

# Budget Views

## All Comments

### Week 5

7.11.11 – 14.11.11

Comment
<p>Don't cut the arts! The arts have added so much to the life of the city. The council should continue to fund and nurture arts and culture, as we need a diverse and varied cultural life, with large and small companies, and contemporary creative work alongside more traditional repertoire.</p>
<p>While money is tight and there are very many pressing demands on the council, I would urge you not to overlook or underestimate the value of arts and culture to our city. They not only generate a large income for the city, they also help to raise the international profile of Birmingham and bring joy, understanding, humanity and wisdom to everyone who accesses them. I would urge you strongly to support especially the large arts organizations in the city as generously as you can.</p> <p>Thanks for the opportunity to have a say.</p>
<p>Following a meeting today at Birmingham City Council Events Depot and having noticed a lack of familiar faces that normally greet me, I was concerned to learn that there is currently a number of budget cuts being made which may have a knock on affect to local businesses also?</p> <p>I was born in the West Midlands, live in the city centre and work in the surrounding areas. I am heavily involved with local suppliers to the construction and events industry, which all benefit from both regeneration projects and entertainment within the city.</p> <p>If these cuts continue, it will not only affect the Events Depot but potentially me, my fellow work colleagues, our suppliers and a number of local businesses.</p>

After reading a recent publication of "Autumn Forward" the headline page clearly states, I quote, "Birmingham is the most visited English city outside London for European visitors, attracting 740,000 overseas visitors to the city last year, spending £249 million".....need I say any more?

I am in support of Shelforce staying open. This business supports disabled people in a working environment. This gives confidence to them that they are earning their money, supporting themselves and not depending on benefits.

Some of the employees have been there a number of year as much as 15-20 years, which has become part of their life. People at Shelforce are like a family and care for each other.

If there was another business option for them and they have good management and sales team to drive it, this should clearly be a winner.

On my understanding this has been mostly part of the problem, so why should the employees suffer on their behalf. I work in the hospitality trade which are constantly projecting a sales mannerism and this is what the management should project.

I believe that councillors should lead the way in saving money. I have been informed that councillors are not employed by birmingham city council but are 'elected representatives' as such your 'salaries' and conditions of work are not affected to the changes in contracts which affect all other employees. I find this difficult to understand given that you are on the payroll for birmingham city council and receive your 'expenses' as a salary. You are also entitled to join the government pension scheme, receive maternity benefits, and sick benefits.. Your child care costs and dependent carers costs are met. You're travel is subsidised in fact taxis are paid for if the meetings are during later hours. I can't help compare these conditions of service to those which you have agreed for other council workers who no longer get shift and weekend increased pay or car park spaces. Could you explain why there is such a difference? Why 'wage rate indicators should not be related to authority pay scales'? Why is there the distinction between elected members and local authority workers?

It all seems rather Animal Farm to me. As elected members you are making decisions about other people's working conditions to save money and not your own and yet many earn less than your basic £16,267. On top of this many receive huge sums at the expense of the tax payer for responsibility posts.

Why should tax payers pay for your food? Your taxis? Your chid care? I feel you are completely out of touch with ordinary people who are losing the equivalent of £3000 or more and who are already on low wages. I think Mr Cameron said 'we are all in it together'....somehow I don't think so. Unless you lead the way you have no credibility.

How are vulnerable children high on your agenda as you state, when budget cuts to local CC will undoubtedly affect the services they offer and support they give to children and families..

Also cuts to respite services for CYPF will affect parents/carers ability and capacity to cope with their disabled child which will have a knock on effects

I am against all these cuts the Council wants to make to departments that look after the vulnerable, the old, the sick, children, those in great need, the disabled, the homeless, the careers advice service (Connexions); green spaces, libraries, Centro, in fact everything that makes life worth living and comfortable for us ordinary working class people. All the departments that receive money from the Council are important.

Here are some ways in which you could save money instead:-

**Cut the salaries of the top directors**  
**Stop taking on teams of consultants.**

Some of these cuts, if made, would be downright immoral, for instance, cutting Supporting People by 25% (as you want to do). This supports women fleeing domestic violence. Have you ever thought what it must be like to be in such a situation? and you can't leave because you've got nowhere to go, and you can't take your children with you????? And also by cutting Connexions you are throwing young people on the scrapheap. You are going back to the early 60s, when I left school, when there was no careers advice and girls ended up in lowpaid boring jobs with no chance of further education/training or a decent career. I myself am now retired and am dependant on Supporting People for part of my income. Please don't pull the carpet from under my feet. You would not like it done to you.

I was at the consultation in Kings Heath the other night, and a resolution was passed that we don't want these cuts. If you really want to listen to the people, then please take this on board.

Please do not make the cuts as explained in all your paperwork, but do as I suggest above, in large purple lettering.

Dear Sir/Madam

Can I submit this report on the Sutton Coldfield consultation meeting on the City Council budget for publication on the Council's website.

(name withheld)

Dear editor

I enclose a report on the City Council budget consultation meeting last night at the United Reform Church Sutton Coldfield.

The meeting started with a presentation by a council official on the programme of cuts the Council is proposing over the next four years. There was a number of responses from the audience.

1. Since these proposals were political why was there no presence of local Councillors from Sutton Coldfield and Erdington. One local resident said it was a disgrace the local Tory MP and government minister was not present to justify these massive attacks on vulnerable people.
2. Others disputed statements in the Council budget document which says in part "our top services priorities are as follows: ...helping people into work" A Unison member stated this was a desperate misrepresentation given that Connexion workers (whose job is to help young people into jobs) were being cut from 350 to 70 employees. Cutbacks for people with disabilities were also condemned.
3. Others stated that the whole procedure of taking down peoples comments was a fraud and the meeting should consider collective statements in the form of motions to the meeting. This was agreed after much resistance from the supposed "independent" chair.

The meeting voted to reject all the Council Cuts and proposed that if the Councillors and the Chief Executive approve 10% cuts then the Chief Executive's pay and the Councillors allowances would be cut by the same amount. Out of a meeting of 40 only 3 people voted against the first part of resolution one and 5/6 against the second part with a small number of abstentions in each case. The second resolution was passed unanimously

The resolutions are listed below

Resolutions to the budget consultation meeting 2.11.11.

#### Resolution 1

This meeting opposes all the cuts Birmingham City Council is proposing in the 2012/13 Budget.

It further calls for the reinstatement of all the cuts in the 2011/12 budget in particular reversing the massive pay cuts (up to £5,000 a year) being imposed on many City Council workers.

#### Resolution 2

The official rhetoric on the cuts is that we are all in this together. In line with this establishment line it is agreed to support the following.

The percentage cut in the 2012/13 budget agreed by the Birmingham City Council will be the same percentage cut in Councillors allowances and pay of the Chief Executive and directors of the Council's departments.

For example if the Council agrees a 10% cut in services for Birmingham people, the allowance of the Council leader and the pay of the Chief Executive will be cut by 10%.

An announcement was also made about a Birmingham Against the Cuts public meeting at 7 pm Thursday 24th November Council House with (name withheld) General Secretary of NUT and (name withheld) Regional Secretary of GMB as well as other speakers.

This is an Important part of the City which brings cultures closer together by putting on events such as the BUPA Great Run which raises thousands of pounds for charities that rely on these sponsored events to help various people within the community to live a better standard of life.

Whilst I fully understand the requirement for the City to make cost savings, I do not feel the way this is being dealt with in relation to Shelforce is either ethical or fair bearing in mind the people we employ.

For over a year now we have been waiting for details of the Service Redesign proposals for Shelforce so that we can all actively play a part and feedback with comments or suggestions during the 90 day consultation period. This has never happened, infact we have now had multiple meetings when we have been told – nothing! – “no decision has been made”.

Everyone at Shelforce accepts the need for change and a redesign of Shelforce to keep in line with the changing nature of our business, but the City is not allowing us to make these changes. In fact it would appear as if the City is actively preventing us making the changes, therefore we cannot control the company, during which time our deficit continues to rise putting the business at more risk. In April we were informed that the committee had approved the redesign proposals and they were to be released shortly afterwards for the 90 day consultation period – nothing! – Now it would appear that the talk is of closure rather than redesign, prior to that no-one had even mentioned closure.

The consequence of this is rock bottom morale across the whole of Shelforce staff are covering multiple peoples job roles due to people taking VR, Retirements and long term sick leave. This is putting considerable stress and anxiety on the remaining staff, still we are asked to do more and more whilst the axe hangs over us. - Not the way to get best out of people.

We have now been asked to give constructive feedback for the consultation period following the Section 188 Notice. How can we do this when we have not been given the full details? The information relating to Shelforce is inaccurate and misleading at best, and the redesign proposals have not been released or included!

The Government is fully committed to making and imposing these cuts on Local Government, and public sector employees are paying the price for a problem caused by others. They say they are fully committed to support the Vulnerable and Disabled in Society but Birmingham City Council seems to be the opposite and is considering closure of Shelforce putting 70 disabled people on the dole, without letting us try the other options first. These are people who do meaningful, worthwhile jobs giving them a sense of well being and security, many of them will not find alternative employment elsewhere and will simply fall into the welfare system costing the country even more.

The way in which the staff at Shelforce have been treated over the last twelve months in my opinion is nothing short of disgraceful, particularly when you bear in mind the vulnerable nature of many of our employees.

I have been employed at Shelforce for the past eighteen years, and have always been, and still am committed to it, I saw my long term future at Shelforce. I would hope there is still a future for Shelforce and I strongly request the Council look at the restructuring of Shelforce and engage with staff at Shelforce for suggestions and feedback to move forward.

BCC can save money by not paying PENNA (a careers consultancy firm) tens of thousands of pounds to give Careers Advice and Guidance to staff leaving the council, when they already have professional, highly qualified staff working for the council who could do this job - they are called Connexions Personal Advisers!!

Please find attached my opinion on the 2012/13 Budget Consultation Document.

I work at (withheld) and there is currently speculation that we may be closed. We are a specific part of the budget consultation paperwork for 2012/13 where it is suggested that £1m worth of savings can be made from Shelforce in that year. There is absolutely no chance of this happening. We do not have a budget that can be transferred anywhere else as we are a trading account. If we have a deficit it produces an additional budget pressure.

An additional budget pressure is inevitable next year as our requested restructure (started in Aug 2010) still hasn't happened and if it ever does get the go ahead there will be associated redundancy costs along with dilapidation charges relating to our premises and also any restructure will take time to bed in. This is on top of the fact that the ambiguous budget consultation paper work and The Leader stating on Radio WM that there are £4m of savings to be made from us had done serious damage to our reputation and brand. As a result of this our customers are questioning how much longer we will be open for. I feel that not enough is being done to correct the mistakes that have happened. The Council should route some work to us to ensure that we have an order book that is as full as possible instead of damaging our reputation by publicising inaccurate information about us.

We understand that our current business model is no longer suitable and have been trying to restructure for 15 months. I do not understand why no decision is being made as the longer it goes on, the higher the deficit we have. If the restructure had been actioned in a timely fashion any deficit for this year would have been significantly smaller than we are looking at now. It is not fair that our people are suffering as a result of someone else's procrastination. Let us restructure and prove what we can do. We can certainly cover most, if not all of our costs and we may even be able to do better than that and generate some income for the city as we have done many times in previous years, 2001/02 to 2006/07.

The fact sheet put on to the BCC website mentions the option of a change of business model as research shows that this does not always provide the best outcome for disabled people. Instead of relying on a report, why not actually come to Shelforce and ask the people what they want? I strongly suspect they are quite happy with working in a Sheltered Business and I also know that they are fully aware how difficult it would be for them to gain mainstream employment, especially in the current economic climate. I find the reliance on research rather than asking those individuals concerned rather patronising. They are people with opinions which they will express should you choose to listen.

I work at (withheld) with a lot of wonderful people who work very hard. I'm appalled at the length of time it's taken to decide on our future. We have been waiting for the redesign for eighteen months now. A lot of the people working here have emotional disabilities which is making their lives nearly impossible to deal with this amount of stress and worry. Closing Shelforce would not save the council any money. We are a trading company we do not get a budget off you. We all pay our taxes and NI contributions so we contribute to society. These people deserve a chance to work not to sit at home on benefits and in a lot of cases never to work again. We now we need to be redesigned but taking this long for a decision is totally unacceptable.

Why is Birmingham Council wasting loads of money to buy snow trucks that you only can use once a year?

Shelforce was my first job from school and I'm so grateful to them because I had to spend a year on the jobseeker and have to go to training course to keep my skills and you are trying to get people out to work.

When I came to Shelforce I met my partner and we bought our own house and also had our first baby in 2008 and then I also got married this year. My partner and I are also expecting our second child that is due early next year. If I did not have my job at Shelforce I would have to go on income support or other benefits and stay at home with my children. Even my partner will have trouble getting a job he has to go on benefits so it is not right to close Shelforce please keep us open to keep everyone's jobs they all got families

I would like to make some suggestion on income maximisation and budget saving .

Having work for BCC for 20 plus years ,I remember the days when councillors were not paid a wage, as they volunteered their time to serve the people of Birmingham . Now, cabinet members are receiving a monthly wage for what was considered a volunteering service . My **first suggestion** is to reduce the councillors wage bill .

**Second suggestion** - The chief executive is receiving a salary which exceeds the prime minister , how can this be . The prime minister runs the county , our chief executive run a local authority. My second suggestion , considerable reduce the pay package for the chief executive .

Third suggestion. - Many of the Directors and Assistant directors working for BCC are on considerable amount of money . **Third suggestion** . reduce the wage bill of directors and Assistant directors.

In many cases , when an economic crises arises the front line lower paid staff, tend to bear the brunt .

The introduction of PDR is in my opinion a very cumbersome. It is time consuming and very labour intensive . A simpler process should be implace where staff are assess against a set of objectives and rewarded for exceeding or introducing cost saving initiatives.

I would like to put myself forward to be involve in the budget consultation process at a senior level , as an independent grass root employee .

Sent on behalf of someone with no email access:-

I disagree with the way the vision is being implemented. Shelforce has been under threat of redundancy / closure since August 2010. They have not been told anything with regards to Shelforce's future which is totally unacceptable. This is their future the Directors are playing with, they have a right to know.

Sent on behalf of someone with no email access:-

More consultations for people affected by the new contracts.

Sent on behalf of someone with no email access:-

Shelforce has the potential to become a successful company, it has the ability to evolve and develop. This will only be achieved if the council give us more work. Shelforce has a history of successfully achieving it's targets through a dedicated workforce.

Sent on behalf of someone with no email access:-

All I see at Shelforce is people leaving and nobody replacing much needed staff. Where would I get confidence even if we stay open most of us more disabled will be out of a job because we would not fit in with the heavier faster pace. When it comes to the crunch the

council is not living up to it's own goals of protection the vunerable and uneducated.

Sent on behalf of someone with no email access:-

The council acts much to late in making savings for Shelforce. The council keeps creating work for outside consultants to do their jobs for them.