

Big Oldham Conversation: Budget 2025/26

Interim update: Budget proposals

Last update: 7 February 2025

1 Overview

- 1.1 The Big Oldham Conversation public consultation on our budget proposals for 2025/26 went live on Thursday 23 January 2025 and will run until midnight on Friday 7 February 2025.
- 1.2 This report summarises common themes received to the budget consultation to date. A fuller report will be prepared once the consultation has closed and will be submitted to Full Council.
- 1.3 The final report will also include full details of the publicity carried out to promote our budget consultation to as many residents, businesses, stakeholders and partners as possible across Oldham.

2. Summary

- 2.1 A total of **200 responses** have been received to the budget consultation to date.
- 2.2 The consultation, which is live on Oldham's digital engagement platform, sets out the scale of budgetary pressures over the next two years, highlighting the need for savings. The survey asks respondents two broad questions. The first question asks respondents where they feel that savings should be made. The second question asks respondents to outline the service areas where spending should be prioritised.

3. Consultation Responses

- 3.1. Respondents were asked two questions relating to the Budget. The first asked respondents where the council should seek to make savings and the second asked which services were most important to invest in.
- 3.1.1 This section of the report provides a summary of the themes on the specific budget proposals, gathered through the online consultation portal. The report looks at the two questions asked and analyses these by common themes.

3. 2 Consultation Responses on Savings

Common themes

- 3.2.1 Reduce waste collection.
- 3.2.2 Reduce town centre events and projects like the new market and renovation of Old Town Hall.
- 3.2.3 Do a proper review of road maintenance works. Stop digging up the same roads.
- 3.2.4 Stop the use of consultants and agency staff. Recruit skilled people from outside the council.
- 3.2.5 Reduce the number of councillors, their expenses and cost of meetings and refreshments.
- 3.2.6 Stop the production of Oldham Council Working For You.
- 3.2.7 Stop lighting up the Civic Centre completely.
- 3.2.8 Do more early intervention and prevention work.
- 3.2.9 Stop using private sector companies when supporting the vulnerable.
- 3.2.10 Reduce senior leadership team and bring down their wages.
- 3.2.11 Fine more people who fly tip and park illegally.

3. 3 Consultation Responses on where we should be spending more

Common themes

- 3.3.1 Social Care investment
- 3.3.2 Libraries, Arts, Galleries
- 3.3.3 Green spaces and play facilities for children
- 3.3.4 Roads, particularly potholes
- 3.3.5 Housing
- 3.3.6 Apprenticeships
- 3.3.7 Prevention activities specifically around children and young people
- 3.3.8 Getting the day-to-day basics right: environmental services, highways, etc.
- 3.3.9 More investment into vulnerable adults

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 This report provides a basic overview of the responses received to our budget consultation to date, however, a full report will be provided to Council ahead of 6 March 2025.
- 4.3 As outlined above, there are clear, emerging themes around residents' broad priorities and although we will publish a full report once the consultation period has closed, it is not likely that the themes outlined above should change substantially. Many of the responses received to date corroborate what we already know about resident views through previous engagement and consultation activities and add weight to the sense we have of local sentiments.
- 4.4 The feedback on the budget reduction proposals will also be used to help shape the council's spending plans, helping drive future strategic planning across the system.

5. Next steps

- 5.1 Cabinet members are asked to note the contents of the report and ensure that resident views and experiences are considered when making budget recommendations.
- 5.2 Members of the communication team will prepare a full report to be included on the agenda at the Full Council meeting on 6 March 2025.