

Budget consultation event questions:

1. What scrutiny do the proposals go under, as lots of the answers don't add up?

The outcome of the consultation will be presented to the Council's Executive on 5 March 2024. The Executive will then give consideration to the feedback and any equality impacts as they finalise their budget proposals in advance of Budget Council on 7 March 2024.

For proposals accepted at the Council's Budget meeting on the 7 March 2024, equality impact assessments will continue to be reviewed as part of their delivery. Additional consultation may also be required against some accepted proposals prior to their implementation.

2. What has driven the budget cuts?

This extract from the budget consultation documents provides the context for the cuts.

The proposals have been developed under an unprecedented level of financial pressure due mostly to the continued significant increases in children's and adult social care demand and cost pressures that are consuming an ever-greater proportion of the council's resources.

Since 2011 Bradford Council has had to find over £350m in cuts and savings due to national austerity measures, inflation and increased demand. More recently exceptional inflation and energy prices have put additional pressure on budgets.

In 2023-24 the council used around £48m of one-off reserves to help balance the budget and pay for children's social care and other pressures. Costs have continued to grow, and the council is forecast to overspend by about £73m in 2023-24. This therefore results in a budget gap of around £121m in 2023-24

3. If you are not looking to sell anything 'operational' or of 'high value' or 'for use of statutory delivery elsewhere' ...Ingleborough Hall is all of these things. This is an asset to children and young people and would be detrimental to their education, their emotional, social and mental health and wellbeing and needs serious consideration.

We recognise the value of outdoor education to our children and young people. However, the provision of an outdoor education service is not a statutory requirement. Many councils sold their centres, but we have been fortunate to retain 2 in Bradford. The council does not have £2.9m required to bring the building up to standard. Our ability to operate Buckden House as a fully traded service means that children and young people are still able to have the outdoor education experience.

4. With the proposed increase in schools going to Buckden House, how is this planned to happen without increasing staffing at Buckden House.

Ingleborough Hall and Buckden House are staffed to meet full operating capacity. Neither operate to full capacity at present. Therefore, we will be able to manage fully booked capacity at Buckden House. As currently happens at both locations, we will continue to use additional outdoor education instructors as ratios require.

5. Where have the figures of saving £200k in 2024-25 and £400k in 2025-26 and 2026-27 come from? What does this saving comprise of?

The savings in the proposal relate to the sale of the building and the future staff cost savings if the building closes. Future years savings for the council will come from Buckden House being fully traded and not relying on council funds to operate.

6. At this time there is no catering on offer at Buckden House – our school has always benefitted from the 3 excellent meals a day that Ingleborough Hall has provided. How do you suggest we go about this?

We understand the concerns raised around a catered service. Buckden House's kitchen is fully equipped to deliver a catered service. Our intention would be to offer self-catered and catered options for groups at Buckden House. Catered services would be procured locally supporting the local economy whilst delivering a quality catered service to our customers.

7. The Council proposes to move all bookings from Ingleborough Hall to Buckden House. I run a 2 form entry school and have 60 children and 13 adults on my visit list. Buckden House has only 68 beds. Which 5 people should I leave behind – 5 children or 5 supervising adults who are required to look after the significant number of SEND children?

We understand the challenges presented given that Buckden House is smaller than Ingleborough Hall. However, we already support schools with 2 and 3 form entry to enjoy an outdoor education experience at Buckden House. This includes children with SEND. As you will know the outdoor education service works closely with schools to meet their needs and will continue to do so.

8. On one of the Schools Forum Agendas I noticed that it stated: "...to ensure that the District retains the appropriate level of facility to support a sustainable outdoor learning offer." – surely the need for outdoor education has increased so why even consider closing the biggest of the Council's facilities?

We understand the benefits of providing an outdoor education experience to our children and young people. However, as noted in the budget proposal documentation, there is a requirement to find £2.9m to bring the building up to standard and this money is not available in the council. In the event a decision is made to sell Ingleborough Hall we will still retain an outdoor education offer at Buckden House.

- 9. I would like to ask a question about Ingleborough Hall Outdoor Education Centre. In February 2017 the Strategic Director of Children's Services organised a meeting of Audit and Governance where the future of Ingleborough Hall was discussed. The theme of the meeting was to discuss Ingleborough Hall becoming independent of the Local Authority and making it sustainable into the future. The long term goal was to ensure financial sustainability with a rigorous new business plan and to adopt a Trust model (a CIO – Charitable Incorporated Organisation) for Governance. The target to achieve this was set at September 2017 with the Centre becoming independent of the Council in December 2018. Why was this not achieved? If it had been, surely, we wouldn't find ourselves in this position now? Would the Council consider fulfilling its promise to turn Ingleborough Hall into a CIO?**

I am unable to confirm why this did not happen in 2017 as it was prior to the current children's services senior leadership. In the event a decision is made to sell Ingleborough Hall, this will be with specific criteria including the need to retain it as a facility for community use. It should be noted that the site sits in the National Park and their rules for sale of the building include community use. We have had a number, of enquiries from organisations, that meet those criteria. However, as the building is not currently for sale, we are unable to enter, into detailed conversations, but have noted their interest.