

Report of	Meeting	Date
Chief Executive	Council	28 <sup>th</sup> February 2013

## BUDGET CONSULTATION 2013/14

### PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. This report provides the Council with the results of the public consultation carried out on the Executive's draft budget proposals for 2013/14.

### RECOMMENDATION(S)

2. That Members use the results which highlight the views of residents to inform their decisions on setting the Budget for 2013/14

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

3. Public consultation on the outline budget for 2013/14 was carried out between 28<sup>th</sup> January 2013 and 8<sup>th</sup> February 2013 using a combination of: online survey posted on the website; email survey sent to approximately 2,500 residents; email survey sent to parish councils via intheboro; press releases; face to face consultation; provision of paper surveys and the use of social media. The consultation received 459 responses.
4. The results of the consultation show that residents who took part clearly recognise town centre development, a strong economy and neighbourhood working as high priorities. In terms of Council Tax, residents indicated that their preference would be for as small an increase as possible.

<b>Confidential report</b> Please bold as appropriate	Yes	No

### CORPORATE PRIORITIES

5. This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Involving residents in improving their local area and equality of access for all	x	A strong local economy	x
Clean, safe and healthy communities	x	An ambitious council that does more to meet the needs of residents and the local area	x

## BACKGROUND

6. The consultation to support the 2013 budget cycle included: an online survey posted on the website; an email survey sent to approximately 2,500 residents; an email survey sent to parish councils via intheboro; press releases; face to face consultation; provision of paper surveys and the use of social media.
7. The public consultation was based on priorities outlined in the Council Budget proposals which were approved by Executive Cabinet on the 17<sup>th</sup> January 2013. Residents were asked to provide their opinions on:
  - The specific key investment areas aligned with the Council's corporate strategy priorities
  - The future level of Council Tax given the impact of a reduction in Council funds

## RESULTS OF THE CONSULTATION

8. The quantitative results presented below come from the public survey which ran from the 28<sup>th</sup> January 2013 to the 8<sup>th</sup> February 2013. 459 residents responded to the consultation. (Please note that not all answers will sum to 459 as some residents chose to skip questions)

### Council Tax

9. 46.2% (183) respondents considered a 0.5% increase appropriate if they are to receive continued investment in services; 43.7% (173) considered a 2% increase appropriate and 10.1% (40) considered a 5% increase would be appropriate. Of the 205 respondents who provided qualitative feedback on the proposals 9.3% (19) commented that they would like to see a Council tax freeze.

### Budget Principles

10. Respondents were asked to score the specific investment proposals on a 5 point scale from high to low priority. The results below rank the principles in order of priority.

		Overall Score*	Overall %
1	Supporting Businesses	1615	15.0%
2	Improving Town Centre	1521	14.1%
3	Neighbourhood Working	1482	13.8%
4	Schemes to support young people	1353	12.6%
5	Sporting Activities Young and Old	1289	12.0%
6	Events in the borough	1241	11.5%
7	Improvements to play areas	1169	10.8%
8	Improvement of Street Furniture	1107	10.3%

\*Please note that respondents were asked to score the priorities from 1 to 5 and could give as many 5s or 1s as they wished.

## Summary of qualitative feedback

11. Of the 205 respondents who gave additional comments or suggestions, the following key themes can be identified:

Council tax freeze	9.3%	Residents stated that they would prefer no increase in council tax.
Town centre development	9.2%	Responses included requests for more independent shops and incentives for businesses.
Road and pavements	7.1%	Responses related to improving services provided by Lancashire County Council.
Car parking	6.1%	Comments related to increasing the amount of parking and providing free parking.
Dog fouling	6.1%	Requests for more stringent controls and measures for dog owners who let their dogs foul in public places, particularly parks and residential areas.
Policing and PCSO's	6.1%	Responses requested an increase in the number of Police and PCSOs on the streets
Rural areas	3.5%	Responses relate to ensuring access to services in rural areas
Public transport	3.5%	Responses were mainly about bus transport
Other including footpaths, housing and planning		Responses included improving foot paths, development control and affordable housing

## Other issues arisen for consideration

12. Euxton Parish Council have raised concerns about the impact of recent changes as part of the council tax support scheme which they consider negate recent growth in Euxton and therefore leaves a budget shortfall. As such, it is requested that the top up grant is increased to reflect the equivalent increase in housing growth in parish areas.

## IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

13. 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	N	Policy and Communications	

## COMMENTS OF THE STATUTORY FINANCE OFFICER

14. The financial implications of the budget are set out in the main report and the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

## COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

15. There are no comments.

GARY HALL

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

There are no background papers to this report.

<b>Report Author</b>	<b>Ext</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Doc ID</b>
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