

Bolton Council

Report to: Council

Date: 22nd February 2017

Report of: Borough Treasurer Report No:

Contact Officer: S Johnson Tele No: Ext. 1502

Report Title: **2017/18 Budget Report**

Purpose:

1. The final details of the 2017/18 Revenue Budget
2. To provide an update on the Council's proposed savings plan for 2017/18 & 2018/19 post consultation
3. To consider the options for Council Tax in 2017/18

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Council approve:-

1. The Budget for 2017/18
2. The Council Tax for 2017/18
3. The strategic budget reduction programme for 2017-2019

Background Doc(s):

Provisional local government finance settlement: England, 2017 to 2018 released 15th December 2016
Key information for local authorities: provisional local government finance settlement 2017 to 2018 released 15th December 2016
The Council Tax (Demand Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2017

1. CONTEXT

At its meeting on the 10th October 2016 Cabinet considered the Council's Medium Term Financial Summary for the financial years 2017/18 to 2019/20. This report was subsequently submitted to the Department for Communities and Local Government as the Council's Efficiency Plan covering this period, and in doing so was the Council's acceptance of the Government's 4 year settlement offer initially outlined in 2016/17. This report also re-affirmed the Council's priorities, namely;

- Protecting the most vulnerable in the Borough;
- Supporting economic development.

At its meeting on 7th November 2016 Cabinet approved the updated financial forecast for financial years 2017/18 and 2018/19 including:

- That revenue reserves totalling £30m are used to cash flow the revenue budget for the financial years 2017/18 and 2018/19.
- That the initial saving proposals for 2017/18 and 2018/19 outlined in the report of £12.5m be formally agreed for consultation.

This report sets out the updated position in respect of the Government settlement on 15th December 2016 and the outcome of the consultation.

Cabinet 17th February 2017

At the meeting of the Cabinet on the 15th February 2017, Cabinet agreed that in respect of the Revenue Budget 2017/18 to recommend to Council the following;

- That the Council Tax for 2017/18 be increased by 4.8%, represented by a 3% increase in Adult Social Care and a 1.8% general increase

That in respect of the proposed savings identified to balance the 2017/18 budget, following the consultation process,

- Review of provision of School Crossing Patrols (£0.200m) – this proposal to be removed
- Review of commissioned services for short break activities for disabled children (£0.015m) – this proposal to be removed

These amendments can be funded from the additional savings achieved from waste disposal costs due to the success of the slim bin roll out across the Borough

2. PROJECTED OUTTURN 2016/17

The projected 2016/17 outturn expenditure (excluding Schools and Parish Precepts) is £209.5m, and as a consequence of this, available General Fund balances are expected to be approximately £10.66m at the 31st March 2017. The above projected 2016/17 figures also assume spending delegated to schools will be in line with the budget. School balances, as required by legislation, are carried forward for the sole use of schools.

3. GOVERNMENT SETTLEMENT

The acceptance of the 4 year settlement covering the financial years 2016/17 to 2019/20 provides certainty around the level of Revenue Support Grant (RSG) that the Council receives.

The Settlement confirmed that RSG was in line with the figure announced as part of the 2016/17 Settlement expected, being £30.8m in 2017/18 compared to £42m in 2016/17.

As part of the 2016/17 Settlement, Authorities were given the flexibility to increase their Council Tax by an additional 2%, “the Adult Social Care Precept” (ASC), and have to demonstrate that the additional monies raised are spent in that area. As part of the 2017/18 Settlement councils have been given the option to increase the Adult Social Care Precept by a maximum of 6% over the 3 financial years 2017/18 to 2019/20, with any one year limited to a 3% increase. Any general Council Tax levy must be limited to 2%, meaning that Council Tax can increase by up to 5% without the need for a referendum

For a number of years the Council has received New Homes Bonus (NHB) funding for each house that has been put back into use, based upon an average of £1,530 per dwelling in 2016/17. From 2017/18 the government has introduced a baseline, below which no funding will be provided. This has been set at 0.4%, meaning for Bolton approximately the first 400 houses brought back into use no longer qualify for NHB. In addition, from 2018-19, Government will consider withholding NHB payments from local authorities that are not planning effectively, by making positive decisions on planning applications and delivering housing growth, as well as withholding payments for homes that are built following an appeal

Whilst indications were that the Council could receive around £4.5m in NHB in 2017/18, as part of its financial strategy the Council had already assumed a reduction in NHB of £300k and was expecting to receive £4.2m in 2017/18. With the introduction of the new baseline the Council will receive around £2.9m in 2017/18, i.e. a reduction of £1.3m.

The rationale for introducing the NHB baseline was to transfer money from this form of funding into a new grant, namely the “2017/18 Adult Social Care Support Grant”. The amount that the Council has received for this is £1.4m, meaning that the impact of the loss of NHB with the introduction of the Adult Social Care Grant is broadly neutral. It should be noted, however, that there is no indication that this grant will continue beyond 2017/18 at this stage.

4. 100% BUSINESS RATES RETENTION

As Members will be aware, business rates collected since 2013 by the Council are distributed 50% to Central Government, 1% to Fire, and 49% is retained by the Council. It has been decided going forward that councils will retain 100% of their business rates with 1% passed to the Fire Authority. Whilst this only starts nationally from 2019/20, from 2017/18 it has been agreed that the Council will be part of the Greater Manchester pilot for 100% business rates retention. In order to account for the Council retaining 99% of the business rates it collects the following risks / assumptions are noted:

- RSG and Public Health Grant will be removed as sources of funding
- Any business rates losses resulting from the reduction in rateable value will be offset by increased business rates top up grant
- All other business rate relief grants will remain

The underlying assumption of the move to 100% business rates is that it will be fiscally neutral.

The impact of these changes, in terms of loss of grants compared to retaining all business rates, is shown below:

	2017/18 Funding Based on the 2013 System	2017/18 Funding Based on the New System
	£000s	£000s
Revenue Support Grant	30,813	0
Public Health Grant	22,042	0
Business Rates Projection	41,610	81,358
Business Rates Top up	24,699	37,806
Total	119,164	119,164

5. EXPENDITURE FORECAST

Taking into consideration the latest government figures, an updated expenditure forecast for 2017/18 is shown in the table below. For comparison, 2017/18 is shown twice, once with the RSG and Public Health figures included, and the other based upon 100% business rates retention.

This forecast is based on the assumption that Council Tax will increase by 3% for Adult Social Care, plus 1.8% for the general levy.

	Original Budget 2016/17 £000s	Original Forecast 2017/18 £000s	Original Forecast 2017/18 100% Business Rates £000s	Original Forecast 2018/19 100% Business Rates £000s
Expenditure				
Previous Year's Budget	465,099	453,681	453,681	441,911
Additional Public Health Transfer	3,809	-557	-557	-573
Schools DSG Change	-7,486	-9,395	-9,395	0
Adult Svs New Burdens Grant Loss	1,379			
Inflation	3,627	3,375	3,375	3,867
WDA/PTA	1,525	1,525	1,525	1,525
Other Corporate	1,360			
Pensions	819	804	804	731
National Insurance Changes	1,876			
Adult & Children's Growth Pressures	1,000	0	0	1,000
Adult Social Care Precept		2,952	2,952	3,094
Adult Social Care Support Grant	0	1,396	1,396	0
Living Wage Supplement	120	130	130	130
Apprenticeship Levy		500	500	
Savings to be identified	-19,447	-12,500	-12,500	0
Budget Requirement	453,681	441,911	441,911	451,685

Resources	Original Budget 2016/17 £000s	Original Forecast 2017/18 With RSG & Public Health Grants £000s	Original Forecast 2017/18 100% Business Rates £000s	Original Forecast 2018/19 100% Business Rates £000s
Direct Schools Grant	221,550	212,155	212,155	212,155
Public Health Funding	22,599	22,042	0	0
Education Services Grant	3,890	1,029	1,029	0
New Homes Bonus	4,521	2,905	2,905	1,292
Use of Reserves	2,000	3,989	3,989	21,673
Retained Local Business Rate (incl prev yrs balance)	43,050	37,220	76,968	78,225
Business Rates Top Up	19,332	24,699	37,806	29,276
Council Tax Contribution - Base Adjustment (incl Contribution from Collection Fund & prev yrs balance)	91,541	100,940	100,940	103,918
Council Tax Contribution - Adult Social Care	1,823	2,952	2,952	3,094
Council Tax Contribution - General Levy	1,367	1,771	1,771	2,052
Adult Social Care Support Grant	0	1,396	1,396	0
Revenue Support Grant	42,008	30,813	0	0
Total	453,681	441,911	441,911	451,685
Council Tax Increase	3.50%	4.80%	4.80%	4.99%

Note: 2018/19 figures are currently indicative. Further details of expenditure and income can be seen in Appendices A & B. Appendix C contains details of the major movements on the Financial Arrangements account, which deals with the strategic transactions of the Council which fall outside the remit of any one service

6. SAVINGS

Taking into account the provisional settlement figures, the savings required to balance the budget remain at £12.5m forecast in the 7th November Cabinet report. In order to do this, reserves of £4.0m will be used to balance the 2017/18 budget. Savings have been allocated departmentally as follows;

	Target
	£m
People	4.35
Public Health	2.00
Place	2.80
Chief Executive's / Corporate	3.35
Total	12.50

It is not possible to accurately identify how many posts will be lost until detailed proposals are developed. Based upon the options outlined in Appendix B, up to 239 posts may be affected. The Council currently has 441 vacant posts (321 FTE), although currently over a third of these are considered to be business critical and are therefore covered by agency staff. During previous budget rounds the Council secured post reductions through voluntary means such as Voluntary Severance and Voluntary Early Retirement, where these meet business needs, and it is hoped that this approach can be continued, avoiding compulsory redundancies wherever possible.

7. RESERVES

Appendix E outlines the current projected position on reserves as at 31st March 2017, split by category, and provides some information of the implications of not holding these reserves.

8. SETTING THE COUNCIL TAX

The Secretary of State has announced that the Referendum limit for 2017/18 is 5%. However, within this is the assumption that councils will raise up to 3% specifically for Adult Social Care, with any increase beyond that to fund general service expenditure. This report assumes Council Tax will rise by 3% for the Adult Social care precept which would generate £2.95m in additional income.

9. RESOURCING OF THE SAVINGS PROGRAMME

Resources will be identified to fund the one-off costs required to deliver the savings programme.

10. FINANCIAL RISKS

Members will be aware that the Borough Treasurer has provided advice on the recommended level of Balances to be maintained previously. The full detail, including an identification of financial risks, is set out in Appendix F. However, in summary this advice is as follows:

Currently it is estimated that available Balances as at the 31st March 2017 will be £10.66m. The Borough Treasurer's advice to Members is that, as a minimum, Balances of £10.0m or higher should be maintained, based upon the Borough Treasurer's understanding of the risks and financial issues facing the Council over the next 3 years, and the proposals around the Budget, as identified in this report. Should Members wish to agree any additional items for growth or for savings not in this report, then the Borough Treasurer will need to advise Members as to whether or not those proposals would result in an increase in the financial risk facing the Council, and therefore a need for a higher level of Balances to be set as a minimum.

11. PARISH PRECEPTS

The individual parish precepts are shown below with comparative figures for last year.

	2016/17	2017/18
	£	
Blackrod	54,608	64,608
Horwich	185,836	185,836
Westhoughton	130,750	140,157

As required by the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the Parish Precepts need to be added to Bolton's budget requirement.

12. BUSINESS RATES

Whilst the Council is part of the Greater Manchester 100% pilot, it should be noted that the Government determines the rates to be collected - the "multiplier" - and has set these at 46.6p in the pound for small businesses and 47.9p in the pound for large businesses

All non-domestic properties are usually revalued at five-yearly intervals. The most recent listing came into force on 1st April 2010. The '2015' revaluation was delayed and will come into force on 1st April 2017.

The rateable value of a property is broadly equivalent to the annual rent that a property could be let for on the open market. These values are set by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA). A property's rates bill is calculated by multiplying its rateable value by the NNDR 'multiplier'.

Bolton Council's 2017 RV list is £224.7m. This is a reduction of 1.6% from its 2010 list (£228.2m). This compares to an increase of 9.6% in the RV list for England as a whole (£57.7bn in 2010, £63.2bn at 2017). The North West as a whole saw no significant change in list size, with the largest changes in London (23.7% increase from 2010 to 2017) and the South East (9.6% increase).

13. COUNCIL TAX

As stated above the Secretary of State has announced that the Referendum limit for 2017/18 is 5%, of which 3% must be directly allocated to Adult Social Care. Based upon a 3% increase for ASC plus a 1.8% general levy increase in Council Tax for Bolton Council (i.e. excluding Parish, Fire and Police precepts), this equates to an additional 81p per week on Band A properties, which are more than 40% of the properties in Bolton.

Police and Fire Authority Precepts

The Fire and Civil Defence Authority Precept and the Precept for the Police Authority have been estimated as follows:-

	Band A	Band D
	£	£
Police	108.20	162.30
Fire & Civil Defence	39.97	59.95

This equates to a £5.00 increase on a Band D equivalent property for Greater Manchester Police Authority and a 1.99% increase on a Band D equivalent property for Greater Manchester Fire and Civil Defence Authority.

On the basis of a total budget requirement of £218.6m (i.e. total expenditure less Dedicated Schools Grant, New Homes Bonus, Public Health funding and Use of Reserves) the balance to be raised from Council Tax is £103.5m as shown below:-

	2016/17		2017/18 100% Business Rates	
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Bolton		199,121		218,292
Parish Precepts		371		391
Budget Requirement		199,492		218,683
Less				
Collection Fund Balance		400		400
		199,092		218,283
Less Income				
Revenue Support Grant	42,008		0	
Business Rates Top-Up	19,332		37,806	
Non Domestic Rates	43,050	104,390	76,968	114,774
Balance to be raised from Council Tax		94,702		103,509

The Council Tax base for tax setting purposes in 2017/18 is 74,472 Band D equivalent properties.

The basic amount of Council Tax for that part of the Council's area where no Parish Precepts apply, but including the Police and Fire and Civil Defence precepts, is £1,071.28 for a Band A property and £ 1,606.91 for a Band D property.

The Council Tax bases for tax setting purposes for the Town Council areas are as follows:-

	Tax Base in Band D Equivalents
Blackrod	1,867
Horwich	7,285
Westhoughton	8,421

The resultant additional Council Tax in each Town Council area for Band A and Band D properties are as follows:-

	Additional Council Tax Band A	Additional Council Tax Band D
	£	£
Blackrod	23.07	34.61
Horwich	17.01	25.51
Westhoughton	11.09	16.64

The above figures relate to Band A and D properties. The table below shows the total Council Tax for all Bands in the various areas (i.e. including Police and Fire precepts):-

	Parish of Blackrod	Parish of Horwich	Parish of Westhoughton	All other parts of the Council's area
	£	£	£	£
Band A	1,094.35	1,088.29	1,082.37	1,071.28
Band B	1,276.74	1,269.66	1,262.76	1,249.82
Band C	1,459.13	1,451.05	1,443.16	1,428.37
Band D	1,641.52	1,632.42	1,623.55	1,606.91
Band E	2,006.30	1,995.18	1,984.34	1,964.00
Band F	2,371.08	2,357.94	2,345.13	2,321.09
Band G	2,735.87	2,720.71	2,705.92	2,678.19
Band H	3,283.04	3,264.84	3,247.10	3,213.82

For information, Appendix G sets out a comparison between the level of Council Tax in 2016/17 and 2017/18 (for those areas which do not include the Parish Council Precept), and the percentage of properties in each band.

The Council is also required to show on its bills the cumulative Adult Social Care Precept (i.e. 2016/17 & 2017/18 combined). This detail is also shown in Appendix G for Band A and Band D properties for reference.

Around 45% of households will receive reduced Council Tax bills through the Council Tax Support Scheme and Personal Discounts. For Council Tax the maximum support for pensioners through the Council Tax Support Scheme is 100%. Working age customers receive a maximum reduction of 87.5% of their bills. As some households will, therefore, not pay Council Tax, this will be highlighted on their bill. Consequently at this stage it is not possible to give an average bill.

14. COUNCIL TAX BILLING

The Budget contained in this report assumes that the Council Tax is set at the Council Meeting on the 22nd February 2017. Should the Council not be able to set the Council Tax on that day

then a week's delay will put back the processing and distribution of Council Tax bills, which will incur additional costs.

15. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The delivery of the Council's budget is led by a clear philosophy, which is summarised below. As part of this year's budget process, the priorities which the Council wishes to adopt when looking at delivering cuts have been re-affirmed at the Cabinet meeting of 10th October 2016 and set out in section 1, above. This provides a framework for the delivery of the 2017/19 budget.

In terms of staffing, the anticipated impact of the budget on the workforce is set out in section 6, along with the strategy for managing this. The Council retains its objective of seeking to manage all reductions consensually as far as possible in order to mitigate the impact on staff, through the use of voluntary early retirement and severance, as well as managing vacancies etc. Effective communication and consultation with staff and their trades unions will continue to be vital to the budget process as a whole, as well as to individual service reviews.

It is important to recognise that achieving a balanced budget at this level, following the significant reductions that have already been made, will be much more challenging than in the last two years. However, the Council continues to aim to minimise the impact of budget cuts on front-line service provision. Proportionately different levels of reductions have once again been sought from each of the Council's departments to offer a degree of protection to front-line services and to protect the borough's most vulnerable people. This distribution is set out in section 6.

The EIA is attached at Appendix I.

16. PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Consultation has taken place on the council's strategic budget options. The key messages can be summarised as follows:

- The majority of respondents agreed with the Council's approach to making the necessary savings, although the level of support varied from a high of 86% (savings should be made from management / administration rather than front-line services) to a low of 65% (impact on staff should be minimised, whilst putting the needs of local people first).
- Almost half (47%) of respondents agreed with the proposed 3.99% increase in Council Tax (including 2% for Adult Social Care) to achieve the savings and avoid even more cuts to services, with 39% disagreeing with this.
- Agreement with the range of proposals put forward varied with 84% agreeing with a proposed reduction in Elected Member allowances and a reduction in senior council officers but only 46% agreeing that school crossing patrols should be reviewed.
- Most respondents (85%) were aware of the need for the Council to change the way it delivers services and three-quarters accepted that budget reductions had to be made.

These findings would suggest that, on the whole, the Council's approach to its strategic budget – particularly the strategy on which it is based – has public support, but that responding to the differing attitudes and expectations of Bolton's diverse communities is not straightforward.

Appendix J provides details of the outcomes from the public consultation exercise undertaken during December 2016 and January 2017

17. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Council approve:-

- (a) The Budget for 2017/18
- (b) The Council Tax for 2017/18
- (c) The strategic budget reduction programme for 2017-2019

A Draft Substantive Council Tax Resolution is set out in Appendix H.

18. APPENDICES

Appendix A	General Fund Summary
Appendix B	Subjective Analysis
Appendix C	The Financial Arrangements Account
Appendix D	Savings 2017-19
Appendix E	Review of Reserves
Appendix F	General Fund Balances/Financial Risks
Appendix G	Council Tax (Non Parish Council Areas)
Appendix H	Draft Substantive Council Tax Resolution
Appendix I	Equality Impact Assessment
Appendix J	Public Consultation

GENERAL FUND SUMMARY

	2016/17 Original Budget	2017/18 Original Estimate
		100% Business rates
	£000	£000
Children's Services	271,239	257,239
Adult Services	68,497	67,037
Public Health	22,599	22,042
Environmental Services	24,671	23,188
Development & Regeneration	10,550	9,073
Housing	1,796	1,627
Property Services	4,803	4,598
Central etc	24,626	21,427
Financing and Investing	9,082	9,082
Levies	42,291	41,349
Miscellaneous	-7,026	-2,251
Savings	-19,447	-12,500
Net Exp	453,681	441,911
Parishes	371	391
Sub Total	454,052	442,302
Income		
Direct Schools Grant	221,550	212,155
Retained local business rates	43,050	76,968
Council Tax Contribution - Base Adjustment	91,541	98,795
Council Tax Contribution - Adult Social Care	1,823	2,952
Council Tax Contribution - General Levy	1,367	1,771
Council Tax contribution - Parishes	371	391
Collection Fund Balance		2,145
Adult Social Care Support Grant		1,396
New Homes Bonus	4,521	2,905
Business Rates Top-Up	19,332	37,806
Revenue Support Grant	42,008	0
Education Services Grant	3,890	1,029
Reserves	2,000	3,989
Public Health	22,599	0
Total	454,052	442,302
Council Tax Increase	3.5%	4.80%

SUBJECTIVE ANALYSIS

	2016/17 Original Estimate	2017/18 Original Estimate	
Expenditure			
Employees	297,726	261,742	
Premises	37,725	34,314	
Transport	19,128	17,823	
Supplies and Services	66,987	71,328	
Agency / Third Party	99,753	112,382	
Transfer Payments	151,341	151,924	
Capital Costs	12,747	11,751	
Total Expenditure	685,407	661,264	
Income			
Grants & Contributions	137,576	142,729	
Customer & Client Receipts	66,266	67,776	
Rent	6,046	6,122	
Interest & Dividends	2,391	2,726	
Total Income	212,279	219,353	
Savings	-19,447	0	2017/18 savings now shown within the subjective headings above
Net Expenditure *	453,681	441,911	
* Before Direct Schools Grant of	221,550	212,155	

THE FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS ACCOUNT

	2016/17 Original £'000s	2017/18 Original £'000s	Comment
Corporate Financing Costs	11,003	10,795	
Transferred Debt	1,507	1,507	
Interest and Contributions	-958	-750	
Airport Dividend	-1,000	-1,000	
Airport Rents	-414	-414	
Airport Loan Interest	-1,076	-1,076	
Debt Management	20	20	
Total Financing and Investing	9,082	9,082	
Levies	42,291	41,349	
Former Employee Pensions	852	852	
Car Parks	-350	-350	
Miscellaneous	-7,528	-2,753	
Corporate Savings			
Use of Reserves	-2,000	-3,989	Use of reserves to balance the budget
Education Services Grant	-3,890	-1,029	
Adult Support Grant	0	-1,396	
New Homes Bonus	-4,521	-2,905	
Total Miscellaneous	-17,437	-11,570	
Total	33,936	38,861	

SAVINGS 2017/18

PEOPLE OPTIONS

People - Description of Option	£'000	Total Posts Affected
Review of Corporate Parenting Board Officer/ Virtual Schools Manager role	61.9	1
Financial remodelling and efficiencies of children's residential and respite provision	75.0	
Review and redesign of the Leaving Care Service	53.0	1
Review of controllable budgets at Bolton Science Technology Centre	65.0	
Review and redesign of Connexions , Early Intervention & associated services	230.0	8
Review and redesign of Secondary Education Improvement services	65.0	
Review and redesign of Primary Education Improvement services	230.0	
Development of an Asset Management traded service	50.0	
Review and re-provision of Commissioned Day Services	200.0	
Reconfigure and develop new partnership delivery model for Heaton Fold	150.0	
Develop a new Learning Disability Supported Housing Strategy and re-model provision	250.0	
Review of the fairer charging policy; including the charging cap and weekly charges	550.0	
Review of Workforce Development	80.0	1
Ongoing service delivery efficiencies - Bolton Council's provider services to deliver ongoing efficiencies in line with national requirements, some remodelling of care hours will be involved.	445.0	1
Income generation through remodelling to create discharge to assess capacity in line with national requirements	250.0	
Review and re-provision of external extra care housing.	160.0	
Review of Community Meals charges	100.0	
Review of nursery service provision	40.0	
Review of Grants to the independent and voluntary sectors	180.0	
Review of Positive Activities, free play service and youth service provision	300.0	30-52
Review of Positive Activities Sport Development provision	115.0	3-11
Creation of Integrated Commissioning & Provider Services	100.0	2
Redesign and restructure of the back office support services within Policy, Planning and Resources	150.0	7
Review of business support including development of digitalisation options	300.0	7
Management of Cash Limited budgets	185.1	
ICT system rationalisation	100.0	

People - Description of Option	£'000	Total Posts Affected
Total Options	4,485.0	61-91
Current Vacant Posts		147
Current Vacant Posts (FTEs)		100.0
Current Agency Staff covering these posts		91

PLACE – OPTIONS

Place - Description of Option	Savings£'000	Total Posts Affected
Service Review of Highways, Engineering and Parking	445	12
Service Review of Regulatory & Neighbourhood Services	405	11
Review of Neighbourhood Management and Area Working	266	0
Review of Markets and Bereavement Services	236	1
Asset Rationalisation Programme	166	15
Review School Meal Subsidy	75	5
Review of Transport and Waste Services	53	1
Review of Economic Development and Regeneration	220	12
Review of Procurement	122	
Cross Cutting options which include a review of senior management and a review of cash limited budgets	812	12
Total Options	2,800	69
		216
		156.4
		50

RESERVES

Service	Category of Closing Balance 2016/17								
	Revised Opening 01/04/16	Activity in Year 2016/17	Closing balance 31/03/17	Legal requirements	Existing commitments	To cover key areas of future spend	To cover key areas of risk	Service general contingencies	Available for re-allocation
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Adult Services and Public Health	14,780	(5,249)	9,531	1,356	3,084	3,975	0	1,116	0
Schools and DSG	16,438	(8,560)	7,878	2,261	5,617	0	0	0	0
Children Services	10,425	(3,634)	6,791	2,620	1,059	2,172	410	530	0
Chief Exec - Depart'l	1,257	38	1,295	0	317	133	259	586	0
Chief Exec - Corporate	12,166	(869)	11,297	0	603	4,016	6,678	0	0
Devel & Regeneration	12,073	(389)	11,684	3,970	143	5,217	2,288	0	66
Environmental Services	11,379	(5,880)	5,499	415	3,770	457	801	0	56
Corporate Accounting	18,622	(500)	18,122	18,122	0	0	0	0	0
Financial Services	64,778	(7,658)	57,120	160	28,165	17,997	10,798	0	0
General Fund	10,660	0	10,660	10,660	0	0	0	0	0
Total	172,578	(32,701)	139,877	39,564	42,758	33,967	21,234	2,232	122
Add in Capital Reserves	30,983								
Total of Revenue & Capital Reserves	203,561								

Revenue Impact of not holding key Reserves

If we were not to hold these Reserves then there would be a direct impact on the Revenue Budget in the order of £6m. This would be from having to provide a Contingency Budget to meet certain risks or additional costs that the Council will be facing in the future. These are set out below:-

	£m
ICT replacements (would need an annual contribution to meet these costs)	2.0
Redundancy/redeployment (if we did not hold Reserves we would have to capitalise these costs – if Government agree)	2.0
Equal Pay (if we did not hold Reserves we would have to capitalise these costs – if Government agree)	0.5
Corporate contingencies – Energy etc. (would need a specific Contingency provision)	0.5
Service contingencies (would need a specific contingency provision)	1.0

	6.0

APPENDIX F

Report to: Cabinet

Date: 13th February 2017

Report of: Borough Treasurer

Report No:

Contact Officer: Sue Johnson

Tele No: Ext 1502

Report Title: **General Fund Balances/Financial Risks**

Non -Confidential: This report does **not** contain information which warrants its consideration in the absence of the press or members of the public

Purpose: To outline the Borough Treasurer’s advice on the Financial Risks facing the Council and the appropriate level of Balances to be maintained

Recommendations: That the minimum level of Balances for 2017/18 should be £10.0m or higher if possible.

1. **INTRODUCTION**

The Council maintains two types of revenue reserves, earmarked reserves and general reserves (Balances). Earmarked reserves are set aside for specific purposes/commitments whereas general Balances are maintained to support the overall Council cash-flow and meet any unforeseen contingencies/demands.

This report considers the current level of general Balances, evaluates the reasons why Balances are maintained (i.e. the general financial risks facing the Council) and provides advice on the appropriate level of Balances to be maintained by the Council in the light of Guidance from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). Appendix E sets out the Council's current position in respect of Reserves.

2. **NEED FOR GENERAL BALANCES**

Whilst the Council's annual Budget provides resources to meet any known liabilities or expenditure requirements, Balances are amounts which are set aside to meet unexpected changes in the Budget and to finance demands for resources which cannot be predicted and are assessed on the basis of the general financial risks facing the Council.

The requirement for Balances is acknowledged in statute with Section 32 of the 1992 Local Government Finance Act requiring Authorities to have regard to the level of Balances needed to meet estimated future liabilities when calculating their Budget requirement. The Chief Finance Officer has the responsibility of ensuring that the Council maintains a balanced Budget, with powers under Section 114 of the 1998 Local Government Finance Act to report to the Council should its liabilities be in danger of exceeding its resources. Equally, the External Auditor has a responsibility to review and report on the Council's financial standing. Further requirements within the 2003 Local Government Finance Act reinforce the above with additional monitoring and reporting responsibilities.

In drawing together the Council's capital and revenue budgets and the Medium Term Financial Statement, the level of general Balances and Financial Risks are always carefully considered. The provision of an appropriate level of Balances is therefore a fundamental part of prudent financial management.

3. **MINIMUM LEVEL OF RESERVES**

Authorities should maintain Balances equivalent to 3% of their Budget, for 2017/18 this would amount to approximately £13.0m. However, whilst this is recommended guidance, the decision on the appropriate level of Balances is one for the Council, with advice from its Borough Treasurer, to determine. There are several factors/financial risks that need to be taken into account in considering a prudent level of Balances:

i) **Revenue Contingencies**

The Council does not maintain a general contingency within its revenue budget but relies on in year savings and Balances to meet any unexpected demands. For example, a pay increase of 0.5% more than that allowed for in the Budget would cost approximately £0.6m, excluding Teachers. A price variation of 0.5% would cost approximately £1m.

ii) Interest

In recent years the Council has been successful in managing the interest that it pays out/receives, and savings in this area have generally added to Balances. However given the current historic low level of interest rates, with no expectation of an increase in the near future, returns on investments this cannot be guaranteed

iii) Capital

The Council now has a capital programme in the order of £60m per annum. Within the capital programme there are no contingencies and whilst the programme is actively monitored and managed, there is the potential for a demand on Balances from any capital overspend. In addition because of the economic climate there may be difficulties in generating the level of Capital Receipts assumed in the capital programme. For 2017/18 this has been included at £2m.

iv) Economic Climate

The downturn in the general economic climate continues to create pressures for the Council in several ways. Demand for services is increasing, particularly on those which support business, support those who are unemployed, and to process benefits. In addition, several of the income/revenue streams may be affected by reduced demand/take up. Both the above items have been reflected in the budget but the change in demand cannot be absolutely forecast and therefore there may be changes in cost/income levels during the year.

v) Council Tax Support Scheme

From 1st April 2013 the Council introduced a Local Council Tax Support Scheme. The full risk of increasing numbers of claimants and greater individual claimant eligibility remains within the Council and is a risk to the Council's resources

vi) Local Business Rates

Prior to 2013, all business rates collected by local authorities were paid over to the Government. This money was distributed back to local authorities by the Government in the form of grants.

From 2013 local authorities could retain up to 50% of business rates collected (the 'local' share) with the remaining 50% (the 'central' share) paid to the Government. This central share was distributed back to councils in the form of reduced grants. The Government introduced a system of top-ups and tariffs to redistribute income between councils so that councils with higher needs or less capacity to raise their own business rates were compensated.

From April 2017, Greater Manchester local authorities will form part of a 100% Business Rates Retention Pilot (with all LAs moving to 100% rates retention by 2020). There will be a corresponding reduction in government grants to reflect the increase in retained business rates.

A move to a 100% retention scheme doubles the risk to a Council of a loss of income due to non-collection. In the current economic climate this risk is significant. In 2015/16 Bolton Council's share of the provision

set aside and charged against revenue was £1.6m, with a similar figure projected for 2016/17. From 2017 onwards it is anticipated that this figure will double. The Government provides an overall safety net that is designed to protect councils if their business rates income falls significantly in the year – however the safety net is set at 92.5% of a council's baseline funding level (in the case of Bolton Council this represents a loss of approximately £6.5m) – the Council may potentially have to cover losses up to this amount from its General Balances.

vii) Un-predictable Demand Led Expenditure

Major parts of the Council's Budget, particularly in Social Care Services and Education are "demand led" and as seen in previous years, can create significant demands for increased expenditure during the year. Services maintain modest Reserves of their own, currently £2.2m to meet minor Budget variations.

viii) Emergencies

The Council is required to maintain provision to meet the cost of emergencies that cannot be met from main Budgets or by Insurance. Significant costs on emergencies are met by Central Government under the "Bellwin Scheme" but these are only triggered once the Council's expenditure has exceeded a pre-determined limit (0.1% of the revenue budget which is approximately £440k). Costs above this limit are covered by Central Government but only up to 85%.

ix) Unexpected Demands

Balances also need to provide sufficient resources to meet unexpected demands, particularly those that result from a legal decision, a change in Government legislation or a determination of Government legislation. In the past the Council has had to fund several major issues of this nature.

x) Service Deficits

Balances are also required to offset any Budget deficits carried forward or generated during the year by services as allowed under Financial Regulations.

xi) General Risks

It is also important to weigh up the general risks facing the Council and evaluate what any potential financial impact may result from these risks. The Borough Treasurer and the Head of Internal Audit and Risk have undertaken a review of these risks. The areas with a potentially significant financial impact are as follows:

Economic Climate
Changes in Government Funding
Potential Legal Claims
External Suppliers going into Administration

These have been taken into account in the overall evaluation of the minimum level of Balances to maintain.

4. REVIEW OF 2017/18 BALANCES POSITION

The last quarterly report estimated available Balances at 31st March 2017 at £10.7m. The review of the last 12 months does not suggest that there are any additional factors to take into account in 2017/18, other than those referred to in this note, although it is difficult to predict whether the economic climate will add further to the demands on the Council's services or reduce the income it receives. On this basis I am recommending that the current minimum level of Balances remains at £10.7m in 2017/18.

5. BOROUGH TREASURER ADVICE ON THE MINIMUM LEVEL OF BALANCES

Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 requires the Section 151 Officer (Borough Treasurer) to report to the Council when it is setting its Budget/Council Tax on the "robustness of the estimates" and the "adequacy of the reserves".

Equally the Council should not hold usable Balances at too high a level, as this would not be making the most effective use of the Council's overall resources when faced with significant demands for increased levels of service. Even allowing for a recommended level of Balances of £13.0m above, Balances at up to £18m would not be regarded as inappropriate.

At this point in time, bearing in mind the above, and the size of the Council's Budget at approximately £440m, I would recommend that a minimum level of Balances for the Council to maintain would be £10m (but if possible should be at a higher level).

Use of Balances

Any future use of Balances above the recommended level is best used to support "one off" initiatives/investment. Any significant use of Balances to meet the on-going costs of services should only be considered on the basis of providing a Revenue contribution for the period of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

6. SUMMARY

The report has set out the various factors that influence the level of Balances which must be maintained to meet any unexpected increases in expenditure or shortfall in income during the year. The Borough Treasurer's advice is that as a minimum Balances should be maintained at £10m but if possible should be at a higher level.

APPENDIX G

COUNCIL TAX (NON PARISH AREAS INCLUDING POLICE & FIRE)

	Properties	2016/17	2017/18	Increase
	%	£	£	
Band A	42.95	1,024.88	1,071.28	4.53%
Band B	18.98	1,195.68	1,249.82	4.53%
Band C	17.51	1,366.49	1,428.37	4.53%
Band D	10.48	1,537.32	1,606.91	4.53%
Band E	5.60	1,878.95	1,964.00	4.53%
Band F	2.33	2,220.57	2,321.09	4.53%
Band G	1.92	2,562.20	2,678.19	4.53%
Band H	0.23	3,074.64	3,213.82	4.53%

The Police and Fire increases in percentage terms are 3.18% and 1.99% respectively resulting in an overall increase of 4.53%. The tables below show how the cumulative element of the Adult Social Care precept needs to be shown on Council Tax bills

Band A	Basic Council Tax (£)	Adult Social Care Precept (£)	Total (£)	% Increase
2016/17 Council Tax Base (excl Police & Fire and excl ASC)	863.81		863.81	
2016/17 ASC		17.02	17.02	
2016/17 Council Tax Base	863.81	17.02	880.83	1.80%
General Levy 2017/18	15.85		15.85	
ASC Levy 2017/18		26.43	26.43	3.00%
Total 2017/18 (excl Police & Fire)	879.66	43.45	923.11	
Fire 2017/18			39.97	
Police 2017/18			108.20	
Total 2017/18	879.66	43.45	1,071.28	
	This will appear as an item on the Council Tax bill	This will appear as an item on the Council Tax bill		

Band D	Basic Council Tax (£)	Adult Social Care Precept (£)	Total (£)	% Increase
2016/17 Council Tax Base (excl Police & Fire and excl ASC)	1,295.71		1,295.71	
2016/17 ASC		25.53	25.53	
2016/17 Council Tax Base	1,295.71	25.53	1,321.24	1.80%
General Levy 2017/18	23.78		23.78	
ASC Levy 2017/18		39.64	39.64	3.00%
Total 2017/18 (excl Police & Fire)	1,319.49	65.17	1,384.66	
Fire 2017/18			59.95	
Police 2017/18			162.30	
Total 2017/18	1,319.49	65.17	1,606.91	
	This will appear as an item on the Council Tax bill	This will appear as an item on the Council Tax bill		

DRAFT SUBSTANTIVE COUNCIL TAX RESOLUTION

- (i) That the following recommendations of the Cabinet on 17th February 2017 be approved:-
- (a) The Council be recommended to approve the Budget for 2017/18.
 - (b) That the Council Tax be increased by 4.8% in 2017/18 of which 3% be specifically for Adult Social Care and 1.8% for the general levy.
 - (c) That in respect of the proposed savings identified to balance the 2017/18 budget, following the consultation process, Cabinet recommends to Council the following:
 - Review of provision of School Crossing Patrols (£0.200m) – this proposal to be removed
 - Review of commissioned services for short break activities for disabled children (£0.015m) – this proposal to be removed
 - (d) These amendments can be funded from the additional savings achieved from waste disposal costs due to the success of the slim bin roll out across the Borough
 - (e) That the Cabinet recommends to the Council the following in respect of the £2.5m unallocated Capital Programme Resources for 2017/18;
 - £1m per annum be allocated to continue Safe Warm Dry schemes over the next 2 years to replace the loss of government funding
 - Up to £0.3m to extend the provision of Free Breakfast clubs in Primary Schools for a further 2 years
 - £0.2m money to implement dropped kerbs around the Borough for improved disabled access
 - (f) £2.5m is identified from the existing allocations for essential work on Westhoughton Town Hall
 - (g) The Council be recommended to approve the Capital Programme for 2017/18
 - (h) The Council be recommended to approve the Investment and Prudential Indicators and Treasury Strategies 2017/18 to 2019/20
- (ii) It be noted that on 5th December 2016 the Cabinet calculated
- (a) the Council Tax Base 2017/18 for the whole Council area as 74,472 (item T in the formula in Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the “Act”); and
 - (b) for dwellings in those parts of its area to which a Parish precept relates as:

Parish Councils

The Parish of Blackrod	1,867	Band D equivalents
The Parish of Horwich	7,285	Band D equivalents
The Parish of Westhoughton	8,421	Band D Equivalents

being the amounts calculated by the Council, in accordance with regulation 6 of the Regulations, as the amounts of its Council Tax base for the year 2017/18 for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate.

(iii) Calculate that the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2017/18 (excluding Parish precepts) is £103,118,400

(iv) That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2017/18 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act.

- (a) £218,283,001 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils.
- (b) £114,774,000 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.
- (c) £103,509,001 being the amount by which the aggregate at (iv)(a) above exceeds the aggregate at (iv)(b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its Council Tax requirement for the year. (Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act).
- (d) £1,389.90 being the amount at (iv)(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T ((ii)(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish precepts).
- (e) £390,601.00 being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act, each individual parish precept being:
- | | |
|--------------|----------|
| Blackrod | £64,608 |
| Horwich | £185,836 |
| Westhoughton | £140,157 |
- (f) £1,384.66 being the amount at (iv)(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at (iv)(e) above by Item T (ii)(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no Parish precept relates.
- (g) Part of the Council's Area
- | | |
|------------------------|-----------|
| Parish of Blackrod | £1,419.27 |
| Parish of Horwich | £1,410.17 |
| Parish of Westhoughton | £1,401.30 |

being the amounts given by adding to the amount at (f) above the amounts of the special item or items relating to dwellings in those parts of the Council's area mentioned at (e) above divided in each case by the amount at (ii) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act, as the basic amounts of its

Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate.

(i) Part of the Council's Area

Valuation bands	Parish of Blackrod	Parish of Horwich	Parish of Westhoughton	All other parts of the Council's area
A	£946.18	£940.12	£934.20	£923.11
B	£1,103.88	£1,096.80	£1,089.90	£1,076.96
C	£1,261.57	£1,253.49	£1,245.60	£1,230.81
D	£1,419.27	£1,410.17	£1,401.30	£1,384.66
E	£1,734.66	£1,723.54	£1,712.70	£1,692.36
F	£2,050.06	£2,036.92	£2,024.11	£2,000.07
G	£2,365.45	£2,350.29	£2,335.50	£2,307.77
H	£2,838.54	£2,820.34	£2,802.60	£2,769.32

being the amounts given by multiplying the amounts at (f) and (g) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands

(v) That it be noted that for the year 2017/18 the Greater Manchester Fire and Civil Defence Authority and the Greater Manchester Police Authority have stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:-

Precepting Authority

Valuation Bands	Greater Manchester Fire & Civil Defence Authority	Greater Manchester Police Authority
A	£39.97	£108.20
B	£46.63	£126.23
C	£53.29	£144.27
D	£59.95	£162.30
E	£73.27	£198.37
F	£86.59	£234.43
G	£99.92	£270.50
H	£119.90	£324.60

(vi) That, having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at (iv)(f)(i) and (v), the Council, in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the following amounts as the amounts of Council Tax for the year 2017/18 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:-

(i) Part of the Council's Area

Valuation bands	Parish of Blackrod	Parish of Horwich	Parish of Westthoughton	All other parts of the Council's area
A	£1,094.35	£1,088.29	£1,082.37	£1,071.28
B	£1,276.74	£1,269.66	£1,262.76	£1,249.82
C	£1,459.13	£1,451.05	£1,443.16	£1,428.37
D	£1,641.52	£1,632.42	£1,623.55	£1,606.91
E	£2,006.30	£1,995.18	£1,984.34	£1,964.00
F	£2,371.08	£2,357.94	£2,345.13	£2,321.09
G	£2,735.87	£2,720.71	£2,705.92	£2,678.19
H	£3,283.04	£3,264.84	£3,247.10	£3,213.82

(vii) That the Council's basic amount of Council Tax for 2017/18 at an increase of 4.8% is not excessive in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZB Local Government Finance Act 1992.

(viii) That the Borough Treasurer be delegated authority to collect revenues and disburse monies from the relevant accounts.

(ix) That it be noted that the Government have set a National Non-Domestic Rate of 46.6p in the pound for small businesses and 47.9p in the pound for larger businesses for the financial year 2017/18.

(x) That the Council's current policy in respect of discretionary relief, as approved by the Executive Member, Regeneration and Resources on the 13th February 2017, be reaffirmed and that the Borough Treasurer be delegated authority to determine applications for such relief.

(xi) That War Disablement Pensions and War Widows' Pensions be disregarded for the purposes of the Council Tax Support Scheme.

(xii) That Council approves the following definition for the 'minimum occupancy period' for Council Tax Discount Class C properties, to apply from 1 April 2017:
"For the purposes of Discount Class C, in considering whether a dwelling has been vacant for any period, any one period, not exceeding six weeks, during which it was not vacant shall be disregarded".

(xiii) That the minutes of the proceedings of the undermentioned Scrutiny Committee regarding their consideration of the budgets be noted:-

Corporate and External Issues 15th February 2017

Equality Impact Assessment

Executive Summary

Background and Context

At its meeting on 10th October 2016, Cabinet approved the Medium Term Financial Summary (MTFS) 2017-20, which provides some financial certainty as to the amount of Revenue Support Grant (RSG) the Council will receive.

This document provides a strategic equality impact assessment (EIA) of the service reductions and changes that the Council is proposing to deliver in order to achieve a balanced budget by the end of 2018/19. It is a strategic analysis only at this stage, as the detail of each option is yet to be worked up. Individual EIAs will be produced for each option, when developed, as part of an ongoing consultation exercise.

Budget Strategy

The Council has a strong track record of budget management, delivering approximately £140m reductions over the last six years and remains committed to its priorities:

- Protecting the most vulnerable in the borough
- Supporting economic development

As of April 2016, the Council has £73m useable reserves. It is therefore proposed to adopt a 2 year strategy covering 2017/18 and 2018/19, namely:

- Use £30m reserves to cash flow the revenue budget
- Identify proposals of £12.5m for the two year budget cycle

The £12.5m target for 2017/18 and 2018/19 is based on the following assumptions and considerations:

- Education Services Grant – this has reduced from £3.8m in 2015/16 to £1m in 2017/18. It is assumed this resource will be zero from 2018/19 as all schools convert to academies
- Inflation – 1% for pay awards and 2% for all other categories
- 3.99% Council Tax increase in 2017/18 (2% ring-fenced for Adult Social Care)
- That any changes to the proposed 100% Business Rates retention scheme are fiscally neutral

It is important to stress that in identifying options to achieve these reductions, the Council needs to strike a balance between the impact on the general public of a council tax increase and the impact on the public in terms of service reductions. A decision to reduce the Council Tax increase for 2017/18 will increase the total of reductions required.

The Approach to Managing and Mitigating Service Impact

As set out above, the scale of the cuts required and the restrictions on which parts of the Council's budgets these can be made from, means that the Council has to make some challenging decisions about service provision in order to deliver a legal budget for 2017-19. The Council will take the following steps to deliver the best options for

Bolton from a very difficult set of choices, and to manage and mitigate the worst of the impacts arising as far as possible:

- The Council has once again sought proposals over a two year programme to allow for strategic planning and phased implementation up to 31st March 2019
- As in previous years, strategic budget allocations have sought to make smaller percentage reductions from the Department of People (formerly Children's and Adult Services) which has a lead role in delivering front-line and statutory services for vulnerable service-users – a clear part of the strategy to ensure that statutory provision continues to be met, and to limit the impact on the most vulnerable in the borough, whilst also supporting economic development

Strategic Approach

Within the context of the Council's strategic priorities, a series of principles have been articulated to inform proposals. These are:

- Centralised and streamlined support services internally, to achieve economies of scale and careful prioritisation of capacity
- Further digitalisation of council services to realise efficiencies in conjunction with the Council's digital inclusion strategy
- Alternative service delivery models to deliver reductions in operating costs

Specific Proposals

There are a number of specific options with a potential equality impact, including:

- A further reduction of the Council's workforce by up to 239 posts
- A review of the provision of public health services
- A further review of universal services in order that resources may be re-directed to targeted support for the most vulnerable in both People and Place departments as outlined in Appendix D of the budget report.
- A review of local and GM voluntary sector services and funding
- A review of provider services

Consultation

Formal consultation on the budget options set out in the report included:

- Formal consultation with trade unions – information and proposals set out in this report have already been presented to the joint unions at the SLJCC on 3rd November 2016
- Briefings with staff
- Views and comments sought from 500 targeted households and through one organised briefing event.
- Online survey form available on website and promoted via a press release in the Bolton News and sent to eView, the council's consultation panel.
- Targeted presentations/discussions with representatives of the voluntary and community sector and business rates payers
- Updates via Staff News and Bob explaining the overall budget position to staff

Specific proposals will include consultation with appropriate groups, organisations and individuals prior to the final decision on the options being taken.

Equality Impact Assessment Questions

1. Describe in summary the aims, objectives and purpose of the proposal, including desired outcome

The report sets out the strategic context and outline budget for 2017/18 and 2018/19, including options to achieve the anticipated reduction of £12.5m over the two-year budget cycle.

2. Who are the main stakeholders in relation to the proposal

As set out in previous strategic EIAs, the very nature of the services the Council provides and the scale of the savings required, mean that a range of stakeholders are likely to be affected by changes to council activity in some way over the next. In particular:

- **Service users/their carers** – both now and in the future, may find that some aspects of service provision change. Some services may change fundamentally and be delivered in a very different way; some services may reduce or stop, and some customers' eligibility to access services may change.
- **Members of the general public** – could be affected by further reductions in universal services and changes in Council Tax.
- **Organisations working with or supported by the Council** – the reducing level of resources available will continue to have an effect on the extent to which the Council can provide financial support for the work of partner organisations. Equally, whilst difficult to quantify, the reduction in services provided by the Council may also have an effect on the demands for the services provided by these partners.
- **Staff** – given the ongoing scale of the savings required, there will continue to be an impact on staff, whether through loss of employment or associated restructuring and change. The Council's workforce has already reduced by over 1,350 posts since 2009 and a further 239 posts may be affected in this programme. However, the Council retains its objective of seeking to manage all reduction consensually as far as possible, to mitigate the impact on staff, through the use of voluntary early retirement, voluntary severance and vacancy management, avoiding compulsory redundancies wherever possible.

3. In summary, what are the anticipated (positive or negative) impacts of the proposal?

The philosophy set out by the Council to deliver its budget is very clear regarding its priorities in relation to protecting the most vulnerable and enabling economic growth. The approach set out in the earlier parts of this EIA seeks to deliver the best outcome for Bolton in very difficult circumstances and, where possible, mitigate the worst of the impacts, particularly for the borough's most vulnerable people.

The use of reserves as a one-off measure to cash flow the budget significantly lessens the financial burden on the Council for the period 2017-19. That said, this

option also focuses on the Council's strategy for economic growth and development and the potential to increase base income.

As before, the Council aims to minimise the impact of budget reductions on front-line service provisions. Proportionately different levels of proposals have once again been sought from each of the Council's departments to offer a degree of protection to front-line services and to safeguard the borough's most vulnerable people, whilst at the same time moving forward on our economic strategy.

The potentially negative impacts are reduced universal services; a reduction in grants to the voluntary sector; an increase in Council Tax, and a further reduction in over 200 council jobs. This will be mitigated through careful targeting to protect the most disadvantaged in the borough; ongoing investment in economic growth and development, and a workforce strategy to mitigate the impact of reductions in staff as far as possible.

Council Tax

As part of the 2016/17 Settlement Authorities were given the flexibility to increase their Council Tax by an additional 2%, the "Adult Social Care Precept" (ASC), and have to demonstrate that the additional monies raised are spent in that area. As part of the 2017/18 Settlement councils have been given the option to increase the Adult Social Care Precept by a maximum of 6% over the 3 financial years 2017/18 to 2019/20 with any one year limited to a 3% increase. Any general Council Tax levy must be limited to 2% meaning Council Tax can increase by up to 5% without the need for a referendum. A 2% increase in the Council Tax generates approximately £1.9m in additional income.

The Council acknowledges that any increase in council tax has a financial effect on those who are eligible to pay in the borough and may be particularly difficult for those who are already under financial pressure. However, this increase will subsequently reduce the amount of cuts which may otherwise need to be achieved.

The 2% increase specifically for Adult Social Care would help protect the most vulnerable customers and residents in the borough and reduce the cuts in services they receive.

4. **Is there any potential for (positive or negative) differential impact or adverse impact with regard to the identified stakeholders and the diversity groups (race, religion, disability, gender, gender reassignment, age, sexuality, caring status, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, socio-economic)? Can this be justified/what mitigating actions will be taken?**

Council stakeholders

Service users (Including parents and carers)

The Council is committed to continuing to protect children's social care services as far as possible; however, reviews are proposed in services for children and young people. That said, limiting the impact on the most vulnerable children and young people is a priority and care has been taken to ensure that the potential impacts of proposals are mitigated as far as possible through targeting and engaging partners to deliver diminished council services.

The Council is also committed to protecting adult and older people's social care services as far as possible, and in addition to this budget strategy, there is investment from the Greater Manchester devolution programme to assist in integration of health and social care services which will mitigate against some of these reductions and improve outcomes for older people.

Members of the general public

The Council has a clear strategy of moving from universal to targeted services in order to offer a degree of protection for services for the Borough's most vulnerable people whilst at the same time moving forward with our economic strategy. The strategy continues to be pursued through these proposals.

If Council Tax rises are approved there would be a further, specific financial impact on those who pay Council Tax in Bolton, as they would be asked to pay an increased amount. By raising Council Tax, however, the Council is able to increase its income and therefore reduce the amount of savings which may otherwise need to be achieved. This is particularly so for the 2% Adult Social Care precept.

In coming to a decision about possible Council Tax increases the Council will seek to strike a balance between the impact on the general public of a Council Tax increase and the impact on the public in terms of service reductions.

Organisations working with or supported by the Council

As in previous years, the Council must look at making reductions from across the range of services which it provides, including commissioned and grant funded services. This means that partners who receive funding from the Council may see a change or reduction in their funding, which may in turn have an effect on their service delivery. This may affect partners from the voluntary, community and faith sector; as well as private or charitable organisations which deliver services in partnership with or on behalf of the Council.

Clearly, it will be essential to make sure that the Council continues its good working relationships with partners from across the private, voluntary, and charitable sectors to understand and, where possible, manage the impact of possible funding changes. In addition, it will be necessary for individual reviews to consider any potential impact on partner service delivery e.g. where complementary services are being reviewed. The Council has been working with these partners over the last few years to encourage and assist these organisations to become self-financing and sustainable where possible.

Staff

Given the ongoing scale of the budget requirements, there will continue to be an impact on staff, whether through loss of employment or associated restructuring and change. The Council's workforce has already reduced by over 1,350 posts, entirely through voluntary means, since 2009 by, for example, freezing external recruitment, deleting vacancies, offering voluntary early retirement / severance and a comprehensive redeployment scheme. The proposals set out in the report have been developed alongside a continuing commitment to a set of values as an employer which seek to protect the Council's workforce from the worst aspects of the budget reductions and remain a best practice employer. The proposal as a basis for consultation is that the Council will consider reductions through voluntary

means, such as voluntary severance and voluntary early retirement, (where these meet business needs) and will be considered at the beginning of each budget saving proposal.

Diversity Groups

Throughout this process, the Council will need to consider the impact of its proposals on its duties under national equalities legislation, which require it to have due regard to the outcomes below, while also ensuring that the Council can set a legal, balanced budget:

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- Fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it

Analysis on those defined groups with protected characteristics is as follows:

- Race
- Religion
- Disability
- Gender
- Gender reassignment
- Age
- Sexuality
- Caring status
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Marriage and civil partnership

Headline analysis identifies potential impacts around age, disability, caring status and socio-economic deprivation. Specific impact around race, religion, gender, gender reassignment, sexuality, pregnancy and maternity, and marriage and civil partnership has not been identified at this early stage, but will be analysed as part of detailed EIAs for individual reviews.

Further detail included in previous strategic reports indicates that equality issues must be examined around customer access, as the Council intends to move towards a greater use of technology as the primary access route. This is supported through the Council's digital inclusion strategy for our communities.

Children and young people and their parents/carers

Several significant reviews are proposed for services for children and young people.

In the broadest sense, changes to such services have the potential to impact upon children and young people (including those with disabilities or special educational needs); their parents/carers; and those young people who are also parents or carers. Limiting the impact on the most vulnerable children and young people will continue to be a priority, and care will be taken to ensure that the potential impacts

of proposals are well understood and mitigated as far as possible e.g. through targeting.

Older people and those who care for older people

Ongoing transformation within adult social care means that the way in which services are provided will continue to change. The Council continues to seek to deliver quality and affordable services, while also promoting independence, choice and control and meeting statutory duties. However, service users and their families and/or carers will see changes as a result of the budget proposals, and also as the programme of integration across health and social care services continues.

Throughout this process, it will be essential to ensure any proposed changes to services are based on a full understanding of need and eligibility, to ensure that Bolton's older people and their families continue to receive appropriate, accessible and safe care services.

Socio-economic deprivation

The Council and its partners have a long-standing commitment to achieving economic prosperity and narrowing the gap in Bolton, which sits at the heart of the Council's aim to protect the most vulnerable in the borough. Many of these people live in Bolton's most deprived areas, and Bolton's strategy continues to be to target resources to support people in these areas – although resources are much more limited than in previous years, and this budget strategy does have the potential to have an impact on those people who are experiencing socio-economic deprivation. Each review will need to consider this in the detailed EIAs.

5. Are there any gaps in your evidence or conclusions which make it difficult to quantify the potential adverse impact? If so, please explain how you will explore the proposal in greater depth.

Yes, this strategic EIA provides a high level response to the Council's standard EIA questions. It will, however, be necessary to bring forward detailed proposals for each of the options, including detailed analysis of equality impact, and this will take place on a phased basis over the next two years. It will also be necessary to consult with trades unions and appropriate stakeholders on each of the individual reviews as they come forward. The consultation processes will help to inform a full assessment of equality impact.

Consultation has taken place on the council's strategic budget options. Analysis of the results of the public consultation is provided in Appendix J. The key messages can be summarised as follows:

- The majority of respondents agreed with the Council's approach to making the proposed savings, although the level of support varied from a high of 86% (savings should be made from management / administration rather than front-line services) to a low of 65% (impact on staff should be minimised, whilst putting the needs of local people first).

- Almost half (47%) of respondents agreed with the proposed 3.99% increase in **Council Tax** (including 2% for Adult Social Care) to achieve the savings and avoid even more cuts to services, with 39% disagreeing with this.
- Agreement with the range of proposals put forward varied with 84% agreeing with a proposed reduction in Elected Member allowances and a reduction in senior Council officers but only 46% agreeing that school crossing patrols should be reviewed.
- Most respondents (85%) were aware of the need for the Council to change the way it delivers services and three-quarters accepted that budget reductions had to be made.

These findings would suggest that, on the whole, the Council’s approach to its strategic budget – particularly the strategy on which it is based – has public support, but that responding to the differing attitudes and expectations of Bolton’s diverse communities is not straightforward.

In conclusion, the Council continues to make every effort to protect the most vulnerable as far as possible, support economic development, and to respond appropriately to its duties under the Equality Act. However, this strategic EIA recognises the significant challenge which the financial position presents for Bolton, and the likelihood that many of the strategic budget options – whilst seeking to deliver the “least worst” outcome for Bolton – may well have an impact on a range of stakeholders as the Council sets a legal budget for the coming two years.

Please confirm the outcome of this EIA:

No major impact identified, therefore no major changes required – proceed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adjustments to remove barriers / promote equality (mitigate impact) have been identified – proceed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Continue despite having identified potential for adverse impact/missed opportunities for promoting equality – this requires a strong justification	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Stop and rethink - the EIA identifies actual or potential unlawful discrimination	<input type="checkbox"/>

Public Consultation

1. Summary

Consultation was undertaken to ascertain the views of interested parties on the financial challenges faced by the council over the next few years.

A **survey form** was posted to a random sample of 500 households in the borough. The same survey was also made available on-line, via the Council's website, and sent to eView, the Council's consultation panel. A press release was sent to the Bolton News, which ran a number of articles, and the public were advised about the proposals and consultation at a public meeting in January 2017.

Most respondents agreed with the council's **approach** to making the necessary savings: 86% agreed that savings should be made from management / administration rather than front-line services, 85% agreed to maximise economic prosperity, 80% felt that the most vulnerable should be protected as far as possible, 74% agreed that services should be targeted to individuals and areas in greatest need, 68% agreed with using £30m of reserves to minimise savings, and 65% felt the impact on staff should be minimised, whilst putting the needs of local people first.

Almost half (47%) of respondents agreed with the proposed 3.99% increase in **Council Tax** (including 2% for Adult Social Care) to achieve the savings and avoid even more reductions to services, with 39% disagreeing with this.

Respondents were then asked if they agreed or disagreed with a series of **proposals**. 84% agreed with the proposed reduction in Elected Member allowances and a reduction in senior Council officers, 77% agreed that social care and community meal charges should be reviewed, 63% felt that support for non-statutory services should be reduced, and that people should be encouraged to use the web / telephone rather than contacting the Council face-to-face, 59% agreed that resources should target the most vulnerable, and 52% that universal services for children should be reduced. Less than half (46%) felt that school crossing patrols should be reviewed.

When asked about **managing change**, 84% were aware of the need for the Council to change the way it delivers services, three-quarters accepted that budget reductions had to be made but only three out of ten felt the Council was doing its best under difficult circumstances.

Respondents were asked to comment on how the proposals would **impact on them or their families**, and for **alternative solutions**. The prime impact was financial, although 28 respondents felt that there would be minimal impact. The most commonly suggested alternatives were improved leadership / decision making, followed by increasing staff efficiencies.

2. Methodology

The consultation sought to ascertain the views of interested parties on the financial challenges faced by the Council over the next few years.

A survey was posted to a random sample of 500 households in the borough. Those selected were sent a copy of the questionnaire, covering letter and links to supporting information (hard copy available on request) together with a pre-paid return envelope.

The same questionnaire was also available online, with a printed version on request to allow everyone to comment on the proposals.

The consultation was publicised via the press and on the Council's website. It was also sent to eView, the Council's electronic survey panel.

Formal consultation with the Trades Unions, included outlining the proposals at the SLJCC meeting in November and a special meeting of the Chief Executive's DJCC. As part of the consultation a log of questions and answers was developed and this is available for members on request.

3. Results

149 responses were received via the consultation questionnaire

- 86% responded as residents, 4% as Council staff, 4% as a partner, 3% represented a community or voluntary group and 2% were a local business.

The following relate to those who had answered as residents / Council staff

- 94% gave their ethnic origin as White British, 3% Asian / Asian British and the remainder from other ethnic groups.
- 71% felt that their day-to-day activities were not limited due to long term illness or disability
- 63% had no caring responsibilities

4. Formal responses

Formal responses were also received from the following organisations (and are included lower down):

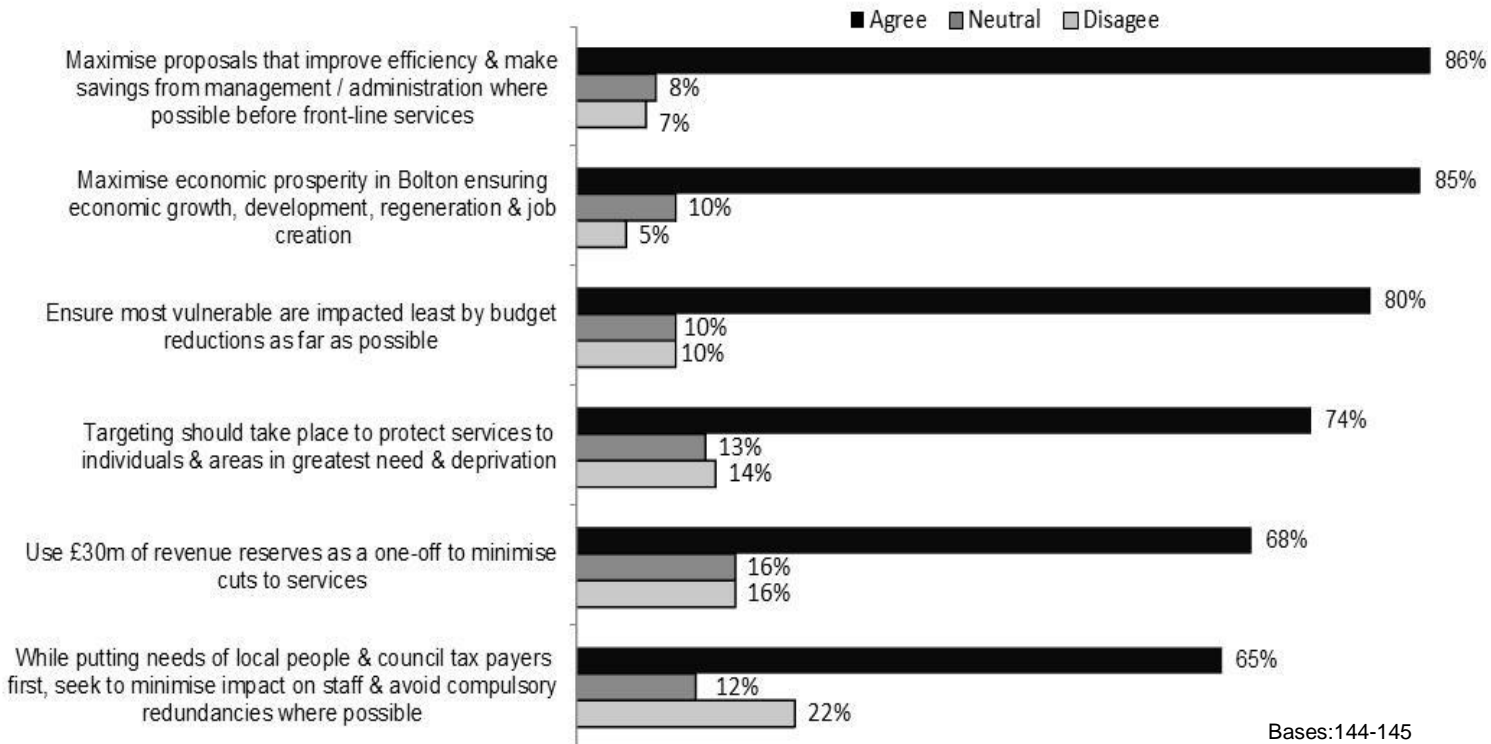
- Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
- Mental Health Independent Support Team (MHIST)
- Bolton NHS Foundation Trust
- Bolton Community and Voluntary Services (CVS)
- Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)
- Joint response from trade unions– UNISON and teacher unions
- Response from GMB

Issues raised will be picked up within the regular meetings that take place between the Council and partner organisations, in line with the Council's partnership approach.

Responses

Q1: Our approach

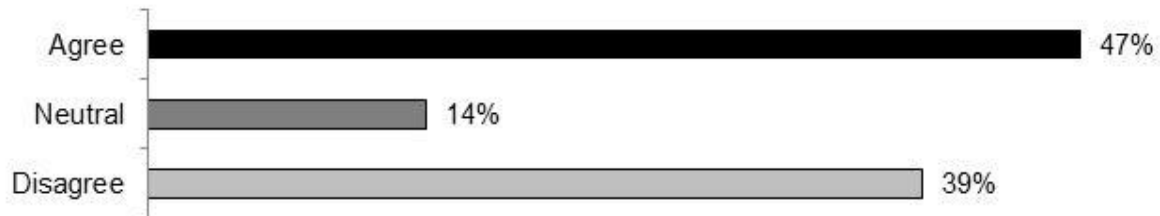
Q: Whilst achieving the necessary cuts is very difficult, the council continues to have a clear strategy for the delivery of its budget, as detailed below. Please state how strongly you agree or disagree with each



The majority of respondents agreed with the strategy put forward by the council for the delivery of the budget.

Q2: Council tax

Q: The proposals put forward assume a 1.99% increase in council tax and an additional further 2% for Adult Social Care. Please state how strongly you agree or disagree that the council should raise council tax to achieve the savings and avoid even more cuts to services

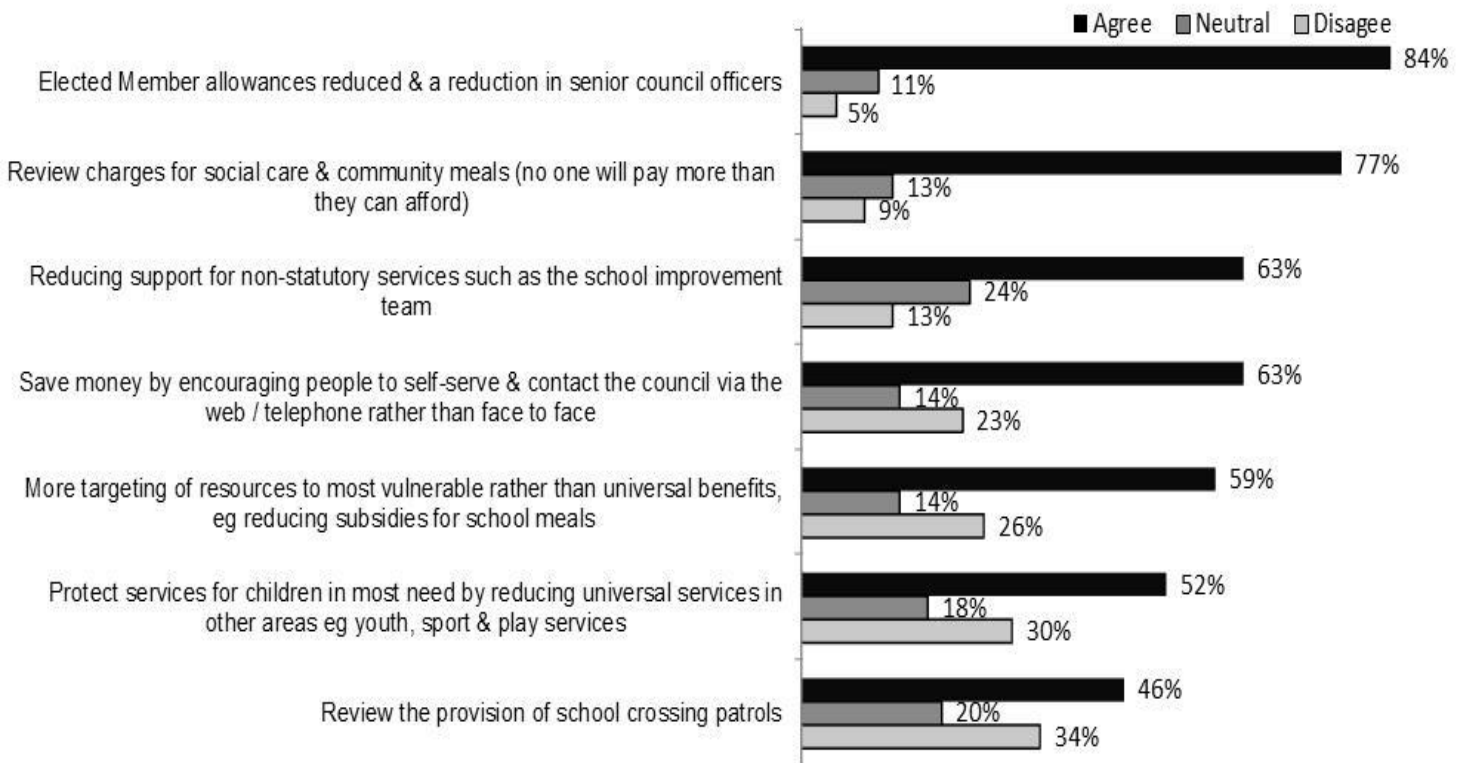


Base:146

Just under half of respondents said they agreed with the proposal to raise council tax.

Q3: Proposals

Q: In order to protect the most vulnerable children and adults, and to avoid deeper cuts to directly delivered services, the council has had to make some very difficult decisions. Some of the proposals that have been put forward are detailed below. Please state how strongly you agree or disagree.

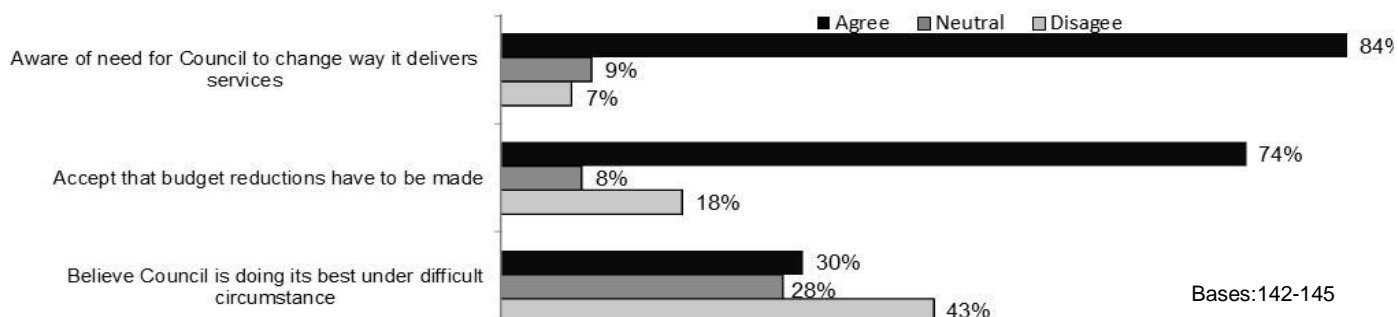


Bases:139-145

Strongest level of agreement related to the reduction in Elected Member allowances and senior council officers. The strongest level of disagreement was for the review of provision of school crossing patrols.

Q4: Managing change

Q: The council is going through a period of unprecedented change. As described above, in making decisions about what to change, the council's priority is to maintain support for vulnerable children and adults within the borough. With this in mind, please state how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements



Bases:142-145

Over four-fifths of respondents were aware of the need for the Council to change the way it delivers services and almost three-quarters accepted that budget reductions needed to be made however less than a third thought the Council was doing its best under difficult circumstances.

Q5: Impact of the proposals

Q: Please describe how you / your family will be affected by the proposals

Categorised comments	Number of respondents
Financial – including job loss	49
Minimal / no impact on self / family	28
Services used will be affected / won't get value for money	23
Concern for others / future	18
Equality impact	18
Comments on how savings can be made / other issues	13
Penalises workers / savers at expense of non-contributors	6
Don't receive any / many services	6

Financial – including job loss

At least 35 of the 49 comments in this category referred to adverse effects financially. Respondents talked about how they were struggling already: *“just about manage to keep my head above water”, “cannot tighten our belts any further”* and would *“be stretched to pay more each month in council tax. We're already in the overdraft most months”*. They pointed out that costs were increasing more rapidly than income *“not had a pay rise for the last five years. Yet my council tax has risen 10% in the last 20 years”* and *“no pay rises for us in private sector”*. Some respondents worked in services affected by the potential cuts *“the proposals are putting my job at risk - therefore my income. I work for one of the Public Health services were there is a reduction”*

Some of the other respondents who mentioned the financial aspect were accepting; for example; *“only the slight increase in Council tax”* and *“the amount is acceptable to me”*.

Minimal / no impact on self / family

Comments in this category were from people who were able to accept / afford an increase in Council Tax: *“fortunately, very little affect”, “very little personally.”* and *“if I'm honest - whatever happens our family adapts - we always manage”*. One said *“I feel the Council are doing a good job and personally I am comfortably off. I am very well aware that there are more needy & vulnerable people that really need all the Council's services.”*

Services used will be affected / won't get value for money

Respondents wrote about the importance of services and their long-term affect: *“services that are linked to the health of my family are a necessity - my family has accessed the stop smoking service and could not have quit smoking without them. This would have meant further health issues down the line.”*, *“children's centres are already being closed, and I and my youngest child rely on them for interaction outside the home.”*

Some respondents felt that they were paying out but not receiving anything back: *“reduced services such as waste collection, roads maintenance, grass cutting etc”*, and *“do not receive relevant help when needed”* also *“an increase in council tax for less services is unacceptable”*.

Concern for others / future

Respondents described concerns for others who used services, and the long-term effect: *“obese children with lack of free activities during holidays leading to higher costs to the NHS.”*, *“once the services are cut there will be no assistance for people to change their risky behaviours and these will continue to cost the council extra monies for the rest of their lives.”* Respondents pointed out that it was *“not all about individuals - this will affect us all.”*, and were worried about the future *“concerned what the charges made now may affect me if any future needs change”*.

Equality Impact / services for vulnerable people

Respondents felt that vulnerable members of the community such as older people and children with disabilities could be more adversely affected by the proposals than other residents, for example older people were *“less likely to ask for help if they have to use self-service or internet to contact council offices”* and this comment from a disabled person: *“any changes in this area will affect me living independently in my own house.”* Respondents also pointed out that vulnerable people often fell into more than one category *“I have a child with SEND who uses social care to support her needs - if this was stopped it would drastically affect her life and mine as a Carer as I am a disabled person as well.”*

Penalises workers / savers at expense of non-contributors

Respondents pointed out that *“any rise in Council Tax only affects those who are not on any benefits, as responsible pensioners we have to adhere to a budget”*

Respondents also felt that more revenue could be collected via Council Tax *“stop letting people get away with non-payment of council tax”*, and that everyone should contribute *“we will pay our way. More effort needs to be made to ensure EVERYONE in the borough does the same.”*

Q6: Alternative solutions

Q: Can you think of any other ways Bolton Council can make the savings whilst still delivering statutory services?

Categorised comments	Number of respondents
Comments about leadership / management	25
Cut staff costs / benefits / increase staff efficiencies	21
Cut costs of councillors / mayor	18
Work with other councils / agencies / private sector	15
Increase revenue / spend reserves / release capital	13
Other efficiencies use services,	12
Spend on preventative / proactive services	11
Cancel projects	10
Cut / reduce non-statutory services	9
Attract more people / spending to borough - improve appearance, transport links, free parking	7
Use volunteers / unemployed	6
Restrict / cut services / benefits	5

Comments about leadership / management

Respondents felt that decisions could have been made differently: *“don't offer £100's of £1000's of Council funds to private businesses owned by millionaires whilst cutting services”*

Respondents also suggested that *“better man-management of existing resources would result in better use of them”*.

Cut staff costs / benefits / increase staff efficiencies

Respondents suggested that it should be possible to *“reduce office staff”*; and make cost / efficiency savings: *“work together - and talk to client - cost savings due to improved communication”, “close the pension scheme to new starters, make regulatory departments profitable, deal with complaints first time”, “privatise so they are done more productively and at a lower price eg waste collection. Too much absenteeism, too little productivity”*

Other suggestions included *“Pay cuts should be proposed to higher management posts!”*

“Cut wages. Stop pay rise or increase.”

Cut costs of councillors / mayor

Comments included *“cut number of councillors, remove special responsibility allowances”*,

“why is it never considered about how many elected members that we have, Have we not reached the point where we reduce the number of councillors, this would be a popular move with the public”, “I don't think Councillors should be paid, it should be voluntary, quite a number have retired and have occupational pensions.”

Respondents also felt that savings could be made in the Mayoral office: *“scrap the use of Mayors”, “abolish the position of Mayor or at least reduce the amount spent on the mayoralty and other civic events.”*

Work with other councils / agencies / private sector

Respondents felt that efficiencies / more effective ways of working could be made by working with or learning from others: *“take a look at towns around Bolton and see how they are thriving instead of all the silly ideas”* and *“combine like for like services with neighbouring authorities”* or *“examine ways of out-sourcing services on a competitive tender basis”* Another suggestion was to *“look at selling some of your services to local business - you have a lot of skilled personnel that could make you money”*.

Increase revenue / spend reserves / release capital

Respondents had a variety of ideas including increasing charges so that *“all chargeable services should be based on ability to pay”*. Revenue could be increased by being *“stricter in getting 3 bedroom Council Houses back into circulation especially when an elderly person is left on their own as family members die or leave. i.e. compulsory moving into a smaller unit”*, also *“increases in Bandings ...when a resident submitted planning applications and they were then passed it was then re-assessed for council tax banding and the resident had to pay increased council tax”*. Other income generation ideas included *“hiring facilities”*

Other efficiencies

Suggestions here included *“try switching off lights in your offices, bin collecting one a month”* and removing service protection *“stop protecting social services from change, get them into the 21st century”*.

Spend on preventative / proactive services

This category included spending more on services initially to save in the long-term, particularly re: highways and health *“Don't axe services that will make a positive impact on health and save costs in the long run, preserve those services that serve to prevent problems”* and *“carry out maintenance & repair work to last, i.e. not quick fix - we had half the potholes filled in on our road, the other half continue to get bigger!”*.

Cancel projects

This category included comments on spending on *“statues & objects that are a waste of money”* and *“unnecessary items, things that are no value or makes any difference in Bolton.”*

Other respondents also mentioned the money spent on the Market Place, *“replacing traditional market stalls was a huge mistake. Now most shops sell same goods”* and *“stop digging up the town hall square.”*

Cut / reduce non-statutory services

Respondents suggested the Council *“stop funding so many non-statutory services that the Council do not have to offer”,* that we *“Close more libraries”* and *“shut all non-mandatory departments”* also *“get rid of non essential services, the ones that target minority groups, in this economic climate monies should be diverted to the services that serve the majority of Bolton Residents and not the few”*.

Attract more people / spending to borough - improve appearance, transport, parking

Respondents commented on the *“appalling”* transport links between Bolton and Manchester, which if improved could attract commuters to live in *“a strong community in a beautiful area”*.

It was suggested that Bolton needs a *“strong central area providing leisure activities - partly because the town centre is dying”* supported by good evening transport links.

Other ideas included *“reduce or scrap car parking fees in Bolton Town centre to encourage some shopping life back into Bolton. Encourage decent stores back into town centre, it is dead and not inviting.”* and *“rather than decrease services, sometimes services have to be increased to build capacity and success which then increases outcomes, investment, people moving to the area”*

Use volunteers / unemployed

Ideas here included using people who are *“out of work and able bodied to help with community and environmental works - community garden areas, keeping community areas clean and litter free”* *“we have got too used to expecting 'nanny state' to do everything, and it is simply no longer affordable.”* Volunteers could also deliver community meals, as happened elsewhere, leaving *“only the cost of meals to be met.”*

Restrict / cut services / benefits

Respondents suggested *“Cut expenditure in so called deprived areas”,* that the Council should review *“the current fashion for “politically correct” services & causes”* and look at definitions *“adults whose actions cause them to be unable to look after themselves should not be classed as vulnerable”*.



Budget consultation: have your say

Background

We are seeking your views on the financial challenge Bolton Council faces during the coming years. Significant reductions in funding from central government mean we have to make budget reductions of around £42.5m over the next three years, this comes after £140m of reductions over the last six years.

The report put forward to the Cabinet recommends using £30m of the Council's revenue reserves. This leaves £12.5m to be found from departments. We are now consulting on these proposals. Given the financial challenge facing the council it is important that residents express their views to help guide and shape decisions. Please read the information in the report which went to the Cabinet and then complete the questions below.

Our approach

Whilst achieving the necessary cuts is very difficult, the council continues to have a clear strategy for the delivery of its budget, as detailed below.

Q1 Please state how strongly you agree or disagree with each: [tick one box per row]

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree / disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Ensure the most vulnerable are impacted least by the budget reductions as far as possible	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maximise economic prosperity in Bolton ensuring economic growth, development and regeneration and job creation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Targeting should take place to protect services to individuals and areas in greatest need and deprivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
While putting the needs of local people and council tax payers first, seek to minimise the impact on staff and avoid compulsory redundancies where possible	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maximise proposals that improve efficiency and make savings from management and administration where possible before front-line services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use £30m of revenue reserves as a one-off to minimise cuts to services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Council tax

The proposals put forward assume a 1.99% increase in council tax and an additional further 2% for Adult Social Care.

Q2 Please state how strongly you agree or disagree that the council should raise council tax to achieve the savings and avoid even more cuts to services

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree / disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

* As an indication, an increase of 3.99% in council tax on a band A property would add around £41 and band C would add around £55 to the yearly bill

Proposals

In order to protect the most vulnerable children and adults, and to avoid deeper cuts to directly delivered services, the council has had to make some very difficult decisions. Some of the proposals that have been put forward are detailed below.

Q3 Please state how strongly you agree or disagree with each [tick one box per row]

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree / disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Protect services for the children in most need by reducing universal services in other areas such as youth, sport and play services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
More targeting of resources to the most vulnerable rather than universal benefits, for example reducing subsidies for school meals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reducing support for non-statutory services such as the school improvement team	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Elected Member allowances reduced and a reduction in senior council officers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A review of the charges for social care and community meals (no one will pay more than they can afford)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Review the provision of school crossing patrols	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Save money by encouraging people to self-serve and contact the council via the web or by telephone rather than face to face	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Managing change

The council is going through a period of unprecedented change. As described above, in making decisions about what to change, the council's priority is to maintain support for vulnerable children and adults within the borough.

Q4 With this in mind, please state how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements. [tick one box per row]

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree / disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I accept that budget reductions have to be made	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am aware of the need for the council to change the way it delivers its services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I believe the council is doing its best under difficult circumstances	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Impacts of the proposals

Q5 Please describe how you / your family will be affected by the proposals



Alternative solutions

Q6 Can you think of any other ways Bolton Council can make the savings whilst still delivering statutory services?



About you

So that we can understand how our proposals affect different residents, we would be grateful if you could answer the following questions.

Q7 Please tick the box that most closely describes your interest in this issue [tick one box]

- A resident in the borough of Bolton
 A Bolton Council member of staff
 An interested partner organisation (please state below)
 From a community or voluntary group (please state below)
 A business in the borough of Bolton (please state below)
 Other (please state below)

If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, group or business you do not need to complete the rest of this section

Q8 Please tell us your postcode?

Q9 What is your age?

Q10 What is your ethnic origin?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> White British | <input type="checkbox"/> Black / African / Caribbean / Black British |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other white | <input type="checkbox"/> Other ethnic group |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed / multiple ethnic groups | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian / Asian British | |

Q11 Are your day to day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted or expected to last, at least 12 months?

- Yes, limited a lot No
 Yes, limited a little

Q12 Do you look after, or give any help or support to family members, friends, neighbours or others because of either a long term physical or mental ill health / disability or problems due to old age? (do not count anything you do as part of your paid employment)

- No Yes, 20-49 hours a week
 Yes, 1-19 hours a week Yes, 50 hours or more a week

**Thank you for completing this questionnaire.
Please return your completed questionnaire in the enclosed pre-paid envelope before
Friday 13 January 2017.
You do not need a stamp.**

Clinical Commissioning Group Response

“The CCG worked with Bolton Council and other partners in the Health & Wellbeing Board to sign up to a five year financial plan as part of Bolton’s locality plan in the same week in November as this consultation was launched and the CCG was unaware until this point of the proposals for council savings. Unfortunately, elements of the proposed savings impact the ability of the Health & Wellbeing Board’s plan to deliver.

“The key example of this is the proposal to review Council contribution to Think Positive. If the council stops its £180,000 funding to Think Positive, the Access to Psychological Therapies services will reduce and Bolton will fail its national targets in this area. Bolton’s joint transformation fund bid to Greater Manchester for health and social care included a request for funding to further increase capacity in Psychological therapies in order to support our locality plan outcomes, support people back into employment (further backed by the Work In Health Green Paper) and meet the demand expected from the Working Well initiative. With a reduction in baseline spend, as well as increasing waits, the expected outcomes of Transformation Fund investment agreed jointly with Bolton partners will not be delivered.

“The CCG has been engaged in the plans for substance misuse services and will continue to take our part in ensuring Bolton people get a more integrated service to support substance misuse, alcohol and mental health needs.

“The list of public health savings includes services which are targeted at some of the health priorities for Bolton, such as healthy lifestyle and obesity. These are areas where prevention and early intervention are an agreed priority for Bolton partners at the Health and Wellbeing Board so the CCG will continue to work with the Council to ensure there are effective plans for alternative ways of providing this support to local people, particularly in neighbourhood renewal areas where there is most need.”

Bolton CVS



Response to Bolton Council's Strategic Budget Consultation

January 2017

12 January 2017

Introduction

Bolton Community and Voluntary Services (CVS) is a membership organisation with over 26 years of experience of providing high quality, intensive capacity building support and championing the contribution of the 1000+ voluntary and community sector groups and organisations across the borough of Bolton.

On Monday 28th November 2016, Bolton CVS hosted a '*Budget Update and Options 2017 – 2019*' workshop session for the voluntary and community sector at the Bolton Hub. The session included a presentation by Janet Pollard on behalf of Bolton Council which outlined the options and proposals that were currently being consulted on.

Following the presentation, Bolton CVS held a round table discussion session about some of the assumed and potential impacts on the voluntary and community sector and those who access services and support offered by the voluntary and community sector in Bolton. **35** individuals attended the session with **22** different Bolton based groups and organisations represented including; *Bolton Community and Voluntary Services, Action for Children, Birtenshaw, Bolton Under Fives Forum, Methodist Church, BAND, Toy Library, MHIST, Asian Elders, Age UK Bolton, Bolton at Home, Healthwatch Bolton, YMCA, Bolton LGBT, Senior Solutions, Bolton Young People's Housing Service, BBNW, Zacs, SNUFs, Beacon Counselling, Bolton Lads and Girls Club.*

This consultation response aims to collate some of the key messages, concerns discussed at the session on behalf of those voluntary and community sector organisation's present and include broader thoughts from both Bolton CVS and our voluntary and community sector partners.

Background

This consultation response is in direct response to the Strategic Budget consultation being undertaken by Bolton Council, seeking views on the financial challenge Bolton Council faces during the coming years and focusing on the significant reductions in funding from central government and the proposed budget reductions of around £42.5m over the next three years.

It aims to speak to the report put forward to the Cabinet recommending using £30m of the Council's revenue reserves. This leaves £12.5m to be found from departments.

Information that influenced the content of this consultation was taken from the information in [Part A](#) and [Part B](#) of the report which went to the Cabinet and directly responds to the consultation questions.

Question 1 - Our approach

Whilst achieving the necessary cuts is very difficult, the council continues to have a clear strategy for the delivery of its budget, as detailed below.

Please state how strongly you agree or disagree with each: [tick one box per row]

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree/ disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<i>Ensure the most vulnerable are impacted least by the budget reductions as far as possible.</i>	✓				
Comments:	It would be helpful to have an outline narrative provided by Bolton Council of what is meant by the 'most vulnerable' and how the group is defined and how vulnerability will be assessed consistently across council services and those services provided by partner agencies. This narrative could be designed in partnership with system partners and the community in order to have a shared understanding across the borough.				

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree/ disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Maximise economic prosperity in Bolton ensuring economic growth, development and regeneration and job creation.	✓				
*Comments:	Economic prosperity has to remain a strategic focus for Bolton, as in 2020 when Bolton Council retains control of the business rates, this is ultimately how the council will cover the vast majority of the costs of services and support in the borough. In order to ensure economic growth and stand true to its commitment and lead by example, Bolton Council should implement and fully sign up to the Living Wage Foundation and formally become a Living Wage employer, ensuring that all staff and contracts are paying the 'Living Wage' in Bolton.				

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree/ disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Targeting should take place to protect services to individuals and areas in greatest need and deprivation.		✓			
Comments:	Whilst it should be recognised that targeting is important, as some areas/neighbourhoods and demographics face different issues, there is a risk that focusing on one group or problem means that another (whether that be a demographic or location) then suffers. It is essential that Bolton Council ensures that all of its population who needs support is able to access it, to create a positive borough that meets the needs of everyone and we don't create new pockets of deprivation or exclusion whilst tackling current issues and demand patterns.				

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly
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	Agree		agree/ disagree		disagree
While putting the needs of local people and council tax payers first, seek to minimise the impact on staff and avoid compulsory redundancies where possible.				✓	
Comments:	<p>Bolton Council has a responsibility to its residents first and foremost and should ensure that they are at the centre of all decision making.</p> <p>If Bolton Council implements processes that minimise impact on its staff, then the same approach should be fostered and adopted for its supply chain.</p> <p>When cuts don't happen within the council but happen outside the council, then as a result people who have established roots in Bolton are still being directly impacted through compulsory redundancies and other such issues.</p> <p>The consequential impacts of cuts should be effectively and fairly assessed through consultation to both Bolton Council and its supply chains including the voluntary and community sector.</p>				

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree/ disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Maximise proposals that improve efficiency and make savings from management and administration where possible before front-line services.		✓			
*Comments:	<p>It can't be argued against the fact that we have to ensure that the best return on investment is achieved for Bolton. Simply cutting management and administration won't necessarily achieve the borough's aspirations and should be approached in the context of;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introducing digital options for services and support and building on the 'digital by default' strategy where this doesn't exclude or disproportionately affect certain groups AND where access and support has been implemented to enable people to utilise newly developed services, including ways of ensuring digital inclusion for those in poverty, where the technical resources don't exist within homes or locally, where ability or skills are a factor and considering disabled and language accessibility and of course age, carers status and long term conditions and dementia. • Decisions should be made as to 'outsourcing', 'commissioning' or 'grant making' to enable services which may currently exist within Bolton Council to take place within or as a result of collaboration outside the current council structure to open the door to new models of investment and funding, as part of a wider strategy for community involvement of services and building on the commitment to co-production and co-design in the Vision Strategy 2030. 				

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree/ disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Use £30m of revenue reserves as a one-off to minimise cuts to services.	✓				
Comments:	It is recognised and welcomed that Bolton Council have made the decision to utilise reserves to off-set the impact of cuts and this decision is positively received by Bolton CVS and other voluntary and community sector partners. It is essential that Bolton Council continues to follow its reserves strategy and reserves policy in line with its Governance processes.				

Question 2 - Council Tax

The proposals put forward assume a 1.99% increase in council tax and an additional further 2% for Adult Social Care.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree/ disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Please state how strongly you agree or disagree that the council should raise council tax to achieve the savings and avoid even more cuts to services:		✓			
Comments:	The question needs to be answered in how this decision affects the most vulnerable in Bolton, who this decision will make more vulnerable and what measures have been put in place or will be put in place to reduce the impact of an increase in Council Tax to those already facing significant challenges in the borough. We already know that Bolton's average wage is below the national average and we need to consider that in decision making on how cuts impact low earning workers, when aligned to strategies aiming to encourage and enable people to return to and/or start work.				

As an indication, an increase of 3.99% in council tax on a band A property would add around £41 and a band C would add around £55 to the yearly bill.

Question 3 – Proposals

In order to protect the most vulnerable children and adults, and to avoid deeper cuts to directly delivered services, the council has had to make some very difficult decisions. Some of the proposals that have been put forward are detailed below.

Please state how strongly you agree or disagree with each [tick one box per row].

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree/ disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Protect services for the children in most need by reducing universal services in other areas such as youth, sport and play services				✓	
Comments:	<p>The important factor here is what is in scope and therefore it is difficult to answer this question in any other way.</p> <p>Through disestablishing services for those families which may struggle without them, as a borough we run the risk of pushing more families into facing distress and new challenges and increasing their vulnerability.</p> <p>We have to apply caution in cutting services as the longer term impact will increase demand in other places and this will increase demand within the voluntary and community sector which is already struggling to meet demand (in some areas) and with appropriate investment could create capacity.</p> <p>Voluntary and community sector services can help to support and manage demand, but that is based on adequate and appropriate investment in those services as they also need to maintain resource and quality, whether that resource is staff or volunteers, there are always costs attached.</p> <p>As much research outlines, a universal approach to services through making eligibility for benefits a right of citizenship creates the sense of equality. Through placing citizens on equal ground rather than emphasising difference, universal approaches can strengthen social cohesion and reduce inequalities.</p>				

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree/ disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
More targeting of resources to the most vulnerable rather than universal benefits, for example reducing subsidies for school meals.				✓	
Comments:	<p>Again, the important factor here is what is in scope and how is this assessed for those who are currently 'just about managing'.</p> <p>For some, the school meal may be a lifeline.</p> <p>A universal approach to services through making eligibility for benefits a right of citizenship creates the sense of equality.</p> <p>Through placing citizens on equal ground rather than emphasising difference, universal approaches can strengthen social cohesion and reduce inequalities.</p>				

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree/ disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Reducing support for non-statutory services such as the school improvement team.			✓		
Comments:	<p>It is essential that new ways of delivering non statutory services are identified, including transferring such services to the voluntary and community sector with appropriate kick-starter investment.</p> <p>Understanding what is in scope is also important. Clarity on the role and function of the school improvement team is required and if a borough priority is 'economic growth, development and regeneration and job creation', then we need effective schools developing effective people to achieve brilliant things. The strategy must be connected and is it therefore wise to disestablish something that will help Bolton to achieve its strategic priorities without clearly identifying where that function could be picked up?</p>				

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree/ disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Elected Member allowances reduced and a reduction in senior council officers.			✓		
Comments:	<p>It is important that Elected Member allowances should be reviewed along with other boroughs across Greater Manchester and that allowances should reflect responsibilities, roles and expectations. Through not reimbursing such roles effectively potentially restricts less affluent people from undertaking such roles and potentially perpetuates inequality and gaps in understanding of communities within the decision making and governance of the borough.</p> <p>The number of Senior Council officers and the grade at which they're appointed should relate to the effective management of the Borough and the management of contracts, grants and external commissioning. Such roles should also make consideration for positive performance and improvements in Bolton's people and place outcomes. Where possible, Senior roles could be reviewed and shared; for instance, across commissioning were more of this work is joined up with the Clinical Commissioning Group, integrating budgets and work programmes where this is viable and effective.</p> <p>The co-design and delivery of services should also enable more shared services and where practicable, across borough boundaries considering models and approaches such as the shared Director of Public Health position.</p>				

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree/ disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
A review of the charges for social care and community meals (no one will pay more than they can afford).			✓		
Comments:	<p>We believe think that this should be done in the context of what is being provided also through the voluntary and community sector as that information needs to influence decision making, such as foodbanks, lunches and other activities.</p> <p>There is a potential for decisions to be made on what is currently known within the Public Sector and across some services, without realising the extent to which support is being provided through the wider voluntary and community sector offer and other initiatives and therefore decisions that impact those services may lead to increased demand via social care (depending on what is covered/in scope).</p> <p>Ultimately, it should be recognised that this review may lead to a need for greater investment or new models of delivery.</p>				

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree/ disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Review the provision of school crossing patrols.		✓			
Comments:	<p>Anything that compromises the safety of Bolton residents must fully account for the fact that there needs to be appropriate measures in place to mitigate the potential risks and both human and financial costs.</p>				

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree/ disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Save money by encouraging people to self-serve and contact the council via the web or by telephone rather than face to face		✓			
Comments:	<p>Where people are encouraged to use digital to self-serve, then appropriate measures must be implemented to ensure that the entire population has equal and fair access to services and information in Bolton.</p>				

Question 4 - Managing change

The council is going through a period of unprecedented change. As described above, in making decisions about what to change, the council's priority is to maintain support for vulnerable children and adults within the borough.

With this in mind, please state how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements. [tick one box per row]

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree/ disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I accept that budget reductions have to be made.				✓	
Comments:	<p>It is clear that the current conditions present challenges for Bolton Council, however it is not acceptable that budget reductions have to be made as it is short sighted, however it is clear that reductions are in line with the cuts to the Revenue Support Grant. The longer term impact of cutting prevention services and support for our population, including universal services, means that there will be greater costs in the future. The complexity of cases being seen by the voluntary and community sector and the level of support needed for some groups is increasing and without appropriate investment and co-ordination, these people will escalate in to crisis increasingly. Short term cost savings will neither effectively shift demand or reduce costs to the system, it will just create new patterns of demand and also ineffective services that don't meet quality standards or improved outcomes, there needs to be strong voice from both Bolton at the Greater Manchester level, which includes key partners including the CCG and the Foundation Trust, and Greater Manchester needs to be making this point nationally.</p> <p>We should be testing and investing in new models of services and support that meet the needs of our diverse and evolving population, at the same time as running existing services to ensure that they work and then decommissioning appropriately.</p>				

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree/ disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I am aware of the need for the council to change the way it delivers its services.	✓				
Comments:	<p>It is widely recognised that there are a range of service models that will improve outcomes for people in Bolton and that Bolton Council must always ensure that it is on a journey of continuous improvement.</p> <p>Through providing more ownership to populations and more involvement of residents, communities and voluntary sector groups and organisations in the design, delivery and development of services and support, there is significant opportunity to continue to improve services.</p> <p>Bolton Council should ensure that they continuously strive for excellence, safety, quality and effectiveness in all service delivery whilst recognising the potential of changing delivery models and partners, exploring and effectively harnessing the power, potential and opportunity of the voluntary and community sector in new and innovative ways.</p>				

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree/ disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I believe that the council is doing its best under difficult circumstances.			✓		
Comments:	<p>It can't be avoided that these are challenging times, however there are increases in certain types of crime, street begging and homelessness, cuts to services, quality concerns in social care, significant changes to children's services, thresholds moving, concerns around suicide and wider mental health, a workforce that is struggling, public concern, increased access at food banks, capacity issues within voluntary sector services and widespread concern about the ability to support our ageing and diverse population which demonstrates the fact that our local populations are struggling.</p> <p>It is important to recognise the role and contribution of officers, leaders and elected members in this challenging environment, in the same way we have to recognise the resilience and the contribution of volunteers and voluntary and community sector based groups and organisations (including faith groups and social enterprise).</p> <p>Bold decisions and inspiring leadership is needed in order to ensure that we can improve the lives of our residents. It is not purely the role of Bolton Council to address all these factors and we must inspire the whole system to collaborate, involve communities and enable behaviour change within our communities; but this all takes intervention and resources at a time of significant challenges.</p> <p>We have to work together and we have to recognise strengths, failures and the need for changes in order to meet the needs of residents.</p>				

Please describe how you / your family will be affected by the proposals

Key issues identified by the 35 participants at the Strategic Budget Consultation event hosted by Bolton CVS in November 2016 included:

What impact or assumed impact may the budget have on your group or organisation?

- There is a significant concern over the rhetoric of prevention and the actual commitment to ensuring that prevention is a reality in the borough.
- Greater need to demonstrate impact for voluntary and community groups, even though the resource required to do this is being stretched.
- It will potentially mean that some of our services for vulnerable people have to close.
- It could become self-perpetuating and a spiral down to the bottom, particularly where price is a factor.
- Difficult to say what the impact will be without actual detail.
- There will be increased demand on voluntary sector services which probably hasn't been considered in the public sector planning.
- There will be greater competition in the sector for investment, with significantly less local investment in the sector.
- Groups and organisations will have to spend more time on accessing funding than delivering services and support.
- Knock on effect of 'holes' or 'gaps' in services.
- Short length of service models.
- The length of funding or investment is often not long enough to prove the point, value or efficacy of what the VCS can do/offer.
- Speed of increase in demand and a limited ability to scale up.
- The connectivity of services and support is currently not as it should be; further demand and time pressures will not improve this situation and silo working.
- What is the role of (and where is) health in relation to all of these social care cuts in this new joined up system?
- ESOL classes if cuts happen and we can't provide ESOL our learners won't be able to go on to further studies and pay back into the economy.
- Youth services and housing, will there be a spike in homelessness/crime.

What impact or assumed impact may the budget have on those who access voluntary and community sector services or support?

- Voluntary sector is expected and needs to 'pick up the slack', but with less investment than currently.
- Current cuts are already affecting the most vulnerable in the borough. Further cuts will do more of this.
- The voluntary sector is best placed to reach the most vulnerable.
- The most vulnerable can't afford to pay for services and therefore approaches need to be implemented.
- Communities don't understand the availability and diversity of offer from Bolton Council and what support is available and we need to plan for this.
- The quality of services and support will be affected, which will affect more people in the longer term and increase demand on statutory services.
- Greater demand will be put on other commissioned (and in many cases none commissioned and none grant funded) voluntary and community sector groups.
- Plans are being designed in isolation – with carefully selected partners.
- The council is looking too 'inwardly' about the impact on them, and doesn't appear to be transforming itself to the outside world.
- Those individuals currently supported through VCS provision that will be squeezed or will end, will appear at A&E, in GP surgeries and at the One Stop Shop. The Public Sector does not know some of these people yet.
- Effective services may disappear altogether.
- Support needs don't get met and they may put pressure on other services.
- Managing service user expectations.
- People with multiple challenges, difficulties and issues will be the most excluded.
- Young people's services are over-represented?
- Difficult to see what vulnerabilities are impacted or created.
- Organisation's should work more in alliance to gain strength.
- We need to understand who'd delivering what, so services can be co-ordinated better.
- Increased vulnerability of the most vulnerable.
- Increase in a group of people who are yet unknown to the statutory sector as they've been supported in the voluntary and community sector, which is no longer able to support the complexity.

- More demand on other statutory and none-statutory services.
- Increase in mental health and suicide.
- Community sector is just expected to 'pick up the pieces'.

Can you think of any other ways Bolton Council can make the savings whilst still delivering statutory services?

It is essential that engagement with the voluntary and community sector is maintained and focused around co-design and inclusion in order for the voluntary and community sector to innovate and meet demand created by any changes to existing services. Bolton Council is already working with Bolton CVS to develop messages and outline the role and contribution of the voluntary and community sector in the borough and support communities to understand and embrace the Vision Strategy.

Bolton Council could develop their Social Value policy in partnership with partners, outlining the approach for Bolton and ensuring buy-in from the private sector and establishing the voluntary and community sector as a key partner. Bolton Council could follow other localities across Greater Manchester and increase the social value aspect of each and every tender specification for Bolton to a minimum of 20% to increase and swell the potential and opportunity of each and every Bolton £1 spent on contracts. Social value is “the benefit to the community from a commissioning/procurement process over and above the direct purchasing of goods, services and outcomes”. There is no authoritative list of what these benefits may be – the Act is deliberately flexible because social value is best approached by considering each local context and needs, this means that Bolton could focus on specific areas, such as Children and Young people or Adult Social Care for example. The Act gives commissioners and procurement officials the freedom to determine what kind of additional social or environmental value would best serve the needs of the local community as well as creating an opportunity for providers to innovate.

There is the factor of economies of scale and understanding that some things are delivered better over different geographic and/or thematic footprints. Is a strategy of shared services across local authorities something which will provide more savings, such as the Bolton, Trafford and Salford substance use tender and also the shared Director of Public Health? This should only be done where this does not further marginalise or exclude Bolton residents or disadvantage Bolton in any way greater than it would people in any other borough.

As a commitment towards protecting the most vulnerable, Bolton Council should become an accredited ‘Living Wage’ employer, committing to prevent poverty within working families in the borough and leading by example for Bolton.

Investment in communities and community based interventions should be designed and developed with the end user outcome as the key driver in all instances. Where possible, practical and practicable this could be done jointly and system-wide for Bolton to achieve the best value from each pound and the voluntary and community sector should have a role in the governance structures established to support integration.

There needs to be appropriate investment in prevention ambitions and intentions for Bolton effectively and a commitment to enabling the voluntary and community sector to build and enable capacity within communities across all thematic and population strands.

In this time of significant change, investment in front line voluntary and community sector services should be maintained and wherever possible increased, with a focus on central operating and delivery costs. Through developing grant programmes to enable this, Bolton based voluntary and community sector groups will be able to draw down other monies to the borough to improve the lives of residents with the right support and strategies, such as the Vision 2030 and officer support. A strategic approach to supporting an effective voluntary and community sector in these challenging times will provide resource and capacity to the system, ensuring adequate provision for the most vulnerable in the borough looking at examples such as the Camden Voluntary Sector model and the Plymouth Cooperative Commissioning model.

New commissioning specifications should be co-designed with local people who have experienced similar to what the intended service specification aims to support or alleviate without exception, building on the borough intentions of co-design and co-production in order to improve service outcomes for the individual and result in less 'revolving door' activity and public sector service duplication.

There must be a focus on 'effectiveness opposed to efficiencies' and that decisions are led as much by impact on communities and the borough in line with strategy and planning, as well as the immediate cost benefit analysis. We must ensure in all instances that decisions around investment and services consider the social and environmental impact as well as the financial. We need to foster and adopt social value in to all of our decision making processes.

It is essential to maintain effective services that people use and therefore quality and safety of provision needs to be maintained in all instances and supported. This needs to be consistently applied and the voluntary and community sector needs support with this.

Trial offering local companies incentives where possible in exchange for providing good jobs for **local** people in designated areas in order to develop sound evidence on the impact of such incentives in line with Joseph Rowntree poverty recommendations.

The door needs to remain open to enable voluntary and community sector providers to influence and shape the future in Bolton.



GMB 23 Branch

Response to Strategic Budget Consultation 2017-18/2018-19

Bolton council informed the trade unions of its intentions to set a two-year budget at the SLJCC meeting on the 3rd November 2016

On the 9th of November both the GMB and UNISON meet at the chief executive s JCC meeting with the borough solicitor

A further meeting was held on the 14th December with the borough solicitor and also with the head of the H/R department and explanations of how the business rates would work.

Points of consideration from the GMB are as follows.

- 1. We the GMB welcome the decision to use the reserves that the council stipulated to avoid further cuts.**
- 2. We also can see the rational for the council to accept the government's proposal for a four-year settlement.**
- 3. We also take note that the proposal of a two – year budget plan and can see the thought in that process**

- 4. GMB do have concerns over the 239 job's noted to be at risk**
- 5. We would ask if any amount of money left over from the 2015/2017 budget to be used for the forthcoming cuts and inform the GMB of the amount.**
- 6. With regards to the proposal to reduce the current enhanced pay connected to VS from 12 weeks to 6 weeks GMB would ask the council to reconsider their position with regards to this reduction.**

In conclusion we are glad to see the approach to try and mitigate any compulsory redundancy has been at the forefront of the way the council has approached the drastic situation we are presently in.

**Stephen Dickinson Branch Secretary.
On Behalf of the B23 Branch Committee.**

13 January 2017

Consultation and Research Team
Third Floor
The Wellsprings
Victoria Square
Bolton
BL1 1US

Dear Consultation and Research Team

Response to the Strategic budget consultation

MhIST does not agree with or support the statement that the budget strategy re-affirmed at Cabinet on 10th October will in fact be "Protecting the most vulnerable in the Borough". We would like to try to make a case for the rejection and rethinking of the proposed strategic budget. For MhIST, as a values based organisation what is proposed is, we believe, the opposite of what the council should be proposing. We have some specific concerns which we will attempt to illuminate in the following sections.

Who is MhIST?

MhIST is a well-respected Bolton based charity which has been in operation since the early 1990s. MhIST provides a range of low intensity, high volume activities in support of people who experience mental health problems. On average we support 250-300 people every week. Our method of operation is to use the skills, knowledge, and experience of the people of the borough to deliver services which divert people with needs away from local authority and health authority front line, crisis, and emergency services. Many of our referrals emanate directly from health and council sources which are already unable to deal with the needs of

MhIST is a registered charity number 1130152 and is registered in Cardiff as a company limited by guarantee number 4128980.

local people. Our objective is to enable local citizens to be able to provide services for and support themselves. We use coproduction and asset based community development techniques to achieve these goals, where we can. The people who use our services feel that MhIST is an enormously valuable community resource without which the borough as a whole would be much less able to support the most vulnerable people in our community, in particular those people who experience mental health problems. MhIST, like other voluntary and community sector (VCS) agencies, provides high quality good value services and many (MhIST included) make a net contribution to the borough through our own earnings and inward grant funding.

Voluntary is not free

I would like to emphasise that VCS agencies are not free. Voluntary is not the same as free, somebody pays, and as resources are squeezed and reduced our ability to provide the support that so many vulnerable people in our community require diminishes. Further shrinking of our services will reveal the lack of depth in the authorities' services mentioned earlier and begin to overwhelm them. This will leave people exposed, leading to further despair, reduced hope for the future, and increased vulnerability. This does not sound like protection of the most vulnerable citizens in the borough.

MhIST appreciates that times are financially difficult and there must be spending reviews and reductions, alas MhIST and the wider VCS are unable to take up the increase in demand however much we might wish to, without further investment. Nor do we see that the council spending reserves on keeping what exists, but at a reduced level, for a few years is the best way forward. Surely a transformation needs to occur and services need to be rethought, redesigned, and coproduced, rather than just less of the same for an indeterminate period. Spending reserves in this way looks to the outsider of denial of the problem with hopes that something will come along to save the situation if only we can hold on long enough.

Effective or efficient

Effectiveness, doing the right thing, is extremely important at MhIST. It means that we are able to tailor our support directly to the needs of the people and then, most often, they don't

come back, which we think is good. Efficiency, doing things right, on the other hand, works well for our administration and back office processes. Working with people who have wide and varied needs is not conducive to efficiency, unless you provide services where 'one size fits all', which then doesn't fit most of the people, at least not in our case. By being effective we are able to provide service which meet needs and reduce demand in urgent, emergency, and other front line services.

Increased demand – Reduced supply

It is not clear from the proposals if or how the council plans to mitigate the movement in demand when reviews are implemented. It will not just go away, it will come to VCS providers.

We note that there is a proposal to 'review of grants to the independent and voluntary sector' which linked to many of the other proposals for review, and irrespective of the numbers concerned, will impact the ability of MhIST to respond to likely increases in demand. When, as there has been in the past, a reduction in council or health service provision takes place much of the demand falls to the VCS to support. There is a clear link between the reduction or removal of council services and an increase in demand for MhIST services. In the mental health economy there is a direct impact on MhIST and because of reduced investment over recent years we are now unable to scale up quickly, we will not be able to plug the gaps or find suitable alternatives, and it will actually put pressure on and cause the closure of some of the services which we already provide for vulnerable people. We feel that this will create a downward and self-perpetuating spiral of supply (a race to the bottom) against the backdrop of increasing volume and acuity of demand. Our recent experience of bed closures by GMW at Royal Bolton Hospital is a case in point. Bed closures and their consequent community reorganisations have led directly to an increase in demand for MhIST services.

As previously mentioned VCS organisations are not free to operate, we need money just like everyone else. With an expectation of the council saving many millions in the borough we have to counter with an increased need for financial and other support. It is important that disinvestment does not lead to a barren VCS landscape, as has happened in other local

authority areas where vulnerable citizens have been left with no choices. Bolton has a vibrant, but diminishing, voluntary and community sector, which is the envy for miles around.

Dealing with demand means we need more resource. MhIST is capable and reasonably successful at bringing in investment funds (well over £1,000,000 within the last 10 years or so) from outside the borough, but fund raising is time consuming and intensely competitive. That competition is increasing locally, regionally, and nationally and the average values are reducing. We believe that we should be spending time delivering great services to local people that need them. Proactive support in this area would be helpful.

To sum up, we believe that these proposals will shift demand towards poorly funded and resourced VCS services, creating a flow of demand away from council services, and putting our existing services at risk. VCS services being relatively poorly resourced, and although good at attracting external funding, will be unable to both retain the skills and knowledge needed to bring in extra operating funds and provide great services to vulnerable local people.

Commitment to prevention – Links to Economic prosperity

The strategic approach which will be taken by the council to inform proposals will be, among others, 'alternative service delivery models to deliver reductions in operating costs'. The proposed budget does not appear to support the concept of prevention. There are no obvious proposals which suggest or state an investment in developing new models or prevention, all of them appear to be about reductions. The ultimate aim of Bolton council and NHS services is to reduce the numbers of people requiring more intensive and more costly interventions through social care and other crisis led services, by providing timely and effective responses that prevent difficulties escalating. For many years there has been a focus on reducing demand for urgent, emergency, and crisis services, yet the budget proposals give no indications of how a prevention system might truly be implemented or funded.

We at MhIST, and in the wider VCS, know all about prevention. As previously mentioned we provide an effective service, by doing the right thing, that people need and we help them to avoid the need to use statutory services leading to reduced demand. It is well understood

that prevention and delay is less expensive than dealing with and putting right chronic conditions. Prevention is also an important way of tackling the persistent inequalities in life expectancy and healthy life expectancy across England. These are things which are no doubt important to the more vulnerable people who live in Bolton. We know from colleagues in public health that prevention is cost-effective, prevention will save money in the long-term, and the benefits of prevention reach far beyond where the money or service was originally delivered.

The experience of MhIST is that in general terms people who experience mental health problems have been progressively less able to access services and are being driven to greater despair. This despair creates difficulties for families and friends, leads to relationship breakdowns, places more demand on community services such as GPs, increases demand on money skills agencies, people being sacked or unable to work. It does not take long for people to go from being safe and strong citizens to being vulnerable ones. People need only have a short run of bad luck, for example, an unexpected big bill, a dressing down at work, poor sleep, or an illness, and they can easily slide in to despair in a few short months. All of which ultimately reduces and destabilises economic development.

Every week at MhIST we are hearing the words, 'I was so desperate I had to attempt suicide before services took any notice, then they patched me up and referred me to you'. With services being unable to deal with the more simple needs of the population, it is no great surprise that urgent, emergency, and crisis services are being overwhelmed, something we can help to prevent.

At MhIST we are lucky, we are able to provide an environment where people feel valued, safe and supported. We have been able to prevent some people from sliding into oblivion and help them to climb back into our community, get a job, and rebuild their lives. If we had been better resourced we could have supported many more people to achieve that goal.

In summary, we do not believe that these proposals can support either goal of economic prosperity or of protecting the most vulnerable in Bolton. They will undermine the good work which we in the VCS undertake and will not support economic development. These proposals do not appear to suggest planning for strong, robust prevention services in the community, without which neither of the stated goals of the review seem likely to be achieved.

Finally, as an organisation, MhIST is extremely happy to try and help address the difficulties which the council and community face, but we are unable to do it alone. We want to be included at the beginning of the thinking, we want to be taken seriously, we want to have some control, and we want to be treated as equals.

Many thanks for your consideration of our submission.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Melvin Bradley', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Melvin Bradley

Manager

For and on behalf of MhIST

Consultation Response to the Bolton Borough Council's outlined strategic savings proposals 2017-19

Bolton Foundation Trust (FT) values and supports the services delivered by Bolton Borough Council (BMBC) to the residents of Bolton. As a major provider of health services in Bolton and beyond, Bolton Foundation Trust is committed to working in close partnership with BMBC to ensure a sustainable Health and Social Care system by 2021.

This paper provides a single Executive Director agreed response on behalf of Bolton NHS Foundation Trust. Bolton FT requests that this response is shared with the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

In November 2016 the Bolton Health and Well-being Board, which represents all Health and Social Care Partners in Bolton, signed up to a vision to support behavioural change with people successfully managing their own health and well-being, supported by knowledgeable and skilled teams of integrated health and social care professionals. This is about changing health and care so we spend less on hospital and long term care and more on care in the community. The Locality Plan includes the following high level objectives for Bolton:

- We want to help people to live healthy lives and empower communities to support themselves.
- We need to get in early, offering screening and support to prevent illness

In line with the Theme 1 of the Greater Manchester Plan 'Taking Charge' we have committed to building a system wide, strategic partnership to lead the population level prevention and health improvement. Bolton Foundation Trust strongly supports this agreed vision and therefore continued investment in public health services to prevent unnecessary illness in the future at a cost to both Health and Social Care. Reduction in investment of public health services goes against the Bolton Locality Plan.

We are concerned that the proposed approach seems to represent a slicing of individual departmental/service budgets. Bolton FT would like to work closely with the council to agree service changes that will allow the health and social care system to live within its means and therefore provide a sustainable system for the future.

Specific feedback is provided relating to the proposed reductions in funding to the services provided by Bolton FT. High level executive summaries are provided only within this paper with detailed responses included within the appendices.

Review of Oral Health Prevention Services (Appendix A)

We are concerned that the proposed reduction in funding for Oral Health Preventative Services, in particular the Oral Health Improvement Team (OHIT) will have a large impact on

some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged communities living within the borough. For our children under 5 years Bolton has been identified as one of the 13 priority areas for child dental health nationally. Preventative services can evidence the positive impact on the demand for intervention, despite this reduction child teeth extraction costs Greater Manchester around £6,000,000 per year.

For our older population, approximately 20% of care home managers reported difficulties in accessing routine and emergency dental care contributing to attendances to A+E with dental related problems. Bolton OHIT provides training to adult carers and care homes. This fits directly within the locality plan priority for a system redesign of care homes and home care.

Review of Sexual Health and Contraception Services

In 2016 Bolton FT was awarded the contract to provide sexual health services for the populations of Bolton and Salford. This recently renewed contract had a reduced value to the previous sums invested therefore any further reduction in funds would put at risk the financial sustainability of both the Bolton and Salford Sexual Health Services.

Review/Redesign of smoking cessation provision (Appendix B)

Over half of life-long smokers are killed by their habit, with smokers dying on average 10 years before non-smokers. For every smoker who dies, 20 are living with a chronic illness caused or exacerbated by smoking. Amongst the most deprived areas in Bolton prevalence is 34.5%. Children living with a smoker are 3 times more likely to smoke than those living with non-smokers.

Through national recognition and comparisons the Bolton Smoking Cessation Service can demonstrate its effectiveness. The funding of the stop smoking service is insignificant in comparison with the cost to Bolton in terms of the care of those with long term conditions as a result of smoking. Bolton FT is concerned that any reduction to this service would have a significant impact on future healthcare demand.

Review of Food and Health Services (Appendix C)

The core aim of the food and health services are to empower people with the knowledge, skills and motivation to eat a healthy balanced diet to keep people fit and active, encourage self-care, general health and well-being and ultimately reduce their risk of ill-health, costly hospital admissions and reliance on social care in the future.

Bolton FT has provided Bolton Council with a series of options to reduce cost; appreciating the reality that the Council budget is being significantly reduced. It is felt that a 25% reduction in budget with innovative new ways of working would be the most feasible of these options and would enable a similar level of positive outcomes.

Review of the Community Weight Management Service (Appendix D)

The proposed savings of £91,000 equates to the annual contract value of the riteweight services and therefore the proposals effectively decommission the service. The community weight management team provide the essential link and pathway from the health trainers to the specialist weight management service. As such it provides a key function in preventing demand for the more costly specialist service whilst offering more targeted support than the Health Trainers can provide. There are currently in excess of 150,000 people living in Bolton who could benefit from the support offered by this service with £89.6 million Bolton Pounds spent on managing the consequences of obesity in 2015.

Bolton FT suggests that there is an opportunity to strengthen links with the specialist service to improve overall provision, minimise gaps and improve pathways. Currently the specialist weight management services are commissioned separately. Formalising these links would allow design of an optimum treatment plan for all patients.

Finally as a potential cross cutting impact, consideration must be given to the cost of any potential redundancies within the wider health and social care system. Bolton FT will work closely with all partners to enable opportunities for public service staff affected by change regardless of the employing organisation.

Bolton FT will continue to work in collaboration with Bolton Council to offer the best solution possible to the residents and employees of Bolton.

Appendix A - Review of Oral Health Prevention Services

Improving Oral Health of Children aged 0-5 years in Bolton.

1. Introduction

The dental health of young children in Bolton remains poor compared to other parts of the country. Four local authorities (Bolton, Rochdale, Salford and Oldham) within Greater Manchester have been identified within the 13 priority areas for child dental health nationally. In Bolton the Oral Health Improvement Team has been providing evidence based oral health interventions in the areas of highest need and inequalities across the borough. Bolton is the only area within the 4 identified regions that has seen continual oral health improvement. In 2003 -2004 dmft (decayed, missing and filled teeth) of 5 year olds was 3.26 and in 2013 – 2014 dmft of 5 year olds was 1.70. Even though we have seen progress, new and diverse communities are coming into Bolton, often with high dental need, which have had an impact on children’s dmft. These children tend to have more tooth decay, leading to increased numbers of extractions under General Anaesthetic. Referrals of children to hospital for extractions of teeth remain consistent across GM at around 500 per month which equates to £500,000 per month, £6,000,000 per year.

2. The role of Local Authorities

Responsibility for monitoring dental health and commissioning population level oral health improvement programmes lies with the Local Authority – the full scope of their responsibilities are as set out in SI 3094. Key documents including “Commissioning better Oral Health” (PHE 2013) provide useful evidence based guidance to LAs to support their commissioning of oral health improvement programmes. In addition the recently published Evidence Review and Return on Investment tool (PHE 2016) provides further guidance to LAs commissioning oral health improvement programmes. In Bolton up until this recent proposed budget cut Bolton Council has been able to retain some investment in Oral Health Improvement Programmes and has been able to provide resources for evidenced based programmes. Totally cutting the OHIT budget of £180,000 per year as suggested, would have a great impact on the oral health needs of some of the most vulnerable children and adults living in Bolton. If you compare this with the cost of General Anaesthesia sessions across GM this is a small amount in comparison. In the other three LA areas where OHIPs have been limited or cut the dmft of 5 year old children has deteriorated.

3. Evidence based programmes provided by Bolton’s OHIT

In Bolton the OHIT has been identified as being proactive in all key GM wide evidence based oral health programmes, and a number of Bolton’s schemes have been taken forward and used in a suggested GM wide model.

1. Supervised brushing with fluoride toothpaste, in early settings and take home packs. **(Bolton: 95 settings/7042 children brushing daily) 73% in quintile 1 and 2)** (Public Health England- Improving oral health: A toolkit to support commissioning of supervised tooth brushing programmes in early years and school settings, December 2016).

2. Distribution of fluoride toothpaste and key information via health visitors along with bi-annual health visitor training.
3. Dental Access Voucher Scheme, available for children 0yrs-5yrs, LAC/Children on safeguarding plan (***Bolton's LAC - March 2014 96.5% of LAC children in Bolton had accessed a dentist compared to the National Average of 82% making Bolton one of the best towns in the country – due to the dental voucher scheme***), 0yrs-5yrs attending EDS, children attending a GA appointment, if they have no dentist, to prevent ***repeat*** GA attendance.
4. The “Buddy Practice Scheme” – linking schools to a local dental practice.

In addition Bolton's OHIT provides a 20 UCAS point accredited course through UCLAN which is supported through Health Education England. The OH/FV course for dental nurses enables them to apply Fluoride Varnish and give Oral Health advice within their practice.

Oral Health Care for Adults Living in Bolton

1. Introduction

The number of people with three or more long-term conditions is expected to increase across GM from 1.9 million in 2008 to 2.9 million in 2018 - this is due to improved diagnosis and living longer with illness. The majority of older people nationally now have some retained teeth. Older people in all settings have higher reported current pain, sepsis and are less likely to rate their oral health as good. More than half of dentate residents in care settings have untreated decay. Approximately 20% of care home managers reported difficulty accessing routine and emergency care. In a Health Watch report (February 2014) it showed 8% of elderly people living in Bolton and Kirklees had attended A&E with a dental related problem. Half of the residents in care homes would find it difficult or impossible to receive emergency treatment in general dental practices due to medical or psychological complications.

2. Oral Health for adults in care homes (Nice guideline) July 2016. nice.org.uk/guidance/ng48.

In July 2016 NICE published its recommendations ‘Oral Health for adults in care homes’. Its key findings were:

1. All setting to have an oral health policy
2. Daily mouth care plan
3. Training for staff
4. Support to access dental services.

In Bolton the OHIT has been providing training as part of the ***Adult Carers Mandatory Training Package***, along with bespoke training for care homes looking at patients with dementia and complex medical needs. From May 2017 the OHIT will be offering training sessions at the Castle Hill Centre for any carers within Bolton wishing to attend, this includes home carers as well as carers in a residential setting.

“Start Well, Live Well, **AGE WELL**” an upgrade in prevention will help people stay well for longer and reduce the impact on A&E and hospital services.

3. “Dental-Care-Link” Service Development Project Pilot

Bolton has been chosen as part of a developmental Oral Health project, the proposal of the scheme is to link a local dental practice with a local care home and in partnership with the OHIT to provide:

1. An Oral Health Assessment of all residents who do not have a dentist
2. Adjustments to daily mouth care plan to incorporate any prescription only prevention (High Fluoride Toothpaste)
3. Refer patients who have immediate need for dental treatment to the most appropriate dental service
4. Provide arrangements for preventative services such as fluoride varnish application and additional training of carers by the OHIT.

Oral Health of People with Additional Needs

1. Introduction

Department of Health –Valuing People’s Oral Health – A good practice guide for improving the oral health of disabled children and adults, November 2007

People with additional needs have the same entitlement to good oral health as the rest of the population. Oral health is an important factor in overall health and well-being. Good oral health can promote good communication, good nutrition, and positive self-esteem can lead to a reduction or elimination of discomfort from teeth or mouth. Treatment of preventable dental diseases is costly to all involved, and is sometimes high risk for patients with complicated medical conditions.

2. Services provided by the OHIT in Bolton

In Bolton the OHIT have been providing a variety of evidence- based Oral Health interventions for both Children and Adults with additional needs.

0yrs – 19yrs

1. Provision of fluoride toothpaste with advice and encouragement for its use
2. Supervised tooth brushing within nursery and school setting
3. Home Visits to encourage and support parents/carers on brushing, diet, and dental access
4. Encourage professional application of fluoride varnish three – four times yearly
5. Working in partnership with the specialist dental service at Lever Chambers Centre For Health

Adults

1. Encouragement of twice –daily, supervised brushing with fluoride toothpaste containing a minimum of 1350ppm – 1500ppm
2. Encourage professional recommendations of higher concentrations of fluoride tooth paste 2800ppm or 5000ppm.
3. Provision of supplement to aid dry mouth
4. Working in partnership with the specialist dental service at Lever Chambers Centre For Health
5. Home Visits to support carers on brushing, diet and dental access.

Conclusion

The removal of the funding for the OHIT in Bolton will have a large impact on some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged communities living within the borough. New and evidence based approaches need to be maintained in order to further embed and increase preventative activity. The availability of fluoride through supervised tooth brushing programmes, fluoride toothpaste and fluoride varnish should be encouraged. With oral health being poor amongst the population of Bolton, this can result in high levels of treatment need, increased demand on access to services, higher levels of referral to hospital and the use of provisional medication via prescription. Any cuts in these services go against the Bolton Locality Plan.

Increased attendance at treatment services has not resulted in a reduction in the prevalence of decay, periodontal disease or oral cancer to date.

Population or community based interventions are still required to bring about that level of change, hence the need for a service that reaches out to sectors of the population that are at most risk of dental disease. The services provided by the Oral Health Improvement Team are therefore required to implement population level preventive programmes and support the neediest communities of Bolton. Treatment services are not in a position to initiate such facilities across the borough and provide the evidence based preventive activities required to reduce dmft in the future.

Statement of support from Bolton Council's Achievement, Cohesion and Integration Service (ACIS) – dated 23rd December 2016

The oral health sessions are extremely valuable for the children and parents that ACIS works with. Sue works with all our children who are recent arrivals in the UK. Many are extremely vulnerable and have spent many years in a refugee camp. Sue also delivers a session with their parents.

Sue brings in lots of visual props e.g. pictures of healthy/decayed teeth, model of a set of teeth etc. to help with children's understanding and the physical exercise of brushing their teeth in a manner most of them are not used to. The large majority of the children do not speak English and so the visuals and modelling are invaluable. She brushes her teeth and the children copy her. Sue has a lovely manner with the children many of who have experienced some form of trauma. At the end of the session the children take home their own packs of toothpaste and a toothbrush.

Some of the children that come to ACIS have no knowledge of oral hygiene. They learn an important self-care skill. They learn to develop good habits and routines in order to improve their oral hygiene issues and prevent tooth decay. On a bigger scale this ultimately helps the NHS in a way to prevent dental issues and future dental procedures for children. We would not want to lose this valuable session.

Appendix B - Review/Redesign of smoking cessation provision

Smoking is still by far the highest cause of preventable death in the over 35s in the UK, accounting for 78,200 deaths in England in 2013 (ASH 2016a). 468 people in Bolton die every year as a direct result of their smoking, so 9 a week (PHE 2016a). Smoking causes 80% of bronchitis and emphysema, 80% of lung cancer, a quarter of all cancer deaths and 14% of deaths from heart disease (ASH 2016b). Over half of life-long smokers are killed by their habit, with smokers on average dying 10 years before non-smokers (ASH 2016b). For every smoker who dies, 20 are living with a chronic illness caused or exacerbated by smoking (ASH 2014).

Although smoking prevalence has declined in recent years, it is still at very high levels in the most deprived areas. For instance in Bolton smoking prevalence is 18.5%, a little over the national average of 16.9%, but amongst the routine and manual socio economic group in Bolton, prevalence is 34.5% (PHE 2016b). In the most deprived areas of Bolton smoking is normalised through the generations, it is known that children living with a smoker are 3 times more likely to smoke than those living with non-smokers (ASH 2016a). It is likely that this difference in smoking prevalence in the town, is responsible for most of the inequalities in health in Bolton. Men in the most deprived areas of Bolton die on average, 11.3 years sooner than men in the least deprived areas, for women the difference is 10.9 years (PHE 2016).

“Smoking is so corrosive to individual, family and community health that any success in reducing smoking in disadvantaged groups has knock on benefits for the wider determinants of health, above all through reductions in poverty” (ASH 2016a)

Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) estimate that smoking in Bolton costs the economy as a whole £76.35million: included in this figure is a cost of around £11million a year to the NHS in Bolton, £3.5million in social care provided by the council and a further £2.6 million in self-funded care (ASH 2016c). Smoking doubles the risk of developing care needs, smokers on average need social care 9 years earlier than non-smokers (ASH 2014b). The stop smoking service regularly sees people who are in the early stages of long term conditions which, if they don't quit smoking, will deteriorate and eventually lead to a need for social care. An example of this is a gentleman from Farnworth who has recently quit smoking specifically to save his legs from amputation. His wife is a non-smoker who suffers from breathing problems, probably as a result of years of passive smoking; with his quit, her health will also improve. This gentleman's quit could have a ripple effect through the entire family, with the possibility of his adult children following his example and making it less likely that his grandchildren will take up smoking .

In Bolton as part of the Stop Smoking Service, we have an innovative pregnancy service, Bump the Habit (BTH) whereby referrals are taken directly from the maternity services data base. This means that since February 2015, every pregnant smoker in Bolton has been contacted by BTH. Nationally smoking in pregnancy accounts for 5000 miscarriages, 300 still births, 2200 premature births and 19,000 babies born with low birth weight, the risk of sudden infant death for a baby whose mother smoked during pregnancy is four times that of a baby whose mother has not smoked during pregnancy (ASH 2016d). In June 2016 BTH advisors attended a national conference for smoking cessation in London to present a poster about their work and are

drawing attention for their approach from other areas. The BTH advisors routinely make home visits to pregnant smokers, giving a very intensive intervention. The women they work with tend to be younger and from the most deprived parts of town, with extremely difficult lives, nevertheless BTH far exceeded their target for 2015/16 and are set to do so once more in 2016/17.

Another nationally recognised strand of the smoking cessation work done in Bolton is the close working partnership between the Stop Smoking Service and the Royal Bolton Hospital. A pathway is operated whereby inpatients are offered a stop smoking intervention by clinical staff and followed up upon discharge in the community by the Stop Smoking Service. This pathway won the Cancer Team of the Year, BMJ award in 2014. The Stop Smoking Service provides the training for this pathway and also Level One training – an introduction to raising the subject of smoking cessation with smokers. The 2016/17 target for providing this training has already been exceeded this year as the team are keen to encourage as many members of staff, both at the hospital and in the wider health economy to talk to their patients about breaking free from this terrible addiction.

The national standard for recording quits is 4 weeks after a quit date, in Bolton, as per our commissioners, the Stop Smoking Service also records 12 week quit status. As with other services across the country, Bolton Stop Smoking Service has seen a drop in foot fall, making the 4 week target difficult to achieve; nevertheless the service exceeded the much tougher 12 week quit target set by the council for 2015/16 and is on track to do so again for 2016/17, this shows the quality of the intervention provided with just a whole time equivalent of 3.43 advisor hours. Numerous case studies previously submitted to the commissioners, show that because of the level of deprivation many of our clients live in, it can take many attempts for them to quit smoking and that the intervention has to be much more intensive and longer than in years gone by: to deliver an effective service to the type of clients seen nowadays, experienced, highly committed staff are needed, whose only job is to provide stop smoking interventions. Studies have shown that due to the complexity of working with smokers, integrated lifestyle services providing smoking cessation on a Level 2 basis are not as effective as the Level 3 Specialist Stop Smoking Services (Shahab 2016).

In conclusion, the cost of running the stop smoking service is tiny in comparison with the cost to the people of Bolton in terms of the health and prosperity lost to smoking. By continuing to invest in the stop smoking service and helping adults in these most deprived areas to quit smoking, Bolton Council will be helping future generations to avoid the ill health and poverty smoking breeds. Any cuts in these services go against the Bolton Locality Plan. There is much worthwhile work still to be done in Bolton to reduce smoking prevalence and therefore reduce inequalities in health. The Stop Smoking Service are passionate about continuing and developing their work further, thereby contributing to making Bolton a healthier, more equal town.

References

- ASH 2014 *"The costs of Smoking to the Social Care System in England"* www.ash.org.uk
- ASH 2016a *"Health Inequalities and Smoking"* www.ash.org.uk
- ASH 2016b *"Smoking and Disease"* Action on Smoking and Health www.ash.org.uk
- ASH 2016c *"The Local Cost of Tobacco: ASH Ready Reckoner"* www.ash.org.uk
- [ASH 2016d "Smoking: Pregnancy" www.ash.org.uk](http://www.ash.org.uk)

PHE 2016a *“Bolton Unitary Authority Health Profile 2016”* Public Health England
<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk>
PHE 2016b *“Local tobacco control Profiles”* <http://www.tobaccoprofiles.info>
Shahab L 2016 *“Integrated Health Behaviour (Lifestyle) Services: a Review of the Evidence”*
National Centre for Smoking Cessation and Training www.ncsct.co.uk

Appendix C - Review of Food and Health Services

The current annual income for the Food and Health Team (FHT) provided by Bolton Foundation Trust is £248,000 with Bolton Council proposing £118,000 of savings, which is approximately a 48% cut to the service, the majority of which is staff costs. As the service also receives funding from the Public Health Budget which also faces cuts it is anticipated this may be higher.

The core aim of the FHT service is to empower people with the knowledge, skills and motivation to eat a healthy balanced diet to keep people fit and active, encourage self-care, general health and wellbeing and ultimately reduce their risk of future diet-related ill health, costly hospital admissions and reliance on social care in the future.

Bolton's Locality Plan - This work is central to the proposed move from treatment to prevention services as detailed in the Bolton Locality Plan (December 2016). The Locality Plan highlights the importance of early identification and support. The 12 priorities for the Health and Wellbeing Board include '*giving every child the best start in life*' and '*childhood obesity*' with year 6 obesity rates set to worsen. Any cuts to these services go against the Bolton Locality Plan.

The Evidence - Whilst treatment interventions can be targeted at school aged children to reduce excess weight, a growing body of research suggests most excess weight before puberty is gained before five years of age. Therefore, a more cost effective approach would be to prevent the development of excess weight in school aged children through the provision of interventions which target the modifiable early life risk factors for obesity before a child turns 5, such as age of introduction to solid foods, diet quality and quantity, parental feeding practices/shared family meals and physical activity/active play.

The Team

1. The Food and Health Team (FHT) is a small team (7.62wte) of Food and Health Advisors (FHAs) and Community Nutrition Workers (CNWs).
2. FHT develop and deliver high quality, evidence-based food and nutrition interventions across Bolton. The service is separated into two arms of work:
 - Community delivery – Direct engagement with individuals and/or groups through targeted sessions and courses
 - Support for staff and settings – Providing support to settings and services to develop and implement healthy nutrition policies and providing training to staff to enable them to offer brief nutrition advice and sign-post.
3. The FHT delivery of core early years interventions (e.g. Baby's first foods, Happy healthy toddler club courses, cook4life courses) is an integral part of the 2 year healthy weight pathway. There are no other funded services delivering targeted weight management/prevention services for the under 5's in Bolton as all funding for children's weight management services was transferred to the Bridgewater 5-19's service in December 2015.

4. FHT also enhance the delivery of the adult obesity pathway as we work in partnership with health trainers, the riteweight service and adult dietetics, offering interventions for these services to refer patients on to, which increase practical food skills and support behavioural change e.g. food4life courses, one-to-one support. The Service provides health trainers and other staff with nutrition and brief intervention training.
5. Bolton FT consider that a training only option would soon be less effective. As whilst we feel training and skilling up the workforce to offer brief advice and ‘make every contact count’ is important, there becomes a point at which the patient requires more support than that staff member can provide within their role and at which point they require more targeted services to signpost/refer on to. If those targeted services disappear, staff will refer into more costly specialist services instead (e.g. paediatric and adult dietetic services) which will increase demand on those services. If patients cannot be supported by those services, then it is likely staff will eventually stop raising the issue in the first place and the whole system will break down.
6. A cut of 48% would have a very detrimental impact on an already small service. Bolton FT has previously provided commissioners with a series of costed options detailing proposed staffing and delivery options for a 25%, 35% and a 39% cut to budget. Each option preserved the ‘Support for staff and settings’ delivery arm as requested but also protects as much of our Community Delivery arm as possible prioritising the early years work which forms part of the 0-5 obesity pathway, and then also prioritising our outreach work which is targeted to the most vulnerable groups in Bolton. A 25% reduction in budget with some innovative new ways of working would be the most feasible and enable us to continue to deliver both arms of the service and achieve a similar level of positive outcomes.

Overview of the current FHT

Current work is delivered across different levels and is separated into two arms of work;

- 1) **COMMUNITY DELIVERY:** Direct engagement with individuals or groups, including families with 0-5’s and adults, out in the community through our interventions. This is divided into:
 - a) **Core work:** Set interventions, with a set target audience, session structure, KPIs and a core programme of annual activity which is advertised and recruited to by ourselves:
 - **BFF - Baby’s First Foods** – 2-hour session on weaning (deliver 2 a week, 90 a year)
 - **C4L – Cook4life** – 10 week healthy cooking course for families with 0-5’s (9 courses/min. 36 families completing a year)
 - **HHTC – Happy Healthy Toddler Club** – 8 week healthy lifestyle course (9 courses/min. 45 families completing a year)
 - **F4L – Food4life** – 8 week healthy cooking course for adults 16+ (8 courses/min. 32 individuals completing a year)
 - **F4L Market** – Healthy cooking demos & tasters, market shopping tours (12 demos)
 - **One-to-one sessions** – Up to 6 sessions of practical cooking/nutrition advice in homes
 - **Food poverty** (32 a year)
 - **Staying well** (monitor numbers)

- **Other e.g. Bespoke weaning/fussy eating support** (monitor numbers)
- b) **Targeted work:** Additional work targeted towards vulnerable/disadvantaged groups that require support but are less likely/able to access our core offer. We work with partners to deliver bespoke sessions & courses in food banks, sheltered housing & support groups.
- 2) **SUPPORT FOR SETTINGS/STAFF:** Providing support for settings to implement healthy food and nutrition policies and also training staff to offer brief interventions on nutrition themselves.
- **HEAR** (*Healthy Eating Awareness Raising*) project – monthly nutrition campaigns
 - **Training** – *Deliver a programme nutrition training course for staff throughout the year:*
 - **Bespoke training for health visiting**
 - **Bespoke training for health trainers** (*mandatory nutrition training for staff every 3 years, brief updates at team meetings once a year*)
 - **Training courses for other staff** (*programme of training dates for general healthy eating or feeding babies/toddlers for range of staff to access – 4 times a year*)
 - **BHEYS** – *Bolton Healthy Early Years Settings Award scheme for day care settings.*

Appendix D - Review of the Community Weight Management Service

The proposed savings of £91,000 equates to the annual contract value of the riteweight service and therefore these plans effectively decommission the service.

Riteweight provides the only Tier 2 Weight management service for the people of Bolton, which is publicly funded, not for profit and free of charge. It provides the essential link and pathway from Tier 1 (e.g. Health Trainers) to Tier 3 (Specialist Weight Management SWMS) services, as recommended in NICE guidance's; DoH guidance; local 'Healthy Weight' strategy and Obesity pathway (Ref 1,2,3,4,5). As such it provides a key function, with the aim of preventing people progressing to the much more costly Tier 3 SWM service, whilst offering more targeted additional support than is possible to be provided by the broadly focused Tier 1 service. Therefore to lose this Tier 2 service would have a significant impact on other services in the local Obesity pathway and be in direct contravention of NICE guidance (Ref 1).

This is at a time when Obesity is on the increase and has been identified as a major public health risk for the population, because of its direct links and impacts on life expectancy and so many other long term health conditions, such as Diabetes, CHD, musculoskeletal conditions and some cancers. In addition to the resultant impacts and costs in terms of pressure on other health services, workforces and therefore economic stability (Ref 6,7). There are currently in excess of 150,000 people living in Bolton who could benefit from the support offered by our service and therefore we may go some way to reducing the £86.9 million it cost Bolton tax payers to manage obesity in 2015. The service focuses particularly on providing a targeted approach, aimed at the most vulnerable sections of the local community, living in areas of deprivation, who would be unable to access other commercial weight loss options. The riteweight team prioritise those at greatest risk of becoming overweight or obese and offer a variety of more specialised sessions, as well as mainstream options. The team have well established links with a variety of services and also offer training to other colleagues and services as appropriate. All of the programmes meet NICE guidance and focus on long-term sustainable weight loss.

A small team with very low overheads; the majority of budget is spent on staff, who are all on a low banding in comparison to other services. Currently the team consists of 5 part-time staff, equivalent to 3.31wte. The potential to make significant non-pay savings are minimal. If pay costs were reduced this would impact on the current level of service. In particular provision of sessions which cover all the areas of greatest need in Bolton, with the aim of 'narrowing the gap' in life expectancy.

There is an opportunity to strengthen and formalise links with Tier 3 services to improve overall provision; minimise gaps in service; improve pathways and 'patient journey' if these services are commissioned jointly, as the DoH report on commissioning Tier 2 services recommends (Ref 8). Currently Tier 3 Weight Management services are commissioned separately and only for patients with a BMI ≥ 40 kg/m², which also does not comply with NICE Guidance (ref 1). Therefore many patients who should be eligible for Tier 3 SWMS are currently accessing the Tier 2 Riteweight service and achieving good results. This not only reduces the impact on the Tier 3 service, but can also prevent a referral to both Tier 3 and Tier 4 (Bariatric surgery) services, which are both much more costly options. Formalising links between Tier 2 and Tier 3 services would allow discussion as to the

optimum treatment plan for all patients; sharing of expertise and resources; a focus on lifestyle measures for all patients on the obesity pathway. This would result in a more equitable weight management service for all of the Bolton population.

The Tier 2 Riteweight service has a proven track record of consistently meeting targets & KPI's and achieving significant and long term sustainable weight loss in a variety of groups. Over a 12 month period 50 programmes are typically delivered, achieving a 79% completion rate; deliver 40 additional activities and events; see over 900 adults of all ages (Ref 9).

For such a small service to achieve these outcomes on a small budget, demonstrates how cost effective the service is in providing value for money. The service demonstrates the effectiveness of the proposals described within the Bolton Locality Plan, any cuts would go against this.

The success of the service is down to the many years of experience which has been retained within the team, who now have a depth of knowledge and skills which would be difficult to replace at this banding. Even more difficult to replace would be the passion and commitment to the service that the current staff demonstrate. This is evidenced by the overwhelmingly positive feedback received from participants.

References:

1. Weight Management: lifestyle services for overweight or obese adults (2014) NICE guideline PH53.
2. Obesity: identification, assessment and management (2014) NICE guideline CG189.
3. Obesity in adults: prevention and lifestyle weight management programmes (2016) QS 111.
4. Bolton: Our Vision 2007- 2017 Bolton Council.
5. Bolton's Healthy Weight Strategy: 2012 -2017 Public Health NHS Bolton
6. Foresight Tackling Obesity: Future Choices Project Report (2007) Government Office for Science
7. Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives: A Cross Government Strategy for England (2008) HM Government.
8. Developing a specification for lifestyle weight management services: Best practice guidance for Tier 2 services (2013) Department of Health
9. Riteweight Annual report: Review of Service Delivery (2016) Bolton NHS Foundation Trust

What people enjoyed about the Riteweight programme:

'Friendly, light hearted but serious delivery' Alan, Farnworth

'Sharing information and experiences with others in the group' Paul, Farnworth

'The presentation and the input from the people there' Carol, Farnworth

'Relaxed atmosphere of the tuition and discussions' Peter, Lever Chambers

'Chance to interact with others while trying to lose weight' Stephen, Lever Chambers

'Information given in an easy to understand manner' Sheila, Thicketford

'No feeling of guilt, focused on small steps, so more achievable' Julie, Lever Chambers

'All of the information, most of it I did not know' Jaymie, Lever Chambers

'Meeting other people like myself who are struggling to keep weight down as we get older and less active' Dorothy, Crompton

'All of it, emotional eating was best' Rabia, Lever Chambers

'Not being treated as an idiot or fool, laughing and learning together' Linda, Horwich

'Meeting the others and discussing food prep ideas etc' Margaret, Watersmeeting

'The ability to ask questions' Lynn, Crompton

'Informative, helpfulness and meeting other people' Bernice, Watersmeeting

'I would highly recommend attending this course as the information provided is extremely useful and based on facts, not fads!' Amanda, RBH

What people say about us:

'Facilitator was friendly and made the sessions easy to understand, she didn't tell everyone our weight as other diet classes do' Pauline, Farnworth

'Facilitator did not make us feel awful' Joan, Farnworth

'Facilitator was very good, met new people and learned a lot' Annette, Lever Chambers

'Everything the instructor was kind and very helpful' Marillyn, Lever Chambers

'Made you feel welcome, nice leader and very informative' Jenny, Thicketford

'Instructor is excellent in the way she presents the course, Hilary, Hulton Lane

'The tutor is absolutely lovely, very supportive, knowledgeable and a good listener' Amanda, RBH

Case Study

Hearing personalised success stories are important and valuable to our team, as they let us know that we are making a difference to people's lives, which is what we are here to do!

Therefore, we would love to hear about how our team has made a difference to you...

Person involved:

Description of those involved (names, ages etc):

Paul 42, Bolton

Baseline weight – 149.3kg

Last recorded weight – 145.2kg

% weight loss – 2.74%

Background information:

(How did you get involved with the Riteweight Team? What input/support did you receive from our team: When, where and who?)

Following blood tests at my doctors, I was asked if I was happy with my weight and if I would be interested in attending Riteweight. I have been conscious of having a weight issue, since stopping smoking in particular, but due to work and busy lifestyle had found it difficult to exercise. Attending Riteweight at Lever Chambers was just what I needed to get started.

The impact/benefit:

(How has the input/support that you received from our team benefitted you? What changes have you made?)

Attending Riteweight was the gentle encouragement I needed to start eating healthier and begin to lose weight. Through the advice and direction from the facilitators, I re-educated myself as to what to eat, when to eat, how much to eat and why I am eating. The information presented to you is easy to take in and understand and invaluable when learning to change eating habits. With a little discipline, forward planning and a few minor adjustments I have lost 10 lbs over the 8 week program and not felt hungry! This has certainly given me the encouragement to carry on developing new habits and carry on with my weight loss.

Response from RNIB

Please see below a response to your budget challenge consultation on behalf of RNIB, the UK's largest organisation of blind and partially sighted people. We understand that Bolton Council is seeking views to inform its decisions about funding for the coming years. During this process we urge you to consider the vital importance of vision rehabilitation. Given that numbers of blind and partially sighted people are increasing, we believe that ensuring the right resources for vision rehabilitation now will prepare Bolton's local services for the future. There is an urgent need to ensure that vision rehabilitation services get the right resources to 'See, plan and provide':

- See: everyone with a visual impairment receives a specialist face to face assessment.
- Plan: everyone has a plan in place, identifying the outcome of their assessment. The first two steps take place within 28 days of first contact with the council.
- Provide: any agreed vision rehabilitation support starts within 12 weeks of the person's initial contact with the council.

You will no doubt be aware that when vision rehabilitation services are properly resourced, the crucial training and advice they provide can make a huge difference to the daily lives of people experiencing sight loss. People can gain the skills and confidence to maximise their independence, participate in activities and access their community. By supporting blind and partially sighted people to live independently at home, it can also prevent, reduce or delay the need for expensive care packages – thereby saving the council money whilst helping you to meet your statutory duty to provide preventative support under the Care Act. RNIB works with local authorities across the country to promote vision rehabilitation and share examples of best practice. Feel free to contact us on campaigns@rnib.org.uk if there is any way we can support you in this regard. Our campaign website, www.rnib.org.uk/seeandplan also contains a range of materials to support local authorities, including our 'See, plan and provide' report and checklist.

Joint Trade Union Response to Strategic Budget Consultation 2017/18 and 2018/19

Bolton Council informed the trades unions of its intention to set a two-year budget strategy at the SLJCC on 3rd November. The report was subsequently ratified for consultation on 7th November 2016.

On the 9th November UNISON and GMB were invited to a meeting of the Chief Executive JCC and were informed by the Borough Solicitor that there would be one consultation meeting for trade unions and one for the public.

Ahead of the meeting UNISON met with senior stewards and submitted a list of questions.

It is with regret that what we considered reasonable questions were responded to in a quite dismissive manner "*unsure as to the relevance of this question to the consultation exercise*". This is a departure from the norm. The Director of Finance has in the past been more than happy to explain financial matters. As trade union representatives, it is not our area of expertise, therefore if the consultation is to be meaningful then we need to understand the proposals in the first place.

A meeting was held on the 14th December with the Borough Treasurer and the head of HR. UNISON felt the meeting was constructive and the Borough Treasurer was very helpful in terms of explaining how the changes to business rates would work. It was also an opportunity to clarify some of the UNISON questions which had been misunderstood when sent in writing. UNISON's understanding from that meeting is that we would be receiving further details regarding the £40m reserves and the savings to date from reviews.

At that meeting we asked several supplementary questions three of which were prompted from articles in the Bolton News:

- Airport Dividend: reportedly £3.4m. It was confirmed that £1m goes into the base budget and there is £0.5m which would be distributed based on the needs of the various portfolio holders. UNISON asked that the £0.5m be put in the base budget to protect jobs and services. The airport dividend has been consistently above £1.5m and there are no indications that this will reduce and that an additional £0.5m would not put the council at any future risk.
- We sought clarification on the Harworth Estates payment of £2.2m to attract tenants to Logistics North i.e. where does the money come from and, how does it work and do we get it back? Our understanding is that Harworth Estates as a subsidiary of Peel Holdings is a cash rich company.
- We also sought clarification on how revenue from parking charges is used.
- UNISON requested an update on the savings as a result of the accommodation review. Previous budgets have shown a revenue saving of

£1m per year. We understand the refurbishment budget was overspent and the council are now relocating workers into the buildings which were vacated to make the savings.

On 17th January 2017 UNISON received the updated log (attached)

We were disappointed that the dialogue which took place on 14th December 2016 was not reflected in the updated log and the additional information which we had requested has not been made available.

A request for a further meeting was declined.

Therefore, we do not believe the consultation process has been meaningful

The key points which UNISON would like to highlight are as follows:

1. We welcome the decision to use reserves to ease the burden of further cuts, however, these should be spent wisely and reported on a quarterly basis to this committee.
2. We note the council's decision to accept the governments four-year settlement as sensible
3. We note the planning of a two-year budget strategy as sensible.
4. UNISON regrets the loss of a potential 239 jobs.
5. We are concerned that the strategy to rely on 100% collection rate for business rates is risky
6. We believe it is wholly unsatisfactory not to provide a breakdown on spending of the £40m set aside for the 2015/17 budget. Without knowing how much is left, if any, then we are unable to comment if the reserves set aside for 2017/19 are adequate or indeed needed. UNISON reiterate its request for this information.
7. We are of the view that council reserves have steadily increased whilst jobs have been lost and services cut but the council is unable to provide a like for like comparison.
8. We would ask that the £0.5m from the airport dividend to be allocated by the leader is put into the base budget.
9. That a full report on the accommodation review including capital cost and revenue savings be brought to a future meeting of this committee.
10. We welcome the council's proposals to continue with VER / VS to mitigate compulsory redundancy and that these will be made at the start of each

budget savings proposals as sensible. However we do not accept the proposals to reduce the severance payments, see below.

‘Proposal’ to reduce the enhanced redundancy payment.

In 2009 the council agreed its “voluntary Termination of Employment Policy”. Together with this policy it was agreed to enhance the payment to staff choosing to leave the council above the statutory minimum by offering an additional 12 weeks’ pay. This was part of the council’s overall strategy to mitigate compulsory redundancies. We welcome the fact that there have been no compulsory redundancies and that this strategy has been successful.

There is no reference in the report agreed by cabinet in November that this would change, even though it would have budget implications and affect the overall strategy.

In response to a question from UNISON as to whether this will continue we have been told this is to reduce to 6 weeks for VS and changes to VER. (see question 22 on log).

UNISON would like to make it clear that if the council is to maintain the existing strategy of mitigating compulsory redundancies, set out in the EIA then the enhanced payment is in our view crucial.

UNISON’s position is that the current scheme should continue for at least the next two years.

This UNISON position is supported by NUT, NASUWT & ATL.