

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**CABINET
MONDAY 22 JANUARY 2018 AT 2.00PM**

Agenda Item
No.

4(i)

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ON THE 2018/19 – 2021/22 INTEGRATED PLAN

Report of the Director of Resources

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Executive Member:- David Williams, Leader of the Council and Executive
Member for Resources, Property and the Economy

1. Purpose of report

1.1 To report on the public engagement activities undertaken on the Council's budget and spending priorities for 2018/19 and beyond.

2. Summary

2.1 The results of the key public engagement activity undertaken on the Integrated Plan for 2018/19 are set out in the paragraphs below.

2.2 The IP engagement process has primarily been focused on informing and raising awareness with residents about the financial pressures faced by the County Council. This year a variety of techniques have been used to engage with the public. This has included an online survey for residents on budget priorities, events with community leaders and discussions with young people in Hertfordshire as part of YC Hertfordshire's (Youth connexions) Takeover day.

2.3 This approach is largely a reflection of the fact that with the multi-year financial planning process employed by the County Council, any significant service changes will be subject to their own consultation exercises and Cabinet decisions.

3. Recommendation

3.1 That Cabinet notes the results of the public engagement activity undertaken and takes this into account when considering the proposed Integrated Plan for 2018/19 – 2021/22.

4. Background

- 4.1 The County Council has a good track record of consulting and engaging with residents using a wide variety of methods. Ongoing dialogue concerning the financial issues the Council faces continues to be promoted through channels such as Herts Horizons, the Council website, and through stakeholder and user groups.
- 4.2 Specific service-related proposals which affect the integrated plan are each subject to their own individual consultations, the outcomes of which are reported to Cabinet separately at the appropriate time.
- 4.3 Alongside this consultation activity, the County Council has engaged widely with service users and partners to help shape its future spending and service plans. Notable examples of this include:
 - a) The Council's involvement in the key countywide partnerships such as Hertfordshire Forward, the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership. Hertfordshire Forward's annual conference, held on 21 June 2017, focused on the topic of prevention. This explored how partners across the county could work together to improve outcomes, influence behaviour and help reduce demands on public services.
 - b) Engagement with key partners such as the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, the county's district and borough councils, the Highways Agency and the Department of Transport on major transport schemes.
 - c) Countywide conferences on health and wellbeing (30 June 2017), working with the voluntary and community sector (9 October 2017) and public health (22 February 2017). An annual partnership meeting with town and parish councils was also held on 3 July 2017.
- 4.4 The following activities have been undertaken for this year's engagement with the public on the Integrated Plan:
 - a) An online survey inviting residents to feedback what is important to them and the priorities they consider the Council should be focusing on. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix A.
 - b) This year an additional webpage giving useful contextual information about Hertfordshire's budget, where our funding comes from and service pressures/priorities was made available to help inform residents when completing the survey. This information can be accessed by clicking on: <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/about-the-council/consultations/council-budget/have-your-say-on-budget-spending.aspx>.

- c) A community leaders' engagement event took place on 30 November 2017. A summary of this event can be found in Appendix B.
- d) An engagement activity with young people from Hertfordshire's Young Commissioners, students from North Herts College and members of the Children in Care Council also took place on 24 November 2017 as part of YC Hertfordshire's Takeover day. A summary of this discussion can be found in Appendix C.
- e) Statutory consultation with the business community via the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce is planned at the beginning of 2018 following the approval draft of the Integrated Plan.

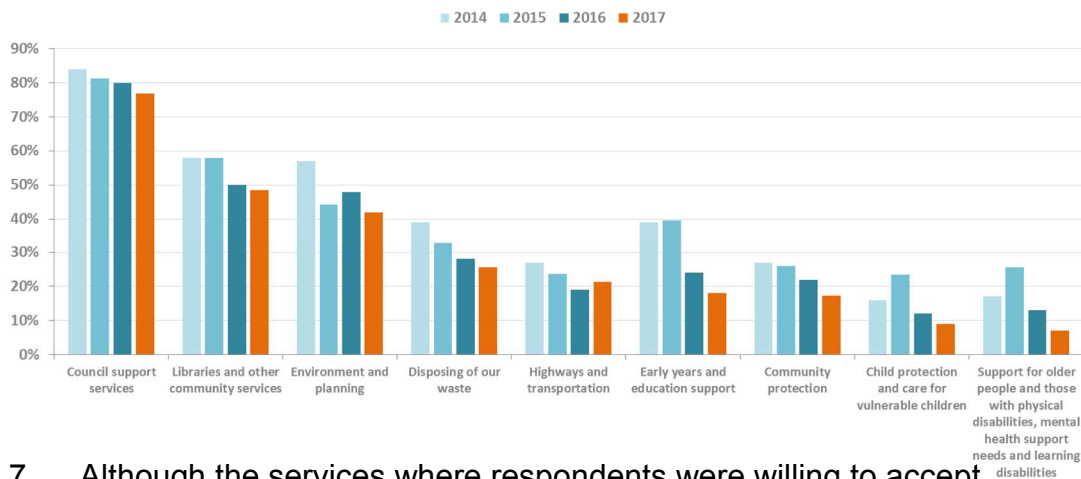
5. Online Survey

- 5.1 An online survey was created and published on the consultation section of www.hertfordshire.gov.uk. This asked respondents to select the service areas in which they thought spending could be reduced/ maintained by the County Council in the next financial year. The survey also asked respondents whether they had suggestions on how service spending could be reduced in specific areas and whether council tax should be increased. The survey opened on 10 November 2017 and ran until 17 December 2017.
- 5.2 Social media communications and blogs were also put out to direct people to the survey and a short video of the Leader of the Council was published to encourage people to take part. Posters were also displayed around Hertfordshire libraries and other key sites. District and borough councils were also contacted to encourage people to complete the survey. Hard copy versions of the survey were also available on request.
- 5.3 A newsletter was sent to the 1,625 members of the Hertfordshire Citizens Panel, inviting them to take part in the survey. The Citizens Panel is a representative group of Hertfordshire residents who are regularly consulted for their views on how Hertfordshire County Council should deliver its services. Two Update Me articles with links to the survey were sent electronically to the over 3,500 members of the public who subscribe to this service.
- 5.4 In total, 1225 responses to the survey were received this year. This is down on the number of responses received last year (1,937) but slightly higher than the average response rate experienced during the 4 previous years the Council has run a version of this survey (1,010).
- 5.5 This year the group which was most under-represented was 90+ year olds, whereas last year it was 18-24 year olds. The age range of most respondents to this year's survey was 35-44, similar to last year's

results. As in previous years a larger proportion of respondents (48.7%) identified as female compared to male (29.6%). Please note that these results are not a direct representation of Hertfordshire’s population and although some groups were under-represented, analysis of data weighted to correct for this under-representation revealed little or no change to the overall results. Please also note the margin for error in the survey results is +/- 3%.

5.6

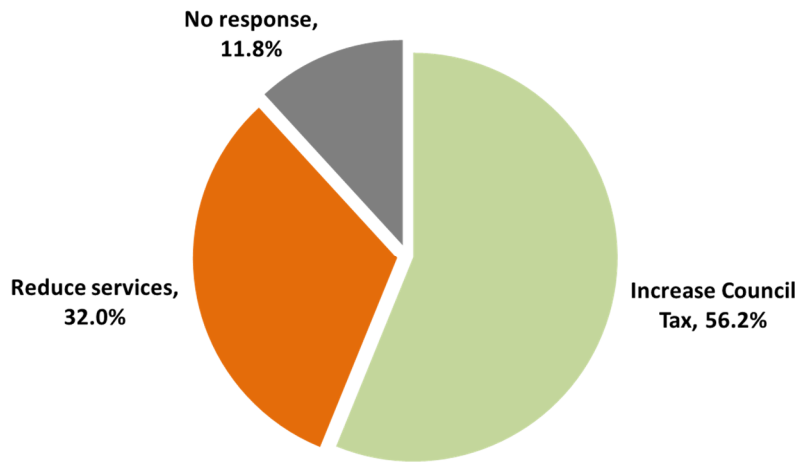
In response to the question “**In which service areas do you feel that spending should be reduced?**” the participants answered broadly the same way as they have done in previous years. The most supported areas for spending reductions were ‘Council Support Services’, ‘Libraries and community services’ and ‘Environment and Planning’. The full results for this year (compared with results from the 2014, 2015 and 2016 survey) were as follows¹:



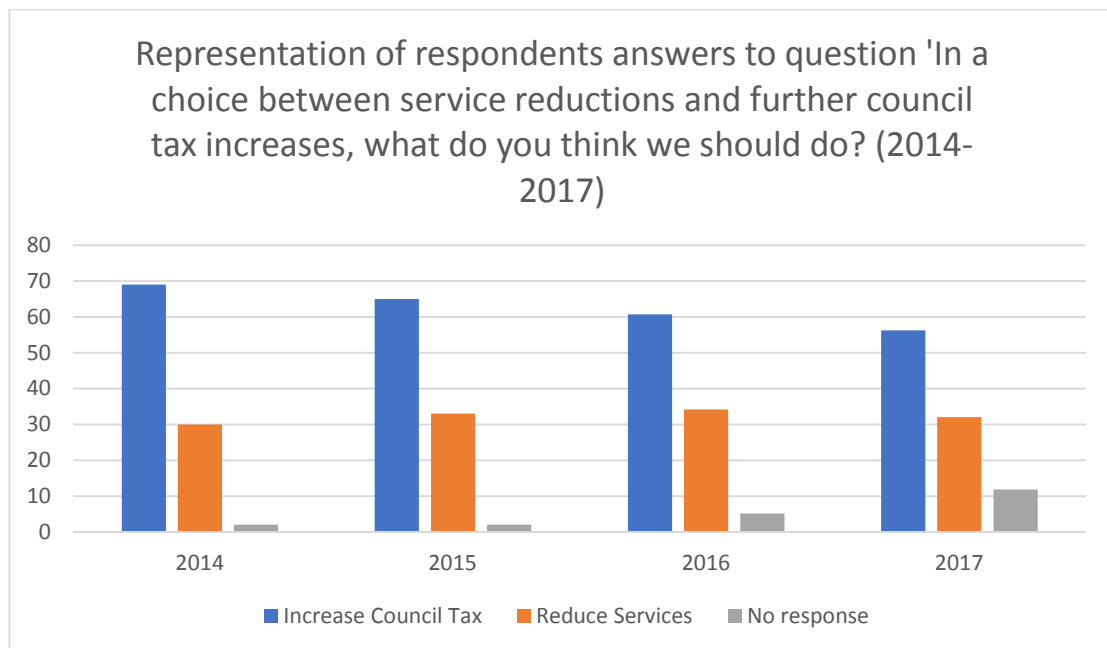
5.7 Although the services where respondents were willing to accept reductions were in a similar priority order to last year, the proportion of people willing to support service reductions is lower this year than last. For example, compared to last year, 6% less respondents chose to reduce spending in ‘Environment and planning’, ‘Early years and Education support’ and ‘Support for older people and those with physical disabilities, mental health support needs and learning disabilities’. The majority of other services also saw a reduction in the percentage of participants choosing to reduce budget spending.

5.8 In response to the question, “**In a choice between service reductions, and further council tax increases, what do you think we should do?**”, the following results are apparent:

¹ Please note – in the analysis of this question, the percentages are out of the number of respondents that answered each particular question (for example, only 1205 respondents answered the question regarding Council support services in 2017, and 77% of these supported reduction in expenditure). The analysis was performed this way in previous years, so this method has been preserved in order for the year-on-year results to be directly comparable.



5.9 56.2% of those who answered this question preferred council tax to be raised rather than see reductions in services. The below charts demonstrate how respondents have answered this question over the last couple of years. The amount of people choosing to increase council tax has reduced over the period whilst the amount of people choosing to reduce services has stayed broadly the same. However an increase can be observed in the amount of people choosing to not answer this question.



Comments and Feedback

5.10 29.5% of survey participants (361) left additional comments covering a wide range of topics. Many comments covered several different subjects.

5.11 These comments present an interesting snapshot into some residents' views, but it is important to emphasise that they are not representative of the overall views of respondents to the survey as a whole.

- 5.12 Nearly a quarter of the comments received in this year's survey related to areas which are outside the council's control. This has been a common area of focus in previous surveys and comments covered a range of services which are delivered by other bodies/organisations. In particular, District Councils are responsible for a number of the services which were commented on in this survey. This included public parking and fines, improving waste collection and concerns around town growth, housing and planning constraints. There were also comments on services delivered by other organisations such as the NHS and police and a number of comments relating to legislation/ policy set by central government and therefore outside of the County Council's control. An example of this were comments which called for an increase/reduction in business rates.
- 5.13 Following this category, nearly a fifth of comments made suggestions on how the County Council could reduce spending by making efficiency savings. Proposals ranged from reviewing and simplifying current council processes to being more strategic in managing investments and spending. Like previous years, there were a number of comments relating to improving the repair of faults on highways and footpaths and waste issues. In terms of the latter, suggestions included that opening hours be increased at household waste recycling centres sites. Other comments suggested that the County Council relook at how budgets are distributed among services and where possible combine responsibilities across directorates.
- 5.14 A similar amount of comments concerned the Council's staff recruitment and expenses scheme. Many called for reductions in senior managers' salaries, and asked the County Council to focus on recruiting permanent staff rather than relying on locums and consultants. Further responses suggested efficiencies relating to staff, including having a more thorough review of roles and responsibilities to see if any savings can be made/processes changed. Like previous years, there were a number of comments which called for a reduction in expenses associated with councillors and council meetings. There was also a small number of comments calling for a reorganisation of local government.
- 5.15 Another theme which emerged from this year's survey was concerns over the County Council's relationships with partners and external contractors. A number of comments raised concerns about the contract costs of SERCO and Ringway, who deliver services across the county. There were also a lot of suggestions that the Council should improve how it delivers partnership working with other organisations including other local authorities and the voluntary sector. Some comments also suggested that there should be better procurement procedures/ contract monitoring in place and that the County Council do more to identify areas where volunteers can get involved and support the council in delivering services, thus making savings.

- 5.16 From the results above it is clear that many participants chose 'Increase Council tax' rather than 'Reduce services'. There were number of comments which support this option, suggesting that vulnerable people would suffer if services were not maintained at their current level. However, there were some comments which suggested that council tax should only be increased by a minimal amount if all other saving options have been explored.
- 5.17 Like results from previous years, some of the comments gave suggestions on how we can make efficiencies from increased use of technology. This included suggestions to continue to digitise council services, using less paper and reducing the amount of external communications sent in leaflet/magazine form to residents. There were also calls for the Council to make better use of its own property be it through sharing office space with others or selling this to generate revenue and future income to help balance the books. A couple of comments also suggested more should be done to promote more working from home in order to free up additional office space.
- 5.18 Like last year suggestions relating to how the County Council can make energy efficiencies within its own property estate were also mentioned. This included suggestions to cut back on street lights, investment in renewable energy sources, using LEDs and more durable building materials and promoting a cultural change to encourage staff to be more energy efficient. However, there were a number of comments which saw respondents calling for street light provision to be improved, with arguments that they should be switched on later into the evening to ensure residents felt safe.
- 5.19 The specific areas where respondents commented spending should be maintained were mainly those which provide social care/educational services to adults and children. Many commented that the most vulnerable Hertfordshire residents should remain a top priority for the Council and instead of making reductions in these services, more be done to look at how efficiency savings could be made.
- 5.20 There were also specific comments on services where spending could be reduced/improved. Although it did not feature as a prominent category, there were comments which suggested the Council review or reduce its current library model, and consider whether these premises could be used in collaboration with other services. There were also a small amount of comments calling for the Highways services to focus on ensuring that sustainable transport options such as cycling and public transport can operate effectively as well as investment in sustainable solutions such as wind turbines/solar panels.
- 5.21 A number of comments touched upon how the Council can be doing more to prevent residents needing to use services. This included suggestions such as providing advice earlier and doing more to promote the benefits of keeping healthy so residents are not reliant on

our services in the future. Some participants also commented more be done to create and maintain inclusive communities that are able to offer help and support to residents rather than continually signpost to council services.

6. Engagement with Community Leaders

6.1 On the 30 November 2017, community leaders representing a range of voluntary and community groups and town and parish councils from across Hertfordshire met at Robertson House, Stevenage to hear from the Leader of the Council and Director of Resources about Hertfordshire County Council's budget challenges and priorities. The discussion also included information about Hertfordshire County Council's Prevention Agenda and upcoming plans for the 'Year of Physical Activity' which is officially launching in January 2018.

6.2 Following the presentation there was a vibrant question and answer session. The following themes were discussed during this session:

- Concerns were raised about the plans for more housing in the county and how Hertfordshire County Council could help these remain affordable and accessible to current residents. Audience members also questioned how the county council will ensure there are a sufficient number of employment opportunities, and effective infrastructure to support this growth, particularly in relation to roads.
- Guests were keen to ask the Leader about how the County Council can help ensure volunteering levels are maintained in the count. There was also some anxiety and apprehension expressed around the relationship between the voluntary sector and the county council, especially in regards to procurement and commissioning processes.
- Audience members were also keen to learn what plans and strategies the County Council had to deliver savings in the future. Suggestions from the audience included increasing the amount of council tax residents have to pay and enquiring whether there were opportunities to reform the county's current local government structures.

6.3 A full summary of the discussions had at this event can be found in Appendix B.

7. Youth Engagement

7.1 In conjunction with YC Hertfordshire (Youth Connexions), a discussion on the council's priorities and budget was held on the 24 November 2017. There were 22 participants with representation from Hertfordshire's Young Commissioners, students from North Herts College and members of the Children in Care Council.

7.2 Attendees took part in two activities. The first a quiz on the results from last year's survey, as well as their knowledge on the Councils' current budget. They were asked which services they believed respondents had selected to maintain/reduce budget spending for last year, and were mainly correct in their answers. They were also asked specific questions on the amount of budget each of the County Councils services received and how much they thought the Council had saved/needed to save over the next few years.

7.3 In the second task, the group were asked for their opinions and reasoning on which services budgets should be maintained/reduced in the next financial year. Feedback highlighted that the services in which the group felt budgets should be maintained mostly included those which kept people safe and provided care and support to vulnerable citizens. This included:

- Support for older people and people with physical disabilities, mental health support needs and learning disabilities
- Early years and education support
- Community protection

Many of the participants were passionate that these budgets be maintained as it was felt that the services and activities delivered enable people to be empowered, stimulated and offer new opportunities for growth and development. It was also commented that there needed to be a strong focus on supporting carers.

7.4 There was debate over whether the budget for council support services should be maintained or reduced as some of the group recognized how these services were integral in supporting council employees to run services. They argued that the budget for Environment and planning should not be reduced, but suggested they may be ways of combining it with the money the Council spends on disposing of waste. There were also suggestions that the child protection and care for vulnerable children budget be increased in the next financial year with comments that there should be better facilities for younger people.

7.5 When asked about which service budgets should be reduced they suggested highways and transportation, disposing of our waste and libraries and other community services. What followed was a lively discussion on how savings in these departments could be achieved. For example, for libraries there were suggestions of charging the public membership fees and generating income by adding additional facilities such as coffee shops/bars.

7.6 A wider summary of this discussion can be found in Appendix C.

8 Consultation with the Business Community

8.1 Following confirmation of the County Council's draft Integrated Plan at Cabinet on 22 January 2018, Hertfordshire businesses will be contacted, via the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and

Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce, to encourage businesses to comment. This timing is in line with requirements under the Non-Domestic Ratepayers (Consultation) Regulations 1992.

9. Financial Implications

- 9.1 The financial implications of the Integrated Plan are considered elsewhere on this agenda. This report relates to the public engagement and consultation on the draft plan and there are no financial implications for this work.

10. Equalities Impact

- 10.1 The equalities implications of the Integrated Plan are considered elsewhere on this agenda.

Background Information

County Council consultations webpage:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/about-the-council/consultations/council-budget/have-your-say-on-budget-spending.aspx#>

Your Priorities

The council continues to face significant financial challenges. Since 2010 we have made savings of almost £290 million from our annual budget and we must make further savings of £42 million by 2020. This is because the Government has significantly reduced its grant to councils and because the number of people living in Hertfordshire is growing every year. As our population ages and more people require care, more of our budget will be spent on supporting older people. For instance, an additional £6.8 million was needed to support older and vulnerable people in the 2016/2017 financial year than was allocated in the budget.

Although we face these financial pressures, we will continue to find innovative ways to make savings and deliver high quality services to our residents.

Your priorities survey

The services below are listed in the order of how much we spend on them (from largest to smallest).


While recognising there are no easy answers, in which service areas do you feel spending should be reduced? (Please tick at least three areas).

Your feedback will be used to inform our decision-making process; you will be able to follow the discussion and find out the final outcome at the County Council Meeting on Tuesday 20th February 2018.


If you would like help understanding this information, for example, if you would like to request it in an alternative format, please contact corporatepolicy@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Please note Public Health services have not been referenced as a budget to maintain/reduce as they are funded by a specific grant which can only be used on these services. Other department budgets are formulated from an array of different income sources.


1. Support for older people and those with physical disabilities, mental health support needs and learning disabilities

	<p>(£322.8 million pounds in 2017/2018)</p> <p>This pays for things like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Safeguarding adults at risk of abuse or neglect - Support to help people in need of care and support to leave hospital - Help for people to stay well and independent in their own homes - Help for older people and disabled people with activities such as getting up, washed and dressed - Day activities and other services for adults with disabilities, mental ill health, dementia and for older people. - Residential and nursing care - Information and advice - Support for carers to help them stay well and continue to provide care 	<p>Maintain budget</p>	<p>Reduce budget</p>
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2. Child protection and care for vulnerable children

	<p>(£103.6 million pounds in 2017/2018)</p> <p>This pays for things like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Keeping vulnerable children safe within their families - Providing foster carers and residential homes to support our children looked after - Finding new adoptive families for children looked after - Providing support to disabled children and their families 	<p>Maintain budget</p>	<p>Reduce budget</p>
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3. Early years and education support

	(£62.7 million pounds in 2017/2018) This pays for things like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Funding of mainstream education - Support and oversight of maintained schools - Provision and/or funding of services for children with special educational needs and disabilities - Provision of adequate school places - Co-ordination of school admissions 	Maintain budget	Reduce budget


4. Highways and transportation

	(£59.4 million pounds in 2017/2018) This pays for things like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintenance of 3,000 miles of roads and pavements - Repairs and resurfacing - Road improvement schemes - Streetlights - Gritting in the winter - Subsidising and supporting bus services - Road safety 	Maintain budget	Reduce budget


5. Council support services

	(£59.1 million pounds in 2017/2018) This pays for things like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial advice and processing - Legal services - Planning and managing our workforce - Technology - Property services - Communications - Support to the democratic process 	Maintain budget	Reduce budget


6. Disposing of our waste

	(£43.1 million pounds in 2017/2018)	Maintain budget	Reduce budget
	<p>This pays for things like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensuring the waste you produce is legally and safely disposed of in well managed facilities. - Providing residents with a network of household waste recycling centres (tips/dumps). - Making arrangements for the reuse, recycling and composting of waste to reduce the amount sent for disposal (such as in landfill sites). <p>* Your local district and borough council provides collection of rubbish and recycling from your home.</p>		


7. Community protection

	(£35.2 million pounds in 2017/2018)	Maintain budget	Reduce budget
	<p>This pays for things like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fire and Rescue Service - Trading standards - Resilience (Emergency Planning) - County Community Safety Unit 		

8. Libraries and other community services

	<p>(£15.0 million pounds in 2017/2018)</p> <p>This pays for things like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 46 public libraries (supporting literacy and access to reading, information and online services) - Registrars (registration of births, deaths, marriages and civil partnerships) - Hertfordshire Archives (preservation of local historical records) 	<p>Maintain budget</p>	<p>Reduce budget</p>
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9. Environment and planning

	<p>(£3.7 million pounds in 2017/2018)</p> <p>This pays for things like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working with district councils to ensure future growth is well planned with the right infrastructure - Ensuring up to date policies are in place from waste and minerals planning - Monitoring the impact of potential airport expansion in the South East and the growth of London - Looking after footpaths, bridleways and the environment - Flood management issues - Developing the Local Transport Plan for the county 	<p>Maintain budget</p>	<p>Reduce budget</p>
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Do you have additional comments about how we could reduce spending in some areas?

In a choice between service reductions and further council tax increases, what do you think we should do?	Please tick one
Increase Council Tax	
Reduce services	

IP Community Leaders' Event: 'Meeting Hertfordshire's Challenges', 30 November 2017

The annual 'Meeting Hertfordshire's Challenges' community leaders event took place on Thursday 30 November. Representatives from the voluntary and community sector and town and parish councils heard from the Leader of the Council, David Williams, and Director of Resources, Owen Mapley, about Hertfordshire's budget challenges, work on prevention and plans for a Year of Physical Activity, which will be launching in early 2018.

Following a presentation on these topics, the floor was opened to questions from attendees, and a vibrant Q and A session followed touching on the below topics:

New housing and jobs

With plans for more houses to be built across the county, many questions were raised about:

- how the necessary infrastructure to support this growth will be delivered;
- whether there will be sufficient new jobs and employment opportunities; and
- how to ensure these houses are affordable and accessible to current Hertfordshire residents.

Concerns were also expressed about the additional pressures to Hertfordshire's roads.

An attendee from the NHS added how due to the ageing population, it would be necessary to ensure the county is able to attract an increasing number of health and social care workers to provide services to this growing area of the population.

It was mentioned that the county's district and borough councils, in their role as local planning authorities had the task of establishing where this new housing would be located. In doing so, they were seeking to ensure there was a better mix of affordable social and private housing built, with opportunities for shared equity and also starter homes.

Alongside this, the County Council had recently announced plans to create its own property company. Through the development of land it owns, but no longer uses, it was planning to deliver over 6,000 new homes in the county the next 15 years. Plans for a significant development in Baldock were given as an example of this.

As well as an opportunity to help the County Council manage the financial pressures it faces, these plans will also enable it to take a leading role in delivering the sort of high quality, sustainable settlements the county needs.

Through these plans, the Council will also be seeking to provide more much needed assisted living accommodation. Alongside providing more suitable accommodation for some of the county's older people, this will in turn help free up family sized properties for use by others.

It is also estimated that 100,000 more jobs will accompany this growth in housing over the next 15 years. The County Council is working with the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and the Department of Work and Pensions to ensure that the county's workforce is appropriately skilled to meet the needs of local employers in the county. In doing so, there is a particular focus on key sector industries such as enviro-tech and life sciences.

Transport policy

Questions were also raised about the Council's transport policy.

With more 175,000 more people expected to be living in Hertfordshire by 2031, it was recognised that there would be a huge impact on the congestion and journey times in the county, particularly during peak travel periods. However, it was also noted that it would not be possible to solve this issue by simply building more roads and encouraging more car use.

As such, the Council's proposed new local transport plan strategy seeks to achieve a change in travel behaviour where people chose to travel by other modes of transport where possible. The plan was currently out for [consultation](#) and set to be adopted in 2018.

Due to a change in working culture in many organisations there is an increase in the amount of people able to work from home and plans for improved rail links with the Thameslink commute across the county.

Volunteering and engagement with the voluntary sector

Questions were also raised about Hertfordshire's corporate plan and the objective of providing residents with the 'opportunity to take part'. It was explained that the Council's aspiration was to enable residents to take a more active part in their local areas. This included encouraging residents to get involved in local issues and volunteer in their communities.

It was recognised that there was a vibrant culture of volunteering and voluntary groups in the county and the County Council was seeking to promote, celebrate and further nurture this through initiatives such as the 'Year of Volunteering'.

It was noted that many of Hertfordshire's services are supported by volunteers. Concerns were expressed about whether the pool of those willing to volunteer was reducing and tended to be those who were older in age. With people retiring later, it was felt that there were less young volunteers and this raised concerns about the future sustainability of community services.

Issues were raised about how voluntary sector groups were finding it increasingly difficult to access funding from the County Council. Changes in the council's procurement and commission processes meant that tenders were more often awarded to larger commercial bodies rather than those in the voluntary sector.

It was recognised that due to the financial pressures facing the council, changes in approach had been made. However, the council's Community Wellbeing team was working to ensure that voluntary and community groups had fair access to tender opportunities.

As part of this, the Hertfordshire COMPACT was mentioned, a written understanding between the voluntary and community sector and public sector organisations about how they will co-operate and work together positively. It was recognised that, as with others, the County Council did not always get everything right but this was an important mechanism to allow issues to be resolved when they did arise.

Financial Pressures

Questions were also asked about what plans the County Council had to make the savings that were required to balance its books. Whilst the council was always looking at ways to reduce costs and be more efficient, it was also looking at ways to maximise the value of its assets and increase revenue streams to reduce the overall impact to frontline services.

As had been mentioned, the Council would be launching its own property company which, amongst other benefits, would generate both capital receipts and longer term revenue income. Through its prevention agenda, the Council was also looking at ways to intervene in potential problem areas earlier to, not only improve outcomes for residents, but also reduce the demand on council services.

Additional suggestions from attendees included requesting additional funding from central government and considering raising council tax further to help meet the Council's increasing pressures. Questions were also asked about whether a restructure of the county's local government structures would provide additional financial savings.

Conclusion

Attendees asked that update be provided at next year's event on how discussions at this meeting had influenced the Council's budget setting approach. This was noted and agreed.

Discussion with young people from Hertfordshire Young commissioners, students from North Herts College and members of the Children in Care Council
County Hall, Hertford, Friday 24th November 2017

On the 24th November 2017, an officer from the Corporate Policy team hosted an event in conjunction with YC Hertfordshire (Youth Connexions) as part of Takeover day.

[Takeover Day](#) is a national initiative, led by YC Hertfordshire locally, which puts children and young people into decision making positions and encourages organisations to hear their views. 22 participants attended and the event shared with them results from previous engagement surveys and tested their knowledge on our budget spending in the current financial year.

Participants were also tasked to select whether they thought specific service budgets should be maintained or reduced in the 2018/2019 financial year and to give reasons behind these decisions. The notes below detail the discussions which followed.

1. Support for older people and those with physical disabilities, mental health support needs and learning disabilities

The general feedback was that this service's budget should be maintained at its current level. When asked for reasoning behind this many of the participants highlighted how this service is integral in supporting vulnerable people as the activities and support they offer keep people empowered, minds stimulated and offer new opportunities. They also referred to how it is important to support carers who offer care to those with additional needs which in turn supports the economy as a whole.

2. Child protection and care for vulnerable children

Feedback on this topic demonstrated how all of the participants believed this service's budget should be maintained and if possible increased. Participants argued that it is essential to keep children and young people safe and to give them the best opportunities in life. They added how staff working in these industries are often over worked and are facing increasing pressures in their day to day work. They also added that there should be better facilities for children and young people.

3. Early Years and Education support

The group decided that the budget for this service should be maintained, adding that schools are already facing pressures so extra support is needed.

4. Highways and Transportation

Participants felt that this service was one area in which the county council could reduce spending, believing there were areas where savings and efficiencies could be made. They believed the standard of services should remain the same and recognised the importance of public transport such as buses, particularly in providing elderly and young people with transport links as well as those in rural areas.

5. Council Support Services

There was divided opinion on whether the budget for this service should be maintained or reduced. Some participants argued that as these services do not have a direct impact on communities, there may be areas where savings could be made. One suggestion which arose from this discussion was whether council owned art work could be sold to help maintain other HCC services. However, some of the group argued that this budget should not be reduced, recognising how support from these departments is integral in allowing HCC to deliver and maintain services.

6. Disposing of our waste

Participants argued that this service was an area where efficiencies and savings could be made. They highlighted how there is too much household waste and it is important for HCC and its partners to continue to emphasise the benefits and need for residents to recycle and reuse.

7. Community protection

There was a unanimous decision to maintain this service's budget, with participants arguing that it is an essential service in maintaining residents' safety.

8. Libraries and other community services

Many of the participants felt that there could be savings made in this service's budget. They suggested that more should be done to digitise information and deliver more online services and also made suggestions on how libraries could make additional revenue. For example, suggestions included privatising libraries or charging membership fees. There were also discussions around whether this budget could be incorporated into other services, such as Early Years Education and Support or Schools. A final suggestion was whether these facilities could procure coffee shops/bars on site as an additional way to generate income.

9. Environment and planning

There were mixed views on whether this budget should be maintained or reduced with some participants arguing that as it was the smallest service budget in the council, was it fair to reduce it further. However, suggestions were

made that this budget could be incorporated with other services such as Disposing of Waste, as a way of making savings.

Following this session, participants were sent the link to the online survey to have their say.