

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES TO SAVINGS PROPOSALS

This summary is not comprehensive as it reflects, where possible, responses that are related to the savings proposals contained in the main report. A full analysis of all responses to the consultation on the savings proposals will be included in the report to the Executive on 14 June 2016.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS RECEIVED VIA THE WEB SURVEY

1. The following comment could be related to Road Safety:

It seems with cuts to roads, paths, safety Bracknell although being regenerated will be all fur coat and not even a thong!

2. The following comments could be related to Early Help Offer (Development Officer post deletion):

Early intervention is essential if our children are to be school ready at 5 with speaking skills, listening skills and social skills. The children's centres and training for child minders helped raise these standards. Schools could then continue the work, but without this support, many children will arrive lacking the skills needed to learn to read and write. A recent conference organised by Bracknell Forest on 'Life Chances' emphasised the importance of talk, play and encouragement in securing emotional health and resilience. Cuts in this early intervention and training will limit the intervention needed to help the children succeed. This will cost more in the long run.

These services can be cut because the recipients are unlikely to cause a fuss. Rate payers will not notice the cuts, but the future of the young people involved will be greatly affected and may well cost dear in years to come.

SCHOOLS FORUM RESPONSE

The Schools Forum were unanimous in their view that the 2016/17 proposed further savings in respect of the revenue budget for Children, Young People & Learning would have a significant and detrimental affect on the outcomes for young people which, once realised, would be too late for those young people. The Schools Forum believed officers faced an unrealistic timeframe in which to determine where the cuts should be made and Members felt they too faced an unworkable timeframe in which to offer viable alternatives to the proposed cuts.

EXTRACT FROM LABOUR'S RESPONSE

I am replying to this consultation on the assumption that

- The proposals are at a formative stage
- The product of the consultation must be conscientiously taken into account in finalising the proposals

as advised by the Borough Solicitor. i.e. The decisions have not already been made.

The sparsity of detail included in the online consultation makes me question whether any resident can have any idea of the outcome of the each cut proposed. And negates the Solicitor's advice: - "sufficient for the proposal must be given to allow intelligent consideration and response".

I totally understand why more proposals for cuts are necessary following the Local Government Financial settlement on Dec 17 2015 but I do not agree with all the cuts proposed.

At a recent conference organised by Bracknell Forest Council on improving Life Chances, I learnt of the importance of Early Intervention in supporting the mental growth and wellbeing of our children. The conference filled me with hope that we can reduce the increasing number of identified behaviour problems and emotional ill -health issues, if we can expose our youngest children to the right level of positive intervention. This means training Child Minders, Pre-School groups and all involved in Children's Centres. Reducing these very resources is a short term gain but will have a long term cost implication.

In future I urge the Council to

- highlight the need for the consultation in bullet points and not in the long preamble
- to give more detail with each proposal so residents can make an informed response

Mary Temperton

Labour Councillor

EXTRACT FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION RESPONSE

The Borough Treasurer reported that full Council had considered a report that set out budget setting proposals to meet the £11.6m funding gap faced by the Council. It was agreed at this Council meeting that £4.5m of savings would be made, a rise in council tax would raise a further £2.1m and £5.1m of reserves would be utilised.

Following this meeting, it was clear that using reserves in this way was not a sustainable approach and that further savings needed to be identified. Additional budget proposals were subsequently agreed by the Executive on 23 February.

This range of saving proposals were now being put before the O&S Commission for consideration. The Borough Treasurer reported that if these budget proposals were implemented, the Council would have an underspend of approximately £3-4m, this underspend could then be added to reserves to be utilised in future years.

In response to Members questions, the following points were made:

- A range of documents had been made available alongside the revenue budget savings proposals to assist understanding of the proposals.
- It was confirmed that youth provision would be considered under the heading of early intervention/prevention heading on page 14 of the agenda papers.
- The budget consultation exercise had been shown on the Council's website and a press release had also been published.
- It was reported that the transitional grant would be paid over a two year period. It had to be taken into the revenue budget and it was viewed as a stop-gap measure to lessen the impact of the funding gap.

Councillor Mrs Temperton reported that she had recently attended a Life Chances Conference which focussed on reducing ill health and improving the emotional resilience of disadvantaged children. The message from the Conference was that early intervention, children' centres, good universal youth provision, programmes like Home Start were all measures that helped children to develop emotional resilience, reduced ill health and reduced the numbers of children being taken into care by local authorities. She felt as a result that the budget proposals relating to young people were short sighted.

The Chairman stated that there was still opportunity for budget proposals to be removed, amended or replaced.