

Would you be supportive of an increase in Council Tax if the money this raised was ringfenced for a specific purpose/project?

● Yes	153
● No	191
● Maybe, depending on the pur...	421



In light of your previous answer, what purpose/projects would you wish any Council Tax increase to support?

(The top 4 themes of response are listed below)

You said

We did

Roads Network

The Council is investing £95.1m in Roads over the next 10 years to improve Roads, Bridges and pavements with increased focus on first and final fixes and piloting alternative technologies to reduce temporary patching and build resilience. This includes a new approach with the purchase of a Pothole Pro following successful trials in the Borders during 2021 to avoid the need for temporary patching. The Council is proposing a one-off £1.35m increase in revenue spend on roads to target high profile/high priority identified local schemes and white lining following a process of public consultation.

Education

£2.9m investment is being made in 75 FTE additional teaching and support staff in schools to reduce the attainment gap. 3 new Secondary schools will be built in Gala, Peebles and Hawick during the next Council along with new Eyemouth and Earlston primary schools by end of 2025/26. The work in Earlston will include provision of a new GP surgery funded by NHS Borders.

Social Care

Significant investment of over £8.5m permanent, recurring funding has been provided to Social Work services to deliver increased pay for social care staff along with a further increases over 2021/22 levels for care at home investment, interim care, free personal & nursing care and the carers act. The Council is also advancing the delivery of new care facilities at Tweedbank and in Hawick to modernise the care estate.

Climate change

The Council is investing in spend to save projects in a range of energy efficiency measures designed to reduce our Carbon Footprint with an investment of over £4m in the next 3 years and £400k to support increasing work around sustainability and a fair transition to net zero. Work is also progressing to protect our towns from flooding including delivery of the £92m Hawick Flood Protection scheme and natural flood measures in upland areas. The Council is transitioning its fleet to alternative green fuel sources and has ordered the first 20 all electric vehicles to replace existing diesel cars.

At the heart of what the Council is aiming to achieve is improving the wellbeing, in its widest possible sense, of everyone living in the Scottish Borders. What could the Council do to help increase your wellbeing and that of your family?

(The top 5 themes of response are listed below)

You said	We did
Keep Council Tax increases to a minimum	Council Tax and fees & charges will increase by 3% in 2022/23. With inflation currently running over 5%, this increase is a below inflation increase and represents a real terms reduction in the funding available to the Council next year. Around 25% of lowest income households do not pay any Council Tax as this is fully offset by the Council Tax reduction scheme.
Support Health, fitness and wellbeing activities	The Council is investing an additional £500k in Culture & Sports Trusts to support them in providing high quality sports and recreation activities in the COVID-19 recovery period. £4m investment programme is in place to improve and modernise outdoor Community Spaces. As part of this, destination play areas have been delivered in Harestanes, Galashiels, Kelso, Peebles, Hawick, Coldstream and Newtown St Boswells, with further projects to be delivered in Jedburgh, Duns, Eyemouth and Earlston.
Improvements in roads, paths and cycle ways	Significant investment in the Roads network of £95.1m over the next 10 years plus over £2.5m investment through the Cycling, Walking, Safer Streets programme over 5 years to improve paths and safe cycling opportunities. An active travel network is also being developed in Hawick as part of the Flood Protection works. The destination Tweed project is seeking to join up the paths network across the Borders to encourage cycling and walking.
Transport	The Council continues to support the extension of the Borders Railway through the pilot study currently being undertaken by Transport Scotland and is currently investing £2.4m in opening Reston Station on the east coast mainline. A Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) pilot is being launched to support usage of the new Reston Station. In line with national policy under 21s in the Borders will be eligible for free travel from the end of January 2022.
Investment in communities and towns	Investment through the capital plan in Hawick through the development of a Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS). Use of second homes Council Tax to bring empty homes into use through a new £500k empty homes fund managed by a new empty homes officer, this fund will provide grants of up to £25k to redevelop empty homes in our towns and countryside. £250k investment in a neighbourhood support fund, for area partnerships to target local priorities.

As part of the drive towards net zero emissions there is a national target of recycling 70% of household waste by 2025. We have already achieved a huge reduction in the amount of household waste sent to landfill and no longer send any waste to landfill in the Scottish Borders. There has been an associated increase in the recycling rate and in the year to December 2020 over 56% of household waste was recycled. We're obviously keen to maximise the recycling rate, so how could the Council help you to reduce your waste and increase the amount recycled in your household?

(The top 4 themes of response are listed below)

Increase types of collection

The Council is working with Zero Waste Scotland to identify opportunities to improve kerbside collection services. Feedback from this survey will help shape future service provision and bid applications. The Council has diverted most waste from landfill, increased recycling performance and reduced its carbon emissions through its new residual waste contract. In addition the Council has invested over £4.5m in its waste transfer stations and purchased 5 new Refuse Collection Vehicles four of which have electric bin lifters reducing vehicle emissions.

Educate the public

The Council is currently focusing on educating its children and young people. This has involved the development of a Schools Resource Pack covering recycling, climate change and a number of other subjects. At the current time the resource pack is being piloted in 8 primary schools, with the aim that this will be rolled out to all primary schools from August 2022. The Council has worked with Zero Waste Scotland to introduce a National Recycling Sorter which enables residents across Scotland to check what materials should be placed in which bin.

Accessibility and use of recycling centres

The hours of operation at Community Recycling Centres have been adjusted to reflect customer feedback and usage data. This has included providing longer opening hours in the summer & at weekends and shorter hours in the winter. In 2020 the Council upgraded Easter Langlee Community Recycling Centre to improve accessibility and reduce the need to shut the site when skips are being serviced.

Reduce use of plastics

The Council recognises and supports the need to reduce the quantity of plastics used in packaging. This is confirmed in the Council's Climate Change Route Map. The Scottish and UK Governments are working on a number of legislative and policy drivers to reduce the amount of plastic used in packaging including Extended Producer Responsibility Scheme and the Deposit Return Scheme. The Council will continue to work with the Scottish Government to reduce use of plastics.

The Council is continuing to develop new digital ways for customers to deal with us. What Council services would you like to be available online 24/7 to help you do more at a time that suits you?

(The top 5 themes of response are listed below)

Introduce an online chat service	The Council is planning the launch of a web chat service to allow customers to contact the Council over a live web chat. This will allow customers to resolve a range of issues through this flexible and modern approach.
Ability to engage with the Council through one route	The Council is rolling out a customer account allowing individuals to securely sign up for a personal account on the Council website. After signing up they will be able to submit requests, raise queries and access information relevant to themselves. The account will record their requests, provide progress updates where applicable and have options to view and use Council systems. The account will be available via the Council website and so be easily accessible from devices such as laptops, tablets and mobiles phones.
Provide Council Tax services online	As above the customer account being rolled out will allow customers to access their Council Tax account to check or update personal information and make payments.
Emergency response	Feedback from members of the public asked the Council to focus 24/7 support on times of crisis indicating they value this service and that this approach should continue with resources focused on support to communities in emergency situations.
Provide as many Council services as possible online	The Council is aiming to deliver as many services as possible on line and has an active programme to roll out this digital engagement.

The Council is committed to increasing the opportunities for people and communities to have a say in how we invest and support jointly agreed priorities within their community. What would be your top priority for improving the community in which you live?

(The top 4 themes of response are listed below)

Town Regeneration

The Council is investing in new facilities to regenerate our town centres including the opening of the new Tapestry centre in Galashiels and the extension of the Jim Clark museum in Duns. These initiatives are intended to encourage footfall in our town centres.

Investment in communities and facilities

Over the next 10 years the Council is planning over £500m investment in our communities, new facilities being delivered will include new Community schools for Peebles, Gala, Hawick, Earlston and Eyemouth. New outdoor activity spaces are being developed through Outdoor Community spaces programme including parks, the Council is playing its part in developing 2 region City Deals including Borderlands and Edinburgh South East Scotland project and major investment is planned at Tweedbank through this initiative. The new schools will deliver huge improvements in community sport facilities and encourage access and participation for all.

Public Transport

The Council continues to support the extension of the Borders Railway through the pilot study currently being undertaken by Transport Scotland and is currently investing £2.4m in opening Reston Station on the east coast mainline. A Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) pilot is being launched to support usage of the new Reston Station. In line with national policy under 21s in the Borders will be eligible for free travel from the end of January 2022.

Improving Roads network

Over the next 10 years the Council will invest £95.1m in improving roads, bridges, pavements and paths.

Do you have suggestions on things the Council could do differently, or potential savings we could make?

(The top 4 themes of response are listed below)

Ensure that the public have more say

The Council continues to develop Community Choices approaches to involving communities in how budgets are prioritised and spent. We are using citizen space to gather views from the public including this consultation to be more responsive to local needs.

Ensure the Council takes a proactive and transparent approach

The Council is committed to openness and transparency in all its dealings. The majority of Council meetings are held in public, online and full minutes of meetings and decisions are published on the Council website. The Council live streams its meetings on Teams and are looking at ways of recording these meetings to ensure they can be viewed after the meeting for a 6 month period. The Council is also examining ways in which more information can be published on the Council website to reduce the number of FOI requests which are responded to. The Council is looking to modernise its website and is looking for alternative methods of communicating including Yammer and Citizen space as a way of encouraging active dialogue and participation with communities.

Review service delivery models

The Council is continually seeking to modernise its services and adopt innovative ways of supporting our communities through the use of technology. A good example is the support provided to individuals and businesses during the pandemic both online and through our community assistance hubs which operated in each locality. The Fit for 2024 transformation programme continues to undertake cross cutting service reviews to deliver efficiency savings and modernise the Council.

Review staffing arrangements

The Council is now developing specific projects as part of the agreed digital transformation strategy which will seek to ensure the tasks undertaken to deliver services are done by the most appropriate staff, this includes automation of some business processes, allowing staff to focus on value added tasks, providing staff on the frontline with the technology they need to do their job, reducing administration and manual effort and integrating our back office systems with hand held technology provided to staff who are out in our communities.