



## Annex 2b

A summary of responses to Cheshire East Council's

# Budget Consultation 2023 – 2027



# Executive summary

## Introduction

The Cheshire East Council 2022 / 2023 budget consultation was conducted between 6 January and 30 January 2023, on a draft Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2023 to 2027.

In total, there were 2,267 consultation engagements, including 1,417 online survey completions, 269 social media comments, 232 attendees at budget consultation events, 170 budget webpage comments, and 179 emails, letters and other responses.

The number of budget consultation engagements in 2023 (2,267) was significantly higher than in previous years – 6 times as many budget consultation engagements as received in 2022.

## The top 25 MTFS proposals

The draft Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2023 to 2027 included 122 budget investment or saving proposals.

In order to help respondents navigate the proposals during the consultation, the council highlighted the 25 top proposals which it considered the most significant. Some of these proposals were grouped together for convenience.

Within the consultation survey, respondents were asked to indicate whether they supported or opposed each of these top 25 MTFS proposals.

## 12 proposals received strong net<sup>1</sup> support

The 12 proposals that received strong net support are shown in the table below.

Budget proposal	Net Support / Opposition	% Not sure / Not enough info. to decide	No. survey responses	No. public comments, emails & letter responses
[57] Reduce cost of Democracy	82%	9%	665	0
[38] Review commissioned services across Children and Families Directorate	40%	31%	551	0
[105] Energy saving measures from streetlights	39%	14%	756	5

<sup>1</sup> Net levels of support or opposition are calculated by subtracting the % of respondents that oppose a proposal, from the % that support a proposal. For example, if 86% of respondents support the budget proposal “[25] Reduce cost of democracy”, and 4% oppose it, the net level of support = 82%

[8 & 12] Home First Strategy	39%	21%	629	1
[68] Office Estate Rationalisation	38%	16%	641	25
[101] Household Waste and Recycling Centres - introduce residency checks	36%	13%	859	1
[35] Integrated Children's Service Strategy	32%	31%	575	0
[1, 2, 3 & 5] Investment to address demand in adult social care	26%	29%	653	0

Whilst these proposals received strong net support, some still received strong local opposition, or received nuanced feedback, for example:

**Proposal 105 (Energy savings measures from streetlights)** – While showing strong net support of 39% overall, there was concern of the impact of this proposal on rural communities, and for the safety of those walking in urban areas, particularly females

**Proposal 68 (Office Estate Rationalisation)** – While showing strong net support of 38% overall, the proposal to relocate Macclesfield Library received much local opposition

**Proposal 101 (HWRC residency checks)** – While showing strong net support of 36% overall, some felt the relatively small scale of savings (£21,000) were not worth the inconvenience and increased waiting times for both HWRC users and staff, plus it was felt not to be an environmentally friendly proposal

## 8 proposals received marginal net<sup>1</sup> support or opposition

The 8 proposals that received marginal net support or opposition are shown in the table below.

Budget proposal	Net Support / Opposition	% Not sure / Not enough info. to decide	No. survey responses	No. public comments, emails & letter responses
[11] Adult social care: Client contribution yield offsetting growth	17%	37%	557	0
[24] School transport pressures	12%	29%	598	1
[10, 20 & 22] Learning Disabilities Future Service Development and Review	7%	30%	568	2
[90] Strategic Leisure Review	4%	35%	695	2
[91] Maintenance of green spaces	3%	11%	822	14
[108] Parking	-5%	31%	826	12

The proposals receiving marginal net support or opposition did so either because respondents felt they did not have enough information to make a decision either way, or because the issue was very polarising with strong levels of support alongside strong levels of opposition.

Some of these proposals also received strong local opposition, or received nuanced feedback, for example:

**Proposal 11 (Adult social care: Client contribution yield offsetting growth)** – A high proportion of respondents were not sure whether they supported or opposed this proposal, or felt they did not have enough information to decide (35%). This may indicate more information or consultation is required.

**Proposal 22 (Building based Day Services)** – This proposal received strong localised opposition from Knutsford residents who were opposed to the closure of Stanley Centre, including from Knutsford Town Council and Knutsford & District Lions Club. Respondents felt the budget consultation was not a sufficient consultation process for this proposal.

**Proposal 91 (Maintenance of green spaces)** – Although showing marginal support, this proposal was very polarising – with 47% support and 43% opposition. Many were concerned about the potential detrimental effect of the proposal on the aesthetics of local areas.

**Proposal 108 (Parking)** – Another proposal which is very polarising, with 32% support and 37% opposition, though a significant proportion also felt they did not have enough information to make a decision (31%). Respondents stressed the importance car parking charges play on town centre vitality, felt that a consistent charging policy across Cheshire East is needed as the current one is felt to be unfair, but also stressed that each town and car park has its own unique characteristics meaning applying the same charges everywhere might not be appropriate. They felt a car parking policy for the whole of Cheshire East is required, but maybe one that sets variable charges for each car park depending on factors such as: current occupancy rates; quality of the town’s offer; car parks usage e.g. access to key services such as GPs; quality of local competition etc. Ultimately respondents stressed that setting car parking charges too high has and could undermine the success of CE high streets, in turn reducing council income from business rates etc, and while the council must maximise income from car parks, respondents felt that can't be at the expense of town centre footfall.

## 5 proposals received strong net<sup>1</sup> opposition

The 5 proposals that received strong net opposition are shown in the table below.

Budget proposal	Net Support / Opposition	% Not sure / Not enough info. to decide	No. survey responses	No. public comments, emails & letter responses
[117] Council Tax % increase	-27%	14%	810	29
[103] Local Bus	-39%	22%	748	17
[104] Highways	-46%	21%	809	21

[93] Libraries - Service Review	-58%	8%	1126	187
[92] Review Waste Collection Service - Green Waste	-66%	7%	937	51

Of the 120 proposals included in the MTFS for 2023 to 2027, these 5 proposals received the most significant levels of opposition:

**Proposal 117 (Council Tax % increase)** – A 4.99% Council Tax increase was deeply unpopular with many residents (-27% net opposition), with many simply stating they would not be able to pay this increase in Council Tax, especially during a cost of living crisis which many are already struggling with. Respondents also questioned how this year's MTFS represents good value for residents when Council Tax is increasing significantly, at the same time as key services are being cut. Some felt the council has to live within its means more or increase taxes on the most affluent residents.

**Proposal 108 (Local Bus)** – Another unpopular proposal that gained 59% opposition and 20% support. Respondents feel buses are an essential service especially for some of the most vulnerable residents in Cheshire East including rural residents, the elderly and those living in the least affluent households. Respondents also questioned how this proposal compliments the council's environmental, Active Travel and car park charging ambitions.

**Proposal 108 (Highways)** – Another unpopular proposal that gained 62% opposition and 17% support. Respondents stressed the importance to them of fixing potholes, and of good road condition and highway maintenance. Some strongly felt there should be no reduction in funding for some of these services, and that all new road building should be put on hold with funds diverted from there to maintain the existing network.

**Proposal 108 (Libraries - Service review)** – This proposal received a huge amount of feedback, with 1,126 survey completions, and 187 responses in the form of public comments, emails and letters. It also received a very large level of opposition, with 75% opposition and just 17% support. Respondents simply felt the proposal to reduce library opening hours is wrong, especially on Saturdays which is the only day those who work, and families, can visit. They felt that libraries have evolved to become community hubs, and now act as the council's main customer facing contact points, and that reducing hours would further distance the council from the communities it serves. Some suggested that reducing library opening hours would lead to demonstration and would cause reputational damage to the council. They implored the council to explore alternative solutions instead of service reduction.

**Proposal 108 (Review Waste Collection Service - Green Waste)** – This proposal was also deeply unpopular, with 79% of respondents opposed to it and just 13% in support. Respondents felt this proposal was completely at odds with the council's aims of becoming environmentally friendly, given people would put their green waste

in black bins or fly-tip their waste rather than paying. They also felt this to be a “stealth tax” which should be covered by Council Tax.

## Conclusions

### A significant budget consultation response

The response to the budget consultation this year has been extraordinary as compared to recent years – the high number of responses received highlights the level of feeling about the proposals in this year’s MTFS, and is especially significant given the shortened timescale of this year’s budget consultation.

### General support for the MTFS

That said, despite the high level of response, and the opposition to a Council Tax rise of 4.99%, there does seem to be a general support for proposals.

Of the 25 top proposals focused on in the survey, 12 received strong net<sup>2</sup> support, and none of the proposals outside of the 25 top proposals received significant levels of feedback or opposition.

This does suggest that the vast majority of the proposals in the MTFS for 2023 to 2027 are supported (109 out of 122 proposals).

The most complex proposals in the MTFS for 2023 to 2027	Reasons for complexity
[92] Review Waste Collection Service - Green Waste	Strong net opposition
[93] Libraries - Service Review	Strong net opposition
[104] Highways	Strong net opposition
[103] Local Bus	Strong net opposition
[117] Council Tax % increase	Strong net opposition
[108] Parking	Polarise resident opinion, Extremely nuanced
[91] Maintenance of green spaces	Polarise resident opinion
[90] Strategic Leisure Review	Polarise resident opinion
[10, 20 & 22] Learning Disabilities Future Service Development and Review	Strong localised opposition
[24] School transport pressures	Polarise resident opinion
[11] Adult social care: Client contribution yield offsetting growth	More information required
[68] Office Estate Rationalisation	Strong localised opposition

## **Meaningful consultation and co-design of proposals**

Given the potential impact these proposals could have on the future of Cheshire East communities, given the complexity of some of these proposals, and given the strength of opposition to some of them, it is strongly recommended that meaningful consultation on proposals takes place before they are adopted.

In order that proposals are successfully delivered, it is recommended that proposals are co-designed through pre-consultation engagement with relevant stakeholders and communities, prior to being formally consulted on for final approval. It may be there are viable alternative ways of making savings on all proposals which have not yet been considered.

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# Introduction

## Purpose of the consultation

The Cheshire East Council 2022 / 2023 budget consultation was conducted between 6 January and 30 January 2023.

The council promoted its budget consultation through a dedicated webpage at [www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/budgetengagement](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/budgetengagement).

The council published a full draft Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) document on this webpage which was consulted on.

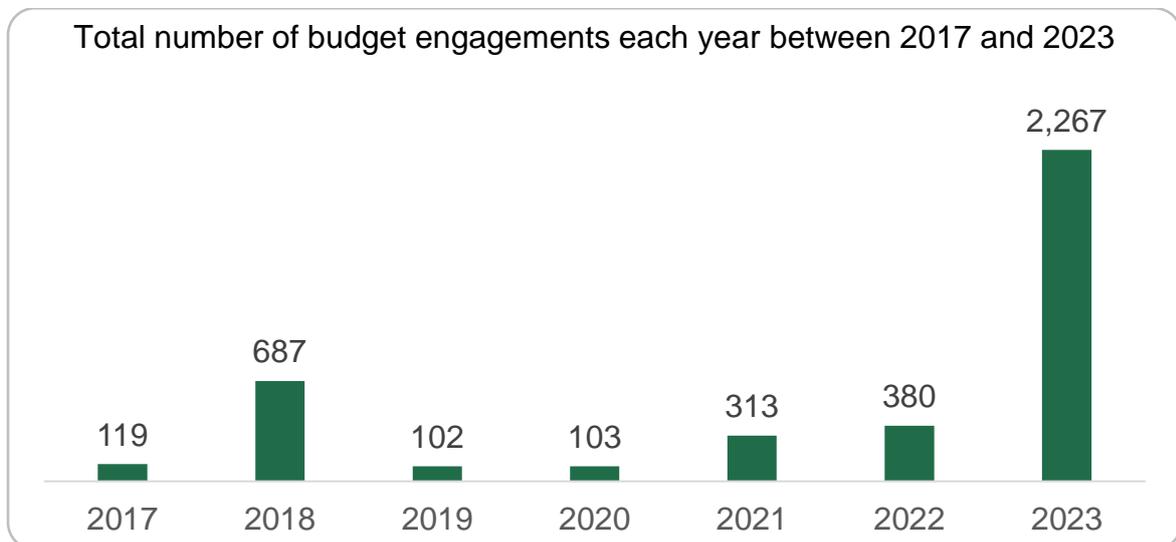
Results from the consultation would inform the adoption of the council’s Medium Term Financial Strategy, due [to be voted on at full Council on 22 February 2023](#).

For a full description of the consultation methodology see Appendix 6.

## Consultation engagements

In total, there were 2,267 consultation engagements, including:

- 1,417 online survey completions
- 269 social media comments
- 232 attendees at budget consultation events
- 170 budget webpage comments
- 65 emails
- 52 “Save Us Money” ideas submitted by council employees
- 35 paper survey completions
- 27 letter responses



The number of budget consultation engagements in 2023 (2,267) was significantly higher than in previous years – 6 times as many budget consultation engagements as received in 2022. 2,267 responses is also the largest number of budget consultation engagements received since records began in 2017.

In addition, all 6 council committees were due to consider and debate the consultation material during public committee meetings – see Appendix 5 for a summary of these meetings.

## **Reading this report**

The main sections of the report (“Overview of feedback on the top 25 MTFS proposals” through to “Finance Sub-Committee proposals”) summarise responses from the 1,417 survey respondents. This includes levels of support and opposition for each proposal, as well as a written summary of feedback on each proposal.

Appendices 1 to 5 then summarise all feedback received through other mediums, from consultation events (appendix 1) through to Committee feedback (appendix 5).

Every public comment, email and letter received during the consultation has been printed verbatim in the following separate report:

[Report of all public comments, emails and letters received in response to Cheshire East Council’s Budget Consultation 2023 \(PDF, 3.3MB\)](#)

## Overview of feedback on the top 25 MTFS proposals

### The top 25 MTFS proposals

The draft Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2023 to 2027 included 122 budget investment or saving proposals.

In order to help respondents navigate the proposals during the consultation, the council highlighted the 25 top proposals which it considered the most significant. Some of these proposals were grouped together for convenience. These top 25 proposals were selected using the following criteria – financial impact, number of people affected, historical interest in the subject, and where the council has significant discretion in how to spend, save or deliver a particular service.

The vast majority of all consultation responses received concerned these top 25 MTFS proposals. Furthermore, of the top 25 MTFS proposals, proposal “[93] Libraries – Service Review” received the most survey completions, comments, email & letter responses, with 1,313 in total.

Budget proposal	No. survey responses	No. public comments, emails & letter responses	Total survey completions, comments, email & letter responses
[93] Libraries - Service Review	1126	187	1313
[92] Review Waste Collection Service - Green Waste	937	51	988
[101] Household Waste and Recycling Centres - introduce residency checks	859	1	860
[117] Council Tax % increase	810	29	839
[108] Parking	826	12	838
[91] Maintenance of green spaces	822	14	836
[104] Highways	809	21	830
[103] Local Bus	748	17	765
[105] Energy saving measures from streetlights	756	5	761
[90] Strategic Leisure Review	695	2	697
[68] Office Estate Rationalisation	641	25	666

[57] Reduce cost of Democracy	665	0	665
[1, 2, 3 & 5] Investment to address demand in adult social care	653	0	653
[8 & 12] Home First Strategy	629	1	630
[24] School transport pressures	598	1	599
[35] Integrated Children's Service Strategy	575	0	575
[10, 20 & 22] Learning Disabilities Future Service Development and Review	568	2	570
[11] Adult social care: Client contribution yield offsetting growth	557	0	557
[38] Review commissioned services across Children and Families Directorate	551	0	551

## Level of support or opposition for each of the top 25 MTFS proposals

Respondents completing the consultation survey were asked to indicate whether they supported or opposed each of these top 25 MTFS proposals.

Net levels of support or opposition<sup>2</sup> for the top 25 MTFS proposals varied significantly, from 82% net support for the MTFS proposal “[57] Reduce cost of democracy”, down to -66% net opposition to the proposal “[92] Review Waste Collection Service - Green Waste”.

The 12 proposals which received strong net support included:

- [57] Reduce cost of Democracy (82% net support)
- [38] Review commissioned services across Children and Families Directorate (40% net support)
- [105] Energy saving measures from streetlights (39% net support)
- [8 & 12] Home First Strategy (39% net support)
- [68] Office Estate Rationalisation (38% net support)
- [101] Household Waste and Recycling Centres - introduce residency checks (36% net support)

<sup>2</sup> Net levels of support or opposition are calculated by subtracting the % of respondents that oppose a proposal, from the % that support a proposal. For example, if 86% of respondents support the budget proposal “[25] Reduce cost of democracy”, and 4% oppose it, the net level of support = 82%

- [35] Integrated Children's Service Strategy (32% net support)
- [1, 2, 3 & 5] Investment to address demand in adult social care (26% net support)

The 8 proposals which received marginal net support or opposition included:

- [11] Adult social care: Client contribution yield offsetting growth (17% net support)
- [24] School transport pressures (12% net support)
- [10, 20 & 22] Learning Disabilities Future Service Development and Review (7% net support)
- [90] Strategic Leisure Review (4% net support)
- [91] Maintenance of green spaces (3% net support)
- [108] Parking (-5% net opposition)

The 5 proposals which received strong net opposition included:

- [117] Council Tax % increase (-27% net opposition)
- [103] Local Bus (-39% net opposition)
- [104] Highways (-46% net opposition)
- [93] Libraries - Service Review (-58% net opposition)
- [92] Review Waste Collection Service - Green Waste (-66% net opposition)

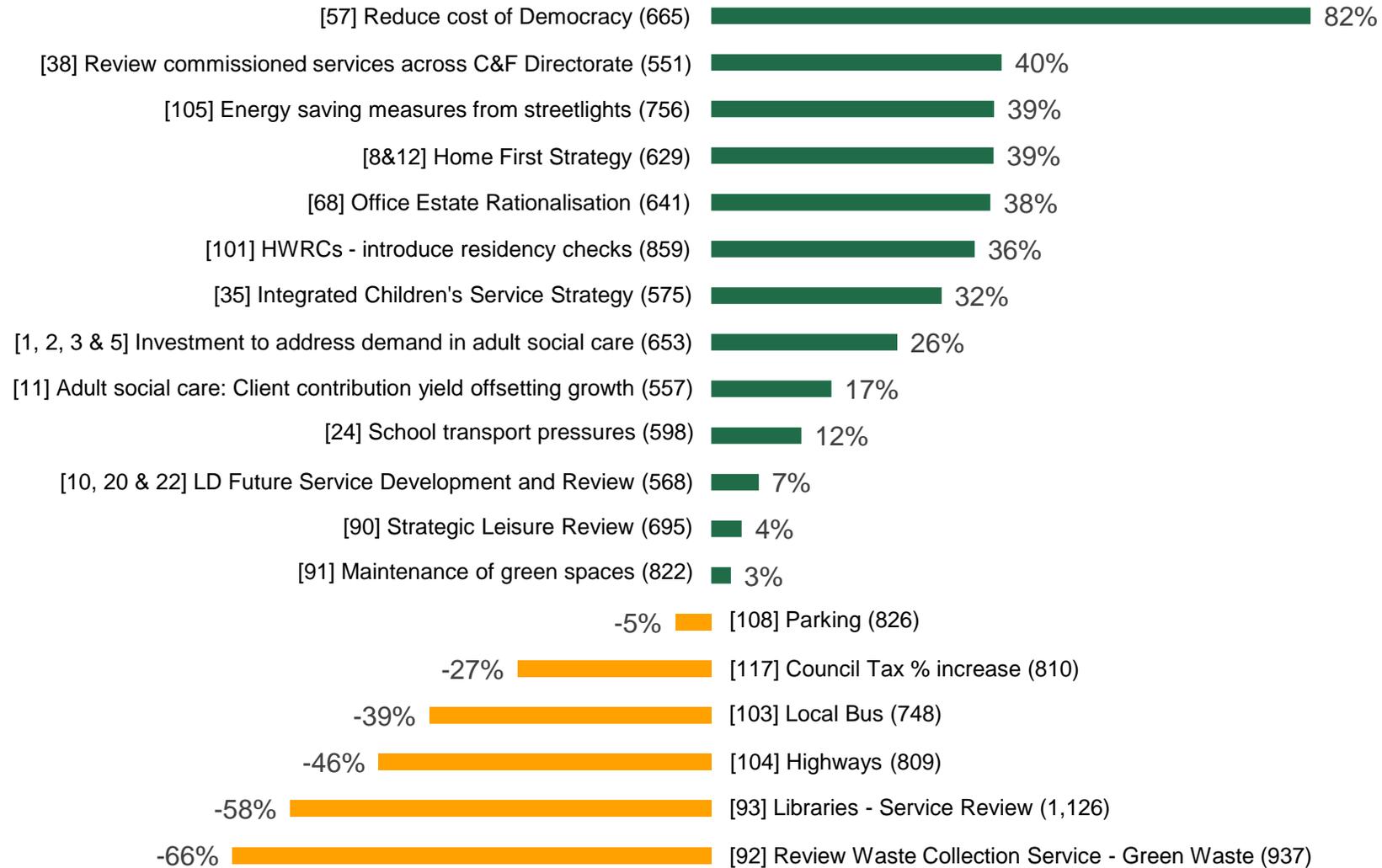
The following table and chart show the net support or opposition that each of the top 25 MTFS proposals received.

Budget proposal	CE Cmte	% Support	% Oppose	% Not sure / Not enough info. to decide	No. survey responses	Net Support / Opposition
[57] Reduce cost of Democracy	CP	86%	4%	9%	<b>665</b>	82%
[38] Review commissioned services across Children and Families Directorate	C&F	54%	15%	31%	<b>551</b>	40%
[105] Energy saving measures from streetlights	H&T	62%	23%	14%	<b>756</b>	39%
[8 & 12] Home First Strategy	A&H	59%	20%	21%	<b>629</b>	39%

[68] Office Estate Rationalisation	E&G	61%	23%	16%	<b>641</b>	38%
[101] Household Waste and Recycling Centres - introduce residency checks	E&C	61%	25%	13%	<b>859</b>	36%
[35] Integrated Children's Service Strategy	C&F	50%	19%	31%	<b>575</b>	32%
[1, 2, 3 & 5] Investment to address demand in adult social care	A&H	48%	23%	29%	<b>653</b>	26%
[11] Adult social care: Client contribution yield offsetting growth	A&H	40%	23%	37%	<b>557</b>	17%
[24] School transport pressures	C&F	41%	29%	29%	<b>598</b>	12%
[10, 20 & 22] Learning Disabilities Future Service Development and Review	A&H	38%	32%	30%	<b>568</b>	7%
[90] Strategic Leisure Review	E&C	34%	30%	35%	<b>695</b>	4%
[91] Maintenance of green spaces	E&C	46%	43%	11%	<b>822</b>	3%
[108] Parking	H&T	32%	37%	31%	<b>826</b>	-5%
[117] Council Tax % increase	FsC	30%	56%	14%	<b>810</b>	-27%
[103] Local Bus	H&T	20%	59%	22%	<b>748</b>	-39%
[104] Highways	H&T	17%	62%	21%	<b>809</b>	-46%
[93] Libraries - Service Review	E&C	17%	75%	8%	<b>1126</b>	-58%
[92] Review Waste Collection Service - Green Waste	E&C	13%	79%	7%	<b>937</b>	-66%

Committee key: CP = Corporate Policy, E&G = Economy & Growth, E&C = Environment & Communities, C&F = Children & Families, A&H = Adults & Health, H&T = Highways & Transport, FsC = Finance Sub-Committee

Net support minus opposition for each of the top proposals in the Budget Consultation 2023:



*Number of responses in brackets*

## **Not sure / Not having enough information to decide**

It should be noted that when asked whether they supported or opposed proposals, large proportions of respondents answered “Not sure / Not enough information to decide” for some of the proposals.

For example, 37% of respondents felt they did not have enough information to decide on whether to support or oppose the proposal “[11] Adult social care: Client contribution yield offsetting growth”.

Those answering “Not sure / Not enough information to decide” may either:

- Not have strongly supported or opposed these proposals – hence “Not sure”
- Or may not have felt they had enough information to make a decision.

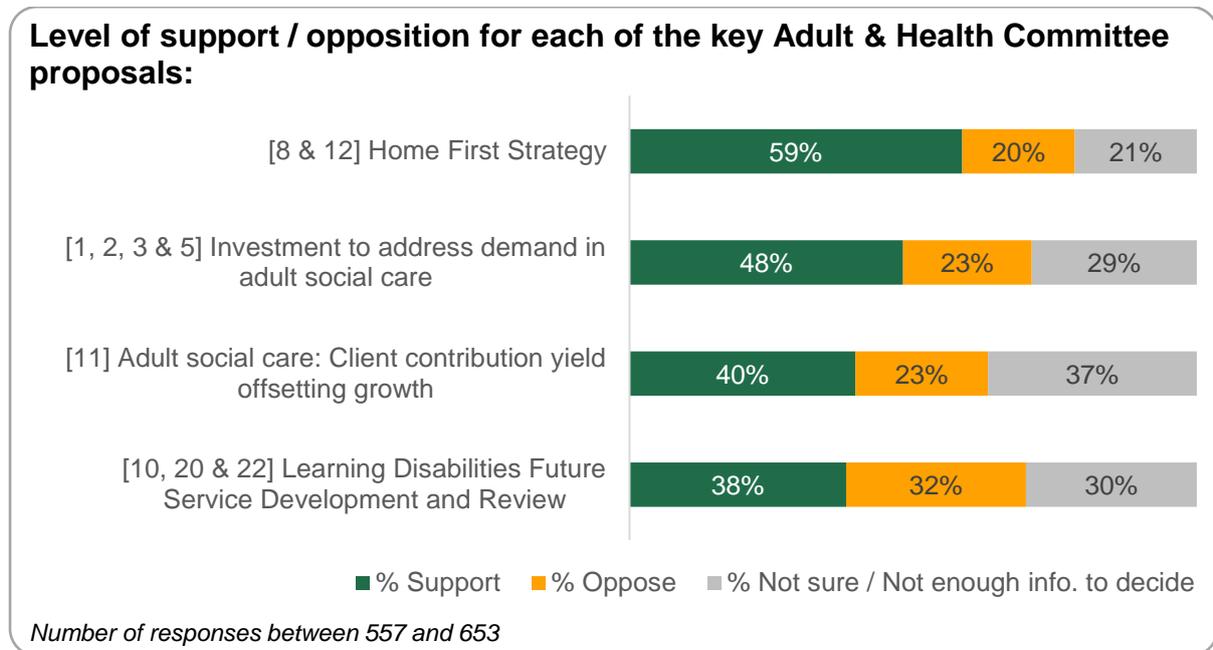
If judged to be the latter, further more in-depth information provision and consultation may be required in future to increase understanding of, and gain support for, proposals.

# Adults & Health Committee proposals

Net support or opposition for each of the 4 top Adults & Health Committee MTFS proposals was:

- [8 & 12] Home First Strategy (39% net support)
- [1, 2, 3 & 5] Investment to address demand in adult social care (26% net support)
- [11] Adult social care: Client contribution yield offsetting growth (17% net support)
- [10, 20 & 22] Learning Disabilities Future Service Development and Review (7% net support)

Levels of support and opposition for each of these 4 proposals is shown in the chart below:



## [8&12] Home First Strategy

**Net support = 39% support**

### Opposed to proposals 8 & 12 (29 comments)

More funding required to provide for service demand. Against decrease in funding for services. More funding needed to implement proposed changes. Opposed to proposed changes, will be detrimental to residents' health and wellbeing and will increase demand for more serious care in the long term. Oppose uptake of technology if this means loss of 'face-to-face' care. Cannot afford Council Tax Rise. Voluntary

sector should not be relied upon to cover service deficit. Unsure what is being proposed, need further information to comment, point 12 unclear, what is non-care community-based support?

### **Support proposals 8 & 12 (24 comments)**

Approve of proposed changes, will assist NHS in opening hospital places. Care at home better value for CEC compared to privately run care homes. Approve further coordination between CEC and NHS. Better for service users to be as independent as possible. Investment in better technologies needed. Collaboration with local groups/communities needed.

### **Staff concerns (7 comments)**

Increased wages and benefits needed to assist recruiting into sector. Greater effort in creating skilled staff pool for CEC rather than relying on private or voluntary sector. Social Care Accessors are neglecting resident needs, forcing vulnerable residents and their families to use the NHS instead.

### **Central Government Service (5 comments)**

Central Government should be funding/operating these services through the NHS.

### **Convalescence Homes (5 comments)**

Need for convalescence homes for those between hospital care and care at home, to open up NHS beds. These and short-term nursing homes should not have been closed by CEC.

### **Other comments (6 comments)**

- More responsibility on families to care for relatives (2 comments)
- More respite places needed (1 comment)
- General concern of public health and wellbeing (1 comment)
- Support for local libraries (1 comment)
- Macclesfield residents affected disproportionately (1 comment)

## **[1, 2, 3 & 5] Investment to address demand in adult social care**

**Net support = 26% support**

### **Opposed to proposals 1,2,3 & 5 (20 comments)**

Would prefer reduced spending in adult social care service, to avoid Council tax rise. Or simply oppose Council tax rise entirely. Not enough information provided in consultation and MTFS to comment, detailed explanation of funding changes in later years needed. How will these changes be funded? Cannot understand what is being proposed. Consultation reach and scale is too limited to claim approval from CE residents.

### **Support proposals 1,2,3 & 5 (19 comments)**

Agree more funding is needed to sustain the current/future service requirements. This funding increase has been needed for a long time, with the need for funding only increasing with an ageing population.

### **Local Government Service (5 comments)**

Adult Social Care services should be operated directly by CEC, without contracting out services to private sector firms or staff. Fees charged by private firms to CEC and to residents extortionate. Avoid reliance on more expensive non-CEC care staff. Further regulation of the private care sector needed to save on costs.

### **Concern over burden on service users (4 comments)**

Not fair to place extra physical, mental and financial burden on families and vulnerable residents. Concern especially for lower income households struggling to finance care needs. Risk of increase in homelessness as a result.

### **Support for libraries (4 comments)**

Services/support provided in libraries vital and need to be retained. Opening times need to be extended for libraries. Ability to research available support using library ICT particularly important. Libraries important for social mobility and to support vulnerable residents and families.

### **Central Government Service (3 comments)**

Adult Social Care services should be funded/operated entirely by the central government through the NHS.

## Other comments (16 comments)

- Restructure of staff needed in service, reducing number of managers, and eliminating inefficiencies (2 comments)
- Volunteer and Community groups should be funded to provide support (2 comments)
- Concern over staff retention/quality (2 comments)
- New technologies needed to improve service (1 comment)
- Concern lack of adult social care placements causes problems for NHS (1 comment)
- Increase in spending should be funded by higher earners (1 comment)
- Introduce/increase charges to service users directly to fund changes (1 comment)
- Dissolve CEC and restore local Councils (1 comment)
- Better inter service coordination required, less red tape to find savings (1 comment)
- Non-elderly focused care should not be neglected (1 comment)
- Efficiency of spending needs to be published annually (1 comment)
- Accessible and affordable cross border public transport needed for social care staff and residents (1 comment)
- Restore respite services (1 comment)

## [11] Adult social care: Client contribution yield offsetting growth

### Net support = 17%

When invited to give reasons for their support or opposition to this proposal, 26 survey respondents made a total of 28 comments between them. These comments have been summarised below.

### Can people afford an increase in client costs? (15 comments)

It's unrealistic to put more financial pressure on people, immoral and indefensible. The benefits are only just keeping in line with runaway inflation. Why should disabled people pay to access services unless you are going to up charges on the wealthy?

Just because inflation has gone up doesn't mean costs on everything should go up. How does an inflation increase in pensions automatically mean more income from client contributions? Does it mean CE automatically puts up charges?

Is the assumption that clients have had a corresponding rise in their benefits in order to support rising costs and / or they can afford the rises?

There should be no need for a client contribution if this was funded from income tax.

## **Confusion about what the proposal means (3 comments)**

Does this mean I have to pay more in Council Tax, or you will charge me more for services? What are 'client contributions'? This proposal needs a re-write.

## **Services need cutting / making more cost effective (3 comments)**

Cut commissioners and managers etc instead.

## **Residential Dementia Care Home funding (1 comment)**

I suggest you address the anomalous situation in Residential Dementia Care whereby if a family somehow manages to get a family member "sectioned" resulting in the individual being admitted to a Dementia Care Home, no financial contribution will be sought from the individual or family, no matter what level of income or capital assets.

## **Private care for self-funders (1 comment)**

Some people who are above the thresholds and are self-funders can access home care through the council's brokerage system. This means that people who should be private clients are getting care at a reduced rate through the council contract, and not at private rates. This is not a transparent process and creates inequalities, as other people who are over the threshold have to seek care themselves and pay private rates. The council's current system to support self-funders could be reviewed to ensure everyone over the limit is able to source private care easier. Although these people would have full cost recovery to the council, the work involved has costs that would be saved. The current situation reduces the income to businesses, which reduces the sustainability of care providers in the area.

## **Uplifts (1 comment)**

Recent uplifts have seen less people wanting to work, more people needing care and support and this must be paid for through lifting client contributions and by pressing for the Health & Social care levy to help and support.

## **Other comments (4 comments)**

Other comments on this proposal included:

- It is fair that those in care contribute towards their accommodation and care (1 comment)
- We have paid our taxes for a lifetime, we should have the support of a robust system (1 comment)

- In the earlier proposal you are seeking to improve services through voluntary groups saving £5m in 2023. Those savings should offset these increases (1 comment)
- Silo budgets are not the answer (1 comment)

## **[10, 20 & 22] Learning Disabilities Future Service Development and Review**

**Net support = 7% support**

### **Opposed to proposals 10, 20 & 22 (28 comments)**

Disagree with proposed changes, CEC does not understand the importance of these services. Proposals will result in loss of trained specialist staff, causing further issues in the long term. Access to respite care vital and should not become a rare luxury in CE. Closing these centres and instead utilising private firms for the same services, will cost CEC more in the long term. Services are needed within reasonable distance to the service users.

### **Alternative services (12 comments)**

Service users need to be made aware of the service alternatives, especially for the centres proposed to be closed. Concern whether alternatives to these services are or will be made available. More information needed on proposals to comment. What other options have been considered before the closing of these centres was decided upon?

### **Oppose proposal 22 (9 comments)**

Against closing of Stanley Centre as services still required. Centre should be handed over to Knutsford Town Council to operate. Residents and service users should be consulted on this closure and any alternatives. Respite care service vital to carer and cared for health and wellbeing.

### **Oppose proposal 20 (4 comments)**

Against closing of Warwick Mews as services still required. Respite care service vital to carer and cared for health and wellbeing. Closing centre will cause greater problems for CEC in the long term.

### **Support proposals (2 comments)**

Better to provide services locally and at home, rather than in a few centralised centres throughout CEC.

## **Other comments (5 comments)**

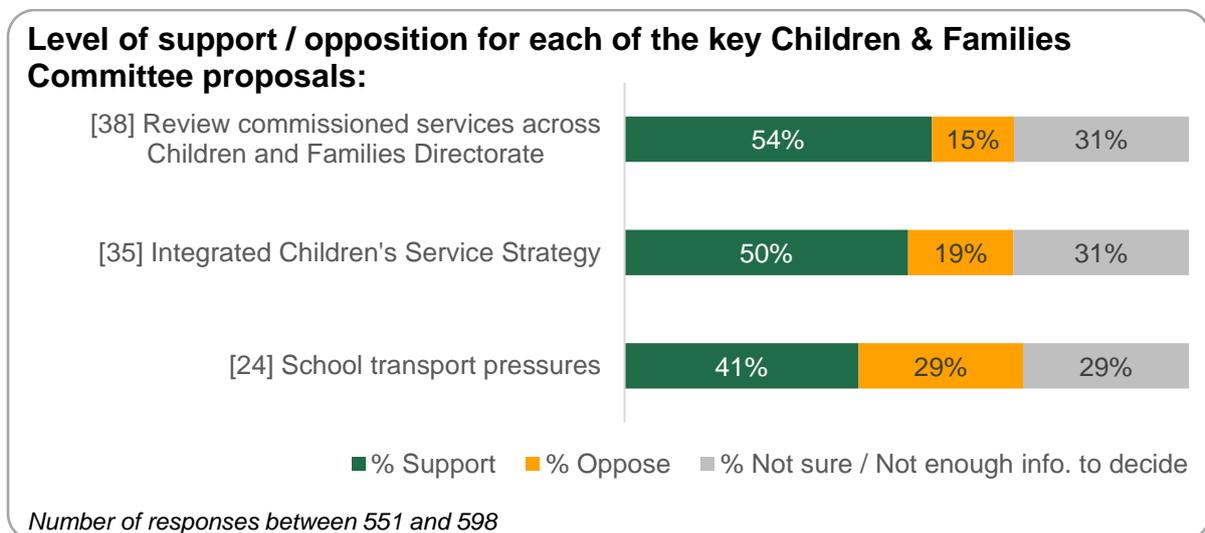
- Investment needed in better technologies to aid service (1 comment)
- Support closing single facility if both services merged into the remainder (1 comment)
- Concern of staff retention / quality of staff (1 comment)
- Central Government should manage/fund these services (1 comment)
- Macclesfield residents affected disproportionately (1 comment)

# Children & Families Committee proposals

Net support or opposition for each of the 3 top Children & Families Committee MTFS proposals was:

- [38] Review commissioned services across Children and Families Directorate (40% net support)
- [35] Integrated Children's Service Strategy (32% net support)
- [24] School transport pressures (12% net support)

Levels of support and opposition for each of these 3 proposals is shown in the chart below:



## [38] Review commissioned services across Children and Families Directorate

**Net support = 40% support**

### Oppose proposal 38 (17 comments)

Oppose funding reductions to children’s services as current service is insufficient to meet the demand. Reducing funding will mean limited training and result in loss of vital experienced staff in the long term. Acute concern for low-income households already struggling with current level of support available. Waiting lists for support currently unacceptable. More support needed for children with ASD. Sceptical savings will be made given cost of a review. Funding reduction to services will place greater pressure on other services, such as the NHS. Not enough information provided on proposal to comment, what are commissioned services?

## **Support proposal 38 (8 comments)**

Support review of commissioned services across the Children and Families Directorate. Review of commissioned services should be carried out for all CEC services.

## **Staff Restructure (4 comments)**

Restructure of staff roles required, sceptical whether certain roles are required or cause inefficiencies. Reduce the number of manager and consultants.

## **Other Comments (9 comments)**

- Ensure staff receive fair pay, support, and benefits (2 comments)
- Cannot afford Council Tax rise (2 comments)
- Same approach should be enacted across all services (1 comment)
- Resources should be focused on 'responsible' family planning (1 comment)
- Support and services should be available throughout CE, not just focused on major towns (1 comment)
- Staff should be held accountable for service inefficiencies (1 comment)
- Macclesfield residents affected disproportionately (1 comment)

## **[35] Integrated Children's Service Strategy**

**Net support = 32% support**

### **Support proposal 35 (20 comments)**

Support restructure of staff, reducing higher level positions to save costs but increasing or at least maintaining 'front line' roles. Remove unnecessary management roles. Review of commissioned services needed. Support closure of 'less used' children's centres to save on costs. Ageing population means that demand and cost for this service will and should drop.

### **Oppose proposal 35 (20 comments)**

Against any funding reduction, demand for services only increasing with more families struggling financially. Service in need of increased funding to meet current demand. Less staff and increased responsibilities will result in errors and loss of support for service users. Domestic Abuse Service vital and should not have funding reduced. Unsure of what is being proposed, what is MARS? How much £ would be saved through this move? Sceptical proposal will result in savings. Opposed to closing service hubs, will limit access to low-income households in rural areas.

## Other comments (5 comments)

- Cannot afford Council Tax rise (2 comments)
- Greater focus on promoting 'responsible' family planning (1 comment)
- Budget savings should be channelled into Adult Social Care (1 comment)
- Macclesfield residents affected disproportionately (1 comment)

## [24] School transport pressures

**Net support = 12% support**

### Oppose proposal 24 (28 comments)

School transport should be funded by some or all parents of SEN students. Not fair to other CEC resident to subsidise this travel. SEN students should use normal bus services, with specialised transport limited to select cases. Procuring transport from taxi firms not efficient use of Council funds. Need to avoid sending pupils long distances to non-local schools. Oppose Council tax rise to fund this proposal. Avoid transport provision for shorter school commutes.

### Support proposal 24 (6 comments)

Support increase in funding for SEND transport. Service is vital for all students to access appropriate educational facilities/support. Funding needs to increase further to assist lower income households. Need for investment in specialised staff to operate this service.

### Local SEND placements (11 comments)

Increased provision in SEND support in local schools needed to avoid need for long distance transport. DfE needs to provide further support to create more SEND school placements within CEC.

### CEC Transport (3 comments)

Invest in dedicated SEND bus/taxi fleet operated by CEC, cheaper alternative in the long term to taxi firms. Bus/Taxi fleet of carbon neutral vehicles to provide service.

### Other comments (6 comments)

- Not sure what is being proposed, whether an increase or decrease in funding? (2 comments)
- Transport to/from school should be free for all (1 comment)
- Accessible and affordable bus services required for all (1 comment)
- Macclesfield residents affected disproportionately (1 comment)

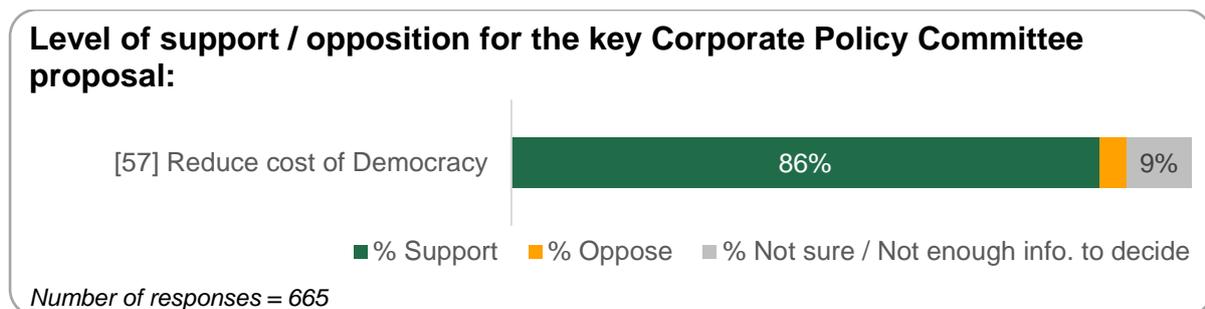
- Central Government should fund this service (1 comment)

# Corporate Policy Committee proposals

Net support or opposition for top Corporate Policy Committee MTFs proposal was:

- [57] Reduce cost of Democracy (82% net support)

Levels of support and opposition for this proposal is shown in the chart below:



## [57] Reduce cost of Democracy

**Net support = 82%**

### Support for the proposal (10 comments)

This would be a good idea/good place to start. Seems sensible to make efficiencies in this area without impact on residents. Would favour proposals like this instead of an increase to council tax.

### Financial based commentary (27 comments)

Allowances should be reduced, frozen or cut further to make greater savings in this area. Allowances should not be allowed to increase more than the rate of council tax increase. Leader allowances should be removed as well as responsibility pay to bring greater equality to the system. External review of spending and allowances.

### Meeting efficiencies could be improved (31 comments)

The council should move to more online meetings along with better hybrid working practices. Printing should be reduced, no paper copies at meetings to save in this department. Only internal venues should be used for meetings and the council should review the estate it holds. Reduce the number of committees and general efficiency of meetings, too much focus on political standing rather than decision making.

## **Representation and engagement (6 comments)**

This proposal would reduce representation across the council. The knowledge of some councillors was called into question and could be improved in regard to resident queries. A greater say on council spending, issues and consultation needed.

## **Other comments (3 comments)**

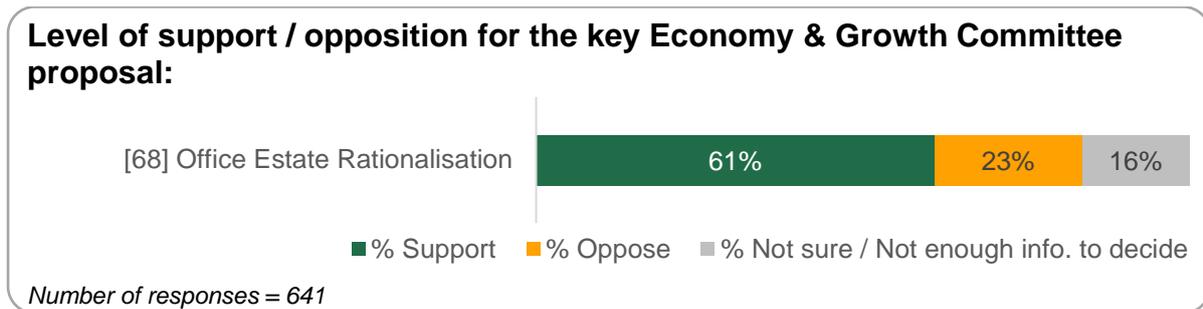
Other comments on this proposal were that more detailed information was required to decide either way.

# Economy & Growth Committee proposals

Net support or opposition for top Economy & Growth Committee MTFS proposal was:

- [68] Office Estate Rationalisation (38% net support)

Levels of support and opposition for this proposal is shown in the chart below:



## [68] Office Estate Rationalisation

**Net support = 38%**

When invited to give reasons for their support or opposition to this proposal, 97 survey respondents made a total of 120 comments between them. These comments have been summarised below.

### Regarding Macclesfield Library Relocation (51 comments)

Great concern over the relocation of the library to the town hall, would there be enough space to maintain the current service provision which is excellent and well needed. Against having more empty buildings in Macclesfield. Seen as a negative step and widely opposed.

### Asset Management (37 comments)

General support for the rationalisation of office spaces, especially those that are underused such as Westfields. The council should look into efficiencies that are possible due to increased home working. Development of more hub services and using spaces to develop skills and economic growth. Should consider a community asset transfer for buildings to town and parish councils.

### Financial based commentary (17 comments)

These proposals should not require spending to achieve, more should be cut in regard to this proposal to avoid increases in council tax which cannot be afforded.

The council should sell off assets that are expensive to maintain and not being used but care needs to be taken that not all assets are sold. Assets in prime locations should be sold.

### **Using Office Space (11 comments)**

The council needs to be careful in its approach of rationalisation to ensure there is a good level of face to face customer support. Staff should return to the offices for mental wellbeing and to monitor productivity.

### **Other comments (4 comments)**

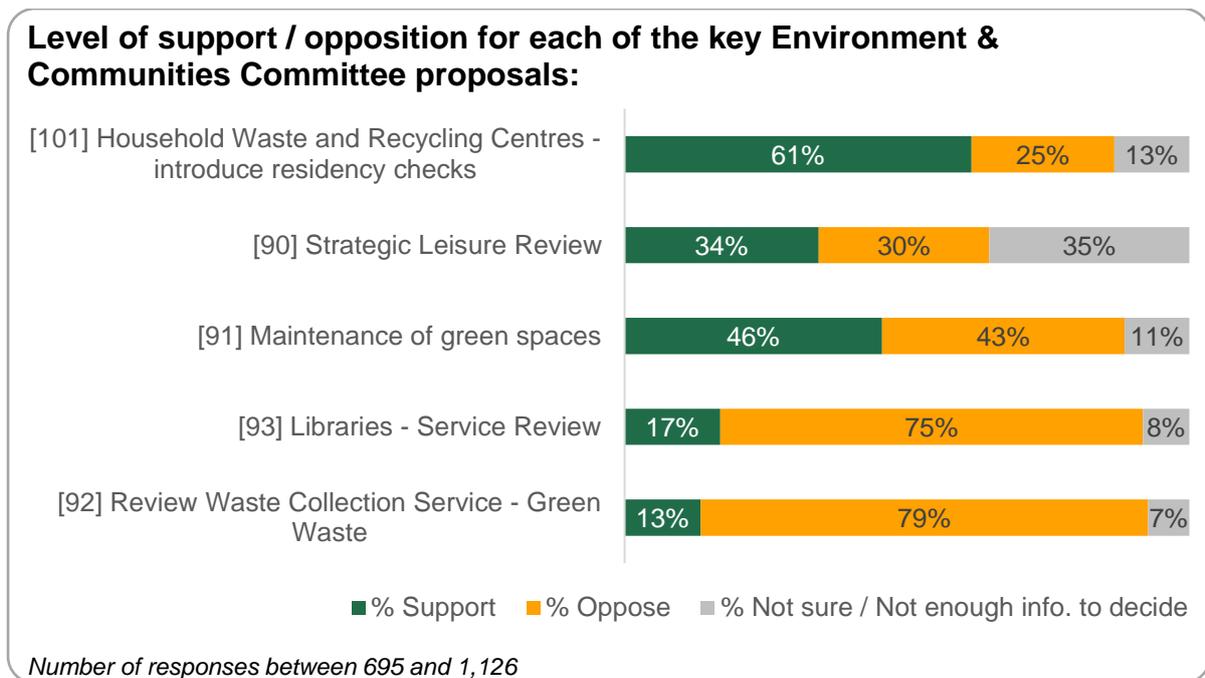
Other comments on this proposal were that more detailed information was required to decide either way, especially in regard to the relocation of the library.

# Environment & Communities Committee proposals

Net support or opposition for each of the 5 top Environment & Communities Committee MTFs proposals was:

- [101] Household Waste and Recycling Centres - introduce residency checks (36% net support)
- [90] Strategic Leisure Review (4% net support)
- [91] Maintenance of green spaces (3% net support)
- [93] Libraries - Service Review (-58% net opposition)
- [92] Review Waste Collection Service - Green Waste (-66% net opposition)

Levels of support and opposition for each of these 5 proposals is shown in the chart below:



## [101] Household Waste and Recycling Centres – Introduce residency checks

**Net support = 36%**

When invited to give reasons for their support or opposition to this proposal, 138 survey respondents made a total of 210 comments between them. These comments have been summarised below.

## **Support for the proposal (28 comments)**

This seems to be a good idea – it won't cost much to implement, will encourage people to make less trips, and works well in other areas (such as in Cheshire West & Chester or on the Wirral). It should happen anyway, given other areas have already adopted this approach. This proposal is supported if it ensures local Household Waste Recycling Centres are kept open.

## **The benefits don't seem to outweigh the costs, this seems "petty" (66 comments)**

As this proposal will only save £21,000, it doesn't seem worth it, it seems "petty" and nonsensical. The proposal will create hassle and waste time for residents, as well as for on-site staff, only for a very small saving. It seems like insignificant gain at great inconvenience to residents and staff that will only antagonise people. Won't the extra administration costs of delivering this proposal outweigh the benefits? It seems like pointless bureaucracy.

## **This proposal will lead to increased fly-tipping (41 comments)**

This proposal, alongside other proposals such as charging for green waste collection, will lead to more fly tipping. Any barriers to waste disposal just increase fly tipping – we need to be encouraging everybody to take waste to recycling and waste sites, whereas putting more and more restrictions on people will only lead to more fly-tipping. Some areas (Crewe for example) already have issues with fly tipping and littering which needs to be addressed whether or not this proposal goes ahead. There is considerable reliable evidence to show these measures already introduced in other areas causes the public to fly tip and use public bins instead.

## **Checks must not deter people from visiting (22 comments)**

Any residency checks have to be easy and must not increase waiting times – they must not deter people from visiting HWRCs. It is not clear how the HWRCs would manage this without causing unnecessary queues. This feels a little like "Big Brother" – asking everyone where their papers are? No thanks.

## **People should be able to use the HWRC nearest to them (16 comments)**

It makes more environmental sense if people can use the HWRC that is closest to them, even if that is over the border in another council area. The council should look to partner with its neighbour Local Authorities to harmonise regulations, and actively encourage cross-border access to HWRCs where doing so would improve services or reduce costs overall, similar to the model used in Greater Manchester. The

proposal will lead to a reduction in recycling, when the council should be encouraging people to dispose of their rubbish themselves correctly rather than discouraging them!

### **What evidence of residence will be required? (15 comments)**

What evidence of residence will be required when visiting a HWRC? Would a driving licence suffice, or would they require a pass or residency card which would cost money.

Perhaps a free residency card could be supplied, which could also be used at libraries and in local car parks, and which was automated via a scanner, such as systems used in some London council areas. Or maybe automatic number plate recognition to identify the vehicle's registered owner's address. How will personal data be protected through such a scheme?

### **Do we know how many people this will affect? (14 comments)**

Have we got evidence to show if this is a problem, how big a problem this is, and evidence to show this proposal is needed? How many non-Cheshire east residents travel to Cheshire East to dispose of waste, is this really needed? What % of waste in HWRCs is from outside of Cheshire East?

### **Other comments (8 comments)**

Other comments on this proposal included:

- The local HWRC is not good, a lot of waste is either not accepted or you are charged extra for it (2 comments)
- Congleton HWRC needs reopening / replacing, it should never have been shut (2 comments)
- Don't close HWRC sites – Poynton in particular (2 comments)
- HWRCs should accept small amounts of building material (1 comment)
- Don't increase Council Tax, people can't afford it (1 comment)

## **[90] Strategic Leisure Review**

**Net support = 4% support**

### **Oppose proposal 90 (35 comments)**

Oppose merging existing services into less buildings as it limits access to some residents. Merging services will mean the loss of some leisure facilities which need to be retained. Maintain Poynton leisure centre/swimming pool. Maintain Macclesfield Community Hall / Leisure Centre. Maintain Nx Brine Pool for health and tourism

benefits. Swimming facilities need to remain for public safety reasons. Concern Lower income households will be more harshly affected by service reductions. Instead of merging leisure facilities; Provision of public transport to existing services to promote use, Further promotion of existing services to bring in the revenue necessary to fund, Reduce fees for using leisure services in order to encourage further use overall, subsidized rates for children & elderly, Collaborate with neighbouring councils to provide cross border services, Increase fees to some service users to cover costs.

### **Current service insufficient (23 comments)**

Leisure facility provision in CEC already insufficient before proposed funding reduction. Leisure/Health facilities are too vital to be reduced at present. More funding required for leisure service to meet current demand. Lack of funding for this service will lead to greater costs in the long term due to poor health.

### **Concern for public health and wellbeing (19 comments)**

Public health crisis means these facilities are all already not meeting the public demand. With ageing population, more access to leisure centres in CE is required. Healthier population will mean less strain on other services, particularly the NHS. Facilities provide physical and mental health benefits.

### **Further information required (11 comments)**

Further information required on funding reasoning/efficiency to comment on these proposals. Point 90 unclear. Why is there such a large growth in 2024/25. How do these proposals align to public health targets. Too much jargon language used to understand what is being proposed and its reasoning. How will this affect leisure facilities tied to schools.

### **Other comments (9 comments)**

- Private sector should be approached to provide services in collaboration / sponsorship (3 comments)
- Oppose building of new hubs to house multiple services, existing structures should be used instead (2 comments)
- Cannot afford Council Tax Rise (2 comments)
- Heating in Council buildings should be reduced (1 comment)
- Funding should be given to local groups to provide these services (1 comment)

## **[91] Maintenance of green spaces**

**Net support = 3% support**

### **Oppose proposal 91 (58 comments)**

Current level of maintenance to CE green spaces is insufficient. Green spaces should be maintained to a greater standard to promote informal leisure and exercise. Grass verges are already too overgrown in places. Rewilding is a poor excuse for reducing funding. Funding reduction is too much too quickly and will result in staff reductions. Changes will have detrimental effect on areas aesthetics, reducing local pride and tourism. Need for further information to comment on these proposed changes, publish Carbon Reduction Analysis, why do savings decrease overtime?

### **Support proposal 91 (50 comments)**

Support reduction in funding as many green space facilities are not used enough to justify the expense. Support rewilding and less grass cutting to increase biodiversity, wildflower growth and contribute to CEC carbon neutral efforts. Support as reduced maintenance will result in savings for CEC. Reduce/eliminate use of harmful weedkillers. Support transfer of verge maintenance to ANSA. Cease maintenance of non-CEC owned land.

### **Basic level of maintenance (41 comments)**

'Basic' level of maintenance needs to be continued for safety and to ensure access to green spaces continues. Bins need to be emptied. Management of green spaces important for flood management. Concern proposal will lead to green spaces being neglected in the long term. Less maintained green spaces will dissuade resident from using these spaces.

### **Resident Wellbeing (36 comments)**

Green Spaces integral to physical and mental health, especially for children, families, and the elderly. Continued access to green spaces can offset the effects of cuts to other local health facilities. Green spaces provide venues for sports and socialization.

### **Limited Rewilding (25 comments)**

Rewilding needs to be managed and not the result of neglect. Staff need to be retrained for this role. Rewilding efforts should be limited to certain areas, retaining public access for other areas. Too little maintenance in areas may attract anti-social behaviour.

## Voluntary Support (18 comments)

Local groups and communities need to be informed and included in rewilding efforts. Residents willing to assist with wildflower planting and limited green space maintenance. Residents should be consulted on whether specific green spaces should be subject to rewilding.

## Tree Planting (8 comments)

CEC needs to plant more trees to achieve carbon neutral goal, this should be included in rewilding efforts. Restrict number of trees being removed.

## Private Sector Support (7 comments)

Private sector should contribute to maintenance, through compulsory contributions or via sponsorship of green spaces. Increase green spaces required in any new developments.

## Other Comments (5 comments)

- Specific efforts needed to encourage bees (1 comment)
- Maintain Countryside Ranger Service (1 comment)
- Recreation Centre in Bollington is important (1 comment)
- Remove golf area of South Park for safety (1 comment)
- Macclesfield residents affected disproportionately (1 comment)

## [93] Libraries – Service Review

**Net support = -58%**

When invited to give reasons for their support or opposition to this proposal, 385 survey respondents made a total of 1,240 comments between them. These comments have been summarised below.

### **Do not reduce library services or opening hours (102 comments)**

Libraries seem to be busy. Libraries are vital. Libraries should be considered critical national infrastructure. This is a disgusting proposal.

It is a false economy to reduce opening hours, as people will be driven to require services elsewhere. These facilities provide so much benefit to so many, even though that benefit isn't necessarily directly measurable.

*“There are some things you just cannot put a price on, and public libraries are one of them.”*

One way to increase the wealth in an area is a well-resourced library. For every pound invested in libraries you get many more back in terms of the health, wellbeing, safety, education, digital access and sense of community provided by libraries. They help prevent further costs down the line by improving people's mental health, helping them access services online, and providing a free, safe, warm space for everyone. The amount saved by this proposal is relatively small in comparison to the potential long-term harm to the community. The financial cost of libraries is far outweighed by the support they give to the local community.

*“There is no appreciation of the value of libraries in the upper echelons of the authority to urban and rural populations. They put the best face on the council and remain an indispensable service and should be comprehensively supported in this difficult time.”*

If you want support for your administration, support the libraries.

*“If you reduce the hours to this much cherished place I for one will be absolutely devastated, and am prepared to protest it as much as possible.”*

A reduction in opening times could mean less people use the libraries which then causes further reduction in hours and the downward spiral could cause the eventual closure of the libraries.

### **Do not cut libraries as they have become community hubs (179 comments)**

Libraries have become a very necessary part of life, libraries aren't all about borrowing books these days, they have become community hubs, providing socialisation, with a core of people who visit each day, spending much of their days in the library. Libraries are vital services in the community, not only as cultural hubs but also as socialising hubs. Libraries have evolved to become "social hubs" over the years and surely this has been a beneficial means to combat loneliness and isolation. Libraries are fun places to be, providing a safe public space for all.

The library is a lifeline to a lot of people and makes a huge difference to individual lives. Reducing the hours libraries are open will have a negative impact on the lives of residents.

*“Libraries are accessible to all age groups regardless of income or background in a safe environment that the public trust.”*

Libraries are one of the only places where you can go out to and you're under no expectation to spend money, which is especially important when the cost of everything, including Council Tax, is already very expensive and increasing.

*“Many families cannot afford trips out at the weekend and evening to play centres and cinemas and the library is such a positive and fulfilling place to go.”*

Cheshire East has been way ahead of the curve with delivering services in libraries and transforming them into community hubs that are an essential part to both the communities themselves, and to the council's offer to said communities. It is saddening that the council could place all of the essential community services into libraries, only to then close those libraries for any period of the week.

*“The library as it is should be seen as a cornerstone of the town centre and an institution of which we should be proud of and keen to protect.”*

### **Do not cut libraries as they inspire literacy and learning (93 comments)**

A reduction in service limits access to books, especially for children and for families that can't afford to buy books. This in turn limits literacy and learning. The learning resources the library has available is so important for child's education, reading allows access to the world, The joy of reading and the associated education for future generations should never be underestimated. Children's education has suffered enough already, especially during covid. Children love visiting the library.

### **Do not cut libraries as they provide activities and groups (61 comments)**

Cutting libraries would remove access to the current wide range of activities, groups and clubs they provide, including rhymetime, storytime, lego club, baby and toddler classes, book clubs, craft groups, family history groups, reading sessions, music sessions, sensory activities, musical performances, art installations, language classes, coffee and chat groups, chess clubs, after school clubs, and jigsaw exchanges.

### **Do not cut libraries as they are designated “warm places” (61 comments)**

Reducing library opening times would make a mockery of libraries being designated warm places.

### **Do not cut libraries as staff provide advice, help and council services (57 comments)**

Residents appreciate being able to get council help face to face, especially residents who aren't confident online and on the phone, and libraries are the last place left for people to interact with the council face to face. Libraries have a dual function as a customer service point as well as a library. Libraries should be the councils front window, important council hubs, the heart of contact with the council for residents. Libraries are one of the few places left where people can speak to a council worker face to face and without an appointment.

*“Reducing opening hours will further distance Cheshire East from the communities it purports to serve.”*

The expertise and friendliness of library staff is greatly appreciated, staff are very well qualified to help, and provide a lot of advice and help. The hard working and multi trained library staff signpost customers to services on a wide range of issues including safeguarding, Citizens Advice, support with access to emergency housing, shelter and food. They also help with Blue Badges, bus passes, railcards, benefit scans, Cheshire Home Choice, parking fines, alley gate keys, photocopying, printing, completing the census online, helping with applying for ID, processing documents, DBS checks for Ukrainian host families, and increasingly filling the gap left by social care.

*“Libraries have been at the forefront of delivering many council initiatives from the current Warm Places, to providing pick up points for free supplies for Ukrainian families arriving locally, winter warmth supplies for the vulnerable, contact point for delivering hot meals to local people.”*

**Do not cut libraries as this will remove access to public toilets (7 comments)**

**Do not cut libraries as this will impact families (93 comments)**

Traditional opening times of Monday to Friday 9 till 4 are useless to a modern families. Libraries provide very important roles in the lives of families, as places to go as a family and share the joy of books.

*“As a family with two young children Wilmslow library is central to our daily life.”*

Families visit and socialise with other families and friends using the library and it is invaluable. It’s also a very important service to new mothers and young families with their free classes and access to free books for children.

**Do not cut libraries as this will impact vulnerable residents (82 comments)**

Vulnerable residents rely on their local libraries for warm spaces, socialisation, and council services. Libraries are places of refuge for young people, the elderly, the housebound, the poorest / least affluent, the homeless, those living alone, the lonely, the isolated, people new to an area, and those with mental health issues.

This proposal is discriminatory as it would adversely affect those most in need disproportionately more than others and would therefore fail to meet equality requirements.

Has the council conducted an Equality Impact Assessment on this proposal and considered how it affects the council’s ability to meet its obligations under the public sector equality duty? This policy could cause significant detriment to those with shared protected characteristics, such age (older and younger people who has the library services), race, disability, and pregnancy and maternity, as well as having significant impacts on social mobility and digital inclusion.

**Do not cut libraries as this will impact the digitally excluded (31 comments)**

Libraries provide vital computer access, free internet / wifi and IT buddy services, which are invaluable for those that are digitally excluded.

**Do not cut libraries as this will impact full time employees (20 comments)**

**Do not cut libraries as this will impact students and young people (14 comments)**

Including those who come to libraries after school to do study and do their homework.

**Do not cut libraries as this will impact those who work from home (3 comments)**

Libraries provide respite from the isolation of working from home.

**Do not cut the libraries book budget (22 comments)**

Not buying new books would eventually lead to old, tatty stock which wouldn't be borrowed, leading to a reduction in footfall – it is vital to invest in new books.

*“The high success of CE libraries compared to their unitary authority peers should not be jeopardised by ill-considered budget cut to book funds.”*

Perhaps more residents could be encouraged to donate more books to their local libraries? Could a formal rota be generated to swap more books between different Cheshire sites to help keep up visitor interest?

**Do not cut the libraries newspaper budget (9 comments)**

Don't cut the newspaper budget, there are only 2 newspapers in my local library and there is already a queue for these. Maintaining the e-library offer will be important if you wish to reduce the book fund and newspaper budgets. Could libraries across the country join together to negotiate purchase of online magazine and newspaper subscriptions. Perhaps only have newspapers at the larger libraries.

**Do not cut library hours on Saturdays (163 comments)**

By all means shave time off each day in the week but do not totally remove access at a weekend. This would deprive access for families that work through the week. Saturday mornings are a peak family time to visit the library and immerse children in books and play, it's when families do their weekly book swap as they can't visit during the week. Saturday closure would be awful and truly detrimental to many families with young children.

Saturday morning is when libraries are at their busiest – why would you close them on this day when it would completely exclude those who work during the week from accessing the service. Reducing library hours, especially at weekends, would lead to significant drops in visitor rates and would likely end up in future with Cheshire East council arguing that reduced visitor numbers mean the library isn't needed.

Rather than reducing hours perhaps review the hours of opening so that they are more in line with peoples working life! Saturday opening should be retained as a priority service.

### **Do not cut libraries in the evenings (33 comments)**

Late evening hours allows families and full time workers to visit. Seriously consider a later start in the mornings balanced by later finish in the evenings (only one late evening a week is not enough so don't cut that either!).

### **Do not cut library provision at the following libraries:**

- Macclesfield (17 comments)
- Nantwich (14 comments)
- The Mobile Library – The mobile library provides a well-loved and well used rural lifeline for poorer people in areas that are badly served by public transport. Think a very necessary service, and we would not like to see it stopped (13 comments)
- Poynton (10 comments)
- Wilmslow (8 comments)
- Bollington (4 comments)
- Crewe (4 comments)
- Handforth (4 comments)
- Holmes Chapel (4 comments)
- Disley (3 comments)
- Sandbach (3 comments)
- Congleton (2 comments)
- Knutsford (2 comments)
- Middlewich (2 comments)
- Alsager (1 comment)

### **Invest more in libraries, don't cut them (30 comments)**

Invest in libraries rather than reducing them, increase their opening hours.

*“A reduction in opening hours would be a poor reflection on the council's attitude to what should be a cherished institution at the heart of community life.”*

Encourage people to go to libraries, don't put people off and make the service unavailable. Promote libraries better. Opening libraries longer stops people going to pubs and betting shops, and prevents youths / young people from wandering the streets.

### **Don't relocate / co-locate libraries from their current buildings (13 comments)**

Co-location has to be done carefully. The relocation and co-location of Crewe library had a significant negative impact on the service offered and accessibility to the population. Don't relocate Macclesfield library – relocating Macclesfield to the Town Hall would mean a smaller library, with less facilities and services. There is no mention in this proposal about moving Macclesfield Library into the Town Hall but there is elsewhere in the consultation, why is it not mentioned here?

### **Do co-locate libraries (10 comments)**

In favour of colocation of libraries. Close library buildings and relocate modern suitably sized provision at leisure centres, community centres, childrens centres and day centres.

### **Make libraries more cost efficient**

**Libraries should actively generate extra income.** Libraries could be utilised more effectively with correct investment. The potential for commercialisation needs to be explored. Libraries provide a wide range of services, much of it which is currently free of charge – wifi, book borrowing, activities, space for home working. Could nominal charges for such activities help keep libraries open? Even if these were voluntary contributions? (4 comments).

**Boost library income by having café in them to sell refreshments.** Have better catering and drink facilities. Attract more people by selling coffee and refreshments, particularly those that currently work from cafes (4 comments).

**Rationalise staffing levels** – Staffing could definitely be looked at, do we really need both managers and senior library assistants? The role the librarians play on Grade 6 is very similar to the role of library assistant Grade 4. It would be far cheaper to introduce casual workers again as done in the past rather than having too many permanent members of staff, a review of the way staff resources are utilized would identify savings (3 comments).

Other suggestions included:

- Hire out space, provide meeting room hire. Hire out the space for community group meetings & gatherings (3 comments)

- Bring outside corporations into libraries, engage with companies with profit margins like Bentley to obtain subsidy for the maintenance of the existing offer and the enhancement of library services in the future (2 comments)
- Pass libraries to town and parish councils to manage, especially those with low footfall (2 comments)
- Libraries and their services need marketing more effectively (2 comments)
- Allow libraries to set their own hours depending on need – more flexible opening hours would improve access (2 comments)
- Move library stock online to digital only (2 comment)
- Remove newspaper provision from libraries (1 comment)
- Charge more for reservations on books (1 comment)
- Work more with local schools and use space for extracurricular activities (1 comment)
- Automate libraries as much as possible, have self-service (1 comment)
- Turn down the heating to save on costs. Some libraries are too hot to use (1 comment)
- Provide more modern, flexible seating arrangements for people working from home and in need of a comfortable space/change of scenery (1 comment)
- Partner up with local schools & tutors to create learning hubs and homework clubs inside library facilities (1 comment)

### **Close libraries (32 comments)**

Libraries could be cut and closed completely as they are underused and a relic of pre-internet age – this proposal does not go far enough. Closure of libraries should be considered as most are obsolete and provide service to a very small section of the Cheshire East community. There should be no further funding of libraries until adult social care and childrens' services are receiving above inflation budget increases.

Close some of the smaller libraries. Where libraries are situated in close proximity to each other, the smaller, low footfall libraries should close to save book budgets and loss of Saturday hours. Close the mobile library.

Support closure of libraries 1 day a week or late night, if there is significant data showing low footfall / use of provision. This is preferable to complete closure.

### **Improve the consultation material (3 comments)**

- Consultation material should be made available in paper format, to not do so is not compatible with Cheshire East's Digital Inclusion policy
- There is not enough detail to comment on this proposal (1 comment)

## **[92] Review Waste Collection Service – Green Waste**

**Net support = -66%**

When invited to give reasons for their support or opposition to this proposal, 267 survey respondents made a total of 475 comments between them. These comments have been summarised below.

### **Environmental Impact (216 comments)**

This is completely at odds with the council's commitment to be carbon neutral and green. Will lead to more green waste being placed in black bins and sent to landfill instead of being turned into something useful. Nonsensical given the recent changes to food waste going into the green bins, a massive retrograde step to place this waste back into the black bins. Seems to be at odds with the government policy recommendations around charging for waste collections.

### **Impact of Green Waste Charges (119 comments)**

This will lead to an increase in fly-tipping which will cost more to clear up than the savings brought in by the charge. Will lead to increased vehicle usage to the waste sites, are the waste sites equipped to cope with this?

### **Financial Commentary (105 comments)**

This should be a service covered by council tax by default, this is a stealth double taxation of households. Against the extra cost or could not afford the extra cost at this time. How will this affect households already paying for additional green waste collections?

### **Alternatives to Charges (27 comments)**

Black waste collection frequency could be decreased to three weekly or monthly or the reduced winter garden collection be brought back. Charges could be made for those with larger bins and food waste bins should be stopped. Communal collections for green waste could be introduced plus help for home composting. The council should capitalise on the income stream from collected green waste, especially given the investment in Crewe.

### **Impacted groups (8 comments)**

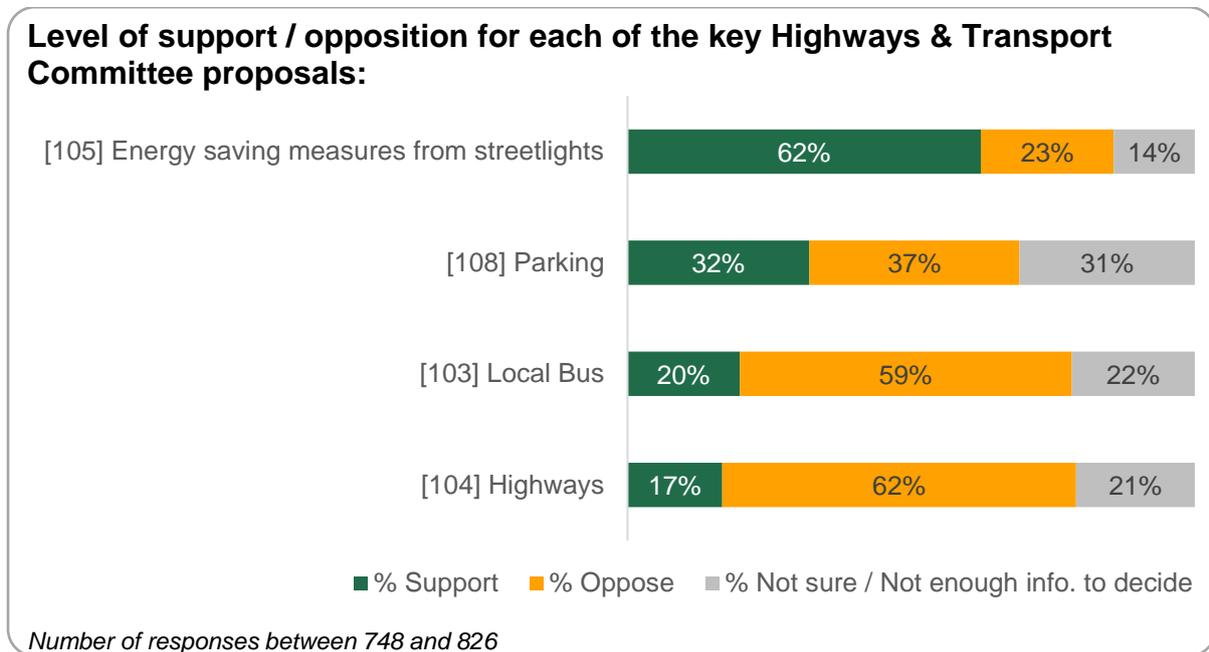
This will have a disproportional impact on those on lower incomes who could not afford to pay and those who do not have access to transport to get to the waste sites such as the elderly.

# Highways & Transport Committee proposals

Net support or opposition for each of the 5 top Environment & Communities Committee MTFS proposals was:

- [105] Energy saving measures from streetlights (39% net support)
- [108] Parking (-5% net opposition)
- [103] Local Bus (-39% net opposition)
- [104] Highways (-46% net opposition)

Levels of support and opposition for each of these 5 proposals is shown in the chart below:



## [105] Energy saving measures from streetlights

**Net support = 39% support**

When invited to give reasons for their support or opposition to this proposal, 134 survey respondents made a total of 159 comments between them. These comments have been summarised below.

### Opposition to the proposals (87 comments)

Massive impact in terms of safety for both pedestrians and cars, especially in rural areas. Great concern expressed from lone women in urban areas who would not feel safe walking after dark. Concerns about the increase in crime, especially in relation to burglaries.

## **Lighting comments (19 comments)**

A swap to solar energy should be made to provide greener lighting. The maintenance of existing lighting should be reviewed and improved, some reports have taken over two years and still have not been resolved. Areas need more lighting not less, could add more LEDs. Concerns about LED lights and the beam spread, and general brightness is too dim/not good.

## **Benefits of the proposal (43 comments)**

General support for this proposal as a viable way for the council to save money. Could be further expanded by requiring businesses to turn off their lights in the evening. Would be good to reduce light pollution and help with darker skies at night. Review whether existing lights were actually required. Variable lighting or variation in lighting periods could be a good solution (such as less lighting in the summer, over different time periods in the evenings, alternate lights being turned off with consultation from those in the local area).

## **Other comments (10 comments)**

This responsibility should be devolved to parish councils. The proposal does not save enough money to be worth the disruption. More information needed about the location of the lights being turned off/changed. Don't increase council tax, could not afford it.

## **[108] Parking**

**Net support = -5%**

When invited to give reasons for their support or opposition to this proposal, 199 survey respondents made a total of 389 comments between them. These comments have been summarised below.

## **Provide free / cheaper car parking in Cheshire East (49 comments)**

Opposition to car parking charges or increases – Car parking costs in CE are ridiculously high, especially as Council Tax is going up 5%. Car parking should be free across all of Cheshire East to stimulate local economies.

Revenue lost through cheap parking would be gained through increased income from business rates if shops are open and viable. The council should generate income from developers or rates instead.

Proposals to increase parking charges must come with an impact assessment of the proposed increases on each town.

### **More car parking is needed in Cheshire East (12 comments)**

Parking provision in CE is limited anyway, especially given the amount of development going on. CEC should also consider how planning and the need for services such as car parking are integrated, far too often we allow development only to see a lack of parking provision, or public transport. Cheshire East needs to search for ways of storing cars off roads that are still convenient for people.

### **Parking charges would lead to an increase in illegal parking / parking on residential streets (11 comments)**

And this would lead to general mayhem for residents. If charges are imposed or increased, action would be needed to address this, including resident parking schemes. Show consideration for local residents.

### **Free car parking should be part of the council's regeneration plans (6 comments)**

The council says that one of their midterm financial strategies is to spend £48.1 million on town centre regeneration – a key place to start with regeneration would be to have free car parking, to encourage trade and support town centres following the pandemic.

### **Car parking should be free (8 comments):**

- For the first 30 mins / 1 hour / 2 hours / 3 hours
- After 3
- On Saturday
- For residents

### **Car parking charges discourage town centre visitors and reduce footfall (88 comments)**

Car parking charges will kill off the high street even further, increasing parking charges is the opposite of what's needed at this time after the pandemic. Shops need customers. Do we really want another Stockport situation where parking fees was a factor in driving people to retail parks?

*“Visit Urmston they manage to NOT charge and have a very vibrant shopping centre with all types of major stores...”*

*“Take a look at Leek - a thriving market town and they keep their parking charges low.”*

Local towns have lost large retailers and are becoming ghost towns. To charge more to park would deter people from coming all together. There is no point in introducing / increasing car parking charges when our town centres have no shops.

*“Paying to (park to) come and have a coffee because the shops have all shut is ridiculous.”*

*“We have only lived in Sandbach for 3 years, but there is little doubt in our minds, nor those of our visitors who frequently comment, that free car parking is a major contributor to the vibrancy of the town centre.”*

*“On a recent trip to the Cotswolds for 4 days I paid no parking charges at all. The towns were really busy and local people made more frequent visits.”*

This Authority needs more tourism, not less – people in Staffordshire no longer come to Nantwich to shop because of the high cost of parking and lack of parking.

### **People will go elsewhere where parking is free (21 comments)**

People will go to Handforth Dean, Cheadle, Barracks Mill and to other large “out of town” retail sites that offer free car parking rather than Macclesfield Town Centre, people will go there instead. Charging for parking will drive people away to out of town retail parks where parking is free and plentiful, and will be the death-knell for our already struggling high streets. Perhaps when the council approved out of town complexes such as Lyme green and Barracks Mill it should have made them subject to parking charges. Why are only town centres subject to parking charges?

*“I’ll just go outside of Cheshire East and spend my money elsewhere. Watch the town centres decline. Stupid idea.”*

### **Parking charges have had, or will have, an impact on our local towns, including:**

- **Macclesfield** – The town centre is getting worse, the high street has been hit hard post-covid, the town centre is dead, shops and banks have closed, it is very run down and neglected. You can count the major stores in Macclesfield on the fingers of one hand, the running down of the town centre is due to the current parking charges. Now that the council has successfully decimated the town centre, how does it think it appropriate to charge people more money for parking to visit a ghost town? How will that encourage visitors? Parking in Macclesfield is significantly more expensive than in Wilmslow...how is this justifiable? (26 comments)
- **Crewe** – Cheaper car parking would support regeneration of the town, it’s not fair Crewe bears the brunt of parking charges. In Crewe, the town centre has been decimated by parking charges and now by demolition that might not

result in re-building – why we need a multi-storey car park defies belief, what would people want to come to town for exactly? Crewe has become a cash cow (11 comments)

- **Nantwich** – It's not fair Nantwich bears the brunt of parking charges. It is not right that you have to pay to park by Nantwich health centre if you have a Doctors appointment (6 comments)
- **Poynton** – It is not a large town and would be negatively impacted by car parking charges (6 comments)
- **Alsager** – In Alsager free parking is critical to the use of services such as the library, community centre etc (2 comments)
- **Wilmslow** (5 comments)
- **Congleton** (2 comments)
- **Knutsford** (1 comment)
- **Alderley Edge** (1 comment)
- **Middlewich** (1 comment)
- **Bollington** (1 comment)

## **Parking charges must be consistent across Cheshire East (40 comments)**

Why should some towns subsidize those which have free parking? Having no charges in some towns, and charges in others makes it completely unfair and discriminatory. Why isn't it fair across Cheshire East? Why was the decision to start charging in some towns reversed? It is no longer acceptable for some towns to have free parking whilst others pay. It is essentially forcing people to shop in those cheaper / free parking areas whilst other towns decline due to lack of use.

### **...but charges have to be variable from town to town (11 comments)**

Towns with lower footfall like Crewe should have lower charges. Small towns can't be compared to other larger towns in Cheshire East, and so shouldn't be charged the same for car parking. Communities and their parking needs and the reasons for them are not equal – different towns have different uses and needs for their car parks. Some towns have a better offer than others. Why do some town centres have free parking like Alsager, Sandbach, Bollington, Middlewich, while others charge?

## **Parking charges should be designed to encourage public transport use, but only if public transport exists! (25 comments)**

If you increase parking cost you must increase public transport, active travel, cycling and walking facilities. You can't reduce public transport and increase parking costs at

the same time – MTFs proposal 103 seeks to reduce public transport funding, and this proposal wants to increase car parking charges!

*“For 5 years we fought against the need for a second car. The reduction in bus timetabling to get out of Bollington to surrounding areas have resulted in us (purchasing) a second car.”*

If we had more reliable local public transport or park and ride we would not need as many cars on the road in return reducing the need of car parks and becoming more sustainable.

## **More information is needed to understand this proposal (20 comments)**

What does this proposal mean, it's very vague? More detail is needed. Use less jargon, and more plain English.

*“The summary is complete gibberish – what does it actually mean in plain English?”*

Reading through the confusing language of the proposal, I assume that means an increase in parking charges? You're just looking to raise revenue.

*“This will be a cash cow, where will the revenue go that is raised???”*

Please re-read your written description of the proposal, what on earth are you trying to say? Are we going to pay more or less for parking? Is it going to be consistent across the Borough?

## **Support for the proposal (10 comments)**

The proposal could go further e.g. controlled parking zones and climate levies for diesel fuelled cars. Car use needs to be cut.

## **Other comments (25 comments)**

- Enforce illegal parking better, use more CCTV to reduce on the ground staffing (5 comments)
- Pass car parks onto town councils – Let local councils set parking charges depending on their needs, they understand the local area better (5 comments)
- Increase revenue by having more enforcement officers, by having larger fines for illegal parking, by having parking meters and residents' permits (3 comments)
- Zonal parking – Support and queries about what it is (3 comments)
- Digital payment methods exclude those who don't have smartphones (2 comments)
- This is an attack on car users (2 comments)

- All car parks must have EV charging points (1 comment)
- Have shorter time slots for parking available to increase turnover (1 comment)
- “Unprecedented”...really??? (1 comment)
- Medium / long term car parking should be discouraged. Short term car parking free (1 comment)
- Increase resident permit parking schemes (1 comment)

## **[103] Local Bus**

**Net support = -39%**

When invited to give reasons for their support or opposition to this proposal, 188 survey respondents made a total of 316 comments between them. These comments have been summarised below.

### **Against the proposal (233 comments)**

Buses are an essential service, and no cuts should be made to the budget here. They support both physical and mental wellbeing for all members of society and are a much needed and well used service. Not everyone has access to a car and the council should be looking to discourage car use which this proposal is counter to. There are currently not enough bus services locally especially in rural areas or an evening service so greater investment is actually needed. By making the service less reliable there will be less users generally meaning fewer viable routes.

### **Impacted groups (32 comments)**

Will have a disproportionate impact on those in rural areas who already have an extremely limited service on which they are dependent. Will also have a large impact on those in lower income groups and the elderly.

### **Considerations or alterations to the proposal (31 comments)**

Services with a low number of users should be considered for reduction. Greater control over the bus service providers should be reviewed, if they are making profits on the popular routes these should be used to offset the less popular routes rather than relying on a subsidy from the council. Better cross border services are needed for fringe areas of Cheshire East. Could smaller or electric buses still retain routes that are less used, more on-demand transport in rural areas.

### **Financial commentary (20 comments)**

Could payment schemes like those used in London be integrated to encourage more users to a streamlined system. More information needed around the services to be removed and a general confusion around how an increase in spending can lead to a

reduction in service provision. Greater levels of central government support should be fought for. Parking charges should be increased to fund bus provision.

## **[104] Highways**

**Net support = -46%**

When invited to give reasons for their support or opposition to this proposal, 213 survey respondents made a total of 342 comments between them. These comments have been summarised below.

### **Road condition (190 comments)**

The roads are in too poor a condition to take any reduction in service at this time, much damage has been done to cars due to the number of potholes and poor carriageway condition. Not spending in this area will lead to increased safety risks to both vehicles and people.

### **Highways Provision (76 comments)**

The quality of repairs should be increased rather than having to visit the same problem over and over. Road works schedule needs reviewing to prevent overlap in some locations. Flooding a risk for much of the borough and not enough is being done to mitigate this. The current highways provider should be removed or controlled to ensure repairs are completed timely and to a good standard. Roads need to be cleaned as well as properly maintained. All new roads should be put on hold and this finance diverted to maintain the existing network. Specific jobs needing attention were raised in various locations.

### **Financial Commentary (60 comments)**

Greater investment in the road network is needed, not less, this will have benefits in the long term rather than a short-term gain. Permit control is a good idea to help raise funds. More should be spent on public transport and active travel methods to ease the amount of traffic on the roads. Less money should be spent on vanity projects, more focus on road repair. Savings should be made elsewhere in the budget, this is a key service.

### **Alternative Proposals (9 comments)**

Impose greater charges on businesses that put a high number of heavy goods vehicles onto the roads which speed up degradation. Greater control of on-road car parking, especially in residential areas near to workplaces. Charge the housebuilders for the increase of vehicles caused by developments. Ask the ground team

undertaking repairs if they have any ideas for improvements. Tighter control and restrictions on utility companies causing damage to roads.

### **Other comments (9 comments)**

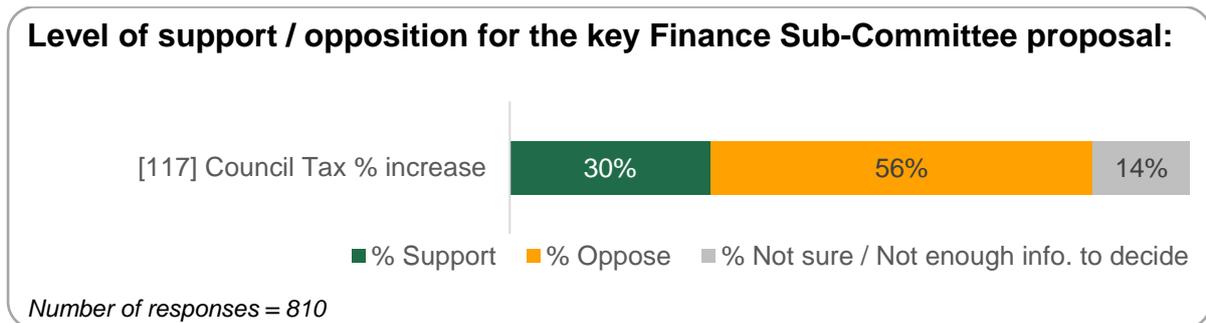
Other comments on this proposal were that more detailed information was required to decide either way, especially in regard to increasing income from licensing and permits.

# Finance Sub-Committee proposals

Net support or opposition for the top Environment & Communities Committee MTFs proposal was:

- [117] Council Tax % increase (-27% net support)

Levels of support and opposition for this proposal is shown in the chart below:



## [117] Council Tax % increase

**Net support = -27%**

When invited to give reasons for their support or opposition to this proposal, 204 survey respondents made a total of 287 comments between them. These comments have been summarised below.

### People cannot afford a 4.99% Council Tax increase (112 comments)

Some residents including workers, OAPs, people in single households, those on minimum wage, and those in band A and B households cannot afford a Council Tax rise of 4.99%. This increase is too big – Council Tax is far too high already! This is the wrong time to increase Council Tax. Stop flogging residents. We already had an increase last year and now to increase it again would be insulting.

*“Every year Cheshire East increases the council tax by a higher percentage than our wages increase, at some point something has to break, this is completely unsustainable.”*

Now fuel costs are declining a 5% increase is unfair, this proposed Council Tax rise will push even more people into poverty and misery, is this what Cheshire East Council is trying to achieve?

*“I have no heating on and (am) not sure what else to cut”*

*“We will have to sell our house if council tax increases by another large percentage, as will many others.”*

This will increase dependence on benefits, it will cause a lot of negative feeling. Will there be safeguards for those on benefits and vulnerable people to make sure the increase is not going to push them into poverty?

### **There are no benefits to this proposal (50 comments)**

It’s confusing that Council Tax is going up, but services still need to be cut?! There are no benefits to this proposal – you want to increase Council Tax but reduce bin collections, reduce library opening hours, turn street lights off, nor repair roads e.g. cut everything and make us pay more?

*“You want to not repair the roads, and you want to turn off the street lights...and then you want to charge us more each month for the services you are reducing. I think it’s ludicrous.”*

The town is falling apart, potholes everywhere that aren't fixed, missed bin collections, teenagers running amok and your proposal for this is to increase costs and make cuts when things are already falling apart?

Council Tax is getting to be worse and worse value. It's not value for money.

### **Support for the Council Tax rise of 4.99% (29 comments)**

Supportive of this Council Tax raise if it keeps services open, and provided money goes on important items e.g. highway repairs, buses, libraries, garden waste collections and adult social care, and not “woke nonsense”.

Supportive of a Council Tax rise, but only for higher Council Tax brackets, or with some other way of means testing to protect those who are already struggling due to the cost of living crisis – Some that can afford it would support a greater increase in higher council tax bands too.

### **The council must live within its means (26 comments)**

The council must live within its means, be more efficient and stop wasting money. Too many services are being cut whilst money is being wasted. Efficiencies should be pursued and exhausted internally within all aspects of the council before lumping unjustified price increases onto residents.

*“Efficiencies need to be made in how the council is run, review processes, staffing levels, increase automation etc just like all private sector companies have to do.”*

It’s not more money the council needs, it’s greater efficiency and less bureaucracy and less red tape. Try harder in considering alternative income streams – be

innovative and more commercially minded. Council tax continues to rise with little evidence of effective spending, money is wasted on dreams and inefficient programmes. Find savings elsewhere.

### **Reduce employee numbers and benefits (19 comments)**

Before tax is increased, management numbers and the pay structure within the borough should be looked at, and be transparent for residents to see. Reduce management, staff numbers, cut pay rises, gold plated pensions, and councillor expenses, and stop early retirements.

### **Increase taxes on the rich (14 comments)**

Make the super-rich pay more tax, or those with 2nd / empty homes in CE, or those with larger homes or in higher Council Tax bands, the current tax system is unfair and inequitable. There should be a higher proportionate increase for the higher Council Tax bands, and none for the lower bands – Council Tax is currently not based on ability to pay.

### **More information is needed (13 comments)**

What are the real term consequences of 4.99% and 2.99% impacts compared against each other? Evidence of spending needed. There must be lots of cost savings to be had which would not impact on services to residents. Does the Council publish any such data? If so, it should share it with residents.

There is some confusion over the figures provided as to whether the increase is 4.99% + 2% or not. Some are not sure what is being suggested.

### **Don't always take the maximum CT increase when it is offered (6 comments)**

Why does the council always opt for the maximum Council Tax increase they can in law? This policy has to stop.

### **Council Tax has to be just 2.99% next year (5 comments)**

What guarantee is there it will be 2.99% next year? It has to be 2.99% in future years or be reviewed next year if possible if it goes up this year.

### **Other comments (13 comments)**

Other comments on this proposal included:

- Clamp down on people who don't pay Council Tax when they should, decrease the amount of discretionary payments given to benefit claimants (3 comments)
- As a result of this increase I will spend less in the local economy (2 comments)
- Shouldn't money raised from new houses should cover costs? (2 comments)
- Tough times call for tough measures – Politicians have to be a bit tougher, explain the situation we are in and ask people to back them in plans to improve some services and perhaps close down others entirely or hand them over to the voluntary / charitable sector to sink or swim (2 comments)
- Freeze tax increases, as they will drive inflation even higher (2 comments)
- Use government grants to cover shortfalls instead (1 comment)
- Use Plain English – The use of acronyms no one understands is unhelpful (1 comment)

# Conclusions

## A significant budget consultation response

The response to the budget consultation this year has been extraordinary as compared to recent years – the high number of responses received highlights the level of feeling about the proposals in this year’s MTFS, and is especially significant given the shortened timescale of this year’s budget consultation.

## Strong opposition to a Council Tax increase of 4.99%

Net opposition of -27% to a Council Tax rise of 4.99% is significant and highlights this is deeply unpopular among many residents.

This compares to net support of 11% to a proposed Council Tax rise of 2.99% last year – this year’s Council Tax increase of 4.99% may make the council very unpopular, and such continued rises are felt to be unsustainable for many.

## General support for the MTFS

That said, despite the high level of response, and the opposition to a Council Tax rise of 4.99%, there does seem to be a general support for proposals.

Of the 25 top proposals focused on in the survey, 12 received strong net<sup>2</sup> support, and none of the proposals outside of the 25 top proposals received significant levels of feedback or opposition.

This does suggest that the vast majority of the proposals in the MTFS for 2023 to 2027 are supported (109 out of 122 proposals).

## Strong opposition to a handful of complex proposals

However, a handful of complex MTFS proposals either face strong net opposition, polarise resident opinion, are extremely nuanced, face strong localised opposition, or require more detail, and these include:

The most complex proposals in the MTFS for 2023 to 2027	Reasons for complexity
[92] Review Waste Collection Service - Green Waste	Strong net opposition
[93] Libraries - Service Review	Strong net opposition
[104] Highways	Strong net opposition
[103] Local Bus	Strong net opposition
[117] Council Tax % increase	Strong net opposition
[108] Parking	Polarise resident opinion, Extremely nuanced
[91] Maintenance of green spaces	Polarise resident opinion
[90] Strategic Leisure Review	Polarise resident opinion

[10, 20 & 22] Learning Disabilities Future Service Development and Review	Strong localised opposition
[24] School transport pressures	Polarise resident opinion
[11] Adult social care: Client contribution yield offsetting growth	More information required
[68] Office Estate Rationalisation	Strong localised opposition

### **Meaningful consultation and co-design of proposals**

Given the potential impact these proposals could have on the future of Cheshire East communities, given the complexity of some of these proposals, and given the strength of opposition to some of them, it is strongly recommended that meaningful consultation on proposals takes place before they are adopted.

In order that proposals are successfully delivered, it is recommended that proposals are co-designed through pre-consultation engagement with relevant stakeholders and communities, prior to being formally consulted on for final approval. It may be there are viable alternative ways of making savings on all proposals which have not yet been considered.

## Appendix 1 – Consultation event feedback

7 budget consultation events were held during January 2023:

Event	Date	No. of attendees
Town and Parish Council meeting (1 of 2)	12 January 2023	21
Trade Union Budget Briefing	16 January 2023	7
All Member Briefing (1 of 2)	17 January 2023	23
Town and Parish Council meeting (1 of 2)	24 January 2023	18
Manager Share and Support Session	31 January 2023	120
Cheshire East Business Forum	31 January 2023	15
All Member Briefing (2 of 2)	31 January 2023	28

During these meetings members of the council's Finance Team presented an overview of this year's budget consultation document. Below summarises the number of attendees at these events, and the feedback received. Feedback has been anonymised to protect the identity of individuals.

### Town and Parish Council meeting (1 of 2) – 12 January 2023

Event host / chair: Jackie Weaver / Alex Thompson

No. of event attendees: 21

#### Q) Closure of libraries.

Has Cheshire East Council considered passing some responsibilities down to town councils to allow libraries to stay open longer? 2012/13 quite a lot of services were passed down to T&PCs but now the process seems much harder to pass service on (business cases needed etc). Areas of open space to stop being maintained – can this be passed on also?

A) All libraries are to remain open, but some reduced hours/days are proposed. But if T&PCs can fill the gap CEC is very open to the suggestion. We also need to make them more affordable overall in terms of heating/lighting etc. Re open spaces, CEC would also welcome suggestion for T&PCs to help maintain them. Hopes its not more difficult to localise facilities but need to refocus on the process (it has been lower down the agenda recently due to covid etc) and make it easier to make this happen.

#### Q) Congleton car parking charges

Last year there was a saving of £180k on winter gritting. Are other services suffering as a result such as fire/ambulance – extra accidents etc? Re parking changes, it is

felt that Congleton suffers the biggest adverse impact of current car parking charging policy. What about elasticity of demand and impact on businesses?

A) Currently gritting in excess of policy and no proposal this year to change further. Parking – multiple ways to achieve changes to car parking income. Any studies to prove links of effect on towns and centres would be welcome if anything available? Cost to manage park cars etc is also increasing with inflation so need to make them more affordable with increases in charges etc.

**Q) Potholes and highways maintenance.**

It appears temporary pot hole repairs aren't lasting. Since Ringway Jacobs was given the contract in 2012 the standard of repairs seems to have gone downhill. Have CEC considered going back to inhouse maintenance? It cannot be profitable to run the service as it is. There is general despair at state of the roads. Does the council use HIPAS materials to make repairs?

A) The contract with Ringway Jacobs was renewed a few years back, and is a 15 year contract which it would be difficult to get out of early. We would need to identify levels of service to know if there is an issue with the contract. Cannot comment on quality of the materials. Will talk to the Head of the Highways Service to understand how they identify what works need doing on each pothole i.e. for safety reasons etc. Fixing on a temporary basis might not seem cost effective but may be necessary as the council has a duty to make emergency repairs quickly. Cannot comment on HIPAS materials – will take away (Jackie to take question back to Highways Committee).

**Q) Car parking**

The council should introduce more car parking for free days, or free after 3.30 car parks, to help town centre trade and parents etc.

A) If Town and Parish Councils can provide evidence that such schemes help increase footfall and trade etc the council will take a look. From what the council is aware no such evidence exists – some areas with high footfall also have high car parking charges for example. It depends on the town as well, we would need to look at every town individually.

**Q) Presentation edit**

There is a possible error on one of the presentation slides.

A) This is acknowledged and will be corrected.

# Trade Union Budget Briefing – 16 January 2023

Event host / chair: Jane Burns / Alex Thompson

No. of event attendees: 7

The Trade Unions represented by event attendees included:

- Unison
- NASUWT (The Teachers' Union)
- GMB
- NEU (National Education Union)

## **Q) Does the council get to keep 100% of the Council Tax (CT) it collects?**

A) There are a number of elements to CT – police, fire etc, but other than that CE does retain 100% of CT.

A) There is a CT support scheme to help lower the CT bill for those on low incomes. We reviewed that scheme, and when we did some people, including those in the poorest neighbourhoods, are now eligible for 100% CT relief.

## **Q) Are you confident the proposed saving figures are accurate?**

For example we have been led to believe the ICT saving figures may be grossly underestimated, according to colleagues.

A) We do as much due diligence as we can, but through consultation we will find some things won't go ahead or will be more expensive than forecast. However, we don't have a lot of reserves to fall back on and so our forecasts can't be too wrong – if things are going to be more expensive, we will have to find money to make up for it elsewhere. We need to know things like this as part of the consultation so we can prepare for it.

A) The council has to set a balanced budget. The Chief Financial Officer has to be satisfied that everything is balanced. We have to minimise costs as much as possible this year.

A) ICT is overspending by over £2.5 million this year. Not having a balanced budget is not an option. We're on different paths with CW&C, we have different priorities and different financial priorities. We benchmark differently. We over-rely on agency staff. Not a surprise we now need to say we can move to a new decision. This consultation is about an overview, there will be further consultation about disaggregation. It requires more investment from CE and CW&C to make these savings. Both councils don't want less ICT. Part of the consultation is to understand what this might mean. There are equivalent issues right across the budget e.g. health and social care.

**Q) We have a problem with a lot of residents on low income, and putting CT up 5% will impact them. At the same time we're cutting services which does not look good.**

This in turn will cause problems for recruitment in future in jobs at the lower end of the pay scale e.g. bin collectors as they will not be able to afford to live on that wage. We will have a tough job to recruit at the lower end of the pay scales.

A) When we have increases in expenditure / inflation of 10%+, CT doesn't cover it at a rise of 5%, inflation is rising at a lot faster rate than our income. Therefore our budget is difficult to balance. New income tax comes with new expenditure. Average pay awards are at 6%. Triple lock pensions are at inflation. We know it is painful, but we have to maintain spending levels by putting CT up.

**Q) CT going up is more for people to pay out. Those of us who are on low pay, our pay has gone up, but our universal credit has gone down.**

We're getting increasing numbers of enquiries from people who are working who can't afford their gas and electric, and they can't afford more CT and won't be eligible for support.

If libraries are going to have reduced opening hours, but they are the main place for warm places, used by those who can't afford to put their heating on. We will need to pay more CT, but get less services for it, it's not balancing for me.

A) Members don't want to put up council tax, however, national government assumes council's put up council tax to the maximum.

A) We increased all thresholds of the means assessment in line with CPI, so that shouldn't impact their council tax support. We retain the emergency support scheme. Housing benefit subsidy.

A) The library proposal is for next year so it won't impact this year. There will need to be a further consultation so we will have to have a close look at how to deliver the service.

**Q) We could spend all day discussing how to chop up the same money pie, the go-to shouldn't always be to increase Council Tax.**

People are seeing pay increases, but it's in name only. People are using food banks, or having to go to libraries to keep warm. The implications of putting up CT is that people's lives are at risk. We're all feeling that squeeze, it's like Armageddon.

We will end up with a situation like the Poll Tax years ago, at some point people won't be able to pay it.

Some of our members won't get to see any of the detail being proposed in this MTFS.

A) There is a diagram showing we get no government grant, so in CE the bigger burden falls on CT tax payers. But the population is growing, with growing needs, and an aging population. There are some very difficult trade-offs, and elected Members will have to decide what the balance is.

A) You are describing just how difficult this is. If we had increased CT in line with inflation we would have £70 million more to spend. We are trying to cut costs. Members are facing a very difficult situation.

A) We don't want to increase the tax burden of residents, and Members recognise that too. It's not an easy option to do it, but the government made the expectation that we put up council tax. We describe every bill going up, that is a consequence of inflation, and that is what the government is trying to address nationally. Any ideas to stop expenditure would be appreciated.

**Q) The MTFS document is a huge long document which is difficult to digest, how residents are meant to?**

Yes it is difficult to access a 300 page document, however, to help make it more accessible we have created a summary feedback survey which just lists the key top 25 proposals for feedback, to try and focus on the proposals where we think members of the public will be most concerned about. We have published the full MTFS though for full transparency, and people can comment on any aspect of the MTFS they wish to.

**Q) The council puts forward ideas about how a service can run more efficiently, but they don't ask the people on the ground who are delivering services.**

The council will consult but staff are seen as disrupters. Would it not be good to bring staff together to ask how they think the service can be delivered best? If you want to engage staff as part of a budget engagement, it's how to engage with them to make them feel like their views count. It looks like decisions are already made. There needs to be an opportunity for staff to say "that won't work".

A) In terms of listening to staff, we do run a Save Us Money (SUM) campaign asking for staff ideas on how to save money, so all staff can submit all good ideas, and these will be assessed through our Bright Ideas scheme. All MTFS proposals are subject to further consultation, and we have a history of making changes during consultation. Furthermore, all council Committee meetings are public, so residents and staff can attend those and submit questions if they wish to.

**Q) Are we looking at contracts where we outsource provision to see if we can save money by bringing services back in-house?**

Re contracts moving forward – Is there any opportunity to look at them? Can we find savings that other organisations made and cross reference them here? Be careful of prime pumping opportunities to save money e.g. getting rid of warm places can have a knock on effect on adult social care. Bringing services in-house might be successful long term.

A) Whenever we commission we go through a process of testing the business case and assessing whether we can we do without the service.

**Q) Is there any data of negotiating with providers, can we see that as part of the consultation?**

I can ask the procurement manager how successful that has been in the past. We frequently benchmark with others to see if there are good ideas out there.

**Q) In terms of comparisons with other LAs can we see the data.**

It is helpful of having that data when we're asked those questions. The data helps us defend the position.

A) We don't capture it as a central record which is the problem.

A) The LGA share best practice. We're not sophisticated as a country to understand how impacts are linked. We do try. We would invest in Early Help more if we could.

A) A lot of services are facing a lot of similar issues.

**Q) Have we sent out as a council something that is an Easy Speak as to what the council has to provide.**

In Denbighshire when the council started charging for green bins the council put something out that made it easier to understand. Can the council put something out that explains simply why council tax is going up? I notice the Police and Crime Commissioner has put over to the public the decision to be made, and has put it out as a poll. Can we send something out that is more plain speaking. People always associate rises with an increase in wages and fat cat salaries which is not true.

A) Yes we will take that feedback away with us. Economic development is a discretionary service.

## **All Member Briefing (1 of 2) – 17 January 2023**

Event host / chair: Lorraine O'Donnell / Alex Thompson

No. of event attendees: 23

**Q) The Council need adequate reserves to be able to set the budget - how do we decide that level?**

Residents would prefer to spend the income now rather than set it aside for the future.

A) The S151 officer needs to provide a professional view (S25 report) on whether reserves are adequate. Proposals need to be robust to be able to give this assurance. Reserves help to cover for the risk that this might not be the case. The risk of proposals also has to be factored in – are they achievable Reserves are also held for specific purposes to help spread the cost of risk as costs cannot always all be incurred in one Council Tax charge / year. Self assurance etc. Therefore we cannot hold zero reserves. The Reserves Annex in the MTFs helps set out the position on what is held/required.

**Q) There are high levels of staff vacancies in the council. Do we know what we are spending on agency staff / consultants?**

A) Agency staff are required where there is need for specific purposes / min level of service cover for example. Specialist work can require consultants where appropriate. We are trying as hard as we can to reduce that need. Social care relies on agency but there are restructures in the proposals to try to make the position more permanent and stable to reduce the reliance on agency staff.

**Q) MTFs must be based on robust estimates. How do we cover off for future inflation / changes based on recent volatility?**

A) An example would be the pay award. We should be focused on target inflation as prescribed by central government and therefore we forecast pay inflation at 2.5% (2% plus slightly high inflation for the lower grades) and it came it at c.6%. Therefore next year we are factoring in the continued increase in inflation and cannot just follow target inflation now. So we need to change services to reduce reliance on consumables that inflate. Opportunities to use less buildings etc and to get the most out of current resources. Couldn't risk an underinflated budget hence the increase in projected costs across the relevant services for the medium term.

**Q) Do you know how much more it costs for a Committee system vs a Cabinet system?**

A) We stick to the design principles that it will cost no more or no less. But if costs of running a democratic organisation increase then it may have been the case under either system.

**Q) Will the current financial situation affect the regeneration of Crewe? Specifically the infrastructure / rebuilding side?**

A) Look at the proposals for future towns funds. The number of community projects was around 10 and there is no way all could be deliverable. Towns board have had to rationalise. So we will have to rationalise if it was no longer affordable. But Infrastructure plans haven't been delayed. We have used flexibility around borrowing (budget increased for the scheme) to allow the projects to carry on. So they now cost more but will still be delivered as planned.

**Q) Largest portion of budget goes to social care. We receive lots of grants so why are we having to cover the increase when government funding is available? What about RSG?**

A) Government determine Core Spending Power (CSP) levels (the net amount a council needs to run its business) based on demographics and deprivation factors etc. Councils that are able to raise their own resources through Council Tax get less funding as they are seen as more self-sufficient. Low deprivation leads to lower grant allocations. So CSP figure is used like a guideline / limit. So if you can raise higher income from Council Tax / business rates etc compared to other authorities then you get less RSG (according to gov formulas). RSG has gone from £55m to effectively nil over the recent years.

**Q) Are no allowances made for the number of over 80 – 85 year olds in CE?**

A) RSG – No, this does not impact. Social care grant funding will cover this and we have benefited but it doesn't match the total growth we have experienced in full. The difficulty is we have a large population which is aging. Government grants do recognise that, but it also recognises we don't have as much deprivation as other Local Authority areas.

**Q) There seems to be an open cheque book for Adult Social Care funding. Isn't the aging population an issue? Can this be strongly brought to central government's attention?**

A) Not quite open cheque book. Self-funders are also affected. Central government have listened and the policy for a cap on care costs has been deferred and they have given us the funding that would have been used to pay for that policy to help fund demand now. The increased Adult Social Care precept also allows us to support the issue. But they have to continue to listen as the historic underfunding hasn't been rectified. There is probably a backlog due to covid delays also so the situation is likely to get worse. We will continue to use Local Government Association / County Council Network route to continue to lobby government.

## **Town and Parish Council meeting (2 of 2) – 24 January 2023**

Event host / chair: Sharon Angus-Crawshaw / Alex Thompson

No. of event attendees: 18

**Q) The perception in Congleton is that Crewe gets a lot of money spent on it. Are all the improvements funded from grants?**

A) There is a mixed approach. Government provides towns funds and regeneration funding for deprived towns for example. The majority of the improvements are government funded but there are elements such as the Royal Arcade Scheme (including new bus station) that is funded from Cheshire East Council.

**Q) Will the Poynton Leisure Centre capital project go ahead as planned as it is still included in the budget?**

A) Capital schemes in the budget are usually fully funded but that particular scheme requires external borrowing for it to continue. The business case was done pre pandemic and borrowing is now more expensive so we will need to have another look at it to see if it is still appropriate to carry on as proposed. For example, is there enough income to repay the higher borrowing costs? The proposal is still in the budget but now needs significant review to see if the scope will require changing. There is an MTFS proposal to review Leisure service this year. We will feedback when we know clearer timescales.

**Q) I have worked in the NHS for over 40 years and have a keen interest in health care at GP practices. The large development of new homes in Nantwich will have an effect on service provision for example healthcare and primary schools. Is there thought given to GP expansion within the town?**

A) I cannot answer specific question but generally the impact on local services are considered at planning stage which helps to specific what S106 contributions are required to help mitigate the impact. Developer contributions can fund elements of highways for example is new access if required. Extra school places are covered by additional DSG grant. Healthcare provision can be included in S106 contributions but I have no information to hand on the church view project. We can find out and feedback accordingly.

**Q) It is tough making hard decisions regarding service levels. We all need to think about risk management processes. We didn't see inflation coming or the war in Ukraine for example. Have you got the right balance of big infrastructure projects compared to revenue services? And, what are the implications for internal changes on staff and Member levels?**

A) Reserves levels help to manage the risk around changing forecasting levels. Within the public sector there is a difficult balance between trying to help return to target inflation (avoiding pay rises for example) but equally we need to support individuals suffering with the cost of living etc. With regards to infrastructure spending vs protection of services, the majority of schemes in the capital programme are already existing schemes. They therefore already have associated spending on them, some in the millions. Because of that we have to protect and complete those schemes or the money spent would have to be repaid in full in one go from revenue as they would be classified as abortive costs. There are not many new infrastructure schemes coming forward due to this.

I do not know the change in parish councillors for next year but there is no reduction proposed for change in ward councillors from the current 82. There are proposals around allowances paid included in the consultation. This will be limited in impact across the entire budget position. There are staffing change proposals particularly in Place and Children's and Families areas within the consultation. Total numbers of staff changes are difficult to predict as the authority are carrying a number of vacancies at the moment with staff not actually in post. So reductions might not have an impact on teams currently in post.

**Q) Do you want responses to the consultation by end of January ideally?**

A) Responses submitted by the end of January will allow them to be included within the report to Full Council in February.

## **Manager Share and Support Session – 31 January 2023**

Event host / chair: Alex Thompson

No. of event attendees: 120

**Q) What's happening with MARS?**

A) MARS has been debated at CLT – announcements imminent (possibly this week).

**Q) The link says the consultation is closed!**

A) You can still feed comments into the process.

**Q) What if the Members don't vote for it because it is election year – where does that put the council?**

A) Members have a responsibility to set balanced budget. They cannot renege on that responsibility. They cannot just not vote a budget through. They could pose alternative proposals at the full Council meeting in February. They would be in breach of their responsibilities and seen as wasting time if they don't approve the budget. The Secretary of state would have to intervene if they don't make a decision. Members have been advised of this.

**Q) Any good SUMS suggestion you could mention and what is the process?**

A) A full response on SUMS will be in the consultation report and will say what we have done with the ideas and which ones need more information. The overall budget is precarious so all ideas welcome. We will continue to look at processes and opportunities. Some difficult items already included in the budget.

**Q) Is this setting the budget for the next administration? What if there is a different Council after May?**

A) There is a responsibility to agree and approve a legal council tax level. A new Council could open up the budget again but would have to live within the same council tax envelope. They could have another budget council in June if a new administration wished to. Some items such as green waste charges will be subject to further consultations which would impact future administrations and future committee meetings. There is then the risk that such decision would not then get approved. But an administration cannot knowingly unbalance the budget so will be difficult if new / alternative proposals aren't put forward to replace any that fall.

**Q) What happens / actions can be taken to review progress on the MTFS / balanced budget savings forecasted if they do not materialise?**

A) We would have to put other proposals in place or use reserves but we don't have many reserves and we need to repay reserves over time to bolster back up to a prudent level as we are in a very tight position and open to risk. As mentioned during the Government autumn statement, the government won't listen to Councils objections on funding levels if reserves aren't used first. We are doing that already.

**Q) When will the MTFS be in the public domain?**

A) Will be published tomorrow as part of Corporate policy committee (9th Feb) agenda. Will then go onto full Council 22 February 2023.

**Q) Is anything expected to change as a result of the consultation findings?**

A) Some changes will be made but not many in scope due to tight financial situation. Challenges/feedback around many proposals but we will be reviewing and changing where we can to accommodate feedback based on feasibility options.

**Q) How are you managing the politics and the securing of seats in May vs. the real dire financial picture and what NEEDS to happen? Do members fully understand the importance of their council decision in Feb?**

A) It is a conversation I have had with senior politicians. But they must implement policies to achieve a balanced budget. Possibly a new administration might come up with new ideas but we have to work with what we have currently to make a decision and approve a balanced budget. All the new members will need education on spending/services/flexibilities to help ensure they understand the new budget.

**Q) Does the council have the resource capacity to implement the changes?**

A) We have tried to identify where significant changes are occurring to ensure resources are available where required. The business cases for each proposal should cover off this requirement.

**Q) Some of these proposals seem like they might have short term savings but longer term problems - for example, green waste bins. Have these potential adverse impacts been considered?**

A) We try to look at the four year position to understand the full life cost for each proposal. We try to think through all the costs and consider any knock on effects. CLT and senior politicians are sighted to try to mitigate these risks. We also try to avoid silo proposals and we encourage enabling services to review HLBCs to look for any cross directorate issues.

**Q) There have been so many proposals to review as an enabler service. Only had a few minutes to comment on each proposal. Don't feel like I could give it much time. Public consultation – difficult and lengthy read. Was it because it was produced in a rush which is why time was short and not very accessible? To note – Proper face to face consultation does help stakeholders understand the reasons for these difficult changes.**

A) The process was truncated this time in terms of consultation timescales. We usually aim to publish in November / December. But this time in November we were looking at a gross overspend in the region of c.£20m and nothing coming in so CLT decided to wait for government announcements to see what the funding envelope looked like to hopefully reduce down the scale of the cuts required. As we had less consultation time it was decided to publish the full MTFS to ensure as much

information was out in the public domain as possible. The online consultation focused on the top c.25 proposal to help focus the comments.

**Q) Have you considered if they are accepted. Have you considered a more streamlined governance process as the committee system is quite lengthy, would help to implement proposals quicker? Is there any form of narrative to go into implementation reports for committees to ensure they are not rejected (as required to maintain the balance budget)?**

A) Constantly trying to streamline the process. We know the committee system is complex but will be here now for a few years. Number of committees to remain as is. Decision making process – future reports to CLT – need to make things faster. Need less “to note” reports and focus on “decision reports”. Constantly working on this. Also trying to manage members expectations sooner. We only really meet with committee chairs but they are not individual decision makers so we need to look at how we inform more members in the process.

**Q) Do CIPFA/others still provide analysis of comparator authorities' spend on different services?**

A) Yes they do. As a comparator, generally, we have low reserves and collect more council tax as we have more houses than other authorities.

## **Cheshire East Business Forum – 31 January 2023**

Event host / chair: Alex Thompson

No. of event attendees: 15

The Cheshire East Business Forum was originally set up to in response to the Covid-19 pandemic aiming to provide a platform to help us to understand the impacts of Covid-19, mobilise and direct resource as appropriate and feed local issues back up to central government. The group has since developed to include a range of businesses, representatives of important business sectors across the borough, members of the Cheshire East Place Board (an existing strategic steering board made up of a range of public and private sector representatives), some of the suppliers key to service provision for the Council and business representative/membership organisations covering the Cheshire East area.

Topic areas for discussion at this meeting were:

- Progress with delivery of the Shared Prosperity Fund in Cheshire East
- Consultation on our budget proposals for the coming year
- Impacts of the cost of living on your businesses and employees for us to feed back to government

Questions asked included:

- Can the slides be shared?
- How has Cheshire East Council approached pay inflation projections? Is it a living wage employer?

## **All Member Briefing (2 of 2) – 31 January 2023**

Event host / chair: Lorraine O'Donnell / Alex Thompson

No. of event attendees: 28

**Q) Green bins: part of the rationale with the green waste site at Leighton, we take all our waste to this facility rather than paying other providers across the borough. What about the T&C's with this current provider at our green waste site – are we undermining our own contract? In relation to the MTFs document – is it still accessible to read online? Can I confirm if you are aware of my work to bring forward alternative proposals?**

A) Green waste – proposal subject to consultation. It reflects implementation from Q4 2023/24 so there is time to iron out contractual issues. It is expected that only half the borough would take up the option to pay for green waste but potential changes may mean we might not be looking to extend the contract anyway. There isn't expected to be a contractual challenge from them. We are aiming to produce the HLBC shortly to give more information before making the final decision on 22 February. Consultation closed but MTFs still available to view online (search "budget" on CEC website). CPC agenda will have the latest version once published tomorrow evening. Alternative proposals – aware something is coming, but not seen the detail yet until officers have finished developing the proposals further.

**Q) At Highways & Transport committee – we stated we wanted to see background information to the proposals. We were told the HLBCs would be available this week?**

A) The intention is to publish all HLBCs by the end of this week so they are imminent. Latest should be early next week.

**Q) Following a visit to the shared joint committee in Winsford last week, I did not understand the financing of that issue. I cannot see it explicitly in MTFs?**

A) Referring to the Hybrid ICT shared services model proposal. The expenditure is split between year 1 and 2 and shared with Cheshire West. Mix of expenditure through revenue and some through capital (within the capital programme line). Savings due in later years hence the revenue reductions. Capital for ICT cover many different programme lines – add up to £13m over a number of years. There is

a hybrid line of £1.5m within the Capital strategy (Corporate policy table – page 237). The HLBC will bring all the revenue and capital numbers together.

**Q) Public building closures. Thinking about water services within them? Will there be extra expenses?**

A) Any process to close building will go through consultation and costs for empty buildings will be limited where possible and retain the value in the asset by properly maintaining the building. Conversation with Economy & Growth committee to get maximum value from all assets – options of letting/selling etc.

**Q) What additional funding will be put in place to uphold culture as staff work remotely? Also for this budgetary saving I assume Staff will need updated contracts so is this reflected in the HR budget?**

A) There is ongoing support for individuals to be able to work remotely. Staff retention is important. We expect to have a mix of people in the office as well as them having the facilities to work remotely and safely from home. There is no specific or additional new funding in the MTFs for this but in terms of ongoing support any issues around Health & Safety and Occupational Health for example remain in place - there is no planned reduction to that.

**Q) Are all proposals in the MTFs deliverable? What about staff deployment?**

A) The intention is that all proposals are robust and deliverable but this also depends on external factors such as inflation / procurement issues as an example. Timescales may need to change which is why we need adequate reserves to allow for possible unforeseen changes/slippage. In terms of redeployment, Cledford house – there is a consultation for this site. We consult with all staff that may need to be redeployed and compensation is made available if appropriate. No new proposals in this MTFs in addition to this site.

**Q) You have said that you do not expect big differences to the quantities of green waste in the future. Do you expect any problems with the compost contractor with changes to the type of green waste once the "food" waste is removed. i.e. will it be less "nutritious" from the point of view of composting**

A) We are intending to stay within contractual terms to be able to make the relevant changes. The proposals will have to take into account any changes. It is dependant on future government plans also. But we need to deal with our current situation now. We have been in contact with central Government who are actively looking at it in case they make mandatory changes for which they would have to compensate us for. Level of uncertainty across many services. Proposals are based on best knowledge at the time but reserves are really important to buffer the risks.

**Q) Was sorry to note at Member Input Panel today that there's no budget to celebrate staff achievements. Shame it had to be done online.**

A) Lorraine kicked off staff awards programme online today. Online ceremony with hundreds of people nominated. It is a cost effective way to celebrate staff achievements. Staff don't want to spend money and are happy to do it online to help save money.

## Appendix 2 – Public comment, email and letter feedback

Given the large response to the Budget Consultation 2023, all public comments, emails and letters received during the consultation have been printed verbatim in the following separate report:

[Report of all public comments, emails and letters received in response to Cheshire East Council's Budget Consultation 2023 \(PDF, 3.3MB\)](#)

All public comments, emails and letters received as part of this consultation are presented within the above report under the proposal reference number and name which they refer to. Note responses are published multiple times if they refer to more than one proposal in their response.

The total number of public comments, emails and letters received as part of this consultation, and included in this report, was:

- 170 public comments
- 64 published emails
- 27 letters

The total number of references to MTFs proposals within all these public comments, emails and letters is shown below, by proposal reference number and name.

MTFS Ref No & Name	Public comments	Emails	Letters	All
[4] Pay inflation	3	0	0	3
[9] Pension Costs Adjustment	2	0	0	2
[12] Home First Strategy - alternative care provisions	0	1	0	1
[16] Direct Payment - Audit Recoveries	0	1	0	1
[18] Maximisation of Supported Living	0	1	0	1
[21] Adults and Health Non-Essential Commissioning/Contracts	0	1	0	1
[22] Building Based Day Services	11	9	0	20
[23] Day Care Review	0	2	0	2
[24] School transport pressures	1	0	0	1
[26] Growth in Children's Social Care	1	0	0	1
[33] Pension Costs Adjustment	2	0	0	2
[55] Pension Costs Adjustment	2	0	0	2
[64] Assets - Buildings and Operational	0	1	0	1
[68] Office Estate Rationalisation	19	6	0	25
[69] Rural and Visitor Economy	0	1	0	1

[70] Cultural	0	1	0	1
[72] Assets - Transactions	1	0	0	1
[74] Pension Costs Adjustment	2	0	0	2
[75] Restructuring Potential	0	1	0	1
[76] Investment in Public Rights of Way	0	1	0	1
[77] Tatton Park	1	1	0	2
[90] Strategic Leisure Review	0	2	0	2
[91] Maintenance of green spaces	7	6	1	14
[92] Review Waste Collection Service - Green Waste	38	11	2	51
[93] Libraries - Service Review	117	44	26	187
[94] Pension Costs Adjustment	2	0	0	2
[100] CCTV	1	1	0	2
[101] Household Waste and Recycling Centres - introduce residency checks	1	0	0	1
[103] Local Bus	12	5	0	17
[104] Highways	16	5	0	21
[105] Energy saving measures from streetlights	3	2	0	5
[106] Pension Costs Adjustment	2	0	0	2
[108] Parking	5	6	1	12
[110] Pension Costs Adjustment	2	0	0	2
[117] Council Tax % increase	25	4	0	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>419</b>

## **Appendix 3 – Social media engagement**

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12 posts advertising the consultation were posted on Facebook and Twitter during the consultation on corporate council accounts (@CheshireEastCouncil), and in total, 269 comments (engagements) were received in reply from social media users.

### **Facebook engagement**

Total number of posts advertising the consultation on Facebook = 12

Total number of Facebook comments = 254

Total number of Facebook likes = 4

### **Twitter Engagement**

Total number of posts advertising the consultation on Twitter = 12

Total number of Facebook comments = 15

Total number of Facebook likes = 7

### **LinkedIn Engagement**

Total number of posts advertising the engagement on LinkedIn = 2

Total number of Facebook comments = 0

Total number of Facebook likes = 0

## Appendix 4 – Newspaper Articles

A total of 13 newspaper articles were published throughout the duration of the consultation – these are listed below.

Date	Source	No. comments	Article title & link
06/01/2023	Cheshire East Council	0	<a href="#">Investing in sustainable council services in Cheshire East</a>
07/01/2023	Silk 1069	0	<a href="#">Investing in sustainable council services in Cheshire East</a>
08/01/2023	BBC	0	<a href="#">Cheshire East Council residents face 4.9% tax increase</a>
10/01/2023	Church Minshull Village Arena	0	<a href="#">C.E. Budget Review</a>
16/01/2023	Nantwich News	0	<a href="#">LETTER: Readers should look at CEC Budget consultation</a>
18/01/2023	Knutsford Guardian	13	<a href="#">Stanley Centre in Knutsford at risk of closing down</a>
19/01/2023	Northwich & Winsford Guardian	0	<a href="#">Cheshire East will go bust unless savings made, cllr warns</a>
20/01/2023	Knutsford Guardian	0	<a href="#">Call for Cheshire East to sell derelict buildings not cut services</a>
23/01/2023	Cheshire East Council	0	<a href="#">Cheshire East Council's budget out for consultation</a>
23/01/2023	Knutsford Guardian	1	<a href="#">Council urged to re-think plans to close Stanley Centre at Knutsford</a>
23/01/2023	Knutsford Guardian	7	<a href="#">Call to save Stanley Centre as council spends £12m on HS2</a>
30/01/2023	Knutsford Guardian	0	<a href="#">Plan to hike up parking charges challenged by Cheshire East cllrs</a>
31/01/2023	Knutsford Guardian	0	<a href="#">Mayor calls on plans to close Stanley Centre to be abandoned</a>

## Appendix 5 – Council Committee feedback

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### Children and Families Committee – 16 January 2023 10:30

Meeting agenda:

<http://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=963&MId=9287>

Full meeting minutes:

<http://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/documents/g9287/Printed%20minutes%2016th-Jan-2023%2012.30%20Children%20and%20Families%20Committee.pdf?T=1>

Meeting minutes relating specifically to item MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2023-27 CONSULTATION

The committee received the report which aimed to capture committee members' feedback as consultees on the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023 – 27 in relation to the responsibilities of the committee.

The following comments were put forward:

Cllr Anderson queried the increase in cost of transport and requested a breakdown of where the additional costs are coming from. The Director of Education responded that the majority of the cost is the increase of children eligible for transport as well as the increase of cost due to procurement. A report brought to committee previously had set out in detail the strategy to review the programme but it was likely to be the next contract year when the benefit of that would be seen. The committee were advised that a small amount of that money would fund the additional capacity needed to deliver the change and that providing school transport for eligible children was a statutory requirement. The data requested would be extracted from the previous report and re-circulated to committee.

Cllr Parkinson, who was present as a substitute, asked for clarity on the amount received from government grants in Children's Services and where these funds had been distributed. The Director of Strong Start, Family Help and Integration responded that there was regular reporting to committee on funding received from grants and that a full breakdown of this could be shared following the meeting.

Cllr Beanland raised a query regarding what the resettlement fund is and whether there was any money left from that fund. The committee were advised that Cheshire East had received this funding for families coming to Cheshire East and that it applied to any services where cost was incurred, for example for transport or additional staffing costs. There was an ongoing piece of work to assign the income to services.

Cllr Beanland raised a query regarding the £45.6m deficit on the DSG reserve and how it was being managed. The committee were advised that this was being managed by statutory override and that a piece of work was ongoing. The Chair highlighted that high needs did not sit within the MTFs but was part of a high needs management strategy and an update on this would be coming to committee for debate.

Cllr Beanland raised a query regarding appendix 1 which referred to any betterment to the forecast outturn position being utilised to replenish reserves in line with the priorities of the Corporate Plan, and asked whether there was a figure available for the reserves. The committee were advised that it was necessary to wait for the year end to understand the position on this.

Cllr Beanland raised a query relating to the £76m referred to in appendix 2 with regard to the DSG budget, specifically what the breakdown of this was and what control there was for how this was to be spent. The committee were advised that a breakdown of this would be brought to the February committee meeting and any outstanding questions could be addressed at that point.

Cllr Beanland referred to the table on policy proposals in appendix 2 and requested that future reports include a column showing what the original budget was for clarity. The committee were advised that this was included in the full MTFs budget consultation document.

Cllr Beanland referred to the Educational Psychology service and queried whether this has brought in any income. The committee were advised that this had been included in the MTFs within the general income. The Educational Psychology service had brought in income with the traded service and there was good uptake of intervention work, however statutory work had also increased. A report was due to come to committee with an update.

Cllr Beanland raised a query regarding the review of the Children's Services structure and how the £0.950m referred to would be achieved. The Executive Director of Children's Services responded that this was an opportunity to streamline and deliver services differently for less with a plan for the longer term. There were a number of existing and emerging priorities that needed to be delivered in the most efficient and effective way.

Cllr Beanland made a request for the wording to be changed regarding Crewe Youth Zone to clarify that this was for the benefit of children and young people in Crewe. The Chair expressed a view that it was not necessary to change this as the clarification was not needed.

Cllr Beanland raised a query regarding the Poynton planning area referred to in appendix 3 and what the £1.5m was for. The committee were advised that a slight

shortfall in places at the primary phase was forecast and consultation with the schools was currently taking place. This was always the first stage in considering options and at the appropriate time a paper would be brought to committee for decision.

Cllr Beanland stated that the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) appeared to be the same each year and queried whether it was expected to change. The committee were advised that there could be an increase but at this point it would be difficult to say what this would be. Further information would be coming to the next committee meeting.

Cllr Saunders stated that she disagreed with points 35 (integrated children's service strategy) and 40 (early help redesign). Cllr Saunders disagreed with cuts to staffing levels in social services due to families facing profound difficulties at the current time.

Cllr Saunders also expressed concerns about the impact of staffing cuts on the morale of existing staff and the chances of recruiting staff.

Cllr Saunders agreed with point 29 regarding the reversal of travel savings that cannot be achieved.

Cllr Saunders also expressed a view that an audit of buildings should take place with a view to selling buildings that were not needed.

Cllr Saunders expressed a concern about the early help budget being used to support Crewe Youth Zone. Cllr Saunders stated that she was not against the youth zone but could not see how it could be afforded at the current time and did not feel that it was right to take money from the early help service to help to fund it. Cllr Flavell responded that the function of the youth zone was to provide early help and support and therefore it was not about cutting early help services but investing in something that will provide this service. Cllr Saunders added that the grant could have been used across the whole borough instead of focusing on one area.

Cllr Clowes raised a query regarding school transport pressures and whether flexibility is being built into contracts for downward changes, for example petrol price decreases. The Director of Education advised that through Procurement there was a lot of challenge going on to look at reducing the contract prices but it remained a challenge.

Cllr Clowes raised a query regarding safe walking routes to school and whether there had been any progress with this to reduce costs. The committee were advised that this was included in the transport review report.

Cllr Clowes referred to pressures in social care payments and was surprised that it indicated a budget pressure as in Adults Services direct payments had caused some

pressures to decrease. Cllr Clowes suggested this could also be a good thing to encourage to ease the transition from Children's Services into Adults.

Cllr Clowes referred to the growth in children's social care and acknowledged that pressures are growing but that the budget in 2020 had provided for using Mount View and Bexton Court for provision and would have started to make cost benefits to the services involved within a five year period. Cllr Clowes stated that the business cases would need to be reviewed but with the cost of care going up, it would be expected that there would still be savings and suggested that this is looked into. The Director of Children's Social Care responded that half of the growth related to the need to realign the way DSG was applied and half was in relation to the growth pressures. A greater proportion of children and families had been accessing direct payments. There was an increasing number of children who were being supported by the local offer for children with disabilities and a reduction of children open to the Child in Need & Child Protection service and the Cared for Children with Disabilities service so the broader picture was of prevention and inclusion. The growth pressures in children's social care was around external placement costs. The service had been able to safely reduce the number of children living in residential care over the past 12-18 months. The inflationary costs of the external services had created the additional pressure. There were capital programmes for the refurbishment or purchasing of up to four residential children's homes and a paper on this would be coming to committee in March.

Cllr Clowes referred to MARS and stated that she did not disagree with reviewing the structure but that MARS had previously not done as well as hoped. Consequently, money from predicted savings had to be put back in. Cllr Clowes suggested, in the light of new regulatory frameworks, the possibility of retraining staff before looking at MARS.

Cllr Rhodes referred to the DSG and stated that Cheshire East was underfunded and children in Cheshire East were receiving less from the government than those in other areas.

Cllr Rhodes agreed with Cllr Saunders and Cllr Clowes regarding concerns about the reorganisation of Children's Services.

Cllr Rhodes also agreed that the MARS scheme had not always been as successful as hoped.

Cllr Rhodes expressed a concern about cuts to early years as providing support early could reduce costs later on.

Cllr Rhodes expressed a concern about school transport and getting value for money.

Cllr Rhodes was in support of the Crewe Youth Zone and stated that Crewe had six wards in the top 10% of deprivation in the country and that the government had recognised this deprivation and awarded the funding for the project.

Cllr Handley was also in support of Crewe Youth Zone and stated that the cost of living crisis had disproportionately affected children and young people in this area.

Cllr Flavell recognised that there were external pressures that needed to be addressed and was in support of the way in which officers had managed this.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the Children and Families Committee notes:

1.1 The year-end forecast outturn position for 2022/23 (Appendix 1).

1.2 The financial context and proposals contained within the Executive Summary of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS report Annex C, Section 1).

1.3 Revenue Grant Funding (Appendix 4).

1.4 Earmarked Reserves (Appendix 5).

2. That the Committee provides feedback on the proposals within the MTFS, as related to the Committee's responsibilities, that can support and advise Full Council in fulfilling its responsibilities to approve a balanced budget for 2023/24, in the following areas:

2.1 Revenue Proposals (Details are at Appendix 2).

2.2 Capital Programme (Appendix 3).

## **Economy and Growth Committee – 17 January 2023**

Meeting agenda:

<http://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=960&MId=9268>

Full meeting minutes:

<http://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/documents/g9268/Printed%20minutes%2017th-Jan-2023%2014.00%20Economy%20and%20Growth%20Committee.pdf?T=1>

Meeting minutes relating specifically to item 44 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2023-2027 CONSULTATION:

The Committee received a report on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2023-2027 and the revenue and capital proposals contained within the MTFS relating to the Committee's responsibilities. As part of the consultation process the Committee was asked to provide comments and feedback to the Corporate Policy Committee on proposals related to the responsibilities of the committee.

The following comments were raised by Committee:

- concern that Members had not been involved in the drawing up of the proposals before them in the report. In previous year there had been session with finance officers to discuss proposals before they went into the MTFS. It was asked if it was possible for the background workings behind each proposal to be circulated to the committee for information.
- Ref 64 Assets Buildings and Operational – the Committee was concerned that only spend on maintenance where there was a specific Health and Safety risk was not a sustainable approach and could cost the Council more in the long term.
- Ref 66 & 67 Rates increase for Cheshire East properties - it was asked why the rates increase for Cheshire East properties were being funded from the Collection Fund earmarked reserve. In response it was reported that the proposal were the result of the increase in business rates payable by Council due to the Valuation Office Revaluation which took effect on 1st April 2023. The estates rationalisation exercise was ongoing and this may ultimately reduce the level of business rates payable by the Council and therefore the uplift in rates currently forecast could be temporary.
- Ref 68 Office Estate Rationalisation – clarification was sought and given that the reference to Macclesfield Library related to the physical building and not the service. It was also raised if there would be a separate formal consultation about the move of the library building.
- Ref 72 Assets Transactions – it as commented that using auctions to dispose of property was not always the best way to dispose of property quickly and did not always achieve the best price.
- Ref 75 Restructuring Potential – it was suggested that the Council should look at retraining or upskilling staff before using schemes such as MARS. It was also queried if there was scope for transferring non-statutory services/non-income generating posts to town and parish councils.

RESOLVED:

1 That the Committee notes

1 the year-end forecast outturn position for 2022/23, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

2 the financial context and proposals contained within the Executive Summary of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (as set out in the MFTS report at Annex C, Section 1).

3 the Revenue Grant Funding, as set out in Appendix 4 to the report

4 the Earmarked Reserves, as set out in Appendix 5 to the report.

2 The Committee feedback be noted on the proposals within the MFTS, as related to the Committee's responsibilities, that can support and advise full Council in fulfilling its responsibilities to approve a balanced budget for 2023/23 in the following areas:

1 Revenue Proposals, as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report

2 Capital Programme, as detailed in Appendix 3 to the report.

## **Finance Sub-Committee – 19 January 2023**

Meeting agenda:

<http://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=965&MId=9688>

Full meeting minutes:

<http://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/documents/g9688/Printed%20minutes%2019th-Jan-2023%2010.00%20Finance%20Sub-Committee.pdf?T=1>

Meeting minutes relating specifically to item 4 MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2023-27 CONSULTATION

The Sub-Committee considered a report on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2023-27.

The Sub-Committee was being asked to provide feedback, as consultees, on the development of the MFTS in relation to the Sub-Committee's responsibilities. The feedback would be presented to the Corporate Policy Committee for consideration on 9th February 2023 before a balanced budget was presented to full Council on 22nd February 2023 for final review and approval.

In response to members' questions, officers commented as follows:

The un-ringfenced specific grant levels for 2023/24 and 2024/25 were in the order of £26.4M and £29.1M respectively, showing an increase over time. Further details were available in the full MFTS available on the Council's website.

The figures for bad debt provision adjustment related largely to adult social care. The figures did not include deferred debt.

With regard to the Council paying the rate increases on its own properties from the Collection Fund earmarked reserve, the increases related to revaluations rather than inflation, the Government having frozen business rates nationally for the current financial year. The Council usually funded its business rates from general reserves and the use of the Collection Fund was a temporary arrangement.

The officers were thanked for having produced the budget on time in conditions of uncertainty.

## RESOLVED

That

### 1. the Sub-Committee notes:

- (a) the year-end forecast outturn position for 2022/23 (Appendix 1 to the report);
- (b) the financial context and proposals contained within the Executive Summary of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS report Annex C, Section 1); and
- (c) Revenue Grant Funding (Appendix 2); and

2. the Sub-Committee's feedback be provided on the proposals and current strategies within the MTFS, as related to the Sub-Committee's responsibilities, in order to support and advise full Council in fulfilling its responsibilities to approve a balanced budget for 2023/24, in the following areas as detailed in the Appendices to the report:

- Revenue Proposals (Appendix 3)
- Capital Strategy (Appendix 4)
- Treasury Management Strategy (Appendix 5)
- Investment Strategy (Appendix 6)
- Reserves Strategy (Appendix 7)

## **Adults and Health Committee – 23 January 2023**

Meeting agenda:

<http://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=964&MId=9294>

Full meeting minutes:

<http://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/documents/g9294/Printed%20minutes%2023rd-Jan-2023%2010.00%20Adults%20and%20Health%20Committee.pdf?T=1>

## Meeting minutes relating specifically to item 53 MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2023-27 CONSULTATION:

The Committee received a report on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2023-2027 and the revenue and capital proposals contained within the MTFS relating to the Committee's responsibilities. As part of the consultation process the Committee was asked to provide comments and feedback to the Corporate Policy Committee on proposals related to the responsibilities of the committee.

The following comments were raised by Committee:

- Proposal 8 Home First Strategy: Increased Care Home capacity – Members raised concerns around the proposal to maximise the use of block booked beds and the potential impact this would have on relationships with care home providers, sustainability of the care market and carers.
- Proposal 10: Learning Disabilities Future Service Development and Review – Members raised concerns around the ability to achieve the savings associated with this proposal. Reassurance was sought that Cheshire East would not pick up any additional costs as a result of working in partnership with health colleagues on shared Continuing Health Care (CHC) funding.

Councillor Clowes referred to the capital addendum items put forward in 2020 which proposed to use Mountview and Bexton Court for the purpose of delivering extra care with the view of establishing improved facilities to incorporate Stanley House on the ground floor of that new facility. Councillor Clowes requested that those capital addendums, which were previously budgeted for (Addendum items could be released by the portfolio holder and Chief Financial Officer subject to an appropriate business case, demonstrating how the proposals would be funded), were explored as an alternative to the full closure of Stanley House.

It was agreed that a written response would be provided by the Director of Adult Social Care to members in respect of Mountview and Bexton House.

- Proposal 16: Direct Payment – Audit Recoveries – Members felt that the £750k saving associated with this proposal was ambitious and may not be achievable. It was agreed that a written response would be provided by the Executive Director of Adult, Health, and Integration in respect of the concerns raised by Councillor Clowes that people may not be receiving the right support and guidance on using their direct payments.
- Proposal 20: Building Based Short Breaks – Members raised concerns around the potential closure of buildings and the impact this would have on those being discharged from hospital. Members asked what could be delivered better and what could make the facilities used to their full potential and service their communities better. Councillor Clowes asked if it would be

better to reconsider block booked contracts in the context of Learning Disabilities rather than close the facility. It was requested that consideration was given to expanding the role of the Shared Lives initiative.

- Proposal 21: Adults and Health Non-Essential Commissioning/Contracts – Members requested reassurance that the services that would not be renewed would not impact negatively on the organisations that would be relied upon to deliver other elements of the budget proposals.
- Proposal 22: Building Based Day Services – Councillor Clowes requested that this item be incorporated with earlier suggestions regarding Bexton Court and potential capital addendums.
- Proposal 23: Day Care Review – it was suggested that further consideration was given to this proposal to ensure that 1) the savings are not at the expense of further isolating elderly recipients and 2) that carers receive the right support. It was proposed that community hubs are explored further.

RESOLVED:-

1. That the Committee notes:-

1. The year-end forecast outturn position for 2022/23 as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.
2. The financial context and proposals contained within the Executive Summary of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (as set out in the MFTS report at Annex C, Section 1).
3. The Revenue Grant Funding as set out in Appendix 4 to the report
4. the Earmarked Reserves, as set out in Appendix 5 to the report

2 The Committee feedback be noted on the proposals within the MFTS, as related to the Committee's responsibilities, that can support and advise full Council in fulfilling its responsibilities to approve a balanced budget for 2023/23 in the following areas:

1. Revenue Proposals, as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report
2. Capital Programme, as detailed in Appendix 3 to the report.

Councillor D Edwardes left the meeting and did not return.

## **Highways and Transport Committee – 26 January 2023**

Meeting agenda:

<http://modern.gov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=961&MId=9276>

Full meeting minutes:

<http://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/documents/g9276/Printed%20minutes%2026th-Jan-2023%2010.30%20Highways%20and%20Transport%20Committee.pdf?T=1>

Meeting minutes relating specifically to item 43 MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2023-27 CONSULTATION

The Committee received a report on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2023-2027 and the revenue and capital proposals contained within the MTFS relating to the Committee's responsibilities. As part of the consultation process the Committee was asked to consider the proposals within the remit of the Committee and provide comments and feedback to the Corporate Policy Committee for consideration on, 9 February 2023, before a balanced budget was presented to the full Council meeting of 22 February 2023 for final review and approval.

The following comments were raised by Committee:

Members raised concerns around the consultation process and that Committee Members had not been involved in the drawing up of the proposals before them in the report. Committee Members requested to receive the background information (High Level Business Cases –'HLBCs') supporting the proposals as soon as possible.

Tom Moody advised that HLBCs would be presented to the Corporate Policy Committee on 9 February and agreed to explore when it would be feasible to share this information with Committee Members.

Proposal 108: Parking – Members highlighted that any increase in the current parking charges would have a detrimental impact on town centre recovery, local businesses and residents. Members felt that the current car park charging policy was unfair and there needed to be a consistent and fair policy across the borough. Members queried when the expansion of car park charging to other towns would be considered at Committee and if guidance would be provided to Members to gauge satisfaction with residents.

The Chair confirmed that car parking proposals were due to be considered at the first Highways and Transport Committee meeting scheduled for the new municipal year.

Proposal 105: Energy saving measures from streetlights - Members raised concerns around the potential public safety implications as a result of switching off streetlights. Members also queried if there were likely to be costs incurred as a result of handling an increase of calls reporting broken streetlights. It was suggested that those streetlights purposefully switched off are clearly marked to avoid this. It was asked if there was a way of targeting any reduction of lighting to areas where there may be ecological benefit to do so.

Cllr Smetham suggested that streetlighting in critical and problematic areas could continue but queried what the significant difference between rural and urban areas was. Mike Barnett committed to providing a more detailed response on the criteria for installing streetlighting in urban/rural areas.

Members agreed that some of the proposals were unpalatable but recognised the extremely difficult financial situation facing the Council.

RESOLVED (by majority):

1) That the Committee notes:

- a) the year-end forecast outturn position for 2022/23, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.
- b) the financial context and proposals contained within the Executive Summary of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (as set out in the MFTS report at Annex C, Section 1).
- c) the Revenue Grant Funding, as set out in Appendix 4 to the report.
- d) the Earmarked Reserves, as set out in Appendix 5 to the report.

2) The Committee feedback be noted on the proposals within the MFTS, as related to the Committee's responsibilities, that can support and advise full Council in fulfilling its responsibilities to approve a balanced budget for 2023/23 in the following areas:

- a) Revenue Proposals, as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report
- b) Capital Programme, as detailed in Appendix 3 to the report

## **Environment and Communities Committee – 2 February 2023**

Meeting agenda:

<http://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=962&MId=9281>

Full meeting minutes: Not yet published.

## **Corporate Policy Committee – 9 February 2023**

Meeting agenda:

<http://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=959&MId=9262>

Full meeting minutes: Not yet published.

# Appendix 6 – Consultation methodology & response

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## Consultation live dates

The Cheshire East Council 2022 / 2023 budget consultation was conducted between 6 January and 30 January 2023.

The start of the consultation was delayed until after HM Government had published its [local government finance settlement for 2023 to 2024](#). Once this settlement had been published, the council could then finalise a draft Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to be consult on.

## Consultation material

The council promoted its budget consultation through a dedicated webpage at [www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/budgetengagement](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/budgetengagement).

The council published a full draft Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) document on this webpage to be consulted on. This MTFS contained 122 different proposed changes to the council's budget. Some of these were simply referring to receipt of grants or are accountancy adjustments, however, a number of proposals relate to increased investment in or savings to be made against specific council services.

In order to help navigate the 122 proposals in the full MTFS document, a short survey was also provided which asked for feedback on the top 25 proposals out of the 122.

The top 25 proposals listed in the survey were selected using the following criteria – financial impact, number of people affected, historical interest in the subject, where the council has significant discretion in how to spend, save or deliver a particular service. Although the top 25 proposals were listed in the survey, all 122 proposals were available for comment within this survey.

## Capturing feedback

People could respond to the consultation by:

- Completing an online survey
- Completing a paper version of the survey, made available at all libraries in Cheshire East
- Publicly commenting on [the Budget Consultation webpage](#)

- Emailing the Research and Consultation Team at [RandC@cheshireeast.gov.uk](mailto:RandC@cheshireeast.gov.uk)
- Writing to Research and Consultation, Westfields, Sandbach, CW11 1HZ
- Tweeting @CheshireEast #CECBudget

## Consultation promotion

The consultation was widely promoted, most notably though:

- Media releases
- Emails to key stakeholders including all local Town and Parish Councils
- Members Briefings
- Town and Parish Council meetings
- A Trade Union Budget Briefing
- Business and Schools forums
- The council's Digital Influence Panel
- Social media
- Internal council employee message boards

Additionally, Cheshire East Council employees were invited to submit ideas on how the council could save money and raise income for the council via a “Save Us Money” campaign.

## Consultation responses

### Total consultation engagements for 2022

In total, there were 2,267 consultation engagements, including:

- 1,417 online survey completions
- 269 social media comments
- 232 attendees at budget consultation events
- 170 budget webpage comments
- 65 emails
- 52 “Save Us Money” ideas submitted by council employees
- 35 paper survey completions
- 27 letter responses

### Consultation engagements compared to previous years

The number of budget consultation engagements in 2023 (2,267) was significantly higher than in previous years – 6 times as many consultation engagements were received in 2023 compared to 2022. 2,267 responses is also the largest number of budget consultation engagements received since records began in 2017.

<b>Feedback mechanism</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
Survey responses	47	436	97	99	291	264	1452
Social media comments or replies	26	116	-	-	-	20	269
Event attendees	32	-	-	2	-	73	232
Budget webpage comments	-	-	-	-	14	6	170
Emails / Letters	14	132	5	2	8	3	92
SUM ideas submitted	-	-	-	-	-	14	52
Petitions	-	3	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total engagements</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>687</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>2,267</b>

