

Draft Budget Consultation 2019/20 – 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 2019/20.

Cabinet decisions and formal consultation

2. The Draft Budget was approved by Cabinet on 11th December 2018 and consultation on the budget proposals began immediately following this meeting. The consultation concluded on 23rd January 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 and Project Management (BIPM), 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 and MEPs, 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 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 Cabinet paper in relation to the [Recommendation on the future of the Specialist Dementia Domiciliary Care Service following consultation](#) gives details about specific consultation promotion amongst customers who would be directly affected by this proposal (18-001-17).

How did consultees have their say?

7. 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
8. Some consultees chose to submit their views about Draft Budget Proposals directly to their County Councillor or the County Council's Chief Executive. These responses were forwarded to the 'Consult' inbox and have been included within the consultation analysis.

Number and type of responses received

9. During the draft budget consultation period, using the various means available to consultees, local people and organisations contributed to the consultations almost 900 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). However, it should be noted that almost half of participants in the online questionnaire did not complete it and in some cases chose only to answer the mandatory questions, which explains the lower response numbers to each question when compared with the overall number of participants. There was also a high proportion of respondents who skipped directly to their proposal of interest rather than feeding back on all sections of the questionnaire.
10. During the consultation period regular summaries of consultation responses received were circulated to decision makers to ensure such responses were considered in full and redacted versions of all responses received were circulated upon conclusion of the consultation.

What did people say?

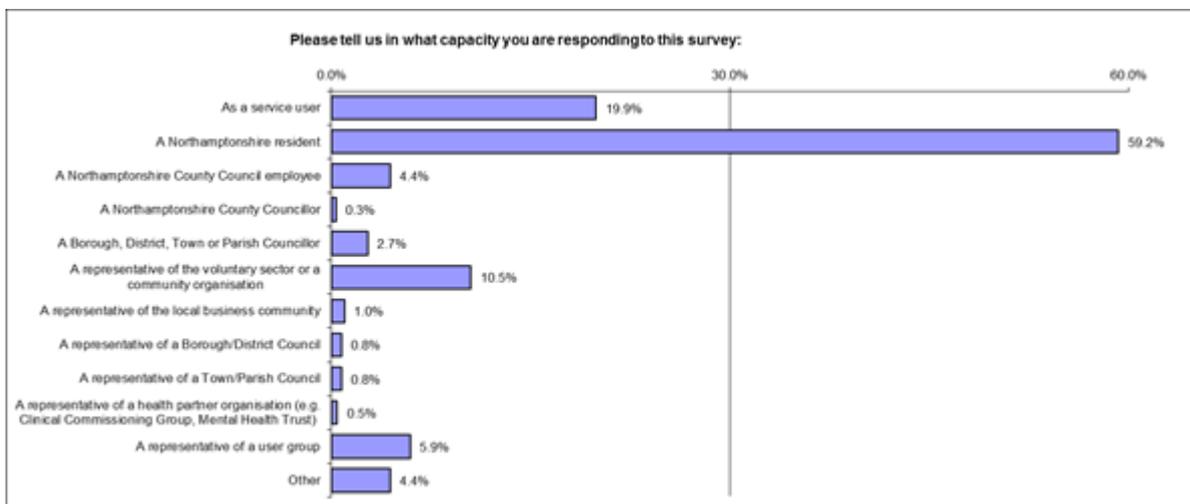
11. This report is a summary of the feedback received. It is recommended that it is read in conjunction with the full consultation results, including the detail and suggestions contained within some of the written responses. The full consultation results have been made available to Members and are available upon request.
12. Due to the number of proposals in the Draft 2019/20 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, mirroring the feedback that came from letters, emails and petitions in relation to individual proposals. 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 from the relevant sections of the questionnaire.
13. In the development of the final budget, some proposals which were consulted on have been removed. However, because respondents took the time to comment on them, the feedback is shown below. More information on which proposals have been removed can be found in the associated [Cabinet Paper appendices](#).

Questionnaire

14. In total, 878 respondents filled out a questionnaire, 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. However, we have chosen to include the

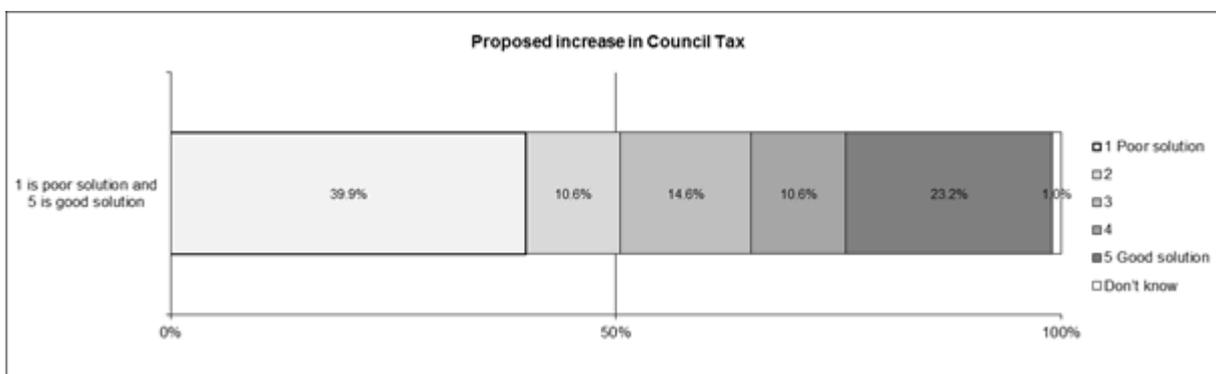
total number of all responses, whether complete or not, to recognise the time and effort people have gone to give their views.

15. Respondents were asked in what capacity they were responding to the consultation, and could select more than one option.



Proposed increase in Council Tax

16. As part of the Draft Budget Proposals, the Council was proposing to increase the council tax rate by 2.99% in 2018/19. For an average (Band D) Council Tax payer, this would mean an increase of £35.20 per year (68p per week) for the Northamptonshire County Council precept. This takes into account the transfer of the Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service to the Northamptonshire Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.
17. 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 3%.
18. Respondents were asked to what extent they think this is a good solution, where 1 is a poor solution and 5 is a good solution. There were 198 responses to this question.

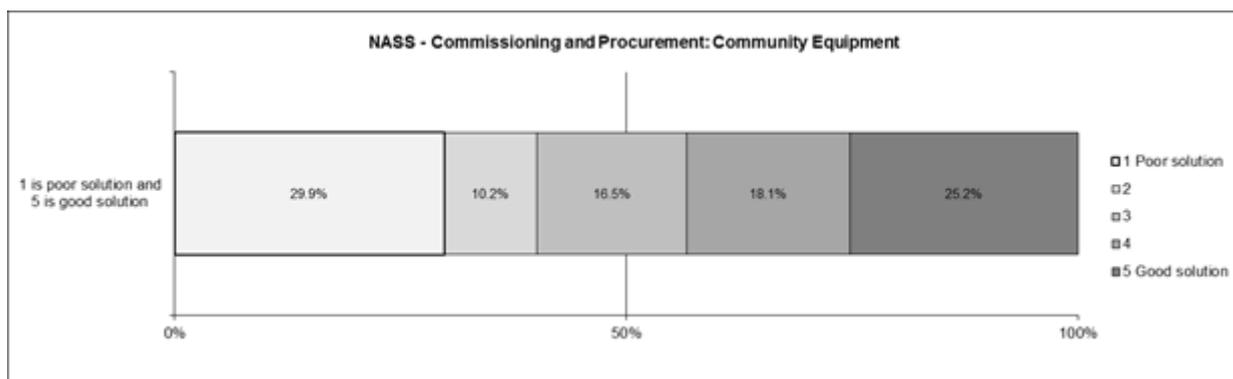


Poor solution		Good solution			Don't		
1	2	3	4	5	know		
39.9%	10.6%	14.6%	10.6%	23.2%	1.0%	Answered	Skipped
79	21	29	21	46	2	198	680

19. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 152 comments made in relation to this question.
20. Respondents who provided comments to why they thought this proposal was a good solution mostly either made general comments about how they had little choice or that they felt that there was no other way of raising the funds required. A few respondents said that it was the fairest and easiest way the Council could raise revenue. However, respondents stated that even though this was a good solution they felt that the Council would need to manage public resources effectively and efficiently. They did not want the Council to waste resources as its previous track record implied. Some respondents felt that the cost of holding a referendum to increase Council Tax further was too high in comparison to the money it would raise. Others questioned the estimation of the actual cost of holding a referendum.
21. These respondents said that the Council had to be put back “on track” and a rise in Council Tax could help do this. Respondents stated the Council had to provide essential services to vulnerable people. If service provision were to reduce, then vulnerable people are likely to suffer a greater impact than others. A few respondents commented that they were happy to pay more for services. Respondents overall did not want to see services closed, stopped or diminished.
22. Respondents said that Council Tax is not popular but overall it is a quick way of collecting revenue. Respondents also used this opportunity to state that Council Tax increases should have been implemented over time to keep pace with inflation and service pressures. Respondents commented that central government needs to recognise local government services and accordingly provide adequate financial support for local councils. Another commented on the growth of the county and its subsequent need for public services.
23. Respondents who felt it was poor solution said the proposal was an easy fix for the Council, but for the public it was a case of paying more and getting less. They said that taxes were already too high and asking for more contributions would cause financial hardship. They further stated that some families would be highly affected by the increase, as it would be an increase in payment in relation to their own household budget. This would be of particular concern for those in work but with a low income and for those on benefits i.e. state pension. A few respondents gave personal accounts of how the change would affect them. Respondents said that Council Tax was one of the most expensive bills for them in which they had no control in how it is spent.

24. Respondents commented that the proposals showed that a number of services and facilities were reducing across the county and yet the Council was proposing what they perceived to be a substantial council tax increase for the second year in a row. They added that they had seen a reduction in services, or services compromised and poorly maintained. Respondents were not sure how the increase in Council Tax in previous years had been used and that it was unrealistic to ask residents to continue to pay higher tax when they are benefiting less.
25. Respondents consistently expressed the view that they were paying for the financial mistakes the Council has made and, some felt, were continuing to make. They said that this should not be the case and those employees, current or past, should be held to account through legal routes. Some commented that they were not sure whether the proposal for an increase in Council Tax was legal and proper. Respondents were angry at the conduct of the Council and questioned the competency of senior management and political leaders asking whether they could be trusted with public money. These respondents felt that the perceived high salary for senior officers and allowances for Members was not good value for money. They also mentioned the high use of agency staff and government consultants being too costly.
26. Others comments received said that the level of tax was too high for the county and that it is comparable to the level in other more affluent areas of the country , however, in those areas tax payers were receiving more and better services than Northamptonshire residents are or would be. They said that the Council was continuing to fire fight instead of addressing the real problems and issues. Respondents felt that central Government ought to be doing more to fund increased social care costs, although some commented that the money for Northamptonshire was adequate, it was just not being spent in the correct way. A few comments were made on how wider central government policies such as foreign aid, could be changed to help direct money into local government services.
27. Respondents stated that the information provided with the consultation papers lacked detail about what the money would be spent on but had lots of information on where the funds would be coming from. This lack of clarity meant that respondents said they were not well informed of the full scope of the proposal.
28. Respondents who said that it was neither a good nor a poor solution commented on their unhappiness with the way in which the Council spent its money. They said that Council was not accountable and that those that had made poor decisions had to be held accountable. Respondents said that this did not solve the issues the Council was facing and that although it may be a simple way for the Council to raise revenue, it was not simple for the householder who would have to find extra money. Respondents again commented on value for money and that they were being asked to pay more money for reduced services. Some suggested a smaller percentage rise to make it potentially more affordable for all.
29. No comments were made by those that answered “Don’t Know”.
30. Respondents were then asked if they don’t agree with this solution, to tell us how else they would raise income required to avoid cuts to frontline services. There were 96 comments made in relation to this question.

31. Respondents to this question made comments about their dissatisfaction with the Council management and operations. They said the Council needed to stop paying high salaries to chief officers and managers. They felt the salaries did not reflect value for money. Some suggested that the management structure ought to be streamlined. A few commented on issues relating to terms and conditions of employment such as reduction in sickness pay; payment of bonuses or incentives; and bringing the retirement age in line with the private sector.
32. Respondents did not want Councillors to be paid high allowances. They emphasised the view that poor decision making has led to the consequences now faced by the Council. They also said that this failure should not fall on the public to pick up. A few respondents suggested that individuals – both senior manager and members – should be liable for financial mismanagement. Respondents expressed a sense of mistrust and anger with senior members and managers.
33. Respondents' other suggestions included using employees within other local government organisations in the county to help bring the Council back on track. They wanted services to be in-house, and some commented that they personally did not benefit from or see any specific services from the Council being provided to them or their geographical location. They said that a lot of services in the frontline had been cut and implied that the council services they previously used are no longer there, i.e. buses, libraries, children's centres.
34. They stated that more accountability and responsibility was required in the way in which the Council functioned. If they were paying more in Council Tax and receiving fewer services then they wanted to be assured that public money was being used effectively, efficiently and safely. Respondents said that Council could benchmark itself and learn from good practice Councils. Respondents also commented that the Council should only provide services that it had budgeted for and therefore it ought to be more prudent and accountable with its financial management of public funds. This control in spending required transparency, governance, scrutiny and ownership.
35. Other general comments included the use of business levies, an increase in house building, and better collection of existing Council debts. Respondents want the Council to consider the preventative services that were being disinvested in or had already been disinvested in. They said the result of cutting these services would create severe problems in the future and that the Council would not be able to afford the resultant services that would be required. Respondents thought that some services could innovate and increase their income which could then help pay for other services; or that the Council Tax could be set at a higher rate as in the long run the Council was being abolished and therefore it had nothing to lose. Respondents also said that Central Government needed to help the Council more.
36. At the time of launching the draft budget consultation, the Government had not confirmed the rules around the allowed percentage increase for 2019/20 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 2.99% to further fund frontline services, using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is a poor solution and 5 is a good solution, to what extent do they think this would be a good solution? There were 188 responses to this question.



Poor solution

Good solution

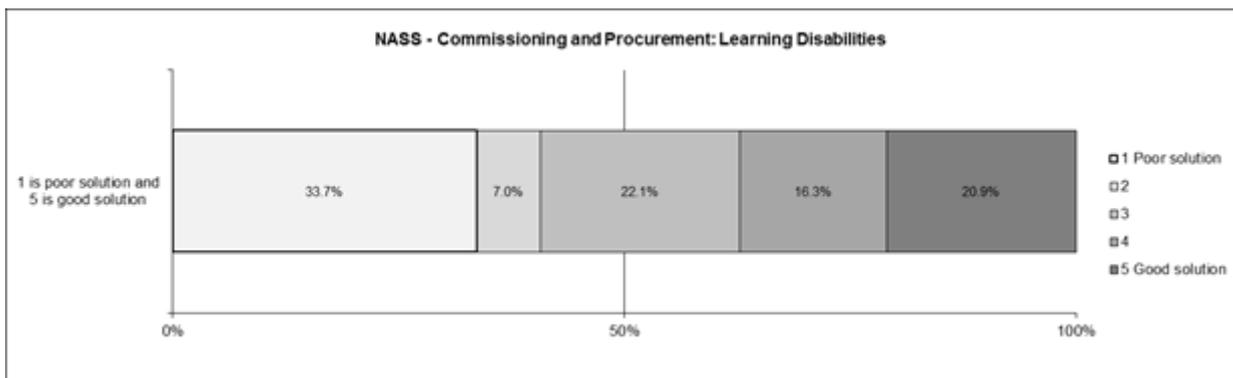
	1	2	3	4	5	Answered	Skipped
	29.9%	10.2%	16.5%	18.1%	25.2%		
	38	13	21	23	32	127	751

39. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 80 comments made in relation to this question.
40. The respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was a good solution mostly either made general supporting comments saying the proposal seemed like a sensible approach or said they thought the approach was fair and that if users of the service wanted higher specification equipment then they should pay the difference. Some respondents stated that the assessment needs to be robust to ensure the correct equipment is prescribed.
41. A few respondents commented that the service should be means tested and that users who can afford to pay should make a contribution for the equipment. A small number of respondents commented that the equipment could be recycled more effectively to help reduce the cost. Other comments included questioning the proposed budget reduction within NASS.
42. The respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was a poor solution mostly said it was because they felt the most vulnerable and people on low incomes would be negatively affected. They were against the principle of a top-up payment, especially those who already make payments for council services. However, some respondents' comments appeared to be under the misunderstanding that no equipment would be provided without payment.
43. Some respondents said that there should be more funding for adult social care and vulnerable members of society, and that there should be no cuts on what is considered by some to be an under-funded service. A similar number of respondents said capitalisation of equipment would not generate a saving for NCC as there is an impact long term on the revenue account.

44. Other comments made that sometimes non-standard equipment may not suit some users and if users did not have the equipment they needed it would put greater strain on other services; that people should be given the equipment they need and that they should take responsibility for its condition; and general dissatisfaction with NCC.
45. The respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was neither a good nor poor solution said similar comments as mentioned above including that some users would be unable to pay for a top-up and that the equipment provided should be based on an individual's need. Other comments included concerns about any depletion of existing equipment for those that do not contribute extra monies or that the quality of this equipment could be reduced.
46. Respondents were then asked if we do not go ahead with this proposal, do they have any other ideas about how we could save the same amount of money or generate the same amount of income (£3,100,050)? There were 48 comments made in relation to this question.
47. From the respondents who provided comments as to how NCC could save the same amount of money or generate the same amount of income, the most frequent comments made were regarding dissatisfaction with NCC and its financial management, including criticism of past management, the salaries of some members of staff, and that money is being spent in what was considered the wrong areas, amongst others.
48. Some suggestion of income generation included a higher increase in Council Tax to ensure retaining existing levels of service until the proposed unitary authorities come into being; improved recycling; fines for non-returned items of equipment or missed appointments; renegotiation of provider contracts; consider a leasing arrangement; sharing of budgets for equipment for example with the NHS; means tested charging for servicing of equipment; and to learn from other local authorities, with the example given of Milton Keynes.
49. Other comments received included general comments requesting better efficiency of running the service; support for the proposal to proceed; or saying there was a lack of information to enable them to comment. Some respondents stated they did not have any alternative suggestions.

Commissioning & Procurement: Learning Disabilities

50. Respondents were given an explanation of the proposal in this category and asked, using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is a poor solution and 5 is a good solution, to what extent do they think this would be a good solution?
- Learning Disability Programme - New Learning Disability Provider Framework (£1.3m) – this will change the way we buy care services for adults with learning disabilities from private providers, to meet the increasing demand in the most cost-effective way. This will ensure we have more certainty of our cost and can consider better ways of providing improved outcomes.
51. There were 86 responses to this question.



Poor solution

Good solution

1

2

3

4

5

33.7%	7.0%	22.1%	16.3%	20.9%	Answered	Skipped
29	6	19	14	18	86	792

52. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 58 comments made in relation to this question.
53. The respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was a good solution mostly made general supporting comments including how services and contracts should be provided in a cost effective way and provide good value for money. However, some added that the quality of services needs to be a strong factor, not just the cost. Respondents said services for vulnerable customer groups need to be delivered safely and meet the needs of the individual, including their culture and age.
54. Some respondents commented on their preference for services to be delivered in-house rather than contracted out to private providers, as they feel this diminishes the quality of care delivered.
55. Other comments included requests for greater partnership working; greater funding for the service; and comments about a lack of supporting information within the consultation materials to fully understand the implications of the budget proposal.
56. The respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was a poor solution mostly commented about their dissatisfaction with outsourcing the contract as they felt this would cost more than delivering the service in-house and that the care may be of lower quality and NCC's control of such would be reduced.
57. Some respondents were concerned that if NCC reduces the amount it pays for services then the quality of those services would reduce, and that this should not be the case for vulnerable individuals. Some felt this may cost more if these individuals require other

services as a result, and that it should be needs led and the individual should be given a personal budget to buy their own care instead.

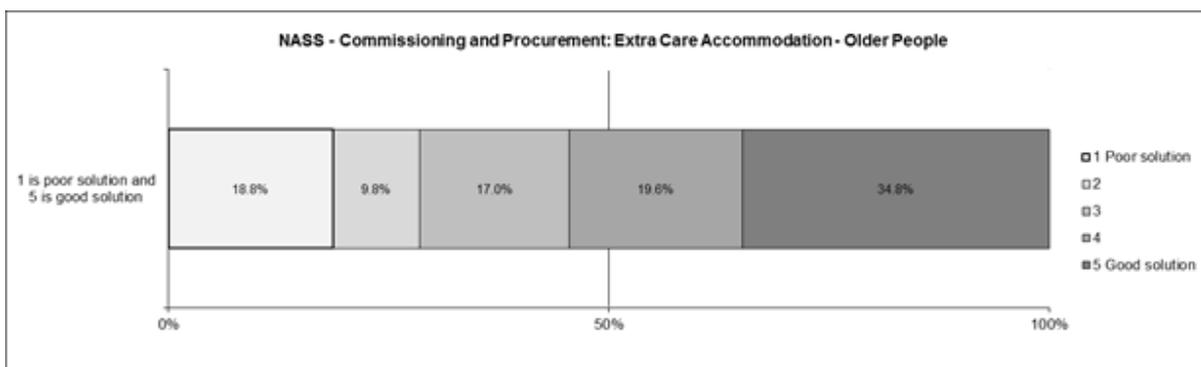
58. A small number of respondents mentioned their dissatisfaction with NCC and its management of contracts, and feel NCC do not pay enough for the services already so cannot see how funding can be reduced further. Other comments included the need for the contract to be managed to ensure customers are not put at risk; and disagreement with paying for the contract as it stands.
59. The most frequent comment made by respondents who provided comments as to why this was neither a good nor poor solution was because they felt they did not have sufficient information in order to provide feedback, such as why there is a perceived increase in demand.
60. Other comments included the need for sufficient monitoring of providers to ensure there are good quality services and that alternative providers can be readily sourced should services fall below an agreed standard.
61. Other comments received included a disagreement with outsourcing; the view that support should be based on need and not what services a specific provider can deliver; and that contracts need to be properly tendered.
62. Respondents were then asked if we do not go ahead with this proposal, do they have any other ideas about how we could save the same amount of money or generate the same amount of income (£1.3m). There were 23 comments made in relation to this question.
63. The most frequent comments made were regarding dissatisfaction with NCC, most notably salaries and areas of spend. Other comments made by respondents included the need for respite care; and support for general efficiency savings.
64. A small number of respondents put forward some saving and income generation suggestions which included a higher increase in Council Tax; reducing energy usage at council offices; to provide more services in-house; the means testing of customers; reviewing the contribution policy; review the care needs of customers and deliver services to those with more complex needs back in county; provide funding for annexes in homes to allow some carers to care for their adult with complex needs more easily which could reduce the need for respite; increase the amount of housing association homes; support customers with complex needs out of residential settings and living within the community to have more control; and increased scrutiny of care providers.

Commissioning & Procurement: Extra Care Accommodation – Older People

65. Respondents were given an explanation of the proposal in this category and asked, using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is a poor solution and 5 is a good solution, and to what extent do they think this would be a good solution?

- Utilisation of Older People Extra Care schemes (£674k) - We know that older people's wellbeing and health is better when they are able to maintain their independence for as long as possible - in a safe and supported environment and they feel part of a community. As a result, we want to reduce the number of people who have to be placed in residential care, by utilising extra care solutions which help reduce social isolation, means their independence and safety is maximised, whilst also offering better value for money.

66. There were 112 responses to this question.



Poor solution

Good solution

1

2

3

4

5

18.8%	9.8%	17.0%	19.6%	34.8%	Answered	Skipped
21	11	19	22	39	112	766

67. 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.

68. The vast majority of respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was a good solution made comments as to how most older people would rather live in their own homes for as long as possible, and that this is better for their independence and wellbeing. However, some added that there is still a requirement for vulnerable people to be properly cared for, with care staff that are able to provide sufficient time and good quality care, and they are safeguarded within their own homes and only remain there so long as it is safe for them to do so.

69. A few respondents commented on their dissatisfaction with care homes as they are seen as expensive and not always delivering the right level of care. Other comments included concern over the accumulation of previous service reductions including bus subsidies and day services that may have an impact on social isolation for some elderly people that remain in their own homes; and dissatisfaction that some elderly people have to sell their homes to fund their care.

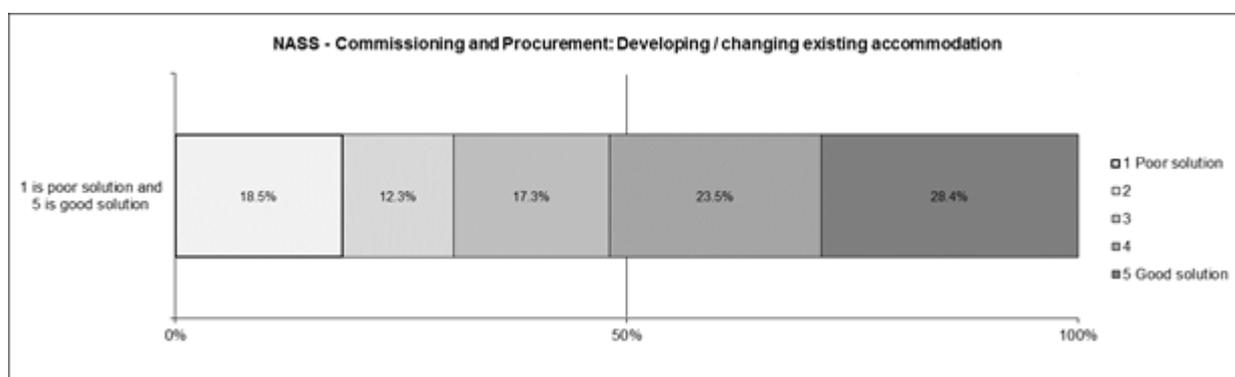
70. The respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was a poor solution mostly felt that care homes are sometimes the best place for some older people, with some respondents feeling the quality of care being provided within people's own homes is insufficient and that some people would be safer and have a better quality of life if they lived in a care home. A small number of respondents raised their concerns over the potential risk some older people may face if they were not in a care home due to what they felt was a lack of enough support within the community.
71. Again, some respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with NCC and did not feel that this budget has been sufficiently managed and that the projected savings would not be effectively implemented. Other comments included the need for more funding; the need for more support from and for families to help look after older people; that the Council should review its providers to ensure it is receiving the best value for money; and that Council Tax should be increased to help fund the service.
72. The respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was neither a good nor poor solution said similar comments as mentioned above, most significantly concerns over loneliness for older people living within their own homes and the potential lack of care and support available to delivered within the community.
73. Again a small number of respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with NCC and the currently level of care services, and called for more investment in services. Other comments included the need to consider the cost of being cared for in someone's own home compared to cost of residential care; the need for respite to be easier to access; and that having older people living closer together i.e. sheltered housing or retirement complexes, could provide better value than having carers travelling long distances between appointments.
74. Respondents were then asked if we do not go ahead with this proposal, do they have any other ideas about how we could save the same amount of money or generate the same amount of income (£674k)? There were 34 comments made in relation to this question.
75. Respondents who provided comments as to how NCC could save the same amount of money or generate the same amount of income gave a variety of answers. Again there was an expression of dissatisfaction with NCC.
76. Some respondents weren't able to make a suggestion, whilst others said there should be more funding from central government for this service. Other comments included a request for NCC to prioritise social care funding over arts and heritage; and for residential care homes to charge less.
77. A small number of respondents put forward some saving and income generation suggestions which included an increase in Council Tax; to sell some of NCC's assets; reduce spending on NCC buildings including having more staff working from home; using some of the New Home Bonus to provide housing for the elderly; part scheme in shared ownership with a compulsory buy back when the resident passes away or is unable to live in their extra care home; review and improve contracting with providers; enhance market options and review care rates; more support for families to help care for elderly relatives; and enhance NCC's debt recovery processes.

Commissioning & Procurement: Developing / changing existing accommodation

78. Respondents were given an explanation of the proposals in this category and asked, using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is a poor solution and 5 is a good solution, to what extent do they think this would be a good solution?

- Eleanor Lodge - Change of use (£300k) - There is a shortage of appropriate, cost-effective supported living placements for people with learning disabilities within Northamptonshire. The proposal is to convert Eleanor Lodge (which currently provides short-term breaks and respite placements mainly for customers with a learning disability) into 3/4 bedroom supported living flats/houses. This would mean that the service at this site would no longer provide short breaks and this would need to be provided in other short breaks services (within the Council or by other providers) or by offering customers Direct Payments or individual budgets. The current average cost of a supported living package is £1,422 per week. By running this service in house, we can deliver better value for money and provide supported living for some of our most challenging Learning Disabled clients rather than relying on residential care which does not support independence in the same way. We are consulting directly with customers who are currently using this service (or have booked a future break) and their families to find out their views.
- NCC Care Home ownership (£183k) – the Council is considering whether a residential home should be taken back into NCC ownership and converted in order to manage and support clients with complex needs in a more cost-effective way
- Saxon Court (£166k) – This is a new development planned by a private provider for a new Supported Living Scheme in Northampton for younger adults with complex needs. This will expand our opportunity to support more younger adults to live more independently in the community and improve their longer term outcomes as well as being more cost effective than more expensive residential care

79. There were 81 responses to this question.



Poor solution		Good solution			Answered	Skipped
1	2	3	4	5		
18.5%	12.3%	17.3%	23.5%	28.4%	81	797
15	10	14	19	23		

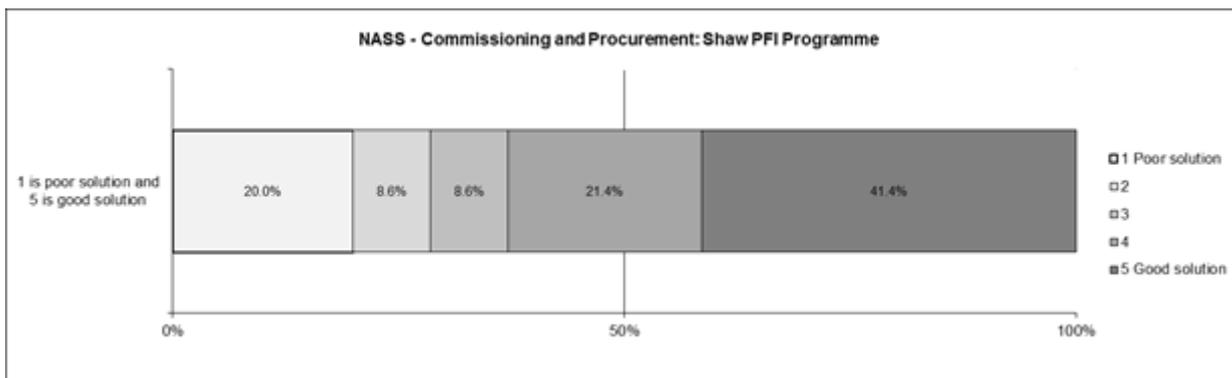
80. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 55 comments made in relation to this question.
81. The respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was a good solution mostly commented about their general support for the proposal, and that they felt making these changes to reduce service costs seemed like a sensible approach. Many respondents also expressed their preference for services to be delivered in-house, as they feel private providers have to make a profit which can impair the quality of service, and that having in-house services delivered by NCC means there will be consistency of the quality of services and that it will not vary depending on where customers live within the county.
82. Other comments included that this should only be done if it is of benefit to the customer; that day services and respite must be sufficiently funded and delivered across the whole county, including rural areas; that contracts with existing providers should be reviewed to ensure they are providing the required services; and that NCC should be developing housing and day services.
83. The respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was a poor solution mostly mentioned Eleanor Lodge and its importance of providing respite for family carers. They stated how they valued the staff at the venue and how they and the person they care for would struggle if current services were removed from the venue, including how the customer may struggle to cope with changes. They commented how suggested alternatives are not suitable and how travelling to Corby as an alternative would be too far. They felt removing this service from Eleanor Lodge would incur extra cost for NCC as their needs as carers and the customers' needs would increase to the point there they would seek access to assisted living or a care home.
84. Some respondents also commented about the potential loss of short-term breaks, the lack of availability, and how reducing this further may impact on the carer. Some respondents commented that carers require more support than is currently available.
85. Other comments included a small number of respondents commenting on their dissatisfaction with NCC; doubt that the savings will be delivered within the timescale; and that there should be more support for vulnerable adults, including social workers to help people live independently.
86. The respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was neither a good nor poor solution repeated some similar comments as mentioned above, with concerns over any reduction in available respite being of particular concern. They commented on how some people, such as those with autism but not learning disabilities, have unmet needs, and

how opportunities for them may be diminished. Some respondents commented on the potential impact on the wellbeing of the family should respite services be reduced, and that having carers at home is not the same as a break in a respite centre.

87. Other respondents commented that the services should be available across the county and not too heavily focused within Northampton; conversely a respondent commented on the lack of respite provision within Northampton if the short breaks provision is removed from Eleanor Lodge; and a request that there should be more facilities that take into account an individual's needs, including cultural and ethnicity.
88. Respondents were then asked if we do not go ahead with this proposal, do they have any other ideas about how we could save the same amount of money or generate the same amount of income (£649k)? There were 25 comments made in relation to this question.
89. The most frequent comments made were again regarding dissatisfaction with NCC. Other comments included a request to prioritise monies and services for vulnerable people over arts and heritage; concern that the proposals would impact vulnerable people; and a request for more help so people can live independently in their own homes.
90. The comments from respondents who put forward saving and income generation suggestions included to use some existing land or property that is currently unused to make a purpose built facility; review existing contracts with providers for greater efficiency; to bring services in-house; to review available housing that is appropriate; and to enable easy access for people to pay for care within their own homes should they wish.

Commissioning & Procurement: Shaw PFI Programme

91. Respondents were given an explanation of the proposals in this category and asked, using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is a poor solution and 5 is a good solution, to what extent do they think this would be a good solution?
 - Shaw PFI Programme - Contract Compliance (£1.192m) - The Council has a 25 year contract with Shaw for the building and running of 4 specialist care centres (SCCs) with the supporting care services. This contract runs until 2028. The contract met the Council's service needs at the time it was set up in 2003 but over time, the complexity of people and the advances in home-based reablement and rehabilitation means that most people who would have gone to the centres in the past now stay in their own homes. However, it has been difficult to place people needing more complex support in these centres, even though the Council continues to pay for the beds, regardless of how many are filled. Through improved contract management, we can increase the use and occupancy and get better value for money.
 - Shaw PFI Programme - Funded Nursing Care (£248k) – as part of the work on the Shaw contract, we plan to potentially increase the number of nursing places and ensure that Funded Nursing Care costs are recouped for qualifying nursing payments. This will only affect the future management processes for the Specialist Care Centres.
92. There were 70 responses to this question.



Poor solution

Good solution

1

2

3

4

5

20.0%	8.6%	8.6%	21.4%	41.4%	Answered	Skipped
14	6	6	15	29	70	808

93. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 55 comments made in relation to this question.
94. The vast majority of respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was a good solution expressed their general support for this proposal. They felt this was common sense, with some questioning why the PFI contract with Shaw was set up this way in the first instance and why this has not been changed in previous years.
95. A similar number considered that a contract that included payment for what was regarded as 'empty beds' as extremely poor value for money and wanted to see better contract management of the PFI contract.
96. A small number of respondents also suggested that any surplus places within Shaw should be sold on to other organisations such as the NHS or to organisations outside of the county who may be lacking capacity within their own premises. Other comments included support for more nursing care, with a suggestion that some of the nursing care cost could be paid for by the NHS.
97. The vast majority of respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was a poor solution mostly expressed their dissatisfaction with PFI contracts in general, with some wanting NCC to withdraw from the Shaw PFI contract completely, whilst others wanted it renegotiated.
98. A small number of respondents simply expressed their dissatisfaction with NCC or felt that NCC has tried and failed in the past to renegotiate the contract so there is an expectation that this budget saving will not be achieved.

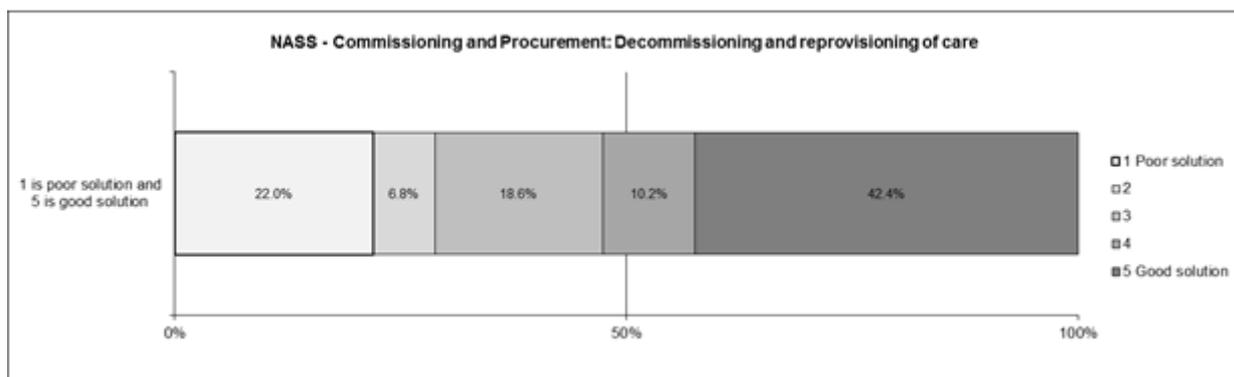
99. Other comments included dissatisfaction with the service a respondent received from Shaw; a suggestion that the centres should be changed to meet the needs of the population if they are not fulfilling their primary task; and again a suggestion that the surplus places be sold to other organisations.
100. Similar to the above, the majority of respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was neither a good nor poor solution mostly expressed their dissatisfaction with the PFI contracts and the length of the contract.
101. Other comments included concern over the perceived working relationship between NCC and Shaw; a respondent feeling there is not enough information available for them to make an informed decision; and a respondent saying that Shaw is performing well and the service requires more money and not less.
102. Respondents were then asked if we do not go ahead with this proposal, do they have any other ideas about how we could save the same amount of money or generate the same amount of income (£1.44m)? There were 19 comments made in relation to this question.
103. Respondents provided various comments as to how NCC could save the same amount of money or generate the same amount of income. Some said they were unable to make any suggestions; and some again expressed their dissatisfaction with NCC; another felt there was more efficiency savings that could be made.
104. The comments from respondents who put forward a saving and income generation suggestions included a higher increase in Council Tax; renegotiation of the Shaw PFI contract; delivering the service in-house; and sell surplus places to other organisations.

Commissioning & Procurement: Decommissioning and reprovisioning of care

105. Respondents were given an explanation of the proposals in this category and asked, using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is a poor solution and 5 is a good solution, to what extent do they think this would be a good solution?
- Decommission in house Dementia Specialist Domiciliary Care Service (£150k) – the home care service run by NASS is supporting fewer people than it has capacity for and this has been steadily reducing. As a result it does not offer value for money in terms of utilisation of the staff and when compared to the costs paid on the Council’s new Home Care Provider Framework for private providers. This proposal would mean moving existing customers to new providers who would provide the same levels of home care and moving in house staff to other areas where we need their capacity and skills, such as supporting hospital discharges. This will offer better value for money at the same time as ensuring ongoing care for all existing customers. We are consulting directly with customers who are currently using this service and their families to find out their views.

- Shaw PFI Programme - Decommission Day centre service (£100k) – we are reviewing day centres services that are part of the Shaw contract, which are under-used but have a high operating cost and associated transport costs. It may be that we can achieve better value for money by using different day care services for those customers, without a reduction in the services they receive. We are consulting directly with customers who are currently using this service and their families to find out their views.

106. There were 59 responses to this question.



Poor solution

Good solution

1 2 3 4 5

22.0%	6.8%	18.6%	10.2%	42.4%	Answered	Skipped
13	4	11	6	25	59	819

107. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 37 comments made in relation to this question.

108. The respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was a good solution mostly made general supporting comments about how they feel this is a sensible approach and that a review should be undertaken and alternatives sourced if services are under-utilised. However, some added that the alternatives must be suitable including any alternative buildings and staff. Respondents also wanted the quality of the services received by the customers to be maintained or increase; that vulnerable adults are appropriately safeguarded; and that customers do not face increased costs.

109. Other comments included dissatisfaction with Shaw as the current provider; concerns that reducing any day service provision could increase social isolation which may incur higher care costs; dissatisfaction over the cost of care and how this is funded by the sale of an individual’s property; and a request for the existing dementia services to be reviewed along with the threshold for accessing these services.

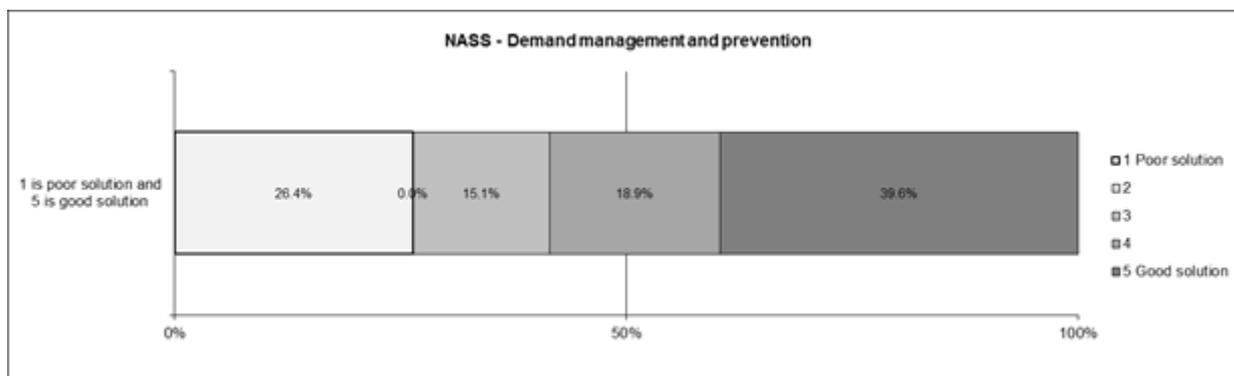
110. Respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was a poor solution gave various reasons for doing so. Some rated highly the dementia service being delivered by OCS and questioned why the existing service is under-utilised and felt there is a strong demand for these specialist services. Some respondents said how they want to keep this service and felt other non-specialist providers would not be able to deliver the same level of dementia service. A few respondents expressed dissatisfaction with out-sourcing, preferring services to be delivered in-house.
111. Other comments included a suggestion that funding for the service should be reviewed and that it should either be solely funded by NCC or that Dementia care itself should come under NHS Continuing Healthcare and not social care. Again a small number of respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with NCC and its management.
112. The respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was neither a good nor poor solution again said that more government support should be given as it was felt dementia care was a service that was lacking nationally. A suggestion was again made about how this should fall under the NHS and not local authorities. A small number of respondents also expressed their concerns that moving customers to alternative venues could be detrimental to their wellbeing.
113. A few respondents made alternative suggestions which included having more local community schemes being delivered in local facilities with NCC qualified staff supporting; provision of services by a charity partner to be considered; and again offer any surplus provision to partners.
114. Other comments included some general support for the proposal but concerns over outsourcing of services; concern that the budget saving would not be realised due to lack of supporting information provided; and dissatisfaction with PFI contracts was also mentioned again.
115. Respondents were then asked if we do not go ahead with this proposal, do they have any other ideas about how we could save the same amount of money or generate the same amount of income (£250k)? There were 12 comments made in relation to this question.
116. Comments included the belief that NCC has enough money to not have to implement this budget proposal; the general suggestion that further efficiency savings are available; and dissatisfaction with NCC.
117. The comments from respondents who put forward saving and income generation suggestions included the review of customer contributions towards costs of their care; and a renegotiation of the cost of OCS care and the hourly rates and to include a review of NCC's resource allocation system.

Demand management and prevention

118. Respondents were given an explanation of the proposals in this category and asked, using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is a poor solution and 5 is a good solution, to what extent do they think this would be a good solution?

- Learning Disability Programme - New models of Care (£1.5m) – we plan to put a number of things in place to improve the quality and effectiveness of reviews and reassessments for people with learning disabilities. In future we want to focus more on people’s outcomes and what the individual can do, rather than what they can’t. This will include offering more opportunities for people to step down from residential care (where that is suitable) or live in more independent settings.
- Intermediate Care (£700k) – this proposal will reduce the number of long term care placements for those people discharged from hospital by offering more reablement (a short and intensive service aiming to help people go back to being as independent as they can be) and step down care (transferring people out of hospital but giving them the support they need before they are able to remain at home independently). This includes 24 hour care at home for a short period to help people being discharged from hospital faster and also avoid people going into residential care where they do not need to. We know too that people’s long term outcomes are better if they leave hospital in a timely and safe way and as soon as they no longer need hospital care.

119. There were 53 responses to this question.



Poor solution

Good solution

1

2

3

4

5

26.4%	0.0%	15.1%	18.9%	39.6%	Answered	Skipped
14	0	8	10	21	53	825

120. 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.

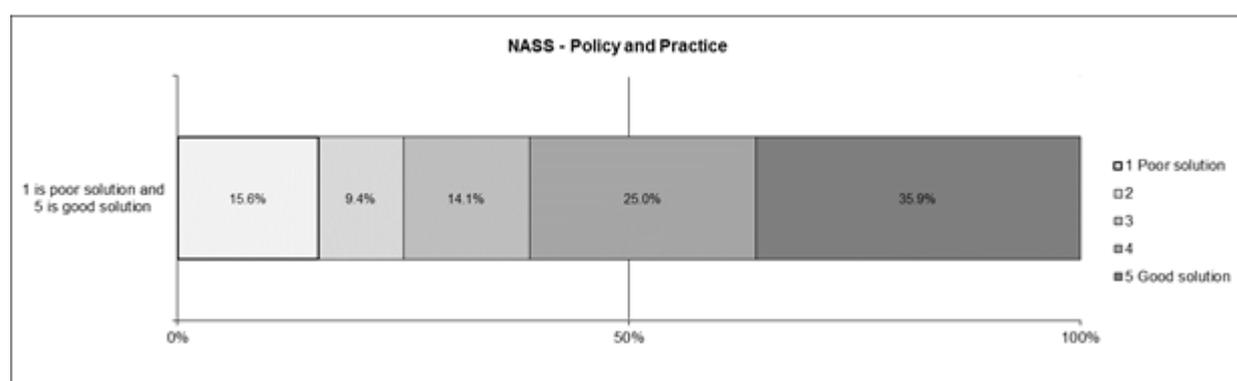
121. The majority of respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was a good solution mostly felt this was a sensible approach, as long as it is able to deliver the required outcomes. They felt individuals are best placed within their own home where possible and to have independence, but only on the proviso that vulnerable people are safeguarded and protected and do not incur extra costs.
122. Some respondents commented on how this needs to be implemented effectively and that replacing long term care with short term care needs to be carefully assessed to ensure that vulnerable individuals receive the support they need. Adequate adult social care services also need to be in place to support the transition from hospital discharge.
123. Other comments included concern over the deliverability of the saving within the short-term; that services delivered should be based on an individual's needs; and dissatisfaction with NCC and its adult social care needs assessments.
124. The respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was a poor solution said that the assessment process needs to be effective. They also commented that this should only apply to individuals when it is appropriate and may not be suitable for some complex needs; that it should not affect current service provision; and that vulnerable people require more support not less.
125. The respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was neither a good nor poor solution said that the services need to be personalised, with a good assessment completed to ensure people can safely live independently. If not this could result in further support being required and an increase in cost. It was commented that moving from a highly supported environment to one with less support could harm an individual's recovery.
126. A few respondents commented that there needs to be enough staff to provide the ongoing support and for the assessments and individuals reviews. It was suggested a panel of industry and lay experts could assist with ensuring correct procedures are in place. Other comments included concerns that this will not be able to effectively work in practice; and that the priority should be meeting needs, not about the budget.
127. Respondents were then asked if we do not go ahead with this proposal, do they have any other ideas about how we could save the same amount of money or generate the same amount of income (£2.2m)? There were 11 comments made in relation to this question.
128. Respondents gave a variety of responses. These included not being able to think of any alternatives; feeling that NCC had the money to pay for the service and that more efficiency savings should be made; that care could be provided on an attendance basis in the community; and general dissatisfaction with NCC.

Policy and practice

129. Respondents were given an explanation of the proposal in this category and asked, using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is a poor solution and 5 is a good solution, to what extent do they think this would be a good solution?

- Older People Continuing Healthcare Optimisation (£100k) – this is about making sure that older people with significant health conditions have better access to Continuing Healthcare support, meaning that their costs are paid for by Health Providers rather than the Council where that is appropriate under national guidance.

130. There were 64 responses to this question.



Poor solution

Good solution

1 2 3 4 5

15.6%	9.4%	14.1%	25.0%	35.9%	Answered	Skipped
10	6	9	16	23	64	814

131. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 41 comments made in relation to this question.

132. The vast majority of respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was a good solution mostly made general remarks as to their support for this proposal. They said organisations should be accountable and pay for their own services. They felt it is fair the health service pays for the cost of health care, especially if it has a duty to do so.

133. Respondents did comment that the costs of services are funded by the public purse and were dissatisfied with lack of clear agreement as to which public sector organisation is required to pay towards services. Respondents also commented that the current NCC social care software needs to be reviewed to make it more effective in recording areas of complex and shared funding.

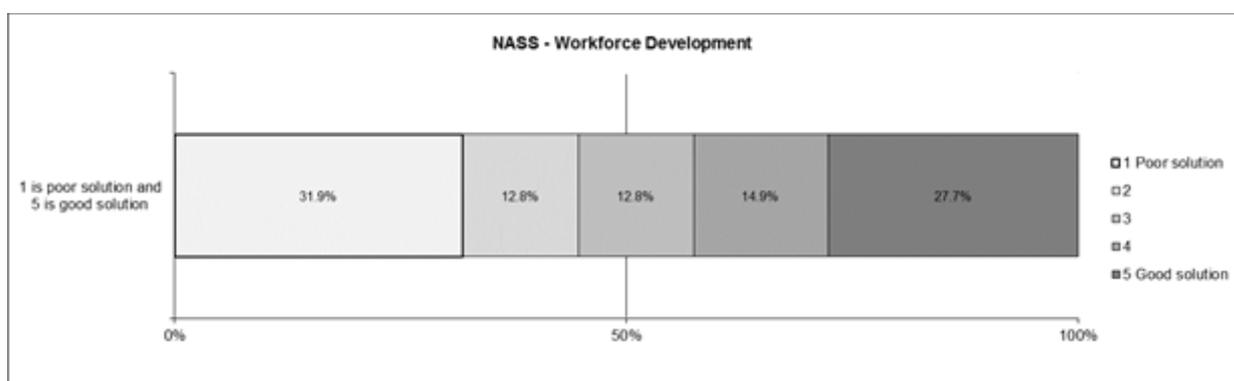
134. Other comments included that elderly people and the vulnerable need to be protected; dissatisfaction that NCC has been paying for services they are not responsible for from monies received via Council Tax; concern the budget saving will not be made; and a request for a clearer understanding as to how people are entitled for Continuing Healthcare support.
135. The respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was a poor solution saw this as a shift in the 'burden' of this budget to the health services. They also felt this may have an impact on the health of the end user. It was suggested that more collaboration between NCC and health providers would be a preferred way forward.
136. A small number of respondents said they felt this was not achievable. They also said that many patients being discharged under continuing health care do not qualify for the funding at their first review. Another raised concerns that this may cause future issues or delays for individuals if payments are not made or agreed between organisations due to them trying to reduce spending.
137. Other comments included the thought this would not save money in the long-term; and again, dissatisfaction with NCC.
138. The respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was neither a good nor poor solution said similar comments as mentioned above including that this just shifted the cost from one organisation to another. They also raised concerns that individuals may lose out on services if organisations are unable to agree on who is responsible for the funding. There was also some doubt by a small number of respondents as to whether health providers would release the monies.
139. Other comments received included suggestions that cost should be shared between NCC and the health providers; and that any transition should have a seamless effect on services.
140. Respondents were then asked if we do not go ahead with this proposal, do they have any other ideas about how we could save the same amount of money or generate the same amount of income (£100k)? There were 12 comments made in relation to this question.
141. Respondents commented that the services must be provided and that this amount is relatively small compared to other proposals; that there are general efficiency savings to be made; that there should be more engagement with the users of the services to help identify where savings can be made; that there should be increased partnership working between organisations; that NCC should support a locally formed charity and share council property to help keep costs minimal; and that appropriate assessments should be held with the required timeframes and this would aid the efficiency of social workers.

Workforce development

142. Respondents were given an explanation of the proposal in this category and asked, using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is a poor solution and 5 is a good solution, to what extent do they think this would be a good solution?

- Staff vacancies/ turnover management (£350k) – a review of how we allocate work in NASS has resulted in the service being able to carry a higher number of vacancies and so this money can be given up as a saving

143. There were 47 responses to this question.



Poor solution

Good solution

1

2

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4

5

31.9%	12.8%	12.8%	14.9%	27.7%	Answered	Skipped
15	6	6	7	13	47	831

144. 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.

145. The respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was a good solution felt this made sense and that there could be the ability to have shared teams and roles, for example administrative support. They also felt that any job duplication should be avoided. Other comments included concern that individuals' workloads may be unsafe; that all required vacancies should be filled and not automatically deleted for budget savings; and that there should be efficient use of NCC's facilities.

146. The vast majority of respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was a poor solution raised concerns over staff workload and the fear this will also impact on the quality of work and the service delivered to customers. They felt the staffing levels were already too low and that NCC has lost many experienced members of staff. They felt not recruiting more staff may result in current staff being off work ill or leaving their

employment. Other comments received included the need to remove any job duplication, and dissatisfaction with NCC.

147. The respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was neither a good nor poor solution said similar comments as mentioned above and reiterated the concern that the staffing levels should not be reduced and that the wellbeing of staff and their ability to perform well has an impact on the customer. Another respondent felt with improved training and internal processes members of staff will be able to manage increased workloads.

148. Respondents were then asked if we do not go ahead with this proposal, do they have any other ideas about how we could save the same amount of money or generate the same amount of income (£350k)? There were 9 comments made in relation to this question.

149. These included dissatisfaction with NCC; that further efficiency savings are available; that the proposal should proceed; and that managers should share examples of good practice.

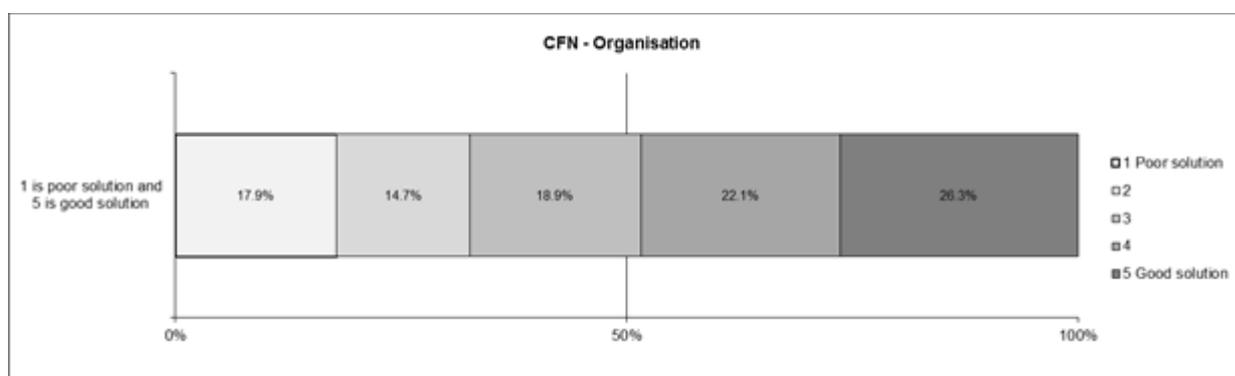
Children First Northamptonshire

Organisation

150. Respondents were given an explanation of the proposal in this category and asked, using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is a poor solution and 5 is a good solution, to what extent do they think this would be a good solution?

- Reorganisation (£1.207m) – savings that can be made by joining up teams to make sure that as many as possible of the resources available to the service are used to support children and families

151. There were 95 responses to this question.



Poor solution		Good solution			Answered	Skipped
1	2	3	4	5		
17.9%	14.7%	18.9%	22.1%	26.3%	95	783
17	14	18	21	25		

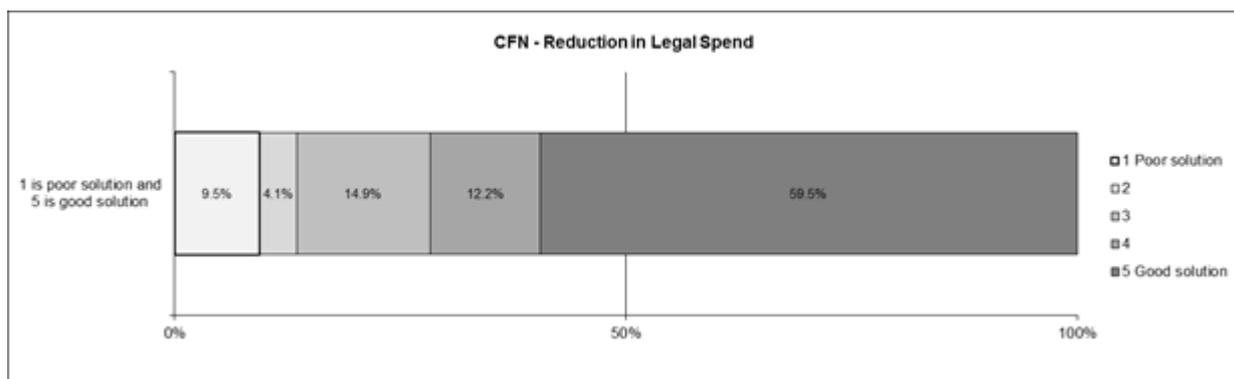
152. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 53 comments made in relation to this question.
153. Respondents who indicated that they thought the proposal was a good solution commented that it is good management practice to try to reduce overheads as long as services are not compromised. They thought the proposal was practicable and realistic as long as it achieved the correct outcomes for children. Respondents said that new structures should aim to deliver initiatives that reduce the wastage. Any restructuring needed to put frontline services first and that more support should be given to service users. Respondents were apprehensive about how this proposal would be go ahead in light of the recent OFSTED inspection report and the ability of the Council to deliver its proposal.
154. Respondents felt that ineffective and inefficient performance is ingrained within the Council and that it may be difficult to fix. They stated that some of the services are disjointed and that if reorganisation meant that services got better, that would be an improvement. Respondents wanted to see better relationships building up in teams within the Council and with other key partners, including those in the third sector.
155. A few respondents said their confidence in Children First Northamptonshire decision makers was at a low level. Respondents wanted a reduction in the salary given to managers and to have overall smaller teams, which may assist more effective working. A few respondents made suggestions such as staff spending less time at meetings; and finding ways to offer support to the frontline; and reducing social worker caseloads.
156. Respondents wants the Council to be honest in their approach to inefficiencies and felt that the Council was still saying it had enough money to do things when they perceive it has not. They said that the Council ought to put pressure on central Government to help Northamptonshire achieve better outcomes for vulnerable children and their families. Other comments included reorganising services as long as there were no redundancies; an overall decrease in social worker caseload and no reduction in current services. Respondents stated that services need to be at a local level and direct help be provided to those families that need it.
157. Those that thought it was a poor solution commented that vulnerable children needed protection. Respondents said services were constantly being restructured and this was costly for the Council. They said the Council had to tackle the cost of agency staff along with high operating costs. However, a few respondents also said services were failing and that it was time to completely overhaul children services. They felt the introduction of more expert managers could achieve the rapid change, which was required. Others felt that any restructuring might spread resources more thinly with no great improvement; and

furthermore that some children were already invisible in the system and others subsequently could become invisible too.

158. Respondents made general comments about decisions already made by the Council in other areas, which they perceive have had an adverse impact on children's services such as advisors for the NEET group; support services for young people with mental health or drug and alcohol issues; access to local facilities such as children's centres and libraries.
159. Those respondents who said "neither a good nor poor solution" commented on staff losing specialisms. They asked that the Council looks at the preventative service and provides more holistic services. They said that children could not be protected if there were fewer staff; and again they noted that social workers have large caseloads to manage.
160. A few respondents commented that diverting staff to different operational areas would have an impact but they could not fully assess the outcome, as they did not know where and how staff and subsequent work would be diverted. Reorganisation may offer protection to vulnerable children but it could have a negative impact and add extra stress to a complex system of care. Staff would be affected too. They felt that families and children are struggling enough and do not need an inefficient organisation to add to their complex issues.
161. Respondents were then asked if we do not go ahead with this proposal, do they have any other ideas about how we could save the same amount of money or generate the same amount of income (£1.207m)? There were 18 comments made in relation to this question.
162. Those who commented said that the Council could ask families for contributions to help; that staff could change their approach to work which would result in efficiencies and savings. Some respondents commented that it was a wider issue about why more children are in care in Northamptonshire compared to other areas. A few respondents said they did not have enough information to give comments; or they said they had no comment to make.

Reduction in Legal Spend

163. Respondents were given an explanation of the proposal in this category and asked, using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is a poor solution and 5 is a good solution, to what extent do they think this would be a good solution?
- Reduction in legal spend (£750k) – reducing the amount of money we spend on legal fees with LGSS Law by increasing our control and scrutiny of work undertaken so we don't always have to rely on lawyers
164. There were 74 responses to this question.



Poor solution

Good solution

1

2

3

4

5

9.5%	4.1%	14.9%	12.2%	59.5%	Answered	Skipped
7	3	11	9	44	74	804

165. 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.
166. Respondents who said this proposal offered a good solution commented that reducing costs in this manner was essential and that it made good business sense. They said that this cost saving should come first before reductions in any other front line services. A few respondents commented on lawyers' fees being expensive and the recent Library Service judicial review implied that the current arrangement were not effective. Respondents stated that the Council should employ law staff directly as opposed to paying people outsourcing fees. A few did not want any changes to affect service provision.
167. Other general comments included the Council exiting current LGSS arrangements; reducing layers of unnecessary management; introducing more Councillors' scrutiny function; awarding contracts based on work at the best price either with one or with multiple specialist providers; and that if the Council ran its operations well it would not need such an expensive team of lawyers.
168. Respondents who indicated the proposal was a poor solution commented that shared services between Councils is a step forward but the current litigation environment may make arrangements burdensome. Others commented that current arrangements were too expensive and a cheaper provider should be sought. Another respondent commented that there was no proof as to whether this proposal was achievable, and another respondent questioned how staff would be trained and supported in such a specialised role. Another respondent commented that the Council should stop spending "our" money.
169. Respondents who said it was "neither a good nor poor solution" questioned whether it was a feasible proposal as legal expenditure may need to increase. Another

respondent was not sure what the real issue was and whether it was the judicial system which was not playing fair or whether the Council had become more risk averse and was therefore seeking more legal advice on matters. Respondents stated the if Council did its job properly and made lawful decisions i.e. fill potholes to stop claims; help keep children in their own homes to keep costs down rather than take them into care at the first sign of difficulty, the Council would be less likely to use lawyers.

170. Respondents were then asked if we do not go ahead with this proposal, do they have any other ideas about how we could save the same amount of money or generate the same amount of income (£750k)? There were 12 comments made in relation to this question.

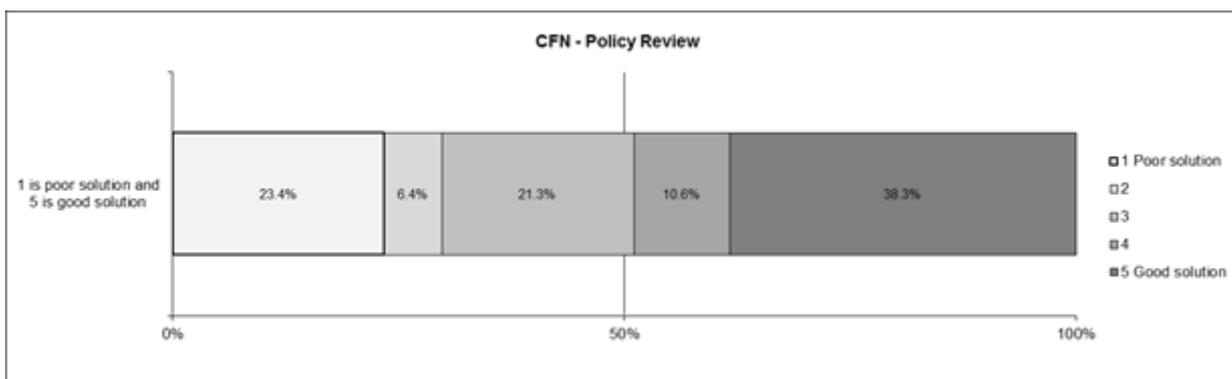
171. Respondents made a variety of comments. They said legal services should be awarded on a best price basis with the use of multiple specialist providers; that current arrangements should be stopped and brought back in-house; that salaries and perks offered to employees should be cut; that the Council should directly employ its own advocate. Respondents gave examples of where smaller councils had a model of sharing services. Other respondents stated they had no comments to make.

Policy review

172. Respondents were given an explanation of the proposals in this category and asked, using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is a poor solution and 5 is a good solution, to what extent do they think this would be a good solution?

- Review of Appeals Rights Exhausted/No Recourse to Public Funds accommodation (£350k) - this is about improving how we work with other agencies to make sure we meet our statutory duties and Human Rights legislation by applying a clear policy and having more appropriate housing options for people who are in the country on arrangements which mean they receive little or no support
- Reduction in Section 17 support (£200k) - Financial assistance in terms of goods or services, or in exceptional circumstances cash, can be provided to a child, parent or carer under Section 17(6) Children Act 1989 to address identified needs to safeguard and promote a child's welfare where there is no other legitimate source of financial assistance. Improving control of expenditure will make sure we meet our statutory duties and operate within our policy

173. There were 47 responses to this question.



Poor solution

Good solution

	1	2	3	4	5	Answered	Skipped
	23.4%	6.4%	21.3%	10.6%	38.3%	47	831
	11	3	10	5	18		

174. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 19 comments made in relation to this question.

175. Those respondents who thought that it was a good solution said that it was sensible as long as vulnerable people were protected and that no extra costs would be incurred. Other respondents questioned how it is being done now.

176. Those respondents who said it was a poor solution made comments about not providing housing to people with no recourse to public funds; others said that more should be done to support where required but that public money should not be wasted. Respondents stated that children should be safeguarded. Other comments included the effects of poverty on criminal behaviour, and the suggestion of a reduction in the salaries of council management and employees.

177. Those respondents who said "Neither good nor poor solution" said that this area should be within the funding remit of national Government and not the County Council. Others comments that if help was needed it should be offered but that a clear understanding of the legal situation was required.

178. Respondents were then asked if we do not go ahead with this proposal, do they have any other ideas about how we could save the same amount of money or generate the same amount of income (£550k)? There were 8 comments made in relation to this question.

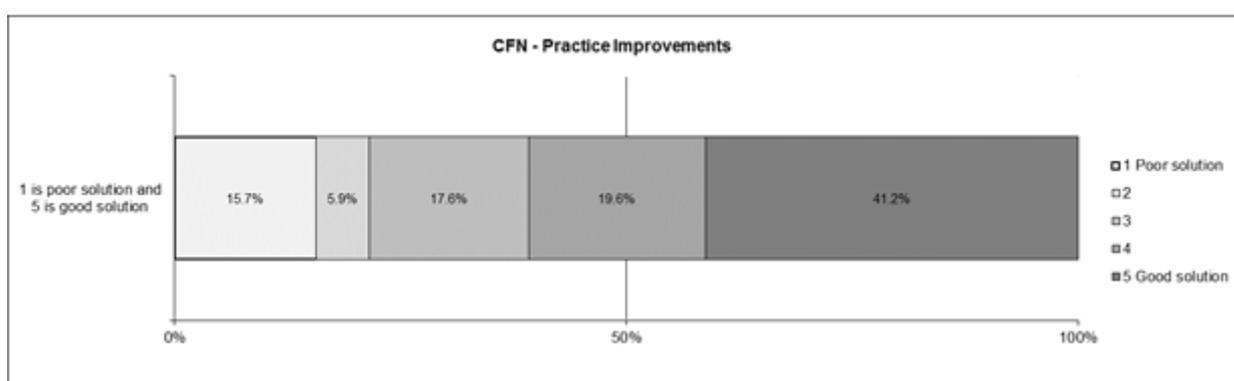
179. A few comments were provided which included questioning whether this was a local government function or whether it should be within the national government remit; that there should be no housing provision for those who do not have recourse to public funds; and that money could be diverted from current PFI contracts to this area of work.

Practice improvements

180. Respondents were given an explanation of the proposal in this category and asked, using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is a poor solution and 5 is a good solution, to what extent do they think this would be a good solution?

- Review of Mother & Baby assessments (£400k) – if we improve practice and the quality of pre-birth assessments for those families where potential safeguarding issues have been identified, we can reduce the need for expensive residential Mother & Baby assessments and improve support for families at an earlier point

181. There were 51 responses to this question.



Poor solution

Good solution

1

2

3

4

5

15.7%	5.9%	17.6%	19.6%	41.2%	Answered	Skipped
8	3	9	10	21	51	827

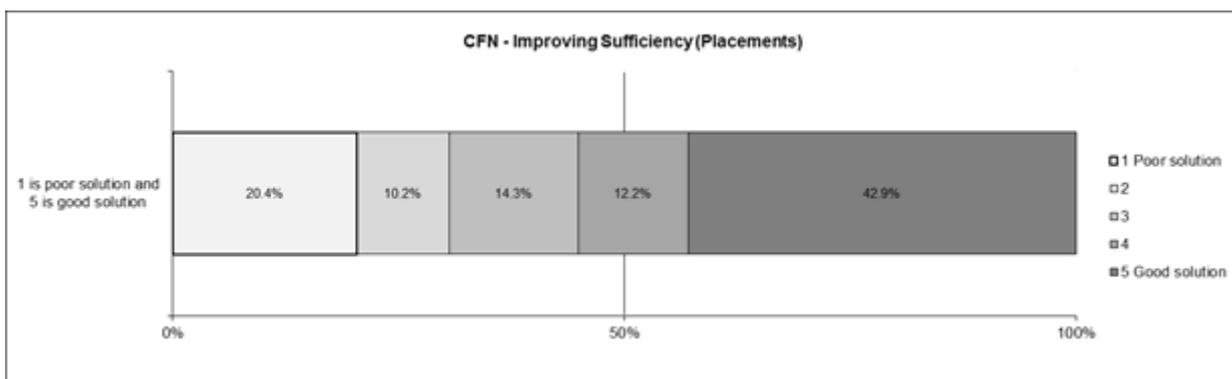
182. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 24 comments made in relation to this question.

183. Respondents who said that this proposal provided a good solution commented on the need for the Council to support vulnerable families. They said that prevention was better than cure and that early intervention and investment in pre-natal mental health support would support this. Suggestions were also made by respondents including that the Council should use volunteers/voluntary sector organisations to support their core work. Respondents said that like most of the budget proposals this sounded like a sensible idea but in practice may be damaging to those involved. Respondents did not want the current service to change and they did not want the Council to incur extra cost. Some respondents said support needed to be provided in the families' own home while another respondent spoke about their personal experience of a poor service and asked for the service to be abolished.

184. Respondents who felt that the proposal was a poor solution commented that it was difficult to judge safeguarding issues prior to a child being born. They also commented that vulnerable people needed support. Others said that more information was needed as to how the Council planned to save the money; others commented the service was available to only a few that were privileged to receive it. They said that 'ordinary people' had not heard of this service.
185. Respondents who said that the proposal was "neither good nor a poor" solution wanted further evidence in order for them to make a comment. They also expressed a concern that residential units were expensive to run and did not provide a realistic experience for mothers/parents and that home support was more effective. They also commented about having sufficient stable and properly supervised staff along with appropriate support programmes for the service to be successful.
186. Respondents were then asked if we do not go ahead with this proposal, do they have any other ideas about how we could save the same amount of money or generate the same amount of income (£400k)? There were 7 comments made in relation to this question.
187. These respondents made a few observations and comments which centred on the use of health visitors, extra educational help in early years and to the end of out of county expensive placements.

Improving Sufficiency (Placements)

188. Respondents were given an explanation of the proposals in this category and asked, using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is a poor solution and 5 is a good solution, to what extent do they think this would be a good solution?
- Placement Sufficiency (£1.2m) - increasing the occupancy of the Council's own residential homes and utilisation of foster carers to reduce reliance on external agencies
 - Review of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) accommodation (£200k) - Review arrangements for 18+ population to ensure value for money whilst providing appropriate accommodation
189. There were 49 responses to this question.



Poor solution

Good solution

1

2

3

4

5

20.4%	10.2%	14.3%	12.2%	42.9%	Answered	Skipped
10	5	7	6	21	49	829

190. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 26 comments made in relation to this question.

191. Respondents who said that this proposal provided a good solution commented that it was a common sense approach which made a refreshing change. Efficient use of accommodation should be the norm with placements being within county rather than outside. They also said that foster carers needed to be valued, and that too much being enforced on them and other carers means that there were less people willing to continue with the role or coming forward to foster. Other comments included that unaccompanied asylum seeking children must be supported and that there should be a better understanding of their needs.

192. Respondents who said it was a poor solution commented that the proposal did not show that it was value for money for young people and that £200K was a very large sum of money allocated to a review process. They further added that the policy and process of claiming asylum was at fault and that money was better spent keeping asylum seeking people within their home country or first country of entry.

193. Respondents who said that the proposal was “neither a good nor poor “ solution commented that this service should be funded by central government and not be down to local government, The Council, they said, is unlikely to make the savings it wanted within the timeframe it had allocated. A few comments were made about respondents’ personal experience of the service saying that it was not good, and that services’ reprovion could happen by using underused care homes places.

194. Respondents were then asked if we do not go ahead with this proposal, do they have any other ideas about how we could save the same amount of money or generate the same amount of income (£1.4m)? There were 9 comments made in relation to this question.

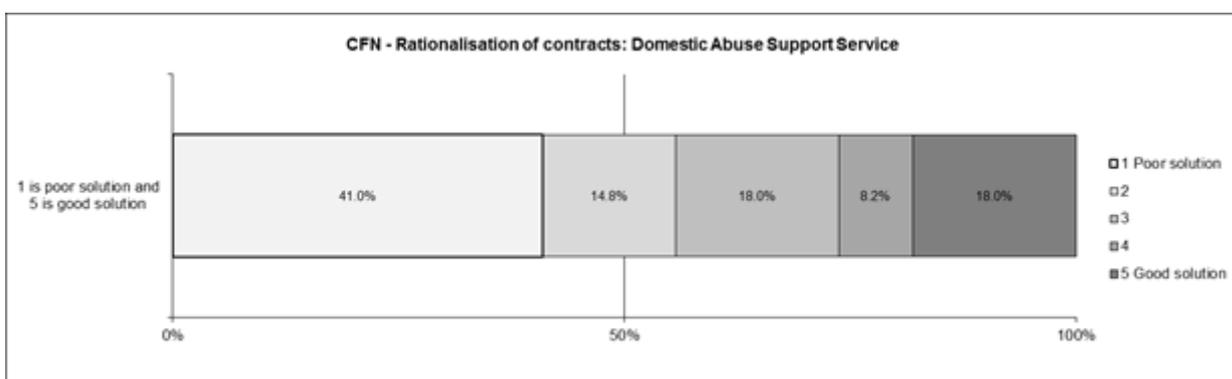
195. Respondents said that more government funding will be needed, and on the other hand, respondents commented they had little confidence in the Council being able to deliver what they were saying they could. Others comments included improving support and avoiding private agencies; encouraging more family fostering of asylum seeking children to help them integrate; and to look at incentives such as Council Tax relief for those who take on asylum seeking children under 18.

Rationalisation of contracts

196. Respondents were given an explanation of the proposals in this category and asked, using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is a poor solution and 5 is a good solution, to what extent do they think each proposal would be a good solution?

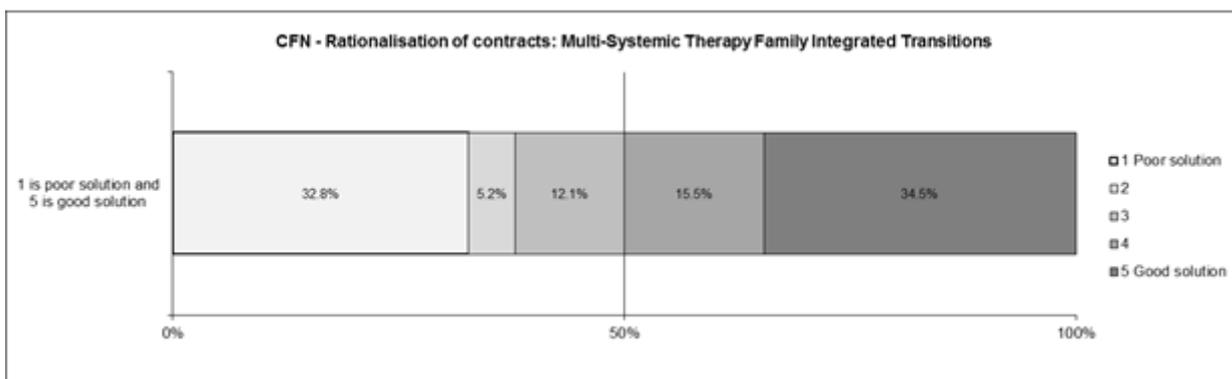
- The contract for Domestic Abuse Services that focuses on individual child and family support where domestic abuse has been identified is coming to an end and alternative ways of supporting families are being explored with partners. Children First Targeted Early Help Services will continue to support families.
- The MST-FIT service is a licensed intensive family and community based programme for adolescents aged 11-17, and as such only reaches a limited number of families. By releasing the current location in which the therapy is provided, an NCC-owned residential home, we can use this location to accommodate more children in care in Northamptonshire. This will mean less children and young people being accommodated away from their communities and current schools, whilst also improving our ability to respond to rising demand.
- The current contract to support young people not in education or employment (NEET) tracks the outcomes of young people and provides advisor support to young people that are NEET. This proposal would reduce the spend on support for young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) whilst making sure that statutory duties are still met
- The total value of savings attached to these proposals is £1.6m.

197. There were 61 responses to this question in relation to the contract for domestic abuse services.



Poor solution			Good solution		Answered	Skipped
1	2	3	4	5		
41.0%	14.8%	18.0%	8.2%	18.0%	61	817
25	9	11	5	11		

198. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 35 comments made in relation to this question.
199. Respondents who said the proposal offered a good solution commented that they supported the proposal as long as it would not be cost-cutting exercise and that service should remain the same or improve. They commented that this service should be a shared service and the Council should look at how other areas work together to deliver good services.
200. Respondents who thought it was a poor solution wanted the Council to appreciate the wider damaging effects of domestic abuse. They commented on the secondary effects such as service pressures felt by other public bodies, such as the NHS and Police, if the Council were to reduce funding. They stated that there is uncertainty around what interim arrangements would be in place and found it hard to comment on the alternatives. Respondents said that funding should be found to appropriately fund the service.
201. Some respondents felt that cuts have already eroded the provision of services to victims of domestic abuse. They expressed concern about a smaller value contract achieving value for money or gaining the right outcome for people who are victims of domestic abuse. They felt that victims of abuse require specialist support which could be compromised locally by this proposal. Respondents said that the Council needed to look at the long-term impacts of the proposal. Nationally, they said, there are systems in place that are working well but would need local support.
202. Respondents who said the proposal was “neither a good nor poor solution” commented that it was important service and that having inadequate provision could result in further damage to partners, parents and children. They said that the service was vital and that the service could not be lost. Respondents said that domestic abuse was prevalent across the county. Respondents said the service had to continue but be subject to scrutiny and auditing. Other comments included not having enough information in order to comment and that from the Council’s track record, it was unlikely that the Council would be able to deliver the proposal.
203. There were 58 responses to this question in relation to the contract for the MST-FIT service.



Poor solution

Good solution

1	2	3	4	5	Answered	Skipped
32.8%	5.2%	12.1%	15.5%	34.5%	Answered	Skipped
19	3	7	9	20	58	820

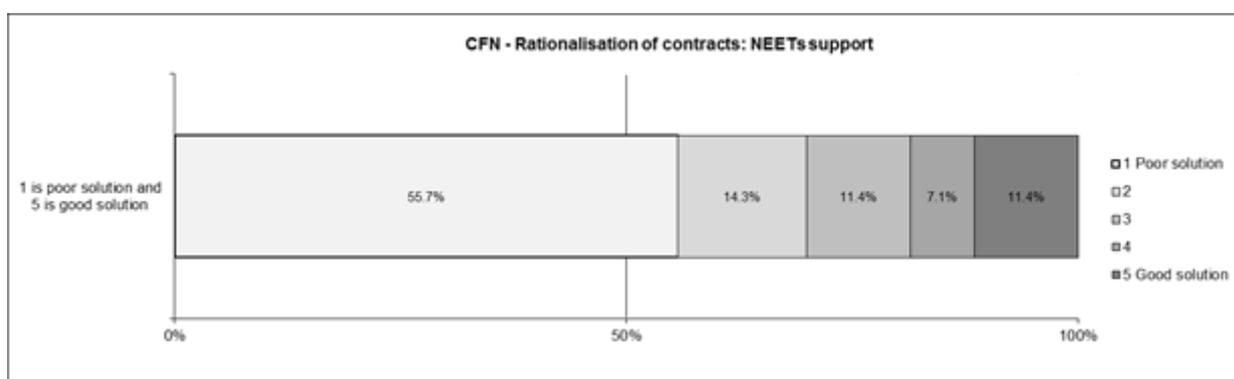
204. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 33 comments made in relation to this question.

205. Respondents who said that the proposal provided a good solution commented that the proposal appeared to make financial sense. Some respondents commented that repurposing the building and abolishing the current MST–FIT service made financial sense, in that it saved money and resources could be used to provide more local help for people in need. Respondents said it was better to keep young people within the community and close to their locality. Respondents wanted children kept close to their family and in familiar places and felt this would aid a better transition out of care/intervention.

206. Respondents commented the Council should maintain service standards and not decrease them. Respondents stated the proposal increased local capacity of the children's home but suggested the Council also look at alternative provision such as offering a limited number of places to run alongside standard placements. Respondents expressed a desire to make sure that Council properties and assets are used in the most effective way and that their capacity to help delivery services is managed sensibly.

207. Respondents who thought that this proposal provided a poor solution commented that everyone needed a chance and that there was not enough funding in place to deliver what was required. They stated that a mixture of in county and out of county provision was required. They questioned support to vulnerable families and children in the future, if such specialised services were to stop. Respondents felt it could not be an either/or situation. It was a complex field and the current service was valuable in that it returned children to their families within a shorter timeframe. This brought savings to the Council via reduced foster and residential care costs. Respondents feared that, if agreed, this proposal would trigger an increase in foster and residential care.

208. Many respondents spoke about the high level of current intervention being provided. They also said that the current work and services of the MST–FIT service needed to be more visible within the Council. This could result in more referrals to this service and better utilisation. Respondents spoke about how the service enables families to stay together and work through complex issues. Respondents gave examples of how the current service has helped them turn around their lives.
209. Some respondents gave detailed accounts of access to Raven House. They felt that the specialist staff deliver the best support and care services. They said it was imperative that the service is not reduced and that evidence-based service interventions are not compromised. Respondents acknowledged that at times Raven House did not run to full capacity, and that the under-use of beds at Raven House has had some knock-on effects. They commented that other areas of the country were looking to develop what Northamptonshire has. Respondents said that the Northamptonshire home, along with ones in Leeds, had an excellent rating by OFSTED. A few respondents said that they understood the requirements for better cost-effective accommodation but better local contract negotiation could be undertaken to ensure better value for money.
210. A few respondents shared ideas about how service changes could be introduced that would increase flexibility of the current provision. Respondents gave explanations as to why initial costs are high for the service but that this is balanced with a reduction in long-term residential care costs.
211. Respondents who indicated that the proposal provided “neither a good nor poor solution” commented that the county needed to improve children’s care first. Other comments included making use of Angel Square as a base; and questioning whether current services provided value for money including whether it did prevent people from accessing other services.
212. There were 70 responses to this question in relation to the contract for NEET support.



Poor solution			Good solution		Answered	Skipped
1	2	3	4	5		
55.7%	14.3%	11.4%	7.1%	11.4%	70	808
39	10	8	5	8		

213. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 47 comments made in relation to this question.

214. Respondents who said it a good solution commented that the service needs to remain at the same standard and not decreased, and that vulnerable people need to be protected; however a respondent questioned why financial resources were allocated to this area of work.

215. Respondents who said it was a poor solution said more funding was required; and that if funding was reduced then maintaining service standards would be compromised.

216. Respondents were unsure as to what the statutory minimum service would be. They commented on the statutory entitlement to services. They also said the real impact of these changes in regards to Prospects, if implemented, would not be seen until October when NEET figures are reported. They said that the service area over the years had taken significant cuts and that young people and youth provision needed investing in. Services had to exist in order to be able to prevent young people from making poor life choices. Respondents commented that they were concerned about the vulnerability of young people who could be exploited; about increases in NEET statistics and about young people becoming more dependent on public services in the long run.

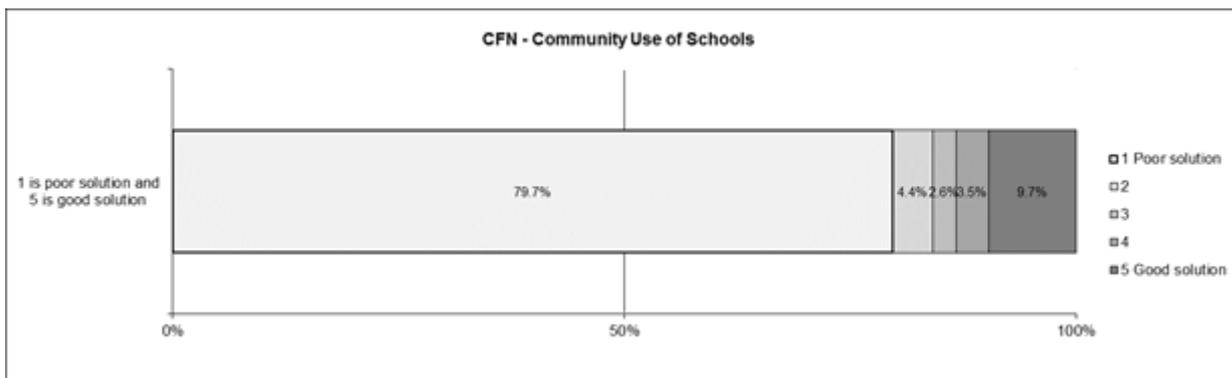
217. Respondents expressed concern about using digital platforms only to support people. They felt that many young people may not effectively use the service and subsequently would miss out on critical support which they required. Respondents said one to one support and face-to-face interaction was essential.

218. Respondents also stated that, in particular, those with SEND required targeted support that was not provided by schools if they were to move into further education and training. They said that those young people without an EHCP/SEND plan would be disproportionately affected. They expressed concerns over these cohorts of young people not engaging with the service. Respondents felt that the model proposed i.e. the Lincolnshire model, appears cheaper in cost but its performance was poor. Respondents felt that the system would only focus on a very small number of young people and that the majority who would need advisor support would not be able to receive it. There would be a knock-on effect for other service providers – i.e. Youth Offending services, mental health teams; training providers (who would not be able to refer young people to one to one advisors or would have to close services as they would not be viable). Respondents felt that the proposal was short-sighted and that the Council would not meet its statutory duties.

219. Other comments included that the proposal would mean redundancies for Prospects staff; that the current service was providing a good service with good outcomes; local training provision would cease; that a low skilled/unskilled workforce would not attract business to the county and subsequently affect economic growth. Respondents stated that those young people who did not have an “formal” assessment i.e. SEND or EHCP would not be able to access the service and that these young people could present with other social and economic problems in later years. Respondents felt that the Council should strive to provide more than the minimum standard with young people’s needs being really understood and therefore being given choice and opportunity to help determine their future.
220. Those respondents who said it was “neither a good nor poor solution” commented that it was not the remit of local government but rather that of central government and that they were unclear about what the negative impacts would be.
221. Respondents were then asked if we do not go ahead with this proposal, do they have any other ideas about how we could save the same amount of money or generate the same amount of income (£1.6m)? There were 22 comments made in relation to this question.
222. Respondents said that funding could be found from reviewing other areas of council spend, naming PFI contracts, Council Tax revenue, councillor expenses, managers’ salaries, looking at a reduction in high cost residential care placements and also a reduction in locum and agency workers.
223. They also suggested that the Council should claim Child Benefit for those children it cares for, and liaise better with other public authorities/partners. The Council’s social workers also could monitor and make reductions to what they pay for clothing and travel allowances for young people. Respondents felt that there were many reasons why finances were challenging at the Council, but that reducing opportunities for young people to move into positive activities was not a good way of dealing with them. Other general comments also included dissatisfaction with the current Prospects service and its working relationship with children at school.

Community use of schools

224. Respondents were given an explanation of the proposal in this category and asked, using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is a poor solution and 5 is a good solution, to what extent do they think this would be a good solution?
- Community Use of Schools (£56k) – NCC currently runs a scheme which subsidises hourly rates charged by schools to uniformed organisations (such as the Scouts and Guides) for the use of school premises. We are proposing to end these subsidies so that groups negotiate their own discount arrangements with schools
225. There were 227 responses to this question.



Poor solution

Good solution

1	2	3	4	5	Answered	Skipped
79.7%	4.4%	2.6%	3.5%	9.7%	227	651
181	10	6	8	22		

226. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 198 comments made in relation to this question.
227. Respondents who said that the proposal was a good solution commented that it was right, although regrettable, to end the subsidy for groups to hire school premises at times of financial constraints. Some respondents said groups like the scouts and the guides were part of large national bodies who could negotiate local deals. Others commented that such groups should not be treated preferentially as many other groups had no benefit from the subsidy; or that the system of subsidy was outdated and that groups should be self-financed. A few suggested that schools should provide the venues for free or that schools were not the best placed to host these activities.
228. Respondents who thought it was a poor solution said that if the Council was to go ahead with this, it would negatively affect Scout and guide groups. The financial impact would be significant, resulting in increased subscriptions and other costs which would have to then be passed on to families. Respondents commented that many of the children who attend such activities are young and are often part a sibling group that all attend. If costs were to increase then the knock-on effect on the family would be even greater and making it only available to more affluent families.
229. Respondents strongly voiced their concerns about the amount of money being saved by the proposal. Respondents said that they understood that the Council had financial challenges but compared to the size of this budget with the wider budget spends it was worth preserving. For £56,000 it brought a much greater community benefit. They said that the small amount of Council investment generated greater payback in volunteering hours and support to children and families' health and wellbeing. Many respondents stated that

the range of activities and opportunities provided were unique and that the scouting and guiding movements themselves were inclusive and an important part of the community. Respondents made representations on individual achievements and aspirations and passionately gave examples of what was gained from being part of such organisations.

230. Respondents said that the Community Use of Schools budget was vital and that the skills offered by the organisations that utilise this funding enable children and families to develop skills for life. Respondents consistently cited schools as a place which was recognised by the children as safe places to go. They also said that on the whole school buildings were accessible to young people. Some respondents also said schools were the only option available to them due to their location, time of hire, or through the lack of any other community space. This was more apparent in rural areas of the county. They added that schools had traditionally been used by uniformed groups and were naturally placed in the heart of communities. In turn, some respondents, said that children could be “walked” to activities as opposed to being driven to them, thus reducing the environmental footprint.
231. Many respondents were disappointed that the Council was thinking of such a proposal. Respondents who were volunteers or leaders in organisations who use the subsidy said that they relied on subscriptions paid by attendees to their groups. Losing the subsidy paid to schools would mean that their subscriptions would have to rise and a consequence of this could be that the groups could stop running or that low income families may not be able to afford to send their children to the activities.
232. Respondents also said that uniformed organisations put a lot back into the community including fundraising to provide services that supported children that were in need or in care or known in some other way to the Council. They added that if groups closed, the impact for the Council would be greater as Council would no longer be able to use their services.
233. Respondents commented that their own organisations provided valuable volunteering experiences and contributed to the health and wellbeing of the county. They said that fewer groups would mean fewer volunteering opportunities which in turn would mean that the health and wellbeing of current volunteers would be affected.
234. Respondents commented that the activities help keep children diverted away from poor life choices and instil in children a lifelong sense of pride and citizenship. The level of support provided by the organisations means that children become stronger, responsible, trusted and confident young people and eventually become an asset to the local community.
235. Respondents said many local organisations did not have the capacity or the knowledge to begin local negotiations about reduced hire charges. Respondents were concerned about the differing levels of negotiation skills that they would require in order to secure best rates for hiring premises and that this in itself would create unnecessary stress and tension for the volunteers who run the groups. They felt that this could create problems and that it was short-sighted of the Council to think that this could be a solution to its financial challenges.

236. Many comments came from people who identified themselves as parents of children attending uniformed groups who said they feared that local groups would close and/or that they could not afford higher fees. They said their children would miss out on activities which they could not access elsewhere. Others commented that although the groups were part of a national organisation they were independent small local voluntary/charitable organisations who had to constantly generate income to provide activities. Respondents gave examples of how much the rent contribution would be and in reality what a struggle would be to raise that.
237. Respondents said that they wanted the Council to consider increasing provision for young people. The Council should, they said, reconsider this proposal in light of the high value it was getting back in social cohesion, volunteering and opportunities for young people. Respondents said that these were preventative services which had been running for many years and the Council should very carefully consider the high number of representations that they knew were being made about this proposal.
238. A few comments were made by those respondents who said that the proposal was “neither a good nor poor solution”. They centred on the value and contribution of the organisations being significant to the community; that the proposal would indirectly increase operating costs of organisations who assist in youth provision and that it was a relatively small cost saving to the Council but a large cost to organisations which as a result could fold. Secondary effects that respondents commented on were that that parents will have to pay more and that schools could seek to increase revenue and not offer a discount.
239. Respondents were then asked if we do not go ahead with this proposal, do they have any other ideas about how we could save the same amount of money or generate the same amount of income (£56k)? There were 109 comments made in relation to this question.
240. Respondents commented that the Council could stop spending elsewhere and that they could reduce the number of employees who earn high salaries. Respondents commented that they want the Council to look at the various criteria it has for entitlement to services and to re-examine them in order that they provided better value for money. Any efficiency made could be re-directed into helping with the community use of schools subsidy. Other suggestions included that Council could run the community space within schools more effectively and efficiently and therefore could generate much of the funds needed to help uniformed groups. A few respondents commented that the savings could be realised by seeing the subsidy as an investment in order to have future good citizens.
241. Overall respondents were consistently saying that the Council could find the saving from looking at internal costs and making efficiencies elsewhere. Respondents felt that the Council pays too much in bonuses and that Councillors could forgo their allowances to help pay for this subsidy. Other respondents said that a small rise in Council Tax could easily raise the money required; or they could use the collection from parking charges to help pay. Some respondents suggested that the Council could use its influence to negotiate with the schools so that they could charge a reasonable amount for the hire charge and at the same time organisations could consider a slight increased contribution to venue hire charges. Respondents also pointed out that the organisations were charitable bodies who were using

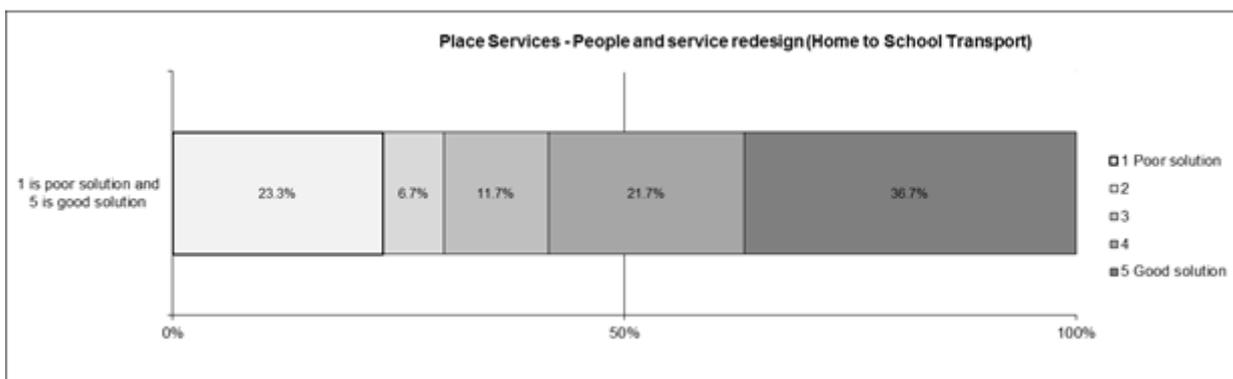
the subsidy and not making a profit from the activities; and that increases are passed on to the users. Some respondents said they wanted the Council to ensure that all members of the community have the opportunity to take part in activities and volunteer. Respondents suggested the Council uses its links with business and other partners to innovate and develop ways of achieving funding to support this subsidy. This include using development monies from new schools initiatives.

242. Other comments included rationalisation of Council IT equipment and software; review of staff numbers; reduction of the Council's own infrastructure; look to helping Northamptonshire children first as opposed to child asylum seekers; look at helping schools achieve commercial rents for late hire of premises and allow uniformed organisation to use facilities, as they do, in off peak time i.e. early evening. Other suggestions included claiming back money for non-payment of Council Tax and working out what the real costs are to the school.

Place Services

People and service redesign

243. Respondents were given an explanation of the proposal in this category and asked, using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is a poor solution and 5 is a good solution, to what extent do they think this would be a good solution?
- Home to School Transport (£300k) - The objective of the transformation project is to re-design and deliver an efficient and effective integrated travel co-ordination unit that is capable of assessing need, designing appropriate travel solutions and strengthening supply chain management of transport services. The intention is to co-locate and centrally manage the end to end process so that decision-making and budgetary responsibility are reconnected to provide better value for money and safely discharge the statutory functions of the Council. The new approach will seek to promote sustainable travel, health and wellbeing and ensure that we can invest in a travel training programme so that young people, wherever appropriate, will be supported to learn new skills and have the best possible chance of becoming independent travellers. Existing policies and procedures will be reviewed and, if changes are required then public consultation will take place in the future with regard to policy changes.
244. There were 60 responses to this question.



Poor solution

Good solution

1

2

3

4

5

23.3%	6.7%	11.7%	21.7%	36.7%	Answered	Skipped
14	4	7	13	22	60	818

245. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 37 comments made in relation to this question.
246. The respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was a good solution mostly included general support for the proposal, and said they felt this was a fair and feasible approach, so long as it is done sympathetically to the needs of the users. They felt the system is in need of a review and that there are efficiency savings that could be made, including route planning and less reliance on private hire vehicles. They felt young people should be trained and supported to enable them to travel safely and independently.
247. Other comments received included the need to keep vulnerable people safe; that individuals should not incur extra cost as a result of this proposal; preference for the service to be delivered in-house; concern about whether the savings will be achievable; and the belief that the service is being abused by some.
248. The respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was a poor solution mostly said they felt the service was already inadequate and the funding levels for the service should be retained or that it required more funding not less. A small number of respondents raised concerns over the safety of children if the service was reduced if they had to travel long distances by themselves and felt this proposal would be to the detriment of children.
249. Other comments included concern that families with more than one child would be adversely affected; that young people should not need to be trained in how to travel effectively; that school admissions and allocations need to be reviewed if changes were made to transport; that the existing system should remain until a new organisation is in place; and that this budget reduction will not be achieved as NCC have failed to do so in the past.

250. The few respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was neither a good nor poor solution mostly said there was not enough information available for them to be able to provide definitive feedback. Others said this should not put individuals at a disadvantage; that the system should have been reviewed in previous years; and again that the budget reduction will not be achieved as NCC have failed to do so in the past.

251. Respondents were then asked if we do not go ahead with this proposal, do they have any other ideas about how we could save the same amount of money or generate the same amount of income (£300k)? There were 8 comments made in relation to this question.

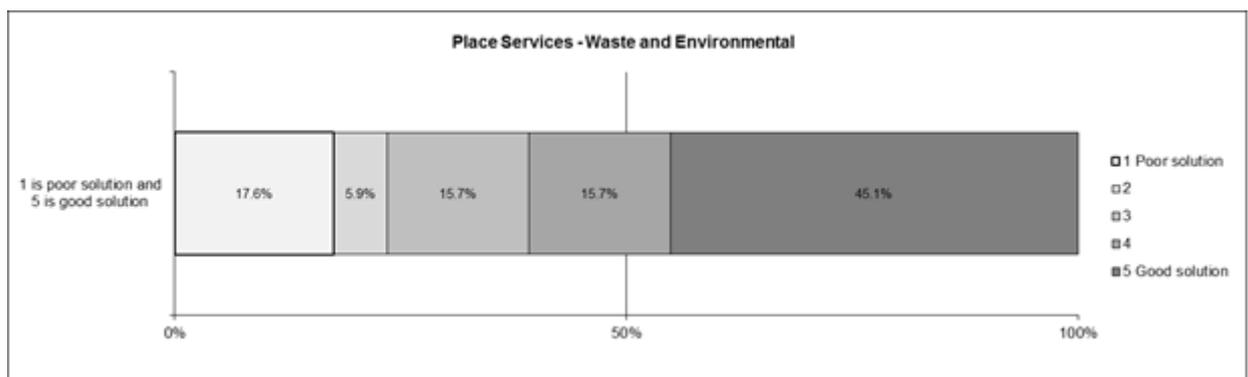
252. These respondents gave varied answers. These included simply stating that they do not know how else to make the same level of saving, and uncertainty about what is being proposed. The comments from respondents who put forward saving and income generation suggestions included a higher increase in Council Tax; to have the service means tested with a contributions policy; and a suggestion that salaries within NCC should be reduced to cover the required saving.

Waste and environmental

253. Respondents were given an explanation of the proposal in this category and asked, using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is a poor solution and 5 is a good solution, to what extent do they think this would be a good solution?

- Waste management (£109k) – this would be made from savings negotiated on the rent for household waste and recycling centres (HWRCs) and using capital funding to pay for some of the Council's HWRC costs where allowed by regulations

254. There were 51 responses to this question.



Poor solution			Good solution			
1	2	3	4	5		
17.6%	5.9%	15.7%	15.7%	45.1%	Answered	Skipped
9	3	8	8	23	51	827

255. 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.
256. The majority of respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was a good solution felt this was a good approach as it meant there would be no reduction in this service which is valued by the respondents. Some did raise their concerns about fly-tipping and the costs associated with it and felt any reductions to the current waste management could result in this being more prevalent.
257. Other comments included a suggestion that NCC should work with the District and Borough councils to identify further waste management efficiencies; that people should be encouraged more to reuse their belongings before disposing of them as waste; and a suggestion that the household waste and recycling centres should be privately run with their waste sold on to recycling plants.
258. The respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was a poor solution raised concerns about changes impacting the service and were fearful of a further reduction in opening hours. They also commented how they disapproved of the use of capital spending as it is deferring the cost to future councils. Other comments included a request for better detection of fly-tipping; to have the serviced delivered in-house; and again dissatisfaction with NCC and its waste management.
259. The respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was neither a good nor poor solution said similar comments as mentioned above with concerns raised again regarding fly-tipping and the problems and expense this incurs to remove. Again concerns were raised by some respondents about fears that this proposal may impact the existing level of service, including limitations and reduced access to existing household waste and recycling centres.
260. Other comments included general support for the proposal; a request for the collection of food waste; and the importance of effective waste management, especially in light of new homes being built within the county.
261. Respondents were then asked if we do not go ahead with this proposal, do they have any other ideas about how we could save the same amount of money or generate the same amount of income (£109k)? There were 7 comments made in relation to this question.

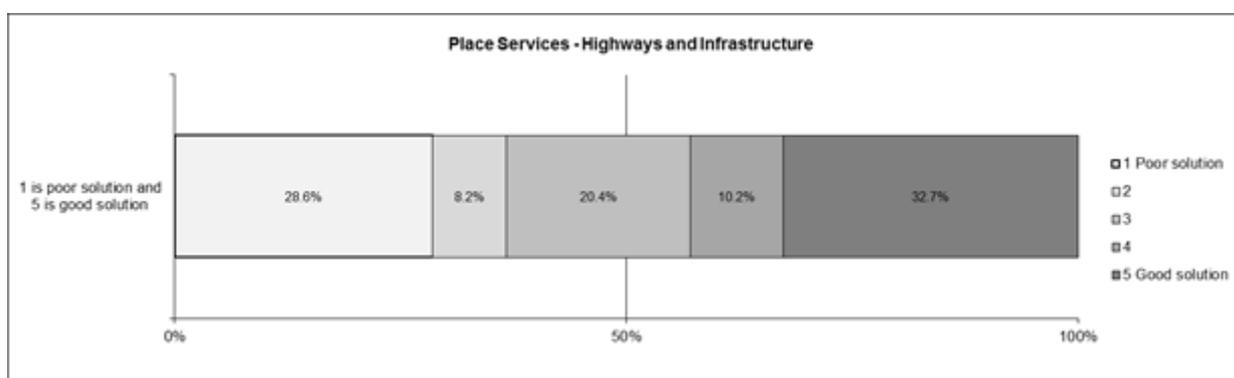
262. Suggestions included a higher increase in Council Tax; to learn lessons on how other local authorities deliver these services; and to utilise ways in which waste can be transformed into energy. Again a small number of respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with NCC.

Highways and infrastructure

263. Respondents were given an explanation of the proposals in this category and asked, using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is a poor solution and 5 is a good solution, to what extent do they think this would be a good solution?

- Highways Contract (£150k) – this saving would come from a negotiated fee reduction on the Highways contract overheads without impacting on service delivery
- Streetlighting PFI (£700k) - contract management savings from the Streetlighting PFI contract which will be achieved from shared overheads with Cambridgeshire County Council.
- Winter Maintenance (£100k) – paying for the maintenance works at Brixworth salt barn using capital funds as per regulations

264. There were 49 responses to this question.



Poor solution

Good solution

1 2 3 4 5

28.6%	8.2%	20.4%	10.2%	32.7%	Answered	Skipped
14	4	10	5	16	49	829

265. 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.

266. The most frequent comments made by respondents who said this was a good solution were general supporting statements as they felt the proposal was sensible and

useful to share costs. Respondents also felt residents should take more responsibility for the upkeep of their own street; that NCC should have LED light fittings in all of their properties to reduce cost; that contracts must provide good value for money; they questioned whether NCC has received any funding from central government for pot holes; and a respondent expressed their dissatisfaction with the streetlight PFI contract.

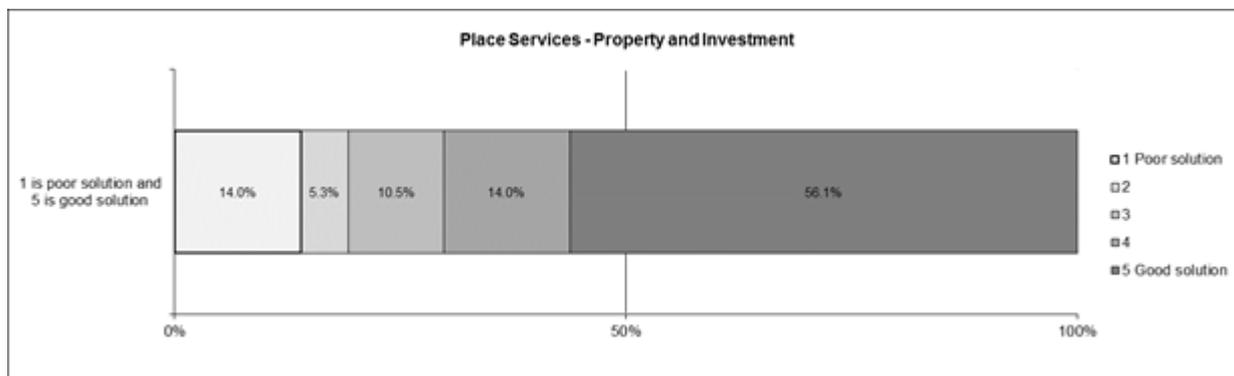
267. The most frequent comments made by respondents who explained why they rated this as a poor solution were those expressing their dissatisfaction with the current service. They felt the highways were in need of repair, that pot-holes are not repaired effectively first time, and that they are unhappy about previous reductions in street lighting.
268. A few raised their concerns over people's safety due the current level of street lighting and the concerns there will be less gritting of the roads during winter months. They felt that this is causing some people to be scared of leaving their homes due to the fear of having an accident. A similar number of respondents also expressed their dissatisfaction with the PFI contract and requested that services were delivered in-house as it was felt this would mean greater accountability. Other comments included the belief this may deliver short-term savings but could cost more in the long-term.
269. The respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was neither a good nor poor solution said similar comments as mentioned above including dissatisfaction with the state of the current service and concerns of safety. They felt the external contracts needed closer monitoring and expressed a preference for services to be delivered in-house, with more funding.
270. Other comments included a suggestion to reduce streetlighting further by turning all lights off between midnight and 5am; that there is still too much light pollution in some areas within the county; and disagreement that capital reserves should be used for this expenditure.
271. Respondents were then asked if we do not go ahead with this proposal, do they have any other ideas about how we could save the same amount of money or generate the same amount of income (£950k)? There were 10 comments made in relation to this question.
272. A variety of comments were received. These included a request to allow more local councils to take over the responsibility of streetlighting within their own areas; to allow villages to be responsible for an annual allocation of salt, which can then be managed by volunteers within the village; to request more funding from central government; and re-charge for repair work to those responsible when areas are damaged. Again a small number of respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with NCC.

Property and investment

273. Respondents were given an explanation of the proposals in this category and asked, using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is a poor solution and 5 is a good solution, to what extent do they think this would be a good solution?

- Asset Restructure (£30k) - maximising the use of office space within NCC’s offices at the William Knibb Centre in Kettering, so that we need fewer properties
- Asset Restructure (£40k) - maximising the use of office space within NCC’s offices at One Angel Square in Northampton, so that we need fewer properties

274. There were 57 responses to this question.



Poor solution

Good solution

1 2 3 4 5

14.0%	5.3%	10.5%	14.0%	56.1%	Answered	Skipped
8	3	6	8	32	57	821

275. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 38 comments made in relation to this question.

276. The respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was a good solution mostly make reference to their general support to the proposal without any specifics. They felt it was sensible to utilise the properties owned by NCC and felt this made economic sense. Some commented that they were surprised this had not been done already and to not do so is a waste of tax payers’ money. A few respondents suggested spare council space should be maximised by either using it for training and/or for renting out space to other organisations.

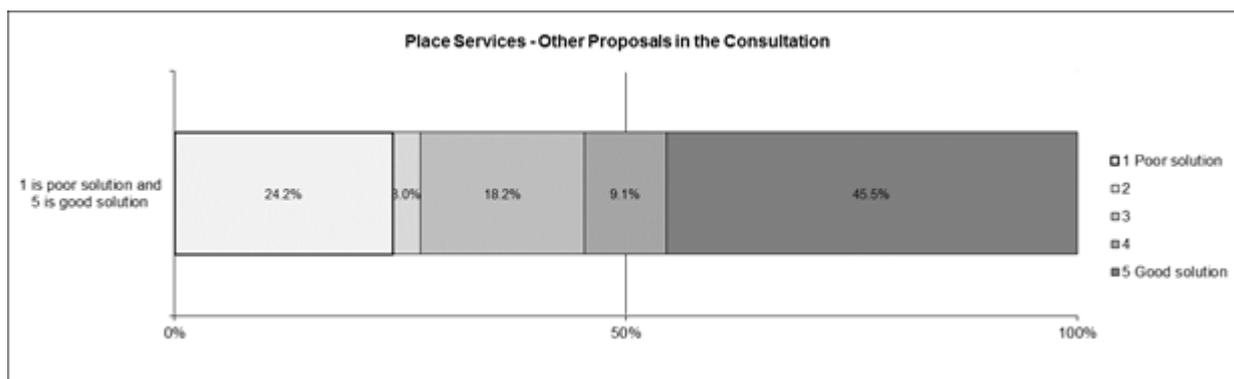
277. Other comments included that home working should be encouraged as well as hot-desking to help reduce overheads; that a reduction in venues should not impact on customers; and again general comment of dissatisfaction with NCC.

278. Some of the respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was a poor solution appear to have been written by NCC staff in response to the consultation. Some respondents express their dissatisfaction with current NCC accommodation complaining that they feel it is too crowded and does not have the surrounding infrastructure that the buildings should have, and that renting out space would disrupt and demoralise staff.

279. Other comments include general dissatisfaction with the construction of One Angel Square; that NCC should move out of One Angel Square; and that there was an expectation if the county has unitary councils there would be the requirement for less office space.
280. The respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was neither a good nor poor solution said similar comments as mentioned above with comments received regarding the perceived lack of some facilities within One Angel Square; that the lack of parking would make it difficult to rent space to another other organisation; and an uneven balance between areas within the building that are full to capacity and some that under capacity. Other comments include dissatisfaction of NCC renting One Angel Square; the recommendation that more NCC staff work from home; and surprise that this proposal was not in place already.
281. Respondents were then asked if we do not go ahead with this proposal, do they have any other ideas about how we could save the same amount of money or generate the same amount of income (£70k)? There were 10 comments made in relation to this question.
282. Again there was a variety of feedback. These included more on-the-spot fines for littering; the renting of space within NCC buildings; centralisation of services; to seek further funding from central government; staff retention; reduction in agency staff; reduce council spend on non-essential items; and again some general comments of dissatisfaction with NCC.

Other Place proposals

283. Respondents were given an explanation of the proposals in this category and asked, using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is a poor solution and 5 is a good solution, to what extent do they think this would be a good solution?
- Chester Farm (£125k) – this is the phased removal of the revenue budget for the set up costs for Chester Farm, the heritage project near Irchester
 - Place-based Public Health offer (£200k) – this would be a saving to the Place Services budget because appropriate projects within Place Services that are linked to the Public Health Business plan and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy would be funded in a different way
 - Concessionary Fares volume reduction (£300k) – this would reduce the budget for the payment of Concessionary Fares by £300k, based on forecast future usage of the scheme. This is a national scheme with national eligibility criteria and this reduction in budget will not see anyone who is eligible miss out on a bus pass
284. There were 33 responses to this question.



Poor solution

Good solution

1

2

3

4

5

24.2%	3.0%	18.2%	9.1%	45.5%	Answered	Skipped
8	1	6	3	15	33	845

285. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 18 comments made in relation to this question.

286. Comments received by the respondents who said this was a good solution were in general support and they thought the proposals were reasonable. Some respondents were also critical of funding for Chester Farm not being ceased in previous years, although another respondent said that it should remain. Other comments received included the need for these services to be as efficient as possible; and a comment regarding the use of a donations box within a village for individuals with concessionary bus passes to contribute towards the running cost of a Parish Council run bus service.

287. Some respondents appear to be under a misunderstanding that the concessionary bus fares proposal relates to cutting concessions or eligibility, as opposed to a revision to the funding required based on the latest population projections. Comments regarding concessionary bus fares from respondents who said this was a poor solution said that the concessionary fares scheme should be fully funded as they felt bus services are vital to the community and cut congestion and pollution, and raised concern that the elderly and vulnerable people will be negatively impacted by the proposal.

288. Comments regarding Chester Farm from respondents who said this was a poor solution said they felt Chester Farm is an important part of the county's heritage and that the Council should not reduce its funding. In contrast another respondent said Chester Farm had no place in the current financial climate and due to the small amount of individuals who will benefit from it, its continued funding cannot be justified. The other comment made was in general disagreement with the proposals.

289. The respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was neither a good nor poor solution said similar comments as mentioned above. They felt bus passes are important for use of travelling into town. They also said they were in agreement with the

reduction of funding of Chester Farm. Other comments included general support for the proposals, so long as they did not affect customers.

290. Respondents were then asked if we do not go ahead with this proposal, do they have any other ideas about how we could save the same amount of money or generate the same amount of income (£625k)? There were 4 comments made in relation to this question.

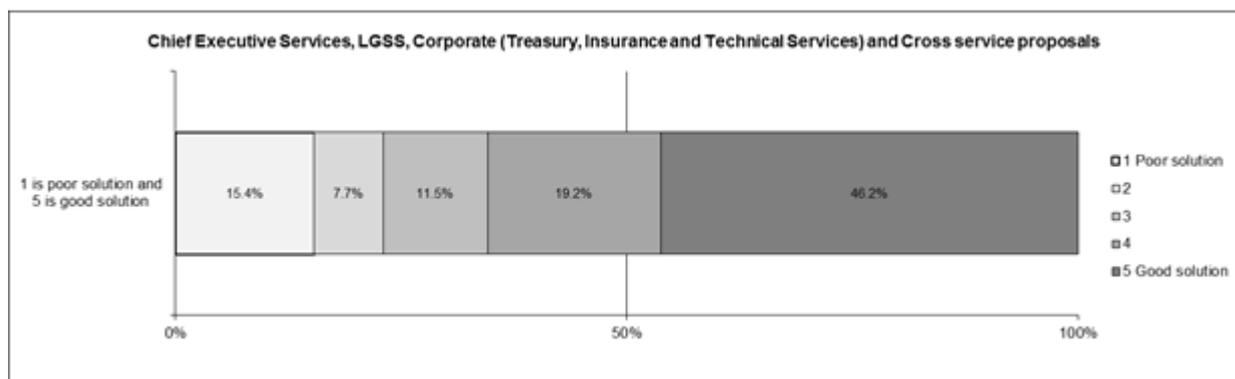
291. Only a few respondents provided comments. These included requesting more funding from central government.

Chief Executive Services, LGSS, Corporate (Treasury, Insurance and Technical Services) and Cross-service proposals

292. Respondents were given an explanation of the proposals in this category and asked, using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is a poor solution and 5 is a good solution, to what extent do they think this would be a good solution?

- Commercialisation of assets (£50k) - increasing income to sustain vital services by selling advertising space in prime locations around the County where advertisers would want to promote their products and services
- Public Health Communications and Marketing (£45k) – this would utilise existing public health money to fund specific public health communications and social marketing activity, in line with the rules around utilisation of the Public Health grant
- LGSS Operational Savings (£248k) – savings made in our back office functions through more efficient delivery
- Finance Operations (£33k) – savings made in the Finance back office function through more efficient delivery
- HR, Transactions and Payroll (£63k) - savings made in the back office functions through more efficient delivery
- Business Systems and Change (£50k) - savings made in the back office function through more efficient delivery
- Staff Travel (£100k) – using the most cost effective travel methods for staff
- Expenditure Control Panel (£274k) - reviewing non-essential spend
- Procurement Review (£1m) - driving lower prices from our contracts by improving the way we negotiate, monitor and manage contracts

293. There were 52 responses to this question.



Poor solution

Good solution

1

2

3

4

5

15.4%	7.7%	11.5%	19.2%	46.2%	Answered	Skipped
8	4	6	10	24	52	826

294. 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.

295. The respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was a good solution mostly made general supporting comments of the proposals, and said they make sense and that NCC should be run efficiently. A comment was received saying staff need to be paid a reasonable rate to travel for work purposes. In contrast another respondent felt NCC should not pay any travel allowance to staff who incur travelling expenses within their role. Other comments included a desire for NCC not to re-employ individuals as contractors after they have taken voluntary redundancy; and again a comment regarding dissatisfaction of NCC.

296. The respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was a poor solution mostly expressed their dissatisfaction with NCC and the running of the Council. Comments were also received regarding LGSS and its sustainability. The achievability of the savings listed for LGSS was also questioned, and it was commented that if there were savings made by LGSS Pensions it should be for the benefit of the members of the LGPS and not for the benefit of NCC. A comment was also received regarding the risk of any further staffing reductions adversely affecting NCC.

297. The respondents who provided comments as to why they thought this was neither a good nor poor solution gave a variety of feedback. Comments included general support but feeling that some of the savings are small (for example LGSS) and suggestions there has been overspend in some areas and savings should have been made sooner; concern over the level of service not being affected; that the wellbeing of staff should be assured; and again some dissatisfaction with NCC.

298. A respondent also commented that they believe some of the proposals may have an impact on the customer, as if these saving are not delivered then money may need to be found from other public-facing services.
299. Respondents were then asked if we do not go ahead with this proposal, do they have any other ideas about how we could save the same amount of money or generate the same amount of income? There were 10 comments made in relation to this question.
300. Respondents provided a variety of feedback. Comments received included requesting further funding from central government; re-evaluation of properties that have been extended to increase their Council Tax band; hot-desking within NCC offices; freezing all staff salaries and bonuses; and delivering services in-house.
301. It was also suggested that staff should travel by the most economic means necessary. However, there may have been some confusion regarding staff travel, as at least one respondent appears to have understood this proposal as reimbursement of staff travel to commute to and from work, and not as travelling for work as part of performing daily duties.
302. A small number of respondents said they did not have any alternative suggestions. Again there a small number of respondents who expressed their dissatisfaction with NCC.

Fees and charges

303. 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.
- Parking in country parks
 - Education Rangers
 - Research and local history fees in libraries
 - Printing/photocopying in libraries
 - Book reservation charges in libraries
 - Lending music sets in libraries
 - Residential and training fees at some outdoor learning centres
 - School swimming lessons
 - Educational Psychology Service
 - The Virtual School
 - Highways and transport fees
 - Trading Standards
 - Archives and heritage
304. Respondents were asked if they had any comments on any of the proposed fees and charges increases. There were 39 comments made in relation to this question.
305. The respondents who answered this question gave mixed responses, although most were against some if not all of the proposed increase of fees and charges.

306. Those in support felt an increase was necessary, and that people should be expected to pay for the services listed within the fees and charges schedule and that the increases are needed, and should be regularly increased and not retained at the same rate for several years.
307. Others commented that the right balance had to be found between charging the correct amount and not charging too much so as to discourage the usage of the services. Country parks car parking charges was a common example given by some respondents. It was felt if the charges become too high, fewer people would use the services and the income would ultimately reduce, and this would also have a social impact. They felt people would visit other places that were cheaper or park anti-socially in order to avoid paying a parking charge.
308. Some respondents were simply against the concept of an increase in fees and charges. Some felt the increase would disproportionately affect children as they felt that in addition to country parks and the changes to the park ranger's fees, it was libraries and Children's Services that would be impacted the most. Respondents were against the Virtual School charges increase. They also felt there is shortage of educational psychologist assessments which is causing delays in support and unless these services are at an affordable cost, many children will not receive the support they need. They were also against an increase in the cost of swimming lessons for children and felt this is an important life skill, along with reading. The reasons some respondents disagreed with an increase in library fees and charges that has not already been mentioned above included dissatisfaction with the current service and an objection to pay more.
309. Comments were also received that made suggestions as to how alternative savings could be made or how to increase different levels of funding. These included a surprise that an increase in marriage fees was not included; that country parks should introduce a season ticket that is applicable to all sites but separately for Irchester Country Park and Stanwick Lakes which makes it more expensive; buses should be made smaller for the routes that are under-utilised, that all services should receive a small increase in charges; and that there should be more funding from central government.
310. OCS was also mentioned in that a respondent felt the care charges were out of line with other local providers and the signposting to these "expensive and under-performing services" was not supportive to the customers' needs.
311. Other comments included that the poorest will be most affected and may not be able to afford some services, especially if there is a cumulative effect; that it is unfair that cash paying customers have to pay for others to use credit cards and if credit cards increase the costs then these should not be accepted; that these decisions should wait until the potential new unitary authorities were established; and again general dissatisfaction with NCC.
312. Respondents were then asked if we do not go ahead with these proposals, do they have any other ideas about how we could save the same amount of money or generate the same amount of income? There were 16 comments made in relation to this question.

313. A variety of comments were made. These included change parking charges to enable half-day parking at country parks to encourage more usage; to either stop lending music from libraries or have an online service; to run events to generate income; to rent out assets; to reduce staff salaries; to improve the efficiency of managing the library service and to renegotiate the contract for the multi-functional devices used in libraries.
314. There was also a request to seek more funding from central government for services and that more funding should be allocated towards adult social care. Again, a small number of respondents took the opportunity to express their dissatisfaction with NCC and the Councillors and its previous allocation of spending. Other comments included that services paid for via Council Tax should focus on the contribution to the wellbeing of families and communities; general disagreement with the proposals; a concern this will not generate the anticipated savings; and that the option to pay by credit card payments should be removed if this increases the overall costs to customers.

Other comments

315. Respondents were then asked if they had any other comments to make about the draft budget. There were 87 comments made in relation to this question.
316. Respondents made a variety of comments. They said that it was a difficult time for Northamptonshire. Respondents consistently spoke about the perceived mismanagement and lack of financial accountability of the Council. They expressed anger and upset and said that they had little faith in the Council delivering its savings due to its track record. They highlighted issues of trust and integrity. Some recognised new management structures and leadership in place but were unsure of the impact this would have. Respondents said that they had little confidence in Councillors to achieve what was required, and at the same time they spoke of a lack of morale and social accountability. They said that the Council was not thinking about the future sustainability of the county but rather that this budget was too insular and short-term. Respondents said the Council had a history of making promises that it could not keep and that they could see very little evidence that this had changed within the proposals presented.
317. Respondents commented that Northamptonshire used to be a place where people were proud to live, however they felt it has become a place where life experiences are poor and the future felt very uncertain. They said that there was no forward-thinking or a real understanding of the predicament that the county was now in. They said the Council needed to be responsible for the public money it administers and that it should subject itself to better monitoring and scrutiny so that it is transparent and providing value for money to Northamptonshire residents. Furthermore some respondents said they are not sure whether the Council would take consultation feedback into consideration.
318. Respondents mentioned reductions in critical frontline services to vulnerable people who needed them. They felt that the services were being diminished and that they were asked to make compromises or pay more taxes. Some respondents asked that the Council preserve as many services as they could and constantly look at ways of improving them or

providing them in different ways. Respondents wanted the current contracts such as PFI to be ceased and the money reinvested in-house. Comments on the proposed unitary reorganisation for the county were expressed, with respondents saying that reduced management would be of benefit.

319. More specifically, respondents commented on the investment they felt was required for preventative services. They felt that the current budget did not look at this and that reductions in some of the services would cost more in the future as more bespoke and intense interventions would be needed for vulnerable people. Many respondents took the opportunity to comment on previous budget reductions stating that the library review, removal of bus subsidies and the reduction in highway maintenance had had a major impact on them. They also mentioned the effect of proposed cuts to low income families and that these effects were not only financial but also that families would be even further socially isolated.
320. A few respondents were critical of the way in which they felt residents were being punished for the actions of the Council. They commented that senior managers and Councillors ought to be held to account, and that reviews or cuts should be imposed to their salaries and allowances.
321. Respondents stated the budget proposals lacked any reference to economic and business regeneration. They suggested the Council needed to consider the development of town centres and rural areas. Other respondents spoke about bringing improvement to roads. A few respondents made comments about the use of council buildings and assets and said that the Council should be more transparent about how it uses these. They asked that this information be easy to find and that it should be placed within the public domain.
322. Respondents said that the Council should ask for assistance from the government. Respondents also questioned why the Council was paying high costs for the commissioners which the government has sent to Northamptonshire. They referred to the various levels of what they perceived to be expensive tiered management which meant that frontline services were being compromised.
323. Respondents highlighted that interested parties and those affected by the proposals within the budget should be properly informed about the changes to their services. They felt the Council needed to communicate better with them rather than them reading information in the press.
324. Respondents also use this section of the consultation to reiterate the views on the subsidy the Council provides to schools for community use. Here respondents asked the Council to reconsider the proposal and to value the efforts and activities that uniformed organisations bring to the county. They said that the proposal put forward by the Council would have a detrimental effect on young people in the county.

Demographic information

325. 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 upon request.

Direct contact from NASS to customers

326. Some proposals in NASS, if implemented, would have a direct impact on current service users and so they were contacted directly about the proposals to provide an opportunity to raise any particular concerns and to ensure they were aware of the consultations. Some completed the questionnaire or sent separate emails and so their views have been included in the relevant sections within this report.

327. With regard to Eleanor Lodge, NASS forwarded feedback from family members of service users to the Consultation, Equalities & Accessibility Team that mirrored responses already received via the questionnaire. In particular, they raised concerns about the impact of change on their family members if Eleanor Lodge is no longer used for respite, and concerns about the suitability (including location) of the proposed alternative in Corby and the increased travel costs that would arise.

328. A separate Cabinet paper regarding the dementia domiciliary care proposal is being considered at Cabinet in February, and the feedback received directly by the service has been included there.

Emails

329. We received 17 emails in relation to the draft budget consultation and one late submission.

Eleanor Lodge

330. We received emails from five parents of current service users of Eleanor Lodge and a day services manager in Northampton. The family members stated that their relatives enjoy their stays at Eleanor Lodge. They were concerned about the negative impact that change in respite provision could have both on their relatives who stay in Eleanor Lodge and the wider family who trust the staff there.

331. There was concern that there were no suitable alternatives locally and that a different setting would be a longer journey away, which would be distressing for their relatives. It was also pointed out that using Eleanor Lodge allows some current service users to continue with their current day care arrangements, which would not be possible if their respite was in Corby.

332. There was concern that this proposal reduces the amount of respite care available in the county. Some also remarked that they had made plans based on bookings already made and were concerned that these would be affected by the proposals.

333. There was some criticism of the direct consultation with customers and their families and the information provided and the perceived lack of clarity about what would happen next with regard to short breaks. One respondent felt the decision had already been made.
334. There was the view that the budget will not decrease as this proposal will require more spend to meet legal duties towards adults with learning disabilities. In the longer term, it was considered that reduced access to respite care might mean some customers would not be able to live at home any more, therefore costing more in residential care. There was also the view that if there is plenty of respite care capacity if Eleanor Lodge is no longer used for respite, then it is wrong that money has been wasted in the past. It was felt that budget cuts had been targeted at vulnerable adults. One respondent expressed some doubts about the legality of the proposal.
335. In general, there were concerns about the negative impact that respondents believe this proposal would have.

NEETs proposal

336. We received an email from the head of an academy school regarding the NEETs proposal. They felt that the proposal would mean that NCC would not be meeting its statutory duty towards young people not in education employment or training (NEET) and that it would lead to a lack of support for young people who are NEET and who have other protected characteristics or issues to deal with. They considered the proposal was based on a flawed model and that the Northamptonshire model has a better success rate and should not be changed.
337. They were also concerned that training providers may not be able to run viable courses in Northamptonshire as a result of reduced support for young people and that they could close local provision. They felt overall that there would be fewer opportunities for young people and that this would have a wider impact on Northamptonshire's economy.
338. The late submission from Corby Borough Council made similar points.

Community Use of Schools subsidy

339. We received emails from two parents, three volunteers/representatives of scouting groups and two county councillors regarding the Community Use of Schools subsidy proposal.
340. Respondents noted that the subsidy allows groups to pass the discount on to parents and therefore more children and young people are able to participate. It was felt that this proposal could lead to some parents being unable to afford costs if they had to increase to cover increased hire costs or that it would affect the viability of groups. Most respondents noted the benefits of being in uniformed groups both for children and young people and the wider community. It was noted that these groups are dependent upon volunteers/subsidies in order to run.

341. There was concern about what children and young people would do if they could not access uniformed groups such as the scouts as a result of this proposal, with the perception that there is nothing else for them to do in some areas (with a particular impact in rural areas). It was felt this could have a knock-on effect on support services from NCC further down the line if young people were not diverted from more harmful activities. It was felt important that NCC supports organisations that develop children and young people. It was noted that the budget is small compared to the benefits it brings, and that many people were concerned about the impact of the proposal.

Other comments

342. We received an email from UNISON Northamptonshire County Branch regarding the lack of provision in the budget for a pay increase for NCC staff. It was the union's view that inadequate remuneration of staff is not the solution to the Council's financial difficulties, and that the Best Value Report had stated that staff were not to blame for the current situation.

343. They felt that the current conditions were contributing to a crisis in recruitment and retention, giving examples such as the mandatory unpaid leave for staff in 2017 and increased workloads and stress, and that they were impacting on staff morale and productivity.

344. They felt that NCC staff are disadvantaged because they are not part of the national pay agreement, and that there needs to be consistency locally as the county's councils move towards unitary status.

345. They noted the increase in the cost of living compared with the pay increases in recent years, and also the lack of incremental progression for staff as a result of decisions taken previously. They also noted the disparity between honorarium payments to senior managers compared to junior staff. They felt that no provision has been made in the budget to invest in the reward, retention and recruitment of staff.

346. We received a submission from Kettering Borough Council, which welcomed the more robust approach to financial management being taken by NCC. However, it stated that it did not support costs being shunted between public sector bodies. It raised some concerns about the capital dispensation granted to the Council and the impact on reserves it could have.

347. It was concerned about the deliverability of some of the proposals for the 18/19 budget and questioned the robustness of some medium-term assumptions in the draft budget for 19/20. It requested clarity in the Council's approach to replenishing reserves in future.

348. We also received a submission from Daventry District Council, which welcomed the more robust approach to financial management being taken by NCC. However, it raised concerns about the deliverability of the 18/19 budget, including assumptions made about Council Tax measures, and the knock-on effect this could have on the 19/20 budget. There

were also some concerns about the sustainability of some of the measures, and it was felt that there would need to be higher spending in Children's Services, not less, to address weaknesses identified by Ofsted.

349. It felt that NCC should request permission from the Government to increase Council Tax by more than the current threshold to provide more income to address the financial difficulties it faced. It was also concerned about the amount of capitalisation measures in the budget proposals, given NCC plans to use capital receipts to address other financial issues. It was supportive of some of the NASS measures but believed that investment will be required which could undermine the savings. It welcomed the reinstatement of highways maintenance budgets.

Petitions

350. We received one [petition](#), containing 576 signatures when the consultation closed, in disagreement with the proposal for the Community Use of Schools subsidies. Comments against the proposal were also submitted as part of the petition submission.
351. Mostly signatures are from people from Northamptonshire who either have family members who attend groups or are group leaders and helpers themselves. Other who signed the petition have or have had affiliation with Northamptonshire's various uniformed groups. The majority of the comments provided concentrate on the subsidy being a small but significant investment which results in young people experiencing opportunities for personal development. They felt the proposal would increase costs and prevent many young people having such opportunities as either groups would close or they would become unaffordable to many.

Feedback from group discussions

352. A total of 2 group feedback discussion forms were submitted by two parish councils.
353. Both parish councils felt that the proposed Council Tax increase was a good solution (scoring it 4 or 5 out of 5), and felt that this was a reasonable way to resolve funding problems. Both were less keen on a higher percentage increase if allowed by the Government, rating it 3 out of 5. Both were pleased with the reinstatement of the highways budget although one raised concern about the bus subsidies removal that had happened as a result of last year's budget decisions. One parish council commented that a single effective unitary authority should be considered as an alternative.

Social media comments

354. The consultation was promoted via the Council's social media channels, and five tweets were received via NCC's Twitter account in relation to the budget consultation. The majority of these expressed their dissatisfaction with NCC and its previous budget management and priorities, including the building of One Angel Square and the cost of Councillors' allowances. Two respondents mentioned the importance of libraries and the

need to for them to be retained, although concern was raised regarding some people's ability to access them due to previous reductions in bus routes.

355. A total of 20 Facebook messages were also received. These comments posted on the Council's Facebook page were much more varied than the tweets received although again the most frequent comments were individuals expressing their dissatisfaction with NCC. Others raised their concern over the fear of further service reductions or their dissatisfaction in the prospect of paying more Council Tax whilst services are being reduced. A respondent stated their support for paying more Council Tax and felt that money should be prioritised on supporting vulnerable adults, including the elderly, and children, whilst another respondent felt some people may not be able to afford to pay any more Council Tax. One respondent also felt road maintenance should be a priority for NCC.
356. Another respondent raised their concerns over a reduction in educational psychologists within some areas of the county and the impact this has had on Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule assessments, which they felt is leaving vulnerable children without a diagnosis.
357. Other comments included general support for NCC; request for organisational change led from the top down; a request for all services to be delivered in-house as it was felt this would be cheaper than outsourcing; and a comment from a respondent regarding dissatisfaction with the length of the consultation questionnaire who also felt the budget decisions had already been agreed.