

West Lancashire  
Meeting the Budget Challenge  
2016 Consultation  
Council Housing Tenants



in:fusion

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## Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Executive Summary.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Background and Methodology .....</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1	Background.....	4
2.2	Methodology.....	4
2.3	Who responded?.....	5
<b>3</b>	<b>Main Findings .....</b>	<b>7</b>
3.1	Water Mains.....	7
3.2	Fencing and Paving.....	8
3.3	Disabled Adaptations Policy .....	9
3.4	Gardening Services for Elderly or Disabled Residents .....	10
3.5	Other Comments and Suggestions.....	11

## 1 Executive Summary

**118 responses** were received to the 2016 Meeting the Budget Challenge consultation from Council housing tenants.

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.

For all proposals, more Council tenant respondents agree than disagree. The highest level of agreement is with the proposal to end the planned programme to replace fencing and paving from March 2017.

Proposals	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
To end the planned programme to replace fencing and paving from March 2017*	70%	22%	9%
To change the existing disabled adaptations policy to make better use of housing stock*	65%	18%	18%
Not to carry out a water mains replacement programme scheduled for 2017/18	62%	23%	15%
To introduce a nominal charge of £5 per week for 26 weeks to contribute to the costs of the gardening service	54%	38%	8%

*\*Some totals exceed 100% due to rounding*

From the comments received the main concerns appear to be the potential for:

- Health issues relating to drinking water if lead pipes are not replaced as part of the water mains programme
- An increase in health and safety hazards if paving is not replaced or regularly checked
- Any housing moves as part of the disabled adaptations policy to cause disabled people some stress or worry
- The cost of a gardening service to be too much for some vulnerable Council tenants on low income, although this was a mixed view with some others feeling that the proposed charge was reasonable

## 2 Background and Methodology

### 2.1 Background

West Lancashire Borough Council needs to make savings, efficiencies and increase income in order to contribute to savings required up to 2020.

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

From April 2016 the Government has required the Council to reduce housing rents by 1% per year up to 2020. This means that the Council has approximately £8 million less to invest than it had previously planned.

The Council has already identified £3.4m of efficiencies and other savings that will not affect service provision. However further options for savings will have a direct impact on the services it had planned to deliver.

The aim of the consultation is to understand whether Council tenants agree or disagree with the proposals and what impact these would have if they were implemented. The findings of the consultation will inform the decision-making process on the Council's budget for 2017/18.

This report focuses on the feedback received from **Council housing tenants** through the open-access consultation.

### 2.2 Methodology

An open-access online consultation survey was developed for Council tenants in West Lancashire to give their views on proposals around housing policy. The six week consultation went live on Monday 25 July 2016 and closed on Sunday 4 September 2016.

The Council tenants' survey was hosted on the Council website and promoted through a range of press releases and social media updates. Council tenants were also made aware that they could request a paper copy of the survey or send in their views directly either by email or in writing.

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, **118 responses were received from Council tenants**. This comprised 50 online responses, 67 completed paper surveys and 1 telephone interview.

The purpose of the consultation was to give Council tenants the opportunity to give their views on the Council’s housing policy 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 Council tenants in the borough.

Whilst demographic information was captured in the survey there will only be cross-tabulation analysis referenced within this report when sample sizes allow and findings are considered noteworthy.

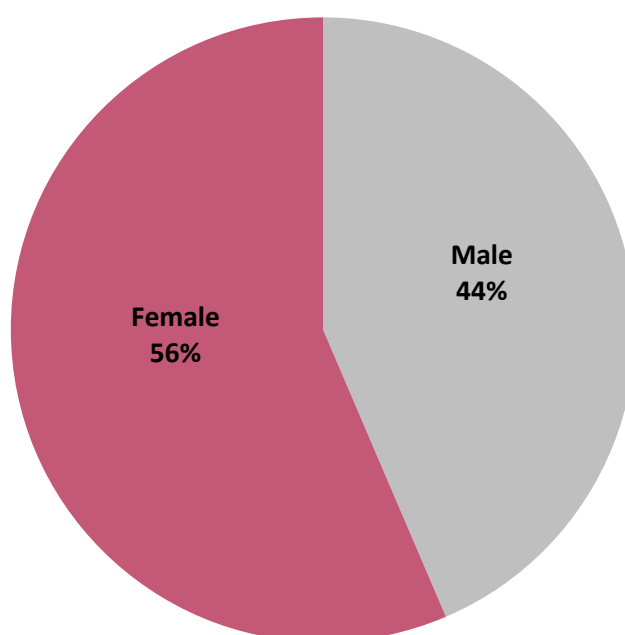
For some questions in this report, individual percentage figures may total above 100% due to rounding.

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?**

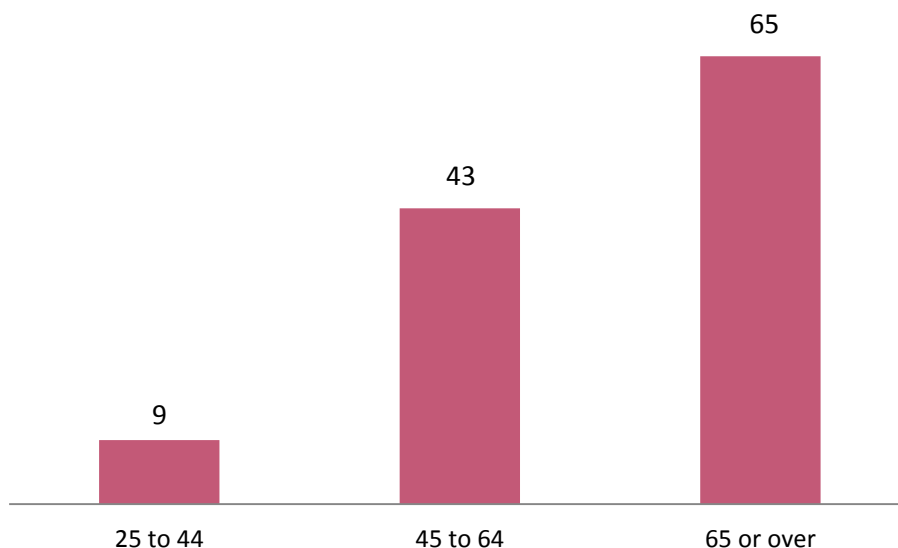
More females than males responded to the Council tenants’ consultation.

**Figure 2.1: What is your gender? (base – 115)**



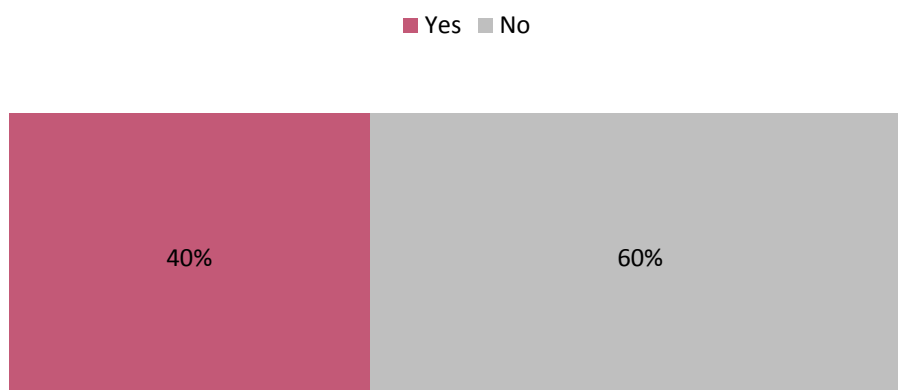
More than half (56%) of respondents to the Council tenants' consultation were aged 65 or over. There were no respondents from the 16 to 24 age group.

**Figure 2.2: What was your age on your last birthday? (base – 117, actual numbers)**



40% of respondents indicated that they have a disability or are deaf. This is higher than the 20% of residents in the borough who have a limiting long-term illness or disability according to 2011 Census statistics.

**Figure 2.3: Are you a deaf person or do you have a disability? (base – 116)**



Two thirds of respondents were of Christian faith, 18% indicated no faith. The majority (96%) of respondents are of White British ethnicity.

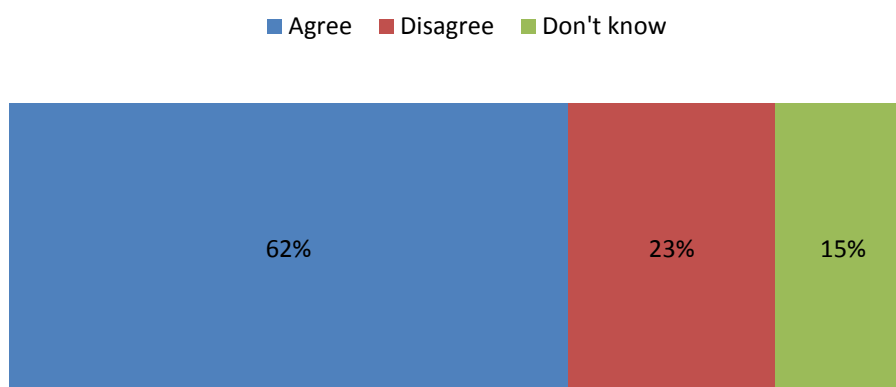
### 3 Main Findings

#### 3.1 Water Mains

Around three in five (62%) Council tenant respondents agree with the proposal not to carry out a water mains replacement programme scheduled to take place in 2017/18. 23% disagree with the proposal.

Older respondents appeared more likely to agree with the proposal, with 65% of those aged 45 or over agreeing compared to 33% (3 of 9) of 25 to 44 year olds.

**Figure 3.1: Do you agree or disagree with the proposal not to carry out a water mains replacement programme scheduled to take place in 2017/18? (base – 117)**



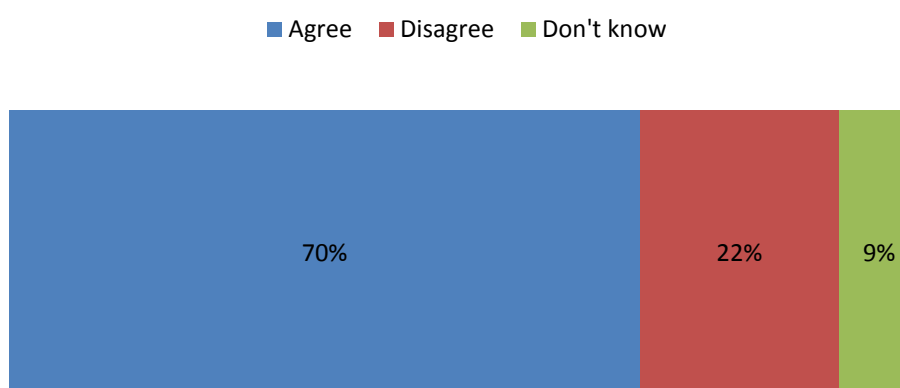
Respondents were asked for comments on the proposal and to explain any impact it might have on them. The main themes emerging are:

- The most common point raised through the comments on this proposal is a worry about the health impact of retaining lead pipes, particularly around drinking water.
- A couple of respondents suggest that the Council should consider postponing and reviewing the programme of replacement rather than cancelling it altogether.
- There was some support for the proposal reaffirmed in some of the comments, with a number of respondents feeling that it is not a problem to them at the moment and therefore replacing the pipes is not required.

### 3.2 Fencing and Paving

Seven in ten (70%) respondents to the consultation agree with the proposal to end the planned programme to replace fencing and paving from March 2017. 22% disagree with the proposal.

**Figure 3.2: Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to end the planned programme to replace fencing and paving from March 2017? (base – 115)**



*Please note that the totals exceed 100% due to rounding*

Of the comments made on this proposal, the main points were:

- The Council should still consider the safety of residents and Council tenants, particularly around uneven paving. Some suggestions were made around regular checks and monitoring of the state of pavements and fencing to avoid hazards and the risk of unnecessary accidents.
- A couple of respondents suggested that the maintenance of fencing should become the responsibility of Council tenants.
- Some comments indicated concern about the negative impact the proposal might have on the appearance of Council housing and surrounding areas.

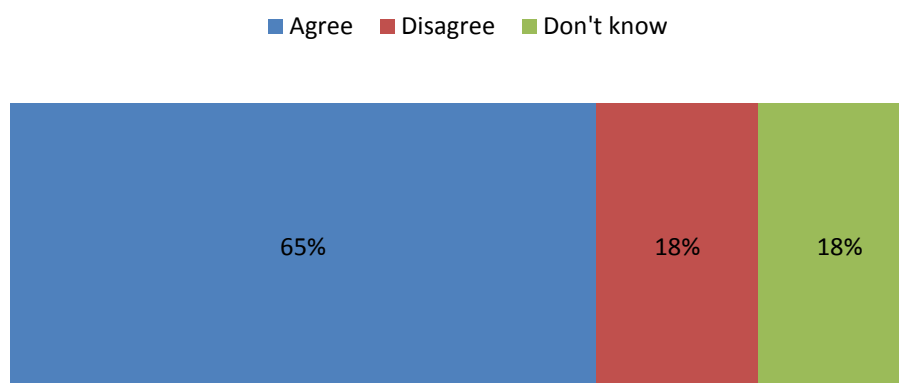


### 3.3 Disabled Adaptations Policy

65% of respondents agree with the proposal to change the existing policy to make better use of housing stock, make cost savings on adaptations and provide better for the needs of disabled Council tenants. 18% disagree with the proposal and a further 18% indicated that they do not know.

Those respondents with a disability were less likely to agree. 57% of people with a disability agreed compared to 70% of those with no disability.

**Figure 3.3: Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to change the existing policy to make better use of housing stock, make cost savings on adaptations and provide better for the needs of disabled tenants? (base – 113)**



*Please note that the totals exceed 100% due to rounding*

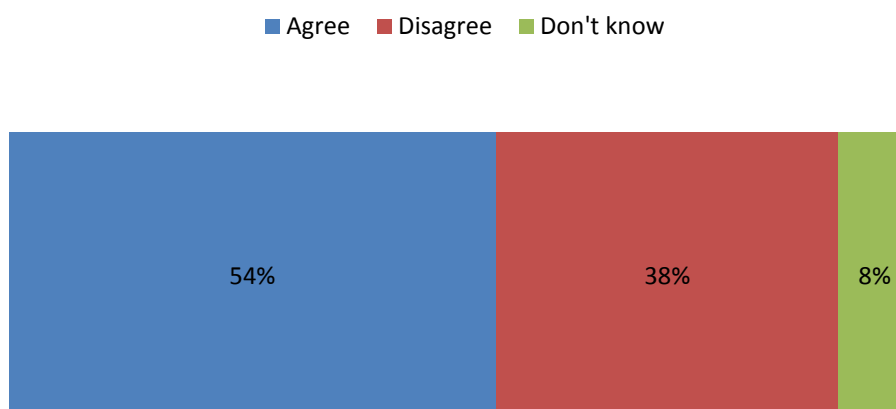
Of the comments made on the disabled adaptations policy proposal, two main points were covered:

- The main worry around the proposal is what it would mean for disabled Council tenants being re-housed, whether the housing would be suitable and the wider impact and stress this might cause people.
- A number of respondents did not feel there was enough information about the policy and what it means in reality to give an informed response.

### 3.4 Gardening Services for Elderly or Disabled Residents

54% of respondents agree with the proposal to introduce a nominal charge of £5 per week for 26 weeks to contribute to the costs of the gardening service. 38% disagree with this proposal.

**Figure 3.4: Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to introduce a nominal charge of £5 per week for 26 weeks to contribute to the costs of the gardening service? (base – 116)**



There was a mixed view in the comments on the proposed charge. Some indicated that it seemed a reasonable charge for a gardening service, particularly compared to the cost of private gardeners, although there was a caveat from a couple on the level of service that would be received if a charge was introduced. Conversely, some people feel the charge would be unfair or excessive and could have an impact on people on low incomes or modest pensions.

A couple of suggestions were made around how the Council might be able to use volunteers or people not in employment to deliver a gardening service to Council tenants at a reduced cost.

### **3.5 Other Comments and Suggestions**

Finally, respondents to the consultation were asked if they had any further comments or suggestions to make about how savings could be made or income increased. The main suggestions were:

- Reduce the salaries, remuneration and expenses of senior managers and councillors
- Ensure students and landlords are paying Council Tax
- Look to reduce the frequency of a range of council services in an effort to maintain them, including gardening services and bin collections
- Review contractor arrangements and staffing levels to drive efficiencies whilst delivering a better service