

Best Services Resources Allow – an update from the Chief Executive.

During the scrutiny of the Council's 2012/13 and 2013/14 budgets the Budget Scrutiny Task Group expressed some concern that officers were still keen to provide a 'Rolls Royce' service on a 'Mini' budget. The Task Group recommended that a review of the 'Best Services Resources Allow' activity be added to the Committee's forward plan, so that the Committee could be assured that the Council was not prejudicing its ability to deliver core services at an acceptable level.

Ashford has budgeted wisely and prepared well for the reductions in Government grant which have occurred since the last election. As a result of this very few staff have been made redundant. However, staff numbers have reduced through staff turnover (vacant posts not being refilled without clear justification) and reorganisation of the structure of Services.

In 2010, the people of Ashford were given the opportunity to take part in a SIMALTO survey in order to tell the Council where they would like Council resources to be focussed over the next 5 years. The results of this consultation exercise were fed into the 2011 – 2015 business plan.

One of the priorities that arose was 'best services resources allow' i.e. the Council could shift spending to priority areas but it was expected that essential Council business would still be maintained at a decent standard but modest cost.

To help implement this priority a series of staff/Member workshops were organised in May 2011 to enable ideas for taking this forward to be suggested. Of the many ideas that came from the workshops, seven were selected to be explored further:

- To improve the website
- To improve the intranet
- To explore the possibility of the Council setting up its own lettings company
- Using staff as inspectors to report problems e.g. broken manhole covers, fly tipping etc.
- Generic working – more joined up working across functions and services leading to less duplication
- Commercial charging – to explore charging for some services that were provided free of charge
- Printing – to see if there were opportunities to reduce the amount of printing we do

The Chief Executive will update the Committee on the achievements to date and how we are delivering essential Council services.