

Elders Council of Newcastle

Response to Newcastle City Council Budget Proposals 2018-19

1. Introduction

Elders Council of Newcastle welcomes the opportunity to respond to Newcastle City Council's Budget Proposals, and the opportunity to meet with officers for presentation and discussion on the budget. .

We welcome Newcastle's overall approach to addressing inequalities in the city and the efforts to ensure that services are targetted towards those in most need.

Please find below our comments on the proposals.

2. Working City

We agree with Newcastle City Council's commitment to investing in the future of the city by attracting businesses and generating jobs. However, we do think attention needs to be given to ensuring that these are good quality jobs which enhance people's wellbeing and that there are job opportunities for older workers. There is extensive research demonstrating the value of older workers to the economy and recommending practices which support older people to stay in work or gain employment. There is evidence to show that, when we get it right, extended working lives can have a positive effect on people's health and wellbeing. However more attention needs to be paid to employment policies and practices to ensure that they are fit for purpose in responding to the ageing workforce.

The increase in Newcastle's Living Wage is very welcome as is the Council's commitment to ensure that providers of commissioned services improve workforce terms and conditions.

We welcome the upgrades to Newcastle's road and public transport network. Good quality public transport and a safe environment for pedestrians are particularly important to older people. Whilst we are in support of the improvements to the cycling infrastructure in the city, attention needs to be paid to the interface between pedestrians

and cyclists, which particularly impacts on people with sensory impairments and limited mobility.

3. Decent Neighbourhoods

We welcome the Council's commitment to provide suitable and affordable housing, including the attention being paid to providing different types of specialist housing for older people.

Given that a significant percentage of people aged 65+ are homeowners living in general housing, we also welcome the commitment in the Specialist Housing Delivery Plan to support people to stay in their own homes through access to equipment and adaptations. Recent research commissioned by the Centre for Ageing Better demonstrates the value of adaptations in enabling people to live independently and relieving pressure on the NHS and social care. We hope that the current research led by Northumbria University for the Centre for Ageing Better will result in recommendations that can be implemented locally to streamline the adaptations process.

Notwithstanding our endorsement of important adaptations that enable people to stay in their own homes (if this option is considered to be the best one for them), we would also like the Council to consider supporting a greater range of affordable and flexible housing (including inter-generational) which aims to mitigate the negative effects of loneliness and isolation that is often experienced by some of those who stay in their family home (irrespective of helpful adaptations).

We consider that more attention should be given to ensuring that people have the advice and information to understand their housing options and the support available to them. This is an area of particular concern to the Elders Council as we are so often made aware of how little people know about their housing options and how difficult people find it to navigate the complexities of the system. We appreciate that it's important to encourage people to use on-line resources. However, we believe that there are other ways in which

people can be supported to make decisions e.g. the role of front line staff in using on-line resources and signposting people to appropriate services. Ultimately, however, there will always be a need for 1-1 support to talk through housing and care decisions and we believe there is a gap in the provision of a housing and care navigation service, particularly for homeowners.

We are interested in the proposals for Community Service Hubs and would like to be kept informed as to how these develop. We can see the value of a local network of hubs providing a core of information, advice and services. We can see a role for Information NOW as one of the core on-line resources available in the hubs for the public and staff. Community Hubs could be a focal point for local resident-led initiatives such as the ‘village’¹ model. Elders Council would also be interested in exploring how it might work with the hubs to improve its reach across the city.

4) Adult Social Care

In relation to Adult Social Care, Elders Council fully supports the focus on early intervention and prevention. We understand the trend towards supporting people to help themselves through a digital self-service offer, however, we also know that this does not work for everyone and we do have concerns that people who need support will be slipping through the net. Vigilance on the part of front line staff from all sectors to ensure that people know about and are accessing the services they need in a timely way may help to mitigate this.

A recent presentation at Age Friendly City meeting on research on ‘Later Life Dependency’ demonstrated the trend towards people with substantial complexity remaining in the community and only moving into care much later in life. We are all fully aware of the pressure that this trend is placing on services. Another key point to arise from the research is that ageing is malleable, and the importance of encouraging and supporting people to continue to maintain their

¹ Villages represent an emerging consumer-driven social support model that aims to enhance the social engagement, independence, and well-being of community-dwelling seniors through a combination of social activities, volunteer opportunities, service referral, and direct assistance.

independence, in particular through maintaining social contact, exercise and healthy eating. We need to ensure that these messages are more fully understood by older people, their families and people who work with them. We continue to hear positive feedback about Intermediate Care and Re-ablement Services and we welcome the investment in step up/step down facilities and the additional scope that this will provide to support people to stay independent.

The budget papers highlight the need for closer working with health to both improve the quality of services but also make the efficiencies required. We would urge that these discussions also include Housing, which is so often left out of these discussions but has a very important role to play.

We would be interested to know more about the impact of 'dynamic reviews'. Whilst in principle we appreciate that people's needs fluctuate and that dynamic reviews have the potential to create a more responsive system. However, we have concerns that if this process is not carefully reviewed and monitored it could result in people not receiving the support they need in a timely way and not reaping the benefits intended.

We understand the need to introduce a charge for the Money Management Service but would be interested to know what impact this has on the take-up of the service and the potential to place vulnerable people at risk.

As services change, it becomes increasingly important that both providers of services and the general public have easy access to good quality information and advice. We would be interested in having more feedback on the Council's approach to the provision of information, advice particularly in relation to housing, health and social care.

5) Age Friendly City

The impact of demographic change is already very evident in the city and we do therefore urge the Council to continue its commitment to the Age Friendly agenda and to learning from others through its links with national and international programmes. Elders Council is committed to this agenda and to working with other interest groups of all ages to make sure Newcastle continues on its journey of adapting to demographic change. With the wealth of knowledge and expertise in the city, not least through the National Innovation Centre on Ageing, we would like to see Newcastle being used as a platform for more innovation along the lines of Future Homes. Elders Council is committed to playing its part in bringing the voices and experiences of older people to the table.