

Responses to online budget consultation 2019/20

The council cannot seriously reduce the garden waste charge by just £3 when the collection schedule is to be reduced by more than half. (So reduce the charge by half!)

Can the council note that I will be lucky to receive a pay rise of 1% this year!

Rip inflation running at 2.1% in December 2018!

How does the council suggest 'I PAY' for a 2.99% district council rise?

I strongly disagree with your planned 3 month suspension of the garden waste collection service over winter ,since myself and many others in our village use this service fully every week ,and otherwise would have to have bonfires in our gardens which is not the best way forward for our environment ..

The reduction in collecting garden waste will result in more journeys to the large waste collection sites, which adds to pollution and more unnecessary journeys, road wear and tear, and an increase in fly tipping. Reducing the collection to fortnightly for 2 months over the winter period might be acceptable, and would I suggest allow the current fees to remain in place. What data have you got to support such a drastic reduction in collections?

The plan to build a multi storey car park on a designated flood relief area appears ridiculous.

Surely with the change to the high street, uncertain economic times partly as a result of Brexit, shopping attitudes methods coupled with communities attitudes to cars and the reduction in pollution and improvements to health that can be achieved by the introduction of a combination of a Park & Ride & Stride on the Chesterton side of the town somewhere near to the junction of the Tetbury and Stroud roads, plus a Park & Ride & Stride from the Rugby Club along Grove Lane towards the London Road roundabout is surely a much better use of the proposed £15m budget. Such a huge amount of money on a project that will inevitably turn into a white elephant and cost more than budgeted for, either in the construction phase, or over the lifetime of the building, as a result of poor quality control or the developers failing to deliver the designed & contracted quality, because they have been too optimistic over their price and cannot then deliver, and will force a scaling back or suggest that they will go out of business so in effect holding the council to ransom. The redevelopment of the Market Place had similar construction problems if you recall.

The current needs of the town are at a point of change that could significantly alter the requirements of cars to enter the town centre, and the council needs to think outside the box and develop plans that meet future needs and not what is the current issue. A market town that finds that it has a shift in the needs of its residents and businesses, such that for example, the traffic volumes are spread over a greater time scale may well lead to less congestion and therefore less of a need to provide this proposed plan.

Ever since I moved to Cirencester in 1986, there has always been an undercurrent of a desire to build a multi-storey car park, maybe if that had been done in the late 80's or 90's it would have solved the needs, but now we are at a point of change and much more thought should be given to the use of small electric minibuses operated on a variable timetable arrangement from both Park & Ride & Stride sites but also from the various housing areas around the town, and even from the surrounding villages.

Have you ever tried to get to Cirencester via public transport from the surrounding villages for a working day of say 08:00 to 16:00 or 09:00 to 17:00, and if you want to visit at the weekend or stay late and have an evening out it is basically impossible unless you make use of

expensive taxis. A clear indication that finding solutions to enable residents & visitors alike to enjoy our town without recourse to a car should be foremost in your plans and budgets.

I have severe doubts that continued integration of services delivered by Publica will offer the level of service currently provided, especially if further squeezes are enforced and the areas covered expand further.

I do not agree with cutting winter green waste collection services for three months. This will increase fly tipping or bonfires.

I would consider cutting services for December and January but not October, November or February, March. This is time that gardeners are preparing their garden and there are a lot of clippings that need composting.

While I support the change to fortnightly garden waste collections, I strongly object to the winter suspension of this service. No Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken for this element of the change which will adversely effect the less mobile and those unable to afford cars or increase the volume of garden waste being put in the main rubbish collection cycle. The committee paper which recommended this proposal showed that switching to fortnightly collection alone would allow the £30 charge to cover the service's costs and the additional savings from the winter suspension were minimal.

More work and funding is needed to support the use of sustainable and public transport in the area working in partnership with the county and town council to deliver this. Funds to be spent on parking schemes could be used to support alternatives such as a town hopper bus service, which will generate its own revenue as well as freeing up parking spaces for those travelling from further afield.

Improvements to cycle routes around and making it safer to cycle on local roads in the area would also help address parking issues.

We already pay a hefty £250 plus a month council tax. I don't see we actually get much out of it. the bin collection is a very sore point. Our green bin is full and more every single week through spring and summer. I accept you may not want to collect for 12 weeks over the winter but just every other week during the growing season is not acceptable. How on earth can you take just £3 off per year when you will only be collecting 20 weeks of the year and not the current 52. We for one will not renew and take our green waste to the rubbish. This is just greedy. It seems we have no say anyway as it's already been decided.

Should the county consider streamlining the three levels of councils to reduce bureaucracy and cost by moving towards a unitary authority?

As someone who has to drive into Cirencester to shop, I would like to see a more efficient and flexible parking charge system. I don't mind paying more, if I pay for the time I use, rather than overpay.

I also think it might be worth EITHER having a two-hour limit OR putting up the parking fee dramatically in a couple of car parks after, say, three hours, to stop people parking all day.

I know a lot of people drive to work in Cirencester, and they have to find somewhere to park, but it would be nice to know that in at least one central car park, one could be sure of finding a space during the day.

With the present system, where parking is free after 3pm, workers only have to nip out once to

renew their ticket.

I know this sounds hard on employees, but without customers, there aren't going to be any employees!

Disappointed that garden waste is to become fortnightly and concerned that this will lead to increased air pollution due to the need for bonfires to burn garden rubbish. Perhaps funds should be made available to introduce a clean air act that prohibits garden and allotment bonfires during hot weather, at weekends, Bank Holidays and leaving bonfires burning overnight; this shouldn't cost too much to introduce, main costs will be communication and enforcement.

The Council plans to use £1.845 million of New Homes Bonus to protect the delivery of existing services to the community. Any New Homes Bonus received over this amount will be made available to fund investment in initiatives which support the Council priorities such as car parking. I fully support this proposal but would want assurance this means reversing cuts to front line staff and the cutting of the council tax support to the poorest residents in the CDC area those on Universal Credit with limited capability for work and those with more than two children. Some of these residents are seeing increases in Council Tax liability of £700 a year in a band A property!!!

I fully support Council Tax increases therein needed to protect the Council Tax Support for the most vulnerable residents.

I don't mind paying more if it is used wisely. I am on a fixed income and it makes me cross when I see money wasted on expensive consultants.

I'm concerned about the 3-month suspension of garden waste collections over winter. It is January and our green bin is still filling up, mainly with dead leaves blown in from surrounding trees. Could the collections be reduced to monthly over that period as a compromise? Otherwise I suppose we will be putting green waste into our grey wheelie bin which seems a waste.

New Homes Bonus funds need to be spent with more fairness and transparency. In Stow we have two big developments but the funds are being spent on a car park for Cirencester. And on admin I understand, also in Cirencester no doubt. The funds need to be spent in the town or parish that has the development, and that community must have the final say about how it is spent. Feelings about this are very strong here and people are incredulous about what CDC has done.

The Council needs to look carefully at overheads and payments to Councillors and administrative staff with a view to reducing these further. The fact is we could do parks, libraries, leisure facilities, buses and schools in the 1950s with very few management and admin staff and cutting services while not cutting admin staff and councillor allowances is simply unacceptable.

If you want pro bono help I am an experienced senior manager/Director and management consultant!

For several years now the District Council has made cuts to or frozen council tax increases against making efficiency savings by combining back office and in-house services finally culminating in the creation of Publica. But the scope for continuing these savings in future is limited so it comes as no surprise, against a background of central government funding cuts, that council tax rises are now being contemplated if services are to be maintained and not reduced or cut still further. Moreover, with living standards still under pressure (the introduction of Universal Credit, reductions in welfare benefits and for several years until 2018

wages not keeping pace with inflation) the role of the community and voluntary sector as a safety net for the disadvantaged or excluded has increased (witness the rise in and reliance on food banks and the increase in homelessness) with the potential for more public sector grant and revenue funding to be provided if that support is to continue.

This leaves few viable options, with sensible and affordable increases in council tax probably the best and most immediately available option, with limited scope to raise additional revenue through other sources of income generation. Against this background the proposed 2.99% increase in council tax from £126.40 to £130.18 per annum, equivalent to 32 pence per month in 2019/20, seems entirely reasonable (though MTFS assumptions for holding council tax increases at 1.99% in future years may well prove to be overly optimistic). It also seems right that town and parish councils should not rely on Local Support for Council Tax to pay for the services they wish to provide, or to augment provided by others, but should step up to the plate in raising the precept needed to pay for their contribution to the provision of public services.

Finally, the New Homes Bonus (or successor scheme) does need to be managed with care so that it is not used indiscriminately to subsidise increases in council tax needed to pay for the provision of services across the district as a whole, but is targeted on those locations where new housing development is concentrated (Cirencester is a particular case in point) to augment the additional infrastructure and public services that are needed beyond those that can be secured in Section 106 and CIL developer contributions. A similar argument can be advanced in respect of car parking revenues noting that charges are not uniformly distributed throughout the district as a whole.

I believe that CDC should, if necessary, increase Council Tax by more than the 2.99 percent allowable without a referendum in order to support vital services such as child and social care.

Email Responses

I write to suggest you reconsider the proposed changes to the Green Bin Collection At XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX, I have a garden of just under 1/4 acre comprising lawn, trees and shrubs, generating green waste to fill 2 bins per week for 60% of the year obviously with some empty bins in the winter.

Can you please tell me how I am supposed to dispose of this quantity when you reduce the collection by 60% capacity including no collection for 13 weeks.

And, secondly, do you realise that the ludicrous "reduction" of £3 per bin is, in fact, an increase. We currently pay the equivalent of roughly 60p per bin. As the result of your "generosity", we would be paying 70p per emptying.

This proposal seems to have been hastily and poorly thought out and will certainly lead to a large increase in fly-tipping and to the detriment of the landscape

Finally, I would be prepared to accept a modest increase in the bin charge rather than a monumental decrease in the service and effect on the environment.

XXXXXXXXXX PS Of course, you will sell a lot of brown bags !!!!

We use our green bin on a weekly basis.

The garden maintenance we carry out in the winter months means the bin is rarely empty.

The green bin is also used for our household waste.

The cost of the green bin has remained the same for the past 5 years or so.

May we suggest that if this is a cost saving exercise then due consideration be given to increasing this cost to keep the collections as they are.

The inconvenience of a reduction in collections cannot be compensated with £3.00.

I urge the Council to reconsider the idea and keep this essential service as it is.

To whom It may concern,

Having witnessed fly tipping of garden waste at first hand in Donnington, I am slightly concerned about the planned changes to green bin collection.

During Spring, Summer and Autumn it is rare that our green bin is not filled.

On the occasion that we haven't filled it our neighbours (who may have done more gardening that week) top it up with their overflow.

Reducing the collection to every fortnight will be fairly inconvenient to those with moderate sized gardens and could well encourage fly tipping.

On the subject of a 3 month window from green bin collection can I ask you to reconsider.

I understand that there is not as much green waste BUT with late Autumn pruning and Christmas even a monthly collection would be better than none at all.

Finally, as with any changes, education of the public is paramount.

When I first heard of the proposed changes I was dead against them, but having had the reasoning behind them explained, I can better understand the thought process.

I'm sure if an explanation had gone out with the proposed changes there would have been fewer queries.

I'm also sure that if you can be persuaded not to have a complete 3 month break from green bin collection but collect monthly during that period there will not be as much disruption.

I gather that you are proposing to no longer collect green garden waste for three months over the winter. What are residents meant to do with garden waste over this time? Are you expecting residents to bag up their garden waste and take it to the tip?

What I don't understand is why? The recycling vehicles have the capacity to take garden waste so why not take it when they are going round anyway?

Some gardens need a lot of cutting back over the winter, not to mention leaf collection, and without a collection I am worried that this will lead to garden waste being dumped on the side of the road.

I feel you should not make the garden waste collection fortnightly, as we already fill the bin on a weekly basis. This usage continues throughout the year, and I would question what would be done with all the winter prunings which at present fill the green bin on a weekly basis during the winter months as well as the spring, summer and autumn months.

Could I suggest that the cardboard collection bag be made as big as the white plastic/can collection bag, as the majority of people in our village (Icomb) seem to be leaving a lot of cardboard boxes out for collection over and above what can be fitted into the current blue bag/bags, and on a number of occasions the refuse collection drivers do not take any cardboard which is not in the blue bags.

The proposed changes relate to about a 60% reduction in service for customers who pay the current annual charge of £30. Therefore a reduction of £3 would still equate to a considerable increase in cost for a lesser service. I would be concerned that this reduction in service may result in households not renewing the garden waste service.

As for fortnightly collection of garden waste over the rest of the year, time will only tell. This could result in an increase in both road traffic, as people may find it essential to take garden waste to the refuse centres, and also unfortunately could result in more roadside dumping. I see enough of this when walking locally.

This could also cause extra cost to the Council as you may find an increase in the request for more food waste bins.

If you propose both a reduction to fortnightly collection, plus a 3 month break at £27 this would be an overall price increase of 50%!! The garden waste service to date has been invaluable and I think a saving could be made by a 3 month break in the winter, keeping the fee at £30.

I understand the need for budget changes to services but think this change needs to be looked at again and if the proposal is adopted then I think the service fee should be less than £27 as the rate increase (3%?) will also have to be taken into account for household budgets in 2019.

It has come to our attention that there are proposals drawn up by the council to make a significant change to the waste collection service currently operating in the combined parish of Broadwell and Donnington, GL56. The residents of Donnington have received no notification of this and were unaware that proposed changes were up for public consultation. We have no details but have been led to believe that part of the changes would see no waste collection for a considerable period of time in the early months of the year, and the gap between other collections would be extended.

We wish to raise an objection to the proposal. The changes will not provide an adequate service and may well attract vermin -which in the rural areas surrounded by farms are numerous- rats in particular. The suggested savings are pitiful and insulting. We have already been subjected to an inefficient and substandard service where bins and recyclables have been missed and left at the roadside on many occasions. The proposal lacks consideration and understanding.

The CDC is acting in a cavalier and insensitive manner and is making no effort to consult with those who may be affected. We wholeheartedly disagree with the proposal. It offers little benefit and the suggested savings offered are laughable.

Please rethink and improve the service not remove it.

We understand that there are proposals to reduce the weekly collection of garden waste to a fortnightly one and to suspend collections for three months in the winter.

It has come to our attention (through people in Broadwell, who seem to have been better informed on this than people in Donnington) that a consultation is being conducted and I would like to express my views.

For us this would be a most unfortunate step for the following reasons:

- we have a reasonable sized garden which generates considerable waste
- for much of the year we fill the bin to its capacity week after week
- although we compost what we can, a considerable proportion of garden waste is not suitable for composting
- the size and layout of our garden make bonfires impossible and they are in any case are inconsiderate to neighbours and pollute, as well as being a fire hazard in summer months
- the waste is often too bulky to carry to waste disposal sites and unsuitable to stuff into ordinary cars
- collections will continue in any case for kitchen waste
- lack of proper collection arrangements inevitably lead to fly-tipping and other anti-social practices in the villages
- it would add to the steady decline of proper council services to the community the provision of which is the Council's role.

I accept that there may be cost-implications in continuing the weekly service. Cotswold seems to be cheaper than the neighbouring Councils and some revision may be due.

For all these reasons I would urge the Council to reconsider its proposals and continue to provide what I see as an essential service.

I am writing to express my concern at the recent proposal of removing the weekly green bin collection for 3 months during the Winter months.

I would be disappointed if this happens as we use our green bin for food waste, as well as garden waste, and therefore use it throughout the year.

The green bin food caddy's are too small and in my opinion not secure against animals.

I feel that the recycling and bin collection scheme is working really well, as it is!

There is a glaring omission from the questions on the survey and that is looking at overheads and payments to Councillors.

It is a fact that in the 1950s my local council in the North of England could do libraries, schools, buses, leisure facilities, parks and cemeteries and waste management with minimal admin staff. Typically one senior manager, who was a professional in the field, and his secretary and they worked with the chairman of the relevant committee to ensure things ran effectively.

CDC should therefore be looking critically at all administrative staff and payments to Councillors with a view to elimination....

I write to contribute to Councillors Budgetary deliberations, by way of commenting on the lack of few visible controls or restrictions on dog owners exercising their pet animals.

If indeed, there are patrolling dog wardens I have yet to observe any since the summer months where I saw one patrolling the Abbey grounds; last week in Dollar Street and continuing on Gosditch towards the church, were the remains of two if not more loose animal droppings, which I and fellow pedestrians either managed to spot in time, or inadvertently spread the mess, making it far worse.

Previously I have encountered similar spreads in Market Street and elsewhere, particularly noticeable on weekends.

Where there are regulations it behoves all of us to comply. In 2019, I hope dog owners are made to feel sufficiently aware, and to dispose rather than allow the spread of their pet waste products.

(When I lived in Stroud, where street systems were noticeably cleaner than in Cirencester, a Dog warden's response was that since local veterinary practices held dogs DNA records, so it is easier to trace the dog owners).

The drainage too is particularly bad at times, and almost medieval in the town centre, where smells are bad around the vicinity and alleyway towards the Car park and Arts Barn.

So, dogs mess and drains ! We could do better!

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1. Increase in Council tax for CDC portion by maximum of 2.99%. Strongly support
2. Car parking charges freeze. Don't mind
3. Changes to waste/recycling. Option 3. As a very much poorer garden waste bin service is proposed, with fewer than half the collections we currently get, £15 a year should be maximum
4. Council not proposing to make changes to standards in front line services.
This statement is unclear as it is not obvious what the front line services are. I assume Environmental, Leisure and Communities, Planning and Strategic Housing (and why are these lumped together?), Democratic Services and Corporate Services (list from the Guide to Council tax 2018-19).

If improving standards equals more expenditure maybe some front line services e.g. planning need more financial input.

5. No proposed changes to grants to voluntary sector.
Not enough detail provided and this is not clear I think, either from the MTFs or the Council website: at least, not immediately apparent.
Depending on what the voluntary sector consists of, I would strongly support increasing grant aid. For example, from googling CAB I see Cotswolds CAB is one beneficiary of funds from CDC. They need as much money as possible.
6. New Homes Bonus
My views on this are strong. I hope I have grasped the essentials of the NHB. As CDC's income from the New Homes Bonus must increase according to the size of houses to which planning permission is granted, that is surely an incentive for developers to put in plans for large executive style homes and an incentive for planning officers to wave things through under delegated powers. We have experience of that here in Longborough and I am fighting it every inch of the way, and, I hope, I may be getting somewhere. NHB creates tension between what is

agreed as a result of Housing Needs Survey and what the developer thinks can be got away with. It is a disgrace that size of homes agreed at outline can be so different to size of homes agreed later. I believe this all brings the planning system into disrepute. Planning is supposed to be about people. People should be put before profit.

And then the form goes on to say that the NHB protects delivery of existing services to the Community. Such as implementing the Housing Needs Survey recommendations for Longborough? Such as promoting CDC's corporate strategy aim 'to Champion Issues which are Important to Local People'? Residents such as myself are fed up with well meaning statements such as the corporate strategy that actually mean b..... all.

8. Grants to Parish and Town Councils.

I strongly disagree about withdrawing local council tax support grant to Parish and Town Councils. They need as much money as possible in order to function efficiently. Clerks' pay and hours should be realistic otherwise there are recruitment and retention problems as seem to have happened in Longborough. There is no possible justification for paying a Parish Clerk an hourly rate substantially lower than the person who is asked to clean the village hall. A Clerk's responsibilities are huge.

9. Further comments. I don't know under which budget heading it comes but money needs finding to overhaul the website, especially the planning part of the website. Generally it is hard to navigate and one might imagine (surely not?) that it is made deliberately difficult - so we go away and do something less difficult.

Also very important: the Guide to Council tax 2018-19 p 12 shows DC net assets of £48.7 million on 31.3.2017. I tried googling to get the equivalent figure for 31.3.2018 and got nowhere. Why not? It would be useful to know surely what the net assets were for the last financial year and whether they had decreased or increased.

Finally: it is an outrage that properties valued over £320K as at 1991 are only liable for twice the Council tax of Band D properties.

WHEN is this going to be addressed? WHY is CDC not lobbying?

Comments from Fairford Town Council on CDC Consultation on Medium Term Budget Strategy 2019/20 to 2028/29

Fairford Town Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Budget Strategy and supporting documents (including the Summary Finance, Service Performance Report, which provides the context in which to judge the proposals).

In summary, we are concerned that:

- There is a significant amount of money from New Homes Bonus for recent housing delivery that is held in reserves, but there has not yet been any effective consultation with affected communities, as “expected” under central government policy, about how this money should be spent to address the local impacts and needs arising from this development. Indeed, a large proportion of this seems to have been allocated to unrelated projects/purposes.
- There is too much focus on Cirencester, effectively drawing resources and footfall away from other Principal Settlements in the District, which desperately need these in order to maintain their sustainability. At the same time, CDC risks duplicating or conflicting with the Neighbourhood Planning process for Cirencester, with consequent inefficiencies.
- There is still a lack of a comprehensive economic strategy covering all settlements in the District, to ensure that these remain sustainable. In the absence of GCC or the LEP providing this, there is a need for this activity to be resourced.
- Underspends and overspends in certain budget areas, including Environmental & Regulatory and Development Management, indicate an inadequacy of budgeted resources to fulfil the Council’s statutory responsibilities, which has not been adequately addressed in the budget proposals.
- The arrangement with Publica is meaning that Cotswold District Council Tax payers are not getting “value for money” from certain key resources.
- The ‘Top Tasks’, ‘Performance Indicators’ and ‘Efficiency Measures’ are too narrow, and/or the targets not sufficiently challenging, to ensure that all key areas are adequately covered.
- It is unclear how the financial and economic risks associated with Brexit are being addressed.

Concerns

Use of money from New Homes Bonus

In the absence of an up-to-date Local Plan major housing developments have already taken place in the District in the current plan period (2011-2031), for which CDC will have received a cumulative total of some £16m in New Homes Bonus (NHB) payments by the end of the current financial year. A significant proportion (approx 8%) of the related housing completions, and therefore the payments, have been in relation to development in Fairford (Ref Local Plan EIP document ED046, Table 10). On a pro rata basis this is about **£1.3m** for development in Fairford.



NHB was supposed to compensate for additional costs on the local authority and address impacts on local communities due to this housing development. Central Government policy on the NHB states that "Local councils can decide how to spend the New Homes Bonus. However, we expect local councils to consult communities about how they will spend the money, especially communities where housing stock has increased." (Ref <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2010-to-2015-government-policy-house-building/2010-to-2015-government-policy-house-building#appendix-8-new-homes-bonus>). However, in practice there has been no effective consultation by either CDC or GCC (who have also received a share of NHB) about how the money should be spent, and little or none of this has been spent locally to address the impact of and needs arising from the development. This is particularly important in Fairford, which (along with Lechlade) is recognised (Ref Local Plan para 9.7.9) as having relatively less shops, facilities and services, and therefore be less self-sufficient, than Cirencester and the 5 Key Centres (Bourton-on-the Water, Chipping Campden, Moreton-in-Marsh, Stow-on-the-Wold and Tetbury). At the same time, there seems little prospect of public transport connections to Cirencester or other major centres being enhanced or maintained at any more than a basic level. There is now an urgent need to address this issue.

Adequacy of resources for Planning (including Enforcement) and Environment

Other areas of concern include the adequacy of current and proposed resources to fulfil the authority's responsibilities effectively with regard to the processing of Planning applications, planning enforcement and the protection of the natural and historic environment. Under-spend on some budgets, including staffing, is of significant concern, particularly when considered in the context of performance targets which seem quite narrowly focused. While this may keep 'costs' down, this is likely to mean that CDC's Council Tax payers are not getting either their share of the benefit of key resources under the Publica 'umbrella' – or 'value for money'.

In particular, the Performance Report (section 2 and Appendices B,D) shows:

- Under-spend on Environmental & Regulatory – Based on our experience and statements made at the recent Flood meeting in Cirencester (November 2018) we have a concern that key resources such as Lawrence King (EVS 5) are being disproportionately employed elsewhere by Publica to the detriment of Cotswold District. We also understand that CDC still does not have the necessary expertise in some key areas, e.g. to provide proper independent assessment of sewer improvement schemes for clearance of planning conditions and have been relying (inappropriately) on reports provided by the water/sewage undertaker on behalf of developers.
- Overspend on Development Management (including Forward Planning) – Based on our experience, we are concerned that this is indicative of CDC having under-resourced this area in the past, with an impact on their ability to fulfil their statutory duties in respect of protecting/maintaining heritage and environment and the sustainability of communities in the District, including proper cooperative support for Neighbourhood Planning.

Proper Use of Accumulated Reserves

Section 10 of the draft MTFs indicates that a significant proportion of the NHB remains unallocated within total reserves of approx £12.3m, and a significant share of this should therefore still be available to support local projects in Fairford or elsewhere.

It would seem to make sense for CDC to allocate this expenditure earlier rather than later, to avoid the risk of being 'penalised' for having been prudent in the past and of Fairford consequentially never receiving any compensation/benefit.

Priorities

Based on our experience in the past and what we have been told about 'prioritisation', there is a need to ensure resources are adequate (i.e. probably increased) to ensure heritage and environment are protected properly in line with CDC's statutory responsibilities and national policy objectives – including increased resourcing/improvements to the validation process for planning applications (which does not seem to have been applied properly in a number of cases), and resourcing to ensure more timely action on enforcement (in cooperation with Town/Parish Councils, who will be reluctant to provide this service on a voluntary and unpaid basis unless this is done). Having said this, the Planning Enforcement team have been more responsive to us in recent months, so it seems progress is now being made.

Associated with this, there is a need to ensure that the 'Top Tasks' (Appendix A of the Performance Report), Performance Indicators (Appendix B) and 'Efficiency Measures' (Appendix C) are sufficiently comprehensive, and the associated targets are well defined and sufficiently challenging, to ensure that all key areas with potential impact on communities are covered and Council Tax payers receive 'value for money' from performance. There is clearly a danger that if only certain things have remunerative performance targets allocated to them other things will be neglected.

It is unclear how the financial and economic risks associated with Brexit are being addressed in the financial strategy. This seems a major omission.

Regarding Revenue Reserves (section 10 of the draft MTFs), we note that existing/proposed Council Priority projects include:

- The transformation programme being delivered by Publica;
- Implementation of a decked car park in Cirencester and the associated redevelopment of the Old Memorial Hospital site;
- The review and implementation of revised waste and recycling services;
- Funding increased costs of waste and recycling service pending the acquisition of new vehicles;
- Implementation of the Local Plan and the associated introduction of Community Infrastructure Levy;
- Contribute towards the costs of improvements to the Corinium Museum;
- Developing a Masterplan for Cirencester town centre;



- Funding costs associated with the Council's commitment to freeze leisure prices, reduce building control fees and enhance environmental services.

There seems to be too much focus on projects which could perhaps more properly be dealt with through the Neighbourhood Plan for Cirencester, and we can see no reason why projects in Fairford should not also be included within this list. These could potentially include (in addition to priorities already identified, such as land for allotments and a new burial ground, which may otherwise need to wait for contributions from CIL from future housing development):

- Progressing of Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan for Fairford (which has not yet been done for Fairford, despite the statutory requirement that every local planning authority "shall from time to time determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance" (s68 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990) and national guidance that "A conservation area appraisal can be used to help local planning authorities develop a management plan and appropriate policies for the Local Plan" (ref 18a-025-20140306) – also for other historic settlements in the District;
- Drafting and implementation of Article 4 Directions where necessary, to address loopholes created by Permitted Development Rights which undermine the national policy objectives of protecting the historic environment (and indirectly the economic well-being of settlements);
- Improvement and management (in cooperation with Farmor's School) of Farmor's Sports Centre for increased community use;
- Acquisition of land for a new health centre and/or community building at either eastern or western end of Fairford (to replace the community site lost at Keble Fields);
- Acquisition of land and provision on additional car parking north of High Street;
- Acquisition of buildings in town centre to secure future use for retail/community purposes;
- Development of a museum facility for display in Fairford of information and artefacts arising from archaeological investigations relating to recent and older developments in the Fairford area.

There seems to be too much focus on Cirencester – There is a need for more comprehensive strategy embracing objectives to support the role of all principal settlements in the District and ensure sustainability of these, i.e. not just as dormitory towns for commuters to elsewhere - (Ref Appendix A)

We note that Cirencester has recently been designated as a Neighbourhood Plan (some 5 years after Fairford), but we have never had the cooperation on the development of a 'Master Plan' that is currently being progressed for Cirencester. We also note the concern expressed about the issue of "how both Councils will support and deliver their separate but complementary plans" (Appendix A, p4). There would seem to be a danger of duplication of effort and inefficient use of resources on something that is properly a matter for the Cirencester Neighbourhood Plan (in accordance with NPPF para 21), although enhanced support for the latter from CDC would no doubt be welcome, as it would on the revised draft Fairford Neighbourhood Plan.



There is also a good case for the development by CDC of an economic strategy for the District (as, for example, Vale of White Horse have done) incorporating all the Principal Settlements. This should address imbalances between the location of housing and employment which currently undermine the sustainability of policies such as those on affordable housing, in terms of ease of access, benefits to the vitality/viability of settlements and the environmental impacts of commuting. This clearly requires resources.

Jenny Poole

From: Andrew Tubb <andrew@cirencester.gov.uk>
Sent: 06 February 2019 15:40
To: Jenny Poole
Subject: RE: Cotswold Budget Consultation

Afternoon Jenny,

I just wanted to say that we are in the process of writing to the Leader of the Council in response to CDC's budget consultation which was considered by the Town Council at its most recent meeting on January 22nd 2019.

We have also recently consulted with the public on our own budget proposals and medium term financial plan, providing a range of budget infographics, in addition to hosting a workshop and opportunity for the public to meet with Councillors and officers.

We had around 100 responses from local residents, business, young people and visitors to the town and on January 22nd, the Town Council's element of local council tax was approved at an increase of 0.77%, an increase of 96 pence for a Band D equivalent household.

Taking into account the responses to the consultation and subsequent consideration by Council, we would like to make the following comments in respect of CDC's budget proposals:

Council Tax Support Grant

Cotswold District Council continues to receive central government funding for town and parish councils.

'The Government's clear expectation is that billing authorities will work with parish and town councils to pass down funding so that increases in their precepts can be avoided. As the tier of local government closest to their communities, parish and town councils have an active and important role to play in local government decision making.' Rishi Sunak MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, January 2018

It is therefore misleading to suggest that this funding is no longer being received, it has simply been reallocated through a different funding mechanism, including business rate retention.

Whilst CDC has indicated it is no longer passing on the grant to towns and parishes, it is noted in the letter dated 21st December 2018, from Chris Megainey, Deputy Director at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, that CDC will continue to receive a 'Localised Council Tax Support Administration' subsidy of £63,271 to cover costs of administering the overall scheme.

In light of towns and parishes receiving no business rate support and CDC continuing to receive a grant for administering the Local Council Tax Support scheme, the Town Council strongly disagrees with the proposal to phase out and not pass on this grant and urges CDC to reconsider providing a grant which is intended for town and parish councils in recognition of the continuing gap in the tax base.

Garden Waste Collection

There was a general discussion about proposed changes to collecting garden waste and a consensus that the service should not be reduced over the winter months.

Voluntary Sector Grants

Whilst it is noted that there are no planned changes to voluntary sector grants, we would ask that the social, economic and environmental impact of this decision be carefully considered.

New Homes Bonus (NHB)

The New Homes Bonus funding of £1.845 million should not be used to protect the delivery of existing services or to ever subsidise council tax. The House of Commons Library briefing paper on New Homes Bonus explains that this funding is a fundamental part of the Government's initiative aimed at encouraging local authorities to grant planning permissions for the building of new homes in return for additional revenue.

The Local Plan identified a single strategic housing and employment site for the District in Cirencester; the NHB is intended to mitigate against this and contribute towards vital infrastructure and community well being.

Therefore NHB should directly contribute towards the social, economic and well-being of local communities and we would ask CDC to engage in a meaningful discussion with towns and parishes across the District on how this funding should be allocated and spent towards meeting real needs and priorities.

Longer Term

In respect of the longer term priorities and financial pressures on principal authorities, there was some concern raised in respect of direct investment in commercial property; whilst the Town Council invests in the CCLA property fund, investment in commercial property and the overall asset portfolio of CDC should not be solely capital focused at the expense or compromise of partnership working and establishing vital community assets for the long term viability and vibrancy of towns and parishes across the District.

Whilst fully understanding the reasoning behind innovative business models for the delivery of services in to the future such as Ubico, SLM and Publica, the Town Council seeks assurance that the models provide value for money and democratically accountable scrutiny.

Further Comments (Community Led Housing)

In 2016, CDC received Government funding from Homes England of circa £882,000 to support community led housing schemes and is required to submit an annual return as to how funding from this grant has been spent. Co-housing is referenced within the Local Plan and forms an integral part of the Chesterton strategic site along with the need for affordable housing provision.

As part of this important budget consultation we would like to ask for information as to how CDC has used this funding to support community led co-housing and affordable housing schemes in Cirencester and how much of this funding remains available in 2019/20.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment and look forward to continuing to work positively with CDC across a range of projects.

All the best and regards, Andrew

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Chief Executive Officer

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