

2006 Budget Survey

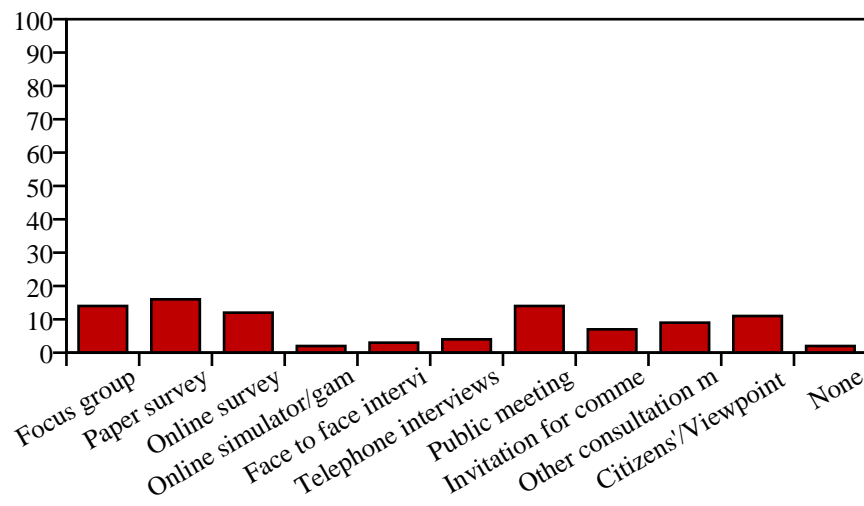
A consultation of LA budget consultation processes

Overview

From **20/02/2006** to **12/06/2006**, Delib ran a consultation entitled '*2006 Budget Survey*'. This report covers the online element of the consultation process, which was run from <http://www.citizenspace.com/local/consult/budget>

Topic 1: Consultation methods

Q1: What budget consultation methods did you use for the last budget year?



Option	Value	Percentage
Focus group	22	14%
Paper survey	25	16%
Online survey	18	12%
Online simulator/game	4	2%
Face to face interviews	5	3%
Telephone interviews	7	4%
Public meeting	21	14%
Invitation for comment ("write to us at...")	11	7%
Other consultation method	14	9%
Citizens'/Viewpoint Panel	17	11%
None	4	2%
Total	148	

Q2: If you ticked 'other consultation method', please enter details below

There are 58 responses to this question. Please see Appendix A for the text of these responses.

Q3: How many responses did each of the above methods receive?

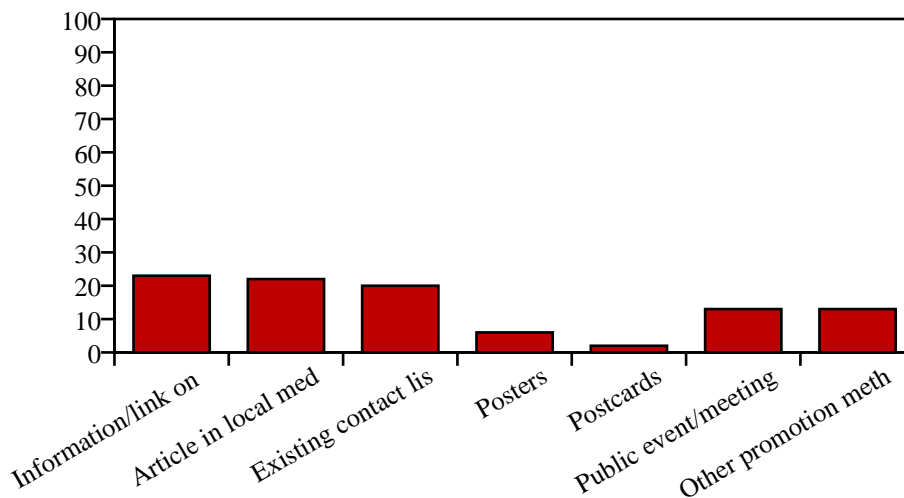
There are 59 responses to this question. Please see Appendix A for the text of these responses.

Q4: From which consultation method(s) do you feel you gained the most useful information?

There are 59 responses to this question. Please see Appendix A for the text of these responses.

Topic 2: Consultation promotion

Q1: How did you promote your budget consultation process?



Option	Value	Percentage
Information/link on website	30	23%
Article in local media	29	22%
Existing contact list (citizens' panel, equalities forum)	26	20%
Posters	8	6%
Postcards	3	2%
Public event/meeting	17	13%
Other promotion method	17	13%
Total	130	

Q2: If you ticked 'other promotion method', please enter details below

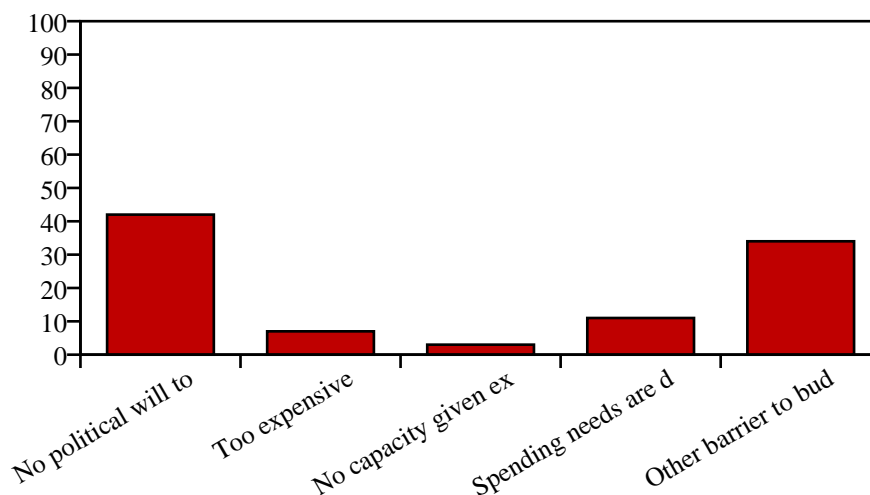
There are 62 responses to this question. Please see Appendix A for the text of these responses.

Q3: Which promotion method do you think proved most effective and why?

There are 62 responses to this question. Please see Appendix A for the text of these responses.

Topic 3: Barriers, resources and cost

Q1: If you did not conduct any budget consultation, why was this?



Option	Value	Percentage
No political will to do so	11	42%
Too expensive	2	7%
No capacity given existing workload	1	3%
Spending needs are dictated by central govt	3	11%
Other barrier to budget consultation	9	34%
Total	26	

Q2: If you ticked 'other barrier to budget consultation', please enter details below

There are 67 responses to this question. Please see Appendix A for the text of these responses.

Q3: What was the total spend on your budget consultation process?

There are 67 responses to this question. Please see Appendix A for the text of these responses.

Q4: Roughly how many person days were spent by staff on the budget consultation process?

There are 67 responses to this question. Please see Appendix A for the text of these responses.

Q5: Do you have any more comments you would like to make about budget consultation in general?

There are 67 responses to this question. Please see Appendix A for the text of these responses.

Topic 4: Online budget consultation

Q1: Please enter any comments you may have on Budget Simulator below

There are 67 responses to this question. Please see Appendix A for the text of these responses.

Appendix A

If you ticked 'other consultation method', please enter details below

1. Youth Cabinet
2. Our current priorities are informed by a MORI consultation panel called Suffolk Speaks which is a partnership of the County Council, districts and other public sector partners.
3. Workshops with Partners and Stakeholders
4. Workshops
5. Consultation roadshows in our consultation caravan. Where we use innovative Interactive techniques to gauge public opinion examples include the use of stickers, post-it notes, boxes, balls, monopoly money, connect four pieces etc..... we are soon to use SMS text messaging to identify public opinion.
6. Used information from other consultation carried out with stakeholders eg residents' attitude survey, user satisfaction survey, area forums, user group forums. Had a business breakfast meeting with business rate-payers as part of NNDR consultation. We also have a Public Service Board where the CE meets with CEs of local partner organisations - budget issues are discussed there.
7. Paper survey in local newspaper
8. Meeting with Parishes. Meeting with local group representatives. Cabinet roadshow in 3 major towns. Invite to all councillors from later to identify local ward issues.
9. Along with a questions in our annual residents survey an opportunity to vote for the desired level of Council tax and priorities is sent to every household as part of a budget special resident's newsletter
10. Deliberative Opinion Polling group
11. Interactive workshop with young people, including telepad voting.
12. We used handheld voting units at our workshop event.

How many responses did each of the above methods receive?

1. there were 4 focus groups, with 8 - 10 people each. general satisfaction survey and spending priorities survey each attracted 800+ responses. the 6 area committee meetings had an average of 30 people each.
2. About 3,500 to a paper survey incorporated into our County Council external publication (with very tight timescales)
3. Focus Group c.10 Paper survey c.1100 Online survey c.35 Telephone interviews 27 Public meetings c.100 Youth Cabinet c.10 Residents' Panel c.500
4. 220 responses to a 20 minute telephone interview
5. Total responses : 250
6. 48 in total
7. Sample of 2000
8. 30 invited; 27 attended.
9. Focus group included 120 residents across the area, from 12 groups. Monthly residents household magazine 'Direct' generates between 400 to 500 responses
10. Citizens' Panel 671 responses (59.9%)

11. 1.227
12. 32 participants in 4 focus groups
13. Suffolk Speaks has a 'panel' of 500 for our district. When it is refreshed, it will increase to 1000.
14. varied but not many eg websurvey 130,
15. 40 attended discussion groups Approx 30 attended workshops
16. 71 (out of a sample of around 250)
17. Fewer than 30, the bulk in relation to one particularly controversial proposal
18. Very low - around 50. This year we did not have any controversial proposals.
19. 6 workshops - 8-10 participants at each
20. 500+ although not all were valid due to the Delib simulator game not collecting all demographic info at the start and/or people responding from outside the area (when it did start collecting the info) so we didn't include everyone in the final analysis. So final results were based on 400+
21. Face-to-face = 600 Focus Groups = 50
22. Approx 200 in all. Most from Cabinet roadshow. Not that many directly related to the budget.
23. Not great last year - the every household poll had distribution problems. About a 2% response (year before had 9%).
24. Numerous - not time to fill this in.
25. Online survey / simulator - 250 Focus groups - 24 Workshop - 27
26. Panel 600+ Online poll 300 Workshop 24 Citizen article 260 Other 150
27. Questionnaire in the Council's magazine and on the web achieved an uncharacteristically low response of 180 (47 via web). Two focus groups with members of citizen panel 500 telephone interviews with citizen panel were carried out because of the low response to the paper questionnaire.
28. There was about a 60% response rate from the Citizens Panel
29. c. 1800 responded to survey overall (paper, phone and online) all citizens' panel members. c. 30 attended discussion event comprising question and answer sessions, focus groups and interviews.
30. 466 in total.
31. 25 letters
32. face to face was very good (SIMALTO) public meeting this year was a disaster

From which consultation method(s) do you feel you gained the most useful information?

1. focus groups and then the surveys.
2. Focus groups
3. Paper survey
4. Public meeting / focus panel
5. it didn't
6. face to face
7. The focus groups worked well and as it was the first time we had undertaken budget consultation it provided a basis on which we can build this year.
8. The focus groups were really beneficial. Began to explore other issues other than council budgets. Budget exercise is really just to tick the box as the council already internally set its budget. Resident's can help to re-affirm

priorities.

9. We had half a dozen public meetings with probably 50 attendees at each, a reduction on previous years
10. Prefer face to face interviews
11. Suffolk Speaks
12. citizens' panel
13. Both were useful and gained insight into views of general public and professionals
14. Citizen Panel surveys and public meetings
15. Focus groups held in the past gave some useful information, although often views of different consultees were in conflict. However only reached a small proportion of residents in this way, many with particular interests, so unlikely to be representative.
16. Public meeting, e-survey and workshops
17. Invitation to comment, despite the limited response.
18. The roadshows were very successful for gaining public opinion, problem solving and good public relations. (although we did have to back them up with surveys to our residents panel, to add more weight to the results)
19. In the past we've used Simalto, and that was great but because we didn't have any big issues, we didn't do it this time.
20. I was only involved in one
21. Face-to-face
22. Neither - the survey was not representative nor were the public meetings
23. focus group newspaper survey
24. Cabinet roadshows
25. neither very useful last year
26. Citizen's viewpoint
27. Telephone survey of representative sample of our population
28. Focus Group
29. Focus groups
30. Workshop
31. 500 telephone interviews and focus groups.
32. We only used 1 method last year.
33. Discussion groups
34. Focus Groups
35. We only used one method this year, focus groups.
36. We undertook a proper SIMALTO survey a couple of years ago to cover the 4-yr strategy period - which was very useful. The latest via the website is really just an interim arrangement & acknowledged to be so.
37. face to face

If you ticked 'other promotion method', please enter details below

1. we had a copy of the survey published with the council tax leaflet.
2. Only appeared in County Council news publication which is sent to all homes in the county
3. letters were sent to those who were likely to receive a phone call based on previous respondents to the Citizens Panel
4. radio advertising
5. Leaflets through the door of houses in the vicinity of each meeting

6. google searchwords for selby, tadcaster and sherburn in elmet
7. Invitation to meeting
8. Council Newspaper
9. Radio interviews, internal communication, local magazine (Torbay View).
10. Resident magazine
11. Through our local Council magazine.
12. Council newspaper
13. Survey undertaken via council's own newsletter. Included prepaid form to return.
14. A stratified sample identified by our consultation consultants
15. Direct recruitment of young people from shopping centres using a screener.
16. In our Citizen magazine
17. Letters were issued to what was considered to be a representative cross-section of the public, private, community sectors and main stakeholders inviting them to attend focus groups.

Which promotion method do you think proved most effective and why?

1. the counciltax leaflet reached every household and the survey was relevant to it
2. Residents survey shows that our County's news publication is a popular source of information about the County Council
3. Used Citizens Panel for recruiting Focus Groups. Focus Groups were the main source of information used to inform budget consultation. (The on-line survey was simply to open up the debate to anyone else that wanted to participate). Our Citizens Panel is well maintained and is a cost effective way for us to recruit participants from
4. Article in local media
5. Face to face recruitment from front-line services. Use a mailing to existing database of participants. This is topped up each year through survey responses in council magazine. Normally an integrated communications approach works best.
6. Don't know
7. panel..built up rapport over time
8. Using recruitment from citizens panel
9. Existing contact list
10. Have generally used the Citizens Panel for consultation. Some years we have run focus groups and these were well received as they gave people more understanding of the work of the Council and an insight into budget constraints and choices to be made.
11. Use of existing mailing list for the Community Network which generated a range of considered comment around the options
12. Media involvement - Radio, and articles in the local paper.
13. Resident magazine
14. don't know as we didn't ask people where they found out about it, but think it might have been the 'article in local media' - which was actually a front page article in our resident newspaper, which is delivered to all homes
15. Through our Council magazine as it goes to every household and in surveys comes out consistently as the highest source of information about the council.

16. Web site Local papers
17. advert in paper
18. None particularly. Turnout was generally disappointing.
19. local media
20. Press releases
21. Focus Group - opportunity to engage with individuals/with each other: opportunity to educate as part of consultation.
22. Direct street recruitment. Able to tailor a specific sample.
23. Local media
24. Existing contact list because information is directed to a specific person, therefore more personalised and they are more likely to respond.
25. Meetings
26. The focus groups with interactive keyboards which was used for the first time in this budget consultation received favourable comments from those attending. It produced results that could be considered by Members when setting the council tax.

If you ticked 'other barrier to budget consultation', please enter details below

1. It is both a capacity issue and one of the will (or courage) to do it. The whole arena is fraught with the politics of health provision, balancing budgets, relationships within the health economy and public needs, wants and expectations.
2. getting a representative sample
3. Public are just not interested
4. While nothing specifically was done for 2006/7 revenue budget channels have been used in the past including "citizens panel" and there is little sense in repeating the same exercise every year. Also all spending plans need to be linked with other corporate plans. In 2005 there was a lot of wide consultation on the "Community Strategy". The budget should not be viewed in isolation. All savings in the budget were linked back to both the policies of the Council and the "Gershon" agenda
5. We conducted a scientific survey (SIMALTO) a couple of years ago to cover the 4-yr period of the budget strategy - so not necessary to do last year.
6. We undertook a high level exercise for 2004/05 as part of a satisfaction survey, and intend to use a three year rolling programme, consulting on specific service areas in years 2 and 3. We used MORI to undertake this work, based around a Citizens Panel format of 8,000 people.

What was the total spend on your budget consultation process?

1. c£3,000
2. Approx £6,000
3. 15000
4. £8,000 approx
5. £8,500
6. £100
7. £1,500
8. £200

9. £30k ish
10. £3500
11. not costed but not much
12. £9000
13. Minimal - done in house
14. Less than £500 excluding staff time
15. £10,000
16. £1000
17. £10,500
18. £2000
19. 10,000
20. No additional costs
21. Minimal excluding staff time
22. £10k
23. 17,000
24. Not costed
25. @£10k
26. Approx £15,000
27. under £10k
28. £35,000
29. c £3,000
30. 12,300
31. c£1,500
32. c. £10,000
33. under £10k
34. £8,500 approx.
35. Nil last year
36. £15,000

Roughly how many person days were spent by staff on the budget consultation process?

1. 30
2. c3 - done very quickly at last moment
3. 30
4. 5
5. 10
6. 7
7. 10
8. 5 days
9. 6
10. 7 maybe
11. 20
12. 10
13. approx 3 (more in previous year when we used focus groups)
14. Fewer than 5
15. can't say
16. 25
17. approx 15
18. don't know

- 19. 2
- 20. None specifically on budget consultation
- 21. 25
- 22. 3
- 23. 30 + (including members)
- 24. 10
- 25. 45 - 50days
- 26. Can't say
- 27. c12
- 28. 6-8
- 29. 5
- 30. 20
- 31. 6
- 32. 6 days approx.
- 33. approx. 10
- 34. Nil last year
- 35. 5

Do you have any more comments you would like to make about budget consultation in general?

1. people like short sharp surveys or else a method that is personal and interactive. on-line surveys have yet to take off in a big way.
2. Needs to provide enough information to residents about the services and the impacts of cuts. In last survey we were criticised for not doing this and also not writing in plain English. It is crucial that Residents understand the consequences of what they select in a consultation.
3. We put considerable effort into budget consultation as the information gained is useful for the Council as a whole. Consulting on the budget is extremely difficult as the issues are technical and need to be presented in ways that the public can understand and comment on. It takes us a considerable amount of time and effort to 'translate' budget information into a useable format.
4. consultants who were experts in the field were used to carry out the process so actual officer time was limited
5. The consultation wasn't specifically for the budget, but budget priorities were covered as part of the general satisfaction survey
6. It's difficult to provide enough information, in a format that is simple enough for the public to understand, to enable them to get the most from the process. However, it was very interesting and we are doing more this year as a result.
7. Our consultation was carried out as part of our Service & Financial Planning cycle. Therefore, it tested residents' views on whether our priorities accord with their wishes, rather than asking specifically about financial issues. A short exercise was carried out to find out how each participant would allocate a sum of money amongst our priorities, to establish the relative merits of the priorities, from their perspective.
8. very difficult to engage the public on this if it is a pure financial survey..complex issues and implications
9. main difficulty is getting responses that are representative of the general public

10. Difficult to get the balance between giving enough information to put in context, and keeping short so that people don't lose interest.
11. I think a question around council tax rises is very important, it's something the residents really want to have their say on and it can attract them into completing the other questions, as long as they feel their views are going to be listened to and action is to be taken. Feedback is very important if you are undertaking budget consultation each year - we advertised our changes to the budget after the consultation process and got a great response from residents. They felt more confident in us!
12. WE are still struggling to ensure clarity of message and to establish a structure which is accessible to the public and relevant for ourselves.
13. See question 2
14. Online polls have proved to be a waste of time and are easily influenced by interest groups.
15. It is difficult to provide the correct information, in a format that is simple enough for the public to understand, to enable them to get the most from the process. The interactive keyboards allowed everyone in the focus groups to take part and have their views heard, not just those with the loudest voices! The electronic Talkback Panels used for the first time in this budget consultation also proved a popular way of obtaining feedback, rather than the usual paper format.
16. The only really useful survey is the SIMALTO one which was based on a statistically sound sample base

Please enter any comments you may have on Budget Simulator below

1. not seen it yet!
2. Good way of allowing residents to "play" and see the consequences and impact on Council tax. Could be influenced by groups other than purely residents.
3. Easy to use. Drawbacks are: no sense of the materiality of services -- in the examples you give education would be larger than all the others put together. no real exploration of where the money is currently spent -- so opinions are being solicited in a vacuum
4. It's OK, it is difficult to use for a police authority budget as it is hard to define sectors of policing for funding like you do for the councils. We did a simple questionnaire online using Monkey for two weeks and got nearly 800 responses- the software also produces the results overall in powerpoint and then via excel we can break down by age, districts, or any other specified break. We can also adapt the questions at any time and the software only cost £300.
5. Interesting concept and would be interested in learning more about it and the cost etc
6. Seems pretty simple. Can you change the budget headings? If you can we would be interested in using it this year.
7. Let people set a target Council Tax at the start. Need to give people a quick information screen on how much money government is giving to support spending so they understand the effect of the settlement on Council Tax. Need to get people to understand some of the key cost drivers in setting the Council Tax - pay, rates, etc. These costs rise nationally and you simply can't duck them. Need to give people income options other than Council Tax and the

consequences such as increasing parking charges, admission fees. Then allow them to spend what's left in the pot on priorities. This is more like what the politicians do.

8. Probably useful as an education tool but too simplistic to be used in statistical decision making. SIMALTO offers more robust statistical citizen choice. All tools can have a role in educating the public in the difficulties involved. Even backbench councillors need to be educated in the budget processes.

9. The model is far too simple to elicit a meaningful response

10. Have used a budget simulator process before and it was very complicated for people to understand.

11. The simulator did not open fully on my screen. Therefore I was unable to use it. This could however be because I am hot-desking today, so the PC may not be set up correctly.

12. looks entertaining !

13. Very simplistic and doesn't really get down to the heart of budget decisions. It would be a struggle to sell this to our political masters as a good way of consulting with the public.

14. It seems like a very useful tool for engaging with groups and smaller groups of members in terms of setting priorities.

15. its a great tool, we have had over 1000 responses.

16. It is great in some ways and we got a fantastic response to it - much higher than other online surveys we have done. Great for drawing people in. However it is slightly 'mickey mouse' in some ways such as the way that explanations of increases/decreases are dealt with (just one coverall option available to put in as the consequence regardless of what increase/decrease is proposed), and the pictures that appear - whilst good to have some interactive/movement etc on screen, not sure how useful they really were esp. as seemed quite slow to build and were expensive. Also need to make the demographics section clearer - it was odd that although people 'had' to fill in the postcode sector on ours (as we felt it was important to only include people from the area in the consultation), it turned out that people could still submit their results without filling in ANY demog info, - therefore the 'have to fill in' function didn't really work. Finally, the game itself seemed quite small on the screen - i.e. there was a lot of bumf around it, meaning that the space for it was limited and you had to do a lot of scrolling down to answer more qs / see more results I'm not sure that everyone was aware of this So some sort of automatic movement thru the game would be good. Hope this doesn't sound too negative, as overall we did find it useful and were really pleased with the high response we got - and we do plan to continue using it in the future. thanks.

17. Seems simplistic

18. It looks a good system. The price may be a barrier to authorities who's budgets are already tight.

19. Easy to use, but needs to go into a bit more detail. Expect we could produce something similar. Would consider using it if it was either cheaper or more detailed.

20. Simplistic - needs to reflect what we do and the scale of budgets

21. Looks as though it could be very useful

22. Get in touch with me in September - may consider using it.

23. I would like to use it in a controlled workshop environment.

24. This is a piece of software I'm currently looking at as one way of conducting our budget consultation this year.