

Budget 2014 – Consultation Results

Appendix A

To date there have been 208 responses to the budget consultation (as at 14th January 2014). The results are provided below. The Central Bedfordshire Equality Forum also discussed the draft budget, their feedback has also been included in the summary of comments.

Q1. When Central Bedfordshire Council sets the level of council tax for next year, which of the following would you prefer?

7 in 10 respondents want council tax to remain the same and for the council to improve efficiency and only spend less on services if absolutely necessary.

	Frequency	Percent
Reduce council tax and spend considerably less on public services, this will mean cutting some services	19	9.1
Keep council tax the same, improve efficiency and only spend less on services if absolutely necessary	148	71.2
Increase council tax to enable the council to spend more on some services	37	17.8
Don't know	1	.5
No answer given	3	1.4
Total	208	100

Q2. To what extent to do you agree or disagree with the following statement? I would rather see savings made in the cost of running the council than in front line services.

Almost 9 out 10 respondents agreed that we should make savings from the cost of running the council rather than front line services. Over half (54%) strongly agreed with this.

	Frequency	Percent	Combined Percent
Strongly agree	114	54.8	88.5
Tend to agree	70	33.7	
Neither	14	6.7	6.7
Tend to disagree	5	2.4	4.3
Strongly disagree	4	1.9	
No answer given	1	.5	
Total	208	100	

Q3. Do you have any comments to make about any of the proposals in the council's budget for 2014/15?

Approximately half of the respondents made a comment. Whilst a lot of respondents expressed general agreement with the savings proposals there were also a few proposals which received some concern. Below is a summary of the most popular issues raised.

Some respondents disagreed with the proposal to increase our fees for adult social care (for those who pay for their own care). Respondents were concerned about the impact of rising costs would have on pensioners who already have a high cost of living (if they have to pay for care) and are on a fixed income (pension).

Several people raised concerns about reducing bus subsidies, particularly in areas where there is no other form of public transport available. These respondents felt this would increase rural isolation, particularly for the elderly and also this goes against the council's sustainable transport aspirations. Some respondents suggested using smaller buses to reduce the cost of the service.

Equally there was concern about the proposal to limit the times of the day when people can use their free bus passes. Again it was felt this could impact on the elderly, especially in rural areas where the bus service may not be as frequent. Some suggested a small payment for each journey instead of limiting times of travel.

There were also a few respondents who were concerned about the potential impact on farm tenants if we increase their rent. Respondents felt farmers were already struggling to make ends meet given the rise in their costs and supermarkets effectively reducing profits to farmers.

There were a few comments asking for Central Bedfordshire Council to pass on to Town and Parish Councils the funding from Central Government for Council Tax Support Grant.

Several respondents called for better control of, and quality assurance of, contractors - particularly in relation highways. Examples were given of poor quality.

A few people questioned the council's decision to invest in leisure centres at a time when we having to find savings elsewhere.

A couple of people were concerned that charging for pest control services may lead to public health problems when people cannot afford the service.

A few comments recognised that while they thought e-learning was suitable in some situations they also recognised the value of classroom style learning where people could share experiences and learn from each other.

In a similar vein some people were concerned that Special Educational Needs placements should focus on best solution for the individual, this may not be in the Central Bedfordshire area. The placement should not just be based on cost.

The Central Bedfordshire Equality Forum also discussed the draft budget, below is a summary of their main concerns.

The efficiency proposals include several contract reviews, some in relation to services for vulnerable groups. The forum asked if the council will the Council retain sufficient focus on quality of provision.

In terms of bringing Special Educational Needs children back into local authority placements rather than out of county placements. They raised similar concerns to the public respondents – use the placement that meets the needs of these children and not just the cheapest option. The forum was also concerned about the proposal to reduce the staff in this area given that that the Children and Families Bill could increase pressures in this area.

The forum also expressed concerns about the proposal to review bus subsidies and concessionary fares. They felt these could impact on both young and older people in rural areas who already experience considerable problems in relation to the availability of public transport.

Q4. Are you:

	Frequency	Percent
Central Bedfordshire resident or tax payer	190	91.3
Local business	7	3.4
Town or Parish Council	5	2.4
Voluntary organisation or charity	1	.5
Other (please write in below)	5	2.4
Total	208	100

“Other” included:

I work in Central Bedfordshire
 School or teacher within CBC x2
 School Governor Central Beds
 Staff

Q5. Are you male or female?

	Frequency	Percent
Male	114	54.8
Female	91	43.8
No answer given	3	1.4
Total	208	100.0

Q6. What was your age on your last birthday?

	Frequency	Percent
Under 20 years	1	0.5
21-30	12	5.8
31-40	35	16.8
41-50	49	23.6
51-60	36	17.3
61-70	51	24.5
71-80	12	5.8
80+	1	0.5
No answer given	11	5.3
Total	208	100

Q7. Do you have any long-standing illness, disability or infirmity?

	Frequency	Percent
No	169	81.3
Yes	31	14.9
No answer given	8	3.8
Total	208	100

Q8. To which of the following ethnic groups do you belong?

	Frequency	Percent
White	188	90.4
Asian or Asian British	2	1.0
Black or Black British	1	.5
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	2	1.0
Other (please write in below)	7	3.4
No answer given	8	3.8
Total	208	100

“Other” included:

English x2

Not relevant to this survey

White English

Why so racist? This is very early 70s and irrelevant and costly.
You don't need to know what colour I am

Q9. What is your home postcode?

Ward	Frequency	Percent
Amphill	9	4.3
Arlesey	8	3.8
Aspley and Woburn	3	1.4
Barton-le-Clay	1	0.5
Biggleswade South	3	1.4
Caddington	3	1.4
Cranfield and Marston Moretaine	6	2.9
Dunstable Central	3	1.4
Dunstable Icknield	5	2.4
Dunstable Manshead	7	3.4
Dunstable Northfields	11	5.3
Dunstable Watling	12	5.8
Eaton Bray	3	1.4
Flitwick	11	5.3
Heath and Reach	3	1.4
Houghton Conquest and Haynes	2	1.0
Houghton Hall	2	1.0
Leighton Buzzard North	3	1.4
Leighton Buzzard South	6	2.9
Linslade	10	4.8
Northill	3	1.4
Parkside	1	0.5
Potton	4	1.9
Sandy	4	1.9
Shefford	9	4.3
Silsoe and Shillington	5	2.4
Stotfold and Langford	5	2.4
Tithe Farm	1	0.5
Toddington	4	1.9
Westoning, Flitton and Greenfield	2	1.0
No postcode given/ invalid postcode	59	28.4
Total	208	100.0