

Chief Executive	Meeting	Date
	Special Council	25 th February 2014

BUDGET CONSULTATION 2014/15

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. This report provides the Council with the results of the public consultation carried out on the Executive's draft budget investment proposals for 2014/15.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

2. That Members use the results which highlight the views of residents to inform their decisions on setting the budget for 2014/15.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

3. Consultation on proposed budget investment areas for 2014/15 shows a good spread of support and agreement for each of the investment areas with supporting business and improving the local economy considered to be the highest priority.
4. Additional comments and suggestions were also provided by just under half of the respondents. Suggestions about improvements of the services provided by LCC have been grouped together and therefore form the highest response rate, however below that reference to improving the town centre and its offer, and to improving the cleanliness of the borough were the top in terms of the services we deliver.

Confidential report Please bold as appropriate	Yes	No
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CORPORATE PRIORITIES

5. This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

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

BACKGROUND

6. The 2014/15 budget consultation process started following approval of the budget position paper, which set out the budget position along with proposed investment areas, by Executive Cabinet on the 16th January 2014.
7. The proposed investment areas were grouped into nine categories for the purposes of the consultation, and respondents were asked to look at each one and score how much of a priority they considered it should be for the council to spend in each of the areas so that we

can ensure money is being spent on the things that matter to local people. The categories were as follows:

- Neighbourhood working – implementing local projects in your neighbourhood.
 - Supporting business and improving the economy – encouraging business growth, attracting new investment into Chorley, offering advice and support to new and existing businesses.
 - Improving the town centre – including delivering actions in the Town Centre Masterplan and delivery of projects within the town centre/Steely Lane area.
 - Supporting safer communities through a scheme to support young people who are at risk of homelessness and provision of a mediation service for anti-social behaviour disputes.
 - Delivering a cleaner Chorley through the continuation of the litter bin replacement programme.
 - Supporting healthy communities through provision of sporting activities for both the young and old, and tackling social isolation in older people through a food delivery project.
 - Improvements to play areas in the borough.
 - Putting on events in the borough to attract more people into Chorley, including entering into the national Britain in Bloom competition.
 - Supporting residents who are struggling financially, through projects such as extending the food bank, providing an energy advice switching service, and working with partners such as the credit union to help you save more easily.
8. Respondents were also asked for any additional suggestions about where the council should be investing its money but aren't.
9. The survey ran until the 9th February with respondents encouraged to complete an online survey; however paper copies were also available. The consultation was widely promoted through the Council's website, local press, social media and invitations to take part were also emailed to a number of groups including, parish council clerks, the VCF sector network, the equality forum and 150 residents who had recently responded to our customer satisfaction survey.

BUDGET CONSULTATION RESULTS

10. The 2014/15 ran from the 17th January to the 9th February and received 282 responses. The first question asked responded to score each of the investment areas out of five, with one being low priority and five being high priority. Respondents were able give as many fives or ones as they wished. The results are shown below:

	Priority	Overall score	Overall %
1	Supporting businesses and improving the local economy	1080	12.5
2	Supporting healthier communities	1047	12.1
3	Supporting residents who are struggling financially	1006	11.6
4	Supporting safer communities	1001	11.5
5	Improving the town centre	960	11.1
6	Delivering a cleaner Chorley	953	11.0
7	Neighbourhood working	895	10.3
8	Putting on events	877	10.1
9	Improvements to play areas	850	9.8

11. The results show a good spread of support for each of the investment areas. While the investment areas are not directly comparable to the investment areas consulted on last

year, of those that are similar, the results continue to show a similar pattern in terms of priority ranking. For example, supporting business and improving the local economy continues to receive the highest score, as it did last year, followed by improvements to the town centre, events in the borough and then improvements to play areas.

12. From the 282 responses, 123 provided additional comments and suggestions about areas that they felt the council should be, but are not currently investing in. These have been grouped together and prioritised in order of the highest frequency of comments. It should be noted that responses often included more than one comment or suggestion, covering more than one area.
13. Included in the table against each category is a brief note of the work that the council is already undertaking or has plans in place to address.
14. The availability of New Homes Bonus has presented an opportunity to provide a programme of new investment in the Corporate Priorities. The following table summarises the total invested in 2013/14 and 2014/15 and shows that the new investment is in agreement with the findings of the consultation exercise.

Two Year Investment Programme 2013/14 to 2014/15

Priority	Total £m
A strong local economy	2.002
Clean, safe and healthy communities	0.988
Involve residents in improving their local area and equality access for all	0.608
An ambitious Council that does more to meet the needs of residents and the local area	0.545
TOTAL TWO YEAR INVESTMENT PROGRAMME	4.143

No.	Category	Details	Approximate frequency category mentioned	Note
1	LCC Services including road and transport improvements	Included are comments regarding the need to repair and improve the roads, followed by transport infrastructure, improving schools, keeping libraries open and reducing speed limits.	23	The council will continue to work with and lobby Lancashire County Council to improve issues experienced by our residents.
2	Town centre improvements	Comments referenced the markets, range of shops and need for more entertainment facilities in the town centre.	18	To have a thriving town centre is a key priority in the Council's corporate and economic development strategy. The town centre masterplan developed during 2013/14 includes a number of proposals which will seek to improve the town centre offer. Alongside that, work is being undertaken to improve the look of Market Street with improvements to shop fronts and public realm works.
3	Cleaner, greener Chorley	Including street cleansing, dog fouling, bin collection, recycling and renewable energy.	17	Resources have continued to be allocated in the budget to support the replacement of litter bins, and the proactive clean-up team which target issue areas. The cleaner Chorley campaign, which will fully launch in the coming months, encourages residents to report issues and challenges people who do litter and do not clean up after their dogs. In addition, the funding provided to support neighbourhood projects means that local areas can target issues relevant to their locality for improvement.

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4	Social isolation and protecting the vulnerable	Including providing support for those in financial need, older people and those with a disability.	14	The council agreed to implement initiatives to overcome social isolation in this year's corporate strategy, and funding is proposed in the budget to support the work. In addition, work is being undertaken to deliver the welfare reforms action plan to ensure that those affected by changes to welfare support are supported through the change. Finally, the council is using the core funding process for this year to commission a series of services which will support vulnerable people, particularly older people.
5	Parks, play and open spaces	Including environmental improvements, planting, footpaths, playing pitches and sporting facilities.	14	The council has recently consulted on its play and open spaces strategy, and money is proposed in this budget to support its delivery. The strategy identifies work and improvements to parks, play areas and open spaces which will be undertaken in the coming years.
6	Neighbourhood working/community empowerment	Comments included community centre management, food growing schemes, and volunteering.	11	The council is continuing to work to encourage volunteering, including through the time credits programme, the civic pride campaign and core funding commissioning. Neighbourhood areas have been working to develop suggestions for projects for the coming year. A continued resource has been proposed in the budget to support the delivery of that work.
7	Investing in the visitor economy and local events	Comments referenced existing events as well as sporting events and making more use of Chorley's heritage and countryside.	10	The council will continue to support and deliver events which provide an opportunity make use of Chorley's assets and encourage visitors.
8	Supporting the local economy/businesses	Additional comments referenced the importance of broadband provision and social enterprises.	8	There is significant investment proposed in the budget to support the delivery of the economic development strategy and the corporate strategy key projects.

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9	Car Parking	Including the repair of car parks, payment methods and enforcement.	7	The Executive Cabinet have recently approved a contract award for the resurfacing of some of the key town centre car parks.
10	Investment in outlying areas of the borough	Comments mainly focused on the level of investment in outlying and rural areas compared with the town centre.	7	Much of the investment that is proposed is available and will be used in rural areas. For example, the neighbourhood working projects give local areas the opportunity to identify issues and solutions for their area.
11	Activities for children and young people	Activities in addition to park and play provision mentioned above.	7	The council continues to support activities for children and young people, with the provision of programmes such as Get Up and Go. The budget includes investment to continue the free swimming programme, and support for the development of a Youth Zone.
12	Protecting green space	Planning related comments including enforcement and reference to travellers site provision	6	The council is continuing to work towards full adoption of the LDF.
13	Support for VCF sector organisations	Requests for investment in this sector.	4	<p>Support for the VCFS has continued. The Executive Cabinet have agreed changes to the arrangements for providing core funding this year, and have made available small community grants and councillor community grants in addition to the larger scale support for the sector.</p> <p>In addition, the VCFS Network, as the umbrella body for the sector locally, is continuing to receive support to develop its work and support the sector.</p>
14	Community safety	References to the feelings of safety particularly for the vulnerable and policing levels.	4	The council will continue to work with the police and other partners to improve feelings of safety. This includes the proposed budget investment for a mediation service to tackle anti-social behaviour.
15	Affordable housing		2	The council is continuing to work to deliver affordable housing across the borough, including making use of its assets to bring forward sites for development.

15. Comments and suggestions on improving LCC services have been group together and therefore form the highest frequency of comments. In terms of the services we provide, improvements to the town centre and its offer, as well as addressing the cleanliness of Chorley, particularly in relation to dog fouling were mentioned the most.

IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

16. 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

17. The financial implications of the budget are set in the main report and the Medium term Financial Strategy.

COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

18. There are no comments.

GARY HALL
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

There are no background papers to this report.

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
Rebecca Huddleston	5779	10 th February 2014	Budget Consultation Council Report