

Consultation responses received since the publication of the Cabinet Agenda.

The following responses were received since the publication of the Cabinet papers. Many of these picked up on the themes already included within the consultation responses already published.

CCTV – Three letters have been received with regards to HBC proposals to cease activity and mothball equipment from police colleagues covering both strategic and operation concerns. Letters from the Assistant Chief Constable (Sussex and Surrey) and District Commander (Hastings and Rother) flag concerns with regards to partnership working; contractual arrangements and funding; eco-friendly income generation opportunities from CCTV Street furniture; maintenance costs and options; strategic and operational potential impacts. These are supplemented by a letter from a Neighbourhood Police Sergeant offering further evidence of success of existing CCTV arrangements to counter drug dealing activity.

Response: The Assistant Director for Environment and Place responded directly. In summary this response included: Thanks for acknowledgement of the excellent CCTV service our officers have delivered with partners to date; intense regret with having to make these particular budget proposals; that the current provision is quite unique in terms of HBC input in comparison to other district and borough councils; that future funding for districts and boroughs is decreasing in real terms while service demand increases; that proposals for future 5 G related income (if realisable) would only amount to between 6 and 11 % of annual operating costs (not including our existing staff resource); that the response will be shared with the lead portfolio councillor and will feed into the challenging decisions facing cabinet and council.

Business Improvement District (BID) – A letter was received on behalf of the BID with regards to proposals to remove funding for monitoring and maintenance of CCTV. This letter: sympathises with the challenging financial position facing the council; includes survey responses from 100 of 450 members and 81% of those surveyed suggested that the loss of live CCTV would have a ‘detrimental impact on their business;’ recognises that businesses have responsibility for their own security but this is less viable for smaller businesses; view the CCTV control room team as central to the Business Crime Reduction Partnership efforts.

The letter also identifies the invaluable work that the control room do to prevent crimes before they happen and communicate vital intelligence; flag the knock on effects of these preventative efforts on wider crime, alcohol, drug and antisocial behaviour; as well as, tracking missing/lost children, vulnerable adults; reuniting families; apprehension of suspects wanted by the police; monitoring of large crowds during special events; review of historical footage to help in investigations into criminal or anti-social behaviour; providing support to the council's warden service while they are dealing with breaches of the public space protection order.

This letter was also copied to the Chief Inspector of Police, the Police Crime Commissioner and the MP with a view that the benefits of the existing service 'should be the responsibility of the wider public sector.' The letter asks that the council in conjunction with these other public sector partners, consider whether at least some of the service could continue to be delivered and that the BID have a number of ideas and would be happy to discuss these regarding targeted hours for live monitoring and the use of non-council staff, etc.

Response: The council wishes to thank the BID for their considered response and acknowledges that our associated proposals are difficult. However our funding position dictates that retaining the enhanced service as it is currently provided is simply not viable. While we will continue to ensure the police are able to monitor the cameras as they do in other local authority areas.

West Marina Bowls Green – An e mail was received objecting to the closure of the West Marina Bowls Green that including the following ideas to retain this provision: Shorter attendant working hours; green fees being made payable to a representative bowls club on behalf of HBC; reduced greens maintenance; closure of 2 of the 4 greens at White Rock Gardens as unused anyway.

Clive Vale Bowls Club – A letter was e mailed: contesting proposals to close greens and access to pavilions; identifying potential impacts in terms of loss of income, players and amalgamation of clubs offset against council draft budget proposals; the potential loss of the bowls in Alexandra Park as a tourist attraction; outlining perceived risks and impacts of proposals; further proposing paying fees and payment direct to the council rather than via the current arrangements and, welcoming alternative clubs to join this one.

St Leonards Bowls Club – A letter was e mailed flagging impacts of potential closure of bowls green and putting including: loss of facilities, income, fitness opportunities for those '70 plus.' Could some of the proposed monies of 50k for climate change growth by allocated to saving the West Marina Bowling Green? Would HBC consider a 'stay of execution' to enable Bowlers to complete their 'Mermaid League' - a reprieve for the 2020 season? These questions were followed up by an offer to assist with maintenance costs (no figures provided) and a warning that White Rock potential developments could result in green closures there, with the cost of having to close and reopen West Marina at a higher cost.

A follow up e mail was received from the Captain of St Leonards Bowls Club suggesting: that the West St Leonards Bowls Club would like to take over ownership and maintenance of the club and therefore put in for grants to assist with facilities maintenance. To request that existing fixtures be completed. To collect monies by the club for the council and look after the greens. Could greens maintenance be at a lower level to reduce costs?

A further e mail was received from a health practitioner objecting to the potential closure of the West St Leonards Bowls Club, flagging the physical and mental health benefits that would potentially be lost for users and spectators.

Observer Bowls Club – A further letter was e mailed, picking up the points raised in the St Leonards Bowls Club letter with the following additions: Income from memberships could be used to offset costs; loss of greens will result in loss of clubs; unused greens and clubhouse still require maintenance; facilities will need to be enhanced at White Rock if clubs needed to move there. A further request was made to use the clubhouse beyond the 1st of April if the budget proposals go through so that the club has time to find a new base for their equipment?

Falaise Indoor Bowls Association – A letter was received with initial proposals to ‘enable the sustainability of Bowls in the White Rock Area.’ These included: contacting Clive Vale, St Leonards and Observer Bowls clubs with an offer of access if unable to fulfil their current fixture list; redeveloping greens outside the indoor centre, enabling said clubs a permanent base in and outdoor with a shared clubhouse; thereby saving the council money; developing outdoor greens would give stability to the White Rock and Rosemount; potential financial stability for Falaise club with all year round bowling offered; the Falaise club have a strong workforce and appetite to apply for grants where appropriate; the Association has funds to purchase equipment to ensure the greens are kept in order. The Association consider themselves as forward looking and willing to continue working with the council to firm up these proposals.

Response: The council are grateful for the responses received with regards to proposals to reduce operating costs by no longer providing bowls at Alexandra Park and West Marina Gardens, and also ceasing putting at West Marina Gardens; thereby consolidating all bowls and putting to the existing facilities at White Rock Gardens. Our financial circumstances dictate that this proposal will remain, as no viable alternative has been found that can achieve the level of savings needed.

Suggestions have been made in terms of reducing greens maintenance costs, however the impact of reduced maintenance may make greens unusable anyway. Flat green bowls maintenance involves cultivating specialist turf that is then laid and carefully maintained to provide a playable surface. From time to time areas of turf will be damaged (e.g. by animals) and need replacing, It isn't a case of just buying some ordinary lawn turf and tamping it in. Fewer cuts and reductions in treatment would almost certainly make the surface unplayable from a flat green bowling perspective.

We recognise the impact of the changes proposed and will continue to work with bowls clubs to ease this transition, answering questions, accommodating requests and pursuing alternative ideas raised where possible and practical.

HVA/HCN joint submission – A letter was centre to Cllr Chowney responding to the consultation with the following points: Thanks to Cllr Forward for attending and responding to questions at the HCN meeting and acknowledging the challenging financial circumstances; welcoming of potential future arrangements with Foreshore Trust post Community Partnership Funding commissions; concern on community cohesion and hate crime support budget proposals coupled with a match fund proposal in the pipeline to protect aspects of this work; flagging support for HBC climate change ambitions but concerned by Hastings Country Park seemingly being HBC's priority for associated work in terms of Solar panels -this should be a 'last resort' rather than a 'first priority;' regret that attempts to co-finance the CCTV service with public agencies that benefit have as yet been unsuccessful; concerned by proposals to delete the post supporting the Youth Council and highlighting future scope for potential partnership arrangements to align associated activity; unable to support In2Play tapering funding proposal and consider this a retrograde step in the context of the council's wider ambitions; concern for remaining HBC staff post redundancy proposals; enthusiasm for the prospective Town Deal and potential benefits.

Response: HBC thank HVA and HCN for its submission. In terms of Hate Crime, HBC will now match the offer put forward by HVA of £10k to continue Hate Crime support for 2020/21 and the budget will be amended accordingly to reflect this.

Council Tax – An e mail was received asking about charging council tax to every household with the possibility of a nominal amount to be paid by everyone as all benefit from council tax?

Response – The Working Age Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) is reviewed annually, as required by regulations. Consideration is given to all aspects of the scheme including the financial impact on the council's budget.

It has been agreed to continue to provide 100% assistance to the most vulnerable in our community in 2020/21.

Decision Making Accountability report – A request was made via e mail for said report.

Response: The information requested in respect of the Decision Making Accountability (DMA) report commissioned 2019-2020 is exempt information under Section 36 of the Freedom of Information Act 'Prejudice to effective conduct of public affairs.'

Environment and Natural Resources Manager – Further letters were received from the CAVE Co-operative Ltd and the Land Management Consultant for Hastings Country Park in support of retaining this post to deliver the Hastings Country Park Visitor Centre.

Response: The revised budget published on 31 January for consideration at the Budget Cabinet on 10 February, no longer includes this post.

Sussex Wildlife Trust – A letter was received giving feedback on the council's draft corporate plan. This letter emphasised the need to raise the profile of bio diversity and the natural environment in the draft plan across all priority areas, flagging areas and activities where this is underplayed or potentially ill-considered. Some proposals for changed emphasis and wording were put forward, combined with some further questions relating to some of the associated intentions set out in the draft corporate plan.

Response: The council are thankful for this very helpful feedback on the draft corporate plan 2020/21. The developing climate change strategy intends to pick up on the points raised and these have already been forwarded to the executive leadership and appropriate officers working on this. The council intends to consider these very carefully in line with the developing climate change strategy.

The covering report detailing the bulk of the consultation responses also identifies intention to move the draft corporate plan online so that it becomes a more dynamic part of our website (rather than a static pdf document) where progress can more easily be tracked. Ultimately this is a high level document and the detail will appear elsewhere.

Bulverhythe Recreation Ground – An e mail was received claiming to represent 300 people living near said playing fields keen that the council do not waste further monies on the 192 proposed houses. It is suggested that there are a number of associated flooding related problems and more rather than fewer council staff will be needed to address these including: Houses too near land fill and leachate; reduced scope to walk along the river and maintenance of bunds; flood risk, land saturation and contamination, tanks required under housing and maintenance costs of these, uncertainty over who will take responsibility where associated problems arise?

Response: Concerns have been noted and forwarded to the appropriate officers engaged in this project.

Unison response – A letter was e mailed to the consultation inbox at 14:26 on 10/02/20. This letter: acknowledges efficiencies made and income generated to assist with the challenging budget position; notes how services will continue to corrode without central government funding and that budget proposals if agreed will hit some of our poorest wards with the greatest health inequalities hardest; suggests councillors remain ambitious despite acknowledging high impact of proposals and proposed cuts are at odds with some corporate priorities; identifies that last year Unison were promised a rationale for the future of the council in the form of a blueprint but that this has not yet been forthcoming.

The letter also identifies a reduction in post that appears at odds with the income generated through that post in terms of events and filming in the borough. There is a further query on how some of the cultural events in the town will be safely monitored in the context of the CCTV budget proposals.

This response also flags the mental health impact on all staff of proposed reductions. This extends into consideration of how the general election impacted on the process, suggesting that errors were made and staff were put 'at risk' when they didn't need to be and other staff finding out that they were subsequently 'at risk.' On this basis, Unison are asking for a review of this process and for changes to job descriptions to be available at the start of the consultation in the future, where roles are being reduced or significantly altered.

This letter acknowledges that further restructures are proposed and warns that skilled and experienced staff maybe replaced by those on lower grades which in turn make such roles increasingly stressful and potentially lower skilled. The letter notes how the pay gap is less than that in other parts of East Sussex and that careful consideration needs to be given to ensure new structures don't have a detrimental effect on this.

Response: The council thanks Unison for its helpful comments and notes these.

Cultural sector support – A letter was received at 14:45pm on 10/02/20 flagging potential further emphasis in the corporate plan and associated initiatives to support the town's cultural sector. These included: a request for more detail on the types of cultural support the council might offer; encouraging that HBC lead on and support 'clustering' (e.g. Rock House and the 12 Claremont developments); using empty council space to support the creative workspaces; to include cultural emphasis in our first strategic outcome acknowledging how the arts and culture can enable 'safe, happy, healthy, independent lives;' considering 'invest to save' beyond purchasing property, drawing on the potential of the creative and cultural sector; a need to continue to invest in leveraging in external funding support suggesting that the proposed reduction in the Cultural Regeneration Officer post maybe at odds with this; encouraging the council not to lose sight of the potential for cultural led regeneration; that cultural activity is often the first to go in challenging financial times suggesting that this is a 'false economy.'

Response: Comments noted.