

2009 Budget Priorities Survey Highlights (for 2010- 11 budget- setting)

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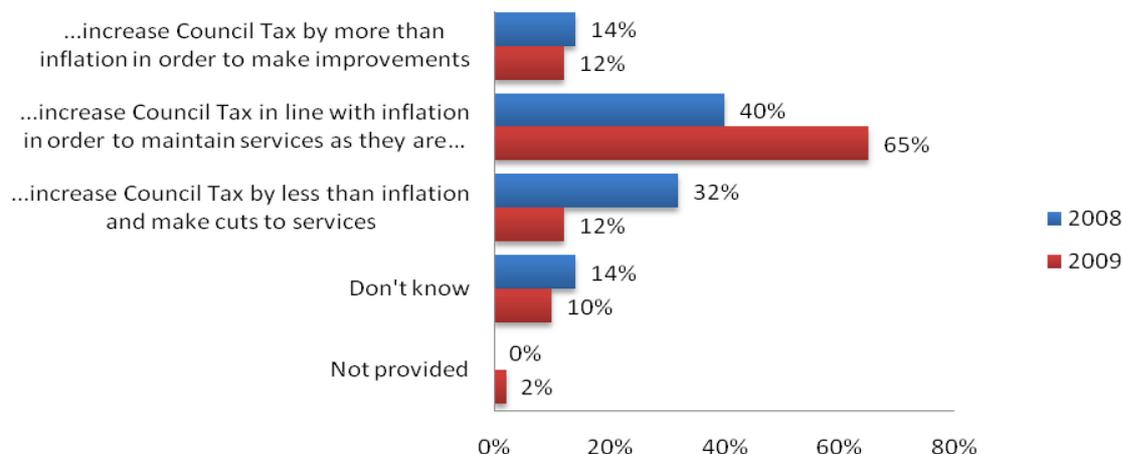
Background & methodology

The Local Government Act 2000 requires local authorities to involve residents in developing and evaluating policy, consulting them on issues that directly affect them. The purpose of Breckland's annual 'Budget Priorities Survey' is to obtain information about how highly our residents value each of our frontline services, so that the survey results can be used to inform the budget-setting process for the following financial year.

The Budget Priorities survey took place during June/July 2009 and 537 completed questionnaires were received giving a 54% response rate. Results were weighted to reflect the demographic make up of the district.

Council Tax

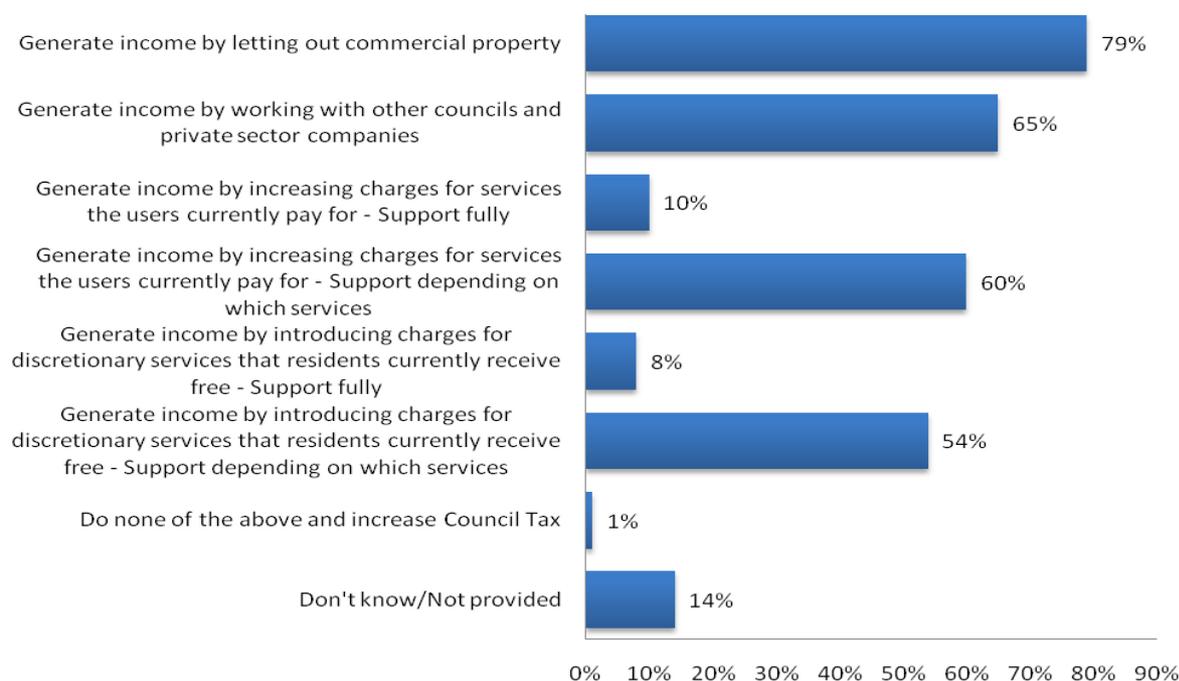
Whether Breckland Council should increase Council Tax by more, less or in line with inflation (all Breckland respondents).



Results this year show greater variation than in 2008, with a clearer majority of respondents (65%) saying that Breckland should raise Council Tax in line with inflation in order to maintain services as they are now. It is interesting to note that, despite the current financial climate, there has been a significant decrease since 2008 in the % of respondents who opted for a less than inflation increase if this meant cuts to services (32% to 12%).

Funding Services

Q31 Whether respondents support proposed methods of generation income (all Breckland respondents)



The 2008 results are not shown as these are not comparable. In 2008, respondents could select only one option and, in 2009, could select as many options as they agreed with. Also, the 2009 survey contains additional options, i.e. would respondents support introducing/increasing charges depending on which services.

Respondents were asked how Breckland Council should fund services to residents, and there are 2 results which are particularly relevant at this time.

Almost 8 in 10 respondents supported Breckland's strategy of generating income by letting out commercial property. This was the most frequently selected choice.

New options were added in the 2009 survey to explore if residents would be willing for Breckland to introduce/increase charges for some services, 'depending on which service'. The results are interesting as they show that significant numbers of residents support the principal of paying for some services, either fully, or 'depending on which service'.

In the light of likely future cuts in central government funding, the survey results indicate that residents are receptive to the principal of paying for some services, 'depending on which service'. Further research would be needed to determine whether residents would pay extra for services if it affected them personally and if so, which services would they be prepared to pay for.

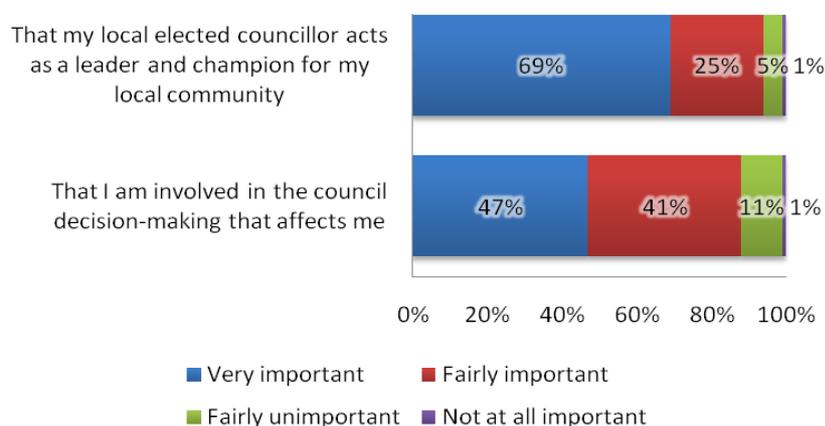
Relative importance of services to residents

Respondents were given a list of 30 frontline services and asked to state how important they felt each of them was. All the services listed were considered important by at least 60% of respondents. The top 10 services in terms of importance to respondents are listed below; services related to crime and anti social behaviour, environmental issues and economic issues generally come out on top. The full list showing the priorities relating to all 30 service choices can be seen on P4 of this report and P25 of the full report.

Service	% of respondents who consider this important
Ensure Council manages finances well	98%
Work with police to reduce crime	98%
Tackle anti-social behaviour	97%
Street cleaning	97%
Tackle nuisance, noise, smells & pollution	94%
Support local business	93%
Manage commercial portfolio property	92%
Provide customer services on telephone	92%
Create quality job opportunities	91%
Cutting grass/hedges, etc	91%

Local decision-making and the role of elected members

Figure 1: Q33 Importance of involvement in local decision-making in Breckland (valid Breckland respondents)



Sample bases vary

Two new questions were added in 2009 to explore how respondents felt about the role of elected members. The results showed that 94% of respondents feel it is important that their elected member acts as a community leader and champion, and that this tends to be given greater importance by older residents. A significant number of respondents (88%) stated it is important to them that they are able to be involved in the decision-making that affects them; this right is more valued by residents who have lived longer in the area.

The second question asked about respondents' actual experience, and 61% of respondents agreed that their local elected councillor acts as a community leader and champion. Only 36% agreed that they were involved in the council decision making that affects them.

Figure 2: Importance of services provided by Breckland Council

