

West Lancashire
Meeting the Budget Challenge
2016 Consultation - Organisations



in:fusion

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1 Executive Summary

38 responses were received to the 2016 Meeting the Budget Challenge consultation from organisations, as well as 2 emails about proposals in the consultation.

The table below provides a summary of the level of agreement for each proposal in the consultation, ordered by those proposals with the highest agreement levels. Not all 38 respondents to the consultation answered every question.

The majority of organisations and stakeholders agree that they understand the challenges that the Council faces to find new ways of achieving savings and increasing income.

The savings proposal with the strongest level of disagreement amongst stakeholders is the removal of CCTV cameras in areas with lower crime rates. From the comments received this appears to be because of the role organisations feel CCTV can have on deterring crime and the impact of other budget cuts relating to community safety, including police presence.

Proposals	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
Agreement with the statement – 'I understand the challenges that the Council faces to find new ways of achieving savings and increasing income from the services it delivers' *	30	1	1
Reduce the time period for discretionary Council Tax Discounts on empty properties by half	30	6	1
Stop garden waste collections during the winter	25	10	2
Charge £25 per year per bin to have an extra green bin emptied	25	11	1
Remove static recycling sites across the borough	23	11	3
Reduce live monitoring of CCTV in off peak/quieter periods	20	16	2
Review mechanical sweeping and street cleansing prestige work	19	14	4
Rationalise public toilet provision to reduce costs by 50%	17	16	4
Introduce an annual charge of £30 to collect garden waste	17	17	3
Remove some of the CCTV cameras in areas with lower crime rates	14	22	2

**A different scale was used for this question so the totals do not include responses to a 'neither agree nor disagree' option*

2 Background and Methodology

2.1 Background

West Lancashire Borough Council needs to make savings, efficiencies and increase income in order to balance the budget for 2017/18.

The Council developed a range of proposals in 2016 which were approved for consultation with residents and organisations in the borough before any final decisions are made on the Council's budget for 2017/18.

The aim of the consultation is to understand whether residents and organisations agree or disagree with the proposals and what impact these would have if they are implemented. The findings of the consultation will inform the decision-making process on the Council's budget.

This report focuses on the feedback received from **organisations** in the borough.

2.2 Methodology

A targeted online consultation survey was developed for organisations in West Lancashire to give their views on proposals around the Council's budget. The six week consultation went live on Monday 25 July 2016 and closed on Sunday 4 September 2016.

The organisations' survey was hosted on the Council website. Emails were sent to organisations in the borough, including public and private sector organisations and voluntary and community groups, inviting them to take part in the consultation. The survey was also promoted via West Lancs CVS newsletters to stakeholder organisations.

In relation to each of the savings proposals, some facts and figures were provided giving further information including how much money would be saved. Respondents were also invited to give comments about each proposal and any impact it might have.

In total, **38 responses were received from organisations**, of which 5 were paper returns. By comparison, 30 responses were received from organisations to the 2015 budget consultation and 14 were received in 2013. Therefore this represents an improved response rate from organisations.

In addition to the survey responses, two emails were received, one from a parish council and the other from a public service, about proposals within the consultation. Both referred to the proposed reductions in CCTV coverage.

The purpose of the consultation was to give organisations the opportunity to give their views on the Council’s budget proposals and provide insight into any impact these would have. Therefore it should not be considered a statistically representative piece of research which represents the views of all organisations in the borough.

The ‘base’ totals included for each question within this report refer to the total number of responses to that particular question. Whilst 38 organisations completed the survey, some did not answer every question.

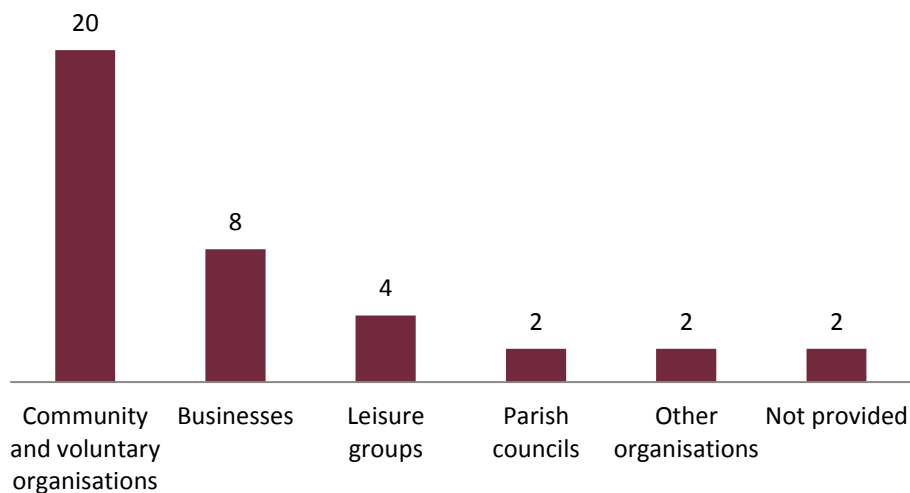
A number of open-ended questions were included in the survey to give people the opportunity to comment on the proposals. As part of the reporting, these comments have been independently reviewed and summarised into key themes during the analysis process.

2.3 Who responded?

Of the 38 organisations who responded, more than half are community and voluntary organisations. This includes charities, community interest companies (CICs) and support groups. Around one in four (8 of 38) respondents were local businesses.

2 respondents to the consultation did not indicate which organisation they were representing.

Figure 2.1: Type of organisations who responded (base – 38)

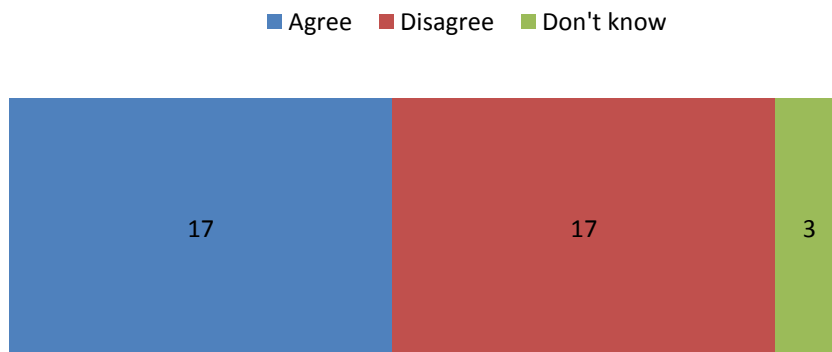


3 Main Findings

3.1 Garden Waste Collection

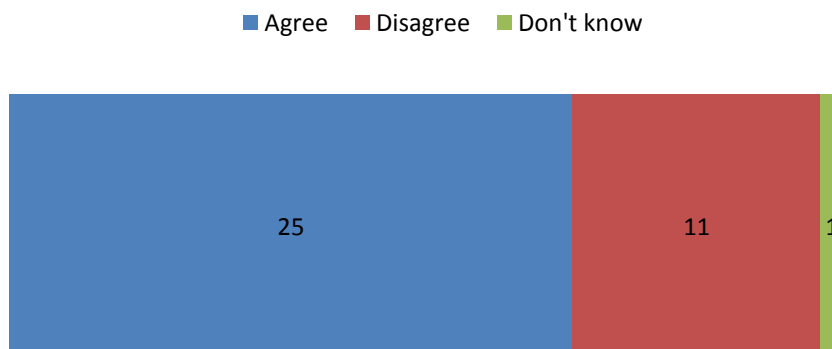
For householders, the Council proposes to introduce an annual charge of £30 to collect garden waste. Organisations are split in their views on this proposal with 17 agreeing, 17 disagreeing and 3 indicating that they don't know.

Figure 3.1: Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to introduce an annual charge of £30 to collect garden waste? (base – 37)



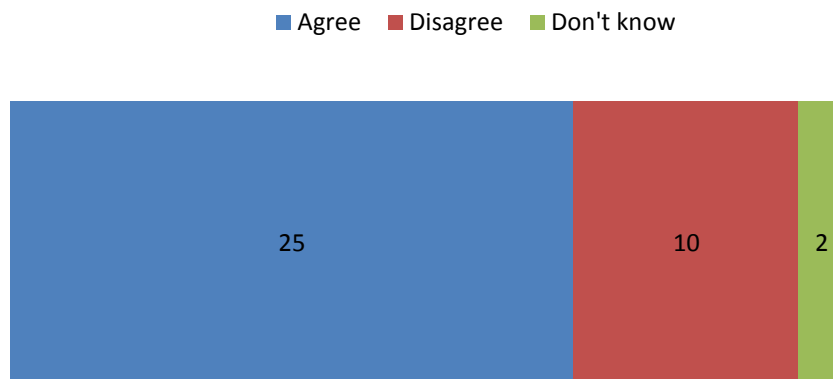
The Council also proposes to charge £25 per year per bin to have an extra green bin emptied. More organisations agree with this proposal than disagree. 25 of 37 indicated that they agree. All 8 businesses who responded agree with the proposal.

Figure 3.2: Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to charge £25 to have an extra green bin emptied? (base – 37)



In addition, or alternatively, the Council proposes to stop garden waste collections during the winter. Again, more organisations agree than disagree with this proposal. 15 of the 20 community and voluntary organisations agree.

Figure 3.3: Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to stop garden waste collections during the winter? (base – 37)



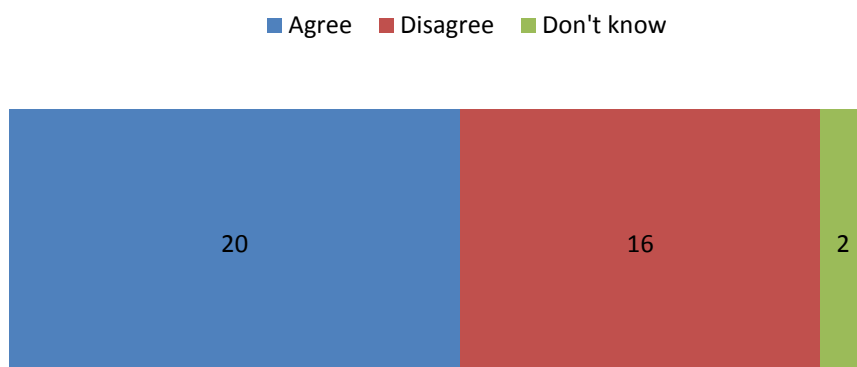
Of the comments received from organisations on the garden waste collection proposals, the main issues and suggestions related to:

- The potential impact on the level of fly tipping in the borough if the proposal is implemented as well as comments about the knock-on effect on other council services as a result.
- Comments and suggestions around the frequency of collections, particularly over the winter months. A number of organisations would prefer to see reduced frequency over winter rather than ceasing them altogether.
- A couple of organisations highlighted the impact the proposals might have on those residents who are more vulnerable, including disabled people who could find it difficult to remove their own waste and people on low incomes who might find the extra cost a burden.
- A couple of other suggestions were made, including making the scheme an optional donation instead or charging based on Council Tax band level and ensuring student accommodation in the borough is covered.

3.2 CCTV

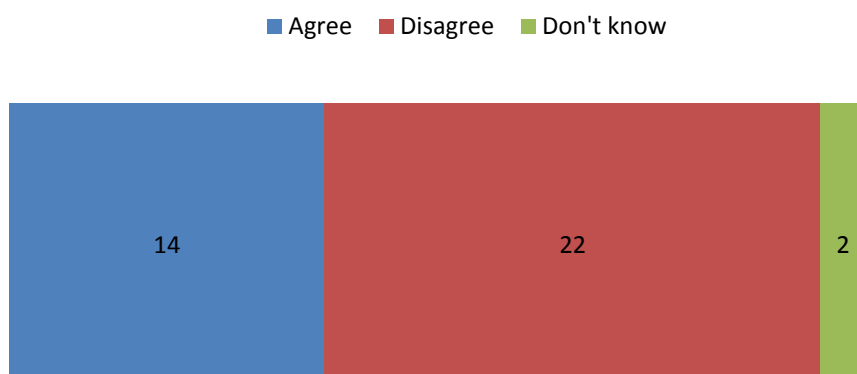
The Council is proposing to reduce live monitoring of CCTVs in the borough during off peak/quieter periods. Slightly more organisations agree with the proposal than disagree. 5 of the 8 businesses who responded disagree with this proposal.

Figure 3.4: Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to reduce live monitoring of CCTV in off peak/ quieter periods? (base – 38)



Another proposal is to remove some of the CCTV cameras in areas with lower crime rates. This time, more organisations disagree with the proposal (22 of 38). Again businesses have the highest level of disagreement (7 of 8).

Figure 3.5: Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to remove some CCTV cameras in areas with lower crime rates? (base – 38)



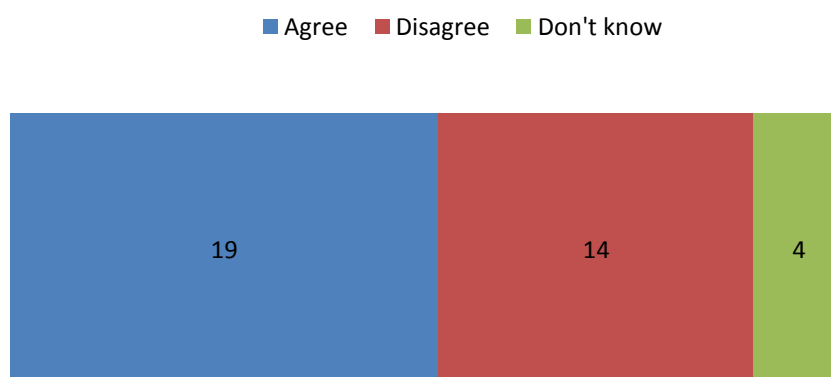
Of the comments received from organisations on the CCTV proposals, the main points made were:

- The main comments related to the potential impact on levels of crime in parts of the borough if CCTV cameras were removed or switched off. Some organisations feel that the presence of CCTV provides reassurance and a sense of safety to local communities and that low crime levels may be as a result of CCTV acting as a deterrent.
- Several comments centred on the cumulative impact of other funding cuts relating to the Police and Police Community Safety Officers, with CCTV seen as a tool for coping with these reductions, particularly in rural areas.
- A couple of alternative suggestions were made relating to parish councils and community groups. One respondent felt parish councils could look to fund CCTV if their areas require it, whilst one parish council suggested there was an opportunity to combine an existing wireless CCTV system operated by them.

3.3 Street Scene Services

The Council proposes to review mechanical sweeping and street cleansing prestige work, including routes and frequencies. More organisations agree with the proposal than disagree.

Figure 3.6: Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to review mechanical sweeping and street prestige work? (base – 37)



A number of suggestions were made by organisations about any review of street cleaning in the borough, including:

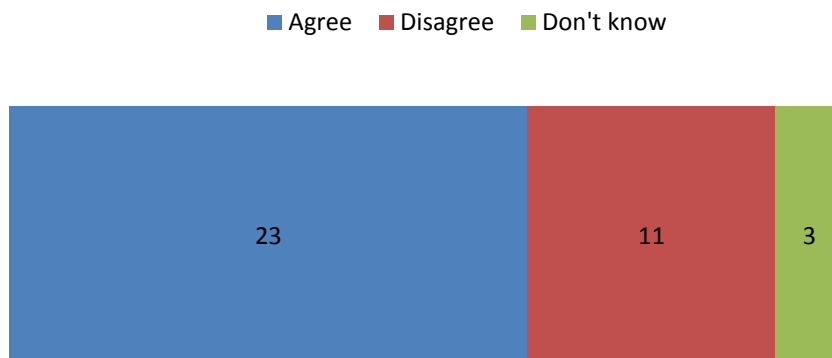
- More monitoring and auditing of contractors to ensure the council gets value for money out of a street cleaning service
- Encouraging local businesses to take responsibility for areas around their premises
- Developing a social enterprise model or using volunteers to maintain existing coverage at a reduced cost

Additionally, some organisations commented on the importance of a tidy appearance for the borough to attract visitors and ensure 'success as a destination'.

3.4 Static Recycling Sites

The council proposes to remove static recycling sites across the borough. 23 of 37 organisations agree with the proposal, with community and voluntary organisations appearing most likely to agree (15 of 20).

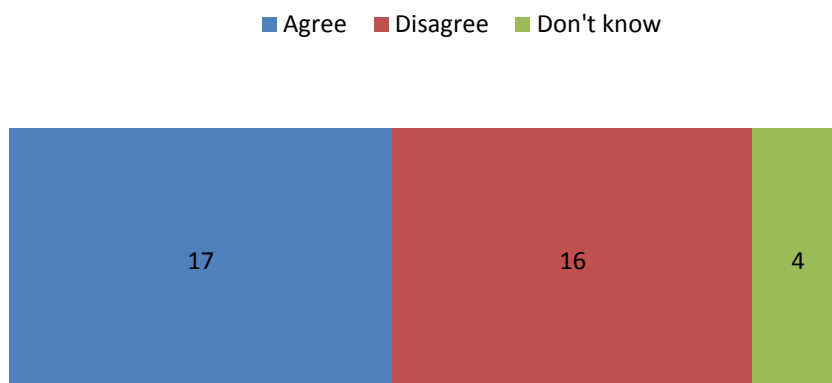
Figure 3.7: Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to remove static recycling sites across the borough? (base – 37)



3.5 Public Toilets

The council proposes to rationalise public toilet provision to reduce costs by 50%. The view from organisations on this proposal appears to be split, although businesses appear more likely to agree (5 agree, 2 disagree).

Figure 3.8: Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to rationalise public toilet provision to reduce costs by 50%? (base – 37)



The main comments made about the public toilet proposal were:

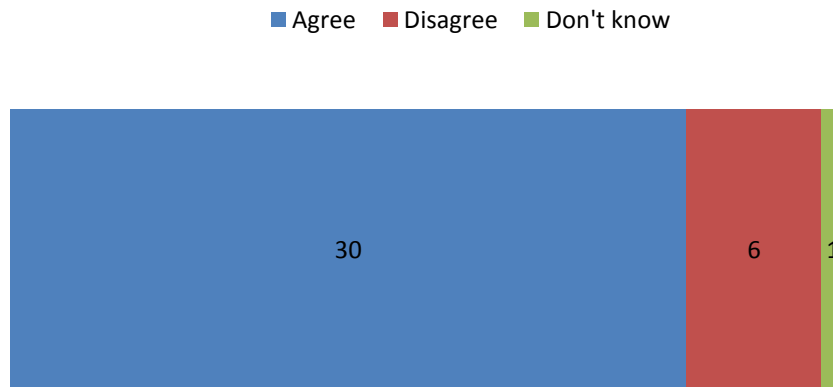
- Organisations highlighted the impact that a reduction in the number of toilets could have, both on people but also businesses and towns. Some feel it would lead to reduced visitor numbers and vulnerable people such as the elderly or those with a disability or limiting conditions could be affected.
- Some organisations suggested that people either already utilise businesses like cafes and shops to visit their toilet facilities, or that this could be a scheme that the council may look at in consultation with local businesses.
- A couple of organisations felt a small charge would be fair to ensure decent quality public toilets are provided.

3.6 Council Tax Discounts on Empty Properties

The Council proposes to reduce the time period for discretionary Council Tax Discounts on empty properties by half. There appears to be relatively strong agreement for this proposal amongst the organisations who responded. 30 of 37 organisations who responded to the

question indicated that they agree, with 19 of the 20 community and voluntary organisations agreeing.

Figure 3.9: Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to reduce the time period for discretionary Council Tax Discounts on empty properties by half? (base – 37)



A review of the comments on the proposal around Council Tax Discounts and the impact it might have reveals:

- General support for the proposal from some organisations, with a view that it could help to ensure that properties in the borough are better used and not left 'to attract vandalism and deteriorate'.
- A couple of comments indicated that any change to Council Tax Discount should account for discretionary circumstances, such as empty homes due to family deaths or older people moving into care. Also, one organisation suggested that there should be a way to distinguish between empty home owners who have their property up for sale and those making no attempt to sell.

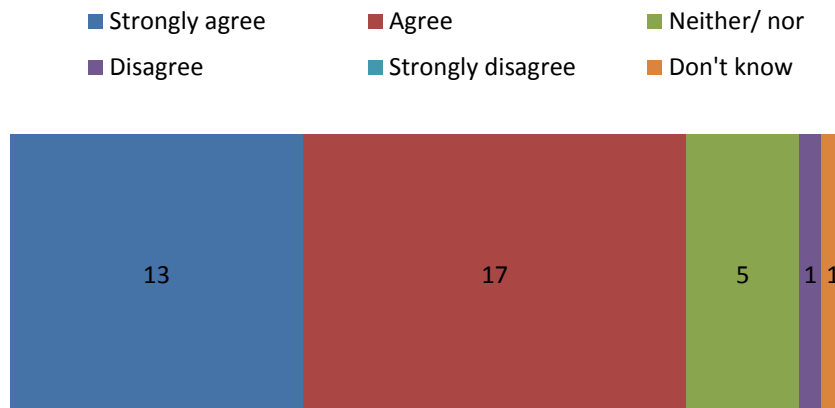
3.7 Overall Measures

30 of 37 organisations who responded to this question strongly agree or agree that they understand the challenges that the Council faces to find new ways of achieving savings and increasing income from the services it delivers.

Just one organisation disagreed with the statement.

Community and voluntary organisations were more likely to indicate strong agreement than businesses.

Figure 3.10: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement – ‘I understand the challenges that the Council faces to find new ways of achieving savings and increasing income from the services it delivers’? (base – 37)



Finally, organisations were given the opportunity to make any further comments or suggestions about how the council could make savings or increase income. The main ideas and suggestions were:

- Looking at opportunities to work with third sector and community organisations to deliver public service contracts in the borough.
- Opportunities for other community and voluntary schemes to support service delivery, including ‘community work schemes’ for those not in employment or looking at volunteering.
- General comments about ensuring internal efficiencies are reviewed and realised, including more auditing and accountability of council contracts.