

Dear Sirs,

## **Gloucester City Council 2017-18 Budget Consultation**

We are writing on behalf of the '[Gloucester Faith & VCS Homeless Forum](#)', with regard to the above and would wish to make the following submissions/representations.

Members have expressed concern over the City Council need to make further savings of £2.6m over the next 5 years and any subsequent affect on reductions in expenditure for certain important council services. We are aware that to help the Council decide how to continue to meet the financial challenges in the future, a Budget Consultation and survey is being undertaken as to what council services are felt to be most important; the consultation ends on the 9th.

As part of these consultations may we please express the view that we feel that the '**Homelessness and Housing**' council services, are of paramount importance, submissions/comments all as follows:-

1. Re the survey itself: Those that rely on these important services, Homelessness and Housing, don't have a voice, as we have seen with the need for Healthwatch to undertake an important and strategic look at access to health and social care services by marginalised and vulnerable people in Gloucester.....and so it is unlikely that these marginalised and vulnerable people will be involved in the consultation survey; their participation would be disproportionally low for obvious reasons.
2. We would concur with members that Homelessness & Housing services **saves lives**, whereas say the Car Parking service doesn't. The Faith & VCS Homeless Forum would therefore respectfully request that a council service that **saves lives** should, in the difficult decisions on budget savings of £2.6m, be continued to be fully supported and considered as 'very important' as per the questions in the survey.
3. Looking at the present County Council budget consultations, as a public body, the County says, 'it has a duty to take into account the impact of their decisions on people with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010'. This should extend to people who are homeless. We would be grateful if the council could please arrange for any information on this to be forwarded.

We will point out to Forum members that the City Council has certain basic duty's and obligations to the homeless and those at risk of homelessness but recognise that any reductions in expenditure will leave homeless people falling further and further from help – acknowledging the increasing damage homelessness does to a person.

Although most powers under housing services are statutory, which means they can't be lost entirely, we are concerned that if councils continue to reduce their budgets then their ability to tackle homelessness and find people safe and secure homes will also diminish; and homelessness/rough sleeping will only increase.

Why should we be concerned about this? Housing services are responsible for a large number of important issues, from helping house homeless households, [making sure that private rented sector housing is safe to live in](#), to helping people with mental health problems, disability or a medical condition find a home that is right for them. Housing should provide that place of safety, a place to foster a sense of well-being, and at other times to recover and receive support such as from invaluable Supported Accommodation. Hence we fully support the City Councils 'Homeless & Housing Strategy 2015 -20, Key Objective 3 - ...to prevent homelessness and to foster good community health & wellbeing...'.

We look to our homelessness services, locally and nationally, not only to try to help people out of homelessness but also improve their health & wellbeing and support them back into employment. Homelessness is a recognised public health risk and we have been kindly asked to help work together with Public Health towards a Homeless Health JSNA.

Finally, while recognising that the council continues to strive to deliver quality service to both residents and the City, we would request that the council does all it can to protect the most vulnerable and not make reductions in expenditure for, what are considered, extremely important **live saving** services, being the 'Homelessness & Housing Services'.

Kind Regards  
Tony Hipkins  
Faith & VCS Homeless Forum

Ps: We would be grateful if you could please acknowledge receipt.