

Appendix 2

Taken from Newport City Council website regarding the 2013-14 budget proposals¹

Have your say on next year's budget

Newport City Council wants to hear the views of residents on a number of proposals for the 2013/2014 budget.

Send in your comments on next year's budget

Like other authorities around the UK, the council is facing challenging economic conditions.

Next year the council has to make savings of £8.4 million while continuing to provide the best possible services.

It wants to protect frontline services but recognises that some major changes will have to be made including working in collaboration with other authorities and partners, and reviewing non-essential services.

At its meeting, the cabinet agreed a series of proposals which it would like the public to comment on. Follow the links below to see the proposals for each area.

- [Continuing learning and leisure](#)
- [Corporate services](#)
- [Education](#)
- [Environment and regeneration](#)
- [Social services](#)

The council would like to stress that no decisions will be made until the final budget is approved.

Following the consultation, cabinet will consider and discuss the responses at its February meeting and will then make its recommendations to the full council which meets on Tuesday 26 February 2013.

¹ As highlighted above, the following proposals are those which the council consider the most controversial, and in total amount to approximately 2.7 million of cuts. There is still therefore a remaining 5.7 million of cuts to account for (given the 8.4 million cited below as the savings required) – as outlined in parameter 4 above, the FC consider it a moot point for issues of fairness, as to whether or how a breakdown of the latter figures be made available on the council website.

Leisure and continuing learning

The council has no legal duty to provide services such as leisure centres but they are seen as an important part of the fabric of life in the city, enhancing the lives of residents.

Faced with huge financial challenges, the council's main priorities have to be towards those services which protect and support older people, the vulnerable in our community and children.

Significant savings have to be found in this area. However, the council does realise the value and benefit of leisure and continuing learning and will do what it can to ensure continuation of this service. This may involve investigating new ways of delivery but difficult decisions will also have to be taken over the coming months about streamlining some elements to preserve others.

Consultation proposals

Closure of Underwood Leisure Centre (£58,000):

Considerable effort has been put into trying to keep this ageing leisure centre open over a number of years but it is the least used of all our leisure facilities. As a result, it is currently only open on evenings and weekends.

If the proposal goes ahead, the council will seek redeployment opportunities for the four people working at the centre.

Sport and leisure trust

It is being proposed that the council explores the options for transferring sport and leisure to a trust.

This could be a not-for-profit organisation that would manage these services leading to savings in business rates and tax benefits in future years.

Corporate

The council's corporate services cover a range of both back-office and customer-facing services including finance, IT, human resources, the city contact centre and the Information Station.

Much work has been carried out over recent years to streamline these functions making them more efficient and cost effective.

A number of changes in national policy, such as the Welfare Reform Act, will place additional burden on these budgets. For example, from April 2013 the responsibility to provide a council tax benefit scheme will devolve to the Welsh Government and the council, and there is essentially less funding available than under the current scheme.

Other national schemes such as automatic enrolment in a pension and potential consideration of the Living Wage represent considerable pressures on the budget.

As is normal, some investment is also required year-on-year to keep our systems and IT packages up-to-date.

Consultation proposals

Twinning (£10,000):

Twinning activity has gradually reduced over recent years with activities facilitated rather than funded. This further reduction in the budget reflects this and, if required, funding for one-off events will be sought from other sources. Twinning is entirely discretionary and there is no statutory requirement for any arrangements to continue.

Neighbourhood Allowance (£25,000):

Members each have a £1,500 allowance to spend in their ward on good causes. The council is considering cutting this allowance to £1,000 per Member. This would mean they still have the opportunity to make a valuable financial contribution while still achieving a saving.

Mayoralty and civic events (£30,000):

It is proposed that there is a change of priority relating to the type of events hosted by the Mayor. While the Mayor will continue to attend and support events across the city, those organised and hosted by the Mayoralty will have more of a civic focus and there will be further savings made on some corporate events. This proposed saving reflects the change in focus and the fact that the budget is also traditionally under spent. This saving is proposed while very much recognising the importance of the Mayor and corporate events and how they support local charities and organisations.

Customer Service review (£130,000):

In November 2012 cabinet approved the council's customer services strategy for 2012-17. As part of this wide-reaching work, elements that make up our customer service offering are being reviewed.

Within this saving the council is proposing to reduce the hours of opening of the contact centre which is a reflection of more people doing things online.

It is also proposed that savings are made by the council introducing an automated switchboard function which could handle 'switchboard' type calls.

By streamlining processes, it is also anticipated that we can reduce the number of repeat calls.

Channel shift (£76,000):

The way people contact the council and access certain services is changing. For example, more people are using the council website to report problems, make payments or request services. These proposed savings reflect the increasing use of self-service facilities.

In addition, there are moves to make certain services available online/via self-service only rather than via face-to-face or over the telephone. This would also achieve savings.

Shared services collaboration (£120,000):

A priority over the next year will be to identify opportunities for collaborative working across the corporate services portfolio. This is in line with the Simpson review – a report commissioned by the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government which looks at whether public services are best delivered on a local, regional or national basis.

Education

Newport City Council is proud of education in the city. The priority is to maintain those high standards and there is a commitment in the budget proposals that school funding for 2013/14 meets the Welsh Government funding target.

However, savings do have to be made in increasingly challenging times. For example, the number of primary school pupils in Newport is set to rise by more than 300 costing an extra £500,000 over the next five years.

Services previously funded by grants will now have to be met from the council's central education budget. From 2013/14, the council will take on the financial responsibility for post-16 special needs pupils. The grant being transferred by the Welsh Government is £1.39 million but this will leave a shortfall of at least £500,000 which will have to be met by the council.

There will be an investment in developing breakfast clubs in primary schools. At the moment, there are three schools in the scheme with another four due to take part but there is a target of including another 20 schools in the next financial year bringing the total cost to £151,000.

Consultation proposals

Gwent Music Support Service (£292,000):

This is a non-statutory service and, although the council appreciates the added value of it, we have to concentrate on frontline education for the benefit of all pupils.

We believe the way forward is for GMSS to become self-financing with schools still having the option of subsidising fees or asking parents to contribute.

Discussions have been held with the service about the future and it understands it will also have some difficult decisions to make as a result of this reduction in funding but the council is working with the management to explore income opportunities.

Outdoor Education Provision (£79,000):

Traditionally, the council has provided a subsidy towards outdoor education. This is also a non-statutory service which is expensive to provide and alternative provision is available for schools that wish to continue to offer this opportunity to pupils.

Environment and regeneration

There is pressure on the environment and regeneration budget of £345,000. This is as a result of the Magistrates Court Service having moved out of the Civic Centre leading to a loss of income, costs associated with CCTV line and the Super Connected Cities bid as well as ongoing costs due to the removal of sewage at Peterstone.

The council has also lost income from the closure of Cambrian car park and Market Square car park although in the longer term this is beneficial for the city.

Consultation proposals

Newport Unlimited (£187,000)

Welsh Government is currently carrying out a review of regeneration across Wales and in turn is considering the future funding of Newport's urban regeneration company Newport Unlimited. A decision is expected in the New Year.

Welsh Government contributes around £666,000 per year to Newport Unlimited's revenue (running) costs and Newport City Council, a founding partner, contributes around £333,000. If funding is not extended, Newport City Council would not be able to bridge the gap and Newport Unlimited could not continue in its present form.

The regeneration and development of the city is a priority for the council and in this situation a number of functions currently carried out by Newport Unlimited may need to be delivered by the council. This figure represents the saving on the council's current annual investment in Newport Unlimited after such services have been accounted for 'in-house'.

Removing floral displays (£37,000)

The council is considering removing hanging baskets and planters from all areas of Newport apart from at key locations such as the city centre. As well as exploring the possibility of seeking sponsorship for some of the floral displays we would also look at alternative ways of generating income through a commercial approach to nursery services.

Removing the budget for public art maintenance (£30,000)

The maintenance budget for public art and statues in the city will be reduced to just essential maintenance. This will affect bronze statues in the city centre, flood lighting to the castle and St Woolos Cathedral, Cenotaph on Clarence Place, murals, VJ memorial, Merchant Navy memorial, D Day memorial, Wave and the aqua beast (heraldic supporter).

Social services

There is tremendous pressure on the social services budget, in the region of £5m and this can be attributed to a number of factors.

The number of older people continues to increase and that puts a strain on social services, while the number of children with complex disabilities moving into adulthood is rising and they continue to need our care and support. The city also has a rising birth rate which is likely to create rising demand for children's services.

The council is part of the Gwent Frailty Project and our continuing investment is needed to transform services for older people. This is a long term project and, while in the short term creates pressure on our budget, it will eventually deliver savings.

There have also been a number of policy changes, for example, the family justice review which means that it is no longer acceptable to have delays during care proceedings. We have to ensure that the majority of cases are taken through the court more swiftly, in a maximum of 26 weeks.

Families who have come to the UK from Europe but who do not have access to public funds have been increasing each year. The council has a duty of care to these families under Section 17 of the 1989 Children Act.

Our Integrated Family Support Service (IFSS) is a preventative programme contributing to 'safely' reducing the number of children in care. As a result we have seen a seven per cent reduction of children in care compared to a national increase of 22 per cent. Changes to the IFSS grant means that the council will have to find approximately £225,000 to retain a significantly reduced but adequate level of service.

A number of the budget proposals below are primarily about giving people greater choice and control over the care they receive. The direct payment proposals are about giving people the opportunity to make their own decisions about what they want.

Consultation proposals

Reprovision of New Willows (£124,000)

At present, adults with a learning disability do not choose the type of respite care they want and it is proposed to put the control back in their hands. The council would do this by making direct payments available which will allow them to choose the type of respite care they want. This would give individuals real choice and allow them to purchase respite options in alternative ways, for example, they could choose to spend the money on a holiday or have a day trip out of the area. The council would support individuals with their choices and provide advice to ensure they are spending the money in the correct way and that it is appropriate to their needs.

As a result, the council is proposing to close the residential home, New Willows, which provides respite for people with a learning disability.

Reprovision of Ringland and Baneswell Resource Units (£186,000)

This proposal is about modernising day services and not restricting the opportunities available for people with a learning disability. There are currently two resource units that operate as part of day services but this support can be provided in alternative ways and it is proposed to close these centres. People will still be able to access services at Brynglas and Ringwood centres, sometimes as resource or drop in centres. People can use their direct payments to access a range of day opportunities offering more flexible options.

Extra Care redesigned to care-only contracts (£187,000)

Presently, the in-house domiciliary care service provides both personal care and housing support to tenants in the four extra care housing schemes. It is proposed that in future the service will only provide personal care, for example, helping people get out of bed or get dressed. Funds would still be available to Linc Cymru to provide the housing support service if they wish, but it would no longer be provided by the council.

Family aide reprovision (£122,000)

The council is proposing to close the current family aide services and re provide them through an alternative third sector or not-for-profit provider. Direct payments would be offered for people to create their own individual packages of support, giving people greater control.

Alternative provision of residential education placements (£208,000 in the third year only)

Alternative options could be provided for young adults to support their development and learning. This would mean exploring options other than residential colleges outside the city. The aim will be to develop local services that prepare young people for a purposeful adult life, offering skills that enhance their independence and increase the likelihood of employment and training. This is a long term goal with savings identified for the third year.

Closure of Hillside care home (initial investment of £54,000 but then savings of £853,000)

This proposal is aimed at offering greater choice for older people to remain independent with access to care and support when needed. This will involve the closure of Hillside, a residential care home for older people and its replacement with an additional Extracare housing scheme in the city. This will result in a cost in the first year but will represent a considerable long-term saving. It is anticipated that the Extracare scheme will open before Hillside is closed. Full consultation will take place with the residents and their families prior to any decisions being made.