

**East Lindsey District Council
Budget 2023/24
Consultation Report
Published 13/02/2023**



East Lindsey
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Introduction to this consultation

1. This report details the responses received for the Budget 2022/23 consultation undertaken between 27th January 2023 and 10th February 2023.
2. The exercise was performed to seek residents' views on the Council's Budget proposals for 2023/24.

Methodology

3. A media release was issued to local newspapers to promote the consultation and social media activity was ongoing throughout the consultation period.
4. A link to the electronic questionnaire was made available on the Council's website, shared regularly via the Council's Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn pages and was included in the Council's e-Messenger. Paper copies of the questionnaire were available on request.
5. It should be noted that base data has been rounded to the nearest number (so may add up to between 99% and 101%). Where available this report details comparisons with the previous budget survey undertaken in 2022/23.

Response Rate

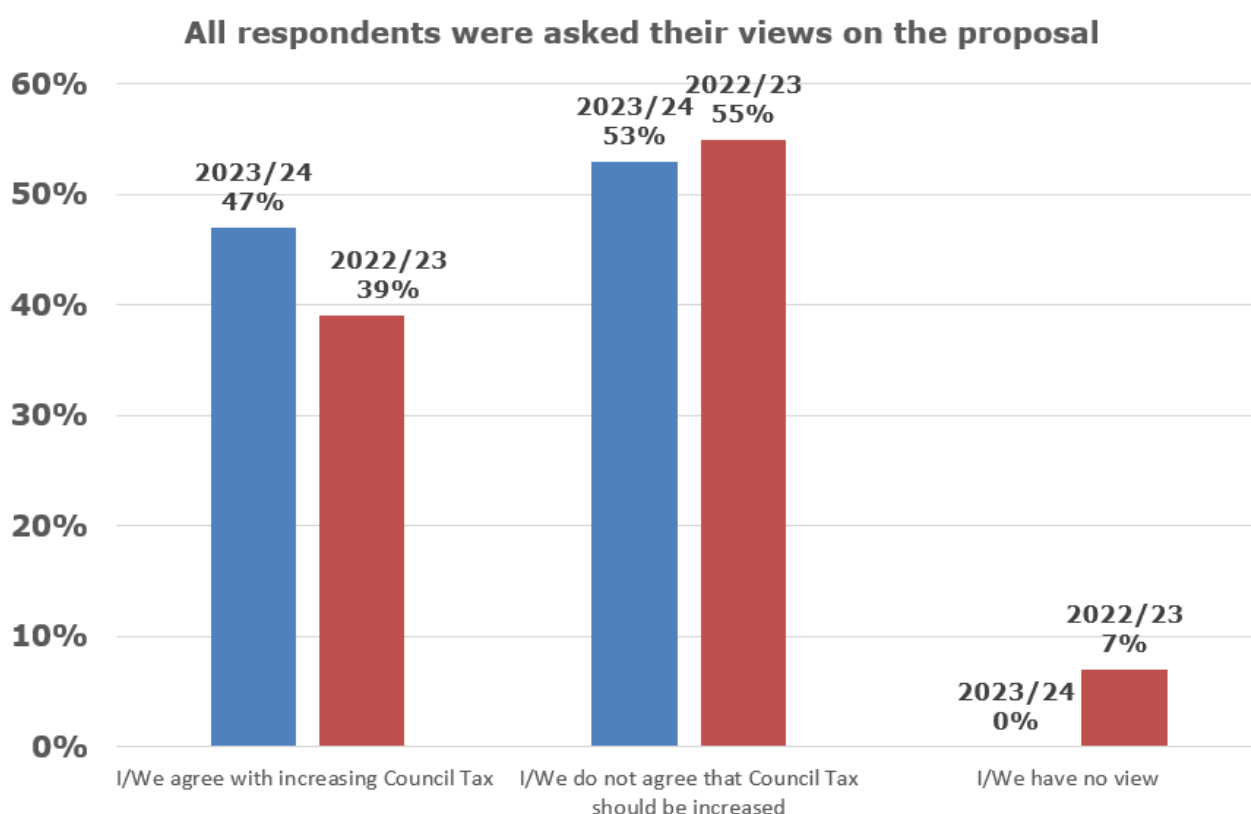
6. 68 electronic responses were received. An increase of 38 responses when compared with the previous year's budget consultation exercise undertaken in 2022/23.

Results and Analysis

7. 93% of respondents were residents, 1% responded from a business/organisation and 1% responded as 'other', listed as a holiday home owner. 4% of all respondents did not identify what they were responding as.

Council Tax

8. All respondents were advised that East Lindsey District Council's current Council Tax levy for a Band D property was £15.67 per month (based on 10 monthly payments). The Government was allowing the Council to put its Council Tax up by a maximum of £5 next year (based on a Band D property). The Council was therefore proposing a £4.95 (3.16%) increase for 2023/24 – an extra 10p per week for a Band D property. A 3.16% increase was proposed for all Council Bands. All respondents were asked their views on the proposal. The comparison chart below shows that 47% of all respondents agreed with increasing Council Tax to support the delivery of local services. This is an increase of 8% when compared to the previous consultation exercise undertaken in 2022/23 when 39% of respondents agreed with increasing Council Tax by £4.95 (NB. This was equated as a 3.37% increase).



9. All respondents were asked if they had any comments to make about the proposed budget and associated papers. Most comments referred to the current cost-of-living and that those residents could not afford the increase. There were some comments

about how the Council spends money, one respondent commented that the Council should not spend so much on consultants, whilst others commented that funds should be spent on essential services first. A full list of their comments is detailed below:

- The pressures on homes, businesses and ELDC are enormous. I understand all the reasons why council tax should be increased, but fear that many people will be unable to pay. I hesitate to leave this comment, because I don't have any suggestions on how we can move forward without increasing contributions.
- It seems very reasonable
- Please ensure funds are used on essential services and not on petty administration.
- If the Government can afford to chuck money at old decrepit buildings in the name of levelling up, why can't it be spent on something worthwhile?
- Capital expenditure should be frozen or reduced, fewer buildings and cutback on staff and drive more efficiency
- The level of council tax is one of the highest in the country. The services that we get in this area are a fraction of what other areas get. We should not have to pay the level we are paying now, let alone, an increase!
- Budget for homelessness, would this include rehousing of asylum seekers in our county? Would this be funded directly by government funding? Is the council responsible for all homeless persons who happen to locate in Lincolnshire?
- That means a cut because inflation is much higher.
- Fuel costs for vehicles- should not assume increases, need to look at ways of making savings. We already see prices coming down & will continue to do so when this government gets its act together.
- We currently have a Cost-of-Living crisis, in particular with food prices (16% increase) and fuel (gas Electricity Heating oil) all at record levels. All councils seem to automatically think they can just increase taxes every year. Wrong how about going into the next year with the thinking that taxes are to be decreased. Save money, stop wasting money, improve efficiencies, become more efficient, Save money and cut taxes just for once.
- In view of the total budget for ELDC, I am completely 'mind-blown' by the unbelievable additional amount of money put into pensions to keep them afloat. This is the sort of financial stupidity that is normal in communist nations but is not acceptable practice. The cost of interest charges was nearly £500k, and the amount of money wasted on pensions would not only supply the money borrowed but would save that £500k. That is monumental stupidity.
- Is this proposed general increase to be added to the Police and Crime Commissioners proposed to increase the Police Budget by yet another 5%?
- I do Not think we should have to pay extra - we are already the highest in the area. The garden waste should do back to being part of the council tax. It would be good if you would consider a discount for us as we already do an awful lot of clearing up in our area without any payment of any kind.
- Cancel the contract for enviro-enforcement-it's a waste of money and they do not even bother with local groups who already deal with the issues as

volunteers and not even a certificate to show for it. These folk are no doubt on an expensive contract - Reduce our council tax by getting rid of unnecessary contracts and projects dreamed up by local councillors who do not consult with anyone.

- All benefits of Council Tax increases appear to have been spent so far on services/improvements at the East Coast and not inland. For example, the roads inland such as A158 (main road from Lincoln to the Coast (Skegness)) is, in places in need or urgent repair. The road from Scamblesby to Louth (e.g.: Caulkwell Hill) is dangerous (near to the top). This is a very steep hill and if not repaired soonest may be the cause of "vehicular skidding" due to not only potholes but also areas where the road surface has worn away. Obviously, there are other roads, but these are a few I have driven over recently. Road signage is not being updated in places.
- Any funding for additional funding for affordable housing, and education, training and wellbeing is welcomed. We are working in the heart of Mablethorpe with training education and wellbeing and delivering housing in Louth and other areas. Any opportunity to work more closely with you we welcome.
- The papers and budget require quite a high-level of accounting and budget knowledge - something easier to read and understand would be useful
- The money should be spent on essential needs of the public
- Very thorough.
- As I am approaching 76 years of age and my wife 81, we are at breaking point with the cost of energy plus the cost of living generally. In our working life of over some 50 years we were prudent and saved for our retirement so with our savings falling we are not able to increase our outgoings any further. We do not qualify for any benefits of any kind although my wife has severe health conditions and is classed as medically extremely vulnerable.
- We fully appreciate that all local councils are having their budgets squeezed by Central Government whilst costs continue to rise. However, constantly increasing taxes, especially during a cost-of-living crisis, does nothing but continue to harm the tax and payer who is already finding it hard to make ends meet.
- Q1 does not seem to be the correct maths. £15.67x10 months???
- whilst as an individual I can ride the increase proposed I am fully aware of neighbours (without internet etc) cannot therefore without some form of means testing before applying such increases the risk of additional hardship and in the medium/longer term an increase of those forced to claim further state benefits.
- I believe we pay more than enough council tax already for very little services! You have had a brand-new office, yet we are expected to pay more? Added a new bin into our system and yet the driver has been seen on multiple occasions putting multiple waste into one lorry?
- Perhaps stop paying so much to consultants and put into frontline services?
- Times are financially challenging. We (individuals and organizations, businesses, companies) must accept that money doesn't grow on trees. Individuals cannot keep paying more and more to organizations, businesses, and companies. Individuals must also accept that if council tax payments

aren't increased some plans will have to change, some decisions will have to be changed. We will have to accept 'less' in general.

Cost of Living and Financial Pressures

10. All respondents were advised that in view of the cost-of-living crisis and financial pressures that both individuals and businesses are experiencing, the Council is looking to find different and innovative ways of working. All respondents were asked what changes they think the Council could implement to support this. 30 comments were made which are listed below:
- I believe the council should be supporting any business taking on full time employees by expanding transferable skill sets such as first aid and health and safety
 - Make it easier to contact EL Officers directly, going through customer services wastes a lot of time and often they are unable to help.
 - Stop moving offices.
 - Fewer staff
 - There are many holiday caravans which can pay more to council for the resources they use. Increase their rates or impose a holiday tax
 - Surely that is what you are paid for!
 - Stop putting bills up of those that work hard but can't claim any help and are living on the breadline when mortgages and utility bills are going through the roof!
 - Save energy costs by turning off street lighting during late night early morning. Reduce grass cutting and spraying, this will also support nature and the environment. Campaign for residents to take time and care in the community, doing their bit with community projects which will support the community and the environment
 - Sack 20% of the workforce and be as productive as the private sector must be to survive.
 - Ensure staffing levels/ management positions are only at the level required to provide a quality service. Encourage community groups to carry out tasks that can be done on a voluntary basis.
 - Have a good look at the management structure and get rid of those with fancy job titles but who are not worthwhile.
 - Stop paying yourselves such high wages
 - All councils seem to automatically think they can just increase taxes every year. Wrong how about going into the next year with the thinking that taxes are to be decreased. Save money, stop wasting money, improve efficiencies, become more efficient. Save money and cut taxes just for once.
 - Stop paying out huge amounts of money to support stupidly high pension pots. Nearly half of all ELDC income over the last two years has gone into pensions. Mindboggling!
 - Stop wasting money on proposals to alter the way people vote in elections - the I.D. issue
 - Stop allowing certain councillors money for vanity projects that are just not needed - i.e. The Broadway Car Park -a total waste of half a million!!!!
 - Change our local town councillors who are adept at wasting money.

- To allow free car parking in Horncastle (and other town centre car parks within ELDC) during the Christmas Period.
- Do not put council tax up
- ELDC is an innovative council, we support them and would like to work more closely with them at a strategic and delivery level.
- Ensure that planning permission is only given to ecologically sound housing developments. Solar panels to be fitted as standard to roofs facing the right way. Incorporate water-harvesting devices. All new homes to include a water butt if there is a garden. High degree of insulation. These should be mandatory.
- I think more emphasis could be placed on recruiting volunteers. With many people not working, but still competent to carry out tasks, these benefits both the council and the individuals.
- Stop wasting money on non-essential work & projects
- Look very carefully at office spaces to minimise energy use. For example, open plan spaces make it difficult to localise heat where it is of most benefit (this is a domestic issue too).
- Be more proactive in repairing damaged roads i.e., potholes, during the past couple of years instead of completing extensive works we have had numerous workers carry out poor maintenance across Hunters Lane in Tattershall.
- Resist quick fix false economies! By way of example, the recent parking charges imposed on beach side car parks in CSL have resulted in numerous acts of vandalism to payment signs. Each time requiring large sums of money to replace or repair. Considering this and the cost in employing enforcement officers has this really been a cost-effective exercise or best use of tax payers' money? Again, this has impacted residents who used to regularly use these sites whilst dog walking. Car Parking charges put visitors off and ultimately hit small businesses and the local economy. Alford Town Council have shown great initiative in removing parking charges, an example more should follow.
- Stop printing and mailing letters - it should be ALL electronic apart from those with accessibility difficulties. Stop plastic stickers for green bin - the driver should have an app with projected route and customer addresses to go by. Have more coding and IT courses that reflect industry demand - this needs to be massively improved. Colleges are offering poor opportunities for upskilling - especially at evening and weekends- THIS IS THE BIGGEST DOWNFALL TO THIS REGION. Time to start forward thinking.
- Stay as they are!
- Have a holiday tax for those visiting our seaside towns for a week or more.
- Are you responsible for roads/roadworks/road repairs? If so, collect the signs, diversion signs etc that get left after jobs, littering the countryside, and costing the taxpayer.

11. All respondents were given the opportunity to provide any other comments; a full list of these is detailed below:

- The planning and technical services departments need re-organisation. It is very difficult to contact officers to get issues resolved. I have had an

ongoing footway light issue for over 2 years with no sign of a successful resolution and a total lack of consultation, even our ward councillor cannot get answers.

- In Mablethorpe we are forgotten. We have very little medical resources and dentist perhaps it's about time you look after the people you tax. Ps What's happened to the new leisure centre?
- It's time to REDUCE our council tax.
- Business rates should be examined & revised or even scrapped Free parking would attract more shoppers into town & so, indirectly, pay for itself.
- Money should be spent on road repairs, up grading sewage system especially in Holton Le Clay as the village has really grown and sewage system needs to be up graded to accommodate the rise in housing and population.
- When you go to a restaurant, pub or large shop, expecting perhaps to spend a quite a bit of money, you would be surprised and put off finding that you had to pay to use the toilet, or pay to use the car park. Making these conveniences free to use is a sensible commercial strategy. By the same reasoning, it is sensible for the council to do the same at the level of the whole town, to encourage people to visit and spend, recovering the costs through the rates. There is still some good provision of free toilets and free parking in the ELDC area, but less than there was. I would encourage the council to return to as soon as possible to providing free public toilets and a period (e.g., an hour) of free parking in all towns, noting that the strong "grey pound" is spent where the weak "grey bladder" is happy.
- I understand the pressures the Council are under because of the cost-of-living crisis but so are we as residents especially elderly people who cannot increase their income like the local authority to cover whatever basic bills. I doubt very much that my comments will be taken seriously with you going ahead with your proposed 3.16% increase in April causing further untold misery for residents.
- Skegness has many elderly residents and reliant on seasonal work. It is heavily dependent on the income that comes from our Holiday visitors. Nothing should be allowed to happen that reduces the attraction of Skegness. Once Skegness fails to be attractive to people to come here on holidays and often move here permanently then it will be lost forever.
- Stop having lots of bins - create a community shared bin disposal area. Large industrial bins at different points or copy Liverpool's concept for waste. Increase opening times for waste disposal sites AND make it cost a pound for everyone including businesses. That way, all will use more frequently and reduce fly tipping.