

Budget Proposals 2019/20: Volunteer Centre West Berkshire (VCWB)

Consultation Summary Report

Why we consulted?

Over the last nine years we've had to make savings of £60 million as our central government funding, the Revenue Support Grant (RSG), has reduced and the need for social care support has increased. We've done this by becoming more efficient at what we do, by reducing some of our administrative functions and increasing our income. Throughout this period we have done our best to protect your services.

Six years ago, the RSG was worth £24 million to the council and was reduced to just £100,000 last year. In 2019/20 there will be no grant and our costs will exceed our income. As a result, we'll need to find a further £7 million in savings or income generation. Much of this will come from becoming a more efficient council, however, 14 proposals, amounting to approximately £300,000, have been identified from services that will impact the public.

It was these proposals that made up the Budget Proposals 2019/20 consultation.

Approach

We published all the public facing proposals on our website on 12 November 2018 with feedback requested by midnight on 23 December 2018.

Respondents were directed to a central index pageⁱ, which outlined the overall background to the exercise, and provided links to each of the individual proposals on our Consultation Portalⁱⁱ.

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'd taken into account. Feedback was then invited through an online form and a dedicated email address. Hard copies of the proposal documents and surveys were also made available on request.

As well as publishing the consultations on our website, we also emailed members of the West Berkshire Community Panel (around 400 people) notifying them of the exercise and inviting their contributions. Heads of Service also made direct contact with those organisations directly affected prior to them being made publicly available.

Finally, we issued a press release on the 12 November 2018, and further publicised our consultations through our Facebook and Twitter accounts. We also placed posters in our main offices and other council properties e.g. libraries, and made them available to WBC Councillors and Parish and Town Councils to put up in the wards/parishes.

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Proposal Background

The Volunteer Centre West Berkshireⁱⁱⁱ (VCWB) is a registered charity that provides a number of services, including:

- A volunteer job shop service for the district that matches interested people with opportunities to volunteer and promotes volunteering and good practice.^{iv}
- A volunteer driver and community car scheme for the Newbury area, which provides transport for people who find it difficult to use public transport. They offer the service for regular journeys e.g. out-patient treatment but also for one-off visits to doctors and shopping. The volunteer driver and community car scheme asks the user to pay a mileage- related contribution to pay for petrol and running costs. The driver's time is donated voluntarily.^v
- Newbury and Thatcham area 'Handybus' community transport provides regular transport for people who find it difficult to use public transport, approximately 12,000 journeys a year. The cost of the trip depends on the distance travelled. A local trip could be as little as £2-£3.^{vi}

During 2017/18, VCWB attracted 354 volunteers across a range of volunteering activities. The VCWB also held a number of promotional events some of which are listed below:

- Knowledge Event which attracted 91 organisations.
- Listening Event with the Clinical Commissioning Group and Public Health attracting 24 organisations.
- Specialist car and bus driver recruitment event.
- Speed volunteer dating event in Caffé Nero for 20 organisations.
- Voluntary services event for the Pangbourne area which attracted 11 organisations.

VCWB has round 230 volunteers to deliver these services.

We currently provide annual funding of £20,028 to the VCWB for these services.

Legislation Requirements

The services provided by the VCWB are not statutory, but help to support our community.

Proposal Details

To reduce the annual funding to the VCWB from £20,028 to £15,028 (a saving of £5,000 or 25%) from 1 April 2019.

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Consultation Response

Number of Responses

In total, 22 responses were received, although two of those responding did not complete the questionnaire.

Two of the respondents identified themselves as a user of the service, 13 as residents, one as employed by West Berkshire Council, two as Parish/Town Councillors, one as a service provider, two as a partner organisation, and seven as other, including the Chairman of Trustees from the VCWB.

Summary of Main Points

Of the 20 complete responses, 16 strongly disagreed with the proposal, and 3 disagreed. There were no responses in favour of the proposal.

The main issue raised was that the vulnerable, particularly the elderly, would be impacted by this proposal.

It was also suggested that, if the Handybus scheme was impacted by this proposal, then the elderly who could not drive and need to attend important dentist or doctor/hospital appointments could be impacted

A small number of respondents also cited the effect a cut to this service might have on the ability of the council and the NHS to engage with the voluntary sector, and mobilise their capacity. Making use of community resources, particularly volunteers, was mentioned as one way of mitigating the impact of cuts to money going to local government from central government. The use of volunteers used in the Library Service was given as a recent example.

Summary of Responses by Question

1. Are you...?

(N.B. respondents were able to tick more than one option)

	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Or anyone you care for, a user of this service	2	6.9%	9.1%
A resident of West Berkshire	13	44.8%	59.1%
Employed by West Berkshire Council	1	3.4%	4.5%
A Parish/Town Councillor	2	6.9%	9.1%
A District Councillor	0	.0%	.0%
A service provider	1	3.4%	4.5%
A partner organisation	2	6.9%	9.1%
Other	7	24.1%	31.8%

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2. **How far do you agree with the proposal to reduce the annual funding to the Volunteer Centre West Berkshire from £20,028 to £15,028 from 1 April 2019?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	0	.0	.0
Agree	0	.0	.0
Neither agree nor disagree	1	4.5	5.0
Disagree	3	13.6	15.0
Strongly disagree	16	72.7	80.0
Total	20	90.9	100.0
Not answered	2	9.1	
Total	22	100.0	

3. **What do you think we should be aware of in terms of how this proposal might impact people? For example, do you think it will affect particular individuals more than others?**

One respondent suggested that this proposal would impact on the elderly if the volunteer car scheme was affected.

The Chairman of the Trustees to the VCWB confirmed that they were a small cost effective charity and this proposal could impact across a range of projects that they were responsible for.

It was also reported that the charity played a vital role on the Health and Wellbeing Board, amongst other groups, and had been undertaking the role of a Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) “umbrella” organisation over the last two years. This role provided support and guidance to the whole of the VCS, which would be compromised if this proposal was to proceed.

4. **If the decision is taken to proceed with this proposal, do you have any suggestions for how we can reduce the impact on those affected? If so, please provide details.**

One respondent suggested that Council Tax should be increased in order to avoid the need to make this saving. Increasing car parking charges was also suggested as a way of mitigating the need to reduce funding to the VCWB.

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5. **Do you have any suggestions on how we might save money or increase income, either in this service, or elsewhere in the council? If so, please provide details.**

Suggestions made were:

- Increase Council Tax
- Lobby central government for a fairer, more sustainable and decentralised system for funding local government
- Cutting back bench councillors' pay
- Reduce under-performing / excess staff from council payroll

6. **If you, your community group, or organisation think you might be able to help reduce the impact of this proposal, if the decision is taken to proceed with it, please provide your name and email address below.**

None received.

7. **Any further comments?**

A few comments were received, but were mainly a repeat of earlier comments.

One respondent, a volunteer driver, said that he was seeing an increased use of the transport service because users were unable to use public transport from outlying areas / rural communities.

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

Andy Day
Head of Strategic Support
03/01/2019

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.

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i <http://www.westberks.gov.uk/budgetproposals>

ii <http://info.westberks.gov.uk/consultations>

iii <http://www.volunteerwestberks.org.uk/index.htm>

iv <http://www.volunteerwestberks.org.uk/registering.htm>

v http://www.volunteerwestberks.org.uk/car_scheme.htm

vi <http://www.volunteerwestberks.org.uk/handybus.htm>

Overview of Responses and Recommendations

Budget Proposals 2019/20: Volunteer Centre West Berkshire			Head of Service: Andy Day		5 March 2019
			Author:		Version 1 (Full Council)
Proposal:	To reduce the annual funding to the Volunteer Centre West Berkshire from £20,028 to £15,028 (a saving of £5,000 or 25%) from 1 April 2019.				
Total budget 2018/19:	£20,028	Initial proposed saving 2019/20	£5,000 (25%)	Recommended saving 2019/20	£5,000 (25%)
No. of responses:	<p>In total, 22 responses were received. Of those that responded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two respondents identified as service users • 13 as residents of West Berkshire • One as a council employee • Two as Parish/Town Councils • One as a service provider • Two as partner organisations • Seven as other, including the Chairman of Trustees from the VCWB 				
Key issues raised:	<p>Of the 20 complete responses, 16 strongly disagreed with the proposal, and 3 disagreed. There were no responses in favour of the proposal.</p> <p>The main issue raised was that the vulnerable, particularly the elderly, would be impacted by this proposal.</p> <p>It was also suggested that, if the Handybus scheme was impacted by this proposal, then the elderly who could not drive and need to attend important dentist or doctor/hospital appointments could be impacted</p> <p>A small number of respondents also cited the effect a cut to this service might have on the ability of the council and the NHS to engage with the voluntary sector, and mobilise their capacity. Making use of community resources, particularly volunteers, was mentioned as one way of mitigating the impact of cuts to money going to local government from central government. The use of volunteers used in the Library Service was given as a recent example.</p>				
Equality issues:	No issues were raised during the consultation, that weren't already included in the stage one Equality Impact Assessment				

NB: This Overview of Responses and Recommendations paper should be read in conjunction with the Consultation Summary Report and Verbatim Responses received in relation to this proposal. These can be found in the agenda pack or on our [Consultation Portal](#).

Overview of Responses and Recommendations

Suggestions for reducing the impact on service users:	Suggestion	Council response
	No suggestions were forthcoming	
Suggestions for saving money or increasing income:	Suggestion	Council response
	Increase car parking charges to mitigate the need to reduce funding to VCWB.	Car Parking charges will be reviewed as part of setting the 2019/20 Revenue Budget
	Increase Council Tax	The raising of Council Tax will be one of the options that Members will consider as part of setting a balanced budget for 2019/20.
Conclusion and recommendation:	<p>Whilst it is clear that the VCWB do provide services which are much thought of by those that use them, most notably the elderly, the consultation has not provided any information which would suggest that the council should not proceed with its proposal. It should be noted that the council has recognised the valuable services that VCWB provides and to this end has protected them from any budget reductions to date unlike many other voluntary and community sector organisations.</p> <p>The current economic climate is continuing to require the council and those that it funds to make difficult financial decisions.</p> <p>It is therefore recommended that this proposal is progressed.</p>	

NB: This Overview of Responses and Recommendations paper should be read in conjunction with the Consultation Summary Report and Verbatim Responses received in relation to this proposal. These can be found in the agenda pack or on our [Consultation Portal](#).

Stage One Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA 1)

What is the proposed decision?	To reduce the annual funding to the VCWB from £20,028 to £15,028 (a saving of £5,000 or 25%) from 1 April 2019.
Summary of relevant legislation	N/A
Does the proposed decision conflict with any of the council's key strategic priorities?	No
Name of budget holder	Andy Day
Name of Service and Directorate	Strategic Support Resources Directorate
Name of assessor	Andy Day
Date of assessment	02/10/2018
Version and release date (if applicable)	V1. 12/11/2018

Is this a...?		Is this policy, strategy, function or service...?	
Policy	No	New or proposed	No
Strategy	No	Existing and being reviewed	Yes
Function	No	Changing	Yes
Service	Yes		



1. What are the main aims, objectives and intended outcomes of the proposed decision and who is likely to benefit from it?	
Aims:	The organisation aims to provide volunteering opportunities across a wide spectrum of activities.
Objectives:	The organisation provides a range of direct services to the public, but its overriding ethos is to match local people to local need.
Outcomes:	People are matched to volunteering opportunities which promotes community work and spirit.
Benefits:	Local communities and individuals are supported.

2. Which groups may be affected and how? Is it positively or negatively and what sources of information have been used to determine this?		
Group affected	What might be the effect?	Information to support this
Age	There is no evidence to indicate that there will be a greater impact on this group than on any other	
Disability	There is no evidence to indicate that there will be a greater impact on this group than on any other	
Gender reassignment	There is no evidence to indicate that there will be a greater impact on this group than on any other	
Marriage and civil partnership	There is no evidence to indicate that there will be a greater impact on this group than on any other	
Pregnancy and maternity	There is no evidence to indicate that there will be a greater impact on this group than on any other	
Race	There is no evidence to indicate that there will be a greater impact on this group than on any other	



Religion or belief	There is no evidence to indicate that there will be a greater impact on this group than on any other	
Sex	There is no evidence to indicate that there will be a greater impact on this group than on any other	
Sexual orientation	There is no evidence to indicate that there will be a greater impact on this group than on any other	
Further comments		
It is difficult to say at this stage what the impact might be. However, the volunteering opportunities offered by VCWB can be bespoke and so every effort would be made to accommodate any of the protected characteristics should they wish to volunteer and have a specific project in mind.		

3. Result	
Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could contribute to inequality?	No
VCWB would try to accommodate any suggested volunteering opportunities raised with them and so it is not considered likely that any inequality would occur. Payments made to VCWB combine a number of services, however this proposal does not impact on the Handybus Service.	
Will the proposed decision have an adverse impact upon the lives of people, including employees and service users?	No
The result of this reduction in funding may be that the VCWB takes longer to set up volunteering opportunities. However, this will not be specific to any of the protected characteristics and so it is not likely that inequality will occur.	

4. Next steps	
EqlA 2 required?	No
Owner of EqlA 2	
Timescale for EqlA 2	

Number of responses: 22 (including 2 incomplete)

ID	How far do you agree with the proposal to reduce the annual funding to the Volunteer Centre West Berkshire from £20,028 to £15,028 from 1 April 2019?		What do you think we should be aware of in terms of how this proposal might impact people? For example, do you think it will affect particular individuals more than others? Please refer to the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) to see what has already been identified.	If the decision is taken to proceed with this proposal do you have any suggestions for how we can reduce the impact on those affected? If so, please provide details.	Do you have any suggestions on how we might save money or increase income, either in this service, or elsewhere in the council? If so, please provide details.	Any further comments?
	Response	Please tell us the reason(s) for your response.				
1	Disagree	<p>We acknowledge that the Council is in a challenging financial situation and will therefore need to reduce its expenditure. We do however have some concerns about the areas highlighted below, particularly because prevention is one of the main priorities in the NHS Five Year Forward View and the West Berkshire Health and Well Being Strategy. We would also like to continue to explore how we can work together through the Berkshire West 10 to maximise economics of scale across our area. These are the areas of concern and questions we wanted to highlight: The voluntary sector plays a key role in supporting service user groups which in turn reduces reliance on statutory services like social care and the NHS. We would like to be assured that the proposed funding reductions will not lead to increased demand for statutory services. Some of the budget proposals mitigate the impact of budget reductions by citing the presence of a wide range of voluntary sector organisations offering help. The Volunteer Centre West Berkshire has a vital role in building capacity of voluntary and community sector organisations. They also provide a single point of contact for both the Council and the NHS to engage with the voluntary sector which assists considerably with engaging and mobilising their capacity. The Volunteer Centre are an active member of the Health & Wellbeing Board as well as involved in driving the suicide prevention agenda locally. Our concern around any proposed cuts to this function is likely to impact on the wider strategic objectives of both the Local Authority and NHS to enable people and communities to stay resilient as well as diminishing the co-ordinating function of the voluntary sector locally. The CCG are keen to work with our Council partners to ensure the best services are available to maintain our population health and wellbeing and we would welcome a discussion on working jointly to resolve the financial constraints that are faced by all public services while maintaining good quality services to support our population needs.</p>				
2	Strongly disagree	short term and damaging				

ID	How far do you agree with the proposal to reduce the annual funding to the Volunteer Centre West Berkshire from £20,028 to £15,028 from 1 April 2019?		What do you think we should be aware of in terms of how this proposal might impact people? For example, do you think it will affect particular individuals more than others? Please refer to the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) to see what has already been identified.	If the decision is taken to proceed with this proposal do you have any suggestions for how we can reduce the impact on those affected? If so, please provide details.	Do you have any suggestions on how we might save money or increase income, either in this service, or elsewhere in the council? If so, please provide details.	Any further comments?
	Response	Please tell us the reason(s) for your response.				
3	Strongly disagree	<p>Central government has massively cut the money going to local government over recent years with a significant impact on local communities. One way of mitigating that impact, to some limited extent, is by making use of community resources, particularly volunteers (as has been done with library services, for instance). Is the council now saying there is not even any money for that? Small investments can release large amounts of voluntary time, so cuts in this area will have a greater proportionate effect than cuts in other areas. If so, this does not make financial sense. It is likely to increase difficulties for many vulnerable people and quite possibly increase costs on other parts of the council and public sector. If the council has been forced into such an irrational position, will it be making urgent representations to central government (as a council and through political channels) to appraise them of the situation and try and persuade them to change their policies on council funding, particularly to give more autonomy to local areas? In the meantime, perhaps they could work more productively with local people to find ways of meeting the funding gap.</p>			<p>I do not have sufficient information about the workings of the rest of the council to be able to suggest any better area for cuts. More general options for increasing income would be to increase council tax, holding a referendum, as required by central government, if necessary. The council might also wish to lobby central government and inform them of the harm being done by their cuts. It could also lobby, directly and through the LGA, for a fairer, more sustainable and more decentralised system for funding local government, which increased the extent of local control. One way of reducing costs longer term would be by reducing demand on services through investment in prevention, which is the opposite of what these cuts are doing. The council should be considered social costs more broadly and working more effectively with other bodies, including health, criminal justice etc. to pool resources and invest for longer term benefit, particularly in prevention.</p>	
4	Strongly disagree	<p>We strongly disagree with this proposed cut because it will partially disable the ability to get things done through volunteers.</p>	<p>There would be less volunteering as Handybus drivers etc. This would affect people who do not live on easy public transport routes and could make it difficult to get to hospital for example.</p>	<p>We are not aware of any way to reduce the impact other than not to make the cuts.</p>		<p>Do not make these cuts.</p>

ID	How far do you agree with the proposal to reduce the annual funding to the Volunteer Centre West Berkshire from £20,028 to £15,028 from 1 April 2019?		What do you think we should be aware of in terms of how this proposal might impact people? For example, do you think it will affect particular individuals more than others? Please refer to the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) to see what has already been identified.	If the decision is taken to proceed with this proposal do you have any suggestions for how we can reduce the impact on those affected? If so, please provide details.	Do you have any suggestions on how we might save money or increase income, either in this service, or elsewhere in the council? If so, please provide details.	Any further comments?
	Response	Please tell us the reason(s) for your response.				
5	Strongly disagree	<p>The services that the Volunteer Centre provide are essential to local people, especially when services provided by the government and local authorities are being cut back. Many of the users are elderly, disabled, unwell and vulnerable, and some have no friends or family to rely on. I live in a rural area of the district and the challenges are more pronounced here because of infrequent and expensive buses. Your Equality Impact Assessment focuses on the impact on volunteers rather than those being helped by the volunteers. It is wrong to say these cuts backs will not impact on the elderly and disabled more than other people. If I had not been a befriender because cut backs meant there were less resources to promote the scheme, and I had not heard of it, this would not impact me. However, it would impact someone with a life-changing illness that has left her with disabilities because she would not have a befriender. Also, the time I spend with my befriender provides respite for her carer. These cuts are also incompatible with the district's Health and Well Being Strategy and an example of the right hand of the council not coordinating with the left hand.</p>	<p>The services that the Volunteer Centre provide are essential to local people, especially when services provided by the government and local authorities are being cut back. Many of the users are elderly, disabled, unwell and vulnerable, and some have no friends or family to rely on. I live in a rural area of the district and the challenges are more pronounced here because of infrequent and expensive buses. Your Equality Impact Assessment focuses on the impact on volunteers rather than those being helped by the volunteers. It is wrong to say these cuts backs will not impact on the elderly and disabled more than other people. If I had not been a befriender because cut backs meant there were less resources to promote the scheme, and I had not heard of it, this would not impact me. However, it would impact someone with a life-changing illness that has left her with disabilities because she would not have a befriender. Also, the time I spend with my befriender provides respite for her carer. These cuts are also incompatible with the district's Health and Well Being Strategy and an example of the right hand of the council not coordinating with the left hand.</p>	<p>The council should work more closely with parish councils to coordinate and publicise services for local people. Councillors could seek answers to the above question by spending time at parish council meetings and knocking on doors and talking to people in their wards. Most people in my ward have never met their councillor, and the ones who have have not seen them since they were seeking their vote in May 2015. This is shameful. They get paid to be councillors after all.</p>	<p>How much did the refurbishment of the council reception area cost? You could save money by avoiding cock-ups like the St Modwen case. Cutting back bench councillors' pay because they don't bother to have any communication with their residents. Turning up to meetings periodically to raise their hands in the air isn't enough. They took a pay rise three years ago. What have they done to earn it?</p>	
6	Strongly disagree	<p>The services that the Volunteer Centre provide are essential to local people, especially when services provided by the state are being cut back. Many of the users are elderly, unwell and vulnerable, and some have no friends or family to rely on. I live in a rural area of the district and the challenges are more pronounced here because of infrequent and expensive buses.</p>				

ID	How far do you agree with the proposal to reduce the annual funding to the Volunteer Centre West Berkshire from £20,028 to £15,028 from 1 April 2019?		What do you think we should be aware of in terms of how this proposal might impact people? For example, do you think it will affect particular individuals more than others? Please refer to the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) to see what has already been identified.	If the decision is taken to proceed with this proposal do you have any suggestions for how we can reduce the impact on those affected? If so, please provide details.	Do you have any suggestions on how we might save money or increase income, either in this service, or elsewhere in the council? If so, please provide details.	Any further comments?
	Response	Please tell us the reason(s) for your response.				
7	Strongly disagree	<p>Whilst Circa £5k may not seem a huge sum to lose, this reduction will have a long term impact on the work that the Volunteer Centre can carry out. It seems bizarre that at a time when volunteering itself is being highly promoted by central Government, cuts to funding are being considered. There is no other organisation in West Berkshire who has the skills and knowledge to draw in volunteers. There is no other organisation in West Berkshire that provides the service to the the community that the car scheme does. Whilst £5k may not stop these services, it will no doubt pay for the cost of running an office space, which is fundamental and essential to providing those services. Finding a grant funder to pay for rent, electric and staff is incredibly difficult and the Charities that the Volunteer Centre supports, through information events & matching volunteers (among other activities) are the very Charities picking up the slack from where where Council services for the community have been cut back. Charities providing what were once seen as essential services and which are still seen as essential by service users. Cutting this funding is very shortsighted and will no doubt have serious repercussions, perhaps not in the next financial year but certainly in the years that follow. Volunteers are an essential part of our local service provision for the vulnerable and cutting funding to the Volunteer Centre does not show that volunteers are valued by the Council and will have a very negative impact on lives of the vulnerable.</p>	<p>It will impact on any person who uses a local charity. Typically this will be a person who is considered vulnerable by way of disability or circumstance.</p>	<p>I cannot see any way that the impact can be reduced. The Volunteer Centre provides a valuable service and has costs to bear in order to provide that service. Costs such as office space/manpower that they would struggle to find funding for.</p>	<p>Reduce the allowances paid to Council Members. Reduce the high end salaries paid to Council staff.</p>	
8	Strongly disagree	<p>Vulnerable (elderly) people unable to avail themselves and/or to use public transport even if it exists in their locale.</p>	<p>See answer 2 re: elderly/vulnerable people.</p>	<p>Potentially more elderly/vulnerable people may find themselves in hospital under emergency conditions thus adding to pressures on the NHS.</p>	<p>Reduce under performing/excess staff from council payroll.</p>	<p>I am already a volunteer driver and see my client list growing month by month because they are unable to use public transport from outlying areas. My organisation is a lifeline to many who live in rural communities.</p>
9	Strongly disagree	<p>Volunteer Centre West Berkshire is a small and cost effective charitable body. At the core of our activities lies the desire to engage the public as stake holders in their own communities. In addition to the direct public services we provide, we have, for two years, provided a CVS (council for voluntary service) function for the benefit of both the voluntary sector, the local authority and the CCG (Clinical Commissioning Group), which necessitated a reorganisation of the charity. At the very centre of West Berkshire Council's devolution policy is the empowerment of communities. The Volunteer Centre has advised the council in many forums about the sustainability of services such as library provision, children's services, adult social care, mental health provision and the reduction of community transport provision. Our director has sat with key decision makers and worked closely with the Chief Executive of WBC and others within the Health and Wellbeing Board where his local knowledge and practical experiences are brought to bear for the benefit of West Berkshire. His advice assists senior level officers to understand the impact of policy at the grass roots. The trustees remind the council that within 'The West Berkshire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2017-2020' it states: 'The role of the health and wellbeing board' – page 7: 'Public spending has and will continue to reduce by unprecedented levels; therefore, joint working across the public sector and beyond with the voluntary and community sectors, and local businesses, is essential to ensure those most in need are supported, and that people and communities become as independent and resilient as possible'. 'Integration' – page 12: 'More co-operative working with voluntary and community sector to deliver and sustain interventions.' It therefore naturally follows to ask the council how does the Health and Wellbeing Board hope to</p>	<p>Further, in the council's consultation document, the Equality Impact Statement comments that, with regard to age & disability groups in the community: "there is no evidence to indicate that there will be a greater impact on these groups than on any other". In fact, the great majority of VCWB's clients fall into these two categories, and thus the proposed cut will impact on these vulnerable groups.</p>			

ID	How far do you agree with the proposal to reduce the annual funding to the Volunteer Centre West Berkshire from £20,028 to £15,028 from 1 April 2019?		What do you think we should be aware of in terms of how this proposal might impact people? For example, do you think it will affect particular individuals more than others? Please refer to the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) to see what has already been identified.	If the decision is taken to proceed with this proposal do you have any suggestions for how we can reduce the impact on those affected? If so, please provide details.	Do you have any suggestions on how we might save money or increase income, either in this service, or elsewhere in the council? If so, please provide details.	Any further comments?
	Response	Please tell us the reason(s) for your response.				
		<p>achieve the above policy when it proposes a 25 per cent cut in funding to the very organisation in West Berkshire that is at the core of delivering the council's strategy? An organisation that has worked tirelessly with the Board to achieve these aims by providing, for example, the Knowledge event and the forthcoming V365 event planned for January 2019. VCWB has been front and centre in establishing the Suicide Prevention Action Group on an unfunded basis for West Berkshire. The charity has also been central to the falls prevention strategy, and other areas such as the learning and skills work with the council's adult and community learning committee. It has worked with the PPE (Patient Participation and Engagement committee), and taken part in numerous meetings with the CCG for forward-integration planning, voluntary sector funding meetings, and listening events and so forth. It therefore comes as a surprise and disappointment that the council's own policy of empowering communities that are seeking to encourage volunteering, is weakened by this proposal to cut funding. Weakened, not only in fiscal terms but in political terms – it is most discouraging at this crucial time. Further, in the council's consultation document, the Equality Impact Statement comments that, with regard to age & disability groups in the community: "there is no evidence to indicate that there will be a greater impact on these groups than on any other". In fact, the great majority of VCWB's clients fall into these two categories, and thus the proposed cut will impact on these vulnerable groups. A cut to the core grant will therefore impact on all of our services, as each service area is in itself designed to run at a very low cost, whilst making a small contribution to the core costs of the charity. We are able to keep costs low due to the huge added-value of volunteers in the community. This core grant supports the ability to open the doors, keep on the lights, and pay the rent in a town centre location that is vitally accessible to all. In view of the current economic circumstances, VCWB trustees decided earlier this year that, for the 2018/19 budget, they would draw down on charity reserves in order to maintain the existing level of services. We are thus currently running a budget deficit of £50,000. The charity cannot sustain another overall deficit budget at this level in 2019/20. A reduction of £5,000 from the core support will have a significant impact on the charity, impeding our ability to "balance the books" in 2019/20 and necessitating a reduction in services run for the benefit of the West Berks community. The trustees wish to acknowledge the support provided by West Berkshire Council for the benefit of West Berkshire people, whilst expressing their concern at the proposed cut to the core grant. We earnestly request that the council reconsiders this proposal.</p>				
10	Disagree	<p>Volunteer Centre provides essential information and services to the people of West Berkshire. To reduce the funding will not be in the interest of those people who use the service. If the funding is cut any further, there is a possibility that some 'needs' will be ignored.</p>	<p>The vulnerability of some people must be safeguarded; else the consequences could be grave.</p>	<p>Vulnerable people are vulnerable for a reason. Making people more vulnerable due to reduction in budget is not the answer. Instead of having an on-line consultation process which is a sterile environment, WBC should seriously consider having a 'town-hall' meeting where people can voice their views and suggestions in a less sterile environment.</p>	<p>(1) Increase income by capping District Councillors allowances. (2) Increase income by adding 5p on parking charges on WBC run car parks</p>	<p>None at this time</p>

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11	Strongly disagree					
13	Strongly disagree	It is utterly unjustified to cut services to the vulnerable and elderly that have such a huge impact on their quality of life. Especially against a background of poor financial management such as the delay to introducing the green bin costing £150k - which would have covered half the budget of all these services.				
14	Strongly disagree	You have already made huge and sustained cuts to many support services over the last few years which in many cases have hit the needy the hardest. It's time to stop this, and to focus limited funds on those who need them most. I cannot support any of the above cuts and urge you to find savings elsewhere or re-allocate funds from areas that will not impact the disadvantaged.				
15	Strongly disagree					
16	Strongly disagree	This is an important service for the community to help each other. We need to support and increase these activities as our future is reliant on community and collaboration		Make a charitable appeal to those that can afford to pay more should pay more council tax	Make a charitable appeal to those that can afford to pay more should pay more council tax	
17	Strongly disagree	The services provided by VCWB are vital to support our communities. Community transport enables people to access health and social care services to keep them safe and well at home - even though the drivers are volunteers, they are supported by paid staff at VCWB and VCWB coordinates the many journeys that are booked each week. The volunteer service helps the many charities in West Berkshire to recruit the volunteers to keep delivering services which make a real difference to people's lives and can prevent people having to use statutory services such as social care and primary health	Many people using the volunteer car driving service will be disadvantaged, on low incomes or elderly. They will be negatively impacted if the volunteer car driving service is reduced. Some of the minority groups in West Berkshire are currently supported by small charities, which recruit their volunteers through VCWB - those groups will be disadvantaged if the services and support they receive is reduced because volunteers cannot be recruited through the work of VCWB	No, the services of VCWB are vital to keep the communities in West Berkshire vibrant and delivering excellent services		
19	Strongly disagree	This service provides a lifeline for many older people in our community who for whatever reason (including medical exclusion) cannot drive. The service means that they are able to retain some of their independence and interaction with the community as well as attend doctor/hospital appointments without having to fork out for comparatively expensive taxi fares, which in many cases are unaffordable meaning missed appointments and/or result in isolation at home.				
20	Strongly disagree					
21	Disagree					

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	Response	Please tell us the reason(s) for your response.				
22	Neither agree nor disagree	I understand the need for funding cuts however I feel you should increase my council tax so that these services do not suffer.		I feel you should increase my council tax so that these services do not suffer.	I feel you should increase my council tax	Increasing volunteering is a free solution for you. But how volunteers are treated (e.g. over stretching them, not providing support/training) can be detrimental to the service you aim to provide.