

**Boston Borough Council
Budget 2022/23
Consultation Report
Published**



Introduction to this consultation

1. This report details the responses received for the Budget 2022/23 consultation undertaken between 20th January, 2022 and 16th February, 2022.
2. The exercise was performed to seek residents' views on the Council's Budget proposals for 2022/23.

Methodology

3. A media release was issued to local newspapers to promote the consultation and social media activity was ongoing throughout the consultation period.
4. A link to the electronic questionnaire was made available on the Council's website and in the Boston Bulletin. Paper copies of the questionnaire were available on request.
5. It should be noted that base data has been rounded to the nearest number (so may add up to between 99% and 101%). Where available this report details comparisons with the previous budget survey undertaken in 2021/22.

Response Rate

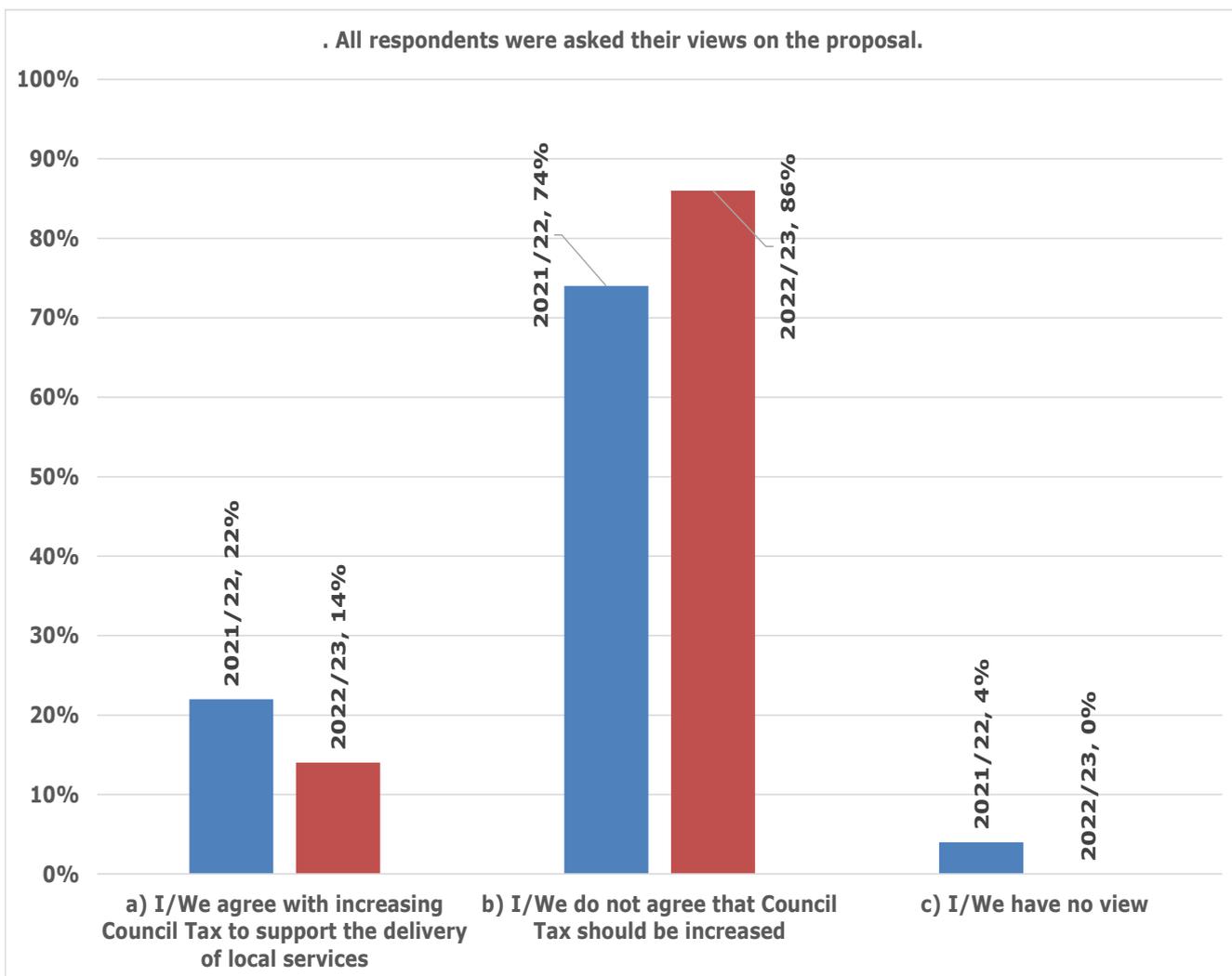
6. 16 electronic responses were received. A decline of 30 responses when compared with the previous year's budget consultation exercise undertaken in 2021/22.

Results and Analysis

7. All respondents responding to the consultation responded as 'A Resident'.

Council Tax

8. All respondents were advised that Boston Borough Council's current Council Tax levy for a Band D property was £197.91 per month (based on 10 monthly payments). The Government was allowing the Council to put its Council Tax up by a maximum of £5 next year (based on a Band D property). The Council was therefore proposing a £4.95 increase for 2022/23 – an extra 9.5p per week for a Band D property. A 2.50% increase was proposed for all Council Bands. All respondents were asked their views on the proposal. The comparison chart below shows that 14% of all respondents agreed with increasing Council Tax to support the delivery of local services. This is a decrease of 8% when compared with the previous consultation exercise undertaken in 2021/22 when 22% of respondents agreed with increasing the Council Tax by £4.95.



9. Those respondents that did not agree with the proposed increase in Council Tax were asked why they did not agree. The majority of comments made were about the rise in Council Tax being too high and that residents would not be able to afford to pay it due to being on low incomes and other rising living costs. Some respondents felt that Council Tax had gone up but services had reduced. They also considered that the Council had done nothing in the town that benefitted residents during the last year and that an increase in Council Tax would not change the situation. Two respondents thought that the town was in a mess, streets were dirty and dark and the refuse collection service was unsatisfactory. One respondent mentioned pot holes which is not under the remit of the District Council but the County Council. A full list of their views are detailed below:

- We received practically nothing in the last year. The town is a mess, putting it politely. Why are meetings being postponed - no indication of any problems. Councillors still getting paid I presume? Reception still closed - why are staff not working?
- We pay enough
- Need to cut Councillors' payments to offset hike
- The amount of houses being built should give you enough money to not keep putting Council Tax up, I am aware that half your money goes to Anglian water. The cost of living is rising and nothing is being done to help residents.
- I think we already pay a lot. We have seen an increase in Council Tax every year. A lot of the issues could be resolved in a different way, for example opening hours for a recycling centre could be increased during work days.
- I think that Council Tax in BBC is one of the higher ones in England already. People of Boston are on low incomes and another increase would push more people into the poverty. Furthermore currently BBC is doing absolutely nothing for its inhabitants. Streets are dirty and dark, refuse system is bad at best. This situation is highly unlikely to change after the Council Tax is increased
- I feel that this increase is too much, especially when inflation is also rising and heating and electricity is also rising. There has to be a line drawn somewhere.
- You already get enough and what is it actually used for?
- The reduction of services, combined with reliance on the third sector to plug the gaps means taxpayers are effectively paying twice for the limited services they receive. Whilst the rich get richer, the poor are propped up by handouts - middle Britain is picking up the cost. Make the money work for statutory services and stop wasting on vanity projects for members and senior offices personal recognition....the citizens have paid for it - yet are never rewarded.... Focus on the people you represent.
- You increase the Council Tax, and doing nothing with the money. Look at the whole Carlton Road!!Holes, dirt, not enough bins for rubbish. The children play area is the worst part. Nothing happened. Then is Covid thing. People have no money, and you increase! That is a shame. Have still not enough money, put in pocket and do nothing with them.
- I am on a state pension with all the gas, electric and food prices going up why do you want to completely wring me out?

Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy

10. All respondents were asked if they had any comments to make in respect of the draft Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy. Six comments were made which are listed below. The majority of them were general comments as oppose to comments about the Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- Imposing another increase in tax is not a solution. This creates and increases pressure on working class people or pensioners who don't get support. Financially strong are not bothered and benefit claimants are not affected. A squeeze should be equal and effective.
 - Waste of time - no one taking any notice. Everything is still fine in Boston is it?
 - Pension contributions for Council staff.....they should not rise. Indeed cease if possible. If any member of the Council receives private medical cover it should cease this day. Why is the police precept rising? It should remain the same. HOMS should be required to pay a 100% increase in Council Tax to reflect the number of residents.
 - Poorly prepared.
 - No comments, it's a shame that increase.
 - The PCC jumped up and down with glee with his increase last year and we still do not see any Police on the streets, the only service I receive is my bins emptied. Council offices are still closed.
11. All respondents were given the opportunity to provide any ideas that they might have that could help the Council to reduce its expenditure or increase its income to support local services. Some respondents suggested that the Council should do an internal spending review on staffing, councillors' expenses and staff salaries. Three respondents considered that fly-tipping was a problem and suggested raising fines for those that were responsible. One respondent commented about vanity projects and another felt that the Council should stop the purple bin collection. A full list of ideas and comments are detailed below:
- Internal expenditure review like staffing. Poor performance of Council is widely known. Why not replace less efficient persons or other investment with efficient ones?
 - Spend some of the millions you have in savings. Have you not noticed things need doing in the town?
 - Sort out fly-tipping; have designated places other than tip to go to, as some do not have transport to get there.
 - Get rid of the purple bins they are useless. I might put mine out 3 maybe 4 times a year same with blue bins.
 - Penalise fly-tippers
 - Make everyone pay some sort of Council Tax, no one should get away without paying it.
 - Fly-tipping minimum fine should be 100% of the cost of the clean-up PLUS 100% PLUS vehicle used to be crushed. Scrap sold for income = strong deterrent. Free parking for Council staff should be cancelled unless parked in West Street Council property. Any bonus for Council staff simply doing their job should be scrapped.

- Reduce vanity projects; make managers and members more accountable for failures.
 - Freeze Councillors expenses, PCC's and deputies wages and expenses. Do a thorough survey of office personnel and if most are still working from home you don't need them and let them go. Do you need all that office space in that building? Look at all the heating and lighting it has and how much it costs. I have had to cut down and so should you, I have to wear extra layers to keep warm so should all your staff.
12. All respondents were advised that whilst capital resources were limited, the Council was keen to invest what resources it does have available to improve the local economy. All respondents were asked how they believed that capital resources should be used to achieve this objective. Two respondents suggested that the Council should invest its money efficiently and economically. They also felt that the Council should avoid any high risk investments. Another respondent thought the Council should invest in Boston town centre by offering empty shops on the high street to small and independent retailers as oppose to large companies that could afford to invest themselves. The remaining comments received were about cleaning up the town, making the first hour free in car parks and making Boston a city would be too costly. A full list of comments/suggestions are included below:
- Efficient and economical investment are necessary over blindly putting money into things.
 - Get the town cleaned up!
 - First hour free in car parks.
 - Difficult at this time of low interest rates. Also have to avoid high risk investments. No crypto currency. Blue chip companies. 100% safe investments...understand this produces lower interest but Council Tax payers funds need protection.
 - Invest in the town - but not to support companies that can afford to invest themselves. Improve the offering of the little companies and independent retailers.
 - Stop throwing resources away paying out money to make us a city will cost too much.
13. All respondents were given the opportunity to provide any other comments; a full list of these are detailed below:
- Just above should be considered.
 - Waste of time - nothing gets done. Get rid of the so-called 'leader' Batemans comes to mind.
 - Why should taxpayers pay for police chief's medical insurance and chauffeur? If taxpayers pay for anything other than the salary for the Chief Executive then such payments should cease this day.
 - Don't increase every year, you think that people are going to have money. They're going to stop paying, because of that.
 - You cannot keep wringing us out, our money (income) is not keeping up with what you demand. There will be more homeless soon and then you will want even more money to deal with that. We are not cash cows here, remember, this is a low pay area.

Respondent Profile

14. 43% of all respondents were male, with the remaining 57% being female.
15. 21% of all respondents considered they had a disability, with the remaining 79% considering they did not.
16. The pie chart below shows that the most popular age groups to respond to the consultation were the '25 to 44' and 'Over 65' age groups with 36% each. It also shows that the '45 to 64' age group was a popular age group to respond with 29%.

