Appendix I

Draft Budget Consultation 2020/21 – Analysis Report

Introduction

1. The purpose of this report is to set out the Draft Budget consultation process, and key consultation findings (including an understanding of who participated in the consultation), the results of which will be used to help inform decisions on the Council’s final Budget for 2020/21.

Cabinet decisions and formal consultation

2. The Draft Budget was approved by Cabinet on 12 November 2019 and consultation on the budget proposals began immediately following this meeting. The consultation concluded on 24 December 2019, in line with the process set out in the Council’s constitution.

3. The public consultation was conducted by the Consultation, Equalities & Accessibility Team based within Business Intelligence (BI), which carried out the consultation in compliance with NCC’s Consultation and Engagement Policy and Statement of Required Practice.

How was the consultation promoted?

4. The consultation was featured on the Council’s website. Councillors, local MPs, district and borough councils, parish and town councils, partner organisations, voluntary and community sector organisations, representatives of protected characteristic groups, local business groups, and members of both the Northamptonshire Residents’ Panel (circa 1,000 members) and the Council’s Consultation Register were formally invited to give their views and asked to promote the consultation to their members, or within their local area where appropriate.

5. Opportunities to take part in the consultation were also promoted in the local media via press releases, through the Council’s website, e-newsletter and social media channels, allowing both internal (e.g. NCC staff) as well as external consultees to get involved in the process.

6. The consultation feedback on the Care Home Review (Evelyn Wright House) (19-001-05) was considered at Cabinet in January when the decision was taken to cease provision at Evelyn Wright House and to move customers to alternative provision. The link to the consultation analysis report is available on the Council’s Consultation Hub and gives further detail on the feedback received, including from residents of Evelyn Wright House and their family members and carers.

7. The consultation feedback on the Fair Contributions Policy (19-001-16) is being considered at this Cabinet meeting (February) and the link to the consultation analysis report is available on the Council’s Consultation Hub. This report gives further detail on the feedback received, including from current service users who may be affected by the proposed policy changes.

8. The consultation on the review of catering facilities (19-001-04) included a specific questionnaire which was targeted at service users and their families/carers. This feedback has been included in pages 26-31 of this analysis report.
How did consultees have their say?

9. Local people and organisations were able to have their say about the Draft Budget proposals in a range of ways, by:
   - Visiting the Draft Budget Consultation webpage and completing the questionnaire or requesting a paper questionnaire from the Council
   - Emailing consult@northamptonshire.gov.uk
   - Writing to Draft Budget Consultation, Northamptonshire County Council, One Angel Square, Northampton, NN1 1ED
   - Using social media: Tweeting @mycountycouncil or posting comments on the mycountycouncil Facebook page
   - Using the toolkit to hold their own discussions and feeding back to us
   - Signing or submitting a petition or e-petition

10. Consultees could also chose to submit their views about Draft Budget Proposals directly to their County Councillor or the County Council’s Chief Executive. These have been included in the consultation analysis below.

Number and type of responses received

11. During the draft budget consultation period, using the various means available to consultees, local people and organisations contributed to the consultations 864 times (acknowledging that some people may have taken part in more than one consultation or responded to the same consultation via a number of different methods). Within each questionnaire, respondents could choose which questions they responded to, and so there are lower response numbers to each question when compared with the overall number of participants, depending on whether participants had a particular interest in the subject matter.

12. During the consultation period, regular summaries of consultation responses received were circulated to decision makers and all responses received were circulated to decision makers upon conclusion of the consultation to enable them to see each response in full.

What did people say?

13. This report is a summary of the feedback received. It is recommended that it is read in conjunction with the full consultation results, including the detail and suggestions contained within some of the written responses. The full consultation results have been made available to Members and are available on the Council’s Consultation Hub.

14. Due to the number of proposals in the Draft 2020/21 Budget Proposals, the questionnaire was structured so that respondents could give their views on any of the individual proposals if they chose to do so. This means we are able to summarise views by proposal, collating the views from the different consultation channels. Links to equality impact assessments for those proposals which required them in the opinion of the service were available within the relevant sections of the questionnaire.
Draft Budget Consultation 2020/21 Questionnaire

15. In total, 451 respondents filled out a questionnaire on the draft Budget proposals, either partially or fully. Respondents did not have to answer every question and so the total number of responses for each question differs and is shown in relation to each question.

16. Respondents were asked in what capacity they were responding to the consultation, and could select more than one option. There were 432 responses to this question, with respondents being able to select more than one option if applicable. Over two-thirds of respondents said they were local residents, and just over a third said they were County Council employees.

![Respondent Type Diagram]

Proposed increase in Council Tax

17. As part of the Draft Budget Proposals, the Council was proposing to increase the core council tax rate by 1.99% in 2020/21. For an average (Band D) Council Tax payer, this would mean an increase of £24.60 per year (47p per week) for the Northamptonshire County Council precept.

18. Under the rules current at the time of launching the consultation, the Council would have to hold a referendum on the proposed increase in council tax if the total increase is equal to or greater than 2%.

19. Respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree with the proposal. There were 305 responses to this question. Almost half of respondents said they strongly agree or tend to agree with the proposal, while just over 40% said they strongly disagree or tend to disagree with the proposal.
20. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 190 comments made in relation to this question.

21. A total of 79 respondents who agreed with the proposal provided comments, the most frequently mentioned reason for people agreeing with the proposal (by over half of respondents to this question) being that they acknowledged that services need more funding and that they accepted a Council Tax increase was necessary to do this. Around 15% of respondents, while accepting the need to increase Council Tax, added that they would want to see more investment, an improvement in services and to be reassured that the additional funding would be used properly. A Council Tax increase that everyone contributed to was considered fair by some respondents.

22. Some respondents felt that Council Tax should have been increased sooner, and that the Council might not be in the same financial situation if it had done so. A few respondents mentioned the previous financial decisions made and added that they hoped better financial decisions would be made in future.

23. A few respondents said they thought the increase should be higher in order to better fund services. A variety of other comments were made, including the view that the Council should receive more funding from central government; an acknowledgement that Council Tax in Northamptonshire is still relatively low even with this proposed increase; the view that funding has to come from somewhere; and requests that the Council Tax rules (relating to Council Tax Reduction Schemes, second homes and empty properties) be changed.

24. Other comments, while coming from respondents that indicated agreement with the proposed increase, contained some caveats – some concern for the financial impact on people who are already struggling and their ability to pay, along with the view that wages have not increased in the same way; and the view that this was penalising residents and some concern that services and financial decision-making have still not improved. One respondent wanted to see the increase used to support the Police, which is not part of the County Council’s remit.

25. A total of 17 respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal made a range of comments, with few common themes. A few respondents said that the increase in Council Tax must be used to improve services, while a similar number said that services have been cut but
that they acknowledge Council Tax must increase to address this. A couple of respondents mentioned previous financial decision-making.

26. Other comments included the view that Council Tax increases have been lower in recent years; the lack of desire to pay more Council Tax but an acceptance to do so if the funding is spent wisely, while another respondent acknowledged the ageing population and the need to properly fund support, and the view that Council Tax is still relatively low. Another respondent accepted the need for more funding for services but said that staff have not had adequate pay rises, while another said that they hope the correct decisions were being made on behalf of residents.

27. Further comments included the view that public sector budgets do not encourage spending less and saving money; dissatisfaction that services are being reduced and Council Tax is increasing; and the view that it is difficult to see how the proposed increase will improve services and that there should be more transparency about how money is spent. There was also the view that Council Tax will be increased regardless of the consultation feedback, and criticism of central government and local councillors.

28. A total of 93 respondents who disagreed with the proposal provided comments. The most frequently mentioned reason (by around a third of respondents to this question) for people disagreeing with the proposal was the view that the current financial position is down to previous financial decision-making and management and that residents should not have to pay for this. Another common view (from around a fifth of respondents) was that Council Tax was being increased while services are being reduced, and that this has been going on for several years.

29. Almost 14% of respondents were concerned about the impact of the proposed Council Tax increase on people on lower incomes, with some people giving personal examples of financial difficulties. A similar number of people felt that the increase was too high and/or that there had been too many increases recently and that some people would not be able to continue to afford to pay. Several commented that they felt the Council Tax increase would cancel out the proposed staff salary increase for 2020/21.

30. Several respondents doubted that the increased funding would deliver improvements, or that it would be spent correctly. A similar number commented that it would depend on what the money is spent on, and that they needed to see what they would get for the extra money. A few respondents commented on the pay of senior management and consultants and felt spending in this area should be reduced. A couple of respondents felt that the Council should make more savings rather than increasing Council Tax.

31. Other comments included a comment on the perceived inequity of different levels of Council Tax for different areas and criticism of the current Council Tax system with calls for a reform; the view that the public did not have enough say on Council Tax increases; the view that additional funding for the Council is not needed; and the view that NCC needs more funding from central government.

32. Further comments included disagreement with the principle of having to pay for services that the individual does not use e.g. adult social care or education; that the Council should try to recover more debt from service users before increasing Council Tax for everyone; that there is
too much waste at NCC and that only statutory services should be provided; that families should do more to support Adult Social Care customers; an acceptance of paying more Council Tax if it stops further service cuts and the view that the Council needs to get a better grip on spending first. One respondent misunderstood the proposal and thought the increase applied to lower Council Tax bands only.

33. The one respondent who commented having said “don’t know” said it depends what the increase will be spent on. No comments were received when the respondent did not indicate agree or disagree to the proposal.

34. Any respondents who felt the proposal would have a negative impact were then asked to tell us what they thought the impact would be, along with any suggestions on how any potential negative impacts could be mitigated. A total of 100 respondents provided comment. By far the most frequently mentioned impact (by 40% of respondents) was a negative financial impact on people on lower incomes, from general observations to personal stories about financial difficulties. Several respondents also felt that the proposed Council Tax increase would effectively cancel out the proposed staff pay rise, with a concern that it would be perceived that the Council Tax increase was being made to pay for a staff pay rise and the possible negative effect that would have on opinions of staff.

35. Several respondents acknowledged that some people would not be happy with paying more Council Tax, with some making similar comments to the previous question about paying more Council Tax while services and budgets are being reduced. Several respondents felt the impact would be further lack of trust in the Council. A few respondents felt that the increase would be unpopular unless residents can see services improve.

36. A couple of respondents said that the negative impact would be that it costs all taxpayers more, not just affecting those on lower incomes. Other impacts mentioned included the view that the funding would still not be enough for what the Council needs; that there would be a knock-on effect on the local economy if people have less disposable income because their Council Tax is higher; that the proposed budget will negatively impact upon children’s and adult’s services; and that there would be a negative impact upon local Conservative councillors if residents do not agree with the proposed increase. One respondent felt there would be no negative impact as long as the additional funding is spent correctly, while another thought that there would be no negative impact at all.

37. Various potential mitigations were mentioned in response to this question. Several respondents thought the impact could be mitigated by the Council getting a better grip of its finances and increasing its efficiency before considering Council Tax increases. Slightly fewer thought that any negative impact could be mitigated by the Council being clear what the money will be spent on and ensuring there is greater transparency around the cost of services and what people get for their money. A few respondents felt that the increase would be fairer if Council Tax was means-tested in some way, meaning that people earning more money paid a higher rate. A similar number felt that senior management salaries should be reduced to limit the need for Council Tax increases.

38. Other mitigations suggested included saving money in other ways or generating more income e.g. by reviewing contracts, selling land; offering financial support and advice to anyone
negatively affected by an increase in Council Tax and increasing Council Tax by a smaller percentage.

39. Further mitigations included making sure that services are properly funded; recovering more debt from customers before increasing Council Tax; reviewing Council Tax bands; better partnership working; and better communication of the good work the Council does to improve its image. Respondents also said that the impact could be mitigated by not increasing Council Tax at all, or by cutting it; some mentioned councillors, saying that the impact could be mitigated by changing the current councillors and checking candidates more carefully before elections; and by ensuring that no-one who had previously played a part in what were deemed as poor financial decisions and management is employed by or represents the Council in future. One respondent felt it was for senior managers and councillors to decide how to mitigate any negative impact.

40. Several respondents also made some general comments in response to this question. These included comments about the previous financial management at the Council and the view that Council Tax should have been increased sooner. A few respondents referenced their responses to the previous question.

41. As well as increasing Council Tax by 1.99%, the Council is allowed to add a further 2% increase to be spent on Adult Social Care, subject to the outcome of the Government’s consultation on this. This was proposed as part of the consultation.

42. Respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree with the proposal. There were 264 responses to this question. Almost half of respondents said they strongly agree or tend to agree with this proposal, while just over a third said they strongly disagree or tend to disagree with this proposal.

43. Respondents were invited to provide comment as to why they either agreed or disagreed with the proposal, and 135 respondents did so. A total of 60 respondents who agreed with the proposal provided comment. By far the most frequently mentioned reason for people agreeing with the proposal was the view that social care needs the funding and should be an area of priority, mentioned by around two-thirds of respondents who agreed to this proposal and commented on this question. This was followed by some respondents saying the Council must
ensure that the funding provides value for money and is not wasted or spent inappropriately. Several respondents said they agreed because the Council did not receive enough funding or support from central government for adult social care. A similar number of respondents felt it was a fair amount of money to pay towards improving adult social care.

44. Other comments included the view that the money has to come from somewhere, while another respondent stated that they were prepared to pay for better services. Some respondents commented that although they agreed with the Adult Social Care precept, they did not understand why money was also being taken out of the adult social care budget and that this increase on top of the increase to the basic level of Council Tax may be too much for some people. One respondent wanted assurances that the money would not focus on hospital transfers to the detriment of community services. Other comments included the view that there was a lack of trust in the Council and that people on benefits need a reduction in their Council Tax. Some people referred to the comments made in relation to the previous question.

45. A total of 15 respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal made a range of comments, with few common themes. These included the view that adult social care is not the only service that is underfunded, with children’s services being mentioned; that there should be an alternative way of funding adult social care e.g. a social care tax; the view that the need for additional funding has to be balanced against what people can afford; and that the Council must demonstrate what the additional funding will be spent on and how the service will improve.

46. Further comments included the view that there is lots of waste in adult social care; criticism of central government and local councillors; agreement with the proposal if it is really necessary and if it is done properly; and the view that most people shouldn’t have to pay for a service they don’t use.

47. There were also comments made in relation to the view that central government should pay for adult social care; that people don’t want to pay for a poor quality service; the view that the service needs more than just money; doubts that it would actually be spent on adult social care; and the view that there are too many increases in Council Tax. Some people referred to comments made in relation to previous questions.

48. A total of 59 respondents who disagreed with the proposal made a range of comments. The most frequently mentioned reason, by several respondents, was the previous financial management of the Council, closely followed by respondents saying they or others would not be able to afford the precept and the view that other services needed funding too, with education, roads and children’s social care being mentioned. Several respondents felt that tax payers should not have to fund adult social care, with some saying it should be funded by central government. A similar number commented that they would have to pay more but budgets are being cut.

49. Similar to the proposed increase in the basic Council Tax level, a couple of respondents felt that the Adult Social Care Precept would effectively cancel out the proposed staff pay rise for 2020/21. A couple of respondents talked about personal experiences of Adult Social Care, saying that they or a loved one had been unable to access social care. A similar number doubted that the precept would improve the service and said that they wanted proof that the money would be spent on Adult Social Care. A couple of respondents felt that this charge was unfair on top of
the proposed increase in the basic rate of Council Tax. A similar number of respondents felt that too much money is spent on Adult Social Care already.

50. Other comments included a comment on the perceived inequity of different levels of Council Tax for different areas; the view that the Council needs to be more business-like in how it operates; that the service needs more than money to improve it; and that the increase would be fairer if Council Tax was means-tested in some way, meaning that people earning more money paid a higher rate. Further comments included a lack of clarity of the Council’s role in social care; the view that the Adult Social Care Precept is financially unfair on older people; the view that the money would be wasted by the Council; and a disagreement with the principle of outsourcing services.

51. Other comments included the view that the Council should save more money first before adding the Adult Social Care Precept on to Council Tax; that there should be an alternative way of funding adult social care e.g. a social care tax; that senior management salaries should be reduced first; and that social care should be paid for by the NHS. Further comments included a disagreement with funding Adult Social Care; the view that it was not needed; the misconception that the Adult Social Care Precept would only be applied to Band D properties; and a comment about the £10m loan to Northampton Town Football Club, incorrectly attributed to NCC. Some people referred to comments made in relation to previous questions.

52. The one respondent who commented having said that ‘don’t know’ asked whether there were other services that need money just as much (if not more) than Adult Social Care. No comments were received when the respondent did not indicate agree or disagree to the proposal.

53. Any respondents who felt the proposal would have a negative impact were then asked to tell us what they thought the impact would be, along with any suggestions on how any potential negative impacts could be mitigated. A total of 65 respondents provided comment. By far the most frequently mentioned impact, by almost a quarter of those who commented on this question, was a negative financial impact on people on lower incomes, from general observations to personal stories about financial difficulties. Again a few respondents felt that the Adult Social Care precept would cancel out the staff pay rise proposed for 2020/21.

54. Various other impacts were mentioned, including the view that some people would not be happy paying more Council Tax, and general dissatisfaction with the Council and a lack of trust in councillors and senior management. Other comments included the view that additional money should go into other services rather than Adult Social Care, with Children’s Services being specifically mentioned; a concern that anyone paying the Adult Social Care Precept who is also a social care customer paying for their care may not be able to afford their care and support; the view that people may not understand the need to fund social care; and the view that there would be a negative impact on those paying for the service via the Adult Social Care Precept but not accessing the service.

55. Further comments included the view that the funding increase is too late to have an impact on Adult Social Care; the view that asking residents to pay the Adult Social Care Precept would have a wider impact on the local economy in terms of disposable income, and the view that it would have a particularly negative impact on Northampton. One respondent felt it would not have a negative impact.
56. Various potential mitigations were mentioned in response to this question. Several respondents thought that any negative impact could be mitigated by the Council being clear what the money will be spent on and ensuring there is greater transparency around the cost of services and what people get for their money. A similar number of respondents felt that senior management salaries should be reduced to limit the need for Council Tax increases. Other ways to save money instead of increasing Council Tax were suggested, including improving the efficiency of the Council, better contract management and the Council getting a better grip of its finances.

57. Alternative funding sources were suggested as a way of mitigating the need to increase Council Tax, with some respondents saying it should be funded by central government and others saying social care should be paid for by the NHS. A similar number of respondents felt the whole Adult Social Care Service at NCC needs overhauling. Other comments included that there should be an alternative way of funding adult social care e.g. a social care tax; that the impact could be mitigated by not cutting services or not increasing Council Tax; and that Council Tax bands should be reviewed to make payments fairer.

58. Some respondents also made some general comments in response to this question. These included comments about the previous financial management at the Council and the observation that Council Tax was effectively being increased twice; some respondents also wanted assurance that this increase would be enough, and the hope that more money in the system will mean that people get the care they need. Other general comments included the perception that there is a lot of waste in Adult Social Care; negative comments about councillors. Some respondents referenced their responses to the previous question.

59. At the time of launching the draft budget consultation, the Government had not confirmed the rules around the allowed percentage increase for 2020/21 before a referendum is needed. Respondents were therefore asked if the Government rules change to allow the Council to increase Council Tax by more than 2% to further fund frontline services to what extent they agreed or disagreed with this proposal. There were 256 responses to this question. Almost a third of respondents strongly agree or tend to agree with this proposal, while over half strongly disagree or tend to disagree with this proposal.

![Potential Increase in Council Tax by more than 1.99% (with a further 2% for Adult Social Care) if Government change the rules to allow this to happen without a referendum](image-url)
Northamptonshire Adult Social Services (NASS)

Commissioning & Procurement

- **18-001-16 Specialist Centre for Step Down Care – Mental Health and Acquired Brain Injury**
  - Moray Lodge development by Northampton Borough Council and Northampton Partnership Homes to provide specialist and step down supported living for people with an Acquired Brain Injury and Mental Health support needs. This is forecast to deliver savings of £114,000 in 2020/21.

60. Respondents were given the above explanation and asked if they agree or disagree with the proposal. There were 225 responses to this question. Almost 60% said they strongly agree or tend to agree with this proposal, while 12.5% said they strongly disagree or tend to disagree with this proposal.

61. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 69 comments made in relation to this question. A total of 30 respondents who agreed with the proposal provided comment, with the majority feeling there is a need for improved mental health services and welcomed enhanced supported living services for these service users and those with acquired brain injury. Several respondents made comments giving their general support of the proposal. A similar number of respondents welcomed the prospect of savings, with some adding the proviso that there should be no detrimental impact on services.

62. A couple of respondents commented about partnership working, with one hoping the proposal would be an effective partnership of support services, whilst the other respondent said they would like a mental health service that works directly with the police and hospitals. A couple of respondents felt there was not enough information given about the proposal. Other comments included a belief that in-house provision is more cost effective than one commissioned externally; that some people are unable to pay further tax increases to support others; that families should do more to support the care and rehabilitation of their relatives; that the cost of this care should be funded by central government; and that the savings made should be reinvested into care services.
63. A total of 16 respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal provided comment. The majority of these respondents commented as to how they felt the proposal was unclear in how the savings were to be made, with a few questioning if this meant there would be service reductions. A few respondents said they had little knowledge on the subject.

64. One respondent said they felt the county needs more diverse support and that services are disjointed, whilst another said they disagreed with partnership working between public bodies and the private sector. Other respondents made various comments including the need for quality of care and health benefits; general criticism of NCC and its leadership and management; that the proposal is too Northampton-centric and should have a wider geographical spread; and a belief that a saving would not be made.

65. A total of 19 respondents who disagreed with the proposal provided comment. These respondents gave a variety of reasons. Some said the service should not be subject to a budget saving and that adequate resources should be in place to support vulnerable adults. Respondents felt there is no more scope for budget savings if a good level of service is to be retained. One respondent was concerned that the scheme would cost more in future years and this would outweigh any initial saving. A few respondents also commented how they felt mental health services funding should be increased, and that mental health services should not be regarded as of lesser importance than physical health services.

66. A couple of respondents felt the services should be funded and managed centrally, with one adding that this should be delivered via the NHS’s budget. A similar number of respondents also felt the service would be better run by an external organisation, with St Andrews being mentioned as a potential provider. Other comments included a concern that the proposal is too focussed on Northampton and that funding should be more equally spread across the county; that access to the service should be based on individual needs and abilities; that a review of expenditure should be conducted; and general dissatisfaction with NCC.

67. The four respondents who commented having said “don’t know” made various comments. A couple wanted more information about the proposal. One questioned if the proposal would be deliverable, whilst another felt various support and health services were more focused on keeping costs down rather than effectively supporting individuals. No comments were received when respondent did not indicate agree or disagree to the proposal.

68. Any respondents who felt the proposal would have a negative impact were then asked to tell us what they thought the impact would be, along with any suggestions on how any potential negative impacts could be mitigated. A total of 24 respondents provided comment. The majority stated how they felt the proposal could be detrimental to service users, especially if there were service reductions, and that it has the potential to cause significant harm to individuals. It was commented that the long-term cost of an individual’s care could be more if their services are reduced. It was felt that any reduction in funding should not be to the detriment of the service user. It was added that there is a need for appropriately knowledgeable and trained staff to help deliver the required support services.

69. Some respondents voiced conflicting views. One resident felt the service should be funded from increased Council Tax, whilst another felt taxes were already too high. Another disagreed with outsourcing to external providers and was concerned this could cause future service reductions,
whilst another felt local authorities do not have the specialist understanding to be able to effectively deliver the service.

70. Other comments included reference to previous comments made; that care varies from county to county; that further information regarding where savings will be made and reinvested should be available; that the required care should be available for anyone who may require it; that the monies should be saved and services transformed; and general dissatisfaction with NCC and its political leadership.

- **19-001-06 New Learning Disability Service provision** - Proposal with Northampton Borough Council to build eight specialist bungalows for clients to live more independently, creating savings from less use of residential care. The build will be funded by Homes England and Health. This is forecast to deliver savings of £406,000 in 2020/21.

71. Respondents were given the above explanation and asked if they agree or disagree with the proposal. There were 224 responses to this question. Almost three-quarters of respondents said they strongly agree or tend to agree with the proposal, while just over 10% said they strongly disagree or tend to disagree with the proposal.

72. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 79 comments made in relation to this question. A total of 48 respondents who agreed with the proposal provided comment, with the vast majority stating their general support for the proposal and the prospect of individuals being able to live more independently. They felt this service is much needed and, where appropriate and properly assessed, people should be able to live independently and not in residential care, and that this proposal would help alleviate some of the pressures on residential care and make a positive impact on the individual’s wellbeing. A couple of respondents felt this highlighted the large expense of residential care and it was commented that this proposal has the potential to generate a large saving over an individual’s lifespan.

73. Several respondents said they felt eight specialist bungalows would not be sufficient and thought there should be more. Some respondents said they supported the proposal on the proviso that the service is person-centred with appropriate support plans in place and that this
does not mean a diminished service for those involved. It was commented that the new bungalows should be suitably designed and well-built, and will be a tangible asset that can help support independence for the foreseeable future. Other comments included the need for the scheme to support people across the county, not just those already in Northampton; that more information is needed; support for the investment made by NBC; that this should save further expenditure including that of the NHS; and the expectation that this would also generate a staff saving.

74. A total of nine respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal provided comment. These respondents provided a variety of views. A couple of respondents felt eight new homes is not sufficient and more is required. One respondent wanted to know the number of people who required this service. Another said they lack the knowledge to be able to comment on this matter. One respondent felt the proposal was too Northampton-centric. One respondent questioned why this would be funded via the county’s council tax and not NBC’s as they saw this as only a benefit to those people living in Northampton, whilst another questioned a council tax rise if the build cost is being funded by Homes England and Health. One respondent gave their general support for the proposal and the saving it will generate; and another felt this was only a short-term saving.

75. A total of 19 respondents who disagreed with the proposal provided comment. Again respondents made a variety of comments. A few questioned how the service would be supported and felt there is currently a lack of care support services and staff within the community to support independent living. Respondents also felt eight properties would not be sufficient to meet current levels of demand. It was also commented that there needs to be a fairness and equity with the allocation of properties, and that the current focus is too Northampton-centric and the service should be available across the county.

76. A few respondents were doubtful the proposal would generate the outlined savings, with one respondent questioning if the full in-year saving would be made if the homes have not yet been built, whilst another wanted to see more information regarding the ongoing running costs and questioned whether this was included within the savings projection. It was commented that this is a large investment for a small cohort of people and that monies could be better spent on supporting more individuals or better utilising and maintaining existing buildings. A couple of respondents also raised their concern about the involvement of private businesses. Other comments included concern this would put more pressure on families; and that money needs to be invested into staff and their retention.

77. The two respondents who commented having said “don’t know” referred to comments made in relation to previous questions. The one respondent who commented and did not indicate agree or disagree to the proposal said they did not have sufficient knowledge to answer the question and asked if the individuals would receive less support or be able to manage independently.

78. Any respondents who felt the proposal would have a negative impact were then asked to tell us what they thought the impact would be, along with any suggestions on how any potential negative impacts could be mitigated. A total of 19 respondents made a variety of comments. There was a concern that the proposal may isolate people, with a feeling that people may be better off with more communal living arrangements or residential care. It was commented that the proposal needs to be properly implemented and that ongoing care, support and effective
person-centred planning is required. There was a concern that the focus on people living more independently would put more pressure on families to provide support and that some families live some distance apart.

79. Other comments include that there needs to be provision outside Northampton; a concern about the increasing cost of Council Tax; that the bungalows should be built as units to reduce staff costs; that staff and patients need to be engaged; a concern the proposal will mean the removal of funding from other areas; and a request that the investment be spent elsewhere such as highways or waste collection.

- **19-001-12 Shaw Public Private Partnerships (PPP) Review of Packages** - Review of supplementary care costs over and above contract hours and closer management of periods of voids charges. This is forecast to deliver savings of £80,000 in 2020/21.

80. Respondents were given the above explanation and asked if they agree or disagree with the proposal. There were 205 responses to this question. Almost half of respondents said they strongly agree or tend to agree with the proposal, while just over 10% of respondents said they strongly disagree or tend to disagree with the proposal.

![Shaw Public Private Partnerships (PPP) Review of Packages](image)

81. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 56 comments made in relation to this question. A total of 26 respondents who agreed with the proposal provided comment, with the majority stating their general support for the better management of funds, and a few questioning why this isn’t already happening and that it should be business as usual. One respondent wanted to know if the cost of the review would outweigh the potential savings. Respondents wanted closer monitoring and more frequent assessments to ensure service users are in receipt of the correct care at the appropriate rates.

82. A few respondents raised their concern that they did not wish for a review to result in any reduction in service provision for the service user. A few respondents also criticised the Shaw contract and felt the contract should be amended and that there is the potential for further savings to be made. Other comments included a suggestion on how care could be charged; and
support for the proposal on the proviso that it is managed and not just applying pressure to deliver within selected timeframes.

83. A total of 11 respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal provided comment. A few said they were concerned that a drive for savings could have an impact on service users and the services they receive or reduced staffing levels. A couple of respondents criticised contracts with private companies and said they would prefer services to be delivered in-house. A few respondents said they felt they did not have enough knowledge or understanding in order to be able to provide feedback. Other comments included general support for the proposal and questioned why this was not managed as business as usual; that the proposal is too Northampton-centric and there is a need for more geographically spread solutions; and that staff numbers should be reviewed in order to find savings.

84. A total of 11 respondents who disagreed with the proposal provided comment. Again respondents made a variety of comments. A few respondents simply expressed their distrust and dissatisfaction with NCC. A couple of respondents did not believe the saving would be made, with one wanting further information about the proposal. A similar number of respondents were concerned that savings could lead to a reduction in staff and services to vulnerable people. Other comments included criticism of public private partnerships; and reference to previous comments made.

85. The majority of the six respondents who commented having said “don’t know” said they did not understand the question and that more information is required to enable them to provide an answer. One respondent expressed their dissatisfaction with NCC, whilst another made reference to their previous comments. The one respondent who commented and did not indicate agree or disagree to the proposal referred to comments made in relation to previous questions.

86. Any respondents who felt the proposal would have a negative impact were then asked to tell us what they thought the impact would be, along with any suggestions on how any potential negative impacts could be mitigated. A total of 11 respondents provided comment. Whilst a few respondents referred to comments made in relation to previous questions, the majority of respondents raised their concerns that a drive for savings could result in fewer staff and services being available. One respondent felt the proposal would cost more than it would save, whilst another felt a full service review is required of working conditions for providers and the allocation of care hours for service users. Other comments included one respondent’s general distrust of NCC; and another respondent said they felt the burden of the review cost should not fall upon tax payers.

- 19-001-05 Care Home Review - Review of Evelyn Wright care home viability and building investment and alternatives to meet need more effectively in the area.

87. This proposal was subject to a separate consultation, as outlined in paragraph 6. The consultation analysis report is available on the Council’s Consultation Hub.
Policy and Practice

- **19-001-16 Fair Contributions Policy** - Proposal to revise the allowances of a number of client groups in line with national and local levels

88. This proposal was subject to a separate consultation, as outlined in paragraph 7. The consultation analysis report is available on the Council’s [Consultation Hub](#).

Technology and Innovation

- **19-001-07 Brain in Hand** - Use of Assistive Technology to support clients with specific focused care needs and to promote independence and life skills. This is forecast to deliver savings of £78,000 in 2020/21.

89. Respondents were given the above explanation and asked if they agree or disagree with the proposal. There were 190 responses to this question. Over 70% of respondents said they strongly agree or tend to agree with the proposal, while just over 7% said they strongly disagree or tend to disagree with the proposal.

![Brain in Hand Graph](#)

90. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 48 comments made in relation to this question. A total of 32 respondents who agreed with the proposal provided comment. The vast majority of these respondents said how they supported the proposal and the ability to use technology to help promote and support independence and the benefits this could bring to service users. Several respondents added the proviso that individuals’ needs to be sufficiently assessed to ensure this is suitable for them. One respondent added that service users and carers need to be fully trained to ensure they can use the equipment correctly. A few respondents said they would not want technology to replace human interaction and that it is important that people were not left isolated or without sufficient care support. Other comments included the need for increased advertising and greater awareness of the service.

91. A total of four respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal provided comment. These respondents felt the use of assistive technology needs to be person-centred as
it would not be suitable for everyone. It was again commented that suitable training on how to use the equipment will be required, as was the concern this would reduce human interaction with carers. Other comments included a belief that care standards are falling; and that it is hard to answer the question without a better understanding of how individuals’ lives may be impacted.

92. A total of 10 respondents who disagreed with the proposal made a variety of comments. A couple highlighted the importance of ensuring assistive technology is only put in place when it is suitable. A similar number said how they disagreed with the use of assistive technology. One respondent said they need more information about assistive technology as they do not know what it is. Other comments included a request that more money is invested into assistive technology; doubt about the robustness of the figures and that support should be provided by specialist charities; general distrust of NCC; and a request for a review of staffing levels and abilities.

93. There were two respondents who commented having selected “don’t know”. One felt the question was too specific to be asked of members of the public, whilst the other doubted the potential savings and noted that no details regarding the installation, ongoing maintenance costs etc has been mentioned. No comments were received when respondents did not indicate agree or disagree to the proposal.

94. Any respondents who felt the proposal would have a negative impact were then asked to tell us what they thought the impact would be, along with any suggestions on how any potential negative impacts could be mitigated. A total of 13 respondents made a variety of comments. A couple of respondents voiced their general support. A similar number of respondents expressed the need for any equipment supplied to be suitable and for individuals to have choice and control, with one respondent questioning how an estimated saving can be projected without a view taken as to how many people will be in receipt of the equipment.

95. One respondent felt assistive technology may not be reliable and was concerned it may reduce social interaction. Other comments included a request for funding to be given to emergency services instead; that assistive technology should be cost-effective for the Council to maintain; a concern it would reduce care support; general distrust of NCC; and references to previous comments respondents have made in relation to previous questions.

Demand Management

- **19-001-11 Mental Health Review** - Complete review of mental health packages and opportunity to step down care or support an individual to return to independence following a period of intervention and crisis care by Adult Social Services. This is forecast to deliver savings of £200,000 in 2020/21.

96. Respondents were given the above explanation and asked if they agree or disagree with the proposal. There were 180 responses to this question. Almost 60% of respondents said they strongly agree or tend to agree with the proposal, while almost 14% of respondents said they strongly disagree or tend to disagree with the proposal.
97. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 44 comments made in relation to this question. A total of 19 respondents who agreed with the proposal provided comment. The majority commented on their general support for the proposal and welcomed the prospect of individuals being enabled to become more independent, with some adding the proviso that they are supported and monitored appropriately. It was commented that mental health services require additional support.

98. Many of the respondents also said how they felt regular reviews were important to help ensure the right support and resource requirements are in place. Some questioned why this was not already business as usual. Other comments included a concern that support is not just passed on to another service, for example the NHS or police; and that a new model should be developed to help meet future demands.

99. A total of 10 respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal made various comments. A few said they were unclear how the proposal would deliver a saving. Another said they were surprised there is a proposal to reduce funding from mental health services as they believe it is currently under-resourced. A couple of respondents said regular reviews should already be happening as a matter of good practice, with one adding that these reviews should be for the benefit of service users and not as a cost-saving opportunity. One respondent commented on their personal experience and said they only interacted with NHS services. Other comments included the need for good intervention and crisis care; and a concern that savings would be poorly reinvested.

100. A total of 14 respondents who disagreed with the proposal provided comment. These respondents most frequently said mental health services should not be reduced and felt this would remove support from vulnerable individuals who require it, and that a reduction in funding would likely lead to worse outcomes for those in need, with one respondent saying further investment is required. A couple of respondents commented on their personal experience and said how they felt they were not given the level of support they required.

101. Other comments included agreement that there needs to be a review of care packages but a lack of belief this would generate any savings; a call for a restructure of mental health services as it was felt staff numbers are too high; concern with public private partnerships, which were
considered expensive and profit-led; and a request that mental health services no longer be available as the respondent did not feel they were effective and not reducing demand.

102. The one respondent who commented having selected “don’t know” referred to comments made in relation to previous questions. No comments were received when respondents did not indicate agree or disagree to the proposal.

103. Any respondents who felt the proposal would have a negative impact were then asked to tell us what they thought the impact would be, along with any suggestions on how any potential negative impacts could be mitigated. A total of 11 respondents made various comments. A few respondents commented on their concerns over what they felt would be a reduction in support services. They were concerned that people would not be able to access these services as easily and the subsequent impact this could have on individuals’ wellbeing and further expenditure on more support needs that may be required as a result.

104. One respondent commented on their personal experience with the service and felt it needed improving, and felt service users should be more involved with the design and delivery of services. Other comments included an opinion that too much investment has already been made in mental health services and that it still requires improvement; that there should not be a profit-led approach to public services; that there should be more investment in mental health services, with the suggestion that large local organisations could sponsor the service; and a comment of general dissatisfaction with NCC.

- **19-001-14 Strengths Based Working** – Transformation of Adults Social Care pathways and processes to ensure a focus on client outcomes, independence, better decision making and best practice approaches to reduce delays and spend. This project is funded by the Business Rate Pilot at assessment stage and is now out for tender for the implementation of new Target Operating Model (TOM) service design. This is forecast to deliver savings of £3.5m in 2020/21.

105. Respondents were given the above explanation and asked if they agree or disagree with the proposal. There were 173 responses to this question. Almost 60% of respondents said they strongly agree or tend to agree with the proposal, while almost 10% of respondents said they strongly disagree or tend to disagree with the proposal.
Appendix I

106. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 42 comments made in relation to this question. A total of 22 respondents who agreed with the proposal provided comment. The majority of these gave their general support for the proposal and welcomed a new approach, although some added the proviso that savings should not be to the detriment of service users. It was felt services should be person-centred and that change should be for the benefit of service users. A few of the respondents felt the services were in need of improvement with personal examples given.

107. A few respondents ask for staff to be consulted with on the new Target Operating Model (TOM), as they wanted its development to be influenced by their experience, and for it not to be developed by people with little knowledge of the service area. A couple of respondents raised their doubts about whether the change and its projected savings would be delivered. Other comments included a request for improved communication to service users; and a request that services be delivered by local professional charities.

108. A total of five respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal provided comment. One respondent felt the service needs an independent review and was concerned the proposal is about saving monies instead of providing improved support. They suggested care needs are randomly checked by an independent panel of service users and professionals to ensure the right level of support is being provided. One respondent felt services should not be provided if the Council is unable to afford them, whereas another respondent said they felt there are too many budget reductions. Other comments included that structure changes should be made after the service is stable; and that it is not possible to agree or disagree to the proposal as there is no certainty it will be successful.

109. A total of 11 respondents who disagreed with the proposal provided comment. A few respondents appeared to have been confused by the proposal and thought it meant the service is being outsourced. The few that were under this impression were against the idea. One respondent commented how they felt the service was in need of improvement. Another expressed how they doubted the proposed saving would be made. Other comments included that all people should pay the same; a question of why council tax is being increased if there is a forecasted saving on this proposal of £3.5m; a suggestion there be fewer service providers; and that the social care budget should not be reduced and any efficiencies should be reinvested into the services.
110. A total of four respondents who selected “don’t know” made a comment. One referred to comments made in relation to previous questions. Another, similar to above, thought the proposal meant the service was being put out to tender. The other respondents felt the proposal description was unclear. No comments were received when respondents did not indicate agree or disagree to the proposal.

111. Any respondents who felt the proposal would have a negative impact were then asked to tell us what they thought the impact would be, along with any suggestions on how any potential negative impacts could be mitigated. A total of eight respondents provided comment. Again there appeared to be some confusion over the proposal with a couple of respondents thinking it meant the service was being outsourced. Other comments included the view that this will inevitably bring change to staff and service users; that reducing the size of the service will provide more money; that care pathways should be person-centred; and comments of general dissatisfaction with NCC.

Operational Efficiency

- 19-001-02 Direct Payment High Balance Review - The recovery of the backlog of unspent sums from customers’ personal budgets or Direct Payments when they are not used in the required period or consistently underspent in line with practice and policy. This is forecast to deliver savings of £500,000 in 2020/21.

112. Respondents were given the above explanation and asked if they agree or disagree with the proposal. There were 171 responses to this question. Over 70% of respondents said they strongly agree or tend to agree with the proposal, while almost 9% said they strongly disagree or tend to disagree with the proposal.

113. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 54 comments made in relation to this question. A total of 38 respondents who agreed with the proposal provided comment. The vast majority of these respondents commented on their support for having the funds effectively managed and suggested these
funds should be under regular review. A few of the respondents voiced their opinion that some Direct Payments are being misused and they felt there ought to be a “tighter grip” on personal budgets. Several respondents commented how they felt the current situation is predominately due to poor practice within the service. Some thought that the Direct Payment amounts for the sums in question were either too high or not being reassessed often enough or that improved and more frequent monitoring would have helped mitigated against the current situation.

114. A few respondents said that any monies recovered should be reinvested back into Adult Social Care. It was commented that the recovery of monies from vulnerable people should be done carefully and fairly, and that consideration should be given to people whose needs change from time to time so that the amount they need is inconsistent. Other comments included a respondent’s personal observation that they have witnessed service users with too high a Direct Payment amount and those with not enough.

115. A total of four respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal provided comment. One respondent felt the issue is a result of the referrals process which they considered too complex and slow, and that service users should be kept better informed. Another respondent questioned whether the underspending was due to a lack of service provision to purchase. One respondent felt the proposal would generate a saving to the benefit of the wider council, whilst the other respondent thought there should be lower salaries and expenses for NCC’s senior management and leaders instead.

116. A total of 11 respondents who disagreed with the proposal provided comment. The most frequent remarks were from respondents who felt service users should be supported more to help them spend their Direct Payment correctly with clear objectives, as it was felt that some service users do not fully understand what they are allowed to use their Direct Payment for. A couple of the respondents said it should be up to the individual to spend the money given to them as they wish.

117. One respondent commented that some accrued monies may be due to the service user having to make purchases that are not weekly. Another respondent asked how amounts not in use will be assessed and identified. Other comments included that unspent monies should be redirected to other services; that individuals’ needs should be investigated if they have unspent monies; that people accruing unspent Direct Payments should be prosecuted; and that Council Tax should not be increased if this proposal is forecast to deliver savings of £500,000.

118. The one respondent who commented having said “don’t know” referred to comments made in relation to previous questions. No comments were received when respondents did not indicate agree or disagree to the proposal.

119. Any respondents who felt the proposal would have a negative impact were then asked to tell us what they thought the impact would be, along with any suggestions on how any potential negative impacts could be mitigated. A total of five respondents provided comment. It was commented that unspent monies may be due to service users saving for larger essential purchases at a future date. Another said service users should be left with sufficient funds should they have to make a repayment. Other comments included a suggestion to reduce funding to some services in order to increase budgets for another; that service users’ finances should have

23
been better managed; and that NCC should have better supported the service users in question to spend their budget and understand the policies and processes.

- **19-001-04 Reviewing catering facilities at day services** - A review of catering provided at three in-house day services (Riverside Resource Centre, Towcester, Patrick Road Resource Centre, Corby and Gladstone Road Resource Centre, Northampton) and food options for in-house day services. The feedback in paragraphs 120-128 is from the general draft Budget consultation. The feedback from a separate questionnaire for clients and their family members to give their views on this proposal is shown in paragraphs 129-157. This is forecast to deliver savings of £100,000 in 2020/21.

120. Respondents were given the above explanation and asked if they agree or disagree with the proposal. There were 163 responses to this question. Almost 40% of respondents said they strongly agree or tend to agree with this proposal, while almost 13% said they strongly disagree or tend to disagree with this proposal.

![Reviewing catering facilities at day services](image)

121. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 28 comments made in relation to this question. A total of 11 respondents who agreed with the proposal provided comment. A few respondents said they agreed that a review was needed and that new ideas should be considered, although one questioned why the Council was unable to provide meals within a budget. Another respondent said there should be an ongoing review of the provision of nutritional food with costings managed more like a business.

122. A few respondents felt the service was no longer required. One respondent felt the service was not used as much as it used to be, with another respondent adding that service users would be able to bring in a lunch with them. One respondent said that it would be a learning curve for service users to adjust and the service should not be funded if it is unaffordable. Other comments included the need to still provide an acceptable standard of food; that the target savings appear ambitious; that the review should be about eliminating waste and not reducing cost or quality; and another wanted to see more detail about the proposal.
123. A total of five respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal provided comment. Most of these respondents felt they did not have enough information about the proposal, including what the alternative arrangements would be. One respondent wanted to know if there is any way the service could be retained, for example by increasing the costs charged for the meals.

124. A total of 10 respondents who disagreed with the proposal provided comment. Respondents gave a variety of views with various concerns raised about the impact on service users. It was commented that an in-house catering provision should be retained. One respondent whose relative attends one of the day services commented on the importance of them receiving a healthy meal and that snacks and sandwiches would not be a replacement. They said they would be prepared to pay more to keep the service. Concerns were raised about the quality and lack of nutritional value of alternative food. One respondent was concerned that the cost would increase if the alternative options were food and drink from vending machines.

125. One respondent said they were a member of staff. They criticised the Council as they felt the service has been allowed to get to the current state by not increasing the prices of meals to match the overheads. They cited alternative venues which charged slightly more and felt their kitchen should be given the opportunity to make it more profitable. They also commented that their service is also a teaching kitchen that helps service users develop life skills and employment opportunities. Other comments included general dissatisfaction with the proposal; a concern that this may be the only meal some people receive; a hope that the views of service users and their families influence the final decision; and a suggestion that the service be stopped, although considering this comment, it is feasible this respondent may have selected disagree by mistake to the previous question instead of agree.

126. Only two respondents who selected “don’t know” made a comment. One said it should be down to families and users; and the other said a change in meal provision could have a negative impact to the vulnerable people who use the day services. No comments were received when respondents did not indicate agree or disagree to the proposal.

127. Any respondents who felt the proposal would have a negative impact were then asked to tell us what they thought the impact would be, along with any suggestions on how any potential negative impacts could be mitigated. A total of eight respondents provided comment. A few respondents commented on their general disagreement with the proposal and the potential negative impact this may have on vulnerable service users. One respondent was of the misunderstanding that service users would no longer have access to any food and drink at the day services.

128. A similar number of comments were also made raising concern about the quality of alternative food provision, and that alternatives would be processed food and of lower nutritional value. Other comments included that the service was needed for social interaction as well as providing food; there would be a loss of skilled staff; that the catering should be in-house with service users working in the kitchen to help develop life skills and independence; and a comment of concern from a family member that their relative’s mental health and behaviour could worsen should alternative provision cause them digestive problems.
Review of catering facilities at day services – Service User and Family Member/Carer Questionnaire

129. Service users and their families had a targeted questionnaire to find out specifically what they thought about the proposal and the impact it might have on them/their family member. Twenty-eight respondents completed this targeted questionnaire. A total of 19 responses were from service users and 9 responses were from family members and/or carers.

130. Respondents were asked whether the service user currently has another hot meal on the day(s) they attend the day service. There were 28 responses to this question. Approximately two thirds of respondents said the only hot meal is the one purchased from the day service on the day(s) they attend, whilst a third of respondents said they have another hot meal as well as the one purchased.

131. Respondents were then asked where else the service user would be able to get a hot meal on the day(s) they attend the day service if hot meals are no longer provided. There were 26 responses to this question. The majority of respondents (61.5%) said they would either cook...
themselves a hot meal or have one cooked for them by a family member/carer. Just under 4% said they would have a hot meal delivered to them; and the same number of respondents said they would attend another day service that provides hot meals. A total of 26.9% said the service user would not be able to have a hot meal on the day(s) they attend the day service.

### Access to an alternative hot meal on the day(s) the person attends the day service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service user/carer would cook own hot meal</td>
<td>61.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would have a hot meal delivered to their home by a carer and/or an organisation other than NASS</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would visit someone else's house and eat a hot meal with them</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would attend another day service that provides hot meals</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would not be able to have a hot meal on the day(s) attend the day service</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

132. There were four service users who said ‘Other’. Two respondents said they would be reliant on a carer to cook them a hot meal, with one adding that they currently only have a carer attend to them in the mornings and would put a sandwich/roll in the fridge for their evening meal. The other added that whilst they have a carer who would cook them a hot meal they would not eat it. The third respondent said the only time they have a hot meal is three times a week at the day service. The fourth respondent said they did have a hot meal in the evening but would still need a hot snack or meal at lunchtime as they are unable to eat sandwiches.

133. There were two family member/carer respondents who said ‘Other’. One commented they would be able to cook a hot meal for the person they care for but they were concerned they would be too tired to eat it in the evening. The other said they could also cook a meal in the evening but added that a midday meal is better as they felt people with less mobility are more likely to put on weight.

134. Respondents were then asked to show on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is ‘No impact’ and 5 is ‘Significant impact’, how much of an impact they think the proposal would have. A little over two thirds of respondents thought this would have a significant impact, ranking the level of impact as either 4 or 5. Four respondents felt the proposal would have little to no impact ranking it as either 1 or 2.
Respondents were then asked what they thought that impact would be. There were 19 comments made in relation to this question from service users and family members/carers.

The majority of the ten service user respondents who felt this would have a significant impact and gave comment said they would struggle without a hot meal at the days they attend their day service. A few said they would not be able to have an alternative as they are unable to cook a hot meal for themselves. They appreciated having a healthy hot meal which was better quality than processed microwave food, snacks and junk food. A couple of respondents said they would miss the social aspect; another said they struggle with changes due to their condition and would find it difficult to cope; while another said they struggle to eat due to their medical condition. One respondent added that a hot meal helps to keep vulnerable adults warm during the day.

The six family member/carer respondents who felt this would have a significant impact and gave comment said how they valued the service being provided. It was commented that without a hot meal provided at the day service, the service users’ care plans would need to be reviewed as a paid carer would be required to make them a hot meal on the days they attend the day service. A couple of respondents said the service user they care for has a special diet that requires them to have a liquidised hot meal at lunchtime. One respondent said due to the service user’s condition, they do not cope well with change. Another said they were an elderly carer and not having to cook a hot meal in the evening the person they care for attends the day service makes a great difference for them, and added that they felt disabled people were being seen as ‘easy targets’.

The one service user respondent who felt this would have a moderate impact said their spouse was disabled and would cook them a meal instead, but their preference would be for the day service to continue providing this service.

The one family member/carer respondent who felt the proposal would have a moderate impact said that one of the reasons for moving to that day service was because it provided hot meals.
140. The service user respondents who felt the proposal would have little or no impact did not provide comment. The one family member/carer respondent who felt the proposal would have little or no impact did not provide comment.

141. Only one respondent selected “Don’t know” as an answer option and that was a service user who did not make a comment as to why.

142. One service user respondent did not answer the previous question but still provided a comment. They said they are not able to eat a hot meal during the evening due to a medical condition, and if this provision was removed they would not be able to eat a hot meal on the days they attend the day service.

143. Respondents were then asked, on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is ‘Not important’ and 5 is ‘Very important’, how important it is that the food for sale at the day centre are healthy balanced options. Nearly 90% of the 27 respondents who answered this question felt this was very important and ranked the level of importance as either 4 or 5. None of the respondents felt this was of low importance (i.e. ranking it as either 1 or 2).

144. Respondents were then asked if Northamptonshire Adult Social Services were to stop selling hot meals at these three day services, what they think needs to happen to make sure the service users are not affected much by this. There were 19 comments made in relation to this question from service users and family members/carers.

145. Eight of the eleven service user respondents who answered this question said they would need to be provided with a viable alternative to a hot meal, with five saying they would still require hot food to be provided if no meal was available, and one respondent feeling the current range of hot snacks would need to increase. One added that there should be a slight increase in the cost of a meal whilst another felt their current payment to attend the day service should be sufficient to cover the cost of a hot meal and were concerned that some people would find it difficult if hot meals were no longer provided. One respondent said a healthy substantial lunch or healthy snacks throughout the day should be available. Three respondents said they would need further care and support for someone to cook them a hot meal. One respondent requested
that no change be made, whilst another said they would be reliant on ready-meals or takeaways.

146. The eight family member/carer respondents who answered this question provided various comments. Three of the respondents said a hot meal should continue to be provided as it was felt this was the only hot meal available to some people. Three of the respondents said this would require an extension of hours of a paid carer’s time in order to cook a healthy hot meal for the service user.

147. A couple of respondents also mentioned the service users’ dietary requirements and the need for them to have suitable liquidized meals, with one respondent saying they would have to prepare these at home and another saying they could not foresee how to mitigate the potential impact. It was also commented by one respondent that they would cook a hot meal in the evening; that sufficient notice should be given of any change (they suggested approximately 1 month) in order for the service user to adjust as they do not cope well with change; and that service users’ views should be taken into consideration as to what alternative snacks may be provided.

148. Respondents were then asked if they had any different suggestions they would like us to consider. There were 27 responses to this question, with an equal split of 40.7% of respondents saying they did have an alternative suggestion and 40.7% saying they did not.

149. Respondents were invited to provide an alternative approach to the proposal. There were 11 comments made in relation to this question from service users and family members/carers.

150. Five service user respondents provided comment. One commented that service users have already had other services withdrawn which they now have to pay for themselves and questioned the Council’s duty of care towards vulnerable people. They suggested Council staff should not receive a salary increase in order to retain the service.

151. The other respondent expressed how they strongly disagreed with the proposal. They felt there is a strong uptake of hot meals and questioned if the service is running at a loss, why the financial contribution has not been increased for years. They said they would rather have no
food provided than to have junk food. They suggested the Council’s property assets should be reviewed and liquefied in order to fund the continuation of the service.

152. Other comments include a request that the day service continues to sell hot meals; that there is still some type of warm food available; and that prices should increase in order to retain the service.

153. Six family member/carer respondents made various comments. A couple of respondents suggested an external mobile caterer be engaged to provide hot meals, although this caterer would need to understand service users’ requirements. Other comments included the request for more funding for the Council from central government; a request to stop reducing funding for services that support vulnerable people; a suggestion that a microwave be provided so service users could bring in their own meals to be heated up; a belief that demand for hot meals is high and that the service should not be stopped as it will affect those who are not capable of cooking themselves a healthy hot meal; and one respondent who said the only alternative would be for the service user to be fed by tube which they hoped would be avoided whilst they are still able to swallow.

154. Respondents were then asked if they had any other comments they would like to make about the proposal. There were 18 comments made in relation to this question from service users and family members/carers.

155. The 12 service user respondents who answered this question made various comments, with some repeating what they had previously said. They expressed their disagreement to the proposal and how highly they valued having a hot meal provided. One respondent said there are reductions to services but not senior managers’ salaries. One respondent said they would go hungry as they are unable to make hot meals themselves, with another saying it would mean they would only eat sandwiches every day of the week. Another respondent said their personal budget would need to be increased to enable a paid carer to cook a hot meal on the days they would have had a hot meal at the day service. One respondent said how they felt they were fortunate as they had someone at home who would be able to cook for them but raised their concerns for any service users who were reliant on the hot meals provided at the day service. Another respondent said it would have a detrimental impact on their health due to a medical condition. Another respondent felt people would attend other day services where hot meals are provided.

156. The majority of the seven family member/carer respondents who answered this question expressed their disagreement with the proposal. It was felt this was an important service and that changes would affect some of the most vulnerable people and this service should not be stopped. One respondent added that unless people experience it for themselves, it is difficult to understand what it is like to not be able to have a hot meal every day. Another felt the decision had already been made based on their experience of a previous consultation on respite care.

157. Similar to the wider budget consultation, respondents were asked a range of questions about themselves to help us understand the characteristics of people who had taken part in the consultation. That information is shown in graph form in the appendix to this report, which has been made available to Members and is available on our Consultation Hub.
Draft Budget Consultation 2020/21 Questionnaire continued

Children First Northamptonshire

Commissioning and Procurement

- **19-002-02 Improvement in capacity building in Foster Care** - Increasing our CFN foster carers who can care for young people with complex needs. We are using business rates to fund specialist training for our foster carers to increase their skills and confidence to care for young people with more complex needs. This will mean young people can be cared for within a family rather than in a children’s home if this is in their best interests. Residential care costs more so this proposal is forecast to save £941,000 in 20/21.

158. Respondents were given the above explanation and asked if they agree or disagree with the proposal. There were 136 responses to this question. Over 80% of respondents said they strongly agree or tend to agree with this proposal, while just over 5% said they strongly disagree or tend to disagree with this proposal.

![Improvement in capacity building in Foster Care](image)

159. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 42 comments made in relation to this question. A total of 31 respondents who agreed with the proposal provided comments, with almost half saying they agreed because they believed a family environment is better for children than residential care. Several respondents said that it is important for foster carers to have specialist training and support from social workers.

160. As well as general support, a variety of other comments were made, including the view that Northamptonshire needs more foster carers and that it is important to make sure children are properly supported. Other comments included the view that children’s social care needs funding; the view that historically, foster carers have not had enough support; and comments around the rates that foster carers receive, with one respondent stating that the rates should be more favourable to compete with agencies, and another stating that foster carers are able to claim too much. Further comments included the view that care homes should be of a better
standard; that Business Rates money should not be used for this project; that it will be challenging to achieve; and doubts that it will succeed.

161. Six respondents who said they neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal provided a variety of comments. A couple of respondents felt that this proposal may not be enough to retain the number of foster carers needed. Other comments included the view that foster carers need appropriate support, especially if they are supporting children with complex needs; that the child’s own family should be supported first to see if the child can remain in its own home; the suggestion that staff numbers should be cut instead; and the misunderstanding that this would lead to higher Business Rates to fund the project.

162. Four respondents who said they disagreed with the proposal provided a variety of comments, with no common themes. One respondent said that foster carers need better support than they currently receive, and another said that there are not enough specialist foster carers to support children. Another respondent felt that young people have not been prioritised enough, and another respondent disagreed with Business Rates funding being used to support the project.

163. The one respondent who said “don’t know” raised their doubts about the proposal. No comments were received when the respondent did not indicate agree/disagree.

164. Any respondents who felt the proposal would have a negative impact were then asked to tell us what they thought the impact would be, along with any suggestions on how any potential negative impacts could be mitigated. A total of eight respondents provided comment, with few common themes. A couple of respondents thought that a negative impact could be if foster carers have to take on more than the approved number of children or have no breaks between placements, if there are not enough foster carers. Another respondent was concerned there would not be enough suitable foster carers and foster homes for children, while another was concerned that using Business Rates to fund the project would lead to higher rates.

165. A couple of potential mitigations were mentioned in response to this question. One respondent said that there needs to be enough support for foster carers from NCC, while another said there needs to be better pay for foster carers. One respondent raised their doubts about the proposal. Another respondent referenced their response to the previous question.

- **19-002-10 In-House Foster Carers** - We will increase our recruitment and retention of foster carers in Northamptonshire who can meet the needs of our children in care. This will reduce our need to purchase more costly independent foster care placements. This is forecast to deliver savings of £271,000 in 2020/21.

166. Respondents were given the above explanation and asked if they agree or disagree with the proposal. There were 133 responses to this question. Over 80% of respondents said they strongly agree or tend to agree with the proposal, while almost 7% said they strongly disagree or tend to disagree with the proposal.
Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 33 comments made in relation to this question. A total of 22 respondents who agreed with the proposal provided comments, with almost half expressing their general support for the proposal. Several respondents, while supportive of the proposal, raised some doubts about whether it would be achieved and the saving delivered, with concerns about the recruitment process and drop-out rates being mentioned, and the fact that this proposal is closely linked to other proposals within the Children First Northamptonshire budget which are also expected to deliver savings in 2020/21.

Other comments received included the view that pay rates for foster carers need to be improved and that foster carers need the right support from NCC, meaning that staff retention is important. Respondents also said that there is a need for foster carers for children and young people with complex needs and that it is important to find the right people; that it is better for fostering to be managed in-house rather than by external agencies which are more costly; that the scrutiny of foster carers should be reviewed; and that the service should review other costly contracts to save money.

Six respondents who said they neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal provided a variety of comments. Half of these questioned how the proposal would work and deliver savings. A couple of respondents observed that foster care is not right for all children and that solutions need to be individual. Another respondent said there needs to be ongoing support and training for foster carers, while another said that families should be supported first before funding foster care.

Five respondents who said they disagreed with the proposal provided a variety of comments. Three respondents doubted whether the proposal would be delivered, citing reasons such as the view that NCC is not competitive with fostering agencies, the difficulty in fostering children with challenging behaviours, recruitment and retention issues and slow processing times. Another respondent said it would depend on who was paying for it and another said any savings should be invested in foster carers.

No comments were received when respondents said “don’t know” or when respondents did not indicate agree/disagree.
Appendix I

172. Any respondents who felt the proposal would have a negative impact were then asked to
tell us what they thought the impact would be, along with any suggestions on how any potential
negative impacts could be mitigated. A total of six respondents provided comment, with most
doubting the proposal would work. When thinking about the impact of the proposal, one
respondent thought it may not actually help children if foster carers are only interested in
money; another thought it was too ambitious and would not work; and a third thought the
impact might be that foster carers could end up being overloaded with troubled children. They
said this could be mitigated by managing the situation carefully. Another respondent referred to
their response in the previous question.

- **19-002-09 Supported Accommodation** - Improved supported accommodation for young
people. We will commission independent accommodation for young people leaving care to
give them good quality housing and the support they need to prepare for adulthood. We will
achieve better value for money and this is forecast to deliver savings of £197,000 in
2020/21.

173. Respondents were given the above explanation and asked if they agree or disagree with the
proposal. There were 132 responses to this question. Three-quarters of respondents said that
they strongly agree or tend to agree with the proposal, while just
over 10% of respondents said
that they strongly disagree or tend to disagree with the proposal.

174. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that
they did. There were 29 comments made in relation to this question. A total of 19 respondents
who agreed with the proposal provided comments, with over half expressing general support,
citing reasons such as it being important to support young people as they move into adulthood,
ensuring young people can be independent and reducing homelessness and crime. The need to
include financial education was mentioned in particular. Another respondent said that the
current placements for young people are not good. One respondent said it was unclear how this
would be achieved. Another respondent referred to their previous response.

175. Five respondents who said they neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal provided a
variety of comments with no common themes. One respondent thought there was a
contradiction between the need for provision and a savings target attached to the proposal. Another respondent thought this could be seen as an opportunity for staff to waste money on non-essential things. One respondent thought that young people should have the option of returning to their families or remaining in contact with them. Another respondent questioned who will make sure the young people have the right support. The final respondent who commented said that it was key to ensure that the right young people can use the service and that there are staff to support them.

176. Five respondents who said they disagreed with the proposal provided a variety of comments, mostly doubting the deliverability of the proposal or the savings target attached to it. Another respondent thought that there should be improvements in education to give young people better prospects, while the final respondent who commented said that the public should not have to pay for young people who did not want to live with their parents anymore and their parents should contribute.

177. No comments were received when respondents said “don’t know” or when respondents did not indicate agree/disagree.

178. Any respondents who felt the proposal would have a negative impact were then asked to tell us what they thought the impact would be, along with any suggestions on how any potential negative impacts could be mitigated. A total of 12 respondents provided comment with no common themes. One respondent was concerned that the proposal could lead to money being wasted while another thought that there was a risk that young people would end up in less favourable areas because of costs, which could lead to exploitation. A third of respondents did not think there would be a negative impact or said they were unsure.

179. Various potential mitigations were mentioned in response to this question. Several respondents mentioned the need to have adequate support for young people, including teaching them life and money skills, improving education to increase their chances of getting a job and a clear plan to remove support to promote independence. One respondent thought that support should be provided by district and borough councils, as they have the responsibility for housing. Another respondent raised their doubts about the proposal.

- **19-002-11 Disabled Children’s Domiciliary Care Framework** - Domiciliary care for children with disabilities. We will commission domiciliary care for children with disabilities to meet their needs and deliver better quality and better value for money. This will give CFN increased certainty over costs and is forecast to deliver savings of £100,000 in 2020/21.

180. Respondents were given the above explanation and asked if they agree or disagree with the proposal. There were 125 responses to this question. Seventy-two percent of respondents said they strongly agree or tend to agree with the proposal, while just over 7% said they strongly disagree or tend to disagree with the proposal.
181. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 22 comments made in relation to this question. A total of 11 respondents who agreed with the proposal provided comments, with almost a third indicating they agreed because it will help manage the budget more effectively. A couple of respondents said they thought it was important for children to get support, and more than they currently receive.

182. Other comments included the view that all contracts should be reviewed to save money; that the respondent agreed if it meant care in an NCC children’s home; the view that the NHS should pay towards care; and that assistive technology should be used before staff support is commissioned. Further comments included the view that domiciliary care needs to be tailored towards the individual needs of children; general support for the proposal; concerned about the Council’s contract management skills; and concern that the savings will be cancelled out by management costs.

183. Five respondents who said they neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal provided various comments. Most of these respondents did not understand how the proposal would work or doubted it will save money. One respondent said that children with disabilities and their families will always need support, while another thought the proposal was more concerned about saving money than providing a service.

184. Four respondents who said they disagreed with the proposal provided a variety of comments, with no common themes. One respondent said that this needs to be managed carefully, while another thought that staying at home is not always right for the child or their family, citing violence towards parents and carers or families being unable to cope. Another respondent felt that parents should provide care at home, not funded by tax payers, while another raised doubts about the proposal.

185. The two respondents who said “don’t know” made opposing comments – one said that people in this situation need support, while the other said that the budget should be cut because parents should take responsibility for their disabled children. No comments were received when respondents did not indicate agree/disagree.

186. Any respondents who felt the proposal would have a negative impact were then asked to tell us what they thought the impact would be, along with any suggestions on how any potential
negative impacts could be mitigated. A total of seven respondents provided comment with no common themes. Around half said they thought there would be no negative impact or that they did not know. One respondent thought that there could be a negative impact if keeping a child at home causes family breakdown. One respondent raised doubts about the proposal.

187. Two potential mitigations were mentioned in response to this question. One was that individual needs must be considered, and another was that expectations need to be managed.

Policy and Practice

- **19-002-03 Disabled Children’s Review** - Joint funding of care packages for children with disabilities. We will work with our NHS colleagues to agree a joint funding formula for agreed packages of care for children with disabilities who have health and social care needs. This will help us to better manage and forecast costs. It is forecast to deliver savings of £400,000 in 2020/21.

188. Respondents were given the above explanation and asked if they agree or disagree with the proposal. There were 122 responses to this question. Almost four-fifths of respondents said they strongly agree or tend to agree with the proposal, while 5% said they strongly disagree or tend to disagree with the proposal.

189. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 21 comments made in relation to this question. A total of 13 respondents who agreed with the proposal provided comments, with over a third saying it was important to work in partnership and reduce duplication. A couple of respondents also thought it was positive that the financial burden would be shared with the NHS. Other comments received included general support for the proposal, with one respondent noted that it works in Adult Social Care, and another thought it should already be happening. Further comments included the view that this needs good management; questions whether the NHS will pay their share; and the view that support in this area should be reduced to the statutory minimum.

190. Four respondents who said they neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal provided a variety of comments, with no common themes. One respondent felt this proposal was focused
on savings over service provision, while another said there was a need to include parents. Another respondent doubted whether there was the funding for this, and another thought that the Council should not provide social care packages for disabled children.

191. Two respondents who said they disagreed with the proposal provided comments. One said that this kind of proposal never works while another said they could not see how savings would be delivered if services are maintained.

192. Two respondents who said “don’t know” provided comments. One raised doubts about the proposal, while another referred to their previous response. No comments were received when respondents did not indicate agree/disagree.

193. Any respondents who felt the proposal would have a negative impact were then asked to tell us what they thought the impact would be, along with any suggestions on how any potential negative impacts could be mitigated. A total of five respondents provided comment with no common themes. Two said they thought there would be no negative impact or that they did not know. One respondent thought a negative impact could be if it takes a long time to get agreement, while another cited a potential lack of co-ordination between the two organisations. One potential mitigation was mentioned in response to this question, which was that it is important to have speedy reviews and award of funding.

- **19-002-06 New Contact Offer** - Improved contact service for children and their birth families. We will make improvements to our contact service which supports children and families who no longer live together so they can continue to have contact with each other. The improvements will increase the quality and value for money of the service and is forecast to deliver savings of £100,000 in 2020/21.

194. Respondents were given the above explanation and asked if they agree or disagree with the proposal. There were 116 responses to this question.

![New Contract Offer](image)

195. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 21 comments made in relation to this question. A total of 12 respondents who agreed with the proposal provided comments, with almost half agreeing that contact
between children and their birth families is important and/or needs improving. A couple of respondents said that there needs to be appropriate venues for contact, better than currently available, and another couple of respondents said that contact should be focused on what is best for the child. Other comments included that the contact offer needs more careful budget management; that contact should be local to avoid unnecessary transport costs; that providers should be responsible for contact within their contract; general support for the proposal; and the view that contact is not always the best option for the child.

196. Four respondents who said they neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal provided a variety of comments, with no common themes. One respondent felt the focus was on budget cuts rather than the service, and another wanted to know what safety nets there are around this proposal. Another respondent thought the Council should make better use of technology to save money e.g. Skype, Facebook etc, while another thought the tax payer shouldn’t have to pay for this.

197. Four respondents who said they disagreed with the proposal provided comments. Two respondents said that families should take responsibility for contact and should fund it themselves. Another respondent thought it would be better to spend money on early intervention to stop families getting to that point, while another raised their doubts about the proposal.

198. The one respondent who said “don’t know” said there was not enough detail on the proposal. No comments were received when respondents did not indicate agree/disagree.

199. Any respondents who felt the proposal would have a negative impact were then asked to tell us what they thought the impact would be, along with any suggestions on how any potential negative impacts could be mitigated. A total of seven respondents provided comment with few common themes. A couple of respondents said there could be a negative impact as contact isn’t always good for children and should be optional. Another respondent said that if the focus is on saving money, there is a risk of using inappropriate venues, untrained staff and that unsupervised contact might occur. Another respondent said the proposal was not clear enough.

200. Three potential mitigations were mentioned in response to this question. One respondent said that fit for purpose venues are needed to make it a success, while another said that there was a need to balance costs and results carefully. Another respondent thought there might not be much demand for contact.

**Demand Management**

- **19-002-07 Improved children's outcomes** - Right care for children. We will improve support and interventions with families of children who are close to being brought into care so that the best interests of children are met. This will mean families are better supported for children to safely remain in their care, that families are supported for children to return home from care quickly. If it is not possible or suitable for children to return home we will seek for children to live within their wider family network or to be adopted. Research shows this generally helps children to achieve better outcomes. Our spend will be reduced on
fostering and residential care spend. This is forecast to deliver savings of £588,000 in 2020/21.

201. Respondents were given the above explanation and asked if they agree or disagree with the proposal. There were 115 responses to this question. Over 85% of respondents said that they strongly agree or tend to agree with the proposal, while 6% of respondents said that they strongly disagree or tend to disagree with the proposal.

202. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 24 comments made in relation to this question. A total of 20 respondents who agreed with the proposal provided comments, with almost half citing reasons for their agreement, such as this would be an important area to invest in, improvement is necessary and that it is better to try to keep children out of care. A few respondents said they weren’t sure if there were enough skilled social workers for this to improve safeguarding and work effectively with partners and that the Council did not have a good track record on this. A couple of respondents said that this proposal needs effective management and the right staff to work.

203. Other comments included the view that this should always have been the case; that it is good to involve the wider family; the need to ensure there are safeguards in place to make sure children are not returned home unsafely to save money; and the view that it might look like Social Care is putting the responsibility on others. Further comments included the view that the Council needs to improve its interventions to remove children from families where necessary; doubts about the staff capacity to deliver this proposal; the view that there is not enough funding; and a comment that the proposal is unclear.

204. The one respondent who said they neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal said that parents need to be fully involved in the process and there needs to be full transparency about any process that removes a child from its family.

205. Three respondents who said they disagreed with the proposal provided comments. One respondent thought that remaining within the family is not safe for some children while another thought this area should not have a savings target but should be a priority. Another respondent raised their doubts about the proposal.
206. No comments were received when respondents said “don’t know” or did not indicate agree/disagree.

207. Any respondents who felt the proposal would have a negative impact were then asked to tell us what they thought the impact would be, along with any suggestions on how any potential negative impacts could be mitigated. A total of five respondents provided comment with few common themes. One respondent was concerned family members would feel forced to care for children if Social Care put the responsibility on them. A few mitigations were suggested. One respondent said that the Council should make sure that the family network has been properly looked into; another said there needs to be a shorter timeframe for resources to start working with families; and a third respondent said people need to be treated as individuals.

- **19-002-08 Reduction in Residential Care** - Reduction in the use of residential care for children and young people in our care. Where it is in the best interests of children in our care who live in residential homes, we will help them to move into foster care, so they can live with a family. This will help support better outcomes for children and young people and reduce our spend on more costly residential care. This is forecast to deliver savings of £276,000 in 2020/21.

208. Respondents were given the above explanation and asked if they agree or disagree with the proposal. There were 112 responses to this question. Almost 80% of respondents said that they strongly agree or tend to agree with the proposal, while just over 7% said that they strongly disagree or tend to disagree with the proposal.

![Reduction in Residential Care](image)

209. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 23 comments made in relation to this question. A total of 16 respondents who agreed with the proposal provided comments, with almost half citing reasons for their agreement, mainly relating to the view that it is better for children to be in a family environment. A couple of respondents agreed as long as it is the safest and most appropriate option for each child. Another couple of respondents said that foster carers need proper support.
210. Other comments included the view that it should always be like this; that the criteria for foster parents needs reviewing; that children’s homes should be a thing of the past; that the Council should make sure that any residential care is cost-effective; and questions about how this can be achieved without achieving an increase in foster carers, referencing other proposals within the draft Budget.

211. Four respondents who said they neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal provided a variety of comments, with no common themes. One respondent said that more training and families are needed, while another said larger Council properties should be offered to people currently caring for children to broaden the criteria for foster carers. Another respondent said it depends on each child’s needs and a final respondent questioned whether this was double-counting other savings proposals within the draft Budget.

212. Two respondents who said they disagreed with the proposal provided comments. One said that foster care does not suit all children and there should not be a ‘one size fits all’ policy, while another raised doubts about the proposal.

213. The one respondent who said “don’t know” said this cannot be achieved without increasing foster carers which can take some time, and is therefore unlikely to make the savings target for 2020/21. No comments were received when respondents did not indicate agree/disagree.

214. Any respondents who felt the proposal would have a negative impact were then asked to tell us what they thought the impact would be, along with any suggestions on how any potential negative impacts could be mitigated. A total of eight respondents provided comment with few common themes. A couple of respondents thought there could be a negative impact as foster care could be unsuitable or traumatic for some children. Another thought that it could take some time to find the right foster carer, leading to rejections. One respondent referred to their previous response and another thought there wouldn’t be any negative impact. A couple of respondents made general comments, raising doubts about the proposal and asking what funds have been made available to increase in-house foster care provision and provide ongoing support.

**Operational Efficiency**

- **19-002-12 Transport Optimisation** - The Social Care Transport Project will:
  
  - Review our policy for providing travel assistance to ensure that it is fit for purpose to meet children’s needs and helps them to achieve good outcomes and independence; and enables good value for money to be achieved
  - Review and improve our processes for approving and requesting travel assistance
  - Review and improve the way we work with Kier and other travel providers
  - Review and improve the way we monitor spend

This may result in us applying our policy more consistently; or changing our policy. We will consult in early 2020 on any proposed changes to our policy and we will ensure that the support provided meets children’s needs and helps them to achieve good outcomes and independence. We plan to implement any changes to the policy from 1 Apr 2020, subject to approvals. This is forecast to deliver savings of £600,000 in 2020/21.
215. Respondents were given the above explanation and asked if they agree or disagree with the proposal. There were 112 responses to this question. Almost 60% of respondents said that they strongly agree or tend to agree with the proposal, while just over 10% of respondents said that they strongly disagree or tend to disagree with the proposal.

216. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 22 comments made in relation to this question. A total of eight respondents who agreed with the proposal provided comments, with almost half giving their support, with efficiency being one reason given. A couple of respondents felt that this needs to be done carefully to mitigate negative impacts and that to assess properly could end up costing more money. A couple of respondents felt that social care transport is not managed well at the moment, with lots of waste and the view that managers need to be accountable. Another respondent thought that provision should be in-house.

217. Seven respondents who said they neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal provided a variety of comments. Almost half commented on the current provider and questioned whether it provided good value for money and felt it needs scrutiny. A couple of respondents thought that families should bear more responsibility, especially if they were in receipt of a mobility car and receiving social care transport from the Council. Another respondent felt this proposal focuses on cost-cutting over need, while another said there was not enough detail on what the provision would look like in future to be able to comment.

218. Six respondents who said they disagreed with the proposal provided comments. A couple of respondents felt that tax payers should not have to pay to transport disabled children when their family receives benefits, and that this should be the exception not the rule. Two respondents thought that transport could be reviewed, but with one saying that there needs to be more school provision for children with SEND before transport arrangements are changed, and another said that being a rural county with poor public transport, alternatives are limited. Another respondent thought it was unfair to reduce the budget for disabled children’s transport and a further respondent raised doubts about the proposal.

219. The one respondent who said “don’t know” said they couldn’t give a response because it’s not clear what the proposal means. No comments were received when respondents did not indicate agree/disagree.
220. Any respondents who felt the proposal would have a negative impact were then asked to tell us what they thought the impact would be, along with any suggestions on how any potential negative impacts could be mitigated. A total of three respondents provided comment, with two being concerned that there could be negative impacts from the desire to save money, saying that assessments would need to be carefully carried out to mitigate any risk and that individual arrangements could end up costing more. One respondent referred to their previous response.

221. In addition to the proposals already set out, we consulted on a number of budget proposals in Children First Northamptonshire that we believe can deliver savings without having an impact on customers. Respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree with these proposals.

- **19-002-04 Reconfiguration of Social Work Academy** – Remodelling our learning and development offer for children's social care practitioners. This is forecast to save £300,000 in 2020/21.

222. There were 109 responses to this question. Just over 65% of respondents said that they strongly agree or tend to agree with this proposal, while just over 7% of respondents said that they strongly disagree or tend to disagree with this proposal.

- **19-002-05 Reducing reliance on Agency Staff** – Business Rate Pilot funded proposal to increase the proportion of permanent staffing within Children First Northamptonshire and reduce the reliance on agency staff, through a refreshed Workforce Strategy and Quality Assurance Framework that creates a strong and stable workforce. This is forecast to save £138,000 in 2020/21.

223. There were 104 responses to this question. Over 90% of respondents said that they strongly agree or tend to agree with this proposal, while just under 5% of respondents said that they strongly disagree or tend to disagree with this proposal.
Corporate & Community Services

Workforce

- **19-004-05 Customer Service Centre** - Delete vacant training post and reduce opening hours to 9am - 5pm (currently 8am to 6pm) in line with demand patterns. This is forecast to deliver savings of £136,000 in 2020/21.

224. Respondents were given the above explanation and asked if they agree or disagree with the proposal. There were 143 responses to this question. Over two-thirds of respondents said that they strongly agree or tend to agree with this proposal, while almost 18% of respondents said that they strongly disagree or tend to disagree with this proposal.

225. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 28 comments made in relation to this question. A total of 15 respondents who agreed with the proposal provided comments, saying that opening for standard business hours was more viable and offered a way to save money. Some respondents thought that the
change would not have a great impact on people. Others commented that it was inevitable when finances are challenging. Some respondents suggested that digital improvements to the website need to be made in order for the Council to be accessible outside core business opening hours. Others felt that staff working patterns could be changed or staggered to offer longer opening hours. One respondent expressed concern about out of hours contact for those in work or school, along with commenting that demand could increase during core business hours.

226. One respondent commented that no further cuts to opening hours should be made if this current proposal was approved. Another could not understand how the proposal would save £136,000. A respondent commented on the vacant post proposal saying that if the Council is coping without the post then there would be no reason to fill it.

227. Four respondents who said they neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal provided a variety of comments. A couple of respondents felt the proposal could have a negative effect, especially for those that are at work and unable to call during business hours but they did agree that the Council should use data about who calls before 9 or after 6 in order to determine which opening times to keep. Another respondent asked whether staff opinions had been taken into consideration and how this would affect them. They further referenced the increase in Council Tax in relation to having wages cut for employees. Other comments included disagreeing with any changes that reduce the responsiveness of the Customer Service Centre; the view that it makes the service harder to reach or makes the service even more impersonal. One comment agreed with the vacant post being deleted.

228. Nine respondents who said they disagreed with the proposal provided comments. They commented overall that it would be harder for people to make contact with the Council. They said that it could add pressure to emergency services and on families who work during proposed opening hours. Some commented that the Customer Service Centre should open for longer into the evening and also open on Saturday morning. Another respondent said that they struggled now to get through and therefore further restrictions on hours would be a bad thing.

229. One respondent expressed their concern about the Council’s website, saying it was confusing and slow. They also said that not everyone has access to computers. An employee commented that their current shift pattern helped with their work/life balance and their travel to work time which would be compromised. One respondent commented on the long-term quality of the service being offered and said that deletion of the vacant post may mean that the public will talk to staff who were less well-trained. They said that it was important to be able to talk to someone who was well trained in dealing with issues.

230. No comments were received when respondents said “don’t know” or did not indicate agree/disagree.

231. Any respondents who felt the proposal would have a negative impact were then asked to tell us what they thought the impact would be, along with any suggestions on how any potential negative impacts could be mitigated. A total of 13 respondents provided comments. Respondents consistently mentioned aspects of a reduced service. This included the view that it makes the Council less accessible; that it would be detrimental to service users because they could not contact the Council as before; that the Council should consider opening later in the
morning in order to provide a service later into the evening; and that the hours being proposed will be prohibitive.

232. Comments included concerns that the vacant post being deleted would impact on staff being inadequately trained to do their job effectively. Other comments include the need to look at the reason why vacancies exist, and rather than delete vacant post, the Council should look at modifying it in line with the proposal of new business opening hours. A respondent also commented on the effects of the proposal regarding the training post to succession and service development planning, with another highlighting the overall negative impact on Council services.

Policy and Practice

- **19-004-06 Complaints** - Change to working practices for advanced stage complaints – these will be investigated independently from the service but in-house, rather than being contracted out to external investigators. This is forecast to deliver savings of £50,000 in 2020/21.

233. Respondents were given the above explanation and asked if they agree or disagree with the proposal. There were 141 responses to this question. Almost three-quarters of respondents said that they strongly agree or tend to agree with the proposal, while 10% of respondents said that they strongly disagree or tend to disagree with the proposal.

234. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 30 comments made in relation to this question. A total of 23 respondents who agreed with the proposal provided comments, consistently commenting that services being provided in-house makes better financial sense and that it was a good idea. They felt that outsourcing services is not effective. Some said that the Council should have the capability of providing the service itself. However, with an in-house process, some respondents expressed their concern about having the skilled staff to undertake the work, suggesting on-going training to make sure staff were up to date on matters. They also said that the process needs to be genuinely independent. Comments were also made about the Council’s financial history; the
quality of the current complaints system; the capacity of an over-stretched Council to take this on and the view that the Council should be working in ways which reduce the number of complaints.

235. Two respondents who said they neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal provided comments, saying that they thought that this was the current practice anyway or that some complaints should be investigated independent of the Council.

236. Five respondents who said they disagreed with the proposal provided comments, with most saying that process needs to be independent of the Council and that the cost saving is minimal and does not justify the impartiality that could occur. Another respondent said that overburdened staff would have to take this on in addition to their day job.

237. No comments received when respondents said “don’t know” or did not indicate agree/disagree.

238. Any respondents who felt the proposal would have a negative impact were then asked to tell us what they thought the impact would be, along with any suggestions on how any potential negative impacts could be mitigated. A total of five respondents provided a variety of comments. Comments included that the Council having no control on outsourced services; the impact on staff; the view that the Council should keep the service external and that if it was internal then there would be less opportunity for public scrutiny, adding that public opinion of the Council is already low.

239. In addition to the proposals already set out, we consulted on a budget proposal in Corporate & Community Services that we believe can deliver savings without having an impact on customers. Respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree with this proposal.

- **19-004-03 Communications and Marketing** – resource efficiency in Communications and Marketing team. This is forecast to save £55,000 in 2020/21.

240. There were 140 responses to this question. Almost three-fifths of respondents said that they strongly agree or tend to agree with this proposal, while almost 11% of respondents said that they strongly disagree or tend to disagree with this proposal.
Appendix I

Place Services

Operational Efficiency

- **18-006-10 Targeted delivery of roads maintenance** - Optimised route-planning using improved decision-making on when to carry out gritting activity. Detailed consultation to be held with borough, district, town and parish councils in respect of any future planned changes to existing routes. This is forecast to deliver savings of £500,000 in 2020/21.

241. Respondents were given the above explanation and asked if they agree or disagree with the proposal. There were 105 responses to this question. Just over 57% of respondents said that they strongly agree or tend to agree with this proposal, while just over a quarter of respondents said that they strongly disagree or tend to disagree with this proposal.

242. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 23 comments made in relation to this question. A total of 11 respondents who agreed with the proposal made a variety of comments. A few of these respondents made general comments about their agreement for the proposal and welcomed greater efficiency and improved decision-making based on known data. A similar number of respondents said they felt rural roads and communities need to be considered and not neglected, including being gritted. Other comments regarding gritting mentioned that gritting requirements need to be prepared for unpredictable weather conditions; an opinion that gritting is sometimes done unnecessarily when temperatures are not too cold; and that specific street conditions, such as gradients in residential roads should also be taken into consideration.

243. One respondent raised their concern about the impact on non-adopted roads and said they disagreed with the current road adoption process. Other comments included that the Council should take a safety first approach; and a respondent who criticised the conditions of the roads and said they have caused damage to their motor vehicle. Considering the comment it may be feasible that this respondent said they agreed to the proposal by mistake and meant to select disagree.

244. Only one respondent who neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal provided comment. They said they worked in a school and the lack of gritting by the school has resulted in
accidents. They wanted roads near schools to be gritted to help ensure the safety of those that use them.

245. A total of 11 respondents who disagreed with the proposal provided comment. A little under half of these respondents commented on the need for a safety first approach and were concerned that a reduction in winter maintenance would lead to more accidents and that people’s safety should not be jeopardised in order to save money. A couple of respondents cited recent incidents of car accidents. It was also commented that people’s ability to get to work is hampered if the roads are not safe and are unusable during winter months. A couple of respondents mentioned their general disagreement with the proposal, saying more money should be spent on the county’s roads and that all roads should be maintained. A similar number specifically mentioned gritting and felt the weather forecast should be better utilised, that more gritting is needed on residential roads, and the desire for the reinstallation of community grit bins to enable communities to grit their local area.

246. A couple of respondents thought that the proposal would not be implemented, with one respondent saying as the service level impact assessment has not been completed, the projected saving cannot be accurate or fully resolved. Other comments included a concern that rural areas will be marginalised; the importance of decisions being made; and that there is not enough information about the decision-making process for gritting and that the parish and district councils are better positioned to be making decisions on non-highways.

247. No comments were received from respondents who selected “don’t know” or when respondents did not indicate agree or disagree to the proposal.

248. Any respondents who felt the proposal would have a negative impact were then asked to tell us what they thought the impact would be, along with any suggestions on how any potential negative impacts could be mitigated. A total of 12 respondents provided comment. Respondents repeated their concerns about the safety of residents and what they thought would be an increase in accidents. It was commented by one respondent that the gritting routes should not be reduced whilst another respondent said all major roads within the county should be gritted.

249. Respondents were also concerned that the proposal may lead to communities, especially rural ones, becoming isolated, which would in turn present difficulties in accessing work and school. Other comments included that changes need to be based on data; that there is a need for better education of drivers to not drive directly behind gritting vehicles and disrupt the gritting process; a request to revisit the Equality Impact Assessment as services could be worse if the proposal were to proceed; and a general comment about increasing road maintenance and not reducing it.

- **19-006-06 Superfast Broadband** - Remove dedicated operational budget for technical, commercial and business case support. This is forecast to deliver savings of £65,000 in 2020/21.

250. Respondents were given the above explanation and asked if they agree or disagree with the proposal. There were 103 responses to this question. Just under 50% of respondents said that they strongly agree or tend to agree with this proposal, while almost 14% of respondents said that they strongly disagree or tend to disagree with the proposal.
251. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 12 comments made in relation to this question. A total of five respondents who agreed with the proposal provided comment. Respondents made general comments about how they supported the proposal and felt that it made sense, although one respondent, who appears to be an employee of NCC, added that this could be short-sighted if it were to be disruptive to people trying to work and cause more computer system crashes. Another respondent said that superfast broadband should be the responsibility of central government.

252. A total of two respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal provided comment. Both said that they did not know enough about the subject matter to make comment.

253. A total of three respondents who disagreed with the proposal provided comment. These respondents said that the Superfast Northamptonshire project may save money in the long term if kept, and that it is a minimal saving; that encouraging local businesses to become more efficient could mean more income for the Council in the long-term; and that reducing this funding would not help reach the targets that they believed are already being missed.

254. The two respondents who commented having said “don’t know” said there was not enough information provided and that they have insufficient knowledge about the service. No comments were received when respondents did not indicate agree or disagree to the proposal.

255. Any respondents who felt the proposal would have a negative impact were then asked to tell us what they thought the impact would be, along with any suggestions on how any potential negative impacts could be mitigated. Only one respondent provided comment and simply said that others may feel negative about the proposal.

Commissioning and Procurement

- **19-006-07 Economic Development** - Reduce the operational budget and cease undertaking the Local Area Assessment, reduce the project delivery to support economic growth, business skills and job creation. This will in part be mitigated through increased collaborative activity with partners. This is forecast to deliver savings of £85,000 in 2020/21.
Respondents were given the above explanation and asked if they agree or disagree with the proposal. There were 105 responses to this question. Just over a third of respondents said that they strongly agree or tend to agree with the proposal, while just over a fifth of respondents said that they strongly disagree or tend to disagree with the proposal.

Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 11 comments made in relation to this question. A total of five respondents who agreed with the proposal provided comment. Respondents were in general support for the proposal, with one respondent being critical of the current service and pleased the funding was being reduced. Other comments included support for the joint working approach; regret that some support would be removed from start-up companies but a belief that funding and support were available for them elsewhere; and the view that the Council should keep an overview of certain developments themselves.

A total of two respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal provided comment. One respondent said there was not enough details provided. The other respondent said they did not know what the Local Area Assessment was but they felt the projected saving of £85k did not warrant the reduction of project funds to support economic growth, business skills and job creation.

A total of two respondents who disagreed with the proposal provided comment. One respondent said there is a need to focus on supporting local businesses and not international firms, so that Council money is reinvested into the local economy. The other respondent said they felt the proposal was too short sighted and there is a risk of withdrawing from areas that may have future cost savings.

The two respondents who commented having said “don’t know” said that there was not enough information provided and that they did not know enough about the subject matter to make comment. No comments were received when respondents did not indicate agree or disagree to the proposal.

Any respondents who felt the proposal would have a negative impact were then asked to tell us what they thought the impact would be, along with any suggestions on how any potential
negative impacts could be mitigated. A total of four respondents provided comment. The majority of these respondents referred back to comments provided to previous questions. One respondent said many people are opposed to development, despite the opportunities they may bring. Another respondent simply said that others may feel negative.

Policy and Practice

- **19-006-05 Management of Closed Landfills** - Risk-based approach to the management of historic closed landfill sites during 2020/21. This is forecast to deliver savings of £100,000 in 2020/21.

262. Respondents were given the above explanation and asked if they agree or disagree with the proposal. There were 103 responses to this question. Just under 55% of respondents said that they strongly agree or tend to agree with the proposal, while just under 15% of respondents said that they strongly disagree or tend to disagree with the proposal.

263. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 10 comments made in relation to this question. A total of four respondents who agreed with the proposal provided comment. Comments included general support for the proposal; the view that it should be handed over to local businesses; a questioning of why sites are left untouched if they could generate income; and a request for assurance that the £100k saving will be reinstated into the following year’s budget.

264. A total of three respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal provided comment. A couple of the respondents said the service needs to be given the finances to mitigate and stop environmental damage, with one adding that it is important that sites are managed and remain safe and that risks are correctly assessed. The other respondent said they did not have sufficient knowledge on the subject in order to make comment.

265. A total of three respondents who disagreed with the proposal provided comment. Respondents expressed their general dissatisfaction with the proposal. One respondent felt the proposal was putting budget saving before community safety and that the landfill sites are the
continued responsibility of the Council. Another respondent said there is a need to source future landfill sites.

266. No comments were received from respondents who selected “don’t know” or did not indicate agree or disagree to the proposal.

267. Any respondents who felt the proposal would have a negative impact were then asked to tell us what they thought the impact would be, along with any suggestions on how any potential negative impacts could be mitigated. A total of two respondents provided comment. One respondent said they could not foresee a negative impact; whilst the other respondent said they were not sure if the proposal was an appropriate saving.

- **19-006-15 Commissioned Services from Third Parties** - Remove the budget for service level agreements with environmental bodies in line with practice over last two years. This is forecast to deliver savings of £46,000 in 2020/21.

268. Respondents were given the above explanation and asked if they agree or disagree with the proposal. There were 102 responses to this question. Just over two-fifths of respondents said that they strongly agree or tend to agree with the proposal, while almost 13% of respondents said that they strongly disagree or tend to disagree with the proposal.

269. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 10 comments made in relation to this question. A total of four respondents who agreed with the proposal provided comment. All of these respondents gave their general support for the proposal, with one asking what the £92,000 had been spent on over the past two years.

270. A total of three respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal provided comment. A couple of the respondents said they did not understand the impact of the proposal, with one wanting to know what an ‘environmental body’ was. One respondent made a comment about the Northampton Borough Council waste collection.
271. A total of two respondents who disagreed with the proposal provided comment. One respondent felt the saving was small but may have a deeper impact for services that rely on the service level agreements. The other respondent commented about the lift at Weston Favell Library being defective for some time and felt a service agreement would have enabled it to be maintained.

272. The one respondent who commented having said “don’t know” did not comment specifically about this proposal but said they felt the consultation document could have been more clearly laid out and that there was too much information provided and what was provided was not clear. No comments were received when respondents did not indicate agree or disagree to the proposal.

273. Any respondents who felt the proposal would have a negative impact were then asked to tell us what they thought the impact would be, along with any suggestions on how any potential negative impacts could be mitigated. A total of three respondents provided comment. One respondent felt there may be an impact with the current waste disposal work. Another respondent said there is need to assess the impact of this on the county and questioned if any of the service level agreements are used for monitoring purposes and if there was a potential loss of protection of the environment. Another respondent simply said that others may feel negative.

274. In addition to the proposals already set out, we consulted on a budget proposal in Place Services that we believe can deliver savings without having an impact on customers. Respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree with this proposal.

- **19-006-04 Professional Fees** – removal of the budget for external consultancy and technical work. This is forecast to save £115,000 in 2020/21.

275. There were 104 responses to this question. Just over three-quarters of respondents said that they strongly agree or tend to agree with this proposal, while just under 5% of respondents said that they strongly disagree or tend to disagree with this proposal.
LGSS

276. We consulted on a budget proposal in LGSS that we believe can deliver savings without having an impact on customers. Respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree with this proposal.

- **19-005-01 Wide Area Network (WAN) network replacement** – migration onto the Health and Social Care Network via EastNet, delivering significant savings as well as significant service improvements and opportunities for the STP (Sustainability and Transformation Partnership). This is forecast to save £595,000 in 2020/21.

277. There were 102 responses to this question. Just under two-fifths of respondents said that they strongly agree or tend to agree with this proposal, while just under 10% of respondents said that they strongly disagree or tend to disagree with this proposal.

![WAN Network Replacement Chart](image)

Fees and charges

278. The Medium Term Plan (MTP) requires the Council to review opportunities for income generation. Respondents were provided with a list of proposed fees and charges increases, with further details available in the Cabinet paper.

In summary, the proposed fees and charges increases relate to:

- School Effectiveness
- Moderation fees in schools
- Laminating fees in NCC run libraries
- Hire of drama sets in NCC run libraries
- Priority Copy Certificates in Registration Services
- School swimming lessons
- Meals and accommodation at Knuston Hall
- Some Archives and Heritage Services
- Trading Standards
- Highways and transport
- Rights of Way
Respondents were asked if they had any comments on any of the proposed fees and charges increases. A total of 23 comments were made about fees and charges, covering a range of different services. Almost a quarter of respondents said that increasing fees and charges needs to be balanced so as not to discourage use, become uncompetitive or become unviable, with car parking in country parks and library services being specifically mentioned. Several respondents gave their general agreement to the proposals with one saying it is time to review these services, and another saying they agreed because there wasn’t much of an increase for library charges. One respondent thought that increases are unavoidable but that the impacts should be monitored. One respondent made positive suggestions about Chester Farm, saying it should open sooner, that car parking should be free and that the Council could generate income via a café. One respondent suggested a 20% increase across the board for all services.

Other respondents disagreed with some of the proposed fees and charges. One respondent mentioned the Archives Service, saying it needs investment or it risks becoming unviable, while another respondent disagreed with the charge for using a camera in the Archives Office. Another respondent criticised the increases for laminating at libraries, saying it should be in increments of 5p or 10p to make it easier for everyone. One respondent disagreed with the increase for school swimming lessons fees. Another respondent felt that fees and charges should be frozen or increased by inflation. Some general comments were also made. A couple of respondents disagreed with Chester Farm as a Council project and said it should be sold. One respondent said the Council should invest in Duston Pool. Another said more public transport is needed in rural areas. One respondent said the council should support libraries.

One respondent came up with a number of suggestions regarding fees and charges and current chargeable services, including selling Knuston Hall, ceasing provision of non-statutory services such as Adult Learning, Appropriate Body Services and Leadership and Governance Services in Education and equipment verification in Trading Standards and an increase in residential parking permits. One respondent made general comments about support for people with disabilities.

**Alternative suggestions and other comments**

Respondents were then told that the Council must set a balanced budget, and were asked if they had any other ideas about how we could save the same amount of money or generate the same amount of income if we did not go ahead with these proposals. There were 50 comments made in relation to this question, covering a wide range of subjects. Just over a quarter of respondents mentioned salaries, staff and the use of consultants, with the view that senior management pay should be reduced, that frontline staff should be paid more, that the Council should get rid of inefficient staff and/or reduce staff numbers and should stop using consultants. Several respondents were critical of local and central government politicians, of the Council’s senior management and referred back to previous financial management of the Council. Several other respondents thought the Council could sell resources such as land, identify more income generation opportunities and set appropriate fees and charges levels to increase the amount of money it receives.
283. A couple of respondents said the Council should increase its debt recovery and try to recoup losses and stop fraud. The same number said the Council should have better financial monitoring and should review all expenditure to identify savings. A couple of respondents said councillor allowances should be cut, and a similar number said the Council should stop outsourcing services. A couple of respondents said they agreed with the proposals in the draft budget, while the same number felt the Council should not look to residents to pay more when the Council was in financial difficulties. One respondent came up with a wide range of alternative suggestions, from replicating Uber-style services to promoting Northampton town centre (these are shown in full in the appendix).

284. Other comments included the following:

- Reduce the cost of back office services
- To not put as much money into reserves whilst at the same time reducing service budgets
- For students to pay Council Tax
- Assess services thoroughly before making judgements on their budget etc
- To stop restructuring the Council and focus on running it effectively
- Freeze salaries or only increase in line with national increases
- Review the library service again
- Retain school transport so that children are given the best start in life
- Review LGSS
- Reduce the number of councillors
- Use development money to improve infrastructure
- Increase parking fines and fine untaxed and un-MOT’d motor vehicles

285. As well as providing alternative suggestions, some respondents made general comments. These included the view that the Council needs to deliver on its savings proposals; that the Council should improve its communications, transparency and clarity, especially in relation to the draft Budget consultation; that MPs should have done more to support the County Council in its financial difficulties; and that the wider tax system should be reformed. Further comments included general dissatisfaction; a request that the Rights of Way and Definitive Maps budgets are not reduced further; that staff should be treated better; and that better buildings are needed for children’s social care. One respondent referenced their previous comments. Another mentioned getting rid of the Office of Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner, although this is not part of NCC’s remit.

286. Respondents were then asked if they had any other comments they wanted to make. There were 18 comments made in relation to this question, covering a range of subjects with few common themes. The only points raised by more than one respondent were the view that the proposals were good but should be business as usual already; and the perceived inequity of pay for lower grade staff in comparison to their responsibilities, workloads, disparity of salary with senior management and with agency workers.

287. Other comments included reference to previous decision-making; the view that there needs to be parity of Council Tax in the new unitary authorities, reduced to the lowest rate; the view that the Council Tax increase cancels out the staff pay rise; and that staff numbers should be
reduced. Further comments included the view that disabled people need more support; negative comments on the Shelton Road incinerator; the view that services should be based on needs not wants; and criticism of the Conservative Party.

288. There were other comments made in relation to the view that more rural public transport is needed; that the Council should operate like the private sector to remove inefficiencies; the concern that other elements of Council Tax will also increase, making it harder to afford; and that it is time for the Council to improve its image. One respondent felt that the Council would not listen to the consultation feedback, while another felt the consultation was too complex. One respondent wanted to see investment in parents with mental health issues and another felt that some proposals were good while others were less well-thought through.

**Demographic information**

289. Respondents were asked a range of questions about themselves to help us understand the characteristics of people who had taken part in the consultation. That information is shown in graph form in the appendix to this report, which has been made available to Members and is available from our Consultation Hub.

**Other responses**

290. We received 4 emails in relation to the draft budget consultation. We received a letter from the North Northamptonshire District and Borough Councils, setting out their joint response to NCC’s draft Budget. The response said that the councils recognise the financial challenge facing the NCC and that they welcome the improved financial position and more robust approach to financial projections. They said that delivery of a balanced budget in 2019/20 must remain a priority for the County Council. Looking at the draft Budget for 2020/21, they welcomed the contingency money and funds set aside for reserves. They were keen to know the delivery status of draft Budget proposals to understand the risks around the draft Budget.

291. They raised some questions around the robustness of assumptions made about demographic pressures and whether they are fully reflective of demand and stressed the importance of accurate forecasts to provide the best opportunity to successfully deliver a balanced budget.

292. This submission was also forwarded by South Northamptonshire Council.

293. We received a letter from Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) which explained its interest as it covers residents who are served by GP practices in Oundle and some surrounding villages. It expressed its concern about the scale of the proposed changes and the groups that will be affected. It said that it is essential that local authorities and the health system work together closely to minimise the impacts of changes on the most vulnerable residents. On the basis that 2.41% of the Northamptonshire population are patients of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough CCG, it estimated the potential financial impact of the proposals on the CCG as £44.7K.
294. It then listed specific proposals and gave the CCG’s views on them. For Children First Northamptonshire proposals, it said that as childhood is a critical time for development and these services are used more frequently by people who are more deprived, it recommends that savings are made without decreasing the quality or capacity of these services.

295. It then commented on a number of NASS savings proposals, some of which, while included in NCC’s draft budget, were not subject to specific consultation at this time because they had formed part of a previous budget consultation and a decision had already been taken on these. This feedback has been forwarded to the relevant Director but is not included in this feedback analysis. Regarding those proposals forming part of this consultation, in most cases, it said the details were unclear and so it could not make a recommendation.

296. With regard to proposal 18-001-16 Specialist Centre for Step Down Care – Mental Health and Acquired Brain Injury, it said that it is currently reviewing provision for this group of patients and would welcome a collaborative approach for its Northamptonshire patients. For proposal 19-001-04 Reviewing catering facilities at day services, it quoted the high levels of malnutrition in patients admitted to hospital and recommended that any changes to day centre food enhance rather than decrease the nutritional status of clients.

297. We received an email from a resident who said that there needs to be more public transport in rural areas, following the reduction in bus subsidies as part of last year’s budget. They said this has had a particular impact on elderly people, and that older people felt ignored and isolated.

298. We received no comments that came via social media or via the group discussion facilitator feedback form.