



Kettering
TOWN COUNCIL

Community • Environment • Heritage

KETTERING TOWN COUNCIL

REPORT FOR DECISION

Item No:- 23/063

Committee:-	Council
Date:-	13 th December 2023
Author:-	Martin Hammond, Town clerk
Report Title:-	Results of Budget Consultation
Wards Affected:-	All

1. Purpose of Report

To report on the results of the budget consultation for next year's budget and seek Council's advice about any changes they wish to make to the budget as a consequence.

2. Recommendation

Instructions are requested on any changes to the budget as a result of the consultation.

3. Information - Background

- 3.1. The consultation on the 24-25 budget ran from 28th October to the 4th December and comprised:-
- An online consultation document and questionnaire, supported by regular social media posts to advertise its existence
 - The Town Meeting of 15th November
 - Two half day drop in sessions in the Newlands Centre on November 17th and 18th

3.2. A total of 149 people made written or verbal comments and these are set out in summary form in section 4 below. The actual responses are set out here:- <https://www.ketteringtowncouncil.gov.uk/uploads/consultation-comments-202425.pdf?v=1701782628>

4. Consultation Responses

4.1. A series of questions were posed through the consultation material. Learning from last year's consultation, this was a shorter questionnaire, asking for views on new items of expenditure and for whether the council should continue existing services and activities. Respondents were free to comment on any aspect of public services in Kettering and a wide range of remarks were collected about NNC services, and about bus services, policing and other matters, which will be communicated where appropriate to the relevant agency.

4.2. A total of 43 written responses were received and these are summarised below. A further 100+ interactions took place at the Newlands Centre with local people and there was a discussion at the Town Meeting which focused on the running event and inter schools sporting events, events in general, whether speed devices were effective, and how to improve footfall in the town centre, for example with free wi-fi. The minutes of the Town Meeting are elsewhere on this agenda.

4.3. There were interactions with 106 people at the Newlands Centre, some of which produced written response detailed below. 72 of those on the Friday and 34 on the Saturday.

4.4. Question 1 – is the proposed increase in Council Tax reasonable?

Written responses		Verbal responses	
Yes	No	Yes	No
11	12	6	3

Clearly, only 23 of 43 written responses addressed this question, but the responses were evenly divided.

Several of the “no” answers provided an explanation for their position

- Four felt that there should be no further spending until the library, art gallery and wider Cornerstone Project had been sorted out and the library was open again
- Three felt that an increase was inappropriate with the cost of living crises
- Several more felt that some of the proposed items of expenditure should be removed
 - o The running event 2

- Speed devices 3

Those who provided commentary when answering yes, were concerned to support the town centre, left behind areas, and the local economy.

4.5. Question 2 – what new or continuing services do you support?

Item - new service areas	Written responses	Verbal responses	Total	Opposed (both written and verbal)
Running event	13	2	15	3
Cultural events	17	1	18	1
Play area improvements	23	3	26	1
Flowers and hanging baskets	21	12	34	2
Neighbourhood Plan	18	1	19	1
Speed devices	14	2	16	6

Item - continuing service areas	Support
Events	19
Markets	20
Grants and Town lottery	14
Infrastructure investment	12
Toilets	21
Support to local Charities	24
Town Meetings	7

Respondents elaborated on their choices in the free text boxes on the questionnaire and in person. There was a widespread support for events, markets, allotments, planting schemes in the town centre, and toilets. Particular comments included:-

- The need for a neighbourhood plan to cover Field St and Bayes St area
- To stop using companies to manage food events in town
- The need for an indoor market
- The need for an information hub in the town (two people)
- The importance of investing in left behind areas or with more diverse groups (four responses)
- The need to support new and existing community groups
- That the Council should support Kettfest
- The feeling that it was not safe to walk around town
- Involving schools in the bands in park
- The Council should help support food banks

There was a proposal that the running event should be widened to become more of a wider sporting occasion, involving schools and other sporting clubs.

One response provided some local (North Northamptonshire wide) market research which had been conducted on behalf of a local organisation amongst community groups and in places of worship, which highlighted the demand for more events which reached a wider audience, both geographically and by community group, particularly in terms of a multi-cultural festival. This drew on about 85 responses.

More generally, there were a large number of comments about local services, most of which of course are the remit of NNC, and on the overall condition of the town centre, as well as people seeking help on particular issues. These are summarised below

Economy

- Unhappiness with quality of shopping offer in Kettering 5
- Need for free parking 2
- Poor quality and poor frequency bus services, including inter town services 7
- Energy park planning application – opposition to it 1

NNC services

- Library and art gallery closure 15
- Housing repairs problems not being addressed 4
- Homelessness cases not being resolved 2
- Road sweeping needed Neale Avenue and Rockingham Rd park area 1
- Street lighting – Rockingham Rd 1

Street scene

- Need for more tree pruning of highway trees – Neale Ave and St Francis Ave 2
- Potholes 2

- General state of town centre	4
- Dog mess	1
- Drains and gulley cleansing	2
- Litter, rubbish and bins in street – Regent St	1
- Overgrown bushes and hedges - Highfields and footpath over railway	2
- Mill Rd playground litter bin needs emptying	1
- E-scooter nuisance	1

4.6. Question 3 – demand for speed devices and potential locations

There was divided opinion on the value of speed devices, with some people feeling there were not effective. Two people proposed replacing them with speed cameras and generating income from motoring transgressions. One person advocated more 20pmh speed limits. The following locations for new speed devices were suggested:-

- Windmill Ave
- Mill Rd
- St Mary's Rd
- Northfield Ave
- Gipsy Lane
- Kingsley Ave
- "outside all schools " – 2 people

5. Finance, Legal and Resource Implications

The costs of the consultation were minimal and largely for materials produced for the drop in sessions. The Newlands Centre provided their space at no charge.

6. Climate Change implications

The Council's budget and corporate plan incorporate climate change implications as relevant to each area of activity.

7. Policy Implications

The Corporate plan is the policy framework for the Council and it and the budget should mirror each other.

Background Papers

Consultation responses online and on paper
Notes of verbal comments made at Newlands Centre Drop in
Minutes of Town meeting 15th November 2023



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