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KETTERING TOWN COUNCIL

REPORT FOR DECISION

Item No:- 22/066

Committee:-	Council
Date:-	14 th December 2022
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 years 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 23-24 budget ran from 27th October to the 6th December and comprised:-

- An online consultation document and questionnaire, supported by regular social media posts to advertise its existence
- The Town Meeting of 16th November, devoted to this subject matter
- Two half day consultation events – drop in sessions – at a shop unit in the Newlands Centre on 17th and 22nd November
- A half day consultation event at the Grange Shops on 6th December as part of their Christmas fair



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3.2. In addition, some members took the opportunity to talk to other groups they were engaged with during the period about the Council's budget and priorities.

3.3. The consultation sought views about the corporate plan as well as the detail of the budget.

3.4. A total of 59 people made written or verbal comments and these are set out in summary form in section 4 below. Some respondents put a great deal of time into answering most questions. The actual responses are set out here:- [Consultation responses by question 2023-4.pdf \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

4. Consultation Responses

4.1. A series of questions was posed under the following headings and respondents were free to chose which to answer or comment upon, as well as raise other issues

- The Corporate Plan
- Budget and Precept
- Public Toilets
- Grants
- Community Resilience
- Town Lottery
- Events
- Local Facilities
- General market
- Trees and bio-diversity
- Allotments

4.2. **The Corporate Plan** 25 people made comments on these questions – some of the answers related to NNC services, but the specific KTC related comments which were made included

- The council needed to diversify its income and find better income generation opportunities, including increasing charges
- There should be more focus on regeneration of the town centre, including providing a town centre wide public internet, filling more empty shop units and developing an indoor market There should be more and bigger events throughout town.
- There should be more effort on promoting sustainable housing and transport
- The section on rewilding and environmental targets was currently weak.
- The Council should consider setting up a Youth Council and engaging more with schools and young people
- There is insufficient attention paid to arts, theatre and culture
- The Council should focus more of its resources on the most vulnerable, and especially in relation to mental health

4.3. **Budget and precept** 25 comments were received. 13 of those thought the amount in the budget was about right, but with some doubts expressed, and two who felt the budget should be reduced or picked up entirely by NNC. Two people felt that the Council shouldn't be picking up services that NNC were shedding, whilst one thought the opposite. One person proposed that the Council employ a fund raiser for itself and other organisations, and a small number (3) questioned whether the Council had the right staffing structure to reflect its priorities. More people thought the headings in the budget were right compared to those that didn't but this was small numbers, and there were some concerns about affordability for some on low incomes. .

4.4. **Public toilets.** The 41 responses were sharply divided between those who would welcome new public toilets (27) and those who thought the expenditure would be wasted when it could be spent on better things (14). Those opposed (and some in support) to the toilets were concerned about vandalism, drug misuse on the premises, overall maintenance and appearance and several commented that there were already good facilities elsewhere in town. Three people suggested alternative locations. Those in favour thought it would benefit disabled and elderly people and those with young children. Two suggested a Changing Places standards toilet.

4.5. **Grants** 26 responses. Most people felt that the grants fund was sufficient, but had views on priorities for it. Outcomes for the grants provision included

- Services benefiting children and young people
- Arts and nurturing local talent
- Walking and cycling
- Supporting vulnerable people and providing warm spaces, supporting mental health outcomes, preventing homelessness,

There were two opposing views on the ward initiatives fund. Two people were concerned (incorrectly) that religious groups were getting money for their own benefit. One person suggested a large increase in the grants pot and asking the wider community what their priorities would be. Several advocated clearer accountability for the groups receiving money for how they used it.

4.6. **Community Resilience** 25 responses. There was an even mix of responses here between those who thought the money should be focused on specific localities and those who thought the money should be spread widely across the whole town, focusing on the "right" people rather than the "right" places. Several mentioned mental health and children as a priority and one on the need to tackle anti-social behaviour. Four mentioned the need to support food banks, warm spaces and support vulnerable people most. A few respondents felt there would be merit in combining the community resilience fund and the general grants fund. Other groups referenced were young offenders, asylum seekers. Job creation and supporting volunteering were also proposed as positive interventions.

4.7. Town Lottery 23 responses Most respondents were unaware of it, so suggested wider promotional work. Four were opposed to it on principle. There were a scatter of suggestions about how the proceeds could be used, such as on the environment, community facilities, older people, children and health and wellbeing as well as support for the existing priorities.

4.8. Events 36 responses overall

- a) Christmas lights and switch on event – 28 responses, divided between those thought we should not spend money on them and those that did (approx. 65% in favour) . A number of supporters were still surprised by the cost of the lights as included in the budget and a good number suggested not using a celebrity in future. A number of people proposed securing sponsorship as a way of meeting the costs.
- b) Xmas events 30 responses – most people wanted a mix of choirs, bands, traditional events, fairs and markets.
- c) Kettering by the Sea - 34 responses – 22 in favour and 11 against; with a number expressing surprise at the cost.
- d) Bands in the park. 25 respondents This was universally popular with respondents, with most supporting more variety and a few more locations, or widening the offer to include food and other activities.
- e) Other events – 28 responses. A number of suggestions, including that of Literary Festival in 2024 from the Civic Society, with most people focusing on live music, street food Saturdays, markets, fair and fetes. One comment was to widen out events to appeal to a wider age range. Several mentioned events for young people and 1 asked for an ice rink.
- f) Coronation weekend 15 responses- a variety of ideas put forward which will be shared with market and events committee Five people were against such a celebration.
- g) Venues and other locations 27 responses – Thirteen people proposed events at Wicksteed Park; other locations were the Lighthouse theatre, the Pleasure Park, the Yards, other town centre venues including the Royal Hotel, the Arts Centre, Johnny’s Happy place, whilst two people thought that all events should take place in the town centre.

4.9. Local Facilities 24 responses – there was support for more of what the Council is already doing – recycling bins, defibrillators, bleed kits; some opposition to the idea of a digital notice board and other comments were made about a lack of sporting and arts facilities, and the condition of some spaces in town, including alleyways and the appearance of empty shop units. Mention was made by two people of needing more cycle facilities.

4.10. General market 27 responses – almost everyone supported fostering the market and growing it, and a significant number proposed relocation to the market place or creating an

indoor market. For most respondents, a good market had lots of variety, small traders and supporting activities, and was easily accessible and well promoted.

4.11. **Trees and bio-diversity** – 20 responses – there were a good proportion of respondents who thought the emphasis should be on rewilding areas, creating new habitats or protected environments for species. Where tree planting was advocated it came with the rider that the newly planted trees had to be properly looked after. One person criticised the total amount available in the budget.

4.12 **Allotments** -29 responses. There was broad support for more allotments in the Hanwood Park development, and allotment provision has been referenced in their recent outline planning application. Whilst there was support for more allotment space throughout the rest of the town, there was some concern about costs, and making them self funding. One mention was made of the need to invest in existing allotment sites as a priority, rather than creating more sites.

4. Finance, Legal and Resource Implications

4.11. The costs of the consultation were largely materials produced for the drop in sessions and amounted to £203 in total.

5. Policy Implications

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

Background Papers

Consultation responses
