

Budget Consultation 2026/27 – Summary of Responses

Introduction

The consultation on budget proposals for 2026/27 ran from 15 January to 1 February.

- 621 people chose to respond to the survey

The survey was publicised widely:

- Dedicated web page established, with an alert on all pages of the NWLDC website. 3,206 people visited the web page
- 1 x news release resulting in four pieces of media coverage (BBC Leicester, Leicestershire Live, Ashby Nub News, Coalville Times)
- 3 x customer emails to those subscribed to receive surveys and consultations (total distribution:
 - Email 1: Opened by 28,662 people, 1,372 people clicked on the link
 - Email 2: Opened by 27,785 people, 1,171 people clicked on the link
 - Email 3: Opened by 23,981 people, 1,066 people clicked on the link
- 2 x Facebook posts
 - Post 1: Reached 2,984 people
 - Post 2: Reached 1,923 people
- Screen in the Customer Centre viewed by all visitors to the centre.

Summary of quantitative responses

Confidence in council income

- Most respondents (93%) said they are very confident or somewhat confident that they understand where the council's money comes from

Legacy Fund

- 73% of respondents either completely support or support somewhat the idea of a Legacy Fund for projects, with a further 9% saying they were neither supportive nor unsupportive
- 19% of respondents were either somewhat unsupportive or do not support the idea at all
- In relation to match funding, 54% of people stated that they either completely agree or agree somewhat that groups should match fund
- 29% stated that they did not agree at all or somewhat disagreed that groups should match fund, with a further 18% remaining neutral on the issue
- When asked whether the council should invest in long-term projects ahead of local government reorganisation, 77% of respondents either completely agreed or agreed somewhat
- 12% somewhat disagreed or did not agree at all with the idea of investing in long-term projects before a new unitary is created
- 11% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the idea

Council tax

- 48% of respondents said they completely agree or agree somewhat with the proposed council tax increase
- 41% said they somewhat disagreed or did not agree at all with the proposed increase
- 11% said they neither agreed nor disagreed

Capital investment

- 58% of respondents completely agreed or agreed somewhat with the proposed capital investment
- 27% of respondents said they somewhat disagreed or did not agree at all with the capital proposals
- A further 15% were neutral on the matter

Revenue investment

- 58% of respondents completely agreed or agreed somewhat with the proposed revenue investment
- 21% said they somewhat disagreed or did not agree at all with the revenue proposals
- A further 17% were neutral on the matter

Summary of qualitative responses

Overview

The qualitative responses from the budget survey highlight concerns about fairness, priorities, and value for money.

Many respondents wrote that the council should focus on essential services, such as street cleaning, litter, safety, and support for vulnerable people, before funding new initiatives.

Some comments mentioned clearer transparency and equitable investment across the district.

The most consistent concerns relate to car parking charges, particularly the combination of free parking in Coalville and higher charges elsewhere, which people view as unfair and harmful to local high streets.

Waste and recycling proposals also attract some criticism, with respondents questioning costs, practicality and reduced income under the new system.

Support for the council tax increase was slightly higher than opposition to it, with supporters accepting the increase is needed to protect services.

Of those who oppose the increase and chose to comment, they cite household financial pressures and the council's growing reserves as the reason for their objection.

Legacy Fund

General comments about the principle of a Legacy Fund

Of the 621 respondents who answered the question 'Do you support the idea of a Legacy Fund for community projects?', 253 chose to comment when asked 'Please provide any comments regarding your support for the Legacy Fund'.

Several themes emerged from these comments:

- 1. Essential services should be prioritised**

A major theme is that the council should prioritise core services, such as street cleaning, litter, weed removal and basic maintenance, as well as services for vulnerable people, like supported housing.

2. Scepticism towards council spending

Some comments expressed opinions of 'wasted' money on past projects e.g. Coalville regeneration and in Measham. There was some concern that the Legacy Fund could become hidden, misused or diverted during local government reorganisation, and comments were submitted suggesting that spending must be transparent, tightly monitored and audited.

3. Fairness and geographic distribution

Those respondents who live outside of Coalville expressed a desire that the legacy fund should seek to address rural villages like Castle Donington, Diseworth, Worthington and areas north of Coalville.

4. Support for community projects

There was support in the comments for community projects, so long as they really are long-lasting. There was particular support for projects that improve quality of life, support active travel, improve youth facilities, or focus on green spaces and heritage.

Specific suggested areas include:

- Cycling / walking routes (with safety improvements)
- Green and biodiversity projects
- Upgraded community buildings
- Facilities for older people
- Youth sports, recreation, and social spaces
- Heritage preservation
- Arts and cultural facilities (e.g., Century Theatre).

5. Transparency

Some respondents used comment to ask for:

- A simpler application process
- Clear assessment criteria

- Public involvement in decision-making
- Robust monitoring and safeguards against “consultant waste”, fraud or poor value for money
- Transparent long-term planning.

Comments regarding match funding of Legacy Fund

Of the 621 people who responded to the question ‘Do you agree that community groups should provide match funding for Legacy Fund projects?’, 250 people chose to provide a comment when asked ‘Please provide any comments regarding match funding for Legacy Fund projects.’

Supportive of match funding (but with comments)

Most comments show that respondents believe match funding is positive but only if the community group can afford it and the threshold is realistic.

- Some respondents wrote that match funding shows commitment and proves a group is serious about its project
- They believe it encourages community ownership of the project
- They believe it helps to stretch the Legacy Fund further, allowing more projects to benefit
- Some say a lower contribution than 50% (e.g., 25%) would be realistic
- Some think certain projects (e.g., private sports clubs) should contribute.

Not supportive or concerned about match funding

A smaller number of respondents are not supportive of match funding, with respondents believing that it could exclude those who need the fund most and may be unworkable in many communities.

- Smaller or less affluent groups will be excluded
- 50% match funding is seen as too high
- Cost-of-living pressures affecting group fundraising efforts
- Equity concerns that match funding could penalise poorer areas and may prevent projects that need most support from going ahead

- Burden on volunteers, who would have to give time and money (and time to raise money)
- Community groups already pay council tax
- Administrative difficulty with fundraising in terms of grant applications and capacity in smaller groups and

Neutral comments / suggestions

Some comments don't take a side but suggest there isn't a 'one size fits all' solution and that the Legacy Fund should consider:

- Flexibility depending on the project
- Means testing
- Consideration of deprivation levels
- Assessment of project impact
- Allowing exceptions where groups cannot realistically contribute
- Recognising volunteer time as an in-kind contribution.

Ideas for Legacy Fund

When asked 'What types of projects would you like to see funded through the Legacy Fund?' 381 people chose to comment.

The top ten ideas for Legacy Fund projects are as follows (some of which are not directly in the district council's remit):

1. Improve walking and cycling routes (safe, offroad, joined-up)
Safe crossings, off road trails, better maintained paths
2. More youth clubs and spaces for teenagers
Especially in Coalville, Ashby, Castle Donington and rural villages
3. Community buildings / halls / hubs
New or upgraded buildings for meetings, social groups, warm spaces, classes, heritage groups etc.
4. Repair and upgrade parks and playgrounds
Better equipment, safer play areas, more green spaces, all-weather

surfacing. Maintenance of existing facilities

5. Enhanced leisure facilities
e.g. indoor bowls, leisure facility in the north of the district, better timetables and accessibility at existing leisure centres
6. Environment and nature projects
Tree planting, green corridors, biodiversity recovery, habitat restoration
7. Safe walking routes
Particularly where footpaths have been cut by roads
8. Children's activities
SEN, after-school clubs, toddler groups, safe indoor and outdoor spaces
9. Mental health and wellbeing support
For adults, men, carers, young people, to table loneliness
10. Improve community cleanliness
Bins, litter, village / town clean-up programmes

Other ideas included:

- Regenerating derelict or disused buildings for community use
- Support for local sports clubs
- Better roads, safety improvements, pothole repairs
- Improved public transport links
- Community events and festivals
- Projects supporting elderly residents
- Improved local retail areas and town centre appearance
- Creating larger strategic green spaces
- Heritage preservation and cultural projects
- Support for small local businesses.

Comments about creation of a Legacy Fund in relation to local government reorganisation

Support for spending money allocated to the Legacy Fund now

Most respondents to this question support investing or committing the Legacy Fund now, before the 2028 move to a unitary council, driven by a fear that North West Leicestershire will lose funding, influence and local focus after reorganisation.

These respondents want to guarantee the investment stays local and make sure that long-term projects are underway before structural change happens.

There is concern amongst some respondents that funds will 'disappear' into a bigger pot, that local needs will be diluted by regional priorities and that North West Leicestershire will be deprioritised in favour of larger or wealthier areas such as Loughborough, Melton or Rutland.

Concern about spending money allocated to the Legacy Fund now

A smaller minority of respondents believe this money should only be spent once the council has clarity on the future structure post-reorganisation, believing that spending before reorganisation could lead to waste or unsustainable projects.

These people believe that uncertainty about local authority structures makes long-term commitments risky and that projects may later be stopped when the new authorities take over.

Common themes across all comments

Almost all comments emphasised the need for projects to be robust, long-term and sustainable, with broad benefits for the community.

There is general concern around local government reorganisation in terms of losing local control, identity and representation, and a worry that decisions will favour more politically influential areas.

A large number of comments seek assurance that money allocated to North West Leicestershire is spent within the district and that any projects should have accountability beyond 2028.

Council tax increase

General comments about the proposed council tax increase

The majority (48%) of respondents to this question are in support of the proposed council tax rise.

These respondents believe the rise is small, reasonable or in line with inflation, and understand that councils face rising costs like everyone else.

There was a smaller, but clear, group of respondents who oppose the increase, primarily due to household financial pressures, concerns about the cost of living and the large reserves the council has.

Alternative income suggestions

When asked 'If you disagree [with the proposed council tax increase], what alternative would you suggest to increase our ongoing income to maintain essential services?', 213 respondents chose to comment.

Most respondents to this question believe the council should find alternative income by improving efficiency, cutting waste and using existing resources, rather than increasing council tax.

The most common alternative suggestions were:

- Cut waste, inefficiency and unnecessary projects
- Use reserves, higher Government grant and the Legacy Fund
- Generate income from council assets and commercial activity
- Grow the local economy to increase business rates
- Use targeted fees and enforcement instead of blanket tax rises.

There is a recurring theme in the comments, with respondents believing residents already pay enough.

A majority of respondents believe that a small increase is reasonable, as inflation makes rises unavoidable, but services must be maintained

However, a number of comments add that the council must prove value for money, that improvements must be visible and spending should be better targeted, with protection crucial for vulnerable households.

Capital investment

General comments on proposed capital investment

Of the 621 overall survey respondents, 221 chose to provide comments ‘regarding our proposals to invest in one-off capital money in existing services’.

From these comments, a series of themed emerged.

Of all the proposals, CCTV has the most support and the mobile sign has the least. Pay-and-display replacement is seen as unjustified by some who chose to comment.

Respondents to this question believe the following things should be prioritised:

- Roads and potholes (not a district council service, but this comment appears a lot in our survey)
- Town centres supported
- Parking made fair and accessible
- Litter and fly-tipping properly enforced, not monitored
- Clear evidence that any capital investment has real community benefit

Objections to proposed capital investment

234 people responded to the question ‘Are there any proposed capital investments listed above that you do not agree with? Please state which.’

Respondents disagreed with the following (ranked most frequently mentioned to least frequently mentioned).

1. Pay and display machine replacement
2. Mobile environmental sign
3. Noise monitoring equipment
4. CCTV upgrades
5. Legacy Fund spending
6. Reserves / business rates reserve use.

Reasons for objections to proposed capital investment

211 respondents chose to provide detail on the reasons they objected to the proposed capital spending.

Many respondents describe the proposals - especially the mobile environmental sign, noise monitoring equipment, and pay and display machine replacement - as a 'waste of money'.

This question also generated comments about spending that should benefit the whole district, with many respondents expressing frustration that spending is concentrated in Coalville and a lack of comparable investment in Ashby, Castle Donington, Kegworth and rural areas.

The most frequently cited objection across all categories was opposition to pay-and-display machine replacement, with respondents stating:

- Existing machines are fine
- £40,000 cost seen as excessive
- Fears about app-only, card-only or smart phone-dependent machines (exclusion of older people, digital exclusion)
- Parking charges seen as harming local high streets
- Calls for free parking instead
- Frustration that Coalville has free parking while Ashby does not

When describing opposition to investment in the mobile environmental signs, reasons include:

- Seen as ineffective i.e. litterers won't change their behaviour
- Signs are unattractive
- Many people have not seen the existing signs
- Cheaper alternatives exist (social media, static signage, education)

A lot of comments in this section related to services residents believe should be prioritised that are outside the remit of the district council, namely:

- Road repairs and potholes
- Flooding and drainage
- Public services like healthcare, schools, social care
- Youth facilities
- Policing and enforcement.

Priorities for capital investment

We asked survey respondents 'If you believe other areas should be our top priority for investment (please specify)'. 618 people chose to provide a comment in response to this question.

Ranked in order, according to frequency of mentions, respondent's top alternative priorities for investment were:

1. Waste, recycling system improvements and better collections
2. Street cleaning, litter removal and fly-tipping prevention
3. Parking (free parking, fair charges, more spaces, enforcement)
4. Community safety, crime reduction and CCTV
5. Parks, open spaces, green areas and environmental protection
6. Town centre regeneration (especially Coalville and Ashby)
7. Social housing, homelessness support and quality of council housing
8. More enforcement officers (parking, ASB, environmental offences)
9. Leisure facilities, sports pitches and community recreation spaces, parks and children's play equipment.

A number of things received a high level of support for investment, but lie outside of the district council's remit:

- Roads, potholes and general highway maintenance
- Youth services, youth clubs and activities for young people
- Public transport improvements (buses, rail links, school transport)
- Social care and health-related investment
- Traffic calming, speed cameras and safer roads
- Better street lighting for safety and visibility
- Flooding and drainage improvements
- Investment in local shops, high streets and support for small businesses

Revenue investment

General comments on proposed revenue investment

Of the 621 overall survey respondents, 179 chose to provide comments 'regarding our proposals to invest in revenue money in existing services'.

From these comments, a series of themed emerged.

Car parking charges

The strongest objections were to car parking charge increases, with respondents overwhelmingly opposed to any increases. There are strong calls for free or low-cost parking, or at minimum harmonised charges across the district.

Key concerns include:

- Damage to high street footfall
- Coalville receiving free two hours- parking while Ashby and other towns face increases is seen as unfair and unequal
- Many say people will simply go to Swadlincote or Fosse Park, where parking is free
- Respondents believe increased charges will lead to more on-street parking, causing congestion and safety issues

Inconsistency of investment

Another theme coming through in this question is widespread frustration about perceived unfairness towards Ashby and other towns, with many respondents believing that NWLDC favours Coalville, especially regarding free parking, facilities and investment.

Waste and recycling

Investment in waste and recycling proposals cause mixed reactions

Some respondents question or oppose the waste-related investment proposals, with key objections being:

- Investment in existing refuse lorries ahead of them being replaced next year
- Moving to mixed recycling when it reduces income / recycling quality
- Concerns about recycling boxes blowing away and littering streets.

Objections to proposed revenue investment

We asked survey respondents whether there were any proposed revenue investments listed above that they did not agree with. 178 respondents chose to provide an answer to this question.

Respondents disagreed with the following (ranked most frequently mentioned to least frequently mentioned).

1. Parking charge increases district-wide
2. Coalville free parking (due to unequal treatment across the district)
3. Waste and recycling (investment in bin lorries and containers)
4. Public toilet redecoration
5. Burial fee increases.

Reasons for objections to proposed revenue investment

155 respondents chose to provide detail on the reasons they objected to the proposed revenue spending.

Car parking charges

In relation to car parking charges, which was the main investment people objected to, the following reasons were given:

- Reduce footfall in Ashby and other towns and not being equitable with Coalville
- Drive shoppers to free-parking alternatives (Fosse Park, supermarkets, Swadlincote)
- Damage local businesses and the high street
- Encourage dangerous or inconsiderate parking in residential streets
- Penalise workers on low incomes who must drive.

Waste and recycling

When considering investment in waste and recycling, respondents didn't think that £175,000 spent on repairing bin lorries that will be replaced soon was justified, and had financial concerns about losing recycling income under a mixed recycling system.

Public toilets

Some respondents queried the investment in public toilets, not believing that this should be a priority and thinking that the same could be achieved for less money.

Final comments

We gave respondents the chance to provide any additional comments in a free text box at the end of the survey.

The topics most mentioned by the 156 respondents to this question are as follows:

1. Car parking policy (charges, fairness, free parking in Coalville)
2. Fairness across towns (Ashby, Castle Donington, villages vs Coalville)
3. Waste and recycling services (new bins, purple bags, costs, income loss)
4. Council tax increases (opposition, reliance on reserves, value for money)
5. Community safety (CCTV, ASB, police presence, lighting)

The two strongest themes coming through in this question, and in the rest of the survey are

1. Frustration about car parking charges
A major theme is objection to free parking in Coalville and higher charges elsewhere, which is seen as unfair, harmful to Ashby, and damaging to local businesses. Some support Coalville's free parking, but most call for consistency.
2. Calls for greater fairness across the district
Calls for investment outside of Coalville.