



**Corporate Policy and Resources**

**Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> July 2022**

**Subject: Budget Consultation 2022**

Report by: Director of Corporate Services and Section 151 Officer

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Purpose / Summary: To present the proposed Budget Consultation process for 2023/24.

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

1. That Members agree the Budget Consultation process.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

### **Legal:**

None from this report

### **Financial : FIN/90/23/EVF**

Contained within the report

### **Staffing : None from this report**

### **Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :**

An equality questionnaire will be available to complete at the end of the survey

### **Data Protection Implications :**

The residents and business to receive directed invitations have agreed by registering to receive Council information

### **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 :**

Wherever possible please provide a hyperlink to the background paper/s

If a document is confidential and not for public viewing it should not be listed.

### **Risk Assessment :**

We will assess the risk of holding face to face events and consider that in line with the Government's' guidance on not holding group events if Covid levels increase.

### **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**

### **Key Decision:**

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

**Yes**

**No**

### **1. Background**

- 1.1 Each year a consultation is undertaken on the following years' budget prior to it being set. Although there is no legal requirement to undertake this we have a legal requirement under the Local Government Act 1992 section 65 to consult ratepayers who are persons or bodies appearing to be representative of persons subject to non-domestic rates within the district and must be about the authority's proposals for expenditure.
- 1.2 West Lindsey District Council (WLDC) are members of the Consultation Institute and in accordance with best practice, we ensure that all consultations are legal and appropriate processes are in place to lower the risk of a judicial review. Consultation according to the Consultation Institute is the dynamic process of dialogue between individuals or groups, based upon a genuine exchange of views, with the objective of influencing decisions, policies or programmes of action.
- 1.3 Before 1985 there was little consideration given to consultations until a case (*R v London Borough of Brent ex parte Gunning*). This case sparked the need for change in the process of consultations when Stephen Sedley QC proposed a set of principles that were then adopted by the presiding judge. These principles, known as Gunning, were later confirmed by the Court of Appeal in 2001 (*Coughlan case*) and are now applicable to all public consultations that take place in the UK. These outline the principles which all consultations must abide by and are:

- **When proposals are still at a formative stage**  
Public bodies need to have an open mind during a consultation and not already made the decision, but have some ideas about the proposals.
- **Sufficient reasons for proposals to permit 'intelligent consideration'**  
People involved in the consultation need to have enough information to make an intelligent choice and input in the process.

- **Adequate time for consideration and response**

Timing is crucial – is it an appropriate time and environment, was enough time given for people to make an informed decision and then provide that feedback, and is there enough time to analyse those results and make the final decision?

- **Must be conscientiously taken into account**

Think about how to prove decision-makers have taken consultation responses into account.

The risk of not following these principles could result in a Judicial Review.

## **2. Proposal**

- 2.1. To undertake this work it is proposed that multiple routes are taken to consult with our stakeholders.

Due to current guidelines from the Government in relation to avoiding public gatherings, it is felt inappropriate to host face to face events this year. We will however, be producing an online and paper survey, a booklet and written submissions. The responsible officer for this work is Emma Foy, Director of Corporate Services with the accountable officer being Katy Allen, Corporate Governance Officer.

- 2.2. The objectives of the engagement are to:

- Raise awareness of the financial challenges.
- Raise awareness of the diversity of services the Council provides.
- Identify what areas of the Corporate Plan and the Business Plan should be prioritised.
- Provide some feedback following the recent Council motion to consider supporting residents in this time of increased inflation.

## **3. Who and how to involve**

- 3.1. This year we would like to increase the breadth stakeholders which we would consult with on this subject would be:

- Business Rate payers
- Residents
- Citizen Panel members
- Community Leaders
- County Councillors
- Significant employers
- Education sector
- Parish and Town Councils

Data from this consultation will go on to inform Councillors of WLDC who will take this information into consideration when setting the 2023/24 budget.

- 3.2. To ensure we are as inclusive as possible and allow as many residents as possible to take part we run a number of different routes to take part.

These routes include events, online and paper questionnaire and written submissions.

- Online and paper questionnaire –To ensure there are as many views on the consultation as possible we would have an online and a matching paper questionnaire which would be available to those on the citizen panel and any other resident that wishes to take part through requesting a questionnaire, completing a questionnaire on our website or through an invite from the Citizen Panel.
- Events – Workshops, Face to Face meetings, Market Stalls, Business Breakfasts/ Networking meetings.
- Written Submissions – Although written submissions are not advertised as being accepted we would accept them. They are not advertised due to the amount of time analysis of these submissions take compared to other routes.

### 3.3. The communications strategy will include;

- Information Leaflet – a short booklet with the aim of which is to give context and challenges for budget setting, and to promote the council and what it does for our customers (residents/businesses). It will be published on social media and the Council's website.
- Social Media – we would advertise the consultation on both Twitter and Facebook to try to spread the chance for residents to take part as wide as possible.
- Emails to specific organisations
- Short introductory video
- Citizens' Panel and Registered businesses will be contacted and asked to participate
- Parish/Town Council and Voluntary Groups e-brief
- Subscribed Residents Newsletter – e-brief
- Public Events – (subject to latest Covid Guidance/Risk Assessment)
- Website banner – prominent notice on our front page with link to access the booklet and survey.
- Press release
- Minerva

- Customer Service promotion and Corporate wide email signatures promotion

#### **4. Timescales**

- 4.1. The timescale for the consultation and future reporting is included as Appendix 1.

#### **5. Questionnaire contents**

- 5.1. A copy of the questionnaire can be found at Appendix 2.

#### **6. Recommendation**

- 6.1 It is recommended that Members accept the budget consultation process for 2022.

## Appendix 1 – Proposed Timescale

Action	Detail	Date	Responsible Officer
Member Workshop	Workshop with members to develop consultation questions	11 <sup>th</sup> and 18 <sup>th</sup> July	Emma Foy
Management Team	Update on progress	18 <sup>th</sup> July	Emma Foy
Leaders Panel	Update on progress	22 <sup>nd</sup> July	Emma Foy
CP&R	Report outlining consultations proposal	28 <sup>th</sup> July	Emma Foy
Public consultation		15 <sup>th</sup> August to 3 <sup>rd</sup> October	Katy Allen
Market Stalls	Face to face	16 August, 3 September, 20 September	Katy Allen
Events	Face to face	25 August, 1 September, 12 September	Katy Allen
Business breakfasts			Katy Allen
Q&A session	Online	8 September	Julie Heath
LCC Councillors			Katy Allen
Lalc			Katy Allen
Community Leaders/Headteachers			Katy Allen
Big Businesses	Letters	15 August	Katy Allen
Analysis and report writing		4 <sup>th</sup> October to 21 <sup>st</sup> October	Katy Allen
Leaders Panel	Update on progress	4 <sup>th</sup> November	Emma Foy
CP&R	Report on public consultation and MTFP update	10 <sup>th</sup> November	Emma Foy

## Appendix 2 – Questionnaire



## West Lindsey District Council Budget Consultation 2022

### HELPFUL HINTS FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

- Please read each question carefully. In most cases you will only have to tick one box but please read the questions carefully as sometimes you will need to tick more than one box, or write in a response.
- Once you have finished please take a minute to check you have answered all the questions that you should have answered.
- If you have any questions about this survey please email the Engagement Team on [engagement@west-lindsey.gov.uk](mailto:engagement@west-lindsey.gov.uk).

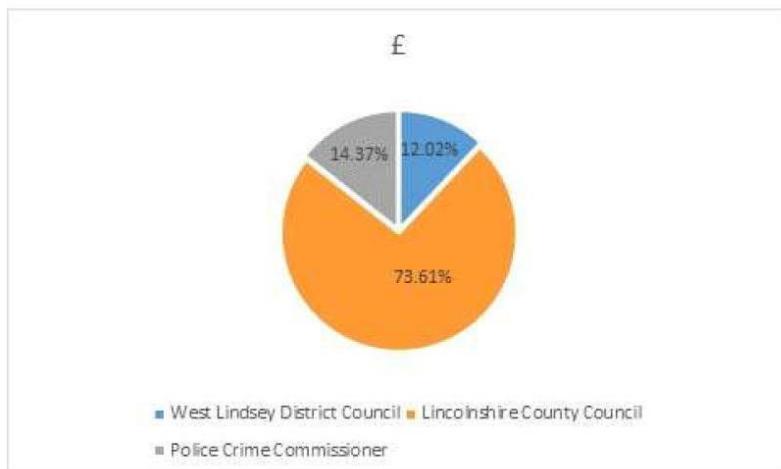
Please insert your name or Citizen Panel reference:

Are you responding as: (Please tick all that apply)

- a citizen panel member
- a resident
- a Parish or Town Councillor
- a WLDC Councillor
- on behalf of a business
- a community representative

### Council Tax

Local Councils, the Police and Fire Authorities fund their services through government grant, fees and charges, Business Rates and Council Tax. There is one council tax bill for each domestic dwelling whether it is a house, flat, mobile home or houseboat. We collect the council tax on behalf of Lincolnshire County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner and Parish and Town Councils. West Lindsey District Council share of your overall Council Tax is 12.02% (excluding Parish/Town Council Precepts) and funds around 50% of our overall budget.



1. With annual increases in costs of around 11%, what level of council tax increase would you support for 2023/24? **Please tick one box only**

  - 0% change - A 0% change would give West Lindsey a total level of council tax income of £6.744m.
  - 1% increase - A 1% increase would mean a 4 pence per week increase for a band D property on the West Lindsey proportion of council tax and would give West Lindsey a total level of council tax income of £6.812m.
  - 2% increase - A 2% increase would mean a 9 pence per week increase for a band D property on the West Lindsey proportion of council tax and would give West Lindsey a total level of council tax income of £6.879m.
  - 3% increase - A 3% increase would mean a 13 pence per week increase for a band D property on the West Lindsey proportion of council tax and would give West Lindsey a total level of council tax income of £6.974m.
2. Do you think that local councils should have the ability to determine Council Tax without the need for a referendum if above the Governments Cap? **Please tick one box only**

  - Yes
  - No

3. Any comments you wish to make around the level of Council Tax:

#### Fees and Charges

4. Historically the Council has increased its fees and charges by inflation or costs of delivery which are impacted by inflation. Which of the following options do you feel would be the best option for 2023/24? **Please tick one box only**

  - Cap fees at a lower rate than inflation (4%)
  - Pause fees at the current level and increase by inflation next year
  - Increase fees by inflation only and review next year
5. Any comments you wish to make regarding the fees and charges options:

#### Further support for residents during these times of increasing costs

6. Is there any further support that you feel the Council should be providing due to the level of rising costs for residents or particular types of residents (e.g. families, elderly people)?

### **Market Rasen Leisure Centre**

8. Previous business cases have shown that with current usage, fees would not support the business case to deliver a pool at Market Rasen. Would you support a pool at Market Rasen if the residents pay for it in terms of increased access costs / membership? **Please tick one box only**

Yes  
 No  
 Don't know

### **Enforcement and Rangers**

9. Residents have raised concerns around issues such as fly tipping, litter tipping, illegal parking and dog fouling. Other authorities have introduced community rangers who can be on the ground and able to issue fines and notices to those contravening existing rules. Is this something that you would like to see in the district? **Please tick one box only**

Yes  
 No

### **Other comments relating to this consultation**

10. Any other comments you wish to make regarding this consultation:

### **Equalities questionnaire**

By answering the equalities questions you will help us to understand how different groups of people from different areas feel about the budget consultation. All responses are anonymised and you do not have to answer these to take part in the budget consultation.

11. Are you willing to answer these questions?

Yes  
 No - If you answer no you will be taken straight to the end of this consultation

12. Are you?

Male  
 Female  
 Transgender  
 Other  
 Prefer not to say

13. Do you consider yourself disabled?

Yes  
 No  
 Prefer not to say

14. What age are you?

- 16-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56-65
- 66-75
- 76 or over
- Prefer not to say

15. Which of these ethnic groups do you consider you belong?

- White - British, Irish or other
- Black or Black British - Caribbean, African or other
- Asian or Asian British - Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi or other
- Arab/Middle Eastern
- Chinese
- Mixed Race
- Other
- Prefer not to say

16. Which of the following best describes your faith/religion/belief?

- No religion
- Christian (all denominations)
- Muslim
- Buddhist
- Sikh
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Other faith
- Prefer not to say

17. Which of the following statements best describes your sexuality?

- Heterosexual/Straight
- Lesbian/Gay
- Bisexual
- Other
- Prefer not to say

Thank you very much for your time completing this questionnaire.  
Please click submit to ensure we receive your responses. You will then be taken to our website.