



General Fund budget consultation 2024/25

Consultation responses

1. Introduction

Consultation on Canterbury City Council's (CCC) proposals for the General Fund budget took place between Monday 13 November 2023 and Monday 8 January 2024.

Every year, the council has to set a balanced budget to make sure the money we spend delivering services is in line with the money we have available.

Before setting the budget for 2024/25 in February 2024, this consultation sought the public's views on what has been proposed, including:

- reinstating the market in Canterbury city centre
- reopening Sturry Park and Ride
- three hour blue badge parking, increased from 2 hours
- proposed changes to charges in council car parks.

Respondents were also asked to comment on council tax, the draft capital programme, garden waste proposals and other fees and charges across a wide range of services.

A total of 69 responses were received.

2. Executive summary

- The majority of respondents said that the increase in council tax was fair given the current cost of day to day expenses.
- There was good support for the Park and Ride at Sturry. Support was mixed for the Canterbury market and tree officer.
- There was strong support for the Christmas tree disposal service and a large concern that restricting the Christmas tree disposal service to garden waste subscribers only would increase fly tipping.
- Many respondents said that the beach hut increase is too large given the quality of nearby facilities.
- A number of respondents recommended increasing or maintaining the support of voluntary sector organisations
- There were recommendations to perform a cost-benefit analysis of charging council tax to low-income households.

3. Consultation methodology

Consultation took place between Monday 13 November 2023 and Monday 8 January 2024. The following methods were used to seek views:

- an online questionnaire, which received 69 responses
- a paper version of the questionnaire, of which one was returned
- No written representations were received.

The consultation was promoted in the following ways:

- an article on the council's newsroom site
- posts on the council's social media channels.

Additionally, the following stakeholders were emailed directly to encourage them to respond to the consultation:

- Parish councils
- CCC councillors
- Relevant KCC councillors
- Residents' associations
- Local 'Friends of' groups
- Canterbury Connected Business Improvement District (BID)
- Canterbury Archaeological Trust
- Canterbury Green Party
- Canterbury Inter Faith Association
- Canterbury Society
- Canterbury Society
- Canterbury Action for Sustainable transport
- Canterbury College
- Cathedral Court Residents Association
- C4B
- CPRE Kent
- CPRE Kent
- East Cliff Neighbourhood Panel
- English Rural Housing Association
- Ethnic Minority Independent Council (EMIC)
- Ethnic Minority Independent Council
- Herne Bay and District Chamber of Commerce
- Hi Kent
- Hilltop Community
- Home Builders Federation
- Chamber of Commerce
- Invicta Chamber of Commerce
- Local Democracy Forum
- Moat Housing
- Mono Consultants Limited
- SPOKES East Kent Cycle Campaign
- St Mildreds Area Conservation Society SMACS
- The Crab & Winkle Line Trust
- The Canterbury Academy Trust
- The Gardens Trust
- The Georgian Group
- The Ickham, Littlebourne and Wickhambreaux Society
- The Open Spaces Society
- The Society of Sturry Village
- The Talk of Tankerton
- The Twentieth Century Society
- Theatres Trust
- Whitstable Improvement Trust
- Visit Kent

- Canterbury Climate Action Partnership
- Canterbury Christchurch Student Union
- University of Kent Student Union
- UCA Student Union
- Age UK Canterbury
- Canterbury Inter-Faith Association (CANDIFA)
- Disability Advisory Panel (DAP)
- Ethnic Minority Independent Council (EMIC)
- HiKent
- Nigerian Community Association
- Polish Educational Club in Kent (PECK)
- Karibu Community Action Kent
- Kwan Ngei Chinese Association

- Canterbury and District Jewish Community
- Canterbury Muslim Cultural Centre
- Kent County Council - Highways
- Stagecoach
- Whitefriars
- Marlowe Society
- English Heritage
- World Heritage Committee
- Pride
- Visit Kent
- Canterbury Cathedral
- Canterbury Festival
- Continental Drifts
- Kent Cultural Transformation Board
- Canterbury Tales of England
- Canterbury Archaeological Trust
- Relevant licence holders

4. Findings

NB: Percentages have been rounded to the nearest decimal point

4.1. Questionnaire responses

A total of 69 completed questionnaires were submitted, all but one of which were online.

4.1.1. Respondent profile

Over 76% of respondents are residents of the Canterbury district.

Respondent type	Percentage
A resident of the Canterbury district	76.8% (53)
A visitor to the Canterbury district	5.8% (4)
A worker in the Canterbury district	5.8% (4)
A business, organisation or community group	-
A city, county, parish or town councillor	11.6% (8)

8 (11.6%) respondents answered 'Other', and their self-described respondent type is shown below

- Beach hut owner
- Beach hut owner
- Beach hut owner Herne Bay
- Canterbury & District Green Party
- Live in the surrounding area
- Resident and beach hut owner
- Trustee of Canterbury District Citizens Advice
- Volunteer with Citizens Advice

The majority of people responding were aged between 45 and 74.

Age	Percentage
Under 18	-
18 to 25	2.9% (2)
26 to 34	2.9% (2)
35 to 44	7.2% (5)

45 to 54	17.4% (12)
55 to 64	18.8% (13)
65 to 74	26.1% (18)
75 to 84	18.8% (13)
85 and above	-

NB: 3 (4.3%) respondents did not give their age

More females responded than males.

Gender	Percentage
Male	49.3% (34)
Female	42.0% (29)
Prefer to self-describe (for example, non-binary, gender fluid etc)	-

NB: 3 (4.3%) respondents did not give their gender

4.1.2. Council Tax

A number of respondents emphasised the need to perform a cost benefit analysis of collecting council tax from the poorest members of society, a number of which may be within Band 1.

A good number of the respondents thought the increase was fair and necessary to support the council's services.

Others stated that the council should cut costs rather than increase tax.

The following themes were identified in the comments:

- A new system of council tax should be made to take account of people's ability to pay: 9 comments
- Increase is fair: 8 comments
- Investigate if the costs of charging and enforcing council tax on the poorest are greater than the income generated: 7 comments
- Increase is fair (below inflation): 6 comments
- Increase is unfair (cost of living, inflation, mortgages): 6 comments
- Increase should be bigger to support services: 4 comments
- Increase is fair (cuts to local government funding): 2 comments
- Increase is unfair (given other fees/CCC charges): 1 comment
- Increase is unfair (CCC should cut costs): 1 comment
- Increase is unfair: 1 comment
- Increase is fair (CCC doesn't get much of the tax): 1 comment
- Is an increase needed?: 1 comment
- Increase is unfair (quality of services are poor): 1 comment

4.1.3. Draft Budget 2024/25

For the draft budget there were a wide range of comments, given the breadth of the proposals.

There was strong support for the Sturry Park and Ride, as well as giving 3 hours free parking for blue badge holders.

Responses around recruiting a tree officer were mixed with some questioning how useful this would be.

The following themes were identified in the comments:

- Sturry Park and Ride (support): 15 comments
- 3 hours parking is good: 10 comments
- Agree with all proposals: 5 comments
- Canterbury market (general support): 5 comments
- Tree officer (support): 4 comments
- Beach huts: fee increase unjustified: 4 comments
- Tree officer (object): 3 comments
- Does not support more free time for disabled parking: 3 comments
- Canterbury market (object): 2 comments
- Parking enforcement (why is it losing money/cost so much?): 2 comments
- Parking charges are too high: 2 comments
- Parking: 3 hours free disabled parking will decrease the availability of general parking places: 2 comments
- Climate change reserve is good: 2 comments
- No need for a tree officer: 1 comment
- CCC should cut costs (bandstand, parking enforcement): 1 comment
- More enforcement in Canterbury city centre of ASB and ebikes: 1 comment
- Percentage incorrect (it is correct to the nearest £1): 1 comment
- Chief executive post should be returned: 1 comment
- Generate more revenue from beach huts and on-street parking: 1 comment
- Canterbury market stalls should be close together: 1 comment
- More and wheelchair friendly/bungalows in social housing: 1 comment
- Increase local housing allowance: 1 comment
- Open market in Whitstable: 1 comment
- More sports and clubs for young people: 1 comment
- Increasing parking charges deters visitors: 1 comment
- Encourage highly qualified jobs working with the universities: 1 comment
- Ensure parks are lockable at night: 1 comment
- More needs to be done given climate and biodiversity emergencies: 1 comment
- Canterbury market: expensive parking will put people off: 1 comment

- Disable parking spaces don't need to be free, but they do need to be reserved and priority spaces: 1 comment
- Improve public toilets: 1 comment
- Blue badge holder don't need free parking, they only need reserved priority spaces: 1 comment
- Stop being anti-motorist: 1 comment
- Support food banks: 1 comment
- Park and Ride very expensive: 1 comment
- Canterbury market is good: 1 comment

4.1.4. Capital programme

Given the range of schemes under the capital programme, the comments were quite varied.

There were two or three respondents that asked for more detail in order for them to be able to better understand and comment on the proposal.

The following themes were identified in the comments:

- More detailed explanation of large expenditures is required (e.g. building improvements): 2 comments
- Prioritise sustainability in the refurbishments: 1 comment
- Reduce light pollution by selecting highly directional street lighting: 1 comment
- Congestion charge for Canterbury and Whitstable: 1 comment
- Work with KCC on active travel: 1 comment
- More funding for play areas: 1 comment
- Reinstate conservation works in 26/27 budget: 1 comment
- Extend Kingsmead leisure centre pool by 50m as this will bring in more money: 1 comment
- Why is there no capital expenditure on cycling facilities?: 1 comment
- What does St George Lane Relo LL and St George Lane Relo Tenant mean?: 1 comment
- Reopen Wincheap public toilets: 1 comment
- Where is LUF scheme explained?: 1 comment
- Surprise at decrease in planned expenditure in the later years: 1 comment
- More spend for Herne Bay: 1 comment
- Make museums wheelchair accessible: 1 comment
- Are beach huts for sale or rent?: 1 comment
- How can expenditure decrease so much in later years?: 1 comment
- Give overview of strategy alongside figures: 1 comment
- This budget does not invest in rural areas enough: 1 comment
- Improve street lighting: 1 comment
- Privatise beach huts: 1 comment
- Protect voluntary services like CAB: 1 comment
- Invest in current play areas, not new ones: 1 comment
- Much greater detail is required in the consultation to assess the achievability of net zero: 1 comment
- Beach hut increase is unfair: 1 comment

4.1.5. Garden waste

From 2024/25, the council proposes to only provide a free Christmas tree collection for those residents who have a garden waste subscription.

Many respondents were concerned that the removal of this service would cause fly tipping of Christmas trees and there was good support for the original Christmas tree disposal service.

However, there was still a good level of support for removing this service.

The following themes were identified in the comments:

- Concerns over increased fly tipping: 20 comments
- Support for original christmas tree disposal service: 10 comments
- General support: 8 comments
- People should cut up tree and put in garden waste bin: 4 comments
- Will this save money given the risk of increased fly tipping: 2 comments
- Wasteful to encourage people to individually visit the tip to dispose of trees: 2 comments
- Churches should have their trees collected for free: 2 comments
- Promote the sale of Christmas Trees with roots: 1 comment
- Organise a 'tree volunteer shredder' programme via the City website: 1 comment
- Increase green bin cost instead: 1 comment
- Unfair to non-Garden waste subscribers to add the Christmas tree collection to the garden waste service.: 1 comment
- Unfair on those who do not have gardens: 1 comment
- This will take money from charities who perform this service: 1 comment
- Garden waste should be free and include trees: 1 comment
- Grind up trees for park mulch: 1 comment
- Discarded trees will block pavements: 1 comment
- General objection: 1 comment
- People should not have to subsidise this luxury purchase: 1 comment
- Garden waste collection should be free: 1 comment
- Will encourage the use of plastic trees: 1 comment

4.1.6. Fees and charges

Many respondents were against the increased beach hut fees.

Others said that the condition of both public and private rented housing was poor and needed improvement.

The following themes were identified in the comments:

- Beach hut increase is too high/unjustified given the state of nearby facilities: 18 comments
- Enforce improvement of poor rented housing conditions (both private and public): 4 comments
- Licensing fee should be controlled by local government/Why is gambling excluded from the increase?: 2 comments
- Tackling the housing crisis: 2 comments
- Keep ownership of and renovate heritage properties (Sidney Cooper): 1 comment
- On P38, do the charges apply to waste and recycling domestic bins collections: 1 comment
- It is unfair that bowls is free and pitch charges are increasing: 1 comment
- Add 120 and 240 litre garden waste tariff: 1 comment
- Increase immigration fees: 1 comment
- Allocate money for Active Travel: 1 comment
- Don't charge too much to market and food stalls: 1 comment
- 4% taxi charges will be borne by customers. There isn't enough public transport to avoid taxis.: 1 comment
- Publish more details about the 4 museums' finances: 1 comment
- Improve the approach from the Gorrell Tank car park to Whitstable harbour: 1 comment
- Why aren't all museums free instead of just the Beaney?: 1 comment
- Taxi fee should be increased by inflation: 1 comment
- Retain elderly travel cards: 1 comment
- Bus fares should only be increased by inflation: 1 comment
- Increase social housing: 1 comment
- Allow bonfires on beaches: 1 comment
- Introduce a Whitstable market: 1 comment
- Increase CAB funding: 1 comment
- E Scooters are a problem in Canterbury: 1 comment
- High parking will reduce the number of visitors to Canterbury: 1 comment
- Keep museums free: 1 comment
- Publish waste collection and recycling data: 1 comment
- Use prefabricated buildings to increase the amount of public housing: 1 comment

4.1.7. Other comments or suggestions

A number of respondents recommended increasing or maintaining the support of voluntary sector organisations, of which the Citizen's Advice Bureau was mentioned a number of times.

Some respondents also were concerned that the cost of trying to collect council tax from low income households might not outweigh any income gained.

The following themes were identified in the comments:

- Increase support for the voluntary sector: 7 comments
- Increase is fair: 4 comments
- Don't collect council tax from Band 1 as the costs will outweigh the income: 4 comments
- Improve enforcement (litter, parking, fly tipping, dog waste, alcohol in prohibited areas): 2 comments
- Increase parking enforcement to generate income: 1 comment
- Blue badge holders don't need free parking: 1 comment
- Increase business charges: 1 comment
- More speed cameras, to generate more revenue: 1 comment
- Working with community groups to access external funding: 1 comment
- Increase council tax: 1 comment
- Beach hut increase not justified given poor state of facilities: 1 comment
- Make hampton free car park except for May to September: 1 comment
- Adult social care could save money by using Shared Lives Scheme: 1 comment
- Remove managers and use salary on services: 1 comment
- Sell land at military road for development: 1 comment
- Solar panels on schools: 1 comment
- Better sport facilities and events: 1 comment
- Encourage cycling to reduce road wear: 1 comment
- Work with charities more: 1 comment
- Run more events in the city centre / open air concerts: 1 comment
- Charge nightclubs more: 1 comment
- Cut services and staff: 1 comment
- Tax developers: 1 comment
- Encourage tourism out of season: 1 comment
- Cut councillor salaries: 1 comment
- Cancel cycle path from park to Herne Bay station: 1 comment
- More litter bins and dog poo bins.: 1 comment
- Increase charges for gambling: 1 comment
- Stop being anti-motorist: 1 comment
- Focus on core services: 1 comment

- Prioritise social care, community and mental health: 1 comment
- Encourage high-tech businesses with short term funding: 1 comment
- Increase tourism with mediaeval city branding: 1 comment
- Increase published data and transparency of council owned property developments:
1 comment

4.2. Written representations

No written representations were received.

A number of queries relating to the figures provided for council tax increase were raised. Council officers were able to confirm that the figure of £6.77 for the year is correct as this relates to the increase on CCC's element of council tax only.

5. Conclusions

This consultation covered a wide range of proposals as part of the 2024/25 budget.

Some expressed that, given the cost of living at the moment, the proposed increase in council tax is unfair. That being said, some did state that they understood the reasons for it.

Respondents showed support for the return of Sturry Park and Ride. Comments around the reintroduction of Canterbury city market and the recruitment of a tree officer which were far more mixed.

No presiding theme emerged in the comments about the capital programme, but two respondents requested more details for large expenditures like building improvements.

There is strong support for the Christmas tree disposal service, however several respondents expressed concerns that by restricting the service, fly tipping may increase.

On other fees and charges, many respondents feel that the beach hut increase is high. Explanations for this highlighted the poor quality of nearby facilities and previous increases which have increased above inflation over the years.