



# Northumberland

## County Council

COMMITTEE: CORPORATE SERVICES AND ECONOMIC GROWTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

DATE: 12<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2022

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### **BUDGET CONSULTATION 2023/24**

**Report of:** Cllr Richard Wearmouth

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Executive Director of Finance

#### **Purpose of report**

At its February 2022 meeting, Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a report summarising the results of the Budget Consultation undertaken as part of the 2022/23 Budget setting process. At that meeting, Members requested that the Committee have the opportunity to input into the development of the Budget Consultation for the next year (2023/24).

To help the Committee to do this, this report provides a summary of results from the last budget consultation undertaken between 10<sup>th</sup> December 2021 and 21<sup>st</sup> January 2022, setting out each of the questions asked (Appendix 1). The report also includes summary demographic information in relation to the respondents (Appendix 2).

#### **Recommendations**

**Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee is invited to:**

- **Consider the consultation questions asked in the Budget Consultation undertaken for 2022/23 and make suggestions as to draft questions for 2023/24.**
- **Make other suggestions to further strengthen budget engagement and consultation with residents and partners.**

#### **Link to Corporate Plan**

As the budget consultation helps to inform the Council's budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan, it is aligned to all the priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan.

#### **Key issues**

1. It's important that the Council's budget reflects services and investments that are most important to residents and businesses in all communities across the County. From 10<sup>th</sup>

December 2021 to 21<sup>st</sup> January 2022, we consulted on our budget proposals. Appendix 1 outlines the summary results of that consultation.

## **Background**

2. In December last year, the Council launched its online budget consultation. This was through an online survey tool and was open to anyone wishing to participate, including residents, businesses, partner organisations, Members and staff. The consultation was promoted through a variety of media channels. As the survey was online and open to all, the responses are not a 'statistical sample' of the population so, we did not present the results as representative of the population as a whole. However, the results provided a useful sense of views across a range of stakeholders, including:
  - Residents (94.55% of the responses);
  - Local businesses;
  - Charities;
  - Community Groups;
  - NCC staff who are residents;
  - NCC Staff who are non-residents;
  - Councillors;
  - Public Sector;
  - Other.
3. In total, we received 312 responses to the consultation which is a positive response rate. In the consultation, we asked for views on each of the key services. For each of these areas we asked:
  - (i) Would you spend more / less / same on these services?
  - (ii) How important are these services to you ('extremely' / 'very' / 'important' / 'not very' / 'not at all')?
4. Respondents were also asked:
  - What investment priorities are most important to help jobs and businesses grow;
  - To rank which services were most important to them;
  - To rank priorities for tackling Climate Change;
  - Whether the proposed Adult Social Care precept should be more, less or the same; and,
  - To provide suggestions on how the Council could raise more income or deliver services differently to save money.
5. As well as the consultation questionnaire, in January 2022, the Leader and Portfolio Members presented to the five Local Area Councils (LACs) on the Budget. These meetings were open to the public to view through the YouTube channel. The table (below) sets out viewing for these meetings.

**Table 1 LAC Participation**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Views (YouTube)</b>
<b>Castle Morpeth LAC</b>	314
<b>Tynedale LAC</b>	129
<b>Ashington and Blyth LAC</b>	221
<b>Cramlington, Bedlington and Seaton Valley</b>	223
<b>North Northumberland</b>	306
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,193</b>

6. In addition, the Leader of Council hosted a public question time session on the budget, supported by the Deputy Leader and the Executive Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer). Questions from members of the public were invited, and the livestream had 2,759 views.
7. The budget consultation was promoted on the Council’s social media channels and reached 17,532 people – 12,922 engaged with our social media posts and 300 people commented.

**Implications**

<b>Policy</b>	The Budget Consultation helps to inform the Council’s Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	Whilst there are no financial implications arising directly from this report, the consultation and wider engagement on the budget help to inform the Council’s Budget which will be detailed in the separate report to Council in 2023.
<b>Legal</b>	Whilst there are no legal implications arising directly from this report, the consultation and wider engagement on the budget help to inform the Council’s Budget which will be detailed in a separate report to Council in 2023.
<b>Procurement</b>	There are no specific Procurement implications within this report.
<b>Human Resources</b>	There are no specific HR implications within this report.
<b>Property</b>	There are no specific Property implications within this report.
<b>Equalities</b>	There are no specific Equalities implications within this report, although the consultation and wider engagement on the budget

(Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	help to inform the Council's Budget which will be detailed in a separate report to Council in 2023.
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	There are no specific risk implications within this report.
<b>Crime &amp; Disorder</b>	There are no specific crime implications within this report.
<b>Customer Consideration</b>	There are no specific customer implications within this report.
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	There are no specific carbon reduction implications within this report although the feedback on carbon investment priorities will be shared more widely with teams leading on the Council's plans for carbon reduction.
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	There are no specific health and wellbeing implications within this report.
<b>Wards</b>	All wards

**Background papers:**

Budget Report Medium-Term Financial Plan

**Report sign off.**

	Full Name of Officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Suki Binjal
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	Jan Willis
Relevant Executive Director	N/A
Interim Chief Executive	Rick O'Farrell
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Richard Wearmouth

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