

**South Holland District Council
Budget 2023/24
Consultation Report
Published 13/02/2023**



Introduction to this consultation

1. This report details the responses received for the Budget 2022/23 consultation undertaken between 20th January 2023 and 10th February 2023.
2. The exercise was performed to seek residents' views on the Council's Budget proposals for 2023/24.

Methodology

3. A media release was issued to local newspapers to promote the consultation and social media activity was ongoing throughout the consultation period.
4. A link to the electronic questionnaire was made available on the Council's website, shared regularly via the Council's Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn pages and was covered in the local press. Paper copies of the questionnaire were available on request.
5. It should be noted that base data has been rounded to the nearest number (so may add up to between 99% and 101%). Where available this report details comparisons with the previous budget survey undertaken in 2022/23.

Response Rate

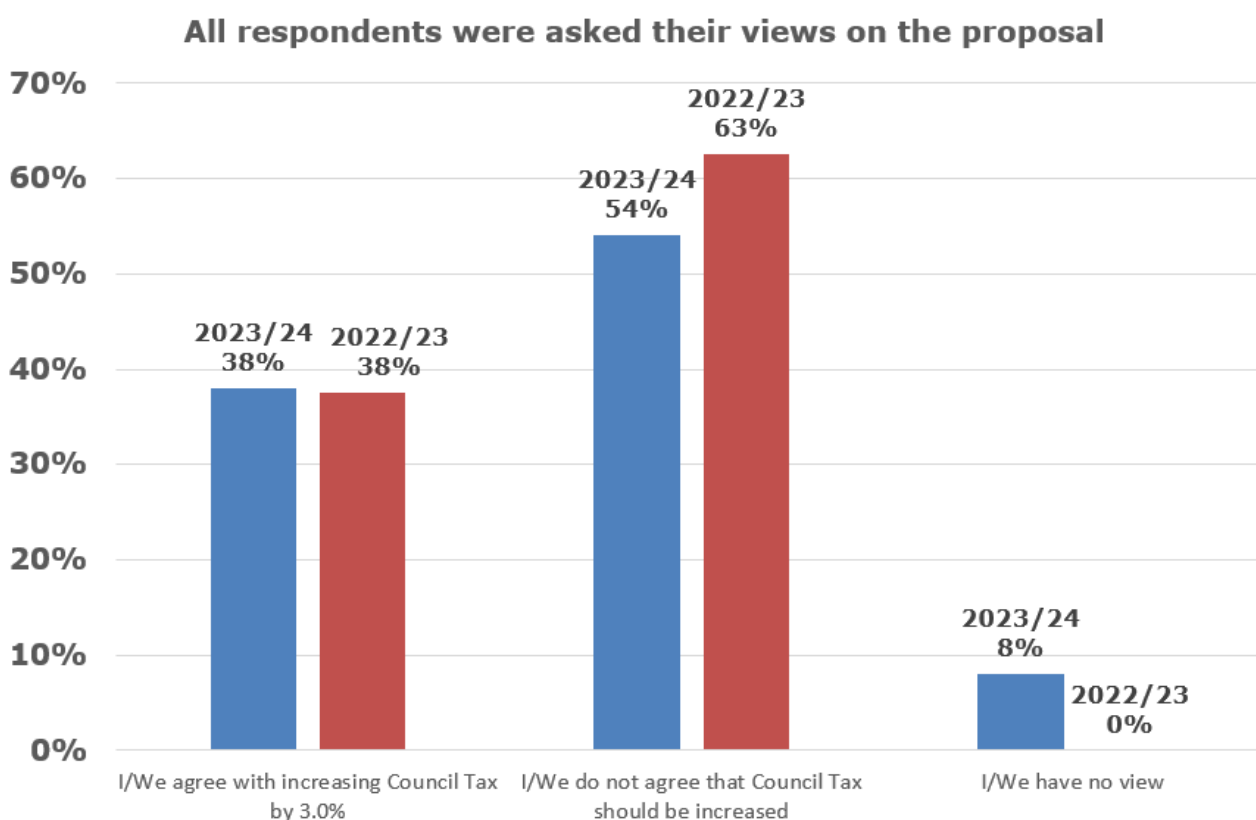
6. 13 electronic responses were received. An increase of 5 responses when compared with the previous year's budget consultation exercise undertaken in 2022/23.

Results and Analysis

7. 12 of the 13 respondents were residents, 1 respondent responded from a business/organisation.

Council Tax

8. All respondents were advised that South Holland District Council's current Council Tax levy for a Band D property was £18.96 per month (based on 10 monthly payments). The Government was allowing the Council to put its Council Tax up by a maximum of 3.0% next year (based on a Band D property). The Council was therefore proposing a £5.76 (3.0%) increase for 2023/24 – an extra 11p per week for a Band D property. A 3.0% increase was proposed for all Council Bands. All respondents were asked their views on the proposal. The comparison chart below shows that 38% of all respondents agreed with increasing Council Tax to support the delivery of local services. This is level with the consultation exercise undertaken in 2022/23 when 38% of respondents agreed with increasing Council Tax by £4.95 (2.83%).



9. Those respondents that did not agree with the proposed increase in Council Tax were asked why they did not agree. Most comments made were about the rise in Council Tax being too high and that residents would not be able to afford to pay it. Two respondents referred to the cost of living. One respondent felt that people were squeezed enough already. One respondent referred to the stagnation in their

wages and queried where the additional money would be coming from. A full list of their views is detailed below:

- Cost of living
- I'm sick of paying for other people's elderly parents/children etc in social care. If there was an option to opt out, we would do- People are squeezed enough already. How about reducing the top executives pay!!
- Cost of living
- My Wages have not increased to allow for this extra cost, where is the money supposed to come from, I'm Gedney hill, we have very little services, internet is poor, barely any phone signal, not public services, how is this increase going to benefit me where I live, you collect the rubbish, that's it, council provides nothing in this village
- We are financially struggling as it is

Cost of Living and Financial Pressures

10. All respondents were advised that in view of the cost-of-living crisis and financial pressures that both individuals and businesses are experiencing, the Council is looking to find different and innovative ways of working. All respondents were asked what changes they think the Council could implement to support this. Seven comments were made which are listed below.
- Gift Ayscoughfee Hall & Gardens to English Heritage, so we no longer have to pay for it not to be open seven days per week and that it can be properly managed like Gainsborough Old Hall. Sell and lease back the SHDC offices in Priory Road.
 - Pushing to alter the council tax regime, either through raising higher bands by more than lower bands to make the tax system more progressive, or undertaking a review of the banding of houses, as many in the lower bands will have been extended and should rightfully be in higher bands. This could be done based on the next sale of a house to slowly move properties up the scale as required. Alternatively, it could be done once building control has signed off extension work. A fairer council tax system could raise more funding locally while targeting those most able to pay. The council could also consider leveraging more money from developers to cover or offset the cost of the drainage board charges. Like with securing funding for the NHS, Local schools or Roads, the council should consider asking similar contributions to a drainage fund to help raise additional funds for the council where we, unfairly, are required to cover the costs at a local and not national level. The council could/should also consider how to maximise the benefit the town received from council run services for which it charges. This should consider more than just profit but choosing to break even to keep costs lower for residents at this challenging time.
 - Ensure every expenditure is creating value (and clearly demonstrate this), provide evidence that waste reduction never stops and ensure cost cutting is a priority. The council must look to become leaner, more efficient and where possible, amalgamate services with other councils and authorities. You're not getting any more money, so cost reduction, efficiency and waste reduction are your only options.
 - Keep the discount. Get other people to pay for their parents in care.

- SHDC must be the only council that loses money on traffic wardens. They could make a fortune just in Holbeach alone.
- The increase in price is simply to line the pay and pension pots for the people at the top, we just pay the tax and have no say
- To modernise ways of working, a wide spread fast internet connection is required everywhere, not just in large towns. Data speeds are essential to allow any innovation in delivery of services. Rolling out, and subsidising, if necessary, Fibre to The Premises internet connections for all villages of over 100 properties and working to eventually connect all properties should be a priority. Require all new build estates to provide Fibre to The Premises as a condition of planning.

11. All respondents were given the opportunity to provide any other comments; a full list of these is detailed below:

- Outsourcing is not cost-effective for delivering quality local services. Staff who are employed in the local area would provide a higher quality service, and arguably work more hours to support the development of their community. The council could also consider opportunities to expand the services it offers. The council has a wide portfolio of properties for which maintenance is required. Could the council not consider developing its own in-house facilities team, that not only covers it's estate and assets, but also is available to provide the same service to locals, generating an income and potentially covering some of the costs of supporting its own estate.
- The household support fund should be open to all who receive council tax support, not just people who the council seem to want to give it to
- I can almost walk from Spalding to Surfleet faster than I can make a video call between the two! Fibre to the premises is a must for all South Holland.