

Budget Proposals 2016-17 Phase 2: Trading Standards, Environmental Health and Licensing

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 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

West Berkshire Council's Trading Standards, Environmental Health and Licensing services are delivered jointly with Wokingham Borough Council.

All the current services are provided because they're either a statutory function, or directly support the provision of a statutory function, and any changes to the level of service may increase the risk of us failing to deliver our statutory functions.

Proposal Details

We are looking to change the way we deal with enquiries into the service by early identification of the risks and impact on residents and prioritising actions. This would save the council £160,000, phased over a three year period.

The initial saving in 2016/17 would be £50,000. This is in addition to the savings already subject to the public consultation in Phase One.

In order to minimise the risks associated with reducing performance, a framework for prioritisation will be introduced. This will use a form of resource allocation based on a range of factors, such as demand and severity of a problem.

Trading Standards has been operating a similar model for some time, but for reasons other than the specific intention of reducing performance in relation to statutory functions. It will be a new approach for Environmental Health and Licensing services.

Consultation Response

Number of Responses

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

- Six from individuals
- One from groups/organisations
 - Unison

One response was from a non-user of the service.

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Summary of Main Points

Two responses agreed with this proposal, one response asked if further shared services could be considered, one raised concerns over risk to the community and the council's legal position, one was concerned about compulsory redundancy and the last was an expression of concern of the risk.

Summary of Responses by Question

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

Four respondents identified themselves as users of the service

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

One expressed concern about safeguarding the community and another felt that more shared services could be explored.

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 stated that they thought people most at risk will be affected.

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.

No suggestions were given.

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 given.

6. Any further comments?

Concern over the risk this proposal created was expressed, the legality of the proposal was questioned and a request that compulsory redundancy would be a last resort was made by the Union.

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

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Manager
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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.