

Report of	Meeting	Date
Gary Hall Statutory Finance Officer	Council	1 March 2011

## BUDGET CONSULTATION 2011

### PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To provide Members with the results of the public consultation carried out on the Executive's draft budget principles for 2011/12.

### RECOMMENDATION(S)

2. That Members reflect on the results which highlight the views of residents in making decisions on setting the Council's Budget for 2011/12.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

3. The consultation on the Council's draft budget principles for 2011/12 was carried out through a variety of means, including: online survey, website, twitter, Facebook and an open invitation in the press to write in to the Council and express views. The Corporate Director (Transformation) also attended the Parish Council Liaison Committee to provide information about the proposals and invite representatives to complete the online survey.
4. The results of the consultation show that respondents are broadly in agreement with the budget principles made by the Executive, particularly in view of Council Tax setting but also in priorities for investment and the Council's proposed budget principles (all of which scored an average importance score of 3.5 or more out of 5).

### REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

(If the recommendations are accepted)

5. N/A

### ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

6. None

### CORPORATE PRIORITIES

7. 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

8. The consultation carried out as part of the 2011 budget cycle included; an open invitation in the local press for residents to contact the Council, meetings with Parish Councils, an online survey on the Council's website, and an email survey sent out to over 500 residents, posting of the survey onto Facebook and twitter to specifically target younger residents.
9. The public consultation was based on the proposals set out in the Council's Budget Principles which were approved by Executive Cabinet on 9 December 2010. Residents were asked to provide their opinions on the following:
  - The level Council tax should be set at for 2011/12
  - Chorley's key budget principles for 2011/12
  - Proposed key areas of investment
  - Support for proposals on longer-term financial planning

## RESULTS OF CONSULTATION

10. The quantitative results presented below come from the public survey which ran from January 17 to 16 Feb 2011. 260 residents responded to the consultation. (NB not all answers will sum to 260 as some residents chose to skip questions).

## COUNCIL TAX

11. Just under two thirds of residents supported the proposal to freeze Council Tax. There was also more support for an increase than for a cut.

WHAT LEVEL DO YOU THINK COUNCIL TAX TO BE SET AT FOR 2011/12?	
I'd be prepared to see an increase in Council Tax	20.8% (50)
Freeze Council Tax at 2010/11 levels - a 0% increase	65% (156)
Cut Council Tax - this will require the Council to make additional cuts in services	8.8% (21)
No preference	2.5% (6)
Don't know	2.9% (7)

12. Of those who were prepared to see and an increase around half felt this should be less than 2%, around 12% were prepared to see an increase of 4-5% or more, around or above the current level of inflation (CPI 4.0%, RPI 5.1%).

% increase	%
less than 1%	10.2% (5)
1 - 2%	40.8% (20)
2 - 3%	20.4% (10)
3 - 4%	14.3% (7)
4 - 5%	6.1% (3)
5 -10%	6.1% (3)
Other please specify	2.0% (1)

## BUDGET PRINCIPLES

13. Respondents were asked to score all principles and areas on a scale of 1-5 where 5 is very important and 1 not important. The general budget principles were broadly supported by residents and are here ranked in ascending order of average score in the following tables, which also shows the proportion of residents scoring each as being 5/5 (very high importance).

BUDGET PRINCIPLE	Average score (1-5)	% scoring 5/5
Safeguarding Frontline Services - that savings and efficiencies should wherever possible come from managerial and administrative costs, better procurement and non priority areas rather than services the taxpayer values.	4.38	63.1%
Providing Better Value Services - provide value for money to the tax payer of Chorley by seeking efficiencies and savings.	4.28	54.4%
Protect business in Chorley - wherever possible restrict increases in car parking charges and market rents.	3.96	42.6%
Protecting Chorley's Community from the impact of the recession	3.88	41.6%
Freeze Council Tax	3.77	47.3%
Continuing to be a high performing Council - ensure the Council's performance is among the best Local Authorities nationally on all measures.	3.52	28.5%

## CORPORATE STRATEGY OBJECTIVES

14. The most popular areas for investment of the Council's Strategic Objectives by some way was 'Safe Respectful Communities' 4.37, 56.6% ranking 5/5, followed by Vibrant Local Economy 4.13 (43.3%) with others receiving lower but broadly similar levels of support (between 3.7-3.9).

CORPORATE STRATEGY OBJECTIVES	Average score (1-5)	% scoring 5/5
Safe Respectful Communities (Tackling crime, anti-social behaviour and promoting respect)	4.37	56.60%
Vibrant Local Economy (Attracting new business, supporting existing businesses)	4.13	43.30%
Pride in Quality Homes and Clean Neighbourhoods (Quality affordable housing, clean streets, residents that take care of their communities)	3.92	31.10%
Education and Jobs (Improving education, skills and job prospects across the family)	3.9	33.60%
Quality Community Services and Spaces (Clean, safe and well used open spaces, engaging with local people)	3.89	32.20%
Thriving Town Centre, Local Attractions and Villages	3.86	34.30%
Strong Family Support (early intervention, prevention of health problems and supporting older residents to be healthy and independent)	3.79	33.00%
Ensure Chorley Council is a Consistently Top Performing Organisation and Delivers Excellent Value for Money	3.72	36.90%

## AREAS FOR INVESTMENT

15. Of the more specific organisational the areas for investment identified by the Executive all achieved at least an overall score of importance of 3.8, the most important being seen as ensuring the workforce are productive (4.44) and driving out costs and inefficiencies (4.43).

AREA FOR INVESTMENT	(1-5)	5/5
Ensuring our workforce are productive	4.44	61.4%
Driving out inefficiency and costs for activities that do not have a direct benefit to residents	4.43	65.2%
Focusing on the Council's Corporate Strategy objectives	4.09	42.7%
Looking for opportunities to share services with other Councils and organisations	4.07	47.2%
Look for opportunities to generate additional revenue by selling the services and products we have to others when that opportunity arises	3.87	38.7%
Reducing debt and financing charges - the Council sets aside significant sums from its revenue budget to repay debt - focus on reducing this debt.	3.87	37.0%

## LONG TERM PRINCIPLE

16. Support for the longer term principles identified by the Executive up to 2014 in order respond to cuts in formula grant was also fairly high, with balancing the budget and delivering the Sustainable Community Strategy / externally facing Corporate Strategy Objectives achieving the highest levels of support.

LONG TERM PRINCIPLE	Average score (1-5)	% scoring 5/5
Balance the budget over the financial planning period 2011/12-2013/14	4.07	47.78%
Focus on the priorities of the citizens and business community of Chorley (Chorley Council's externally facing Corporate Strategy objectives)	4.07	41.09%
Continue to change the shape and scale of the organisation to deliver efficiencies agenda by adopting different delivery models such as sharing services.	4.00	41.67%
Look to consolidate the Council's debt position and reduce it wherever possible	3.88	36.10%
Continue to invest in new technology and schemes that generate savings (such as providing more services online)	3.72	30.39%

## IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

**(PLEASE NOTE THAT IF YOU TICK ANY OF THE BOXES BELOW YOU NEED TO ENSURE THE RELEVANT DIRECTOR / HEAD OF SERVICE COMMENTS ARE BELOW.)**

17. 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	

GARY HALL  
DIRECTOR OF TRANSFORMATION

There are no background papers to this report.

<b>Report Author</b>	<b>Ext</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Doc ID</b>
David Wilkinson: Performance Officer	5248	17 <sup>th</sup> February 2011	Budget Consultation Report 2011