

# Build forward better

*Our medium-term plan for 2021-22 and 2022-23*

Appendix 3 – Consultation report 2021-22 and 2022-23



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## 1. Introduction

This report summarises the main messages from our consultation on the proposals set out in Build Forward Better: our medium-term plan for 2021-22 and 2022-23. It also describes our approach to informing people about the consultation and engaging with them to get their views.

Public consultation took place between 4 December 2020 and 17 January 2021. We asked local residents and organisations to provide us with feedback about specific proposals as set out in our integrated impact assessments (IIAs) and general comments about our draft plan, including any cumulative impacts.

This report presents only the views expressed by residents and stakeholders during the consultation period. It is intended to inform the process of assessing the impact of our proposals ahead of final decision-making.

The findings outlined within this report should be read in conjunction with:

- Build Forward Better – our medium-term plan for 2021-22 and 2022-23
- Appendix 1 – Revenue and capital plan 2021-22
- Appendix 2 – Summary of service proposals 2021-22 and 2022-23
- Appendix 4 – Cumulative impact assessment 2021-22 and 2022-23
- Integrated impact assessments (IIA's) for proposals which will impact on services in 2021-22 – these have been updated following the consultation period.

We would like to thank all the individuals and organisations who took the time to give us their views, and the volunteers and employees both within the council and in our partner organisations who supported this consultation.

## 2. Our approach and summary of who took part

### How we engaged with residents, organisations, and key stakeholders

We engaged with individuals and organisations online through Let's Talk Newcastle, emails and virtual events. We promoted the consultation widely on social media, using animated and explainer videos, Facebook posts and tweets. We asked organisations such as Connected Voice, Newcastle Disability Forum and the Elders Council to circulate information to their members and people using their services. We also used non-digital communication channels, such as press releases, letters and our Citylife magazine, which was posted to residents in December 2020.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were unable to hold face-to-face meetings in the way we usually would with organisations and their members, including Newcastle Disability Forum and the Elders Council. Instead, we arranged virtual meetings to gather feedback using Zoom and Microsoft Teams and created a FREEPOST address so people could give us their feedback in writing. The FREEPOST address was publicised in Citylife and on Let's Talk Newcastle. We also worked with Newcastle Disability Forum to provide people who were not able to go online or write to us to give us their feedback by telephone.

Our use of social media – 20 posts on our Facebook and Twitter channels – means that, in addition to the people and organisations who sent us their views, many more will have seen information about our proposed medium-term plan through Facebook and Twitter. Our social media 'reach' (the number of people who have 'interacted with a particular piece of content on a social media platform') for this consultation is 512,500.

### Number of respondents

198 individuals and organisations took part in the consultation. The proposal with the highest number of people and organisations commenting on it (33) was IIA 5 Public Health – A whole systems approach to healthy weight and obesity.

	No of people / organisations
IIA 5 Public Health – A whole systems approach to healthy weight and obesity	33
IIA 3 Children's social care – Keeping families safely together	24
IIA 6 Council Tax and adult social care precept	23
IIA 2 Adult social care – Supported housing options for people with a learning disability, autism or both	22
IIA 1 Adult social care – Financial management	11
IIA 4 Children's social care – In-house residential	3
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It is possible for an individual or organisation to take part in the consultation through several channels. For example, they might send an email and later complete a Let's Talk Newcastle online survey. We would not be aware of this unless they chose to tell us. Similarly, one piece of feedback may represent the views of several people, for example, the notes from a virtual consultation event.

Therefore, the numbers of individuals and organisations shown in the table above adds up to more than 198 individual responses because many of those responding commented on more than one proposal.

Around 174 members of the public gave us their views. We also received feedback from organisations including Connected Voice, Difference North, the Elders Council, Food Nation, Healthwatch Newcastle, Healthworks Newcastle, NE1 (the Business Improvement District for Newcastle), Newcastle Chamber of Commerce, Newcastle Disability Forum, Save Newcastle Wildlife, schools and 16 voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations who took part in a virtual discussion in January 2021.

### **3. Analysis of feedback on IIA 1: Adult social care – Financial management**

The proposal is: We propose to add a weekly arrangement fee of £5 to the person's contribution to cover the administrative costs of commissioning and arranging services on their behalf. We estimate that this will provide income of £100,000 to offset costs across adult social care.

We received 11 comments on this, eight from members of the public who responded by letter or via Let's Talk Newcastle and responses from the Elders Council, Healthwatch Newcastle and Connected Voice.

#### **Is the proposal clear?**

Four people said the proposal was very clear and three said it was quite clear.

#### **Consequences and impact**

Three people were concerned that the increased expense could put care services out of reach for some older and disabled people and that this was a time of increased costs for many people due to the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Three were concerned that this could prevent people who need it from seeking help and relying on family carers instead. However, one person thought it would be reasonable to charge more. The Elders Council were concerned that the complexities of arranging care are a challenge for some older people and that this could be an additional barrier. Healthwatch Newcastle were concerned that people who currently have the council arrange services for them could find that they have to do this themselves and this could affect both their wellbeing and that of their carers.

#### **Minimising any negative impact**

Four people thought the council should simply not implement the proposal. One said that any increase in charges should fall only on those who can afford it, and another thought the council should lobby central government for more funding for social care services. Connected Voice commented that, given the impact of the recent pandemic on many people's finances, it is important to consider exceptional cases and keep this under review.

The Elders Council asked about the possibility of having a 'sliding scale' for arrangement fees to take people's circumstances into account and asked us to monitor the impact if the proposal is implemented, to identify what effect it is having and if some people might require more assistance. Healthwatch Newcastle observed that people will need clear information about this change to ensure they fully understand what it means for them, and if this change does cause some people and / or their unpaid carers to arrange their own care to avoid the fee, it will be necessary to ensure that they have enough information readily available to be able to do this.

#### **Fair and reasonable?**

Two people thought that this was fair given that the council has less funds than it used to have. Four thought it was not fair and could lead to people no longer having these services provided. One person commented that it seemed to be especially unfair to people who had been able to build up savings during their working lives, and hence are self-funding.

The Elders Council asked for more information about how this fee might impact on older people on basic benefits compared to disabled people, given that benefits received by people in these groups differ considerably. Healthwatch Newcastle raised the issue of the effects this proposal could have on unpaid carers (family and friends) of people affected by

it, and how people in this situation could be identified and support provided to help them manage the new situation.

**Other ways to save money and generate income**

One person wanted the council to stop spending money on cycle lanes and also suggested seeing if efficiencies could be achieved through contracting out services. Two people wanted the council to look at renting out buildings for income and cutting spending on pensions and senior staff salaries. Another said that the council should look at charging higher fees for arranging social care services.

#### **4. Analysis of feedback on IIA 2: Adult social care – Supported housing options for people with a learning disability, autism or both**

The proposal is: 'In order to improve the way we support people with a learning disability, Autism, or both, we intend to:

- Undertake a fundamental review of the independent supported living support model, working with people, providers, and other stakeholders to examine the cost and support model of these services and, where we can, expand on the use of individual service funds.
- Identify those independent supported living properties that require significant investment and / or are under-occupied, with a view to reducing the overall numbers of properties we operate across the city.

We received feedback on this from 22 people and organisations, including three members of the public who took part via Let's Talk Newcastle, Connected Voice, Healthwatch Newcastle, Newcastle Disability Forum, Difference North and 16 voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations who attended a virtual consultation event.

##### **Is the proposal clear?**

Two people said that the proposal was 'quite clear', no-one responded to say that it was not.

##### **Consequences and impact**

Two people were concerned that people with learning disabilities would have less choice about where to live and who they live with and that people might be asked to move out of properties they currently live in and consider to be their homes. One person questioned if carers and family members of people in independent supported living properties were being included in the consultation.

Those organisations who attended the voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations' virtual consultation event, Connected Voice and Difference North all said that they supported the move to more community-based supported housing, with Connected Voice saying that they were concerned that people with learning disabilities and autistic spectrum disorder are more vulnerable to isolation and mistreatment if they live in accommodation far away from their families and friends. Healthwatch Newcastle commented that the most important aspect of this work is to make sure that service users are receiving the right care and support in the right venue, based on their needs.

##### **Minimising any negative impact**

One person suggested that we should look at making efficiency savings by reducing overnight and weekend staffing cover in independent supported living properties where this could be done safely and also working with young people who are reaching an age where they may be looking to move into independent supported living properties in the near future, so that friends could look at moving into properties together.

##### **Fair and reasonable?**

We received two comments. One person said that this is more essential than fair. Another view was that they didn't think it is fair or reasonable, expressing the view that the need of people with learning disabilities for stability within their lives should be prioritised over council savings.

### **Other ways to save money and generate income**

One suggestion was to look at ways of using technology to provide services more efficiently where it is possible to do this. Newcastle Disability Forum suggested there is potential for voluntary organisations to provide independence training to people and that this may help to reduce the need for the council's support services by supporting them to be able to do more things for themselves.

### **General comments**

Connected Voice said that they would like to see more support for disabled people who are not yet reliant on services, but who are at risk of needing them due to the combined impact of income reduction, isolation and reduced support services, all of which have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Newcastle Disability Forum said they saw a need to encourage people to use supported assessment tools that are available like Your Equipment Newcastle, to help them purchase 'low-level' items, rather than waiting to be assessed for equipment. Healthwatch Newcastle emphasised the need for communication and engagement about any changes to services with the service users, their families and carers, and voluntary organisations who support them.

## **5. Analysis of feedback on IIA 3: Children's social care – Keeping families safely together**

This proposal is: We propose to work with the wider family and any extended support networks to encourage long-term changes at home that keep children safe, boost family resilience, and create stable homes where children can thrive.

We received nine responses on this from residents and organisations including Healthworks Newcastle, Connected Voice, Healthwatch Newcastle and the 16 voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations which took part via a virtual event. Four members of the public took part via Let's Talk Newcastle, and one by letter.

### **Is the proposal clear?**

About half of those taking part said that they thought the proposal was very clear or quite clear; other respondents did not comment about this. One response said they understood that the council's priority is to keep children safe by giving families more control, but it was not really clear how this will happen. Another asked whether looking at reducing spending on this service implied that current spending was too high.

### **Consequences and impact**

Some responses from the public expressed concern that there could be a shift away from focusing on children and young people's needs towards focusing on saving money. Some were concerned that this proposal would put more pressure on staff and lead to higher turnover. One person said they were concerned that if this led to children at risk not being properly safeguarded, this would lead to more spending in the future to address the negative consequences of this.

One person felt it was a good idea to explore new ways of working, but said that more resources were needed for family support services, not less, and there was no indication of how the consequences of earlier cuts to services had been addressed. Attendees at the virtual voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations' event were concerned that changing the way services are delivered risks losing existing good practice, such as partnership working in the West End; this was also a concern expressed by Connected Voice.

Healthworks Newcastle were very concerned at the implications of the proposed withdrawal of service delivery from the Community Family Hub West, both for its service users and for the organisations contracted to deliver these services.

Connected Voice supported the idea of working more closely with families using a partnership approach, as this has been successful in other areas of the UK. They were keen for voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations to be involved in developing and delivering these services.

### **Minimising any negative impact**

Suggestions included carrying out more work in schools to hear more from children about their needs and the challenges they face and to promote skills for developing positive relationships. One person suggested there was a need to challenge negative attitudes to support services to encourage families in need to use them. Another person responding stressed the need to support families out-of-hours (at evenings and weekends) and to provide adult social care services to support parents where this is needed.

**Fair and reasonable?**

One comment was that the proposal was neither fair nor unfair. Two people said that it was reasonable given that there are limited funds available and there is a need to save money but questioned whether it was fair to children and if it would lead to inadequate services to support them.

**Other ways to save money and generate income**

Suggestions for other ways to save included taking a 'targeted approach' and working in partnership with other service providers, such as health services, to streamline services and prevent duplication of work. Others suggested looking at how new ways of working such as agile working, remote working and digital solutions could provide better support and save money and asked if there were lessons to be learned from changes in ways of working caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

One suggestion was to look for other sources of funding and apply for them and added that it might be more efficient in the long run to invest now in services to ensure better service provision in the future. One person asked whether providing parenting skills courses for young people could lead to long-term savings as it would help avoid them needing support in the future if they become parents themselves. Connected Voice emphasised the importance of learning from existing good practice such as the West End service delivery partnership between Action for Children, Children North East, the Riverside Community Health Project, Healthworks and others.

## **6. Analysis of feedback on IIA 4: Children’s social care – In-house residential**

This proposal is as follows: We propose to operate five children’s homes in the city from 2021-22 which, subject to the needs of individual children, will provide loving and supportive homes for up to 22 children and young people. The changes we have outlined above will positively impact the children and young people in our care by, creating a more homely environment, improving matching of children who live in each of the homes, and where appropriate will better enable us to support children and young people to reunify with their family or settle within a fostering family.

We received three responses to this from a member of the public via Let’s talk Newcastle, Connected Voice and Healthwatch Newcastle.

### **Is the proposal clear?**

One comment was that the proposal was quite clear, but that it was difficult to understand all of the detail about the homes the council operates if you are unfamiliar with this subject.

### **Consequences and impact**

A member of the public commented that smaller homes seemed like a good idea for children and young people and would be a win-win solution if these homes were also more energy-efficient and cost-effective, and enabled children to stay in their local area.

Connected Voice commented that they understand that improving the residential offer for children and young people needed to be done in conjunction with the keeping families safely together proposal (see IIA 3). They also said that they supported the transformation of children’s social care services to aim to keep families safely together wherever possible. However, they asked if there was a need to pause the closure of the temporary capacity provided by Children’s Home 6, as the Covid-19 pandemic continues into spring 2021.

### **Minimising any negative impact**

A member of the public commented that they were concerned that children should not be placed in homes that are due to close, as having to move again to a new home could be detrimental to their welfare.

### **Fair and reasonable?**

One person commented that this ‘seemed reasonable’.

### **General comments**

Connected Voice asked if there was confidence that this proposal addresses the Ofsted judgement of ‘Requires Improvement’ (2017).

## **7. Analysis of feedback on IIA 5: Public Health whole systems approach on healthy weight and obesity**

This proposal is: Individuals' weight cannot be addressed in isolation because exercise habits and eating behaviours reflect social norms, particularly within families and routine settings (schools, workplaces, travel routes), and derive from the complex interaction of environmental and social influences. We propose to shift the focus on tackling obesity from measures that largely focus on individual behaviour change, to action on the structural causes of obesity in our environment, culture and society via a whole-systems approach.

We received 18 responses from 33 people and organisations, including 11 members of the public who took part via Let's talk Newcastle, 16 voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations who attended a virtual consultation event, Connected Voice, the Elders Council, Food Nation, Healthwatch Newcastle, Healthworks Newcastle and Save Newcastle Wildlife.

### **Is the proposal clear?**

Three members of the public said that they did not find the proposals at all clear, saying that they did not think they had enough detail. One commented that they felt there was more detail about what services would stop being provided than about what would replace them. Five people said that they were quite clear that they were aimed at tackling structural population-level issues rather than individual-level problems. One person commented that they appreciated the animated video provided but found the IIA harder to understand, and another felt that the language used in the IIA would be difficult for some people in Newcastle to understand due to the complexity of the language. Two people said it was very clear.

### **Consequences and impact**

Most of those who responded expressed concern at possible consequences of the proposal. Three members of the public were concerned that individuals needing extra support would not get the services they need, with one person saying that people with long-term conditions, such as diabetes, need more help.

Another concern raised by those organisations who attended the voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations' virtual event was that the proposals would lead to job losses among staff currently employed by the voluntary and community sector to deliver existing services to tackle obesity, which was also a concern raised by a member of the public, Healthworks Newcastle and Food Nation. Voluntary and community sector organisations felt that they had not been properly consulted about the proposals and that good practice in existing service provision would be lost.

Other concerns raised were that that existing health inequalities would widen, that the proposals rely too heavily on communities to step in without providing additional funding to support this and that this approach is already being tried and not working. One person thought that this approach would help to tackle obesity, but another said that they felt that this was a consequence of personal choice and that public money should not be spent to address obesity.

### **Minimising any negative impact**

Some people thought that more detailed proposals and in particular, research to help understand the likely outcomes of changes to service delivery were needed. One person asked if it would be possible to have a two-pronged approach - looking at having both a structural approach and working to ensure that individuals' needs are met. Another suggestion was to consider the impact of stress and mental health issues on obesity levels,

particularly given the increase in both caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, asking how people suffering from these conditions would be supported.

One respondent felt that emphasis of the groups mentioned in the IIA risked missing out people who did not fall into these groups and wanted to see an approach which focusses on the entire population.

### **Fair and reasonable?**

Two people said the proposal was fair and reasonable, including one who commented that it makes sense with limited resources and this proposal will have the greatest impact. Three people had negative views about this, one of whom said it was not fair and reasonable and two of whom said they did not feel they had enough detail to comment. Healthwatch Newcastle, and voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations who attended a virtual consultation event, felt the proposed changes, including defunding existing services, would have a disproportionate impact on residents in disadvantaged parts of Newcastle, and groups such as people aged 46 and over and people in some BAME communities.

### **Other ways to save money and generate income**

One comment was that it would be a good idea to list all local measures that could be taken, such as restricting the opening hours of fast food outlets, tackling alcohol consumption, looking at approaches to treating pre-diabetic patients and providing more information to people about the effects of obesity and services available to help them improve their health. They suggested incentivising staff delivering services through positive impacts. One person said in their view, part of the issue is that in some areas, obesity is so widespread it is a social norm.

Three people outlined the need for partnership working between local authorities, health services and the voluntary sector and to ensure all council staff understand how this is part of their work. Save Newcastle Wildlife commented that building a cycle network similar to Manchester's Bee Ways cycle scheme would make it easier for people to be active and also help to tackle congestion. Other suggestions were to make public gym membership less expensive, to look at the role of social media influences on platforms such as TikTok and have volunteers run activity sessions. One person wanted the project to be scrapped. Others suggested cutting senior staff salaries and pension spending to save money.

## **8. Analysis of feedback on IIA 6: Council Tax and adult social care precept**

The proposal is: We are proposing to increase core Council Tax by 1.949%, which will increase income by £2.2 million (excluding the assumed 1% reduction in the Council Tax base). In addition, we propose to apply the government's 3% Council Tax precept for adult social care to help fund the increasing demand in adult social care and the long-standing, complex impact of COVID-19 on social care services. This will generate an additional £3.4 million of Council Tax income.

The council is also proposing to increase the empty property premium in line with legislation set out above. If agreed this would generate additional Council Tax income of £144,500. We are not proposing to make any changes to the working-age Council Tax Reduction Scheme in 2021-22. We will continue to provide Council Tax hardship for working-age people in receipt of Council Tax reduction in 2021-22 to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 and any increases in Council Tax, although the level of support will be subject to the local government finance settlement.

We received 22 responses to this proposal. 19 members of the public commented by letter, via Let's Talk Newcastle and using social media. We also received responses from Connected Voice, the Elders Council and Healthwatch Newcastle.

### **Is the proposal clear?**

Five people said this was very clear, six said it was quite clear. One said it was not very clear and that they did not think members of the public would read through the IIA.

### **Consequences and impact**

Four people commented on this. One said that it was necessary to find a way to pay for social care, but that they thought central government should do more to fund it. Both a member of the public and the Elders Council said they were concerned at the potential impact of any increase in household expenditure on both households and individuals on low incomes, especially given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and asked what current rates of non-payment of Council Tax are.

### **Minimising any negative impact**

Two people made comments on this. One suggested that, given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, it would be best to freeze Council Tax for 2021-2022. Another suggestion was to implement the proposal over a longer time period and to check what service provision is available from the voluntary and private sectors before making cuts. Connected Voice stressed the importance of making sure people have information about the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and how they can apply for it if they are eligible for it.

### **Fair and reasonable?**

Seven people commented on this. One said that the proposal was "okay" given the financial constraints the council is operating under, but that cuts should fall least heavily on the poorest individuals and households. Other respondents said that they were unfair or unreasonable, although one commented they were "understandable but unfair", and another said they disagreed with most proposals, but not with the empty property premium proposal. Two people said that they thought the proposals were unfair on people who work and / or who pay Council Tax and another thought it was unfair on people living in areas with a lower level of services or poorer transport links compared to other areas. One person was concerned that the proposals would have a heavier impact on carers, women and people with disabilities. This was a concern raised by Connected Voice and Healthwatch Newcastle, who also commented on the potential effects on people suffering in-work poverty.

### **Other ways to save money and generate income**

Five people made comments on this. One suggestion was to ensure the council's finances are run "like a business" to achieve maximum financial efficiency, including contracting out services to the voluntary and private where possible and using digital technology where this can save money, for example, virtual meetings. Two people suggested cutting senior staff salaries, pensions spending and councillor expenses, another suggested cancelling spending on cycle lanes and any future fireworks displays.

One person suggested lobbying central government for a re-evaluation of Council Tax property bands to bring in more income. Another wanted the council to lobby central government for more funding for social care. Other comments were that the council should prioritise social care spending over the environment and spend some of its reserves to avoid having to raise Council Tax.

### **General comments**

16 people and organisations, including Connected Voice, Elders Council and Healthwatch Newcastle made general comments. The most common theme in the comments, made by three people, was that Council Tax is increasing year-on-year, but people do not see any improvements in their services or feel that services are getting worse. Organisations who commented on this proposal said that they understood why the council wanted to implement it, but wanted to see this matched by a commitment to ensuring people are aware of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and monitoring the impact on people who are already on low incomes and / or have protected characteristics, such as disabled people.

## **9. Analysis of other feedback received**

157 people and organisations commented on the possible consequences and impact of the proposals as a whole and the context they are being proposed in, including Connected Voice, the Elders Council, NE1, NECC, Save Newcastle Wildlife, schools and 16 voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations who took part in a virtual consultation event.

35 people took part via Let's Talk Newcastle, eight by email, four by letter, and 89 via social media. Only those taking part via Let's Talk Newcastle answered the questions about whether the proposals are clear, their consequences and impact, minimising negative impact, whether they are fair and reasonable and other ways to save. Others left more general comments, which are summarised towards the end of this section.

### **Are the proposals clear?**

Three people said the proposals were very clear, two of whom said that the video helped to understand what was being proposed and another said the report was well laid out and easy to read. Eleven people said they were quite clear. One said they would like to see the amounts people would expect to pay before and after the proposals, as well as the proposed percentage increase. Another said that it was not clear enough in which areas the changes would be made.

Eleven people said that the proposals were not very clear, of whom two said they were vague, and one said it was hard to work out where the cuts would fall. Another said that the text was too dense and hard for people to understand. Two people said that the proposals were not at all clear, with one saying that they were 'meaningless and aspirational' and another saying that the IIAs are too long and difficult to understand.

### **Consequences and impact**

27 people commented on the potential consequences and impact of the budget proposals. The most common themes were services will be worse, Council Tax is increasing, but services are not improving and there will be more fly-tipping. Other issues raised included concerns about adult education, protecting the vulnerable and tackling benefit fraud.

We held a virtual meeting with schools to hear their feedback on proposals relating to children's social care and education. They commented on the proposal relating to reduce the current subsidy provided for free school meals and universal infant free school meals (increasing the price charged to schools), asking if this was intended as a one-year increase, or whether it would be reviewed on an annual basis.

NE1 expressed general support for the proposals and added that they supported taking a collaborative approach to addressing the difficult situation we face at present. The North East Chamber of Commerce expressed general support for our proposals and commented that they appreciated the strain current circumstances place on local authority finances, and the disproportionate effect of both the pandemic and previous funding cuts have had on our area. They said they would support us in making an argument to central government that more support is needed to overcome these challenges and promote local economic development.

Theme	Mentions	Examples of what people said
Services will be worse	4	'Cuts in services cannot be sustained, many services are already reduced from what we expect from our council.'
Council Tax is increasing but services are not improving	3	'I am paying more and more and receiving less and less services.'
There will be more fly-tipping	3	'[There will be] fly-tipping by individuals and local businesses as a result of increasing the cost of [garden] waste disposal.'
Dissatisfied with proposed garden waste service charges	3	'There will be more fly-tipping and garden waste going to landfill.'
City will have to change given impact of pandemic	2	'It was good to read about plans for the future and in the 'new world' as I do believe a lot will change within the city as much of the service industry closes or is reduced.'
Concerned that wildlife will suffer	2	'Less green belt [means] loss of habitat for our wildlife.'
Households are under financial pressure	2	'It is unreasonable to increase Council Tax when all residents are going through the same, or even bigger, difficulties than the council.'
Increased parking costs will mean fewer visitors to the city	2	'How are you going to attract people back to the city centre shops if you put up a barrier of increased parking charges?'
Loss of green space	2	'[There will be] further erosion of green space and wildlife habitats.'
More Council Tax arrears	2	'More people will be unable to pay [Council Tax], so there will be increased arrears.'
Dissatisfied with parking charge increases	2	'There will be fewer people visiting the city centre due to increased parking costs.'

### Minimising any negative impact

26 people gave their views on how any negative impact of these proposals could be minimised. The most common themes were to encourage the public to develop new ways to deliver services and support people, feeling the council is inefficient and to protect green space. Other issues raised included suggestions about supporting people to be active outside, protecting wildlife and unhappiness with some details of the proposals.

Theme	Mentions	Examples of what people said
Encourage public to develop new ways to support people and deliver services	3	'You need to support people to work with you to find creative solutions and find ways to create schemes for those who can afford it to support people in

Theme	Mentions	Examples of what people said
		need, such as solidarity payments and fundraising for libraries.'
Feel the council is inefficient	3	'Are all of the council's committees and sub-committees genuinely needed?'
Protect green space	3	'Stop building houses on greenbelt land, use all brownfield sites first.'
Be clear about benefits of the proposals	2	'I think it is important to be absolutely clear as far as possible about the likely benefits [of the proposals] which can also include cleaner air, greener surroundings and beauty, also reduced emissions.'
Protect the vulnerable	2	'You should look after the poorest and expect the rest of us to pay more.'
Spend some of the Council's reserves	2	'Use the £94 million of unearmarked money.'
Dissatisfied with Civic Centre refurbishment	2	'Stop refurbishing the Civic Centre. Rent it out and move half the council employees to a smaller building.'

### Fair and reasonable?

23 people gave their views on whether the proposals were fair and reasonable. The most common themes were that they are not very fair, and it is not fair to raise Council Tax and deliver fewer services. Other comments included concerns that the proposals penalise people who are working, that increasing garden waste collection charges could lead to more fly tipping and that the council should prioritise road maintenance and street cleaning.

Theme	Mentions	Examples of what people said
The proposals are not very fair	6	'This is unfair. You cannot increase council tax again.'
It is not fair to raise Council Tax and deliver fewer services	3	'It is not fair, we are paying more tax for less services, how long do we have to tolerate this?'
The proposals are quite fair	3	'If you have to balance the books these steps seem fair.'
Cut senior staff pay	2	'Asking taxpayers to shoulder the burden when council leaders are more than happy to accept pay rises isn't fair or reasonable.'
Satisfied with the overall proposal	2	'I think the proposal sounds fair and reasonable and well-thought-out, if executed well.'
There will be more fly-tipping	2	'Unfair, as making people pay more Council Tax, then pay more for services, will simply lead to fly-tipping.'

Theme	Mentions	Examples of what people said
Need more detail to be able to say if the proposals are fair	2	'I think we have been dealt an extremely rough deal over the last 10-plus years so the proposal is necessary, but it could be much more consultative.'
Proposals are not ideal but are necessary	2	'Any feelings about how unfair the proposals are, are swamped by understanding of the already difficult financial climate for local authorities, exacerbated by Covid-19. Difficult choices have to be made.'
Protect the vulnerable	2	'I'd prefer a larger increase to Council Tax and charged-for services such as car parking to have lower or no cuts to the services for vulnerable people.'
Those who can afford to pay should do so	2	'I think the proposals should aim to have more contributions from those who can afford it most.'

### Other ways to save money and generate income

25 people commented on possible other ways to save money and generate income. The most common themes were to cut senior staff pay, make efficiency savings and dissatisfaction with Civic Centre refurbishment'. Other suggestions included introducing a hotel tax, congestion charging, and generating renewable energy.

Theme	Mentions	Examples of what people said
Cut senior staff pay	5	'In line with public sector pay freeze, no pay rises, and senior staff to take pay cuts like the private sector have had to do in many industries.'
Make efficiency savings	5	'Check productivity across the board. Bring in a proven private company to run the finances and allocate the budget impartially.'
Dissatisfied with Civic Centre refurbishment	3	'Stop refurbishing [and] wasting money on the Civic Centre and sell it.'
Bring services in-house	2	'Bring departments like those who print Citylife, etc, in-house, use online [options for delivering services].'
Feel the council wastes money	2	'Reduce workforce by 50%. Reform all the pensions. Check productivity across the board. Stop refurbishing / wasting money on the Civic Centre and sell it. Bring in a proven private company to run the finances and allocate the budget, impartially.'
Merge several NE local authorities to achieve economy of scale	2	'Newcastle City Council, Gateshead MBC, North and South Tyneside MBCs should all amalgamate into a single Greater Newcastle Authority.'
Performance management is needed	2	'You need to employ proper performance managers.'

Theme	Mentions	Examples of what people said
Dissatisfied with road and cycle lane changes	2	'Make more cuts to infrastructure spending, stop pointless spending on ineffective traffic calming measures.'

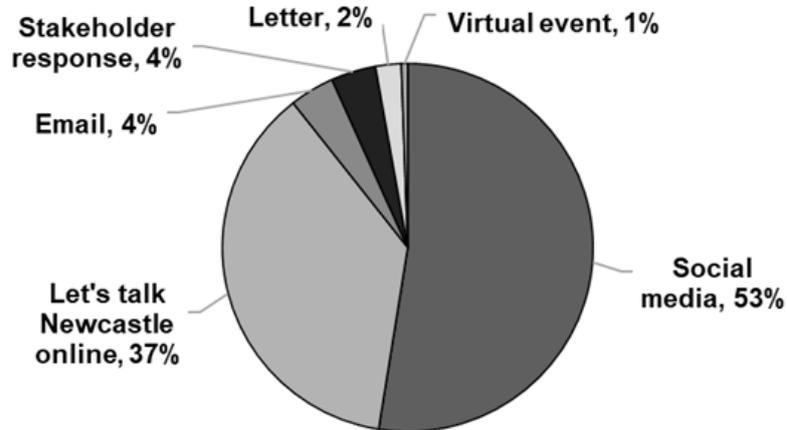
### General comments

126 people commented on possible other ways to save money and generate income. The most common themes were dissatisfaction with road and cycle lanes, cut senior staff pay and central government is responsible for cutting councils. Other issues raised in comments include concerns about the impact of the pandemic on the city centre, on the local economy, and on individuals' and households' finances and wellbeing.

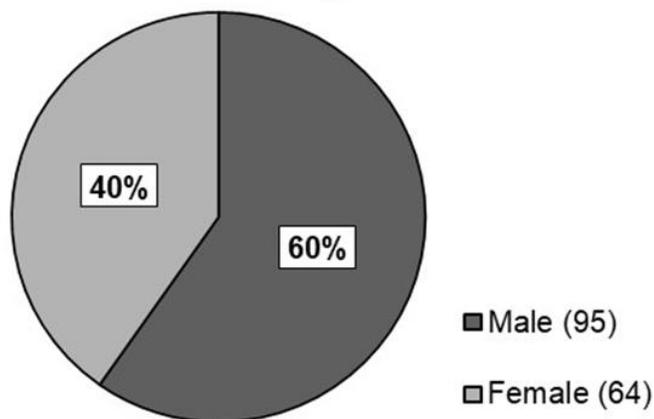
Theme	Mentions	Examples of what people said
Dissatisfied with road and cycle lane changes	18	'You did not need to change roads to bus and cycle lanes.'
Cut senior staff pay	12	'We give pay rises to the top officials in the authority before people.'
Central government is responsible for cutting councils' funding	11	'Central government grants have been cut year-on-year for a decade. Costs still keep going up though.'
Dissatisfied with council leadership	10	'Decades of poor leadership and sluggish behaviour.'
Dissatisfied with loan to Crowne Plaza hotel	8	'Don't hand out loans to hotels.'
Protect green space	7	'I am of the opinion that a greener city with an ambitious green agenda can only be good for people in terms of health and wellbeing.'
Cut councillors' expenses	6	'I think you should review expenses for councillors.'
Feel the council is inefficient	6	'If the council wish to save money, start cutting back on non-essential spending.'
Create more green jobs	6	'We need more green jobs, including the regular removal of litter and fly-tipping from green and blue spaces.'
Protect wildlife	6	'I wonder how many cities can boast such wildlife as kingfishers, otters, woodpeckers and deer spotted within 15 minutes' walk from the city centre? This is an important aspect of our city and one we should be celebrating as well as doing our utmost to protect it for future generations.'

## 10. Analysis of who took part and how

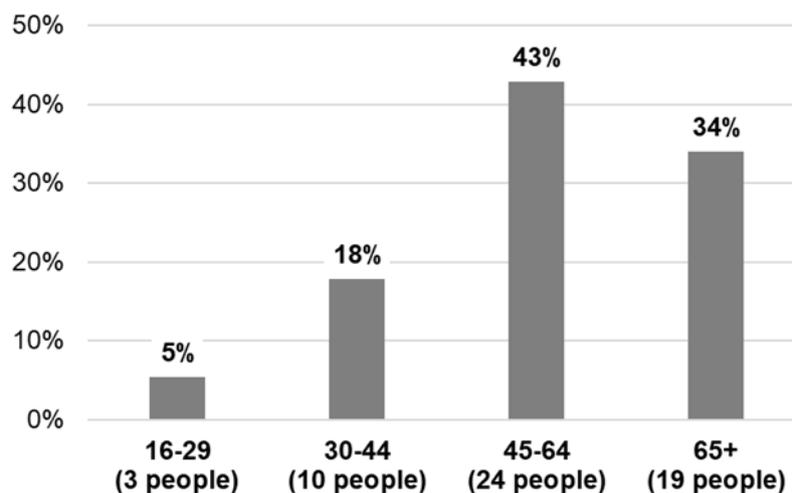
Around 183 individuals and organisations responded via Let's Talk Newcastle, attending virtual events, social media posts and emails. It is not possible to know the exact number of individual people who took part as we do not have a way of checking whether someone might have sent us several responses – for example, posting a comment on our Facebook post, then completing a survey on Let's Talk Newcastle.



Around 159 of an estimated 174 individuals who took part gave information about their gender; no participants described their gender as being other than 'male' or 'female'.



56 of the 174 individual responses we received had information about the age group of the respondent; the biggest proportion were aged between 45-64.



Most respondents did not specify their ethnicity. Of those who did (64 out of 174 people), most described themselves as 'White British'.

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>No. of people</b>
White British	57
Other mixed	2
Prefer not to say	2
Other Asian	1
Asian - Pakistani	1
White Irish	1

Most respondents did not specify their sexual orientation. Of those who did (61 people), most said they were 'heterosexual'; others described themselves as gay, bisexual, or other.

<b>Sexual orientation</b>	<b>No. of people</b>
Heterosexual	47
Prefer not to say	10
Gay or lesbian	2
Bisexual	1
Other	1

39 respondents provided information about where they live, the largest number were from Manor Park.

<b>Ward / Area</b>	<b>No. of people</b>
Manor Park	4
Callerton and Throckley	3
Gosforth	3
Parklands	3
Wingrove	3
Blakelaw	2
Castle	2
Chapel	2
Dene	2
Denton and Westerhope	2
Lemington	2
Monument	2
Kenton	1
North Heaton	1
Ouseburn	1
South Jesmond	1
Walker	1
Westgate	1
<i>County Durham</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>North Tyneside</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Sunderland</i>	<i>1</i>

Most respondents did not specify their employment. Of those who did (62 out of 174 people), the largest proportions were either employed full-time or retired.

<b>Employment status</b>	<b>No. of people</b>
Employed full time	26
Retired	20
Employed part-time	7
In education or training	3
Prefer not to say	3
Unemployed	3

Most respondents did not specify whether they were disabled. Of those who did (54 out of 174 people), most said they were not disabled.

<b>Disability</b>	<b>No. of people</b>
Not disabled	45
Disabled	9