

Birmingham Civic Society responses to Birmingham City Council 2015+ Budget Consultation

Birmingham Civic Society has recently submitted responses to Birmingham City Council's public consultation on aspects of the budget saving proposals it is considering having to make over the next three years.

Though appreciative of the scale of budget savings the Council is facing, which will potentially affect so many aspects of the lives of Birmingham citizens, we gave particular focus to commenting on the impact of the proposed budget reductions for Birmingham Museums Trust, who operate the city's museum services, and likewise, to commenting on the proposed cuts to the Library of Birmingham should these savings measures be carried out.

Alongside the Museum and Art Gallery - Aston Hall, Soho House, Blakesley Hall, the Museum of the Jewellery Quarter and Weoley Castle are part and parcel of making up a museums service with a long and distinguished track record in staging important educational programmes for all ages. These institutions are of major importance to the city. Amongst other highly significant cultural organisations within Birmingham, they play a crucial part in enriching people's lives and contribute to the economy of our city in so many ways.

Whilst recognising the immensely difficult task faced by Birmingham City Council in relation to dealing with the overall reduction in its budget, we have requested that consideration is given to reducing the scale of the projected cuts to Birmingham Museum Trust's funding and that any cuts imposed are scheduled in a measured way to enable time for it to expand and grow new income streams.

With regard to the Library of Birmingham we especially expressed our concerns that the proposed reductions in staff numbers would lead to the loss of experienced staff and knowledge within the archive, heritage and photography service. At the end of last year we deposited the Society's archives with the Library for the safe-keeping of our heritage so we believe that it is most important that a way is found to retain the key staff and the service.

We have suggested the need to explore what commercial and entrepreneurial knowledge and support Birmingham's business community could potentially offer to these cultural institutions and have offered to support this dialogue taking place.