

Budget Consultation Results

The Council budget and council tax consultation with residents and businesses closed on the 31 January 2023. There was a total of 126 responses, of which 123 were from residents, 2 from people that worked or were visiting Rother and 1 from a business. A summary of the results is shown below.

Key findings:

The consultation asked to what extent respondents either agreed or disagreed with a series of options that the Council could consider, these are provided at the end of this briefing note.

The following options received overall support from respondents:

(agree = agree/strongly agree. Shown in order of most support):

- 78% agreed to streamlining services so we can deliver the same outcomes.
- 66% agreed to people helping themselves, so they have less reliance on publicly funded services.
- 64% agreed to prioritising spending to protect services for most vulnerable and those without choice.
- 60% agreed to partnering with other organisations to provide services.

The following options did not receive overall support from respondents:

(Agree = strongly agree/agree, disagree = disagree/strongly disagree. Shown in order of highest to lowest levels of agreement)

- 46% of respondents agreed to encouraging local people and communities to deliver certain services. Whilst only 17% disagreed, opinion is mixed/neutral.
- Whilst 35.5% agreed to introducing charges for some services currently free or subsidised, nearly as many (31%) disagreed.
- Only 28% agreed with reducing or stopping the delivering of some services to protect others with the same proportion disagreeing (28%).

Council Tax

There was overall support for the proposed amount of Council Tax to be charged, with 62% of respondents agreeing (53% strongly agree and 9% agreeing 'a bit').

Fees and Charges

There was also overall support for the proposed increase (10%) for fees and charges. Overall, 64% of people agreed (agree and agree strongly 43% and 21% agreeing 'a bit'). However, 30% of respondents disagreed.

Views on capital programme proposals

We received just over 60 individual comments which reflected a range of views from agreement with the proposals to ceasing capital investment. The common comments focussed on the following;

- Agreeing with the proposals outlined;
- Not using reserves or borrowing to fund capital expenditure;
- Only investing in current assets, not new ones;
- Being cautious when investing in new assets;
- Focus on provision of housing;
- Not investing in the Town Hall;
- Some comments highlighted a misunderstanding of what service and functions the Council undertakes (road improvements for example).

What else should the Council take into account

We received around 70 individual comments, the most significant of these were as follows;

- 16% raised concerns about resident's ability to pay given rising costs;
- 13% stopping capital projects and not changing the town hall;
- 9% no value in having town/parish councils, too expensive, review cost vs delivery, reduce layers of local government
- 7% prioritising the most vulnerable; and
- 6% recommended cutting and reducing services (unspecified)

Respondents:

44% live in Bexhill
11% live in Battle
5% live in Rye
40% live in a village or the countryside

48% are male
46% are female
1% transgender/transsexual
5% prefer not to say

4% are aged 18 to 34
22% are aged 35 to 54
25% are aged 55 to 64
44% are aged 65 to 79
5% are aged 80 and over.

20% had a disability or a long term, limiting illness or condition that can affect day to day living

88% are White British
2% are White Gypsy/Traveller
5% are White other background
1% are Asian/Asian British: Indian
1% are Asian/Asian British: Chinese
3% are 'other' ethnic group

Consultation questions

What should the council do?

How much do you agree or disagree that Rother District Council should do each of the following when faced with financial pressure?

Streamline services so that we can deliver the same outcomes

Introduce charges for some services that are currently free or subsidised

Reduce or stop delivering some services to protect others

Encourage local people and communities to deliver certain services

Help people to help themselves more so they have less reliance on publicly funded services

Prioritise spending to protect services for the most vulnerable and those without choice

Use or partner with other organisations to provide services

Proposed council tax level

The Band D council tax for Rother District Council for this year is £193.38 and the possible increase for 2023/2024 is £5.78, which would take the charge up to £199.16. In the current financial circumstances how much do you agree or disagree that this is an appropriate amount to charge?

Proposed fees and charges

We are proposing increases in fees and charges for services we provide, except where the charges are set by the government, restricted to income recovery only or have fallen behind what other providers are charging. This is to help manage the inflationary pressures the Council is facing.

Most of the proposed increases for fees and charges are 10% in line with current inflation levels but there are some exceptions. In the current financial circumstances how much do you agree or disagree that this is an appropriate amount to increase fees and charges by?

Proposed capital spending plans

The Council's capital programme shows what we intend to spend on purchasing new assets and improving existing ones over the next five years. Over the period of our Medium Term Financial Plan we intend to invest £113m, funded by a mix of grants, capital receipts, reserves and borrowing. Please let us have any views on the capital programme proposals.