

TITLE:	Budget Consultation 2022-23
Background	
1.	Consultation on the 2022-23 council budget was conducted via an online form, with feedback also invited via social media. In addition, a letter was sent to key partners seeking their views.
Online Consultation	
2.	<p>The online consultation was open from 22 December 2021 to 23 January 2022 and the online form had four questions, which allowed for “free text” responses:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What would be your spending and saving priorities? 2. Do you have any concerns about the Council’s current budget? 3. Do you have any other thoughts on the budget? 4. Council Plan budget priorities <p>Question four was sub-divided into five separate questions, with respondents asked to give their budget priorities for the five themes in the new Council Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every neighbourhood thriving • People are safe, healthy and live well • Every child able to fulfil their potential • Expanding economic opportunity • A cleaner, greener local environment <p>A total of 36 people completed the online consultation. A summary of responses is set out below.</p> <p>What would be your spending and saving priorities?</p> <p>A total of 30 spending priorities and 14 saving priorities were identified, spread across a wide range of themes.</p> <p>Spending</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There were six mentions of facilities, services or activities for children and young people (e.g. services or support for children with special educational needs or disabilities, and investing in voluntary sector organisations to engage with young people). ○ Also mentioned relatively frequently (four mentions each) were issues relating to: supporting the voluntary and community sector; crime and community safety; transport and roads; housing; and the environment. ○ There were three mentions each of issues relating to waste; street cleaning; social care; and economic development. <p>Saving</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Adjusting service offers was the main category of saving suggestions (five mentions). This included spending less on redesigning council services, reducing the budget of RiDO, and not wasting money on ‘stupid schemes’. Three respondents suggested

reducing the numbers/salaries of senior management.

Do you have any concerns about the Council's current budget?

22 respondents raised a concern in response to question 2. Eight concerns related generally to service priorities. This included:

- Prioritising pay in waste management
- Not enough funding for adult social care
- Having to divert funding from elsewhere to support the 'inadequate' budget for at risk children
- Lack of clarity about the value provided for the 'significant sums' RiDO receives

Other relatively frequent concerns related to perceived overspending or mishandling of finances, including concerns that council tax was too high.

Do you have any other thoughts on the budget?

Half of the respondents (18) provided additional comments in response to this question. Again, there was a wide spread of topics and many served to reinforce points made in response to previous questions. The only issues to feature more than twice were:

- *Social care* – comments focused on providing additional support, including for children with special educational needs
- *Clean streets* – again, spending more on keeping streets/public spaces clean and tidy, and taking enforcement action against people littering etc.

Council Plan themes

Respondents' views on budget priorities for the five Council Plan themes are summarised below.

Every neighbourhood thriving (26 total suggestions)

'Local priorities', comprising suggestions for spend in a particular part of Rotherham, received the most responses. The other most frequently mentioned topics were crime and anti-social behaviour, keeping streets/public spaces clean, and engaging with communities. Arts and culture, community support and limiting spending (on neighbourhood activity) were the other topics to receive more than one mention.

People are safe, healthy and live well (28)

Crime and anti-social behaviour had the most mentions within this theme. Streetscene issues were mentioned again too, but the focus was more on improving street lighting. Health issues and social care also featured in multiple responses, as did support for those who are socially isolated or struggling with fuel or food poverty.

Every child able to fulfil their potential (18)

There was an equal focus on education and activities for children and young people – jointly the topics most frequently referenced within this theme. There were also specific references to improving/increasing support for children with special educational needs, and another mention for crime and anti-social behaviour.

	<p><i>Expanding economic opportunity (15)</i> One third (five) of the responses related to business support (e.g. reducing rents, supporting independent businesses and SMEs), with other topics including community investment, job creation/promotion and transport.</p> <p><i>A cleaner, greener local environment (27)</i> Issues relating to waste collection and clean streets (plus clean canals and rivers) were predominant. Other topics mentioned more than once were transport (active travel and preventing 'idling' engines), education/engagement (on environmental issues) and housing.</p>
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Social Media Engagement

<p>3.</p>	<p>The budget consultation was publicised widely to different audiences using the Council's main communications channels, as set out below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media – press release issued 23 December and picked up by a number of local outlets, including the Rotherham Advertiser. • Social media – regular posts on the main corporate Twitter and Facebook accounts, plus LinkedIn: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Facebook – 8 posts generated over 14,000 views ○ Twitter – 9 posts generated over 11,000 views • E-mail bulletins – issued to those people on the Council's database who have consented to receive information directly: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Covid-19 residents bulletin – 40,000 distribution ○ Covid-19 member/stakeholder bulletin – 130 distribution ○ Chief executive's staff bulletin – 4,000 distribution ○ Rotherham Round-Up news bulletin – 8,000 distribution <p>Responses There were limited comments in response to the social media posts, with most activity on Facebook. Topics tended to cover single issues or specific areas of investment required, rather than being linked to departmental spend or themes in the Council Plan.</p> <p>No single issue was mentioned by more than a handful of posts. A selection of issues raised includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selective Licensing charges should be scrapped • The salaries of senior Council staff should be cut • Council staff should be paid more • Investment is needed in Swallownest Community Centre • Investment is needed in areas outside the town centre • More call centre staff required for Key Choices enquiries • Boston Castle Park requires investment.
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Other responses	
4.	<p>Partners</p> <p>Three responses were received to the letter sent to key partners. These were from Rotherham Clinical Commissioning Group, Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust and Voluntary Action Rotherham, and all were broadly supportive.</p> <p>In addition, a letter was received from Alexander Stafford, the Member of Parliament for Rother Valley. Mr Stafford drew attention to a range of issues in his Rother Valley constituency relating to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Road safety• Fly-tipping• Crime prevention• Investment in local high streets• Public transport• Kiveton Park station• Planning• Social care
Recommendations	
5.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To note and consider the findings as part of the overall budget discussions.