

# Budget and Service Planning: What you said, what we did



## Introduction

As part of our commitment to promote participation and engagement, Bournemouth Borough Council consulted local people about its service plans and budgets for the next couple of years (starting in the 2010/11 financial year).

Due to service pressures and anticipated cuts in Government funding the Council has adopted a two-year approach to efficiencies and reductions, ultimately looking to make total savings in the region of £16 million.

A public consultation on a selection of frontline services helped Councillors to make the difficult decisions about which services to prioritise when setting the Council's budgets and agreeing service plans.

## Methodology

To ensure that the consultation was both meaningful and an accurate reflection of the kind of pressures involved in setting a budget, the Council decided to adopt a 'SIMALTO' modelling system. SIMALTO (Simultaneous Multi-Attribute Level Trade-Off) asks participants to spend a limited number of 'points' on services, with the number of available points increasing in successive rounds. In this way respondents are compelled to prioritise services and think about how much Council Tax they would be willing to pay for the differing levels of provision.

## What did we do?

Listed below is each of the services the Council included in the budget consultation. Every entry includes the difference in funding between the 2009/10 and 2010/11 financial years and explanations behind the decisions made.

**1. CCTV cameras**

*Overall reduction in budget for 2010/11: £25,000*

Despite a reduction of £25,000 there should be no reduction in the actual numbers of CCTV cameras within the town. This money will be saved from the maintenance budget. With improving technology which is more competitively priced, this should make maintenance less frequent.

**2. Fund for tackling anti-social behaviour**

*Overall reduction in budget for 2010/11: £20,000*

The public were very resistant to seeing reductions in this service. However, this reduction will be offset by a £44,000 grant from central Government this year, meaning a net increase in funding. In addition, we are investing heavily in preventative measures: £240,000 has been allocated to the Family Solutions Team, who work to minimise the risk of family breakdown.

**3. Public toilets (excluding parks)**

*Overall reduction in budget for 2010/11: £0*

The public were resistant to any significant reduction in the number or opening hours of public conveniences, but they recognised that other services are a higher priority. Therefore, there will be no reduction in funding for public toilets (including those on the sea front) in 2010/11. This will be reviewed for the 2011/12 financial year and will depend on the overall financial position of the Council.

**4. Evening cleansing of Bournemouth, Boscombe and Charminster town centres**

*Overall reduction in budget for 2010/11: £0*

There will be no reduction in funding for evening cleansing of town centres in 2010/11. As a popular tourist and business visitor destination the appearance of the town was a factor in this decision, alongside the results from the consultation which showed that there was resistance to reducing the service. These arrangements will be monitored and reviewed in time for the 2011/12 financial year.

**5. Litter picking and sweeping of residential roads and outlying shopping areas**

*Overall reduction in budget for 2010/11: £0*

There will be no reduction in funding for litter picking and sweeping of residential roads and outlying shopping areas in 2010/11. This will be reviewed for the 2011/12 financial year.

## **6. Refuse and recycling collection**

*Overall reduction in budget for 2010/11: £100,000*

In general, the public were reasonably accepting of a less reliable refuse collection service. As part of our continuing push for efficiencies, collection rounds were altered during the 2009/10 financial year. As a result of this reorganisation there will be no alteration to the collection service in 2010/11. Savings have already been found in waste disposal as prices for this service have been successfully negotiated down by £300,000, meaning collections will not be affected.

## **7. Road and footpath repairs**

*Overall investment in budget for 2010/11: an additional £1,500,000 (making £2,500,000 in total)*

A £2.5 million investment in roads and footpaths has been agreed for 2010/11. Repairing road and footpaths is a priority, especially after the cold winter that has resulted in some surfaces falling into disrepair as a consequence of constant freezing and thawing.

Some of this money will go towards larger scale maintenance projects, such as re-kerbing and highway design. The £1.5 million allocated by the Council from a VAT refund will be boosted by a further £1 million in capital funding from Government through our Local Transport Plan.

## **8. Out of hours service**

*Overall reduction in budget for 2010/11: £100,000*

A review of this service has not yet been completed. It will look to achieve £100,000 in savings but it is hoped that the customer service level will not be affected. Items under review include stand-by and rota systems in order to reduce overtime costs and improve efficiency.

## **9. Day centres for older people and people with physical and learning disabilities**

*Overall reduction in budget for 2010/11: £160,000*

Over the past year, the Council has been piloting a number of schemes aimed at empowering those who would otherwise be reliant on care provision from both the Council and the NHS Primary Care Trust. Having done so successfully, a significant amount of money has been invested in Reablement, which involves short-term, intensive periods of support leading to long-term independent living where appropriate. It is hoped that Reablement, along with other initiatives, will help people to stay independent for longer and so reduce the level of day care provision required in Bournemouth.

## **10. Home care for older people and people with physical and learning disabilities**

*Overall reduction in budget for 2010/11: £100,000*

In the interests of fairness and consistency, the Council is aligning its expenditure on home care with both Poole and Dorset. In addition, and as with our approach to day care, we are looking for ways to allow the people who actually use care services to make informed decisions about their requirements. Investment is being focussed towards flexible schemes such as Self Directed Support, which gives people money to plan, choose and manage their own support.

## **11. Grass cutting of verges and residential areas**

*Overall reduction in budget for 2010/11: Under ongoing review*

The public consultation indicated that people would be prepared to see some reduction in the frequency of grass cutting in verges. This option will be partially implemented this year, with any further alterations subject to public feedback, 2011/12 budgets and Service Plans. A basket of measures should end up saving in the region of £50,000. These include a review of work time arrangements and the introduction of more wildflower meadows. The likelihood is that during peak growth times cutting may take place on a 3-4 week cycle as opposed to the 2-3 week cycle last year.

## **12. Car park charges in parks and public open spaces**

*Overall reduction in budget for 2010/11: Under review*

At present, the Council does not charge for parking at parks and open spaces except at Hengistbury Head, the seafront and Tuckton tea gardens. The charges for parking in Council car parks have not been increased at all this year. The results of the consultation demonstrate that members of the public would be willing to see parking charges introduced in other public spaces. This proposal is currently under review, and the decision will partly be dependent on how much maintenance each car park requires and how much traffic they generate.

## **13. Bowling greens maintenance**

*Overall reduction in budget for 2010/11: Under review*

The results of the Budget Consultation clearly show that the public are willing to reduce the amount of public money spent on the maintenance of bowling greens. A bowls review is underway, and solutions will be explored with the clubs; it is hoped that arrangements will be in place with clubs in time for the 2011 bowls season. The decision has been made to hand over a small amount of maintenance to the clubs during this financial year. The potential for savings for the 2011/12 financial year could be £400,000.

## 14. Trees

*Overall reduction in budget for 2010/11: £0*

While the public were prepared to see charges introduced and less tree maintenance, Councillors rejected this option for 2010/11. They felt that the time and cost involved in setting up and running a scheme could outweigh the benefits. They also felt that preventative maintenance of the half a million trees on public land is important as it contributes to the Council's top priority of 'Improving our Environment'. Measures considered for the 2011/12 financial year include issuing a new arboricultural contract, which may produce additional efficiency savings.

## 15. Flower baskets and pedestals

*Overall reduction in budget for 2010/11: £25,000*

The majority of flower baskets and bedding within the town are sponsored by local businesses. To address the reduction in this budget for 2010/11 the Council is actively seeking new sponsors for flower baskets and pedestals that would be otherwise maintained solely by Council funding.

**Options 11-15 will all be considered as part of a wide-ranging Parks Review which will take place over the course of the next year. Below is a statement on the Parks Review from Councillor Stephen MacLoughlin, Leader of the Council:**

"The Council has reviewed the way it delivers services and has concluded that significant efficiencies will be found from combining grounds maintenance work previously undertaken by different departments, for example housing (who maintain public open space on estates), cliff tops, parks and the countryside service. This new way of working will take some time to settle in, and it is inevitable that service standards will be affected to some extent. However, the situation will be reviewed and any adjustments made accordingly, to ensure that the service continues to deliver value for money.

In addition, over the summer of 2010, the new service will also provide employment for dozens of local young people who have been unemployed for a period of time, helping them to enter the world of work."

## 16. Subsidised bus routes

*Overall reduction in budget for 2010/11: £100,000*

As the public were prepared to see some reduction in bus route subsidies, the Council agreed to reduce this budget by £100,000 in 2010/11. However, the impact of this reduction will only be known once the tenders for various routes have been considered during the course of the year.

## **17. Youth centres**

*Overall reduction in budget for 2010/11: £0*

The results of the Budget Consultation pointed towards a strong public feeling in favour of maintaining the current level of youth centre provision. Therefore, for the 2010/11, the Council will continue to fund the running costs of nine youth centres.

## **18. Grass cutting in cemeteries and crematorium**

*Overall reduction in budget for 2010/11: £0*

There will be no reduction in the budget for maintenance in cemeteries and the crematorium this financial year. The results from the Budget Consultation indicate that this is an area where the public are prepared to allow for some reductions. The Council will take this advice on board and spending in this area will be reviewed in anticipation of next year's budget.

## **19. Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Licensing**

*Overall reduction in budget for 2010/11: £134,000*

Although maintaining funding for this service was popular in the Budget Consultation, Councillors had to have regard to the Council's priorities. A tough choice had to be made, but the Council's third Key Priority (out of five) is 'Better Planning'. Therefore, budget reductions were agreed for these services, but not for Planning Enforcement (please see option 20. below).

However, we will be monitoring Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Licensing and will review spending at the end of the financial year.

## **20. Enforcement of planning permission**

*Overall reduction in budget for 2010/11: £0*

One of the Council's five strategic priorities is 'Better Planning'. Consequently, we are pleased that local people also share our belief in the importance of planning enforcement. Taking both the Council's strategic priorities and the results of the Budget Consultation into account, no reductions will be made in the budget for the enforcement of planning permission for 2010/11.