

Budget Consultation Summary

1. This Annex sets out the key messages from Oxfordshire County Council's public consultation exercises carried out to support the Council's Service and Resource Planning.
2. The Cabinet's proposals for the 2013/14 budget take into consideration the outcomes of the public consultation exercises summarised in this Annex.

Oxfordshire Voice Budget Consultation

3. Fieldwork was carried out using a self-completion method (either a postal or an online survey) between Monday 15th October and Friday 23rd November 2012. The preferred method of completion was recorded during the recruitment stage. Panellists were either sent a postal or online questionnaire depending on their preference. Of the 1,357 residents who responded to the survey, 989 did so via post and 368 completed the survey online. During fieldwork, one reminder was sent out to non-responders.
4. Two-thirds (66%) of respondents are satisfied with services provided by Oxfordshire County Council with a quarter neutral. There are no significant differences in opinion by demographic sub-groups.
5. Key services of importance to residents, when statistical conjoint (subconscious trade-off) analysis is conducted are:-
 - Child protection
 - Fire and Rescue
 - Services for older people
 This ranking of services is calculated through respondents stating, how important it is for the Council to provide each individual service in comparison with another service.
6. The three services ranked highest when respondents were asked to spontaneously cite which are most valued by them are slightly different:-
 - Fire and Rescue
 - Public Transport
 - Highways
7. The most valuable services to respondents emerge differently to the trade-off analysis as they focus on different states of mind. Conjoint analysis requests respondents to make an objective judgement of importance of one service against another which is then analysed as a whole. In contrast, a subjective opinion is given on the value of a service to an individual and is often what is likely to be most top-of-mind to them or to be used by them.

Conjoint analysis enables the Council to focus on what services are likely to be most important for residents overall whereas the spontaneous value of a service offers the Council insight into what is currently of most relevance to them.

8. Half of the respondents do not think central government should pass on the budget deficit to local authorities. For council tax planning, the majority think it should only be increased in line with inflation with just 15% stating it should be increased above this level to deal with economic pressures. A quarter of respondents would prefer to see council tax frozen at the current level.
9. Four in ten respondents have faith that the council will do what's right for Oxfordshire and a similar proportion that it is providing value for money.
10. A full copy of this report is published on Council's consultation calendar available at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/consultation.

Comments on Overall Budget Proposals

11. Between 4 January 2013 and 1 February 2013, Oxfordshire County Council invited comments on its 2013-14 budget proposals.
12. 4 people took up this opportunity to have their say. Comments are summarised below:
 - General feedback on the consultation - Given the importance of the budget it should be easier to comment on budget proposals rather than having to sift through links from other pages.
 - Concern was expressed at a proposal to freeze council pay at 1% even though the cost of food was estimated to rise by 5%. It was suggested that council services should be reduced to the core to and that services that were 'nice to have' are no longer an option.
 - It was suggested (by someone who didn't live in Oxfordshire) that money could be saved on concessionary travel by reducing the hours that it can be used in. They suggested following other local county and metropolitan areas with a reduction to a 09.45 start and a 22.30 finish Monday to Friday.
 - The Chairman of the Oxfordshire Group of the Civil Service Pensioners Alliance (CSPA) took the opportunity to reply with a number of further questions about the possible reduction of services used by pensioners that might be affected by possible budget cuts.