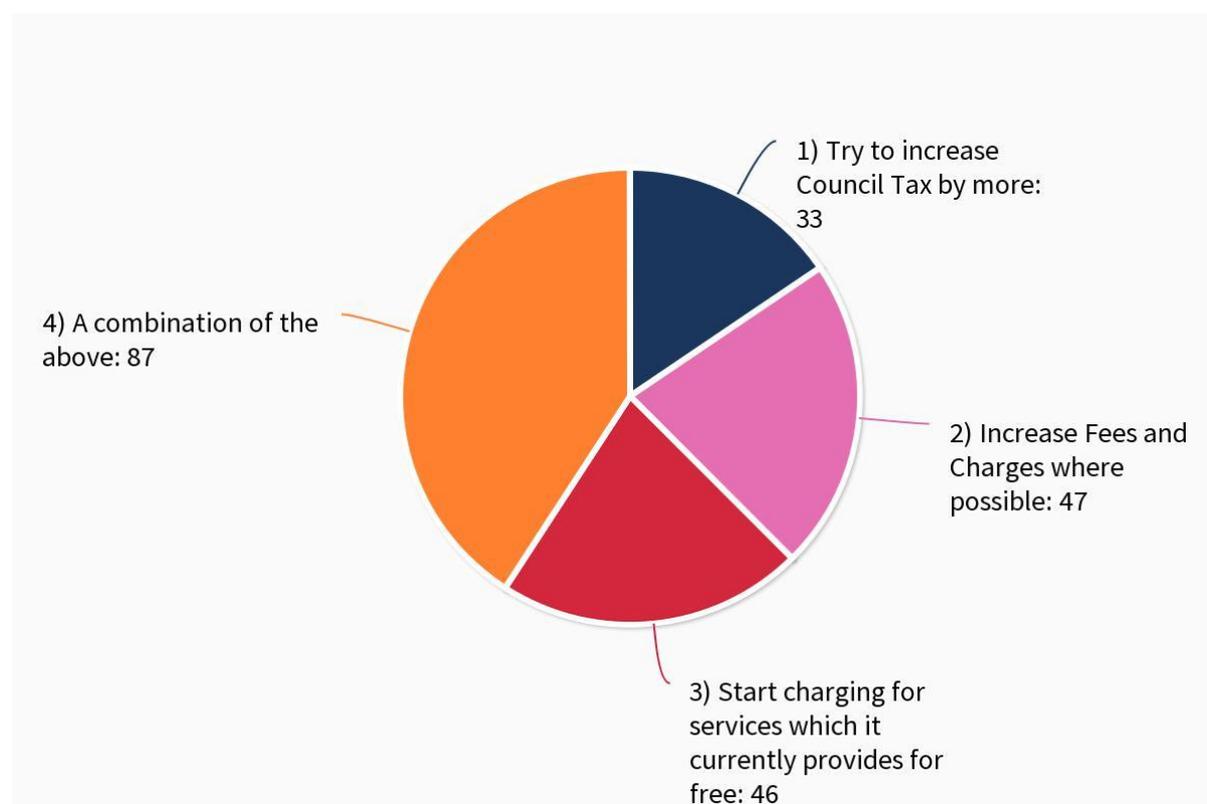


West Oxfordshire District Council Budget Consultation 2023/24

We received a good response to our budget survey which we appreciate as we welcome resident's views. All free text suggestions from question 3 which related specifically to the leisure service have been passed on to the leisure management team and our leisure operator, and all free text responses on question 5 related to the Council are printed in full below.

Q1) Do you think that in order to increase income the Council should..

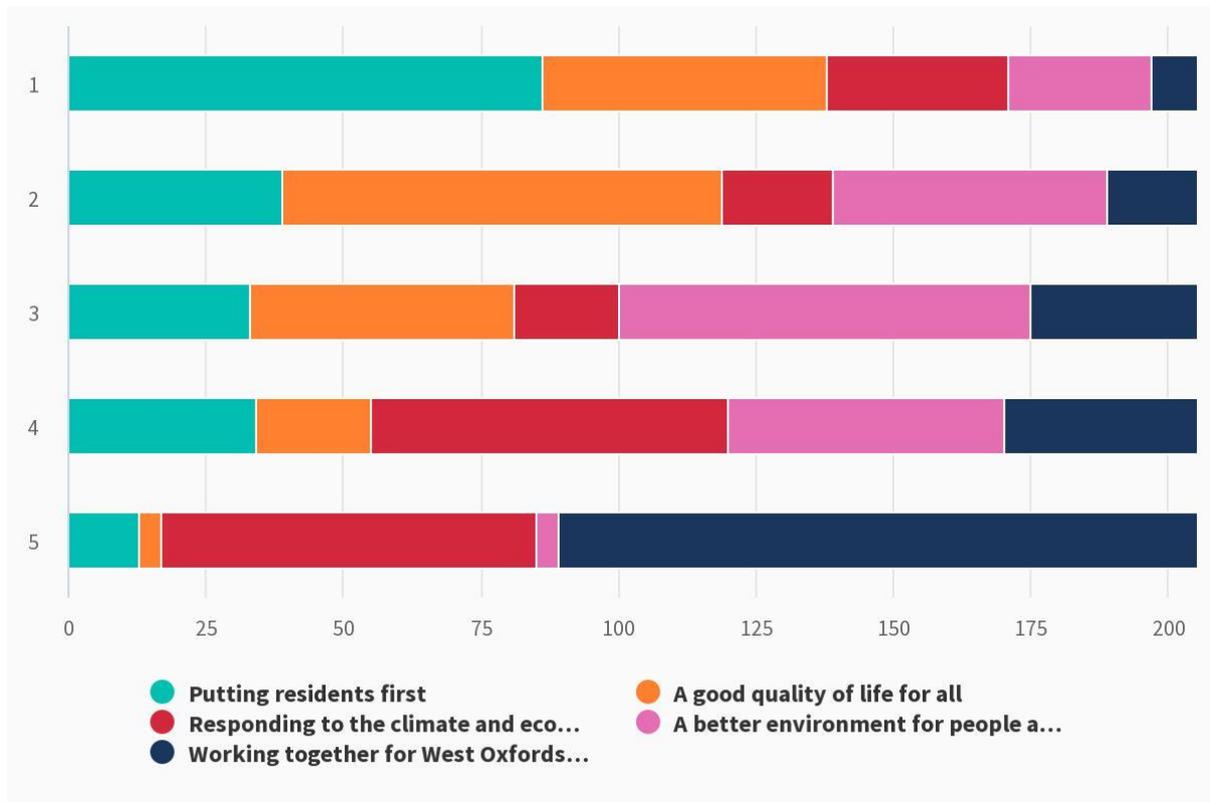


Q2) The Council is proposing the following priorities, which have been developed after consultation with residents. Please rank them in order of importance to you:

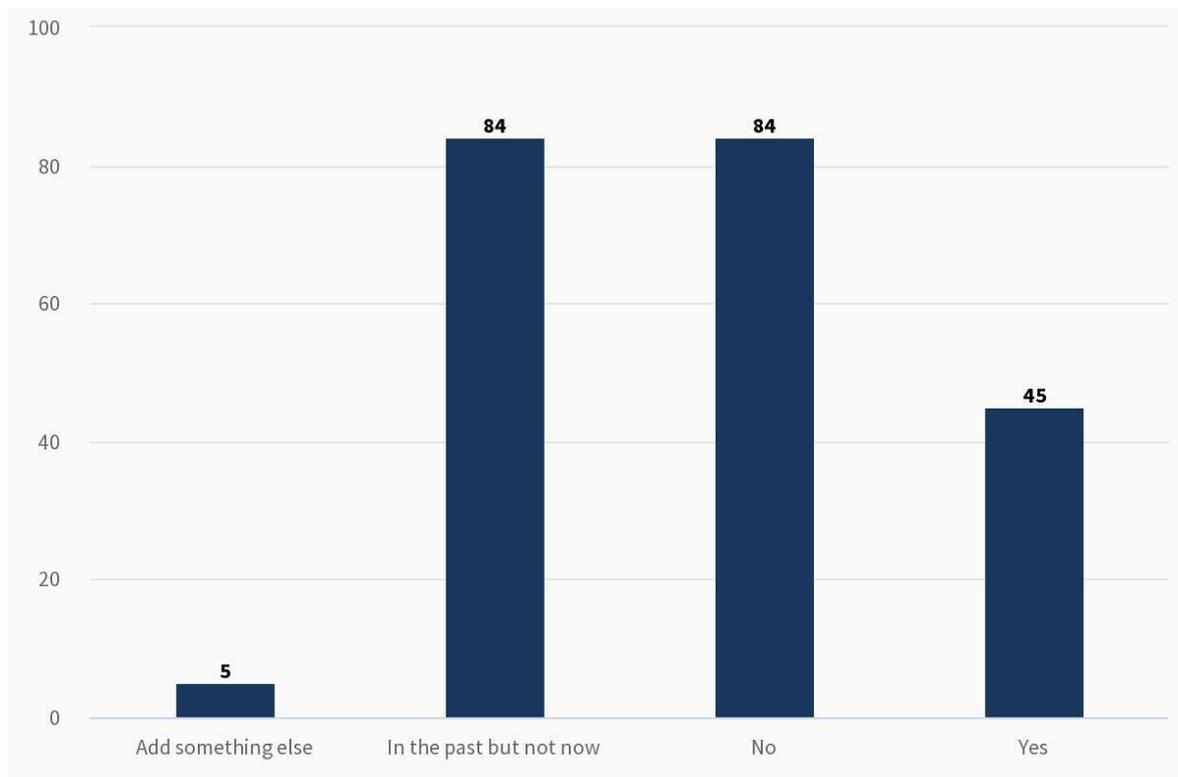
1. Putting Residents First
2. Enabling a Good Quality of Life for All
3. Creating a Better Environment for People and Wildlife
4. Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency
5. Working Together for West Oxfordshire

The bar chart below shows the priorities ranked by respondents i.e. "Putting residents first" (in green) was the highest priority of most residents featuring strongly in the top half of the table, closely followed by "A good

quality of life for all” (in orange). The lowest priority was “Working together for West Oxfordshire” (dark blue) which you can see most heavily in the bottom half of the table.



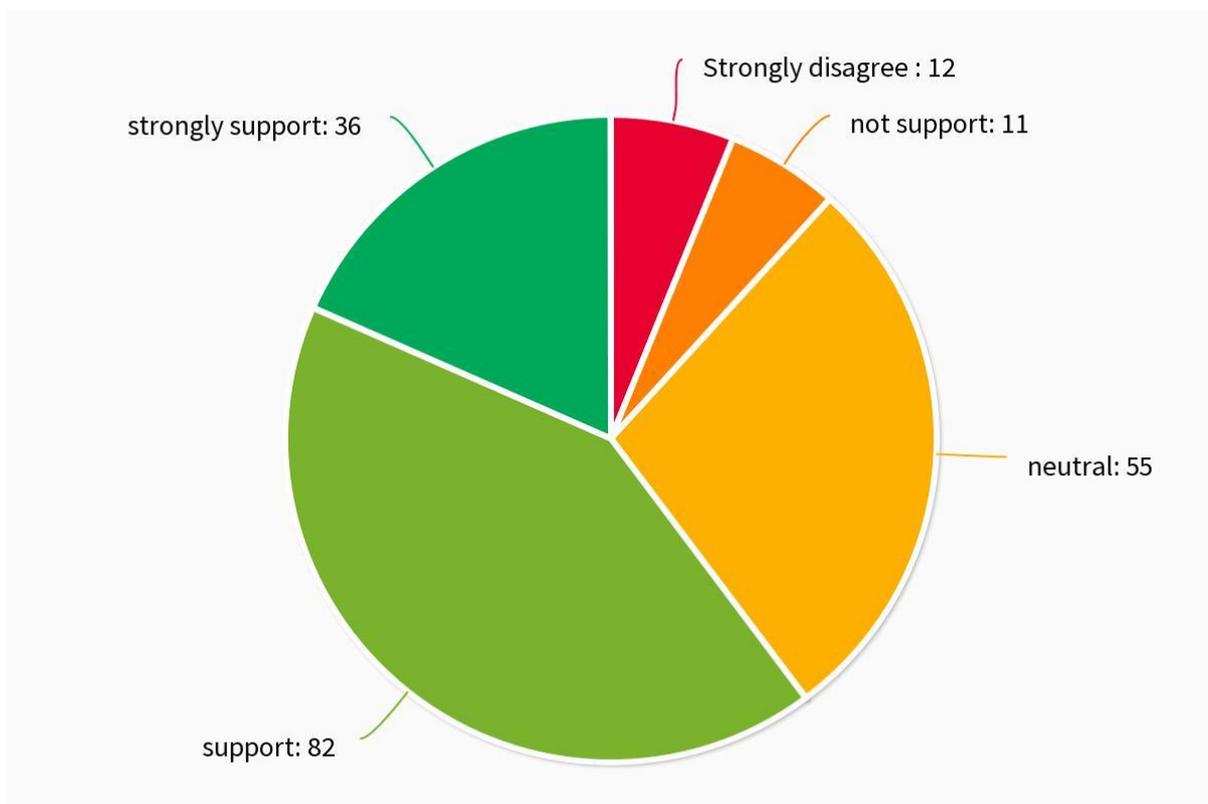
Q3)a) Do you use the Council's leisure centres?



The word cloud shows the most frequently used words or phrases. Swimming featured highly in the responses. While residents are aware that the Council is the main provider of access to swimming pools, many of the comments centred around the type of swimming sessions they would like to see. All suggestions for this and other types of facility have been passed to the leisure team and through them to GLL, our leisure provider and will be taken into consideration when planning the way forward for the leisure service.

We highlighted a list of potential measures that we could consider introducing in order to reduce the financial strain on the Leisure Service and asked what level of support there was for them if it helped to keep the centres open and the pools in use.

- Pools closing one day a week
- Limiting usage of the outdoor pool to the warmest months
- Restricting Leisure Centre opening hours, again at times of very low usage
- Closure of smaller facilities at quieter periods
- Temporary closure of some high loss making facilities such as underutilised pitches



Q5. Are there any other comments you would like to make on our priorities or any other aspect of the Council's spending and service delivery?

- More mental health support for children and young adults.
- Spend money on a safe footpath from Carterton to Witney. I currently HAVE TO use my car to get to Witney.
- This was a really poor survey. Forcing choices between options when I don't agree with anything listed
- "I fully understand the need to cut costs in these times of extremely high energy prices. Cutbacks are inevitable. However I would strongly disagree with the statement 'reduce the pool opening by a few carefully chosen hours per week during the winter season at times when they have extremely low usage' With a bit more care, everyone can still be catered for but as it is, it seems it is just the late 'swim for fitness' sessions that have been axed and there is now little opportunity to swim at either Witney or Carterton most weekday evenings after 8:30 and none at all after 9pm. Whilst I realise that such sessions have been poorly attended prior to the turn of year, this has historically always been the case in the run up to Christmas. It would have made sense to axe the sessions temporarily then. But to close such sessions in January seems self-defeating. Last night I counted 29 people at one point during the 7:30-8:30 session - one off capacity I believe. It is well known that January is the one month where attendance at Leisure Centres can almost be guaranteed. Witney and Carterton pools are 5 miles apart and many people use both interchangeably depending on available sessions. It therefore makes perfect sense to avoid duplication and trim similar sessions that are running at both simultaneously. But to cut back at both at the same time defies logic. Would it not make more sense to keep a swim for fitness session open at one of these pools and close the corresponding session at the other? Perhaps alternate pools throughout the week? As it stands there is no Swim For Fitness session at either Witney or Carterton after 4pm on a Friday - not much use for the working person! Another factor regarding attendance I believe is the personal cost. Yes, it costs more to run the pools now but by increasing entry to £6.90 for the casual swimmer you are deterring people from attending at all. Surely it makes more sense to reduce it to a level where people are encouraged to attend - £4.90 (ie less than a fiver) for example. Afterall £4.90 x 10 is £49. £6.90 x 0 is zero. When sessions are poorly attended there is surely scope to reduce the cost per session to such a point where people feel they are getting value for money. The pool will be open regardless so it makes sense to have it populated."
- More better maintained football pitches and more atps
- More detailed consultations with residents: e.g. the document about the Witney Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan is really excellent
- "Since when do the council have any services for free? I pay £200 per 12 months (£2,400 per year) so I don't consider anything is free. A surplus? You shouldn't need to increase anything then!!
- I know more could be saved, having worked for OCC in the past there is a huge waste of money going on ridiculous things. As someone else said get rid of middle and higher management that haven't a clue what they're doing but get paid loads of money for doing nothing. How about stopping all the extra sick pay staff get?"
- These decisions don't take into account years, pre-pandemic of poor/inconsistent maintenance of facilities. They also don't take into account that it is impossible to phone GLL to receive updates, become a member or renew your membership. They don't take into account the poolside staff's frustration with not being able to access management when necessary. Hence people vote with their feet and either don't join because they hear of the poor service, or join for a short time and don't go back. I fit this category and GLL lost me to the University of Oxford sports centre. It takes me a round trip of 2 hours to get there and home using public transport, and the cost is more. Yet I know what I am paying for.
- The Woodstock pool isn't open most of the year and when it is, it closes too early for me to use as I'm not back from work early enough. Please don't reduce its opening hours any more.

- Q1 and Q2 are loaded questions. They are biased towards increasing spending on environmental issues, many of which residents do not support such as Market sq, High Street Closure, Further 20mph zones, removal of barriers etc. - in fact many of the proposals being pushed forward by WTC and West Oxon. There are no opportunities to register NO for these questions.
- Restart the production of a printed annual waste collection calendar/ timetable for issue to residents who cannot access the internet.
- I do not agree with any of the suggestions in question 1. I think the Council should reduce its costs by being more efficient and targeting the essential services.
- What does 'putting residents first' actually mean?
- As long as it doesn't get too busy at certain times of the day or that would put me off going even more
- Being truly environmentally sustainable would save money in the long run.
- Don't think £75k should have been/be spent on 2 electric waste vehicles, when social care services need funding. NB I do support EV's and drive 1 myself!
- I would have thought you could save money internally, getting rid of middle management etc
- Make sure your spending is under control and is very good value for OUR money
- Keep up the good work!
- Better bin service as waiting weeks for bin after broken by bin men
- "Is it necessary to keep all street lights on all night
- Some roads are so full of potholes they cause a danger to road users! I think good roads should be a priority"
- There needs to be strict adherence to builds / renovations in conservation areas. What is being allowed is not with the preservation of buildings or land and green spaces.
- "The fact that the climate and ecological emergencies have a high profile across the Council's planning and budgeting is excellent and in keeping with the principles to which the West Oxfordshire Alliance declared its commitment on coming to power. I should like to see a clearer commitment to social equality, i.e. wherever possible putting the burden of higher costs on to those residents who can afford to contribute a bit more. That is why I favoured increasing Council Taxes over increasing or introducing charges. However, although Council Tax is relatively progressive as opposed to (flat) charges, its very existence can be an intolerable burden to families that are having to choose between heating and eating. Would it be possible to exclude the lowest bands (A, B) from any increases? Another way of distributing costs more fairly would be to introduce exemptions from any new charges introduced. I appreciate that there could be administrative complications to this, but would it be relatively simple to make receipt of welfare benefits (not pension) a criterion for exemption?"
- "Question 1 needs an option for 'none of these'. What a joke. How about: Reducing wastage Increasing efficiency Resolving corruption, Not backing ludicrous schemes, Not lining your own pockets to the detriment of everyone else, Not shifting the blame of terrible decisions elsewhere- take some responsibility! Stop making non-religious residents pay for parish and church costs. "
- The cost in this area is crazy, and you are thinking of increasing try to find ways to reduce
- Q2 (priorities) - all meaningless fluffy phrases. Needs some clear objectives with targets, timeline and measures
- The centres require more advertising of activities and available services it's an overlooked facility
- I Petition you to keep the council tax rate increase at Zero percent this year to support West Oxfordshire Families through the Cost of living Crisis. You can do this. Cut the IT Budget in half, delay replacement IT, eliminate paper, Reduce the Waste cost increases by upping recycling, and lower the £0.6m increase in leisure costs.
- The bin men need to be handling the bins with care just chucking them down when they've emptied them and causing damage to the bins then we have to claim for new bins is false economy
- More for youths, give them a chance a safe place.
- "To increase funding you should be challenging OCC about the amount that's taken by the county. Being realistic about how much it ACTUALLY costs to run WODC with appropriately funded police,

fire services, road maintenance, waste collection, councillors, etc, rather than cutting back on public services. Cutting services to save money is not the same as "efficiency savings". Also, how did WODC end up with a surplus of £750k? That is poor financial planning and hides the real world cost of running WODC. A surplus implies that all services and responsibilities of WODC are in perfect order with no room for improvement. "

- You still have to heat pools when you shut the centres, cutting hours that are open only saves wages, GLL are making a fortune.
- Service delivery: pay much more attention to sewage infrastructure when assessing planning applications please.
- "No"
- "Services such as pest control should be the same charge to all no subsidies.
- The leisure centre is a priority for health and fitness and should not be sacrificed.
- Council tax should be frozen for residents whilst there is a cost of living crisis and single occupants should have a 50% discount and not a mere 25%. Any rises should be for second homes only."
- Better use of section 106 funding to provide local services such as shops and/or public transport.
- "It is quite clear that new houses have far outstripped the infrastructure in every way; surgeries, roads, parking spaces even outside your own home. Many local people feel disenfranchised and unable to stop the flood of our once rural county becoming an extension of Little London. Enough."
- All Councillors should be involved, and all views listened to
- keep things maintained so that people can be healthier and happier
- why do we have to pay for garden waste when we have such small gardens
- yes garden we have very small gardens so can not compost ourself and have to pay extra for weeds to be taken away
- More money/support for sports clubs towards grants needs to be made available. To support the council with their budget, they should look more at supporting clubs to access granting to improve facilities on offer
- Good luck as it's a very challenging time for local authority finances
- I value a clean environment above everything. Better litter removal, more bins and more notices telling people not to drop litter on our roads and countryside.
- Stop wasting money. Councils have the money but waste so much on 20 mile road schemes , restricting the high street, Witney was a nice town but it's slowly turning into dying town by council decisions .
- Change your pension scheme from defined benefit to defined contribution so it aligns with industry and the real world.
- Any attempts to reduce general opening hours of District leisure Centres in Oxfordshire should be fiercely resisted. Healthy body = healthy mind. Instead of spending tax payers' money on expensive, untested fripperies like LTN's and filter traffic zones in Oxford, the focus should be on providing value for money services for its' council-tax-paying citizens.
- Where is the EYFS funding that was never utilised? Facilities for EYFS and Primary/secondary schools need to be developed
- Think leisure centre could be proved more and some special offers
- Leisure centres need to be cleaner and less expensive
- Cutting back pool hours better than losing them all together.
- "Remove the ltns from high st.
- Stop cars parking between town & Swan Court Witney on DYL. Reduce hrs on outdoor pools during winter makes sense."
- Take notice, respond and act on the wishes of West Oxfordshire residents.
- "Get rid of the pathetic 20mph speed limits.

- Provide more services for the elderly, both in the community and at home. Being a development manager for a local residential independent living my residents awfully suffer and becoming more and more isolated.
- Consider looking into supporting local community first responder (SCAS) trained. These could be personal from West Oxfordshire that respond just for West Oxfordshire. Currently CFRs are volunteers and can be called anywhere. WODC could have there own ""pool"" of CFRs funded by West Oxfordshire residents. Having these types of resources can be hugely beneficial especially on days where the emergency services are striking. "
- Look to see how more unattended use of facilities could work. For Example have a key card entry which allows you access to whatever you have booked. Badminton, Squash, Gym could all have card entry with a number to call for any emergency. Then they could be open 24 hours and gain more revenue?
- We need a local tip / recycling centre close to Chipping Norton, nothing since Dean Pit closed and the car park facilities closed, yet the population is increasing rapidly with all the new homes - why not incorporate into the planning needs for one of the big housing developments?
- Stop spending millions on hotel rooms for migrants and use the money to keep public services alive.
- Introduce CIL payments
- A great deal of the priorities that you have seem to be for a minority of citizens
- "With regards to Q4: how long does it take to reheat a pool after heating isn't being provided? Does it cost more to heat a cold pool than maintain an existing warm one? I've heard of complaints about the pool being cold already - does that mean it's already being turned off for too long? If so, this will surely lead to a continued decline in use so creating something of a Catch-22. Can more environmentally-friendly means of heating be used? PVs on the roof to heat the pools for example? I appreciate this is an expensive capital outlay which might not be feasible but surely provides longer term improvements and contributes to responding to the climate emergency.
- Can you improve marketing of existing resources to encourage more use? I don't really know what leisure facilities are available and as someone who participates in a lot of sport myself (parkrun; running 3 times per week; home workouts), if I don't know, there's a strong chance others won't know either.
- Final comment: Please don't cut library resources!"
- Disabled/Access for all
- Why reduce opening, fixed costs will remain but you reduce potential income
- Stop spending money on useless ideas like 20 m p h. Schemes and invest it in things that really matter - increase the temp of the pool then people might use it.
- Change street lights to led or turn every other one off in highly lit zones
- Control housing development around villages or, at least ensure it suits the vernacular of the area (most don't and are just a developers mishmash of cheap materials and styles that make no esthetic contribution to the rural character of West Oxfordshire. Ensure meaningful mitigation is put in to support wildlife and reduce the impact of climate change, also, that sufficient infrastructure is in place and that the mix of housing actually meets local needs. Most of the new local developments are bout providing a dormitory for Oxford and commuters further afield and profits for developers. The huge solar development proposed is ludicrously inappropriate and will not provide the energy outcomes being touted by the developers.
- It would be good to see Council workers working rather than parked up in lay-bys smoking showing no interest in getting on with the job.
- Closing outdoor pools in the winter would be the most logical and best way to save money.
- don't spend so much on closing off oxford city; you may not like cars but the bus service is totally inadequate here.
- West Oxfordshire has a negligible effect on climate change. Council taxpayers money would be better spent on local issues. Perhaps getting the bins collected on time.
- no

- If there are no alternatives i would rather see facilities limited than costs increased. ie less opening hours.
- More facilities in the outlying villages where we get little or no help from the council. Buses have been cut, roads are in a state of disrepair, no footpaths outside the village so you cannot walk safely, especially in the dark or bad weather. We pay more council tax than those in towns but get far less for what we pay.
- "Road maintenance, road sign maintenance, street cleaning, car parking enforcement.
- Whole West Oxfordshire area looks uncared for, to outsiders it must look like we take no pride in the district."
- Re swimming pool costs - I'm not sure how closing a pool for a few hours or one day a week will reduce utility costs. The water will still need circulating and heating to stay at temperature. It seems to me that the only savings will be on lifeguarding. If you let the temperature drop, you'll then need more gas to get it back up to a temperature in which small children can learn and enjoy the water. This is a very tricky one, in my opinion. Ideally it would be better to boost pool usage and income, rather than so something which in my view won't generate significant savings.
- Supporting vulnerable residents through the cost of living crisis must be the priority.
- Charge for car parking in Witney town centre. Increasing council tax too much just adds to everyone's misery. Look into raising more money on assets by changing offices and other commercial premises to flats for example-there is a huge deficit in rental properties in Witney-this has been done in London. Perhaps give up altogether on the leisure centre? There are other gyms and facilities in Witney, better run, with longer opening hours at a competitive price. Sort out the paperwork and make more processes digital. Support the issuing of riding school licences by BHS and ABRS instead.
- If it is in your remit, sack the people who established blanket 20 mph speed limits in wholly inappropriate places in Witney.
- Your priority should be to identify efficiency savings and those that are abusing the benefits system. Not raising council or business rates for already struggling members of the community
- Roads and pathways maintained in a usable condition
- Public services such as leisure centres should be available regardless of increased costs - not closed. Spend less money on 20mph schemes that are not suitable in many areas and lack public support. Increased spending on public transport and infrastructure.
- Stop outsourcing, every outsourced service is making a profit for someone else money which should stay in the town/ county to provide the services why have the council upgraded a bin lorry to move to electric vehicles when the contractor providing the service makes a profit?
- Why spend £8m on reduced speed limits when you've got no money?
- "The limited detail provided makes it very difficult to comment on the allocations. I can't tell, for example, where public transport sits or where I can feedback on the removal of bus services to Churchill. I don't want to buy a second car, but I must now.
- The priorities above are so generic to be meaningless. What do they actually mean you would do differently? Please make this kind of consultation specific so that it is meaning and impact. I can only conclude that it has been designed to be so vague that the results will support whatever decisions you intend to make anyway. This is a really shame and missed opportunity.
- "Stop the OCC interfering with West Oxon! The money they have spent on the 20MPH scheme should have been put towards the Shores Green development!
- Please don't even think about removing free parking!!!"
- Repair the roads, cut out bike lanes,
- More needs to be spend on maintaining things the council spend money on either as facilities and infrastructure. Too often we see things broken and failing because no money has been allocated to maintain - footpaths, footbridges, trees not pollarded becoming oversized and branches and boughs falling into the river and impeding the flow. Styles and gates around local paths broken and left unrepaired

- "Adult users should directly contribute more for the leisure services they consume, as they often do for private leisure facilities.
- WODC should not be trying to 'save the planet' at our expense, that's a job for government. You could save a fortune by cutting out the food waste collections. AD produces only 10% more electricity than burning the waste at Ardley would, but consumes huge amounts of diesel, capital & manpower to collect the waste separately from other domestic waste in the first place.
- I don't understand the proposal to ""close pitches"". It was only a few days ago that you created a job to secure more pitches!
- "I do not agree with having the pool closed one day a week or limiting outdoor opening season. I do agree with measures such as improved lighting, making the old buildings more energy efficient etc and temporary closure of unused pitches.
- Please DO NOT increase council tax. Middle income families are struggling to buy food & heat their homes. Now is not the right time to increase taxes, even if that means services need to be (temporarily) cut back"
- I use my swimming pool regularly, but I am also struggling financially with the costs of swimming. I understand that the leisure centres are also struggling. IT IS IMPORTANT TO KEEP POOLS OPEN, but I really don't know what the solution is
- Two areas of concern where WODC doesn't get value for money: Its contract for road maintenance with Oxford County Council and its contract with Ubico for rubbish collection. They are not delivering on their contractual obligations to you, and you are not delivering to residents like me.
- Review all lighting in leisure centres more sensor lighting to reduce wastage. These facilities are essential to local communities and everything must be done to keep them open. Offer incentives to get people to join. Increase advertising, more referrals etc
- Reduce administration and management staff. Prioritise on only providing essential services. Stop all green and carbon net zero objectives.
- Yes stop wasting money on climate change no amount of money is going to make difference. Mother nature is going to do what it does we will just end up paying more tax. Also stop with this 20mph speed BS it has already costed us a lot and lastly open up the high streets and stop wasting money on things we don't need including supporting refugees
- Q1 - why no reduce spend option e.g. chasing non-sensical anti-car schemes and perhaps listening to residents views when proposing changes of this type. I have only been in the area for 2 years yet continually see you pushing forward with schemes against the wishes of the local residents
- I feel your priorities are only for the few and do not answer for the majority of the people. If your going to up the council tax and cut back on more valuable community equipment, then the public want to see their funding be used for the correct purpose. Not on a park and ride that doesn't even have a bus lane. Or the fact that all the speed limits have dropped which is now causing accidents and more pollution. We feel nothing has been thought out.
- Key areas should be protecting the most vulnerable in our society, addressing the climate and ecological crisis, ensuring public transport services are in place, helping with business support to help maintain employment and asking those who can afford to to pay a bit extra to help out wider society at this very difficult time.
- Have you looked at simple cost saving measures? For example I work for a Parish Council. We receive bills from WODC with 14 days payment terms. Why not change these to 28 days to reflect that most Councils only meet monthly and to save sending pointless reminders when payment is virtually certain. How much does this waste in postage? Also any thought to sending these bills electronically again saving postage.
- Mark a greater effort to get people to use the facilities. I.e underused pitches and gyms
- "Road maintenance needs to be improved. High costs of vehicle repairs are created due to potholes and other unrepaired road surfaces.
- "Because the Libdems vetoed the new reservoir they have condemned us to ongoing water shortages, hose pipe bans in summer. Also the crazy introductions of 20 mph speed limits in the county.

- If you want cycle paths widen the roads to accommodate them, do not put dotted lines on the roads where motor vehicles travel and pay exorbitantly to do so!
- As a lifelong cyclist and motor cyclist I can honestly say most of the bikes and riders are unfit to be on the road and are a danger to themselves and everybody else using the roads.No body should be cycling on the road without training, carrying written proof of it, and that the bike has been serviced and tested annually and fit for the road. They should also have third party insurance cover, as also should all pedestrians.
- Completely ban the use and sale of electric scooters, they are a complete and utter menace."
- Massive reduction in council tax our ridiculous charge for one month being in band F is approximately the annual charge in other European countries.
- On planning keep 5 year housing supply, insist all houses built to good eco standards and tackle Thames Water on sewerage and SSE on cost of delivering electricity supply.
- You need to recruit a specific individual to the recruit volunteer group to clean and maintain their own neighbourhood. We don't seem to care about where we live we just blame the 'council' for everything that is wrong and don't see the bigger picture.