

# Budget Consultation

## YouChoose Budget Calculator Results

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## 1 Executive summary

Lancashire County Council must save approximately £130 million from its budget over the next two financial years (2011/12 and 2012/13). Lancashire residents were invited to share their views on how to make these savings by completing an online budget calculator called 'YouChoose'. This is a national tool, provided by YouGov and the Local Government Group, as a resource for local authorities to engage their citizens in decisions about how they spend their revenue budgets and increase understanding of the tough choices each council faces.

The calculator required each respondent to choose whether to reduce or increase spending within different service areas while maintaining the current level of council tax and balancing the books. Therefore respondents needed to identify savings in most, if not all, areas of the budget. The findings show which services respondents are more likely to identify for making savings and where they suggest the biggest savings should come from. The calculator was available through the county council website from 3 December 2010 to 4 January 2011 and a total of 736 responses were received.

### 1.1 Key findings

- Services respondents were more likely to reduce spending for were: council support and public engagement; cultural services; and adult social care (699, 698 and 690 respondents, out of 736, respectively).
  - Services fewer respondents chose to reduce spending for were: roads and public transport; children and young people; and waste services (600, 625 and 630 respondents).
  - Respondents made the highest proportional reductions in spending for: cultural services; council support and public engagement; and environment and public protection (27%, 22% and 18% average reduction in budget respectively).
  - Respondents made the lowest proportional reductions for: children and young people; adult social care; and waste (13%, 14% and 14%).
  - Although most respondents suggested reducing spending in most or all service areas, some suggested increasing certain budgets and offsetting this with larger reductions elsewhere. Where respondents suggested increases, the biggest increases were for roads and public transport; environment and public protection; and council support and public engagement (14%, 13% and 13% budget increase respectively).
  - Within each broader service area shown on the calculator are a number of more specific services that respondents could change the budget for independently. The largest proportional reductions of these were to: libraries; museums; and finance, human resources, communication and information technology within the council (27%, 27% and 23% reduction respectively).
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- The largest absolute reductions (i.e. the largest by monetary amount) were services for older people; services for people with a learning disability; and placements for looked after children (£21m, £12m, and £7m reductions respectively).
- Respondents could also select a number of efficiency savings to help meet the new budget. In order of preference, respondents selected to: reduce the use of consultants (599); reduce use of agency staff (588); reduce travel and conference costs (580); reduce management costs (555); savings on accommodation (532); strategic partnership (513); and policy, performance management and administration costs (510).

## 1.2 Limitations

- The above results should be treated as indicative only, as they do not form a representative cross-sample of Lancashire residents.

**Chart 1 - Current budget (2010/11) and respondents' average proposed percentage reduction in each area**

