

2016/17 Budget Consultation

Community & Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 17th December, 2015

Member Comment/Question	Response
<p>The Welfare Rights Team provide a vital service to reduce pressure on residence. The Team do a wonderful job and it is nice to see them going out into the Community.</p>	<p>The business plan efficiencies do not propose a further reduction in staffing levels within the Welfare Rights Team. The proposal is to train staff within the Connect centres to deal with lower level welfare reform enquiries.</p> <p>Share similar concerns given that changes to welfare reform are yet to be fully implemented. The Council has been working to bring together advocacy agencies to provide joint working to reach all residents affected by welfare reform. The service will continue to be treated as a priority and all staff should be thanked for their hard work and commitment to this service.</p>
<p>Concerned to see a review of Flintshire Connects budget on the list of business planning efficiencies given how successful these centres have been. How will efficiencies be made without having a negative impact on the service provided?</p> <p>Please be mindful when reviewing opening times of Connects centres, that tenants/residents will be able to pay their council tax and rent at the centres from April, 2016, and many may be working and will need this centre available on a Saturday.</p>	<p>Understand the concerns but all aspects of the Community & Enterprise budget have to be reviewed to ensure all possible efficiencies are found. We recognise the positive impact connects centres have had in delivering services. In future years we may have to consider reviewing the opening times and admin costs of the centres, through learning from the experiences of those centres which have been open for some time.</p> <p>Noted.</p>
<p>Does the Council still use Bed and Breakfast accommodation and also continue to lease properties.</p>	<p>The Council recently introduced a small charge to tenants using Bed and Breakfast accommodation and the annual target has been reduced to £120,000 for the use of this accommodation which is a significant reduction in this budget. The Council also lease a small number of private properties which is much more cost effective than placing people in Bed and Breakfast accommodation, with a plan to stop using this</p>

	accommodation altogether in the future.
The recent Cabinet decision to delay the implementation of service charges for the gardening service should be shown as a budget pressure. Why is this not included in the list of 2016/17 proposals?	This budget pressure will be shown within the Housing Revenue Account, which will be presented to the Committee in January, 2016.
Concerned with the recent changes to the switchboard and the difficulties in connecting to, and being directed to, the right members of staff by telephone.	<p>Following the closure of the switchboard in September, 2015, recent feedback has shown an improvement in the current telephone service. If Members have specific examples where this is not working as it should, please contact the Chief Officer (Community & Enterprise) who can look into this.</p> <p>If a member of staff has been supplied with a works mobile phone, this number should be made available to Members. Members Services can provide this information, which is also available on the internal infonet phone directory. We will check that this information is up to date.</p>
Concerned that the Council may see additional budget pressures during the 2016/17 financial year, given the financial challenges affecting private landlords as part of the Chancellors Autumn Statement, and the possible increase in people contacting the Council for support in finding suitable accommodation in the future.	The Council will have to continue to watch closely whether the changes from UK Government will have a negative impact. The Welsh Government have announced their increased support for the housing development programme through the Social Housing Grant.
With regard to the proposal for a staff restructure within the revenues and benefits service, could you explain how the possible financial risks will be minimised?	The proposal is to reduce staffing levels in line with the decreasing subsidy administration grant from DWP in order to have a cost neutral service. There is a possible risk to the service, as there is a higher chance of mistakes with a smaller staff team which could have a negative financial impact in the future. Detailed work is currently being undertaken to assess how this can be achieved and risks mitigated to protect the service.
Apart from the Welfare Reform Team, will the reduction in Families First Grant impact any other part of the service?	There has been a significant cut in the Families First Grant and it is currently unclear if funding to the Welfare Reform Team will be reduced as a result. A review of 3 rd sector funding to identify risks to funding reductions is being carried out and we will have greater clarity around this in January 2016.

<p>How confident are you in receiving the proposed income from the Energy Efficiency and SHARP Frameworks?</p>	<p>Confident in receiving the proposed income from the SHARP Framework. Negotiations with WG are continuing around the Council's Energy Efficiency Framework which could be used to assist with the National Procurement Service Strategy.</p>
<p>With regard to the proposals for the Regeneration Service, have these been fully costed and what will the impact be?</p>	<p>The proposals will have an impact on the scale of work that can be carried out in town centres but the Council will continue to work to improve town centres through external funding streams.</p>
<p>With regard to the Response Service for older people, what is the proposed alternative model?</p>	<p>There is currently 2 Warden Support Staff with an annual cost of £22,000. During the current year there have only been 55 calls with the majority being for repair and maintenance issues. The proposal is to work closely with colleagues in social services to ensure that repairs and maintenance issues are directed to the right staff and Galw Gofal who can ascertain what the issues are and whether a member of staff needs to visit the person. A small budget has been retained to support a member of staff making a personal visit if needed.</p>