

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL
2012+ BUDGET CONSULTATION
Thursday 3rd November
Newtown

Twenty-one people attended the meeting on Thursday 3rd November.
The attendees were from ten different postcodes across the city.

Peter Hay, Strategic Director of Adults and Communities, presented Birmingham City Council's budget options to the meeting. Following this, residents were able to put forward their views to the meeting and in small groups. The following issues were raised. They are presented in an order that represents the feeling of the meeting, with points appearing to secure greatest support coming first. The issues related to proposed savings are listed first, followed by alternative ideas for savings and additional points made.

1.0	Concerns about specific savings proposals.	For the attention of Department/s
1.1	<p>Vulnerable Adults Speakers were concerned about the proposed reduction in Supporting People services and services for very vulnerable people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Your priority is protecting vulnerable people but if you reduce care/Supporting People you will put more people at risk. ▪ The implications will be severe and more people will have to access Adult & Social Care. ▪ People are already affected by the cuts, and to propose more is not on. They are already affecting marginal communities. ▪ People receiving care/support will have their foundation removed if support is cut – they'll end up costing more. ▪ For example, people with mental health issues can recover with SP care. If SP is gone they will have to access Care, maybe residential care, which will cost more. ▪ There should be compassion for people with mental health issues. Couldn't cope without eg. floating support. ▪ Don't remove services because it will waste the investment that's been made so far. ▪ A small amount of support stops need going from substantial to critical. ▪ Supporting People saves 1.8m. If it is cut there will be a loss of specialised services and staff. ▪ The need to save money will lead to the loss of specialised services – the skills lost will be gone forever. <p>Points were made about Individual Budgets, the system whereby people are given money to purchase their own services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It is difficult for people to get the services they need from the private arena. ▪ Not convinced people are getting quality and value for money from private organisations. ▪ It is difficult for people to create a package of care for themselves. 	Homes & Neighbourhoods Adult & Communities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It is a complicated system, difficult to set up. <p>Response: £10 was spent on prevention last year. There is a conundrum – how can we look after the few with high need and high cost and the many with lower cost through prevention? We’re trying to do both but where can we find the money to do it? The Council’s legal duties remain the same: to meet the needs of the people of Birmingham. How to meet the needs with less money? How do we build different ways of meeting the need? Individual budgets – the evidence is that people get better services at better prices. We agree with the issues of losing staff and skills, and we’re trying our best to prevent that happening.</p>	
1.2	<p>Children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There was concern about cutting any further into services for children and young people. There fear was that this will cause trouble in the area such as riots, gun crime, drugs etc. Prevention is important to prevent problems. The area needs youth provision, after school clubs, holiday play schemes, to keep children off the streets and avoid shootings and gangs. They could be self financing, but they’re not allowed to take-on the staff to provide the clubs/schemes. ▪ There is a contradiction between increasing fostering and streamlining fostering. ▪ People living in difficult situation need some support to prevent costs later. Early intervention is important to stop family breakdown in pressured economic climate. ▪ Some cuts have already started and the impact is being felt. Now there will be further cuts and more impact. Early Years has already been cut back with impact that the Nursery has been reduced from 2 days to 2.5 days. Early Years is now 15 hours per week instead of full-time. Improvement will go backwards. We need to invest in Children’s Centres. There are no nurseries in the centre of Newtown. People can’t go to college because there are no nursery places for their children. All children should have access to free nursery provision. ▪ The Council is not aware of the number of children in need of services. The figures are underestimated. <p>Response: Yes, this is the 2nd year of a 4 year programme of budget reduction. Family Support Teams have been set up to aid prevention. Children do better with families. We want in-house foster carers and to reduce children’s homes.</p>	Children, Young People & Families
1.3	<p>Voluntary Organisations/Private Sector</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cutting funding will impact on Voluntary Organisations. ▪ Smaller voluntary organisations are disappearing. 	All Departments

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Voluntary sector providers involve people better and provide more holistic services. ▪ The Council should reduce the amount paid to the private sector for services. ▪ The council should negotiate better contracts when commissioning. 	
1.4	<p>Other Concerns</p> <p>Withdrawal of Youth Service in Newtown, just as anti social behaviour was being successfully tackled.</p> <p>Response: The proposal is not to reduce funding for Youth Service.</p> <p>People are struggling. They have no money coming in. They're living on less than before. I hope the Council won't increase Council Tax</p> <p>Response: The government has offered money to freeze Council Tax. It is being proposed that we accept that money.</p> <p>There was concern about cutting any more into staff salaries.</p> <p>Newtown Community Centre is needed. Being able to meet for social club prevents elderly people needing more expensive services.</p>	<p>Children, Young People & Families</p> <p>Corporate Resources & Democratic Services</p>

2.0	Possible Alternative Actions to Make Savings	For the attention of Department/s
2.1	Cuts to salaries of highly paid staff.	Corporate Resources & Democratic Services
2.2	Still single glazing in council buildings/housing. Replace & save money.	Homes & Communities. Corporate Resources.
2.3	Harness green energy.	All Departments
2.4	Volunteering. There is a belief that people would like to volunteer. Examples were given of being a Supporting People volunteer, for example talking and helping with paperwork. It prevents people becoming 'critical'. Also – people would like to volunteer in council services eg. neighbourhood offices.	All Departments

3.0	Other Points Made at the Meeting	For the attention
------------	---	-------------------

		of Department/s
3.1	<p>No Cuts. A number of participants were against cuts altogether and made points such as: The cuts are political. The welfare state is being ripped apart. Debt interest charges should not be paid. The council and the government should be told its not on. Most people at the meeting indicated general agreement with these statements.</p>	All Departments
3.2	<p>Other The swimming baths at Newtown were renovated and re-opened but they're only open until 3.30pm in the week and closed at weekends. Local young people say it is only open for the unemployed and not for us. Response: The specifics of Newtown baths were not known, but the principle is that services need to be available when they're most needed.</p> <p>Residents of the new Crocodile Works housing development have children but there is nowhere for them to play. Yellow Park near by, isn't big enough.</p> <p>Unemployment is a big concern in Newtown area.</p> <p>Private landlords are increasing rents. The quality of housing is poor, including in council flats and tower blocks. Parents are blamed for childrens' health problems, but it is the fault of the condition of council housing.</p>	All Departments

4. Written Comments

Increasing Council Tax – 4 against, 0 in favour.

Not happy about the cuts – take this back to Councillors.