

## Budget Consultation – feedback report

- 1.1 Detailed budget proposals for 2013/14 were published on Council's website for consultation on the 19<sup>th</sup> December 2012, and were accessible through a prominent link on the front page. The consultation and budget proposals were also promoted through the local media. Responses to the consultation were invited via written submission to the Leader of the Council or via email. The period for comments and responses to the Council concluded on the 25<sup>th</sup> January 2013.
- 1.2 Alongside this, in November 2012 the Council, as part of the Big Conversation, published an illustrated online explanation of the Council's financial challenges, over the short and medium term. The presentation, which has been displayed at public buildings, such as libraries, leisure centres and community centres, has also been introduced at public meetings across the Borough, helping to stimulate constructive debate. Residents have been sharing their opinions and ideas with elected members, staff and other residents both in person, via email and on social media. The Big Conversation is an on-going dialogue to help build better mutual understanding and make it easier for people to recognise our growing challenges, in particular the increasing demand for all services and reduced resources to deliver them.
- 1.3 Feedback to the budget proposals has been elicited from both residents and stakeholders in the form of emails to the Council although the response has been notably low. A total of 17 emails were received by the closing date although some of these comments related to more than one proposal. Details are summarised below.

### Proposed: Reduce Public Transport Bus Subsidies by £400k

Number of responses	Mode of communication	Respondents	Summary of comments
3	3 emails	Local residents,	<p>Opposition to the proposal. Views that public transport is fuel-efficient and that not all routes can be self-supporting.</p> <p>Suggestion to increase season ticket prices for</p>

			<p>all-day parking /commuters, and for investment in park-and-ride sites and improved bus services.</p> <p>Concern for those on benefits and ability to afford fares, and impact on town centre.</p>
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**Proposed: Stop grant funding for Homeless Support of £20k**

Number of responses	Mode of communication	Respondents	Summary of comments
3	3 emails	Local residents	<p>Concern that support will be discontinued and that number of people who find themselves homeless will increase as a result of government cuts to welfare benefits. View that £20k is insignificant and that proposal should be withdrawn.</p>

**Proposed: Changes to Adult Social Care.**

Number of responses	Mode of communication	Respondents	Summary of comments
1	1 email	Local resident	<p>Opposition to 'further reductions' to adult social care</p> <p>Reductions will reduce capacity to provide necessary support.</p>

**Proposed: Changes to Council Tax Financial Support to save £1.532m.**

Number of responses	Mode of communication	Respondents	Summary of comments
2	2 emails	Local residents	<p>Agreement in principle; but query whether this does include empty business premises? If not, why not?</p> <p>Concern that ending the six month discount on empty properties by levying a charge of 50% of the Council Tax after three months and the full 100% after six months</p> <p>Suggestion that households awaiting probate and subsequent sale should keep the 6 month discount.</p>

**Proposed: Reduce One Stop Shop & Contact Centre opening times and service levels to save £250k.**

Number of responses	Mode of communication	Respondents	Summary of comments
1	1 email	Local resident	Concern that proposal states the internet is preferred means of contact. Need to be able to have a conversation.

**Proposed: Close Town Centre car park to save £400k .**

Number of responses	Mode of communication	Respondents	Summary of comments
1	1 email	Local resident	There needs to be a surplus of parking spaces to

			encourage people to come into town.
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**Proposed: Reduce Landscape services grants saving £20k**

Number of responses	Mode of communication	Respondents	Summary of comments
1	1 email	Local resident	Support for proposal. Support should be for charities that are providing a service that assists the people of Swindon.

Other suggestions/comments:

1.4 Residents also submitted alternative suggestions for savings and general feedback on information supplied about the Council's budget proposals. Most of these were single-issue comments, whilst others ranged more widely across other issues.

1.5 The following points were raised in these submissions:

- Raise Council Tax (3 comments): The Council should raise council tax by the maximum 2% permitted without a referendum this is, less than inflation and there has been no increase in the last two years. If it is to provide the services that the public want, there must come a time when, in order to do so, the 'income' (i.e. Council Tax) will have to be increased
- Why are paper and cans collected weekly instead of fortnightly? Recycling collection should fortnightly (2 comments)
- Join up information systems on Council tax debts and housing and commercial rents debts to reduce outstanding monies owed to the Council (1 comment)
- Replace the mayor with a chair of Council to reduce costs of the Mayor's office (1 comment)
- Abolish Forward Swindon. - appears to duplicate Council functions (1 comment)
- Reduce expenditure on consultants (1 comment)
- Reduce Councillor allowances (1 comment) .

- Support for proposals in principle but would require full details about grant expenditure to understand scale of reductions (1 comment)
- Some areas appear untouched at the expense of areas deemed less vital to the council i.e. youth services (1 comment).
- Lydiard Park and Coate Water could be provided by charitable or commercial organisations (2 comments)
- Recycling collection should fortnightly (2 comments)
- Libraries should be cut, - are a luxury in the present climate (1 comment)
- Proposals do not provide details about the Council's debt – what it is for, or how it is proposed to reduce it. (1 comment)
- Prefer to have a choice on what the money is spent or suggest that we only pay for the service we actually use - i.e. roads, decent free car parks which might encourage people to visit the town (1 comment)
- Suggest getting rid of any printed material sent out by the Council and simply email the information to residents (1 comment)
- The proposals only detail the £4m savings, yet the introduction talks about £13 identified. Where is the rest? (1 comment)
- Suggest that the Swindon Twinning Forum should be wound up. The twinning organisations of Haydon and Lydiard have already stopped. (1 comment)
- Support for new welfare reform legislation concerning council housing and fairer rents. Concern that many tenants occupy housing that is too big for their needs. (1 comment)
- Comment regarding a range of council services including social care and protection for vulnerable children: :The Council should add assurance that services are well regulated and money isn't spent on those who don't really need it – needs to be well regulated to prevent misuse (1 comment)
- Concern for perceived cuts to Dial a Ride Service facilitates independence and reduction will have a personal impact in terms of travel and attending day support clubs (1 comment).
- Bin collections should not be cut any more (1comment),
- There should be help for disabled children.

- Youth Clubs provide benefits to the community, such as less anti-social behaviour (1 comment).
- Leisure, recreation, libraries and culture should be run by a private organisation unless lots of money is being made to plough into other services. (1 comment)
- Street cleaning, etc. - - possibly need some campaigns in schools, about dropping litter and chewing gum. (1 comment)
- Surprised community safety is lower spending area Need a better overview on youth and anti- social behaviour in the town. (1 comment),