

Report of	Meeting	Date
Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation and Improvement)	Members	4 th February 2008

BUDGET CONSULTATION 2008

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To update Members on the results of the consultation carried out around the draft budget.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

2. That Members determine if any changes to the draft budget should be made as a result of the budget consultation information.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

3. Consultation on the draft budget 2008 was carried out by undertaking a straw poll on the markets to gain a broad understanding of the views of members of the public and a more detailed consultation workshop with members of the Making Chorley Smile panel. In addition, the Council's Overview and Scrutiny panels, but not the committee, have completed their scrutiny.

The results of the consultation were positive, with positive comments about most of the priorities for investment. At the workshop, support was strongest for, increasing the Get Up and Go! activities, improving local neighbourhoods and improving the town centre. More detailed comments were made by the group on each area, and these are outlined in the report.

The views expressed by the Making Chorley Smile panel were mirrored by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny panels, who were keen to see more resources put into neighbourhood working, particularly around street cleansing in rural areas and youth activities in areas where there is limited access to the Council's and CLS leisure facilities.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

(If the recommendations are accepted)

4. N/A

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

5. N/A

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

6. This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Put Chorley at the heart of regional economic development in the Central Lancashire sub-region		Develop local solutions to climate change.	
Improving equality of opportunity and life chances		Develop the Character and feel of Chorley as a good place to live	
Involving people in their communities	✓	Ensure Chorley Borough Council is a performing organization	

BACKGROUND

7. Consulting on the budget, and taking in consideration the views of the public and other stakeholders is an important process in ensuring the Council is able to take account of the views and needs of the community it serves. The consultation that has been undertaken provides information that Members can use when making their decisions in the budget setting process.

This report contains details of the results of the consultation carried out for the 2008 budget cycle. It has included; taking a straw poll in the covered market of what people saw as a priority for Chorley, a workshop with representatives from the Making Chorley Smile panel and meetings with the scrutiny panels.

INTRODUCTION TO CONSULTATION

8. In each public consultation, people were asked to comment on the areas identified for investment. These were:

- Improving your neighbourhood
- Helping organisations work together to improve Chorley
- Open Astley Hall more
- Put on more Get Up and Go! activities
- Invest in more events and tourism
- Helping create more affordable housing
- Improving your town centre, including the markets

The main qualitative and quantitative results have come from a workshop held with 29 members of the Making Chorley Smile Panel on the 30th January. Where appropriate, the views expressed during the consultation with members of the public have been fed into the results.

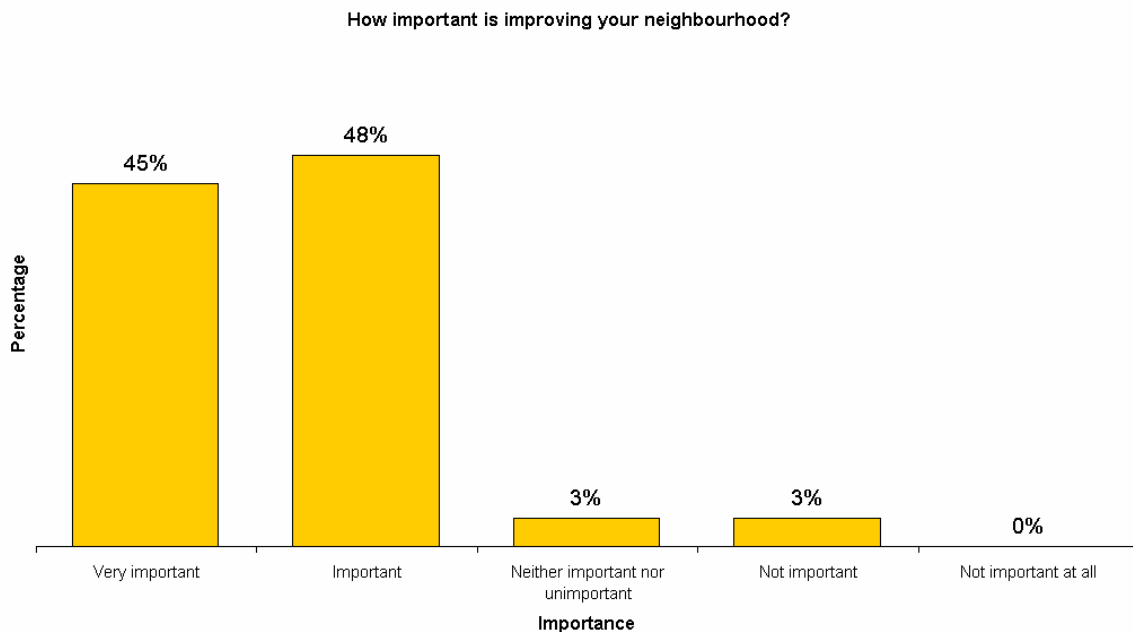
The following section outlines the responses received from the public about each priority investment area. The percentages referred to are a result of voting by the Making Chorley Smile Panel.

9. **Improving your neighbourhood**

93% of the workshop thought that improving their local neighbourhood was either ‘very important’ or ‘important’. This priority was also a popular option during the consultation on the markets, with a large number of people selecting it as a priority.

When asked what they meant when thinking about their ‘neighbourhood’, the panel indicated that they would be talking about the areas within walking distance from their home, and particularly the streets in the immediate vicinity. Those members from more rural areas would normally consider their village to be their ‘neighbourhood’.

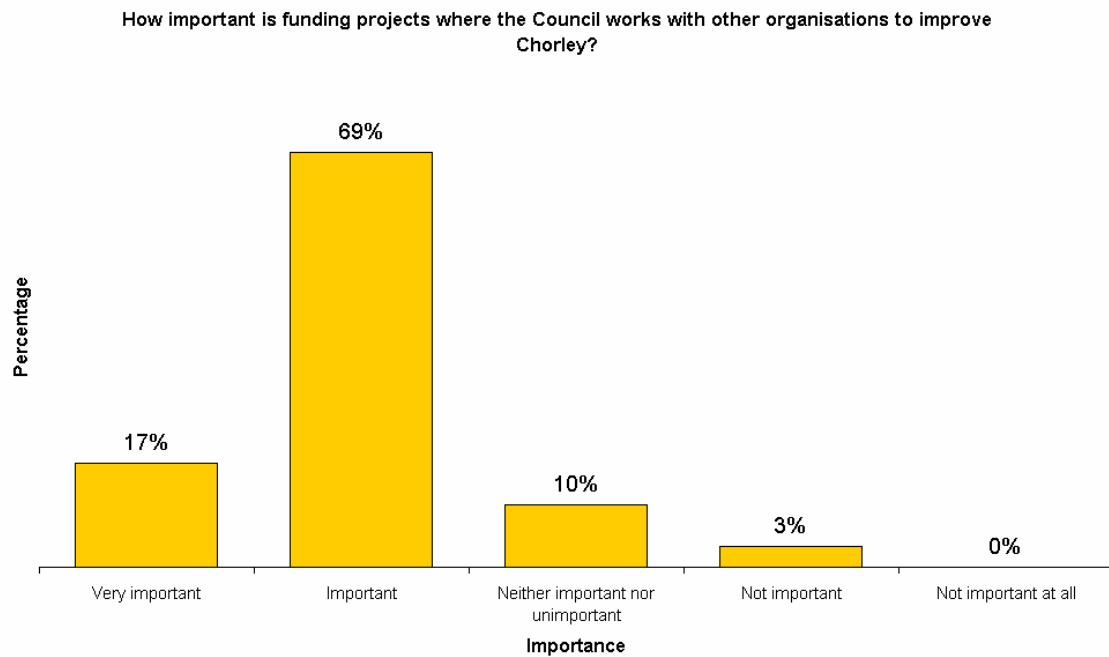
The issues that were identified as important in improving neighbourhoods were largely based around environmental quality (street cleansing and parks and open spaces particularly), activities for young people, community assets and tackling low level anti-social behaviour.



10. **Helping organisations work together to improve Chorley**

86% of the panel thought that investment in this area was ‘very important’ or ‘important’, although a majority only thought it was ‘important’, a weaker endorsement of this priority than was seen with neighbourhood working.

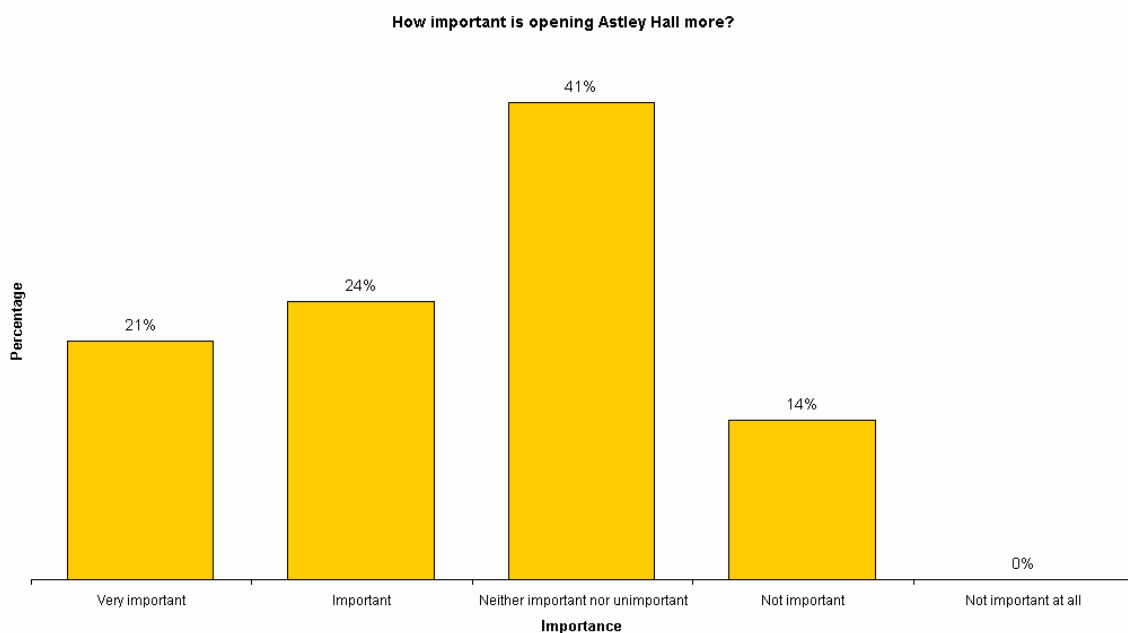
The workshop group did not understand why the partners on the Local Strategic Partnership could not work together without funding being made available to them. In addition, there was some concern that the success or otherwise of projects may not be fully monitored and that the bodies receiving money may not be held to account. One comment was that the work of the LSP needed to be better communicated.



11. Open Astley Hall more

45% of participants in the workshop indicated that they thought that opening Astley Hall more should be a priority. A majority (41%) thought that it was neither important nor unimportant. A similar message came from the consultation carried out on the market, with only a small number supporting this as a priority.

The workshop group emphasised that they thought the work in Astley Park was positive, and that Astley Hall was an asset for the area. They felt, however, that with limited resources, it was not a priority. They particularly felt that the provision of activities for young people should not be detrimentally affected by increased provision of Astley Hall.

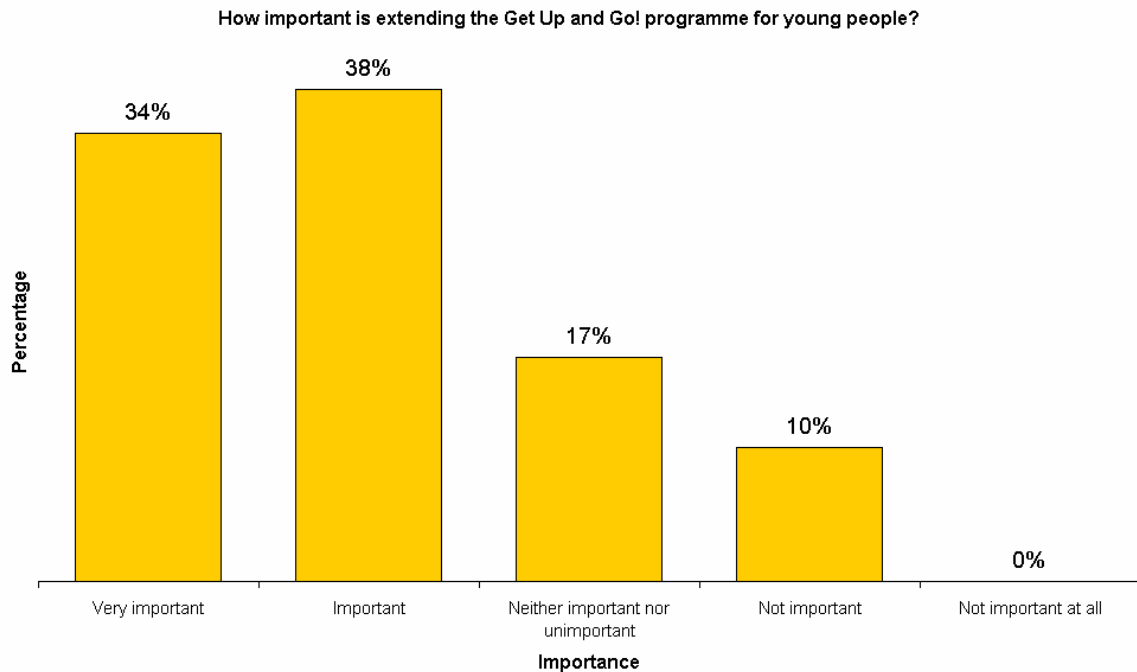


12. Put on more get Up and Go! activities

The panel felt strongly that the Get Up and Go! programme could have a positive impact on young people and, in addition, help to tackle anti-social behaviour by providing diversionary activities. The programme needs to be developed to target those older age

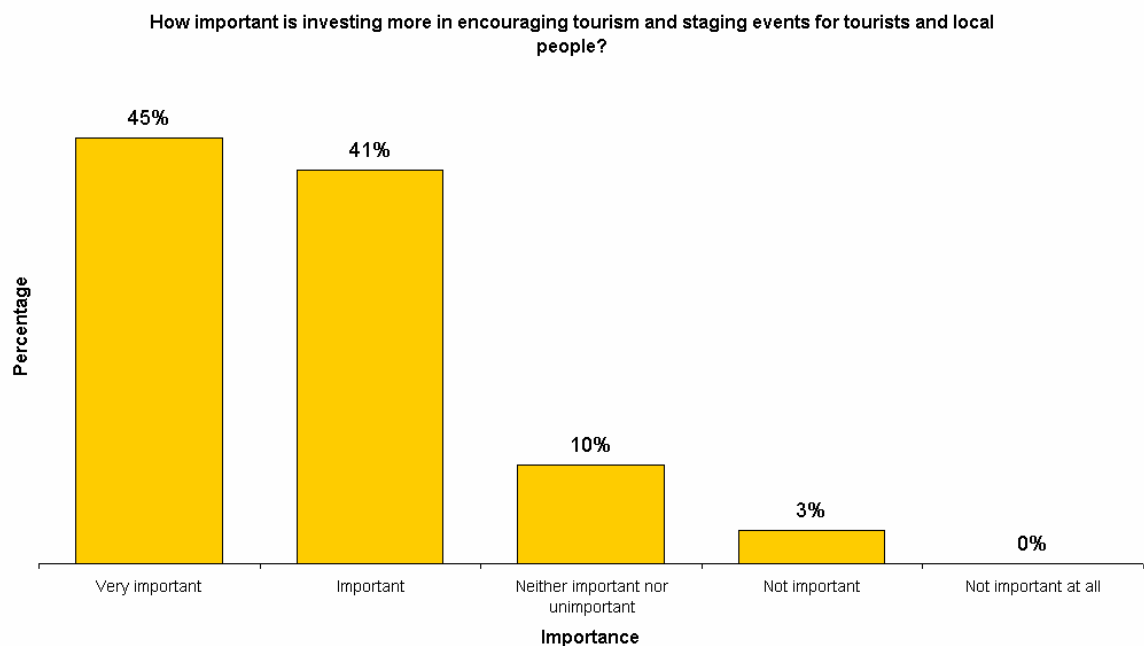
groups and rural areas. If the programme is to be successful, it was felt that young people need to be consulted with to ensure that the activities available are attractive and suitable for them. In addition, the programme should be sustained, rather than just offering short term diversionary activities.

The straw poll on the markets also showed a strong support for the provision and extension of Get Up and Go! activities.



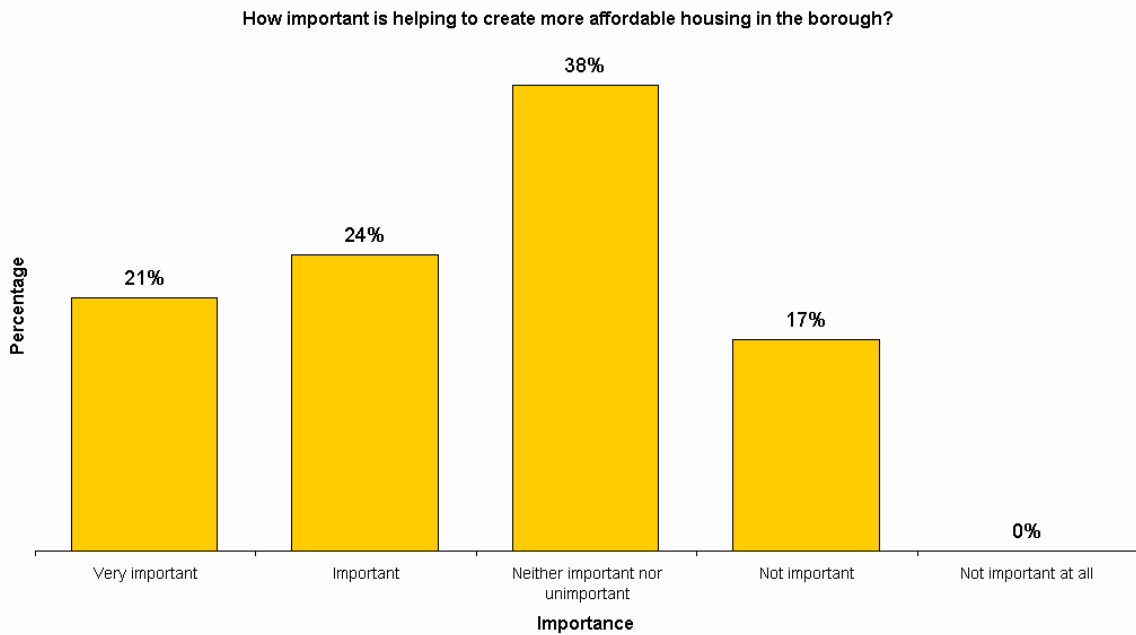
13. Invest in more events and tourism

The workshop group supported the marketing of Chorley, particularly if it is linked to securing more inward investment and jobs creation. The comments made by the group centred around the need for Chorley to be better marketed to attract more visitors, but that this need needed to be balanced to ensure that facilities such as car parking, could cope with additional visitor numbers.



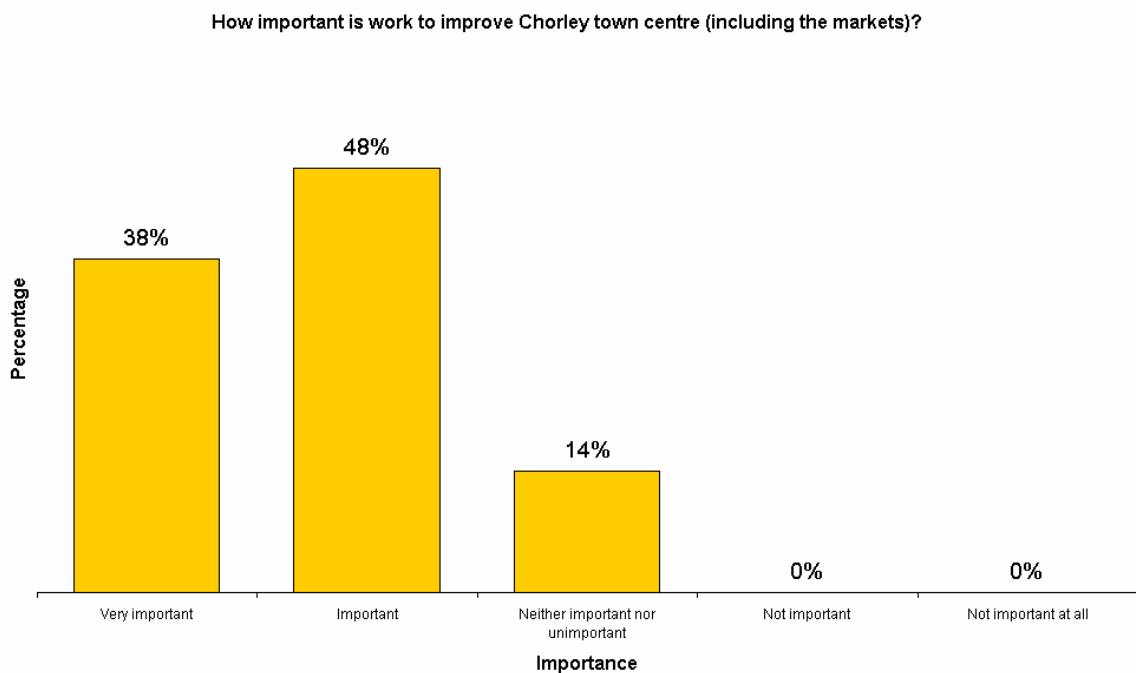
14. **Help create more affordable housing**

The group was supportive of the proposal, but felt that they would need more information about how the proposal would work. For example, they would need information about where housing would be located and what type of affordable housing is being referred to. For these reasons, there was generally less support for investment in this area.



15. **Improve the town centre, including the markets**

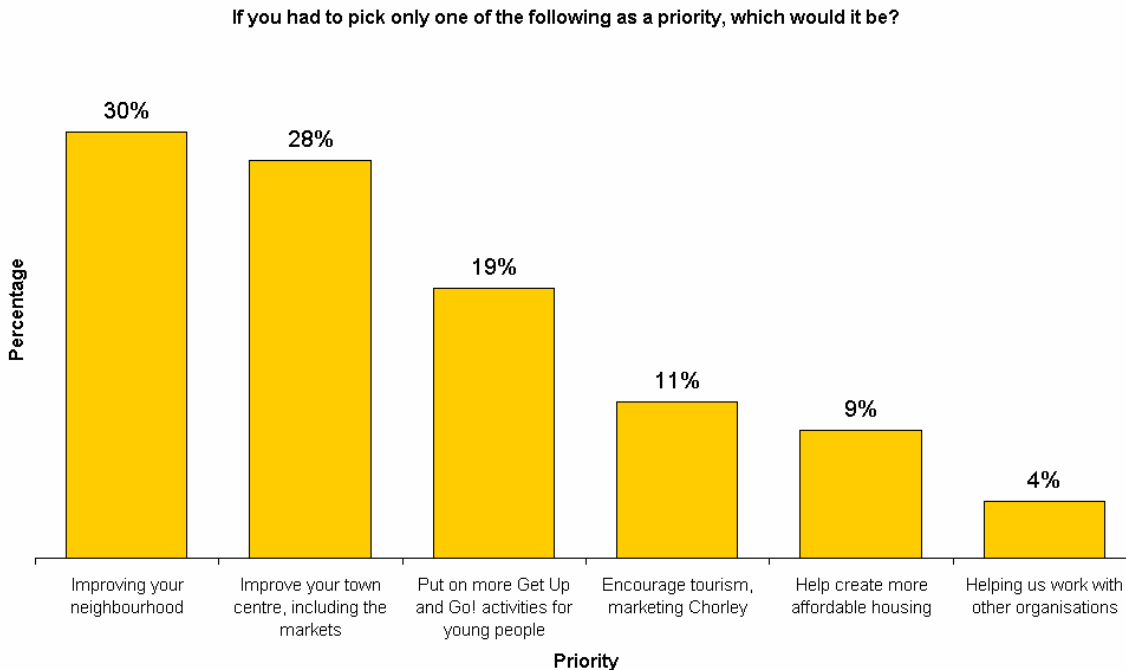
There was general support from the consultation workshop for developing and improving the town centre. The group felt it was important that the Council are aware of the need to retain the balance between attracting new, chain shops to Chorley and retaining its distinctive character and shopping experience.



16. Top Priority

At the Making Chorley Smile panel consultation workshop, the group were asked to selected one priority that they saw as the most important. The majority of the group felt that improving their neighbourhood would be the top priority, if they had to choose one.

The graph below illustrates the combined responses from the consultation workshop and the straw poll on the markets.



17. Conclusion

Many of those involved in the consultation around the 2008 budget expressed satisfaction that the Council was trying to ensure that the views of the public were taken into account when decisions were been made around the budget and making additional investment in priority areas.

Generally, most support was received, from both the market consultation and the workshop, for the work around improving local neighbourhoods, improving Chorley town centre and further developing the Get Up and Go! programme of activities, particularly in rural areas and for older age groups.

IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

18. This report has implications in the following areas and the relevant Corporate Directors' comments are included:

Finance	✓	Customer Services	
Human Resources		Equality and Diversity	
Legal		No significant implications in this area	

COMMENTS OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION AND IMPROVEMENT)

19. As this report will influence the budget setting process, it has financial implications. The implications of any decisions made by Members will be covered in budget setting meetings.

GARY HALL
ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION AND IMPROVEMENT)

There are no background papers to this report.

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
Chris Sinnott	5337	31 st January 2008	Budget Consultation Report