

PLANNING OUR FUTURE – PUBLIC CONSULTATION

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 Argyll and Bute Council aims to work with as well as for the people of Argyll and Bute.
- 1.2 The Council will therefore carry out a public consultation exercise as part of our planning our future process.
- 1.3 The consultation will seek the views of our communities on options for making savings, so that their views contribute to taking ideas to the right choices for Argyll and Bute.
- 1.4 It will also ask for community suggestions on innovation, efficiencies and income growth.
- 1.5 This report sets out for comment the proposed public consultation.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Policy and Resources Committee approves the public consultation approach for consideration by Council on 22nd October.

3.0 DETAIL

- 3.1 With its funding set to fall considerably in future years, the Council has no choice but to make choices about its future service delivery.
- 3.2 The Council will continue to be a major provider of services, and a key employer in Argyll and Bute. However change will happen to what it does and how it works.
- 3.3 The views of our communities are sought on the wide range of options identified for making savings primarily over the next two years, in addition to inviting suggestions for transforming how it works and for growing income to support service delivery in future years.
- 3.4 Respondents are invited to assess all options and indicate which they would find acceptable, given the need to make choices, and which they would not. As the Council must deliver a balanced budget, people are asked to choose the same number of 'yes'

(acceptable) options as 'no' (unacceptable) options, and to the same value.

3.5 The consultation provides:

- the list of savings ideas identified, value of savings to be achieved and impact on jobs
- the opportunity to give different levels of contribution
- an indication of the different ways in which the Council has worked to achieve required savings so that services and jobs can be protected wherever possible, through transforming how we work, growing income, reducing and retaining services, or stopping to save

3.6 It is proposed to carry out the consultation exercise using methods that have proven most useful to citizens in previous budget consultation exercises:

- website/social media questionnaire
- Citizens' Panel survey
- Reaching younger people through our Youth Services
- Working with our Third Sector Interface partners to reach people who would not normally proactively respond to a survey
- Printed questionnaires in libraries and customer service points

3.7 An additional step is also planned to help ensure a balanced and representative response: focus groups will be carried out across the area seeking qualitative feedback on options.

3.8 The consultation will be promoted in different ways:

- On-line (via the website and social media channels)
- Advertising in local media
- Email distribution to our community planning partners and community councils
- The Council's weekly news round up

3.9 Findings will be collated and presented to a Special Policy and Resources Committee in January 2016.

4.0 CONCLUSION

4.1 The overall aim of the consultation approach is to maximise the likelihood of public involvement by providing opportunities for different levels of involvement.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Policy: Consultation findings will support service choice decisions.

5.2 Financial: costs are allowed for in the Communications/Strategic Finance budgets.

5.3 Legal : none

- 5.4 HR :Change will be managed within all relevant HR policies and procedures.
- 5.5 Equalities: The consultation will be available in different formats
- 5.6 Risk: The approach proposed is designed to encourage feedback at whatever level people are comfortable with, while also ensuring full and balanced responses.
- 5.7 Customer Service: Providing feedback on actions taken following consultation will support future citizens' involvement.

Douglas Hendry
Executive Director, Customer Services

Further information:

Jane Jarvie, Communications Manager, tel: 01546 604323

Appendix 1: Proposed content of consultation

Appendix 1: Proposed consultation content

Welcome

Argyll and Bute Council's funding is set to fall considerably in the years ahead.

We must therefore make choices about what we do and in how we work – so that we can continue to support our communities where most needed, and to invest in a prosperous future for Argyll and Bute.

We would like to make these choices with you.

Facts and Figures

- The Council provides a huge range of 'cradle to grave' services.
- 80% of a council's funding comes from the Scottish Government.
- Over the next five years our funding is expected to be reduced significantly. Budget estimates show that we will have to bridge a funding gap of between £21.7 and £26 million.
- This means a savings target of around £9 million in both 2016/17 and 2017/18 with further savings in future years.
- The Council has already delivered savings of £32 million over the past six years; and recently agreed a further £1 million that can be made without impact on policy, number of jobs or communities.
- While making savings, we must also continue investing in building a prosperous future for Argyll and Bute.

Councillor Dick Walsh, Leader of Argyll and Bute Council, explains:

"We would like to do all that our communities want their Council to do for them, but drastically reduced funding means that this just is not possible.

We need to make choices about the work we do. We need to identify what is most important now, and for our future prosperity. We need to decide how we can make best use of the resources we have.

We would like to make these choices with you, which is what this consultation is about.

The consultation sets out a wide range of ideas for how we might make the savings we must primarily over the next two years.

The Council has worked hard to find ways in which to transform how we do things and to preserve as many services and jobs as possible. We will continue to be a major employer and we will continue to support all aspects of our communities' lives.

However this level of reduction in funding will mean change for us all. We would ask you therefore to take time to answer this consultation.

Work with us in progressing from ideas to the right decisions for Argyll and Bute. Thank you."

The consultation: from ideas to the right decisions for Argyll and Bute

The consultation has three sections. We would appreciate hearing your views on all or any of them.

The consultation is set out so that you can give whatever level of in-put suits you.

Section 1: Key aims in transforming the work of the Council – do you agree with them?

Section 2: Savings categories and individual options – given that change must happen, which for you are acceptable or unacceptable?

Section 3: Innovation: the Council is working to transform how we work, to make savings and grow our income; we'd like to hear your views on how we could do this.

Section 1: Key aims in transforming the work of the Council		
Invest in the future	Funding for services is connected to the size of the population. We need to attract people and businesses to the area to create prosperity, and to secure funding for future council services.	Do you agree with these as key aims: Yes
Support our communities now by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Protecting jobs- Provide help most important now	Employment supports individuals, their families and their local economy. All our services are desirable, we must preserve those most important now.	No If no, please comment

Section 2 (a): Categories of savings

The Council has identified a wide range of options, more than we need to take. These are grouped into four categories.

Categories of options explained.			Which of these overall categories do you most support?
Transform	Grow council income	Reduce and retain	Stop to save
Innovation, doing things differently, achieving efficiencies – these can all lessen the impact of reduced funding.	Increasing charges reduces savings to be made and protects services	Reducing services could avoid losing services and achieve savings	We deliver a huge range of services; reduced funding does not allow all to continue

To give your views on individual options, please proceed to section 2 (b)

.

Section 2 (b): Individual savings options (for completion subject to feedback from SMT)

We would like to know your views on which services you believe are important to you now and to building prosperity for our future.

Please choose the same number of 'Yes' (acceptable) and 'No' (unacceptable) options, and ideally to the same financial value.

This will help ensure that the consultation provides balanced findings that can be considered as part of the decision-making process.

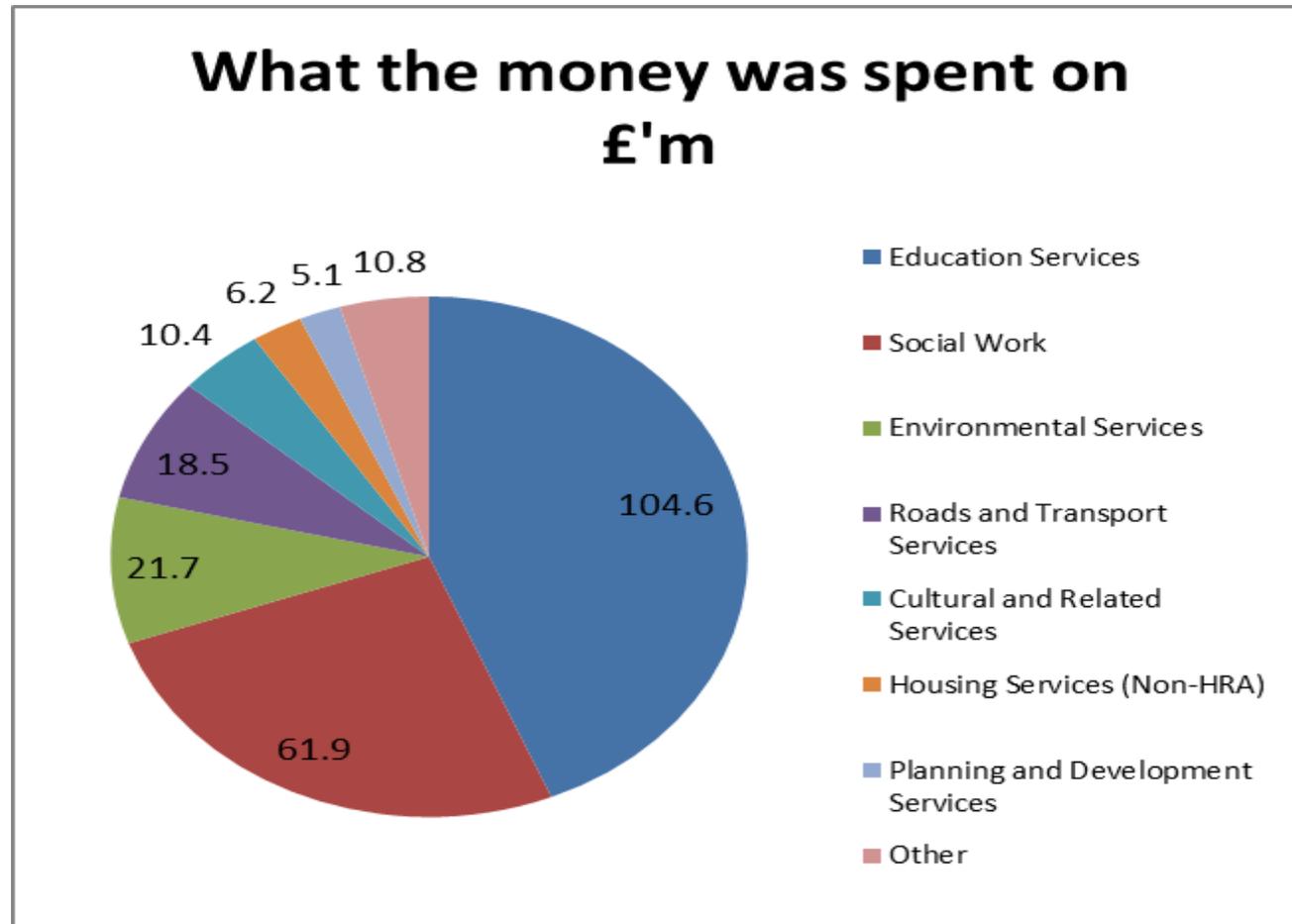
Thank you.

Introducing the options

- There are more ideas identified here than we need to take
- Options are wide ranging and include potentially reducing our workforce of 5,000+ by 299 posts (FTE) through redundancy and 125 by transfer to a new organisation.
- To support our employees the Council has invited interest in voluntary redundancy to create opportunities for posts at risk.
- The Council delivers a huge range of services from one overall primary budget; options look across the whole range of our work.
- Achieving savings in social work services will be progressed by the Health and Social Care Partnership.

Note: FTE (full time equivalent) - one FTE refers to hours equivalent to one full time job; hours may be split across work patterns and people.

2014/15 funding allocation



Transformation					
Innovation, doing things differently, achieving efficiencies					
Area of work	Option	Comment	Saving £000	Yes	No
Community Development and Community Planning	With resources shared across community development and community planning teams, reduce cost of team.	1.7 fewer FTEs	71		
	Introduce consistent management arrangements for our four main community centres, to deliver equitable pricing.	By changing the current arrangements with Centre Councils, Argyll and Bute Council would deliver an equitable approach to pricing.	45		
Creditors	Reduce postage, stationery, and printing costs	Increase use of email for correspondence; increase use of BACS for transactions.	13		
Customer Service Centres	Tiree Service Point service – deliver through contract with voluntary sector	This works well in Jura and Colonsay. 0.5 fewer posts.	19		
	20% savings on postage, printing and stationery in all service points	Communicate by email rather than post.	10		
Facility services	Develop a Council catering service for events, functions etc	This would build on the ad hoc special catering service already provided.	40		
	Spend to save: water utility savings		100		
	Spend to save: energy use savings		25		
	Increase heating efficiency through use of biomass boilers		12		
	Reduce costs of Estates Section, through use of external providers	1.4 fewer FTEs required	50		
	Improve use of fleet (transport) resources across different council teams	1 fewer FTE required	16		
Housing	Transfer of strategy staff costs to Strategic Housing Fund with no impact on service delivery, impact on resources available for housing development	.	137		

Improvement and HR	Redesign delivery of personal safety training for employees.	1 fewer FTE required	38		
	Redesign the Health and Safety Advisory Team, and develop on-line support	1.5 fewer FTE required	81		
	Combine Improvement and Organisational Development, and Human Resources teams to create a single service	12.2 fewer FTEs required	511		
Information Technology	Replace broadband circuits to offices and schools with cheaper, lower bandwidth alternatives		139		
Leisure and libraries	Create Charitable Leisure Trust, bringing together Council owned community halls, libraries, swimming pools and fitness facilities.	This would reduce council jobs; posts would transfer to the new organisation.	700		
Planning and Regulatory Services	Reduce business support costs by efficiency savings provided by staff reductions.	1 fewer FTE	20		
	Reduce central administration costs by improved processes and systems.	1 fewer FTE	16		
Revenues and benefits	Reduction in postage, printing and stationery costs	Stop providing pre-paid envelopes; increase correspondence by email	23		
	Council tax e-billing /landlords portals – replace external contract with in-house solution; if unavailable withdraw the service.		50		
	Income from double charge Council Tax in part to support administration costs of raising this income.		80		
	Benefit advisor posts –reduce to match expected reduction in caseload following introduction of Universal Credit	2 fewer FTEs	48		
Roads and Amenity Services	Move to a 3 weekly collection for general waste (green bin), fortnightly recycling		548		

	collections, and double shift patterns to improve use of fewer vehicles	7 fewer FTEs			
	Energy Reduction Lighting programme		150		
Strategic Finance	Review staffing structure	7 fewer FTEs	259		

Grow council income					
Increasing charges reduces savings to be made and protects services					
Area of work	Option	Comment	Saving £000	Yes	No
Economic Development	Reduce subsidies to freight operators at Campbeltown		37		
	Increase piers and harbours berthing charges		58		
Education	Increase fees for music tuition by 50%	Music tuition is an extra curricular activity	50		
Planning and Regulatory Services	Introduce charging for statutory street numbering	To be paid by developer or property owner. Already in place in other council areas	10		
	Introduce charging for pre-application advice for major and locally significant planning applications.	Already in place other council areas.	10		
	Introduce charges for Phase 1 Habitat Surveys		3		
	Increase charges to businesses for inspection and certification of food export certificates	Already in place in other council areas	12		
	Increase income from private landlord registration scheme	Targeted enforcement work on unregistered private landlords	8		
Revenues and Benefits	Levy landlord penalties	Use statutory powers to levy civil penalties on landlords that fail to provide information on tenants timeously and so make it difficult to collect council tax.	64		
Roads and Amenity	Increase burial charges by 20% plus	Costs in Argyll and Bute would continue	79		

Services	inflation	to be below the average cost across 9 local authority areas			
	Increase cremation charges by 20% plus inflation		59		
	Charge for, or remove services, for Cowal Games (eg toilets, litter collection, staffing)		30		
	Increase parking charges	80p to £1; Introduce to Mull car parks; Year round charging	150		
	Recover full cost for event banners and other activities associated with events.		15		
	Reduce and retain Reducing services could avoid losing services and achieve savings				
Area of work	Option	Comment	Saving £000	Yes	No
Adult learning and literacies	Reduce Adult Learning and Literacies service availability	3.4 fewer FTEs	104		
	Reduce spend by 50% on adult learning and literacies resources and tutors.		29		
Arts and festivals	Reduce grants to major events and festivals by 20%		37		
	Reduce arts development budget		10		
Community Development and Community Planning	Reduce third sector grant funding by 10%		14		
Governance and Law	Reduce area committee/governance functions with reduced support for Elected Members.	9.8 fewer FTEs required	301		
Housing	Reduce funding to energy and mediation advice services where there are other funding opportunities or reduced service demand.		41		

	Reduce funding by 25% for domestic abuse outreach support		40		
	Reduce funding for tenancy support contracts		191		
	Reduce funding for Rent Deposit Scheme, and service user involvement.	Service user consultation to be carried out by in-house staff.	14		
	Reduce budget for Housing IT, strategy development and staff training.		51		
	Reduce staffing costs	1 less FTE	45		
Customer Service Centres and Registration	Reduce service point opening hours to 30 hours a week. Stop taking council tax payments in servicepoints, promoting alternative options (direct debit, online, Paypoint)	3.5 fewer servicepoint staff, 2 fewer telephony staff, one fewer systems support staff, and (2018/19) one fewer in management structure	207		
	Rothsay service point – reduce opening hours further to 17.5 hours per week	0.5 FTEs removed This service point has the lowest volume of customer face to face contact.	20		
	Remove small repairs property maintenance budget at Jura and Colonsay service points		4		
Education	Reduce the disability access budget (for adaptations in education centres)	The level of demand has meant that this budget has been underspent previously.	20		
	Reduce home and hospital tuition (25%)		3		
	Reduce Quality Improvement Team materials (60%)		15		
	Reduce specialist equipment budget (20%)	The level of demand has meant that this budget has been underspent previously	7		
	Reduce Repairs Outside Contractor costs for Special Education HQ by 39%		7		
	Reduce Additional Support Needs (ASN) assistants by 45%	72 fewer FTEs	1,370		
	Reduce Creative Arts in Schools Team by	0.2 FTE reduction	5		

20%				
Reduce instrumental instructors by 20%	2.6 fewer FTEs	99		
Reduce level of support available to the Council and providers of Early Learning and Childcare	6 fewer FTEs	553		
Withdraw 3% annual increase in payments to Early Learning and Childcare commissioned providers		82		
Reduce Central Support and Repairs/janitorial Staff	4 fewer FTEs	78		
Reduce PE facilities budget by 50%		60		
Reduce janitorial cover budget by 20%		16		
Reduce central repairs budget by 20%		159		
Reduce underspent clothing grant budget by 30%	Demand has been less than previously allocated budget	39		
Reduce Classroom Assistants by 20% - primary schools	8 fewer FTEs across all 79 primary schools	137		
Reduce Classroom Assistants by 20% - secondary	6.6 fewer FTEs across all 10 secondary schools	110		
Reduce clerical assistants(20%) - primary	13 fewer FTEs	217		
Reduce clerical assistants (20%)-secondary	6.2 fewer FTEs	108		
Reduce pupil support assistants (20%) primary	3 fewer FTEs	62		
Reduce janitor costs by 20% - primary	8.6 fewer FTEs	153		
Reduce janitor costs by 20% - secondary	2 fewer FTEs	39		
Reduce supply teacher costs (20%)–primary		98		
Reduce supply teacher costs (20%) –secondary		75		
Reduce grounds maintenance by 20% - primary		12		
Reduce grounds maintenance by 20% -		8		

	secondary				
	Reduce budgets for individual schools by 20% - primary		85		
	Reduce budgets for individual schools by 20% - secondary		105		
	Reduce school technician costs	6 fewer FTEs	170		
	Reduce Educational Psychology Services budget by 7%	0.6 fewer FTEs	37		
	Reduce budget for residential schools by 7%		74		
Facility Services	Reduce by 14% central repairs budget by removing planned maintenance for schools, libraries and social work premises	3 fewer FTEs	164		
	Reduce by 8% central repairs budget by removing planned maintenance for shared offices from 2016/17	1 fewer FTE	46		
	Reduce by 22% shared office central repairs budget from 2017/18		118		
	One off 25% reduction in bus stop/shelter budget in 2016/17 only		16		
Housing	Reduce Housing budget for Rent Deposit Scheme, and cost of Housing service user involvement	Service user consultation to be carried out by in-house staff	14		
	Reduce Housing budget for IT and Strategy development, and training.		51		
	Reduce Staffing costs	1 fewer FTE	45		
Information Technology	Replace broadband circuits to offices and schools with cheaper, lower bandwidth alternatives.		139		
Libraries	Reduce Library management costs	1 less FTE	40		

Planning and Regulatory	Reduce Development Management team – validation and registration of planning applications	1 fewer FTE	30		
	Remodel Planning enforcement team	1 fewer FTE	42		
	Remodel Access Team	2 fewer FTE (one currently vacant, one potentially from 2018)	70		
	Remove vacant Regulatory Services enforcement post	0.6 vacant post removed	17		
	Reduce the debt counselling service to focus on complex cases	1 fewer FTE	36		
Roads and Amenity Services (R&A)	Close 43 public conveniences that cannot be run without cost to the Council	7.6 fewer FTEs	140		
	Reduce hedge maintenance from 2/3 to 1 cut per year	0.9 fewer FTEs	18		
	Reduce / stop grass cuts	1 fewer FTE	21		
	Reduce Environmental Warden Team	4.5 fewer FTEs	113		
	Reduce Street Sweeping frequency (50%)	4.5 fewer FTEs	79		
	Reduce maintenance- R&A property (25%)		64		
	Reduce maintenance of depots (25%)		26		
	Additional reduction in staffing across the Roads and Amenities service	Approx. 8 fewer FTEs	167		
	Reduce coastal and flooding work budgets	1.8 fewer FTEs	81		
	Reduce bridge assessment budget	0.2 fewer FTEs	13		
	Reduce central administration costs through improvements to process and systems, and a reduction in training budget	1 fewer FTEs	64		
	Reduce budget for road works	3 fewer FTES	164		
	Street lighting – increase planned repairs on an area basis, reduce reactive repairs	0.5 fewer FTES	49		
	3 weekly general waste, bi-weekly co-mingled uplift by internal resource for Islay.	This is in line with other local areas	17		

	Remove vacant posts in Waste Management service	2 fewer (vacant) FTEs	54		
--	---	-----------------------	----	--	--

Stop to save					
We deliver a huge range of services; reduced funding does not allow all to continue.					
Area of work	Option	Comment	Saving £000	Yes	No
Culture and libraries	Withdraw mobile library service	3.5 FTEs removed	137		
	Offer Campbeltown Museum for community ownership; if no interest close the Museum		37		
Education	Withdraw services that the council is not required to provide for children under 5	8 FTEs removed	382		
	Removal of Attendance Officer posts	4 FTEs removed	68		
	Removal of management development and training budget – primary schools		49		
	Removal of management development and training budget – secondary schools		37		
	Removal of school librarians in secondary schools	10 FTEs removed	319		
	Stop paying for lunches for lunchtime supervision staff – primary		12		
	Stop paying for lunches for lunchtime supervision staff – secondary		12		
	Withdraw Early Years third sector grants and services		183		
	Remove Early Years Change Fund		90		
	Removal of budget for external support in modern language education	Foreign language training to be provided through the Scottish Government Languages 1+2 budget	36		
	Remove subsidy payments to community swimming pools		15		
	Remove central budget for additional ASN	Use existing resources	80		

	assistant cover (eg for absence, in-service days)				
Facility Services	Remove out-of-hours property emergency line cover		9		
	Remove discretionary community transport grant funding		93		
Planning and regulatory	Remove aerial photography provided by Ordnance Survey		5		
	Remove general budget for local development plan consultation events		5		
	Remove software/licences used for local development plan consultation		24		
	Remove budget for physical footpath maintenance and signage works		5		
	Remove footpath survey software and Local Access Forum budget		4		
	Remove specialist legal expenses budget for resolving access disputes		8		
	Remove direct funding to advice agencies		55		
Revenues and benefit	Remove discretionary council contribution to relief for charitable bodies from non-domestic rates		90		
Roads and Amenities	Removal of hanging baskets	1.5 FTEs removed	30		
	Replace annual bedding displays with grass areas	1.6 FTEs removed	33		
	Remove rose and shrub beds, return to grass	3.4 FTEs removed	70		
	Removal of Christmas light installations		100		
	Remove all school crossing patrollers	13.5 FTEs removed	200		
	Removal of food waste collections within Helensburgh area	4 FTEs removed	76		
	Remove subsidies to Tobermory Harbour		8		

	Association				
Strategic Finance	Secondary review of staffing structure	3 FTEs removed	120		

Section 3: Transforming for the future: we'd like to hear your ideas for ways in which we could transform what we do, make savings or grow our income.

As indicated in many of the options listed, the Council has worked to find ways in which we can transform how we work and reduce the impact of savings on employees or communities, by making efficiencies or growing our income.

This focus on innovation will continue in order to support the Council and our work in the short and longer term. As part of this we invite your views on the questions below.

Transformation for the future – innovation, savings and growth		
Question	Comment	Yes / No
Would you support the Council sharing the delivery of services with other organisations as a way to make savings?		
Would you support an increase in council tax?		
What would you recommend for making savings or generating income for the Council?		
Other comments		

Thank you for letting us know your views and sharing your ideas. Information will be available on how answers to the consultation have contributed to decisions made, after the budget setting meeting scheduled for February 2016.