

Budget Proposals 2016-17: Shopmobility

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.

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Background

Shopmobility is a network of locally based wheelchair and scooter loan centres. It provides a service for people who have permanent or temporary mobility difficulties. It can be used for shopping trips as well as business and leisure visits to town centres. Shopmobility facilities are available, not only to the permanently disabled, but also to those whose mobility is restricted by age, accident or illness, whether temporary or for a long period.

The Newbury Scheme is managed by the Volunteer Centre. The scheme operates six days a week (Monday to Saturday) 9:30am to 4pm. A charge of £3 is made for a scooter and annual membership is available at £10.

The council currently provides £26,000 of funding towards this service.

The proposal is to reduce the budget by £12,000.

Summary of Key Points

There were 17 individual responses received in relation to the savings proposal. Of the 17 responses 9 were from non users of the service. 5 of the responses were from users of the service and three did not indicate either way.

Two of the responses were from organisations. These were West Berkshire Neurological Alliance and Aim to Fly UK.

The main comments received to this proposal was that it would directly impact on the elderly, infirm and disabled and would deprive them of the independence that the Council promotes through many of its policies. All those responding considered that the service was valuable and added value to the local economy in terms of making the town centre accessible to those with disability problems. A number of those responding suggested that the Town Centre offering would be diminished if this reduction in funding were to be taken.

1. Are you, or anyone you care for, a user of this service?

4 of the individuals responding to this proposal were users of the service.

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

The main concern about this funding reduction was that it could potentially deprive some vulnerable people of their independence and of the opportunity to lead normal lives such as being able to shop in Newbury Town Centre.

3. 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?

No other comments were raised.

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Conclusion

It is clear from the responses received that this service is very well thought of and used by those that have a disability or mobility issues. Given that the current funding for this service is Public Health grant, which has been ring fenced for the next two years, it is suggested that the Council continue to fund this service for the next two years and to review this thereafter.

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.

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