

Members' Library Service Request Form

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REPORT TO: Members' Library Service

MEETING DATE: February 2023

BY: Executive Director for
Council Resources

SUBJECT: Consultation Results – Budget Priorities



1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide an overview of the results of the recent consultation exercise on budget priorities.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To note the consultation results and plans for the next phases of consultation activity.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 As part of the development of its financial strategy and budgets for 2023 – 2028, the Council has embarked on a programme of consultation activity, inviting local people, communities and partners to have their say in how resources are directed in the future to ensure that the council continues to effectively meet the needs of local communities.
- 3.2 The initial phase of the budget consultation concluded in December, and the results are attached within Appendix 1. This exercise focussed on local priorities, and was conducted as an online survey through the consultation hub.
- 3.3 Further consultation exercises will follow during 2023, targeting specific groups including children, in line with the Council's responsibilities under the UNCRC, and asking local people for their views on some of the specific options which Council will consider in seeking to close the budget gap.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The purpose of budget consultation is to enable local people to have an opportunity to contribute to the development of the council's budget.
- 4.2 This consultation exercise is the first phase of a wider programme of consultation activity that will help to inform decisions which Council will make regarding the budget over the coming years.

5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Financial – As noted above, while there are no direct cost implications, the results of this first phase of budget consultation activity will help to inform the development of council budgets over the coming years.

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Appendix 1

Analysis of Responses to Budget Consultation held in December 2022. Based on 300 responses (unweighted)

Characteristics of respondents

Respondents by Ward

There were higher proportions of respondents from Haddington & Lammermuir and Musselburgh wards and lower proportions of respondents from the PSG and TWM wards. Analysis of results by ward is available but the low number of respondents in each ward means that these results have a very low level of reliability.

Ward	Number of respondents	% of respondents	% of EL population	Variation %
Dunbar & East Linton	52	17.3	14.5	+2.8
Haddington & Lammermuir	59	19.7	19.3	+0.4
Musselburgh	60	20.0	16.3	+3.3
North Berwick Coastal	54	18.0	17.7	+0.3
Preston, Seton, Gosford	37	12.3	16.4	-4.1
Tranent, Wallyford, Macmerry	38	12.7	15.7	-3.0

Age

The middle age groups 35-44, 45-54 and 55-64 were over-represented in the respondents whilst the younger age groups 16-24 and 25-34 and the older age group, 65+ were under-represented.

Age	Number of respondents	% of respondents	% of EL population (aged 16 and Over)
16-24	4	1.3	10.6
25-34	19	6.3	13.7
35-44	59	19.7	14.8

Appendix 1

45-54	97	32.3	17.2
55-64	77	25.7	18.2
65+	42	14.0	25.5

Sex/Gender

A higher proportion of respondents were female – 59% compared to c.52% of the overall population.

Sex/Gender	Number of respondents	% of respondents	16-24 %	25-34 %	35-44 %	45-54 %	55-64 %	65+ %
Male	104	38.0%	2.6	7.8	23.5	24.3	22.6	19.1
Female	162	59.2%	0	5.1	17.5	37.9	28.2	10.7
Non-Binary	4	1.5%	-	25	25	50	-	-
Not answered	4	1.5%	-	-	-	-	-	-

Analysis of results by the sex / gender of respondents has been carried out. This showed relatively little variation in results according to the sex/ gender of respondents. These are some of the most significant variations (although age as well as sex/ gender may also have influenced these responses):

- 53% of female respondents said Job Opportunities are Very Important or Important, compared to 44.5% of males
- 78.5% of female respondents said Schools are Very Important or Importance compared to 70% of males
- 79% of female respondents said Community Facilities are Very Important or Important compared to 72% of males
- 72% of female respondents said Digital Connectivity is Very Important or Important compared to 64% of males
- 78% of female respondents said Health Care is Very Important or Important compared to 63% of males
- 86% of female respondents said Reducing Poverty is Very important or Important compared to 66.5% of males
- 74.5% of female respondents said Social Care is Very Important or Important compared to 59% of males
- However, more male respondents (84.5%) than females respondents (82%) said Community Safety/ Tackling Crime is Very Important or Important
- And, 84% of male respondents said Roads are Very Important or Important compared to 74.5% of females

Appendix 1

Other characteristics

- One respondent self-identified as Trans or having a Trans history
- 30 respondents said they have a disability
- Six respondents said they were lesbian or gay, and five said they were bi-sexual
- Only two respondents said they were Asian, Scottish or British Asian and four said they were of an Other ethnic group

Results

Question 2: We want you to tell us the things that have either encouraged you to move to East Lothian or made you want to stay here. What do you value most about where you live?

	Very Important	Important	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Don't Know/ Not Answered
Location / surrounding area	68.3	25.2	3.3	2.9	0	0.5
Outdoor environment	65.7	25.6	4.7	2.6	1.0	1.0
The people and community	43.8	31.4	12.8	7.7	2.2	2.2
Good schools	46.0	21.2	15.3	2.2	12.0	3.3
Transport Links	41.2	32.9	13.5	5.8	5.1	1.5
Local shops and facilities	35.8	43.0	9.1	7.3	2.9	1.8
Culture and leisure	23.7	43.8	13.8	9.1	6.6	2.9
Job Opportunities	27.0	22.3	27.0	6.6	14.2	2.9
Other	11.3	1.5	10.2	1.1	1.0	75.2

60 respondents provided comments to this question

Appendix 1

Question 3: We are always looking for ways to improve. To help us prioritise limited resources in the future and ensure that council spending has an impact where it needs to, please tell us about what you would like to see improved where you live. Which areas would you like to see improved?

	Very Important	Important	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Other/ Don't Know/ Not Answered
Schools	51.8	20.4	14.6	2.2	6.9	4.0
Public transport	46.4	30.3	12.8	5.1	3.7	1.8
Community facilities	36.9	38.0	11.0	7.7	3.3	3.3
Digital connectivity	30.3	34.3	18.3	6.6	5.5	5.1
Shops and services	29.6	39.1	17.2	6.6	4.0	3.7
Culture and leisure opportunities	27.4	36.5	18.3	7.3	6.2	4.4
Job opportunities	25.9	31.8	21.5	7.3	7.3	6.2
Housing	17.9	24.5	28.1	7.3	14.2	8.0
Adult learning opportunities	11.0	29.6	27.0	15.7	12.8	4.0

62 respondents commented on this question

Question 4: Together with its partners, East Lothian Council provides a wide range of public services to its communities. What are the most important issues for your community?

	Very Important	Important	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Don't Know/ Not Answered
Healthcare	69.3	23.4	2.5	0.7	0.4	3.6
Education & Schools	58.0	19.0	10.6	2.2	4.7	5.5
Community Safety / Tackling Crime	46.0	33.2	9.5	5.1	1.8	4.4
Reducing poverty and inequality	40.5	35.8	10.2	4.0	4.4	5.1

Appendix 1

Social Care	38.7	37.6	11.7	3.7	2.2	6.2
Libraries and community halls	30.7	36.5	14.2	9.1	6.2	3.3
Climate Change	31.0	23.7	20.1	9.9	11.3	4.1
Supporting local businesses	27.7	38.3	16.4	8.8	4.0	4.7
Employment opportunities	21.5	38.3	19.3	8.4	5.8	6.6
Housing	18.3	31.0	27.7	6.2	11.0	5.8
Recovery from Covid 19	13.5	29.2	22.6	11.0	14.6	9.1

Question 5: The council provides services to every person who lives in East Lothian. Help us improve by telling us what matters most to you. What are the most important issues for you and your family?

	Very Important	Important	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Other/ Don't Know/ Not Answered
Healthcare services	69.7	26.3	1.8	1.1	0.4	0.7
Outdoor spaces	52.9	31.4	8.4	4.4	0.7	2.2
The natural environment	48.2	30.3	9.5	5.5	3.3	3.3
Good schools	48.9	15.7	13.1	3.7	13.9	4.7
Personal Safety	40.9	35.4	12.0	5.1	3.3	3.3
Social care	28.8	35.8	16.1	7.7	6.6	5.1
Public transport	39.4	33.2	13.9	7.7	3.7	2.2
Local Community	31.7	43.4	12.0	5.5	2.9	4.4
Roads	31.0	45.3	13.9	5.5	1.8	2.6
Local shops and facilities	31.4	40.2	14.6	7.3	2.9	3.7
Climate change	31.8	25.2	17.5	9.5	13.1	2.9
Access to leisure facilities	29.6	40.2	13.1	7.7	4.7	4.7
Libraries and community halls	29.9	33.9	18.6	7.3	6.9	3.3
Affordable Housing	23.0	20.4	24.5	7.7	20.4	4.0

Appendix 1

Employment opportunities	19.3	32.9	24.8	5.8	13.1	4.0
Financial support and advice	7.3	24.5	32.1	8.8	21.5	5.8

70 respondents commented on this question

**Question 6: Recovery & Renewal from COVID / Reduce Poverty & Inequality / Respond to the Climate Emergency / Grow our Economy
Grow our People / Grow our Communities / Grow our Capacity - Do you agree that these are the right areas for the council to focus on?**

Yes 59.9%
No 35.4%
Not Answered 4.7%

130 respondents commented on this question

Question 7: Please rate these objectives in order of importance to you and your community from 1 to 7 (where 1 = most important to 7 = least important)

	Average score	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Not Answered
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Reduce Poverty & Inequality	4.75	26.6	19.0	13.9	15.3	9.5	11.3	1.8	2.6
Grow our People	4.36	18.6	16.4	16.4	14.6	13.5	9.5	4.7	6.2
Grow our Economy	4.23	16.4	13.9	19.3	14.6	13.9	11.7	5.5	4.7
Grow our Communities	3.92	6.6	15.3	19.0	20.8	15.7	11.7	5.1	5.8

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Respond to the Climate Emergency	3.76	14.2	15.0	11.3	9.1	15.0	15.7	17.2	2.6
Grow our Capacity	2.96	8.0	8.4	9.1	9.1	13.9	19.3	25.6	6.6
Recovery & Renewal from COVID	2.79	6.6	8.0	7.3	11.7	13.9	15.7	33.2	3.7

45 respondents commented on this question

Question 8: Please tell us what you think we should do to help reduce the budget gap.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/ Not Answered
Invest in prevention to help reduce demand for services	44.9	38.7	9.1	2.6	1.8	3.0
Sell some council buildings to fund reinvestment in others	44.9	32.2	13.1	3.3	2.6	4.0
Make greater use of digital technologies to deliver services more efficiently	46.7	29.6	11.3	5.8	2.6	4.0
Redesign services to make them more efficient	42.3	37.2	10.6	1.8	2.9	5.1
Close buildings which are not well used in order to protect others	36.5	38.0	15.7	4.0	2.2	3.7
Invest in making our buildings and vehicles more energy efficient	32.5	38.3	13.1	8.8	4.0	3.3
Empower local groups and communities to deliver more services	32.1	38.3	12.0	7.3	5.5	4.7
Reduce expenditure on contracts	28.5	31.0	23.4	3.3	1.8	12.0
Reduce funding and subsidies to other organisations	16.8	23.3	33.2	10.6	5.5	10.6
Change or reduce opening hours for some services	11.0	32.1	29.6	11.3	7.7	8.4

Appendix 1

Reduce spending on employee costs through service reduction	11.3	15.0	21.5	25.8	21.5	5.5
Increase income by raising fees and charges	9.9	33.6	20.4	18.6	13.9	3.6
Increase council tax	9.1	25.6	21.9	19.3	20.8	3.3

110 respondents commented on this question

Question 9: To reduce costs and modernise the way that we deliver services, do you think we should...?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/ Not Answered
Increase the number of services that can be accessed online	42.0	40.2	9.5	3.3	2.2	2.9
Invest in online services to make these better for customers	38.7	40.2	9.9	5.1	1.8	4.3
Provide services digitally by default	28.1	29.6	19.0	15.0	4.7	3.7
Reduce face to face contact where possible	13.1	17.2	23.7	28.5	15.3	2.2
Reduce telephone contact where possible	9.5	17.9	15.3	33.6	20.1	3.6

94 respondents commented on this question

Question 10: If there are any other areas that you think we should focus on to improve efficiency and reduce costs, please tell us below:

88 respondents provided comments

Question 11: What is your preferred method for engaging with the council to have your say in future budget consultation?

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	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/ Not Answered
Online survey	56.6	32.9	4.7	1.8	1.1	2.9
Public meetings	13.1	25.9	27.4	15.7	8.4	9.5
Social media	10.6	26.6	14.2	17.2	20.8	10.6
Focus groups	10.6	29.9	24.8	14.6	9.1	11.0
Roadshows	8.8	23.0	25.2	19.7	12.0	11.3
Paper survey	3.7	9.9	17.9	23.4	30.3	15.0