

Our North Tyneside Plan and Budget Engagement

Approach

The Authority took a cautious approach to the budget engagement this year given the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic. People were however given the option of online engagement or meeting face to face.

Engagement with residents and other key stakeholders took place between 3 December 2021 and 23 January 2022.

This was done via:

- two face to face sessions with the Residents Panel
- online and face-to-face with key stakeholder groups; and
- online questionnaire published on the North Tyneside Council website from 30 November 2021

In the online sessions, participants were shown a short film and presentation about the Authority's Budget and Cabinet's Council Plan and initial Budget proposals as agreed on 29 November 2021. Participants were able to have their questions answered and were asked to give their views on the Budget proposals.

In face-to-face sessions the participants were shown a presentation about the Local Authority's Budget. Participants were able to have their questions answered. The Residents Panel were also able to send in questions after the first session. These questions were answered by members of Senior Leadership Team at the second session which included time for discussion.

Engagement opportunities were publicised in the Our North Tyneside magazine and on all of the Authority's social media platforms to explain how people could get involved. Posters were also displayed in the five leisure centres and circulated to all the Authority's North Tyneside Living Accommodation and Voluntary and Community Sector contacts. This information signposted people to the online engagement and provided contact information for those who required different formats. A display with information and paper copies of the survey were also available in the Community Conversation Corners in the four main Customer Service Centres.

Outcomes from the Engagement Activity

218 people took part in the engagement process.

Regarding our face to face and online engagement meetings people were in support of no cuts to services and a commitment to keeping library and leisure services open. There was an understanding that the Authority had needed to follow the Governments Core Spending Power assumptions regarding the rise in Council Tax and the setting of the Social Care Precept. People welcomed the initiatives that are being taken to address poverty and the voluntary sector agencies welcomed the changes to backdating of the Council Tax Support Grant which would help in this instance. The Residents Panel and Children and Young Peoples groups felt that

clearer funding of green initiatives and more information were important in this important issue. They also felt that spending on social care and skills and employment initiatives were high priority.

154 responses were received the on-line survey. There was very strong agreement that the authority should continue to focus on the four elements within its Efficiency Programme in relation to: Commissioning; Digital Strategy; Asset Management; and Workforce.

In relation to the considerations regarding the proposals to backdate new claims to the Council Tax Support Scheme and to increase Council Tax and the Social Care precept, the majority of those who expressed a view as part of the engagement were supportive. Consultation participants also provided their suggestions about how the Authority could achieve a balanced budget and these will help to inform the implementation of the Efficiency Programme.

Regarding our online engagement we had 460 unique views on the budget engagement site and 114 page views on the original press release in our News section. The Authority reached more than 28,742 people on its two main social media platforms Facebook and Twitter. In response to information regarding the Council Plan and Budget proposals which were promoted via these platforms, on Facebook there were we had 1,027 engagements and 208 links clicked.