

BUDGET CONSULTATION 2023/24

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. This report provides the Council with the results from the public consultation carried out on the draft budget proposals for 2023/24.

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 2023/24.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

3. The consultation on the proposed budget principles for 2023/24 received a total of 104 responses to the online survey, including 41 open feedback comments, and 28 comments through social media. This is in comparison to 148 responses received to the 2022/23 budget consultation.
4. Participants were asked to allocate scores out of five for their preferred priorities for investment and to also share general feedback on the budget proposals. Analysis showed a broad level of support for the areas of investment with some options prioritised more highly than others.

Confidential report Please bold as appropriate	Yes	No
--	-----	-----------

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 2023/24 budget consultation ran from the 13th February to the 21st February 2023 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. A draft consultation report was prepared at the mid-point of the consultation period to review responses received so far, alongside the full report prepared at the end of the consultation which is outlined below in full detail.
9. The consultation question format set out the key principles of the budget proposals along with a summary of the current context and challenges facing the council in future years.
10. The first part of the consultation asked residents to score each of the proposed investment areas on a scale of 1 (not important) to 5 (very important.) The second part of the consultation

asked for general feedback on the budget proposals through an open text box format, with the intention of gaining more qualitative feedback to gain a deeper insight into views and opinions.

CONSULTATION FINDINGS

11. Consultation on the 2023/24 budget ran from the 13th February to the 21st February 2023. The consultation was publicised through various Council channels, including the council website, social media pages and email contact list.
12. The formal consultation received 104 responses and within that there were 41 qualitative responses to the open feedback section.
13. As well as completing the online survey, respondents also shared their views and comments using social media. From across all the posts during the budget consultation period on Facebook, the posts received 52,794 impressions with 3,896 engagements (likes, comments and shares) reaching a wide proportion of the population. The consultation also received 789 impressions via NextDoor and 565 impressions via Twitter. Analysis of social media responses (which totalled 224 Facebook comments, 28 of which directly related to the consultation) have been grouped alongside the consultation responses.
14. The responses have been collated and analysed to identify the main themes and then grouped together based on whether they indicated a positive or negative response to the proposals. It should be noted that responses often included more than one comment or suggestion, covering more than one area. Where this occurred, the main area of comment was selected.

Priority Rankings

15. All residents were asked to rate the priorities of the council budget 1-5 based off how important they value each one personally. All priorities were seen as 'high priority' by residents, with the majority of scores for all priorities being either 4 or 5. The areas which had the greatest number of scores at 4 or 5 were improving play area and open spaces across the borough, supporting community and community facilities to thrive and delivering excellent leisure services.

Priorities that were scored 4 or 5



16. Below is a list of each priority given and a summary of the results via % and numbers recorded.

Priority 1: Supporting businesses to get back on their feet

Option	Total	Percentage
5 (High Priority)	25	24.27%
4	38	36.89%
3	31	30.10%
2	1	0.97%
1	6	5.83%
Not answered	2	1.94%

Priority 2: Improving Leyland town centre including delivering the plans set out in the Town Deal

Option	Total	Percentage
5 (High Priority)	25	24.27%
4	26	25.24%
3	16	15.53%
2	13	12.62%
1	21	20.39%
Not answered	2	1.94%

Priority 3: Supporting communities and community facilities to thrive including through the South Ribble Family Wellbeing Centre, community group funding, and an enhanced social prescribing offer to help families and individuals.

Option	Total	Percentage
5 (High Priority)	41	39.81%
4	29	28.16%
3	21	20.39%
2	5	4.85%
1	5	4.85%
Not answered	2	1.94%

Priority 4: Working in partnership to join up local services so that they're responsive to local need

Option	Total	Percentage
5 (High Priority)	33	32.04%
4	33	32.04%
3	24	23.30%
2	9	8.74%
1	3	2.91%
Not answered	1	0.97%

Priority 5: Delivering excellent leisure services and running leisure centres efficiently

Option	Total	Percentage
5 (High Priority)	37	35.92%
4	32	31.07%
3	14	13.59%
2	13	12.62%
1	5	4.85%

Not answered	2	1.94%
--------------	---	-------

Priority 6: Improving play areas and open spaces across the borough

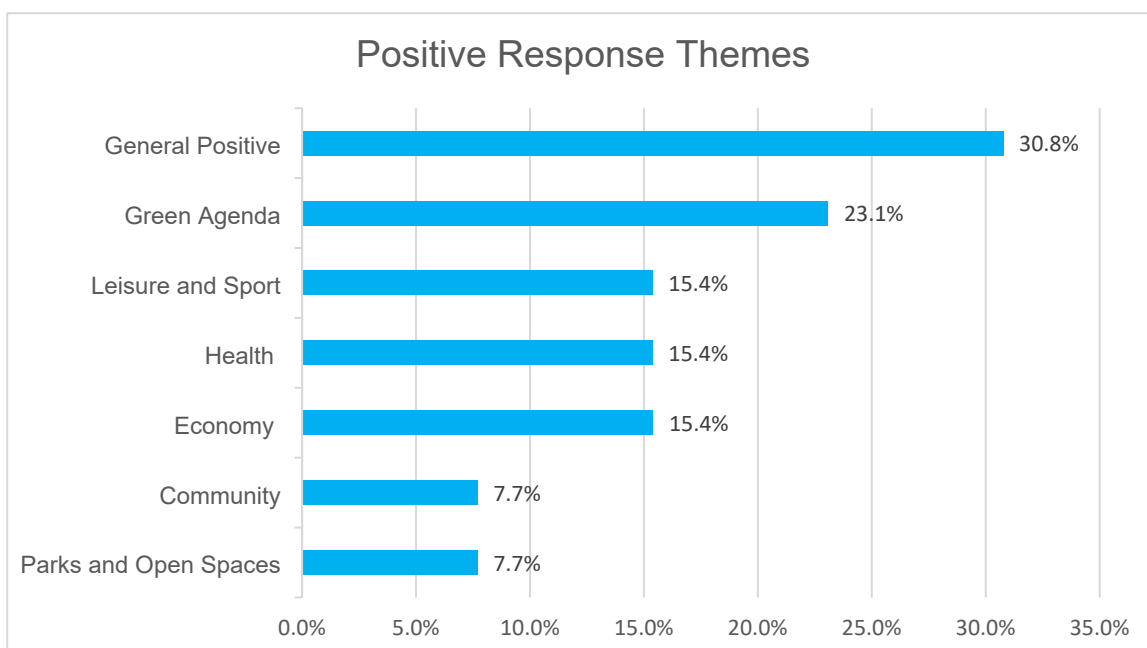
Option	Total	Percentage
5 (High Priority)	48	46.60%
4	22	21.36%
3	19	18.45%
2	6	5.83%
1	7	6.80%
Not answered	1	0.97%

Priority 7: Supporting the development of an Extra Care Scheme to provide affordable housing for those who require extra care

Option	Total	Percentage
5 (High Priority)	29	28.16%
4	32	31.07%
3	19	18.45%
2	12	11.65%
1	9	8.74%
Not answered	2	1.94%

Open feedback

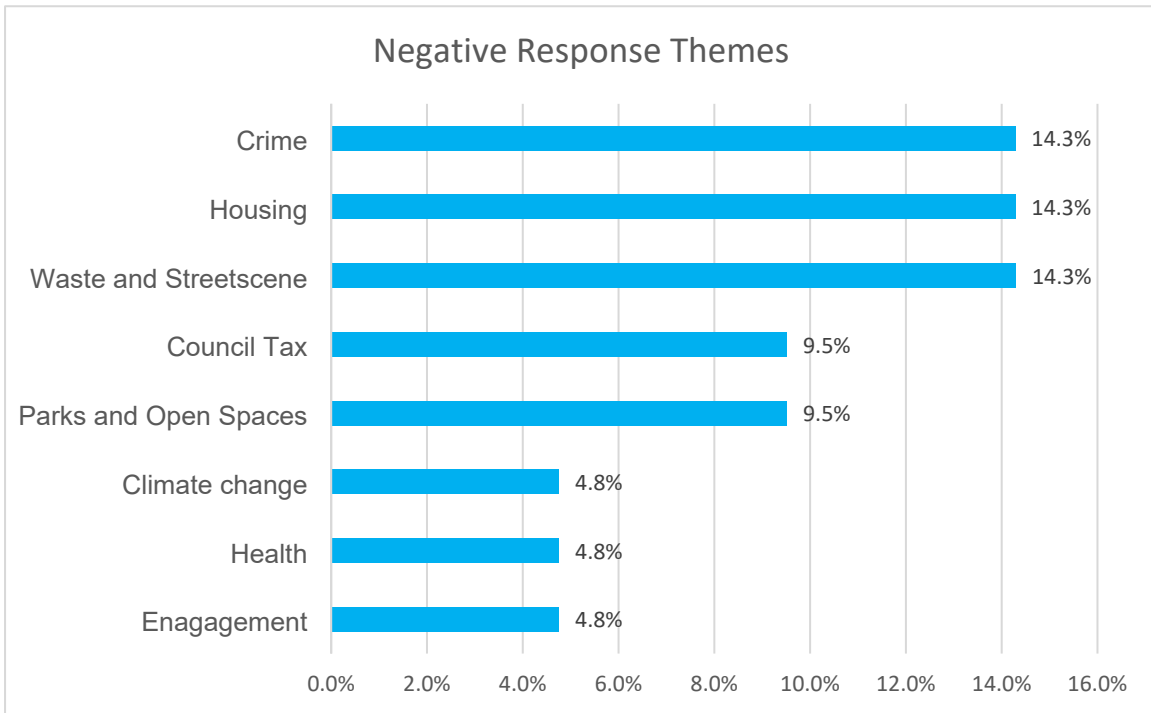
- The following tables summarise the positive, neutral, and negative responses to the open question which asked for comments on the overall budget proposals.
- Of those comments indicating a positive or neutral viewpoint, the following themes can be identified:



19. The majority of positive or neutral comments (30.8%) indicated general acceptance of the proposals and support for the investment areas. The second most common theme is support for action on the green agenda (23.1%). This theme is something that residents feel the council has done a lot for in the past and need to keep investing in, for example continuing to invest in becoming carbon neutral and protecting our green spaces. In addition to this, comments also referenced a positive or neutral view towards proposals relating to Leisure and sport (15.4%), Health, including support for the social prescribing model (15.4%) and the Economy, including support for local businesses (15.4%). Investment in Parks and Open Spaces (7.7%) and Communities (7.7%) were also highlighted as positive themes.
20. Some examples of the types of comments expressing a positive or neutral viewpoint are outlined below:

Best SRBC we've ever had....looking after the Community... Well done to all concerned....
We appreciate you freezing your portion of the council tax
Continue to invest in SRBC assets to become carbon neutral
I work in healthcare so my attention was grabbed by the social prescribing section, we need more social prescribers they are invaluable but swamped with work. The family centre you mention implies to me young families- how about somewhere for all ages there's a lot of lonely people who pay council tax, the social prescribers could have an office in there to bring people in, sometimes they set up in our GP waiting room to try to find those in need.
The proposal to continue to fund community groups, I feel, is crucial. The impact on people's loneliness and mental health, particularly after the pandemic, has been staggering and it is thanks to these groups with funding from the likes of SRBC, that has enabled people to get out, socialise and have support. Thank you.
I would like to see the social prescribing idea launched
Whilst personally I hope never to require such assistance it is a comfort to know it is available to those who require it.
We are extremely fortunate to have such lovely open spaces nearby and as a family enjoy our trips to Hurst Grange and our local park on Margaret Road. We are especially excited to see any improvements in the coming months.

21. Of those comments expressing a negative viewpoint, the following themes can be identified:



22. Negative comments (14.3%) relate to housing development, waste and Streetscene (14.3%) and Crime (14.3%), with respondents indicating this as their reason for disagreeing with the proposals. Comments highlighted perceived increase in anti social behaviour, littering and dog fouling. A proactive response is being put in place to target key hot spots and mitigate concerns. There were also negative comments around council tax with some respondents disagreeing with the proposed levels of tax suggesting it needs to be reduced to help those who are the most in need.

Report Author	Date	Doc ID
Robert Langford	22/02/2023	Budget Consultation Report 2023

APPENDIX A – Summary of Comments – Question 1 (Budget Specific)

An example of the types of comments received through the consultation is outlined below:

POSITIVE
Looking after the Community ... Well done to all concerned ...
As a teacher and mother it is imperative that support for families who are struggling is right and fit for purpose. Whilst personally I hope never to require such assistance it is a comfort to know it is available to those who require it. We are extremely fortunate to have such lovely open spaces nearby and as a family enjoy our trips to Hurst Grange and our local park on Margaret Road. We are especially excited to see any improvements in the coming months.

NEGATIVE
"Roads need looking at. We also need better tidied paths with regular tree cutting. Enforce dogs on leads and cleaning up after dogs. Look at use of bikes on footpaths, cyclists travelling too fast on paths when people are walking or out with family. Ban e scooters, shouldn't be on the pavement it's the same for cyclists. It's dangerous for frailer and hard of hearing."
More and better road repairs!!a review on the overuse of golden hill lane by hgv's which would no doubt be assisted with a pollution review!better policing, especially at night!

NEUTRAL (No definable positive or negative viewpoint, or mixed)
More fun injected into Leyland for youngsters. Something similar to what Chorley offers.
"I work in healthcare so my attention was grabbed by the social prescribing section, we need more social prescribers they are invaluable but swamped with work. The family centre you mention implies to me young families- how about somewhere for all ages there's a lot of lonely people who pay council tax, the social prescribers could have an office in there to bring people in, sometimes they set up in our GP waiting room to try to find those in need."