

## Budget Proposals 2016-17: Waste Management – Street Cleansing

### Summary of Feedback Received and Key Findings

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#### 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**

Street cleansing and litter collection is a statutory requirement upon the authority to keep the public highway free of litter, rubbish and refuse.

The proposal is to reduce the amount of street cleansing service provided including:

- reducing the weed spraying from three times per year to two;
- reducing the frequency of cleansing around the mini recycling centres;
- reducing the frequency of washing some litter bins from twice to once a year;
- reducing the frequency of litter picking or street cleansing

This will save approximately £100,000.

#### **Summary of Key Points**

The proposal received a total of 17 responses; 16 specific responses (including four from town / parish councils and one from another organisation) and one general response.

Responses were received from Parish Councils in Burghfield, Holybrook, Lambourn, and Tilehurst and the WBC Transport Team.

The key concerns raised were that the proposal will result in an unacceptable level of cleanliness, reducing the quality of life in the district. Concern that litter will increase, litter bins will overflow, leading to an increase in vermin, health hazards and an unsightly, dirty district which will deter visitors and impact on local business.

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

Concerns included:

- The proposal will result in an unacceptable level of cleanliness, reducing the quality of life in the district (or particular parish)
- Concern that litter will increase, litter bins will overflow, leading to an increase in vermin, health hazards and an unsightly, dirty district which will deter visitors and impact on local business
- Reduced weed spraying will create damage to the highways as weeds grow in the fabric of the highway and make it more difficult to properly cleanse the streets
- Reduced street cleansing will result in more detritus being washed down into the drainage system creating more blockages and putting more pressure on the gully cleansing service
- The proposal will lead to an increase in complaints which is counter-productive as it will waste valuable officer time

#### **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?**

One response was received responding to this question which stated that areas which have a higher percentage of residents renting and in social housing are particularly vulnerable to an increase in the instability of the neighbourhood. Therefore a reduction in litter picking and street cleansing in these areas may lead to further anti-social behaviour.

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

Suggestions included:

- Local volunteers, unemployed or Community Payback offenders provide the service
- Local shops could sponsor litter bins outside their premises
- Encourage Parish Councils to get volunteer litter pickers / Local communities to run service themselves
- Parish Councils raise funds through the Council tax for contractors or to fund a Community support officer with the power to raise fixed penalty notices
- Providing physically larger litter bins in high pedestrian areas and more litter bins in areas where there are few
- Provide more education to encourage the public to dispose of litter carefully
- Instead of spending money clearing up litter it should be policed and penalties issues

**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.**

We received one offer of help with community clear ups from one individual. Another individual stated that they already assist with litter clear up.

**5. Any further comments?**

None

### Conclusion

The key concerns raised were that the proposal will result in an unacceptable level of cleanliness, reducing the quality of life in the district. Concern that litter will increase, litter bins will overflow, leading to an increase in vermin, health hazards and an unsightly, dirty district which will deter visitors and impact on local business.

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***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.*

Jackie Ward  
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