

The City of Edinburgh Council

10.00am, Thursday, 21 January 2016

2016-20 Budget Proposals: Overview of Feedback and Engagement - referral report from the Finance and Resources Committee

Item number	4.1(b)
Report number	
Wards	All

Executive summary

The Finance and Resources Committee on 14 January 2016 considered a report which provided an overview of feedback received as part of the Council's 2015 Budget Engagement process. The report has been referred to the City of Edinburgh Council for consideration as part of setting the 2016/20 revenue budget framework.

Links

Coalition pledges	See attached report
Council outcomes	See attached report
Single Outcome Agreement	See attached report
Appendices	See attached report

Terms of Referral

2016-20 Budget Proposals: Overview of Feedback and Engagement

Terms of referral

- 1.1 The approach used to engage citizens, staff, partner organisations and all other stakeholders in 2015 was hugely successful in achieving the Council's highest recorded response to budget engagement, and generated 4,183 responses (up by 31% on 2014) and more than 10,000 signatures to three petitions.
- 1.2 There was strong support for the Council to raise additional income in order to protect services, such as raising Council Tax and charging for services. There were further calls for Edinburgh to benefit from tourism directly through the introduction of a dedicated visitor levy. Significant opposition was received in relation to proposed changes to the Instrumental Music Tuition Service. There was a high response to proposals related to Business Support Services (especially schools) and School Crossing Guides (via petition). The Newhaven tram extension received a negative reaction, which in part appeared to be due to limited understanding of how the project would be financed.
- 1.3.1 The Finance and Resources Committee agreed:
 - 1.3.1 To note the report.
 - 1.3.2 To refer the report to Full Council for consideration as part of setting the 2016/20 revenue budget framework.

For Decision/Action

- 2.1 The Finance and Resources Committee has referred the report to The City of Edinburgh Council for approval as part of the budget setting process.

Background reading / external references

Minute of the Finance and Resources Committee, 14 January 2016.

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Links

Coalition pledges	See attached report
Council outcomes	See attached report
Single Outcome Agreement	See attached report
Appendices	See attached report

Finance and Resources Committee

10am, Thursday, 14 January 2016

2016-20 Budget Proposals: Overview of Feedback and Engagement

Item number	7.5
Report number	
Executive/routine	
Wards	All

Executive summary

This report provides an overview of feedback received as part of the Council's 2015 Budget Engagement process. This year's approach has been hugely successful in achieving the Council's highest recorded response to budget engagement, generating 4,183 responses (up by 31% on 2014), plus more than 10,000 signatures to three petitions.

There was strong support for the Council to raise additional income in order to protect services, such as raising Council Tax and charging for services. There were further calls for Edinburgh to benefit from tourism directly through the introduction of dedicated visitor levy. Significant opposition was received in relation to proposed changes to the Instrumental Music Tuition service. There was a high response to proposals relating to Business Support Services (especially schools) and School Crossing Guides (via petition). The Newhaven tram extension received a negative reaction, which in part appears to be due to limited understanding of how this project would be financed.

The findings suggest the need for further engagement on such proposals and projects to address concerns and explore alternative ways of service delivery where this is appropriate.

Links

Coalition pledges	All
Council outcomes	All
Single Outcome Agreement	All

2016-20 Budget Proposals: Overview of Feedback and Engagement

Recommendations

- 1.1 To note the contents of this report.
- 1.2 To refer this report to Full Council as part of setting the 2016/20 revenue budget framework.

Background

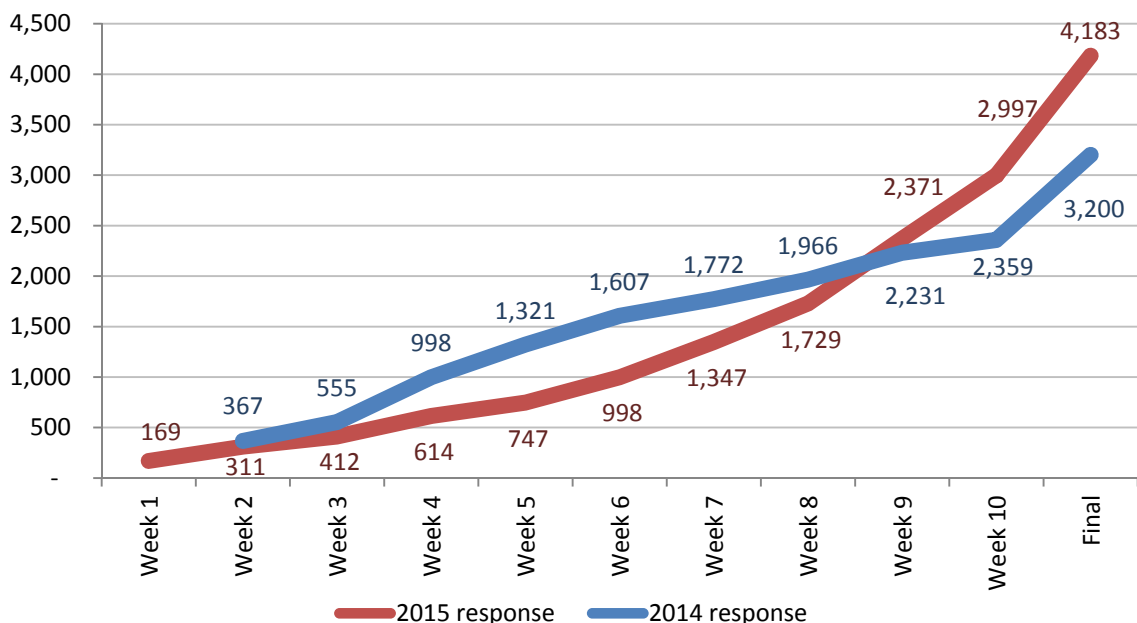
- 2.1 The Deputy First Minister announced a one-year Local Government Finance Settlement on 16 December. The headline level of revenue support to be made available to local authorities in 2016/17 is some 3% lower than the equivalent figure for 2015/16. This has significantly increased the overall level of savings requiring to be delivered by councils across Scotland, relative to earlier planning assumptions. In Edinburgh's case, the actual level of grant funding has added £16.7m to the overall savings requirement for 2016/17 and has reinforced the urgent need to transform, and where necessary prioritise, the Council's services.
- 2.2 In this context the City of Edinburgh Council continues to engage citizens, staff, partner organisations and all other stakeholders in a dialogue about what shared priorities are and how the Council should allocate its budget.
- 2.3 The Council seeks to reach the largest number of people and meaningfully engage with them on the budget. As the Council's annual revenue budget is almost £1bn and covers a diverse range of services, ensuring respondents are engaged and reasonably well-informed about the consequences of budget changes is a challenge. Each year the engagement programme has been adapted and improved based on learning from previous years.
- 2.4 In addition to the online planner and standard methods of communication, for 2015 the Council introduced an online survey to ensure demographic information was gathered alongside information that would otherwise be received by email, and the idea-generation tool Dialogue.
- 2.5 Following feedback and building on the success of the 2014 online planner, the renewed planner focused on a reduced set of strategic decisions for the organisation.

Methods of engagement and response

- 3.1 As the 2015 budget engagement took place over 11 weeks, the engagement activities were planned to attract people to the three digital engagement tools as well as highlighting a mix of Council services and transformation topics. More information about the communication tools and engagement activities is included in Appendix One.
- 3.2 In 2015 respondents were able to participate through:
- The online planner – looking at key choices in relation to the Council's Transformation Programme;
 - Dialogue – an online forum aimed at generating ideas to address new and existing challenges;
 - Online survey, email, telephone and letter – responding to the Council budget proposals;
 - Social media – directed people to the main engagement tools and also allowed them to post comments on specific budget proposals and submit their ideas;
 - Leaflets distributed to all libraries, community groups and centres, Council offices and to partner organisations; and
 - Face-to-face meetings conducted by service areas with their customers and partners.

Response numbers

- 3.3 A total of 4,183 responses to the budget engagement have been received by all methods. This compares to 3,200 responses by all methods in 2014 and represents a 31% increase in response over the budget period and is summarised in the following graph. The demographic summary is included in Appendix one.



3.4 This total response to the budget includes the following elements:

- 1,086 individuals completed the online budget planner;
- 153 ideas discussed on the Council's Dialogue site, resulting in 470 individual comments and 981 ratings;
- 832 responses submitted by the online survey and 235 responses were received by email, telephone and letter;
- 50 budget leaflets completed and returned; and
- 376 comments received through social media, including 204 comments on Facebook, 66 comments using #edinbudget, and a further 106 direct replies on Twitter.

3.5 In addition to this feedback, three petitions were received by the Council, these signatures are counted separately. The Council is considering how future petitions as part of the budget process can be recorded to enable the Council to understand whether respondents are individuals and living in Edinburgh. The following petitions were received:

- In opposition to the introduction of charges for the Instrumental Music Tuition Service (this online petition was noted as having received 9,905 signatories at 15:27 on Tuesday 22 December 2015. The petition was still open at that time);
- In opposition to the introduction of charges for the Instrumental Music Tuition Service (117 responses from pupils of Currie Community High School);
- In opposition to a reduction in hours for school crossing guides at lunch times (this online petition was submitted with 475 signatures).

Feedback on budget proposals

3.6 All feedback received has been made available to all elected members as a searchable electronic information pack. This report includes a summary of the main findings. Further information including the contextual evidence and differences between demographic groupings is included at Appendix two.

INC2 – Increase discretionary income by RPI+2%

3.7 As part of the online planner, respondents were offered the choice to vary the overall charges the Council issues over the next four years by a range of RPI to RPI+6%. 78% of respondents were in favour of above-inflation increases in service charges.

3.8 INC4 – Increase fee charges for section 109 permits to install pipe and cables in roads and pavements

3.9 There was strong support for this idea on the Council's Dialogue page with 23 votes and an average score of 4.9/5.

3.10 Other comments received were in favour of making utility companies and developers more accountable for road surfaces – through inspection, rental of roads while work was ongoing, and fines for work that was poorly carried out.

There would likely be significant public support for any policy aimed at making sure road works are completed to a good standard, in a reasonable time period, and that where this doesn't happen a responsible body is charged.

INC8 – Increase parking permit charges by 5%; INC9 – Increase pay and display charges; and PLA/INC2 – Increase parking charges by an average of 4.5% per year over four years

- 3.11 74% of respondents using the online planner favoured an increase in parking charges, with 32% supporting the Council's plan for immediate changes (INC8, INC9) and 43% supporting increases approximately double this. 20% wanted current charges to be frozen, while only 5% wanted to see a decrease.
- 3.12 Opinion was broadly similar across 50 other comments received on parking charges, with two-thirds in favour of increases and one-third opposed.
- 3.13 Supporters of increases in charges were opposed to cars in the city centre, in favour of public transport, and in favour of more active forms of travel. Those opposed felt that the Council was unfairly targeting motorists and believed that there would be negative economic consequences for Edinburgh by excluding drivers.

TP1 – Reduce third party payments for Community Learning and Development services

- 3.14 Reduction in Community Learning and Development (CLD) worker posts was opposed by customers receiving this service. More than 50 comments were received in support of CLD services, most of which came from customers of Cameron House. These comments emphasised that CLD services provide a social life-line that is particularly valued by older people, as well as classes being valued in themselves.

TP2 – Reduce grant payment to Festival City Theatre Trust; TP4 – Review funding arrangements for Winter Festivals

- 3.15 More than 40 comments were received in relation to festivals funding and, to a lesser extent, funding for the Festival Theatre. These were generally in support of the Council's plans and were in some cases strongly opposed to any spending on festival activities.
- 3.16 Extremely high levels of support (550 contacts, 10,000+ petition signatures) for the Instrumental Music Tuition service (noted later in this report) did not translate to support for culture spending in general in budget feedback received.

TP7 – Review allotment service and increase rents

- 3.17 The Council conducted a Dialogue with allotment holders, those on the allotment waiting list and interested members of the public. 25 ideas for allotments generated 126 comments and 166 votes. All feedback received will be passed on to the Allotments Service for consideration. In summary, the ideas were:
- Limiting plots to one per household;

- Reviewing the waiting list, particularly with regard to identifying where individuals already had allotments and were seeking a transfer;
- Turning full allotment plots into half plots when they become vacant;
- Exploring opportunities to develop community gardens in other areas of disused land; and
- Restrictions on entitlement to discounts.

3.18 The Council's proposal to increase allotment rents received 12 votes with an average rating of 2.4/5. Scores can range from a minimum of 1 to a maximum of 5, therefore the mid-point of the scale is 3, and a score of 2.4 would indicate this idea was unpopular with those voting.

3.19 In addition to Dialogue, more than 30 comments were received about the allotments service. Most were opposed to increasing charges in principle, cited a previous agreement to maintain rents at £100 per year until 2020, and asked for the Council to keep to that agreement. However some respondents felt that current discount levels were too high and they were happy to pay higher rents.

TP8 – Reduce spending on block-contracted services by 10%

3.20 More than 30 responses were received in relation to care services, however most did not specifically mention the 10% reduction and were instead stressing the importance of these services. Those responses that did mention reduction questioned how this could be done without a real decline in the quality of service and were concerned this would happen.

TP9 – Reduce funding to Police Scotland

3.21 Police Scotland's 24-page response to the funding reduction is available in the information pack which has been sent to all members. Key points from this response include:

- A service-level agreement (SLA) was created after previous reductions in funding were rejected by Council following consultation. This SLA has resulted in named officers being assigned to community policing in each ward and the city centre;
- Identification that the loss of funding would result in a reduction of 11 officers which would impact directly on the size of taskable forces, reduce the ability of Police Scotland to engage in local partnership working, and could lead to antisocial behaviour and hate crime developing into more serious criminality;
- With specific regard to CF/SR1 (the proposal to end the night time noise team), Police Scotland estimate that 63% of calls received about night time noise in Edinburgh are referred to the night time noise team, with around 37% being responded to by police. If the referrals were all dealt with by Police Scotland, that would equate to a 10% increase in the total number of incidents dealt with and during busy periods it would be likely that many of these could not be attended. This would have a material impact on Edinburgh residents.

3.22 Fewer than 20 comments were received in relation to Police Scotland funding, and were opposed to the reduction. Particular concerns were raised about this reduction in relation to the proposed changes to stair lighting maintenance. Concerns about Police funding were disproportionately expressed by older respondents.

SP8 – Reduce gully cleaning service

3.23 Around 10 responses were received in relation to gully cleaning and all were opposed to the changes. Respondents' views varied from stating that they did not believe gullies were currently cleaned as frequently as claimed, to observing that more blockages would result in higher costs and that these savings were therefore a false economy.

P3 – Reduce use of employee overtime by 25%; P4 – Reduce use of agency staffing by 20%; and PLA/EFF3 – Reduction in staff and agency costs

3.24 General feedback, not in relation to specific budget proposals, urged the Council to reduce overtime, agency, and consultancy. This was part of more than 70 comments which looked for a general reduction of Council employee numbers, management numbers, pay and benefits – particularly pensions. Around 15 further comments asked for a reduction in the number of Councillors and their remuneration.

CO/ST12 – Business Support Services

3.25 More than 160 comments were received in relation to administrative changes in schools related to Business Support Services changes. These were almost always firmly opposed and made the following points:

- Any reduction in education spending was opposed;
- Parents had been led to believe that education spending was ring-fenced and protected against cuts. There was confusion that this applied only to teacher numbers and not all school staff;
- It was felt to be obvious that a reduction in administrative staff numbers would result in administrative tasks being placed on teaching staff, and that this would cause a reduction in the amount or quality of teaching time; and
- The work done by non-teaching staff in school was valued and there was a perception that head teachers and deputy head teachers already carried out too much administration.

3.26 Without any emphasis on schools administration, the Business Support Services proposal was included as part of the online planner. The planner focused on the speed at which Business Support Services would be created and the Council's stance towards redundancies as part of transformation.

3.27 24% of respondents favoured a slower implementation of the transformation plan, with reduced use of redundancies and increased reliance on natural wastage. This was slightly higher (30%) amongst current Council employees.

41% of respondents supported the Council's current plan, while 35% wanted to see changes made more quickly.

General feedback on proposals SP3; CF/EFF5; CF/EFF8; CF/EFF9; and CF/ST1-6

- 3.28 Extensive feedback was received on areas related to education and the provision of services to vulnerable children and their families. However this feedback was fragmented and not specifically addressed against budget proposals. This section summarises all feedback received that would appear relevant.
- 3.29 There were concerns these proposals would negatively impact services already perceived to be stretched. Respondents highlighted that the children receiving these services are vulnerable, with specific support needs, and that staff currently supporting them have a special range of skills and duties which are vital to help these children reach their potential. There were concerns that if staff numbers were reduced, and children were required to go to mainstream schools, this would negatively impact on their development. It was felt that children attending special schools do so as they are unable to succeed at mainstream schools. Respondents also perceived the proposals as going against our legal duties to support pupils and the principles of 'getting it right for every child.'
- 3.30 Cutting resources would mean that remaining staff would have reduced ability to manage behaviour in classes, write care plans or interact with pupils and parents appropriately. If children with additional needs were included in mainstream classes then this would require extra planning and support within schools.
- 3.31 Regarding the proposal to reduce the number of Pupil Support Assistants, respondents were opposed to the plans as they felt there were already insufficient resources available. Some respondents mentioned personal experiences where specialist 1:1 care was not provided due to existing reductions in support and that some pupils were receiving 1:2 support, even though the pupils had differing needs.
- 3.32 The proposals were seen to be short sighted; respondents felt that a reduction in support for excluded children and those with special needs would likely lead to increased long-term costs in terms of unemployment, crime etc and that the lack of support would ultimately affect their independence and potential to lead fulfilling lives later on.
- 3.33 A number of respondents felt that the proposals mention 'review' or 'redesign' of services but are unclear on the actual detail, therefore they found it difficult to comment on them.
- 3.34 The EIS Union responded specifically on proposal CF/ST6 – Family solutions review. This response echoed those received from other interested parties and highlighted the increased risk of a child becoming looked-after by the Council if family support was reduced. It was felt this would lead to higher costs in the long term and poorer outcomes for children, and was described as "short sighted".

CF/EFF2 – Closure of Panmure School

- 3.35 More than 30 comments were received in relation to proposed closure of Panmure school (also referred to as Panmure St Ann's). These comments were all in opposition to the proposal. The arguments against the closure are summarised at Appendix two.

CF/ST8 – Redesign of library services; CF/SP2 – Community centre staff reduction

- 3.36 17% of respondents were in favour of more local delivery. 23% supported the Council's current plans to merge some facilities. However 60% of all respondents were in favour of service hubs that provide more services at the expense of very local provision.
- 3.37 In contrast to the planner response, more than 30 comments received in other ways were either opposed to merging libraries and community centres, or to any reduction in library or community centre services. Instead of merging facilities, some respondents suggested reducing opening hours.

CF/SP4 – Redesign of Music Instructor Service

- 3.38 More responses were made about music tuition than any other service. More than 550 comments were received in opposition to the proposed reduction in funding for the service, including from teaching union EIS, compared to fewer than 20 comments in support of the change.
- 3.39 The proposed change was the subject of two petitions; one from school pupils, the other open to the general public. These petitions, mentioned earlier in this report, have accrued more than 10,000 signatures at the time of writing.
- 3.40 It should be noted that the draft budget proposals were only in relation to extracurricular music tuition and not classroom teaching of music. The number of teachers and the amount of class time given for music would not be impacted by these changes. Instrumental music tuition is a service delivered outside of normal class time. Following a summary of feedback on the tuition proposal, suggestions are made as to how any future engagement on this policy could be taken forward.
- 3.41 The comments and petitions make the following key points:
- Although this proposal covers tuition outside of class teaching, respondents view it as essential for skills development;
 - Music has an important role in engaging all children in their education, but is felt to be especially important for children who are not otherwise academically inclined, those with learning difficulties, and those with mental health issues;
 - Moving from free provision to paid provision of the service will result in some families being unable to afford tuition. This may mean money has been wasted on purchase of an instrument. This was felt to be more likely to impact on families who are "just outside" of any remaining threshold of

free provision and would make little difference to children from “rich families”;

- Requiring payment will increase the extent to which music is, and is viewed as, an elitist subject;
- Because of Edinburgh’s role as the Festival City, it was viewed as incongruous that the Council could attract musicians to play from all over the world, but cannot afford to provide music tuition for its own children;
- Various orchestras and ensembles that are effectively supported by this service could cease operating, possibly due to a shortage of children being taught how to play for more expensive instruments;
- A 75% reduction in the service’s budget was an alarming and unexpected figure, which was viewed as excessive even by those who stated their willingness to make some contribution to the provision of the service;
- The proposals do not provide sufficient detail on the alternative delivery model to provide confidence or assurance; and
- Respondents would like alternative ways of generating income to be considered, such as fund raising concerts and other charitable activities, before charging was implemented.

3.42 Feedback on this proposal indicates that there is considerable scope for the Council to improve the clarity of charges for extracurricular music tuition. While it seems likely that many would be opposed to charges in principle, it is equally likely that a charging element would be acceptable in a broader context and with appropriate supporting information. In particular, any future proposal on this subject should:

- Ensure head teachers are meaningfully engaged in the creation of any plans for the service;
- Ensure consideration has been given to transitional arrangements that would not require individual pupils to abandon any course of study for financial reasons; and
- Ensure that exemptions has been developed before engaging with parents, and that a charging policy identifies:
 - a. the criteria by which pupils would be exempt, receive a discounted rate, or be asked to pay full price;
 - b. how expensive musical instruments would be purchased; and
 - c. a price that parents of non-exempt pupils would be expected to pay.

PLA/SP3 – Waste Services

3.43 Two significant areas of the waste services proposals were addressed in the Council’s Dialogue – moving to three-weekly garden waste collection and moving to four-weekly glass recycling collections.

3.44 More than 30 comments were received in general relating to waste collection and recycling. These stressed the importance of delivering these services on a regular basis, and respondents would like these services to improve, but they were on balance neither for nor against the budget proposals. This feedback likely reflects the attention waste services receives as a core local authority

service, and it may be the case that most respondents mentioning waste collection or recycling had not actually read the waste proposals.

PLA/SP4 – Withdrawal of School Crossing Patrol Guide service at lunchtime

3.45 There were fewer than 10 responses in opposition to withdrawing this service at lunch times and fewer than five responses were in favour. However a petition was received in opposition to the changes with 475 signatures.

3.46 Those in opposition made two distinct points:

- Removing crossing guides increases risk and therefore reduces the safety of children; and
- A reduction in hours would force some crossing guides to seek alternative work.

3.47 Those in favour of the changes did not believe that removing crossing guides at lunch time represented a significant increase in risk.

PLA/SR1 – Stop repairs and maintenance of Stair Lighting Service in tenements

3.48 Fewer than 20 responses were received in relation to stair lighting. These were generally in opposition to the Council's current proposal to stop maintenance of stair lights. For some respondents, the provision of stair lighting in a built-up area was no different than the provision of street lighting in an area with few homes and they felt that the Council should provide this.

3.49 The range of views expressed also included those who were concerned that without the Council providing maintenance, no-one would provide maintenance. Respondents cited difficulties with arranging repairs to common parts of the property. It was felt that the growth in private renting and the inability of owners to agree on common repairs and maintenance would mean stair lights would fail and this would create spaces in which accidents, antisocial behaviour and crime would be more likely.

3.50 It was suggested that a change in the law would be necessary to require owners and landlords to introduce factoring arrangements, and it was felt by some that the Council simply charging for this service would be the simplest way of dealing with the issue.

General feedback on third party payments and voluntary sector

3.51 The full submission to the budget by Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations Council (EVOC) is included in information packs sent to elected members. In summary the points made by EVOC were:

- Council budget seems disconnected from changes in administrative structures, particularly with regard to the Integrated Joint Board;
- Use of the word "efficiency" is disingenuous – the Council should simply describe cuts as cuts;

- Geography has not been given enough consideration when funding is allocated to organisations, leading to “post code lotteries”;
- Reductions in preventative services should be reconsidered as these help to avoid greater costs later;
- Changes to management in the Council have raised concerns about loss of organisational knowledge, and uncertainty over decision-making;
- EVOC welcome the Council’s stated position on empowered communities, but feels that reality does not match rhetoric and more genuine co-production between partners is imperative.

3.52 More than 20 comments were received in relation to voluntary sector funding and how the Council works with the voluntary sector. Overall feedback was that respondents felt these services were valuable and that the Council should continue to support them. Respondents emphasised that additional work could be done by volunteers and that the Council needed to do more to ensure people had opportunities to volunteer.

3.53 Using the online planner, respondents were asked about the Council’s role with the voluntary sector and commissioned services. 72% of respondents were supportive of something close to the Council’s planned approach involving more co-design and delivery of services with partners. More radical positions were less favourably viewed, with only 16% supporting the Council moving to become a commissioning body with no direct delivery of services; and only 11% looking for the Council to bring all services in-house for additional control and accountability.

Online planner choices

3.54 Eight key strategic areas were presented to the public in the online planner, with potential choices available in each case. Five of these areas have already been reported alongside the associated budget proposals. Overall reaction to the remaining three proposals is summarised below.

Council Tax

3.55 Of the 1,086 responses to the online planner, a majority (63%) of those were in favour of increasing Council Tax from 2017/18 to pay for services, while 9% wanted to see a reduction. A quarter of respondents (25%) were in favour of increasing Band D Council Tax by around £100, while 38% opted for the more modest £50 increase.

3.56 Those with long term illnesses or disabilities were more likely to support increases in Council Tax, with 73% favouring some kind of increase, compared to 62% of those without disabilities.

3.57 Looking at the ward-level response from the online planner reveals that there was support for a Council Tax increase in each ward, though this varies substantially as shown in the following table. Av. indicates the average score in relation to the online planner – where -50 represented a reduction in Council Tax by £100 per year for Band D properties, while +50 was a £100 per year increase.

Ward	Av.	Ward	Av.
Almond	10.7	Leith	17.9
City Centre	6.4	Leith Walk	23.6
Colinton/Fairmilehead	9.0	Liberton/Gilmerton	27.6
Corstorphine/Murrayfield	18.5	Meadows/Morningside	14.5
Craightinny/Duddingston	14.0	Pentland Hills	23.6
Drum Brae/Gyle	19.0	Portobello/Craigmillar	25.8
Forth	25.0	Sighthill/Gorgie	25.4
Fountainbridge/Craiglockhart	19.0	Southside/Newington	19.9
Inverleith	9.7		

- 3.58 Scores show strong support for an increase in 13/17 wards, but lower levels of support in City Centre, Colinton / Fairmilehead, Inverleith, and Almond.
- 3.59 Feedback from all other engagement methods was similar, with 150+ comments in favour of either Council Tax increase and / or Council Tax reform. Fewer than ten comments were received in opposition to a Council Tax increase.
- 3.60 A broad consensus of feedback was that holding Council Tax at the same level for an extended period of time was undesirable when services were being cut, there was a strong feeling that respondents wanted to pay more to maintain funding in key areas and the delivery of important services. There was a very high level of understanding that this was a Scottish Government policy. Respondents expressed negative perceptions of the Scottish Government in respect of the Council Tax Freeze.
- 3.61 However respondents stated that any increase in Council Tax should also be accompanied by the Council making efficiencies and that more tax revenue should not be a substitute for this.
- 3.62 While revenue raising through Council Tax increases had support, it was still cited as a regressive tax and calls were made for reform through revaluation, introduction of additional Council Tax bands for more valuable homes, selective increases in tax only for higher bands, and for the system to be replaced in favour of a more progressive income-based local tax.
- 3.63 It was also suggested through the Council's Dialogue that students should make some financial contribution towards Council services. The idea received 13 votes and had an average score of 4.6/5. The original idea received through Dialogue was for a contribution of £5 per week. In other feedback, a similar amount was suggested of £200 per year or a percentage of the normal Council Tax bill for their property.

Renewable energy generation

- 3.64 27% of online planner respondents were in favour of a more ambitious strategy on renewable energy generation, with the Council actively seeking opportunities

to invest in renewables to gain more income in future. However the majority (73%) preferred a more cautious approach. Some suggested that the Council had already “missed the boat” in developing renewable energy opportunities.

Electronic billing

- 3.65 81% of respondents supported moving to digital billing by default, with customers having to opt-in to paper billing. There was strong consensus on this issue and in supplementary comments many respondents felt this was an obvious and preferable solution, with paper bills being used only for identification purposes.
- 3.66 While fewer than 1% were in favour of the current system of paper bills, 19% preferred an opt-in to digital billing, rather than an opt-out system. It should be noted that these are all results of online engagement, and may therefore not represent the views of the whole population on online issues.

Dialogue ideas

- 3.67 Feedback on the Council’s Dialogue page that relates directly to budget proposals has been included previously. Aside from these, the highest rated ideas suggested on the Council’s Dialogue page have been summarised below. The Council has undertaken to investigate the highest rated proposals and to implement those that are practical, or feed back on those that cannot be implemented.

Tourist tax

- 3.68 In addition to more than 60 comments received from all sources asking for the introduction of a tourist tax, the introduction of a charge for visitors to the city was the second most discussed suggestion on the Council’s Dialogue site (second only to the proposal to create a social enterprise to deliver music tuition). The idea received 36 votes with an average score of 4.6/5.
- 3.69 There was consensus that around £2 per room, per night was a fair charge and one which respondents had experienced themselves when visiting cities throughout Europe. However it was also suggested that a percentage cost or a fee relative to the type of room (hostel, B&B, hotel) would be fairer as flat rate charges would be disproportionate for very cheap room rentals.
- 3.70 The phrase “tourist tax” appears to be well recognised by respondents and does not appear to have strong negative connotations. Given attitudes to both tourists and festivals amongst some residents, the notion of specifically “taxing” tourists may be viewed more positively than introducing a “transient visitor levy”.

Congestion charging

- 3.71 Introducing a congestion charge was a popular idea, with 23 votes and an average score of 4.4/5, however comments diverged significantly from the voting with around half of those discussing the idea being moderate to strongly opposed.

- 3.72 Around 15 additional comments were received suggesting that the Council reconsider a city centre congestion charge.
- 3.73 It was not possible to judge the extent of general public support for a congestion charge from the information received.

Other feedback

Newhaven Tram extension

- 3.74 More than 150 comments were received in opposition to the extension of the tram line to Newhaven, while fewer than 10 responses were received in support.
- 3.75 Respondents directly linked tram spending with budget problems and attributed all of the Council's current financial issues to the tram. It was suggested that the whole capital cost of tram extension construction could be transferred to revenue spending on education, care for vulnerable adults, etc. and that this would more than meet the current budget shortfall.
- 3.76 The feedback suggests a general misunderstanding on the financing of the tram project and the benefits of a tram extension. The Council's revenue and capital budgets are separate and while capital budget spending can be financed through borrowing, revenue budget spending cannot. The Council would only invest in extending the tram if the additional fare income covered the cost of borrowing, therefore there would be no impact on the revenue budget of extending the tram line. However this also means that the funding for tram could not be used to address the shortfall in the revenue budget.
- 3.77 The Council may be able to influence overall opinion by more clearly communicating the benefits of the extension, while making appropriate assurances about the financial costs of the extension.
- 3.78 Nevertheless there are significant negative attitudes towards trams which appear to be unlikely to change.

Measures of success

- 4.1 The success of a budget engagement process is determined by several criteria, including:
- a. The number of individuals who are reached by messages about the consultation, raising awareness that the Council is engaging on its budget;
 - b. The number of individuals who attend events;
 - c. The number of individuals who complete and submit the online planner;
 - d. The number of comments made on the budget by any means;
 - e. The demographic representativeness of those responding;
 - f. The extent to which individuals and organisations have been able to understand and meaningfully input into the budget process. Unlike other

measures of success, this is subjective and takes into account wider feedback on the budget process.

- 4.2 In addition to the information provided earlier in this report, addressing points a-c, the following feedback has been received on the budget process itself:
- a. Respondents found the full financial information difficult to understand or not detailed enough – often due to the evolving nature of proposals related to the Transformation Programme;
 - b. The purpose of the online planner was questioned for not covering the full range of Council services. However the planner included all Council services in 2014 and was used in 2015 to concentrate on key Transformation choices and feedback from 2014 budget engagement;
 - c. Multiple response methods, while intended to provide the broadest range of opportunities for individuals to engage with the budget, could be confusing and did in some cases result in respondents going from one web page to another without being clear on how to submit their feedback.

The process is reviewed each year, and all of this feedback will be considered when designing any future budget engagement activity.

Financial impact

- 5.1 The budget engagement process is met from within existing budgets and resources.

Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 There is a general acceptance that a local authority has a responsibility to meaningfully engage with stakeholders on its budget. An open, transparent budget engagement process is a key part of several corporate strategies and local community plans. This process reduces the overall risk of legal action and reputational damage for the Council.

Equalities impact

- 7.1 The engagement process has been designed to be inclusive through all communication channels, reaching both individuals and special interest groups, using a range of promotional material.
- 7.2 All proposals from the budget are in the process of being equalities rights impact assessed both individually and cumulatively. The results of these ERIAs will be reported to Full Council as part of the budget process.

Sustainability impact

- 8.1 The impacts of this report in relation to the three elements of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 Public Bodies Duties have been considered, and the outcomes are summarised below.
- 8.2 This budget engagement process has no appreciable impact on carbon emissions. Through any engagement process it is hoped that services and their customers will develop more sustainable ways of operating.
- 8.3 The need to build resilience to climate change impacts is not relevant to this report, however specific proposals may have climate change impacts and these will be reported on as part of their individual impact assessments.
- 8.4 The budget engagement process will help achieve a sustainable Edinburgh through ensuring a diverse range of people have a meaningful say on issues that affect the economic wellbeing and environmental stewardship of the city.

Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 The budget engagement process is one of the Council's key projects for ensuring citizens, staff and other stakeholders have a voice in priorities for the city and how its budget is spent.
- 9.2 This budget engagement is part of a four year programme of continuous engagement with citizens, staff and the Council's partner organisations on all issues relating to the budget and transformation of services, including integration of health and social care services. Methods have been established for enabling meaningful dialogue with all stakeholder groups and these will be continually reviewed with these groups to ensure they are accessible and relevant for obtaining all types of feedback.

Background reading/external references

Responses received to engagement

[Budget and Transformation 2016-20 Approach to Engagement](#)

[Interim Budget Engagement Results 2015](#)

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Links

Coalition pledges	All
Council outcomes	All
Single Outcome Agreement	All
Appendices	Appendix one – communications campaign Appendix two – Expanded comments on budget proposals Appendix three – map of distribution of budget responses

APPENDIX ONE

Edinburgh's budget challenge: your city, your say Communications campaign and response

A proactive and sustained communications campaign ran from 5 October until 17 December to ensure that as many people as possible in Edinburgh were aware of the opportunity to have their say on the Council's 2016-2020 budget proposals. The campaign's key message was that people had the opportunity to have their say about the budget proposals, using the strapline 'Your city, your say'.

A wide range of communication tools were used to deliver the 11 week engagement campaign to maintain interest and target different audiences across the different demographics of the city's population. Where possible no or low-cost tools were used. In particular there was significant use of PR and social media, with the Edinburgh Evening News providing sustained coverage of the different proposals throughout the period, and STV Edinburgh also hosting several Convener Q+A sessions.

Social media was also used significantly, and for the second year, the Council staged a Convener's Q+A session at the City Chambers, which was attended by members of the public and webcast live to an audience of over 200 people on the night. In addition and to ensure the campaign was as inclusive and engaging as possible some paid-for communications were required. The communications campaign cost less than £15,000 in total.

The communications were developed throughout the campaign to reflect the additional proposals announced on 20 November, the extended deadline, the ideas suggested by the people of Edinburgh, as well as the need to try and encourage more women to have their say to provide more balanced feedback. A variety of channels were used to reach people and encourage them to give their views, ideas and solutions through any number of the engagement tools including the dialogue page, planner, survey, leaflet, phone, and email.

Digital channels

Various digital channels were used at no cost. This included the web pages at www.edinburgh.gov.uk/budget which were created to provide the core budget information which were updated throughout the process. This included highlighting the changes that had been made to the 2015/16 budget as a result of people's previous feedback to demonstrate that the Council listens to and actions people's views. The web pages also linked to the 2016-2020 proposals and gave a variety of options about how people could get involved and have their say. 13,241 people visited the web pages during the engagement period. People were directed there from all other communication channels including the [Council's website](#) home page and the [Consultation Hub](#).

Other no-cost digital tools were used including an electronic signature, which was incorporated in Council emails. Four e-fliers were also sent to nearly 1,000 individuals, businesses and organisations, including people who participated in 2014, various equalities organisations, community groups and partners to encourage people to have their say.

A sustained social media campaign encouraged people to use the various engagement tools, highlighted key milestones such as the budget Question Time event, highlighted specific budget proposals and reflected people's ideas to generate interest. In addition to publishing social media posts, a number of promoted posts and adverts were used to reach those people in Edinburgh who do not follow the Council's Facebook and Twitter accounts.

163 Tweets, including two adverts, were posted with a reach of 591,983. This resulted in 619 retweets, 195 Likes and 1,619 people clicked on the links to the website or engagement tool. 21 Facebook posts including two adverts, reached 149,769, with 1,465 clicking on the links, 183 likes and 69 shares. 3 posts on LinkedIn reached 13,343, resulting in 82 clicks and 9 likes. This proactive social media activity resulted in a total of 152 comments on the budget.

Those who took part in the planner, could also encourage others to take part by using the built in Twitter and Facebook links.

Four adverts, at no cost, were run on the digital boards along Princes Street. Paid-for adverts were also used on a range of websites, including mobile. Specific websites were targeted, including the Herald, Edinburgh Evening News and Scotsman aimed at Edinburgh users.

The overall click through rate was 0.29%, approximately four times more than the industry average. Ads delivered to mobile sites outperformed other digital ads - click through rates were 0.38% and delivered the most impressions.

Overall, this digital advertising campaign resulted in 4,513 click throughs to the budget website. There was a spike in click throughs on 24 November.

An online advert was also placed on the Edinburgh Reporter's website. From the Edinburgh Reporter website there were 301 click throughs to the Council's budget website and five click throughs via the mobile ad.

Messages were also included on a number of the Council's plasma screens in the main neighbourhood offices and libraries at no cost, and a message ran on the contact centre's phone line throughout the campaign. A presentation was developed for employees and councillors to use at engagement events. Online articles were also included in the Leader's Report, Usher Hall and Tenants newsletters.

Marketing and advertising

In addition to 1,000 posters, 14,000 leaflets were printed and distributed across the city to target those people who don't use online channels, providing them with an opportunity to have their say using a tear-off freepost form.

Lamppost wraps, which have been highly successful in other campaigns, were rolled out across the city in three phases in high footfall areas. Advertising on phone boxes and bus shelters were also used across the city to encourage pedestrians, public transport users and vehicle users to have their say.

Adverts were also placed in the printed editions of the Metro, Edinburgh Evening News, as well as local media including the Leither, Trinity Spotlight, Stockbridge Spotlight and Edinburgh South West.

Media and events

Media releases were issued to mark the start of the engagement, the release of the additional proposals and the Scottish Government budget announcement. Working with the Edinburgh Evening News and Edinburgh Reporter, a series of councillor opinion pieces and interviews were also run.

43 articles appeared in the media including the Edinburgh Evening News, The Scotsman, Edinburgh Reporter, the Times (online), Herald (online) and on STV (online).

Five features also appeared on local radio stations and six interviews with councillors appeared on STV Edinburgh.

The Evening News' editor chaired our webcast Budget Question Time event which is the second year the Council has organised this. A panel of five senior councillors answered questions from the 40+ guests at the event, as well as questions previously submitted by Twitter, with 200 people watching live via the webcast, and 360 have watched the archive recording.

Employee communications

In addition to various engagement events, colleagues were encouraged to take part by email, service area newsletter, and through articles on the Council's intranet site and in turn encourage their family, friends and customer to have their say.

Gender gap

An interim report showed that only 37% of respondents were women. To help address this and achieve a balanced response a series of communications actions were taken. Around 75% of the Council's Facebook followers are women and so an advert was created specifically designed for them, and only issued to women users. Some of the outdoor advertising and lamppost wraps were also specifically placed near areas predominantly used by women, including schools. The final analysis shows a fairly even gender split.

Analysis

Respondents sited the following channels as the way they found out about the budget engagement:

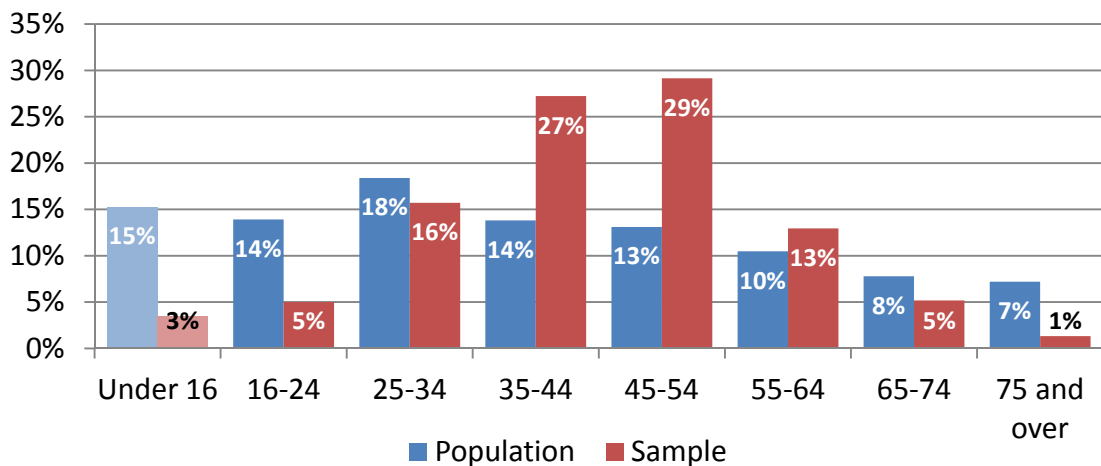
Email	18%
Council website	16%
Advertising on lampposts	11%
Council staff communications	9%
Twitter	9%
Facebook	9%
Press coverage	8%
Press or outdoor advertising	5%

Demographics

This demographic summary is based on information supplied by respondents. It should be noted that many responses are received in formats that do not encourage or permit respondents to supply information about who they are, such as letter, email, petition, Facebook, Twitter and Dialogue. Respondents are also not required to submit any demographic information for their response to be considered as part of the budget engagement process as some respondents prefer not to provide this information, and would not participate if this information was mandatory. As a result, reasonable demographic information is available for around 1,500 respondents (35% of the total sample).

In contrast to the 2014 budget engagement, where 41% of respondents were women, in 2015 a total of 53% of responses were received from women. The population of the city is 51% female, around the same as was achieved in the sample. In part this apparent increase in participation from women may be due to the introduction of an online survey which was promoted in preference to email or letter contact. This survey allowed demographic information to be captured which was not available in previous years.

The age profile of respondents has remained similar to that recorded in 2014 – both the 2014 and 2015 engagement exercises have attracted an overall younger demographic than in 2013. However, as in 2014, generating responses from the 16-24 and 75+ age groups is challenging, and the overall response is dominated by the 35-54 age groups.



Results for the online planner, shown later in this report, instead of using all 1,086 planners, uses 892 respondents who have supplied an Edinburgh post code. These 892 responses are weighted by age and gender to better reflect the views of all Edinburgh residents.

A map showing the distribution of responses around the city is included as an appendix to this report. There has been good coverage of all areas of the city, with no apparent geographic bias. Also shown on the map are areas of deprivation (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2012, 15% most deprived data zones) and responses have been received from all deprived areas.

7% of respondents (111 of 1,518 answering the question) identified themselves as having a disability or long term illness that impacted on their ability to perform daily activities.

12% of respondents (180 of 1,534 answering the question) identified themselves as being from a non-white and / or non-British background. In the 2011 census, 8% of Edinburgh residents identified as non-white, while 11% identified themselves as being non-British.

Employment was only asked of respondents using the budget planner, and is thus based on only 885 responses. Of these:

- 2% were unemployed – approximately representative of Edinburgh;
- 4% were full-time students – less than the 12% estimated for Edinburgh and likely due to lower response levels amongst the 16-24 age group;
- 67% were employed full-time – reflecting the high level of participation amongst 25-64 year-olds.

Around 27% of respondents are Council employees – this is in line with all previous years where around a quarter of respondents were employed by the Council.

Appendix Two: Full Results

Feedback on budget proposals

All feedback received has been made available to all elected members as a searchable electronic information pack. This report will only address those areas where at least ten responses have been received.

INC2 – Increase discretionary income by RPI+2%

As part of the online planner, respondents were offered the choice to vary the overall charges the Council issues over the next four years by a range of RPI to RPI+6%.

78% of respondents were in favour of above-inflation increases in service charges. 22% favoured inflation-only increases, 43% backed the Council's current plan of RPI+2%, while 29% favoured RPI+4%. Increasing charges by RPI+6% was the least popular choice, supported by only 5% of respondents.

Higher levels of increase were favoured by 25-54 year-olds, with 39% being in favour of RPI+4% or RPI+6%. By contrast only 26% of those in aged 55 and over supported increases at that level. This older age group favoured indirect Council Tax increases over direct service charges.

INC4 – Increase fee charges for section 109 permits to install pipe and cables in roads and pavements

There was strong support for this idea on the Council's Dialogue page with 23 votes and an average score of 4.9/5.

Other comments received were in favour of making utility companies and developers more accountable for road surfaces – through inspection, rental of roads while work was ongoing, and fines for work that was poorly carried out. There would likely be significant public support for any policy aimed at making sure road works are completed to a good standard, in a reasonable time period, and that where this doesn't happen a responsible body is charged.

INC8 – Increase parking permit charges by 5%; INC9 – Increase pay and display charges; and PLA/INC2 – Increase parking charges by an average of 4.5% per year over four years

74% of respondents using the online planner favoured an increase in parking charges, with 32% supporting the Council's plan for immediate changes (INC8, INC9) and 43% supporting increases approximately double this. 20% wanted current charges to be frozen, while only 5% wanted to see a decrease.

Opinion was broadly similar across 50 other comments received on parking, with two-thirds in favour of increases and one-third opposed.

Supporters of increases in charges were opposed to cars in the city centre, in favour of public transport, and in favour of more active forms of travel. Those opposed felt

that the Council was unfairly targeting motorists and believed that there would be negative economic consequences for Edinburgh by excluding drivers.

TP1 – Reduce third party payments for Community Learning and Development services

Reduction in Community Learning and Development (CLD) worker posts was opposed by customers receiving this service. More than 50 comments were received in support of CLD services, most of which came from customers of Cameron House. These comments emphasised that CLD services provide a social life-line that is particularly valued by older people, as well as classes being valued in themselves.

All respondents requested that the Council reconsider its plans to reduce CLD workers posts and make no cuts to this service.

TP2 – Reduce grant payment to Festival City Theatre Trust; TP4 – Review funding arrangements for Winter Festivals

More than 40 comments were received in relation to festivals funding and, to a lesser extent, funding for the Festival Theatre. These were generally in support of the Council's plans and were in some cases strongly opposed to any spending on festival activities.

Extremely high levels of support (550 contacts, 10,000+ petition signatures) for the Instrumental Music Tuition service (noted later in this report) did not translate to support for culture spending in general in budget feedback received.

TP7 – Review allotment service and increase rents

The Council conducted a Dialogue with allotment holders, those on the allotment waiting list and interested members of the public. 25 ideas for allotments generated 126 comments and 166 votes. All feedback received will be passed on to the Allotments Service for consideration. In summary, the ideas were:

- Limiting plots to one per household;
- Reviewing the waiting list, particularly with regard to identifying where individuals already had allotments and were seeking a transfer;
- Turning full allotment plots into half plots when they become vacant;
- Exploring opportunities to develop community gardens in other areas of disused land; and
- Restrictions on entitlement to discounts.

The Council's proposal to increase allotment rents received 12 votes with an average rating of 2.4/5. Scores can range from a minimum of 1 to a maximum of 5, therefore the mid-point of the scale is 3, and a score of 2.4 would indicate this idea was unpopular with those voting.

In addition to Dialogue, more than 30 comments were received about the allotments service. Most were opposed to increasing charges in principle, cited a previous

agreement to maintain rents at £100 per year until 2020, and asked for the Council to keep to that agreement. However some respondents felt that current discount levels were too high and they were happy to pay higher rents.

TP8 – Reduce spending on block-contracted services by 10%

More than 30 responses were received in relation to care services, however most did not specifically mention the 10% reduction and were instead stressing the importance of these services. Those responses that did mention reduction questioned how this could be done without a real decline in the quality of service and were concerned this would happen.

TP9 – Reduce funding to Police Scotland

Police Scotland's 24-page response to the funding reduction is available in the information pack which has been sent to all members. Key points from this response include:

- A service-level agreement was created after previous reductions in funding were rejected by Council following consultation. This SLA has resulted in named officers being assigned to community policing in each ward and the city centre;
- Identification that the loss of funding would result in a reduction of 11 officers which would impact directly on the size of taskable forces, reduce the ability of Police Scotland to engage in local partnership working, and could lead to antisocial behaviour and hate crime developing into more serious criminality;
- With specific regard to CF/SR1 (the proposal to end the night time noise team), Police Scotland estimate that 63% of calls received about night time noise in Edinburgh are referred to the night time noise team, with around 37% being responded to by police. If the referrals were all dealt with by Police Scotland, that would equate to a 10% increase in the total number of incidents dealt with and during busy periods it would be likely that many of these could not be attended. This would have a material impact on Edinburgh residents.

Fewer than 20 comments were received in relation to Police Scotland funding, and were opposed to the reduction. Particular concerns were raised about this reduction in relation to the proposed changes to stair lighting maintenance. Concerns about Police funding were disproportionately expressed by older respondents.

SP8 – Reduce gully cleaning service

Around 10 responses were received in relation to gully cleaning and all were opposed to the changes. Respondents' views varied from stating that they did not believe gullies were currently cleaned as frequently as claimed, to observing that more blockages would result in higher costs and that these savings were therefore a false economy.

P3 – Reduce use of employee overtime by 25%; P4 – Reduce use of agency staffing by 20%; and PLA/EFF3 – Reduction in staff and agency costs

General feedback, not in relation to specific budget proposals, urged the Council to reduce overtime, agency, and consultancy. This was part of more than 70 comments which looked for a general reduction of Council employee numbers, management numbers, pay and benefits – particularly pensions. Around 15 further comments asked for a reduction in the number of Councillors and their remuneration.

CO/ST12 – Business Support Services

More than 160 comments were received in relation to administrative changes in schools related to Business Support Services changes. These were almost always firmly opposed to the changes. The main points raised were:

- Any reduction in education spending was opposed;
- Parents had been led to believe that education spending was ring-fenced and protected against cuts. There was confusion that this applied only to teacher numbers and not all school staff;
- It was felt to be obvious that a reduction in administrative staff numbers would result in administrative tasks being placed on teaching staff, and that this would cause a reduction in the amount or quality of teaching time; and
- The work done by non-teaching staff in school was valued and there was a perception that head teachers and deputy head teachers already carried out too much administration.

Without any emphasis on schools administration, the Business Support Services proposal was included as part of the online planner. The planner focused on the speed at which Business Support Services would be created and the Council's attitude towards redundancies as part of transformation.

24% of respondents favoured a slower implementation of the transformation plan, with reduced use of redundancies and increased reliance on natural wastage. This was slightly higher (30%) amongst current Council employees. 41% of respondents supported the Council's current plan, while 35% wanted to see changes made more quickly.

General feedback on proposals SP3; CF/EFF5; CF/EFF8; CF/EFF9; and CF/ST1-6

Extensive feedback was received on areas related to education and the provision of services to vulnerable children and their families. However this feedback was fragmented and not specifically addressed against budget proposals. This section summarises all feedback received that would appear relevant.

There were concerns these proposals would negatively impact services already perceived to be stretched. Respondents highlighted that the children receiving these services are vulnerable, with specific support needs, and that staff currently

supporting them have a special range of skills and duties which are vital to help these children reach their potential. There were concerns that if staff numbers were reduced, and children were required to go to mainstream schools, this would negatively impact on their development. It was felt that children attending special schools do so as they are unable to succeed at mainstream schools. Respondents also perceived the proposals as going against our legal duties to support pupils and the principles of 'getting it right for every child.'

Cutting resources would mean that remaining staff would have reduced ability to manage behaviour in classes, write care plans or interact with pupils and parents appropriately. If children with additional needs were included in mainstream classes then this would require extra planning and support within schools.

Regarding the proposal to reduce the number of Pupil Support Assistants, respondents were opposed to the plans as they felt there were already insufficient resources available. Some respondents mentioned personal experiences where specialist 1:1 care was not provided due to existing reductions in support and that some pupils were receiving 1:2 support, even though the pupils had differing needs.

The proposals were seen to be short sighted; respondents felt that a reduction in support for excluded children and those with special needs would likely lead to increased long-term costs in terms of unemployment, crime etc and that the lack of support would ultimately affect their independence and potential to lead fulfilling lives later on.

A number of respondents felt that the proposals mention 'review' or 'redesign' of services but are unclear on the actual detail, therefore they found it difficult to comment on them.

The EIS Union responded specifically on proposal CF/ST6 – Family solutions review. This response echoed those received from other interested parties and highlighted the increased risk of a child becoming looked-after by the Council if family support was reduced. It was felt this would lead to higher costs in the long term and poorer outcomes for children, and was described as "short sighted".

CF/EFF2 – Closure of Panmure School

More than 30 comments were received in relation to proposed closure of Panmure school (also referred to as Panmure St Ann's). These comments were all in opposition to the proposal. The arguments against the closure were, in summary:

- A belief that only some of the pupils currently in Panmure can be accommodated at Gorgie Mills, raising questions about alternative provision;
- A belief that there is a lack of appropriate skills and training amongst mainstream teaching staff;
- A belief that current provision within schools for children with additional support needs is inadequate and that mainstreaming would disadvantage all children in the class;

- That there is no effective alternative provision of social, emotional and behavioural needs (SEBN) at secondary school level in Edinburgh;
- That teaching staff from Panmure School would be lost, resulting in a loss of necessary skills within the Council;
- Rising schools rolls may require a similar facility again in a relative short time.

CF/ST8 – Redesign of library services; CF/SP2 – Community centre staff reduction

Proposals for services to occupy shared buildings were included as part of the online planner. The focus of this proposal was whether respondents preferred shared-service hubs in which more services would be provided, or if they preferred specific services to maintain their own facilities, thus ensuring more local delivery but at higher cost.

17% of respondents were in favour of more local delivery. 23% supported the Council's current plans to merge some facilities. However 60% of all respondents were in favour of service hubs that provide more services at the expense of very local provision.

Those with a long-term illness or disability were more likely to be in favour of local delivery options (26% compared to 16% of those without a disability). In earlier reports it was reported that residents who had lived in Edinburgh for longer were more in favour of hubs than newer residents, but in the final data and after weighting this difference was no longer present. There was also no significant difference by age, gender, whether the respondent was a parent or a Council employee.

In contrast to the planner response, more than 30 comments received in other ways were either opposed to merging libraries and community centres, or to any reduction in library or community centre services. Instead of merging facilities, some respondents suggested reducing opening hours.

It is likely that without a detailed plan of what alternative service provision would look like in this area, many customers would view these proposals as a simple cut to services.

CF/SP4 – Redesign of Music Instructor Service

More responses were made about music tuition than any other service. More than 550 comments were received in opposition to the proposed reduction in funding for the service, including from teaching union EIS, compared to fewer than 20 comments in support of the change.

The proposed change was the subject of two petitions; one from school pupils, the other open to the general public. These petitions, mentioned earlier in this report, have accrued more than 10,000 signatures at the time of writing.

It should be noted that the draft budget proposals were only in relation to extracurricular music tuition and not classroom teaching of music. The number of teachers and the amount of class time given for music would not be impacted by these changes. Instrumental music tuition is a service delivered outside of normal class time. Following a summary of feedback on the tuition proposal, suggestions are made as to how any future engagement on this policy could be taken forward.

The comments and petitions make the following key points:

- Although this proposal covers tuition outside of class teaching, respondents view it as essential for skills development;
- Music has an important role in engaging all children in their education, but is felt to be especially important for children who are not otherwise academically inclined, those with learning difficulties, and those with mental health issues;
- Moving from free provision to paid provision of the service will result in some families being unable to afford tuition. This may mean money has been wasted on purchase of an instrument. This was felt to be more likely to impact on families who are “just outside” of any remaining threshold of free provision and would make little difference to children from “rich families”;
- Requiring payment will increase the extent to which music is, and is viewed as, an elitist subject;
- Because of Edinburgh’s role as the Festival City, it was viewed as incongruous that the Council could attract musicians to play from all over the world, but cannot afford to provide music tuition for its own children;
- Various orchestras and ensembles that are effectively supported by this service could cease operating, possibly due to a shortage of children being taught how to play for more expensive instruments;
- A 75% reduction in the service’s budget was an alarming and unexpected figure, which was viewed as excessive even by those who stated their willingness to make some contribution to the provision of the service;
- The proposals do not provide sufficient detail on the alternative delivery model to provide confidence or assurance; and
- Respondents would like alternative ways of generating income to be considered, such as fund raising concerts and other charitable activities, before charging was implemented.

Feedback on this proposal indicates that there is considerable scope for the Council to improve the clarity of charges for extracurricular music tuition. While it seems likely that many would be opposed to charges in principle, it is equally likely that a charging element would be acceptable in a broader context and with appropriate supporting information. In particular, any future proposal on this subject should:

- Ensure head teachers are meaningfully engaged in the creation of any plans for the service;
- Ensure consideration has been given to transitional arrangements that would not require individual pupils to abandon any course of study for financial reasons; and
- Ensure that exemptions has been developed before engaging with parents, and that a charging policy identifies:
 - a. the criteria by which pupils would be exempt, receive a discounted rate, or be asked to pay full price;
 - b. how expensive musical instruments would be purchased; and
 - c. a price that parents of non-exempt pupils would be expected to pay.

PLA/SP3 – Waste Services

Two significant areas of the waste services proposals were addressed in the Council's Dialogue – moving to three-weekly garden waste collection and moving to four-weekly glass recycling collections.

The glass recycling proposal received 8 votes with an average score of 3/5. Comments on this proposal were supportive, though ability to store glass recycling for a month might be an issue for some households. Comments also indicate there may be a preference for on-street recycling facilities over kerbside collections.

Garden waste collection received 4 votes with an average score of 3/5.

More than 30 comments were received in general relating to waste collection and recycling. These stressed the importance of delivering these services on a regular basis, and respondents would like these services to improve, but they were on balance neither for nor against the budget proposals. This feedback likely reflects the attention waste services receives as a core local authority service, and it may be the case that most respondents mentioning waste collection or recycling had not actually read the waste proposals.

PLA/SP4 – Withdrawal of School Crossing Patrol Guide service at lunchtime

There were fewer than 10 responses in opposition to withdrawing this service at lunch times and fewer than five responses were in favour. However a petition was received in opposition to the changes with 475 signatures.

Those in opposition made two distinct points:

- Removing crossing guides increases risk and therefore reduces the safety of children; and
- A reduction in hours would force some crossing guides to seek alternative work.

Those in favour of the changes did not believe that removing crossing guides at lunch time represented a significant increase in risk.

PLA/SR1 – Stop repairs and maintenance of Stair Lighting Service in tenements

Fewer than 20 responses were received in relation to stair lighting. These were generally in opposition to the Council's current proposal to stop maintenance of stair lights. For some respondents, the provision of stair lighting in a built-up area was no different than the provision of street lighting in an area with few homes and they felt that the Council should provide this.

The range of views expressed also included those who were concerned that without the Council providing maintenance, no-one would provide maintenance. Respondents cited difficulties with arranging repairs to common parts of the property. It was felt that the growth in private renting and the inability of owners to agree on common repairs and maintenance would mean stair lights would fail and this would create spaces in which accidents, antisocial behaviour and crime would be more likely.

It was suggested that a change in the law would be necessary to require owners and landlords to introduce factoring arrangements, and it was felt by some that the Council simply charging for this service would be the simplest way of dealing with the issue.

General feedback on third party payments and voluntary sector

The full submission to the budget by Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations Council (EVOC) is included in information packs sent to elected members. In summary the points made by EVOC were:

- Council budget seems disconnected from changes in administrative structures, particularly with regard to the Integrated Joint Board;
- Use of the word "efficiency" is disingenuous – the Council should simply describe cuts as cuts;
- Geography has not been given enough consideration when funding is allocated to organisations, leading to "post code lotteries";
- Reductions in preventative services should be reconsidered as these help to avoid greater costs later;
- Changes to management in the Council have raised concerns about loss of organisational knowledge, and uncertainty over decision-making;
- EVOC welcome the Council's stated position on empowered communities, but feels that reality does not match rhetoric and more genuine co-production between partners is imperative.

More than 20 comments were received in relation to voluntary sector funding and how the Council works with the voluntary sector. Overall feedback was that respondents felt these services were valuable and that the Council should continue to support them. Respondents emphasised that additional work could be done by

volunteers and that the Council needed to do more to ensure people had opportunities to volunteer.

Using the online planner, respondents were asked about the Council's role with the voluntary sector and commissioned services. 72% of respondents were supportive of something close to the Council's planned approach involving more co-design and delivery of services with partners. More radical positions were less favourably viewed, with only 16% supporting the Council moving to become a commissioning body with no direct delivery of services; and only 11% looking for the Council to bring all services in-house for additional control and accountability.

Online planner choices

Eight key strategic areas were presented to the public in the online planner, with potential choices available in each case. Five of these areas have already been reported alongside the associated budget proposals. Overall reaction to the remaining three proposals is summarised below.

Council Tax

Of the 1,086 responses to the online planner, a majority (63%) of those were in favour of increasing Council Tax from 2017/18 to pay for services, while 9% wanted to see a reduction. A quarter of respondents (25%) were in favour of increasing Band D Council Tax by around £100, while 38% opted for the more modest £50 increase.

Those with long term illnesses or disabilities were more likely to support increases in Council Tax, with 73% favouring some kind of increase, compared to 62% of those without disabilities.

Looking at the ward-level response from the online planner reveals that there was support for a Council Tax increase in each ward, though this varies substantially as shown in the following table. Av. indicates the average score in relation to the online planner – where -50 represented a reduction in Council Tax by £100 per year for Band D properties, while +50 was a £100 per year increase.

Ward	Av.	Ward	Av.
Almond	10.7	Leith	17.9
City Centre	6.4	Leith Walk	23.6
Colinton/Fairmilehead	9.0	Liberton/Gilmerton	27.6
Corstorphine/Murrayfield	18.5	Meadows/Morningside	14.5
Craightinny/Duddingston	14.0	Pentland Hills	23.6
Drum Brae/Gyle	19.0	Portobello/Craigmillar	25.8
Forth	25.0	Sighthill/Gorgie	25.4
Fountainbridge/Craiglockh	19.0	Southside/Newington	19.9

art			
Inverleith	9.7		

Scores show strong support for an increase in 13/17 wards, but lower levels of support in City Centre, Colinton / Fairmilehead, Inverleith, and Almond.

Feedback from all other communication methods was similar, with 150+ comments in favour of either Council Tax increase and / or Council Tax reform. Fewer than ten comments were received in opposition to a Council Tax increase.

A broad consensus of feedback was that holding Council Tax at the same level for an extended period of time was undesirable when services were being cut, there was a strong feeling that respondents wanted to pay more to maintain funding in key areas and the delivery of important services. There was a very high level of understanding that this was a Scottish Government policy. Respondents expressed negative perceptions of the Scottish Government in respect of the Council Tax Freeze.

However respondents stated that any increase in Council Tax should also be accompanied by the Council making efficiencies and that more tax revenue should not be a substitute for this.

While revenue raising through Council Tax increases had support, it was still cited as a regressive tax and calls were made for reform through revaluation, introduction of additional Council Tax bands for more valuable homes, selective increases in tax only for higher bands, and for the system to be replaced in favour of a more progressive income-based local tax.

It was also suggested through the Council's Dialogue that students should make some contribution towards Council services. The idea received 13 votes and had an average score of 4.6/5. The original idea received through Dialogue was for a contribution of £5 per week. In other feedback, a similar amount was suggested of £200 per year or a percentage of the normal Council Tax bill for their property.

Renewable energy generation

27% of online planner respondents were in favour of a more ambitious strategy on renewable energy generation, with the Council actively seeking opportunities to invest in renewables to gain more income in future. However the majority (73%) preferred a more cautious approach. Some suggested that the Council had already "missed the boat" in developing renewable energy opportunities.

Electronic billing

81% of respondents supported moving to digital billing by default, with customers having to opt-in to paper billing. There was strong consensus on this issue and in supplementary comments many respondents felt this was an obvious and preferable solution, with paper bills being used only for identification purposes.

While fewer than 1% were in favour of the current system of paper bills, 19% preferred an opt-in to digital billing, rather than an opt-out system. It should be noted that these are all results of online engagement, and may therefore not represent the views of the whole population on online issues.

Dialogue ideas

Feedback on the Council's Dialogue page that relates directly to budget proposals has been included previously. Aside from these, the highest rated ideas suggested on the Council's Dialogue page have been summarised below. The Council has undertaken to investigate the highest rated proposals and to implement those that are practical, or feed back on those that cannot be implemented.

Tourist tax

In addition to more than 60 comments received from all sources asking for the introduction of a tourist tax, the introduction of a charge for visitors to the city was the second most discussed suggestion on the Council's Dialogue site (second only to the proposal to create a social enterprise to deliver music tuition). The idea received 36 votes with an average score of 4.6/5.

There was consensus that around £2 per room, per night was a fair charge and one which respondents had experienced themselves when visiting cities throughout Europe. However it was also suggested that a percentage cost or a fee relative to the type of room (hostel, B&B, hotel) would be fairer as flat rate charges would be disproportionate for very cheap room rentals.

The phrase "tourist tax" appears to be well recognised by respondents and does not appear to have strong negative connotations. Given attitudes to both tourists and festivals amongst some residents, the notion of specifically "taxing" tourists may be viewed more positively than introducing a "transient visitor levy".

Congestion charging

Introducing a congestion charge was a popular idea, with 23 votes and an average score of 4.4/5, however comments diverged significantly from the voting with around half of those discussing the idea being moderate to strongly opposed.

Around 15 additional comments were received suggesting that the Council reconsider a city centre congestion charge.

It was not possible to judge the extent of general public support for a congestion charge from the information received.

Other feedback

Newhaven Tram extension

More than 150 comments were received in opposition to the extension of the tram line to Newhaven, while fewer than 10 responses were received in support.

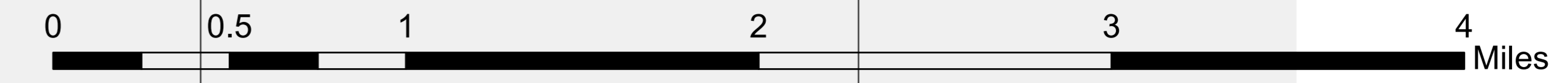
Respondents directly linked tram spending with budget problems and attributed all of the Council's current financial issues to the tram. It was suggested that the whole capital cost of tram extension construction could be transferred to revenue spending on education, care for vulnerable adults, etc. and that this would more than meet the current budget shortfall.

The feedback suggests a general misunderstanding on the financing of the tram project and the benefits of a tram extension. The Council may be able to influence overall opinion by more clearly communicating the benefits of the extension, while making appropriate assurances about the financial costs of the extension.

The Council's revenue and capital budgets are separate and while capital budget spending can be financed through borrowing, revenue budget spending cannot. The Council would only invest in extending the tram if the additional fare income covered the cost of borrowing, therefore there would be no impact on the revenue budget of extending the tram line. However this also means that the funding for tram could not be used to address the shortfall in the revenue budget.

Nevertheless there are significant negative attitudes towards trams which appear to be unlikely to change.

Budget proposals - respondent postcodes



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Legend

SIMD 15% most deprived datazones

Responses per postcode

1 response

2 responses

3+ responses

