

BUDGET CONSULTATION: YOUCHOOSE BUDGET SIMULATOR RESULTS

Executive Summary

As part of the budget setting process for 2017-20, the Council used the YouChoose budget simulator as a means through which the residents of St Helens could put forward their views on how the required savings for 2017-18 could be achieved. The online budget simulator allowed residents to identify the areas in which they believed the Council should make savings, those areas they should potentially protect and indeed those areas in which they felt there should be further investment. In addition to aiming to balance the budget respondents were also allowed to make suggestions for reductions outside of those options posed by the budget simulator. The budget simulator was live on the Council's website from August 2016 until mid-February 2017. A total of 119 responses were received.

Key Findings

The table below provides an overview of the overall average reductions proposed in the responses to the consultation across the Council's services.

Table 1: Overall Average Changes to Council Spend

	Average % Change
Adult Social Care	-6.40%
Regeneration, Housing & Planning	-7.89%
Early Years & Young People's Services	-5.73%
Culture, Sport & Heritage	-10.04%
Environment & Neighbourhoods	-6.04%
Corporate Services	-12.78%

Appendix 1 provides a more detailed analysis of reductions over specific services areas. However, below is a summary of the main findings.

- In general, responses broadly supported similar reductions across all service areas of the Council with the exception of Corporate Services and Culture Sport and Heritage which saw respondents supporting a higher proposed reduction in spend.
- Of the 119 respondents 71 respondents (60%) supported increasing spend on one or more service areas.
- The average proposed decreases across Council Services spend ranged from a 5.73% reduction to a 12.78% reduction.
- There was no significant variance in reduction in spend across the following services; Adult Social Care, Early Years & Young People's Services, Regeneration, Housing & Planning, and Environment & Neighbourhoods (the range being between 5.73% to 7.89% reduction).

- The area in which respondents proposed the highest levels of reduction in spend was in respect of Corporate Services. The average reduction proposed by respondents was 12.78%.
- In respect of Adult Social Care the average reduction proposed by respondents was 6.4%. Learning Disability Support and Other Adult Services were the areas in which respondents proposed the greatest reduction (7.20% and 7.56% respectively). Respondents proposed the lowest level of reduction in the area of Mental Health Support (average reduction of 5.30%), but this was only marginally less than Physical and Sensory Support and Support for Memory and Cognition.
- The average reduction proposed for Regeneration, Housing & Planning was 7.89% across all areas. However, respondents favoured slightly higher reductions in Supporting People (average reduction of 8.37%). The lowest average reduction in spend was in the area of Support for Business (average reduction of 6.32%). In regard to Housing Services and Planning & Development Services the average proposed reduction was 7.57%.
- In respect of Early Years & Young People Services, the average proposed reduction was 5.73%, this being the service area respondents proposed the lowest reduction in spend overall across the Council. However, of the services within this category, Schools Related Education Functions saw the highest reduction at 6.47%.
- The average proposed reduction for Culture Sport & Heritage was 10.04%. Community Safety was the area in which respondents sought the lowest with the average reduction of 7.73%. However, the highest reductions were proposed in Culture & Heritage, which was over 3% more than Community Safety (average reduction of 11.27%). In the area of Recreation and Sport respondents proposed average reductions of 8.74%.
- The average proposed reduction to Environment & Neighbourhoods budgets was 6.04%. The lowest reduction was in the area of Highways, Roads and Transport Services (average reduction of 5.51%), which was closely followed by Waste and Recycling Services (average reduction of 5.52%). The other service areas were broadly similar ranging between a 7.06 % and 8.38% reduction in proposed spend.
- As stated above respondents proposed the highest reduction in Corporate Services. The highest reduction was in the area of Democratic Representation and Management (average reduction of 14.41%). The areas of Grants and Donations and Other Corporate Services saw respondents proposing savings of greater than 11%.

The budget simulator also asked respondents to provide their views on the areas in which they thought that the Council could increase income generation and efficiencies. Summaries of the response are provided below.

- In relation to income generating proposals respondents favoured increasing the Council's fees and charges by 5% as opposed to increasing Council Tax by 5%.
- There was strong support amongst respondents for the Council to look to drive efficiencies through improved procurement, 78.15% of respondents believed that the Council should seek to achieve efficiency through this mechanism.
- Based on the aggregated responses, respondents proposals suggested an overall reduction in Council Tax of 3.65%. Of the responses provided, 62 respondents (52%) favoured a reduction to Council Tax levels ranging from 1% to 37%. No respondents favoured an increase in Council Tax levels.

In addition to the responses to the specific proposals for balancing the Council's budget, the budget simulator also provided respondents with the opportunity to put forward their own suggestions on how the Council could save money. The full responses are available for inspection however below is a summary of some of the main proposals.

- Reduce the number of Councillors;
- Reduce Councillor allowances and expenses;
- Reduce salaries of senior management;
- Utilise shared services arrangements;
- Review procurement arrangements and shared commissioning;
- Increase partnership working;
- Use of volunteers, community groups, local participation;
- Turn off street and traffic lighting at certain hours;
- Reduce printing of glossy booklets such as St Helens First,
- Efficiencies in communication, use of Digital Services;
- Introduce incentives to attract business, thereby increasing the tax base and attract new jobs into the town ;
- Develop the Town Centre;
- Sale of surplus land or assets;
- Increase revenues through the introduction of new charges / increase fees; and
- Review recycling processes.

APPENDIX 1

AVERAGE REDUCTION IN SPEND OVER SERVICE AREAS

	% Reduction
ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES	
Adult Social Care and Health/Physical Support	-5.49%
Adult Social Care and Health/Sensory Support	-5.64%
Adult Social Care and Health/Support with Memory and Cognition	-5.86%
Adult Social Care and Health/Learning Disability Support	-7.20%
Adult Social Care and Health/Mental Health Support	-5.30%
Adult Social Care and Health/Other Adult Services	-7.56%
REGEN, HOUSING AND PLANNING	
Regeneration, Housing and Planning/Housing Services	-7.15%
Regeneration, Housing and Planning/Planning and Development Services	-7.98%
Regeneration, Housing and Planning/Support for Businesses	-6.32%
Regeneration, Housing and Planning/Supporting People	-8.37%
EARLY YEARS AND YOUNG PEOPLE SERVICES	
Early Years and Young Peoples Services/Early Years Development	-5.05%
Early Years and Young Peoples Services/Service to Young People & Other Community Learners	-4.83%
Early Years and Young Peoples Services/Young Peoples Commissioning & Social Work	-4.89%
Early Years and Young Peoples Services/Children Looked After and Young Peoples Safety	-5.78%
Early Years and Young Peoples Services/Family Support Services	-5.36%
Early Years and Young Peoples Services/School Related Education Functions	-6.47%
Early Years and Young Peoples Services/Other Children and Families Services	-5.74%
CULTURE, SPORT, HERITAGE	
Culture, Sport and Community Safety/Culture and Heritage	-11.27%
Culture, Sport and Community Safety/Community Safety	-7.73%
Culture, Sport and Community Safety/Recreation and Sport	-8.74%
ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOODS	
Environment and Neighbourhoods/Waste and Recycling Services	-5.52%
Environment and Neighbourhoods/Regulatory Services	-8.12%
Environment and Neighbourhoods/Highways, Roads and Transport Services	-5.51%
Environment and Neighbourhoods/Parks, Open Spaces and Environmental Initiatives	-7.06%
Environment and Neighbourhoods/Other Environmental Services	-8.38%
CORPORATE SERVICES	
Corporate Services/Grants and Donations	-11.05%
Corporate Services/Democratic Representation and Management	-14.41%
Corporate Services/Local Tax Collection	-9.54%
Corporate Services/Other Corporate Services	-11.51%

