



Glasgow City Council

Executive Committee

Report by the Chief Executive

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Item 10

3rd March 2016

Budget Consultation : Summary of Responses

Purpose of Report:

This report provides a summary of the responses to the Budget Consultation carried out between 18th January and 19th February 2016.

Recommendations:

The Executive Committee is asked to:

- (1) consider the issues emerging from the consultation;
- (2) note that feedback will be provided to participants; and
- (3) agree that the report is made available to all members to allow them to consider the issues raised when setting the budget for 2016-2018.

Ward No(s):

Citywide:

Local member(s) advised: Yes No consulted: Yes No

1.0 Background

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the Budget Consultation carried out between 18th January and 19th February 2016. The consultation included three different elements:
- three consultation events;
 - an online discussion tool (www.glasgow.gov.uk/budget); and
 - a dedicated email account (budget@glasgow.gov.uk).
- 1.2 Three budget consultation events were carried out in the North West, North East and South areas of the city. These events allowed participants the opportunity to hear about the financial challenges the Council faces and the chance to discuss and suggest different options that may be used to tackle these challenges.
- 1.3 Approximately 200 people attended the meetings. Those invited included Community Councils, Housing Associations, Voluntary Groups and Community Groups, covering a broad range of interests (e.g. care, sports, arts, equalities, culture, etc.). A significant number of these were representatives of voluntary and community groups and this is reflected in some of the themes and ideas discussed.
- 1.4 All the meetings considered the same two questions:
- What services do you want the Council to protect?
 - Where do you think the Council can make further savings or generate income?
- 1.5 The remaining elements of the consultation were an online discussion tool (Dialogue) and a dedicated email address. Both these options allowed members of the public to submit ideas and suggestions. They were asked the same two questions posed at the community events. Staff were also encouraged to submit their ideas and suggestions.
- 1.6 In total, 228 submissions were made (Dialogue –202, email – 26) which generated 102 ideas and suggestions. Dialogue also gave users the opportunity to comment and rate other users' ideas.
- 1.7 Below is the range of responses to the questions asked at the community events, along with details of the ideas and suggestions submitted online through Dialogue and email.

WHAT SERVICES DO YOU WANT THE COUNCIL TO PROTECT?

2.0 Vulnerable People

- 2.1 There was overwhelming agreement across all community events that services for vulnerable groups should be protected. These groups included:
- children and young people,

- older people; and
- disabled people.

3.0 Early Intervention

3.1 Participants suggested that by focusing on early intervention it would be possible to prevent people from becoming vulnerable in the first place and that this would help reduce the need for support services and ultimately lead to further savings in the future. Participants commented that this may require services such as education and social work to be protected as part of any budget savings. There were no additional ideas on this topic submitted online.

4.0 The Local Environment

4.1 Participants identified those services which improve and maintain the physical environment as areas to protect. These included:

- street cleaning,
- refuse collection,
- vandalism/graffiti removal,
- road maintenance; and
- recycling.

4.2 Participants stated that protecting these services would help contribute to maintaining and increasing inward investment from new and current businesses. Maintaining parks and open spaces to a high standard was also highlighted as critical in supporting the health and wellbeing of citizens. There were no additional ideas on this topic submitted online.

5.0 Tourism

5.1 Participants regarded services that support tourism as important in maintaining the city as a world class destination. Specific reference was made to museums and art galleries which participants believed can have a positive impact in continuing to grow the numbers of visitors and generating vital income for the city. There were no additional ideas on this topic submitted online.

6.0 Voluntary and Community Groups

6.1 At the community events, participants highlighted the need to protect the Integrated Grants Fund (IGF) given to the Third Sector. This funding was seen as critical leverage to obtain significant additional funding from other sources, such as the Big Lottery and European Funding. Participants noted that any reduction in IGF would result in a considerable loss of this additional investment and possibly prevent groups from delivering vital services to their communities.

- 6.2 People did accept that some budget cuts were inevitable; however, it was suggested that protection should be given to projects and initiatives which provide the greatest impact when cuts are necessary. Rather than top-slice all projects, participants suggested that the Council should use existing monitoring data to identify these projects. There were no additional ideas on this topic submitted online.

WHERE DO YOU THINK THE COUNCIL CAN MAKE FURTHER SAVINGS?

7.0 Shared Services and Partnership Working

- 7.1 Participants regarded greater partnership working as critical to achieving further savings. It was suggested that the introduction of more shared services, particularly back office functions, such as HR, finance and information technology would generate savings. These suggestions covered both services across local authorities and between the Council and community and voluntary groups. Participants believed this would also allow resources to be re-directed more effectively by local groups and was a way to mitigate against any potential reduction in their funding. There were no additional ideas on this topic provided online.

8.0 Community Hubs

Participants thought that greater use could be made of libraries in local communities as they could be used as hubs to deliver a range of services from different organisations and agencies across the city. Again, this was seen as a way of reducing cost by removing duplication of offices and any associated costs. There were no additional ideas on this topic provided online.

9.0 Streamlining Employability Services and Environmental Services

- 9.1 Participants believed that there was duplication in both environmental services and those supporting residents into employment. In both cases, these types of services were also being provided by other organisations and agencies, including the third sector. They thought that money could be saved by working in partnership and that the Council should engage in more effective partnership working with these organisations to provide the services on their behalf.
- 9.2 Online comments suggested that the Council introduce Social Impact Bonds as a way of incentivising social enterprises to develop innovative projects which could then be provided with funding from any savings made. This was suggested as a way of reducing Council expenditure and to encourage more involvement from the voluntary and community sector.

10.0 Civic Responsibility

- 10.1 Participants thought that a major area where citizens could directly save the Council money is in tackling the issues of litter and fly tipping. They endorsed

the Council's attempts to challenge and change the culture and behaviour of residents who continue to discard litter and household items irresponsibly. They would support the Council in taking additional action, including stronger enforcement, to reduce this problem and ultimately save money.

- 10.3 Online it was proposed that the Council could make better use of CCTV and mobile cameras to enforce both parking tickets and cars which are parked illegally. Participants believed this could lead to better enforcement and generate additional income.
- 10.4 Comments were made about how residents and local businesses could contribute to maintaining the local environment. Examples were given of other countries, particularly the United States, where individuals took responsibility for maintaining the cleanliness of the areas in front of, and around, their homes and businesses. As well as reducing costs, it was suggested that this would help foster more pride among local communities while making businesses more appealing to potential customers.

11.0 Volunteering - Environmental Clean Ups

- 11.1 It was suggested that communities could work in partnership with the Council and other agencies, as volunteers, to help clean up and improve their local neighbourhoods. Parks and open spaces were also identified as areas where this would be particularly relevant and useful.
- 11.2 Online, schools were specifically mentioned as contributing to the problem of litter within local neighbourhoods. It was suggested that schools and pupils, in particular, should actively be involved in clearing litter in their local neighbourhood. This would help reinforce the education they receive about environmental issues during class time and tackle the problem.

WHERE DO YOU THINK THE COUNCIL CAN GENERATE INCOME?

12.0 Charges

- 12.1 Participants highlighted new charges as a way of generating further income. These included charges for:
- non-residents for admission to museums and galleries,
 - visitors/tourists who stay in the city overnight,
 - residents for the uplifting of bulk household items,
 - motorists to bring their vehicle into the city centre, particularly high polluting vehicles,
 - overnight and Sunday parking within the city centre; and
 - late night establishments to help cover the cost of additional street cleaning and public safety measures.
- 12.2 Online, suggestions included an increase to the current level of Council Tax. It was suggested that any increase could be confined or applied disproportionately to the highest bands to overcome the potential impact on

low income households. Participant also wanted to ensure that any non-payment was tackled and addressed. It was proposed that, where appropriate, those identified as not paying should have their entitlement to non-essential services removed to improve collection rates.

13.0 Assets

- 13.1 People expressed the view that the Council could use its range of assets better to generate new and additional income. Participants highlighted the large culture and art collection which could be loaned, for a fee, to other authorities and museums.
- 13.2 Museums and galleries were highly regarded and seen as essential to be retained and protected; however, it was suggested that their ownership could be transferred to a national body, similar to museums in Edinburgh. Participants thought this would not only reduce the cost burden of providing them but also protect them for future generations.
- 13.3 Making better use of empty or under occupied buildings and land was also suggested as a method of generating additional income, particularly the selling of surplus land for regeneration and housing. Participants suggested providing incentives to businesses to take over empty properties which would generate extra non-domestic rates.
- 13.4 Ideas generated online included:
- Make better use of city centre venues (buildings and open spaces), including the City Chambers and George Square for private/corporate events and functions.
 - Selling of art and cultural collections which are kept in storage.
 - Using buildings to host solar panels to generate electricity.
 - Introduction of electric vehicles across the council.
 - Using vehicle trackers to reduce speeding and save fuel.
 - Better utilisation of the river Clyde for transport.
 - Using organic matter (branches, leaves, grass cuttings, etc.) collected from parks to create usable products such as compost, wood chipping and furniture.
- 13.5 Participants also highlighted the closure of the city's museums and galleries on either one or two days per week as a way to further reduce costs. They believed the potential impact of this could be reduced by closing different venues on different days, ensuring that there was always part of the provision available to visitors.

14.0 Staff Ideas and Suggestions

- 14.1 Other suggestions provided were mainly by staff who were encouraged to take part in the online consultation.

15.0 Procurement

- 15.1 Staff suggested a number of proposals about how the Council could better procure the wide range of products and services it uses. Numerous examples were mentioned, from food to flooring. Participants believed that procurement on a local or individual project basis would save money and provide better value. They thought that this could be achieved through the introduction of procurement cards (PCards) which would be better suited for purchasing low value products and services that do not require the need for a full procurement process.

16.0 No Cuts Budget

- 16.1 Some suggested the idea that the Council should not make any cuts to its budget and instead set a 'legal' no cuts budget. They believed that this would allow sufficient time to campaign against the budget reductions at a national level.

17.0 Pay, Conditions and Benefits

- 17.1 A range of ideas and suggestions were put forward relating to the pay, terms and conditions and benefits of staff, management and Elected Members.
- 17.2 These included the further adoption of more flexible working (e.g. home working), the introduction of more term-time contracts for education staff and reduced working hours across the organisation. Participants suggested that even a small reduction in the hours worked by all staff would not only reduce overall staff cost but allow the Council to further reduce the amount of office space required.
- 17.3 A number of respondents questioned the current policy of no compulsory redundancies and whether it was attainable or even beneficial under the current financial climate. Participants suggested that the use of natural attrition to reduce staff numbers would limit the Councils ability to manage this reduction. It was suggested that where services were being cut back it would be necessary to reduce the amount of staff required and that those staff affected would not have sufficient skills to allow them to be redeployed where they were needed.
- 17.4 It was suggested that there should be more support for older members of staff or those with a sufficient length of service to take the opportunity of early retirement or voluntary redundancy; or, alternatively, these members of staff could be encouraged to reduce the hours they work.
- 17.5 It was suggested that the Council should introduce a maximum wage which would set an upper limit for the amount any individual should be paid across the organisation.

17.6 Staff regarded executive level and Elected Members benefits and expenses as an area where further savings could be made by either limiting or removing them. Participants perceived that these benefit include:

- free parking,
- sustenance payments,
- travel expenses; and
- additional payments (e.g. election expenses).

18.0 Statutory Obligations

18.1 Finally, participants suggested that the Council should focus on statutory obligations only - similar to what they understood happened in some major city authorities in England and Wales. As part of this, they suggested the Council would need to manage community expectations and explain that it would not be the sole provider of these optional services.

19.0 Feedback to Participants

19.1 The budget consultation has highlighted a number of issues for members to consider when setting the budget for 2016-2018. It is suggested that this report is made available to all members in advance of the budget meeting. As good practice, it is proposed to make the summary of responses available online and to those who took part in the community events. Officers are considering how to engage further with community groups in each area as part of the transformation strategy and how to use the online Dialogue tool throughout the year to consult on a range of topics.

20.0 Policy and Resource Implications

Resource Implications

Financial:	Linked to the budgeting setting process
Legal:	No legal implications
Personnel:	No personnel implications
Procurement:	No procurement issues

Council Strategic Plan Priorities

Making best use of our resources

Equality Impacts

EQIA carried out: No.

Outcome: Not applicable

Sustainability Impact

Environmental:	No impact
Social:	No impact
Economic:	No Impact

21.0 Recommendations

21.1 Executive Committee is asked to:

- (1) Consider the issues emerging from the consultation;
- (2) Note that feedback will be provided to participants; and
- (3) Agree that the report is made available to all members to allow them to consider the issues raised when setting the budget for 2016-2018.