

Budget Consultation 2012/2013 – Feedback Document



Purpose of This Document

- This document provides a summary of the response to the Budget Consultation 2012/2013. The results provided are the actual results based on the number of respondents. The responses could not be weighted to make them representative of the Craven population due to the low numbers of respondents.

What We Did and When

- The Budget Consultation was undertaken between December 2011 and January 2012.
- The following were directly consulted: Parish and Town Councils/Meetings, Craven Resident Panel, Craven District Council Members and Staff, Chambers of Trade, Local community and voluntary organisations, and Craven Youth Council.
- The consultation was also advertised on the Council website, press released, and within our own Community Bulletin. Copies of the consultation document were made available at the Council's main contact points/offices and at local libraries.

Purpose of the Consultation

- The Council wants the public to be more involved in shaping where it spends its limited resources. The budget consultation set out some key issues to think about and invited residents to give us views on their spending priorities.

Responses

- We received 75 responses to the main consultation survey. 61 responses were from residents, 11 from Parish and Town Councils/Meetings, 1 from a Chamber of Trade, 1 from a local organisation, and 1 from a local Councillor. The results were supplemented by the results from the Craven Youth Council focussing on spending priorities.
- Based on the number of the 61 residents answering questions about themselves, the demographics of individual resident respondents are summarised as:
 - 90% of respondents were aged 45+
 - 63% male and 37% female
 - 16% stated they had a disability or limiting long –illness
 - 100% stated they were white British
 - 23% of respondents live in Skipton and 13% in Sutton in Craven.
- Responses were also received from residents living in Bentham, Bradley, Burnsall, Burton in Lonsdale, Carleton in Craven, Cononley, Cowling, Embsay, Eslack, Gargrave, Giggleswick, Glusburn, Hellifield, Ingleton, Kirby Malhamdale, Langcliffe, Lothersdale, Settle, Skipton, Staniforth, Sutton in Craven, Thornton in Lonsdale, Thornton in Craven, Thorpe, and Threshfield.

Results

The following pages sets out the results of the consultation and our response to the findings. A shorter consultation exercise was undertaken with the Craven Youth Council and the results are included.

Spending on Services (Question 1 of our survey)

We Asked: Which key services should we reduce, maintain or increase spend on in 2012/2013. (A list of the key services was set out in the questionnaire.)

You Said: Overall, based on all the services provided, 95% of respondents stated spend should be reduced or maintained. Only 5% thought spend should be increased.

On an individual service basis most thought spend should be reduced or maintained.

The top 6 services respondents said we should reduce spend on were:

(The % indicates the % of respondents saying spend should be reduced)

- Executives & Business Support (89%)
- Corporate Costs (67 %)
- Transformation & Communications (64 %)
- Projects and Facilities (62%)
- Human Resources (56%)
- Financial Services (50%)

The top 3 services respondents said we should maintain spend on were:

Top 3 customer facing services

- Refuse Collection & Recycling (76%)
- Environmental & Regulatory Services (73%)
- Parking (71%)

Top 3 back office services

- Legal & Democratic (64%)
- Information Services (51%)
- Finance (49%)

The top 3 services where respondents said we should increase spend were as follows: (Although in each case the majority felt spend should be reduced or maintained)

- Housing (17%)
- Environmental & Regulatory Services (16 %)
- Cultural Services (13%)

Response from the Youth Council

The young people on the Youth Council were more inclined to increase spending on services than the respondents to the general survey.

The top 3 services Youth Council Members said we should increase spend on were:

(The % indicates the % of respondents saying spend should be increased)

- Transformation & Communication (64%)
- Culture and Related Services (46%)
- Environmental & Regulatory Services (46%)

The top 3 services Youth Council Members said we should reduce spend on were:

- Legal & Democratic (55%)
- Information Services (46%)
- Revenues & Benefits (45%)

What We Are Doing: The reality of the budget cuts means that spend in all services will be subject to pressure. We are looking to prioritise service spending on front line services and trying to ensure the majority of the reductions we make come from back office services. We have made savings of £607k in back office service budgets since 2010/11. This is 51% of the total savings in service budgets, and we will aim to increase this level. The feedback from the questionnaire will be used to help us prioritise further savings over the four years of our Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Council Priorities (Question 2 & Question 3 of our survey)

We Asked: If the Council's current priorities were still the right ones

You Said: Most people thought all priorities were still right.

Priority	% Saying Yes It is Right
Affordable Housing	66
Enterprising Craven	81
Empowering Communities	73
Reducing Carbon	78
Council Transformation	82

We Asked: If you had any suggestions for a new priority in 2012/2013.

You Said: 27 additional comments were made many focused on doing less, not wasting money and doing only the essential. No common additional priority can be identified from these comments.

What We Are Doing: The Council Plan priorities for 2012/2016 remain unchanged and are Affordable Housing, Enterprising Craven, Reducing Carbon, Empowering Communities and Council Transformation.

Satisfaction with Services (Question 4 of our survey)

We Asked: How satisfied you were with the services we provide. The list of services included: Aireville Park, Bereavement Services, Car Parking, Council Tax Benefits and Housing Benefits, Craven Museum and Gallery, Craven Pool & Fitness Centre, Environmental Health Services, Housing Advice Services, Planning & Building Control, Refuse & Recycling collection, Street Cleansing.

You Said: The majority of people are very or fairly satisfied with most of the services listed. However, there was a close split between satisfaction and dissatisfaction for Car Parking and Planning & Building Control. Housing Advice Services was one of the top 3 services for highest dissatisfaction; however the results showed most respondents were neither satisfied or dissatisfied with this service.

Top 3 Highest Satisfaction (Very/fairly satisfied)

- Refuse & Recycling Collection (87%)
- Street Cleansing (64%)
- Environmental Health Services (64%)

Top 3 Highest dissatisfaction (Very/fairly dissatisfied)

- Car Parking (43%)
- Planning & Building Control (40%)
- Housing Advice (19%)

What We Are Doing: We want to provide good quality, value for money services that meet needs and that users and residents are satisfied with. We are pleased that most respondents were satisfied with the majority of the services we provide, but we know we don't always get it right. We are constantly striving to improve the services we provide and we use the feedback we receive to make improvements.

Following a recent tendering exercise we will be bringing back the Homelessness & Housing Advice Service to an in house delivery option from May 2012 following the end of existing contractual arrangements with Yorkshire Housing. Bringing the service back in house will enable the Council to generate cost savings and to bring about improvements to the service and resident satisfaction.

Value for Money (Questions 5 & 6 of our survey)

We Asked: If you agreed or disagreed that the Council provides value for money.

You Said: 47% of respondents disagree/disagree strongly that the Council provides value for money. 32% of respondents strongly agree/agree that it does.

The majority of respondents feel that it is important:

Firstly	the Council provides good value for money to local tax payers
Secondly	Council Tax rates are kept low
Thirdly	the Council provides high quality services

What We Are Doing: We want to ensure that we provide efficient, effective and value for money services. We have agreed a Value for Money Framework and Action Plan that sets out the mechanisms we have in place and the actions we will undertake to ensure the services we provide are value for money.

We have reduced service budgets by £1.2 million over the last two years. We have also invested £295k in non-recurring expenditure that will enable us to make future efficiency savings.

A programme of Value for Money Service Reviews is underway to ensure the services we provide continue to give value for money. We have recently completed a review of Street Cleansing and reviews of our Legal and Democratic Services, and Finance, are now nearing completion. We have also completed a number of structural reviews of key services including Revenues & Benefits and Customer Services, and Asset Management. Savings from these reviews have been built into the 2012/2013 budget and identified improvements will be implemented and monitored.

We are constantly reviewing arrangements for procurement including options for joint working. We have recently retendered our grounds maintenance contract which will save approximately £200k in actual costs over the lifetime of the contract.

We have entered into a shared service with Selby District Council for the provision of ICT services and will commence shared services with Harrogate Borough Council and Hambleton & Richmondshire District Councils for Internal Audit and Payroll services from 1st April 2012. All of these initiatives have helped the Council to save money.

Each year as part of its annual audit of the Council, the Audit Commission give a value for money conclusion. The last audit of our 2010/11 arrangements concluded that the Council had proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Council Tax and Service Provision (Questions 7 & 8 of our survey)

We Asked: The level of Council Tax rise you would prefer from a number of options.

You Said: 63% of respondents said they would prefer a Council Tax rise of 2.5% in 2012/2013 followed by 2.5% in 2003/2014.

We Asked: If you agreed or disagreed with paying more Council Tax to protect public services in Craven.

You Said: 40% disagreed/disagreed strongly whilst 37% strongly agreed/agreed

We Asked: If you would accept additional charges for some services if this meant other essential services were protected.

You Said: 68% of respondents said that yes they would.

We Asked: If you would accept the Council not providing some services to protect and develop others.

You Said: 58% of respondents said that yes they would

What We Are Doing: The Council agreed to freeze Council Tax at current levels for 2012/13. Decisions on future Council Tax increases will continue to be made in February each year as part of the annual budget setting process. In 2012/13 freezing the level of Council Tax meant the Council will get an additional one off grant of £85k from Government. As we won't get this in future years, it will mean we have to save an additional £85k in 2013/14 to balance the budget.

We have reviewed our fees and charges for 2012/13 and have made increases in a number of areas and introduced some new fees. However, we have also decided not increase current charges for some of the services we provide. Examples include car parking, and some fees and charges at Craven Pool and Fitness Centre. We need to make sure our fees are fair and competitive, and don't have a significant detrimental impact on users being able to access our services.

Whilst we don't want to stop providing any of the services, in the future we may have to consider making tough decisions on which discretionary services we will continue to provide, as funding from Government reduces further.