

19 December 2017

Nick Forbes  
Leader of Council  
Newcastle City Council

Dear Nick

## **Newcastle City Council's Budget proposals for 2018/19 Consultation Response from Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service**

Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service is the local support and development (infrastructure) organisation for the voluntary and community sector in Newcastle.

Our overall aim is to improve the quality of people's lives in Newcastle by promoting voluntary and community action. We do this by:

- Enabling the Voluntary and Community sector to influence decision makers – and supporting the sector as its voice
- Building capacity within the sector to shape a better, more diverse and equal society
- Empowering people and organisations to be heard and take action

### **Central Government funding**

Over the last seven years we have consistently expressed the view that the way Local Government is now funded is unfair and the current mechanism appears to give the least support to the areas of greatest need. This unfair allocation and the additional problems of future funding in relation to the loss of the Revenue Support Grant are well-illustrated in the 'Investing for a fairer future' documentation. We understand the 75% Business Rate retention of will now start in 2020. The impact of cost pressures, the low Council Tax base in Newcastle and the challenge of the importance of the Business Rate makes the task very difficult. The previous cuts of £254million, the cumulative impact of the underfunding of social care, and the increased responsibilities on Local Authorities eg the Homelessness Prevention Act make the task almost impossible. The uncertainty over any potential replacement for the Revenue Support Grant also aggravates the situation; whilst the Revenue Support Grant has been reduced by £9.1million or 20.4% compared with 2017-18.

Voluntary and community organisations are increasingly seeing the impact of Central Government policy on the people we support (our beneficiaries). The impact of Welfare Reforms and in particular the introduction of Universal Credit, cuts in benefits, dramatic shifts in housing policy, the decrease in public services and loss of overall support has made life extremely (and unnecessarily) difficult for many of our residents and communities. In the reports we produce we have highlighted the growing impact of

austerity and poverty within local communities, whilst at the same time noting the increasing inequalities. We are able to give you stories and support your campaigns and lobbying to try to improve the situation. A number of reports locally and nationally, are showing the widening of the gap between the richer and poorer communities in our city, region and country; despite it being previously decreased. Part of 'I, Daniel Blake' was filmed outside our office, and this year we established a 'welfare advocate' as part of our response.

We share the Council's irritation with Central Government statements which give the impression that Local Government has been more than adequately funded. Since 2010, much of the funding has shifted from being needs-based to being population based which has a major impact on many (northern) cities. The 'permission' to raise the Council Tax precept for social care gives the impression this would solve the underfunding of this vital service, when in reality this would cover only a small percentage of the actual costs. At the same time, there has been insufficient coverage about the growing crisis in Children's Services nationally – with more Looked After children; significant increases in children being excluded from schools (and the impacts on Pupil Referral Units) and the growing number of children with very complex needs.

We note that cost pressures, to which many organisations are subject, are now increasing faster than funding cuts.

We recognise that around 47% of the revenue budget is spent on supporting children's and adult's social care and so would support the Council Tax being increased by 1.95% and also the 3% social care precept. We understand that an announcement made today would allow the Council to raise the Council Tax by up to 3%

## **Process**

Newcastle CVS has promoted the budget consultation exercise through our website, e-inform, and holding a meeting for the sector in December, circulating notes from these meetings and encouraging our members to engage and respond. At the meeting that Newcastle CVS hosted, there were presentations from the Director of Resources and the Director of Commissioning and other senior Council officers. The meeting had a short presentation but a lot of discussion and questions. The short note from that meeting is attached to this letter.

We appreciate the timetable is extremely tight given the need to set a budget at the March Council meeting and we noted that there was a lower attendance at our open meeting (14 as opposed to 23 representatives last year, and 40 the year before) and we wondered if people felt it made no difference/ they were ground down/ the timing. We also recognised that a number of these proposals were the second or third years of three year proposals and there were very few new and additional proposals.

The overall presentation of the budget, the diagrams, tables, graphs presented the information very clearly and highlighted the dilemmas in which the Council finds itself and the hard choices to be made. Although the main policy documents very clearly outlined the Council's overall budget problems and how the City Council found themselves in this space, there was still insufficient information on the detail of some of the proposals. Clearly the associated Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) documents give more detail; but it was hard to pin down actual numbers of people who would be affected by some of the proposals

There was insufficient information on the implementation of the cuts from Year One – how had these worked, had the proposed savings been delivered? What were the unintended

consequences (if any) of these actions? Representatives noted that rather than just going into Year Two, there needed to be information and feedback from the Year One implementation. It was quite difficult to understand what the exact proposals in adult and children's services were in detail, and therefore more difficult to comment on them. Maybe next year, and in the response document, this information could be incorporated?

A number of the social care providers would be affected by some of the proposals. It wasn't clear what engagement with providers and budget holders had actually happened. For some organisations these reductions could be a highly significant part of their income and make them non-viable. The situation is different for each organisation and we are sure they will be making individual representations to the Council. There is also the role that many voluntary organisations have as advocates for their user group.

We would highlight the gearing impact of funding voluntary organisations as sometimes Council investments contributes towards the core costs, that makes it easier to attract additional funding from external sources. Also voluntary organisations can engage and maximise the use of volunteers making a service even more cost-effective, and adding to Social Value. So a cut of one pound to a voluntary organisation can result in a much greater loss of several pounds worth of activity.

Throughout the consultation we heard that the huge financial challenges faced by the Council meant a retraction to providing purely statutory services. However the conflict is that many of the services delivered by voluntary organisations provide high levels of prevention and deter and delay the use of more expensive and intensive statutory services. In the same way that the Council is investing capital money in renovating the Civic Centre so that it can be let out in future years and generate an income, this invest to save policy could be applied to a number of the proposed cuts. Comments were made on the importance of prevention work and the concern that if the Council retreats to statutory services, this ends up costing more.

The voluntary sector is also facing the cost pressures noted by the Council – the increase in the National Living Wage in April, as well as the creeping impact of pension auto enrolment. Whilst recognising Council employees have access to a pension, this is not the case for all voluntary sector workers. Clearly these additional cost pressures will be significant for many of our members – particularly those organisations that provide domiciliary care, residential care, and support to people. These services help people to live independently and maintain a good quality of life and the impact of welfare reforms on people with disabilities, the loss of the Independent Living Fund, and the reduction in services (NHS and local authority) could go over the tipping point and mean people end up in more expensive forms of care and support.

The proposals are written in a way to illustrate the impact on Council posts only – numbers and Full Time Equivalents, but they do not illustrate the approximate equivalent job losses in the voluntary (and private) sector. Clearly a significant amount of the £2,628,000 cuts in continuing care and support for adults with complex or multiple needs – Proposal 24, is used to pay for support staff. The papers not only show no posts lost, they don't identify the costs of redeploying social care staff to undertake the 'dynamic reviews'.

Many of these cuts will result in the loss of posts in the voluntary and private sector, and this should be estimated. As the City Council is discussing constructing a budget for the whole city in the future, all job creation and losses should be openly acknowledged; regardless in which part of the system they occur.

These are very difficult times for everyone, but we believe in the value of partnerships and on-going discussions. Voluntary sector investment is less likely to come through local government; there are more opportunities through Big Lottery funding, national trust and foundation funders, and other sources. We believe more detailed dialogue should start earlier with thematic groups, not necessarily looking at specific cuts, but instead exploring what can be delivered together, and maybe differently, for Newcastle's communities.

It would be very helpful for the Council to produce a document after the budget was set outlining the differences from these proposals; recognising the Government's letter to the Council outlining the actual levels of support is issued mid-December. When there are multi-year proposals, it would be helpful to report back on the progress of these in the next set of budget consultations, as there is nothing to assess against.

## **Specific budget proposals**

The following comments relate to the specific proposals, from a voluntary sector perspective, based on the discussions at meetings, and comments from representatives, providers and carers. It was difficult to comment on some of the proposals as they were in year two and three of a three year process, and there was minimal/no information from previous years on their progress, problems, and outcomes. The language and phrasing sometimes made it difficult to understand what was happening.

### **Proposal 2 IIA 1**

#### **Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums**

We recognise the value and contribution of TWAM. We support two of the TWAM venues being designated as Safe Places, contribute to the City of Sanctuary, Wellbeing Programme, Platinum Programme, RICH Recovery Programme, and contributions to community satellite programmes. We note the proposed changes in governance and the creation of the Trading Company. We welcome TWAM as a CVS associate member and look forwards to working closer with it in the future. We congratulate TWAM in obtaining funding for work with local women to mark the centenary year of the Representation of the People Act.

This proposal is part of three years of a £450,000 reduction in total (£150,000 a year). Clearly the TWAM service was instrumental in bringing the Great Exhibition of the North to Newcastle and this is likely to generate substantive amounts of tourism activity in 2018.

It is noted that TWAM didn't achieve its projected income target 2016/17, due to the external environment impacting on the disposable income of visitors but has brought the income in through other mechanisms.

The key issue will be how TWAM achieves these savings whilst still having a free offer for the many residents who can't afford to pay, but is able to better offer attractive, paid for products by those people who can more easily afford them.

## **Operations Division**

### **Proposal 4 Buildings and Commercial Enterprise**

There might be potential opportunities for more shared services, joint working and income generation through the proposed North of Tyne devolution scheme

### **Proposal 5 and 6**

#### **Community Hubs, Libraries and Parks**

There have been several meetings on these issues throughout the year. A number of public sector organisations were now using the term 'hub and it needed to be clarified' just

exactly how a hub was defined. Some buildings had been purchased through PFI schemes and there were concerns that these could be prioritised because of their funding stream. The voluntary sector would wish to be engaged in these conversations in the future. Hubs needed to be considered as the most appropriate place, rather than being defined through ownership.

A number of community libraries had been transferred to other organisations over the last few years and it would be an interesting project to look at how these had fared, what services they were offering, their useage and their community engagement.

The proposal for the Parks Trust had been called in at the time of the meeting. Representatives were very clear about the access to parks being open and free for the public to use; clearly any covenants need to reflect this. Representatives also commented it was naive to assume there was additional funding for charitable activities and organisations that public organisations could not otherwise access. There were also concerns that there would now be greater competition for limited charitable funds as more public sector facilities were transferred to the charity sector and there had been 'charitisation' at both local and national level eg English Heritage.

It was recognised that in order to survive parks would need to have more charged for services and there could be conflicts with public health priorities eg Coca Cola sponsored events and priority given to income generation schemes eg Go Ape rather than wider community access. How would the needs of local residents and communities be taken into account? A number of 'Friends of' groups were local residents and there could be potential conflict between income generation and local amenities.

### **Proposal 10 and 11, IAA 2**

#### **Waste collection and contract**

We look forwards to seeing some of the recommendations from the Waste Commission being incorporated into future plans.

### **Proposal 14, Economic Development, IAA 3**

#### **Newcastle Futures**

The Council support to Newcastle Futures would be reduced by £40,000 to £120,000, assuming that the level of funding from Job Centre Plus remains the same. The work done by Newcastle Futures is important in addressing the NEETS issue identified by Newcastle 2020. Should Newcastle Futures be an independent organisation and be able to attract funding from elsewhere? Newcastle Futures engages in voluntary sector activities and is important in getting residents into work. Does this further cut of £40,000 have an impact on its overall sustainability and viability? Given the impact of Universal Credit, Newcastle Futures is able to offer additional support to the residents and families it works with.

The possibilities outlined in the North of Tyne devolution deal offer some potential of extending the model (North of Tyne Futures) throughout the wider area, given the emphasis on inclusive growth.

### **Proposal 21**

#### **Age Friendly City**

The loss of dedicated officer time for the specific work was noted as having no loss of officer, and it is assumed that is because the post is in the voluntary sector. The commitment to an 'Age Friendly agenda across all the Council's services' is welcomed, but experience shows there can often be a dilution of impact when there is no dedicated officer time.

## **Proposal 22, IIA 4**

### **Care and protection of children and young people**

This proposal follows on from changes to the service last year. It is difficult to work out from the paper how successful these have been, and their impact. The Newcastle rate of Looked After Children is of concern, and that there has been an increase of around a third of children and young people with child protection plans, from 358 to 469.

It is very positive that Newcastle Council and Unicef have teamed up to create a Child Friendly City, but we have already noted our concerns on Children's Services, which have not necessarily been highlighted nationally. Is Newcastle Council part of the Children England campaign for '**The Case for a Children Act Funding Formula**'? (*"Children England believes the case for a fair, sustainable funding mechanism for essential children's services is too urgent and too acute to ignore. We propose the establishment of a Children Act Funding Formula, which would distribute national taxation to all authorities with duties under the Children Act 1989 according to the needs of children in their area. We call on the government to implement such a formula by 2020 at the latest"*). We would be happy to support involvement in this.

The Social Finance report illustrated the pressure points, but it is not clear how these are being invested and supported. We are aware of workforce issues and would suggest that there are voluntary organisations that are able to do some of this work.

There might be more potential for voluntary sector placements inside of Newcastle, where this is appropriate. We recognise the importance of providing an appropriate and comprehensive service for Looked After Children, and that in some cases these children and young people are best cared for within Newcastle; and in other circumstances, they should not be placed in Newcastle. However their area of placement should be based on their appropriate needs rather than costs. Again we see this as an area for fruitful discussions with neighbouring authorities and the use of selective commissioning.

It isn't clear how successful the implementation of a policy of charges towards the cost of care in appropriate circumstances has been in 2017.

The assessment of post order support needs for adopters and special guardians will need to be sensitively introduced else they deter potential special guardians and adoptive parents.

Removing £852,700 from the budget, even though some of this is due to increased charges, with 4.8 WTE of Council jobs going will inevitably mean substantial job losses in the voluntary and community sector and less support for a growing number of people with complex and increasing needs.

## **Proposal 23, IIA 5**

### **Care and Support for Adults – Early Intervention and Prevention**

This is another proposal which is a continuation of previous work and it would be helpful to see how this has worked in the last year – had the proposed savings been made, what is the impact on service users and their carers, what is the impact on provider organisations and staff?

Digital solutions can work well, as long as there is a safety net for those people who are not digitally-enabled. The voluntary sector has provided a lot of the advice and information across the city and needs to be involved in any service changes.

Jointly working with health is a positive collaboration, but if referrals are to be made to community-based solutions, particularly those run by volunteers, community organisations and voluntary organisations, these solutions (activities and facilities) must have sufficient investment.

A number of positive comments have been made about the Reablement Service and that it enables people to live with dignity and respect in their local community. We do not want people to be caught in the middle of health-funded and council-funded decisions. It is obvious that way to prevent hospital admissions and support faster discharge is to have good community facilities; however the current funding stream often mitigates against this position.

Joint commissioning with health for voluntary sector organisations makes sense as the division can sometimes seem arbitrary for voluntary organisations.

Any reduction in domiciliary care spend is worrying as this can be the single service that enables people to remain in their communities. There is currently only one voluntary organisation provider. Staff in these services are usually paid the minimum legal rates, yet do an incredibly important job.

We note the proposal to extend the dynamic review process to other groups of people. We would ask for the outcomes of the dynamic review approach, which appears to be a large team of assessors, people being regularly assessed, and providers finding it difficult to cope with fluctuating workforce.

We note the comments about carers and would suggest there are further discussions with the CCG on how they support carer organisations in Newcastle, as there is a disparity with their investment in Gateshead services. There needs to be more links with housing.

The proposal for charges for the Money Management Service is noted; it isn't clear what would happen to those people who are unwilling to pay.

It isn't clear if there has been any consultation with the organisations listed in the IAA since last year. What was the impact of the changes on their users, carers and organisations? Newcastle Carers has noted a decrease in social care packages

Removing £720,000 from the budget, even though some of this is due to increased charges, with no apparent loss of Council jobs, will inevitably mean substantial job losses in the voluntary and community sector and less support for a growing number of people with complex and increasing needs.

## **Proposal 24, IIA 6**

### **Continuing Care and Support for Adults – Complex or Multiple Needs**

This proposal is identified to save £2,628,000 with no loss of Council jobs; the assumption is therefore that this relates to jobs in the voluntary and private sector and people's personal budgets. There doesn't appear to have been any active consultation with user groups and carers – the Inclusion North / Skills for People work relates to the changing housing options. Once again, it would have been helpful to have an analysis of what happened in the last year, the impact on users and carers, providers and their staff.

It isn't clear how the option to provide day opportunities in the Council-run Welford Centre, is in line with individual choice. It isn't clear if this is the only option that will be promoted to people with autism and their carers, even though we support this provision as part of a spectrum of choice. Whilst we have no objection to traditional day centres, this is in contradiction to the Council's own approach a few years ago when Day Centres were

closed. It might have been an interesting option to have worked in partnership with a voluntary sector provider to run this service. We recognised that people with autism sometimes need dedicated, rather than mainstream facilities.

If different living models are being proposed, then there needs to be a full and open discussion about the options offered to individuals, and proper consultation with independent advocacy provided so the most appropriate models of housing are used. It was recognised that Newcastle City Council has been a keen supporter behind Independent Supported Living options, but some of the payment systems that had supported this approach had changed (e.g. the loss of the Independent Living Fund, use of Housing Benefit etc). Clearly for most people their housing options will change as their needs change, so there needs to be a consideration of how people can be moved appropriately between different models of housing support. Residential care is an appropriate and preferred option for some people at some stages of their lives, however not in all cases. Extra care housing can provide an additional level of support for some people. Also Concierge Plus and virtual clusters will work well for some people. We would support a range of different options for people, based on their needs; and that should have access to independent advocacy before any decisions or changes are made. The voluntary sector should be actively involved in planning new housing options. The Deciding Together/ Delivering Together exercise might have an impact on some of the options for people with enduring mental health problems.

The dynamic review evaluation needs to be shared with others – it isn't clear from the information given from whose perspective this was done. Any evaluation needs to involve users, carers, and providers. Have any changes been made since the evaluation? The dynamic review approach can cause considerable difficulties for providers in relation to staffing and cover. Has there been any consultation yet with people with high physical needs and / or neurological conditions about this? There is a budget saving of £1,820,000 associated with this proposal and it isn't clear how much of this relates to the increased input of social workers (average review time increased from 3 hours to twenty hours) and the reductions in support for users (and carers).

It isn't clear what is meant by the 'fundamental review of the way we provide overnight support' – the assumption is the replacement of the majority of staff by on-call services and assistive technology. Clearly this should be used where it is appropriate but it must be balanced with safety and the prevention of potential safeguarding issues.

We welcome the discussion with young people and their carers now, in order to future proof and plan for the future and provide clarity about expectations.

### **Proposal 25 Life Chances and early help**

It isn't clear from the description what is being proposed as there are £530,000 of saving proposed against no loss of Council jobs. There were references to Castle Nurseries, so is this about increased charges ?

### **Proposals 27-32 Resources Directorate**

Could the devolution deal provide further efficiencies / income generation opportunities in this area?

### **Communities Team and Community Buildings**

There is no mention about these proposals so we are unclear about the Council's intentions. We recognise the Communities Team have been through several major changes and Newcastle CVS has engaged with the new team in order to reduce



duplication. The reductions in central funding means the team has to raise funding from elsewhere. Will the current team budget be the same until March 2019?

The asset transfer of community buildings has been slower than predicted, and we believe a different approach should now be pursued. Nearly all the organisations that wished to, and were able to, directly manage their asset have done so; and clearly, this process is now reaching its natural end. All other community buildings, assets - council and otherwise, should be viewed as a single 'one estate' approach, and active conversations started on rationalisation as part of the Communities Hub process.

### **Council Tax and Social Care Precept**

This is the proposal to increase the Council Tax by 1.95% in base and add the adult social care precept of 3% making 4.95% increase in total.

We do not object to this proposal but believe there should have been an increase in Council Tax, every year since 2011 (as set out in our previous responses), except for the years when the Council would have been penalised for this. We recognise the low Council Tax base. We believe the social care precept is inadequate when compared to actual social care needs; and basically it means those poorer communities, which are likely to have higher social care needs, must pay more. We remain concerned about those residents previously covered by transition but now paying Council Tax, particularly those who are already in arrears. We also believe there is a growing crisis in Children's Social Care nationally and the Government needs to urgently address this. Today's announcement about Local Government Finance still offers minimal relief to many local authorities, including Newcastle.

### **Concluding comments**

The scale of these reductions of £13.3million next year, on top of the £254 million in the last seven years, with a likely £15million in 2019 - 2020 has never been experienced before by those of us who live and / or work in Newcastle. We are deeply concerned about the cumulative impact of all of these proposals on the citizens of Newcastle, in particular the most vulnerable residents and communities (whether of identity, interest or geography). We have tried to provide a summary of the comments that have been made by our members and put them in an overall context, in relation to how the budget proposals have been presented. However we recognise that many of these issues are related and will have impacts on each other. The size and scale of public spending cuts, together with Welfare Reforms are having a massive negative impact on many communities, local businesses, the economy and could lead to a downward spiral. Whilst at the same time we recognise the ambition in Newcastle as a city in which to invest.

However we believe the inevitable focus on the cuts of this magnitude has meant that opportunities have been lost to transform some services and work in partnership. Opportunities still exist and many voluntary organisations would welcome discussions with council officers in order to minimise impacts on our city's residents. We have already seen many imaginative approaches to retain services for people, and believe these should be further enhanced. We also believe others, such as the Newcastle Hospitals NHS Trust, could use some of their resources to help support our most vulnerable citizens through these difficult times.

Although the budget cuts proposed are not to statutory services, a number of the services affected offer some form of prevention, often helping people to maintain independence and stay in their own home in the community. A number contribute towards improving health and wellbeing and challenging loneliness and isolation. There are genuine concerns that

the loss of some of these services could not just impact on the people who use them and their carers, but might also result in greater demands on statutory health and social care services and actually cause an increase in costs, not a reduction.

The voluntary sector has experienced a period of massive change - the loss of significant government grants, the push to larger contracts, the drop in donations, the contraction of grant-making trusts, the promotion of social investment, and the changes in the NHS have made the sector itself more vulnerable. This is at a time when we are being asked to take on more (unpaid) work and more clients, users and carers are being sign-posted to us. We believe the voluntary and community sector has a number of resources which we are willing to share, but we want to be treated as a serious partner to help get us all through the next years ahead.

Yours sincerely

*Sally*

Sally Young  
**Chief Executive**

cc All NCC Cabinet members  
All NCC Executive Directors  
Rachel Baillie  
Helen Dickinson  
Eugene Milne  
Tony Durkin

# Newcastle VCS budget meeting



## Notes of Newcastle City Council 2018/19 budget consultation 6 December 2017

### Present

Barbara Douglas	Quality of Life Partnership
Karen Williams	NAPI
Katie Dodd	Carers Centre Newcastle
Michelle Dias	Caudwell Children
Neil Shashoua	Blue Stone Consortium
Hanna Stapley	Shelter
Nick Lambert	Elders Council
Siobhan O'Neil	Involve North East
Alisdair Cameron	Launchpad and ReCoCo
Kate Israel	Healthwatch Newcastle and West End Women and Girls
Rachel Bickerdike	Newcastle United Foundation
Ruth Abrahams	Newcastle CVS
Scott Vigurs	Mental Health Concern
Sarah French	Groundwork

Rachel Ballie	Newcastle City Council
Tony Durcan	Newcastle City Council
Tony Kirkham	Newcastle City Council
Eugene Milne	Newcastle City Council

Sally Young	Newcastle CVS
Pam Jobbins	Newcastle CVS
Martin Gollan	Newcastle CVS

Apologies	
Steve Nash	VOLSAG

### Newcastle City Council budget presentation

Tony Kirkham, Director of Resources, began the consultation session with a presentation on the budget proposals. Newcastle City Council's budget for 2018-19 seeks to make savings of £13.3m and by 2020 the Council will have reduced its budget £282m. The Council is in the second year of a three year medium term financial plan, on which it consulted widely on last year.

Over the next three years there are things the Council will have to do and change but it remains ambitious for the City. For example, parks are not a statutory service and the Council cannot afford to run them anymore,

The Council wants to work on a larger footprint than central government wants, but central government grant now makes up only 15% of the Council's income. Council Tax is the single largest income stream for the Council. It has been encouraged by central government to increase Council Tax through the Adult Social Care precept.

The Council is caught within the 'jaws of doom' where there are increasing cost pressures and reduced government support to cope with increased costs and needs.

The Council's Working City priority contributes to the budget through developments such as those on the Science City site and Accelerated Development Zones which allow the Council to retain 100% of business rates, compared to 48% business rate retention in other (non-ADZ) areas.

Lots of positive things are planned for the City including the Great Exhibition of the North, the developments around Central Station and the redevelopment of East Pilgrim Street. The prosperity of the city will benefit from these initiatives.

The Council's Decent Neighbourhoods priority is seeking to progress 11,000 new homes and return around 600 homes into use. The development of student accommodation means the city is home to around 50,000 students, who contribute to making Newcastle a thriving place to be; albeit they do not pay Council Tax. The Newcastle Waste Commission and the North of Tyne Devolution deal will both offer opportunities for the City.

Under the Tackling Inequalities priority, success does not necessarily attract additional funding, therefore successfully preventing homelessness can be a 'negative' for the City in financial terms. The Council wants the government to recognise prevention rather than need in its funding formulae. The Council is looking to work with and share services with other local authorities and at methods of working with individuals using digital technologies.

The biggest contributors to the Council's budget are the private sector, central government and the city's residents from Council Tax and the Adult Social Care precept. In terms of savings the Council is reducing its contribution to Tyne and Wear Museums by £150,000 and 40 jobs will be lost.

Central government is pushing local authorities to concentrate on statutory services whereas Newcastle City Council sees itself as having a wider leadership role. With its proposals for the City's parks trying something no other council has attempted. The community hubs proposals have proved difficult to progress because of the proliferation of other hubs e.g. Community Family Hubs and Health service hubs.

The Council might not be able to create a streamlined model but can take some of the confusion out of the system. A report on the community hubs will be taken to the Council's overview and scrutiny committee.

### **Questions and comments**

Q What is the Council doing to pre-empt what might happen after the parks transfer?

A The Council is carefully drafting the aims and objectives of the Parks Trust and there will be restrictions placed on how the parks can be used.

Q How will the Council and Your Homes Newcastle avoid replicating what is already being provided in community from voluntary sector managed community assets (community hubs)?

A Because the scope of the community hubs proposal has broadened there hasn't been time yet to consider partnership working.

Q Is the community hubs proposal being driven by the Council's wish to avoid PFI penalties on its buildings?

A This has proved to be a very difficult piece of work and the Council does not want to incur penalties but it does want to protect council buildings through the hubs proposals.

It was pointed out that managing a community building or asset has its own pressures. Also that Broadacre House, for example, is a positive example of a community hub because of the culture that developed there organically.

For the city parks, free entry will be retained for all parks but it's acknowledged that some parks will be more challenging to maintain than others, mainly because local conditions and motivation of local communities to get involved.

Concerns were expressed that some of the Council's expectations from setting up the Parks Trust are due to imagining conditions in the voluntary sector to be rosier than they in fact are; also that for established voluntary organisations the trust is a potential competitor for funding and resources.

The Council will carry out an open recruitment for trustees for the Parks Trust, which will include a role skills specification. There will be further discussion about the objectives of the trust but because of complexity of land issues it's likely to be a year before changes are in place.

It was noted that that under the People Directorate proposals cuts to the Age Friendly City budget (and others) are recorded as having no impact on council staff. It would be interesting to find out the impact on the voluntary sector workforce.

The impact of pedestrianizing Blckett Street on people with disabilities or mobility issues was discussed. The proposals are considered to have a positive impact on pedestrians' health; at the moment the area suffers high levels of pollution as bus operators use Blckett St as a free bus station. There has been contact with the Elders Council over proposals; the scheme will be temporary, during the Great Exhibition of the North, but may become permanent as part of development plans for Northumberland Street.

There is lots of work continuing from last year on care and protection for young people. There have been significant changes in children's social care including introducing a charge towards cost of care in certain cases.

The Council has been working with an organisation called Social Finance on system changes in children social care and providing early help services. The impact of austerity and welfare reform makes matters more complex; there has been an increase in child protection plans. There can be good reasons for this, such as placing a young person out of area to break their use of NPS or other addictions.

There needs to be a dialogue with providers to gain a more granular understanding of issues and plan for the future. The budget proposals show what intended savings are and how to make efficiencies.

It was noted that where issues disappear from one area they can emerge in another with a cost then borne by another provider e.g. a voluntary organisation.

The proposals for Adult Services include use of digital tools, based on lots of work with Newcastle Carers on signposting to services before someone enters social care services. There is an aim to create better links with health services but there is also a need to make improved links with housing providers and the Fairer Housing Unit.

The Council is proposing to save over £3.3 million from the Adult Social Care budget and will continue to use dynamic reviews to maintain a sustainable service.

The Council shouldn't underestimate the impact providing fewer care packages will have on carers and the effect on their quality of life, when evidence shows that the health of carers is already likely to be poor as a result of their circumstances. In Gateshead there is a larger financial envelope for carers despite there being fewer carers in the borough. There needs to be greater equality for carers across Tyne and Wear.

From a provider perspective the dynamic review process can make it difficult for voluntary sector organisations to manage and plan staffing requirements if the number of staff needed is under continual review. The Council needs to work with providers to understand the impact of the changes. Is the dynamic review process equitable and not leaving parents or carers to pick up slack when support from commissioned services is reduced?

Concern was expressed about increased contribution from individuals to their social care package and the ongoing affordability for individuals of social care.