

Overview of Responses and Recommendations

Budget Proposals 16/17 Phase Two: Theatres		Paul James – Culture Manager	24 March 2016 Version 2 (Executive/Council)
Proposal:	<p>To reduce the funding provided to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corn Exchange (Newbury) Trust Ltd by £136,000 to a payment of £174,000 • The Watermill Theatre Ltd by £14,000 to £18,000 		
Total budget 15/16:	£341,400	Recommended officer saving 16/17:	£150,000 (44%)
Initial proposed saving 16/17:	£150,000 (44%)	Final recommendation to Executive/Council:	To proceed with this savings proposal, but make £56,000 of transitional funding available in 2016/17
No. of responses:	<p>In total, 3,224 responses were received, 1,619 of which included comments. Of those who responded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2,894 were individuals • 241 were from representatives of 22 groups/organisations • Three were Town/Parish Councils • One was a District Councillor <p>296 responses were from non-users of the service.</p>		
Key issues raised:	<p>All respondents expressed concerns about reductions in cultural provision for residents and visitors to West Berkshire including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reductions in education and outreach activity for young people, older people and people with disabilities provided by the Watermill Theatre and the Corn Exchange. • The budget reduction for the Corn Exchange destabilising the organisation and making it unviable in its current form. • The potential negative impact on the evening economy in Newbury town centre. 		
Equality issues:	No issues were raised during the consultation, that weren't already included in the EqIA stage one.		

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Suggestions for reducing the impact on service users:	Suggestion	Council response
	<p>Note: there were more 3,224 responses to this consultation and it is not possible to list all the suggestions for reducing the impact here. An assessment has been carried out and none of the suggestions are likely to mitigate the impact (on the Corn Exchange in particular) due to the size of the proposed reduction and the short period of time they have to plan before the beginning of the new financial year in April 2016.</p> <p>The two main proposals for mitigation are as follows:</p>	
	<p>Increasing ticket prices at the Corn Exchange for all events or for some premium events to subsidise others.</p>	<p>As the Corn Exchange's response points out, increasing ticket prices will have little impact on mitigating the reduction in funding as it retains only 20p in £1 of ticket revenue and seating capacity is limited to 400.</p>
	<p>Either not make this proposed reduction in funding within the current Service Level Agreements with the theatres OR to spread the reduction across several financial years to allow the theatres to develop other income and investment.</p>	<p>The council's Phase Two budget reduction proposals are in response to a 44% reduction in the Revenue Support Grant from Government announced in late December. This requires the council to reduce its spending by a further £7.4m in addition to the Phase One savings of £10.6m already planned for 2016-17.</p> <p>The Government has granted the council £1.6m in transition funding in 2016/17 which members may use to reduce the impact of some of the proposals. The Corn Exchange has provided a counter-proposal to mitigate this.</p>
Alternative options for applying the saving in this area:	Suggestion	Council response
	<p>No suggestions were received that have not already been considered</p>	
Suggestions for how others may help contribute:	<p>No suggestions were forthcoming that mitigate the impact of the proposal.</p>	

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Officer conclusion and recommendation as a result of the responses:

The Corn Exchange has submitted a counter proposal which is for a £80,000 reduction in 16/17, £92,000 in 17/18 and £102,000 saving in 18/19, giving a total 3 year saving of £274,000 a difference of £134,000 against the total WBC saving.

It is recommended that our original proposal be progressed but that transitional funding of £56,000 is allocated for 2016/17.

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