



St Helens Borough Council Budget Consultation 2022-2023

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council ran a public budget consultation exercise from 8 December 2021 to 3 January 2022 seeking the views of residents and businesses on the vital services funded from the Council budget. These services were aligned to the Council's Service Priorities detailed within the Borough Strategy 2030. In addition, views were also sought on how the Council could generate additional income to support the budget, and which areas of spending were important for the Council to focus upon during recovery from the pandemic.
- 1.2 The consultation was promoted on the Council's webpage and an active social media campaign was conducted encouraging residents and businesses to respond and share their views and provide comments.
- 1.3 The consultation covered a number of service activities from within five of the Council's strategic priorities and sought views on whether respondents considered these as important / not important or whether they had no preference. A total of 104 responses were received. However, not all respondents provided a response to every question.
- 94 responses were from residents of the borough (90.38%)
 - 3 responses were from business of the borough (2.89%)
 - 7 responses were classed as other (6.73%)
- 1.4 In responding to the consultation, residents and businesses were asked to consider the impact not only on themselves and their families, but also to reflect on their immediate and wider communities.

2. Key Findings

- 2.1 Overall, the feedback from the consultation reaffirms the Council Priorities set out in the Borough Strategy, previously consulted upon in 2020. In most areas, residents and businesses considered the selected service activity within each priority as important.
- 2.2 A summary of the responses for each service priority is detailed below, alongside commentary on income generation and respondent's views on service priorities following the pandemic.

2.3 Priority 1 – Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life

2.3.1 Of the 6 areas included within the survey for this priority 77% of respondents viewed these areas as important, of which the most important were services supporting children and families, keeping children safe, and reducing child poverty and inequality.

Priority 1 – Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life . We want to make a difference to the lives of children and young people who live in the borough, improve outcomes for all children, whilst tackling deprivation and child poverty and protecting children from vulnerable backgrounds.				
Answer Choices	Important	No preference	Not Important	Response Total
Involving children and young people in shaping services	58 56.86%	30 29.41%	14 13.73%	102
Supporting children and families and keeping children safe	88 85.44%	14 13.59%	1 0.97%	103
Providing early help services and children's centres across the Borough	77 77.00%	20 20.00%	3 3.00%	100
Improving services for children in care	78 77.23%	23 22.77%	0 0.00%	101
Encouraging all children and young people to meet their full potential	83 81.37%	17 16.67%	2 1.96%	102
Reducing child poverty and inequality	86 83.50%	13 12.62%	4 3.88%	103

2.4 Priority 2 – Promote good health, independence, and care across our communities

2.4.1 Within this priority 79% of respondents considered all the four areas identified as being important.

Priority 2 - Promote good health, independence, and care across our communities. We want to continue to deliver excellent integrated services to make sure residents can access help and support in the right place at the right time.				
Answer Choices	Important	No preference	Not important	Response Total
Working with health partners to deliver excellent joined up services	77 75.49%	17 16.67%	8 7.84%	102
Ensuring older people and vulnerable adults are looked after and supported to live independently	86 83.50%	16 15.53%	1 0.97%	103
Supporting people to manage their own health conditions, stay healthier for longer and lead fulfilling lives	77 75.49%	19 18.63%	6 5.88%	102
Promoting mental health and wellbeing services	84 81.56%	17 16.50%	2 1.94%	103

2.5 Priority 3 - Create safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods for all

2.5.1 Of the 4 areas included within the survey for this priority 73% of respondents viewed these areas as important, of which the most important was people wanting to feel safe in their homes and communities.

Priority 3 - Create safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods for all. We want St Helens Borough to be welcoming for all, where people get on with each other and feel part of their local neighbourhood.

Answer Choices	Important	No preference	Not important	Response Total
Creating safer and stronger communities, so people feel safe in their homes and communities	85 85.86%	13 13.13%	1 1.01%	99
Providing support to our most vulnerable residents and those living in our most deprived areas	73 73.00%	21 21.00%	6 6.00%	100
Ensuring residents have access to quality and affordable homes	61 60.40%	32 31.68%	8 7.92%	101
Reducing the number of rough sleepers and providing support to homeless individuals	72 72.00%	22 22.00%	6 6.00%	100

2.6 Priority 4 - Support a strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected economy

2.6.1 Within this priority respondents considered attracting investment into the borough and the creation of jobs for local people as the most important. Overall, of the 4 areas included within the survey 73% of respondents viewed these as important.

Priority 4 - Support a strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected local economy. We want to improve our local economy, and address long standing issues such as poverty and unemployment.

Answer Choices	Important	No preference	Not important	Response Total
Creating vibrant high streets to attract visitors through regeneration of the Boroughs Town Centres and localities	62 60.78%	27 26.47%	13 12.75%	102
Attracting investment in the Borough to create new jobs for local people	88 85.44%	12 11.65%	3 2.91%	103
Supporting businesses to grow and thrive	73 73.74%	19 19.19%	7 7.07%	99
Delivering and ensuring a sustainable transport infrastructure	72 70.59%	18 17.65%	12 11.76%	102

2.7 Priority 5 - Create green vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture

2.7.1 Of the 5 areas included within the survey respondents considered waste management, keeping the borough clean, and provision of parks and playgrounds as the most important.

Priority 5 - Create green vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture. We want St Helens to be a better, healthier, and more sustainable place that proudly celebrates our culture and heritage whilst embracing new opportunities.

Answer Choices	Important	No preference	Not important	Response Total
Creating greater opportunities for leisure and cultural activities	58 56.87%	35 34.31%	9 8.82%	102
Promoting walking, running and cycling	44 44.00%	38 38.00%	18 18.00%	100
Providing excellent waste management services and keeping the Borough clean	82 81.19%	15 14.85%	4 3.96%	101
Providing and maintaining our parks, playgrounds and open spaces	83 80.58%	18 17.48%	2 1.94%	103
Tackling climate change and reducing our carbon footprint	56 56.00%	29 29.00%	15 15.00%	100

2.8 Income Generation

2.8.1 Overall, respondents supported providing more digital solutions and offering more services online, encouraging more businesses to start up in the borough and maximising opportunities as working as part of the Liverpool City Region to generate additional income and funding.

2.8.2 Less than 23% of respondents agreed with Council Tax increases and 50 respondents (48.54%) strongly disagreed with Council Tax increases.

2.8.3 71% of respondents disagreed with either increasing existing fees and charges or the introduction of new fees and charges for services which the Council provide and are currently free.

Looking at ways to generate income is one way the council can look to balance its budget and deliver on priorities. Do you agree or disagree with the following?

Answer Choices	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Response Total
Providing digital solutions and offering more online services	33 32.67%	47 46.54%	19 18.81%	2 1.98%	101
Increasing existing fees and charges	4 3.88%	22 21.36%	42 40.78%	35 33.98%	103
Introducing new charges for services that the Council provide which are currently free	5 4.85%	29 28.16%	32 31.07%	37 35.92%	103
Increasing Council Tax	3 2.91%	20 19.42%	30 29.13%	50 48.54%	103
Encouraging new businesses to start up in the Borough	67 66.34%	29 28.71%	5 4.95%	0 0.00%	101
Taking a more commercial approach	33 32.67%	46 45.55%	18 17.82%	4 3.96%	101
Maximising opportunities of working as part of the Liverpool City Region	42 41.18%	43 42.16%	9 8.82%	8 7.84%	102
Other	10 47.62%	5 23.80%	3 14.29%	3 14.29%	21

2.9 Post Pandemic Recovery

2.9.1 Respondents were asked to consider which areas of Council activity are the most important to focus on during recovery from the pandemic. Of the 15 areas covered within the survey respondents identified the three main priorities as:

- supporting children and families
- prioritising mental health
- regeneration of the town centre and its localities.

2.9.2 Respondents also commented that provision of a hostel for rough sleepers and homeless individuals, education and job creation were key areas to focus upon.

As we recover from the Coronavirus pandemic, which of the following areas do you think are most important for the council to focus on? (Please select a maximum of three options).		
Answer Choices		Response Percent
1	Supporting young people to achieve their goals	19.84%
2	Supporting children and families	36.37%
3	Improving health and care and supporting people to live active and healthy lives	23.96%
4	Prioritising mental health	33.06%
5	Supporting older people to live independently within their own home	28.92%
6	Reducing homelessness	19.01%
7	Improving community safety	21.49%
8	Regeneration of our town centres and its localities	33.88%
9	Encouraging everyone to learn and develop skills	6.61%
10	Creating opportunities for employment	23.14%
11	Support the local economy to recover from the pandemic	17.35%
12	Increase tourism and events	2.48%
13	Taking positive action to tackle climate change	9.92%
14	Increasing recycling throughout the Borough	7.44%
15	Investing in new technology	6.61%
16	Other	9.92%

The table shows the percentage of respondents including the respective service areas within their three most important.