

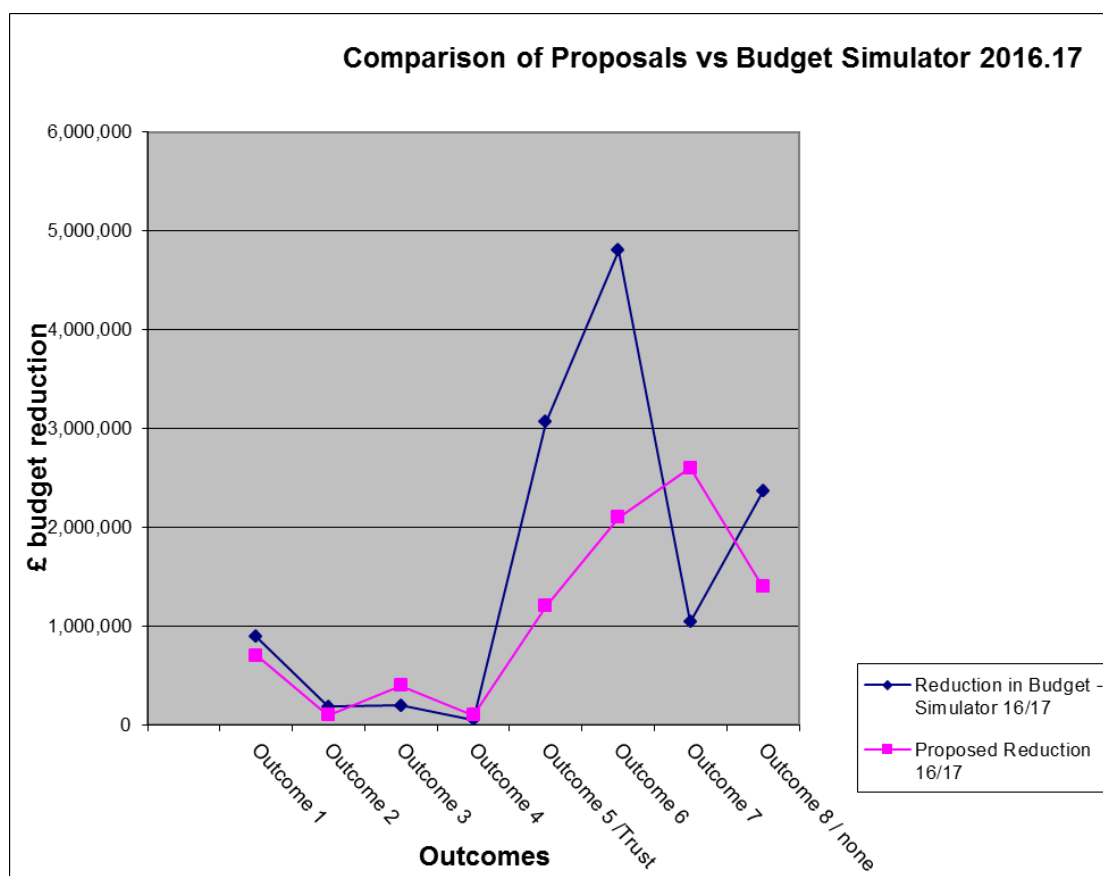
Summary of Budget consultation

In autumn 2015, the Council consulted residents and businesses through a budget simulator exercise on the Council’s budget and proposals to ensure it balances for 2016-17. The consultation was supported by a Facebook campaign as well.

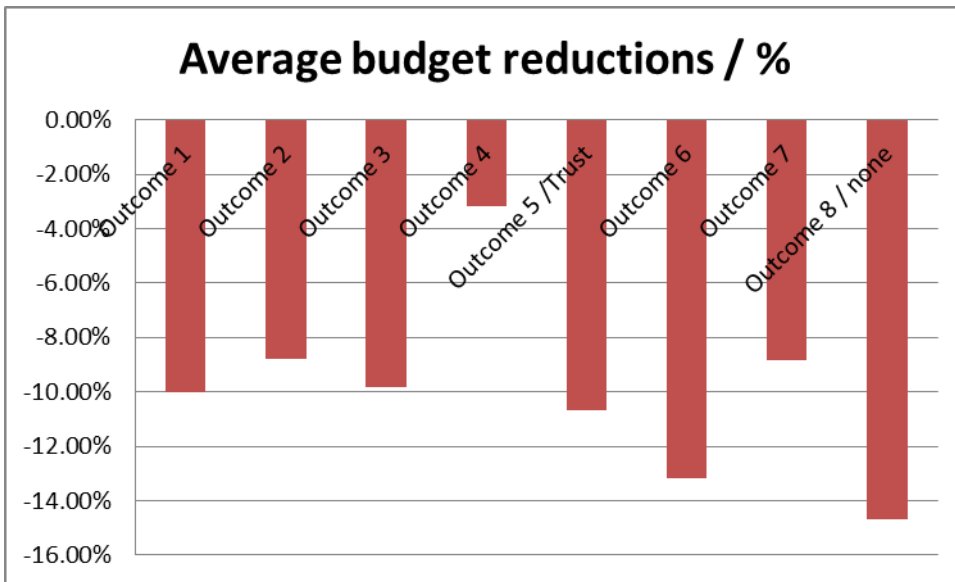
The Council also took this to the Slough Business Community Partnership on the 10th December 2015 along with an overview presentation on the key budget issues and their impact on local businesses.

Over 500 people used the simulator with 176 completed responses.

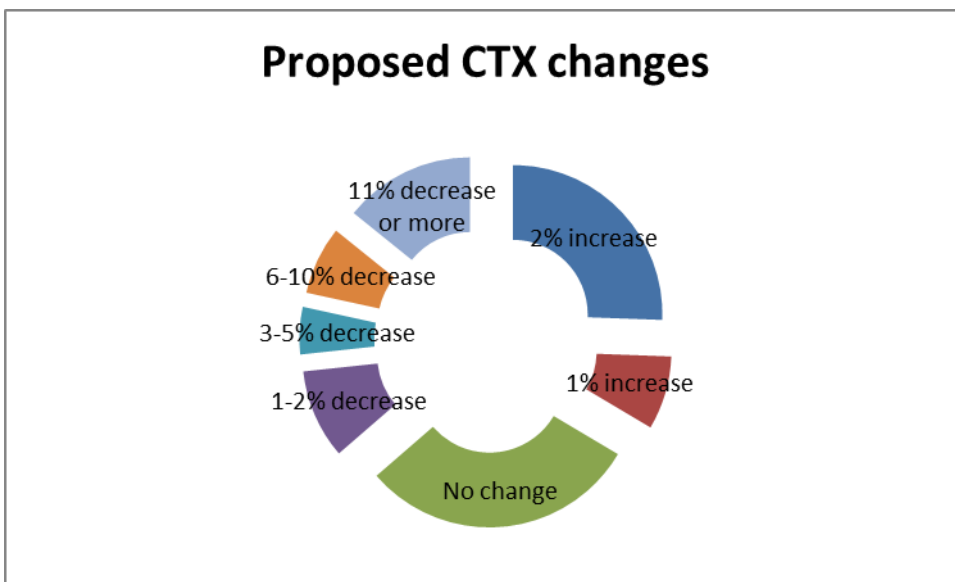
The simulator asked residents to increase or decrease spending across the outcomes identified in the Council’s 5 Year Plan. Below is a summary of how the respondents to the simulator completed the budget against the Council’s proposals. There were many areas of similarity in the first four outcomes. Outcome 5 (Children’s & Education), Outcome 6 (Adults) and Outcome 8 (Digital & Support services) saw respondents propose greater levels of savings than the Council is current setting out. Outcome 7 (Income and Assets and including waste management) saw respondents protect this area more than the Council’s proposals. However, the 2016-17 Council proposals are primarily income generation orientated rather than focussed on waste management.



The responses also highlighted the comparative % reduction overall to the different outcomes with the greatest protection for Outcome 4 ‘safe’ and the largest reductions in Outcomes 8 and 6.



Respondents were also asked to ensure that the budget balanced. Below is a summary of the responses. A majority of respondents went for somewhere between non change and a 2% rise (the maximum allowable in the model). There were a number of people who did propose major reductions with 8 people voted for up to a 60% reduction.



Written responses

Respondents also took time to make suggestions both in the simulator and on the Facebook page. There are a number of comments which are available, but this paper summarises some of the key themes from respondents.

The Council Tax Support scheme proposals were not commented on by anyone.

The most talked about topic was roadwork's, road congestion, and in particular the congestion caused by the roadwork's. 13 respondents commented on how unhappy they were with the continual "messaging about" with Slough's road network.

11 respondents also thought senior management were paid too much, with a number also stating that there were too many of them. Whist two other respondents suggested that the

Council employ too many expensive Agency and Contract staff. Three other people suggested more shared services and shared senior management.

4 people suggested that Councillors should be paid less.

11 respondents commented on Council wasting money, and working inefficiently. However in most cases these comments were not backed up with an example. Where there were examples it was around being given incorrect information on the phone relating to council tax and benefits and having to make more than one phone call to get the issues resolved. The other example, raised by two people, was on the waste of money spent on the banners welcoming people to Slough

7 respondents all commented that we need to ensure we protect the vulnerable and need to be careful about cutting Social Care services further. No-one commented that the Council spends too much on Social Care; this is in contrast to the simulator results where 40% of people supported the proposal to charge users more for the services they receive and the average reduction in budget for Outcome 6 was 13%.

6 respondents talked about making Slough “cleaner”. This included suggestions to involve schools by educating children with projects around “A Clean Slough”, increasing fines to businesses creating litter and also more council activity.

There were 5 responses around stopping benefit fraud and a further 6 comments about rogue landlords, and the requirement to regulate properly. This included comments about more affordable housing.

Although we did not get any responses directly from business, 5 people commented that we should be doing more to attract businesses into the area, and get them working in partnership with the Council, and sponsoring certain activities. 2 people also suggested that we should be pushing large companies on the industrial estate to take more apprentices. One comment was that we need a long term push within the schools to give children an education which gets them apprenticeships with the large companies based in Slough, this in turn will improve the traffic problems because...”at the moment low skilled workers have to commute out of Slough whilst the higher paid workers on the trading estate commute in”

There were 3 comments along the lines of running more services “for the people by the people”. This included community centres run by charities or local people.

5 people suggested we should be using capital resources efficiently to generate revenue...whether this be housing projects or businesses owned by the Council paying rent. However, 6 other people commented on the Curve and 2 on the bus station, and all but one of these comments were unfavourable.