



Northumberland
County Council

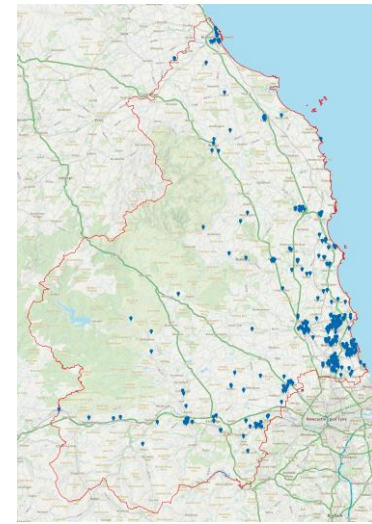
Appendix 1

Budget 2024/25 and MTFP Consultation Summary of Survey Results

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Introduction

- Each year the council must set a balanced budget, which sets out funding for its services as well as its plans for investing. The budget must also take account of new cost-pressures as well as making sure all its services are as efficient as possible.
- A consultation to collect the views of local communities through an online survey ran from 12/12/2023 to 26/01/2024.
- In total 338 responses were received – 93.8% of which are residents of Northumberland.
- Residents were asked to provide a postcode to enable analysis by local area. Responses were fairly evenly spread across the County:
 - Ashington / Blyth (75 responses, 22.2%)
 - Castle Morpeth (77 responses, 22.8%)
 - Cramlington / Bedlington / Seaton Valley (68 responses, 20.1%)
 - North Northumberland (71 responses, 21.0%)
 - Tynedale (42 responses, 12.4%)
 - Not in Northumberland (5 responses, 1.5%)



Capacity in which consultation completed:	Total	Percent
I am a resident of Northumberland	317	93.8%
I represent / own a local business	17	5.0%
I represent a charity that covers the Northumberland area	4	1.2%
I represent a community group in Northumberland	11	3.3%
I work for Northumberland County Council (resident)	16	4.7%
I work for Northumberland County Council (non-resident)	4	1.2%
I am a Councillor	17	5.0%
I represent a public sector organisation	4	1.2%

If we look at how our budget was spent last year would you spend more, less or about the same on the following services:

The survey asked respondents to give their opinion as to whether they would spend more, less or about the same as last year on five service areas. An explanation of what services each area provides was given to help respondents decide.

- 42% of respondents said that more should be spent on Public Health with 36% saying more should be spent on Place & Regeneration.
- 35% of respondents felt that less should be spent on Enabling Services, with 20% wanting less budget allocated to Adults Services.
- There are differences in opinion depending on where respondents reside within the County. All areas wanted less spent on Enabling Services

	More	Less	About the Same	Not Answered
Place and Regeneration (15.4% of budget / £131.7m total budget)	35.5%	13.9%	47.9%	2.7%
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities (3.8% of budget / £32.8m total budget)	41.7%	18.6%	37.6%	2.1%
Children and Young People (31.4% of budget / £269.2m total budget)	33.7%	15.7%	47.6%	3.0%
Adults (27.4% of budget / £235m total budget)	29.3%	19.5%	48.8%	2.4%
Enabling Services (22% of budget / £188.2m total budget)	16.0%	35.2%	45.3%	3.6%

Ashington / Blyth	Castle Morpeth	Cramlington / Bedlington / Seaton Valley	North Northumberland	Tynedale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More spent on Public Health (41%) and Place and Regeneration (36%) • Want less spent on Enabling Services (32%) • About the same on Children's Services (55%). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More spent on Public Health 30%) and Children and Young People (30%) • Want less spent on Enabling Services (46%). • About the same on Place and Regeneration (60%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More spent on Public Health (47%). • Want less spent on Enabling Services (35%). • About the same on Adults (56%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More spent on Public Health (45%). • Want less spent on Enabling Services (34). • About the same on Adults (49%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More spent on Public Health (48%). • Want less spent on Enabling Services (33%). • About the same on Children and Young People (48%).

How important are these services to you?

- 56% of respondents felt that Place and Regeneration services were extremely important or very important. This was followed by Children and Young People (55%) and Public Health (53%)
- Least important for respondents were Enabling Services, where 27% of respondents indicated these services were not very important or not important at all).

	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Not very important	Not important at all	Not Answered
Place and Regeneration	28.1	27.8	31.1	9.8	2.0	1.2
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities	26.9	26.0	32.5	11.0	2.4	1.2
Children and Young People	29.6	24.9	31.1	9.2	2.4	3.0
Adults	24.0	23.4	39.9	11.0	0.9	0.9
Enabling Services	12.7	17.2	41.4	23.1	4.1	1.5

There are variations in opinion across the County.

- People living in Tynedale were more likely than other areas to feel Place and Regeneration were extremely important / important (66.7%) compared to 48.1% in Castle Morpeth.
- Respondents in North Northumberland were more focused on Children and Young People (67.6%) and Adults (62%).

	% extremely important / very important				
	Place and Regeneration	Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities	Children and Young People	Adults	Enabling Services
Ashington / Blyth	53.3%	52.0%	37.3%	37.3%	25.3%
Castle Morpeth	48.1%	46.8%	51.9%	41.6%	27.3%
Cramlington / Bedlington / Seaton Valley	54.4%	48.5%	55.9%	48.5%	30.9%
North Northumberland	60.6%	56.3%	67.6%	62.0%	32.4%
Tynedale	66.7%	66.7%	66.7%	47.6%	38.1%

Place and Regeneration

Do you have concerns on any of the budget proposals outlined for place and regeneration services? If yes, what are these?

166 people responded to this question

- **Roads and Paths** – Roads and paths (maintaining / investing) was most mentioned by residents (31 people, 19%).
- **Towns and Villages** - 27 respondents (16%) highlighted they would want to see more resources for some towns and villages.
- **Recycling** - 14 respondents (8%) highlighted recycling in the proposals. Some felt the levels of recycling and the types of items that can be recycled should be increased. Others suggested offering more recycling services (e.g. doorstep glass collection).
- **Meaning of efficiencies** – 13 residents responded that they were unsure of what efficiencies would mean in practice. They felt they needed more information and detail about how efficiencies would be achieved. Some respondents were concerned efficiencies might lead to job cuts.
- **Climate Change** - 11 respondents highlighted questions and concerns with money being spent locally on climate change. Some felt this was a "national issue" and funding should be focused on local communities.
- **Cost of services** - 4 respondents said that they would be concerned if the cost of running some services increased if this did not result in an improved service to residents. Residents felt any increases in cost for some services (e.g. waste, parking) might lead to other issues (e.g. fly-tipping or reduced visits to town centres).
- **Salaries, Staffing and Internal Processes** - 9 residents said that they felt there should be a review of staffing levels and wages. Internal processes, such as BEST reviews, should be assessed to find efficiencies and that the Council should review internal processes to save money.
- **Charges for car parking** - 9 respondents said they would like to maintain free parking for residents. There were also suggestions that funds could be made from tourist parking or a small charge.
- **Public Toilets** - 5 residents said public toilets should continue to be maintained and improved.

Would you be prepared to accept a reduction in any of these services? If yes which ones?

- Of the 143 respondents to this question 73% said they'd be willing to accept a reduction in service.
- 28 people (27%) would accept a reduction in arts and culture, 15 people (14%) climate change and 15 (14%) tourism.

Are you happy for the Council to make decisions about these services to save money or make the service more efficient if there is no change in the level of service you receive? - 65% said yes

Reduction in Service?	No.
Arts & Culture	28
Climate Change	15
Tourism	15
All	13
Business	12
Free Car Parking	9
Planning	9
Regeneration / Towns	8
Roads	7
Street Lighting	7
Bins / Waste Collection	6
Cycling	3
Second homes / holiday homes	3
Housing	2
Grass Cutting	1
Internal Processes	1
Payments to staff	1
Public Toilets	1

Place and Regeneration

Would you be willing to pay more for a service if it meant the level of service you receive was maintained? If yes which services?

Of the 166 respondents, 52% would not be willing to pay more for a service. Of the respondents who would be willing, the services they'd be prepared to pay more for were:

- 26% - Bins, Waste, Recycling
- 16% - Roads
- 9% - Parking
- 9% - only willing to pay more if services were improved or provided better value for money
- 8% - All place and regeneration services

Do you have any ideas for how the Council could raise more income or deliver these services differently to save money?

197 respondents had ideas as to how the Council could raise more income or deliver services differently in place and regeneration. These included:

- Attract more Tourists / High Profile Events
- Minimum charge to use tip
- Review internal processes
- Ask for more money from the government
- Improved partnership working
- Charge for Parking
- Cut expenditure to paid officials / wages / Councillors
- Reduce subcontracting
- Higher Council Tax for holiday / second homes / higher bands
- Shared bins less use properties
- Better quality road repairs – last longer
- Reduce energy use council buildings / street lighting
- Sell logs from pruning of trees / mulch

Public Health, Inequalities & Stronger Communities

Do you have concerns on any of the budget proposals outlined for public health, inequalities and stronger communities services? If yes, what are these?

117 people responded to this question.

- **Health Initiatives** – 21 people (18%) were concerned about health initiatives. These included smoking, drug and alcohol support. Some respondents felt these should be covered by the NHS rather than the local authority.
- **Sport provision / facilities** – 15 people (13%) had concerns around sporting provision and facilities. They do not want to see sporting facilities close, or see costs increase and they want to see 'even' provision.
- **Health Service Provision & Facilities** - 11 respondents were concerned about health services and facilities. Access to a hospital and dentist were issues raised.
- **Libraries** - 10 people focussed on libraries. Respondents were positive about libraries, wanting the service to be maintained and these are seen as essential community hubs.
- **Partnership Working & Contracts** – 9 respondents highlighted contracts within public health and felt partnership working should be improved where possible.
- **Reducing Inequalities** - 4 respondents had concerns about reduction of inequalities and how this should be a main focus.
- **Carers** - 3 residents felt support for carers was missing from the budget proposals.

Are you happy for the Council to make decisions about these services to save money or make the service more efficient if there is no change in the level of service you receive?

- 64% of respondents said yes

Would you be prepared to accept a reduction in any of these services? If yes which ones?

- Of the 106 respondents to this question 75% said they'd be willing to accept a reduction in service.
- 13 people (17%) would accept a reduction in libraries and museums, 13 (17%) sport and leisure facilities and 12 (15%) cost of living.

Reduction in Service	Responses
Libraries and Museums	13
Sport and Leisure	13
Cost of Living	12
All	11
Health Initiatives	11
Public Health	7
Alcohol / Drugs / Smoking	5
Customer Experience	5
Internal Processes	3
Care to Communities	1
Council properties	1
Payments to Staff	1

Public Health, Inequalities & Stronger Communities

Do you have any ideas for how the Council could raise more income or deliver these services differently to save money?

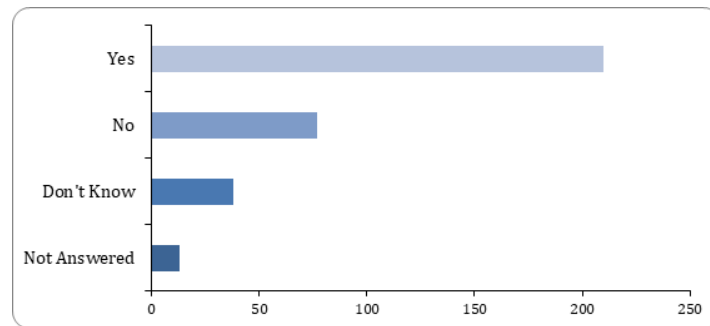
147 respondents had ideas as to how the Council could raise more income or deliver services differently in Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities. These included:

- Increase partnership working – including with residents & health services
- Efficiencies
- Better communication
- Combine numerous services in one facility / hub (bank, post office, health care, libraries, social services etc.)
- Community run support – parish councils, charities
- Forums – get resident's views / community input
- Use volunteers
- Reduce salaries
- Private Sector sponsorship
- Charge for library membership
- Use council car parks at weekend for sporting events – charge
- Review and monitor contracts
- Look at how technology and innovation can help

In previous years, the Council has supported some of the lowest income households with a local Council Tax Support Scheme. Given the cost-of-living pressures on households we propose to continue this scheme in the 2024-25.

Do you agree with the proposal to continue the local Council Tax Support Scheme in 2024-25?

- 62% of respondents agree with the proposal to continue the Council Tax Support Scheme



Children & Young People

Do you have concerns on any of the budget proposals outlined for services to Children and Young People? If yes, what are these?

84 people responded to this question.

- **Workforce Pressure** - 16 people (19% of respondents) were concerned with the pressures placed on the workforce and staffing levels. Some were worried about understaffing and lack of recruitment into vacancies. Some respondents were unsure as to what "managing staff vacancies" entailed.
- **Rebuilding** - 11 people (13%) highlighted re-building / refurbishment of educational facilities. Respondents believe this is an essential part of the budget and schools must be fit for purpose.
- **Increase in funding** – 10 people (12%) felt funding should be increased in this area. This included more funding for training, to support children in the care system and safeguarding.
- **More detail on proposals** - 10 people (12%) wanted to see more detail on the proposals before commenting.
- **Support for SEND** - 6 respondents highlighted a need for more SEND places and that SEND vacancies are filled.
- **Contracts** - 5 felt money was being wasted bringing in advisors and wanted more information on what 'managing demand' means.
- **Out of school activities**- 5 felt there should be more focus on the provision of out of school activities, helping to reduce anti-social behaviour.
- **Other issues highlighted** – support and provision for disabled Children (3), funding to help young / child Carers (3), youth services (3) , child mental health support (2) and increasing support for local charities who work with children and young people (2).

Are you happy for the Council to make decisions about these services to save money or make the service more efficient if there is no change in the level of service you receive?

61% of respondents said yes

Children & Young People

Would you be prepared to accept a reduction in any of these services? If yes which ones?

- Of the 65 respondents to this question 45% (29) said they'd be willing to accept a reduction in service. 36 people (55% said there should be no reduction in services.
- 45% of those who agreed (13) said they would be happy for all services to be reduced. Others included after school activities (3), learning and skills service (3) and school transport (3).

Do you have any ideas for how the council could raise more income or deliver these services differently to save money?

99 respondents had ideas as to how the Council could raise more income or deliver services differently in services related to children and young people. These included:

- All areas move to two tier system
- Better partnership working with private sector / charities
- Review of school transport and contracts. Look at use of private taxis
- Forum / panel of residents to generate new ideas
- Career services to offer paid advice to residents
- Training on budgeting
- Eco buildings – energy saving projects
- Adequate staffing
- Increase use of family hubs – rent out for birthday parties, functions etc.
- Support from local businesses / organisations e.g. apprenticeships
- More SEN places close to residential location of child – reduce transport costs
- Promote proactive preventative services – e.g. community allotments, repair cafes, 'how to' food budget
- Sponsor a child / support our school day / community events
- Streamline EHCP process
- Increase volunteering opportunities

Reduction in Service	Response
All	13
After School Activities	3
Learning and Skills	3
School Bus Service	3
Apprenticeships	1
Housing	1
Internal Processes	1
Residential Care Homes	1
Schools	1
SEND	1
Staff	1

Adults

Do you have concerns on any of the budget proposals outlined for services to Adults? If yes, what are these?

99 people responded to this question.

- **Adult Social Care** - 17 (17%) said Adult Social Care is an area they feel needs investment, including access in remote parts of the county.
- **Charges** - 16 (16%) highlighted concerns around charges increasing and could this lead to those who need services not being able to afford them. Some thought contributions should be related to earnings / on a scale.
- **More Investment** - 16 (16%) respondents feel more money needs to be spent on Adult Services and that services need to be maintained.
- **Manage Demand** - 12 (12%) respondents were unsure what "safely manage demand" meant.
- **Independence** - 7 (7%) felt 'increasing independence' could be seen as reducing care and support and wanted more detail about what this means in practice.
- **Support to VCS / Charities** - 5 (5%) respondents suggested increased investment in VCS and Charity support.
- **Carers** - 4 (4%) commented that unpaid carers need increased support.
- **Prevention** - 4 (4%) respondents suggested we look at supporting activities such as walking groups to help older people stay healthier longer.
- **Volunteers** - 4 (4%) suggested looking at how volunteers could help support Adult Services.

Are you happy for the Council to make decisions about these services to save money or make the service more efficient if there is no change in the level of service you receive?

56% of respondents said yes

Adults

Would you be prepared to accept a reduction in any of these services? If yes which ones?

- Of the 47 respondents to this question 43% (20) said they'd be willing to accept a reduction in service.
- Services in which respondents would be prepared to accept a reductions include all (9), grants support to VCS (5) independent living (2) and community cohesion (2).

Do you have any ideas for how the Council could raise more income or deliver these services differently to save money?

76 respondents had ideas as to how the Council could raise more income or deliver services differently in adults. These included:

- Bring back 'cottage hospitals' – free up hospital beds and allow older people to return home from care in a better position
- Increase volunteering
- Advertise adult care
- Care villages
- Increase funding from integrated care board to promote health monitoring and prevention
- Council owned care – reduce reliance on private sector. Centralised service
- Care in the community
- Divert money from other services
- Increase multi-disciplinary team working
- Encourage walking for older people – improve health and keep older residents active
- Multi-client access to specialist buildings eg maximise use of sheltered or extra housing schemes
- Raise the awareness of social commitment among the citizens of Northumberland by a campaign asking for volunteers, support this with free transportation and or use of direct link to bus services
- Look at retention of social workers. Speak to frontline staff about what the issues are
- Support carers and families - help independent living
- Support more community groups to reach out to isolated vulnerable adults & offer preventative services to keep adults healthy & well for as long as possible
- Work with neighbouring councils where possible to create regional specialist hubs

Reduction in Service	Response
All	9
Grants support to VCS	5
Community Cohesion	2
Independent Living	2
Everything except support for vulnerable adults	2
Adult Safeguarding	1
Mental Health Support	1

Enabling Services

Do you have concerns on any of the budget proposals outlined for enabling services? If yes, what are these?

85 people responded to this question.

- **Efficiencies & Savings** – 16 (19%) - Concerns were raised about the level of potential savings from BEST and whether this was achievable. Residents want to see value for money in this area. Contracts in this area should be reviewed. Seen as an area where the most efficiencies could be made.
- **Climate Change** – 14 (17%) - Climate change was an area resident's felt could be reduced. This was seen by some as a national problem requiring national funding and solutions.
- **Staffing** – 13 (15%) - staff vacancies should be effectively managed. Pay should be reviewed, especially at the top. Some respondents expressed empathy with back-office support staff – some respondents thought the Council could not function as well without these 'back office' services.
- **Not enough detail** – 8 (9%) people felt there was not enough detail in the proposals for them to comment.
- **Regulatory Services** – 5 (6%) believed services such as Democratic Services, environmental health and licensing should be maintained but we should look at how these could generate income.
- **Contacting the Council / Communication** – 3 (4%) felt there should be a review of how residents can contact the council and how information is communicated to them.
- **Generating new income** – 3 (4%) would like to see the target increased and more focus on this area.

Enabling Services

Do you have any ideas for how the council could raise more income or deliver these services differently to save money?

98 respondents had ideas as to how the Council could raise more income or deliver services differently in enabling services. These included:

- Roll out energy saving ideas, like the solar panels at county hall, to all council facilities and buildings. Reduce energy use
- A review of allowances to include penalties for non-attendance
- Abandon climate action plan
- Apply to government for more money
- Use retired volunteers
- Engage with residents via email and web services to keep residents informed, rather than printed and posted materials. Less face-to-face service delivery
- Bring in some people with private business or 'lean' experience to review council operations and look at how savings can be made
- Cost cutting efficiencies and multitasking instead of specialists. Reduce back-office support and meetings
- Drive efficiency, review staff levels based on priorities
- Further investment in digital services
- Join some services e.g. committee services and communicating with customers
- Less bureaucracy faster decision making
- Stop homeworking
- Make services which aren't online (e.g. registration services) digital delivery
- Remove duplication

Value for Money

Have any of these areas become MORE important to you over the last year?

75% (260) said yes, some areas had become more important

Which areas have become more important?

- Roads and Pavement Repairs – 88 responses (34%)
- Anti-Social Behaviour – 43 responses (17%)
- Affordable Decent Housing – 38 responses (15%)
- Care and Support for Older People – 38 responses (15%)
- Clean Streets – 36 responses (14%)

Have any of these areas become LESS important to you over the last year?

20% (85) said yes, some areas had become less important

Which areas have become less important?

- Cultural Facilities – 18 responses (21%)
- High Profile Events and Tourist Attractions – 17 responses (20%)
- Free Parking in Town Centres – 14 responses (17%)
- Shopping Facilities – 10 responses (12%)
- Leisure Centres – 8 responses (9%)

Affordable decent housing	Education provision/schools	The level of traffic congestion
Car parking generally	Facilities and activities for young children under 13 years (e.g. playgrounds)	Parks and green spaces
Free car parking in Town Centres	Facilities and activities for teenagers (e.g. skateboarding facilities, youth clubs)	Public transport
Care and support for older people	Health services	Road and pavement repairs
Care and support for disabled people	High profile events and tourist attractions	Sense of community
Clean streets	Job prospects	Shopping facilities
Community facilities (e.g. libraries & community centres)	The level of anti-social behaviour	Leisure centres (includes swimming pools)
Cultural facilities (e.g. museums, arts venues)	The level of crime	Wage levels and local cost of living

Climate Change - What do you think are the top priorities for the Council when budgeting to maintain and improve environments? (rank 1 to 7 where 1 is the most important to you and 7 is the least important)

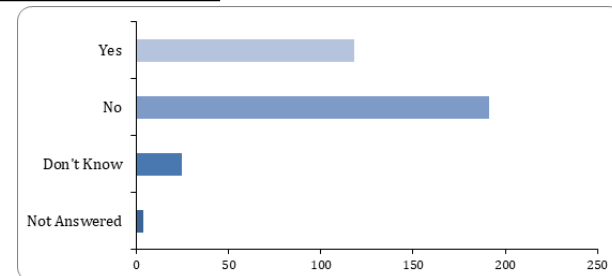
- Supporting households and communities to reduce waste and increase recycling was seen by respondents as being the most important environmental priority, followed by promoting biodiversity / natural environments and renewable energy.
- Investing in climate change initiatives and travel choice were seen as less popular by those who responded.

Environment Priorities in Rank Order	Ranking
Reducing waste generated by households and increasing recycling	4.41
Promoting biodiversity and protecting natural environments	4.28
Using and promoting renewable energy	4.21
Access to quality parks and open spaces	3.84
Investing in Climate Change initiatives (both reduction and mitigation)	3.52
Promoting travel choice	3.33

	Rank						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Reducing waste generated by households and increasing recycling	15.09%	16.86%	20.12%	22.19%	7.69%	9.47%	2.96%
Promoting biodiversity and protecting natural environments	16.86%	17.16%	10.95%	20.12%	15.09%	12.13%	2.66%
Using and promoting renewable energy	15.98%	13.31%	21.01%	13.31%	15.98%	9.17%	5.03%
Access to quality parks and open spaces	10.65%	19.23%	13.91%	9.47%	14.79%	18.34%	5.92%
Investing in Climate Change initiatives (both reduction and mitigation)	13.61%	11.54%	10.95%	10.95%	15.98%	10.06%	21.30%
Promoting travel choice	7.69%	10.06%	11.24%	13.61%	17.16%	23.96%	8.58%

Council Tax - The Government has said that councils can increase Council Tax bills by up to 5% next year (up to 3% council tax and up to 2% adult social care precept) - do you agree with that?

- 57% of respondents did not agree.
- 35% agreed.
- Respondents from Ashington / Blyth were most opposed, with 75% not agreeing.
- People who answered the survey from Tynedale were least opposed, with 50% saying they would agree with the statement.



Option	Total	Percent
Yes	118	34.9%
No	191	56.5%
Don't Know	25	7.4%
Not Answered	4	1.2%

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Ashington / Blyth	18.7%	74.7%	6.7%
Castle Morpeth	41.6%	54.5%	2.6%
Cramlington / Bedlington / Seaton Valley	23.5%	67.6%	7.4%
North Northumberland	47.9%	35.2%	14.1%
Tynedale	50.0%	45.2%	4.8%