



BIRMINGHAM LINK REPORT BACK SHEET

Title /Purpose Of Meeting: Public Consultation (Oct 12th 2011 - Jan 8th 2012)
Date: 27th Oct 2011
Venue: Alexander Stadium Perry Barr
Members Attending: Co-Chair MHAG Birmingham LINK + 1 MHAG member
Also Attending : Approx 10 members of the public - approx 12 staff
Terms : "Supporting People" Housing support for highly vulnerable

A MHAG Co-Chair attended this meeting to form preliminary focus on issues we had been alerted to by Users/Parties regarding £3.8m. cuts to "Supporting People " budgets. It was a chance too to act as a LINK networker to bring other info. back to the LINK

The event was the second of the : "community forums" of the initial 8 consultations planned . (NB there will be others later - some more specialised)

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| 1. Saturday 22nd Oct | - Council House | 10 - 12 noon |
| 2. Thursday 27th Oct | - Alexander Stadium Perry Barr | 6.30 - 8.30 p.m. |
| 3. Wednesday 2nd Nov | - Sutton Coldfield United Reformed Church | 6.30 - 8.30 p.m. |
| 4. Thursday 3rd Nov | - Newtown Community Centre | 6.30 - 8.30 p.m. |
| 5. Monday 7th Nov | - Bournville College - new campus | 6.30 - 8.30 p.m. |
| 6. Wednesday 9th Nov | - Kings Heath Community Centre | 6.30 - 8.30 p.m. |
| 7. Thursday 10th Nov | - The Council House | 6.30 - 8.30 p.m. |
| 8. Saturday 12th Nov | - Shard End Community Centre | 10 - 12 noon |

There was a Bham City Council finance Director giving the presentation and the meeting was chaired independently. Much of what was presented, was in a similar 30 page document prefaced by a Birmingham City Council CEO Stephen Hughes statement . ([See original Document here](#)). Those 30 page documents were made available from a box after I pointed out there were not fully available. The nearby walls of the room we were in had information on them for people to read and even write on.

There was a very broad set of financial information presented. That went into new details about a number of new specific proposed savings that now had to be made in light of the [May 2011 High Court judgement](#). That judgement had stopped changes proposed for social care eligibility bandings because it held the previous consultation had been flawed . Specific financial information for certain client group services was talked about. Finally though it was stated that there will be some further detailed individual consultations to follow later in the year - for instance for Adult and Communities issues as well as

"Supporting People" .

The finance director spelled out clearly, out of the total revenue (£3.527 million) the spend that was "controllable" (non-ringfenced) , was only £1,257. This was well explained and slowly demonstrated across the services targeted for savings . It was explained savings could only be made in the "controllable" spending budget

Public Reaction .

(1) There was moving set of points by an Afro Caribbean man who thought personal "sacrifice" in hard times made good sense for all . He outlined an idea to the public arena of people volunteering time (it is what he partly did) to train young people up in life skills with businesses donating money for the use of centres and spaces . He felt very strongly that we all must chip in to aid people when times were hard .

(2) There was another set of points made by a man with interests in child protection and children's matters who thought that some Council in-house skills had to be preserved for the sake of making sure quality was checked and he was worried about the amount of cuts in Adults & Communities .

(3) A man put forwards an idea that Councillors should be reduced from 3 per ward to 2 . That would make savings of 16k per ward . It was said there were 120 Councillors and that "losing" 40 of them at 16k would equal a (640k) saving.

(4) Another man spoke up about the unfairness of the "cuts" :

"they are not savings but in fact cuts"

He was was unhappy with the way bankers had created the problems and everyone was picking up the payment. The person was also annoyed that the consultation was formed in such a way as to potentially restrict debate .

(5) A member of the public read out from page 4 of the BCC Consultation doc that it stated :

"In Birmingham total Council Tax is around £200 per property a year, lower than the other major cities' average , equivalent to around £60m a year in total"

And asked everyone if their "sacrifice" could also mean a significant rise in the council tax to protect the weakest citizens in Birmingham.

Officer Responses

Responses were stated to everyone and were comprehensive as well as inclusive. There was a lady employed to take these down and fairly record them into a document to be published later . It was repeated some areas of the consultation would have more details and

meetings . The political zietgeist and mandates was more in favour of not raising council tax but a number of people in the audience (not specified) did support a council tax rise when asked. The Government did have "reserve powers" upon which to rely if they felt some Councils were hiking Council tax rates too high .

Mental Health Action Group Concerns

MHAG's Role MHAG's powers as activities are expressed under the Local Government and Public Involvement In Health Act 2007 . SEE - : Section 221(2b)

Local involvement networks

221 Health services and social services: local involvement networks

- (1) Each local authority must make contractual arrangements for the purpose of ensuring that there are means by which the activities specified in subsection (2) for the local authority's area can be carried on in the area.
- (2) The activities for a local authority's area are—
 - (a) promoting, and supporting, the involvement of people in the commissioning, provision and scrutiny of local care services;
 - (b) enabling people to monitor for the purposes of their consideration of matters mentioned in subsection (3), and to review for those purposes, the commissioning and provision of local care services;
 - (c) obtaining the views of people about their needs for, and their experiences of, local care services; and
 - (d) making—
 - (i) views such as are mentioned in paragraph (c) known, and
 - (ii) reports and recommendations about how local care services could or ought to be improved,to persons responsible for commissioning, providing, managing or scrutinising local care services.

The issues that the MHAG was alerted to originally were the newly targeted "Supporting People" savings (an extra £3.8m) . These do affect some mental health groups and are important for housing stabilisation and support in the community . These were only touched on briefly in this Oct 27th 2011 consultation event . It was stated by an officer that "Supporting People" was probably going to be looked at again due to concerns already expressed . It became clearer through officers they will create other types of meetings with greater detail. MHAG will need to be informed about these in order to do its duty and pass onto the LINK what it can to aid others . This particular meeting thus lacked details for MHAG to work with such as client group/type impact and equality analysis . We do need that to create a full and proper monitoring response to the consultation and that detail

seems likely to be obtained later . It is thus clear this consultation is at least partly being run so far without details that should have been there at the Oct 12th beginning. Other members of the public have noted this too Forward planning seems to lack too in so far as MHAG were only informed with a full consultation document sent to us by the public on Oct 22nd not by the Council itself . A link to the council website was supplied by the new Local Involvement Network Host (Oct 20th) - but good forward planning means health and social care monitors must have observance of consultation matters as quickly as possible for their own planning agendas. The argument must be, that in information terms, a consultation must ideally optimise "digestible time" at its beginnings (Oct 12th !) . It is clear though the Council are working under great pressure and even some strain . That insight has been gained through talks with officers who have also seen a lot of alterations around them .

Conclusion

This event itself was well run and genuinely so by the officers there . It allowed for the public voice to be heard and recorded. Arrangements are being made for the recording of people's input and demonstrating that later . This event signposted to later consultation events for specific client group consultations . That must be monitored however .

Extra Information From BCC Website : [CLICK HERE](#)

The Supporting People programme aims to help vulnerable people improve their quality of life by providing a stable environment, which enables them to live more independently. There are many different groups of people who qualify for help under Supporting People. They are:

- Older or frail elderly people
- People with mental health problems
- People with physical or sensory disabilities
- People with learning disabilities
- People at risk of offending
- Teenage parents or pregnant teenagers
- Young people at risk
- Young people leaving care
- Young single homeless people with support needs
- Homeless families with support needs
- People with HIV or AIDS
- People escaping domestic abuse
- Travellers
- People who misuse substances.

PBT MHAG 28th Oct 2011