiencies and Savings

- Hydrant maintenance (contract reduction)
 - Supported *provided service and maintenance is not affected*
 - *[It's a] saving with no loss of service delivery*
 - *Well done for finding a cheaper service provider!*
 - Some concern at Ludlow that *the cheapest price can result in the cheapest job and we don't want hydrants that don't work!*
- Rental income (ambulance at Market Drayton) supported
 - *Good for Fire Service and Ambulance Service*
 - *Great thinking!*
 - *Money can be used in other departments*
 - *It's a good idea and if possibilities of extension occur then these should be taken*
 - *Minority questioned the £9,000 rental and recommended an annual review of this figure*
 - *Is this enough and who pays for the maintenance of the building?*

PUTTING SHROPSHIRE'S
SAFETY FIRST



Efficiencies and Savings

- Personal Protective Equipment (re-issue of fire kit) strongly supported and participants questioned why this has not been done before
 - *Very good...it's wasteful to throw away good, serviceable, little used kit*
 - *Makes complete sense to recycle*
 - *Recycle:re-use...we like it!*
- Re-deployment rather than ill-health retirement seen as a very good idea
 - *Provided re-deployment is to do a necessary job rather than just 'finding a job' for someone*
 - *It is keeping knowledge within the service*
 - *Sensible use of manpower and existing skills/expertise*
 - *Great idea as it values the greatest resource – the people!*

PUTTING SHROPSHIRE'S
SAFETY FIRST



Efficiencies and Savings

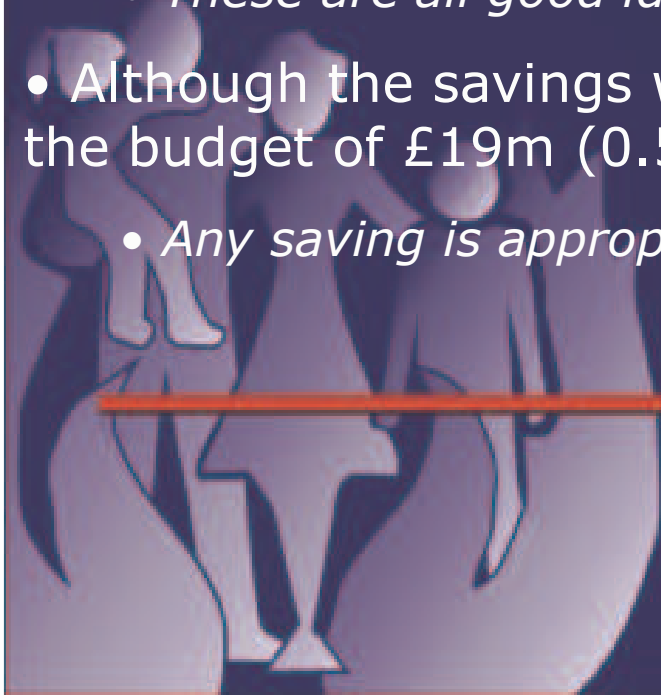
- Wholetime recruit training changes supported provided the quality of training is maintained
 - *Very good provided there is no reduction in training levels*
 - *Makes sense having it closer to home*
 - *Represents a saving of time and money*
 - *It is a good idea and saves money without reducing performance*
 - *Hidden benefits to the family of staff involved*
- Retained Support Officer appointments
 - Generally supported
 - *Especially if it increases retained applicants or helps to keep retained staff*
 - *The officers offer expertise*
 - *Good to use ordinary firefighters as this cuts costs*
 - Some concern at Shrewsbury that morale may have been impaired by offering these as firefighter posts rather than as promotion

PUTTING SHROPSHIRE'S
SAFETY FIRST



Efficiencies and Savings

- Areas of efficiency/saving deemed appropriate
 - *Represent very good value for money*
 - *They are relevant to the FRS*
 - *All seem good savings without compromising service delivery*
- Participants were pleased that areas of potential saving are being explored and questioned whether there are others
 - *These are all good ideas...are there others?*
- Although the savings were acknowledged to be small in relation to the budget of £19m (0.5%) they were agreed to be welcome
 - *Any saving is appropriate*



PUTTING SHROPSHIRE'S
SAFETY FIRST



Service Developments

- IRMP (moving engine from Telford to Tweedale) approved
 - *Improves service delivery and ensures vehicles and staff are deployed where they can respond more quickly*
 - *It is essential to the development of Tweedale*
 - *Much better fire cover for Telford...a valuable improvement in service provision*
 - *Agree that this is an efficient use of resources*
 - *Needed for better cover for people's safety*
- Road Safety Strategy strongly approved, although a minority questioned whether the FRS should be funding this long-term (as opposed to the Police)
 - *Properly equipped vehicles save lives...all means to reducing accidents is always worthwhile*
 - *Any provision in accident prevention is desirable*
 - *Makes sense to work in partnership with other bodies to reduce accidents*
 - *Important to build the trust and respect of youngsters*
 - *A good advancement...it should help reduce accidents*
 - *More awareness is needed for young drivers to help save lives*



**PUTTING SHROPSHIRE'S
SAFETY FIRST**



Service Developments

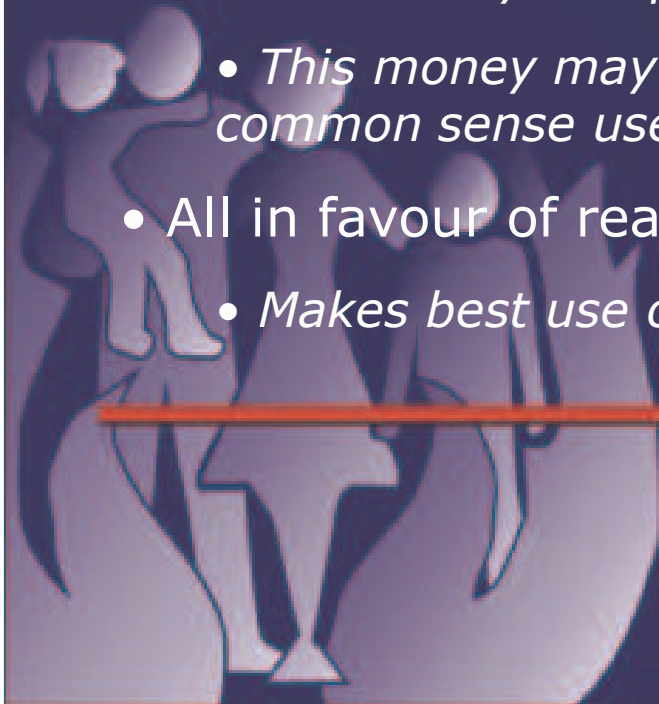
- Data Quality Officer supported by most, on condition they are not merely used for propaganda purposes
 - *As better data is being demanded by the Auditors then it is essential to have this, particularly as it will give better information to enable service improvement as well as obtaining funds from Government*
 - *We think good information is vital especially if it helps planning for future services*
 - *Needed to resolve identified problems in this area*
 - *It is essential to measure performance in order to improve on identified weak areas...but we are not in favour of funding spin and the information should be used to look forward rather than tell everyone how great you are*
- Older People's Officer
 - Generally supported, providing it is kept under review to ensure an ongoing cost-benefit
 - *Good idea as it has been seen to be a high-risk area*
 - *Again a good choice for a post that should have a positive effect on accident reduction*
 - One group at Ludlow undecided as *possibly should stay as County Council responsibility under Social Services*
 - Another group at Ludlow felt the FRS should have a post for vulnerable people as a whole
 - *We support an increase in the budget for vulnerable people as the Council has withdrawn funding*

PUTTING SHROPSHIRE'S
SAFETY FIRST



Service Developments

- Human Resources (equality and reasonable adjustment budget) seemed reasonable to participants
 - Equality aspect accepted, reluctantly in some cases, by most
 - *In today's world it is a necessary allocation*
 - *Due to the amount of new legislation it's important that someone is ensuring the Service is complying*
 - *Reluctantly accept this as it is being required by legislation*
 - *This money may be better spread across the other four areas and common sense used to cope with this*
 - All in favour of reasonable adjustment budget
 - *Makes best use of the valuable resource of trained people*



PUTTING SHROPSHIRE'S
SAFETY FIRST



Service Developments

- Most participants were pleased with all areas of spend
 - *They are good value for money as £280,000 is not a high cost to save lives or even property*
 - *Sensible use of resources and money*
 - *Well thought out and will help save lives through better road safety and Tweedale upgrade*
- They were particularly pleased with...
 - Tweedale proposals
 - Road Safety Strategy in order to reduce RTAs
 - *Can never stress the message enough, especially to young people*
 - Data Quality Officer (at Ludlow)
 - *This was highlighted as a problem*
- One group at Shrewsbury had reservations about the Data Quality Officer and felt that *the Audit Commission should justify the need to employ staff to answer their PIs*
- Another at Ludlow *possibly* disagreed with the Older People's Officer *as this could be done through another agency*
- Further, one group at Shrewsbury expressed some concern, describing the Service Developments as *like the Curates egg...good in parts!*

PUTTING SHROPSHIRE'S
SAFETY FIRST

