



**Corporate Policy and
Resources Committee**

**Thursday 17th September
2020**

Subject: Budget Consultation 2020

Report by:

Section 151 Officer

Contact Officer:

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Purpose / Summary:

To present a summary of responses to the
Budget Consultation 2020

RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. That members accept the results of the Budget Consultation 2020 and consider the results and comments during the budget setting process 2021/22.

IMPLICATIONS

Legal:

The Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires that business rate payers are consulted on the authority's proposals for expenditure (including capital expenditure) within the following year Budget.

This has to be undertaken prior to the issue of the first Precept payment.

Financial : FIN/64/21/TJB

None from this report

Staffing : None from this Report

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :

Data Protection Implications : None from this report

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities: None from this report

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations: None from this report

Health Implications: None from this report

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report :

Risk Assessment :

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

No

x

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

No

x

Executive Summary

The Budget Consultation is an annual consultation exercise to get the views of our residents and businesses on how we direct our resources and set next year's budget. The 2020 consultation had the following objectives;

- Raise awareness of the financial challenges;
- Seek views on current priorities;
- Identify how the respondents felt West Lindsey District Council (WLDC) had performed during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The full report can be found at Appendix A and details the methods undertaken, respondent analysis and consultation responses in addition to other questions raised.

The following conclusions can be made from the report:

Response

Response rates this year were higher than ever this year with 708 responses which is 19% higher than the previous year. Work has also been undertaken this year to monitor the equalities questions in regard to respondents.

Corporate Objectives

88.5% of respondents felt that the current corporate objectives should continue and that the initiatives shown are all important. Community Safety measures achieved the highest priority with 86.9%.

As a rural district the top 2 main challenges highlighted from the list are Transportation and Job Opportunities.

Climate Change

These results show that the action that the respondents felt would be best achieved in West Lindsey is the action to reduce waste through recycling and reuse initiatives.

Investments

These results show that the respondents would prefer West Lindsey to look at ways to generate more income or achieve efficiencies and cost savings through routes which do not reduce or stop services to the residents.

Council Tax

These figures show the favoured option is a 3% increase albeit 68.1% of respondents would prefer a lower or no increase.

Covid-19

From the results on how WLDC did with the Covid-19 pandemic it was recorded that a significant number of respondents may not have required our support as 47% of respondents did not actually know how we did during the pandemic. The analysis of those that were able to provide a view highlighted that these respondents were not comparably representative of those provided with support. However 45% considered our response above average or excellent.

Online Question and Answer Session

The Question and Answer videos increased the level of engagement across the district with regards to the Budget consultation and demonstrated that this was worthwhile, as you can see from the figures mentioned previously. Regeneration, Council investments, fly tipping and Council Tax were among the most viewed question and answer responses.

Any other comments

Other comments received mostly are around:

- Residents do not like being called a customer;
- A thank you to the Waste service for keeping a good service during the Covid-19 pandemic;
- Highlighting that communication needs to be undertaken in different ways as not everyone has the internet;
- Asking for consultation to not only continue but for more to be undertaken.

Next Steps

The results and responses collated from this survey are considered when developing the budget 2021/22.

The following actions are recommended for 2021 budget consultation:

- To continue with the use of a format which gives those which took part the same message.
- Continue to undertake the consultation earlier in the year to miss school holidays and allow time for consideration of responses in the budget setting process.
- Due to low representation from the business community, that we carry out a specific consultation with Business Rates Payers, as required by Section 65 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, on the proposals for expenditure (including Capital Expenditure) for 2021/22. This is likely to take the form of an online consultation, with a summarised version of the Revenue and Capital Budgets with links to the Draft Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) papers which will be presented to Corporate Policy and Resources committee (CP&R) in February 2021.
- That the consultation for Business Rates Payers, be also issued directly to those Businesses which registered with us during Covid-19.