



# **Northampton Borough Council**

## **Budget Proposals 2017/18**

### **Consultation Results**

**Report owner: Glenn Hammons**

**Chief Finance Officer**

31<sup>st</sup> January 2017

## **1. Executive summary**

- 1.1. In December 2016 the Council launched a consultation which looked at the budget proposals for 2017/18. Comments were invited over a 6 week period, ending on 26 January 2017.  
People were invited to comment on the budget options for savings and growth. This report summarises the results of the consultation on the Council budget proposals.
- 1.2. Key results  
57.58% out of 66 respondents agree with proposals to increase council tax  
Almost 37 % out of 66 respondents would be willing to pay more.

## **2. Introduction**

- 2.1. On 14 December 2016 Cabinet approved for consultation their draft budget proposals for 2017/18, indicative budgets for 2018/19 to 2021/22 for the General Fund Revenue Budgets, the Housing Revenue Account and the Capital Programme as well as a proposed Council Tax increase and Treasury Management Strategy.
- 2.2. Views covering all these areas were invited from 15 December 2016 until 26 January 2017. The aim of this consultation was to find out people's views on the draft budget proposals presented and to propose alternative suggestions.
- 2.3. Completed questionnaires were accepted up to 26 January 2017.
- 2.4. The consultation period will formally close on the date the budget is approved in February 2017.
- 2.5. This consultation followed the principles set out in the Council's Consultation Toolkit and industry standard guidance on best practice in consultation.
- 2.6. This report contains the results to the draft budget 2017/18 consultation. They will be used to by the Council as part of the process for informing priorities for the Council's Corporate Plan and for setting a balanced budget (including a capital programme).

## **3. Methodology**

- 3.1. Residents, businesses, and other stakeholders were invited to provide feedback on the proposals for the draft budget during the consultation period and support was made available to maximise involvement and understanding of the proposals.
- 3.2. People were able to engage in a range of ways:

- On-line survey asking people if they agreed or disagreed with the proposal to increase council tax; if they would be prepared to pay more council tax if it helped the Council protect or improve services and inviting feedback on the proposals including thoughts on alternative proposals;
- Advertised through social media
- Paper questionnaires available upon request;
- Website information on consultation proposals and questionnaire available to download and complete on-line
- E-mail address, freepost address and consultation phone line set up to receive feedback;
- Staff via intranet, trade unions and as general public;
- Open public meeting held at the Guildhall on 12 January 2017;
- Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 20 January 2017;
- Audit Committee Meeting 18 January 2017

The consultation was advertised through the media including press releases to raise awareness. Social media, including Facebook and Twitter, were used during the consultation period. We posted five times on Facebook during the consultation period reaching a total of 1,638 people, 48 of whom went on to engage (click, like, comment or share) with the post. We tweeted 7 times during the consultation period generating a total of 7,891 impressions and 58 engagements.

#### **4. Consultation questions**

**Q1** Northampton Borough Council is proposing a small increase in council tax, the first increase in the Borough's element of the tax for five years, in its draft budget proposals for 2017/18. We propose to increase council tax for all households by 2.4%. This will be the equivalent for a band D household of £5 per year. By doing this it raises an estimated £329,000 in 2017-18, and this enables the Council to continue to deliver value for money services in the future. What is your opinion about raising council tax? Would you:-

Increase it by more or  
Keep it the same or  
Reduce it

**66 responses – See Section 8 for full responses**

**Q2** Where do you feel the Borough Council should be spending additional funds?

**55 answers recorded – see Section 8 for full responses**

**Q3** How do you think we can reduce spend, generate income or do things differently so that we ensure we maintain a balanced budget.

**49 Comments – see Section 8 for full responses**

**Q4** Part of the money raised in the increase in council tax will enable us to provide for a capital investment of £100,000 in new play equipment across the borough in 2017/18, along with additional play equipment maintenance of £15,000 per annum. Northampton Borough Council is committed to a programme of enhancements across the Borough which we believe improves the quality of life for our residents. Which of the initiatives below do you think bring the best enhancements to the people of Northampton? You can choose as many as you like - and feel free to add comments at the end if there are any other schemes you would like to see considered by Council.

- Town centre traffic enhancements
- New play equipment in parks
- Improvements for parks, allotments and cemeteries
- Fish Street - public realm development
- Cultural Quarter - public realm development
- Link road scheme between St James and Towcester Road
- Development of the Waterside Enterprise Zone
- Museum expansion
- Superfast broadband

### **59 responses – See Section 8 for full responses**

Consultation demographic information is available at section 9

## **5. Findings**

5.1. 66 completed online surveys were received as at 26 January 2017, compared with 90 in 2016 and 2015. Full consultation results are available at section 8.

5.2. It should be noted that additional activity relating to the budget was undertaken in addition to this exercise during the period of consultation including local press, public meetings, and that the views expressed during such events are not included in this document. (For Audit Committee, Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Community Forums, please view minutes of meetings held during the consultation period available at [modern.gov](http://modern.gov))

## **6. How feedback will be used**

6.1. Where comments relate to service specific issues that relate to the usual business of the organisation, these will be forwarded to the relevant service area.

6.2. Where issues raised are not our responsibility, such as street lighting, the state of the roads or about social work, the comments received will be forwarded to the relevant organisation as appropriate.

6.3. In relation to the budget, the Cabinet will consider all responses alongside the need to set a balanced budget. Any changes arising from the consultation will be detailed in the General Fund Revenue Budget Report.

6.4. Findings have also been used to inform priorities for the Council's Corporate Plan 2017-21.

## 7. Equalities

7.1. The Cabinet will consider the results of this consultation and of all relevant impact assessments which were developed to make an informed decision regarding the Council's budget.

7.2. Equality and Diversity were considered as part of the budget build process and an equality impact assessment or screening was completed as appropriate.

7.3. Where issues have been identified and the option is approved, the detailed equality impact assessment will be used to inform the implementation of the budget option.

7.4. An Equality Impact Assessment for this budget consultation process is available at Section 10.

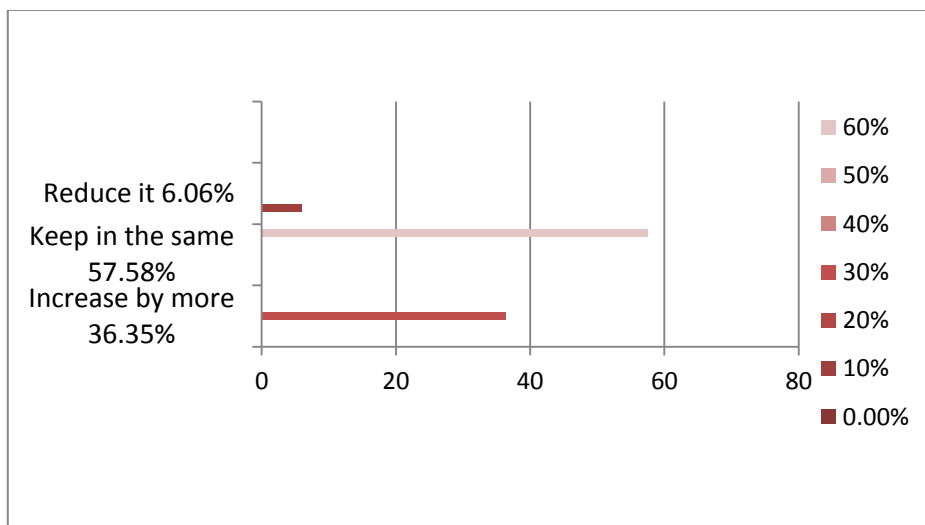
## 8. Draft Budget 2016/17 Consultation Results - Survey Monkey

**Q1** Northampton Borough Council is proposing a small increase in council tax, the first increase in the Borough's element of the tax for five years, in its draft budget proposals for 2017/18. We propose to increase council tax for all households by 2.4%. This will be the equivalent for a band D household of £5 per year. By doing this it raises an estimated £329,000 in 2017-18, and this enables the Council to continue to deliver value for money services in the future. What is your opinion about raising council tax? Would you:-

Increase it by more or  
Keep it the same or  
Reduce it

**Answered: 66 Skipped 0**

Percentage breakdown



**Q2. Where do you feel the Borough Council should be spending additional funds? Answered: 55 Skipped:11**

- Spend more on street cleaning in deprived and densely populated areas and litter picking in neighborhood parks. This means avoiding the easy and annual apparent option you take of allocating all your resources to the town centre and Abington Park.
- Supporting local voluntary sector groups
- Community projects, adult social care, playgrounds
- Additional funds should be used to lower council tax.
- Housing
- Support of the disabled
- Investment in the arts
- Social care of elderly and vulnerable adults
- This increase must not be lost in the system and be spent on improving our poor town centre. We need to get shop owners want to come to our Town. Compared with other Centre's we appear very poor.
- Care Homes Safeguarding of Children in the Voluntary Sector
- On parks and open spaces
- Supporting the voluntary sector so that the money spent gets the best return
- Voluntary sector services, including support services across the board. Housing to reduce temporary emergency housing.
- Roads
- Core services such as waste collection and environmental service improvements
- Decrease homelessness by creating a social housing company that appeals to landlords
- Child and Adult Social Care Parks and play equipment parking enforcement Litter tidying
- Street lights, pot holes
- Parks & environment
- Environmental management - such as clean air & recycling initiatives. Improved benefit services (they are confusing) & access to advice. Christmas lights - they are poor in comparison to other areas - they do not promote Northampton well as a festive place to shop.
- Care for the elderly and adults with disability
- There are not enough dementia services
- Care for Elderly - especially to allow them out of hospital earlier.
- The environment especially Northampton East, where street cleaning is minimal & tree care almost nonexistent
- Adult Services and social care
- Services for children and the elderly Street Cleaning and maintenance of public places
- Environmental, street and council estate cleaning
- At least maintain or increase spending on environmental side, dealing with litter and appearance of the town.
- Health and social care as well as mental health services.

- I think you should publish your books down to the last penny it will end any public confusion and have your offices held in higher respect, I trust you have nothing to hide
- Road repair and street cleaning
- Stamp down on fly tipping.
- Police, bus, roads, schools, housing
- More police on the streets and more traffic cars on the roads!
- Pathways to elevate the amount of elderly that fall and need hospital care which would in turn free up hospital bed blocking
- Encouraging decent shops and businesses to the town to generate future income and visitors. By decent, I don't mean pound shops, charity shops or Primark!
- Housing
- On the basics so we can keep them
- Housing and social care
- Collecting litter, tidying the streets and improving public path ways.
- Cleaning the streets up collection of litter providing more litter bins
- Adult social care, children's services
- Police, ambulance, fire
- NBC MUST knock down the Concrete casting at Sixfields Stadium it's not been paid for, won't ever be paid for, or completed its an embarrassment for the town and shows how not to lend vast sums of cash to bankrupt firms, spending a few grand smashing that would be great for local morale, if NFC want additional seating they can fund it themselves with fans not towns money
- To set up a 'Halfway House' to accept people fit to be discharged from hospital but are awaiting a social settlement.
- I don't like question one - I would agree that £5 is fair Council need to ensure that all subcontractors meet KPI's. Additional spending on fixing potholes would be welcome
- Elderly totally ignored as always. Services that were once available are now not. Should be more parking easily accessible to shops and Derngate. All the building over town centre car parks has restricted access for those who whose walking ability is restricted.
- Care in the Community. Encouraging local people to look out for and after their neighbours
- Road repairs, street lighting, youth clubs to stop them hanging around local shops.
- Set up a power supply company at negotiate a preferential rate for citizens of Northampton that is cheaper than currently available to us from the big 5 like Nottingham Power has done.
- Care of children and old people should take priority, pot holes, parks and failing schools would make a big difference too.
- Recovering the £10.25m you blew on dodgy loans.
- Roads', cleaning up town centre as it is disgusting, sorting the buses out and the ridiculous state of The Drapery now. Cleaner parks, more dog wardens.
- Parks! There is a roundabout in Abington Park that has been broken for months. Very sad for the kids.

**Q3. How do you think we can reduce spend, generate income or do things differently so that we maintain a balanced budget. Answered: 49 Skipped: 17**

- Merge your environmental health department with the county council's Trading Standards service.
- Improve customer service by doing things at the right time, first time
- Cut management posts, reduce higher band salaries. Cut duplication of services, take services back in house such as grounds maintenance
- Er...get the £10M back
- Reduce the number of directors to fit the current structure it is ridiculous to have so many for such a slimmed down organisation. Reduce spending on non-essential and non-statutory services. Let the private sector do more, it is not a local authority's job to support private companies.
- Find a more effective waste management/grounds maintenance contractor
- Cut down the volume of roadworks in the town centre which is currently discouraging people into town. This will encourage more small businesses in, therefore increasing council's income through business rates.
- Value what the voluntary sector do already, there are many unsung groups of people who get no recognition at all for working tirelessly to keep the councils head above water.
- If we have a thriving Town Centre then more income would be generated. I think we need to look at other towns and see how they do things. Reduction in spend is always difficult to answer when I do not have budget information
- Reducing spend means less services. The Council has already cut back too many vital services
- Do not hire consultants at NBC. Attract people to come to Northampton by helping independent retailers and getting big branded companies in. The proposed plans for the town centre are boring and not good enough. Make the Greyfriars site into a large square with a central focus and with independent shops around the edges.
- By looking for best value
- Invest in opportunities that arise to save money in the longer term.
- Get more people in schools respecting society and therefore more people will volunteer, less crime and less vandalism.
- Create more apprenticeships/internships and volunteering opportunities across the entire council
- Wider use of parking permits parking enforcement greater use of racecourse to encourage public attendance
- Don't waste money on unnecessary work
- A considered approach to actual expenditure in all areas of running the council facility/operation further internal savings are likely to be made with stringent assessment
- Improve access to Northampton's attractions - e.g. add some grass guard permeable paving along Park Avenue South & Abington Park Crescent for safer parking and improved access to the park - this may help encourage visitors to the museum at Abington Park. Improving the Christmas decorations around the town may help entice more shoppers into the area. Thus increasing income. The current decorations seem tired & sparse. Reduction of rent/business rates in the town centre. Many empty shops, incentives to open in the town are needed. Northampton is facing increasing competition from other nearby towns for retail.



Keep current parking charges & free at weekends. Improve online services on borough council website - website can be confusing & difficult to find information at times. Improve clarity of financial demands sent out (e.g. council tax bills, benefit awards) - vulnerable adults can find these confusing & distressing, in turn putting further pressure on council services in sorting & explaining these documents, or chasing unpaid bills etc.

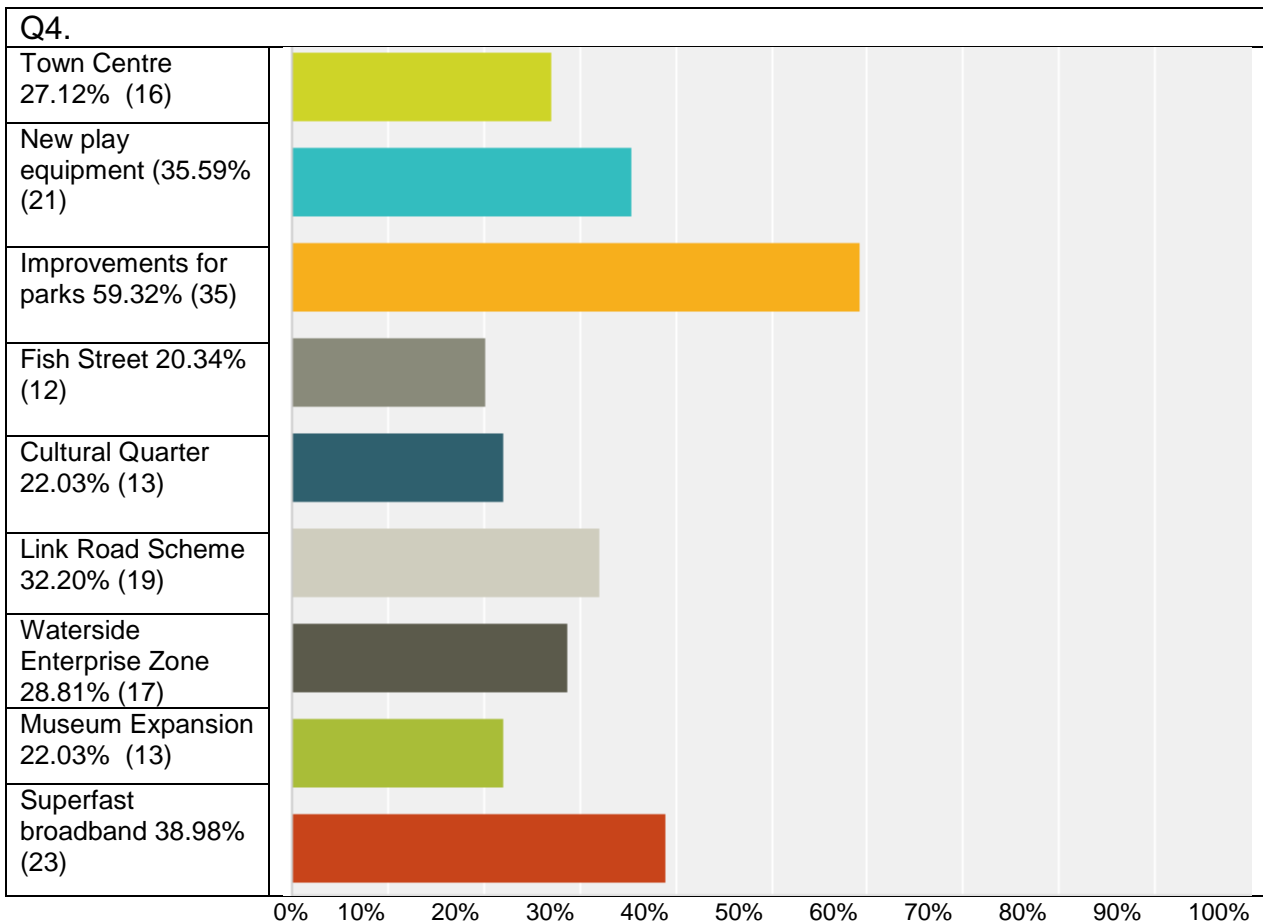
- Outsource services e.g. waste collections
- Make senior officers more accountable for decisions, greater clarity and named leads
- Sell unused land/buildings and speed-up Planning Application approvals - e.g. Old Gas HQ at St Peter's roundabout that has been unused since as long as I can recall - 25 years?
- Fine people heavily for any fly tipping, noise nuisance & other anti-social behavior
- Integrate services where feasible
- Employ intelligent, conscientious staff with the relevant skills
- Stop making financially naive decisions i.e. lending tax payer's cash to football teams...
- Keep pressure on staff management costs
- Get more money from government do NOT accept their cuts when they spend £42.3 BILLION on guns!!!
- Outsource the Neighbourhood warden to a similar company to the one that is enforcing the litter in Town Centre.
- Take a pay cut
- Stop giving away money to unscrupulous businesses!
- Insource procurement, and have more centralised buying across the country. You will never get best value for money when someone else is buying on your behalf.
- Get more premium retailers into the town centre to attract consumers with money to spend (at the moment you lose people to MK, London, Cambridge, Leicester as they have to travel to find decent shops). This would also give you better business rates.
- NBC should agree to a review to see if a single authority for the county would provide better value for money.
- Stop having hare brained schemes like opening Abington St and doing up Giles St! Massive debt incurred! Look at the unused housing and use it. Look at empty shops and put them on a peppercorn rent for artists or students to showcase new talent.
- Attend to necessities before niceties
- Incentivise council teams to use 6S methods to find improvements - by allowing them to spend any savings as they see best.
- Get more of the companies operating in the borough to sponsor litter collection . Mc Donald's litter bins as an example.
- Stop paying managers huge amount of bonuses.
- Tighten up the contract with Amey, make sure they are working the contract to the benefit of the people not their shareholders. Where bus shelters are known vandalism targets removed them. Promote communities to look after their open spaces, and assist them where required, where redundant green spaces are behind estate homes, replace with hard standing for residents cars etc.
- Don't spend the money outlined in Part 4 (Play equipment) as in these tight times it really is not necessary!

- Better use of facilities
- Actually work like a business. If a company like Enterprise does not meet KPI's then hold them to account. Better management of public funds overall.
- Provide more services directly, instead of just hiving off to 3rd party providers who make a profit. Vital services should never be contracted out to those whose motivation is profit. Just makes it more expensive to tax paye, Would be good to have a convenient bus service back too. From 20 minute service we now have an hour. People in their mid-70s cannot stand for an hour in the Drapery in the hope they may get a bus
- Look at how much money is being taken every month into the pension pot! We all need a pension but the next generation of employees need to be on a less generous contribution from the tax payers
- Don't spend money on non-necessities like silly statues around town. Increase the yearly street fair time to an extra couple of days and charge the fairground people a bit more. Fine people for stupid parking and fine people that park in parent & baby spaces that do not have babies! Increase the amount of parent & baby spaces in car parks and maybe ask people to apply for parent & baby passes (maybe for a fee of £10 a year max) on proof of their children like you do with disabled people. I would happily pay for this if it stops idiots parking in these spaces; I can drive round for hours and hours trying to find a suitable spot to get my 3 month old out in his car seat.
- Scrapping printing everything in 10 different languages and paying for interpreters (those who need them should pay for their own except for in emergencies) a lot of money could be saved by doing this. Also charging for English lessons etc for non-English speakers whether adults or children in school. My grandchildren's school is failing because of the amount of time teachers have to spend with non-English speaking children at the expense of English children.
- Take a pay cut.
- More fines for ASB, noise pollution, littering. Pay the senior management less money. Make the One Stop Shop appointments-only or get rid of it - other councils manage without one! Sort out the website so we can do more without having to phone. Can't find anything on there.

**Q4. Part of the money raised in the increase in council tax will enable us to provide for a capital investment of £100,000 in new play equipment across the borough in 2017/18, along with additional play equipment maintenance of £15,000 per annum. Northampton Borough Council is committed to a programme of enhancements across the Borough which we believe improves the quality of life for our residents. Which of the initiatives below do you think bring the best enhancements to the people of Northampton? You can choose as many as you like - and feel free to add comments at the end if there are any other schemes you would like to see considered by Council.**

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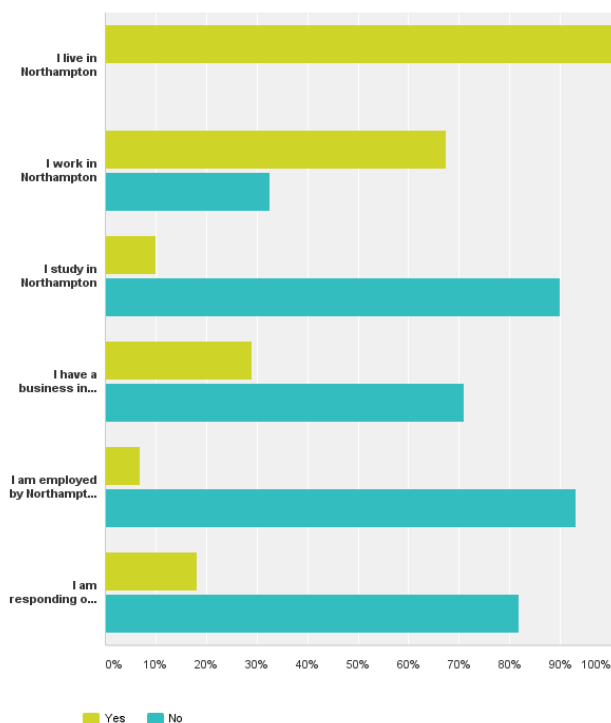
## 9. Demographics of respondents

### Q5. Contact Details Answered: 47 Skipped:19

Answer Choices	Responses	
Name	97.87%	46
Organisation if applicable	34.04%	16
Address	91.49%	43
Telephone number	68.09%	32
Email address	91.49%	43

### Q6. About you Answered 58: Skipped 8:

	Yes	No	Total
I live in Northampton	100.00% 55	0.00% 0	55
I work in Northampton	67.44% 29	32.56% 14	43
I study in Northampton	10.00% 3	90.00%	30
I have a business in Northampton	28.95% 11	71.05% 27	38
I am employed by Northampton Borough Council	6.90% 2	93.10% 27	29
I'm responding on behalf of an organisation or group	18.18% 6	81.82% 27	33



**Q7. Are you: Answered 55: Skipped 11**

Answer Choices	Responses	
Male	54.55%	30
Female	45.45%	25

**Q8. How old are you Answered: 54 Skipped:12**

Answer Choices	Responses	
Under 16	0.00%	0
16-24	1.85%	1
25-34	12.96%	7
35-44	16.67%	9
45-54	20.37%	11
55-64	24.07%	13
65-74	22.22%	12
75 or above	1.85%	1

**Q9. How would you describe yourself? Answered: 57 Skipped: 9**

Answer Choices	Responses	
White	87.72%	50
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	3.51%	2
Asian/Asian British	3.51%	2
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	0.00%	0
Other ethnic group	1.75%	1
Prefer not to say	3.51%	2

**10. Equality and Community Impact Assessment**

This is available on the [NBC website here](#)

**What are we looking to achieve from the budget consultation process?**

- The budget consultation exercise will seek views from the public, local businesses and other stakeholders on the Council's draft budget
- The Council is committed to its public sector equality duty and wishes to ensure that it has due regard to its equality duties in its decision making process

### **How will the decision be made?**

- The Full Council in February 2017 will make the final decisions on the Council's budget for 2017/18 based on recommendations from Cabinet
- Cabinet will take into account feedback from this consultation exercise when making these recommendations. This is a legal requirement
- The Cabinet will consider the results and outcomes of the consultation and of all relevant impact assessments to help it make an informed recommendations regarding the Council's budget and priorities

### **What information exists already to assist with making the judgments above?**

- Service managers undertake impact assessments for individual budget proposals/options
- Each budget option is reviewed as the budget consultation evolves using the consultation feedback received

### **Has any consultation been undertaken on this or any other related issue?**

- The budget consultation is the key process to inform the budget decision making process
- Service managers undertake specialist consultation in developing the budget proposal/options presented during the consultation process

### **Are any reports or relevant documents available internally or from partners or other sources?**

- The draft budget reports are published on the Council's website, along with any background papers as appropriate

### **Who is/ will be the main beneficiaries/people affected by this activity?**

Everybody living, working, studying, visiting or otherwise engaged with the town of Northampton or its people may be potentially affected by the Council's budget plans.

- This includes businesses, employees of the Council as well as, partners and contractors
- Some efficiency savings may impact on staff and this could lead to redundancies and changes in service provision
- The level of service received by the public will be protected wherever possible
- Where there are changes, consultation will be undertaken in accordance with council policy and all those affected will be consulted with and able to have a say in the process

### **Does the activity have the potential to cause adverse impact or to discriminate against different groups in the community or to make a positive contribution to equalities?**

- The economic climate has a significant impact on our communities as a whole and also on the Council's budget and therefore may impact on different groups

in the community, but is not intended to discriminate against different groups in the community

- The Council has limited resources; to mitigate this, service provision is constantly being reviewed. This will inevitably mean changes in the services provided and how they are provided, who they are delivered to and who receives the services
- It is critical when making decisions that may affect people that their views are sought and considered so that we can understand the impact of decisions, what matters to them, what they consider as priorities, what areas are in need of improvement and how the choices made may impact on their lives

## **Impact**

- The budget proposals that may lead to efficiency savings and/or potential changes in service provision have been screened for impact against the protected characteristics groups
- Where proposals involve staff changes and rationalisation, appropriate consultation in line with council policy will be followed and outcomes monitored for any disproportionate and adverse impacts on individual groups
- Any savings with impact on services will have the issues and risks raised through their individual assessments and evaluations taken into account in the implementation and monitoring of the options
- Issues and concerns identified during this consultation will be used to develop mitigation where possible and will be used to inform priorities for the Council