

Budget consultation survey results

Background

Following the agreement of the Policy and Resources Committee on 30 November, a consultation was launched on draft proposals for the council's budget for the financial year 2023/24.

This consultation ran for 6 weeks, and responses were encouraged through news release, social media posts, the council website, and direct emails to stakeholders.

There were:

- 450 views of the consultation page on the council's website
- Social media activity promoting the consultation reached 8,901 people

The consultation asked people to read key budget documents and then respond to nine questions.

The consultation closed at 5pm on Friday 13 January, having received 64 responses, and four email submissions which have been included in the below summary.

Results – summary

Q1

The council needs to prepare a balanced budget so that its costs are met by income. Currently our costs are forecast to exceed the income we are able to generate. In order to be able to deliver a balanced budget what services would you support reducing?

There were 45 responses to this question, of which

- 2 said “pass” or they had insufficient information to answer
- 8 said there should be no cuts to services
- 3 said reduce spending on councillor allowances
- 4 said reduce spending on senior staff
- 4 said reduce non-statutory services
- 5 were suggestions purely related to non-Swale services (streetlights, school transport, road schemes, Police and Crime Commissioner, road schemes)
- Other suggestions for reductions, were waste collections, leisure, and regeneration

Q2

The council also intends to increase its income. How would you suggest we might do that?

There were 39 responses to this question:

- 4 explicitly supported increasing parking fees
- 2 explicitly opposed increasing parking charges
- 3 supported increasing fees and charges generally
- There were several suggestions that the council should be more entrepreneurial, such as:
 - Renting out Swale House
 - Renting out homes at market rates

- Setting up a LATCO to charge for services
 - Chargeable events/concerts
- Other suggestions included:
 - Increasing fines for enforcement
 - Charging developers more for planning applications

Q3

Do you believe the council should reduce its spending on some services to be able to spend more on others?

There were 52 responses to this question, of which:

- 32 (62%) responded “yes”
- 20 (38%) responded “no”

Q4

Which services would you reduce spending on, and which services would you spend more on?

There were 47 responses to this question:

- 14 supported increased spending on the voluntary and community sector
- Other suggestions for increased spending included:
 - Litter, enforcement, environmental improvements, cleansing
- Suggestions for reducing spending included:
 - Discretionary services, leisure, housing, senior staff, grounds maintenance, councillors, mayor, green initiatives, town centre improvements.

Q5

Please use the box below to let us have any views on the proposed increases to the fees and charges.

There were 30 responses to this question, including:

- 6 agreeing with proposals overall
- 4 disagreeing with increased parking charges explicitly
- 1 agreeing with increased parking charges explicitly
- 8 comments disagree with increases in various waste charges:
 - 3 bulky
 - 2 household
 - 2 garden
 - 1 garden and bulky

Q6

The Band D Council Tax for Swale Council for this year is £189.27 and the suggested increase for 2023/24 is £5.67. In the current financial circumstances do you think that this is an appropriate amount to charge?

There were 54 answers to this question of which:

- 30 said yes,
- 14 said no

- 2 said yes, with caveats (equitable share between rural and urban services, and listen to residents' views and take action)
- 1 said it should increase more
- 1 n/a
- 1 suggested a referendum on increasing
- The remainder made general comments about the cost and council services

Q7

If the government gave us more flexibility to increase the charge by £10.00 to help support the council's budget would you be supportive?

There were 57 responses to this question, of which:

- 31 (54%) said yes
- 26 (46%) said no

Q8

Please use the box below to let us have any views on the capital programme proposals.

- Several comments were unsure what Levelling Up Funding involved
- 3 comments were generally supportive
- Other comments include:
 - Both opposition to, and support of, funding for Faversham Pools and the Swing Bridge
 - Letting out offices
 - Get residential rental income

Q9

Please use the box below to let us have any views on the savings proposals.

There were 53 responses to this question, with a range of views, including:

- 8 support them overall
- 6 support reducing member allowances, 1 opposes
- 11 oppose removal of dog waste bins
- 18 said not to cut voluntary and community service funding
- Several organisations affected by proposed cuts submitted their opposition to the proposals and these have been incorporated in the above

Results - detailed

The results of each question is set out below, followed by four separate direct submissions from organisations impacted by the proposals.

Where the number of comments does not add up to the number reported this is due to comments being entered with no information eg "XXX", "n/a", or "none".

Q1

The council needs to prepare a balanced budget so that its costs are met by income. Currently our costs are forecast to exceed the income we are able to generate. In order to be able to deliver a balanced budget what services would you support reducing?

There were 45 responses to this question

Suggestions were:

- Anything that's an absolute waste. There are people who just sit around doing nothing. You need to be making redundancies.
- Councillors drawings. Money wasted on climate change rubbish.
- Councillors wages
- Decoration and gardening, leaf & litter cleaning (residents responsible), lights on at night, no more signs of the new housing developments all around Faversham, painting and resurfacing roads that are still ok,
- The number of senior management positions
- Housing
- I believe that housing development should be limited because the construction of large houses with inadequate facilities exacerbates the inequalities and deprivation that exist in Swale. The Council should invest in renewable energy across council estates to reduce energy costs; increase investment in LED lighting to offset the costs of fuel support for residents in the long run; offer staff a cash alternative to opt out of the LGPs at half the cost of the Council contribution; promote salary sacrifice schemes to help reduce Council ENICs contributions; and use community organisations in the delivery of community services (for instance, outsource the Council's community development services, training and development, monitoring and evaluation, etc.) to reduce locum staff and expensive outside consultants; review VFM of consultancy contracts; extend use of dynamic purchasing systems to help ensure VFM.
- I think the reductions should be spread across all services including the statutory ones but don't reduce spending on charitable and voluntary organisations.
- I would think about 3 weekly waste collection if food and nappies could be collected weekly.
- Implement efficiency improvements for waste collections. Bring it back in house if need be. Example: I live a building with 3 other properties inside, next door there are a number of flats. We all have separate bins lined up for collection. Why not just a large waste disposal bin for apartments that is easier to collect? Seen this in Europe.
- Consolidate ICT services, customer experience and contact centres with other local authorities to create one large service between multiple authorities. This can be done with other services such as communications, strategy/change/projects and even resident facing services such as enforcement too.
- Utilise private sector innovation to improve procurement processes and enter negotiations with more industry knowledge. There are companies that support local councils with this.
- There are probably many areas where efficiency savings can be found but I'm not an officer at Swale so I can't see internally.
- Improving administration amongst all services. Working closely with charitable sectors to increase early interventions in areas such as council tax collections processes for both the council and residents. Increase possible local temporary housing opportunities and more affordable rented properties via housing developments , reducing the need to source more expensive out of borough arrangements and benefit applications costs reduced
- In reaching your decisions, please do not penalise those in rural areas who already have vastly reduced services compared to those in the towns - we are

always an easy target for spending cuts on Council services but things should be more balanced and equitable.

- Invest in renewable power generation across the council estate to reduce energy costs; invest in LED lighting; offer staff a cash alternative to opt out of the LGPS at 50% of the cost of council contributions; promote salary sacrifice schemes to help reduce council ENICs contributions; outsource to save e.g. community services to the VCS; reduce reliance on agency staff; review VFM of consultancy contracts; extend use of dynamic purchasing systems to help ensure VFM;
- Leisure facilities
- Leisure services and increase charges to cover to realistic levels
- Members grants, expenses and services
- New housing estates. Crime Commissioner's salary!
- Perhaps review the types of work each service does because I'm sure there are cross-overs in the type of work carried out so there's more opportunity for shared services. There are also very expensive I.T systems that each service is paying for. There must be an opportunity for 'deals' to be done if split across Maidstone, T.Wells and SBC
- Not the voluntary sector
- Reducing the amount of managers/supervisors at top levels. There seems to be a lot of duplication of people doing the same job but one paid as a manager and the other paid as a supervisor
- Reduction in Executive staff
- Regeneration and Economic Development, grants to community and voluntary groups and members grants.
- Regeneration of expensive council buildings
- Stop wasting money on stupid road schemes ie. wooden boxes full of dirt, narrowing of roads etc.
- The budget for waste collections seems extremely high and feel this could be reduced and put towards other things. The budget needs to be spread out across other things that most communities need.
- The management at the councils bonus's, services need improving not cutting
- You need to remove the layers of directors and senior management which would provide savings on wages and on-costs like national insurance and pension contributions. The staff on the front line do the work, not those at the top of the chain.

Q2

The council also intends to increase its income. How would you suggest we might do that?

- Change planning charging scheme to be a sliding scale so the more houses in a development the more that should be paid. Why should 8000 houses pay same as 200 houses.
- Charge more for Developer planning process
- Charging for replacement bins, if lost or damaged deliberately.
- Creating a local authority trading company is a good start. Finding ways to generate income outside of council tax. This could be business waste that is sold to business paying rates, repairs services, events management. Creating a business portfolio that generates income could relieve some of the desire to raise council taxes and parking charges.

- It could also mean investing in property to rent. We have lots of private rental accommodation for profit. Why not build and then rent properties at market rates? No problem with the Council being business focused. You have the skill in house already.
- Crowd funding?
- Double yellows in areas that really need them. Reducing business taxes in the town so we have something to go into town more. More footfall more money from car parks etc
- Ensure investment income on reserves is maximised; increase rental/fees from income generating assets such as property;
- Fund raising events, concerts etc.
- Get outside investors to invest in the area. Example EV charging companies who would install rapid chargers and SBC can rent out unused land to them
- If you increase parking charges for example, the High Street's will suffer. Ultimately risking businesses closing and a reduction in business rates. I think the biggest opportunity is to rent out a larger amount of Swale House. Maintain a small 'hub' IF staff want to come into the offices or have meetings.
- Increase car parking charges, brown bin charges, fees for statutory functions such as planning applications.
- Increase car parking charges, hall hire, pest control etc.
- Increase fees across the board and build your own houses.
- Increase in council tax, increases in rent, review of under-occupied properties, increase in fees for charged services
- increase parking fines, litter charges, flytipping charges and parking charges. By changing the hours that the enforcement officers work to give more cover around school times then i'm sure you would see your income increase dramatically just on school parking alone
- Increase rents and build more beach huts
- Increase wherever you can.
- Increasing car parking fees will damage high street shopping and extending car park times will impact householders. You should look to increase income through paid advertising in the newsletter, website, on street and car parks. Redevelop Swale House into flats and employees continue to work from home. Invest in property for rent, use car park land see Zed Pods. Energy generation - installation of solar panels in all the car parks with spaces under.
- Install more cameras to catch flytippers, take them to court/fine them/stop repeat offenders this reducing clean up bill in the longer term.
- Increase fines for all activities that the council has to rectify, ie picking up litter, parking on verges etc.
- Increase business rates for large corporations.
- invest in climate technology, adaptation and green energy
- Lobbying Govt for more funding; partnership working;
- Looking for efficiency savings. Reconsidering the circumstances in which council tax benefit is applied. All residents in the Borough should make a contribution.
- Means tested charges for waste collection
- Offer paid for services - flic so waste, those that the private sector buy.
- OK to increase fees for use of leisure facilities and swimming pools
- Pay and display on shingle bank and shellness road, especially all the camper vans who are getting a free holiday.

- Renting office space in council buildings
- Run the Borough like a business.
- Slight increase in fees and charges. Charging for overnight usage of car parks, small increase to garden waste/bulky waste collections.
- The Council should maximise reserve income by increasing rental/fees from income-generating assets such as property.
- They could stop giving money to developers for starters or fighting planning appeals you've got no chance of winning. I remember the notes of the wises lane appeal giving the impression that the council acted incompetently and failed to follow protocol
- work with the prison for prison workers and social value
- Working collaboratively with local charitable organisations to deliver a single point of access service, ensuring effective referrals to appropriate services but reducing the amount of duplicated work that is currently evident throughout the borough. Providing this type of service could help reduce expenditure and therefore maximise income to the council ,available by fairer distribution of monies to other organisation but improving services to clients and residents in the area.
- Working with the public sector or with charities and local organisations will help increase your income and by working in partnership. These sectors are crucial at this time and are what communities need. This will help generate more income but will also be helping others.

Q3

Do you believe the council should reduce its spending on some services to be able to spend more on others?

There were 52 responses to this question, of which:

- 32 (62%) responded "yes"
- 20 (38%) responded "no"

Q4

Which services would you reduce spending on, and which services would you spend more on?

There were 47 responses to this question, and those relating to Swale services said:

- As mentioned above, improving administration and working closely with charitable services who can offer early intervention support to residents to achieve earlier collection rates. Look at increasing social housing stock to reduce high rental costs. More should be given to local charitable sectors who can collectively support local people in a more collaborative way .
- Cut down on your heating in council run buildings, when all these new homes you allow to be built make the builders build the services first ie doctors, local shop on new estate BEFORE they build any houses ,
- Discretionary services and senior leadership team
- Excessive housing development and cutthroat consultancies, with additional spending on agency staff, should be curtailed, while the Council should proactively put its money where its mouth is, that is, by investing in infrastructure (Swale CVS). Due to the local government's withdrawal of core funding, this vital umbrella organisation is being squeezed out of its critical role in the third sector. Swale CVS is

now primarily a project delivery organisation rather than an infrastructure organisation. It is now competing for funding with other community organisations. Medway and other districts in Kent and elsewhere fund organisations similar to Swale CVS, which reduces their investment in community development and services. Swale CVS is critical to bringing together and sustaining voluntary sector organisations in the Borough. Its role during the global pandemic, as well as the roles of the various voluntary sector organisations in Swale, should not be underestimated or forgotten.

- Executive staff costs
- Devolve services to parish councils like other areas have done - toilets, parks, cemeteries
- Faversham Swimming Pool
- Grounds maintenance, economic development, leisure and tourism
- housing - there seems to be alot of people who make themselves intentionally homeless by not paying their rent, causing damage to property and anti social behaviour but then the council pick them up and put them in a hotel which is costing a fortune
- I feel the budgets are extremely for the items shown in your plan. It would make more sense to reduce these budgets and use more money for other sectors. Swale CVS have been very beneficial to a lot of charities and organisations including ourselves. They have not only helped us with the operational side but have also helped us develop.
- I think you should not reduce spending on discretionary grants to community and voluntary groups, because they provide valuable services to the community. I also doubt that you will be able to make savings on homelessness provision.
- I understand you intend to cut the grant to Faversham swimming pool. I strongly recommend maintaining or increasing the grant for this vital facility.
- In reaching your decisions, please do not penalise those in rural areas who already have vastly reduced services compared to those in the towns - we are always an easy target for spending cuts on Council services but things should be more balanced and equitable
- Increase core grants to the VCS as they are under significant financial pressure too and a relatively small contribution from SBC can help ensure their survival; Swale CVS in particular, should see an increase to its core grant, as the contribution it makes towards holding together voluntary sector infrastructure is critical to supporting the sustainability of the sector at a time like this;
- Just need more money
- leisure
- Leisure reduce, look at all non statutory functions, spend more on housing
- Less on IT and overheads
- Less on street cleaning, festive lights, street upkeep & maintenance
- More affordable housing, NHS and community service grants such as Citizens' Advice, Age UK
- Literally everything non essential and woke. All staff benefits cut and no Christmas party. Every council employee is lazy and 20% should be encouraged to move on and work somewhere else.
- Medway Puzzles believes that Swale CVS (SCVS) should have increased funding and not have it stripped. Puzzles and its members rely on the SCVS services which is right in the heart of the community. Without SCVS Medway Puzzles and its members would lose the support in Swale and force many of our members into

harder times, pushing them into isolation and taking away even more opportunities for the Autism community.

- More investment in local infrastructure services to support the Community and Voluntary Services.
- More on climate and environmental. Not sure what you would cut. This survey needs accessible data for the user to help decide
- None should be reduced. Increase services to help people insulate their home
- Non-regulatory services should all be reduced to help pay for the essential ones.
- Reduce amount spent on Councillors, Mayor and Crime Commissioner.
- Increase amount spent on the investment of charitable infrastructure, so that charities are able to continue developing. and take the load/pressure off the council. Swale Community & Voluntary Services (SCVS) has been involved in supporting an employability project, helping those of 45+ to return to the workplace, to date, this project has helped over 90 local people in the Swale area back into work, training or going self-employed. Investment for charities from the council, is needed to help these organisations to continue to support projects such as this in the future. "
- Reduce on green initiatives, members grants, corporate services, increase on litter dumping, reduce fees for under 16 leisure.
- Reduce the amount of time you operate street lighting, it's NIT needed ALL night, cut the hours by two thirds!!!
- retain adequate resources within the conservation and design team. The heritage within Swale is diverse and unique due to its history and geographical location. any reduction in heritage services will have a long term adverse impact on the built environment within swale.
- reduce services supporting people who don't help themselves. Increase spending on care for the elderly but only for those who have contributed financially in their working lives.
- Sittingbourne and faversham improvements. Not cost effective and not even spread amongst the three towns
- Spend less on building new houses and spend more on improving the current housing stock and environment
- Spend more on enforcement, this would inturn generate income to the council
- Spend more on social care, local facilities essential services. Spend less on vanity projects.
- Spend more on the environment, invest in cameras to catch fly tippers and rescue the clean up bill.
- Swale CVS has been invaluable to me. I have had several hospital appointments all over the country Kent and London - on the island we do not have easy access to hospitals and without them what options do I have ?? CVS have also put on a panto with the children and how that was appreciated, the children and parents and grandparents brought together was fantastic. CVS is the only organisation that involves my age group and salary . PLEASE DO NOT CUT THEIR FUNDING this would have a dreadful impact mentally and for me physically.
- Try to keep spending up on voluntary and charitable organisations as these can produce benefits of many times the money spent. Reductions should be spread across all other services.
- less parking charges
- We recommend the sustained, and in some cases increased, spending on voluntary and community services, to best address the welfare of the large number of people within Swale living in households with low income, and poorer levels of education

and employment attainment. Evidence that these wider determinants of health impact significantly on the health and well-being of residents is clear, and VCSE organisations are best placed to work in and with these communities. The cost of living crisis will only amplify the need for such services. The voluntary sector can provide services at a reduced cost as compared to statutory organisations, and it is therefore recommended that this stays within the voluntary and community sector, as opposed to this being done at a statutory level.

- With 30,908 children in Swale living in low-income families, we recommend that voluntary organisations working specifically with children be funded, with increasing funds, to prevent significant impacts on services in future.
- Yes and no. It depends on what service. As a resident, I'd like to see my town centre of Faversham cleaned up. The pavements need jet washing down and graffiti needs cleaning off. I've lived here since 2020 and it's never been done. Whilst it might not seem like a priority, a clean environment is more attractive to tourism.
- Mentioned above regarding consolidating services, including frontline services. This should generate savings that can be reinvested. Could be done via your own LATCO.
- You need to remove the layers of directors and senior management which would provide savings on wages and on-costs like national insurance and pension contributions. The staff on the front line do the work, not those at the top of the chain.

Q5

Please use the box below to let us have any views on the proposed increases to the fees and charges.

There were 30 responses to this question:

- Accept the % increase in parking but the change in times is appalling. This will impact decent people who need parking to go to work.
- agree with these
- agree with those increases above
- Bulky waste increase will lead to more items being dumped, it's bad enough now !!
- car parks, extend the hours, put the price up, and then wonder why the local businesses fail. Surely reduce the hours, maybe one hour free parking, and then see what happens to the local economy. Everyone complains that the high street is dying, who can be bothered to go there when driving and parking is so awful in town. If you put up the cost of waste collections, it will cost the council more in clearing up after fly tipping.
- Charging for household bins is wrong when they are the only way to get rubbish taken away when you have paid council tax for the service
- Definitely not car parking!!
- extending the hours car parks operate would increase your expenditure with the employment of more parking wardens, could you ensure their safety at night. As the only authority in Kent to make a loss would increasing staff costs balance the budget.
- Garden waste increases then people will stop paying
- Garden waste should fee should not be raised.
- Given the financial situation there seems little option. The increase in the cost of burials seems excessive and risks additional stress for the families.
- How can you justify cutbacks after spending £24m on SBC busing refurb?
- I agree with these proposals

- I do agree there will need to be increases in fees and charges but money also needs to be spent on the community and voluntary sectors. We have received so much support from this sector that it's a shame for these to be reduced.
- I know these cannot be helped, but with the cost of living at the moment people need help with everyday things. Any increases are going to push some over the edge. With mental health and wellbeing such a high priority this could spiral even more. If car parking was free like in most of the big shopping centres, it would attract more people to the towns. The vulnerable and those in need will be pushed out which in the modern world is totally unacceptable.
- If waste bins become chargeable, residents will not bother to have them, therefore fly tipping will increase. As car park charges were recently increased, extending the time to midnight, it simply hitting out at motorists even more. Also, care park tickets wardens will have to have their pay increased, if they are expected to work until midnight, meaning the council will be spending more on staff salaries.
- I'm the CEO of Medway Puzzles, an Autism Charity across Kent. We are disappointed that you have taken away the core funding of Swale CVS (SCVS). SCVS in their 50th year of helping the community of Swale. SCVS have not only helped Puzzles with training and bid writing but also helped our members with employability, support and volunteering opportunities.
- increase to level budget
- Increasing bulky waste collection fees will just result in more flytipping.
- Increasing the cost of burials? That's insane right! Increase charges and fines for anti social behaviour, fly tipping etc
- Is the council sure that an increase in garden waste and bulky will just lead to increase in fly tipping. Should these not be reduced to include higher take up of service. With the decrease in bus services then it seems unfair to increase car park charges and by increasing does that create less demand.
- No further fees to residents should be increased. Planning and business services could be increased as these are not everyday resident costs
- Pre-planning advice charges is okay as far as charitable organisations are exempted from such charges; buying household waste bins is a good source of income; however, the Council should make allowance for free waste bins for community organisations that are helping the Council most especially during this period of deepened austerity; car park should remain operational from 8am to 6pm, considering that Swale operate one of the highest car park charges across Kent and Medway; we are animal lovely society and we need to support stray, abandoned animals; pest control should continue as the current rate to avoid public health outbreak (it should be noted that Swale counts as one of the dirtiest borough after Medway);
- Should you increase by 15% and have a hardship scheme
- The council should start charging for pre-application consultation for alterations to listed buildings. two layers of charges- for written report and site visit. alterations to listed buildings are challenging and a site visit is usually required- the council should charge for the service.
- these sound ok
- Whilst I can see the need to increase some fees, there is concern that increasing fees for waste collections, runs the risk of increased possibilities for fly tipping etc. Increased parking costs may affect people's affordability shop locally and encourage shoppers to travel elsewhere outside the borough which would directly impact local economy and businesses.

- Why is there no fee for charities, voluntary groups and parish councils for pre application planning advice - meetings and works/ repairs to listed buildings? Do other councils charge for this? If so, I think a nominal fee should be introduced, the same for pre application advice - letters. Why have many local land charges reduced? Why is there no charge for motorcycles in car parks? Replacement of domestic refuse bins fee should be increased by rate of inflation. Fee for radar keys should be increased by rate of inflation. Legal charges for third parties should be increased by rate of inflation.

Q6

The Band D Council Tax for Swale Council for this year is £189.27 and the suggested increase for 2023/24 is £5.67. In the current financial circumstances do you think that this is an appropriate amount to charge?

- Absolutely not!! More houses are being built and services are still not being improved where is that money going? Stop taxing people that can barely afford to cover there bills.
- Given the current state of affairs and the discretionary schemes that are available this seems a reasonable increase
- hold a referendum to explain why you need extra, you shouldn't be scared of the democratic process
- I agree with this proposal.
- I agrww
- I don't agree with these increases. Households are paying out enough each month for utilities and having an increase in this will make people struggle when some are already struggling.
- I think council tax should be increased more
- I think we need to justify the increase and demonstrate where savings have been made first. I also think KCC need to cut back on services they provide and ensure Swale gets a fairer share. An increase of £5.67 is probably manageable for many residents but I think it's important to demonstrate where savings have been made before announcing this.
- It's always been a contentious thing to pay. Taxing people to live in their own home will always be a sore point. I begrudge paying it each month. By paying this I have cut back on other things. For those who don't work full time or have other more important things to pay, it must be harder.
- No I do not. Council should be disgusted. You should sack staff before forcing the families in swale to pay for you to spaff it all up the wall. Stop playing the victim about only betting 10p for every £1 when you barely provide any service at all in the first place. It doesn't all just go to central government it goes to KCC and the parish councils. Maybe give us some quality delivery and people might hate you less.
- No more than this
- No should be frozen
- No should be frozen
- No we don't get services for the money we pay now!
- No, because many people are already struggling with either heat or eat. Interest rates have gone up again today and there is only so much money people have got. I think you should reduce the exemptions given in council tax such as a one month exemption on empty properties when Canterbury Council and Thanet Council give no discount. Reduce the major works exemptions to 6 months instead of one year. If you

increase council tax then you are putting more pressure on people already struggling to survive, especially seeing as you are not even increasing the wages of your own staff which is ludicrous, where are they meant to find the extra money from?

- No, with the cost of living already crippling Puzzles members, we believe you should freeze the council tax
- "No. I think it is unrealistic.
- Charge more in order to keep services and jobs in line.
- Constant reduction in services and employees means that everything is undermined"
- No. It is extortionate. Considering the extra new houses now paying.
- No. Unemployment, poverty and social deprivation are rife in our borough. Increases costs for people already in financial pain is nonsense
- Only if there is an equitable share of Council services in rural and urban areas, those of us living in rural areas are bearing a much greater brunt of Council service cuts and cost of living as the public transport is virtually non-existent (following County cuts) meaning we have to rely on private vehicles.
- Only if you listen to residents views and take action
- The council delivers a number of very important services and supports the local economy and VCS through it's work as well, so I would be prepared to pay more as a local council tax payer. Many on the lowest incomes will receive support that will mitigate the effect of any increase but I would be concerned about those who don't receive support and are just about managing. Having said that, across a whole year it is still a very small increase and people have been hit much harder by energy and food cost increases, compared with which, the proposed increase to council tax here, is essentially negligible.
- The increase of 2.99% is reasonable depending on where it ends up being spent.
- This is great value for the bin service alone
- we cant afford it and we are both earning . My husband full salary only covers the mortgage and council tax and our mortgage is going up by £350 so with that and the suggested cost that the council wants is more than £500 from where ?
- We pay well over £2.4k a year just to empty bins and provide scant streetlighting while you approve 750 new homes on the Lower Road. Scandalous. Farm land gone forever.
- Why is Band D always hit the hardest, all bands should pay more.
- Yes. Those who can't afford it are likely to be able to get a Council Tax benefit of some sort anyway, I presume. We mustn't shy away from increasing Council Tax as it's been used as a political weapon for too many years.
- Yes but I can't believe how steep the increase is between Band D and the higher bands. I pay around £ 2000 per year. I think the costs should be shared more equally.
- Yes, and even more.
- Yes, providing it remains at £5.67 and does not increase to £10 or more in the future.

Q7

If the government gave us more flexibility to increase the charge by £10.00 to help support the council's budget would you be supportive?

There were 57 responses to this question, of which:

- 31 (54%) said yes
- 26 (46%) said no

Q8

Please use the box below to let us have any views on the capital programme proposals.

There were 33 comments responses, of which, the comments were:

- Capital increase on Swale house should be shelved, waste contract increases seem to be down to very poor management of current contract"
- Although I agree with raising council tax where appropriate and for those who can afford it cutting any services or funding elsewhere is just madness in the current climate. Especially where little is done to address anti social issues and environmental issues! Where are the fines for the water companies polluting this part of Kent and where is the money. Fly tipping fines etc. Better services bring people to the area are you seriously trying to drive people away from this part of Kent??
- As long as we can actually see where the money is going, we're constantly told how much is being spent but nothings improving
- CCTV good, but a deal needs to be made with the likes of Kent Police etc who benefit from this most. No idea what dolphin barge and skatepark is. It's probably not a priority so I'd cut it. Town centre and high streets spending is good. Faversham Creek bridge is a waste of time. Residents should not be paying to install a bridge that lifts so a minority of wealthy people can dock their boats closer to Morrisons. I'm not sure if it's a viable business plan and the campaigns around it seem to be quite selfish. Wouldn't spend it. We shouldn't be paying for a church wall. Church of England or relevant faith groups must fund it. Only historically important features should be supported as a special measure. Swale House. Close it and convert to housing for rent. It's right near the station and could provide a decent income. Move council offices further out of town, into a new economical building that is on cheaper land too. There should be no need for town centre council offices. They could be put to better use. Think of the rental income made from nice apartments right near the station... for London workers. £££. Leisure centres and play equipment. The centres need to be profitable, we are past the need to entertain people now they have online access etc... so they should be making money. Investment is okay as long as it pays for itself. Play equipment should be scaled back, it's expensive and we can't afford it right now. There are plenty of options for kids in 2022. Access Road: Roads are the responsibility of KCC, why are we paying for this? Borrowing levels obviously need to be massively reduced to avoid interest payments. Otherwise everything else seems ok.
- Council owned listed buildings should be included, and proposals developed to refurbish them for community use and income generation for the council. Council needs to start thinking like a private landlord for all the heritage assets owned by them. These assets can generate money for the council. an overview/ framework program should be developed.
- Do not reduce faversham pool budget! It's a very popular pool throughout the year. It's not cheap and people might be reluctant to pay more for the swim. Ensure that the monies are spent and spread evenly across the borough. The recent fiasco for Sheerness and mini golfgate underlines this. Don't try to hide costs by cutting services and expecting residents and volunteer groups to pick up the slack. Support those with continuation of the grants system to help out. This enables those already pressurised groups to be able to provide services and events that the Council can't and or won't.
- I don't have enough detail to comment on the specifics but understand that capital investment is needed to prevent longer-term issues around maintaining assets etc.

- I don't think the Council should spend money on Dolphin Barge Museum and Skatepark, Forstal Community Association, Faversham Creek Basin Regen Project (Swing Bridge), High Streets, Coronation Clock Tower Sheerness, Barton's Point - replacement bridge, Council Chamber IT equipment.
- I don't trust whatever this coalition administration does with money. I wouldn't be at all surprised if they haven't invested in vhs players in every house.com I don't even know why I'm wasting my time filling this in. I don't think for one moment the coalition administration Will believe anything except the answers that they want to hear.
- I think borrowing that much money is unwise but a huge chunk of it is prior year; given the current economic climate, I would be looking to delay as much of this programme as possible for two years and only focus on absolutely essential capital spending
- I think we need to be careful on this and make sure what you spend on brings growth to the local economy not just vanity projects
- i would stop giving out tenancy bonds on behalf of tenants as that must cost the council thousands which is just gifting landlords money as the council don't even get this back!
- Investing in charitable organisations.
- Levelling up - unclear what that means locally. But I think it's just a current fad and is better spent elsewhere.
- moratorium on capital spending to enable recovery
- More charging for Ev's
- Only spend money on the most essential needs.
- Really unhappy that Faversham pool is going to be reduced by £20k. Shortsighted for - health, wellbeing,entertainment of all ages of community & brings in visitors into town who bring footfall into shops etc alongside visit to pool as well as jobs, swimming lessons, leadership training/life guarding. 20% reduction is unfair compared with grant given to them over last 10 years
- Some items in your proposal are essential and others could be cut back.
- Stop wasting huge sun's on white elephants.
- The levelling up scheme needs more explanation, otherwise no particular concerns about the proposals.
- The swing bridge replacement should be completed in Faversham. Also help to upgrade Favershams ageing swimming pools.
- These are fine.
- These proposals seem appropriate and fair under the circumstances
- They are reasonable but review if any are vanity projects
- Unimaginative
- What will the levelling up scheme look like? Is it worthwhile spending all that money on it
- Would not support cuts to voluntary sector funding

Q9

Please use the box below to let us have any views on the savings proposals.

There were 53 responses to this question and the comments received were:

- A reduction or cessation to grants for the voluntary sector could be counter productive, many employ local people, they provide essential services to the local community which could close. Then who would provide services such as transport to

hospital, delivery of meals, support for those with mental health issues, the lonely, disabled and other vulnerable members of your community. By giving voluntary services a small grant they can often access additional grants for their service from trusts and grant giving organisations. How would you manage if we had another crisis such as the COVID pandemic without the voluntary sector who delivered essential food supplies, prescriptions and provided other services you did not have the resources to offer for months during lockdown and afterwards when people were isolating.

- Agree
- All attendants from toilets is fine. So are the grants reduction.
- All fine except of dog waste bins. Also decrease members' travelling and subsistence
- All necessary
- All of the above are short sighted and desk top based ideas. The reality is that if you remove and reduce these, there will be more longterm cost. More litter, damage to toilets . Lack of take up by volunteers of services and events that they provide instead of the Council. Not to mention the political and media backlash.
- All of the above except for members allowances freeze are morally wrong
- All ridiculous and asking for trouble, removal of dog bins means more people just won't bother, the toilets will get vandalised costing even more.
- Any decision to remove grants should be justified against value for money in the long term. How does the current grant level help maintain the built environment within Swale. Can council do it cheaper? will council have the resources to do it. is giving grants the most cost effective way of addressing some of the issues in maintaining a safe environment within Swale? removing attendants is fine from the public toilets, but please ensure adequate CCTV coverage is included to prevent crime. Fully support reduction in cost of member allowances. "
- Councillors salaries and pensions. Trim bloated management. Instead your proposals literally make Swale a darker and, pardon my language, [redacted] place.
- Cut grants, Cut support for parish councils, Parish all the borough, Close public loos are fine
- Cut the members allowances by 50%
- Despite their financial difficulties, the voluntary sector organisations have supported and continue to support the local government during this cost of living crisis. Their contributions during the global pandemic, when the council and other government services were shut down, should not go unnoticed or unrewarded. As a result, SBC's proposed saving of £69k will have a disproportionately negative impact on a sector whose goals are broadly aligned with those of the Council. As the Council is aware, the shared community they both serve is struggling to survive the cost of living crisis, and undermining the sustainability of those in the voluntary sector on the frontlines of support will cause significant harm. This is especially true for organisations like Swale CVS (the only infrastructure organisation in Swale) and Diversity House Centre (which supports over 55 nationalities through an intersectional lens); in order to strengthen these organisations and ensure that they can continue to be forces to be reckoned with alongside and in addition to the Council, the reduction in VCS funding should be waived.
- Disagree with all proposed savings except members' allowances.
- Do away with all the various mayors and all the paraphernalia that goes with that pantomime.
- Do not freeze all but the lowest wages. This is unfair to staff as you know their fuel, housing and food costs have increased

- Do not reduce grants to voluntary sector. Do not reduce dog waste and litter bins because the town is too dirty already.
- Dog bins, fine people who don't clean up after there dogs! Reducing bins won't make a difference!!
- Dog waste should not be reduced. These need to be increased. Others I feel are fine.
- From a CIO point of view and having help from Swale CVS starting up, receiving help with accounts, helping us deliver what we intended as a charity and supporting us with all aspects. I feel these sectors need more support than some items on your proposals. Reducing grant to the voluntary sector and community grants is not a sensible move. These are the people out there helping others especially those within the community.
- I agree with the proposals but I think grants to voluntary sector and community groups should be reduced further and members grants should stop completely.
- I don't think reducing grants to the voluntary sector is sensible as the benefits are often many times the money spent.
- I feel strongly, that reducing the amount in grants to community groups should not take place. These groups are very much needed in the Swale area and will cease to function without them.
- I object to any reductions in the grant to Faversham swimming pool
- I support all of the suggested proposals.
- I volunteer regularly 4 days/week for CA, Age UK, Plastic Free Faversham and Faversham and Villages Refugee Solidarity Group - all registered charities. Reducing grants to the voluntary sector will necessarily increase your statutory duties as these charities will need to make paid staff redundant and refer work back to you. For charities that are completely volunteer run and managed, little if any grant support has been available to us. Instead grants seem to go to festivals, events and administration, rather than addressing the actual needs of vulnerable people and responding to the climate catastrophe. Please do not reduce grants to voluntary sector and community groups.
- In favour
- In responding to this question, we are writing on behalf of Swale Community and Voluntary Services (SCVS). SCVS is the membership body for the voluntary and community sector in Swale, enabling the Swale Community Empowerment Network (SCEN) and supporting the development of a wide range of local projects. In addition, we directly deliver a wide range of services relating to community transport, volunteering, befriending and access to health and employment. We are funded through a variety of sources: over time, our financial model has evolved, so that we are now mainly funded through contracts, user payments and a range of charitable contributions. We are entirely focused on the needs of the community in Swale, and we work closely with many local charities. The budget consultation includes a proposal to reduce grants to voluntary and community sector groups, from £249k per year to £180k. The consultation materials do not identify how these proposed savings will be made, although we understand from Council officers that it is proposed that these will partially be funded through the ending of SCVS's current £15k annual grant. We are grateful to the Council for your openness in informing us of this in good time, and for enabling us to respond. We are very sympathetic to the financial challenges that the Council faces, and we appreciate the balance that the Council is seeking to strike between financial sustainability and the maintenance of the essential services that it provides. In that context, we are pleased to have been able to support the Council in recent years in providing a number of services at lower cost

than the Council would otherwise have been able to deliver, including as part of the response to the Covid-19 pandemic. We also regularly support the Council in facilitating consultation and engagement with the voluntary sector, a service which is otherwise unfunded. We would be interested in exploring alternative funding options with the Council. This might include a service level agreement relationship, through which the Council may fund a specific series of activities, at lower cost and with greater transparency. We would be delighted to discuss this with you. We remain grateful for the excellent relationship we have had with the Council over many years, and we assure you that our commitment to collaboration and partnership working remains, regardless of the outcome of the current consultation. Some of the highlights over the past year include; 3560 Essential medical appointments were carried out for those that are unable to make their own way to the hospital. 223 Organisations across Swale have signed up to the Swale Community Empowerment Network (SCEN) which provides groups and organisations resources and information on a fortnightly basis to help their Charity grow and expand their networks of support.

- member allowances are just extreme and should be reduced a lot more than you are proposing. I don't see how removing dog waste bins is going to help, surely that is just going to increase and encourage flytipping
- my main concern is the reduction in grants to the voluntary sector and community groups. I volunteer for both Citizens Advice and Swale Friends of the Earth and we rely on being able to apply for grants in order to support priority 3 and priority 2 respectively. I'm sure there are other groups that help to support your 4 priorities through these grants.
- No issue with any of the above, except reduction in dog waste bins. People in Swale are already lazy at clearing up after their dog. Any reduction in facilities might result in bags of poo on Swale House doorstep and I wouldn't blame them!
- No view
- Please don't remove dog waste bins as it is likely to result in more waste on the street.
- Parish footway lighting - sounds feasible but will be unpopular - I don't live in an area likely to be affected.
- Removing voluntary group AND discretionary grants may be necessary, but would need to be made clear to residents that this is not a desirable option. Attendants in public toilets. I would agree, but don't use them so don't know if they have been beneficial. Member allowance freeze. Agreed. This would demonstrate solidarity with their voters.
- Reduce grants to £150,000, Yes, remove discretionary grants. We're not a lottery fund. Footway lighting: if the area has potentially high crime rates, then it may be sensible to retain some funding. However, seems like a good move. Public Toilets: Unsure if these are for cleaning. If so, why is it costing so much in the first place. Review needed. Bins: Never understood why dog waste can't go in normal bins, unless you sell it to support bio growth on farms etc. Ideally busy areas such as town centres need more bins. Bin collections should be completed by the same teams who collect household waste bins and they should be done on route. Member Allowances: rates for members are pretty low, encouraging only retired people to stand for election and not bringing about diversity of thought in the councils leadership. You can't live from a members allowance and that means less time is spent working for residents. I would disagree with reductions.
- Reduce lighting and grants to voluntary sector

- Reducing grants to charitable organisations is extremely worrying for those people who need help and can't receive this from council sources. Improving collaborative working in the sector could help improve access to residents and redistribute the costs that these organisation could provide. Many in the sector help to support council services and reducing the grants would reduce the help they can provide at a time when this is desperately needed in the community and would increase pressure on the council's staff who are already overstretched and based on current proposals also looking to reduce their available working hours.
- Reducing litter bins will be counter productive and result in more litter that needs picking up by manual labour.
- reducing support for Parish Councils further exacerbates the divide between rural services and those within the Towns where the bulk of Council services are already concentrated, a fairer, more equitable share of the Council services must be provided for all Council tax payers. Dog fouling and littering is already at unacceptable levels so reducing the number of bins, particularly in the under resourced, under patrolled rural areas will on exacerbate this issue and the health concerns associated with it. It seems appropriate to freeze allowances for members to bring these in line with other public services constraints.
- Reduction of public toilet attendants is not great as this could lead to mis use and dirtier toilets. The district suffers badly from litter and dog waste and so bins should be increased to reduce the ad hoc clean up calls.
- Shocking, you should be ashamed these are my thoughts on your saving proposals in a time local residents are struggling enough!
- Shocking. The real question is how our council has ended up in this mess despite having an experienced chief executive and management team
- some of these are minor and can be found elsewhere
- Stop giving councillors thousands of pounds for them to distribute on vanity projects. The money should go back to being centralised and spent more wisely. Reduce member allowances.
- The council bins are poorly emptied, causing additional litter as a result, but any reduction in the number of bins the council supplies would also add to the litter and dog waste, and be counter productive. Don't reduce the amount of litter and dog waste bins.
- The Parish councils are wasting money constantly like a bandstand that no one uses. As mentioned please do not remove funding from SCVS without their support I would be off sick and not earning and therefore unable to pay the council tax . I use their support to get to and from hospitals after I lost my license through ill health. I can not get to Canterbury or William Harvey Hospital without their support. My last appointment was in Margate . And my last interaction was the panto and what a delight to see the children engaged. Learning and to be aspired so we don't end up with paying for additional support or prison at a later date. Actual prosecute dog fouling. Get rid of Parish councils. if you remove public toilet attendants then you will have to close the toilets or they will be disgusting. We are a tourist area toilets are needed. Removing bins ??? more rubbish on the road side. Freeze all allowances .
- The reduction in grants to the voluntary sector and community groups, as well as the small discretionary grants, would prove to be highly detrimental to the population of Swale, in both the immediate and long term. In 2019, 14.9% of the population of Swale were income deprived, and the impact of Covid, along with the current cost of living crisis would only have increase the number of people that are income deprived. This equates to 21 of the 85 neighbourhoods in Swale being in the 20 percent most

income deprived nationally, with the majority of these being on the Isle of Sheppey. For those living among these neighbourhoods, the voluntary and community sector provide an invaluable contribution to their standard of living, including supporting people with housing, food parcels, and community activities, to name a few. There are particularly relevant on the Isle of Sheppey, where system funded resource is sparse. The Covid response provided by the voluntary and community sector only further evidences the need for such organisations to remain funded. The voluntary and community sector are able to adapt quickly to demand, and have shown themselves indispensable in the face of adversity for the population. The Voluntary and Community Sector are also the closest to people within communities, and are already working alongside system partners to support bottom-up decision making for the communities around them as part of system wide transformation. Reducing, or removing, funding from these groups will prevent this work from taking place, and reduce the huge impact that this would have on the local population. This may initially be unseen, but will have a huge knock-on effect, that will cost far more to address in future years. It is therefore recommended that the funding for this area is not reduced or removed.

- The street lighting and bins cut backs would have a very negative effect. More risk of serious crimes being committed and vulnerable people feeling more isolated. More litter and dog waste being dumped adding to pest infestation and smell.
- The voluntary and community sector are experiencing financial hardship too and the relatively small proposed saving of £69k to SBC, could have a disproportionately negative impact on a sector whose aims are largely aligned with those of the council. As the council will know, the shared community they both serve are trying to survive a cost of living crisis and undermining the sustainability of those in the VCS on the frontline of support, could do much harm. This is particularly the case for organisations such as Swale CVS who have a key role in supporting the sustainability of the sector with infrastructure services, volunteers and more. At a time like this the council should be increasing the investment it makes in organisations like Swale CVS to strengthen the sector and ensure it can continue to be an effective force alongside and in addition to the council.
- Would not support cuts to voluntary sector grants. In particular the grant to Swale CVS who provide an excellent service to the community
- You should remove as many council employees as possible they are all lazy.

Directly submitted responses

Ospringe Parish Council:

I had hoped to be able to speak to you briefly at the recent KALC SAC meeting. Ospringe Parish Council is very concerned at the proposal to cut the lighting grant – it will have severe consequences for our finances given the costs incurred by the council in providing and maintaining its street lighting. We were alerted to the possibility of the cut by a letter from Lisa Fillery dated 24 November 2022. This stated that “the draft budget will be open for consultation following the committee meeting [on 30 November]” but gave no further information.

So I am clear, can you please let me know what form that consultation takes (or took); when the consultation period expires (or expired) and how the details of the consultation have been publicised. Is there detailed data available showing the saving which would be made by cutting the grant, broken down into each parish, and the percentage saving on the overall budget?

I have seen or heard various suggestions as to how parishes may deal with a cut in their lighting grant. These include turning off the lights or getting KCC to take over responsibility. Neither of these is workable. Moreover, any further cut in the lighting grant (from the capping already undertaken some years ago) will result in double taxation for those parishes who have responsibility for street lighting versus those whose lighting costs are the responsibility of a third party. I would also further add that parishes (including Ospringe) are facing huge increases in their lighting costs with inflation of energy costs, standing charges, and maintenance/repair costs, such that any cut in the grant would result in a double detriment – another point which I hope can be passed on along with the other points.

Faversham Pools

Thank you for inviting us to comment on the proposed cut to our annual grant from £100,000 to £80,000.

We understand the financial challenges facing Swale in respect of the cuts in government funding, the continued capping of Council Tax and the various spending pressures facing the Council.

We are also grateful for the support Swale has given us both as freeholder and as our main grant funder. The current annual grant comprises 12.5% of our operating costs and has in the past helped us to provide an affordable swimming experience for our users. Swale also provided us with significant help during the Covid lockdowns and was instrumental in us coming out of the crisis in reasonable shape.

It is worth noting that a reduction of £20,000 reduces the grant back to its 2009/10 level. Of course in that time, inflation has eroded the real value of the grant, and the proposed grant for 2023/24 is equivalent to just over £50,000 at 2009/10 values. We would argue that over the years we have absorbed the impact of inflation.

Going forward we have a number of cost pressures facing us.

These include:

- The impact of the National Minimum Wage which has increased by 9.7% and which we support.
- Energy and chemical price increases.
- The need for significant capital investment in the pools following the commissioning of a condition survey.

On this final point when compared to the Sittingbourne and Sheppey pools, the Faversham pools have been starved of capital investment since the indoor pool was built in 1993.

The reduction of £20,000 will mean that we will have to review our opening times and our prices. We are reluctant to increase ticket prices at a time when many households are facing severe financial pressures and it would be very disappointing to be forced to reduce what we offer to the swimming community in the Faversham area. Our prices are already comparable to other Kent pools. Perhaps most significantly the reduction will reduce our ability to raise capital investment for our rapidly ageing pools.

Whilst we are very sympathetic to the financial situation Swale finds itself in, this reduction and the implied threat of further reductions when, as stated in the budget report, Swale's reserves are extinguished in 2025, severely reduces the ability of the trustees to offer Faversham and its surrounding areas a pool fit for purpose.

We strongly urge you to reconsider the proposed cut in our grant.

Lynsted with Kingsdown Parish Council

I refer to your letter dated 24 November addressed to the Parish Clerk, in which you state that your draft budget includes a proposal to reduce our footway lighting grant in 2023/24 and 2024/25 by 50% - and scrap it altogether after that.

We object strongly to this proposal.

We are responsible for the running and maintenance of over 40 street lights in our Parish.

As you will know, the price of electricity is rocketing. This is no time to be axing our lighting grant.

We are already budgeting for a loss in 2023/24 of around £3,500. We have less than £11,000 in our reserve account.

The reduction and subsequent removal of the lighting grant would place the Parish Council in a precarious financial position.

This year, street lights will account for 47% of our precept. In addition to regular maintenance, tree pruning and electricity costs, we have had to fund numerous repairs - mainly as a result of vandalism.

Without the grant from Swale Council, we may have no alternative but to decommission all the lights. It is not technically possible to turn off some but not others - it's all or nothing.

Plunging the Parish into darkness would have a serious impact on the safety of residents - particularly on the sections of road where there is no footpath for pedestrians.

We would urge Swale Council not to proceed with this proposal.

Citizens Advice Swale

We at Citizens Advice Swale are very aware of the challenges local authorities are facing at the present time in maintaining and funding services for the local community. We therefore understand the wish to review grants to local community and voluntary groups in the current budget consultation.

In response, we have prepared a paper which is attached to this email to remind Members of some of the work we do and its impact for Swale residents – and some of the wider considerations that a significant cut in our core funding may have.

One of these, we would like to expand on in this covering email.

We deliver services that are directly possible because of our Swale BC funding – for example, our generalist advice provided by our extensive team of volunteers. The core funding helps substantially to cover recruitment, training, equipment, premises, quality assurance and management costs. We also locally offer specialist welfare benefits advice solely supported by this funding, in conjunction with an award by Faversham Town Council.

However, we also provide services that are funded by a variety of other means – which can easily involve in the region of eight or ten additional channels in a typical year. These allow us to (for example) provide specialist debt advice locally, help people build financial capability skills, operate our telephone and online advice routes, offer energy awareness support, help clients with mental health considerations, provide on-site support to Foodbank

clients, distribute food and fuel vouchers, develop partnerships and provide referral channels to other agencies.

None of this work is possible without an infrastructure capable of identifying sources and making funding bids, organizing staff and/or volunteers, creating materials and access routes for advisers and clients, reporting back to funders. It is therefore clear that any cut in our core funding can dramatically affect our ability to bring in the full range of services we currently offer in Swale – it is not a simple “x reduction in funding = x reduction in services” equation. We ask decision-makers to bear this in mind when considering any grant award to us in 2023-24 and beyond.

We will continue to provide elected Members with data about their own Ward while we are able to do so, and will follow up this communication with further information over the next few weeks while budget decisions are being finalized in the belief that Members are keen to support their local community and that the value of services provided by Citizens Advice Swale makes a solid case to retain the core grant we receive at its current rate.

We are very happy to discuss any aspects of our work with individuals or groups of Members, and remain continually grateful for the support we receive through Swale Borough Council to allow us to carry on our work for the community.