

**Manchester City Council
Report for Resolution**

Report to: Council – 7 March 2014

Subject: Response to Budget Proposals

Report of: Assistant Chief Executive (Finance and Performance)
Assistant Chief Executive, Communications, Customer Services
and ICT
Head of Intelligence & Performance

Purpose

To present the responses to the consultation on the budget proposals that was communicated to residents and businesses from 20 January 2014.

Recommendations

That the Committee considers and takes into account the responses to the consultation on the budget proposals summarised in this report.

Wards Affected:

All

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Introduction

The Council's proposed budget is based on the 2014/15 indicative budget approved last year as part of the two year budget 2013/14 and 2014/15. This included a two year savings package designed to achieve approximately £78m of savings across the two years. Approving a two year budget plan was in response to the two year financial settlement issued by the Government in January 2013 which set out a level of reduced funding for those two years. The Revenue Budget 2014/15 report to Executive on 12 February detailed changes to that budget based on a re-examination of all the constituent elements. The budget includes the need to achieve the remaining balance of the £78m savings package agreed last year and whilst the programme is progressing well and in line to achieve the required level of savings there remains some significant challenges for the Council in the coming year.

The statutory business consultation commenced on the 20 January and the resident part of the consultation started on 5 February, both closed on 26 February in order to allow as much time as possible for residents and businesses to participate.

Last year a consultation on the two-year budget proposals covering 2013-15 ran between 16 January and 20 February 2013 leading to 634 responses. In January the Council asked residents and businesses for their views on its proposed budget for 2014-15, including a proposed Council Tax freeze. MCC has a statutory duty to consult with businesses in Manchester on these proposals and letters were sent to the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce, CityCo, Business Leadership Council, the Local Enterprise Partnership and CBI North West on 20 January 2014. Residents were also given the opportunity to comment on the consultation via an online survey which consisted of three questions, one open ended question and two questions with tick box responses.

Since last year's budget consultation, lessons have been learnt and improvements have been implemented. Therefore this consultation included a simpler feedback form, clearer guidance for residents and businesses and a rich media video to present the consultation in an alternative format.

Improvements have also been made to ensuring that frontline staff and members are aware of channels by which residents and businesses can engage with the council, including the contact centre that provide residents with digital assistance in filling out the consultation online, as well as directing to channels to be able to request hard copies or copies in another format.

In addition to the statutory consultation required for businesses, communications also ensured that the consultation was accessible for residents, with the budget consultation being clearly accessible from the homepage of the council website and on the main www.manchester.gov.uk/consultations pages. The budget consultation page received 339 visits. Other communications channels which have been used include PR, email broadcasts, social media and localised channels via frontline staff.

Results

At the close of the consultation, there had been a total of 59 responses to the Budget

Consultation, all of which were from residents. The responses were as follows:

Question 2 - Do you generally agree with our three budget priorities?

- 61% (36 out of 59 respondents) agreed with the budget priorities
- 15% (9 respondents) disagreed with the priorities
- 24% (14 respondents) responded don't know/no response

Question 3 - Do you think we should freeze council tax in 2014/15 and accept the Government grant?

- 64% (38 out of 59 respondents) agreed the council should freeze council tax and accept the grant
- 24% (14 respondents) disagreed that the council should freeze council tax and accept the grant
- 12% (7 respondents) responded don't know/no response

Question 1 - We are halfway through our £80million savings plan. What do you think of our progress so far? This was an open text response option and of the 59 responses to date 45 respondents had commented on this question. The verbatim (un-edited) comments are shown in the annex.

About the respondents

The respondents were asked a series of questions about themselves. Analysis shows that the majority of respondents were White British, male, heterosexual, did not consider themselves to be disabled and did not identify with any religion or belief. The largest proportions of respondents were aged 40-64. Due to the low response rate we are unable to determine whether the demographic make-up of respondents is a good representation of the resident population of Manchester.

Detailed numbers below for information:

- The majority of respondents (32) were male, 17 were female and 10 preferred not to say/no response
- The majority of respondents (34) stated their ethnicity to be White British, 14 people preferred not to say/did not respond. Two respondents were Bangladeshi and two were White Other. One person responded from each of the following ethnic groups; Black Caribbean, Chinese, Kashmiri, White - Gypsy/Irish Traveller, White and Asian, White and Black African and White British.
- The largest proportion of respondents (23) was aged 40-64. Fifteen respondents were aged 26 to 39 followed by 12 respondents that preferred not to say/did not respond. Four respondents were aged between 16 and 25, 3 respondent was aged between 65 and 74 and 2 respondents were aged over 75.
- The majority of respondents (35) did not consider themselves to be disabled, 14 respondents preferred not to say/did not respond and 8 respondents considered themselves disabled.
- The majority of respondents (34) were heterosexual, 16 respondents preferred not to say/did not respond, 8 respondents were gay and 1 respondent was a lesbian.

- The majority of respondents (28) did not identify with any religion or belief, 17 preferred not to say/did not respond and 14 did identify with a religion or belief.

Annex

Comments from respondents that are supportive of our proposals	
Response ID	Comment
3	Good
8	I'm impressed
18	Good savings given the situation.
25	I don't think you could have made more savings without giving up work on the library.
31	Satisfactory
34	OK
42	Doing well
46	Doing as well as can be expected
50	Progress has been good so far despite the massive shortfall
57	It is positive to see that even with budget reductions big initiatives are being undertaken and savings are also made.
Other comments and suggestions	
Response ID	Comment
4	As a city centre resident, I'm sick of being tapped up for cash to park my car outside my own bloody flat! Finance the canal street stuff by taxing the businesses on canal street, not us.
5	Good but could save money on energy bills. Every time I go past central library and town hall, all lights in every room are on. This is huge waste on money and planet's limited resources.
7	Fine. More investment in better pedestrian and cycling facilities would be good. Make it illegal for cars to park on footpaths like in London. Put red routes in with double red lines. More segregated cycle lanes. That will make the city a lot cleaner. Also I really like the investment in better bin and recycling bins.
9	I think progress is overall good, though I don't agree with building new facilities when maintaining the old ones is plainly more cost effective.
11	The city looks scruffy especially in north Manchester. Leaves and rubbish remain on streets from months ago. Looking forward to seeing the central library reopening. Why are facilities always in the south and east of the city? Here in north Manchester residents feel we are forgotten and being left behind.
13	I think the work has gone well, however it is important to make sure that the decisions made are for the term good of the City, such as with the environment and low carbon skills/job growth.
14	Very good to save, but savings must also be made on all salaries to ensure councillors/ exec members remain IN TOUCH with real life The one off 14M is not going into areas that need a bit of a boost in showing the MCC really does care about them. Stuck in an area between two big projects (that make the city look good) how about a share of the money. Fully agree with helping people who need help, but far too many people in Manchester benefit from a slack regime. They litter, they deal, they make noise and they destroy communities, yet we give the council tax rebates and housing benefit!

17	Ok but worried you will be left as a shell and unable to respond to issues which are out of your control.
19	Personally I think that more money should be spent on the state of are roads. Palatine road from Northenden right threw to oxford road is in need of major repair and updating in safety after yet another death in Fallowfield!
20	More of the Clean City Scheme funds need to be used in Longsight. Huge pest problem in the area and pot holes everywhere.
21	Clean and green is good but council needs to work more with local companies and the people to ensure city is KEPT clean. E.g. posters re chewing gum. Parks - obviously to as important as social care but important to quality of life. Don't ignore. Sense that city centre gets more spending than the suburbs - attracting companies to Manchester is crucial but people don't live in the centre. Should work more closely with Labour councils of the whole North to get a more balanced economy and social/ cultural spending away from London. Don't compete with Liverpool and Leeds, shift power to the North so all benefit and stop the over investment in economic and cultural spending in the SE. House of Lords in Manchester! Dept. for sport and culture shifted to Leeds!
24	It is the best of a bad job with this government
30	Too little information. As to progress you seem to be looking for a pat on the back - sorry but you're not going to get it. The information the council provides by way of leaflet as to where the money collected is spent is not sufficiently detailed for suggestions / comments to be made.
32	Not enough information to comment
35	Hough End Leisure centre is not actually in Chorlton and will result in the loss of a vital local amenity. At present Chorlton baths and leisure facility can be used by children and adolescents on their own, but the Hough End facilities are not only too far away from Chorlton for kids to walk to but will result in personal safety issues due to the distance and location. The local economy benefits from the location of the baths in Chorlton and all this will be lost- local cafes and bars will suffer.
36	Roads are worse than ever - potholes etc. - all well and good asking people to take pride in their area but they can't fix roads or stop larger vehicles using roads that weren't made for them Seem to employee a lot of consultants - poss. down to the m people system not being fit for purpose if there aren't the appropriately qualified staff in the council, and no opportunities to develop current staff because most services seem to be a constant state of redesign
39	Not sure why we're still spending so much on managers and consultants in ICT. What improvement have they brought?
40	Investments that bring cash returns to the Council are very welcome indeed and long term plans set out are to be applauded. So well done. This hasn't been easy for the Council I imagine, with such a massive budget reduction from a Government that clearly doesn't care about Manchester. It's clear the Council has tried its best. However, as a city centre resident, I must point out that the state of the streets and canals are becoming worse and worse by the day and nothing is being maintained anymore. It's at a tipping point. Although the Council faces very tough choices, if anything can be spent on maintenance of our roads, pavements and canal side areas it would be very welcome.
44	I think the progress so far has been good but I think some of the work could

	have waited, and therefore more help could be given to those who haven't in the past had to pay council tax in the past.
47	The reductions in services have massive effects on residents of Manchester. Also massive negative effects on those still working for MCC and other services.
49	I think its good that you are using money to clean the city, refurbish library's and build new leisure centres but your not taking into account people like myself where I rarely go in to the city centre, use that particular library and it is way out of my way to access the leisure centres it seems it all for people who live in central and south Manchester I do not think its fair
53	In the more deprived neighbourhoods where communities are significantly diverse, it is evident cleansing services have been reduced and housing conditions are deteriorating despite the private rented market increasing. This is really impacting the overall perception of these areas as owner occupiers continue to move out and a more transient population move in. The cash boost relating to the airport is a massive opportunity to make tangible differences, however, the Council is not able to use this I understand to invest in machinery/equipment which would assist the cleansing services. There is still some wastage with funding e.g. Hate Crime, Crime & Satisfaction money, its great doing things for the community (e.g. hosting community days) but how much of a difference does this really make to improve the quality of life for residents in Manchester and what is the more long term gain with such events?
58	To go ahead until we reach our goal.
59	In the main you have done very well. But 'Greater Priority' should be given to road and pavement repairs. Some of our roads, especially back streets are a disgrace.
Comments from respondents that don't agree with the proposals	
Response ID	Comment
1	Ill managed and driven by what appears to be panic led management. Failure to update anyone what is really happening until the last minute. Not making any real stand against Central Government To much investment going into supporting private business rather than using income to support the residents of the City (Major chains shops are not leaving the City and it appears that the employment of people is from outside the City therefore the income IS NOT being placed back into the City)
2	Crap
10	Still spending money on the wrong things. Employ more street wardens to combat fly tipping in the alleyways. Keep the city clean, and fine people who don't because that's the only thing they understand. Clean the streets more, Manchester is a dirty city compared to many others I've been to and I'm ashamed to invite people to my home. The only part of the road I live on that's clean is the bit outside my home which I and my family clean. My road is disgraceful and has hardly any tarmac on, and has never been touched in the 27 years I have lived here.
12	You have slashed the social care budget and any more hits here will mean real hardship to those in most need. You should stop the practice of officers using taxis to travel around the city - this is a disgraceful practice. You should be mindful of the number of people you are excluding from accessing the

	services they need - by going digital. In particular you are excluding, those most in need that do not have access to the internet, and shamefully the majority of older people in the city too!!!
22	More dog mess, graffiti and litter thanks to fortnightly black bin collections (non-recycling residents don't help, though!) and heavy cuts in street scene / litter picking services. Roads are slowly getting worse due to Highways services cuts, more pot holes and road surfaces in bad condition, more pooling when it rains. Hearing signs that Social Services are approaching, if not already in meltdown due to Social Worker retention and sickness issues; mainly due to the impact of benefit cuts via Council Tax Support, Housing Benefit and DWP sanctions rather than to the service itself; but seems Social Workers are not being well enough supported to cope with their heavy workloads.
23	Of course I don't like it, kid's swimming pools, libraries etc. I realise you have to make savings given this mean government grant, but young kids are our future and they should be protected.
27	I don't think you are making the saving in the correct area. When the budget cuts started you changed the way the city was cleaned and it has become a disgrace. I work in Manchester city centre and in particular the village area. You changed the overnight cleaning on Saturday which is the busiest night so now it looks like something out of a horror film on Sunday mornings. I have seen council workers empty the black bins into a truck and then as the bin was over flowing he put it back in its case and let all the extra rubbish fly down the street. If a member of the public had done that and been seen on camera you would have fined them. Manchester need a real deep clean why don't you look at how big city's in Europe which are clean as a whistle, they jet wash the streets ever night, why cant you buy big road sweepers, the little ones that run on the pavements are useless they just push the rubbish around. The Piccadilly Gardens is a complete mess and needs "the Berlin Wall" knocking down or if that is too expensive light it up with multicolour led lights over all its surface not just the odd light that doesn't work. A lot of cities use lighting to make the place more attractive Manchester needs to spend more on Led lights that actually work and put them in the trees and on the buildings. Piccadilly gardens and the Village also need to have some of the licences removed from takeaways, this is the main reason for the litter and you as a council allow far too many takeaway food shops in small areas.
37	Forget the environment, it's not important. Put the money towards fixing the roads and drains
38	I think it is a very depressing outlook that we are currently living through-none the less it is clear that progress is being made in the City, I think that less money should be wasted which I see on a day to day basis.
51	You need to do more and charge less