

BUDGET ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

This Appendix provides details of the budget engagement events which have taken place in January 2023.

Statements on Budget Proposals for 2023/24 from Overview and Scrutiny Committees

The following statements have been received from Scrutiny Committee meetings which have taken place during January 2023:

Adults and Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee – 11 January 2023

The Adults and Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee has made the following comments:

- (1) The Committee supports the proposals for the Adult Care and Community Wellbeing budget for 2022/23, and the Committee acknowledges the pressures on the budget such as inflation and increases in demand for services, as well as the risks. The Committee welcomes the contribution to budget reductions by the improvement and development programme, whose extensive scope has included improvements to the financial assessment process for clients.
- (2) The Committee welcomes the continuing emphasis on preventative services and initiatives, which have the potential to improve the outcomes for people. Reducing demand for other services in turn leads to savings for both Lincolnshire County Council and the public sector overall. For example, effective substance misuse services can lead to reduced demand on the NHS and the criminal justice system, realising benefits over the longer term.
- (3) The Committee welcomes comparative financial and performance measures, which enable comparisons to be made with other local authorities. These comparisons generally show that Lincolnshire County Council provides good value in its adult social care and public health services.
- (4) The Committee has suggested that in the light of further anticipated constraints on public expenditure, expected in two years' time, consideration be given to developing a mechanism for valuing the benefits of the services provided. This could take the form of evaluating costs per head; and how expenditure on one service might lead to savings in another. This would assist the Council if difficult decisions were to be required on the levels of future services, although several services are statutory, and discretion in these areas would be limited.
- (5) The Committee would like to promote the concept of self-help and self-responsibility, so that people have the knowledge to make informed choices about their own health and lifestyle, so as to lessen the demand on services overall.

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee – 13 January 2023

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee unanimously supported the budget proposals for Children's Services for 2023/24.

The Committee explored the risks facing Children's Services which could have an impact on the budget proposals. The following areas of high risk were identified:

1. Children in Care – this was a key financial risk due to the increasing number of children in care, complexity, type and cost of placements, and rising demand which was difficult to predict. The number of children in care was expected to continue to increase due to population growth and migration into Lincolnshire through the national transfer scheme. Assumptions had been built into the 2023/24 budget based on trends over the last year, both locally and nationally, which was why a cost pressure of £1.404m had been identified. There were several strands of proactive work being undertaken to support families and prevent children needing to come into care, such as the Early Help offer and edge of care support. Placement planning was reviewed weekly to consider any options for reducing the number of high-cost external placements. In addition, there was the ongoing children in care transformation work to address these pressures, which included two new children's homes due to be opened in 2023.
2. Social Work Workforce – the challenge of recruiting and retaining social workers presented a financial risk due to the use of agency workers to cover any staffing shortages, which were a lot more expensive than social workers. To address this challenge, there were now additional social care apprenticeships being offered and an uplift in pay for social workers in frontline teams was being provided to prevent staff from being attracted to agency work wherever possible. A number of the social care apprentices had come from other teams in Children's Services such as Early Help, which were easier to recruit to. These measures were starting to stabilise the social work workforce.
3. Inflation – the increase in costs due to inflationary pressures was also identified as a financial risk. Some of these inflationary costs were beginning to normalise but would continue to require close monitoring. Workforce costs were significant, and inflation and the staff pay award were being built into the budget. As the majority of services were delivered in-house, the Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan had already built-in staff pay assumptions. In addition, there was a range of commissioned activities for Children's Services which impact on the Council's budget. Contractual inflationary costs for these commissioned services had also been built into the budget proposals in line with the Council wide recommendations. Work however was ongoing with partners to monitor the situation through contract meetings to ensure they remain financially sustainable.

In relation to the financial and inflationary challenges facing Local Authority maintained schools, the Government's Energy Bill Relief Scheme was providing support to schools with rising energy costs, but the energy cap changes from the end of March 2023 would create additional costs for schools. The Government has however responded to this change by providing additional funding to schools to spend on energy efficiency upgrades to help save on energy bills going forward. Schools were also having to manage increased staff costs and overcome the challenge of teacher recruitment. There were currently around ten maintained schools in Lincolnshire which were experiencing a budget deficit. The Council would work with these individual schools to set a budget recovery plan. As the Local Authority was not allowed to fund overspends in maintained schools, there would be no financial risk to the Council. The Autumn 2022 statement announced a further £2bn increase in schools funding in each of 2023/24 and 2024/25 to respond to

increasing costs faced by schools, particularly through staff pay awards and utilities, which was welcomed.

4. National Funding Formula - the policy decision to continue adopting the national funding formula for mainstream schools was currently being assessed for affordability. The Local Authority has to set an affordable schools formula and the Local Authority would continue to adopt the same principles as in prior years ensuring fairness in approach was applied. An Executive Councillor decision would be taken on the affordability steps. The funding formula would be published by the 28 February 2023 deadline.

The Committee also made the following comments:

- The Committee was concerned with the loss of the Local Authorities School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant and what impact this would have on supporting schools judged as inadequate or requiring improvement. The Committee was pleased to hear that maintained schools had supported the Council to repurpose the de-delegated budgets for maintained schools to maintain the provision for school improvement. The de-delegation budget would usually be used to provide other school improvement services to schools, such as an interim headteacher service, but those services had been used less over recent years due to more stability in the school sector.
- The Committee was pleased to hear that the Council was receiving additional grant funding from the Department for Education to enable Children's Services to provide support to other Local Authorities, such as North East Lincolnshire Council. This funding was separate to the budget proposals for Children's Services and was reviewed every three months. The current funding was agreed until the end of March 2023 and work was ongoing to assess what further support would be required for the six-month period post March 2023.

Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee – 17 January 2023

The Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee has made the following comments:

- (1) The Committee supports the proposals for the Environment and Economy Services budget for 2022/23, and the Committee acknowledges the pressures on the budget such as inflation and increases in demand for services, as well as the risks.
- (2) In relation to the £735,000 saving on the Waste Contract (relevant to the roll out of paper and card recycling scheme), the Committee enquired what the impact was for District Councils that implemented the scheme. Officers explained that financial gains from the twin stream (paper and card separate collection) were not shared with DCs and added that LCC bore the sole risks for the scheme. It was clarified that LCC paid for the bins and supported DC staff with a team of employees who delivered the project, whilst enduring ongoing risks of paper prices dropping following a high of the past 12 months. Prior to the project commencing District Councils were offered the opportunities to share in the costs and benefits but they declined. Income generated by the project was put back into an improved engagement programme that included school visits and talking to residents with the overall objective of improving.
- (3) The Committee acknowledged the enormously important value of broadband provision across the whole of the County. In relation to inclusion of the £5.5m for the provision of super-fast broadband in future years, Members requested more information on what that included.

Officers explained that the overall budget for the programme had not been increased and the inclusion of this figure was due to phasing. The programme has already provided 96% of properties in Lincolnshire with super-fast broadband; this triggered a performance bonus that was agreed with the contractor (BT) in 2012 and which would be used to fill gaps in provision and in increasing broadband speeds. There was an ongoing process whereby the Government was expected (within the course of the next 9 months) to identify what gaps they were covering, following which there will be a decision on which elements the remainder of the funds would be allocated to.

Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee – 23 January 2023

On 23 January 2023, the Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee considered a report in relation to the Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals for 2023-24 and supported the Recommendations set out in the report to the Executive.

The following points were highlighted:

- In relation to the increased funding allocation for the North Hykeham Relief Road, Members sought assurance that despite funding pressures, the NHRR was still being delivered as a dual carriage way bypass. Officers explained the increase of funding in further detail and gave assurance that the NHRR was still planned to be delivered as expected, adding that the next key milestone was in September 2023 (Executive and Planning). Further, in relation to cost increases, Officers clarified that costs are bound by contract frameworks and changes in terms of repricing were being considered by the Executive for a key decision prior to contractual agreements being signed with contractors. Increases in figures emerged due to inflation, and price increases within the construction market which were outside LCC's control.
- Members pointed out that delays in the delivery of schemes may incur increased costs owing to inflation and other cost rises. Assurance was sought that LCC was not delaying the construction and delivery of planned schemes and projects. Officers explained that projects required a design process, which included the capture of data, ground investigations, geophysical surveys etc. Following the design process the procurement and delivery mechanisms commenced. Successful contractors are incentivised to expedite delivery to avoid unnecessary spending.
- In reference to point 1.27 of the report, Members enquired what the likely spend pattern entailed and asked for some tangible examples where rephasing was considered. In terms of re-phased project budgets, Officers clarified that budgets for some projects (e.g., Spalding Western Relief Road Section 1, were being put back to future years to allow the capital allocated to that to be re allocated towards increases in other areas such as the Grantham Southern Relief Road.
- Impact of decline in the price of diesel on budgets and whether that was considered already was queried by Members. Officers explained that in regard to passenger transport the impact of the price fall depended on the particular contract model in place and the indices that were built in around fuel; which is currently being reviewed. Overall the price decrease was anticipated to have a positive long-term effect if it continued. Officers emphasised that fuel prices were not the sole driver of cost increases in the market, with other pressures including wage rates, driver shortages and vehicle shortages.
- Members raised questions around whether future plans included the improvement of other highways in the region (e.g., Hykeham Roundabout and Skellingthorpe Roundabout) and were informed that those raised in particular by Members came under National Highways and therefore

fell under the National Highways' decisions on network expansions; nevertheless, Officers gave assurance that they actively canvassed for opportunities.

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board – 26 January 2023

On 26 January 2023, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board supported the Council Budget proposals for 2023/24 as set out in the report to the Executive on 4 January 2023. Three councillors abstained.

The Board acknowledged that the Council was facing difficult financial decisions for 2023/24 and beyond, but recognised that additional funding was required to enable the Council to continue providing the same level of services to residents. Several members of the Board supported the proposal for the 4.99% increase in council tax, as recommended by the Section 151 Officer, to avoid a deeper year on year reduction in available funding going forward and depleting the Council's reserves more quickly. However, the Board also acknowledged the impact that a rise in council tax would have on residents during the current cost of living increases, and that there was a need to ensure residents fully understood why it needed to increase.

With respect to the public consultation on the budget proposals, the Board welcomed the range of options being consulted on for the increase in council tax, but was disappointed with the low number of responses, which stood at 58 at the time of the meeting. It was recommended that the public consultation should be revisited to maximise engagement in the future.

In relation to the 2023/24 details, the following points were clarified for the Board:

- With regards to the grant conditions on ringfenced adult social care grant and the discharge funding, it was confirmed that the discharge funding had been put in place by the Government to support the NHS with discharging patients from hospital quicker. This meant that the Council was commissioning care beds which it would not normally commission, so there were costs being incurred by the Council which would not usually be incurred through normal service delivery. Some of the grants received for adult social care come with costs that would not usually be incurred through normal service delivery, but these were offset by the £4.8m discharge funding received.
- There was no information currently available as to when the Fair Funding review would take place, but it was expected that the earliest it would happen would be in 2025/26 after the next general election.
- Regarding the loss of the £12m funding from the Government for highways maintenance, it was confirmed that this had been included in the base budget for highways for now to cover the shortfall, but the continuation of this funding would depend on what funding and savings were available to the Council in the future.
- There was £240m held in total in the Council's reserves at the start of the year. Of this, £28m was for schools' carry forward and half related to revenue grants received for specific purposes. The largest reserve was the Financial Volatility Reserve which stood at £47m and would support the Council to plan its finances moving forward.

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board also considered the budget proposals for 2023/24 for the Council's Resources directorate and Corporate Services. The following points were clarified for the Board in relation to questions raised by Members:

- In relation to the Capital Programme, there were a number of fixed cost elements for the Resources directorate such as refreshing IT equipment and property maintenance on the buildings owned by the Council. A decision could be made in the future to reduce the level of property maintenance, but this would need to be balanced against the potential negative impacts on service delivery and higher costs in the long run if assets fall into a state of disrepair.
- Following the introduction of the Smarter Working policy in 2022, it was confirmed that a review of the Council's capital estate had commenced to determine what buildings would be required in the future on the Newland campus in Lincoln and in the localities, based on the usage of the Council's buildings over the past year. The recommissioning of the corporate support services could have an impact on the Newland campus as some teams would be insourced and the Council's premises could be utilised as part of the procurement of a customer service centre. A report would be brought to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board in Spring/Summer 2023 on a strategy for the Newland campus once the future requirements had been determined.

Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee – 31 January 2023

On 31 January 2023, the Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee considered a report in relation to the Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals for 2023-24 and supported the Recommendations set out in the report to the Executive.

The following points were highlighted:

- Registration and Celebratory Services:
 - Members asked what the Registration services budget was likely to look like in the 2023/24 in order to meet the inflation that is on the rise and deliver a full cost recovery model. Officers provided assurance that the costs that came into the service were reduced due to diverting some of these online through the improved digital service offer.
- Fire and Rescue Service:
 - The impact of fluctuation in fuel prices on the Fire and Rescue Service was queried. The ACFO explained that the current decline of fuel prices was not anticipated to remove cost pressures, most of which had already been incurred in the current year.
 - In relation to “unavoidable service specific cost pressures” (para 1.15- relevant to FRS) that amounted to £487,000, Members asked what these entailed; Officers explained that these included fuel costs, costs of facilities and headquarters related costs and explained that these were partially offset by

savings that emerged from the rent savings following the acquisition of the Waddington Training Centre site.

- Members requested further information about the rolling programme for the replacement of FRS fleet vehicles and associated equipment increase to c£2.6 million. The ACFO explained that this covered vehicles (e.g., fire engines) and operational and specialist equipment (e.g., thermal imaging cameras, cutting equipment, FRS boats etc). These were reviewed as to establish their life expectancy, to assess damage and repairs/maintenance required, to ensure technological compatibility which reduced the risk of adverse impacts owed to condition of these.
- Reference was made to the withdrawal of the Firelink Grant (para 1.18, second bullet point) which resulted in fire services incurring the costs for communication and mobilising systems used.
- Assurance was provided that although no new projects were added to the Capital programme (para 1.22), a new developments capital contingency within the programme at £5 million per annum, was available to be used to fund any projects brought forward during the year. This meant that there was £50 million of capital available (over the 10-year capital programme) for other projects in addition to those already featured within the capital programme. Members were satisfied that despite increased costs and inflation rates, the services needs were being met and projects were not being delayed or deferred due to cost pressures.
- Members noted the absence of an increase in funding to Citizens Advice Lincolnshire (CAL). In line with the cost-of-living crisis and inflation in the market, CAL was a valued source of advice and support to residents that lack resources and experienced hardships. Members were concerned by the increased pressure on CAL to support residents on restricted funding. Officers gave assurance that there were ongoing negotiations with CAL and looked at efficiencies that could be achieved through better use of resources that were available. In addition, the role of CAL was under review and officers offered to bring back a report relating to the procurement process and the commissioning arrangements with CAL.

Meeting with businesses, trade unions and other public bodies – 27 January 2023

BUDGET CONSULTATION MEETING 2023

A list of attendees is detailed at Appendix A to these notes.

Councillor M A Whittington, Executive Support Councillor for Resources and Communications welcomed everyone to the meeting. Attendees were informed that this meeting was part of the normal consultation process which the authority undertook when setting its budget and provided the opportunity for partners and other organisations to take part in the consultation. It was reported that

the proposed budget was also examined by each of the County Council's scrutiny committees who would look in more detail at the budgets for individual service areas. Recommendations would then be made to the full Council at its meeting on 17 February 2023, where the budget would be formally approved.

Michelle Grady, Assistant Director – Finance and Adam Hopley, Strategic Finance Lead - Corporate, introduced a presentation on "Budget Engagement Meeting with Key Stakeholders, 27 January 2023", which was a consultation exercise led by the County Council to highlight the Council's current budget and financial outlook for public services over the coming year.

During discussion the following main points were highlighted:

- In terms of the economic and financial context, inflation had peaked at 11.1% in October 2023, and it was noted this would have been higher without government intervention in energy prices etc.
- In the government's Autumn Statement, specific consideration was given to the current economic issues, and in the short term there would be more fiscal intervention as the economy got back to a more stable point. In terms of the medium term outlook, once the economy was growing again, then the investment in public services would grow at a slower rate.
- There had been many world factors which had contributed to the high inflation rate, however the Bank of England was able to influence this through the interest rates, which had been increasing gradually over the past year, and it was expected that they would increase further. It was hoped that this would start to bring the inflation rate back down. In terms of impacts on the County Council, this increased the costs of borrowing for schemes included in the capital investment programme.
- This was now a much riskier environment financially, than it had been for a number of years.
- The Autumn Statement had a number of headlines for local government, which included the delay to the social care reforms of two years, however, the funding which had been earmarked for this had been retained within Adult Social Care (ASC). There was also an additional investment of £1bn for 2023-24 and £1.7bn in 2024-25 to aid with hospital discharge. The County Council was also able to increase its council tax by a maximum of 5% (3% general and 2% for the ASC precept). Another consideration would be the increase to the National Living Wage by 9.7% to £10.42 an hour from April 2023.
- In terms of the provisional local government finance settlement it was highlighted that LCC would receive a notional £62.5m increase in core spending power. This would be split between grant funding and extra council tax. However, it was predicated on the County Council increasing its council tax by the maximum figure of 5%. There were also increases for the ASC market sustainability and improvement fund, ASC discharge and a settlement funding assessment. However, there were also reductions in the New Homes Bonus, and the Service grant to reflect the reversal of the health and social care national insurance rise. It was also noted that this was a one-year settlement, but overall it was better than expected.
- It was queried whether the Council would receive any additional funding to cover the public sector pay increases. Officers advised that the LCC employees pay was negotiated through a national scheme, but organisations were expected to manage these increases through their

own budgets. The pay increase for 2022 was funded through use of the Council's contingency fund.

- It was queried whether it was likely that the funding situation would change if there was a change of government. It was acknowledged that Lincolnshire received a lot less funding than some of the counties in the south east, for example. Officers commented that the government had committed to a Fairer Funding Review, however, this had been pushed back to the next Parliament.
- It was commented that there were pockets of deprivation in Lincolnshire, both within rural areas and within towns, and there was a need for the government to recognise this. It was noted that some of the grants received by the County Council were weighted for those authorities with a lower tax base, and so Lincolnshire had benefitted from these.
- It was discussed whether having more decision-making at a lower level would be beneficial, however it was commented that this would need to include the power to remove the maximum cap for council tax increases, and this was not possible under the current funding mechanism.
- It was noted that how schools were funded had changed significantly over the years. The Council now received a dedicated schools grant which was very specific in how it could be used.
- A query was raised in relation to reserves, and whether the council was happy with the current levels. It was noted that there were some reserves which had a specific purpose, such as the winter maintenance budget which was there to cover gritting of roads during the winter months, and there was a need to maintain this type of reserve. It was also highlighted that there was a financial volatility reserve which was there to help the council to manage if costs exceeded income. In terms of earmarked reserves, which totalled around £240m, around half of this was held for schools, and the remainder was made up of grants, such as for public health, as well as an insurance fund reserve and a development fund. There was also a contingency budget, which this year had been increased to £6.5m and had been used to cover the staff pay award.
- It was commented that the County Council had always done a good job of managing its finances, including during the pandemic, when other authorities began to struggle.
- Officers advised that the Council had received additional grants during the pandemic to help manage additional costs. It was also noted that having well run services was beneficial when managing budgets. The Council was fortunate that it had not had to cut any services over the past couple of years.
- It was commented that during the pandemic, information had been cascaded down to providers well. Officers noted that the Council had dealt with providers individually during the pandemic to determine how best to support them.
- In relation to a devolution deal, officers advised government was being lobbied on this and it would create an extra layer of funding and decision making. This was something which Greater Lincolnshire was actively looking for. However, it was commented that devolution was one thing, but local government reorganisation was something different. It was likely that any funding received in relation to devolution would be geared towards infrastructure or higher level projects.
- In relation to the Medium - Term Financial Position, the main drivers for the budget shortfall were higher cost pressures due to the current inflationary environment.

- It was highlighted that one area of risk which was still being worked through was Home to School Transport, where a deep dive of this area was being undertaken. There were cost pressures which were not yet included in the budget, but this work would be concluded for the report which would be presented to Council on 17 February 2023 for approval.
- In terms of the reversal of the National Insurance levy, it was clarified that the Government had amended the Services Grant funding stream to reflect the reduction in cost this would cause. The amount recovered was higher than the levy cost to LCC. Separately, the 2022/23 pay award cost was higher than had been planned, which required the Council to cover this through the corporate contingency.
- In terms of the Capital Programme, it was noted that no major projects had been added, and the focus would be on those that were already underway which included Spalding Western Relief Road, Grantham Southern Relief Road and the North Hykeham Relief Road, as well as the delivery of the SEND schools provision. This was to ensure that the programme remained affordable.
- The Council was thanked for maintaining its commitment to deliver the SEND Schools provision.
- In relation to the SEND schools budget, it was noted that the provision was better for the child as they could remain local to family, and it also reduced the Councils ongoing costs as children would not need to be placed out of county. It was noted that the Council did try and take the approach of prevention wherever possible with services as it would be better for the person, and would save money over the long term.
- It was also highlighted that Lincolnshire was one of the few counties that had managed to keep all of its Children's Centres open.
- It was noted that all areas of government were having problems attracting good staff, but Lincolnshire was not experiencing as many problems as other areas. There were still difficulties in attracting staff, however, Lincolnshire was able to retain staff fairly well. Having the university was a benefit as people would often stay in the County after graduating. There was a hope that the medical school in Lincoln would also encourage people to stay in the County.
- In relation to the Council Tax proposals, it was reported that there were three options being considered and consulted upon:
 - Option A – (2% ASC precept and 0.99% general precept)
 - Option B – (2% ASC precept and 1.99% general precept)
 - Option C – (2% ASC precept and 2.99% general precept)
- A discussion took place around the options for setting the council tax level and it was acknowledged that this was a difficult decision, particularly with consideration of the cost of living crisis when all other prices were increasing as well. There was understanding around the need for council tax to be increased. However, it was highlighted that there were schemes out there to help people who were struggling, and all district councils had schemes to help people with paying their council tax. There was a need to explain to people how their money was actually spent, and that there were also efficiency savings being made.
- It was suggested whether the increase in hybrid working could help with organisations becoming more efficient (although it was acknowledged that this would not work for all services). It was noted that more hybrid working could lead to reduced mileage claims as well as reducing the impact on the environment.

- The challenge with two tier authorities was that responsibilities were split, however the county council had continued to work with district councils on issues such as housing provision.
- In terms of next steps, the updated budget proposals would be considered by the Executive on 7 February 2023, and then the budget would be recommended to Council for approval on 17 February 2023.

Appendix A

Present	Representing
Councillor M A Whittington	Lincolnshire County Council
K Rustidge	NEU
P Allison	Linkage
M Grady	Lincolnshire County Council
A Hopley	Lincolnshire County Council
R Wilson	Lincolnshire County Council

Public Engagement via the Council website

Following consideration of the budget proposals 2022/23 by the Executive on 5 January 2022, a public engagement was published on the Council website, and closed on 26 January 2022. The following two responses were received by email:

Response 1 by email

OptionB please, as a retired resident I would like services maintained to a improving standard ,and as a parish councillor I would like to the money spent wisely....

Regards
VCI (*name redacted*)

Response 2 by email

Overall opinion , recognise challenges faced BUT many of residents in E LDC whilst asset rich , owning own homes, are elderly retirees on pensions already facing challenges of rising cost of living, fuel rises simply will not be able to afford option B Or Option C.

Overall suggest Option A is the way forward.

South Cockerington Parish Council

Response 3 by email

Good afternoon

Gedney Parish Council would like to opt for Band B

Kind regard
Gedney Parish Council

Response 4 by email

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for the email regarding the budget and council tax proposal, and for giving us the opportunity to have our say.

Waddington Parish Council discussed this at their meeting and agreed on Option C. They believe that a difference of £30 a year for a band D household is not a lot, and that the reserves should be kept where possible, as with the current climate who knows when these may be needed.

Kind regards.

Waddington Parish Council

Response 5 by email

Spridlington Parish Council supports Option B

Regards
Spridlington Parish Council

Response 6 by email

Good afternoon,

I am writing to you, on behalf of North Hykeham Town Council, to confirm that at the last meeting of the Finance and Policy committee the LCC request for views on the budget and council tax proposals for 2023/24 were discussed. It was resolved to support Option C: 2% adult social care precept + 2.99% general precept = 4.99% precept.

Kind regards,
North Hykeham Town Council

Response 7 by email

South Willingham Parish Council would support option B.

Yours faithfully

South Willingham Parish Council

Responses posted on council website (Let's talk Lincolnshire), at 24/1 (all comments included here are as they were entered onto the Let's talk Lincolnshire platform/Sic)

Response 1 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

Option B - the middle one of the 3 evils.

Response 2 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

It would be better to have more detail on the budgets for people to comment on, and jargon used that perhaps the general public would understand, rather than the term precept. Doesn't really explain how much it's going to cost each household taking into account the cost of living crisis.

Response 3 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

There are many things that can be done to improve and save costs in adult social care all legal and approved under the statutory guidance. Before considering precepts may be it would be wise to look at the process and see how they could be streamlined to save money time and resources

See post at: <https://haloabletec.blogspot.com/2022/02/saving-resources-time-and-money-in.html>

And

<https://haloabletec.blogspot.com/2022/04/direct-payments-care-markets-and.html>

Promoting and letting people manage their own care could save substantial amounts of money.

We need social care to move forward and think in fresh ways to deliver the service which is not staff extensive and reduce costs.

Response 4 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

Option A is essential unless other options will result in massive improvement in road quality, otherwise these increases will not be stomachable in present circumstances.

Response 5 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

I vote for Option A. I would also like to query why you no longer have public forums to answer direct questions about your plans for our money ?

Response 6 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

As you should know there are less fires and less usage of fire service which is why they diversify into other jobs such as first responder etc. to try and keep jobs. I would recommend giving them £15 million and the £7 million going to highways.

Response 7 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

Care should really come from Central Government. However if forced I would choose option A. All my cost are going up and income is not...so sorry

Response 8 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

The consultation process should help the Executive to decide on the most appropriate option to recommend - not the other way round.

Given the financial pressures on local authority and NHS services adversely impacting on the quality and quantity of services available to the public, and reducing reliance on reducing the County Council's reserves, which may be needed if the financial situation worsens, it would seem that the most appropriate and prudent approach would be to go with Option C.

This recognises that on the one hand it will impact on individual household finances, but on the other hand it will support the funding those people services such as help for older and frailer people, people with disabilities and mental ill health and children and families in need to access services, rather than having to wait and be denied services which if provided in a timely manner and on an early intervention and prevention basis will save money further down stream.

The staffing situation affecting Social Care and Health Care services is at crisis point and needs addressing immediately with levels of remuneration that will attract the right quality and quantity of staff into the system - opting for Option C will provide fee rates to Care Providers to enable them to achieve that goal.

Response 9 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

I don't have enough knowledge to confidently comment except for a couple of comments one being that generally the highways are in a very poor state with constant requests to fix dangerous potholes. You should not be relying on public reports, you should have dedicated people to do the reports. The other would be that I don't want to see my council tax increase again. I see increases every year without an understandable reason particularly with increases for the police. I never see a policeman, where are these increases going? Being cynical I would expect it goes to increased pay for people at the top.

Response 10 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

I don't think you should be raising Council Tax at all at a time of massive inflation and cost of living crisis. Who can afford it? If you raise Council Tax by 3-5%, you must raise salaries by 3-5%, except for those on top rate tax brackets. Balance the budget by reducing expenditure on roads; prioritise children and adult social care; reduce the numbers of senior managers and make decision making and commissioning and more efficient (more empowered decision making and leaner process) and therefore cost effective. Council processes are laborious and costly. Use more of the reserves. Be transparent and accountable about ethical investment of reserves and unspent budget. Don't use hotels for meetings. Be frugal in the use of resources. Put pressure on government for proper funding of adult social care. Use what you have more smartly. Be seen to reduce wastefulness. Generate more income from assets.

Response 11 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

Option C - it's about time the public were clearly told the true cost of public services; once the monies are made available to the Council, the public will expect better services. We need to ensure that the ageing demographic is looked after appropriately.

Response 12 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

This is poor. You're basically asking people to agree to an increase despite all the cost of living increases. I don't want an increase AT ALL. I am already struggling month to month. OPTION A is only thing I would be prepared to agree to.

Response 13 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

1st - "community wellbeing" - drop everything in this category, it is a populist and meaningless concept/grouping that provides nothing of value (long/medium term) to any community. It is a squandering waste of public funds. Every manager/employee associated with those "activities" should be made redundant as they are fulfilling non-jobs only to satisfy box-ticking, but still at the unjustified expense of the taxpayer.

2nd - "Option A" - 2%+0.99% for the 2.99% precept. I also criticise and formerly complain about your disingenuous presentation of numbers to deceive the electorate, 0.99% is 1% so say what it actually amounts to and stop **offensive word redacted** about, there's nothing clever about your infantile deception attempt. Whoever the culprit with that idea on the Executive should be sacked for gross-misconduct.

Response 14 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

Option A at the most, ideally zero increase as low paid workers are really struggling. Lots of ways to save money, use all your reserves for a start as by next year Lcc may be gone, share facilities with others, work from home to the max so you can sell off county hall and cut back the oap bus passes for a start to just what they are entitled to and charge for things you can do eg call connect and library fines. But please no tax rise thank you.

Response 15 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

I see no issues with drawing from reserves, that is why they are there. For the options presented, I would support option B as all are similar. It would have been good for a further option to allocate more to adult social care.

Response 16 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

I would also agree with previous comments that social care should come from central government, however given the options presented i am of the view that drawing from reserves is acceptable so I would support Option B

Response 17 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

I select option A, 2% +0.99%, but there should be options in weighting on the distribution funds to other areas too. I'm disappointed that the "plans includes:" section did not give some sort of brief or reference to the stresses of those areas listed with values or point us into an area that identifies the details that lead support the decision, the impact and numbers; it seems deliberate and no help to the public to provide effective feedback due the lack of quality informed information. I don't think the weighting reflects the situation now, for example our highways are in a right mess but due to the lack of informed content how can we see that it should be higher and another area lower or not etc.

Response 18 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

Option A would seem to be the best of a bad deal. In the current financial crisis I think a zero increase would be another option. There appears to be so much money wasted on projects that are of no benefit to anybody except the people being paid to do the research, the council should look at reducing the number of managers at the top of the tree

Response 19 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

Option D - no increase at all - the PCC increased our council tax last year we dont want another increase

Response 20 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

None of these: many people are experiencing great hardship at the moment as prices, mortgages, food, home heating costs rise inexorably and many will expect to lose their jobs or businesses in the coming year as the recession deepens. LCC needs to cut its management structure, stop wasting money on bureaucratic exercises, reduce its headcount, cut councillors' allowances, contributions to external Quangos and NGOs. Instead it should concentrate on its social care responsibilities (and again, cut the bureaucracy and management); concentrate on repairing the county's lamentable and dangerous roads; and consider every aspect of its expenditure and if necessary, subsidies. It should decrease its precept on tax bills and urge the Police and Crime Commissioner (a true waste of every penny sent there) to cut his demands and to take more from reserves (which is what they are there for). The overall bill has got to go DOWN, not up: people can no longer afford to subsidise this bloated bureaucracy and the lifestyle of its employees and participants.

Response 21 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

I trust LCC to do their best. None of us would agree with everything they do or spend but overall I think they do a good job in difficult circumstances. I go for Option B

Response 22 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

With regret, I go for Option C.

I agree with the use of reserves, but the shortfalls over the medium term exceed the given amount of reserves.

I also agree with the comments about top-heavy management, and non-jobs. Pay the workers, and remind the councillors they are performing a public service, not riding a gravy train.

Do road repairs properly the first time, don't waste money on repeated bad jobs.

Response 23 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

I would prefer choice A, whilst I appreciate the council have less disposable income, so do the general public.

I have had to leave work due to disabilities, I need heating and hot water but I'm using less due to cost and yet the bill is two and a half times last year's, every penny is accounted for, to have too

much of a raise in council tax could be the straw that breaks the camel's back.
We don't get expenses etc paid like councillors.

Response 24 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

In my opinion the most appropriate option would be Option C so that council services can be maintained and even enhanced. For too long Lincolnshire County Council seems to have been proud to claim that it has one of the lowest council taxes in the region. Indeed I was told at a meeting that to be otherwise would be a vote loser....so be it if it is

Response 25 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

I retired in 2008, but every single year (up until 2022), my income has gone down due to reducing interest rates. No doubt that will not be of interest to councillors, but it still means that any and all increases have a massive effect on my position. I would suggest that continuing to operate on principles such as poor quality of road maintenance is only going to cost more in the long run (i.e. the substructure of roads is now being severely undermined by lack of maintenance - and that will cost a lot more to fix later). Another classic example of short term solutions with long term consequences is not clearing drains - - we will all suffer from that silly decision before long with climate change under way. The long term effects of short term slipshod solutions should be thought through much more thoroughly before implementing any budget changes, but without doubt just shoving up council tax without dealing properly with waste first (on all fronts), is just bad management. None of us can afford for councillors not to use pure common sense on every decision rather than the other mis-guided principles currently being used. Go for option B this year and then deal with mis-guided principles before next year's budget review.

Response 26 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

I support a rise of £5 as the Council does a great job and I understand about rising costs

Response 27 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

Option A. The country is facing an economic crisis as not seen for a generation. Households have generally seen their real incomes fall at an unprecedented rate over the last 12 months. Ideally no increase should be put upon the public at this time & the reserves should be used. If not at this crisis time when else should reserves be used? Increased productivity at every level of the council should be increased to obtain better value for money from our public services. As others have alluded too, the Senior Management seem to think they have more important jobs than the Prime Minister as they pay themselves more. Scandalous. Looking at road and path maintenance workers, perhaps they could explain why it takes 5 times longer to complete a task in Lincolnshire than it does in

London? As for Adult social care, when our family needed support from the Council for my father-in-law, not a single penny was forthcoming from the Council as he was one of those conscientious individuals who had worked his whole life and saved only to have it all taken back in Care Home fees without any local government support whatsoever. I for one, begrudge paying into a system that is never going to offer me or my family anything in return.

Response 28 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

Option C would be my choice.

The disparity between senior officers holiday entitlements needs to be addressed. Senior officers need a reduction in their leave entitlements.

Education needs more autonomy within a devolved budget making them responsible for education welfare provision.

The post of police commissioner needs slimming down and savings diverted to beat officers/ community.

Response 29 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

Option D would allow more money to be spent on potholes which are a danger to all residents in Lincolnshire causing accidents which impose on our hospitals and police. Less money should be spent on Quango meetings within social care which expect more money than the Prime Minister for doing less work. The Police Crime commissioner is a drag on Police finances and his powers should be decreased and pay reduced accordingly. This would leave more money for the important expenses within the county. Council expenses should be carefully audited by outside auditors.

Response 30 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

I think that the cost of living crisis is having such an impact on household budgets that it warrants dipping into Council reserves for this next year. Anything that can help consumers should be considered. I know it isn't a long term solution but it does feel like the country is facing a unique crisis at the moment.

Response 31 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

The situation will remain very difficult for several years. Option A is "attractive" short term in view of the current pressure on households but will result in increased pressure in subsequent years. Option B seems to be the least bad choice for the moment

Response 32 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

Would prefer option C. There are many elderly people in the area who lived & lost in WW2 = we owe these people a decent standard of care in their last years.

Response 33 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

I think option A as people are struggling enough at the moment, without additional financial burden.

Response 34 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

I don't agree with any of them, the pensioners will get a pay raise and then they have to pay more on Community tax, so basically gaining nothing. Community tax should be looked at, I thought everyone paid the same, but certain parts of the Country pay a lot less than ELDC banding is, I think the Council themselves needs to look at saving money, stop their high pay raises, and other expenses. District/country councillors should be paid for what they achieve and how many meetings they actually attend.

Response 35 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

It's essential to future proof so understand the options proposed. It's also essential to understand the genuine pressures on local people so I think option B helps balance the books, doesn't move the pressure to individual households and demonstrates compromise/meeting in the middle. Alternatives must be looked at to avoid reliance on government grants and a constant need to increase local council tax burdens. I am grateful that consideration and funds are being given to services that most need them.

Response 36 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

As an ex-pro in the Social Care sector, I know that financial decisions are a workaround the Big Taboo, which I have supported since I first heard it in the 1980s: social care will be a huge financial headache unless and until there is a National Care Service in parallel with the NHS. That said, your option B strikes the best balance. Whatever you do, keep up the effort with highways & potholes etc.- that affects everyone, including those going by road to a care home, or to care delivery in the client's home!

Response 37 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

Option B seems to be fair. With rising costs, it's clear we need to have a larger increase, however this needs to be affordable and the cost of living crisis is having a huge impact on the residents of Lincolnshire. Perhaps when the cost of living is more under control (hopefully 2024!) a larger increase would sit better with the public

Response 38 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

The annual County Council claim of poverty - we all know that spending is being cut in real terms, and that Local Govt. is an easy target for central govt. so this claim is completely understandable. However, if LCC is serious about saving money, why is it proposing to spend £200m on the Lincoln Southern ByPass alone (now renamed North Hykeham Relief Road I understand)? We know historically that final costs of large civil engineering costs are much higher, so considering the recent inflation hikes and unforeseen costs on site, this could realistically end up as £280 to £300m. Does this represent good value for money? Does it really paint a picture of an authority strapped for cash? More importantly, we are no longer living in the 20th century - the car is not king anymore, how does the County Council reconcile its 2019 commitment to becoming a carbon neutral authority by 2050 with the huge new road building programme (Spalding, Grantham, North Hykeham, Orby, Skegness...)? What kind of responsible authority these days promotes such an extensive and environmentally damaging road building programme? The carbon costs captured must include service life of the roads, the traffic they generate (let us not kid ourselves anymore that new roads relieve traffic), maintenance costs, raw material extraction, and ultimately the costs associated with the housing projects they will generate. Planting a few trees does not balance the destruction of environment for material quarrying. If LCC wants to save money, and contribute to saving the planet (this old phrase is no longer an exaggeration is it?) - STOP building new roads (please).

Response 39 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

Can LCC provide any form of additional data to justify the proposals as they sit? Especially regarding the total amount or percentage of council tax payers who use the adult social care system? Given this remains a constant in all three proposals it would indicate that this decision has been made and yet there is likely to other areas that members of the public would want targeted funding (such as highways given the extremely poor state of roads in our county). Also LCC need to reassess their current costs for projects they routinely announce and if they are truly value for money. Only recently was a spend of £300k announced to rebuild a footpath which can hardly be justified in the current climate whilst still proposing an increase in council tax.

Response 40 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

Option A

Response 41 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

My hart says option C, BUT my financial postion, as a disabled veteran, on a pention, I can only say option A, as every pound and penny i get/have is already acounted for, (more than once). Sad but true.....

Response 42 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

Option A no matter how much we want to help the situation will only get worse if those with no money left end up struggling even further. going higher would long term cause more problems that you are trying to help

Response 43 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

I note that there is no option for a zero% position nor one for a reduction in Council Tax and associated precepts.

I challenge you to offer a real consultation -

Option D 2% adult social care precept + -2.0% general precept = 0% precept

Option E 2% adult social care precept + -7.0% general precept = 5% precept

Past time for LCC and District Councils to reduce their expenditure, just as many families are having to do, and pass on the cuts to struggling households.

Option E

Response 44 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

In the current economic situation, difficult decisions have to be made. I am staggered by the amount of money going into adult social care compared to other services. With that in mind, in my opinion option A should be considered.

Response 45 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

Option c.

Response 46 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

Can I propose Option B is put forward (2% adult social care precept + 1.99% general precept = 3.99% precept). Noting the reserves detailed in the report Option B seems a good compromise. Option A

removes too much from the reserves when viewing the future predicted shortfalls, whilst option C places too much on the people of Lincolnshire with the way inflation has rocketed.

Response 47 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

Fotherby Parish council considers option C to be appropriate

Response 48 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

Option A. In the current climate please use cash from reserves. It's there for rainy days, and it's pouring down.

Response 49 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

Hemswell Cliff Parish Council supports option C.

Response 50 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

Option A - taxes have gone up by enormous amounts over the last few years, appreciate that this isn't getting through to local Government but the country is overtaxed. Difficult choices need making.

Response 51 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

Option a and ideally option e below as people don't have anymore money to pay a council tax rise this year not everyone is working, alot jn the area of East lyndsey are unemployed,retired and disabled please think of a reduction and higher boses take a pay cut like us people in the community are having to cut back, the alternative is freeze the council tax this year and the council learn how to do cut backs too, irs nad enough pay council tax and still have to pay for green waste 50 a year think is over charges and you could do a direxy debit option for the green waste which would help residents to beabke to subscribe to the service. Think of the public pocket first please this year we all have no more money in the pot.

Response 52 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

Option D

please people don't have anymore money in the post at all we have all having to cut baxk so council will have to do the same instead of passing your costs onto us all the time

Response 53 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

Option A - costs for everyday living are escalating daily and many people are struggling

Response 54 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

Following an email to Utterby Parish councillors they supported Option A: 2% adult social care precept + 0.99% general precept = 2.99% precept

Response 55 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

Scotter Parish Council discussed the option in their January meeting. They agreed option A was the most acceptable in the current climate

Response 56 on Let's talk Lincolnshire

No surprise that councils on here are backing the higher increase...

None of these options actually address the main issue that concerns the general public, which is value for money. This is simply asking for more money rather than the public seeing genuine basic improvements to our local areas. Expenditure appears to be a black hole filled with bureaucracy, overpaid and overmanned middle to senior management, with poor communication throughout. One look at the proposals for major works in the county show that projects are stuck in the system year after year and the costs increase with each delay. The longer these things take, the more expensive they become. As a result, it appears that the public have to make increased payments to cover this inefficiency without seeing any increase to standards.

This is then compounded when those who have paid into the system for years, finally retire and eventually rely upon the care system, only to find they yet again have to pay out of their own pocket because the council refuse to support them. There is no benefit to working hard, having personal savings, or indeed contributing to the public purse, as all it does it exclude you from support of any kind when you need it, whilst you pay more and more for a net worth of nothing.

The council need to be more accountable for how the money is spent.

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