

Annex 6

Budget Consultation Update

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MTFP 2022-26 Consultation Findings and Responses

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1. Background

- 1.1 Consultation on the Council's developing Medium Term Financial Plan 2022-26, including budget proposals for 2022/23 concluded on 10th January 2022 following an eight-week consultation period. This paper provides a summary of the findings. Draft recommendations and proposed responses are included but they are subject to change.

2. Methodology

- An online survey promoted through various channels inviting respondents to respond to the developing MTFP and proposed budget proposals
- A range of targeted and general on-line and in-person engagement events
- All responses have been consolidated and subject to thematic analysis

3. Participation and Survey Responses

- 3.1 The consultation process attracted almost 700 responses (surveys and emails) and over 300 participants at events (in-person and on-line):
- 632 responses came through the online survey. Of these, 49 were responses from organisations and 583 were from individual citizens.
 - 63 responses provided via email
 - 17 engagement events were held, of which 9 were in-person and 8 on-line
 - 216 people attended in-person events and 108 people online engagement including 40 organisations
 - Consultees included:
 - Citizens (including direct consultation with service users)
 - Voluntary & community sector organisations and faith groups
 - Businesses
 - Statutory and non-statutory partner organisations
 - Council staff and networks
 - Trade Unions
 - Overview and Scrutiny Committees (combined response submitted)

4.0 Consultation Findings

- 4.1 Overwhelmingly, the vast majority of responses to the survey and comments received at the engagement events related to the children's centres and play & youth service proposals (69%). Other notable, proposals that received responses include parking permits and bulky waste, albeit to a much lesser extent. Analysis of the survey by proposal are also a reflection of the focus of

the engagement sessions (Table 1). As such the combined findings from the survey and engagement events are presented by proposal below.

Table 1: Responses by Proposals		
Area of proposal	Responses	%
Children's Centres	323	44%
Youth & Play Service	180	25%
Parking Permits	60	8%
Bulky Waste	60	8%
NGY, CAMHS & Targeted Services	47	6%
Transport	35	5%
Public toilets	22	3%

All quotes below are taken directly word for word from survey submissions.

Children's Centres

4.2 Proposals:

- Children's Centres - Excluding buildings: The Early Help service will operate from only three Children's Centres across the City, with a reduction in staffing and early help offer to families (£449k full year saving)
- Children's Centres - Building Only: Children's Centres operate from three centres. 6 Centres would close (£344k full year saving)

4.3 Summary: The general consensus of the respondents was that these proposals would have a potentially detrimental impact. As the proposals are only in first stage and no specific Children's Centres have been named for closure yet, respondents were concerned about the process for deciding which centres will close, but also highlighted the benefits of the centres that they used. Amongst the over 300 responses, there were significant representations from organisations including nursery providers, NHS and education partners. All were concerned about the impact on outcomes for young children and families, especially in areas of highest deprivation. The support for parents as well as children was highlighted around concerns over loss of support services for mental health, parenting skills and employment. Specific issues highlighted included:

- Employment/Skills (46): Many parents spoke of importance of attending classes to gain skills to improve their employability.

"I attend an IT class in which I have made new friends which has helped to boost my confidence. I have an excellent IT tutor who always teaches me new i.t. skills and also improve my current IT skills in an excellent IT room."

- Mental health (43): Lots of respondents mentioned that mothers suffering with mental health issues got a much needed break when their children were at the play centres.

"Significant impact on mental health, the service is greatly needed for people at a time when most vulnerable, i.e. new mums"

- Travel to alternative sites (31): Some service users were concerned that the travelling time & cost could mean some would not be able to attend another children's centre.

“The centre is walking distance for me which is great as due to being on benefits I am unable to fund travel to get to college campuses”

4.4 Common themes and questions from the engagement sessions included:

- Why is the Council proposing cuts to vital Children’s Services at a time of increasing need for citizens and communities?
- How do the proposed cuts to Children’s Services support the ambition to be a Child-Friendly City and Early Intervention city?
- How will local need for Children’s Centres and Play and Youth services be met by the proposed new hub-model working arrangements, and what are those arrangements going to look like in practice
- How will voluntary, community and faith sector be supported to fill the gaps in provision created by the cuts to Children’s Services?

Draft Recommendations and Response - Children’s Centres

- i. **Recommendation 1:** In the light of further budgetary work the Council reconsider the proposal to move to a city-wide model based on three children’s centres on the basis that the proposed financial savings would still be substantially achieved

Response: Officers are developing a detailed proposal for a new Children’s Centre model based on retaining four centres under direct Council operation. In addition, the Council will explore options if partnerships with schools and child care providers at other sites can be agreed.

- ii. **Recommendation 2:** Ensure that detailed proposals on which centres are to remain are based on accessibility and highest need; and that, alternative proposals for delivery are considered as part of the final phase 2 proposals.

Response: Plans are still at the formative stage in terms of which centres will remain and proposals will be based on maximising accessibility to centres and that services are targeted to those most in need/vulnerable. Alternative proposals from other organisations to deliver and operate centres will be considered as part of final proposals that will be subject to further public consultation as part of phase 2.

- ii. **Recommendation 3:** Ensure appropriate communication and signposting is available (subject to any future implementation) to alternative employability skills training and advice for parents

Response: As part of the phase 2 development of any final proposed changes to children centre provision.

Youth & Play Services

4.5 Proposals:

- Play & Youth Services - Excluding buildings: Reduction of the service to provide targeted youth provision only. All play services would cease and there will be a reduction in staffing. (£838k full year saving)

- Play & Youth Services - Buildings only: Reduction of the Play and Youth buildings in line with a reduced service as above (£165k full year saving)

4.6 Summary: The proposed closure of all but two Youth Centres, and the move to a much reduced and peripatetic staff team was unsupported. Respondents spoke passionately about the impact of a reduction in both centres and staffing, and spoke of having no alternative place to go to either, whether speaking as children and young people, parents or workers. There were very few ideas offered up as to how the closure programme and workforce reduction might be mitigated, although a few respondents suggested any money for youth services would be better spent in the voluntary sector. Specific issues highlighted included:

- Crime & Antisocial Behaviour impact (49): There was a common opinion that a lot of the children and young people currently making use of youth centres would be at increased risk of negative outcomes and a potential negative impact both on community safety and crime levels. Knife Crime specifically was mentioned 10 times.

“This will have a negative impact on society. Not only to the children affected but likely will cause a higher cost on crime, anti-social behaviour and unemployment in the near future. Please keep and improve youth services”

- Mental health impact (23): As with the other early help proposals, almost half of the comments regarding mental health mentioned the pandemic as a specific reason that mental health support for young people was more needed than ever.

“These early intervention services are critical for the young people of Nottingham, even more so following a pandemic which has caused a major impact on social, emotional and mental health. Nottingham needs to invest in support in its next generation, not reduce opportunities for them to access support in a safe, welcoming and age appropriate environment”

4.7 Other comments/themes from the targeted sessions include:

- Lack of presence of a base or hub in the central of south localities which may exacerbate feelings of remoteness and disengagement or children and young people there.

Draft Recommendations and Response Options - Play and Youth Service

- Recommendation 4**: Reconsider proposals in relation to play and youth on the basis of an acceptable reduction in the proposed savings target.

Response: That Bulwell Riverside would operate as a citywide outreach hub while The Ridge Adventure Play and Youth Centre in Top Valley would provide specialised adventure provision on a citywide basis.

The proposal around staffing reductions, however, has been reconsidered and an additional 3 FTE staff will be retained, ensuring there are 15 youth workers plus a manager providing city-wide outreach. In going ahead the Council will be open to discussions with voluntary and community groups about the use of surplus buildings.

Parking Permits

4.8 Proposal:

- Introduce a Residents Parking Permit charging Scheme: 1st permit free (residential or visitor), 2nd permit £35 and 3rd permit £50 (£413k full year saving)

4.9 Summary: The proposals in this area received a mixed response. Although most respondents opposed the proposed charge for 2nd and 3rd household parking permits, a number of respondents expressed qualified support for the proposal, linking it to environmental improvement.

4.10 Most of the positive comments were around the same topics covered in this comment:

“Good idea to charge for additional permits above one per household. In line with reducing car use overall because of the effects of climate change, road congestion and health issues.”

4.11 Specific issues highlighted included:

- Driveway/Garage (7): An example of some of the comments against the proposal suggested that it unfairly affects poorer residents

“This proposal unfairly discriminates those poorer residential areas with high density housing. Acute parking pressures are felt on terraced streets, where there is little frontage parking for residents. These residents will have to purchase a permit, whilst houses on larger plots with driveways and garages will opt to use their private parking to avoid the charges. No EIA has been done for this”

- Short term permits for visitors and tradespeople (7): This was a suggestion highlighted by a number of respondents:

“Perhaps a system of short term, one day permits, could be used for visitors this would enable residents to get tradesmen in or have genuine visitors without using visitors permits for a year or more”

Draft Recommendations and Response Options - Parking Permits

- i. **Recommendation 5**: To implement the proposal as in paragraph 4.8.

Response: Direct consultation will be conducted with permit holders and these responses and suggestions will be considered alongside those before any proposed changes to the scheme are made. This will ensure that fairness and equity are embedded into the parking scheme.

Bulky Waste

4.12 Proposal:

- Waste Collection - Bulky Waste: Introduce a proposed charge for bulky waste, including discount schemes (£80k full year saving)

4.13 Summary: Responses were mixed with some respondents flagging concern of the potential impact on fly-tipping, and the ability of poorer residents to pay.

Conversely, those in favour highlighted the potential to raise money by charging for garden waste removal as well. There were also several respondents that agreed with this proposal:

“Good idea. I think it unreasonable that households should expect the council to remove bulky waste free of charge. Encouraging companies to remove items when delivering new would be a good step and even better making more items renewable and repairable for more sustainable use.”

4.14 Specific issues highlighted included:

- Fly tipping (36): The highest concern by far was that this would potentially lead to an increase in fly tipping. Some of those mentioning the fly tipping were not necessarily against the charge, they just had concerns.

“I think fly tipping will dramatically increase if the bulky waste charge is brought in. Will this cost more in the long run?”

Draft Recommendations and Response Options- Bulky Waste

- i. **Recommendation 6**: Continue to review incidents of fly tipping and consider introduction of a charged service for garden waste collection, in the context of government led changes to waste collection and ability to deliver an effective service

Response: Incidence of fly tipping is regularly reviewed and feasibility for a charging model on garden waste to be considered as a way of raising revenue for 2023-24 budget proposals.

NGY, CAMHS and Targeted Services

4.15 Proposals:

- NGY Services: Ending the grant funding of the youth services and NGY base provided by Base 51 (£180k full year saving)
- CAMHS City Wide Service: Working with the Clinical Commissioning Group and Public Health to transform Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) (£215k full year saving)
- Targeted support to children and families: Review and reconfiguration of Targeted Family Support and Edge of Care Services to consolidate and target the offer (£309k full year saving).

4.16 Summary: Responses on this issue were largely concerned about the potential negative impact on children and young people. The responses were mainly focused on the perceived impact cuts would have on NGY's services. Some respondents thought the Council was proposing to shut NGY, rather than remove its grant support for a voluntary sector partnership with multiple other funding sources. Most were concerned that any cuts would endanger NGY and/or its partner organisations.

4.17 Specific issues highlighted included:

- Mental health impact (20): Following the trend from most of the early help proposals, users of this service were concerned that they would struggle

without the mental health support they receive. We received comments from Base 51 themselves and some of their staff.

“I work at Base 51, part of NGY as a counsellor and in clinical triage supporting youth mental health. The impact the closure of the service would have on the hundreds of young people we see every year, some barely clinging on to life, will be devastating to them and their families. To make cuts during a global pandemic when youth services are needed the most due to the negative impact it has had on mental health is outrageous.”

Draft Recommendations and Response Options - NGY, CAMHS and Targeted Services

- i. **Recommendation 7:** Review proposed cuts to NGY annual contribution

Response: NGY is based on a number of funding streams for the partnership, whose partners are self-governing organisations with the capacity to raise alternative funding from a wide range of sources. Options for early help services will be explored.

Meanwhile, the CAMHS service will continue to be funded at the same rate, through a different funder and CAMHS provision will be transformed over time.

Transport services

4.18 Proposals:

- Public Transport: Reduced link bus services mean fewer buses in operation, leading to a maintenance saving (£100k full year saving). Scholars pass upgrade to Robin Hood Card no longer available other than for SEN children (£35k full year saving)
- Withdrawal of school bus service A1: Alternative services available on the commercial network (£40k full year saving)
- Medilink fare increase: Increase fares for greater alignment with commercial network (£10k full year saving)
- Bus service reductions: Reduce the frequency on a number of services, but retain links to out of town employment and education destinations and to essential services and amenities. The majority of households would continue to have access to a public transport service (£340k full year saving)

- 4.19 Summary: Most respondents were concerned that increasing charges to the Medilink service to bring it into line with other bus services would lead to hospital staff/patients choosing to drive instead of taking public transport.

“This will generate higher traffic in the city, higher pollution which is in the contradiction of attempts to reduce CO2, make the city greener, promote and develop public transport.”

- 4.20 Some respondents were supportive, with comments advocating for a full charge for specific groups, such as students or NHS staff.

“Charge visiting students full adult fare, they get enough concessions as it is”

- 4.21 In addition to the general consultation there was 25 additional responses received in relation to direct consultation that was promoted on the potentially affected bus services. The vast majority (86%) of these were from parents in relation to the A1 school service but no responses from members of the public regarding proposed changes to any other services.
- 4.22 The majority of responses to the A1 service proposal was from parents affected by the possible withdrawal of the service between Basford, Bulwell and Aspley Schools. In response the council has approached Trinity Academy, the main user of the service, for a contribution per year to keep the service operating in the new school year from September 2022. This is being considered by the school.

Draft Recommendations and Response Options - Transport Services

- i. **Recommendation 8:** Explore the possibility of Trinity Academy contributing to the A1 to maintain a service and that ensure that any changes are well communicated

Response: Any changes, including increases in Medilink service charges and changes to the Scholar Pass scheme will be well-communicated and alternative funding for the A1 service will be fully explored.

Public toilets

- 4.23 Proposals:
- Introduce a charge for the Greyhound Street toilets (£52k full year saving)
 - Close the public convenience on Victoria Embankment (£32k full year saving)
- 4.24 Summary: Relatively few comments were received on these proposals but the main concern was around the impact of charging for the Grey Hound Street toilets. The Disability Inclusion Group and others highlighted the lack of free toilet access for those with medical conditions or disabilities, and the risk that closing Greyhound Street could be discriminatory. Others highlighted the need for homeless people to have access to a free toilet facility in the city centre that was not in a private property or business premises.

“Those who are menstruating, or have conditions such as IBS or take medication that causes frequent urination would be heavily limited in what they can do if public toilets are not available to them”

“This is the only public toilet in the city centre and needs to be freely accessible for all the homeless people living on our streets.”

Draft Recommendations and Response Options – Public Toilets

- i. **Recommendation 9:** Reconsider the introduction of charging for greyhound street toilets on the basis of an acceptable reduction in the proposed savings target.

- ii. Response: Greyhound street toilets would remain a free of charge service facility.

Additional Comments from the Engagement Sessions

4.25 As previously highlighted, the largest response was in relation to the proposals relating to the play and youth service and children centres. There were, however, some general comments and questions raised that are summarised below.

- How much is being done to lobby Government for full compensation for Covid-19 spending and what else is being done to get more money to protect services?
- How can the Council protect services in future?
- How will the Council ensure it learns from previous issues around Governance and financial management?
- How will the Council increase public confidence after the recent review?
- How does the MTFP support economic growth?