

Budget Consultation 2019-20

Executive Summary

As part of the budget setting process for 2019-20, the Council consulted with the residents of St. Helens, giving them the opportunity to put forward their views on proposals for Council Tax increases. Respondents were asked if they were aware St Helens Council has the lowest council tax in Merseyside, whether they were aware the Council has experienced significant revenue grant reductions of £90m during 2010-2020 and will have made savings of £20.6m during the three-year period 2017-2020. Residents were also consulted on which areas of service they would like to see the Council spend more, less or the same amount of money.

The consultation was available on the Council Website from 15th January 2019 until the 4th February 2019. A total of 303 responses were received, which is significantly higher than the 86 responses received in the previous year.

Key Findings

The majority of respondents (77%) were aware that between 2010 and 2020 the Council has received reduced revenue grant funding from Government of £90million.

Only 52% of respondents knew that St Helens Council will have made £20.6m of savings during the three-year period 2017-2020.

A minority of residents who responded (22%) were aware that St Helens Council Tax is the lowest in Merseyside.

In regard to the in-principle proposals for a 2.99% Council Tax increase in 2019-20, the majority of respondents disagreed with the increase in Council Tax (65%).

The table below provides an overview of the responses to the consultation with regards to how the Council should spend its resources. A pictorial representation for each service area is included in Appendix 1.

Table 1:

Service Area	More money	Same amount of money	Less money
Education	44%	50%	6%
Children's Social Services	43%	49%	8%
Adult Social Care & Health	45%	46%	9%
Community Safety	37%	53%	10%
Youth & Youth Offending	26%	52%	22%
Libraries, Culture & Heritage	26%	45%	29%

Service Area	More money	Same amount of money	Less money
Parks & Open Spaces	27%	54%	19%
Waste Collection & Recycling	33%	55%	12%
Traffic Management & Road Safety	23%	54%	23%
Street Cleansing	21%	61%	18%
Highways & Street Lighting	13%	64%	23%
Environmental Health & Trading Standards	13%	60%	27%
Recreation & Sport	19%	44%	37%
Private Housing Initiatives	7%	30%	63%
Planning & Economic Development	19%	47%	34%

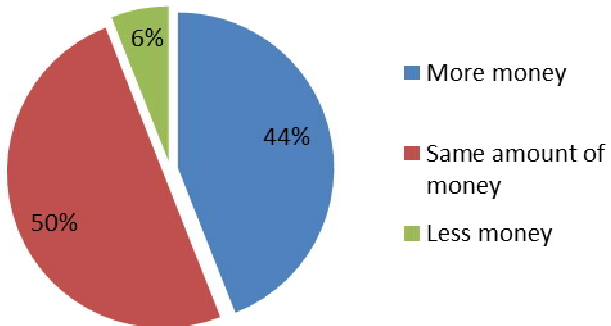
To summarise the findings in Table 1:

- The proposed increases on Council Services spend ranged from 7% in Private Housing Initiatives to 45% in Adult Social Care.
- The five services highlighted by respondents as the top areas they would like to see more resources being spent were in Adult Social Care, Education, Children’s Social Services, Community Safety and Waste Collection & Recycling.
- The percentage of respondents who expressed the view that less money should be spent on Education, Children’s Social Services, Adult Social Care & Health and Community Safety was lowest, being between 6% and 10%.
- A significant percentage of respondents (63%) felt less money should be spent on Private Housing Initiatives. This was the only service where the majority of respondents felt the Council should spend less.
- Generally, in terms of Highways & Street Lighting, Street Cleansing and Environmental Health & Trading Standards, the majority of respondents felt the Council was allocating the correct amount of funding.

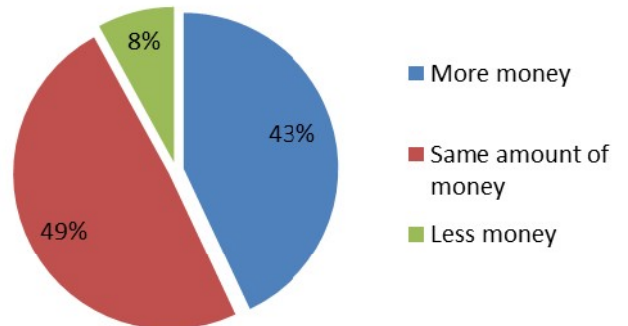
The residents of St Helens were specifically asked if they would like to provide further comments regarding the Budget for 2019-20; many respondents did not provide any comments. The main feedback is detailed below but full responses are available for inspection:

- Reduce usage of consultants;
- Investment in town centre's amenities;
- Reduce the numbers of Councillors;
- Reduce Councillor allowances and expenses;
- Reduce the number of Senior Managers and salaries;
- Improve recycling collection system;
- Improve community activity to help reduce crime;
- Use of volunteers, community groups, local participation;
- Re-open Central Library;
- Closure of public buildings over the Christmas Period;
- Create a more commercial aspect within the Council to generate additional income;
- Concerns over plans for building on green belt land.

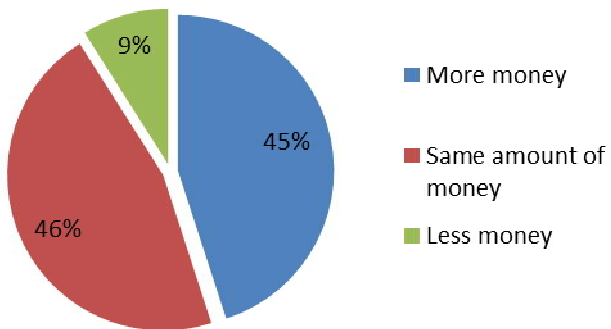
Education



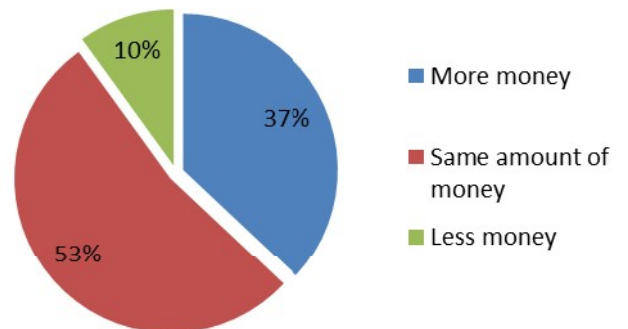
Children's Social Services



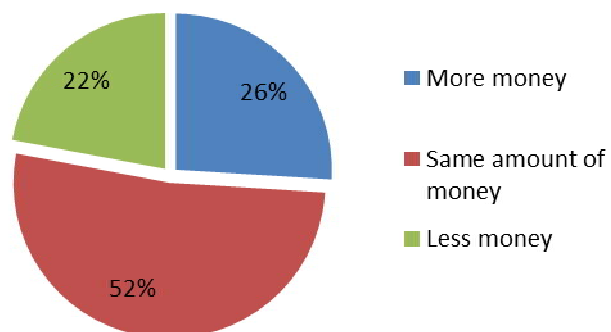
Adult Social Care & Health



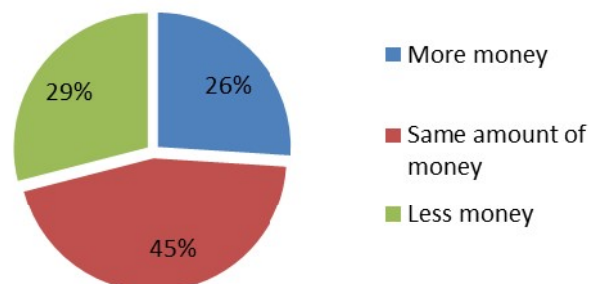
Community Safety



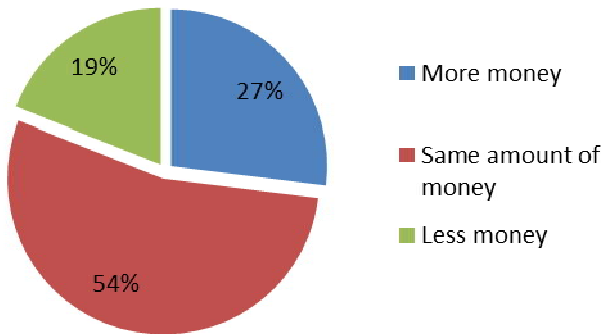
Youth & Youth Offending



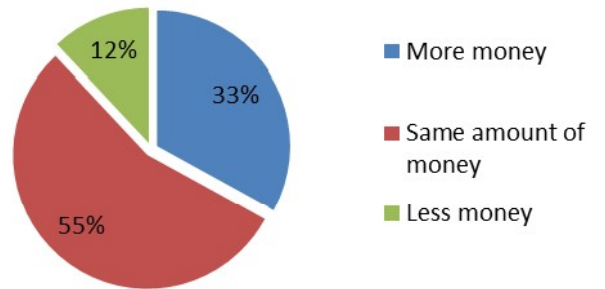
Libraries, Culture & Heritage



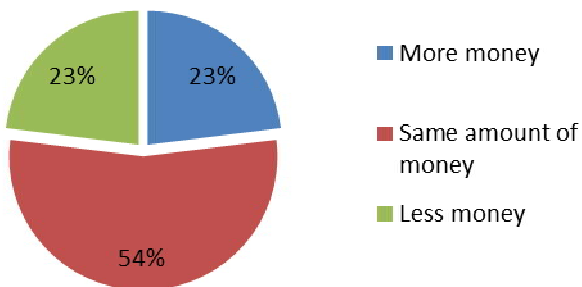
Parks & Open Spaces



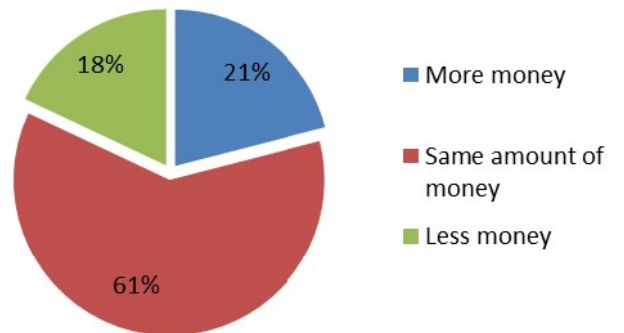
Waste Collection & Recycling



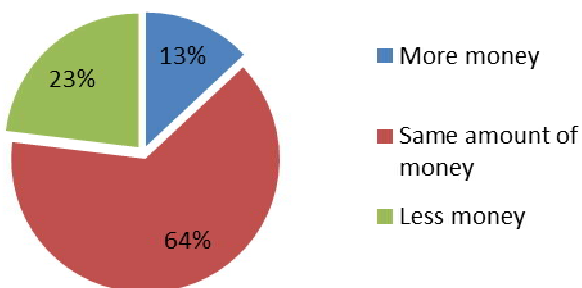
Traffic Management & Road Safety



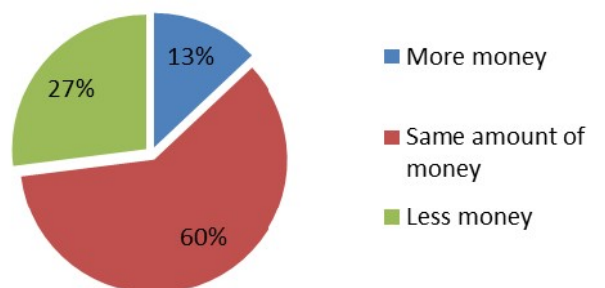
Street Cleansing



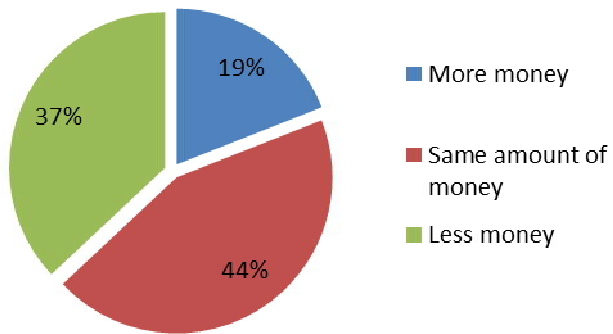
Highways & Street Lighting



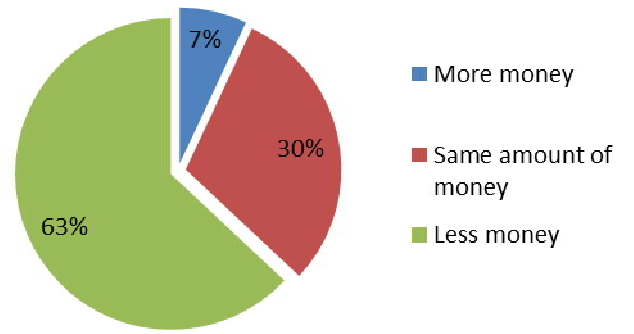
Environmental Health & Trading Standards



Recreation & Sport



Private Housing Initiatives



Planning & Economic Development

