

Appendix 1

Reports from working groups on budget proposals 2013-14

3.1 *Parameter 1: Equal treatment while recognising difference*

Question A – according to the working group, what are the main proposed budgetary decisions which seem to *support* principles of fairness as raised by the parameter of fairness above and outlined in the interim report here?

- **Twinning (£10,000)**

Whatever their merits and benefits, twinning arrangements seem to us a relatively low priority in terms of this parameter, in a climate of cutbacks.

- **Mayoralty and civic events (£30,000)**

We feel that as long as these savings affected the expenses involved in laying on corporate events, rather than the level of engagement between the Mayor and the community and the access which the community has to the Mayor, then they support this parameter.

- **Shared services collaboration**

It seems to us that while in some cases, moving over to shared provision (either between local authorities, or between Newport City Council and other local bodies) might risk reducing services to the most vulnerable or most included, in others it might have beneficial effects. Without knowing the full detail of each proposal in this regard, it is difficult to distinguish between each kind of case. But with due caution, we would like to say that wherever it will lead to a more efficient and consistent provision of services with no concomitant loss in provision for the most vulnerable or excluded, the collaborative provision of shared services is potentially beneficial (or at least, not detrimental).

Question B – according to the group, what are the main proposed budgetary decisions which seem to *put at risk* principles of fairness as raised by the parameter of fairness above and outlined in working paper 2?

Note: the first two points here refer to items not included in the information provided about budgetary decisions. The latter three refer to items which are included.

- **Lack of consultation about Categories 1 and 2**

We gather that the public consultation concerns those aspects of the budget which fall under 'Category 3' – i.e., those deemed most likely to prove politically controversial. Yet Categories 1

and 2 include changes very likely to have an impact on equity within the NCC workforce. Clearly, this is an area – for example, the impact on the grading of staff or on their income, and the relative treatment of different groups of staff – where the principle of ‘equality while recognizing difference’ applies, and is likely to be vital.

- **Council Tax**

It seems to us problematic that the setting of Council Tax rates is a crucial part of the process which, again, is excluded from view in the consultation document. In other words, there may be a case on equality-related grounds either for increasing Council Tax rates, or holding them down. But to assess this, we would need to see the rationale behind setting rates as they are – which clearly has rather momentous knock-on effects in terms of the scale and nature of savings which then have to be made.

- **Channel Shift (£76,000)**

The proposals here seem likely to hit hardest those already most likely to be excluded from access to the Council’s services – e.g. those without broadband access, those who are least ‘internet-savvy’, those least confident about accessing information via self-service means. These people are disproportionately likely already to be disadvantaged because of their situation. It seems likely that an impact assessment of these changes might suggest that whatever their benefits, there will also be losers.

- **Re-provision of social services (New Willows, £124,000; Ringland and Baneswell Resource Unites, £186,000; Family Aide, £122,000; residential education placements, £208,000)**

The very scale of these savings raises clear questions about their likely impacts, both on the quality of services and the terms and conditions of the workers providing them. Experience suggests that while savings may accrue from such moves, there is also a risk that both services and working conditions become less consistent, and at least in some respects poorer. Again, we would like to see evidence that an assessment of their likely impact in terms of equal access to quality services and the equal rights of employees has been taken into account.

- **Removing floral displays (£37,000)**

While the removal of hanging baskets and planters may seem to be an ‘easy win’ in terms of this parameter, our group are concerned that often, gestures such as this will have considerable qualitative effects on civic pride and the extent to which citizens identify positively with their community. In principle, the removal of flowers (or indeed their provision via high-visibility corporate sponsorship) affect all in the community equally. Yet in another sense, those who have least resources (less access to gardens, etc) may be hardest hit by such changes. Without

being able to offer an easy way of quantifying such impacts, we would suggest that NCC bear these factors in mind – and for example, prioritise the retention of flowers in areas otherwise most disadvantaged.

3.2 Parameter 2: Mutual obligations between citizens and local government

Question A – According to the group, what are the main proposed budgetary decisions which seem to *support* principles of fairness as raised by the parameter of fairness above and outlined in the above interim report?

- Twinning – while recognizing the importance of establishing links with other Cities across the world and pursuing the ‘entente cordiale’, a question is raised about the universal impact of the twinning on the citizens of Newport. The benefit to individuals in Newport communities is likely to be limited. Disadvantaged people are not represented amongst the individuals who speak of involvement.

- Neighbourhood Allowance – Should there be a more general countywide small donation / grant scheme available for good causes? Is there an impact assessment on the donations to date? How are these accessed and who are the recipients? These are discretionary donations that councillors can make to charities to continue work in their ward areas. Other grants are available, generally from national funding or other charities. There are restrictions on who receives them but they are awarded subjectively. The proposal is not to withdraw them completely, therefore this is fair.

- Mayoralty and Civic Events – while the citizens of Newport City and staff of Newport City Council are having to cut on living and service costs – e.g. no refreshments are offered at the Civic Centre for council related meetings it is fair also that Mayoralty and Civic Events are also a part of these cuts. There is no evidence that most citizens would see or understand these expenses.

- Newport Unlimited – Is what Sir Terry Leahy says about the fact that people want to shop in big stores rather than in the high street ring true for Newport? If a town is vibrant and appealing enough do the shoppers flock?

- <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2013/feb/03/small-shop-closures-ex-tesco-boss>

This interesting article might be able to give an insight to this:

<http://ukregeneration.org.uk/2011/03/30/modelling-a-thriving-town-centre/>

To what extent do Newport residents have an input into how they wish to see City redeveloped?

- Social Care –“ greater choice and control over the care residents and clients receive” is fully congruent with this parameter of the FC.
- Gwent Music Support Service – Local and nationally music education and development is desirable however it is not part of the national curriculum and perhaps this should be recognised nationally but it is not a local responsibility. More disadvantaged areas will have the greatest challenges in addressing the younger generation’s social mobility and there should be more direct ways of enabling this factor as a priority, where the case should be to directly support musical education specifically in children, where through child poverty, their home background makes them more likely to be excluded.
- Public Art maintenance – in times of austerity art support groups could be formed to maintain these landmarks.
- Closure of Hillside Care Home – This need to be implemented where the necessary alternative services can be provided to the state’s mandatory standards. In this case, central funding can be claimed to maintain certain types of care, in this case *Supported Housing*. The Elderly Mental Ill nursing component, currently provided to residents at the unit, is a service where greatly increased provision will have to be planned for in the future in partnership with the NHS, who have obligations under *Continuing Health Care* to pay for severe dementia care. There are an increasing number of people developing dementias at a younger age and many people in older age progressing slowly in to the disease. They need to be appropriated supported through more understanding and specialist care within accommodation that enabled and encourages the maximum independent and avoidance of institutionalisation and is better addressed through *Supported Housing*.
- Customer Service Review and Channel Shift - The information contact service has been innovative and over some years has increased the range and accessibility of services. Despite increases in the hours of accessibility, there still remain improvements to be made in effectiveness, which is different to access issues, and remains a challenge. The advantages of the use of on-line facilities is a feature which has offered huge advantages and arguably isn’t available to the majority of the most needy however technological advances have enabled far greater provision than those which existed just a few years ago and therefore should be considered fair, if not desirable. The situation still exists that those whose services are sought still only work largely around core hours of 9 till 5.

- Reprovision of Ringland and Baneswell Resource Units - No comment being made on Ringland but Baneswell can no longer be considered an appropriate resource for this type of facility, being poorly furnished and maintained, and don't reflect the value society should place in service users. Comments made below about the Family Aide Service and Direct Payments should be considered here in terms of improved efficiencies. It could be that some applications of FA could be incorporated to offer greater choice and social experience opportunities however, overall, this proposal can be considered fair.

Question B – according to the group, what are the main proposed budgetary decisions which seem to *put at risk* principles of fairness as raised by the parameter of fairness above and outlined in working paper 2?

- Gwent Music Support Service – While recognizing that frontline education is a priority, an impact assessment should be conducted to analyze the impact of Music education on pupils' general attainment and skills development as well as general wellbeing. A public perception that Music Service is elitist and is only subsidized for those that can afford the fees is a misrepresentation of the opportunity it provides to all schools across the City. The arts seem to be hit more than once in these budget cuts. While this is not a statutory responsibility, tackling poverty is. Poverty can also be tackled via non-statutory means. Gwent music service is a well established and internationally well reputed service.
- Customer Service Review - while it is welcomed to see a customer service review there is a concern about the group of people that do not own a computer to access information online. Older people for example do not have access to not only computers but the skills to use them. Is NCC consulting with those groups to seek how this might disadvantage this group? Information available online needs to be easily accessible. An attempt to reduce the propensity to call is an effective cost reducing method but this can only be achieved if the information on the website and within the public domain through the media/ newspapers/ libraries is current and very detailed.
- Newport City Council is the only Welsh council without a bilingual website – to develop a bilingual website has been a part of the council's own strategy for years but nothing has been put in place. Welsh Language Measure 2010 makes it a requirement for Councils to adhere to standards that will come into effect this year. Should the needs of community languages also form a part of this review?
- Social Care – all proposals should ensure that no group is left out without the care they need. There are difficulties when people are asked to make decisions regarding self-funding

their own care. One person's perception of adequate care might not be the same as the next. Education, sound advice and full support needs to be built into any self-funding proposal.

- Removing Floral Displays – All citizen can have access to the benefit of these glorious displays but it is arguable that the greatest pleasure is made by those who themselves live in the most deprived environments. No gain for the greater good is made by reliance on more advantaged people developing their own gardens, which of course can be done in any event. The displays created are not only a universally accessible feature of art and culture in the city. They provide added advantage in raising the profile, memorability and attractiveness to visitors and potential commercial developers of all sorts, therefore providing added value where loss would also cause impact the long-term sustainability of the borough. They provide evidence of care and regard for Newport and withdrawal could be seen as a lack of regard all citizen and city presentation and marketing of its self and should considered unfair. It is not clear if floral displays in the Civic Centre are included in this proposal but undoubtedly most people aren't able to gain any benefit from these and they could be withdrawn.
- Removal of Public Arts Maintenance – The remarks of the previous point should be considered here as well and should be considered unfair.
- Family Aide Reprovision – The introduction of this service was innovative and is arguably valued more where there are family carers than service users themselves. Little visible appreciation of unpaid carer's services is shown by the statutory sector but the loss of their good-will, though unthinkable except in the most extreme of circumstances would be devastating locally as well as nationally. Most carers face the prospect of paying heavily in their own poor health, which alone imperils their contribution (equivalent to the same cost of the NHS) and loss of personal achievement and life style through their role. It is important that provision and support should be shown that enables them to carry on. Direct Payments should already be an alternative to effectively every service user group. It has been a failure that it has not been rolled-out more extensively. There is anecdotal evidence that staff time is not used as efficiently as it could be. Also there has been withdrawal of services, which offered the advantages of economies of scale in the form as higher ratios of service user to staff ratio, as well as socialization and skill development opportunities through programmes such as the 'Saturday Group', which in current circumstances could offer greater efficiencies.

2.4 Parameter 3: Interdependency and reciprocity within community relations
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We thought the "ward housing market profiles" would be a good guide in assisting with the community needs for example deprivation , ethnic minorities, health and social services. The impact of any welfare reforms could also be judged against the information in these profiles and the risk of unfair treatment assessed .Our concerns for the wider Community with regards to Recreation: Leisure / sport: Music and the Arts: All of these along with highly valued youth work go towards not only building communities but are important to sustaining all community relations. Community Cohesion is often most successful run by volunteers in the areas we have mentioned .What are the Council going to put in place to ensure the poorer and more vulnerable in our society will not lose out on Quality of life issues? Also these are important for the Health and well being of our communities of all ages. We also believe that if youth work and activities for young people go there could be an increase in Anti Social Behaviour and possibly criminal activity and the use of Drugs and abuse of Alcohol. This would certainly impact on the quality of life of the Elderly as the Fear of Crime would rise in the Community. We felt that cutting Twinning costs is justifiable.

2.5 *Parameter 4:* Transparency and accountability in decision-making

Question A – according to the group, what are the main proposed budgetary decisions which seem to *support* principles of fairness as raised by the parameter of fairness above and outlined in working paper 2?

Our Group thought it was incumbent on Newport City Council (NCC) to present the maximum amount of information on its proposals in a clear and easily understandable format.

We also believe that NCC needs to afford an opportunity for the widest consultation of its citizens and other interested parties utilizing a broad spectrum of communication media. This means exploiting the print and online media opportunities already in use together with polling, surveying and holding public consultation meetings to supplement and provide opinion data.

- Corporate savings such as Twinning, Neighbourhood Allowance and civic events have no direct impact on direct services to the public and so are easy hits for cuts and are not likely to generate opposition. As these are subject to the website consultation Newport citizens have the opportunity to voice support or opposition. There is obviously an argument against making these cuts as it could have an impact on good causes and charities – has NCC contacted the organizations involved or will it be assumed they will respond to the website consultation?

- The way NCC delivers education has parameters for funding and spending set by Welsh Government but sees its core function is to provide what it calls 'frontline education'. This means that it is hoped that the activities associated with Gwent Music Support Service and Outdoor Education Provision will be provided by another organization or stand alone funding. The council also makes clear it has no legal obligation to provide these services. Has there been a dialogue with the parties affected? Is it fair to expect parents to contribute which could make it prohibitively expensive? What about the impact on cultural and social development?
- Welsh Government and NCC jointly fund the urban regeneration company Newport Unlimited. The Welsh Government is currently reviewing the effectiveness of regeneration throughout Wales. If as a result Welsh Government withdraw the funding it provides then urban regeneration could become an 'in house' service provided by NCC. This could have major ramifications for how Newport develops in the future. A concern must be does NCC have the necessary skills to deliver this responsibility? Who have they consulted?

Question B – according to the group, what are the main proposed budgetary decisions which seem to *put at risk* principles of fairness as raised by the parameter of fairness above and outlined in working paper 2?

- The proposal to close Underwood Leisure Centre has a legal backing in that the council has no obligation to provide this facility and does not appear to be utilized as much as other leisure centres that NCC operates. But is this a fair decision when seen in the context of a reasonable alternative facility to the community and does it take account of how important that facility is to this community. Have the views of the community been sought either directly or via their elected representatives on NCC and the Community Council?
- The most emotive and contentious areas for implementing savings are around the provision of social services. NCC is part of the Gwent Frailty Project whose objective is for senior citizens to be treated and remain in their own homes rather than care facilities. There is also a drive for other vulnerable groups of people to live independent lives in their home rather than in care facilities. Therefore NCC has proposals to close some of these facilities or reduce the services they provide. These will deliver big savings either immediately or in the years ahead. The questions that need to be asked are is there evidence to support their case that necessary care can be delivered by this change in emphasis? Have the residents, their relatives and interested parties (including the staff) been consulted over these proposals?
- There are a number of proposals for NCC to be involved in shared services and other partnership agreements to save money. As this tends to be in the provision of back-office

functions then the public don't tend to see the risks involved – until something goes wrong. There have been a number of high profile shared services schemes that had serious consequences for local authorities and other bodies involved and their users. As they can result in substantial savings they are very attractive propositions. It is this that creates the risk of lack of transparency and consultation with the interested parties including citizens and employees.