

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of Transformation	Budget Council	22 nd February 2010

BUDGET CONSULTATION 2010/11

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- To update members on the results of the consultation carried out around the draft budget principles.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

- That Council note the consultation responses.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

- Consultation on the draft budget 2010/11 was carried out by undertaking a straw poll in the Council's One Stop Shop to gain a broad understanding of the views of members of the public. In order to ensure that the Council takes into account the views of all of its residents, an online survey about the budget was also conducted through the Council website, which involved the Chorley Smile Citizens Panel, Parish Councils, Chamber of Trade and other residents and stakeholders across the borough.
- The results of the consultation were broadly supportive of the proposals made by the Council that Council Tax rises should be kept as low as possible and the delivery of core services protected. However, 38.8% of respondents also indicated that they would like see a Council Tax freeze. Popular areas for investment were protecting business in Chorley and tackling crime and anti social behaviour.
- There were 130 responses to the budget consultation, which is the highest rate of public involvement in setting the budget that there has ever been.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

(If the recommendations are accepted)

- N/A

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- N/A

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

8. This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Put Chorley at the heart of regional economic development in the Central Lancashire sub-region		Develop local solutions to climate change.	
Improving equality of opportunity and life chances		Develop the Character and feel of Chorley as a good place to live	
Involving people in their communities	√	Ensure Chorley Borough Council is a performing organization	

BACKGROUND

9. Consulting on the budget, and taking into consideration the views of the public and other stakeholders is an important process in ensuring the Council is able to take account of the views and needs of the community it serves. The consultation that has been undertaken provides information that members can use when making their decisions in the budget setting process.
10. This report contains details of the results of the consultation carried out for the 2010/11 budget cycle. It has included; a straw poll in the one stop shop, an online survey on the Council's website which involved the Chorley Smile Citizens Panel, Parish Councils, Chamber of Trade and other residents and stakeholders across the borough. The budget principles were also published on the Council's website for members of the public to view.

INTRODUCTION TO THE CONSULTATION

11. During the current recession, and financial pressures that the Council faces, the administration proposed that the budget for 2010/11 should concentrate on protecting services to the public and protecting them from the affects of recession while keeping council tax rises as low as possible. Therefore, during each public consultation, people were asked to comment on whether they thought this was the right approach, or whether Council Tax should be raised or cut, with the corresponding changes in service levels. They were also asked for other suggestions about priority areas.
12. The results of the consultation are set out below, and include suggestions made by the public for priority areas and possible alternative approaches that could be taken by the Council.

THE LEVEL OF COUNCIL TAX

13. The majority of the respondents (51.2%) felt that the current proposal, to increase Chorley's element of the Council Tax below the rate of inflation was appropriate. A high percentage of respondents (38.8%) also felt that a Council Tax freeze would be appropriate. The reasons given by respondents centred on the importance of relieving the pressure on residents who are suffering because of the recession. Respondents also emphasised the importance of protecting core services and rooting out inefficiencies.

PRIORITY AREAS FOR INVESTMENT

14. The consultation also asked what area respondents would like to see investment in to see the biggest improvement in their area

15. The top priority of respondents was to protect frontline services, making sure that efficiencies come from managerial and administrative costs. The other key priorities that respondents identified were as follows:

- Tackling crime – continuing to fund the 22 PCSO's in the borough (36.7%)
- Reducing worklessness – continuing to tackle unemployment (32.8%)
- Protecting businesses – restricting increases in car parking charges and market rents (30.4%)
- Dealing with anti social behaviour – providing street pastors and play rangers to help reduce anti social behaviour (31%)

16. The responses that have been collated from the budget consultation will be used by members to set the budget for 2010/11. Due to nationally recognised efficiency savings that we have made, Chorley Council will be freezing Council Tax in this budget. In response to the budget consultation, other priorities for spending on frontline services will continue to be in line with the priorities identified as important by the public.

- Helping to fund 22 PCSOs across the borough
- Helping people to get back into work and reduce unemployment
- Freezing car park charges and market rents in Chorley for the next 12 months
- Provide street pastors and play rangers to help reduce anti social behaviour

CONCLUSION

17. The majority of respondents who participated in the online budget consultation expressed the view that the current proposals were the most appropriate in the current circumstances, to increase council tax below inflation and concentrate on protecting core services. However, there were also a high percentage of respondents who also expressed a preference for a council tax freeze.

18. Popular areas for investment were; tackling crime and anti social behaviour and protecting business in Chorley.

IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

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

Finance	√	Customer Services	
Human Resources		Equality and Diversity	
Legal		No significant implications in this area	

COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF TRANSFORMATION

20. As this report will influence the budget setting process, it has financial implications. The implications of any decisions made by Members will be covered in any budget setting meetings.

GARY HALL
DIRECTOR OF TRANSFORMATION

There are no background papers to this report.

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
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