



# **BUDGET CONSULTATION 2022**

Consultation Report

October 2022

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background and introduction

With reduced grants from Central Government, it is critical that we direct our resources in a way that benefits our communities and meets their needs and priorities.

Each year a consultation is undertaken on the following year's budget prior to it being set. Although there is no legal requirement to undertake this we have a legal requirement under the Local Government Act 1992 section 65 to consult ratepayers who are persons or bodies appearing to be representative of persons subject to non-domestic rates within the district and must be about the authority's proposals for expenditure.

This report summarises the views of residents and businesses that took part in this consultation. Views were gathered from West Lindsey residents, Parish Councillors, West Lindsey District Council Members and West Lindsey businesses through either a direct invite, events or by visiting the website.

The objectives of this engagement were to seek views on the priorities for our residents and businesses and to raise awareness of the financial challenges the council faces.

## 1.2 Methods

To undertake this work we used multiple routes to consult with our stakeholders. The consultation was undertaken using an online survey, a paper survey, through stalls within the Markets at Market towns and face to face events within the district.

### Surveys

All 1551 members of the West Lindsey Citizen Panel received a copy of the survey. This was split with 1024 being sent via email and 527 by post. Both versions of the survey had the same content and a copy of the survey distributed can be found at Appendix A.

## 1.3 Response

The survey had 680 responses compared to 513 during 2021. The breakdown of these responses are:

|                      | Survey |
|----------------------|--------|
| Citizen Panel Member | 510    |

|                           |     |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Resident                  | 520 |
| Town or Parish Councillor | 5   |
| West Lindsey Councillor   | 2   |
| Businesses                | 2   |
| Voluntary organisation    | 0   |

Table 1: Breakdown of respondents

Please note that respondents were able to mark more than one of these boxes and therefore could be responding as both a Citizen Panel member and a resident of West Lindsey for example.

Out of these responses 342 were received electronically, 205 were postal and 133 were from votes at events.

The total responses each year have been:

| Year | Responses |
|------|-----------|
| 2022 | 680       |
| 2021 | 513       |
| 2020 | 708       |
| 2019 | 595       |
| 2018 | 409       |
| 2017 | 368       |

Table 2: Yearly response numbers

Most sections within this consultation had a section for comments. During the analysis, the comments have been summarised. A full list of comments received will be available separately.

## 1.4 Respondent data

Respondents were asked at the end of the survey to answer some equality questions. Whilst not mandatory, 507 respondents did give a response, and these have been broken down into gender, age, disability, ethnicity, faith/religion and sexuality.

## Gender

Out of the 507 who took part, 51.9% of those are Male and 47.5% are Female and 0.6% were transgender, other or preferred not to say.

## Age

To take part in the consultation it is requested that they need to be 16 or over. Age data is available for the 446 members who took part and the ages are grouped as:

| Age range         | Percent |
|-------------------|---------|
| 16-25             | 0.4%    |
| 26-35             | 1.4%    |
| 36-45             | 5.1%    |
| 46-55             | 11.9%   |
| 56-65             | 20.6%   |
| 66-75             | 38.5%   |
| 76+               | 20.9%   |
| Prefer not to say | 1.2%    |

Table 3: Age ranges

## Disability

Out of those who took part, 12.5% of those classify themselves as being disabled and 82.5% do not. 5% preferred not to say.

## Ethnicity

The majority of respondents class themselves as White British, Irish or other with 96.6%. All other ethnic groups had responses but the percentage is 1% or under for each. This included Black or Black British, Asian or Asian British, Chinese, Mixed Race and other. 1.4% prefer not to say.

## Religion/Faith/Belief

Which the Christian religion came up with the majority of responses with 64.2%, the no religion option had 31.5%. The other religions which came in under 1% were Sikh and Hindu while other faith had 0.4% and prefer not to say had 3.6%.

## **Sexuality**

The majority of responses came from heterosexual respondents with 93.6%, while those who classed themselves as Lesbian/Gay were 1% and Bisexual with 0.6%. Other was 0.6% and prefer not to say came in at 4.2%.

## 2 Results

### 2.1 Council Tax

The results relating to the level of council tax were as follows:

| Option      | Results        | Last years total |
|-------------|----------------|------------------|
| 0% change   | 103<br>(19.2%) | 78<br>(15.2%)    |
| 1% increase | 86<br>(16%)    | 120<br>(23.4%)   |
| 2% increase | 93<br>(17.4%)  | 135<br>(26.3%)   |
| 3% increase | 159<br>(29.7%) | 164<br>(32%)     |
| No response | 95<br>(17.7%)  | 16<br>(3.1%)     |
| Total       | 536            | 513              |

Table 4: Council Tax data

These figures show the favourite option is a 3% increase. This can also be seen in figure 1.

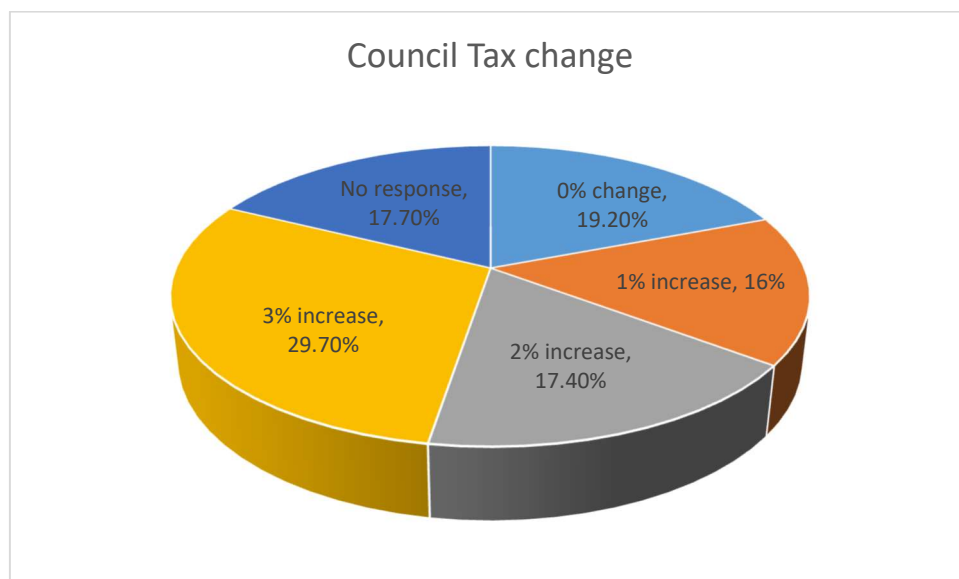


Figure 1: Council Tax change



Following on from this we asked if respondents thought that local councils should have the ability to determine council Tax without the need for a referendum if the level was above the Government's Cap.

| Option | Results 2022 | Results 2021 |
|--------|--------------|--------------|
| Yes    | 30.6%        | 37.9%        |
| No     | 69.4%        | 62.1%        |

Table 5: Council Tax data

The following comments were made in regard to this section:

- Council Tax is already a high expense for most households
- The level paid should represent the level of service provided
- Sell some assets to help keep the level low
- Increase should be kept to a minimum
- A larger than 3% increase may be required in order to maintain services

## 2.2 Fees and Charges

Historically the Council has increased its fees and charges by inflation or costs of delivery which are impacted by inflation. We asked respondents their views on which of the following options did they feel would be the best option for 2022/23.

|                                                                     |       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| Cap fees at a lower rate than inflation (4%)                        | 46.5% |
| Pause fees at the current level and increase by inflation next year | 25.8% |
| Increase fees by inflation only and review next year                | 27.7% |

Table 6: Fees and charges options

From these results it can be seen that nearly half of the respondents opted to cap fees at a lower rate than inflation (4%).

To further this data we asked what comments they wished to make and the following was highlighted:

- Need to get used to how much things cost now

- Too many people already struggling with costs
- Need to look at how costs can be reduced not increased
- Need to look at least yearly as costs/affordability can change in that time

### 2.3 Further support for residents during these times of increasing costs

Due to the increasing costs for our residents we asked if the respondents felt that we should re-prioritise funding to directly support residents or to continue existing services but to signpost residents to where additional support can be found.

|                                |       |
|--------------------------------|-------|
| Directly support residents     | 36.8% |
| Signpost to additional support | 50.7% |
| Not sure                       | 12.5% |

Table 7: Cost of living support

From those which marked to directly support residents they were asked how this support should be given (of which they could mark more than 1 option).

|                                                                         |       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| Provide direct payment such as cash or a voucher for a specific purpose | 47.5% |
| Provide services such as school breakfasts or luncheon clubs            | 66%   |
| Provide donations to foodbanks                                          | 45.5% |

Table 8: Direct support options

These questions showed that half of the respondents felt we should signpost residents to where additional support can be found rather than directly supporting them. For those who did believe we should support directly the highest option was for this to be done via services such as school breakfasts or luncheon clubs.

Residents were then asked whether they had any further comments on how the council might be able to provide support to residents. The comments included:

- No cash to be given as can be used for other things
- Breakfasts clubs should be for all schools
- Support needs to be targeted

- What about those who cannot attend luncheon clubs/foodbanks etc due to transport issues? Travel vouchers?
- Free school meals and milk should be for all children

## 2.4 Culture and Leisure Facilities

The Council provides leisure and cultural services such as Market Rasen and Gainsborough Leisure Centres and the Trinity Arts Centre. We asked respondents if they thought it was important for the Council provide this service.

|     |       |
|-----|-------|
| Yes | 71.1% |
| No  | 28.9% |

Table 9: Important to provide Leisure and Cultural Services

Nearly three quarters of the respondents felt we should enhance this service and from those we asked how they felt this enhanced service should be funded.

|                                                                                                                                                                   |       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| The user should pay higher prices to access additional services                                                                                                   | 32.1% |
| The user cannot afford higher prices and therefore services should stay the same                                                                                  | 30.6% |
| The council should look at providing a different way of providing leisure and culture such as through walking and cycling routes that are less costly to maintain | 27.5% |
| To be paid through Council Tax (an increase to all Council Tax payers)                                                                                            | 9.8%  |

Table 10: Direct support options

And to follow on from this what additional provision do they feel that West Lindsey should consider. The following options were highlighted:

- Safe and secure cycle routes would be a real asset
- More opportunities needed for children (including teenagers)
- Need for a swimming facility on the eastern side of the district
- Bring back libraries

- Better promotion of facilities already available

## 2.5 Enforcement and Rangers

Many of our communities have groups of residents who support their communities by reporting issues such as flytipping or by organising litter picks. We are grateful for all this support that these residents give to make our district a better place to live. However, some residents have raised concerns around issues such as litter, illegal parking and dog fouling.

Other authorities have introduced Community Rangers who can be on the ground within the District and be able to issue fines and notices to those contravening existing rules. We asked our respondents if this would be a scheme that they would like to see in the district.

|     |       |
|-----|-------|
| Yes | 71.3% |
| No  | 28.7% |

Table 11: Introduction of Enforcement Rangers

## 2.6 Voting on prioritisation

Five events were held in the District at Gainsborough, Market Rasen, Caistor and Nettleham. These events were a mixture of seated conversations and market stalls. At each of these events we asked respondents to vote to prioritise which of 3 areas they feel the council should focus on. These areas were:

- Enhanced leisure and cultural services such as Market Rasen Leisure Centre and Trinity Arts Centre
- Extra support to help you with the increase in the cost of living
- Greater enforcement on issues such as dog fouling, littering and street parking



| Event               | Culture | Cost of Living | Enforcement |
|---------------------|---------|----------------|-------------|
| Gainsborough Market | 4       | 14             | 18          |
| Nettleham           | 0       | 5              | 10          |
| Market Rasen Market | 28      | 9              | 14          |
| Gainsborough        | 4       | 0              | 4           |
| Caistor Market      | 6       | 11             | 6           |
| Total               | 42      | 39             | 52          |

Table 12: Priority votes

Due to the passing of our dear Queen the event at Caistor was cancelled out of respect.

As you can see the numbers are quite close with greater enforcement coming first overall.

## 2.7 Other comments relating to this consultation

Respondents were asked if there is any other comments they would like to make which has not already been covered. The comments were:

- Fly-tipping is an issue
- Transport is an issue as a rural district
- When will Market Rasen get a swimming pool?
- Education needed and where that fails enforcement
- Support our society with things like kids holiday food
- Dog fouling is an issue
- WLDC should continue to consult in this manner
- Why should fringe villages pay for the towns to have facilities?
- Thank you for the opportunity

There were a number of comments which focused on the responsibilities under other organisations such as Lincolnshire County Council and Lincolnshire Police which included:

- Better maintained road
- Street lighting to be put back on
- Police taking too much in Council Tax for level of service received
- More speed cameras needed
- Stop wasting money on the LCC Newsletter

## **3 Conclusion**

### **3.1 Response**

Response rates this year were higher than last year with 680 responses compared to 513 in 2021. Work was undertaken this year to monitor the equalities questions in regard to respondents.

### **3.2 Council Tax**

These figures show the favourite option is a 3% increase with 30% of the votes and over two thirds of the respondents said that the council should not have the ability to determine the level of council tax without a referendum.

### **3.3 Fees and Charges**

Nearly half of respondents (46.5%) felt that we should cap fees at a lower rate than inflation this year.

### **3.4 Further support for residents during these times of increasing costs**

Half of the respondents (51%) felt that we should support residents by signposting them to additional support rather than with direct support which was only 37%.

### **3.5 Culture and Leisure Facilities**

Nearly three quarters of respondents felt it is important for the Council to enhance culture and leisure facilities. However, how this enhancement would be paid was very split with no overall lead on how this should be done.

### **3.6 Enforcement and Rangers**

Nearly three quarters of respondents felt an enforcement ranger service would be a scheme that they would like to see in West Lindsey.

### **3.7 Voting on prioritisation**

From our voting schemes at events the respondents overall felt the enforcement rangers were the best option. This did change however, depending on what part of the district was voting at the time.

### **3.8 Other comments relating to this consultation**

All the comments received as part of this consultation are supplied separately and will be taken to the chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

### **3.9 Next Steps**

The following actions are recommended for 2023 budget consultation:

- To continue with the use of events to ensure that as many residents as possible can take part.
- Continue to undertake the consultation and try to make the process as easy as possible for stakeholders to take part.

## **4 Appendices**

### **Appendix A: Questionnaire**



## West Lindsey District Council Budget Consultation 2022

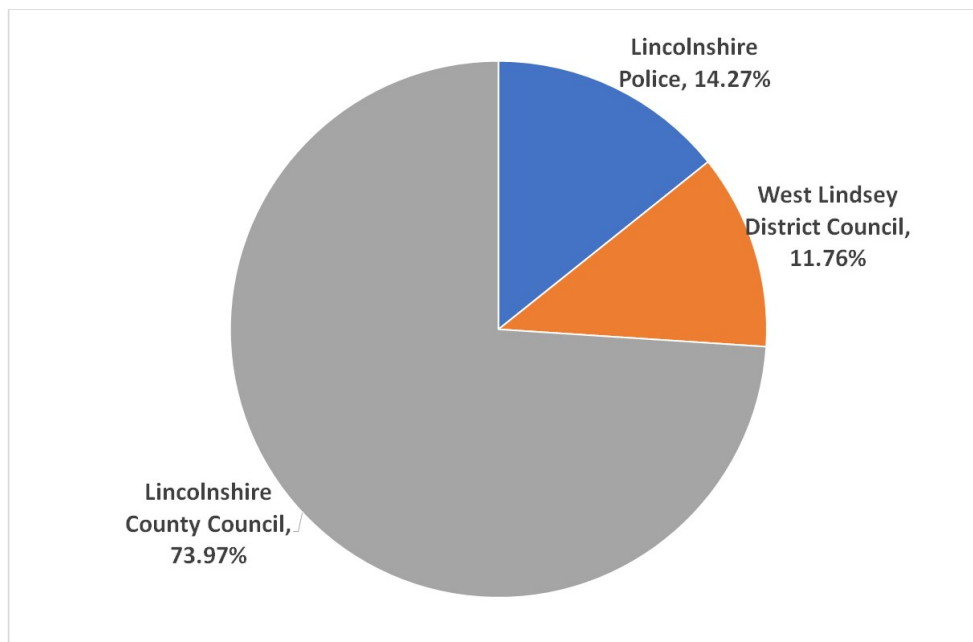
### HELPFUL HINTS FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

- Please read each question carefully. In most cases you will only have to tick one box but please read the questions carefully as sometimes you will need to tick more than one box, or write in a response.
- Once you have finished please take a minute to check you have answered all the questions that you should have answered.
- If you have any questions about this survey please email the Engagement Team on [engagement@west-lindsey.gov.uk](mailto:engagement@west-lindsey.gov.uk).

Citizen Panel reference:

### Council Tax

Local Councils, the Police and Fire Authorities fund their services through government grant, fees and charges, Business Rates and Council Tax. There is one council tax bill for each domestic dwelling whether it is a house, flat, mobile home or houseboat. We collect the council tax on behalf of Lincolnshire County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner and Parish and Town Councils. West Lindsey District Council share of your overall Council Tax is 11.8% (excluding Parish/Town Council Precepts) and funds around 47.2% of our overall budget.



1. With annual increases in costs of around 11%, what level of council tax increase would you support for 2023/24? **Please tick one box only**
- 0% change - A 0% change would give West Lindsey a total level of council tax income of £7.122m.
  - 1% increase - A 1% increase would mean a 4 pence per week increase for a band D property on the West Lindsey proportion of council tax and would give West Lindsey a total level of council tax income of £7.193m.
  - 2% increase - A 2% increase would mean a 9 pence per week increase for a band D property on the West Lindsey proportion of council tax and would give West Lindsey a total level of council tax income of £7.264m.
  - 3% increase - A 3% increase would mean a 13 pence per week increase for a band D property on the West Lindsey proportion of council tax and would give West Lindsey a total level of council tax income of £7.335m.
  - £5 Band D equivalent increase per property - A £5 increase would mean a 10 pence per week increase for a band D property on the West Lindsey proportion of council tax and would give West Lindsey a total level of council tax income of £7.278m.

2. Do you think that local councils should have the ability to determine Council Tax without the need for a referendum if above the Governments Cap? **Please tick one box only**

- Yes
- No

3. Any comments you wish to make around the level of Council Tax:

### **Fees and Charges**

4. Historically the Council has increased its fees and charges by inflation or costs of delivery which are impacted by inflation. Which of the following options do you feel would be the best option for 2023/24? **Please tick one box only**
- Cap fees at a lower rate than inflation (4%)
  - Pause fees at the current level and increase by inflation next year
  - Increase fees by inflation only and review next year

5. Any comments you wish to make regarding the fees and charges options:

### **Further support for residents during these times of increasing costs**

6. Do you feel the District Council should re-prioritise funding to directly support residents in this cost of living crisis or continue existing services and signpost residents to where additional support can be found? **Please tick one box only**
- Directly support residents - **Please go to Q7**
  - Signpost to additional support - **Please go to Culture and Leisure Facilities section**
  - Not sure - **Please go to Culture and Leisure Facilities section**

7. Should this support be either by giving cash or by providing services like school breakfasts, luncheon clubs, donations to foodbanks etc? **Please tick all that apply**
- Provide direct payment such as cash or a voucher for a specific purpose
  - Provide services such as school breakfasts or luncheon clubs
  - Provide donations to foodbanks

8. Do you have any further comments on how the Council might be able to provide support to residents:

### **Culture and Leisure Facilities**

9. The Council provides leisure and cultural services such as the Market Rasen Leisure Centre and Trinity Arts Centre in Gainsborough. Do you think it is important for the Council to provide and enhance these services? **Please tick one box only**

- Yes - **Please go to Q10**
- No - **Please go to Enforcement and Rangers section**

10. Any significant enhancement or improvement to existing services will require additional funding. Which of the following options would you support? **Please tick one box only**

- The user should pay higher prices to access additional services - **Please go to Enforcement and Rangers section**
- The user cannot afford higher prices and therefore services should stay the same - **Please go to Enforcement and Rangers section**
- The council should look at providing a different way of providing leisure and culture such as through walking and cycling routes that are less costly to maintain - **Please go to Q11**
- To be paid through Council Tax - **Please go to Enforcement and Rangers section**

11. What additional provision do you feel that West Lindsey should consider?

### **Enforcement and Rangers**

Many of our communities have groups of residents who support their communities by reporting issues such as flytipping or by organising litter picks. We are grateful for all this support that these residents give to make our district a better place to live. However, residents still have raised concerns around issues such as litter, illegal parking and dog fouling.

12. Other authorities have introduced Community Rangers who can be on the ground within the District and be able to issue fines and notices to those contravening existing rules. Is this something that you would like to see in the district? **Please tick one box only**

- Yes
- No

## Other comments relating to this consultation

13. Any other comments you wish to make regarding this consultation:

## Equalities questionnaire

By answering the equalities questions you will help us to understand how different groups of people from different areas feel about the budget consultation. All responses are anonymised and you do not have to answer these to take part in the budget consultation.

14. Are you willing to answer these questions?

- Yes
- No

15. Are you?

- Male
- Female
- Transgender
- Other
- Prefer not to say

16. Do you consider yourself disabled?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

17. What age are you?

- 16-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56-65
- 66-75
- 76 or over
- Prefer not to say

18. Which of these ethnic groups do you consider you belong?
- White - British, Irish or other
  - Black or Black British - Caribbean, African or other
  - Asian or Asian British - Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi or other
  - Arab/Middle Eastern
  - Chinese
  - Mixed Race
  - Other
  - Prefer not to say
19. Which of the following best describes your faith/religion/belief?
- No religion
  - Christian (all denominations)
  - Muslim
  - Buddhist
  - Sikh
  - Hindu
  - Jewish
  - Other faith
  - Prefer not to say
20. Which of the following statements best describes your sexuality?
- Heterosexual/Straight
  - Lesbian/Gay
  - Bisexual
  - Other
  - Prefer not to say

Thank you very much for your time completing this questionnaire.  
Please ensure this questionnaire is returned by 9am on Monday 3rd October 2022

**If you would like a copy of this in large, clear print, audio, Braille or in another language, please call 01427 676676 email [customer.services@west-lindsey.gov.uk](mailto:customer.services@west-lindsey.gov.uk)**

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