

Consultation report: Budget Survey 2016/17

1. Introduction and purpose

Consultation and feedback is important to the council, particularly views on prioritising resources in challenging financial circumstances. However, the council provides over 800 public services and local government finance is unfortunately complex making it difficult to design a consultation approach which residents and others can readily understand and engage with. In an attempt to address this, a questionnaire has been used in recent years which has provided a simple and effective way for residents to express views about council tax increases, raising other revenues and prioritising spending. Ultimately, however, the complexity of services and finances may explain the low response rates experienced in recent years. For this reason, and given the challenging financial situation, the council has focused this year on delivering a lower cost but highly accessible consultation process via the council's website and through social media (e.g. Twitter) with paper copies of the questionnaire being made available in Libraries.

The budget questionnaire and information on the website were therefore also part of a promotion to inform residents about the council's budget and finances as well as gathering residents views on:

- Increasing council tax to reduce pressure on council resources
- Increase council tax by 2% to support Adult Social Care services
- Increasing other revenues
- Attitudes to volunteering to run public services
- Services to prioritise for funding

The purpose of this report is to feed back the results and findings from the budget consultation.

2. Methodology

An on-line self-completion questionnaire was devised to both inform and give residents an opportunity to comment on Brighton & Hove City Council's budget. Most of the questions were similar to those used in previous years. Links were provided to the appropriate budget and social care pages on the council website where information on the budget proposals for 2016/17 to 2019/20, where the council's money comes from and how it is currently spent could be found.

The questionnaire was available on the city's Consultation Portal between 3 December 2015 and 17 January 2016 with the link distributed via the usual council channels with specific emphasis on social media linking through to the council webpages and consultation. Provision was made in all main and community libraries to support residents without access to, or knowledge of, using the internet to complete the questionnaire.

A poster was sent to 250 outlets across the city and the CCG was sent graphics to display on GP surgery screens.

Advertising was placed in the Argus, Brighton and Hove Independent and online at brightonandhovenews.org alongside media coverage of the consultation.

As a self-selecting questionnaire it is not possible to determine with any accuracy if the responses to the survey are representative of those in the city as a whole.

As part of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to complete the council's standard equalities monitoring form. Questions on housing tenure, make up of households, postcode and in what capacity the respondent was completing the questionnaire were also asked.

3. Response and respondents' profile

In total 438 responses were received including:

- 401 residents
- 9 visitors
- 8 Community & Voluntary Sector organisation representatives
- 2 local businesses
- 2 stakeholder representatives
- 23 'other' respondents (the majority classifying themselves as workers in the city)

(Note: these are not mutually exclusive)

Relatively high numbers of respondents (15 to 24% depending on the question) did not complete the equalities and demographic questions. Therefore it is not possible to compare the respondents profile with that of the city as whole.

A full equalities and demographic profile can be found in section 5 of this report.

4. Results and findings

These results are the responses from Brighton & Hove residents only (401 respondents). The number of visitors and 'other' respondents is too small for meaningful analysis and responses from the community and voluntary sector, stakeholders and businesses will be considered separately.

Responses to all closed questions from the survey have been analysed by the following demographics and equalities groups;

- Age
- Carers
- Connection to the Armed Forces
- Ethnicity
- Households with at least one child
- Households with at least one adult aged 65 or over
- Housing tenure
- Health problem and disability
- Postal sectors
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation

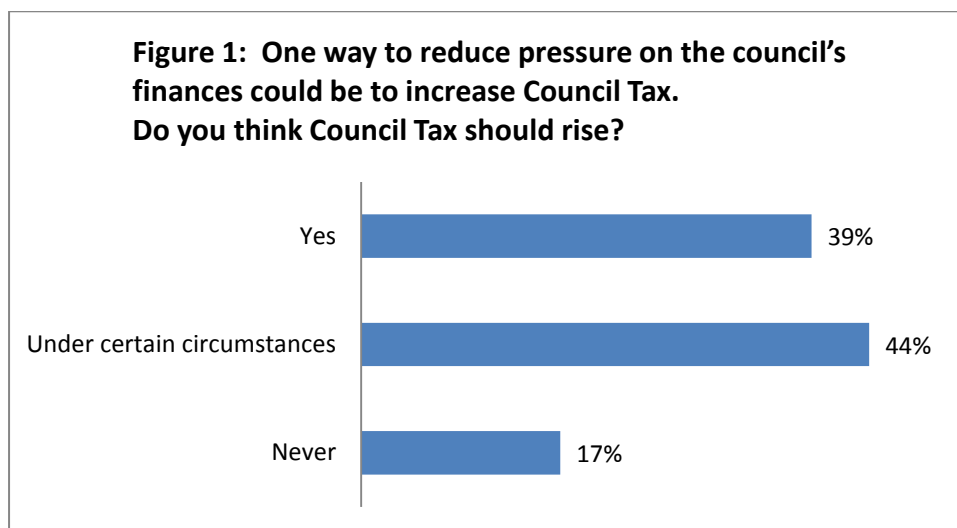
Due to the relatively high numbers of respondents that did not provide complete equalities and demographic data, combined with the small number of responses from some groups, makes equalities and demographic analysis difficult. Therefore care needs to be taken when interpreting the results.

4.1 Raising Council Tax

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

Nearly two out of five respondents (156 people, 39%) felt that Council Tax should rise with less than half that number (69 people, 17%) responding never. A further 44% (176 people) thought that Council Tax should rise in certain circumstances.

In comparison to the self-selecting sample in last year's budget consultation, this year 8% more are in favour of Council Tax rising while 5% fewer are saying never.



Base: all respondents who answered the question (n=401, 100%)

However, among respondents in last year's random sample only 13% thought Council Tax should rise with 39% saying never.

Analysis of the comments made by respondents who answered that Council Tax could rise 'under certain circumstances' was conducted to establish what those circumstances are (figure 2). It shows five main positions;

- If the rise is in order to maintain core or essential services (34 people, 23%)
- If the system is progressive / means tested (20 people, 14%)
- If the rise is small or not more than 2% (14 people, 9%)
- If it's a last resort and efficiencies have been made (14 people, 9%)
- If there is a demonstrated need and accountability (14 people, 9%)

Other responses specified specific services with services for the vulnerable, elderly and health services most mentioned (7%).

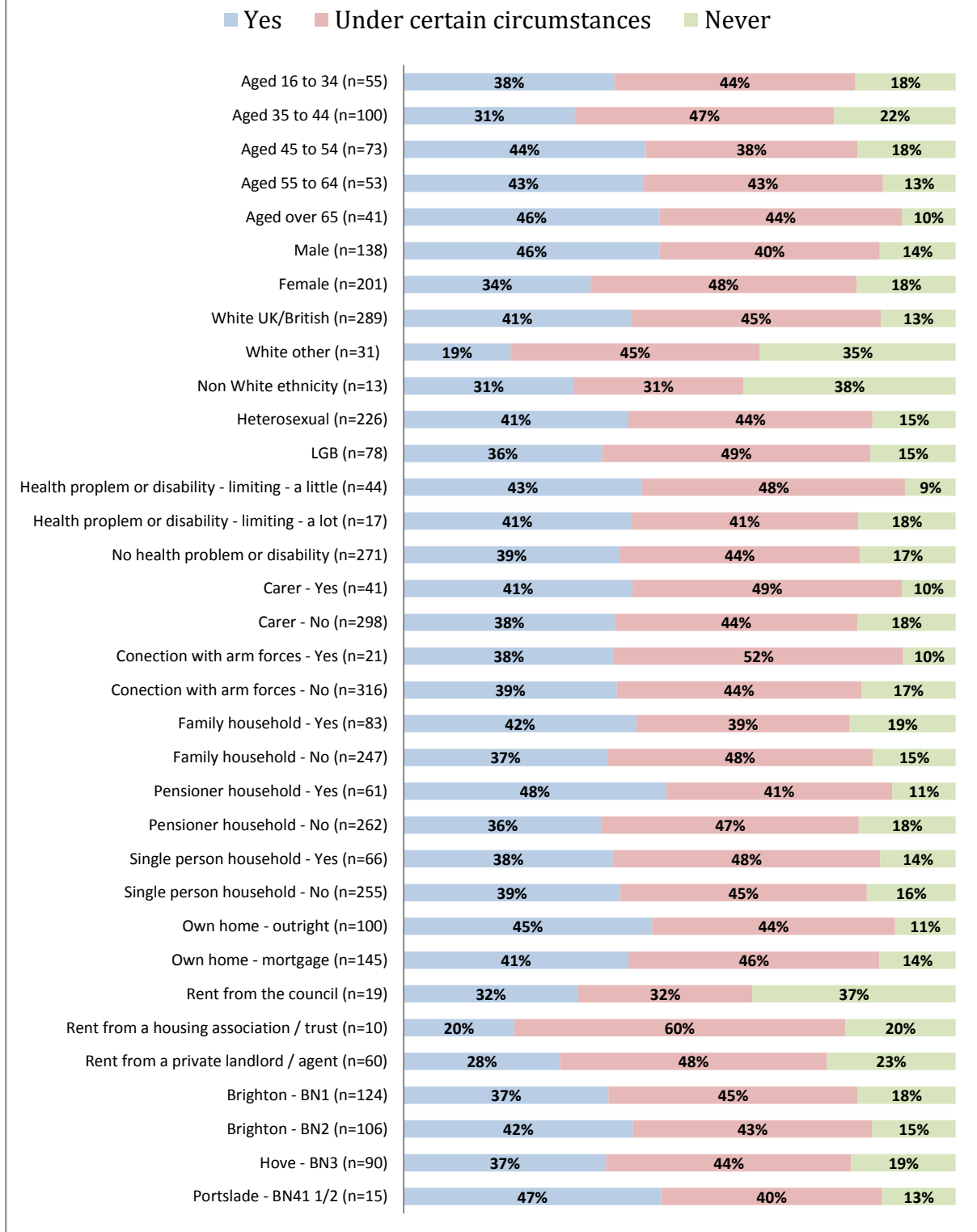
When looking at the responses by equalities and demographic groups (figure 3) there are some notable proportional differences to responses:

- Twice as many respondents with a non White (5 people, 38%) or other White (11 people, 35%) ethnicity said that Council Tax should never rise compared to 17% of all respondents and only 13% of respondents with a White British/UK ethnicity.
- Twice as many respondents who rent from the council (seven people, 37%) said Council Tax should never rise compared to 17% of all respondents and is also between 14 and 26 percent points higher than for all other types of tenure.

- While nearly a half of male respondents (64 people, 46%) think Council Tax should rise only a third (68 people, 34%) of female respondents do so.

Figure 2: Under what circumstances would you be prepared for Council Tax to rise?		
	Number	Percent
To support / protect services for...		
vital / core / essential / front line	34	23%
vulnerable / disadvantaged people	11	7%
elderly / older people	11	7%
NHS / health and or disability	10	7%
animal welfare / dog team	7	5%
making it better for residents	6	4%
youth / children / young people's services	8	5%
social / welfare care	5	3%
Cityclean / cleaner street	5	3%
education	4	3%
police	3	2%
rough sleeping / homelessness	3	2%
libraries	3	2%
better parks and or play grounds	2	1%
highways / transport	2	1%
support people benefits	1	< 1%
discount bus fares	1	< 1%
public toilets	1	< 1%
services (no more detail given)	10	7%
If the increase was...		
progressive / means tested	20	14%
a last resort / efficiencies been made	14	9%
for a demonstrated need and or with accountability	14	9%
small / in line with inflation / not more than 2%	14	9%
Figure 2 continued....		
tax student properties / landlord tax	5	3%
for infrastructure projects	5	3%
If the money raised is not spent on...		
pay or allowances for staff or councillors	9	6%
road / cycle schemes	2	1%
vanity projects	2	1%
Miscellaneous	21	14%
Base: All residents who thought council tax could rise under certain circumstance who answered the question (n=148, 76%)		

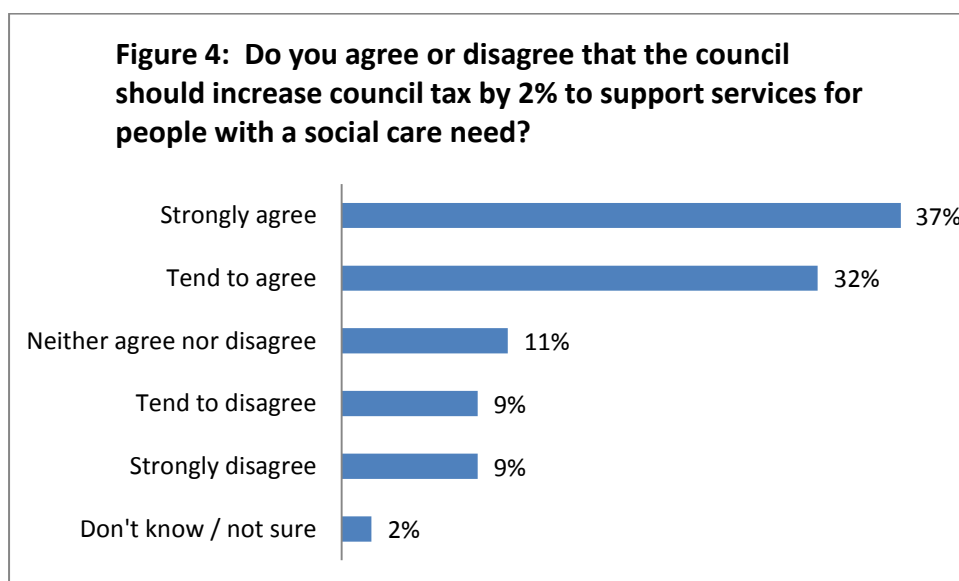
Figure 3: Do you think Council Tax should rise



Base: All respondents who answered the question about raising council tax and who answered the appropriate equalities or demographic question.

4.2 Supporting services for adults with a social care need

Respondents were asked if they supported increasing Council Tax by 2% to specifically fund adult social care services.



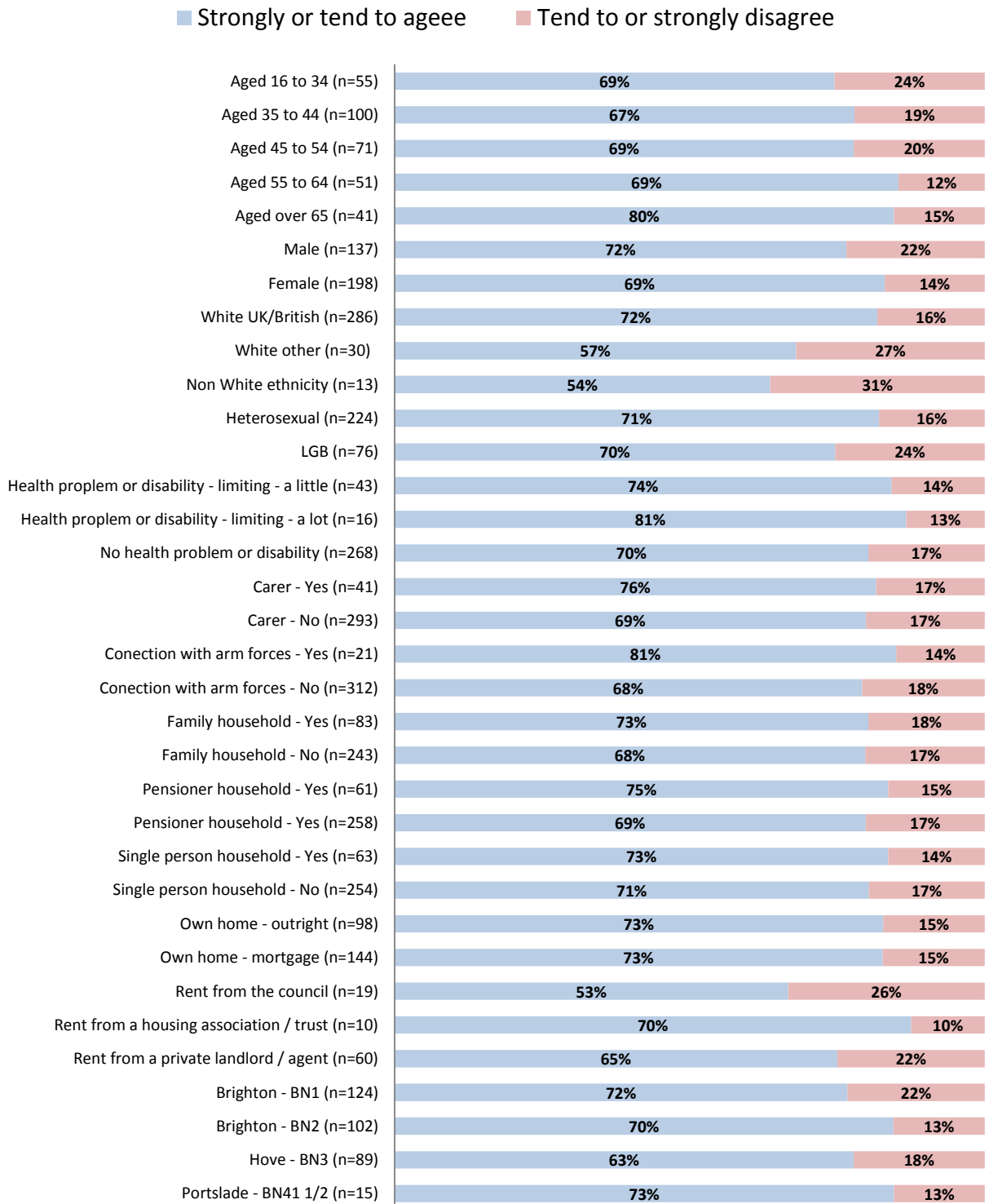
Base: All respondents who answered the question (n=396, 99%)

More than two thirds of respondents (274 people, 69%) strongly or tend to agree that the council should increase Council Tax by 2% to support services for adults with a social care need. Nearly four times more than those who tend to or strongly disagree (72 people, 18%).

When looking at the responses by equalities and demographic groups (figure 5) there are some notable proportional differences to responses.

- While only 16% (46 people) of White UK/British respondents disagree that Council Tax should rise, nearly a third of respondents with a non White ethnicity (4 people, 31%) and more than a quarter of respondents with a White other ethnicity (8 people, 27%) do so.
- While only just over a half of respondents (10 people, 53%) who rent from the council agree that Council Tax should rise by 2%, between 65 and 73% of respondents who live in the other types of tenure think it should rise.

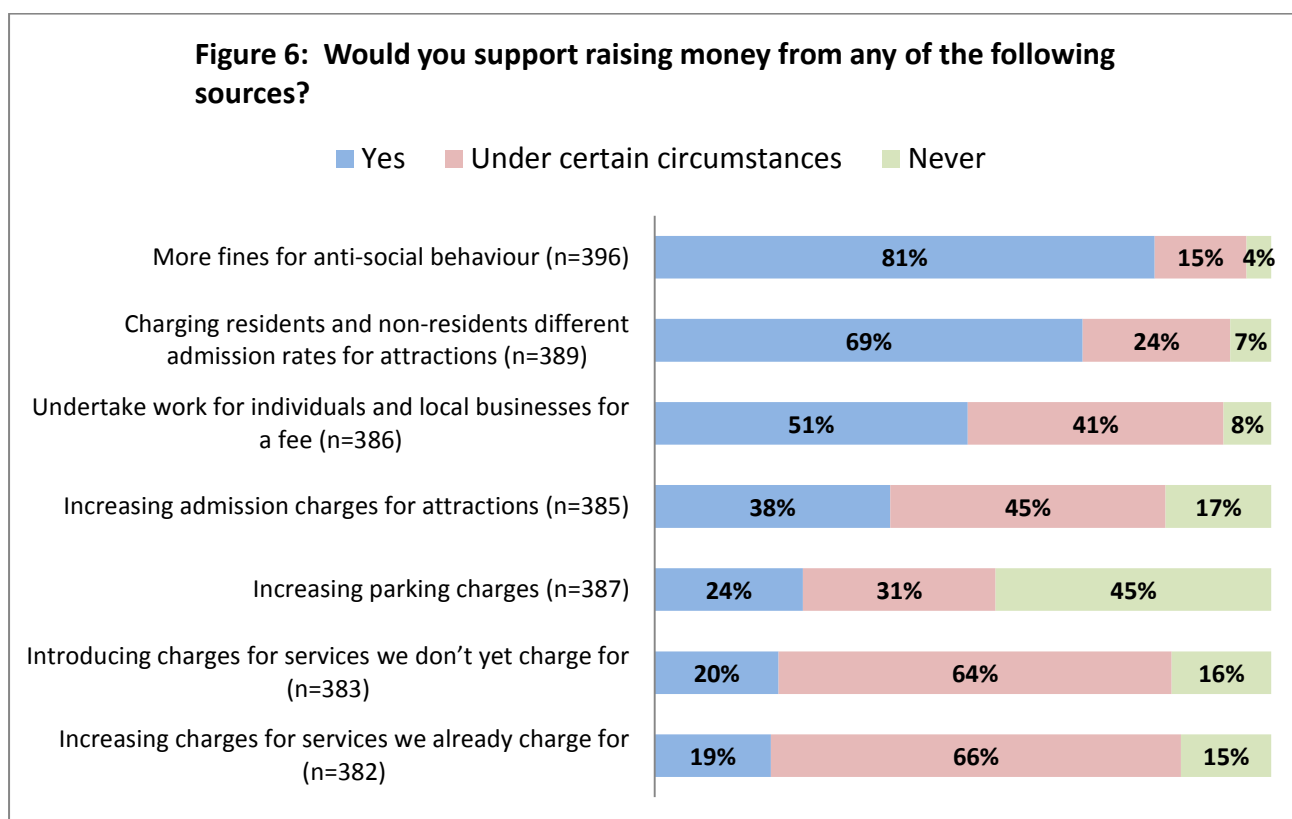
Figure 5: Do you agree or disagree that the council should increase council tax by 2% to support services for people with a social care need?



Base: All respondents who answered the question about raising council tax and who answered the appropriate equalities or demographic question.

4.3 Raising money from other sources

Respondents were asked if they would support raising money from any of seven different sources. Figure 6 summarises their responses.



Base: All respondents who answered the individual questions

As in previous years there was clear support for raising money through more fines for anti-social behaviour with more than four out of five (81%) saying yes.

A majority of respondents also support 'charging residents and non-residents different admission rates for attraction' (69%) and a small majority support the council 'undertaking work for individuals and local businesses for a fee' (51%).

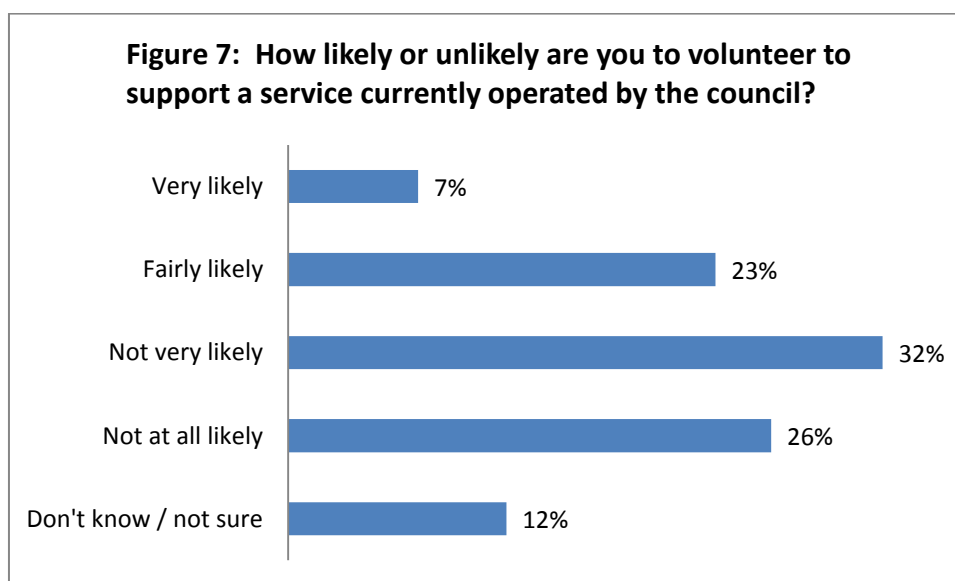
Less than one in five (17%) said that admissions charges should never increase, with 38% supporting an increase and 45% saying they could increase under certain circumstances.

Views on 'increasing charges for services we already charge for' and 'introducing charges for services we don't' are mixed with a similar but relatively small proportions saying yes and never (20% or smaller) with the majority (just under two thirds) in both cases saying they could but only in certain circumstances.

Increasing parking charges is the area where the most respondents (45%) say they would never support. However, a majority (55%) would support increasing parking charges although 31% would only agree under certain circumstances.

4.4 Volunteering

Respondents were asked how likely they would be to volunteer to support a public service currently operated by the council. Figure 7 summarises their responses.



Base: All respondents who answered the question (n=399, 100%)

Nearly a third of respondent's (120 people, 30%) said that they would be very or fairly likely to volunteer to support a service currently provided by the council. Only 58 per cent (232 people) said they were not very or not at all likely too. Just over one in ten (47 people, 12%) were undecided.

4.5 Priority services

Respondents were asked in an open question which services the council should priorities. Analysis of the comments made by respondents is summarised in figure 8. Four out of five respondents (319 people, 80%) responded to the question making over 750 suggestions. Some suggestions were very specific while others were general in nature. Some respondents name only one service or theme while others named many. Therefore it should be noted that most respondents are not mutually exclusive to one service or theme.

The vast majority of services mentioned and the reasons given relate to protecting the most vulnerable in the city. A quarter of respondents (80 people, 25%) mentioned social care or a specific service relating to social care. More than a fifth of respondents (69 people, 22%) mentioned health services, 10% (31 people) mentioned (without being specific) services for vulnerable people, the disadvantaged and low paid and 10% (33 people) mentioned housing services, again, mostly in the context of the potentially vulnerable and disadvantaged.

Fig 8: Are there any particular service areas that you would prioritise for funding?

	Number	Percent
Social care / care services	80	25%
<i>i) Children</i>	15	5%
<i>ii) Adult</i>	27	8%
<i>iii) Elderly</i>	21	7%
Health services	69	22%
<i>i) Mental health</i>	25	8%
<i>ii) Learning disabilities / SEN(D) / special needs</i>	16	5%
<i>iii) service for those with a disability</i>	11	3%
<i>v) Drug and alcohol / addictions</i>	4	1%
<i>vi) Public health</i>	4	1%
<i>iv) Services for the deaf</i>	3	< 1%
Animal welfare / dog wardens	62	19%
Services for children's inc. children's centres / sure start	39	12%
Services for vulnerable people / disadvantaged / low income	31	10%
Housing / Housing services	33	10%
<i>i) social / council / for the vulnerable</i>	11	3%
<i>ii) Private sector</i>	3	< 1%
<i>iii) Older people</i>	3	< 1%
Homelessness	25	8%
Cityclean - refuse / clean street	23	7%
Education	19	6%
Services for older / elderly people	19	6%
Libraries	18	6%
Infrastructure / regeneration / highways / arches	18	6%
Youth service / young people services	17	5%
Parks / open spaces / play grounds / allotments	17	5%
Preventative work (inc. families) early help / advice services	11	3%
Women refuge / domestic violence / violence against women/girls	11	3%
Public toilets	11	3%
Leisure services / swimming pool	9	3%
Special schools / schools / nurseries / child care	8	3%
City environment - linked to tourism	8	3%
Community safety / ASB / police	7	2%
Rough sleepers	7	2%
CTR / Benefits	5	2%
Environment	6	2%
Park rangers	5	2%
Community development / services / centres	5	2%
Bus passes / discounted travel	4	1%
Travellers - dealing with	4	1%
Services for adult	3	< 1%
Income generating services	3	< 1%
Economic development	2	< 1%
Public transport	2	< 1%
All services are important	8	3%
Miscellaneous / off topic	35	11%
Base: All residents who responded (n=319, 80%)		

Services mentioned that did not directly relate to vulnerable people included the animal welfare service mentioned by a fifth of respondents (62 people, 19%) and Cityclean (23 people, 7%). 6% of people mentioned Education (19 people), services for older people (19 people), libraries (18 people) and or infrastructure / regeneration projects (18 people).

4.6 General comments

Finally respondents were asked if they had any other comments about the budget proposals. Just over half of respondents (209 people, 52%) made comments. Comments made were varied in their detail with many not relating to the budget proposals.

There were only 7 themes where 10 or more people (5%) made related comments:

- Concerns about cuts to / support for the animal welfare / dog warden service (31 people, 15%)
- Need for a robust review of all services. How they are delivered and staff wages, often with reference to senior management and directors (30 people, 14%)
- Need to protect vulnerable people those on low pay and or that the proposals unfairly affect these groups (23 people, 11%)
- A need for the council / politicians to stand up / lobby to protect local services against cuts imposed by central government (14 people, 7%)
- In relation to the budget process, a need for more openness and transparency, better communications and accountability (13 people, 6%)
- Concerns about cuts to / support for services for children and young people including cuts to children centres and the youth service (12 people, 6%)
- Concerns about spending on road and or cycle schemes (10 people, 5%)

Other themes mentioned by between 6 and 9 people were:

- Cutting services will just make the situation worse and more expensive in the future
- Happy to pay more tax to save services / or if money is not wasted
- Use of volunteers to provide services is not the answer / will not work
- A need for a progressive / means tested tax
- The council needs to be more radical and innovative
- Still more saving / efficiency to be made
- Enforce by-laws through fines
- Concern about / support for health and disability services including support for Tower House
- Concern / support for services for older people
- Concern / support for park rangers service
- Support for keeping bus passes and concern about proposed new restriction
- Concern about closure of public toilets
- Parking charges too high / concern about increasing charges
- Concerns about support for the I360

5. Full respondent profile

		Frequency	Percentage of all respondents	Percentage answered the question
Age Group				
Valid	16 to 24	7	2%	2%
	25 to 34	48	12%	15%
	35 to 44	100	25%	31%
	45 to 54	73	18%	23%
	55 to 64	53	13%	17%
	65 to 74	38	10%	12%
	75 and over	3	1%	<1%
	Total	322	80%	100%
Missing	Not known	25	6%	
	Prefer not to say	54	14%	
	Total	79	20%	
Total		401	100%	
What gender are you?				
Valid	Male	138	34%	41%
	Female	201	50%	59%
	Other	1	<1%	<1%
	Total	340	85%	100%
Missing	Not known	28	7%	
	Prefer not to say	33	8%	
	Total	61	15%	
Total		401	100%	
Do you identify as the sex you were assigned at birth?				
Valid	Yes	309	77%	97%
	No	8	2%	3%
	Total	317	79%	100%
Missing	Not known	47	12%	
	Prefer not to say	37	9%	
	Total	84	21%	
Total		401	100%	
How would you describe your ethnic origin?				
Valid	White UK/British	289	72%	85%
	White Irish	9	2%	3%
	Other White	31	8%	9%
	Non White	13	3%	4%
	Total	342	85%	100%
Missing	Not Known	26	7%	
	Prefer not to say	33	8%	
	Total	59	15%	
Total		401	100%	
Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?				
Valid	Heterosexual	226	56%	74%

		Frequency	Percentage of all respondents	Percentage answered the question
	LGB	78	20%	26%
	Other	2	<1%	<1%
	Total	306	76%	100%
Missing	Not known	41	10%	
	Prefer not to say	54	14%	
	Total	95	24%	
Total		401	100%	
What is your religion or belief?				
Valid	I have no particular religion	161	40%	50%
	Buddhist	4	1%	1%
	Christian	79	20%	24%
	Jewish	4	1%	1%
	Pagan	2	<1%	<1%
	Agnostic	13	3%	4%
	Atheist	51	13%	16%
	Other religion	5	1%	2%
	Other philosophical belief	6	2%	2%
	Total	325	81%	100%
Missing	Not known	30	8%	
	Prefer not to say	46	12%	
	Total	76	19%	
Total		401	100%	
Are you day to day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last 12 months?				
Valid	Yes a little	44	11%	13%
	Yes a lot	17	4%	5%
	No	271	68%	82%
	Total	332	82%	100%
Missing	Not known	32	8%	
	Prefer not to say	37	9%	
	Total	69	17%	
Total		401	100%	
Are you a Carer?				
Valid	Yes	41	10%	12%
	No	298	74%	88%
	Total	339	84%	100%
Missing	Not known	31	8%	
	Prefer not to say	31	78%	
	Total	62	16%	
Total		401	100%	
With a connection to the armed forces				
Valid	Yes	21	5%	6%
	No	316	79%	94%
	Total	337	84%	100%

		Frequency	Percentage of all respondents	Percentage answered the question
Missing	Not known	64	16%	
Total		401	100%	
Household with at least one child				
Valid	Yes	83	21%	25%
	No	247	62%	75%
	Total	330	82%	100%
Missing	Not known	71	18%	
Total		401	100%	
Household with at least one pensioner				
Valid	Yes	61	15%	19%
	No	262	65%	81%
	Total	323	81%	100%
Missing	Not known	78	20%	
Total		401	100%	
Single person household				
Valid	Yes	66	17%	21%
	No	255	64%	79%
	Total	321	80%	100%
Missing		80	20%	
Total		401	100%	
In what way does your household occupy your current accommodation?				
Valid	Owned outright	100	25%	30%
	Buying on a mortgage	145	36%	43%
	Rent from the council	19	5%	6%
	Rent from HA / trust	10	3%	3%
	Rent from a privately	60	15%	18%
	Other	3	<1%	<1%
	Total	337	84%	100%
Missing	No response	30	8%	
	Prefer not to say	34	9%	
	Total	64	16%	
Total		401	100%	
Postal area				
Valid	BN1 (Brighton)	124	31%	37%
	BN2 (Brighton)	106	26%	32%
	BN3 (Hove)	90	22%	27%
	BN41 ½ (Portslade)	15	4%	5%
	Total	335	84%	100%
Missing	Not known	63	16%	
	Other	3	<1%	
	Total	66	17%	
Total		401	100%	