

# Budget Views

## All Comments

### Week 8

28.11.11 – 4.12.11

#### Comment

I am writing in support of maintaining the CBSO's funding level as it currently is.

The CBSO is the most amazing ambassador for Birmingham. It is an orchestra that has consistently surpassed other regional orchestras in its quality of performance and programming and in its educational and outreach programmes. I have attended CBSO concerts since the 70s and suggest that the growth in quality and scope has been second to none in Britain. Coupled with its residency at the incomparable venue of Symphony Hall, the CBSO is in a position under Andriss Nelsons to continue to bring attention, commerce and kudos to Birmingham. More should be made of its international standing and of its testimony to Birmingham's progressive stance and commitment to the arts.

Imagine the bad publicity in the national and international press for cuts to an orchestra whose conductor is seen as the 'new Rattle.' Birmingham needs the courage to support and invest in its amazing and under-appreciated orchestra. Friends in London who travel up to concerts here continually remind me at how self-effacing Birmingham is and how the orchestra needs more publicity to maximise its potential as one of the foremost UK orchestras.

I hope that you will consider the lasting damage to the amazing continuing success story of this fantastic orchestra that further cuts would inflict.

I am wishing to express my support for the continued financial assistance for the CBSO. it is encouraging that they have increased audiences and that in itself help generate employment and income for the City. many of the people attending live at some distance form the City Centre and take the opportunity to have a meal, a drink and sometimes combine it with an opportunity to go shopping. The City Council needs to support this.

In terms of identifying potential areas for spending reductions or income generation I would suggest you explore better control of mental

health funding under Section 117 of the mental Health Act where health service colleagues fail to review and reduce levels of support for those people who are substantially recovered.

I am not a resident of Birmingham but come up to the city 3/4 times a year to hear the CBSO. I live in Hemel Hempstead Herts.

Your funding of this orchestra is vital if they are to continue giving the excellent service they do to a wide community. I grew up in Kings Norton and was at secondary school there from 1959 to 1966 and members of the CBSO came and performed there on various occasions and gave me my love to hear a symphony orchestra. The orchestra then did not have the national standing it does now nor any international standing.

Now they are an ambassador for the city. Any funding cuts will affect the full role that they can play. Remember they have kept the municipal name City of Birmingham since their inception and do sterling work for the City. Obviously when I visit, I spend money elsewhere in the city during my stay - sometimes overnight but always for 3/4 hours extra beyond the concert - a meal, a drink, purchase of a magazine for the rail journey back etc. The orchestra is trimming its sails but any further reduction in funding will be hard for them to bear and still give the 100% that they already give.

Please spare them in your deliberations if at all possible.

The mac is a long established centre offering opportunities to people of all ages, faiths and ethnic backgrounds to either express themselves as artists or to contribute to the centre as spectators. This provides audio and or visual stimuli which are beneficial to mental health.

It is a centre where people meet which is vital to community cohesion. The building is available for hire for all sorts of events which are significant in people's lives. The costs for the renovation have been met partly from donations from the public. It would be unethical to disregard this financial situation as the expectation was that contributions would sustain the mac to continue to provide all of the benefits available to the local community as well visitors to the area.

The whole existence of the mac contributes to the cleaner greener agenda of Birmingham City Council. The mac promotes culture in a variety of ways which is something that Birmingham City Council constantly says it requires to assist with recognition of England's second city.

The mac has been an innovative enterprise always ready to develop ideas. It must not be reduced further in any way.

I am writing in support of the CBSO and chorus'. These are world class, a huge bonus in the cultural life of Birmingham and in keeping the city high up on the places most likely to visit and reside in. Being near to a world class music venue, which the Symphony Hall is, was

one of the main reasons why my husband and I chose to live in central Birmingham when we moved here from London 8 years ago.

I appreciate that cuts have to be made, but planning for the future also needs to be thought about. If the city's reputation is diminished because the arts are cut back too far then other cities such as Manchester will be only too quick to cash in.

I first received an email from DanceXchange and then from yourselves via Arts Fest in regards to Birmingham City Council budget cuts. As a passionate artist/creative director who's revenue and income heavily relies on schools, ticket sales from theatres and Arts Council England and commissioning from other Arts organisations. Having had a background as a dancer as opposed to an arts manager, I now apply for funding, produce the projects, deliver the projects and sometimes even perform in my own work, whilst I manage to make a living a lot of time is given voluntarily in terms of management and marketing because as you are well aware the clients budget can only normally afford to pay for the 'product', I do add some of these extra costs into my pricing but I have found more and more the organisations I deal with are having smaller and smaller budgets which means I reduce costs. As an artist led company it is hard to say no because I sincerely believe the arts make an incredible difference that is often taken for granted - and it would just defeat the purpose of us being here if I did say no... We are driven by seeing the looks on people's faces when we have created work for them, especially when we go to places that are less cosmopolitan/diverse or meet children that have only engaged in our 1 workshop out of all of the other subjects there school provides for the whole year, this is what makes us tick and wants to keep going as a small company.

Anyway to cut it short, having done Creative Leap which was a professional development project supported by BCC, The Drum, Sampad and Ulpha Arts it allowed me to gain the confidence and equipped me with a lot of skills to manage my self as an artist... Which means I can now afford to at times cut out the middleman that sometimes claims to find you work/develop artists through a one off platform that's unpaid just to tick boxes. There are huge budgets for arts administration jobs salaries, where I think that it can go straight to the artist that have the skills to also manage there projects, that way we can still reach people but doing what is most important first. Yes we do need managers, but if they have so much faith in the arts then they should free lance and personally manage an artist, and if they don't believe it's worth it then they arnt cut to be an arts administrator, artist gamble all the time... So I think that in these hard times the tables should be turned.

Don't get me wrong organisations such as The MAC are reaching people, it is always buzzing and full of the normal public, this is what I aspire to do with my company, it's a really inspiring place to be in Birmingham and try to put myself and the other company members there as much as possible. Where ever you see people means that money has been well invested... So how do we reach people? Though some hard core well equipped arts marketing, im just not sure that these other job roles are needed to be paid with salaries??? The money doesn't always get filtered to down to the actual work.

So for a quick fix if you see more activity and people in the office than in areas were the activities take place in an arts organisation for 6 or more months of the year then the budget should be cut a substantial amount.

BCC has an enormously difficult task to make budgets balance in times like these, and none of the choices for saving money are easy.

I wish to comment on one aspect in particular - arts and culture funding. The quality of the arts organisations in Birmingham is probably the single biggest reason in my mind why the city is 2nd only to London in the UK., and I have previously lived in London and Manchester, and travelled widely throughout the UK. It is the main reason why I was happy to move to the city for a job 10 years ago when I had no personal connections to the region. Organisations like Birmingham Royal Ballet, the Rep Theatre, and in particular the CBSO are world class, and lift this city into the major European league as well as making a major contribution to the quality of life here. This all adds up to a significant boost to the local economy.

City Council support for the arts has always been amongst the most enlightened in the UK, but the arts are really struggling to cope with funding cuts, and a depressed economy. As far as I can tell, so far there hasn't been a terrible impact to the quality of work these organisations produce, but everything I hear suggests that that is all at risk in the event of further cutbacks. The arts don't generally benefit much in times of plenty as people take them for granted - extra investment always seems to be needed elsewhere first. This means there is not much room to cut back in lean times, and big cuts have already been made.

I urge that BCC arts funding is preserved at least at its current levels. Any savings for BCC from further cuts would be swallowed up as a drop in the ocean in other areas of the budget, but would have adverse impacts on arts organisations. That would also affect Birmingham's standing nationally and internationally in the arts, as well as undermining the quality of life in the city, and having a knock-on effect on businesses which benefit from custom associated with arts consumers. Please don't cut any more - you can't just buy back this quality if the finances improve in future, and the savings won't make a material difference to anything else.

I am writing to support SAMPAD as it provides invaluable art and cultural experience, which i think has a deep and important impact on a society, especially a multi cultural society like Blrmingham. Please do not make cuts to SAMPAD and let it do its wonderful work.

I would strongly support continued arts funding in Birmingham. The city has an enviable reputation worldwide for the arts and music, and this would be endangered by any significant cuts to the budget, thereby not only devaluing the city, but also reducing income from the many international visitors who come every year.

I fully sympathise with the difficult choices that Birmingham City Council has to make in reducing its budget. However, I would like to add my support for the exceptional work that the CBSO does. They are a world class orchestra in a world class venue. We regularly attend CBSO performances at Symphony Hall and are always very impressed by the superb standard which the orchestra always performs. We always leave having thoughly enjoyed the concert. The CBSO helps to put Birmingham "on the map". Their international reputation and high esteem helps to attract visitors to Birmingham.

Birmingham is justly proud of its status, but unless it continues to pursue excellence, it will suffer relative decline with respect to other major cities in the UK outside London. Birmingham also has other major attractions for visitors including museums and art galleries. It is essential to maintain their standards of excellence.

Birmingham is a major attraction throughout the west midlands region and will increasingly wider influence if improvements to transport links, including the proposed HS2, are maintained.

Purley as a comment on how to reduce the budget, it always helps to look at what needs to be done and also ask if things could be done differently?

Whilst the Council has a number of very difficult decisions to be made in respect of its budget for 2012, further cuts to arts funding will undoubtedly cause disproportionate damage to the cultural offer being made by the collective group of arts organisations in the city. One typical example of a group doing much good across the city is Ex Cathedra who provide much needed help to sick and needy children via Singing Medicine and Singing Playgrounds. There are of course many other examples of groups providing much needed joy to many sections of the community.

For the benefit of all in the community, I would ask that you do not make any further cuts in arts funding when carrying out your 2012 budget review.

I am very heartened by the opportunity to be able to express a view on the proposed Birmingham budget for 2012/13. I agree entirely with your priorities and in particular the emphasis on Children. With this in mind I would like to express my support for the excellent work of Ex Cathedra. I have seen first hand the work they do in Hospitals and Playgrounds. The long term benefits they offer to children who are either sick or lacking confidence is immense and I would urge you to take this into consideration when considering allocation of funds for the coming years.

I am writing to ask Birmingham City Council not to cut arts funding further in the way that is currently budgeted; I am concerned your proposed budget for 2012-2013 includes significant cuts for the arts sector which will cause disproportionate damage to the cultural offer of the city which I value highly.

In particular I wish to highlight the excellent work of Ex Cathedra a Birmingham Based organisation who bring Singing Medicine to the children and young people of Birmingham Children's Hospital. Singing Medicine enables children who are in hospital long term or with life-limiting conditions to participate in singing activities. The impact this has on their health and well being and aiding recovery is immeasurable and of which its loss would be enormous.

I acknowledge that Birmingham City Council are undergoing a budget consultation exercise and I would like to express my support for Ex-Cathedra. I have experienced at first hand the amazing work that Ex-Cathedra do with young people and whilst I understand that budgets will be significantly challenged, I believe there is a very good case for your continued support of this group.

They are obviously very committed and passionate about what they do and as a musician I know the value that music brings to young people in challenging environments such as hospitals and schools.

I would therefore like to petition to keep the funding that Ex-Cathedra receive to continue their wonderful service.

With reference to the budget consultation I would just like to comment on the Events Depot. This specific team have provided CBD with an excellent customer service, products and knowledge of events during the 18months we have been working with them. They have gone out of their way to accommodate our requirements and have delivered value for money on each occasion.

I am writing to note to you the importance of Singing Medicine and Singing Playgrounds to G4S, we sponsor and work with Ex Cathedra across a number of our FM contracts nationally in schools and hospitals and I believe it would be devastating to our participating client sites if the fabulous and indeed inspirational work that this organisations does with patients in hospitals and pupils in schools was to be discontinued due to lack of funds.

I do hope therefore that Ex Cathedra continue to receive the apposite level of Government funding to allow them to carry on and indeed grow their current range of activities within the public sector.

Birmingham's arts infrastructure has, for so long, been a vital tool in the city's aim to improve the quality of life for its citizens, its inward investment performance, and its status as a true global city.

The creative industries have a hugely beneficial impact, with Birmingham-based cultural organisations contributing £271m to the region's economy each year.

Please do not reduce funding to the independent arts organisations in Birmingham any further. They do such a tremendous job and it would be a travesty if they had to stop any of the work they do through lack of funding.

You may recall that I have written to you several times regarding the continually diminishing possibilities of the UK's number 2 city ever to be nationally selected as a "City of Culture".

My previous communications centred on the matter of Birmingham's allegedly "international" annual jazz festival though this was in the

context of the manner in which the current coalition-administration of the City Council seems to regard Culture generally. It is no surprise that Manchester is making considerable headway in becoming recognised as the nation's second city for what is generally referred to as "quality of life".

This sector is, to a significant extent, dependent on the levels of funding by the City Council being maintained at traditional levels. In your last Budget there were savage cuts across the board in which the decision making as to where these were applied appeared to have been decided arbitrarily by accountants without any consideration of the impact on specific activities. A good example is this can be seen in the case of the MAC complex where, following significant costs in facility improvements, their grant was cut by over £100,000: quite a contrary action.

Like most Local Authorities, you will now be in the throes of preparing your 2012 Budget. It is recognised that your own funding sources have been savagely, and many would say, unreasonably reduced by Westminster - although you still seemed happy to greet the PM with a smile when he arrived the other day.

Many people might regard the support of culture as far less important than front line services such as bin collection but the former's contribution to quality of life is difficult to cite quantitatively; as are the economic benefits: vide my previous comments on the need for an internationally recognised annual Jazz Festival for Birmingham.

I know that the trick may appear impossible but I would like to think that, when planning your 2012/3 Budget, it is not just the bean-counter's view that is used in determining the City Council's funding allocation for cultural activities.

"Frustrated @BhamCityCouncil's online budget consultation design. Unplain English, no context for impact of your choices on other services.

@BhamCityCouncil Thanks. Visual totalizer would have been good showing the impact of your choices on savings as you progress through survey".

Since I came to Birmingham in the 1960s, I have been a regular concert-goer and more recently a Patron of the CBSO. The city has been extremely good to the orchestra, and in these difficult times will be under pressure for continued support from all the other arts bodies which create such a rich and vibrant variety which enhances the quality of life.

I do believe that the CBSO warrants special help. Its work is enjoyed by many throughout the world, both in live performance and disc, so helps to raise and maintain Birmingham's profile. Major tours in Europe are planned for next year, alongside its regular performances in Symphony Hall.

I still maintain a base in the city although I moved my main home elsewhere after I retired from work. One reason for that is to keep contact with the city's cultural life. For the time being I have kept up my Patronage for the CBSO and regular concert going. I now live for most of the time in Cumbria, which despite its natural beauty, cannot provide the artistic events which many in Birmingham can presently take for granted. It would be a great loss if the CBSO cannot maintain its present standards.

As a person who lives and works in Birmingham for four days in the week I wish to register my concern over arts funding by the council and the cuts to organisations like the CBSO, MAC and others.

Birmingham's cultural life has played a huge part in the development of its position as the second city of the UK and this must not be allowed to decline.

I value the services provided communally for the City of Birmingham. I would rather live in a civilised City with decent libraries, well maintained parks, exciting arts / cultural events, swimming pools, an efficient transport system affordable by all and good schools than save a few - even many - pounds on my Council Tax.

If we let go of these shared resources our society will be further atomised and our quality of life diminished. Such things are always more difficult to build up than take apart. Please do not take our City apart. I for one am prepared to pay to live somewhere worth living.

As a businessman who dearly wants the international and national profile of Birmingham to be effectively promoted as a place to do business, can I please ask you to take these issues into account in determining the budget for the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra.

1. The orchestra has an international brand and reputation for excellence which takes the City's name across the world.
2. This reputation puts Birmingham on the map for inward investment in the face of competition from other UK cities such as Manchester.
3. The quality of the orchestra's programme attracts so many people to Birmingham with the consequent benefits for other Birmingham businesses as these visitors spend money in the city.
4. The CBSO's reputation and quality of its programme has enabled it to have the highest level of ticket income of any UK orchestra and secure significant support from members and donors.
5. The CBSO has already been preparing for cuts and has made significant savings, so further cuts will have a very damaging effect on the orchestra, its programme and its international reputation.
6. Points 5. and 6. further justify the maintenance of the Council's support for the CBSO
7. The sense of pride and of wellbeing which the audience and the wider Birmingham public feel from having a world class orchestra

in the city must not be ignored when there is so much depressing news elsewhere.

8. Finally, the CBSO has established a high quality community programme including a valuable education programme in disadvantaged communities across the city which would be put at risk if further cuts are made.

I trust that these comments are helpful and please get in touch if you want to follow up any of these points

In common with (I hope) others in the region, I value the services provided communally for the City of Birmingham. I would rather live in a civilised City with decent libraries, well maintained parks, exciting arts / cultural events, swimming pools, an efficient transport system affordable by all and good schools than save a few – even many – pounds on my Council Tax. It is easy - but fatally mistaken - to overlook the extraordinary value which these services bring to our lives: a libraries, swimming pools or arts events for example may be the invisible front line in defending the physical or mental health of many people.

If we let go of these critical shared resources we force further divides into our already fractured society, we diminish opportunities for vulnerable people to lead normal lives, and our collective quality of life will be diminished. Services such as these are always more difficult to build up than they are to destroy.

Please do not take our City apart. I for one am prepared to pay to live somewhere worth living.

I'm writing to you to express my views on the current budget consultation.

I wish I was able to identify potential efficiency savings within the council, but as a member of the public I don't feel that I have sufficient insight to be able to identify such savings - however, I feel sure that there are internal savings which could be made which do not impact destructively on our crucial frontline services.

Please don't cut services which I think make living in the city worthwhile - sports facilities, exciting arts and leisure events, wonderful parks, and public transport allowing access to these services - they are crucial to the lives of individuals, and integral to the maintenance of a shared sense of community and society.

Additionally, I suggest that you are brave and determined in your defensive of these services. For example, supporting continuous programmes of arts services and events, with which people can engage throughout the year, seems more important to me than headline events such as ArtsFest. Birmingham has been promoting itself as a cultural city, and to cut cultural provision makes a mockery of our claim to be a cultural leader worthy of inward investment, and risks losing an extraordinarily valuable city asset.

As someone who has lived for 74 years in Birmingham (lately in Solihull) I am proud of the standard of the Arts in the area. I have been a

concertgoer for over 60 years and a supporter of the CBSO since 1995.

In the CBSO we have a world quality group of musicians, singers and educators and any reduction in funding which would damage their ability to carry on and expand the great work which they already do would be a tragedy for not only the City and West Midlands but for the reputation of the country as a whole.

I know that these are difficult times, but the retention of standards is also paramount

We appreciate that, in common with all Councils, you are facing major cuts to your central grant and the freezing of Council Tax and are having to make very difficult financial choices but may we make a plea on behalf of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra whom you have so strongly supported over many years.

The CBSO are not just a great orchestra but superb ambassadors for your city both locally, regionally and especially when touring abroad. They raise the profile of Birmingham in Europe and elsewhere and their world class playing under their inspirational Music Director, Andris Nelsons, has received high praise from audiences across Europe and beyond and he has received many awards for his work with the CBSO. Many concertgoers, just like us, travel considerable distances to get to Birmingham and our example is repeated by many hundreds of others whether travelling independently or in organised coach groups.

Stephen Maddock, the CEO, spoke on "BBC Midlands Today" TV, back in May 2010, about the value of Arts funding and how £1 spent on the Arts brings income to Birmingham far in excess of each £1 of Arts funding so perhaps I can illustrate our own personal example.

For each CBSO concert we attend in Birmingham, usually about 20 per season, we use about 10 litres of petrol each visit giving income to garages, oil producers etc. If we travel by train we are contributing to the local rail network and then, due to disability, we have to get taxis to and from New Street giving income to the local taxi drivers.

When we get to Symphony Hall after our 50 mile journey we usually spend around £10 or often much more on refreshments. This gives revenue to the on site cafe/restaurant/bars and employment for their staff at the Hall. We also buy a concert programme giving revenue to the CBSO and work for the printing staff and programme contributors.

Excluding the cost of the concert tickets, and the work and employment which that income funds, we believe that we spend an average of £15-£20 at the venue per visit, all of which contributes to local employment and benefits the local economy. (That's assuming we don't also buy any CD's from the THSH shop!).

I endorse Stephen's comments wholeheartedly and hope that the City Council, when making these difficult financial decisions, have the vision to take a global view of the value of Arts investment in the CBSO rather than merely looking at "the cost" of such support. Please don't just look at the costs of arts funding of the CBSO but balance the benefits it brings to your city both financially and in positive

promotion of your City and showcases what Birmingham has to offer.

The CBSO also contribute greatly to the musical education of local school children and through their Youth Orchestra and Choirs give the younger generation the opportunity to engage directly in the world of music. The CBSO shows them how important music is to happiness and well being and that it can give so much pleasure to even the very young. The CBSO are passionately committed to promoting Birmingham as a great city with a first class artistic culture and do so superbly.

Just to show that we understand that arts funding isn't always enough we also give direct personal financial support to the CBSO of around £2000 p.a., again excluding ticket costs, and we have also left the CBSO a significant bequest on our death and we sincerely hope that you will be able to continue your highly valued support at, or near, the current level.

We are sure that the CBSO won't mind us stating that many decades ago the CBSO were regarded as a mere regional orchestra but thanks to the hard work of many people over the last 20+ years it is now acknowledged as a truly world class orchestra of which Birmingham can be truly proud as indeed we are!

Having been a subscriber to the CBSO since 1971 I have enjoyed 40 years of wonderful & innovative music making. I am currently a 'Chair Endower'. Thanks to funding from sources that include in the foremost Birmingham City Council the orchestra has maintained a thoroughly high standard not only in terms of their orchestral concerts but also in their education provision. It has been truly inspirational.

I earnestly hope that in considering their further funding you will give serious consideration to all that the CBSO does not only for the City but also in terms of their international reputation when they tour overseas. The CBSO plays a vital role in improving the quality of life in Birmingham & attracting business & tourism.

Please, please continue to support the CBSO.

I am writing because I am concerned that your proposed budget for 2012 / 2013 includes significant new cuts for the arts sector. I believe Birmingham arts organisations are a tremendously important part of the City's life, and I value them highly. They make the city an attractive place to live and work and give it a distinct identity. Further to this they help the community in many ways, such as ExCathedra who provide singing medicine into Birmingham Heartlands hospital. I have seen the good work this arts organisation does for poorly children, and funding cuts may mean that this type of organisation may no longer survive.

I would therefore like to ask that you reconsider the further cuts you are proposing to the arts sector.

I am writing to express my concern about possible future reductions in funding to the city's Arts organizations. I understand, for example,

that the funding to the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO) was cut by 9% for the current financial year and I would think that funding cuts of similar magnitude were made to the city's other Arts organizations.

I fully recognize that in the current financial situation with central government spending cuts impacting on local government, particularly the large metropolitan councils, it is not possible for Arts organizations to remain immune and for their funding to continue at past levels.

However, there may be a tendency to cut the funding to perceived 'soft' targets, like the Arts, disproportionately, although based on past evidence I hope that Birmingham City Council will not take this view.

I, together with my wife, run an organization called Arts for All which enables people to attend Arts events, by coach, from South-West Shropshire, Mid-Wales, Shrewsbury and Telford, in venues all over the West Midlands region. Indeed, last season (September 2010-July 2011) we handled nearly 4100 bookings of which 3000 were to events in Birmingham. The venues included Symphony Hall, Town Hall, Birmingham Rep, CBSO Centre, Hippodrome, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, and The Barber Institute at Birmingham University. Not only did this benefit organizations such as the CBSO and BRB, etc. but restaurants, bars and shops also derived income from these visitors.

It is not only these, comparatively, local visitors who benefit the city as both the CBSO and BRB undertake foreign tours. Indeed, I understand that during the next two and a half years the CBSO will play no less than 70 concerts in other countries which speaks volumes for the quality of the orchestra under its current Music Director, Andris Nelsons. Birmingham Royal Ballet have a similar talent in David Bintley, the current Artistic Director, who is recognized as the leading choreographer in the UK.

It is difficult to over-state the importance of the Arts in the lives of Birmingham's residents and, indeed, in the lives of those who live further afield and there is, surely, a strong case to be made that in times of hardship and economic stress the Arts become even more important to the well-being and happiness of so many citizens.

I do not envy the task of council members as they deliberate where the economic axe needs to fall but I would hope that when Arts funding comes on the agenda you will take the above comments into consideration.

I am struggling to identify the perceived benefits of reducing expenditure on housing related support services. Such low-level support has been well documented as a means of preventing vulnerable people finding their various predicaments escalating out of control to the point that they will require costly statutory services, social work and intervention, hospitalisation, prison, probation services, psychiatry, psychology etc.

The adults and communities directorate has made reference to its intention to develop prevention services. The development and

procurement of any services is a costly and labour-intensive process, not to mention the required infrastructure to ensure that quality and value for money is being delivered. Housing related support services already have such infrastructure in place and have developed a very credible track record in deploying low-cost preventative interventions for many thousands of vulnerable people within the City of Birmingham.

The budget reductions that the government had imposed nationally, came with recommendations of a 15% reduction in housing related support services at a local level. Birmingham is currently projecting any 25% cut in the housing related support budget, with a distinct possibility of a higher percentage being required due to the successful judicial review that was recently upheld against adults and communities.

As a taxpayer, I would like to see my contributions been utilised to enable vulnerable or disadvantaged people to establish themselves in their local communities, access leisure facilities, adult education, employment training and achieve a good quality of life with secure tenancies and meaningful opportunities to develop social networks.

I am deeply concerned that the proposed reductions in our established early intervention initiatives and increased thresholds for eligibility for statutory services will create a future climate critical need for some of our most vulnerable citizens.

Yesterday was strike day to call for no cuts to our pensions. At Shelforce we also took the opportunity to draw attention to the fact that Shelforce is at risk of closure and that our people with disabilities have their jobs at risk.

We have never had so many people out on strike before in our 27 year history and it was heartwarming to see all our Shelforce Family stood out there shoulder to shoulder fighting for their jobs. We started at 7am at Shelforce, moved onto Lancaster Circus at 10.30 and then we walked up and joined the march through Birmingham City Centre. We had people with mobility problems and cerebral palsy who completed the whole march and we were truly humbled as we watched their commitment as they struggled to complete the march.

Morale was very high this morning, every one felt proud and boyant and our shopfloor people were working really well feeling better than they had done in a long time.

This was until a Consultant who works for Strategic Director Development arrived who is here to follow our change process through.

He came to annouce that there are job vacancies within the bcc post rooms that our guys can apply for. There are 16 jobs available at 2 different locations. This has left everyone feeling that the closure of Shelforce is inevitable as they are trying to move people out already. Morale is now at rock bottom again, staff are tearful, (withheld – member of staff) with severe autism is crying and thinks he now has to work at the jewellery quarter and two guys who were happy this morning started fighting after the meeting. The Consultant is walking

round telling people that he understands but he doesn't. Our guys need to know that Shelforce will stay open, not to be offered part time jobs in a post room. The Consultant was then joined by a colleague from HR who entered the building without announcing his arrival or signing our visitors book. This is in breach of our health and safety procedures.

The Consultant doesn't understand Shelforce and is distrusted. Today he has caused more damage than good. He was told before the meeting that it would cause damage to our people with disabilities and our General Manager also objected but he was overruled. It seems the Management of Shelforce has been passed on to Consultants who don't know our people and the stress they are under. Today has caused major disruption to morale and our production levels and I can't believe that this is being allowed to happen. I don't think our guys can take much of this. I don't think I can either.

We have been advised by both Unison and ACAS to seek legal advice regarding our position and we intend to do so as a matter of urgency.

Comments sent by a deaf person to regarding the offer of part time jobs in a bcc post room made to Shelforce staff yesterday. These comments illustrate the effect this offer had on our people. They were frightened and didn't know what to do.

i just put name just waste time all was panic!! Was shock same at me i cant believe is what there done today. anyway just wait see final shelforce meeting

Sent on behalf of someone with no email access regarding the meeting held at Shelforce yesterday to offer people part time jobs in a BCC postroom.

I feel that yesterday was very misleading. I felt like I was being bullied. Shelforce is like a big happy family and I don't want to leave. People understand me here. People are very upset about yesterday and it is hard for people with mental health problems. Some people might have suicidal thoughts. I will be on medication for the rest of my life and what would happen to me if I didn't have my job at Shelforce? It wouldn't be good for me and I would struggle to cope. My Mom said that the meeting was very misleading and that it seems people are trying to close Shelforce by getting people to leave. I am very worried and so is my Mom. I don't want to leave Shelforce, I want to stay here.

I think we are all aware of the extremely difficult budget situation the council faces and of the need to cut costs the team with other parts of the service has been actively working to streamline and cut out unnecessary duplication in getting potential foster carers onboard with Birmingham within a decreasing staff resource. This will continue within both adoption and fostering response and action on enquiries

form potential enquirers

A team member has suggested that non agency adoption work is charged for in the same way as inter country adoption.

This is work that sometimes overlaps with immigration issues

Charges would probably be difficult to administrate but would also act as a deterrent when these enquiries are demanding of time and resources and divert resources from response from work of more potential to Birmingham's children who require adoption or fostering

I understand the need to keep expenditure as low as possible but the decision to keep council tax as low as at present is essentially a political one,