

BUDGET CONSULTATION

A number of changes were made to the consultation process compared to the previous year. Having carried out a YouChoose exercise for the past two years this was replaced with a 'Priorities' survey. Consultation with the voluntary / community sector was delegated to individual services and focused on specific proposals.

Overall the consultation exercises carried out were:

- During August and early September 2014, a resident's doorstep priorities survey. The sample of respondents properly reflects the age, sex, gender, ethnicity, economic status, district of residence and rural/urban split of the Cambridgeshire population as a whole. A sample of 1,100 residents was interviewed.
- Over a similar time period the same questions were available to answer as an on-line survey. 886 people responded to the survey but this was a self-selecting sample.
- Local businesses were consulted through local events organised with the chambers of commerce; a stall at the B2B business event in autumn 2014 and an on-line survey targeted at businesses.

The 'doorstep' survey asked by how much residents would personally be prepared to increase Council Tax by, taking into account the savings required, and taking into account that increases of about 1.99% would trigger a referendum. The results showed that 48.3% of all respondents opted for no increase in council tax; 51.7% would be prepared to have some level of increase with 20.2% opting for a figure of 1.99% or above. The three service aims that respondents felt were most important for the wider community were 'Safeguarding and protecting children', 'Ensuring high quality education' and 'caring for older people'.

The 'on line' survey results showed that 21.7% of all respondents opted for no increase in council tax; 78.3% would be prepared to have some level of increase with 54.4% opting for a figure of 1.99% or above. The same three top priorities for the wider community were selected by the on-line respondents.

Business representatives were asked two open questions but discussions tended to focus on the second of these; "What do businesses value from Cambridgeshire County Council?" and "What should Cambridgeshire County Council do to help your businesses thrive?" Discussion centred on seven themes:

- Transport infrastructure
- Broadband
- Housing affordability
- Training and apprenticeships
- The role of local government and communicating that role
- The environment and business opportunities in environmental technology
- Business advice and support

Significant support was expressed for the County Council's role in developing major infrastructure e.g. the Ely Bypass and improving Broadband. The importance of the County Council in tackling issues such as housing affordability for employees and

availability of training opportunities was also acknowledged.

The full results of the consultation are available on the Council's website:

http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/site/custom_scripts/cons_details.aspx?ref=319.