

Survey methodology

The budget survey was live from 11th August to 11th September. It was online and supported by Communications promotion, with the option of calling to request a paper survey also promoted.

In 2021, we only received 70 responses to the previous budget survey

This year, the response number was 134, which is almost double the sample, but caution must be applied, as 300+ counts as a good representative sample for a self-selecting survey in Maldon.

Overall survey findings:

- 53% agreed with the principle of raising council tax by £5/ 2% a year. 36% disagreed.

The government have set a limit to increase council tax by 2% or £5 a year (whichever is greater). Maldon has factored into the medium-term financial plan a £5 increase (10p a week) to try and maintain services, given reductions in grant funding and inflationary costs. Do you agree with this approach?

Yes	70
No	47
Unsure	14
I do not pay Council Tax	1



- 9% were unable to cope financially and a further 45% struggling to cope financially with the current cost of living crisis. 31% reported that they were financially comfortable and 16% were unsure.

Do you feel the current cost of living crisis is having an impact of how you manage your household finances?

I am unable to cope financially	12
I am struggling to cope financially	59
Not sure	21
I feel slightly comfortable financ...	34
I am very comfortable financially	6

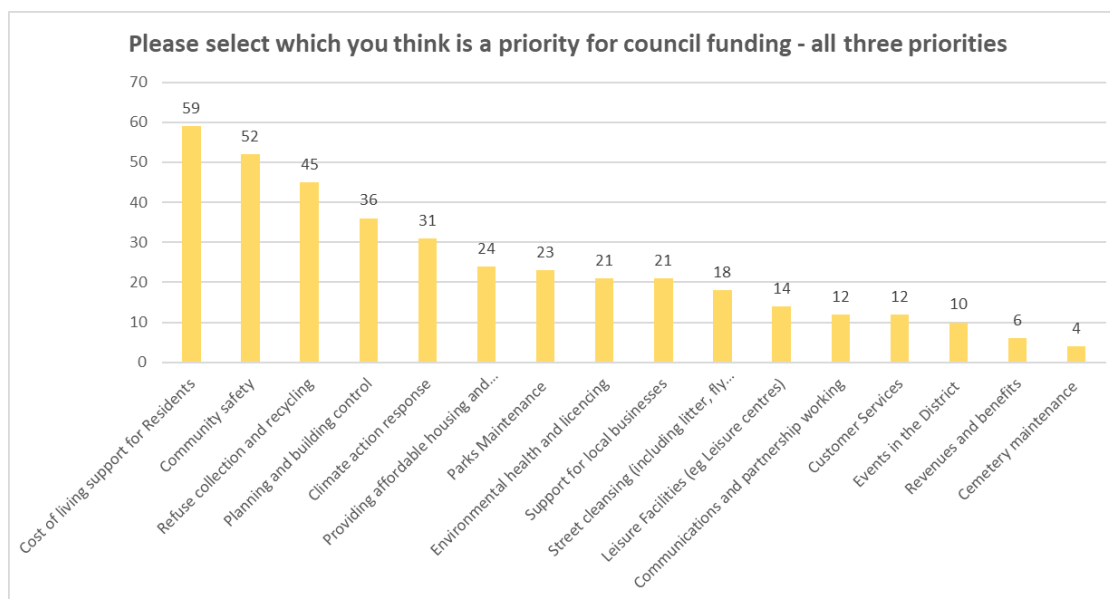


Council funding priorities

Respondents were asked to select from the list of 16 categories their top three priorities for Council funding. The results of these have been combined below. All of the categories were selected by at least four respondents. Not all respondents to the survey made a selection.

The top three categories that were prioritised most frequently were:

- Cost of living support for residents
- Community safety
- Refuse collection and recycling



Free text comments

As these comments were unprompted, any clusters are representative of a trend for those who responded to the survey.

For some of the comment clusters, an illustrative comment has been shown to describe the mood of the survey responses.

Numbers shown in brackets represent the number of individuals that commented along this theme.

Comments received: If you would like to provide any comments relating to the selections you have made above please do so here.

- Infrastructure to support housing (e.g. schools, medical, roads) (18)
How can you have place as a priority when your flooding the area with excessive house builds and unsupported by appropriate infrastructure improvements- have you attempted to drive through Latchingdon, or get a doctor, pharmacy or school without driving in to Maldon or Woodham?
- Thematic strategies too vague/ not clear on detail (11)
The priorities do not clearly explain what you are actually going to do. It would be useful to know what actions are actually being taken or will be taken
- Burnham infrastructure (7)
The Quayside of Burnham-on-Crouch requires urgent investment - in particular the storm damaged pontoon urgently requires renewal
- Green spaces and trees (7)
Think there needs to be more investment in playgrounds for children and Green spaces for everyone. The playground at the top of Maldon Prom is in a terrible state and needs investment. Also local play parks and green spaces in villages need to be considered.
- Services aren't being delivered to legal standard/ Questions what Maldon District Council (MDC) is delivering (4)
- Unimpressed having to download and review strategy document(3)
- Reduce parking costs to increase visitors/ support businesses (3)
- Parish/ County Council(s) should be spending better (3)
- Timely delivery of strong Local Development Plan (LDP) (2)
- Shouldn't charge Council tax at all/ Council tax not value for money (2)

Other comments where one response was received

- Building houses that are for local families
- Clean, tidy, safe area
- High street pollution (pedestrianise. Park and ride)
- Supporting businesses
- Be diligent about any cost of living grants

Comments received: If there is a different strategic priority you think the Council should focus on please tell us here

- Infrastructure / facilities (25)

Improving traffic flow, especially through Heybridge which will help reduce Co2

Mitigation of too much housing for the limited resources in the District

- Climate emergency (5)

Preparing the region for dealing with our climate Emergency

- Lack of trust in delivery (5)

No - I have no faith that MDC will deliver on anything other than what is in their self-interest to do

- Cost of living crisis support (4)
- Support local residents with staying in district (4)
- Cleaning town (3)
- Burnham quay/ infrastructure (3)
- Events (3)
- Small business support in high street (3)
- Cheaper parking (2)
- Better comms with residents (2)

Other comments where one response was received

- Prioritise resource to save money
- Council staff back in offices
- Health and wellbeing
- Rural broadband
- Paying contractors, improving performance eg bins
- Reduce Council Tax
- Reduce payments to Councillors
- Against resources diverted to refugees

Comments received: If you have any suggestions as to how the Council should save money or generate more income please tell us.

- Prom and riverside assets/ events (13)

Have hireable kayaks at the lake in the Prom. The old swimming lake is a large and deep body of water that currently is only used by birds! Why could this not become a water-sports area, your community strategy talks about improving the health and physical opportunities for residents, and you could likely get funding from one of the national watersporting groups, or livewell or active essex funding.

- Spend money more wisely (10)

Cut hours of management by 1 day

As things currently stand - No discretionary services should be provided. You - many Local Authorities - have wandered well out of your lane. Get back in it. You should only be providing the non-discretionary services; those legally required to.

Additionally, I feel there's too much focus on the "nice to have" items without enough on the basics

- Build high street businesses (5)

Ease the burden on the high street by removing parking charges at certain times to encourage people there. Build more relationships via a proper economic development team. Come back to work in your offices and make the most of the empty spaces in the high street for pop up vendors. Consider extra events you could have at the prom including local businesses instead of outsourcing to big event companies.

- Sell offices (4)

Rent out (or sell) spare office space. Sell the museum building.

- Funds from housing used for infrastructure (4)

If you're going to approve housing, insist on developments that provide necessary infrastructure support to the area, such as improved traffic management, doctors, pharmacy, retail. Not a token coffee shop !!!

- Bring underperforming services in-house (2)

Bring services back in house. If not then improved contract management of refuse service. Routinely my collection is missed but I see no evidence that you manage the contracts when service falls below KPI and seek to secure financial recompense for a service not carried out/incompletely carried out.

- Parking and littering fines , developer fines (2)
- Planning decisions that cant be overturned (2)

Other comments where one response was received

- Address fraud and council tax non-payment
- Promote high street
- Charge 50p tip visits
- Reduce amount given to Essex County Council (ECC)
- Increase council tax for those with 5+ bedrooms
- Sell museum building
- Stop running MDC
- Reduce support for 'immigrants'
- Reduce Councillor payments

Misconceptions

Ask the planning committee to hand over their brown envelopes to you...

Comments received: If you have any other comments about the council's budgets

- Areas underfunded e.g. Woodham water, Burnham (3)
- Council tax unlawful (3)
- Fix potholes/ reduce ECC money (2)
- Don't waste money on climate change (it's natural warming) (2)

Other comments where one response was received

- Make council office carpark a public carpark
- Only run non-discretionary services
- Understanding the budget is tricky, thanks for being able to give feedback
- Council tax discount for those on private roads
- Be transparent about budget decisions
- Moorings are neglected – e.g. Northsea Island
- Care for older people e.g. St Peter's hospital
- Cost of living should come from Central government

NB There were also further questions included in the budget survey relating to the Local Council Tax Support Scheme. Results of these will be shared with the officers involved with reviewing the scheme.