



Big Oldham Conversation: Budget 2025/26

Responses to our Budget proposals

Last update: 24 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 ran until midnight on Friday 7 February 2025.
- 1.2 This report summarises all responses we received to the budget consultation, including those received via social media.
- 1.3 The report also details the communication and engagement activity carried out across channels to promote our budget consultation to as many residents, businesses, stakeholders and partners as possible across Oldham.

2. Summary

- 2.1 A total of **212 responses** have been received to the budget consultation via Engagement HQ. An additional **29 responses** were received via social media, meaning the total number of responses received is **241**.
- 2.2 The consultation, which was 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 asked respondents two broad questions. The first question asked respondents where they feel that savings should be made. The second question asked respondents to outline the service areas where spending should be prioritised.
- 2.3 Comments were also collected on our Council social media accounts, including Facebook and Instagram, both of which have a large, local following. Residents were able to add comments under the posts and reply to one another, prompting discussion amongst residents themselves. Due to the nature of the posts, there is no way to discern demographic information, although it is likely that contributors live within borough.

3. Publicity

- 3.1. Our budget consultation was promoted using our established channels of communication on the Oldham Council website and across social media on LinkedIn, Instagram and Facebook.
- 3.2 "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.
- 3.3 The consultation was also promoted via external and internal newsletters to residents and staff, 70% of which live in the borough.

- 3.4 A total of **1,100** views were made to the budget consultation page of the Oldham Council website during the consultation period.

4. Respondents

- 4.1. We received a total of 241 responses to our formal budget consultation including comments on social media (across Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn).
- 4.2 Unlike budget consultations in previous years, participants were not asked to provide any demographic information. This could be voluntarily provided via the engagement platform and the option to create an account however this was not a pre-requisite to taking part in the consultation. As the majority of participants opted not to disclose demographic information, this will not be part of the analysis.

5. Resident insight

- 5.1 As part of the formal budget consultation survey, 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.
- 5.2 This section of the report provides a summary of the feedback 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.
- 5.3 The report also considers the emerging themes for those who responded and social media.

5.1 Consultation Responses on Savings

Workforce

- 5.1.1 Reducing the number of contractors and agency staff in the council workforce was one of the most prominent themes which emerged throughout the budget consultation as a means to save money. Many respondents felt the council should work harder to recruit their own staff and focus on retention.
- 5.1.2 Another common suggestion was for senior management teams to be streamlined and management posts to be cut, with many respondents citing their belief that salaries for senior officers were inflated and could be reduced.
- 5.1.3 Similarly, many respondents referred to the number of councillors across the borough and their associated allowances, with many requesting the number of councillors be cut per ward.

Town Centre

- 5.1.4 A common theme that emerged from feedback was the town centre retail offer remains poor, with many respondents remarking that we should stop spending money on the ongoing regeneration projects within the town centre.

Digital

- 5.1.5 Many respondents felt strongly that the council could save money by making better use of digital systems. Suggestions included better use of AI for admin tasks and improved data collection to understand current issues across the council.

5.2 Consultation Responses on Spending

- 5.2.1 Responses to the question on where spending should be protected are set out below:

Children's Services

- 5.2.2 A large number of survey participants were very strong in their view on prioritising education and creating more opportunities for young people in council spending. The overwhelming agreement highlights the community's strong belief in investing in the future of our youth. Respondents stressed the need for increased funding in educational infrastructure, grassroots projects and increased activities for young people.
- 5.2.3 Respondents also had strong views on early intervention and prevention, with feedback citing the need for more support services to be available earlier to avoid issues that would later result in crises situations.

Clean and Green

- 5.2.4 Clean and green issues and the local environment was referred to as an area in which spending should be prioritised in the upcoming budget.
- 5.2.5 One of the most prevalent responses was around the need to ensure clean, well-maintained roads and streets to improve the look and feel of local areas. Residents specifically mention potholes and fly tipping are key issues that need more funding. This echoes findings of previous consultations over the last two years including last year's budget consultation in which this issue was repeatedly raised by respondents.
- 5.2.6 The maintenance of parks and green space was considered a key priority in spending plans. Many respondents suggested the council should organise litter picks with community groups to help keep our green spaces clean and tidy.

Adult social care

- 5.2.7 Adult social care was highlighted as a key spending priority for respondents. Some respondents cited the difficulty in accessing adult social care services for elderly relatives and the worry they have of the potential costs involved. Residents felt strongly that our adults should be protected as they enter older age and become more vulnerable.

5.3 Social Media Themes

- 5.3.1 As part of the communications plan, the budget consultation was promoted widely across social media including on Oldham Council's Facebook page which has a large, local following. Residents were able to add comments under the posts and reply to one another.
- 5.3.2 Mirroring the responses seen across the formal consultation, comments were strongly focused on environmental and waste management issues.
- 5.3.3 Other comments related to calls for improvements in social housing, youth activities and community spaces.
- 5.3.4 Finally, other comments related to the consultation process itself, suggesting that the council should provide more detailed information around their current spending and any future plans or potential service changes so respondents are able to reflect properly and provide commentary and insight from a more informed perspective.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 Oldham's budget consultation 2025/26 has engaged with residents, staff, local businesses and partner organisations, to gather feedback on this year's proposals.
- 6.2 This report provides an overview of the responses received to our budget consultation following the interim report and has included wider responses received via social media channels.
- 6.3 As has been outlined above, there are clear, emerging themes around residents' broad priorities, with a strong focus on protecting our vulnerable adults and children, maintaining high quality key services such as road maintenance and waste management, as well as maximising and improving local parks and green space.
- 6.4 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.

7. Next Steps

- 7.1 Elected members are asked to note the contents of the report and ensure that resident views and experiences are considered when making budget recommendations.