

**South Holland District Council
Budget 2024-25
Consultation Report
Published**



Introduction to this consultation

1. This report details the responses received for the Budget 2024/25 consultation undertaken between 19th January 2024 and 2nd February 2024.
2. The exercise was performed to seek residents' views on the Council's Budget proposals for 2024/25.

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 and in the e-Messenger. 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%).

Response Rate

6. 29 electronic responses were received.

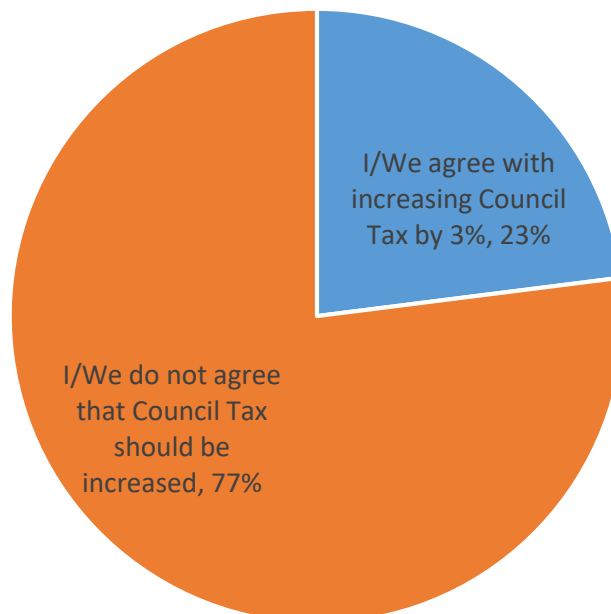
Results and Analysis

7. 97% of all respondents responding to the consultation responded as 'A resident', with the remaining 3% responding as 'Town/Parish Council.'

Council Tax

8. All respondents were advised that the Government was allowing the Council to put up its Council Tax by a maximum of 3% next year (based on a Band D property). The Council was therefore proposing a £6.03 (3%) increase for 2024/25 - an extra 12p per week for a Band D property. A 3% increase was proposed for all Council Tax Bands. All respondents were asked their views on the proposal. The chart below shows that 23% of all respondents 'agreed with increasing Council Tax by a maximum of 3%' and 77% 'did not agree'.

Please give us your views on this proposal



Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy

9. All respondents were asked if they had any comments to make in respect of the proposed Budget and associated papers. A full list of comments is included below:
- Roads are a major issue as dangerously damaged. Stop wasting money and focus on things that matter.
 - The budget settlement from the Government should be challenged. You should be fighting for a better deal, rather than just roll-over!
 - Please support the IDBs to prevent flooding. Forget or postpone capital expenditure which can wait for six months or a year. Can you justify buying a

new laptop to a working but homeless person who has nowhere to sleep because they couldn't afford to pay their rent?

- Central Government income for this area is significantly reduced. This means the council is looking at other areas to increase income, which may include business rates, market fees, parking charges etc. Meanwhile, there is concern the town centre is dying and reducing those charges would help to support bringing people back in. Cutting funding is not working and we need our MP to better represent this area and ensure a fairer share.
- Why does it have to go up the maximum amount? Any help that can be given to struggling households would be helpful. Increase by half the maximum amount and use some of the council reserves (hopefully there are some reserves!!!)
- As costs go up revenue needs to increase (council tax)
- Before we look to raise council tax figures can we review the psp contract. PSPs is run by the council and yet it has raise its contract price to the council. As an individual working on a private profit generating business this raises a lot of alarms. Could the psp contract not be reviewed first??
- Get rid of plastic bags and join the real world by having bins.
- The council should REDUCE its council tax levy. To do this it should 1. Reduce its spending and cut its services to the minimum required by law 2. Sell its assets such as the Spalding civic centre, and the Priory Road offices, and obtain a direction from the government to enable the proceeds to be used to meet the council's necessary day-to-day expenditure.
- Usual full percentage rise with no improvements to services.

10. All respondents were advised that in view of the cost-of-living crisis and financial pressures that both businesses and individuals were experiencing, the Council was looking to find different and innovative ways of working. The Council asked all respondents what changes they thought the Council could implement in order to support that. A full list of suggestions are listed below:

- If council tax is increased mp wages is cut by same %
- Make potholes a priority. Collect green recycling once a fortnight black bins weekly as at present
- Consider costs of running front line services - can these be amalgamated with other LAs not necessarily within the current partnership.
- Work more cost effectively, and collaboratively.
- The Council must have more money to spend next year. New houses are being built all the time, and no extra facilities or improvements are being made to the area. Use this extra monies to help all residents is South Holland.
- Speak to people who run and use the food banks. Ask them what would really make a difference to their quality of life.
- We need an MP that gets us a fairer deal on funding, recognising this area has been underfunded for decades.
- Rent office space for hot desking
- Look at senior management roles in the council. For example Deputy Heads of Dept are really not needed. A senior manager could stand in if needed!

This would not impact services and SAVE money to actually improve services.

- Several of my friends work for the council in council uniforms. They are employed by agencies. The agencies charge the council over double minimum wage per hour. The friends I have working for the council only take home minimum wage, they have worked the same job for the council for 5 and 8 years. If you add up how much this cost in agency fees, surely it's more cost effective to directly employ them at 10.47 an hour. Though you would be liable for holiday pay and N.I, this would still be more effective in the long run than the 20ph you pay and agency. So may be look at long term agency staff and see what savings you can make.
- Make cost savings and cuts at your offices and cut overpaid employees. Freeze your salaries. Residents should not have a forced increase, particularly as most are struggling financially.
- Review the psp's contract. Agree with the sharing of contracts as it makes complete sense but don't road prices.
- Stop building companies who on nearly every application want to reduce levy's that are approved by full council. Make companies like Ashwood Home pay the approved planning levy pay it up front into an escrow account.
- The council's administrative work should be contracted out, so there is no ongoing need for the council's offices.
- Reduce pay awards of top 10% of staff

11. All respondents were given the opportunity to provide any other comments. A full list of comments are included below:

- Benefits cut. Remove non skilled foreign people immediately. This will allow our infrastructure to recover
- Under the current cost of living crisis a freeze on council tax for one year would be a splendid gesture from shdc.
- Sick of council increasing every single year. It's pay out money the whole time with nothing to see for the increase in what residents pay.
- Consider leasing older vehicles. Forget company cars. Pay frontline staff considerably more than minimum wage. Offer higher paid staff the chance to work part time for pro rata income. Offer all jobs as job shares which particularly benefits women and those with caring responsibilities.
- People just cannot afford another rise. It's a pointless cycle. Minimum wage increase, the cost of everything increase therefore wages have to increase, this is a never ending spiral where money just eventually loses it's value.
- Stop paying councillors expenses, I don't get mileage allowance on my journey to work.
- The council, as it stands, appears to be a bottomless pit of waste and inefficiency.