2012-13 Budget Public survey using SIMALTO modeling – Headline findings

- A.6.1. The results of the survey are a robust and reliable guide to the views of Surrey residents. There were 701 responses. The method used means the results reported are representative of the whole county - they include a balance of views from people of different ages, gender, socio-economic groups etc.
- A.6.2. There are four key headline findings:
 - 1. The council's current spending closely reflects the spending priorities of Surrey's residents

A majority of residents would leave the allocation of current spend as it is now, altering the existing budget only slightly through increased investment in highways services, with corresponding reductions to the opening hours of libraries and recycling centres.

2. The council understands its residents

The research company who ran the exercise reported that the similarity between the council's current spending and residents' preferences was notable and not typical for councils.

- 3. A majority of residents (58%) would be willing to see a slight increase in council spending and their council tax in return for current service levels being maintained and specific investments and improvements being made in:
 - Highways maintenance
 - Supporting young people into education, employment or training, including more apprenticeships
 - Supporting more older people to live independently
- 4. Residents attach value to the council's services and reductions will cause dissatisfaction

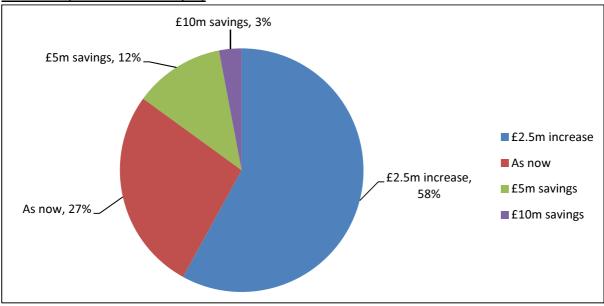
If service levels were scaled back to the most basic level that was presented in the budget survey, 96% of respondents indicated they would complain to the council. They identified four areas that should be protected even if savings have to be made:

- Fire and Rescue services
- Highways maintenance
- Residential care for dementia sufferers
- Independent living for older people
- A.6.3. The full set of data results from the survey can be found online at http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/your-council/consultations

Detailed results

A.6.4. Figure A6:1 shows that once informed about the impact of their service preferences on the council's spending (and their council tax) the consensus view from residents was slight increases to the current level of spend on the services they were surveyed on. 58% of respondents to the survey were willing to accept a £2.5m increase in council spend on the services (equating to a £6 annual council tax rise for the average home) to pay for their preferred service options.

Figure A6:1: Residents' budget scenario choice once informed of impact of their spending decisions (face-to-face sample)



- A.6.5. Table A6.1 shows residents' consensus optimum service configurations for different spending scenarios. The column on the far right hand side illustrates the mix of services that residents expressed a preference for in a scenario where an additional £2.5m is invested in the services. The column of the far left hand side illustrates the mix of services that residents expressed a preference for in a scenario where spending on the services is reduced by £10m. The columns in-between illustrate the preferred mix of services in scenarios where spending on the services is reduced by £7.5m, £2.5m or remains as it is currently.
- A.6.6. The yellow shaded options (in bold) indicate where the current service level has been 'improved', and the grey shading (italics) indicates reduction in service level.

Investment Scenario SIMALTO Points	-£10m 31	-£7.5m 41	-£5m 51	-£2.5m 61	As now 71	+£2.5m 81
Council Tax change	-	-	-	-	-	+£6
1 NEET support centres	5 fewer	5 fewer	As now	As now	As now	More apprenticeships
2 Children's centres	6 fewer	6 fewer	6 fewer	As now	As now	As now
3 Dementia care	100 fewer	As now	As now	As now	As now	As now
4 Elderly live at home	As now	As now	As now	As now	As now	100 more
5 Day centres	Close 1	Close 1	As now	As now	As now	As now
6 Learning difficulties	20 fewer	20 fewer	As now	As now	As now	As now
7 Fire and rescue	As now	As now	As now	As now	As now	As now
8 Library service	Large reduction	Large reduction	Large reduction	Small reduction	Small reduction	As now
9 Trading standards	Halve protection	Halve protection	Halve protection	As now	As now	As now
10 Arts & heritage	No support	No support	No support	No support	As now	As now
11 Road maintenance	As now	As now	As now	As now	Increase	Increase
12 Recycling centres	Less hours	Less hours	Less hours	Less hours	Less hours	As now
13 Bus routes	Many fewer	Many fewer	Many fewer	Fewer	As now	As now
14 Countryside estate	Close all	Close all	Close all	Deteriorate	As now	As now

Table A6.1: Optimum service configurations for different spending scenarios (face to face survey results)

A.6.7. Table A6:2 shows the complete hierarchy of preferred choices for the options on the SIMALTO grid. The options at the top of the list are those which the most number of residents selected as a priority. So, from a starting point where all services have reduced spending and provision the most popular thing to do when given a chance to allocate funds was to spend it on highways maintenance. The second most popular choice was to spend a further amount on highways maintenance. The third most popular choice was then to bring the number of fire engines back up. And so on.

Service	Change	% Preference Face-to- face	% Preference Web residents	Cost
11 Road maintenance	Big reduction \rightarrow Reduction	91	93	£1m
11 Road maintenance	Reduction \rightarrow as now	88	82	£1m
7 Fire and rescue	2 fewer \rightarrow 1 fewer engine	86	89	£1m
1 NEET support	Close 10 centres \rightarrow close 5	85	85	£1m
4 Elderly independent living	100 fewer \rightarrow as now	84	89	£1m
7 Fire and rescue	1 fewer engine \rightarrow as now	83	68	£1m
5 Disabled day centres	Close 2 \rightarrow close 1	81	88	£500k
9 Trading standards	No support \rightarrow Reduced	79	88	£250k
9 Trading standards	Reduce \rightarrow as now	79	75	£250k
1 NEET support	Close 5 centres \rightarrow as now	79	71	£1m
2 Children's centres	12 fewer \rightarrow 6 fewer	78	83	£500k
2 Children's centres	6 fewer \rightarrow as now	74	68	£500k
5 Disabled day centres	Close $1 \rightarrow as now$	73	75	£500k
6 Learning independence	20 fewer → as now	72	86	£1m
3 Dementia residential care	100 fewer \rightarrow as now	72	71	£2.5m
12 Recycling centres	Fewer centres → fewer hours	70	84	£500k
13 Bus routes	12 fewer \rightarrow 7 fewer	69	80	£1m
14 Countryside estate	Close sites → deterioration	67	81	£250k
14 Countryside estate	Deterioration → as now	67	71	£250k
13 Bus routes	7 fewer → as now	66	56	£1m
1 NEET support	As now \rightarrow more apprenticeships	62	41	£500k
11 Road maintenance	As now \rightarrow increase	62	44	£1m
8 Library services	Big reduction \rightarrow Reduction	61	75	£500k
12 Recycling centres	Fewer hours \rightarrow as now	58	64	£500k
8 Library services	Reduction \rightarrow as now	53	57	£500k
2 Children's centres	As now $\rightarrow +1500$ children	51	27	£500k
10 Arts & heritage	No support \rightarrow as now	50	72	£250k
4 Elderly independent living	As now \rightarrow 100 more	49	57	£1m
9 Trading standards	As now \rightarrow Enhanced	47	37	£250k
7 Fire and rescue	As now \rightarrow investment	35	13	£1m
6 Learning independence	As now $\rightarrow 20$ more	30	55	£1m

Table A6:2: Complete hierarchy of preferred choices

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14 Countryside estate	As now \rightarrow improved	30	24	£500k
13 Bus routes	As now \rightarrow 7 more	27	13	£1m
11 Road maintenance	Increase → significant increase	27	15	£1m
1 NEET support	more apprenticeships \rightarrow much more	24	14	£500k
10 Arts & heritage	As now \rightarrow enhanced	24	26	£250k
2 Children's centres	+1500 children \rightarrow +3000 children	22	9	£250k
8 Library services	As now \rightarrow increase	22	12	£250k
9 Trading standards	Enhanced \rightarrow + advice	21	12	£250k
3 Dementia residential care	As now → 100 more	19	23	£2.5m
12 Recycling centres	As now \rightarrow some new	18	15	£500k
7 Fire and rescue	investment \rightarrow more investment	15	4	£1m
14 Countryside estate	improved \rightarrow much more	11	6	£500k
12 Recycling centres	some new → more new	9	3	£500k
8 Library services	Increase \rightarrow + Sunday opening	8	5	£250k
13 Bus routes	$7 \text{ more} \rightarrow 11 \text{ more}$	7	4	£1m

A.6.8. The results show that of the numerous individual changes to service levels from which residents could choose to prioritise, some key messages emerged regarding service enhancements that would cause them to be **most satisfied**, service levels that they most **wished to protect** from reductions, and others they would be relatively **less concerned** about if they were reduced:

Enhancement options that residents would be most satisfied with:

- More investment in Highways maintenance
- Investment in NEET support, including an increase in apprenticeships.
- Further investment in more older people being supported to live independently.

Services where provision should be protected even if savings have to be made:

- Fire and Rescue services.
- Highways maintenance.
- Residential care for dementia sufferers.
- Independent living for older people.

Service reduction options that would cause relatively least concern for residents

(But which would still cause many people dissatisfaction)

- Reducing Libraries opening hours and fewer new books.
- Reducing opening hours for recycling facilities.
- Six to eight bus services removed.
- No support for Arts and Heritage services

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Background

- A.6.9. The Council desired resident input into the 2013 Budget planning process that was as relevant and accurate as possible. Following a procurement process the SIMALTO Modelling approach was adopted. The Council has used this approach for budget consultations previously in 2005 and 2009. It has also been used by over 90 local authorities in the UK and worldwide.
- A.6.10. This method asks respondents to make their priorities from a choice of defined alternative levels of each service. Respondents' choices are 'realistic' since the relative savings/extra costs of each different service level are shown to residents, and they only have fixed, constrained budgets to allocate across the competing service levels. This recognises some changes save/cost more than others, and residents (councils) cannot spend the same money twice

Method

- A.6.11. The council prepared a matrix grid of 14 different services on which the level of service provision might be changed from 2012 to 20131. Individual alternative levels of service are described, each with the relative cost of their change from other levels of the same attribute, e.g. increased investment in road and footway maintenance (4 units, (12 8) on attribute 11) costs the same as 6-8 enhanced weekday bus services (4 units, (12 8) on attribute 13).
- A.6.12. Very approximately, 1 point on the grid represents £250,000 of council budget, and the current service 'costs' 71 points (approximately £18million) on the grid. Respondents were invited to carefully read the whole sheet, and then carry out the following tasks.
 - Task 1Cross out any options they thought were unacceptable, i.e. would cause them to
complain or seriously consider doing so if this level of service was provided.
 - Task 2Indicate the 5 or 6 services they thought were most important.
 - Task 3Read the options in the first option box on each row, and indicate how 'pleased'
they would be if that level of service were to be provided by the council.
 - Task 4Allocate between 29 and 31 points on improving the overall service from this
basic first option box position (first priorities)
 - Task 5 Allocate a further 20 points second priority improvements
 - Task 6
 Allocate a further 20 points third priority improvements
 - Task 7 Allocate a final 15 points of improvements fourth priority improvements

After each of Tasks 4 to 7, respondents indicated how 'pleased' they would be if this improved level of service were to be provided (with no associated change in council tax being implied).

¹ Note that the survey did not model the entire council budget. It focussed on 14 service areas with discretion to adjust spending levels

Task 8 Finally respondents were told the net effect that each of their scenarios would have on the county budget. The last scenario would require an approximate £6 annual increase in council tax for the average home.

First points allocation round	+30 point priorities	£10 million saving
Second points allocation round	+50 point priorities	£5 million saving
Third points allocation round	+70 point priorities	No change
Fourth points allocation round	+85 point priorities	£2.5 million increase (equates to approx £6 council tax increase for a Band D property)

Residents were then asked to select the scenario which they felt was most worth the cost.

Sample

- A.6.13.A total of 701 people participated in the survey. The sample for the Simalto exercise was sourced using two different methods:
 - 155 face-to-face interviews were completed to capture views that were representative of Surrey's residents across different ages and genders
 - A web-based version of the Simalto exercise was run via the council's website. A total of 546 people participated in the web survey – 445 residents, 89 council officers and 12 Members.
- A.6.14. When comparing the results between both samples, there are only very slight differences between their preferences.

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