Summary Report:
Budget Consultation and Engagement with Residents Autumn 2013

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Summary of findings
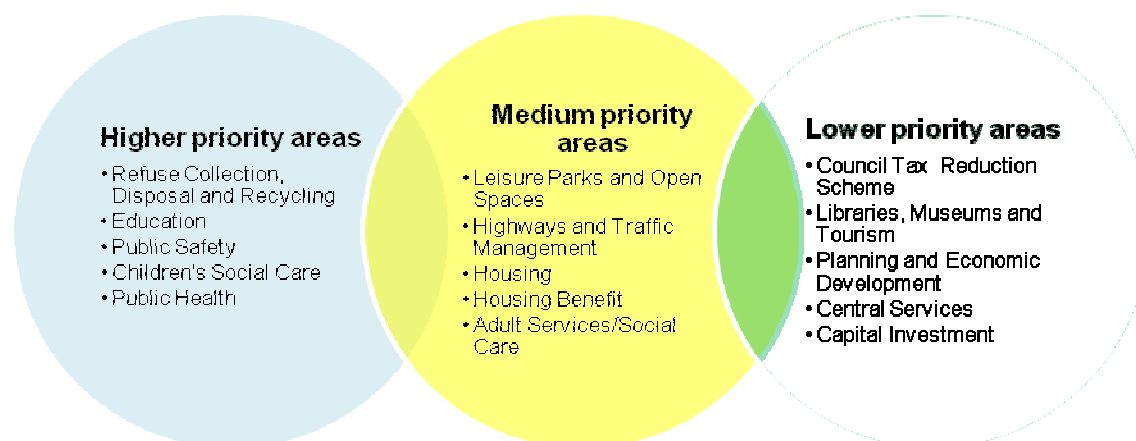
Higher priority areas
- Refuse Collection, Disposal and Recycling
- Education
- Public Safety
- Children's Social Care
- Public Health

Medium priority areas
- Leisure Parks and Open Spaces
- Highways and Traffic Management
- Housing
- Housing Benefit
- Adult Services/Social Care

Lower priority areas
- Council Tax Reduction Scheme
- Libraries, Museums and Tourism
- Planning and Economic Development
- Central Services
- Capital Investment

- The majority would prefer funding to be at least maintained, if not increased, for all service areas, however, a third would reduce funding for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.
- Three areas where higher proportions (at least a third) would increase funding are Children's Social Care, Public Safety and Education.
- 44% think Council Tax should never rise.
- Residents are very much in favour of the exploitation of fines for anti-social behaviour as a way to increase revenue; parking charge rises were not favoured by most.

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Introduction

Following a review of what worked well and what could be improved in terms of consultation and engagement with residents on the budget, it was agreed that the approach in 2013/14 would be designed to achieve two objectives:

1. Obtaining a statistically robust and representative response to our budget survey;
2. Ensuring that as many residents as possible have the opportunity to engage with our budget and have their say about it, should they wish to.

In order to meet objective 1 a postal survey was issued to a random sample of 3,280 households in early October, with an aim of receiving back 1,058 completed surveys to provide a robust sample.

In order to meet objective 2:

- the same survey questions were made available online via the Consultation Portal from 4 October 2013, and the link to this survey was widely promoted via social media;
- the same survey was made available in hard copy in libraries and public buildings;
- an online budget literacy and prioritisation tool was hosted on the Brighton & Hove City Council website budget pages from 8 October 2013.

Purpose of the Report

This report draws only on the results to the survey issued to a representative sample of households (which is the most reliable research data we have to draw on) and on the 'prioritisations' made by users of the online budget tool.

Analysis of the self-selecting samples' responses to the online and paper based survey will be included in an update report in January 2014, 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.

Methods and response rates

Paper and online survey: representative sample
A paper-based survey was issued to a stratified random sample of 3,280 households across the city in the first week of October 2013. The covering 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 which had not responded two weeks later, ahead of industrial action planned by Royal Mail staff.

A closing date of 4 November was set, although surveys received up to Monday 18 November are included in the analysis.

In total 668 surveys were received via this method, representing a response rate of 21% (once void addresses are removed from the base). Whilst the response rate was lower than anticipated (30%), the sample is robust at the city level at a confidence interval between 2% and 4%, depending on how many people responded to each question. This means that we can be sure that the results are accurate to within +/- 4%. For example, if a result from this

sample of households is 45% we know that the actual result, were we to survey all households, would be within the range 41% to 49%.

<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 20 November 2013. Responses received up to 17 January 2014 will be analysed in the update to this report.

In total 292 people had used the tool and a maximum of 83 people went on to prioritise service areas.

<u>Note about interpreting results</u>
The results to the stratified random sample survey should be considered the most robust as these are from a random sample of households in the city. As there were 668 responses we can be sure that they are representative to within +/- 4% of the views of all households.

Analysis and Results

<u>Paper and online survey: representative sample</u>
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.
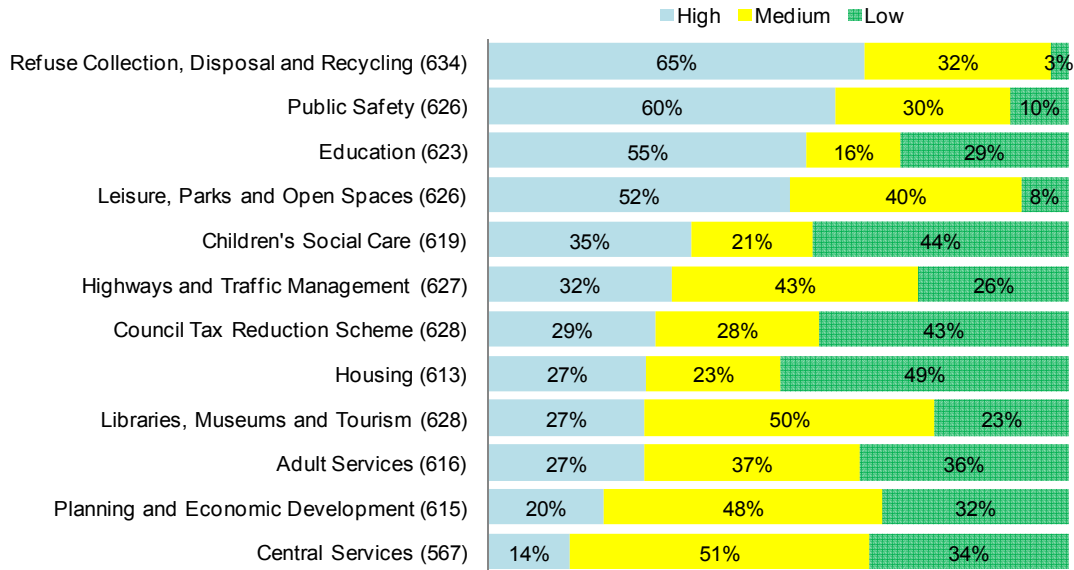
Not everyone who completed the survey rated every service area so the number of people rating each service area is given in brackets on charts. For example only 567 respondents rated Central Services, whereas 634 rated Refuse Collection, Disposal and Recycling.

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 things 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; 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.

The charts below shows the service areas ranked from highest priority to lowest for respondents and their families then for the city.

Priority ratings of each service area: For you

High   Medium   Low

Service	High	Medium	Low
Refuse Collection, Disposal and Recycling (634)	65%	32%	3%
Public Safety (626)	60%	30%	10%
Education (623)	55%	16%	29%
Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces (626)	52%	40%	8%
Children's Social Care (619)	35%	21%	44%
Highways and Traffic Management (627)	32%	43%	26%
Council Tax Reduction Scheme (628)	29%	28%	43%
Housing (613)	27%	23%	49%
Libraries, Museums and Tourism (628)	27%	50%	23%
Adult Services (616)	27%	37%	36%
Planning and Economic Development (615)	20%	48%	32%
Central Services (567)	14%	51%	34%

Priority ratings of each service area: For the city

High   Medium   Low

Service	High	Medium	Low
Education (617)	77%	20%	3%
Children's Social Care (612)	66%	28%	6%
Refuse Collection, Disposal and Recycling (622)	66%	31%	3%
Public Safety (614)	60%	31%	8%
Housing (602)	51%	36%	13%
Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces (609)	49%	43%	9%
Highways and Traffic Management (616)	41%	42%	17%
Libraries, Museums and Tourism (616)	40%	45%	15%
Adult Services (603)	38%	47%	14%
Planning and Economic Development (605)	36%	46%	18%
Council Tax Reduction Scheme (615)	29%	46%	25%
Central Services (559)	18%	57%	25%

Higher priority areas:

- Refuse Collection, Disposal and Recycling had the highest priority rating for respondents themselves with 65% rating it high. Although it was the third highest priority service for the city, a slightly larger proportion, 66%, rated it higher for the city than for themselves. Just 3% rated it a low priority for either themselves or the city.
- Education was the highest rated service for the city with over three quarters of respondents (77%) giving it a high priority rating.

- Refuse Collection, Disposal and Recycling and Public Safety both have very high and very similar priority ratings, regardless of whether respondents were rating them for themselves or the city.
- Children's Social Care also had a high priority rating, especially when rated for the city, with 66% rating it high.

Lower priority areas:

- Central Services was the lowest rated area with under a fifth rating it as a high priority for either themselves (14%) or the city (18%).
- Respondents consistently rated services for themselves as lower priorities than for the city. The following service areas were all rated a low priority by at least a quarter of respondents for themselves: Housing (49%) Children's Social Care (44%), Council Tax Reduction Scheme (43%), Adult Services (36%), Central Services (34%), Planning and Economic Development (32%), Education (29%), Highways and Traffic Management (26%).
- For the city, just two areas were rated a low priority by at least a quarter of respondents; Council Tax Reduction Scheme (25%) and Central Services (25%).
- Despite differences in how respondents rated services for themselves and for the city, three of the four lowest rated services are the same regardless. These were Central Services, Planning and Economic Development, and Adult Services.
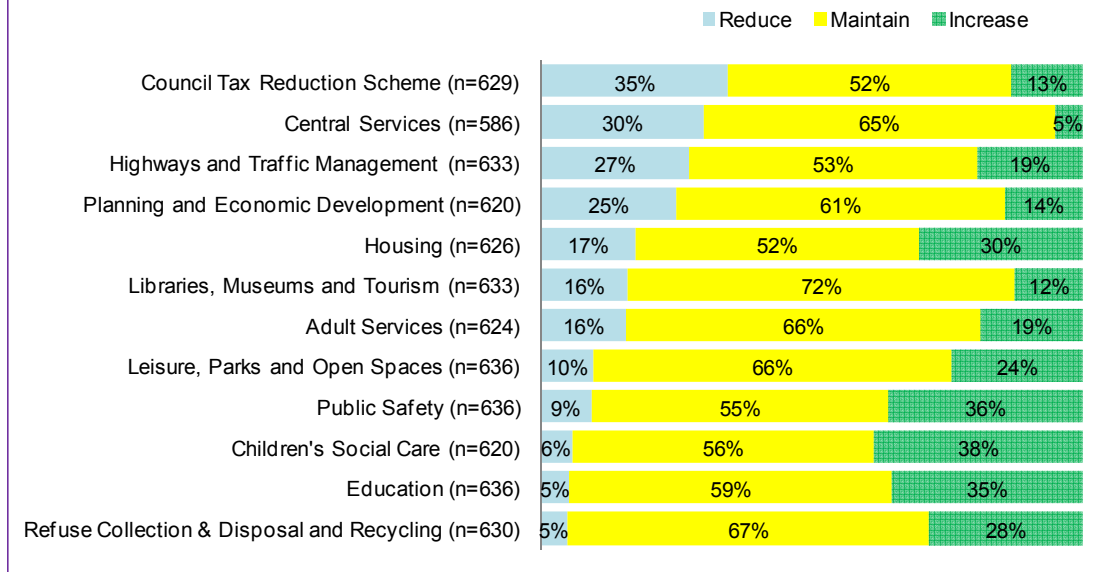
Areas with the widest spread of opinion:

- 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 opinion when rating services for themselves and their families were Libraries, Museums and Tourism (27% high, 23% low), Highways and Traffic Management (32% high, 26% low), Adult Services (27% high, 36% low), Children's Social Care (35% high, 44% low).
- Service areas where views were divided over the priority for the city were Council Tax Reduction Scheme (29% high, 25% low) and Central Services (18% high, 25% low).

The full report "Budget Survey 2013 'Your Money, Your Services'" includes more information about differences by characteristics such as age, gender, sexual orientation and ethnicity.

Respondents were then asked to say whether they would reduce, increase or maintain service area funding at the current level. Results are shown below.

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

Service Area	Reduce	Maintain	Increase
Council Tax Reduction Scheme (n=629)	35%	52%	13%
Central Services (n=586)	30%	65%	5%
Highways and Traffic Management (n=633)	27%	53%	19%
Planning and Economic Development (n=620)	25%	61%	14%
Housing (n=626)	17%	52%	30%
Libraries, Museums and Tourism (n=633)	16%	72%	12%
Adult Services (n=624)	16%	66%	19%
Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces (n=636)	10%	66%	24%
Public Safety (n=636)	9%	55%	36%
Children's Social Care (n=620)	6%	56%	38%
Education (n=636)	5%	59%	35%
Refuse Collection & Disposal and Recycling (n=630)	5%	67%	28%

Reduce funding:

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

That said, 35% would reduce funding for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and 30% would reduce funding for Central Services.

Increase funding:

Over a third, 38%, wanted funding for Children's Social Care to increase, 36% wanted funding for Public Safety increased and a similar proportion, 35%, wanted funding for Education increased.

Maintain funding:

For each service area, over half of respondents thought funding should be maintained at the current level. Service areas with the highest proportions of respondents thinking that funding should be maintained were: Libraries, Museums and Tourism (72%), Refuse Collection, Disposal and Recycling (67%), Adult Services (66%), Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces (66%) and Central Services (65%).

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

Do you think Council Tax should ever rise? (n=659)

- 6% Yes
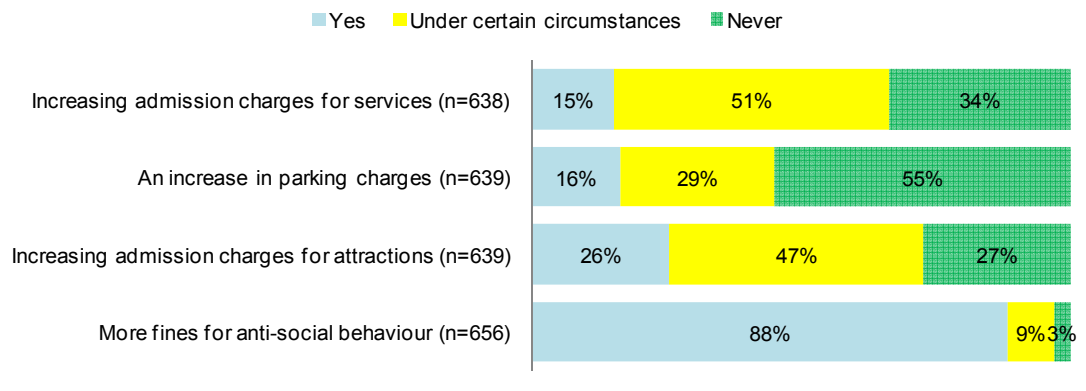- 50% Under certain circumstances
- 44% Never
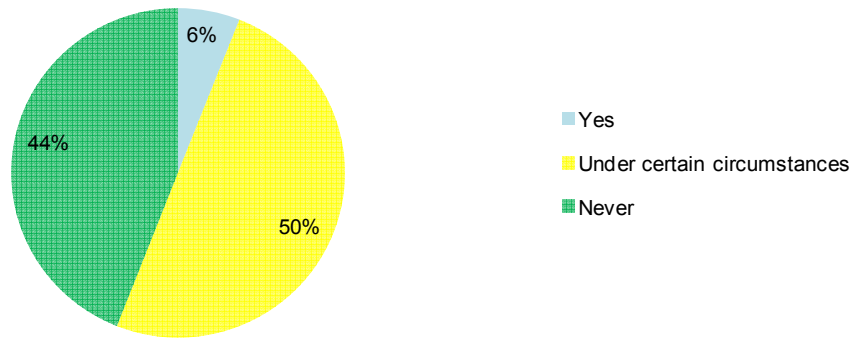
Just 6% of the sample felt that Council Tax should rise, compared to 44% who thought that it should never rise. Half the sample felt that an increase in Council Tax could be justified in certain circumstances.

Analysis of people's 'free text' comments around the circumstances that they would support a rise in Council Tax is currently being undertaken.

Respondents were then asked if they would support raising money from any of four different sources.

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

- Yes
- Under certain circumstances
- Never

	Yes	Under certain circumstances	Never
Increasing admission charges for services (n=638)	15%	51%	34%
An increase in parking charges (n=639)	16%	29%	55%
Increasing admission charges for attractions (n=639)	26%	47%	27%
More fines for anti-social behaviour (n=656)	88%	9%	3%

There was clear support for raising council revenue through fines for anti-social behaviour such as litter, dog fouling and noise with 88% of the sample saying they would support raising money via such fines.

Over half of respondents (55%) opposed raising revenue through increasing parking charges.

Respondents were divided as to whether increasing admission charges for attractions would be popular with 26% in favour and 27% not.

Analysis of respondents' other 'free text' suggestions for increasing income to support the budget is currently being undertaken and will be included in the update report in January.

Online budget literacy and prioritisation tool

By 20 November 2013 292 people had used the interactive budget tool 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 2013/14.
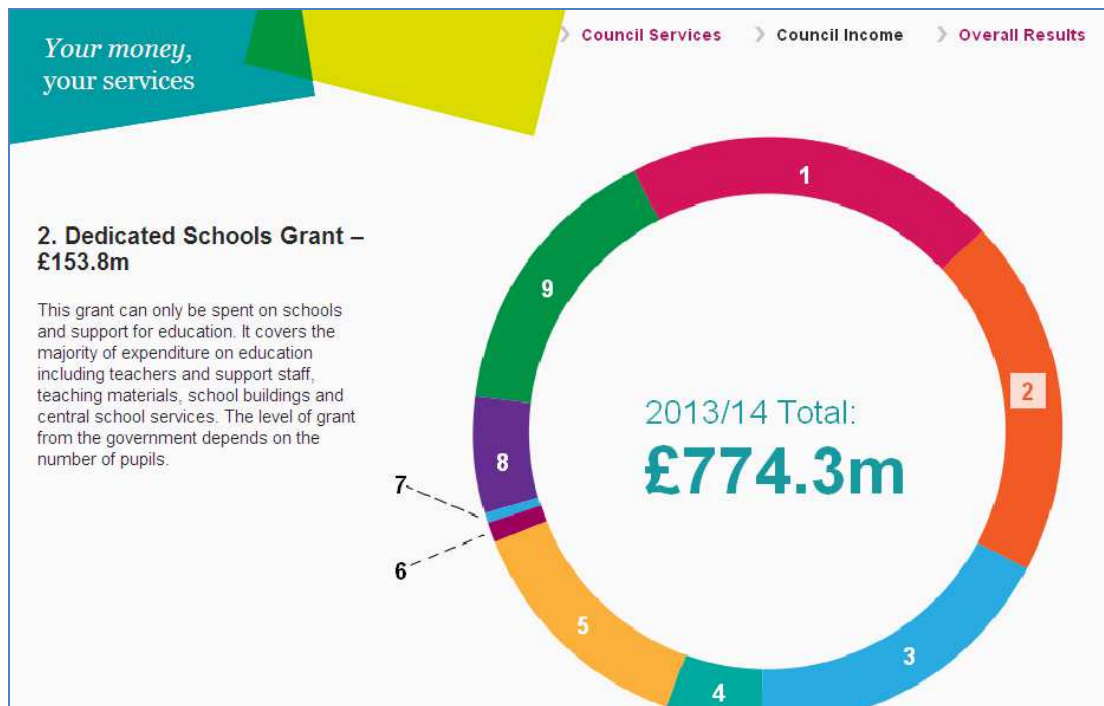
The screenshot below shows the tool where the user has clicked on Education.

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 292 people have looked at the tool (these are individuals looking at the tool rather than the number of visits which is 443) a maximum of 83 have gone on to prioritise service areas.

On the second screen users can find out where council income comes from. In the screenshot below the user has clicked on the orange section of the chart (labelled 2) relating to the Dedicated Schools Grant.

Your money,
your services

**2. Dedicated Schools Grant –
£153.8m**

This grant can only be spent on schools
and support for education. It covers the
majority of expenditure on education
including teachers and support staff,
teaching materials, school buildings and
central school services. The level of grant
from the government depends on the
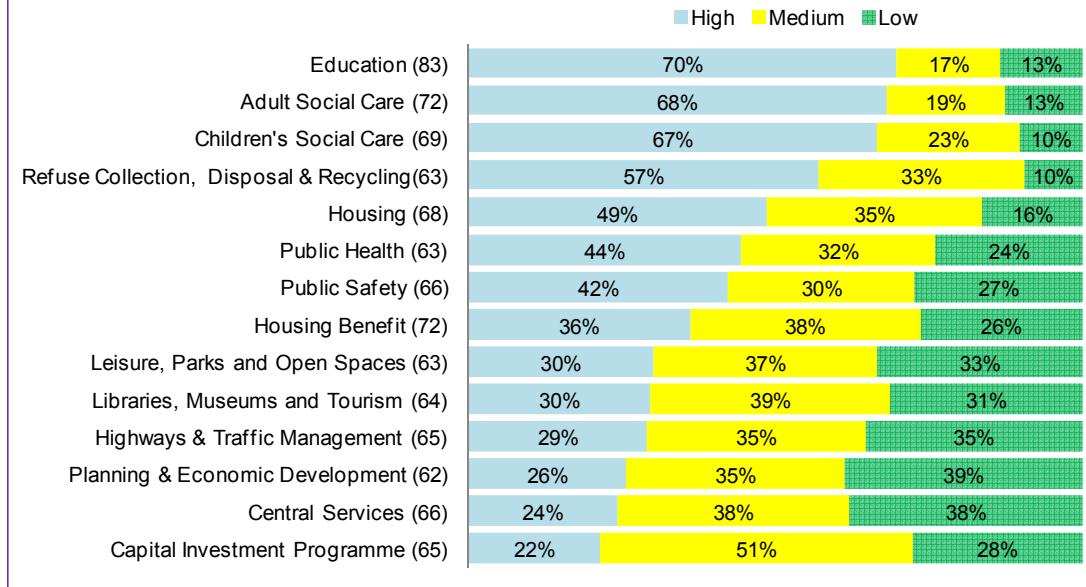number of pupils.

2013/14 Total:

£774.3m

On the final screen of the tool users can see the average results of how all
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, 83 users have given
Education a priority rating but only 62 have given Planning and Economic
Development a rating.

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

Note that there are three additional service areas in the tool to the ones asked
about in the survey outlined above; "Capital Investment Programme", "Public
Health" and "Housing Benefit". Also the term "Adult Social Care" is used on
the tool where "Adult Services" is used on the survey. Council Tax Reduction
Scheme is included in the survey and not the tool.

Priority ratings of each service area

Service Area	High	Medium	Low
Education (83)	70%	17%	13%
Adult Social Care (72)	68%	19%	13%
Children's Social Care (69)	67%	23%	10%
Refuse Collection, Disposal & Recycling (63)	57%	33%	10%
Housing (68)	49%	35%	16%
Public Health (63)	44%	32%	24%
Public Safety (66)	42%	30%	27%
Housing Benefit (72)	36%	38%	26%
Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces (63)	30%	37%	33%
Libraries, Museums and Tourism (64)	30%	39%	31%
Highways & Traffic Management (65)	29%	35%	35%
Planning & Economic Development (62)	26%	35%	39%
Central Services (66)	24%	38%	38%
Capital Investment Programme (65)	22%	51%	28%

Higher priority areas:

- Education, Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care all received high ratings with at least two-thirds rating these areas as high priority (70%, 68% and 67% respectively). In each case around 90% rated them as high or medium priorities.
- Refuse Collection, Disposal and Recycling and Housing were also rated relatively high priorities (57% and 49% rated them high) with over 80% rating them as high or medium (90% and 84% respectively).
- Public Health, Housing Benefit and Public Safety were all rated very similarly, with around three quarters of the sample rating these as high or medium priorities (76%, 74% and 73%).

Lower priority areas:

- Four areas were rated as a low priority by at least a third of users of the tool; Planning and Economic Development (39%), Central Services (38%), Highways and Traffic Management (35%) and Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces (33%).
- Capital Investment was rated a high priority by the smallest proportion of people, 22%, but a comparatively large proportion (51%) rated it a medium priority.

Areas with the widest spread of opinion:

- Libraries, Museums and Tourism was rated high by 30%, medium by 39% and low by 31% revealing little agreement about its status.
- Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces was rated high by 30%, medium by 37% and low by 33%, therefore having a narrow margin rating it a lower priority rather than high.

- Housing Benefit also divided opinion with 36% rating it high, 38% rating it medium, and 26% rating it low. Here then, a narrow margin rated it a higher priority rather than lower.
- Highways and Traffic Management was rated high by 29%, and medium and low by 35% each, so marginally more people felt it was a lower priority than high.

Conclusions

- The majority would prefer funding to be at least maintained, if not increased, for all service areas, however, a third would reduce funding for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.
- Three areas where higher proportions (at least a third) would increase funding are Children's Social Care, Public Safety and Education.
- Residents are very much in favour of the exploitation of fines for anti-social behaviour as a way to increase revenue; parking charge rises were not favoured by most.