

Budget Consultation – feedback report

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of consultation feedback to the Council's Budget Proposals for 2014/15.
- 1.2 The consultation occurred in several phases. Cabinet took some decisions in December 2013 and January 2014 following consultation between October to December 2013 to ensure that changes could be implemented for the 2014/15 financial year.

2. Kerbside Recycling Collection and Green Waste Collection Service – decision taken Cabinet Minute 79, 2nd January 2014.

- 2.1 To achieve savings of up to £1 million in its waste and recycling service, the Council considered two proposals that, together, could deliver these savings. These were:
 - A change in the frequency with which recyclables are collected from kerbside, from a weekly to a fortnightly collection;
 - The introduction of charges for green waste collection, The service would be optional, but would require an up-front payment of £35 to cover the cost of a bin or bags, and an annual charge of £35 to cover collection costs.
- 2.2 To assist the Council in evaluating these proposals, a consultation was carried out by distributing an information letter to all households and business representatives in the Borough. It explained the proposals and invited people to comment on them, either online or via a paper questionnaire available on request. Distribution of this letter took place from 29th October 2013, and was completed by 22nd November; the closing date for responses to be included in this report was 9th December 2013. By this date, a total of 5,718 valid responses had been received.
- 2.3 The results of this consultation were presented at the Cabinet meeting on the 11th December 2013 and the feedback helped inform proposals before they were revised and approved at the Cabinet meeting on January 2nd 2014.

3. Other Proposed Service Changes

- 3.1 Detailed budget proposals for 2014/15 were published in Cabinet papers on the 11th December 2013 and details of service changes were also published on Council's website for consultation on the 20th December 2013. The consultation and budget proposals were promoted through the local media and 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 29th January 2014.
- 3.2 Feedback to the budget proposals from both residents and stakeholders in the form of emails to the Council has been notably low. Some service specific consultations are still on-going and these are detailed below.

1. Proposal: Efficiencies within the library service to save £300K

	Mode of Communication	Respondent	Comments
To include efficiency savings a staffing restructure and partnership working with Gloucester County Council. Consultation is to be carried out on an updated library strategy, previously agreed by Cabinet in 2011, which may generate further savings depending on the outcome. The £300k comprises: reducing the library management team from three to two FTE, procurement saving on library management system, staffing changes including reducing centralised	1 email	Local resident	Further information requested including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a break-down of overhead (recharge) costs to Libraries• whether the central recharge is to be reduced• whether the overhead (recharge) costs to libraries might be considered disproportionate• how many paid staff jobs have been or will be deleted and, if none, <i>why</i> volunteers are now to be asked to staff all the smaller libraries?• What research has been done to underpin and justify the new draft

teams including acquisition, stock and local studies teams, reducing the stock fund, a reduction in the publicity budget and other back-office savings			Strategy.
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Consultation on the draft Library Strategy is underway and will conclude on Monday 14th April 2014.

2. Proposal: Reduction to subsidy of Grounds Maintenance to save £40K

Subsidy reduction	Respondents	Summary of comments/feedback
<p>Reduction to the subsidy of grounds maintenance costs for football pitches and leisure grounds by recovering the costs through higher fees.</p> <p>Users of these grounds include five bowls clubs, six football pitches used by 30 clubs and two cricket pitches.</p>	<p>Consultation/feedback has been received from with 3 bowls clubs, one cricket club and 2 football clubs</p>	<p><i>Feedback from Bowls clubs to date:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation is already dropping • Only social event/opportunity for some players • If clubs close down then the Swindon and district league will become unsustainable • Whilst all clubs have improved their facilities, more investment is needed. • Clubs offer open days for young people and disabled people, in some cases have special wheel chairs and adoptions to enable wheel chair users to play. <p><i>Feedback from football clubs to date:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wiltshire FA is concerned that such changes will affect the Swindon Sunday, Saturday,

		<p>and North Wilts Youth Leagues</p> <p><i>Suggestions for ways in which the Council can help maintain sustainable clubs include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce a three or five year plan for reducing the subsidy with bowls clubs • Consider bowls clubs holding the lease for the facility • Work with clubs to help them maximise their income (e.g. increase fees, increase bar prices, encourage greater use of the facilities) • Promote bowls as a sport • Produce and implement a strategy around the provision of football through council facilities, rather than the <i>ad hoc</i> facilities dotted around.
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Consultation on implementation of this proposal is still on going and will be concluded by 31st March 2014.

3. Proposal: Adult Social Care

Ensure maximum use of facilities at Respite Care Firethorn Close to save £250k. (For implementation from the 1st October 2014)

Ensure maximum use of facilities at Firethorn Close by rescheduling current provision for Learning Disability respite care, as demand is limited during weekdays resulting in surplus places. Available capacity will be used for short term residential and crisis services. These changes are the full implementation of the original business case regarding Firethorn Close and Learning Disability short break services in 2008/09.

Consultation with service users and carers is due to commence in February 2014.and will run for a period of 12 weeks .

4. Proposal: Leisure Asset transfer of Leisure and Golf facilities to an external operator.

The facilities concerned are golf courses at Broome Manor, Highworth (the nine hole course) and Moredon; and six leisure centres; Croft Sports Centre, Delta Tennis Centre, Dorcan Recreation Complex, Haydon Centre, Health Hydro and the Link Centre. The proposal does not include Highworth Recreation Centre at this point.

Consultation with service users and residents is underway and will conclude on 3rd March 2014. The results of the consultation will be presented to the Council's Cabinet in late spring, before a decision is made on a preferred bidder.

4. Other suggestions/comments:

4.1 Residents also submitted alternative suggestions for savings and general feedback on information supplied about the Council's budget proposals. The following points were raised in these submissions:

- Rather have the option to pay more for more services (1comment)
- Query over whether savings can realistically be achieved without staff cuts (1 comment)