

# Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council

## Budget Proposals 2022 to 2023 – Consultation Findings Report

A public consultation was held from 10 November 2021 to 2 January 2022 to gather views on the council's budget proposals for 2022 to 2023. There were a total of 96 responses to the consultation. 87 were received via the online survey (80 from individuals, 6 from organisations, 1 not stated) and 9 responses were received via email (7 from individuals and 2 from organisations). The organisations that responded included:

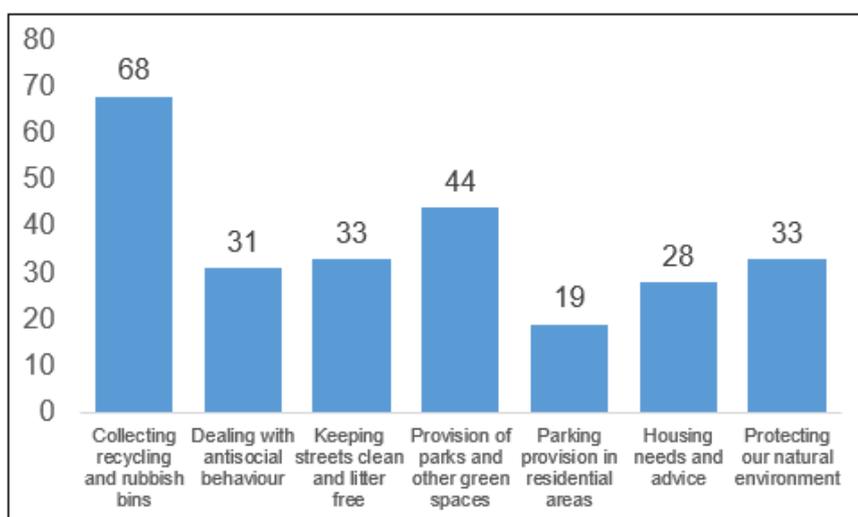
- Basingstoke Rugby Club
- Age Concern Hampshire
- Sherfield Park Parish Council
- Chineham Parish Council
- Squirrels Antiques
- Basingstoke Deane Rotary Club
- Hampshire Hospitals Foundation Trust

### Consultation responses

**Question 3:** To help us target our limited resources, please select the top three front line services that you would like us to focus on most.

### Top services

Service	Number
Collecting recycling and rubbish bins	68
Dealing with antisocial behaviour	31
Keeping streets clean and litter free	33
Provision of parks and other green spaces	44
Parking provision in residential areas	19
Housing needs and advice	28
Protecting our natural environment	33
<b>Total</b>	<b>256</b>



### Comments

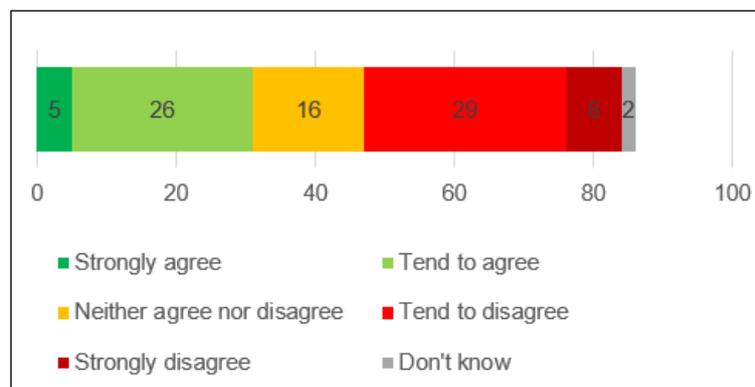
The main themes arising from the feedback to this question are as follows:

- **Climate change and green spaces:** need to tackle the climate emergency and cut back overgrown hedges, but not everywhere as it is better for biodiversity. Parks and green spaces are important for wellbeing, so it is important to maintain them and keep accessible.

- **Bin collections:** duty to collect, reduce to once a fortnight to increase recycling and lower costs, bring plastic recycling in-house or have more sites in town.
- **Residents' parking:** more scope to generate income from this vs do not increase as would make parking unaffordable. Make every parking space in residential areas eligible for a resident permit. New housing should have adequate parking and good access roads for emergency services. Interest in active travel provisions, such as for walking and cycling, rather than parking. Need more parking and electric vehicle charging points in Tadley.
- **Crime prevention:** dealing with anti-social behaviour is a police matter.
- **Street cleaning:** litter and dog fouling is an issue in some areas e.g. Castle Hill School and Fort Hill paths. Need more anti-littering comms and onus on local businesses.
- **Other points:** all frontline services are important, some can be delivered with other organisations, create arts/leisure opportunities, help for homeless, road maintenance.

**Question 4:** Thinking about the overall approach to balance the council's proposed budget for 2022 to 2023 (as outlined in the budget proposals for 2022 to 2023 webpage, which includes an overview document and Cabinet report: [www.basingstoke.gov.uk/ budget 2021](http://www.basingstoke.gov.uk/budget%202021)), to what extent do you agree or disagree that this is the right approach for Basingstoke and Deane?

Response	Number
Strongly agree	5
Tend to agree	26
Neither agree nor disagree	16
Tend to disagree	29
Strongly disagree	8
Don't know	2
Total	86



<b>Agree</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>37</b>

The main themes arising from the feedback to this question are:

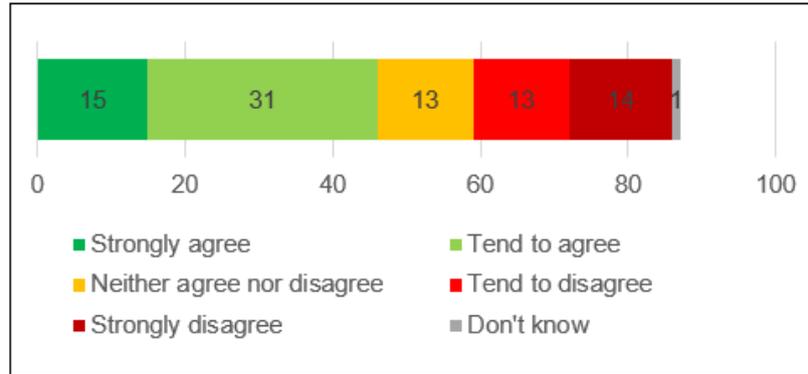
- **Parking:** disagree with parking permit increase as current spaces are not patrolled well.
- **Bin collections and climate:** reduce to once a fortnight to increase recycling, lower costs. Promote active travel such as cycling and walking to reduce traffic and improve air quality.
- **Reduce spending:** senior staff salaries, bonuses and councillor allowances.
- **Grant funding:** concern about reductions for Community and Voluntary sector and festivals.
- **Council tax:** poor return on council tax vs increase council tax to meet budget gap and fund core business, arts and festivals. Either increase fees or increase council tax, not both.
- **Other points:** this is a sensible approach to managing finances, be more transparent/ accountable, black bin charge an issue for some older people, more affordable housing and developers contributions, build council housing with affordable rent, twinning programme good, bus service should be council controlled, lobby central government more, service reduction gone too far due to government cuts, work with other adjacent authorities to pool central functions, issue with grass cutting/maintenance in the summer.

## Options for the budget

### Review charges for optional services that the council provides

**Question 5:** To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to review charges and concessions for optional services? (for example, pest control)

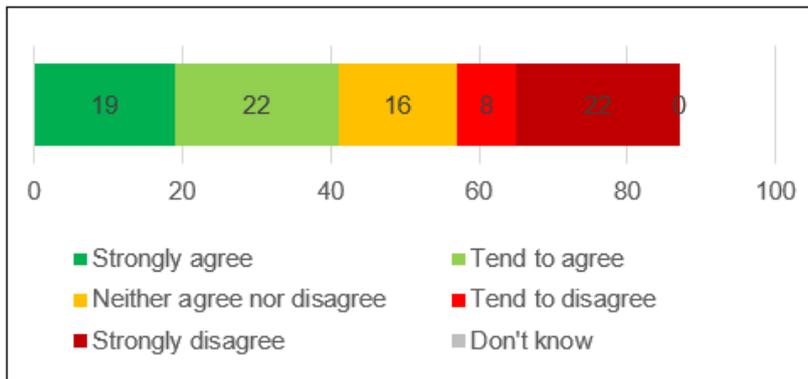
Response	Number
Strongly agree	15
Tend to agree	31
Neither agree nor disagree	13
Tend to disagree	13
Strongly disagree	14
Don't know	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>



<b>Agree</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>27</b>

**Question 6:** To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to increase the charge for residents parking permits from £40 to £50 to cover administration costs and enforcement activity in line with our agency agreement with Hampshire County Council?

Response	Number
Strongly agree	19
Tend to agree	22
Neither agree nor disagree	16
Tend to disagree	8
Strongly disagree	22
Don't know	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>



<b>Agree</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>30</b>

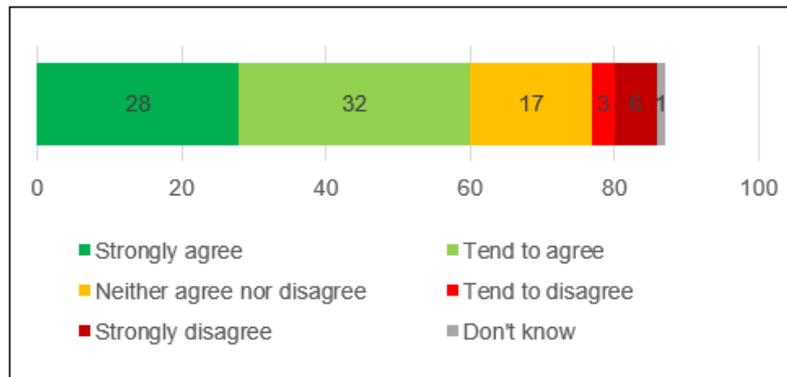
## Reviewing our services in line with the Council Plan 2020 to 2024 priorities

We are considering a range of changes to current services and activities to help meet the council's budget gap (see below). To what extent do you agree or disagree with these?

The responses to this series of questions are illustrated below.

**Question 7:** Tourism work: we are proposing to incorporate our existing tourism work into the wider promotion of borough activities and budgets to reduce funding. This would have no impact on the current work we do to promote tourism in the borough.

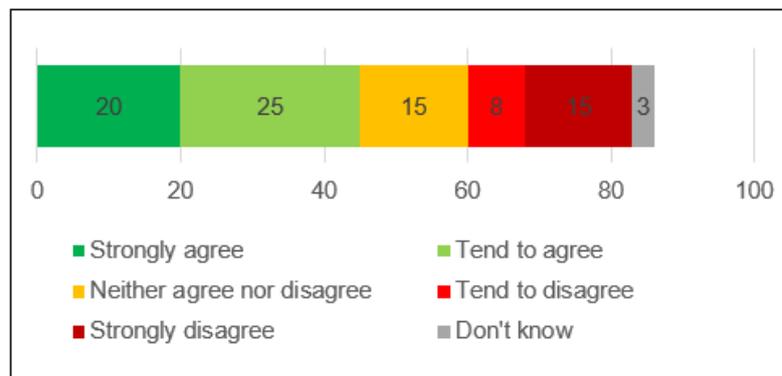
Response	Number
Strongly agree	28
Tend to agree	32
Neither agree nor disagree	17
Tend to disagree	3
Strongly disagree	6
Don't know	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>



<b>Agree</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>9</b>

**Question 8:** Bus Services: we are proposing to review our contribution to Hampshire County Council's bus services before it finalises work to renew its new bus services contract from September 2022.

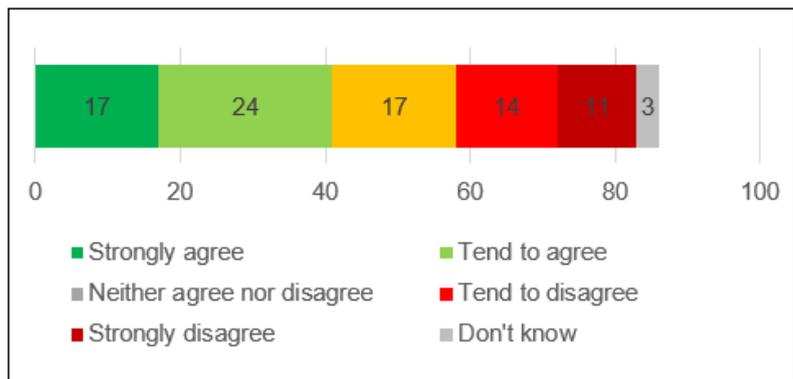
Response	Number
Strongly agree	20
Tend to agree	25
Neither agree nor disagree	15
Tend to disagree	8
Strongly disagree	15
Don't know	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>86</b>



<b>Agree</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>23</b>

**Question 9:** Dial-a-Ride service: we are proposing to review the extra hours that we fund for the Dial-a-Ride service provided by Hampshire County Council. This review aims to adapt the service to best meet current local need.

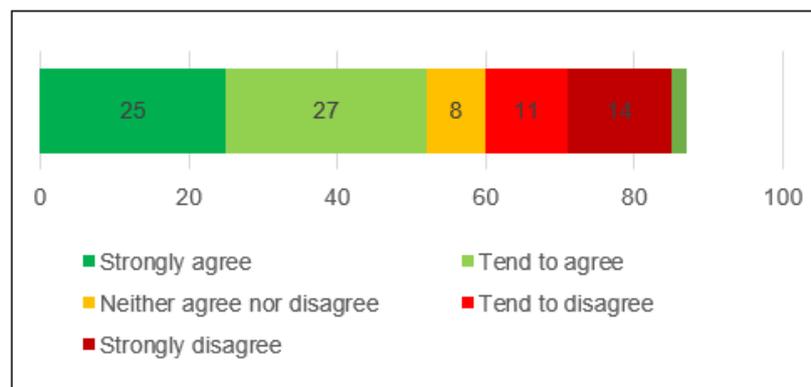
Response	Number
Strongly agree	17
Tend to agree	24
Neither agree nor disagree	17
Tend to disagree	14
Strongly disagree	11
Don't know	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>86</b>



<b>Agree</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>25</b>

**Question 10:** Events: we are proposing to review our support for Basingstoke Kite Festival, Basingstoke Transport Festival and Euskirchen Festival of Sport. We would continue to work with event organisers to support them to deliver events and, in the case of the Euskirchen Festival of Sport, seek increased contributions from participants while reducing our funding contribution.

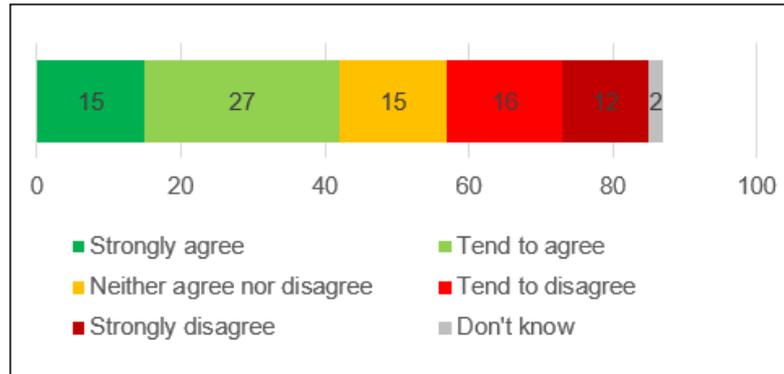
Response	Number
Strongly agree	25
Tend to agree	27
Neither agree nor disagree	8
Tend to disagree	11
Strongly disagree	14
Don't know	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>



<b>Agree</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>25</b>

**Question 11: Discretionary Business Rates Relief:** The council currently gives non-profit organisations an additional 20% business rate relief on top of the 80% relief which has been agreed by the government. We are proposing to review the eligibility, criteria and reliefs given under our discretionary rates relief scheme.

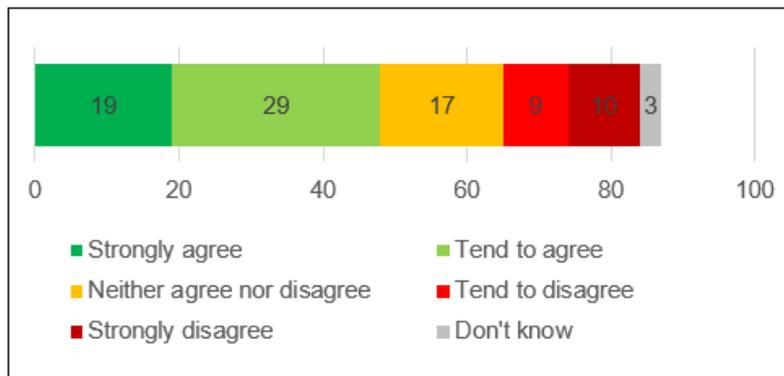
Response	Number
Strongly agree	15
Tend to agree	27
Neither agree nor disagree	15
Tend to disagree	16
Strongly disagree	12
Don't know	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>



<b>Agree</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>28</b>

**Question 12: Council Tax Reduction Scheme:** The council provides a Council Tax Reduction Scheme for a number of residents. We are proposing to review this service to bring it more in line with national schemes.

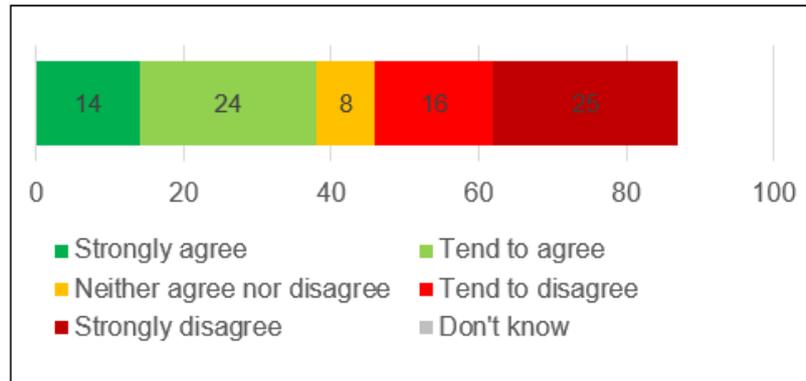
Response	Number
Strongly agree	19
Tend to agree	29
Neither agree nor disagree	17
Tend to disagree	9
Strongly disagree	10
Don't know	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>



<b>Agree</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>19</b>

**Question 13:** Grants to community and voluntary organisations: as part of a review of our overall support for grants to community and voluntary organisations (current total £1.35 million) we are proposing to reduce the budget for financial grants while also supporting organisations to find alternative funding sources.

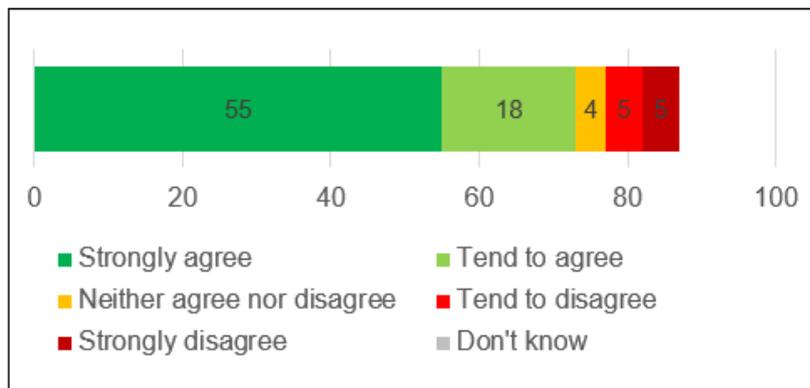
Response	Number
Strongly agree	14
Tend to agree	24
Neither agree nor disagree	8
Tend to disagree	16
Strongly disagree	25
Don't know	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>



<b>Agree</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>41</b>

**Question 14:** Waste services communications: we are proposing to consider the use of a new digital platform to reduce postage costs by using electronic methods of communication. Paper communication and information in other formats would still be provided where required.

Response	Number
Strongly agree	55
Tend to agree	18
Neither agree nor disagree	4
Tend to disagree	5
Strongly disagree	5
Don't know	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>

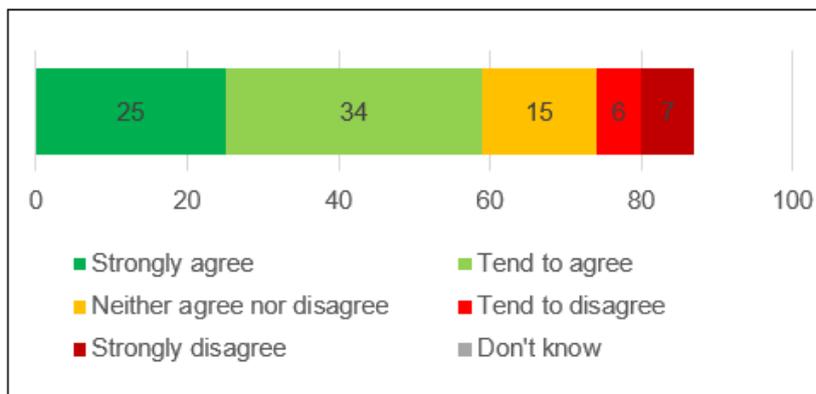


<b>Agree</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>10</b>

## Generating additional income

**Question 15:** The council could consider ways of generating additional income, such as alternative investment opportunities and selling our services to other organisations. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this option?

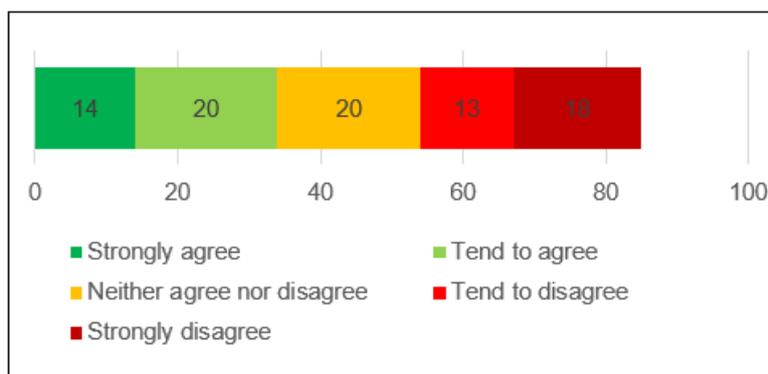
Response	Number
Strongly agree	25
Tend to agree	34
Neither agree nor disagree	15
Tend to disagree	6
Strongly disagree	7
Don't know	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>



<b>Agree</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>13</b>

**Question 16:** To meet its budget gap, the council is proposing to align its fees and charges for bulky waste and replacement black bins with Hart District Council. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?

Response	Number
Strongly agree	14
Tend to agree	20
Neither agree nor disagree	20
Tend to disagree	13
Strongly disagree	18
Don't know	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>



<b>Agree</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>31</b>

## Other comments

**Question 17:** If you have any further comments on these options, or ideas on how the council could balance its budget, please share these in the box below:

The main points from the feedback to this question are:

### Potential savings

- Fortnightly bin collections and use savings from for grants to voluntary organisations.
- Do more to prevent fraudulent claims.
- Digitalise all communications and ban all post.
- Combine Basingstoke and Hart councils. Do not align fees with Hart as Basingstoke is not as wealthy.
- Do not sell services, look at staff costs and discuss issue with government.

### Potential income

- More fines for fly tipping and littering, reduce bureaucracy and number of councillors.
- Sell council land e.g. the Knowlings in Whitchurch is a prime development site, should be sold and revenue used to purchase income generating property.
- Selling services is good but need to prioritise services for residents.
- Tax local landlords and increase council tax weighted for the higher bands.
- Provide secure bicycle lock-up provision in town centre/train station – charge for this.
- Improve payment machines, increase EV charging points to provide revenue opportunities.

### Concerns / suggestions

#### *General*

- Options are good in theory but careful not to lose factors that make the borough a good place to live and work.
- Need to improve communications around what the council is trying to achieve, provide a clear breakdown of expenses (some requests for this have been refused), how the budget will be measured, risks etc. to improve trust.
- Very concerned about the reduction of funding to the Festival of transport as Rotary have only had it 2-3 years and it benefits the council and residents.

#### *Vulnerable people and those on a low-income*

- Cuts target the most vulnerable, not inclusive.
- Resident parking permits should be free as the fee is difficult for poorer families. Could raise town centre parking charges to address this.
- Concern about lower income families access to events/activities if they are charged for e.g. festivals, parking at Eastrop Park.
- Protect pensioners, communications should be accessible to older people e.g. paper copies.
- Council tax increase is the same cost as one individual's prescription for the month.
- Perception that the budget will reduce payment to charities and individuals that need it and increase payments from residents wherever possible.
- Reducing contribution to bus services will directly impact most vulnerable and reliant on public transport, better to invest more and charge more for parking to benefit environment.

### *Environment*

- Cuts to buses is not good for climate commitments.
- Increases in waste charges will increase the cost of fly tipping to the council.
- Increase recycling, promote supermarket and clothing (Air Ambulance do collections) recycling options.
- Stop the need to book a slot at the tip, is digital comms cost less than postage?
- Need more recreation facilities, improve leisure park, get new owner to improve ice rink, swimming pool and bowling.
- Stop final salary defined benefit pensions and replace with defined contribution pension scheme. Don't accept redundancy costs when staff move from another LA.

### *Finance*

- Perception that cuts only affect public and not in-house expenses.
- Review investment strategy to assess better opportunities as cash balances are earning less than the rate of inflation and investment is earning a negative real rate of return.
- Look at sustainable investment opportunities and direct investment in building renewable infrastructure to future proof the borough against the impacts of climate change.
- Other revenue from other sources sounds like outsourcing and privatisation. Need to share how you are looking to make efficiencies by reducing operational and processing waste.

**Question 18:** If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please let us know what impacts these proposals could have on your organisation and, where possible, how these could be mitigated.

- Festival of Transport is not necessarily self-funding and council can buy festival services at a better price. Need to discuss possible run-off of funding from 2024 to give Basingstoke and Deane Rotary time to understand event better, work on additional income lines and avoid ceasing the event. This would be a loss to the town and the council's reputation, all for a relatively small investment.
- Understand need for reductions but need to work smarter.
- The reduction of funding via grants to community and voluntary organisations will have a detrimental impact on our capacity to support older people in the district. We will struggle to continue to deliver wellbeing services via the coordinator post and projects to encourage people to take part in activities to make healthier life choices, reduce harmful behaviours and improve their physical and mental wellbeing at a time when support is needed more than ever following COVID and with dementia cases rising.

### **Email responses**

The main points from the feedback received via email responses are:

- 5 of the 9 emails received noted 'extreme disappointment' and concern about the proposal to cut funding to the Transport Festival. Comments included that it one of the largest free car gatherings in the South (15-20,000 visitors) that brings revenues to the town, funding for a range of community projects (£35,000 has been made in donations this year and significant work with vaccinations), a positive reputation to the council and already has registrations for next year. The Rotary has made the event a success after taking it over (at the council's request) and is proposing to hold talks and look at options to avoid stopping the event, this is supported by two ward members. It was also noted that there are a large number of disabled people who attend the event and that additional parking spaces were needed at the last event to accommodate the rising numbers of disabled visitors.

- The Festival of Sport brings immeasurable value to young people in the development of their lives. The grants given are small compared to the overall budget for the event but the gains well and truly outweigh the grants and give great value in so many long-lasting ways.
- Keep parking charges low to attract people to our town centre, at the very least, return to a £1 flat fee on Sundays.
- 2 emails objecting to an increase in parking permit/visitor permit fees as it would penalise residents that need them. Some are considering not having a visitor permit as the costs levied do not justify the quality of service delivered. What about revenues generated from fines? As the residents permit is linked to a registration number, paper permits should stop to save costs. Houses on Sherborne Road on the left-hand side travelling north have no choice but to park on the road. Commercial vehicles and those with private drives use residents' parking spaces. Charges should differentiate more between those residents with sufficient private parking space and those who have no option but to park on the road. Vehicles violating the permit scheme should be penalised more frequently. Parking on weekdays rarely monitored and never at weekends when there are most issues.

### **'About You' questions**

These optional questions are asked to help understand whether the responses received are representative of the borough's population. Findings were as follows:

- Geographical areas: of the respondents who gave their postcode there was approximately a 50:50 split between those who were from town and rural areas. A small number were from outside of the borough.
- Gender: there were more men (47) than women (34) who responded to this question. The borough population is approximately 50:50 men and women.
- Age: the majority of respondents to this question were of working age and limited responses were received from young people.
- Disability or long-term physical / mental health condition: the percentage of the borough population who described themselves as 'suffering from a long-term health problem or disability which limited day-to-day activities a lot or a little' at 2011 Census is 13.5% and the percentage for those who responded to this question was 9% (excluding the 'prefer not to say' numbers).
- Ethnicity: 11% of people who responded to this question were of other than White British ethnic origins, which is similar to the overall borough population of 11.8% as at the Census 2011 (excluding the 'prefer not to say' numbers).