

Budget Proposals 2016-17 Phase 2: All2gether

Consultation Summary Report

Why We Consulted?

From 3 November to 14 December 2015, we consulted on the need to make £10.8m of savings in 2016/17. £4.6m of these savings affected frontline services. The consultation generated over 2,500 responses and covered [47 individual budget proposals](#).

Shortly before Christmas, however, the Government began a [public consultation](#) on local government funding and proposed to reduce our funding by 44% (Revenue Support Grant). This announcement was totally unexpected, and we were faced with the challenge of finding an additional £7.6m of savings, whilst also considering increases in Council Tax.

In order to inform this process, 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 15 February 2016 with feedback requested by 7 March 2016.

Respondents were directed to a [central index page](#), which outlined the overall background to the exercise, and provided links to each of the individual proposals.

Each individual page included further details on the specifics of what the proposal contained and what we thought the impact might be, along with any other elements we had taken into account.

Feedback was then invited through an online form, face to face meeting with All2gether 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 publicly available.

A press release was issued on the same date, and was further publicised through the council's Facebook and Twitter accounts.

The period in which we invited responses was reduced to three weeks in this case, instead of the usual six. This is because the funding announcement from government was both unexpected and very late in the financial year. It was not possible to extend the consultation period without negatively impacting the delivery of the 2016 council budget. In order to minimise the impact of this shorter timescale, we undertook extra activities to publicise the consultation in addition to our usual channels. This included making potential consultees

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aware of the impending exercise much earlier than normal via press releases and associated PR activities.

Proposal Background

All2gether is a not-for-profit Community Interest Company supporting minority communities in West Berkshire. All2gether seek to:

- Build trust and understanding between community groups and statutory service providers by working together and utilising joint resources
- Influence and support community safety initiatives
- Celebrate the ethnic/cultural and spiritual diversity in West Berkshire

The council currently provides £10,000 in annual funding.

Proposal Details

To reduce the funding provided to All2gether by £5,000 (50%) in 2016/17. It is proposed that the remaining funding will be removed for 2017/18.

Consultation Response

Number of Responses

In total, 31 responses were received, 17 of which included comments. Of those who responded:

- 29 were individuals
- One was a group / organisation
 - Newbury Family Counselling Service
- One was a Town/Parish Council
 - Tilehurst Parish Council

22 responses were from non-users of the service.

Summary of Main Points

Newbury Family Counselling Service considered that this was a service which needed to be retained because of the nature of their work and because they were the only organisation providing the services referred to above.

The majority of the comments from non-users of the service considered that the council should not be funding All2gether given the current financial climate and the challenges facing the council.

Some of those responding considered that other charities and community groups should help fund All2gether.

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Summary of Responses by Question

1. Are you, or someone you care for, a user of the service?

11 responses were from non-users of the service. The Newbury Family Counselling Service used and valued the service.

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

Some of those responding considered that minority groups, per se, might be impacted without the support of All2gether.

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 specific groups were mentioned by any of those responding.

4. Do you have any suggestions as to how this service might be delivered in a different way, whilst still making the same level of savings? If so, please provide details of any alternative proposals.

Many of those responding considered that other charities and religious institutions should support minority communities. Some of those responding suggested that other charities and community groups should help fund All2gether.

5. 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.

There were no suggestions coming forward from those responding as to how they might mitigate the impact of this proposal.

6. Any further comments?

There were no further comments from those that responded.

Officer conclusion and recommendation can be found in the associated Overview of Responses and Recommendations document.

Andy Day
Head of Service
Strategic Support
11 March 2016

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.

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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.