

Budget Conversation Report 2023

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1. Summary

Questionnaire format: Web/Paper
Responses: 154 (122 web, 32 paper)
Date range: 17 November 2023 to 15 December 2023

2. Introduction

Respondents were asked to take part in a short survey and answer a series of broad questions about where and how they think CBC budgets should be spent.

Before taking part in the survey, respondents were asked to read through the background information included on the [CBC Budget Conversation webpage](#) and in the [Budget Conversation brochure](#).

The invitation to take part in the Budget Conversation was shared via social media and on the council's website. Paper copies were also available at key locations (Visitor Information Centre, Town Hall, Queens Park Sports Centre, Healthy Living Centre and Brimington Parish Council Office).

Information gathered during the budget conversation including comments and individual submissions are being used over the coming weeks to inform proposals and key decision considerations including equality and climate change impact assessments.

3. Questionnaire results

Which of the following best describes you?

Respondents could select all that applied to them.

Which of the following best describes you?		
	Number	Percentage
I am a resident of Chesterfield Borough	125	83.9%
I work in Chesterfield Borough but live in another area	5	3.4%
I am a visitor of Chesterfield Borough	8	5.4%
I work for Chesterfield Borough Council	9	6.0%
I represent a business in Chesterfield Borough	2	1.3%
I represent a community organisation in Chesterfield Borough	12	8.1%
Other	4	2.7%

Budget theme 1 – Identifying efficiencies or alternative funding.

Guidance notes within the survey:

This theme is about the council identifying ways to reduce costs that won't have a big impact on the services that we provide. The council has already done a lot of work within this theme, but you might have additional ideas about how we could do this.

Examples could include removing roles at the council that haven't been filled or needed for a long time, streamlining our processes and the way we work internally, reducing how much we spend on items and services we buy and revisiting our arrangements for buying them (procurement), minimising waste, and making the best use of external funding and grants.

Are there any specific services or processes that you think could be provided more efficiently?

90 responses were received, covering a wide range of subject areas. Some covered one subject area, others covered multiple. The most common themes for this question were:

1. Comments relating to CBC staffing issues including structures (18)
2. Suggestions around enabling the digitalisation and transformation of services (17)
3. Suggestions relating to alternative delivery models for services including trusts and shared services (12)
4. Suggestions around improving asset (mainly buildings) management, rationalisation or maximisation (10)
5. Comments and suggestions regarding housing issues (7)

Budget theme 2 – Increasing income and behaving commercially.

Guidance notes within the survey:

The costs of delivering services are increasing due to a period of exceptionally high inflation which means the cost of buying goods, services and contracts has risen.

The cost-of-living crisis and the long-term impact of Covid-19 mean that the council's income is much lower as people have less disposable income to pay for services that the council provides.

Many of these discretionary services are provided at a cost to the council. This means that the income produced by people using the services does not cover the cost of delivering them.

Under this theme, the council would like to look at opportunities to ensure that wherever possible the costs of service delivery are recovered, and that there is no cross-subsidy from other service areas.

Examples could include reviewing the charges for services such as car parking and leisure centre services, looking at the way we operate our cultural spaces and reviewing the charges and how some of our community buildings are used e.g. Hasland Village Hall, Assembly Rooms and Revolution House. We also plan to review the level of funding currently provided to a range of external organisations, including Community and Voluntary Groups and the subsidies applied to the running of outdoor sports and leisure activities, such as bowling greens and football pitches.

How strongly do you agree or disagree that the council should increase income and behave more commercially to help reduce the council’s budget gap? This might mean customers paying more in order to keep a service.

How strongly do you agree or disagree that the council should increase income and behave more commercially to help reduce the council’s budget gap?					
Base (142)	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Total respondents	21	43	25	27	26
Percentage	14.8%	30.3%	17.6%	19.0%	18.3%
Chart (total positive/total negative)					

Are there any specific services that you think the council could provide more commercially or charge more for?

91 responses were received, covering a wide range of subject areas. Some covered one subject area, others covered multiple. The most common themes for this question were:

1. Reducing subsidies or concessions for service users, applying the true cost of services or introducing donations (17)
2. Reducing service fees and charges to increase user numbers (15)
3. Increasing the waste and recycling service offer or charging for some existing provisions (10)
4. Asset management, rationalisation or maximisation (mainly buildings) (9)
5. Suggestions around Parking provisions (9)

Do you anticipate any issues with the council taking this approach (increasing income and behaving more commercially)? Please briefly explain what they are.

91 responses were received, covering a wide range of subject areas. Some covered one subject area, others covered multiple. The most common themes for this question were:

1. Concerns about a reduction in usage (32)
2. Concerns about health and wellbeing of residents and equalities issues (22)
3. Complaints from residents and organisations (10)

4. Governance or oversight concerns (10)
5. Impact on CBC staff (6)

Budget theme 3 – Transforming service delivery.

Guidance notes within the survey:

This theme is all about the way the council works and delivers its services. Delivering our services in a modern way will include taking advantage of digital ways of working and taking forward the learning and opportunities that have arisen through the period of the covid pandemic and over the past 18 months.

This will involve considering the way we engage with customers, helping people find the services they need as efficiently as possible, and ensuring services are designed in a way that improves outcomes and minimises costs. This also might include looking to deliver services together with partners.

Examples could include encouraging customers to engage with the council digitally, rather than face to face, and moving away from payments by cash and cheques. One of the areas we would like to explore under this theme is the way tourist information services are delivered.

We are already taking steps under this theme as part of our continuous improvement, but please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree that we should move more quickly in order to modernise the council's services?

How strongly do you agree or disagree that we should move more quickly in order to modernise the council's services?					
Base (139)	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Total respondents	24	49	23	20	23
Percentage	17.3%	35.3%	16.5%	14.4%	16.5%
Chart (total positive/total negative)					

Are there any specific services that you think the council could transform and deliver differently?

82 responses were received, covering a wide range of subject areas. Some covered one subject area, others covered multiple. The most common themes for this question were:

1. Suggestions around enabling the digitalisation and transformation of services (32)
2. Concerns about digital exclusion (17)
3. Comments and suggestions regarding the visitor information centre and visitor services (14)
4. Comments and suggestions regarding housing issues (8)
5. Suggestions relating to alternative delivery models for services including trusts and shared services (6)

Do you anticipate any issues with the council taking this approach (transforming service delivery)? Please briefly explain what they are.

94 responses were received, covering a wide range of subject areas. Some covered one subject area, others covered multiple. The most common themes for this question were:

1. Concerns about digital exclusion (45)
2. Concerns about health and wellbeing of residents and equalities issues (13)
3. Concerns about a reduction in usage (10)
4. Impact on CBC staff (9)
5. Complaints from residents or organisations (5)

Budget theme 4 – Reducing services offer / stop doing.

Guidance notes within the survey:

This will be the theme where the hardest decisions will have to be made, as it may mean that the council cannot continue to meet its existing priorities, objectives and commitments. It will involve considering the levels at which we deliver discretionary council services, and whether there are alternative ways of delivering our statutory services.

This will include considering the level of service provided, the costs of running the service, and alternative options, including looking at examples from other councils.

Examples could include reviewing the council’s events programme to make sure events are effectively supporting the town centre and parks while providing value for money. We also plan to look at the way we run and maintain our parks and open spaces, the provision of public toilets, and the grant support that we provide to voluntary sector advice agencies.

How strongly do you agree or disagree that we should reduce or stop providing some services in order to reduce the council’s budget gap?

How strongly do you agree or disagree that we should reduce or stop providing some services in order to reduce the council’s budget gap?					
Base (138)	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Total respondents	13	32	31	30	32
Percentage	9.4%	23.2%	22.5%	21.7%	23.2%
Chart (total positive/total negative)					

Are there any specific services that you think the council could reduce or stop doing?

81 responses were received, covering a wide range of subject areas. Some covered one subject area, others covered multiple. These have been themed. The most common themes for this question were:

1. Events programme overall / specific events (19)
2. Environmental services including street scene, grass cutting, planting schemes (8)
3. Suggestions relating to alternative delivery models for services including trusts and shared services (7)
4. Outdoor leisure including parks and open spaces, play areas (7)
5. Reducing subsidies or concessions for service users, applying the true cost of services or introducing donations (6)

Do you anticipate any issues with the council taking this approach (reducing services offer / stop doing)? Please briefly explain what they are.

79 responses were received, covering a wide range of subject areas. Some covered one subject area, others covered multiple. The most common themes for this question were:

1. Concerns about health and wellbeing of residents and equalities issues (23)
2. Concerns about a reduction in usage (13)
3. Complaints from residents and organisations (13)
4. Concerns about impact on community and voluntary sector organisations (10)
5. Concerns that proposals could increase spend in longer term (9)

Budget theme 5 – Rightsizing the organisation.

Guidance notes within the survey:

Employee pay is one of the biggest costs to the council. The process of identifying efficiencies in the way we deliver services through all of the above themes will have an impact on how many staff the council needs, and the way we work. As an employer we value our staff greatly and, working with our trade unions, we're committed to protecting jobs and services as far as we can over the coming years. Doing all we can to avoid compulsory redundancies is central to this commitment.

We have already taken steps under this theme, by looking at vacant posts to see if any can be removed and updating our Voluntary Early Retirement and Voluntary Redundancy procedures. We have also launched a new scheme that has been offered to all employees so what we can understand who may be interested in leaving the Council on voluntary terms. This also provides the opportunity to consider whether savings proposals relating to other budget themes e.g., stopping a service, might be more readily achieved by releasing employees through the Voluntary Early Retirement and Voluntary Redundancy scheme.

If we are not able to make enough savings through activities under the other four themes, then the council may need to look at changing staff terms and conditions, and then potentially compulsory redundancies in order to protect customer services.

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the council rightsizing the organisation to reduce our budget gap?

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the council rightsizing the organisation to reduce our budget gap?					
Base (142)	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Total respondents	28	44	29	25	16

Percentage	19.7%	31.0%	20.4%	17.6%	11.3%
Chart (total positive/total negative)					

Do you anticipate any issues with the council taking this approach (rightsizing the organisation)? Please briefly explain what they are.

92 responses were received, covering a wide range of subject areas. Some covered one subject area, others covered multiple. The most common themes for this question were:

1. Concerns about impact on quality of services (29)
2. Supportive of rightsizing the organisation (12)
3. Concerns about wellbeing of CBC staff (12)
4. Suggestions around reducing/ changing CBC management roles (10)
5. Suggestions around enabling the digitalisation and transformation of services (9)

Budget theme 6 – Asset Rationalisation and Effective Asset Management

Guidance notes within the survey:

The council owns and operates a number of buildings and land. Under this theme, we will need to consider rationalising (reviewing and reducing where appropriate) the assets we own and operate in order to raise capital funds and reduce the costs of running our buildings. This would involve selling off some property, to ensure that we can effectively maintain those which we keep.

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the council rationalising our assets to reduce the budget gap?

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the council rationalising our assets to reduce the budget gap?					
Base (144)	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Total respondents	35	51	27	16	15
Percentage	24.3%	35.4%	18.8%	11.1%	10.4%
Chart (total positive/total negative)					

Do you anticipate any issues with the council taking this approach? Please briefly explain what they are.

75 responses were received, covering a wide range of subject areas. Some covered one subject area, others covered multiple. The most common themes for this question were:

1. Generally supportive of asset management and rationalisation (21)
2. Concerns about short term gains V loss of future opportunities (20)
3. Suggestions around advice needed and concerns about legal issues (13)
4. Governance issues (7)
5. Complaints from residents and organisations (5)

Summary and overview

Overall, are there any services that you feel should be protected from reductions in budget? Please tell us what services these are.

113 responses were received, covering a wide range of subject areas. Some covered one subject area, others covered multiple. The most common themes for this question were:

1. Comments relating to Derbyshire County Council or other public service providers (28)
2. Visitor information centre (23)
3. Waste and recycling services (17)
4. Housing (14)
5. Leisure Centres (12)

Where would you choose to target spend reductions?

98 responses were received, covering a wide range of subject areas. Some covered one subject area, others covered multiple. The most common themes for this question were:

1. Suggestions around reducing / changing CBC staffing arrangements (29)
2. Asset management, rationalisation maximisation (mainly buildings) (15)
3. Suggestions around enabling the digitalisation and transformation of services (12)
4. Suggestions around reducing elected member, civic or mayoral costs (9)
5. Suggestions and comments around regeneration schemes (8)

Do you think we have missed out any important themes? If so, please tell us what they are:

56 responses were received, covering a wide range of subject areas. Some covered one subject area, others covered multiple. The most common themes for this question were:

1. General comment regarding the Council or budget - no specific suggestions (17)
2. Concerns about impact on Town Centre (10)
3. Issues that are outside of local authority control such business rates level (7)
4. Suggestions and comments around parking issues (5)
5. Suggestions and comments around regeneration schemes (4)

4. Equality monitoring

What is your sex?

	Male	Female	Prefer not to say
Number	59	50	2
Percentage	53.2%	45.0%	1.8%

How old are you?

	Under 16	16-18	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	Over 75	Prefer not to say
Number	0	0	1	10	11	20	22	31	15	3
Percentage	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%	8.8%	9.7%	17.7%	19.5%	27.4%	13.3%	2.7%

Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?

	No	Yes	Prefer not to say
Number	0	77	5
Percentage	0.0%	93.9%	6.1%

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

	No	Yes - mobility	Yes - hearing	Yes - vision	Yes - learning	Yes - mental health	Other disability	Prefer not to say
Number	78	16	8	2	3	11	6	4
Percentage	70.3%	14.4%	7.2%	1.8%	2.7%	9.9%	5.4%	3.6%

What is your ethnicity?

	White British	Other White background	Black or Black British	Asian or Asian British	Mixed ethnic group	Other ethnic group	Prefer not to say
Number	105	1	0	0	1	0	6
Percentage	92.9%	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%	5.3%

Which of the following best describes your religion?

	Buddhist	Christian	Hindu	Jewish	Muslim	Sikh	None	Other	Prefer not to say
Number	0	51	0	0	0	0	51	2	9
Percentage	0.0%	45.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	45.1%	1.8%	8.0%

Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?

	Heterosexual / straight	Bisexual	Lesbian	Gay Man	Prefer not to say / blank
Number	9	5	1	4	10
Percentage	82.0%	4.5%	0.9%	3.6%	9.0%

