

## Budget Proposals 2016-17 Phase 2: Community Furniture Project (CFP)

### 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, from a face to face meeting with Community Furniture Project 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**

The Newbury Community Resource Centre runs the Community Furniture Project (CFP) based in Newbury. As well as running furniture and horticultural projects the CFP provides support and accredited training in practical skills to over 300 volunteers and trainees from all backgrounds, many of them requiring high levels of support due to learning disabilities, learning difficulties, mental health issues or young people with behavioural issues.

The council currently provides £11,246 in annual funding.

#### **Proposal Details**

To reduce the funding provided to the CFP by £5,623 (50%) in 2016/17. It is proposed that the remaining funding will be removed for 2017/18.

#### **Consultation Response**

##### Number of Responses

In total, 28 responses were received, 22 of which included comments. Of those who responded:

- 26 from individuals
- One from groups/organisations
  - Unison West Berkshire
- One from Town/Parish Councils
  - Tilehurst Parish Council

11 responses were from non-users of the service.

##### Summary of Main Points

Those that responded considered that the Community Furniture Project (CFP) provided an excellent and cost effective service in relation to the furniture which it reclaimed and then redistributed this to many people that would otherwise be unable to afford it.

Other comments referred to the excellent work which the Furniture Project did in providing opportunities for vulnerable people to get back into work.

##### Summary of Responses by Question

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

Eight of those responding were users of the service whilst five were not.

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

CFP provide a two tiered pricing structure one which was discounted for people on benefits. This meant that many people could purchase or replace furniture which might not be the case if CFP were not able to operate this service.

**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?**

Those responding considered that this proposal would impact on the vulnerable and particularly those on low incomes or benefits. Furthermore, some of those responding considered that those vulnerable individuals which are offered work opportunities might lose this opportunity in the future.

**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.**

Two responses suggested that CFP should approach Greenham Common Trust to see whether they would be prepared to fund them.

**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.**

No suggestions were offered as to how the impact might be mitigated.

**6. Any further comments?**

There were no other comments that were relevant to this proposal.

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.*

*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.*