



PRESS RELEASE

Bradford Council Financial Difficulties - the impact Response from Ilkley Civic Society

The announcement by Bradford Council that significant cuts in expenditure - see <https://news.bradford.gov.uk/> - are necessary is extremely concerning. We need to understand and have much more information on these proposals, costings and impacts before the public consultation commences and any decisions are made. We are concerned that the cost benefit analysis of each of the proposed savings is not yet public.

The Council Executive is holding an Extraordinary Meeting on Thursday 11th January to consider the proposals and it is expected that meeting will approve them for consultation to proceed until 17th February 2024 as required with the public, interested parties, staff and Trade Unions.

The consultation timescale is very short - it is planned that the proposals for services to be cut will go to the Full Council meeting on 22nd February 2024.

Recycling

Of particular concern in Ilkley is the closure of the Recycling Centre at Golden Butts, one of three centres proposed for closure. Golden Butts Recycling provides a service for residents in Ilkley, Menston, Burley and Addingham. Opening hours have already been reduced. Full closure of the Ilkley site will impose a 20-mile round trip to the next nearest, Keighley Recycling Centre, on individuals wishing to dispose of domestic waste, plus additional queuing time. This will lead *to fewer people* willing to do recycling. The longer trip will mean that many people will of necessity have to go to the tip at weekends, when the roads are already very busy. And how are the current pedestrian users with several bags of waste supposed to manage? On the bus?

The recycling centre closures will achieve only a small fraction of the total savings needed.

The alternatives available to Ilkley residents will be to dispose of items through normal collections, domestic fires, bonfires, use of street waste bins and potentially, fly tipping. Recycling will be greatly reduced and pollution increased. Large amounts of garden waste will not be composted. Income from recycling deals will be lost. Sustainability will be reduced considerably, with impacts on public health. Before closure is even considered we would expect to see full income and expenditure costings and staffing levels.

Volunteer litter picking is much appreciated in Ilkley and we hope that bag pick up arrangements can be safeguarded.

Other services

A series of other Council services and facilities is also under review, including Libraries, Sports and Leisure Facilities, Estates and Property. Bradford Visitor Information Centre is proposed for closure but we are unclear what impact, if any, this may have on Ilkley Visitor Information Centre.

Sale of Assets - whilst possible long-term benefits may accrue we fail to understand how the proposal to sell £60m of assets will help the current situation, property can take many months if not years to sell.

Nor are we clear what impact the proposed cuts will have on current staffing levels and customer service targets – for example responses to queries, reports of blocked drains and potholes and so on.

The full potential impact on Ilkley cannot yet be assessed.

We note the City of Culture funding of £3m in 24/25 is still planned when reductions in other services will negatively affect far more people in Bradford.

One area of expenditure omitted from the proposals is the spend on consultants now and in the future.

The proposals published to date show that local authority thinking and financing needs radical updating to reflect modern business practices with business managers responsible for annual business plans.

We hope that Ilkley residents will respond to the consultation exercise when it goes live.