

Report of	Meeting	Date
Chief Executive	Special Council	28 th February 2012

BUDGET CONSULTATION 2012

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. This report provides the Council with the results of the public consultation carried out on the Executive's draft budget principles for 2012/13.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

2. That Members use the results which highlight the views of residents to inform their decisions on setting the Budget for 2012/13.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

3. The results of the consultation show that residents who took part in the consultation are broadly in agreement with the budget principles put forward by the Executive, particularly in view of Council Tax setting but also in priorities for investment and maintaining spending.

Confidential report Please bold as appropriate	Yes	No
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CORPORATE PRIORITIES

4. This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Strong Family Support	√	Education and Jobs	√
Being Healthy	√	Pride in Quality Homes and Clean Neighbourhoods	√
Safe Respectful Communities	√	Quality Community Services and Spaces	√
Vibrant Local Economy	√	Thriving Town Centre, Local Attractions and Villages	√
A Council that is a consistently Top Performing Organisation and Delivers Excellent Value for Money			√

BACKGROUND

5. The consultation to support the 2012 budget cycle included: an online survey posted on the website; an email survey sent to over 500 residents; press releases; provision of paper surveys and the use of Facebook and twitter to specifically target younger residents.
6. The public consultation was based on the proposals set out in the Council's Budget Principles which were approved by Executive Cabinet on the 15th December 2011. Residents were asked to provide their opinions on the following:

- The level Council tax should be set at for 2012/13
- Chorley's key budget principles for 2012/13
- Proposed key areas of investment and maintaining spending
- Areas for improvement in Chorley

RESULTS OF CONSULTATION

7. The quantitative results presented below come from the public survey which ran from December 20th 2011 to the 31st January 2012. 256 residents responded to the consultation. (Please note that not all answers will sum to 256 as some residents chose to skip questions).

COUNCIL TAX

8. 83.5% (213) of respondents agreed with the proposal to freeze Chorley Council's element of council tax, 16.5% (42) disagreed. Of those who did not want a freeze, 87.8% (36) would be happy with an increase in Council Tax, 12.2% (5) would prefer a cut.

BUDGET PRINCIPLES

9. Respondents were asked to score all principles and areas for investment on a 5 point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The results below rank the principles in order of agreement.

BUDGET PRINCIPLE	Agree	Disagree
Provide better value services - provide value for money to the tax payer of Chorley by changing the way we work and increasing staff productivity	92.7%	2.3%
Safeguard frontline services - Savings and efficiencies should wherever possible come from managerial and administrative costs, better procurement and non priority areas rather than services the taxpayer values	90%	3.2%
Generate money by providing services , such as consultancy and contracted work for other authorities where we have been recognised as excellent	87.3%	5.9%
Reduce debt to avoid debt repayment charges rather than make additional expenditure	86.7%	4.2%
Look for opportunities to share services with other councils or partners to make savings	83.5%	7.4%

AREAS FOR INVESTMENT

10. All of the specified areas for investment identified by the Executive achieved where agreeable to the majority of respondents. The results are listed below:

AREA FOR INVESTMENT	Agree	Disagree
Develop a programme to tackle the issue of youth unemployment in Chorley	78.6%	8.6%
Restrict increases in market rents	67.5%	12.7%
Restrict increases in car parking charges	64.4%	16.1%
Maintain support for the voluntary sector	62.2%	11.7%
Allocate resources to support new business start ups	59.3%	16.2%
Maintain funding support for Police Community Support Officers (PSCOs).	57.4%	23.2%

11. Areas in need of improvement

Residents were also asked to rate key areas for improvement in the borough on a scale of 1-5, where 1 means in need of no improvement and 5 meant it was as very much in need of improvement. The top areas in need of improvement are ranked below:

	Residents rating 4 or 5 (out of 5)	Average score (out of 5)
Job prospects	55.1%	3.56
Town centre investment	49.5%	3.40
Local shopping facilities	46.2%	3.28
Activities for teenagers	44.1%	3.27
Support for older people	43.4%	3.37
Anti social behaviour	39.6%	3.26
Other	35.5%	2.52
Support for local businesses	33.5%	3.03
Affordable decent housing	32.0%	2.91
Health issues and inequalities	29.7%	2.85
The level of crime	29.6%	3.02
Support for the Community and Voluntary sector	29.4%	2.83
Opportunities for volunteering	29.1%	2.81
Facilities for young children	27.5%	2.88
Clean streets	27.1%	2.84
Community Activities	25.4%	2.79
Parks and open spaces	21.4%	2.59
Sports & Leisure facilities	20.3%	2.61
Waste collection & recycling	17.8%	2.24
Cultural facilities such as Astley Hall	16.5%	2.48
Race relations	14.4%	2.31

IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

12. This report has implications in the following areas and the relevant Directors' comments are included:

Finance		Customer Services	
Human Resources		Equality and Diversity	
Legal		Integrated Impact Assessment required	N
No significant implications in this area	√	Policy and Communications	

COMMENTS OF THE STATUTORY FINANCE OFFICER

13. The comments of the Statutory Finance Officer on the 2012/13 Budget are contained on a separate report on the agenda.

COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

14. As the report relates to informing Councillors of a consultation response there are no legal comments.

GARY HALL
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

There are no background papers to this report.

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
David Wilkinson: Performance Officer	5248	1st February 2012	Budget Consultation Report 2012

Background Papers			
Document	Date	File	Place of Inspection
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Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
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