

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Council – 6 March 2015

Subject: Response to Budget Proposals

Report of: City Solicitor, Deputy City Treasurer and Assistant Chief Executive (Communications & Customer)

Summary

This report presents the responses to the consultation on the budget proposals that were communicated to residents and businesses from 26 November 2014.

Recommendations

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

Contact Officers:

Name: Liz Treacy
Position: City Solicitor
Telephone: 0161 234 3339
E-mail: l.treacy@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Carol Culley
Position: Deputy City Treasurer
Telephone: 0161 234 3406
E-mail: c.culley@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Sara Tomkins
Position: Assistant Chief Executive (Communications & Customer)
Telephone: 0161 234 3706
E-mail: s.tomkins@manchester.gov.uk

Background Documents

Public Consultations 2015/16 Open Text Responses

A file including open text responses to questions in the budget consultation will be available for inspection in the meeting.

Introduction

- 1.1. On 12 November 2014 the Council published reports to its scrutiny committees setting out a series of budget options being considered for 2015/16 – 2016/17. As the Financial Settlement for 2016/17 had not been published at that time, options were designed in response to the estimated funding gap of £59m in 2015/16 rising to £91m in 2016/17.
- 1.2 The general budget consultation opened on 26 November and ran until 18 February 2015. The Council also has a statutory duty to consult “persons or bodies appearing to it to be representative of persons subject to non-domestic rates” about budget proposals for the coming financial year. The consultation enables residents, staff, businesses and other stakeholders to express their views on the Council’s budget priorities and whether Council Tax should rise to address the funding gap.
- 1.3 The general budget consultation focused on the following questions:
 - Have you heard about the Council having to make savings?
 - In principle, do you generally agree with the Council’s three budget priorities for the next two years?
 - Do you think we should increase your council tax to help address the funding gap?
 - Do you have any further comments or suggestions about the Council’s budget options for 2015–17?
 - Do you have any further comments or suggestions about how the Council can save or make money?
- 1.4 Some specific options outlined in the budget reports were subject to separate consultation exercises. These options related to:
 - Free Swimming
 - Voluntary and Community Sector
 - Mental Health
 - Youth and Play
 - Children and Young People
 - Homelessness and Housing Related Support
 - Drug and Alcohol
 - Wellbeing
 - Sexual Health
- 1.5 The Free Swimming consultation commenced on 26 November and closed on 7 January 2015. The other specific consultations commenced on 1 December and were initially due to close on 26 January.
- 1.6 The provisional local government finance settlement was released on 18 December 2014. The revised financial position of the Council following the receipt of the Provisional Financial Settlement and the application of the interim airport dividend enabled the Council to consider again the budget

proposals and savings options including the options for the creation of capacity for £5.5m for investment in priority areas, including £3.5m in the Children and Families Directorate. It was therefore agreed to extend the consultations relating to the options within this directorate until 1 February in order to hear the views of the public and service providers on how this investment should be spent. This process was managed through the following approach:

- Additional information and supplementary questions were added to the website and paper consultation questionnaires; respondents had the option to complete this additional section only or complete both the consultation theme as well as the additional questions
- Additional and supplementary questions were specifically highlighted during both the public and service-specific (targeted events) with consultees provided with the opportunity to comment on the additional proposals.

1.7 Responses to the consultations relating to Free Swimming and changes to services with the Children and Families Directorate have been analysed and submitted to scrutiny committees and Executive to be taken into account in budget decision making.

1.8 This report outlines the communication activity delivered to support the consultation process, the number of responses to each consultation and analysis of the responses to the general budget consultation.

2.0 Communication and engagement

2.1 Communication and engagement for the budget options was split into two phases:

- Phase 1 – Engagement, context and budget options from 10 November until 25 November 2014
- Phase 2 – Formal consultation from 26 November 14 until February 2015.

Phase 1: 10 November 2014 – 25 November 2014

2.2 As budget options were announced and the scrutiny process commenced, engagement took place to encourage residents and stakeholders to submit their views. This included communication activity and channels that have not been used before for the budget setting process, such as films, social media and live streaming.

2.3 All of the budget option information was available on the Council website at www.manchester.gov.uk/budget. This included a plain English narrative of the budget and consultation process and summaries of all the directorate papers including links to the full committee reports. The summaries, written by the Council's Communications section, were produced to provide an outline of the budget options that is easier to read and digest. The budget option pages were visited over 4,125 times in this phase.

- 2.4 Stakeholders were encouraged to submit their questions, comments and suggestions for alternative options and were also able to sign up for an alert to notify them when the formal consultations started. Over 75 comments were received, and could be loosely categorised into the following themes:
- Reserves
 - Concerns about services for vulnerable people
 - Investment programmes such as Clean City
 - Council Tax
 - Staff asking questions about workforce reductions.
- 2.5 All comments received were logged, acknowledged and dealt with centrally on a case by case basis. All comments received were noted and form part of the consultation process.
- 2.6 Alongside this, a ‘talking head’ film explaining the budget cuts and options for consultation was produced. As of 19 February this film had been watched 1,154 times. The film also used a series of infographics which clearly explain changes in a visual way. These infographics were also promoted via social media.
- 2.7 There was significant social media activity, pushing the key messages, listening to and engaging stakeholders in a conversation about the budget options, using the #McrBudget. In this phase there were over 320 conversations on social media about the budget. If the number of retweets, likes and shares are included this number increases to 686. Social media sharing not only ensures that the key messages reach significantly more stakeholders, but it can also help to build trust because people tend to react more positively to content that has been recommended by someone within their own social network. The themes on social media are broadly similar to the comments received from the website.
- 2.8 All Scrutiny meetings and Executive were live streamed in November. There have been a total of 240 views of these meetings during this phase. The Press Office also tweeted during those meetings discussing the budget to encourage people to watch the live stream and provide an explanation about what was being discussed. The tweets were not a ‘commentary’, rather a further opportunity to encourage engagement for the budget options, reporting what was discussed.
- 2.9 Local media were engaged fully, with a comprehensive news release which provided the full budget context and explanation of the headline options and priorities.
- 2.10 Staff were also briefed with both a broadcast explaining the cuts and introduced to a voluntary severance and voluntary early retirement scheme and told about pending dialogue events with their Heads of Service. Frontline staff were briefed and made aware of the channels available for collecting and recording responses during this phase of activity.

Phase 2: 26 November 2014 – 14 February 2015

- 2.11 The formal budget consultation and the consultation on the withdrawal of the free swimming offer went live on 26 November. The consultations for Children and Families were launched on 1 December. As the formal consultations began messages were focused on promotion of the consultations to encourage participation.
- 2.12 Again, all the information relating to the consultations are available at www.manchester.gov.uk/budget. The website presented all the information on the overarching budget consultation and specific directorate consultations. Each consultation contains a summary of the proposals, and links to supporting documents including the committee reports, before leading into a series of questions for residents to complete about the options. As of 19 February 2015 these pages had been visited just under 52,780 times since 26 November.
- 2.13 Hard copies of each consultation have also been made available, and specialist formats are available on request (alternative languages, Braille, 'easy to read' and large print). Copies are available from all Council libraries, the Customer Service Centre, in leisure centres, appropriate neighbourhood venues and available at consultation events. Over 9,250 copies were printed and distributed.
- 2.14 Consultation events for Children and Families consultations have taken place in each of the three localities: north, central and south of the city.
- 2.15 The consultation has been publicised through a variety of digital and community channels. It has its own icon on the Council's webpage, over 300 posters have been distributed to over 50 locations across the city including Council libraries and leisure centres and a 'consultation special' e-bulletin has been sent to over 65,500 people. The e-bulletin had an open rate of 24%. It also resulted in an additional 910 visits to the website. A further three e-bulletins, sent to a total mailing list of over 225,000 people, have included consultation news and updates. Social media channels have been heavily used; resulting in a further 1,042 referrals from Council social media accounts to the online budget consultation, press releases have covered the consultations and events and the digital screens in the city centre and Town Hall Extension have been used.
- 2.16 At the start of December, the Leader hosted a live twitter chat. During this Twitter session 73 questions were asked. The session also generated 80 general social media comments about the budget. Resident questions, the Leader's responses and general comments combined created 234,421 organic impressions (this is the number of time the live chat featured in a social media users' newsfeed or stream). Given the success of this a further live chat took place on 28 January. During this session 44 questions were asked. The session also generated 64 general social media comments about the budget. This session generated over 520,000 organic impressions. (This

large increase in impressions has been due to many people sharing the promotional messages and responses to questions).

- 2.17 A further film was produced to explain the budget challenge facing the Council. The animation, produced in house, explains with simple graphics what people could do to help and encourages people to participate in the consultations. The animation has been viewed 1,345 times. Both films were captioned and transcripts made available on the site.
- 2.18 A range of channels were used to consult directly with businesses. These include: Employer Engagement Board Members, The Enterprise Services Network, Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce newsletter, Pro Manchester weekly newsletter, Business in the community newsletter, Business Solutions newsletter, Midas Mailing list, Growth Hub members, Environmental business pledge members, CityCo members and distribution lists, Council Regeneration teams and ward coordinators. 14 responses have been received from businesses to the budget consultation, which is significantly higher than the response rate last year of just one response

Responses Received

- 2.19 The following table shows the number of online and printed consultation forms that had been received for the different consultations.

Consultation	Responses
Budget	673
Free Swimming	422
Voluntary & Community Sector	1208
Mental Health	395
Youth and Play	269
Children and Young People	289
Homelessness and Housing Related Support	304
Drug and Alcohol	163
Wellbeing	450
Sexual Health	441

- 2.20 215 responses were received to the consultation on changes to the budget savings, referred to in paragraph 1.6. This consultation launched on 12 January.
- 2.21 Responses to the budget consultations were monitored to ensure that the respondents are reflective of the population of the city as a whole. For example where there have been low numbers of respondents in a particular area of the city or amongst a particular community, targeted activity has been delivered to encourage higher response rates.

Complaints, Petitions and other Correspondence

2.22 In addition to formal responses to the budget consultation, petitions and other correspondence relating to the budget options have been monitored. Three petitions have been received, one relating to Youth and Play, one relating to the option to remove the school crossing patrol on Ogden Lane/Varna Street and one relating to the option to stop funding the Recovery and Connect service. There have been four enquiries from MPs regarding the options relating to the Voluntary and Community Sector and Children and Young People. 43 letters relating to the budget options have also been received and responded to. These have been taken account of within the individual budget savings consultation reports as part of the budget setting process.

3. Programme of Events

3.1 24 public consultation events and 168 targeted events have been held relating to the nine budget consultations for the Children and Families directorate. Since the outset of the consultation, dialogue with residents, service providers and key stakeholders have encouraged feedback and ensured residents are aware that the Council is listening to their views.

3.2 The Directorate has a number of key citizen groups for older or disabled people. These groups have been consulted on the eight theme budget options. The groups are:

- Learning Disability Partnership Board
- Physical Disability Partnership Board
- Visually Impaired Steering Group
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing Steering Group
- Valuing Older People Board

3.3 A number of requests were received to hold further service-specific events. These have been accommodated and arranged to ensure that the consultation process has been open and accessible.

3.4 The Free Swimming Consultation was publicised online and through information in the Council's leisure centres. Leisure centre staff have also encouraged service users to complete the online consultation questionnaire.

4.0 Response to the General Budget Consultation

4.1 673 people responded to the general budget consultation. Of these 82% were members of the public, 4% were from partner organisations, 7% from voluntary and community sector organisations 2% from businesses and 4% from other groups. The responses to the consultation show 44% of respondents generally agreed with the Council's priorities, whilst 29% did not. 26% did not know. The majority of respondents (57%) thought the Council should not increase council tax to help address the funding gap. The table below includes full details of how the public responded to the first three questions in the General Budget Consultation.

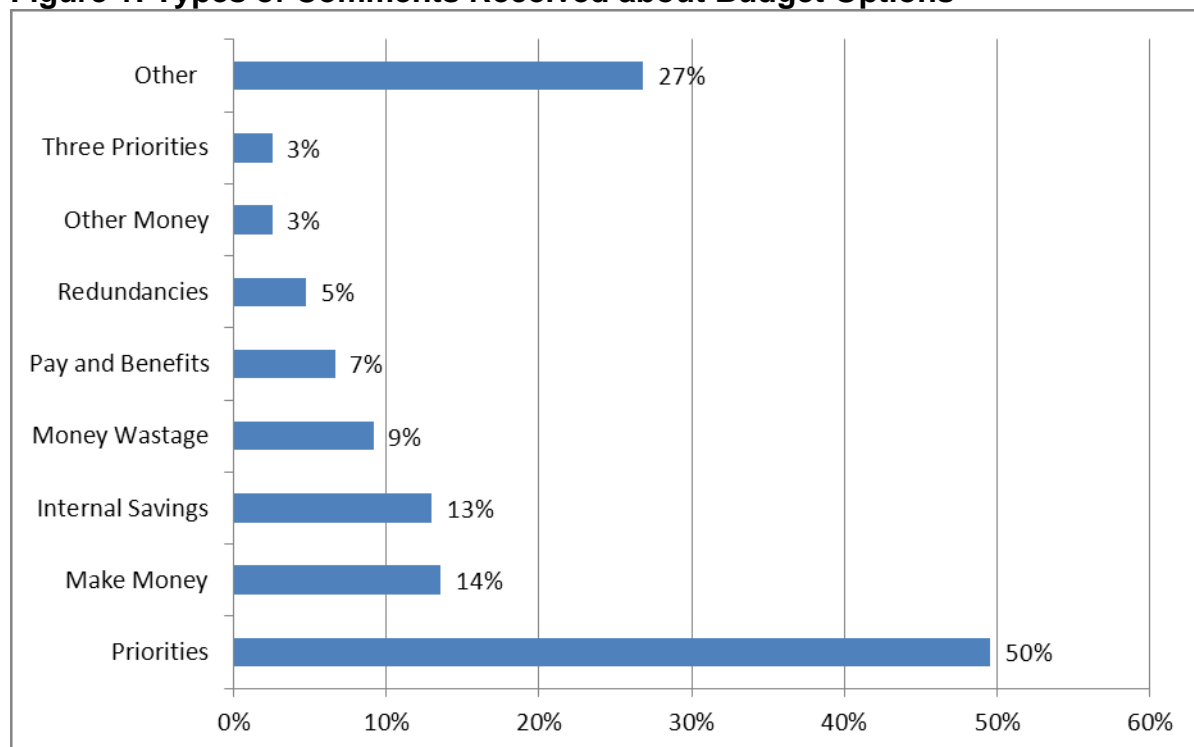
	1. Have you heard about the Council having to make savings?	2. In principle, do you generally agree with the Council's three budget priorities for the next two years?	3. Do you think we should increase your council tax to help address the funding gap?
	Number of Responses	Number of Responses	Number of Responses
Yes	643 (96%)	297 (44%)	227 (34%)
No	19 (3%)	197 (29%)	381 (56%)
Don't Know	7 (1%)	171 (25%)	61 (9%)
No Response	4 (1%)	8 (1%)	4 (1%)
Total	673	673	673

Please note percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number and therefore some columns will not total 100%.

4.2 Respondents were also given the opportunity to add their comments and suggestions in their own words in response to the fourth and fifth questions. The table below shows the types of responses received for these two questions.

4.3 The graph below (Figure 1) shows the types of comments people made in response to the question "Do you have any further comments or suggestions about the Council's budget options for 2015–17?". Half of respondents (50%) related to the areas/services they felt should be prioritised. Fourteen percent of respondents suggested ways of making money whilst 13% felt more internal savings could be made.

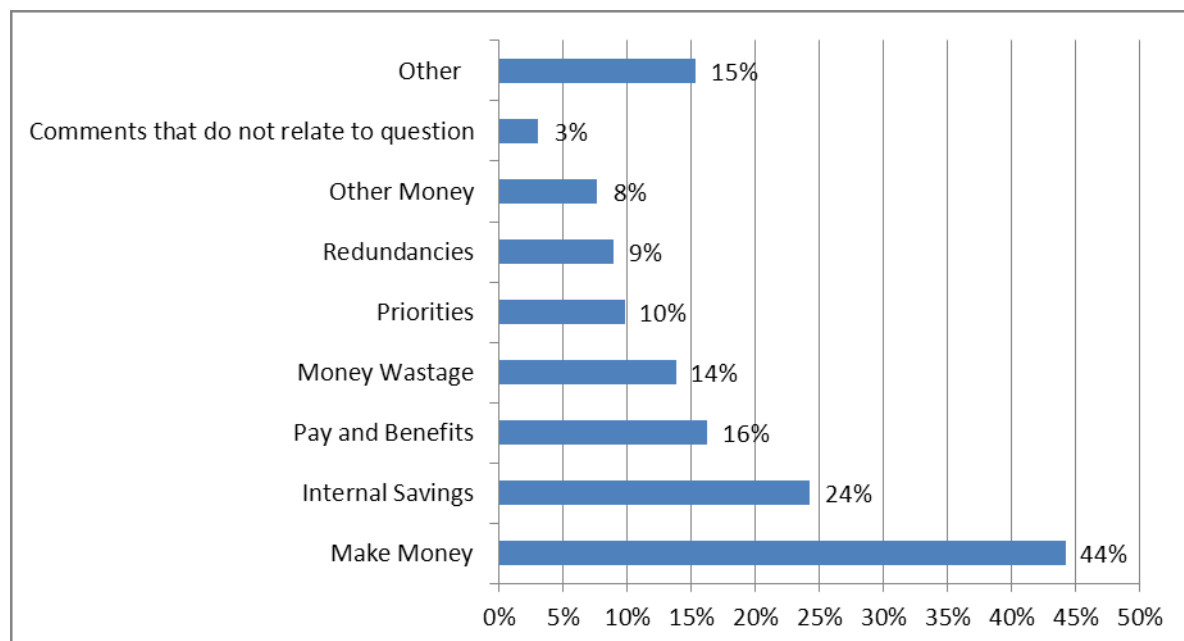
Figure 1: Types of Comments Received about Budget Options



- 4.4 The most frequently mentioned comments in response to the question were:
- Protect Children's services / young people/ families (10%)
 - Be careful not to cut low used services if used by vulnerable / protect vulnerable (7%)
 - Protect mental health / disabled services (7%)
 - Prioritise preventative services (public health / smoking / PARS) (6%)
 - Protect social care (4%)
 - Cut high salaries (4%)
 - No cuts (4%)
 - Stand up to government and refuse cuts / ask for more money (4%)

4.5 The graph below (Figure 2) shows the types of comments people made in response to the question "Do you have any further comments or suggestions about how the Council can save or make money?" 44% of comments received related to how the Council could make money and just under a quarter (24%) were suggestions about how the Council could make savings internally. 16% of comments related to Council staff pay and benefits and 14% were regarding respondents' opinion that money was being wasted.

Figure 2: Types of Comments Received About how the Council can Save or Make Money



- 4.6 The most frequently mentioned comments in response to the question were:
- Cut high salaries (9%)
 - Cut those at higher paid grades / reduce number of senior management staff (6%)
 - Make money from assets e.g. rent out/ sell assets (5%)
 - Find private funding for some services / events / stop funding events (4%)

- Reduce spending on council 'Jollies' / entertaining etc (4%)
- Increase council tax (with caveats) (4%)
- Reduce number of contact staff/ consultants (3%)
- Increase licence fees / charge restaurants / takeaways / bars / football clubs for clean-up (3%)
- Collect all council tax (3%)

4.7 Included in the appendix to this report is information regarding the location and characteristics of respondents to the consultation, compared to the prevalence of those characteristics across the city. This information serves to demonstrate how representative the sample of respondents is of the city as a whole. It should be noted that many individuals declined to provide this information and so this comparison can only be made on a limited basis.

5.0 Recommendations

5.1 It is recommended that the Committee considers and takes into account the responses to the consultation on the budget proposals as summarised in this report.

Appendix: Demographic and Equality Data

Please note percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number and therefore some columns will not total 100%.

Demographic Data

Q1. What is your post code?	Manchester	Respondents who provided a Manchester postcode	All Respondents
North Manchester	19%	14%	12%
East Manchester	16%	14%	11%
City Centre	4%	6%	5%
Central Manchester	17%	15%	12%
South Manchester	30%	43%	34%
Wythenshawe	13%	9%	7%
Not recognised / outside Manchester	-	-	10%
No response	-	-	9%

(Source: Addresspoint)

Equality Data

Q2. What is your gender?	Manchester	Respondents who identified gender	All Respondents
Female	50%	49%	36%
Male	50%	51%	38%
Prefer not to say	-	-	1%
No response	-	-	24%

(Source: Mid Year Population Estimates 2013)

Q3. Do you identify with the gender you were assigned to at birth?	Respondents who provided a yes / no answer	All Respondents
Yes	100%	73%
No	0%	0%
Prefer not to say	-	2%
No response	-	25%

Q4. What is your age?	Manchester	Respondents who provided their age	All Respondents
Under 16	20%	0%	0%
16-25 years	21%	8%	6%
26-39 years	26%	34%	26%
40-64 years	25%	50%	37%
65-74 years	5%	7%	5%
75+ years	3%	1%	1%

Prefer not to say	-	-	1%
No response	0%	-	25%

(Source: Mid Year Population Estimates 2013)

Q5. I would describe my ethnic origin as ...	Manchester	Respondents who described their ethnic origin	All Respondents
Black Caribbean	2%	0%	0%
Black African	5%	1%	1%
Black British	0%	3%	2%
Bangladeshi	1%	0%	0%
Chinese	3%	2%	1%
East African Asian	0%	0%	0%
Indian	2%	1%	1%
White - Irish	3%	2%	1%
White - Gypsy / Irish traveller	0%	0%	0%
Roma / Romani traveller	0%	0%	0%
Kashmiri	0%	0%	0%
Middle Eastern	0%	1%	1%
Pakistani	9%	3%	2%
Vietnamese	0%	0%	0%
White and Black Caribbean	1%	2%	1%
White and Black African	1%	0%	0%
White and Asian	1%	2%	1%
White British	0%	0%	0%
White English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British	62%	77%	53%
Other ethnic group (please specify)	1%	0%	0%
Other mixed group (please specify)	1%	0%	0%
Other African (please specify)	2%	0%	0%
Other Asian (please specify)	0%	0%	0%
Other black (please specify)	1%	0%	0%
Other white (please specify)	5%	4%	3%
Other Any	0%	1%	1%
Prefer not to say	0%	-	3%
No response	0%	-	28%

(Source: Census 2011)

Q6. Do you consider yourself to be disabled?	Respondents who provided a yes / no answer	All Respondents
Yes	13%	9%

No	87%	62%
Prefer not to say	-	3%
No response	-	25%

Q7. I would describe my sexuality as ...	Respondents who described their sexuality	All Respondents
Heterosexual / straight	84%	56%
Lesbian	1%	1%
Gay	12%	8%
Bisexual	2%	1%
Other (please specify)	1%	1%
Prefer not to say	-	8%
No response	-	25%

Q8. Do you identify with any religion or belief?	Respondents who provided data	All Respondents
Yes	47%	33%
No	53%	37%
Prefer not to say	-	4%
No response	-	25%

Q9. If you have said yes to Manchester question 8, please specify.	Manchester	Respondents who provided data	All Respondents
Christian*	49%	77%	28%
Muslim	16%	7%	3%
Sikh	1%	0%	0%
Buddhist	1%	1%	0%
Jewish	1%	2%	1%
Hindu	0%	0%	0%
Prefer not to say	32%	7%	3%
Other (please specify)	0%	6%	2%
No response	0%	-	64%

(Source: Census 2011)

(*including Church of England, Roman Catholic, Protestant and all other Christian denominations)

Q10. What is your relationship status?	Respondents who provided data	All Respondents
Single	38%	26%
Married	37%	26%
Life partner	17%	13%
Civil partnership	2%	2%
Prefer not to say	-	5%
Other (please specify)	5%	3%
No response	-	25%

Q11. Do you have caring responsibilities?	Respondents who provided data	All Respondents
None	61%	44%
Primary carer of child / children (under 18)	22%	16%
Primary carer of disabled child / children	2%	1%
Primary carer of disabled adult (18 and over)	4%	3%
Primary carer of older person(s) (65 and over)	4%	3%
Secondary carer (carer but not the primary carer)	7%	5%
Prefer not to say	-	3%
No response	-	27%