

Priorities Committee Meeting_Jul12_2022

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE AND UPDATE

Budget Survey Results

Report Purpose

To provide Priorities Committee with an update on the budget survey results for the upcoming budget cycle.

Our Prioritized Strategic Goals

Goal 1 - Build strong communities to support the diverse needs of residents

Goal 7 - Provide opportunities for public engagement and communication

Continuously improving the way we work, as one organization, in an agile and sustainable manner

Report

A survey was conducted through two online platforms (SCOOP and Alchemer) from April 8 to May 8, 2022, to better understand the views of residents, business owners and property owners as it relates to their priorities, property taxes, service levels and infrastructure in the County. The survey results will be used by administration in development of the 2023-2026 budgets and will also inform Council of resident views and preferences. While the full report can be found in detail in Enclosure 1, some highlights are captured below.

Survey Questions

When asked to select from a list about what the 2023-2026 budget priority should be, the top five results were:

- Ensure long-term fiscal sustainability (48%)
- Minimize property taxes in the future (22%)
- Prepare for and react to changes in the economy (10%)
- Attract new and maintain current businesses and amenities (10%)
- Plan for future growth (5%)

When asked about comfort and preference of tax rate changes as it correlates to service levels (increasing property taxes could maintain or improve services, while maintaining or decreasing property tax levels would likely decrease services levels), the results were:

- Increase property taxes – 58%
 - Of the respondents who selected this answer, 67% support a tax rate increase of 2.0% or more
- Maintain property taxes – 35%
- Decrease property taxes – 7%

When asked to rate the value received from County services, the most provided response was good or excellent value (58%). Average value responses were next (30%) with poor value receiving the fewest responses (12%).

When asked about their personal financial situation, both in 2022 and anticipated in 2023, results were as follows:

Priorities Committee Meeting_Jul12_2022

2022

- 9% became better
- 50% stayed the same
- 39% became worse

2023

- 8% will become better
- 58% will stay the same
- 31% will get worse

Respondent profile

A total of 1,395 responses were received with the majority of respondents being residents. Due to the low response count of business or property owners (19), no specific analysis of these respondents was conducted. Resident respondents primarily lived in Sherwood Park (75%) with rural subdivisions being the next largest group (16%). The age of respondents is primarily between 45-64 (42%) with 65+ (31%) and 25-44 (23%) making up the majority of remaining responses.

Summary

The survey results are part of the information used to help with development of the 2023-2026 budgets. Overall, most respondents support long-term fiscal sustainability and moderate tax rate increases, and resident value-satisfaction of County services is generally high.

Council and Committee History

March 8, 2022	The Priorities Committee received a report with an update on public engagement options for the upcoming budget cycle.
February 8, 2022	The Priorities Committee received a report seeking feedback on the 2022 Budget process.
December 7, 2021	Council requested that the Public Engagement Options for Budget report be brought back to Council in Quarter 1, 2022.
November 26, 2021	Strathcona County 2022 Budget - Non-Statutory Public Hearing. The Mayor convened the Public Hearing at 4:01 p.m.
April 13, 2021	Council approved public engagement on the annual budget for 2022 include activities that do not require in person attendance: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• virtual meetings between individual councillors and constituents;• a non-statutory public hearing to be advertised once the budget dates have been determined; and• inclusion of budget related questions in a mixed topic SCOOP survey prior to the budget process, including a question on the proposed 2022 tax rate. Council directed that by the end of 2021, Administration bring forward a plan to address public engagement on the proposed budget in future years.
November 26, 2019	Council directed Administration to provide a report, by the start of the second quarter of 2020, outlining logistics, timing and cost of options for providing a specific annual opportunity for residents to have input on upcoming yearly budgets, the report to address the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Opportunities for resident input to be provided prior to the end of July each year to allow timely consideration of the input; Include recommendations on how the input is to be received, and who would receive the input.

Priorities Committee Meeting_Jul12_2022

Other Impacts

Policy: FIN-001-004 Expenditure and Budget Management

Legislative/Legal: n/a

Financial/Budget: n/a

Interdepartmental: n/a

Master Plan/Framework: Economic Sustainability Framework

Communication Plan

The Budget Survey results will be posted to the public engagement reports webpage, shared by email to members of the Strathcona County Online Opinion Panel (SCOOP), and announced through the public engagement eNewsletter.

Enclosures

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 1 | Budget Survey Report |
| 2 | Budget Survey Results presentation |