

## Budget Proposals 2016-17: Pang and Kennet Project

### Summary of Feedback Received and Key Findings

---

#### Why we consulted?

Over the last four years we have had to make savings of £23m because we've received less money from central government. We have done this by becoming more efficient at what we do, by reducing some of our administrative functions and increasing our income. Throughout this period we have done our best to protect front line services.

We now have to find another £20m over the next four years, with almost £11m to be found in 2016/17. Much of this will come from further efficiencies within the council, but £4.6m will have to come from services that will impact the public.

In order to inform the budget setting process for 2016/17 we published a list of those proposals which would likely have a direct impact on service users, and sought the views from those affected and interested:

- to understand the likely impact
- to identify any measures to reduce their impact
- to explore any possible alternatives

#### Approach

All the proposals were published on the council's website on 3 November 2015 with feedback requested by 14 December 2015. Respondents were directed to a [central index page](#), with a video message from the Chief Executive outlining the background to the exercise.

Information relating to this proposal was linked directly from this index page. This contained more detailed information on what was specifically proposed, information on what we thought the impact might be, as well as what else we had considered in developing and arriving at this proposal. Feedback was then invited through an online form and through a dedicated email address.

Each individual budget proposal was placed on our [Consultation Portal](#) which automatically notified those registered that an exercise had been launched. Members of the West Berkshire community panel (around 800 people) and local stakeholder charities, representative groups and partner organisations were also emailed directly, notifying them of the exercise and inviting their contributions.

Heads of Service made direct contact with those organisations affected by any of the budget proposals prior to them being made publically available.

A press release was issued on the same date, as well as publicised through Facebook and Twitter.

## Budget Proposals 2016-17: Pang and Kennet Project

### Summary of Feedback Received and Key Findings

---

#### Background

The Pang and Kennet are chalk rivers flowing through West Berkshire. The council provides a contribution of £14,000 per annum to the Pang and Kennet Rivers Project. The Project seeks to protect and enhance the health of the rivers and the biodiversity that they support.

West Berkshire Council's financial contribution will be withdrawn and we will no longer have any financial involvement with the Pang and Kennet River Project. This will save £14,000 per annum.

#### Summary of Key Points

Five responses received in total; two from members of Pangbourne Parish Council, one from Tilehurst Parish Council and two from residents.

The main concern was the loss of funding to keep this project going and viable and the loss of the ongoing biodiversity benefits that it has achieved. This project is a good link with the agricultural community, and therefore a key component of flood elevation and advice to farmers on flooding issues.

**1. What do you think we should be aware of in terms of how this proposal might impact people?**

There will be an impact on the agricultural community who were a recipient of advice, and also fishermen who rely on the biodiversity of the river.

**2. Do you feel that this proposal will affect particular individuals more than others, and if so, how do you think we might help with this?**

The anglers, mainly, but the health of the river Pang is important to the whole community.

**3. Do you have any suggestions as to how this service might be delivered in a different way? If so, please provide details.**

No suggestions.

**4. Is there any way that you, or your organisation, can contribute in helping to alleviate the impact of this proposal? If so, please provide details of how you can help.**

Pangbourne PC stated they might be able to make a modest contribution.

**5. Any further comments?**

Correspondent's comment:

'I have strong concerns about the withdrawal of funding from the very successful Pang and Kennet project. The Council admits that this could lead to the termination of the project, with adverse effects on biodiversity along a watercourse that traverses the whole District of West Berkshire.'

## Budget Proposals 2016-17: Pang and Kennet Project

### Summary of Feedback Received and Key Findings

---

With the years that have been spent clearing the river banks, if this was no longer done it would have a knock on effect in the long term and could potentially cause flooding. Tilehurst Parish Council would question who would pay for the services required during and after flooding had occurred. It is felt that the saving of £14,000 would be a false economy and would object to this proposal.'

This is a nice rather than necessary budget allowance and should be cut. There are other agencies, interest groups, who would raise the alarm if water standards dropped.

### Conclusion

Having spoken to the Pang and Kennet Project they were resigned to receiving no further contributions and that the project would cease to exist this year.

**Please note:** *In order to allow everyone who wished the opportunity to contribute, feedback was not sampled. Therefore this wasn't a quantitative, statistically valid exercise. It was neither the premise, purpose, nor within the capability of the exercise, to determine the overall community's level of support, or views on the proposals, with any degree of confidence.*

*The feedback captured therefore should be seen in the context of 'those who responded', rather than reflective of the wider community.*

*All the responses have been provided verbatim as an appendix to this report. Whilst this summary seeks to distil the key, substantive points made, it should also be read in conjunction with the more detailed verbatim comments to ensure a full, rounded perspective of the views and comments are considered.*

Gary Lugg  
Head of Planning & Countryside  
8 January 2016  
Version 1 (CB)