

Appendix 2

CONSULTATION ON THE COUNCIL'S BUDGET PROPOSALS 2017-2020

JANUARY 2017

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Between December 2016 and January 2017, the Council undertook an eight week period of consultation on its budget proposals for 2017/18 to 2019/20, prior to making the final decision on its budget.
- 1.2. The Council reported on its priorities, the budget setting context and local financial position and gave an outline of the proposals to balance the Council's 2017/18 to 2019/20 budgets. The Council asked for views on its proposals for delivering services in the future while achieving the savings needed.

2. Consultation Process

- 2.1. The Council hosted a survey on its website asking for people's views on the budget proposals. This survey was publicised through the Council website, Facebook and Twitter pages. There were a total of 227 respondents, of whom 74 left comments. The results of the survey are summarised in section 3.
- 2.2. In addition, a meeting was held with the Chamber of Commerce during January to understand the views of the Chamber on the Council's budget proposals. The issues raised during the meeting are summarised in section 4.
- 2.3. The Trade Unions were also consulted on the draft budget proposals at a series of meetings held between November 2016 and January 2017. The Council continues to consult with the trade unions on the impact and implementation of the Council's budget.
- 2.4. Two online petitions have been started: Save our Job Shop and the essential support that helps Coventry residents into work and Stop the closure of our shop mobility. These are available to view on the Council's website.

3. Outcomes of the Consultation on the Council's Budget Proposals

- 3.1. The main issues that were raised through the public consultation on the Council's budget proposals are set out below. A table is included at the end of this report that provides a summary of the comments made during the consultation, grouped into subject areas
- 3.2. In addition to survey responses, written responses were received from Trade Unions, Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce, Coventry Older Voices and the Disability Equality Advisory Panel
- 3.3. A full list of comments from the meetings, online survey and written feedback can be received by contacting insight@coventry.gov.uk.

Feedback from the on line survey and written feedback

- 3.4. Whilst recognising the current financial climate and the Council's reduced resources, a number of respondents felt that it was vital for the Council to continue investing in the city, in order to support the city's economy and stimulate growth.
- 3.5. A large number of respondents referred to the importance of the Job Shop in the city and the need to continue providing employment support for the most vulnerable groups in the city. It was stressed that this support would be vital in ensuring the continued growth for the city centre. Whilst most respondents stressed the importance of the provision of employment support there were some that viewed the Job Shop as a duplication of provision and one that the Council did not need to support.
- 3.6. There were concerns that changes to the bin collections and street cleansing would result in increased fly tipping and more litter on the streets at a time when the city is already very dirty. Concerns were also raised about the proposed changes to the Shop Mobility Service and Trading Standards, claiming that it would be vulnerable people that would be most affected by any changes. Throughout the comments there was a general concern expressed over the negative impact of the budget cuts on some of the most vulnerable people in the City.
- 3.7. There were mixed views about the importance of the Universities in the future development of the city centre. Many residents felt the city has become over-run with student accommodation and that the Universities should be paying for improvements to the city centre. It was highlighted several times that a way for the Council to raise money would be to charge either the students directly or their landlord's Council Tax.
- 3.8. The voluntary sector felt that there needed to be recognition of the role that they have in delivering some of the early preventative services which in turn could help to manage the demand for Council services as well as their role in securing resources into the city.
- 3.9. Even though the Council is required to set a balanced budget a number of respondents expressed their view that the Council needed to do more to fight the scale of spending cuts coming down from the Government.
- 3.10. A number of respondents highlighted that both the budget report and consultation should be improved in order to make it more meaningful to local people. A number of residents said that the budget proposals were so broad that there was insufficient detail in the savings proposals upon which to comment. They were interested to understand what further consultation would take place when more detailed proposals emerged.

4. Feedback from Consultation Meeting

- 4.1. A presentation was given, which generated a discussion on a number of areas, the comments made on the Council's proposed budget proposals centred on the perceived negative impact on the planning process that would be felt if the service was reduced. It was widely felt that any reduction in service would be a barrier to the growth the city needs. In fact the response went as far as to suggest that the planning team needed further investment at this time.

Summary of Responses from the Council's Public Budget Consultation – January 2017

Priority / Theme	Comments	
Tell us what you think about the proposed budget plans for 2017/20?		
Employment Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Save job shop as it helps the tax payer save money from people not working, also boosts the local economy due to the job increase saving the city long term due to economic development. • The proposed closure of the job shop would be hugely detrimental to the city. • Having read your proposals I am astounded to see that you are looking to cut employment support services, including the successful Job Shop. • In addition a cut in the funding of existing services and in closing the Job Shop which is quite a flagship for this work, will lose the city a very high amount of leveraged funding that comes in on the back of existing activities. This would include European and national grants, and initiatives more holistically focused on boosting the local economy. • Employment Team/Job Shop/Youth employment this type of work is supported at a national level with huge resources and Coventry City Council is duplicating this work • I am appalled by the proposed cuts to the Employment Team and the closure of the Job Shop, at a time when we need to be investing in local people not turning our back on them. Many of the people that access the Job Shop are NOT eligible to receive support from the Job Centre, so NO this is not an alternative 	Residents/Trade Unions/Organisations
Waste Services/Street Cleansing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cutting back on waste disposal will lead to more fly tipping and unauthorised fires and so forth no cost saving. • The plans for waste collection are rubbish! • I think the further reduction in street cleansing and reduction in number of litter bins and their emptying is short sighted and unacceptable, particularly in view of the Council's drive to achieve City of Culture status in 2021 	Residents/Trade Unions/Organisations

Priority / Theme	Comments	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not agree with reduction in street cleaning Coventry is dirty enough already and needs more cleansing not less. The proposal to end weekly bin collections is disgraceful. It just means we're paying more in Council Tax for a degraded level of service. Aside from the likely problems with smell and insects/vermin during hot weather, it's bound to lead to an increase in fly-tipping and litter on the streets. 	
Shop mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ceasing of the Shop Mobility service is likely to backfire - it is a well-used service, much valued by people who have money to spend in local shops. I think a number of the more marginal savings proposed will have disproportionate impact and should be avoided, in my view by slightly increasing Council Tax. In particular, I think that the proposals to close all pro-active trading standards, to cease Ward Forums, to further cut Community and Development services, and to close shop mobility are all likely to have a high impact while achieving only relatively minor savings It is not acceptable to close this service for disabled people + older less mobile people who need to use this service. It will make some very vulnerable people more socially isolated + does not go well for Coventry who aspire/ are supposed to becoming an Age Friendly City. 	Residents/Trade Unions/Organisations
Trading Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposal would put an end to pre-emptive work of trading standards, reverting to statutory enforcement function only. This is open to interpretation and would have wide implications as to the work of trading standards and could seriously restrict its work and the protection that it could provide for Coventry Citizens 	Residents/Trade Unions/Organisations
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are on the cusp of great things in Coventry and we don't want any changes to the planning system to become a barrier to this growth Need to ensure that capacity and quality are not impacted by any changes to the planning department 	Members of Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce
Overall proposals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The way you are dealing with the central government cuts to budgets is as usual for this council totally wrong and isn't for the best. Cutting services, some vital ones may I add is not the right thing to do. Whilst these cuts stem from a Tory government, we believe that this Labour led Council should not be just passing them on. Total council reserves have 	Residents/Trade Unions/Organisations

Priority / Theme	Comments	
	<p>risen again in the last year and now stand at £95 million! Some of that money should be used to preserve services against cuts and use the time bought to lead a serious campaign against the Tory government for the restoration of essential local funding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A scandalous betrayal of the Coventry public. Use your reserves or refuse to carry out these terrible cuts and force the government to come in and run the authority - that way they get the blame not you. Stand up for what you believe in! • Appreciate the very difficult decisions - but the council could do more to help citizens understand the difficult moral, social and financial issues faced. The cuts should be targeted more at those who can afford rather than the most vulnerable in our communities. • The Council is facing a challenging situation but overall I consider the approach is ok Coventry will have no more services in 2020 at this rate. We will potentially be the city of culture with nothing worth living in for. • How can we be a City of Culture or even be considering this if we don't value the people living in it • Stop spending on non-essential such as 1/2 marathons when saying there is NO money • Coventry will have no more services in 2020 at this rate. We will potentially be the city of culture with nothing worth living in for. • How can we be a City of Culture or even be considering this if we don't value the people living in it 	
<p>What do you think the Council could do differently to reduce costs and save money in the future?</p>		

Priority / Theme	Comments	
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get a lot better at communicating with the people you are meant to be representing and serving that way they get the blame not you. Stand up for what you believe in! • What consultation events have you held across the city to share information about the tough decisions and work with Coventry people to come up with their suggestions? 	Residents/Trade Unions/Organisations
Infrastructure Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in the city's infrastructure/ business to attract more investment • Stop building new council offices ,use what you have until Coventry becomes strong and self-reliant again • Ditch the money spent/wasted on prestige projects to "revitalise" the City Centre and pay more attention to the needs of ordinary people living out in the suburbs. 	Residents/Trade Unions/Organisations
Council Staff/Number of Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There seems no need to have quite so many councillors per ward as they no longer need to be out in their communities because communication is more effective and faster using email and other social media, the work can be done in a different more efficient way, and as charities are now picking up all the previous statutory and community services, not needing help from the city council • As the majority of the council costs are staff related they should review staffing costs, particularly at the most senior level. • Look closely at the high salaries paid to what continues to be an exceptionally high number of senior managers. 	Residents/Trade Unions/Organisations
Voluntary Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission more services from the voluntary sector • More actively facilitate (including ongoing material if not financial) support for social enterprise solutions to key community service provision 	Residents/Trade Unions/Organisations
Universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could the council levy some kind of 'poll tax' on student dwellings being erected all over the city? Some of the revenue could then be used to be more pro-active in addressing the concerns of local people over the 'swamping of the city centre' with student accommodation 	Residents/Trade Unions/Organisations

Priority / Theme	Comments	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student accommodation which is everywhere should not be totally council tax free. They are using services , they should be paid for • Charge both universities fees for all the student accommodation and expansion they are creating in the city. It is about time they paid back to the community. 	
Overall Comments		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I bet this consultation is just a box ticking exercise and that the comments will be ignored and the plans pushed ahead regardless of the comments. • The council should be open and honest with people so that they know it's just not possible to deliver the services they may want or may have received in the past • Why is there no coordinated central volunteer line and service within the council for litter picking, park maintenance etc. • To make this a meaningful consultation, there should be better ways of presenting the information so that everyone can understand. 	Residents/Trade Unions/Organisations