

Big Oldham Conversation: Budget 2022/23

Responses to our Budget proposals

Last update: 21 February 2022

1 Overview

- 1.1 The Big Oldham Conversation public consultation on our budget proposals for 2022/23 went live on Thursday 20 January 2022 and ran until Sunday 20 February 2022.
- 1.2 This report summarises the responses received to the budget consultation; including those received through our website; via social media; through direct stakeholder engagement and through individual separate correspondence (including emails and letters).
- 1.3 The report also details how our budget consultation was promoted to as many residents, businesses, stakeholders and partners as possible across Oldham.

2 Summary

- 2.1 A total of **691 responses** were received to the budget consultation, across all platforms.
- 2.2 This includes 143 responses received via the online consultation portal, 14 letters or emails, and 534 comments and reactions on social media (across Facebook, Instagram and Twitter).
- 2.3 Responses to the budget proposals overall were very positive, with **414 “likes”, “loves”** or positive comments on social media in response to posts on our budget consultation. The majority of these positive responses were in relation to posts on paying carers the Real Living Wage. There were also a further 16 positive comments in our online consultation which applied to the budget in general rather than to specific proposals, as well as two strong letters of support from Unison and from Madhlo.
- 2.4 Those aspects of our budget proposals which received the most positive response were the proposal to pay the Real Living Wage to all staff and contractors, as well as the proposal to increase funding for youth activities. This was reflected across the social media responses as well as in the online budget consultation responses.
- 2.5 Responses in relation to individual budget savings proposals were more mixed, with a range of positive and negative responses received to each of the proposals. These are analysed in more detail further in the report.

3. Publicity

3.1 Media and advertising

- 3.1.1 Our budget consultation was promoted in the traditional media (i.e. local and regional newspapers), on the Oldham Council website and across social media on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, including using paid-for targeted advertising.

- 3.1.2 A press release with accompanying social media, and a video, was released to launch the budget consultation on 20 January. This resulted in positive news stories in the Oldham Chronicle and Oldham Times the following day, focusing on the Living Wage Foundation National Living Wage aspect of the budget proposals. A further story then ran in the Oldham Chronicle in early February, focusing on the Council Tax rise.
- 3.1.3 “Organic” (i.e. unpaid) social media posts ran on Oldham Council’s social media channels throughout the duration of the consultation period, signposting members of the public to the online consultation portal as well as inviting them to comment online. On Facebook, these posts reached **41,530** people; on Instagram they reached **4,927** people and on Twitter, our budget posts reached **22,698** people. In total, therefore, organic social media posts on the budget issued on Council channels reached **69,155** people. Responses are analysed in the next section of this report.
- 3.1.4 Paid-for advertising also ran on Facebook and Instagram, targeted at Oldham postcodes, to reach members of the public who would not ordinarily follow our social media channels. A total of £60 was spent on this Facebook and Instagram advertising. These posts reached **11,973** people during the consultation period.
- 3.1.6 A total of **2,473** page views were made to the budget consultation page of the Oldham Council website during the consultation period (20 January to 20 February)

3.2 Stakeholder engagement

- 3.2.1 Direct engagement was carried out with a number of stakeholder groups, both to ask their views on our budget proposals and also to encourage them to share the consultation with their own networks.
- 3.2.2 On 21 January 2022, the overall budget reduction proposals were presented to Oldham’s Equality Advisory Group (EAG), made-up of key representatives from groups with protected characteristics. The EAG meets monthly to help inform and co-design policy, ensuring that the lived experience of people with protected characteristics is central to Oldham’s strategic planning. The EAG agreed to communicate the proposals across Oldham’s communities, encouraging residents, especially those directly impacted by the proposals, to respond to the consultation.
- 3.2.3 Other stakeholder groups engaged with and encouraged to contribute included trade unions, care organisations, the Youth Council, Oldham Care and Support helpline users, local businesses, Pennine Care Foundation Trust, Oldham CCG, people who use Learning Disability services, and registered social landlords.
- 3.2.4 Two online engagement sessions were hosted by Oldham CCG on 8 and 9 February in relation to the adult social care proposals. Those who attended included carers as well as representatives from stakeholder groups. There were representatives from carers who support people with varying needs and levels of disability, including brain injury, dementia and physical disabilities. They were encouraged at the event and via follow-up emails to fill in the online consultation document.
- 3.2.5 Stakeholders were also engaged with via social media and responded through this channel as well. Responses received in this way came from organisations including the GMB and the Living Wage Foundation.

- 3.2.6 We promoted the consultation to local businesses through the business newsletter and on social media, including LinkedIn. Through engagement with local business we received 10 responses via the online portal.

4. Respondents

4.1 Respondent numbers

- 4.1.1 We received a total of 691 responses to our Budget consultation, across all platforms.
- 4.1.2 This includes 143 responses received via the online consultation portal, 14 letters or emails; and 534 comments and reactions on social media (across Facebook, Instagram and Twitter).

4.2 Respondent type

- 4.2.1 133 of our online responses identified themselves as being residents of Oldham.
- 4.2.2 Ten of the responses were from businesses within the borough. These respondents did not give the name of their business.
- 4.2.3 Seven responses were from organisations and/or community groups within the borough and/or wider region. These respondents were:
- Unison
 - The GMB (Oldham branch)
 - Living Wage Foundation
 - Mahdlo Youth Zone
 - Greater Manchester Youth Network
 - Bee Together Community Centre and Garden
 - Great Places Housing Association
- 4.2.4 Responses on social media generally did not state their connection to the borough.

5. Responses

5.1 General responses

- 5.1.1 Respondents were given the option to respond generally to our budget proposals, as well as responding to individual savings proposals.
- 5.1.2 Most of our responses (534 out of a total of 691) came in via social media. On social media, responses to the budget proposals overall were very positive, with 414 “likes”, “loves” or positive comments, compared to 20 negative comments or reactions, and 20 neutral comments.

- 5.1.3 Stakeholder responses were more mixed, with strong letters of support from Mahdlo and Unison (in the Appendix) and supportive comments on social media in regards to the Foundation Living Wage, from the GMB and from the Living Wage Foundation. Stakeholder comments were more negative, however, in relation to the proposal to reduce funding for Get Oldham Growing, as detailed in the next section.
- 5.1.4 Those general responses to our budget received through the online consultation portal were also more mixed. Through the online portal we received 54 general responses to our proposals, which were analysed in terms of sentiment:
- 15 positive
 - 21 neutral
 - 18 negative
- 5.1.3 Full responses to the general budget proposals are detailed in the Appendix.

5.2 Specific proposals

- 5.2.1 This section of the report provides a summary of the feedback on the specific budget proposals, gathered through the online consultation portal. This includes the total number of responses, with specific examples that encompass the feedback given.
- 5.2.2 **Health and social care: Oldham Care and Support (Miocare) management fee reduction and increase in helpline charges** – In total we received 99 responses to this proposal. 49 responses were negative, expressing concerns about the reduction in staffing “I can’t see that by reducing staffing you will meet the needs of vulnerable residents” and the impact on vulnerable people “The service will be reduced and therefore vulnerable people will suffer”. 15 responses were neutral, often requesting further information. 35 responses were positive, stating that the proposal is reasonable “My mother is one of the residents affected. I agree that 50 pence a week is a fair rise for service users.”
- 5.2.3 **Health and social care: review of care and support plans** – In total we received 107 responses to this proposal. 48 responses were negative, expressing concerns that “people deserve better than minimum levels of support”. 27 responses were neutral, often requesting further information on the impact on vulnerable people. 32 responses were positive, with the consensus being that the proposal is “fair as long as residents are not left lacking in support.”
- 5.2.4 **Health and social care: increasing community enablement** – In total we received 99 responses to this proposal. 12 responses were negative, highlighting concerns around “reducing personal contact” and “increasing isolation and loneliness which is not good for anyone”. 30 responses were neutral, with suggestions to explore “what other countries are doing” and to ensure the “local community is involved” in supporting re-enablement. 57 responses were positive, with many respondents stating that “people should be able to stay at home and not end up in care homes if that is at all possible.”
- 5.2.5 **Public Health: Get Oldham Growing** – In total we received 122 responses to this proposal. 55 responses were negative, with many respondents highlighting the “link between improved mental health and all aspects of gardening and growing” and that “food insecurity is a real threat.” 25 responses were neutral, with suggestions to “make Get Oldham Growing a charity” and “seek corporate sponsorship” to support the

continued delivery of the project. 42 responses were positive, expressing views that the project “delivers extremely limited benefit to the wider community.”

- 5.2.6 **Education and Skills: Oldham Music Centre fees** – In total we received 102 responses to this proposal. 28 responses were negative, expressing concerns that “this will make the service more unaffordable”. 17 responses were neutral, with many unable to comment as they don’t use the service. 57 responses were positive, with most agreeing that “an inflationary rise sounds reasonable.”
- 5.2.7 **Education and Skills: Oldham Theatre Workshop fees** – In total we received 106 responses to this proposal. 20 responses were negative, highlighting that “people are already struggling, so increasing costs is not going to work”. 19 responses were neutral, with most not accessing the service. 67 responses were positive, with the consensus being that “this is a good idea as long as concessions are still in place and people can still access the service.”
- 5.2.8 **Children and Young People: Autism Youth Club** – In total we received 102 responses to this proposal. 7 responses were negative, though no clear reason was identified. 25 responses were neutral, though some highlighted the need to “obtain feedback from parents” and to ensure that “service users experiences are unaffected”. 70 responses were positive, with many thinking the proposal was a “good idea” and that “an external provider will be more beneficial as the third sector is generally more flexible.”
- 5.2.9 **Children and Young People: Non-renewal MOMO** – In total we received 106 responses to this proposal. 23 responses were negative, expressing concerns that removing the service would “take away the children’s voice” and that “these children need to be heard”. 33 responses were neutral, though some suggested ensuring “the new engagement mechanisms are in place before making the cut”. 50 responses were positive, supporting the proposal “as long as the children continue to have a voice to help keep them safe” and “as long as the new service provision is improved.”
- 5.2.10 **Business: Commercial Rent Reviews** – In total we received 100 responses to this proposal. 36 responses were negative, expressing concerns about “pushing businesses into failure” and that “people are already paying too much in rents”. 26 responses were neutral, with some recognising “that this is needed”, but concerned “that this will force businesses to close”. 38 responses were positive, with many agreeing, though highlighting the need “to keep costs affordable for the tenants of the buildings.”

6. Conclusion

- 6.1.1 Oldham’s budget consultation 2022/23 has engaged with residents, service users, staff, local businesses and partner organisations, to gather feedback on this year’s proposals. This has included a wide range of feedback mechanisms, including a multi-channel communications strategy incorporating digital, social and traditional media, consultation events and through the dedicated online portal.
- 6.1.2 We have received incredibly positive feedback about our commitment to pay the Living Wage Foundation National Living wage to all contracted care providers in Oldham, with most responses recognising that this is the right thing to do, especially following the Covid-19 pandemic.

- 6.1.3 We have received a generally mixed response to our specific budget proposals, with Adult Social Care proposals causing the most concern. This is mainly because of the potential impact on vulnerable residents, though mitigations have been identified through the Equality Impact Assessment Process. There has also been concern raised about the Get Oldham Growing proposal, with responses highlighting the cost-of-living crisis and the impact on participants mental health and wellbeing. However, it should also be noted that through the online consultation portal there was also support for this proposal, with many responses recognising the challenges of funding a scheme like this in the current budgetary climate.
- 6.1.4 There was broad support for the Education and Skills proposals, as well as the Children's Social Care proposals, with responses highlighting the importance of continuing to support children and young people in every way we can.
- 6.1.5 The feedback on the budget reduction proposals will also be used to help shape the priorities in the refreshed Oldham Plan and Corporate Plan, helping drive future strategic planning across the system.

7. Appendices

7.1 General responses

- 7.1.1 This section of the report includes general responses to the budget proposals that were submitted during the budget consultation. These have been split into comments received through social media, comments received through the online consultation, and comments received directly from stakeholders. They have been included in their entirety as received.

The general themes of the feedback included a positive response to our commitment to pay the Living Wage Foundation national Living Wage and to our youth work investment proposals, a generally positive response to the Don't Trash Oldham campaign, and comments on the general cost of living, including the challenges that some residents are facing.

- 7.1.2 General comments on the budget received through the online portal (please note, the comments have been left in their original format to reflect the genuine sentiment of residents):

Sentiment	Comments received
Positive	These are really good ideas. I'm particularly in favour of continuing Don't Trash Oldham. I'm also in favour of increasing the salaries of carers.
2	All seem worthy
3	These are brilliant ideas which will benefit the lowest paid people in our borough. Very happy to support.
4	These are really good plans, which will help carers and other low paid workers. Thank you Oldham Council
5	Ok

6	Paying care worker the £9.90 an hour is absolutely the right thing to do. As a senior social care manager in another area I believe care workers deserve to be rewarded and we cannot provide a stable ASC without it investment in staff pay as they would simply leave and join retail sectors.
7	I think it's fantastic that all carers will receive the Foundation Living Wage, it's such a vital, undervalued service that has suffered from low pay for too long.
8	Really positive
9	Highly agree, these are important issues
10	Look good if it does what it promises
11	Sound fine, especially the pay uplift for care workers (though if only it could be more)
12	Fair. More money needs to be invested in litter and graffiti removal. Fly tipping and general littering make the area unpleasant to live in and attracts anti social behaviour
13	Agree with Hess three , money needs to be spent on youngsters.
14	I like the clearing up of the streets and want that to continue. How have you not already been paying care workers that amount? They should be earning more.
15	They're good.
Neutral	I agree with paying carers a living wage Don't trash Oldham just encourages fly tipping, Should be easier ways to dispose of rubbish especially for the elderly There should be more accessible outlets for the elderly especially since Covid, to get them back socialising"
2	I agree with everything except giving yet more money to Mahdlo. Few young people outside Oldham can access their services and they could attract more corporate sponsorship and grants from charities.
3	All fine, but where do the unpaid carers with Carers allowance sit? We save money for the councils and ultimately government by being available 24/7 for Â£66 a week.
4	Don't trash Oldham is a good initiative but I think having a pot of funding for eligible residents to have household waste removed with greatly reduced charge. Bulky bobs is good but no good if the items are actually waste.
5	Whilst I agree carers should be paid a decent wage for the job they do is it for the council tax payer to find this. Great work on don't trash Oldham but it's just a shame mindless people will always just mess things up again. Penalties need to be harsher. I think the money spent on youth work could be much better spent
6	It is important to pay workers properly. Where are the savings coming from to pay for this?
7	Depends how savings are made to pay for this
8	I agree that all care workers should be paid well; however, I also think that unpaid carers should be valued and supported, and they have not been throughout this pandemic. I see you upgraded the Spindles and gave Omicron grants to businesses worth millions , though.
9	Reduce the parking costs , living wage while commendable , I dont see why I have to pay the extra rise. As for youth projects you reduced & stopping grants for mahdlo

10	I can't see what the cuts are
11	I agree there should be investment in youth and lower paid care workers, however, I am concerned that the distribution of youth schemes investment will be targeted at then usual hotspot areas and Saddleworth will once again miss out, notwithstanding there is a youth and drug problem in the area
12	Fair but youth work budget should be bigger and spread equally around the Borough not just central Oldham.
13	Rising costs affect everyone, not just the lowest paid. Some of us are living month to month. I thought the 'Don't trash Oldham' was just for the initial round and then handed over to residents. Money could then be used to pay everyone a proper cost of living rise. I don't know much about Mahdlo or use Youth services
14	Youth work offer - could be delivered by inhouse youth services
15	Why is £100,000 being invested to Mahdlo, when there are countless of other youth engagement organisations across the borough who could benefit from this. Mahdlo should now be standing on their own feet, attracting external funding.
16	I think care workers need to be paid for the actual hours worked and that travel time should be included in their day. They often get short appointments with people due to pressures around travel time. I'd also like to see a bigger pay rise.
17	Looks promising, but depends what you are cutting elsewhere.
18	Don't trash Oldham shouldn't need to be done if people are educated to look after their area & have a pride in their town. Heftier fines for littering & tipping should be used. You got to make it work or else you are just throwing money away
19	Stop councillors claiming unnecessary expenses. Be more vigilant on fly tipping. Definitely need services for youth to keep them off the street. Boxing projects, discounted gym/ fitness sessions.
20	Overall the proposal looks very good. My only issue is with 'continuing our investment in cleaning up our borough's streets'. On of the main reasons i can see what this would/will be needed is that some residents just do not care what it looks like where they live. if the residents took more care in throwing litter etc then this initiative would just not be needed and we could spend money on other things. Please invest some time and effort in education not just clearing up after everyone year on year.
Negative	You are forever spending on things that have little benefit to Oldham as a whole. If you increase Council Tax then I would like for it to be spent on an independent body to verify what you already spend on and any proposals you, as the council, make. Conducting cost benefit analysis and comparing against proposals made by residents that need spend. Otherwise I am against any rises.
2	Don't invest in Don't Trash Oldham
3	Not appropriate to the current needs of the population based on most recent ONS reviews

	<p>OMBC closed youth services but not funds a charitable organisation that reaches only a tiny percentage of the identified need and does not cover the whole borough. A service that has invested in expansion but not a robust diversification of its service. This is a false economy and should be put to consultation. Youth provision needs more than climbing walls and performing arts.</p> <p>Oldham has a service that delivers street cleaning and rubbish collections. No more money should be invested in expensive PR campaigns that don't target the perpetrators or offer a solution to prevention.</p> <p>Where is the green agenda. We need a policy that embraces improvement to health and well being.</p> <p>Cuts to social care will only increase pressure on health services.</p>
4	Our council tax is too high and the council should be bringing forward proposals on how to reduce it.
5	I remain unconvinced on don't trash Oldham
6	Poor
7	Rubbish council tax is too high reduce councillors and middle management your savings are there to spend on your wish list
8	Terrible time to raise council tax
9	Don't trash is a waste of money
10	Disappointed councillors should take a allowance cut
11	Think the prospect of spending such a large amount on youth is not justified
12	I don't want money wasted on projects that fail, I.e. rubbish
13	Ok but I don't agree with putting council tax up by 3.99% families are already struggling and are disadvantaged due to pandemic! Your stating you want to help the disadvantaged but what your doing is making residents even more disadvantaged by putting up council tax to pay for these targets you want to achieve it's wrong!
14	Nowhere near enough, my wage doesn't even cover the rent and council tax and you have refused to give me a rebate! No not good enough at all, what we want is the £15 an hour that was proposed and expected.
15	Absolutely load of tosh not able to claim a penny back even though worked all my working life and yes all through the pandemic? And all I hear is how well oldham has done destroyed oldham Market spindles half empty disgusting alley ways given themselves pay rises etc etc
16	Council Tax should be frozen....the Council should spend more wisely with its funds and stop wasting money. We all need a break after the last 2 years so the hardest working are hit hardest
17	<p>I think there should be a council tax reduction.</p> <p>Get rid of the over paid senior management. Any one on a salary over £60,000.00</p> <p>Stop hiring contractors on day rates.</p> <p>Stop wasting money on useless consultants</p>
18	Disagree, council tax is one of very high already for the Oldham area.

7.1.3 General comments on the budget received through social media

The below responses are a cross-section of the 534 received via social media.

Sentiment	Platform	Comments received
Positive	Facebook	Fantastic news
2	Facebook	Well said – you deserve much more (<i>in response to video from carers</i>)
3	Twitter	Oldham Council took good initiatives giving them living wage these workers
4	Twitter (from GMB Oldham)	Oldham Council takes the lead on the staffing crisis in care and also helps for commissioned care service workers get recognition in their pay by paying the real living wage. Government failure Oldham Council step in well done
5	Twitter (from Stand up for Social Care)	We call on all Greater Manchester councils to follow Oldham's lead and ensure that all care workers – whether directly employed or commissioned – are paid at least the Foundation Living Wage
6	Twitter (from Stand up for Social Care)	Brilliant News. Oldham Council will implement the Foundation Living Wage for care workers
7	Twitter (from Living Wage Foundation)	Fantastic to see Oldham Council rewarding all their amazing frontline social care staff! This uplift will see care workers earn an extra £768 a year!
8	Instagram	(Carers) should be paid a lot more than that! But in the financial climate it's better than nothing and I for one would like to see higher wages for all low paid public sector workers
9	Facebook	In reality they are taking extra council tax off everyone and paying extra to the carers. That sounds good to me.
10	Facebook	At least it's a justified expense for a change unlike the mayors office charges
11	Facebook	Shouldn't they be doing that already
Neutral	Facebook	Can you upload an Organogram of the Department top to bottom manager to operatives. No names just positions and roles.
2	Facebook	vicious Tory austerity measures put towns and cities all over the country in the same position,law,litter,fly tipping,the list is endless as to what the tories have caused,you only get what you vote for.
3	Facebook	In our budget next year we want too..... ..but if we get in we won't..... but we will get the clean air zone back up n running
4	Facebook	Please can you lower parking charges in oldham, it deters a lot of business oldham is currently 3x the price of Ashton and Rochdale and the traffic wardens are like vultures
5	Facebook	Onwards and upwards now please listen to what people are saying to make it better
6	Facebook	Yeah the sentiment is nice but Oldham is already a poverty stricken borough with some of the highest council tax..

7	Facebook	It would be good too, to put more into making the back area of Yorkshire street safe. If you oull everything down, it will just move the problem to another area. The crime/dangers need to be addressed and maybe more officers with special training to deal with this. It would be nice too to see the shops on Yorkshire Street get a sprucing up with respect to their era. It's a shame there's such a problem behind there.
8	Facebook	If the council were to provide skips that the public could use then surely a lot of the flytipping would be averted. Many people have neither the money to pay a licensed waste carrier to remove rubbish nor access to a vehicle to take it to the dump themselves.
9	Facebook	Mobil recycling services are good for people who cannot drive to a tip, but would like to do their part. Those would throw rubbish on the streets may not do it if someone can help them more that way. If they do throw in the streets, then fining people with already strained finances is very tough, especially when businesses don't take care of their own buildings. I think it would be better to get them to clean up with community service and educate more.
10	Facebook	Trying to look good just before the elections...
11	Facebook	Giving it with one hand and taking it back with the other
Negative	Facebook	Think you need to look at the allowances for in house foster carers too, who haven't had a rise in over a decade !!
2	Facebook	What does it matter what we think? You've already decided so our input is useless as always 😊
3	Facebook	Then taking it straight back out with the rise in national insurance, council tax. The only one leveling up is the council and governments. Average tax payer will not see any extra disposable income at all.
4	Facebook	£9.90, an absolute disgrace and a liberty to the working man and woman
5	Facebook	Clean up what Bouroughs? I flipping do it
6	Facebook	Lets get it right. Our councils and council workers are coining it in. Just look at covid. How many council civil servants were on furlough. None. And worse of all became front line workers on all the free food. Discount shopping. Etc etc. And woeking from home on discounted electric etc. Yet pensioners. Veterans and the poor. Got nothing.
7	Facebook	Save some money we only need 40 councillors not 60 we have got
8	Facebook	Pay the councillors,for the work they do.Cut them down to 30 we don't need any more.let the public decide what pay to give them not themselves.Be Fair,Be Honest,

9	Facebook	I think you shouldn't have written off 45 million pounds in unpaid council tax last year, then you wouldn't have had to increase it for the rest of us
10	Facebook	How about doing a honest days work for a honest days pay. And all council worker's taking a 10%pay deduction.
11	Facebook	In our budget went to fleece the working class.....
12	Facebook	As I will be paying the extra NI contributions for social care, will the council stop adding the extra to my council tax bill. Don't see the need to pay for social care twice?
13	Facebook	The council tax will go up but the services are just going down, it's only the bins collection we get on 14 what we pay but that's not good either,so tell me what to look forward or the positive outcome of this conversation for Oldham council or at the borough.
14	Facebook	Give staff a pay rise that isn't even a 3 rd of the rate of inflation
15	Facebook	So basically carers in oldham will be paying fir their own pay rise. □
16	Facebook	Funny how they don't struggle to fund high salaries and expenses
17	Twitter	Why are we paying for this council's incompetents
18	Instagram	Fly tipping will never be stopped no matter how much money you throw at it
19	Facebook	<p>Oldham Council need to hang their heads in SHAME you seem so proud of spending ££££££ millions to clear up, for goodness sake get a grip it's gone on for to long.</p> <p>Same with the empty properties you won't take over despite the levelling up money the government have given, don't keep going on about the housing crisis. Take some responsibility for all your mistakes, you know nothing listen to the residents of Oldham for a change instead of yourselves .</p> <p>I remember my dad saying when you held a competition to press the button to knock down St. Peters Shopping Centre, who would be happy to to see tax payers money go up in smoke obviously the Council.</p> <p>This year can you mow the grass on the Manor Flats, Greenacres so children and adults can play on the field, that's what it's for recreational ground</p>
20	Facebook	Yeah? Here's your rise, oh, and here's your revised council tax bill...
21	Facebook	But don't worry we are going to get it back off you again from the rip off Clean Air Zone tax you will all be paying for one way or another
22	Facebook	<p>I think there should be a council tax reduction.</p> <p>Get rid of the over paid senior management. Any one on a salary over £60,000.00</p> <p>Stop hiring contractors on day rates.</p> <p>Stop wasting money on useless consultants</p>

23	Facebook	Then taking it straight back out with the rise in national insurance, council tax. The only one leveling up is the council and governments. Average tax payer will not see any extra disposable income at all.
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7.1.4 General responses from stakeholders

Response from Unison

UNISON, the public service union, represents members across Oldham - in local government, healthcare, police and probation, higher and further education, transport and the utilities.

There are over 6,000 UNISON members living and working in the area. They support the union's campaigns against poverty pay, including those on behalf of care workers. Persistent government underfunding of the local authorities commissioning care has meant staff have been underpaid for far too long.

UNISON strongly supports, and has recommended, the proposal to introduce the Foundation Living Wage for all council staff and contractors.

The union is particularly keen to see improvements in the pay and conditions of care and support workers employed within care homes, homecare and supported living services. Day in, day out, they go the extra mile to provide exceptional care for some of Oldham's most vulnerable residents.

These workers, along with other public service employees and contractors, worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic to keep communities safe and healthy. This has often been at great personal cost. They have surely earned their right to a wage upon which they can live, not merely exist.

These workers cared for elderly and disabled people ill with Covid. They were with Oldham's elderly residents when no one else was able to visit them. They put themselves and their families at risk by working on the frontline during the pandemic, often without adequate resources, safety kit or proper sick pay.

Those workers feel undervalued and unappreciated. They do some of the hardest and most important work in Oldham, yet their wages fail to reflect this. Successive governments have failed to fund social care properly over many years. Severe cuts to council funding means care has often been commissioned at bargain basement rates. This has left many care workers on hourly rates barely above the minimum wage. This is a wrong we must begin to put right. Care workers across Oldham have been forced to visit foodbanks, take out pay day loans and take on second, or even third jobs.

A major increase in funding is needed to put care services on a proper footing to meet growing demands as people live longer. The government's current proposals fall well short in that care must wait in line until the massive backlog in the NHS is tackled, and it is by no means clear what money, if any, will be left at the end.

Yet when national insurance contributions go up in April to pay for this health and social care levy, care workers will be hit hard as their take home pay is further reduced.

This, combined with the highest inflation for thirty years, huge increases in the cost of food, bills and transport, could see many care workers leave the sector in search of better paid, less stressful work.

Care staff love their jobs and were attracted into the service to help others. But financial pressures mean many are being forced to leave. This could spell disaster with the sector already some 100,000 staff short nationally.

That's why Oldham's proposal that all care workers are to earn the real living wage is so important. It's the least we can do to prevent the sector losing more and more staff and services being unable to meet growing demands.

UNISON strongly welcomes the proposal in the budget and urges Oldham Council to stick firmly to its promise.

Response from Mahdlo

Dear Cllr Arooj Shah,

Despite 2021 being such a challenging year as we remobilise our services in line with government guidance we have continued to strive to give Oldham's young people the best possible start in life.

Young people and their families have been able to depend on Mahdlo. Despite us adapting to regular changes in guidance and restrictions we've found innovative and engaging ways to support those that needed us most.

This year we'll continue to meet the needs of young people, reflecting the diversity of the borough, in Mahdlo, in the community and online.

As a charity we need to ensure long term financial stability. The board of trustees and I are relieved that the council will support us in our efforts through the continuation of the current level of funding. This will enable us to continue to support young people across the borough and respond to the increased need within our communities.

Thank you ever so much for your continued support. You have enabled us to make such an impact on the lives of so many young people. Your contribution will be felt more than ever as we continue to move towards a new normal and support young people through this very challenging time.

Best Wishes

CEO
Mahdlo Youth Zone

Chairman
Mahdlo Youth Zone

7.2 Specific responses

7.2.1 This section of the report includes further detail on responses to the individual budget savings proposals.

7.2.2 Get Oldham Growing responses

Responses from users, residents and stakeholders

1	<p>Dear XXXX,</p> <p>As an Oldham resident I am of the strongest opinion that removing funding from this worthy project is counter productive in a multiplicity of ways. Clearly in these times of austerity and massively rising food prices the ability for many to grow their own and obtain free and wholesome food is a positive and caring solution. Not only do these facilities allow residents to learn the skills required but provide a hub for social interaction. Get Oldham Growing is a life saver not only in providing nutritional food but in feeding residents social needs. The project cares for both people's physical and mental well being. There is already a thriving network of volunteers prepared to contribute to growing, teaching others and giving away food. It would be remiss of Oldham Council not to support such caring volunteers.</p> <p>Oldham Council would be foolish to remove funding from such a worthy cause and should be happy and proud to contribute with resources and at a strategic level. Indeed I and others Council Tax payers are so impressed with Get Oldham Growing that I think the council should increase funding not remove it.</p> <p>Kind regards, xxxxx</p>
2	<p>Dear XXXX,</p> <p>Please find below a short response to the proposed cutting of funds by £62,000 which I would be grateful if you could record as being against these cuts:</p> <p>The proposal would be disastrous for the Oldham growing hubs. The hubs are not only about growing food but are a lifeline for vulnerable and disadvantaged people in the community. An example of this is when, at the peak of the pandemic, we were able to work together to provide food for local community groups and food distribution centres. We also worked with Age UK Oldham and to provide seed growing packs for older people so they could grow plants at home, not only to provide food but to enhance mental wellbeing.</p> <p>Hubs can be used as educational hub to teach all elements of how to grow food in a sustainable way. The hubs are a resource for schools and colleges, especially as habitat management and wildlife are becoming a key part of the curriculum.</p> <p>Get Oldham Growing is an integral part of the Oldham Food Strategy and so should still remain a priority, otherwise the strategy is worthless.</p> <p>Growing food locally is crucial to Oldham being self-sustainable in these uncertain times and a key element in the strategy to reduce the carbon footprint from food miles. Good food management will create</p>

	<p>and protect habitats and encourage wildlife and therefore strengthen the rationale to combat climate change through providing more growing hubs of which there is a community demand for. It is ludicrous to suggest a reduction of support for these hubs when there should be more encouragement to use them and protect them. For instance, the hubs are ideally located to be part of the 'Holiday Hunger' initiatives. Last year, GOG assisted another food growing community group in Glodwick and only two weeks ago I was approached by a group in Derker wanting to set up a growing group which I directed onto Hannah Williams, showing the communities in Oldham do want such a project.</p> <p>Thank you for your help in this matter and if I can be of further help please let me know.</p> <p>Warm regards, xxxxx Lees Park ECO Hub</p>
3	<p>re Proposal to remove funding from Get Oldham Growing.</p> <p>There are clearly problems with cutting the resources for Get Oldham Growing as without the staffing you will lose the infrastructure and skills needed to support volunteers in a way that enables them to grow themselves and not just to be there to grow food.</p> <p>Things are getting pretty grim for many residents and this is something positive that people can get involved in and contribute too and talk about as oppose to the huge worries people have about rising food costs. The project needs to be expanded and not cut in this situation. The council can't sit back while peoples' wellbeing suffers. Other costs for care and health will rise.</p> <p>The projects benefits physical and mental wellbeing through the physical activity involved in growing food and the provision of fresh veg, fruit and herbs. It also promotes mental wellbeing through supporting social interaction between and across communities.</p> <p>The biggest difference in the diets of the least and most well off is in their consumption of fruit and veg and this contributes to the inequalities in experience of disease so its also in the eating of the produce and the way this is shared with the wider community that Get Oldham Growing benefits the community.</p> <p>People in Oldham don't need to be told what healthy eating and a healthy life is they need practical skills based programmes to enable this to be easier or even possible. Information can be an important part of this but this is not enough on its own.</p> <p>I am lucky to have an allotment and have lived in Oldham for more than 40 years and been to school here and witnessed how important the work to engage communities is in making building and infrastructure projects successful and the downside of neglecting this.</p> <p>The engagement of volunteers in different areas of Oldham contributes to building a thriving network that will provide important support for the future</p>

	<p>work of the Northern Roots Programme that is in just one area. Cutting the resources for Get Oldham Growing will undermine this development.</p> <p>The council needs to lend support to this programme at a strategic level and with resources. Its time to take the fundamental issues around the food we grow, shop for, cook and eat much more seriously. As in turn it has a massive impact on everything else, including peoples capacity to work and care for others.</p> <p>Regards, xxxxx</p>
4	<p>Dear XXXX,</p> <p>I have only recently discovered the Lees Park Growing hub through my involvement with a very new community garden as part of St Chads Church Uppermill.</p> <p>The Growing Hubs are an excellent way of encouraging the local community to lean about growing veg and flowers for their phtsical and mental health. I was very fortunate to have grown up in a rural area and my father and grandfather were keen gardeners so I have always enjoyed the natural world and the benifits of growing my own food. It is so important in our present situation to encourage people to get closer to nature. We need to work towards a more sustainable world for many reasons. I urge you to please fight for retaining the budget for these hubs it would be extremly short sighted to make cuts now. They really are very important in all they bring to ALL young , old black white PLEASE PLEASE do your very best to enable these Hubs to be a haven for all.</p> <p>Best wishes, Xxxxx</p>
5	<p>Dear XXXX,</p> <p>Following last night's most instructive and inspiring presentation by Alan Price about the work of the Lees Growing hub at a Green Talk Greenfield event at the Satellite Centre last night, I'm writing to convey our strongest possible objections to the proposed removal of OMBC funding for the Oldham Get Growing project. In terms of the total spend of council spending, this £69k cut amounts to less than one third of your Chief Executive's salary. Whilst big monies are still being spent on polytunnels by our borough, our council should be supporting community engagement and develop awareness of the need for a sustainable and biodiverse future. I strongly urge that the council reverses its decision about this matter.</p> <p>Kind regards xxxxx</p>
6	<p>Dear XXXX,</p> <p>How is it that millions will be spend on the project at snipe clough which I'm not against for it is an exciting time to be here but shutting down a brillant project as GOG which is only £62,000 cannot we appeal to lottery funding or crowd funding to keep these places open.</p>

	<p>People need these places it for people who's illnesses can't be seen its for retired people and all types society's people growing food for people who are struggling it's for families who want the children at an early age to care for nature and learn her natural Eco systems you have a piece of land at the back of Alexandra Park where food is grown on a bigger scale and there's a place erected now for beehives what point of doing that if your proposing to close the hubs it doesn't make sense people who use the hubs learn a lot and the staff are brillant with there knowledge I do hope the powers in control can help to keep these places open.</p> <p>Best wishes, xxxxx</p> <p>Ps The Covid was very Trying for everyone but I see there are many questions to which answers will surely come and I see it gone by March up to June</p>
7	<p>Dear XXXX,</p> <p>I am writing to express my concerns about the proposed cuts to Get Oldham Growing.</p> <p>As the strategic lead on the Health Offer for Oldham HLA (Heritage Libraries and Arts) I am deeply concerned about the potential impact to Oldham residents of these cuts. GOG are invaluable partners in the delivery of a range of outreach opportunities and services that contribute to the health education and wellbeing practices of some of Oldham's most vulnerable community members. As a local authority we have higher than national average obesity levels, higher than national average levels of inactivity, lower than national average Oral Health and Health Literacy levels (according to data collated by Health Education England: http://healthliteracy.geodata.uk/?search=Oldham) well below the threshold for people to understand and interpret health information for themselves, for over half of our residents (51.56% approx.). As such, it is only through hands-on learning opportunities, such as those provided by GOG that we can see real impacts for our communities, with people being empowered and upskilled to make long-term healthier choices to the benefit not only of themselves but also all of the support services (NHS and LA) that would otherwise be required later in life – it is well known that prevention is cheaper than treatment. This is to say nothing to the stimulation of the local economy and charitable infrastructures that the GOG initiative supports through activities like volunteering opportunities (that promote wellbeing and/or employability skills) and the support and resources provided to community hubs and social enterprises. I believe that the proposed cuts to this service will have massive negative ripples throughout the community and on the partner services with whom they so effectively work, like HLA.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration of my concerns.</p> <p>Kind regards, xxxxx</p>
8	<p>Dear XXXX,</p> <p>I work for Great Places Housing Association and manage the Crossley Community Centre in Chadderton.</p>

	<p>We were supported by the Green Ambassador in 2019 on a project to install solar panels for watering plants. We have worked with Get Oldham Growing in the past and have benefitted immensely from their support. The community centre is part of a PFI project that includes a housing development where tenants from diverse background have benefitted.</p> <p>It would be a shame to lose this £60K worth of funding especially during times of people being affected by the effects of Covid on health, isolation, lack of exercise.</p> <p>You may be aware that the present Prime Minister spent £110K on a consultant to decorate Downing Street.</p> <p>As a possible way to fund raise for G.O.G they could consider fund raising pages online such as Crowdfunder.</p> <p>Kind Regards, xxxxx</p>
9	<p>Dear XXXX,</p> <p>As a recipient of advice, support and goods from Get Oldham Growing we are dismayed to read of their possible demise.</p> <p>In a time when we are being encouraged to grow our own and look towards reducing our carbon footprint. As well as all the benefits to our mental and physical health, plus the provision of produce to our food banks, surely this is a retrograde step?</p> <p>Surely there must be other ways of saving money, without closing what in our opinion is a vital service to our community?</p> <p>Will it not cost more to provide fruit and vegetables to the food banks if you have to purchase from other sources, which may not be as fresh?</p> <p>Please ask the council to have a rethink.</p> <p>Yours sincerely, xxxxx</p>
10	<p>Dear XXXX,</p> <p>I am writing to express my deep concern over the proposals to reduce the funding for the get Oldham growing project. I run a programme for young people aged 16 to 25 in Oldham who are care experienced (they have been in the care system at some point in their lives). We have regularly attended the Hub at Alexandra Park to volunteer. The young people have loved this project and have made statements such as 'I love coming here every week, it is so good to see what we have planted grow, knowing that the vegetables are going to people who need them makes it all worth it too'. Others have been less passionate about the work itself but 'just happy to get out of the house, if it wasn't for this project I wouldn't have left the house all week'. We haven't been to the Hub recently but one young person keeps asking when we will go back. When I ask him what he likes best about GMYN he says</p>

	<p>every time 'gardening at the Hub with Hannah'. This particular young person has even built planters at home and donated them to the hub.</p> <p>The loss of this project would mean that these young people lose an amazing experience. Throughout attending sessions at the hub they have been able to improve their wellbeing, learn about growing vegetables and gardening which improves their life skills, meet other young people and build relationships, and of course teaches them the value in contributing to their community.</p> <p>It is obvious the impact that the project has in providing food to food banks and the community, but it also helps vulnerable people with so many different skills and their wellbeing. The loss of get Oldham growing would have a severe negative impact on the programme I run and the young people I support.</p> <p>If you need more information around how the project has helped my programme and these young people please don't hesitate to get in touch.</p> <p>I urge you to reconsider this decision. xxxxx</p>
11	<p>Volunteering at The Hub has proved very beneficial for me for the following reasons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I have gained much confidence in a social setting, 2. I have made many new friends during the six years I have been volunteering at The Hub, 3. I have found considerable satisfaction in helping colleagues at The Hub, 4. Volunteering has improved my knowledge of gardening and of healthy eating, 5. Working in a healthy environment has had considerable beneficial effects for me. I am fitter than I was previously and my mental health is much improved. 6. For our work at The Hub we get a share of the produce grown at The Hub. It tastes better than supermarket food as we know it to be fresh and grown organically. 7. After the loss of my father in 2010, I experienced several years of stress and working at The Hub has helped me to feel more confident and less nervous than I was before. 8. We have lived through the worst pandemic in my lifetime which I have found very challenging. Volunteering at The Hub has been of considerable help to me in getting through the pandemic.

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I would like to make the following comments regarding the proposed cuts to the Get Oldham Growing Budget:

- It helps with my mental health
- It keeps me busy
- I meet ~~new~~ new people and enjoy meeting new people
- I learn new growing techniques which are helpful for my future
- I feel good being involved because it's going towards a good cause.