Budget Consultation and Engagement with Residents Autumn 2014

Preliminary Summary Report
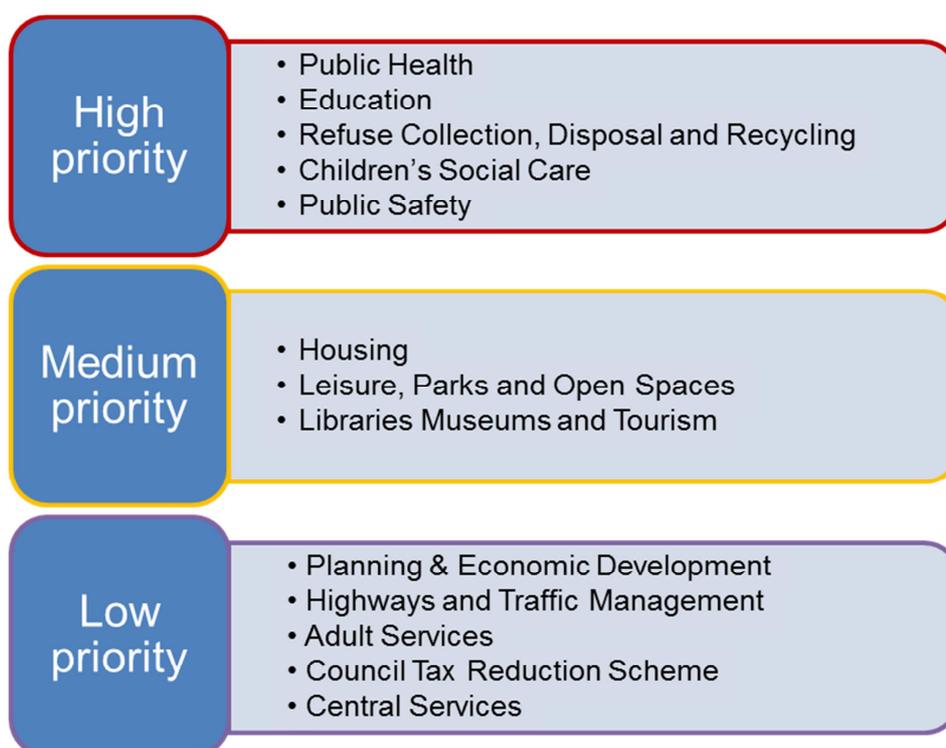
About this report:

Findings reported here are based on 427 random sample postal and online survey responses and 227 budget tool users' views.

Results of the random sample survey are the most statistically robust: the summary information below draws on these alone.

Detailed information on the approach, methods, response rates and analysis are provided at end of this report.

An update report will be provided to Members in January 2015 to include further analysis and wider consultation findings e.g. from the online survey, a Youth Council event, etc.

Findings: at a glance

High priority
- Public Health
- Education
- Refuse Collection, Disposal and Recycling
- Children's Social Care
- Public Safety

Medium priority
- Housing
- Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces
- Libraries Museums and Tourism

Low priority
- Planning & Economic Development
- Highways and Traffic Management
- Adult Services
- Council Tax Reduction Scheme
- Central Services

- Public Health is residents' top priority; a third would increase spend on it. Central Services is residents' lowest priority;

- Whilst the majority want funding to be, at least, maintained for all service areas, around two-fifths would reduce funding for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, Central Services and Highways and Traffic Management;

- Two fifths think Council Tax should never rise; half think it could under certain circumstances;

- Residents are very much in favour of the exploitation of fines for anti-social behaviour as a way to increase income, and of differential charging for attractions for residents and visitors;
- Residents would stop delivering non-essential services and stop spend on road/traffic/cycle/parking developments;
- Residents would start introducing/increasing charges/rates/taxes/fines and start to focus on delivering (only) "essential" services and improving waste and recycling services;
- Residents would change staffing/councillor levels and pay, and change road/traffic/cycle/parking developments.

Findings:

Paper and online survey: random sample

Residents were first invited to rate as high, medium or low, the priority they would give to different service areas for themselves and their family, then to do the same prioritisation exercise for the city.

Not everyone who completed the survey rated every service area so the number of people rating each service area is given in brackets on charts. For example only 364 respondents rated Central Services, whereas 403 rated Public Health.
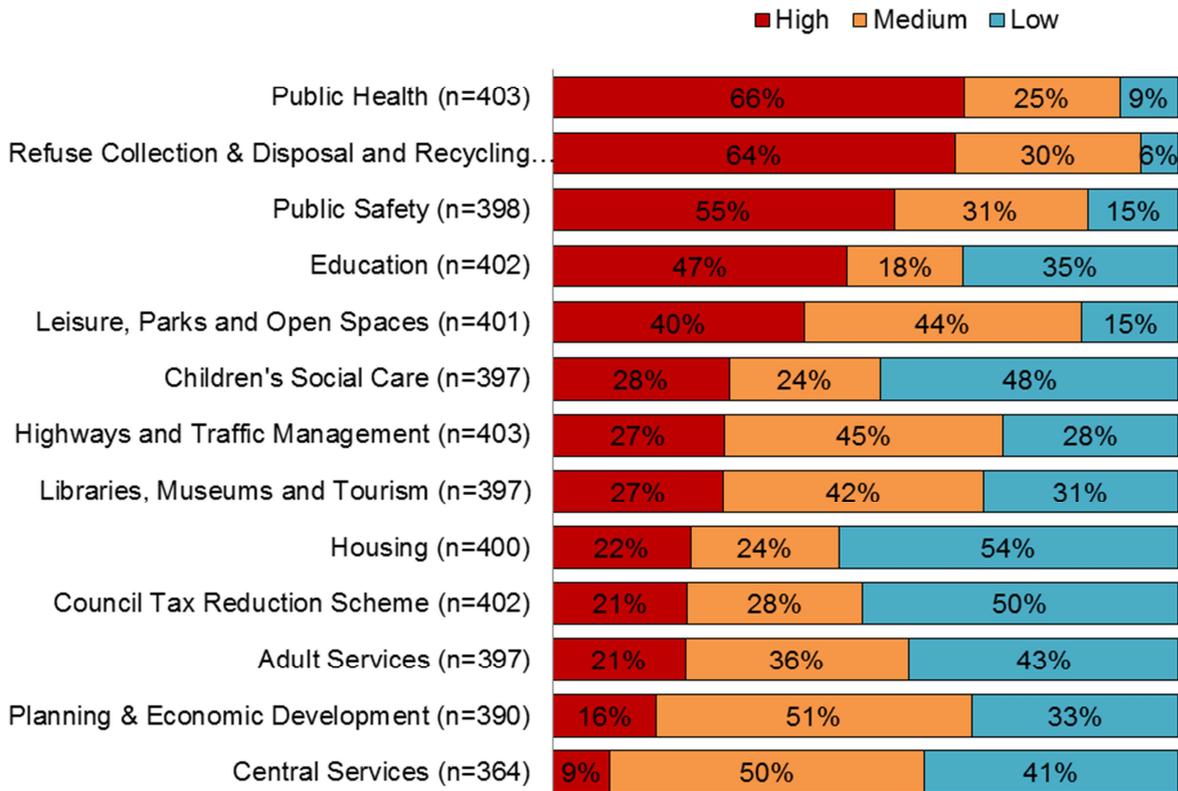
A small number of respondents only rated services for themselves and their family and did not go on to rate them for the city as well.

Results show that respondents tended to rate service areas as a higher priority for the city than for themselves and their families. There was also, unsurprisingly, more polarisation when rating service areas for themselves compared to the city; i.e. if a respondent (and their family) uses or benefits from a particular service they may be more inclined to rate it a higher priority, whereas a respondent not using or benefitting from a service may be more inclined to rate it low.
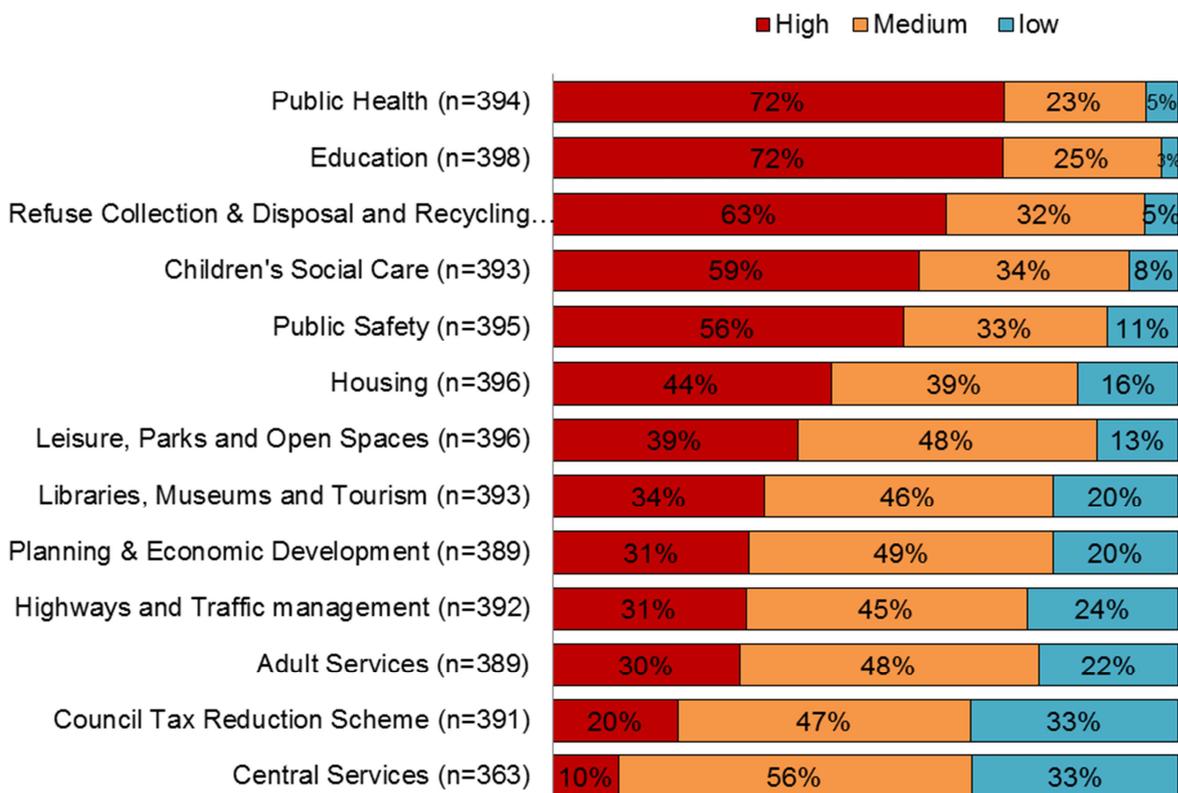
Compared to last year's results, the proportions rating services as high priorities are lower, and proportions rating services as low priorities are higher, suggesting the scale of the budget challenge may be better understood this year.

The charts overleaf show the service areas ranked from highest priority to lowest for respondents and their families, then for the city.

Priority rating of each service area: For you & your family

Legend: ■ High ■ Medium ■ Low

Service area	High	Medium	Low
Public Health (n=403)	66%	25%	9%
Refuse Collection & Disposal and Recycling…	64%	30%	6%
Public Safety (n=398)	55%	31%	15%
Education (n=402)	47%	18%	35%
Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces (n=401)	40%	44%	15%
Children's Social Care (n=397)	28%	24%	48%
Highways and Traffic Management (n=403)	27%	45%	28%
Libraries, Museums and Tourism (n=397)	27%	42%	31%
Housing (n=400)	22%	24%	54%
Council Tax Reduction Scheme (n=402)	21%	28%	50%
Adult Services (n=397)	21%	36%	43%
Planning & Economic Development (n=390)	16%	51%	33%
Central Services (n=364)	9%	50%	41%

Priority rating of each service area: For the city

Legend: ■ High ■ Medium ■ low

Service area	High	Medium	low
Public Health (n=394)	72%	23%	5%
Education (n=398)	72%	25%	3%
Refuse Collection & Disposal and Recycling…	63%	32%	5%
Children's Social Care (n=393)	59%	34%	8%
Public Safety (n=395)	56%	33%	11%
Housing (n=396)	44%	39%	16%
Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces (n=396)	39%	48%	13%
Libraries, Museums and Tourism (n=393)	34%	46%	20%
Planning & Economic Development (n=389)	31%	49%	20%
Highways and Traffic management (n=392)	31%	45%	24%
Adult Services (n=389)	30%	48%	22%
Council Tax Reduction Scheme (n=391)	20%	47%	33%
Central Services (n=363)	10%	56%	33%

Higher priority areas

Top five (largest proportion rating high priority for the city):

- Public Health (72% high)
- Education (72% high)
- Refuse Collection, Disposal and Recycling (63% high)
- Children's Social Care (59% high)
- Public Safety (56% high)

- With the exception of Public Health, which wasn't asked about in last year's survey, all service areas have lower priority ratings this year.
- Public Health had the highest priority rating of all services, regardless of whether respondents were rating it for themselves and their family (66%), or the city as a whole (72%).
- Education was also rated a high priority for the city by 72% of respondents, with just 3% rating it a low priority. For respondents and their families, Education received a lower rating (47% high) but was nonetheless the fourth highest ranked service.
- Refuse Collection, Disposal and Recycling received high and very similar priority ratings, regardless of whether respondents were rating it for themselves or the city (64% and 63% respectively).
- Children's Social Care had a high priority rating, especially when rated for the city, with 59% rating it high. Although only 28% rated it high for themselves and their families it ranked 6th out of the 13 service areas asked about.
- Public Safety, like Refuse Collection, Disposal and Recycling, was rated very similarly for respondents themselves (55% high) and the city (56% high).

Lower priority areas

Bottom five (largest proportion rating low priority for the city):
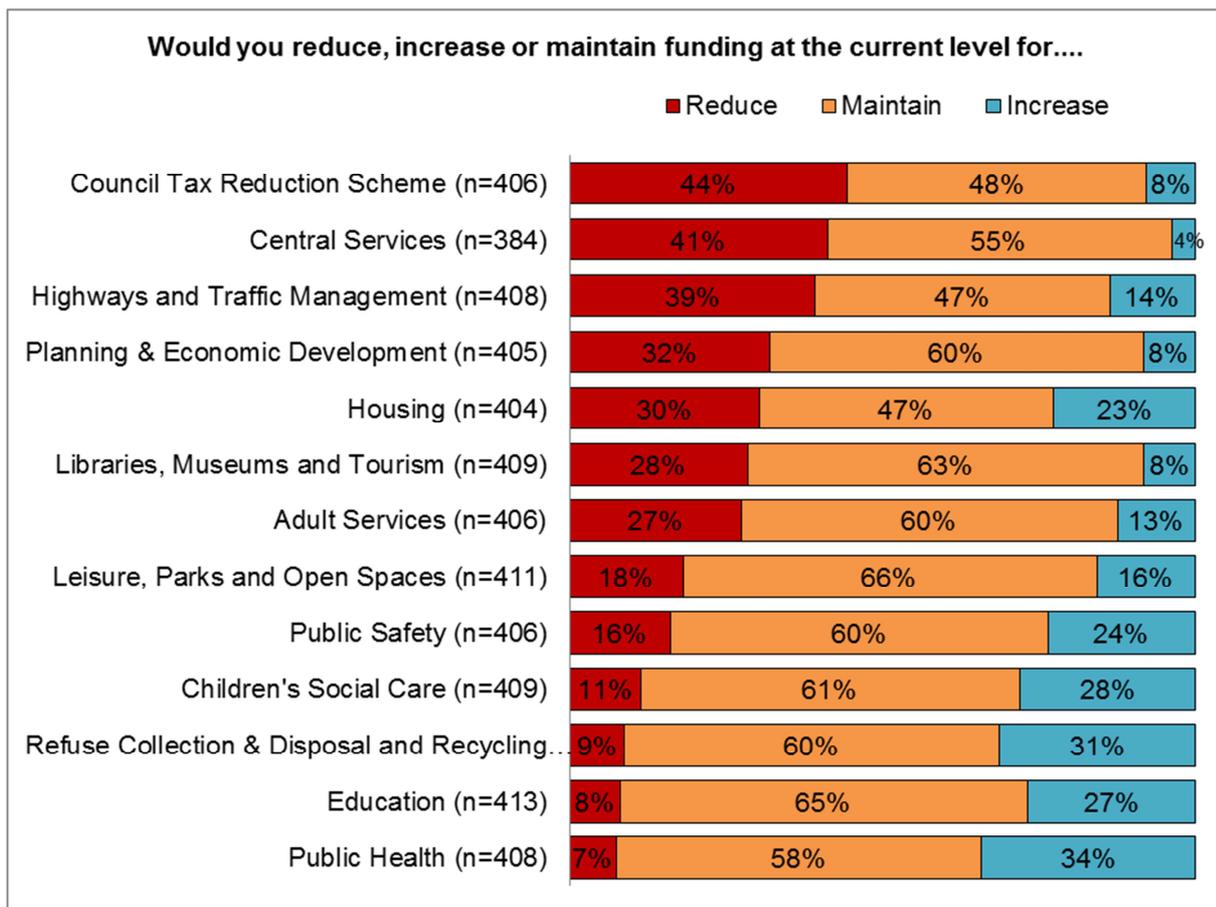
- Central Services (33% low)
- Council Tax Reduction Scheme (33% low)
- Highways and Traffic Management (24% low)
- Adult Services (22% low)
- Planning & Economic Development (20% low)

- As in previous years, Central Services was the lowest rated area with just 10% rating it a high priority for the city, and only 9% rating it high for themselves. A third of respondents rated it a low priority for the city.
- Although, generally, larger proportions rated service areas as lower priorities this year, just two areas were rated low by at least a third; Central Services and Council Tax Reduction Scheme.
- Despite differences in how respondents rated services for themselves and for the city, three of the four lowest rated services are the same. These were Central Services, Adult Services and Council Tax Reduction Scheme, all of which were rated low priorities by at least a fifth of respondents.

- The service area with the largest proportion, 54%, rating it a low priority for themselves and their family was Housing. This compares to 16% rating it low for the city.

Areas with the widest spread of opinion
- When rating services for themselves there was more variance than when rating services for the city. As mentioned before, this is likely to be as people rate services they currently use, or are more likely to use, as a higher priority.
- The widest spread of opinions when rating services for themselves and their families were Highways and Traffic Management (27% high, 28% low), Libraries, Museums and Tourism (27% high, 31% low) and Education (47% high, 35% low).
- Service areas where views were divided over the priority for the city were Highways and Traffic Management (31% high, 24% low) and Adult Services (30% high, 22% low).

Respondents were asked to say whether they would reduce, increase or maintain service area funding at the current level. This year, respondents were more inclined than last year to say funding should be reduced, and less inclined to say it should be increased, across all service areas (except Public Health which was not asked about last year). Results are shown below.

Would you reduce, increase or maintain funding at the current level for....

■ Reduce　■ Maintain　■ Increase

Service area	Reduce	Maintain	Increase
Council Tax Reduction Scheme (n=406)	44%	48%	8%
Central Services (n=384)	41%	55%	4%
Highways and Traffic Management (n=408)	39%	47%	14%
Planning & Economic Development (n=405)	32%	60%	8%
Housing (n=404)	30%	47%	23%
Libraries, Museums and Tourism (n=409)	28%	63%	8%
Adult Services (n=406)	27%	60%	13%
Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces (n=411)	18%	66%	16%
Public Safety (n=406)	16%	60%	24%
Children's Social Care (n=409)	11%	61%	28%
Refuse Collection & Disposal and Recycling…	9%	60%	31%
Education (n=413)	8%	65%	27%
Public Health (n=408)	7%	58%	34%

Reduce funding
Respondents generally didn't want funding reduced with the majority opting to either maintain or increase funding for all areas.

That said, 44% would reduce funding for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, 41% would reduce funding for Central Services and 39% would reduce it for Highways and Traffic Management.

Increase funding
The only service area where at least a third wanted funding increased was Public Health, with 34% saying they would increase funding and just 7% saying they would reduce it. A comparatively large proportion, 31%, would increase funding for Refuse Collection & Disposal and Recycling.

Maintain funding
With the exception of 3 service areas (Housing, Highways and Traffic Management and Council Tax Reduction Scheme) over half of respondents thought funding should be maintained at the current level. Service areas with the highest proportions of respondents thinking funding should be maintained were Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces (66%), Education (65%) and Libraries, Museums and Tourism (63%).

Respondents were then asked if they felt Council Tax should ever rise to reduce pressure on the council's finances.
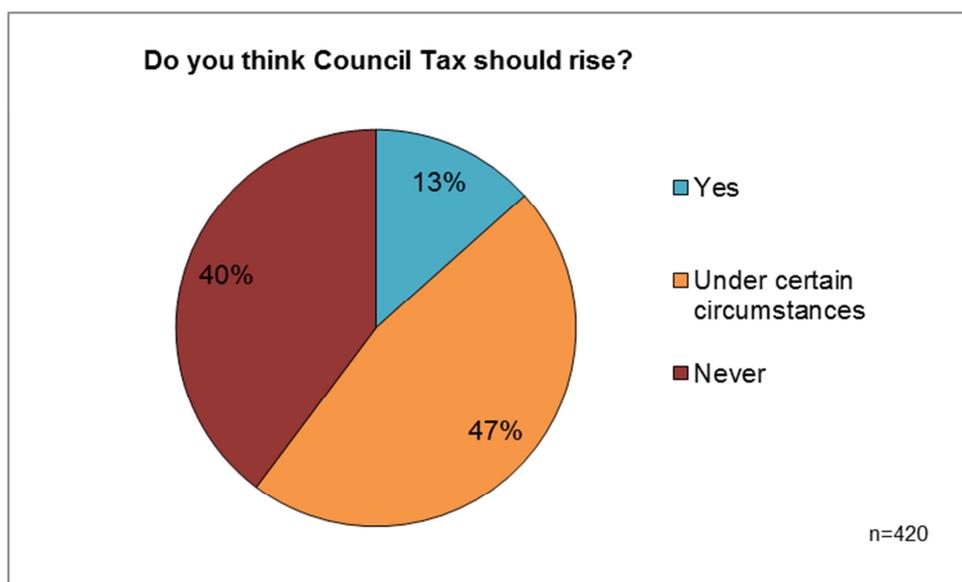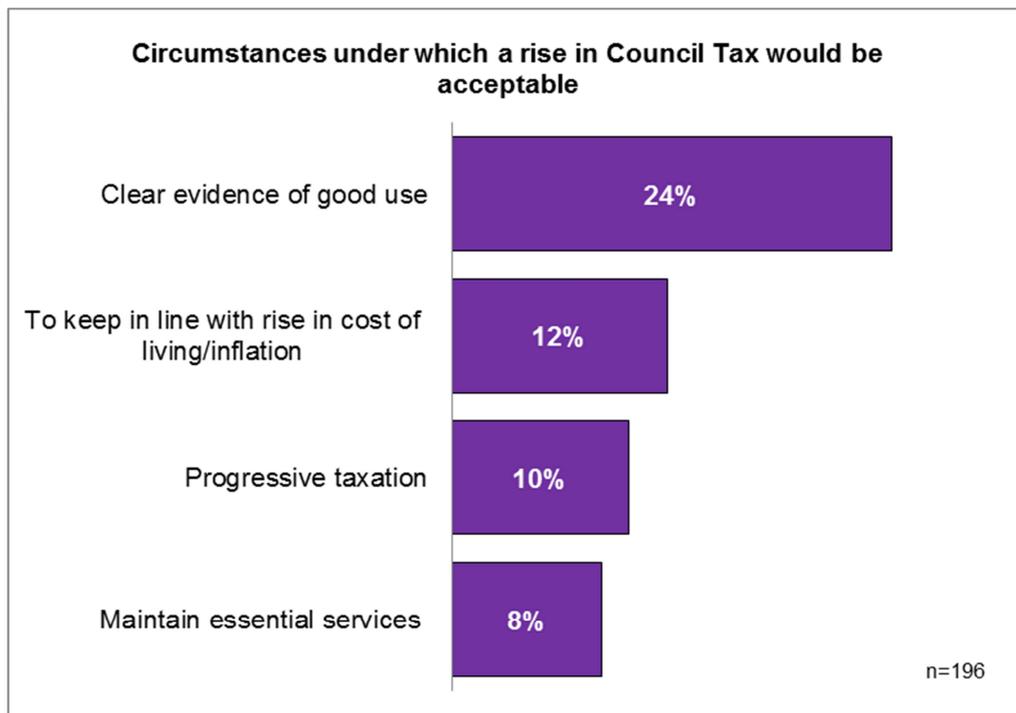

13% of the sample felt that Council Tax should rise, a notably larger proportion than the 6% saying it should in response to last year's survey. However, 40% thought that it should never rise whilst 47% felt that an increase in Council Tax could be justified in certain circumstances; both of these results are within +/- 4% of last year's results.

Analysis of comments made by respondents who answered that Council Tax could rise "under certain circumstances" has been conducted to establish what those circumstances are. It shows there are 4 main positions:
- If there's clear evidence of the money being put to "good use" (24%[1])
- If the rise is in line with cost of living increases/inflation (12%)

---

[1] Proportion calculated as number of mentions of an issue as a percentage of respondents answering the question "under certain circumstances"

- If the system is progressive (10%)
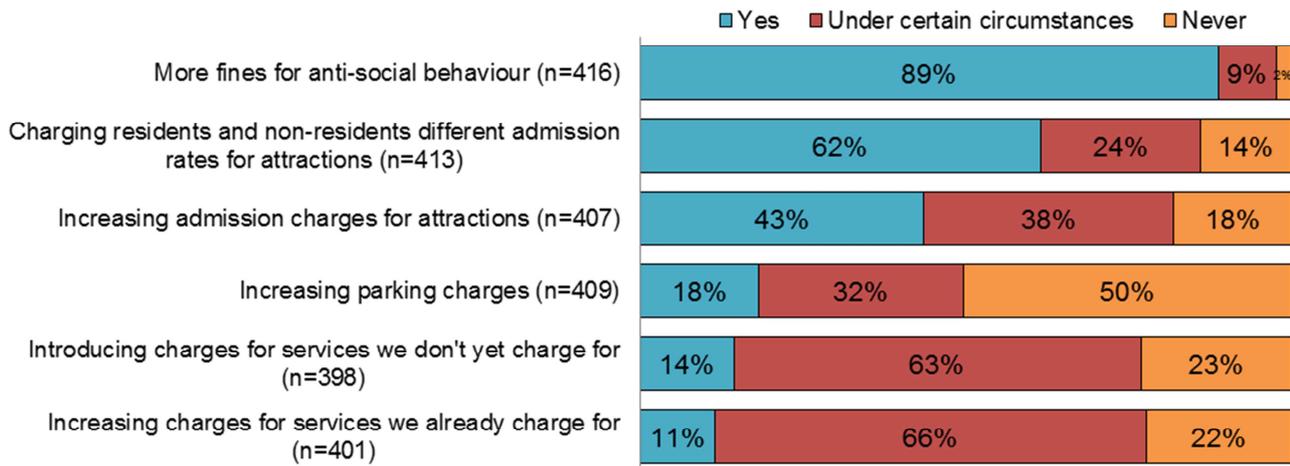- If the rise is in order to maintain essential services (8%)

Circumstances under which a rise in Council Tax would be acceptable

Clear evidence of good use	24%
To keep in line with rise in cost of living/inflation	12%
Progressive taxation	10%
Maintain essential services	8%

n=196

Some respondents specified particular services that money raised from any rise in Council Tax should be used to fund. In order of mentions these were:

- Public Health (6%)
- Waste and recycling (6%)
- Social care (6%)
- Schools and education (5%)
- 5% of respondents would support a rise in Council Tax to finance the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

There was a wide range of other circumstances under which a rise in Council Tax would be acceptable, but, with the exception of those noted above, none were mentioned 10 times.

Respondents were then asked if they would support raising money from any of 6 different sources. Two new sources were asked about in this year's survey: "charging residents and non-residents different admission rates for attractions" and "introducing charges for services we don't yet charge for", and the wording of one option changed from "increasing admission charges for services" to "increasing charges for services we already charge for".

Would you suport raising money from any of the following sources?

Legend: ■ Yes ■ Under certain circumstances ■ Never

Source	Yes	Under certain circumstances	Never
More fines for anti-social behaviour (n=416)	89%	9%	2%
Charging residents and non-residents different admission rates for attractions (n=413)	62%	24%	14%
Increasing admission charges for attractions (n=407)	43%	38%	18%
Increasing parking charges (n=409)	18%	32%	50%
Introducing charges for services we don't yet charge for (n=398)	14%	63%	23%
Increasing charges for services we already charge for (n=401)	11%	66%	22%

As in previous years, there was clear support for easing pressure on the council's finances through more fines for antisocial behaviour such as litter, dog fouling and noise, with 89% of the sample saying they would support raising money via such fines and only 2% saying this should never happen.
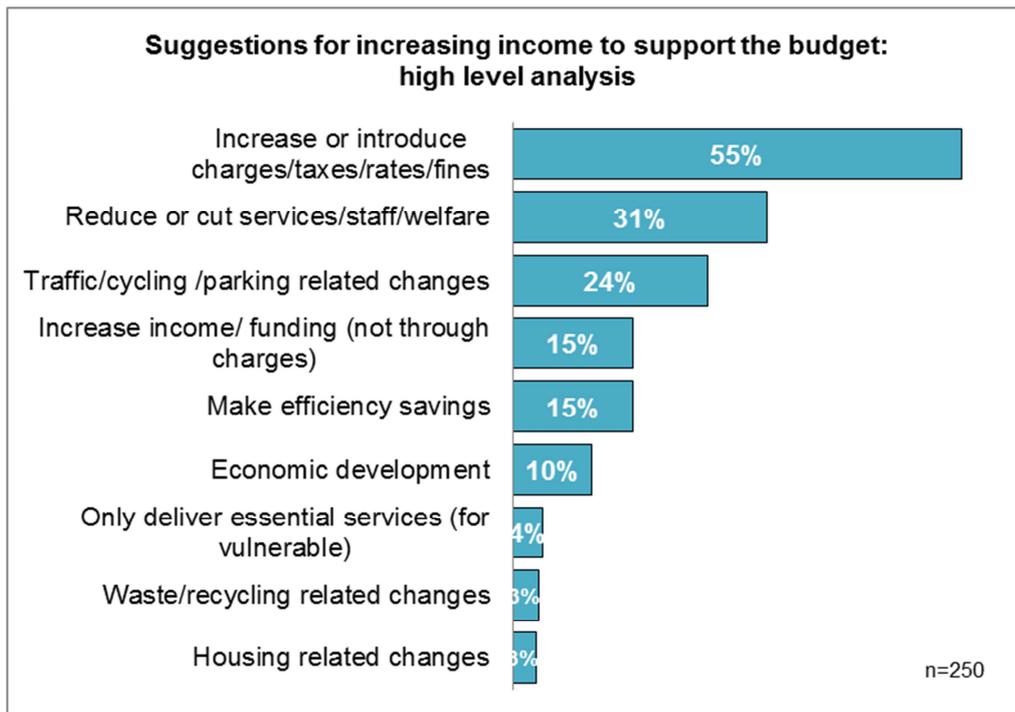
The majority, 62%, also favoured charging residents and non-residents different rates for attractions.

This year there was more of an appetite to increase charges for attractions with 43% in favour. Last year respondents were divided as to whether increasing admission charges for attractions should be done, with similar proportions in favour (26%) as opposed (27%).

Half of respondents were opposed to increasing revenue through raising parking charges, a slightly lower proportion than last year (55%).
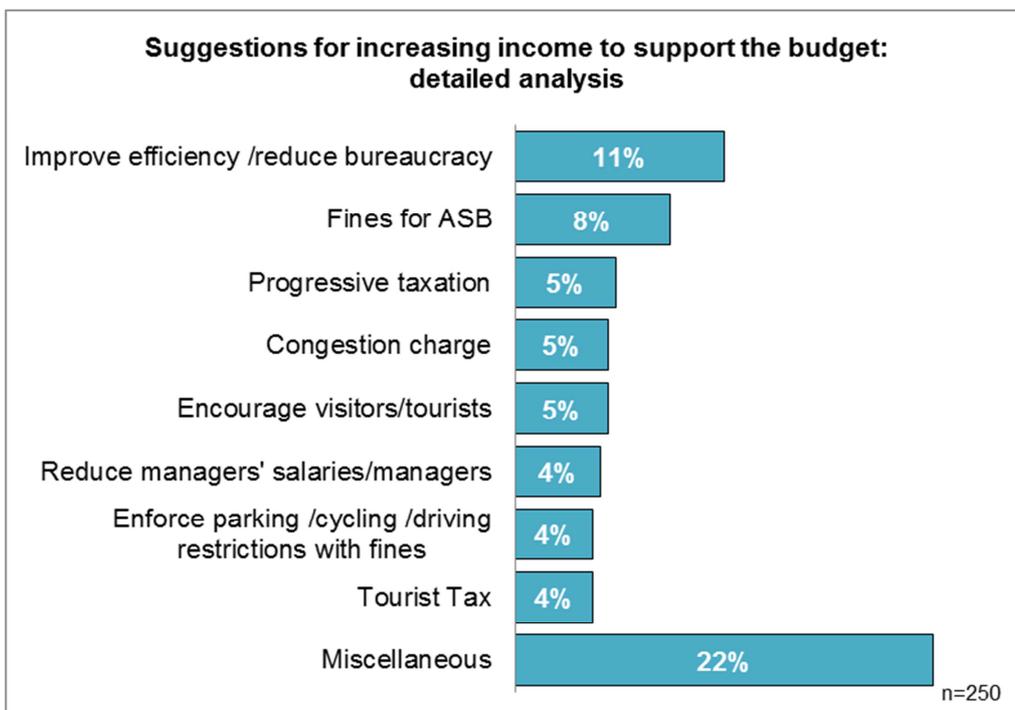
The majority (around two thirds in each case) said that only under certain circumstances would they favour the introduction of charges for services we don't yet charge for and increasing charges for services we already charge for.

Respondents' other suggestions for increasing income to support the budget were wide ranging. Analysis has therefore been undertaken at two levels; firstly, at a high level, with suggestions grouped into broad categories, and secondly at a more granular level, with counts of mentions of single issues.

Suggestions for increasing income to support the budget: high level analysis

Increase or introduce charges/taxes/rates/fines	55%
Reduce or cut services/staff/welfare	31%
Traffic/cycling /parking related changes	24%
Increase income/ funding (not through charges)	15%
Make efficiency savings	15%
Economic development	10%
Only deliver essential services (for vulnerable)	4%
Waste/recycling related changes	3%
Housing related changes	3%

n=250

Analysis at a high level shows increasing, or introducing charges, taxes, rates and fines was the most common type of suggestion from residents for raising income, with 55% of those responding to the question commenting to this effect. This compares against 31% who suggested making cut-backs and reductions, although note that many respondents made suggestions that fit into more than one category, so some have suggested raising charges, as well as reducing services[2].

The chart below shows only those suggestions that were mentioned at least ten times.

Suggestions for increasing income to support the budget: detailed analysis

Improve efficiency /reduce bureaucracy	11%
Fines for ASB	8%
Progressive taxation	5%
Congestion charge	5%
Encourage visitors/tourists	5%
Reduce managers' salaries/managers	4%
Enforce parking /cycling /driving restrictions with fines	4%
Tourist Tax	4%
Miscellaneous	22%

n=250

[2] Where this is the case responses are multi-coded.

The most common single issue mentioned was to improve efficiency, cut out waste and bureaucracy and streamline services. One respondent said:

"Look at the efficiency of how some departments are run. Get a business analyst in maybe - just do some common sense cost saving."
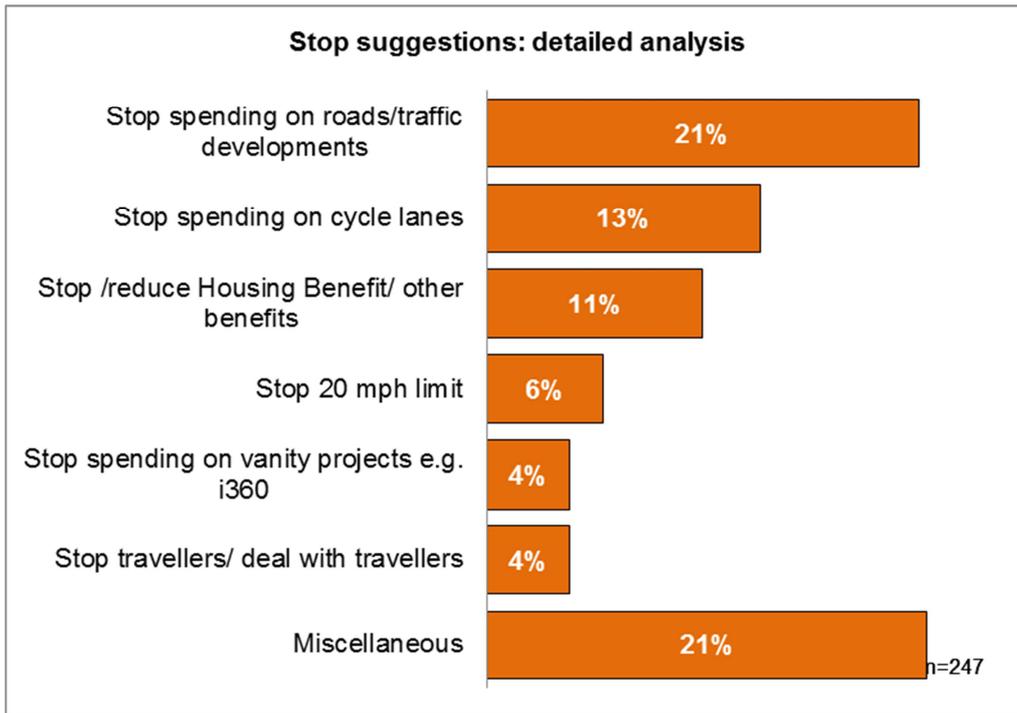
Fines for anti-social behaviour were another popular suggestion, regarded as a win-win for the city. Some respondents singled out different types of ASB they would charge for. For example, one respondent said:

"1) Large fines to cyclists riding on pavements and going through red lights. 2) Cars parked on pavements, extended corners etc. should be fined heavily. 3) Dog owners who blatantly ignore signs saying "dogs should be on leads" should be heavily fined. Not picking up after your dog also. I am a dog owner by the way. 4) Impose high fines on properties which leave rubbish outside for weeks. Empty/vacated properties should have the fine loaded onto the buy-to-let landlords."

Respondents were asked, in the financial context, what they would stop doing, or do less of. Again, the charts below show only those issues mentioned at least 10 times.
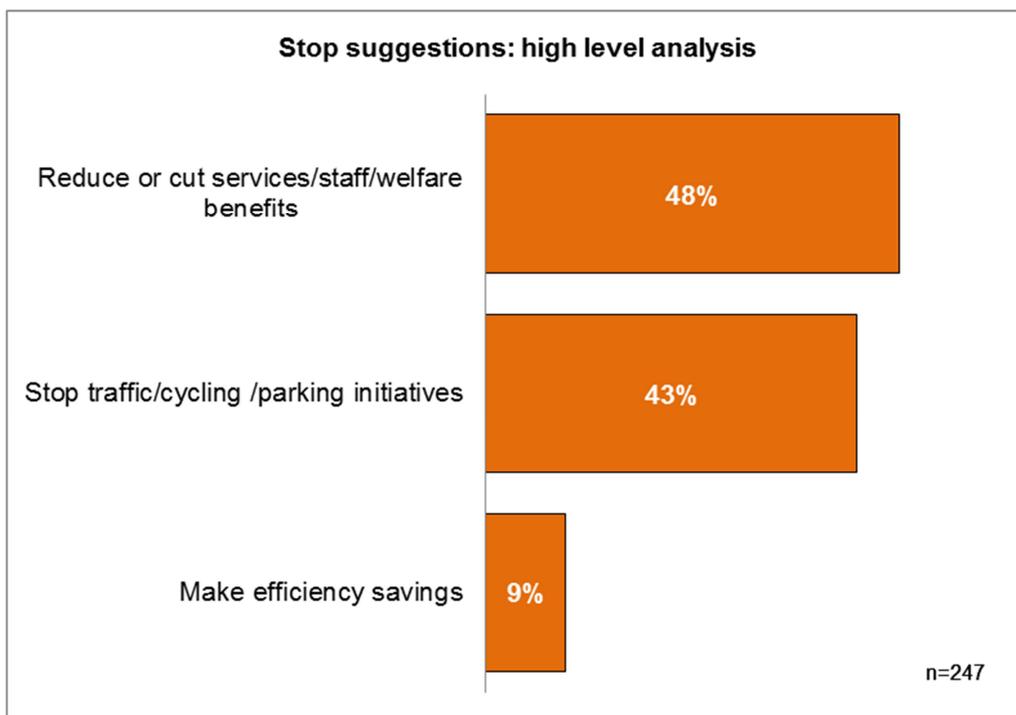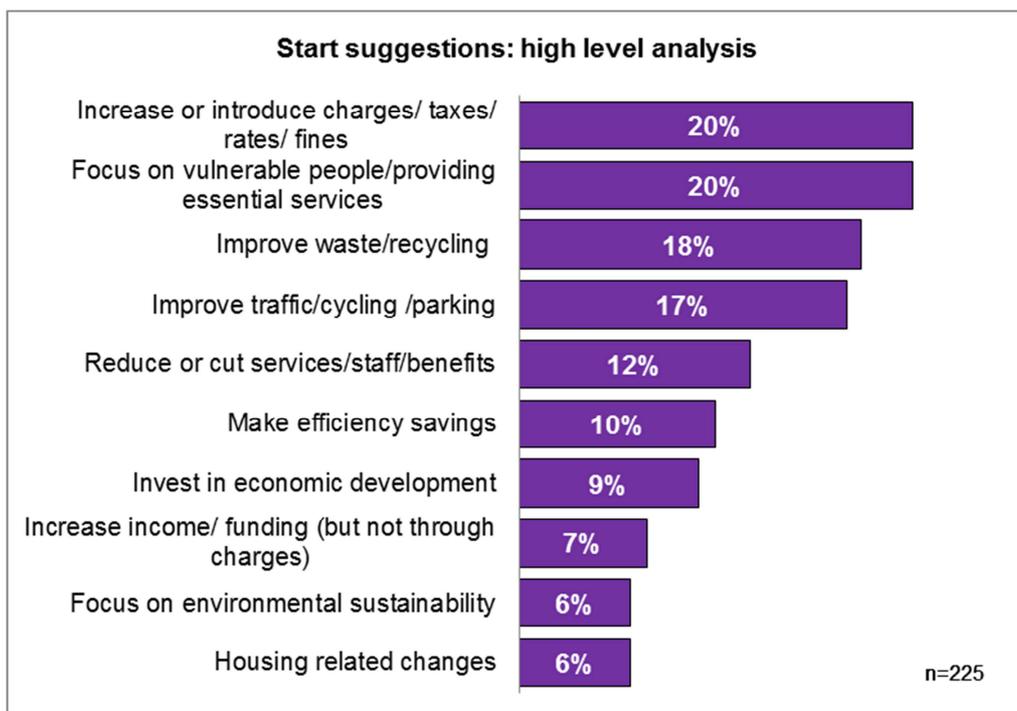

Probably due to the wording of the question, comments clustered around reducing or cutting services, staff and benefits. Stopping traffic, cycling and parking initiatives was a close second with 43% suggesting making fewer changes to transport infrastructure.

Stop suggestions: detailed analysis

Category	Percentage
Stop spending on roads/traffic developments	21%
Stop spending on cycle lanes	13%
Stop /reduce Housing Benefit/ other benefits	11%
Stop 20 mph limit	6%
Stop spending on vanity projects e.g. i360	4%
Stop travellers/ deal with travellers	4%
Miscellaneous	21%

n=247

Looking in more detail at what respondents felt could be stopped shows alterations to roads (including bus lanes) was the most frequently mentioned single issue, with 21% of responses referring to them. A further 13% referred specifically to spend on cycling lanes that they would stop to help close the budget gap.

Reducing benefits, particularly Housing Benefit, was mentioned by 11%, and, in some cases, sentiments around this suggestion were expressed strongly.

The next question asked respondents what they would start doing, or do more of.

Start suggestions: high level analysis

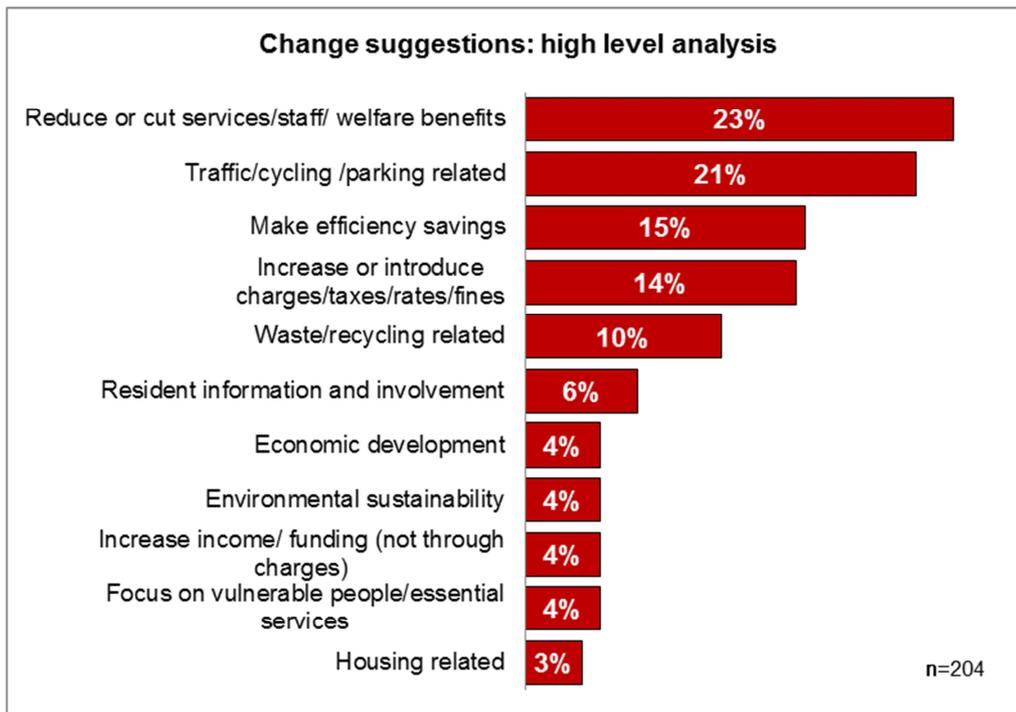| Category	Percentage
Increase or introduce charges/ taxes/ rates/ fines	20%
Focus on vulnerable people/providing essential services	20%
Improve waste/recycling	18%
Improve traffic/cycling /parking	17%
Reduce or cut services/staff/benefits	12%
Make efficiency savings	10%
Invest in economic development	9%
Increase income/ funding (but not through charges)	7%
Focus on environmental sustainability	6%
Housing related changes	6%

n=225

20% of respondents felt that introducing or increasing charges was something they would do to help close the budget gap, whilst the same proportion felt that the council should focus its efforts on delivering (only) essential services. Respondents had different views about what those essential services were but there tended to be agreement that the most vulnerable residents should be prioritised, with social care, and children's services, including education being frequently mentioned.

Improving the waste and recycling service was mentioned by 18% of respondents.
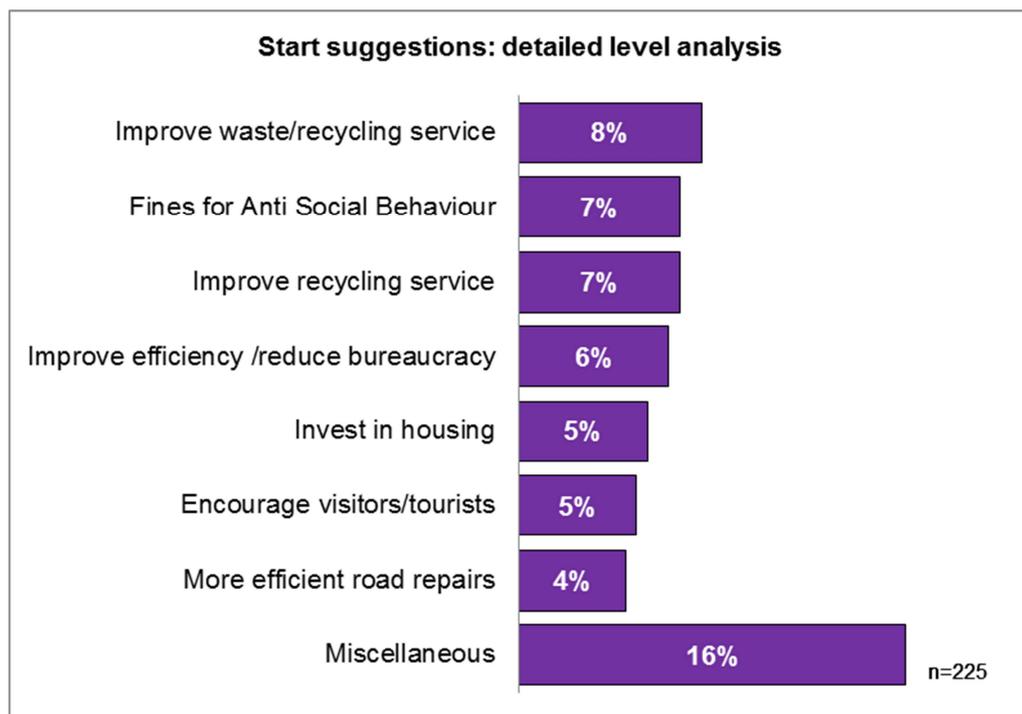
Looking in more detail at suggestions reveals that, whereas 8% of respondents referred to improving the waste/recycling service, a further 7% specifically singled out improvements to recycling services as something they would start to focus on.
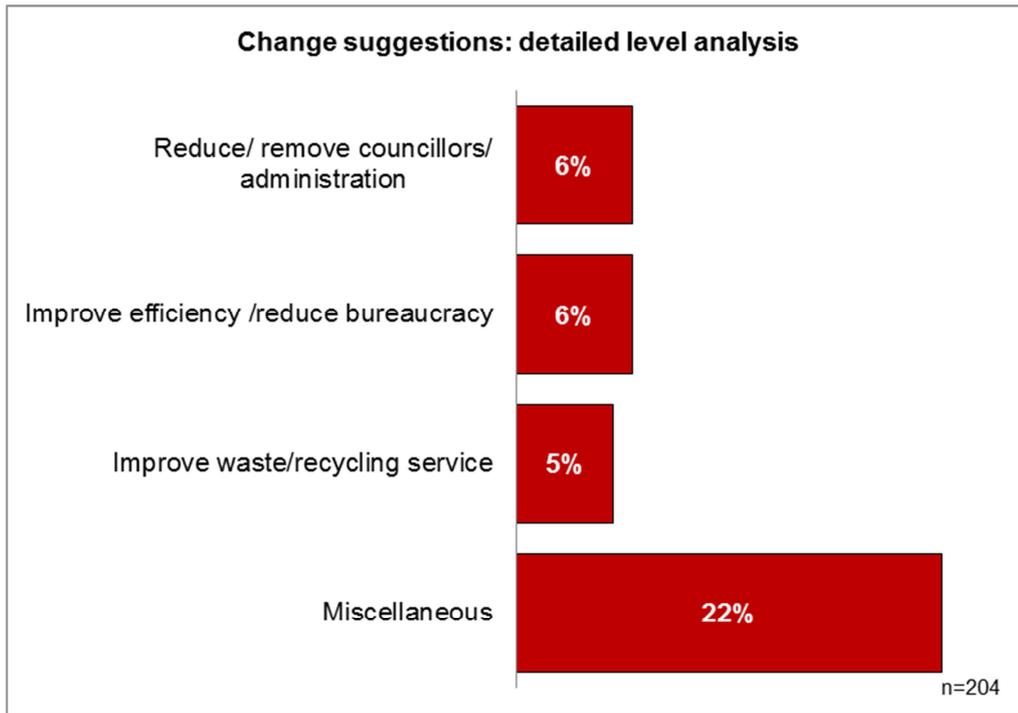
Finally, respondents were asked what they would change or do differently. Most respondents chose to recap on their previous answers here.

Change suggestions: high level analysis

Category	Percentage
Reduce or cut services/staff/ welfare benefits	23%
Traffic/cycling /parking related	21%
Make efficiency savings	15%
Increase or introduce charges/taxes/rates/fines	14%
Waste/recycling related	10%
Resident information and involvement	6%
Economic development	4%
Environmental sustainability	4%
Increase income/ funding (not through charges)	4%
Focus on vulnerable people/essential services	4%
Housing related	3%

n=204

Reducing or cutting services/staff/benefits was the top suggestion for change mentioned by 23%. 14% felt increasing or introducing charges should be part of the funding gap solution. This suggests that, on balance, respondents would favour cutbacks rather than paying more to maintain the status quo.[3]

Again, traffic, cycling and parking related changes were frequently mentioned.

---

[3] This finding appears to contradict respondents' earlier answers around suggestions to increase income, whereby increasing or introducing charges was favoured over cutbacks. However, this is probably due to the question wording; the former question asked about increasing income specifically, and cutbacks would not increase income, although they would effectively increase the amount of money available to divert to where it was needed.

Change suggestions: detailed level analysis

| Category	Percentage
Reduce/ remove councillors/ administration	6%
Improve efficiency /reduce bureaucracy	6%
Improve waste/recycling service	5%
Miscellaneous	22%

n=204

There was a particularly wide range of single issues mentioned in response to this question, and, as in previous charts, the chart above shows only those issues mentioned by at least ten respondents.

The most frequently mentioned single issue respondents would change, mentioned by 6%, was to remove or reduce councillors/the Council, followed by improving efficiency and improving waste and recycling services.

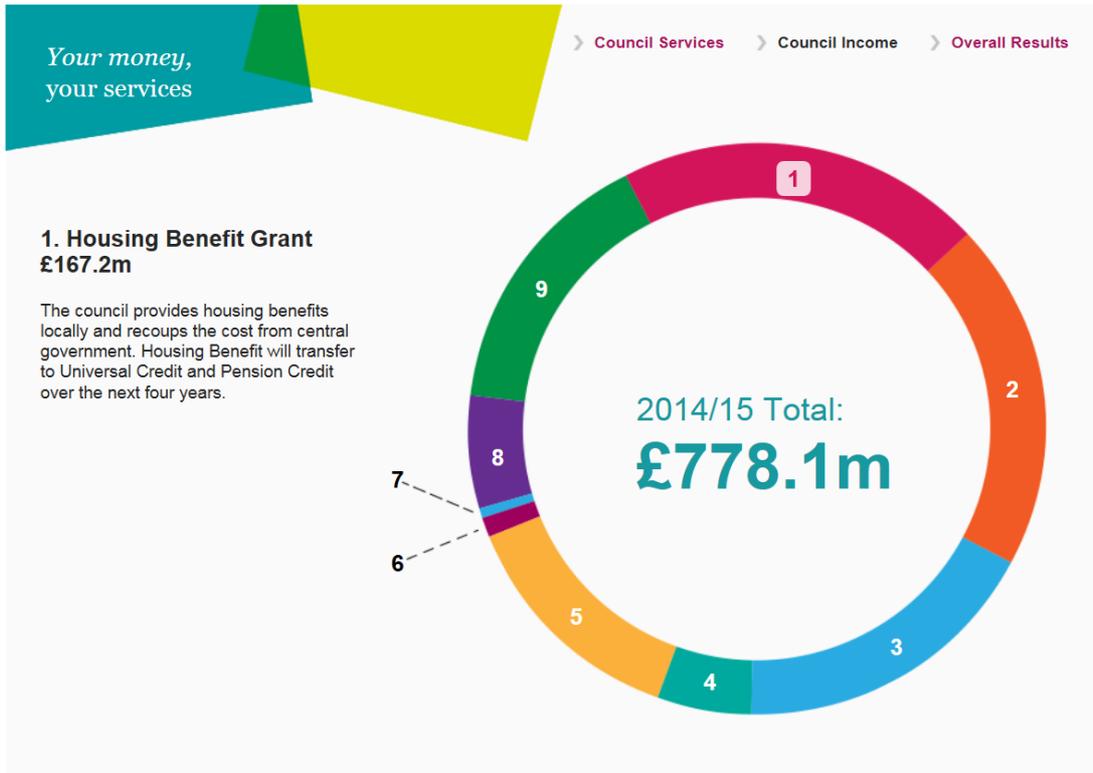Online budget literacy and prioritisation tool

By 5 November 2014 447 people had elected to use the interactive budget tool on the Council's website which shows how much money is spent on different service areas, as well as where it comes from. On the first screen, when a user clicks a particular service area, details of what each area includes appear, as well as the cost in 2014/15.

The screenshot below shows the tool when the user clicks on Adult Social Care.
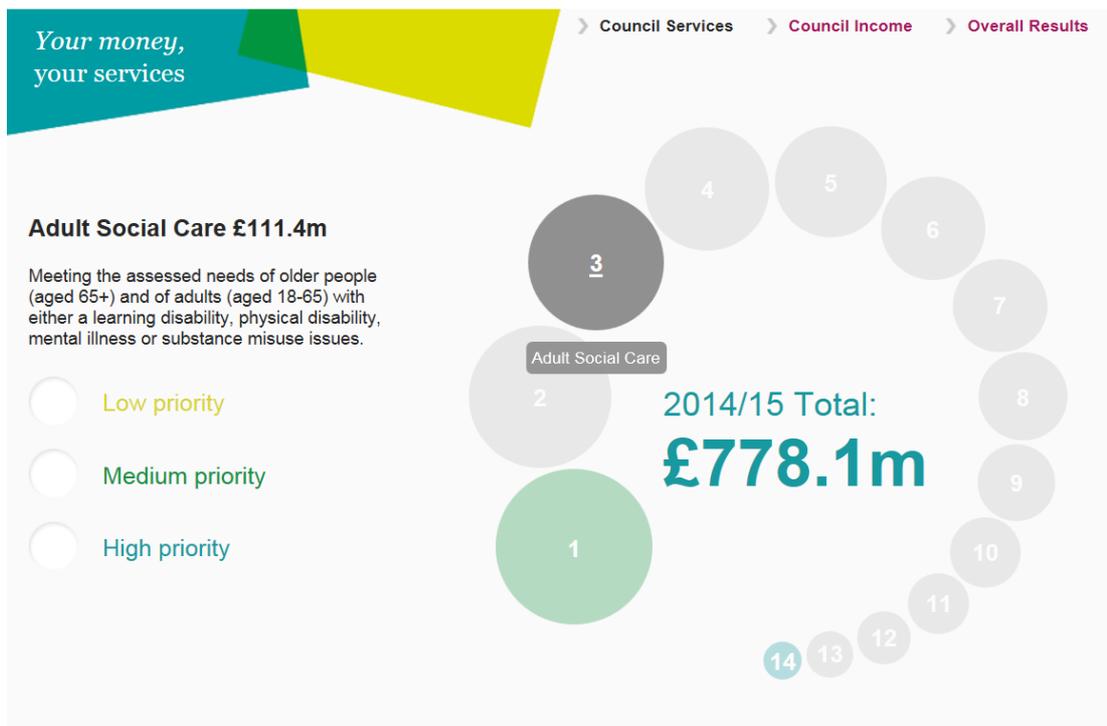
Users of the tool have the opportunity to rate the 14 different service areas with a priority rating of high, medium or low. Not all users choose to do this, and the tool is as much, if not more, about budget literacy as it is about gathering feedback. So, whilst 447 people have looked at the tool (these are individuals looking at the tool rather than the number of visits which is 717) a maximum of 227 have gone on to prioritise service areas. This sample is self-selecting and so should not be considered robust, but the results are indicative of users views.

On the second screen users can find out where council income comes from. In the screenshot below the user has clicked on the red section of the chart (labelled 1) relating to the Housing Benefit Grant.

Your money, your services

1. Housing Benefit Grant £167.2m

The council provides housing benefits locally and recoups the cost from central government. Housing Benefit will transfer to Universal Credit and Pension Credit over the next four years.
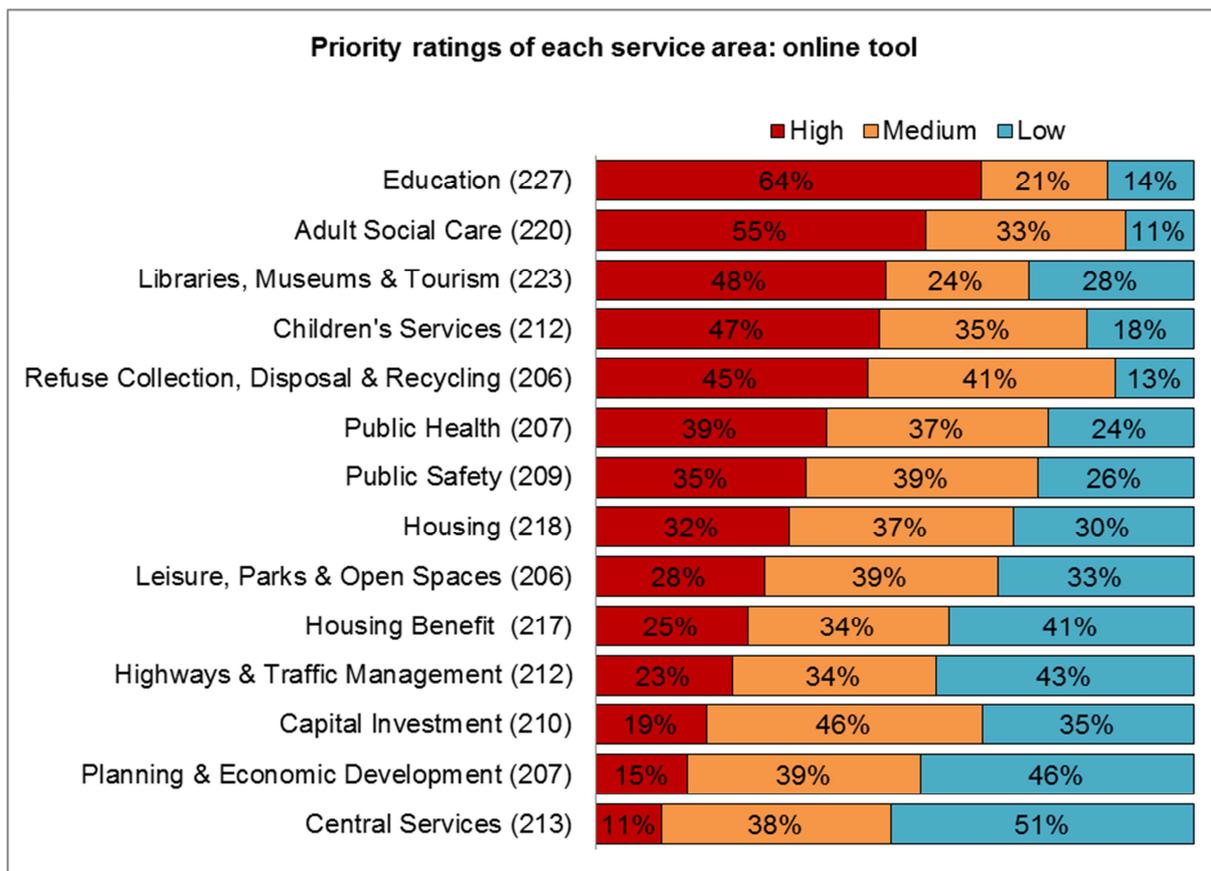
2014/15 Total:

£778.1m

On the final screen of the tool users can see the average results of how users of the tool have prioritised services.

Not all users who prioritised any services as high, medium or low prioritised all services; they missed out rating some. For example, 227 users have given Education a priority rating but only 206 have given Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces a rating.

The chart below shows the percentage of all users rating each service area as high, medium or low.

Note that there are two additional service areas in the tool to the ones asked about in the survey outlined above; "Capital Investment Programme" and "Housing Benefit". Also the term "Adult Social Care" is used on the tool where "Adult Services" is used on the survey and "Other children's services" is used on the tool where "Children's Social Care" is used on the survey. Council Tax Reduction Scheme is included in the survey and not the tool.

Priority ratings of each service area: online tool

Service Area	High	Medium	Low
Education (227)	64%	21%	14%
Adult Social Care (220)	55%	33%	11%
Libraries, Museums & Tourism (223)	48%	24%	28%
Children's Services (212)	47%	35%	18%
Refuse Collection, Disposal & Recycling (206)	45%	41%	13%
Public Health (207)	39%	37%	24%
Public Safety (209)	35%	39%	26%
Housing (218)	32%	37%	30%
Leisure, Parks & Open Spaces (206)	28%	39%	33%
Housing Benefit (217)	25%	34%	41%
Highways & Traffic Management (212)	23%	34%	43%
Capital Investment (210)	19%	46%	35%
Planning & Economic Development (207)	15%	39%	46%
Central Services (213)	11%	38%	51%

As for the survey, compared to last year's results, the proportions rating services as high priorities are lower, and proportions rating services as low priorities are higher. For example, last year, 3 service areas (Education, Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care) were rated a high priority by at least two thirds of tool users. This year no services have been rated a high priority by quite such a large proportion. Last year, the largest proportion rating any service as a low priority was 39%, (for Planning and Economic Development) whereas this year it's 51% for Central Services.

Higher priority areas

Top five (largest proportion rating high priority):

- Education (64% high)
- Adult Social Care (55% high)
- Libraries, Museums and Tourism (48% high)
- Children's Services (47% high)
- Refuse Collection, Disposal & Recycling (45% high)

- Education and Adult Social Care, as in previous years, were given high priority ratings; this year at least half of respondents (64% and 55% respectively) thought they were high priorities. Adult Social Care had the smallest proportion (11%) rating it a low priority.
- Libraries, Museums & Tourism was considered a high priority by 48%, making it the third highest rated service this year, whereas last year it was tenth out of fourteen. That said, 28% felt it was a low priority, indicating mixed views.

- Children's Services was rated high by 47%.
- Analysing results by adding the proportions rating services as high or medium priorities reveals that four services were rated as such by at least four fifths of respondents: Adult Social Care (89%), Refuse Collection, Disposal & Recycling (87%), Education (86%) and Children's Services (82%).

Lower priority areas

Bottom five (largest proportion rating low priority):

- Central Services (51% low)
- Planning and Economic Development (46% low)
- Highways and Traffic Management (43% low)
- Housing Benefit (41% low)
- Capital Investment (35% low)

- Over half (51%) of tool-users thought that Central Services was a low priority and just 11% thought it was a high priority.
- Planning and Economic Development received slightly higher ratings, but 46% also felt this was a low priority area, and just 15% felt it was a high priority.
- Highways and Traffic Management and Housing Benefit both had over 40% rating them low (43 and 41%) but also had around a quarter rating them high (23 and 25% respectively). Both service areas were rated a medium priority by 34%.
- Capital investment had a comparatively smaller proportion rating it a low priority (35%), but a comparatively high proportion rating it a medium priority (46%).

Areas with the widest spread of opinion

- Housing and Leisure, Parks & Open Spaces appear to divide opinion, with around a third in each case rating them high, medium and low priorities.

About the consultation approach

The budget consultation approach taken in 2013/14 was felt to efficiently deliver robust results, as well as enabling residents to have their say about the council's budget, should they wish to. The approach was therefore mirrored this year, with some improvements to consultation questions.

Specifically:

- a postal survey was issued to a random sample of 3,000 households in early October, with an aim of obtaining a statistically robust sample;
- the same survey questions were made available online via the Consultation Portal from 26 September 2014, and the link to this survey was widely promoted via social media, and in targeted emails to strategic partners, the community and voluntary sector, the business sector and other stakeholders;
- the same survey was made available in hard copy in libraries and public buildings and to targeted groups such as residents of sheltered housing; and
- an online budget literacy and prioritisation tool has been hosted on the Brighton & Hove City Council website budget pages since 26 September 2014.

About this report

This report draws only on the results to the survey issued to a representative sample of households received by 7 November and on the prioritisations made by users of the online budget tool by 5 November.

Analysis of the self-selecting samples' responses to the online and paper based survey and further responses from the random sample, received after 7 November, will be included in an update report in January 2015, ahead of detailed budget discussions.

There is a range of other consultation and engagement activity taking place with stakeholders, staff and representative groups that also have relevance to budget deliberations.

Note about interpreting results

The results to the random sample survey should be considered the most robust as these are from a random sample of households in the city. As there were 427 responses we can be sure that they are representative to within +/- 5% of the views of all households.

Methods and response rates

Paper and online survey: representative sample
A paper based survey was issued to a stratified random sample of 3,000 households across the city in the first week of October 2014. The cover letter accompanying the survey explained that households could also complete the survey online. The sample was stratified to ensure that all areas of the city were targeted.

A reminder letter and another survey were issued to those households that had not responded three weeks later.

A closing date of 31October 2014 was set, although surveys received up to 7 November are included in the analysis.

In total 427 survey responses were received via this method by 7 November, representing a response rate of 14.4% (once void addresses are removed from the base). Despite using the same methodology as last year, the response rate was lower than anticipated (25%). However, the sample is statistically robust at the city level at a confidence interval of between 4% and 5%, depending on how many people responded to each question. This means that we can be sure that the results are accurate to within +/- 5%. For example, if a result from this sample of households is 45% we know that the actual result, were we to survey all households in the city, would be within the range 40% to 50%.

<u>Online budget literacy and prioritisation tool</u>
The budget pages of the Brighton & Hove City Council website include a link to an interactive budget tool. This enables users to see how much money is spent on different service areas, where the money comes from and, if they wish, to indicate what priority they would give the service areas if they were setting the budget.

The tool is still available at the time of writing but data was downloaded for analysis on 5 November 2014. Responses received up to 21 January 2015 will be analysed in the update of this report.

In total 447 people had used the tool and a maximum of 227 people went on to prioritise service areas, a much larger number than last year when just 83 people prioritised services over a five month analysis period.