



## **CABINET REPORT**

Date Written	22 <sup>nd</sup> February 2021
Report Author	Ceri Dinham
Service Area	Communications, Consultation and Engagement
Committee Division	Strategic
Exempt/Non-Exempt	Non-Exempt
Committee Date	3 <sup>rd</sup> March 2021

*To: Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen*

# **Council Priorities and Budget Consultation 2021/22**

## **1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 As part of the budget setting process, the Council has a requirement to consult with the residents of the County Borough on how we spend their money and what should be the Council's priorities for 2021/22.
- 1.2 As part of this process, over a four-week period between Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> January and Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2021, an online survey was available for residents of the county borough. The results of which are contained in this report.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 2.1 The results of the Council Priorities, Budget Consultation and Council Tax exercise be received and considered.

## **3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Engagement with citizens is essential as part of the priority and budget setting process. This provides the Council with opinions from the public on the delivery of services, priorities and potential Council Tax increases. The aim of the consultation was to consult with a variety of citizens across the County Borough via an online survey.

3.2 Under normal circumstances a number of roadshows would take place in various locations across the county borough, and paper copies of the survey would have been available in Council buildings, however as a result of COVID-19 restrictions, this year's survey was limited to online only.

#### **4.0 COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION METHODOLOGY FOR THE COUNCIL PRIORITIES AND BUDGET CONSULTATION EXERCISE**

4.1 An online survey was designed using Smart Survey consultation software.

4.2 Residents were directed to this survey via the Council website and corporate social media pages, namely Facebook and Twitter.

4.3 Updates reminding citizens of the online survey were posted periodically to our social media pages.

4.4 An email was sent to all MTCBC staff and elected members at the start of the consultation process to raise awareness and to increase engagement.

4.5 Results were analysed using the consultation software in order to determine citizens' opinions and preferences.

#### **Questions**

4.6 Consultees were asked the following two questions in relation to Council Tax:

**Q1. When making decisions about spending next year, should the Council:**

*(Please tick one)*

Maintain as many services at the current level as possible, even if it means a reasonable increase in Council Tax.

<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>

Cut services to keep any increase in Council Tax to a minimum.

Please note a 3% increase, for example, would add approximately 64p per week to the lowest band property in Merthyr Tydfil, and 96p per week to an average band property.

**Q2. What would be your preferred level of Council Tax increase for next year, taking into account key local government related inflationary pressures rising by more than the rate of general inflation, demands on services for the most vulnerable in society are increasing and there is a need to fund growing pressures on our key front-line Services?**

**\*Please note that 4.99% relates to the Council Tax increase for the current 2020/21 financial year\***

Lower than or equal to 4.99% (=Additional Council Income between £0 and £1.5m)

Greater than 4.00 % (=Additional Council Income over £1.5m)


4.7 Consultees were also asked to prioritise Council Services:



**3. Below is a list of ten service areas. Please select the eight service areas that are most important to you.**

Budget Priority Area
Schools and Education
Children's Social Care
Adult Social Care
Physical Regeneration
Community Regeneration
Highways & Infrastructure
Refuse & Waste
Street Scene
Environment, Health & Community Safety
Leisure & Culture



## 5.0 CONSULTATION RESULTS

5.1 539 people took part in the survey.

5.2 The response to Q1 was as follows:











			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Maintain as many services at the current level as possible, even if it means a reasonable increase in Council Tax.		64.38%	347
2	Cut services to keep any increase in Council Tax to a minimum.		35.62%	192

5.3 The response to Q2 was as follows:

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Lower than or equal to 4.99% (=Additional Council Income between £0 and £1.5 million)		89.05%	480
2	Greater than 4.99% (=Additional Council over £1.5 million)		10.95%	59

5.4 Below is a table indicating how participants in the consultation prioritised Council services in Q3:

*Please note: This question was skipped by 26 people, therefore the total number of responses to this question is 513.*

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Schools & Education		85.96%	441
2	Children's Social Care		74.46%	382
3	Adult Social Care		68.62%	352
4	Physical Regeneration		48.34%	248
5	Community Regeneration		73.29%	376
6	Highways & Infrastructure		82.85%	425
7	Refuse & Waste		88.69%	455
8	Street Scene		45.03%	231
9	Environmental Health & Community Safety		79.53%	408
10	Leisure & Culture		65.30%	335
			Answered	513
			Skipped	26

## 5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

6.1 Financial implications arising from the consultation process will be considered within the final budget process where appropriate.

## 7.0 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts	Not Applicable
<b>1. Merthyr Tydfil Well-being Objectives</b>	0 of 4	0 of 4	4 of 4
<b>2. Sustainable Development Principles - How have you considered the five ways of working:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long term</li> <li>• Prevention</li> <li>• Integration</li> <li>• Collaboration</li> <li>• Involvement</li> </ul>	1 of 5	0 of 5	4 of 5

<b>3. Protected Characteristics</b> <i>(including Welsh Language)</i>	0 of 10	0 of 10	10 of 10
<b>4. Biodiversity</b>	0 of 1	0 of 1	1 of 1
<p><b>Summary:</b></p> <p>The main positive impact is that the public were consulted with as part of the public consultation in order to seek their view on what Council services they think should be prioritised and where they think the Council's budget should be spent.</p> <p>There were no negative impacts, as this report is presenting the findings of the public consultation, with no proposals being put forward at this stage.</p>			

**ELLIS COOPER**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**COUNCILLOR ANDREW BARRY**  
**CABINET MEMBER FOR GOVERNANCE**  
**& CORPORATE SERVICES**

<b>BACKGROUND PAPERS</b>		
<b>Title of Document(s)</b>	<b>Document(s) Date</b>	<b>Document Location</b>
Council Tax Engagement Feedback	February 2021	Communication and Consultation Office
<b>Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?</b>		<b>No.</b>

***Consultation has been undertaken with the Corporate Management Team in respect of each proposal(s) and recommendation(s) set out in this report.***