

Appendix C

Adults and Safeguarding Committee

Consultation findings

1. INTRODUCTION

This report summarises the key findings from the 2015/16 Budget and Strategic Plan to 2020 consultation from across the council as well as more detail on the findings from the Adult and Safeguarding Committee. .

For more information on the background and method to the consultation you can read the full consultation paper [here](#).

The consultation involved three strands;

- General budget consultation on the 2015/16 budget
- Service specific 2015/16 proposals: Special Educational Needs Transport
- Strategic Plan to 2020: Corporate Plan Priorities, Theme Committee Commissioning Plans, and the overall MTFs from 2015 - 2020

A total of 333 people took part in the three strands – with 181 completing the various online surveys as part of the open consultation (61 for 2015/16 budget, 28 for Strategic Plan to 2020 and 92 for SEN Schools transport) and 149 taking part in the Strategic Plan to 2020 workshops.

2. FULL COUNCIL FINDINGS

STRAND 1: Open Consultation on 2015/16 Budget Savings

In total 61 questionnaires were submitted on the 2015/16 budget. Over two-thirds of respondents (34 of the 56 respondents) disagreed with the council's proposed savings in terms of balance between efficiency savings, income generation and cuts to services, with only 8 of the 56 respondents believing the council had got the right balance.

The key reasons for people disagreeing with the balance of savings were;

- Services cannot be reduced
- Council Tax should be increased
- Library service should not be cut.

In regard to Council Tax for 2015/16, the majority of respondents to the open consultation disagreed with the council's proposal to freeze Council Tax, with

residents stating that a small increase could support services, with a particular focus on preservation of the library service.

In regard to comments on the balance of savings for each committee respondents felt;

- The council should increase Council Tax
- Cuts are too heavy, with a particular objection to reductions in the Adults and Safeguarding budget and the Library service.

Both the 2015/16 Budget savings and Strategic Plan to 2020 consultation were open at the same time as other major consultations such as the Library Strategy Consultation. It is reasonable to assume that some residents have responded to the three strands of this consultation programme as well as the individual service specific consultations.

From the comments received as part of the consultation it is evident residents have used the vehicle of these consultations to make clear their feelings on the proposed reduction in funding to the library service.

Strand 2 is not included as it is a service specific consultation for Special Educational Needs Transport.

STAND 3: Workshops for Strategic Plan to 2020

The workshops found that when residents had to prioritise services in the context of the financial restraints the council is under, residents' priorities broadly matched the council's current proposals for savings up to 2020.

It was clear from the workshops that residents prioritised targeted support for vulnerable children and adults over universal services such as waste collection and libraries. In general, residents wanted the council to make less reduction to adults and children's service budgets and slightly more savings for Environment Committee.

The findings of the workshops stand in contrast with both the open consultation and the Residents' Perception Survey, where the larger numbers of users of universal services naturally leads to these services being given greater importance in quantitative surveys.

The greater review and discussion of services in the workshops, and the prioritisation of services and funding that the workshops demanded led residents to accept compromises in universal services in order to protect services for the most vulnerable.

a. Key Themes

Support to the most vulnerable is a priority

Across all workshops there was a strong belief that the council should target support at the most vulnerable, findings which match those from the first round of the Priorities and Spending Review in 2014. The majority of residents' priorities can be summarised by the following comment on emergency temporary housing for the homeless;

"These are the most vulnerable people in our society. If we can't help them what's the point?"

Prevention is a good use of resources

The workshops which focused on services for adults and children saw residents prioritise services that supported the prevention agenda as well as the most vulnerable;

"Prevention is better than cure. I think the more one can support those families to get through the year, the better the outcome, the less will be required from the council."

Prevention proved popular in the context of potential cuts as residents thought that prioritising prevention services could reduce the cost to the council in the long term and improve the outcomes for those supported. This was felt to be both just, and a good use of resources.

The importance of a safe environment

Safety was an underlying theme of why many residents prioritised services. This was especially evident in the learning disability workshop. Safety was an issue in regard to safeguarding of vulnerable adults and children as well as safety for all residents through universal services such as street lighting and street cleansing.

Resident's emphasised the importance of street lighting because: *"If you have lights on you are actually saving lives"*.

b. Theme Committee Priorities

The focus of the workshops was on those services which most impact on residents, these were generally services within the remit of Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding; Adults and Safeguarding; and Environment Committees.

Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding

As part of the workshop focused on Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee, residents prioritised the following services;

- Children's mental health

- Short Breaks
- Support for young adults leaving care.

Those services which attendees felt, within the context of council's reductions, had the most potential for savings were;

- Educational support to schools
- Special Educational Needs transport
- Libraries
- Children's Centres.

In later discussions residents still emphasised the importance of these services, but in context they were seen as more palatable options to reduce costs.

For example, although people in the workshops were supportive of libraries as a service, they were not seen as a priority when compared to targeted services which supported the vulnerable. This was a theme not only when focusing on the **Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee** but also in the context of wider council services.

As each specific proposal within the remit of the CELS committee is brought forward, individual consultations will be conducted. The library proposal is currently under active consideration and the outcomes of the library consultation will be reported to the CELS committee in June.

Resident's preference within the workshops was to make less service reductions in the remit of the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee than the council has proposed.

Adults and Safeguarding

As part of the workshop focused on the Adults and Safeguarding Committee, residents prioritised the following services;

- Support offered to carers
- Preventative work for people with learning disabilities
- Short term and residential care for people with mental health issues
- Support to community/voluntary groups for the elderly
- Direct payments for people with physical disabilities
- Leisure centres.

Those services which attendees felt, within the context of council's reductions, had the most potential for savings were the more expensive services of;

- Supporting older people in their homes
- Residential care for older people.

Again there was an emphasis on prevention, with one resident stating that (in regard to short term mental health support): *“It’s much better in cost terms than rehabilitation. Short term they can improve and get better rather than, possibly, being institutionalised”*.

Resident’s preference was to make less service reduction in the remit of the Adults and Safeguarding Committee than the council has proposed.

Environment Committee

As part of the workshop focused on Environment Committee, residents prioritised the following services;

- Street lighting

Those services which attendees felt, within the context of the council’s reductions, had the most potential for savings were the more expensive services of;

- Rubbish and recycling collection
- Town centre cleaning
- Green waste
- Management of the council’s bowling greens.

Residents, on balance, prioritised residential street cleaning over town centres, whilst the main reason for prioritising street lighting was to protect safety. Residents saw the commercial benefit of increasing the number of events in parks but would be worried if a lot of access to parks was not available to the general public.

On balance, the view seemed to be that a fortnightly rubbish collection was good idea, but a weekly collection of recyclables should remain. It was felt by many that this policy may encourage more recycling.

Residents’ preference was to make slightly more savings from the Environment Committee budget than the council has proposed, with residents preferring to prioritise services which supported vulnerable children and adults.

c. Barnet’s ‘Commissioning Council’ Approach

Participants were asked to give their views on the council’s ‘Commissioning Council’ approach. This means that the council’s primary concern is about the quality of local services, whether they achieve stated outcomes and whether they are value for money, rather than how services are delivered and by whom. Generally as part of the workshop there was an acceptance (rather than endorsement) of the concept, but with a concern about whether the council would have the management capacity or skills to manage a broad and range of contracts.

There was a general agreement with the principle of the Commissioning Council model and the following comments give a good summary of the discussion and opinion;

"It's all right by me as long as it's done properly with proper controls and transparency"

"I think that's completely unrealistic. In principle, in theory, if it's done to the same quality, yesbut that's not what happens."

"As long as the service remains the same it's not detrimental"

Key concerns were about accountability, especially in regard to private sector organisations with a level of mistrust about large businesses being involved in the delivery of core council services.

In contrast to the workshops, respondents to the open consultation appear to be more negative about the commissioning approach, with 13 out of 23 respondents being strongly opposed to this approach, with only 6 out of 11 respondents either strongly or tended to support this commissioning model.

d. Council Tax

Within the workshops, the majority of respondents attended from the Citizens' Panel were supportive of increasing Council Tax, compared to only a third of the service users who attended workshops, where the majority of attendees preferred a freeze on Council Tax.

The key reason for choosing an increase in Council Tax was that they felt that it was value for money to pay slightly more per resident but minimise cuts to services. Those that chose to freeze or reduce Council Tax felt that Barnet Council Tax was higher than some neighbouring boroughs and was high enough already.

Residents taking part in the open consultation were heavily in favour of raising Council Tax, with the most common responses to open ended questions for each committee being about increasing Council Tax to protect services.

e. Open Consultation on Strategic plan to 2020

Those who responded online supported the council's four proposed priorities as well as the majority of priorities and outcomes for all the Theme Committees. However, as with the 2015/16 Budget feedback, there was a clear emphasis from residents that service reductions were too large, libraries should be protected and that social housing was a priority.

3. ADULTS AND SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE FINDINGS

This section covers the findings from the Strategic Plan to 2020 consultation. 19 residents responded to the open consultation online survey, whilst 149 residents took part in the workshops which covered services within the remit of the Adults and Safeguarding Committee. 19 residents took part in the Adults and Safeguarding focussed workshop.

a. Open Consultation

Adults and Safeguarding Committee's Priorities

The majority of respondents (11 out of 17 or more) who answered the questions agreed with all the priorities set out in the Adults and Safeguarding Commissioning plan.

- That social care outcomes are delivered through a partnership with NHS, JobCentre Plus, housing providers and local communities
- That people are able to plan for the future, but are supported to get back on their feet if crises occur
- Those with longer term need have access to support options that are creative, individual to their needs and local.

Adults and Safeguarding Committee's Outcomes

In terms of outcomes, at least 13 out of 15 respondents agreed with all of the outcomes identified by the Adults and Safeguarding Committee, including those focused on;

- Planning for life
- Early intervention and prevention
- Person-centred integrated support
- Safeguarding
- Carers.

Adults and Safeguarding Committee's Approach

The most supported approach was 'Working closely with the NHS to implement the Care Act' (10 out of 15 respondents agreeing), whilst the lowest supported approach was to 'Explore alternative ways to deliver services, in partnership with other organisations and residents' which was only supported by 4 of 15 respondents, with 8 of the 15 respondents disagreeing.

Balance of savings

Respondents were asked how much they agreed that the Committee has identified the right balance of savings in order to achieve its priorities. 3 respondents agreed

the council had made the right balance, with twice as much, 6 respondents disagreeing.

Those who disagreed suggested cuts should not fall on social care, that there is no distinction between effective and efficient service delivery and that Barnet Council should not continue with outsourcing to private companies.

b. Workshop Findings

Results show that residents' prioritised prevention services for adults with learning disabilities, short term support for adults with mental health issues and increasing the support to carers to help people live longer in the community.

Mental health support was prioritised, whilst residential care for people with learning disabilities and homecare for the elderly was not prioritised as strongly. This does not mean that people did not feel these services were important, but that when they had to choose between priorities these services did not come first in most instances.

As the council's most expensive services, there is potential that these services were not prioritised by residents as it allowed them to prioritise more lower cost services.

The majority of residents preferred slightly more savings than those proposed by the council in regard to Adults and Safeguarding, in contrast to when services were considered across the whole council where residents wanted to make less savings in Adults and Safeguarding area.

The services which were prioritised by the Citizen's Panel members were;

- Prevention services for people with learning disabilities
- Residential care for people with mental health
- Short term mental health support
- Direct payments for people with Physical disabilities
- Support for carers
- Leisure centres.

The services which, on balance, were seen as options for savings were;

- Homecare for older people
- Residential care for people with learning disabilities.

The table below summarises discussion on each service as well as selected quotations from residents, which aim to give a flavour of the discussions.

Area	Feedback and example comment
Social care offered to older people in their own homes	<p>Residents were unanimous that it was important to look after elderly people and that, wherever possible, in-home care was a better option than residential care. Help from families and neighbours was not always available.</p> <p><i>“It’s important, first of all to keep people in their own homes because they tend to deteriorate very rapidly if you take them out of their own home and put them in residential homes. They can’t necessarily rely on neighbours.”</i></p>
Residential care for older people	<p>It was recognised that residential care for older people was a requirement and that some conditions, such as dementia and Alzheimer’s, necessitated residential care. At the same time residents wanted to keep elderly living in their own homes as long as was possible and feasible.</p> <p><i>“It depends on the elderly person and if they can’t manage at home they need to go to residential care.... Elderly people are living a lot longer and it does get expensive.”</i></p>
Supporting community/voluntary groups to work with older people in the community	<p>The value of supporting voluntary and community groups to support older people was evident.</p> <p><i>“I know charities that specialise in working with elderly people and I think it’s really important. A lot of these volunteers come from the same community that the elderly people come from in the community... It’s much cheaper to help volunteers to go into the homes of these people and help them than find they are totally dependent on the council, which is much more expensive”</i></p>
Residential care for people with learning disabilities	<p>No top priority spend being allocated was probably because it was the most expensive service on the grid.</p> <p><i>“It’s very important to me because people think because I’ve got learning disabilities we can’t think for ourselves, but we can ... and this helps us be independent”</i></p>
Prevention Supporting people with learning disabilities to live independently, be	<p>Definite evidence that Barnet residents at the workshop believed in the adage “Prevention is better than cure”</p> <p><i>“I chose it as a top priority because if you don’t have prevention, you will have more disability - so stop something</i></p>

involved in social activities and support with employment	<i>happening down the line and creating expectation that you have to be cared for all your life”</i>
Residential care for people with mental health needs	<i>“Some people can help themselves, but with mental illness it’s very difficult. I’ve dealt with mental patients and it’s very difficult - they need extra care”</i>
Short term support for people with mental health issues to support them back to a full life	<i>“It’s much better in cost terms than rehabilitation. Short term they can improve and get better rather than, possibly, being institutionalised”</i>
Direct Payments Payments made to people with physical disabilities or sensory impairments for them to meet their needs	<i>“with Direct Payment I’m in control of how much I can pay, how much I need and for what purpose.... So I could still continue my normal lifestyle of getting help to get dressed and washed – all that kind of stuff – and go to University on top of that”</i>
Social care services for carers Offering support for people who care for family members and friends. Including support, advice, information and short breaks from caring.	<i>“I think it’s very important to encourage people to continue with a good level of care, they need a lot of support because they do these things selflessly anyway”</i> <i>“If social care is being cut someone needs to pick up the pieces (and it will be carers)”</i>
Leisure Centres	<i>“I think it’s key to keep it the way it is at the moment. It’s important to motivate the young”</i>