

2024/25 Budget Consultation Responses

1. The Council Constitution sets out a requirement for the Council to undertake sufficient internal and external consultation on the annual budget and medium-term financial plan proposals. The external consultation has included a very broad public consultation on the overall budget strategy.
2. The objectives for consultation on the 2024/25 budget proposals were to:
 - (i) Engage with key stakeholder groups and local residents;
 - (ii) Seek feedback on specific budget proposals for 2024/25; and
 - (iii) Seek feedback on general spending and income generation priorities.
3. The Council ran a public budget consultation online from mid-December 2023 to the end of first week in February 2024. At the time of drafting this report four pieces of direct feedback were received through these means, which was significantly lower than the nine pieces of feedback received last year. We will continue to seek to explore options to obtain a more representative sample of residents' views in future years.
4. There was no consensus among the feedback received, and some of the comments were as follow:
 - *Waste collection issues - planned reduction in number of waste bins and street cleaning would seem to be counterproductive, only increasing the potential rise in fly tipping etc.*
 - *Waste collection services should be maintained and all services that the Council provide to collect extra-large domestic waste items should be increased so the Council covers all costs and maintain provision of general waste bins etc.*
 - *Like to see the reversal of all the residential parking restrictions and the associated costs.*
 - *Completely understand why you are having to consider budget cuts, but it is not at all clear from the documents in the public domain exactly what the £3.6m cuts will mean to local residents.*
 - *Concerned about the £10m capital items for Folca and also the £26m for a new leisure center.*
 - *Do not cut street litter bins to an unjustifiable target figure. Look at the numbers and distribution based on need.*

On the proposed 2.99% District Council tax increase proposed within this budget.

- *Think this is reasonable given the increase in the cost of services that the Council supplies.*
- *This will be difficult for some people to afford this increase, but it is much less than inflation and I so I support it. Much better than additional cuts.*
- *Wish it could be lower, but its a lot lower than inflation.*

Other suggestions on how the Council could save money, raise extra income, or provide better value for money?

- *Otterpool - delays in this development are resulting in piecemeal land grabs and developments by local developers with little regard for residents. The Council should prioritise local residents and taxpayers' views when determining how Otterpool progresses.*
- *General - the Council should reduce / remove spending on consultants and agency staff to minimums and review all contracts for services supplied by external contractors.*
- *Sell off property gained under previous management that is not required i.e., saltwood castle.*
- *Great to see the Residents car parking permit being offered for a 3 month period rather than just annually. Reduces barrier to entry.*