

BUDGET CONSULTATION 2022/23

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 2022/23.

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 2022/23.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

3. The consultation on the proposed budget principles for 2022/23 received a total of 220 responses to the online survey, with 109 open comments and 39 comments through social media. This is in comparison to 105 responses received to the 2021/22 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 2022/23 budget consultation ran from the 1st February to the 10th February 2022 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 three parts. In part one, participants were presented with eight 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:

- Supporting businesses to get back on their feet after Covid
- Improving Leyland town centre including delivering the plans set out in the Town Deal.
- Support communities and community facilities to thrive through the community hub boost fund.
- Work to target fly-tipping and environmental improvements
- Delivering excellent leisure services and running leisure centres efficiently
- Taking steps to retain wealth within the borough through local job creation
- Improvements to play areas and open spaces across the borough
- Support the development of affordable homes

9. In part two, participants were asked whether they agreed to a Council Tax increase in line with inflation. In part three, participants were asked to share any additional suggestions or comments in an open format.
10. The consultation was publicised through a structured digital campaign which included eight posts on Facebook which accrued 818 link clicks, 73,588 views, reached 65,018 accounts and had 5676 engagements (likes, comments or shares).

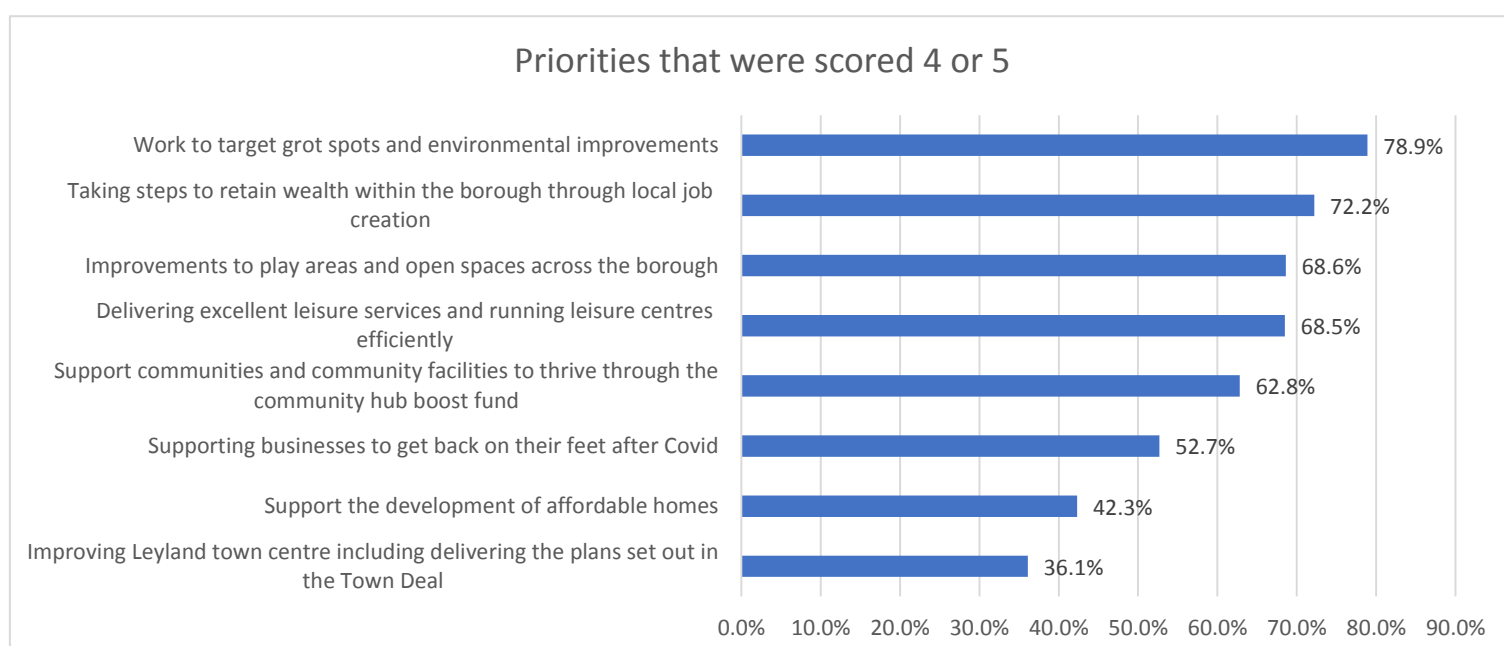
CONSULTATION FINDINGS

Overview

11. There were 220 responses received via the online survey, with 109 participants providing qualitative feedback through one open-ended question. Response levels have increased, compared to last year's budget consultation survey, in which we received 105 responses.

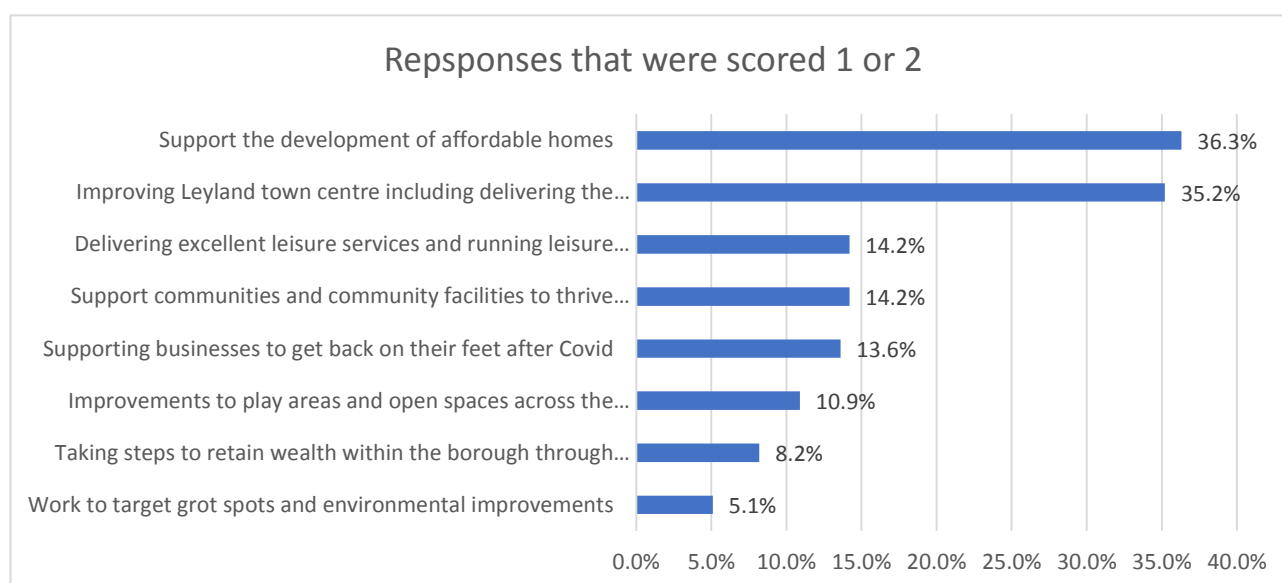
Part 1: High Priority Areas

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):

13. The highest priority scored by participants was work to target fly-tipping and environmental issues (78.9%). The second highest priority identified by participants was taking steps to retain wealth within the borough through local job creation (72.2%). The latter was also highly prioritised in the budget consultation for 2021/22.
14. Supporting communities and community facilities to thrive through the community hub boost fund (62.8%), delivering excellent leisure services and running leisure centres efficiently (68.5%) and improvement to play areas (68.6%) were also highly prioritised.
15. The categories that were scored the lowest priorities (one or two), are presented in the chart below:



16. The priority that was scored lowest was the development of affordable homes with 36.4% ranking this as low priority. The area that was scored as the lowest priority overall was improving Leyland town centre including delivering the Leyland town deal, with 35.2% participants scoring it as low priority and 36.1% scoring it as high priority.
17. For a detailed outline of the scoring of each priority area, see Appendix A.

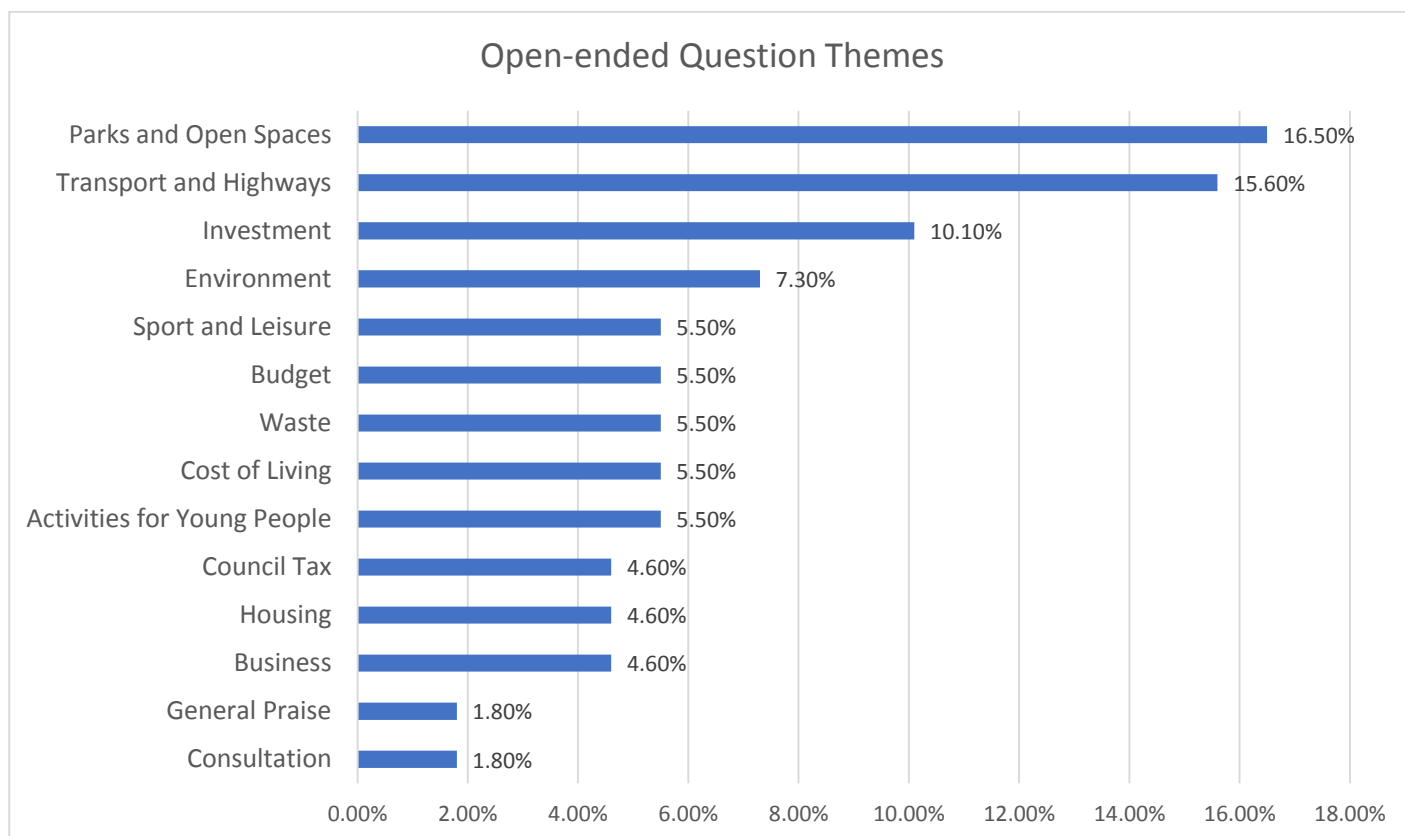
Part 2: Council Tax

18. Respondents were asked whether they agree with a Council Tax increase in line with inflation. The results showed a marginal disagreement. Open responses reflected the results of this, with residents' concerns primarily being the current economic climate and the impact of what an increase would have in this climate.

Response	%
Agree	46.7%
Disagree	53.2%

Part 3: Open-ended Question Results

19. Respondents were asked to review the budget 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:



20. The most common theme amongst the participant feedback was parks and open spaces, which featured in 18 (16.5%) responses. This included general suggestions for improvements to outdoor facilities, including adding CCTV and provisions for outdoor sports.
21. The second most common theme was transport and highways, which was mentioned by 17 (15.6%) participants. Feedback included areas outside of the Council's remit, with the fixing Tram Road bridge being a popular theme.
22. Other common themes included the environment, with residents indicating further wildlife meadows and trees as a key priority, which was reflected as a high priority among residents more broadly.
23. The comments from the five most recurring themes are presented in Appendix B.

Social Media Responses

24. Alongside the online survey, there were a number of structured Facebook posts during the consultation period. These received 39 comments. These comments broadly reflected the themes of the consultation.

IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

25. 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

26. There are no comments.

COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

27. There are no comments.

CHRIS SINNOTT
DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Report Author	Date	Doc ID
Sophie Tsang	11/02/2022	Budget Consultation Report 2022

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)
Work to target fly-tipping and environmental improvements	79%
Taking steps to retain wealth within the borough through local job creation	72%
Improvements to play areas and open spaces across the borough	69%
Delivering excellent leisure services and running leisure centres efficiently	68%
Support communities and community facilities to thrive through the community hub boost fund	63%
Supporting businesses to get back on their feet after Covid	53%
Support the development of affordable homes	42%
Improving Leyland town centre including delivering the plans set out in the Town Deal	36%

I want the council to allocate money to:	Responses scoring 1 or 2 (Percentage)
Support the development of affordable homes	36%
Improving Leyland town centre including delivering the plans set out in the Town Deal	35%
Supporting businesses to get back on their feet after Covid	14%
Support communities and community facilities to thrive through the community hub boost fund	14%
Delivering excellent leisure services and running leisure centres efficiently	14%
Improvements to play areas and open spaces across the borough	11%

Taking steps to retain wealth within the borough through local job creation	8%
Work to target fly-tipping and environmental improvements	5%

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:

Parks and Open Spaces
Great improvement to Strawberry Valley Park, however CCTV and better lighting, especially on the middle of the footbridge to Hargreaves Avenue, would be very welcome.
Protecting green spaces for both nature and for peoples wellbeing. This includes parks, fishing ponds, fields, woodland
Transport and Highways
Please put aside money to support the re-opening of the tram bridge. Some sharing of costs with PCC may get the project off the ground.
Cycling Leyland loop. Please finish the route with signage.. Make route traffic free at least 10 miles. Preston guide is 21 mile
Investment
Would like to see some investment in Lostock Hall village centre.
Money spent on ALL areas of South Ribble and not just Leyland. More involvement with the local communities and the smaller parishes, More help for the disabled, and more disabled parking near parks and leisure areas.
Cost of Living
I think in times like we have at the moment, increasing Council Tax should be the bear minimum. I do like the plans suggested, but many people are worried more about "heating or eating" than more expensive issues. Please invest more to help people in need
Use some of the money to support the poorest through the cost of living crises. Increase council tax for the rest of us in line with inflation (or even a little more) but apply a discount to those who are struggling
Activities for Young People
More activities/youth groups to encourage teenagers to come off the streets and discourage antisocial behaviour. Especially when new parks are being built for younger children and potentially face being ruined by teenagers with nothing better to do.
We need to focus on children's, groups from 5 to 18 actives, physical, social and mental health and groups for LGBT as there are several parents and children who need to feel part of the community. Also youth groups as well as showing or helping them to gain skills and not follow the wrong path. Budgeting classes for those who struggle. The Base on broadfield drive do exelent work and offer groups and support to families. So why not invest in a purpose built community hub like the one in Chorley. run by the volunteers at the base this would benefit the whole community and we would reap the reward of better positive outcomes for those less fortunate.
Environment
Need more trees and wildflower meadows, help to fund maintaining natural areas to walk and enjoy to help mental health and physical health, help to encourage and protect wildlife and help for small independent businesses to recover from the pandemic
Please invest more funds into protecting our green spaces and increasing biodiversity. Where I live in lower Pemwortham, hundreds of tree are being felled to make way for the flood defences. There are so many areas where grass could be turned into wildlife areas, small wooded areas or community gardens/orchards. Less grass and more trees please!