

ANNEX 6

BUDGET CONSULTATION 2017/18

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ANNEX 6: BUDGET CONSULTATION 2017/18

SUMMARY

Nottingham City Council is setting its budget within a very challenging financial environment. It has seen a substantial reduction in Government funding and faces uncertainty over future levels of funding. Across the country there is a funding crisis in providing care for the elderly. This year the Council must find more money for Adult Social Care so must make difficult decisions about some services and levels of Council Tax and social care precept.

In line with the Council's commitment to citizen involvement, a full programme of consultation has been undertaken to support construction of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). This report details the results of that consultation and includes responses received up to and including 27 January 2017.

1. BACKGROUND

Context

There are a number of practical difficulties to be faced when undertaking budget consultation. A unitary authority such as Nottingham City Council provides an enormous number of services and this creates a complex picture with many proposals to consult on. This is made more difficult by the short consultation period available between the government notifying the Council of its funding levels and the annual budget-setting Council meeting.

Impact of Consultation

Nottingham City Council has a long term commitment to incorporate the views of citizens into the processes of policy making and service improvement. This helps the Council to understand the issues and services that matter to local communities. Budget consultation ensures that citizens' priorities guide the Executive Board in developing the budget proposals.

The Council has been guided by the following principles:

- Take account of the Council's priorities within the Council Plan 2015-2019 agreed by the Council on 9 November 2015;
- Address demographic and service pressures;
- Reflect the significant reductions in external funding (especially general and specific Government grants) by reducing expenditure on those activities;
- Support the Council's determination to be efficient, improve performance and modernise the organisation;
- Minimise the impact of service reductions and changes on vulnerable citizens by protecting frontline services;
- To pursue commercialisation opportunities to generate income for the Council.

2. THE CONSULTATION

How we consulted

Consultation on the budget was conducted in two phases:

Pre-budget

Before the budget settlement for 2017/18 was announced in December, pre-budget consultation was carried out during October and November 2016. This gathered views through a survey, available both on-line and through the October edition of the Council's Arrow magazine. Citizens were asked:

- Which services are important;
- Issues of concern in the current economic climate;
- How the Council could make further savings or generate additional income;

Following this process, the draft budget was approved for consultation by Executive Board on 20th December 2016.

Consultation on budget proposals

The Council consulted on the draft budget proposals from December 20th 2016. A consultation form was made available online and in hard copy to enable everyone to have their say. As part of the consultation, events were arranged across the City, which were publicised locally by neighbourhood management teams. Attendees were invited to provide feedback via the consultation form and verbal feedback from these events was recorded and collated. Consultation with businesses, colleagues, One Nottingham partners and the voluntary and community sector was also undertaken. Young people's views were also sought via a discussion at Youth Cabinet.

The consultation events

The local public consultation events provided the opportunity for citizens to engage directly with members of the Council's Executive Board and ask them about the proposals. The Council's neighbourhood management teams arranged four 'drop-in' sessions, one in each of the Joint Service Centres. At each event a presentation was available, providing background to the budget and information about the proposals. A short animated video was also available which used graphics to explain the current budget position in Nottingham. In addition, agenda items on the budget consultation were added to some pre-existing meetings and citizens had the opportunity to discuss the budget during regular weekly surgeries with councillors. Interpreters were present at the community event at the Mary Potter Joint Service Centre to help members of the deaf community engage with the consultation.

Members of the local business community attended a breakfast briefing and a lunchtime event on the Council's budget was arranged for One Nottingham Partners. There was also an additional event hosted by Nottingham Community and Voluntary Service for voluntary and community groups and Communities of Identity. All of these events involved a formal presentation from a Portfolio Holder or Executive Assistant, followed by a Q&A session.

The views of young people in the City were also sought via a session at a Youth Cabinet meeting. Cllr Mellen introduced the young people to the budget and fielded questions and encouraged discussion about the proposals and the budget as a whole.

Nottingham City Council colleagues were also given the opportunity to be involved in the consultation, this involved:

- Presentations by the Chief Executive or the Deputy Chief Executive and the Deputy Leader, followed by question and answer sessions.
- Intranet news articles

Feedback to services

Feedback received on the budget proposals from this series of events and via the consultation form is being forwarded to senior officers on a regular basis for appropriate consideration.

3 RESULTS AND FEEDBACK FROM THE CONSULTATION

Pre-budget consultation

2,034 responses were received from the pre-budget consultation with 98% of these coming from the survey in the October edition of the Council's Arrow magazine; the remainder responded online or completed a form which was available at local meetings or in Council buildings.

Respondents were asked to rate a cross section of 24 council services / functions on a scale of 1 (Not important) to 5 (Very important). For each service a mean average has been calculated out of 5. The services rated as the top 5 most important by respondents were:

1. Tackling crime and antisocial behaviour
2. Refuse collection
3. Services to elderly and vulnerable people
4. Public Health
5. Child Protection

Four out of the services rated as the five most important by 2016 respondents are the same as those identified in the 2015 survey. Public Health has replaced Public Transport in the top five, Public Transport appeared 6th in the 2016 survey. The ordering of the top services has changed however; in 2015, services to elderly and vulnerable people topped the list.

The full results of the survey are given in **Appendix A** to this report.

Consultation on the budget proposals

Responses via the budget consultation form

124 survey submissions have been received to date.

Feedback specific to budget proposals

87 pieces of feedback relating to specific budget proposals has been received to date. The following table summarises this feedback by service area.

Service	Feedback received
Public Transport	39
Sport & Culture	12
Neighbourhood Services	8
Energy Services	6
Early Help	4
Econ Dev Partner & Policy	4
Children in Care	3
Inclusion & Disability	3
Adult Social Care	2
Community Protection	1
Education Partnerships	1
Legal & Democratic	1
Quality & Commissioning - Supporting People	1
Strategy & Policy	1
YOT	1

Most of the feedback received to date relates to the Public Transport proposals and the majority of these have been about the proposal to charge for the Medilink service.

Other feedback

Around 120 comments have been received which are not specific to individual budget proposals. A number of these were concerns about a rise in Council Tax.

The rest of the comments related to a very wide range of topics with no topics dominating feedback. Topics included:

- Income generation
- Government cuts
- Concerns about Social Care costs
- Marketing spend

In some cases, feedback showed that citizens feel that the Council is doing its best given the difficult circumstances. Some citizens stated that more information is needed in order for them to fully understand what is being proposed.

The above is based on data received up to 7 February 2017.

Feedback from events in neighbourhoods

Clarity was sought on the detail of a number of proposals including:

- redesigning Children's Centres,
- charging non-domestic users for use of household waste recycling centres,
- the bereavement service review,
- the proposal to charge for medilink

Topics discussed included:

- The impact of the rise on those on benefits and whether the Council recovers all the Council Tax due.
- The need for supporting people at home so as to reduce the burden on the NHS and how savings are to be made through jointly working with the NHS.
- Concern about costs of leisure centres for those on benefits
- Concerns about the loss of EU funding for construction, skills and training and business grants
- Concerns about what will happen in future years, whether there will be future rises in Council Tax
- The impact on Council Tax of having a lot of student properties within the City
- The City's Business Rates
- The Transitional Grant from the Government

Clarity was also sought on the funding sources of a number of projects and programmes and the impact of the cuts on Council staff.

Discussions with the business community

Topics discussed included:

- The need to educate people about the real issues, the complexity of the budget situation facing the Council and the uncertainty of future costs
- Balancing long term returns and short term one-off opportunities
- Speculative investments
- Local Authority borrowing
- Outsourcing

Discussions with One Nottingham Partners

Topics discussed included:

- The importance of retaining welfare rights interpreting services whilst trying to find savings if possible.
- Protecting services for the homeless
- How One Nottingham can work with smaller niche voluntary organisations
- Nottingham's future and its opportunities, the Council's priority to up-skill the city
- Funding for work around social cohesion
- Communicating the complex budget issues to citizens

Feedback from the Voluntary and Community Sector

Feedback, queries and discussion centred around:

- A number of the specific budget proposals, including cuts to Youth Crime Services, Nottingham Futures, bereavement services, charging for Medilink
- Co-ordinating social care and health services
- The sustainability of constant cuts
- Cuts to voluntary sector funding
- Support for the Council and the understanding that it is doing all it can

Feedback from the Youth Cabinet

A number of specific proposals were discussed including:

- The proposed charge for the medilink service
- Review of fees and charges at Leisure Centres
- Reductions in the Youth Offending Team and therefore intervention work which could have a negative impact by making YOT service users more likely to reoffend

Other topics discussed included:

- How to improve Nottingham and encourage more people and business into the City
- The amount the Council spends on adult services and whether citizens realise what the Council spends its money on
- The need for care provision in the community to relieve pressure on hospitals, re-thinking how older people are cared for and the practicalities of increased caring responsibilities whilst still earning a living.

Formal responses

A formal response has been received from the Nottinghamshire Disabled People's Movement which provides feedback on eight of the budget proposals. A summary is provided below and the full response has been shared with relevant senior officers and portfolio holders:

- Concern about the impact of potential cuts to the Easylink dial-a-ride service which many disabled people rely on to go out during the day, for essential meetings, appointments, social activities, etc.
- Concern that Special Education Needs services are to be sold as a means of income generation, there is a danger of these services not being available to the children who currently rely on them.
- Impact on young people's employment readiness and economic growth of the city relating to proposals affecting Nottingham Futures.
- Concern that the library proposals could impact more severely on those who are disabled or elderly and increase social isolation.
- The NCH cut is sizable and there is concern that services offered to vulnerable people will be affected.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Throughout the consultation a large amount of feedback has been received from a wide-ranging group of respondents and this information has been fed into the decision-making process.

Overall there is recognition of the difficult position the Council is in, regarding the scale of savings that have to be made.

The results from the '2016 Your City Your Services' survey undertaken in phase one of the consultation shows that Citizens' service priorities have not significantly changed since the previous year. There have been small changes in the overall ranking of services important to citizens. For example 'Tackling crime and antisocial behaviour' has risen in the rankings since last year. This may in part be due to the local publicity around the City.

Findings from phase one of the consultation about citizens' priorities suggest that health is an increasingly important issue for citizens. Public Health was this year ranked as the 4th most important Council service and almost three quarters of respondents said that they were concerned or very concerned about the 'impact on my health' of the current economic situation.

Throughout the second phase of the consultation, the feedback we have received via the survey has tended to focus on the proposals which are likely to impact citizens on a day-to-day basis. However, feedback via the events and discussions has also brought out the longer term issues of future funding and how to meet the increasing costs of social care.

This suggests that, although citizens are worried about potential cuts to services which would impact upon them now, there is a growing understanding and concern amongst citizens and organisations within the city about the more long term issues such as funding for social care. The Council has been communicating widely about these complex issues and needs to continue to do so as they are becoming so fundamental to future decision-making.

Appendix A: Your City Your Services 2016 Data Report

Background

This report presents the detailed results from the 2016 Your City Your Services (YCYS) survey. This is the sixth annual Your City Your Services survey.

From the beginning of October 2016 the YCYS survey was available online and a paper version was distributed to every household across the City in the autumn edition of the Nottingham Arrow publication. The survey was also circulated using Social media (Facebook and twitter). Paper copies of the survey were made available at customer reception points across the City including at the Joint Service Centres, leisure centres, libraries and Angel Row Contact Centre.

As in previous years, the 2016 YCYC survey used a self-completion approach. At the date of writing this report a total of 2,034 responses have been received, compared to 1,834 in 2015, 1,982 in 2014 and 2,524 in 2013.

Results from the survey were made available to inform Councillors' decisions in the 2017/18 budget making process.

Interpreting the data

Please note that, as the Your City Your Services survey did not use a truly random sample, the confidence intervals stated within this report should be used as a guide only.

Percentage figures quoted have been rounded up/down to the nearest whole number and mean scores have been rounded up/down to one decimal place. Where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of "don't know" categories, or multiple answers.

The base number of respondents for each question is given as (n = base number)

How important are services?

For question 1, respondents were asked to rate on a scale of 1 (Not important) to 5 (Very important) a cross section of 24 Council services.

Based on the views of respondents each service has been given a mean score calculated out of 5. Figures have been rounded up/down to one decimal point.

Four out of the services rated as the five most important by 2016 respondents are the same as those identified in the 2015 survey. Public Health has replaced Public Transport in the top five, Public Transport appeared 6th in the 2016 survey.

Table 1: Top Five Rated Services in 2015

2016 ranking	Service (2015 ranking in brackets)	Mean score
1	Tackling crime and antisocial behaviour (3)	4.30
2	Refuse Collection (4)	4.29
3	Services to elderly and vulnerable people (1)	4.28
4	Public Health (6)	4.17
5	Child Protection (2)	4.15

The ordering of the top services has changed; in 2015, services to elderly and vulnerable people topped the list. **Tackling crime antisocial behaviour** and **refuse collection** have both moved up two places since last year. **Child Protection** and **Services to elderly and vulnerable people** have both dropped down within the top five. **Public Health** has entered the top five, having been sixth last year, whilst **Public Transport** has dropped into sixth place this year.

The services rated as the two least important by respondents remain the same as last year. These are **Museums** (3.13 out of 5) and **Events** (2.88 out of 5).

Further savings or additional income

Respondents were asked to suggest how the Council could make further savings or additional income. 816 respondents provided their ideas. Suggestions are summarised by Portfolio below:

Strategic Regeneration

A small amount of feedback was received about services in this Portfolio. The feedback received related to:

- Selling Council assets e.g. buildings and land
- The role of voluntary & community sector in providing services
- Focussing on rehabilitation to reduce re-offending

Resources & Neighbourhood Regeneration

Feedback relating to this Portfolio centred around the need for the Council to develop more commercial services and reducing spend on Councillors. There was also quite a bit of feedback around Council Tax but most the suggestions are unfortunately not under the discretion of the local authority.

Energy & Sustainability

Very little feedback was received about the services within this Portfolio. Feedback received related to reducing energy use in Council buildings and more use of solar panels.

Planning & Housing

Not much feedback was received about the services within this Portfolio. Suggestions made included introducing fines for private landlords not maintaining properties or housing and charging social housing tenants for damages they cause to their homes and gardens.

Business, Growth & Transport

We received more suggestions about services which are in this Portfolio than any other. Suggestions included:

- Reduce street lighting
- Stop spending on cycle lanes
- Levy charge on heavy vehicles which damage roads to pay towards repairs
- Look into policies on passes for free bus travel
- Reduce some bus services with lower demand outside peak hours
- More enforcement of on-street parking charges
- Raise on-street parking charges

In particular we received a large volume of responses about reducing street lighting and spending less on cycle lanes.

Adults & Health, Reputation & Communications

Suggestions included:

- Reduce spend on marketing and communications eg the Arrow, banners around the city
- Charge some citizens who could afford it for social care
- Encourage people to be more active to reduce healthcare costs

The majority of responses relating to services in this Portfolio were about reducing spend on marketing and communications with particular reference to the Arrow publication and banners and posters around the city.

Leisure & Culture

The services within this portfolio attracted a large volume of feedback; much of this was about events, including:

- Raise more income from events
- Charge for events
- Stop some events
- Use parks for income-generating events

There were also ideas about making the most of Nottingham and raising income from tourist attractions eg caves, Robin Hood legend, River Trent. Other suggestions included cutting library opening hours and introducing minimal charges for museums.

Community Services (& Human Resources)

As in previous years, a lot of feedback was received relating to staff - reducing salaries, cutting staff numbers, reducing numbers of managers etc. In addition quite a large volume of feedback was received about other services in this portfolio, these included:

- More fines for littering, leaving bins out, dog fouling
- Less frequent refuse collections
- Charge for garden waste bins
- A small charge for bulky waste collection
- Use low level offenders for street cleaning
- Less street cleaning

Areas of concern

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of concern about a number of issues during the current economic situation.

Table 4: Stated Levels of Concern.

% Very concerned/Concerned	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
Cuts to public services	94%	92%	92%	93%	90%
Impact on my health	74%	67%	69%	73%	N/A
Household money problems (Wording changed from previous survey: Debt problems in 2010/11/12/13)	68%	67%	69%	64%	58%
Changes to benefits (Wording changed from previous survey: Welfare changes 2010/11/12/13)	58%	54%	58%	77%	N/A
Losing my home ⁱ	48%	47%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Losing my job	39%	44%	45%	51%	54%

ⁱ Included in 2015 for the first time

Results show that respondents remain most concerned about cuts to public services. The level of concern relating to impact on health has increased by seven percentage points since last year.

Further concerns

Respondents were asked if they had any 'further concerns' due to the current economic situation. A total of 651 respondents provided comments.

Comments covered a wide range of issues including:

- Concern for future generations, their children and grandchildren won't be able to get jobs, afford housing etc.
- Various concerns about health – current difficulties getting appointments, waiting times for appointments etc. and the feeling that it will get worse but also concerns about impacts on mental health
- Concerns over the impacts of Brexit
- Concerns about lack of school places, cuts to school funding and education levels
- Concerns about availability of social care, both now and in the future
- Concern about specific vulnerable groups particularly the homeless
- Concerns about the potential impacts of cuts to services e.g. increasing antisocial behaviour and crime
- Concern that there will be less investment in green spaces which will impact on the quality of the environment and quality of life
- Worries about the impact of benefit changes
- Many worries about money e.g. rising cost of living but no rise in wages, pensions etc. but also not being able to pay the rent, buy food, heat their homes
- Lack of affordable housing
- Concerns over how the Council prioritises its spending
- Concerns over Council Tax rises and whether they will be able to pay it

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ITEMS USED TO COMPILE ANNEX 6

Your City Your Services Arrow and Online Survey October to December 2016

Comments on budget proposals: Dec 2016 - Feb 2017

Notes of consultation meetings: Jan-Feb 2017