

Budget Proposals 2024/25: Restructure Adult Social Care (ASC) care home charges

Consultation Summary Report

Why did we consult?

The council is facing unprecedented financial pressures. From historically high inflation increasing contract costs, to rising housing costs and through to large increases in cost and demand in supporting our most vulnerable residents with social care, the council has some major cost increases.

In 2024/25, we need to find £14.2 million in savings or income generation. This figure is based on the assumption that Council Tax increases by 4.99% overall in line with previous government referendum limits. We have identified £12.2 million worth of savings and income generation, of which approximately £1.75 million comes from proposals that require public consultation.

Through extensive internal discussions and meetings with our service providers, we've identified 10 proposals.

For more information please visit <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/balancing-our-budget>

Approach

We published all the public facing proposals on our website on 27 November 2023 with feedback requested by midnight on 11 January 2024.

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 and Engagement Hubⁱⁱ.

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 considered. Feedback was then invited through an online survey, and hard copies of the proposal documents and surveys were made available on request.

Adult Social Care (ASC) wrote to all of the individuals that would be affected by this proposal and we had no direct contact with anyone in relation to this proposal.

As well as publishing the consultations on our website, we also emailed members of the West Berkshire Community Panel (around 2,500 people), local stakeholder charities, representative groups and partner organisations notifying them of the exercise and inviting their contributions. Service Directors contacted those organisations directly affected prior to them being made publicly available.

Finally, we issued a press release on 28 November 2023, and further publicised our consultations through our social media accounts and residents' e-newsletters. We also placed posters in our main offices and other council properties e.g. libraries and

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family hubs and made them available to WBC Councillors to put up in the wards/parishes.

Proposal Background

West Berkshire Council's (WBC) Adult Social Care Service currently has three care homes and while most of the residents are funded by the council, a small number of residents pay the full cost, or are funded by another local authority or the NHS.

The cost to the council of purchasing a bed in a privately run care home is currently an average of £1,133.00 per week.

Birchwood has 60 beds available, and currently has 40 residents. 9 of which pay the full cost or funded by another local authority.

Notrees has 18 beds available, and currently has 13 residents. 3 of which pay the full cost or funded by another local authority.

Willows Edge has 37 beds available, and currently has 31 residents. 8 of which pay the full cost or funded by another local authority.

To date we have not charged these individuals what it actually costs us to provide the placement. Details of the current and actual costs are as follows:

WBC care home	Current charge per week	Actual cost per week	% difference
Birchwood	£1,007.70	£2,572.00	-61%
Notrees	£971.00	£1,496.00	-35%
Willows Edge	£971.00	£1,598.00	-39%

The cost to the council of purchasing a bed in a privately run care home is currently an average of £1,133.00 per week.

Legislation Requirements

The Care Act 2014 governs what services the council should provide as part of an individual's care package and what services the council does not need to provide.

Currently, the council does not have to provide a placement to individuals that would be considered self-funders, but as a council we have chosen to do this.

Proposal Details

To increase how much we charge for a bed, as detailed below for each home. This is above the normal annual inflationary rate (4.6% in 2024/25).

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WBC care home	Proposed charge per week	Proposed % increase
Birchwood	£1,209.20	20%
Notrees	£1,068.10	10%
*Willows Edge	£1,068.10	10%

Based on the current numbers of residents this would generate £78,000 per year.

**Please note: Willows Edge Care Home is subject to another budget proposal to either close or find an alternative provider to run it.*

Following the consultation, if the decision is taken to close the home, this income will be lost. If an alternative provider is found, then the charge may be different than proposed here.

Consultation Response

Number of Responses

In total, 54 responses were received.

We also received no petitions.

Summary of Main Points

The general view from the respondents was that it was appropriate to increase the fees for those individuals who could pay.

There was a lack of understanding from some respondents as to how individuals are financial assessed and how much most individuals contribute towards their care.

Summary of Responses by Question

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1. Which of the following best describe you? Please select all that apply.

	Number	Percentage
A user of the service	4	7.41
A resident of West Berkshire	48	88.89
A visitor to West Berkshire	0	0
A West Berkshire business owner	0	0
Employed by a West Berkshire business	4	7.41
Employed by West Berkshire Council	3	5.56
A Parish/Town Councillor	3	5.56
A District Councillor	0	0
A partner organisation	0	0
A West Berkshire Council service provider	1	1.85
Other	1	1.85

2. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to increase how much we charge for a bed at each of our care homes?

i. Birchwood (£1,209.20 per week / 20% increase)

	Number	Percentage
Strongly agree	16	33.33
Agree	18	37.50
Neither agree nor disagree	1	2.08
Disagree	4	8.33
Strongly disagree	9	18.75

ii. Notrees (£1,068.10 per week / 10% increase)

	Number	Percentage
Strongly agree	15	31.91
Agree	18	38.30
Neither agree nor disagree	3	6.38
Disagree	5	10.64

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	Number	Percentage
Strongly disagree	6	12.77

iii. Willows Edge (£1,068.10 per week / 10% increase)

	Number	Percentage
Strongly agree	16	33.33
Agree	16	33.33
Neither agree nor disagree	4	8.33
Disagree	6	12.50
Strongly disagree	6	12.50

The majority of the respondents felt that the fees should be increased, and some respondents felt the fees should be increased to the actual cost.

Some respondents felt that the fees should also be inline with those charged by private providers.

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?

Mainly the respondents felt that it would affected older people more than anyone else and that there was the possibility that it would affected individuals families as well as the individuals themselves.

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.

The main suggestion to reduce the impact were to:

- outsource all of the homes
- lobby government to make significant changes to the system
- give plenty of notice of the change

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.

The main suggestions to save money or increase income were:

- Review all contracts
- Sell the old Newbury Day centre site
- Close the 3 day centres owned by the Council

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- Sell all 3 care homes
- Replace the Council's fossil fuel vehicles with electric ones
- Eliminate transport subsidies for everyone but pensioners
- Reduce agency staff
- Review all of the nice to have proposed spending
- Charge for bin replacements

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 contact details below.

None

7. Any further comments?

"Important to ensure the decision to increase costs has been scrutinised"

"This proposal seems to clash with the proposal to close Willows Edge. Moving patients from a facility costing £1.6k pw to one costing £2.5k will be the opposite of cost-saving..."

"I am not particularly interested in "volunteering" for the Council as I already volunteer for other organisations. If I can help review and restore order on the costs in your care homes, I should be happy to help. (I know that staff shortages are an issue across the sector and possibly account for the under-utilisation of Birchwood and, thus, some of its overblown cost base; putting up wages and improving the facility could have the effect of making it a net contributor to WBC)."

"Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council do not know the impact that this will have."

"Review all "nice to have proposed spending such as: Greening, net zero initiatives including LTNs and other "halo initiatives" unless they show a net saving in spend locally with payback within a three year timescale or positive annual contributions in the immediate future. New cycle lanes and pedestrian zones including consultation experiments. New speed limit reduction initiatives where these are not evidenced as necessary through increasing traffic injuries. Potential for staffing cuts associated with initiative creation and spends that will be reduced or delayed."

"West Berkshire provision for elderly care is apparently one of the worst in the country."

"I think this needs much more significant long-term structure change. The current system is not sustainable, and tinkering round the edges - although I can see why you're doing it - just won't be the answer."

"It is a tough time, unfortunately."

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

Jo England
Joint Interim Service Director
ASC
14.1.24

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.

i <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/balancing-our-budget>

ii <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/consultations>