

Title of Report	ADDITIONAL PAPER: BUDGET CONSULTATION REPOSONSES	
Presented by	Councillor Nicholas Rushton Corporate Portfolio Holder	
Background Papers	General Fund and Special Expenses Budget 2020-21 – Cabinet 4 February 2020	Public Report: Yes
	Housing Revenue Account Budget 2020-21 – Cabinet 4 February 2020 2020/21 – 2024/25 Capital Programme and 2020/21 Capital Strategy – Cabinet 4 February 2020	Key Decision: No
Financial Implications	None	
	Signed off by the Section 151 Officer:	
Legal Implications	None	
	Signed off by the Monitoring Officer:	
Staffing and Corporate Implications	None	
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service:	
Purpose of Report	To update Cabinet on the latest results from the budget consultation	
Reason for Decision	To enable the Council to set balanced budgets for 2020/21.	
Recommendation	THAT CABINET NOTES THE UPDATE ON THE CONSULTATION EXERCISE WHEN CONSIDERING THE 2020/21 BUDGET REPORTS	

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 As part of its meeting today, Cabinet will be considering three budget reports:

- General Fund and Special Expenses Budget Proposals for 2020/21;
- Housing Revenue Account Budget Proposals for 2020/21; and
- 2020/21 – 2024/25 Capital Programmes and 2020/21 Capital Strategy.

1.2 In each of these reports we provided an update on the consultation process. This report reproduces the consultation sections within each of those reports, with changes and additional information provided in **red text** to show where additional responses have been received. Any further responses received between this paper being circulated and the Cabinet meeting will be shared verbally.

1.3 There are no changes to the budget as a result of the consultation.

2.0 GENERAL FUND AND SPECIAL EXPENSES CONSULTATION UPDATE (ITEM 6) [Section 9 in the original report, pages 22-24]

- 2.1 The consultation on the annual budget setting for 2020/21 consisted of scrutiny by members of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee, statutory consultation and public consultation.

Corporate Scrutiny Committee

- 2.2 There was a new step in the process in the annual budget setting process for 2020/21, with a report taken to Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 7 November 2019 to seek feedback on the early budget proposals. Suggestions from members of the committee were built into the draft budget proposals presented to Cabinet on 10 December 2019.
- 2.3 The Corporate Scrutiny Committee met on 8 January 2020 to review all the proposed budgets for 2020/21. A link to the draft minutes have been included as a background paper **in the original general fund budget report**. There was no comments resulting in budget changes from the committee in this budget report.

Statutory Consultation

- 2.4 The statutory consultation on the 2020/21 budget proposals commenced on the 18 December and closed on 4 February. The statutory consultation included the Parish Council's within North West Leicestershire, Trade Unions and the Federation of Small Businesses. They were all provided with a copy of the budget reports and given the opportunity to provide feedback. At the time of writing the report, one response has been received and is included in Appendix E **in the original general fund report**. Any additional responses received will be provided to Cabinet **as a verbal update at the meeting**.

Coalville Special Expenses Working Party

- 2.5 The Coalville Special Expenses Working Party met on 17 December 2019 to review the council tax increase for Coalville Special Expenses. A link to the draft minutes have been included as a background papers on page one of this report and an extract from the minutes in relation to the increase in council tax is detailed below:

"Following a lengthy discussion regarding the recommendation to Cabinet to increase the special expenses council tax precept, members expressed concerns and were not prepared to support it. They felt strongly that an increase should not be made to fill a gap in funding and other options to increase income streams should be investigated first."

Enhanced Public Consultation

- 2.6 An online consultation commenced on 13 January and closed on 3 February. The surveys asked respondents to rate how supportive they are of budget proposals from "very supportive" to "very unsupportive", and provides an opportunity to add comments. **We also ran a large scale social media campaign to publicise the consultation which reached thousands of our followers.**
- 2.7 **We received a total of 144 responses, a full breakdown of which is attached at Appendix A to this additional paper. A summary of the responses is provided in the table below.**

Table 1: Consultation responses relating to the General Fund budget

	Supportive or very supportive	Neutral or did not answer	Unsupportive or very unsupportive	Themes from comments
On the NWLDC Council Tax Freeze	79 (55%)	26 (18%)	39 (27%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 49 residents left detailed comments on the council tax freeze. • Nine suggested they would be happy with an increase in council tax. One thought it should be reduced. • Six commented that they were happy with the freeze as long as services were not being cut.
On increasing the Special Expenses Council Tax	35 (39%)	23 (25%)	32 (36%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This question only applied to the 90 respondents that live in a special expenses area, 42 left comments. • Those that were supportive were happy for the increase, with some mentioning that it should lead to better service, with suggestions of more dog waste bins and efforts to reduce vandalism. • Those that were unsupportive commented on the fairness of different council taxes in different areas and suggested that these areas were not being maintained.
Changes to Fees and Charges	49 (34%)	71 (49%)	24 (17%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 33 respondents left comments. • 8 commented that fees for removing waste encourages fly tipping. 1 was supportive of this fee if it was invested in recycling facilities. • 3 commented that the fees for Newmarket were too high. • 2 felt a 5% increase in burial fees was too much. • 3 respondents agreed with our charging policy – to recover costs and generate a profit where possible – whilst another 3 disagreed with this approach.
Changes to day to day services	56 (39%)	54 (37%)	34 (24%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 58 Residents provided comments. • The most common comment related to development within the district, with 11 residents raising concern about the level of development and how that was compatible with our plans to reduce our carbon footprint and plant trees. • 10 residents commented on our plans to reduce our carbon footprint. 4 were negative about the idea, suggesting it was too

				<p>much and we should be looking at improving local transportation instead. 5 were positive, with suggestions that we should start with solar panels on the council building.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 commented on our plans to provide free trees and increase funding for maintaining trees. 6 were negative, citing the high cost whilst 4 were positive.
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3.0 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT CONSULTATION UPDATE (ITEM 7)

[Section 6 in the original report, pages 50-52]

3.1 Corporate Scrutiny

3.2 The Corporate Scrutiny Committee met on 8 January 2020 to review all the proposed budgets for 2020/21. A link to the draft minutes have been included as a background paper [in the original HRA report](#).

3.3 The main focus of the Committee's discussion was on the capital programme, which is [discussed in section 4 of this report](#).

3.4 On the draft HRA budget, members of the committee suggested that we should write to all tenants to ask them for their views. After carefully considering this suggestion we have concluded our already-enhanced approach to consultation this year to be satisfactory. The approach we have adopted includes:

- Gathering reviews from the Performance and Finance Working Group, who are a group of tenants that meet quarterly to review the performance and financial position of the housing service. This meeting occurred on 12 December 2019 and their views are detailed in paragraphs 6.5 to 6.8 below.
- Writing to 100 'involved residents' to ask for their views.
- A large scale social media campaign across all our social media accounts, with an online survey for people to complete. Our main accounts reach tens of thousands of people each month, and our housing specific accounts reaching between 1,000 and 8,000 each month on average. The online consultation commenced on 13 January and will close on 3 February.
- A news release to promote the budget consultation.

We will, however, look to further improve the consultation next year with an article in our quarterly magazine that is sent to all tenants in January.

3.5 Performance and Finance Working Group

3.6 The Performance and Finance Working Group is a group of tenants who meet quarterly to review the performance and financial position of the housing service. They reviewed the 2020/21 budget on 12 December 2019.

3.7 Their main feedback was that they would prefer for rents not be increased by 2.7%, which was seen to be a large jump. However, they could understand why we would increase rents after four years of 1% cuts in rent, as it would enable us to continue to invest in the service and homes we provide.

3.8 There were further comments on the HRA capital programme, which have been noted in the capital programme report that is a separate agenda item at this meeting.

3.9 Tenants and Leaseholders Forum

3.10 The tenants and leaseholders Forum (the Forum) is group of tenants and leaseholders who provide feedback on the housing service. The papers from the Performance and Finance Working Group feed into the Forum. They reviewed the proposed budget on 27 January 2020.

3.11 There was some support for the increase in rents, as long as it is reinvested into the properties. They also discussed the planned increase to HRA shop leases of 14% to bring them in line with market rents, and were content once they knew the shops were not located in the centre of Coalville.

3.12 Ongoing Consultation

3.13 The consultation will remain open until 4 February. Any additional feedback will be verbally shared with Cabinet during the meeting on 4 February 2020.

3.14 Online consultation

3.15 We have had 39 responses and 7 of these identified themselves as living within one of our properties. The survey asks respondents to rate how supportive they are to budget proposals from “very unsupportive” to “very supportive”, and provides an opportunity to add comments. Table two below gives a brief summary of the responses, with the highest number of responses highlighted in bold. It shows that so far more people are supportive of the proposed changes than are unsupportive. Appendix B on this report provides a more detailed summary report of the responses so far.

Table 2: Overview of responses to the HRA Consultation

	Supportive or very supportive	Neutral or did not answer	Unsupportive or very unsupportive	Themes from comments
On the proposed rent increase of up to 2.7%	28 (72%) amongst all respondents 3 (43%) amongst our residents	4 (10%) amongst all respondents 2 (29%) amongst our residents	7 (18%) amongst all respondents 2 (29%) amongst our residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was recognition that our rents are lower than private rents. • There were requests to ensure that the increases benefited tenants.
On planned changes to service charges	24 (62%) amongst all respondents 3 (43%) amongst our residents	11 (28%) amongst all respondents 1 (14%) amongst our residents	4 (10%) amongst all respondents 3 (43%) amongst our residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One individual did not support the rise in the older person charge. • Another was very unsupportive of the increase in grounds maintenance over concerns around the level of service they are receiving.
On planned changes to other fees and charges	18 (46%) amongst all respondents 2 (29%) amongst our residents	12 (31%) amongst all respondents 3 (43%) amongst our residents	9 (23%) amongst all respondents 2 (29%) amongst our residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 comments suggested we should be decreasing shop leases, not increasing them. • One commented that the lifeline costs should not be increased given the effect it would have on the elderly.

On changes to our planned day to day spend	22 (56%) amongst all respondents	8 (21%) amongst all respondents	9 (23%) amongst all respondents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The value for money review of the In-house repair team's delivery of the home improvement programme was considered a good idea by one respondent, but another felt the cost for it was excessive. • One tenant questioned whether it is necessary to have a support officer to work with tenants who have opted not to receive the support.
	3 (43%) amongst our residents	3 (43%) amongst our residents	1 (14%) amongst our residents	

4.0 2020/21 to 2024/25 CAPITAL PROGRAMME (ITEM 8) [Section 8 in the original report, pages 80-82]

Corporate Scrutiny

- 4.1 The Corporate Scrutiny Committee met on 8 January 2020 to review all the proposed budgets for 2020/21. A link to the draft minutes have been included as a background paper [in the original capital budget report](#).
- 4.2 The Committee discussed increasing the size of the off-street parking provision in relation to the HRA Capital Programme. Following the meeting the size of the off-street parking programme has been increased by £50,000 to £250,000 for 2020/21 in this budget. We are continuing to develop our off-street parking programme to meet the ambition of members and have recently procured a 7 year contract to deliver up to £2 million of off-street parking. Given the interest in this programme, we propose taking a dedicated report on this topic to scrutiny in quarter one of the new financial year.
- 4.3 The committee also raised a number of points linked to the need to reduce our carbon emissions. This included installing electric charging points in new off-street parking sites on council estates and changing street lights for more efficient LEDs. Officers are still looking at how best to respond to the climate emergency, and these ideas will be considered as part of that review.

Performance and Finance Working Group (HRA)

- 4.4 We have also consulted on the HRA Capital Programme with the Performance and Finance Working Group, which is a group of tenants who regularly review the financial position of the Housing Revenue Account and the associated capital programmes. Their comments are summarised below:
- They supported the focus on New Supply and noted that we should be considering how the homes are built, given the need to become carbon neutral by 2030. This is something officers are looking at as part of our work to review our carbon footprint.
 - They welcomed the regeneration pilot, but thought our larger estates would need a lot more funding to improve them. They also noted that the behaviour of individuals can adversely impact the feel of an area, so they recommended that we consider ways we can improve this as well as the physical space. We will consider these views as we develop the pilot.

Trade Unions

- 4.5 Trade Unions have been provided with a copy of the budget reports and given the opportunity to provide feedback. No comments have been received at the time of writing the report. [Any responses received will be provided to Cabinet in a verbal update at the meeting.](#)

Enhanced Public Consultation

- 4.6 An online consultation commenced on 13 January and closed on 3 February. The surveys asks respondents to rate how supportive they are to budget proposals from “very supportive” to “very unsupportive”, and provides an opportunity to add comments. We also ran a large scale social media campaign to publicise the consultation. We received **140** responses for the general fund and **37** for the housing revenue account.
- 4.7 A full list of responses are appended to the General Fund and Special Expenses Budget Proposals Report and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget Proposals on the same agenda as this report. **A summary of the responses in relation to the capital proposals is provided in the table below.**

Responses to the General Fund Capital Plans

- 4.8 Of the 140 responses received, 137 indicated that they are a resident of North West Leicestershire, 1 was an organisation operating in the district and two did not answer the question. The table below shows a summary of the responses received. The overall view of the General Fund Capital Plans is mixed with similar numbers of responses being supportive and unsupportive. The Appleby Magna Caravan Site and Leisure Centre generated a number of negative comments. The plans to demolish the Market Hall generated the most comments.

Table 3: Overview of responses to the General Fund capital plans

	Supportive or very supportive	Neutral or did not answer	Unsupportive or very unsupportive	Themes from comments
Capital Expenditure plans	52 (36%)	41 (29%)	51 (35%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 55 residents left detailed comments on our capital expenditure plans. • 17 left negative comments on the investment in Appleby Magna Caravan. • There were 11 negative comments relating to the new leisure centre and one positive one. • The plans to demolish the existing market hall generated 25 comments. Most were expressing their views on what to do with the site, with common suggestions being bars, a cinema or a train station. Using the site for housing was unpopular. Five felt we should not be demolishing the hall before we decide what to do with it. • 4 commented on the lack of investment in northern parishes, such as Castle Donington and Kegworth.

Responses to the Housing Revenue Account Capital Plans

- 4.9 **Of the 37 responses we received 7 live in one of our properties.** The table below provides a summary of the responses received, and we have reported the overall response and the response from our tenants. The overall view of the Housing Revenue Account Capital Plans is positive at the moment, with more respondents being supportive of our plans than unsupportive. The area that has least support is the estate regeneration pilot.

Table 4: Overview of responses to the Housing Revenue Account capital plans

	Supportive or very supportive	Neutral or did not answer	Unsupportive or very unsupportive	Themes from comments
On our plans to build and purchase new homes	24 (62%) amongst all respondents 5 (71%) amongst our residents	2 (5%) amongst all respondents 1 (14%) amongst our residents	13 (33%) amongst all respondents 1 (14%) amongst our residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Those supportive commented that the new properties should be of a good size and in the correct area. Those unsupportive raised concerns with the amount of development in NWL and the infrastructures ability to cope with additional houses. There was also some concern over the cost of building new homes.
On our plans to improve our existing homes	29 (74%) amongst all respondents 6 (86%) amongst our residents	4 (10%) amongst all respondents 1 (14%) amongst our residents	6 (16%) amongst all respondents 0 (0%) amongst our residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comments from those supportive of the plans suggested particular things we should look replacing, such as old double glazing. Comments from those unsupportive include suggesting that tenants should pay for this in addition to their rents
On our plans for a pilot to regenerate one of our estates	16 (41%) amongst all respondents 2 (29%) amongst our residents	11 (28%) amongst all respondents 3 (43%) amongst our residents	12 (31%) amongst all respondents 2 (29%) amongst our residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suggestions from supportive respondents include landscaping, removing alleyways and derelict buildings, planting trees and installing off street parking. Comments from those unsupportive question the cost of the pilot, the need to tackle anti-social behaviour and for community buy-in and ownership.
Other HRA Capital programme works	21 (54%) amongst all respondents 4 (57%) amongst our residents	16 (41%) amongst all respondents 3 (43%) amongst our residents	2 (5%) amongst all respondents 0 (0%) amongst our residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One respondent questioned how off street parking will be enforced.

8.13 The overall consultation will remain open until Cabinet meet on 4 February 2020 with views being sought from the public, tenants, businesses and staff. Any additional comments from these sources will be fed back to Cabinet during the meeting on 4 February 2020.