



# Have your say

## Wirral Council Budget 2022/23 Proposal – Woodchurch Leisure Centre 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 permanent closure of the Woodchurch Leisure Centre. This option includes the demolition of all elements of the facility including pool, changing areas, halls, reception etc.

The proposal is due to the condition of the built facilities on the site, low usage levels compared with other sites, the required level of investment required and the subsidy it carries. It is proposed that the centre is demolished to make way for a growth in outdoor leisure provision.

The site adjacent to the Leisure Centre will see the construction of a new supersize 3G Artificial Grass playing pitch and accompanying built facility during the 2022-23 Financial Year.

This option will generate a potential saving of £402,000 (full year effect) if taken.

Through this consultation people were asked to provide their views of the Woodchurch 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 in 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 Woodchurch proposal.

## 1.1 Key Findings

On 3 February the consultation was temporarily paused after it was identified that some questions did not provide an accurate reflection of the proposed budget option. A small number of questions were revised, and a modified survey was put back online. Please see

Appendix 1 for the Questionnaire Content Amends. All contributions and views expressed through the survey are taken into consideration in this report.

- 167 people participated in the online survey before the pause (survey 1) and 136 people completed the online after the pause (survey 2). There were no paper copies submitted.
- When asked how regularly they used Wirral council's swimming pools, 72.4% of respondents were regular users and 27.6% were not regular users (Question 1).
- 30.1% of respondents had used council leisure facilities within the last week and only 3.6% had never used a council leisure facility (Question 2).
- 74.2% of respondents use council leisure facilities at least once per month (Question 3).
- 23.5% of respondents were members of the Invigor8 scheme, 76.5% were not (Question 4).
- 22.4% of respondents used council leisure facilities for organised/team sport, 77.6% did not (Question 5).
- When asked what council leisure facilities respondents used, swimming pools was the most common answer (39.3%) (Question 6).
- When asked their opinion on reducing the number of council leisure facilities if it will allow the authority to protect other leisure facilities, 85.3% of responses disagree, with 68.4% strongly disagreeing and 11.8% agreeing (Question 7a – survey 1 only).
- When asked if the closure of Woodchurch leisure centre is acceptable if it will help protect other leisure facilities, 86.8% disagreed, with 74.3% strongly disagreeing, and 11.0% agreeing that it would be acceptable (Question 7b – survey 1 only).
- 88.9% disagreed with the proposal to replace Woodchurch Leisure centre with a 3G football pitch and facilities. 10.4% agreed with the proposal (Question 7c –survey 1 only).
- 65.9% of respondents disagree with the proposal to permanently close and demolish Woodchurch Leisure Centre. 30.0% agreed with the proposal (Question 7.2 – survey 2 only).
- When asked what types of leisure provision they would like to see in the area, the top themes were: (Question 8 – survey 2 only)
  - Swimming facilities (17.7%)
  - Retain the existing leisure centre at Woodchurch (7.0%)
  - Outdoor spaces for sports/leisure/recreation (4.7%)
  - Gym facilities (4.7%)
  - Refurbish Woodchurch leisure centre (4.2%)
- When asked if they had any alternative ideas to generate budget savings in leisure services, the top themes were: (Question 9)
  - Make savings – reduce cost of Council employees (14.0%)
  - Refurbish Woodchurch leisure centre (5.0%)
  - Close other leisure facilities (4.7%)
  - Change the pricing structure (4.3%)

- Find a new revenue source (4.3%)
- When asked if they had any additional comments on this budget saving proposal, the top 5 themes were: (Question 10)
  - The proposals are detrimental to health and wellbeing (9.6%)
  - The proposals disproportionately affect the most deprived (8.0%)
  - People are against the proposals (6.8%)
  - There is no nearby swimming alternative (5.0%)
  - The leisure centre is the last remaining community facility in Woodchurch (4.0%)



## 2.0 Methodology

Through the Woodchurch 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 on online public consultation through the ‘Have your say’ consultation portal at [www.haveyoursay.wirral.gov.uk](http://www.haveyoursay.wirral.gov.uk) with a page dedicated to the Woodchurch Consultation. Documents provided on the site included a summary of the Woodchurch Budget Proposal, a set of frequently asked questions and an Easy Read version of the questionnaire.

An 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 Woodchurch 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.

The consultation commenced on 31 January 2022. On 3 February the consultation was temporarily paused for an hour after it was identified that some questions did not provide an accurate reflection of the proposed budget option. A small number of questions were revised, and a modified survey was posted back online. Three questions were removed and replaced with two questions. The other questions remained the same so were unaffected by the change. All contributions and views collected from both questionnaires were analysed and collated in this report. The questions that were changed are noted in Appendix 1 of this report.

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 questions, 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.

No paper or 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 Easy read 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

On 3 February the consultation was temporarily paused after it was identified that some questions did not provide an accurate reflection of the proposed budget option. A small number of questions were revised, and a modified survey was put back online. Please see Appendix 1 for the Questionnaire Content Amends. All contributions and views expressed through the survey are taken into consideration in this report.

167 people participated in the online survey before the pause (survey 1) and 136 people completed the online after the pause (survey 2). There were no paper copies 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 Council swimming pools?

Of the 301 respondents, 218 (72.4%) regularly used Wirral Council’s swimming pools. 83 people (27.6%) were not regular users.

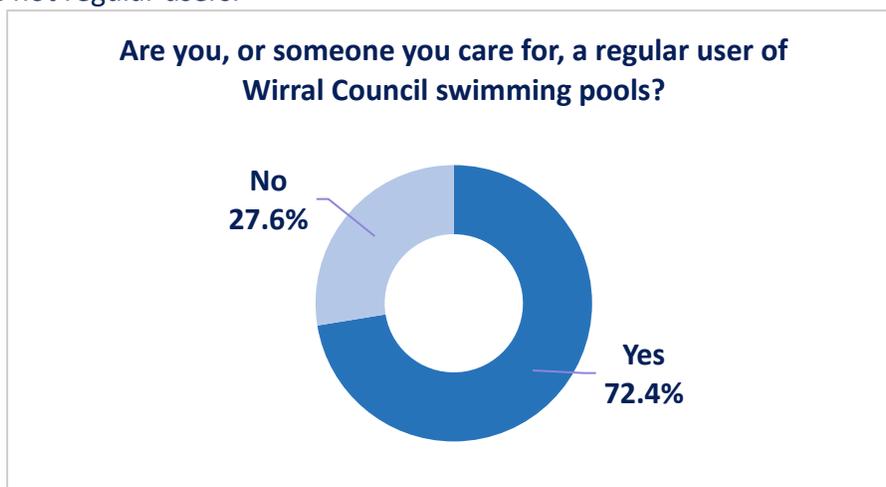


Figure 1: Chart showing the proportion of respondents who use council swimming pools regularly.

Are you, or someone you care for, a regular user of Wirral Council swimming pools?	Online 1	Online 2	Total	%
Yes	111	107	218	72.4%
No	25	58	83	27.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 1: Showing the total number of respondents who used and did not use council swimming pools.

### 3.1.2 Question 2: When was the last time you used a council leisure facility?

302 responded to this question. Very regular users were the largest group represented in this survey, with 91 (30.1%) respondents using leisure facilities within the last week. 176 (58.3%) respondents had used a council leisure facility within the past 3 months. The second largest group was the 90 (29.8%) respondents who last used a leisure facility over a year ago; it is important to consider the impact the coronavirus pandemic may have had on the regularity of leisure facility use. 11 (3.6%) respondents had never used a council leisure facility.

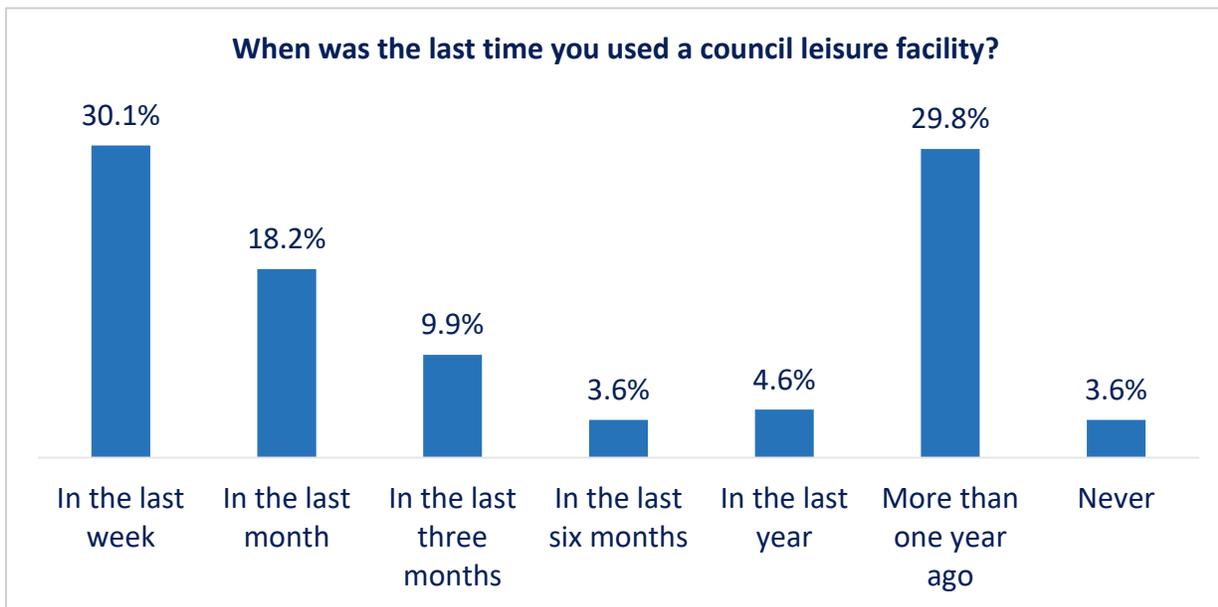


Figure 2: Chart showing the last time respondents used a council leisure facility.

When was the last time you used a council leisure facility?	Online 1	Online 2	Total	%
In the last week	44	47	91	30.1%
In the last month	23	32	55	18.2%
In the last three months	20	10	30	9.9%
In the last six months	6	5	11	3.6%
In the last year	6	8	14	4.6%
More than one year ago	35	55	90	29.8%
Never	2	9	11	3.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 2: Total number of respondents who used a council leisure facility in the specified time frames.

### 3.1.3 Question 3: How often do you use council leisure facilities?

298 responded to this question, with 86 (28.9%) choosing the most common answer 'more than once a week.' 221 respondents (74.2%) used council leisure facilities at least once per month.

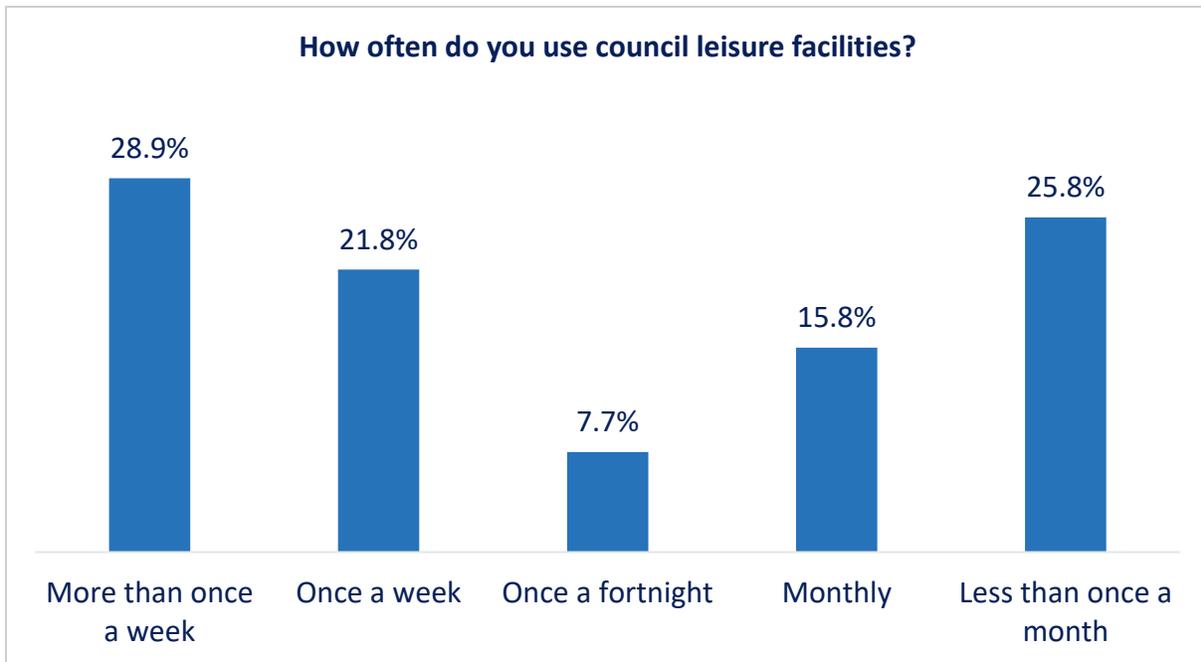


Figure 3: Chart showing how frequently respondents used council leisure facilities.

How often do you use council leisure facilities?	Online 1	Online 2	Total	%
More than once a week	42	44	86	28.9%
Once a week	33	32	65	21.8%
Once a fortnight	12	11	23	7.7%
Monthly	24	23	47	15.8%
Less than once a month	24	53	77	25.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 3: The frequency of council leisure facility use.

### 3.1.4 Question 4: Are you a member of Wirral Council's Invigor8 scheme allowing access to council leisure services?

298 people responded to this question. 70 (23.5%) were members of the councils Invigor8 scheme, while 228 (76.5%) were not members of the scheme.

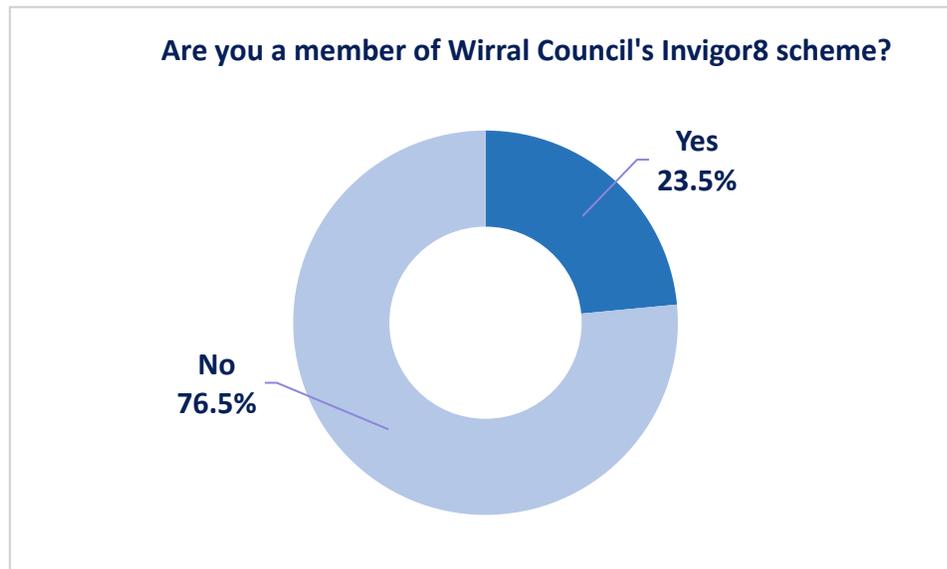


Figure 4: Chart showing the proportion of respondents who were members of the Invigor8 scheme.

Are you a member of Wirral Council's Invigor8 scheme allowing access to council leisure services?	Online 1	Online 2	Total	%
Yes	32	38	70	23.5%
No	102	126	228	76.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 4: The number of Invigor8 members among respondents

### 3.1.5 Question 5: Do you use Wirral Council leisure facilities for organised/team sports, e.g., football?

299 people responded to this question. 67 (22.4%) did use Wirral council leisure facilities for organised / team sport, while 232 (77.6%) did not.

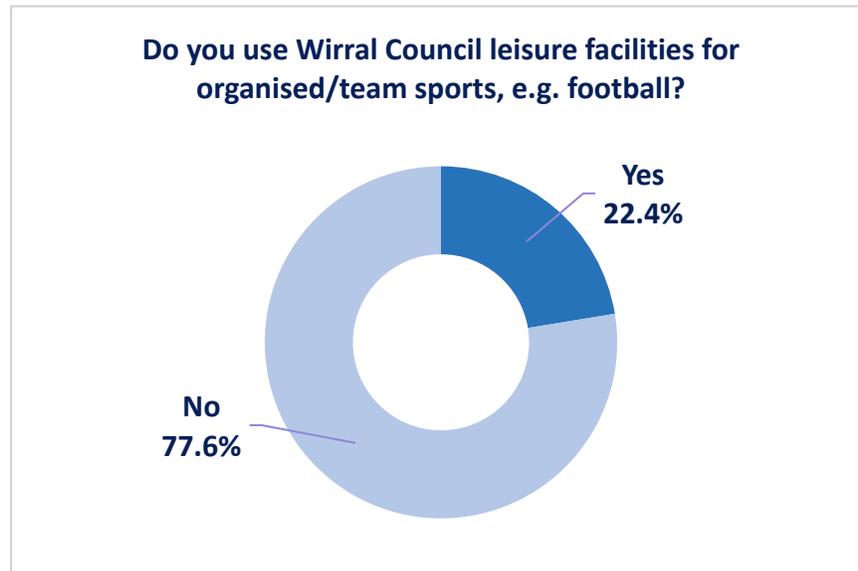


Figure 5: Chart showing the proportion of respondents who used council leisure facilities for organised sport.

Do you use Wirral Council leisure facilities for organised/team sports, e.g., football?	Online 1	Online 2	Total	%
Yes	31	36	67	22.4%
No	105	127	232	77.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 5: The proportion of respondents who used council leisure facilities for organised sport.

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

Respondents were able to select multiple facilities that they use. Swimming pools was the most common use of council leisure facilities among respondents, with 225 (39.3%) of use among respondents. 11 respondents (1.9%) did not use any council leisure facilities.

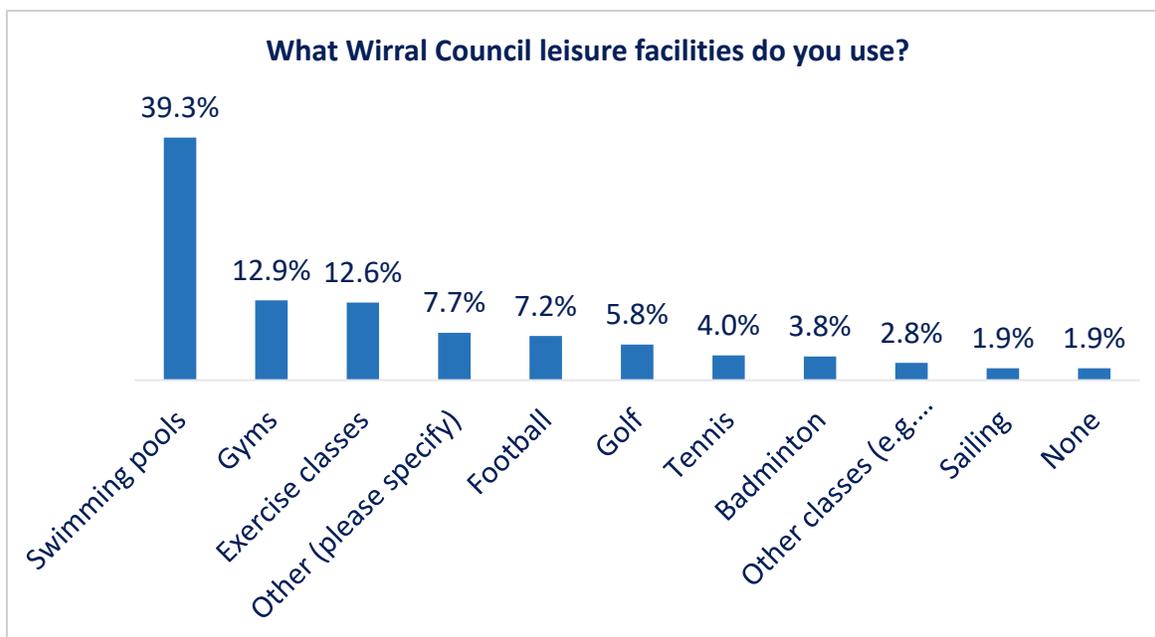


Figure 6: Chart showing the council facilities respondents use.

The Other category included many different things, including parks, running tracks, bowling greens, skiing facilities, dancing, open water swimming, paddleboarding and kayaking.

What Wirral Council leisure facilities do you use?	Online 1	Online 2	Total	%
Swimming pools	118	107	225	39.3%
Gyms	38	36	74	12.9%
Exercise classes	36	36	72	12.6%
Other (please specify)	8	36	44	7.7%
Football	19	22	41	7.2%
Golf	15	18	33	5.8%
Tennis	6	17	23	4.0%
Badminton	6	16	22	3.8%
Other classes (e.g., martial arts)	7	9	16	2.8%
Sailing	5	6	11	1.9%
None	6	5	11	1.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>572</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 6: Table totalling the council facilities respondents use.

**3.1.7 Question 7a: Closing down a council-operated leisure centre is acceptable if it will help protect other leisure facilities.**

This question was only included in survey 1.

136 people responded to this question. The most common answer was ‘Strongly disagree,’ with a total of 93 (68.4%) votes. In total, 116 (85.3%) disagreed, and 16 agreed (11.8%).

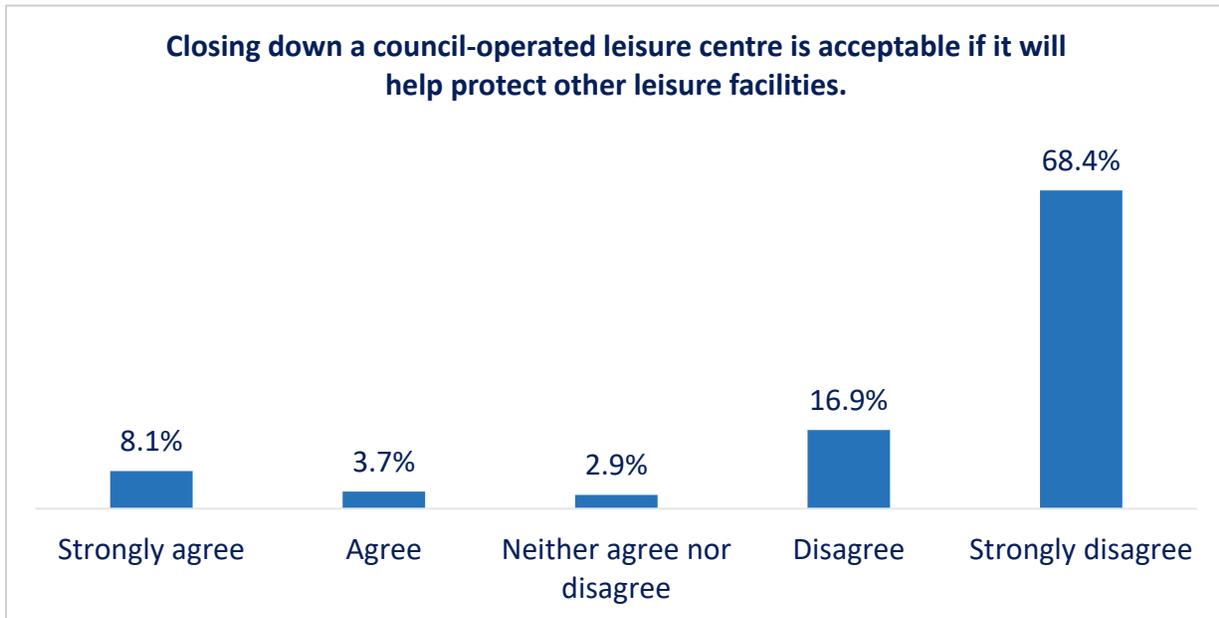


Figure 7: Chart showing the extent to which people agreed with the proposed reduction in council leisure facilities.

Closing down a council-operated leisure centre is acceptable if it will help protect other leisure facilities.	Online 1	Total	%
Strongly agree	11	11	8.1%
Agree	5	5	3.7%
Neither agree nor disagree	4	4	2.9%
Disagree	23	23	16.9%
Strongly disagree	93	93	68.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 7: Totalling the number of responses by agreement level.

### 3.1.8 Question 7b: Closing down Woodchurch Leisure Centre is acceptable if it will help protect other leisure facilities.

This question was only included in survey 1.

Of the 136 who responded to this question, 'Strongly disagree' was the most common answer – selected by 101 (74.3%). In total, 118 (86.8%) disagreed with the statement and 15 (11.0%) agreed.

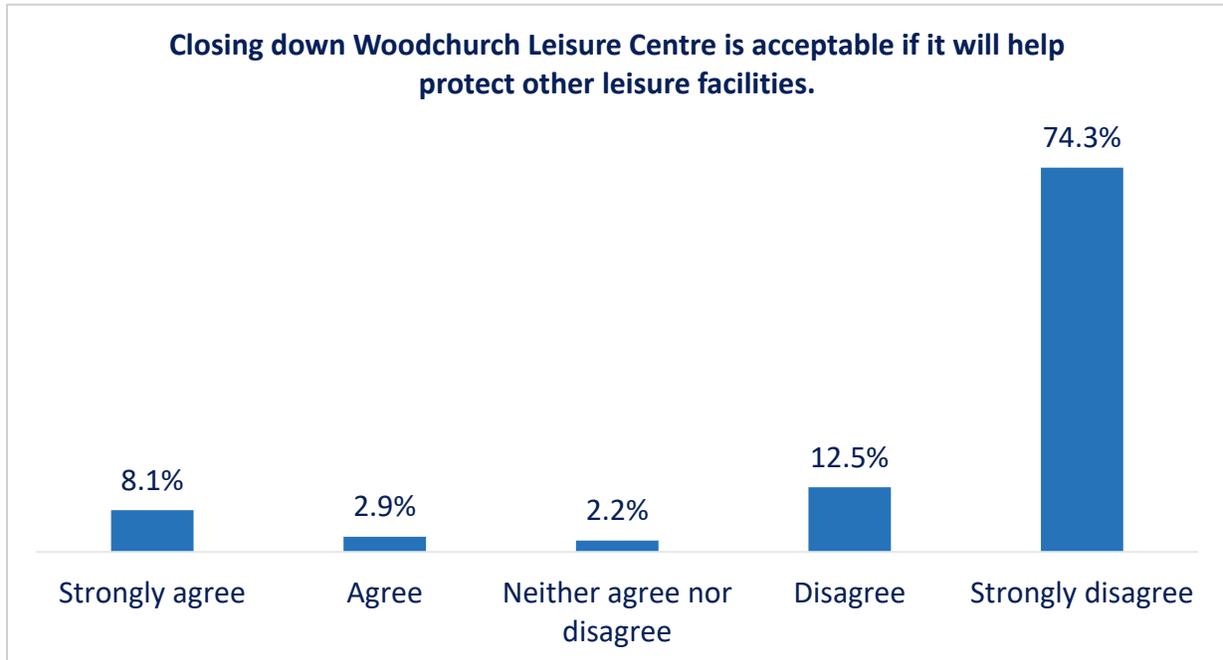


Figure 8: Chart showing the extent to which people agreed with the proposed closure of Woodchurch leisure facility.

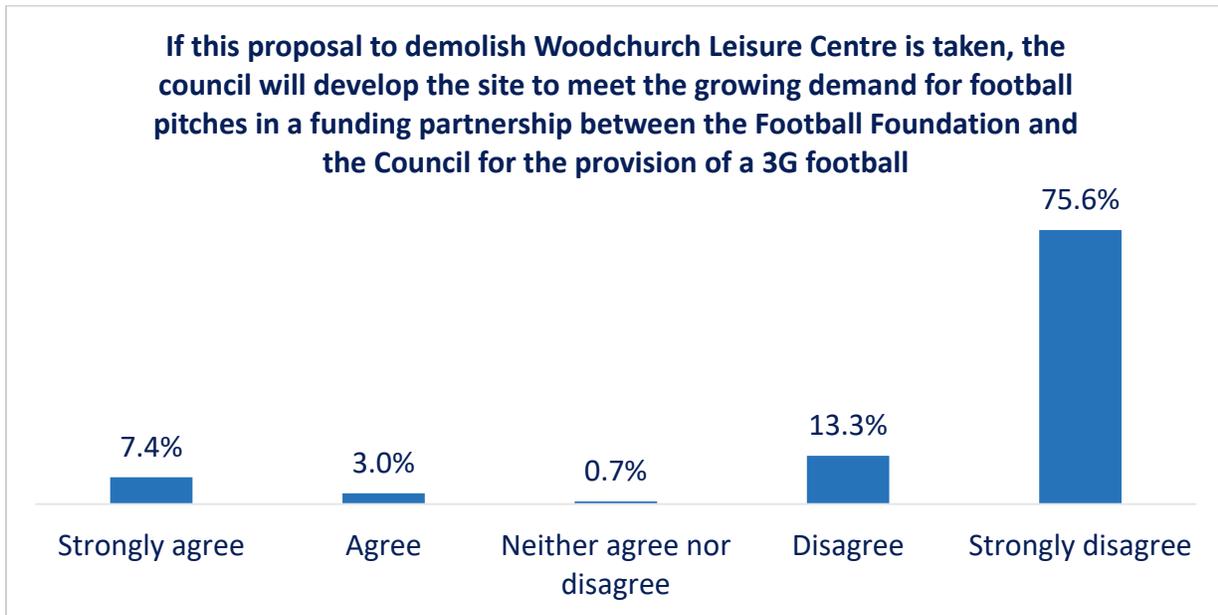
Closing down Woodchurch Leisure Centre is acceptable if it will help protect other leisure facilities.	Online 1	Total	%
Strongly agree	11	11	8.1%
Agree	4	4	2.9%
Neither agree nor disagree	3	3	2.2%
Disagree	17	17	12.5%
Strongly disagree	101	101	74.3%
Total	136	136	100.0%

Table 8: Totalling the number of responses by agreement level.

**3.1.9 Question 7c: If this proposal to demolish Woodchurch Leisure Centre is taken, the council will develop the site to meet the growing demand for football pitches in a funding partnership between the Football Foundation and the Council for the provision of a 3G football pitch and facilities. This new provision to meet demand would be acceptable to me.**

This question was only included in survey 1.

Of the 135 who responded to this question, ‘Strongly disagree’ was the most common answer – selected by 102 (75.6%). In total, 120 (88.9%) disagreed with the statement and 14 (10.4%) agreed.



*Figure 9: Chart showing the extent to which people agree with the proposal to demolish Woodchurch leisure centre and replace it with a council operated 3G football pitch.*

<b>If this proposal to demolish Woodchurch Leisure Centre is taken, the new provision of a 3G football pitch to meet demand would be acceptable to me.</b>	<b>Online 1</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
Strongly agree	10	10	7.4%
Agree	4	4	3.0%
Neither agree nor disagree	1	1	0.7%
Disagree	18	18	13.3%
Strongly disagree	102	102	75.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*Table 9: Totalling the number of responses by agreement level.*

**3.1.10 Question 7.2: It is proposed, as part of the council’s savings options to balance the budget, to permanently close and demolish Woodchurch Leisure Centre. Please tell us your opinion on this proposal.**

This question was only included in survey 2.

In total, 167 people responded to this question. The most common answer was ‘Strongly disagree’ with 95 votes (56.9%). 110 (65.9%) disagree with the proposal and 50 (30.0%) agreed.

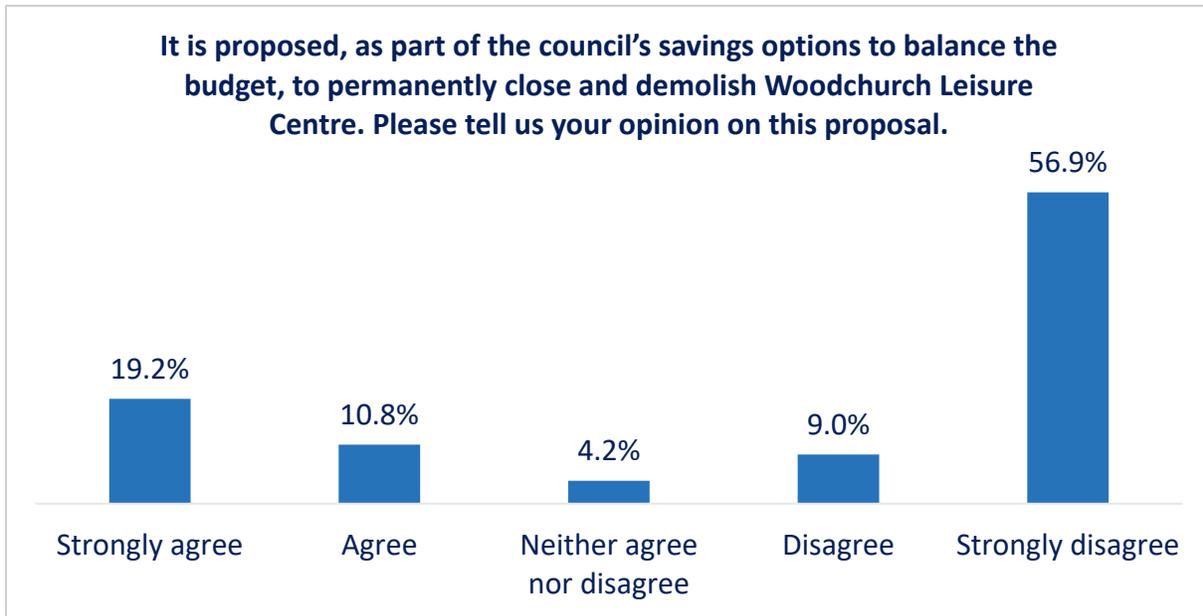


Figure 10: Chart showing the extent to which people agreed with the proposal to permanently close and demolish Woodchurch Leisure Centre

It is proposed, as part of the council’s savings options to balance the budget, to permanently close and demolish Woodchurch Leisure Centre. Please tell us your opinion on this proposal.	Online 2	Total	%
Strongly agree	32	32	19.2%
Agree	18	18	10.8%
Neither agree nor disagree	7	7	4.2%
Disagree	15	15	9.0%
Strongly disagree	95	95	56.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

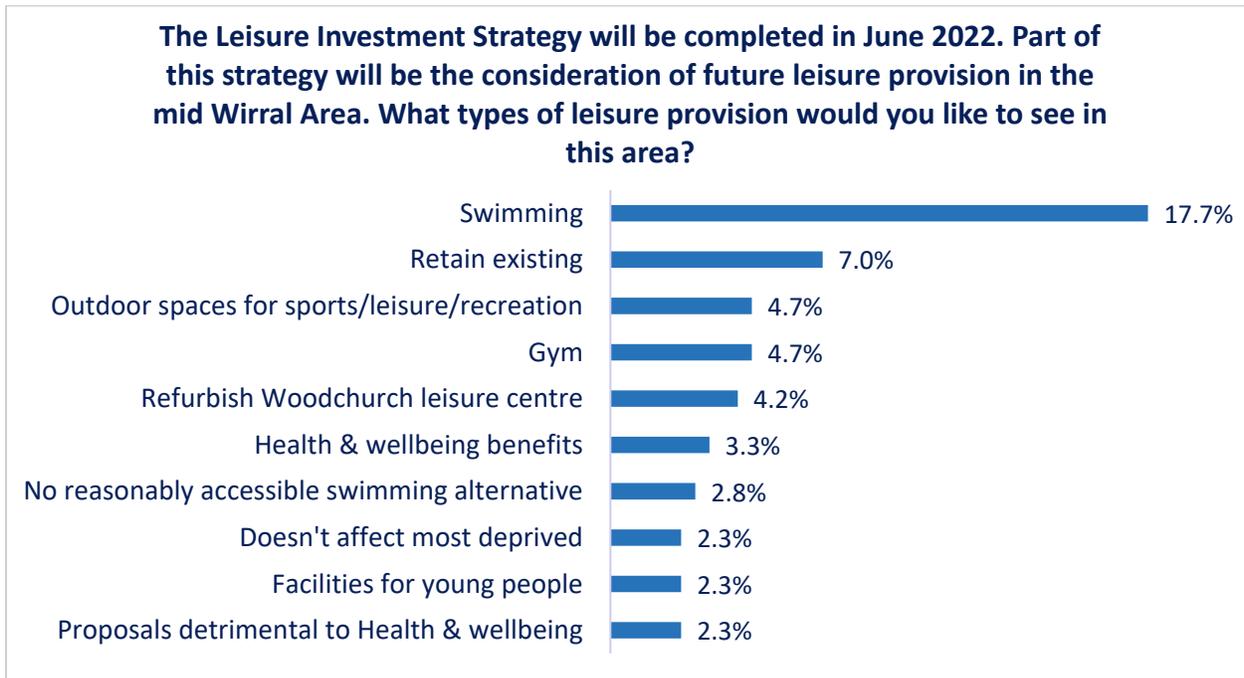
Table 10: Totalling the number of responses by agreement level

**3.1.11 Question 8: The Leisure Investment Strategy (Leisure Facilities Masterplan) will be presented to members of the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee in June 2022. Part of this strategy will be the consideration of future leisure provision in the mid Wirral Area. What types of leisure provision would you like to see in this area?**

This question was only included in survey 2.

Respondents were asked what types of leisure provision they would like to see in the area. There were 115 online comments which were categorised into themes.

Below are the top themes arising from the comments, these top themes together make up 51.2% of the total themes identified.



*Figure 11: Chart showing the top themes of what types of leisure provision respondents would like to see in the area*

**Swimming (17.7%)**

Respondents would like swimming facilities. Some specifically wanted facilities that are local to them, and some wanted updated swimming facilities. Some mentioned they'd like outdoor swimming pools or a 50m swimming pool.

**Retain existing (7.0%)**

Respondents want to keep the existing leisure centre at Woodchurch, in particular the swimming facilities.

### Outdoor spaces for sports/leisure/recreation (4.7%)

More outdoor spaces for sports, leisure and recreation are required with most people mentioning green spaces and parks as well as some suggesting outdoor gyms and outdoor classes.

### Gym (4.7%)

Respondents said they would like to have access to gym facilities.

### Refurbish Woodchurch leisure centre (4.2%)

Respondents want the existing leisure centre to be refurbished. Some comment that this will increase usage, which will in turn increase revenue.

<b>The Leisure Investment Strategy (Leisure Facilities Masterplan) will be presented to members of the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee in June 2022. Part of this strategy will be the consideration of future leisure provision in the mid Wirral Area. What types of leisure provision would you like to see in this area?</b>		
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% Of all themes</b>
Swimming	32	14.7%
Retain Existing	15	6.9%
Gym	8	3.7%
Outdoor spaces for sports/leisure/recreation	8	3.7%
Refurbish Woodchurch leisure centre	8	3.7%
Health & wellbeing benefits	7	3.2%
No reasonably accessible swimming alternative	6	2.8%
Doesn't affect most deprived	5	2.3%
Facilities for young people	5	2.3%

*Table 11: Table showing the top themes of what types of leisure provision respondents would like to see in the area*

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

This was originally question 8 in survey 1, question 9 in survey 2.

Respondents were asked if they had any alternative ideas to generate budget savings in leisure services. There were 180 online comments which were categorised into themes.

Below are the top themes arising from the comments, these top themes together make up 43.7% of the total themes identified.

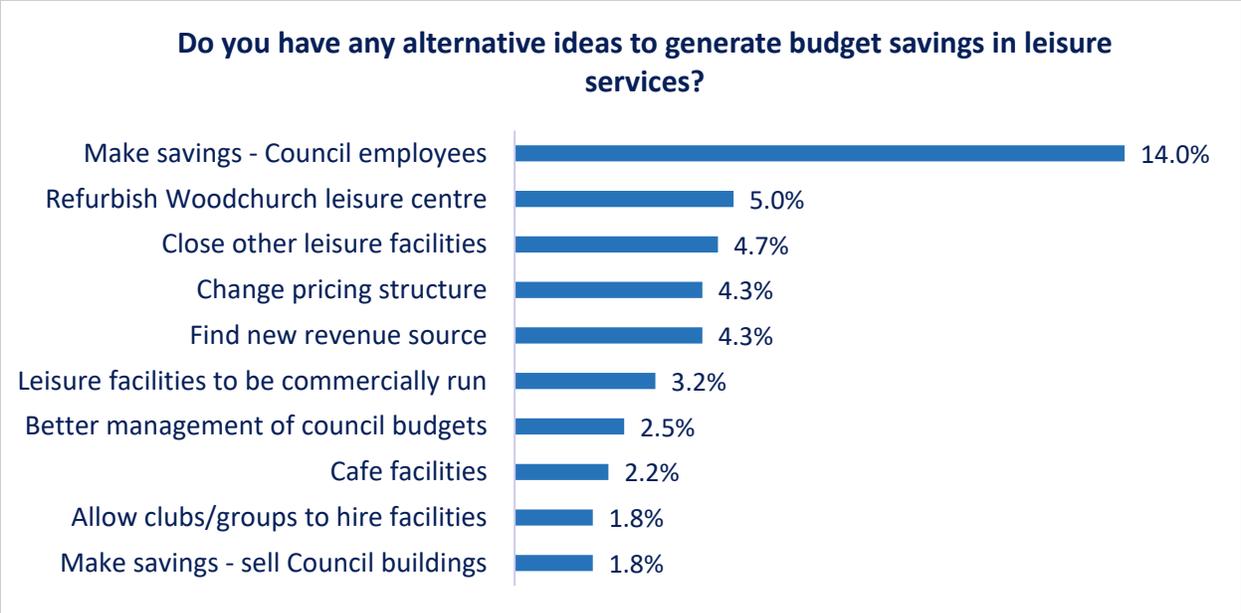


Figure 12: Chart showing alternative ideas to generate budget savings in leisure services

**Make savings – Council employees (14.0%)**

Respondents said the council should make savings by reducing employment costs: by having fewer council employees and paying them less, using fewer consultants, having fewer councillors, paying them less and using fewer developers and contractors.

**Refurbish Woodchurch leisure centre (5.0%)**

People said that by refurbishing the centre, it would bring more customers in and therefore more revenue would be generated.

**Close other leisure facilities (4.7%)**

Respondents suggested closing other leisure facilities instead, with most people suggesting to close golf courses, but others suggesting closing the Concourse, Europa Pools, the Tennis Centre, and some suggesting closing older buildings and reduce the number of leisure facilities overall.

**Change pricing structure (4.3%)**

People suggested various ways of changing the pricing structure in order to raise more money. Some suggested raising prices, while others suggested reducing prices in order to attract more customers.

### Find new revenue source (4.3%)

Respondents said that the council should seek new revenue sources, including government funding, sponsorship, applying for funding/lottery, community fundraising or private investment.

Do you have any alternative ideas to generate budget savings in leisure services?		
Tag	Total	% Of all themes
Make savings - Council employees	39	14.0%
Refurbish Woodchurch leisure centre	14	5.0%
Close other leisure facilities	13	4.7%
Change pricing structure	12	4.3%
Find new revenue source	12	4.3%
Leisure facilities to be commercially run	9	3.2%
Better management of council budgets	7	2.5%
Cafe facilities	6	2.2%
Allow clubs/groups to hire facilities	5	1.8%
Make savings - sell Council buildings	5	1.8%

*Table 12: Alternative ideas to generate budget savings in leisure services*

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

This was originally question 9 in survey 1, question 10 in survey 2.

Respondents were asked if they had any additional comments on this budget saving proposal. There were 180 online comments which were categorised into themes.

Below are the top themes arising from the comments, these top themes together make up 48.3% of the total themes identified.

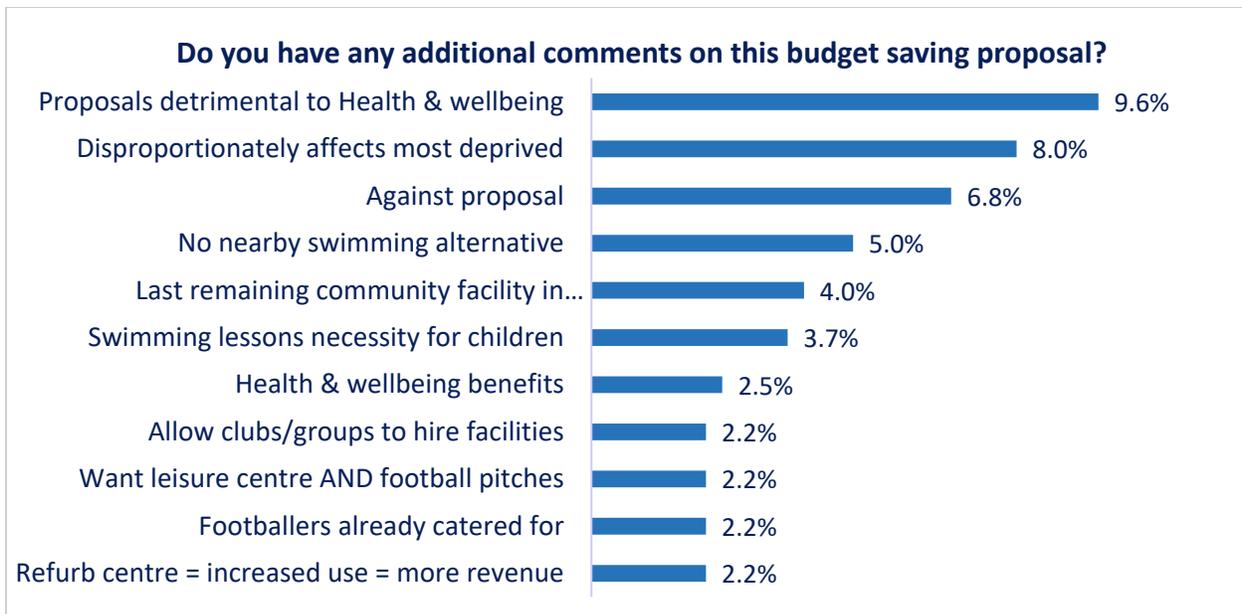


Figure 13: chart showing the top themes of additional comments on this budget saving proposal

#### **Proposals detrimental to Health & wellbeing (9.6%)**

Many of the respondents said that closing the leisure centre would severely affect the health and wellbeing of the people in the community, many of whom cannot afford to travel elsewhere to access other leisure facilities. It will affect physical wellbeing including fitness and obesity, and mental health.

#### **Disproportionately affects most deprived (8.0%)**

Many people said that this is a deprived area and that closing Woodchurch leisure centre will affect people who do not have the means to access other facilities, whereas other leisure facilities in less deprived parts of the Wirral are remaining open.

#### **Against proposal (6.8%)**

Respondents said that they are against the proposal, and they think it is “totally unacceptable” and “appalling” to close this much needed centre.

#### **No nearby swimming alternative (5.0%)**

People commented that there are not any swimming facilities nearby and travelling to access other facilities would be difficult for some people in the Woodchurch area.

#### **Last remaining community facility in Woodchurch (4.0%)**

Respondents said that the leisure centre is the last remaining community facility in Woodchurch and closing it will have a big impact, including causing anti-social behaviour and

vandalism. People are concerned that without this central facility there is no-where for the community to come together, and some commented that not everyone likes football.

Do you have any additional comments on this budget saving proposal?		
Tag	Total	% Of all themes
Proposals detrimental to Health & wellbeing	31	9.6%
Disproportionately affects most deprived	26	8.0%
Against proposal	22	6.8%
No reasonably accessible swimming alternative	16	5.0%
Last remaining community facility in Woodchurch	13	4.0%
Swimming lessons necessity for children	12	3.7%
Health & wellbeing benefits	8	2.5%
Allow clubs/groups to hire facilities	7	2.2%
Want leisure centre and football pitches	7	2.2%
Footballers already catered for	7	2.2%
Refurb centre = increased use = more revenue	7	2.2%

Table 13: table showing the top themes of additional comments on this budget saving proposal

## 3.2 Direct Representations

Eight direct representations were received via the dedicated email address supplied for the consultation process. These are provided in Appendix 2.

In relation to the Woodchurch proposals an online petition was created which can be found here:

[Petition · Save Woodchurch Swimming Pool and Leisure Centre · Change.org](#)

As at 11:00 20 April 2022, 4,909 people had signed this petition.

# 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 (91.5%) classed themselves as local residents.



Figure 14: Who are you registering as?

The gender of respondents was 61.3% female, 35.6% male, with 2.7% preferring not to say and 0.3% preferring their own term.

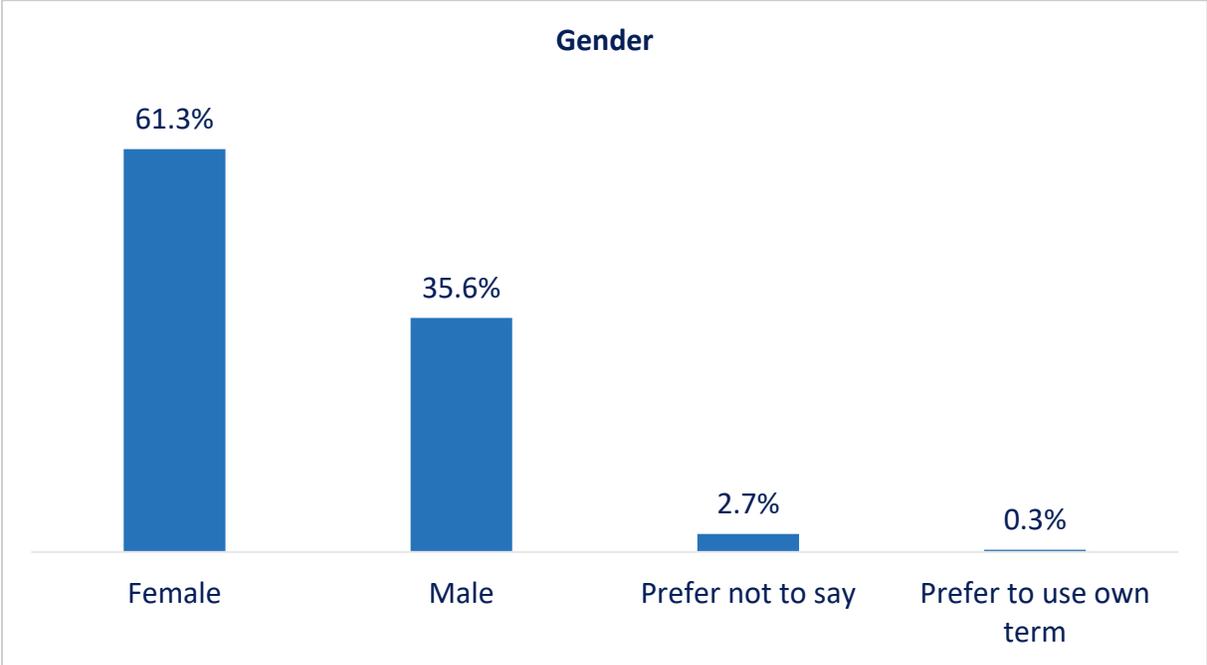


Figure 15: Gender of respondents

The age group profile is illustrated with the most common age groups were 45-54 years (27.8%), followed by 55-64 years (19.7%). Under 16s were unrepresented and 3.2% were aged 16-24 years.

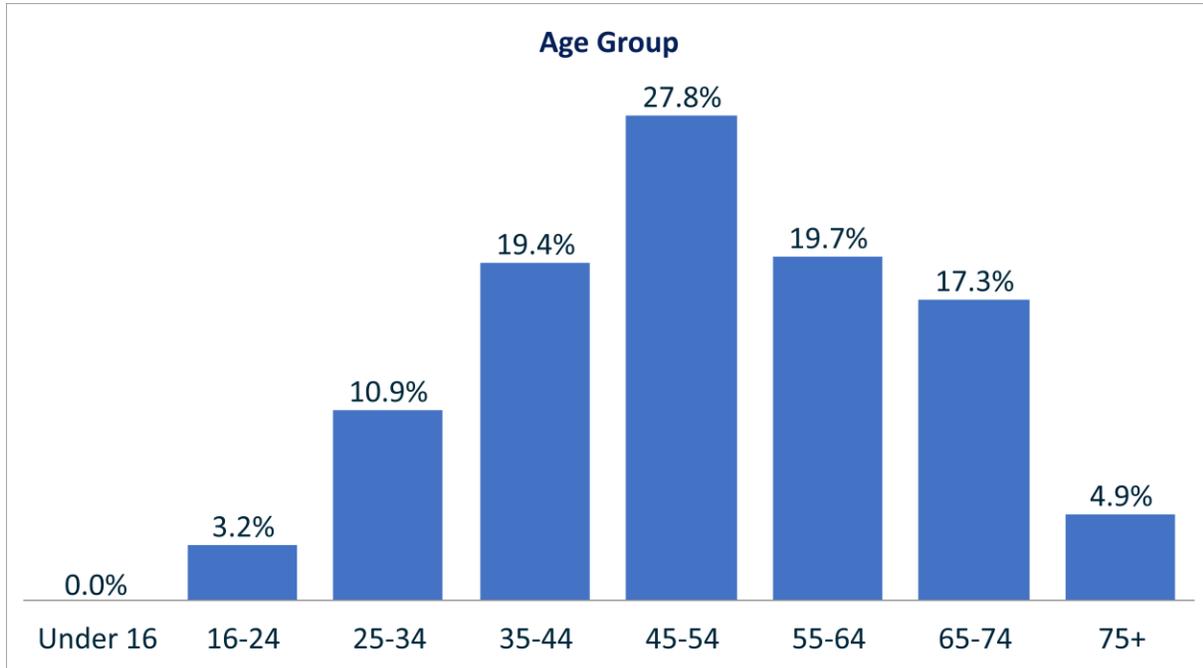


Figure 16: Age group of respondents

92.8% of respondents were White British, with only 3.3% of respondents being of non-white ethnicity.

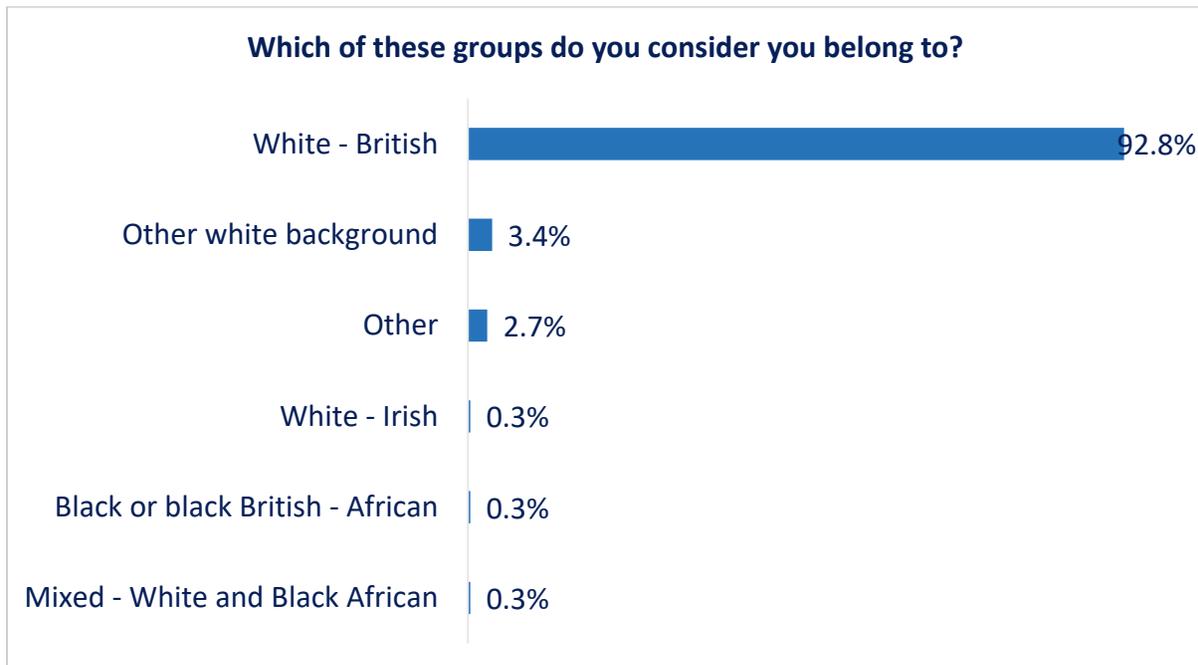


Figure 17: Ethnicity of respondents

93.5% of respondents were heterosexual, 5.3% were gay/lesbian, 1.2% bisexual and 16.2% preferred not to say.

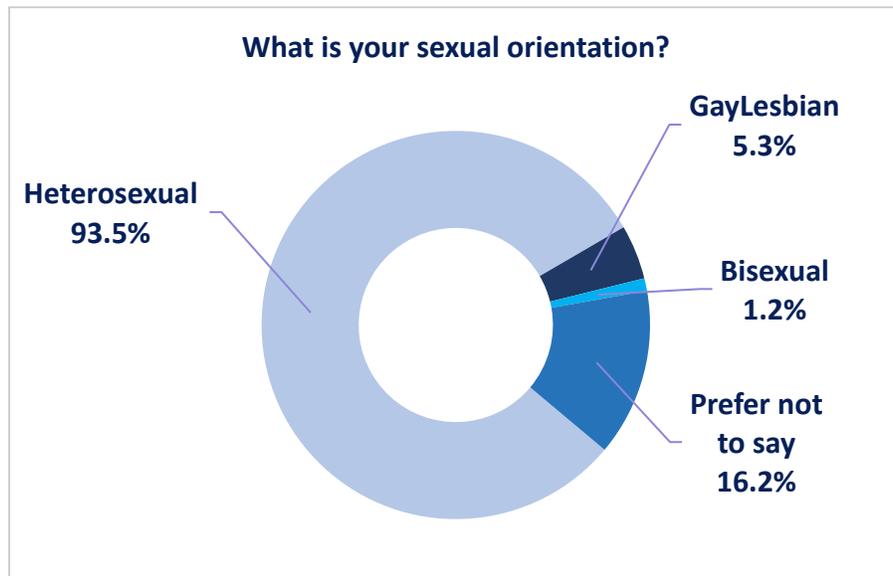


Figure 18: Sexual orientation of respondents

## 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.

Site registration allows us to confirm the number of engaged participants, 167 people participated in survey 1 and 136 people completed survey 2. 1,578 visited the Woodchurch Leisure Centre Consultation page of the Have Your Say site, of these 101 downloaded a document and 301 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 direct visits (694) where people have either pasted or typed the URL in to their browser or visits via email (467 visits), where people have clicked a link in an email. Direct visits generated a rate of engagement of 22.2%, meaning 22.2% of these visits resulted in completion of the poll, and email visits had an engagement rate of 9.2%.

TRAFFIC CHANNEL	AWARE VISITS	INFORMED VISITS (%)	ENGAGED VISITS (%)
DIRECT	694	348 (50.1%)	154 (22.2%)
SOCIAL	314	168 (53.5%)	50 (15.9%)
EMAIL	476	187 (39.3%)	44 (9.2%)
SEARCH ENGINE	75	38 (50.7%)	8 (10.7%)
.GOV SITES	5	4 (80%)	0 (0%)
REFERRALS	275	125 (45.5%)	47 (17.1%)

Table 14: Site traffic sources

## Appendix 1: Questionnaire Content Amends

Some questions in Questionnaire 1 were removed or amended and Questionnaire 2 was utilised for the remainder of the consultation timeframe. The removed and amended questions are noted here.

### Questionnaire 1. Original questions that were removed.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Closing down a council-operated leisure centre is acceptable if it will help protect other leisure facilities.					
Closing down Woodchurch Leisure Centre is acceptable if it will help protect other leisure facilities.					
If this proposal to demolish Woodchurch Leisure Centre is taken, the council will develop the site to meet the growing demand for football pitches in a funding partnership between the Football Foundation and the Council for the provision of a 3G football pitch and facilities. This new provision to meet demand would be acceptable to me.					

### Questionnaire 2. Replacement questions.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
It is proposed, as part of the council's savings options to balance the budget, to permanently close and demolish Woodchurch Leisure Centre. Please tell us your opinion on this proposal.					

The Leisure Investment Strategy (Leisure Facilities Masterplan) will be presented to members of the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee in June 2022. Part of this strategy will be the consideration of future leisure provision in the mid Wirral Area. What types of leisure provision would you like to see in this area?



## Appendix 2: Direct Representations

This appendix includes feedback directly sent to the contact email address:

[budgetconsult@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:budgetconsult@wirral.gov.uk)

I was appalled to hear that Wirral Council have decided to close and demolish Woodchurch Leisure Centre. I cannot help but feel that this is a very short-sighted decision. As a user of the pool, I am aware that many locals use the pool. These users are generally older members of the community with difficulty accessing other facilities. They use the pool for social interaction as well as fitness. Closure will lead to further social isolation and worsening mental ill health. There is already a crisis in mental health service provision at both a local and national level; closure of the pool will not benefit anyone.

Local children use the pool too, and Woodchurch Swimming Club is based there. Local schools access the pool (at least did prior to the pandemic). As you are no doubt aware, swimming is a mandatory aspect of the national curriculum for children in primary schools. Moving swimming lessons to other pools further away will result in increased pollution due to increased transport requirements. This will have a negative effect on the education and health budgets. Living on a peninsula, the ability to access open water is readily available and therefore being able to do so safely is vital. I have nursed and attempted resuscitation on many drowning victims (adults and children) and am aware of the need for people to be able to swim.

Heart disease, diabetes, and obesity are increasing at alarming rates. It is now the most sensible time to be reducing access to exercise facilities. Increases in these diseases will inevitably lead to greater pressures on home care, higher benefit requirements, increased pressure on local NHS services which are already under unprecedented pressure. The latest CQC report on Arrowe Park Hospital is hardly glowing. As has been demonstrated in numerous reports, life expectancy in poorer areas in the Wirral is greatly reduced compared to the more affluent areas both locally and nationally. The council and government should be seeking to address and reduce these inequalities, not exacerbating them.

On a personal level, swimming at the Woodchurch pool (my local pool) has helped me recover from PTSD sustained during deployment in the forces and regain my fitness following a procedure on my heart. My second procedure, during the pandemic has required me to travel further to use the pools. I am sure that Wirral Council, as with other large, cumbersome organisations wastes plenty of money (doing up the town halls, multiple managers who do very little, expenses, foreign travel etc) which could be used to better effect. I realise that governing (locally and nationally) is about priorities, budgets, and targets. These decisions should not have such an impact on the health and well-being of the electorate.

Please can you do whatever you can to keep the pool open, after all the public were involved in the opening of the pool and the council appear to have intentionally let it deteriorate so as to have an excuse to close it. The pool itself is a lovely pool, used by locals and NHS workers from

Arrowe Park Hospital. We should be encouraging not discouraging all types of exercise including swimming!

I write to express my utter dismay at Wirral Council's proposal to permanently close Woodchurch and Europa Fun Pools.

I know cost savings have to be made, but how can the council consider closing such facilities in deprived areas? Woodchurch facility is used by local schools and could be well utilised by swimming schools if properly managed. Europa Fun Pools, if priced correctly, should easily 'wash its face' financially and offers an important exercise opportunity in a very deprived area, one which also constructively occupies young people keeping them away from the dangers of hanging around on the streets. This current proposal is beyond any logical reasoning that I can understand.

How can councillors sleep at night when they have approved spending huge amounts of money (outside of the related government grant) forcing a sea wall on West Kirby for the purpose of protecting private property in a relatively affluent area (and when most residents don't want it anyway), and yet close important facilities for health, development, and opportunity in deprived areas of the borough?

Is that how 'levelling up' works?

I urge a review of council priorities to stop vanity projects and ensure ALL expenditure is focused on our communities that most need investment and development. We should be actively supporting young people getting active and having constructive outlets for their free time, not taking these important facilities away from them.

It is with some concern that I read that Wirral Council is considering the closure of Woodchurch Leisure Centre, apparently because of the need to make stringent cuts in its budget.

For the reasons outlined below I feel that this decision would be very short sighted indeed. The country as a whole is being encouraged to get fit and become more active. To consider the closure of the leisure centre goes against this.

- The Council claim this facility is the least used of all leisure centres. This is because the Council have deliberately neglected it and spent money on improving other facilities. They have installed gyms and cafes in their other centres yet allowed the Woodchurch centre to become run down. The Council have actively turned away opportunities to make additional revenue from the Swimming Club when the Club wanted to hire it for additional time, with a willingness to meet any additional lifeguard cost. Similarly, the Council have turned away Commercial swim schools who would have been willing to hire at commercial rates. The

Council seem to have been deliberately obstructive in maximising the use of the facility and would rather see it empty and then claim it requires a large subsidy.

- We are not sympathetic to cuts that arise because of Council mismanagement. The Cost of running the centre could be paid for by allowing the grass to grown longer in some of the largest parks. Long grass is easy to cut but replacing a leisure centre and pool isn't.
- Many years ago, the centre was set up with contributions from local residents, the Council therefore have a duty to keep this centre going and to maintain it in the same condition as other centres.
- The swimming pool is quite pleasant internally, so doesn't even require huge expenditure to improve its appearance.
- Swimming is a life skill; it could save your life. Swimming pools are essential facilities as you can't practice swimming without a pool. Having a piece of gym equipment at home or playing football in your garden/on a field is within the reach of many people, the same cannot be said of having a pool.
- Commercial swimming schools have waiting lists that run into the hundreds, therefore how can the Council claim there isn't the demand. It is clear children are losing the opportunity to learn to swim.
- There are many schools that use the Woodchurch facilities and will have to hire a coach at additional cost to take pupils further afield. No doubt the pupils will lose even more of their school day reaching swimming facilities.
- Woodchurch is a deprived area and so it should be invested in. The Council does in fact have plenty of capital to invest which it can spend if it serves the local levelling up policy agenda or enables a greater revenue return. This is probably why the Council propose to build yet another 3G pitch and pavilion next to the Woodchurch leisure centre. Please note it's not necessary to demolish the centre to make way for the 3G pitch; there is room for both.
- Woodchurch SC needs its home pool back, we keep being shunted from one pool to another and sessions curtailed without any notice. This has created a lot of work for the volunteers that run the club. It has also created child safeguarding issues. It has impacted membership, as members and coaches are having to travel further for training sessions, and it creates confusion as to when and where sessions are taking place. The swimming clubs provide a focus for the local community, bringing people together, giving young people a constructive outlet. The older children have the opportunity to give back to the community by helping and supporting younger children.

- Swimming is an important form of exercise for all ages, it is a low impact exercise so particularly beneficial to older people.

I would respectfully urge that the Council as a whole and those Councillors in particular who represent me should vote against this action

I am the treasurer and significant contributor to the running of Woodchurch Swimming Club as well as the mother of two girls that swim at this club. I write to express my absolute dismay that Wirral Council is considering the closure/demolition of Woodchurch Leisure Centre, including the pool.

The points I would like to make are as follows: -

The Council claim this facility is the least used of all leisure centres. This is because the Council deliberately neglected it and spent money on improving other facilities in Wirral. They installed gyms and cafes in their other centres yet allowed the Woodchurch centre to become run down. The Council have actively turned away opportunities to make additional revenue from the Swimming Club when the Club wanted to hire it for additional time, with a willingness to meet any additional lifeguard cost. Similarly, the Council have turned away Commercial swim schools who would have been willing to hire at commercial rates. The Council seem to have been deliberately obstructive in maximising the use of the facility and would rather see it empty and then claim it requires a large subsidy.

The Council have done little to promote the centre and few residents are aware of its existence; the pool has always come as a pleasant surprise when we have hosted galas there. We are always told by other clubs that they didn't know about it. Perhaps now that so many Wirral residents have received their vaccines at this centre, they will have a better awareness!

The location of the Centre/pool in the centre of the Wirral and close to the motorway makes it a good location.

I am not sympathetic to cuts that arise because of Council mismanagement. The Cost of running the centre could be paid for by allowing the grass to grow longer in some of the largest parks. Long grass is easy to cut but replacing a leisure centre and pool isn't.

Many years ago, the centre was set up with contributions from local residents, the Council therefore have a duty to keep this centre going and to maintain it in the same condition as other centres.

Swimming is a life skill; it could save your life. Swimming pools are essential facilities as you can't practice swimming without a pool. Having a piece of gym equipment at home or playing

football in your garden/on a field is within the reach of many people; the same cannot be said of having a pool.

Commercial swimming schools have waiting lists that run into the hundreds, therefore how can the Council claim there isn't the demand. It is clear children are losing the opportunity to learn to swim.

There are many schools that use the Woodchurch facilities and will have to hire a coach at additional cost to take pupils further afield. Pupils will lose even more of their school day reaching swimming facilities.

Woodchurch is a deprived area and so it should be invested in. The Council does in fact have plenty of capital to invest which it can spend if it serves the local levelling up policy agenda or enables a greater revenue return. This is probably why the Council propose to build yet another 3G pitch and pavilion next to the Woodchurch leisure centre. Please note it's not necessary to demolish the centre to make way for the 3G pitch; there is room for both.

Woodchurch SC needs its home pool back, we keep being shunted from one pool to another and sessions curtailed without any notice. This has created a lot of work for the volunteers that run the club. It has also created child safeguarding issues. It has impacted membership, as members and coaches are having to travel further for training sessions, and it creates confusion as to when and where sessions are taking place. The swimming clubs provide a focus for the local community, bringing people together, giving young people a constructive outlet. The older children have the opportunity to give back to the community by helping and supporting younger children.

Swimming is an important form of exercise for all ages, it is a low impact exercise so particularly beneficial to older people, me included. I am a master's swimmer and compete in the ASA masters nationals. I tried to take up running when pools were closed and quickly suffered injuries. It was very difficult to return to swimming after months of pool closures. I was grateful to Caldys pool and pools in Cheshire to get back to swimming when the government allowed it, after the Council took additional months to reopen any of the Wirral pools.

It is also disappointing to see the closure of the fun pool at Europa as a permanent feature. This pool was always queued out at weekends, and it represents an important introduction to swimming to young children that may encourage them to learn to swim, I am not aware of any similar facilities in the area. If there is such a high demand for gym equipment and it makes money, then perhaps such facilities could be located somewhere other than a popular fun pool.

I think it's a disgrace for the council to close Woodchurch baths because they say they are receiving 100m less income, like most people on the Woodchurch we have to struggle don't close the baths

To whom it may concern... I am like many thousands of Wirral residents feel let down by our so called government/ local council in their decisions regarding Woodchurch leisure centre

closure/demolition. There's so much you need to learn about this place that has brought many decades of helping every age group in development skills, easing mental health & bring a massive community together, especially these times were people are struggling with normal life in general it s a disgrace. Restore the centre & bring it back to its former glory for the sake of all Wirral residents & local communities & for mankind!!!.

I am writing to convey my concern over the alleged plans to close Woodchurch Leisure Centre.

This Centre has provided a much needed service to my family and community. As you know, we live on a peninsular and the ability to swim is key to children's safety.

Affordable and inclusive access to pools and leisure services in this community is almost vital to the overall wellbeing of individuals and families. Being aware of the demographics of the area, I am sure you are aware of the barriers to access that exist.

Woodchurch Leisure Centre has not received investment in a number of years. The potential is clear and the opportunity to create a beacon of wellbeing should be considered. There is space for a creche and cafe, as with West Kirby, rentable spaces for physios or other wellbeing practitioners.

I do hope there is wide consultation on the future of Woodchurch and the final decision errs on the side of opportunity and future provision.

As a user of Woodchurch Leisure Centre especially the pool I am shocked at its possible closure. The Woodchurch estate itself is one of the largest housing estates in England with 2 high schools and 3 primary schools, and the Noctorum also has at least 3 primary schools and Ridgeway High School all with a high number of FSM pupils who will be unable to afford to travel elsewhere to learn to swim or exercise.

The small pool is essential for under tens non swimmers to give confidence. Not all families can afford swimming lessons. I was taking my two nieces of 6 and 5 every week for two months until lockdown and they were nearly ready to swim unaided but they are now 8 and 6 and cannot swim. Their school could not provide swims either.

When the pool was available for my child from St Michaels she learnt to swim without me having to pay for lessons.

The whole leisure centre has been let down by the council on investment.

The nearest pool for Woodchurch for a family swim is West Kirby and the fun pool in Birkenhead is also up for closure.

If the leisure centre had proper facilities it is more accessible than West Kirby.

An Ice rink in the winter and a roller rink in the summer would also be popular. I oppose the closure.

Am writing with a view to adding my voice to the "Save the Woodchurch Leisure Centre" campaign. I have lived in Woodchurch since 1979, and both of my children were able to use the swimming baths etc. (as did I). The swimming baths were lovely and the Leisure Centre was regularly used for Judo and dancing classes etc. Also at Christmas time pantomimes were regularly performed. I think it would be a shame to close these venues as they have given so much pleasure to so many people in the past. Hoping you would be able to reconsider taking this action as am sure would be frequented regularly in the future.