

## Budget 2014 – Consultation Results

## Appendix A

To date there have been 260 responses to the budget consultation. 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?**

69% of respondents want council tax to remain the same, improve efficiency and only spend less on services if absolutely necessary.

	Frequency	Percentage of responses
Reduce council tax and spend considerably less on public services, this will mean cutting some services	22	8.5
Keep council tax the same, improve efficiency and only spend less on services if absolutely necessary	180	69.2
Increase council tax to enable the council to spend more on some services	52	20.0
Don't know	2	.8
No answer	4	1.5
Total	260	100.0

### **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.**

87% of 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	Percentage of responses	Combined percentage
Strongly agree	141	54.2	87.3
Tend to agree	86	33.1	
Neither	19	7.3	7.3
Tend to disagree	5	1.9	4.2
Strongly disagree	6	2.3	
Don't know	2	.8	
No answer	1	.4	
Total	260	100.0	

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

150 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.

20 respondents expressed concern with the proposal to increase our fees for adult social care (for those who pay for their own care). Respondents were worried 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).

17 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 (17 respondents) 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.

13 respondents called for better control of, and quality assurance of, contractors. 11 of these respondents cited examples of poor work in relation to our highways contractor.

Whilst there was significant support for protecting front line services 10 respondents expressed concern about reducing staff numbers and the impact this will have on running services.

10 respondents commented on reducing Councillor allowances and expenses. They supported this proposal as they thought Councillors were paid for the work they do plus expenses.

9 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.

9 people were concerned that merging teams would impact on the service and skills available to customers.

5 respondents 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.

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

The table below provides a summary of all of the most popular comments.

<b>Comment</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage of responses</b>
Concerned about the impact on pensioners if they are required to pay more for adult social care	20	7.7
Reducing bus subsidies and increasing rural isolation	17	6.5
Limiting the time for using concessionary bus passes	17	6.5
General concern about getting value for money from contracting out services. 11 cited examples of poor quality from our highways contractor	13	
Concern about the quality of academies	12	4.6
Concerned about the impact of reducing staff	10	3.8
Councillors should not receive expenses/ allowances, therefore supportive of reducing allowances	10	3.8
Special Educational Needs placements should be decided on the best outcome for the child and not the cheapest option	9	3.5
Merging the library and theatre teams would reduce specialist skills within the team	6	2.3
Support for prioritising services to support vulnerable children	6	2.3
Court Drive cited as an example of wasting money	6	2.3
Concerned about the impact of increasing rent on county farms	5	1.9
Concern about charging for pest control services as this may lead to increased public health issues	5	1.9
General concerns about bus services	5	1.9
Don't rely solely on E-learning	3	1.2
Pass on the precept funding from central Government	2	0.8
Miscellaneous	17	6.5

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 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:**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage of responses</b>
Central Bedfordshire resident or tax payer	237	91.2
Local business	7	2.7
Town or Parish Council	7	2.7
Voluntary organisation or charity	4	1.5
Other (please write in below)	5	1.9
Total	260	100

**“Other” included:**

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

**Q5. Are you male or female?**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage of responses</b>
Male	135	51.9
Female	119	45.8
No answer given	6	2.3
Total	260	100.0

**Q6. What was your age on your last birthday?**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage of responses</b>
Under 20 years	4	1.5
21-30	14	5.4
31-40	45	17.3
41-50	60	23.1
51-60	45	17.3
61-70	64	24.6
71-80	15	5.8
80+	1	0.4
No answer given	12	4.6
Total	260	100.0

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

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage of responses</b>
No	205	78.8
Yes	46	17.7
No answer given	9	3.5
Total	260	100

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

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage of responses</b>
White	232	89.2
Asian or Asian British	2	0.8
Black or Black British	1	0.4
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	2	0.8
Other (please write in below)	13	5.0
No answer given	10	3.8
Total	260	100

**“Other” included:**

English x3

White English x2

West Indian

Not relevant to this survey

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?**

190 postcodes were matched against Central Bedfordshire wards. 31 had no postcode, 32 were incomplete, and 7 appear to be out of county. There were no postcodes in Biggleswade North ward, but all other wards had at least one response.

<b>Ward</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage of responses</b>
Amphill	10	3.8
Arlesey	14	5.4
Aspley and Woburn	3	1.2
Barton-le-Clay	2	0.8
Biggleswade South	4	1.5
Caddington	5	1.9
Cranfield and Marston Moretaine	10	3.8
Dunstable Central	4	1.5
Dunstable Icknield	5	1.9
Dunstable Manshead	8	3.1
Dunstable Northfields	11	4.2
Dunstable Watling	13	5.0
Eaton Bray	4	1.5
Flitwick	13	5.0
Heath and Reach	5	1.9
Houghton Conquest and Haynes	6	2.3
Houghton Hall	2	0.8
Leighton Buzzard North	4	1.5
Leighton Buzzard South	7	2.7
Linslade	11	4.2
Northill	4	1.5

<b>Ward</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage of responses</b>
Parkside	2	0.8
Potton	6	2.3
Sandy	4	1.5
Shefford	14	5.4
Silsoe and Shillington	5	1.9
Stotfold and Langford	6	2.3
Tithe Farm	1	0.4
Toddington	5	1.9
Westoning, Flitton and Greenfield	2	0.8
No or incomplete postcode	70	26.9
Total allocated to wards	260	100.0