

**Boston Borough Council
Budget 2023/24
Consultation Report
Published 20/02/2023**



Introduction to this consultation

1. This report details the responses received for the Budget 2022/23 consultation undertaken between 31st January 2023 and 17th February 2023.
2. The exercise was performed to seek residents' views on the Council's Budget proposals for 2023/24.

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, shared regularly via the Council's Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn pages and was included in the Council's e-Messenger. 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 2022/23.

Response Rate

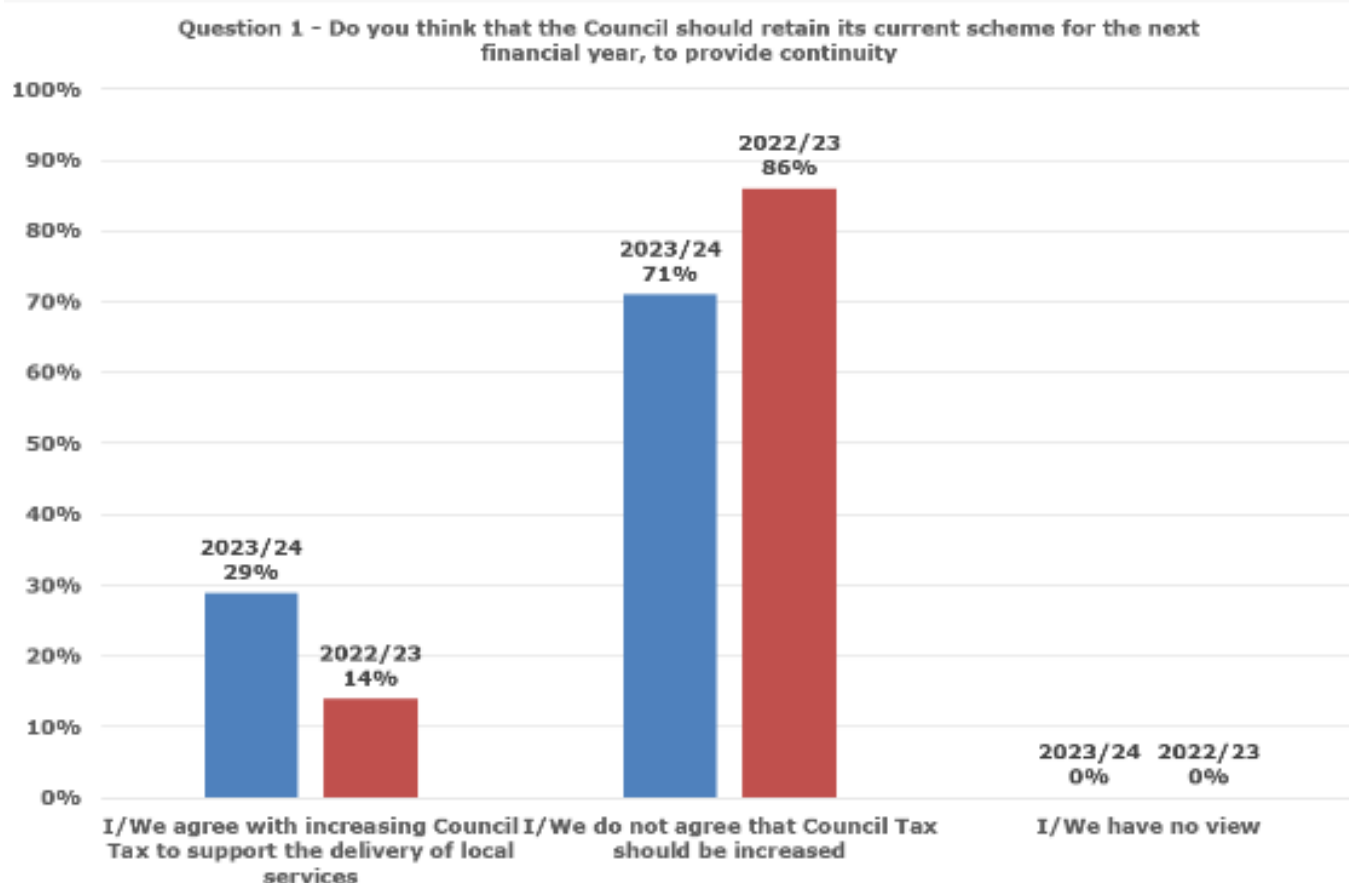
6. 14 electronic responses were received. A decline of 2 responses when compared with the previous year's budget consultation exercise undertaken in 2022/23.

Results and Analysis

7. 13 of the 14 respondents responding to the consultation responded as 'A Resident'. One respondent did not indicate.

Council Tax

8. All respondents were advised that Boston Borough Council's current Council Tax levy for a Band D property was £20.89 per month (based on 10 monthly payments). The Government was allowing the Council to put its Council Tax up by a maximum of 3.0% (based on a Band D property). The Council was therefore proposing a £6.03 (2.97%) increase for 2023/24 – an extra 11p per week for a Band D property. A 2.97% increase was proposed for all Council Bands. All respondents were asked their views on the proposal. The comparison chart below shows that 29% of all respondents agreed with increasing Council Tax to support the delivery of local services. This is an increase of 15% when compared to the previous consultation exercise undertaken in 2022/23 when 14% of respondents agreed with increasing Council Tax by £4.95 (NB. This was equated as a 2.5% increase).



9. All respondents were asked if they had any comments to make about the proposed budget and associated papers. Some comments stated that residents would be unable to afford the increase due to the current cost of living, other comments proposed that rather than an increase in payments by residents there should be a

reduction in Council spend in certain areas. One comment queried the involvement of South Holland District Council in the budget. A full list of their comments is detailed below:

- You have millions in reserves apparently. Why not make a few more savings and keep councillors' payments the same for next year. Most of them have been invisible this year anyway.
- I believe that no one wants to come to Boston, in fact the people who live here don't even want to live here so as for spending millions on a gateway to Boston is an absolute waste! People need a town to come to, something to come for, there are so many empty shops so why anyone would want to come here unless they would like to get a haircut, waste money in a betting shop or go to a charity! The town needs filling with good shops that is aimed at middle age / young people. And as for a green area at the back of an old B&M it give it a month before it's ruined by the drunks! Waste of time and effort, Boston is a sad old run down town that needs shops jobs more policing.
- Why is the draft budget being completed by South Holland District Council? Can we not do our own?
- No need to raise council tax. Reduce support for non-working people. Why do I pay for council employee's pensions and union time?
- There needs to be a consideration of the current economic times that residents find themselves in and there should be no increase for this year, any increase should be deferred to the following year when there is some possibility of economic recovery.

Cost of Living and Financial Pressures

10. All respondents were advised that in view of the cost-of-living crisis and financial pressures that both individuals and businesses are experiencing, the Council is looking to find different and innovative ways of working. All respondents were asked what changes they think the Council could implement to support this. 5 comments were made which are listed below:

- Assist the town's pensioners who are on a fixed income from the state.
- Waste of time redevelopment of area of old bus station/dhs need to get more shops in middle of town and encourage more market traders as Boston is now not a proper market town perhaps free parking to encourage people to come n shop or visit
- Scrap diversity department, collect all council tax, give the freedom of the town to all wombles for doing the job that you no longer do
- Save money by not paying people to do union business in working hours. Unions are little more than a club for members. Not all council tax payers are "club members"
- A reduction at senior management levels and a rethink of the current remuneration levels for senior management at executive should be restructured to be performance-based, not just standard remuneration of the old-school ways, this would save money. The PSPS system does not seem to

be rewarding the decision to join, despite warnings from councillors who opposed it.

11. All respondents were given the opportunity to provide any other comments; a full list of these is detailed below:

- Dump the Christmas “tree” and let the local electricians do their jobs again.
- I'm surprised that despite BBC joining with SHDC and ELDC, in 5 years' time there is projected to be just 4 full time employees less than this current financial year. Joining forces was supposed to be saving us money. Has that saving been swallowed up in fuel/electricity/gas increases etc.? Is BBC taking the New Homes Bonus because it's extra income, or because we actually need new houses? My other concern is that those who are less educated/have difficulties with reading are less likely to read these proposals and understand it all. And it is this social group that is often on the lowest incomes. So, you're likely to get fewer respondents from this group and more likely to have respondents who can afford a council tax increase so will agree with that. You will then report, for example, 95% of respondents agreed to a Council Tax increase.
- Freeze Council taxes and spend what you get a lot better, i.e., less councillor perks and expenses.
- Within the budget more should be allocated for street cleaning in the surrounding areas, such as Fishtoft. Far too much litter is on the streets as a lack of bins are available. Likewise, dog mess is getting to be a worse problem more dog bins and patrols are required with fines being levied not just for poo, but for not carrying the means to clear up.
- Empty properties should pay double or more council tax. If not let out or sold in, say, up to 12 months then treble council tax. 2nd homes should pay double council tax. Illegal HMO should pay not less than 50% of the value of the property to the council. Fly tippers should have vehicles crushed...even if the owner is not the tipper...and a fine of the cost of clear up plus 50% should be levied.
- The lack of environmental enforcement has led to greater costs of cleaning up fly-tipping, why has little if anything been done about fly-tipping? This would have saved a significant amount of money if it had been sorted out sooner.