

## **Budget Consultation**

1. This annex sets out the key themes from Oxfordshire County Council's public consultation exercise and stakeholder engagement carried out to support its Service and Resource Planning process for 2018/19 to 2021/22.

## **Approach**

2. Between 6 December 2017 and 8 January 2018 the council invited comments on its budget proposals in the context of its newly agreed vision 'Thriving communities for everyone in Oxfordshire'. These were set out in a summary document and detailed in the papers published for consideration by the Performance Scrutiny Committee on 14 December 2017.
3. The consultation was primarily carried out online, with paper copies of the consultation document and feedback form also made available in libraries. Residents and stakeholders were invited to share feedback using the online form, paper form, by email or letter.
4. The exercise was promoted via a news release, using the homepage feature switcher on the county council website, via the council's corporate facebook account (9,692 followers) and twitter account (32,600 followers), and in two editions of YourOxfordshire (the council's fortnightly eNewsletter for residents, circulation of 8,676).
5. To ensure key stakeholders were aware of the council's budget proposals, details of the consultation were published details in the Oxfordshire MPs Briefing and Oxfordshire Matters, the council's monthly eNewsletter to stakeholders (circulation of 600+, including all parishes and town councils).

## **Analysis**

6. In total, nineteen residents submitted their views via the online feedback form, one resident sent an email and MyLife My Choice' wrote to the Leader of the Council. The consultation document was downloaded 126 times, whilst engagement via social media was significantly higher, with one post reaching over 8,000 people.
7. All the responses to the budget consultation exercise have been read and the main themes are summarised in this report. Many people chose to submit comments on multiple themes. The full responses to the consultation (redacted where appropriate) have been placed on deposit for all county councillors to review to inform the budget setting process.

## **Outcomes**

8. The first question in the survey asked people for their views on the council's budget proposals in the context of the county council's newly agreed vision 'Thriving Communities for everyone in Oxfordshire'.

9. Overall, 18 residents provided detailed comments and ‘concerns about impact of budget ‘cuts’ on social care/most vulnerable’ was the most frequently mentioned subject (four mentions). The largest share of comments related to our priorities for thriving people (ten mentions) and how the council listens to people and provides value for money (nine mentions). This was followed by comments relating to our priorities for thriving communities (six mentions). The table below summaries the comments and how they relate to the county council vision.

**Q1. Do you have any comment about the council’s budget proposals in the context of our vision for ‘Thriving communities for everyone in Oxfordshire’?**

<b>Thriving Communities</b>	
We help people live safe, healthy lives and play and active part in communities. We provide services that enhance the quality of life in our communities, and protect the local environment.	
<b>Theme</b>	
- Invest in cycle infrastructure	2 mentions
- Prioritise air quality/concern about air pollution	1 mention
- Address transport issues	1 mention
- Invest in libraries	1 mention
- What about affordable housing? - why it is missing?	1 mention

<b>Thriving people</b>	
We strive to give every child a good start in life and protect everyone from abuse and neglect We enable older and disabled people to live independently. We care for those in greatest need.	
<b>Total</b>	<b>9 mentions</b>
- Support funding social care for the elderly	2 mentions
- Budget ref:19PC5 – Concern about achievability of strategy to reduce the number of children coming into care	1 mention
- Concern about impact of budget ‘cuts’ on social care/most vulnerable	
- General	1 mention
- Specifically, adult social care/responsibilities of Acts	2 mentions
- Specifically, children’s services including help for children with disabilities	2 mentions
- Points about education services including transport and school improvements and school places	1 mention
- Query re. approach to areas of deprivation, what is the council doing to reduce inequity	1 mention

<b>Thriving economy</b>	
We support a thriving local economy by improving transport links to create jobs and homes for the future To achieve our vision, we will listen to residents so we can continuously improve our services and provide value for money	
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Mentions</b>
- Concern about the scale of development in Shrivenham	1 mention

<b>We listen to residents so we can continuously improve our services and provide value for money</b>	
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Mentions</b>
Approach	
- Concerns about budget/service cuts in general/impact on community/charity groups providing local services	3 mentions
- Prefer funding as a preventative measure to avoid future problems	1 mention
- Criticism of strategy, general, including rethink approach	1 mention
- Money could be saved across the whole budget	1 mention
- Budget reference 19RES4– Sceptical about long-term cost savings and applying lessons learnt from other arrangements e.g. 19COM3	1 mention
- Negative comment about the county council's treatment of its staff – will plug gap in funding	1 mention
- Consider proposed Council Tax rise is excessive	1 mention

10. The second question in the survey focussed on attitudes towards the proposed council tax level, including the adult social care precept. 18 responses were given to this question, with the balance of opinion being negative (12 comments). My Life, My Choice (MLMC) – the only stakeholder group to register a response to the consultation were very supportive of the proposed council tax level and indeed would welcome an even higher increase to support social care.

**Q2. Do you have any comments on the proposed council tax include of 4.99% (including +3% adult social care precept) that you would like councilllors to consider?**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Mentions</b>
Positive comments	
- Fine/agree with proposed increase	2 mentions
- Fine with proposed increase if not linked to councillor allowances increase/ pay increase for senior staff	1 mention
- Happy to pay tax that will go towards paying for adult social services	1 mention
- Would like to see higher proportion going to adult social care	1 mention
- Delighted with the proposal, would support higher increase	1 mention (MLMC)
- Should maybe be considered?	1 mention

Theme	Mentions
Negative comments	
- General disgruntlement	4 mentions
- Criticism of approach to Council Tax rises	2 mentions
- Too high / will put pressure on families / most vulnerable	3 mentions
- Consider proposals to change charging for adult social unfair	1 mention
- Consider adult social care precept unfair	1 mention
- Too high, suggest people take out insurance to cover costs of future adult social care needs	1 mention

11. The third question in the survey gave individuals and organisations the opportunity to put forward suggestions for how the council might save money and provide better value for money. 18 people responded to this question, with a majority of the suggestion relating to the council's leadership and management style (7 mentions) and practical examples of how to reduce council's overheads (6 mentions).

**Q3. Do you have any suggestions for how we can save money and provide better value for money?**

Theme	Mentions
Leadership and management style	Total mentions = 7
- Invest in evidence based strategy	1 mention
- Take invest to save approach	1 mention
- Learn lessons from restructures and service redesign	1 mention
- Keep on pushing for unitary status	1 mention
- Learn about legal services	1 mention
- Listen to people's needs to shape services and wellbeing	1 mention
- Have a general review of approach (leadership, management, duplication, efficiency, cost effectiveness etc.)	1 mention
Budget management	Total mentions = 3
- Allow people to 'opt out' of council services to reduce demand and reduce council tax bills	1 mention
- Plan a reduction of council tax each year	1 mention
- Run the council more as a business (some examples, freeze budgets, fund rises from cost reductions, refuse price increases from suppliers)	2 mentions
Services	Total mentions = 4
- Review approach to highways schemes	1 mention
- Means test free bus passes	1 mention
- Review how adult social care teams (older people) are structured – considered to be ineffective and wasteful	1 mention
- Health and social care – avoid duplication, when will be they integrate	1 mention
Cost of business/overheads	Total mentions = 6
- Reduce councillor allowances	1 mention
- Reduce managers wages	1 mention
- End final salary pensions	1 mention

- Reduce heating bills in council buildings	1 mention
- Review outsourcing (perceived) expensive contract bills	1 mention
- Cost of motivational speakers	1 mention

12. The final question was designed to elicit practical suggestions on how the council might improve its services. In total 17 people answered this question, generating 23 suggestions. The largest share of the comments related to how the council might improve its leadership, management style and culture (nine mentions) followed by how the council might make improvements to health and social care services (four mentions) and bus services (three mentions).

#### Q4. Do you have any suggestions for how we can improve our services?

Theme	Mentions
<b>Leadership, management style and culture</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Become more business-like (commercial)</li> <li>- Adopt evidence-led/data-led style</li> <li>- General comments</li> <li>- Focus on basics</li> <li>- Reduce duplication / unnecessary headcount</li> <li>- Better support for staff, so that they can work to potential</li> <li>- Stop cuts, focus on prevention rather than reacting</li> <li>- Criticism of management culture (people and data management)</li> </ul>	Total mentions = 9 1 mention 1 mention 2 mentions 1 mention 1 mentions 1 mention 1 mention 1 mention
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Better funding for Health and social care</li> <li>- Better funding for adult social care, particularly staff training</li> <li>- Better resources for adult social care, wide ranging criticism of the way older people's services is currently organised/managed</li> <li>- Better funding for adult social care to improve systems</li> <li>- Clarity regarding who pays for Education Health Care Plans</li> </ul>	Total mentions = 4 1 mention 1 mention  1 mention 1 mention
<b>Focus on individuals and communities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Listening to people and communities/effective systems 2</li> <li>- Consider risk of rising social exclusion and its impact 1</li> </ul>	Total mentions =3 1 mention 1 mention
<b>Improve libraries</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Put staff back in, increase opening hours, stock 1</li> </ul>	1 mention
<b>Bus services</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Question about overall investment in subsidised bus services 1</li> <li>- Collaboration between the council and bus operators to examine viability of network as a whole rather than individual routes, explore ways to increase revenue or communities funding service</li> <li>- Reduce eligibility for state bus passes (those on state pensions and benefits only)</li> </ul>	Total mentions = 3 1 mention 1 mention  1 mention
<b>Enabling community services</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cannot see provisions in budget for enabling community self-</li> </ul>	Total mentions = 2 1 mention

help e.g. grants - Encourage personal resilience	1 mention
Council's role in promoting a sustainable economy - Cannot see mention of budget provisions for promoting and incentivising a sustainable economy – where all activity is measured by the impact of that activity on the natural environment.	1 mention

Communications Team

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