

North Northamptonshire Council Draft Budget 2023/24 – Consultation Analysis Report

Introduction

1. The purpose of this report is to set out the Draft Budget consultation process, and key consultation findings (including an understanding of who participated in the consultation), the results of which will be used to help inform decisions on the North Northamptonshire Council's Budget for 2023/24.

Executive decisions and formal consultation

2. The [Draft Budget 2023-24 and Medium-Term Financial Plan](#) was approved by Executive on 22 December 2022 and consultation on the budget proposals began later that day. The consultation concluded on 27 January 2023.
3. The public consultation was conducted by the Council's Consultation and Engagement Team. The structure and design of the consultation set out the budget proposals and enabled both online and non-digital means of participation, in accordance with nationally recognised good practice.

How was the consultation promoted?

4. The consultation was hosted on the Council's [Consultation Hub](#) website. Councillors, local MPs, town and parish Councils, partner organisations, voluntary and community sector organisations, representatives of protected characteristic groups, local business groups including Chamber of Commerce and Federation of Small Businesses, and members of both the North Northamptonshire Residents' Panel (circa 600 members) and the Council's Consultation Register were invited to give their views and asked to promote the consultation to their members, or within their local area where appropriate.
5. Opportunities to take part in the consultation were also promoted in the local media via press releases. The press release went to 38 newsrooms (local and national, print and broadcast including the Northants Telegraph and BBC Radio Northampton), plus individual reporters and other local news sites. It was promoted through the Council's website, e-newsletters and social media channels, enabling both internal (e.g. staff) as well as external consultees to get involved in the process. The Facebook Reach (i.e. the number of people who saw any content from or about the consultation web page) was 19,100; the Twitter Impressions (i.e. the number of times any content from or about the consultation webpage entered a person's screen) was 3,956; and LinkedIn impressions were 1,823.

How did consultees have their say?

6. Local people, organisations and other interested parties were able to have their say about the Draft Budget proposals in a range of ways, by:
 - Visiting the [Draft Budget Consultation webpage](#) and completing the questionnaire or requesting a paper questionnaire. Access to the online questionnaire was also made available free of charge at any North Northamptonshire Council library
 - Emailing CET@northnorthants.gov.uk
 - Writing to Budget Consultation Response, North Northamptonshire Council, Sheerness House, Meadow Road, Kettering, NN16 8TL

- Using social media by Tweeting (@NNorthantsC) or posting comments on the Council's Facebook page
- Contacting us by telephone to give verbal feedback
- A toolkit was developed to enable user groups/forums to hold their own discussions and provide their feedback as a collective group.

Number and type of responses received

7. During the draft budget consultation period, using the various means available to consultees, local people and organisations contributed to the consultation 453 times. Nearly all of the feedback received was via the questionnaire, with 449 respondents participating via the questionnaire, two respondents submitted a written response, and two responded via social media.
8. Within the questionnaire, respondents could choose which questions they responded to, and so there are lower response numbers to each question when compared with the overall number of participants, depending on whether participants had a particular interest in the subject matter.
9. During the consultation period, regular summaries of consultation responses received were circulated to senior Finance officers and all responses received were circulated to decision makers upon conclusion of the consultation to enable them to see each response in full.

What did people say?

10. This report is a summary of the feedback received. It is recommended that it is read in conjunction with the full consultation results, including the detail and suggestions contained within some of the written comments. The full consultation results have been made available to Members and are available to view on the [consultation webpage](#).
11. The questionnaire was structured so that respondents could give their views on any of the individual proposals if they chose to do so. This means we were able to summarise views by proposal and collate the views from the different consultation channels.
12. An [equality screening assessment for the budget proposals](#) was published alongside the Executive papers and made available via the questionnaire. The equality screening assessment found the proposals would have either a positive or neutral impact on the protected groups outlined within the Equality Act 2010.

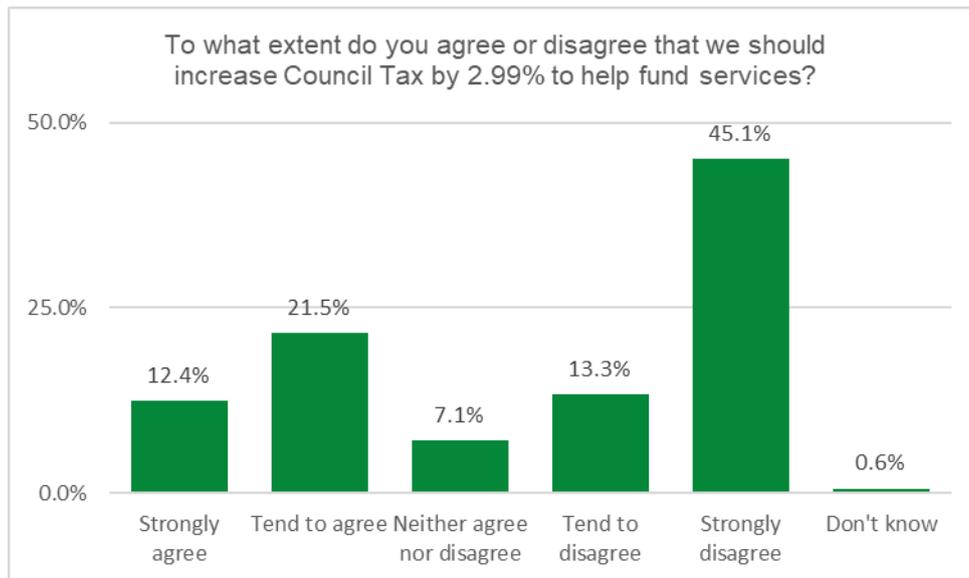
Draft Budget 2023/24 Consultation Questionnaire

13. In total, 449 respondents filled out a questionnaire on the draft Budget proposals, either partially or fully. Respondents did not have to answer every question and so the total number of responses for each question differs and is shown in relation to each question.
14. Respondents were asked in what capacity they were responding to the consultation. There were 444 responses to this question, with respondents being able to select more than one option if applicable. Nearly all the respondents said they were local residents (88.3%). The second highest respondents were North Northamptonshire Council employees (19.6%), followed by service users (7.0%). The following table details the various respondent types to the consultation questionnaire.

	Response number	Percentage (%)
A local resident	392	88.3%
A service user	31	7.0%
A North Northamptonshire Council employee	87	19.6%
A North Northamptonshire Council Councillor	4	0.9%
A representative of a Town/Parish Council	3	0.7%
A Town or Parish Councillor	8	1.8%
A representative of the voluntary sector or a community organisation	8	1.8%
A representative of the local business community	3	0.7%
A representative of a health partner organisation	0	0.0%
A representative of a user group	6	1.4%
Other	5	1.1%

Proposed Council Tax rate increase

15. The Council is proposing to increase Council Tax up to the level currently allowed by the government, without triggering a referendum – 4.99%. This increased rate includes a general increase of 2.99% and the allowable Adult Social Care precept increase, which is 2%.
16. This 4.99% increase would result in a 2023/24 Band D Council Tax increase for North Northamptonshire Council of £78.78 per year, which is £1.52p per week.
17. It should be noted that these figures do not include the Council Tax for individual town and parish councils or the Council Tax set for fire and police by the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner. These are not within the scope of this consultation and these amounts are added afterwards before people receive their final bills.
18. The Council's proposal to increase the core Council tax rate by 2.99% in 2023/24 means an average (Band D) Council Tax payer's rate would increase £47.21 per year (£0.91p per week) for the North Northamptonshire Council precept.
19. Respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree with the proposal to increase Council Tax by 2.99% to help fund services. There were 339 responses to this question. Approximately a third of respondents (33.9%) said they strongly agree or tend to agree with the proposal, while over half (58.4%) said they strongly disagree or tend to disagree with the proposal.

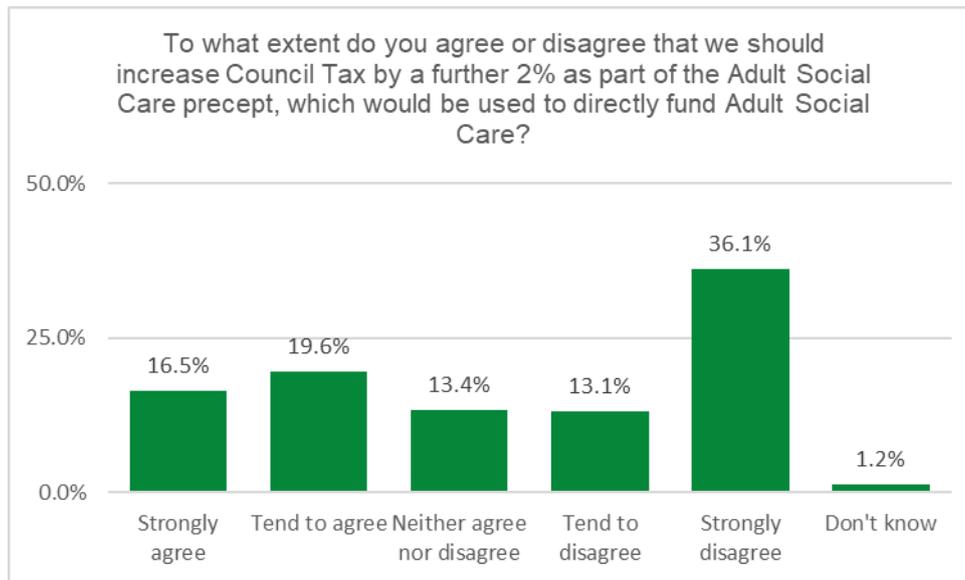


20. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 211 comments made in relation to this question.
21. A total of 50 respondents who agreed with the proposal provided comments. By far the most frequent comment made by respondents was their agreement that funds for services were needed and accepted that a Council Tax increase was necessary to ensure sustainability of services, especially in light of current inflationary pressures. Comments included recognition that residents had a responsibility to contribute to the cost of services and that the Council has a responsibility to ensure the funds are appropriately spent. There was also acknowledgement of the additional pressures and demand of services being placed on the Council at this time.
22. The next most frequent comment respondents made was recognition of the challenges of the current economic climate and the additional pressure on some households that the potential Council Tax increase is likely to add. Although these respondents agreed with the proposed increase there was concern over how this may impact households who are struggling financially.
23. A few comments indicated that the Council needs to show that any additional funds are being used effectively to improve service provision, with some specifically requesting extra funding for local communities, social care, and highways. Comments also referenced the historic reputation of the unitary authority legacy Councils and the perceived continuation of reduction of services that were previously made, while others indicated that services required this increase, alongside additional Central Government funding.
24. A small number of comments put forward alternative suggestions, these included a proposal to make efficiency savings by reducing staff and therefore salary costs, including senior management and Councillor expenses. It was also suggested that there should be a smaller Council Tax increase, to ease the current financial pressures on residents.
25. Other comments made by those respondents who supported the proposal detailed recognition of Council staff for their continued work and commitment during the pandemic, which they felt should be rewarded. There was additional concern that there would be a disproportionate impact on children both at school and home due to current pressure on some household's finances.

26. A total of 13 respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal made a comment. Just under half of these respondents indicated their general dissatisfaction with the Council and some felt that the decision to increase Council Tax had already been made and was inevitable and referenced their disagreement with the recent Green Waste subscription charge decision and its consultation findings. There was again reference to the current cost of living challenges on families, and the additional financial pressures a Council Tax increase may bring.
27. A small number of respondents made various suggestions including that any increase in Council Tax should be used to build social housing for the younger generation so that rental revenue could be used for further development and therefore generate additional revenue, offering a longer-term solution; and that manager roles, and structures should be reviewed, with performance being benchmarked with other local authorities, with efficiency benefits being published.
28. There were 147 respondents that commented as to why they disagreed with the proposed increase. The most frequent comment made by respondents, which was made by approximately half of these respondents, was recognition of the challenges of the current economic climate and the additional strain that the potential Council Tax increase would place on households, while some also referenced that a lot of households had seen little or no increase to their income.
29. Many respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with the Council indicating an unequal allocation of resources across services and different areas within the region. It was also felt there is a lack of understanding from Executive members on financial management. Comments referenced recruitment challenges, and a perceived lack of senior manager support in understanding what is needed to deliver the service, with concerns that profit is coming before people.
30. A similar number of respondents commented that current funds should be allocated differently with queries as to what extra services would be provided for the additional income, and a perception that current service levels have diminished. There were several comments that there could be more Court cases/debt collection costs due to non-payment of Council Tax. There was also a perception that it's not the true increase due to the Police, Fire and Crime Commission precept and the additional Town and Parish Council's precepts.
31. There were several references that the Green Waste subscription charge would add an additional financial burden on top of the proposed Council Tax increase, along with general dissatisfaction at the newly implemented subscription charge for the service within some localities.
32. A small number of respondents commented that they felt the decision to increase Council Tax had already been made and the Council is unlikely to listen to feedback. Other comments included a feeling that historical financial mismanagement from Northamptonshire County Council is still having a continued impact on finances and services; and that anyone who is in the receipt of benefits should not have to pay Council Tax.
33. A few respondents shared ideas for alternatives to increasing Council Tax including an independent review of services and how they are provided, with charges according to use, in consultation with the public; using fewer private consultants; reduction in top salaries; a reduction in non-core services; and higher increases for residents in higher Council Tax bands being deemed a fairer distribution.

34. The one respondent who said, 'Don't know' and commented expressed difficulty in their decision, recognising the increase in costs and the potential detrimental effect on family finances.
35. Any respondents who felt the proposal would have a negative impact were then asked to tell us what they thought the impact would be, along with any suggestions on how any potential negative impacts could be mitigated. A total of 167 respondents provided comment.
36. The most frequent comment made by these respondents, with nearly two thirds of responses to this question mentioning it, was once again a feeling that the current financial crisis and additional pressure on households would be the most common impact. There was concern that some households will be having to carefully prioritise where they need to spend their money and adding further financial pressure would likely increase debt and could push families into poverty. However, a small number of respondents said they acknowledged the need for additional funds to help maintain services.
37. Several respondents made comments regarding their frustration as they felt there is a lack of detail of what the additional funds would be used for and whether there would be any improvement to services. It was felt local and community needs should be prioritised and residents wanted reassurance that the funds will be properly and proportionately spent. There was concern that pressures on people's finances are likely to lead to a rise in pressures on all services and in homelessness and business closures.
38. There were a small number of comments indicating that more should be done by Central Government, via the taxation system, and an expectation that there would be more funding for the Council via the Levelling Up fund, and a better funding deal and more support for middle earners who are unable to access the benefits system.
39. Other comments included a perception that service levels may decrease with a potential for an increase in crime, including fly-tipping; and that Council staff working from home is not productive.
40. There were several suggestions made on how to mitigate the impact of a potential Council Tax increase, these included having a lower increase in Council Tax or no increase at all, a lower increase for lower income families; ensure that owners of multiple houses are paying the full amount of Council Tax; withdrawal of the green waste subscription charge; and to only provide the statutory services and projects. It was suggested that additional business levies should be considered, as well as charging for car parking in Wellingborough and Rushden. Along with building low-cost houses for rental income and revenue creating and/or revenue releasing projects; to hold a lottery; offering advice to residents on releasing capital and downsizing; and working with budget support services.
41. The questionnaire then outlined the Council's proposal to increase the Council Tax rate by a further 2% in 2023/24 as part of the Adult Social Care precept, which would be used to directly fund Adult Social Care, meaning an average (Band D) Council Tax payer's rate would increase £31.57 per year (£0.61p per week) for the North Northamptonshire Council precept.
42. Respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree with the proposal to increase Council Tax by a further 2% as part of the Adult Social Care precept, which would be used to directly fund Adult Social Care. There were 321 responses to this question. Similar to the core council increase proposal many respondents opposed the increase, although disagreement was not as high for the Adult Social Care precept increase as it was for the core increase. Approximately just over a third of respondents (36.1%) said they

strongly agree or tend to agree with the proposal, whilst half (49.2%) said they strongly disagree or tend to disagree with the proposal.



43. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 162 comments made in relation to this question.
44. A total of 47 respondents who agreed with the proposal provided comments. By far the most frequent comment made by respondents who agreed with the additional 2% Adult Social Care precept said they agreed that funds for Adult Social Care services were needed to provide an appropriate level of care and accepted that an Adult Social Care precept was necessary. There was acknowledgement that service demand is high, that North Northamptonshire has a rapidly ageing population and that the service needs investment. It was also commented that these services being insufficiently funded has a direct impact on the NHS and a detrimental impact, including possible closure, of private care homes.
45. There were a few comments seeking clarity on where the additional funds would be spent and the perception that there is currently no plan as to how the funds would be spent.
46. Some ideas for alternative funding streams were shared including the Council owning rehabilitation homes as respondents felt the Council could potentially run these more cost effectively than the private sector, and an insistence that the funds aren't utilised to support general hospitals unless there was reciprocal access to their funding streams. It was felt that investment in early years and education was also needed to mitigate dependence on services in later years.
47. A total of 21 respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal made comment. These respondents provided a variety of feedback with no single common theme emerging. Some respondents wanted clarity on where the funds would be allocated. There was an indication from a few respondents that a review of services and/or staff structure should be undertaken to support the allocation of funds and to ensure extra funding went to services and not salaries, which are felt to be high for management but low for care workers.
48. A similar number of respondents expressed their general acceptance that funds are needed to support Adult Social Care services, with an acknowledgement of the additional pressure this Council Tax precept may put on some families in the current economic climate.

49. There were a small number of comments that there would be more agreement to the increase in the Council Tax element if the Green Waste subscription charge hadn't been approved, or if the proposed increase was a lower percentage than 2%.
50. A total of 90 respondents who disagreed with the proposal provided comments. The most frequent comments were regarding the concern over the cost-of-living challenges and concerns over the Council putting further financial pressure on households, especially as the Adult Social Care precept is on top of the proposed Council Tax increase of 2.99%.
51. The next most common comments were regarding a general dissatisfaction with the current perceived spending allocation and/or process of allocation, and the level of support received from people who use the service. There were requests for a complete overhaul of the service and a belief that the Adult Social Care precept is being disproportionately used for Adult Social Care in comparison to the number of users of the service. There was also a reference to the historical challenges of the previous County Council and perceived history of mismanagement of funds and services.
52. There were a few comments concluding that the expectation is that more support and higher priority should be given to Adult Social Care by Central Government, including greater funding.
53. A few respondents felt there is an over reliance on agency staff and/or consultants and a full review of services should be undertaken with a view of bringing services in-house. It was felt a further review of the discretionary parts of the service with closer partnership working is needed to promote household sustainability and independence. There were additional comments with a view that the cost of care should be paid for by the people who use the service and their families.
54. There were two respondents who said, 'Don't know' and made comment. There was recognition that Adult Social Care is underfunded but that maybe this wasn't the right time, or the proposed increase should be lower. There was also recognition that it was a challenge to retain social workers due to competitive salaries elsewhere.
55. There were two respondents who had not indicated if they agreed or disagreed with the proposal but still made comment. There was acknowledgement of the current economic challenges to residents and that any increase could put them in a vulnerable position, thus needing the Adult Care Service themselves. Equally there was acknowledgement that the service needs the additional financial support.
56. Any respondents who felt the proposal would have a negative impact were then asked to say what they thought the impact would be, along with any suggestions on how any potential negative impacts could be mitigated. A total of 93 respondents commented and made a range of comments.
57. The most frequent comments made by respondents were regarding concerns about the current cost-of-living crisis and the impact that any increase would have on households, with many respondents repeating their concerns given in previous answers and mentioned earlier in this report. A small number added their concern over potential impact on people's mental wellbeing and additional strain a Council Tax increase may put on other services, for example food banks and debt collection.
58. Several respondents felt they already pay for the service through National Insurance and that it was disproportionate for those who work to pay more than those who don't, with some respondents saying they shouldn't have to pay for the service if they don't use it.

Some comments also indicated a perception that the decision to increase Council Tax had already been made.

59. A small number of comments queried how the additional funds would be spent and felt more transparency and clear auditing is needed.
60. Other comments included an opinion that there is no long-term financial sustainability, just continued cuts in central funding and the increase in Council Tax; that central government should tax the “super-rich” more; that decisions made by central government have adversely impacted local government finances; and the perception that there are finances available in a Brexit fund to help pay for Adult Social Care services.
61. Other comments included that statistics should be shared to indicate how many people use the Adult Social Care service; that there should be a return to towns having their own Councils; and that the precept increment should be used exclusively for service delivery.
62. Several respondents offered suggestions of how any negative impact may be best mitigated. The most frequent suggestion was that Council Tax should not be increased at this time. It was commented that a lump sum rather than a percentage increase could be fairer. Other ideas included commissioning a full spending review, to reduce overall spending and/or smarter spending, with community needs being prioritised; that residents should pay for their own care; identify services which could generate commercial income and offer services to other authorities or the private sector; place levies on businesses; that reserves should be used to build more Council owned housing; and that there should be greater integration with the NHS, with shared roles and a single estate strategy. It was also suggested that care staff pay should be reviewed alongside a request for reducing the staffing budget.

Draft Capital Programme 2023-26

63. The Draft Capital Programme and its appendices includes all capital expenditure and income, including the acquisition, replacement and enhancement of assets financed from government grants, external contributions, revenue contributions, capital receipts and borrowing.
64. It sets out the key objectives and broad principles to be applied by the Council when considering capital investment and its funding, and provides the context for how the Medium-Term Capital Programme seeks to support the realisation of the Council’s vision and corporate priorities.
65. The Draft Capital Programme has been developed to ensure a robust mechanism to deliver our priorities within the finances available.
66. Respondents were given the above explanation and provided with the draft [Capital Programme 2023-26](#) and its appendices, and were invited to contact the Council if they would like further details about any of the schemes.
67. Respondents were asked if they had any comments on any of these schemes. A total of 46 comments were received about these schemes, covering a range of different services.
68. Approximately a quarter of these respondents did not comment about specific aspects of the programme but made more general comments about the programme as a whole. Several of these respondents felt activities were not being fairly distributed across North Northamptonshire and that some areas appear to be receiving a disproportionate amount of investment compared to other towns and villages, with Corby in particular being cited

as one of the towns that appears to benefit more than others. It was also commented that some of these schemes were not essential, whilst others mentioned schemes which they felt should be included but could not see, for example youth provision. It was also questioned if the programme would be delivered within the set time and budget.

69. The next most frequently mentioned subject was regarding highways and footpaths. Several respondents said they felt many roads are in need of repair, with potholes being cited as a concern. Individual comments were received mentioning highway projects which they oppose. It was also commented that the cost of new road junctions and train station links should be paid by either the developers, train companies, or central government and not by the council.
70. A few respondents mentioned the Housing Revenue Account. They felt there is an inequality between council tenants compared to other tenants when it comes to receiving funding and support for adaptations and that this area is being underfunded. Housing and homelessness were also mentioned by a couple of respondents. It is commented that the Council needs to provide more housing, especially social housing; that social housing is too focused to Corby and Kettering; and the Council should work with partners to help provide a more holistic service and support people into employment and accommodation.
71. A few respondents specifically mentioned the Hazelwood Neighbourhood Centre in Corby and expressed strong views on how important they felt this centre is for the local area, especially the elderly and their mental health. They feel the centre is well used and that it should not be subjected to any decreased funding.
72. A small number of respondents mentioned the flexible and remote working of council staff. This raised mixed opinions amongst respondents. It was commented that staff should not be working remotely but from offices. However, it was also commented that staff should continue to work remotely to enable the council to make savings by reducing its estate and energy bills.
73. A couple of respondents specifically mentioned the development pool. One respondent felt more should be done to improve the countryside, whilst the other felt the cost of street lighting was high.
74. A couple of respondents mentioned the Northamptonshire Superfast Broadband. It was commented it was not sufficient, especially in rural areas.
75. Other comments included general dissatisfaction with the Council and some of its previous decisions; that the information presented within the appendices was not clear; the need to ensure investments are sufficiently monitored; request for more youth and special educational needs provision; that council salaries should be reduced along with a reliance on consultants. It was also suggested the Council should introduce dog licencing; maximum fines for all fly-tipping; library subscription charges; and a reduction in grants for gypsy/travellers, in an attempt to save money and increase income.

Alternative suggestions and other comments

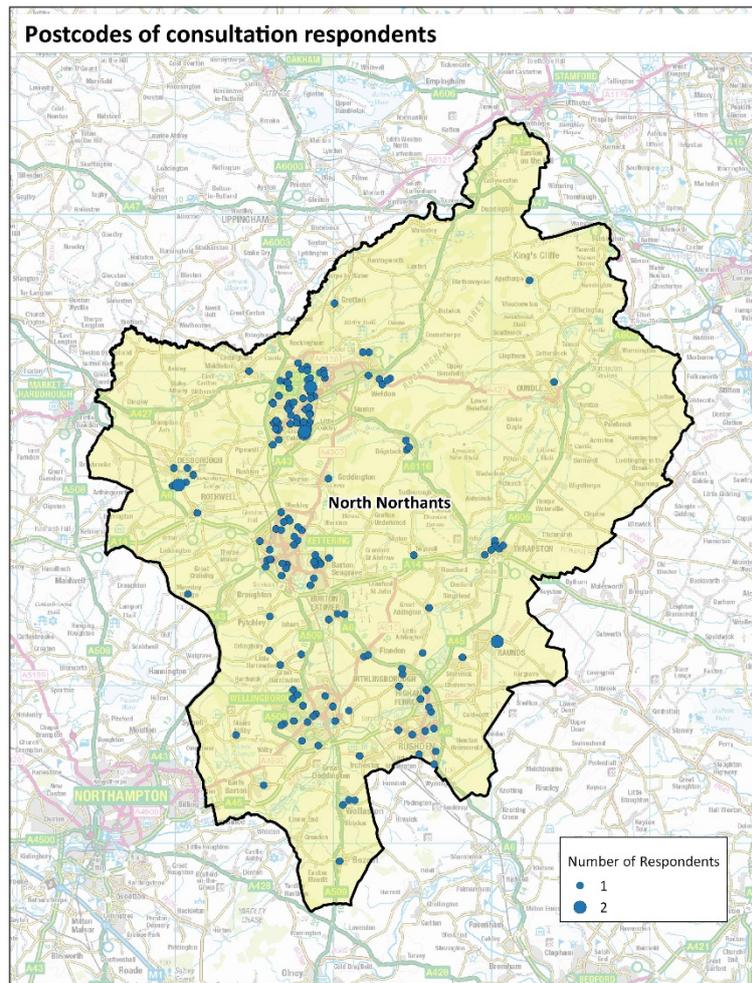
76. Respondents were then reminded that the budget report sets out the latest estimated funding position, service budget pressures, key financial risks and challenges influencing the development of North Northamptonshire Council's financial plans for 2023/24 and the ongoing financial impact of those plans, together with the medium-term estimates of funding and spending requirements.

77. Respondents were reminded that the consultation questionnaire focusses on the new proposals for the draft budget 2023/24 that will likely affect residents and service users. However, respondents were welcome to comment on anything within the Draft Budget.
78. Respondents were asked if they had any other comments they would like to make, including any alternative ideas about how the Council could save the same amount of money or generate the same amount of income as outlined in the proposals. There were 50 comments made in relation to this question and respondents made a variety of comments.
79. The most frequent comment made to this question were expressions of dissatisfaction of the Council and its decision making, with approximately a fifth of these respondents mentioning comments along this theme. Some of these respondents felt the consultation was not open for enough time and that the consultation feedback would not influence the council's decisions. It was also requested that the Council publishes the details of what it spends its money on to enable respondents to be better informed when feeding back on budget proposals. There were also criticisms about the quality of Council services.
80. A few respondents took this opportunity to express their criticism of the garden waste subscription charge. It was also suggested that there should be mandatory introduction of food waste collections; review of public waste bins; and to encourage more recycling and composting.
81. A similar number of respondents took this opportunity to comment about Council Tax. It was suggested that there should be a complete tax reform with a wealth tax system to replace the current Council Tax band system. There was also objection to paying for a social care precept increase; and support for the building of new houses that help add to the total Council Tax revenue.
82. A small number of respondents commented about the council's property assets. These respondents made a variety of comments including a perception of lack of capital funding for rural areas; disagreement with allocation of funds to refurbish offices; and request for more funding to be available to help maintain local leisure services, libraries, and social housing. It was also commented that the Council has moved some assets to parish councils and that this should result in lower maintenance cost for the Council.
83. A small number of respondents commented on the state of some public roads and felt they needed repair and more investment should be provided for ongoing maintenance. It was also commented that plans for a local cycle lane should not go ahead and that the monies would be better used elsewhere.
84. A similar number of respondents felt too much money was being paid to local politicians, consultants, and senior management. It was suggested there be a reduction in either the quantity of these roles or their salaries.
85. A few comments were received that regarding the importance of the Hazelwood Neighbourhood Centre in Corby and should not be subjected to any reduction in funding. It was commented that the centre is within an area of deprivation and provides vital multi-generational services. It was commented that the onsite day nursery is dependent on the partnership of the centre and the facilities it provides, for example the use of the kitchen for meal provision. Without this partnership it was felt the nursery would be unable to maintain its current level of service and would likely need to cease the provision of government subsidised childcare as it would become unaffordable and would need to reduce its staff.

86. Other comments included a request to secure more funding from housing developers to help fund local amenities and ease the pressures new house estates may place on local services and infrastructure; for more funding and information on how the Council is tackling climate change; for more transparency on any proposed changes to fees and charges; that the council should receive more funding from central government and not be penalised for past successes; for the Council to have increased partnership working and scrutiny of lower tier councils; a feeling of inequity of service provision between rural and urban areas; and general dissatisfaction of council services.
87. A small number of comments were received regarding services which fall outside of the council's remit, for example the police and the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner office.

Demographic information

88. Within the demographic section of the questionnaire organisational respondents were asked to provide more detail about their organisation by providing their organisations name and their job title/ role. The five respondents who provided this information identified themselves as parish councils; bowls club; and a day nursery. We have not listed the job titles/ roles of respondents within this report to ensure respondents' anonymity is retained.
89. Individual respondents were asked to provide their postcode to give us an understanding of where respondents live. There were 173 valid postcodes provided for North Northamptonshire. The below map broadly shows where these respondents reside. A total of 32 postcodes were incomplete and two were from outside of the area.



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90. Respondents who were not responding on behalf of an organisation were asked to complete the Council's equality monitoring form to help us understand the characteristics of people who have taken part in the consultation.
91. The vast majority of respondents chose not to provide their demographic information. Full statistical data of the responses is available within the Appendix. The following is a brief summary of the data received.
92. The majority of respondents who completed the equality monitoring form identified themselves as female (53.3%), with 40.0% being male, and 6.7% saying 'Prefer not to say'. The most frequent age given by respondents were those aged between 35 to 49 years (28.6%) and 50 to 64 (28.6%).
93. A total of 66.7% of respondents who completed the equality monitoring form were married, with 20.0% being single (never married); 6.7% divorced; and 6.7% saying 'Prefer not to say'.
94. Other identified demographic information provided by these forms demonstrated that 14.3% were disabled; nearly all respondents who completed the equalities form identified themselves as White British (93.3%); and the most frequent religion identified was Christian (14.3%) with 64.3% saying they have no religion.

95. The final question within the questionnaire asked respondents how they found out about the consultation. A total of 244 respondents answered this question. The majority of respondents said they were made aware of the consultation via social media (45.1%). Other awareness raising channels included via the local media i.e. newspaper/ radio (23.8%); an email from the Council (19.3%); from the Council website (14.8%); and via a voluntary sector organisation (0.8%). Most of the 11.5% respondents that said 'Other' appear to be from council staff who explained they found out about the consultation via internal communication channels; other responses included hearing about the consultation via family or friends.

Other responses

96. There were two written responses received in relation to the draft budget consultation.

97. A written response was received on behalf of three community centres and one community library in Corby. The response focused on the harmonisation of grants and community centres. The author expressed their concerns over a potential loss of funding and stated if the grant was no longer available the following issues would occur:

- Volunteers would withdraw from the centres
- Hard to find grants to support with running costs and salaries
- Community centres close after a year if there is no council support with funding
- Rising costs of utility bills is making it putting pressure on budgets along with limited income
- If based in an area of deprivation, then centre is not able to increase hall hire
- Loss of local amenities, for example community library; neighbourhood centres; community café, drop-in centre for services, food bank; warm space; children's centre; nursery.
- Partner services in regular attendance and working in the community will no longer be able to attend at these venues
- There will be a cost to the Council of mothballing buildings and potential loss of business rates
- There will be a loss of external funding medium term projects including up-grading of facilities

98. The author strongly expressed the importance of the facilities and the services they provide within their role of supporting the local community, and the potential impact should grant funding be lost. They also criticised the consultation timeframe and said they felt three months' notice of potential devolved grant reduction is not an adequate timeframe for these facilities.

99. The second written response was from an individual regarding the devolved community centre grants harmonisation saving of £112k. The author said they only received notice of this on 19 January, which gave them and others like them little time to respond.

100. They requested further details of what financial support the Council provides to other non-devolved community centres and questioned the financial fairness of the harmonisation. Whilst they did not name any specific community centres, they said the funding provided by the Council is critical in the continuation of the centres, and the centres provide good value for money. They added that the Council would incur a greater cost should community centres close, for example the cost of maintaining the building.

101. If the funding were reduced the respondent felt this would mean future job losses and an impact on the wellbeing of the centre's users. They said as an alternative to grant

harmonisation the removal of a senior council officer post would provide an equivalent saving. The added should funding be reduced that it be deferred for a year and funded from reserves to allow time for a managed exit and for the community centres affected to seek alternative funding.

102. A copy of these two letters is available to view along with the full consultation results on the [consultation webpage](#). Unredacted copies of the feedback received has been shared with senior officers.
103. There were two comments made directly to our social media channels regarding the consultation. Both respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with the Council, with one commenting that their Council Tax has increased by 13% over the past two years.