



Have your say

Wirral Council Budget 2022/23 Proposal - Tennis Public Consultation Report



Consultation: 31 January – 27 March 2022

Report: 20 April 2022

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1.0 Executive Summary

Wirral Council is facing significant financial challenges and is currently going through a detailed process to set a budget for the next year. This is part of a wider approach to address long term structural issues in the council's finances and deliver substantial savings to balance the budget.

The council is legally obliged to set a balanced budget or risk Government intervention, and the savings measures currently being proposed are intended to put the authority on a stable financial footing for the long-term.

A number of budget proposals were consulted on, this budget proposal is for the closure and redevelopment of the Bidston Tennis Centre (indoors) for the full financial year 2022-2023. During this period identified capital funding will be utilised to improve the facility mix to create a more family focused service and offer. The proposal will see the permanent reduction of 3 indoor tennis courts (3 will remain). The Council has been working with partners to secure funding for an additional 3G pitch and it is anticipated that this work will commence during the financial year.

These proposals will generate a potential saving of £114,000 for one full financial year (2022-2023) if taken.

Through this consultation people were asked to provide their views of the tennis budget proposal considering reduced budgets and were asked for further ideas on savings in leisure services.

These consultation findings will be presented at the council's Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee at the meeting planned for June. The Committee will scrutinise the savings proposals taking into account the comments of the public including any suggestions on alternative ways of making savings and the budget allotted by the full Council. Decision will be made on the Tennis proposal.

1.1 Key Findings

- 148 people participated in the survey online and 9 people through paper copies of the survey.
- The majority of respondents (65.1%) said they, or someone they care for, were regular users of Wirral Tennis Centre (Question 1).
- When asked "When was the last time you used the facilities at Wirral Tennis Centre?" people most commonly said within the last week (46.3%). 21.1% said that they never used the facilities at the Centre (Question 2).

- Of those who use Wirral Tennis Centre, when asked how often they used the facilities, most respondents stated that they used them either more than once a week (48.4%) or less than once a month (26.6%) (Question 3).
- When asked what facilities they use at Wirral Tennis Centre, the tennis facilities (36.1%) were the most frequent answer, followed by 'Other' facilities (22.2%), which are predominantly exercise classes including yoga, Pilates, tai chi, spin, and body pump (Question 4).
- 58.7% of respondents said they or someone they care for are regular users of other council leisure facilities (Question 5).
- The other council leisure facilities used by respondents are predominantly swimming pools (21.5%), gyms (15.7%) and exercise classes (15.0%) (Question 6).
- Most respondents, by a small margin, were not Invigor8 members (51.7%) (Question 7).
- Most respondents (48.6%) disagreed overall that temporary closure of the tennis centre was acceptable, 38.5% disagreed strongly. 41.2% agreed that temporary closure was acceptable (Question 8a).
- Most respondents disagreed (58.1%), with 41.9% in strong disagreement, that it would be acceptable to replace indoor tennis courts with soft play and gym facilities. 31.1% of respondents agreed that replacing the courts would be acceptable (Question 8b).
- Most respondents agreed overall (55.8%) that it would be acceptable to build a second 3G Astroturf within the grounds of the Centre. Overall, 20.4% of respondents disagreed (Question 8c).
- The most popular alternative ideas to generate budget savings were:
 - Increase the number and variety of classes (6.9%).
 - Encourage a new generation of tennis players (5.7%).
 - Allow clubs and/or commercial operators to hire facilities (5.0%).
 - Wider promotion and marketing of the facilities (5.0%).
- The top additional comments on the budget saving proposal were:
 - Football pitches, gyms and soft play are well catered for elsewhere and should not be expanded at the expense of tennis courts (17.2%).
 - The proposals are detrimental to health and wellbeing (11.0%).
 - There are no alternative indoor tennis facilities locally or in the wider area (11.0%).
 - Temporarily closing the Centre is not acceptable (7.6%).

2.0 Methodology

Through the Tennis consultation people were asked to tell us their views of the budget proposal considering reduced budgets and were asked for further ideas on savings in leisure services.

Following the consultation, the feedback will be considered at a meeting of the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee in June 2022.

The consultation was carried out between 31 January – 27 March 2022. The approach used was an online public consultation through the 'Have your say' consultation portal at www.haveyoursay.wirral.gov.uk with a page dedicated to the Tennis Consultation. Documents provided on the site included a summary of the Tennis Budget Proposal and an Easy Read version of the questionnaire.

One online questionnaire was provided for residents to engage with. Respondents were also able to request paper copies of the survey, including an Easy Read version, or submit additional comments via a dedicated email address, which was published on the 'Have your say' website alongside the online tool. Completed Easy Read surveys were accepted until 10 April 2022.

2.1 Questionnaire

The consultation questionnaire was developed on the tennis budget proposal and enabled stakeholders to record their feedback. To enable further understanding, and in-depth analysis, respondents were invited to provide free-text comments to expand on their ideas or concerns.

Following closure of the consultation, the responses to each of the direct questions were collated and the responses included in this report. For the free-text comment question, a text coding approach was used based on the reoccurring themes. This data was then collated and summarised in the report. For specific tools where percentages do not add up to 100, this may be due to rounding, or the question is multi-coded. All free-text questions and ideas that offered respondents the option to provide written feedback could have covered multiple themes. Therefore, with free-text responses being categorised using a coding system, some comments will be multi-coded and therefore may add up to more than 100 percent.

9 paper questionnaires were submitted. These responses were examined, and the points raised incorporated into the online questionnaire results to ensure the views were represented in the final analysis.

No Easy Read questionnaires were submitted.

2.2 Analysis of Respondents

Respondents to the online tools were provided with the option to provide demographic information about themselves. It must be noted that this is an option and that not all respondents included this information. This data allows the demographic results to be included in this report to enable analysis of the scope of responses and representation from different demographic groups.

2.3 Interpretation of Results

In terms of the results, it is important to note that:

- The public consultation is not representative of the overall population but provides information on the opinion of those residents who engaged.
- For specific tools where percentages do not add up to 100, this may be due to rounding, or the question is multi-coded. All free-text questions and ideas that offered respondents the option to provide written feedback could have covered multiple themes. Therefore, with free-text responses being categorised using a coding system, some comments will be multi-coded and therefore add up to more than 100 percent.

2.4 Communication

To raise awareness amongst as many residents, stakeholders, and businesses as possible, a consultation sub campaign was carried out which, linking with the overall budget narrative and service specific responses, urged target audiences to take part in the consultation.

A variety of communications channels and platforms were utilised. This included:

- Organic social media (mix of platforms) – 187,107 impressions and 10,319 interactions
- Targeted, sponsored social media – 160,107 impressions and 562 link clicks
- Resident Email (inclusion in 5 editions)
- Partner/ Stakeholder updates
- Availability of Easyread questionnaires
- Councillor Updates (including consultation specific URL and narrative to share with constituents)
- Creation of a dedicated Budget email inbox
- Digital campaign box adverts on council owned platforms (linking to HYS page)
- Press/ Content Media releases

- Budget updates posted to wirralview.com (Budget/ consultation specific news tab)
- Posts on Staff Facebook page
- Exec View (Staff Newsletter)
- Shared narrative for regular Workforce, Directorate and Team updates

In addition to the above, the service itself administered the issuing and recording of paper copies and responses, as well as direct engagement with friends/ interest groups.

3.0 Results

3.1 The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was responded to by 148 people, with 139 through the online portal and 9 paper copies submitted. No Easy Read versions were submitted. No questions were mandatory so respondents could choose which questions to respond to.

3.1.1 Question 1: Are you, or someone you care for, a regular user of Wirral Tennis Centre?

The majority of respondents (65.1%) were regular users of Wirral Tennis Centre or were the carer of a regular user.

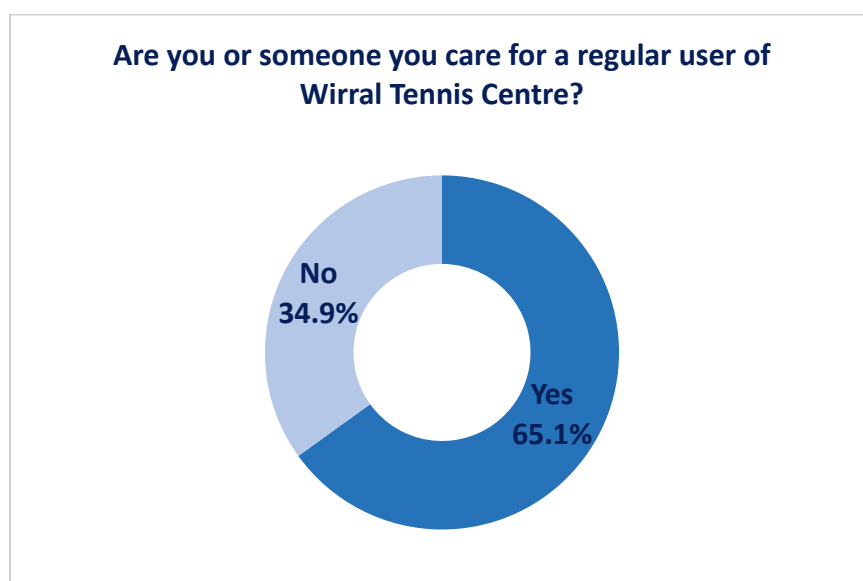


Chart 1: Are you, or someone you care for, a regular user of Wirral Tennis Centre?

Are you, or someone you care for, a regular user of Wirral Tennis Centre?	Online	Paper	Total	%
Yes	86	9	95	65.1%
No	51		51	34.9%
Total	137	9	146	100.0%

Table 1: Are you, or someone you care for, a regular user of Wirral Tennis Centre?

3.1.2 Question 2: When was the last time you used the facilities at Wirral Tennis Centre?

People most commonly used the facilities at the Tennis Centre within the last week of responding (46.3%). 21.1% of respondents had never used the centre.

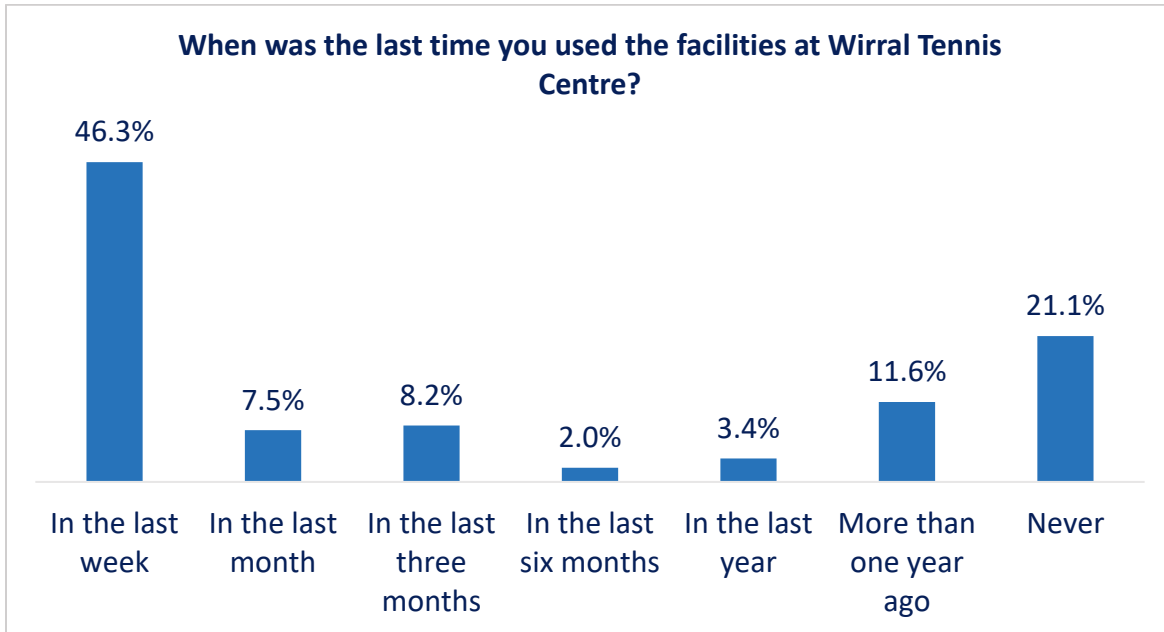


Chart 2: When was the last time you used the facilities at Wirral Tennis Centre?

When was the last time you used the facilities at Wirral Tennis Centre?	Online	Paper	Total	%
In the last week	60	8	68	46.3%
In the last month	10	1	11	7.5%
In the last three months	12		12	8.2%
In the last six months	3		3	2.0%
In the last year	5		5	3.4%
More than one year ago	17		17	11.6%
Never	31		31	21.1%
Total	138	9	147	100.0%

Table 2: When was the last time you used the facilities at Wirral Tennis Centre?

3.1.3 Question 3: If you use Wirral Tennis Centre, how often do you use the facilities there?

Most respondents used the facilities either more than once a week (48.4%) or less than once a month (26.6%)

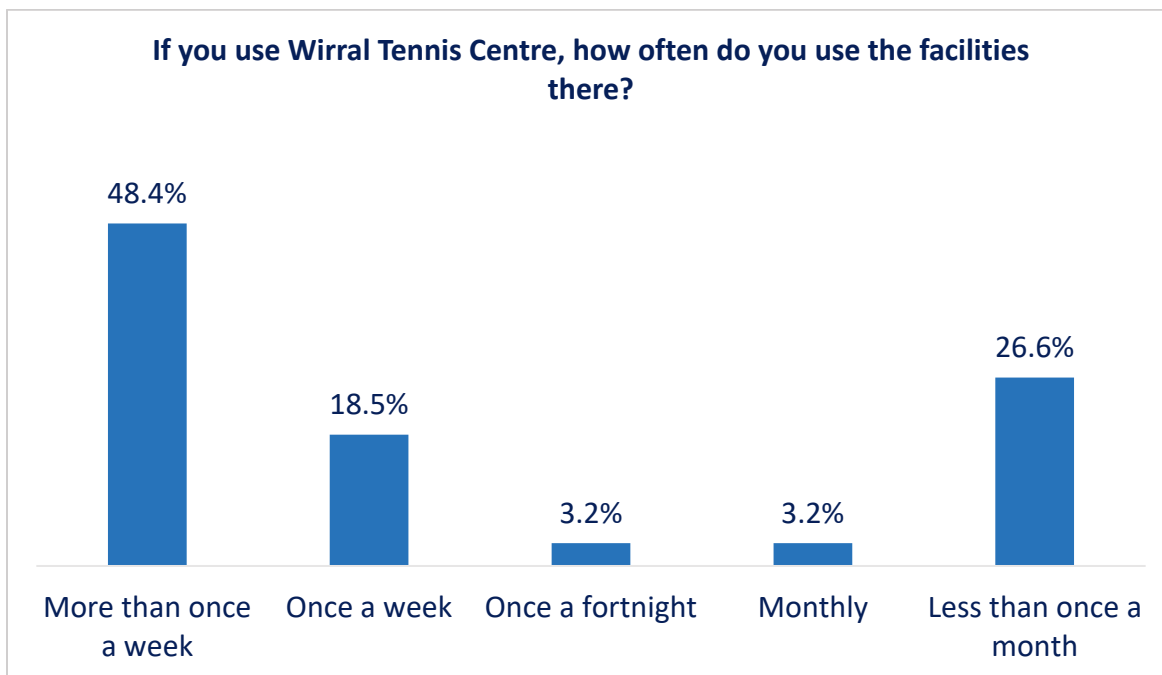


Chart 3: If you use Wirral Tennis Centre, how often do you use the facilities there?

If you use Wirral Tennis Centre, how often do you use the facilities there?	Online	Paper	Total	%
More than once a week	53	7	60	48.4%
Once a week	22	1	23	18.5%
Once a fortnight	3	1	4	3.2%
Monthly	4		4	3.2%
Less than once a month	33		33	26.6%
Total	115	9	124	100.0%

Table 3: If you use Wirral Tennis Centre, how often do you use the facilities there?

3.1.4 Question 4: If you use Wirral Tennis Centre, what facilities do you use there?

The most commonly used facilities are the tennis facilities (36.1%) followed by 'Other' facilities (22.2%), which are predominantly exercise classes including yoga, Pilates, tai chi, spin, and body pump. Badminton facilities are the least commonly used facilities (9.5%)

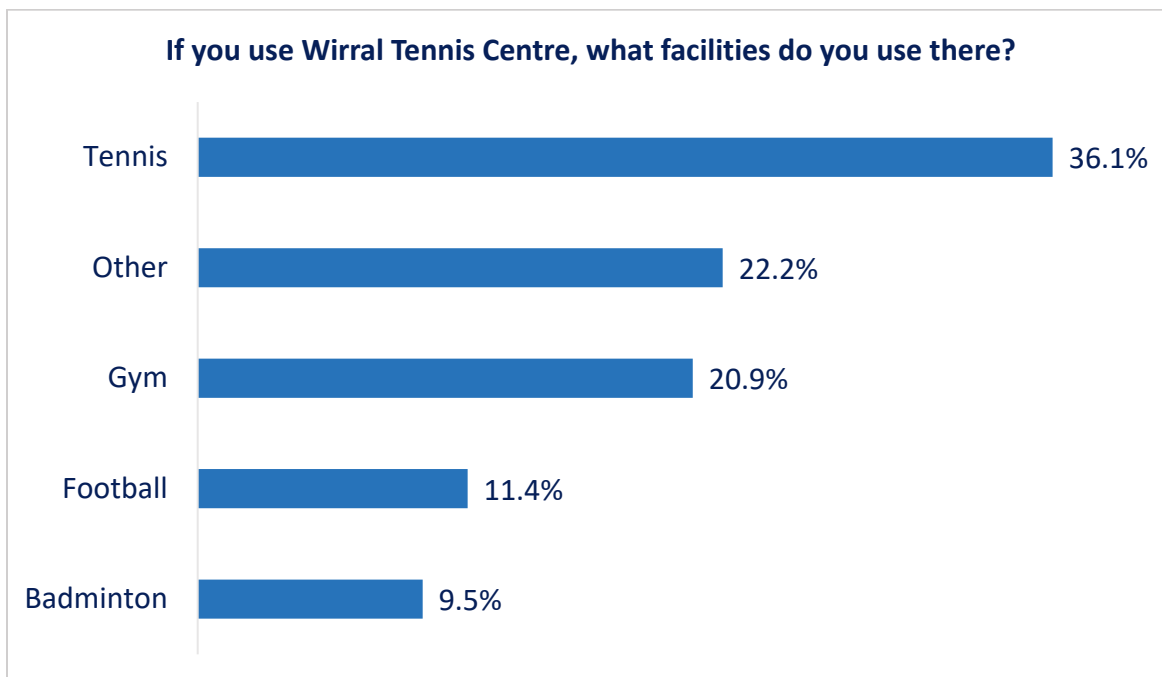


Chart 4: If you use Wirral Tennis Centre, what facilities do you use there?

If you use Wirral Tennis Centre, what facilities do you use there?	Online	Paper	Total	%
Tennis	55	2	57	36.1%
Other	31	4	35	22.2%
Gym	31	2	33	20.9%
Football	17	1	18	11.4%
Badminton	15		15	9.5%
Total	149	9	158	100%

Table 4: If you use Wirral Tennis Centre, what facilities do you use there?

3.1.5 Question 5: Are you, or someone you care for, a regular user of other Wirral Council leisure facilities?

58.7% of respondents, or someone they care for are regular users of other Wirral Council leisure facilities.

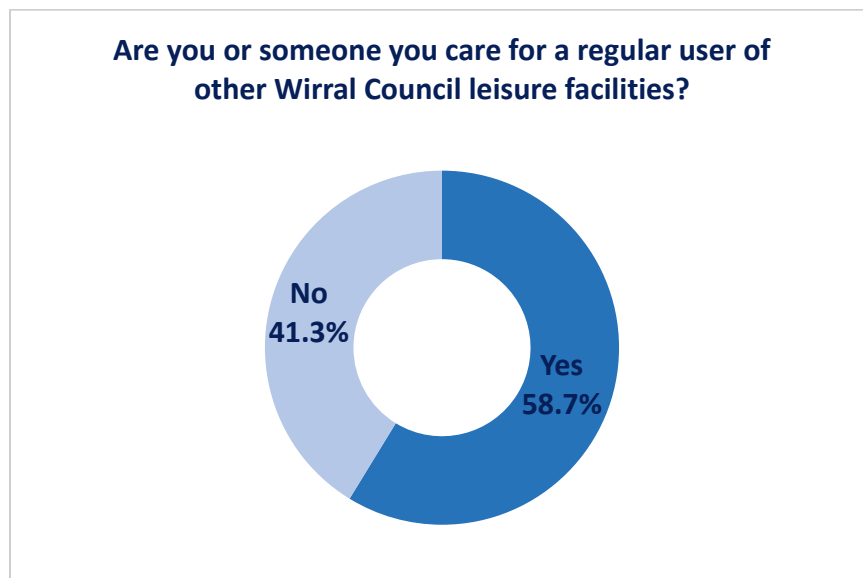


Chart 5: Are you, or someone you care for, a regular user of other Wirral Council leisure facilities?

Are you, or someone you care for, a regular user of other Wirral Council leisure facilities?	Online	Paper	Total	%
Yes	76	8	84	58.7%
No	58	1	59	41.3%
Total	134	9	143	100.0%

Table 5: Are you, or someone you care for, a regular user of other Wirral Council leisure facilities?

3.1.6 Question 6: What Wirral Council leisure facilities do you use?

Other Wirral Council leisure facilities used by respondents are predominantly swimming pools (21.5%), gyms (15.7%) and exercise classes (15.0%).



Chart 6: What Wirral Council leisure facilities do you use?

What Wirral Council leisure facilities do you use?	Online	Paper	Total	%
Swimming pools	61	2	63	21.5%
Gyms	43	3	46	15.7%
Exercise classes	42	2	44	15.0%
Tennis	38		38	13.0%
Golf	25		25	8.5%
None	21		21	7.2%
Badminton	17		17	5.8%
Football	14	1	15	5.1%
Other	9		9	3.1%
Other classes e.g., martial arts	5	1	6	2.0%
Squash	6		6	2.0%
Sailing	3		3	1.0%
Total	284	9	293	100.0%

Table 6: What Wirral Council leisure facilities do you use?

3.1.7 Question 7: Are you a member of Wirral Council's Invigor8 scheme allowing access to Council leisure services?

Most respondents, by a small margin, were not Invigor8 members (51.7%).

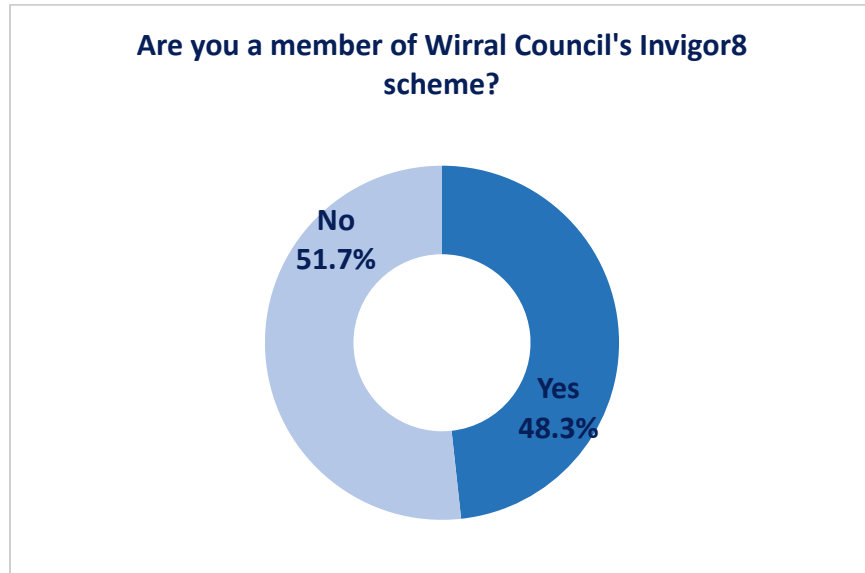


Chart 7: Are you a member of Wirral Council's Invigor8 scheme allowing access to Council leisure services?

Are you a member of Wirral Council's Invigor8 scheme allowing access to Council leisure services?	Online	Paper	Total	%
Yes	62	8	70	48.3%
No	74	1	75	51.7%
Total	136	9	145	100.0%

Table 7: Are you a member of Wirral Council's Invigor8 scheme allowing access to Council leisure services?

3.1.8 Question 8a: Temporarily closing down Wirral Tennis Centre at Bidston to redesign it to meet the needs of the local population and provide additional income is acceptable if it will help protect the centre’s future.

Most respondents (48.6%) disagreed overall that temporary closure of the tennis centre was acceptable, 38.5% disagreed strongly. 41.2% agreed that temporary closure was acceptable.

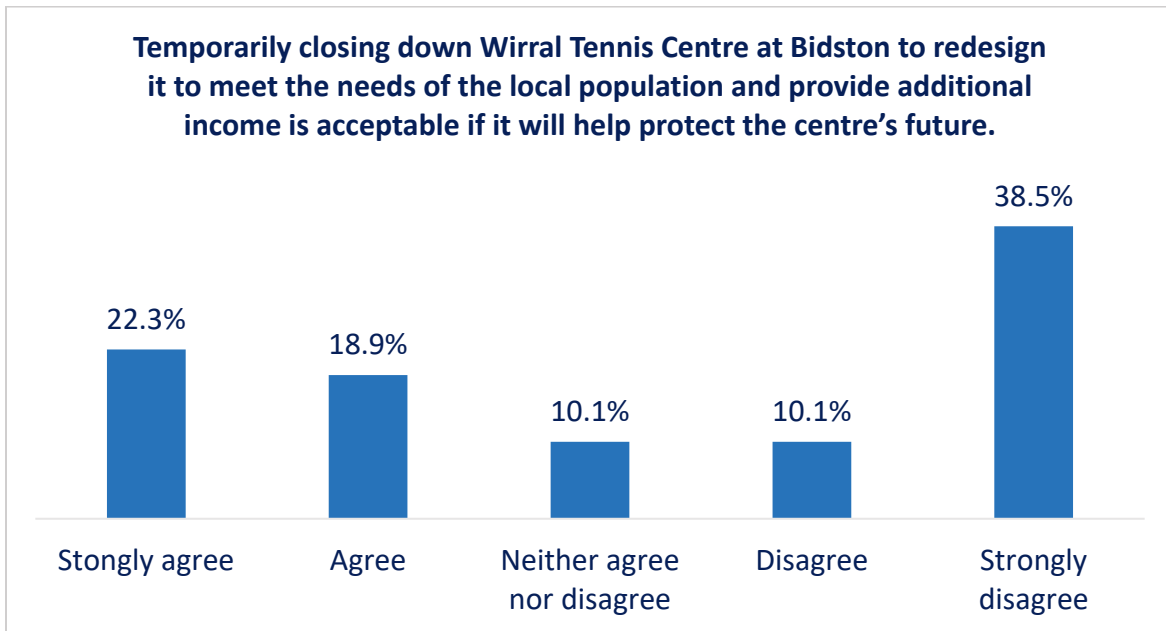


Chart 8: Chart totalling the number of responses by agreement level

Temporarily closing down Wirral Tennis Centre at Bidston to redesign it to meet the needs of the local population and provide additional income is acceptable if it will help protect the centre’s future.	Online	Paper	Total	%
Strongly agree	32	1	33	22.3%
Agree	27	1	28	18.9%
Neither agree nor disagree	15	0	15	10.1%
Disagree	14	1	15	10.1%
Strongly disagree	51	6	57	38.5%
Total	139	9	148	100.0%

Table 8: Table totalling the number of responses by agreement level

3.1.9 Question 8b: It is acceptable that the new development at Wirral Tennis Centre at Bidston would remove three of the indoor tennis courts and replace them with extensive soft play and improved gymnastics offer.

Most respondents disagreed overall (58.1%), with 41.9% in strong disagreement, that it would be acceptable to replace indoor tennis courts with soft play and gym facilities. Overall, 31.1% of respondents agreed.

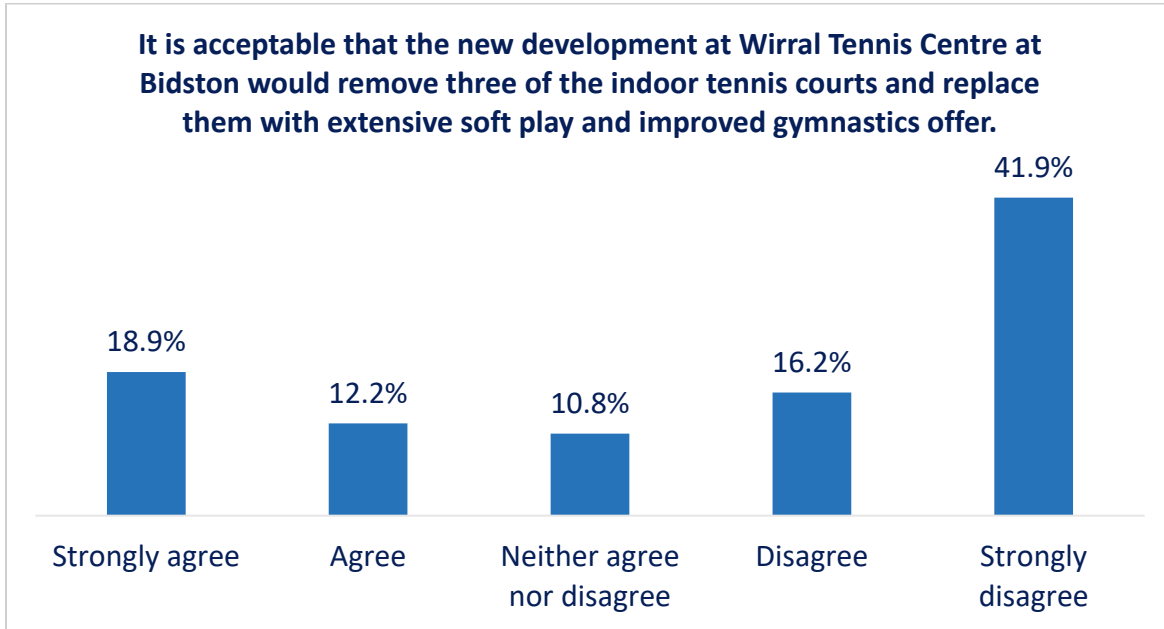


Chart 9: Chart totalling the number of responses by agreement level

It is acceptable that the new development at Wirral Tennis Centre at Bidston would remove three of the indoor tennis courts and replace them with extensive soft play and improved gymnastics offer.	Online	Paper	Total	%
Strongly agree	28	0	28	18.9%
Agree	18	0	18	12.2%
Neither agree nor disagree	15	1	16	10.8%
Disagree	19	5	24	16.2%
Strongly disagree	59	3	62	41.9%
Total	139	9	148	100.0%

Table 9: Table totalling the number of responses by agreement level

3.1.10 Question 8c: If the proposal to remodel Wirral Tennis Centre is taken forward it would be acceptable for a second new 3G Astro turf pitch to also be built within the outside grounds of the Wirral Tennis Centre site providing further income potential to support leisure services.

Most respondents agreed overall (55.8%) that it would be acceptable to build a second 3G Astro turf within the grounds of the Centre. Overall, 20.4% of respondents disagreed.

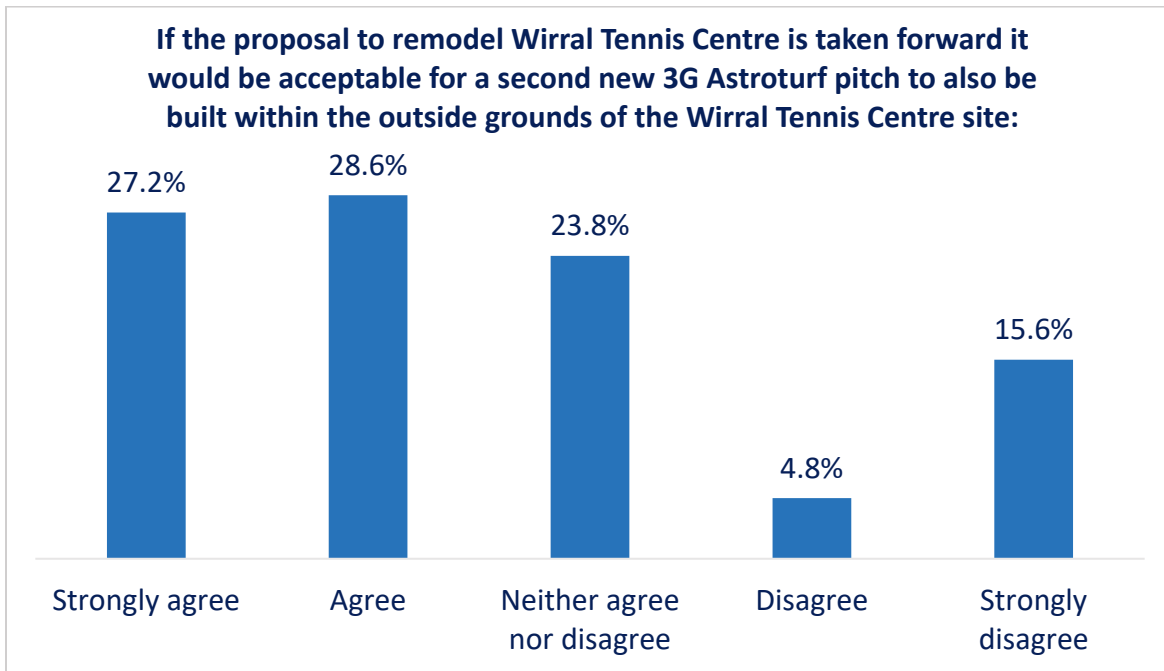


Chart 10: Chart totalling the number of responses by agreement level

If the proposal to remodel Wirral Tennis Centre is taken forward it would be acceptable for a second new 3G Astro turf pitch to also be built within the outside grounds of the Wirral Tennis Centre site providing further income potential?	Online	Paper	Total	%
Strongly agree	38	2	40	27.2%
Agree	42	0	42	28.6%
Neither agree nor disagree	33	2	35	23.8%
Disagree	4	3	7	4.8%
Strongly disagree	21	2	23	15.6%
Total	138	9	147	100.0%

Table 10: Table totalling the number of responses by agreement level

3.1.11 Question 9: Do you have any alternative ideas to generate budget savings in leisure services?

Respondents were asked if they had any alternative ideas to generate budget savings in leisure services. There were 62 online comments and 8 paper copies which were categorised into themes.

Below are the top themes arising from the comments, these top 8 themes together make up 37.1% of the total themes identified.

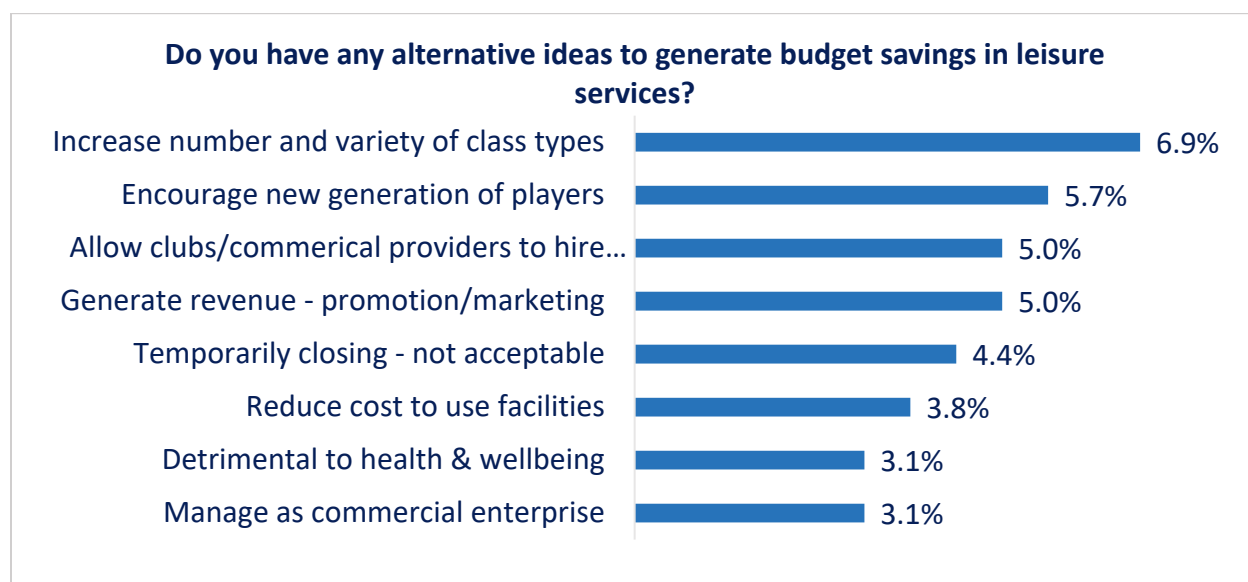


Chart 11: Chart showing the themes of alternative ideas to generate budget savings in leisure services

Increase number and variety of class types (6.9%)

Suggestions that the Centre offer an increased number and wider variety of classes, which would attract more users and generate more revenue. Where specified, class suggestions include yoga, Pilates, circuits, Zumba, cheerleading, boxing, and martial arts.

Encourage a new generation of players (5.7%)

A new generation of players should be encouraged, providing an increase in users and continuity for the future. Suggestions include forming partnerships with schools and offering free or discounted coaching/sessions to young people.

Allow clubs and commercial providers to hire facilities (5.0%)

Revenue generation through hiring out facilities to commercial operators such as tennis schools and allowing community groups or clubs to use them.

Promotion and marketing (5.0%)

Suggestion that the facilities on offer at Wirral Tennis Centre are not known about widely and should be advertised and promoted. Information is difficult to access. A rebrand is suggested to remove the focus from tennis, so that it may be more obvious that other offers such as the gym and classes are available at the centre. Several respondents suggested working in partnership with the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) to promote the Centre.

Temporary closing unacceptable (4.4%)

Temporary closure of facilities is not acceptable. Reasons include that other alternative leisure centres remain closed, that money should not be spent on refurbishments and that temporary closure would result in a decline in invigor8 members and therefore a long-term negative effect on revenue.

Reduce cost to use the facilities (3.8%)

It is suggested that making the centre more affordable to use, thus attracting more users, would lead to increases in revenue.

It should be noted that 2.5% of people made the contrary suggestion that small increases to court fees and/or invigor8 membership would be acceptable and generate revenue.

Proposal is detrimental to health & wellbeing (3.1%)

Full or temporary closure, or reduction in the facilities on offer at the Tennis Centre will have a negative effect on the health and wellbeing of the community, including mental health. This is a false economy and will lead to long term costs combating this.

Manage the Centre as a commercial enterprise (3.1%)

The Centre needs to be managed in a more commercially oriented way, either by the council or by a commercial entity. It is pointed out that the centre is not competitive with nearby gyms who offer, for example, 24 hours access at an affordable price.

Theme	Total	% Of all themes
Increase number and variety of class types	11	6.9%
Encourage new generation of players	9	5.7%
Allow clubs/commercial providers to hire facilities	8	5.0%
Generate revenue - promotion/marketing	8	5.0%
Temporarily closing - not acceptable	7	4.4%
Reduce cost to use facilities	6	3.8%
Detrimental to health & wellbeing	5	3.1%
Manage as commercial enterprise	5	3.1%
Total	59	-

Table 11: Do you have any alternative ideas to generate budget savings in leisure services?

3.1.12 Question 10: Do you have any additional comments on this budget saving proposal?

Respondents were asked if they had any additional comments about this budget saving proposal. There were 74 online comments and 8 paper copies which were categorised into themes.

Below are the top themes arising from the comments, these top 4 themes together make up 46.9% of the total themes identified.

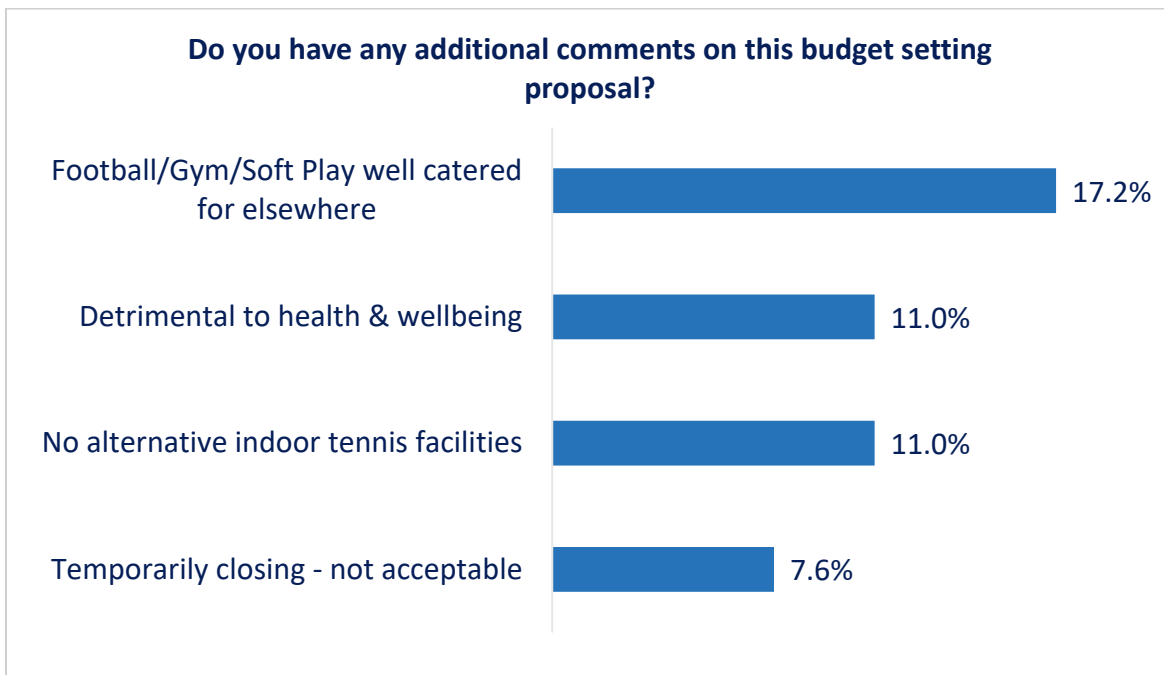


Chart 12: Chart showing the themes of additional comments on this budget saving proposal

Football pitch, gym and soft play users are well catered for elsewhere (17.2%)

The Tennis Centre should be used exclusively, or predominantly, for tennis. There is no shortage of football pitches, gyms, or soft play centres locally, but there are few alternative tennis facilities, and no other indoor tennis courts so these should be preserved, not reduced.

Proposal is detrimental to health and wellbeing (11.0%)

Full or temporary closure, or reduction in the facilities on offer at the Tennis Centre will have a negative effect on the health and wellbeing of the community, including mental health. This is a false economy and will lead to long term costs combating this.

There are no alternative indoor tennis facilities locally (11.0%)

This is the only indoor all-weather all-season tennis centre serving both Wirral and the wider area. There are no alternative indoor facilities nearby and people who use these will have nowhere to play, particularly older people who cannot readily play outdoors. The loss of this

Centre would also remove the capacity to hold tournaments and competitions in the area, and the associated income generated. It would also negatively affect the ability to nurture up-and-coming tennis talent.

Temporary closure is unacceptable (7.6%)

Respondents are against the idea of closing the centre temporarily. It is noted that alternative leisure provision such as Woodchurch Leisure Centre and Europa Pools would also not be available. Even temporary closure would fragment the current user groups and possibly permanently disperse them in the long term.

Theme	Total	% Of all themes
Football/Gym/Soft Play well catered for elsewhere	25	17.2%
Detrimental to health & wellbeing	16	11.0%
No alternative indoor tennis facilities	16	11.0%
Temporarily closing - not acceptable	11	7.6%
Total	68	-

Table 12: Do you have any additional comments on this budget saving proposal?

3.2 Direct Representations

Two direct representations were received via the dedicated email address supplied for the consultation process. These are provided in Appendix 1.

4.0 Demographics and Site Traffic

4.1 Demographics

Registration was required to engage in the online Budget Consultation. The registration form included questions regarding demographics including gender, age group, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, however not all questions in the registration form were compulsory and respondents could choose to select 'prefer not to say' or skip the question. The demographics results are summarised below.

Most of the respondents (86.4%) classed themselves as local residents.



Chart 13: Who are you registering as?

The gender of respondents was 50.4% female, 45.8% male, with 3.1% preferring not to say and 0.8% preferring their own term.

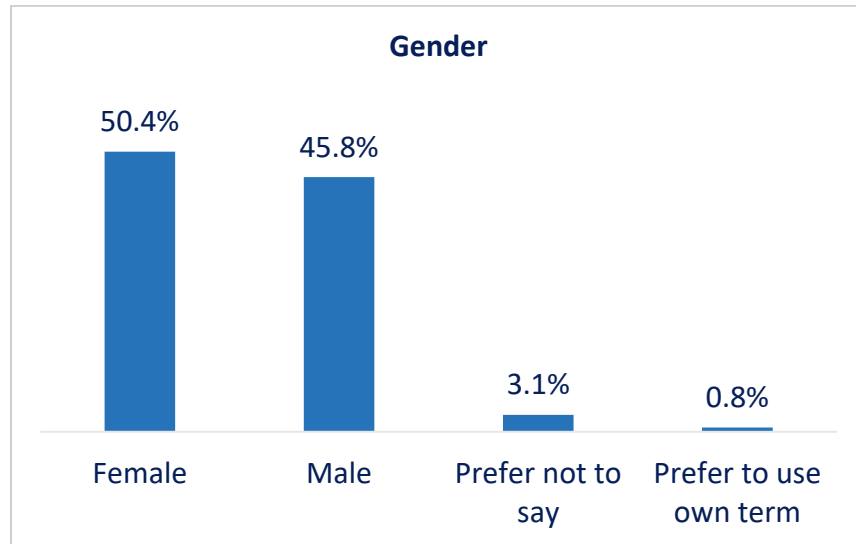


Chart 14: Gender of respondents

The most common age groups were 55-64 years (28.2%), followed by 64-74 years (26.7%). The least represented groups were under-24-year-olds (0%) and 75+ years (5.3%).

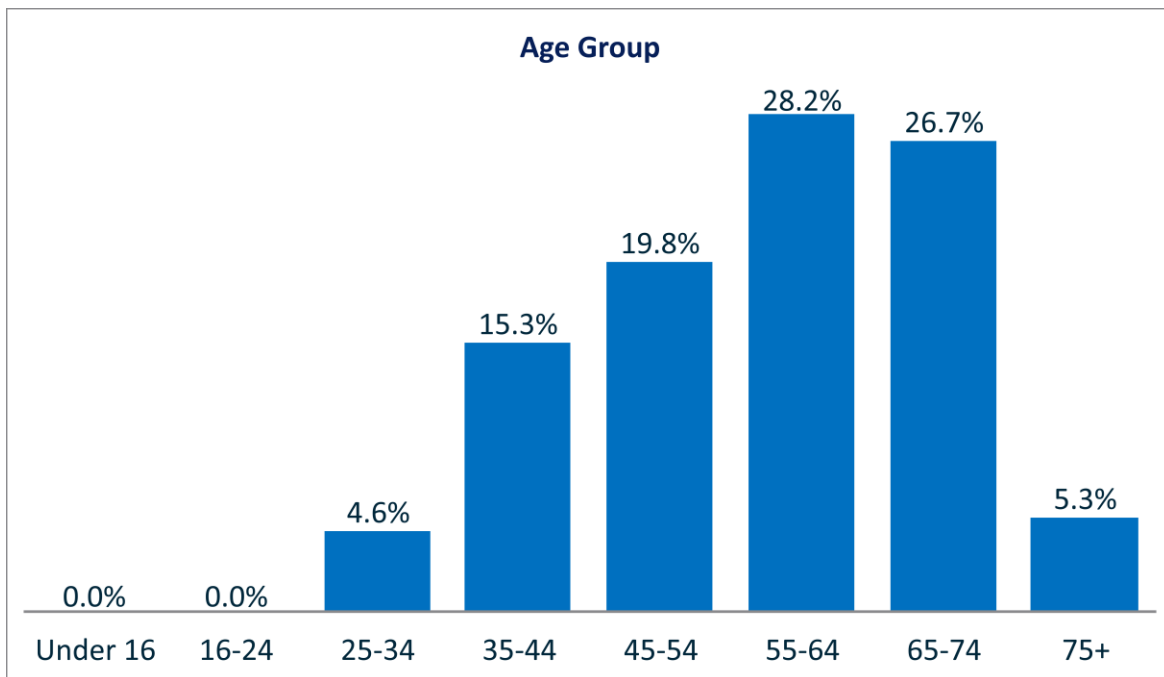


Chart 15: Age group of respondents

90.1% of respondents were white British. 3.2% of respondents were of a non-white or other (3.1%) ethnicity.

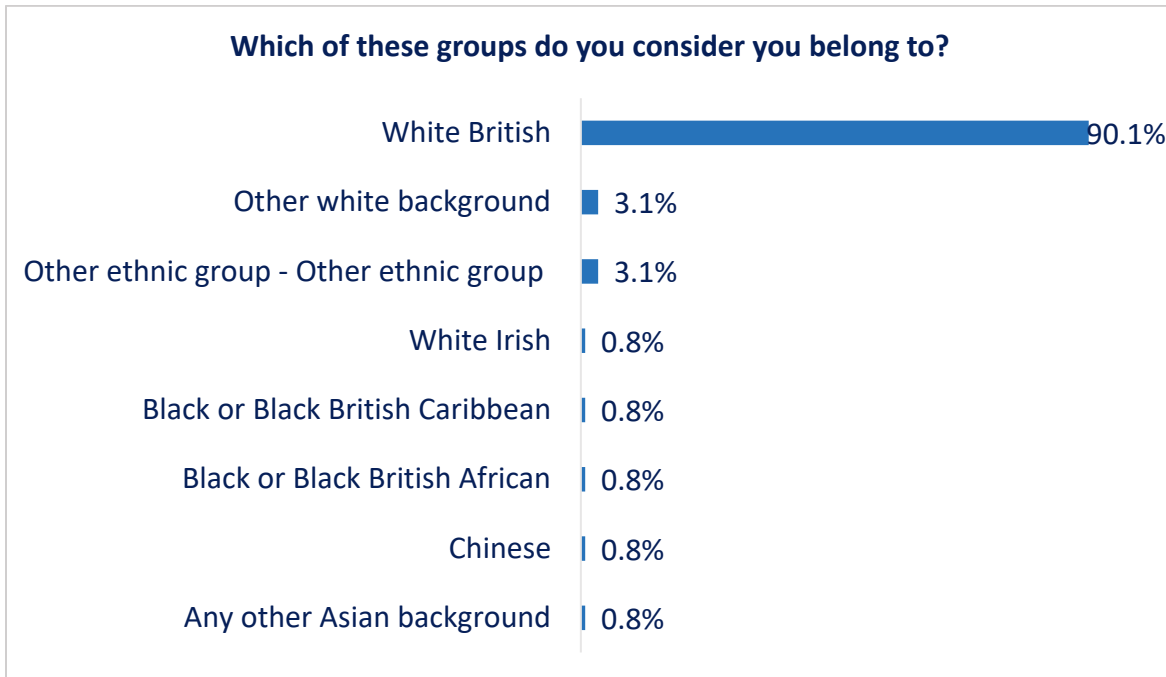


Chart 16: Ethnicity of respondents

86.9% of respondents were heterosexual, 1.5% were gay/ lesbian, and 11.5% preferred not to say.

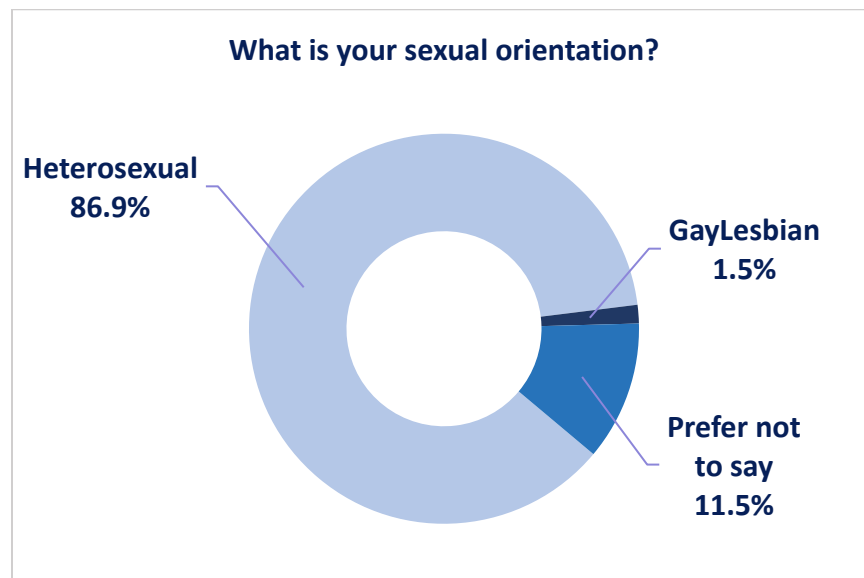


Chart 17: Sexual orientation of respondents

4.2 Have your say - Site Traffic

Reviewing the site activity, visits, and how people visit the site can be useful to evaluate if people are aware of the site, as well as to ensure engagement activities are deployed effectively, and to a wide range of different people – enhancing public engagement in the future.

1,011 people visited the Wirral Council Local Elections Consultation page of the Have Your Say site, of these 77 downloaded a document and 139 people completed the questionnaire.

These figures cannot be viewed as definitive as they are based on site tracking through ‘cookies’ and there are a number of factors that can impact on this. These include that cookies may be disabled or deleted, individuals may access the site multiple times through different devices or different browsers. However, the figures can be used to gauge how much interest has been generated in individual projects through the rate of engaged participants.

The route that people access the site is known as the traffic source. The ‘Have your say’ portal allows analysis to be carried out on traffic source, and if they lead to engagement in the site tools such as the questionnaire. This analysis allows a greater understanding of which communication and promotional tools to use to optimise engagement.

For this project a range of traffic sources have been reviewed and summarised in the table below. Most visits to the site were either visits via email (318 visits), social direct visits (297) where people have either pasted or typed the URL in to their browser or referrals from other web pages (224). Direct visits generated a rate of engagement of 20.5%, meaning 20.5% of these visits resulted in completion of the poll.

TRAFFIC CHANNEL	AWARE VISITS	INFORMED VISITS (%)	ENGAGED VISITS (%)
EMAIL	318	78 (24.5%)	23 (7.2%)
DIRECT	297	135 (45.5%)	61 (20.5%)
REFERRALS	224	75 (33.5%)	27 (12.1%)
SEARCH ENGINE	87	37 (42.5%)	14 (16.1%)
SOCIAL	80	18 (22.5%)	13 (16.3%)
.GOV SITES	5	4 (80.0%)	1 (20%)

Table 13: Site traffic sources

Appendix 1: Direct Representations

This appendix includes feedback directly sent to the contact email address:
budgetconsult@wirral.gov.uk

We would like bring to your attention a serious issue facing the Tennis players and the game of tennis in the Wirral

This is the only indoor tennis centre on the Wirral Lot of people like me are members paying monthly fee only for the tennis Two courts have been occupied by Gym for a while It is always noisy with loud music and it puts us off from playing tennis There are plans to reduce the number to only 3 courts All these factors affect the players like us, the learners and particularly children How can we produce the likes of Murray if we are removing the facilities Sometimes I get the feeling I am living in a poor country with no financial resources or long term vision I would request you to get the tennis back to the full 6 courts and move the gym to the the previous area

I plant some of the 20.000 trees the council promised, feel strongly that Hoylake beach should be left to nature- which generally knows best - and also play tennis every day. Pre C19 I was at the Bidston morning mix ins which brought together folks from all the different local clubs. And we would socialise and play for 2 hours most mornings. We managed to organise ourselves without supervision during the previous 12 months!

It was also a great place for new tennis players and newcomers to Wirral to meet others. All 6 courts were fully utilised if no wheelchair coaching was bring carried out.

Not only that but every year there were important international junior tournaments held there by Aegon mostly, which were free to view and brought Wirral to the international stage.

Please could you help stop the unnecessary Bidston refurb or explain how it would save money?