

## **1.0 Resident's Survey – Budget Results Summary**

1.1 For six weeks during November/December 2022, the Council undertook a Resident's Survey. The feedback from which will be reviewed (including any associated action plans) in a Cabinet report in February 2023.

1.2 The online survey was publicised as widely as possible including local press, social media and through Parish Councils. It received over 1,000 responses, but caution is advised in terms of this being statistically representative.

1.3 Part of that survey included specific consultation on the 2023/24 budget. The budget feedback will be considered at the next round of Cabinet and PDG meetings in January. A summary of the budget related responses is included below along with a comparison, where applicable, to last year's results and those received from the Local Government Association resident satisfaction telephone survey, conducted in June 2022:

- 46% of responses indicated they agreed that the Council's services provide value for money (41% in 2021, 45% LG Inform);
- 42% said the most important priority when making spending decisions was providing basic statutory services (38% in 2021), 16% seeking to support and develop the economy, 15% tackling climate change (21% in 2021), and 14% said providing affordable housing (19% in 2021);
- 50% said when making spending plans the council should protect services even if it means it will need to increase council tax and fees and charges (46% in 2021). 26% said the Council should share services with other organisations (29% in 2021).
- 63% think this should come from planning and building control (49% in 2021).
- Of the discretionary services provided by MDDC there was a fairly even balance about which services should be protected. 52% public toilets (63% in 2021), 51% favoured parks and open spaces (67% in 2021), 46% town centre regeneration (52% in 2021).
- Of our statutory services 92% felt waste and recycling service was most important service (93% in 2021) followed by food and water sampling with 69% (68% in 2021), and homelessness at 56% (60% in 2021).

1.4 The results generally show a desire to protect basic service provision, even if it means it will need to increase council tax and fees and charges. Specific service areas results show a downward trend with many 2022 results being lower than the prior year equivalent.

1.5 The current proposed budget reflects much of this, through:

- Protecting services – no service reductions are currently included, although there clearly remains a significant deficit to offset;
- Significant investment in decarbonisation of our estate and additional housing;
- Income generation has been prioritised with a full review of Fees and Charges and inflationary price increases applied. In some cases, above

inflation increases have been applied to discretionary services to ensure full cost recovery is achieved.

- 1.6 Income from Planning Development is largely controlled by Government as planning fees are set nationally. However, all discretionary fees have been increased to minimise the difference between the cost of operating this service and the income it generates.
- 1.7 It has long been the view that all development service activity, including enforcement, should be funded by the fees paid by those who benefit from development proposals. In light of the residents' survey, we will write again to our MPs to seek support for allowing local authorities the ability to charge a variable rate for planning matters in order that local Council Tax payers don't have to subsidise development activity.
- 1.8 In this year's survey, we asked for what else should be considered a priority when setting the budget. The comments received suggest:
  - Protecting/supporting those who are vulnerable,
  - Climate change,
  - Council value for money/efficiency