

2015-16 Draft Budget Consultation summary report

Summary:

The council held a 4 week consultation so that residents could have the opportunity to provide comment on the 2015-16 Draft Council Budget.

The consultation closed on Sunday 15 February 2015 with the Final Budget to be approved on 26 February with consideration of the feedback collected as part of the consultation.

The Draft Budget consultation was promoted in the following ways:

- Harrow Council Home Page banner
- Harrow E Newsletter distributed to 65,000 residents
- Harrow Times advertorial on Thursday 5th February 2015
- Harrow Council's Twitter and Facebook accounts.

The survey was provided in an online format and held 2 main questions which were followed with the council's equality monitoring information.

The equality monitoring data is not analysed in this report.

The consultation received 88 responses.

This brief summarises these findings. For a full copy of the consultation data visit www.harrow.gov.uk/draftbudget or contact communications@harrow.gov.uk to be sent a copy of the responses.

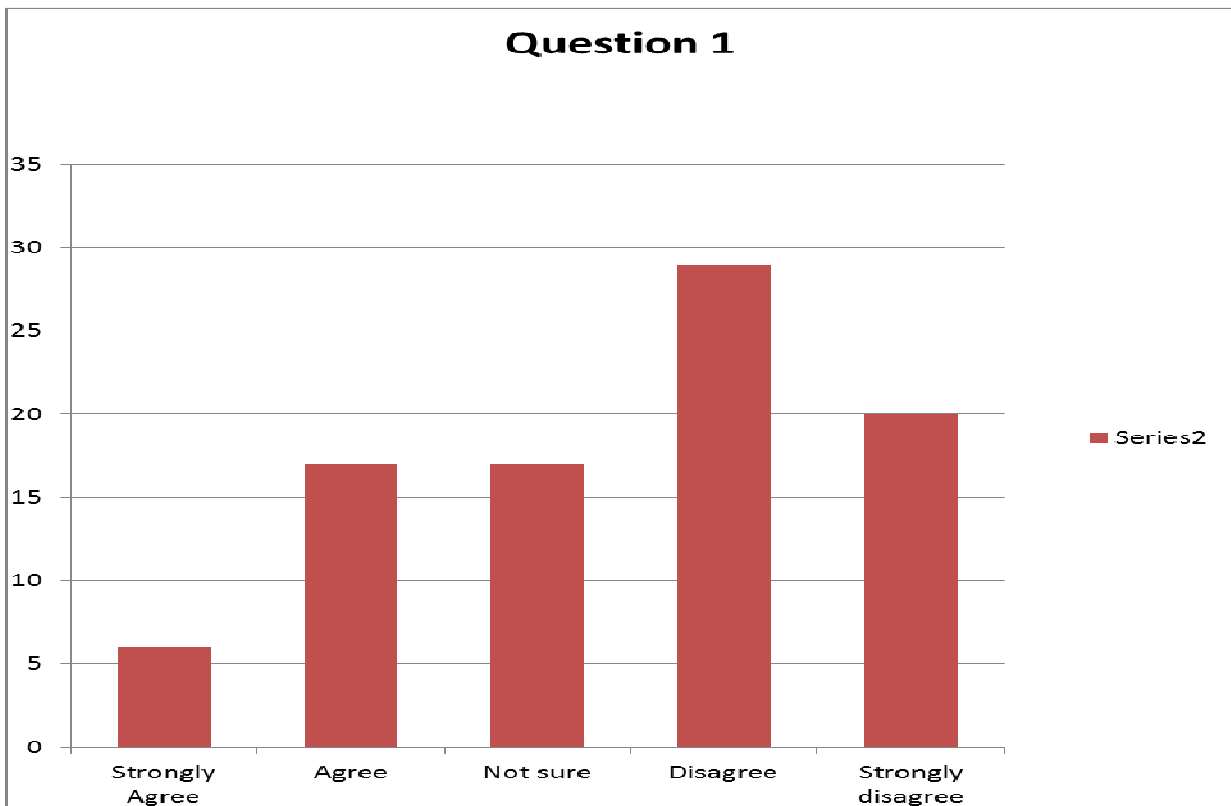
Findings:

Question 1: Do you agree with the changes that the council have made to the budget in response to the Take Part consultation as listed on www.harrow.gov.uk/draftbudget ?

98% of the consultation respondents answered this question, with 54.44% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the changes the council has made to the budget in response to the Take Part Consultation.

However 25.56% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the changes, leaving 18.89% of respondents not sure.

The breakdown of this is as follows:



Question 2: Do you have any further comments on any aspects of the 2015-16 Draft Council Budget?

The council received 48 responses to this question. For the purpose of this report, these responses have been broken down according to style and topic of response.

Concerns with the proposal:

The main issue coming out of this consultation was residents concern for changes to Harrow Council Waste services. 22 of the responses addressed their concern with this area with issues cited including (but not limited to):

- It is unfair to charge more for this service at a time of Council Tax rise
- Concerns about and increase in fly tipping, people contaminating other bins
- Fairness between garden owners and non-garden owners
- Collection regularity
- Costs involved with policing compliance

5 respondents as part of their response suggested concern with fly tipping in response to this proposal.

Some quotes from the respondents included:

“A large wheelie (bin) is not required for household organic waste and council tax is already (very) high. I would not pay”

“I strongly disagree with garden refuse being collected fortnightly, especially from June until the end of November. During the rest of the year fortnightly collections would be sufficient.”

“Introducing A£75 annual Garden Waste charge is effectively a charge for having a garden, and is stated will reduce the burden on those who do not have gardens. However most properties in Harrow that do not have gardens are flats and as such not participating in recycling provisions the way that non-flat residents do therefore subsidising those who live in flats.”

“Fly tipping will increase, if you charge to collect garden waste.”

The second biggest concern was the issue of a Council Tax increase. 12 responders suggested that they were **not** happy with the council tax rise, with 3 saying they found the increase in council tax as a **good** thing, with one of those people suggesting only if service is maintained.

Some of the response quotes:

“Why does the council tax have to be increased when we are paying a lot as it is?”

“How come neighbouring councils can manage without increasing council tax?”

“You have a high populated area with very few services left. If you intend to increase council tax but not retain the level of service or indeed terminate certain services then why should we pay the additional council Tax.”

3 responder’s commented on the costs of re-introducing the Chief Exec role.

Other concerns highlighted by the responders include (but not limited to):

- Cuts to Environmental health service
- Libraries closures (with equal amount of people saying council should close them)
- Street cleaning and parks maintenance being compromised
- Respite for disabled carers
- Parking costs for Harrow Council employee
- Insufficient funding of cycling
- Voluntary sector cuts
- Pavements and potholes

Suggested ways to reduce costs or limit cuts proposed:

3 responders suggested cutting down on senior managers would be a way to handle cuts, with a further 2 respondents suggesting to cut senior management pay.

2 respondents suggested cutting subcontractor and 1 suggested mayoral costs.

1 responder suggested charging council staff for parking.

Other comments:

That the budget document was too hard to read/ understand as it was too long.

That the survey questions were not sufficient given the size of the budget document.

There was a call for more transparency.

A number of respondents asked for more information and the opportunity to comment on more detailed proposals e.g.: Environmental Health Officer Post, Voluntary sector cuts.

Cuts to front line services appear to be politically motivated.

Harrow should receive a fairer grant.

Appendix:

1. 2015/16 Draft Budget Consultation Data
2. 2015/16 Draft Budget Equalities data.