

Caerphilly County Borough Council

Budget Consultation 2017/18 Report

Background

Caerphilly county borough council has faced significant budget cuts over the last two years and has needed to introduce a range of cuts to help deliver significant savings.

Draft savings proposals for 2017/18 follow the Council's key principle to limit the impact of cuts on front line services. The draft savings proposals for 2017/18 total **£8.653m** but the vast majority of these will have no direct impact on residents. (Draft proposals for 2017/18 are detailed in **Appendix 1**.)

The draft budget includes a proposed increase of **1%** in Council Tax for 2017/18 which is the same as last year. This would equate to an increase of **19p** per week for an average Band D property.

Resident and stakeholder views were sought on the draft proposals. Views will be fed back to and considered by elected Members prior to the final budget for 2017/18 being agreed at a meeting of Full Council on **Wednesday 22nd February 2017**.

Method (What we did)

The council's budget consultation took place over a 6 week period from 5th December 2016 until 14th January 2017.

A short questionnaire (**Appendix 2**) was developed to seek views on the draft budget proposal. The questionnaire was made available on the council's Website and promoted via social media. The survey was also distributed to a wide range of key stakeholders and groups (as outlined in **Appendix 3**) via e-mail and in printed format.

Results

In total, 41 completed surveys were returned. Whilst this figure may seem low, it was expected given the "low impact" of the list of proposed savings on residents.

In general, there was a positive response to the proposals set out and an acceptance that the council is doing the best it can in difficult circumstances. A full digest of comments can be found in **Appendix 4**. Comments about the senior pay issue were submitted as part of the consultation feedback. These comments have been noted, but they are not included in this report due to the authority's ongoing internal investigations.

General themes

- There was general agreement that self-management of bowling greens was an acceptable solution
- There were mixed views on the 1% increase in Council tax
- Questions were raised over “nil” impact savings. It was noted that cutting back office staff may not have a direct public impact, but it can ultimately have an impact on the services delivered on the front line
- There was disagreement with removal of the park ranger service
- There were a number of responses received in objection to increasing car parking charges at country parks by a number of residents who are members of a walking group

How the council and others can lessen the impact of savings proposals on residents

A number of suggestions were made to lessen the impact of savings proposals although it was noted that few proposals have a direct impact on residents.

- The council should focus on increasing income and reviewing expenditure on non-essential items
- Working in partnership with others where necessary, the council should capitalise on the assets available e.g. working with Cadw to increase visitors to Caerphilly Castle and the town centre
- Streamline senior management and decision making processes
- Provide a good quality service therefore reducing complaints

“Everyone needs to accept some responsibility for the situation we are in.”

Groups impacted

Members of a walking group expressed concern that parking charge increases at country parks have a greater impact on older people and those with disabilities.

Respondent profile

Of those who provided information:

16 were female and 24 male.

38 were residents of the county borough, 1 was a business person, 1 an elected member and 1 an employee of CCBC.

Residents from areas in and surrounding the main towns of the county borough, Bargoed, Blackwood, Caerphilly, Risca, and Ystrad Mynach responded to the survey.

Appendix 1:

Draft Savings Proposals 2017/18

1	Savings in advance brought forward from 2016/17	£1.815m
2	Full-Year impact of approved 2016/17 savings	£0.146m
	2017/18 savings proposals: -	
3	'Nil impact' savings	£3.037m
4	Bowling Green rationalisation	£0.113m
5	Treasury Management – Review of MRP policy	£3.500m
6	Pension contributions for former Authorities	£0.042m
	TOTAL	£8.563million

So, what does this actually mean?

1 - Savings in advance brought forward from 2016/17 – This is the amount of extra money that we saved last year which has been 'carried over' to this year.

2 - Full-Year impact of approved 2016/17 savings - Some of last year's savings only had a part-year impact and the full-year effect of these savings will now be seen in 2017/18.

3 - 2017/18 'Nil Impact' savings – These are the 'back room' savings consisting, in the main, of vacancy management, budget realignment and minor changes to service provision.

4 - Bowling Green rationalisation – The council is changing the way it operates these facilities across the area. The key changes include:

- Closure of Abertridwr Bowling Green and the release of one member of staff
- Removal of the Park Ranger service
- The operation of 20 bowling greens at a reduced maintenance programme and the release of three members of staff
- Bowling Clubs to undertake non-specialist green maintenance tasks
- Payment of a grant to Bowling Clubs
- Clubs to retain income from fees and charges.

4 - Treasury Management - Review of MRP policy – This saving would not have an impact on the public and would be made by reviewing one of the council's financial policies called the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP).

5 - Pension contribution for former Authorities – This relates to pension contributions made to staff who worked for other authorities before local government reorganisation in 1996.

Proposed council tax increase 2017/18

The draft budget includes a proposed increase of **1%** in Council Tax for 2017/18.

This is the same increase as we saw last year when Caerphilly agreed the **lowest Council Tax rise in Wales**. Below is the actual weekly increase each property will see for the CCBC element of their Council Tax. Full details will be included in your annual Council Tax Documentation.

Appendix 2 - Caerphilly County Borough Council Budget Consultation 2017/18



Caerphilly's Budget Challenge

Please give us your views on the savings proposals outlined in the table "Draft Savings Proposals 2017/18". You may wish to indicate if you strongly agree or disagree with any of the cuts listed, giving reasons for your views.

Please outline any suggestions you may have on how the council and others can lessen the impact of these savings proposals on residents.

If you feel that budget cuts in a specific area will affect you as an individual (positively or negatively) because of any of the following (your ethnic origin, gender, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, gender reassignment, religious beliefs or non-belief, use of Welsh language, BSL or other languages, nationality or responsibility for any dependents) please give details below.

To ensure that we achieve a representative sample, it would be useful if you could answer the following questions about yourself.

Age:

Gender:

- Female
- Male
- Transgender
- Prefer not to say

I am completing this survey:

- As a resident of the County Borough
- Representing a third sector organisation
- As a business person
- As an elected member
- Other, please write in

My postcode is:

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.
Please return your completed survey to any CCBC library, leisure centre, customer service centre or housing office.**

**Alternatively you can post to: CCBC Communications Unit, Penallta House,
Tredomen Business Park, Hengoed, CF82 7PG.**

This survey is also available online at: www.caerphilly.gov.uk

Appendix 3: Stakeholders

Our audiences are broadly split into the following categories:

- All CCBC Residents
- Young People
- Older People
- Business Community
- Voluntary Sector
- Viewpoint Panel
- Partner Organisations (PSB etc.)
- Town and Community Councils
- CCBC staff

Stakeholders

Copies of the questionnaire will be distributed to the following stakeholder groups either electronically or in paper format:

- Business Forum
- Caerphilly 50+ Forum
- Voluntary sector including GAVO, Valleys Voices projects and the Parent Network
- Viewpoint Panel members
- Partner Organisations (LSB)
- All Town/Community Councils
- Online Watch Link (OWL) network
- Equalities Network contacts
- All head teachers for parents
- Intergenerational clubs
- CCBC employees

Appendix 4: Digest of comments

Q1: Please give us your views on the savings proposals outlined. You may wish to indicate if you strongly agree or disagree with any of the cuts listed, giving reasons for your views.

- 2017/18 nil impact savings - what minor changes to service provision? Bowling green Self Management - do not agree with removal of Abertridwr Bowling Green and Park Ranger Service (they do a good job especially as some youngsters use the parks for alcohol and drug abuse. Grants are welcomed by bowling clubs and other community centres.
- Completely agree with the proposal regarding Bowling Greens. Seems fair that maintenance should be carried out at and by the clubs with them receiving the full monies generated at the clubs. No major issue with the rise in Council Tax but it would be good to know how the extra money will be spent. The main point I would take issue with is how can you save over £3m without any impact? the change mentioned is to MRP. What does that mean? How can such a huge saving be made without any impact. This causes one to ask why would we be spending that amount of money on something which has no impact for the positive in the first place?
- Council Tax increase! we are paying more and more, and getting a far worse service.
- DON'T AGREE WITH GETTING RID OF PARK RANGERS AT ALL. AS A RESIDENT I ENJOY THE PARK FACILITIES THAT CAERPHILLY HAS TO OFFER. WE NEED MORE PARK RANGERS TO UPKEEP THE PARKS AND ENSURE JOBS ARE NOT HANGING AROUND. PARKS NEED TO BE KEPT CLEAN AND TIDY AND THERE IS ALWAYS LITTER TO BE PICKED UP.
- I agree with most. I do not agree with removal of the park ranger if is supervise the safety of the wild life.
- I agree with the proposals, however, the council needs to address financial wastage e.g. scaffolding is put up a long time, up to six weeks, before any work is started. Surely this can be done more efficiently.
- I agree with the proposed savings for 2017/18.
- I agree with these proposals as they appear to have minimum impact.
- I agree with what you have put in place, and also for the increase in Council Tax.
- I agree, agree with the proposals on the previous page. Having been employed by Cardiff CC in the past, I am aware of the problems and work load you have to contend with.
- I am fully supportive of the proposals you have outlined opposite. It is a very difficult time for LAs to balance books potentially when you have to deal with the crumbs given to you from the "Tories" masters table at Westminster. Good Luck
- I do not agree that there should be an increase. Families my agree as they might be able to afford it. I can think afford my bills now. How is this going to help a single parent with a child in collage. I have to support her. I have a 30hours per week job on minimum wage. I have no help with my mortgage, so work it out. I don't have enough to live on as it is. How is this going to benifit me?
- I feel sure that bowling members will maintain the greens
- I objected strongly to the charges of £1 which were made and you may have my letter. The proposal of increasing it is a tax on me keeping fit, especially the elderly.

- I register my wish to have the Council Members decide for me. They have the full implication of the decision.
- I think that a 1% rise in Council Tax is very admirable, but I also think that an extra 1% could have been put on the Tax in order to cut the parking charges and to help maintain the councils parks.
- I would agree in principle that budget cuts where necessary are made as outlined in the Draft Savings Proposal 2017/18 though priorities should be determined taking note of residents views and following the outlined consultation process. I would also add that whilst some of the back budget cuts are intended not to impact on residents they cut create a reduction in some services that may impact residents indirectly.
- It is very difficult to understand, let alone comment on/with the limited information issued each year on this matter by CCBC. It is further complicated even more, by the manner in which the authority publishes its financial accounts and reports to committees. Documents never convey a clear and full enough picture? Given the financial austerity levels everyone is bleating on about, I fail to see, how, within any recent year, any allocated budgets managed an underspend at the end of the year if they are supposed to be allocated on a needs basis - what is not getting done? £3M Nil Impact Savings? - where and why has this spend been allowed in previo
- Over £3m of these savings are deemed to be of nil impact to the public. This represents a significant proportion of the total saving. How is the public to decide whether they are of nil impact? Details of the actual cuts should be made available to the public.
- Parking Charges at country parks should be removed. The amount collected at these car parks was vastly less than the estimated amount that would be raised by installing metered at these parks. this indicated a negative effect on these parking charges. The charges were in direct opposition to the Councils aim and objective to "promote a healthy lifestyle". Seems like the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing. People will now start parking in the streets in and around the area which will no doubt upset the residents.
- Parking charges at Country parks should be removed. The amount collected at these car parks was vastly less than the estimated amount that would be raises by installing metered at these parks. This indicated the negative effect of these parking charges. The charges were in direct opposition the the Councils aim and objective to 'promote a healthy lifestyle'.
- Parking charges at Country parks should be removed. The amount collected at these car parks was vastly less than the estimated amount that would be raises by installing metered at these parks. This indicated the negative effect of these parking charges. The charges were in direct opposition to the Councils aim and objective to "promote a healthy lifestyle".
- Parking charges at Country parks should be removed. The amount collected at these car parks was vastly less than the estimated amount that would be raises by installing metered at these parks. This indicated the negative effect of these

parking charges. The charges were in direct opposition to the Councils aim and objective to "promote a healthy lifestyle".

- Parking charges at Country parks should be removed. The amount collected at these car parks was vastly less than the estimated amount that would be raised by installing metered parking at these parks. This indicated the negative effect of these parking charges. The charges were in direct opposition to the Councils aim and objective to "promote a healthy lifestyle".
- Parking charges at Country parks should be removed. The amount collected at these car parks was vastly less than the estimated amount that would be raised by installing metered parking at these parks. This indicated the negative effect of these parking charges. The charges were in direct opposition to the Councils aim and objective to "promote a healthy lifestyle".
- Savings are never carried over from year to year. If you don't spend it this year, you'll not get it next year. Bowling greens? If you want to play bowls, ok by me but pay for the greens yourself.
- Strongly agree with all the above.
- The proposals look very reasonable in the current economic climate. All suggestions are ok.
- The savings made by careful budget planning should be ongoing and not just because Government may cut back on support grant or a bit more positive for 2017/18 i.e. No 3 - No 5 together total over 6 million more of that.
- There is not enough detail on the summary version that is available on the website. There appears to be no analysis of impact, just stating what will be done. I am concerned about the cuts to "park ranger" service - what does this mean? We are paying for use of car parking in country parks, yet there seems to be no investment in the service. I cannot comment in detail as the proposals are not outlined in sufficient detail on the website.
- Vacancy management DOES affect The Public. If vacant jobs are not filled it means that someone else's workload increases or the service does not go ahead. It is unrealistic to rely on the website or the telephone systems to replace humans as, if there are insufficient staff to reply to emails or answer telephone calls, then the service cannot go ahead. Also, not everyone is computer literate and "one size does not fit all" with regards to form filling as we are all individuals and people's lives are not standard. Also, even if forms are completed online, evidence still needs to be provided by visiting an office so we still need frontline staff and t
- would reducing the Park Ranger service be a better option than removing it? I don't believe outsourcing services is the way to go making them more efficient is the answer

Q2 Please outline any suggestions you may have on how the council and others can lessen the impact of these savings proposals on residents.

- The population has grown tremendously in the borough and especially in Caerphilly and surrounding area. We pay our Council Tax and I think we need the amenities offered - such as sports centres, community centres etc not only for present residents but future generations.
- Explain the MRP change. Huge saving - no impact - How is this possible? What other significant spending areas 'have no impact' for the positive and can be so easily removed?
- income that could be used for new schools, a decent planning service etc. you keep hitting hard working, low earning people.- yes the ones, that are not eligible for benefits
- MRP HAS NO EFFECT ON RESIDENTS, SO THIS IS A STUPID QUESTION
- Council tax is the lowest in Wales for the last few years. I did not know bowling club was costing so much money to maintain and keep going.
- As above i.e. scaffolding scenario Empowering residents to take ownership of walkways and green areas by keeping them clean and tidy
- All parties involved given plenty of notice of any changes.
- Review spending on non essentials such as creating higher pavements at bus stops. Lets have all road signs in English only as having bi lingual is a hazard to road users I
- look to promote sponsorship by of salesmen visiting businesses
- I think that if the increases are put forward, £2, fewer people will use the parking facility and the roads around will be filled with cars.
- You will do your best.
- Review and reduce the amount of 'wards' and 'councillors' representing the public. Reduce top 3/4 tier management salaries. Streamline and create effective and meaningful decision making that is truly transparent and swift to make change/improvements/impacts. Re-instate 'time-served' and 'time-skilled' quality staff of all ages (building on existing staff and bring back in more career path posts). Truly engage with citizens (accept what the real issues are in our communities) not dictate officer perception from the ivory
- The loss of revenue from these charges could be raised by a very small increase in the proposed 1% increase in Council tax.
- The loss of revenue from these charges could be raises by a very small increase in the proposed 1% increase in Council Tax
- The loss of revenue from these charges could be raised by a very small increase in the proposed 1% increase in Council tax.
- The loss of revenue from these charges could be raised by a very small increase in the proposed 1% increase in Council tax.
- The loss of revenue from these charges could be raised by a very small increase in the proposed 1% increase in Council tax.
- The loss of revenue from these charges could be raised by a very small increase in the proposed 1% increase in Council tax.
- The loss of revenue from these charges could be raised by a very small increase in the proposed 1% increase in Council tax.
- The loss of revenue from these charges could be raised by a very small increase in the proposed 1% increase in Council tax.
- There have been "cuts" all the time when I was a child - 60 years - Nothing has ever been better. Where are these cuts?
- Get competent people not the idiots running it now.

- Try and cut down on rubbish disposed of along highways, cameras would help to catch people doing this.
- This is a "silly statement". Residents NEED to appreciate that it is a whole community approach which can make things work and that we are ALL involved. Everyone needs to accept some responsibility for the situation we are in.
- One way to help if you protect frontline services they must be carried out in a professional and positive manner so there are no complaints made about your service.
- I would like to know the rationale behind removal of park ranger service, and also its possible impact
- By listening to its customers and staff more and tailoring services to suit. If CCBC want more people to access services online then the system should be able to cope with the demand and not keep crashing. Also if they want more people to use the phone system, then it should be manned adequately so they are not kept waiting unduly and there should be enough staff in the back offices to answer their query.
- reducing wastage and reducing stock holding may offer an effective alternative in many cases.
- You need to build the economy of the area, which will increase the councils income and save on expenditure. I suggest you encourage tourism. To do this you must build on what is already here. E.g. Caerphilly has the castle. The council can make its surrounding area more attractive to visitors. One simple thing that could be done is to make a path way, all the way around the castle, so walkers and cyclist have a better experience. Open up the great park spaces around the whole area and ensure there is plenty for children and youths to enjoy. Add more parking spaces where ever possible. Then the council must work with Cadw to build on the experience i
- Please find the money to lock the gates at Morgan Jones Park. This is a small price to pay for security at night.

Q3 If you feel that budget cuts in a specific area will affect you as an individual (positively or negatively) because of any of the following (your ethnic origin, gender, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, gender reassignment, religious beliefs or non-belief, use of Welsh language, BSL or other languages, nationality or responsibility for any dependents) please give details below.

- No-one likes increases in Council Taxes especially when you are AGEING. On the whole I think you have done good work over the years I have lived in Caerphilly (since 1982). However, there will always be areas for improvement e.g pot holes in the road - fly dumping etc etc. Good Luck in 2017-18!!
- yes, people that are on a low income and married! I earn £17,500 a year, and my husband around the same., its not exactly a decent wage we are not entitled to any help, and its becoming a real struggle, I am now starting to suffer from depression. we have a three year old, again no tax credits for us. these decisions are made by people earning a decent wage, and don't feel the impact. I do! to say I am annoyed is an understatement. how about no increase in council tax
- Cuts will have no socio or economic affect on me.
- I belong to a walking group - council run - at the Pengam site. There can be 60 people attending. I know they have said they will park on the surrounding roads and safety will be risky - All walkers are over 60.
- Cuts will affect us all in some way and our problem lies with the Government and not the Borough.
- As the majority of the people in this area speak English not Welsh I object to every document and form being in both languages. I understand that by law this has to be done but would it not be a better idea to inform the public that if they wanted their information to be in Welsh that they make a request for this at the onset. This also applies when you phone the council. If it stated at the beginning that they required their information through to Welsh medium press button 1, English press button 2, this would then stop any excess charges on their phone bill.
- Why is this question simply focused on 'protected characteristics' only, when on-going budget cuts are clearly affecting many aspects of peoples lives, such as: Education: Attainment levels / Children who complete 'off road cycle training' / Swimming / School meals and Free school meals / Leaving school with no formal qualifications / Attendance (Primary & Secondary) / Attendance at libraries & reduced opening times / NEET's / Renewable technologies / Surplus/insufficient places / Special Needs provision and support. Transport: Road/Bus/Rail links (access - availability – connectivity – cross valley links-satisfaction - information) – City Deal /
- The country parks are the safest venue for walking groups. Many of these groups are elderly and disabled. The charge at these parks are a tax on people who are often less able to afford the charge.
- The country parks are the safest venues for walking groups. Many of these groups are elderly and disabled. The charge at these parks are a tax on people who are often less able to afford the charge.
- The country parks are the safest venue for walking groups. Many of these groups are elderly and disabled. The charge at these parks are a tax on people who are often less able to afford the charge.
- The country parks are the safest venue for walking groups. Many of these

groups are elderly and disabled. The charge at these parks are a tax on people who are often less able to afford the charge.

- The country parks are the safest venue for walking groups. Many of these groups are elderly and disabled. The charge at these parks are a tax on people who are often less able to afford the charge.
- The country parks are the safest venue for walking groups. Many of these groups are elderly and disabled. The charge at these parks are a tax on people who are often less able to afford the charge.
- The country parks are the safest venue for walking groups. Many of these groups are elderly and disabled. The charge at these parks are a tax on people who are often less able to afford the charge.
- I belong to none of the above because I am me, nobody else.
- Irrelevant
- Budget cuts are not likely to have any direct impact on our household which is 2 adults both 65+.
- Additional detail of the impact of the proposed realignment of pension contributions to employees of previous pre Lgr authorities is needed in order to better understand if this proposal has an impact on me due to my age. Where can the detail of this proposal be obtained and viewed?