

Budget 2021/22
Consultation Report
Published 19/02/2021

“You Said, We Listened”



Introduction to this consultation

1. In 2019 the Council introduced a 'You Said, We Listened' approach to consider feedback received through public engagement activities. This report details the responses received for the Budget 2021/22 consultation undertaken between 14th January, 2021 and 8th February, 2021.
2. The exercise was performed to seek residents' views on the Council's Budget proposals for 2021/22.

Methodology

3. A media release was issued to local newspapers to promote the consultation and social media activity was ongoing throughout the consultation period.
4. A link to the electronic questionnaire was made available on the Council's website and was included in the Council's e-Messenger, e-business brief and the Town and Parish Newsletter. An email was sent to groups that represent those individuals with the characteristics identified in the Equality Act. Paper copies of the questionnaire were available on request.
5. It should be noted that base data has been rounded to the nearest number (so may add up to between 99% and 101%). Where available this report details comparisons with the previous Budget Survey undertaken in 2020/21.

Response Rate

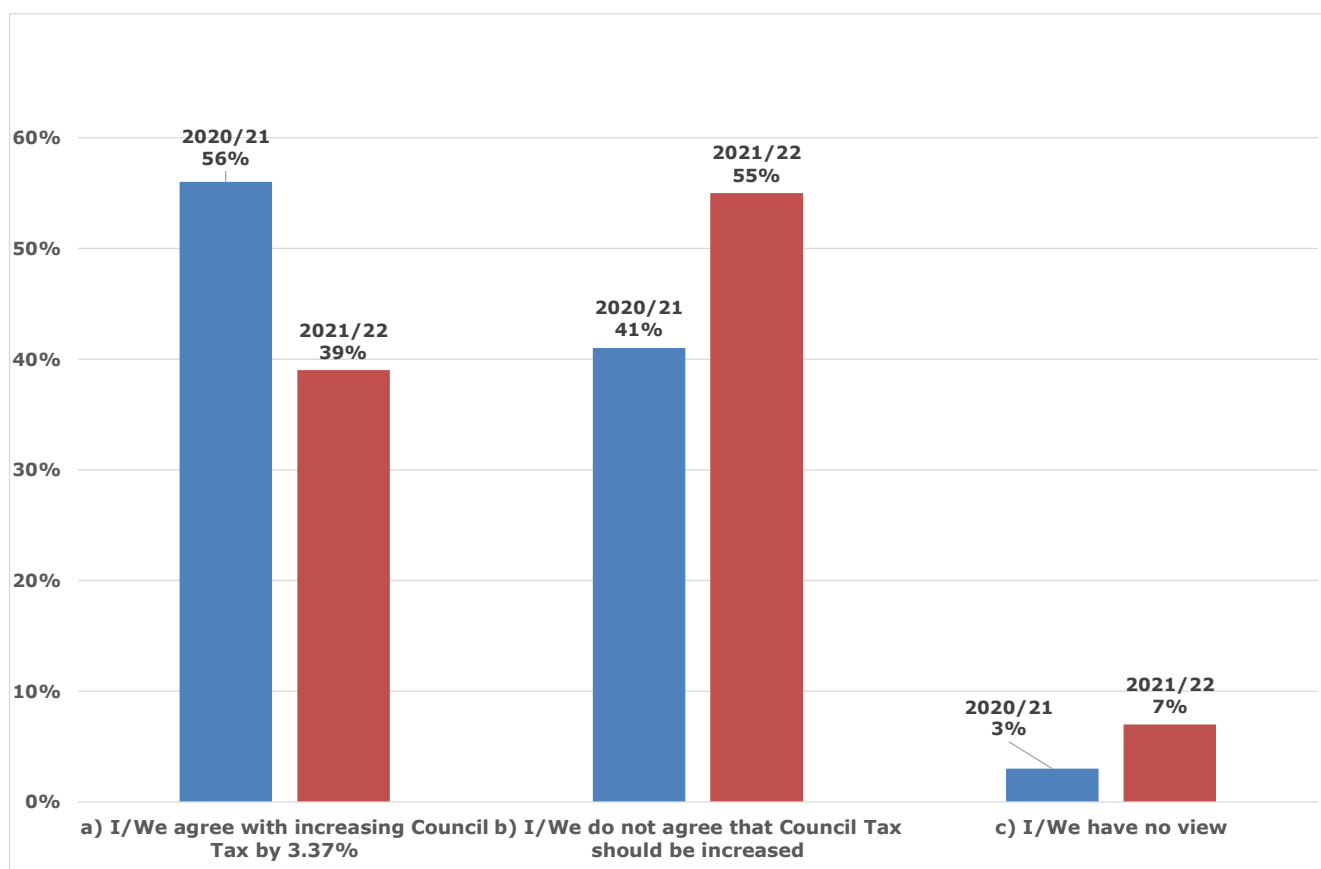
6. A total of 30 electronic responses were received. A slight decline of 8 responses when compared to the previous year's budget consultation exercise undertaken.

Results and Analysis

7. 97% of all respondents responding to the consultation responded as 'A Resident' with the remaining 3% responding as 'A Group/Local Organisation'.

Council Tax

8. All respondents were advised that, at £146.79, East Lindsey District Council's current Council Tax level for a Band D property was one of the lowest in the country. The Government was allowing the Council to put its Council Tax up by a maximum of £5 next year (based on a Band D property). The Council was therefore proposing a £4.95 (3.37%) increase for 2021/22 – an extra 9.5p per week for a Band D property. All respondents were asked their views on the proposal. The comparison chart below shows that 39% of all respondents agreed with increasing Council Tax by 3.37%. This is a decrease of 17% when compared with the previous consultation exercise undertaken in 2020/21 when 56% of respondents agreed with increasing the Council Tax by £4.95 (N.B. in 2020/21 this equated to a 3.49% increase). The comparison chart also shows that although there has been an increase in those that 'Did not agree that the Council Tax should be increased' there has been a slight shift of 5% in those that 'Had no view'.



9. Those respondents that did not agree with the proposed increase in Council Tax were asked why they did not agree. Numerous concerns were raised about the financial impact residents and businesses had experienced over the past year because of Covid 19; they felt that now was not the right time to raise Council Tax as this would put more strain on peoples' finances. A couple of respondents

considered the increase to be higher than the rate of inflation. Two respondents commented about the Council spending £8.5m on the public sector hub project at Horncastle. There was also a couple of comments stating that because the Government allowed the Council to increase their Council Tax, it didn't mean that they had to. A full list of their views are detailed below:

- Higher % rate increase than Lincolnshire County Council how can this be justify. Disappointing under circumstances if people struggling with jobs and home schooling children
- Enough strain on finances when you only seem to care about funding the big caravan site owners to make more silted income, haven't you worked out their gains don't make it into the local economy yet. Spend responsibly before putting up council tax
- Times are tough enough and police are likely to need it more
- Use the money you intend to spend on building a new Headquarters at Horncastle first.
- 2020 has been hard financially for many residents and the time is not right for above inflation rise. Furthermore, there is too much focus on the coastal fringe at the expense of inland districts
- Whilst businesses and residents have spent the last year with reduced or no income it is unfair to expect them to pay higher charges.
- Stop ripping off ELDC residents
- As councillors have been using Zoom to conduct their meetings the money saved on: (A) travel expenses (B) attendance Payments, (C) any expected pay rise, (D) food allowances should be taken into account. Also the removal of bins from the promenade and Sutton High street. How long is COVID-19 going to be used to put prices up?
- Because people have had enough hardship this past year. Saying it's because of Covid is a spin. You would have put it up by the maximum allowed by government anyway as you have done for years. You have been caught out by political point scoring in the past in not putting up Council Tax in the good years simply to put on election leaflets and still doing it now. Tory led Council Administration bowing to political masters since 2010 who are pursuing a policy of austerity. Who pays in increase in the gap in ELDC funding by actions of Tory Policy? Yes that's right the people you are supposed to serve. Noticed that Councillors have not been pulled in on expenses and allowances even though they mostly do not need it as they're business owners or retired and doing ok. Thank You. Lead by example. Noses in troughs. Oh and scrap the leaders vanity project on moving to Horncastle.
- The Council should look to reduce the burden it imposes on local people in return for its diminishing services and reduction of amenity value in the district.
- I don't agree with what it's being spent on.
- After a year of financial hardship for all during COVID-19, a year of no price increase should be instated. Secondly, just because the government allow you increase by a maximum of £5, doesn't mean you should.
- I think increases to Council Tax should not be increased this year due to the impact Covid is having on residents, haven't we suffered enough this year.

- In the context of the general economic situation, with residents' incomes under pressure, there is no justification for a real terms increase in Council Tax.
- The proposed increase is above the rate of inflation whichever RPI or CPI measure is used. The Council should be looking to reduce the charge even if that means a nil % increase. This would, in reality, give a small real time decrease because of inflation which an increase number of commentators suggest is likely to increase substantially over the next few years.
- We are in the middle of a pandemic with many people suffering financially and with some of the most deprived areas in the country so why has East Lindsey chosen now to hike the Council Tax up as much as they possibly can whilst they continue to progress with an £8million pound project so a few Councillors and higher management can have some nice shiny new offices - and before you respond with "it's not costing anything as it will be paid for by savings", give the public some credit. We are not as stupid as you would like to believe. Keep Council Tax at the same level, work from home and use the £8million to improve services instead of selling off local assets.

Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy

10. All respondents were asked if they had any comments to make in respect of the draft Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy. One respondent commented about the budgeted increase on Travellers' sites and another stated that now was not the time to build up the reserves when the country is going through the greatest crisis in centuries. A full list of comments are detailed below:
- Unrealistic and over stretch
 - Why are staff savings from alliance being put in economic team? Just make the savings and keep Council Tax low
 - Surprised no Community Infrastructure Levy when ELDC must have huge infrastructure needs looking at Internal Drainage Board precept.
 - Was expecting coastal caravans to feature heavily, as not sure ELDC think about anything else but bring self-catering accommodation to the coast- these don't benefit the economy like serviced accommodation so why the obsession over coastal caravan sites owned by the big operators?
 - Rip off
 - As East Lindsey has joined forces with Boston Council to reduce expenditure plus what I put earlier in this survey; there should be no need to raise taxes.
 - You need to think outside the box for once which is hard for civil servants
 - No comment as its all fairy tales.
 - There seems to be a budgeted increase of expenditure on traveller sites. If this is not centrally mandated then is it wise to spend funds unless any increase in traveller occupation within ELDC can be accompanied by the right to ensure that these sites can be open to inspection of all the things we're subjected to: vehicle licencing and insurance, benefit claims if not seeking employment, access to police investigations. Recycling and all other normal requirements placed on the average citizen.
 - Ironically, while the Council seeks to increase its income from commercial activity, this will bring it into competition with the very businesses that it relies upon for funding via business rates. The Council needs to put its own

self-preservation to one side, reduce its level of activity and do whatever it can with the meagre funding it receives to improve the amenity value of the area. That, in essence, is what its sole function should be.

- More money needs to be spent on transport, Holton Le Clay only has one bus service running every hour between 9 and 5 from Grimsby to Louth, and no connection to nearby villages of Marshchapel, Tetney or Humberston
- I think increases to Council Tax should not be increased this year due to the impact covid is having on residents, haven't we suffered enough this year.
- Now is not the time to be seeking to build up reserves. What sort of circumstances could you possibly be seeking to prepare for given that we are currently in the greatest peacetime crisis this country has faces in centuries? You must be totally detached from reality. The time to build up reserves is during the good times, not in the depths of a massive crisis. The very idea is ludicrous.
- There isn't enough detail to comment but I hope the strategy does not include the selling off of anymore of Skegness's asset's or stealing the Towns Fund money intended to regenerate the coastal area in order to build themselves another caravan site, this time on the seafront. I note East Lindsey used a £50,000 Government Grant to improve The Rockery in Skegness and then included it the plans for the seafront caravan site, even though it's Grade II listed and Heritage England should have been consulted. One day someone might wake up and realise they are killing the goose that laid the golden egg.

11. All respondents were given the opportunity to provide any ideas that they might have that could help the Council to reduce its expenditure or increase its income to support local services. Some ideas did not fall under the remit of the District Council but under the County Council and some were comments as opposed to ideas. There were a number of comments made about highly paid officers at the Council and a couple of comments about the Council spending £8.5m on the public sector hub project at Horncastle. One respondent suggested introducing a Tourist Tax during the summer season which could be re-invested into the town/s. Another suggested that staff should continue to work from home and one respondent made a suggestion about Councillors Allowances. A full list of ideas and comments are detailed below:

- Think the Council need to re-address pay across staff, often pay more than industry and have far too many chiefs and not enough Indians.
- Stop wasting money.
- Stop wasting money, you have lots of dep/directors/dep chief execs on payroll; exactly how many do you need?
- Give us all a break from caravans, spread the focus of the council to all sectors whether self-employed, tourism, agriculture...
- Encourage home working. Commission an independent best value review of all of your departments. Reduce the size of the executive. Hold more meetings on internet based platforms to reduce Councillors' expenses.
- Stop wastage e.g. car park wardens busting small car parks at the weekend. Concentrate services on 8am to 5pm weekdays and stop most weekend and holiday working.

- Sack all the Assistant Directors to save £250k alone
- Continue to use Zoom for Council meetings. Put a cap on Councillors' payments.
- Stamp is a fledgling local organisation and has a multi-million pound project. If ELDC and to some extent LCC work with us in supporting our Capital Grant application to Central Government, it would reduce costs to ELDC and increase business rates revenue and provide hundreds of jobs. This project would provide an exhibition/event centre, state of the art Sports Centre (so no need to continue Station Sports Centre alterations), re-purpose dilapidated buildings and run a main stream Secondary School by asking for a transfer of assets of the existing site from LCC. The income and expenditure of the project has been drawn up and it is only 30% of the capital cost that is being requested as grants. We will build and run all of the venues as a non-profit CiC. We hope that both ELDC and LCC will work with us in supporting our project and our grant applications. If you don't we will pursue this anyway.
- Only pay Councillor allowances for out of pocket expenses. Cut mileage allowance to 25p for all. Get true democracy and have an executive based on proportional representation of the make-up of Council so true debate can be had. Give all Councillors a free vote on every issue. Scrap extra allowances for Chair and Vice Chair positions. Cut extra allowances for executive positions by 50%. Show some leadership.
- There needs to be a reset back to the pre-1973 organisation of local Councils. East Lindsey District Council should therefore work towards its own demise and leave true democracy in the hands of local people at a local level.
- It is vital to the town of Louth that all shops closed during the pandemic are opened there is nothing worse for the High Street for there to be empty shops. This may require more creative thinking in getting these premises let. The pathways along the Louth Navigation have been a lifeline for many during this pandemic. Parts of the pathway needs relaying and outdated stiles replaced with more user friendly gates. The Multi-User Path plans to link Louth to the Coast would further develop Louth as a Visitor destination in a sustainable way. The Christmas Market at Louth needs to be re-established and may need more support from the Council for Louth Independent Traders who are understandably concentrating on their own business's at this difficult time.
- Buy back some of the old Council houses that are still rented out by housing associations, buy some of the local shops and rent them out or launch own shop and buy some big buses (stop paying firms like stagecoach) and relaunch your Lincs bus service as a proper time-tabled service and the alike to provide the service and get the bin men to drive these buses instead and launch your own Taxi company using employees that drive as drivers and get them to drive their own cars as the taxi company. Get the bin men to offer a grocery delivery service at the same time as emptying bins with a delivery charge in place.
- Do you all really need so many expenses? Teaching staff pay for many things out of their own pocket without considering claiming expenses, take a leaf out of their book.

- Scrap the increase and put it on next years.
- Cut senior executive pay. Don't spend a fortune on expensive new offices.
- Given the merger with Boston and the Covid lockdowns where most office based staff were supposedly working from home, surely the number of FTE's could reduce more than 8 for '21/'22. I think the lockdown has proved that a fair number of staff are not needed and the salaries could be used on more worthwhile projects. Another option to reduce costs would be to make a proportion of FTE's, into PTE's because, again, the lockdown proved this is achievable. An additional bonus would be the reduction of the Council's carbon footprint.
- Provide only mandatory services plus services that help the tourist economy such as provision of street cleaners, regular waste removal and actually fining people who litter. As we have upwards of 32,000 caravans why there is not a charge levied on them? They use the local services but do not pay a contribution so why not introduce something similar to a city tourist tax, this could generate a few million over the summer season. This could then be invested in the Town Centres where many shops have closed by reducing rates and encouraging new business. Similarly a small charge for day trippers visiting the seaside areas could encourage people to use alternative forms of transport other than the car, thereby reducing emissions and easing congestion on the proviso that an efficient park and ride system could be introduced.

12. All respondents were advised that whilst capital resources are limited, the Council is keen to invest what resources it does have available to improve the local economy. All respondents were asked if they believed that capital resources should be used to achieve this objective. One respondent suggested that the Council should invest in small High Street businesses so that they are able to re-open after the pandemic. Another respondent suggested refurbishing and improving the local area to enhance its attractiveness to residents and visitors. A couple of suggestions made were not under the remit of the District Council but the County Council, Environment Agency, Broadband Providers and the Drainage Board. One respondent considered that the Council should no longer pursue a move to Horncastle. A full list of comments/suggestions are included below:

- Every capital project is overpriced; it seems contractors charge premium when working for local authorities
- Not on caravan sites, they are rich enough and suck money from other struggling businesses; read your own steam reports.
- Build more industrial sites, we need jobs for the thousands of houses you are building in the district, where lots of people are migrating, they'll need somewhere to work.
- Louth and Horncastle improvements as key service centres. Stop all our shopping money going to Grimsby and Lincoln
- Frugally, and without coastal bias.
- Capital reserves should not be used to boost ailing sectors. Reserves best used to promote better facilities and infrastructure.
- You are ripping off tourists and residents alike.

- Invest in resurfacing roads/pathways that need it rather than resurfacing those that do not really need it, instead of bodging pot holes at extortionate costs time after time.
- Please read our previous comments on capital grants for our transformative project
- I expect you will be giving money to businesses and in particular to the right colour supporters. While dumping or cutting services were ever you can get away with it.
- Flood defence, broadband speed, provision of mains sewers and drainage.
- Refurbish and improve the local area to enhance its attractiveness to residents and visitors.
- The Louth High Street needs investment to make sure shops re-open after the pandemic and the area is made attractive so that customers find it an attractive place to spend time.
- Scrap the Horncastle building and scrap the partnership with BBC
- Investment is generally best left to the private sector. If you plan to do this I would suggest offering grants to the private sector who actually have the expertise to deal with this efficiently.
- To improve and promote the natural assets we already have such as Gibraltar Point, the Blue Flag beaches, what's left of Skegness foreshore and to generally make the towns and villages more attractive? Encourage all year round businesses to set up throughout the district. Now many of them are used to providing their staff with the means to work from home it should be easier to attract business when traditionally poor transport links have put them off.

13. All respondents were advised that in view of the recent pressures that both individuals and businesses are experiencing, the Council is looking to prioritise its services towards the recovery process. All respondents were asked what actions and initiatives they thought the Council could implement in order to support this? A couple of respondents considered that the Council should reduce business rates to help keep business overheads low. One respondent suggested the Council should consider training people that had lost their job or business. Another suggested that the Council should think of creative ways to lease empty shops. Two respondents felt that the Council should not extend the caravan season any further as it already had a massive detrimental impact on hotels and that they were having to be turned into Houses in Multiple Occupation in order to stay financial viable. A full list of suggestions and comments are included below:

- Reduce rates to keep business overheads lower while recovering High street innovation.
- Not more caravans and not a longer caravan season, they are hidden residents that draw on local resources and offer nothing especially now sites are self-sufficient being near beach has nothing to do with these caravans anymore.
- Small business relief
- Don't forget the little guy/gal, you only seem to focus on the large noisy companies or those with local Councillor favour.

- Tourism infrastructure including public toilets. Develop the cycling offer as in Yorkshire - there is huge potential
- Please read our previous comments on capital grants for our transformative project
- Stop supporting the austerity measures of this terrible government that has through its handling of this pandemic has caused thousands of unnecessary deaths. Fight back. Mutiny against it, show some defiance and stop sucking up and taking it on the chin. If you can't do that, resign the lot of you. Think of your residents for just once.
- The Council is unable to realistically support any recovery process.
- Give consideration to training people who have lost their job or business; support business and High street.
- Creative ways found to lease all shops on the High street 2) Make the High Street attractive for customers to spend time 3) Find ways of making sure more money is spent in the local economy 4) Improve the public realm, pathways support places of interest for visitors such as the museum, canal, concerts and market.
- Take more pride in Holton Le Clay and other villages like Marshchapel, Legbourne, Tetney and North Thoresby, as these have been forgotten about.
- Do not increase it this year. Tighten your belts like everyone else. You should have saved a lot this year as Councillors will not have been collecting travel allowance, so use that money instead of making residents pay for it.
- Focus on the young people who through no fault of their own have been so badly impacted by the restrictions (in order to save the elderly and infirm) imposed by the Government. Help for the hospitality industry who have been so badly impacted by the restrictions.
- People over non people - social services over car parks etc.
- Not make the millionaire caravan site owners even richer by extending the season but maybe help hoteliers improve their properties so they can compete. Over the years, East Lindsey's policy of allowing caravan after caravan site to spring up has resulted in the once grand hotels having to turn into HMO's to stay financially viable, providing accommodation for single benefit dependent people coming from the cities and doing nothing for the local economy. Skegness seafront looks an absolute disgrace at the moment. The caravan site owners provide everything on site meaning that Skegness itself relies on day visitors which is maybe why the Embassy Centre never makes any money and the seafront bars are always empty even at weekends. Rather than extend the season, it would be better to improve what's already there within the summer months.

14. All respondents were given the opportunity to provide any other comments; a full list of these are detailed below:

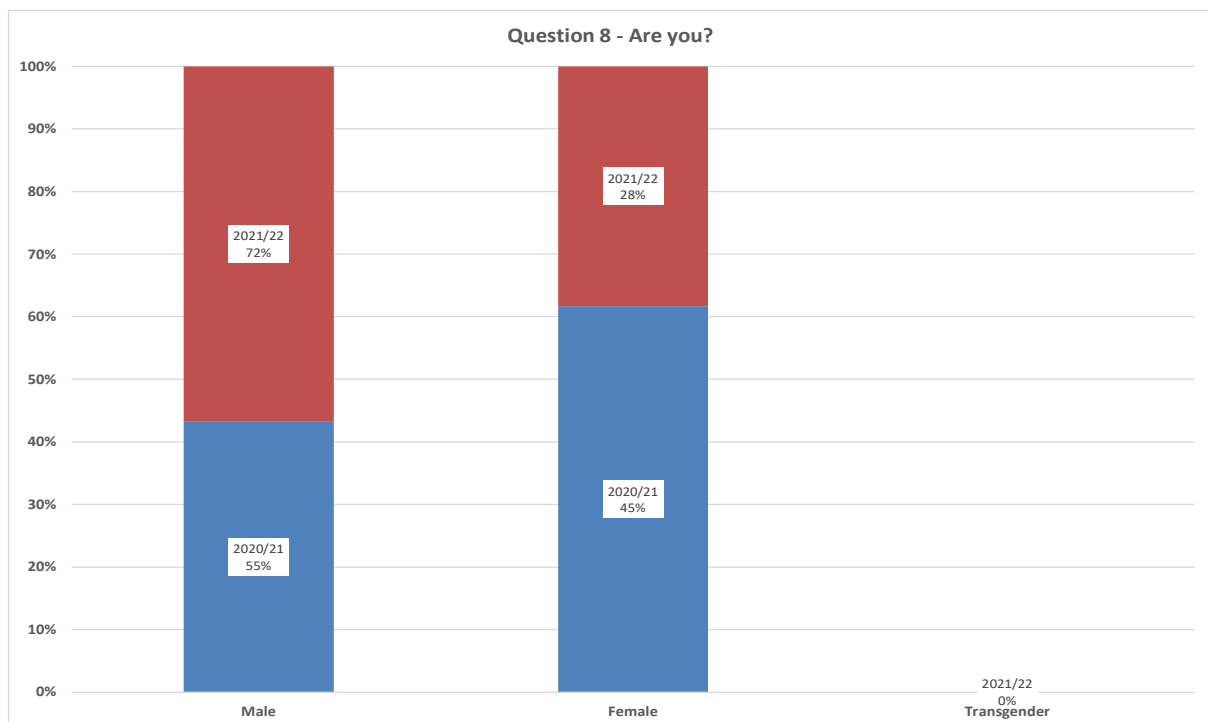
- Stop lining the pockets of the caravan sites, they are rich enough and don't benefit locals at all.
- If you are willing to support our Transformative Project we would be interested to hearing from you.
- This exercise is of course a waste of time because the dictatorship system claiming to be democracy will just ignore any opposition and steam roller

through any decision using the party loyalty and whip if necessary. So what the leader and his handpicked executive want is what we get and have to be grateful for because of course we are just the poor plebs and democracy is a farce, an illusion to keep us down.

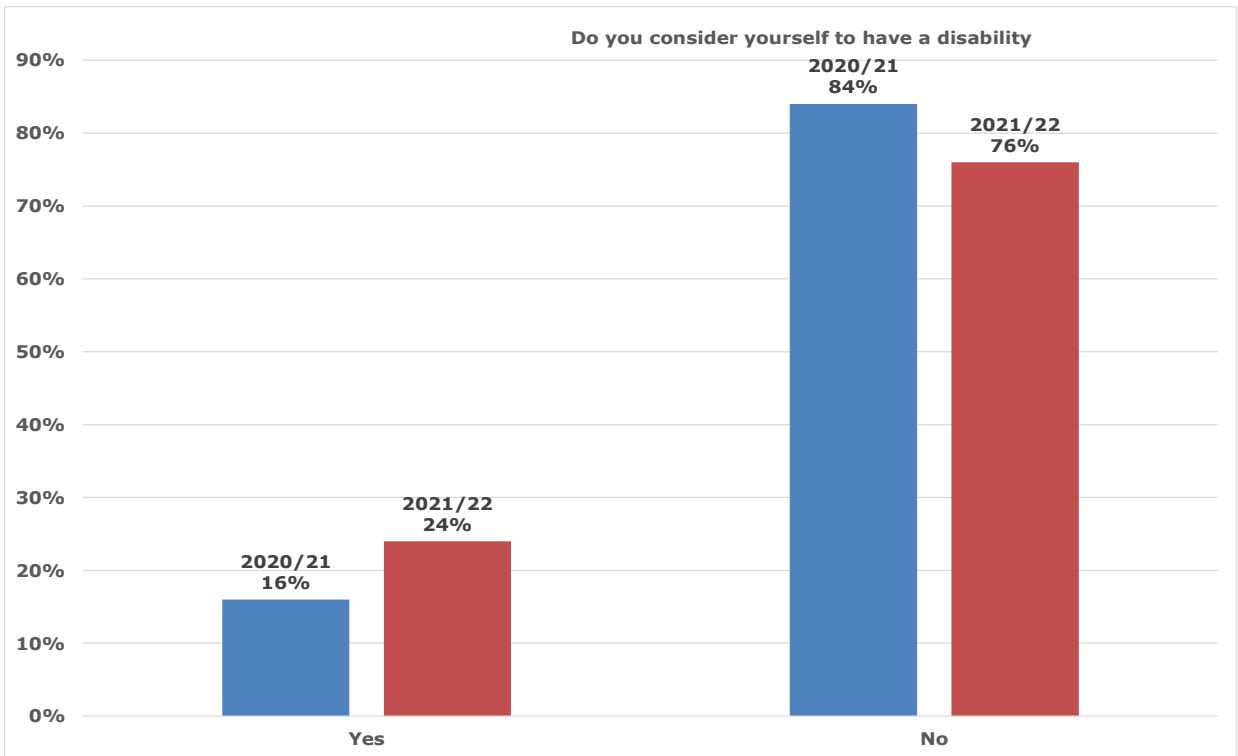
- The arrangement with Boston Borough Council and the move to a new "hub" are both wrong inasmuch as they further establish the notion of a district level of Council. It is this level of Council that has brought about the demise of the area to its current level of deprivation, particularly along the coast.
- Virgin media are the only telephone and broadband supplier available to the majority of Holton Le Clay. This needs to be changed and open reach infrastructure needs to be updated as half the village are not able to have good broadband from anybody else but virgin and they are entitled to a choice
- I think increases to Council Tax should not be increased this year due to the impact Covid is having on residents. Haven't we suffered enough this year?
- Perhaps you could consider not giving senior executives huge pay-outs when they fail at their job and leave.

Respondent Profile

15. The comparison chart below show that 72% of all respondents were male, with the remaining 28% being female. In previous years respondents have predominately been male.



16. The comparison chart below shows that 24% of all respondents considered they had a disability; a slight increase of 8% when compared with the previous consultation exercise undertaken.



17. The comparison chart below shows that the most popular age groups to respond to the consultation were the '45 to 64' and 'Over 65' age groups, as was the case when the previous consultation exercise was undertaken.

