



**Corporate Policy and
Resources Committee**

13 December 2018

Subject: Budget Consultation Report 2018

Report by:

Executive Director of Resources

Contact Officer:

Ian Knowles
Executive Director of Resources
01427 675183
ian.knowles@west-lindsey.gov.uk

Purpose / Summary:

To provide Members with the final report on the budget consultation for 2018.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. That Members accept the findings from the 2018 budget consultation and agree to publication of the final report.
2. Agree to the proposals for the 2019 consultation exercise

IMPLICATIONS

Legal: Requirement to consult on the budget

Financial : FIN/172/19

None from this report.

Staffing : None

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :

Consultation designed with different routes to ensure as many residents and businesses as possible are able to take part and results published online with copies available upon request.

Risk Assessment :

Risk that no residents or businesses take part. Work undertaken to ensure that as many respondents as possible are received through different consultation routes.

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities : None

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

None

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

1. **Background**

- 1.1 Each year a consultation is undertaken on the following year's budget prior to it being set. Although there is no legal requirement to undertake this West Lindsey District Council (WLDC) has 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 During 2018 budget consultation was undertaken with invites going to citizen panel members, councillors and parish councils.
- 1.3 This consultation ran for 6 weeks during September and October 2018 with the consultation being available through 3 events, paper survey or online budget tool.

2. **Results**

- 2.1 A summary of the results are below which have been pulled from the full report, attached at Appendix 1.

2.2 **Response Rates**

Response rates this year were higher than 2017 by 41, however this is still lower than 2016 when 461 responded. There was an increase this year in both the number of attendees to the events (49 in 2018 compared to 44 in 2017 and 64 in 2016) as well as completing either the online tool or survey (460 in 2018 compared to 324 in 2017 and 402 in 2016).

2.3 **Council Tax Level**

Residents were asked whether they preferred a 1%, 2% or 3% increase in Council Tax. The figures returned showed no overall option being the favoured although the 2% increase option had a slight advantage response. Comments received included why there was no option for a 0% change to council tax, which due to increasing costs and reducing funding keeping the council tax level at the same rate for next year is not an option for the council and was therefore not consulted on.

2.4 **Service Priorities**

For the service priorities the results were gained through 2 different routes. For the events and the online tool respondents were asked to mark whether they would keep each service budget the same, or to reduce by either 5%, 10% or 15%. For the paper survey respondents were asked to rank the same services but just in order from 1 to 11 with 1 being the highest priority and 11 being the lowest. By analysing these figures it showed that the top 4 services in regards to priority are the same as last year with Waste, Environmental, Housing and Economic Development.

2.5 **New Homes Bonus**

Nearly half of the respondents felt that the new homes bonus should be used to support growth and regeneration across the whole of West Lindsey and 57% felt that it should not be used to support the revenue budget for the council. Respondents felt that the support needed to be across the whole district and not focused on the towns.

2.6 **Fees and Charges**

While looking at the current policy respondents felt that there should be no further increase in car parking charges and that green waste should be free or at least all year around. There was a positive attitude in the comments to the policy being in place and some felt that it is important to ensure the fees and charges policy remains in place.

When asked what additional services should be included the services mentioned included pest control and enforcement including enforcement of fly tipping and dog fouling.

2.7 **Joint working with 3rd party organisations**

The results that came back from this section outlined that nearly 2 thirds (73.6%) of respondents felt that WLDC should work with other organisations and these included any adjoining council, Fire, Police, NHS, RAF and environmental organisation.

2.8 **Feedback**

There was a great number of comments received on all sections of the consultation. It is worth noting that it highlighted to respondents the difficulty the council has in ensuring a balanced budget is achieved. The comments also raised on numerous occasions the amount of respondents who do not understand the split between the responsibilities of services for West Lindsey compared to Lincolnshire County Council.

3. **Next Steps**

3.1. To ensure WLDC keeps the budget consultation relevant to the council and to residents it is suggested that the process for 2019 includes the following:

- Record the presentation being spoken and put that online as well as the actual slides;
- Look into an animated video being developed as an introduction to the consultation;
- Aligning the council's revenue and capital budgets with the new corporate plan and allow residents the chance to comment if the new corporate plan could be achieved;
- Undertake the consultation earlier in the year to avoid school holidays and allow easier integration into the following year's budget.