

APPENDIX 2

BUDGET 2020/21: CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

1.0 SUMMARY

This report provides Members with an analysis of the feedback received from residents and council staff in relation to the council budget for 2020/21. The feedback includes:

- Results from the Budget Questionnaire
- Feedback from residents and staff who attended a series of budget workshops during January 2019

Members are invited to take account of this feedback as part of the decision-making process for the 2020/21 budget and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

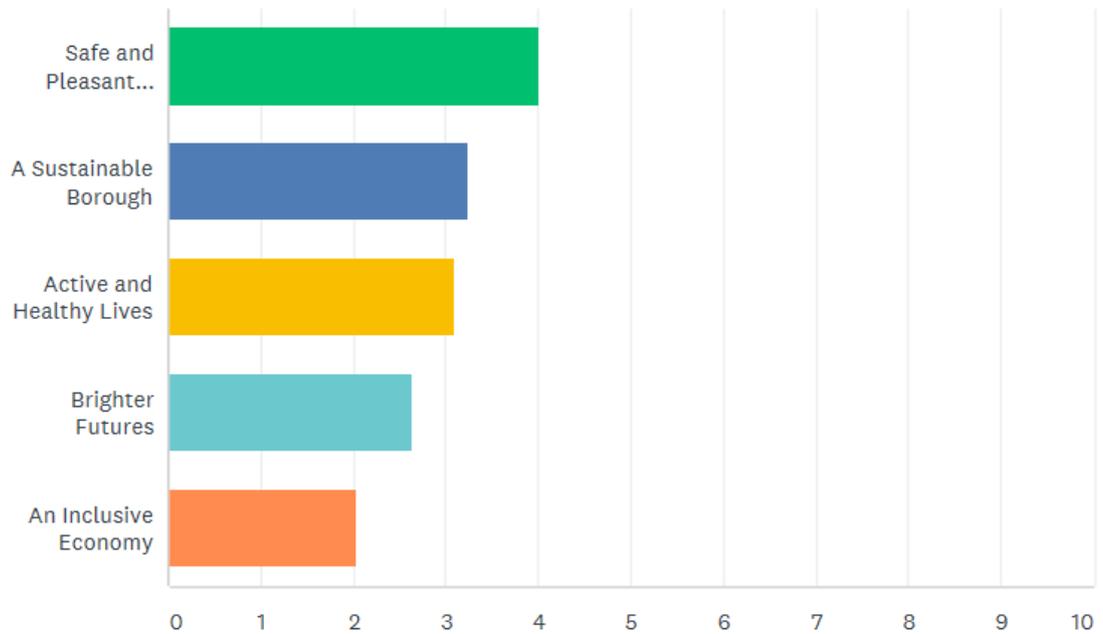
2.0 BUDGET QUESTIONNAIRE

The budget questionnaire was made available to residents through local services, online, and through the local press, Wirral View and social media. A total of 179 responses have been received.

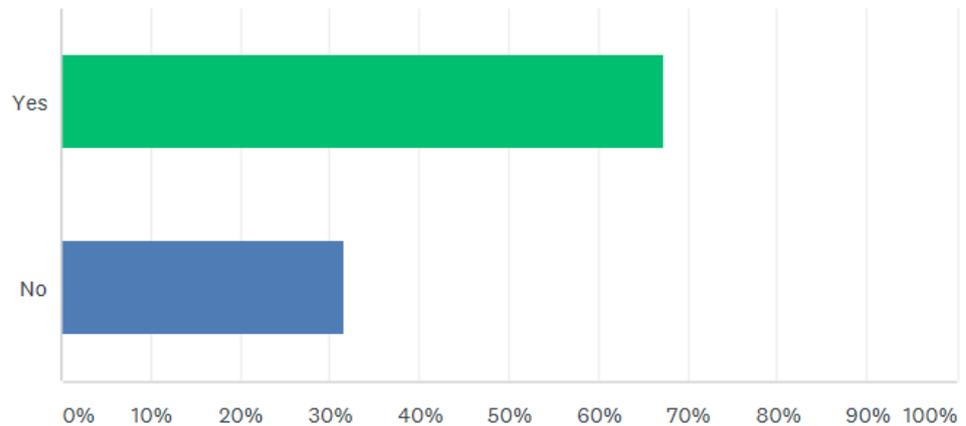
The consultation questionnaire then went on to gather views on the key priorities of the Council and proposals which could generate financial savings. The feedback from these questions are provided for Members in the charts below.

Five Priorities

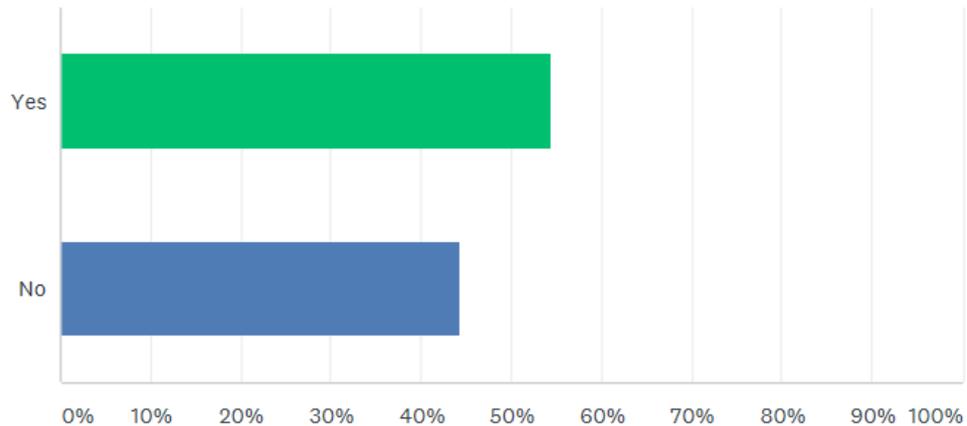
Q1: Below are the five priorities that you have told us matter to you. These are the areas where Council resources should be invested. How would you rank them, in terms of importance? (1 being the most important, 5 being the least)



Q2: Do you agree that they should be the top five priorities?



Q3: Do you believe anything else should be in the top five priorities?



Q4: Please explain your ranking for: Safe and Pleasant Communities. The everyday services people want the most – street cleaning, tackling dog-fouling, road maintenance, streetlights, grass-cutting – will be delivered to the best possible standard

Comments Received

We received 49 comments, key themes identified were:

- There is a strong connection between feeling safe and public areas being clean.
- Public perception is that most services are delivered in a reactive manner rather than proactive or through good maintenance activity
- Wirral Council is not getting the basics right in terms of dog fouling, litter and fly tipping.
- Street lighting and pothole repairs are inadequate.
- Concerns that not enough is done to address anti-social behaviour.
- Grass verges should be allowed to be “wild” rather than managed with pesticides
- Removing the Kingdom contract was welcomed, but current enforcement is inadequate

Q5: Please explain your ranking for: A Sustainable Borough. The latest global scientific evidence makes clear that the way with live our lives is not sustainable. As a council we have traditionally focused on keeping Wirral clean and tidy and protecting our cherished local environment. We need to act fast to turn things around. In short, working for a sustainable borough will make Wirral a better place.

We received 88 comments, key themes identified were:

- Most comments focussed on wanting recycling facilities to be better, easier to understand, more accessible and having wider geographical reach.

- Other comments included improvements to public transport and cycle facilities to reduce car use.
- Perceived disappointment in Council interactions with business and developers to improve the longer term sustainability for the Borough.
- General comments supporting the importance of climate change activity and long term planning to protect green space.

Q6: Please explain your ranking for: Active and Healthy Lives. In Wirral we want all our residents to have a good quality of life. Good health and wellbeing is key to this and achieving that is more than about health services. A good start in life, education, opportunities for leisure, sports and exercise and services to support our elderly and most vulnerable all play a part.

We received 49 comments, key themes identified were:

- Primarily, this was seen as the responsibility of the individual / community and therefore a low priority for Council spending.
- However, there were a number of comments looking at how to improve the position for the elderly and young people, particularly low cost or free access to health and wellbeing services.
- Some comment recognised that better health and wellbeing offer would reduce costs for the NHS.

Q7: Please explain your ranking for: Brighter Futures. There is no limit to our ambition for families in Wirral. We put the support in place so people can increase – and achieve – their aspirations. Children are the forefront of every decision we make. They are right at the top of our list of priorities, and they will stay there.

We received 49 comments, key themes identified were:

- Supporting vulnerable children is a priority
- There is a perceived lack of opportunity for young people, this presented as a reduced youth offer, inadequate access to leisure facilities, lack of educational and job opportunities.
- Schools need more support to help parents and children

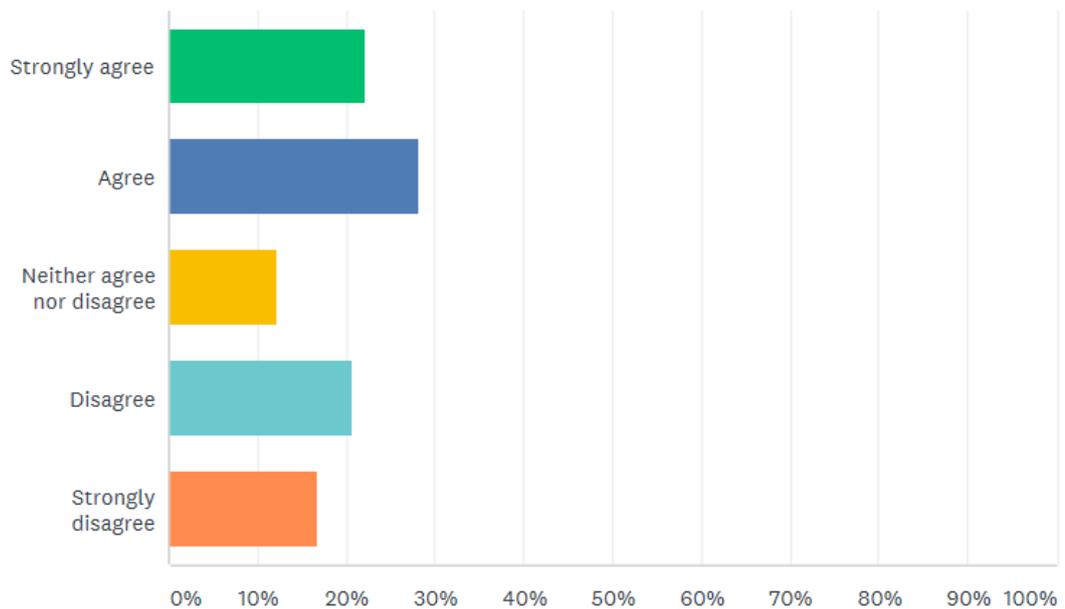
Q8: Please explain your ranking for: An Inclusive Economy. We want to create ambitious and prosperous communities. Our plans for sustainable economic growth are about creating community wealth. They're about encouraging inclusive and sustainable growth, where the benefits are felt by every resident without damaging the environment on which we all rely. They're about creating opportunities for local people, and inspiring ambition. Prosperous communities are happier, healthier and better places to live.

We received 78 comments, key themes identified were:

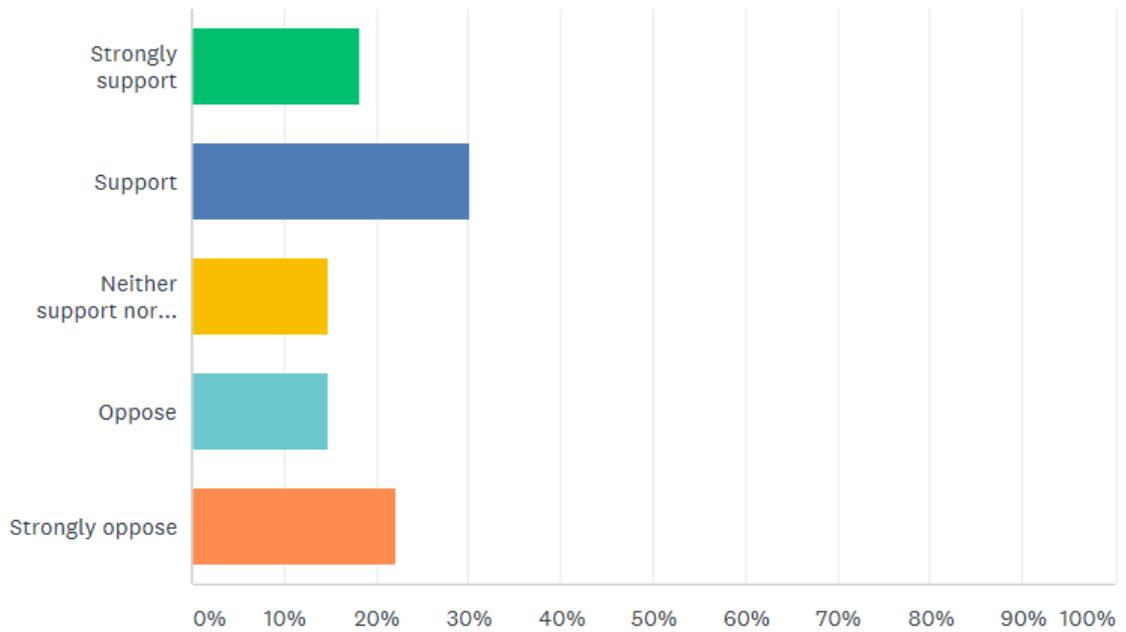
- The majority of the comments focussed on perceived inequality across the region being a key cause of this issue.
- There were some comment about a desire for more jobs and better jobs being made available for Wirral residents, including attracting new businesses to come to Wirral.
- There were suggestions that growth should be community driven.

Proposals

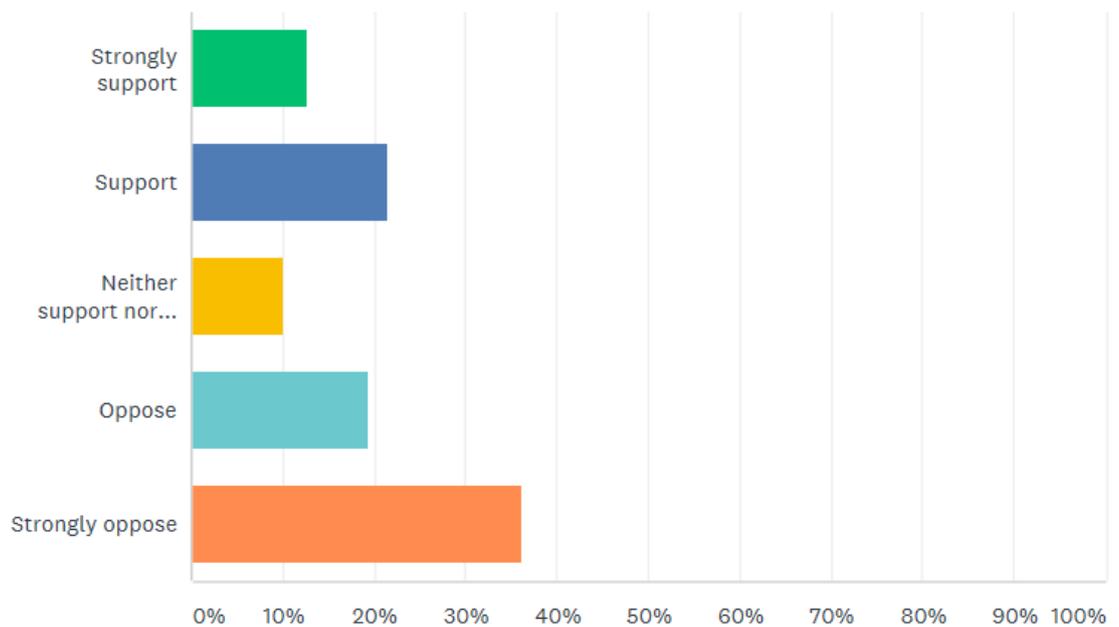
Q9: Do you agree or disagree that the Council should increase charges for some services, for those who can afford to pay, in order to use the income to protect other services?



Q10: Wirral Council could investigate whether a charitable organisation, a private company, or a community or voluntary organisation, could attract funding to provide a more efficient service for some Council functions. To what extent do you support or oppose this option?



Q11: Provided the Council was still responsible for making sure the quality of services was high enough, would you support or oppose the Council paying someone else to deliver services, rather than delivering them itself?



Q12: If services need to be reduced to help towards making the budget savings the Council needs, what things do you think should be considered when making the decision?

Comments Received

We received 52 comments, key themes identified were:

- Majority of comments focussed on reductions to:
 - The total amount of Councillors, less elections, remuneration packages
 - Management pay/hierarchies
 - Use of consultants

Q13: How else do you think the Council should save money?

We received 120 comments, key themes identified were:

- Reduce the amount of Councillors.
- Reduce Management pay.
- Reduce use of consultants.
- Refocus services to the residents / communities that most need them
- Increase community involvement in services.
- Engage more closely with partners like the NHS or educational establishments.
- Improve the procurement / contract process.

3.0 BUDGET EVENTS

A series of events were organised for residents to come together, hear more about the budget proposals and debate how investments in Wirral are made. A separate series of events were organised for council staff.

These events generated positive debate, constructive feedback and a range of ideas and suggestions for developing financial strategies in the future. Further work is being done on the content from these events to inform future savings proposals.

The savings proposals put forward for consultation by Cabinet in November 2020 were not specifically commented on at these events, the discussions that took place were more around what services the public and staff value most and whether they wanted to submit any ideas to be fed into the future budget setting process and MTFs.

Feedback from Public Meetings

- *West Kirby Concourse – number of people: 4*
- *Wallasey Town Hall – number of people: 2*
- *Bromborough Library - number of people: 0*
- *Birkenhead Town Hall - number of people: 0*

We received 19 comments, key themes identified were:

1. More community cohesion needed.
2. Regeneration
3. Transport and Travel
4. Waste
5. Leisure/Parks
6. Other Items
 - Public consultation events are valued, but could be better advertised in advance
 - Residents still under the misconception that the council is wasting millions on employing consultants, we should get some positive comms out about it.
 - Use Wirral View more for positive comms e.g. café at Marine Lake has been in progress for 2 years, no one knew what was going on until around 6 months ago when some signs were put up.
 - Are we charging enough for planning applications and are we enforcing planning as much as we should to generate fines.
 - No conservations officers anymore which is a detriment as assumption is that this falls on planning officers. Assumption that people are pushing the definition of conservation.

Feedback from Staff Meetings

Queries raised around the pay rise, lack of knowledge/communication about regeneration activities and treasury management of cash