

North Northamptonshire Council Draft Budget 2024/25 – Consultation Analysis Report

Introduction

1. The purpose of this report is to set out the Draft Budget consultation process, and key consultation findings (including an understanding of who participated in the consultation), the results of which will be used to help inform decisions on the North Northamptonshire Council's Budget for 2024/25.

Executive decisions and formal consultation

2. The [Draft Budget 2024/25 and Medium-Term Financial Plan](#) was approved by Executive on 21 December 2023 and consultation on the budget proposals began later that day. The consultation concluded on 26 January 2024.
3. The public consultation was conducted by the Council's Consultation and Engagement Team. The structure and design of the consultation set out the budget proposals and enabled both online and non-digital means of participation, in accordance with nationally recognised good practice.

How was the consultation promoted?

4. The consultation was hosted on the Council's Consultation and Engagement Hub website, [Your Voice Matters](#), and promoted on the homepage of the Council's website. Councillors, local MPs, town and parish Councils, partner organisations, voluntary and community sector organisations, representatives of protected characteristic groups, local business groups including Chamber of Commerce and Federation of Small Businesses, and members of both the North Northamptonshire Residents' Panel (circa 700 members) and the Council's Consultation Register were invited to give their views and asked to promote the consultation to their members, or within their local area where appropriate.
5. Opportunities to take part in the consultation were also promoted in the local media via press releases. The press release went to 26 newsrooms (local and national, print and broadcast including the Northants Telegraph and BBC Radio Northampton), plus individual reporters and other local news sites. It was promoted through the Council's website, e-newsletters and social media channels, enabling both internal (e.g. staff) as well as external consultees to get involved in the process. The Facebook Reach (i.e. the number of people who saw any content from or about the consultation web page) was 20,395; the X (formerly known as Twitter) impressions (i.e. the number of times any content from or about the consultation webpage entered a person's screen) was 2,292; and LinkedIn impressions were 1,615. Social media followers were directed to the consultation webpage to facilitate informed feedback.
6. Several reminders were distributed via various communications channels during the consultation period, including a further press release to the above newsrooms.

How did consultees have their say?

7. Local people, organisations and other interested parties were able to have their say about the Draft Budget proposals in a range of ways, by:
 - Visiting the [Draft Budget Consultation webpage](#) and completing the questionnaire or requesting a paper questionnaire. Access to the online questionnaire was also made available free of charge at any North Northamptonshire Council library
 - Emailing YourVoiceMatters@northnorthants.gov.uk
 - Writing to Budget Consultation Response, North Northamptonshire Council, Sheerness House, Meadow Road, Kettering, NN16 8TL
 - Contacting us by telephone to give verbal feedback
 - A toolkit was developed to enable user groups/forums to hold their own discussions and provide their feedback as a collective group

Number and type of responses received

8. During the draft budget consultation period, using the various means available to consultees, local people and organisations contributed to the consultation 475 times. Nearly all of the feedback received was via the questionnaire, with 466 respondents participating via the questionnaire, and nine respondents submitting a written response. Google analytics recorded 1,706 unique visitors to the consultation overview page. It is unclear why many visitors to the consultation page did not respond to the consultation and/or open the questionnaire. Although we do not know why these respondents did not engage further, there is anecdotal evidence to suggest in these instances many of these stakeholders are apathetic towards the proposals and its subsequent consultation.
9. Within the questionnaire, respondents could choose which questions they responded to, and so there are lower response numbers to each question when compared with the overall number of participants, depending on whether participants had a particular interest in the subject matter.
10. During the consultation period, regular summaries of consultation responses received were circulated to senior Finance officers and all responses received were circulated to decision makers upon conclusion of the consultation to enable them to see each response in full.

What did people say?

11. This report is a summary of the feedback received. It is recommended that it is read in conjunction with the full consultation results, including the detail and suggestions contained within some of the written comments. The full consultation results have been made available to Members and are available to view on the [consultation webpage](#).
12. The questionnaire was structured so that respondents could give their views on any of the individual proposals if they chose to do so. This means we were able to summarise views by proposal and collate the views from the different consultation channels.

13. An [equality screening assessment for the budget proposals](#) was published alongside the Executive papers and made available via the questionnaire. The equality screening assessment found the proposals would have either a positive or neutral impact on the protected groups outlined within the Equality Act 2010.

Draft Budget 2024/25 Consultation Questionnaire

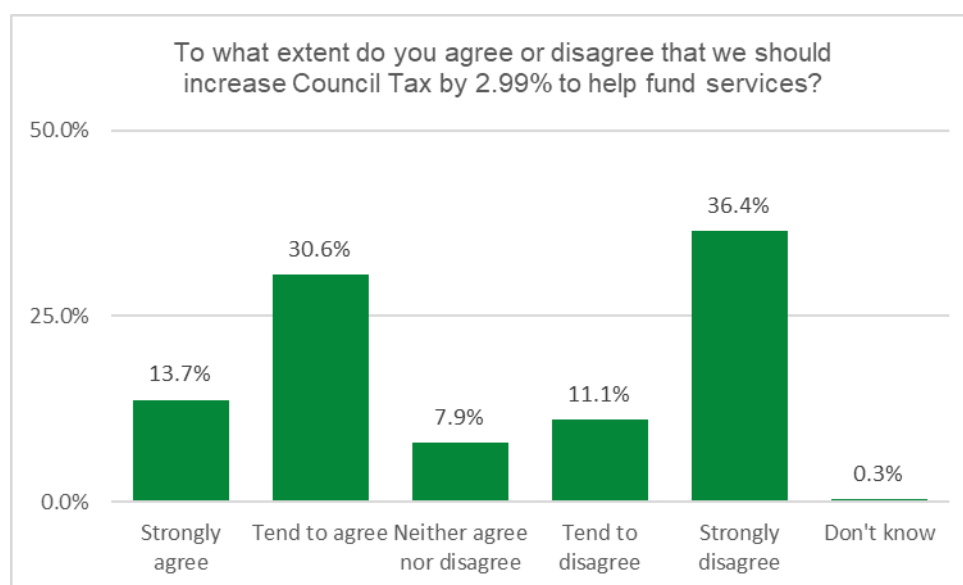
14. In total, 466 respondents filled out a questionnaire on the draft Budget proposals, either partially or fully. Respondents did not have to answer every question and so the total number of responses for each question differs and is shown in relation to each question.
15. Respondents were asked in what capacity they were responding to the consultation. There were 456 responses to this question, with respondents being able to select more than one option if applicable. Nearly all the respondents said they were local residents (91.7%). The second highest respondents were North Northamptonshire Council employees (14.0%), followed by service users (7.9%). The following table details the various respondent types to the consultation questionnaire.

	Response number	Percentage (%)
A local resident	418	91.7%
A service user	36	7.9%
A North Northamptonshire Council employee	64	14.0%
A North Northamptonshire Council Councillor	6	1.3%
A representative of a Town/Parish Council	5	1.1%
A Town or Parish Councillor	19	4.2%
A representative of the voluntary sector or a community organisation	12	2.6%
A representative of the local business community	8	1.8%
A representative of a health partner organisation	2	0.4%
A representative of a user group	3	0.7%
Other	4	0.9%

Proposed Council Tax rate increase

16. The Council is proposing to increase Council Tax up to the level currently allowed by the government, without triggering a referendum – 4.99%. This increased rate includes a general increase of 2.99% and the allowable Adult Social Care precept increase, which is 2%.
17. This 4.99% increase would result in a 2024/25 Band D Council Tax increase for North Northamptonshire Council of £82.71 per year, which is £1.59p per week.

18. It should be noted that these figures do not include the Council Tax for individual town and parish councils or the Council Tax set for fire and police by the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner. These are not within the scope of this consultation and these amounts are added afterwards before people receive their final bills.
19. The Council's proposal to increase the core Council tax rate by 2.99% in 2024/25 means an average (Band D) Council Tax payer's rate would increase £49.56 per year (£0.95p per week) for the North Northamptonshire Council precept.
20. Respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree with the proposal to increase Council Tax by 2.99% to help fund services. There were 343 responses to this question. A total of 44.3% said they strongly agree or tend to agree with the proposal and 47.5% said they strongly disagree or tend to disagree.



21. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 204 comments made in relation to this question.
22. A total of 61 respondents who agreed with the proposal provided comments. Approximately three quarters of those respondents acknowledged that a Council Tax increase was needed to finance the level of service required, and potential improvements. They felt services are stretched. However, there was a feeling that residents need to see results, and improvement of services.
23. Nearly a quarter of respondents expressed frustration at the current service levels with concern as to whether improvements could be delivered. There is a perception that efficiencies need to be improved and bureaucracy reduced. It was acknowledged that households final Council Tax increases will include other precepts including those set by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner.

24. A few respondents expressed their frustration at Central Government due to funding cuts and how it spends central funds and that services such as Adult Social Care and Childrens services are difficult to budget for.
25. A small number of respondents expressed concern of the additional pressure on family finances and their wellbeing.
26. A number of respondents offered some suggestions and/or ideas of what they perceive is needed, including the requirement for a vision for enhanced Social Care; road improvements and maintenance; supporting the arts and libraries; and monitoring of contracted work. Others suggestions included removal of any superfluous services; the charge for green waste being included in Council Tax; and 4.99% increase being too high of an increase. There was also objection to funds being made available for the Travellers Temporary Stopping site near Junction 3 of the A14, due to the proposed logistics site nearby.
27. A total of 15 respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal made a comment. Just over half of these comments expressed general agreement to the potential increase in Council Tax, however there was concern expressed as to whether the funds would be spent wisely.
28. A third of these respondents shared a perception of an unsatisfactory level of service, and that the Council's reputation could be damaged due to perceived lack of value for money. It was felt past Council Tax increases haven't improved services, and that there should be a review of how funds are spent.
29. A small number of comments recognised the additional financial pressure any potential increase in Council Tax could put on some families.
30. A few saving suggestions were offered including removal of the fuel allowance for employees and reducing facilities due to hybrid working. There is a perception that savings can be made, and additional tax is not the best approach, or that a small increase would be more palatable. It was also suggested that the garden waste charge should be included within Council Tax.
31. There were 127 respondents that commented as to why they disagreed with the proposed increase.
32. Nearly half of respondents' comments indicated a perception of current services being less than satisfactory, with a few feeling that the maximum increase will happen despite how residents respond to the consultation. There is a feeling that the increase is a default position; that the Council wastes funds and any additional funds through Council Tax will not be used effectively. It was commented that too much is spent on consultants and agency staff. Respondents felt more needs to be done to maintain streets, roads, refuse collection, and flood defences. It was felt there are lessons to be learned from the situation with Northamptonshire County Council.

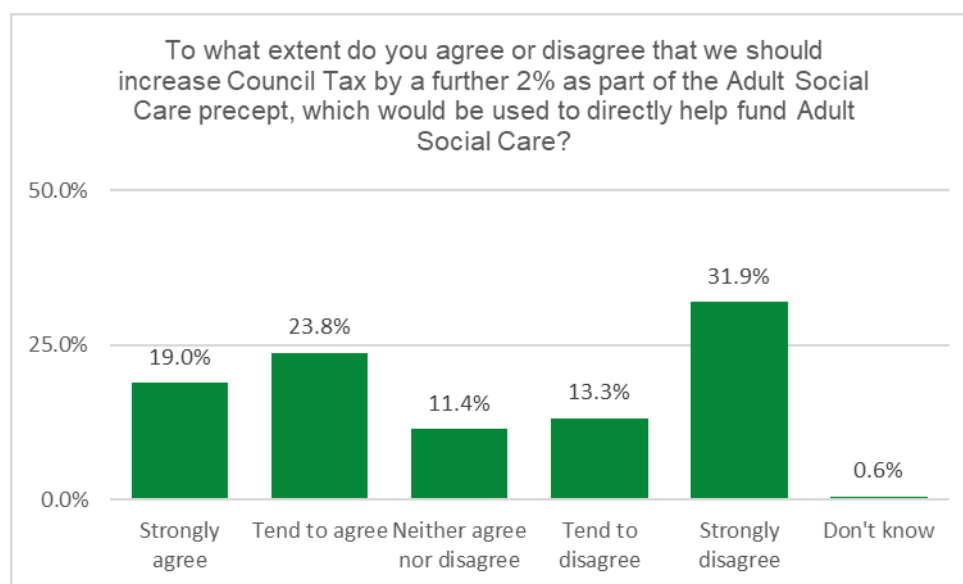
33. Some respondents questioned Councillors decision-making with views that perceived 'vanity projects' that do not offer comparable benefits to the tax paying public being prioritised, with respondents citing the Kettering library roof/Cornerstone, electric car charging points and Chester House. It was felt more activities are needed to keep young people occupied and more investment in schools.
34. There was an opinion from a few responses that with the additional Adult Social Care, Town and Parish Councils, and Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner precepts the true tax increase will be much higher than indicated. It was felt revenue from new housing estates should be sufficient to allow a smaller increase in Council Tax and that some estates pay their own maintenance fees, but don't see a reduction in their Council Tax. One comment indicated that the Council should be aware of the high inflation rate increases in some contracts and it is unfair to use this as a reason to increase Council Tax.
35. Approximately one third of comments indicated concern regarding the additional financial pressure and continued cost of living crisis, with bills going up and income not matching that increase. There is a perception from these respondents that those on benefits are receiving additional support while those employed are not.
36. There is a perception that more funds should be available due to the number of new homes in the county. The value of properties does not reflect the ability for those residents to pay their Council Tax as disposable income changes. Additionally, there were a few comments regarding frustration over perceived cuts to services within Rothwell and objection to the proposed Travellers Temporary Stopping site nearby, citing their opinion that money could be better spent elsewhere, unsuitability of the site especially when compared with alternative sites and frustration at the Council funding such services.
37. There were a small number of comments expressing frustration at Central Government priorities and lack of funds and recognition of current UK wide challenges.
38. A small number of comments referenced the capital programme and the calculations used with a perception of not being transparent.
39. A small number of respondents shared some suggestions which included a smaller 1% increase being more palatable; a Council Tax freeze until fuel costs are reduced; tackling the overspend and any potential waste of resource, including the running costs for various buildings which may not be at capacity; that Councillor allowances and senior management salaries should be reduced; and that more should be done to chase debt. It was also commented that more should be done to tackle the perceived poor management of social care services. It was suggested that only statutory services should be offered, and the Council should be attracting businesses to help fund services.
40. The one respondent who said, 'Don't know' and made a comment expressed frustration at what they perceived to be the Council intruding on people's lives.
41. Any respondents who felt the proposal would have a negative impact were then asked to tell us what they thought the impact would be, along with any suggestions on how any

potential negative impacts could be reduced or avoided. A total of 137 respondents provided comment.

42. Over half of respondents expressed concern that any Council Tax increase would have a detrimental effect on finances of families who are already experiencing cost of living pressures. They said that wages have not increased by the same level as costs. Some indicated that benefits have gone up and recipients of those benefits are not impacted by the same degree. With fees and charges being increased and the additional partner organisation precepts they felt many households' financial burdens will be high.
43. About a fifth of the comments shared frustration on the perceived level of current services which they felt were inadequate. Respondents want to see where the additional funds would go, and gave examples of the roads, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) provision, and parking enforcement as being areas where they want to see improvement.
44. There was further frustration that employees are receiving pay increases and Councillors receiving allowances and a feeling that the Council don't care about residents. There was reference that residents had previously been able to come into offices to seek support but that has been stopped. There was also a couple of comments regarding the spend on electric vehicle charging points and that most residents cannot afford to buy an electric car, and those that have one should pay for their own charging point.
45. Several respondents indicated that the potential increase in Council Tax could potentially lead to a reduction in wellbeing of residents, increased debt to the Council, as well as homelessness, more children relying on free school meals and an increased need for Council housing.
46. A small number of respondents expressed frustration that more funds are not available from Central Government, and that Councils should continue lobbying for a three-year settlement. One comment indicated that Council Tax and general taxation should be abandoned, and that residents who work hard will amass finances to support themselves.
47. A similar number of respondents accepted that an increase was needed but expressed concern that funds would not be used in the most appropriate way.
48. Suggestions that were shared included focus on community and training/employing local youth; review of top salaries, with a £60k salary cap; that the pay structure activity should have been a priority, and it has resulted in excessive consultants and contractors costs, and caused unrest with staff. It was also suggested that skilled staff are paid at a rate that makes them feel valued and reduce agency fees that fill the gap. Other suggestions included a reduction in the number of council staff, and reduction of hours worked; putting a hold on non-urgent capital spend; reduce digital infrastructure; carry out less consultations; ensure employees are included in any reviews of services; the Council should only spend on statutory services; that the potential Council Tax increase to be delayed for 12 months; there should be a smaller percentage increase; and payment should be means tested or only increased for the higher Council Tax bands. Additionally,

there was further objection to the proposed Travellers Temporary Stopping Site and a request for a new swimming pool in Kettering.

49. The questionnaire then outlined the Council's proposal to increase the Council Tax rate by a further 2% in 2024/25 as part of the Adult Social Care precept, which would be used to directly help fund Adult Social Care, meaning an average (Band D) Council Tax payer's rate would increase £33.15 per year (£0.64p per week) for the North Northamptonshire Council precept.
50. Respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree with the proposal to increase Council Tax by a further 2% as part of the Adult Social Care precept, which would be used to directly fund Adult Social Care. There were 332 responses to this question. Similar to the core council increase proposal most respondents opposed the increase, although disagreement for the proposed Adult Social Care precept increase was slightly less when compared with the core increase. A total of 42.8% of respondents said they strongly agree or tend to agree with the proposal, whilst 45.2% said they strongly disagree or tend to disagree.



51. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. There were 151 comments made in relation to this question.
52. A total of 48 respondents who agreed with the proposal provided comments. Over half of these respondents indicated that there was acceptance and understanding that an increase in funds was required to provide the level of service for Adult Social Care, with some adding the increase was preferable to cutting services, particularly with the increasing number of service users adding pressure to the service. Although there was some uncertainty that funds would be used efficiently.
53. Several respondents felt improvements to the service were needed, particularly as it is the Council's largest spend and North Northamptonshire having an ageing population. It was suggested a full review be carried out to understand the needs of service users.

54. A small number of comments indicated frustration at Central Government with cuts to funding. There was an indication that the Council should be lobbying for more funds and that we need to enhance links with the NHS.
55. A couple of saving suggestions were shared including building more homes to resolve the housing crisis, with rent being means tested and supporting communities. Additionally the Council should look at how we can work in partnership with charities and organisations with specialist skills to prevent reliance on services.
56. A total of six respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal made comment. The comments indicated hesitation to agree or disagree as there was a feeling that it was unclear what the funds would be spent on; a lack of conviction that the increase was needed; that Childrens services need a financial injection too; it did not impact the particular respondent; it was a difficult question due to residents' finances; and a belief that regardless of the consultation findings the Council will do what it wants to.
57. A total of 95 respondents who disagreed with the proposal provided comments. A little over a third of comments indicated frustration at the level of service from Adult Social Care, with a feeling that some issues have been inherited from the former Northamptonshire County Council, passing on to the unitary without any significant changes being made. Some added that they found it difficult to access services, particularly while in work, which can impact mental wellbeing. There was also perception that the money will be used for other services and for paying higher salaries.
58. Several respondents referenced the additional financial burden that any potential Council Tax increase would have on households, particularly in light of the continued cost of living crisis and wages not increasing to the same degree, adding to mental wellbeing pressures.
59. There was expression that social care funding should come from Central Government and services could be provided through the NHS. Additionally that the Council and Government should work more closely together and a sense that Central Government funding could be better prioritised.
60. Other comments included a call for more services in the village areas and a review of the top 20% of Adult Social Care users – with an indication of some spending control issues having been identified by other Councils.
61. Approximately a quarter of respondents offered saving suggestions including funding the Adult Social Care service from reserves; reviewing spend and efficiencies, including within the Childrens Trust. It was suggested that as the service is the largest budget in the Council other ways to generate revenue for it should be explored. Providing only statutory services was also a suggested option – with a perception that there was little appetite to pay for services for others who might need those services due to their own actions or poor financial planning. One comment queried how funds were spent in lockdown when facilities were shut. Another thought the spend on care homes run by private companies should be reviewed and perceived them to be making extensive profit from the Council.

62. It was also suggested that rather than a percentage increase there could be a set amount which was deemed fairer; a smaller increase; no increase at all; or a rate of inflation increase. There was a comment that the Council and/or Council Tax should not exist, and that services should be disbanded, the view being that those with financial means to pay for services will do so and those without will get support via welfare. It was also commented that there should be additional funds available through income from all the housing being built in the county and a reduction in electric vehicle charging spend would contribute towards a saving.
63. There were two respondents who had not indicated if they agreed or disagreed with the proposal but still made comment. One indicated a desire for the Adult Social Care precept to be firmly ringfenced and the other said better management of the funds would ensure more efficiency.
64. Any respondents who felt the proposal would have a negative impact were then asked to say what they thought the impact would be, along with any suggestions on how any potential negative impacts could be reduced or avoided. A total of 82 respondents commented.
65. Approximately one third of comments indicated that additional financial pressure on top of the current cost of living situation would put strain on families as wages are not rising in line with inflation. One comment indicated a feeling that the younger generation would be disproportionately affected and forced further into poverty to support an older generation who have benefited from pension increases and not planned for their future.
66. A similar number of respondents offered saving suggestions which included delaying any potential Council Tax increase by 12 months; means testing payments; putting unnecessary spending and non-urgent capital expenditure on hold; and seeking increased efficiencies within the service and revisiting contracts for better value for money. Charging for the services that are used by individuals, rather than everyone paying the same and that individuals should plan and prepare for the support they may need in the future was also suggested. Other suggestions included investing in preventative care and community groups to reduce long term cost and reliance on the service; capping the amount of landlord supported housing funds that can be claimed; and a call to look to revitalise areas to encourage new working families who will spend their money locally and support local businesses and infrastructure.
67. A few comments were made perceiving a lower than inflation increase being a reduction in services. A small number of respondents felt aggrieved that they had to pay towards social services when they may not receive the service themselves, and begrudged others who either pay less or no Council Tax but still receive the benefit of services. Among these comments it was generally felt there was poor service; that economies and efficiencies should be made; salaries and Councillor allowances should be reduced; all budgets should be reviewed; and to ensure a fit for purpose Council Tax Reduction Scheme.
68. A small number of respondents commented that more funds should come from Central Government and that social care should be centrally funded and managed, like the NHS.

Capital Programme 2024-28

69. The Capital Programme and its appendices includes all capital expenditure and income, including the acquisition, replacement and enhancement of assets financed from government grants, external contributions, revenue contributions, capital receipts and borrowing.
70. It sets out the key objectives and broad principles to be applied by the Council when considering capital investment and its funding, and provides the context for how the Medium-Term Capital Programme seeks to support the realisation of the Council's vision and corporate priorities.
71. The Capital Programme has been developed to ensure a robust mechanism to deliver our priorities within the finances available.
72. Respondents were given the above explanation and provided with the [Capital Programme 2024-28](#) and its appendices, and were invited to contact the Council if they would like further details about any of the schemes.
73. Respondents were asked if they had any comments on any of these schemes. A total of 56 comments were received about these schemes, covering a range of different subjects.
74. The subject that received the most comments was regarding the capital funding for the Travellers Temporary Stopping Site, near Junction 3 of the A14, with 23 respondents expressing their strong opposition to this proposal. They questioned the ongoing validity and location of the proposed site. It was felt the site offered poor value for money; would not be sufficiently used; and that alternative sites offered a better solution and would have less impact on the environment. Respondents felt this proposal should not be a priority, especially during times of financial pressure for the council and that the monies could be better spent on other capital infrastructure, especially those that improved the environment. It was felt there was wide public opposition to the proposal; that it was not wanted within the travellers community, and that it should undergo further consultation. It was also commented that the cost of the site should be funded by the site users and not from wider taxation or borrowed funding.
75. One respondent copied the contents of a submitted email, expressing their objection to the site. These comments were copied into several comment boxes throughout the questionnaire. This respondents' comments echoed other feedback mentioned above. To avoid duplication within this report the contents of this email is summarised below within the 'emailed/written responses' section.
76. The next most comment theme was regarding highway, cycleways and footpaths. More funding was requested to improve and repair local roads, including those in rural communities. There was also a call for more investment and thought for cycle networks and footpaths and a transparent road adoption process.
77. A few respondents commented on the Local Electric Vehicles Infrastructure (LEVI) funding. Like the above it was felt that this infrastructure funding should not come from the

Council's finances but private resources. It was also commented that this funding could be put to better use elsewhere; and that it should be easier for homeowners to have charging points installed at their property.

78. Several other subjects mentioned by just a handful of respondents included:

- Management of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) should be done by the Council and not the private sector; and that local housing should only be sourced for local residents.
- Concern there were too many new housing developments, which are putting increased pressure on services.
- A call for more investment to improve and modernise town centres.
- More support for rural communities.
- More investment in bus services, including both rural and towns, and improved bus shelters.
- That the cost for new waste/ recycling bins should be paid for by those residents living in legacy local authority areas who did not already have them; and a call for the waste collection service to be run more efficiently.
- The amount of the IT Strategy investment was also questioned.
- Similar to some previous comments, there was challenge as to why the investment in Superfast Broadband was being paid for out of public funds and not the service providers. It was felt this funding could be better used elsewhere.

79. A small number of alternative and cost saving suggestions were made. These included bringing building design services in-house; better optimisation of infrastructure; reduce investment into highways to maintain the status quo; reduce borrowing for capital expenditure so projects only go ahead if fully funded; reduce/rent surplus office space; and having a less generous Council Tax Support Scheme.

80. Other comments included a request for improved partnership working; a need for services to be funded; to reduce taxpayers funding to the Corby East Midlands International Pool; dissatisfaction that the Kettering Library roof was not well maintained; more equity in housing modifications for people with disabilities; and an opinion of a lack of transparency on discretionary funds spending.

Alternative suggestions and other comments

81. Respondents were then reminded that the budget report sets out the latest estimated funding position, service budget pressures, key financial risks and challenges influencing the development of North Northamptonshire Council's financial plans for 2024/25 and the ongoing financial impact of those plans, together with the medium-term estimates of funding and spending requirements.

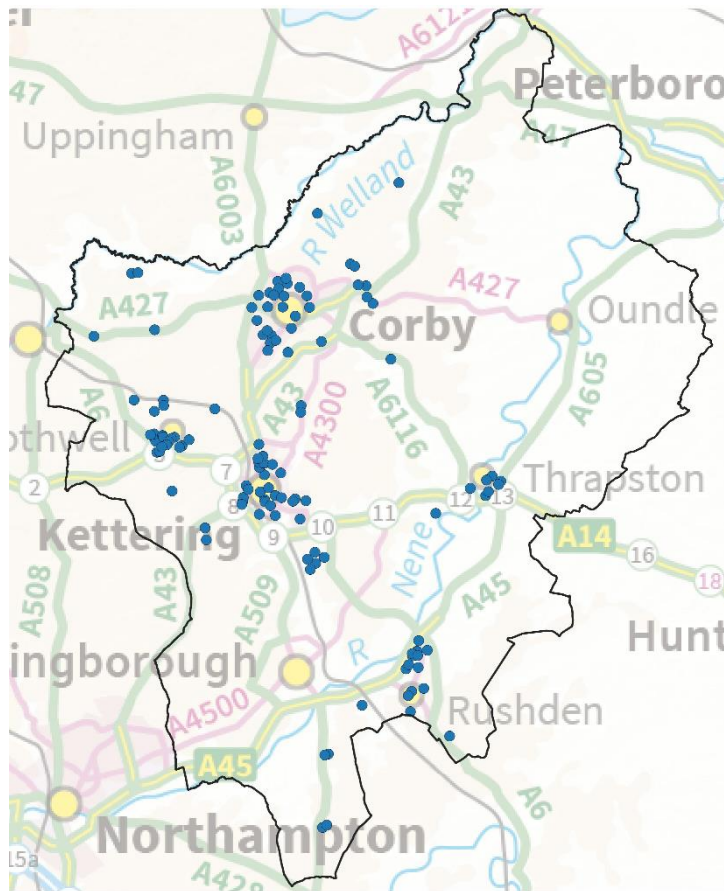
82. Respondents were reminded that the consultation questionnaire focusses on the new proposals for the draft budget 2024/25 that will likely affect residents. However, respondents were welcome to comment on anything within the Draft Budget.

83. Respondents were asked if they had any other comments they would like to make, including any alternative ideas about how the Council could save the same amount of money or generate the same amount of income as outlined in the proposals. There were 48 comments made in relation to this question. A variety of comments were received to this question, with some respondents repeating previous comments.
84. Similar to the previous question, the most frequently mentioned theme was the objection to the proposed Travellers Temporary Stopping Site. Many of these comments mirrored feedback previously given. Additional comments included concerns over the wellbeing of the site users due to road safety and pollution.
85. Several comments were regarding the dissatisfaction with road maintenance. Some respondents felt more funding should be provided. There was also a call for improved bus services.
86. A small number of respondents said they felt there were too many council staff, and that staff and Councillor allowances were too high and should be reduced.
87. A similar number of respondents expressed their thoughts on the environment and felt council offices should be run more energy efficiently. There were mixed opinions regarding electric vehicles (EV's). It was comment that the Council fleet should be replaced with EV's, whereas other respondents felt plans for EV facilities should be removed and not fall within council funding.
88. A small number of respondents felt it would be financially astute for the council to invest in property and use its assets as an income generator. It was also commented that cost effective materials should be used to maintain council buildings.
89. A similar number of people felt the funding for IT was high and questioned if it could be reduced.
90. A couple of respondents asked for more investment into town centres.
91. A small number of alternative and cost saving suggestions were made. These included delaying some projects, including the superfast broadband expansion and the replacement of waste vehicles; reviewing income generation; undertaking an expenditure and efficiency review; improved partnership working with local businesses; and bringing more services in-house.
92. Other comments included a belief the Council's priorities were wrong; that expert opinions should be sought before making decisions; and that all proposals should undergo public debate. There was a request for improved waste collection services; increased school funding and special educational needs support; and more funding for heritage services, including the arts, museums, and adult learning.

Demographic information

93. Within the demographic section of the questionnaire organisational respondents were asked to provide more detail about their organisation by providing their organisations name and their job title/ role. The five respondents who provided this information identified themselves as parish and town councils, and a patient participation group. We have not listed the job titles/ roles of respondents within this report to ensure respondents' anonymity is retained.

94. Individual respondents were asked to provide their postcode to give us an understanding of where respondents live. There were 172 valid postcodes provided for North Northamptonshire. The below map broadly shows where these respondents reside. A total of 28 postcodes were incomplete.



Draft Budget 2024-25 consultation

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95. Respondents who were not responding on behalf of an organisation were asked to complete the Council's equality monitoring form to help us understand the characteristics of people who have taken part in the consultation.

96. The vast majority of respondents chose not to provide their demographic information. Full statistical data of the responses is available within the appendix to this report. The following is a brief summary of the data received.

97. The majority of respondents who completed the equality monitoring form identified themselves as female (56.3%), with 43.7% being male. The most frequent age given by respondents were those aged between 50 to 64 years (50.0%).
98. A total of 56.3% of respondents who completed the equality monitoring form were married, with 18.8% being single (never married); 12.5% widowed; and 6.3% in a civil partnership and 6.3% cohabiting.
99. Other identified demographic information provided by these forms demonstrated that 18.8% were disabled; most respondents who completed the equalities form identified themselves as White British (81.3%); and the most frequent religion identified was Christian (43.8%) with 43.8% saying they have no religion.
100. The final question within the questionnaire asked respondents how they found out about the consultation. A total of 256 respondents answered this question. The majority of respondents said they were made aware of the consultation via social media (53.1%). Other awareness raising channels included via an email from the Council (24.6%); from the Council website (15.2%); the local media i.e. newspaper/ radio (7.8%); and via a voluntary sector organisation (0.8%). Most of the 5.9% respondents that said 'Other' were from council staff who found out about the consultation via internal communication channels; other responses included hearing from a Councillor; from a Parish Council newsletter; and word of mouth.

Emailed/written responses

101. There were nine emailed/written responses received in relation to the draft budget consultation.
102. Six written responses raised their objections over the proposed Temporary Travellers Site near Junction 3 of the A14.
103. One respondent identified themselves as a representative of a town/parish local council within their questionnaire response, which included a copy of their written email submission in its entirety within several comment boxes of the questionnaire. To avoid duplication a summary of their comments is presented below. They expressed their dissatisfaction that this would be funded via borrowed money which would incur interest. They felt the proposed location had not been sufficiently thought through, is not suitable and would be underused. The respondent suggested an alternative site of one of the large laybys on the A43 between Kettering and Northampton, which they believed to be substantially more cost effective. They felt the implementation and ongoing cost of the proposal would not provide good value for money and should not be approved.
104. A response was received from a local Parish Councillor. They felt the proposed site was not appropriate considering its proximity to a possible logistics terminal being constructed adjoining the site. They raised concern over the site possibly interfering with any construction and said a decision should be made on the proposed logistics site before attempting to provide a temporary traveller stopping site.

105. Other respondents felt there was a lack of transparency in the decision-making process and questioned if the site was a priority when compared with other needs. They were concerned of the impact on rare local wildlife and believe there are other more cost-effective sites elsewhere within North Northamptonshire. They also raised safety concerns over the additional traffic; pollution; the ongoing cost of managing and maintaining the site for local council's and partner organisations.
106. Responses not referencing the proposed temporary travellers site included a written respondent who questioned the feasibility of the proposed savings and efficiencies being achieved. They sought reassurance that any potential service reductions be subject to sufficient consultation.
107. Another respondent expressed their desire for key services to be prioritised and for strong working relationships between Councillors and employees.
108. The final written response expressed their dissatisfaction with the Council's complaints procedure. They felt the system was prone to poor recording and controlling of complaints, which left it exposed to not providing reliable data for future service reviews and expenditure plans.
109. A copy of these nine letters is available to view along with the full consultation results on the [consultation webpage](#). Unredacted copies of the feedback received has been shared with senior officers.