

Eric Pickles – “50 sensible savings ideas”

No.	Eric Pickles Suggestion	B&NES Council response
1	<p>Share back office services: share with neighbouring authorities from planning to press, from HR to legal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared services are in place for community health and social care through a new social enterprise - Sirona. • Local Enterprise Partnership is in place for the West of England for some of the most strategic services and to enable private sector growth. • Shared pensions service for West of England in place – the Unitary Councils, Universities, Fire, Local Councils and other admitted bodies with over 90 employers in total. • Shared Service also in place for the back office aspects of procurement • Local accessible services and ‘getting it right first time’ - with a minimal back office - is often much better than sharing the back office. This is a more radical approach – and is being widely used including by the Council Tax and Benefits services.
2	<p>Community Budgets – Bring staff and money together: DCLG wants to roll out Community Budgets across country</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council is part of the Troubled Families initiative and has pioneered the pooling of budgets to reduce costs and improve outcomes. • We are monitoring the progress of the Community Budgets initiative closely to see what further potential exists.
3	<p>Use transparency to cut waste: publish spending, contracts, tenders over £5000 and property data online</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contracts Portal in place for many years advertising all opportunities in public domain and allowing full E-Tendering package for free to all suppliers reducing costs for all • Over 15,000 Contractors registered, using system and receiving regular updates • Accounts, JSNA and Census data all published and all individual payments published on monthly basis • Further updates and developments on publishing community data being planned off back of new IM Strategy
4	<p>Tackle duplicate payments: estimated that councils waste up to £147 million a year by paying bills more than once</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Externally assessed and internally audited on a regular basis, no issues and good controls in place with excellent performance • Procure to Pay system now in place with strengthened internal controls and helps

		to ensure framework contacts are well used.
5	Clamp down on corporate charge cards: introduce greater financial controls on cards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System has significant benefits and is well controlled • Supports SME's (smaller businesses) in paying bills faster & guaranteeing payment • Efficiency Savings of up to £50 per transaction
6	Special spending controls: review processes for approving how spending is signed off	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheme of Delegation, Financial Regulations and Budget Management Scheme all in place and signed off by Council • All Financial systems regularly audited - no weak systems • Consistently good record of spending on revenue (day to day costs) in line with budgets despite an ambitious change and efficiency programme • Strong project management process in place with dedicated capital project delivery unit and practices in line with the best in the private sector. • Consistent delivery of major capital projects on time and within budget
7	Tackle fraud: estimated that councils could save £2.2 billion a year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core role of Internal Audit and Housing Benefit Visiting Teams • Consistent high performance and low risk evidenced by results of National Fraud Initiative exercise through the Audit Commission and regular reviews of policies, procedures • Annual Governance review checks progress and Audit Committee receive bi-annual report on fraud and corruption arrangements
8	Claw back money from benefit cheats: using the Proceeds of Crime Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We already make application to Crown Court in appropriate cases to claw back money from Benefit cheats using this process
9	Get more for less by improving procurement: councils can group together to get better prices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing partnership already in place • B&NES already in a series of collaborative arrangements for over £10M of spend with other authorities • Works closely with neighbouring authorities, NHS and Universities to identify further opportunities
10	Buy together: Public Buying Organisations facilitate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As item 9 and for example: • Joint procurement (with North Somerset)

	collective buying of goods and services	<p>of OH services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint procurement (with South Glos) of recruitment advertising services • Shared budgets and procurement on many aspects of community health and social care
11	Stop the scope for procurement fraud: costs local government £890 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As item 7
12	Utilise £16 billion of reserves creatively: make creative use of reserves to address short term costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has a clear reserves policy and keeps only essential reserves • Main reserve held to cover risks and is only 4% of gross annual spend • Other revenue reserves, being about another 6% of gross spend, mainly to enable efficiency and invest to save projects over next 3 years • Planned use of reserves published with the budget in line with best practice
13	Improve council tax collection rates: total of £2.4 billion of uncollected council tax across England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are in the top ten councils in the country for collection of Council Tax • Year on year achieve around 99% in year collection, having used private sector Systems Thinking methodology to improve performance
14	Encourage direct debit and e-billing for council tax: councils can offer discounts or incentive schemes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have about 70% of our Council Tax payers on DD and have just launched e-billing
15	Close council cash offices: allow residents to pay bills in post offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post Offices are an expensive transaction cost but we do provide this service • We have kiosks in our 'one stop shops' but no longer take payments over the counter • We have no separate cash offices
16	Better land and property management: sharing property assets between public bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part of the Keynsham Town Centre project, we are sharing the new office accommodation with several public sector partners, the voluntary sector and the community. • Shared front offices used by most of the main public agencies and several voluntary organisations • Regular co-operation with public sector partners on development opportunities • Management of commercial properties in Bath City Centre in line with best practice in the country with exceptionally low voids and good returns

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guildhall extensively used by the community and project being progressed to develop the undercroft next to the river. • Heritage assets such as Roman Baths regularly achieve awards good returns and managed in line with the best in the tourism sector.
17	Hot-desking, estate rationalisation and sub-letting: councils should undertake review of accommodation costs and identify savings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Workplaces project is well advanced and achieves on average a 3:2 desk ratio with hot desking. • This project is about 50% complete and will complete in 2014/15. The overall number of Council offices will reduce from 12 to 4. • Offices are linked to one stop shops and shared with health and in future with the police and possibly others
18	Open a 'pop-up' shop in spare office space: can help share costs and support local firms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We've gone one further. The Guildhall Creative co-working Hub launches Spring 2013 for new micro business start-ups.
19	Close subsidised council canteens: have food delivered or lease space to businesses / 'pop up' operators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being done through the Workplaces project. Seeking provision through lease of space as suggested.
20	Cancel away days in posh hotels and glitzy award ceremonies: use council-owned properties for away days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no Council away days in posh hotels • The Council does celebrate staff success but in its own premises
21	Open a coffee shop in the library: generates revenue and encourages visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being addressed through the Workplaces project. A coffee shop has already been opened in the new One Stop shop in Bath
22	Cut senior pay: have chief executives take a pay cut	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A pay freeze has applied to senior staff for the last 3 years. • Management costs are being reduced by restructuring with over £1M of savings being targeted • Recruitment of new CX in 2012 involved a salary saving of approximately 15%
23	Share senior staff: combine chief executives with other councils / public authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The agreed approach is for strong local leadership to drive forward services tailored to the needs of local communities. • The joined up working with the health service and the integration of public health into the Council are examples of this. • On strategic matters including planning, transport and job creation the Council

		<p>works closely with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) for the West of England.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The arrangements for the LEP and health are amongst the best in the country.
24	Scrapping the chief executive post entirely: aims to show that a Chief Executive can serve three authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council agreed in 2011 that a Chief Executive was essential to provide strong local leadership. • See above.
25	Introduce a recruitment freeze: only replacing a portion of staff that leave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rigorous vacancy management arrangements in place. • A complete freeze is a blunt instrument when wishing to maintain critical frontline public service
26	Freeze councillor allowances and end councillor pensions: councillors should be volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The basic Councillor allowances have not been increased since 2010 • For most councillors, when equated to an hourly rate, are below the minimum wage
27	Cut spending on consultants and agency staff: reduce number of consultants / agency workers employed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agency staff and consultants are only used where in house staff and expertise cannot be obtained or where specialist skills are required. • Framework contracts used to minimise costs.
28	End expensive 'leadership' courses: review sending staff to Common Purpose etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most courses delivered in house at low costs and tailored to individual needs. • Staff annual review process in place to ensure this works well and helps individual staff to achieve.
29	Cut spending on head hunters and expensive adverts: publish job vacancies online instead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Majority of advertising is now limited to Council job site & consequent financial savings accrued
30	Review and reduce absenteeism: introduce new absence reporting measures and provide support for staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council already has good procedures for managing sickness resulting in reducing absence rates. • Its current performance puts it in the best category for public sector organisations.
31	Scrap trade union posts: get rid of full-time trade union 'pilgrim' posts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship with the unions is positive and this is important when the Council faces significant financial challenges. One person supports the work of 14 trade unions.
32	Charge for collecting trade union subscriptions: so-called 'check' off arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a standard payroll arrangement, it involves no net additional cost. Any additional services requests are charged.
33	Stop spending money on commercial lobbyists: goes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We do not use commercial lobbyists.

	against guidance in <i>Code of Recommended Practice...</i>	
34	Stop translating documents into foreign languages: undermines community cohesion by encouraging segregation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have automatic translation built into the website so there will be minimal need
35	Reduce the number of publications and media monitoring: DCLG has already started to cut spending in this area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are already doing this. The new e-version of the Council Tax booklet will reduce the number of printed copies from 80,000 to 2,500
37	Cease funding 'sock puppets' and 'fake charities': don't deliver services but demand more state funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We don't fund organisations like this. Our funding for groups is related to outcomes and delivery.
38	Scrap the town hall Pravda: local authority newspapers undermine independent local press	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasingly Council information is provided on the web site and using social media, such as when there is bad weather and other urgent information. The Council uses its paper publications to get information to people with no access to the web. Costs are amongst the lowest as a result of the use of advertising.
39	Stop providing free food and drink for meetings: also ban mineral water at council meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council has been reducing this expenditure. The type of provision is modest and is mainly to support decision-making meetings with still water and sandwiches. Some small cost savings may still be possible.
40	Reduce first class travel: DCLG have cut spending from £200,000 a year to £17,500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employee Travel policy does not support 1st class rail. The council starts from a much more modest place than is implied.
41	Cut mileage payments: should be cut back to HMRC levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This forms part of the budget proposals
42	Video conference instead of travel: embrace technology to cut travel costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Travel is kept to a minimum and so are meetings. Staff being located closer to the work as part of the Workplaces project. One stop shops across the District also help.
43	Help the voluntary sector save you money: should give organisations chance to offer suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We do this through events like our Budget Fairs where suggestions are brought forward for saving money 'One stop shops' are shared with the voluntary sector. Programme to transfer some assets into

		<p>the community will form part of the budget proposals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right to Challenge Process allows voluntary bodies to offer suggestions on how to run Council services
44	Cut printing costs: publish online only unless residents ask for hard copy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will do this at annual billing this year by using this approach for the Council Tax leaflet
45	End lifestyle and equality questionnaires: also no need to spend money on Equality Impact Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council conducts one integrated employee survey every 2 years. • This helps enable investment in staff to be prioritised and supports good leadership arrangements. • Some equalities impact assessments are used to support decision making but the approach is proportionate to the issues. • Whilst the equalities legislation remains the need for these assessment or an equivalent also remains. • The approach taken is a positive and risk based approach mainly to ensure we support the most vulnerable and those with greatest needs when designing services
46	Sell services: new general power of competence makes it easier for councils to undertake ventures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has looked hard at opportunities to generate income. It already does this. • The budget proposals include ideas to expand this approach
47	Hire out the town hall: could be booked for weddings, civil partnerships, meetings, theatre productions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has been doing this for many years, and has recently greatly increased revenue income
48	Lease works of art not on display: not seen in galleries or museums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We run an Adopt-a-Picture scheme whereby members of the public and businesses can 'adopt' works of art for a fee • Furthermore, the adoption moneys are eligible for Gift Aid. • We average £4500 per annum income for the scheme
49	Save money on computer software: conduct full review of software licences across authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main opportunity in many Councils, including our own, is to reduce the number of ICT systems and to better integrate them • The new ICT strategy has this at its heart along with other measures to radically reduce the cost of ICT • The key is simpler and more

		<p>standardised</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open systems approaches are under review and the Council website has just moved to open source and licence free system
50	<p>And finally... ask your staff for more sensible savings ideas: give a prize for best staff ideas for efficiencies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is already an Ask the Chief Executive initiative. This will be enhanced by a programme for staff to suggest and lead small change programmes to improve effectiveness and efficiency – with senior management sponsorship • There are awards for staff that deliver excellence and this includes initiatives to save money • The Council's new open source intranet will in future enable staff to provide comments more easily on all the Council's main projects, challenges and initiatives