

APPENDIX L

REPORT TO	ON
Council	24 February 2021

TITLE	REPORT OF
BUDGET CONSULTATION 2021/22	Deputy Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer)

Is this report confidential?	No
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PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. This report provides the Council with the results from the public consultation carried out on the Executive's draft budget proposals for 2021/22.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

2. It is recommended that Members use the results from the consultation, which represent the views of residents, to inform their decisions when setting the budget for 2021/22.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

3. The consultation on the proposed budget principles for 2021/22 received a total of 105 responses to the online survey. This is in comparison to 21 responses received to the 2020/21 budget consultation.
4. Participants were asked to indicate their preferred priorities for investment and to also make suggestions on what they think the council should be doing. Analysis showed a broad level of support for the areas of investment with some options prioritised more highly than others. The open comments were positive in relation to the council tax proposals and generally supportive of wider principles including ensuring a strong recovery from the pandemic and protecting the most vulnerable.

Confidential report Please bold as appropriate	Yes	No
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CORPORATE PRIORITIES

5. This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

An exemplary council	✓	Thriving communities	✓
A fair local economy that works for everyone	✓	Good homes, green spaces, and healthy spaces	✓

BACKGROUND

6. The budget consultation aimed to gather feedback from residents and promote engagement around the budget proposals for the next financial year.
7. The 2021/22 budget consultation ran from the 2nd February to the 14th February 2021 and was conducted through an online survey. The consultation relates to the proposals set out in the budget positions statement, forecast budget and guiding principles for application of the budget over the next 3-year financial period.
8. The survey was structured into two parts. In part one, participants were presented with nine priority categories for investment and asked to score each of them on a scale of one ('low priority') to five ('high priority'). The categories included:
 - Neighbourhood working to undertake local improvement projects in the local area.
 - Supporting businesses to get back on their feet after Covid-19.
 - Improving Leyland town centre including delivering the plans set out in the Town Deal.
 - Additional support for vulnerable children through the Holiday Hunger scheme and support with technology for home learning.
 - Improvements to community facilities such as community centres and open spaces.
 - Support to achieve positive mental health for young people.
 - Delivering excellent leisure services and running leisure centres efficiently .
 - Taking steps to retain wealth within the borough through better procurement and local job creation.
 - Improvements to play areas across the borough.
9. In part two, participants were asked to review the proposals and provide their suggestions through an open-ended question, with the intention of gaining more qualitative feedback to gain a deeper insight into views and suggestions perhaps not covered by the proposals.
10. The consultation was publicised through a structured digital campaign which included ten posts on Facebook and Twitter, reaching over 15,200 users and receiving 343 clicks and engagements. Awareness was also raised through traditional media outlets and local networks to ensure maximum reach, with support offered to complete the survey digitally to ensure accessibility.

CONSULTATION FINDINGS

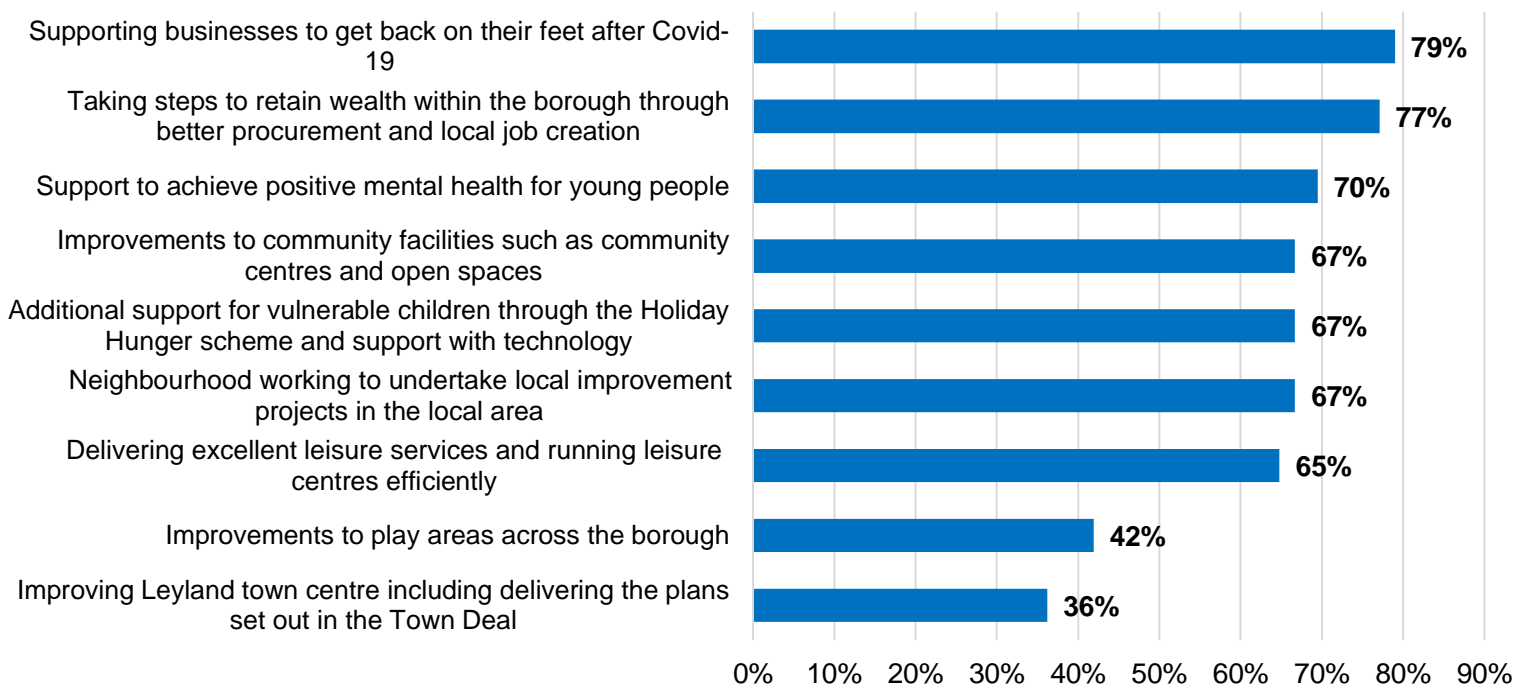
Overview

11. There were 105 responses received via the online survey, with 54 participants providing qualitative feedback through one open-ended question. This is compared to last year's survey, where 21 individuals responded.

High Priority Areas

12. Participants were asked to rank on a scale of one ('low priority') to five ('high priority') what should be prioritised when allocating funding. The chart below presents the categories that were scored the highest priorities (four or five):

Responses scoring 4 or 5 (High Priority)



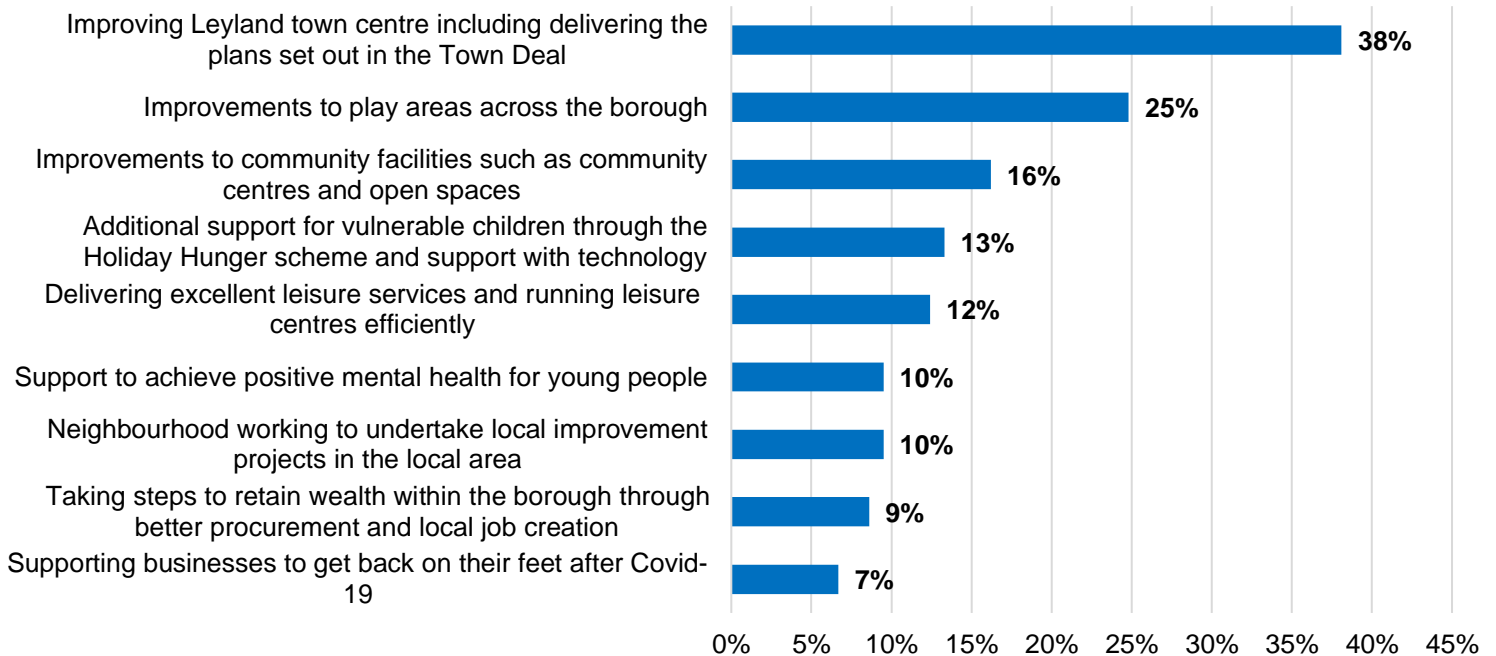
13. The highest priority scored by participants was supporting business to get back on their feet post Covid-19, with 83 (79%) scoring it as high priority. This is reflected in participant comments, which include anxieties around the changing business landscape as a result of the pandemic and the need for targeted support to rejuvenate the local economy. The second highest priority identified by participants was retaining wealth in the borough through job creation and procurement, with 81 (77%) scoring it as high priority.

14. Positive mental health for young people (70%), neighbourhood working (67%), improvements to community centres (67%), and Holiday Hunger (67%) were also

considered high priorities by participants. This reflects the recent context and concerns as we emerge from the pandemic.

15. The categories that were scored the lowest priorities (one or two), are presented in the chart below:

Responses scoring 1 or 2 (Low Priority)



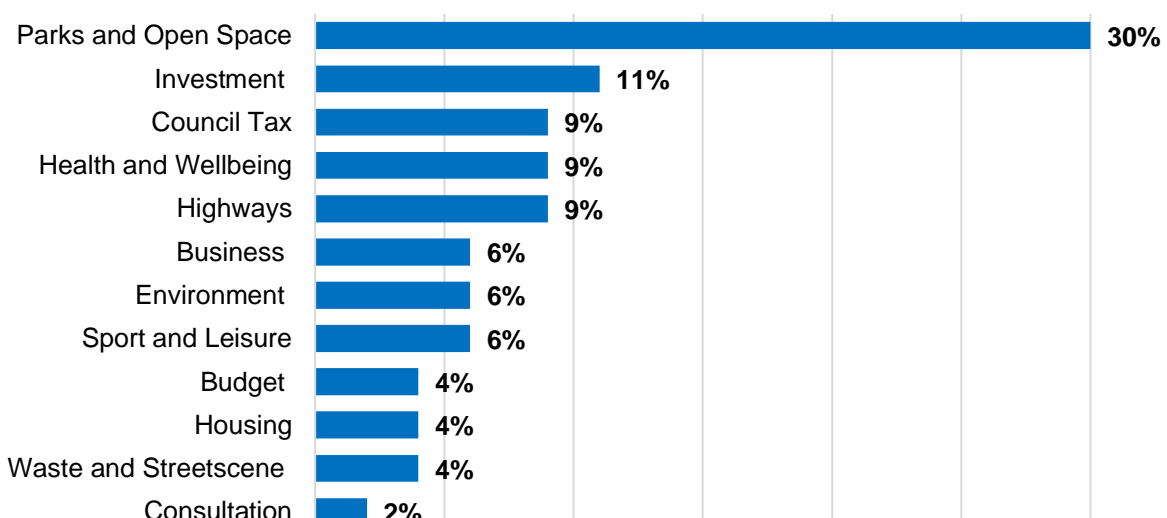
16. The area that was scored as the lowest priority was investment in town centre improvements, with 40 (38%) participants scoring it as low priority and only 38 (36%) scoring it as high priority.

17. For a detailed outline of the scoring of each priority area, see Appendix A.

Participant Suggestions

18. Respondents were asked to review the proposals and provide their suggestions through an open-ended question, with the intention of gaining more qualitative feedback and wider suggestions perhaps not covered in the proposals. Responses were grouped together and categorised by theme with the frequency shown in the chart below:

Response Themes



19. The most common theme amongst the participant feedback was parks and open spaces, which featured in 16 (30%) responses. This included general suggestions for improvements to outdoor facilities, including footpaths and parks such as the Penwortham tramway route.
20. The second most common theme was investment, which was mentioned by 6 (11%) participants. Feedback included suggestions on investing in modern developments in order to make the borough more vibrant and fresher as well as investing and delivering improvements in areas outside the town centre.
21. Other common themes included Council Tax, which was mentioned in 5 (9%) of the responses to the open question. The proposed freeze in Council Tax was received positively by respondents, with many expressing support due to personal financial pressures caused by the pandemic. Health and wellbeing were also featured in 5 (9%) comments, with participants suggesting broadly that the council should invest in mental health support, promote healthy eating, provide provisions for the elderly, and tackle poverty and addiction. Moreover, highways were highlighted by 5 (9%) respondents. This included comments suggesting that the council should address potholes as well as introduce more street lighting.
22. The comments from the five most recurring themes are presented in Appendix B.

IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

23. 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

24. There are no comments.

COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

25. There are no comments.

GARY HALL
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

There are no background papers to this report.

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
Jon-James Martin		18/02/2021	Budget Consultation Report 2021

APPENDIX A – Investment Priorities (Part One)

The table below presents the response received to part one of the survey, where participants were presented with several categories and asked to rank on a scale of one ('low priority') to five ('high priority') what should be prioritised when allocating funding:

I want the council to allocate money to:	Responses scoring 4 or 5 (Percentage)	Responses scoring 4 or 5 (Frequency)	Responses scoring 1 or 2 (Percentage)	Responses scoring 1 or 2 (Frequency)
Supporting businesses to get back on their feet after Covid-19	79%	83	7%	7
Taking steps to retain wealth within the borough through better procurement and local job creation	77%	81	9%	9
Support to achieve positive mental health for young people	70%	73	10%	10
Neighbourhood working to undertake local improvement projects in the local area	67%	70	10%	10
Additional support for vulnerable children through the Holiday Hunger scheme and support with technology for home learning	67%	70	13%	14
Improvements to community facilities such as community centres and open spaces	67%	70	16%	17
Delivering excellent leisure services and running leisure centres efficiently	65%	68	12%	13
Improvements to play areas across the borough	42%	44	25%	26
Improving Leyland town centre including delivering the plans set out in the Town Deal	36%	38	38%	40

APPENDIX B – Respondent Comments (Part Two)

The table below presents a selection of comments from part two of the survey. These are comments from the five most reoccurring themes when participants were asked to make suggestions on what they believe the council should be doing:

THEME: Parks and Open Spaces
Maintain parks, create more open spaces, feed into mental health provisions there's going to be a lot of people struggling once restrictions are lifted. Where possible invest in local businesses, encourage spend in the towns and encourage footfall (socially distant allowing) into those areas. I appreciate the support you seem to extend to those families who need food banks/school meals, keep it up.
Funds should be allocated to the restoration of the tramroad bridge crossing the river Ribble. This is an important link between south Ribble and Preston particularly for exercise and access to green spaces
Investment
Need to look at how to attract investment of small businesses into the area that get people spending within Leyland and creating diverse business support and new, start-up businesses to rejuvenate the local economy.
Developing the area to look modern, clean and fresh. Rather than a rundown industrial town let's get something vibrant and a space that other towns will envy.
Council Tax
Freeze council tax. Would be the best way to support all residents, regardless of financial status.
Please do not hike up council tax. I am self-employed and I have not claimed a penny during this pandemic not a penny nor have I been able to continue with my business due to the climate and home schooling.
Health and Wellbeing
I think mental health support isn't just important to the young but to all ages especially after lockdown and covid and furlough. There is going to be a massive fall out from 2020/21 which we are already seeing and so we need to be ready and focus on this. More support groups, free outside activities and fitness and wellbeing areas. Young and old this and helping people's businesses back on their feet must be priority over the next few years.
Improving poverty in our Borough improves everyone's lives. Poverty and addiction are linked to the lack of social inclusion and being able to afford to entertain families is a key to beating both poverty and addiction within our community. Now South Ribble Council have retaken over the leisure centres, they need to make provisions for the most poverty stricken and support family activities through leisure and help bring the community together.
Highways
More street lighting in New Longton.
Road surfacing.