

## ANNEX B TO ITEM 4

### Budget 2005/2006 - Consultation Responses Received by Deadline of 31 January 2005

#### Section A.

166 responses were received and have been logged. The table below indicates the level of support for each of the budget proposals outlined in the consultation leaflet. Where totals do not equal 166 this indicates non-response(s) to that question.

	Too High	Acceptable	Too Low
<b>Do you think the Council Tax rise we are proposing is:</b>	52	79	9
	<b>A Lower Council Tax rise this year with a higher rise next year</b>		<b>A more evenly spread rise over the two years (as we are proposing)</b>
<b>Would you prefer to see?</b>	6		103

<b>The areas we are planning to invest additional money into next year are:</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Do Not Support</b>
• Increase of grant aid budget by rate of inflation for voluntary organisations	128	32
• An additional Housing Strategy officer to help us plan housing growth properly	73	86
• An additional officer to help enforce planning regulations	80	79
• One qualified teacher for each new Children's Centre at Fullers Slade, Netherfield, Fishermead and the Lakes estate to ensure high quality learning	117	42
• Appointment of special educational needs coordinators to help identify and address the special educational needs for children aged 3 to 5 years in pre-schools and day nurseries	98	61
• Early Intervention Service (Mental Health) - This is a support service for young people (aged 14 to 25) who have a first diagnosis of a psychotic illness	135	22
• The council has received a 5% reduction in its supporting people funding from central government. This will make up for some of that shortfall for essential support services for vulnerable people.	92	64
• To improve local environmental quality through 4 additional enforcement staff to tackle litter, fly-tipping, graffiti and other environmental problems. The proposal is in partnership with the private sector who will fund half of one of these posts.	97	61

• Introduction of an Environmental Health 'out of hours' service to deal with specific noise nuisances for weekends from May to September	110	51
• To implement the recommendations of the Independent Panel on Councillors' Allowances which reported in November 2003	85	71

<b>We are also planning to spend money in the following areas to create savings in future years:</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Do Not Support</b>
• Development of a new approach with construction partners to improve procurement and reduce capital costs for new schools.	116	38
• A pilot project to collect food waste from approximately 500 properties. This will test the viability of a Borough-wide food waste collection service that will improve composting rates.	94	65
• To help improve the maintenance of Milton Keynes highways.	142	15
• The introduction of space saving arrangements within existing council administrative buildings.	107	45
• Efficiency fund which will be used to help us deliver better services in future years.	104	51

<b>To balance our budget for next year we are proposing reductions of around £756,000 across the following services:</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Do Not Support</b>
• To only dig out silt from gullies when they are full rather than when programmed.	82	64
• Place fewer people in Bed & Breakfast and hostels outside Milton Keynes.	144	15
• Place fewer people in expensive residential homes far from Milton Keynes and support more people within MK.	140	19
• Reduce operational costs by considering transferring management of Bletchley market to local parish/town councils.	143	18
• Stop highway weedkilling.	59	97
• Only replace road direction signs when totally beyond repair or unreadable.	96	64
• Focus subsidy funding of public transport to health and education facilities, major employment areas and shopping centres.	103	48

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deferred appointment to education psychologist post, which will lead to a shortfall in service to schools. The impact of the reduction would be that schools and parents would receive reduced support with pupils at greatest risk of under achievement and/or exclusion.</li> </ul>	87	71
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A small reduction in the School Specific Contingency budget to support schools in financial difficulty.</li> </ul>	70	88
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintaining a vacancy of Assistant Rights of Way officer. This could result in failure to implement sections of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Recent improvements will not be continued.</li> </ul>	96	63

## **Section B.**

The following comments are a sample of those received regarding the budget proposals:

### **Council Tax**

“Already too high, most cannot afford these increases. Given an extra £19m from government there should be no increase” **Member of the Public**

“Should be in line with inflation - not always above inflation” **Member of the public**

“Council tax rises should be fixed at the rate of inflation. More efficient ways of working and centralising of some services within the council would probably reduce costs, thus reducing the need to increase council tax so much.” **Member of the public**

“Rise should never be above inflation rate as my pension is not” **Member of the public**

“The Council tax is too high for single people living on own or low wages” **Member of the public**

“Council Tax payers are sick and tired of taxes being raised above the rate of inflation and new stealth taxes - like parking charges - when for most their incomes are rising below the rate of inflation. The government's extra funding should enable a rise below the rate of inflation this year.” **Member of the public**

“Council tax - We are aware that older people are very concerned about council tax increases being in line with pension increases. ACMK appreciates that this is an issue where there has to be a national solution and we would find it very difficult to endorse any cuts in services for older people to achieve this. Although we appreciate that a 4.5% increase in council tax is likely to be less than other areas and a lot better than many people expected, none the less this may be an issue with some older people if their pensions only rise by 3% and there are no special government concessions for pensioners.” **Age Concern Milton Keynes**

## Environment

"I feel that money should be allocated to road crossings at the city centre and on Avebury Boulevard at Campbell heights" **Member of the Public**

"Subsidies of transport should be continued to encourage the use of transport rather than own cars for those who most need it" **Member of the public**

"It is proposed that £50,000 is saved through focusing subsidy of public transport to health and education facilities etc. ACMK would not like to see any reduction in transport investment as this particularly affects older people and is the number one issue for older people. The focus of the proposal also works against older people who are not in employment but for the benefit of their overall health and well being need to access leisure and engage in social activities which may not be in major employment or shopping centres. ACMK would also wish to ensure that funding continues for "Nippa" service. This provides a valuable complimentary service to community transport, plus a specific service for ethnic minority communities in accessing their day clubs etc. (21% of passengers are from ethnic minority communities.) We believe that the committee is being asked to consider as we hope endorse this." **Age Concern Milton Keynes**

"Would also like to see a bus service running from Shenley to Stony Stratford without going all the way round to the city centre for a five minute bus ride from Shenley to Stony Stratford instead of an hour round the city" **Member of the public**

"I prefer encouragement and education to enforcement. Number 8 for example [To improve local environmental quality through 4 additional enforcement staff], I would have supported if the proposal had been for additional staff to encourage more socially acceptable behaviour by, say, providing outlets for graffiti artists to express themselves in a controlled environment. Install a sense of community pride." **Member of the public**

"Presumably Parish / town councils will need additional funding for Bletchley market?" **Member of the Public**

"MKC has recently issued a leaflet inviting comments on its proposals for next year's council tax. MKC kicks off by saying it has been given an extra £19million by the Government which was £4.5 million more that it expected. It therefore proposes an above inflation increase of 4.5%! To achieve this MKC is proposing "reductions of around £756,000". These include proposals to save £59,000 by not filling two existing Council jobs and creating 13 new jobs at a cost of £345,000! It also proposes a minor saving of £8,000 by transferring management of Bletchley market to a Parish Council. (How a few stalls, which used to be run at a profit, costs MKC £8,000pa is beyond me.). If the market had not been moved from an off road market to an on road one and £150,000 subsequently spent on ridiculous, underused, bandstand in its' place, perhaps "saving" this £8,000 would not have been deemed necessary. Bletchley is the one place in the MK area where an expenditure cut is proposed. This flies in the face of all regeneration schemes. What is it that our politicians have against Bletchley? Unwelcome plans to build a bridge, relocate police, ambulance and rail stations, build over Bletchley Park, etc. all remain on the table. I suppose I will just have to walk down the beautiful wooded Sherwood Drive, (with the dustcarts thundering by on their way to the Council depot), then walk past the derelict 12 storey office block and do my shopping in Queensway. At least I

will be able to get cheap things in the half dozen charity shops and lose my money in the three betting shops. I can then go back, via the Parish Council paid for conveniences in Albert Street, to the third world bus station and get a bus to . . .? anywhere out of Bletchley.” **Member of the Public**

“Whatever happened to the millions of pounds brought in by parking? How about cutting back on streetlighting and road furniture?” **Member of the Public**

### Learning & Development

“You are investing too much in early years learning with the set up of Galley hill centre. The council needs to look at provisions for school aged children up to and including secondary school ages.” **Member of the public**

“Why does the MK museum not get any funding from the MK council as it provides a service to schools and the community?” **Member of the Public**

“Vital to maintain grant aid budget funding as a minimum - more if available to ensure survival and forward planning. I receive valuable support from HEADWAY MK Interaction and have close links to BAB (Bucks Association for Blind and Partially Sighted). All do excellent work.” **Member of the Public**

### General

“Herewith a few extras I would like to see included in your budget plans 1) Return of visitors information centre 2) Repair of pavements around Housing Estates 3) Upgrade of coach station - probably the poorest in the UK, so many visitors say "this can't be Milton Keynes surely" 4) Access to platforms at Railway Station 5) Rectify the non-stopping of long distance trains eg. Scotland and North Wales 6) When Milton Keynes was first put together planting of trees, hedges, flower beds was excellent and for a while looked so good but obviously not a lot of thought was put into the cost of upkeep, how so many areas sadly neglected giving a 'neglected and tatty' look. 7) Too many so called experts appointed, all costs money when the people with practical experience in the field and ordinary citizens probably know better.” **Member of the public**

“Reductions No.2 (Place fewer people in Bed & Breakfast/hostels outside MK) Support in principle but where are they going to go? Presumably these people are placed outside MK because there is no space and/or the accommodation is too expensive. No.3 (Place fewer people in expensive residential homes outside MK) As above - what is the provision in MK? No.4 (Reduce operational costs by considering transferring management of Bletchley Market to local parish/town councils) Support in principle but how are the town/parish councils going to raise the money? No.7 (Focus subsidy funding of public transport to health and education facilities, major employment areas and shopping centres) Does this mean withdrawal of dedicated school buses eg. to Stantonbury campus, St Paul's School, Royal Latin etc? How are elderly/infirm non-driving people to get to required appointments or do their shopping? No.8 (Deferred appointment to Educational Psychologist post) There are not enough educational psychologists out there now. At present the educational psychologists focus only on disruptive or obvious special needs children. Those with less obvious special needs are being neglected in main stream schools with their needs being explained away by other more acceptable

responses. I have 2 children both with special needs both of whom have slipped through the primary school net, under achieving because of this. No.9 (Reduction in budget to support schools in financial difficulty) How can badly performing schools be helped by reducing their budget still further? Again this is the schools who have a higher than average percentage of children with special needs? No.10 (Maintaining a vacancy of Assistant Rights of Way Officer) Living in a rural area of MK it is very important for rights of way to be maintained. How can this be done with no-one to oversee?" **Member of the public**

"Should the council not consider more "optional" services where the user pays for the facility - the green bin contribution is one example where many residents appear to accept the cost which I am sure does not cover the service but at least off sets the loading. Working in the private sector and having budget responsibility, I understand the main costs are always staff related. One initiative that would have significant contribution would be to reduce the absence by 50%, are there plans or figures on absenteeism and it's net cost to the council? It may be that better management of staff can improve absenteeism and thereby recover considerable lost cost." **Member of the public**

"Against any staff increases as they will need continual training. Councillors' allowances always increase beyond inflation even though reductions are required in other areas" **Member of the public**

### **Section C.**

Two group responses have been received as part of the budget consultation process. These are regarding 1. Milton Keynes Play Association 2. Milton Keynes City Orchestra

#### 1. Milton Keynes Play Association

Approximately 50 responses were received between 29<sup>th</sup> October and 16<sup>th</sup> December 2004 regarding the issue of funding for Milton Keynes Play Association from the council. The majority of these were received in the form of a standard letter, see below:

**Name of Group/Individual**.....

**Address**.....

**Date**.....

Dear Sirs,

Re. Councils Budget Proposals for 2005-2006

Responding to the Milton Keynes Council Budget consultation I am writing to express my concern regarding possible budgetary cuts to the voluntary sector.

I/we use **Milton Keynes Play Association** as a resource to support work with the local community and would strongly recommend that no funding is cut from this or any other voluntary service within Milton Keynes.

I/we would like to register our concern at the potential reduction in the Core Grant Aid given to **Milton Keynes Play Association**. If a reduction is made then this will have a direct effect on the services I/we provide to Milton Keynes.

I/we would like to add the following statement of support

Signed.....

A sample of the additional comments received about the Milton Keynes Play Association are set out below:

“It is of significant concern to the foundation that your organisation could lose a strategic post holder at a time when you are in receipt of a foundation 3-year development grant and how this post can continue to be managed if a senior member of the play association is made redundant. In addition to this, the city is planning for significant growth in MK and will be attracting large numbers of people, including families with young children to the area...It would seem that the role of the play association would need to increase in activity, not decrease. Certainly from our recent visits to your premises the organisation has worked hard to increase its capacity to deliver high quality programmes. Conversations I have had with others including Brian White MP, the high sheriff of Buckinghamshire and Phyllis Starkey MP have all been very supportive of the play associations activities. You may be aware that Sir Bob Reid (Chair, MK PC) met with me to learn about the local voluntary sector and it was clear from his comments that he is most interested in children’s education, opportunities to learn and ways of raising the standards of children’s attainment.” **Milton Keynes Community Foundation**

“MKPA provides useful training particularly for new members of staff. Also a shop for reasonably priced play materials and a scrap stove where junk materials can be acquired for a small donation. We would miss the services if not available.” **YMCA After Schools Club**

“The scrap store is of vital use to our school where we have a limited budget. We also loan play resources regularly in fund raising activities. A reduction in staff resources would impact on our children.” **Greenleys First School**

“Training provided by MKPA has been invaluable for my role as a playworker. Changes to the running of courses would be greatly upsetting” **Member of Netherfield Children’s Centre**

“This association is valuable for all our staff at MKCF both as a resource and training”  
**Milton Keynes Christian Foundation**

“I have found the training provided to be very helpful to myself and am coming to more in the future. They provide courses on areas that otherwise would be more difficult to access.” **Nene Valley Christian Family Refuge**

“Having spent most of my working life in MK with children, without this resource the children/we would not have such a varied access to resources and equipment. These children are Milton Keynes’ future” **Member of the Public**

“MKPA provides our setting with quality equipment which we use throughout the year, that help us provide quality sessions. Without our membership of MKPA we would not be able to have a variety of equipment.” **Coffee Hall Out of School Project**

“As a group of volunteers providing Youth Clubs (junior & senior) and a holiday club for over 100 children we are dependent on the play association for advice, training and assistance: Without their help children and families would not be provided for in Kents Hill & surrounding areas. MK depends on volunteers and in turn they depend on MKPA”  
**Christ the King Church**

“Community based organisations in MK work a good deal on goodwill and unseen effort, commitment and support. This can only be sustained and encouraged with a financial support from the council. Voluntary organisations are sadly an easy target. An efficient council should not seek easy targets” **Member of the Public**

“MKPA enables us to help children understand the benefits of canals and explore their own ideas with crafts/arts. Costs are reduced and the important message of community recycling is supported” **British Waterways**

## 2. Milton Keynes City Orchestra

9 responses were received in November 2004 regarding funding for Milton Keynes City Orchestra from the council.

A sample of the comments received about the Milton Keynes City Orchestra are set out below:

“I write in support of the above when the budget for 2005 is considered. The Orchestra performs a major role in the essential cultural life of this city and should be supported to the maximum degree possible.” **Member of the Public**

“Milton Keynes has been chosen by Central Government to be a focus for growth in the UK over the next 30 years. To continue to grow successfully, Milton Keynes must include proper cultural development. The council must not restrict the grant to the Milton Keynes City Orchestra and similar voluntary organisations unless it wishes to see the City as a cultural desert. The orchestra makes a significant contribution to the cultural life of the City, through it's planned concerts around the area as well as it's education and outreach programme. I am aware that the orchestra has significantly extended it's outreach programme recently, both to schools and residents. The MKCO relies strongly on



partnership funding and the Council's grant is significant in helping the orchestra to obtain this. I do hope that the Council will be able to continue it's support for MKCO and other community groups which help to make Milton Keynes such an exciting place to live."

**Member of the Public**

"I am writing in response to the budget consultation as a patron of Milton Keynes City Orchestra. Whilst I appreciate that local government finances are stretched, it would be a retrograde step to reduce the grant to the orchestra. The value of the work that it does in the schools in the area and the opportunities for young people (and others) to hear "live" music should not be underestimated. All my life I have sung in choirs, latterly with the Danesborough Chorus. The enhancement that music has brought to my life is too great to describe. I can only say that without it I would be a different person. To sing in a concert hall, accompanied by an orchestra is so exciting and uplifting, and I want all young people to have a chance to experience similar excitement. I have attended rehearsals of the Bedfordshire County Second Youth Orchestra when the Danesborough Chorus performed with them in Edinburgh. I witnessed the enthusiasm the children displayed and the skills that they learned to play together. I think their lives would be pretty barren without any involvement without music. Nothing can replace the joys of taking part in the performance of music, whether it be "classical" or "popular". Listening to live music comes a close second. I hope that the Council will feel able to support the work of the MKCO to achieve this desirable aim." **Member of the Public**

"As one of the older people in the district, I am writing to ask the Milton Keynes Council to keep up the grant to the Milton Keynes City Orchestra. The Orchestra does such wonderful work not only with the extremely good concerts put on, but also the education and outreach programme. It is so important to keep interest going amongst the young. And older people can benefit from the outreach programme too. I hope the Council will consider keeping the grant at the same level as before." **Member of the Public**

"Milton Keynes is, we understand now, one of the key locations for growth in the United Kingdom and is set to double in size over the next 30 years. It must therefore be essential that the related infrastructure include realistic cultural development. To continue to restrict the grant of the Milton Keynes City Orchestra, and those of similar voluntary organisations, would risk Milton Keynes returning to a cultural desert. As a professional Orchestra resident here in Milton Keynes, it should be recognised that MKCO with it's planned concerts and it's education and outreach programme makes a significant contribution to the cultural life of the city. During this last year, the Orchestra has significantly extended it's outreach work through schools and to residents in the area but any further cuts to it's grant will put proposed future developments in jeopardy. The MKCO relies strongly on partnership funding, for which the support of the Council grant carries great weight. As always, in a developing city, efforts have to be made to support the continuance of community groups, which benefit the whole area and help to build a sustainable community." **Member of the Public**

"I write hoping that you will not be contemplating reducing the grant to the Milton Keynes Orchestra under the new Budget review. It is always short term and easy to slash Arts grants, but undoubtedly the rich artistic culture that we have managed to achieve in Milton Keynes attracts employers and private individuals to want to come to live and work in Milton Keynes. In the past, the new Theatre, Art Gallery and the Orchestra have acted like lamps attracting many to the City who, in turn by their spending and rates contribution,

enhance the financial strength of the Council's area way above the grants that have been given. Therefore I hope you will not seek to reduce but, if anything, enhance the grant to the orchestra which is such an important part of the artistic life of the city." **Member of the public**

"I hope you will give proper consideration to the importance of your grant to the MKCO. I have been attending their concerts for almost 30 years. The MKCO, together with other arts facilities, are one of the benefits that the new city has brought to those of us who have lived here since long before the days of the Development Corporation." **Member of the public**

**For further details on the consultation responses please contact Jenny Platt, Chief Executive's Office (01908) 254844.**