

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

**FINAL REPORT ON
BUDGET CONSULTATION 2014+**

29TH January 2014
CSK Strategies Ltd

Contents

HEADLINES	3
1.Introduction.....	14
2.The Future City Council.....	19
3.Adult Social Care	24
4.Safeguarding, Supporting and Educating Young People	30
5.Developing a Successful and Inclusive Economy	33
6.Developing Successful and Inclusive Communities	36
7.Safe, Clean and Green Neighbourhoods.....	40
8. Support Services	44
9. A Well Managed and Resilient City.....	46
10. Council Tax Options	48
11. Preparing for 2015+: Suggestions on future engagement and consultation	50
 APPENDIX I	 51
Responses from Organisations.....	51
 APPENDIX II	 55
Profile of On-Line Survey Respondents.....	55

HEADLINES

This draft final report summarises responses from:

- 287 people at four public meetings led by the Council's Leader and Cabinet;
- Comments made by some of the 60 people who attended the drop-in, information provision session at the Library of Birmingham on 9th December 2014 together with comments relevant to the budget proposals made at the Standing up for Birmingham (SU4B) workshops.
- 944 responses to the online 'Be Heard' survey;
- 263 responses to a parallel survey with the People's Panel using the same questionnaire as the online survey;
- 161 comments through submissions to 'Budget Views' via email, text and letter;
- A Disability Forum, that is, a consultation meeting of 25 people targeted at people with disabilities and their organisations;
- A consultation meeting for voluntary organisations through the Third Sector Assembly organised in partnership with the Birmingham Voluntary Services Council (BVSC) attended by approximately 75 people; and
- A meeting of 31 members of Birmingham's People's Panel facilitated and written up by BMG;
- A large consultation meeting attended by 120 businesses and hosted by Find it in Birmingham and attended by the Council Leader;
- A phone-in on BBC WM with the Council Leader where listeners were invited to phone in suggestions for saving money and working differently; and
- More extensive engagement through social media and online activity this year which included over 31,000 'hits' on the service review videos and a webcast Cabinet round table budget discussion. 517 people joined the discussion live and the archive on the Council's website has received over 1,600 views to date and rising.

The budget consultation built on comments on 11 Service Review Green Papers submitted via a number of means:

- Discussions at all 40 Ward Committee meetings.
- 319 responses to the on-line 'Be Heard' questionnaire on the Green Papers accessed through the Council's website.
- Individual comments via 109 emails, 1,363 letters and 59 postcards; and
- Feedback from 51 people attending two Birmingham People's Panel workshops.

Points made during this Service Review Dialogue which are relevant to the budget proposals have been incorporated into this report. Even before taking into account the responses to this Dialogue, there were more responses overall to this year's consultation than to last year's consultation on the 2013/14 (current year's) budget.

Overall, the budget consultation process reached more people and elicited more responses than in the previous two years. This therefore has been the largest budget consultation that the Council has ever undertaken.

This year's consultation referred to the **£88.4m of savings** required in the coming 2014/15 financial year and the longer term financial challenge that would mean that by 2017/18, the Council would have had to reduce its controllable expenditure by about two-thirds (£840m) from what it was in 2010/11.

As well as asking for views on specific savings proposals, the consultation asked for views under three big themes for change:

1. **Efficiency**
2. **Working with others**
3. **Working differently**

Council Directorates have been supplementing this over-arching consultation with more detailed consultations with users about their specific proposals. Consultation on new ways of working and on service priorities beyond the next financial year will also continue, in part through the Standing Up for Birmingham campaign.

The Future City Council: Service Priorities and New Ways of Working and Funding in the Future

Service Priorities

- The online and the People's Panel surveys and the range of comments at meetings and submitted in writing, suggested that **all the broad services provided by the Council** as described in the Service Review Green Papers were **seen as important** and part of the role expected to be played by BCC. There was a similar result in the People's Panel survey.
- Interestingly, while most respondents reported that they did not expect cuts in Adult Social Care and Safeguarding, Supporting and Educating Young People to have a 'significant effect on me or my family' these were still seen as important services by almost every respondent in both surveys. This was also reflected in the number of times these issues were raised at public meetings and in the submissions to Budget Views. There is clearly a groundswell of opinion amongst Birmingham residents that these are crucially important services for the Council to provide.
- The area in both surveys where the largest proportion of respondents agreed that cuts would have 'a significant impact on me or my family' was Safe, Clean and Green neighbourhoods (83% agreeing including 60% strongly agreeing in the online survey). This was also reflected in the number of times that safe, clean and green issues came up in the public meetings and in submissions, particularly around parks.
- The **new, broad message** that emerged in this year's budget consultation appears to be that people do see a central and important **role for the Council in 'place making'** (that is, shaping the 'look', environment and facilities of the city) **and in building and maintaining the city's social fabric**. This was reflected in the many comments around libraries, parks and other green issues, and in the support for the Council taking a lead in bringing people together to find ways of preserving services and community amenities. This message was in addition to the points about the **importance of services for vulnerable people, young people and concerns about private contractors** which were also raised strongly as they were last year and the year before.

New Ways of Working and Funding in the Future

- There was strong **support and advocacy for more partnership working** across the public, private and third sectors with many examples given of waste resulting from duplication and misunderstandings together with unnecessary and dangerous delays because of arguments about who was responsible and who should pay. Support for this was also reflected in the online survey with 72% (78% in the People's Panel survey) supporting the proposal that the Council should '*work more closely with other organisations such as the health service and the police*' and only 2% not supporting this (the rest expressing support depending on service affected). A large number of the written submissions on ways to save money also referred to partnership working as did comments at the public meetings and Disability Forum.

- The work done to date on building these partnerships was welcomed and a number of consultees said that this effort led by the Council must continue beyond the setting of the 2014-15 budget because of the continued difficult decisions faced in the coming years.
- There was strong support, reflected in the online survey, at meetings and through written submissions, for **investing in early intervention and preventative measures**. 71% of online survey respondents (75% in the People's Panel survey) supported the proposal to *'Direct more resources to early intervention to prevent costly interventions later'* with only 2% not supporting it. 44 people added written comments in their online survey response warning that **cutting preventative services would create future costs for the Council**. This was also a major theme in the public meetings and the submissions to Budget Views
- There was some **support for most of the other 'big ideas'** for future Council services depending upon the services affected including *'Target services to those most in need, but reduce them for others'* (68% with 12% not supporting), *'Introduce charges for some services which are currently free'* (57% with 27% not supporting), *'Increase charges for services'* (48% with 39% not supporting), *'Encourage local people and communities to deliver services the Council can no longer afford to sustain'* (51% with 28% not supporting).
- The **one exception** was *'Reduce the amount of face-to-face contact with the Council, and increase online interaction'* which was not supported by 41% (48% in the People's Panel survey), supported depending upon the service by 37% and supported across the board by 22%. This concern was apparent at the public meetings, and particularly at the Disability Forum, with many saying that **too much of a shift to IT as the way of engaging with the Council would lead to social isolation and greater exclusion**.
- The importance of **building on the huge volunteer effort** in Birmingham to mitigate some of the impact of the cuts was supported in all the consultation arenas with many of the written suggestions in the surveys mentioning this as a way of maintaining services. However, there was a widely held view that **volunteers could not fill the gaps** created by the cuts and that volunteering could also undermine existing jobs. It was also stressed that **volunteering would be undermined by staff cuts**, for example in parks, as paid staff are needed to recruit, train and co-ordinate volunteers. Some at the Disability Forum suggested that the important role of people with disabilities was often overlooked but that this volunteering effort depended upon support workers.
- Two suggestions around floating support workers and Extracare were put forward by **Supporting People** as ways of continuing preventative support to older people at a lower cost. (See the Adult Social Care section below.)
- Ideas put forward on a BBC WM programme where the Council Leader invited money-saving ideas included selling off Woodcock Street, issuing "hefty fines" to cars that park all four wheels on footpaths or park irresponsibly near schools, and turning off the lights of the Christmas tree in Victoria Square.
- Many of the suggestions on ways of saving money by respondents to the surveys and other submissions were in areas that the Council has been acting on such as reducing waste/inefficiencies, reducing the salaries of the highest paid, seeking private investment and collaborating with other local authorities. This suggests that

the Council needs to continue to provide information on what it is doing in these areas.

- There was a great deal of concern expressed through public meetings and submissions to Budget Views and the online survey **over contracting out services**, particularly large contracts won by the private sector. A belief was expressed by many that existing private contracts were not facing the same level of cuts as Council staff and that the Council was locked into inflexible contracts for often inappropriate services which are sometimes less efficient than those provided by internal staff. There were calls for the books to be opened on these big contracts with private companies.
- There was concern that the private sector was winning contracts for services that could be better provided by the third sector. Inclusion of **social value in contracts** was welcomed but there were calls for this to be clearly defined. There were concerns about the ethical values and business practices of some firms both in this country and abroad. Some stressed the need to **retain public sector expertise** even when much of the services were contracted out to the third sector as this was needed to better co-ordinate and support the services they provide.
- There were a few suggestions that savings could be made by cutting the number of Councillors and of cutting Councillors allowances.
- A number of suggestions on ways of finding savings were made through the various consultation routes under each of the Service Review headings, together with opinions on the broad approaches that should be adopted such as investing more for prevention, the balance between the costs of increasing investment in enforcement and the increased income that might come as a result, co-ordinating and joining up services within the Council and with other organisations, operating at a more local level and empowering communities to do things for themselves. These ideas are summarised under each section of the main text and will be explored in detail by the relevant Council Directorates and in the continuing consultation.
- There were a number of calls at the public meetings (12 across all 4 meetings) for the Council to **set a 'needs budget'** - and therefore a deficit and illegal budget – and/or for the Council to lead Birmingham residents in a nationwide **mass campaign to reverse the cuts**. Similar impassioned pleas were made at the Third Sector Assembly, in written comments on the online survey and in Budget Views submissions. Cabinet members responded at the public meetings that they would not set an illegal budget because in their view this would lead to a worse situation for the people of Birmingham but that they were lobbying the national government along with other cities for less cuts in their funding.

Adult Social Care

- **Vulnerable people:** As during last year's consultation, there was strong and general support that meeting the needs of vulnerable people and supporting their independence as much as possible should be a very high priority for the Council's services. (This was raised by 17 people across all four public meetings, by 197 people responding to the online survey and the main theme of the Disability Forum, and 12 of the 25 organisations that made submissions to Budget Views.) There was a great deal of concern that they will suffer greatly from cuts. In particular there were fears, including fears expressed by users of Adult Social Care, that the Council's statutory requirement to focus on those with critical or substantial needs would lead to a **neglect of those with moderate and lesser needs** but whose needs would

become greater if the current support they had was removed. This was causing real fear amongst some people with these levels of needs; at the Disability Forum one person asked *“Are we going to return to the 40s era of large institutions?”* Another said: *“We don’t want to be scroungers. Can we make a small extra contribution from our benefits towards our support?”* The risk is that funding will be concentrated on short-term, intense need rather than addressing long-term needs and prevention: firefighting which does not save money in the long run.

- Organisations involved in **Supporting People (SP)**, including SP service providers, housing providers and organisations representing people with disabilities, expressed concerns that SP services, which are widely recognised as excellent preventative services, will *‘go out of the window’* along with other preventative care. They recognise that cuts have to be made but suggest two alternative ways of saving money. First, the **development of a city-wide floating support service** that is cross-tenure which would allow vulnerable older people to receive cost-effective support and enabling services that would allow them to remain in their home in a safe way for longer. Secondly, that spending **commitment to Extra Care is maintained** as an alternative to older people being placed in residential care or hospital.
- Some consultees argued that **the knock-on effects** on vulnerable people of cuts to many different services and third sector organisations were not being considered adequately. If a service disappears because of inadequate funding, demand for their services may be transferred elsewhere putting other services under huge stress. One impact is that on **carers**: cuts to date were said by a number of people to have placed many at breaking point. Many will stop caring duties if pushed further and this will increase costs for the Council.
- The cuts proposed by Centro to **Ring & Ride** were a concern raised at meetings and through written submissions. It was predicted that this will isolate vulnerable people who rely on the service for their interaction with the outside world. Consultees wanted the Council to oppose Centro's proposed cuts. The importance of public transport for people with disabilities and older people was stressed by a number of consultees.
- At the Disability Forum there was a major **recommendation for a better co-ordination of services**. Duplication, inadequate and delayed assessments and failures to pool resources occur as a result of a lack of co-ordination and communication between professionals in different organisations in the public, private and third sectors, often with tragic consequences as well as huge inefficiencies. The Council could ensure a better service all round as well as saving money if it continued to take a lead in improving service co-ordination.
- It was suggested that this co-ordination of assessments and other services would be more easily achieved if adult care related services were **organised on a smaller geographical basis than the city as a whole**, perhaps on a quadrant or District basis.
- **Mental health issues** are often neglected in needs assessments according to some consultees. Removing preventative support and early interventions will worsen mental health issues and increase costs in the longer term. There is a need to develop a long-term, sustainable approach to improving mental health.
- There were also suspicions that **assessments were often inadequate** in part because of pressures to reduce demands on budgets. A need for agencies to accept each other's assessments together with training social workers to assess complex

needs rather than just having limited specialisms were suggested as ways of saving money.

- Comments were made about how **difficult it was to read and use much of the material produced by the Council**. If support to individuals in understanding such material and completing forms is withdrawn then people with moderate and lesser needs will become isolated with growing needs. Can the Council look at Easy Read and Talking Book approaches?
- **Concerns about the Council's plans for a 'channel shift'**, that is, a greater use of the internet and other IT communication means for Council information and applications. It was felt that this may lead to the exclusion of many vulnerable people. Helping access and use IT properly can sometimes take more time than the old methods.
- A view was expressed a number of times that increasing **community and family support is good but it does intensify safeguarding risks**. An attendee at the Disability Forum put it thus: *"A large percentage of our safeguarding cases are perpetrated by friends, families and neighbours, the same people you want to help."* (The same issue was raised in relation to vulnerable children.)
- **Pregnancy Outreach Service** works and should not be decommissioned was a point raised at two of the public meetings and in detailed submissions to Budget Views from two organisations. The services are also important for providing support to reduce infant mortality rates.
- A number of consultees via all consultation channels warned that cuts in Adults and Communities services would be in an environment of **rising demand from an aging population**. The impact would only worsen over time.
- Two organisations suggested in their submission that the proposed **Healthwatch cuts were too high** and will reduce capacity to generate income and meet their statutory requirements. Healthwatch is also needed to ensure that the voices of local people are heard on all service and budget issues.
- Work with **women suffering domestic violence needs continued support**. Not doing so will cost the Council more in the long run. This point was raised in submissions from two organisations, at one public meeting and at the Third Sector Assembly.

Safeguarding, Supporting and Educating Young People

- **Child Protection:** the extra funding for this area of work was generally welcomed but some concern was expressed that the £13m cut in children's services overall would mean that we would actually be providing less child protection, an area where the city is already failing. It was explained by the Cabinet that the funding reductions in Children's Services were not in areas related to Safeguarding. Nevertheless, some consultees believed that cuts in other educational services could have a pejorative effect on frontline safeguarding services.
- A view was expressed a number of times that increasing **community support is good but it does intensify safeguarding risks** as the majority of cases of abuse are from families, friends and neighbours. (Applies to vulnerable adults as well.)

- The **poor transition between child and adult support** for vulnerable people, in particular around mental health where there is a gap between the upper age limit for children and the lower one for adults, was highlighted by some as an area where improvement was needed which would also save money as it could prevent support needs worsening.
- Again some consultees said that cuts to **Children Centres** were hurting and should not be happening although the Cabinet responded that there were no cuts in the most deprived parts of the city.
- Schools that submitted comments accepted the need for some of the reductions while making a series of detailed suggestions on others. However, while they accepted that shifting some spending from the Council's general Fund to the Dedicated Support Grant, they were deeply concerned that this places the burden solely on maintained schools, a situation that would worsen as more schools become academies.
- Many points were raised in connection with youth services which are summarised under the 'Communities' service review area.

Developing a Successful and Inclusive Economy

- The online survey revealed a recognition of the importance of the Council's work in this arena for the lives of most of Birmingham's citizen with 81% of respondents stating that these services were very important and 61% saying they agreed (37% strongly agreeing) that cuts in these services would have a significant impact on their families and themselves. A similar though more nuanced picture was provided by the People's panel survey with 71% of respondents viewing the service as quite important or very important.
- At the public meetings and through answers to the online survey and Budget Views submissions, it is clear that **helping young people get jobs** is seen as a high priority. Also target training and employment support at people with disabilities.
- Support for business start-ups was welcomed at the businesses consultation meeting but there was also a plea that more was done for established businesses and social enterprises.
- The Council's **procurement policies** should be used more to support local, more focused, small firms and the voluntary sector.
- Spending and savings decisions should seek to **maximise 'the local multiplier'**, that is, ensuring that the maximum amount possible of Council spend is spent on local companies and local employees and circulated in the local economy.
- The Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trusts argued that a healthy, natural environment is 'natural capital' which underpins the City's economy and is both a strength and opportunity. The city's natural environment is an economic as well as an environmental and social asset.
- Significant concern about the **impact of cuts on buses/public transport** was expressed in the People's Panel Survey - mentioned by 50% of those providing a comment, i.e. 12% of all respondents. This linked with the **concerns about Ring and Ride** which have been summarised above under Adults and Communities.

Developing Successful and Inclusive Communities

- **District-level cuts and devolution:** There was no evidence at the public meetings of opposition to the proposal to devolve to Districts decisions about which specific services should face spending cuts in the context of a cut to each District's overall budgets. The question was raised a number of times of how would the Council ensure that vital services such as **youth services and libraries** will not be cut? Are Districts aware of statutory requirements such as to provide a library service, for example?
- **Young people:** Again, as during last year's consultation, a large number of young people attended the public meetings arguing that the Council should support jobs and training and not cut services to young people further. The Council should be investing in youth. Further cuts are a false economy as they would lead to higher youth unemployment and crime. This issue was raised by 114 people across the public meetings, in 26 of the 161 Budget Views submissions and by 27 of those responding to the online survey.
- **Connexions:** some attendees at the public meetings argued that it should not be cut further as the service has been cut drastically already and is only just about able to fulfil its statutory functions. It was said that at the moment the service protects Council from legal action by parents over the Council not fulfilling its statutory duties.
- **Libraries:** This was a big topic in the consultation around the Service Review Green Papers and repeated again during the budget consultation. A campaign has been organised against proposed cuts to home and mobile library service. Support for the New Library was expressed but there was concern that community libraries are suffering. Libraries are seen by many as an essential part of the community's social fabric providing, for e.g., literacy support, digital access and advice. When other advice services are cut, more people turn to libraries for that advice. The importance of libraries was a central feature of the Service Review dialogue.
- **Leisure Centres and Swimming Pools:** concern was expressed by some consultees about the proposed reductions and closures and whether charges will go up when the new ones created are run by the private sector. This topic was raised by eight people at the public meetings. Some wanted more to be kept or reopened such as Moseley Baths. Others were concerned that where centres were earmarked for community asset transfer, community organisations in those local areas may not have the capacity to run them. The result would be centres closing or being taken over by organisations with scant regard for the views and efforts of local communities. But there was support for the public health link and some argued for a wider spectrum of activities.
- It was important when considering **Community Asset Transfers (CAT)** that the Council did not transfer liabilities to voluntary groups rather than assets because of maintenance and similar issues.
- **Housing:** a few consultees said that cuts to Council and voluntary organisations' housing services, such as for homeless people, would lead to problems for vulnerable people and abandon them to sub-standard private properties and unscrupulous landlords.
- **Parks:** There was a great deal of concern about proposals in The White Paper which were expressed much more strongly than in previous years. Nine people across three of the public meetings, 62 of the Budget Views Submissions (including

five from organisations) and 206 online survey respondents raised concerns about the cuts to **the parks budget**. This included volunteers in 'Friends of the Parks' groups and staff employed in the parks team as well as many residents who were neither. A petition of 699 signatories was also presented. Parks were seen as important for citizens' health and wellbeing and for the city's image. Comments included: Birmingham had a high reputation nationally for its parks but this would go if staff were cut drastically as proposed; their work is undervalued and underestimated, for example, that of the woodlands team. Many also emphasised that volunteers could not substitute for the work of paid staff and that **the current huge volunteering effort in the city would decline as it relies on park staff for recruitment, co-ordination and training**.

- English Heritage suggested that the number of Council staff involved in **preserving the city's physical heritage** was currently at 'the bare minimum' for it to be able to carry out its role and statutory duties in this arena.

Safe, Clean and Green Neighbourhoods

- **Parks:** Though under the 'Successful and Inclusive Communities' Service Review area, reference is made to parks here as well because the number and depth of the comments made on the parks budget were one of the many indicators of the importance placed on the green agenda by those who responded to the consultation this year. See above for details.
- **Large private contracts:** Many of those raising issues under this agenda believed these to be less efficient and add costs because of inflexibility/wrong things in contract. E.g. on waste contract. Questions were asked about why the payments to **Veolia** were not being cut and why the Council was contracting with a company that some claimed was involved in breaking international law.
- There were some concerns about potential cuts in **street lighting** as this might lead to more street muggings and crime.
- An issue raised at one meeting was that the **street cleaning service** is already deteriorating because of staff cuts and this will get worse as further cuts are made. Litter concerns, including fly tipping were mentioned by 59% of those providing a comment in the People's Panel survey i.e. 29% of all respondents.
- There was some opposition (and some support) at the public meetings to the introduction of **wheelie bins** and also questions on whether the £32m grant could have been better spent elsewhere. It was explained that this was an additional grant from the government that saved money in the long run.
- **Pest control:** a Council employee at one public meeting said that charging for some pest control services would have an adverse effect as many people will not/cannot pay the charge, particularly with the squeeze on incomes. Could means testing be introduced in relation to the charging? "*Pest control is a service not a business*" and the cuts to date along with those proposed means that there is no room left for pro-active/preventative work.

Support Services

- **Large private contracts:** These were argued to be less efficient by a number of consultees because of inflexibility/wrong things in contract. The Service Birmingham collaboration with Capita was raised a few times at public meetings with attendees

arguing that it should be brought back into Council as this allows better control of IT services plus more efficient and flexible working.

- Some people suggested that there was a need for a better collection of bad debts and for a restructuring of BCC's loans to NIA, Warwickshire Cricket Club.
- **Acivico:** two public meeting attendees said that Acivico's costs are sometimes higher than what could be obtained elsewhere yet some departments/services are told they have to use them. Children's Centres have saved money by not using Acivico.
- **Benefits:** cuts in front-line staff will affect service for vulnerable people as already building up backlogs.

A Well Managed and Resilient City

- Savings outlined for these services in the Service Review Green Paper were projected to be achieved largely through increases in charges and new income generating opportunities. Responses to the Service Review Dialogue were in general agreement with these increases in charges and income generation proposals, and included a number of other income generating ideas as well as ideas on encouraging people not to break regulations.
- On the other hand, fewer comments were made on this service review area during the budget consultation process compared with other service areas, probably because rather than proposing cuts in spending, savings here are proposed to come mainly from increasing charges and other income generation. In addition, these services are largely invisible to the general public or only occasionally used. Nevertheless, respondents to the online survey recognised the importance of these services with 78% of respondents stating that these services were very important and 53% saying they agreed (30% strongly agreeing) that cuts in these services would have a significant impact on their families and themselves.
- A number of suggestions on ways of finding savings were made in the two surveys and the submissions to Budget Views, together with opinions on the broad approaches that should be adopted such as investing more for prevention, increasing charges and fines as deterrents and the balance between the costs of increasing investment in enforcement and the increased income that might come as a result.

Council Tax Options

- Two-thirds of the respondents to the online survey were in favour of an increase in the Council Tax, just under half – supporting a 2% increase in the Council Tax while one fifth wanted an increase of over 2%. One third wanted a freeze.
- The picture was a little different with the People's Panel survey where 47% were in favour of a freeze, 44% in favour of a 2% increase and 8% in favour of a rise of more than 2%.
- Appeals were made for improvements to the Council Tax collection from non-payers and for a restructuring of the Council Tax so that the wealthier paid more. It was explained that the Council's collection rate was as good as or better than the local government average and that the Council Tax structure was set nationally and could not be changed by BCC.

Preparing for 2015+

- Many at the public meetings and forums praised the Council's efforts to inform and work with other organisations through the Service Review Dialogue, the budget consultation and the Standing up for Birmingham campaign. However they stressed the need for a great deal more work on this and the need to keep up the momentum through and after the budget setting process for 2014-15. Attendees at the Disability Forum stressed that unless this was done there would be a dispersal of organisations and people with moderate and lesser care needs only for them to reappear with critical and substantial needs at a later date, costing the public purse a great deal more.
- Suggestions made for improving future consultation included having total savings proposals by service review area expressed as a percentage of the service area budget as well as an absolute number and specifying clearly which services were statutory services.

1. Introduction

The Consultation Process

Birmingham City Council (BCC) continues to face an extremely challenging financial situation, largely as a result of reductions in grants from central government as part of the national deficit reduction programme together with cost pressures resulting from inflation, the growing demand for services such as adult social care and new statutory service provision requirements. Over the past three years the Council has made £375m of savings. On current projections, it will need to make a further £475m by 2017/18. In the coming 2014/15 financial year, **£88.4m of savings** will be required.

The longer term financial challenge means that by 2017/18, the Council would have had to reduce its controllable expenditure by about two-thirds (£840m) from what it was in 2010/11. (Controllable expenditure is that part of the Council's expenditure on which it can make decisions on where and how to spend it. The rest of the budget consists of expenditure that it has to pass on to others such as schools or some benefit payments.)

This was the context of the consultation round for 2014+ that this report summarises. As well as asking for views on specific savings proposals, the consultation asked for views under three big themes for change:

1. **Efficiency:** reduced waste, clearer priorities, and better use of technology and buildings.
2. **Working with others:** different service providers integrating their budgets and/or services.
3. **Working differently:** co-ordinating services so they worked for 'whole people' and 'whole places', reducing need by, for example, investing in prevention and personal independence so that there were better outcomes for less cost, and working more closely with people and communities.

The public consultation was launched on 9th December 2013 and closed on 10th January 2014. It involved:

- Production of a detailed consultation document entitled 'Planning Birmingham's Future & Budget Consultation 2014-15: A White Paper' which explained the background to the decisions that had to be made for April 2014 onwards and listing the specific savings/cuts proposals for the 2014/15 financial year. This was available online with copies distributed to various facilities, organisations and public meetings. A summary of this White Paper together with more detailed Fact Sheets on each savings proposal were also produced and made available online and in large numbers at public meetings.
- Four public meetings led by the Council's Leader and Cabinet which were attended by 287 people. These were held in Erdington (54 attendees), Yardley (67 attendees), Handsworth (60 attendees) and Longbridge (106 attendees). The overall number of attendees is smaller than the total attending the four public meetings held last year but this is accounted for by one of last year's public meetings being held in the Council House which was attended by over 300 people. However, if account is taken of the webcast (see below) then the number of Birmingham residents who took up the opportunity to ask questions of the Cabinet and listen to their answers was significantly higher. (Reports on the individual meetings are available.)
- A drop-in, information provision session at the Library of Birmingham on 9th December 2014 attended by 60 people. Comments relevant to the budget proposals were also made at the Standing up for Birmingham(SU4B) workshops

held in the Library of Birmingham on the same day and these have been included in this report.

- An online 'Be Heard' survey which received 944 responses. (See below for further details.)
- A parallel survey conducted by BMG with the People's Panel using the same questionnaire as the online survey which received 263 responses. (See below for further details.)
- Opportunities to make comments through submissions to 'Budget Views' via email, text and letter. 161 comments were made through this route, 25 from organisations, 30 by service users and 93 from individuals who did not specify if they were service users. 123 of these were sent in by email. (See below for the number of comments made by Service Review area.)
- A Disability Forum, that is, a consultation meeting targeted at people with disabilities and their organisations, attended by 25 people.
- A consultation meeting for voluntary organisations through the Third Sector Assembly organised in partnership with the Birmingham Voluntary Services Council (BVSC) attended by approximately 75 people.
- A meeting of 31 members of Birmingham's People's Panel facilitated and written up by BMG.
- A large consultation meeting attended by 120 businesses and hosted by Find it in Birmingham and attended by the Council Leader;
- A phone-in on BBC WM with the Council Leader where listeners were invited to phone in suggestions for saving money and working differently.
- More extensive engagement through social media and online activity this year which included over 31,000 'hits' on the service review videos and a webcast Cabinet round table budget discussion. 517 people joined the discussion live and the archive on the Council's website has received over 1,600 views to date and rising.

The budget consultation built on comments on the 11 Service Review Green Papers submitted via a number of means:

- Discussions at all 40 Ward Committee meetings.
- 319 responses to the on-line 'Be Heard' questionnaire on the Green Papers accessed through the Council's website.
- Individual comments via 109 emails, 1,363 letters and 59 postcards; and
- Feedback from 51 people attending two Birmingham People's Panel workshops.

The White Paper consultation document contained a summary of the comments received during this Service Review Dialogue. Points made through these comments on the Green Papers which are relevant to the budget proposals have been incorporated into this report.

Council Directorates have been supplementing this over-arching consultation with more detailed consultations with users about their specific proposals. Consultation on new ways of working and on service priorities beyond the next financial year will also continue, in part through the Standing up for Birmingham campaign.

Overall, the budget consultation process reached more people and elicited more responses than in the previous two years. This therefore has been the largest budget consultation that the Council has ever undertaken.

Representativeness

Although strenuous efforts were made to publicise ways that people could make comments on the budget, it is not possible to simultaneously have an open access online survey and ensure that responses by different groups of people are proportional to their numbers in Birmingham's population. Respondents were asked to complete personal profiles on aspects such as their gender, ethnicity, age and whether they worked for Birmingham Council or another organisation in Birmingham. A large majority of respondents also answered these questions and a detailed analysis of these data is contained in Appendix II.

In summary, more than half (61%) of the respondents were women, the distribution by age was broadly equivalent to the Birmingham population although there was an under-representation of younger people. People of minority ethnic heritage were substantially under-represented. Over a quarter of respondents worked for the Council and one third worked for an organisation based in Birmingham. Continuing to work to improve the engagement of all sections of Birmingham's population remains an important objective for the Council.

Despite being based on a panel that represents the make-up of the city's population, **the People's Panel survey** also had difficulties in ensuring a representativeness of respondents. This is a common issue with postal surveys that have limited time to chase up responses from those under-represented in the returns. Respondents were heavily skewed towards the over-65 age group and, as for the online survey and there was a smaller proportion of responses from people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups than in the general population. However, BMG, the market research company that manages the People's Panel for the Council, has provided data on differences in views between different groups where they are significant and has weighted the Council Tax responses so that it reflects the make-up of Birmingham's population. The workshop for People's Panel members was more representative of Birmingham's population because invites could be controlled.

The numbers of comments by Service Review area made through the submissions to 'Budget Views' are shown in the table below:

adult social care	26	16%
safeguarding, supporting & educating young people	16	10%
developing a successful & inclusive economy	9	6%
developing successful & inclusive communities	117	73%
safe, clean & green neighbourhoods	11	7%
support services	9	6%
a well-managed and resilient city	5	3%
general comments	16	10%

The numbers of comments by the three new Council Directorates are given below:

people	45	28%
place	98	61%
economy	11	7%

Note that some comments referred to more than one Service Area or Directorate.

As explained above, open access was an important principle of the consultation process. However, this has meant that the responses cannot be claimed to be statistically representative of the views of Birmingham residents. As well as the lower representation of some groups of residents than their proportion in the city's population outlined above, responders to any consultation process tend to be those concerned about a particular issue. **Nevertheless, it would be wrong to say that therefore these responses should be discounted as they do reflect the views of a large number of people in the city.**

Providing Information

Perhaps more importantly, the value of the consultation process is in the qualitative information provided to the Council. It has allowed many who will feel the impact of specific proposed savings to express their concerns, to provide details of what they expect the impacts to be and to make many other suggestions. In particular, the concerns of some vulnerable groups and those who work with them have been captured. This is important and valuable information that Councillors and Council officers will want to consider before making budget, staffing and service organisation decisions.

Furthermore, the public consultation has also played an **important role in informing in some depth** a large number of Birmingham residents, Council service users and organisations about the wide range of services that the Council provides, the opportunities and constraints of Council funding and spending (for example, that only one tenth of its revenue is raised via Council Tax), how Birmingham has fared in relation to central government grants compared with other local authorities, and the difficult decisions that it is facing over the coming four years because of huge financial pressures.

The impact of this **important informing role** of consultations is often neglected in assessing the impact of public consultations. The numbers responding to the consultation and the depth of their responses was certainly significant and particularly important this year because there was a greater emphasis on finding new ways to deliver services, particularly through the Service Review Dialogue.

The impact of this informing role is perhaps best illustrated by comments made by participants of the workshop conducted with members of the People's Panel, selected to represent the make-up of the population of Birmingham. This started with an in-depth presentation on the financial situation facing the Council by its staff and by BMG staff. Three quotes are illustrative:

I didn't think it was this extreme.

The scale of the cuts, I hadn't heard that. You can expect certain cuts but it seems like it's going to be really harsh.

It seems like it's going to be a very hard job because you almost feel like there's already been cuts and things are very reduced. You feel like you just can't work out how they're going to still provide a service, but make that bigger saving.

Consultation in the Future

This report aims to summarise truthfully **all** the comments made by people and organisations that responded to the consultation in a format that is accessible and relatively easy to navigate. Reproducing every single comment would be counterproductive as it would make the report too long and dense with virtually every reader only being able to absorb a small number of the comments. However it is inevitable that in summarising some details of submissions will have been lost. Nevertheless, the Council has retained and catalogued every submission and there will be continuing opportunities to make comments and suggestions on the future of the Council through the continuing Service Review process, detailed service consultations and the Standing up for Birmingham campaign. There will also be a specific consultation on the 2015/16 budget.

Structure of Report

Comments submitted through all the channels outlined above are summarised under the Green Paper headings (the Service Review areas) to allow a read across from the Service Review Dialogue summary and because this reflects the organisation of the on-line and

People's Panel surveys. Responses to the Council's 'big ideas' for new ways of working together with ideas put forward by consultees for new ways of working are included in 'The Future City Council' section which was the title of the first Green Paper.

Each of the other sections on each Service Review area is divided into:

- Concerns and impacts of the proposals identified by respondents; and
- Ideas on new ways of working and alternative savings for that particular Service Review area.

These sections are followed by details of responses to a request for views on different options for Council Tax rises. The report concludes with a summary of points made in regard to planning for the financial challenges from 2015 onwards, that is, suggestions for improving consultation and engagement in the future.

All responses from organisations and individuals that were sent to Budget Views have been recorded and analysed, and referred to throughout this report. The individual organisational responses are summarised in Appendix I. The other Appendix contains a demographic analysis of respondents to the online survey.

Detailed notes were taken at each public consultation meeting and summarised in a report for that meeting. These reports will be available on the City Council's website at www.birmingham.gov.uk/budgetviews.

2. The Future City Council

Key Points

All the broad services provided by the Council as described in the Service Review Green Papers were seen as important and part of the role expected to be played by BCC.

New, broad message that people do see a central and important role for the Council in 'place making' (that is, shaping the 'look', environment and facilities of the city) and in building and maintaining the city's social fabric.

Importance of services for vulnerable people, young people and concerns about private contractors which were also raised strongly.

Strong support for more partnership working/joining up services and investing in prevention but caution on impact of reducing face-to-face contact too much.

Danger that reducing staff too far would reduce volunteering raised through most of the feedback routes.

Service Priorities

The survey forms used in the budget consultation process this year did not have a specific question on people's views on the Council's service priorities. Rather, there was a question on for each Service Review area asking if a service was very important (broken down into with a big impact on me and my family, that I regularly use, and 'although I don't regularly use'), quite important, Not very important, not at all important and don't know. The results for the online survey are shown in the table below, which allows a comparison of the relative importance people placed on each service area and why. The final row presents the balance between all who said a service was very important or quite important and those who said it was not important.

	Adult Social Care	Safeguarding, Supporting and Educating Young People	Developing a Successful and Inclusive Economy	Developing Successful and Inclusive Communities	Safe, Clean and Green N'hoods	Support Services*	Well Managed and Resilient City
Very important services with a big impact on the life of me or my family	14%	32%	31%	39%	49%		27%
Very important services I regularly use	2%	6%	32%	20%	29%		17%
Very important, although I don't regularly use these services	64%	52%	18%	25%	9%	33%	34%
Quite important	14%	9%	13%	9%	11%	41%	11%
Not very important	1%	0%	3%	4%	1%	11%	3%
Not at all important	1%	0%	1%	2%	0%	3%	1%
Don't know	4%	1%	2%	1%	1%	13%	6%
Balance between important and not important	92	99	90	87	97	60	85

*nb - response options were slightly different for Support Services - very important was a single response, rather than being split into 3 responses to reflect service use as it was for other areas

The above results from the online survey, similar results from the People's Panel survey and the range of comments at meetings and submitted in writing, suggested that all the broad services provided by the Council as described in the Service Review Green Papers were

seen as important and part of the role expected to be played by BCC. The lowest balance of those who felt a service area was important minus those who did not feel it was important in the online survey was for Support Services, as would be expected from a service area that is less visible to the general public, and even here the positive balance was 60 percentage points. There was a similar result in the People's Panel survey where there was a balance of 65 for Support Services, 86 for Well Managed and Resilient City and all the others in the 90s ranging up to 96 for Safe, Clean and Green Neighbourhoods.

The surveys also asked respondents the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a statement that they were worried that the cuts would have a significant impact on themselves and their families. These results are shown in the table below together with a balance between those agreeing and those disagreeing in the final row.

	Adult Social Care	Safeguarding, Supporting and Educating Young People	Developing a Successful and Inclusive Economy	Developing Successful and Inclusive Communities	Safe, Clean and Green N'hoods	Well Managed and Resilient City
Agree strongly	19%	32%	37%	55%	60%	30%
Agree slightly	9%	6%	24%	15%	23%	23%
Neither agree nor disagree	44%	52%	25%	18%	11%	30%
Disagree slightly	8%	9%	6%	4%	2%	5%
Disagree strongly	14%	0%	4%	6%	2%	4%
Don't know	7%	0%	3%	2%	2%	8%
Balance of agreeing minus those disagreeing	+6	+29	+51	+60	+79	+44

The area in both surveys where the largest proportion of respondents agreed that cuts would have 'a significant impact on me or my family' was Safe, Clean and Green Neighbourhoods (83% agreeing including 60% strongly agreeing versus 4% disagreeing giving a positive balance of 79). This was followed by Developing Successful and Inclusive Communities (balance +60) and Developing a Successful and Inclusive Economy (balance +51). For the People's Panel survey the highest balance was again Safe, Clean and Green Neighbourhoods at +60 figures for these service areas were +60 followed by Developing a Successful and Inclusive Economy (balance +21) and Developing Successful and Inclusive Communities (balance +14).

Interestingly, while most respondents reported that they did not expect cuts in Adult Social Care and Safeguarding, Supporting and Educating Young People to have a 'significant effect on me or my family' these were still seen as important services by almost every respondent in both surveys. There is clearly a groundswell of opinion amongst Birmingham residents that these are crucially important services for the Council to provide.

The **new, broad message** that emerged in this year's budget consultation compared with the previous two years therefore appears to be that people do see a central and important **role for the Council in 'place making'** (that is, shaping the 'look', environment and facilities of the city) **and in building and maintaining the city's social fabric**. As well as this being implied by the survey results quoted above, this was reflected in the many comments at the public meetings and the other targeted meetings around libraries, parks and other green issues, and in the support for the Council taking a lead in bringing people together to find ways of preserving services and community amenities. This message was in addition to the points about the **importance of services for vulnerable people, young people and**

concerns about private contractors which were also raised strongly as they were last year and the year before.

New Ways of Working and Funding in the Future

Partnership Working

There was strong **support and advocacy for more partnership working** across the public, private and third sectors with many examples given of waste resulting from duplication and misunderstandings together with unnecessary and dangerous delays because of arguments about who was responsible and who should pay. Support for this was also reflected in the online survey with 72% (78% in the People's Panel survey) supporting the proposal that the Council should *'work more closely with other organisations such as the health service and the police'* and only 2% not supporting this (the rest expressing support depending on service affected). A large number of the written submissions on ways to save money also referred to partnership working as did many of the contributions at the public meetings.

The People's Panel workshop also gave strong support to this approach but warned that it was important that responsibilities were well-defined; service providers focused on the end customer; and co-ordination between them (such as via ICT systems) was effective but not unnecessarily bureaucratic or costly.

The work done to date on building these partnerships was welcomed and a number of consultees said that this effort led by the Council must continue beyond the setting of the 2014-15 budget because of the continued difficult decisions faced in the coming years.

Investing in Prevention

There was strong support, reflected in the online and people's Panel surveys, at meetings, at the people's Panel workshop and through written submissions, for **investing in early intervention and preventative measures**. 71% of online survey respondents (75% in the People's Panel survey) supported the proposal to *'Direct more resources to early intervention to prevent costly interventions later'* with only 2% not supporting it. 44 people added written comments in their online survey response warning that **cutting preventative services would create future costs for the Council**. This was also a major theme in the public meetings and the submissions to Budget Views.

Two suggestions around floating support workers and Extracare were put forward by **Supporting People** as ways of continuing preventative support to older people at a lower cost. (See the Adult Social Care section below.)

There was some **support for most of the other 'big ideas'** for future Council services depending upon the services affected including *'Target services to those most in need, but reduce them for others'* (68% with 12% not supporting), *'Introduce charges for some services which are currently free'* (57% with 27% not supporting), *'Increase charges for services'* (48% with 39% not supporting), *'Encourage local people and communities to deliver services the Council can no longer afford to sustain'* (51% with 28% not supporting).

Caution on Reducing Face-to-Face Contact

The **one exception** was *'Reduce the amount of face-to-face contact with the Council, and increase online interaction'* which was not supported by 41% (48% in the People's Panel survey), supported depending upon the service by 37% and supported across the board by 22%. This concern was apparent at the public meetings, and particularly at the Disability Forum, with many saying that **too much of a shift to IT as the way of engaging with the Council would lead to social isolation and greater exclusion**.

Volunteering

The importance of **building on the huge volunteer effort** in Birmingham to mitigate some of the impact of the cuts was supported in all the consultation arenas with many of the written suggestions in the surveys mentioning this as a way of maintaining services. However, there was a widely held view that **volunteers could not fill the gaps** created by the cuts and that volunteering could also undermine existing jobs. It was also stressed that **volunteering would be undermined by staff cuts**, for example in parks, as paid staff are needed to recruit, train and co-ordinate volunteers. Some at the Disability Forum suggested that the important role of people with disabilities was often overlooked but that this volunteering effort depended upon support workers.

Large Private Sector Contracts/Contracting Out Services

There was a great deal of concern expressed through public meetings and submissions to Budget Views and the online survey **over contracting out services**, particularly large contracts won by the private sector. A belief was expressed by many that existing private contracts were not facing the same level of cuts as Council staff and that the Council was locked into inflexible contracts for often inappropriate services which are sometimes less efficient than those provided by internal staff. There were calls for the books to be opened on these big contracts with private companies.

There was concern that the private sector was winning contracts for services that could be better provided by the third sector. Inclusion of **social value in contracts** was welcomed but there were calls for this to be clearly defined. Some stressed the need to retain public sector expertise even when much of the services were contracted out to the third sector as this was needed to better co-ordinate and support the services they provide.

At each of the public meetings, concerns about the ethical values and business practices of some firms both in this country and abroad were expressed. These included beliefs that some companies were not paying a living wage, were not paying their fair share of taxes by deploying legal tax avoidance schemes and were involved in contracts abroad that violated international law, Veolia's holding company's contracts linked with settlements on the West Bank being cited at each of the public meetings.

Other Suggestions

Many of the suggestions on ways of saving money by respondents to the surveys and other submissions were in areas that the Council has been acting on such as reducing waste/inefficiencies, reducing the salaries of the highest paid, seeking private investment and collaborating with other local authorities. This suggests that the Council needs to continue to provide information on what it is doing in these areas.

A number of suggestions on ways of finding savings were made through the various consultation routes under each of the Service Review headings, together with opinions on the broad approaches that should be adopted such as investing more for prevention, the balance between the costs of increasing investment in enforcement and the increased income that might come as a result, co-ordinating and joining up services within the Council and with other organisations, operating at a more local level and empowering communities to do things for themselves. These ideas are summarised under each section of the main text and will be explored in detail by the relevant Council Directorates and in the continuing consultation.

The people's panel workshop suggested that non-resident workers, landlords, transport companies and businesses such as hotels and retail outlets operating in Birmingham were all asked to contribute more to the city.

Ideas put forward on a BBC WM programme where the Council Leader invited money-saving ideas included selling off Woodcock Street, issuing "hefty fines" to cars that park all

four wheels on footpaths or park irresponsibly near schools, and turning off the lights of the Christmas tree in Victoria Square.

There were a number of calls at the public meetings (12 across all 4 meetings) for the Council to **set a 'needs budget'** - and therefore a deficit and illegal budget – and/or for the Council to lead Birmingham residents in a nationwide **mass campaign to reverse the cuts**. Similar impassioned pleas were made at the Third Sector Assembly, in written comments on the online survey and in Budget Views submissions. Cabinet members responded at the public meetings that they would not set an illegal budget because in their view this would lead to a worse situation for the people of Birmingham but that they were lobbying the national government along with other cities for less cuts in their funding.

3. Adult Social Care

Key Points

Major concerns for the **impact on vulnerable people**, particularly those with moderate or lesser needs who would move into substantial or critical needs categories if their support was withdrawn.

Fears that preventative services would be withdrawn, especially Supporting People services, as most are discretionary rather than statutory. This would **increase costs in the long run**, particularly as there would be a rising demand for social care from an aging population.

The **knock-on effects** of spending reductions elsewhere need to be considered.

There is an urgent need for **better co-ordination and partnership working** between service providers within and across the public, private and voluntary sectors.

A great deal of concern over the **capacity of volunteers** and the third sector to adequately replace public services, particularly specialist services. Volunteering will weaken if Council staff cuts are too great.

While having more community and family support is good but it does **intensify safeguarding risks**.

Many concerns voiced that Ring and Ride would disappear.

Concerns over **inadequate and delayed assessments** leading to greater needs and therefore costs at a later date. The **mental health impact** of delays was often neglected.

Communication material needs to be simpler as it is often difficult to read and many people with needs would suffer from too great a 'channel shift' to internet-based rather than face-to-face communication.

Some consultees said that **Pregnancy Outreach Worker Service** works and should not be decommissioned.

Women suffering **domestic violence** need continued support.

Many new ways of working and new ideas suggested for mitigating the impact of the cuts.

Impacts and concerns

Vulnerable people

As during last year's consultation, there was strong and general support that meeting the needs of vulnerable people and supporting their independence as much as possible should be a very high priority for the Council's services. There was a great deal of concern that they will suffer greatly from cuts. These issues were raised by 17 people across all four public meetings, by 197 people responding to the online survey and the main theme of the Disability Forum, and 12 of the 25 organisations that made submissions to Budget Views.

In particular there were fears, including fears expressed by users of Adult Social Care, that the Council's statutory requirement to focus on those with critical and substantial needs would lead to a **neglect of those with moderate and lesser needs** but whose needs would become greater if the current support they had was removed.

This was causing real fear amongst some people with these levels of needs; at the Disability Forum one person asked:

"Are we going to return to the 40s era of large institutions?"

Another said:

“We don’t want to be scroungers. Can we make a small extra contribution from our benefits towards our support?”

Many consultees suggested that there is a risk that funding will be concentrated on short-term, intense needs rather than addressing long-term needs and prevention: firefighting which does not save money in the long run. Furthermore, a number of consultees via all consultation channels warned that cuts in Adults and Communities services would be in an environment of **rising demand from an aging population**. The impact would only worsen over time.

Prevention and Early Intervention

Organisations involved in **Supporting People** (SP), including SP service providers, housing providers and organisations representing people with disabilities (8 of the organisations making submissions to Budget Views), expressed concerns that their services, which are widely recognised as excellent preventative services, will *‘go out of the window’* along with other preventative care. This was also a major issue during the Service Review Dialogue, attracting a large number of submissions.

At the Disability Forum it was pointed out that this was because Supporting People (SP) services were discretionary rather than statutory. However, studies have shown that they offer very cost effective prevention – for every pound spent there is a £2 saving on statutory services. For some clients groups (e.g. older people the saving can be £6 for every £1 spent).

This is because SP services help people remain in their own home, maintaining independence. Cutting SP is short-termism and will have the longer term effect of moving people into critical need and will cost a lot in money terms and in human misery. It was argued that there is a lack of logic in applying this saving as it balances the books in the short term, but in the longer term costs increase.

Similar points were made in a large number of submissions to the Service Review Dialogue.

The Supporting People Citizen's Panel has submitted a number of letters recognising that cuts have to be made but suggesting two alternative ways of saving money: the **development of a city-wide floating housing support service** and making a spending **commitment to Extra Care** as an alternative to older people being placed in residential care or hospital. More details further ahead.

Delays in arranging assessments were also reported as a great problem which increased costs, made worse by assessments that failed to take into account the needs of families supplying social support and that failed to take into other needs such as mental health needs. Delays could lead to people falling into substantial or critical care categories sooner. Savings and a better service could be provided if assessors were able to assess for a complex mix of needs rather than only assessing for one or two conditions, including recognising mental health issues early.

Knock-on Effects

Some consultees argued that **the knock-on effects** on vulnerable people of cuts to many different services and third sector organisations were not being considered adequately. If a service disappears because of inadequate funding, demand for their services may be transferred elsewhere putting other services under huge stress.

One impact is that on **carers**: cuts to date have placed many at breaking point, it was said by a number of people. Many will stop caring duties if pushed further and this will increase costs for the Council.

The cuts proposed by Centro to **Ring & Ride** were a concern raised at meetings and through written submission. It was predicted that this will isolate vulnerable people who rely on the service for their interaction with the outside world. Consultees wanted the Council to oppose Centro's proposed cuts.

The importance of public transport for people with disabilities and older people was stressed by a number of consultees.

The Urgent Need for Co-ordinating and Joining up Services

At the Disability Forum there was a major **recommendation for a better co-ordination of services**. Duplication, inadequate assessments and delays occur as a result of a lack of co-ordination and communication between professionals in different organisations in the public, private and third sectors.

A graphic and tragic example was provided of a patient diagnosed with terminal cancer who wanted to die at home but could not be moved out of hospital because there was disagreement about which budget his care package should come from. This was also costing the hospital a great deal because of 'bed blocking'. The situation was resolved by the intervention of a voluntary organisation which arranged his transfer to his home and paid for his care until he died.

The Council could ensure a better service all round as well as saving money if it continued to take a lead in improving service co-ordination.

It was suggested that this co-ordination of assessments and other services would be more easily achieved if adult care related services were **organised on a smaller geographical basis than the city as a whole**, perhaps on a quadrant or District basis.

Concerns were also expressed that there were gaps in the transition of support from children's to adult services.

Issues around Assessments and Mental Health

Mental health issues are often neglected in needs assessments according to some consultees. The Birmingham & Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust made a detailed submission to Budget Views arguing for a long-term, sustainable, system-wide approach to mental health issues, which needs to be properly facilitated. It also argued that removing preventative support and failing to intervene early will worsen mental health issues and increase costs in the long run, for example, preventing patients from being discharged from hospitals.

There were also suspicions that **assessments were often inadequate** in part because of pressures to reduce demands on budgets. There is a need for agencies to accept each other's assessments together with training social workers to assess complex needs rather than just having limited specialisms were suggested as ways of saving money.

There were concerns raised at the Disability Forum about the definitions of 'substantial' and 'critical' care needs. What were the controls to stop assessments underestimating needs? Would Birmingham complete its assessments before the Care Bill definitions came into law? (The Care Bill which will make providing care services to those with substantial or critical needs a statutory requirement, is currently before Parliament.)

Communication Methods

Comments were made at the Disability Forum, through Budget Views submissions and responses to the surveys and at public meetings about how **difficult it was to read and use much of the material produced by the Council**. If support to individuals in understanding

such material and completing forms is withdrawn then people with moderate and lesser needs will become isolated with growing needs. Can the Council look at Easy Read and Talking Book approaches?

Concerns about the Council's plans for a 'channel shift', that is, a greater use of the internet and other IT communication means for Council information and applications. It was felt that this may lead to the exclusion of many vulnerable people. Helping access and use IT properly can sometimes take more time than the old methods.

Support was also limited at the People's Panel workshop for reducing the amount of face-to-face contact with the Council and increasing online interaction. Concerns were largely based on the risk of reducing access to services among the most vulnerable.

Capacity of Volunteers and the Voluntary Sector

Doubts were also expressed about the capacity of the voluntary sector and volunteers to fill the gap caused by Council spending cuts. The public sector had to supply the most specialist skills. Paid, specialist public sector staff were needed to co-ordinate and train volunteers. The Council was also needed to take the lead in improving joint working. Charities were already working together so there wasn't much room for savings here.

Many at the Disability Forum suggested that it was often overlooked that people with care needs already made a huge voluntary contribution. If their support is withdrawn, then this huge voluntary effort would be significantly reduced or lost.

Increased Community Support and Safeguarding Risks

A view was expressed a number of times at public meetings and at the Disability Forum that increasing **community and family support is good but it does intensify safeguarding risks**. An attendee at the Disability Forum put it thus:

"A large percentage of our safeguarding cases are perpetrated by friends, families and neighbours, the same people you want to help."

(The same issue was raised in relation to vulnerable children.)

Other Points

The **Pregnancy Outreach Workers Service (POWS)** works and should not be decommissioned was a point raised at two of the public meetings and in detailed submissions to Budget Views from two organisations. These last two submissions provided detailed evidence of achievements of POWS and cited a robust evaluation which confirmed its impact. The service is also important for providing support to reduce infant mortality rates.

Two organisations suggested in their submissions that the proposed **Healthwatch cuts were too high** and will reduce capacity to generate income and meet its statutory requirements. It was argued that *"Healthwatch Birmingham has a crucial role to play in meeting Birmingham's health and wellbeing challenges."* Already the per capita allocation to Healthwatch is below the national average. Healthwatch is also needed to ensure voices of local people are heard on other proposals on the budget, particularly around social care. This latter viewpoint was also made by the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) in their submission to Budget Views.

Work with **women suffering domestic violence needs continued support**. Not doing so will cost the Council more in the long run. This point was raised in submissions from two organisations, at one public meeting and at the Third Sector Assembly.

Ideas on new ways of working and alternative savings

The Supporting People's Citizen Panel have written to suggest two alternative ways of saving money. First, the **development of a city-wide floating support service** that is cross-tenure which would allow vulnerable older people to receive cost-effective support and enabling services that would allow them to remain in their home in a safe way for longer. Secondly, that spending **commitment to Extra Care is maintained** as an alternative to older people being placed in residential care or hospital.

There were many suggestions that the Council needs to take a lead in developing better joining-up and co-ordination of its adult care services and also developing co-ordination across different service providers in all three sectors: public, private and voluntary. Alongside this were proposals that different agencies accept each other's assessments together with training social workers to assess complex needs rather than just having limited specialisms were suggested as ways of saving money. The value of a revamped re-enablement service should also be investigated.

It was suggested that this co-ordination of assessments and other services would be more easily achieved if adult care related services were **organised on a smaller geographical basis than the city as a whole**, perhaps on a quadrant or District basis.

Suggestions to the People's Panel Survey for savings were mainly in the following three areas:

- Encouraging families to care more for aged relatives;
- Increasing use of volunteers/voluntary organisations; and
- Investigating people who do not need care but who do receive help.

Ideas on saving money in these areas put forward through the online survey included:

- Better liaison with NHS
- More efficient, leaner processes. Look at your most effective staff and look for ways to replicate what they do.
- More pro-active and systematic collaborative working with local communities (along lines of Southwark Circle or Our Camden)
- Set up a Facebook equivalent for older people so they can support each other and have social interactions on-line (or by phone if they don't have internet). A friendly conversation prevents loneliness and associated health problems. Set up 'buddy' systems between older folk who live very near each other so they touch base a couple of times a day and can alert necessary authorities if they don't hear from each other or if there is a problem.
- Look at Midland Heart/Good Hope Hospital service. True integration with improved outcomes.
- Means test those that are able to pay for services.
- Work in closer partnership with GPs and GPs to be responsible for releasing funding locally to pay for support and care.
Work with charities like Trident Reach to create hubs where vulnerable people with less needs can access help when required.
- Adult social care funds should be ring fenced as with health and education.
- Sell off & put all care homes into private ownership. (Note many suggested less private contracting was needed and would save money.)
- Means test some of the aids and adaptations that are provided.
- The number of home-help/visitor schemes should be increased (and thus money saved on residential care-homes).
- Ensure retention of good staff, much less use of temporary agency staff.
- Give more support to carers to look after family members in their own homes.

- More disabled people should be helped to move onto direct payments as they would then be in control of their own care package which is far more flexible. For those that need help to do this, the Council could work more closely with groups/charities such as the Penderels Trust.
- Direct payments are the way forward to tailor packages but the elderly are afraid of the paperwork and finance. More time and effort needs to go in to allaying their fears and enabling companies to visit who can take care of all this for them.
- Perhaps a nominal contribution?
- Incentives for family / friends to take on some parts of caring role - cheaper than paying care staff?
- After extensive experience supporting someone who was not a relative with advanced dementia in their own home I feel very strongly that more people like, this should be in residential care. The complexity of organising numerous council, privatised and private care at home is very challenging. The quality of life of someone like this is very poor in comparison to being in a high quality home with activities, 24 hour care, appropriate equipment etc. The council could then focus funds on supporting very good care with expert staff rather than paying people national minimum wage, low levels of education and training in basic care and often no understanding what so ever of dementia.

4. Safeguarding, Supporting and Educating Young People

Key Points

Ring fencing and extra funds for child protection was welcomed by those who commented on this service area but some fears expressed that funding cuts elsewhere in Children's Services would feed through to safeguarding risks.

More community and family support for children is good but some consultees said that it does intensify safeguarding risks.

Some consultees highlighted what they saw as a poor transition between child and adult support for vulnerable people,

A need for a better streamlining of teams providing children's services as a way of making savings and improving service outcomes was suggested at a public meeting.

Impacts and concerns

Child Protection

The extra funding for this area of work was generally welcomed at the public meetings but some concern was expressed that the £13m cut in children's services overall would mean that we would actually be providing less child protection overall, an area where the city is already failing. Attendees at three of the four public meetings argued that the cuts to a number of educational support services to schools and the reduction in the number of educational welfare officers – the service currently has 19 staff it was claimed - would not only increase absences but would expose children to more safeguarding risks. To quote one contributor:

“This is where problems are identified”

It was explained by the Cabinet that the funding reductions in Children's Services were not in areas related to Safeguarding. Nevertheless, some consultees believed that cuts in other educational services could have a pejorative effect on frontline safeguarding services.

Schools submitting views asked that the role they play in safeguarding needs to be acknowledged and acted on.

A similar point was raised in relation to the cuts in many other services for young people which were felt to be a risk for safeguarding. (Many points were raised in connection with youth services which are summarised under the 'Successful and Inclusive Communities' Service Review area.)

A view was expressed a number of times at the public and targeted meetings that increasing **community and family support is good but it does intensify safeguarding risks** as the majority of cases of abuse are from families, friends and neighbours. This was stressed by a submission by the Third Sector Assembly's Children, Young People and Families representatives. (This point was raised in relation to vulnerable adults as well.)

Transition between children's and Adults Support

The **poor transition between child and adult support** for vulnerable people, in particular around mental health where there is a gap between the upper age limit for children and the lower one for adults, was highlighted by some consultees as an area where improvement was needed which would also save money as it could prevent support needs worsening.

Other Support Services

Attendees at the people's Panel workshop were generally in support of the proposed reviews of the way the City Learning Centre service works, the reduction in provision offered by Connexions, and the review of the School Settings and Improvements service. They qualified their support by asking that schools with lower budgets be monitored to ensure that they were prevented from missing out on essential provision, and that any alternative online provision (e.g. Connexions advice) should be properly costed and maintained. There was more criticism of these proposals at the public meetings.

The schools that submitted comments accepted the need for some of the reductions while making a series of detailed suggestions on others. However, while they accepted that shifting some spending from the Council's general Fund to the Dedicated Support Grant, they were deeply concerned that this places the burden solely on maintained schools, a situation that would worsen as more schools become academies.

Children's Centres

Some consultees said that cuts to Children Centres were hurting and should not be happening although the Cabinet responded that there were no cuts in the most deprived parts of the city.

Ideas on new ways of working and alternative savings

There was also a call at one of the public meetings for a **better streamlining of teams providing children's services** as it was felt that there was duplication and a lack of talking to each other.

Suggestions to the People's Panel Survey for savings were mainly in the following thematic areas:

- Not reducing spend and instead reduce spending elsewhere;
- Using volunteers/mentors; and
- Looking at private investment/commercial sponsorship.

Some quotes which illustrate these points are provided below:

"There should be more, or the same invested in our children and schools. Instead of spending less on children, we should spend less on traffic wardens, 20mph schemes, hundreds of new or extra CCTV camera and use the huge savings on these commodities to ensure our children are properly schooled and trained to guarantee enrichment of our city."

"Volunteers from professional jobs could mentor pupils, such as retired teachers, nurses, health workers and skilled retired engineers, as Birmingham has many skilled retired people who find the first few years of retirement boring."

"Asking the parents at school if any would volunteer to help out at various things i.e. safeguarding on school trips, helping out in school canteens when people off sick, playgrounds. Some parents invaluable knowledge to share. Looking out for bullies, injuries, etc. This would also help some parents to socialise."

"Private investment to schools might help to subsidise some schools where pupils may be offered jobs in local businesses. Our local football, cricket and rugby teams might also play a bigger part."

"Support what is in place instead of spending more money on new ideas and changing everything all the time"

Ideas on saving money in these areas put forward through the online survey included:

- Better use of data between agencies to improve safeguarding.
- Providing a better all-round service and building better links between agencies within a local area.
- Close all Children Centres and integrate their remit to other better placed institutions.
- Prevent duplication of services between council and non-council provision. Better support charitable organisations to provide more services to augment council provision.
- More involvement of community groups and vetted individuals and more sharing of services with nearby council areas.
- The basic strategy for safeguarding is flawed because it does not take into account the psychology of those likely to harm their children. Vast amounts of effort have been made to improve "cover my back paperwork" without tackling the overriding problem of establishing working relationships with hard to reach families. Increase the role of schools in safeguarding. We need "right service, right time" and "no wrong door" policies. The most effective safeguarding and early intervention is done in the school based children's centres where the provision of services is used to attract hard to reach families. The school based work is effective because of the hands on continuous improvement strategy of management forged through the interaction with OFSTED.
- Have more schemes to get young people able to earn money when they are younger so education and the workplace aren't so disparate and overwhelming.
- Train parents and make them take more responsibility for caring for and bringing up their own children.
- Again, much less time in front of the computer and more time visiting and supporting and helping parents - in practical ways, especially in using family centres and nurseries.
- Less agency staff and recruit train and support more social workers.
- Mystery shopping of children's services to really put a spotlight on this service and pick up on any areas of bad practice and inefficiency. Signpost everyone working in settings where children work to ways they can get loans so that they get the development and skills they need.
- Make more use of the voluntary sector such as the Children's Society.
- I have worked as a child psychiatrist for many years. Early intervention can sometimes help with preventing family breakdown but uses scarce resources which should be aimed at those most severely at risk.
- Get rid of OFSTED and get parents to be more involved in their child's learning instead of dropping them off at school and hoping for the best.
- Better social education in schools, build confidence, emotional competence, in young people at school, youth clubs, use of peer mentors.

5. Developing a Successful and Inclusive Economy

Key Points

Viewed as an important service with **helping young people get jobs** a high priority. Also need to focus on training and employment for people with disabilities.

Public transport viewed as important by consultees with fears about the impact of cuts here particularly Ring and Ride.

Procurement policy should be used by the Council to stimulate local firms and social enterprise.

Maximise the **local multiplier**.

Natural environment is an economic resource.

More collaboration between organisations and the Council needed.

Impacts and concerns

The online survey revealed a recognition of the importance of the Council's work in this arena for the lives of most of Birmingham's citizen with 81% of respondents stating that these services were very important and 61% saying they agreed (37% strongly agreeing) that cuts in these services would have a significant impact on their families and themselves. A similar though more nuanced picture was provided by the People's panel survey with 71% of respondents viewing the service as quite important or very important.

At the public meetings and through answers to the online survey and Budget Views submissions, it is clear that **helping young people get jobs** is seen as a high priority. The need for this to be a priority was also reflected at the large consultation meeting of businesses organised by Find it in Birmingham.

The issue of BCC working on this agenda with other local organisations was raised at the Third Sector Assembly, e.g., FE colleges and schools - tapping into their capacity and expertise. There was a feeling that there is a willingness out there to collaborate.

Organisations representing people with disabilities also argued for the Council to help their members/users find employment. As the RNIB put it, it is:

"Imperative that the Council recognises the barriers that people with disabilities face when accessing training and securing and maintaining employment and that effort is made to mitigate these wherever possible."

Significant concern about the **impact of cuts on buses/public transport** was expressed in the People's Panel Survey - mentioned by 50% of those providing a comment, i.e. 12% of all respondents. This point was also made by several submissions to Budget Views, pointing out the importance of public transport for people with disabilities and older people. This linked with the **concerns about Ring and Ride** which have been summarised above under Adults and Communities.

At the Third Sector Assembly there was some discussion on the potential for the Council to stimulate smaller, local companies and social enterprises by using their procurement more effectively. This was also raised in submissions to Budget Views. Can the Council break their procurement down into smaller contracts which smaller companies would have a chance of winning? Some thought that the Council would not have the capacity to manage these if it was cutting its backroom staff. A solution put forward was for a larger voluntary organisation to take on a larger contract which it then subcontracts to smaller organisations

with the management of these contracts being part of the overarching contract with the Council.

This discussion was part of a wider discussion on the need for the Council to improve the way it contracts with the voluntary and community sector including having longer term contracts and improving collaborative working arrangements.

Support for business start-ups was welcomed at the businesses consultation meeting but there was also a plea that more was done for established businesses. There was also a plea for targeted support for social enterprises and, from Localise West Midlands, for policies to **maximise ‘the local multiplier’**, that is that ensure that the maximum amount possible of Council spend is spent on local companies and local employees and circulated in the local economy. Maximising the local multiplier should be one of the principles applied to all spending and savings decisions by the Council.

The Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trusts argued that a healthy, natural environment is ‘natural capital’ which underpins the City’s economy and is both a strength and opportunity. This is a further reason why they oppose cuts to the parks budget (see next section).

In terms of the general importance of this area of work, one responder to the online survey summed up the views of many consultees:

“It should be clear that the public sector performs key functions in the pursuit of inclusive economic growth. Public institutions create the conditions and rules within which sustained and inclusive economic growth driven by the private sector is possible.”

Ideas on new ways of working and alternative savings

Suggestions to the People’s Panel Survey for savings were mainly in the following thematic areas:

- Combine services/resources, including with other Councils (12%);
- Review staff numbers/wages, including Councillors (10%);
- Car parking charge issues such as local parking permits and converting all cars parks to pay on exit as that reduces costs of checking up on pay and display car parks;
- Close down Climate Change
- Use purchasing professionals to reduce costs,

At the People’s Panel workshop an idea was put forward for a congestion charge for non-BCC residents.

The workshop also thought that residents themselves may also be willing to make contributions to support Council services outside of Council Tax. A local lottery or co-ordinated means by which more affluent residents could donate money directly to local services was recommended.

At the Third Sector Assembly it was suggested that the Social Value Act and exemptions in EU procurement law were not being used as effectively as they could.

Time banking as a way of unleashing time and skills of local people to help sustain services in their area was a major discussion point at the Standing up for Birmingham event on 9th December 2013.

Submissions to Budget Views also provided a number of suggestions for boosting the local economy including:

- Setting up an Energy Services Company and an Energy Savers Company (from Friends of the Earth);
- Looking for the best use of waste resources to raise revenues which is not necessarily incineration

Ideas on saving money in these areas put forward through the online survey included:

- The Council is a trusted body that could take over from untrusted energy companies.
- It's time to cut back on hiring consultants, if BCC staff cannot carry out the work needed then you are not hiring the right staff!
- If you help more people get jobs, you would have to spend less on other services like benefits and housing benefits and other things that the council has to pay for. If people are working they can afford to pay for services like leisure, travel, school meals and so on, green bags. It's a no brainer!
- Waste of money. Doesn't make the slightest bit of difference to the number of jobs. Don't bother, leave it to the private sector.
- Economic development and job creation seems to be considered on a standalone basis rather than a function of all Council departments. In parks for example, with support and easier processes we could free up land for self-sustaining cafe enterprises, but the process and lack of support make this all too onerous.
- Ensure projects are fully funded so you don't get incomplete or non-connected cycle paths, for example, which then do not get used.
- Spend more to earn more!
- Cut back on glossy advertising leaflets such as Forward & Letterbox there is enough information online etc. Cut back on contractors like Amy who are charging the extreme to plant saplings when they are a fraction of the cost. Stop letting direct contractors use sub-contractors who charge costly rates to complete repairs.
- Review the German festive market as it's outdated.
- Look at the services that provide the city with a revenue and close the ones that do not make money.
- Stop sending MP's & councillors on funded trips abroad to promote Birmingham.
- Make fewer grants and subsidies to rich organisations such as Birmingham International Airport. Reduce funding for the promotion of Birmingham International Airport.
- Reduce funding for pedestrian roadside railings and capacity improvements on the Middleway. These measures will lead to less safe roads, discourage walking and increase pollution.
- The council should be more business minded especially when it comes to hiring out venues that it owns for weddings e.g. The Council House.
- More involvement of community groups and more sharing of services with nearby council areas.
- Stop using Capita.
- Provide short term free parking near all shops for shoppers, to encourage trade.
- Arts and culture - make these available for a small fee rather than free.
- Long term stability and more co-ordination in planning development, less political tit for tat as happened with the library which ended up in completely the wrong place. Keep the best of the older iconic buildings such as the Maden Library and canal network and use them to build a unique identity for our city that is instantly recognisable worldwide. Sometimes, I think if Birmingham was Venice, our city planners would be proposing we drain the canals.
- Good working relationship with outside agencies.
- Facilitate private sector investment by ensuring there are outstandingly good roads, transport and public infrastructure in the city and surrounding areas.
- BCC to set good example as an employer.
- Providing **support for local, existing projects** and enterprises will help bolster a struggling economy.

6. Developing Successful and Inclusive Communities

Key Points

Concerns about further cuts to services for **young people** were again one of the main issues raised, as it was last year. Some consultees asked for guarantees that their youth club would not close or that District Committees would not cut these services.

Parks were a new and large concern this year with many people saying that staff cuts should not be as large as proposed as this would have a devastating impact on the city's parks and would also undermine the huge volunteering effort.

Libraries were another area of major concern.

The plans to close some **leisure centres and swimming pools** and replace them with new, private sector managed pools were placed under a great deal of scrutiny.

This linked with concerns about **community asset transfer plans** where there appeared to be no community organisation that had the capacity to take over a facility. This combined with fears that maintenance and refurbishment issues would mean that the transferred 'asset' was really a liability.

The city's duty to preserve its **physical heritage** may be under threat.

Impacts and concerns

District-level cuts and devolution

There was no evidence at the public meetings of opposition to the proposal to devolve to Districts decisions about which specific services should face spending cuts in the context of a cut to each District's overall budgets. Some attendees were hungry for information on the actual cut being proposed for their District which was based, in part, on relative deprivation. One attendee asked how relative deprivation within a District would be tackled.

The question was raised a number of times of how would the Council ensure that vital services such as **youth services and libraries** will not be cut in some Districts? Are Districts aware of statutory requirements such as to provide a library service, for example? Cabinet members responded that while it was up to each District to make those decisions – that being the meaning of devolved budgets – the Districts were aware of the extent of concerns here expressed through last year's and this year's consultations.

The holding of District Committee meetings in the city centre rather than in the relevant District was criticised at a couple of the public meetings.

Young people

Again, as during last year's consultation, a large number of young people attended the public meetings arguing that the Council should support jobs and training and not cut services to young people further. The Council should be investing in youth. Further cuts are a false economy as they would lead to higher youth unemployment and crime. This issue was raised by 114 people across the public meetings, in 26 of the 161 Budget Views submissions and by 27 of those responding to the online survey. More detailed information is available in the individual public meeting reports.

Connexions

Some attendees at the public meetings argued that it should not be cut further as the service has been cut drastically already and is only just about able to fulfil its statutory functions. It was also said by one contributor that at the moment the service protects Council from legal action by parents over the Council not fulfilling its statutory duties. Connexions was also

raised by a few of the online survey respondents, usually as part of a more general concern about investment in youth services.

A submission by the Birmingham UNISON Connexions stewards stated that further budget cut of £1.5m to Connexions service seriously threaten the viability of the service and harms the city's unemployed youngsters.

Libraries

This was a big topic in the consultation around the Service Review Green Papers and repeated again during the budget consultation. A campaign has been organised against proposed cuts to home and mobile library service. Support for the Library of Birmingham was expressed but there was concern that community libraries are suffering. Libraries are seen by many as an essential part of the community's social fabric providing, for e.g., literacy support, digital access and advice. When other advice services are cut, more people turn to libraries for that advice. This view was summed up by an attendee at a public meeting who said:

"We offer amazing things in local libraries."

He also asked whether Districts were aware of the statutory obligation to provide libraries under the 1964 Library Act.

Leisure Centres and Swimming Pools

Concern was expressed by some consultees about the proposed reductions and closures and whether charges will go up when the new ones created are run by the private sector. This topic was raised by eight people at the public meetings and by some of the people who attended the drop-in session at the New Library on 9th December 2013. Some wanted more to be kept or reopened such as Moseley Baths. English Heritage called for a 'viable solution' to be found to protect Moseley Baths which are the oldest Grade II* public baths in England.

Others were concerned that where centres were earmarked for community asset transfer, community organisations in those local areas may not have the capacity to run them. The result would be centres closing or being taken over by organisations with scant regard for the views and efforts of local communities. This was raised most strongly around the Laurel Road Centre in the Perry Barr District.

There was support, however, for the public health link to some of the centres that were being kept open and some argued for a wider spectrum of activities to be provided at the centres.

Community Asset Transfers (CAT)

A further issue raised in the consultation in connection with Community Asset Transfer (CAT) proposals was that it was important that the Council did not transfer liabilities to voluntary groups rather than assets because of maintenance and similar issues.

At the Third Sector Assembly the issue of the council only granting 25 year leases was raised as it was felt that this was not long enough to allow organisations to raise funding on the back of the property they had. Leases of 99 or 125 years were suggested.

Housing

A few consultees said that cuts to Council and voluntary organisations' housing services, such as for homeless people, would lead to problems for vulnerable people and abandon them to sub-standard private properties and unscrupulous landlords.

Parks

There was a great deal of concern about proposals in The White Paper which were expressed much more strongly than in previous years. Nine people across three of the public meetings, five of the people leaving comments at the first drop-in event at the New Library, many attendees at the Third Sector Assembly, 62 of the Budget Views Submissions (including from the Birmingham Civic Society and four other organisations) and 206 online survey respondents raised concerns about the cuts to **the parks budget**. This included volunteers in 'Friends of the Parks' groups and staff employed in the parks team as well as many residents who were neither. A petition of 699 signatories was also presented.

Parks were seen as important for citizens' health and wellbeing (with a suggestion at the Third Sector Assembly that China's practice of mass exercising in the park should be copied) and for the city's image. Comments included:

- Birmingham had a high reputation nationally for its parks but this would go if staff were cut drastically as proposed;
- Their work is undervalued and underestimated, for example, that of the woodlands team.

Many also emphasised that volunteers could not substitute for the work of paid staff and that **the current huge volunteering effort in the city would decline as it relies on park staff for recruitment, co-ordination and training**. There are already 8,000 volunteer days in parks a year according to one attendee at a public meeting. Another suggested there were 150 Friends of Parks groups.

Two comments left at the New Library drop-in event on 9th December 2013, the first day of the consultation, illustrated the points that were repeatedly made throughout the consultation:

"We need Park Keepers and Rangers to liaise with!! Make it easier to volunteer not more difficult."

"False economy = reducing Park Keepers. This would reduce volunteer numbers and increase vandalism and increase any health and safety issues in parks."

The Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trusts argued that a healthy, natural environment is 'natural capital' which underpins the City's economy and is both a strength and opportunity. This is a further reason why they oppose cuts to the parks budget.

Heritage and Climate Change

English Heritage made a submission saying it was uncertain about the impact of cuts on the Council's role and statutory duties in **preserving the city's physical heritage**. It argued that the number of staff involved in this is currently at 'the bare minimum'. It added that a 'viable solution' needs to be found to protect Moseley Baths.

Some of the other submissions expressed concern about **cuts to climate change** and environment team.

Ideas on new ways of working and alternative savings

The most common suggestion to the People's Panel survey for savings was to use volunteers. Other comments focused on streamlining processes and controlling private contractors (though some in the online survey suggested that contracting out saved money) as illustrated in the following quote:

“Get it right first time. Money is squandered by dysfunctional processes and inflated payments to contractors.”

Boosting volunteering in parks was seen as critically important by many of those raising concerns about the cuts in the parks budget; but they also stated that this was not possible if paid staff were cut.

Ideas on saving money in these areas put forward through the online survey included:

- Reduce Library of Birmingham opening hours to Monday to Saturday 9am - 5pm so they don't need to recruit more front line staff. And reduce energy bill from lighting and heating.
- Support volunteers with training, insurance and the right infrastructure so they can help in parks and open spaces.
- Manage open spaces as a valuable resource.
- There must be income generation ideas for Sutton Park above charging for parking on Sunday's. How about a Go Ape site, Additional restaurant, commercially operated outward bound site? Whilst there I'm sure there are restrictions on what can be done, the aim should be that the park is much better used and self-financing.
- Other options for delivering play activities - following similar model to the community run Little Aston Park.
- Much more innovation at local level in terms of how these services are delivered - (a) across services/agencies and (b) with the local community. Local staff taking personal responsibility for the local area/community (not just their job description).
- Introduce a minimal charge for everything, just because there is an issue that being free to users creates a culture of not valuing what the council does, under appreciation of staff at the coal face and perpetuates the myth that privatised services are better or more valued.
- Parks - create wildlife areas - stop cutting the grass in large areas and just have paths cut through.
- Remove rose beds, only keeping those in high profile sections of public open spaces.
- You should utilise Friends Groups more - we can litter pick on days when our park keeper is on holiday. If you hold a festival in the park you could build something into the hire cost to cover for grass cutting. Certainly you should be fining companies who cause damage to the parks.
- More involvement of community groups and vetted individuals and more sharing of services with nearby council areas.
- Libraries - may be scope to focus opening hours, to share libraries with more functions e.g. adult education, advice and information, holiday and homework clubs, health information.
- Parks - Scope to reduce contracts to maintain expanses of frequently mown grass, spraying with weed killer, cutting hedges, but move to more natural landscapes with greater wildlife interest. Some areas could be let for food growing, especially in areas that lack allotments such as the inner city. Redundant buildings on park edge might be sold.
- Have interns, work experience students and low level jobs for recent graduates; make the use of opportunities to have paid interns funded by other institutions. Hire a development team for the library to fundraise – they will cover their costs and more. Learn from Universities in this respect.
- Have a single hub for areas so when people arrive they have one specific place to go for information on all different activities and other facets of community life in one place.
- Give people the freedom to design and build their own environment including housing.
- The key secret here is to get the diverse communities to bond more strongly together to share and do more things together and to interact and learn off one another.

7. Safe, Clean and Green Neighbourhoods

Key Points

The importance placed on this agenda was reflected in the number of comments received including on parks (which are under a different Service Review heading). There was widespread concern that spending reductions and staff losses in this area were already having an **impact on the city's environmental quality**. This included concerns about street cleaning and street lighting.

Contracting services to large private firms was also a frequently mentioned concern with the focus falling on the Veolia waste contract in this arena.

Spending reductions on and charging for **pest control** were identified as leaving no room for pro-active/preventative work.

Impacts and concerns

Parks

Though under the 'Successful and Inclusive Communities' Service Review area, reference is made to parks here as well because the number and depth of the comments made on the parks budget were among the many indicators of the importance placed on the green agenda by those who responded to the consultation this year. See above for details.

Large Private Contracts

Concerns about the **outsourcing services to private contractors** were raised by a number of people at each of the public meetings and in many of the written comments in the two surveys. Comments included:

- The large profits made by Veolia on their 25 year waste collection contract with the Council in part because of the contract's inflexibility in not allowing for the funds that can be raised from recycling;
- Questions on why Veolia wasn't included in the savings proposals this year (Cabinet Members responded that it had been cut last year); and
- A call made at each public meeting for the Council to renegotiate or end this contract in the context of Birmingham's business responsibility charter because, it was said, Veolia's holding company is involved in several contracts involving Israeli settlements in Palestine which are deemed illegal in international law.

Other examples were given, though not always completely accurate, of high prices and lower efficiency of private contractors in other service areas such as with tree planting and woodlands management.

More generally, there were calls for better quality information on the details of these contracts so that their cost and value for money could be better assessed.

Street Lighting and Cleaning Services

There were some concerns at public meetings about potential cuts in **street lighting** as this might lead to more street muggings and crime. At the People's Panel workshop, the introduction of lower levels of street lighting raised some concerns but was generally supported. When reducing street lighting, it was recommended that local people have a say in when and where, if possible. The RNIB also submitted that the Council should consider the impact of reducing street lighting on blind and partially sighted people. Environmental groups supported the introduction of energy-efficient yet more effective LED lighting.

An issue raised at one meeting was that the **street cleaning service** is already deteriorating because of staff cuts and this will get worse as further cuts are made. Litter concerns, including fly tipping were mentioned by 59% of those providing a comment in the People's Panel survey i.e. 29% of all respondents. At the People's Panel workshop, some group anticipated an increase in rubbish and rodents as a result of the proposal to reduce street cleansing service while others were more optimistic, considering a targeted approach to these services as 'logical' and part of the Council acting more efficiently.

Wheelie Bins

There was some opposition (and some support) at the public meetings to the introduction of **wheelie bins** and also questions on whether the £32m grant could have been better spent elsewhere. It was explained that this was an additional grant from the government that saved money in the long run. Opposition and support was reflected in the online survey. Wheelie bins were supported by friends of the Earth on the grounds that it encouraged and increased recycling.

A number of participants in the People's Panel workshop were opposed to the introduction of wheelie bins, questioning the introduction of the scheme and fearing difficulties handling heavy bins, lack of storage area and so on. Some used bulky waste collections regularly and would now need to contribute to these collections. There were concerns about elderly or vulnerable residents who would not be able to travel to the tip to dispose of waste and fears that this proposal would lead to an increase in fly-tipping and a general decline in the quality of local streets.

Pest control

A Council employee at one public meeting said that charging for some pest control services would have an adverse effect as many people will not/cannot pay the charge, particularly with the squeeze on incomes. Could means testing be introduced in relation to the charging?

In addition, she stated that the cuts to date along with those proposed means that there is no room left for pro-active/preventative work.

"Pest control is a service not a business."

Charges for pest control were also identified as problematic by the People's Panel workshop. Attendees also saw charges for bulk waste collection as a problem.

Ideas on new ways of working and alternative savings

Suggestions to the People's Panel Survey for savings were mainly in the following thematic areas:

- Stricter enforcement of anti-littering;
- Recruit volunteers, including unemployed;
- Review street lighting levels; and
- Anti-litter education, including schools.

Some quotes which illustrate these points are provided below:

"Litter louts need to be caught and fined. Shops owners should be responsible for their litter within 100 yards of their shop. Mainly takeaways – the litter is a disgrace."

"Be tougher on people who do not keep the environment clean and safe."

"Actually prosecute and fine fly tippers using mobile CCTV cameras and use fine money to pay to keep areas clean."

"Recruit volunteers to patrol our parks"

“Get more people on community service out litter picking and general tidy up”

“Utilise long term unemployed for the purpose of street cleaning and green issues”

“Foster groups which encourage locals to care for their environment (along the lines of Neighbourhood Watch)”

Participants at the People’s Panel workshop felt that:

- Information and education on littering would help combat litter problems and that there needed to be more understanding of the psychological and cultural motivations behind littering so that the city could tackle it more effectively
- The Council should work more closely with charities and other third sector parties to help residents deal with unwanted items and to work with faith groups and other community groups to disseminate information and educate people on how to maintain clean, green and safe neighbourhoods.
- The proposal to ‘reorganise community safety services and encourage more individual, business and community responsibility’ should be supported. Suggestions included deep-cleans/community clean ups, which involve young people to help foster their sense of civic responsibility. Importantly, it was felt that more responsibility should be placed on businesses, to ensure that they assist in maintaining the cleanliness of the local area. The importance of imposing penalties on businesses not abiding by rules was emphasised.

Working with Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) was raised as a way forward by some attending the drop-in event at the start of the consultation.

A large number of specific suggestions for savings/income regeneration were made through the online survey including:

- Using communal ‘Green’ and other recycling bins on housing estates;
- Keeping the parks well maintained as this encouraged more demand for hiring out sections of the parks and therefore more income for the Council.

Ideas on saving money in these areas put forward through the online survey included:

- Encourage neighbourhood watch schemes and get the residents to engage in keeping the areas where they live clean, tidy and safe.
- The employment of crossing patrol wardens at pelican and or toucan crossings seems a waste of resource to me.
- Why no food-waste recycling and anaerobic digesters?
- Do more to prosecute fly-tippers and dumpers.
- Volunteering is going to play a vital role in the future with delivery of service but this can happen without the support and direction of a knowledgeable and informed workforce.
- Much stronger preventative work.
- Stop paying overtime.
- We focus too much on strict financial measures, and are consequently dominated by financial procedures more than enablement.
- There is profit in waste so find more ways to extract that revenue.
- Turn street lights off overnight (say 11:00 - 6:00) depending on the area and the amount of anti-social behaviour recorded in that area.
- Impose more spot fines for people dropping litter. Encourage fast-food outlets to be more responsible in getting their customers to use litter bins. Ask people (nicely!) if they could sweep their sections of street pavement. (Some people already do this.)
- Sow wild flower meadows in parks to reduce the need for mowing.
- The contract to collect and burn rubbish on a huge scale for Veolia has to be exited or renegotiated. Waste system should separate organic waste for digestion/composting and clean items for re-use and recycling. At present, you are

burning resources that could potentially be sold, mixing them into useless rubbish (which is not in any sense a "fuel").

- Collect rubbish every two weeks using wheelie bins.
- Have a poster campaign about green issues, showing what the Council is doing, and showing people how they can help in simple ways.
- Let ornamental horticulture go and start to manage in a much more modern and naturalistic way as they do on the continent. Doing Chelsea is all very well but shouldn't our staff be focussing on making Birmingham a better place to live rather than doing flower arrangements in London.
- Let allotment holders sell their own produce to soften the rent increases and build a healthier population.
- Get park keepers up skilled so they can cover more than one park. Give them the right equipment so they can be efficient e.g. mowers, strimmers, chain saws, tractor skills....give them freedom to use initiative and listen to their advice; then act on it.
- Encourage people to take their rubbish and recycling to council run depots.
- I feel very strongly that the landfill rubbish should only be collected fortnightly. To collect weekly is to remove the incentive to recycle. Does the council have no facility for composting and then selling the garden waste to recoup costs?
- Get the community to take pride in their area, reward them for taking over a grass verge, sowing wild flowers, growing sunflower competitions, growing herbs and spices. It would save money on mowing.
- Educate children about the importance of not dropping litter!

8. Support Services

Key Points

Calls for the ending of large private contracts were frequent, particularly calls to bring the Service Birmingham contract back in house.

The efficiency of Council trading arms Acivico and Cityserve were questioned.

There was a fear that cuts in front-line benefit staff were leading to backlogs that had a detrimental impact on those already facing big squeezes on their income.

Impacts and concerns

Large private contracts

These were argued to be less efficient by a number of consultees because of inflexibility/wrong things in contract. The Service Birmingham collaboration with Capita was raised a few times with many arguing that it should be brought back into Council as this allows both better control of IT services and more efficient and flexible working. Calls were made to see the figures on these contracts so that decisions on whether they can be brought back in-house can be made properly

Others commented that large private firms always do well out of contracts because they have better lawyers.

Some people suggested that there was a need for a better collection of bad debts and of the Council Tax and that there should be a restructuring of BCC's loans to NIA, Warwickshire Cricket Club so that they were on more commercial terms.

Acivico and Cityserve

At two public meetings there were questions around the Council's decision to establish trading companies such as the Cityserve (cleaning services) and Acivico (building and facilities management and services) which were thought to be inefficient. Attendees suggested that Acivico's costs are sometimes higher than similar services that could be obtained elsewhere yet some departments/services are told they have to use them. Children's Centres have saved money by not using Acivico.

Cabinet Members explained that they were looking into making changes at Acivico and that the decision to pay the living wage did have an impact on costs.

Benefits

It was suggested that cuts in front-line benefits processing staff were already building up backlogs which meant that vulnerable people who were facing many pressures on their income were suffering.

Ideas on new ways of working and alternative savings

Suggestions to the People's Panel Survey for savings were mainly in the following thematic areas:

- Review all outside contracts to get the best deal; and
- Review of salaries from top downwards.

Some quotes which illustrate these points are provided below:

"Investigate sharing/pooling of Business and Support Services with other council organisations"

"If I understand correctly, the Council needs to do more for itself, I don't agree with contracts to firms who charge fortunes for their services"

"Make sure you try to recruit high quality solicitors, etc. so that high quality advice is given. In the long run good advice saves money."

"Stop paying the high wages from the top downwards"

"Cut the wages of people who earn over £100,000 a year"

"Many support services are totally irrelevant. Money should be spent on front line services instead."

Ideas on saving money in these areas put forward through the online survey included:

- Cut out bureaucracy - make quicker decisions.
- If not already done so conduct efficiency surveys in departments to see if all are working to capacity. Check jobs aren't duplicated. Ensure staff who are providing advice to the public are well trained and informed.
- Reduce duplication, automate processes, ensure consistency in processes across services, centralise functions.
- Departments to work 'smart' together.
- Don't employ a chief exec on ridiculous wages.
- Introduce Quality principles of excellence and get rid of duplication. More use of digital, such as this survey, and less of paper letters. More transparency.
- Re-evaluate the Service Birmingham Contract.
- Stop paying private companies massive amounts for their profits.
- More mobile key workers and benefits advisers who spent time out and about helping the vulnerable and those requiring advice, instead of long appointment times for busy offices which have huge running costs.
- Ensure that council members are only allowed to claim reasonable expenses. Make a charge for use of the under-ground car park by the Council house especially if used out of meeting times.
- No unnecessary spending on entertaining and glorified advertising.
- Sharing many services with neighbouring councils.
- Service Birmingham use up a lot of money. Use them less. Council need competitive pricing of IT service.
- Deal with calls effectively first time and you can stop repeat calls.
- Combine Chief Exec and Finance functions.
- 2 councillors per ward would be plenty and city wide a considerable saving to budget would be made.
- Crush all of the ambition that your back office services have to be "best in class" "excellent" "world leading". Settle for good enough.
- Have a point contact in each district in community centre and they speak to relevant departments.

9. A Well Managed and Resilient City

Key Points

General agreement with proposals to increase charges and other income generation.

Support for stronger enforcement where costs can be covered by higher income and where it links with incentives to comply.

Many ideas put forward for further savings.

Impacts and concerns

Services covered in this service review area covered: Bereavement Services, the Mortuary/Coroner's Office, the Registrar's Office, Licensing, Traffic Management & Regulation, On Street Parking & Enforcement, Trading Standards, Environmental Health, the Birmingham City Laboratory, Emergency Planning and part of the Planning Service.

The Service Review Green Paper for this area recommended that most of these services should become self-financing within three years although some had no scope to increase income but were essential services for the Council to perform such as Trading Standards, Environmental Health and Emergency Planning. The savings by 2016/17 identified in the Green Paper were £1.743m from a net expenditure of £4.836m in 2013/14 (a saving of 36%). These savings were projected to be achieved largely through increases in charges and new income generating opportunities.

Responses to the Service Review Dialogue were in general agreement with the increases in charges and income generation opportunities proposed, and included a number of other income generating ideas as well as ideas on encouraging people not to break regulations.

Fewer comments were made on this service review area during the budget consultation process compared with other service areas, probably because rather than proposing cuts in spending, savings here will come mainly from increasing charges and other income generation. In addition, these services are largely invisible to the general public or only occasionally used. Nevertheless, respondents to the online survey recognised the importance of these services with 78% of respondents stating that these services were very important and 53% saying they agreed (30% strongly agreeing) that cuts in these services would have a significant impact on their families and themselves. (The figures for the People's Panel survey were lower, at 70% and 30% respectively, but still illustrating the recognition of the importance of these services.)

A few quotes from these surveys illustrate the thinking behind these views:

"I feel that cuts to these services other than streamlining will affect all families especially Trading Standards and Environmental Health service. Their budgets should ideally be increased."

"Cutting these services will lead to a less managed city, with a detrimental impact on the environment we live in"

"These are the most important services a council can provide to ensure a safe secure environment for residents and visitors. I want to know my family is safe and that chaos does not reign in Birmingham"

"Result in food poisoning, traffic chaos, rogue traders: Anarchy."

"Lack of parking enforcement will make walking and driving much more hazardous.... Environmental Health cuts will result in increased fly tipping, nuisance fires and traffic emissions leading to poorer air quality and ill health."

A significant number of respondents to the survey commented that it was difficult for them to obtain information on what services were included under this heading and therefore they felt unable to comment adequately.

Ideas on new ways of working and alternative savings

Ideas on saving money in these areas included:

- doing the work well and once;
- sharing services with other councils (raised by quite a few respondents);
- introducing local parking schemes and measures to encourage cycling and less use of cars;
- better enforcement on fly-tipping with fines to raise income;
- firmer enforcement of parking regulations with the use of CCTV (though others suggested reducing parking charges and fines especially where they might have a negative effect on shopping centres, and that increased use of CCTV was an infringement of privacy);
- more involvement of community groups and education;
- empower local communities to do things for themselves where possible;
- spending more but charging more i.e. investing to earn and recognising that services such as Environmental Health are preventative and better and cheaper than a cure;
- sell salt and grit packs in bad weather;
- outsourcing services although probably more said don't use private contractors;
- more joining up of services within the Council and with organisations outside;
- placing some of these services in other organisations such as registering births at hospitals or Children's Centres;
- more use of new technology such as for registering births etc.;
- employ the long-term unemployed on work experience and training in this area;
- reduce/streamline management, administration and paperwork;
- education programmes.

10. Council Tax Options

Key Points

Two-thirds of the respondents to the online survey were in favour of an increase in the Council Tax, just under half supporting a 2% increase. The People's Panel survey had the largest proportion (just under half) calling for a freeze of the Tax.

A number of calls made that there should be continued efforts to collect all Council Tax debts and that there should be a restructuring of the Tax so that wealthier residents paid more.

Both the online and the People's Panel surveys reflected the consultation White Paper's seeking of view on three options for the Council Tax next year. These were:

1. Freezing the Council Tax and accepting a temporary Government grant.
2. Increasing the Council Tax by the maximum amount possible before triggering a referendum, thought to be a rise of 2%. (This is the option that the Council's Budget proposals are based upon and therefore the one recommended by the current administration.)
3. Increasing the Council tax by more than 2% which would require a local referendum.

The table below provides more details on these options using the same words as in the survey questionnaires. It also provides the results of the two surveys and the results of the People's Panel survey weighted by age and ethnicity to reflect the proportions within Birmingham's population as a whole.

Two-thirds of the respondents to the online survey were in favour of an increase in the Council Tax, just under half (45%) – supporting a 2% increase in the Council Tax while one fifth wanted an increase of over 2%. One third wanted a freeze. The picture was a little different with the People's Panel survey where 47% were in favour of a freeze, 44% in favour of a 2% increase and 8% in favour of a rise of more than 2%.

BMG also noted:

“Respondents owning their properties (outright or via a mortgage) are more likely to favour increasing Council Tax at 2% than those that rent or represent another type of tenure (49% cf. 32%). The majority of those that rent or represent another type of tenure are in favour of a freeze at the current level (59%), while 9% favour an increase larger than 2%.”

Option	% online survey	% People's Panel survey	Weighted % People's Panel survey
1. Freeze Council Tax at its current level Central government offers Councils a grant to freeze their tax, but accepting the grant would still leave the Council short by £1.7m each year. Furthermore, the availability of a grant for future years is not yet confirmed.	38%	47%	53%
2. Increase Council Tax by 2% A referendum is not expected to be required	45%	44%	36%

to do this.			
3. Increase Council Tax by more than 2% A referendum is expected to be required to do this	16%	8%	11%

This may be a reflection of those owning their own properties tending to be wealthier and also less likely to be on Council Tax Benefit as now working age recipients of this benefit have to pay a proportion of it.

A few of the respondents to the online survey complained that they weren't given the option to ask for a reduction in the Council Tax.

Other Points

Appeals were made during the public meetings for improvements to the Council Tax collection from non-payers and for a restructuring of the Council Tax so that the wealthier paid more. It was explained that the Council's collection rate was as good as or better than the local government average and that the Council Tax structure was set nationally and could not be changed by BCC.

11. Preparing for 2015+: Suggestions on future engagement and consultation

Many at the public meetings and forums praised the Council's efforts to inform and work with other organisations through the Service Review Dialogue, the budget consultation and the Standing up for Birmingham campaign. However they stressed the need for a great deal more work on this and the need to keep up the momentum through and after the budget setting process for 2014-15. Attendees at the Disability Forum stressed that unless this was done there would be a dispersal of organisations and people with moderate and lesser care needs only for them to reappear with critical and substantial needs at a later date, costing the public purse a great deal more.

Suggestions made for improving future consultation included having total savings proposals by service review area expressed as a percentage of the service area budget as well as an absolute number and specifying clearly which services were statutory services.

APPENDIX I

Responses from Organisations

No.	Organisation name	Topics Covered
1	Trident Reach	Concern about impact that cutting Supporting People's accommodation based support services will have on Service Users such as victims of domestic violence, vulnerable young people, homeless people and older people. Need to change to outcome based commissioning rather than cutting.
2	Women's Help Centre, Handsworth	Very difficult now for smaller voluntary groups to get funding yet provide a range of vital services. Need to engage the BVSC in strategic planning.
3	Housing 21	Provide Extra Care and sheltered homes for older people and concerned that cutting the small Supporting People (SP) grant they receive will mean some of their residents will have to move to residential homes including existing residents who moved in on the expectation of the SP service.
4	Supporting People (SP) Citizens' Panel	Retain some funding (estimated at £1m) for Extra Care and a city-wide floating support worker for older people rather than the full £5m proposed saving to SP services in this area.
5	Cannon Hill Park Friends Group (Two responses)	Resubmission of detailed comments to Service Review on ideas for maintaining services and raising income at Cannon Hill Park
6	Birmingham Civic Society and Birmingham Trees for Life	Re the Council's proposed cuts to Birmingham's Parks Department 2014 budget. The trustees and members of the Civic Society realise that cuts to the Council budget are inevitable, but feel most strongly that parks and green spaces are vital to the city and that they cannot be properly managed by volunteers alone, however enthusiastic.
7	Colmers School and Sixth Form College	Support for protecting safeguarding budget but note the key role played by schools in safeguarding. Detailed comments about other savings proposals in Children's Services particularly in the relation between LA and schools budgets. More time needed for the detailed consultation.
8	Thomas Pocklington Trust	Provider of services for the visually impaired. Concerned about impact of cutting SP budget. Suggestions about different ways of council working together with provider such as themselves.
9	Localise West Midlands	Detailed comments on proposals including: the need to follow routes which maximise the local multiplier; look at whole system costs; open book approach to large private contractors and weigh up carefully the pluses and minuses of outsourcing; use procurement to boost

No.	Organisation name	Topics Covered
		smaller, more focused local firms; look at best use of waste resources which is not necessarily incineration; concerned about cuts to climate change and environment team; support for national campaign against lack of logic in the cuts and for devolving more national budgets to city regions.
10	Midland Heart	Welcome opportunity to work together with Council including on ways that services could be joined up and shared. Main concern is that cuts in Adult Social care will hit the vulnerable hardest and that cuts to SP will mean that some older people will not be able to live independently.
11	Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country	Commenting on how BCC manages the natural environment. (Second submission – also through Service Review Dialogue.) A healthy natural environment and natural capital underpins the City's economy and is both a strength and opportunity. Cuts in parks budget not supported.
12	Park Hill Junior & Infant School	Deeply concerned that the proposals in the education theme places the burden solely on maintained schools. Situation will get worse as more schools become academies. Supportive of funding for Early Years and Children's Centres, but not to the detriment of maintained schools. Many detailed comments on education proposals. Oppose removing play equipment from parks and reducing number of park staff.
13	Birmingham & Solihull Women's Aid.	Detail on the impact of the work of their Women's Safety Unit. Cutting some services, such as domestic violence support services, could result in an escalation of costs for the local authority and negate any anticipated fiscal savings. Agree that decision making around the cuts should be targeting resources to those most in need and services that enable early intervention and prevention.
14	Public Law Solicitors on behalf of several clients with Learning Disabilities.	Concern about how the corporate and directorate specific consultations connect and initial comments on some A&C proposals.
15	Birmingham & Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust	Importance of mental health issues which affect all aspects of services; need a long-term sustainable approach. Needs a system wide approach which has to be properly facilitated. Agrees with targeting resources were most needed. Outlines a number of detailed concerns including cuts to SP which have already had adverse effects on mental health services which have increased costs because, for e.g., patients cannot be discharged. Supports recommissioning of substance misuse contracts.
16	Birmingham UNISON Connexions stewards	Further budget cut of £1.5m to Connexions service seriously threatens viability of the service. Harms the city's unemployed youngsters.
17	English Heritage	Uncertain about the impact of cuts on Council's role and statutory duties in preserving the city's physical heritage.

No.	Organisation name	Topics Covered
		Number of staff involved in this is currently at 'the bare minimum'. A 'viable solution' needs to be found to protect Moseley Baths.
18	Gateways Family Services CIC	Wish to establish a dialogue to reverse the proposal to decommission Pregnancy Outreach Worker Service because of its effectiveness in tackling huge needs and the knock-on costs of decommissioning this service. Detail provided on outcomes of the Service.
19	Healthwatch Birmingham	Asks for a rethink on the proposal to reduce Healthwatch Council grant by 35% budget cut in 2014/15 and to fill this gap with income generation as it "would significantly reduce all our activity, but would particularly severely limit our capacity to generate income to supplement grant support in future years." "Healthwatch Birmingham has a crucial role to play in meeting Birmingham's health and wellbeing challenges." Already the per capita allocation to Healthwatch is below the national average. Healthwatch is also needed to ensure voices of local people are heard on other proposals on the budget, particularly around social care. A number of details on this are provided in the letter.
20	Professor of Maternal and Child Epidemiology at Birmingham University.	Don't decommission the Pregnancy Outreach Worker Service (POWS). Cites evaluation of POWS service that shows benefit of service.
21	Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Trust.	Suggestion that Health Impact Assessments should be carried out on all proposals. Concerned that some proposals will mean a shift of demand into the NHS.
22	Third Sector Assembly Children, Young People and Families (CYPF) reps	Concern about impact of CYPF proposals though hard to assess from the information provided. There are risks to safeguarding of transfers of these services to more community and volunteer effort. Welcomes voluntary and community sector (VCS) playing more of a role in these services but this raises issues such as the need for longer term contracts and improving the way the Council collaborates with the VCS.
23	Birmingham Rathbone	Concerns about the effect of proposed cuts on people with Learning Disabilities and the role of the VCS. Residential care may be the best option for some individuals. Need more and timely information on proposed cuts to SP grants. If they are cut it will have a profound impact on many people with learning difficulties. Volunteering cannot be a mainstay and also costs. VCS organisations are already collaborating e.g. the Disability Consortium.
24	RNIB	Concern that the independence and the quality of life blind and partially sighted people living in Birmingham do not suffer detrimentally due to City Council budget cuts and that essential services are maintained. "Imperative that the Council recognises the barriers that people with disabilities face when accessing training and securing and maintaining employment and that effort is

No.	Organisation name	Topics Covered
		made to mitigate these wherever possible.” Request that equality impact assessments are conducted to assess impact on blind people. They may also be excluded by too much of a shift towards internet-based communication methods. Remodelling Connexions must not ignore support given to blind people. Reduction of Ring and Ride a huge area of concern. People with disabilities rely heavily on public transport. Opposed to reduction of SP funds especially for support to live independently. Reduction in Healthwatch grant could mean that it will be harder for the voices of blind people to be heard. Council should consider the impact of reducing street lighting on blind and partially sighted people.
25	Friends of the Earth	Concerns about “many proposals which will have negative impacts on the environment and the city's sustainable development more generally. We believe many of the proposals are false economies which will actually cost the council and other public sector bodies, such as the NHS, more in the long run.” Many points including suggestion to set up an Energy Services Company and an Energy Savers Company; opposition to cuts in Environment and Climate Change Team; support to proposals to bring some teams together; cutting funding for public transport is bad for reducing carbon emissions; no to reducing park and woodlands staff and play areas but yes to less frequent grass cutting. Agree with wheelie bins. Much more detail in submission.

APPENDIX II

Profile of On-Line Survey Respondents

Gender	%	Count of Response ID
Female	61%	533
Male	39%	338
Grand Total		871

Age	%	Count of Response ID
<i>25 or younger</i>	3%	25
26 to 29 years	4%	32
30 to 34 years	9%	78
<i>Subtotal 25-34 years</i>	<i>13%</i>	<i>110</i>
35 to 39 years	10%	86
40 to 44 years	14%	119
<i>Subtotal 35-44 years</i>	<i>24%</i>	<i>205</i>
45 to 49 years	12%	102
50 to 54 years	13%	108
<i>Subtotal 45-54 years</i>	<i>24%</i>	<i>210</i>
55 to 59 years	11%	91
60 to 64 years	9%	79
<i>Subtotal 55-64 years</i>	<i>20%</i>	<i>170</i>
65 to 69 years	10%	83
70 to 74 years	4%	31
<i>Subtotal 65-74 years</i>	<i>13%</i>	<i>114</i>
75 to 79 years	1%	11
80 to 84 years	1%	9
85 to 89 years	1%	6
89 years or older	0%	2
<i>Subtotal 75+ years</i>	<i>3%</i>	<i>28</i>
Grand Total		862

Sexual Orientation		Count of Response ID
Bisexual	1%	7
Gay or Lesbian	3%	18
Heterosexual/ Straight	96%	664
Grand Total		689

Live in Brum		Count of Response ID
No	8%	68
Yes	92%	797
Grand Total		865

Work for BCC		Count of Response ID
No	73%	611
Yes	27%	225
Grand Total		836

Work for org in Brum		Count of Response ID
No	67%	538
Yes	33%	269
Grand Total		807

Ethnicity	%	Count of Response ID
White English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British	85%	702
White Irish	2%	15
White Non-British	2%	19
Other White Background	1%	5
<i>Subtotal White</i>	<i>89%</i>	<i>741</i>
Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi	0%	2
Asian or Asian British Chinese	0%	1
Asian or Asian British Indian	2%	20
Asian or Asian British Other	0%	3
Asian or Asian British Pakistani	2%	16
<i>Subtotal Asian</i>	<i>5%</i>	<i>42</i>
Black or Black British Caribbean	1%	7
Black or Black British African	0%	1
<i>Subtotal Black Caribbean/African</i>	<i>1%</i>	<i>8</i>
Jewish	0%	2
Arab	0%	1
Other Ethnic Group	2%	17
<i>Subtotal Other Ethnicity</i>	<i>2%</i>	<i>20</i>
Mixed Race - Asian and White	1%	8
Mixed Race – Black Caribbean and White	0%	4
Mixed Race - Black African and White	0%	1
Other Mixed / Multiple Ethnic Background	1%	5
<i>Subtotal Mixed</i>	<i>1%</i>	<i>6</i>
Grand Total		829

Religion		Count of Response ID
Buddhist	1%	6
Christian	50%	357
Hindu	1%	7
Jewish	1%	5
Muslim	3%	19
No Religion	44%	318
Sikh	1%	7
Grand Total		719