

Section 1

Leader of the Council's Overview

**CORPORATE PLAN AND SERVICE & RESOURCE PLANNING 2016/17
to 2019/20**

Budget speech 2016

To be published on Tuesday 16th February 2016

Outcome of Council Tax Survey

The response to the Council Tax Survey which closed on Monday 8th February 2016 is attached in Section 1.1.

Oxfordshire Voice Citizens' Panel Council Tax levels and Council Tax Referendum Mini Poll 2016

Introduction

This report presents the data from the Council Tax mini-poll, which sought public views on Council Tax levels and the possibility of a Council Tax referendum to raise more income locally.

Methodology

- This survey took place between Wednesday 27 January and Monday 8 February 2016
- Recipients were members of the Oxfordshire Citizens' Panel who had stated a preference for surveys to be sent via email (1096 people in total)
- Prior to sending, the demographic composition of this sub-set of the panel was checked. This showed it to be broadly representative of the population of Oxfordshire, albeit with a slightly younger age profile
- Two reminder emails have been sent to encourage people to respond. These were on Thursday 3 February and Saturday 6 February
- The council's financial situation and the government limit on council tax increases with a referendum were explained.
- We received responses from 230 panel members (21% response rate). Due to the speed of turn-around for the survey data, the figures in this report have not been weighted to provide a more representative result

Results

The headlines from the survey were:

- 80% said they were aware of the council's financial position before the survey
- 19% said they did not want a Council Tax increase, and a 3.99% increase was the most popular level among people who were prepared to accept an increase
- 34% said they thought the county council should hold a council tax referendum and 84% said they would vote in a referendum.

Below are the results from the survey.

Awareness of the council's financial situation

Q1. Before the survey, did you know about significant financial challenges facing Oxfordshire County Council?

Number of responses: 230

	%
Yes	80
No	17
Not sure	3

Council Tax levels

Oxfordshire County Council is proposing a 3.99 per cent rise in its share of the Council Tax for 2016/17. The council could look to reduce the savings it needs to make and protect some frontline services by increasing Council Tax levels further.

This would be in addition to the short-term measures already proposed including:

- drawing from reserves on a one-off basis
- bringing some savings proposals originally proposed for future years forward to 2016/17
- reducing spending in certain areas on a one-off basis (training budgets, Book Fund in the library service)
- recalculating various financial assumptions on things such as inflation, Council Tax income and the overall tax-base

Q2. Taking this into account, tell us what level of Council Tax rise you would accept if it helped protect frontline services?

The table below shows options for increasing Council Tax, the impact each of these would have on the average band D Council Tax bill and the amount of saving the council would still have to find. Please indicate the highest level of rate rise you think would be acceptable.

Number of responses: 230

%	Option for increase	This would be an increased cost per year of... (on an average Band D Council Tax bill)	This would mean the council would have to make savings of...
30	Increase Council Tax by 3.99%	£49.18	£69 million
28	Increase Council Tax by 5%	£61.62	£66 million
16	Increase Council Tax by 10%	£123.25	£51 million
5	Increase Council Tax by 15%	£184.87	£37 million
19	Do not increase Council Tax	£0.00	£81 million
3		Don't know	

(NB: The total does not add up to 100% due to rounding of results.)

Attitudes towards Council Tax referendum

Q3. Do you think Oxfordshire County Council should hold a Council Tax referendum to increase Council Tax to help protect frontline services?

Number of responses: 230

	%
Yes	34
No	53
Not sure	13

Q4. If there was a Council Tax referendum, would you vote?

Number of responses: 230

	%
Yes	84
No	7
Not sure	9

Report by: Eddie Gibb, Head of Communications

Contact officer: Carole Stow, Marketing & Consultation Manager

Date: 8 February 2016