
Report To:	Policy and Resources Committee	Date:	4 February 2020
Report By:	Steven McNab, Head of Organisational Development, Policy and Communications	Report No:	PR/02/20/SMcN/KB
Contact Officer:	Karen Barclay, Corporate Policy Officer	Contact No:	01475 712065
Subject:	Analysis of the Results from the Budget Consultation 2019		

1.0 PURPOSE

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of the analysis of the results from the Budget Consultation 2019.

2.0 SUMMARY

2.1 A total of 802 people responded to the Budget Consultation 2019, a decrease of 42% on the 2018 exercise.

2.2 The Consultation focused on 30 budget saving proposals (excluding charges) which were grouped around the three Council Directorates:

- Education, Communities and Organisational Development
- Environment, Regeneration and Resources
- Health and Social Care Partnership.

2.3 Additionally, questions were included on the following topics:

- Increase charges
- Council Tax
- Profile information.

2.4 Support for the budget saving proposals ranged from 75% (*Stop publication of InView*) to 14% (*Reduction of long term care placements for older people and adults*).

2.5 When reviewing the results of the Consultation, it is important to take into consideration the profile details of respondents. Of the people who answered the profile questions, the majority are in employment and of working age.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- a. takes cognisance of the feedback provided during the Budget Consultation 2019 when considering decisions about the Council's Budget 2020/23.

Ruth Binks

Corporate Director Education, Communities and Organisational Development

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Inverclyde Council, like many other public sector organisations, is facing a very difficult and challenging financial situation. As a result of reductions in Government funding and increasing demand for certain services, the Council needs to make substantial savings.
- 4.2 We launched our Budget Consultation 2019 on 21 October 2019 and closed it on 30 November 2019. A total of 802 people responded to the Consultation during that period.
- 4.3 While the number of respondents to last year's Budget Consultation represents a decrease of 42% on the 2018 exercise, it is broadly similar to the number of people (970) who submitted their views during the Budget Consultation 2017/18 and is still a good response rate for a consultation of this type.
- 4.4 It is difficult to determine accurately the reasons for the fluctuation in the response rates. However, a factor that may be relevant is the timing of the Consultations:

Year	Period of Consultation	Number of responses
2017/18	16 November 2016-9 January 2017	970
2018	15 January 2018-11 February 2018	1,373
2019	21 October 2019-30 November 2019	802.

The figures in the above table could suggest that carrying out Budget Consultations in the last quarter of the year is not a popular time for local people to provide their views.

- 4.5 Additionally, when reviewing the response rates, it is important to bear in mind that the range of budget saving proposals that are included in each Budget Consultation will inevitably attract varying attention from individuals or groups of people, depending on what their interests and priorities may be.
- 4.6 A presentation on the headline results from the Consultation was delivered to the Elected Members on 18 December 2019.
- 4.7 A number of stakeholder groups were invited to participate in the Budget Consultation 2019 including Inverclyde residents and visitors; Council employees and Trades Unions; and the local business community. Additionally, to increase the breadth of the Consultation process, a number of so-called *hard to reach* stakeholders were also invited to take part including young people, older people and special interest groups.
- 4.8 If the current budget saving proposals were also included in the Budget Consultations 2017/18 and 2018, the relevant responses have been incorporated into this report, as appropriate. Where the 2017 and 2018 budget saving proposals are not exactly the same, ones that are meaningfully comparable are shown in italics throughout the report.

5.0 METHODOLOGY

- 5.1 The main method by which people were invited to make their views heard on the Council's Budget 2020/23 was via the Council's electronic Budget Simulator. The benefits of utilising an electronic method include:
- it is user friendly – quick to complete
 - the response rate can be easily monitored and publicity tailored to suit
 - sustainable option – zero print and postage costs
 - it supports the Council's digitalisation agenda.
- 5.2 Of the total number of people who took part in the Budget Consultation 2019, around 200 respondents provided their views via paper submissions which were later input to the Budget Simulator.

5.3 Additionally, as reported to the Policy and Resources Committee in 2015, during the Budget Consultation 2015, electronic means were a popular method used by respondents; 43% of people expressed their views via the on-line Budget Simulator while just over a fifth (20.2%) sent an email to yoursay@inverclyde.gov.uk .

6.0 KEY AREAS OF THE CONSULTATION

6.1 The Consultation focused on budget saving proposals which were grouped around the three Council Directorates:

- Education, Communities and Organisational Development
- Environment, Regeneration and Resources
- Health and Social Care Partnership.

6.2 Additionally, questions were included on the following topics:

- Increase charges
- Council Tax
- Profile information.

7.0 RESULTS: BUDGET CONSULTATION 2019

7.1 A total of 30 budget saving proposals (excluding charges) were included in the Budget Consultation 2019. Support for the budget saving proposals ranged from 75% (*Stop publication of InView*) to 14% (*Reduction of long term care placements for older people and adults*).

8.0 RESULTS: EDUCATION, COMMUNITIES AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

8.1 This section of the Consultation comprised 17 budget saving proposals.

8.2 When asked about the budget savings proposals from the Education, Communities and Organisational Development Directorate, the responses were:

	Agree with budget proposal		
	2019 %	2018 %	2017 %
Stop publication of <i>InView</i> • £0.007 million, 0 employees	75	-	-
Free swimming only available during the school holidays (<i>Swimming for under 16 year olds</i>) • £0.1 million, 0 employees	64	-	49 (introduce a charge)
Reduce Inverclyde Leisure management fee • £0.242 million, 0 employees	63	-	-
Reduce under 19s sports grants and grants to voluntary organisations (<i>Subsidised team sports for under 19 year olds</i>) • £0.085 million, 0 employees	51	37	41
Community hall waivers • £0.035 million, 0 employees	49	-	-

Reduce funding for self-managed community centres • £0.078 million, 0 employees	46	-	-
Remove additional free fruit for primary schools • £0.015 million, 0 employees	44	-	-
Reduction in library services • £0.246 million, 8 employees	43	-	-
Reduction in school music services • £0.103 million, 1.6 employees	41	-	-
Removal of play schemes subsidy • £0.052 million, 0 employees	39	-	-
Reduce the number of educational psychology staff • £0.069 million, 1 employee	38	-	-
Closure of community centres • £0.046 million, 1 employee	37	-	-
Community learning and development budget reduction • £0.123 million, 3 employees	36	-	-
Closure of early years Glenbrae out of school care • £0.032 million, 1.5 employees	34	-	-
Reduction in Home Link Workers • £0.113 million, 3 employees	33	-	-
Reduction in teaching staff • £0.552 million, 11.5 employees	20	-	-
Reduction in Classroom Assistants in schools • £0.2 million, 10 employees	19	-	-

8.3

- **Commentary**

The most popular budget saving proposal from the Education, Communities and Organisational Development Directorate – and indeed from the whole Consultation process - was stopping the publication of InView, with three quarters of respondents (75%) agreeing that the Council newspaper should be discontinued.

Almost two thirds of respondents (64%) agreed with the proposal to make free swimming only available during the school holidays, while, two years ago, just under half (49%) of people agreed that a charge should be introduced for swimming for under 16 year olds.

Meanwhile, only a third of respondents (33%) supported the proposal to reduce the number of Home Link Workers; this may be because, unlike the three most popular budget saving proposals in this Directorate, this one would impact on three members of staff.

The two least popular budget saving proposals in the Education, Communities and Organisational Development Directorate concerned employees who are based in our educational establishments. Only around a fifth of respondents (20% and 19% respectively) agreed with the proposals to reduce teaching staff and to reduce the number of Classroom Assistants in schools.

9.0 RESULTS: ENVIRONMENT, REGENERATION AND RESOURCES

9.1 This section of the Consultation comprised 11 budget saving proposals.

9.2 When asked about the savings proposals from the Environment, Regeneration and Resources Directorate, the responses were:

	Agree with budget proposal		
	2019 %	2018 %	2017 %
Reduction in Community Warden staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £0.211 million, 8 employees 	53	59	62
Reduce frequency of the food waste collection service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £0.104 million, 2 employees 	51	-	-
Reduction in Benefits and Council Tax processing staff (<i>Benefits services</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £0.102 million, 4 employees 	50	45	-
Reduction in Customer Service Centre and Registration services staff (<i>2018: Customer services, Greenock - reduction in resources; 2017: Customer Service Centres</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £0.1 million, 4 employees 	46	48	64
Reduction in employability activities (<i>2018: Employability; 2017: Support for getting people into work and job retention</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £0.1 million, 0 employees 	46	47	46
Reduction in frontline grounds maintenance budget of 15% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £0.238 million, 6 employees 	38	-	-
Closure of 4 public toilets (<i>2017: Public conveniences</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £0.047 million, 1 employee 	38	-	53
Further reduction in employability activities (<i>Support for getting people into work and job retention</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £0.275 million, 0 employees 	36	47	46
CCTV – reduction in monitoring hours (<i>CCTV</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £0.068 million, 3 employees 	35	30	36
Reduction in the burial grounds and cremation service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £0.089 million, 4 employees 	29	-	-
Reduction in the frontline street cleaning budget of 15% (<i>Street cleaning</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £0.243 million, 9 employees 	22	25	26

9.3

- **Commentary**

While reducing the number of Community Wardens was the most popular budget saving proposal in the Environment, Regeneration and Resources Directorate, support for this has declined year-on-year, dropping from 62% in 2017 to 53% two years later.

Just over half of respondents (51%) agreed that the frequency of the food waste collection service should be reduced. It may be the case that local residents are now more accepting of changes to their refuse collection arrangements, following the withdrawal of the kerbside glass recycling service in 2018.

Reducing the number of Benefits and Council Tax processing staff was supported by exactly half (50%) of respondents; this figure represents an increase of 5% from the 2018 budget saving proposal regarding Benefits services.

Following a fall between 2017 and 2018, the number of people who supported a reduction in CCTV monitoring hours (35%) returned to almost the same level as two years ago. (It should be noted that the previous two budget saving proposals around this topic were simply entitled *CCTV*.)

Finally, between 2017 and 2019, there was a small reduction (of 4%) in the number of respondents who supported a reduction in the frontline street cleaning budget, down from 26% to 22%.

10.0 RESULTS: HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE PARTNERSHIP

10.1 This section of the Consultation comprised two budget saving proposals.

10.2 When asked about the savings proposals under the Health and Social Care Partnership, the responses were:

	Agree with budget proposal		
	2019 %	2018 %	2017 %
Reduction in support workers – fieldwork services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £0.091 million, 3.5 employees 	24	-	-
Reduction of long term care placements for older people and adults <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £0.235 million, 0 employees 	14	-	-

10.3

- **Commentary**

The number of respondents who supported the Health and Social Care Partnership's two budget saving proposals is fairly low at 24% and 14% respectively. In fact, the latter proposal attracted the least support of all during the Budget Consultation 2019.

Local residents' views on these budget saving proposals may reflect the desire to protect services for the more vulnerable members of our community, including young people and older Inverclyde residents.

11.0 RESULTS: INCREASE CHARGES

11.1 The next part of the Consultation asked people's views on the possibility of introducing or increasing charges on five services provided by the Council and the responses were as follows:

	Agree to increase charges		
	2019 %	2018 %	2017 %
New £1 charge for under 16s swimming (<i>Swimming for under 16 year olds</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £0.04 million 	68	-	51 (introduce a charge)
Increase charities' waste charge to 100% of regular trade rates (<i>Commercial waste</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £0.024 million 	48	61	-
Increase charging for community alarms (<i>2017: Introduce charges for older persons' community alarms</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £0.02 million 	44	58	21 (introduce a charge)
New and increased roads services charges (<i>Parking – increase existing charges</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £0.062 million 	42	44	49 (by \geq 10%)
Introduce charges for older people's day services (<i>Meals on wheels, meals at day centres and support at home charges</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £0.055 million 	26	36	-

11.2

- Commentary**

More than two thirds of respondents (68%) agreed that a charge of £1 should be introduced for under 16 year olds who wish to swim in Inverclyde; this represents an 8% increase since 2017 when 60% of people agreed that an (unspecified) charge should be introduced for swimming for under 16s. Additionally, it may be helpful to view the response to this budget saving proposal alongside the one around free swimming only being available during the school holidays, as mentioned at paragraph 8.3.

Just under half of respondents (48%) supported the proposal to increase the charities' waste charge to 100% of the regular waste rate. While the charities that would be impacted by this budget saving proposal provide support to many local residents, the response may reflect the fact that some respondents do not consider that they would be directly impacted by the increased charge.

In terms of community alarms, in 2017, just over a fifth of respondents (21%) agreed that the Council should introduce a charge for older persons' community alarms. The following year, 58% of people said that the fees for community alarms should be increased, while, in 2019, this figure dropped by 14% to 44%. It should, however, be noted that, in 2017, the fact that the budget saving proposal was entitled *Older persons' community alarms* may have influenced people's responses at that time.

There has been a year-on-year decrease in the number of respondents who expressed support for increased parking charges, reducing from 49% in 2017 to 42% in 2019. While the 2019 budget saving proposal is entitled *New and increased roads services charges*, it

includes provision to introduce charges for parking permits which are currently available at no cost to householders who reside in the relevant parts of Inverclyde. As this is a service that is used by some people on a regular basis, it is likely that the view of those respondents is that they will be directly impacted by an increase in those charges.

A fairly low number of respondents (26%) agreed that the Council should introduce charges for older people's day services (which include day care, catering and transport). In 2017, the budget proposal entitled *Meals on wheels, meals at day centres and support at home charges* was supported by just over a third of respondents (36%). The reduction in support for this budget saving proposal in 2019 - and for the one around increasing charges for community alarms - may reflect people's view that services for the more vulnerable members of our community should be protected.

12.0 SURVEY RESULTS: COUNCIL TAX

12.1 We introduced the final section of the Consultation by advising participants that a 3% increase in Council Tax would generate £0.95 million in extra income for the Council, adding that this would, in turn, reduce the amount of savings required.

The following table outlines the responses to the question about whether there should be an increase in Council Tax in Inverclyde, together with replies received when the same question was asked during previous Budget Consultations:

	2019 %	2018 %	2017 %
Yes	58	66	68
No	42	34	32.

12.2 The next question asked how much people thought the Council Tax should be increased by; respondents provided the following answers:

	2019 %	2018 %	2017 %
1%	45	36	24
2%	31	20	28
3%	25	44	48.

12.3

- **Commentary**

While more than half of respondents agreed with the proposal to increase Council Tax in Inverclyde, the level of support has reduced by 10% since 2017, dropping from 68% at that time to 58% in 2019.

In terms of the level of the Council Tax rise, an increase of 1% was the most popular. The number of people who agreed with such an increase almost doubled during the last two years, rising from 24% in 2017 to 45% in 2019.

Following a decrease of 8% between 2017 and 2018 (falling from 28% to 20%), we saw support for a 2% Council Tax increase again to 31% in 2019. Meanwhile, between 2017 and 2019, there was a marked drop (of 23%) in the number of people who were in favour of a 3% Council Tax increase, decreasing from 48% in 2017 to 25% two years later.

Some respondents said they were not in favour of increasing the Council Tax, given that a charge is to be introduced for the collection of brown bins.

A number of comments were made relating to the charges for higher Banded properties, which refer to the changes to Council Tax by the Scottish Government which were

effective from April 2017. Additionally, calls were made for a review of Council Tax Bands, something over which the Council has no direct control.

Finally, some people said that a rise in Council Tax could make Inverclyde an unaffordable place for them to live and that they may consider moving away from the area.

- 12.4 As Members will be aware, on 21 February 2019, the Council opted to increase the Council Tax by 4.79% for 2019/20. This means that, in the current financial year, the Council Tax for a Band D property in Inverclyde is £1,293.05.

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13.0 COMMENTS ABOUT THE COUNCIL'S BUDGET

- 13.1 As well as providing their views via the budget simulator, respondents made a number of comments about the budget saving proposals in the three Council Directorates, as well as on the subjects of increasing charges and Council Tax; these are available on request from the Head of Organisational Development, Policy and Communications.

14.0 PROFILE QUESTIONS

- 14.1 So that we can best respond to the needs of different local residents, a set of profile questions was incorporated into the Budget Consultation 2019, the responses to which will help the Council to ensure it treats everyone fairly and equitably. The replies to the profile questions, together with the responses from the Budget Consultations 2017 and 2018, are outlined in paragraphs 14.2-14.6. It should be noted, however, that not everyone who participated in the Consultation chose to answer the profile questions.

14.2 Gender

	2019 %	2018 %	2017 %
Female	56	48	53
Male	43	51	47
Transgender	1	1	0.

14.3 Age

	2019 %	2018 %	2017 %
Under 16 years	4	13	3
16-24 years	5	10	
25-34 years	16	12	15
35-44 years	23	21	25
45-54 years	22	21	29
55-64 years	19	15	21
65-74 years	8	7	7
Over 75 years	2	1	1.

14.4 Employment status

	2019 %	2018 %	2017 %
Full-time employment	49	56	66
Part-time employment	12	12	14
Self-employed	3	4	3

Unemployed	6	2	1
Student	7	10	2
Carer	1	1	0
Long-term illness/disabled	3	1	2
Looking after house/children	3	1	2
Retired	15	11	10
Other	1	2	0.

14.5 Geographical area

	2019 %	2018 %	2017 %
Greenock	56	59	56
Gourock	18	18	20
Port Glasgow	18	13	12
Kilmacolm	3	7	6
Wemyss Bay	6	4	5.

14.6

- **Commentary**

Following an increase of 20% between 2017 and 2018 in the number of respondents aged 24 and under, the number of young people who participated in last year's Budget Consultation fell by 14% to 9%. While it is difficult to say with any certainty why the number of responses from any of the age ranges varies from year to year, the drop in the number of young people who provided their views may be explained by the fact that our secondary school pupils were allocated protected time in school to participate in the Budget Consultation 2018; this was not the case during last year's exercise. However, it should be noted that 2019 figure is still three times higher than the corresponding number of respondents from 2017.

Despite a decrease (of 19% between 2017 and 2019) in the number of employed people who provided their views during the Budget Consultation 2019, this group still make up the majority of respondents at almost two thirds (64%).

Finally, in terms of the Budget Consultation 2019, the split of respondents by geographical area is broadly similar to that of previous Consultations. However, it may be worth noting that the number of respondents from Kilmacolm is down from previous years while we saw a very small increase in the number of people from Wemyss Bay (and Inverkip) who participated in this year's Consultation.

15.0 IMPLICATIONS

15.1 Financial implications - one-off costs:

Cost centre	Budget heading	Budget year	Proposed spend this report	Virement from	Other comments
n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Financial implications - annually recurring costs/(savings):

Cost centre	Budget heading	With effect from	Annual net impact	Virement from	Other comments
n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

15.2 Human Resources: There are no direct human resources implications arising from this report.

15.3 Legal: There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

15.4 Equalities

Equalities

(a) Has an Equalities Impact Assessment been carried out?

X	Yes. Equalities Impact Assessments have been carried out on the Budget Saving Proposals 2019.
	No. This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, no Equalities Impact Assessment is required.

(b) Fairer Scotland Duty

If this report affects or proposes any major strategic direction:-

Has there been active consideration of how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome?

X	Yes. A written statement showing how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed. The details are included in the Equalities Impact Assessments which were carried out on the Budget Saving Proposals 2019.
	No.

(c) Data Protection

Has a Data Protection Assessment been carried out?

X	Yes. This report involves data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals. A Data Protection Impact Assessment was carried out on the Budget Consultation 2019.
	No.

15.5 Budget Consultation 2019 survey and comments.

Budget Consultation 2018 survey and comments.

Budget Consultation 2017 survey.

16.0 CONCLUSION

16.1 The results of the Budget Consultation 2019 are presented for consideration by the Committee with the request that cognisance is taken of the feedback when considering decisions about the Council's Budget 2020/23.