



Overview & Scrutiny

Title:	Scrutiny Panel on the Budget Proposals
Date:	6 January 2012
Time:	2.00pm
Venue	Committee Room 1, Hove Town Hall
Members:	Councillors: K Norman (Chair) Mears Summers Mitchell Sykes K Norman Martindale Pissaridou (CVSF Co-optee)
Contact:	Tom Hook Head of Scrutiny 01273 – 29 – 1062 Tom.hook@brighton-hove.gov.uk

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AGENDA

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- 14.** Procedural Business **1 - 2**
- 15.** Draft minutes of the previous meetings held on 2 December, 5 December and 9 December **3 - 22**
- 16.** Chairs Communications
- 17.** Witnesses
- Draft Budget Proposals Resources
- Cllr Jason Kitcat
 - Strategic Director Resources, Charlie Stewart
- Draft Budget Proposals Place
- Cllr Ian Davey, Cabinet Member for Transport & the Public Realm
 - Cllr Liz Wakefield, Cabinet Member for Housing
 - Strategic Director Place, Geoff Raw
- Dr Tom Scanlon, Director of Public Health
- 18.** Responses via Consultation Portal **23 - 78**
- 19.** Any Other Business

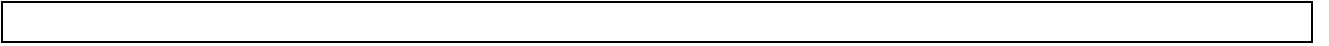
The next panel meeting will be held at 2pm on Monday 9 January in Hove Town Hall.

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For further details and general enquiries about this meeting contact Mary van Beinum, (01273 291062 – email mary.vanbeinum@brighton-hove.gov.uk or email scrutiny@brighton-hove.gov.uk



Agenda Item 14

PROCEDURAL BUSINESS.

A. Declaration of Substitutes

Where a Member of the Committee is unable to attend a meeting for whatever reason, a substitute Member (who is not a Cabinet Member) may attend and speak and vote in their place for that meeting. **Substitutes are not allowed on Scrutiny Select Committees or Scrutiny Panels.**

The substitute Member shall be a Member of the Council drawn from the same political group as the Member who is unable to attend the meeting, and must not already be a Member of the Commission. The substitute Member must declare themselves as a substitute, and be minuted as such, at the beginning of the meeting or as soon as they arrive.

B. Declarations of Interest

- (1) To seek declarations of any personal or personal & prejudicial interests under Part 2 of the Code of Conduct for Members in relation to matters on the Agenda. Members who do declare such interests are required to clearly describe the nature of the interest.
- (2) A Member of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, an Overview and Scrutiny Committee or a Select Committee has a prejudicial interest in any business at meeting of that Committee where –
 - (a) that business relates to a decision made (whether implemented or not) or action taken by the Executive or another of the Council's committees, sub-committees, joint committees or joint sub-committees; and
 - (b) at the time the decision was made or action was taken the Member was
 - (i) a Member of the Executive or that committee, sub-committee, joint committee or joint sub-committee and
 - (ii) was present when the decision was made or action taken.
- (3) If the interest is a prejudicial interest, the Code requires the Member concerned:-
 - (a) to leave the room or chamber where the meeting takes place while the item in respect of which the declaration is made is under consideration. [There are three exceptions to this rule which are set out at paragraph (4) below].
 - (b) not to exercise executive functions in relation to that business and
 - (c) not to seek improperly to influence a decision about that business.
- (4) The circumstances in which a Member who has declared a prejudicial interest is permitted to remain while the item in respect of which the interest has been declared is under consideration are:-

(a) for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence relating to the item, provided that the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose, whether under a statutory right or otherwise, BUT the Member must leave immediately after he/she has made the representations, answered the questions, or given the evidence,

(b) if the Member has obtained a dispensation from the Standards Committee, or

(c) if the Member is the Leader or a Cabinet Member and has been required to attend before an Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Sub-Committee to answer questions.

C. Declaration of party whip

To seek declarations of the existence and nature of any party whip in relation to any matter on the Agenda as set out at paragraph 8 of the Overview and Scrutiny Ways of Working.

D. Exclusion of press and public

To consider whether, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, or the nature of the proceedings, the press and public should be excluded from the meeting when any of the following items are under consideration.

NOTE: Any item appearing in Part 2 of the Agenda states in its heading the category under which the information disclosed in the report is confidential and therefore not available to the public.

A list and description of the exempt categories is available for public inspection at Brighton and Hove Town Halls.

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
SCRUTINY PANEL ON THE BUDGET PROPOSALS

3.00pm 2 DECEMBER 2011

COMMITTEE ROOM 3, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor K Norman (Chair)

Also in attendance: Councillor Mears, Mitchell, Pissaridou, Summers and Sykes. Joanna Martindale (CVSF Co-optee)

Other Members present: Councillors J Kitcat, West

PART ONE

1. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

1.1 Election of Chair

Cllr Ken Norman was unanimously elected Chair of the Panel

1.2 Declarations of Interest

There were none

1.3 Declaration of party whip

There were none

1.4 Exclusion of Press and Public

As per the agenda

2. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

3. DRAFT WORK PLAN

3.1 Members noted the draft work plan. Cabinet Member Councillor Liz Wakefield was due to speak to a future Panel meeting and the date would be confirmed.

4. WITNESSES

4.1 Cllr Jason Kitcat, CM for Financial and Central Services (JK), and Catherine Vaughan, Director of Finance (CV) introduced the draft budget and took questions. (as did Mark Ireland, Head of Strategic Finance and Procurement: MI)

4.2 JK told panel members that this was the first time that the council had prepared a two year budget, and the first time that draft budget papers had been ready for early December. The draft budget had been developed via a 'star chamber' process with council departments, and there had been on-going consultation with unions, the local community and voluntary sector, the City Assembly and members of the public. Scrutiny comments were welcomed.

4.3 JK set out the three underlying principles to the budget:

Protecting services for children and young people
Efficient use of public money
Promoting partnership working

4.4 In addition, particular care had been taken to protect services to carers, ASC services, youth services, staff terms and conditions (including the introduction of a Living Wage), homelessness grants, the Supporting People programme, the Community Grants programme and the council's commitments to sustainability. Given reduced central Government funding, this necessitated efficiencies and changes being made across all areas of the council's work.

4.5 JK and CV answered members' questions. JM asked how replies from consultation events around the City were being dealt with; would they be reported?

a) MM: equal pay reserves?

CV: reserves for single status will be reviewed – currently the position is the same as was reported to Audit Committee Sep 11

b) MM: redundancy reserves?

CV: 3.5M was set aside for 11/12, of which approx 500K remains. There are still some outstanding issues, as not all staff who indicated a willingness to take voluntary redundancy have yet completed the process. This will therefore need to be reviewed before the final Feb 12 Cabinet decisions. Currently the draft budget proposes allotting an additional 700K to these reserves for 12/13.

c) MM: ongoing savings from previous (11/12) budget from recharges?

CV: any savings would already have been included.

d) MM: Seaside Towns funding?

CV: most has been allocated, but not necessarily spent. The draft budget makes no proposals to re-allocate this funding, so the current spending plan still stands.

e) MM: number of vacant posts?

CV: this is not easy to assess, as it is complicated by the ongoing voluntary severance scheme – in some instances it has been decided to retain a post made vacant by voluntary redundancy, and to make savings by deleting the former post of successful applicants to the vacant post. Until this process has been completed it will therefore not be possible to give a firm figure for vacancies. However we will do some analysis to help scrutiny understand the position.

f) MM: new homes bonus?

CV: provisional announcement now made of 425K is slightly higher than expectations, not currently built into budget assumptions

g) GM: have all planned 11/12 savings been made?

JK: TBM forecasts an overall underspend, but not all departments have reached their targets (e.g. in terms of voluntary redundancies).

CV: it has not been possible to make some 11/12 savings (e.g. carbon reduction and procurement), and these are included as separate costs in the budget papers. There is still ongoing work on some admin and management savings, but all are achievable, bar some savings for the Children's Delivery Unit which have been factored into the budget report.

h) MM: are these risks specifically addressed?

CV: yes, via TBM7 report – and the need to fund these pressures is factored into the budget report.

i) GM: has CYP made required savings?

JK: yes, and has in fact achieved more than required.

CV: Cabinet decided not to implement some 11/12 savings (e.g. closure of Brightstart) and these are included as separate costs in the budget papers.

k) OS: how has public consultation affected budget planning?

JK: a number of respondents were clear that they wanted the council to make decisions re specific planning – too complex an issue for non-experts. However, responses make it clear that public wants to see front-line people-centric services prioritised, and this has been reflected in the budget plans. We may see more specific views expressed now that people have a draft budget to interrogate – consultation is still ongoing and the council will respond to public concerns.

l) OS: how are demographic pressures calculated?

MI: this is a best estimate based on past trends, but will be revised in the light of emerging data.

CV: Successful implementation of the council's VfM plans should mitigate against the impact of demographic pressures – the budget pressures to an extent for 2013/2014 assume a scenario where mitigation has not been wholly successful. The budget does provide more detail of this for 12/13, but this has not yet been factored fully into 13/14 planning.

m) CS: how were savings per department calculated?

JK: each department asked to model 5, 10 and 15% savings across 2 years. Decisions were then taken so as to allocate savings in the least damaging way across organisation.

n) GM: capital investment re schools?

CV: education capital budget sits in People section of budget, but information is not currently available to produce a full capital report. There are significant pressures re capital receipts, and there will need to be re-profiling if some expected receipts are not realised – however this is particularly a timing issue.

o) JM: what is planned % spend on voluntary sector?

CV: can get panel an approximation, although it may be very difficult to get an accurate figure as the financial system does not record information in this way, and BHCC may not be able to collate data using CVSF's preferred definition (i.e. orgs with charitable status). However, does not believe that sector has been disproportionately impacted. Will do some analysis to help inform scrutiny.

p) KN: commitment to protecting services for vulnerable people?

JK: yes, although cannot guarantee to protect all current services given size of financial challenge – i.e. 35M over two years. BHCC has actively looked at increasing income as well as making savings.

q) AP: how many posts to be reduced in 12/13?

JK: 100-120 in 12/13 plus approx 30 outstanding from this year's challenge.

4.6 The panel next heard from Cllr Pete West, CM for Environment and Sustainability (PW), and from Gillian Marston, Head of City Infrastructure (GMa) and Geoff Raw, Strategic Director, Place (GR).

4.7 PW told the panel that this had been a very challenging process. Priorities included:

Minimising impact on workforce

Introducing a food waste pilot

Making parks more sustainable

Investing in infrastructure (e.g. street lighting)

4.8 The need to make savings had resulted in plans to reduce the number of public toilets in the city – city has many and not all are well-used. PW recognises that this is a contentious issue and welcomes public ideas on this (although it has to be recognised that identified savings will have to be made somewhere).

a) GM: have additional costs (vandalism) been factored in re plans to have some unattended toilets?

PW: yes.

b) GM: cityclean savings: how many rounds will be taken out of refuse collection?

GMa: 4 rounds (1 refuse, 3 recycling) – will require re-organisation across city – the number of rounds could change as the work is mapped out. No redundancies planned.

c) GM: commitment to continue weekly collections?

PW: yes, committed to maintaining weekly collections for 12/13. Plans for future years will depend on success of food waste pilot.

d) GM: less reliance on agency staff re cityclean?

GMa: yes, costs can be reduced here, although it is necessary to provide cover for sickness and leave.

e) GM: street cleaning reductions?

GMa: yes, but haven't reduced for several years, and confident that staff levels can be reduced without significant impact upon services.

f) GM: street lighting – is condition of posts still a problem and will maintenance continue to be outsourced?

PW: need to address long term neglect of this infrastructure – will look at capital investment here.

GMa: current maintenance contract still has approximately 2 years to run.

g) CS: how was toilet use assessed (esp. for parks)?

PW: there's no measure of volume of use as such, we rely on managers' experience. Have tried to plan closures to minimise impact – e.g. by signposting availability of toilets in nearby BHCC buildings (i.e. proximity of Hove Town Hall will allow week day closure of Norton Rd toilets).

h) JM: has BHCC explored possibility of encouraging 'friends of' groups etc to get involved in toilet provision in parks?

GMa: this isn't an easy community participation activity to sell. The council already tries to think innovatively about park toilets – e.g. encouraging firms leasing park cafes to take on toilet maintenance.

i) MM: what saving will be achieved here?

GMa: estimate 163K

j) AP: planned cuts to coast protection – how will this impact on costs to BHCC and local residents of flood insurance?

GR: although listed in the budget as coast protection, most savings will be made by reducing maintenance of seaside railings, street furniture etc rather than actual coastal defences. Will pick up on potential for additional insurance costs to BHCC.

PW: no intention to increase flood risk: savings will be carefully targeted.

l) AP: allotments – will cuts impact upon poorer people?

PW: concessions will remain; increased costs will reflect actual cost of provision rather than being subsidised.

m) AP: City in Bloom?

PW: would like to encourage more business funding here. Unfortunately, hard choices need to be made, and budget does a good job of protecting parks funding.

JK: auctioning mayoral number plate will raise funds for community groups – this could potentially include City in Bloom.

n) OS: reduced waste PFI costs?

PW: less waste being produced has led to lower costs and high energy prices have meant that electricity generated at Newhaven has brought in additional income.

MI: electricity generation income has always been factored into the contract, but BHCC's calculation of this has differed from Viola's. However, recent legal advice supports the council's model for this calculation.

o) AP: possible impact on tourism as a result of cuts in city cleaning?

GMa: we do monitor this closely. There has not been reductions in street cleansing following the introduction of wheelie bins and communal bins and these help and should mean less of an impact..

PW: public have to recognise their responsibility here: if people didn't drop litter there would be less need for street cleaning.

p) Thurstan Crockett, head of Sustainability: welcomes additional funding for sustainability – will be used to replace time-limited grants funding. Focus will be on embedding sustainability in BHCC and the city as a whole.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

5.1 The next meeting is on Monday 5th December at 2pm in HTH

The meeting concluded at 5.00pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
SCRUTINY PANEL ON THE BUDGET PROPOSALS

2.00pm 5 DECEMBER 2011

COMMITTEE ROOM 1, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor K Norman (Chair)

Also in attendance: Councillor Mears, Mitchell, Pissaridou, Summers and Sykes. Joanna Martindale (CVSF Co-optee)

Other Members present: Councillor Kennedy

PART ONE

6. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

6.1 Declarations of Interest

There were none

6.2 Declarations of party whip

There were none

6.3 Exclusion of Press and Public

As per the agenda

7. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

7.1 Councillor Ken Norman, Chair, reminded the meeting of the main aims of the Panel. He confirmed that Councillor Wakefield's Housing portfolio was included in the panel's Work Plan for 6 January 2012.

8. WITNESSES

8.1 Councillor Amy Kennedy CM for Planning Economic Development and Regeneration (AK) reminded the meeting of her remit; it did not include Trading Standards, Environmental Health and Licensing which were the responsibility of Councillor Ben Duncan. She said maintaining Development Control capacity was especially important; effective ways of working and new technology were key.

8.2 AK was concerned about possible changes to the Planning Policy team, not least because of the need to produce a robust and timely City Plan. She said the Council had to be realistic in the current financial climate when there was little funding for development and inward investment opportunities. Regarding rationalisation of Capital Projects team she said capital projects can still be achieved by working 'smarter.'

8.3 AK answered the Panel's questions together with Jeanette Walsh Development Control Manager (JW), Geoff Raw Strategic Director Place (GR) and Cheryl Finella (CF) Economic Development Manager.

a) CS: ICT migration – a big change seemingly with relatively small savings

JW: this project is due to be delivered in August 2012 and is a forward saving eg on stationery.

GR: it is part of a wider programme of reducing paperwork and improving efficiency.

b) GM: have other options been considered re: savings on major projects team. Potential sources of external income eg regeneration?

AK: there is almost no external funding at present. It is a very tough choice that will likely affect posts. There has to be a balance between front-line and non-frontline posts.

c) GM: is there adequate capacity and knowledge of staff in planning policy, economic development and capital projects?

AK: My portfolio pulls together officers from a number of teams with a wide range of skills which will enable us to review all major projects to identify those that are still viable in this economic climate.

d) MM: How many posts within your remit will be lost?

GR: Restructuring proposals will affect only a small number of posts (that are currently filled) and cannot be shared as they are subject to consultation

e) MM: How many posts in Planning and Public Protection are still vacant?

GR: A written answer can be provided.

f) KN: voluntary severance does not delete a post automatically, does it?

AK: No

g) AP: Is there a list of capital projects that are unlikely to go ahead?

AK: this is subject to review

h) AP: many posts seem to be proposed to be lost in your area.

AK: this is worrying; there are hard choices to be made.

i) KN: what are the risks to the Council of lost posts?

AK: There will still be capacity to produce the City Plan. Frontline services in Development Control (important both for the Council and for residents and developers) remain relatively unscathed under these proposals

j) CS: Do we have the capacity to carry out the Duty for neighbouring authorities to work together?

AK: there is good cross-border co-operation already eg over Shoreham Harbour, Waste and Mineral Plan and National Park Authority. There is capacity to continue this regular work. There would be more pressure if the Council were to support Neighbourhood Forums. Neighbourhood Plans are being looked at, but because they can only be used to promote not prevent development they would not seem to me likely to be popular with many residents and personally at this stage I am sceptical about them for a number of reasons.

k) OS: Will a proposed reduction in technical posts mean this work will go to consultancies instead?

AK: No

l) MM: Will the Planning department still have the capacity and specialist expertise to deal with the volume and complexity of work?

AK: The capacity of the DC team is to be protected; we are looking only to reduce expenditure at senior levels. Expert knowledge exists across all the posts.

m) JM: I welcome close links with the Communities Team on new neighbourhood plans proposals. Joint working with Planning is important. Residents may well be interested in Neighbourhood Councils, eg in involvement in allocation of S106 funding. There are potential sources of European funding that can be accessed via community and voluntary sector.

AK: We are looking at how the Community Infrastructure Levy could be progressed alongside the continuing S106 regime and would welcome wider joint working on this.

n) GM: re redistribution of managerial responsibilities for senior DC and planning posts, what is meant by focussing on core aspects and non-statutory work?

JW: DC has strong management; there will be consultation on this. As the City Plan is following from the Local Development Framework there is a huge change in how plans are drafted and developed. Non-statutory work covers eg communications, graphics, graphic design work. There is no intention to reduce posts in statutory work (such as conservation areas and listed buildings enforcement).

o) CS: in EIAs – page 90 – what will be the effect of reducing the availability of advice on home adaptations?

GR: The Council provides housing adaptation advice to private sector residents. We are exploring the opportunities to safeguard further funding. The Council has policy documents in place 'Lifetimes Homes Policy' and at present an Access consultant works for Planning 1 day per week.

AK The Disability Discrimination Act is law and remains applicable to newbuild.

p) AP: What does the Ordnance Survey budget pay for?

AK: we think a reduction in OS fees (not jobs) can be achieved

q) GM: Economic Development Unit?

AK: we've been able to retain the ED budget which is relatively small but provides initiatives that we think can still make a big difference.

GR ED is central to the Council's being able to address increasing unemployment and increasing deprivation that impacts on the health and well-being of the local community and the pressures on many other local services. An investment prospectus for the City is being drawn up to promote investment and employment in the city.

CF: ED is involved in 3 main areas:

- 1) business support (eg 'Ride the Wave' workshops on networking, supply chains and business clusters; fledgling Environmental Technologies sector which is small but strong and bringing new business into the City; Creative Industries eg digital media and gaming plus performing arts and artists with the Arts Commission; talent scouts in music industry; and business improvement district to support retailers in the town centre)
- 2) skills (City Employment and Skills Programme and working with FE and HE sector to help grow the economy)
- 3) support infrastructure (Brighton & Hove Local Employment Scheme for recruitment and training in construction; an Investment prospectus for the City to develop a strong brand for business {alongside leisure}; showcasing the City and its skills offer including major EcoTec event in June relating to environmental industries)

r) JM: how can we measure the impact of ED actions, on the wealth of the City?

CF: This is notoriously hard to measure but we do take feedback from the business community and engage with different groups eg re skills. We run questionnaires and an annual business survey. We can't always claim credit for increasing the economy but nor should we be held responsible when the economic situation deteriorates given this relates to the national and international situation.

s) JM: Adult Education doesn't seem to attract much funding. How can we help protect frontline services and support organisations?

AK: We are doing this, and emphasising access to education for all, as part of the City Employment and Skills Plan produced in partnership with City College and with the Universities and Amex.

t) JM: But it's difficult to implement a Strategy without resources

GR: Improving coordination and work by Director of People with schools and FE and HE means that more can be done without necessarily having to increase resources to help support children and young people, as much as we may wish to. CESSG is ably chaired by Phil Frier, Principal and Chief Executive of City College Brighton & Hove.

Chair: Thank you all for attending the meeting and answering questions. Thank you to the Press for being here.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

9.1 The next meeting would be on Friday 9 December at 2pm in HTH CR1.

The meeting concluded at 3.50pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
SCRUTINY PANEL ON THE BUDGET PROPOSALS

2.00pm 9 DECEMBER 2011

COMMITTEE ROOM 1, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor K Norman (Chair)

Also in attendance: Councillor Mears, Mitchell, Pissaridou, Summers and Sykes

Other Members present: Councillors Jarrett and Shanks

PART ONE

10. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

10.1 There were no declarations of substitutes, declarations of interest or declarations of party whip.

10.2 RESOLVED; that the press and public be not excluded from the meeting.

11. CHAIRS COMMUNICATIONS

11.1 Councillor Ken Norman, Chair of the Budget Scrutiny Panel, welcomed everyone and reminded the meeting of the aims of the Panel:

- To provide cross-party challenge to the budget proposals brought forward by the administration.
- To understand the cumulative affect of budget cuts across the council, city, for service users and providers.
- To begin looking at public service budgets across the piece – fire, police, health
- To make recommendations to Cabinet as to how to improve the budget

12. WITNESSES

12.1 Councillor Rob Jarrett (RJ) told the meeting that proposed savings were inevitable within Adult Social Care and Health as these service areas represented a large part of the Council's overall budget.

12.2 The underlying principle was that services remain wherever possible and would be delivered more efficiently. Savings would be sought when contracted out services eg in Home Care were due for renegotiation. The Council relied on having the right in-house expertise; internal structures were being looked at to ensure the right numbers and levels of officers. Savings would be made in external contracts wherever possible.

12.3 The Council had a statutory duty to provide care and Brighton & Hove faced some significant demographic pressures; eg there were relatively large numbers of people aged 85+ many of whom had significant health needs and a rise in the numbers of adults with learning

difficulties surviving into old age and a related rise in cases of dementia. So although some significant savings had been identified, this did not mean that the total budget had reduced.

12.4 Raising the service eligibility threshold from 'substantial' to 'critical' had been considered and judged to be a false economy in that service users then would tend to return with more severe problems later on. It is intended to take a preventative approach.

12.5 Compared with other areas Brighton & Hove is known to have significantly higher than average costs per individual, particularly for learning disabilities.

12.6 There are proposals to make savings on accommodation arrangements. Various parts of the City have relatively inefficient buildings, some of which are small and underused so reducing unnecessarily high overheads is key. This would involve rearranging some locations and potentially cause some dislocation to service users. A suitable consultation period was being planned.

12.7 Other efficiencies were planned by using new technologies eg in Home Care, helping people to stay in their own homes. Telecare can be used to reduce the number of home visits needed to ensure a person is OK, resulting in savings without loss of service. Simplifying the range of payment rates in new Home Care contracts would also bring about some savings.

12.8 Community Meals was another area of potential savings, pending the outcome of the current scrutiny process. The option of a new contract would be explored.

12.9 Councillor Sue Shanks (SS) pointed out the wide service areas covered by schools, early years and youth budgets. She said national funding was increasingly being switched from local authorities to individual schools and academies with cuts to spending on eg education welfare, school improvement and early years training subsidies. Councillor Shanks focussed on some of the key areas.

12.10 Some of the Children's Centres did not provide a full range of services and had become expensive to run. For the relatively large numbers of looked after children currently in Brighton & Hove, more learning interventions were being planned to help reduce escalation of service needs. In-house fostering would be used more in future and this was less costly.

12.11 Youth services were shown to be effective, especially at traumatic times in people's lives and the Council would look to protect these; in particular by bringing together commissioning for sports and play services across the City.

A small reduction in employability service was being proposed as schools were increasingly taking responsibility in this area and children staying in school for longer. It was planned to bring together employment services in Housing and Supporting People to cover both young people and older age groups.

12.12 Councillor Shanks said she was keen for schools to stay within the local authority however there were national pressures and a school places commissioning group was established.

12.13 Geraldine Hoban (GH), Chief Operating Officer for Brighton and Hove's Clinical Commissioning Group gave the background to the changes to commissioning for healthcare

within the City. She confirmed that the CCG was working closely with the local authority on both the adult and children's Section 75 and on the Commissioning Strategy and Improvement Strategy. She said that joint governance and decision-making processes were in place and the budget proposals were aligned with healthcare processes.

12.14 She confirmed that from an NHS perspective she was confident that the commissioning proposals would not adversely affect health or the local health economy. As with the approach in health, benchmarking had enabled 'outliers' to be identified, so that better value for money could be achieved. She noted that within the budget proposal there were also investment areas.

12.15 The level of spending on carers would be maintained; there would be changes to how these services are accessed. Mental health was a priority and more funding was being put into this.

12.16 Re-ablement funding was being re-aligned with £3.2 million being passported to the Council including £500k for work on prevention - enabling access criteria to be maintained. Whilst this year there would be a reduction of £130k in this pot she felt confident it could be managed.

12.17 There would be a specific focus on Children's health within the CCG, and Geraldine Hoban said they would want to work very closely with the Council on proposals around Children's Centres. Among the aims of the clinically led working group on Children that will be established this year is to improve the relationships and connections between primary care and the Children's Centres and to ensure community health services are working to keep children out of secondary care whenever appropriate.

12.18 Cabinet Members answered questions from the Panel together with Denise D'Souza, Lead Commissioner Adult Social Care and Health (DD), Terry Parkin, Strategic Director (People) (TP), James Dougan, Head of Children and Families (JD) and Jo Lyons, Lead Commissioner, Schools, Skills and Learning (JL).

a) MM: No reference to S75 in the ASC Strategic Financial Context (p35)?

DD: this will be set out more clearly when the proposals go to the Joint Commissioning Board.

b) MM: Savings in the assessment budget (p36)?

DD: Some of the £200k savings would be found within joint arrangements eg some growth in budget for mental health assessment.

c) MM: Bringing 'in line,' support for the Learning Disability Partnership Board (p36) ?

DD: This budget has been underspent for 2 years. The proposals are adequate to support the LDP Board and consultation.

d) MM: '£50k savings' appears to be a general 'accountancy' number – are these reliable figures (p37, p40)?

DD: The figures in such a large budget are 'rounded.' There are detailed budget sheets behind each of these.

e) MM: Are these deleted or vacant posts?

DD: A review of support services is in progress; more information can be provided following consultation.

f) MM: How many units would be taken out of Housing Stock for 'extra care' (p38)?

DD: Brighton & Hove is still an 'outlier' regarding numbers of older people in residential care. At current rates the numbers will have increased by 700 people by 2013. The Housing Commissioning Group is looking at a range of options for around 15 units locally at present. No decision on providers of housing has been made and other residential social landlords are also being looked at.

g) MM: Concerned about proposals affecting people with disabilities (p40)

MM: Details in EIA – question 'no' impact eg on transgender, ethnicity groups (p119): 'no' impact on older people (p121) EIA 'to be completed' (p123). Some comments may be misleading.

h) RJ: This budget has been prepared sooner than usual and the EIAs are still developing.

DD: Services would be clear about the potential impact regarding individuals but these EIAs are for budget scrutiny and would be enhanced for budget council.

i) GM: Timescale and achievability for reducing the numbers of people in residential accommodation (p38) ?

DD: Despite developing 200 extra places (eg Patching Lodge, Vernon Gardens) we are still short by around 200 units and the number of people aged 85+ is growing. 15 extra people are in care every week; we are working on how to address this and will consult on proposals.

RJ: At present we have people placed as far away as Devon and this is extremely expensive per person although only a few individuals are involved. We can manage transition better and by remodelling local provision we know we can accommodate people in Brighton & Hove, but this will take time.

j) GM: All current in-house provider services (bottom box p44) is this deliverable?

DD: This is for 2013/14, so there is a year to plan this.

TP: This is 'joining up' children and adult services better. Transitioning here is not as good as in some other local authorities; this is one of our biggest weaknesses. Significant savings have already been achieved and we're confident further savings can be made.

k) GM: How will savings be achieved?

TP: We know that local provision can bring down costs significantly and improve the offer to the individual.

l) OS: Adults Assessment – meeting VfM target?

DD: Community Care is linked with Personalisation which is included in the summary of VFM gains (p29). This spending on Community Care eg on increasing independence via Telecare and other initiatives has been shown to be effective over the last 2 years and there is no reason to change this, but there is still more to do.

m) JM: We welcome protection of spending on prevention and we recognise budget pressures. How can we ensure that the quality of domiciliary care does not decrease?

DD: These are proposals covering 2 years; it is not intended to increase the eligibility criteria. Our demographics show that numbers of people over 65+ is not a significant issue, however the number of people aged 85+ is growing. The Community Care budget for older people

continues to decrease and quality is an issue. We are moving to real time monitoring of care actually delivered and getting feedback from carers. The proposals are for more but different investment, targeting the most vulnerable.

RJ: There are savings planned on Home Care contracts but high quality is still expected. There will be encouragement for training and we are looking at ability to recruit staff at the right pay level. This is a key aim, but not in the budget papers.

n) JM: What is the nature of the cuts to the Learning Disabilities Partnership Board? A consultation is planned for next year – so is this a good time to make cuts of more than a half?

DD: The Board will still be supported but there will be less spend on infrastructure and funding targeted instead at specific initiatives, consultations and transitioning.

RJ: There was a small one-off discretionary grant for a pilot scheme. Individuals will still be supported including moving to employment. No reduction is proposed on advocacy or other support for individuals to participate.

o) JM: The Voluntary Sector has particular expertise in transition. How will integrated Transition be planned; what will be the impact on adult services?

JM: The EIAs need strengthening regarding older people. Referring to the questions for EIAs (p19) - have all the risks been identified in the services?

RJ: We want to make sure the EIAs work as they should but they are not perfect at this early stage. Any concerns that the Panel has on EIAs can be referred to Councillor Ben Duncan, either directly or at a Panel meeting.

p) KN: How are the Day Services proposals (p40) different from previous years? Any changes to mental health provision planned?

DD: There is a continuation in the service for carer relief but there is a relatively low occupancy rate and further reductions are expected in the personalisation budget. More preventive work and a move to more community-based options are expected.

GH: There are no firm proposals as yet. We plan to commission Depression services first and then we will look closely at Day Services this year via the Joint Commission Board with the intention of commissioning in 2013/2014.

RJ: Day Services will still be there for those who need them. But there are low occupancy rates and we want to reduce high overhead costs where possible, for example by reducing the number of buildings but still providing the service.

q) GM: No indicative savings for Youth Services for 2013/2014? Will these continue to be provided in-house?

SS: There are no proposals to reduce funding; the Youth Services Review has been published and we plan to work closely with the voluntary sector. Current staff are anticipated to stay employed by the Council.

r) MM: So Youth Services will continue to be provided in-house and there will be no reduction in funding to the voluntary sector?

SS: There is additional funding of £300k to grant aid more groups so there will be increased provision in this area and no reduction in funding. The Youth Services Review indicates area-based work which will bring services together and avoid duplication. Recommendations are being brought to 20 January CMM

JD: The CMM report will indicate how coordination is to be planned.

s) JM; How long will rollover last?

TP: Officer advice is that holiday schemes should not be put at risk so rollover is needed so that critical schemes can continue. This will take time and we are grateful to all currently involved for their commitment. We plan to stop providing advice on health and safety which most authorities stopped long ago.

t) GM: Does 'Transport' or 'CYP' subsidise school buses?

TP: I can confirm Transport is responsible to subsidise school bus routes and we have looked to ensure there is no double-subsidy. Our home to school policy is inconsistent with neighbouring authorities in that Brighton & Hove children receive funding to travel to schools outside the local authority area but children from elsewhere do not receive funding from their Authority to travel to Brighton & Hove schools.

MM: There is a range of different home-to-school subsidies paid, eg SEN and faith schools.

TP: Yes this could be made clearer in the papers. There are no hidden subsidies. We are taking a fresh look at bus routes. We are not good at supporting SEN independence and we're looking at how to improve this.

MM: Regarding transport to faith schools, some children outside the City Centre could be disadvantaged.

SS: There will be consultation on proposed changes.

u) OS: How will schools be able to take on more responsibility and can that be a seamless transition?

SS: we are working closely with schools and Head teachers

TP: The national picture is that local authorities will not be working so closely with schools in future, other than taking responsibility as a last resort.

JL: We have been working with Head Teachers for a long time, on these changes to support school-school support. There is a national and local push for being self-supporting. The local authority team is refocusing on commissioning and brokering partnerships.

TP: It is important to help schools prepare. The pupil premium will rise and school budgets will increase especially for those with high numbers of pupils receiving free school meals. For the local authority this means a large funding reduction for previously grant-supported services eg around ethnic minorities, school improvement and early intervention so the local authority team may need to reduce further.

v) KN: There has been significant interest in changes to the music service and the reduction in funding – would you like to comment on this?

TP: Funding for music has changed; Brighton & Hove Council provide one of the highest subsidies nationally on top of the ring fenced central government grant. The only reduction proposed is in the additional subsidy made available by the Council. The central government grant remains although now the music service has to bid to the Arts Council for it. The Council remains one of the larger funders nationally however despite this cut.

JL: We will be focussing on music provision for vulnerable groups including looked after children and youth offenders and for 2012-2013 will be looking to schools to do their own commissioning.

w) GM: How will the music service be protected in this budget?

SS: There is free tuition for children receiving free school meals and our Arts Council bid will emphasise vulnerable groups.

x) GM :Youth Employability savings (p52)?; and could external funding be sought?

SS Brighton and Hove Business Enterprise Partnership will be looking at increasing employment across the city; there will be more joined up provision. Joint commissioning will help make savings here. The Foyer is active in this area.

TP: This is an example of where early intervention from age 16 can give better outcomes. At present our performance is low - we need to ensure that more young people achieve 5 or more good GCSE grades.

y) JM: Are these Youth Employability Services figures the latest available and why are 4 CVSF posts proposed to the lost in 2012-2013 not shown as a saving (p52) ? Has the transitional funding of £200k all gone?

JD: The £200k was allocated to the voluntary sector for 2011-2012 as part of the transitional funding from Connexions service.

z) JM: we welcome the £300k new funding – how does this link with other grants programmes?

JD: This is a new pot of money for which the precise details are still being developed.

MM; What is the position regarding S75 funding and Children and Families Delivery Unit (p45)?

JD: The Cabinet report can be made clearer here.

aa) MM: Numbers of vacant and deleted posts in services for children with disabilities?

SS: This could be made clearer in the papers.

JD No cuts are proposed to voluntary sector in Youth services.

bb) MM: Reduction of £10k in adaptations?

JD: this is a small saving for year 2 (not year 1) in a much larger budget that we think will have least impact. Discussions are on-going via the Partnership Forum

TP: New technology will bring down slightly the cost of adaptation; an explanation can be provided.

GH: Most adaptations are from S75 funding; I will check this.

cc) AP: Savings in school Improvement and Inclusion?

SS: Schools will be able to buy local authority services back.

dd) JM: What changes will there be to contracting arrangements for Services for Disabled Children (p57)? The £120k proposed savings does not seem to be in line with the needs assessment. Why is the Voluntary Sector singled out for savings here or is there a proportionate reduction in in-house provision? Proposed savings could have a huge impact on staff levels and organisations' ability to survive. This would disproportionately affect parent carers and disabled children.

SS: the move to 2-year commissioning will help contribute to job security including in the voluntary sector, as well as cost reduction.

TP: Identified savings amount to only a small percentage of the total budget. Efficiencies will result from multiyear commissioning and joint commissioning with adult provision. New ways of commissioning will lead to improved services.

ee) JM: even relatively small cuts can impact disproportionately; not least because without core funding CV sector organisations cannot attract additional funding. The needs assessment has identified priorities and it should be followed. The service should be looked at as a whole, not just the voluntary sector.

JM: Where will the £192k savings on the early intervention fund be made (p49)? Also the £107k cut to CAMHs and TAMHs at a time of a 40% rise in referrals, including children, and the highest suicide rate for under-25s, in the UK

SS: At a national level, CAMHs was an initial pilot that was always due to end in March 2012. We have managed to find the money to support the continuation of the service albeit at a reduced level.

JD: Commissioning for Disability Services is actively being linked in with the needs assessments and the next stage is to look at targets. This could be made clearer in the Cabinet papers.

ff) JM: But the cuts appear to be prescribed to fall entirely on the voluntary sector, where they will have disproportionately greater impact.

JD: The savings are not new and have already been achieved via the EIG review. We can look at how the information is laid out in the table of savings description, impact and risk. (p49)

SS: a small funding reduction will be manageable, providing longer-term commissioning and security is achieved.

gg) MM: How many vacant and deleted posts are proposed in ASC and Childrens' Services?

TP: Across 'People' there are approximately 90 vacant posts and 45 unfilled vacancies. These are subject to consultation and detailed figures will be provided. HR can provide the corporate picture.

hh) OS: How can savings be achieved on asylum seekers without service impact (p56)?

TP: There are fewer asylum seekers and we are working more closely with West Sussex colleagues regarding people arriving at Gatwick airport but then presenting at Brighton.

12.19 Cabinet Members provided a summing up:

12.20 Councillor Shanks said the EIAs did not fully identify all equality issues but could focus on the main matters. She emphasised that it was a challenge to balance targeted work with individuals, with generic services. However she was satisfied with the proposals put forward, including looked after children and play services.

12.21 Councillor Jarrett said even though under difficult financial circumstances, the proposals fulfilled the manifesto commitment, protecting the most vulnerable and carers, and recognising the increasing value of community work. Equalities considerations had been applied across services so that wherever possible there was no disproportionate effect on any particular group. Savings would be applied without impacting on services, though the location or means of delivery might change or the profit line of contractors may be affected.

12.22 Councillor Ken Norman the Panel Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting and answering questions.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

13.1 Members noted that the next Panel meeting will be on 6th January at 2pm in HTH CR1

The meeting concluded at 4.30pm

Signed

Dated this

day of

Chair



Brighton & Hove City Council

Analysis of Budget Simulator results for Brighton & Hove City Council November 2011

Table of Contents

Background	3
Introduction	3
The respondents	3
The results	4
Headline analysis	5
From where will the £20m savings come?	5
Childrens services	6
Introduction	6
Childrens Services choices	6
Adult Services	8
Introduction	8
Adult Services choices	8
City Infrastructure	10
Introduction	10
City Infrastructure choices	10
Housing Services	13
Introduction	13
Housing Services choices	13
Communities	16
Introduction	16
Communities choices	16
Resources and Finance	19
Introduction	19
Resources and Finance choices	19
Open ended responses	21

Background

Introduction

The Brighton and Hove budget simulator enabled respondents to allocate expenditure to council services grouped under six broad themes. These are:

Childrens Services

Adult Services

City Infrastructure

Housing Services

Communities

Resources and Finance

Respondents were asked to make adjustments to expenditure that represents a marginal, small, moderate, large or major increase or decrease to each service. Respondents could also choose to leave expenditure unchanged. The starting point for the exercise was that spending is six per cent over target with a potential council tax rise of 17 per cent. The objective of the exercise was to allocate expenditure so that the maximum council tax rise is 3.5 per cent.

The respondents

The budget simulator went live on 1st October 2011. By 1st November 437 people had completed the exercise. The report is based upon these responses.

The collection of demographic details such as age and gender was not mandatory and a number of people did not provide details. It has not been possible, therefore, to compare how the characteristics of people completing the budget simulator compare with the population as a whole.

A breakdown of respondents by age is shown in the tables overleaf. Age details are known for three quarters of respondents.

Table : Age of respondents

	Number	%
Under 18	17	4
18-24	21	5
25-34	51	12
35-44	100	23
45-54	87	20
55-64	41	9
65 and over	14	3
Not known	106	24

If 'not knowns' are excluded the resulting sample under-represents people aged 55 and over and over-represents younger age groups when compared with the population of Brighton and Hove as a whole.

Gender information was provided by 72% of respondents (40 per cent men, 32 per cent women).

The results

The report presents results for each budget heading. It shows the mean average budget expenditure chosen by respondents, the difference between the chosen budget and the starting budget and the percentage difference from current expenditure.

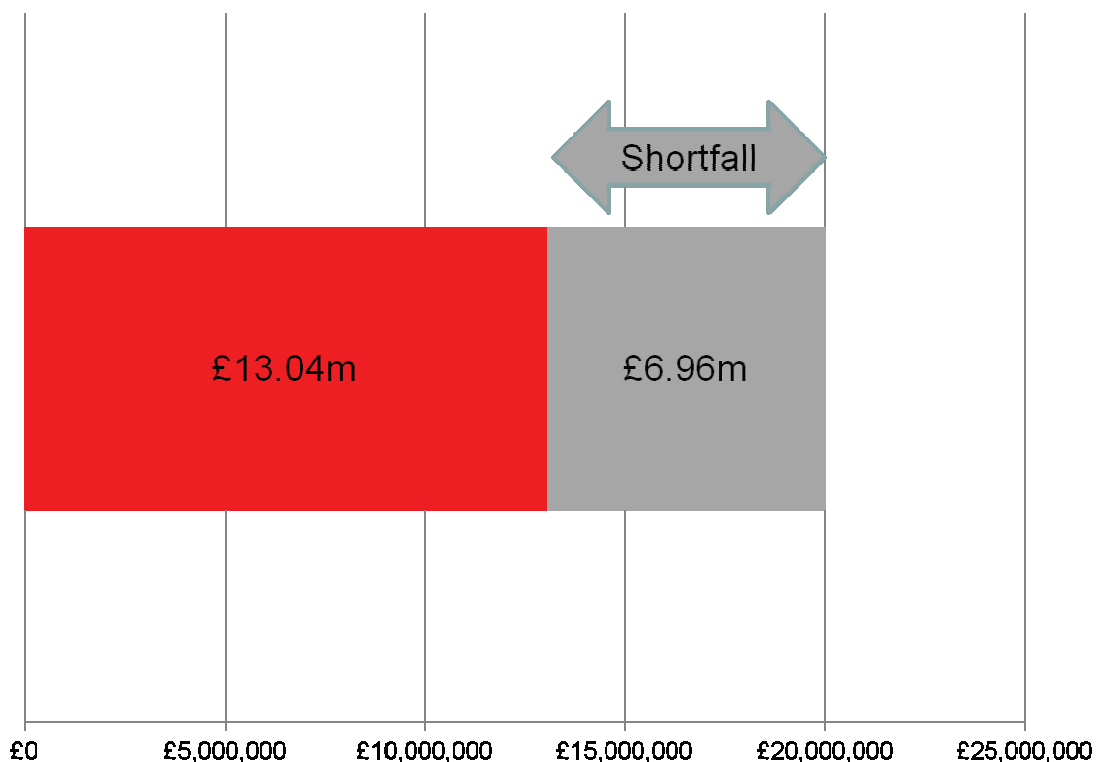
Headline analysis

From where will the £20m savings come?

The budget simulator proposed at starting point of a budget of £362.42m, which is six per cent over the target budget and would result in a council tax increase of 17 per cent. This set the challenge to respondents of reducing the authorities spending by £20m.

The headline findings from the budget simulator show that respondents were unable to meet this challenge and the mean average reduction in authority spending was £13.04m. A shortfall of £7m against the set target (figure 1) of £20m. This equates to an average annual spend of £349.4m for Brighton and Hove City Council.

Figure : Progress towards £20m reduction in spending target



Calculations based on the current Brighton and Hove expenditure of c.£341m, shows that on average, respondents were proposing an increase of on average £7.4m to current spending.

This is an overall increase to current expenditure of 2.2 per cent and equates to an average a Council Tax increase of 6.2%. This is above the suggested target of a 3.5 per cent increase and shows the difficulty respondents had in making the required savings. Figure 2 shows a breakdown of the percentage increases against current budgets¹.

Figure : Percentage reductions against current budgets by service area

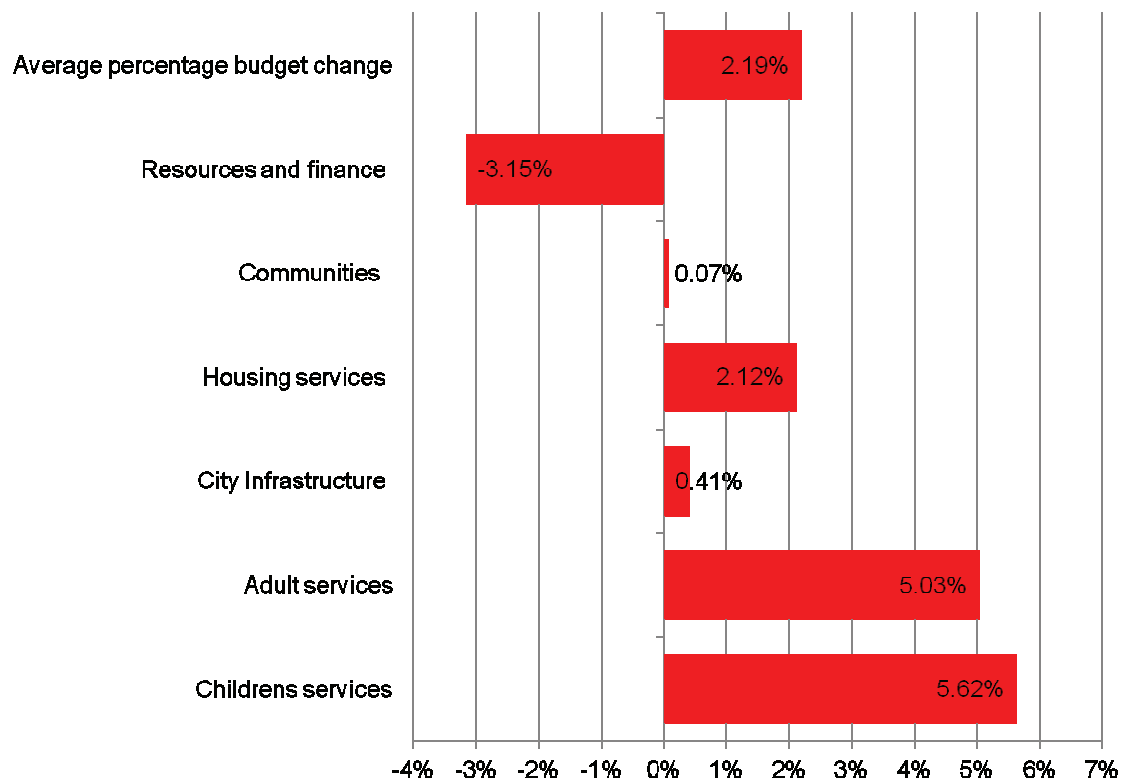


Figure shows how respondent's decisions on proposed changes to budgets vary by service area. Respondents found it difficult to make significant reductions in the Adult and Childrens Services budgets. Again using the calculation against current budgets, respondents actually proposed a 5.0 per cent increase to Adult Services spending and a 5.6 per cent increase to spending on Childrens Services. Resources and Finance was

1

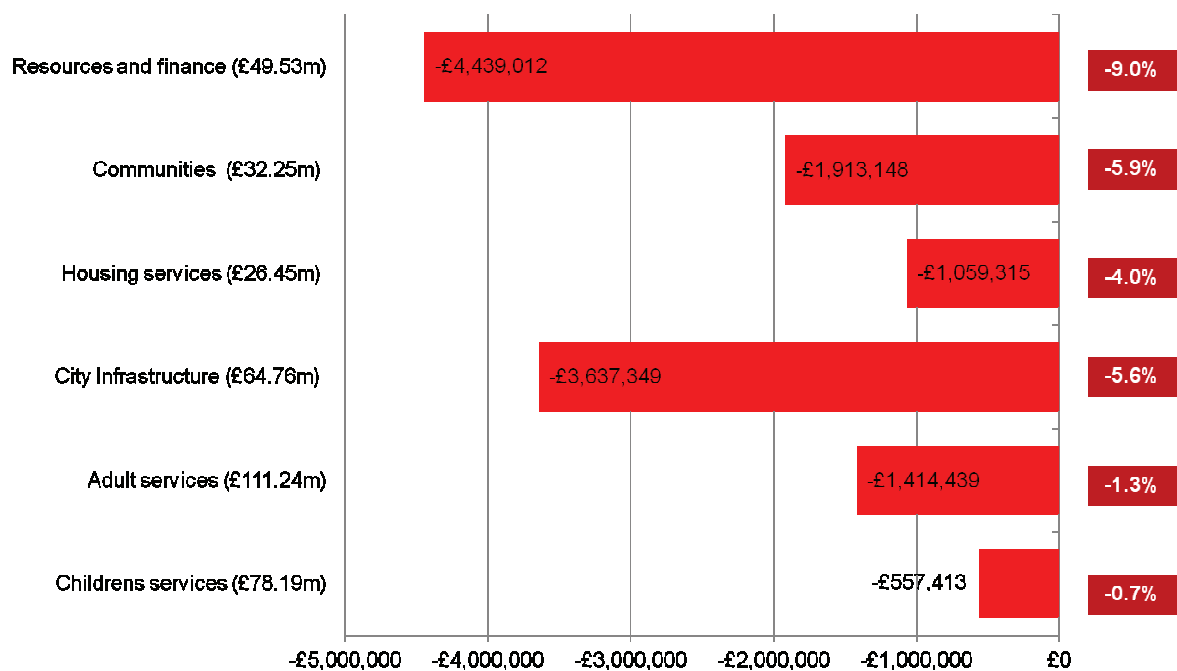
[□] Current budgets are calculated by subtracting 6% from starting budgets in the simulator

the one service area where on average respondents proposed a reduction to current budgets, totalling 3.1 per cent or £1.45m.

Analysing the data against current budgets (without the 6% increase) highlights the challenge that respondents had in making significant reductions in spending levels. However, this analysis does not highlight the reductions that respondents did make against the starting budgets² (figure 3).

Respondents made the largest reduction in spending (9.0 per cent) in the Resources and Finance starting budget. Other areas of saving were £1.9m from the Communities budget and £3.6m from the City Infrastructure budget.

Figure 3: Percentage reductions against starting budgets by service area



²

Starting budgets are the figures used in the simulator which apply a 6 per cent increase to current expenditure

Childrens services

Introduction

In this section the views of respondents in relation to Childrens Services are presented. Areas of council responsibility covered by this service heading include:

- Early years
- Youth Services
- Supporting children in education
- Statutory education services
- Social work and child protection
- Services for looked after children
- Childrens Disabilities

Childrens Services choices

Respondents only made slight adjustments to most of the budget fields within this overall service heading (see table 2). The main exceptions to this is with 'Supporting children in education' where just under half (49 per cent) choose to make a cut to the budget. All but the 18-24 age group chose to decrease this budget heading.

Conversely, respondents used the simulator to propose slight increases in the budget for 'Youth Services and Social Work and Child Protection'. The age group most likely to increase the budget was the under 18s and the 18-24 group. The 45-54 age group chose to make a slight budget increase in Youth Services but all other age groups either left the budget unchanged or decreased it.

Table : Proportion who chose to increase, decrease or maintain spending in each area

	% who want to decrease spending	% who want no change in spending	% who want to increase spending
Early years	36	41	23
Youth Services	30	39	31
Support for children in education	49	36	15
Statutory education services	37	49	14
Social work and child protection	23	47	30
Services for looked after children	29	48	23
Disabled Childrens Services	25	49	26

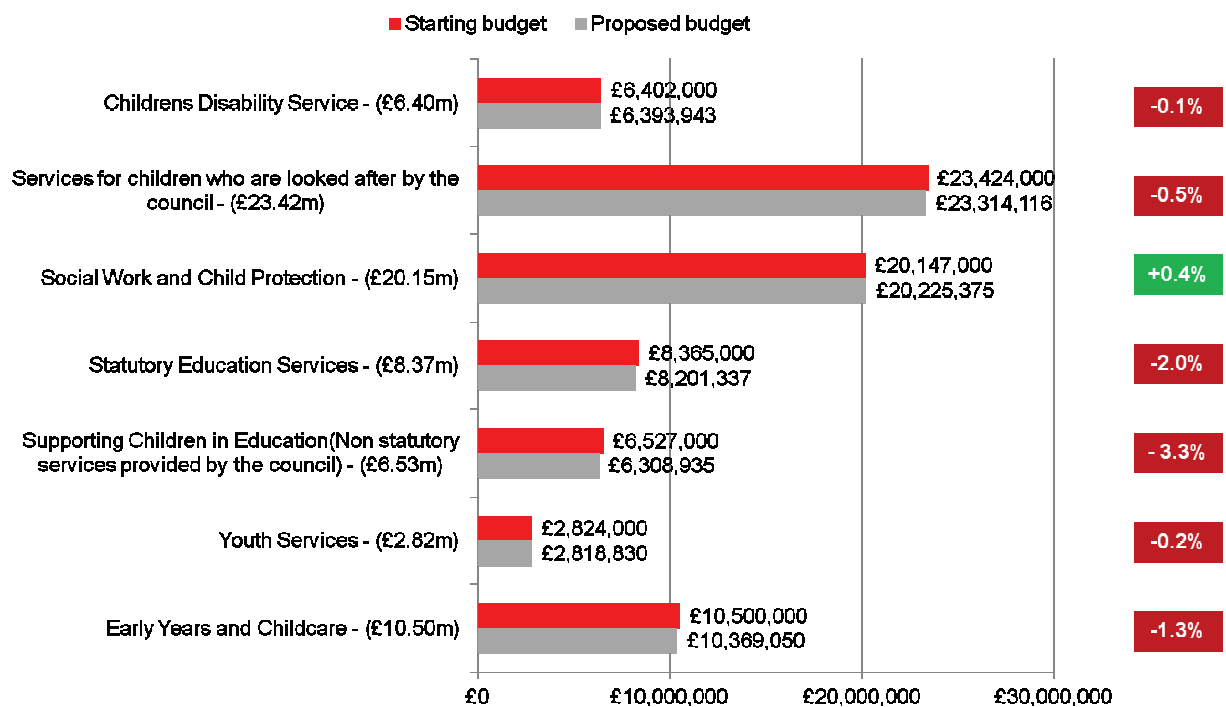
The figure overleaf shows the mean budget allocation for each of the fields under Childrens Services. It also shows the mean percentage increase or decrease from the starting budget.

The figure shows that, on average, respondents made a decrease of 3.3 per cent to the Supporting children in education budget. This is equivalent to a £218,000 reduction in

expenditure. The next largest decrease is in Statutory education services (2.0 per cent of the starting budget). This equates to a decrease of £163,000.

On average, respondents chose to make a decrease to Early Years spending of 1.3 per cent or £130,000 of its starting budget.

Figure 4: Expenditure on Childrens Services



Overall council expenditure in relation to Childrens Services is currently £78.2m. Users of the budget simulator allocated £77.6m which represents a decrease of £0.5m or 0.7 per cent. It is clear from this analysis that Childrens Services is not an area that respondents in Brighton and Hove believe should be subject to all but minor spending cuts.

Adult Services

Introduction

In this section the views of respondents in relation to spending on Adult Services. Areas of council responsibility covered by this service heading include:

- Residential and Nursing Care
- Home Care
- Day Options
- Equipment and Adaptations
- Supported Employment
- Assessment and Care Management

Adult Services choices

Respondents were in favour of maintaining the budgets or reducing spending in most of the budget fields within this overall service heading (see table 3). The exception to this was 'Home Care', where slightly more respondents proposed an increase (28 per cent) than a decrease (27 per cent) in spending. The 45-54 group (36 per cent) and the 55-64 group (37 per cent) were the most likely to suggest an increase to the 'Home Care' budget.

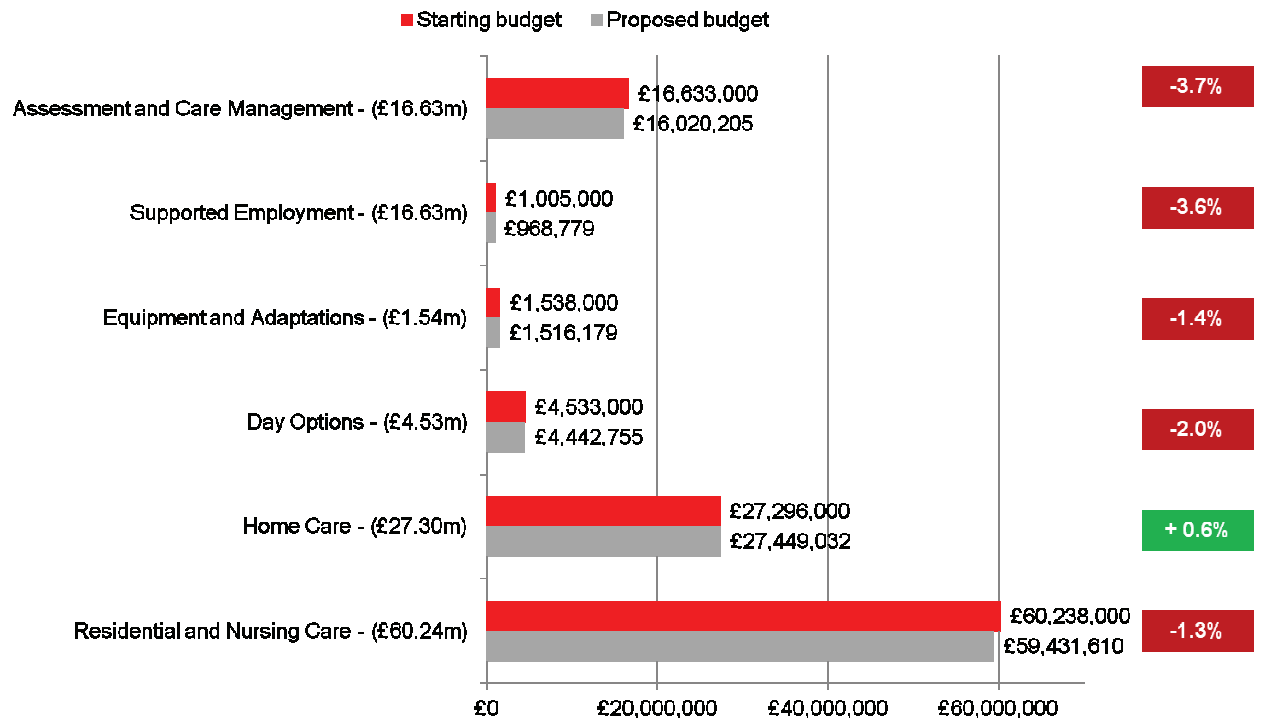
Conversely, respondents used the simulator to propose the highest decreases in the budget for 'Assessment and Care Management' (54 per cent) and 'Supported Employment' (51 per cent). Both young and old age groups were consistent in their view of a reduction in spending in 'Assessment and Care Management', with 71 per cent of both 18-24 year olds and the over 65's proposing a reduction in spending in this area.

Table 3: Proportion who chose to increase, decrease or maintain spending in each area

	% who want to decrease spending	% who want no change in spending	% who want to increase spending
Residential and Nursing Care	39	41	20
Home Care	27	44	28
Day Options	42	41	17
Equipment and Adaptations	39	42	19
Supported Employment	51	32	16
Assessment and Care Management	54	34	12

Figure 5 shows a breakdown of respondents proposed changes to the Adult Services budget by area. Reductions in the budget are proposed in all areas except 'Home Care' where respondents propose a small increase to the starting budget of 0.6% or £153,000. The largest percentage reductions in spending are proposed in 'Assessment and Care Management' (-3.7%) and 'Supported Employment' (-3.6%).

Figure 5: Expenditure on Adult Services



On average, respondents chose a reduction in the budget for Adult Services from £111.24m per year to £109.83m. This equates to a saving of £1.41m and an average reduction of 1.3 per cent against the starting budget, indicating that Adult Services is not an area in which respondents would like to see strong reductions in spending.

City Infrastructure

Introduction

In this section the views of respondents in relation to spending on City Infrastructure.

Areas of council responsibility covered by this service heading include:

- Development Planning and Building Control
- Trading Standards, Environmental Control and Licensing
- Highways and Transport
- Parking Services
- City Clean
- City Parks

City Infrastructure choices

Respondents were strongly in favour of reducing spending in all of the budget fields within this overall service heading (see table 4). The strongest proposals were to reduce spending on 'Parking Services' (85 per cent) and on 'Development Planning and Building Control' (75 per cent). All age groups were consistent in their view that spending of 'Parking Services' should reduce. For 'Development Planning and Building Control', the 35-44 age group were most in favour of a reduction in spending, with 86 per cent of this group backing this change.

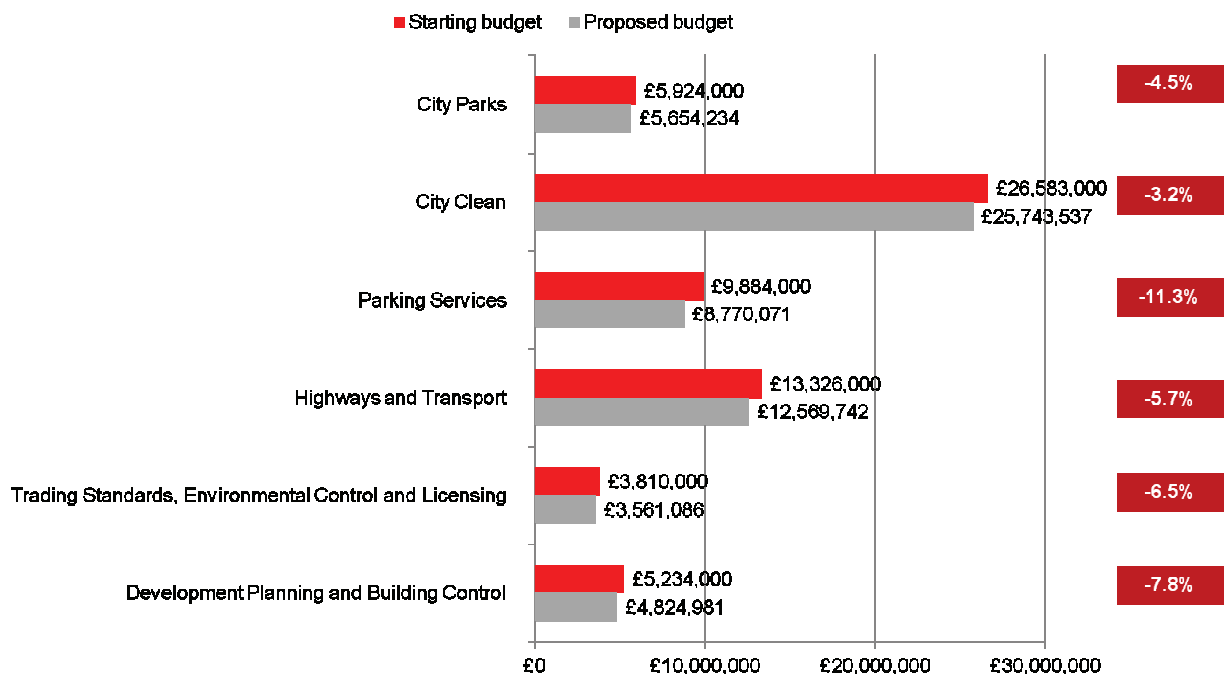
Conversely, while respondents used the simulator to propose decreases in all budget areas, 'City Parks' and 'City Clean' were the two areas where a lower majority favoured budget reductions. The younger respondents were more in favour of increasing spending on 'City Parks' than any other group, with nearly a quarter (24 per cent) of 18-24 year olds proposing an increase in spending.

Table 4: Proportion who chose to increase, decrease or maintain spending in each area

	% who want to decrease spending	% who want no change in spending	% who want to increase spending
Development Planning and Building Control	75	18	7
Trading Standards, Environmental Control and Licensing	68	25	7
Highways and Transport	65	23	11
Parking Services	85	12	3
City Clean	50	36	14
City Parks	59	27	14

Figure 6 shows a breakdown of respondents proposed changes to the City Infrastructure budget by function. Reductions in the budget are proposed in all areas. The largest percentage reductions in spending are proposed in Parking Services (-11.3%) and Development Planning and Building Control (-7.8%).

Figure 6: Expenditure on City Infrastructure



No significant differences exist between the views of males and females, with both consistently proposing a reduction in spending in all areas.

On average, respondents chose a reduction in the budget for City Infrastructure from £64.76m per year to £61.12m. This equates to a saving of £3.64m and an average reduction of 5.6 per cent against the starting budget, indicating that City infrastructure is an area in which respondents would like to see reductions in spending.

Housing Services

Introduction

In this section the views of respondents in relation to spending on Housing Services.

Areas of council responsibility covered by this service heading include:

Housing Strategy and Advice

Homelessness

Supporting People

Housing Services choices

Respondents were less consistent in their views on reducing spending in the budget fields within this overall service heading (see table 5). The strongest feeling was in reducing spending on 'Housing Strategy and Advice' (69 per cent). The older age groups were more in favour of maintaining or increasing spending on 'Housing Strategy and Advice', with 34 per cent of 55-64 year olds and 43 per cent of the over 65's favouring this. Conversely, 24 per cent of 18-24 year olds and 20 per cent of 25-34 years olds were in favour of maintaining or increasing spending on 'Housing Strategy and Advice'.

Respondents were less clear with regards to the budget spent on 'Homelessness', with 36 per cent proposing no change in spending. The 25-34 year old group were more forthright in their views, with just 22 per cent favouring no change and 53 per cent proposing a reduction in spending on 'Homelessness' Older age groups were more likely to favour no change in spending on 'Homelessness'.

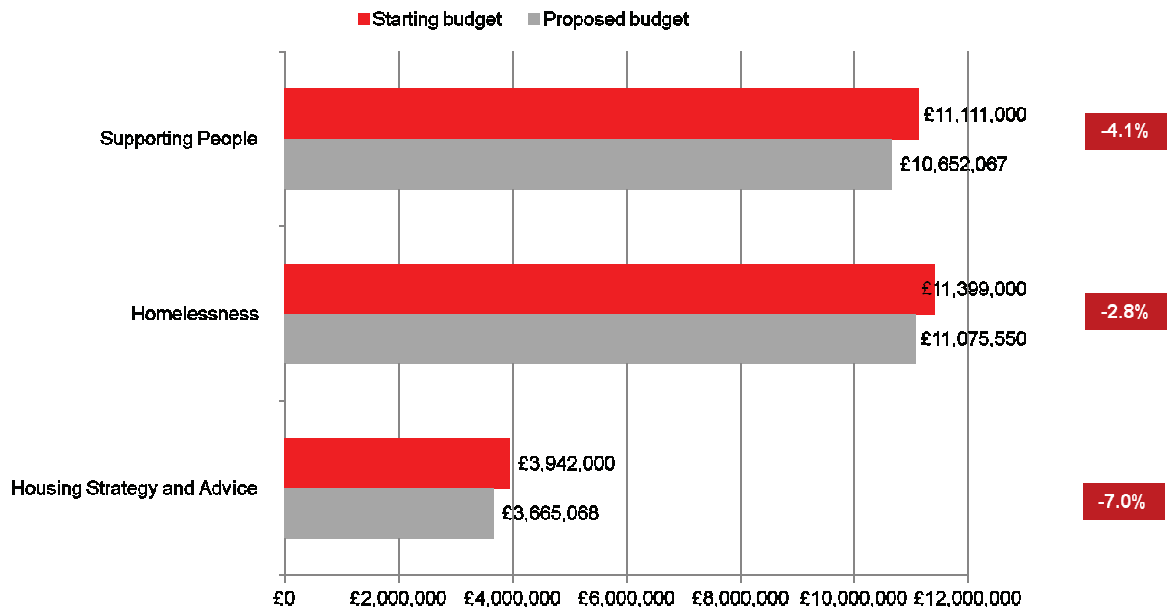
Table 5: Proportion who chose to increase, decrease or maintain spending in each area

	% who want to decrease spending	% who want no change in spending	% who want to increase spending
Housing Strategy and Advice	69	21	9
Homelessness	42	36	22
Supporting People	55	29	16

Figure 7 shows a breakdown of respondents proposed changes to the Housing Services budget by function. Reductions in the budget are proposed in all areas. The largest percentage reductions in spending are proposed in Homelessness (-7.8%) and Housing Strategy and Advice (-7.0%).

Both males and females are consistent in their views of a reduction in spending on Housing Services. Males however, proposed larger reductions in spending in all areas.

Figure 7: Expenditure on Housing Services



On average, respondents chose a reduction in the budget for Housing Services from £26.45m per year to £25.39m. This equates to a saving of £1.06m and an average reduction of 4.0 per cent in spending on Housing Services. This indicates that while residents would like to see reductions in spending in some areas of Housing Services, for the service area as a whole the spending reductions are below the 6% required.

Communities

Introduction

In this section the views of respondents in relation to spending on Communities. Areas of council responsibility covered by this service heading include:

- Communities and Equalities
- Community Safety
- Sports and Leisure
- Libraries and Information Services
- Tourism, Royal Pavilion, Museums and Venues

Communities choices

The majority of respondents were in favour of reducing spending in all but one of the budget fields within this overall service heading (see table 6). With the exception being 'Community Safety' where just under half (49 per cent) of respondents favoured a reduction in spending.

The strongest feeling was in reducing spending on 'Communities and Equalities' (71 per cent), 'Tourism, Royal Pavilion, Museums and Venues, (67 per cent) and 'Sports and Leisure' (65 per cent). The 18-24 age group were the least in favour of reducing spending on Communities (52 per cent proposing a reduction and 20 per cent an increase). All age groups were consistent in their desire to see spending on 'Sports and Leisure' to be reduced.

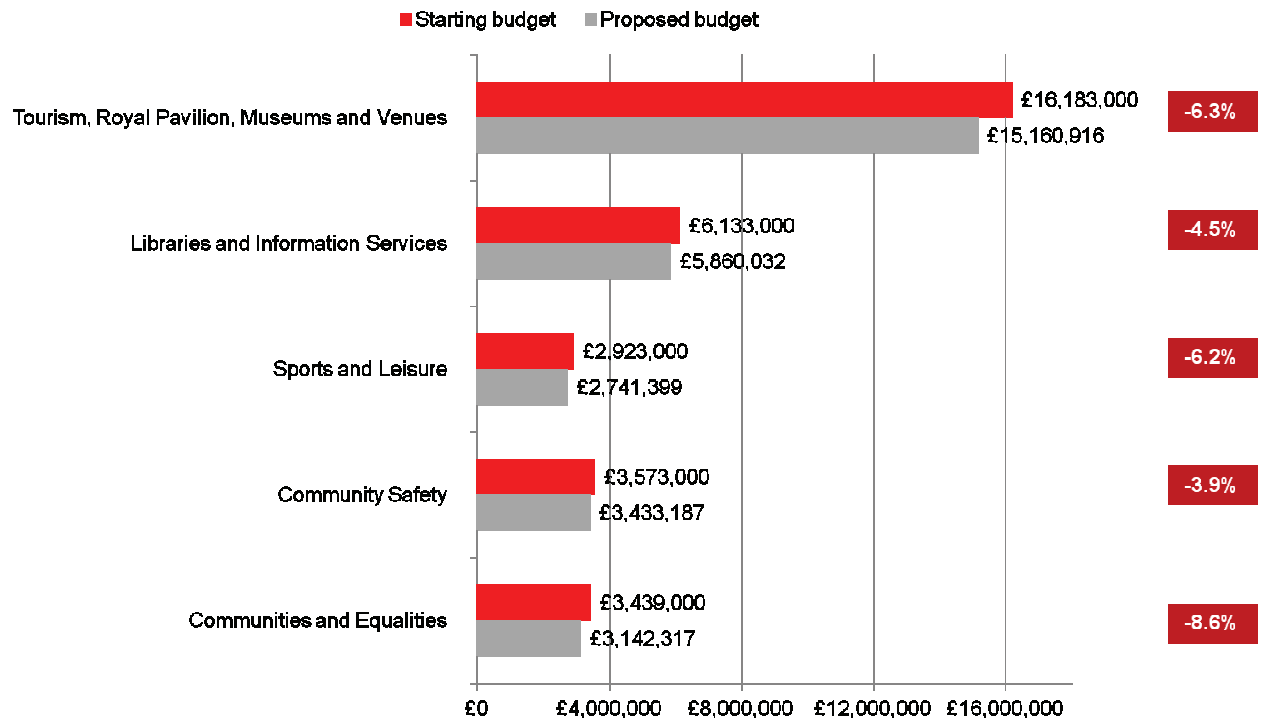
Conversely, 'Community Safety' as may be expected and 'Libraries and Information Services' were the two areas where there was less desire to reduce budgets. The 18-24 and 35-44 groups were most concerned about reductions in spending on 'Community Safety', with 57 per cent and 56 per cent respectively favouring maintaining or increasing current budgets.

Table 6: Proportion who chose to increase, decrease or maintain spending in each area

	% who want to decrease spending	% who want no change in spending	% who want to increase spending
Communities and Equalities	71	21	8
Community Safety	49	36	15
Sports and Leisure	65	26	9
Libraries and Information Services	53	38	9
Tourism, Royal Pavilion, Museums and Venues	67	23	10

Figure 8 shows a breakdown of respondents proposed changes to the Communities budget by function. Reductions in the budget are proposed in all areas. The largest percentage reductions in spending are proposed in Communities and Equalities (-8.6%) and Tourism, Royal Pavilion, Museums and Venues (-6.3%).

Figure 8: Expenditure on Communities



Both males and females are consistent in their views of a reduction in spending on Communities. There are however, differences in views on the degree of the proposed budgets cuts. Males, proposed larger reductions in spending on Supporting People, Communities and Equalities and Community Safety. Females favoured proportionally larger reductions in spending on Libraries and Information Services and Sports and Leisure.

On average, respondents chose a reduction in the budget for Communities from £32.25m per year to £30.34m. This equates to a saving of £1.91m and an average reduction of 5.9 per cent in spending on Communities. In comparison to other service areas this is a significant saving and indicates that the Communities budget is an area in which future saving can be made.

Resources and Finance

Introduction

In this section the views of respondents in relation to spending on Resources and Finance. Areas of council responsibility covered by this service heading include:

- Customer Services and Life Events
- Revenues and Benefits Service
- Human Resources and Organisational Development
- Communications
- Information and Communication Technology
- Legal and Democratic Services
- Property and Design
- Financial Services
- Policy, Performance and Analysis

Resources and Finance choices

The majority of respondents were in strongly in favour of reducing spending in all of the budget fields within this overall service heading (see table 7). The strongest feeling was in reducing spending on 'Human Resources and Organisational Development' (83 per cent), 'Property and Design', (82 per cent) and 'Policy, Performance and Analysis' (80 per cent). The 25-34 age group (92 per cent) and the 45-54 age group (93 per cent) were the most in favour of reducing spending on 'Human Resources and Organisational Development'.

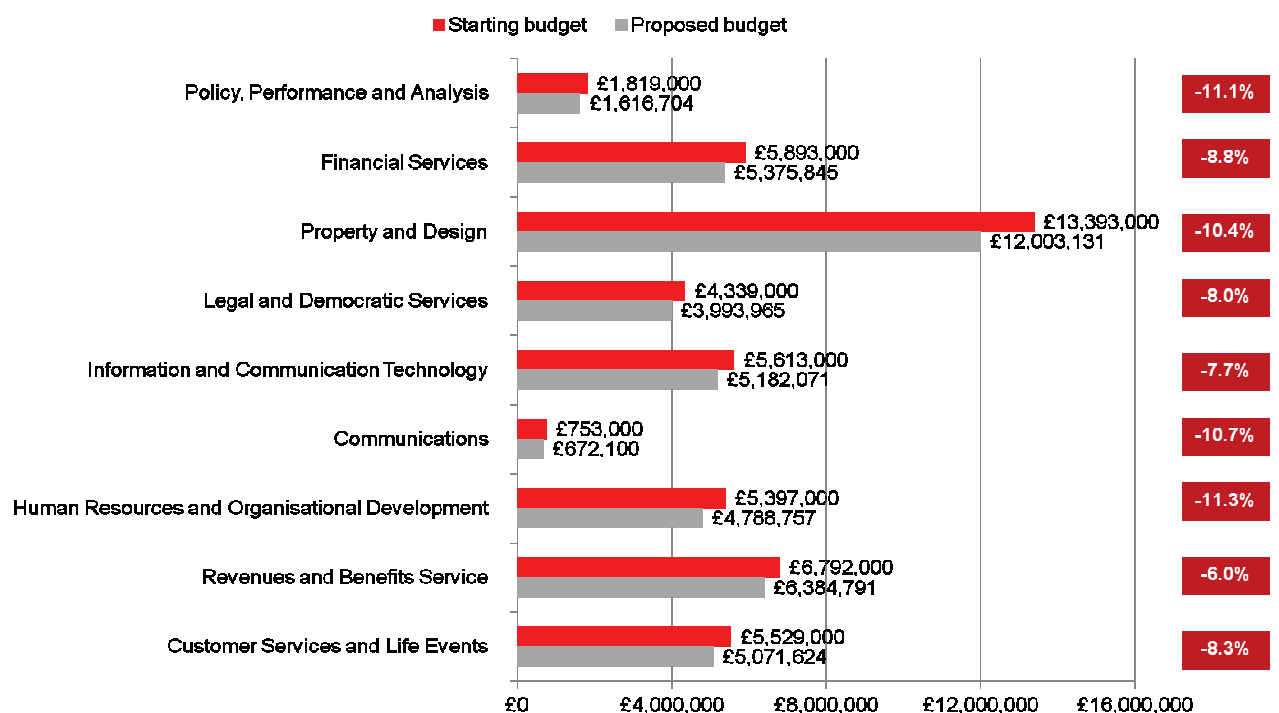
While still favouring a reduction in overall spending, respondents were less likely to propose reductions to the 'Revenues and Benefits' budget. The over 65's were most likely to favour maintaining or increasing spending on 'Revenues and Benefits', with 57 per cent proposing this. Younger age groups were much more likely to favour a reduction in this budget (71 per cent of 18-24 year olds and 73 per cent of 25-34 year olds).

Table 7: Proportion who chose to increase, decrease or maintain spending in each area

	% who want to decrease spending	% who want no change in spending	% who want to increase spending
Customer Services and Life Events	77	20	4
Revenues and Benefits Service	62	30	8
Human Resources and Organisational Development	83	14	3
Communications	77	20	3
Information and Communications Technology	71	19	11
Legal and Democratic Services	74	22	5
Property and Design	82	15	4
Financial Services	77	18	5
Policy, Performance and Analysis	80	16	4

Figure 9 shows a breakdown of respondents proposed changes to the Resources and Finance budget by function. Large reductions in the budget are proposed in all areas, with all functions on average seeing a proposed reduction of 6.0% or more. The largest percentage reductions in spending are proposed in Human Resources and Organisational Development (-11.3%) and Policy, Performance and Analysis (-11.1%).

Figure 9: Expenditure on Resources and Finance



Both males and females are consistent in their views of a reduction in spending on Resources and Finance. No significant differences exist between the views of males and females, with both proposing a reduction in spending in all areas.

On average, respondents chose a reduction in the budget for Resources and Finance from £49.53m per year to £45.09m. This equates to a saving of £4.44m and an average reduction of 9.0 per cent in spending on Resources and Finance. This is the highest proposed reduction in spending for a service area and clearly indicates that this is an area where respondents feel that significant savings can be made.



**THE
DEMOCRATIC
SOCIETY**

BUDGET PARTICIPATION EXERCISES IN BRIGHTON & HOVE

**Report by Anthony Zacharzewski and Susie Latta
for the Democratic Society**

27 November 2011

Table of Contents

The events	6
Recruitment	6
The data provided	7
Did the per-person budget number aid understanding?.....	8
Preparation for the events.....	8
How we ran the events.....	9
Prioritising council services	11
1. Participants were unwilling to take responsibility for cuts.....	11
2. There was general opposition to cuts.....	12
3. Participants felt that they had insufficient information to make decisions.....	12
4. Participants generally saw the council in a positive light.....	13
5. Consultation was generally seen as positive, but not if it was one-off.....	14
Adults and Children’s services	14
1. Adult and children's services as a whole are seen as extremely important.....	15
2. Greater investment in prevention.....	16
3. Prioritise ability of people to stay in their own home.....	16
4. Greater reliance on community and families (if they have the appropriate support).17	
5. Youth services seen as high importance on estates.....	17
6. Individual suggestions (not mentioned in discussions).....	17
Housing and Communities	18
1. Greater community sector involvement in housing and community safety	18
2. Joined-up services, possibly brokered at local level.....	19
3. Differing views on tourism, culture and sport.....	19
4. Support for developing social housing.....	20
5. Desire for community-led regeneration	21
City Infrastructure	21
1. Saving money on transport.....	21
2. Income generation.....	22
3. Refuse and recycling.....	22
4. Other suggestions.....	22
Finance and resources	23
1. Restraining expenditure in council services.....	23
2. Promoting organisational development and new ways of working	24
3. Other ideas	24
Demographic information	24
Age	24
Gender/Ethnic Origin/Sexuality.....	25
Household Income profile	25
Health and caring responsibilities.....	25
“Five quick questions” survey	26
Lessons for the Future	27
1. The role of information	28
2. Reluctance to make decisions.....	28
3. Ongoing engagement and budget literacy is essential.....	29
4. Strong neighbourhood networks essential	30

Executive summary

Three budget participation events were held over two days, on 12 November (Hangleton in the morning and Patcham in the afternoon) and 14 November (central Brighton, evening).

Participation rates varied, with the Hangleton event attracting 24 participants, the central Brighton 16 participants and the Patcham event 8 participants.

The events ran alongside the council's online consultation, and used the same data set. Experts from the council were available to the council to give background information and answer questions.

Participants were asked to rank the council's services by overall priority, but with a few exceptions most were unwilling to provide numerical rankings, because they felt uncomfortable making – as they saw it – very significant decisions without full knowledge of benchmarks, spending comparisons and other data.

The principal messages to come out of the consultation were:

On prioritising services

1. Participants were unwilling to take responsibility for cuts
2. There was general opposition to cuts (and some expressed the view that Council Tax should be increased further)
3. Participants felt that they had insufficient information on service quality to make judgements
4. Participants generally saw the council in a positive light
5. The consultation events were seen as positive, but participants wanted longer-term engagement – although not longer consultation events.

On adults' and children's services

1. Adults' and children's services as a whole are seen as extremely important
2. There should be greater investment in prevention
3. Priority should be given to work that helps people stay in their own homes
4. There should be greater reliance on communities and families around vulnerable people – but only if they receive appropriate support from the council
5. Youth services were high priority for Hangleton, less important for the other areas

On housing and communities

1. There should be greater community sector involvement in housing and community safety issues
2. Services should be better joined up, with community groups brokering those services at local level
3. There were widely differing views on museums, culture and sport, with some wanting cuts and others seeing them as an essential part of the city's identity
4. There was support for development of social housing
5. Participants wanted to see work on "regeneration without money" through community-led regeneration

On City Infrastructure

1. Save money through greater efficiencies in transport spending
2. Focus on generating income, perhaps through congestion charging or tougher bus lane enforcement
3. Increase efficiency in refuse and recycling by rolling out communal bins and/or retendering contracts.

On Finance and Resources

1. Restrain wasteful expenditure in council services
2. Promote organisational development that encourages new ways of working

Survey responses

Participants were asked to rate services on a scale of one to four, where one meant "spending could be cut a lot", and four meant "needs a lot more money". Most answers clustered around the 2.5 mark (in other words, the balance between "needs more" and "could be cut"), but overall the order identified was:

- Housing and communities (2.77 – slightly in the "needs more" zone)
- Services for adults (2.56)
- Services for children (2.48)
- City infrastructure (2.45)
- Finance and resources (2.24)

There was little difference in the rating between different areas – social services were rated slightly higher in Patcham and slightly lower in central Brighton. City infrastructure was rated higher in central Brighton than elsewhere.

Lessons for the future

As well as the specific comments about council services, we would draw some lessons for future civic engagement work:

1. Information is essential, but there is greater demand for detail than can be satisfied in a single consultation event
2. People are less confident in making decisions than might be assumed, even when those decisions do not have direct consequences
3. Ongoing engagement and participation are essential – starting now for next year's budget process
4. Strong community networks are essential for effective consultation, particularly in areas with lower facility in social media.

The events

Brighton & Hove City Council commissioned three budget participation events, to take place over three days in November 2011, as part of their budget consultation work.

The events ran alongside an online consultation using a budget simulation website provided by Delib at <http://www.budgetsimulator.com>. The offline exercise was structured in broadly the same way, (see "the events" section below) and used the same spending data and division of services.

Recruitment

The recruitment of the events was intended to provide three different audiences. At the outset, BHCC made clear that there should be no incentive payments for participants, and the council no longer maintains a citizens' panel. Since these are the traditional routes for obtaining a balanced sample, and the timescales on hosting the events were tight, it was clear from the outset that it would not be possible to build three demographically balanced audiences.

As a means of bringing together roughly coherent groups that spread across the different demographics in the city, the recruitment was therefore carried out in two separate ways, to cover three demographic/geographical areas. The two events in Hangleton and Patcham were recruited by seeding information into local community networks, flyering and putting up posters in the immediate area around the venue. The event in central Brighton was advertised through Twitter and Facebook and by email to those who had attended CityCamp Brighton in March, and CityForum Brighton in October.

To ensure that community networks were the source of participation online booking to the Patcham event was not initially possible, though it was opened up in the few days before the event, to try to increase attendance. No online bookings were made for Hangleton.

The results of the recruitment varied. In Hangleton, the Hangleton & Knoll project secured 36 sign-ups within a few days, using their extensive network in the area. Of the 36 recruited, 24 attended, a slightly higher drop-out rate than we had expected (33% rather than the anticipated 25).

The Patcham event had a much smaller attendance, although the effort put into seeding community networks was greater. We distributed invitations and flyers through the Patcham LAT, the Community Association, the Youth Centre, and the Neighbourhood Watch. In the week before the event, we followed up initial contacts, and additionally contacted the local branch of the University of the Third Age, several local amenity organisations based out of the community centre, parish churches and community and voluntary sector organisations. We also distributed flyers and posters in the library, the junior school, and around the venue. A week before the Patcham event, we also opened up online

registration for the event. Despite this effort, we had a total audience of eight people, of whom one had signed up online (four further online signups did not attend).

Although the participants who did attend at Patcham had come through the various community networks, it is clear in hindsight that community networks in that part of town are too weak to be a vehicle for recruitment. It was always likely - and we acknowledged in early conversations with the council - that the richer settled area of the city would be the most difficult to recruit in, as residents there have neither the immediate need to rely on public services (as some in poorer areas do), nor the tradition of urban activism of central Brighton wards and the digital community more generally. Even given that fact, the low response rate was a surprise, given that a relatively large number of already-engaged people who were contacted.

The central Brighton event was recruited entirely online, with messages sent twice through the mailing lists for CityCamp (137 members) and CityForum (108), and repeatedly through the Twitter accounts DemsocBTN (255 followers), CityCampBTN (421) and TheBrightonLine (1,983). The message was also distributed through the Democratic Society twitter account, which has 3,493 followers but which has a network that is not Brighton-centred.

There will naturally be some overlap between those groups. Assuming that half the CityForum mailing list is also on the CityCamp mailing list, and that half the followers of DemsocBTN also follow CityCampBTN, we can say that the initial invitation would have hit at least 2,500 individuals, with a wider audience probable since the event information was also distributed through the Community and Voluntary Sector Forum's mailing list, and retweeted on several occasions by the City Council's Twitter feed (6,063 followers), and Cllr Ben Duncan's (1,377).

Assuming a 3,000 initial audience, perhaps a conservative figure given the number of followers of BHCC, the event signup of 22 (with 16 attending) represents a response rate of 0.73%, which is a reasonable rate for non-personalised social-media-driven campaigns.

The data provided

The only area of Council spending that the exercise covered was spending over which the Council had a considerable degree of control. This excluded the Housing Revenue Account, as well as direct payments to schools. In total, £362m of revenue was included.

The spending was described in gross spending terms, with no income offsetting for income-generating services. In a few cases, this distorted the "spend" number, making it look like considerable amounts of council tax were being spent on a service that in reality was balanced by a large offsetting income. All three groups were told that income was generated by some services, but the

third group (central Brighton) received a more explicit warning that some of the high spend numbers were distorted by the absence of offsetting income.

To assist in understanding the large numbers involved, the total council budget was divided by 250,000 - an approximation of the total population of the city - to create a "per-person" budget share of £1,450 (in fact, £1,449.69).

This divided between the six service blocks used, as follows:

- Services for children spend £312.76 per citizen
- Services for adults spend £444.97 per citizen
- City infrastructure spends £259.04 per citizen
- Housing and communities spend £234.81 per citizen
- Resources and finance spend £198.11 per citizen

Did the per-person budget number aid understanding?

The intention behind using a per-person budget share was to get away from the very large numbers that the actual budget represents, and create an accurate but human-scale description of the council's budget.

Participants seemed to find this approach helpful. Although (as will be described later) they were generally unwilling to make specific recommendations on budget numbers or priorities, when they were discussing the different budget items on the tables, they seemed to be able to understand the different shares of expenditure that services represented, and to grasp the scale of differences more easily.

There was some confusion over the use of the term "per-person budget", which two participants at different events took to mean the share of the budget that was spent on a typical service user, rather than the entire council budget shared across (an approximation of) the population. In general, however, people made the right assumptions about what the budget share represented, and we believe that it helped them understand the different scales of expenditure more easily, without being daunted by the large numbers involved. Although we used this per-person division for every group, so there was not control group, it is an approach that we would recommend for future exercises, and as part of any budget literacy training.

Preparation for the events

We prepared three sheets for participants, examples of which are attached, which were:

* "What are we dealing with" - a two-page document describing the council's existing spending and income, and briefly detailing the level of cuts required.

* "What can we do" - a one-page document answering questions that we believed might come up (for example, whether the council could increase council tax or charges further to alleviate cuts)

* "What's going to happen" - a two-page document setting out the running order for the day.

We also produced a "Other information" sheet, with background information on privacy and background on Demsoc Brighton & Hove.

The sheets were available on the tables at the event for people to read in advance, and to use as reference materials. For the central Brighton event, where people had generally signed up online, the sheets were also sent out in advance in PDF format.

How we ran the events

The planned running order for each event was identical. Participants were welcomed on arrival and offered tea, coffee and cake. They were then moved through to the event space, where five tables (two tables in the case of Patcham) had been laid out with the relevant papers. Participants were allocated to the tables at random in the central Brighton and Hangleton events, in Patcham one table looked at Adult and Children's Services, and the second at the other service blocks. We shifted participants at the Patcham event to ensure that neither table was entirely made up of men.

Once people were seated and settled, the facilitator welcomed them, and asked them to start by filling in two surveys on the table. One was called "Five Quick Questions", and asked for participants' opinion on the Council's spending now, and areas where they believed spending needed to be increased or decreased. (The same survey was repeated at the end of each event).

Participants also had a demographic questionnaire. They were told: "you don't have to fill it in, or answer all the questions, but we would be grateful if you could. It helps us to know who has come to the event and how representative of the local population it is. Your personal information will not be passed to the Council."

This part of the event took between five and ten minutes. Participants reported confusion with one of the questions (on whether the council has enough, not enough, or too much money to spend). The question was designed to draw out whether participants felt the council was "flush" and therefore had considerable scope to make relatively pain-free spending cuts. Although not all participants answered all questions, there were no other problems reported with the questionnaire.

Once participants had had the chance to complete the questionnaire and demographic information sheet, those papers were collected in, and the facilitator gave the main introduction.

The facilitator explained that the purpose of event was to gather information on people's budget priorities in advance of the council taking decisions on spending for the forthcoming financial year. It was made clear that no budget decisions had yet been made, and that there would be further opportunities to give views on the detailed proposals.

The facilitator also explained that the specific task for the session was to agree on each table a priority rating out of 100 for each area of the budget block that the table was looking at. It was made clear that because this was a discussion exercise rather than a survey, the whole table needed to agree.

The one-to-a-hundred priority mark was explained as: "If you think something is the most important top priority, and should have spending increased if at all possible, that's 100. If you think it should be cut to zero and no further questions, that's 0."

It was made clear that there was no requirement to propose specific budget numbers, but that there was a space on the sheets to write that in if people wanted to. The cuts requirement was explained as £64 per person, or about £13 per table, £16m across the city as a whole.

Finally, it was pointed out that suggestions and wider comments were welcome from all participants - in Hangleton and in central Brighton we provided blank paper for people to write them down, and collected in all notes that people had made on their sheets.

The council's experts were then introduced. The facilitator told participants that the experts weren't there "to tell you what you should think", but to explain the budget blocks, what each of the services provided, what the consequences of cuts or extra funding would be, and to answer any specific questions to the best of their ability. It was made clear that the experts might not be able to answer every question.

The facilitator said that the second stage of the event would be feedback, and a comparison and group discussion of people's priority rankings. Even once it became clear (see below) that participants were unwilling to rank the different services, this introduction was still given so that the conduct of each event was comparable.

The conversation and discussion with experts then began in the groups. This was the main part of the event, taking about an hour in all three locations. It was made clear to participants at the start of this session that the experts would step away from the tables once they had answered all questions, to ensure that people could have the discussion on priorities in private. In practice, only in Hangleton were experts asked to step away once finished. In Patcham, and in Central Brighton, they were asked more questions, or asked to stay and listen into the discussion.

The intention had been, once tables had decided on their priorities, to write up the full list in order, and then discuss it in the whole group, moving items around if needed. As things turned out (see below) participants were unwilling to rank services, so the final comparative ranking did not take place, and instead there was feedback from each individual table, and then a general discussion in the room on what others had said.

At the end of the event, participants were handed a thank you letter and asked to leave contact details if they wanted to receive a follow-up letter from the council explaining how their contribution would be used. They were also asked to complete the "Five Quick Questions" survey again, to see whether their views had changed as a result of the event. Participants were encouraged to point people to the online survey as well.

Prioritising council services

As described above, the main purpose of the events was to create a prioritised list of council services (and possibly to garner some specific suggestions on budget cuts). Participants were aware that this was the purpose from the start of the event - in the case of central Brighton, in advance.

Although there were no complaints about the priority ranking at the start of the discussion phase, almost no participants were prepared to make a priority ranking between services, and only one table (the Housing and Communities table at the Hangleton event) completely followed the instructions and created a ranking on which they all agreed.

The principal learning points in this area are set out below.

1. Participants were unwilling to take responsibility for cuts

Participants said that the main reason for refusal to prioritise was that they were uncomfortable with making decisions in a time of cuts, knowing that any lower preference expressed would certainly lead to cuts in that area which might have a bad effect on fellow residents. They did not, with a few exceptions, take the attitude that "it's the council's job and they should do it", but there was a feeling that at a time of reductions rather than increases in overall spending the link between lower priorities and higher cuts was very clear.

Views of participants:

"I don't want to put priorities against things when I know that if I do, those are things that will be cut." [H]

"I don't agree with the cuts at all, I don't think they should be happening, and the council should be fighting them harder." [C]

"All of these services need to happen. There's no way we can make a priority between them" [H]

"I'd rather there was an across-the-board cut of whatever's needed rather than priorities." [H]

"It would have been better to have looked at a single area in more detail" [P]

"The elected people should make these decisions .they have been elected for this – we are doing their work for them." [C]

2. There was general opposition to cuts

We expected that there would be a considerable opposition to cuts in general, and that there might be participants who had come solely for the purpose of protesting about cuts. In the event, only two participants were identifiably there with the intention of sending a message back that the cuts were unacceptable, and both participated in the discussion once they had made their initial point. However, although there were no arguments or hostility, there was a general underlying unhappiness about the cuts agenda in general - and some participants remarked that the political leadership should be working harder to campaign against them.

Views of participants:

"We couldn't identify anything that we thought could be reduced" [P]

"The councillors should tell the Government they're not going to make any cuts. These are local councillors – we have elected them. They have power. They need to fight back." [C]

"When the councillors campaigned they did it on a stop the cuts platform. And now they are 'here are the cuts.' Responsibility of councillors to demand that the government reinstates the funding." [P]

"All these things need to happen." [H]

"Who caused all of this? The bankers, the treasury and so on. But no help like they get is being provided to ordinary people." [P]

3. Participants felt that they had insufficient information to make decisions

Participants felt that the information provided was insufficient to make decisions - an interesting point given that the presence of service experts provided more opportunity to receive information than those participating in the equivalent online exercise. The additional information most often asked for was benchmarking on costs compared to other authorities; the extent to which prevention could reduce costs in the future; the comparative cost of salaries between authorities, and between authorities and the private sector.

We asked participants whether they would have wanted more information available on the day, and the general view was they would not have been able to process it in the time available - they expressed a preference for it being put online, and shared more widely over a longer period of time. No participant said that the event was too short, or that they would have wanted to devote a whole day to the event. This conflicting desire to know more but to learn it over time is an element of the argument for ongoing involvement and budget literacy work, set out later in this document ("Lessons for the Future").

Views of participants:

"If we had had more information on the consequences of the cuts - what 5% means, what 10% and what 15%, we might have been able to make more decisions" [P]

"Go to the people who are using the services and then see what they think. There are the best people to inform you." [H]

"There's lots of potential flexibility in shifting small amounts of money. But we don't have enough information or a sense of the political will to understand what would be feasible." [C]

"We would want to understand what the cost savings from prevention could be in the future, so we knew how much we should focus on prevention." [C]

"If provide summary then people want more information if provide more, people find it difficult to understand." [P]

"We could identify shortcomings in services we had used, but we didn't know about the ones we hadn't" [P]

"Finance and resources is a very technical area, we didn't know what effect their services had so we couldn't prioritise" [H]

"How do we know where money is being wasted? What are the benchmarks?" [C]

"If anything, I have learned today that it is immensely complex and I am not capable of this. I trust and pay people do it for me." [P]

"This is a massive amount of money here - there was a description but no quality or quantitative info." [H]

4. Participants generally saw the council in a positive light

Slightly to our surprise, the attitude of participants to the council seemed broadly positive. We had thought that - particularly in Patcham - there might be a small number of politically-motivated participants who would come with a definite "cut everything" agenda, looking to send back recommendations from the group that focused on perceived inefficiencies in the council, and the illegitimacy of council tax increases. However, this element did not materialise - in fact, there was no sense that the political parties or other interest groups had sought to pack any of the events, which is perhaps a benefit of seeding through community groups rather than broader advertising.

Views of participants:

"In some of the areas it would be interesting to know council officer's salaries against services" [H]

"If we do things on the cheap we get cheap things. My council tax is good value for money and I would be willing to pay more." [P]

"We should run a more efficient office and staff not always think of cutting good projects." [H]

"Really difficult to look down the list and say where would you make the cuts. The council and the councillors do seem to have their hearts in the right place." [C]

"The council are cutting by efficiency drives rather than front line service reduction. This seems the correct approach." [H]

5. Consultation was generally seen as positive, but not if it was one-off

Although participants felt uncomfortable with the prioritisation exercise, as described above, the overall view of the events themselves was positive. Only one participant saw the events as being "the council asking us to do their job", and when participants at the Hangleton event were asked whether they would want more or less consultation on council matters, the view was unanimous that they would want more.

The way in which participants envisaged it being delivered, however, was over a longer period, and being more involved in understanding services and their delivery, rather than being asked about specific numbers that - to them - bore no relationship to their lived reality.

Views of participants:

"I find the discussion sterile. There's a localism bill but then the Government says you can't spend any more on this or that." [P]

"More involved is better but not a tick box system. Most of us have gone beyond tick boxes and making proper comments is vital." [H]

"I would be happy if we knew that the money was being spent on the genuine needs of the community not on political ambitions. You need to consult the people with events like this." [H]

"We get our council tax bill in and it says so much has been spent on this, so much on that. This event gives a different perspective on how council tax is spent - people would understand it more and they would maybe more willing to have an increase." [P]

"We want to work with the council about how to deliver the services for ourselves. Not just where to cut services." [H]

"Different kind of consultation is needed - what we priorities and how we spend. The dignity of people and how we serve them. Any consultation should take that on board too." [H]

"We want better tools to think with - we are being asked to consider cuts without understanding the fuller picture of the global council issues. More information in itself may not be useful. It is the framework which is useful." [C]

Adults and Children's services

Adult services and children's services were the two areas that participants felt it was most difficult to cut. They understood that the services were high-intensity and high-cost, and delivered to people in very serious need. Most had not experienced the services directly, and were unwilling to make a judgement about them because they felt they lacked direct experience.

Participants' ideas for the service tended to be expressed as positive policy preferences - sometimes potentially expensive proposals - rather than as areas that could be cut. A greater readiness to come up with ideas was a general pattern across all areas. It suggests that a creative and solutions-focused

discussion (with better information, as discussed above) would be a good model for future events. The only specific suggestion for cuts (from Hangleton) was to reduce spending on agency workers in social care, and replace them with permanent staff.

These services were more prominent in the discussions in Hangleton and central Brighton than during the discussion in Patcham.

The principal points from the discussions were:

1. Adult and children's services as a whole are seen as extremely important

The presence of the experts ensured that the nature of the services and the vulnerability of the people who use them was well understood among participants. There was an understanding that the services were overall high-cost as a share of council services, but the route to cost reductions was seen as efficiency and cost-benchmarking, combined with better prevention (see next point).

Views of participants:

"Can't really make savings to these figures" [H]

"How do you provide for your family? Who looks after old people? Maybe I should be allowed to pay more council tax as some of these things are worth paying for." [P]

"Nothing should be cut. They are all priorities and if they do there should be no more than a 5% cut in any area" [H]

"Early years is essential but the problem is that there is a 20 year lag until you see the benefits" [H]

"These are baseline services which need to stay in place and are essential." [H]

"Need to tighten up all people in these areas with employment contracts – generally wastage. Sickness contracts tightened up for the people delivering the services." [H]

"With the information we have there is nothing on this list that we would be happy to say that there is anything we would like to be cut." [P]

"Reduce funding for residential and nursing care a bit as that is reducing anyway." [C]

"Assessment and care management is the engine room and can't really reduce a lot without having an impact elsewhere." [C]

"We would want to increase funding in some areas to have savings further down the line" [C]

"Council is not going to get this money back. It is communities and families who are going to have to make up the difference. It's really difficult to look down the list and say where would you make the cuts." [C]

"Focus on the main issues – focus on individuals who are vulnerable. That's the core business of the council" [P]

"There is an enormous variation between services provided by the council vs those provided by the private sector. This is because council staff are paid more, and are therefore more motivated." [P]

2. Greater investment in prevention

Participants could see a clear case for spending in preventive services, and identified this as a route to reducing spending in the longer term, although they acknowledged that it would not produce savings on care immediately.

Views of participants:

"Prevent people from getting ill by promoting opportunities for older people to stay active" [H]

"Cuts in some areas will bleed through into others, the council has to be smart about its reductions to prevent this." [C]

"Invest in early year services then deliver what is good for children and good for society. Will cost council more to clear up the mess of the broken children." [C]

"We've looked at each area and agreed that prevention is much better than cure." [H]

"Preventative services should be shared with the PCT. Preventive services and innovation might help in the longer run but not in 2012/13" [C]

"We would want to invest in areas that will bring service savings down the line." [C]

"Would like to see more information on the social return on investment, and how the council can benefit by saving the NHS money." [C]

"The council should borrow to invest in early years services, and look to repay through social return on investment rather than through financial return." [C]

"We should be asking staff and service users to identify efficiencies to make savings later rather than 'your job or his' which is the model for the exercise." [C]

3. Prioritise ability of people to stay in their own home

Related to the point on prevention, the ideal care setting for adults was seen as people's own homes. Residential care was seen as a poor alternative to family or community care, but where it needed to be provided, participants wanted assurances of quality.

Views of participants:

"Preventative and support services are the most important thing, particularly to enable people to live a full life without becoming dependent on residential care." [H]

"Trend is for people to stay in their home, we should encourage that. If necessary reduce funding on residential care - it is going down anyway." [C]

"Home care should be a really clear priority – preventative and cuts here would lead to a big spike in other areas." [C]

"Equipment and adaptations is such a small amount compared to the costs of residential care: it is a good investment." [C]

4. Greater reliance on community and families (if they have the appropriate support)

Participants were very supportive of services being delivered by local community groups and volunteers, but not on private sector delivery of personal services (as opposed to infrastructure services - see later). They saw families as having a first-line responsibility, with the community and voluntary sector working alongside. It goes without saying that this is a difficult area in which to craft messages: participants were happy to say for themselves that families needed to be the first line of defence - they would probably be much less receptive to a similar message coming from the council.

Views from participants:

"Improve support for families to care for older residents." [H]

"I'd rather have services delivered by people motivated by public service rather than private companies." [P]

"Grants to voluntary organisations are good, but it depends on people working themselves to the bone to deliver services. It feels like it could be transferring services to cheap labour, and too open to being misused" [P]

"There should be more activities that allow people to stay in own home and have help from families, and improved support for families to care for residents." [H]

"Families should be able to keep the savings generated if they help a family member stay out of residential care." [H]

5. Youth services seen as high importance on estates

Youth service funding was only specifically picked out in Hangleton, where it was seen as a particularly important area of service. Participants believed that youth services were an investment against anti-social behaviour in the area (they characterised ASB as a problem from the past that had been solved by better youth services and quicker intervention). By comparison, in the other two areas, youth services were not mentioned separately from children's services as a whole.

Views from participants (all in Hangleton):

"Youth services – this is essential for all young people – the benefits are long term but you will see them."

"The atmosphere in this place has been transformed because of youth services in recent years, we don't want to go back."

"More money for community groups, youth groups, volunteers etc. more prevention less cure."

6. Individual suggestions (not mentioned in discussions)

"There should be no social care support for people moving into the city." [H]

"Discourage drug takers from coming here and send them home if they do." [H]

Housing and Communities

Unlike social services, participants felt that they understood housing and communities issues, although there was still the same preference for suggesting new ideas rather than engaging with the cuts agenda. The differences between areas were also striking, with discussion in Patcham largely based around the cultural and economic services provided under this heading, while Hangleton and Central Brighton took a broader view.

This area was the only one in which a whole table came to an agreement on a priority ordering – this was in Hangleton, who collectively rated the services as follows (0 = lowest priority):

- Supporting people: 100
- Tourism, Pavilion & Museums: 100
- Communities and Equalities: 100
- Community Safety: 100 (focus on youth service)
- Libraries and Information Service: 90
- Sports and Leisure: 70 (focus on low-cost sports facilities)
- Homelessness: 60
- Housing Strategy: 50

This spending block also covered culture and sport - the only area of all those covered where there was a wide disagreement about the value of the service. Participants were divided between those who thought culture spending was important, and those who thought it was a luxury.

The principal points from the discussions were:

1. Greater community sector involvement in housing and community safety

Here as elsewhere, community and voluntary sector provision was supported. This was in part because of a desire for more localised provision around community safety and housing, which came out particularly strongly in Hangleton, reflecting its strong internal identity.

Views of participants:

"Why is the council the provider of housing support and advice? People do not want to go to the council for this service, they would prefer to go to a local community group." [H]

"Grants go to youth workers, community workers and community. The council should spend the same amount but better targeted." [H]

"We don't see any grants going to local community safety initiatives here. Money is being channelled but not to all the relevant areas. Community groups can treat the cause not the problem" [H]

"Community groups are left to do things themselves, working alongside the police and NHS (which is what local groups do) - that tackles problems at the roots. Send money right to community level – people there know where the money goes." [H]

"Prioritise grants to community rather than using council officers. Why should council services be best run by the council?" [P]

"There are lots of grants for community and voluntary sector. Are we creating a funding dependency culture for charitable organisations?" [C]

"Anti social behaviour is better tackled by spending the money on community groups, not on council staff." [H]

"Community safety support should go to the community, youth work and community development to work alongside NHS and police. Stop the problem not mop up afterwards." [H]

2. Joined-up services, possibly brokered at local level

Alongside localism and community-level service, participants were keen to see boundaries between services and organisations broken down. This was framed generally as a way of producing better outcomes, rather than as an example of waste. The question of how services should be joined up often threw up the suggestion of community groups as co-ordinators of service at local level. There are some potential lessons here for neighbourhood councils that are drawn out in the "Lessons for the Future" section later.

Views of participants:

"It feels like there is duplication of services between police, NHS and council - can we join them up more at local level?" [C]

"Supporting people should be about connecting services" [H]

"Group together similar services with one contact/ website approach rather than have each sector with each having a separate approach. Put it all together." [C]

"The three areas of housing, homelessness and supporting people are right in my opinion but should be amalgamated and rationalised to avoid duplication of effort. It is possible that costs could then be cut without any loss of service to the community." [C]

"If there are charities working together supporting housing or homelessness they can work together to find common solutions – work better together. If you cut the funding for charities tomorrow – we need to be building a strong group of voluntary groups and charities." [C]

3. Differing views on tourism, culture and sport

This was one of the only areas where there was both an expressed desire for cuts, and differences of opinion within the groups. Some participants felt that culture and tourism spending did not benefit them, and had little effect on the wider economy, while others saw it as an essential part of "what makes Brighton Brighton". On sports, similarly, some thought that sport development was essential and others that it was a luxury. There was more general support for

keeping access to sports facilities cheap and easy. The numbers of people expressing opinions on either side was roughly in balance - but the fact that some participants were ready to propose cuts makes this a possible area for savings.

Views of participants:

"It is a wonderful museum but it could be outsourced. This is not the business of the council." [P]

"I feel the heritage and tourism stuff is really important to me. Universal access to this is really important. Bringing up my children here I want them to have access the history and background. These are important facilities for me and I would reconsider living here if they went." [P]

"Library buildings are not well-used, they should be made available for wider community uses." [H]

"I'd much rather money was taken from museums and put into sports. Sports are important for health, and with the obesity epidemic even more important." [C]

"Museum services and archives maintain our history and there is an enormous amount of material and records that is vital to know who we are and where we are." [P]

"Sports and leisure need to be affordable to the public. And they need to be provided with better and cheaper parking, people round here can't get there and can't afford to park when they do." [H]

"Sports development is a luxury, it should all go. Focus on providing cheap spaces for sport." [H]

"Libraries and info services could be cut moderately. No libraries to be closed but hours could be cut. Likewise staff numbers (to be honest libraries seem to be well staffed). Don't cut mobile library services though as they are great." [C]

"Cut culture and tourism spending dramatically. I am not convinced that income from tourism trickles down significantly to the average resident. Especially those on the outer estates" [C]

"Our museum spending is shockingly high - it should be cut dramatically and museums should be outsourced if necessary." [C]

4. Support for developing social housing

There was some desire to look at the Housing Revenue Account budget in parallel with the main budget in future consultation exercises (although it should be said, that was probably not said with a full understanding of the restrictions on HRA spending). More generally, there was support for council housing and an understanding of the housing problems in the city.

Views of participants:

"Housing there is so much of a knock on effect of not having a decent stock of affordable rented housing – homelessness and so on - but the council has no powers to expand this stock. It needs to be addressed. It can't just be left on one

side – need to put together a strategy and reject the straightjacket we are being put into it." [P]

"The right to buy means losing social housing we can't afford to lose." [C]

5. Desire for community-led regeneration

Regeneration as a topic was not much discussed, but it did come up briefly in Hangleton and central Brighton, where the focus was on "regeneration without money", using community efforts to smarten up buildings, short-term cheap or free leases to community groups.

Views of participants:

"There should be wider work on regeneration, a big conversation about how we do it when there's no money around. Regeneration should deliver mixed spaces with residential and business." [C]

"Giving all the empty shop windows to charities and community groups to do window displays. Or possibly peppercorn rents to actually use the building. This is regeneration for free!" [H]

City Infrastructure

Although city infrastructure, which covered refuse, recycling and transport, is by far the most commonly-used service of those discussed, it was the area where there was least discussion and comparatively few comments.

The view of participants was much more business-focused than community-focused, unlike in other areas. Generally participants thought that costs could be reduced through outsourcing and better contract procurement - but here, unlike in other areas, they also wanted the council to maximise its income generation potential. We did see the general reluctance to specify cuts, as in other areas.

The principal points raised in discussion were:

1. Saving money on transport

Transport was identified as an area where some policy changes could reduce costs, but as with other areas there was a reluctance to specify cuts to services.

Views of participants:

"We should try not fixing pot holes for a while but only short term." [C]

"Local contractors would be cheaper for roadworks if they were procured more sensibly." [H]

"Issue older people with day tickets rather than having them take multiple single journeys with a bus pass." [H]

"Reduce the specification of cycle lanes - all it needs is a bit of paint." [C]

2. Income generation

The one area where income generation was discussed was transport. In general, participants were not willing to see non-transport charges increased. A few participants were willing to see further increases in Council Tax, but most were not. It should be noted that transport charging was only raised as an issue in the central Brighton event – and participants in Hangleton wanted to see reductions in parking charges for sports venues.

Views of participants:

"Congestion charging should be considered, but it needs to be joined up so that it doesn't hurt the business community." [C]

"Charge people for damaging roads – if they drive into bridges for instance." [H]

"Increase fines and enforcement for those driving in bus lanes – set up costs are cheap and fantastic income earner." [C]

"Night time economy - use a polluter pays principle. Anyone who retails after midnight pays a premium for street cleaning." [C]

"Charge utilities for digging up roads." [C]

3. Refuse and recycling

Refuse and recycling was identified as a significant expenditure, but participants had few specific proposals for cuts or reducing costs. The issue of fortnightly collection did not come up, but communal bins received support from people in the central Brighton event.

Views of participants:

"Refuse collection – is there a different way of doing things? Working with a partner organisation, ideally a not-for-profit to reduce costs." [C]

"Communal bins work. We should roll them out beyond the current area." [C]

"Generate income through selling wider range of recyclables or composting." [C]

"Put the city clean contract out to tender again. A private company or a not for profit coop could do that cheaper now." [C]

4. Other suggestions

Participants raised a number of other issues in this area.

Views of participants:

"It's important that there are no cuts to money for crossings outside schools." [H]

"Planning or building control – cut more red tape and ease the amount of time spent. Some of the applications take far longer as have various bodies looking into aspects of the application." [H]

"Trading standards and environmental health essential - very important to prevent cuts in this area." [H]

"The sustainability team needs more resources to enable it to save energy and money for the council elsewhere." [C]

Finance and resources

Participants generally found the finance and resources budget difficult to understand, because it is so internally-focused and no information on benchmarking was available. However, because it deals with the HR and other staffing functions of the council, there was no shortage of suggestions on how the council should manage its business.

Participants generally looked for continuing pressure on efficiency and reassurance that council officer salaries are good value. They felt that staff time could be used more effectively.

Although we expected back office functions to be highlighted for cuts, many participants understood that the central functions of the council had an essential role in making the council run, and in building efficiency.

The principal elements of the discussion were:

1. Restraining expenditure in council services

Participants were most concerned with waste in Hangleton. They did not seem to believe that staff were generally profligate or lazy, but that the systems and habits of the council as an organisation encouraged waste that could be avoided.

Views of participants:

"Tackle waste and efficiency. Ensure that council salaries are in line with similar work elsewhere" [H]

"There is scope for budget savings though centralising ICT functions regionally or nationally." [H]

"There should be incentives to departments to come in under budget in such a way that they are then able to keep those budgets for next year, rather than doing mad end-of-year spending." [H]

"Staff should pay for their own transport to encourage them to walk more." [H]

"Don't provide expensive bottled water in meetings – tap water is fine to drink." [H]

"Cut waste in the offices – paper, paper clips, photo copying, cut time waste too. Smokers chat in corners – we all know who is lazy." [H]

"Look at overall efficiency of services and staff in general." [H]

"Spend on HR seems to be very high. It must be possible to make reductions here." [C]

"Need to tighten up contracts and sickness among people delivering the services." [H]

"The council should not be using bottles of bottled water - £2 per time, 6 on the table." [H]

"Special permission for colour photocopying would save thousands." [H]

"Ensure all meetings are within civic buildings." [H]

2. Promoting organisational development and new ways of working

While participants in Hangleton focused on waste, the main discussion in central Brighton was around new ways of working and promoting organisational change within the council. This reflects the broadly solutions-focused nature of the conversation across all areas in central Brighton, which is unsurprising as they were recruited through routes linked to CityCamp and civic innovation.

Views of participants:

"Partnership seems really important - it's an area where we should make investments." [P]

"We need a new tool that uncovers underlying, systemic issues that are preventing the Council from delivering their services more efficiently and effectively." [C]

"It seems that it is the human resources in the organisations that holds the key and that leadership at certain levels – particularly middle management – effect the culture significantly. Intrinsic motivation seems to be key and this can be tapped into for little cost." [C]

"Giving people recognition will get people working harder. Noticing colleagues doesn't cost anything but can be very motivating. Understanding what motivates and drives people – unleash potential across the council. Understand all levels of the council." [C]

3. Other ideas

Two other ideas came up briefly in discussions, which do not fit easily above:

"I believe the council does far too much in far too many areas. Focus on the main issues, close down the rest." [P]

"Something like this [the preparatory information] should go out to every person paying council tax." [P]

Demographic information

The demographic questionnaire was distributed to all participants. Of the 48 participants, 39 filled in the questionnaire.

Age

The age profile of participants was older than the city's age range. In total across the events, no participants who completed questionnaires were under 20 (one was under sixteen, but she did not complete a demographic questionnaire).

Three were between 20 and 29, 8 between 30 and 39, 7 between 40 and 49, 8 between 50 and 59, 6 between 60 and 69 and 7 were 70 or above.

As might be expected from the recruitment routes, Patcham and Hangleton had an older age profile than central Brighton. Patcham's mean age was 58, Hangleton's 49, but central Brighton's 43.

Gender/Ethnic Origin/Sexuality

Overall, 17 of 39 respondents were male, and 22 of 39 female. Patcham was the only event that did not have a female majority - Hangleton had a 2:1 majority of women.

All bar two questionnaire respondents identified as white, with one Asian/Asian British and one "Prefer not to say".

All questionnaire respondents at Hangleton and Patcham identified as "Heterosexual/Straight". In the central Brighton event, eight questionnaire respondents identified as "Heterosexual/Straight", and one each as "Gay man", "Lesbian/Gay Woman", "Bisexual" and "Other".

Household Income profile

The income distribution was much wider than the age distribution, in all of the events.

The Patcham event was quite polarised, with half the questionnaire respondents reporting incomes beneath £20k, one an income between £45k and £60k, and one more over £60k. Two others preferred not to say.

Slightly less polarised was the central Brighton event. Four questionnaire respondents reported incomes under £15k, one £15-20k, one £20-25k and two £25-30k. Two other participants reported incomes over £60k, and the other three questionnaire respondents preferred not to answer.

The Hangleton event had a broad income spread, skewed to the lower end. Six questionnaire respondents (one third) reported incomes under £15k, two £15-20k, two £20-25k, three £25-35k, one £35-45k, one £45-60k, and two more over £60k (one questionnaire respondent preferred not to say).

Health and caring responsibilities

No questionnaire respondents at Patcham or central Brighton reported having their activities limited by a long-lasting health problem. Five of the eighteen questionnaire respondents (28%) at the Hangleton event reported that their activities were limited by a long-lasting health problem.

Caring responsibilities were more widely spread. Two of eight questionnaire respondents at Patcham, four of eighteen at Hangleton, and one of thirteen at central Brighton reported being a carer for a friend or family member (other than as paid employment).

“Five quick questions” survey

The intention behind the "five quick questions" survey was to understand the attitudes of participants before and after the event, and to discover whether their exposure to the information provided about the council had improved or worsened their opinion. We asked all participants to complete the questionnaire at the start and at the end, but not all did so - with fewer completing it at the end.

At Patcham seven out of eight participants completed the "before" questionnaire, and five out of eight the "after". At the central Brighton event, sixteen completed it before, and seven after. At the Hangleton event, twenty-one completed it before, and seven after.

Because of the low number of "after" responses it is difficult to analyse any change in opinion, but for completeness's sake the "after" answers are shown below in brackets.

The first question asked participants to rate the statement "I think that overall the Council does its job" with 1 being "Not well at all", 2 being "not that well", 3 being "fairly well", and 4 being "Very well".

At central Brighton, the average score was 3.13 (2.71 after), at Patcham 2.71 (3.0 after), and at Hangleton 2.86 before and after.

The second question asked participants to rate the statement "I think that in general the Council uses its money..." on the same scale.

At central Brighton, the average score was 2.88 (2.66 after), at Patcham 2.43 (3.0 after), and at Hangleton 2.62 (2.0 after).

The third question asked participants to rate the statement "I think the amount of money the Council spends is...", on a scale where 1 is "much too much", 2 is "slightly too much", 3 "slightly too little", and 4 "much too little".

At central Brighton, the average score was 2.69 (1.93 after), at Patcham 2.14 (3.5 after), and at Hangleton 2.24 (2.29 after).

The fourth question asked participants to rate the statement "I think that Council Tax is...", on a scale where 1 is "much too high", 2 is "slightly too high", 3 "slightly too low", and 4 "much too low".

At central Brighton, the average score was 2.4 (2.6 after), at Patcham 1.3 (1.7 after), and at Hangleton 2.3 (1.9 after).

The final question asked participants to rate each of the services under discussion on a scale where 1 was "spending could be cut a lot", 2 was "spending could be cut a little", 3 was "needs a bit more money", and 4 was "needs a lot more money". This rating means that the balancing point between cuts and no-cuts is 2.5. Services with ratings higher than 2.5 are thought to need more funding, on average. Services with ratings lower than 2.5 are thought to need less funding, on average.

- ❖ Services for children were rated 2.89 (2.29) in Hangleton, 2.19 (2.0) in central Brighton, and 2.5 (3.0) in Patcham.
- ❖ Services for adults were rated 2.95 in Hangleton (2.3), 2.25 in central Brighton (1.86) and 3.0 in Patcham (3.0).
- ❖ City infrastructure was rated 2.43 in Hangleton (2.0), 2.31 in central Brighton (1.43), and 2.5 in Patcham (4.0).
- ❖ Housing and communities was rated 3.0 in Hangleton (2.43), 2.63 in central Brighton (2.07), and 2.5 in Patcham (4.0).
- ❖ Finance and resources was rated 2.29 in Hangleton (2.0), 2.19 in central Brighton (1.86) and 2.33 in Patcham (2.8).
- ❖ On the basis of these rankings, the overall priority order (averaging the before and after rankings for both groups) between services is:
 - ❖ Above the halfway line, implying a perceived need for funding:
 - ❖ Housing and communities (2.771)
 - ❖ Services for adults (2.558)

Below the halfway line, implying a perception that some cuts were possible:
Services for children (2.476)
City infrastructure (2.445)
Finance and Resources (2.244)

Lessons for the Future

As is clear from the results of the events described above, the events did not produce a clear prioritisation of different services, or specific suggestions for budget reductions in most areas. Instead, they operated in a space between a traditional focus group and a participatory discussion event like CityForum.

The responses of participants give some clear ideas for approaching future budget consultations, and the neighbourhood democracy work currently underway in the council.

The lessons we would draw from the events are:

1. Information is essential, but there is greater demand for detail than can be satisfied in a single consultation event

2. People are less confident in making decisions than might be assumed, even when those decisions do not have direct consequences
3. Ongoing engagement and participation are essential
4. Strong community networks are essential for effective consultation, particularly in areas with lower facility in social media.

1. The role of information

The most common reason participants gave for not ranking or prioritising services was that they did not feel that they had sufficient information to make the decision. The information that was provided for the exercise was based on the Delib consultation materials, but the presence of experts from the council should have meant that participants had more information than those taking the online consultation.

When the facilitator probed concerns about the lack of information, it was clear that participants wanted access to information that would enable them to make qualitative judgements about the services that the council was delivering. The types of information mentioned were salary scales, benchmarks of cost and quality, and comparisons between service levels in different authorities.

The demand for information was considerable, but the readiness of participants to learn more by taking more time over the events was limited. In Hangleton, it was agreed that the 2 hour format was the right length, and that longer would have required an unrealistic commitment of participants' free time. However, the information that people asked for was far more extensive than could have been absorbed in a two hour period, even with pre-reading materials.

Participants in Hangleton agreed that they were not looking to participate in a whole-day event, or to receive more information in advance. Instead, they said that they wanted to be informed about the council's budget and performance all the time. We did not press on how realistic it was to expect people to keep up with such information.

In the same way, the audiences in Patcham and central Brighton looked for more information while being unwilling to commit more time to the event. One participant at Patcham asked the Council to send a summary of spending information to every resident every year - unaware that this information is provided alongside the Council Tax bill. Participants at the Patcham event expressed general ignorance of the nature of the information provided alongside the bill, suggesting that the council tax leaflet cannot be relied upon as a route to disseminate spending and performance information.

2. Reluctance to make decisions

We were slightly surprised by the reluctance participants expressed about making decisions. The event was explicitly billed as a consultation event, and we

had assumed that general scepticism about consultation as a process would mean that participants did not see a direct connection between the views they expressed and the council's decisions. At the start of each event, we made clear that any final decision on budgets would be for the Council as a whole to make.

It is clear, though, from the reaction of participants that budgets, particularly in a time of service cuts, were an area where people made “on the record” comments very cautiously.

Many participants said that they were unwilling to make any recommendations for cuts. This was not generally on the basis that the council ought to rely on its democratic mandate, and make such decisions without consultation. In fact, there was a willingness to be more involved in decisions on services - but also a view that people who received those services were the best placed to specify whether or how they should be changed.

This draws out a distinction between participatory budgeting and prioritisation of service delivery across the whole council.

Participatory budgeting usually operates within the ring fence of a ward or neighbourhood budget, rather than across the whole range of council services. One big decision is already taken: that the ward or neighbourhood will have £50,000 to spend, and the choices are then only between the different options for spending, and people are able to make those choices on the basis of their own experience.

This exercise, by contrast, was spending “other people's money”, or rather deciding on other people's services. The confidence threshold that people felt was therefore much higher than in a simple “spend here or spend there” budgeting exercise. This is both a credit to the approach taken and the trust participants had that they would be listened to - people clearly felt that the decisions would be taken seriously - but also a challenge. It is hard to envisage a manageable single event that provides enough information and decision support to allow members of the public to make such difficult choices.

3. Ongoing engagement and budget literacy is essential.

If participants want more information and more involvement, this can only be practically delivered by budget information provided over a longer term as part of a comprehensive engagement strategy. This will involve commitment by the council and its partners to make service budgeting and performance even more easily available and more transparent.

Of course, even the most transparent and open information is pointless if no-one looks at it - so there is a corresponding need to ensure that those who are interested in involving themselves in local democracy (between fourteen and thirty-four percent of the population, on recent surveys), are targeted and shown how to involve themselves.

This type of awareness-raising and open information will be essential if the council's intentions on neighbourhood governance arrangements, as well as central government's promises community plans and community budgets are to be implemented successfully. We are aware work to develop these approaches is already underway, through the council's consultation on neighbourhood governance arrangements and the NESTA-funded programme *We Live Here*.

4. Strong neighbourhood networks essential

The recruitment method used for this exercise was - intentionally - an experiment with three different sets of networks, the online networks around social media and the CityCamp events; the established networks in Hangleton & Knoll; and the more informal networks in Patcham.

Of the three, at least for this event and on this topic, the neighbourhood network in Hangleton & Knoll was most ready to be engaged, even though participants there were on average poorer, more disabled, and had greater caring responsibilities. This is testimony to the benefit that comes from building strong trusted networks over a number of years. Hangleton & Knoll is perhaps the clearest example of a neighbourhood that would be ready for more devolved forms of governance, because it has existing networks that are strongly interconnected, a sense of itself as a place, and a number of key influencers who bridge different parts of the community. We know from our work on the *We Live Here* programme that a community network mapping exercise will shortly take place in Hangleton & Knoll, and we expect it to show a strong network with high penetration in the community.

The social media/CityCamp network is something different. As might be expected from a loose set of connections through social media, the response rate overall was much lower than in Patcham or Hangleton (although social media and email meant that more people could be contacted).

The nature of the central Brighton group's engagement was also rather different. Because the participants came from various parts of the city, even if predominantly the urban core, there was no sub-city geography that they could identify as "theirs", and so the issues they discussed tended to be general in nature rather than location-specific. Perhaps because a relatively large share of the group was from the CityCamp community, the central Brighton group was far more ready to look for new things to do (with the intention of saving money later), rather than ways to save money or cut services. As a corollary, however, also more ready to see services change than the groups in Hangleton and Patcham, which mostly looked to preserve things as they are.