

Appendix J

Summary of Consultation Responses

Summary

Since August 2014 the council has been talking to residents, businesses and partners about the budget challenge we face. We have also been asking for their ideas for how we can work together to make savings and transform how we deliver services.

Responses have been gathered from the council website, from social media, by post and from an internal forum for council staff.

In total we have received 134 suggestions to date. These have been split into the following themes.

Regeneration:

Many comments focus on improvements to Oldham Town Centre and ask the council to focus on bringing more businesses and visitors into the area. However, a number of comments ask the council to review spend on regeneration projects and review the current use of some buildings.

Salaries, Pensions and staff benefits:

A number of comments focus on staff salaries with many asking for a review of senior manager pay. A small number of residents suggest reviewing staff benefits and pensions. A very small number suggested cutting overtime.

Organisational structure and staffing:

Some comments suggested a review of departments and layers within the council to ensure they are necessary and fit for purpose.

Contracts and suppliers:

A number of comments suggest ways that the council could save money by reviewing contracts and suppliers. Some suggestions centre around sharing council services with other local authorities or trading them to other organisations.

Better ways of working:

A number of residents have asked us to review our services to make sure they are joined up and more efficient. Some asked to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy, like internal billing. Some suggested more online and electronic transactions. A few residents want to see fewer corporate trips and less money wasted on unnecessary purchasing. A very small number suggested more efficient shift working and better care of physical resources e.g. highways maintenance equipment.

Waste and recycling:

A number of residents made suggestions about how we could change our waste and recycling service, including less frequent collections, increased recycling facilities and recycling league tables across different areas of the borough to encourage friendly competition.

Clean Streets:

A number of suggestions centred on better communication of penalties, as well as better bulky recycling facilities. One resident suggested we sweep the streets less frequently.

Removal of unnecessary services / activities:

A number of residents would like to see the removal of Bloom and Grow, Borough Life, Warm Homes Oldham, the EON street lighting project and our translation services.

Councillors:

Some residents suggesting reviewing the amount of councillors in each ward and their expenses.

Council Tax:

A very small number of residents suggested increases to Council Tax and improving collection rates.

Other ideas:

A number of comments suggested other ideas across various themes and services. These include:

Sell off the council's stake in Manchester Airports Group

Crowd funding for projects

Selling land and assets

Online public notices instead of in the press

Commercial advertising on vehicles and buildings

Lease artwork to museums

Encourage resident sign up to Mail Preference Service

Turn down the heating thermostats in council buildings

Reduce opening hours of branch libraries

Borough Raffle for Christmas or even an Oldham Lottery with, for example, a monthly draw

Extend and develop neighbourhood groups

Permanent, sustainable Christmas trees

Flat-rate fare of 50p per journey on buses for those aged 60+

Reintroduce single rate parking charges

Switching off streetlights on smaller roads on non-peak hours

Generate and sell green energy

Keep on top of the travellers' litter problem

Adults and Children's Services and Public Health:

There was a specific section of the website dedicated to the consultation around the Adults and Children's Services and Public Health which allowed members of the public to submit comments and suggestions in response to overarching questions. There was also a mailbox that could be used to submit general feedback, comments and suggestions.

Adults Services

Some residents felt that more could be done to help keep people safe and supported at home for as long as possible. A number of residents felt that people could be supported to live at home by neighbours, volunteers and community groups.

Suggestions for how this could be achieved included offering an incentive, such as a reduction in Council tax or free car parking/public transport within the borough, to those who are willing to volunteer help to neighbours and communities and working with social landlords to help them to support tenants so that they can stay at home for as long as possible. However, it was also highlighted that support for older people needs to be consistent, regulated and of a sufficient quality.

Children's Services

All of the residents who responded in relation to Children's Services agreed that the Council were right in making it a priority to ensure that Looked After Children (children in residential and foster care) have the same opportunities to succeed in life as any other child/young person. It was suggested that continuing to build on successful joint working and good communication across agencies plus sharing expertise and good practice would help to achieve this aim. Most residents who responded agreed that the council and its partners are right to aim to support parents to give every child in Oldham the 'best start in life' and one resident suggested that this could be built on by offering all 2 year olds a place in a childcare setting.

Public Health

Suggestions in relation to improving Public Health services included:

- Providing opportunities for people to connect with their community and other local residents at social events.
- Promoting activities to improve people's physical fitness that appeal to young adults such as family bike rides
- Helping residents to grow fruit, vegetables and herbs by expanding out digging for health
- Continuing to work closely with health partners