

Draft Budget 2023/24 – Consultation Results

23 February 2023

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Introduction and Summary

The Cabinet published draft proposals for the Council's revenue and capital budget for 2023/24 in January 2023 and an online survey was created to gather public views. The consultation opened on 11 January 2023 and closed at midnight on 12 February 2023.

There were 67 responses to the on-line survey. All percentages shown within this report use the number of people that completed the survey as the denominator. All comments within this report are shown as written by the respondent. No written representations were received.

During the course of the consultation, we also ran Facebook, Twitter and Instagram polls on some of the proposals and those results are also included within this report. A Facebook Live event was held on 26th January 2023 to share information about the proposals for the council's 2023/24 budget and answer questions.

A summary of responses to the survey are shown in the table below.

Proposal	Agree	%	Disagree	%
Home to school transport	57	85.1%	9	13.4%
Foster families payment	35	52.2%	31	46.3%
Increased income from events	63	94.0%	3	4.5%
Improving skills	50	74.6%	16	23.9%
Further sponsorship for English Riviera Air Show	61	91.0%	5	7.5%
Investment in premier resort	50	74.6%	17	25.4%
Advertising in community magazines	19	28.4%	48	71.6%
Inclusion Officer	29	43.3%	38	56.7%
Live streaming of meetings	32	47.8%	34	50.7%
Council Tax	35	52.2%	32	47.8%

Responses to the Proposals

Children's Services

Home to school Transport

Promoting individual travel to school reduces the need for transport on minibuses and taxis for identified individuals. We will also consistently review the use of single occupancy taxis. Through this, we are proposing to save £67,000 from the home to school transport budget.

Do you agree with this proposal?

	Number	%
Agree with this proposal	57	85.1%
Disagree with this proposal	9	13.4%
No response	1	1.5%
Total	67	100.0%

In response to the social media polls for this proposal there was one response in agreement with the proposal and none against it.

Foster Families Payment

Our foster families are central to our commitment to children and young people. We are proposing to make a one-off thank you payment of £1000 per family as a mark of our appreciation. We currently have about 90 foster families.

Do you agree with this proposal?

	Number	%
Agree with this proposal	35	52.2%
Disagree with this proposal	31	46.3%
No response	1	1.5%
Total	67	100.0%

In response to the social media polls for this proposal there were 19 responses in agreement with the proposal and none against it.

Place Services

Increased Income from Events

We have invested in the infrastructure at the Banjo and Princess Gardens in Torquay. We are proposing to generate an increased income of £23,000 by holding more events in these spaces.

Do you agree with this proposal?

	Number	%
Agree with this proposal	63	94.0%
Disagree with this proposal	3	4.5%
No response	1	1.5%
Total	67	100.0%

In response to the social media polls for this proposal there were 21 responses in agreement with the proposal and none against it.

Improving Skills

We are proposing to allocate £50,000 towards implementing our Economic Strategy, in particular supporting improving skills in the local area. This money will help between 40 and 60 local businesses.

Do you agree with this proposal?

	Number	%
Agree with this proposal	50	74.6%
Disagree with this proposal	16	23.9%
No response	1	1.5%
Total	67	100.0%

In response to the social media polls for this proposal there were no responses in agreement with the proposal and one against it.

Further sponsorship for English Riviera Air Show

We are proposing to save £27,000 on the costs associated with the English Riviera Air Show by seeking further sponsorship for the event.

Do you agree with this proposal?

	Number	%
Agree with this proposal	61	91.0%
Disagree with this proposal	5	7.5%
No response	1	1.5%
Total	67	100.0%

In response to the social media polls for this proposal there were 11 responses in agreement with the proposal and one against it.

Investment in Premier Resort

We are proposing on investing another £100,000 to keep the Bay clean, tidy and attractive as part of our aim to the premier tourist resort in the UK.

Do you agree with this proposal?

	Number	%
Agree with this proposal	50	74.6%
Disagree with this proposal	17	25.4%
No response	0	0.0%
Total	67	100.0%

In response to the social media polls for this proposal there were 12 responses in agreement with the proposal and three against it.

Respondents who agreed with the proposal to invest £100,000 to keep the Bay clean, tidy and attractive, were asked how they would like to see this investment used. There were 43 responses to this question which are categorised in the table below.

Theme	Example of responses
Appearance (16)	<p><i>“Street cleaning, improvement of hoarding to look more appealing</i></p> <p><i>“Renewal of street furniture and deep cleaning of hard standing areas”</i></p> <p><i>“Clean the streets, fix the horrible patchwork on the pavements and roads”</i></p>
Bins / frequency of emptying (15)	<p><i>“improve worker efficiency in collecting rubbish and provide more bins in busy areas across the bay”</i></p> <p><i>“Increase public bin emptying in peak times – summer...”</i></p> <p><i>“More Recycling Bins across the Bay, encourage visitors to take their litter home with them,”</i></p>
Street cleaning / Litter (14)	<p><i>“Litter clearing from all public spaces including the beach”</i></p> <p><i>“Litter picking, but I do think some of the fast food retailers should be encouraged to litter pick regularly and not just around their establishments but to spots we regularly see their packaging discarded.”</i></p> <p><i>“More street cleaning...”</i></p>
Fines / Enforcement / Responsibility (9)	<p><i>“Install high quality CCTV and fine fly tippers and those with dogs who do not clear up the mess. Employ a dog warden....”</i></p> <p><i>“Enforcement is imperative”</i></p>
Flower beds / Planting (9)	<p><i>“Make the gardens look attractive, the way that they used to be with attractive flower beds and not just grass as far as the eye can see. On Paignton sea front you have placed the stone containers that were on Torquay sea front, fill them with flowers.”</i></p> <p><i>“...Ensuring flower beds in public spaces are kept tidy and plants regularly changed. More hanging baskets,”</i></p>
Other (9)	<p><i>“...free toilets”</i></p> <p><i>“More seating around the harbours.”</i></p>

Grass cutting / Weeds / Verges (8)	<i>“Grass cutting, weeding on pavements and kerbs. General road cleaning.”</i> <i>“...cut the grass verges”</i>
Beaches (4)	<i>“More beach cleans and available bin services during summer months”</i>
Town Centres (4)	<i>“Deep cleaning town centre pavements as well as prime tourist areas...”</i>
Residential / Community areas (4)	<i>“To clean up not only the seafront areas but the streets in Brixham and Furzeham where visitors do go to visit family or to B&Bs as our streets are quite disgusting with weeds in the kerbs, grass not cut AND CLEARED BUT LEFT LAYING ON TOP blowing”</i>
Graffiti (4)	<i>“Grafitti removal and painting/cleaning of walls...”</i>

Advertising in Community Magazines

Over the past two years we have placed information articles in magazines which circulate in some areas of Torbay. This has cost us £10,000 per year and means that those with no digital access can hear about the Council's news and plans.

We are proposing increasing our spend on this activity to £20,000 so that we can cover more areas of Torbay.

Do you agree with this proposal?

	Number	%
Agree with this proposal	19	28.4%
Disagree with this proposal	48	71.6%
No response	0	0.0%
Total	67	100.0%

In response to the social media polls for this proposal there were seven responses in agreement with the proposal and one against it.

Respondents who agreed with the proposal to increase advertising in community magazines, were asked in which community magazines they would like to see articles from Torbay Council.

There were eight responses to this question. Four mentioned the Brixham Signal and four mentioned the Beach Hut. Respondents also suggested:

- Similar publications to the Beach Hut
- "...Any ward publications."
- "...magazines which are distributed in areas of noticeable poverty, where perhaps people do not have internet access. I assume that most 'comfortably-off elderly people do have access or someone who keeps them informed."
- "Local newsletters produced by Community Builders and Partnerships..."

Corporate Services

Inclusion Officer

Following the recommendations from the Torbay Racism Review Panel, we are proposing to appoint an Inclusion Officer. They would work internally and externally to support the Council to meet its public sector equality duty. This would include implementing the Action Plan from the Torbay Racism Review. This proposal will cost £50,000.

Do you agree with this proposal?

	Number	%
Agree with this proposal	29	43.3%
Disagree with this proposal	38	56.7%
No response	0	0.0%
Total	67	100.0%

In response to the social media polls for this proposal there were six responses in agreement with the proposal and 10 against it.

Live-streaming of Meetings

Over the past year we have run a trial live-streaming meetings of the Council, Cabinet and Planning Committee. This costs £90,000 per year and means that more residents can be involved in the decisions we make.

We are proposing to continue to live-stream these meetings as well as promote them more widely.

Do you agree with this proposal?

	Number	%
Agree with this proposal	32	47.8%
Disagree with this proposal	34	50.7%
No response	1	1.5%
Total	67	100.0%

In response to the social media polls for this proposal there were nine responses in agreement with the proposal and two against it.

Council Tax

In 2022/2023, Torbay's Council Tax charge (excluding precepts for Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Commissioner and Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service) for an average Band D property is £1,690.06 per year.

The Government assumes that local authorities to raise Council Tax by 2.99% plus 2% for adult social care. Increases greater than this require a referendum.

We are proposing to increase the Torbay Council element of Council Tax by 2.99% plus 2% for adult social care. The reasons for this are explained in our Budget Overview.

The increase is £1.62 per week (£84.33 per year) for an average Band D property.

Do you agree with this proposal?

	Number	%
Agree with this proposal	35	52.2%
Disagree with this proposal	32	47.8%
No response	0	0.0%
Total	67	100.0%

In response to the social media polls for this proposal there were nine responses in agreement with the proposal and 14 against it.

Comments

Comments on Survey Responses

Respondents were asked if they wanted to provide any comments on the answers they gave in the survey. There were 40 responses which have been categorised and are shown in the table below.

Theme	Example of responses
Council Tax (15)	<p><i>“You make no allowance for the fact that inflation is on the way down. Such a big increase in council tax is not helping get the cost of living down”</i></p> <p><i>“It is despicable that the council intends to raise council tax by 4.99% especially when it will be used for things such as £50,000 for an inclusion officer yet the council never seems to spend money to fix the terrible pot holed road surfaces.”</i></p> <p><i>“It would seem to be irresponsible to raise council tax during this period when every other bill is also increasing. It is likely to lead to more individuals unable to pay or seeking help to meet council tax bills which would cost the council more in the long run. Plus making it even more difficult for local people to afford to live in Torbay.”</i></p>
Other (12)	<p><i>“Increased use of open spaces - Torre abbey for outdoor entertainment. Modern facilities like WeSup cafe and SUP on Torre abbey sands increased to bring in income and make the area attractive to non pensioner / younger visitors. Continue to encourage rough sleepers to move into hostels and look to move on or stop street begging especially around the Torquay harbour area.”</i></p> <p><i>“We are living through an economic and social crisis and this is reflected in the need to increase the budget. What is being done to help those residents suffering during the crisis,”</i></p>
Inclusion Officer (7)	<p><i>“...£50k to employ someone to cover racial inequality under Corporate Services is extortionate. Why such a high salary? With restructuring across Council services I'm sure this role could be job-shared by 'down time' which already exists within roles which are already filled....”</i></p>

<p>Adult Social Care (7)</p>	<p><i>“The adult social care costs more and more every year. Fed up of being being squeezed for that whilst I can see the general state of the bay reduces every year. Get benefit claimants to give back where appropriate, obviously all won't be able to but some should repay debt to society.”</i></p>
<p>Foster Carers (6)</p>	<p><i>“I am not against rewarding foster carers as such but a £1000 cash payment seems excessive and not well targeted. I would suggest a one off council tax bill reduction would be a better idea (although recognise there will need to be something in place to cover foster carers who don't live in Torbay)”</i></p>
<p>Live Stream Meetings (6)</p>	<p><i>“Live streaming - I agree with the principle, but I'm not sure why it costs £90k per year. Streaming services are free - both the platform and the software, such as Steamlabs, this is free software that you just download onto a PC and will interface with almost all streaming software such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitch. You only need a one-off cost for the equipment that's being used which at most the very most will net £1k (high-end PC, high-end camera(s), high-end microphone(s) etc.) and if it's being live-streamed, there's no reason to hire out a room (which also takes away the need to have microphones)...”</i></p>
<p>Waste / Value for money (6)</p>	<p><i>“Given the current circumstances Torbay Council needs to focus on delivering its statutory services, and not focusing on a lot of the discretionary services - particularly spend around place making. As we have seen recently the Council are not providing value for money, nor efficient and effective delivery of the basics. The money spent on its investment portfolio is generating a diminishing income - these assets should be sold off while they are still of value.”</i></p>
<p>Highways (4)</p>	<p><i>“It is despicable that the council intends to raise council tax by 4.99% especially when it will be used for things such as £50,000 for an inclusion officer yet the council never seems to spend money to fix the terrible pot holed road surfaces. Every year I spend hundreds of pounds on car mot's for damaged suspension components, I wish I could send the council my bills to be paid for this unnecessary damage yet you continue to waste money on hair brained ideas like the one I mentioned above, you are an absolute joke”</i></p>

Investment in premier resort (4)	<i>“Re keeping the bay clean for tourists. What about residents who pay all this council tax! We want to live in clean environment and need more dog/litter bins in places like Northfield rd and roads leading up to Battery Gardens etc. Also regular road and pavement sweeping in these areas. Not been done for years. The bus stop areas in Brixham parade are a disgrace.”</i>
Advertising in community magazines (4)	<i>“Money should be spent on increasing IT and social media access to all rather than advertising in paper publications. Also to work with the range of new CICs, cafes, other venues to spread the word and engage. They are better placed to do so. Not just CDT...”</i>
Children’s Services (3)	<i>“Before I would agree with the reduced costs associated with home to school transport under Children's Services I would want to see the full plan that would be delivered to successfully achieve this aim, given that we are talking about vulnerable children/young people. Hence the No at this time.”</i>
Air Show (2)	<i>“Kill the Air Show (pollution, duplication) unless fully self-funding”</i>
Policing (2)	<i>“Don't see how you can justify the increase in council tax with the state of torbay and the lawlessness in torquay, and the underperforming police”</i>

Comments on Other Aspects of the Proposed 2023/24 Budget

Respondents were asked to let us know their views on any other aspects of the proposed budget for 2023/24. There were 24 responses which have been categorised and are shown in the table below.

Theme	Example of responses
Other (8)	<p><i>“Urgent push to prioritise implementation of projects already in pipeline, demonstrate results this financial year. Too much is left dangling”</i></p> <p><i>“Would be good to get further sponsorship for the Airshow to reduce Council subsidy and to do a Climate Impact assessment to see if the negative impact of this event on the climate/Net zero can be reduced and if the findings are overtly negative , review the sustainability of the event in the future.”</i></p>
Out of touch / Wasting money (6)	<p><i>“I think that the council are out of touch with reality and what is happening. You really need to get the voice of the younger generation and a more diverse representation across torbay and that is not reflected in the make up of the council”</i></p> <p><i>“Stop wasting money”</i></p>
Disadvantaged / Cost of living (5)	<p><i>“A mainly elderly and low working age wage economy are being hit heavily by Council Tax, freezing of personal tax allowances and the total cost of living crisis. And now increasing the Council Tax by the maximum without a referendum you are pushing many to the limits. This is a step too far.”</i></p>
Council Tax (4)	<p><i>“Where do you expect residents to get the money from to pay such an extortionate rise on the council tax. Do you think we just pluck it from a tree??? Get back in the real world.”</i></p>
Inclusion Officer (3)	<p><i>“...Stop wasting money on virtual meetings and inclusion officers and get back to delivering the services that are most needed...”</i></p>
Streaming Meetings (3)	<p><i>“They is it costing £90K to live stream Council's meetings. It sounds very high?”</i></p>

<p>Policing (2)</p>	<p><i>“There should be no further increase for police spending until they actually justify what is spent on them already by actually catching criminals and not ignoring evidence which is provided identifying the criminals. There is no sense in employing more officers when the ones that we have do not do their job in the first place. If the CPS is the problem and they feel that they cannot prosecute anyone then sort them out as well.”</i></p>
<p>Foster Carers (2)</p>	<p><i>“Every year the cost of child and adult services rise. The bid to reduce costs of transport home to school is admirable but is the tip of the iceberg. Rewarding foster carers, who get a reasonable amount of money for what they do, once again adds to the child and support budget which is huge.”</i></p>
<p>Roads / pavements (2)</p>	<p><i>“Much too money is being spent on "ego" trips such as the Premier Inn. Such projects should be left to private investors who know what they are doing and the Council should concentrate on basics such as the appalling sate of roads and pevements”</i></p>
<p>Brixham (2)</p>	<p><i>“Once again in a Torbay Council budget proposal there is almost no mention of projects for Brixham, other than St Kilda's, which has been proposed for quite some time. In order for Torbay to become a truly premier resort the Council needs to invest in developments in all of its towns, not just Torquay and Paignton. Town Centre Regeneration and an Enhanced Park and Ride facilities are the keys to unlocking Brixham's potential with public support. The fishing industry is vital to our town's success and reputation, but above the harbour progress must be made in the coming financial year and throughout the period of the next administration, whatever form it may take.”</i></p>

Respondent Profile

Postcode:

	Number	%
TQ1	18	26.9%
TQ2	10	14.9%
TQ3	12	17.9%
TQ4	10	14.9%
TQ5	12	17.9%
Outside of Torbay	2	3.0%
No response	3	4.5%
Total	67	100.0%

What is your connection with Torbay? Please tick all that apply.

	Number
I live in Torbay	66
I work in Torbay	23
I study in Torbay	2
I own a business in Torbay	5
I am a visitor to Torbay	1
I own a house in Torbay that I do not live in	2

Are you?

	Number	%
Female	29	43.3%
Male	24	35.8%
Prefer to use own term	1	1.5%
No response	13	19.4%
Total	67	100%

What is your year of birth?

	Number	%
1940 - 1949	7	10.4%
1950 - 1959	18	26.9%
1960 - 1969	18	26.9%
1970 - 1979	9	13.4%
1980 - 1989	4	6.0%
1990 - 1999	6	9.0%
No response	5	7.5%
Total	67	100.0%

Do you consider yourself to be disabled in any way?

	Number	%
Yes	9	13.4%
No	44	65.7%
No response	14	20.9%
Total	67	100.0%

How would you describe your ethnicity?

	Number	%
White	50	74.6%
Other ethnic group	3	4.5%
Prefer not to say	1	1.5%
No response	13	19.4%
Total	67	100.0%

Forum

In addition to the survey, the Consultation web page a Budget Discussion forum was created so respondents could discuss the Cabinet's budget proposals with others in the community. Comments from the forum are shown below.

- “An additional spend on media does not seem justifiable when the majority of the council's media presence is about virtue signalling. It should be explained more minutely - what will this be spent one? And please justify also any spending on new grass covered bus shelters - is the council aware of the regreening affect that has taken place globally since the turn of the century? This too is simply virtue signalling. Please justify.”
- “Increasing council tax further is ludicrous in the current economic climate. Since moving into our property in 2016 our annual council tax bill has already risen by 34%! How can Torbay council justify a further increase?”
- “Is not the Rate rise, be 3 % only, without a Public Referendum?. Surely it is the wrong time to increase Local Authority Rates while people are severely hit hard with domestic bills, cutting back on their heating and food, etc. The expenses of certain councilors appear to be very excessive.”

Social Media Evaluation

Social media polls took place on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, the polls complemented the consultation. They asked members of the public to agree or disagree with the proposals as well as inviting them to post comments.

In total there were 127 votes in the polls. Of these 89 votes (70%) were in favour of the proposals and 32 votes [25%] were against. The remaining 5% of votes used responses not relevant to the question. There were 3 polls that generated a lot of comments / conversation. This is also reflected in the feedback as part of the online questionnaire. The 3 polls are in relation to:

1. Increasing Council Tax
2. Appointing an Inclusion Officer
3. Costs associated with Live Streaming meetings

Compared with 2022/23 and previous years overall engagement levels are down. This may be as there is nothing contentious within the proposals. Overall, the engagement rate for 2023/24 was much lower, especially in terms of people voting in the poll questions. (285 in 2022/23 agreeing, compared with 89 in 2023/24). Peak viewers of the Facebook Live were around 50% less than in 2022/23.

On the night of the Live Facebook event, the number of viewers varied, going from 22 and peaking at 42. In total the video reached 1,400 people, and generated 92 reactions in total (comments, shares, likes etc.).

A One Torbay budget special was issued on 13 January to 9,506 subscribers.

Bulletin analytics

▪ Total opens	9,565
▪ Unique opens	4841 (52%)
▪ Total clicks	830
▪ Top click (to budget proposals)	251

Top line figures

▪ Number of consultations completed	67
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Polls

▪ Total audience reached with polls	11,663
▪ Total no of link clicks from polls	137
▪ Total no of votes in the Budget polls on social media	127
▪ No of votes agreeing with proposals	89
▪ No of votes disagreeing with proposals	32

General awareness (inc Facebook Live promotion)

▪ Direct Link Clicks to website (excluding poll posts)	184
▪ Total reach	10,050
▪ Engagement (likes, comments, shares)	17

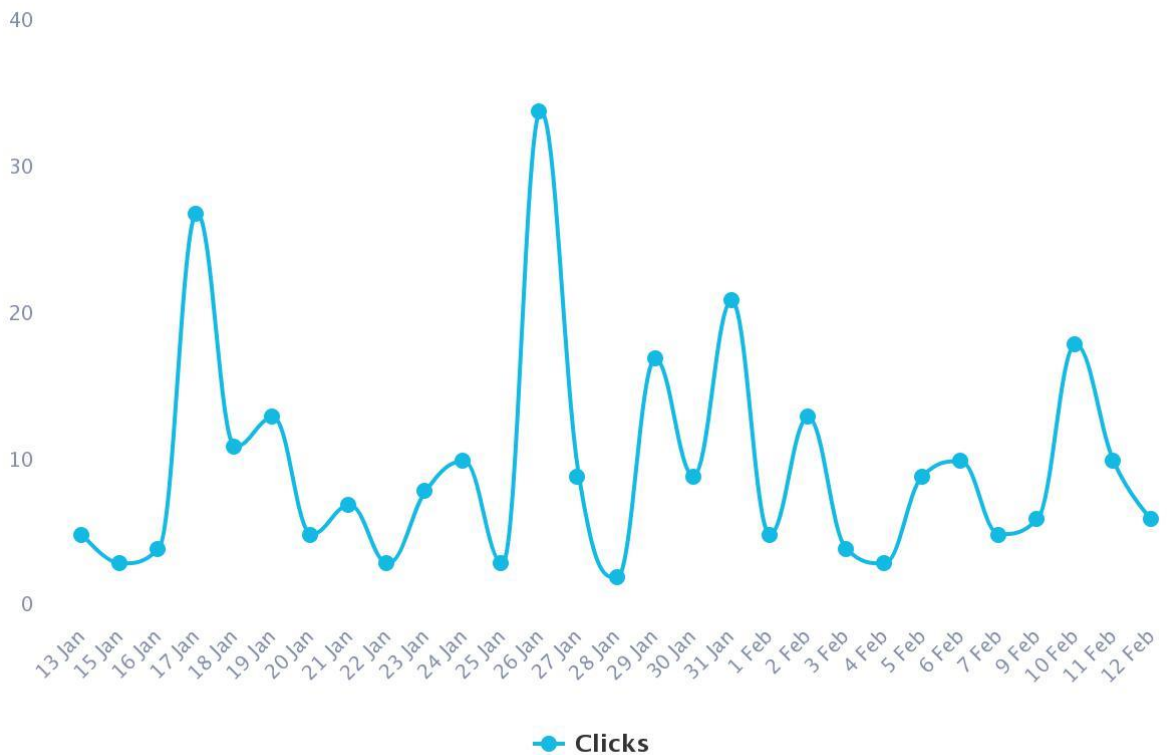
Live Facebook Event

- Peak live viewers 42
- Reach 1,400
- Engagement (likes, comments, shares) 92

Orlo summary of budget consultation posts

- Reach 207.1k
- Impressions 19.2k
- Clicks 280
- Comments 68
- Likes 103
- Shares 26

The peaks in activity coincide with key activity such as the issuing of One Torbay and the Facebook Live event.



Highcharts.com

yoursay.torbay.gov.uk summary

- Consultation survey ran for 35 days
- 67 responses to the consultation survey
- 508 people were aware (people who made at least one visit to the webpage)
- 322 people were informed (people who, once on the webpage, took the “next step” to another piece of information on the page e.g. read a document or clicked through to a survey)
- 141 downloads of supporting documents