

## Budget Proposals 2016-17 Phase 2: Community Council for Berkshire

### Consultation Summary Report

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#### 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, a telephone conversation with CCB 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

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consultation in addition to our usual channels. This included making potential consultees aware of the impending exercise much earlier than normal via press releases and associated PR activities.

#### **Proposal Background**

Community Council for Berkshire (CCB) is an independent charity with experience in community development work. Their overall aim is to support communities in Berkshire to thrive by providing information, advice, support, training and personal development to individuals, groups and other organisations.

The council currently provides annual funding of £6,800.

#### **What is the proposal?**

To reduce this grant by £3,400 (50%) in 2016/17. The remaining funding will be removed for 2017/18.

#### **Consultation Response**

##### Number of Responses

In total, 25 responses were received, 23 of which included comments. Of those who responded:

- 14 from individuals
- Six from groups/organizations
  - CCB
  - Purley on Thames Memorial Hall
  - A representative from Shaw Village Hall
  - Streatley Parish Plan Group
  - Leckhamstead Village Hall Management Committee
  - Aldermaston Parish Hall committee
- Five from Town/Parish Councils
  - Stanford Dingley Parish Council
  - Boxford Parish Council
  - Bucklebury Parish Council
  - Compton Parish Council
  - Beedon Parish Council

Four responses were from non-users of the service.

##### Summary of Main Points

The main issue to be raised was the ability of CCB to be able to sign post individuals and groups to other similar groups in order to share experiences and ideas related to their communities. One of those responding felt that in the current financial climate this was a “luxury” service.

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CCB play a vital role in negotiating the price of domestic oil for several parishes. CCB also play a key role in providing advice and support on managing and maintaining village halls.

Given that CCB were a Berkshire wide organisation, CCB should look across the County to secure other sources of funding.

#### Summary of Responses by Question

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

13 of those responding 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 point raised was that the proposal, if agreed, would lead to an absence of a single organisation that could help individuals and groups to share ideas and provide advice and guidance on many local community related issues.

**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?**

One response considered that anyone who was a trustee would be disadvantaged by the loss of this service in terms of the help and guidance that CCB provided to that part of the community.

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

One response considered that having more online advice and support would help to mitigate the impact.

**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.**

One response suggested that CCB should not pay people expenses for helping out with workshops etc.

**6. Any further comments?**

No further comments were forthcoming.

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

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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.*