

Report of	Meeting	Date
Chief Executive	Special Council	1 March 2016

**BUDGET CONSULTATION 2016/17**

**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 2016/17.

**COMMENDATION(S)**

2. That Members use the results which highlight the views of residents to inform their decisions on setting the budget for 2016/17.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT**

3. Consultation on proposed budget investment areas for 2016/17 shows a good spread of support for each of the investment areas with “Making communities safer by continuing to fund Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) in Chorley, implementing new powers to create safer neighbourhoods and taking action to address long term empty properties” coming out as the top priority for Chorley residents.
4. Additional comments and suggestions were provided by 243 respondents and grouped together to identify key trends. Suggestions regarding the town centre formed the highest response rate, however below that references to both parks and housing were also mentioned in a number of the comments.
5. The consultation this year also included additional questions on the Council’s response to Lancashire County Council budget proposals and also the level of Council Tax, with the opportunity to provide additional comments.

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

**CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

6. 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

7. The 2016/17 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 21<sup>st</sup> January 2016.
8. 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:-
  - Implementing projects in your neighbourhood
  - Encouraging people to get involved and volunteer in their local communities
  - Developing the local economy through providing support and incentives to local businesses, progressing new employment sites and encouraging job creation
  - Working with organisations across the borough involved in the tourism industry to promote Chorley as a place to visit and increase visitor numbers
  - Helping residents to live active, healthy lifestyles by improving parks, playing pitches and open spaces and continuing to offer free swimming for young people in the summer holidays.
  - Delivering a range of events in the borough such as the Chorley Flower Show and Chorley Grand Prix to put Chorley on the map and attract more people into the borough for days out.
  - Making communities safer by continuing to fund Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) in Chorley, implementing new powers to create safer neighbourhoods and taking action to address long term empty properties.
  - Protecting vulnerable residents through supporting food provision schemes, helping young people at risk of homelessness and providing a mediation service to support anti-social behaviour.
  - Making sure that the Council and its partners are set up to meet current and future financial challenges to ensure the best deal for residents.
9. This year, two further questions were also asked of respondents;
  - What services do respondents perceive as priority services for Chorley to support and protect given the proposals from Lancashire County Council to reduce many of its services?
  - What level of council tax increase would respondents be willing to accept given the future reductions in government grant funding?
10. Respondents were also asked for any additional suggestions not mentioned elsewhere in the consultation about where the Council should be investing its money if not already identified.
11. The survey ran until the 14<sup>th</sup> 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 individuals and groups including, parish council clerks, the VCF sector network, the equality forum and myaccount holders.

## BUDGET CONSULTATION RESULTS

12. The 2016/17 budget consultation ran from the 22<sup>nd</sup> January to the 14<sup>th</sup> February and received 948 responses. This consultation response was significantly higher than the previous year (607 respondents) up by 56%. This is mainly due to a structured social media campaign as well as an effective email marketing with 15,000 emails delivered to residents signing up to receive communications via the MyChorley account feature on the Council's website.
13. The first question asked respondents to score each of the investment areas out of five, one being low priority and five being high priority. Respondents were able to give as many fives or ones as they wished. The results are shown below:

	Priority	Overall score	Overall Score %	No. of response scoring 4 or 5	% of responses scoring 4 or 5
1	Making communities safer by continuing to fund Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) in Chorley, implementing new powers and addressing long term empty properties.	3,961	13.12%	741	79.59%
2	Making sure that the Council and its partners are set up to meet current and future financial challenges	3,801	12.59%	687	73.72%
3	Helping residents to live active, healthy lifestyles	3,776	12.51%	689	74.16%
4	Developing the local economy through job creation and support for businesses	3,715	12.31%	654	70.48%
5	Protecting vulnerable residents	3,605	11.94%	622	67.24%
6	Delivering a range of events in the borough to put Chorley on the map	3,142	10.41%	458	49.35%
7	Working promote Chorley as a place to visit and increase visitor numbers.	2,823	9.35%	341	36.98%
8	Encouraging people to get involved and volunteer in their local communities.	2,808	9.30%	324	35.84%
9	Implementing projects in your neighbourhood.	2,557	8.47%	265	31.36%

14. The results show a good spread of support for each of the investment areas with "Making communities safer by continuing to fund Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) in Chorley, implementing new powers to create safer neighbourhoods and taking action to address long term empty properties," coming out as the top priority for Chorley residents. However, feelings of safety remain high with the resident survey completed in July 2015 demonstrating an increase in feelings of safety both during the day (92% compared to 91.1% in 2013) and at night (72% compared to 68.5% in 2013).

15. “Making sure that the Council and its partners are set up to meet current and future financial challenges to ensure the best deal for residents”, previously the highest priority in 2015/16 still remains a high priority as does “Helping residents to live active, healthy lifestyles” which includes proposals linked to playing pitches and free swimming. “Developing the local economy through providing support and incentives to local businesses, progressing new employment sites and encouraging job creation” remains a top priority with open comments referencing support for local businesses and town centre improvements.
16. Respondents were invited to provide additional comments within the survey and also via social media with 243 respondents giving their views on areas that they felt the Council should be, but are not currently investing in. The responses were grouped together by service area 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. Where this occurred, the main area of comment was selected.
17. Included in the table in Appendix I1 against each category of comment is a brief note of the work that the Council is already undertaking or has plans to address.

## RESPONDING TO LCC BUDGET PROPOSALS

18. Following the proposals from Lancashire County Council to reduce many of its services, respondents were provided with a choice of six service areas that the Council could potentially support and asked to identify their top 3 priorities.
19. 918 people responded and identified Highways, Supporting Vulnerable People & Public Transport as the main priority areas with total scores shown below:

Service Area	Total Score
Highways	765
Support Vulnerable People	543
Public Transport	499
Selling off Land and Assests	365
Libraries	351
Bus Station	146

20. In addition, 145 open comment responses were received on what Chorley should be doing to respond to the County Council cuts. The comments have been grouped together within the table at Appendix I1 but focussed primarily on highways including repairs and infrastructure; support for libraries as community centres and protecting local bus routes.

## COUNCIL TAX

21. Respondents were asked to indicate what level of increase they would be willing to accept if, in return, we continue to maintain and invest in services. Three choices were provided and relate to the approximate values in pence per week for an average band D property. The results are detailed below:

Choice	Percentage
No Increase	19.63%
0.5% (2p)	31.80%
2.0% (7p)	48.57%

## IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

22. 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?	
No significant implications in this area		Policy and Communications	

## COMMENTS OF THE STATUTORY FINANCE OFFICER

23. The financial implications of this report are contained in the main budget setting report in the pack as well as appendix C and C1.

## COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

24. There are no comments.

GARY HALL  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

There are no background papers to this report.

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
Jason Mills	5775	16 <sup>th</sup> February 2016	Budget Consultation Council Report 2016

Category	Details	Note
Town centre retail offer, improvements & developments	Comments referenced the markets, the type and range of shops on offer and where future investment should be made including parking/park and ride facilities.	There are a number of town centre schemes either currently being delivered such as improvements to Market Street as well as further projects being planned such as Developing the Market Walk Extension. These are in addition to the ones mentioned in the budget proposals such as Developing Chorley's town and rural economy and investigating further opportunities to expand Chorley markets.
Parks, play and open spaces	Included are comments relating to; maintenance of footpaths and football fields in our parks as well as some positive comments around the developments taking place in Astley Park during 2015	The Council will continue to work through the developments and upgrade projects planned within the Play, Open Space and Playing Pitch Strategy; as well as continuing to utilise the quality of our parks for special events; including Chorley Flower Show as well as a programme of additional events hosted at Astley Park.
Road repairs, pot holes and resurfacing	A number of comments referred to the current road infrastructure, driving conditions, the number of pot holes as well as describing road repairs as poor quality	The Council will continue to work with and lobby Lancashire County Council to improve these issues experienced by our residents.
Economic Development and independent business encouragement	Comments suggest reducing business rates as an incentive to attract new businesses until they become established and a desire to see more independent businesses offering something different to established brands.	A number of support grants are available for businesses including start-up grants, investment for growth grants and grants towards improvement programmes. The Council is focused on bringing a number of key employment sites forward.
Rented property inspections, increase in affordable housing, fair rent social housing as well as infrastructure to support increased housing	Comments suggest an increase in property inspections to ensure upkeep, reduce anti-social behaviour and untidy properties while reducing the remedial works required. Continue to increase affordable housing and fair rent social housing & infrastructure to support increased housing.	A project has been undertaken to look at existing issues relating to home ownership and delivering low cost or shared ownership schemes in Chorley.
Supporting young people to obtain work experience and jobs	Continue to invest in facilities for young people and support young people to obtain work experience and in-work qualifications	The Council continue to work with Runshaw College and other local training providers to offer support with accessing training and qualifications reflected by low levels of young people Not in Education Employment or Training.