

E

2013-14 Budget Consultation

Findings and Report

5th February 2013

Contents

	Page
1. Executive Summary of Public Consultation	
Background.....	3
Key Findings.....	3
2. Findings from the Public Consultation on the 2013/14 Budget	
Survey Method.....	4
Council Strategy.....	6
Council Priorities.....	7
Council Tax.....	9
Other Comments.....	10
3. Consultation with Trade Unions.....	12
4. Schools Forum consultation.....	14

Appendix A

Analysis tables of survey responses

Appendix B

Paper and Online Questionnaire

Appendix C

Telephone survey Questionnaire

Appendix D

Outcome report from Schools Forum 9th January 2013

1. Executive Summary of Public Consultation

Background

The Council Strategy was adopted by the County Council in February 2011. It sets out the vision, values and priorities for the 4-year period from 2011 to 2015. It also provides a high-level overview of the Council's Meeting the Challenge programme.

Over the past 2 years, we have made good progress in delivering this strategy and we believe that the strategic direction it sets is still relevant and appropriate to the opportunities and challenges the Council faces. We will use the budget consultation 2013/14 to seek to reconfirm with local people the values and priorities set out in the Strategy. We will also refresh the Council Strategy to take account of the progress we have made so far and to set out our high level plans for the coming year.

Consultation on the 2013-14 budget took place between the beginning of December 2012 and mid-January 2013. Three methods of gathering respondent data were used; a paper survey, an online version, and a telephone survey. Consultation also took place with stakeholder organisations, councillors, and trade unions. The minutes of the discussion with Trade Unions appear further in this report.

In total, 1338 usable responses were received to the public consultation.

The consultation was largely designed around the four Meeting the Challenge themes:

- Getting our own house in order
- Protecting vulnerable people
- Supporting active communities
- Building a sustainable community

Key Findings

- There is strong endorsement of the Council's strategy and four key priorities. Over 89% of all respondents to the public consultation said that the priorities are either more or of equal importance, compared with last year.
- The top two priorities for 98% of people who responded are: 'Protecting vulnerable people' and 'Getting our own house in order'.
- 'Stimulating economic growth and creating jobs' was rated by 96% of people surveyed as of more or equal importance, when compared with last year.

- A clear majority (64%) of respondents said that the Council should accept the Government funding and freeze Council Tax levels for 2013/14. 18% of respondents disagreed.

2. Findings from the Public Consultation on the 2013/14 Budget

Survey Method

In order to ensure that the consultation provided meaningful information about the priorities of Gloucestershire people, the approach that was adopted captured responses from a representative, random sample of the Gloucestershire population, from self selecting respondents and also from stakeholder organisations. This approach guaranteed that the data generated was inclusive, robust and fully representative.

The consultation used 3 means of gathering responses; telephone interviews, a paper survey, and an online survey.

- Telephone interviews with a randomly selected, representative sample of 1,100 Gloucestershire residents, were conducted by an external consultancy (Future Focus).
- 1,760 paper surveys were available to the public through local libraries and posters were displayed to raise awareness and encourage the public to participate in the consultation. Media coverage was achieved as a result of a press release. 114 completed surveys were returned.
- Paper surveys were also sent to 334 stakeholder organisations, with a covering letter explaining the purpose of the consultation and requesting their participation. 40 organisations either returned surveys or completed them online.
- The survey was available online through the GCC website. 124 responses were completed online.

The paper and online surveys were completed by self-selecting respondents who, by their nature, are more likely to have a particular issue to raise, so that their responses alone would not necessarily be representative of the total population of the county.

However, the methodology used to establish the sample of 1,100 people for the telephone survey ensured that the participants fully represented the geographical distribution of the population of Gloucestershire as well as the age, gender and

ethnic diversity of the county. The telephone survey results are therefore statistically far more representative of the views of the Gloucestershire population.

In total, 1338 usable responses to the public consultation surveys were received.

These included:

- 923 council tax payers
- 95 in receipt of council tax support
- 52 non-council tax payers
- 40 stakeholder organisations
- 44 staff

The questionnaire contained the following:

- Questions on the four main themes of the Council Strategy
- A question on stimulating economic growth and creating jobs
- A question examining the acceptability of freezing Council Tax
- Further considerations that the respondent would like the council to consider

Profile questions on gender, age, ethnicity, disability and carer status, and employment status were also included in the questionnaires and the responses have been analysed to ensure that the Equality objectives of the council have been adhered to.

Copies of the paper/online questionnaire and the telephone interview script of the questionnaire have been included in Appendices B and C.

Measurement

The 'self-selecting' paper and on-line surveys measured responses on a 3 point scale, as did the 2012/13 Budget consultation. The Council priority is therefore either: More important than last year, of Equal importance to last year or Less important than last year.

As the telephone survey was to be the main statistically representative sample of the population and hence the key to a deeper understanding of the levels of importance that the public attribute to each of the Council priorities, it was decided to use a 5 point scale to measure responses. Compared to last year the Council priority is therefore either: Very important, Important, Neither more nor less important, Unimportant or Very unimportant.

Analysis of all the responses looked at each survey individually and then grouped the appropriate responses together to give an overall picture of the views of the public across all respondents in the public consultation. In the charts on the following pages responses have been grouped to show that respondents thought that the Council priorities were either: Of more or of equal importance to last year and Less important than last year.

However, the more detailed responses gathered via the 5 point scale of the telephone survey were particularly useful in identifying where a priority was 'Very important' as opposed to just 'important' for a proportion of the respondents and these variations have been highlighted further in the report.

Because the telephone survey results are statistically more representative of the views of the Gloucestershire population, the responses to the self-selecting surveys may be viewed rather as supplementary supporting data.

Council Strategy

The survey asked to what extent people agreed that the four main themes in the Council Strategy were the correct themes for the council to focus its budget and resources on. A written explanation of each theme was provided, the four themes being:

Getting Our Own House in Order

Meaning that the Council will do everything they can to be as efficient as possible, reduce the council's running costs, streamline management and get the best value out of their assets.

Protecting Vulnerable People

Meaning that the Council should focus its resources on services for the most vulnerable: children, young people and adults.

Supporting Active Communities

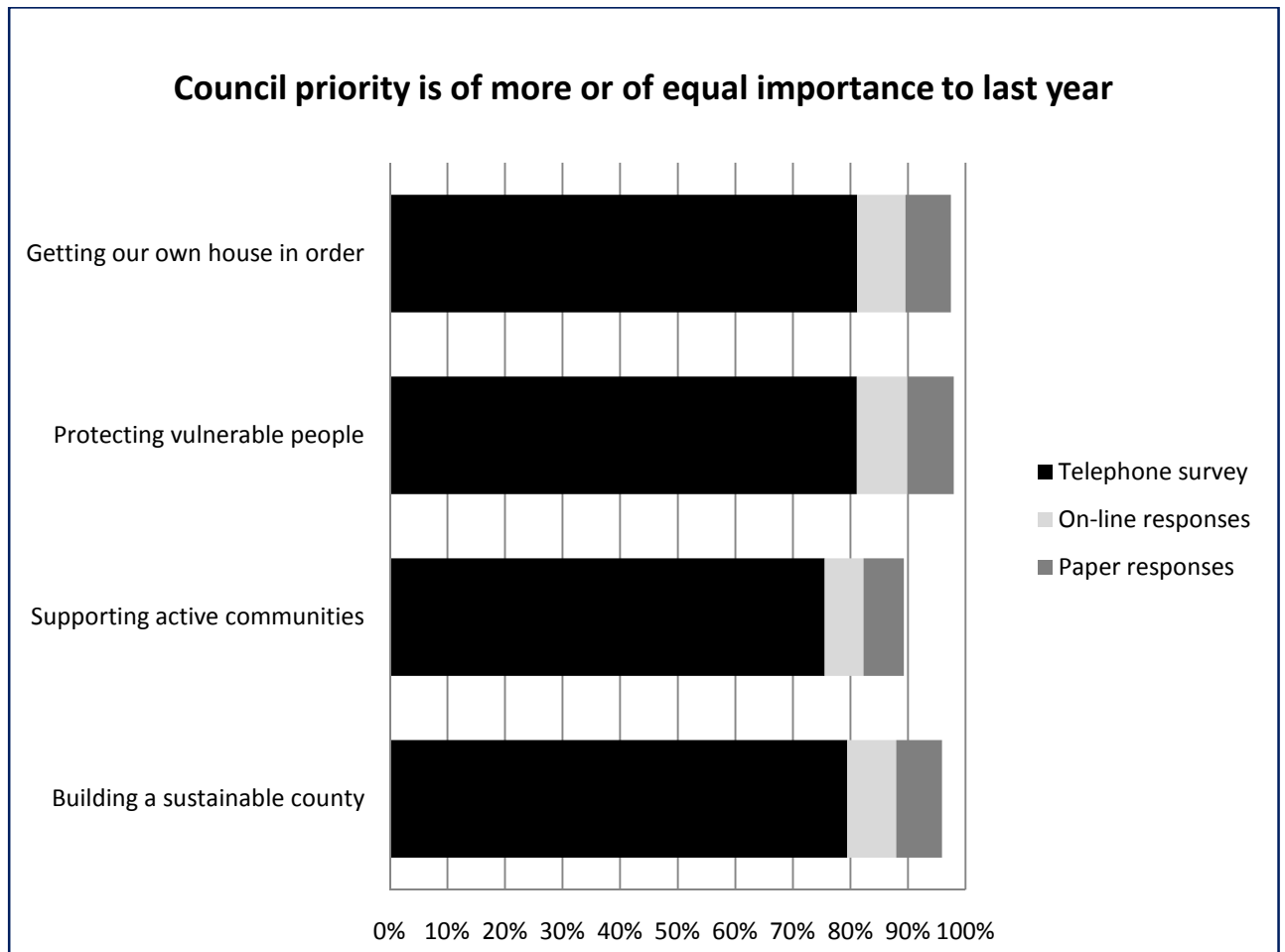
Meaning that the Council should focus on supporting communities to do more themselves and give them more control over local services.

Building a Sustainable County

Meaning that the Council should prioritise those services that keep the county up and running, that make Gloucestershire an attractive place to do business and that directly protect the public from harm.

Findings on Council Priorities

Overall, the responses to all three surveys produced a very high level of consistency with last year and a clear endorsement of the Council strategy. Consistently over 89% of people surveyed stated that the Council's strategic priorities are either of more or of equal importance when compared with last year, with 98% of people rating 'Protecting vulnerable people' and 'Getting our own house in order' as of more or equal importance to last year. See chart below.



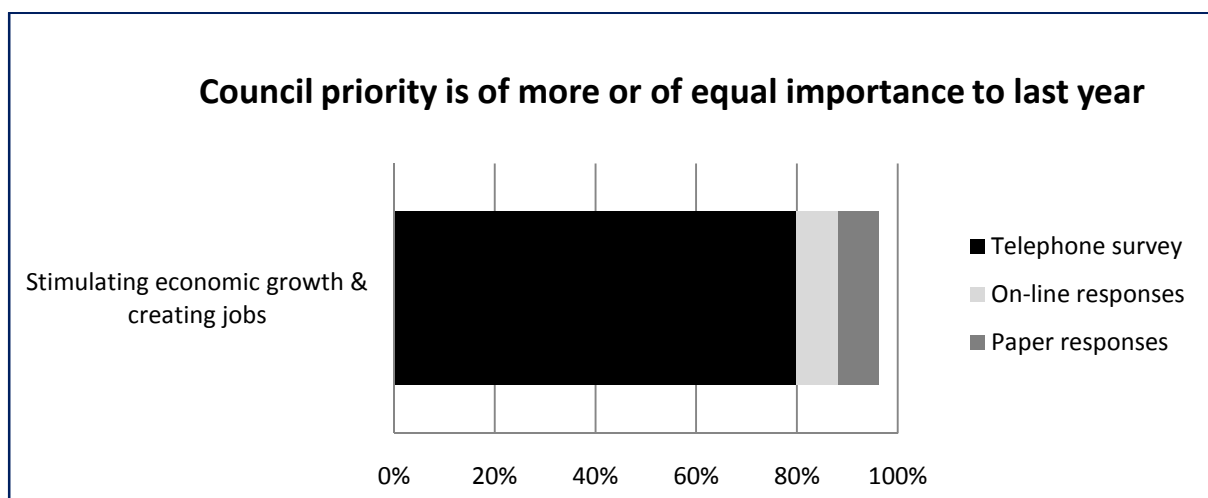
The extensive telephone survey found similar trends in each of the 6 districts for most of the Council's strategic priorities, which reflected the pattern found at County level. Some variations were highlighted, specifically the proportion of respondents perceiving an issue to be 'very important'.

However, the only priority for which any real variation emerged by district was in terms of 'active communities' where respondents in Forest of Dean attached more importance to it compared to other districts. Indeed, in Stroud and Tewkesbury, 13% and 15% respectively felt this priority was not important. The only other trend to emerge was that those aged 55+ were more likely to feel that 'keeping house in order' was 'very important' (72%) compared to 60% of 18-34 year olds and 64% of those aged 35-54.

Stimulating growth and creating jobs

When asked about 'Stimulating economic growth and creating jobs' 96% of people surveyed thought that this priority was also of more or of equal importance to last year. In the telephone survey the proportion rating this priority as important (very/important combined) ranged from 92% in three of the districts to 98% in Gloucester.

There were no variations by age or gender, suggesting that 'stimulating economic growth and creating jobs' was perceived to be of equal importance across the county area, regardless of district or demographics.



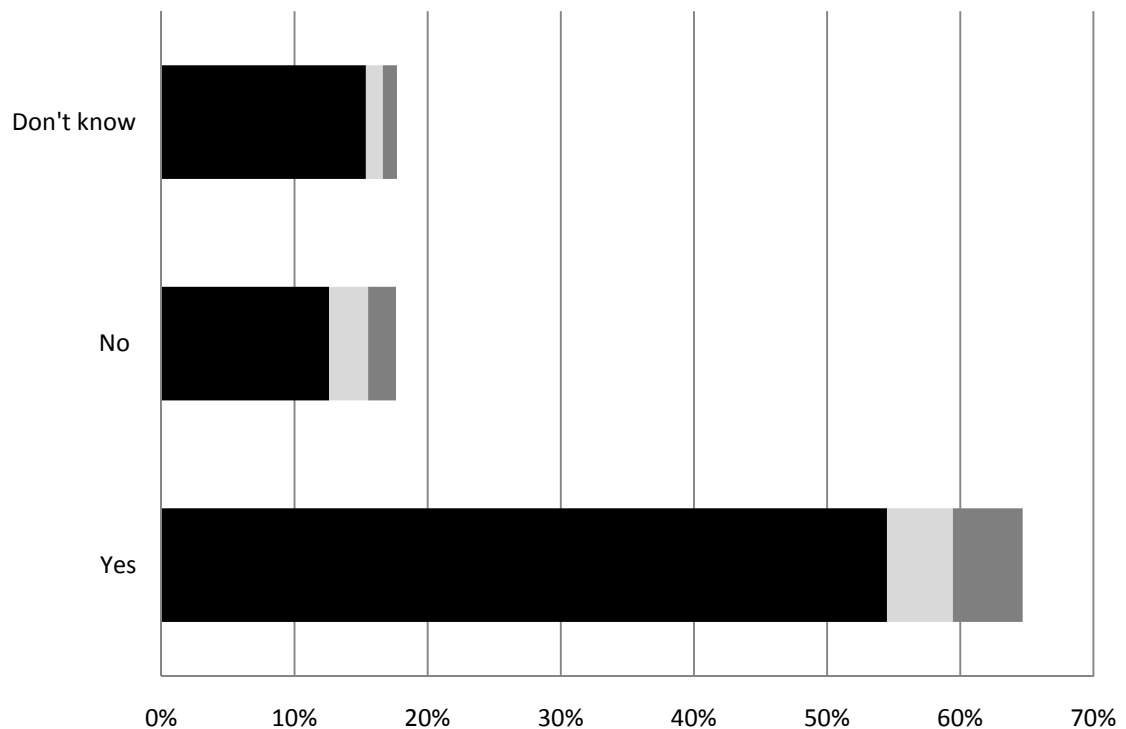
Council Tax

Residents were asked whether they thought the council should freeze council tax again this year. The question was posed:

'The Government intends to make funding available to Councils for 2013/14 to allow a freeze on Council Tax. Do you think the Council should accept the Government funding and freeze Council Tax levels for 2013/14, bearing in mind this will limit the amount of funding the Council can raise?'

The response is a clear mandate for the Council to freeze council tax again this year with 64% of respondents answering 'Yes' to the question and 18% responding 'No'. See chart on the following page.

Do you think Gloucestershire County Council should accept the Government funding and freeze Council Tax, bearing in mind this will limit the amount of funding we can raise?



	Yes	No	Don't know
■ Telephone survey	54%	13%	15%
■ On-line responses	5%	3%	1%
■ Paper responses	5%	2%	1%

Other Comments

All people surveyed were asked two open questions:

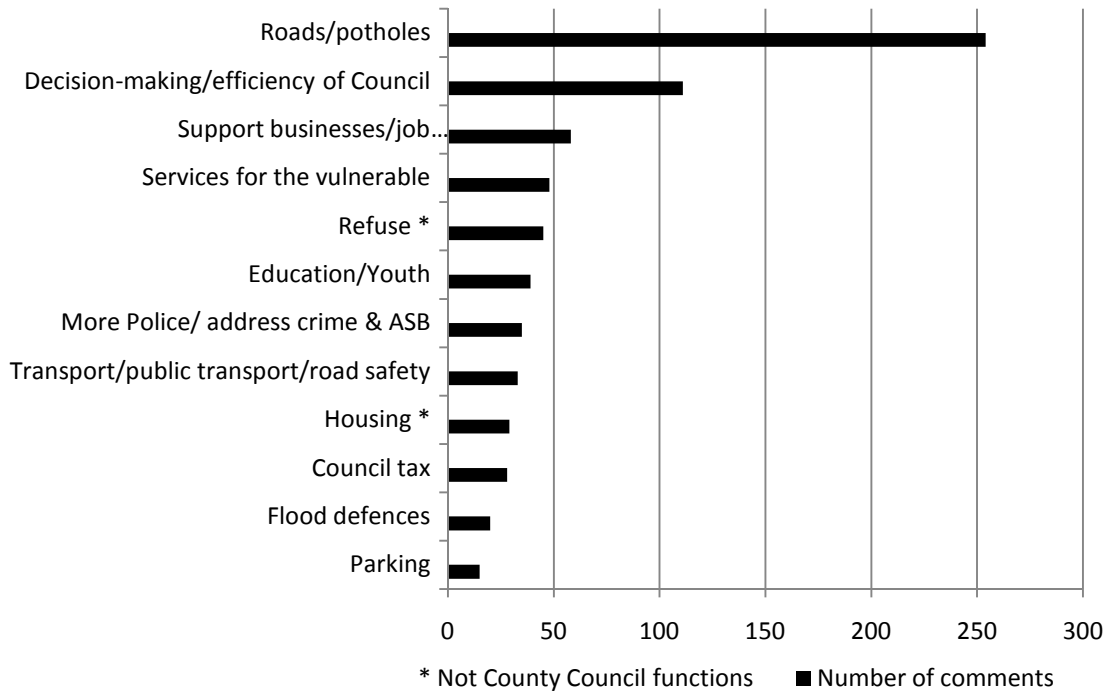
Having considered the four priority areas: Do you think there is anything else we need to focus on over the next 12 months?

And

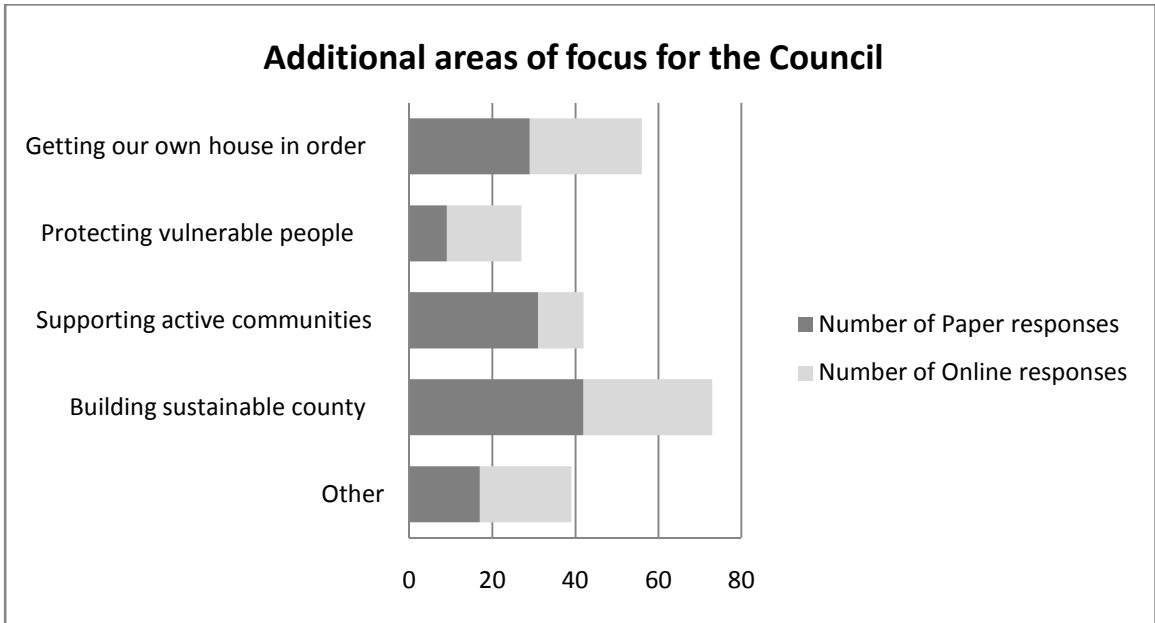
Any further comments that you would like us to consider when developing our strategy and/or budget for 2013/14?

772 of the participants in the telephone survey made additional comments and suggestions which represented a wide range of other areas that respondents felt that the Council should focus on. See chart below:

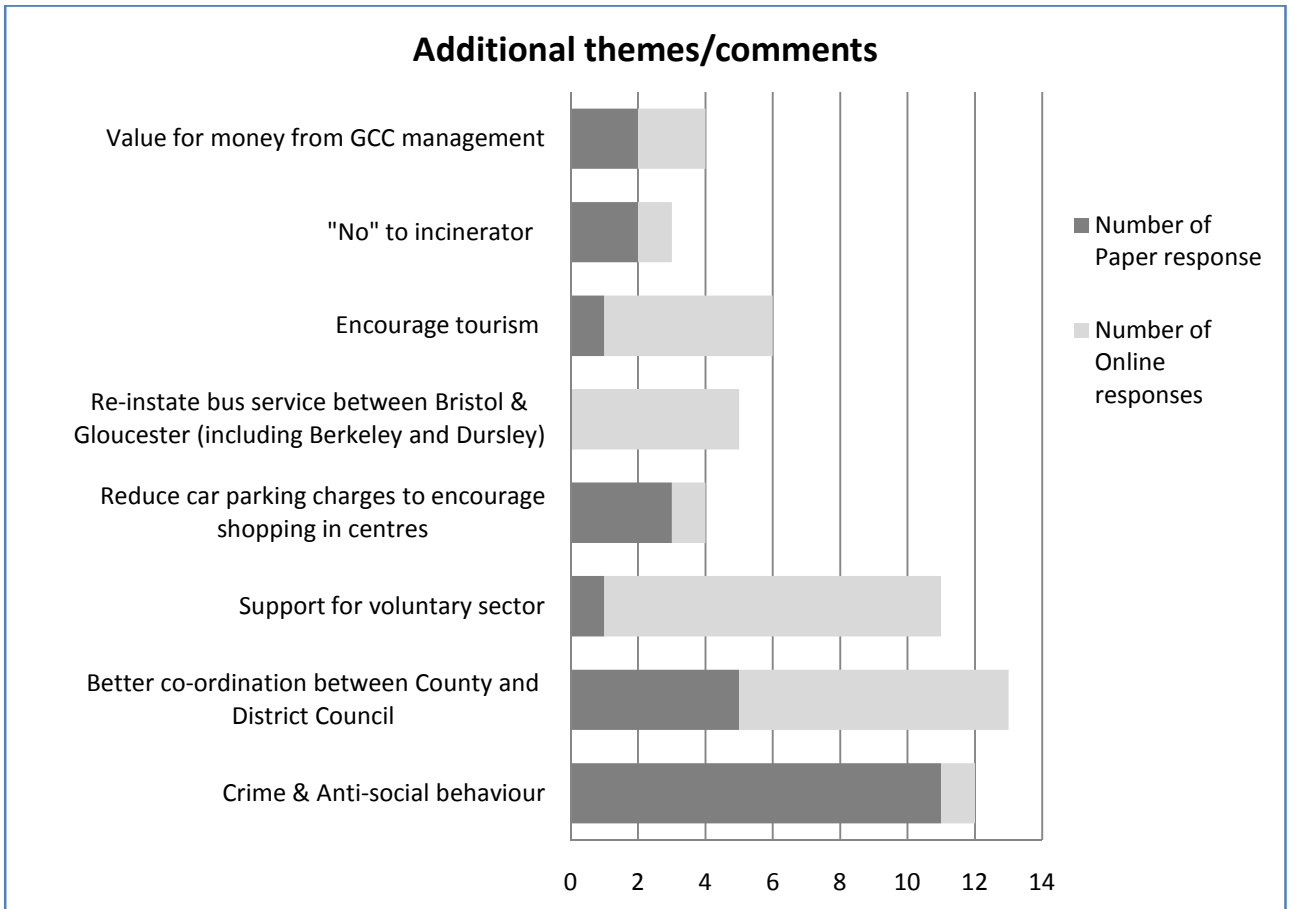
Additional areas of focus for the council from telephone interviews



Analysis of the responses from the self-selecting paper and online surveys also show that over 50% of people who completed a survey made comments and suggestions. However, it should be remembered that as self-selecting respondents, their responses are not as representative of the views of the total population of the county as the telephone survey and therefore should be read with a degree of caution. The majority of the comments could in fact be categorised within the four key council priorities – see chart on the following page.



Within the four key categories there were a number of repeated comments on specific themes which are shown in the chart below.



3. Trades Union and Professional Organisations Consultation on the Budget 2013-14

21st January 2013

Present:

Cabinet members:

Cllrs Hawthorne and Theodoulou

Representatives:

Martin Ballard, NAHT
Simon Cormack and Gavin Brooks, UNISON
Roger Hunt, GMB
Christine Lithgow, AEP
Patricia McKay, ATL
Mike Tully and Nigel Morley, FBU
John Wade, NASUWT
Tim Withers, ASCL

Officers:

Jo Walker, Director: Strategic Finance
Dilys Wynn, Director, People Services
Nick Lerry, Principal HR Advisor
Richard Harris, HR Advisor
Caroline Anderton, Customer Communication and Engagement Manager
Alison Wantenaar, Democratic Services Advisor

Cllr Hawthorne opened the meeting with reference to the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2013-14 in the context of reduced funding from Westminster. He then invited questions. The following is a summary of the matters raised.

Mike Tully, FBU, questioned the reduced funding to the Fire Service. (Annex 4 page 44 of the report). He asked Cllr Hawthorne whether or not he accepted that cuts had been made to Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service based on issues of control, staffing of special appliances and fire prevention.

Cllr Hawthorne responded by describing the investment in the past year to the service, including four new fire stations and the exemplary life skills centre at SkillZone in Tuffley. There had been significant investment in the service over the last three years to the envy of colleagues in other authorities with the use of Public Finance Initiatives (PFI). However he was happy to discuss the concerns with the Chief Fire Officer. It was noted that the County operated one of the lower costing fire services and had contributed to the National Review.

Martin Ballard, NAHT, enquired of the reasoning that had informed the proposal to continue the council tax freeze. He wanted to know how the grant available compared to the possible income from 1 or 2% council tax rise.

Jo Walker explained that the grant on offer for 2 years would roughly equate to an increase of 1% per annum.

Mark Hawthorne explained that it was a balancing act – but that in his opinion it was better to accept money from central grants than from residents. He said he had spoken to Eric Pickles on this issue requesting some continuity for planning.

Martin Ballard, NAHT, asked if there was any possibility that a sum could be taken from the reserves to reduce the severity of the cuts?

Mark Hawthorne referred the meeting to section I, paragraphs 34 to 38 of the report. He explained that the reserves were there to protect services and flatten out one off bumps in expenditure. GCC's business was driven by demand led services such as adult care with recurring costs, whereas reserves can only be used once.

Simon Cormack UNISON, asked if there really was an appetite within the local community to share provision of services with the authority? He noted that there had been 38 small grants made which did not add up to a significant amount.

Mark Hawthorne explained that the Meeting the Challenge programme was a strategic change of direction and there were some real successes. Youth provision was now reaching more young people. In the recent severe weather 18,500 km of roads were gritted and volunteer snow wardens had been trained to use hand gritters to keep pavements open.

Gavin Brooks, UNISON, asked Cllr Hawthorne what vision existed for Local Government considering the relinquishing of service provision to third parties. Was there not an implication for democracy?

Mark Hawthorne explained that external provision by third parties had been around for decades. The County was considering how best to deliver services and there would be a mix of operations and strategically commissioned services. £180 million worth of business was contracted by the county per annum. In his view the changes did not undermine democracy or accountability. There was a robust process in place to secure and monitor third party provision and councils play a vibrant part in the local economy.

Gavin Brooks, UNISON, pointed out that the amount contracted out was increasing and that this limited the assistance a local councillor could have to their residents. How much control did the county actually retain?

Mark Hawthorne responded by giving various examples and emphasised that the county retained control through a robust contract process.

The meeting ended at 4.40pm

4. Schools Forum Consultation

The Schools Forum met on 9th January 2013 and discussed the implications of the DSG settlement announcement of 19th December 2012 and the proposal to write-off historic deficit for those schools that met robust criteria agreed by the Forum. The Outcome report of this meeting is included at Appendix D.

Appendix A - Analysis Tables of Survey Responses

	Telephone survey	On-line responses	Paper responses
Base	1100	124	114
Q1. Compared with last year, focusing on 'getting our own house in order' is			
<i>Very important & important/ More important</i>	1034	28	49
	94%	23%	43%
<i>Neither more nor less important / Of equal importance</i>	52	84	57
	5%	68%	50%
<i>Unimportant & Very unimportant /Less important</i>	14	12	8
	1%	10%	7%

	Telephone survey	On-line responses	Paper responses
Base	1100	124	113
Q2. Compared with last year, focusing on 'protecting vulnerable people' is			
<i>Very important & important/ More important</i>	1044	48	64
	95%	39%	57%
<i>Neither more nor less important / Of equal importance</i>	41	70	44
	4%	56%	39%
<i>Unimportant & Very unimportant /Less important</i>	15	6	5
	1%	5%	4%

	Telephone survey	On-line responses	Paper responses
Base	1100	123	114
Q3. Compared with last year, focusing on 'supporting active communities' is			
<i>Very important & important/ More important</i>	864	28	33
	79%	23%	29%
<i>Neither more nor less important / Of equal importance</i>	147	62	61
	13%	50%	54%
<i>Unimportant & Very unimportant /Less important</i>	89	33	20
	8%	27%	18%

	Telephone survey	On-line responses	Paper responses
Base	1100	123	114
Q4. Compared with last year, focusing on 'building a sustainable county' is			
<i>Very important & important/ More important</i>	1010	41	58
	92%	33%	51%
<i>Neither more nor less important / Of equal importance</i>	53	73	48
	5%	59%	42%
<i>Unimportant & Very unimportant /Less important</i>	37	9	8
	3%	7%	7%

	Telephone survey	On-line responses	Paper responses
Base	1100	123	114
Q5. Compared with last year, stimulating economic growth and creating jobs for Gloucestershire is:			
<i>Very important & important/ More important</i>	1035	65	67
	94%	53%	59%
<i>Neither more nor less important / Of equal importance</i>	34	48	39
	3%	39%	34%
<i>Unimportant & Very unimportant /Less important</i>	31	10	8
	3%	8%	7%

	Telephone survey	On-line responses	Paper responses
Base	1100	124	114
Q6. We have asked you to consider four priority areas: Getting our own house in order Protecting vulnerable people Supporting active communities Building a sustainable community			
Do you think there is anything else we need to focus on over the next 12 months?			
If so, please give details:	602	64	72
	55%	52%	63%

	Telephone survey	On-line responses	Paper responses
Base	1100	122	112
Q7. The Government intends to make funding available to councils for 2013/14 to allow a freeze on Council Tax.			
Do you think Gloucestershire County Council should accept the Government funding and freeze Council Tax, bearing in mind this will limit the amount of funding we can raise?			
Yes	727	66	70
	66%	54%	63%
No	168	39	28
	15%	32%	25%
Don't know	205	17	14
	19%	14%	13%

	Telephone survey	On-line responses	Paper responses
Base	1100	124	114
Q8. Please use this space to make any further comments that you would like us to consider when developing our strategy and/or budget for 2013/14:			
	172	50	68
	16%	40%	60%

Appendix B – Paper and Online survey questionnaire

Please tell us *your views* on the County Council's Strategy and the 2013/14 Budget

The Council Strategy for 2011- 2014 sets out our plans for services and spending over a four year period. These plans reflect the changing demand for council services, as well as the need to save £114 million.

In developing our strategy we have identified three clear values to help shape our decision making, these are;

- Living within our means
- Providing good basic services
- Helping communities to help themselves

Last year we asked you to help set some key priorities that would support these values. This year we want to understand if these priorities are still important to you. We will use this information as part of the process for setting our budget for 2013/14.

At the moment we are still waiting to hear the details of our budget settlement from the Government – this means that we are still developing our full proposals. Therefore we will be asking for your views in two stages – this stage, Stage 1, is about seeking your views on our priorities. Stage 2 will take place later in the year / early next year, when we have more information about our financial settlement.

Helpful hints for completing this questionnaire.

Please fill in only one questionnaire per person, organisation or group.

Once you have finished, please check you have answered all the questions and return in the pre-paid envelope provided (or return to your local library). Or you can complete Online at:

www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/budget2013

Please respond by 5pm on Monday 17th December 2012.

Gloucestershire County Council has a commitment to protecting personal information. All of your answers will be treated in accordance with the data protection act.

Please respond by 5pm on Monday 17th December 2012.

Council Strategy - Our Priorities

Q1 Getting our own house in order

Last year you told us that you believed we should focus on 'getting our own house in order'. You said that

we should do everything we can to be as efficient as possible, reducing our running costs, streamlining

management and getting best value out of our assets.

Looking ahead to 2013 / 14, which of the following best describes your views about this?

Compared with last year, focusing on **'getting our own house in order'** is:

More important.....

Of equal importance.....

Less important

Q2 Protecting vulnerable communities

Last year you said that we should focus on 'protecting vulnerable people'.

Looking ahead to 2013/14, which of the following best describes your views about this?

Compared with last year, focusing on **protecting vulnerable people** is:

More important.....

Of equal importance.....

Less important

Q3 Supporting active communities

Last year you told us that we should focus on supporting active communities. You said we should help

communities to do more themselves and give them more control over local services.

Looking ahead to 2013/14, which of the following best describes your views about this?

Compared with last year, focusing on **supporting active communities** is:

More important.....

Of equal importance.....

Less important

Q4 Building a sustainable county

Last year you said that we should focus on 'building a sustainable county'. You said that we should prioritise those services that keep the county up and running, that make Gloucestershire an attractive place to do business and that directly protect the public from harm.

Looking ahead to 2013/14, which of the following best describes your views about this?

Compared with last year, focusing on **building a sustainable county** is:

More important.....

Of equal importance.....

Less important

Q5 Stimulating growth and creating jobs

Last year you told us that you thought it was important that we support initiatives to stimulate economic

growth and create jobs in Gloucestershire.

Looking ahead to 2013/14, which of the following best describes your views about this?

Compared with last year, **stimulating economic growth and creating jobs** for Gloucestershire is:

More important.....

Of equal importance.....

Less important

Q6 We have asked you to consider four priority areas:

Getting our own house in order

Protecting vulnerable people

Supporting active communities

Building a sustainable community

Do you think there is anything else we need to focus on over the next 12 months?

If so, please give details below:

Q7 The Government intends to make funding available to councils for 2013/14 to allow a freeze on Council Tax.

Do you think Gloucestershire County Council should accept the Government funding and freeze Council Tax, bearing in mind this will limit the amount of funding we can raise?

- Yes.....
- No
- Don't know

Q8 Please use this space to make any further comments that you would like us to consider when developing our strategy and / or budget for 2013/14:

About You

Please give us some details about yourself so we can check we have a good response from across the whole community (these questions are voluntary, you do not have to answer them but your help will be appreciated).

Q9 Please write the first part of your postcode (e.g. GL11, GL52):

Q10 Which of the following age groups do you personally fall into? (tick box)

- Under 16
- 16-19.....
- 20-24.....
- 25-44.....
- 45-59.....
- 60-74.....
- 75+.....
- Rather not say

Q11 Are you? (tick box)

- Male.....
- Female.....
- Rather not say

Q12 Do you have dependent children living at home? (tick box)

- Yes.....
- No
- Rather not say

Q13 If yes - in which age groups are your children? (tick box(es))

- 0-4.....
- 4-10.....
- 11-16.....
- 17 and over.....

Q14 Do you look after, or give special help to an adult who is sick, has a disability, or is an older person, other than in a professional capacity? (tick box(es)):

- Yes, I care for a person in my own household
- Yes, I care for a person in another household
- No
- Rather not say

Q15 Are you:

- Working full-time (30 hours or more per week)
- Working part-time (less than 30 hours per week).....
- In full-time education.....
- Full-time caring for family.....
- Retired
- Unemployed / not working
- Rather not say
- Other (please state)

Q16 Do you have any kind of disability (tick box(es))

- No
- Visual impairment
- Hearing impairment.....
- Physical disability.....
- Mental health problems.....
- Learning difficulties
- Long-term condition
- Rather not say
- Other (please state)

Q17 To which of the following groups do you consider yourself to belong? (tick box)

- White British.....
- White Irish.....
- White other
- Indian
- Pakistani
- Asian other.....
- Mixed: White & Asian.....
- Mixed: White & Black African.....
- Mixed: White & Black Caribbean.....
- Mixed other
- Asian British.....
- Bangladeshi
- Chinese.....
- African.....
- Caribbean
- Black other.....
- Rather not say
- Other (please state)

Q18 Are you employed by Gloucestershire County Council?

- Yes.....
- No

Q19 Do you identify yourself as:

- Bisexual
- Gay man
- Gay woman / lesbian
- Heterosexual / straight
- Transgender
- Rather not say
- Other (please state)

Q20 What is your religion or belief?

- None
- Buddhist.....
- Christian.....
- Hindu
- Jewish.....
- Muslim
- Sikh.....
- Rather not say
- Other (please state)

Q21 Are you completing this questionnaire on behalf of yourself or an organisation?

- Self.....
- Organisation

Q22 If you are completing this questionnaire on behalf of an organisation, please write the name of it here:

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

Please return it (FREEPOST) to:
Budget Consultation
Gloucestershire County Council
FREEPOST NAT8320
Environment Department
Shire Hall
Gloucester
GL1 2BR

The closing date for your comments is 17th December 2012.

Gloucestershire County Council has a commitment to protecting personal information. All of your answers will be treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

We can produce this document in Braille, in large print, on audio tape and in other languages. If you would like a copy in one of these formats, please contact Gloucestershire County Council on 01452 32 8094.

Gloucestershire CC: Budget Consultation

Please enter your Interview ID

If a test interview, please enter 'test'

Introduction

Good morning / afternoon / evening. Your local council has asked us to undertake a short survey on their behalf. My name is ... and I'm calling from Future Focus Research. We have been commissioned by Gloucestershire County Council to undertake a survey with local residents as part of their budget consultation and strategy for 2011-2014. I would be grateful if you would spare a little of your time to answer some questions. The interview will take about 5 minutes or so to complete. Please could you confirm this is okay and then we can start the survey?

S1 Are you happy to take part in this short survey? If refuse, thank respondent but keep page open and try next respondent and start survey from the top of the page.

- Yes - Continue

S2. Please enter district code from sample spreadsheet

- 1 - Cheltenham
- 2 - Cotswold
- 3 - Forest of Dean
- 4 - Gloucester
- 5 - Stroud
- 6 - Tewkesbury

S3. Please record respondent gender. DO NOT ASK THIS QUESTION, JUST RECORD.

- Female
- Male

S4. What is your age next birthday? Interviewer record age into relevant age category below.

- 18-34
- 35-54
- 55+

INTERVIEWER READ OUT:"The Council Strategy for 2011-2014 sets out its plans for services and spending over a four year period. These plans reflect the changing demand for council services, as well as the need to save £114 million."

Getting our own house in order

Q1. Last year the consultation showed that local people believed the Council should focus on 'getting their own house in order'. It said that the Council should do everything it can to be as efficient as possible, reducing its running costs, streamlining management and getting best value out of its assets. Looking ahead to 2013 / 14, how important is it that the Council continues to focus on 'getting their own house in order'

INTERVIEWER INSTRUCTION:

If respondent says 'important'; READ OUT: 'And is that 'very important' or just 'important?'

If respondent says 'unimportant'; READ OUT: 'And is that 'very unimportant' or just 'unimportant?'

- Very important
- Important
- Neither/nor
- Unimportant
- Very unimportant

Protecting vulnerable communities

Q2. Last year the consultation said local people felt that the Council should focus on 'protecting vulnerable people'. Looking ahead to 2013/14, how important is it that the Council continues to focus on protecting vulnerable people...

INTERVIEWER INSTRUCTION:

If respondent says 'important'; READ OUT: 'And is that 'very important' or just 'important?'

If respondent says 'unimportant'; READ OUT: 'And is that 'very unimportant' or just 'unimportant?'

- Very important
- Important
- Neither/nor
- Unimportant
- Very unimportant

Supporting active communities

Q3. Last year the consultation said that local people wanted the Council to focus on supporting active communities. It said the Council should help communities to do more themselves and give them more control over local services. Looking ahead to 2013/14, how important is it that the Council continues to focus on supporting active communities....

INTERVIEWER INSTRUCTION:

If respondent says 'important'; READ OUT: 'And is that 'very important' or just 'important?'

If respondent says 'unimportant'; READ OUT: 'And is that 'very unimportant' or just 'unimportant?'

- Very important
- Important
- Neither/nor
- Unimportant
- Very unimportant

Building a sustainable county

Q4. Last year the consultation said that local people felt the Council should focus on 'building a sustainable county'. It said that the Council should prioritise those services that keep the county up and running, that make Gloucestershire an attractive place to do business and that directly protect the public from harm. Looking ahead to 2013/14, how important is it that the Council continues to focus on building a sustainable county...

INTERVIEWER INSTRUCTION:

If respondent says 'important'; READ OUT: 'And is that 'very important' or just 'important?'

If respondent says 'unimportant'; READ OUT: 'And is that 'very unimportant' or just 'unimportant?'

- Very important
- Important
- Neither/nor
- Unimportant
- Very unimportant

Stimulating growth and creating jobs

Q5. Last year the consultation said local people thought it was important that the Council support initiatives to stimulate economic growth and create jobs in Gloucestershire. Looking ahead to 2013/14, how important is it that the Council continues to focus on stimulating economic growth and creating jobs for Gloucestershire...

INTERVIEWER INSTRUCTION:

If respondent says 'important'; READ OUT: 'And is that 'very important' or just 'important?'

If respondent says 'unimportant'; READ OUT: 'And is that 'very unimportant' or just 'unimportant?'

- Very important
- Important
- Neither/nor
- Unimportant
- Very unimportant

**INTERVIEWER READ OUT: We have asked you to consider four priority areas: Getting our own house in order
Protecting vulnerable people
Supporting active communities
Building a sustainable community**

Q6. Is there anything else the Council needs to focus on over the next 12 months?

- Yes - GO TO Q7
- No - GO TO Q8
- Don't know - GO TO Q8

Q7. What else do you think the Council should be focussing on?

Q8 The Government intends to make funding available to councils for 2013/14 so councils can freeze Council Tax. Bearing in mind this freeze will limit the amount of funding the Council can raise, do you think Gloucestershire County Council should accept the Government funding and freeze Council Tax?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Q9. Do you have any further comments that you would like the Council to consider when developing its strategy and / or budget for 2013/14?

- Yes - GO TO Q10
- No - GO TO Q11

Q10. What else would you like the Council to consider when developing its strategy and / or budget for 2013/14?

INTERVIEWER INSTUCTION: Please probe and record answer fully in space below.

About you

We now have a few questions about yourself to make sure we have obtained the views from a range of people from across the community.

**Q11. Please can you let me have the first part of your postcode?
INTERVIEWER READ OUT: "For example GL11 or GL52"**

Q12. How old will you be on your next birthday?

Interviewer note age and record into the relevant age group below. If respondent does not want to give their exact age, please give them the option of letting you have their age band from below and read out if necessary.

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75+
- Refused

Q13. Record respondent gender.

INTERVIEWER INSTRUCTIONS: Read out: "I am just going to record your gender as...." INTERVIEWER TO INSERT GENDER FROM SOUND OF VOICE"

NOTE FOR INTERVIEWER: This will give the respondent the opportunity to correct you if they would classify themselves as anything different.

- Male
- Female
- Transgender

Q14. Do you have dependent children living at home?

- Yes
- No

Q15. In which of the following age groups do you have children living at home?

INTERVIEWER READ OUT EACH AGE GROUP AND SELECT IF THEY HAVE A CHILD OR CHILDREN IN THAT AGE GROUP. INTERVIEWER INSTRUCTION: CAN MULTICODE

- 0-4 years
- 5-10 years
- 11-16 years
- 17 years and over
- Prefer not to say

Q16. Do you look after, or give special help to an adult who is sick, has a disability, or is an older person, other than in a professional capacity?

INTERVIEWER INSTRUCTION: CAN MULTICODE

- Yes, I care for a person in my own household
- Yes, I care for a person in another household
- No
- Prefer not to say

Q17. Which of the following best describes your employment status?

INTERVIEWER READ OUT EACH CATEGORY.

- Working full-time (30 hours or more per week)
- Working part-time (less than 30 hours per week)
- In full-time education
- Full-time caring for family
- Retired
- Unemployed / not working
- Other _____
- Prefer not to say

Q18. Do you have any kind of disability?

INTERVIEWER INSTRUCTION: If respondent says 'yes': Read out: 'And what sort of disability is that?' And then select relevant answer below. Can select more than one.

- No
- Visual impairment
- Hearing impairment
- Physical disability
- Mental health problems
- Learning difficulties
- Long-term condition
- Other

Q19. Which of the following ethnic groups do you consider you belong to?

- White – GO TO Q19A
- Black or Black British – GO TO Q19B
- Asian or Asian British – GOT Q19C
- Of Mixed Background – GO TO Q19D
- Other Ethnic Group, please specify – GO TO Q20
- Prefer not to say – GO TO Q20

Q19A And is that...? INTERVIEWER READ OUT:

- White - English, British
- White - Irish
- White - Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- Any other white background, please specify... _____
- Prefer not to say

Q19B And is that...? INTERVIEWER READ OUT:

- Black or Black British - Caribbean
- Black or Black British - African
- Any other Black or Black British background, please specify... _____
- Prefer not to say

Q19C And is that...? INTERVIEWER READ OUT:

- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Chinese
- Any other Asian or Asian British background, please specify... _____
- Prefer not to say

Q19D And is that...? INTERVIEWER READ OUT:

- White and Black Caribbean
- White and Black African
- White and Asian
- Mixed, any other mixed background, please specify... _____
- Prefer not to say

Q20. Are you employed by Gloucestershire County Council?

- Yes
- No

**Q21. Do you identify yourself as...? INTERVIEWER INSTRUCTIONS:
Please read out response options.**

- Heterosexual / straight
- Bisexual
- Gay man
- Gay woman / lesbian
- Other _____
- Prefer not to say

Q22. How would you describe your religion or belief?

- Christian
- None
- Buddhist
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Sikh
- Other
- Prefer not to say

Q23. Are you completing this questionnaire as a...?

- Council tax payer (not supported)
- In receipt of council tax support
- Non-council tax payer
- Prefer not to say

Thank and close

INTERVIEWER READ OUT:

Thank you for your time, the results of this survey will be published on your Council website in due course. May I just remind you that my name is.....from Future Focus Research. Our company Free phone Number is: 0800 9788 605 and the Market Research Society Number is: 0500 39 6999, should you have any queries on our company or regards to this research.”
THANK RESPONDENT AND CLOSE.

INTERVIEWER INSTRUCTION: Make sure you select 'Submit' for the survey results to be recorded.

Appendix D

Gloucestershire Schools Forum

Outcome Report from the meeting on 9 January 2013

1. Dedicated Schools Grant 2012/13 and 2013/14

The DSG for 2013/14 was announced in 19 December 2012, and at the meeting the Forum was informed of the detail of the settlement. Following on from the debate at our November meeting the Forum also needed to conclude its considerations on whether to recommend to the GCC Cabinet writing off historic school deficits.

1.1 School Funding

The October 2012 census count demonstrated a 310 increase in pupil numbers from 2011. This represented a 1.75% increase in primary pupils and a 1.32% reduction in secondary pupils. These new pupil counts together with other unit count changes (EAL, deprivation, SEN) and the new Schools Block Baseline per pupil figure result in an additional £1.728m being available for 2013/14. There are, however, some additional costs that need to be set against this figure (£405k estimated increase in rates, and £153k for the new DfE charge for the nationally arranged copyright licensing costs). Forum members agreed to recommend to Cabinet that this additional schools block DSG is used to increase the age weighted pupil unit (AWPU) factor rates in the primary and secondary sectors.

1.2 Carbon Reduction Commitment

The Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in his Autumn statement that schools will be dropped from phase 2 of the Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC). It is understood that from 2014/15 the government intends to implement alternative robust measures to incentivise and support schools to obtain both energy cost and emission savings. Given these circumstances the Forum agreed to meet the cost of the 2013/14 CRC from balances. It is important to note that this is permissible as the CRC is one of the exceptions where funding is not required to be delegated to schools.

1.3 High Needs

There is a high demand on this funding block and the overall situation is very tight. There is still some information outstanding which would help us to understand the pressures and a further report has been requested for the Forum's March meeting.

1.4 School Deficits

The biggest decision for the Forum at this meeting was whether to recommend to the GCC Cabinet to write off historic school deficits. As in November 2012 there was a rigorous debate on this issue with strong views both for and against the proposal. Particular factors that the Forum had to weigh up were the risks to schools, the council, and the fact that it is very unlikely that there would be a similar significant DSG balance in future as the new funding framework does not allow for contingencies to be held in the schools block and therefore a similar opportunity to address historic deficits is unlikely to present itself again. Forum members were also conscious that the negative impact that these deficits could have on the educational

outcomes for the pupils at these schools must not be overlooked. Members thought that some of the suggested criteria were not strong enough and asked that officers draft more robust criteria based on the issues raised by Forum members at this meeting.

After much deliberation, however, the Forum did agree by a majority vote to recommend to the Cabinet to write off the deficits for those schools that meet the robust criteria and that the same principles be applied to those schools that converted to academy status with a deficit prior to 31 March 2012. It is important to note that this is only a recommendation, however, and it will be up to the GCC Cabinet (6 February 2013) and then Council (20 February 2013) to make the final decision on this matter.

2. Special Centres Attached to Mainstream Schools

You will already be aware that the government's school funding reforms for 2013/14 will have a profound impact on special schools; and the situation for special centres is also challenging. The Forum is aware that the special centres are well regarded and it is important to try to ensure that they are sufficiently funded in order that they are able to continue to offer valuable support to mainstream schools.

The proposed funding level is on a similar basis to that of special schools which is: -

- ⇒ £10,000 per place, with a top-up based on the assessed needs of each child on roll.

For the special centres the top up rate will be the same as the Level 1 rate allocated to pupils at special schools.

The proposal for special centres received by the Forum is:-

- ⇒ For 2013/14 - guarantee the centres' funding at the 2012/13 level; to be achieved by applying the top-up for both filled and unfilled places
- ⇒ For 2014/15 – reflect likely under-occupancy in the top-up as proposed for some special schools – the BESD academies, Coln House and Battledown.

Following a full debate on this issue the Forum agreed the proposed funding model for special centres.

3. Early Years

The Forum initially considered this issue in January 2012. Since then there have been significant developments in this area including the creation of an early years funding block within the DSG; and the (national) announcement on the extension of provision for 2 year olds.

The report outlined a proposed strategic direction for this work that would promote high quality provision that would support positive outcomes for these children. An early years provider forum is being established and its first meeting is on 22 January 2013. This will act as a consultative group to inform the Schools Forum; and two representatives from this group will become members of the Schools Forum.

The Forum agreed to the proposed strategic direction as described in the report.

4. SEND Programme

The purpose of this report was to update the Forum on the government's proposals and Gloucestershire's response. The Forum also needed to consider how it wished to be kept informed of developments.

A significant aspect of this programme is the potential impact of personal budgets on funding. Personal budgets give people more choice and control over how resources they are entitled to are used and are linked to agreed outcomes. Also, each local authority will be required to publish a local offer demonstrating what services (education, health and social care) it expects to be available.

A programme board has been set up to take this work forward and will be chaired by the Director Children's Services. The Forum agreed that this issue should be a standing item on the agenda.

5. School Meals

This was an opportunity for the Forum to input into the specification for the new school meals contract from April 2014.

The specific issues that Forum members brought forward were that portion sizes should be relevant to the age of the pupils rather than the current standard size and that secondary schools should be consulted as several currently use the contract.

6. F40

F40 group members have recently met with Stephen Twigg MP the Labour Party's Shadow Education Secretary; and visited the National Audit Office. The group has also set up a team of finance managers as a 'think tank' to develop ideas on alternative funding proposals. Progress is being made with regard to bringing forward school based examples of the impact of low funding on educational outcomes to support the group's next visit to David Laws MP, Schools' Minister, in February 2013.

For information all Forum reports can be accessed here <http://bit.ly/106FLCB>.

Gillian Hayward
Chair, Gloucestershire Schools Forum