

Appendix 7 – Budget Consultation Report

Introduction

The purpose of the 2023/24 Budget consultation was to provide an opportunity for residents, businesses, community groups, and those working in the borough, to submit their feedback on the Council's draft Budget and thereby help inform discussions when it was debated at Full Council on Tuesday 21 February 2023.

The draft budget was agreed by Cabinet on 22 November 2022 and the budget consultation was launched via the council's online community engagement platform ("Engagement HQ") on Tuesday 13 December 2022, closing at midnight on Tuesday 24 January 2023.

The 2023/24 budget consultation was widely publicised through a variety of communication channels, including via social media (Facebook and Twitter), over 100 stakeholder e-shots to community groups, parishes, councillors, MPs, and business groups, and also internal communications to staff. Once the budget consultation was launched, key information about the funding and spending proposals were communicated via social media. As of Wednesday 25 January, the social media posts have attracted 24,147 impressions on Facebook and 14,078 impressions on Twitter.

In response to feedback received last year, the 2023/24 consultation was made more accessible and user-friendly. A new budget consultation guide was produced to provide respondents with a summary of the budget proposals, including a breakdown of council funding and spending (and comparisons with 2021/22), an explanation of the importance of council tax to the services provided to the Royal Borough, and short descriptions of directorate responsibilities and their budget proposals.

Overall, the supporting documents were downloaded by a large number of visitors to RBWM Together (1,220 times), with the budget guide receiving the most views and downloads (350 downloads and 280 additional views).

Paper copies of the budget materials and the survey questions themselves were available upon request at all borough libraries, although the council did not receive any written responses this way. Nevertheless, this facility provided accessibility to those respondents who could not access the consultation online.

In addition to the responses submitted via RBWM Together, the council also received a letter from the Youth Council, a letter from the Governors at Furze Platt Senior School, and a letter from Cookham Parish Council. Presentations were also made to business groups, the Learning Disability Partnership Board, the Older Person's Working Group, the Place committee, and the Overview and Scrutiny committee (Appendix 7 Annex A) in order to receive verbal feedback on the budget. These responses are included within the findings summarised below (although the statistics are based on the online responses).

The timing of the six-week consultation was impacted by the financial uncertainty surrounding the delayed Autumn statement and this meant that this year's budget consultation ran for a slightly shorter period than the 2021-22 budget consultation.

The survey itself was more wide-ranging than in previous years and was designed to give more specific and insightful feedback to each directorate. Respondents were asked a variety of quantitative and qualitative questions that covered their use of different directorate services, their initial response to the proposals, their concerns, and the potential impact of the proposals. In addition, respondents were also asked about proposed parking fees, their overall suggestions for the budget, and some questions about preventative services and their impact. Respondents were able to skip questions if they wanted to and this allowed flexibility for respondents to address the services and proposals that they were most concerned about.

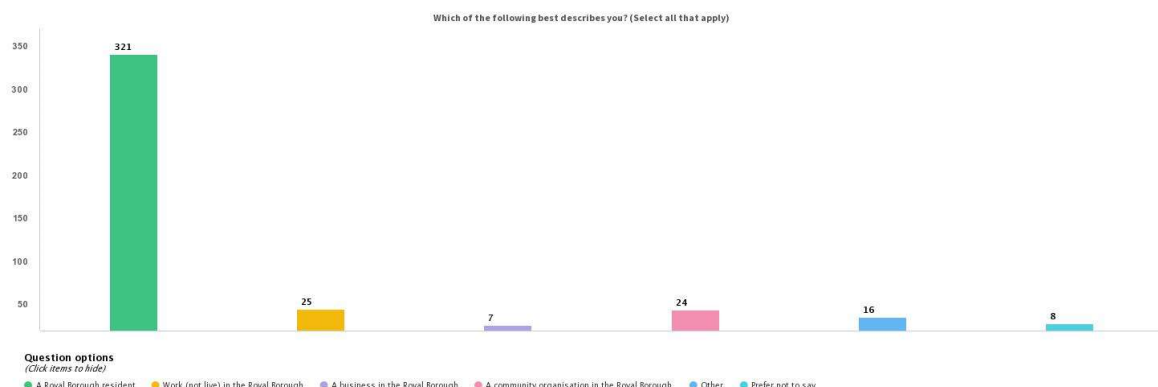
The following document provides a summary of the results from the budget consultation, dated as of Wednesday 25 January. It summarises the key feedback points and includes some example responses to give a sense of common concerns and comments. The council’s response to the feedback is included under each section.

Respondent Demographics

368 individual responses were received on Engagement HQ throughout the consultation period. No paper responses were received via the drop boxes at Windsor and Maidenhead libraries and the post at Maidenhead Town Hall. Cumulatively, respondents answered a total of 6,833 questions, with respondents most likely to respond to the following questions: ‘Q11: To what extent do you agree with the budget proposals for Place’ (356); ‘Q10: Have you used any services provided by Place in the past year?’ (355); ‘Q1: Have you used Adult Services in the past year?’ (354).

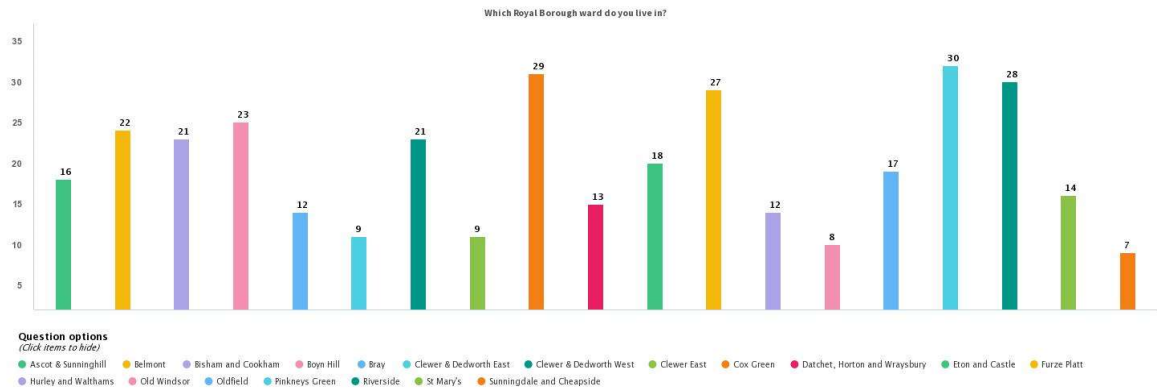
Due to the timing of the consultation in relation to Christmas and New Year’s, there was an expected drop off in responses in late December, but there was renewed interest in early January when the budget consultation was publicised via a reminder campaign.

Of those responding through the online consultation platform, RBWM Together, the majority of respondents identified themselves as a resident of the Royal Borough (321 respondents or 88.2%); 24 (or 6.6%) responded on behalf a community group; 25 (or 6.9%) identified as working but not living in the Royal Borough; 15 (or 4.4%) identified as Other; 8 (or 2.2%) preferred not to say; and 7 (or 1.9%) responded on behalf of a business.



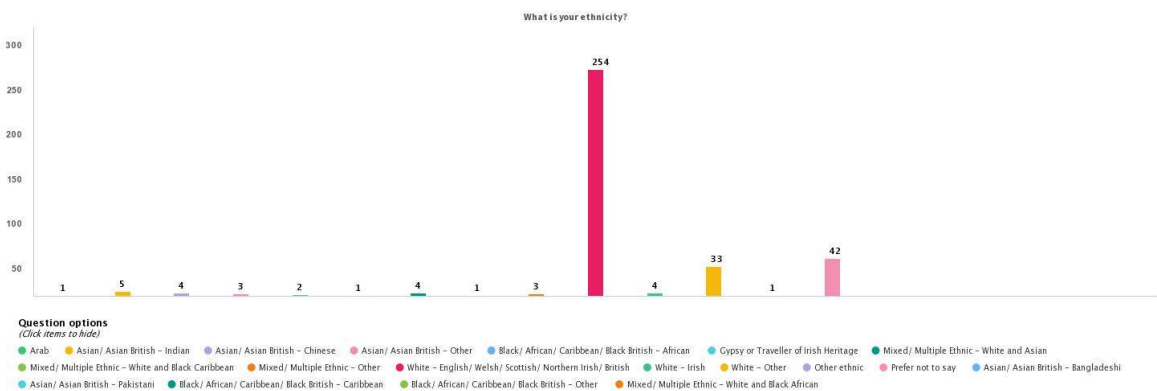
The budget consultation was completed by respondents from across the borough with responses received from all wards. The top three wards that completed the survey were: Pinkneys Green (30 respondents or 8.9%); Cox Green (29 respondents or 8.6%); Riverside (28 respondents or 8.3%). The wards with the lowest number of respondents were:

Sunningdale and Cheapside (7 respondents or 2.1%) and Old Windsor (8 respondents or 2.4%).

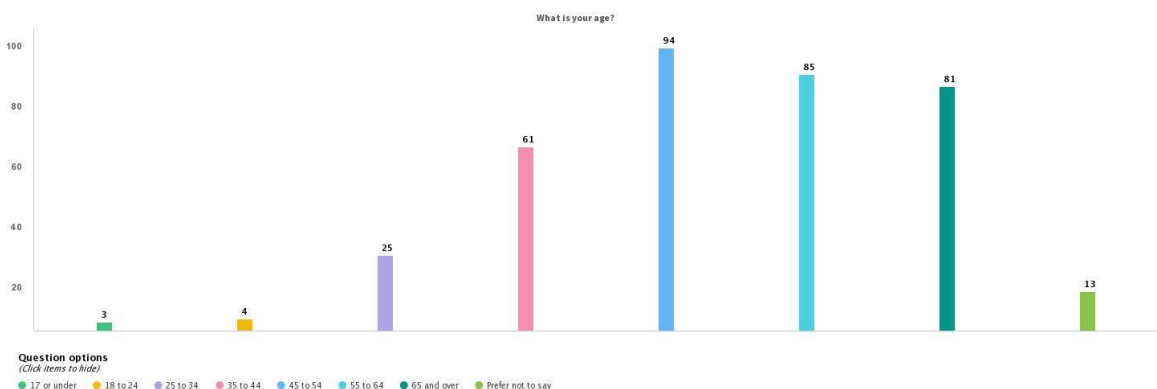


358 individuals responded to the question about ethnicity, with respondents identifying as the following:

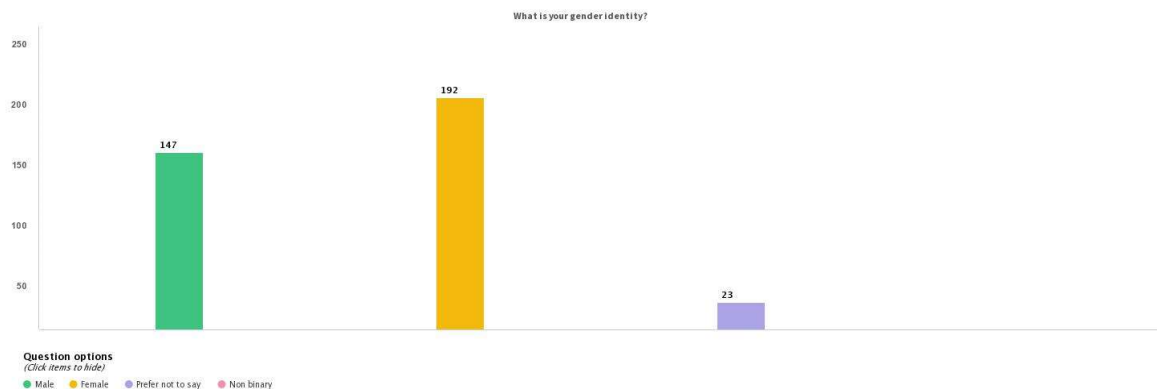
- White (English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British/Irish/Other): 291 (81.2%)
- Prefer not to say: 42 (11.7%)
- Asian/Black/Gypsy/Traveller/Arab/Other: 25 (7%)



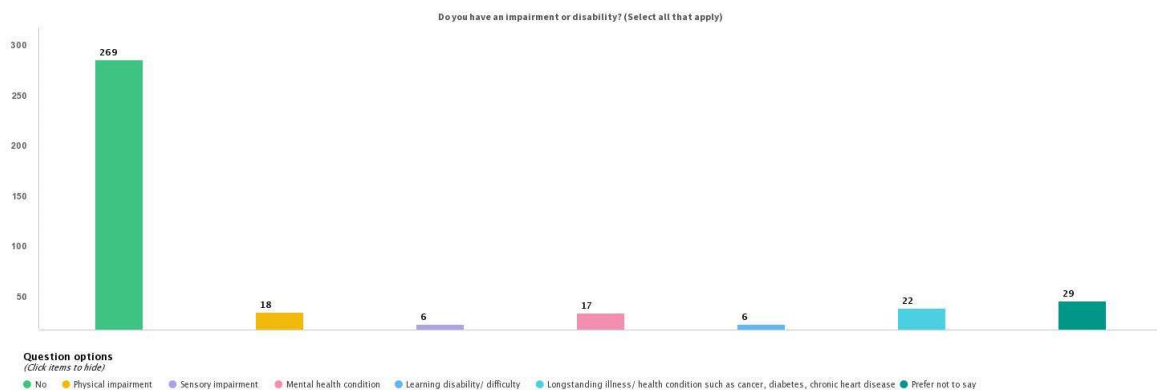
There was a mixture of responses across different age groups, with 366 individuals choosing to answer the question about age. Those aged 45-54 most likely to complete the survey (94 respondents or 25.7%) and those aged 17 or under least likely to respond (3 respondents or 0.8%). However, the Youth Council separately submitted a letter offering their response to the budget consultation.



362 respondents answered the question about gender identity. 192 (53%) identified as female, 147 (40.6%) identified as male, zero identified as non-binary, and 23 (6.4%) preferred not to say.

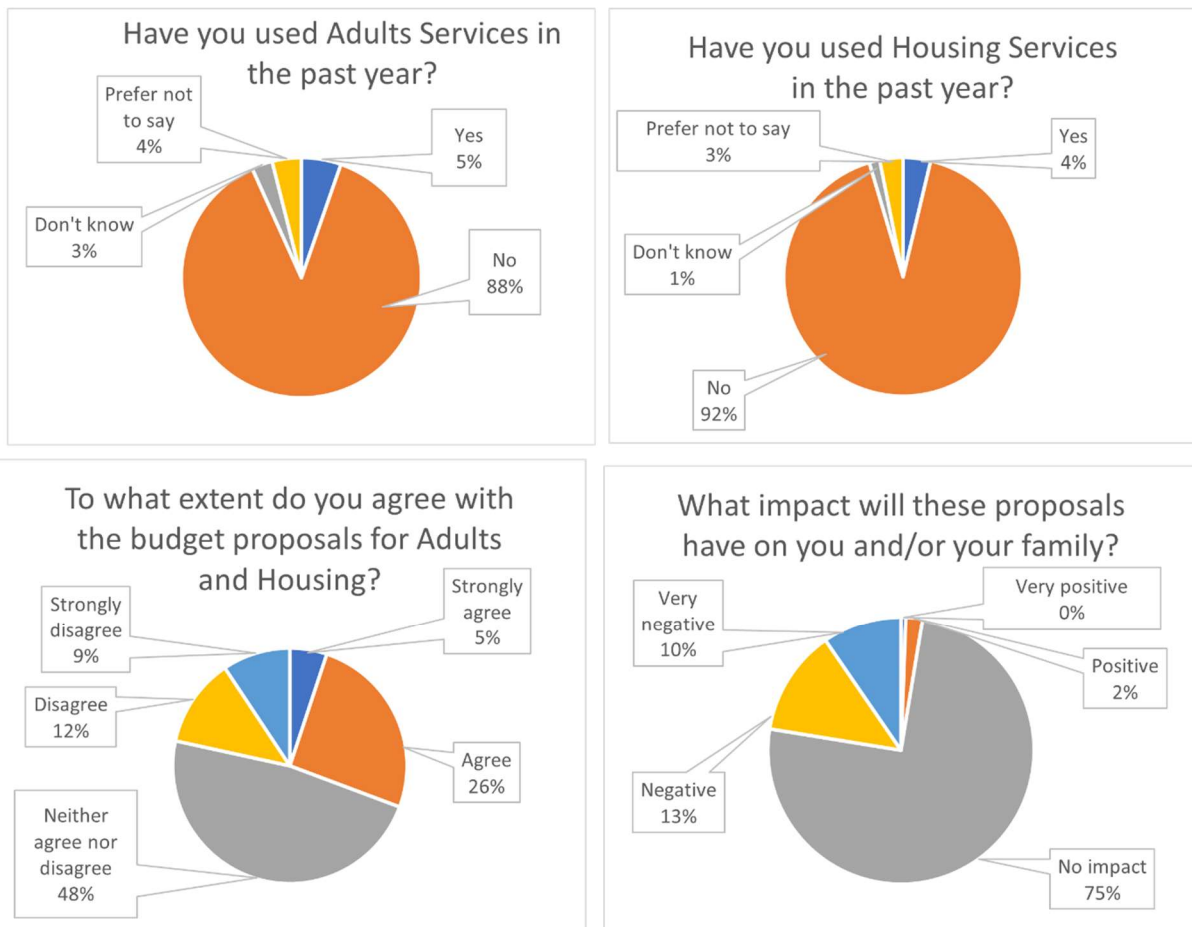


353 respondents answered the question about disabilities and impairments. Overall, 269 (76.2%) declared they had no disability or impairment and 29 (8.2%) preferred not to say. However, 69 (19.5%) identified as having a longstanding illness or health condition, a physical impairment, a sensory impairment, or a learning disability/difficulty. The council also separately briefed the Learning Disability Partnership Board to listen to their responses to the budget consultation and we would like to develop this engagement next year.



Adults & Housing

The overall response to the budget proposals for this directorate were mixed, with 108 respondents (30.7%) agreeing or strongly agreeing with the proposals, 168 respondents (47.7%) neither agreeing nor disagreeing, and 76 (21.6%) respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the proposals. The majority of respondents (257 or 74.9%) stated that the proposals would have 'no impact' on them and/or their family, but 77 (or 22.4%) of respondents noted that they and/or their family would feel a negative or very negative impact. By contrast, only 9 respondents (or 2.6%) stating that the proposals would have a positive or very positive impact on them and/or their family. However, only 19 (5.3%) of respondents who answered questions in this section explicitly stated they had used Adults Services in the past year and only 13 (3.7%) explicitly stated that they had used Housing Services in the past year.



The key concerns arising from the budget proposals for Adults & Housing were:

1. **Funding:** There were concerns about the level of funding for services, especially the impact of below inflation investment in Adult Social Care. Concerns were also raised about potential impacts on the health service of savings within Adult Social Care.

"A real term reduction in funding is unlikely to allow you to achieve your aims"

"I agree with care being brought into the community. BUT on condition that the services and funding are there to support it."

“£0.7M is insufficient to address the numbers of residents who on account of the Cost of Living crisis and current economic climate, are being turfed out of their rented homes or whose homes are being repossessed as they can't repay mortgages. There is and has been for a while, no sign of decent affordable housing for key workers in particular. Homelessness is on the rise and deaths from homelessness, mental health issues is, I understand, also on the rise.”

“Cutting costs to Care Home Quality Improvements, Information & Advice and Carer Services will put vulnerable and disadvantaged residents in a far worse situation. The £2m of cuts by restricting access to care and "right-sizing" could create safeguarding issues, carer breakdown and blight the lives of our most vulnerable”

“Put People first not the council resources”

“We are concerned that Council intends to implement these real term cuts by reducing already stretched early intervention services for these groups [Adults and Housing and Children’s Services], which will have immediate, long-lasting, and costly effects on the most vulnerable members of Cookham’s community.” – (letter from Cookham Parish Council)

2. **Environmental Health and Trading Standards:** The potential impact of reduction of staffing in Environmental Health and Trading Standards was raised, as was the risk this poses to public health and safety (especially with high-profile events such as the Coronation due to take place this year).

“An effective team of EHOs is highly essential [not a luxury option]. Without it the reputation of the Borough is at risk”

“Failure to meet our statutory functions may result in intervention from Central Government agencies such as The Food Standards Agency, The Health and Safety Executive, The Drinking Water Inspectorate and is likely to have an adverse effect on the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors as well as the reputation of The Royal Borough as has happened with other nearby local authorities.”

“The threat to cut environmental health and trading standards posts at time of economic depression and increased public health risk appears counter-intuitive.”

“We have no extra capacity right now to take on any other tragedy, high profile work or to cover the back log of inspections. We cannot afford to lose any staff member. The proposals are putting the borough at risk. We are a statutory function.”

3. **Housing:** Concerns were raised about perceived increases in the level of homelessness and more broadly around shortages of affordable housing in the borough. These included calls for more social housing. The tension between the needs of local residents and the needs of vulnerable residents and asylum seekers was also seen in a range of comments from differing perspectives.

“We need a housing strategy that recognises the need for and importance of social housing and affordable housing.”

“More money needs to be set aside for Social & Community Housing as it has become almost impossible for local Windsor people to afford even the most basic housing in their home town.”

“No more housing the town is full and we don't have the infrastructure to take in any more recent arrivals”

“Do not spend Council Taxpayers money on "unaccompanied children" or offspring of asylum shoppers living in local hotels”

The council's response:

Adult Social Care

In light of additional funding announced by central government since the start of the consultation, the council has reviewed its budget proposals and allocated a further £0.5m to fund Adult Social Care. This has enabled the council to reduce savings in the following ways:

- £20k to remove the proposal to charge for meals on wheels (AHH22S)
- £330k towards reducing the saving on reviewing policies to access care (AHH19S)
- £150k towards reducing the saving on Optalis establishment (AHH30S)

Housing

The council recognises respondent's concerns about the challenges in finding affordable housing in the borough. In response, an additional £39k has been allocated to fund a private landlord housing liaison officer. This will support residents access quality private sector accommodation options.

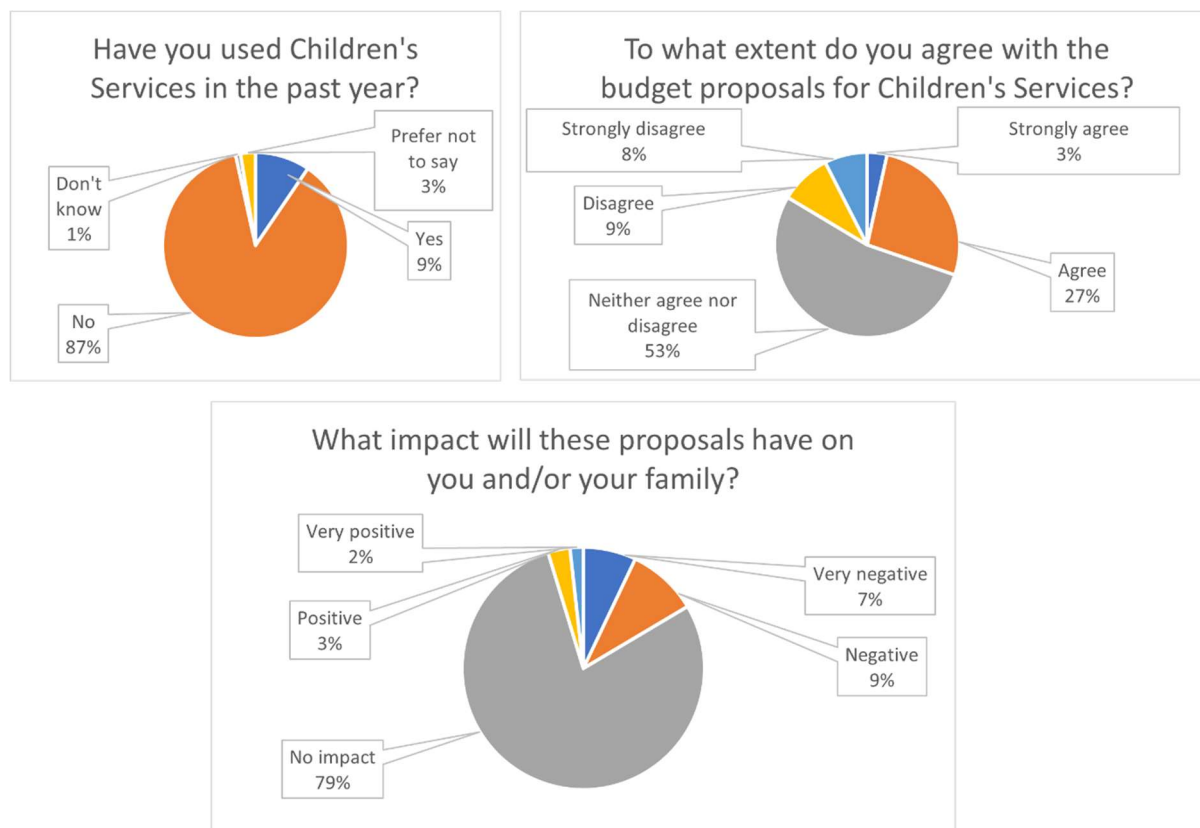
Environmental Health/Trading Standards

Where changes to staffing levels are included in proposals, efforts have been made to minimise the impact on frontline roles and to combine skills across areas, such as the housing, licencing, environmental health and trading standards teams, to maximise the service offer.

Children's Services

The overall response to the budget proposals for this directorate were mixed, with 105 respondents (30.3%) agreeing or strongly agreeing with the proposals, 185 respondents (53.3%) neither agreeing nor disagreeing, and 57 (16.4%) respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the proposals. The majority of respondents (269 or 79.4%) stated that the proposals would have 'no impact' on them and/or their family, but 51 (or 15.1%) of respondents noted that they and/or their family would feel a negative or very negative impact. By contrast, only 19 respondents (or 5.6%) stating that the proposals would have a

positive or very positive impact on them and/or their family. However, only 33 (9.5%) of respondents who answered questions in this section explicitly stated they had used Children's Services in the past year.



The key concerns arising from the budget proposals for Children's Services were:

1. **Funding:** There were a number of concerns about the level of funding, especially the impact of below inflation investment upon the level of support provided by Children's Services.

"I would happily see more money diverted to this area. It can prevent the need for adult services in the future"

"Cutting children's services [...] feels a short-sighted way of saving money"

"The proposed budget increase in children's services is well below the rate of inflation and will be partly enabled by reprioritising services to those children in even more extreme need that at present."

"I think your budget needs to increase"

"Keep as many of the Family Hub services as possible, reducing these would be detrimental to the children and young people in our council"

"losing the early help support runs a high risk of much higher costs as families escalate to statutory intervention due to lack of early intervention"

"how will the removal of early support help to strengthen the council's focus on

prevention and early intervention? [...] We think this is an extremely dangerous approach when supporting vulnerable young people and their families.” – (letter from RBWM Youth Council)

2. **Vulnerable Children:** Several respondents raised concerns about the need for more support for vulnerable children, especially SEND children and those with mental health issues.

“The budget needs to be higher. There are long waiting lists for children in [the] borough to access services and families are at breaking point. More staff in CYPDS, more in IAS, more SEN school places etc.”

“£0.45 million sounds like a lot but not enough when you consider the lack of services for children with SEN.”

“I am concerned that advocates should continue to be readily available to Children in Care. They need that voice”

“We are concerned that Council may intend to implement this proposed significant real term cut in the budget for its Children’s Services by reducing already stretched early intervention services for our most vulnerable students. This will have immediate, serious, and long-lasting effects on both our most vulnerable students, many of whom are already struggling, and our wider school community.” – (letter from the Governors of Furze Platt Senior School)

3. **Additional budget Information:** Several respondents highlighted their desire for more specific information about the proposals under consideration and clearer language (particularly in relation to the directorate paragraph in the Budget Guide).

“There is not enough detail in the budget guide to enable residents to comments on this. For example, how does RBWM propose to support children by reducing the risk of family breakdowns?”

The council’s response:

Children’s Services

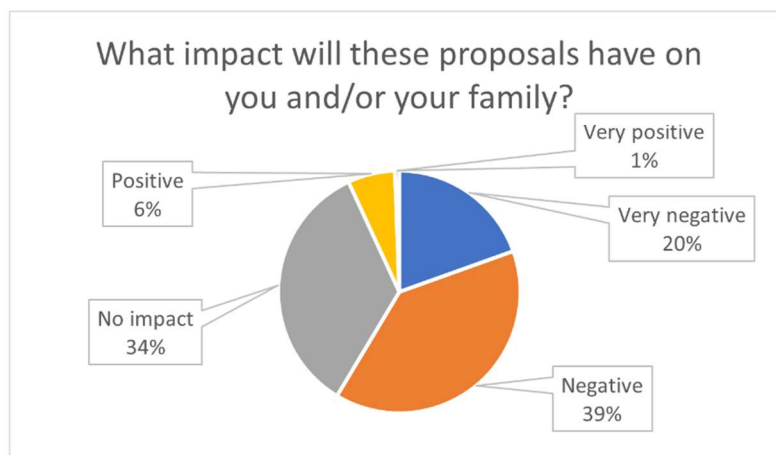
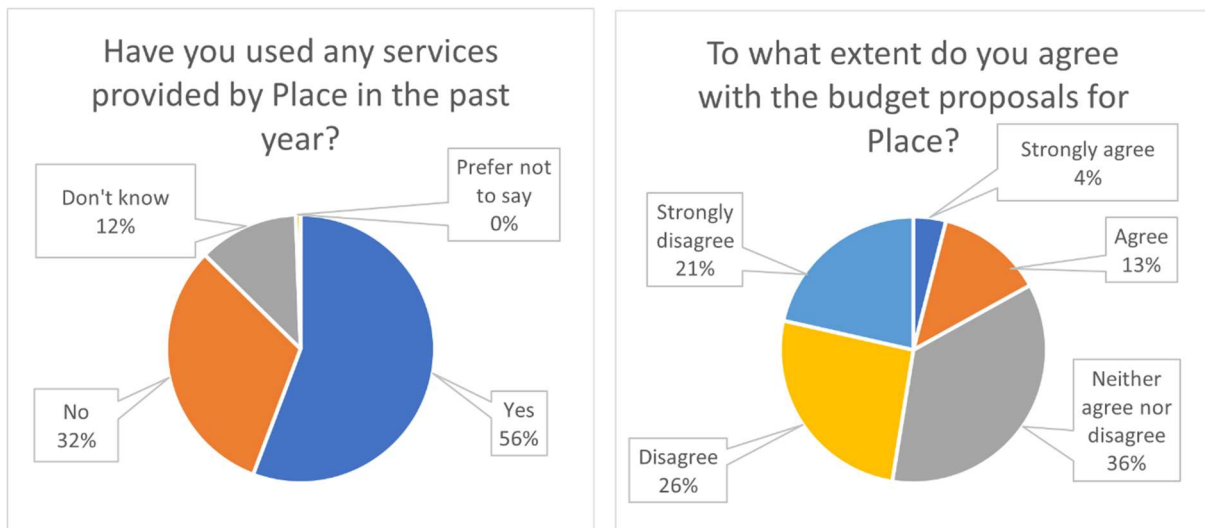
In light of additional funding announced by central government since the start of the consultation, the council has reviewed its budget proposals and allocated a further £0.5m to fund Children’s Services, plus identified an additional grant of £100k. This has enabled the council to reduce savings in the following ways:

- £160k for staff retention
- Reduce savings for Family Hubs by £400k

- Remove the saving in the Youth offending team
- Remove the £170k saving on business support (CHI19S)

Place

The overall response to the budget proposals for this directorate were negative/mixed, with only 55 (15.4%) agreeing or strongly agreeing with the proposals, 119 respondents (33.2%) neither agreeing nor disagreeing, and 184 (51.4%) respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the proposals. The majority of respondents (217 or 62.5%) stated that the proposals would have a negative or strongly negative impact, whilst 107 (30.8%) felt there would be 'no impact' on them and/or their family. Only 23 (or 6.7%) of respondents noted that they and/or their family would feel a positive or very positive impact from these proposals. 216 (60.5%) of 357 respondents who answered questions in this section explicitly stated they had used these services provided by Place in the past year, although, in fact, almost all respondents will have used a range of services provided by the Place directorate, including waste collection, parks, highways etc.



The key concerns arising from the budget proposals for Place were:

1. **Parking:** the most highlighted issue was the proposed changes to Sunday parking charges, especially at Hines Meadow carpark. There was strong feeling from the responses that these parking charges would negatively impact the ability of residents to attend church and thus receive the spiritual and pastoral care they felt they received there. There were also repeated concerns throughout the consultation about the potentially negative economic and social effect that parking increases could have in discouraging residents and visitors from using retail, leisure, pastoral services in the borough. There were also a number of concerns about Ringo and respondents' inability to successfully use the app when parking.

"Many residents use Hines Meadow Car Park on Sundays to attend church services, an important part of community life in our town. Charging for parking on Sundays will harm residents' access to these essential services in the local community."

"Parking fees increase will only deter visitors who generate income and [will] prevent businesses from choosing Windsor."

"Stop charging for every single car park in the royal borough! They should either be free on Sundays or cheaper to park. They are all so expensive! That would massively encourage people to use more facilities, such as parks, green spaces, leisure centres and shopping. It would have a positive impact on the economy as more people would go to these places and use the facilities and it would have a much better impact on people's well-being!"

"it's ridiculous that the only discount is held via a third party app that has poor service."

2. **Climate Partnership:** There were a large number of responses that raised concerns about the funding of the Climate Partnership had apparently been changed.

"The revenue budget set for the Climate Partnership should be retained at, at least, £250,000 and not rely on CIL payments. CIL payments should be reserved for counteracting damage incurred through development. [...] this is not the time to reduce the overall budget made available to deliver upon the commitments set out in the Council's own Environment and Climate Strategy and the Corporate Plan's priority to tackle climate change and its consequences."

3. **Environment:** There were also a strong variety of responses that highlighted concerns about the environment, the importance of green spaces in the borough, and the impact of development.

“I think the council needs to focus money on sustainability and environmental issues as [a] priority in budgets and action.”

“All budget items should be reviewed to determine their environmental and climate impact, similar to the Equality Impact Assessments, so that informed decisions can be taken.”

4. **Neighbourhoods:** There were a smaller number of concerns about the state of roads, the state of shared public spaces, and the need for additional police/community wardens. One respondent suggested that fundraising and/or community events (such as litter picking with complimentary hot drinks) could be organised to help improve shared spaces.

“WE NEED the police to be visible and active”

“The roads in this area CANNOT accommodate the huge increase in traffic arising from the excessive housing developments being squashed into this area. There are NO greenspaces or parks in this area and it is urgently needed.”

The council’s response:

Parking

In response to widespread concerns about the proposed parking increases in the Royal Borough, the council can confirm that free Sunday parking will be retained in Maidenhead. An additional £124k has also been made available to expand 1-hour free parking for residents at Victoria Street (Windsor) and Hines Meadow (Maidenhead).

Environment

Public concerns about the environment and the impact of air quality in the borough have been addressed through an additional £94k has been allocated for air quality monitoring.

Climate Partnership

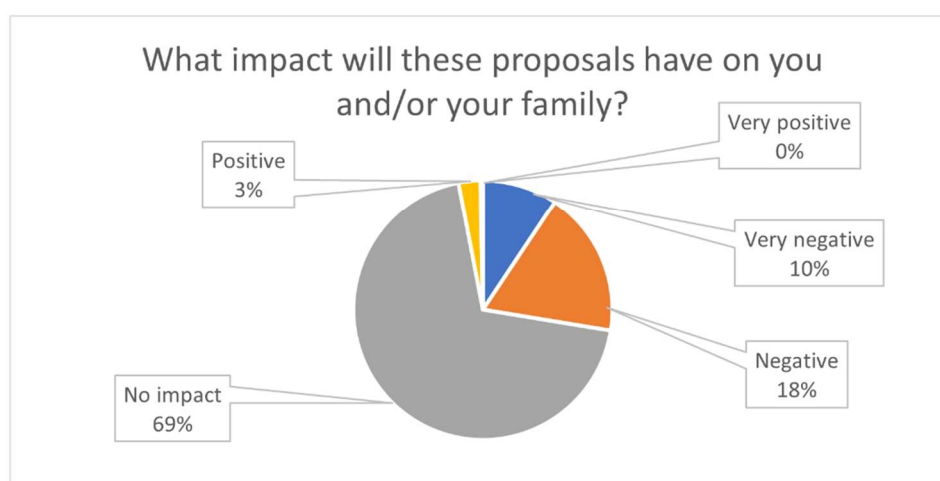
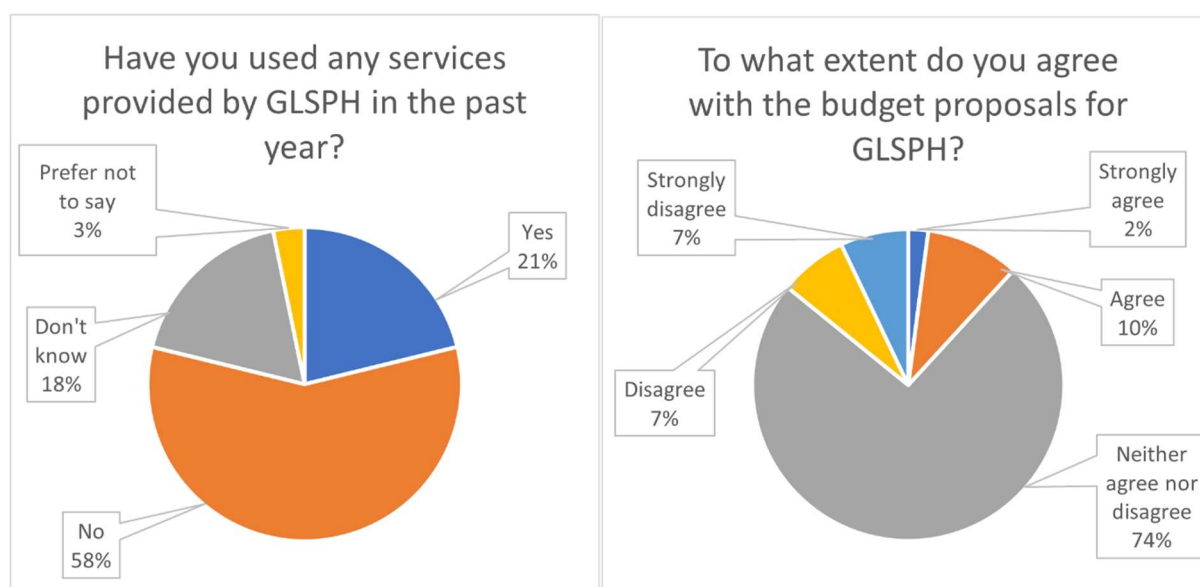
The council can confirm that the amount of money being provided to the Climate Partnership will remain the same as previously agreed. Part of the funding will be provided through S106 funding which is earmarked for the purpose of carbon offsetting projects and is therefore an appropriate source of funding. The funding will not be from CIL funds, as suggested in a number of consultation responses.

Neighbourhoods

The council can confirm that additional investment will be made to ensure the Royal Borough remains a safe, well-maintained community. This includes funding four additional neighbourhood police officers, providing £200k of additional funding for street cleansing, and £150k for a ‘face-lift’ for town centres.

Governance, Law, Strategy & Public Health (GLSPH)

The overall response to the budget proposals for this directorate were largely ambivalent, with only 40 (11.8%) agreeing or strongly agreeing with the proposals, 251 respondents (74%) neither agreeing nor disagreeing, and 48 (14.2%) respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the proposals. The majority of respondents (229 or 69.4%) felt there would be 'no impact' on them and/or their family, whilst 91 (27.6%) stated that the proposals would have a negative or strongly negative impact. Only 10 (or 3%) of respondents noted that they and/or their family would feel a positive or very positive impact from these proposals. 72 (21.2%) of 340 respondents who answered questions in this section explicitly stated they had used services provided by GLSPH in the past year.



The key concerns arising from the budget proposals for GLSPH were:

1. **Funding:** There were some concerns about the level of spending in this area in the context of the cost-of-living crisis and the potential negative impact spending in GLSPH could have on other "front line" services

“These services are important to ensure that citizens of the Borough are treated fairly and legally and should not be cut.”

“I think reducing staff in administrative roles and placing more staff in front line roles is essential.”

“Consideration should be given to substantial improvement in the Council's communication with the public and community groups. I fear that holding the budget level will not allow improvements to be delivered.”

2. **Additional Information:** Several respondents asked for better/additional information in order to adequately answer the questions they were asked.

“I couldn't determine what your proposals are from your documentation.”

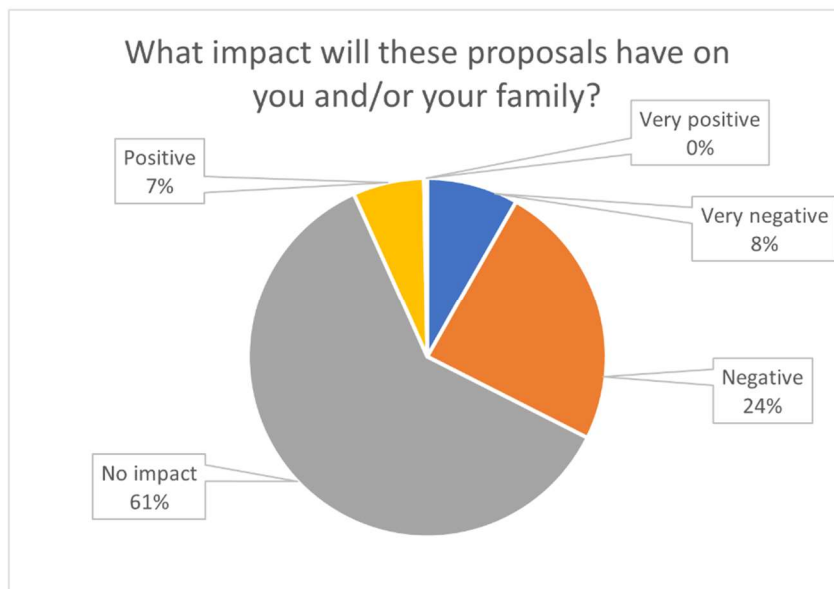
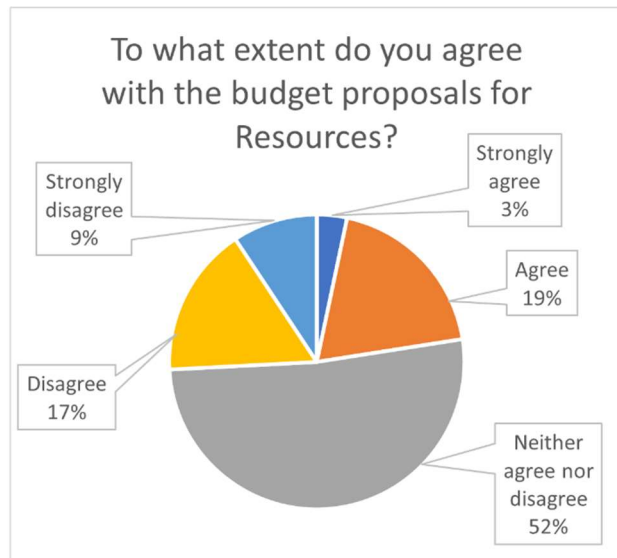
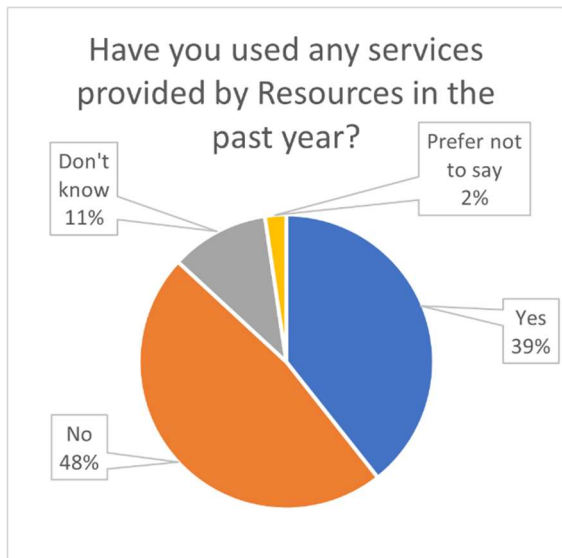
“It is difficult to judge if the correct services are being provided and if they are being provided efficiently. We need some more detailed analysis and KPIs, for comparison with other local authorities on how well RBWM are doing.”

The council's response:

The council recognises the importance of this directorate in providing good governance and its significant role in supporting equalities. This directorate has made savings, as required by all parts of the council, but has prioritised key democratic and legal functions.

Resources

The overall response to the budget proposals for this directorate were largely ambivalent, with only 75 (22.5%) agreeing or strongly agreeing with the proposals, 172 respondents (51.7%) neither agreeing nor disagreeing, and 86 (25.8%) respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the proposals. The majority of respondents (199 or 60.9%) felt there would be 'no impact' on them and/or their family, whilst 106 (32.5%) stated that the proposals would have a negative or strongly negative impact. Only 22 (or 6.7%) of respondents noted that they and/or their family would feel a positive or very positive impact from these proposals. Only 135 (39.4%) of 343 respondents who answered questions in this section explicitly stated they had used services provided by Resources in the past year.



The key concerns arising from the budget proposals for Resources were:

1. **Libraries:** There was very strong feeling from respondents about the positive impact that libraries have on the local community, and many were keen to see that they were properly funded and supported.

“YOU cannot cut funding to libraries. Residents who do not have the internet rely on the Libraries to help them. Libraries are warm spaces for people who cannot heat their homes. Libraries can be the centre of a community if funded correctly.”

“Please ensure that libraries are supported and continue to stay open for our community. Libraries are a vital resources for our local communities providing information, support, companionship and a vital warm space; as well as book borrowing.”

"I strongly feel access to libraries is important. Not only for borrowing books, but also a comfortable warm space where you don't have to make purchases. It is a safe environment for those who cannot afford heating. Plus it enables people who may otherwise be alone to see and talk to others. And learn! So a beneficial social and educational aspect too."

2. **Council Tax:** A number of responses actively called for an increase in council tax so that quality services could be retained and/or improved. However, other called for council tax to be reduced due to increased living costs.

"Hold a referendum to enable RBWM to increase council tax beyond inflation and the social care precept."

"This is one of the wealthiest boroughs in the country! I would rather pay more and have excellent services and public environment."

"The council should ask national government for the ability to make a one-off bigger increase in council tax since the level is so much below nearby local authorities like Slough and Bracknell Forest"

"Everyone's bills have gone through the roof gas electricity food petrol everything has gone up a lot and lots of people are at breaking point trying to survive."

"Budget should not be increased as council tax is becoming unaffordable."

3. **Funding:** there were some concerns about the funding of this directorate and the potential impact of increased costs for residents, especially in the context of the cost-of-living crisis. However, there were also concerns that this directorate was an "easy target" for savings, even though it actually provided important support for "front line" council staff.

"background services look like an easy target but they support what the front line council workers do"

The council's response:

Libraries:

The council recognises the important role that libraries play in our communities and for that reason has not chosen to make any changes in the provision of this service; we will continue to build on the library transformation strategy agreed in 2020.

Funding, Cost-of-living and Council Tax

The council recognises the ongoing impact of the cost-of-living crisis on local residents and continues to provide support for the members of our community who are most in need. The council can confirm that an additional £74k has been made available to fund two income

maximisation offers to help make sure that residents are receiving the benefits that they are entitled to.

The council recognises that our Council Tax rates are some of the lowest in the country and although it would be possible to seek a referendum on raising council tax rates beyond the cap, that in itself would be a costly exercise with no certainty of success. The council also recognises that for some of our residents, even with our council tax being significantly below the national average, raising council tax levels could negatively impact on their personal financial situation. The council has therefore considered the issues carefully and have decided to maximise the increase within the cap, which is still below half of the current inflation level. Support remains for those in financial hardship through schemes such as Council Tax Reduction Scheme and specific financial hardship support.

Respondent's Efficiency, Income & Improvement Suggestions

A range of constructive ideas were submitted for improving council services, maximising income, and managing the budget more efficiently.

Efficiency/Digital Improvements/Prioritisation

Many agreed that services need to be efficient and work together in order to provide good value for money and reduce waste and duplication, but respondents were also keen that services be adequately funded so that provisions remain impactful and quality staff are retained. Others felt that improvements to the website and increased staff in customer service positions would help improve the way they accessed services and information; the possibility of improving IT interoperability was also raised as a way of making cooperation between services easier and more efficient. There were some calls to focus on "basic" (statutory) council services rather than other services deemed "luxuries". Respondents highlighted the need to focus on key/urgent issues first. There were also repeated calls for environmental impacts to be considered in the same way as Equality Impact Assessments.

"I see a lot of duplication of effort, particularly in adult services - teams need to talk to each other and be clear on their remit to reduce waste."

"Do not waste money on paying for unnecessary roles such as diversification and inclusion. We cannot afford it now."

"Your website is awful, very slow and more often than not has errors and is hard to navigate. The phone line has been very problematic too."

"Need to get the basics sorted and then start doing the luxuries. I see too much extravagant waste of money on non-essentials yet the things I need are poorly managed and maintained."

"All budget items should be reviewed to determine their impact on the environment and climate, similar to the EIA, so that informed decision can be taken."

“Why not turn off unnecessary fountains that operate 24/7. This would save on electricity, which as we all know is a huge expense at the moment, and not only help save jobs but also help the planet.” – (letter from RBWM Youth Council)

Contracts and Procurement

A large number of respondents were concerned about the outsourcing of services, the cost of contractors, and the quality of services they provide and thus the value for money they present the borough.

“interrogate the external private sector contracts and frameworks you have to ensure they are representative of council tax payers requirements, put more KPIs in place to guarantee the required delivery.”

“Perhaps ensure you have the best, most suitable staff in place and get rid of any old contractors that are earning massive incomes. Streamline your processes and move away from public sector mentality.”

“Reducing refuse service by choosing a cheaper contractor resulted in very poor service to the residents. It took too long to resolve so if this is a way to save money and I have no issue with looking for competitive services but please ensure a much better implementation”

“3rd party contracting in general can be counterproductive, spending more to achieve a service, which in the long term can reap benefits and savings if managed correctly internally.”

“Contracts are largely silent on Net Zero, Climate Mitigation, Biodiversity Restoration, pollution reduction and, elimination of plastics”

Income generation and Partnerships:

Throughout the consultation concerns were raised about the transparency regarding spending, procuring contractors and outsourcing services, and the feeling that increased parking fees were being used to compensate for the lack of funding generated by council tax. Others raised the possibility of a tourist tax, increasing business rates, raising council tax, sharing services with neighbouring councils in order to offset costs, and more collaboration between community groups. One respondent raised the possibility of using council building to help small businesses and the possibility of generating income through projects such as the Lookout in Bracknell.

“Share more with neighbouring councils like Wokingham and focus on IT interoperability to make it easy to share information eg with Optimistic and AFC”

“Charging for Services in enforcement, e.g. inspections, service of prohibition and Improvement notices to improve standards in food hygiene and health and safety.”

“Outsourcing must be a matter of last resort. With it comes tangible and non-tangible outcomes that can (and invariably do) lead to inefficiencies (higher costs, less value for money) and residents dis-satisfaction.”

“Focus on improving business rates income. it is unbelievable that it is such a small portion of the Borough's income.”

“Consider reducing power consumption outside of office hours. Simple example TV is always running in the library”

“Make tourists pay more for e.g. parking.”

“Can the council run a rickshaw and bicycle hire & use scheme like some banks have done in London? Council could also run crèche in town centre with small contribution from the use? Soft play area in town, Primark, homeless shelter and sustainable shopping areas (no plastic)? The council could introduce a plastic tax for every item wrapped in plastic?”

“Hold focus groups with Windsor residents for brainstorming of ideas. There is a huge wealth of unused talent from adults in Windsor who have worked (still working) in business and/or professional roles who could offer their advice, expertise etc. as a joint venture.”

“Expand residential parking Sponsorship from local companies to support the maintenance for parks and outdoor areas, will free up revenue to be spent elsewhere.”

Feedback on consultation documents:

Some respondents noted that they felt they didn't have enough detail to properly respond to the questions either because they could not find/access supporting documents or because they felt that the introductory paragraphs and/or the questions themselves were not adequately phrased.

Overall, there seems to have been a positive response to the budget consultation documents but there were a number of suggestions that information could be more clearly signposted in the survey and there was a clear desire for a more detailed narrative breakdown of directorate proposals in the budget guide.

These comments have been taken on board and will help inform our communication of the budget proposals next year and make them even more accessible.

“Again I require more detail to make any proper suggestions.”

“we need more detailed analysis and KPIs, for comparison with other local authorities on how well RBWM are doing.”

“While there was a slight improvement on some of the material produced we didn't think the guide gave us the information we really needed. We had to plough through reams of paper to get the facts. Once again we invite you to work with us to produce young people friendly versions of your documents. It is imperative that we are able to understand the implications of decisions that are made that will affect us.” – (letter from RBWM Youth Council)

The council's response:

The council will continue to identify efficiencies that can be made to improve the running of services across the council and welcomes the ideas provided through the consultation.

Following concerns regarding contracts and procurement, the council can confirm that an additional £65k has been allocated to Resources to help assist with contract renewals.

The council acknowledges the complexity of the budget setting process which can make public engagement with the draft budget difficult. Considerable effort was made this year to provide respondents with a more accessible summary of the budget proposes but we have also identified areas for improvement in the future. As highlighted by the Youth Council and the Learning Disability Partnership Board, it is imperative that everyone have the same opportunity to engage with and respond to the budget setting process. Although the council provides more budgetary information than many other local authorities – beyond its statutory requirements – we recognise the strong desire of many respondents to more fully engage with the specifics of the budget and will take this feedback on board for next year.

Prevention

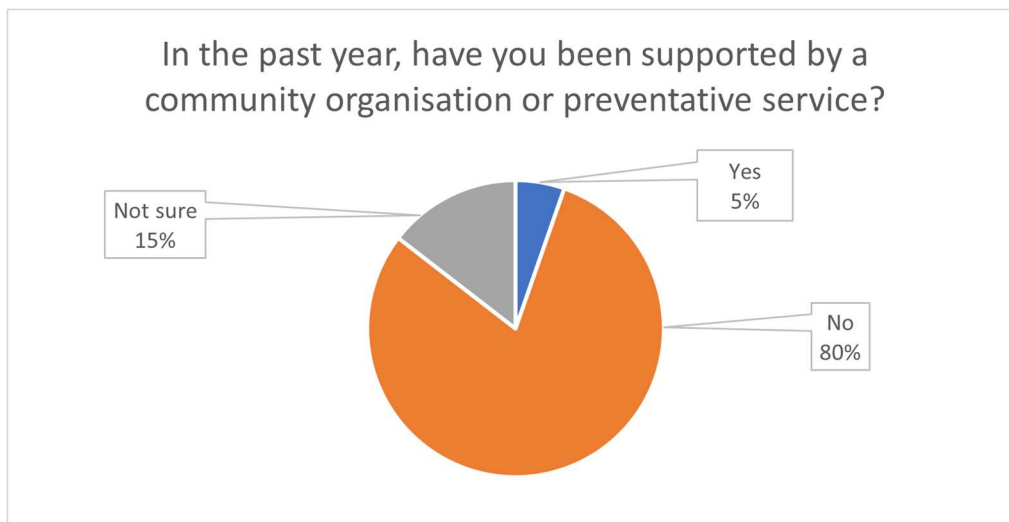
Overall, respondents agreed with the importance of preventative services in providing positive outcomes for communities that provide value for money.

“Preventative care is crucial and the way forward but will not happen if there is not the structure in place to support it.”

“Although I agree with a preventative approach, the existing issues should not be neglected.”

“Many bigger issues down the line can be prevented by effective and supportive services when needed.”

Of the 337 respondents who answered whether or not they had been supported by a community organisation or preventative service in the past year, 270 (80.1%) responded “no”, 49 (14.5%) answered “not sure”, and only 18 (5.3%) said they had.



Nevertheless, a variety of prevention services and community groups were highlighted in the consultation as having had a positive impact on individuals and communities in the Royal Borough. They include:

- **The Autism Group** *“pulls out all the stops and are very supportive”*
- **RBWM Achieving for Children**
- **Family Hubs** *“Support available for all families if needed. This can be intensive support, light touch to support families with particular issues such as behaviour, interventions for young people such as knife crime, sexual exploitation to name but a few.”*
- **Child welfare support services**
- **Clewer & Dedworth events**
- **The Old Court Art Centre Windsor**
- **Number 22** *“Mental health services are effectively and cheaply provided for young people and adults. We are very concerned about being able to continue without reduction”*
- **Family Friends**
- **Mencap Monday Club and ALLsorts** *“supporting adults with learning disabilities as there are very few social events for this group of people”*
- **St Mary’s Church Maidenhead** *“provides friendship, family, support through difficult decisions. Was a lifesaver during COVIS with virtual services to remain connected with other people whilst living alone.”*
- **People to Places** *“gives excellent service, especially shop mobility”*
- **Wild Maidenhead** *“is increasing biodiversity in Maidenhead and its surrounding villages and rural areas by planting trees, creating wildflower areas, supporting the RBWM Biodiversity Action Plan, advising residents, groups and businesses on wildlife and campaigning for better policy.”*
- **Windsor and Maidenhead Climate Community**
- **Wild Maidenhead**
- **Good Gym**
- **Some independent councillors**
- **Food and Baby Banks**
- **Activities in Kidwell park like Cinema in Park and music festival**

- **Ukrainian support**
- **Early Help**
- **Filling Good** *“helping to achieve sustainable lifestyle”*
- **Cycle Hub**
- **Braywick Leisure Centre** *“encouraging healthier lifestyle”*
- **Park Run** *“providing weekly community running”*
- **Repair Café** *“encouraging less waste”*
- **The pub**
- **Craft Coop CIC** *“a social enterprise that not only helps up to 100 local artisans and craftspeople sell their ware in both town, but also offer so many community support activities from free craft sessions for Age Concern, Thames Hospice, Stroke Association, warm spaces for local families on Saturday mornings, but also raising over 500 Christmas gifts for locals in need, in addition to £1000s in local charity support. Yet they cannot continue to do so indefinitely but would benefit from grant funding to help facilitate this on a wider scale.”*
- **West Windsor Hub**
- **Community Wardens**
- **Healthwatch**
- **World Cafes**
- **Police**
- **Housing Solutions**
- **The Preventative Healthcare Service** *“It focuses on mental health, breathing, movement/exercise, relaxation and nutrition. It was tested with three GP practices in the Borough with extremely positive results. [...] With a fractured and crumbling NHS, teaching people how to better take care of themselves via Preventative Healthcare solutions is not only effective, cheap but also has long-term benefits for people and planet as well as profits.”*

Improvements to preventative services

In addition to this feedback, respondents also submitted a number of suggestions for improving support for individuals, families, and communities in order to prevent problems from escalating.

Respondents highlighted that preventative services need to be adequately funded in order to work effectively:

“Services need to be funded so they have the capacity when it’s needed”

“Think very carefully about a referendum to ask if further council tax fees should be introduced if financial support here is preventing lack of help.”

Respondents were also keen to see cross-organisation working, both within the council and with external organisations, but there were also concerns that private and voluntary groups cannot fulfil all the roles of the council.

“Look at partnerships with organisations and churches to use the resources and work together effectively. Thank you for the good work.”

“Adopt solutions such as The Preventative Health Care Service offering and scale it across the borough so it’s a service and solution available to everyone. The resources

are there - we're keen to support helping everyone to learn how to take care of themselves - so that the NHS can concentrate on the big stuff."

"Support community centres and help organisations to promote and advertise themselves. Provide financial support to community groups providing support to client groups needing help. Provide youth hubs and make counselling for young people and adults more available in the community."

"By not abdicating Council responsibility in the vague and untested hope that private and voluntary organisations will plug shortfall"

Several respondents provided specific suggestions for improving access to community events/organisations or ideas for new community ventures.

"When parking costs increase, the additional costs cause people drop out of community groups and societies, and become less engaged in the overall community. It's only by encouraging inclusion and engagement that these services can be effective at prevention."

"A key way is for people to build friendships and support networks themselves before trouble strikes through religious and community activity groups. The council could also direct people to services like the Christians Against Poverty debt centre in Maidenhead."

"Make use of the arts to support well being services - such as Norden Farm"

"Ask for volunteers from people who have existing or transferable skills who could offer their time to assist/support others. Volunteers could be from people who have retired or still working, but have some spare time and willingness to help the community."

"Have free healthy meal for a whole street, cooked by community. Bring people together somewhere warm"

The importance of education and training were highlighted as important preventative factors, although there was an awareness that this needs to be tailored to the needs of individuals.

"Helping them to be active and find a job through training"

"Adult education provides skills and support- grow this"

"Education. It seems to be inter-generational families that use these services"

"Parenting groups"

"from personal experience, families offered parenting courses and little else. Whilst these may help some it is not a one size fits all approach."

Respondents also emphasised the importance of early intervention and targeting support at children and young people in order to prevent issues from escalating and reduce the need and expense of additional and/or protracted intervention in the future.

“Better children's services. This is key, so people grow up to be better citizens.”

“Bring back youth clubs to keep teenagers off the streets”

“early intervention with a proactive preventative strategy rather than reactive”

“More early intervention for struggling families. More effective use of direct payments. An earlier intervention with adults so the funding gap is not forever a drain on much needed resources. Less reliance on Residential care for Children and Adults with disabilities and then care packages passed to ASC without due diligence. More fiduciary responsibility and audit carried out in the disability services.”

Respondents also highlighted the important role the council has in supporting community organisations advertise the work they do and the support they can offer. Others were keen to have better opportunities to engage with the council and have their ideas and concerns better listened to.

“Operate a platform that enables community organisations and preventive services to work easily together, be the facilitator and support for these organisations that do brilliant work. Enable them to do what they do well even better.”

“You need to find ways to meet residents, actively listen to them,, communicate openly and transparently with them, be realistic about what you can do, tell the truth, feed back to them promptly, stop using up time and effort in pointless tick box exercises intended to justify what you have already decided to do regardless of what residents think, stop 'spinning' everything with positive misinformation when we all know things are dire - in short just start doing what you are supposed to do. As it stands many residents don't like you, don't respect you, and don't believe you.”

“Empower residents to manage the resources within their own areas”

“Hold a citizens assembly to find out what issues people need most support for.”

“As I see it most of the time, the council are signposting people back to charities. Continue to support the charities that have proven to do good work.”

“Provide citizens advice type centres in local shopping areas to provide a visible help hub for people. Online version also useful”

“Clearly signposting resources, whether it be online or physically”

There were also a number of responses that focused on the need for improved health support in order to prevent issues from escalating and/or becoming more expensive.

“Doctor and health visitor home visits”

“Focus on mental health”

“Speeding up referrals to dementia services”

The council’s response

The council recognises the invaluable supported provided to communities across the borough from our excellent voluntary and community sectors. The council supports suggestions put forward through the consultation on stronger partnership working, and building further early intervention and preventative services. Over the coming months, the council will be working with our partners to build on existing good practice and to strengthen support provided within, by and for communities.