The London Borough of Havering

Budget Consultation Research Report

26 January 2022

westco

Contents

Introduction

This report summarises the findings from two pieces of budget consultation research conducted by the London Borough of Havering.

Online Survey

The council ran an online survey, from 2nd November 2021 to 4th January 2022 and received 456 responses. Of the responses, 95% came from Havering residents. The survey consisted of questions on:

- Issues and concerns in the local area
- Issues and concerns of personal importance
- Budget and Council Tax
- Saving proposals

Focus Groups

The council commissioned Westco, a market research agency, to conduct two qualitative online focus groups with residents to understand their budget priorities, their perceptions of the council's approach to budget saving and to find out their views on the level of council tax. The focus groups took place online on the 14th and 15th December 2021, using the Zoom platform.

The objectives for these focus groups were the following:

- To explore what is important to Havering residents in public service delivery
- To explore the role public service delivery has on their quality of life in Havering
- To explore satisfaction with perception and expectations of Havering Council
- To explore residents' relative priorities in public service delivery in Havering

Methodology and sample

Survey

The council conducted an online survey to which 456 people responded. The breakdown of respondent types is detailed below:

- 432 identified as residents of the borough AND/OR
- 5 representing / owning a local business
- 5 representing a charity that covers the Havering area
- 2 representing a community group in Havering
- 18 working for Havering Council (resident)
- 8 working for Havering Council (non-resident)
- 6 representing a public sector organisation

Sample

It should be noted that this survey was self-selecting and is not a representative sample of residents. Therefore, results should be treated as indicative only.

The demographic profile of responses to the survey is broadly in line with the Havering population on characteristics including gender and ethnicity. However, the online survey respondents are not as closely aligned with the local population on age. The survey is quite heavily skewed towards older age groups, and this should be borne in mind when reading the results of the survey. Younger residents (aged under 45) made up 32% of the survey responses, whereas ideally, they would have made up 44%.

Age	Survey respondents %	Havering Population Estimates %	Difference
18-24	1%	7%	-6
25-34	12%	18%	-6
35-44	19%	18%	+1
Under 45	**32%**	**44%**	**-12**
45-54	18%	17%	+1
55-64	21%	16%	+5
65-74	20%	12%	+8
75+	8%	12%	-4
Over 45	**68%**	**56%**	**+12**

Focus Groups

Westco conducted two online focus groups over the course of two days in December 2021:

- Residents Focus Group 1 – 14th December 2020, 12:00pm – 1:00pm;
- Residents Focus Group 2 – 15th December 2020, 12:00pm – 1:00pm;

The first group contained participants aged 40 and under. The second group contained participants who were aged over 40 years old. This was done so that the groups felt more at ease expressing their opinions and were more likely to identify life stage themes. Ten participants were recruited for each focus group for a total of 20. Overall, 17 of participants attended the focus groups. The participants were asked to complete some pre-tasks prior to the discussions around their key positive and negative issues for the area and to perform a budgeting exercise.

The focus groups took place on Zoom and lasted for around an hour and 15 minutes. Feedback was recorded anonymously. Observers from Havering Council were present during the two focus groups but did not participate in discussions. The Finance Team gave a presentation on the current state of the council finances and gave an outline of savings and efficiency proposals.

Approach

Employing a qualitative approach allowed researchers to gather rich insights into participants' reflection on the budget and council tax. An online approach was necessary to mitigate the potential for lockdowns and general health and safety concerns arising from COVID-19. Zoom allowed participants to engage with us and one another freely and we were able to video capture their insights and feedback.

Recruitment

In order to recruit a broad range of participants we worked with a market research recruitment agency called Criteria who employed three professional recruiters to source Havering residents for the focus groups.

In order to identify suitable candidates, Westco developed a recruitment screener. The screener ensured that a mixture of residents with different demographic characteristics were recruited. It also ensured residents with a range of views and knowledge about the Council and Covid-19 government guidelines. Finally, the screening questionnaire was designed to also identify participants who were communicative and articulate, ensuring that everyone attending the focus group would provide lively debate and discussion.

The screening questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1.

Sample and Quotas

The following criteria were taken into account to ensure a good mix of participants:

- Demographics (age, gender, ethnicity)
- Mix of working status
- Mix of social grades
- Mix of attitudes towards the Council

Incentives

Participants were offered a cash incentive for attending the focus groups. Residents were offered £60 to attend. Offering incentives is considered best practice when conducting qualitative research, and incentives for this project were given in

accordance with the Market Research Society (MRS) guidelines. The use of incentives improves attendance and it ensures that those who are motivated to attend are not only those with strong opinions that they wish to share. There were no other conditions participants were required to meet in order to receive the incentive, other than to attend the focus group.

Discussion Guide

To facilitate the focus group, Westco produced a discussion guide for the focus groups. This discussion guide was approved by Havering Council.

The discussion guide can be seen in Appendix 2.

Analysis

The nature of qualitative research reflects opinions and is not designed to be statistically representative of the general public. It is rather an opportunity to discuss issues and probe deeply into the views held by the participants. Therefore, conclusions and recommendations from these groups cannot be applied to the general population.

Executive Summary

Life in Havering

Within the survey, respondents were asked what they feel the most important issues are that the borough is likely to face in the next year. By weighted rank these are:

- Social Care provision
- National Health Service / Healthcare
- Crime / Community Safety

In relation to areas of personal concern, the top three things that respondents are personally most concerned about are:

- Cleanliness of street and local area
- Anti-social behaviour in my community
- My physical health and fitness

There is some alignment of views on this among the focus groups, commonly identified negative quality of life factors in the younger focus group were street cleaning and bin collections and the older group highlighted litter as an issue. The older focus group also felt community safety was an area the council needs to improve on.

The focus group participants associate value for money with efficient well-run services. The key value for money council services include street cleaning, bin collection, parks, street lighting and community safety and so there is a lot of cross over here with the survey regarding important issues for the area and for individuals personally.

Council Tax

Respondents to the survey were asked about their support for an increase to council tax. Almost three in five respondents (57%) said they support some form of increase, with two in five saying they do not support an increase (41%).

However, it is important to note the difference in opinion among age groups on this question. Those aged 25 to 44 are much less likely to agree to any rise (60%) compared with those aged over 45 (31% say they do not support any rise). It should also be noted that the survey had a higher-than-average proportion of older respondents (68% aged 45+) to the survey and so the data is skewed towards the views of that group for this question and across the survey results generally.

The majority of participants in both focus groups said they did not want to see any rise in council tax. A minority were split on whether to raise council tax by one or two per cent.

Spending Priorities

Between two in five and two thirds of survey respondents agree with the savings proposals, apart from the proposal around staff reduction – which saw less than half in support.

Proposal	Agree	Neither	Disagree
Better use of data through Business Intelligence	66%	23%	8%
New models of delivery	63%	25%	10%
Prevention	61%	30%	6%
Regeneration proposals	58%	27%	13%
Staff reduction through efficiency	45%	22%	31%

During the focus groups there was also general agreement with the proposals but there were concerns about reducing staff numbers by 400 due to the impact this could have on customer service and other services.

Budget Prioritisation

When asked in the survey if they had to remove £1 from one of a list of service areas, the areas for removal were corporate services (24%), support services (12%), highways, traffic and parking (12%) and libraries (11%).

During the focus group the services that saw the least prioritisation by the under 40s were, libraries, planning and community services. Libraries and planning were also among the services given the least prioritisation by the over 40s.

When asked in the survey if they had to add £1 to a list of services areas, the top responses were adult social care (12%), corporate service (11%), children's social care (8%) and enforcement and safety (7%).

Children's social care was mentioned by both focus groups as being an area for prioritisation.

Life in Havering

Most important issues Havering is likely to face in the next year

The three most important issues that respondents considered that the borough is likely to face in the next year by weighted rank are:
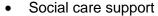
- Social Care provision
- National Health Service / Healthcare
- Crime / Community Safety

Crime and community safety remains an important issue from the previous year. However, the pandemic and the economic situation appear less of a concern compared to the healthcare and social care provision.

Issue	Issue 1 score	Issue 2 score	Issue 3 score	Total score
Crime/Community Safety	240	144	50	434
NHS/Healthcare	162	120	50	332
Social Care	129	72	39	240
Ageing population	126	60	37	223
COVID/Pandemic	141	58	20	219
Economy/economic situation	102	66	35	203
Environment/climate change	99	38	28	165
Population levels/over-population	63	54	45	162
Education/schools	45	62	28	135
Housing	54	48	24	126
Inflation/prices	54	26	20	100
Immigration	51	30	15	96
Morality and individual behaviours	18	28	16	62
EU/Brexit	15	26	4	45
Low pay/wages	6	24	10	40
Unemployment	6	16	7	29
Personal finances	12	10	6	28
Race relations	9	4	5	18
Other	30	20	13	63

Issues the survey respondents feel the borough is facing, which they commented about via the open comment question include:

- Public transport and transportation links (e.g. Beam Park)
- Condition of pavements, roads and local landmarks
- Council Tax

- Social care support
- Health and wellbeing
- Overspending of council budget (e.g. housing benefits, Members' allowance)
- Education
- Waste Management e.g. wheelie bins, bin collection
- High streets
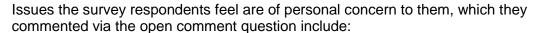- Activities for children and young people

Things of most personal concern to respondents

The three things that respondents are personally most concerned about are:

- Cleanliness of street and local area

- Anti-social behaviour in my community

- My physical health and fitness

Physical health and fitness remains an important concern for respondents with cleanliness of street and local area, and anti-social behaviour is becoming a more pressing concern compared to employment stability and mental health & wellbeing from the previous year.

	Rank 1 score	Rank 2 score	Rank 3 score	Total score
Cleanliness of street and local area	153	94	69	316
Anti-social behavior in my community	123	146	35	304
My physical health and fitness	201	54	25	280
Being a victim of crime	123	64	37	224
Paying bills	120	54	26	200
The local environment/pollution	57	90	50	197
Climate change	111	56	27	194
My mental health and wellbeing	99	56	21	184
Staying in work/employment stability	84	44	19	147
Keeping a roof over my head	69	28	6	103
Raising children	48	28	17	93
Housing affordability	39	30	17	86
Public transport	33	38	12	83
Educational provision	24	24	16	64
Future job prospects	12	26	8	46
Community relations	9	16	18	43
Being lonely	6	10	3	19
None of these	18	10	11	39
Other	33	20	25	78

Issues the survey respondents feel are of personal concern to them, which they commented via the open comment question include:

- Health and wellbeing (e.g. lack of GP or face-to-face appointments, family health, waiting lists)
- Waste Management
- Social Care (care homes, Adult and Children's)
- Council Tax increase
- Parking
- Racism
- Shortage of housing
- Road and cycling infrastructure
- Local Government corruption and maladministration
- Crime and safety
- Overpopulation and immigration
- Climate change

A number of the areas listed above were identified during the focus groups as issues including street cleaning, litter and bin collections, anti-social behaviour and community safety.

Respondents were asked how the Council could support them with the issues that they are most concerned about. Responses are summarised and categorised under the Council's priorities.

CLEANER & SAFER

- More policing, CCTV and visible enforcement
- Preventing crime and antisocial behaviour (ASB) through education
- Reducing and enforcing against littering, noise pollution, ASB and crime
- Repairing roads, potholes and pavements
- Enforcing COVID-19 guidelines
- Schemes to reduce congestion and traffic
- More affordable public transport
- Better walking and cycling infrastructure
- Regular meetings with local residents about concerns
- Regular refuse collection and reducing fly-tipping
- Provision of wheelie bins
- Improving recycling facilities (including kerbside glass collection)
- Higher standards of cleanliness and maintenance of roads, pavements open areas, green spaces and parks
- Providing more parks and open spaces (that are well maintained and litter free)
- Addressing climate change, developing green policies and supporting green initiatives

TOGETHER

- Promoting religious tolerance and inter-cultural events
- Community meeting, groups and events
- Strengthen voluntary sector and increase volunteering opportunities
- Increasing volunteering opportunities and skill development courses

- Invest in community projects
- Prioritising and funding education and schools
- Build more primary and secondary schools
- Better support for mental health issues
- Supporting the NHS (e.g. GP availability)
- Better funding of mental health services
- Protecting social care support and funding
- More youth provision and engagement
- More sporting facilities, clubs and activities

VALUE FOR MONEY (and other Council related suggestions)

- No increase in Council Tax or Business Rates
- Supporting local businesses
- Reducing allowances and pay for staff and councillors
- Providing employment and training opportunities
- Lobbying for more funding from Central Government
- Budgeting well and targeted funding to priority areas
- Ensure value for money and better procurement processes
- Better customer service

PROUDER

- Building and investing in more affordable housing and social housing
- Regulating housing prices and rentals
- Reducing homelessness
- Reducing overdevelopment (and ensuring the right level of infrastructure is in place)
- Improving town centres
- Beam Park development
- Removing car parking charges
- Supporting sustainability / climate change agendas (e.g., planting trees, better recycling, reducing cars)

Quality of life factors

The first part of the focus groups asked participants, unprompted, about positive and negative impacts on their quality of life in Havering.

Positive quality of life factors

Many individuals in both focus groups identified Havering as a good location as it is both close to central London, with good connections, and far enough outside of the city to enjoy the benefits of outer London. Many of the participants had moved at different times from inner London to Havering.

Access and proximity to London

A key advantage of living in Havering is close access to central London whether via road or public transport.

One of the best things about living here is that it is so quick into London

Group 1, U40

I love shopping in Romford, and I sold my car because the transport links are so good. I can be in London in 18 minutes.

Group 2, O40

Parks and open spaces

A reason many of the participants chose to live in Havering is because it has great open spaces and parks. The benefits of these spaces have also taken on new meaning since the beginning of the pandemic. Ready access to open spaces has had important quality of life benefits during lockdowns and the pandemic in general.

Good, clean parks, you know, these are…important for your quality of life.

Group 1, U40

I like the area because it's very green. Yeah, there's so much open space. And it's not too overly dense.

Group 2, O40

I'm enjoying lockdown. We went on some nice long walks in the Bedfords Park and all round, and it was lovely.

Group 2, O40

Shopping

Havering is seen by participants as having good shopping facilities by those that live in the area.

There are good shopping facilities here

Group 1, U40

Good schools

The final area where there is broad agreement, and broad agreement between younger and older groups, is that Havering has good schools.

My daughter - she goes to local school, I have no complaints in terms of the school, I think they might need a bit more funding.

Group 1, U40

I've got one in secondary and one in primary school. And where we live, I like the fact that there is a variety of schools you can pick from, and most of them are pretty good. In fact, they are very good. And I can't fault the schools I picked for both my children, and they seem quite happy and content.

Group 2, O40

It is important in terms of budgetary thinking and communications, that when asked about positive quality of life issues there is an absence of spontaneous identification of social care or, affordable decent housing or social housing from participants.

Negative quality of life factors

The most commonly identified negative quality of life factors in the younger focus group were street cleaning, bin collections and parking. The older group equally highlighted litter, parking and traffic issues. Some of the issue they highlighted align with issues raised in the survey about the local area and personal concerns.

Street cleaning, litter and bin collections

Research conducted by LG Comms has consistently shown that a select few universal services contribute most strongly to the public's overall perceptions of councils, and these are street cleaning, bin collections along with perceptions of parks and open spaces. Participants mentioned issues they perceive with these services in Havering.

I will say probably be a bit more punctual on the rubbish collection.

Group 1, U40

I think the bins aren't emptied often enough.

Group 2, O40

The parks I think the bins aren't empty often enough

Group 2, O40

Parking

Earlier in the pandemic and during lockdowns, Havering Council brought in some innovation around parking which proved popular with residents. Participants expressed concern that these changes were being reverted.

They [the council] can do something in regard to the parking, maybe revert back to the suggestion that was made earlier about half an hour free parking and maybe having some kind of concession or something for residents.

Group 1, U40

Allow them to increase parking spaces

Group 1, U40

I say it's more to do with the Ringo because all it's at the Ringo system, and a lot of my neighbours are really elderly, and they all have issues because the metres don't work and then they haven't got mobile phones so then they're sort of really limited to where they can go and do their shop.

Group 2, O40

Local road changes, traffic and potholes

Participants highlighted a range of issues with road changes, traffic flow through the borough and potholes.

the roadblocks seem to last forever, it's not helping the traffic.

Group 1, U40

Traffic at peak times I know you probably can't do a lot about that but certainly where I live…The traffic round there is a nightmare… it's especially the junction after gallows corner, with the filter… you're lucky to get two cars through before [they change].

Group 2, O40

Key council services like social care, affordable housing and council housing did not appear significantly as negative components of quality of life among the participants.

Perceptions of Havering Council

Council strengths

Focus group participants identified a number of strengths of the council:

- **Good communications** - *I like their newsletters. I get the newsletters every week or so. I think; their newsletters are informative.*

- **Good recycling** - *I like the fact that we get the orange recycle bags, they make sure that we get every couple of weeks as well, which is good.*

- **Community hubs** - *it's the information that you get like the community hubs when they have session times - information where you can be signposted to particular issues that you might have*

- **Good libraries** - *I think we're very fortunate. We have wonderful libraries in Havering. And that is the top of my list. One of the things that the council do well.*

Council areas for improvement

The participants were able to identify more areas for improvement than council strengths. Many of the perceived areas for improvement correspond to the factors that the public identified as issues which were having a negative impact on their lives.

- **Parking, traffic and state of the roads** - *I'd say the parking on the road, the state of the roads as well.*

  additional parking available or what's going on in terms of roadworks

  The potholes we have in the surrounding roads around here [are very hazardous]

- **Community safety** - *Safety in the area. You need to have CCTV cameras everywhere and put in good street lighting.*

  In terms of youngsters and keeping people off the streets

- **Litter and flytipping** - *I know the council sort of deals with the rubbish but I notice more and more bigger items being left and being dumped at the end of the roads. So maybe that's something that needs to be looked at, fly tipping.*

- **Customer contact and customer care** - *just trying to get through to somebody can be a bit difficult, but you know, when they provide information for certain sectors it's quite good.*

Customer service is appalling.

- **Wasting money** - *They waste a lot of money, that's what I find so annoying. It's a lot of money, wasted by the council.*

- **Concern about social infrastructure being large enough to support new developments** - *it is great for the area to see that old developments are knocked down, but you worry what the infrastructure of the area will be after that.*

If new houses are going up and flats, those people might have children and that then means more who don't get into the local school places and preschool places, these are done on distance from the school to your residence. So yeah, I don't know if there's any plans for any new primary schools to be built.

Partnership working

Havering Council were also interested to find out what the participants thought about how the council works with their partners. Building on the issues already raised, regarding quality of life, participants directly raised issues of crime and anti-social behaviour and housing developments:

The police… For me, that would be the partnership that needs to be strengthened.

Group 1, U40

I don't know who it is but whoever does the housing developments, work closely with them. Maybe keep a consistent standard or a consistent way of building houses or new developments.

Group 1, U40

The relationship with public health and the NHS was not raised when we asked about partnership working but the following points were made in the general conversation that took place:

I had COVID back in July and I had a knock on the door actually from two council representatives and I don't know how they managed to do that, obviously I must have signed up for something, but they came just to check to see if I was okay. It was a bit weird, but I found that was quite helpful.

Group 1, U40

I was really impressed with the response that council had because my parents live in Havering. And when you had the lockdown, they were getting provisions and stuff sent to them and stuff like that.

Group 1, U40

Perceptions of Value for Money and Council Tax

What does value for money look like

Participants in both focus groups identified a range of different things which could be seen as 'value for money' or evidence of value for money. Perhaps one of the main challenges is that many people do not have the knowledge about how the council spends its money or where the money comes from. So, it can be hard for people to understand if and how money is being spent well.

Participants identified things that they feel do not make sense, or look like duplication, and see these things as waste but it is much harder for them to recognise when something is working well.

I think it goes down again to the council tax. I mean, that needs to be more transparent as to what my 155 pounds a month actually goes towards, because, apart from picking up my bins and some lighting on my road, really what else am I paying for… they need to demonstrate value for money, because you just don't know how they're spending it.

Group 1, U40

In both discussions, participants associate value for money with efficient well-run services:

Just more efficiency.

Group 2, O40

You need systems to be in place to deal with something - so you don't have to go from department to department and they have to get approved for different things.

Group 2, O40

Good customer service and answer your queries in good time.

Group 2, O40

There is also a pattern to the services they identify as value for money –universal services they said were important for quality of life, and services that contribute to an orderly public realm. These services are also fairly easy to see if they are working effectively – for instance having litter on the streets, having bins lying around and streetlights working.

Weekly refuse collections. That's good. Parks are in a good condition.

Group 2, O40

I think in terms of the council tax... I think the minimum expectation is cleanliness, right?

Group 1, U40

So, I can see that they are investing back into community… So, I think that's quite good. Like keeping everything neat keeping everything clean. So, once you see a clean-cut area, you don't really want to ruin it. If they don't take good care of it and then maybe people litter more etc.

Views on changing Council Tax

Survey respondents

Within the survey, respondents were asked about their support to increase council tax. Almost three in five respondents (57%) said they support some form of increase, with two in five saying they do not support an increase (41%).

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
I support an increase of 2% or above	60	13%
I support an increase of between 1% and 2%	101	22%
I support an increase of between 0% and 1%	96	21%
I do not support an increase	188	41%
Don't know/no opinion	9	2%
Total	456	100%

Views by age group of respondents

However, it is important to note the difference in opinion among age groups on this question. Those aged 25 to 44 are much less likely to agree to any rise (60%) compared with those aged over 45 (31% say they do not support any rise). It should also be noted that the survey had a higher-than-average proportion of older respondents (68% aged 45+) to the survey and so the data is skewed towards the views of that group for this question and across the survey results generally.

	Aged 25 to 44		Aged over 45	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
I support an increase of 2% or above	10	7%	47	16%
I support an increase of between 1% and 2%	18	13%	80	27%
I support an increase of between 0% and 1%	25	18%	64	22%
I do not support an increase	81	60%	94	32%
Don't know/no opinion	2	1%	7	2%
Total	136	100%	292	100%

Though not representative in terms of quantifying perceptions, the focus groups through stratified sampling are representative in terms of validating perceptions.

By this we mean the voting responses of the participants might not be the same as the wider population, but if the general public say council tax should go up then participants in the group who think council tax should go up are likely to be able to explain to us the kind of reasons the wider public think council tax should go up.

In the over 40s group, none of the participants thought Council Tax should be increased:

I've got a Tory MP. I'm sure he could wrangle another 14 million from the government. [They] Waste enough money and strangely enough [they can find money when they want to] So another 14 million

Group 2, O40

The majority in the under 40s focus group also did not want to see a rise in Council Tax:

personally, for me, I know what I want to pay. I want it to be reduced. I just think the whole system needs to be reformed.

Group 1, U40

The remainder of the group then split evenly between wanting a one per cent and a two per cent rise. The opinion among the under 40s focus group is not dissimilar from the in the findings of the online survey conducted last year about council tax increases.

Savings Proposals

During the focus group, the Havering Council Finance team gave a presentation regarding the £14m overspend, explaining that extra demands, especially around the adult and children's social care budget during COVID and lockdown, which have led to significant cost increases.

In order to bring the budget back into balance, the Finance team listed a set of savings proposals and wanted participant's feedback on these.

The Finance team identified the following areas to enable a range of budgetary savings - totalling £14 million.

Proposal	Saving	Details
Staffing reduction through efficiency	£7m anticipated saving	1. Reduce headcount by approximately 400 2. Undertake review of staffing 3. Improve staff retention 4. Create a One stop shop for residents for 'Life Events' circumstances 5. Review Business Processes across the Council to deliver greater efficiency 6. Review of oneSource 7. Efficiencies from the development of the Havering Digital Portfolio: - The Council has invested to develop its digital offer which should allow significant savings through modernising work processes and improving service offers to customers and partners
New Models of Delivery	£4m anticipated saving	Including: 1. Review of Passenger Transport 2. Retendering of the waste contract 3. Review of enforcement activity 4. Front Door / prevention demand in Children's Services 5. Placements / sufficiency in Children's Services 6. Housing Services 7. Adult Services
Prevention	£1.5m anticipated saving	Reviewing opportunities that the new Borough Partnership between the Health system and the Council gives us, particularly around the prevention agenda
Better use of data through Business Intelligence	£1m anticipated saving	Including: 1. Data matching in relation to tracking people in temporary accommodation e.g., Private Sector Leased properties 2. Bringing properties into Council Tax 3. Removing erroneous Single Person Discounts 4. Removing erroneous Freedom Passes 5. Improving debt collection

Regeneration proposals	£0.5m anticipated saving	Including
		1. 80-84 Market Place: no longer managed by the Council and therefore carries no cost to LBH.
		2. Social Value Sponsorship to an Existing Community Scheme or Project:
		3. General Fund Savings
		4. Corporate
		5. Impact of reviewing the Rainham Beam Park Joint Venture:
		6. Review of all Regeneration JVs and major schemes
		7. Assess whether the management of new regeneration sites could be overseen by the Council and used to create income.
		8. Acceleration of works previously planned for 2022/23 in order to maximise use of Government Grants Land
		9. Increased income from telecom masts
		10. Income from Electric vehicle charging points
		11. Refurbishment of white goods/furniture and onward sale through a social enterprise
		12. Monetisation of government credits – carbon neutrality, research & development, recycling, new technologies
		13. Income derived from letting out council office space
		14. Central Romford business hub offering wraparound business support

In the under 40s group, there was universal agreement with the savings proposals and that this is part and parcel of the kind of savings councils' need to be looking for:

[The council] was always going to be making savings - always, there's always gonna be a drive to reduce costs. I mean, this isn't anything that's new, really look at it as probably if we looked at last year's I'm sure last year will be similar.

Group 1, U40

Maybe not that many in terms of reducing headcount but I'm sure improving technology improving your online portals and things like that. behaviour and portals… so, this isn't ground-breaking.
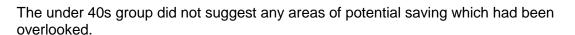*Group 1, U40*

I just wanna add in terms of children's services and social services, you always find that there's a lot of social workers are always in demand. They're always busy. They're always overworked. I've heard is that there's a lot of paperwork, there's a lot of fluff around it, maybe streamline the process and maybe get to the problem quicker…I find a lot of time is wasted.
Group 1, U40

However, in this group, there was more push-back on the council being able to reduce the number of staff by the numbers suggested:

I just want to say about reducing the headcount. I think you've touched on it, but it's 400. Sounds like a lot to me. I would just want to say that if the headcount has to be reduced by that amount, then ensure that the digital platforms are much easier to use, and to get access to, and that there's integration across the portal and other systems

The under 40s group did not suggest any areas of potential saving which had been overlooked.

Again, the over 40s group were in agreement with the main thrust of the savings proposals. However, they were more sceptical about the council being able to achieve its head count savings.

If you reduce staff numbers, your wait time to get through to a specific department would be that much longer. But one stop shop thing you really need someone in there really qualified to cover multiple subjects, rather than someone who generically deals with something. Other than that, we're looking through the rest of it. It's all fairly straightforward stuff … the reduction of staff if you've got 20 people in a core team, and you'd knock it down to 10 the wait time is going to be longer, and it does have a knock-on effect. People don't spend most of their day sitting on the phone waiting for someone to answer it.

Group 2, O40

If they are reducing the number of staff, then quality of service will be affected as well, I don't want it to compromise the quality of service you give to residents.

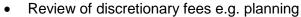*Group 2, O40*

Survey responses on savings proposals

Survey respondents were asked whether they agree with a range of savings proposals set out to allow the council to balance its budget. Between two in five and two thirds of survey respondents agree with the savings proposals, apart from the proposal around staff reduction – which saw less than half in support. These findings align with the sentiment about staff reductions among the focus group attendees.

	Agree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Disagree (%)
Better use of data through Business Intelligence	66%	23%	8%
New models of delivery	63%	25%	10%
Prevention	61%	30%	6%
Regeneration proposals	58%	27%	13%
Staffing reduction through efficiency	45%	22%	31%

Survey respondents were asked for other areas that the Council should be considering for balancing the budget. Responses are summarised and categorised under the Council's priorities.

CLEANER & SAFER

- Better provision of services to prevent crime and antisocial behaviour
- Introducing Sunday parking fees
- Free 30mins – 1-hour local parking

- Review of discretionary fees e.g. planning
- Reducing car usage to support climate change agenda
- Enforcement of fly-tipping fines, including use of ANP cameras
- Better recycling
- Provision of wheelie bins

TOGETHER

- Invest in local charities
- Engage the voluntary sector (e.g. in libraries)
- Reduce funding for education as disproportionately high
- Better medical services
- Invest in social care
- Reduce funding for private support

VALUE FOR MONEY (and other Council related suggestions)

- Reducing energy usage in council buildings
- Reducing benefits (including means-testing)
- Creating a one-stop shop for council services
- Reallocating council spend
- Increasing income generation
- Ensure payment of Council Tax
- Better management of outsourced services (or bring services in-house)
- Reduce number of consultants

PROUDER

- Do not sell council housing
- Increase income generation through rents and rates
- Poor housing contractors
- Rationalise libraries
- More robust town planning
- Invest in regeneration of town centres
- Ensure no vacant or abandoned buildings or sites

Budget Exercise

Within the survey, as part of a budget exercise, respondents were asked about a hypothetical scenario where they needed to remove £1 from a Havering Council service. Almost a quarter of respondents said they would remove their £1 from Corporate services (24%).

Slightly over one in ten would remove £1 from Support Services (Finance, ICT, Legal, HR) services or Highways Parking & Traffic or Libraries, Arts and Music School (11%).

Service	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Corporate services	109	24%
Support Services (Finance, ICT, Legal, HR)	52	11%
Highways Parking & Traffic	52	11%
Libraries, Arts and Music School	48	11%
Leisure Centres and Sports	29	6%
Planning	28	6%
Housing	26	6%
Regeneration and Economic development	23	5%
Bereavement & Registration	14	3%
Adult Social Care	12	3%
Building Control	12	3%
Education Services	11	2%
Transport Services	8	2%
Early Help	7	2%
Environment Services	6	1%
Community Services	4	0.9%
Waste Services	4	0.9%
Children's Social Care	3	0.7%
Enforcement & Safety	3	0.7%
Public Protection & Licensing	1	0.2%

Survey respondents were then asked a similar question and were asked about what services they would add £1 to.

The most popular services which respondents would personally add their £1 to are Adult Social Care or Corporate Services (both 11%).

Service	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Adult Social Care	52	11%
Corporate Services	49	11%
Children's Social Care	33	7%
Enforcement & Safety	31	7%
Highways, Parking & Traffic	29	6%
Public Health	26	6%
Regeneration and Economic Development	23	5%
Environment Services	23	5%
Leisure Centres & Sport	21	5%
Libraries, Arts and Music School	21	5%
Community Services	19	4%
Transport Services	16	4%
Support Services (Finance, ICT, Legal, HR)	15	3%
Education Services	14	3%
Housing	14	3%
Building Control	11	2%
Waste Services	10	2%
Planning	9	2%
Bereavement & Registration	9	2%
Early Help	7	2%
Public Protection and Licensing	7	2%
Not answered	1	0.2%

Survey respondents were asked for other areas that the Council should be considering for balancing the budget. Responses are summarised and categorised under the Council's priorities.

CLEANER & SAFER

- Better provision of services to prevent crime and antisocial behaviour
- Introducing Sunday parking fees
- Free 30mins – 1-hour local parking
- Review of discretionary fees e.g. planning
- Reducing car usage to support climate change agenda
- Enforcement of fly-tipping fines, including use of ANP cameras
- Better recycling
- Provision of wheelie bins

TOGETHER

- Investing in local charities
- Engage the voluntary sector (e.g. in libraries)

- Reduce funding for education as disproportionately high
- Better medical services
- Investing in social care
- Reduce funding for private support

VALUE FOR MONEY (and other Council related suggestions)

- Employing more local residents
- Reducing benefits
- Review council spend (e.g. split per capita, restrict funds to non-borough initiatives)
- Full commitment to balancing the books
- Remove contribution to Mayor's office
- Reducing council spend
- Fix anticipated borrowing
- Freeze Council Tax
- Review staff and Councillors' pay and rewards
- Lobby for Central Government funding

PROUDER

- Do not sell council housing
- Increase income generation through rents and rates
- Poor housing contractors
- Rationalise libraries
- More robust town planning
- Investing in regeneration of town centres
- Ensure no vacant or abandoned buildings or sites

The Focus Group Pre-Task

Prior to the focus groups, participants in both groups were asked to undertake a simple budgeting exercise using council services. It was explained that the financial challenge Havering faces in 2022-23 is significant and means the council will need to make some difficult decisions in February 2022 if they do not get sufficient Government funding. It is important to understand what the participants would do in this situation, so they were asked what their priorities for funding are.

Our first observation was that participants in both groups shied away from making these difficult choices – they were more likely to give services more funding than identify what they would take away.

Participants were given 14 council service areas where they could choose to prioritise more, prioritise the same, or prioritise less. If they wanted to spend more in one area, they had to spend less in another. Equally, they were tasked with only leaving three services on the current level of spending so that their priorities between services were revealed.
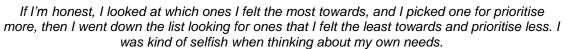
Nine participants in each of the focus groups completed the budgeting exercise. As has already been stated, the voting responses are on too smaller scale to be statistically reliable but offer insights on the reasons for their choices.

Group 1, Under 40s Budget Exercise Table

Answer Choices	Prioritise more	Stay the same	Prioritise less
Children's Social Care (e.g. fostering, residential, family support, adoption, care leavers, safeguarding, children's centres)	67%	33%	0%
Education Service (e.g. Early years, Education, Special Education Needs, Youth services)	67%	33%	0%
Regeneration and Economic Development (e.g. Improving communities, town centres, infrastructure, supporting businesses and local economy)	56%	44%	0%
Waste Services (e.g. Collections, recycling & green collections, Household Waste Recycling Centres)	56%	33%	11%
Public health (e.g. Covid response, health and wellbeing, mental health)	56%	44%	0%
Environment Services (e.g. Parks, Environment Management)	44%	44%	11%
Highways (e.g. Maintenance, footpaths, road signage, streetlights, traffic management, flood management)	44%	56%	0%
Community Services (e.g. Arts, Adult Education, Contact Centre, leisure centres, sports)	33%	44%	22%
Adult Social Care (18+) (e.g. residential & nursing accommodation, supported living, day care)	22%	78%	0%
Transport Services (e.g. Home to School transport)	22%	67%	11%
Housing services (e.g. housing benefit, homelessness, council housing, temp accommodation)	11%	89%	0%
Planning (e.g. building regulations and planning permission)	11%	67%	22%
Libraries, Registration and Archives	11%	44%	44%
Social Support (e.g. Carers, Information & Early Intervention, Safeguarding, Housing Related Support)	11%	89%	0%
Public Protection (e.g. Community Safety, Coroners, Trading Standards, Emergency Planning)	0%	89%	11%

The services that saw the most prioritisation by the under 40s were education services, children's social care, waste services, public health and regeneration. Some of these services align with the top 10 areas survey respondents would add £1 to.

I wished all mine would have stayed the same, but obviously the instruction was maximum of three - it was a very difficult so I can't imagine the members of the council that have to actually sit through this and make those decisions. But it took me over an hour just to kind of do this last bit. But I think the biggest things for me were kind of social care, children and adults, that it was easy for me to click to prioritise those.

If I'm honest, I looked at which ones I felt the most towards, and I picked one for prioritise more, then I went down the list looking for ones that I felt the least towards and prioritise less. I was kind of selfish when thinking about my own needs.

Group 1, U40

The prioritisations, to some extent, can be seen as following the concerns expressed by the under 40s in terms of quality of life with a focus on children and development:

Prioritise more education, and check for special education needs and new services, as I highlighted before it can be doing some more for young children and community centres and things like that.

Group 1, U40

The services that saw the least prioritisation by the under 40s were, libraries, planning and community services. Again, some of these services were within the top 10 areas for removal of £1 among survey respondents.

I put less priority for libraries, I think was it libraries and registration. For libraries just because there's so much more access to information, the majority of us have computers at home, we've got access to the internet… that was the only reason why I'd personally prioritise less - not saying that we don't have a need for those.

Group 1, U40

By way of comparison, the over 40s group prioritise the following council services: social support, children's social care, highways and regeneration. The under 40s and over 40s both shared a focus in the budget consultation on the provision of care.

Group 2, Over 40s Budget Consultation Table

Answer Choices	Prioritise more	Stay the same	Prioritise less
Children's Social Care (e.g. fostering, residential, family support, adoption, care leavers, safeguarding, children's centres)	67%	33%	0.00%
Highways (e.g. Maintenance, footpaths, road signage, streetlights, traffic management, flood management)	67%	11%	22%
Social Support (e.g. Carers, Information & Early Intervention, Safeguarding, Housing Related Support)	67%	33%	0%
Regeneration and Economic Development (e.g. Improving communities, town centres, infrastructure, supporting businesses and local economy)	56%	11%	33%
Adult Social Care (18+) (e.g. residential & nursing accommodation, supported living, day care)	44%	44%	11%
Public health (e.g. Covid response, health and wellbeing, mental health)	44%	56%	0%
Housing services (e.g. housing benefit, homelessness, council housing, temp accommodation)	33%	56%	11%
Education Service (e.g. Early years, Education, Special Education Needs, Youth services)	33%	67%	0%

Community Services (e.g. Arts, Adult Education, Contact Centre, leisure centres, sports)	22%	56%	22%
Environment Services (e.g. Parks, Environment Management)	22%	78%	0%
Public Protection (e.g. Community Safety, Coroners, Trading Standards, Emergency Planning)	22%	44%	33%
Transport Services (e.g. Home to School transport)	22%	44%	33%
Waste Services (e.g. Collections, recycling & green collections, Household Waste Recycling Centres)	22%	78%	0%
Planning (e.g. building regulations and planning permission)	11%	33%	56%
Libraries, Registration and Archives	11%	33%	56%

A range of focus group participants, who were over 40, highlighted care as an important issue:

children's one was them, I did because, you know, they're born into that situation and there's nothing they can do about it. And they've got to be looked after. Whether it's mental health or foster care.

Group 2, O40

I did children's for the same reasons. That's worth spending money on the Children's Services and the family support, all that kind of thing. I think that should be a priority

Group 2, O40

I think there's got to be more priority on adult social care. Definitely. There just isn't enough at the moment. Havering has always had an older population. It's getting harder and harder …you know, to get anybody to do anything.

Group 2, O40

I think I put on there about the highways. Because I think even in the parks, after four o'clock, it's really dark in there. Probably needs more lighting. Footpaths are uneven. potholes are on the road.

Group 2, O40

Obviously, I support the social care for older and younger people. And generally, sort of mental health things like that, I think is to be prioritised.

Group 2, O40

The services that saw the least prioritisation by the over 40s were: libraries, planning, transport and public protection.

Where I live, it's very green. And the last thing I want them to do is take away what I call greenbelt and put houses there unnecessarily.

Group 2, O40

The libraries again I haven't been in the library for probably 15 years.

Group 2, O40

Survey Respondent Profile

Postcode

The postcode of those who responded to the survey are listed below. Responses came from across the borough - Hornchurch, Romford, Upminster and Rainham.

Postcode	Frequency	Percent
RM11	71	16%
RM14	66	14%
RM12	62	14%
RM3	53	12%
RM13	51	11%
RM1	48	11%
RM7	44	10%
RM2	28	6%
RM5	25	5%
CM1	1	0%
CM11	1	0%
E35BN	1	0%
EC1	1	0%
RM4	1	0%
RM6	1	0%
RM8	1	0%
SS17	1	0%

How did you find about this consultation?

The top channels used to find out about the consultation were emails from the council and the council website.

Channel	Frequency	Percentage %
Email from the council	158	35%
Havering Council website	133	29%
Facebook	59	13%
Friend/relative	26	6%
Newspaper	12	3%
Twitter	29	6%
Councillor	8	2%
VCS organisation	8	2%
Other	19	4%

How old are you?

Age group	Frequency	Percentage %
18-24	3	1%
25-34	53	12%
35-44	84	18%
45-54	80	18%
55-64	93	20%
65-74	85	19%
75-84	35	8%
Prefer not to say	22	5%
Not answered		

With which gender do you most identify?

Gender	Frequency	Percentage %
Man	217	48%
Woman	210	46%
Non-Binary	1	0.2%
Trans Man	1	0.2%
Gender Neutral / Agender	1	0.2%
Prefer not to say	25	6%
Not answered	1	0.2%

How would you describe your sexual orientation?

Sexual orientation	Frequency	Percentage %
Heterosexual	387	85%
Bisexual	7	2%
Gay man	5	1%
Lesbian/Gay woman	2	0.4%
Other	3	1%
Prefer not to say	50	11%
Not answered	2	2%

What is your marital or civil partnership status?

Relationship status	Frequency	Percentage %
Married	264	58%
Single	75	16%
Co-habiting	45	10%
Widowed	19	4%
Civil partnership	3	1%
Other	8	2%
Prefer not to say	40	9%
Not answered	2	0.4%

Ethnic origin is not about nationality, place of birth or citizenship. It is about the group to which you perceive you belong

Ethnic group	Frequency	Percentage %
White British	329	72%
White European	19	4%
White Irish	7	2%
White Other	14	3%
Mixed/multiple groups - White and Black Caribbean	6	1%
Mixed/multiple groups - other	7	2%
Indian	9	2%
Asian Other	11	2%
Black /Black British - Caribbean	6	1%
Black Other	4	1%
Other ethnic group	5	1%
Prefer not to say	4	1%
Not answered	47	10%

Faith, Religion or Belief

Religion	Frequency	Percentage %
Christian	217	48%
No Religion	137	30%
Muslim	9	2%
Hindu	5	1%
Jewish	4	1%
Sikh	1	0.2%
Buddhist	1	0.2%
Other	15	3%
Prefer not to say	58	13%
Not Answered	9	2%

Do you consider yourself to have a disability, impairment or health condition?

	Frequency	Percentage %
No	316	69%
Yes	94	21%
Prefer not to say	38	8%
Not answered	8	2%

Type of disability

	Frequency	Percentage %
Sensory - e.g. mild deafness; partially sighted; blindness	17	4%
Physical - e.g. wheelchair user	13	3%
Mental Illness - e.g. bi-polar disorder; schizophrenia; depression	14	3%
Development or Educational - e.g. autistic spectrum disorders (ASD); dyslexia and dyspraxia	12	3%
Learning Disability / Condition - e.g. Down's syndrome; Cerebral palsy	2	0.4%
Long-term Illness / Health Condition - e.g. cancer, HIV, diabetes, chronic heart disease, stroke	50	11%
Other	18	4%
Not answered	316	69%

What is your employment status?

Employment status	Frequency	Percentage %
Employed – Permanent	219	48%
Retired	144	32%
Self-employed	22	5%
Employed - Fixed term	14	3%
Unemployed and looking for work	3	1%
Unemployed and not looking for work	3	1%
Apprenticeship scheme / training	1	0.2%
Student	1	0.2%
Other	15	3%
Prefer not to say	28	6%
Not Answered	6	1%