

Appendix G

Budget consultation (You Choose) 2017/18

The funding we receive from Central Government has been reducing year on year since 2010 and this trend will continue over the next three years of our medium term financial strategy.

By the end of the 2016/17 financial year, the Council will have achieved £11m of savings and efficiencies since 2010, the start of the Government's austerity programme. The Council's average council tax has remained frozen throughout the same period.

Our financial priorities are being reviewed in setting the budget for 2017/18 with these ongoing pressures; an important part of this process is engaging and consulting with local residents on these priorities.

A budget consultation survey was launched on our website to find out how our residents would allocate the budget for 2017/18, in particular with a view to find £564k of savings; this survey began on 21 November 2016 and ran until 19 December 2016.

The survey uses YouChoose online consultation software and shows the cost of service areas as well as potential areas to increase income and make efficiencies. Survey participants can use 'sliding' indicators to adjust spending on certain service areas and to read information on potential impact of budget cuts; there are also options to agree income and efficiency initiatives. YouChoose guides survey participants to balance budgets before submitting and also allows free text suggestions on other areas where savings could be made.

By the end of the consultation period, there were 47 responses. This is 6 more than the number of responses received in the previous year.

Expenditure

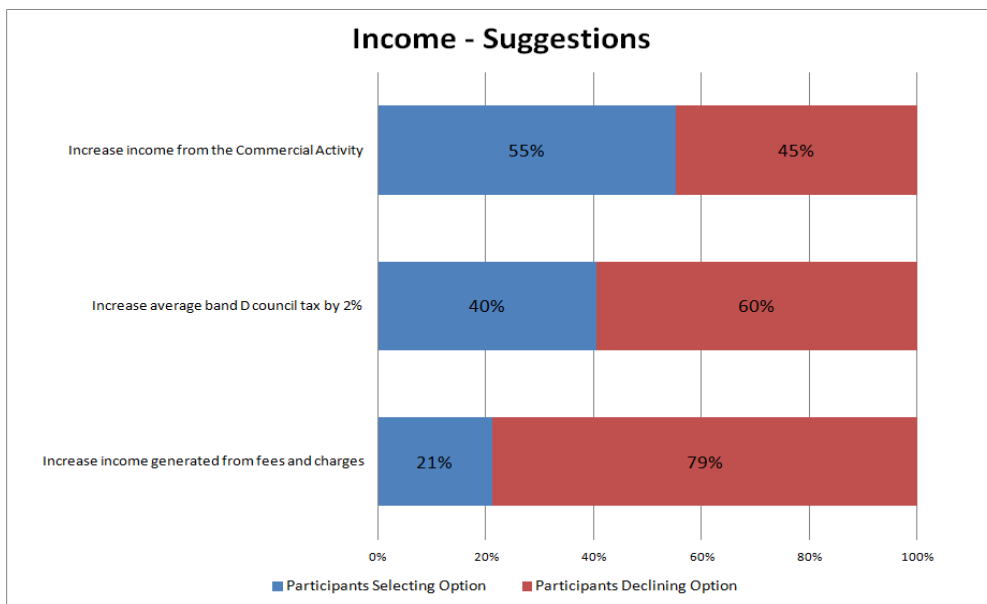
Survey participants were asked to choose how much money is spent in different areas each year. The table below shows that overall, survey participants in 2017/18 chose to reduce spending on all service areas except for Environment services which they would like to see an increase:

Service Area	17/18: Average change to Budget proposed by survey participants (%)	16/17: Average change to Budget proposed by survey participants (%)
Resources	-8.02%	-14.75%
Housing and Community	-5.90%	-5.79%
Policy and Culture	-11.49%	-15.89%
Environment	1.97%	-4.27%
Public Health & Protection	-0.36%	-3.66%
Planning	-5.99%	-11.11%
Law and Administration	-10.03%	-12.01%
TOTAL	-4.63%	-11.18%

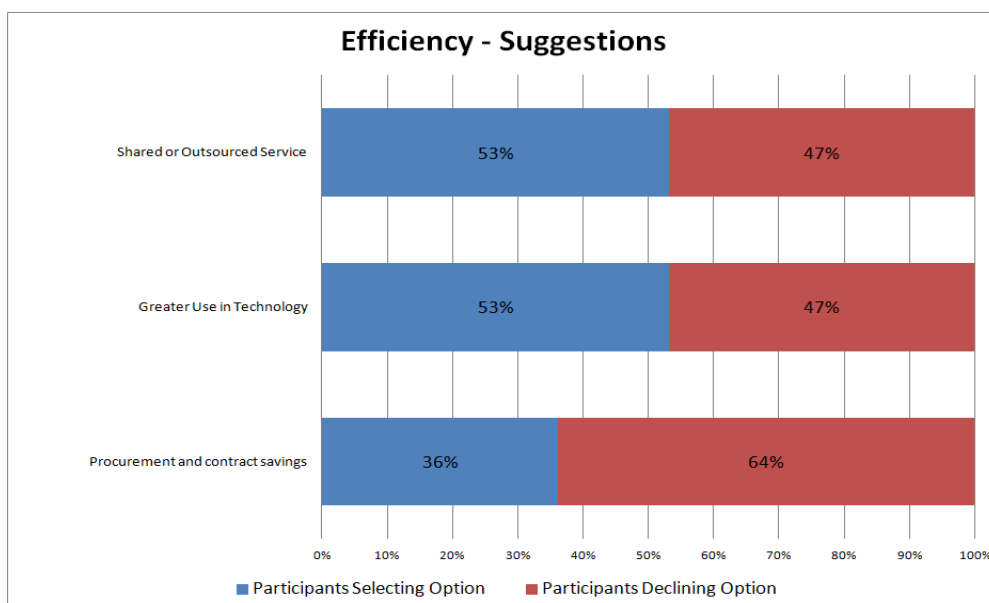
Overall, respondents wished to cut expenditure less than in the previous year consultation response. This will largely be due to the reduced savings target. The service areas Resources, Planning Housing and Community, Policy and Culture & Law and Administration, all saw more than a 5% reduction in proposed budget cuts by respondents. Consistent with last year is that respondents felt the service area with the largest proportion of cuts should be Policy and Culture.

Income & Efficiencies

Survey participants were presented with three ways in which the council can generate money, of which they could choose as few or as many as they desired; their choices are shown below:



Survey participants were presented with a choice of three ways in which the council can increase efficiency from which participants were asked to select their preferred options. These are shown in the graph below:



Summary

The budget consultation enabled residents to give their views on how to balance the budget. There was also the opportunity for residents to offer their own suggestions.

The comments received were sometimes in conflict to the results of the sliding scale income and efficiency results and there was not a strong consensus for ways to balance the budget. For example, 60% of respondents declined an increase in council tax and yet multiple comments were received that acknowledged an increase in council tax is now appropriate, after a seven year freeze. Another comment received from more than one respondent was the wish that more services are provided in-house rather than outsourced and yet 53% of respondents selected the use of shared services or outsourcing for generating efficiency.

In contrast to previous surveys when residents suggested they would prefer an increase in fees and charges rather than a cut in service delivery, only 21% of respondents this year selected an increase in fees and charges to generate income. Although multiple respondents suggested a parking permit scheme and 55% of respondents agreed with generating income from commercial activity.

Responses were received suggesting a reduction in non-essential expenditures, along with reducing costs by being more efficient.