



## Council Spending – have your say

### A survey of Uttlesford residents

This is the 8th year that a consultation asking for residents' views on the headline priorities for setting the budget has been run. In order to obtain as wide a body of opinion as possible, a multi-directional approach has been taken comprising a district-wide distribution of paper questionnaires within the council's magazine *Uttlesford Life*, an online consultation and a telephone survey of over 500 residents undertaken by a professional market research company, NWA Social and Market Research Ltd on behalf of the council. A copy of the survey was also included in the summer Citizens Panel questionnaire. A total of 2422 responses were received.

The *Uttlesford Life* consultation was run over the period 16 July to 6 August 2018. The telephone survey took place over a three week period in July 2018 and the Citizens Panel survey ran from 12 September to 1 October 2018.

The consultation concentrated on asking for residents' views on the prerogatives for the future resourcing of specific service areas and, as in previous years, consultees were asked their views regarding the level of Council Tax that Uttlesford District Council should be levying in the coming financial year. An open text box was provided for respondents to offer additional comments regarding the questions posed in the survey.

The questionnaire distributed within *Uttlesford Life* included additional questions regarding the Local Council Tax Support Scheme

and a question on the proposed increase to the Council Tax premium charged for properties which have been empty for more than 2 years. The results from these questions are reported separately.

Questions posed in the 2018 budget consultation are similar to those asked in previous years and the coalesced results from the different survey streams will inform the setting of the council's budget for the financial year April 2019 – March 2020. As in previous years, the collective data was analysed using rated scores where more weight is given if a service area is selected as “High Priority” and a reduced weight for those selected as “Low Priority”. For a full explanation of this method of calculation, please see Appendix 4.

## Spending priorities for the financial year 2019 to 2020

Consultees were provided with a list of council services and asked:

*“For each service, please indicate whether you consider it to be a high, medium or low priority (please select one option for each service)”*

Priority	Spending Area
Highest priority	Emptying your bins and running the recycling service (96.49%)
Second highest priority	Working with the police and other organisations to keep Uttlesford safe (91.93%)
Third highest priority	Sweeping the streets, litter picking, clearing up fly-tipping and emptying public litter and dog bins (The town or parish councils in Saffron Walden, Dunmow and Stansted are responsible for public litter bins in their areas) (90.36%)
Lowest priority	Collecting stray animals, microchipping dogs and cats and dealing with complaints from the public about pet and animal-related issues (64.18%)

The top three priorities selected by participants were identical to those chosen in the Council Spending survey conducted in the summer of 2017. Similarly, participants in the 2017 Council Spending survey also chose “Collecting stray animals, microchipping dogs and cats and dealing with complaints from the public about pet and animal-related issues “ as the lowest priority.

A comparison of the results across all the listed services may be seen in Appendix 3. Scores across all the services which had also appeared in the 2017 survey have increased in the current consultation. This demonstrates that participants selected more services as ‘High’ or ‘Medium’ priority than in the previous year’s survey and fewer services were viewed as a ‘Low’ priority.

## Council Tax 2019 -2020

Consultees were asked their views regarding the level of Council Tax that Uttlesford District Council should be levying in the coming financial year. The results are tabulated below.

“Just under 9% of the Council Tax you pay goes to Uttlesford District Council. About 72% goes to Essex County Council, with the rest going to the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex, and to your town or parish council, For next year (April 2019 to March 2020) do you think Uttlesford should... *(consultees were then invited to select one option only)*”

Headline	Percentage
Increase the amount of council tax Uttlesford District Council charges	21.65%
Keep the amount of council tax the same	<b>62.42%</b>
Reduce the amount of council tax Uttlesford District Council charges	15.93%

The results showed a marked preference from almost two thirds of those who expressed an opinion to “Keep the amount of council tax the same” (62.42%)\*.

\*Rating was not used in the calculation of these results as selection was based on a direct choice from three options.

## **Additional Comments Received**

Consultees were also invited to submit further comments additional to the formalised questions. 701 comments (29% of the total number of participants) were received from respondents to the *Uttlesford Life* and Citizens Panel questionnaires. These responses, appended verbatim to the full report, covered a wide range of subjects but generally show a topical preoccupation with Police presence within the district and infrastructure, including comments on maintaining community services and roads. Further comments covered concerns over the cost of Council Tax, particularly for the elderly.

Participants were asked (on a voluntary basis only) to provide a postcode in order to provide a profile of the response across the district. In line with the recent guidelines for the General Data Protection Legislation, no other personal data was collected through the questionnaires.

The following appendices provide detailed results from this survey.

- Appendix 1: Residents' Survey results, detailed findings
- Appendix 2: Literal Responses
- Appendix 3: Comparative data across 2017 (for 2018-19) and 2018 (for 2019-2020) surveys
- Appendix 4: How rating scores are calculated
- Appendix 5: Questionnaire
- Appendix 6: Response profile by postcode