

Appendix 3

Budget Consultation Feedback

Detailed draft budget proposals for 2017/18 were published in Cabinet papers on the 7th December 2016, and details of service changes were also published on Council's website for consultation on the 13th December 2016. Responses to the consultation were invited via written submission to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services or via email. The period for comments and responses to the Council concluded on the 11th January 2017.

On the 29th December 2016, a press release was issued to invite feedback on the proposals.¹ A tweet was also sent from the Council's Twitter account the same day.² This generated some media coverage, such as an article in the Swindon Advertiser published online on the 6th January 2017.³

Two email responses were received by the closing date of the 11th January 2017. No letters were received. This is a significantly lower response rate than the previous budget consultation. One response came from a resident, and the other response came from the Woodland Trust - a national conservation charity. Each response concerned one proposal within the Communities and Place service area. Their responses are detailed below:

Proposal	Responses
"Subject to Cabinet decision on Libraries Strategy - Community Assets and Libraries Change Programme - 2017-18 savings being targeted over and above the £300k in 2016-17. Consultation is currently underway on the future of the Libraries Service and this number will be finalised in December when the feedback from the consultation process has been considered and the proposal way forward confirmed."	1 resident
Summary of comments/feedback	
Objection to the new libraries' strategy which will reduce £1.5m of spending by 2020. This saving is negatively contrasted with the £5m due to be invested in the new Museum and Art Gallery. Suggests that libraries provide an invaluable service to a broad demographic, whereas the new Museum - although culturally beneficial - is ultimately unnecessary and would serve a much smaller demographic.	
Suggests that the poor educational attainment in Swindon indicates that there is a need for libraries. Cites Swindon's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, and the letter of concern from Ofsted's Regional Director in November 2016, as evidence for poor attainment.	
Furthermore, suggests that the government's Digital by Default agenda and the	

¹ <http://www.swindonnews.org.uk/residents-still-have-time-to-feed-in-their-views-on-councils-budget-proposals/>

² <https://twitter.com/Swindonnews/status/814506906953875457>

³ http://www.swindonadvertiser.co.uk/news/15007121.Last_chance_to_have_your_say_on_budget/

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upcoming rollout of Universal Credit will require more access to IT equipment and the ability to use it. Libraries can provide both of these to Swindon's residents.

Suggests that SBC has not taken the 'Libraries Ambition' document into account. Published by the Libraries Taskforce, it advocates that local authorities take a 'Libraries First' approach to the delivery of all public services.

Concludes that libraries have a positive contribution to all council services, in particular social care. Reading for health and/or pleasure has positive health benefits, which can delay people from needing health and social care services. Consequently, cuts to the library budget will lead to even greater health and social care expenses in the medium-to-long term, thereby negating potential savings.

Proposal	Responses
"Saving as a result of the June Cabinet decision to withdraw Council funding for local services such as grounds maintenance and street cleaning from 2017-18. Savings in 2016-17 of £500k were achieved by withdrawing such services in currently Parished areas, which have subsequently been taken on by Parish Councils."	Woodland Trust
Summary of comments/feedback	
<p>Acknowledges the need to find £3.9m savings in the Communities and Place Department. Also acknowledges growing pressures in housing development, e.g., the New Eastern Village proposal.</p> <p>Suggests that trees and woodlands should be a vital part of place development. They provide benefits across a wide range of areas: recreation and amenity; health and wellbeing; water quality and flooding; air quality; wildlife and landscape. References the Woodland Trust publication <i>Residential Development and Trees</i>.</p> <p>Also suggests that planting trees on open space can also reduce grounds maintenance budgets - referring to the Woodland Trust publication <i>Trees or Turf?</i></p> <p>Consequently, concludes that there should be no budget reductions for the Landscape and Countryside Service which could jeopardise the cost-saving benefits that trees and woodlands provide. This includes support for the Great Western Community Forest.</p>	