



**CAMBUSLANG**  
Community Council

## **SOUTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL CONSULTATION ON BUDGET SAVINGS**

### **SUBMISSION BY CAMBUSLANG COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

**January 2021**

The following paper is a contribution to the South Lanarkshire Council (SLC) consultation on possible budget savings. It begins with some comments on the process being undertaken for identifying savings, and the involvement of communities, and then identifies the savings options of particular concern to Cambuslang Community Council (CCC). The paper is based on a discussion at the January CCC meeting and subsequent assessment by a CCC working group.

#### **1. Introduction**

We are aware that the [revenue budget paper](#) to the SLC Executive Committee meeting of 13 January 2021 provides *options* for possible savings and that whether these are realised depends significantly on the implications for SLC of the Local Government Settlement following the recent presentation of the Scottish Government budget and future income from Council Tax and non-domestic rates. We also recognise that SLC elected members and officials face difficult decisions given the need to set a budget within the parameters of the available income.

Having said that, we have four concerns. First, if communities and citizens are to be asked to engage meaningfully in a consultation in the complex field of local government finance, it would be important to provide an explainer in accessible language to help people understand the context. For example, the [local government finance paper by SPiCe](#) indicates that SLC is distinctive in the Scottish context in the balance of its income between the revenue settlement, NDRI and Council Tax – clearly this has implications for the impact of changes to different income sources. It would be helpful to understand better the income as well as the expenditure side of the decisions being made. Further, as the [CoSLA budget submission](#) noted, there is earmarking of some expenditure by Scottish Government, and the SLC Executive Committee paper does not explain fully where there is flexibility or not in spending.

Second, we consider that the approach to identifying savings is inadequate as it is based wholly on the internal costs/savings for the Council, and almost totally ignores the wider cost to residents, businesses, and the wider public sector in South Lanarkshire. We provide some examples in this submission of how savings have costs. Before any savings are decided, officials should be requested to provide a cost-benefit analysis to allow informed decisions to be made. The use of benchmarking with other councils to justify reduced service provision or staffing needs makes no sense without comparing relative needs.

Third, we do not consider that the survey approach of South Lanarkshire Council is as relevant or efficient as it could be. Grouping proposals for cuts together with a limited set of responses – and without reference to the nature of the cuts proposed or the context – will not provide valid insights or a basis for drawing conclusions.

Lastly, but importantly, direct consultation with community councils and other community bodies should be an input to the decision-making process and NOT undertaken after the decisions are made. We welcome the recognition in the Executive Committee paper (paragraphs 8.1 and 8.2) of the role that community organisations have played throughout the pandemic and the intention to “engage with communities to consider impact, explore opportunities and discuss options and solutions”. Community bodies, such as community councils and the voluntary sector, can certainly contribute to offsetting cuts to lifeline services (e.g., with volunteer staffing of some local services), but we do not want to be presented with a *fait accompli*. If the Council’s commitment to ‘community participation and empowerment’ – including establishing a dedicated team for engagement with communities - is to have practical meaning, early and serious dialogue with communities needs to start now.

## **2. Education Resources**

### **2.1 Educational services**

The options listed are some of the most damaging in the savings package. Over the past decade, we have seen progressive reduction in education support services and staff, and the Covid pandemic has had serious impacts on [the learning, attainment and life chances of children and young people, as well as their personal and social development](#), and their [mental health and wellbeing](#). The evidence shows that [vulnerable and disadvantaged groups have been particularly severely affected](#), widening inequality.

Any cuts to education services should be rejected. Indeed, we believe that the Council should be structuring its budget to facilitate an intensive programme of post-Covid catch-up in learning, wellbeing, and behaviour support for young people, especially those disadvantaged.

### **2.2 Psychological supports to vulnerable children**

There are multiple areas in the proposals where the most vulnerable children and families will see supports reduced. We would argue that these are far from efficiency measures and would result in multiple harms, as the following indicate.

### **2.3 Additional Behaviour Support in Secondary Schools**

This should be increased due to the affects that COVID-19 has had on our most vulnerable members in our community. We would welcome SLC publishing results on the impact of the six schools currently using Behaviour Support staff and whether the children in these schools were more effectively supported/ had better outcomes. Aberrant behaviour is often how children communicate distress and having specialist staff with a focus on this, is better for specific children’s emotional wellbeing, additionally having an impact on the wider class community, with teachers being able to focus on education.

### **2.4 Removal of Holiday Lunch Clubs Programme/ Breakfast Clubs Programme**

We reject this suggestion on the basis that [between one in four children \(Cambuslang East\) and one in five children \(Cambuslang West\) live in poverty](#). Families in poverty must not bear the burden of these cuts, given the particular stresses families have been enduring as detailed above. We would expect to see a robust analysis of the impact of this upon children and working parents who rely upon these schemes both nutritionally, financially and in terms of childcare, as well the impact of hunger on ability to learn.

### **3. Social Work Resources**

#### **3.1 Psychological Services Staffing/ Looked After Children Counselling Service**

[CAMHS services are widely known to be stretched across the country](#) and cannot replace targeted psychological support; neither should education staff be expected to assume this role.

#### **3.2 Intensive Family Support Services (IFSS)/ Fás. Family Support Service**

Cost-benefit analysis is needed in relation to these important services – reducing intensive services to working only with families/ children at risk of accommodation is too late. The body of evidence regarding the cost effectiveness of Early Intervention as a policy is clear and supported in GIRFEC/ Scottish Government policy intentions. Ultimately reducing the numbers of children escalating through the system will come through early support to families with identified vulnerabilities, **before** they reach crisis. Targeting those in crisis has a role but interventions are less likely to be successful. Scale up of Fas in this respect is welcomed, but not at the expense of other intensive supports for a range of families at the earliest opportunity.

#### **3.3 Payments to Third Sector Organisations**

Similarly, third sector organisations play a huge part in the Early Intervention agenda. They need to be involved prior to decisions being made on cuts so that officials and elected members can make informed decisions.

#### **3.4 Through Care and Continuing Care Team**

In some cases, children are deliberately placed by social work away from their local authority, so LAAC children and YP are not coming into contact with abusive family/ adults within the communities they were born into. The Corporate Parenting Strategy, as well as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child also requires the council to focus on individual needs and not a blanket strategy that moves all these children, who may be in settled placements, due to cost saving.

#### **3.5 Day Care Travel Budget**

Again, we are very concerned about the impact upon the most vulnerable members in our community - it goes against all the Scottish Government and SLC policies in relation to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion.

This is a cost benefit issue again – this affects individuals who are not social work clients – if their main sources of support are removed, they are more likely to become isolated and increasingly vulnerable, unpaid carers more under pressure – leading to costs elsewhere such as requiring a statutory service.

#### **3.6 Autism Resource Coordination Hub (ARCH)**

We are concerned about the proposal to withdraw staff and rely on volunteers. It appears unreasonable to expect carers of people with Autism to run a service themselves, which they come to for support with the pressures that they face in their caring role. The service users require the services of trained personnel to promote their wellbeing.

## **4. Community & Enterprise Resources**

### **4.1 Removal of free bulky uplift/ Fly-tipping**

In May 2017, [Zero Waste Scotland](#) estimated that fly-tipping incurs direct costs of at least £11m of taxpayers' money for clearance, disposal and enforcement activities. On a per head basis, this suggests that South Lanarkshire Council was incurring some £642,000 a year at the time in dealing with fly-tipping. This figure may be a lot higher given that the reports of fly-tipping on [ClearWaste.com](#) for South and North Lanarkshire far exceed virtually every other local authority in Scotland, the reported illegal dumping more than doubling during the pandemic. If free waste uplift is no longer available, it is highly likely that the estimated savings will be reduced, and the estimated additional income will be offset by the costs of clearing fly-tipping.

### **4.2 Litter Collection**

Similarly, research has shown [a link between litter and increased crime rates, even mental illness](#). Cuts like this are likely to have wider impacts that far offset the savings proposed. Noted also are the proposed cuts to mechanical sweeping, which if made would further exacerbate issues with litter and unpleasant environments which do not promote our communities to thrive as we know they can and should.

### **4.3 Grass Cutting / Bankings**

Leaving the banks to overgrow is already an issue across the council which is currently done in the name of biodiversity. It leaves areas looking unsightly and it also further encourages fly-tipping, arguably for similar reasons detailed above.

### **4.4 Gritting**

[Research](#) shows that the primary cause of excess winter risk of injury and fracture is slipping on snow and ice. This risk will increase if footways outside town centres are no longer gritted; the cost will be borne by the NHS – already fully stretched during the winter months – with additional emergency admissions.

Similar negative impacts can be expected if gritting of carriageways only takes place in the early morning. A snow shower later in the day will lead to compressed ice, road traffic accidents and drivers being stranded as occurred in December 2010, January 2018, and January 2020. There is also the potential for increased compensation claims against the Council for breaching roads legislation requiring the Council to ensure as far as reasonably practicable that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow and ice.

### **4.5 Flood Risk Management**

Cambuslang has some serious flooding issues and better management would save costs. Patch up works are costly and do not resolve the issue ([Gilbertfield Farm](#)). Members have similar concerns about cuts to roads and footway repairs budgets; lack of maintenance is likely to lead to spiralling future costs, as well as physical risk to residents.

### **4.6 Leisure Centres – Opening Hours**

We oppose centres closing on Sundays – this reduces access for working people and families who may wish to exercise together at the weekend. We would also highlight the myriad benefits of physical exercise and impact of access to community amenities for our residents. Many people may

be keen to improve their physical activity levels post-lockdown and require facilities that are appropriate to their needs.

#### **4.7 Activage Membership – Increase price from £59.70 to £108 per annum**

The proposed increase of 81% in cost is highly unreasonable. We would suggest this is likely to result in less people renewing memberships and as such defeat the purpose of seeking to make savings through this avenue.

#### **4.8 Closure of Five Public Libraries**

We are opposed to the closure of Halfway Library in our community, with a virtual library replacing it. Vulnerable groups may not have access to the internet, virtual platform devices, or IT literacy. We would argue that the statutory duty of the local authority to “secure the provision of adequate library facilities for **all** person’s resident in their area” ([The Local Government \(Scotland\) Act 1973](#)) would not be met on this basis.

### **5. Staffing and wider economic impacts**

Decisions on budget cuts need to give greater recognition of the personal and economic impacts of reductions in staffing. Table 1 in the report presents potential total cuts of 262.6 FTE overall, 113.4 of which are linked to Education, providing total possible savings £21.321m. We recognise that only some of these staff posts may be lost in practice, but they potentially represent the loss of livelihoods and opportunities for a large number of staff who may not be able easily to find alternative employment in the current economic environment. There is also a wider economic impact on our community of people losing jobs and spending power.

Finally, SLC should be making decisions on its budget priorities in the context of a post-Covid social and economic strategy that rebuilds our communities. In particular, we urge SLC to take account of recent debates on [community wealth building](#), to develop “a people-centred approach to local economic development, which redirects wealth back into the local economy, and places control and benefits into the hands of local people.” At the very least, SLC should be assessing the approach of pioneers in this area such as [North Ayrshire Council](#) to identify how the principles of progressive procurement, fair employment, shared ownership of the local economy, socially just use of land and property, and making financial power work for local places could benefit communities in South Lanarkshire.

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