

Covering Email to Tynedale Council's Submission:

Dear Sir Michael

During our meeting last Monday I mentioned the fact that Tynedale had carried out two public consultation exercises both of which showed that the council tax payers within our area are prepared to pay more if the standards of service in particular areas are lifted.

The first exercise was carried out in 2003 by a company called Research for Today and used the SIMALTO technique

The Council wanted to know the residents priorities about the allocation of council tax between various services before setting the budget for 2004/5. The questions asked were

Which current service levels should be reduced in order to cause least 'distress' among residents?

Which improvements, if any, on other services should take priority?

Would residents be willing to pay more council tax, beyond the expected annual inflation increase, to lessen any reduction, or fund improvements in service benefits

The above was on the basis that to maintain the current levels of service, council tax was expected to rise by 2.5%.

The results in summary form were as follows

- 77% of residents opted for this or larger tax rises, to achieve their personal allocations of the equivalent, or a larger budget.
- 38% of residents chose to pay above inflation tax increase to obtain better services.
- Only 23% of residents choose to reduce tax, assuming the 2.5% increase

A full copy of the final report is attached.

A further exercise was carried out by council staff in 2004.

This related specifically to the re-provision of the Hexham Swimming Pool as both building and plant had become life expired. Of the 1114 responses that were received 1020 were from council tax payers and 604 stated that they were pool users. Of those who pay council tax 84% stated that they would be prepared to pay an increase in council tax for an improved swimming pool. This figure increased to 92% for pool users and dropped to 71% for non users.

The issue of the swimming pool was confused by the fact that although the public expressed overwhelming support for its re - provision and were prepared to pay additional council tax because of the threat of capping the Council has been forced to make reductions in other services in order to allow for this improvement.

I hope the above supplies the information that you require but please do not hesitate to contact me should you wish anything further

Yours sincerely

John Copping
Chief Financial Officer