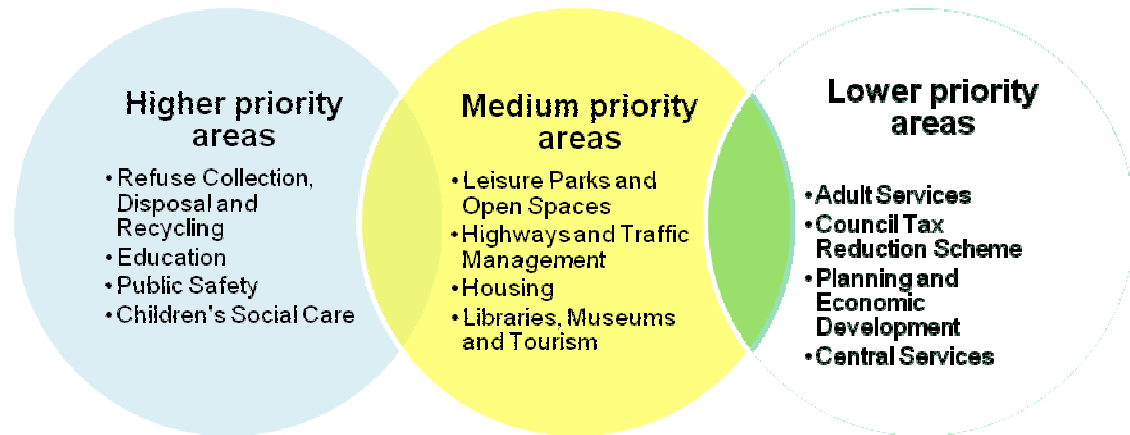


Budget Consultation and Engagement Summary Report 2014/15

Headline Summary of findings from the random sample survey



- The majority want funding to be at least maintained, if not increased, for all service areas, however, 35% would reduce funding for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and 30% would reduce funding for Central Services.
- 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 and 50% think it could under certain circumstances including: to preserve, maintain or improve services; if the rise were affordable and fair; if all other alternatives had been exhausted, or; if the results are tangible.
- 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.
- The main suggestions for increasing council revenue focussed on spending less; the 20 mph initiative, salaries of high paid officials and cycle lanes were singled out.

About this report

This report draws on the following:

- Results of the budget survey issued to a representative sample of households;
- Results of the same survey that City Partners opted to complete;
- Results from a discussion of the survey questions held with the Youth Council; and
- prioritisations made by users of the online budget tool.

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 representative 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.

For information on methods and response rates please see Section C of this report.

A) RESULTS

Paper and online survey: representative sample (668 responses)

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.

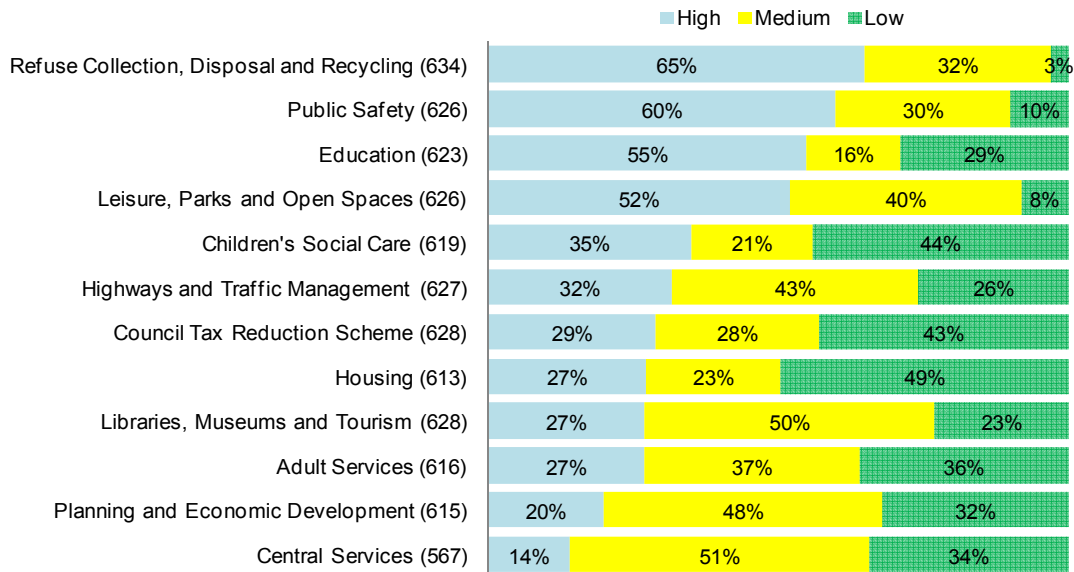
Not everyone who completed the survey rated every service area so the number of people rating each service area is given in brackets on charts. For example only 567 respondents rated Central Services, whereas 634 rated Refuse Collection, Disposal and Recycling.

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.

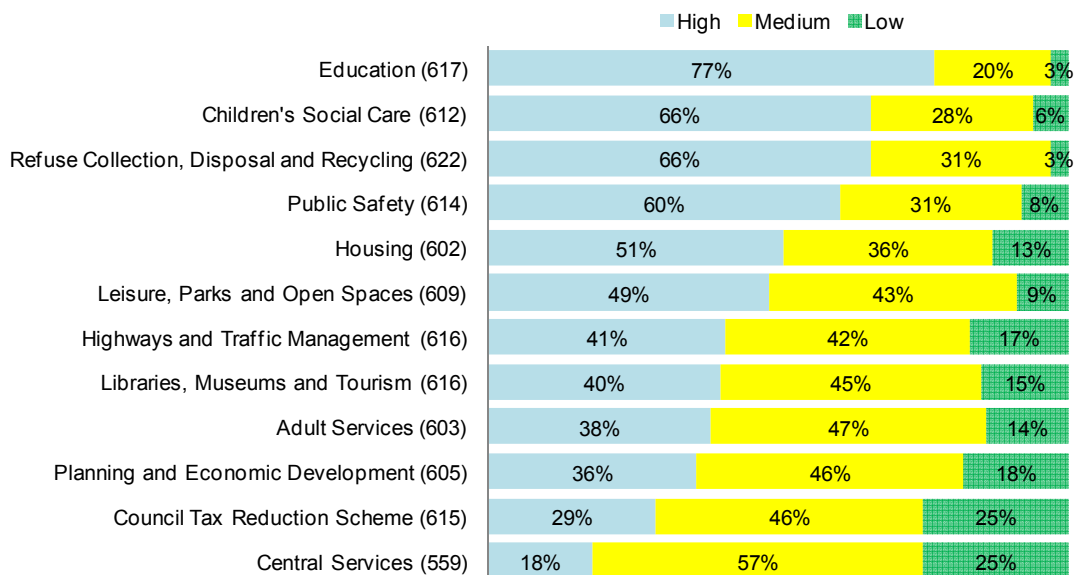
Results show that respondents tended to rate things as a higher priority for the city than for themselves and their families. There was also, unsurprisingly, more polarisation when rating service areas for themselves compared to the city; if a respondent (and their family) uses or benefits from a particular 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 show 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



Priority ratings of each service area: For the city



Higher priority areas

- Although the priority ranking of service areas is different depending on whether respondents were rating services for themselves or the city four of the highest ranked services feature in both rankings for respondents themselves and for the city; Education, Public Safety, Refuse Collection, Disposal and Recycling, and Children's Social Care.
- 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 high for the city. 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.

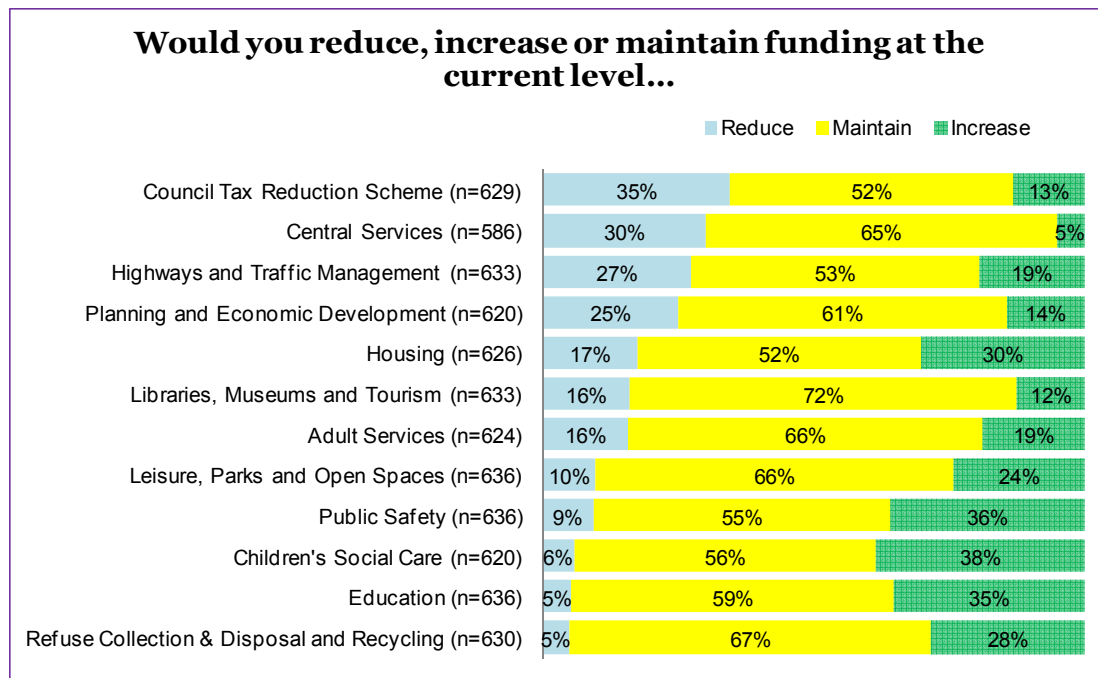
Lower priority areas

- 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.
- 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% low) 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%).

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 because 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).

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



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.

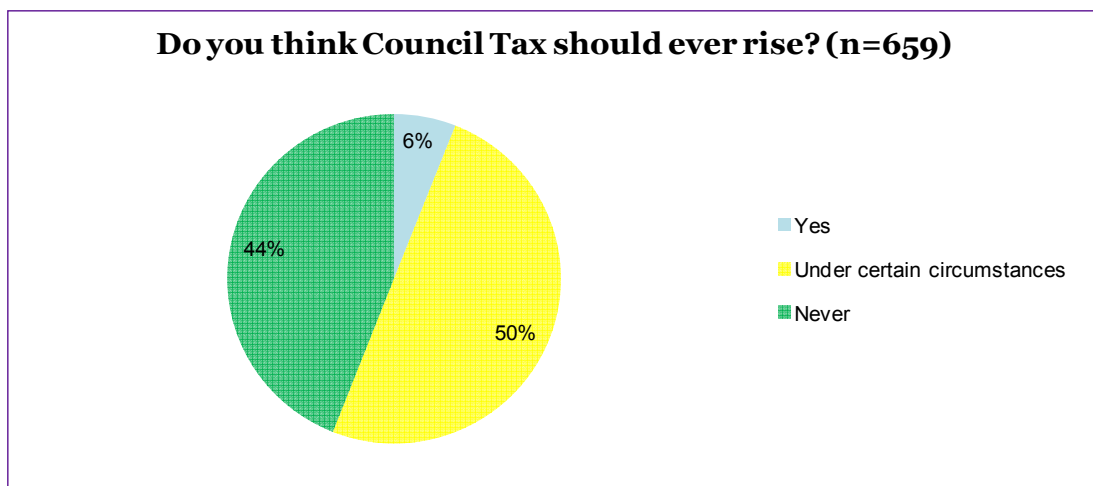
Increase funding

Over a third, 38%, wanted funding for Children's Social Care to increase, while 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 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 Council Tax should ever rise to reduce pressure on the council's finances.

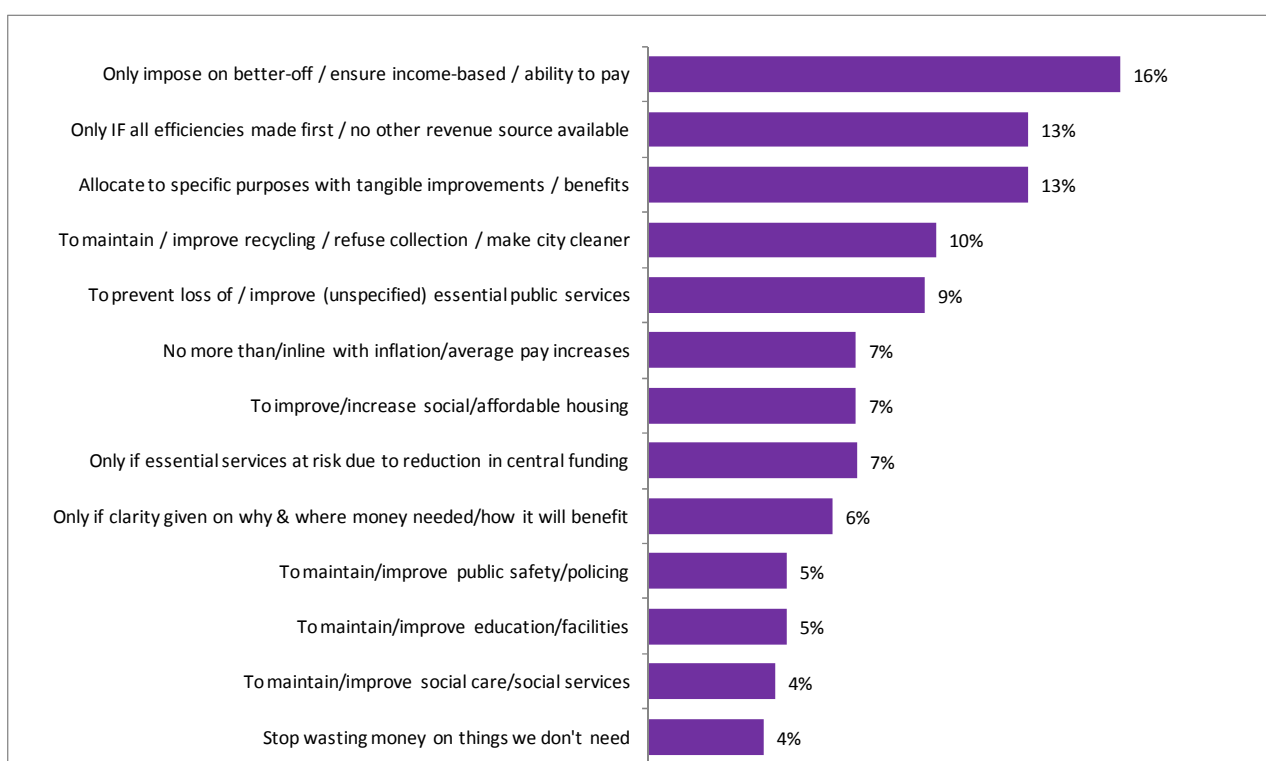


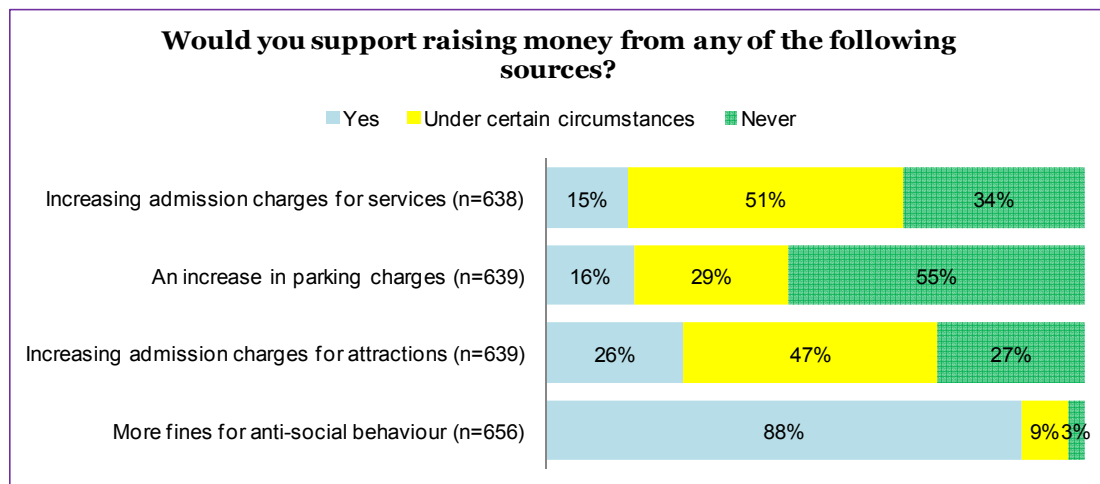
Only 6% of the sample felt that Council Tax should rise, compared to 44% who thought that it should never rise. Half the sample felt that an increase in Council Tax could be justified in certain circumstances. These respondents were asked to explain their answers.

There were 302 comments, which cluster into four main themes. A rise in Council Tax could be acceptable if, and only if:

- It is to preserve, maintain or improve services (e.g. recycling, affordable homes);
- It is affordable and fair (e.g. based on ability to pay; not in excess of inflation);
- There really is no alternative (e.g. all efficiency avenues have been exhausted);
- Residents can see where the money is going.

The chart below shows the main circumstances in which a rise in Council Tax could be acceptable.



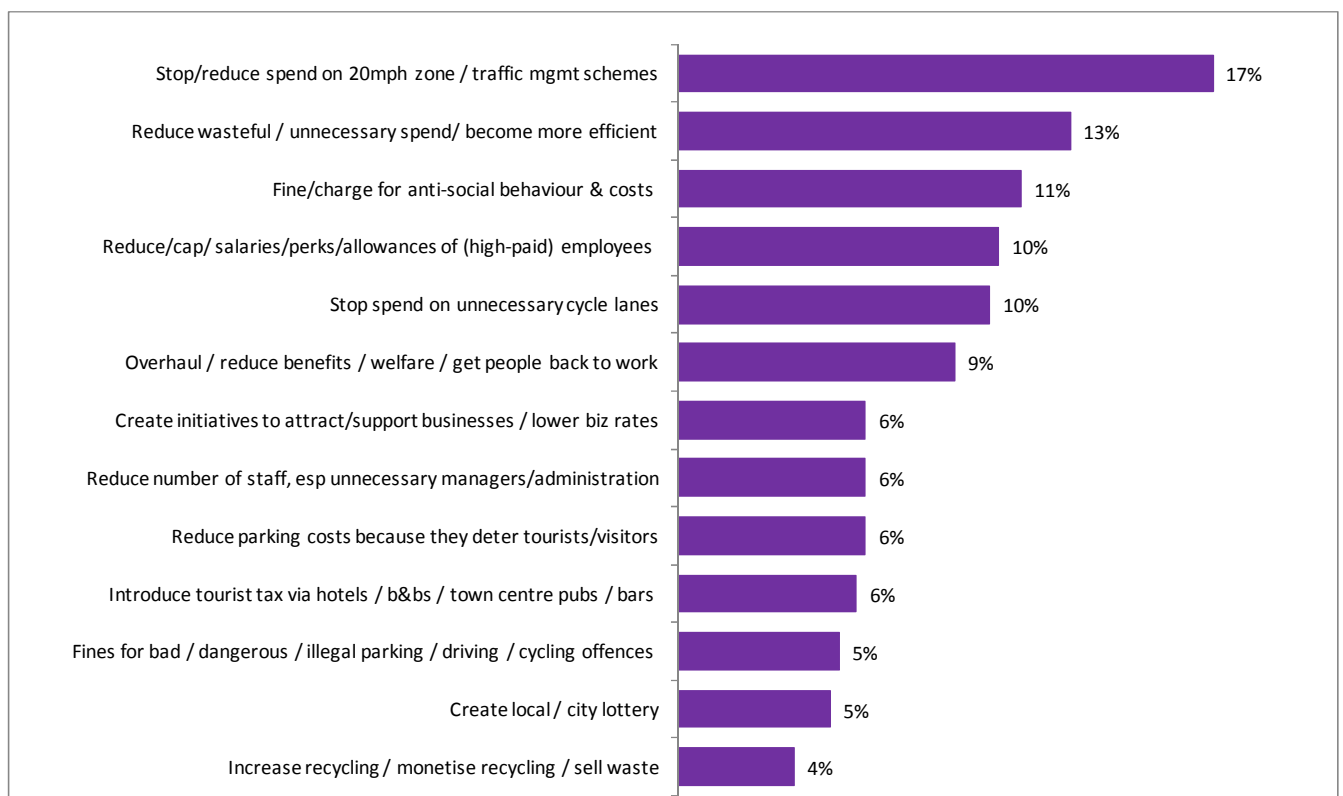


There was clear support for raising council revenue through fines for antisocial behaviour such as litter, dog fouling and noise with 88% of the sample saying they would support raising money via such fines.

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.

Other suggestions for raising revenue were made by 350 respondents. Analysis of these is presented, in summary, in the chart below.



Four of the top five suggestions people had for increasing revenue were about reducing council spend and specifically the 20 mph speed limit initiative attracted a lot of comments.

Further detail on people's suggestions is provided below.

Save money ...	%	New / bigger fines for:	%	Optimising appeal to tourists & businesses:	%
Stop / reduce spend on 20mph zone / traffic mgmt schemes	17	Anti-social behaviour & assoc costs	11	Reduce parking costs as they deter tourists / visitors	6
Reduce unnecessary spend/ become more efficient (gay pride / social events / road signs)	13	Dangerous/illegal parking/driving/ cycling offences	5	Fund initiatives to attract /support businesses / lower business rates	6
Reduce/cap salaries/pensions/perks of (high-paid) council employees	10	Increase parking charges.	3	Fund initiatives/do more to attract more tourists/visitors/investment	3
Stop spend on unnecessary cycle lanes	10	Introduce congestion charge / tax cars in city centre	2		
Overhaul/ reduce benefits / welfare spend. Get people back to work	9	Charge for entry on tourist attractions (e.g. pier/museums) for all or just for tourists	2	Other:	%
Reduce number of council employees, esp unnecessary managers/admin	6			Create local lottery	5
Sell Council assets (e.g. redundant property)	3	New / higher taxes / rates for:	%	Increase / monetise recycling / sell waste	4
Do more shared admin /multi-agency working/partnerships	2	Introduce tourist tax via hotels / b&bs / town centre pubs/bars	6	Utilise unemployed, criminals, general voluntary public for community work	3
		Increase tax /rates for prime location shops / businesses / big multi-nationals	2	Create park & ride	3
		Ensure all taxes are collected, all fines / charges / rents are actually paid	2	Encourage business sponsorship of public spaces / events	3
		Introduce bicycle licenses/bike tax	2	Renovate/build more housing / utilise all unused spaces	3
				Have fund-raising events for specific purposes	2

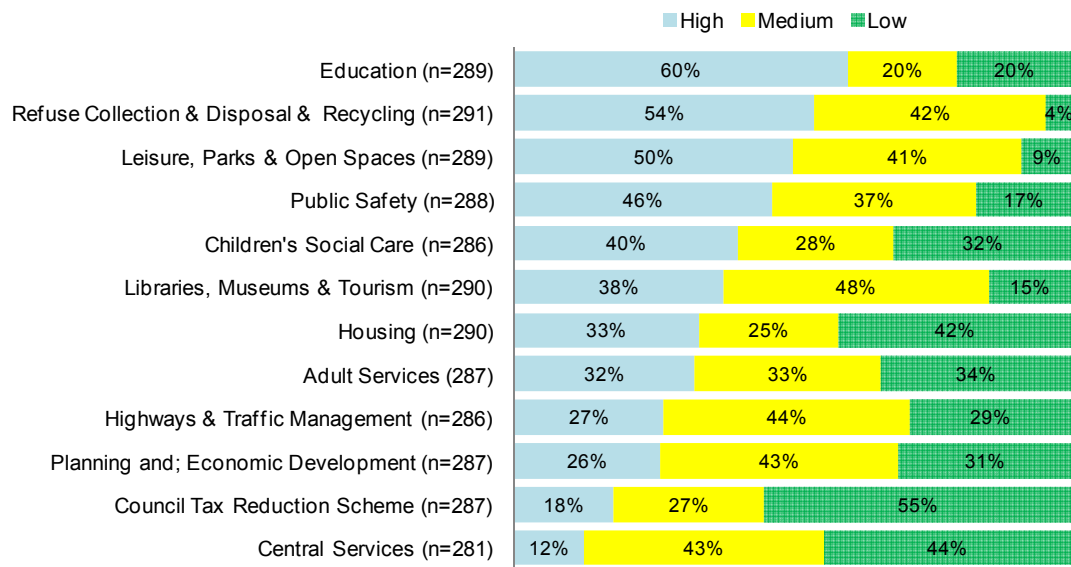
Paper and online survey: self-selecting sample (297 responses)

The same survey was used for the self-selecting sample (i.e. any resident not in the structured sample) so 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.

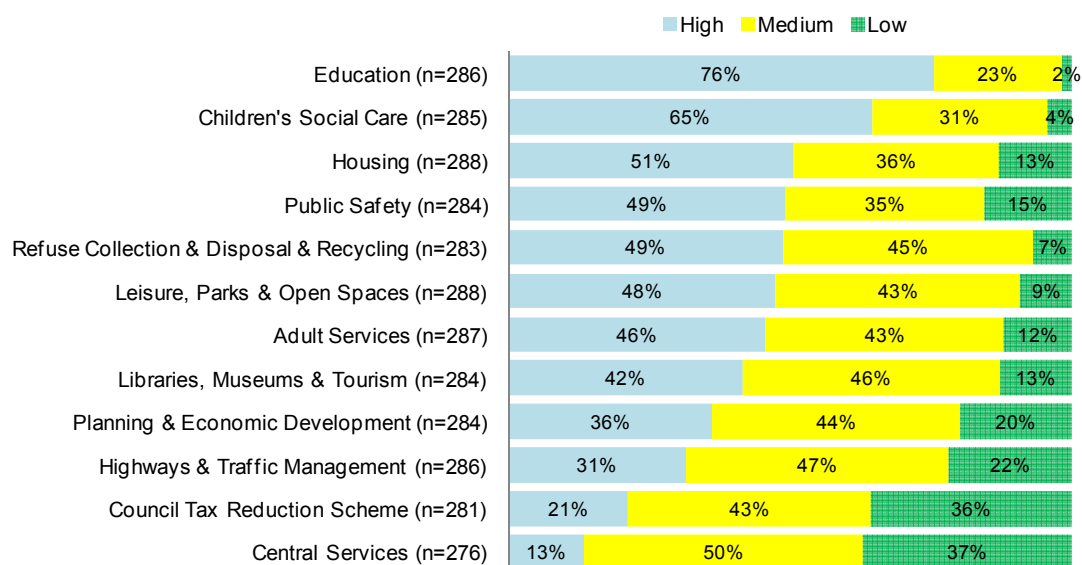
Again results show that respondents tended to rate things as a higher priority for the city than for themselves and their families.

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



Priority ratings of each service area: For the city



Higher priority areas

- For the self-selecting sample, as for the random sample, although the priority ranking of service areas is different depending on whether respondents were rating services for themselves or the city four of the highest ranked services feature in both rankings for respondents themselves and the city; Education, Public Safety, Refuse Collection, Disposal and Recycling and Children's Social Care.
- Education received the highest priority rating, when rated both for respondents themselves and their families and for the city. For the city, over three quarters rated it a high priority and 99% rated it a high or medium priority.

- Children's Social Care and Housing received high priority ratings for the city, 96% and 87% respectively rating them high or medium.
- For both the city and respondents themselves, very low proportions rated Refuse Collection, Disposal and Recycling as a low priority; 7% for the city and 4% for themselves.

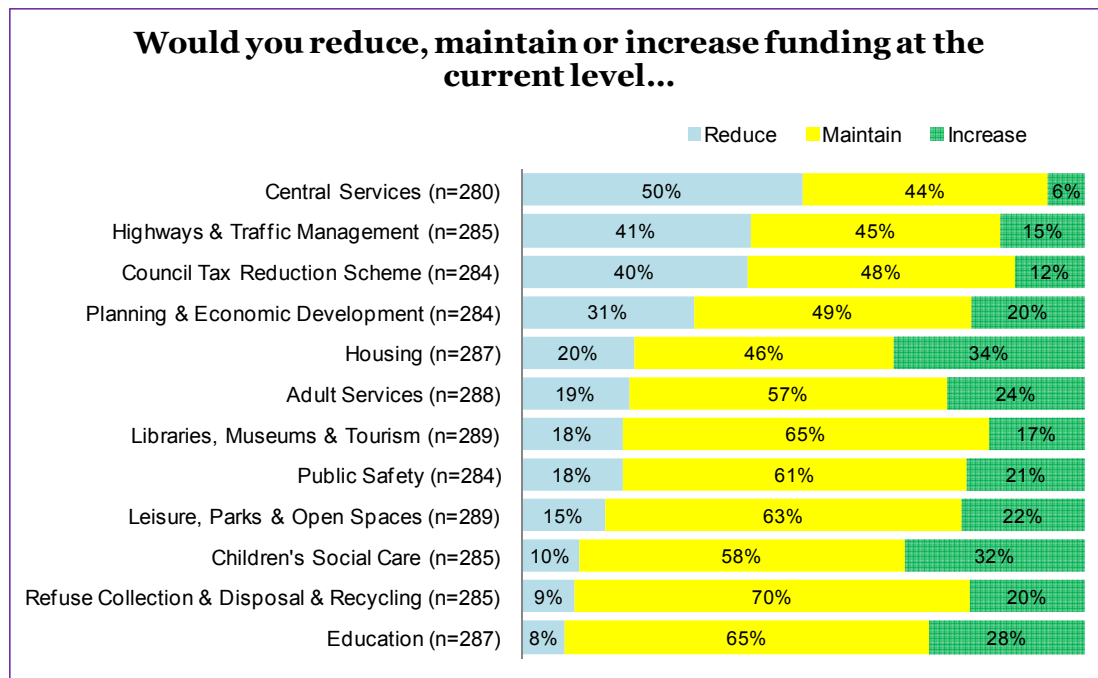
Lower priority areas

- The four lowest rated areas were the same regardless of whether respondents were rating them for themselves or the city and were Central Services, Council Tax Reduction Scheme, Highways and Traffic Management and Planning and Economic Development.
- The largest proportions rated Council Tax Reduction a low priority; for respondents and their families 55% rated it a low priority, compared to 36% for the city.
- Central Services received the smallest high priority ratings with just 12% rating it a high priority for themselves and 13% rating it a high priority for the city.
- Respondents consistently rated services as lower priorities for themselves than for the city.

Areas with the widest spread of opinion

- For both respondents themselves and the city, Highways and Traffic Management received the widest spread of opinion; for themselves, 27% rated it high and 29% low and for the city 31% rated it high and 22% rated it low.
- The widest spread of opinion when rating services for themselves and their families were Adult Services (32% high, 34% low), Highways and Traffic Management (27% high, 29% low), Planning and Economic Development (26% high and 31% low) and Children's Social Care (40% high, 32% low).
- Service areas where views were divided over the priority for the city were Highways and Traffic Management (31% high, 22% low) and Council Tax Reduction Scheme (21% high, 36% low).

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



Reduce funding

In almost all cases the majority did not want to reduce funding, preferring to maintain or increase funding. The exception was Central Services, where 50% did want funding reduced.

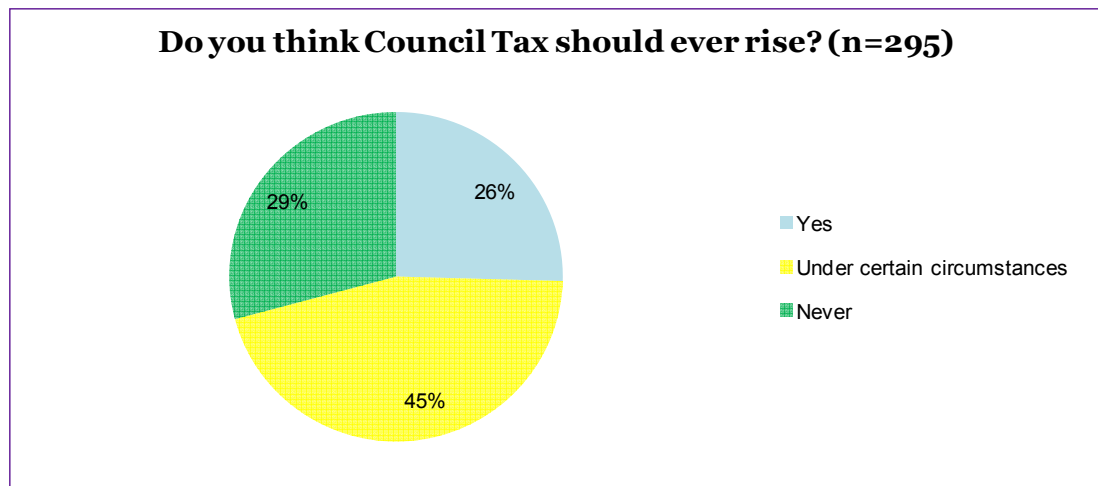
Increase funding

Around a third wanted to increase funding for Housing and Children's Social Care. Education also had a comparatively large proportion (28%) wanting funding increased.

Maintain funding

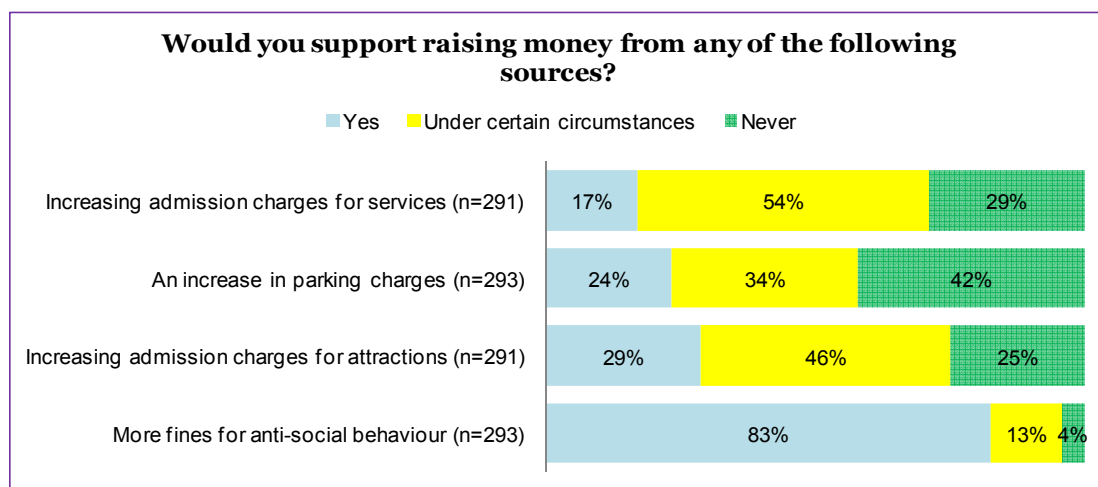
For all services at least two fifths wanted funding maintained. The service areas with the largest proportions wanting funding maintained were Refuse Collection, Disposal and Recycling (70%), Libraries, Museums and Tourism (65%) and Education (65%), followed by Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces (63%) and Public Safety (61%).

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



Around a quarter (26%) of the self-selecting sample felt that Council Tax should rise, in contrast to the results of the random sample survey where just 6% felt it should. 45% of this sample felt that an increase in Council Tax could be acceptable under certain circumstances, whilst 29% felt that it never could.

Respondents were then asked if they would support raising money from any of four different sources. The results are presented below.



Similar to the random sample, there was clear support for raising money from fines for anti-social behaviour, with 83% in favour and just 4% against.

The least popular suggestion for raising money was increasing parking charges, which 42% opposed, although notably, 24% were in favour.

Again, the issue of increasing admission charges for attractions divided views with 29% in favour and 25% against.

Online survey: self-selecting sample of City Partners (27 responses)

The following results show only where City Partners' responses were at least 10% different to the remainder of the self-selecting sample.

City Partners were more likely to rate these services as a high priority for the city, compared to the rest of the self-selecting sample:

- Children's Social Care
- Adults Services
- Planning and Economic Development
- Housing
- Education

City Partners were more likely to rate Council Tax Reduction as a low priority.

City Partners were less likely to want an increase in funding for:

- Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces
- Adult Services

They were more likely to want an increase in funding for:

- Children's Social Care

City Partners were less likely to want a reduction in funding for:

- Planning and Economic Development

City Partners were more likely to want a reduction in funding for:

- Housing

City Partners were less likely to say that an increase in Council Tax should "never" happen.

City Partners were less likely to:

- answer "yes" to an increase in parking charges;
- answer "never" to increasing admission charges for services;
- answer "never" to increasing admission charges for attractions.

City Partners were more likely to:

- answer "yes" to more fines for anti-social behaviour.

Verbal discussion of survey questions by the Youth Council (10 young people)

Young Council representatives felt that, for themselves and their families, the following service areas had the highest priority:

- Education
- Public Safety
- Council Tax Reduction
- Housing
- Children's Social Care

For the city the following service areas were given the highest priority by Young Council representatives:

- Public Safety
- Education
- Council Tax Reduction
- Housing

- Children's Social Care

In terms of funding, Young Council representatives thought that funding should be:

- Increased for Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Children's Social Care
- Maintained for Adult Services
- Reduced for Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces

Asked whether Council Tax should ever rise, 8 people felt it should never rise, one felt it could in certain circumstances and one felt it should rise.

There was overwhelming support from Young Council representatives to raise revenue from increasing admission charges for attractions.

Young Council representatives felt that under certain circumstances it would be justifiable to increase revenue through fines for anti-social behaviour.

There was little support for increasing revenue from parking or increasing admission charges for services.

Young Council representatives had a lot of suggestions for ways the council could increase revenue:

- Higher charges for tourist attractions and a loyalty card for residents;
- Encourage volunteers to do things that cost the council to do and as 'pay-back' reduce their council tax;
- Reduce the salaries of top officials;
- Reduce non-essential bus services and concessionary bus passes;
- Increase parking fines by 20%;
- Increase the council's stock portfolio to a point where it becomes a profitable return through investment;
- Progressive tax system for council tax;
- Sell council properties;
- Introduce a congestion charge;
- Fund raising events for services such as libraries;
- Business to offer an 'exchange'; a percentage of income generated to be given to support essential services – residents decide (similar concept to a well-known supermarket);
- Increase the use of Madeira Drive for chargeable events;
- Employees to be given the opportunity to donate a percentage of their income (via a deduction from salary) to support worthy causes – this would have the added advantage of positive PR for the council;
- More investment to generate income;
- A city wide charity event to include schools and businesses to raise money for services that would otherwise be paid for out of the budget.

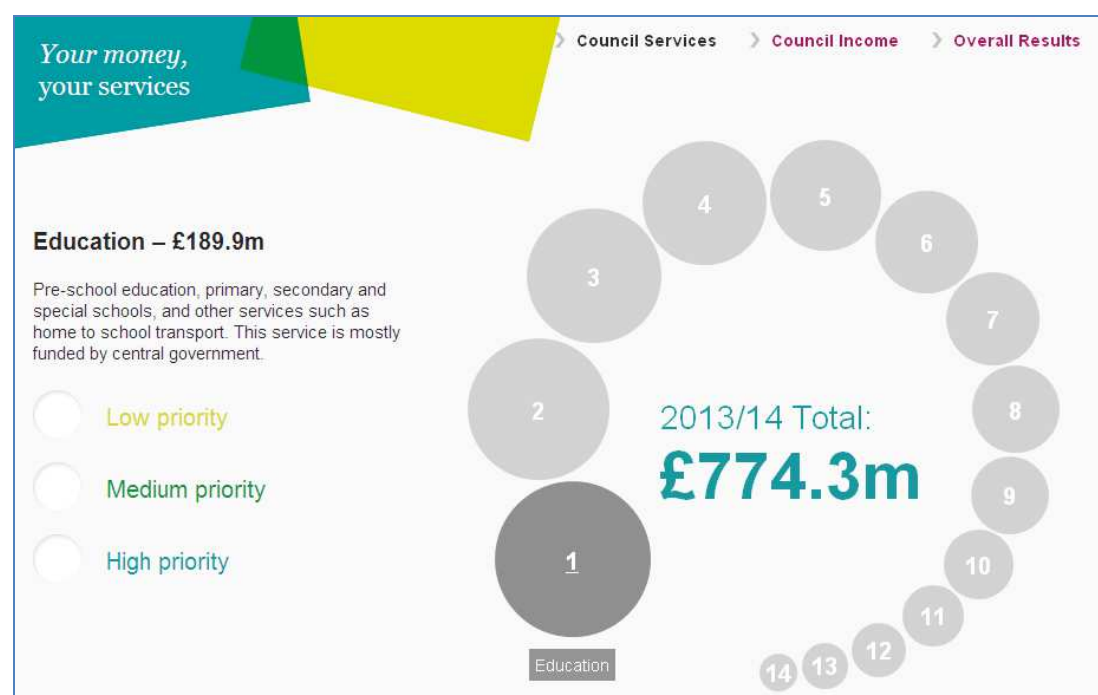
In response to a question about other changes to council services young people would make, two concepts stood out:

- Charge ‘a little for little’; reduce the charge for existing services as an incentive to maintain and develop services whereby residents get a ‘little’ support from services for a ‘little’ fee;
- Reward residents; introduce a loyalty card.

Online budget literacy and prioritisation tool (83)

By 17 January 2014 440 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 when the user clicks 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 440 people have looked at the tool (these are individuals looking at the tool rather than the number of visits which is 655) a maximum of 130 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.

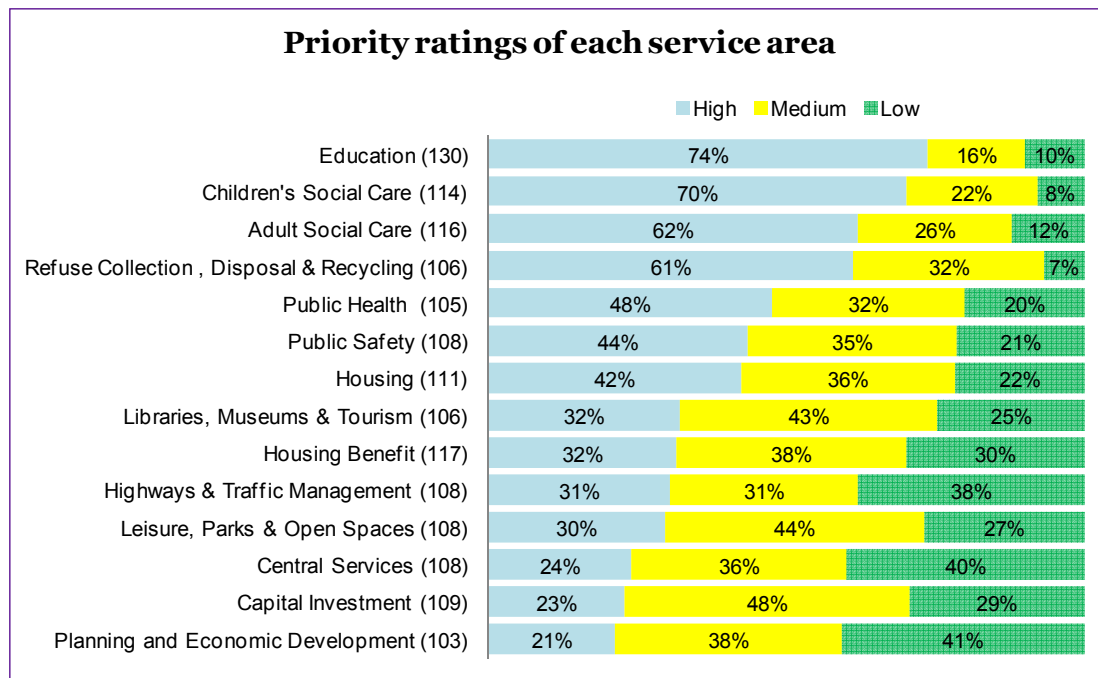


On the final screen of the tool users can see the average results of how users of the tool have prioritised services.

Not all users who prioritised any services as high, medium or low prioritised all services; they missed out rating some. For example, 130 users have given Education a priority rating but only 103 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.



Higher priority areas

- Education and Children's Social Care received high priority ratings with at least 70% rating them a high priority and at least 90% rating them a high or medium priority.
- Adult Social Care and Refuse Collection, Disposal and Recycling were also higher priority areas, though comparatively larger proportions thought they were medium priorities. A very small proportion thought Refuse was a low priority (7%).
- Public Health, Public Safety and Housing were all rated similarly, with around four fifths of the sample rating these as high or medium priorities (80%, 79% and 78%).

Lower priority areas

- Three areas were rated as a low priority by around two fifths of users of the tool; Planning and Economic Development (41%), Central Services (40%), and Highways and Traffic Management (38%).
- Capital Investment was rated a high priority by a small proportion of people, 23%, but a comparatively large proportion (48%) rated it a medium priority.
- Planning and Economic Development was rated a low priority by the largest proportion (41%).

Areas with the widest spread of opinion

- Housing Benefit was rated a high priority by 32%, a medium priority by 38% and a low priority by 30% revealing little agreement about its status; a very narrow margin (2%) rated it a high rather than low priority.

- Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces was rated high by 30%, and low by 27%, again showing a narrow margin (3%) rate it a high rather than low priority.
- Highways and Traffic Management was rated high by 31%, medium by 31% and low by 38, so marginally more people felt it was a lower priority than high.
- Capital Investment also divided opinion with 23% rating it high, 48% rating it medium, and 26% rating it low. Whilst the largest proportion rated it a medium priority a narrow margin rated it a low rather than high priority.

B) BUDGET CONSULTATION APPROACH FOR 2014/15

Following a review of what worked well and what could be improved in terms of consultation with residents around the budget that has taken place in previous years it was agreed that the approach for supporting the 2014/15 budget setting process would be designed to achieve two objectives:

1. Obtaining a statistically robust and representative response to the budget survey.
2. Ensuring that as many residents as possible have the opportunity to engage with the council's 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 2013, 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.

C) 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 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 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%.

Paper and online survey: self-selecting sample

Paper copies of the survey were available in public buildings such as our libraries, customer service centres and other council buildings and the survey was available online on the Consultation Portal from 4 October 2013 to 17 January 2014.

As the sample of people completing these surveys was self selecting, the results have been analysed separately to the results of the random sample.

297 surveys were received via this method by 17 January 2014.

A link to the online survey was sent to City Partners by the Head of Partnerships. This elicited 27 responses so the results have been analysed within the self-selecting sample. However, where the answers of this sub-group differ by 10% or more compared to the rest of the sample these differences have been highlighted briefly in the report.

Verbal discussion of survey questions by representatives of the Youth Council

The Youth Service Participation Team facilitated consultation with young people on the Youth Council, which included asking 10 young people to discuss and answer the survey questions. Their collective views are presented here.

Online budget literacy and prioritisation tool

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 17 January 2014.

In total 440 people had used the tool and a maximum of 130 people went on to prioritise service areas.