

Appendix F – Budget Consultation Feedback



2023/24 Budget Consultation Feedback

Overview of Consultation Process

- This report highlights the key findings of the Budget Consultation 2023-24 conducted by the London Borough of Hillingdon from 16 December 2022 to 29 January 2023.
- The purpose of the consultation was to seek views from residents and local businesses on Hillingdon Council's budget proposals for 2023-24.
- The consultation was publicised:
 - On Hillingdon Council's website
 - Through the Council's social media platforms
- Information about the consultation was also sent directly to:
 - Residents on the Council's Customer Engagement database;
 - Residents associations in the borough.
- The survey received 611 responses, an increase of 496 responses from last year.
- The total number of responses and **key themes** from all open questions are shown in the Survey results.
- All results are unweighted.
- Results are based on all respondents unless otherwise stated.

Summary of key findings

- 95% of the respondents are residents, 5% are on behalf of local businesses or organisations.
- The majority (77%) of respondents are dissatisfied with the budget proposals, 3% are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied which leaves 20% satisfied with the Council's budget proposals.
- 68% of the respondents disagree that the budget proposals give residents and local businesses value for money, with 13% neither agreeing nor disagreeing, leaving 19% agreeing that the budget proposals give value for money.
- 49% of respondents feel well informed about the budget proposals, leaving 51% feeling not informed.

The document is structured by firstly presenting the survey results and secondly presenting the demographic and background information on respondents.

Appendix F – Budget Consultation Feedback

Survey results

Q1: How satisfied are you with the Council's budget proposals for 2023/24?

Response	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
Very Satisfied	84	14%
Somewhat Satisfied	33	5%
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	21	3%
Dissatisfied	124	20%
Very Dissatisfied	349	57%
Total	611	100%

Q1a. Please tell us why:

Positive

Comments suggest that respondents agree for the following reasons:

- Lower than expected increases below inflation rate
- Budget striking the right balance
- Great services provided by Hillingdon
- Tax increases and charges still less than other boroughs

Negative

- Opposed to £75 charge for 1st parking permit, with comments including that car owners unfairly targeted
- Parking charge increases will adversely affect local businesses and high streets
- Funding cuts to Green Spaces and bowls club will have adverse effects on pensioners wellbeing and their ability to exercise and socialise
- Need to improve council services in general and the possible effects of cuts. Level of services provided by the Council are not increasing in line with price increases
- Concerns about that the 30% increase to hall hire prices and effects on local theatres, clubs and societies.
- Nursery and schools - 30% increase is seen as unfair with the increase being higher or in line with private nurseries.
- Increases are too steep and should have been staggered, particularly in an environment of high inflation and the cost-of-living crisis

Neutral

- ULEZ expansion into Hillingdon should be challenged

Appendix F – Budget Consultation Feedback

Q2: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the budget proposals give value for money to local people and businesses?

Response	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
Strongly Agree	86	14%
Tend to Agree	26	4%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	81	13%
Tend to Disagree	135	22%
Strongly Disagree	283	46%
Total	611	100%

Comments on question 2 are a continuation of the same themes raised under question 1.

Q3: How well informed, if at all, do you feel about the budget proposals?

Response	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
Very Well Informed	124	20%
Fairly Well Informed	178	29%
Not Very Well Informed	169	28%
Not Informed At All	140	23%
Total	611	100%

Q3a: Are there any other comments you would like to make about the council's budget proposals for 2023-24?

Most comments were in line with those raised under question 1.

Other comments included:

- The budget proposals were not well circulated
- The information had to be sought after rather than openly issued to all residents

Survey Results – Demographic and Background Information

Q4. Are you completing this survey...?

Response	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
As a resident	581	95%
On behalf of a local	30	5%
Total	611	100%

Q5. Please tell us your postcode:

Response	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
HA4	159	26%
HA5	55	9%
UB3	60	10%
UB7	58	9%
UB8	80	13%
HA6	44	7%
UB10	81	13%
UB4	19	3%
UB5	9	1%
UB9	11	2%
WD3	1	0%
Other	4	1%
Not Completed	30	5%
Total	611	100%

Q6. Please tell us the name of your business or organisation:

Response	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
Anonymous	1	
Total	1	1%

Q7. Please tell us the postcode of your business or organisation:

Response	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
No post code given	1	100%
Total	1	100%

Appendix F – Budget Consultation Feedback

Q8: Are you:

Response	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
Female	311	51%
Male	249	41%
Other	4	1%
Prefer not to say	44	7%
Mr & Mrs	1	0%
Non-binary	1	0%
Not Completed	1	0%
Total	611	100%

Q9: How old are you?

Response	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
Under 18	3	0%
18 to 24	20	3%
25 to 34	67	11%
35 to 44	146	24%
45 to 54	115	19%
55 to 64	131	22%
65+	129	21%
Total	611	100%

Appendix F – Budget Consultation Feedback

Other Responses Received Outside of the Consultation Survey

Emails

- Local theatres, clubs and societies – 20 emailed Responses
 - Included in responses are from members of the society of Ruislip artists, the arts society Hillingdon and Proscenium
 - All opposed the planned increase of 30% to hire of theatres and halls with specific mentions to Winston Churchill Hall.
 - Responses include the risk to local theatre in Hillingdon which is already badly affected by COVID.
- Cut in funding for green spaces - 2 responses
 - Ruislip bowls club
 - Need for better flood defences – flood alleviation and maintenance of ditch/sewer/ clearance and repairs of natural flood management measures
- Social care – 1 emailed response
 - Not enough funding allocated to social care.
- Parking – 2 emailed responses
 - opposed to plan not to give free parking permits.

Petitions

- Two petitions were received regarding the Council's parking charges that were introduced for 2022/23 as part of the budget setting process for the year and proposed to be continued into 2023/24.
- Both petitions raised concerns over the removal of the free 30 minutes for non-residents and the impact on local businesses implemented from April 2022.

Letters

Early Years Centre Fees increases

- A letter received by Cllr O'Brien and Council Officers from the Save our Nurseries Campaign objecting to the proposed 30% increase in early year centre fees and instead requesting our consideration of a gradual increase over the financial year rather than an overnight 30% increase to help parents plan and budget appropriately.
- The letter was signed by 110 people.

Ruislip Residents Association

- The letter received from RRA recognised the challenges facing the council but listed concerns with specifics regarding:
 - Significant Increases in parking charges
 - Introduction of parking charges at Breakspear crematorium as a tax on mourners
 - Budget reduction of green spaces
 - Introduction of £75 first parking permit was not what residents have signed up for

Appendix F – Budget Consultation Feedback

- References to SEN transport and suggestion of reduction to be made
 - No specifics on how savings are to be achieved in each area
- The letter also referenced years of refusal by council to increase council tax as a cause of many of the problems and for the council not to repeat this failure in future but rather with smaller yearly increases to prevent significant increases in the future.

Appendix F – Budget Consultation Feedback

Comments from Select Committees on Cabinet’s 2023/24 budget proposals

As part of the Constitution (Budget and Policy Framework Procedure), Select Committees have a statutory role to review the Cabinet’s draft budget proposals, which were set out at Cabinet on 15 December 2022 and then to submit their comments to the Cabinet for consideration before the final budget is recommended to full Council. At Select Committee meetings in January 2023, consideration was given to reports which provided details of the draft budget proposals relating to the remit of each committee.

The formal comments of the Committee, whether approved at the meeting or through delegated authority after the meeting as agreed by the Chairman, in consultation with the Opposition Lead, are set out below:

Select Committee	Comments
Children, Education & Families Select Committee 4 January 2023	<p>The Committee recognises the pressures placed on the Council's budget through the rising cost of inflation, the legacy impact of Covid-19 and the increasing demands on Children's Services.</p> <p>Additionally, the Committee acknowledges the importance of early help and prevention as a measure to support our families and young people before matters escalate to crisis point, as well as a means to alleviate demand on non-statutory services.</p>
Property, Highways and Transport Select Committee 11 January 2023	<p>The Committee commended the balanced budget proposals in continuing to provide excellent services to residents under the Property, Highways and Transport portfolio and in an extremely challenging economic climate.</p> <p>The proposed increases in fees and charges were deemed necessary in the face of unprecedented inflation rates and considering the comparatively low fees and charges experienced in Hillingdon when compared to neighbouring authorities.</p> <p>Members endorsed the proposals for finding necessary efficiency savings whilst still investing in services for residents, notably through the Capital Programme and projects such as the West Drayton Leisure Centre.</p>

Appendix F – Budget Consultation Feedback

<p>Finance and Corporate Services Select Committee</p> <p>11 January 2023</p>	<p>The Committee noted the report, accepted the balanced proposed budget and that the Council would continue to monitor and maintain a risk register.</p>
<p>Residents' Services Select Committee</p> <p>19 January 2023</p>	<p>The Committee endorses the budget proposals outlined in the report and notes the challenges to be addressed by the Administration due to the economic conditions faced by all local authorities following recovery from the pandemic and higher inflation, resulting in a significant increase in expenditure.</p> <p>Despite these difficult circumstances, the Committee welcomes the Administration's continued efforts and commitment to invest in front line services and Putting Our Residents First, such as a new Leisure Centre in the south of the Borough and funding of the popular Chrysalis and ward budgets schemes.</p> <p>The Council's investment in the regeneration of our housing estates in both Avondale and Hayes Town Centre is also welcomed and endorsed by the Committee and will see a positive transformation of those communities whilst providing much needed housing in a sensible and practical way.</p> <p>The modest increase in fees and charges is unfortunate, though understandable given the financial pressures we face. However, the Committee is reassured to know that Hillingdon's fees and charges will still be among the lowest in London despite these increases.</p>
<p>Health and Social Care Select Committee</p> <p>26 January 2023</p>	<p>The Committee acknowledges the current financial environment but also recognises the importance of health and social care to the lives of large parts of Hillingdon's community. The Committee is grateful to Council officers for their work on the budget as well as the staff who have worked tirelessly to provide health and social care services.</p> <p>Having received assurances about service continuity and improved ways of working, the Committee asks that</p>

Appendix F – Budget Consultation Feedback

	<p>every effort is made to ensure that any new commissioning arrangements do not disadvantage smaller local organisations and that the Council's proactive work with the voluntary sector in relation to commissioning supports those who may not be used to making bids for contracts.</p> <p>Health and social care is such a wide area with a large budget. It is important to measure outcomes to ensure that commissioned services meet the stated objectives. The Committee looks forward to receiving an update on the budget in six months, which should show how contract performance has been monitored and managed. This would also be a timely opportunity to identify the impact of the spending, as well looking at the lessons learnt by the Council and external providers.</p>
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BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Minutes of the detailed budget discussions at the above Select Committees:

- [Children, Education & Families Select Committee - 4 January 2023](#)
- [Property, Highways and Transport Select Committee - 11 January 2023](#)
- [Finance and Corporate Select Committee - 11 January 2023](#)
- [Residents' Services Select Committee - 19 January 2023](#)
- [Health & Social Care Select Committee - 26 January 2023](#)