

Budget Views

All Comments

Week 6

15.11.11 – 20.11.11

Comment

I understand that in most of the parks across the city there are park keepers houses. It is my understanding that these are occupied by BCC staff who pay a nominal rent in exchange for minimal park duties. I think you should investigate the possibility of small fencing changes which would allow these to be sold off for capital receipts and save money on maintaining these. I am sure if this was looked into it would save enough money to offer a small incentive to a member of staff to carry out the park keeping duties.

Re: Have your say on Birmingham's Budget

I am a resident in Birmingham. From Autumn Forward, the official publication of Birmingham City Council, I am very pleased to learn that the City Council invites local residents to have their views on how the city's books are balanced. It reminds me of the similar move the central government did a couple of years ago. Eventually, the central government received many useful, practical suggestions to reduce the wastes and save money. I hope this time, Birmingham City Council will collect many suggestions as well to save money, here, I would like to make two of them.

First, I would like to ask City Council to reduce the waste on Council House management. I live in Northfield area; there are many council houses around. Some of them are three bedroom houses, but there is only one person live there for several years or longer. I believe if these single persons are housed in one bedroom flat and their three bedroom houses are re-allocated for a family of three or more, it may save the City Council lots money to build new three bedroom houses.

Secondly, the Council spent lots money to maintain council houses. Some of the works are, of course, necessary; but some of the repair works are the results of the vandalism from the persons who live there. The Council should assess the damage how and why these damages happened before the repair jobs take place. In a particular case, a three bedroom house in Northfield, only an elderly lady live there, but her granddaughter often come and live there. This young girl did many damages or vandalised the house. The

Council repaired everything she broke. In the last four financial year (from April 2007 to March 2011), the Council had spent £32,636.17 (this figure is official and is obtained through the scheme of Freedom of Information); within four years, the Council spent that amount of the money, can you imagine how the Council's money was wasted. Until now, it is not end of the story, the damages and vandalism is not completely finished yet. The council may still spend money to carry out repair.

Anyway, I hope the Council will improve its management on council houses to save money. The Council has already faced the problem: the shortage of the money; then please do not use tax payer's money to repair the damages caused by the vandalism from the people live there. You may not believe what I said above; but they are true. Hope the Council will take things serious.

We came to Birmingham over thirty years ago in order to work We did not intend to stay, but planned to return to one of our former homes as soon as we retired. We are still here eleven years after retiring. The reason is very largely because of the wonderful range of arts Birmingham has to offer, and at affordable rates. We regularly attend MAC, the Symphony Hall, the Town Hall, BM&AG and the theatres and often say, when we meet others there who have travelled from a considerable distance: 'How lucky we are to have all this in Birmingham'.

Long may that continue; please do all you can to keep arts in Birmingham high on your priority list.

Considering the amount of household waste generated within Birmingham does the City Council sell the waste products that can be recycled to a 3rd party?

If yes, has the City Council ever investigated creating their own waste recycling centre where they can achieve the full cost benefit of reselling the recycled waste that Birmingham collect.

It may also be possible to buy in recycled waste from all the other surrounding Local Authorities/waste collection agencies which will also generate added income for many years to come.

If the cost of building the Re-cycling centre is excessive then perhaps Birmingham could enter into partnership with a 3rd party or indeed the surrounding local authorities who would share the setup/building cost and receive a profit share.

The MAC is a fantastic arts centre. I grew up in birmingham and it was a HUGE influence on my childhood - i went there every week from 1969 through to the mid seventies. When i retrurned to birmingham in 2005 after living in London for 20 years, Mac was one of the few bright places in Birmimgham. My own children then attended courses as I did - it helped me meet people.

I awaited the reopening eagerly and am delighted with what is on offer - though it's a shame that many of the day courses for arts etc

no longer exist.

Please do not cut the arts budget any further! it's a wonderful place and it works well and birmingham should be proud of it! compared to london, birmingham has so few cultural places. dont squeeze MAC into non existence.

To whom it may concern:

I have just received an email from MAC which includes the following paragraph: *City based cultural organisations contribute £271m to the region's economy per year. This is generated from almost 2 million attendances, with arts attenders generating £40m in Additional Visitor Spend (AVS). This represents a return on investment of £29 for every £1 that Birmingham City Council spends on funding the arts.*

I have no way of knowing if these figures are accurate, but even if the return on every £1 spent by the Council were half the sum quoted, it would still represent a very good investment - quite apart from the unquantifiable benefits that the arts contribute to people's lives. Anything that strengthens the local economy increases your income from council tax - with benefit to all kinds of essential services as well as the arts. Any further cuts will lead to a 'downward spiral' of decline in quality leading to a decline of customer support leading to a decline in income.

I have been a long time attendee at The Mac, Birmingham and wish to register my request to ensure that, despite the reduced funding for arts, across Birmingham, the City Council continue to support this fundamental service to the local community

Following its refurb and heavy investment it seems such a waste if through the necessary budget cuts, the Mac should suffer

Please keep this one alive

The Arts may seem an easy target for cuts. If arts facilities cuts lead to the closure of arts centres then there will be a knock-on effect in other areas. Restaurants and shops close when theatres and cinemas fail.

The fact that the council has neglected its film and TV industries has led to a decline in the city's visibility which will mean that Manchester and Cardiff will continue to gain at Birmingham's expense. The creative industries are very important to the UK' economy. Birmingham not using these to its advantage is hugely damaging.

I am writing in support of the Midlands Arts Centre (the Mac). I strongly believe that by providing a strong and vibrant infrastructure the council will ensure a city which is attractive to employers and business. If you discontinue this, then the city could easily enter a death spiral with declining employment, declining revenues feeding into declining services which make the city even less attractive. The artistic

life of the city is key element of what attracts people here (I relocated from London and speak with experience). The mac is a unique facility that plays a strong role in ensuring the strength of the artistic community, please do not destroy what is good and valuable about this city by further reducing your funding to this institution.

Please do not make any further funding cuts to the MAC. It is a great resource and any further cuts to it's budget will kick start a spiral of degraded services which will result in it's demise.

I would place cuts to council executives absurd pay to be of a higher priority than cuts to services that affect us little people.

I do not buy the argument that Council Executive's work is so important, and so beyond the comprehension of mere mortals that it's essential to pay the highest rates possible to ensure that the most special and wise individuals imaginable will apply for vacancies.

I look forward to your response.

I would like to offer me support for maintaining funding for the MAC.

The MAC is a unique resource in Birmingham in that it has the ability to bring a wide and diverse audience/community in contact with art and artforms of all kinds. It has an egalitarian feel and approach to both audience and art makers in the city and beyond.

The recent Anticurate exhibition in the main space demonstrated this in action. In addition, the MAC has the further potential to create dialogues between art forms, that more single dimension institutions do not.

The refurbishment of the building has been extremely successful. The re designed spaces encourage people to explore the building and remove boundaries to cultural consumption that are more prominent in other spaces, institutions and venues. Due to it's location with Cannon Hill park, the 'casual' visitor has access to the cultural landscape to Birmingham that is unique, and not achievable by any other venue in this city or in general, elsewhere.

To not support the MAC, would be an extremely damaging signal to both the cultural community in Birmingham, as well as the outside perception of Birmingham both nationally and internationality. Essentially, diluting Birmingham's credibility to a point close to zero.

I am a Coventry resident and a frequent visitor to shows and films at MAC. When I visit, I bring business to the city by my use of public transport, restaurants and shops. I hope these side benefits to Birmingham's economy from the Council's support of the arts will be borne in mind in making budget assessments

I feel that more effort should be made by the council to improve the recycling of domestic waste around the city. I have noticed countless times visiting friends and relatives around the country how much better different towns and cities are in comparison to Birmingham. It is another example of political motivation being based on short term profit rather than long term benefit which when dealing with environmental issues does not hold.

Firstly I am a bit disappointed that your online questionnaire is not working as I have just wasted 10 minutes trying to input my views.

As I cannot participate in the survey I simply want to ask that you look again at cuts to art organisations such as Mac. This could be part of your 4 priorities as it comes under employability and also education and training. You also have a responsibility to provide leisure activities and the Mac is a great centre for encouraging families to be more active.

I would like to express my complete disagreement with any plans to further reduce the funding for arts provision in Birmingham especially that given to the MAC which provides excellent value for money and generates income in that it provides space and a platform for workers in the arts to teach, learn, make, sell, perform and expand the perception of the arts in our community. Rather than reducing funding the council should be looking at ways to encourage and arts quarter modelled on the success of the jewellery quarter to encourage visitors. This would have positive impact on job creation and could utilise empty commercial properties and regenerate otherwise unused resources.

Cutting funding further would have the reverse effect and would, in my opinion be a negative step. I don't believe that this is a conversation they would have in Manchester or London.

I am emailing to make my opinions heard as you plan for the next budget. It is easy to think of arts as a target for cuts. However, each pound spent on the arts results in a significant return in terms of additional economic activity in Birmingham. Withdrawing funding for the arts will result in a downward spiral harming people and the economy. This is apart from the obvious direct benefits from the art community enhancing our environment and quality of life.

I hope that this is taken into account.

I am very concerned about the potential threat to the future survival of the Midland Arts Centre as a result of the proposed cuts to its budget. I came to Birmingham as a student in 1988, and in all that time the MAC has been an absolute oasis of community. So much so that it was a hardship indeed to endure the temporary closure of the MAC during its refurbishment. It is so much more than an arts centre. It plays a vital part in enriching the everyday lives of so many people in South Birmingham and beyond.

The MAC believes it has reached a tipping point where incremental reductions in costs are no longer achievable, and that if further budget cuts are imposed it 'will lead to a serious "downward spiral" in which the inevitable reductions in artistic activity will lead to lower earned income and funding. Further investment secured from additional sources may well then be withdrawn due to our diminished

capacity to deliver our agreed programme.'

This would be a cultural and community disaster for Birmingham.

MAC maintains that 'city based cultural organisations contribute £271m to the region's economy per year. This is generated from almost 2 million attendances, with arts attenders generating £40m in Additional Visitor Spend (AVS). This represents a return on investment of £29 for every £1 that Birmingham City Council spends on funding the arts.'

I am urging you therefore not to cut funding further and risk losing vital centres of arts and community and further damaging the region's economy as a result.

Sent on behalf of someone without access to email:-

I am a mother and carer of a daughter who works at Shelforce. She has been working there for 10 years. She has learning difficulties and is very shy, she did not mix with people until starting at Shelforce. She enjoys her job and is happy to get up at 6.45am to go to work. What will happen if Shelforce closes, well she will sit in the house with nothing to do and will get job seekers allowance like a lot of other people but she and her workmates have got a job and work hard so why close somewhere that is wanted and help things that are not wanted. These people are disabled and will probably never find another job for their ability again. Why take away from the people who cannot find help themselves, I hope you will help Shelforce and these hard working vulnerable people.

KEEP SHELFORCE OPEN

Why isn't the council exercising its right to use Article 19 of Regulation 7 of the Public Sector Procurement rules January 2006 to ensure that Shelforce has a greater chance of securing work from Birmingham City Council? It seems madness that we are using other companies to produce windows when Birmingham City Council has its own in house manufacturing company. Why give the work away to other Company's without giving Shelforce the best chance possible to win the order?

Although resident in Dudley, not Birmingham, I wish to support the Midlands Arts Centre (mac) in its plea to the Council to avoid cutting further the funds that the City of Birmingham has given to the centre. I believe that the funding cuts already applied in April this year have had such a dramatic effect on the management of the mac that it is now at the point that further losses would be counter productive inasmuch that the reduction in services necessary would deter users. The mac is an enormous asset for the city. It attracts people from all over the West Midlands, and beyond. The range of activities and events mean that one can quite happily spend an entire day there . Its contribution to the reputation and image of Birmingham as a dynamic , progressive and attractive city must bring with it economic advantages.

I appreciate the difficulties that councillors must face in coping with the current recession but hope that the wider and long term benefits of supporting the mac will be recognised.