
Phase 1 Budget Consultation 2016/17 - Supporting Information

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 This report provides feedback on the results of Phase 1 of the public consultation exercise undertaken in relation to the 2016/17 budget. This report provides information on the total number of responses received to the consultation and details of the responses for each savings proposal and the themes of those responses.
- 1.2 This report also highlights those areas where organisations have made “counter” proposals in response to the question asked within the consultation about “what can you do to help mitigate the impact of this proposal?”
- 1.3 The report also looks at those savings proposals which are funded by the public health grant which has been ring fenced for a further two years.
- 1.4 The Council launched its public consultation on its 2016/17 budget on 3 November 2015. The consultation ran for 6 weeks and concluded on 14 December 2015. A total of 2458 responses were received to the 47 individual savings proposals. Approximately 1,000 of these responses were received in the last week of the consultation and required a great deal of work to make sure that all responses were entered on to the system.
- 1.5 A spreadsheet (Appendix B) proposes a recommendation for each of the 47 individual savings proposals. A summary of the total number of responses to each of the proposals is also set out in Appendix C. Appendices D and E provide a summary and overview of the responses received to each of the proposals. A further spreadsheet (Appendix F) is also attached which provides the Equality Impact Assessments, verbatim comments and summary of responses for each proposal.
- 1.6 As already stated there were 47 public facing savings proposals for 2016/17 compared to 18 in 2014/15 and 2015/16. The scale of the consultation was therefore significantly different compared to the last two years. The total value of the public facing savings proposals was £4.6m. The consultation was launched with a video of the Chief Executive explaining the financial challenges faced by the Council.
- 1.7 The 47 individual savings proposals were published on the Council’s consultation finder database with information disseminated to all registered consultees. The proposals were also e mailed round to around 900 members of the community panel as well information being posted on Facebook and Twitter accounts. A press release was also issued drawing attention to the public consultation exercise.
- 1.8 All of the organisations impacted by the proposals were also contacted prior to the consultation exercise going live so were aware of the proposals and the potential impact on them.

- 1.9 The consultation asked the following questions:
1. What would be the impact on you or your community?
 2. What can you do to help mitigate this impact?
- 1.10 The consultation exercise generated a great deal of feedback from the public . Where organisations have made counter proposals these are set out in the summaries and distilled further in Section 2 of this report.
- 1.11 Section 3 deals with those savings proposals currently funded by the public health grant and makes recommendations on those public facing proposals which should be progressed given the need to save 2.2% of this budget in 2016/17.
- 1.12 Section 4 deals with the Equality Impact Assessment aspects of the savings proposals and details the four outcomes which are possible arising from the public consultation.
- 1.13 At the Executive on 11 February 2016 three petitions and a letter were presented requesting the Council to reconsider its proposals to reduce funding in the following areas:
- (i) Short Breaks for Children - The petition contained 3694 signatures.
 - (ii) 143 bus service in Purley and Pangbourne - The petition contained 253 signatures.
 - (iii) 143 bus service in Basildon - The petition contained 352 signatures.
- 1.14 The letter was from the Pangbourne and Whitchurch Sustainability Group supporting the sentiments of the two petitions relating to the 143 bus service.

2. Counter Proposals

- 2.1 A number of “counter “proposals have been suggested by organisations impacted by some of these proposals and these are summarised below:
- (i) CCTV - This service currently costs the Council £224,000 annually. In response to the consultation, Newbury Town Council working with Newbury BID, Thames Valley Police are developing a proposal which will hopefully see a CCTV system being retained in Newbury. Thatcham, Hungerford Town Councils Lambourn and Theale Parish Councils are also considering whether to develop their own bespoke CCTV service.
 - (ii) Empowering West Berkshire - EWB are the umbrella organisation for the voluntary and community sector (VCS). The £50,000 currently goes towards the employment of 1.5fte. All other costs are currently met by Greenham Common Trust.

EWB has made a “counter” proposal to the Council and has agreed to take a funding reduction of £10,000 per annum making the overall cost of operating an umbrella organisation for the VCS £40,000 a year. EWB has committed to securing other funding to bridge this gap. The responses received to this proposal show the value of the organisation and the help that they have provided across the sector.

- (iii) Home to School Transport - The Council currently spends a total of £246,400 on 366 pupils. Having regard to the responses received the following options have been proposed by officers:
 - (a) The Council continues to operate its home to school transport services but for those pupils whose entitlement to free transport has ceased a seat could be offered on a Fare Payer basis.
 - (b) School or community-led bus service - The Council could encourage the schools or community to set up appropriate bus services.
 - (c) Mortimer to Willink Route - The Council could undertake appropriate infrastructure works such as signage, drainage, vegetation maintenance and purchase school lockers to make it easier for pupils to walk to school.
- (iv) Learning Independence for Travel – It has been suggested that the Council retains £40,000 of its planned £114,000 reduction in order to be able to establish a remodelled service with the aim of reducing the SEN home to school transport costs.
- (v) Public Transport - The methodology used to propose the savings was based on the highest cost per passenger journey. It is suggested that this be revised and remodelled on the basis of existing passenger usage rather than cost.

3. Public Health Grant

- 3.1 The Public Health grant for 2015/16 was £4,819k. The Council received a new budget in October 2015 for Health Visitors of £919k making a total public health grant of £5,738k. This has been reduced in year by £355k to £5,383k.
- 3.2 In 2016/17 the Council will receive the remainder of the Health Visitors' budget ie a further £919k increasing its base to £6,301k. The Council is anticipating a reduction of 2.2% to this budget in 2016/17 (£139k) and a further 2.5% reduction in 2017/18 (£154k).
- 3.3 Of the 47 public facing savings proposals 11 are currently funded by the public health grant. The Government has recently confirmed that this grant will be ring fenced for a further two years, however, a reduction of £139,000 (2.2%) to this grant will be required in 2016/17 and £154,000 (2.5%) in 2017/18.
- 3.4 Having looked at the responses received to the savings proposals and having regard to the need to make savings in the public health grant of £139,000 in 2016/17 it is proposed that the following public facing savings proposals be progressed.
 - (i) Eat 4 Health - £5,000
 - (ii) Feel Good Fortnight - £10,000
 - (iii) Oral Health Promotion - £24,000
 - (iv) Physical Activity in Children - £16,000
 - (v) Smoking Cessation Service - "Smoke Free Life" - £32,000

- (vi) Thames Valley Positive Support - £7,000
- (vii) The Edge - £14,000
- (v) Youth Offending Team - £6,000

3.5 The balance of the savings required from the Public Health grant will be met from non public facing proposals.

4. Equality Impact Assessments

4.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty (149 (1) requires a Local Authority in exercise of its functions to have due regard to the need to:

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this act.
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristics and persons who do not share it.

4.2 The essential duty placed on decision makers is that they must keep the welfare of service users at the forefront of their mind, but also families, and especially their families who are most disadvantaged.

4.3 The Equality Impact Assessments attached to this report identify the chosen option(s) and their potential impacts and document the reasons for the decision in each of the 47 savings proposals. The following four outcomes are possible from an assessment and more than one may apply to a single proposal:

- (i) No major change is required as the EIA has not identified any potential for discrimination or adverse impact and all opportunities to advance equality have been taken.
- (ii) Adjustments are needed to remove barriers identified by the assessor or to promote equality (but the local authority has to ask itself if the adjustments will be effective).
- (iii) Continue despite having identified some potential for adverse impacts or missed opportunities to advance equality.
- (iv) Stop and rethink if an EIA shows actual or potential unlawful discrimination. Is there a way of reducing or mitigating any negative impact?

4.4 It is important that Members have carefully considered, assessed and fully understood the implications of any of the responses received to the savings proposals. Members have already reviewed at length the detailed feedback for each of the proposals.

5. Conclusion

5.1 The public consultation on the 2016/17 budget attracted around 2500 responses. Details of all responses and recommendations are set out in the individual templates and further distilled in the Spreadsheet attached to the report.

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No:

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval X
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission or
associated Task Groups within preceding six months
Item is Urgent Key Decision
Report is to note only

Officer details:

Name: Andy Day
Job Title: Head of Strategic Support
Tel No: 01635 519459
E-mail Address: aday@westberks.gov.uk
