

## Budget Consultation- Summary of findings and key themes

The online 2022/23 budget consultation opened on 6 December 2021 and ended on 31 January 2022.

The online consultation asked Brent residents to read the Draft Budget 2022/23, including appendices, and answer the following questions:

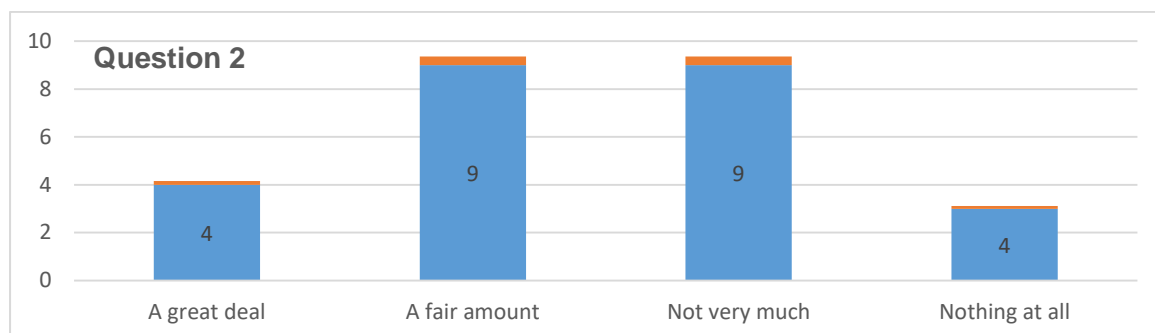
1. Do you have any comments about our draft budget strategy?
2. Having read the draft budget proposals, how much do you now feel you understand the Council's overall financial position and the need to both increase council tax and deliver savings in 2022/23 in order to deliver a balanced budget?
3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the budget proposals?
4. Please provide any other comments you may have on the proposals for the Budget 2022/23.
5. If you have any other ideas for ways we could save money, please let us know.
6. Do you have any comments on the proposal to increase service charges in Council owned and managed blocks?
7. Could Brent Housing Management do any more to provide help and support if you are concerned about paying your rent and bills?

In addition to the questions above standard equalities monitoring questions were asked, to better understand the demographic of the residents who responded.

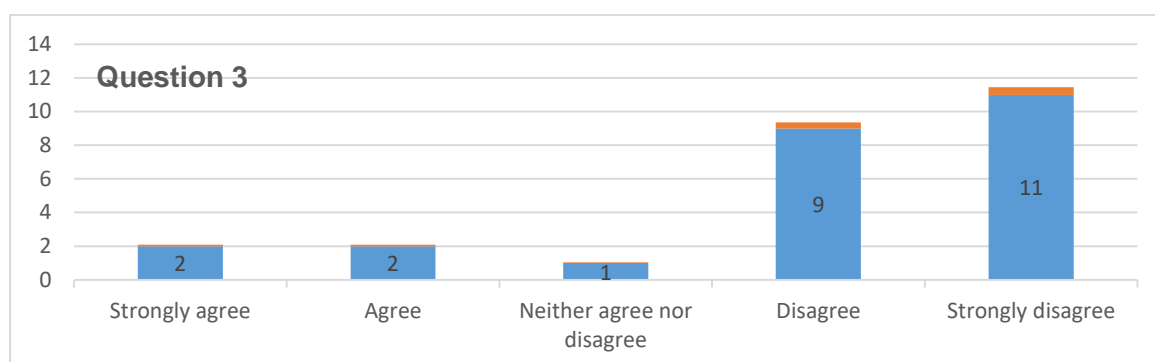
The key themes collected from the comments to **Question 1** '*Do you have any comments about our draft budget strategy?*' include:

- The proposal to increase Council Tax, with many stating that the increase is being made at a time when the general cost of living is also increasing.
- The Council should make further cuts to its spending.

For **Question 2** 50% respondents answered that they had 'nothing at all' or 'not very much' understanding of the Council's overall financial position and the need to both increase council tax and deliver savings between 2020/21 and 2022/23 in order to deliver a balanced budget. 50% responded that they have 'a fair amount' or 'a great deal' of understanding on the Council's overall financial position.



For **Question 3** 77% of respondents answered that they 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' with the budget proposals. Whilst 15% answered that they 'agree' or 'strongly agree' with the proposals. The final 8% answered that they 'neither agree nor disagree'.



The most popular theme to **Question 4** 'Please provide any other comments you may have on the proposals for the Budget 2022/23:' was the Increase in Council Tax during times of increases to other household bills.

For **Question 5** 'If you have any other ideas for ways we could save money, please let us know', a summary of the points made is below:

- Make further cuts, some suggested to staff salaries, Council magazine and LTNs.
- Some suggested introducing more CPZ and increase charges.

For **Question 6** 'Do you have any comments on the proposal to increase Council tenant rents? A mixed response was received from respondents whilst some are in agreement of the proposal others felt that the increase is being made at an inappropriate time and could result in higher household debt.

For **Question 7** 'Do you have any comments on the proposal to increase service charges in Council owned and managed blocks?' Like question 6 a mixed response was received from respondents whilst some are in agreement of the proposal others felt that the increase is being made at an inappropriate time and could result in higher household debt.

For **Question 8** 'Could Brent Housing Management do any more to provide help and support if you are concerned about paying your rent and bills?' Some suggested a

support scheme to be available to vulnerable groups that helps people not to fall into debt.

Overall, the most commented theme was the proposed increase in Council Tax. It is acknowledged that increasing Council Tax will be difficult for some households to manage in the current circumstances and sections 4.10 – 4.13 of the draft budget report set out the rationale the Council considers as part of its decision making. In summary, the increase will provide much needed funding to limit the impact of COVID-19 pressures expected in 2022/23, in particular for the Adult Social Care department, as well as preventing the wholesale cuts key services that many other Councils are having to consider. In addition, the Council continues to invest in the Council Tax Support scheme, which provides over £30m of support for around 28,000 households who are financially vulnerable. In addition, the Council's Resident Support Fund has made available additional funds for residents who are having difficulty due to unforeseen financial circumstances as a result of COVID-19.

Comments and feedback on the budget consultation demonstrates a wide range of views, many common viewpoints and emphasises the fact that Brent residents are concerned over what the expenditure reductions mean not only for them but also for the wider community.

Below is a summary of the demographic information of those that responded to the consultation:

