

Participatory Budgeting Environment: Summary and analysis of comments

Changing the way waste is collected along the lines of most other local authorities e.g. fortnightly collection, which could save between £1.2million and £1.4million

Summary of comments

This proposal attracted the most responses across all directorates (28) with a roughly equal divide of those who expressed a direct opinion (12 in favour and 11 opposed).

Those opposed raised:

- **Hygiene issues**
- **Storage for wheelie bins**
- **Risk of increased fly-tipping**
- **Impact in conservation areas**

Two respondents in favour specifically cited this as a better option than cuts in social care.

Areas for possible for consideration (depending on other sources of information)

Proportionally high response rate suggests this is may be a major concern for residents and a potentially divisive issue

Opposition to any changes should be expected and may focus on hygiene/environmental concerns and the practicalities of wheelie bins for all residents

Direct link from some respondents to avoidance of social care cuts may be worth further investigate – this was the only proposal that elicited such connective responses

Drive to improve recycling whilst reducing Blue Bag waste (including reduction in number of Blue Bags), which could save between £100,000 and £350,000 per year

Summary of comments

Few respondents commented directly on the proposal (two in favour, one opposed).

Most common theme (8 comments) was desire for an increased in what can be recycled.

Suggestions included:

- Ideas for encouraging recycling such as improved incentives, initiatives with school children and increased publicity
- Changing colour of waste bags every year so as to take some out of circulation

Areas for possible for consideration (depending on other sources of information)

Although few respondents commented directly on the proposal, the responses as a whole suggest support for increased recycling, with a desire for more opportunity to recycle at kerbside particularly prevalent. Even the single comment that opposed a reduction in blue bags also called for greater encouragement to recycle.

This indicates that the proposal, if combined with publicised efforts to encourage greater recycling, may not necessarily be opposed widely.

Reduce street cleansing frequencies in town centres at weekends, which could save between £10,000 and £25,000

Areas for possible for consideration (depending on other sources of information)

The proposal received only limited support with the main areas of opposition being:

- Impact on trade
- Impact on quality of life
- Limited savings that it would generate

Some respondents highlighted the responsibility of local businesses (pubs) for the litter they create.

Areas for possible for consideration (depending on other sources of information)

Responses suggest that reaction to this proposal may be linked to a difference in attitude between those who believe WBC should be responsible for making the town attractive in order to support businesses and those who believe businesses should be responsible for the litter their activities create.

Given this it may be advisable to discuss this proposal directly with town centre businesses to assess any impact and identify what support they may be able to provide.

Increase car parking charges (which have not gone up in four years) by 10 to 15 % which could raise between £50,000 and £100,000 per year

Summary of comments

Responses expressing a direct opinion on this proposal were slightly more likely to object (8) than support (5) with the main area of concern being impact on town centre trade.

Areas for possible for consideration (depending on other sources of information)

Although responses suggest the impact on trade is a relevant factor in people's reaction to this proposal, the overall responses were reasonably balanced between those in favour and those opposed.

It may be useful to assess – and publicise - evidence of any real, as opposed to perceived, link between car parking charges and town centre trade to assess the true impact of this proposal.

It may also be advisable to discuss the proposal with town centre businesses before implementation.

Introduce evening and Sunday car parking charges in the majority of our car parks which could raise between £75,000 and £100,000 per year

Summary of comments

- **Responses expressing a direct opinion were more likely to be in favour (11 in full or conditional support) than opposed (2). Concerns raised were based on impact on town centres and how it would be enforced.**

Analysis

Responses suggest that this proposal could meet with reasonable support although further discussion with businesses reliant on evening trade and consideration of enforcement issues may be useful.

Introduce on-street car parking charges in appropriate areas which could raise between £100,000 and £150,000 a year

Summary of comments

Responses were reasonably balanced between support and opposition with the key areas of concern being:

- The need for robust enforcement
- The potential for parking to merely shift to nearby non-charging roads
- Existing parking problems in streets with terraced housing

Areas for possible for consideration (depending on other sources of information)

The balance of responses does not provide a clear steer on public reaction to this proposal. However, the concerns suggest that careful targeting of appropriate areas and continued monitoring to assess the impact on other streets could be important in implementation.

Greater income generation at our Country Parks through more paid-for activity and major events such as festivals, which could generate from £50,000 plus

Summary of comments

- **Responses were overwhelmingly in favour of this proposal (10 supportive and none opposing).**
- **Specific comments not directly related to the proposal covered car park charges and better / commercial use of existing facilities (via out-sourcing).**

Areas for possible for consideration (depending on other sources of information)

One of the proposals with the clearest level of support with benefits beyond the financial noted (social cohesion and improved communities).

New ways to access library services such as self-service and some unstaffed opening to reduce costs and increase opening hours, which could save between £100,000 and £150,000

Summary of comments

- **Limited number of comments, which were evenly balanced between being supportive and opposed (3 of each).**
- **The three negative comments only reference the potential for theft. The positive comments reference the University of Reading's similar service and the long-term savings.**

Areas for possible for consideration (depending on other sources of information)

It may be worth noting that no responses objected to the principle of unstaffed libraries; only to the practical risk of increased theft, and that at least one respondent has experience of a similar scheme elsewhere.

Other Options for Change

Summary of the other options for change suggested at the Participatory Budgeting events

- Make the A329(M) a toll road
- Raise Council Tax (3 comments) rather than cut services
- Public toilets are necessary
- Work with the voluntary sector to manage community facilities and write bids to bring funding into the borough
- Merge Berkshire unitary authorities back into Royal Berkshire County