

Opinion seeking sessions on savings proposals Gwynedd Council November 2009

Background

During the next three years, all councils in Wales face substantial cuts in their finances and – compared to other councils in Wales - Gwynedd Council will receive a smaller share of the national budget. As a result, the Council is planning to save approximately £16 million between 2010 and 2013. In order to realise this, the Council is in the process of formulating a Three Year Savings Strategy which identifies substantial savings that will have the least possible effect on the county's residents. As part of the process of formulating the strategy, it was decided to seek the opinion of groups of people who have an interest in the savings and potential plans, and Siân Shakespeare Associates and Gethin Clwyd were commissioned to plan and facilitate discussions as independent facilitators.

Following a series of facilitated sessions during the week 9 – 13 November, the Council Board will consider a report on the Savings Strategy on 1 December that will include a report on the opinions expressed in these sessions. Then on 10 December the full Council will approve the final savings options list and from April 2010 officers will begin the process of realising the options.

Purpose of sessions

- Explain to attendees why the Council needs to save money.
- Share information about some specific proposals to save money.
- Seek opinions in order to assist Council Members to decide on some of the more difficult proposals.

A total of seven sessions were held over three days with different groups of people in three different locations: Caernarfon, Pwllheli and Dolgellau. Members of the voluntary sector, staff and residents were invited to different sessions and although they had their own perspective they considered the proposals objectively and there was not an obvious difference between the opinions of one group and another. On the whole, the attendees were asked to consider the same proposals in a large part of the sessions, but this was varied slightly between staff and the rest of the groups. Below there is a summary of all the relevant comments for every proposal and the same weight should be given to each comment. Some proposals have longer lists of comments as they were considered in more sessions.

The form of the sessions

Most of the sessions followed the same programme with a presentation by the Chief Executive, Mr Harry Thomas, to begin to explain the background and the need for savings. Afterwards, specific proposals or options were presented one by one and in some sessions the attendees were given the opportunity to ask questions on each one. Following this, groups of attendees were asked to note their concerns, if the proposal was realised, so that

Council members can consider the proposals in the light of these comments. After everyone had heard the views of every group the attendees were given the opportunity to vote in order to express how fair it would be for the Council to consider the proposal under consideration as part of the Savings Strategy. Because of the length of the sessions (approximately 2.5 hours) the attendees could only consider and discuss a limited number of proposals.

The feedback

A total of 95 individuals attended the sessions, and many submitted a written response on the sessions. Reading the comments (see Appendix 1 for a full list) it was obvious that they felt there was value in having the sessions and a number asked for more time to consider the proposals/options. Inevitably, some felt that they would have liked to know more and receive further details about some of the proposals, as well as receiving information beforehand in order to consider the contents more fully. Some would also have liked to have selected which proposals/ options to discuss, and it was suggested meeting beforehand to this end.

On the whole, everyone accepted the message about the need for savings and reductions, and they were eager to take part in discussions on how to achieve these. Only one or two attendees found difficulty in expressing constructive opinions. A mature and constructive discussion was had in every session and everyone had a chance to express their views.

Residents were recruited by contacting those who had responded to the county's Opinion Survey by expressing an interest in giving the Council their views on any further matter. This means that the views expressed below are the opinions of some residents who have a real interest in Council matters, and they do not represent a specific cross section of residents across the county. Nonetheless, there was a certain cross section as regards age, gender and background in many of the sessions, and the staff members felt that more would have liked to attend if they had had better notice and knew more about the type of session beforehand.

The Vote

For the first time in an opinion seeking session within the county, an electronic device was used to enable attendees to express their opinion by voting on each of the proposals put forward. It seems that the response was favourable as no-one had to reveal their vote and it was a neat way of closing the discussions on one proposal before moving to the next. The results of the vote are noted below in order to provide a full record of what happened in the sessions but undue emphasis should not be put on the percentages recorded as the samples were so small. It is also important to note that the session organisers did not wish to place too much pressure on the attendees by forcing them to take decisions, and so the question of voting was carefully articulated. The true value of the sessions was the comments made by the attendees.

Proposal one – reviewing the residential provision for the elderly

Questions

- How many homes exist at present?
A - 14
- Is it possible for the Council to make savings within present arrangements?
A - Yes through more campaigns such as telecare, re-enabling, etc.
- How much cheaper would the private sector be running the homes? – Why the difference?

- A - Commission on the basis of need at the time
- Is the Council considering investing in order to make savings?
A - Yes
- Where does the money come from to build purpose built homes?
A - No new buildings will be built.
- What is the percentage of money coming from residents' rates?
A - 20% which is the maximum allowed because of the cap from the government
- Can the present numbers be housed or will the numbers fall?
A - This is an efficiency plan - introduce a plan that will respond to need but in a new way
- Are the demographics correct? Why reduce to six?
A - This will receive full consideration as part of the detailed plan if the Council decides to include this proposal in the final Savings Strategy.

Concerns

- Where is the process of investing to **prevent** people from going into homes in the first place?
- How much will the **real savings** be considering the number of visits to personal homes that will have to be made and other costs?
- Where is the **investment in homes under supervision/for wardens**
- There will be a need to ensure **respite care** within the private sector.
- There will be need for further investment in **additional care** in order to keep people at home, e.g. via the voluntary sector
- How can the Council **manage the provision in the private sector**?
- There is a danger of **losing control** once the care homes are in the hands of the private sector e.g. the situation between Powys Council and BUPA
- Closing residential homes can create **unemployment**.
- There will be a knock on effect in the communities of **losing these jobs**.
- How **keen will the private sector be** to step into the breach?
- Is the **private sector planning** for an increase in the provision?
- How will the Council decide where the homes will be **located**?
- Has the Council considered the **cost of monitoring** the private sector?
- The provision of **home care** needs to be **in place before** reducing the residential provision.
- The **pressure on carers** will increase.
- The quality of care will reduce in a way that will put the **vulnerable elderly in danger**
- Need to consider **demographic** factors - that the number of elderly will increase over time
- There is a need for considerable faith in the private sector with substantial resources to ensure **consistency and quality**
- The **standard of the provision will change** as the agreement between the Council and the company proceeds.
- It is important for individuals **to stay in their own communities**.
- Moving the elderly from their local community has **ramifications for families**.
- **A lack of family support** for residents because of higher travelling costs.
- Individuals will worry that they are **out of their own 'neighbourhood'**.
- The Council is not sufficiently **clear and decisive** and with time and changes in conditions, the private sector will cost more money in the long run.
- **Quality of care** will deteriorate as workers are treated less favourably.
- **The morale of staff** in the homes and residents will fall
- Will there be provision for the **Elderly Mentally Infirm** in the 6 new 'homes'?
- **Risk for individuals staying at home** if there is no family and insufficient money for 24 hour care

- **'Bed blocking' in hospitals** – individuals who need a place in a residential home when there is not enough room, and so possibly having to stay in hospital until a suitable bed becomes available.
- More **pressure on Social Services.** e.g. Therapy Team, Social Workers Teams – more cases for every worker which would not be safe.
- Increase in the **cost for home care**, essential equipment, e.g. hoists, adaptations to homes e.g. showers, stair lifts, hoists
- **Waiting list** for social services increasing – e.g. waiting list now of 2 months for assessment by the therapy team.
- Need to ensure places for the **'local' elderly.**
- If the situation stays the same, the **maintenance costs of the buildings** will increase.
- The provision should be **consistent throughout all of Gwynedd's communities** – access to services are traditionally poor anyway in some areas (see multiple deprivation statistics).
- What will be the **cost of making the homes fit for purpose?**

Suggestions

- How about creating opportunities for a **local community provider – the 'community connect' model?**
- How about attracting **external investment?**
- Should keep in case the **private sector fails**
- **Sale** of assets is an opportunity – change of use of the buildings.
- How about having provision for **residential and nursing care within the same home?**
- The care provision has to move towards a **more specialist model** for the needs of the older population (which is increasing) for the future

Results of the voting

Question: how fair is it that the Council should consider this proposal as part of the savings strategy?

	Yes it would be fair	Perhaps	No, not at all
Voluntary sector	50%	50%	
Staff members	71%	22%	7%
Residents	55%	38%	7%

Proposal two – increasing the size of classes in primary schools

Questions

- How to ensure that the rate does not go above 30?
A – by mixing ages and including classroom assistants
- Does this include classroom assistants?
A - yes
- If schools close, what is the cost of transporting pupils to larger classes rather than to schools with small/smaller classes?
A - Schools will not close as a result of this decision but of course there is a connection between the proposal and the school arrangements plan
- How many teachers' jobs will be affected?
A - About 30
- Does the average question work/ is it relevant to a county like Gwynedd?

- A – This plan will affect medium and large schools more than small ones (11-30, 23-32)
- How many schools will have to be amalgamated in order to give the desired ratio?
A – No schools will close as a result of this proposal.
 - What is the evidence that changing the ratio will mean deterioration in the quality of education on these numbers?
A – The service does not make this claim. A number of factors influence attainment.
 - What are the implications of a change of one in the ratio?
A – Half the cost
 - What is the difference in the expenditure per head between large classes and smaller ones?
A – Approximately £2,500 → approximately £9,000 per head
 - Is there a difference in standards between small schools and large ones?
A – Not on the basis of Estyn reports
 - How does the present average ratio compare with other council areas?
A – In the primary sector Gwynedd is the 4th highest in Wales
 - How are teachers' salaries set? Does it depend on the number of children?
A – The money that comes from the Assembly depends on the number of children in the county.
 - Is the Assembly's money for education spent on education?
 - Do the councillors have a minimum number of how many children are acceptable in a primary school?
 - Are classroom assistants mandatory depending on the teacher/pupil ratio?

Concerns

- How to keep the rate low enough for the **foundation phase**?
- Are the **present buildings suitable** to hold large classes?
- How will the larger classes be controlled considering **children with ADHD and other needs**?
- The quality of **education and behaviour will deteriorate.**
- Work pressures will increase among teachers and **cause illness.**
- The teacher will have to teach a **wide age range of children** and this will make the work difficult as a result
- **Teachers** will be made **unemployed.**
- **Gifted people will leave** the county/ country and not return.
- Doubt whether members will seriously contemplate this considering why **some were elected.**
- Are the **redundancy costs** in the savings sums?
- Are the **costs of employing more classroom assistants** in the sums?
- £300,000 was spent last year to **reduce the numbers in a class** to fewer than 30!
- If there are fewer teachers in school there will be **fewer specialisms in different subjects**
- Will **children be treated fairly** considering that they need the teacher's attention, not just an assistant. It is teachers, not assistants, who have been trained.
- Children will receive **less individual attention.**
- If you depend more on assistants who tend to be women there will be less **male influence** in schools.
- Teachers will be less alert to the possibility that a **child has special needs.**
- It is possible that schools will decide to have **fewer classroom assistants** in order to save money.
- **Losing control and discipline** of the class.
- **Standards of literacy and numeracy will deteriorate.**
- Will this affect special needs provision?
- Does this mean that a school with fewer than 27 – 28 pupils is not viable and that therefore it will **be closed**?
- Effects on **teacher morale**

- It is possible that teachers will be less alert to **personal problems such as violence** against a child because they do not know the children and families as well.
- Closing village schools and concentrating on extending the size of urban schools will mean **a community loss in rural areas – and a linguistic loss.**
- Will increasing the size of classes **keep small schools open?**
- If the plan is considered, the **implications will have to be 'sold'** clearly to avoid misunderstanding.

Alternative suggestions

- There is a need for better arrangements as many teachers 'retire' and then return on 'supply' which is expensive – this does not give teachers from the university an opportunity.
- What is the real risk of increasing the average numbers in a class when teachers have had to be flexible for years?
- Inconsistency in the education pay structure compared to the rest of the public sector mean that cuts are inevitable.

Results of the voting

Question: how fair is it that the Council should consider this proposal as part of the savings strategy?

Band A – increase the ratio from 25 to 27

	Yes it would be fair	Perhaps	No, not at all
Voluntary sector	60%	20%	20%
Staff members	63%	22%	15%
Residents	64%	18%	18%

Band B – increase the ratio from 25 to 28

	Yes it would be fair	Perhaps	No, not at all
Voluntary sector	60%	10%	30%
Staff members	42%	30%	28%
Residents	46%	27%	27%

Proposal three – close one 'dry' leisure centre

Questions

- Where are they?
A - Penygroes, Bethesda, Barmouth and Dolgellau
- Are the centres near schools?
A - Yes
- How many people use one centre e.g. Bethesda?
A – this will receive full consideration as part of the detailed plan if the Council includes this proposal in the final Savings Strategy.
- How does Gwynedd's provision compare with other counties?
A - Top of the tree compared with rural councils

Concerns

- Two of the centres are in Community First deprived/rural areas. Increasing the problems of lack of access to services

- The 'preventative' element is important in these centres. They save on many other services (e.g. health) in the long run
- At times the leisure centre is the only community centre in the area.
- What would happen to the clubs who use the centre such as the Stroke Club
- This will create a carbon footprint because of the need for travelling to places further afield
- Knock on effect on children's deprivation
- Loss of provision near schools – costing the schools more (travelling and so on)
- Each of the centres is in a rural area which means quite a bit of travelling to a centre in another area – a reduction in travelling by bus to compensate for this
- This is counter to the government's policies
- What would be the cost of closing the building and what will happen to the building?
- Quite an impact on young people such as youth clubs.
- Public health will deteriorate – create a nation of 'couch potatoes' and 'sofa surfers'
- If they close the dry leisure centres – this will add to the problem of obesity and lack of fitness in the population
- Lack of fitness resources near to Barmouth and Dolgellau
- Closing a centre can affect the mental health of individuals which will then have an effect on other services, e.g. social services.
- Is saving £221,000 worth it?
- More problems on the street if a centre closes

Alternative suggestions

- Why not look at all the provision?
- Need to consider if there is a social centre in the same locality as the centre that is to close.
- There is a need consider achieving the service in a different way.
- There is a need to review the way centres are managed
- Why not move more health services to the centre i.e. after a heart attack or stroke?
- Why not offer the centres as a resource for private enterprise?
- Why not raise the admission fee?
- Why not change the opening hours – close during quiet periods?
- Why not extend the use of the centres (survey in the communities)
- Why not change the building into offices for Gwynedd Council employees instead of the portacabins in Penarlâg?
- Way ahead – proposal for the community to run them through grant funding etc

Results of the voting

Question: how fair is it that the Council should consider this proposal as part of the savings strategy?

	Yes it would be fair	Perhaps	No, not at all
Voluntary sector	30%	30%	40%
Staff members	31%	19%	49%
Residents	31%	31%	38%

Proposal four – cut the number of teachers in secondary schools

Questions

- What would be the effect on the percentage of teachers in the county?
A – Band A would mean one teacher fewer in the largest school and then percentages in others and Band B would mean two fewer teachers in the largest school and percentages in others.
- Is the sum specifically correct?
A - Yes.
- A review of arrangements is ongoing anyway as part of the Council's agenda
- Will there be cuts made in special need teachers anyway?

Concerns

- Fewer teachers will mean less control and behaviour will deteriorate
- Because of the need to protect some things from the point of view of Health and Safety it could place more pressure on other subjects.
- Danger of losing social subjects at the expense of the academic ones
- More travelling to a nearby school to receive certain subjects e.g. drama, sports science
- It is difficult to give the best education to a class of more than 33 pupils and to look towards the individual needs of every pupil.
- Danger that this will not help the unemployment situation where 45% of the unemployed are between 16 – 25 yrs of age
- Health and safety will suffer in subjects such as chemistry and sports
- Danger that deprived children will be excessively affected
- Possible that this will be unfair for Arfon schools as those are the ones with a 6th form
- Deterioration in the standard of education and examination results
- Specialism in specialist subjects will disappear
- More pressure on teachers will lead to teachers leaving
- Teachers teaching subjects that they are not qualified to teach
- Loss of good quality, specialist and enthusiastic staff
- Long term effects on the economy by promoting depopulation.
- Broader range of subjects could come from pupils moving to academies/colleges.
- Is the sum saved worth the educational loss?
- It is more important to keep teaching standards in secondary schools than in primary schools.
- Lack of investment in our children

Suggestions

- Why not have more job sharing?
- Why not concentrate on the larger schools?
- Why not share a teacher between schools?
- Why not consider freezing or cutting salaries?
- Is it an option to place the 6th form back into schools in order to boost the numbers?
- A wider range of subjects can be provided by pupils moving to colleges.

Results of the voting

Question: how fair is it that the Council should consider this proposal as part of the savings strategy?

Band A

Cuts of up to 7.7 teachers

	Yes it would be fair	Perhaps	No, not at all
Voluntary sector	40%	10%	50%
Staff members	43%	37%	20%
Residents	31%	29%	40%

Band B

Cuts of up to 14.4 teachers

	Yes it would be fair	Perhaps	No, not at all
Voluntary sector	20%	20%	60%
Staff members	10%	35%	55%
Residents	14%	31%	55%

Proposal five – review the access criteria for a social service

Questions

- How will the Council fund provision for Category 2 people?
 - There would be no provision available.
- Is it expected that individuals will pay for the service?
 - There is an expectation to pay now if they can afford it in accordance with national rules.

Concerns

- Who will be blamed in an inquest if someone dies as a result of lack of care.
- How long will it be before Category 2 individuals become Category 1 as a result of lack of care?
- The burden of care for Category 2 individuals will fall on the 3rd sector – but without additional financial support
- Danger that short term savings will have a substantial long term effect
- More pressure on GPs
- Pressure on primary and secondary care
- Create too much pressure on the families of the needy – they need respite and support
- Danger that vulnerable sections of society will become even more vulnerable
- What will happen to the individuals if they do not receive care?
- How can this work with the plan to care for more people in their homes? – it is contrary to the other plan.
- Put more pressure on social workers

Suggestions

- Why not hold a general review of Social Care?
- Opportunity for the 3rd sector/community sector – but with local strategic support
- Need a discussion between the Council and the health sector on defining responsibilities
- There is a need for more dialogue between strategic projects that are being developed between the 3rd sector and the Local Health Board with the Council present and also contributing.

Results of the vote

Question: how fair is it that the Council should consider this proposal as part of the savings strategy?

	Yes it would be fair	Perhaps	No, not at all
Voluntary sector	40%	20%	40%
Staff members	0	0	0
Residents	38%	12%	50%

Proposal six – switch off street lights between 1 and 5 in the morning

Questions

- Why wait 4 years to put this plan into action?
A – Because of consultation work and assessment of risk by area.
- Does this mean the whole lot in estates or some?
A – Yes except for town centres and Class 1 roads
- What say will community councils have?
A – We will be consulting with community councils as part of the detailed plan if the Council includes this proposal in the final Savings Strategy.

Concerns

- Create fear among the elderly
- Increase in crime and disorder – especially on large estates
- Police will have to deal with the increase in crime
- Increase in compensation cases
- The personal safety of workers who need to be out at night will deteriorate e.g. doctors, midwives
- There was a similar plan in Powys but they have gone back to switching on the street lamps
- Cause concern if someone's car breaks down
- Drinkers will fall going home from the pub because of the extension of drinking hours. Will also lead to anti social behaviour.
- Will the consultation costs cancel out the savings?

Suggestions

- Switch off every other street lamp
- Does not go far enough
- Need to look at re-investing with green energy, solar lights and motion sensors.
- Why not switch off lights on A roads in towns?
- Support switching off more lights.
- Powys are going to pay to re-light the street lights

- This will be a great help in reducing the carbon footprint but why not more similar plans!
- Reduce lights in Council offices or install sensors to put lights on when necessary.
- Switch off half the lights between 1 – 6 in the morning.
- Switch off the lights outside the Leisure centre in Bala.
- Switch off lights at weekends in industrial estates

Results of the vote

Question: how fair is it that the Council should consider this proposal as part of the savings strategy?

	Yes it would be fair	Perhaps	No, not at all
Voluntary sector	90%	0	10%
Staff members	54%	32%	14%
Residents	79%	14%	7%

Proposal seven – reduce the number of councillors to 65

Questions

- Do we need 65 councillors?
- What do councillors do for a salary of £13,000 p.a.?
- Is being a councillor another way of getting a pension?

Concerns

- Larger wards - councillors unhappy with their terms → good councillors will leave
- Larger boundaries will mean that a member cannot give electors the necessary attention
- Effect on deprived wards – if two wards are amalgamated in an area that is mixed from the point of view of deprivation

Suggestions

- The old Gwynedd Council including Conwy had 65 councillors
- Need to reduce the number to 60
- The reduction is not enough - reduce to 50
- Need to increase communication between the electors and the Council
- The members should be changed and increase the need to declare an interest.
- Why not go a step further and review the constitutional arrangements regarding the number / types of committees?
- Need to ensure that Councillors work for the benefit of the Council rather than against it.
- Need to ensure that they do not receive a higher allowance for larger boundaries.
- There are too many layers of democracy – community/town/National Park/Assembly/ Westminster/ Brussels

Results of the vote

Question: how fair is it that the Council should consider this proposal as part of the savings strategy?

	Yes it would be fair	Perhaps	No, not at all
Voluntary sector	0	0	0
Staff members	100%	0	0
Residents	100%	0	0

Proposal eight – close some public toilets

Concerns

- Will affect visitors to areas and create a bad feeling among businesses who will have to provide facilities instead.
- Create a poor impression among tourists
- Need toilets to be open during the summer and winter – not just for visitors – the tourist season has extended
- Deterioration in hygiene – people will use beaches, streets, walls and hedges if no toilets are available.
- There are not enough toilets along the coast and there are no other providers in rural areas.
- Danger that disabled users will suffer most.
- Unfair on parents with young children/ or people with specific health needs.
- Effects on mobile workers or those without facilities.

Suggestions

- Improve quality of the toilets and then try and create an income from them
- As some businesses open their toilets to the public there is no need to keep some open
- Each one needs to be assessed according to its use.

Results of the vote

Question: how fair is it that the Council should consider this proposal as part of the savings strategy?

	Yes it would be fair	Perhaps	No, not at all
Voluntary sector	0	0	0
Staff members	54%	38%	8%
Residents	23%	15%	62%

Proposal nine – Increase the price of school dinners

Questions

- Question the savings

Concerns

- This will lead to increasing the profits of the local fish and chip shop.
- More problems of obesity among children.
- This is the only hot meal that some children get, especially those in deprived areas.

- Food boxes will be filled with cheap food from low quality supermarkets
- Not affordable for many families – considerable costs for a large family.
- Risk that income from school dinners will fall substantially and completely
- All the efforts to get children to eat healthily will be wasted.
- The children who fall outside the categories of those who have a right to free school dinners and who come from fairly deprived homes will suffer.

Suggestions

- Why not look at what is happening in other areas
- There is a need for more investment in parenting skills
- Small cost increase for those who pay and a nominal sum for those who qualify for free dinners
- Why not reduce the choice and prepare one healthy meal
- The increase is too much, why not 50p?

Results of the vote

Question: how fair is it that the Council should consider this proposal as part of the savings strategy?

	Yes it would be fair	Perhaps	No, not at all
Voluntary sector	40%	0%	60%
Staff members	11%	32%	57%
Residents	0	0	0

Proposal ten – charge staff £75 p.a. to park in staff car parks

Opinion of Council staff only

Concerns

- Cost of administering and managing the plan
- Council vehicles have nowhere to park and it can cost up to £30 every time they come back to look for a space
- Can you guarantee a daily parking space for me for £75?
- Will everyone pay £75 or will there be some concessions e.g. part time, essential car users?
- Possible that staff will park on the side of the road, street in order not to pay – implications for health and safety
- Not fair for the three localities concerned – inequality between the localities.

Suggestions

- Why not open the car parks at night and at weekends to everyone?
- Why not increase the cost according to salary grade?
- Why not increase the cost to a commercial rate of £150?
- Why not do this for every member of staff who parks in workplaces e.g. schools, leisure centres?
- Why not charge £100 in order to use any car park belonging to the Council or any car park in Gwynedd by displaying a staff disk?
- Why not include Councillors also?
- It is more likely that people will be encouraged to share cars.

- It is already happening in many Councils.
- £75 a year is not much if this means saving jobs in the larger plan as a whole.

Results of the vote

Question: how fair is it that the Council should consider this proposal as part of the savings strategy?

	Yes it would be fair	Perhaps	No, not at all
Voluntary sector	0	0	0
Staff members	55	27	18
Residents	0	0	0

Proposal eleven – reduce the contribution towards nursery schools

- Indirectly affects Ti a Fi Circles
- The Ti a Fi and Meithrin circles offer an opportunity for socialising
- Danger that a parent/parents will be isolated
- Need for parents to take responsibility for their children instead of letting other people care for them.

Results of the vote

- Question: how fair is it that the Council should consider this proposal as part of the savings strategy?

	Yes, it would be fair	Perhaps	No, not at all
Voluntary sector	60	20	20
Staff members	0	0	0
Residents	0	0	0

Appendix 1 Feedback comments on the sessions

Further comments and suggestions

- More influence on the Assembly is needed regarding the way grants are allocated.
- I still feel very strongly that there is a need to raise rates even though this is unfashionable
- There is no such thing as a cheap meal – we all have to pay for our services somehow. I would like to pay more taxes.
- As there is a need to cut 2% of income it is not too simplistic to consider cuts across everything.
- Does every member of staff have to get a glossy calendar – not doing this would mean a small saving.
- Later on discuss the future of small schools as part of the agenda.
- Don't cut primary school teachers without sufficient reason.
- Don't close toilets.
- Reduce the number of councillors.
- Reduce grass cutting.
- Don't reduce the maintenance of roads.

Voluntary sector

- More time.
- Information beforehand in order to have more time to consider the proposals.
- Difficult to vote without seeing the full picture and give them fair treatment.
- Concern about the way responses will be used. Lack of faith in the Council.
- Need to discuss more considerations and a need somehow to get a full picture rather than voting on individual matters as we proceed.
- This should have been a full day session so that more options could have been considered.
- Individuals from the third sector had the opportunity to contribute constructively. There is a real need to include the sector in this way in order to create a feeling of ownership of the process.
- No need to pay for two to collect the results of the vote – save money.
- Have more papers beforehand.
- More time to consider all the subjects.
- Further opportunity to discuss the capacity of the community sector to respond to the challenge.
- More time to discuss the proposals fully.
- The morning has been efficiently run but there should be more such meetings in order to have input into the process.

Caernarfon Staff Session

- Thank you very much.
- More time to discuss.
- E-mail to follow.
- More time to discuss as the matters are important and crucial to the lives of some people.
- More details on the recommendations. Previous meeting to decide which recommendations to discuss.
- This should have been an all day session.
- Get to know more about all the proposals going before the Council.

Caernarfon Residents Session

Feedback comments

- It's a nice change for the Council to include local ratepayers.
- More time.
- I would have liked to consider more options, e.g. school closures, number of councillors.
- It was very different from what I expected.
- To what extent did the session achieve its objectives? It depends on how much attention will be paid to the results. Totally if I am not being cynical.
- We were asked to express our concerns only and not our support. This felt a bit negative.
- We did not have the opportunity to make suggestions, e.g. don't publish the News and make paying council rates paper-free. It was all very interesting.
- If we had received the papers beforehand we could have considered more of the suggestions.
- I would have liked to have received the notes before the session.
- Would it have been possible to explain things more fully, e.g. risks and so on?
- More time.
- I would have liked to receive the paperwork beforehand.
- Most of the information was conveyed in a clear way with a full explanation but there was a need for more time to understand the Social Services side of things. Good for you for giving of your time and ideas. I hope we get to know the results.
- Very useful. More people would be willing to accept cuts if they knew the facts.
- Very interesting – I would like to hear more about the savings proposals. Will we hear what you decide?
- Everything fine.
- More time.
- I would like to get feedback on what options were decided upon in the end.

Staff Session - Dolgellau

Feedback comments

- More time – a bit rushed.
- It would be good to have more such sessions.
- Time to discuss all the proposals – more staff representatives also ...
- It would be interesting to see the vote in other parts of the county.
- More notice before a session so that more staff members could attend.
- Where will the concerns/questions following the session be discussed, who will discuss the comments?
- More notice before a session so that more staff members could attend – perhaps a daylong session is required.
- Enable teachers to take part also.
- Discuss more controversial proposals.
- Receive more background and details behind the savings before we have to vote!
- Have a little more background before the meeting.

Dolgellau Residents Session

Comments

- It would have been nice to have more Welsh people in this session.
- More representation for Welsh speakers.
- Gwynedd Council is not duty bound to spend thousands on the Tywyn and Barmouth coastline – it is the responsibility of Westminster!
- More time to discuss properly.
- Congratulations to the Council for consulting in a meaningful and positive way.
- Looking at problems/concerns → look also at advantages.
- More time → to look at other things!
- The order of the items could have been better. The services for older people should have been considered earlier.
- A worthwhile process. What response will we get from the Council?
- More time to discuss more questions. Divide the group into Welsh and English so that the discussion can proceed more quickly.
- Good use of time.
- Because of lack of time, some very important matters were not discussed.
- The presentation was good. The event was successful if all the comments are fully considered!
- This was great idea and a lot was included BUT it was too brief and some very important matters were not discussed.
- Please could you arrange many more of these – but it would be better if it was all in English or all in Welsh.
- More time was needed to discuss more of the subjects that needed attention.
- More interactive sessions like this are needed in order to encourage the participation of Gwynedd residents.
- It is always fair to consider something.... the question should have been: 'Should this policy be realised?'
- Better briefing notes.

Pwllheli Residents Session

Pwllheli Staff

Feedback comments

- Ask beforehand whether there is a need for translation provision. Wasteful to have staff here for no purpose.
- I would have liked to discuss job cuts in Council departments.
- As it was known who was going to be in the session, it is suggested that the need for a translator could have been assessed beforehand.
- More specialist in the workers' field.

Feedback comments

- Time to discuss all the options in the paper.
- More time to discuss more of the questions.
- More detail about fewer matters.
- Better understanding of the net costs including the implications for capital monies and costs arising repeatedly and so on.
- Discuss more controversial issues.
- Try to move more quickly through the questions in order to consider more of them.
- Better instructions on how to reach the location.

- We could have considered more if there had been less talking.
- The time was not effectively managed. I would have liked to go through more slides in a shorter time for each question.
- It is difficult to express an opinion without knowing more – details of the recommendations.