



My Lambeth

Involving residents and stakeholders in the Council's budget setting process

Report for London Borough of Lambeth

September 2008

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1. Introduction

OPM (Office for Public Management) was asked by the London Borough of Lambeth to consult residents and other stakeholders about the council's budget priorities for the next financial year and in the longer term. OPM and Lambeth worked together to plan a programme of activity which would help residents to understand and comment on what they felt the council's priorities should be. Specifically the following engagement activities were undertaken:

- **deliberative workshop:** one half day session with members of the public, reflecting the population of the borough
- **focus groups:** these were targeted at particular groups including: young people; older people; the Muslim community; and people from low income groups
- **drop-in sessions:** four on-street roadshows where residents were encouraged to provide their views: Brixton market; Lower Marsh market; Clapham library; and Gracefield Gardens Customer Centre in Streatham
- **on line survey:** a web-hosted survey replicating the questions asked in the drop in sessions and was available to all Lambeth residents

We know from previous residents' surveys and budget consultations that crime and young people have consistently been highlighted as priorities and the council has developed long-term strategies and allocated budgets to focus on this area. As a result, phase 1 of this year's consultation focused on other strategic budget issues such as waste management and health and wellbeing.

This report presents the key findings and recommendations from the qualitative stages of the consultation¹. The findings for the deliberative workshop and focus groups are mapped against six areas that people were asked to discuss:

- Life in Lambeth
- Waste and recycling
- Customer services
- Sports, leisure and libraries
- Invest to save
- Self-directed care²

In each instance the findings from deliberative workshops are presented first, followed by those from the focus groups. The findings from the drop-in sessions and online survey are presented separately at the end of the report.

¹ Both sets of survey findings (face-to-face and online) are available in separate reports. The methods section of this report explains why.

² This issue was only discussed by the older people's focus group

2. Summary and recommendations

In the summer of 2008 OPM ran a number of qualitative events for the London Borough of Lambeth looking at what residents felt should be the priorities for the council's budget over the next 12 months and beyond. This section presents a summary of the main findings across the 6 service areas participants were asked to discuss:

- Life in Lambeth
- Waste and recycling
- Customer services
- Health and wellbeing
- Invest to save
- Self-directed care

Life in Lambeth

Participants had a generally positive view of what it is like to live in Lambeth. The most frequently cited positive factors included:

Diversity: the broad range of nationalities and cultures that can be found in Lambeth are felt to give the borough a strong and distinctive character.

Affordability: considering it is so close to the centre of London, the borough is felt to be comparatively affordable.

Education: primary schools were generally well regarded.

Parks and green spaces: the borough is felt to be well served by good quality and clean green spaces.

Restaurants and bars: they are seen as good and varied.

Waste and recycling

This is seen as an increasingly important issue for the borough which the council and residents need to act on. However, there was not clear sense of how this should happen. Participants put forward a number of possible ideas for the council to review:

Education and information: target communications so that they are effective in reaching and affecting the behaviour of particular types of people. This might mean looking at social marketing approaches.

Compulsory recycling: in comparison to last year, there is a marked shift of support towards creating some form of compulsory recycling.

Keep it simple: people who need to be targeted are unlikely to respond if the mechanisms put in place are too complex.

Comprehensive: just because a resident lives in a flat on an estate this does not mean they should not have the same recycling options as other residents.

Charging: only a minority felt this would change people's behaviour, most felt it would penalise the poor and those with large families.

Varied collections: there was some openness to exploring this idea, particularly the collection of recycling weekly and general waste fortnightly.

Buying bags and then receiving a rebate: this suggestion was supported by some but only if fly tipping would not increase as a result.

Customer services

This was not an issue that participants had much to say about. The general feeling was that good customer service should be a given. Looking at what this might mean for Lambeth they highlighted the following:

Welcoming environment: both Gracefield Gardens and Olive Morris House were felt to score very well in terms of providing a good quality environment.

Staff expertise: staff should be able to solve people's queries quickly and accurately. Currently, this is felt to often be lacking.

Co-location of services: participants had two concerns this. It might further dilute the knowledge of staff, and it could mean that services are located further away from residents.

Continuity: many people said that one of their main frustrations with customer service is that of a fragmented experience. They would prefer to be able to deal with one person to deal with an enquiry rather than being passed from one person to another.

'Tell us once': the idea of being able to give the council your details once and then the service connections be made for you was seen as a good idea, particularly in case of registering bereavement.

Health and wellbeing

This was seen as an important issue for the council to focus on. There were three main elements to people's thoughts on this area: (1) providing services for young people; (2) providing services for older people; and (3) maintaining parks and green spaces. Specifically people highlighted the following issues:

Parks and green spaces: these are felt to be of a good quality and improved in recent years, but is there a way of monitoring them more, for example, park wardens?

Increase use of leisure facilities: a number of ideas were suggested, including: updating facilities; widening range of facilities; improving cleanliness; introducing more variable pricing; and advertising more widely.

Increase use of libraries: among the suggestions here were: update environment of libraries; update and broaden range of stock; introduce other facilities so libraries are more of a community hub; and have more flexible opening hours which fit with people's lifestyles.

Invest to save

Participants felt that this was a good principle but it would need high quality decision making to ensure it was successful. They struggled somewhat with ideas as to where it might be introduced, but suggested the following:

Staffing: aim to increase the percentage of staff on permanent contracts. Agency staff are felt to lack same commitment to the organisation and are more expensive.

Prevention: in the case of older people's and young people's services review range of services offered. There was a feeling that more could be provided in the way of preventative services. For the elderly this will save a lot in after-care, and for younger people it will mean healthier lifestyles.

Commissioning: invest in the community, voluntary and charitable sector to deliver more services as they are often closer to potential users therefore have a better understanding of their needs.

Contract management: improve the level of contract management, particularly monitoring the level of services that are delivered, for example, housing repairs and maintenance work.

Improved accountability: greater transparency of responsibilities across the council. Also clearer presentation to the public of what money has been received and how it was spent.

Self-directed care

This was an issue which was only discussed by the older people's focus group. They raised a number of concerns mainly around potential abuse of the system, particularly whether people would spend the money wisely and be able to manage their budget. They suggested that a number of support mechanisms were needed:

Money management skills: this could be a phone helpline and web based advice.

Staff management skills: again this might be support by a phone line and internet.

Service information: this would be a list of the services which people could buy, again it would need to be available in different formats.

3. Main findings

Deliberative workshop		
Positive aspects of Lambeth	Negative aspects of Lambeth	Areas for improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diversity - Housing affordability - Public transport - Some leisure facilities - Education - Green spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quality of roads and pavements - Crime - Poverty - Education - Housing repairs - Parking enforcement - Co-ordination of council services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recycling and waste collection - Public safety - Young people's services - Public transport - Housing - Service delivery - Online services

Focus groups		
	Positive aspects of Lambeth	Areas for improvement
Young people's focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parks - Public transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Housing services - Crime - Parking - Health and fitness - Facilities for young people - Facilities for older people - Parks and green spaces
Low income focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diversity - Friendliness - Leisure - Parks - Public transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information to residents - Invest to save – prevention - Facilities for young people - Crime
Muslim community focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Safety - Friendliness - Parks - Waste collection - street cleaning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dog mess - Rubbish bins - Public transport - Litter - Safety - Invest to save - Healthy living - Skills training
Older people's focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parks - Community spirit - Leisure facilities - Shops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facilities for young people - Safety - Management of contracts - Traffic calming

	- Safety - Public transport	- Pavements - Care for elderly - Accounting for spending and decisions
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Life in Lambeth

Deliberative workshop

Most positive aspects of Lambeth

Most of the participants at the workshop were positive about Lambeth as a borough. In line with the previous research we have carried out in the borough the main element which people are proud of is the diversity of the area's residents. They feel that gives the area a particularly strong and distinctive character.

Lambeth is also seen as affordable compared to other parts of London, particularly considering how close it is to the centre of the London. The bus and tube transport links to other parts of the capital were generally seen as good, although a number of people commented that public transport in areas such as Norwood and the parts of Crystal Palace which fall within Lambeth is more patchy.

The range of leisure facilities are felt to be varied and good, most notably bars and restaurants.

Looking at public services in the borough a few comments were made about education. Primary schools were generally well regarded, but there were felt to be too few secondary school places.

Another positive aspect of the borough was felt to be the range of good quality, clean green spaces even though it is a very urban area. A number of people were pleased with how the Council has prioritised the regeneration of these in recent years.

"It is more mixed than you expect, there are lots of green areas but also some very built up parts"

Least positive aspects of Lambeth

In thinking about the less positive aspects of the borough, many of the participants commented on the street scene. Generally, public highways and pavements were felt to be not well maintained, and were not as clean as they should be: *"Brixton looks revolting, so does Streatham High Road - all of the town centre areas - there's a culture of why use a bin?"*

One of the main concerns for many people was level of crime and fear of crime which is consistent with the Council's residents survey. A few people said they had experienced going to hospital because of it. There were a number of issues that participants wanted to highlight to the council as concerns:

- Whether CCTV cameras across the borough are operational
- Inadequate lighting at some bus stops

-
- PCSOs are not enough of a deterrent

One participant, who had been a resident in Lambeth for over 20 years, was particularly displeased with the level of public disorder on Clapham High Street. He felt that the High Street had now become unsavoury, and that restaurants and bars attracted a lot of litter and public disturbance on the weekend: *“There are three to four nightclubs on Clapham High Street, and you are often confronted by people asking if you want drugs There are also a lot of people that come and smoke outside the restaurant and dump cigarette butts outside the door.”*

The borough was also felt to have high levels of deprivation. Some poverty was visible in terms of boarded up shops and empty houses.

A number of people said that the streets in some parts of the borough, particularly the busier shopping areas were felt to be too cluttered with shop displays and products blocking the way of pedestrians. This was considered particularly problematic for people with prams and wheelchairs. Generally, they felt the pavements were also in a poor state of repair.

In contrast to the earlier comments about education in the borough a number of people felt that the levels of education attainment were too low. They felt that as a result of this many young people drift into a life of crime.

Also relating to young people, in contrast to some of the earlier comments which suggested that Lambeth has a lot of activities, some participants felt that young people were not particularly well catered for. Youth clubs were felt to be neglected, with little resource invested in equipment and leisure activities: *“There is nothing to entice young people into youth clubs, they will go to the youth club and find a half of a broken sponge ball.”*

Looking at specific public services a number of people were very critical of what they felt was the Council’s attitude towards housing estates. They felt that the quality of the repairs service is poor, thus reinforcing stigma associated with living on an estate and creating a perception of these estates as ‘forgotten’ areas. The quotes below are typical of the type of concerns that people had about housing services:

“They put the scaffolding up and forget it’s there ...that’s where they could save some money.”

“They put CCTV up in our flats, then they demolish part of it, so now we have £120,000 worth of cameras in storage. At Dunbarton court the CCTV cameras don’t work – they’re just for decoration.”

“My flat had a flood for 10 weeks – every time I called them they didn’t know about it – or what an inconvenience it was for me and my special needs child.”

Criticism of the housing service and the way repairs and maintenance are administered was a recurring theme amongst council residents the research, which was often relayed alongside opposition to the Council’s ALMO.

In another service area, the issuing of parking tickets also came in for criticism. The feeling amongst a number of people was that traffic wardens are too keen to issue tickets.

A number of people felt that services are not as joined up as they might be. One person illustrated this with a story about when her father had had a stroke there was a lack of co-ordination across different service areas. The result of this was that she had to constantly chase services for help when she felt they she should have communicated with each once it had become known that he had had a stroke. She did not specify the service areas but it appeared to cover some aspects of adult and social care.

There was also some feeling that decision-making within the council can be too slow. One person illustrated this by citing proposed redevelopment in Streatham: *“You get the impression that decisions aren’t made quickly [by the council] - in Streatham they’ve been talking about regenerating the Megabowl and station area for ages and there’s no action.”*

The Council as a whole also came in for some criticism, however the general feeling seemed to be that this is a remnant of the how it was run in the past and that now if it is generally improving.

Where could be improvements be made?

When asked where improvements could be made participants came up with a long list of suggestions which we have grouped under a number of headings:

- **Recycling and waste collection:** this will be picked up in more detail later in this report but it is telling that people mentioned it spontaneously rather than having to be prompted about it. There was a call for recycling to be made more convenient, for example, providing more recycling bins near the station and on housing estates in the borough. One participant, living on a private estate, said that the Council deposited a pile of orange recycling bags on the estate, rather than delivering them to houses, and the ensuing free-for-all could leave some without anywhere to dispose their recyclable waste. In terms of domestic waste and recycling some felt there was a need to improve awareness of the day on which day collections happen, as many residents seem unaware of this, thus leaving their bags out on the wrong day with the result that animals tear into them and cause a mess and health/hygiene hazard.
- **Public safety:** More community safety officers in general but with specific mention of the north of the borough (Oval, Vauxhall) and improved street lighting as older people feel more vulnerable at night. It was suggested that areas around the schools should be patrolled with more frequency as these are hotspots for anti-social behaviour. One person referring to Gypsy Hill said that *“the closure of Gypsy Hill police station has led to a ‘free for all’ in the area”*.
- **Young people’s services:** there was a view from some participants that if secondary school extracurricular activities could be improved this might help stop young people drifting into crime and gang related activities.
- **Public transport:** mirroring what was said earlier in this report some people wanted improved connections between areas within the borough, for example, Brixton to Streatham is well-served by buses, but there is no tube. And, perhaps

at a more achievable level, bus connections between some parts of the borough to be improved such as Tulse Hill to Streatham. Participants did not indicate whether they were aware that this is not an area of council service provision.

- **Housing:** Council tenants reported the ineffective use of subcontractors when solving problems and, in some cases, doing completely the wrong thing (i.e painting the wrong wall). This was seen as being a result of both poor contract management but also underqualification of the subcontractors, possibly through the Council cutting corners.
- **Managing service delivery:** several participants reported a need for greater consistency in service delivery across estates within the borough, particularly with regard to cleanliness, recycling provision and waste collection. This appeared to be two-fold: firstly participants suggested there was a need for greater consistency between the contracts established between the council and estate management services so as to ensure a borough-wide approach to matters such as recycling provision; and secondly, the Council needed to enforce existing contracts more stringently. In some cases it's not about saving money but managing the service delivery effectively. A few people pointed to instances outside their house where the council frequently has to repeatedly mend the same pot-holes when a longer term solution should be sought.
- **Online facilities:** one person felt the council website to be confusing. One participant had tried to set up a direct debit to pay for her council tax, but was unable to locate the facility on the website.

Where can money be saved?

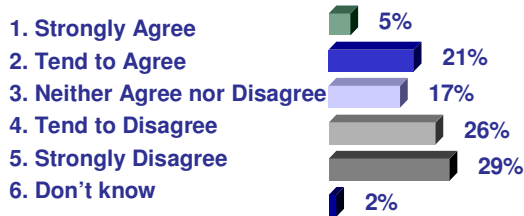
As with the previous section we have grouped participants responses under a number of headings:

- **Communications:** some people were very critical of Lambeth Life. They did not view it as “news” but as council propaganda. In contrast with the figures from the Council's resident's survey, it appeared to have low levels of readership with only older people saying they read it, other people said it went straight into the recycling. The change to fortnightly editions had not been noticed. Money could be saved by taking away the door to door delivery service with the paper only available at drop off points.
- **Recycling:** some said that the council should make people sort out their own recycling. This would not only entrench behaviour in people but save the council money. Others disagreed with this idea, stating the need to make recycling as easy as possible for people. Wandsworth was cited as a model which could be explored: it collects a different type of recycling each week – perhaps this could be explored in Lambeth. However, this approach might introduce a level of complexity which is too burdensome for some residents.

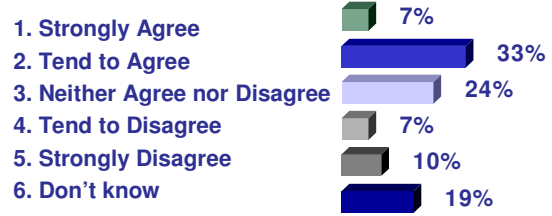
Electronic voting

Near the beginning of the workshop participants were asked to vote on a number of financial statements about the Council. The results are presented below.

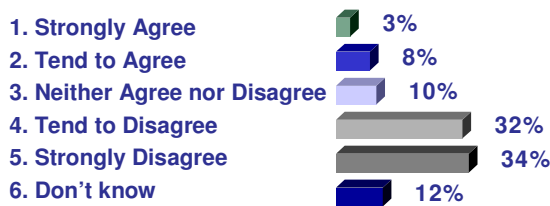
'Lambeth Council provides good value for money for the council tax residents pay'



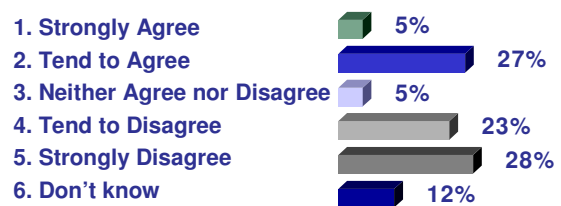
'Lambeth Council provides better value for money now compared to a year ago'



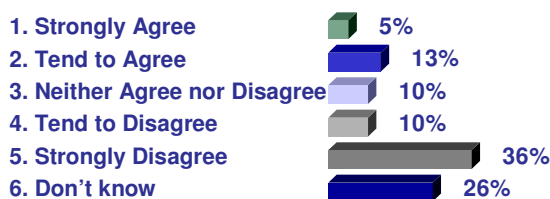
'Lambeth Council shows good financial management'



'Lambeth Council provides enough information to residents about its financial performance and management'



'Lambeth Council has the right level of council tax, relative to other councils'



These questions were also asked in the previous two years of budget consultation. In terms of the first question the trend across this time frame has been of a gradual decrease in people's agreement with the statement. However, there has been a very noticeable rise in the number of people who feel the council 'provides better value for money now compared to a year ago'. Last year the figure for those who 'strongly agree' or 'tend to agree' was 12.5% and two years ago was 29%. There was little change from the previous years for the figures relating to whether the council 'shows good financial management'

and provision of 'enough information to residents about its financial performance and management'. As to whether the council 'has the right level of council tax, relative to other councils' there has been a steep decline in agreement with this statement this from 32% in the first year, 37% last year to 18% this year. It should be noted that these figures are based on a very small sample size so should be interpreted with caution.

Young people focus group

Most positive aspects of Lambeth

The initial response from this group was that there was very little to be positive about in terms of living in Lambeth but plenty that was not good. At a push they opted for the parks and public transport connections as being the best things.

Least positive aspects of Lambeth and possible solutions

Asked to list the worst things about Lambeth, they readily identified many concerns. Many of these were about at housing issues. We have illustrated this issue in the table below. The left hand column details the nature of the concerns while the right hand column lists possible solutions. It should be noted that it was not the case that they identified a solution to correspond with each concern:

Housing	
Concerns	Solutions
Allocation system was perceived as unfair.	More variety in accommodation provided e.g. houses and flats, studios, shared housing
There is a lack of suitable accommodation for young mothers and children	More affordable housing for younger generations
Lack of emergency / Hostel accommodation particularly for the poor	More choice of housing rather than <i>"Lambeth's stupid one offer policy"</i> (this referred to the limited choice that people feel they have when it comes to council accommodation)
Maintenance of council properties: can be slow and temporary with a focus on cheap fixes	Less waiting time for homeless
Bleak and drab estates	More one to one help for homeless – <i>"less of thousands of people knowing your business"</i>
	More housing advice centres

In terms of crime they did not expand on the nature of the problem but did present a number of ideas about what could be done, particularly where it concerns young people:

- New schemes for a safer Lambeth, more police visits to schools once a month

-
- Working together to keep Lambeth safe and a nice environment to work and live for all the community
 - Have “*Lambeth points*” for the children who do good and behave well. These points could be based on monthly behaviour
 - Young people to be rewarded somehow as recognition to their outstanding behaviour

Parking was another area they felt needed to be improved. They felt there needed to be better and easier parking for disabled, OAPs and parents. They also felt there needed to be more parking spaces overall and fewer traffic wardens.

Health and fitness was seen as another important area the Council could focus on. They wanted there to be more fitness clubs for all ages to use. They also suggested that fun fitness days for children and families could be organised. Also, free taster sessions could be provided for children, for example, one day a week free swimming for kids.

The groups also focused on the need for more **services for young people** such as youth clubs. This would help to keep children off the streets. There was some feeling that in the past these had been funded on a short term basis, but if they were to make a real difference they would need to be funded for the long term.

They also suggested improvements in **services for older people** such as clubs they could meet at and coffee mornings.

Parks and green spaces were seen as another priority area. They wanted cleaner and better parks with a wider range of facilities in them to make them more appealing.

One message for the council

Towards the end of the discussion the participants were asked to consider one main message for the council. The list below are verbatim comments grouped under a number of themed headings.

Listening and caring:

- *“Pay some attention to young people”*
- *“Act like you care”*
- *“Focus on young people”*

Communicating:

- *“Give more information to the community”*
- *“Get better at communicating to young people”*
- *“Learn how to communicate with young people”*

Housing:

- *“Stop the bidding system”*
- *“Build some affordable housing”*
- *“Improve our housing conditions”*
- *“Improve housing and focus these improvements on vulnerable people”*

Parks:

- *“Build some dog training areas in parks”*

Employment:

- *“Employ some young people within the Council”*

Low income focus group

Most positive aspects of Lambeth

This group felt there were a number of positive elements to living in Lambeth. These included:

- Diversity of the local population
- The friendliness of the borough
- Leisure activities, including the festivals that are put on
- Shopping, particularly the markets
- Parks and green spaces
- Public transport

One main message for the council?

Towards the end of the discussion this group were also asked to think of one main message for the council. Again, we have grouped these under a number of headings.

Listening and caring:

- *“Have much more sensitive people who can relate to the problems e.g. people with disabled children / working with mental/physical health problems”*
- *“Talk to us about the services we need”*
- *“Listen to the people who really matter – US!”*
- *“Fix up – look sharp”*
- *“Residents are frustrated – listen and learn”*

Communicating:

- *“Lambeth Council should speak more to the people of Lambeth more information is needed on the council’s work”*

Maintaining services and spending wisely:

- *“Invest more – no cutting back”*
- *“Invest the right money into services i.e. ADHD and diabetes”*
- *“Prevention before cause”*

Investing in young people:

- *“Youth helping the youth within this borough”*
- *“The kids are most important”*

Tackle crime:

- *“Stop the killings between the young kids”*

Muslim focus group

Most positive aspects of Lambeth

When asked about the most positive aspects to living in Lambeth they identified the following:

- Friendly people: someone who was new to the borough said that residents made them feel welcome by offering help
- Secure: they felt there are less problems in Lambeth than elsewhere in the country
- Parks and green spaces: they cited a number of different places where they could go which were popular with lots of young people (the group was largely made up of young people)
- Waste collection: waste is removed quickly
- Street cleaning: *"I see a lot more road cleaners now, which is good because there's so much litter. Cleanliness is improving, there are a lot more bins now."*

Where could money be spent and saved?

As well as being generally positive about the borough as it is currently they also identified a number of areas where they felt improvements could be made:

Cleanliness:

- Cleaning up dog mess: *"as soon as I step outside the door that's all I see. From one end of the street to another that's all I see. We need machines for this [to clean it up]"*.
- More rubbish bins and litter awareness campaigns – they complained about chewing gum in bus shelters, there could be more bins
- Bin collection is very noisy early in the morning – could the Council find a way to disturb people less? Could the time of collections be improved?
- *"I would like Lambeth Council to invest more in transport...keeping the buses clean and tidy all the time"*.
- *"The Council should take into account the cleanliness and security of parks"*
- *"The Council must give awareness to people to make their area clean and disciplined for healthy life"*
- *"Monitoring teams to check the people throwing litter in buses, tram, and on paths should start working actively [sic]."*

Public safety:

- *"The Council should spend some money on security like posting more cameras on the streets"*.
- Invest in youth organisations to help with gang culture

Invest to save

- The importance of investing now to save later was raised early in the group, but they did not elaborate on what this might cover aside from focusing on prevention as being cheaper than reacting to problems when they arise

Healthier living:

- Alcohol awareness: promoting the services which are available for treatment
- Healthy living (free gym membership)
- *"Fitness clubs should be affordable"*

Smarter service delivery:

-
- Streamline and improve the planning process. They did not elaborate on what they felt were the current problems

Training and employment:

- *“(can) the Council invest in retraining centres where unskill[ed] workers can pay some fee to acquire employable skill[s]”*

Older people focus group

The best thing about living in Lambeth

Participants identified the following as the most positive aspects to being a Lambeth resident:

- Parks
- Strong community spirit: *“Getting to know each other”*
- Wide range of shopping and leisure facilities: sport, recreation, cinemas, shops, libraries
- Improved security: central areas are more secure at night
- Good transport links and the Freedom Pass: *“you can travel 30 miles from Lambeth”*

Where could money be spent and saved?

We have grouped the suggestions participants put forward for areas of spend and save under a number of headings:

Public safety:

- More police patrol on foot and bike: *“there are too many muggings”*
- More lights, CCTV (with film in the cameras)

Facilities for young people:

- More youth facilities, there were more available in the 1970s

Management of contractors

- Street cleaning needs to be more carefully monitored

Traffic calming measures

- *“Sleeping policemen [traffic calmers] are dangerous for tripping and they are ineffective for cars”*

Smarter decision-making

- *“I don’t think [the Council] can save, they can spend but wisely”*

Areas to spend more

- Pavements – e.g. Studley Road and everywhere need evening out, such as potholes and cracks
- Help with gardening and maintenance
- Care for the elderly – more money and information

One main message for the council?

Towards the end of the discussion this group were also asked to think of one main message for the council. Again, we have grouped these under a number of headings.

Facilities for older people:

- *“Council to put something/ a recreation building for older people at Agneyss Billy Gardens, Poynders Road. It is empty and a nice spot”*
- *“Home care for pensioners and old folk”.*
- *“More money to be spent on the welfare of the old and vulnerable”*
- *“More facilities for old people to access information on what they can claim etc. by dedicated centres”*
- *“I would like more people to keep an eye on old people that can hardly do anything for themselves. And for people found dead in their flats because of neglect, it’s a very sad thing”*
- *“I would like more facilities for the older people in Lambeth and I would like you to put Intercom in Lansdell House”*

Facilities for young people:

- *“Spend money on young people (to keep them off the street)”*

Spending wisely:

- *“Make sure the taxpayer’s money is accountable and honestly and sensibly spent”*
- *“Whatever the project, that the money is spent by having thought it through and will have future financial backing”*
- *“Cutting down waste and mismanagement”.*

Public safety:

- *“For all the people (young and old) to feel safe to use whatever facilities are available in the area (i.e. more police on the beat!)”*

Housing:

- *“More houses and flats to be built”*
- *“To reduce waste and be more efficient in maintenance and repairs”*

Built environment:

- *“Please spend less money on the roads and more on repairing the footpaths”*

Waste and recycling

	Main findings
Deliberative workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Important issue, but no consensus of opinion - Needs people to take personal responsibility - Education and information needed - Keep it simple so people understand - Any approach must be cost effective to implement - Widespread opposition to charging - Open to exploring variable collections - Fears of fly tipping if people made to purchase bags - Minority support for compulsory recycling - Some support for separating waste fee from council tax

Young people's focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education and information needed - Keep it simple so it's not a burden - Charging could unfairly penalise some people - Charging might work if there was a clear 'deadline day' - Doubts whether compulsory recycling would work - Target supermarkets and other businesses
Low income focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Educate children to foster recycling habit - Target supermarkets - Recycling needs to be convenient and simple - Provision of information
Muslim focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide incentives - Recycling campaign with 'community champion' - Charging would unfairly penalise larger families - Charging could also result in fly tipping - Against variable collections - Education and information
Older people's focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recycling is harder for people in flats - More open to coercive approaches - Wider range of waste should be collected for recycling - Some openness to charging for bags

Deliberative workshop

This topic created a lot of interest and was probably the liveliest session of the day. The great majority of participants saw this as an important issue which the council needs to act on. However, there was no clear consensus as to what the approach should be to reducing the amount of waste produced and increasing the levels of recycling. One thing most people were clear about though was that this is an issue which will rely a lot on personal responsibility, but if people are to take more responsibility then the Council needs to perform well on this and deliver their part of the deal, for example, deliver bags and collect rubbish when they say they will. If this doesn't happen then people will not be inclined to keep their side of the bargain – the Council will need to lead and change behaviour by example.

The main view was that it is people's habits and behaviours that need to change if recycling is to increase. There needs to be a habit of cutting down on waste and recycling, but also a change in attitude - creating waste and not recycling needs to become recognised as being socially unacceptable.

When discussing how residents could be encouraged to produce less waste a strong theme with many participants was the perceived need for education. They felt that the reluctance to recycle was often a result of apathy and people generally not being aware of what recycling facilities were available to them. One participant stated: *"People get stuck in their ways and they find it difficult to think about ways to recycle."* In contrast, one participant noted that in Australia, local councils had invested significant resource into advertising and raising public awareness on recycling. Several suggestions were put forward as to what might work best in terms of education, including: leaflets posted through residents' doors; door-to-door visits from a recycling officer; or information

sessions at local community centres (although they recognised that this required residents to be proactive and might result in a low turn-out). Although some participants felt that this might be costly, others thought it would be an important invest-to-save measure.

Schemes could in effect become 'self policing' if there's education to change people's attitudes towards recycling. Some felt that before you could even get to this stage anti-social behaviour, such as chucking rubbish from balconies, needs to be addressed before you can hope to get people who don't think recycling is their responsibility: "*Some people don't think it's their problem.*"

A number of people made the point that recycling is not a static issue and will likely mean that more materials can be recycled over time. The Council should ensure that it updates residents with information about which materials can be recycled. Participants indicated that confusion resulted from differences in materials collected between boroughs; they suggested introducing a greater level of standardisation, which in turn would make it easier to communicate the message on a large scale.

The issue of lack of composting provision was raised, particularly with regard to neighbouring authorities such as Wandsworth³, which provides a compost bin free of charge.

Looking at some of the specifics of administering recycling scheme several points were made. First, that the process needs to be simple. As one person summed it up: "*it is a hassle, it needs to be simpler*". Any future schemes should be based on the principles of keep it simple - older people particularly struggle with change particularly when new things need to be learnt. Also it was pointed out that many people will only adopt a new approach if it results in a minimum effort and does not do too much to upset the status quo. Partly this comment might be due to there being a perception gap, whereby people do not realise that for many residents recycling is already straightforward, for example, non-estate dwellers do not have to sort their recycling but put it all in one bag or box.

In terms of recycling on housing estates it was suggested that each flat in an estate block is provided with an orange bag as at the moment there can be a free-for-all on some estates. There was also a recommendation to provide recycling bins by stations. And, there could be a separate collection for food waste (fruit and vegetables) that can be composted, as residents without gardens are unable to do much of their own composting.

A recurring theme throughout the recycling discussions was that it should not just be residents who are singled out for attention, businesses in Lambeth should also take more responsibility for recycling and the promotion of energy efficiency within the workplace. It was also felt that Lambeth should work with other London authorities to target manufacturers to reduce the amount of packaging attached to goods, thus tackling the problem at source rather than expecting residents to undertake their 'damage limitation'.

Following these initial 'open' discussions participants were asked to look at a number of options and case studies regarding waste management and recycling. Many participants were generally very sceptical of the proposals on the factsheets. Partly this was because

³ It should be noted that Wandsworth was regularly compared to Lambeth on this other issues. They tended to feel that Wandsworth had developed services which Lambeth should look at.

many of the borough's residents live in flats making it seemingly hard to implement schemes which rely on individuals or households being in charge of how much waste they produce and the benefits of producing less: *"On lots of estates, the whole bin thing won't work – you've got two households to one bin."*

Participants were presented with a variety of proposals that have been suggested as part of the climate change bill and asked for their views⁴:

- Option 1: The purchase of refuse bags (or tags for bags)
- Option 2: Charging by bin volume
- Option 3: Charging by frequency of collection
- Option 4: Charging by weight
- Option 5: Varied collections

The main reason for this scepticism was mistrust of others, which led to concerns about fly-tipping, theft of bags/tags - "they would be like gold dust" (option 1) and residents dumping their rubbish in others' bins (option 2, option 4, compulsory recycling schemes, and charging per kg of refuse collected). For some the price of an additional bin (which could be possible under option 2 and 4) would not be sufficient a deterrent.

They also expressed concern at the potential cost and administrative difficulties of implementing some of these options, for example (option 3), refuse collections at differing intervals for different residents by frequency of collection. They also felt that this would make for chaos on the roads, and being able to police schemes to ensure that residents were only charged for their own refuse (by weight) and not dishonest neighbours' refuse as well.

Charging was also opposed by some on moral grounds - that it would penalise poorer people and those with larger families. However, a minority of the group felt that charging would be an incentive for people to change their behaviour

The idea of 'varied collections' (with recycling collected weekly and waste collected fortnightly) received greatest support, though some were concerned about problems with vermin and hygiene issues. One person who had lived in Norwich when there was variable collection said that it had had a positive effect. If food waste was collected with recycling then this option received even more support.

Option 1 was also cautiously welcomed by some people if the risk of people could fly-tipping could be managed. It was felt bags from the Council must be as cheap as normal bags you can buy from the supermarket. There was a question over whether people who don't pay council tax would qualify for a rebate.

When people were presented with a number of actual case studies which displayed some of the options listed above some seemed more accepting of them. It might be the case that when people can put a name to an idea it becomes more realistic and brings the idea to life.

Case study: Barnet Council - Compulsory Recycling Initiative

⁴ The full range of fact sheets provided to participants are appended to this report

Surprisingly some participants thought that Lambeth were already doing this. Many felt it would be a good idea, but they raised the question of how it would be implemented and how much it would cost. One person made the point that it would need to cost less to administer than the benefits which would be gained from it.

Some people did not like the hard edged approach to this case study with the threats of fines. They preferred an approach which emphasised educating people and trying to change behaviours. They felt the only realistic way this option could work was if it largely became self-policing.

One discussion looking at idea of compulsory recycling centred on the feeling that there was an un-level playing field between people who live in flats (for whom recycling is difficult) and those who live in houses (who are supported with green boxes and orange bags). It was felt that a good scheme would recognise this difference and come down harder on people who don't recycle and have no legitimate excuse not to recycle (i.e. people who live in houses with green boxes): *"Those with green bins and orange bags should be targeted. If you've got no excuse then it's right that you're targeted. In blocks it is harder and that should be recognised."*

When this type of option was raised during last year's budget consultation opposition was considerably higher than this year.

Case study: Blaby District Council - Charging by bin volume

Some people found it difficult to appraise the merits of this approach as they could not visualise the size of the bins it refers to. As highlighted before a number of people had concerns about the principle of charging according to amount of waste produced. They felt that a fairer approach would be to relate charges to ability to pay.

Case study: Cork County, Ireland - Charging for household waste

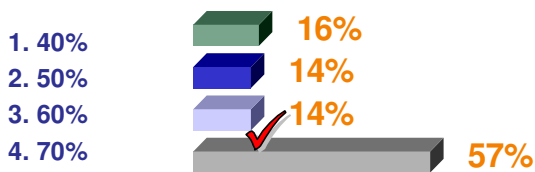
A number of people liked the idea of separating out the waste fee from council tax. But again there were concerns that this might just result in a new costly bureaucracy, both to administer the budget but also to implement the scheme such as weighing the rubbish. People would also need to be informed about the scheme to be able to make the most of what it offers in terms of potential savings.

Some also felt that Cork is a very rural area so it's too different to compare what works there with might work in a very urban area like Lambeth.

Electronic voting

In this session participants were asked to vote on one awareness question; how much of the average bin's rubbish can be recycled. The majority of respondents over estimated the amount.

Roughly how much of the average bin's rubbish can be recycled?



Young people focus group

This group began by looking at the role that education can play in encouraging higher levels of recycling. They suggested leafleting estates in particular, and advertising on the buses, bus stops and other areas including 'Channel U'⁵. The message that these leaflets and posters might convey should be to show what will happen to Lambeth if recycling does not increase. The quotes below illustrate some of their other thoughts about this:

"You should care because if you recycle you are helping your children's, children's, children's, children"

"Don't get a famous person to do the advert – get someone who is real"

"Show a comparison with somewhere else in the world where they don't even have electricity"

They felt that recycling needed to be easy as most people lead busy lives and don't have the time to put much thought into recycling. Easier recycling would mean doing things such as having more collections, more recycle bins, and more convenient placement of recycle bins on estates: *"Maybe people need more recycling bins, and in a more convenient place"*.

Most of the group were against the idea of having fines for those who refuse to recycle. They felt it could affect the wrong people as not everyone knows how to recycle: *"my mum is elderly and she doesn't understand recycling, she doesn't even know what it is and there are other people in the same situation as her"*. Also, a fine is not going to teach someone a lesson, it is likely to just make them angry. They also felt it could be difficult to implement and police:

"How will they know who is recycling and who is not anyway? I could just take someone else's and put it outside my house"

"For big estates it is different, it is impossible to tell who would be recycling"

⁵ This is a UK based music video TV channel and website aimed at young people

Others felt that it could work if introduced carefully such as having a well publicised deadline day as there was with the smoking ban. Also, the fine could be variable depending on how much money a person has (means tested). Richer people should pay more, those on low income less: *“At least make it a reduced price so people can actually afford it. Not everyone has a job.”*

Looking at the three case study areas there was a very negative response to all of them.

Comments on the compulsory recycling scheme in Barnet included:

“How did Barnet even know who is recycling and who is not?”

“You would have to pay people to find out – that would cost more money”

“If someone starts going through my bin – they could get arrested for that”

“If you want people to recycle, why are you charging them?”

Regarding the Blaby and Cork schemes of charging by bin volume and weight and the there was a feeling that it would unfairly penalise larger families:

“Do they balance it out for different households? If you had a family in the house, you would need to balance that out”

“You might have a bigger family. Do you get a bigger bin?”

There was some feeling amongst participants that residents were being unfairly targeted and that businesses, in particular supermarkets should be tackled for the amount of packaging they add to food.

Low income focus group

People in this group were keen to recycle, and many did, especially those with kids. Those that did not felt that it was due to the lack of facilities and/or information on recycling, one woman also stressed the increased difficulty for disabled people. The group were not keen on the 5 options presented to them. There was a general impression that the Council keeps charging or penalising them for everything and this puts people off. They felt that the Council should work more with schools and supermarkets in order to both reduce waste and encourage more recycling with kids – working with children in schools might help get the message back to the parents.

Looking at how the Council could encourage people to recycle more of their waste they felt there could be a number of approaches. The suggestions broadly mirror those that have been highlighted elsewhere in this report – that recycling needs to be convenient, simple and behavioural change needs to come through education. First, the number of recycling bins could be increased particularly on estates. At the moment it is felt that there are not enough recycling bins - in many cases there is only one set of recycling bins

for the whole block of flats. There could also be a recycling chute. People also need more information on what they can recycle.

Looking at the three case studies the group did not warm to any of them. They felt it placed too much of an emphasis on enforcing residents to comply when the real culprits for producing waste are shops such as supermarkets: *"All councils should put pressure on the big supermarkets."* They also felt that these approaches were targeting people who are already struggling to make ends meet and surely the council tax should cover waste collection and recycling: *"All the councils do is take take take, they're already taking money off us to do services, why are they now asking for more and charging."*

In concluding their discussions on this issue they said that perhaps a solution would be to focus on schools more to encourage the kids to get the recycling habit. It might also be an idea to give families 'stars' so that they get something back and are rewarded for recycling, for example, If you recycle you should get vouchers for your kids.

Muslim group focus group

To encourage more recycling this group felt there should be incentives, otherwise people are not proactive enough to do it. They also felt there might be a need for a community champion to encourage people to recycle more: *"Lambeth should put a face behind recycling"*. Again, as with other participants in this research education was felt to be key as some people don't know what they can recycle.

Looking at what the future options might be for recycling they not keen on the idea of charging for waste by volume. It would unfairly penalise larger households. They also suspected that it could result in people dumping their rubbish in other areas. However, a minority of participants felt it was a good idea because it is equitable.

They were mainly against the idea of varied collections. They felt that if rubbish was left out for a long time would make the streets look dirty. Also, this would not cut down on the volume produced instead rubbish would just end up sitting there for a longer period of time.

Discussing what they felt the Council should do they felt the first answer was to raise awareness before choosing to impose fines as people aren't well enough informed at the moment about how to recycle and why it matters. They felt there should be posters, leaflets and adverts for recycling with the message from the Council about why recycling is important.

They also claimed, perhaps wrongly, that the emphasis is unfairly placed on residents to take the initiative in that bags are not delivered to people's doors but have to be picked up from the Town Hall.

They also felt there was a role for central government – recycling should be led from the centre, from top-bottom not the other way round.

Older people focus group

This group began their discussion of this topic by saying the recycling is difficult for people in flats: *"I have to walk 400 yards with paper because there is no recycling on the premises [but] there is plenty of room for recycling bins in and around the flats."* There was a feeling amongst some participants that perhaps Lambeth should be looking overseas for good examples of how recycling can be improved.

In contrast to previous groups this one emphasised the potential role of coercion, for example, introducing fines for businesses that do leaflet advertising. They also felt that more rubbish should be recyclable, such as plastic bags and yoghurt pots.

Looking at the various options for change a number of participants favoured option A, particularly if it meant that people could trade back unused bags for money: *"I get too many [recycling bags], at the moment I've got far more than I need"*. However, there was still a view that people are already paying out enough and should not have to fork out more cash: *"I think we're paying too much already (on black and white bin bags) without paying for other bags or tags"*.

Customer services

	Main findings
Deliberative workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gracefield Gardens and Olive Morris House are welcoming environments - Staff do not have enough service knowledge - Staff attitude needs improving - Lack of continuity of service as no named contact person - Co-location of services opposed, prefer to keep it local - Customer service centres could provide skills training - Phone customer service works well - 'Tell us once' initiative welcomed could charge for wider service like this - Roadshows are not essential, concentrate resources elsewhere
Young people's focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited direct experience of dealing with council - Negative perceptions and experience of customer service - Physical appearance of facilities much improved - 3 roadshow ideas: community safety; healthy living; and caring for the environment
Low income focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff seem poorly trained - Systems, for example, computers don't always work - Co-location welcomed, but fix current system first - Roadshows might not be best use of resources
Muslim Focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Co-locate youth organisations at customer service centres - Police could also be located at customer service centres - Customer service centres could be a community hub - Website should be more interactive, not just provide

	information - Roadshows are good idea, could have one on recycling
Older people's focus group	- Phone customer service generally good, but needs quicker answer times - Co-location could include Age Concern, Citizens Advice, Neighbourhood Watch and public transport information - Roadshows welcomed. Could include: road info; entertainment; healthy living; recreation and community development

Deliberative workshop

Customer service centres and co-location of services

This discussion focused on people's experience and expectations of customer service. Gracefield Gardens and Olive Morris House Customer Centres were used as case studies to frame the discussions.

Several of the participants had used these customer service centres. Gracefield Gardens was particularly highly praised by those who had used it. It was considered to offer the necessary privacy that people felt was required in some circumstances and an efficient service in a modern welcoming setting: *"Gracefield Gardens feels like something from the future"*.

Olive Morris House was also highly praised: *"I like the idea that there is a place that you go to, that is accessible for all"* and *"It is really good and open space, doesn't take long to get seen, I was really surprised."* However, one person referred to it in very negative terms, describing it as a *"cattle market"* which offered no privacy, provided an impersonal service and required a whole afternoon or longer in order to settle a query: *"I spent a whole day in Olive Morris House for parking – I lost a day off work!"*

There were also comments, primarily aimed at Olive Morris House but possibly applicable to Gracefield Gardens as well, that while the surroundings may have improved the quality of the service provided has not always kept pace. It did not feel that the staff did not deal with queries to the satisfaction of customers. Partly this was about them having knowledge of particular service areas but also to do with the perceived attitude and commitment of some staff:

"Ideally, you want the expertise there and then"

"They should be trained to answer your questions"

"They have people there who don't really want to work"

"They're called 'civil servants' but there's nothing civil about them and they sure don't serve us"

"If it gets too difficult they hide from you and send someone else"

“The staff here are here for a free ride – I don’t know what most of them do”

“On the phone they’re so rude – they don’t care”

“Every time you ring up you have to go through it all again”

“In Merton, on all communications you’ll have a name, a direct line and an email address so you can reply to that person. They won’t do that here – it’s back through a call centre – it’s frustrating, it costs you and there’s no accountability”

On the concern relating to the staff not having sufficient experience there was a view from a number of participants that staff should not be unduly criticised - they have such a broad brief to work across and should not be expected to know the final detail of every service area. They felt that if there is a customer service failing it is not to do with staff but with the idea of a one-stop shop model: *“when so many services are offered, is the expertise diluted?”*

There was also a feeling that customer centres do not cater to the needs of young people, and in fact, one participant thought that young people are not allowed into the centre unless accompanied by an adult:

“They should make it teenage friendly, teenagers should be allowed in. They need a section specifically for youngsters“

A few participants said they did not like it that Lambeth staff do not put their direct line details on communications. They felt that this encourages a culture of no personal accountability among staff, and leads to a frustrating experience for customers who have to go back through a call-centre and have to endlessly repeat themselves. One felt that each member of staff should have a code to make them traceable (even if they don’t want to give out their name).

However, despite these reservations, the current approach to Lambeth’s customer service centres were highly regarded. People liked the environment of the two centres in terms of their design and approach. They were viewed as much calmer, cleaner and customer friendly environments than their predecessors. Participants were keen to see the Olive Morris House model replicated across the borough and felt that one in Brixton and *“the secret one in Streatham”* was not sufficient.

When asked about the co-location of other services at these centres or elsewhere participants were fairly ambivalent. If they had concerns they were about:

- (1) access - ensuring that they are easily accessible by residents so that people with limited mobility are able to access such services;
- (2) knowledge - a worry that putting too many services in one place would result in the dilution of expertise: *“It will just lead to more watering down – they can’t cope in Olive Morris House.”*
- (3) awareness - some participants were reluctant to see some of these services available in partner organisations, suggesting that these sites were not ‘intuitive’ and therefore would warrant a high level of public awareness raising. Given that the participants felt that

Olive Morris House was readily identifiable, they found it difficult to identify reasons for extending this.

There was some awareness that NHS services could be accessed at Gracefield Gardens but no evidence that people actually see that as beneficial and convenient to them.

Prompted on what services could be co-located the following were suggested:

- There could be a local “what’s on” (at the customer centres) section on the website
- Perhaps the Customer Centre could host PC training sessions
- Other life skills, such as credit management should be available, not only in the customer centres, but also in schools
- The PCs are noticeably underused at customer centres. There should be broader internet access but not open access. Access could include to websites with information on reliable local trades people with details of their accreditation

Most people would prefer there to be more points of access at a more local area rather than having fewer service centres able to provide more facilities. They felt that having more points of access (if they were staffed with knowledgeable and helpful people) would be convenient. Similarly, young people are likely to find it helpful to be able to access council services in Lambeth College. Others pointed out that outreach models targeted at specific groups who may struggle to visit a council one-stop-shop may be more appropriate than just having more access points in more public service premises - one woman was aware of council staff going to visit older people in sheltered accommodation: *“It’s better to have a council person come to you.”*

Looking at a specific customer service interface, phone lines, most people felt that this worked reasonably well: *“phone services are really helpful”*. However, participants were sometimes frustrated that the person who answered the phone was generally there to just take notes and then direct the query on to the relevant service area rather than provide assistance themselves. Several participants also spoke of making a call to the helpline and subsequently having no further contact from, or correspondence with, the Council. While these participants recognised the value of the performance measures the Council has in place for this service, they were more interested in information that measured the progress of the query after the initial call, for example, information about turnaround time between the initial call and a satisfactory resolution. One participant also suggested that a ‘caseload’ system be operated, so that callers would know who was dealing with their query and how to contact them. This was in response to her experience of speaking to/receiving information from several different people when using the telephone helpline to address single issues. There were also some concerns about use of voice recognition in that it can result in people going round in circles.

‘Tell us Once’ initiative

This initiative is being piloted by the Council within the bereavement service. Following the registration of a death staff within this service will contact other relevant parts of the council (e.g council tax and benefits) to notify them so records can be updated.

Participants had different feelings about the ‘Tell Us Once’ initiative. The slight majority expressed strong support, feeling it made sense for the Council to undertake these activities as they would already be involved in this process through the registrar. As a result it was considered to be a sensible, as well as compassionate, service at a difficult time for the individuals concerned. Others, however, felt it was not the Council’s

responsibility to provide such a service, and suggested that, if the service were to be provided, customers should be given the option to pay for it at the time, rather than funding it through council tax. Some felt £5 would be acceptable a few went as high as £50. It was clear from participants that if this service involved payment then the service would need to be of gold standard quality - it should not just be about quick access it should also be mean that you have paid for people who have the skills to make all the connections for you and take the appropriate actions where necessary.

The one concern that people had with a service like this was that the information provided would need to be carefully managed. It should not be shared with third parties.

Roadshows

The Council in partnership with the flu-awareness campaign, the fire brigade and the local energy efficiency advice centre held 'surgeries' around the borough in late 2007. The possibility of holding future roadshows is currently being explored.

A few comments were made about the ideas of having roadshows. A number of people generally felt these were a nice idea, but they thought Lambeth should probably concentrate on getting its core customer service offering right first by ensuring departments communicate with each other and having staff with relevant knowledge and expertise to help.

Other participants felt that they were a waste of money and people probably wouldn't have time to go to them, particularly the people who would be the target of them.

Young people focus group

The participants in this group had fairly limited experience of direct dealings with the local authority, but those that had were fairly scathing of it, particularly housing services:

"They are crap, and they are quite rude as well. You say 'Can I speak to a certain person?' and they say 'The person is not here at the moment, call back later' and bang, they put down the phone"

"They are ignorant"

"They give me a big form to fill out, and I don't have a clue about the form. I mean come on! I just need a place to sleep"

The group felt that the physical look of the facilities has much improved but Lambeth should make sure that this is a continuous process:

"They are trying to improve, but they need to keep on trying and just keep on trying"

Participants also discussed the idea of roadshows and identified three ideas for what they might cover:

1. Safety in the community:

-
- Stop and search. Have police come and explain their rationale for its use and the rights of the people they are doing it to
 - Update on what the police are doing about gun crime
 - 2. Healthy living:
 - Cooking lessons from famous chefs
 - Education about why people get fat
 - Gym inductions for free done by a person who is like an average person not some muscle bound guy.
 - 3. Environment (primarily the built environment)
 - How to care for your environment
 - How to get involved in improving the environment we live in
 - Ways the Council is improving both the outside and the inside of social housing and any way residents can get this done to their home.

Low income focus group

There was quite a negative response to customer services from participants in this focus group. People said that they did not receive a good service, particularly when phoning up the Council. They felt this was mainly due to poor training of staff, and poor systems that were not able to deal with queries.

Looking at the idea of joined up services they felt this was a good idea, but it was necessary for the Council to first fix what it has now, and train people properly, before trying to do anything more:

“It’s good that they have things in all one roof – it’s a good idea, but it’s the people that they employ that are rubbish, the people they employ do not know what they are doing and are not responding to the needs of the residents”

“The people that work there need to be trained, at the moment they are being told different things”

“The systems don’t work either – the computers are always down and there are always delays in people responding to you”

Looking at the idea of roadshows one person felt that they were a good idea, but others disagreed. One person highlighted that the kind of information that you could get from the road-show can be found elsewhere, so this means that roadshows are probably a waste of money.

Muslim focus group

This group felt that there might be a case for co-locating youth organisations at customer service centres. This might help young people access and use services and could provide an opportunity to put on activities that show young people what is “socially acceptable”. They also felt that the police could have a presence at customer service centres providing advice for residents: “someone to talk to”.

They also felt these expanded service centres could be a community hub – somewhere where residents can get almost everything they might need to know. As well as providing access to services, there might also be a need to think about what other complementary facilities might be needed such as a play area for children to be entertained whilst parents are accessing services. They felt that a hub such as this should be located in a venue which is well known to the community like Lambeth Town Hall.

This group also discussed council’s website. They felt it should be more interactive enabling people to use services and not just get information. This could mean being able to book a meeting with a member of staff to discuss an issue, or being able to search for empty properties.

Roadshows

They felt that the idea of holding roadshows was a good idea as it would mean that the Council is proactively taking services to people. In terms of what the roadshows might focus on they suggested recycling. They could also be used to demonstrate what’s happening in the borough, for example, with a video. The format for the roadshows should be imaginative, for example, having a bus with fun activities and food stalls.

Older people focus group

The view from this group was that customer service over the phone was usually satisfactory once you are actually able to get through to people: *“They are good, on the condition that when you call, they answer the phone and you’re not put on hold!”* The only real gripe they had was a desire for phone answering response times to be speeded up.

Discussing co-location of services they suggested that it might be useful to be able to access Age Concern, Citizens Advice, Neighbourhood Watch and public transport information in addition to the usual range of council services.

This group felt that the roadshows sounded like a good idea: *“[It’s a chance to find out about] things I would normally ignore, and go and find out about and make sense of and get down to the nitty gritty and find out about questions I might have.”*

It was pointed out that other public sector organisations such as the police and fire service already use this type of approach effectively. Suggestions for what a roadshow might cover included:

- Roads
- Entertainment for the elderly
- Cheap entertainment days/times
- Information on health and healthy eating, lifestyle (one group member gets this information from their church)
- Recreation
- Community development

Sports, leisure and libraries

	Main findings
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Deliberative workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parks are well used, leisure centres are not - Improvement of parks is a Lambeth success story - Flexible pricing for leisure facilities welcomed, but cost is mainly too high - Brixton Rec well regarded - Other leisure centres viewed as old and having limited range - Private sector offers better range and quality - Condition and safety of leisure facilities queried - Customer service from leisure staff not always good - Leisure centres accessibility for disabled people not always good - Lack of parking at leisure centres - Need to advertise leisure centres more - Cycle training would be welcomed - 'Active for Life' welcomed - Libraries well thought of by users - Non users cited: competition; outdated services; limited stock; lack of information; and limited opening hours - Libraries could be improved by: learning from elsewhere; fitting more around people's lifestyles; catching people young; providing a wider offering; more modern environment; and more advertising
Young people's focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Negative perception and experience of leisure centres and parks - Leisure centres need to be more affordable - Need to attract people while they are young - Provide a broader range of leisure options - Promote healthier living through healthier diets - Cycle training welcomed - Active for life welcomed - Libraries are not well used because of: level fines; need to sign-up as a member; and their location - Libraries could provide more multi-media items - Libraries could cater more for non-English speakers
Low income focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parks are seen as good but need to: have better disability access; be cleaner; have wider range of facilities; have unacceptable behaviour tackled - Parks could have park wardens to improve safety - Leisure centres are too expensive for many - Cycle scheme welcomed
Muslim focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parks are good during the daytime but unsafe in the evening. They need staff to patrol them. - Leisure centres need more advertising and should be cheaper - Leisure centres could have cafes in them - There is a perception that leisure facilities are poorer

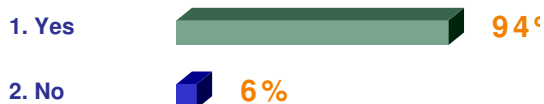
	<p>quality and more expensive than is actually the case</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Libraries are generally felt to be good, but waiting lists for books can be long - Libraries should have: wi-fi access; electronic copies of books; limits on how often a book can be renewed
Older people's focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parks do not provide enough facilities for older people - Upkeep of parks has much improved in recent years - Welcomed concessions at leisure centres for older people

Deliberative workshop

Overview

Many participants said that they had used local parks within the past year, but few had used leisure facilities or libraries.

Have you used a park in the last 12 months?



Have you used a leisure centre in the last 12 months?



Lambeth



Lambeth



Have you used a library in the last 12 months?



Lambeth



Parks and green spaces

Lambeth's parks and green spaces are seen as a success story for the Council. Participants praised them for their quality, safety, cleanliness and range of services that are provided in them. This included parks such as Kennington Park, Clapham Common and Brockwell Park but also the lido and smaller parks and green spaces.

People felt that now that Lambeth have made the initial steps to improve the parks, the high levels of usage that encouraged means in essence that the parks have become self-policing and are safe places to visit.

There were a few minor criticisms about some of the smaller parks in the borough, such as one in Streatham, where vandalism was considered to be an issue.

Positive aspects of leisure facilities

Participants indicated a number of positive aspects of local leisure facilities. Many of these focused on the flexible pricing structure for different sections of the community, including free swimming for disabled people and discounts for those on benefits. Also the option to pay as you go rather than having to commit to a lengthy contract was felt to be beneficial to people who cannot afford a monthly contract, or are infrequent users.

Of the range of leisure centres in the borough the Brixton Rec was the most well respected one.

Barriers to using leisure facilities

When asked why they did not use leisure facilities they came up with a number of reasons which we have grouped together under a number of headings. It should be noted that a common theme across several of these areas is that people's opinions are often based on perceptions and/or old experiences rather than recent experience:

Age and quality of facilities: many people have an impression that leisure facilities provided by the Council are outdated. Streatham swimming pool was cited as somewhere in need of renewal. One person said: *"Streatham is not good...it is disgusting!"* As well as being old they are also felt to be in poor condition and in facilities such as gyms of poor quality and limited range

Condition and safety: a number of participants expressed fears about the safety of some facilities, citing Brixton swimming pool and the lido. They said that the floors are slippery and there are too few rails. One participant said that his wife has MS and was unhappy using Lambeth facilities for safety and accessibility reasons, preferring Peckham Pulse in Southwark. The staff there were also considered to be more attentive.

Customer service: several people raised concerns about the quality of the staff and customer service. *"The staff don't look at you, this is not acceptable"..."There is a definite staffing issue, its shocking. The whole staff team is there but there is no-one over the age of 20!"..."We pay reasonable money but don't get the service".*

Accessibility: residents with disabilities find using leisure services particularly difficult because they are often intimidated but also accessing the recreational centre was difficult – *disabled people won't use it if the only way that we can get in is through a smelly lift.*

Parking: the lack of parking facilities in several of the centres put some people off

Cost: people feel that the cost for using leisure facilities is often too high. One person gave an example of £5.50 for an aqua aerobics class. This was considered expensive.

Private sector facilities were felt by many to offer a much better range and quality of services for a price which was fairly similar. Some participants felt that the council facilities “have to run like a business”, being more competitive in terms of price, equipment and customer service.

For some the reason for not using the facilities was because they participated in activities through other local sports clubs, for example, playing rugby with a local club. In these cases, there was nothing inherent in the facilities that was preventing their attendance, just a preference for participating in other activities.

Increasing use of leisure facilities

Looking at how Lambeth might encourage more people to use leisure facilities the following ideas were suggested:

- Offer incentives to local businesses to use local leisure facilities
- Refurbish facilities, as with the Brixton Rec
- Maintaining an up-to-date section of “things to do” on the website and in Lambeth Life.
- Make facilities more obvious and accessible, rather than having them ‘tucked away’ as they are at present
- Spread information via word of mouth; provide more information. Many people were not aware of what was available at the different leisure locations. The idea of a “Welcome to the borough” pack with details of local GPs, dentists and recreation centres was felt to be a good way to introduce people to the borough and send out a good message.
- Think about providing discounts for residents, particularly children during school holidays
- More people are unlikely to use these facilities until the council addresses the cleanliness problem
- Learn from good example elsewhere: “*Oasis leisure centre in Camden, that is what a leisure should look and feel like*”
- Providing cafes in leisure centres
- Women-only areas in gyms; this would also be useful for women from some religious communities

A couple of examples of schemes were introduced to prompt ideas:

1) Cycle training: This idea was mainly well-received, but some felt it should be a free service. One participant suggested that it might work more effectively if bicycles were available for hire for the session, so as to allow attendees to use the session to decide whether they would feel comfortable cycling on the road and, if so, *then* make the decision to purchase a bicycle. Other participants were reluctant to cycle on the roads and felt that a significant number of people would be deterred from the scheme for this reason. A number of people felt there was a broader picture which needed to be looked at - ensuring there is somewhere safe to lock a bike up at the end of each journey.

2) ‘Active for Life’ (Brighton and Hove): This was also received well. Participants appreciated the range of activities on offer, but one expressed concern that the need to have access to the web, in order to access an ‘Active for Life website’, would exclude some people. There was also some doubt that a system would be sustainable: interest might be substantial at the time of launch, but subsequently wane, with the result that high

levels of input would be required from groups of 'activators'. Some participants felt the activators would be useful for motivating people, but others thought it too much of a 'nanny state' approach and suggested that current problems with inactivity were due less to poor knowledge and more to a lack of time or interest.

Lambeth's Libraries

Those people who are users of local libraries spoke very positively about the wide range of items on offer, the opportunity to access the internet and receive PC training, and the availability of information on local history, genealogy, DVDs. They felt that there had been some big improvements in recent years, including later opening hours and an efficient online ordering service.

However, the majority had not used the library over the past year and they suggested a number of reasons for this, including:

Competition: people accessing a lot of information over the internet now and now have less of a reason to obtain information from local libraries.

Outdated services: The old-fashioned, outdated look of several local libraries. One participant who is a teacher said that the main thing which stops children using libraries is their parents – they don't have the time to take their children and feel that libraries are not as convenient or useful as the internet or other options *"it's not children that are the problem, they want to use libraries...it is their parents that are not inclined to use them, they just don't have the time or use other sources for information and books"*.

Limited stock: West Norwood library was criticised for having a poor selection of books, and there were complaints many books have been sold.

Lack of information: not knowing when the library is open/not being able to reach the library during its opening hours.

Limited opening hours: one person said *"Crystal Palace library is lovely, well resourced but never open. It is hardly used because it is hardly ever open"*.

Looking forward to how Lambeth might develop its library facilities in the future a number of ideas were offered:

Learn from others: one participant spoke of the success of the new Peckham library, which is popular with young people, and suggested that the lessons of this might be relevant for Lambeth. Another participant suggested that libraries should develop specialisms in particular subjects.

User focus: they could be made to fit more around people's lifestyles, for example, being able to check stock online from home and reserve a book that way (this can already be done, but some people were not aware of this). The opening hours could also fit better around people's lifestyles - be open when people finish work.

Catch people young: it was felt you have to start young to encourage use across a diverse range of residents – they suggested: mother and parent groups, reading groups (for adults), outreach classes targeted at different areas, literacy classes, competitions (for example, how many books children can read over the holidays).

Wider offering: there could be more provided in the way of educational services. This could include craft classes children but also PC training for adults. Also provide arts facilities at libraries (dance, drama, dance, musical).

A modern environment: look to mirror a Waterstones/Borders atmosphere where there is a coffee shop, WIFI and a more social feel.

Promotion: one person said “*more people would use them if they had more information about them and publicity about what they do*”.

Young people focus group

Leisure facilities and parks

Discussing leisure facilities the immediate responses were negative:

“Disgustingly dirty, need to clean them up”

“(they are in) poor locations”

Parks were similarly criticised:

“You can’t even walk through them”

“Full of junkies and drunks”

The provision of information seemed to be a major problem as was people’s perceptions and experiences of services:

“My main problem is that I don’t know what is around, I think that is the main problem”

“In Streatham, people pee in that! (swimming pool) The water is green! Clean the water”

Looking at how the usage of leisure facilities could be increased and how people could be encouraged to lead healthier lifestyles several they suggested:

Pricing: providing cheaper or free access to leisure centres, particularly for children:
“They want somewhere they can take the kids without spending a ridiculous amount of money”

New ideas: providing pay as you go pushbikes (although they might get stolen quickly)

Promoting healthy diets: while diet is mostly down to individuals, shops should be encouraged to sell the healthier food

Incentives: encourage volunteering through coupons, meals and trips

Target children and young people: get the schools involved in getting the children down there and ask the schools what it is that kids want. Focus on the under-25s. Get them hooked on exercise and they will stay fit for life

Broad range: keep the options wide on offer, don't limit what people can do

Long term range: rather than a one-off keep it long term. e.g. Football leagues, courses of fashion classes.

Similarly for parks they suggested a number of options for increasing usage levels:
Park:

"Clean them up, get the drunks out"

"Ban the consumption of alcohol in parks and enforce this"

"Patrol the park with park rangers"

"More activities for children"

"Mixed use areas with adult space next to children play area so parents can meet there and keep an eye on their children"

Looking at ideas about what could be done they made the following comments:

Cycle training: they felt this was a good idea and people would do it. It could have positive knock-on effects such as decreased pollution. But there might be a danger that only a 'certain kind' (more affluent) of person would do this and not others. A focus for this would be for it to be delivered in schools.

Active for Life: again this was felt to be a good idea, particularly the use of 'activators' (people employed to champion healthy living) – "If you are confronted by someone you are more likely to say 'yes' to going along to something"

Libraries

Most people seemed to have a good awareness of the libraries and the facilities they offer, but they were not particularly well used by respondents. The main reasons for lack of use were:

"You need a card"

"They are in a fixed location which is not near me"

"The fines for not returning books are too much"

Asked what could be done to improve libraries they suggested reducing or removing fines in libraries. Their thinking here was that the more the council trusts residents in Lambeth the more trust they will get back. They also felt there could be better provision of services for those who do not have English as a first language including more in the way of more

visual / audio items such as DVDs and CDs. A final suggestion was unrestricted access to the internet would be useful as well.

Low income focus group

Leisure facilities and parks

Discussing the quality of local parks they felt they are generally good there are a number of drawbacks:

Accessibility: *“they are difficult for disabled people to access”*

Cleanliness: *“hygiene of the parks is awful”... “Dog mess everywhere”*

Limited facilities: *“Toilets are always closed”... “Not enough play areas”... “There used to be a shop in the park, but now it’s always closed”*

Unacceptable behaviour: *“There should be no way that people should be able to have sex in a public toilet”*

In terms of increasing the numbers of people using parks they suggested employing *“park rangers to look after them and keep out the ‘undesirables’.”* And, to tackle cleanliness providing *“more dog mess bins”.*

Asked why residents tend not to use leisure facilities they felt the main reason was the cost of them, particularly if they have a family: *“If you have more than one child to pay for it’s way too expensive – many can only go for a treat”... “People can’t afford to go if they have big families”.* They also felt that there are fewer facilities available now than there were in the past.

Thinking about their own lifestyle and the kind of initiatives which they think would make the biggest impact in helping them to lead more active and healthier lifestyles they felt there should be a focus on tying ideas in with the 2012 Olympics. They also suggested higher levels of spending with lower prices so that more people can use them.

Looking at the options for the future they felt that the cycle scheme is good but one participant said that the reason someone she knew did not get her child on the scheme was because there are too many roads to cross to get there, and she got stopped recently because her 4 year old child was riding a bike on the pavement: *“how is the mother supposed to get the bike to the scheme if she’s not allowed to ride the bike on the pavement and the roads are too dangerous – she can’t carry the bike.”* This concern about the busyness of roads was repeated by other participants.

Libraries

Most of the group did not feel that putting money into libraries should be a priority for the borough. A small number of people had had used the library within the last week and were regular users. If there were improvements that could be made this would include ensuring that there is disability access.

Muslim focus group

Discussing libraries this group felt that they are a good place to access the internet and user computers for other purposes. They also felt that the quality of the staff and the way they helped users was of a good quality. On the downside they said there were sometimes long waiting lists for books. Looking to the future they felt libraries should explore having: WIFI access; electronic copies of books; and limits on the number of times a book can be renewed.

In terms of parks the general view seemed to be that: *“they are great during the day”*. However, after about 7pm, people had concerns about safety. This could be tackled by having people patrol them on a regular basis and cut down on problem behaviour such as smoking and drinking. They also suggested that the cycle paths could be better signposted.

Turning to leisure facilities and promoting healthy lifestyles they felt it should be promoted by providing more facilities for training (facilities) and weights. They also suggested free membership particularly for those in a low income bracket and having student concessions. To make the leisure centre environment more attractive they suggested having more coffee shops. They felt there was a perception problem with residents thinking that the facilities are of a poorer quality and are more expensive than is actually the case

Older people focus group

This group made a general comment that often parks seem to cater more for younger people than pensioners in terms of the facilities provided. As a result they suggested that one remedy would be for there to be facilities tailored to their needs: *“A dedicated centre for older people because young people do not accept/respect older people being there”* and *“healthy eating in parks – somewhere affordable to eat and even get cheap alcohol i.e. a glass of wine for the elderly – bars are too expensive.”*

However, they did feel there had been great improvements in recent years particularly in terms of their upkeep: *“[There have been] a lot of improvements, the foliage is neater and maintained, there are lights in the right places.”*

Looking at leisure facilities they praised the fact that Clapham swimming pool is free for older people, and concessions are available at Streatham.

Invest to save

	Main findings
Deliberative workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Seen as a more efficient way of spending- To work it needs good quality people making decisions- Invest to save options include: reducing agency staff; focusing on preventative services; investing in 3rd sector to deliver more; joining-up services more; improving contract management; focusing on energy efficiency; improving accountability; and reusing existing facilities than starting

	from new
Young people's focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supported the idea of invest to save - It should be used where prevention costs less than the cure - Invest to save options include sex education; and education and activities for young people to stop them drifting into crime
Low incomes focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Welcomed the idea, but only so long as it targeted the people who would really benefit from it - Could mean ensuring that services are provided correctly the first time rather than repeats e.g. housing repairs
Muslim focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Welcomed invest to save - Involve the 3rd sector more in delivery - Look at preventative services for older and younger people - Look at energy efficiency options
Older people's focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Welcomed invest to save, but decisions would need to be accountable - Suggested: educating young parents; activities for young people; and sex education

Deliberative workshop

As a principle invest to save was seen as a more efficient way for the council to plan its spending. However, to work the council would need to ensure that its staff were of a high quality and were committed to being part of improving its performance.

When thinking through where invest to save might work participants made a number of suggestions. However, it should be noted that some of these are more about pure savings rather than investing to save. Participants felt that residents attitudes will need to be shifted to encourage so that they think about the long term and understand that the Council is looking at long term benefits for users and council tax payers. Residents will need to accept that investment will not bring changes straight away. To reassure them a system to measure performance will be necessary with regular evaluation built in.

Staffing: aim to increase the percentage of staff who are on permanent contracts. At present too many are agency staff who lack same commitment to the organisation and are more expensive

Prevention: in the case of older people's and young people's services review range of services offered. There was a feeling that more could be provided in the way of preventative services, for example, more activities for the elderly will save a lot in after-care, as will investing in healthy activities for younger people

Commissioning: invest in the community, voluntary and charitable sector to deliver more services as they are often closer to potential users therefore understand their needs more and probably able to deliver services more efficiently

Joined-up services: for example, ensure that there is a comprehensive and consistent approach across the borough. Recycling was cited as an example - improve flow of information, facilities to be provided and delivery of the service

Contract management: improve the level of contract management, particularly monitoring the level of services that are delivered, for example, repairs and maintenance work

Greener services: have greener vehicles and compulsory energy efficiency measures for new builds

Improved accountability: greater transparency of responsibilities across the council. Also clearer presentation to the public of what money has been received and how it was spent

Reuse rather than start from scratch: where existing assets exist look at the potential of reusing these rather than investing in new services, for example, with regards to housing invest in existing stock and empty properties, rather than the huge cost of private landlords, B&Bs etc

Young people focus group

To discuss this issue participants primarily looked at how services are currently provided for looked after children they felt that wherever possible service users should focus on encouraging people to stay with friends and family rather than stay in more expensive temporary accommodation. They also said that services need to be more tailored to an individual's needs, this might involve having a dedicated 'case worker' providing continual one to one support rather than the service user being passed from one person to another. Likewise when discussing the use of foster carers they also agreed with the principle of keeping people with families and out of care homes.

This group also supported the principle of investing in services for young people which aim to keep them out of trouble, like the X-it service. They felt there was a need to focus on prevention to avoid longer term problems with the social and financial costs associated with them.

Looking at other areas where an invest to save approach might work they suggested:

- Sex education: to cut down on teenage pregnancy rates
- Education and activities for young people: to stop people drifting into anti-social behaviour and crime

Low income focus group

This group felt that invest to save was a good idea but the council should invest across the board, not just in certain services. They worried that this approach might favour particular groups who might not deserve additional council spending. When discussing X-

it, one participant put it as *“why do they always put money into the bad kids – why can’t they put some money in the good kids – why should the kids that aren’t bad be scared to go outside? They should think about rewarding kids that are good.”*

Aside from this, participants mostly focused on particular concerns they had about services which they felt were underperforming rather than on how money could be invested to make longer term savings. If there was an invest to save element in the issues they raised it was in ensuring that services deliver first time so there is no need to repeat the same action, for example, housing repairs.

Muslim focus group

As with the some of the participants in the deliberative workshop this group felt that a good approach would be to involve the voluntary sector in service delivery. Again, as with other participants they felt that invest to save could focus on prevention approaches for younger and older people.

Participants in this group also focused on housing services, saying there were a range of improvements that could be made. However, mostly these recommendations were about service improvement than invest to save, for example, building more affordable housing and enhancing security on estates.

The final area this group looked at was climate change. They felt there might be an opportunity for the council to improve services in the longer term through carbon offsetting, for example, planting trees to gain larger carbon allowances.

Older people’s focus group

As with the other groups consulted as part of this project the older people’s group welcomed the idea of invest to save, but with the proviso that it is done well, there is clear accountability and the spending is sustained: *“Long term investment is fine as long as it’s accountable and spent sensibly”... “[We] want to see investments that can be sustained once started up, whatever the money is put into.”*

One of the invest to save suggestions from this group was spending more on educating young parents: *“so that kids grow up better in the future.”* This comment was in response to the feeling that the consequences of this lack of investment is seen on the streets now.

They also felt more should be invested in sex education in schools to stem teenage pregnancies. Also, again focusing on young people they felt that there was a need to invest in 16 to 18 year olds to help them keep out of trouble in the area.

Self-directed care

	Main findings
Older people’s focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Concerned about people making poor spending decisions- But, would mean services better meet individual needs- Would need support mechanisms: money management skills; staff management skills; and service information

Older people focus group

This was an issue which was only discussed by the older people's focus group. The aim was to explore their attitudes towards self-directed care. Initially they raised a number of concerns mainly around potential abuse of the system. They did not trust that all people would spend the money wisely or be able to manage the budget:

"I think it would be abused, [people] wouldn't appreciate it as it would seem like people were getting something for nothing."

"What if the money is spent (i.e. on teeth) and then [they] need more and they can't have it because they've spent all their budget, how would [the council] know if all needs were being met?"

"Concern that people may not be honest."

However, there were also some participants who cautiously welcomed the idea feeling that it would mean that services are more closely defined around their needs: *"[People] like to feel they can get the care needed, i.e. if they become ill etc."* But felt that a number of support mechanisms would need to be put in place if people were to benefit from it. These can be clustered under three headings:

- Money management skills: this could be a phone helpline and web based advice
- Staff management skills: again this might be support by a phone line and internet
- Service information: this would be a list of the services which people could buy, again it would need to be available in different formats

Drop-in sessions

	Main findings
Brixton	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Housing: allocation and repairs- Anti-social behaviour and crime- Facilities for young people- Local environment: cleaner and better maintained- Roads: too congested and need to be better maintained- Adult learning facilities: need more access to them- Recycling: people need more information and it needs to be simple- Leisure centres: need to be more affordable and customer service needs improving
Lower Marsh	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The state of the market is a concern- Housing: repairs and security- Education: good but areas for improvement- Recycling: needs to be easy and information provided- Healthy lifestyles: people need to take more personal responsibility

Clapham Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improve the environment - Invest in facilities for young people - Some focus on invest to save - Recycling: more amenable than other areas to charging for recycling - Leisure services: swimming pool refurbishment welcomed - Customer services: would like more online provision
Gracefield Gardens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improve the environment - Invest in services for young people - Improve housing service - Recycling: is hard to change people's behaviours - Leisure centres: need to be more affordable

Brixton Market

The stall for this session was set-up in the heart of Brixton on the corner of Electric Avenue and Brixton Road, one of the busiest corners of Lambeth. Councillor Jim Dickson attended during lunchtime and listened and responded to residents' concerns

This was the busiest of the drop-ins due to the high foot-fall in the area and although people were primarily on their way to go shopping, to work or on other errands many chose to stop and talk briefly with us about the council. There was a good degree of interest in the stall and many people approached us for more information although the majority still had to be approached for their views.

The views collected reflected the diversity of the area. The stand-out issue was the allocation, availability and upkeep of social housing in the area. Strongly voiced views around the need to get repairs right first time to save money were heard along with some negative feedback about the updated housing allocation system:

"Housing repairs need to be sorted out. People need to take responsibility to fix things e.g. leak in a bathroom, can't get through to anyone to sort it out"

"Housing – need to build more houses and give me a council flat. Give people who work to pay for their flat first priority. Change the priority of the waiting list"

The issue of the local environment in terms of cleanliness of and upkeep of streets and roads, and the general appearance of the area was the second main concern for residents:

"Roads need improving as they are too bumpy. Improve the shops, there are too many boarded up"

"Footways – keep them clean and well maintained"

Crime and anti-social behaviour was also a main concern in Brixton:

"Safety – remove the drug dealers and petty crime"

Parking was also an issue:

“Spend less on traffic wardens...at the moment they hide and come and give you a ticket, often indiscriminately and not according to the rules...Lambeth is working hard to improve relations with the community but the wardens spoil them”

Residents also contributed their ideas as to how recycling could be improved:

“More recycling bins. We need them everywhere”

“Fiscal incentives. Telling people about it and explaining how the recycling process works”

A number of people felt the council was already working hard in this area:

“The council is good at recycling”

“Recycling is good. Lambeth is bending over backwards to help people recycle”

“It is easy at the moment”

“The council has done as much as it can. It is up to the individuals. Give people as much information as possible and leave it up to them”

Commenting on customer services Olive Morris House was praised:

“Council office at Brixton Hill is very nice”

“Olive Morris House is excellent”

Lower Marsh Market

The following day brought a slower day of consultation in Lower Marsh market. Fewer stall holders in the area meant a reduced number of shoppers and with many potential consultees hurrying on their way to or from work our opportunity to gain views was limited. Our location on the border with Southwark borough also meant a larger number of respondents were ineligible for consultation due to living outside of the borough.

The relatively low number of passers-by gave us an opportunity to speak to more businesses. By dropping into the shops and stopping by the market stalls in the area we collected a picture of current business concerns.

The main priority from business owners was that Lower Marsh market had been neglected over the years. Concerns primarily focused on recent developments including the reduction in the range allowed to be sold from each market stall, increased pressure to move to the Eastern end of the market and a concern over the mix of stalls and shops that operate in the area. There seemed to be some tension between the market stall holders

and the local shop owners. The views heard from some business owners were extremely negative regarding the Council and their treatment of the Lower Marsh area:

“Lower Marsh is disappearing rapidly. The council has imposed the rule that you can only sell one range of goods. There is only about 5 stalls left”

“Keep ground rate for markets more affordable and keep independent business. Variety in Lower Marsh is very important and will regenerate the area”

“People running the market who don’t have experience in the markets. The market is not running properly and is losing traders. We need better skilled people to do the jobs. The market managers here aren’t here enough and don’t really do anything. There is a lack of communication when it should be a team effort”

Discussing waste and recycling they made a number of suggestions mainly around the frequency of collections, keep it simple and explaining why recycling is important:

“More frequent collection of recycling bins and clarity about what should be recycled. Bins are overflowing and not nice”

“Not enough collections, need more collections. Waste and rubbish sits out on the street and is an eyesore”

“Help businesses more, if recycling was free to businesses then that would reduce waste. Carton boxes take too much room. Supply more recycle bins”

“Make it easy to start will...clearly labelled drawing and words. Have multi-bins in all areas. People need to know what they can and can’t recycle”

“Talk to people. Give more information in money terms such as what money the borough is saving. Show the benefit and they will be encouraged. They will appreciate it more”

There was also a suggestion about the need to improve customer services, but also some praise:

“Too often you end up in the queue on the call centre which makes you reluctant to call again. I have called about an electrician that gave me the run around, there needs to be better customer services”

“I use the phone service and that is very helpful”

Among the many other issues that were mentioned, a comment about the library service stood out:

“Libraries – it is a terrible policy that it comes bottom of the list. There are so many people who cannot read and need to be introduced to books. They are doing a certain amount i.e. books for toddlers, but it is not the general policy. There is a lack of commitment to libraries. There is an excellent situation for archives, but not for the library”

Clapham Library

The setting of Clapham Library presented us with an opportunity to get the views of a different group of residents, primarily the more affluent, young parents and younger people. Participation was increased by the fact that our visit coincided with a parent and child event.

As this was the quietest of the drop-ins it also provided us with an opportunity to get some video interviews on Clapham Common⁶. We were also able to enter into the consultation areas in more depth with library visitors who had a little more time on their hands than the busy shoppers and stall holders of the markets.

Again the main areas of concern reflected the background of the consultees. Issues such as expanded and improved facilities for children including nurseries, leisure facilities and a general spruce up of all council owned facilities of this type was encouraged.

Clapham being a relatively affluent area of the borough there was a higher than usual instance of respondents having 'no opinion' or 'generally good' opinion of the council. This was felt to be due to the lower interaction between these more affluent residents and council services:

"Lambeth is improving. Estates are getting cleaner"

One service area they were particularly complementary about was waste and recycling:

"Recycling very good and easy, Just keep making it easier"

This group also stood apart from the others as being more amenable to charging, variable collections and charging for bags as a way to further improve the management the amount of waste that residents produce:

"Pay per collection – will improve the levels of waste...however, people will want a better service if they pay directly for it – may cause problems"

"Varied collection good idea. Bad quota good idea"

However, a number of people still objected to the idea of charging feeling it unfairly penalises certain groups:

"Danger of people who are less able to pay being hit by charging"

They also covered the same ground as other groups in terms of providing more information about recycling and making it easier:

"More recycling points – not many spaces outside the flats of Lambeth so can't store up recycling. Need to take it out more often"

⁶ A video is being prepared as part of the final reporting for this project

This group also made a number of references about a desire to see more spending on the provision of training courses for residents:

“PC training in customer centre. Free fire risk assessment sounds like a good idea”

Gracefield Gardens Customer Centre, Streatham

Gracefield Gardens Customer Centre provides both council (benefits, housing and council tax) and NHS services. The centre was relatively quiet with most people there to use the NHS services. The flow of people was constant however and we were able to approach people as they were waiting for appointments and leaving the building. We also went onto the street outside when numbers in the building were low.

People seemed generally happy with the council:

“Lambeth has tried a lot. The council tax rates are high but they supply a lot for the elderly and poor. People need to take more responsibility for themselves – not sure what the council can do to encourage this”

People also welcomed the opportunity to contribute to the consultation and were generally interested in the range of issue that we covered. They liked Gracefield Gardens and found it convenient.

Given that the centre provided health care facilities as well as a range of other services (environmental, social care, housing), we captured the views of a generally representative proportion of Lambeth residents. This would include people accessing the podiatrist as well as people that had housing concerns.

Most respondents currently recycled, however they also felt that more information was needed on what could be recycled and also facilities for recycling need to improve:

“We recycle a lot but there needs to be clearer guidance. Not clear what the council can and can't recycle...Lambeth makes it easy at the moment to recycle, but would be happy to separate recycling if that makes it easier”

In the long run investing in recycling would save money:

“Investing in recycling will save for the future”

But, one of the challenges to increasing recycling will be changing residents' behaviour so they take more personal responsibility:

“A lot depends on the public themselves”

“The bins and orange bags are good and there is information available, but about half the people can't be bothered. It is hard to change people's minds about things”

“Depends on the people themselves. They should be responsible for their own lives – not up to the council to bend over backwards for them – that is the wrong thinking”

There was also a feeling that it should not just be residents who are targeted to recycle, businesses are felt to be just as culpable, if not more so:

“The fast food industry should be responsible for the waste they produce. This will reduce half the waste packaging. A lot of packaging is not recyclable”

“Danger of people who are less able to pay being hit by charging. Put pressure on supermarkets to reduce packaging”

A number of people felt that Lambeth is already doing nearly as much as it can regarding providing recycling services and encouraging people to recycle:

“Can’t do any more than Lambeth does other than more posters and ad campaigns”

With regard to local facilities the main message was that facilities are too expensive particularly for families, also people felt that the facilities did not meet with the standard of the private gyms, and this puts people off going.

Another specific issue included the poor maintenance of local housing and the speed with which repairs happen. But there was also a call for residents to take more responsibility themselves:

“Be stronger with tenants and make them more responsible. People neglect their own properties. People expect the council to solve all their problems and don’t help themselves”

There were also a number of comments made about the council listening more to local people and being more accountable after decisions have been taken:

“Don’t rush into projects – take local opinion seriously and make sure the decision is the right one so no money is wasted. Public money should be more wisely spent”

“Spend money more wisely”

Unsurprisingly many people in this group were complementary about Gracefield Gardens, although they felt it needed to be more widely known:

“Gracefield Gardens is a really good idea – having all things in one place”

“I have just stumbled across Gracefield Gardens”

“No one knows about Gracefield Gardens – need to inform more about it”

Summary of responses from the online questionnaire

The online form was available on the Lambeth Council website over a period of a month in August/September. The survey asked residents the same questions that were being asked at the public drop-in sessions, which included the following questions:

- As a borough, how can we reduce the amount of waste we produce?
- As a borough, how can we help encourage people to recycle more?
- In what areas do you think the council should be saving money and why?
- In what areas do you think the council should be spending more money and why?
- What other services would you like to see available at council offices?
- As a borough, how can we help encourage people to be fit and healthy?
- Do you have any other comments or suggestions you would like to make regarding the way Lambeth Council spends its money?

A total of 6 responses were received. The responses are summarised by category below.

Reducing waste

- increase composting options
- increase e-gov communications (online forms) - fewer letters sent out
- encourage community involvement in recycling
- *“provide incentives to households to produce less waste”*
- work with shops to reduce packaging

Increasing recycling

- better recycling facilities in flats/estates
- increase the amount of communications about recycling
- *“explain to people the economics of recycling”*
- increase recycling knowledge for people with limited / no English
- incentivise recycling
- increase the plastics recycling options

Saving money

- less funding of services which will be unaffordable to residents
- *“Stop using tax payers money to build things like the Lido, which is absolutely unaffordable for people on low incomes. I work and earn 21,000 per year, and I still cant afford going there, only a minority of Lambeth residents can actually afford going”*
- more efficiently used and better looking street furniture
- improve efficiency in external and internal council processes -‘less bureaucracy’
- less temporary staff
- fewer central government ‘tickbox’ performance targets

Spending money

- *“Street & footway repairs. It's quite obvious where I live (Balham, bordering Wandsworth borough) where Lambeth begins - because of the poor condition of streets and pavements.”*
- More youth schemes

-
- older people - care and support infrastructure and encouragement of community integration
 - “Social Care for the elderly as this will prevent people reaching crisis point which increases council expenditure.”
 - LGBT services - e.g. an LGBT centre
 - Library services - longer opening hours
 - More money for fostered children
 - More community events such as the Country Show

Customer services

- do not contract out services
- more multi-service contact points combining TFL, NHS and Jobcentre
- more ‘one stop shop’ centres
- Crèche provision at service centres
- More opportunity for customers to give feedback on services e.g. complain about rude staff

Fit & healthy

- Make cycling safer and promote walking
- More subsidised leisure options - especially leisure centres
- make the leisure centres better quality
- *“Have a decent Leisure Centre and gym that charges reasonable rates near to where I live!”*
- More communication about benefits/options of healthy eating
- *“Make restaurants and takeaways publish calorific values/nutritional values of their menus, like in New York.”*
- Community based exercise sessions e.g. park sessions, team sports events, mum’s walking groups

Other responses

- Ensure adequate supply of council housing - buying back those sold off
- *“I wish tax was not so high compared to neighbouring boroughs.”*
- *“Lambeth needs to consider that many people are struggling with their day-day budgets right now..”*
- Make residents more involved with community consultations - *“The community consultation is an excellent idea regarding the budget for 2009/10...”*
- Better contract management and accountability of services/contractors

3. Appendix

Factsheets

FACTSHEET A: Waste and recycling

Options for change

The Climate Change Bill will introduce the piloting of penalties and rewards for the amount of refuse produced by households in some areas. The intention is to increase awareness of what people put in their bins, to get them to think if it could be recycled instead, in order to reduce the amount of refuse they produce. By reducing the amount of refuse produced over a year an individual or household could be rewarded. The schemes being proposed are as follows:

- **The purchase of refuse bag (or tags for bags)** - This will involve households buying identifiable bags or tags to put on refuse bags. At the end of the year a flat rate rebate is sent to all households. This does not affect sacks for recycling
- **Charging by bin volume** - Households would pay a charge each financial year based on the size of bin they want for non-recycled rubbish.
- **Charging by frequency of collection** - Households would receive a rebate or charge based on the frequency of collections they opt for. Allowing people to pick the level of service they require could result in an increase in collection costs.
- **Charging by weight** - This would involve weighing non-recycled rubbish and providing a rebate or making a charge based on the amount. This would require the bag being weighed to be identified with the correct household, therefore would need to be tagged with a barcode or another technical solution.

Other schemes being explored include **varied collections** - Weekly collections of food, green and recycled waste but fortnightly collections of all other rubbish.

Case Studies

A number of local authorities, including Barnet, Brent and Waltham Forest, have introduced a compulsory recycling scheme where a recycling box is provided. Other local authorities have experimented with charging schemes based on bin size or weight of waste.

Barnet Council - Compulsory Recycling Initiative

What did Barnet do?

In 2005, Barnet established a compulsory recycling scheme for 113,000 households in its area (flats were not included).

Residents are required to put glass bottles, jars, tins, cans, paper and magazines in their recycle box and not in their refuse bin. A pilot scheme covering 21,000 households led to an 18% increase in recycling tonnage collected. The year on year increase before the pilot was introduced was 11%. 15% of household waste in Barnet was recycled in 2003/04.

Those that persistently and deliberately fail to recycle will receive warnings and visits from Council Officers. If it continues, formal notices will be served. If the Council chooses to prosecute using this legislation, an offender could face a fine of up to £1000

What effect did it have?

A monitoring exercise carried out before the pilot scheme was introduced showed that 50% of households in the pilot area were recycling. After the pilot this increased to 80% in the compulsory recycling pilot area.

After one year the amount of rubbish recycled increase from 18% to 27%

Blaby District Council - Charging by bin volume

What Blaby did?

As part of its pilot Blaby provided residents with the following free services:

- 140 litre wheeled bin for non-recycled waste emptied weekly
- 140 litre recycling bin and pre-sort boxes emptied fortnightly
- Assisted collections for the frail or disabled

If people wanted bigger bins (240 litre) or their garden waste collected they had to pay extra (£19 per year for a 240 litre garden waste bin).

What effect did it have?

- Only 8.3% of households requested larger bins
- Recycling increased from 90kg to 140kg per household per year
- Increased recycling rate from 29% to 37%
- Reduced the amount of waste for landfill

Cork County, Ireland - Charging for household waste

What did Cork do?

- Introduced a charging scheme for household waste instead of including it in a household's council tax
- All residents are charged per kg of waste produced

What effect did it have?

- In one year the amount of waste reduced from 1,200kg to 383kg per year, per household
- There was an increase in home composting, stopping green waste ending up as landfill
- The average household was able to save more than £80 per annum by “paying by weight”
- An improved overall recycling rate of 38% and 84% of people recycling
- Although flytipping increased shortly after its introduction, this reduced as householders became accustomed to the scheme

FACTSHEET B: Customer Services

The Council's key partners:

- Lambeth Primary Care Trust
- Lambeth Police
- Lambeth Voluntary Action Council
- Lambeth College
- Southbank Employers Group
- JobCentre Plus
- Learning and Skills Council
- London South Bank University and Community

Roadshows

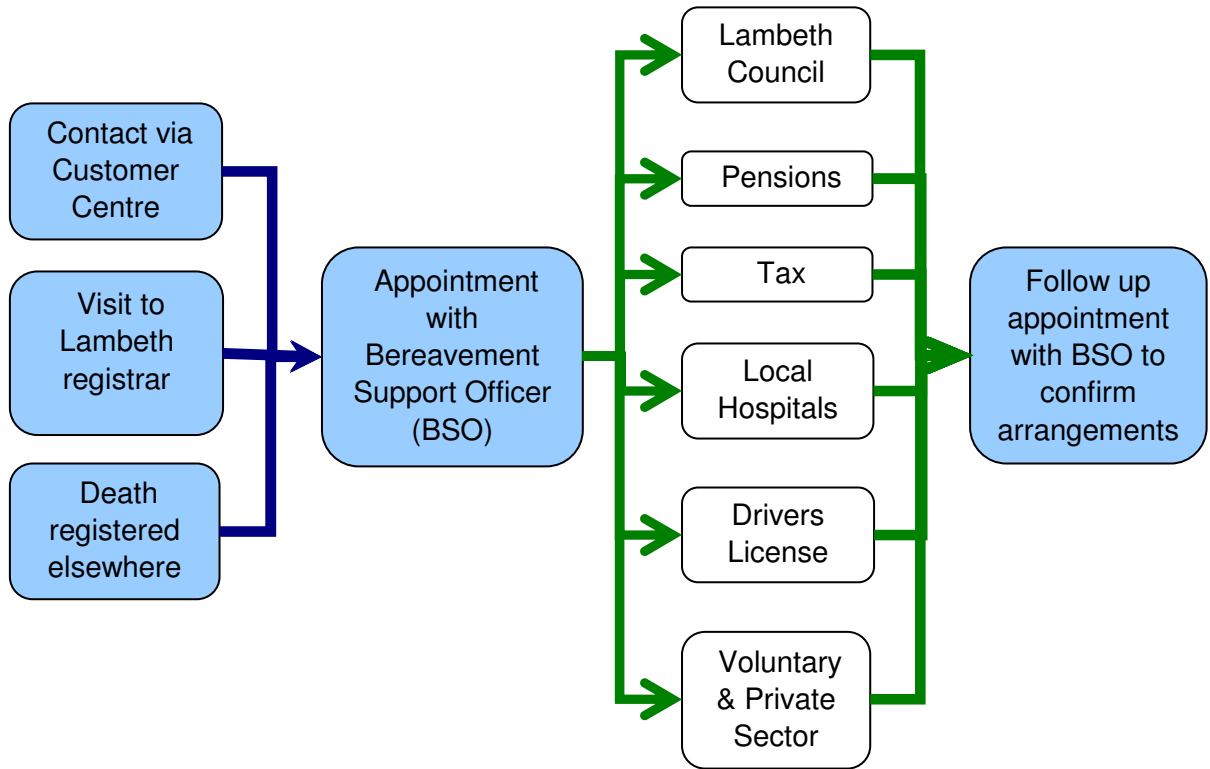
Lambeth Council, in partnership with the flu campaign, the fire brigade and the local energy efficiency advice centre held 'surgeries' around the borough in September and November of 2007.

The roadshows provided a wealth of energy efficiency and healthy living advice, details about grants and benefits, and free low energy light bulbs available. There was also information on how older residents can receive their flu vaccination, including details of pharmacies that were offering the vaccine in winter. The fire brigade advised on how to prevent fires at home and offered free fire safety checks.

Tell us Once initiative – reducing avoidable contact

- “within a year, on average a citizen will need to prove their identity to government at least 11 times” Varney report, 2006
- In a bereavement case study the family of a deceased person “had a total of 44 contacts with government over 180 days trying to make the necessary arrangements.” Varney report, 2006
- The council is piloting a service called “Tell us Once” within the bereavement service which will take responsibility of informing all the relevant parts of the council that an individual has deceased, these could include:
 - o Births and deaths register
 - o The electoral register
 - o The benefits service (Housing and Council tax)
 - o Council tax

How this works



Bereavement Support Service

- Notification and who else to tell
- Benefits & other service entitlement check
- Signposting Counselling and other support services

Key

Public contact →

BSO work →

FACTSHEET C: Health and Well Being

Case Studies

Example 1:

Lambeth Council offers one to one cycle confidence training to people who live, work or study in Lambeth in association with Cycle Training (CTUK).

It is suitable for both novices and experienced cyclists and the courses deal with cycle maintenance, as well as on-road riding.

Up to four hours of cycle training costs just £8 to book (equivalent to one day's congestion charge). CTUK also deliver a family riding course, teaching parents to ride safely with children.

Another course, cycle training for schools, teaches children to ride in realistic conditions but in a controlled environment. It provides lessons in how to interpret traffic and control the bike for example how to turn, look and signal (at the same time). Instructors take children in pairs and can even practice their route to school with them.

Example 2:

In Brighton and Hove, the local authority and local health services came together to create a scheme to increase levels of physical activity. They created:

- “Active for Life” website providing guidance on how to get and stay active, including details of over 190 clubs and groups in the city offering everything from abseiling to yoga.
- A team of 5 “activators” each located in a neighbourhood renewal area to organise activity sessions for local people,
- “Activators” also provided support to existing clubs/groups with training, funding advice and volunteers.

Reducing smoking/Exposure to tobacco

Example 3:

Another local authority plans to increase the number of homes free from tobacco smoke, reducing the risk of harm to children and other people. The scheme is being run with the help of Sure Start to encourage people to protect their families from the dangers of second-hand smoke.

The authority also recently organised an anti-smoking poster competition for students at a local college. The aim of the competition was to raise awareness of the dangers of smoking amongst young people in the district.

Promoting what is in libraries

Example 4:

Staff at Birmingham Library & Archive Services have been invited to take part in 4 one hour long radio shows to promote reading across the city. Unity fm a local and very pro active community radio station in the heart of the city has given library staff the opportunity to share reading experiences, what's on offer in libraries as well as promoting the key themes, messages and legacies of the National Year of Reading.

Background information on Libraries

The following services are typically offered in Lambeth libraries:

- Books, talking books, CDs, cassettes, videos, DVDs and books in large print for loan
- A reference and information service with encyclopedias, directories, maps, newspapers and magazines
- Free use of computers for Internet, email and word-processing
- A computer training centre
- Books in foreign languages
- All Lambeth libraries have Wheelchair access: the entrance to the library has a small ramp.

Online services

- Online book renewal - You can also renew any books you currently have on loan online.
- Place a request - Use the online catalogue to make a request for books, CDs, videos and other materials.

FACTSHEET D: Invest to Save

The Council is launching a multi-million pound fund to spend money on schemes which will eventually result in the Council making savings. These are called “Invest to Save” projects. It is the Council’s goal that the projects will have paid for themselves within four years and will also save money which can be spent on other areas.

Current examples of ‘Invest to Save’ projects include:

Team around the Child (TAC) – The concept of TAC is that for each child that has been identified as being vulnerable or having complex needs, a team of specialists from different organisations (such as teachers, social workers, paediatricians and child psychologists) is created which works together with parents. The same specialists stay with the child throughout the process.

The wide range of skills and knowledge on call enables a whole range of underlying issues to be tackled which are often the root cause of problems. The aim of the TAC is to reduce duplication and support a common way in which we deliver our services to support the most vulnerable children.

Increasing foster carers allowances – By increasing the allowances paid to foster carers, Lambeth can attract more people to be foster carers and reduce the number of cases requiring costly short term care. This not only benefits children in foster care as they remain within a family environment, but also saves money.

X-it programme – This programme offers young people an alternative to gang life and has won the prestigious children’s services award in the Guardian newspaper’s Public Services Awards.

The programme works directly with young people at risk of gang membership. It uses intensive support through group work, residential courses and leadership programmes to develop self awareness and empowerment amongst young people and helps them make positive choices. It gives young people an alternative to being in gangs and helps them pursue interests which offer greater personal fulfillment.

The key strength of the project is that is led by young people that share experiences and backgrounds to those going through it. Once young people have completed the project those involved are encouraged to become peer mentors for other young people.

An evaluation of the programme showed that 72 per cent of participants (18 of 25 young people) had stopped offending whilst they were involved with the programme.

Every Pound Counts – By investing in a campaign that raises awareness of the benefits that older and vulnerable people are entitled to, Lambeth Council has not only improved the quality of life of many but also reduced the need for costly services at a later date such as emergency accommodation.

FACTSHEET E: Participatory Budgeting

Participatory budgeting directly involves local people in making decisions on the spending and priorities for a set public budget.

Participatory budgeting usually features:

- The public identifying their spending priorities and proposing particular spending ideas
- The public voting on which spending proposals should be supported
- If a proposal is supported, the community and local authority work together to develop and implement the plan and report back on its performance