

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Budget Consultation – staff and trade union comments received & responses

1. Staff comments

Theme	Comments	Response
Buildings management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn the heating off when the weather is so mild. • Office moves - why is this not done via Facilities Management as it used to be, we accept they can't do all moves, but what else do they do • Has anyone considered solar panels on our council buildings? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Assets team are constantly turning the heating on and off in response to weather conditions, though sometimes the building takes a while to warm up and cool down. In some areas (but not all) there is a local temperature control so that staff can make adjustments locally. If anyone ever feels a building is too hot or cold they should report it to the FM Helpdesk and they will respond. • The Facilities and Asset Management team do still manage all office moves. The physical work of large moves is done by Phil's Removals (who are a local small business), particularly where we need a van (which we don't have for the purpose). However, this is happening less and less now as we have standardised furniture and so do not need to move so much around. As well as managing moves the team are responsible for managing the Council's asset database, all general housekeeping for the core office buildings, and planning and delivering the Council's office building rationalisation programme. This programme will see us reduce our number of office buildings from 23 to less than 6, which is making a major contribution to our savings programme. • We are actively seeking to achieve installations where possible and have a number on our new buildings (eg Becontree Heath Leisure Centre). Retrofitting to existing buildings is harder although we are also seeking to do this wherever possible. Currently it takes a long time for the savings to cover the cost of installation. We're looking at alternative sources of funding and will endeavour to use

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Buildings management (cont)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk lamps could be used in daylight hours only by staff who are actually at work, this would reduce the amount of lights which are burnt everyday over the top of empty desks 	<p>solar panels wherever economically feasible to do so.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In general in open plan offices you have to provide a certain level of lighting, set out by national guidelines and add task lighting when required – so we have to have our current arrangements in place.
Community Safety Co-ordinators	A detailed response was submitted raising concerns about the proposed deletion of these posts, pointing out the increase in the public's confidence in the local authority and police in dealing with crime and anti-social behaviour since the team was established.	In light of feedback received as part of the consultation process, this proposal has been amended and the service will continue to be delivered, with an additional post, and a revised funding model.
Flowers & street improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They waste a lot of money on signs, new lampposts and flower pots • Flower beds on the roundabout at the civic- at what cost – another unnecessary cost 	<p>These flowers and planters cost £39,000. This was a one-off cost.</p> <p>While some people do not like the flower boxes, a similar number of residents have commented that they have brightened up the borough and make our area look better – this matters because we want to attract investment into the borough and jobs for local people.</p> <p>We believe the lampposts referred to are ones installed relatively recently on Chadwell Heath High Road. These were installed as part of a programme of works to increase the attractiveness of local shopping centres, to support local businesses and encourage people to shop locally. The works were funded by a combination of money from Transport for London and the Council's capital programme (that is, money that can only be spent on one-off works, not on providing services)</p>

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Health & safety	<p>The current establishment has been reduced since 2007 by 65%. The proposed additional 14% (0.5FTE) cut will have an impact on the sort of service that the H&S and Occupational Health (OH) team can deliver and practicalities may result in a reduction of 28% (1.0 FTE)</p> <p>The OHSW service has a positive impact on overall Council expenditure, and parts of the service (wellbeing) have been evaluated to show a positive impact with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sickness absence • Income generation from training and OH provision to outside bodies <p>There are risks resulting in reduction of capacity or sharing the function with others. It is recommended that there needs to be an independent approach to identify the risks of either reducing capacity of the team by 0.5 FTE, or sharing services with others, undertaken by Assurance and Risk.</p> <p>The adoption of a rehabilitation model may be worth exploring across one or more other local authorities.</p>	<p>Senior management recognises the importance of the points that are being made by the Health and Safety Team, in particular the fact that it is not only numbers of staff employed which influence risk – it is also the type of work being done.</p> <p>Senior management is analysing in full the individual points the team are making, but believes that there is potential, particularly through working jointly across councils, to preserve our careful approach to managing risks within this Council and deal with incidents when they unfortunately arise. Joint working will expand our capacity to manage those risks and potentially reduce our costs. In implementing these budget proposals we will not take any hasty steps before being clear on the way in which we are handling them.</p>

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Health & safety (cont)	<p>The use of learning pool will minimise the amount of time needed to directly train, but the impact will be minimal as only 7% of the Health and Safety time is spent on preparation and delivery of training; due to statutory obligation not all of this will be able to shift to Learning Pool.</p> <p>The work being undertaken by ELS to look at alternative models to training commissioning should include health and safety training to drive down costs should external providers be used, as well as minimising spare training places. This will be dependent on ensuring that we have similar health and safety management systems and culture in place. This target is currently being met by providing as much Health, Safety and Wellbeing training in-house as possible.</p> <p>The possibility of merging OHSW and Assurance and Risk could be explored.</p> <p>Consideration could be given to share H&S services with Thurrock.</p>	

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Leisure Services	Is there a need for another new leisure centre when surely spending money on Goresbrook would be a better option this must be a spend to save option	<p>If Goresbrook Leisure Centre closes in 2012 it will be 20 years old. The average life span for a 'wet and dry' centre like this is about 25 years. The reason Goresbrook Leisure Centre needs to close is that it is reaching the age when it will require several millions of pounds of investment to replace key plant and equipment and for structural works just to keep the building operational and safe to use. Due to its design and construction the centre is also very expensive to operate. The new centre will be a lot more cost effective and will of course last for at least another 25 years. In our view it would be a case of throwing good money after bad if we were to spend all that is needed to keep Goresbrook Leisure Centre open for the next decade or so.</p> <p>It's clear from our experience with the new Becontree Heath Leisure Centre, which replaced Wood Lane Sports Centre and Dagenham Pool, that modern, accessible sports facilities are more cost effective and much more popular with customers: for example since the new centre opened at the end of May gym memberships have gone up from 500 to over 3,000 and the number of children learning to swim has increased from 1,200 to 1,900.</p> <p>Usage levels are much higher at the new centre and costs are a lot lower than for the two centres it replaced, which is a win-win scenario. Our plan is to repeat this with a new centre to replace Abbey Sports Centre and Goresbrook Leisure Centre</p>

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Libraries	<p>How have the 2 libraries being selected for closures?</p> <p>Are there any other library closures?</p> <p>We are concerned about the criteria being given by management for the reduction of Specialist Services Officers by one FTE post - 'That with Direct Delivery of stock there will be less backroom support needed for branches.'</p> <p>The Home Library Service (HLS) is very much a front line service, providing a specialised service, delivering directly to clients in their own homes. A service is provided not only to Barking & Dagenham residents, but also by contract to residents of LB of Havering. The Schools Library Service (SLS) is a specialised service of its own, providing ongoing specialised loans, stock and support to teachers and schools across the borough. The SLS also coordinates Bookstart provision across the borough.</p>	<p>Markyate and Wantz are performing well after the changes to opening hours. However, they are located near other good libraries and when we looked at the borough map in terms of a good spread of libraries, it was evident that we could close these 2 libraries and still provide a good service to residents.</p> <p>At this stage the proposal is to shut Markyate and Wantz. Members have asked to consider additional proposals and these will be considered by Safer and Stronger Select Committee on 18 January.</p> <p>The savings do relate to the processes involved in stock services.</p> <p>Management agree with this description of the HLS and SLS.</p> <p>The very nature of the SLA means that in the long term the service can reduce or increase depending on the SLA. We do know that School buy-in has been reducing over the years and is likely to reduce further due to school budgets being affected. This is another reason why savings has been proposed in the specialist services team as we cannot employ permanent staff to undertake SLA services when we are not sure that the SLA requirements are permanent.</p>

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<p>Libraries (cont.)</p>	<p>Both these services have to adhere to Service Level Agreements, and the Schools Library Service is a buy-in service.</p> <p>The HLS has been reduced from THREE permanent staff to ONE. In addition, extra hours provided to HLS by another member of library staff have been terminated. Over the last few years the Resources Service team has already been greatly reduced in number. Since the restructure, some of the Specialist Services Officers have had to take on much more work to ensure all the services are covered. They are already embracing 'new ways of working' to develop the new team approach to provide these services adequately.</p> <p>The Specialist Services Team via the Home Library Service provides services for some of the more vulnerable members of the borough's community, all with individual needs. It also strives via the Schools Library Service to ensure that literacy levels amongst the young people of the borough continue to improve. It is important that staff are able to ensure the take up of the buy-in Schools Library Service is at the highest level possible, keeping existing clients and gaining new ones.</p>	<p>HLS has always had minimum staffing levels: HLS, SLS, and Resources have now been amalgamated to use resources effectively. In addition 2.6 FTE driver posts are provided to assist the specialist services team.</p> <p>Staff job descriptions do reflect the work required to be completed by staff.</p> <p>This is agreed, – but experience tells us that the school buy-in is reducing and this in turn is putting pressure on the service. We have to be smarter about the way we deliver our service and we will be refocusing our efforts to ensure that we only spend what we get from schools.</p>

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Libraries (cont.)	<p>If staffing levels are reduced further, with the likelihood that the HLS will gain more clients with the closure of two branches, it is likely that the team will struggle to ensure the high standards are kept up and the SLAs are met</p> <p>We are very concerned that ‘Backroom support’ to branches is being labelled as ‘just’ the processing of new stock, and therefore with Direct Delivery this will diminish. Much of this support is in an organisational and coordination role, for example Award Ceremonies, National Summer Reading Challenge, Summer Events, and Bookstart.</p> <p>We have been told that some stock will always need to be dealt with by the Resources Section within Specialist Services. The skills and experience needed to deal with all the processes involved with ordering/receiving/invoicing of new stock, and related queries are not easily learnt in half an hour’s training in a branch. Already problems are appearing, and we are frequently required to sort them out when branches need to resolve invoicing/budget problems etc. Already, no cataloguing is being done by branches and records are becoming inconsistent. We are deeply concerned about the impact the loss of one full time member of staff will have on Specialist Services</p>	<p>If we get an increase in any SLA we are able to recruit temporary staff to support the SLA. This is achieved by using the income from the SLA to deliver the service.</p> <p>To a certain extent Direct Deliveries will reduce the processing of stock by the Specialist services team but there will be stock which will still needs to be processed by the team. However this is anticipated to be significantly less than undertaking processing of stock for 10 libraries. The focus is to move away from providing cataloguing and as much as possible get suppliers to do that. We accept that when you move to a new system that staff in branches will need time to get up to speed with the process, and inevitably there will be issues and problems. There are opportunities to introduce technology to make the work of the specialist services team much more efficient. One of the elements that we are looking at is to tag all specialist services stock (i.e. SLS and HLS stock) so issue and discharge can be done much more efficiently in bulk.</p> <p>The London Libraries Consortium (LLC) is also looking at transport services of stock across the LLC and internal deliveries. This should deliver greater efficiency which will reduce the workload of our drivers who can be freed to support HLS. If we are able to introduce these 2 further efficiency projects then it’s likely the impact would not be as significant as staff have outlined above. The details are not yet finalised, however we would wish to work with staff to find a positive resolution and a way forward that works for all of us.</p>

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Mobile phones	Are mobile phones essential? Only staff on call out or at risk should have a phone, is call usage monitored, how many personal calls are made via mobile	Mobile phones are an efficient way to ensure that employees are doing the tasks allocated to them and to allow flexibility in tasking them. Managers are required to monitor phone usage and employees are not allowed to use their phones for personal calls. We will ensure that managers receive the information with which to monitor usage.
Outsourcing	Where will the savings be by moving council departments into private sector companies? Initially there is a saving not having the workforce on the books but will end up costing more in the long run, the same work still needs to be done, a private company will inevitably increase costs to meet their own targets sooner or later. When the contract's up in 5-7 years and the current provider doesn't get reinstated then what?	<p>The proposal to transfer further services into Elevate allows for a number of existing posts within the Council to be merged into existing posts within Elevate. This means that Council staff will transfer into Elevate posts and the Council will be able to make savings from deleting the posts vacated. The posts within Elevate already exist, and are either occupied by secondees from Agilisys, or by agency staff. If the proposal is accepted, the secondees will return to Elevate, or the agency contracts will be terminated. The cost of these Elevate posts are already within the total cost of the Elevate contract, and therefore this proposal represents a true saving to the Council.</p> <p>The contract with Elevate has been negotiated for 7 year duration, and any addition of services will also be negotiated to end at the same time as the original transfer. The contract actually requires Elevate to deliver a cost reduction over the life of the contract, not an increase. At the end of the contract period there are several possible outcomes, which can only be determined at the time:</p>

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Outsourcing (cont)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The council may choose to extend the contract by three years; • The council may choose to retender the contract; • The council may choose to bring the services back in house. <p>If the council retendered the services and Elevate was not successful then the usual rules of TUPE would apply.</p>
Policy and performance restructure	<p>Are admin staff in the Chief Executive's office also being made redundant, the Chief Executive has 3 staff and are some of them going too?</p> <p>Why are the Research and Analysis Officers in the ACS Policy and Business Support team proposed to report direct to the Group Manager?</p> <p>Why were the Workflow Officers employed in the first place and is this not a waste of public funds?</p>	<p>Yes, all policy teams are affected, including the Chief Executive's office.</p> <p>This is more consistent with council policy in terms of an appropriate number of direct reports to any one manager.</p> <p>These savings are part of the Chief Executive's review and contribute to the Council's focus on maintaining front line delivery. At the time of recruiting to the Workflow Officer posts, further back office staff savings had not been suggested.</p>

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<p>Policy and performance restructure (cont)</p>	<p>It was difficult to engage with the document because it doesn't provide much detail on how the focus and quantity of work will change to accommodate the reduction in staff. Unease about the variable impact on the different departments and sections.</p> <p>The deletion of the Public Health Analyst post - it should not be underestimated the extent to which the current postholder has been critical to the health performance management system, general analysis and the preparation of the 2011 Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. This form of analysis requires specialist knowledge, the loss of which could substantially compromise certain public health activities if not managed carefully. Loss of this post, without concerted effort on the part of both organisations to resolve the staffing position in Public Health more generally, would be a very significant loss of critical capacity.</p> <p>Proposals to delete a post and place the postholder at risk, whilst recruiting to substantially similar posts elsewhere seems unco-ordinated and likely to incur costs for both organisations that could be avoided. We would have reduced capacity to service the performance management framework of the Health & Wellbeing Board.</p>	<p>Senior management recognises the value of the work done by all these teams and the importance of working out in detail who will be responsible for each element of the essential work to be undertaken.</p> <p>Since the writing of this response there have been further proposals in relation to policy, performance and data analysis. Many of the public health issues have moved on since the writing of this letter but as the response says it remains the case that there is detailed work to be done on how work within the council, and between the council and the NHS will best be done.</p> <p>On information assurance, the Corporate Director Finance and Resources has already allocated a dedicated resource to undertake this work and this will be more widely publicised.</p> <p>Senior management endorses the points about the need for careful cross working across the council to ensure that the balance of resource is right and there will be much more detailed joint working put in place once the restructurings are implemented.</p>

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Policy and performance restructure (cont)	<p>There appears to be relatively little reduction in the performance resources in Adult & Community Services. We would ask that servicing the performance demands of the new health and wellbeing agenda be made integral to that team's work. We suggest that deletion of the Programme Manager and its support officer is premature until we know the funding position for 2012/13. The deletion of the Information Assurance Officer (less than a year since it was created), is concerning. The previous review of Corporate Policy and Performance dealt too sketchily with the way in which the revised service was to be delivered with the new resources. The risk is that the same process is being repeated. For the benefit of those who work alongside the corporate teams - as well as those in them - it would seem critical that the working model is defined. The feedback that we hear about policy and programme jobs being thought of as unnecessary, and the Secretary of State's repeated references to 'non-jobs', is demoralising. We do continue to 'get on with the job' against this backdrop, as well as being under the shadow of a further review in October 2012. However, perhaps some thought would be useful about how we can demonstrate more clearly the contribution that these teams make to the effective running of the authority's frontline services.</p>	

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Publications	Is it necessary to send out council tax booklets at year end, the price to design and produce and to have the book sent back because they are not wanted is an unnecessary cost. You can inform of certain information by sending out a one A4 page information sheet, publicise the council tax booklet on the web.	The publication of Council Tax leaflets is a legislative requirement: there is a fairly detailed list of what information we have to publish: we keep the costs to a minimum.
Refuse services	Charge for the collection of garden waste like neighbouring boroughs	The green garden waste service is very popular with our residents and this has helped increase, to record levels, the amount of waste that is either recycled or composted. We want all residents to be able to participate in the scheme regardless of their ability to pay. Each ton of green waste composted is waste that does not need to go to landfill. This saves the council around £160,000 in landfill tax.
Signage	<p>New signage being put up around Dagenham East station, is that necessary- review the need and the actual cost to design, print and install</p> <p>Signage at the front of the Civic that appears once a year stating 'we have frozen council tax' or 'merry christmas'- council tax payers would rather be given money off than have it spent on a sign</p>	<p>These are banners recently installed across the borough to look ahead to the Olympics and to celebrate our local young sporting hopefuls. This is designed to help make our borough look attractive both for residents and for the many visitors we expect to receive next year – in turn, we aim to attract investment into the borough, meaning local jobs.</p> <p>The signage used for the last few years has already been paid for, but we accept the need to make sure that we only put up signs for what is absolutely necessary. Where we can, we will try to offset costs through sponsorship, but this isn't always possible.</p>

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Staff pay & allowances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take away essential car user allowances for all staff and pay per mile • Reduce everyone's salaries by 1% to share the pain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are currently reviewing who receives Essential Car User Allowance under the existing criteria and the Trade Unions are involved in that review. This may well deliver some savings. We are not proposing to end the payment of the allowance as we wish to ensure staff are appropriately compensated for costs incurred in delivering services to customers effectively. • A proposal to reduce salaries across all staff is complicated because of the contractual positions of each member of staff and would require huge amount of legal negotiation and consultation. Whilst this has not been ruled out as an option it is very difficult to implement and would have a proportionately greater impact on people at lower salary levels, therefore it has not been proposed at this time.
Staff redundancies	The majority of savings are for posts that don't exist anyway?	There are approximately 140 posts being deleted across the range of proposals being presented to Members. We would estimate at the moment that this would result in up to 100 redundancies.

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Voluntary redundancy scheme	All staff should have the opportunity to apply for redundancy even if their job is not directly threatened. This will allow those who are more financially able to leave and provide jobs for those who are losing their job and cannot afford to be out of work.	We have already had two rounds of voluntary severance which has led to a number of people leaving the Council of their own volition. We work hard to reduce the number of compulsory redundancies, so when individuals are able to volunteer in this structured way, it provides both the council and the employee with a positive way forward. However, we simply cannot afford to allow employees to volunteer for redundancy if the post they are carrying out is not at risk – the important work of the Council has to continue and many jobs have to remain in the staffing establishment, despite the acute cost pressures. Indeed, the costs we incur when people are made redundant are significant and so we have to manage this extremely carefully. Someone volunteering to leave therefore won't always allow the Council to make the savings we need, we may have to spend money to recruit others into the vacant post, for example.

2. Trade union comments

Two responses have been received to date which are included on the following page.