



Budget Consultation for 2016/17

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background and method

This report summarises the views of residents that attended the Budget Consultation Events carried out in November 2016 or completed a survey which was either online or in a paper format. West Lindsey residents, Parish Councillors and West Lindsey District Council Members were invited through either a direct invite, posters or by visiting the website. A further survey was also sent to West Lindsey businesses.

With reduced budgets from central government it is critical that resources are directed in a way that benefits residents and meets their needs and priorities. The introduction to each event introduced the aim of the events to give residents a say in their local area and about local services.

Topics covered included how the Council might explore efficiencies and potential income streams to fund key services.

All 1,300 current members of the Citizens' Panel were sent an invite as well as all Parish Councils and Parish Meeting Councillors and West Lindsey District Council Councillors. 3 events were held across the district with a total of 64 attendees.

Number of businesses responded - 12

Number of Citizen Panel responses - 359

Number of Councillor responses (including at events) - 5

Number of website responses (includes parish councils) – 29

Number of attendees at events – Nettleham 22 residents, 3 Parish Councillors and 1 District Councillor
Market Rasen 8 residents, 9 Parish Councillors and 1 District Councillor
Gainsborough 19 residents and 1 District Councillor

Number of surveys returned – 402

Total response – 461

2 Proposed Options

2.1 Introduction

The first part of the consultation was to discuss with the residents/businesses/councillors a set of options for which the Council may consider developing. At each option the respondents were asked to vote either for or against the option and what issues they felt need taking into consideration before further work is undertaken.

2.2 Council Tax Level

Currently the Council tax level for West Lindsey is at a level which has only seen an increase once in the past 5 years. Respondents were asked to consider whether an increase to the West Lindsey only section of their Council Tax might be an option that they feel residents could be open to.

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
1% increase	1.5% increase	2% increase	No vote
147	125	171	18
32%	27%	37%	4%

Therefore 96% of those asked were happy for West Lindsey to increase their section of the Council Tax bill by some amount. It is worth noting that at the events it was evident that not all residents of West Lindsey understand that West Lindsey do not have an input into how much Lincolnshire County Council, Lincolnshire Police or Parish Council charge and that West Lindsey is a small part of the overall council tax.

Summary of comments:

- No increase is actually a cut and should be outlined as so.
- Increases should be in line with the cost of living but no major jumps at any 1 time.
- The cost of a referendum should ensure that the increase is lower than that.
- Don't increase it.
- Could those areas which take the most service have a higher increase?
- Increase in line with inflation.
- Need to try to encourage central government to stop cutting grants

- What do we get for our Council Tax?
- Should be a small increase every year to make it easier for everyone

2.3 Borrowing

Residents were asked how they felt about the Council taking out further capital investment loans to be used for buying further commercial properties to support an income for future years. The borrowing strategy allows these as long as they are self-financing and generate a surplus.

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Borrow to fund further commercial investment	Do not borrow to fund further commercial investment	No vote
213	225	23
46%	49%	5%

This section had a split between the residents as some felt that purchasing commercial properties are not within the standard business that Councils should be undertaking while others felt that this was a good way to gain an income for the future years. Residents also like the fact that West Lindsey is currently a debt free council and was unsure about changing this unless it was necessary. Residents also feel that in-depth risk assessments would need to be carried out to ensure that purchase was the correct move for the council to make.

Summary of comments:

- Happy with small investments as long as those already undertaken are successful.
- Invest in housing as long as it's on brownfield sites.
- As long as low risk
- WLDC should not be looking at making a profit. Commercial ventures should stay with businesses
- Why purchase properties when there are already empty ones in the district
- If already debt free why get into debt now in the current climate

2.4 Trading

WLDC could bid for contracts and undertake work for other Authorities outside our boundary. This could be external facing services such as waste or internal facing services such as finance or human resources.

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5
Undertake external facing services	Undertake internal services	Undertake both external and internal services	Undertake no work outside WLs boundary	No vote
124	21	169	138	9
27%	5%	37%	30%	2%

The majority of residents (69%) are happy with the authority undertaking additional work of some kind as long as the service that residents currently receive is not affected and that we take into account how local services might be affected by the proposal.

Summary of comments:

- Get into broadband partnership for better deal with supplier such as BulkBuy
- Stick to statutory duties
- Would our services suffer
- Should be excellent at the services you currently deliver to residents before selling them to anyone else.
- If you have the staff to do this then you should look at redundancies rather than taking on additional work which is not statutory to your business
- Would need to make a profit

2.5 Green Waste

Residents were asked how they felt about the Council charging an annual rate for the collection of green waste. This is a service that many other councils have already undertaken. The current garden waste service costs £690k to be delivered and charging for this service would add approximately £70k per annum in additional costs for administration, communications and software.

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
Charge £30 per annum If take-up was 47% then an income of £558k would be achieved	Charge £40 per annum If take-up was 47% then an income of £744k would be achieved	Keep the service free	No vote
133	26	284	18
29%	6%	62%	4%

The majority of those surveyed believe the service should remain free due to not receiving many services with the council tax and due to having fortnightly collections. However there was a number of people who believe that only those who use the service should pay for it and that if it was a paid for service then it should be all year round. Most people however did feel that if any charge was introduced then fly tipping would greatly increase.

Summary of comments:

- An all year round service would be needed if charges were applied. This however would be find being monthly during winter and fortnightly the rest of the year.
- Would be prepared to pay for an extra service during the winter months but not for the whole year.
- Local leafy suburbs benefit from free green bin which was part of the deal with the fortnightly roll out.
- Promote composting
- Can the green waste be composted by WLDC and then sold back to residents to reduce the costs?
- Reintroduce weekly collections
- Fly tipping would increase greatly
- Stop the service altogether
- Should be an all year round service
- £20 would be sufficient
- If this was introduced would the cost be increased every year?

2.6 Leisure

Residents were asked about how they felt about an investment in Leisure facilities for the district. This investment would mean a reduction in the ongoing costs to the taxpayer.

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
Recommission its current Leisure Facilities	Commission new Leisure Facilities	Do not commission Leisure Facilities	No vote
209	118	104	30
45%	26%	23%	7%

Residents felt that some leisure services should be provided but to ensure these made a profit to the council while providing the services which local residents wanted. Also there was a feeling that with the amount of private gyms around that maybe now this service is not such a priority as what it did used to be.

Summary of comments:

- A swimming pool is needed.
- Commercial deal with private gyms near villages to expand their membership with discounted deals for WLDC residents.
- Partnership with schools for access to facilities
- Invest with C of L for a swimming pool facility.
- Need for bowling alley and cinema
- No facilities currently for anywhere else apart from Gainsborough
- As it is Gainsborough only let the Town Council run it
- Need to be self sufficient

2.7 Parish Lighting

Residents were asked how they felt about the fact that WLDC currently pays for some lights in areas away from highways. This service costs WLDC £50k per year.

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
Turn off Saves £50,000	Invest in low energy lighting This could save £24,000 per annum	Pass the responsibility to Parish Councils	No vote
63	354	31	13
14%	77%	7%	9%

The majority of respondents felt that lighting is very important to making people feel safe which when outside but also at home. Many people are unhappy with Lincolnshire County Council switching the lights off and there is some confusion as to which lights West Lindsey actually own and run.

Summary of comments:

- Could the lights be turned off at midnight depending on the location?
- What is the cost of switching to low energy?
- Passing to Parish Councils only passes on the burden of the costs which in turn reduces nothing to the residents.
- Introduce low energy then pass to parishes
- Consult with parishes on which could be turned off but keep overall responsibility
- Some could be switched off at set times depending on location

2.8 Street Cleansing

Residents were asked how they felt about the level of street cleansing within the District. When benchmarked against other authorities the street cleansing service performs well and is top quartile value for money. Currently there is just 15 WL staff working on street cleansing and reduction would have a considerable impact on the level

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
<p>Reduce the amount of street cleaning</p> <p>A reduction of 1 operative and associated van would reduce costs by £35k.</p>	<p>Maintain the amount of street cleaning</p>	<p>No vote</p>
34	418	19
7%	91%	4%

Residents felt very strongly that this service should remain with the staffing it currently has and any reduction in the service would have a detrimental effect on the district.

Summary of comments:

- Less in Gainsborough and more in the rest of the district. Better distribution of the service.
- Never seen a street cleaner in my area
- Service should be increased
- Never available in Caistor when rung
- What would the cost of redundancy be?
- Should place a levy on fast food outlets to employ a street cleaner

3 Resident comments

3.1 Introduction

Information has been collected on what services the residents of West Lindsey would like developing or suggestions on where further cuts might be able to be made.

3.2 Developments

- Recycle bins in village halls like supermarkets do
- Broadband to the whole of the district and therefore can consult easier.
- Advertise pre application service more
- Advertise digital champions
- Can we use google docs instead of office?
- First 2 hours free of parking then higher charge for those staying longer
- Clean up North Street car park
- Fill empty shops – What are you doing to help independent shops?
- Increase the car parking provision
- Improve market
- Regenerate Caistor
- Local skips for waste disposal
- Volunteer litter picks in villages

3.3 Savings

- Cloud servers?
- Merge WLDC with C of L/Unitary councils
- Do not increase councillor allowances/Reduce number of councillors
- Stop top management having company cars
- Stop using consultants
- Sell Sure Staff
- Focus on core services and stop all the rest
- Reduce frequency of bins
- Stop Call connect bus service

- Use inmates for community work
- Stop County News
- Improve Planning Service
- Downsize depots

3.4 Further comments submitted

A number of comments were received which are separate to how the council can develop or make savings:

- How is the population spread across the district? Money seems to be focused on Gainsborough so is this where the majority of the population is?
- Can Manjeet be more visual to the residents of the district?
- Options should be ranked in order of the amount of money it involves.
- Build Younger people. Interest in contributing to consultation.
- Pensioners would be happy to pay 50% for services rather than free
- Where should medical supplies be put? Black bin?
- Why was the old Guildhall demolished?
- Are franking licenses being issues?
- Remove entrepreneurial part of the logo
- Business rate valuations for 2017 are a joke
- How much income is from Traded Services?
- Duel carriageway for A15

4 Next Steps

4.1 Further engagement

This engagement is to be used for Members to help set the budget for the next year and will be reported through the committee cycle with the budget report for 2017/18.