

# The Big Conversation

## Budget Proposals Information Booklet

February 2019

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## Introduction - The Big Conversation

As a Council, we have taken a fresh approach to our budget consultation and engagement in 2018/19; involving our communities, staff and partners more closely in our financial planning and service transformation. To do this, we launched the Big Conversation, an engagement programme designed to spark an open and ongoing dialogue that could produce innovative ideas and solutions.

By highlighting the challenging financial picture facing all local authorities; the costs of, and demands for, our services; and the need to transform service design and delivery, we have been working closely with our key audiences to identify where we can make possible savings, generate income and do things differently.

We have held more than 70 sessions since August to gather and discuss ideas and suggestions via a digital survey, staff engagement, three 3<sup>rd</sup> sector sessions; and public sessions at schools, supermarkets, bus stations, and the Peak, as well as a string of community events.

The first stage took place between August 20 and October 5, and included: an online public survey; social media campaign; online staff survey; staff discussion sessions; community discussion sessions, conversations with 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector; service round tables; themed round tables; corporate management round tables.

The second stage took place between October through November, and involved working with our citizens, the third sector and community organisations with the aim of sharing a snapshot of what had been collated so far, showing themes and ideas, and gathering your views.

We based our discussions around 4 key questions:

- **How do we reduce costs and increase income?**
- **How do we reduce demand for services?**
- **How do we tackle inequality and make Stirling a fairer place?**
- **How can we all work better together?**

The public survey resulted in over 800 ideas; service discussions yielded 97 options, and more than 300 staff took part in the staff survey. Many of the ideas put forward by our communities aligned closely with what we were hearing from our staff. All the information collected was cross-referenced and categorised into key themes. This document details the suggestions for budget savings for **2019/20** that were drawn from the input. There are a significant number of further longer-term proposals that have been identified and are being worked up, many of which are transformational in nature.

The suggestions listed here amount to £1.73m. In addition, we have Business As Usual options which amount to £1m.

The options outlined in this report will provide a package of measures that will substantially address the budget challenge facing the Council for the financial year 2019/20. However, additional measures may have to be considered in order to set a balanced budget, including the review of corporate budget provisions (inflation, treasury budgets, pension provisions) as well as further management efficiency savings and the early implementation of existing budget options.



## Care

### **Technology Enabled Care (TEC) - community alarm charges/income generation (£384k in 19/20)**

The community alarm/Technology Enabled Care equipment service promotes safe, independent living and supports ongoing care at home packages for people within their own homes. Service users can call for help and assistance via their community alarm. The service can be stand alone or be part of a care package. The current cost is £2.90 per week but this is the cost no matter what other telecare/health equipment may be in place. There are 2 options to this proposal.

1. Full Cost Recovery. This would include direct employee costs, relief/agency costs, supplies, and transport. Current calculations/estimates don't include call handling costs for the Contact Centre, and inclusion of these costs could have an impact on the charge to service users. Further work is needed to fully understand what should be included to make this service a Full Cost Recovery Service.
2. Introduce different charging levels. Currently all service users are charged the same whether they have a "Button and Box" or a "Button and Box" plus other telecare equipment. (Some people can have 4 or more telecare items). Both options would charge the full costs to service users.

### **Generate income by using capacity in Brucefield Children's Home (£150k in 19/20; £150K in 20/21)**

The approach of re-balancing care, with a focus on family-based care settings for young people, means that capacity may become available in Brucefield Children's Home. This could be used to make placements available to other local authorities for their looked after and accommodated young people. It would most likely be neighbouring authorities who would use this, although we could accept placements from any local authority. The cost of placing a young person in Brucefield will be less than the cost to place them with a private provider. However, as all local authorities are under similar financial pressures, they will also be seeking to reduce their use of residential placements.

### **Supported living for adults with a learning disability (£59k in 19/20)**

Across the Health and Social Care Partnership there is growing demand for accommodation that supports people with learning disabilities to live as independently as possible in their local community. This option would see the redesign of Beech Gardens to be able to offer this type of service, providing care that is cost effective and that would reduce the reliance on single tenancies for service users who require 24/7 support.

The Beech Gardens redesign will offer accommodation to meet the needs of 6 people with a learning disability who currently live in dispersed single person tenancies. These service users require a combination of 24/7 monitoring and care but the care is invariably provided in an inefficient manner in isolated, single tenancies.

The facility could also be used by an additional 2 service users who are transitioning from children's services to adult care, and who are currently supported by their families in their homes. While the present costs are relatively low due to family support we are aware of the imminent need for 24/7 support.

A decision is required on the future use of Beech Gardens before it closes in 2019. The decision will involve Stirling Council and the Clackmannanshire and Stirling Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP). The building offers excellent potential to provide specialist supported living for adults with a learning disability.

Beech Gardens will operate like other Council owned supported living models, with a commissioned care and support provider delivering services. This option would result in better care and would reduce the cost of individual 24/7 care.

### **Review of Care at Home packages of care (£120k in 19/20)**

The service is currently reviewing all care at home packages, focusing on those that involve 7 or more hours of care. This is to make sure that the services are appropriate, efficient, make best use of resources, and minimise risk. The proposal is to continue with the review, generate additional savings, and reduce commissioned care-at-home hours in line with the efficiency savings built into the resource allocation system.

### **Discontinue free Garden Maintenance Scheme to private homeowners/non Council tenants and offer a fee paying service only. (£25K in 19/20)**

The Garden Maintenance Scheme maintains gardens for the elderly and those unable to maintain their own. We currently maintain approximately 70 private home-owners' gardens without charge. The cost of this service is £20,000 every year between Operations (£10,000) and Social Care (£10,000). It's proposed the subsidised maintenance of private gardens be discontinued. Instead, either a rechargeable service would be offered or homeowners can use the private sector as they do with all other property maintenance. This would generate a £20,000 saving. There would also be the possibility for £5,000 of income generation from this.

### **Removal of foster payments support for telephone allowances (£23k in 19/20), and for respite support at weekends. (£20K in 19/20)**

Currently foster carers receive a telephone allowance in addition to the standard payment for looking after a young person. A review has found that the scope of foster care payments should cover all reasonable expenses associated with the provision of care to the young person. As such, telephone allowances can be considered as part of the overall foster care payment and there is no need to pay an additional allowance for this. This would bring the Council into line with other local authorities. Also, during periods of respite, foster carers continue to receive payments and the respite providers are also paid. This proposal would stop foster carer payments during respite periods and the money would be used to pay for the respite placements.



## Schools & Learning

### **Review and redesign play & early intervention (£64k in 19/20; £68k in 20/21; £48k in 21/22)**

The proposal is to review and re-design the provision of Early Intervention Early Childhood Educators, the staffing of nurture teachers in primary schools, and the Crèche, Play and Out of School Service. The existing provision of Early Intervention Early Childhood Educators and allocation for nurture are allocated within Borestone, East Plean, Fallin, Our Lady's and Raploch primary schools which means that children and families outwith these schools don't benefit from this service. There are 14 out of school care providers in Stirling, only one of which - Fallin Out of School Care- is managed by Stirling, and will continue to operate as it does at present.

### **Align school transport to minimum statutory requirements (£28k in 19/20; £17k in 20/21)**

Local authorities are required to provide home to school transport for pupils under the age of 8 who live more than 2 miles from the school, and for pupils over 8 who live more than 3 miles from the school. At the moment, the Council is exercising its discretion by providing home to school transport to all pupils who live more than 2 miles from the school, regardless of their age. This proposal is to revert to our statutory obligation.



## Parking & Transport

### **Review of car parking charges (£40K in 19/20; £20k in 20/21)**

Car parking charges in the Stirling Council area haven't increased since 2014. This proposal is to increase charges across all areas by 10%, except Linden Avenue and Forthside Car Parks where the daily rate would increase from £1.40 to £1.70 in year 1 and £2 in year 2, and a weekly ticket would increase to £8.50 in year 1 and £10.00 in year 2. Compared to other areas, this option still offers affordable parking to our citizens and visitors.

### **Reduction in funding for assisted transport provision (£28K in 19/20; £28k in 20/21)**

The council provides funding to Dial-a-Journey to provide a door to door transport service for people with mobility problems who are unable to use conventional public transport. We also offer a Taxi card scheme which offers subsidised travel for people with disabilities. This option proposes a reduction in the provision of Dial-a-Journey door to door services. The current provision costs the Council £120k a year. The proposal would be to half this provision, and save approximately £60k a year, less an amount for anticipated uptake in Taxi cards. There is a 6 month notice period, so this saving would be realised across both 2019 and 2020. This option should also improve efficiency by reducing duplication across Dial-a-journey and the Taxi card service.

### **Bus station departure charge (£9k in 19/20; £10k in 20/21)**

All operators who use the bus station are charged rates dependent on whether they use the inside or outside stances, or an express rate for coaches. The charges for the internal and external stances haven't been raised since 2014/15, when there was an approximately 8% increase. The current rates are £1.20 per departure from inside the bus station, £0.90 per departure outside the bus station and £3.10 per coach/express departure. This brought in £190k revenue in 2017/18. A 10% increase on the departure charges could generate approximately £19k extra. We are currently comparing our departure charges with other locations.

### **Park and Ride – introduce parking charges at Castleview (£11K in 19/20; £11k in 20/21)**

Castleview Park & Ride is underused at present, and spare parking spaces are taken up by members of the public and employees of local businesses, primarily at Castle Business Park, who don't pay for this parking. This proposal is to introduce charges for these parking spaces to generate an additional £28k revenue per annum. Of the 450 spaces, 250 are used by Park and Ride passengers and users who park for free and walk to nearby businesses. This proposal outlines the additional revenue that could be obtained from charging motorists who use the free spaces but not the Park and Ride service. It assumes that 100 spaces will be used for paid parking, charged at a rate of £1.40 per day, 5 days a week for 48 weeks. Some investment would be needed to allow for paid parking, and to identify those using Park and Ride, and those using it as a car park.



## Assets

### **Reduction in roads maintenance reactive and cyclic maintenance programme (£100k in 19/20; £50k in 20/21)**

This proposal is to cut the road maintenance budget by £150,000 over 2 years, which will reduce the work in the planned maintenance programme. This includes cyclic and reactive repairs, including repairs to potholes, road defects, road signage and other road assets including gullies which have a direct impact on local flooding issues.

This option requires the Roads capital investment budget to remain at least at current levels to sustain the condition of our roads and minimise the number of defects.

### **Reduction in general amenity grass cutting frequency from 15 to 10 Cuts (£90k in 19/20)**

This proposal would see the grass cutting season for open spaces (April – October) reduced by two weeks, and the number of cuts reduced from 15 to 10. This covers parks, residential areas, burial grounds and general open spaces currently maintained by Stirling Council.

Mowing would start a week later and end a week earlier, with a longer period between each grasscut throughout the season. It would mean that increased cuttings are left and there would be slightly longer grass over Autumn/Winter.

### **Redesign Countryside Management (£36k in 19/20; £38k in 20/21)**

This proposal would see our 20 countryside sites - including Plean Country Park, Back Walk and Abbey Craig - become the responsibility of the Grounds and Maintenance/Play and Maintenance Teams, with the focus on reactive site management. This would mean that all other opportunities to work with other services, volunteer groups, the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector and the educational role would cease.

### **Discontinue deep clean programme for communities (£70k in 19/20)**

Routine cleaning would continue as a statutory duty, however, there would be no intensive deep cleans across communities.

### **Stop providing annual bed flower/vegetable displays (£20k in 19/20)**

The service has historically planted annual beds with summer and winter flowers and vegetables as ornamental displays, at a cost of £20K for bedding plants/vegetables, compost and sundries. This service is non-statutory and the use of annual bedding plants is not a sustainable approach. It's proposed the beds be removed or replanted with perennial plants. This would allow those who maintain the annual bedding to focus on grass cutting duties. It's possible that local communities or other groups could take over this function, however this would require them to take on a lease agreement.

**Reduction in hall revenue grants (£5k in 19/20; £3k in 20/21; £2k in 21/22)**

The annual hall revenue grants budget supports a range of community centres and village halls with essential running costs. All of the halls which are supported either own or lease the facility. Two thirds of the budget is protected to ensure each hall committee gets a contribution towards essential revenue costs e.g. heat, light, cleaning. The remaining third is set aside as the "development" element. Hall committees are asked to identify if they have a development plan for their hall and have the option to bid for an additional award. The development award can be towards energy efficiency, health & safety measures and/or improvements which add years to life of the building. The proposed reduction of £10,000 will come from both the 'essential running costs' and development elements. Stricter criteria will be applied to the 'essential running costs' element to reduce or stop grants to halls who have sustainable income generation streams in place which cover costs. There is expected to be no impact on statutory obligations as this will only apply to halls which are not owned by Stirling Council.

**Reduce bus station opening times (£5k in 19/20)**

This option is to reduce the Bus Station opening times by 1.5 hours a day Monday-Saturday. The current opening hours are 0630-2200hrs Monday to Saturday, and 1000-1800hrs on a Sunday. This proposal would change the Monday to Saturday times to 0700-2100hrs (a reduction of 9 hours per week). The saving would come from reducing the Out of Hours payments.



## Partnership & Shared Services

**Further review of services and payments to 3<sup>rd</sup> sector service providers (£15k in 19/20; £25k in 20/21; £30k in 21/22; £50k in 22/23; £50k in 23/24)**

This proposal will consider current service specifications and identify alternative means to deliver some services. This will be achieved in a number of ways including the use of existing staff resources, revised specifications for external providers, and referrals being reduced through earlier and more effective interventions. The strategic approach to rebalancing care that is being taken forward under other options will also reduce the longer term need for the provision of some 3<sup>rd</sup> sector provided services that are associated with the support to young people who have high levels of need. The redesign of all of the above service provisions will be informed by the needs of our young people and analysis of data associated with current and anticipated future service delivery.

This will be implemented in line with the timescales for the renewal and recommissioning of existing contracts and will consider areas such as: anti-social behaviour; sexually harmful behaviour; youth justice; substance misuse; family support services; independent advocacy; mental health befriending; family-based interventions; and community-based intensive support services.



## Corporate

### **Remove pay enhancement for weekend working/reduce night shift hours (£180k in 19/20)**

This proposal would remove enhanced payments for the 500 Council employees who work at weekends, and would reduce the night-shift period by two-hours, with a total saving of £180K in 2019/20.

At the moment, staff who work Saturday are paid time and a third, and those who work Sunday are paid time and a half. The savings would be made by paying the plain hourly rate for weekend work, and by starting the night-shift at 10pm instead of 8pm. Night shift work is paid at time and a third.

### **Remove the 10% Council Tax discount on second homes (£60k in 19/20)**

Since April 2017, the Scottish Government has permitted local authorities to remove any discount offered on Council Tax charges for second homes. The Council currently has 373 properties categorised as second homes across various Council Tax bands, each receiving a 10% discount on their Council Tax charges. This proposal would remove this discount. The saving quoted assumes there will be a 3% increase in Council tax bands in 2019/20.

### **Provide non-domestic rates discretionary relief to only the highest rateable value property of local charities (£56k in 19/20)**

Charities who have premises in Stirling get 20% discretionary rates relief on their properties from the Council. This proposal would end that relief for national charities (such as Oxfam). For local charities with more than one premises, the rates relief would only apply to the highest Rateable Value property.

### **Restructure support to the Civic Office and Leader of the Council (£36k in 19/20)**

This proposal would reshape administrative support for the Civic Office and Leader of the Council, something which would be consistent with other similarly sized Councils.

### **Libraries and Archives savings proposals (£10k in 19/20)**

It has been suggested that the Council stops the *Off the Page* book festival, and instead hosts a long weekend of junior events called '*Smallprint*' to coincide with World Book Day and Book Week Scotland for adults in November. This would save £7,500. In Archives, a £2,000 saving could be achieved by cuts to a number of budget areas, including materials.

**Reduce Civic budget (£5k in 19/20)**

By refocusing on the benefits of any expenditure to the Stirling Council area, with a clearer link to the Council Key Priorities, this proposal would reduce the Civic budget by 20%, or £5,592. This reduction also takes into account an assessment of the Civic budget, which has been regularly underspent in recent years.

**Stop the weekly payroll (£4k in 19/20)**

This proposal would stop the weekly payroll from April 2019, impacting 300 employees, and reducing payroll staffing to save £4k per annum. One-off change support would be needed to issue employees with an interest free loan to help them make the change.

**Stirling Business Investment Fund (SBIF) (£100k reduction in 19/20 to be repaid over two years)**

There is currently circa £300k in the Stirling Business Investment Fund, for which there is no demand. The proposal is that £100k is put towards the savings target for 2019/20 with the remaining £200k held, in case Elected Members wish to make another allocation of funds to support events in 2019/20.



## Contact

You can find out more information on our web pages:

<https://www.stirling.gov.uk/bigconvo>

If you do not have internet access at home or are unable to access our libraries where free internet access is available, please contact our Community Engagement Team or Customer First 01786 404040 or 01786 233076 and hard copies of our questionnaire or other public documents can be provided.

This document can also be provided to you in other languages and alternative formats such as large print or braille. For further information, please contact Customer First on 01786 404040 or email [info@stirling.gov.uk](mailto:info@stirling.gov.uk)