



Cabinet Meeting

4 February 2015

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| Report title | Budget 2015/16 – Outcome of Consultation | |
| Decision designation | AMBER | |
| Cabinet member with lead responsibility | Councillor Andrew Johnson Resources | |
| Key decision | Yes | |
| In forward plan | Yes | |
| Wards affected | All | |
| Accountable director | Mark Taylor, Finance | |
| Originating service | Finance | |
| Accountable employee(s) | Mark Taylor Tel Email | Director of Finance 01902 556609 mark.taylor@wolverhampton.gov.uk |
| Report to be/has been considered by | Strategic Executive Board | 22 January 2015 |

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Cabinet is recommended to consider the responses to the consultation undertaken for the Five Year Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2015/16 to 2018/19 as detailed in this report.

Recommendations for noting:

The Cabinet is asked to note the final response will also be fed back to those that participated in the consultation.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 This report sets to inform Cabinet about the consultation process undertaken to support the 2015/16 budget-setting decisions, allowing for Councillors' consideration of the initial responses to the consultation.
- 1.2 The completed set of responses to the consultation will be taken into account in the final budget that Cabinet recommends to Council to approve on 25 February 2015. The final response will also be fed back to those who participated in the consultation.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Council's budget consultation took place from 27 October 2014 to 15 January 2015 in order to inform the budget-setting decisions for 2015/16. All of the consultation and analysis was conducted in-house and this was a major factor in keeping the cost of delivery to a minimum.
- 2.2 The process was comprised of:
 - An invitation to submit comments in writing;
 - A survey (available online and on paper) for the public and employees;
 - Stakeholder meetings with
 - Wolverhampton's residents;
 - The business community;
 - Trades unions;
 - Voluntary and Community Sector organisations.
- 2.3 The survey collected 591 responses. 18 members of the public attended the stakeholder meetings. The breakdown was:
 - 2 attendees at Low Hill Community Centre,
 - 9 attendees at Bilston Town Hall,
 - 3 attendees at Bantock House,
 - 2 attendees at Blakenhall Healthy Living Centre,
 - 2 attendees at Business Breakfast.

Views from the voluntary sector and Trade Unions were obtained at one of their scheduled meetings. The attendance at these meetings was not recorded.
- 2.4 The consultation was branded as 'Managing Reality' and the Council's Communications team provided support to develop Facebook advertising and sign-post the public to the online consultation pages. The 'Managing Reality' campaign was publicised in both the Chronicle and the Express and Star newspapers. Appropriate Cabinet Members, Strategic and Assistant Directors attended stakeholder meetings in order to support the process and answer any questions.

3.0 Key Findings

3.1 A fuller summary of the consultation findings can be found in appendix one. Respondents commented upon key areas such as:

- Protecting services from cuts,
- Public volunteering to help reduce the cost of running services,
- Reducing the level of cuts and replacing those with cuts to other services,
- Raising Council Tax.

3.2 Protecting services from cuts

Respondents were asked to choose if each of 13 services should have total, some or no protection. A table of responses for all respondents and by age group can be found in appendix two.

The top three services respondents stated should remain **totally protected** from the proposed savings round were:

- Protecting children from harm (79.20%)
- Caring for and protecting from harm the elderly and vulnerable adults (77.20%)
- Ensuring there are enough school places for the city's children (66.15%)

The top three services respondents stated should have **some protection** from the proposed savings round were:

- Keeping streets and open spaces clean (58.57%)
- Library Services (55.57%)
- Leisure Centres (54.09%)

The top three services respondents stated should have **no protection** from the proposed savings round were:

- Neighbourhood Services (i.e. Neighbourhood Wardens) (29.95%)
- Cultural Services (i.e. Art Galleries, Bantock House) (27.18%)
- Leisure Centres (25.91%)

16-34 year olds voted to totally protect "Ensuring there are enough school places for the city's children" whereas 35+ year olds voted more for "Protecting children from harm". Older respondents (45+) voted no protection for "Leisure Centres", whereas, younger respondents (16-24) voted no protection for "Dustbins and recycling".

3.3 Public volunteering to help reduce the cost of running services

438 of 584 respondents (75%) stated that they would **not** be willing to give up some of their own time as a volunteer to help reduce the cost of running services. 16-24 year olds were more likely to give up their time volunteer with 45% responding yes. Only 19% of 35-44 year olds responded yes. Reasons given included:

"I already volunteer and look after a neighbour as well as working"

“In principle yes, e.g. helping to run a community library service. However, this would lead to more job cuts, more benefit claims, and reduced spending power within the community so I am not convinced it is the right option.”

“No-because I already give a lot of my time to volunteering in Wolverhampton.”

“Unfortunately as a full time mother and full time student midwife I simply don’t have any spare time”

“I already do I work in a local library staffed by volunteers only.”

Overall, respondents reported that although they supported the view to volunteer to help reduce the cost of running services, respondents clearly felt they did not have enough time to do so. More details about the comments received are outlined in appendix one.

3.4 Reducing the level of cuts and replacing those with cuts to other services

Respondents stated that:

“All of my choices relating to Total Protection are to ensure the safety of residents. If cuts were to be made in any of these areas it would be detrimental to all residents.”

“I would like to see the council encourage people to get involved with volunteering in sectors such as environment, sports & leisure, and the arts, where I think people with the relevant skills will be inclined to want to help out.”

“Make use of community centres which do not cost a lot of money and where empty spaces can be used, use the supermarkets which have space available.”

Respondents felt that protecting services aimed at the elderly and younger people in the City ought to be a priority for the Council. They thought that this proposal would have implications for the overall safety of residents. They were also concerned that residents would not be able to access alternative facilities and that the proposal may have a disproportionate effect on some groups such as the elderly.

3.5 Raising Council Tax

276 of 580 respondents (47.59%) stated that they would be willing to pay more Council Tax if that rise reduced the level of cuts to services. To quantify the proposed increase, the impact of each 1% increase would be the equivalent of an additional £10.40 per year based on the average property value (Valuation Band B) in Wolverhampton. Of those 276,

135 (49%) would be willing to pay an extra 1% taking the increase to 3%

74 (27%) would be willing to pay an extra 2% taking the increase to 4%

65 (23%) would be willing to pay an extra 2+% taking the increase to 4+%

16-24 year olds responded most positively to paying more Council Tax with 70% saying yes followed by 35-44 year age group with 57%. Only 36% of 65+ year olds responded yes to paying more.

4.0 General comments unrelated to specific savings proposals

- 4.1 The survey showed that the majority of people (429 of 578, 74.18%) were in agreement with the principle that the Council should focus its resources on protecting children from harm, caring for and protecting from harm the elderly and vulnerable adults and ensuring there are enough school places for the City's children. Participants were concerned about the impact of the savings on the most vulnerable and that the savings might have unintended outcomes particularly related to the most vulnerable in the City.
- 4.2 Respondents were interested in the Council's overall approach to managing the budget challenge. Some participants felt that the Council's back office costs and duplication could be reduced still further and that partnering arrangements with other local authorities should be considered. A partnership approach to addressing the challenges that the City faces was advocated by many and it was felt that the community had an important part to play in this.
- 4.3 Many participants would like to see an increased focus on prevention, which they said would ultimately save money, and some individuals raised concerns about their ability to comment meaningfully on the cuts based on the information provided.
- 4.4 68 suggestions were made for saving money on staffing costs. This included changing terms and conditions, reducing staffing hours, reducing the number of consultants in the Council, capping or reducing salaries (with some advocating that this should be set above a certain salary level) and working from home.

5.0 Initial Observations

- 5.1 It is clear that the responses to the consultation are consistent with the work the Council is undertaking to reduce the number of looked after children as protecting children from harm was voted to be totally protected by 79.02% of respondents.
- 5.2 Following the presentation of a petition to Council in November 2014 regarding the neighbourhood wardens a focus group was established at the petitioners request to consider alternative options to the removal of the service. The focus group identified a preferred option of maintaining ten wardens, funded by the Council for a period of three years, to operate within the crime and community safety priority areas of the City. This would still require investment of approximately £260,000 per annum for this three year period after which the model would be community led and Council funds would be removed. The responses to the consultation do not support this petition as only 18.04% of respondents voted to totally protect Neighbourhood Services. Further discussions will take place around this.

6.0 Financial implications

- 6.1 The final outcome of budget consultation will be taken into account in the Cabinet's final budget recommendations to Council in March 2015.

- 6.2 Should any changes be made to the 2015/16 Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy as a result of the findings of the budget consultation exercise which results in an increased net budget requirement, new savings proposals of an equivalent value will have to be urgently identified to address the projected budget deficit.

[MH/27012015/U]

7.0 Legal implications

- 7.1 Sections 32 and 33 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 imposes a duty on local authorities to calculate their budget requirements and set the Council Tax for each financial year. These provisions are subject to amendment following the Localism Act 2011 which replaces these provisions with a new Section 31A and 31B, under which authorities will no longer be under a duty to calculate their budget requirement for the year, but will be under a duty to calculate a Council Tax requirement. The aim is to make local authority calculations (which must be in accordance with the 1992 Act otherwise the Council Tax setting will be void) simpler and to avoid the need for regulations each financial year.
- 7.2 Part Two of the Local Government Act 2003 also imposes a series of duties and powers to give statutory support to important aspects of financial good practice. This includes provisions in respect of the requirement for the Chief Financial Officer to report on the robustness of the estimates including the adequacy of the reserves.
- 7.3 Cabinet is required to agree a budget proposal to recommend to Full Council.
- 7.4 The Council is obliged to set its Council Tax by the statutory deadline of 11 March 2015.
- 7.5 The Council is required to consult on its draft Council plan and budget. [TS/27012015/T]

8.0 Equalities implications

- 8.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council has a statutory duty to pay due regard to the impact of how it carries out its business on different groups of people. This is designed to help the Council identify the particular needs of different groups and reduce the likelihood of discrimination. The nine equality strands covered in the legislation are:
- Age
 - Disability
 - Gender reassignment
 - Marriage and Civil Partnership (this strand only applies to employment and not to service delivery)
 - Pregnancy and Maternity
 - Race
 - Religion or Belief
 - Sex
 - Sexual Orientation

The strands include everyone.

- 8.2 In relation to determining the overall revenue budget for the Council there is always a difficult balance to be struck in deciding the levels at which to invest, reduce expenditure and raise income set against the often competing needs of different groups within the Wolverhampton community.
- 8.3 In order to address these complex issues, the Council operates an open and consultative approach to budget and Council Tax determination. Year-on-year and medium term spending forecasts are provided to every household and business ratepayer within the City as part of the documentation which accompanies the Council Tax demand.
- 8.4 Budget consultation meetings have been held with the education community, the business community, the voluntary sector, communities of interest and trade unions. The Council's budget consultation approach has also included an online survey in order to gain feedback on budget and service priorities.
- 8.5 In determining the budget for 2015/16, considerable focus has been placed on the development of savings proposals. All of these proposals will be subject to an equality analysis screening and where necessary a full equality analysis will be conducted.
- 8.6 The Council is facing a particularly challenging short and medium term financial environment in which savings must be generated and a tight control on spending maintained. This means that a greater focus than ever is necessary to ensure that core equalities commitments are met.
- 8.7 In summary, the Council's annual budget and medium term financial strategy supports a range of services designed to meet key equalities objectives. A cumulative equalities analysis will be conducted on the overall budget proposals, including the overall impact of job losses. This is will be made available on the Council's website.
- 8.8 Councillors should also be aware that under the Equality Act 2010, they must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) when making budget decisions. What this means in practice is that Councillors must consciously think about the three aims of the PSED as part of the decision making process. The three aims are to have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation,
 - Advance equality of opportunity by removing or minimising disadvantages, meet differing needs and encouraging participation,
 - Foster good relations between people from different groups.
- 8.9 The Act does not require the Council to treat everyone in the same way; sometimes different treatment is required, for example, be making reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of disabled people.
- 8.10 Consideration of equality issues must influence the decisions reached by public bodies including:
- How they act as employers,
 - How they develop, evaluate and review policy,
 - How they design, deliver and evaluate services,
 - How they commission and procure from others.

- 8.11 The Brown Principles, established as a result of a legal case concerning Post Office closures in 2008, provide an important checklist that should be considered when making decisions:
- Decision makers must be made aware of their duty to have due regard to the identified goals,
 - Due regard must be fulfilled before and at the time that a particular decision is being considered, not afterwards,
 - The duty must be exercised in substance, with rigour and with an open mind. It is not a question of ticking boxes,
 - The duty is cannot be delegated; it must be fulfilled by the organisation in question rather than through the use of an external body to do it to the organisation,
 - The duty is a continuing one,
 - It is good practice to keep an adequate record showing that it has considered the identified needs.

9.0 Environmental implications

- 9.1 Environmental implications will be addressed on a case by case basis as part of individual savings proposals.

10.0 Human resources implications

- 10.1 In line with the Council's statutory duties as an employer under the Trade Union Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992, an HR1 form has been issued to the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills identifying the intention to reduce the workforce by up to 1,000 jobs across the Council in the period up to December 2014. The HR1 covers the current voluntary redundancy programme and savings proposals which will result in compulsory redundancies. A further HR1 based on additional proposals will be required from December 2014.
- 10.2 Reductions in employee numbers will be achieved in line with the Council's HR policies. Compulsory redundancies will be mitigated as far as is possible through seeking voluntary redundancies in the first instance, and through access to redeployment. Given the volume and range of savings being proposed, there will be reductions in services and employee numbers which will require fair and due process to be followed regarding consultation, selection and implementation of any compulsory redundancies. The accelerated timetable for achieving savings in the light of the financial settlement is likely to require the Council as an employer to utilise the statutory 45 day and 30 day consultation periods for some service reductions, rather than the best practice position of allowing, where possible, 90 days.
- 10.3 The Council will ensure that appropriate support is made available to employees who are at risk of and selected for redundancy, and will work with partner and external agencies to provide support. Proposals to move service delivery from direct Council management to private, community or third sector providers may have implications under the TUPE regulations.

10.4 There is on-going consultation with the trade unions on the impact Council's budgetary position and the proposals being made to meet the challenges posed by it.

11.0 Corporate Landlord Implications

11.1 Corporate landlord implications will be addressed on a case by case basis as part of individual savings proposals.

12.0 Schedule of background papers

12.1 Five Year Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2014/15 to 2018/19, reported to Cabinet on:

- 25 February 2014
- 22 October 2014

12.2 Managing the Budget Cuts – The Next Phase, reported to Cabinet on 25 June 2014.

12.3 Budget Review – Five Year Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2014/15 to 2018/19, reported to Scrutiny Board on 9 December 2014.

Appendix 1 –Report on the outcome of budget consultation 2015/16

1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 In order to tackle the substantial budget deficit that followed the drastic reduction in financial resources available to the Council arising from successive cuts in government grant support, the Council has identified that a minimum of £27 million of additional savings for 2015/16 will need to be identified in order to demonstrate that a balanced budget can be achieved. A further £37 million of additional savings will also need to be identified, taking the total additional savings to be identified to £60 million, in order to address the projected budget deficit over the medium term to 2018/19.
- 1.2 The majority of the Council's revenue income comes from Central Government revenue support grants. The Government grants will continue to reduce following the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2015/16 so the Council automatically faces a budget shortfall. There is nothing within the Council's control that could have been done to prevent this.
- 1.3 The Council can also not control inflation or rising energy, food and fuel prices which impact further into its budgets every year. At the same time, low interest rates mean that the Council is not earning as much from its investments as it once did, while the economic downturn has had a negative effect on its income from fees and charges.
- 1.4 These challenges are coupled with local pressures on the budget, for example increased cost pressures created from looked after children, pension fund strain and the Primary School Expansion Programme. All these things together have caused the projected budget deficit that the Council faces.
- 1.5 Wolverhampton City Council is committed to involving its citizens in contributing to the important decisions it has to make. In October it published its Draft Budget Strategy 2015/16 and Medium Term Financial Strategy. This document contained savings proposals totalling £60m.

2.0 Methodology

- 2.1 Between 23 October 2014 and 15 January 2015, the Council undertook and made available a range of consultation mechanisms to gather views on the proposed budget cuts. These included both quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

2.2 Consultation sources

The following is a summary of the participants in the stakeholder and community group meetings, plus details of other groups and interested parties that provided their views and opinions.

2.2.1 Stakeholder engagement meetings x 7

- 4 Community meetings;
- 1 Trade Union meeting;
- 1 Business Community meeting; and
- 1 meeting hosted by the Third Sector Partnership

2.2.2 18 members of the public attended the stakeholder meetings. The breakdown was:

- 2 attendees at Low Hill Community Centre,
- 9 attendees at Bilston Town Hall,
- 3 attendees at Bantock House,
- 2 attendees at Blakenhall Healthy Living Centre,
- 2 attendees at Business Breakfast.

Views from the voluntary sector and Trade Unions were obtained at one of their scheduled meetings. The attendance at these meetings was not recorded.

2.2.3 The Council also received letters from residents outlining their support for the Council's approach to managing the proposed cuts.

2.2.4 The Council made a survey available to residents and employees, online and on paper, for the duration of the consultation. This was publicised via the Council website and the Facebook page "Wolverhampton Today". The survey collected 591 responses.

2.3 Considerations around representativeness of the data

In line with best practice issued by Government (The Government's Consultation Principles July 2012), the consultation particularly focused on involving the range of stakeholders affected by the proposals, as well as enabling the general public to comment through the online survey, Facebook pages and public meetings. The findings from the stakeholder meetings and other qualitative correspondence, is by its very nature, indicative only and not necessarily representative of the wider population.

2.4 Considerations around reporting

It is recognised that the public, community groups and key stakeholders are not always aware of the budgetary constraints that local authorities operate under. For example, there is little awareness or understanding of the difference between capital and revenue budgets, controllable and non-controllable expenditure, nor distinctions made between statutory and discretionary spend. This document does not attempt to unpick this, but simply reports the views of the various consultees in their broadest perspective.

2.5 The qualitative findings are a source of information on the specific budget proposals. These have been drawn from comments from the survey, emails received from members of the public and Facebook pages where available. It should be noted that these individuals represent their own views; however, the inclusion of many of these comments forms an important part of the Council's Equality Assessment of the budget proposals – a process that is legally required.

3.0 Executive Summary and Conclusions

- 3.1 This document summarises the key findings from a range of consultation exercises run by Wolverhampton City Council on its budget proposals for 2015/16. It includes an analysis of qualitative presentations and meetings with key stakeholder and community groups designed to gather views and opinions on 87 specific savings proposals. It also includes the outline findings from the survey and data gathered through social media. Stakeholder engagement meetings were held with Trade Unions, four community meetings, the Business Community and the Third Sector Partnership.
- 3.2 The Third Sector Partnership hosted a meeting where representatives were apprised of the Council's approach to managing the budget cuts. Those in attendance included representatives from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups; Third Sector groups; Carers Forums; Deaf people; the Interfaith and Regeneration Network representing faith communities; an organisation representing Transgender and Transsexual people (Gender Matters), the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Network, Voice for Parents, the Over 50's Forum, Experts by Experience and Women of Wolverhampton (WOW).

4.0 Key Findings

The main proposals that respondents commented upon were:

- Protecting services from cuts,
- Public volunteering to help reduce the cost of running services,
- Reducing the level of cuts and replacing those with cuts to other services,
- Raising Council Tax.

4.1 Protecting services from cuts

Respondents were asked to choose if each of 13 services should have total, some or no protection. A table of responses for all respondents and by age group can be found in appendix two.

The top three services respondents stated should remain **totally protected** from the proposed savings round were:

- Protecting children from harm (79.20%)
- Caring for and protecting from harm the elderly and vulnerable adults (77.20%)
- Ensuring there are enough school places for the city's children (66.15%)

The top three services respondents stated should have **some protection** from the proposed savings round were:

- Keeping streets and open spaces clean (58.57%)
- Library Services (55.57%)
- Leisure Centres (54.09%)

The top three services respondents stated should have **no protection** from the proposed savings round were:

- Neighbourhood Services (i.e. Neighbourhood Wardens) (29.95%)
- Cultural Services (i.e. Art Galleries; Bantock House) (27.18%)
- Leisure Centres (25.91%)

16-34 year olds voted to totally protect “Ensuring there are enough school places for the city’s children” whereas 35+ year olds voted more for “Protecting children from harm”. Older respondents (45+) voted no protection for “Leisure Centres”, whereas, younger respondents (16-24) voted no protection for “Dustbins and recycling”.

4.2 Public volunteering to help reduce the cost of running services

438 of 584 respondents (75%) stated that they would **not** be willing to give up some of their own time as a volunteer to help reduce the cost of running services. 16-24 year olds were most likely to give up their time to volunteer with 45% responding yes. Only 19% of 35-44 year olds responded yes.

The comments received have been grouped thematically.

There were also a group of people who either asked for more information about volunteering or made other related comments:

| | |
|---|----|
| May be interested in the future | 1 |
| It would depend on what it was/ how many hours required | 12 |
| Have caring/ other responsibilities/ no capacity | 8 |
| Already volunteering | 22 |
| Don't agree with Council services being run by volunteers | 8 |

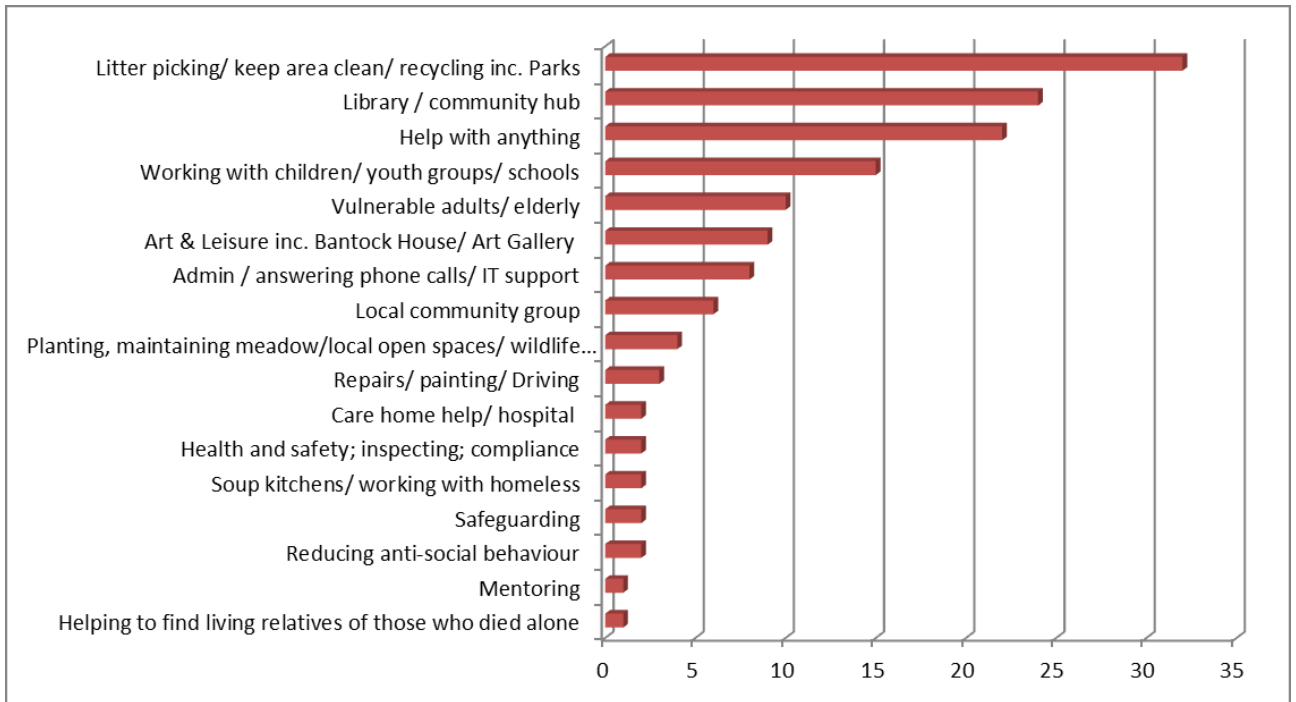
Of those who didn't agree with Council services being run by volunteers, there were a number of comments/ concerns about impact on jobs:

“Free labour rids the number of jobs.”

“It is important that services are delivered by those staff and professionals who know what they are doing and it is difficult for residents to volunteer and live on nothing.”

Of the remaining comments they could be grouped under the headings identified in Fig. 1:

Fig. 1 – What would you be prepared to volunteer to do?



Litter picking and keeping the local areas clean was the most frequent area identified where people would like to volunteer; this was followed by libraries/community hubs. 22 people said they would help with anything, e.g.

“Anything I am capable of doing.”

The two areas where people would most like to volunteer are also identified in the survey as areas where savings could be made in order to protect cuts to other services.

It is also worth noting that 8 people also volunteered to do some sort of administrative role and a number of people volunteered specific professional skills:

“Compliance consultancy, Health and Safety.”

Overall, respondents reported that although they supported the view to volunteer to help reduce the cost of running services, respondents clearly felt they did not have enough time to do so.

4.3 Reducing the level of cuts and replacing those with cuts to other services

Respondents stated that:

“All of my choices relating to Total Protection are to ensure the safety of residents. If cuts were to be made in any of these areas it would be detrimental to all residents.”

“I would like to see the council encourage people to get involved with volunteering in sectors such as environment, sports & leisure, and the arts, where I think people with the relevant skills will be inclined to want to help out.”

“Make use of community centres which do not cost a lot of money and where empty spaces can be used, use the supermarkets which have space available.”

Respondents felt that protecting services aimed at the elderly and younger people in the City ought to be a priority for the Council. They thought that this proposal would have implications for the overall safety of residents. They were also concerned that residents would not be able to access alternative facilities and that the proposal may have a disproportionate effect on some groups such as the elderly.

4.4 Raising Council Tax

276 of 580 respondents (47.59%) stated that they would be willing to pay more Council Tax if that rise reduced the level of cuts to services. To quantify the proposed increase, the impact of each 1% increase would be the equivalent of an additional £10.40 per year based on the average property value (Valuation Band B) in Wolverhampton. Of those 276,

135 (49%) would be willing to pay an extra 1% taking the increase to 3%
74 (27%) would be willing to pay an extra 2% taking the increase to 4%
65 (23%) would be willing to pay an extra 2+% taking the increase to 4+%

16-24 year olds responded most positively to paying more Council Tax with 70% saying yes followed by 35-44 year age group with 57%. Only 36% of 65+ year olds responded yes to paying more.

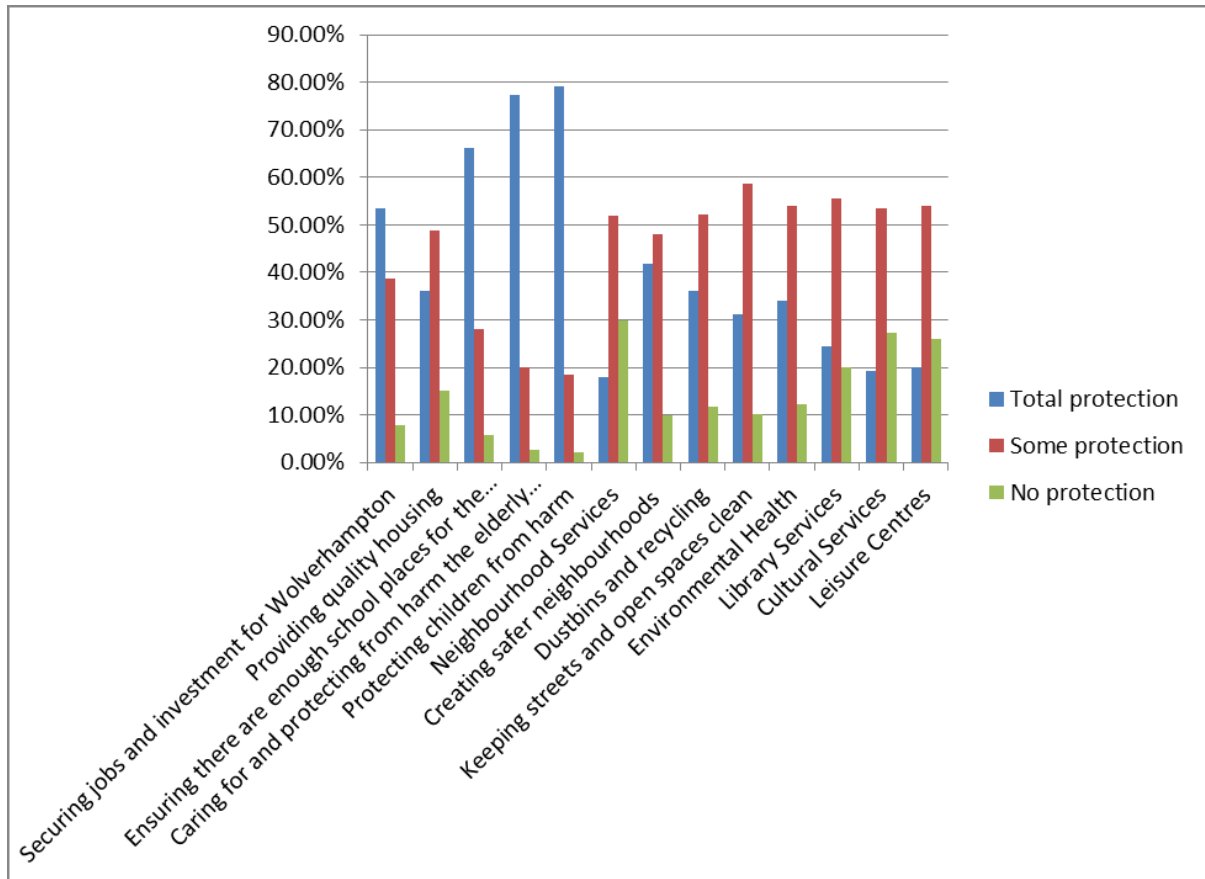
5.0 General comments unrelated to specific savings proposals

- 5.1 The survey showed that the majority of people (429 of 578, 74.18%) were in agreement with the principle that the council should focus its resources on protecting children from harm, caring for and protecting from harm the elderly and vulnerable adults and ensuring there are enough school places for the city's children. Participants were concerned about the impact of the savings on the most vulnerable and that the savings might have unintended outcomes particularly related to the most vulnerable in the City.
- 5.2 Respondents were interested in the Council's overall approach to managing the budget challenge. Some participants felt that the Council's back office costs and duplication could be reduced still further and that partnering arrangements with other local authorities should be considered. A partnership approach to addressing the challenges that the City faces was advocated by many and it was felt that the community had an important part to play in this.
- 5.3 Many participants would like to see an increased focus on prevention, which they said would ultimately save money, and some individuals raised concerns about their ability to comment meaningfully on the cuts based on the information provided.
- 5.4 68 suggestions were made for saving money on staffing costs, particularly through the survey. This included changing terms and conditions, reducing staffing hours, reducing the number of consultants in the Council, capping or reducing salaries (with some advocating that this should be set above a certain salary level) and working from home.

6.0 Findings from the quantitative (statistical) consultation

- 6.1 This section summarises the statistical data from the survey. The questionnaire garnered 591 responses and will be used as the total response base. It should be borne in mind that this is not a sample survey of residents or staff, so the results reported in this section are not necessarily a representative sample due to self-selection.
- 6.2 Services were presented to respondents and each respondent could nominate whether a service deserved total protection, some protection or no protection from cuts.
- 6.3 As there are 87 saving proposals, Fig. 2 summarises those where respondents felt each deserved total protection, some protection and no protection from cuts. Some of the topics were mentioned in the qualitative budget consultation.

Fig. 2 – Should the Council protect the following services from cuts?

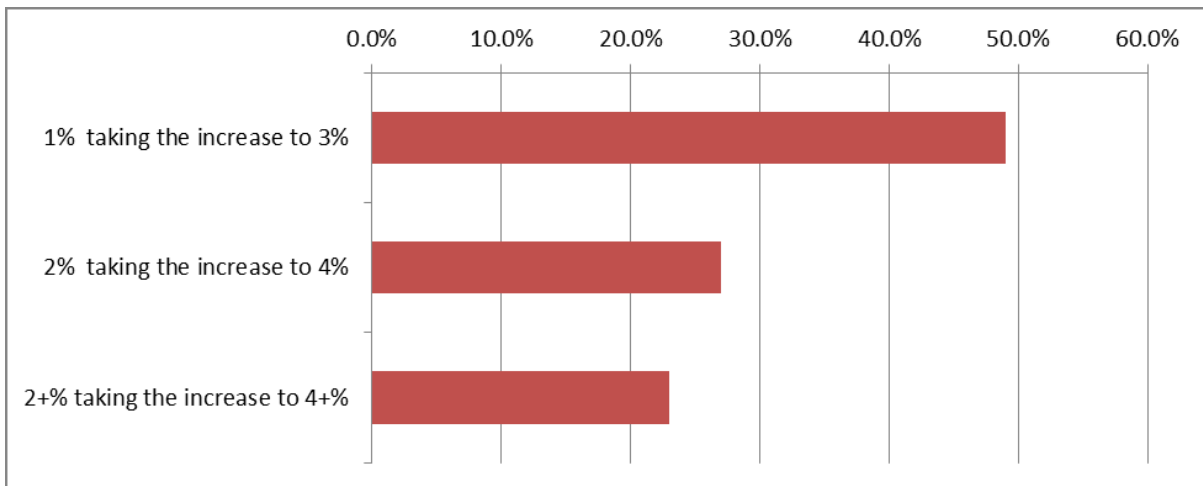


- 6.4 Respondents who answered “Should the Council protect the following services from cuts?” were able to specify that the Council should Protect children from harm; Care for and protect from harm the elderly and vulnerable adults and Secure jobs and investment for Wolverhampton. These were the three most common themes.
- 6.5 Respondents were also asked, if they were willing to volunteer, which service they wished to volunteer for. However, 75% of respondents stated that they would not be willing to give up some of their own time as a volunteer to help reduce the cost of running services. Overall, respondents reported that although they supported the view to volunteer to help

reduce the cost of running services, those providing feedback clearly did not have enough time to do so.

- 6.6 Respondents who said they would pay more Council Tax were then asked precisely how much extra they would be willing to pay. It was stated in the question heading that the impact of each 1% increase would be £10.40 per year based on the average property value (Valuation Band B) in Wolverhampton.
- 6.7 **Please note:** the percentages in Fig. 3 are percentages of the overall respondents who said “yes”. For instance, 150 respondents who said “yes” would be willing to have a 1% rise in their Council Tax bills, the most-selected response. However, respondents who said “yes” were only 47.6% of all respondents to the question, so percentages need to be viewed in context.

Fig. 3 – How much extra Council Tax would you be willing to pay?



7.0 Views on specific service cuts

- 7.1 Seven stakeholder meetings were held and covered a range of topics and gave attendees the opportunity to ask questions, gain clarification, and raise concerns or issues. Given the broad spread of the 87 proposals, only relevant topics were discussed by stakeholders and the community during the meetings. The topics discussed are therefore likely to reflect the issues of most importance to the participants. All of the groups did have access to the public facing budget proposals prior to the meetings via the Council’s website and hardcopies of the budget proposals were made available on request. The public, community groups and key stakeholders often did not have the time to gain an understanding of the difference between controllable and non-controllable costs, or between statutory and discretionary spend.

8.0 General comments about the savings

- 8.1 The survey showed that the majority of people were in agreement with the principle that the Council should focus its resources on protecting children from harm, caring for and protecting from harm the elderly and vulnerable adults and ensuring there are enough school places for the city’s children. Participants were concerned about the impact of the savings on the most vulnerable and that the savings might have unintended outcomes particularly related to the most vulnerable in the City.

- 8.2 Respondents were interested in the Council's overall approach to the budget challenge. Some participants felt that the Council's back office costs and duplication could be reduced still further and that partnering arrangements with other local authorities should be considered. A partnership approach to addressing the challenges that the City faces was advocated by many and it was felt that the community had an important part to play in this.
- 8.3 Many participants would like to see an increased focus on prevention, which they said would ultimately save money, and some individuals raised concerns about their ability to comment meaningfully on the cuts based on the information the Council provided.
- 8.4 A number of suggestions were made for saving money on staffing costs, particularly through the online survey. This included changing terms and conditions, reducing staffing hours, reducing the number of consultants in the council, capping or reducing salaries (with some advocating that this should be set above a certain salary level) and working from home.

9.0 Managing the Budget Challenge – a partnership approach

- 9.1 The Third Sector Partnership said that the Third Sector should be considered part of the solution as well as a factor in the economic regeneration of the City. They said that they generated income for the City which could be reinvested into preventative services. However, the threat to the Third Sector's funding was impacting on their ability to generate income. Suggestions were made including taking a Cooperative Council approach, mergers with neighbouring authorities, attracting more external funding, selling Council assets and reducing the numbers of senior managers and consultants within the Council.

10.0 Managing the Budget Challenge – the budget consultation process

- 10.1 Some respondents raised concerns about the ability to comment meaningfully on the proposals based on the information, or lack thereof, provided.

11.0 Managing the Budget Challenge – savings ideas

- 11.1 Several savings ideas were suggested by participants including: maximising opportunities to attract external funding into the City (from Europe, for instance), turning street lights off in certain areas after midnight, selling Council assets, reducing the wages of the Managing Director and senior employees, stopping the refurbishment of the Civic Centre, turning down/off the heating in public buildings, reducing weekly household bin collections to fortnightly and reducing the number of Councillors per ward from 3 to 1.

Appendix 2 – All responses to Should the Council protect the following services from cuts?

| Service | Total Protection | | Some Protection | | No Protection | |
|--|------------------|------|-----------------|------|---------------|------|
| | Percentage | Rank | Percentage | Rank | Percentage | Rank |
| Securing jobs and investment for Wolverhampton | 53.54% | 4 | 38.69% | 10 | 7.77% | 10 |
| Providing quality housing | 36.13% | 6 | 48.69% | 8 | 15.18% | 5 |
| Ensuring there are enough school places for the city's children | 66.15% | 3 | 27.98% | 11 | 5.87% | 11 |
| Caring for and protecting from harm the elderly and vulnerable adults | 77.20% | 2 | 20.03% | 12 | 2.76% | 12 |
| Protecting children from harm | 79.20% | 1 | 18.54% | 13 | 2.25% | 13 |
| Neighbourhood Services (i.e. Neighbourhood Wardens) | 18.04% | 13 | 52.01% | 7 | 29.95% | 1 |
| Creating safer neighbourhoods (i.e. tackling anti-social behaviour) | 41.90% | 5 | 48.10% | 9 | 10.00% | 9 |
| Dustbins and recycling | 36.11% | 7 | 52.08% | 6 | 11.81% | 7 |
| Keeping streets and open spaces clean | 31.29% | 9 | 58.57% | 1 | 10.14% | 8 |
| Environmental Health (i.e. clean and safe places to eat; protecting people from excessive noise) | 33.91% | 8 | 53.91% | 4 | 12.17% | 6 |
| Library Services | 24.39% | 10 | 55.57% | 2 | 20.03% | 4 |
| Cultural Services (i.e. art galleries; Bantock House) | 19.34% | 12 | 53.48% | 5 | 27.18% | 2 |
| Leisure Centres | 20.00% | 11 | 54.09% | 3 | 25.91% | 3 |

Responses by age to Should the Council protect the following services from cuts?

| | Total Protection | | | | | |
|---|------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | 16-24 | 25-34 | 35-44 | 45-54 | 55-64 | 65+ |
| Securing jobs and investment for Wolverhampton | 65.00% | 57.30% | 53.04% | 51.24% | 47.47% | 36.07% |
| Providing quality housing | 65.00% | 44.94% | 34.78% | 29.75% | 34.34% | 21.31% |
| Ensuring there are enough school places for children | 75.00% | 70.79% | 69.57% | 59.50% | 60.61% | 60.66% |
| Caring for and protecting elderly and vulnerable adults | 70.00% | 83.15% | 72.17% | 72.73% | 77.78% | 73.77% |
| Protecting children from harm | 75.00% | 83.15% | 80.87% | 78.51% | 74.75% | 67.21% |
| Neighbourhood Services | 20.00% | 14.61% | 21.74% | 19.01% | 13.13% | 14.75% |
| Creating safer neighbourhoods | 15.00% | 42.70% | 44.35% | 44.63% | 36.36% | 34.43% |
| Dustbins and recycling | 15.00% | 31.46% | 42.61% | 34.71% | 34.34% | 34.43% |
| Keeping streets and open spaces clean | 25.00% | 42.70% | 33.91% | 28.10% | 17.17% | 26.23% |
| Environmental Health | 35.00% | 39.33% | 32.17% | 29.75% | 25.25% | 36.07% |
| Library Services | 45.00% | 24.72% | 21.74% | 16.53% | 25.25% | 21.31% |
| Cultural Services | 45.00% | 22.47% | 20.00% | 9.09% | 18.18% | 16.39% |
| Leisure Centres | 40.00% | 26.97% | 26.09% | 10.74% | 18.18% | 8.20% |

| | Some Protection | | | | | |
|---|-----------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | 16-24 | 25-34 | 35-44 | 45-54 | 55-64 | 65+ |
| Securing jobs and investment for Wolverhampton | 30.00% | 37.08% | 38.26% | 36.36% | 40.40% | 49.18% |
| Providing quality housing | 30.00% | 33.71% | 50.43% | 50.41% | 46.46% | 60.66% |
| Ensuring there are enough school places for children | 20.00% | 23.60% | 25.22% | 30.58% | 32.32% | 31.15% |
| Caring for and protecting elderly and vulnerable adults | 30.00% | 12.36% | 24.35% | 20.66% | 20.20% | 22.95% |
| Protecting children from harm | 25.00% | 12.36% | 14.78% | 19.83% | 18.18% | 29.51% |
| Neighbourhood Services | 40.00% | 59.55% | 43.48% | 47.11% | 57.58% | 45.90% |
| Creating safer neighbourhoods | 55.00% | 49.44% | 45.22% | 46.28% | 49.49% | 55.74% |
| Dustbins and recycling | 70.00% | 53.93% | 46.09% | 53.72% | 50.51% | 52.46% |
| Keeping streets and open spaces clean | 55.00% | 48.31% | 53.04% | 59.50% | 70.71% | 63.93% |
| Environmental Health | 50.00% | 51.69% | 53.91% | 56.20% | 59.60% | 47.54% |
| Library Services | 30.00% | 53.93% | 53.91% | 61.16% | 49.49% | 67.21% |
| Cultural Services | 25.00% | 50.56% | 53.04% | 61.98% | 47.47% | 49.18% |
| Leisure Centres | 40.00% | 51.69% | 52.17% | 61.16% | 42.42% | 57.38% |

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NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED

| | No protection | | | | | |
|---|---------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | 16-24 | 25-34 | 35-44 | 45-54 | 55-64 | 65+ |
| Securing jobs and investment for Wolverhampton | 5.00% | 3.37% | 6.09% | 10.74% | 11.11% | 9.84% |
| Providing quality housing | 5.00% | 17.98% | 13.91% | 16.53% | 19.19% | 13.11% |
| Ensuring there are enough school places for children | 5.00% | 2.25% | 5.22% | 8.26% | 7.07% | 6.56% |
| Caring for and protecting elderly and vulnerable adults | 0.00% | 2.25% | 2.61% | 4.13% | 2.02% | 3.28% |
| Protecting children from harm | 0.00% | 2.25% | 1.74% | 1.65% | 4.04% | 1.64% |
| Neighbourhood Services | 40.00% | 22.47% | 33.04% | 31.40% | 28.28% | 34.43% |
| Creating safer neighbourhoods | 30.00% | 6.74% | 10.43% | 7.44% | 11.11% | 9.84% |
| Dustbins and recycling | 15.00% | 12.36% | 10.43% | 9.92% | 15.15% | 8.20% |
| Keeping streets and open spaces clean | 20.00% | 5.62% | 12.17% | 8.26% | 12.12% | 8.20% |
| Environmental Health | 15.00% | 6.74% | 13.91% | 10.74% | 14.14% | 14.75% |
| Library Services | 25.00% | 19.10% | 21.74% | 20.66% | 24.24% | 8.20% |
| Cultural Services | 30.00% | 24.72% | 26.96% | 27.27% | 32.32% | 29.51% |
| Leisure Centres | 20.00% | 20.22% | 21.74% | 27.27% | 36.36% | 29.51% |