

Executive Summary of Consultation Exercise

The views of local residents, businesses and organisations were sought in January 2013 on the savings proposed by Herefordshire Council, to inform how the budget is set for 2013/14 and beyond. There were a total of 2,817 responses received, with 77% submitted online. Social media was also used including a session on Twitter with questions posed by the public and answered by two Councillors.

There were high levels of agreement for the savings proposals to reduce/end the distribution of Herefordshire Matters magazine (90%); and bringing together customer service centres, libraries and other facilities where these are duplicated in a particular area. More than half the respondents disagreed with reducing the support to the voluntary and community sector; and also reducing opening hours for customer service centres/libraries. Comments showed strong support for the latter and the voluntary sector. 83% agreed with better co-ordination of transport to reduce costs, but half disagreed with reducing the subsidy to bus services with concern on the impact on the elderly, young people and rural communities.

Of the total respondents, 87% agreed with working with our partners to improve the way children and young people's services are accessed and delivered, removing duplication; more disagreed than agreed with reducing some children's centre services and reducing funding for universal youth provision to focus resource on targeted youth support. There was a mixed response to increasing charges for some types of school transport and reducing to the statutory minimum the schools transport services provided by the Council. More than half agreed with changing the balance of social care services offered to working age adults, reducing day services and increasing other day activities for those eligible.

There were high levels of agreement with reducing our energy costs (88%) and slightly higher agreement than disagreement with removing the remaining 'bring and recycle' glass collection sites. There was a mixed response to changing the refuse and recycling collection to alternate weekly collections and reducing support to the countryside service. There was strong disagreement expressed in the proposal to remove/reduce current subsidies for leisure, heritage and arts facilities/services and reducing the funding available to support tourism. 43% agreed with delaying major infrastructure projects compared with 32% who disagreed and there was a mixed response to increasing the range of development that does not require planning permission.

A headline report was published on the 1st of February including analysis of the many comments with a full report published on the 8th of February to inform meetings of the Cabinet and Council.