

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director (Policy and Governance)	Special Council	27 February 2018

BUDGET CONSULTATION 2018/19

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 2018/19.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

2. That Members use the results which highlight the views of residents to inform their decisions on setting the budget for 2018/19.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

3. Consultation on proposed budget principles for 2018/19 received a total of 780 responses to the online survey and also significant interaction online through social media. The open question format enabled individuals to give detailed feedback on the proposals and their views as to how the council might improve, supporting more meaningful engagement.
4. Content analysis of the comments showed a relatively even distribution of positive, negative and neutral feedback with more positive view points overall. Of the positive comments received to the online survey, the majority support the budget proposals wholeheartedly. Second to overall support for the budget proposals, was positive support for the council tax increase. However, it is worth noting that the council tax increase also featured as the primary negative theme. There is some planned activity in response to the negative themes in appendix 2.

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 2018/19 budget consultation process started following approval of the budget position paper by Executive Cabinet on the 18 January 2018, which set out the budget forecast and guiding principles for application of the budget over the next 3 year financial period.

7. The consultation question format set out the key principles of the budget proposals along with a summary of the current context and challenges facing the council in future years. Proposals included:
 - £897,000 being invested in strategic priorities in 2018/19 and a further £673,000 in 2019/20 onwards, which include proposals to reduce crime and improve feeling of safety across the borough, support people to use and benefit from being online and improve local neighborhoods.
 - Delivery of budget efficiency savings and increased income of £0.345m in 2018/19 onwards, through restructuring our services to make sure they meet the needs of residents as well as generating savings and through exploring different options for generating income.
 - Continued investment and improvement in the council services, for example enhancing our enforcement team and homelessness service.
 - Continued delivery of major projects to make the borough a better place to live, work and invest will continue including the Youth Zone and Primrose Gardens Retirement Village.
 - Mitigating the reduction in Central Government funding by increasing Council Tax by 2.99% in 2018/19 and including a 2.99% increase in Council Tax in 2019/20 and 2% increase in 2020/21 as part of the medium term budget strategy.
8. Respondents were asked to review the proposals and provide their comments in response to an open question, with the intention of gaining more qualitative feedback to gain a deeper insight into views and opinions.

BUDGET CONSULTATION RESULTS

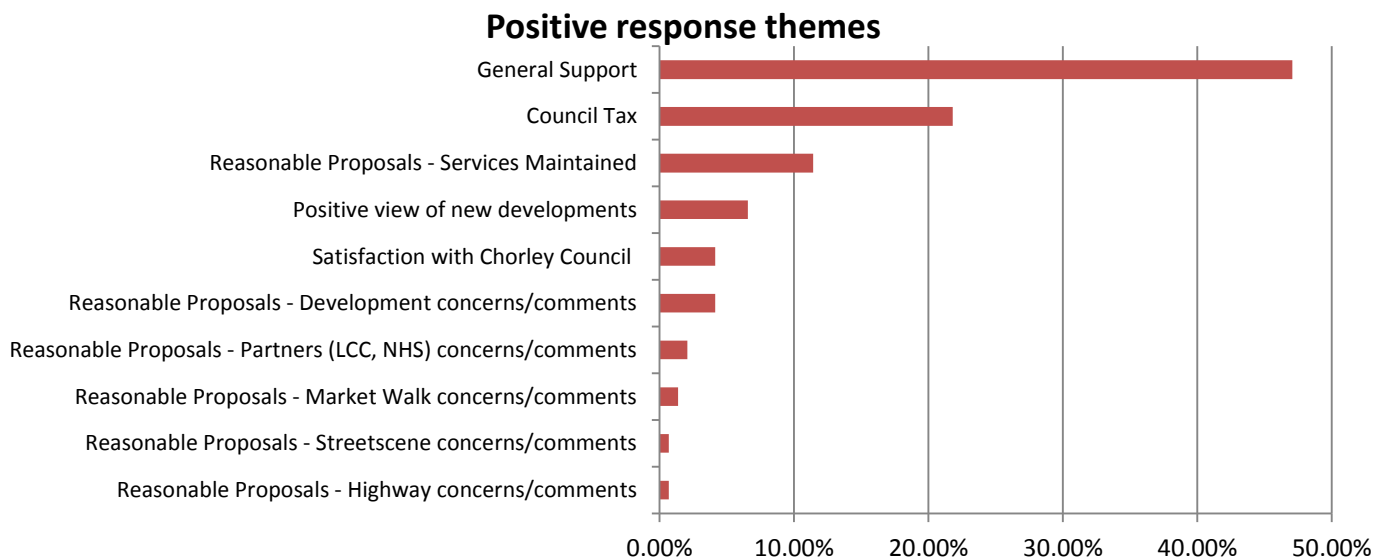
9. Consultation on the 2018/19 budget response ran from the 19th January to the 9th of February 2018. The consultation was publicised through a structured digital campaign including 31,084 emails delivered to residents signing up to receive communications via the My Account feature on the council website, as well as traditional media and awareness raising through local networks including In The Boro, and the VCFS Network.
10. The formal consultation received 780 qualitative responses through an open ended question format via an online survey which provided detailed feedback. This is a significant increase in the level of feedback compared to last year's survey where 540 individuals responded to the online survey.
11. As well as completing the online survey, residents were also invited to share their views and comments using social media. Posts to Facebook received a total 22,400 views and 292 comments reaching a wide representation of the population. Analysis of Social Media responses is included in this report from paragraph 20.
12. The responses have been collated and analysed to identify the main key words or phrases and then grouped together based on whether they indicated a positive or negative response to the proposals. A proportion of the comments offered suggestions for improvement or highlighted concerns, rather than a definable positive or negative view point and these have been grouped together as 'neutral' with further analysis by theme. 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.

13. **Formal Consultation Results** - The following table outlines the distribution of positive, negative and neutral viewpoints from respondents to the online survey.

Positive view of the proposals	44%
Negative view of the proposals	36%
Neutral view point	14%
Non applicable comments	6%

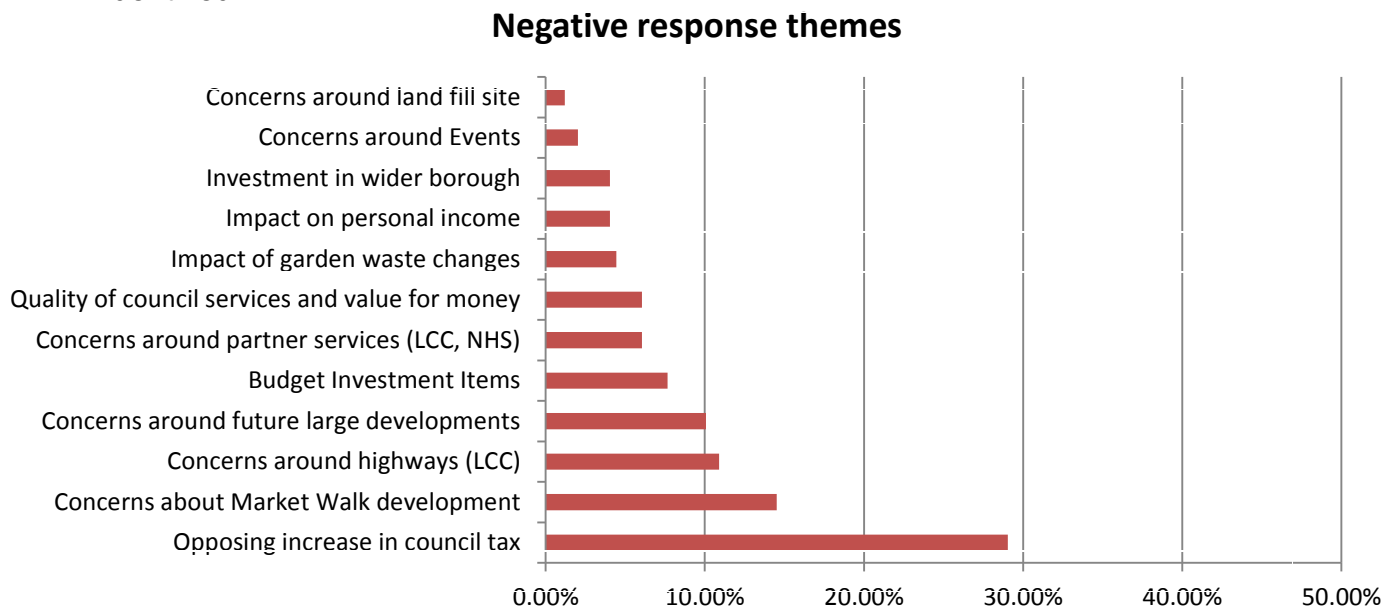
Selections of comments are available at appendix 1.

14. Of those comments indicating a positive view point, the following themes can be identified:



15. The majority of positive comments (47.06%) indicated general acceptance of the proposals, with many stating that they were 'reasonable' and 'fair'. Some positive comments also referenced a positive view of new and current developments. Around (21.80%) welcomed the rise in council tax, and others also accept it if it meant the proposals are met and services are maintained.

16. Of those comments expressing a negative view point, the following themes can be identified:

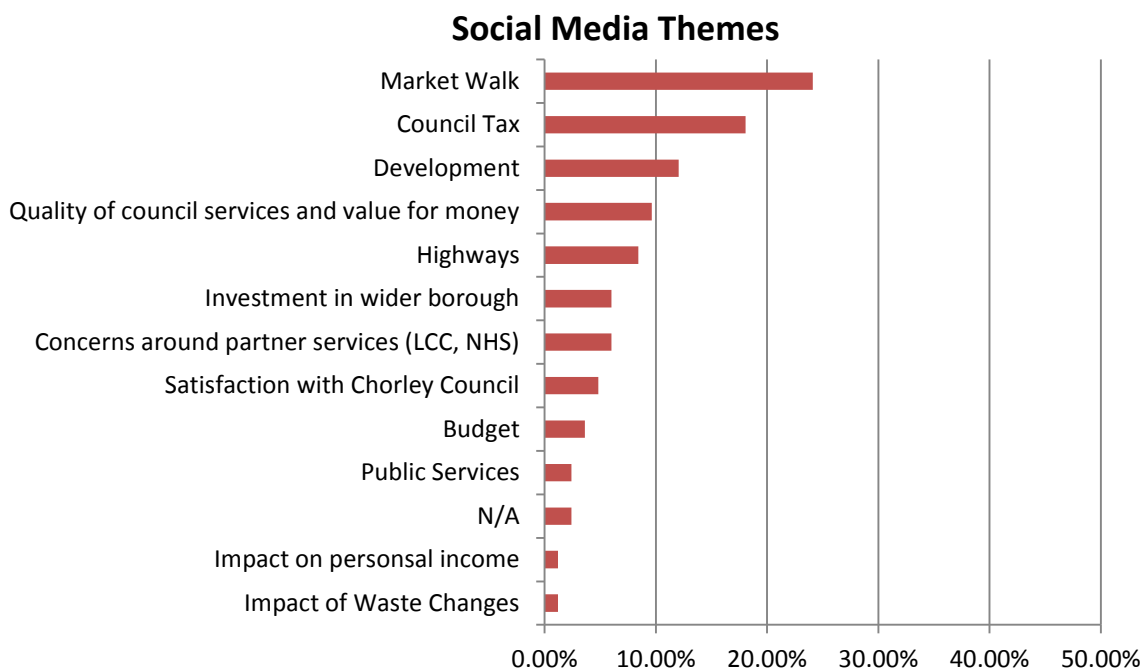


17. The majority of negative comments (29.03%) relate to the increase in council tax. Furthermore (14.52%) of respondents have concerns regarding the future of the Market Walk development. There are also a number of respondents who have concerns regarding partner delivered services such as highways (10.89%) and health services, with respondents urging the council to lobby partner services more effectively. More detail is included in the table at appendix 2 which provides a brief note of action being taken or planned by the council for each negative theme.
18. Of those comments expressing a neutral view point and providing comments or feedback, key themes include:

Alternative budget strategies	Suggestions to reduce funding in other areas e.g. arts, business grants
	Consideration to increase funding for particular service areas e.g. buses, other public services including health services, wellbeing facilities and children's centres
	Options to identify further efficiencies through reduced council costs such as the mayor and senior officer pay
Comments on specific aspects of future developments	Design of the Youth Zone, development of Market Walk, clarification of plans for Primrose Gardens Retirement Living, and affordable homes strategy.
Comments on specific aspects of partner services	Concerns regarding partner delivered services, such as highway related issues. There was also confusion present in terms of what services are provided by partners and Chorley Council, in particular Highways

19. Social media feedback also provides an indication of views; comments generally showed a mix of people who did not want to see any increase to council tax, despite this some respondents accepted the increase, so as long as the council ensured the provision of services. The majority of users mentioned the Market Walk development, and have expressed a positive view towards the progress and development. Despite this, some users have also expressed concern towards the Market Walk development.

20. **Social Media Responses** - Of those comments expressed on social media, the following themes can be identified:



21. The majority of social media comments (24.10%) relate to the future of the Market Walk development, with users expressing their concerns/comments regarding the progress of the development. (18.07%) of respondents have concerns regarding the increase in council tax, and express the impact it would have on their personal income. There are also a number of respondents who have concerns regarding partner delivered services such as highways (8.43%), with respondents urging the council to lobby partner services more effectively.

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. In particular the changes to council tax in response to this consultation are outlined in the main budget report.

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
Kieron Power	5035	15/02/2018	Budget Consultation Council Report 2018

APPENDIX 1: SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

POSITIVE
Happy to pay a bit more council tax to keep Chorley out of debt. The 10p figures of course don't stack up for everyone as I will be paying approximately £50 more per year.
The Council has shown itself to have resident's interests at heart and has been striving to improve amenities and the environment.
Investing in young people and children and families is absolutely essential to create stronger families and communities so the youth zone is exceptionally welcome.
Pleased that the youth zone and social disorder are in the budget proposals.
I totally agree with the budget proposals. Chorley council do an excellent job in looking after the interests of the community and its people
Right priorities and outcomes for Chorley to continue providing services and having creative aspirations
Agree with all of them - Chorley Council is doing a great job for the town.

NEGATIVE
Residents have seen money being wasted on project like the Market development which has stalled & seems a white elephant. That money would be better spent on the essential services you are responsible for. Now you want to increase council tax again. Not good.
10p a week is still a big increase for those struggling to make ends meet as it is. Wages aren't going up but yet you keep increasing council tax
As someone who has no children but yet working full time, paying my own rent and bills I find that once again this budget will not benefit or positively impact me at all apart from once again I will be paying more.
I believe that charging for removal of garden waste will encourage an enormous amount of fly tipping. It will also discourage people to sweep up leaves etc. outside their homes. The extra amount placed into the general collection will be significant.
Don't think the siting of the retirement village is ideal it's not exactly idyllic.
Stop charging for garden waste collection and this would help with the amount of fly tipping which the council has to collect costing more than they get from garden waste collection.

NEUTRAL (No definable positive or negative view point, or mixed. Includes no comment)
The Council need to be careful to ensure the annual Council Tax is affordable. In addition, more focus should be on core Council services and greater incentives should be provided to encourage more people to get back into work. This will in turn ease the pressure of other services.
Seems fine. Would like to see investment in some more allotments. Doesn't seem to be much environmental themes running through aside from aesthetics which is unfortunate.
Although visible investment is being seen with regards to a youth centre, antisocial behaviour is still a major issue.
Living in Whittle-le-Woods we need urgent pothole repairs on most roads especially Chorley Old Road and Cloverfield. Apart from that all looks fair.
It is important that Libraries are kept open so all age groups can meet, communicate and research subjects appropriate to their needs.

Appendix 2 - Current and planned activity in response to negative themes

Category	Details	Notes
Opposing increase in council tax	Comments stated a preference for no increase in council tax	The proposed increase in council tax is needed to help address the budget deficit, avoid cuts to frontline services and enable investment in priorities. It is also in line with central government assumptions to reduce the impact of grant reductions. Chorley continues to have one of the lowest precepts in Lancashire.
Concerns around future developments	Comments referred to the potential risks of large investments including Market Walk, the Youth Zone and Primrose Gardens.	New developments will provide vital services and future income schemes for the council to help ensure that it can balance the budget when central government grant ends in 2019/20. We will continue to engage with residents on future developments to ensure that proposals are well communicated with opportunities to provide feedback.
Investment in the wider borough	Comments highlighted concerns around funding for services in rural areas including community facilities and bus routes	The council continues to invest in initiatives that will benefit the whole of the borough and has also recently made funding support available to protect a number of community facilities and bus routes serving rural areas.
Quality of council services and value for money	Comments highlighted particular council services that should be improved including street sweeping for estates and tree cutting.	The council monitors performance across all services to ensure continued value for money. The Streetscene Strategy sets out a clear plan for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of street and neighbourhood services over the next 4 years.
Impact on personal income	Comments indicated concerns around impact on personal income and ability to meet the increase as well as other living costs when wages may not have increased.	A key corporate priority for the Council is to ensure access to high quality employment and education opportunities. A number of support schemes are available to provide assistance to those who may not be able to meet the cost of living.
Concerns around partner services (LCC, NHS)	Comments noted concerns linked to funding for the hospital and also Lancashire County Council services such as street lights and pot holes.	The Council will incorporate this feedback in its response to Lancashire County Council budget proposal and continue to work with our partners including the NHS to protect and improve services.