

Appendix 2

CONSULTATION ON THE COUNCIL'S BUDGET PROPOSALS 2019/20

FEBRUARY 2019

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Between December 2018 and February 2019, the Council undertook an eight week period of consultation on its budget proposals for 2019/20 to 2021/22, prior to making the final decisions 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 2019/20 budget. 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 29 respondents who 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 February to understand the views of local businesses 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 and the Council continues to consult with the Trades Unions on the impact and implementation of the Council's budget.

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 a written response was received from the UNISON Trades Union.
- 3.3. A full list of comments from the meetings, online survey and written feedback can be received by contacting paul.jennings@coventry.gov.uk.

Feedback from the on line survey and written feedback

- 3.4. There were comments from respondents on specific proposals included in the pre-Budget Report in relation to enforcement activity in the areas of parking (5 in favour, 2 against), bus lanes (2 in favour, 1 against) and the purchase of an Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) vehicle (3 in favour). There were two comments in support of the proposals to charge for parking at the Godva Festival. Other than these there were individual comments in support of the proposals in relation to street cleansing and parks and against proposals for pest control charging and the Council Tax increase.

- 3.5. Respondents were asked what they thought the Council could do differently to reduce costs. Support was expressed for undertaking further traffic and street enforcement activity (5), reducing the number of councillors or the cost of their allowances (4), reducing the level of senior pay or the management structure (4), focussing only on mandatory services (3), increasing productivity and reducing waste (3), charging students or their landlords for Council Tax (3), increase activity to identify and fine fly tipping (3), charging for entry to Godiva Festival (3), be more commercial (2), incorporate volunteering more within Council services (2) and open another redundancy and retirement programme.
- 3.6. A response from the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) supported increased parking enforcement in principle where it can help address and tackle instances where access to business premises is being restricted for small business owners as a result of illegal parking obstructions. However the response urged that any increase in parking enforcement is proportionate with a concern that high parking charges and aggressive enforcement make it harder for individuals to visit small businesses, thereby restricting local growth, investment and job opportunities. This is particular the case regarding high streets and the city centre where small businesses rely on strong footfall. The FSB welcomed the fact that Coventry city centre already has over 450 free parking spaces from 6pm. Alongside the additional parking enforcement during peak times they would like to see consideration given to extending the free parking hours or increasing the number of spaces to help encourage footfall and improve the evening economy in the centre.
- 3.7. The response from UNISON expressed concern over: future financial estimates given the potential impact of a hard Brexit; the union's view of expectations of job losses and increasing pressure on union members based on work volumes; and a perception of valuable services having been cut so dramatically that support for the most vulnerable in the city is spasmodic and difficult to access. UNISON doubted that a new pay and grading structure could be realised within 6 months and stated that it would not support the diminution of terms and conditions. A number of other questions and requests for information were raised. On individual Pre-Budget proposals questions or challenges were raised regarding Looked After Children cost pressures, the costs and benefits of the Caradoc Hall homelessness project, the Council's responsibility to all homeless not just those to which it has a legal duty, the long-term financial benefit of the City of Culture and a challenge to charges at the Godiva Festival.

4. Feedback from Consultation Meeting with the Chamber of Commerce

- 4.1. A presentation was given on the Council's financial proposals and future. Discussion and questions included issues around homelessness, the Station Masterplan plans, and any potential impact of austerity on the City of Culture plans. Comments were supportive of the refurbishment of public leisure facilities in the city and the business model for providing these. The plans to demolish Coventry Point were well received and there was discussion around the future of the City Centre South project and the need to ensure that a sustainable model is pursued.

Summary of Responses from the Council's Public Budget Consultation – January 2018

Priority / Theme	Comments	
Tell us if any of the proposals in the Appendix are likely to have an impact on the services you receive?		
Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better enforcement of bad parking would be great, particularly contraventions to the road vehicle lighting regulations such as cars parked on junctions at night • I agree with the enforcement of residents' only parking in the city, particularly central, and enforcement of existing bus lanes; however, signposting of bus lanes needs to be clearer with both existing and additional cameras. • I think that ANPR to capture motorists who park on or near schools zig zags, is a good idea as long as it is backed up by traffic wardens on the street, any additional help in enforcing parking rules is a great help. • The proposals seem very sensible and in terms of the ANPR about time too. • There will be greater resistance to the parking enforcement leading to greater requests for resident parking zones and private companies increasing costs for parking off street. • Why and for what end will cameras be useful monitoring bus lanes when most of these have been suspended indefinitely? • I am not opposed to increased bus lane enforcement, but some of the bus lanes are very hard to comply with where they end, near to junctions. • The ANPR car is an excellent idea and should be focused on schools where pupil safety is seriously compromised and traffic flow is inhibited by illegal parking. 	Residents/Organisations
Godiva Festival Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paying for parking at Godiva Festival is a good idea, but needs to be managed (good marketing, opportunity to pay in advance/cashless, ensuring strong and enhanced parking enforcement takes place on surrounding streets to mitigate effect on residents). 	Residents

Priority / Theme	Comments	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I support the initiative to charge for car parking at the Godiva Festival. I parked there this year and was surprised that it was free. 	
Pest Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We already receive a poor response for residential Pest Control services - if the emphasis is proposed to be even more focused on commercial customers, the residential/domestic customers are likely to receive an even worse service. 	Residents
Efficiency and Reduction in 'Waste'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The council do not need any new initiatives, it could balance its budget by rationalising existing unwanted and unnecessary services and be much more efficient at collecting money properly due to it. 	Residents
<p>In view of the difficult financial situation, what do you think the Council could do differently to reduce costs and save money in the future?</p>		
Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using car reg plate recognition to fine fly tippers. Choose a member of the public as a 'my street' representative to look after general litter and report fly tipping or rubbish outside houses on their street offering them reduced council tax. A specialist anti fly tipping/Posting Team within street enforcement focusing on 'series and serial' offenders more than the litany of day to day issues would likely generate more income in fixed penalty notices and prosecutions as they would have increased time for the investigations. The amount of dog fouling on public parks seems to have risen, this could be because Neighbourhood Enforcement Officers are tied up dealing with rough sleepers. More patrols of parks would generate more fixed penalty tickets. 	Residents
Other Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concentrate on mandatory services, and those for our residents. The costs attributed to software licensing are obscene! Given the availability for a number of years now of free and good quality alternatives to popular commercial products such as Microsoft Office I'm surprised the council has not seized upon this opportunity make significant cost savings. There is an extraordinary amount of properties in the city claiming Single Persons Discount when they are not entitled. Investing in more enforcement professionals would likely generate a large amount of income. 	Residents

Priority / Theme	Comments	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is absolutely clear that City Centre South is dead in the water. The Council needs to bring forward a new vision for the city centre that is less dependent on chain retailers. 	
Efficiency and Reduction in 'Waste'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect all Council tax, reduce benefit fraud, make better use of empty buildings - make money out of them, reduce senior pay, cut expenditure on agency staff and services. Work more efficiently, prevent the waste which occurs across departments, reduce large employment termination awards. There are a number of capital projects that are wasteful and give an impression of extravagance at a time of austerity. The Council could stop allowing extra lines of management and awarding managers un-deserved pay grade increases. 	Residents
Costs of Democracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have less councillors, even them out to two each ward. 	Residents
Godiva Festival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charge entry at Godiva instead of parking as might also avoid anti-social behaviour if some have to pay. Charge for the Godiva festival as well as for the parking. We should not charge to park at Godiva as this will result in local roads being swamped, we should charge a modest entry fee to the festival site itself, no-one will object to a £2 entry fee. 	Residents
Do you have any other comments you would like to make?		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The city centre looks great again. Good planning. Enhancing spend to save and capital programme, purchasing and building commercial property and promoting the city as a great place to live/work/visit. Some bus lanes have been converted back into regular traffic lanes for usage by all vehicles over the past few years. It wouldn't be cost effective to install enforcement cameras if the remaining bus lanes are subject to review and may subsequently be removed in medium term. The very poorest in our city must be protected as best we can. Taking additional funds from those that can afford it i.e. Car owners makes sense to me 	Residents

