

Birmingham

Corporate Budget Consultation 2012 - You Said, We Did



You Said, We Did...

What has changed because of the Corporate Budget Consultation

Introduction

In 2011 and early 2012 the Council carried out its most comprehensive public budget consultation to date. The consultation consisted of two parts:

1. The corporate consultation on the allocation across services of £65m worth of required new savings for 2012/13 (and their consequent effect in future years)
2. Directorate consultations on specific budget proposals

The corporate consultation ran from 12 October 2011 until the 8 January 2012 and asked for views on the following:

1. The Council's top service priorities and approach to delivering savings.
2. Any of the new savings proposals that they thought we should not implement, but bearing in mind the need to achieve the required overall level of savings.
3. Our plans not to pursue a number of potential savings initiatives which we had considered.
4. Any other suggestions that they would like to make for ways of making savings, taking account of the actions which we have already put in place.
5. The proposed Council Tax freeze, for the second year running.

A wide range of consultation methods were used to engage with the public on what was a very difficult and complex set of proposals. Including (amongst others, an on line survey; public meetings across the city; a postal survey of the People's Panel and focus groups with different equalities groupings within the People's Panel; opportunities to send in comments

The People's Panel Postal survey was structured to be demographically representative of the city. The Online survey via the City Council website was open access and therefore was not targeted, however, the results broadly reflect those from the weighted People's Panel survey.

In addition to the quantitative information gathered through the surveys, we have obtained some extremely valuable qualitative information as a result of the public meetings, people's panel focus groups and bespoke disability and minority group meetings.

All of the feedback given through the corporate budget consultation has been recorded and made public through Birmingham City Council's website www.birmingham.gov.uk/budgetviews.

There was overwhelming support for the Council's four priorities. A net balance of:

- 90% on the online survey and 95% on the People's Panel survey agreed with protecting vulnerable people
- 89% for the online survey and 94% for the People's Panel agreed that the Council should be encouraging investment to create jobs and helping people into work
- 88% for the online survey and 95% for the People's Panel agreed with improving education and skills

- 83% of the online survey and 93% of People's Panel survey with the clean, green and safe community

There was overwhelming support for a Council Tax freeze in 2012/13 from both the surveys and the public meetings

There was also very strong support for not implementing the "not proposed items" at the public meetings. This was also reflected in the high negative balances in the online survey. Details of these responses are contained in the full Business Plan and Budget Document available online.

Summary of feedback on key issues from the proposed additional savings

The People's Panel and Online surveys and public meetings showed broad support for the majority of the savings proposals, but some were not supported. In the table below, we have summarised the views expressed about these 'not supported' proposals and our response.

Issue/s	Summary of Proposal	Summary of feedback	Our Response
<p>Reductions to the Supporting People Programme</p>	<p>Proposed saving: £3.8m for 2012/13</p> <p>A review of how we will deliver the programme within the reduced budget is already in progress. This has included a detailed consultation process with service providers, service users and other stakeholders.</p> <p>A reduced budget would result in a reduction in funding to the voluntary sector, some decommissioning of services and a possible removal of some client groups from the Supporting People programme.</p>	<p>Online survey did not support this. The People's Panel postal survey gave marginal support.</p> <p>There was a strong feeling from all of the community forums and stakeholder meetings that this preventative service should not be reduced further. Some of the important points made were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting People is a preventative service reducing this would lead to cuts to some groups leading to higher costs later and additional costs to other service (e.g. adult social care) • Collaboration needed between and across adult social care and supporting people and in areas such as homeless, health, young people, and probation. Work through the Supporting People programme impacts on all these areas • Overall benefit from preventative services should be taken into account in budget setting – not treated separately 	<p>In response to the feedback from the budget consultation the Council proposes to reduce the originally proposed saving of £3.8m by £1.9m. The Council will consult further on this revised proposal including a review of services provided internally.</p>
<p>To provide social care</p>	<p>Proposed saving: £0.9m for 2012/13</p>	<p>Feedback from the consultation to date indicates that service users and carers</p>	<p>In view of the comments received through the consultation process the</p>

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<p>funding through individual budgets to meet assessed eligible needs.</p>	<p>Individual budgets are a central part of the personalisation agenda, the drive to give service users choice and control over the care services they receive. They are an allocation of funding given to a service user (after an assessment) which should be sufficient to pay for all of the support that they need.</p> <p>We want to move away from a system of overall entitlement to social care in all aspects of a person's life, towards more targeted support where there is clear evidence that there would be a risk of people losing their independence if services were not provided.</p> <p>To make sure that we always carry out our duty to meet assessed eligible needs and minimise the impact on individuals we will operate a system of 'moderation'. This will ensure that individuals receive the right amount of money needed to purchase the care and support they need. However, where we can demonstrate that eligible needs can be met at a lower cost, we will expect people to agree to this.</p>	<p>have had difficulty in understanding how the proposals would impact upon them.</p>	<p>Council is not now proposing to go ahead with this saving proposal in 2012/13. This is a very technical and complex area and we need to ensure that sufficient time and detail is provided.</p> <p>Adults and Communities therefore proposes to substitute an alternative savings plan for the £0.886m of proposal 3. The Directorate believes that continuing with effective vacancy management – while ensuring delivery of frontline services – will allow a saving of this magnitude to be secured in 2012/13, while a further round of communication and consultation is proposed to take place in early summer. The intention would be to seek to implement a fresh proposal following consultation from 1st April 2013.</p>

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<p>Respite Care Homes – linked to reducing numbers of children in care and increasing foster placements proposal</p>	<p>Proposed saving: £6.5 million for 2012/13</p> <p>In order to improve outcomes for children, it is therefore proposed to review and reduce the number of children placed into children’s homes, and increase the number of foster carers.</p> <p>This may mean that we reduce the number of care homes that we fund, and that levels of fostering will need to increase.</p> <p>We propose to focus on recruiting more foster carers and running an intensive campaign to encourage people to consider fostering.</p> <p>We propose to make other savings by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-commissioning existing residential, domiciliary and respite care packages, and reducing the length of stay with expensive providers • Reducing the number of foster placements arranged through external agencies • Reviewing the number and range of in-house residential placements 	<p>There were strong, parent and public views on the possible closure of respite care for children with complex needs. A summary of the points made is as follows.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These homes provide an essential and highly skilled service for the families that use them that is not available elsewhere. • Alternative packages have not worked- providers refuse to take them, or lack skills with children with complex needs • Financially impossible to equip foster homes with facilities needed to cater for these children • Occupancy is misleading - no account of risk assessments, benefit of small peer groups, 5-year waiting lists, social workers don’t suggest it 	<p>This is an emotive and complex area and we acknowledge the concerns and issues that have been raised by stakeholders.</p> <p>Changes in this area are only possible within a clear authorising environment from stakeholders. We will continue to explore how we can best meet need in this area and engage with stakeholders on options to do so. There is no planned closure of residential homes offering this provision.</p> <p>In response to the feedback from consultation, the Council will be keeping Charles House open. Savings from the placement strategy will focus on Children in Care and not disabled children and young people. The Council will look at improving the occupancy levels where appropriate.</p>

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<p>Opportunities for children and young people in the city including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redesigning the Connexions Service to fit available funding. 	<p>Proposed saving: £4.1million in 2012/13</p> <p>This proposal will see the Connexions service being resized to fit available funds and operating as a ‘fully traded’ (and full cost recovery) service. This means it will charge for its service, rather than being paid for by the council.</p> <p>The new Education Bill alters some responsibilities held by councils and by schools relating to the provision of careers advice, which is part of the service provided by Connexions. Schools will be able to source this service from any provider, not just Connexions.</p> <p>Government has launched the ‘National Careers Service’ to take on some of the responsibilities previously held by Connexions, although this will usually be provided online or via an advice line, with face to face work only with young people who meet certain criteria.</p>	<p>There was wide concern around the reduction of opportunities for the city’s children and young people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents were concerned about the reductions in this service at a time of high youth unemployment, and a call for more co-ordinated work in this area in support of the Council’s jobs, education and skills priorities. Young people stressed the need for such services, but (regardless of who provided them as some respondents had experienced variable quality) there needed to be attention to their quality and effectiveness. 	<p>The Government has removed financial resources for the provision of Connexions. In line with other services we have, in addition, proposed a further reduction. This will mean the residual services will focus on the most vulnerable and most in need. From September 2012 the responsibility to provide impartial careers information, advice and guidance will sit with schools; the local authority will continue to provide impartial information, advice and guidance and support to targeted groups.</p> <p>The trend over the past three years has been a reduction in the numbers of young people who are NEET.</p> <p>A key part of our strategy is to strengthen the protective factors in young people’s lives. This can support young people to remain in education, have good attendance at school, manage their behaviour and make positive choices about their health and wellbeing. Strengthening protective factors with a young person, such as reasoning skills and employment prospects, help diminish the effect of risk factors which are more difficult to change e.g. disadvantaged neighbourhood or family history of</p>

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			<p>problem behaviour. This approach will be important in supporting children and young people to maintain their education in school and reduce the number of fixed term exclusions.</p> <p>There is still a significant cohort of young people who are missing from education. This is an area that requires a significant focus. As an issue it disproportionately impacts on children and young people with SEN who are new arrivals to the country who came from disadvantaged backgrounds, and those who are from a Romany/Traveller heritage.</p> <p>In relation to improving engagement in learning and achievement in education and skills we recognise that we are a priority Local Authority for the DfE in terms of our primary schools performance.</p> <p>Underperformance in our primary schools is something that we had recognised through our own self-review. To this end we have established the Primary School Improvement Group led by a primary school Head and more recently the secondary equivalent, the Secondary School to School Partnership Group.</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early years provision and any closure of children's centres 	<p>No specific proposal or saving</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong support in the surveys and consultation meetings for not implementing further reductions in Early Years. • The number of responses sent to budget views concerning the possible savings in respect of children's centres 	<p>This needs to be seen in the context of the City's work to strengthen the local economy and secure economic growth that will increase the range of opportunities for young people.</p> <p>The Council is continuing to consult on how best to achieve savings and meet needs through children's centres. Changes will be based on the new model of working linked to integrated family support teams and delivery in localities.</p> <p>We will be maximising access to the reduced service through locality agreements between groups of children's centres.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining the provision of youth services 	<p>No specific new saving proposal for 2012/13</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong support in the surveys and consultation meetings for not withdrawing from direct provision of youth services. 	<p>The Council in response to the concern about Youth Services will not be making a further £0.5m reduction to the Youth Service.</p> <p>Young people made an overwhelming response to the proposals and due to this Councillors were not minded to proceed.</p>

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Shelforce	<p>Proposed saving: £1m for 2012/13</p> <p>Explore business options and supported employment opportunities. The options are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintaining Shelforce at existing employee and production levels which may require the council and/or other agencies to subsidise the operation to mitigate trading losses. 2. Substantially reduce the Shelforce operation and reduce the number of employees, to improve the trading position. This may require the council and/or other agencies to subsidise the operation but at a reduced level of subsidy. 3. Develop a different operating model for delivering employment support to disabled people. 	<p>Online survey supported the proposal, whereas the People's Panel survey did not.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A key issue for participants in the People's Panel forum was ensuring the welfare of people with disabilities. 	<p>The Council is exploring all options to safeguard the future employment of all registered disabled staff currently employed by Shelforce, and the Council does not envisage any compulsory redundancies among these staff. It is proposed that an extensive consultation exercise with all key stakeholders and staff will be undertaken before finalising any proposals for the future operating model of Shelforce. Specific support will be provided to people with disabilities to enable them to participate fully and meaningfully in this consultation.</p>
Review financial support to community events	<p>Proposed saving: £400,000 for 2012/13</p> <p>Reducing the funding to community events would require partners to provide a bigger financial contribution, or mean that some of the events would need to be smaller.</p>	<p>The net balance in the online survey did not support this proposal</p>	<p>The Council will continue to underwrite important events but will lever in alternative funding sources.</p>

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<p>Reviewing Community Development and Play grants</p>	<p>Proposed saving: £500,000 for 2012/13</p> <p>In order to find the total proposed saving, we will need to both reduce the size of the team, and also the money available to fund the services.</p> <p>The directorate is consulting on the closure of Ladywood Arts & Leisure Centre from 2012 (linked to the Icknield Port Loop development).</p>	<p>The net balance from both the online survey and the People’s Panel survey did not support reducing the community development and play grants. The views expressed at public meeting were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear about impact on crime and anti-social behaviour • Important to prevent problems occurring later • Important to have youth provision, after school clubs, play schemes and keeping children off the streets 	<p>The Council acknowledges that the level and allocation of grant aid has not changed for a number of years.</p> <p>From the 1 April grants will be handled from a commissioning perspective that will focus on priorities.</p> <p>More broadly, funding for young people is currently split between three different Cabinet portfolios. Cabinet Members will look at making best use of the resource to work more effectively for young people in the city.</p>

Full details of the results of both the open online survey and the People's Panel survey, together with a summary of all of the findings from the budget forms and focus groups can be found in the final report and analysis of the budget consultation in "Budget Views" on the Council's website www.birmingham.gov.uk/budgetviews

In summary we have listened to the views expressed through the corporate budget consultation:

- Reduced the amount of savings proposed for the Supporting People Programme
- In response to the feedback from consultation, the Council will be keeping Charles House open. Savings from the placement strategy will focus on children in care and not disabled children and young people. The Council will also look at improving occupancy levels where appropriate.
- Now not making a further £0.5m reduction to the Youth Service and are consulting on the savings that need to be made in respect of children's centres
- The Council intends to protect the employment of individual disabled Shelforce employees by seeking to re-deploy them around the organisation, whilst recognising that changes need to be made to address the company's trading deficit
- Continuing to underwrite important community events, but leveraging in funding to support these
- Ensuring that community development and play grants are awarded through a robust commissioning process and targeted according to priorities
- Maximising the funding for young people across three portfolios to make better use of the money to meet need.

At a strategic level we have heard through the consultation the broader concern for the children and young people in the city and will undertake a through review across all directorates of how we are addressing this