

Policy and Resources Committee

16 February 2016

Business Planning 2016-20

Update on Consultation Findings

This update replaces paragraph's 5.7.5 to 5.7.33 of the published report. It also includes a new paragraph, 5.7.34, on the equalities impact to date.

Formal consultation on 2016/17 budget

5.7.5 The preliminary consultation and engagement has informed the development of the Council's 2016/17 budget proposals to be put forward for consultation.

5.7.6 To allow for an eight-week budget consultation, a general budget consultation began after Policy and Resources Committee on 18 December 2015 and concluded on 12 February 2016.

5.7.7 The interim consultation findings have been updated since the Policy and Resources Committee paper was published last week. This report outlines the interim findings as of 9 February 2016.

5.7.8 The final consultation findings and full report will be taken to Council on 1 March 2016.

General consultation on 2016/17 budget

Method

5.7.9 The 2016/17 General Budget Consultation focused on the overall size and individual components of the 2016/17 budget in general terms. In particular, the consultation invited views on the:

- overall budget and saving proposals;
- savings being made within each Theme Committee;
- proposal not to increase general Council Tax; and
- whether or not the council should introduce the 2% 'Adult Social Care Precept' Council Tax increase.

5.7.10 The general consultation was published on Engage Barnet with detailed background information about the Council's budget setting process and the financial challenges the Council faces.

5.7.11 Respondent's views were gathered via online survey. Paper copies and an easy read version of the consultation were also made available on request.

5.7.12 As part of the Council's statutory duty to consult with National Non Domestic Rate (NNDR) Payers, letters were sent out to all the council's NNDR payers inviting them to take part in the consultation.

5.7.13 The consultation was widely promoted via the Council's residents' magazine, Barnet First; Barnet Online; local press; Twitter; Facebook; Area Forums; and posters in libraries and other public places.

5.7.14 Super-users, i.e. users of non-universal services, have also been invited to take part in the consultation through Community Barnet; Communities Together Network, Youth Board, and Delivery Unit newsletters/circulars and super user mailing lists.

5.7.15 To ensure the views of a representative sample of the borough's population were captured on the proposal not to increase Council Tax and whether or not the council should introduce the 2% 'Adult Social Care Precept' Council Tax increase a separate questionnaire was sent to the Citizens' Panel¹.

Headline Interim findings:

5.7.16 As at the 9 February 2016, a total of 556 questionnaires have been completed, 101 by the general public via Engage Barnet and 445 by the Citizens' Panel.

Overall Budget and Savings for 2016/17 – Online General Public Consultation only

5.7.17 The Citizens' Panel were not asked questions on the overall budget and saving proposals for 2016/17. These were only asked of the general public.

5.7.18 At the time of writing 101 responses have been completed by the general public.

5.7.19 Respondents were asked if they had any comments to make on the overall budget, and in particular on how the 2016/17 proposed savings have been allocated across the different Theme Committees.

5.7.20 Of those who responded to the whole general public consultation 74 out of 101 gave a response to this question. Due to the current small sample size the results should be treated with caution. Also, due to the low completion rate of the equality monitoring questions no analysis has been done on these at this stage.

5.7.20 The types of responses were varied, but the most frequently mentioned type of comment was support for safeguarding Adult Social Care /Agreement for a 2 per cent 'social care precept' Council Tax increase (mentioned by 16 per cent, 16 out of 101).

The five top most frequently mentioned responses are outlined below:

- ***Agree with 2% increase to aid the elderly /Agree with safeguarding this budget / Vulnerable are being looked after / Concern about the vulnerable in the borough being affected / Adult: No sense to cut***

¹ The Citizens' Panel is made up of 2000 Barnet residents, selected to be representative of the adult population of the borough in terms of ward, age, gender, ethnicity, housing tenure, faith and disability

budget with an ageing population / Especially in Adult and Social Care Earnings/ Incomes have not increased in reality / Many people struggle already (16 per cent, 16 out of 101 respondents).

- ***'Agree with proposal/Well thought out/A Themed committee approach is more effective to identify savings*** (9 per cent, 9 out of 101 respondents).
- ***'Library Service: Concern about cuts'*** (8 per cent, 8 out of 101 respondents).
- ***'Concern about reduction in level of services / These are not savings, these are cuts'*** (7 per cent, 7 out of 101 respondents).
- ***'Raise council tax / If council tax had been raised over the last four years these cuts would not be necessary'*** (7 per cent, 7 out of 101 respondents).

Theme Committee Saving Proposals 2016/17 – Online General Public Consultation only

5.7.21 Respondents were asked the following questions on the saving proposals within each Themed Committee for 2016/17:

- Do you have any comments to make about the savings being proposed within this Committee's budget for 2016/17?
- Overall, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the savings that have been proposed within this Committee's budget for 2016/17?
- If you disagree, please give reasons for your answer:
- If you disagree, do you have any alternative suggestions for where the council could make these savings or generate income?

5.7.22 This interim report provides the headline findings on the extent of which respondents agreed or disagreed with the savings proposed within each committee.

Theme Committee	Consultation Findings
Policy and Resources	More respondents disagreed with the proposed savings in Policy and Resources Committee- 18 out of 57 respondents agreed, 29 out of 57 disagreed. Five respondents indicated they Neither agree nor disagree and four indicated Don't know/Not sure.
Adults and Safeguarding	More respondents disagreed with the proposed savings within the Adults and Safeguarding Committee - 29 out of 71 respondents agreed compared to 42 out of 71 who disagreed. Seven respondents indicated they Neither agree nor disagree and two indicated Don't know/Not sure.
Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding	More respondents disagreed with the proposed savings within the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee - 39 out of 59 respondents disagreed compared to 15 out of 59 who agreed. Three respondents indicated they

Theme Committee	Consultation Findings
	Neither agree nor disagree and two indicated Don't know/Not sure.
Environment	More respondents agreed with the proposed savings within Environment Committee - 25 out of 51 respondents agreed compared to 16 out of 51 who disagreed. 9 respondents indicated they Neither agree nor disagree and one indicated Don't know/Not sure.
Assets, Regeneration and Growth	Opinion was slightly more mixed on the saving proposals within this committee, with no clear majority agreeing or disagreeing – 17 out of 42 respondents agreed compared to 11 out of 42 who disagreed. Eleven respondents indicated they Neither agree nor disagree and three indicated Don't know/Not sure.
Community Leadership	The majority of respondents agreed with the budget proposals within this committee - 19 out of 32 respondents agreed and 7 out of 32 disagreed.
Housing	More respondents disagreed with the proposed savings within the Adults and Safeguarding Committee's - 13 out of 27 disagreed and 8 agreed. Six respondents indicated they Neither agree nor disagree.

Detailed analysis on the other open ended questions on each committee is provided in Appendix G. Samples sizes are small for these particular questions but it is recommended that Commissioning Directors consider these responses in detail when implementing their savings.

Council Tax - Citizens' Panel and online General Public Consultation

5.7.23 The Citizens' Panel and the online General Public Consultation were asked for their views on Council Tax.

As at 9 February 2016, 529 respondents have completed the questions on Council Tax, 84 from the general public questionnaire, and 445 by the Citizens' Panel.

5.7.24 The findings to these questions are reported on separately, in terms of the responses from the online General Public Consultation and the Citizens' Panel responses. This is to allow for comparisons to be made with the larger representative sample of the Citizens Panel and the much smaller response to the general public questionnaire. As the general public questionnaire has only received a total response of 101 when considering the general public findings account should be taken of the small sample size.

5.7.25 Key findings are summarised below:

The Council's proposal not to increase general Council Tax in 2016/17

5.7.26 Respondents were asked how much they agreed with the Council's proposals not to increase the proportion of Council Tax bills which can be spent on general local services.

- 445 Citizens' Panel members and 81 from the general public answered this question.

5.7.27 Analysis of the equality monitoring questions has now been completed on the Citizens' Panel responses to date. No equalities analysis has been carried out at this stage on the general public consultation findings, due to the low completion rate of the equality monitoring questions.

- The table below shows that 59 per cent (264 out of 455) of the Citizens' Panel **agreed** with the council's proposal not to increase general Council Tax in 2016/17. A further third disagreed (29 per cent), and 11 per cent said they did not know or were not sure.
- In contrast, 56 per cent (47 out of 81) of those responding to the general public consultation, **disagreed** with the councils proposal not to increase Council Tax in 2016/17 A third agreed (31 per cent, 26 out of 81 respondents) and 13 per cent (11 out of 81) said they were not sure or did not know.

Do you agree with the council's plans not to increase the proportion of Council Tax bills which can be spent on general local services?	Citizens' Panel		General Public	
	%	Number	%	Number
Yes	59%	264	31%	26
No	29%	130	56%	47
Don't know/Not sure	11%	50	13%	11
Total	100%	445	100%	81

Citizen Panel response, differences by different demographic sub groups

5.7.28 When looking at the Citizens' Panel response by different demographic sub groups, respondents who are Asian or of Other ethnic origin, of Hindu or Muslim faith are significantly more likely to support the Council's proposal not to increase general Council Tax.

In contrast, respondents who are of Black ethnic origin or are atheist are significantly less likely to support the proposal.

Reasons given by those who agreed with the proposal not to increase general Council Tax in 2016/17

5.7.28 Of those who indicated they agreed with the proposal 54 per cent of Citizens' Panel and 38 per cent (9 out of 26 respondents) of the general public respondents did not give a reason for their response.

The most frequently mentioned reasons why respondents **supported** the proposal not to increase general Council Tax were: not being able to afford an increase in Council Tax; Council Tax is already very high enough; services seem to be coping with the cuts; a need to make more efficiency savings; and it is Adult Social Care Services that need an increase in funding.

The top five most frequently mentioned reasons for support, and the percentage of respondents who cited these, are listed below:

- ***Earnings/ Incomes have not increased in reality / Many people struggle already / I cannot afford it / Good for pensioners / those on low income/ on fixed income'*** 13 per cent of the Citizens' Panel, and 19 per cent (5 out of 26) of the general public consultation respondents gave this as a reason for their support.
- ***'Barnet Council Tax is very high already / Enough is being charged'*** 12 per cent of Citizens' Panel respondents, and 4 per cent (1 out of 26) of the general public consultation respondents gave this as a reason for their support.
- ***'Services: Seem to be coping with the cuts / Assume council confident services will be maintained'*** 8 per cent of the Citizens' Panel, and 4 per cent (1 out of 26) of the general public consultation gave this reason for their support.
- ***Council workers are inefficient / waste money / Council needs to manage itself better/ Can make more savings on overheads'*** 7 per cent of the Citizens' Panel, and 12 per cent (3 out of 26) of the general public consultation respondents gave this reason.
- ***'Services: Social Care / Adult Care/ services for the vulnerable need an increase in funding'*** 3 per cent of the Citizens' Panel cited this as a reason for their support. None of the general public consultation respondents gave this reason.

Reasons given by those who did not agree with the proposal not to increase general Council Tax in 2016/17

5.7.29 Of those who indicated they did not agree with the proposal, 32 per cent of the Citizens' Panel sample, and 11 per cent (5 out of 47 respondents) of the general public sample did not give a reason for their response.

The most frequently mentioned types of reasons why respondents **did not support** the proposal to increase general Council Tax were: services in general need an increase in funding; Adult Social Care services need an increase in funding; people need to understand they have to pay for services;

and most people can afford it. Also, although some respondents did not agree with proposal not to increase general Council Tax, they also said the Council still needs to become more efficient.

The top five most frequently mentioned reasons why respondents do not support this proposal, and the percentage of respondents who cited these, are listed below:

- ***‘Services in general: Services generally need increase in funding, if not increased concern that level of services would decrease/ Services should be protected / An increase is necessary / Fabric of community services needs maintaining’*** 46 per cent of Citizens’ Panel respondents and 47 per cent (22 out of 47) of the general public consultation respondents cited this as a reason for why they did not support the proposal not to increase general Council Tax.
- ***‘Adult Social Cares: Social Care / Adult Care/ Services for the vulnerable need an increase in funding’*** 10 per cent of the Citizens’ Panel, and 17 per cent (8 out of 47) of the general public consultation gave this reason why they disagreed .
- ***‘People need to understand they have to pay for services’*** 10 per cent of the Citizens’ Panel, and 4 per cent (2 out of 47) of the general public consultation cited this as a reason for why they did not support the proposal not to increase general Council Tax.
- ***‘Affordable by all / most people can pay / Fair’*** 9 per cent of the Citizens’ Panel, and 32 per cent (15 out of 47) of the general public consultation gave this as a reason for why they did not support the proposal.
- ***‘Council workers are inefficient/ waste money/ Council needs to manage itself better/ Can make more savings on overheads’*** 7 per cent of the Citizens’ Panel, and 9 per cent (4 out of 47) of the general public consultation gave this as a reason for why they did not support the proposal.

‘Social care precept’ - residents views on increasing Council Tax by 2 per cent via a ‘Social care precept’

5.7.30 Respondents were asked if they think that the Council should increase Council Tax by 2 per cent in 2016/17 via the ‘social care precept’.

- 445 Citizens’ Panel members and 84 from the general public answered this question.

5.7.31 Analysis of the equality monitoring questions has now been completed on the Citizens’ Panel responses to date. As before no equalities analysis has been done at this stage the general public consultation due to the low completion rate of the equality monitoring questions.

- The Citizens' Panel (55 per cent) are much less likely to say 'Yes' the council should increase Council Tax by 2 per cent via the 'social care precept' next year, compared to the general public consultation (71 per cent).
 - The table below shows that just over half of the Citizens' Panel (55 per cent) think the Council's should increase Council Tax by 2 per cent via the 'social care precept' A further third disagreed (32 per cent), and 14 per cent said they did not know or they were not sure.
 - In contrast, nearly three quarters (71 per cent, 60 out of 84) of those responding to the general public consultation think the Council's should increase Council Tax by 2 per cent via the 'social care precept'. However, a quarter think the council should not increase Council Tax by 2 per cent via the 'social care precept' (26 per cent, 22 out of 84 respondents). 2 respondents said they were not sure or did not know.

Do you think that the council should increase Council Tax by 2 per cent in 2016/17 via a 'social care precept'? ²	Citizens' Panel		General Public	
	%	Number	%	Number
Yes	55%	243	71%	60
No	32%	142	26%	22
Don't know/Not sure	14%	60	2%	2
Total	100%	445	100%	84

Citizen Panel response, differences by different demographic sub groups

5.7.32 When looking at the Citizens' Panel response by different demographic sub groups, respondents who live in Finchley and Golders Green Constituency, or aged 65+, or who are agnostic or atheist are significantly more likely to support a 2 per cent 'social care precept' Council Tax increase.

Conversely, respondents living in Hendon Constituency, or aged 18-24, or of Asian or of Black ethnic origin, or of Hindu or Muslim faith, or living in private rental, or social housing, are significantly less likely to support a 2 per cent 'social care precept' Council Tax increase.

Reasons why respondents think the Council should increase Council Tax by 2 per cent in 2016/17 via a 'social care precept'

5.7.32 Of those who indicated they agreed with this type of increase in Council Tax, 42 per cent of Citizens' Panel and 31 per cent (18 out of 58 respondents) of the general public respondents who agreed did not give a reason for their response.

² Do you think that the council should increase Council Tax by 2% in 2016/17 via a 'social care precept', which would generate up to £3 million - equivalent to an additional £22 per year for a Band D property - on the basis that the money is specifically reserved for adult social care, including care for the elderly?

Of those respondents who did give a reason, the most frequently mentioned reasons why respondents support a 2 per cent increase in Council Tax via the 'social care precept' were: Adult Social Care services need an increase in funding; a 2 per cent increase is affordable; the need to increase Council Tax to pay for an increasing aging population; concern if this part of the Council Tax is not implemented the level of service will decrease. Also, although some respondents supported the increase, there was concern whether the additional funding would actually be targeted towards the elderly.

The top five most frequently mentioned reasons why respondents support a 2 per cent increase in Council Tax via the 'social care precept', and the percentage of respondents who cited these, are listed below:

- **'Adult social care needs further funding / Care for the elderly and vulnerable needs more attention / Agree this is required'** 33 per cent of Citizens' Panel respondents cited this as a reason why they think the council should increase Council Tax by 2 per cent via the 'social care precept'. 42 per cent (25 out of 60) of the general public consultation also gave this reason.
- **'2 per cent / £22 would be manageable / affordable by all / most people'** 16 per cent of Citizens' Panel respondents, and 20 per cent (12 out of 60) of the general public consultation cited this as a reason for why they support an increase in Council Tax by 2 per cent via the 'social care precept'.
- **'The population is ageing. More resources are required for them / Barnet has a large population of older adults'** 12 per cent of the Citizens' Panel, and 8 per cent (5 out of 60) of the general public consultation gave this as a reason for their support.
- **Agree, however: Suspicion/doubt that this additional taxation would be properly targeted towards the elderly'** 6 per cent of the Citizens' Panel, and 3 per cent (3 out of 60) of the general public consultation gave this as a reason for their support.
- **'If Council Tax is not increased concern that level of services would decrease/ Service should be protected'** 4 per cent of the Citizens' Panel, and 2 per cent (1 out of 60) of the general public consultation cited this as a reason why they think the council should increase Council Tax by 2 per cent via the 'social care precept'.

Reasons why respondents do not think the council should increase Council Tax by 2% in 2016/17 via a 'social care precept'

5.7.33 Of those who indicated they do not think the council's should not increase Council Tax by 2 per cent via the 'social care precept', 41 per cent of Citizens' Panel and 24 per cent (5 out of 21 respondents) of the general public respondents did not give a reason for their response.

Of those respondents who did give a reason, the most frequently mentioned reasons why respondents **did not** support a 2 per cent increase in Council Tax via the 'social care precept' were: concern about affordability; lack of clarity why this increase on Adult Social Care is necessary; concern around

singling out one service when other services also require more funding; a view that residents who earn most should pay more; and a view that enough is already being charged.

The top five most frequently mentioned reasons why respondents do not support a 2 per cent increase in Council Tax via the 'social care precept', and the percentage of respondents who cited these, are listed below:

- **'Earnings/ Incomes have not increased in reality / Many people struggle already'** 17 per cent of Citizens' Panel respondents, and 18 per cent (5 out of 22) of the general public consultation cited this as a reason why they do not think the council should increase Council Tax by 2% via the 'social care precept'.
- **'Don't understand why an increase should be necessary. Where is the case for it / Need more detailed information/ publish spending'** 7 per cent of Citizens' Panel respondents cited this as a reason why they do not support an increase in Council Tax by 2% via the 'social care precept'. None of the general public consultation respondents gave this reason.
- **'Disagree. Why single out one service / Other services also require more funding'** 6 per cent of the Citizens' Panel gave this as a reason why they do not want a 2 per cent 'social care' Council Tax increase. Again none of the general public consultation respondents gave this reason.
- **'Those who earn most should pay more / Those in the most valuable houses should pay more'** 6 per cent of the Citizens' Panel cited this as a reason why they do not think the council's should increase Council Tax by 2 per cent via the 'social care precept'. None of the general public consultation respondents gave this reason.
- **'Barnet Council Tax is very high already / Enough is being charged'** 5 per cent of the Citizens' Panel cited this as a reason as a reason why they do not want a 2 per cent 'social care' Council Tax increase. None of the general public consultation respondents gave this reason.

5.7.34 Initial equalities analysis has been undertaken on citizen's panel responses to the proposal to increase council tax for social care precept. This suggests that older people are more likely to support the social care precept increase and there are also geographic and ethnic differences in the groups who are more likely to support the proposal. For example the following groups, living in private rental, or social housing or living in the Hendon Constituency, or aged 18-24, or of Asian or of Black ethnic origin, of Hindu or Muslim faith, are significantly less likely to support a 2 per cent 'social care precept'. (See 5.7.32 of this report). This lends support to the finding under the Council's commitment to Fairness that there is a continuing negative impact for young people.

Where possible further work will be undertaken to analyse any equality impacts from the budget consultation by protected characteristic (including feedback on theme committee proposals where sample size permits). There may be difficulties with particular for responses from the general public where the sample sizes are small. Therefore at this stage the consultation feedback has not materially altered the assessment of equalities impact of either the individual EIAs prepared to support the 16/17 budget proposals or the cumulative equalities impact analysis which are showing some negative impacts for the following groups:

- Age: Over 85's (Home meals, ASC);
- Ethnicity: Jewish and other minority groups (Home meals, ASC);
- Age: 16-18 years (Libraries, CELS);
- Women – pregnancy and maternity (Libraries, CELS);
- People with disabilities (Libraries, CELS);

Or the mitigations proposed. This will be kept under review and included with the final consultation findings and full report presented to Council on 1 March 2016.