

Budget Consultation 2020-21

Summary of Consultation Responses

The budget consultation survey was launched on 17 December 2019 and ended on 20 January 2020. The consultation gave an opportunity to residents, local businesses and partners to review and comment on the Council's approach to meeting the budget challenges ahead, including some possible changes to service delivery and changes to Council Tax.

The online consultation asked questions on:

- Our overall approach to the financial challenge
- Possible service change options relating to waste services
- Council Tax options

The consultation was promoted in the following ways:

- Launch of the consultation on 17 December 2019 with a dedicated web page and media release
- Direct email notification to all Allerdale Borough Council elected members
- Posts on homepage of intranet to alert staff
- Direct email notification to all town and parish councils
- Social media was used to generate interest via Facebook and Twitter

People were able to respond online, by post or email. At the closing date there were 479 responses to the consultation (474 received online and a further 5 by email and post). The vast majority of responses were received from local residents with a small number from local businesses and parish councils.

The consultation was not designed to be a statistically representative sample of public opinion, but to gauge the opinions of those who have chosen to participate in the process.

This report does not seek to make any recommendations, its purpose is to help inform decision makers of opinion expressed as part of this consultation.

A summary of responses is set out below. Due to rounding, some totals in tables and charts may not add up to exactly 100%.

Our overall approach to the financial challenge

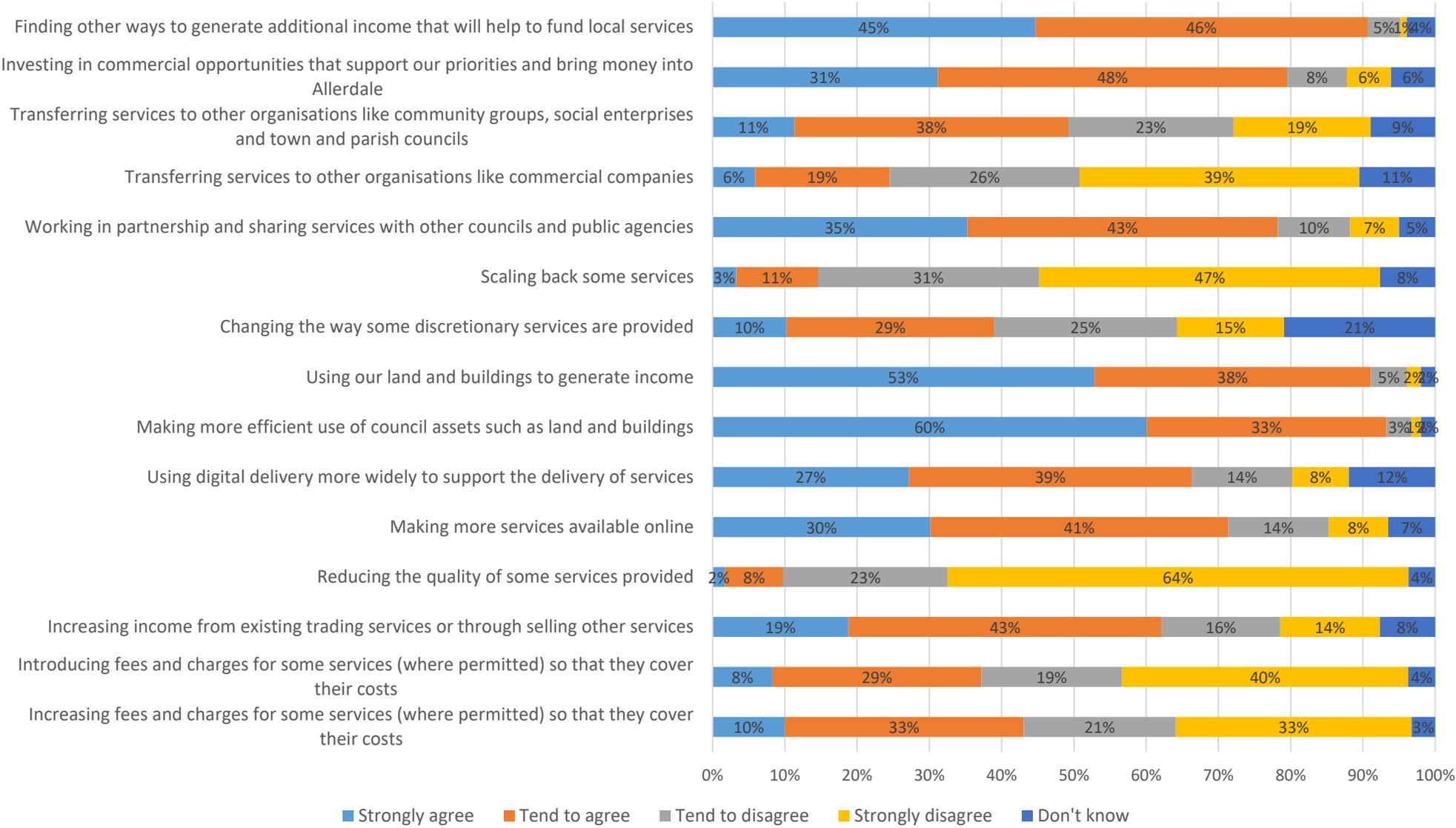
The consultation stated: "We need to continue to find ways to make reductions in our operating costs and bring income into the Council. We are pursuing a range of options."

Q1. How far do you agree or disagree with the following approaches?

(see graph overleaf)

The results suggest that respondents are broadly supportive of many of the approaches suggested, but are clearly not supportive of others.

How strongly do people agree with different approaches to making savings/increasing income?



The majority of respondents agreed with the following approaches:

- Finding other ways to generate additional income that will help to fund local services – 91% agreed (45% 'strongly agree', 46% 'tend to agree')
- Investing in commercial opportunities that support our priorities and bring money into Allerdale – 79% agreed (31% 'strongly agree', 48% 'tend to agree')
- Working in partnership and sharing services with other councils and public agencies – 78% agreed (35% 'strongly agree', 43% 'tend to agree')
- Using our land and buildings to generate income – 91% agreed (53% 'strongly agree', 38% 'tend to agree')
- Making more efficient use of council assets such as land and buildings – 93% agreed (60% 'strongly agree', 33% 'tend to agree')
- Using digital delivery more widely to support the delivery of services – 66% agreed (27% 'strongly agree', 39% 'tend to agree')
- Making more services available online – 71% agreed (30% 'strongly agree', 41% 'tend to agree')
- Increasing income from existing trading services or through selling other services – 62% agreed (19% 'strongly agree', 43% 'tend to agree')

The majority of respondents did not agree with the following approaches:

- Transferring services to other organisations like commercial companies – 65% disagreed (26% 'tend to disagree', 39% 'strongly disagree')
- Scaling back some services – 78% disagreed (31% 'tend to disagree', 47% 'strongly disagree')
- Reducing the quality of some services provided – 87% disagreed (23% 'tend to disagree', 64% 'strongly disagree')
- Introducing fees and charges for some services (where permitted) so that they cover their costs – 59% disagreed (19% 'tend to disagree', 40% 'strongly disagree')
- Increasing fees and charges for some services (where permitted) so that they cover their costs – 54% disagreed (21% 'tend to disagree', 33% 'strongly disagree')

Responses were more split on the following approaches:

- Transferring services to other organisations like community groups, social enterprises and town and parish councils (49% agree, 42% disagree)
- Changing the way some discretionary services are provided (39% agree, 40% disagree)

Q2. Do you have any other suggestions about how we can meet the financial challenges ahead and build a financially secure future?

This question allowed respondents to respond in a free text box and a large number of narrative comments were received. Some responses raised points that related to more detailed elements of service or project delivery which will be used to inform service delivery and project planning. Some respondents gave very broad responses that referred to wider societal or political issues.

A summary of responses is provided below. Responses have been grouped into broad subject areas. Numbers in brackets indicate where more than one similar response has been provided.

Efficiency and effectiveness

- Be more efficient (13): streamline services and reduce overheads
- Concentrate on statutory services not discretionary ones (5)
- Remove wasted time and effort
- Improve contract management (5)
- Improve procurement (2)
- Carry out more joint procurements with neighbouring councils
- Develop an effective commercial agenda and team (2)
- Reduce expenditure on staffing (18): fewer senior managers; fewer agency workers and consultants
- Reduce expenditure on councillors (7): reduce numbers of councillors; reduce councillors expenses
- Improve staff skills and expertise (4)
- Recover debts more effectively
- Plan for the long term not the short term (2)
- Take advantage of all funding opportunities
- Lobby central government for funding (4)

Charging for some services

- Avoid commercial activities
- Don't charge for discretionary services
- Fees should cover costs only (no profit)
- Concerns about service affordability (2)

Use of assets/land

- Ensure market value for sales (2)
- Sell redundant land and buildings for community benefit (2)
- Rationalise land and buildings
- Don't sell assets, but get rental income instead (5)
- Use council land for solar farms
- Ensure environmentally friendly heating/lighting in buildings (2)

Digital

- Reduce paper (2)
- Use more digital platforms and provide more services online (2)
- Concerns about those with poor broadband or who need to access face to face services (3)
- Make sure the technology works and the website is easy to use (3) (Do away with the ring back system)
- Avoid overdependence on technology

In-house service provision

- Bring services back in-house (3): better control, flexibility, local employment
- Evaluate the costs of using external companies versus in-house provision
- Don't sell services to outside companies

Sharing/transferring services

- Closer working with other councils and partner organisations (4)
- Amalgamate services with CCC and other councils (3)
- Create a unitary council (6)
- Query over how transferred services would be funded
- Don't transfer services to parishes without funding (3)
- Avoid commercial organisations

Engagement/involvement

- Improve the relationship with residents (4)
- Involve community groups more
- Involve residents in decisions, changes to service delivery (4): more transparency on budget and costs
- The consultation was too vague, didn't provide enough detail on specific services (12)

Council Tax

- Increase Council Tax (12) by 2% (8)
- Increase in Council Tax is accepted as long as current services stay the same (2)
- Charge more Council Tax on holiday/second homes (6)
- Do not increase Council Tax (3)
- Personal income concerns relating to an increase in Council Tax (3)
- Reform Council Tax nationally

Investment

- Invest in towns (7): to stimulate growth; physical improvements; investment in specific towns; provide incentives for local businesses; encourage use of local shops
- Invest in green technologies

Specific service areas/functions/activities

- Enforce more (5): dog fouling; fly tipping; litter
- Parking (8): decrease charges in town centres; increase charges to decrease traffic; charge for blue badge parking; introduce park and ride in some towns
- Sport and leisure (7): invest more (Stadium in Workington); run leisure centres more efficiently; encourage physical activity
- Housing/planning (2): stop overdevelopment in the National Park; increase S106 demands on developers
- Tourism/events (4): run events and promote tourism to increase income

Other public services / national issues

- Invest more (11) in: health services; youth services; social enterprises; public transport; libraries; roads
- Charge for libraries; enforce on street parking
- Reduce expenditure on the Police and Crime Commissioner (3)
- LDNPA and National Trust should contribute to local authorities
- Improve skills and education (2)
- Stop Brexit (2); raise taxes on the rich (3)

Comments on possible service change options (waste services)

- Move to fortnightly collections (16): environmental benefits; weekly not needed
- Do not move to fortnightly collections (13): concerns that fly tipping will increase; concerns that it will be a health hazard; bigger bins will be needed making it expensive; larger bins would be needed for big families
- Improve recycling (5): more efficient system; better information; reduce paper and glass etc. to monthly; introduce food waste collections; put paper/mixed/garden on a 3 weekly cycle; increase community recycling sites; provide community chipper; encourage people to be less wasteful
- Increase income (5): grow willow for biomass and sell it; sell compost from garden waste
- Do not charge for replacement bins (11): concerns about charging for damaged/stolen bins (comments on quality of blue lidded bins); concerns about length of wait for replacements bins; concerns about those on low income

- Charge for garden waste collections (14)
- Do not charge for garden waste collections (25): concerns fly tipping will increase; concerns recycling will decrease; unfair for the elderly and those without cars; unfair for rural areas; concerns about those on low incomes; concerns it will lead to more car journeys so more pollution; concerns it will lead to more burning of garden waste; concerns it will discourage gardens; suggestion that collection months reduced instead; suggestion that shared garden waste collections introduced
- Poor service delivered over the summer months (12)
- Prioritise bin collections (2); already pay for bin collections via Council Tax (5)
- Introduce on the day permits at recycling centres to reduce fly tipping
- Introduce a single day for collections for each area
- The forecast savings from garden waste charging seem over optimistic (5)
- Combine waste collection with neighbouring authorities

Possible service change options

The consultation stated: “We are currently considering some specific options that would achieve savings in the delivery of the waste and recycling service and therefore make a significant contribution to helping balance the budget in 2020/21 and beyond.”

Q3. Please indicate what your preferred option would be by ranking the options 1-3, 1 being your most preferred option and 3 being your least preferred option.

Ranking	Option 1: Charging for garden waste collections	Option 2: Charging for replacement bins	Option 3: Moving to fortnightly bin collections for general household waste (your black bin)
1 Most preferred	30%	43%	24%
2	29%	45%	25%
3 Least preferred	41%	12%	50%

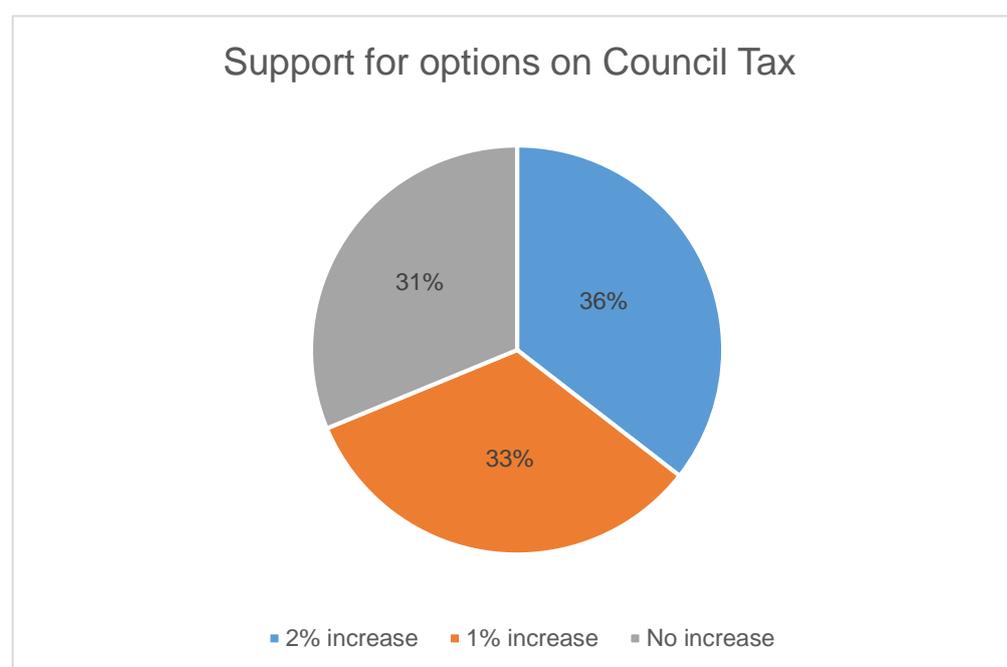
The results indicate that when asked to rank the options ‘charging or replacement bins’ was most likely to be selected as the most preferred option (43%). Most likely to be selected as the least preferred option was ‘moving to fortnightly bin collections’ (50%), closely followed by ‘charging for garden waste collections’ (41%).

Council Tax options

Respondents were asked to indicate which option they would support from the following:

- An increase Council Tax of 2% to avoid having to make even more savings. (This increase is for the borough council's element of council tax only)
- An increase Council Tax of 1% to avoid having to make even more savings. (This increase is for the borough council's element of council tax only)
- No increase in Council Tax - which would mean additional savings would need to be identified across council services for 2020/21.

The results are shown on the pie chart overleaf. The majority of respondents supported an increase in Council Tax (68%). These respondents are fairly evenly split between supporting a 2% increase (36%) and a 1% increase (33%). 31% of respondents stated that they favoured no increase in Council Tax.

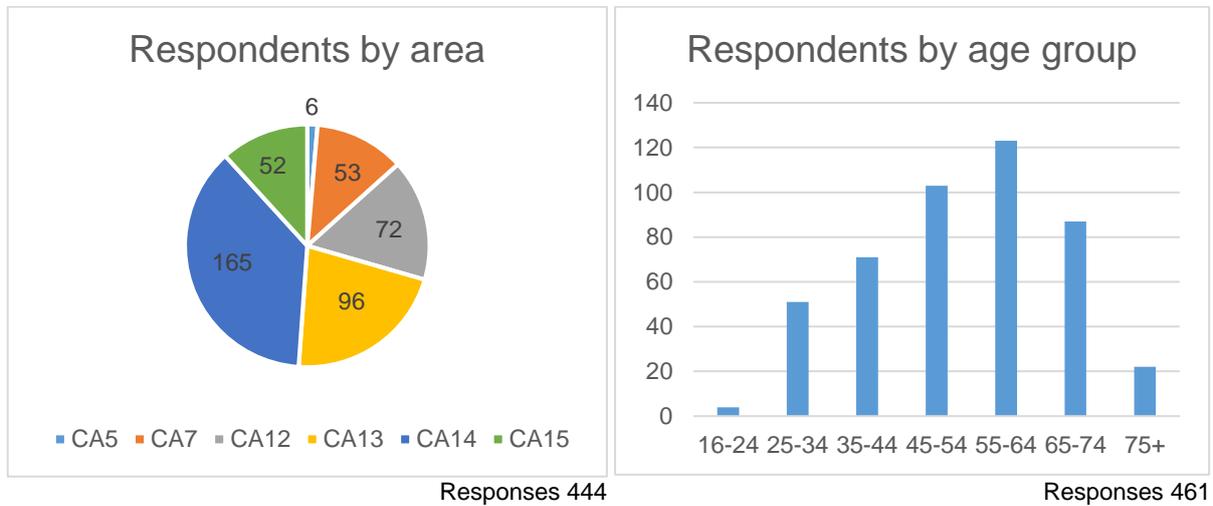


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Response patterns across different age groups and areas were fairly similar for the three options. Respondents in the 55-64, 65-74 and 75+ age groups were slightly more likely to favour a 2% increase than a 1% or no increase. Respondents with a CA12 postcode were slightly more likely to favour a 1% or 2% increase than no increase.

Demographics

Respondents were asked to provide postcode and age range details to help us get a better understanding of responses.



Postcode areas broadly relate to the following areas:
 CA5 – Areas to north east, east and south east of Wigton
 CA7 – Aspatria, Wigton, Silloth and surrounding areas
 CA12 – Keswick and surrounding areas
 CA13 – Cockermouth and surrounding areas
 CA14 – Workington and surrounding areas
 CA15 – Maryport and surrounding areas