

Agenda

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Date: **Tuesday 11 January 2022**

Time: **2.30 pm**

Place: **To be confirmed**

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www.youtube.com/HerefordshireCouncil

Notes: Please note the time, date and venue of the meeting.

For any further information please contact:

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If you would like help to understand this document, or would like it in another format, please call Joanna Morley, Democratic Services on 01432 260239 or e-mail governancesupportteam@herefordshire.gov.uk in advance of the meeting.

Agenda for the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Membership

Chairperson
Vice-chairperson

Councillor Phillip Howells
Councillor Jennie Hewitt

Councillor Graham Andrews
Councillor Toni Fagan
Councillor Helen l'Anson
Councillor Mike Jones
Councillor Jim Kenyon
Councillor David Summers

Andy James – Co-opted Member
Sam Pratley – Co-opted Member

Agenda

Pages

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To receive apologies for absence.

2. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

To receive details of members nominated to attend the meeting in place of a member of the Committee.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive declarations of interest in respect of Schedule 1, Schedule 2 or Other Interests from members of the Committee in respect of items on the agenda.

4. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

To receive any written questions from members of the public.

Deadline for receipt of questions is 5:00pm on Wednesday 5 January 2022

Accepted questions and answers will be published as a supplement prior to the meeting. Please submit questions to:

councillorservices@herefordshire.gov.uk.

Further information and guidance is available at

www.herefordshire.gov.uk/getinvolved

5. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

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6. 2022/23 BUDGET SETTING

To seek the views of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on the budget proposals for 2022/23 as they relate to the remit of the Committee.

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7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is Tuesday, 22 February 2022, 2.30pm.

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- Inspect agenda and public reports at least five clear days before the date of the meeting. Agenda and reports (relating to items to be considered in public) are available at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/meetings
- Inspect minutes of the Council and all committees and sub-committees and written statements of decisions taken by the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members for up to six years following a meeting.
- Inspect background papers used in the preparation of public reports for a period of up to four years from the date of the meeting. (A list of the background papers to a report is given at the end of each report). A background paper is a document on which the officer has relied in writing the report and which otherwise is not available to the public.
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- Have access to a list specifying those powers on which the Council have delegated decision making to their officers identifying the officers concerned by title. Information about councillors is available at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/councillors
- Copy any of the documents mentioned above to which you have a right of access, subject to a reasonable charge (20p per sheet subject to a maximum of £5.00 per agenda plus a nominal fee of £1.50 for postage).
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The location of the office and details of city bus services can be viewed at:

<http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/1597/hereford-city-bus-map-local-services->

**The Seven Principles of Public Life
(Nolan Principles)**

1. Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

2. Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

3. Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

4. Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

5. Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

6. Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

7. Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.



Title of report: 2022/23 Budget Setting

Meeting: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Meeting date: Tuesday 11 January 2022

Report by: Chief Finance Officer

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To seek the views of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on the budget proposals for 2022/23 as they relate to the remit of the Committee.

The draft proposals show an overall increase of £4.2m in the proposed base revenue budget for children and young people. This follows a review of the base budget requirement to enable a funded budget to be proposed.

The budget proposes increasing council tax by 2.99% inclusive of a 1% adult social care precept.

The Committee is invited to make recommendations to inform and support the process for making Cabinet proposals to Council regarding the adoption of the budget and associated budget framework items, including providing constructive challenge to the Cabinet's proposals.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) **the Committee determine any recommendation it wishes to make to Cabinet in relation to the 2022/23 budget proposals specifically affecting children and young people.**

Alternative options

1. There are no alternatives to the recommendations; Cabinet is responsible for developing budget proposals for Council consideration and it is a function of this committee to make reports or recommendations to the executive with respect to the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the executive. The Council's budget and policy framework rules require Cabinet to consult with scrutiny committees on budget proposals in order that the scrutiny committee members may inform and support the process for making Cabinet proposals to Council.
2. It is open to the Committee to recommend alternative spending proposals or strategic priorities; however given the legal requirement to set a balanced budget should additional expenditure be proposed compensatory savings proposals must also be identified.

Key considerations

3. A balanced budget for 2022/23 is proposed. The 2022/23 base budget proposals are based on the provisional local government financial settlement and an assumed total council tax increase of 2.99%, 1.99% increase in core council tax and a 1% adult social care precept. This increases the band D equivalent charge to £1,701.70 representing an increase of £0.95 per week (£4.12 a month). This is the maximum increase permitted, a higher increase would require the support of a referendum.
4. The council tax base for 2022/23 has grown by 3% (following a 2% decrease in the prior year) to 70,252.52 band D equivalent properties. This growth is welcomed and reflects no further increases in working age council tax reduction claimants.
5. The Council has started a two year transformation process with costs to be funded from earmarked reserves. Children's Safeguarding and Family Support Services are undertaking a transformation programme which involves fundamental culture and practice change. This includes children's social work as well as multi agency safeguarding and early help practice.
6. The transformation programme encompasses service redesign, recruitment and retention, prevention and intervening early, establishing services that support moving to independence in adulthood. The underlying aim is to improve the quality of services in Herefordshire as well as capacity. An Improvement Plan is in place.
7. The directorate has seen increasing cost pressures and these are reflected in the 2022/23 budget proposals by an increase of £4.2m in the base budget, 11%.
8. Council will be asked to approve the 2022/23 budget on 11 February 2022. At the same meeting Council will also be asked to approve the updated medium term financial strategy, treasury management strategy, value for money strategy, council tax reduction scheme and the capital strategy.

Community impact

9. The budget proposals demonstrate how the Council is using its financial resources to deliver the priorities within the County plan and associated delivery plan.

10. The Council is committed to delivering continued improvement, positive change and outcomes in delivering key priorities.
11. In accordance with the principles of the code of corporate governance, Herefordshire Council is committed to promoting a positive working culture that accepts, and encourages constructive challenge, and recognises that a culture and structure for scrutiny are key elements for accountable decision making, policy development, and review.

Environmental Impact

12. Herefordshire Council provides and purchases a wide range of services for the people of Herefordshire. Together with partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors we share a strong commitment to improving our environmental sustainability, achieving carbon neutrality and to protect and enhance Herefordshire's outstanding natural environment.
13. Whilst this overarching budget setting document will not detail specific environmental impacts, consideration is always made to minimising waste and resource use in line with the council's environmental policy. A specific environmental impact assessment for the service specific budget proposals will be considered as appropriate to seek to minimise any adverse environmental impact and actively seek opportunities to improve and enhance environmental performance.

Equality duty

14. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
15. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. Service specific equality impact assessments will be completed when the service specific proposals are developed to assess the impact on the protected characteristic as set out in the Equality Act 2010. The duty means that the potential impact of a decision on people with different protected characteristics is always taken into account when these assessments have been completed then we will consider mitigating against any adverse impact identified.

Resource implications

16. The financial implications are as set out in the report. The ongoing operational costs including, human resources, information technology and property resource requirements are included in the draft budget and will be detailed in separate governance decision reports as appropriate.

Legal implications

17. When setting the budget it is important that councillors are aware of the legal requirements and obligations. Councillors are required to act prudently when setting the budget and council tax so that they act in a way that considers local taxpayers. This also covers the impact on future taxpayers.
18. The Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires a council to set a balanced budget. To do this the council must prepare a budget that covers not only the expenditure but also the funding to meet the proposed budget. The budget has to be fully funded and the income from all sources must meet the expenditure.
19. Best estimates have to be employed so that all anticipated expenditure and resources are identified. If the budget includes unallocated savings or unidentified income then these have to be carefully handled to demonstrate that these do not create a deficit budget. An intention to set a deficit budget is not permitted under local government legislation.
20. The Council must decide every year how much they are going to raise from council tax. The decision is based on a budget that sets out estimates of what is planned to be spent on services. Because the level of council tax is set before the year begins and cannot be increased during the year, risks and uncertainties have to be considered, that might force higher spending on the services than planned. Allowance is made for these risks by: making prudent allowance in the estimates for services; and ensuring that there are adequate reserves to draw on if the service estimates turn out to be insufficient.
21. The Council's budget and policy framework rules require that the chairmen of a scrutiny committee shall take steps to ensure that the relevant committee work programmes include any budget and policy framework plan or strategy, to enable scrutiny members to inform and support the process for making Cabinet proposals to Council.
22. Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 restricting councillors voting on certain matters where they are in arrears of council tax, does not apply to scrutiny function as the views from scrutiny on the budget are not a recommendation for approval, a resolution or any other type of decision. As a result a s106 check of councillors arrears has not been undertaken.

Risk management

23. Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 requires the S151 officer to report to Council when it is setting the budget and precept (council tax). Council is required to take this report into account when making its budget and precept decision. The report must deal with the robustness of the estimates included in the budget and the adequacy of reserves.

24. The budget has been updated using the best available information; current spending, anticipated pressures and the provisional settlement. This draft will be updated through the budget setting timetable.
25. There are general risks to delivery of budgets including the delivery of services, new homes, government policy changes and unplanned pressures. We are maintaining a general fund reserve balance above the minimum requirement, ear marked reserves and an annual contingency budget to manage these risks.
26. The most substantial risks have been assessed as part of the budget process and reasonable mitigation has been made. Risks will be monitored through the year and reported to cabinet as part of the budget monitoring process.
27. Demand and supply management in social care continues to be a key issue, against a backdrop of a demographic of older people that is rising faster than the national average. This report and presentation at Appendix A provides an update on the measures being implemented to address these risks.

Consultees

28. The Council's constitution states that budget consultees should include parish councils, health partners, the schools forum, business ratepayers, council taxpayers, the trade unions, political groups on the council, the scrutiny committees and such other organisations and persons as the leader shall determine. Local budget consultation zoom events were held in September 2021, 14 consultation events were held with Parish Councils and other key stakeholders. The aim of the sessions was to ask key questions specifically related to the 2022/23 budget but also to have more in-depth discussion about ideas that were introduced in last year's budget consultation sessions. There were 51 participants. There was support to increase the general Council Tax charge by 1.99%, which is the proposed increase. See Appendix B for a summary report.
29. An online public consultation was open between 27 August and 4 October 2021. The webpage was visited 442 times during the consultation period. A total of 134 responses were received to the online questionnaire, see Appendix C for details.

Appendices

Appendix A: Presentation

Appendix B: Impact report on Local Budget Consultation

Appendix C: Online budget consultation summary

Background papers

None identified

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Draft Budget 2022/2023
11 January 2022**

MTFS 2022/2023

Children & Young People - Draft Funded Budget

Service area	Gross budget £000	Income budget £000	Total 22/23 Budget £000
Children's Commissioning	719	(15)	704
Directors office	338		338
Youth Offending	197		197
Total Central Directorate Costs	764	(15)	749
Additional Needs	2,815	(279)	2,536
Commissioning Management	2,950	(2,178)	772
Development & Sufficiency	1,150	(179)	971
Early Help & Early Years	1,600	(413)	1,187
Education Improvement	496	(107)	389
Total Education & Commissioning	9,011	(3,156)	5,855
Children in Need	4,568		4,568
Looked After Children	29,657	(3,450)	26,207
Safeguarding & Early Help Management	1,477		1,477
Safeguarding & Review	1,373	(166)	1,207
Safeguarding Development	603	(30)	573
Total Safeguarding & Family Support	37,678	(3,646)	34,032
Total 22/23 Budget	47,943	(6,817)	41,126

The proposed 22/23 budget shows an increase of £4.2m from the 21/22 base budget

MTFS 2022/2023
Children & Young People
Big Issues

Placements Pressure £ 2.5 million

MTFS 2022/2023

Children & Young People placements' pressure

The £2.5m pressure includes £1.4m increase in costs that had occurred between budget setting for 21/22 and the start of the financial year

Placement	May forecast variance £000
Residential	760
Supported accommodation	449
Special guardianship	402
In house fostering	105
Agency fostering	(467)
Adoption (allowances)	116
Total pressure	1,365

18

- Residential placements' turnover increased costs as new placements were higher cost. Variance includes a new placement costing £635kpa
- Supported accommodation – use of Bath Street accommodation increased costs by £178k
- Fostering/Special Guardianship Orders/Kinship allowances were increased after budget totals had been set

MTFS 2022/2023

Children & Young People

Breakdown of £2.5m placements' pressure

Placement	£000
Residential	850
Supported accommodation	833
Special guardianship	394
In house fostering	326
Adoption (allowances)	111
Total pressure	2,514

- Residential – includes £635k new placement
- Supported accommodation – increase in placements of 9 since April 2021
- Special guardianship - Increase in numbers and increased allowances
- In house fostering - Increased allowances and increase of 10 placements

MTFS 2022/2023
Children and Young People
Other Issues and Pressures

MTFS 2022/2023

Children & Young People

Other Issues and pressures

- Staffing pressures e.g. agency costs and Workforce Strategy. Retention and recruitment is becoming increasingly competitive and difficult, locally, regionally, and nationally
- Contract inflation
- High Needs pressure (funded by DSG Dedicated Schools Grant)
- Subject Access Request – often young adults wanting access to historical records to understand decisions made in their pasts
- Special Education Needs (SEN) Transport
- Additional one-off transformation costs for 2 year Children & Young People Transformation / Improvement Programme

MTFS 2022/2023
Children and Young People

Additional One-Off
Transformation Costs in 2022/2023

MTFS 2022/2023

Children & Families

Additional One-Off Transformation Costs

- 2 Year additional one-off transformation costs required for 2022/2023 and the following year 2023/2024
- Transformation for Children and Young People is being supported with resources and funding from the Department for Education
- Children & Young People Improvement Plan is already in place overseen by the Improvement Board
- Estimated costs to be funded by Herefordshire Council:

2022/2023 c £2 million

2023/2024 c. £1.5 million

to be funded primarily from Council reserves

Summary of Herefordshire Council's 2022/23 Budget consultation events

1. Introduction to the consultation

As part of the budget setting exercise for 2022/23 a series of 14 consultation events were held between 1st – 30th September with Parish Councils and other key stakeholders. Due to the on-going restrictions of Covid-19 the consultation events were held using Zoom. Fifty-one people participated in the events which were held concurrently with the annual budget-setting on-line survey which went live on 27 August 2021.

The aim of the sessions was to ask key questions specifically related to the 2022/23 budget but also to have more in-depth discussion about ideas that were introduced in last year's budget consultation sessions. This included exploration of the following areas:

- Alternative options for income generation
- What people's view were about what needed doing to help reach Herefordshire's target of a Net Zero and nature rich county by 2030
- How communities were fairing after the pandemic
- How Parish and Town Councils feel about their public realm and what, if any, areas of the public realm they could take more control of

A list of the questions explored in the Zoom consultation session is included as Appendix A.

The sessions were undertaken with the following groups (numbers booking and attending is in Appendix B):

Parish and Town Councils (P&TCs) in each of the Primary Care Networks (PCNs): Hereford City, East, South West and North.

Community Champion areas (CC): South and West, City, East, North and West.

Additional groups¹: Connexus Housing Tenants and Care leavers. Views were included throughout the report, however the discussion with Care Leavers particularly focused on Preventative Services.

¹ A session with Hereford Sixth Form College students was arranged but none of the participants booked onto the session attended. Similarly several attempts were made to set up a session with Hereford Disability United however within the timescales it did not come to fruition.

Consultation engagement

Levels of engagement were lower than anticipated (based on last year's figures). This can possibly be attributed to the following:

- The consultation events were advertised during August in holiday season
- The sessions were held before most Parish Council's had been able to convene post Summer break to enable a Parish Council wide perspective to be reflected.
- The non-contentious nature of this year's questions, compared to last year's large scale savings, meant that there appeared to be less appetite for engagement.

Approach to consultation sessions

Participants were asked to vote via a series of polls that covered 6 questions as well as three additional open discussion questions (an additional question for Parish and Town Councils about the public realm was included). Responses to each question is considered below. Following the polls there was an open discussion which focused on some key areas but also gave participants the opportunity to highlight their own concerns or issues.

Throughout this report we refer to comments made by, for example, 'a few' or 'many' participants. This reflects comments that were made in the facilitated discussions. As with other qualitative research it is not possible to specifically quantify the participants making these comments but points referred to in the report reflect areas where there were outlying opinions or strong consensus or divergence of opinion.

2. Poll results and discussions

Council Tax options for 2022/23 Proposed Council Tax increase

Question 1

In this section, residents were asked about their preference on the level of Council Tax increase that the council should consider for 2022/23: increase Council Tax by 2.99%, 1.99% or by 0.99%.

Which of the following options would you prefer?

Option A: increase Council Tax by 2.99%	9
Option B: increase Council Tax by 1.99%	14
Option C: increase Council Tax by 0.99%	12
No preference	3
None of the above	2
Don't know	3

There was support to increase the **Council Tax by 1.99%** (Option B) slightly more than Option C (increase the Council Tax by 0.99%). This response likely reflects an acknowledgement of the challenge of providing services but also that not everyone has financially recovered from the pandemic. Comments made in relation to this question included:

- Concerns for those families on low-income
- Council tax should continue to be subsidised for those that can't afford it
- Council tax charges should relate to income levels rather than the size of the property

Participants want to know more information about what additional revenue generated from Council Tax would be spent on; and more information about cost savings i.e., is this being looked at alongside increasing revenue.

Question 2

Families on low incomes currently receive a discount on Council Tax (the council tax reduction scheme), however, due to the pandemic low-income families currently receive an additional discount on their Council Tax.

Do you think the Council should remove this additional discount?

Yes	15
No	17
Not yet	24
No opinion	1

There was strong support that now (or a simple No in general) was not the right time to remove this additional discount. (41 saying no or not yet, as opposed to 15 yes).

The most significant concern raised was the timing of any potential withdrawal of additional discount, particularly for those in receipt of Universal Credit who have now had the additional £20 uplift payment withdrawn. Therefore, if these same families were also to lose the additional Council Tax discount then this could lead to very challenging financial difficulties.

Raising additional finance

Question 3

In last year's consultation there was support for raising money to help support vulnerable residents through a Voluntary Contribution Scheme. Building on that, this year respondents were asked how they would like to see any money raised through a Herefordshire Lottery Scheme or Voluntary Contribution Scheme spent.

Geographical priority areas	17
Thematic areas such as children, vulnerable adults, climate emergency	29
Specific charities or local groups	20
Allocated to Parish and Town Councils to decide with local residents for their area	40
Other	18

There was a lot of support for additional income generated to be 'Allocated to Parish and Town Councils to decide with local residents for their area', however this result is unsurprising given the majority of the consultees were from Parish and Town Councils. There was also support for funding to be allocated based on 'thematic areas such as children, vulnerable adults and the climate emergency', however there were not strong views about which specific thematic area should be prioritised.

Comments received in relation to this question included:

"Thematic policy areas may be fairer in terms of allocating funds. Also, would be motivational for those participating in the lottery."

"Lottery - What will the scheme cost to run and do you have enough interest to ensure it is sustainable."

"All areas are important - i.e. in terms of prioritising for additional income. Also, geographical areas are important."

"Need a clear purpose for both schemes to boost engagement"

"Could do different thematic areas in different bidding rounds"

Question 4

Local authorities have the opportunity to borrow money from central government and other sources, and currently Herefordshire Council has not borrowed as much as it is able to.

Respondents were asked whether they agreed that the council should borrow more money to achieve its wider aims?

Yes	22
No	8
Don't know	9

Overall, there was support for this, especially with current interest rates being so low, and especially if the spend was targeted. However, there were concerns about future generations having to pay it back. Participants who answered 'don't know' felt they would require more specific information about the purpose of borrowing money before they could make a decision. See examples of the comments below:

"If money is borrowed to boost the economy, it may pay for itself. If not then how repayment is to be made needs careful consideration."

"If going to borrow money then needs to be evidence based i.e. what is the areas of greatest need and what are the benefits - clarify the business case WITH the Voluntary and Community Sector."

Question 5

If additional money was borrowed in which areas would you like to see it spent?

I don't support borrowing	1
Measures to address the climate emergency	21
Road maintenance	25
Adult social care e.g. care homes, day care services, mental health support	27
Children's services (not education) e.g. children in care, respite care, support for children with disabilities	23
Providing affordable housing	20
Other	4

Views were fairly evenly split with most of the suggested areas of spend receiving support, with no one theme particularly standing out.

Most of the comments received were about the condition of the roads and concern if any additional money was generated through borrowing whether this could be used on potholes

on existing roads, or more widespread resurfacing or whether it was only to be used for new roads. Many participants felt that additional information was required in order for them to give an informed view.

Environmental measures - Net Zero & Nature Rich Herefordshire

Question 6

The questions in this section were about the council's carbon management plan and the corresponding action plan.

Do you agree that Herefordshire Council is doing enough towards achieving its ambition of a net zero and nature rich county by 2030?

Yes, enough	17
No, not enough	24
Don't know	17
I don't agree with Herefordshire Council working towards this ambition	3

The overwhelming response to this question is that many participants did not feel they could answer without additional information on what Herefordshire Council is doing already.

There was slightly more consensus for the view that Herefordshire Council is not doing enough to achieve its ambition of a net zero and nature rich county by 2030.

Question 7

What are the key things you would like to see done differently in the county to help mitigate the climate emergency?

Discussion relating to this question was dominated by a lack of knowledge amongst participants of what Herefordshire Council is currently doing to address the climate emergency. Participants expressed that they wanted more information on what Herefordshire Council are doing, specifically:

- What are the biggest causes of carbon emissions?
- Guidance on recycling and planning to pass on to residents.
- More information on the cost saving benefits and wider economic benefits of some of the environmental schemes / projects / proposals e.g. investment of low energy street lighting cost 'v' cost saving over x years. People want to know what the biggest issues are and what actions will have the biggest impacts.

Additional comments raised:

- Stronger links between the waste strategy, planning policy and the climate emergency.
- A need for sustainable travel was mentioned (although this could have been stimulated by Herefordshire Councils launch of the free bus travel on weekends initiative)
- Free buses at the weekend were thought to be a good idea, although many participants highlighted they were eligible for free bus passes already.
- Younger care leavers identified that many buses were being cancelled with little alternative provision put in place.
- Further investigation into school transport is needed. However, road safety and cost were highlighted as barriers.
- How could residents be encouraged to not use their cars for short trips?
- Planning standards and policy were felt to be areas where some of these issues could be addressed, in terms of housing particularly, which will have a direct impact on the climate emergency in terms of sewage, river quality and phosphates, insulation and energy use. Additional themes related to planning mentioned were parking for bikes, and areas for recycling bins.
- Parish and Town Councils wanted guidance on planning standards and policy to be able to assess planning applications and advise their residents on best practice.
- There was a general consensus that climate change targets can only be met by Herefordshire Council working in partnership with others.
- Participants felt it was important to recognise the economic benefit of some of the environmental schemes, such as the better sustainable transport which might have a positive impact on tourism, easier access to walking routes, busier town centres.
- The waste strategy was also seen as contributing to addressing the climate emergency, particularly if it focused on reduction of use, an element of reduction of food waste (potentially linked to reduction in food poverty and intergenerational projects around learning about how to reduce food waste), better recycling information “what is recycled from the green bin”.
- Guidance on key actions that individuals can take would also be useful add full stop as full stops in bullet points above

Preventative Services

Question 8

In last year’s budget consultation preventative services were identified as an area in need of more prioritisation. What preventative measures would you like to see?

Health and well-being was a key point mentioned, there were examples of good practice such as the Falls Prevention work but on the whole, there were concerns around the gaps

particularly in mental health services for all age groups. Support for older people to remain in their own homes through timed appointments, Occupational Health assessments, offering assistance before acute services at the hospital are required. Also practical advice and support available to those who need it, such as 'support for older people to sell their own homes and move into a more suitable property'.

Adult Social Care was felt to be an area where prevention services could be focused particularly in terms of *"Helping elderly stay healthy stay in their own homes"*. However this was also raised in terms of the cost of Adult Social Care (see next point) and how care homes are supported, particularly around support for staff; pay rates, career development and retention.

There was a general concern around value for money and specifically around Adult Social Care, making sure what is spent will have an impact; who this conversation needs to be had with i.e. a national conversation; and the investment that might be needed.

Comments made in relation to this question included:

"Would like to see more transparency on how money has been spent and reassurances regarding value for money"

"Useful to know per capita spend, also some benchmarking and how/what other options are being explored."

"Concern about national focus on raising taxes to pay for social care. This needs to be a local debate, or with the Local Government Association (LGA)."

"Social Care is taking a lot of the budget, may need more for the rest of what is provided by general council tax."

"Voluntary and Community Sector organisations are often active in preventative services BUT the length of time for funding prevents organisations from addressing issues properly, a longer term view is needed."

"But this needs investment - longer term"

There were views from participants raising concern about the impact being in a rural area has; particularly around the lack on investment in rural areas; the lack of ability to access Section 106 monies from planning and building developments; and the lack of services and facilities, such as playgrounds for older children.

There was also support from participants for children and families to be an identified area of need, as well as those on lower incomes and at risk of homelessness. See examples of the comments below:

“Agree with spend on children's services - assisting families, keeping families together. “

“Support for families - early help has been cut back significantly over the years. This did help, more investment needed. Schools can't support this within their funds.”

“Preventive = enabling people to access services that help get them out of rural poverty and poor housing ... not investing at the symptoms of children safeguarding/looked after. We are looking in the wrong direction.”

In terms of prevention work, whilst there was a will from Parish and Town Councils to help with this area of work there was an acknowledgement that specific skills were missing. There was potential to work better with Talk Communities within this theme to help with the professional support and information to signpost.

Talk Communities were also felt to be a good opportunity for some joined up working and support for local areas. See examples of the comments below:

“I agree there needs to be a level of coordination in developing preventative services. Stepping back and hoping the third sector will fill the gap can't work without resourcing and a level of coordination. I hope that Talk Community can help facilitate and support this process in the future.”

“Support to get involved but safeguarding issue: need a central management system, potentially Talk Communities.”

Care leavers had a number of points to raise about preventative services:

- Providing respite care to families early on may prevent children needing to be moved into care.
- A support service along the lines of Reese Foundation, which provided funds for various items, beds, white goods, or paid rent arrears.
- Money for transport for going for interviews.
- Better emergency accommodation that doesn't place vulnerable young people in overnight accommodation with active drug/alcohol mis-users.
- Practical support – as well as providing cooking, laundry, and a general safe place, the young people felt that they needed to learn how to do some of these practical tasks.
- Option to get a free hot meal when times are difficult.
- More counsellors available for children of all ages.
- Need all options available to access services, face to face personal support and over the telephone talking to strangers.
- Services are particularly needed for single parents.
- Children's views need to be taken into account.
- Still a trust issue with Social Care, worried won't get support; accused of not coping.

Question 9

Pandemic Recovery

When asked 'What would be the most effective way to help your community recovery from the pandemic?' some positives highlighted were:

- That fact that not many smaller businesses have closed suggesting they are resilient,
- Community and voluntary organisations have adapted to continue providing much needed services, such as befriending services by phone,
- Agricultural businesses have been less affected,
- Tourism has had a bit of a boost with the influx of staycations,
- Community events have been adapted and run to promote local traders,
- Government grants have supported village halls.

However, there were some real concerns about the impact the pandemic has had on people's mental health and loneliness, particularly for older people, as well as children and young people. It was also recognised that there is still a fear to 'get back out there', particularly from older people. It was felt there was an opportunity to help support the smaller groups and community events with reopening and helping engage with these people less willing to go out.

It was felt that central support for Talk Communities or organisations that run this type of community intervention (such as Venture) from Herefordshire Council would help to support the wider recovery of the community.

Despite an appreciation for the efficiency of online shopping there was a recognition of the impact this was having on Town Centres. It was felt Town Centres needed to 'up their game' and provide more of an 'experience' rather than just an opportunity to buy shopping.

It was also recognised that there were some families who were really struggling financially and emotionally as a result of the pandemic and that face to face support or case workers could provide 'hand-holding' support were critical at times like this.

There were also concerns that as life starts to return to 'more normal', that the host of volunteers and helpers available during the pandemic are no longer available returning to work etc. Therefore support was wanted to try to stop this decline in numbers of volunteers post covid, there were discussions about how to help community and voluntary organisations with their volunteer base and what Herefordshire Council and HVOSS could do to support this in terms of marketing, advertising, recruitment, and promotion of volunteering.

Question 10

Public Realm (For Parish and Town Councils only)

The public realm is commonly defined as any space that is free and open to everyone.

Parish and Town Councils focused on the following areas when talking about having greater control / influence over the public realm in their local area:

- The relationship with Balfour Beatty Living Places (BBLP)
- Drainage and flooding
- The lengthsman scheme (drainage and verge maintenance)
- Footpaths

On the whole, the comments about the relationship between parishes and BBLP were that there was still significant room for improvement. Although there was some recognition that improvements had been made, many parishes reported still not being listened to, issues with maintenance and routine improvements not happening, and difficulties using the reporting app.

Routine clearing of roads, pathways and drains were concerns raised often in relation to having to make use of volunteers to maintain this work, and the knock-on effect of this not being done was flooding. Drainage grants were mentioned as an option.

Similar stories were given about the footpaths, with these also not being routinely maintained and were not in a good state of repair. The use of volunteers for maintenance and inspection was again mentioned.

There was strong support for any reintroduction of the Lengthsman scheme, particularly if this came with funding and training for any personnel. It was felt to be a good opportunity if the Parish Paths Partnership could also be included as part of this scheme.

Appendix A - Questions asked during the Zoom Consultations.

1. In last year's budget consultation preventative services were identified as an area in need of more prioritisation. What preventative measures would you like to see in any of the following service areas? Or another service area? (Open discussion)
 - a. Children's services
 - b. Adult social care
 - c. Support for vulnerable people
2. Do you agree that Herefordshire Council is doing enough towards achieving its ambition of a net zero and nature rich county? (Poll)
3. What are the key things you would like to see done differently in the county to help mitigate the climate emergency? (Open discussion)
4. Families on low incomes receive a discount on Council Tax (the council tax reduction scheme), however due to the pandemic low-income families currently receive an additional discount on their Council Tax. Do you think the Council should remove this additional discount? (Poll)
5. What would be the most effective way to help your community recovery from the pandemic? (Open discussion)
6. Which of the following options would you prefer?

Option A: To increase Council Tax in 2022/23 by 2.99% general Council Tax This would be an increase of £49.40 per year (or £4.12 per month) for a band D household. This would raise an additional £3.4 million.

Option B: To increase Council Tax in 2022/23 by 1.99% general Council Tax This would be an increase of £32.88 per year (or £2.74 per month) for a band D household. This would raise an additional £2.2 million.

Option C: To increase Council Tax in 2022/23 by 0.99% general Council Tax This would be an increase of £16.36 per year (or £1.36 per month) for a band D household. This would raise an additional £1.1 million.
7. If a Herefordshire Lottery Scheme or Herefordshire Voluntary Contribution Scheme was to go ahead, how would you like to see the money spent? (Poll followed by discussion)
8. Local authorities have the opportunity to borrow money from central government and other sources, and currently Herefordshire Council has not borrowed as much as it is able to. Do you agree that Herefordshire Council should in principle borrow more money to achieve the wider aims of the Council? (Poll)
9. If additional money was borrowed in which area/s would you like to see it spent? (Poll)
10. Where would you like greater control / influence over the public realm in your local area? (Open discussion question only Parish and Town Councils).

Appendix B - Engagement - A breakdown of the numbers participating in each session is provided below.

Session no.	Time/Date	Area	Number booked on	Number attended on the day
1	Wed 1 st September, 7-8.30pm	Hereford City PCN area Parish and Town Councils	2	Cancelled due to low numbers
2	Thursday 2 nd September, 7-8.30pm	East PCN area Parish and Town Councils	13	8
3	Monday 6 th September, 7-8.30pm	South West PCN area Parish and Town Councils	14	8
4	Tuesday 7 th September, 7-8.30pm	North PCN area Parish and Town Councils	11	10
5	Wednesday 8 th September, 7-8.30pm	Hereford City community groups	2	Cancelled due to low numbers
6	Thursday 9 th September, 7-8.30pm	East community Groups	3	4
7	Tuesday 14 th September, 12.30pm-2pm	Hereford City community groups	6	3
8	Tuesday 14 th September, 7 – 8.30pm	South West community groups	6	3
9	Wednesday 15 th September, 7 – 8.30pm	North West community groups	1	Cancelled due to low numbers
10	Thursday 16 th September, 5.30 - 6.30	Hereford 6 th form students		No attendance
11	30 th September 1:30-2:30 Face to Face at Plough Lane	Care leavers	7	7
12	Thursday 16 th September, 7-8.30pm	Connexus Housing		2
13	Wednesday 22nd	Hereford City PCN area Parish and Town Councils		4
14	Wednesday 29th Sept	Leominster PCN area Parish and Town Councils		1

YOUR SAY ON HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL'S BUDGET FOR 2022/2023: KEY FINDINGS

Version 1.0

Herefordshire Council Intelligence Unit

November 2021

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If you need help to understand this document, or would like it in another format or language, please contact us on 01432 261944 or e-mail researchteam@herefordshire.gov.uk

The consultation

The formal public consultation on Herefordshire Council's budget for 2022/23 was carried out using an online questionnaire published on the council's website from 27 August 2021 to 04 October 2021. The consultation was also promoted via the council's social media channels.

A total of 134 responses were received to the online questionnaire, including one response on behalf of an organisation 'Echo of Hereford'. Responses to this year's consultation were relatively low, half the number of responses received to last year's consultation. It's important to be aware of this low response when considering the results; in particular the percentages: an apparently large percentage difference can equate to just a few individual responses.

There was an equal split of male and female respondents. The age profile shows a fair representation of working age (16-64 years) respondents and a marked bias from residents from the upper Council Tax bands (D to H) was also observed.

The following summary presents responses to this year's questionnaire, along with comparison to last year's responses where similar questions were asked. They are marked with this symbol:



Results

Satisfaction with council services (Q1)

The first section of the questionnaire asked about satisfaction with services that Herefordshire Council provides. Different services were listed for residents and for businesses/organisations, and respondents were asked to consider services that they have used themselves in the last year.

The graph (figure 1) below is ordered by the number of people who gave an opinion^[1] on the service, with the most used services at the top. It shows three broad groupings of services in terms of usage.

Note that the percentages quoted in the text below are calculated out of only those people who had used the service, so don't match those on the chart (which shows the proportions of all respondents, to illustrate the wide variation in usage).

- Overall, there were three services which at least half of users who gave an opinion¹ said they were satisfied with: 'waste and recycling' (62%), 'parks and open spaces' (54%), and 'schools' (54%).
- There was a clear distinction in satisfaction levels among the most used services, with higher level of satisfaction for 'waste and recycling' (62% of users satisfied/very satisfied) and 'parks and open space' (54%), while 'highways and roads' has the lowest satisfaction (12%).
- In fact, 'highways and roads' is the service that the users are mostly dissatisfied with (83% of users dissatisfied/very dissatisfied).

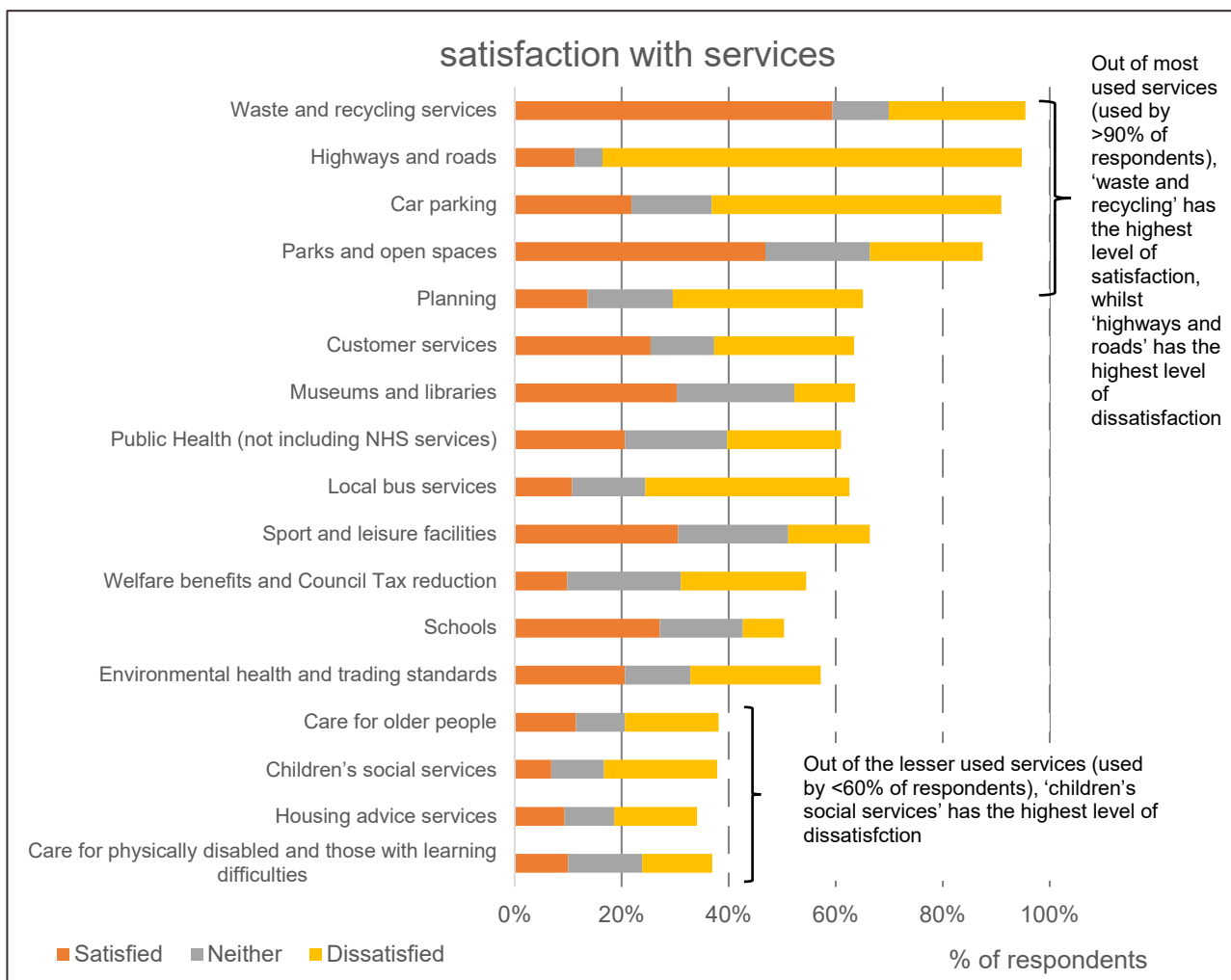
^[1] i.e. respondents who said that they used the services, and excluding those who answered 'don't know'.

- Amongst the lesser used services, satisfaction with services for older people is high (30% of users) – but less so for ‘children’s social services’ (18%).
- Other than ‘highways and roads’, there are four other services where dissatisfaction was higher than 50%: ‘local bus services’ (61%), ‘car parking’ (60%), ‘children’s social services’ (56%) and ‘planning’ (55%).



There appeared to be a broadly similar pattern in terms of the usage of services, although respondents this year were more likely to say they had used the services compared to last year’s response. Overall, respondents to this year’s consultation were less satisfied or more dissatisfied with most of the services than last year. The largest drop in satisfaction is with ‘care for older people’ (by 28 percentage points) which also has the largest rise in dissatisfaction (by 24 percentage points), however this is one of the least used services. There are clear variations in the levels of satisfaction with ‘car parking’, ‘local bus services’, ‘public health’ and ‘children’s social services’ with fewer users been satisfied and more users been dissatisfied with than last year.

Figure 1: Residents’ satisfaction with council services (ordered by usage)



Making services more affordable to run (Q2-Q4)

Q2. This question asked respondents to specify their views on how to make the following services more affordable. The common themes from the comments received are listed below each service:

- a. Making more efficient use of council assets such as land and buildings (69 comments)
 - Use council assets to generate income
 - Diversify the usage of assets e.g. establish community hubs in council buildings
 - Convert council buildings to affordable housing

- b. Changing working practices to make better use of technology and more efficient ways of working (62 comments)
 - Enhance remote/flexible working for council staff where possible
 - Invest in fit for purpose technology e.g. Single data management hubs across agencies to manage interventions with complex clients and case workers, WiFi enabling village halls.

- c. Working in partnership and sharing services with other councils and public sector agencies (63 comments)
 - Make internal and local partnerships rather than sharing services with other authorities
 - Make partnerships only if it provides better services, cut down costs
 - Do not make partnerships as a cost cutting exercise/not with the expense of reduction in resources.

- d. Using digital technology more widely to support the delivery of services (58 comments)
 - Combination of methods need to be used including face to face meetings
 - Make services accessible for all – vulnerable, elderly, people with learning disability, people who are not computer literate, and already disadvantaged groups.
 - Place better infrastructure, more mobile signal coverage first

- e. Making more services available online (53 comments)
 - Do not make services fully automated, make services accessible for people who are not capable of using automated services
 - Not all services are suitable for online provision

Q3. This question asked respondents to provide preventative measures that they would like to see in any of the following service areas.

a. Children's services (48 comments)

- Early identification of needs
- More robust, effective and timely early intervention process
- More competent, committed, qualified, permanent social workers
- Reduce workload of social workers to spend more time on cases
- Provide more resources to early help

b. Adult social care (54 comments)

- Collaborative working with all agencies e.g. NHS, council, care agencies
- Provide care in the community instead of institutional care and improve provision of home care to prevent unnecessary and unwanted residential placements
- More days centres, support hubs to provide leisure facilities, activities and clubs

c. Support for vulnerable people (45 comments)

- Develop community based support e.g. mentoring for young and vulnerable people, more day centres, activities/clubs and meals provided for them
- Improve support for independent living
- Provide a single point of contact for all sectors, collaborative work between all agencies involved and a charter of what is to be offered and where it can be found
- Improve access to mental health services, training in coping strategies

d. Specific prevention measures for any other service area (27 comments)

- Improve access to services and more services to refer to e.g. mental health services, financial help, bereavement
- Improve council practices and standards
- Take actions to protect environment and promote recycling

Q4. Local authorities have the opportunity to borrow money from central government and other sources, and currently Herefordshire Council has not borrowed as much as it is able to.

Respondents were asked whether they agree that the council should borrow more money to achieve its wider aims.

- 58% of respondents agreed for the council to borrow more money to achieve its wider aims while 26% did not agree and further 17% chose to select 'don't know'.

Q5. Only the respondents who agreed that the council should borrow money were then asked to rank areas in order of priority to spend the additional money on.

The results presented in Figure 2 are based on a weighted average of those responses.

There were no stark differences seen in the order of priority for these areas, however, 'children's services (not education) e.g. children in care, respite care, support for children with disabilities' was ranked slightly higher overall. 'Road maintenance' and 'measures to address the climate emergency' have polarised views – Table 1.

Figure 2: priority spending areas ordered by weighted score

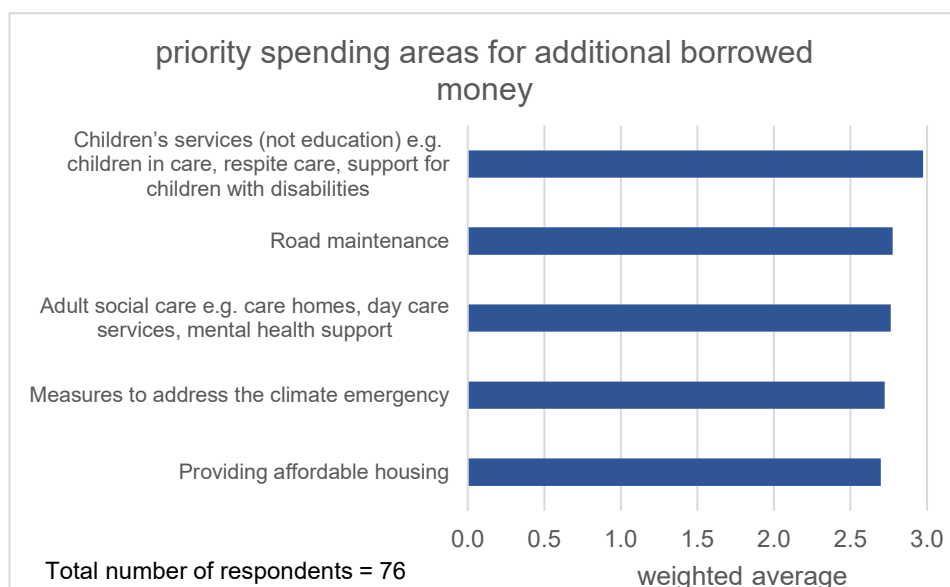


Table 1: proportion of responses to Q5 based on total respondents who ranked at least one option.

	Rank (1= highest and 5 = lowest)				
	1	2	3	4	5
Measures to address the climate emergency	30%	9%	8%	17%	26%
Road maintenance	29%	13%	12%	8%	29%
Adult social care e.g. care homes, day care services, mental health support	8%	25%	25%	29%	4%
Children's services (not education) e.g. children in care, respite care, support for children with disabilities	12%	28%	29%	17%	7%
Providing affordable housing	17%	17%	17%	18%	28%

Respondents were invited to provide other suggestions too. The most common areas suggested to spend the additional borrowings on were: road infrastructure, preventative services, housing, employment opportunities, and public transport.

Tackling climate change and protecting nature (Q6-Q8)

The questions in this section were about the council's carbon management plan and the corresponding action plan.

Q6. 40% of respondents said that Herefordshire Council is not doing enough towards achieving its ambition of a net zero and a nature rich county, compared to 20% who agreed that the council is doing enough. 13% said that they don't agree with the council working towards this ambition.

Sixty respondents commented on Herefordshire Council's work towards achieving its ambition of a net zero and nature rich county. The majority (57%) of comments indicated that the council is not doing enough to achieve its targets, 18% acknowledged that the council is doing enough and heading in the right direction and 12% represented respondents' view on they do not agree with Herefordshire Council working towards this ambition. Despite their varied opinions, respondents provided suggestions for improvement such as tougher planning regulations, more recycling facilities, better and safer cycle routes further afield than the centre of the city, and raising public awareness. Some comments also addressed concerns over other priorities that the council should focus on and some believed the work towards net zero ambition needs to be done by the public and not the council.

Q7. Figure 3 shows the level of support that respondents are prepared and able to do for mitigating climate change.

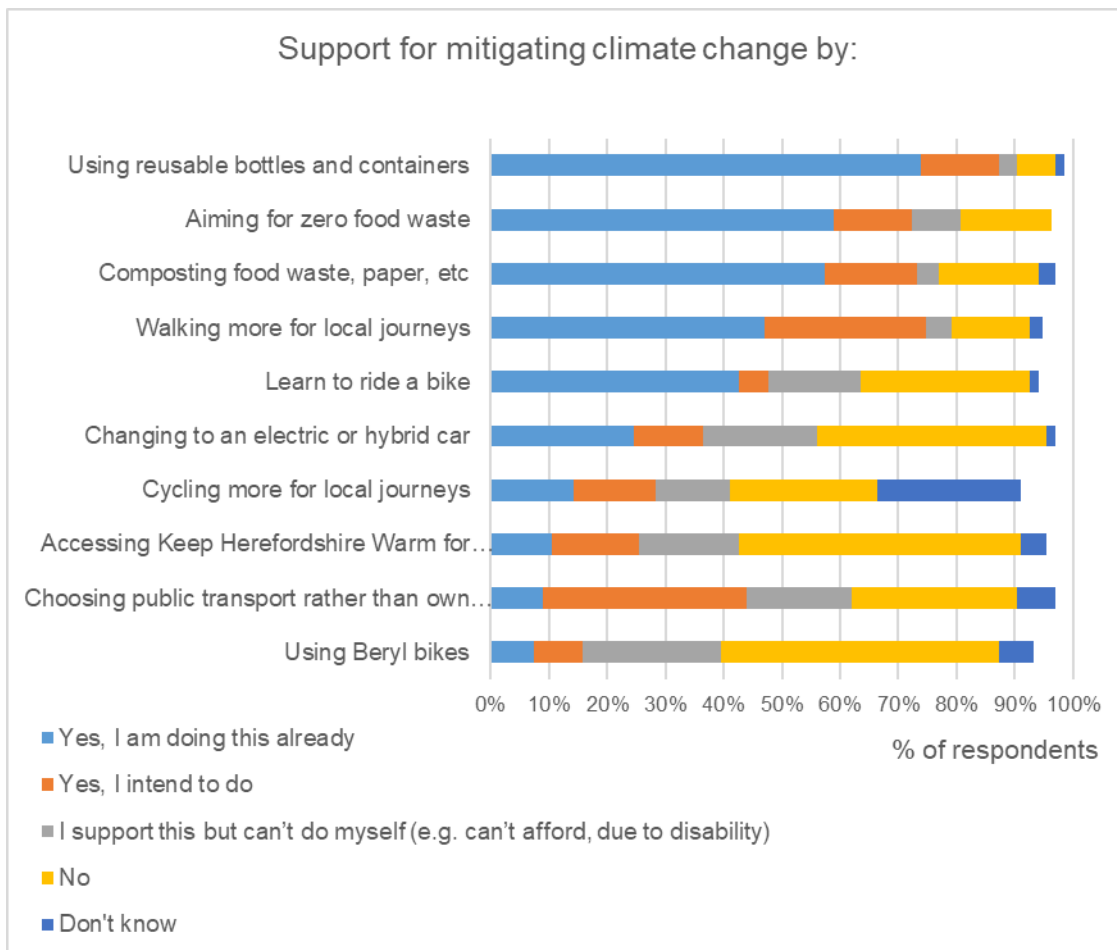
- The majority (60% or more) of respondents said they are already
 - using reusable bottles and containers (75%)
 - walking more for local journeys (61%) and
 - composting food waste, paper, etc (59%)
- The options with the largest proportion of respondents who 'are intending to do' were 'changing to an electric or hybrid car' (36% compared to fewer than 10% who already have) and 'aiming for zero food waste' (29%, in addition to the 50% who are already doing).
- 'Using Beryl bikes' and 'cycling more for local journeys' were the most common options for people to say they support but are unable to do themselves (26% and 20% respectively), but

- They were also the options that people were most likely to say ‘no’ they didn’t support (51% and 41% respectively): along with ‘choosing public transport rather than my own vehicle’ (51%).

Lack of safer and lengthier cycle lanes or lack of reliable public transport were mentioned as to why respondents are not prepared to give up their car journeys towards mitigating climate change.

Forty respondents commented on other activities that they already do or intend to do. Life style changes such as eating less or no meat, using sustainable clothing, choosing sustainable travel choices, making their homes energy efficient or using green energy by adapting to solar power and using energy saving bulbs were cited most frequently. A few respondents said they practice self-sufficient gardening or organic gardening and provide green waste for making bio fuel.

Figure 3: level of support for mitigating climate change (ordered by level of support – already do or intend to do)



Q8. There were 90 comments made when asked about the key things respondents would like to see done differently in the county to help mitigate the Climate Emergency.

Schemes to help support vulnerable residents (Q9)

In last year's consultation there was support for raising money to help support vulnerable residents through a Voluntary Contribution Scheme. Building on that, this year respondents were how they would like to see any money raised through a Herefordshire Lottery Scheme or Voluntary Contribution Scheme spent.

Respondents could select as many of the four options as they wanted, but areas that stand out as being most popular:

- Allocated to parish and town councils to decide with local residents for their area (48%)
- Thematic areas such as children, vulnerable adults, climate emergency (47%)

'Specific charities or local groups' and 'Geographical priority areas' were selected by 37% and 22% of respondents respectively.

Of those who provided details, some respondents thought parish/ town councils and local voluntary or charity organisations would be best placed in understanding their local needs and how these might be best supported. Social housing, young adults with limited capabilities or eligible children were also mentioned by respondents as to where the money should be spent.

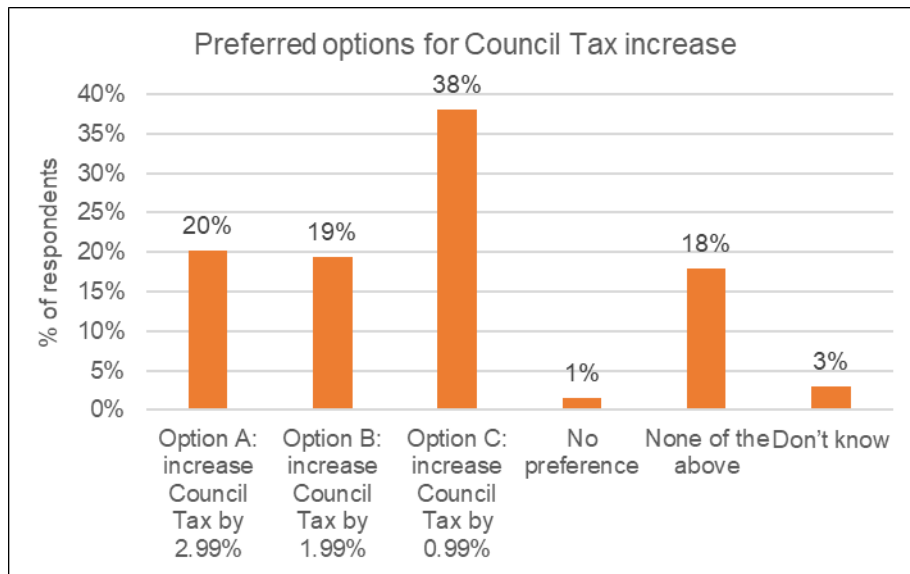
Council Tax options for 2022/23 (Q10 to Q12)

Q10. In this section, residents were asked about their preference on the level of Council Tax increase that the council should consider for 2022/23: increase Council Tax by 2.99%, 1.99% or by 0.99%.

Figure 4 shows the respondents preferred options.

- 38% of respondents supported an increase of 0.99%
- Around 20% supported an increase of either 2.99% or 1.99%. A similar proportion said that they preferred neither option.
- The other 20% preferred neither option; it is not possible to know if they would support less than 0.99% or more than 2.99%.

Figure 4: preference on increasing Council Tax



Q11. In last year's consultation, residents were asked if they would be prepared to pay more Council Tax to help households on low incomes. Given the adverse consequences of Covid-19, the question was repeated in this year's consultation in order to collect views again for the forthcoming year 2022/23.

- Whilst 28% of respondents indicated that they would be willing to pay more Council Tax if the increase was used to help households on low incomes, 56% said they wouldn't and 16% were undecided.

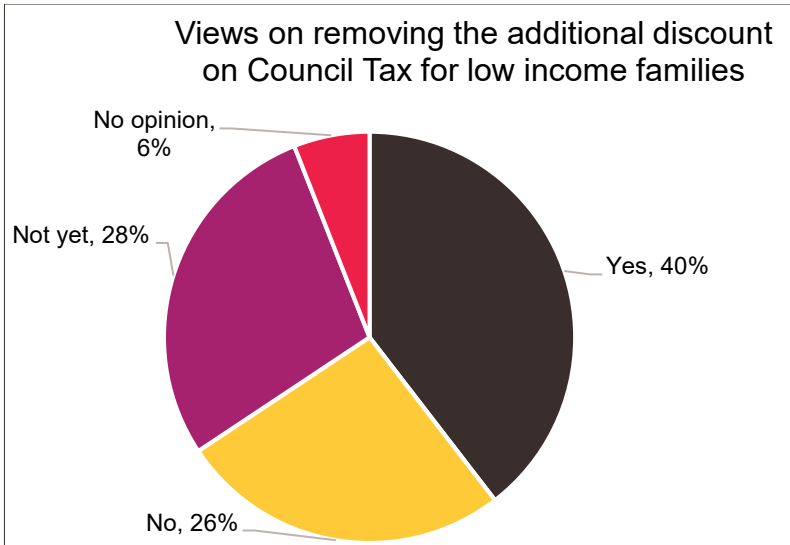


Notably fewer respondents supported this than last year: 41% (2020) compared to 28% (2021). Although fewer respondents also said they wouldn't be willing to pay more (56% compared to 59% in 2020), a sixth of respondents (16%) selected 'don't know' this year – an option that was not included in last year's question.

Q12. Families on low incomes receive a discount on Council Tax, however, due to the pandemic low income families currently receive an additional discount on their Council Tax.

When asked about whether to remove this additional discount, the majority (54%) felt that it should not be removed this year – half of whom said it shouldn't be removed at all, and half said 'not yet'. 40% of respondents thought that the additional discount should be removed now and 6% chose not to express an opinion – Figure 5.

Figure 5: Views on removing the additional discount on Council Tax for low income families



Participation in other consultations (Q13 and Q14)

43% of those who responded to this year's budget consultation had also taken part in previous consultations. Most of them had completed Herefordshire Council's recent waste consultation. Amongst the other consultations mentioned, this year's bus consultation and local consultations such as parish surveys and neighbourhood development plan surveys were the most common.

Appendix 1: Top line report

Your say on Herefordshire Council's budget and tax for 2022/23

The following results are from 134 respondents for the online questionnaire.
The percentages are based on respondents to each question/statement.

The previous public consultation held last winter (2020-21) invited residents to have some tough conversations about what services they prioritised and where they felt savings could be made, as well as exploring the potential for generating income through alternative revenue streams.

While the world may have changed dramatically during the past eighteen months and the pandemic has brought new challenges, it has also brought with it opportunities and the chance to re-evaluate our actions, work programmes and budgets in partnership with residents, stakeholders, communities and businesses to lead Herefordshire into the future with confidence.

Unlike last year we are not facing a significant funding gap so the focus of this consultation is to build on some of the conversations we started last year and to look at how we might begin a journey of transformation, looking at the way we deliver our services in the most efficient and environmentally friendly way.

For your information this is how much the council was budgeted to spend in 2021/2022 and how the money has been allocated:

- Adults & Communities**
£101.6m / 27%
Wide range of services supporting communities including many of the most vulnerable individuals in the county
- Childrens & Families**
£159.2m / 42%
Responsible for education services, safeguarding and family support
- Economy & Place** **£53.7m / 14%**
Highways, regulatory services, waste and economic development
- Corporate** **£18.2m / 5%**
Finance, human resources, legal, communications and strategic transformation and delivery
- Central, treasury management, capital financing & reserves**
£48.7m / 12%
Pension and financing costs

In 2021/22 the council has a gross revenue budget of £381.4 million to invest in the community. This is the money we use to pay for your day to day services - such as educating children, caring for vulnerable people and recycling and waste.



What do you think of our services?

Q1 Thinking about services you have used in the last year, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with each of the following services provided or supported by Herefordshire Council?

	Not used	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	Fairly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't know
Care for older people	56 (43%)	3 (2%)	12 (9%)	12 (9%)	11 (8%)	12 (9%)	25 (19%)
Care for physically disabled and those with learning difficulties	60 (46%)	4 (3%)	9 (7%)	18 (14%)	9 (7%)	8 (6%)	22 (17%)
Children's social services	58 (44%)	3 (2%)	6 (5%)	13 (10%)	9 (7%)	19 (14%)	24 (18%)
Customer services	30 (24%)	13 (10%)	19 (15%)	15 (12%)	13 (10%)	20 (16%)	16 (13%)
Environmental health and trading standards	44 (34%)	10 (8%)	17 (13%)	16 (12%)	16 (12%)	16 (12%)	12 (9%)
Housing advice services	57 (44%)	7 (5%)	5 (4%)	12 (9%)	6 (5%)	14 (11%)	28 (22%)
Highways and roads	4 (3%)	1 (1%)	14 (10%)	7 (5%)	29 (22%)	76 (57%)	3 (2%)
Museums and libraries	35 (27%)	16 (12%)	24 (18%)	29 (22%)	10 (8%)	5 (4%)	13 (10%)
Local bus services	38 (29%)	3 (2%)	11 (8%)	18 (14%)	21 (16%)	29 (22%)	11 (8%)
Parks and open spaces	12 (9%)	22 (17%)	38 (30%)	25 (20%)	14 (11%)	13 (10%)	4 (3%)
Planning	31 (23%)	5 (4%)	13 (10%)	21 (16%)	18 (14%)	29 (22%)	15 (11%)
Public Health (not including NHS services)	35 (27%)	14 (11%)	13 (10%)	25 (19%)	15 (11%)	13 (10%)	16 (12%)
Schools	43 (33%)	11 (9%)	24 (19%)	20 (16%)	4 (3%)	6 (5%)	21 (16%)
Sport and leisure facilities	40 (31%)	8 (6%)	32 (24%)	27 (21%)	8 (6%)	12 (9%)	4 (3%)
Waste and recycling services	3 (2%)	34 (26%)	45 (34%)	14 (11%)	18 (14%)	16 (12%)	3 (2%)
Welfare benefits and Council Tax reduction	43 (33%)	6 (5%)	7 (5%)	28 (21%)	7 (5%)	24 (18%)	17 (13%)
Car parking	7 (5%)	7 (5%)	22 (17%)	20 (15%)	26 (20%)	46 (35%)	5 (4%)

Making services more affordable to run

In last year's online budget consultation residents were asked how they felt services could be made more affordable to run in the next 5-10 years. These results showed there was most support for:

- a. Making more efficient use of council assets such as land and buildings
- b. Changing working practices to make better use of technology and more efficient ways of working
- c. Working in partnership and sharing services with other councils and public sector agencies
- d. Using digital technology more widely to support the delivery of services
- e. Making more services available online

Q2. Looking at each of the preferred options above, do you have any specific views about how this could be done?

- a. Making more efficient use of council assets such as land and buildings

69 comments

- b. Changing working practices to make better use of technology and more efficient ways of working

62 comments

- c. Working in partnership and sharing services with other councils and public sector agencies

63 comments

- d. Using digital technology more widely to support the delivery of services

58 comments

- e. Making more services available online

53 comments

Q3. In last year's budget consultation preventative services were identified as an area in need of more prioritisation. Examples of preventative services could be providing earlier intervention and help to children and their families to avoid children going into care, supporting adults to live independently and safely in their own homes, supporting people to be more active e.g. providing free leisure facilities, such as swimming, support for vulnerable people e.g. cross-service prevention work with health partners and local and voluntary organisations to prevent homelessness and drug/substance misuse.

What preventative measures would you like to see in any of the following service areas? Or another service area?

a. Children's services

48 comments

b. Adult social care

54 comments

c. Support for vulnerable people

45 comments

d. Specific prevention measures for any other service area

27 comments

Q4 Local authorities have the opportunity to borrow money from central government and other sources, and currently Herefordshire Council has not borrowed as much as it is able to. Do you agree that the council should borrow more money to achieve its wider aims? (Please see County Plan for aims).

77 (58%) Yes

34 (26%) No (go to Q6)

22 (17%) Don't know (go to Q6)

Q5. If you support borrowing and additional money was borrowed, in which areas would you like to see it spent? Please rank all five choices in order of the priority you would give each where one is the highest and five the lowest.

	1	2	3	4	5
Measures to address the climate emergency	23 (33%)	7 (10%)	6 (9%)	13 (19%)	20 (29%)
Road maintenance	22 (32%)	10 (14%)	9 (13%)	6 (9%)	22 (32%)
Adult social care e.g. care homes, day care services, mental health support	6 (9%)	19 (28%)	19 (28%)	22 (32%)	3 (4%)
Children's services (not education) e.g. children in care, respite care, support for children with disabilities	9 (13%)	21 (30%)	22 (31%)	13 (19%)	5 (7%)
Providing affordable housing	13 (18%)	13 (18%)	13 (18%)	14 (19%)	21 (28%)

Q5a If you have another area you would like to suggest please give details below, together with the priority you would give it.

21 comments

Tackling climate change and protecting nature

Since 2003, the council has been looking at ways to reduce its carbon footprint and also leading countywide carbon reduction efforts. In recognition of this it declared a Climate Emergency in March 2019. The council has set itself a target of reaching carbon neutrality by 2030 and is aiming for a 75% reduction by 2025/26. To achieve this the council is undertaking a number of energy efficiency projects e.g. installation of solar panels on some council owned buildings, hybrid and electric pool cars, use of renewable energy and initiatives to influence behaviour change.

Alongside these changes the council is also working with partners, businesses and residents on a journey to get the county to net zero and nature rich by 2030. Considerable funding will be required from a wide range of sources and some difficult decision will have to be made on this journey. To succeed it will need the support of local residents and communities.

More information are in the council's Carbon Management Plan and the corresponding Action Plan.

Q6 Do you agree that Herefordshire Council is doing enough towards achieving its ambition of a net zero and nature rich county?

36 (27%) Yes, enough

54 (40%) No, not enough

27 (20%) Don't know

17 (13%) I don't agree with Herefordshire Council working towards this ambition

Q6a Any other comments:

60 comments

Q7 Which, if any, of the following options for mitigating climate change would you be prepared and able to support?

	Yes, I am doing this already	Yes, I intend to do	I support this but can't do myself (e.g. can't afford, due to disability)	No	Don't know
Accessing Keep Herefordshire Warm for home energy advice	19 (16%)	19 (16%)	17 (14%)	34 (28%)	33 (27%)
Walking more for local journeys	79 (61%)	18 (14%)	11 (9%)	21 (16%)	0 (0%)
Learn to ride a bike	57 (45%)	7 (6%)	21 (17%)	39 (31%)	2 (2%)
Using Beryl bikes	10 (8%)	11 (9%)	32 (26%)	64 (51%)	8 (6%)
Cycling more for local journeys	33 (25%)	16 (12%)	26 (20%)	53 (41%)	2 (2%)
Choosing public transport rather than own vehicle	14 (11%)	20 (16%)	23 (18%)	65 (51%)	6 (5%)
Changing to an electric or hybrid car	12 (9%)	47 (36%)	24 (18%)	38 (29%)	9 (7%)
Aiming for zero food waste	63 (50%)	37 (29%)	6 (5%)	18 (14%)	3 (2%)
Composting food waste, paper, etc	77 (59%)	21 (16%)	5 (4%)	23 (18%)	4 (3%)
Using reusable bottles and containers	99 (75%)	18 (14%)	4 (3%)	9 (7%)	2 (2%)
Other	21 (42%)	6 (12%)	0 (0%)	5 (10%)	18 (36%)

Q7a. Other, please give details below:

41 comments

Q8 What are the key things you would like to see done differently in the county to help mitigate the Climate Emergency?

90 comments

Schemes to help support vulnerable residents

Last year we consulted on two new ideas for raising money to help support vulnerable residents:
Looking into the establishment of a lottery scheme for the council for the purpose of raising funds to support good causes, benefitting the residents of Herefordshire (through local consultation)
Looking into the establishment of a voluntary contribution scheme for the council for the purpose of raising funds to support good causes, benefitting the residents of Herefordshire (through on-line consultation)

In general, participants were in support of the two schemes and officers have looked into the merits of each. If these were actioned it would be useful to understand how residents would like to see the money raised spent.

Q9 If a Herefordshire Lottery Scheme or Herefordshire Voluntary Contribution Scheme was to go ahead, how would you like to see the money spent? Tick all that apply

26 (22%) Geographical priority areas

56 (47%) Thematic areas such as children, vulnerable adults, climate emergency

44 (37%) Specific charities or local groups

57 (48%) Allocated to parish and town councils to decide with local residents for their area

7 (6%) Other

Q9a Other, please give details below:

16 comments

Council Tax options for 2022/23

Proposed Council Tax increase

Last year, for 2021/22, due to the large scale savings required amounting to £11.205million, Council Tax was increased by 4.99% (1.99% general Council Tax and 3.00% Social Care Precept) which raised only £3.2 million due to a tax base decrease.

For next year, 2022/2023 savings of this magnitude are not anticipated and the council would like your views on the level of Council Tax that it should consider for 2022/2023.

Please note: the council has no control over the Council Tax collected on behalf of the police, fire service, or parish and town councils. Each of these bodies will make their own independent decisions.

Option A: To increase Council Tax in 2022/23 by 2.99% general Council Tax. This would be an increase of £49.40 per year (or £4.12 per month) for a band D household and would raise an additional £3.4 million.

Option B: To increase Council Tax in 2022/23 by 1.99% general Council Tax This would be an increase of £32.88 per year (or £2.74 per month) for a band D household and would raise an additional £2.2 million.

Option C: To increase Council Tax in 2022/23 by 0.99% general Council Tax This would be an increase of £16.36 per year (or £1.36 per month) for a band D household and would raise an additional £1.1 million.

Q10 Which of the following options would you prefer?

27 (20%) Option A: increase Council Tax by 2.99%

26 (19%) Option B: increase Council Tax by 1.99%

51 (38%) Option C: increase Council Tax by 0.99%

2 (1%) No preference

24 (18%) None of the above

4 (3%) Don't know

Further information about Herefordshire Council Tax can be found using this link:
[Your Council Tax explained 2021/22](#)

Last year we asked if residents would be willing to pay more Council Tax if the increase was used to help households on low incomes. 41% of respondents supported this proposal and 59% did not. Given the adverse consequences of Covid-19, the council would like to ask for your views again on this issue for the forthcoming year 2022/2023.

Q11 In principle, would you be willing to pay more Council Tax if the increase was used to help households on low incomes?

37 (28%) Yes

75 (56%) No

22 (16%) Don't know

Q12 Families on low incomes receive a discount on Council Tax, however due to the pandemic low-income families currently receive an additional discount on their Council Tax. Do you think the council should remove this additional discount?

53 (40%) Yes

35 (26%) No

38 (28%) Not yet

8 (6%) No opinion

More information about the Council Tax Reduction Scheme

Q13 Have you taken part in a budget consultation previously?

57 (43%) Yes

67 (50%) No

10 (7%) Don't know

Q14 What other local consultations have you taken part in over the last year? Please consider any parish consultations, or county wide consultations such as Herefordshire Council's Waste survey.

52 comments

About you

Q15 Are you responding on behalf of an organisation or group, or as an individual?

1 (1%) Organisation or group

132 (99%) Individual

If you are responding on behalf of an organisation or group please tell us the name of the organisation/group:

1 response

If you are responding as an individual please answer the following questions about yourself. This information helps us to understand the profile of respondents and whether views vary amongst different groups of people across the county. It will only be used for the purpose of statistical monitoring, treated as confidential and not used to identify you.

You do not have to answer these questions. If you do not wish to complete them please indicate this below:

34 (100%) I do not wish to complete this section

Which Council Tax band are you in? (if you are not sure a rough guess is fine)

6 (6%) A

9 (9%) B

13 (13%) C

25 (25%) D

15 (15%) E

9 (9%) F

8 (8%) G

1 (1%) H

13 (13%) Don't know

1 (1%) Prefer not to say

Your gender

46 (46%) Male

49 (49%) Female

1 (1%) Other

3 (3%) Prefer not to say

What is your age band?

- 0 (0%) 0-15 years
- 4 (4%) 16-24 years
- 30 (30%) 25-44 years
- 38 (38%) 45-64 years
- 20 (20%) 65-74 years
- 7 (7%) 75+ years
- 1 (1%) Prefer not to say

Do you have a disability, long-term illness or health problem (12 months or more) which limits daily activities or the work you can do?

- 23 (23%) Yes
- 68 (69%) No
- 7 (7%) Prefer not to say

How would you describe your ethnic group?

- 88 (88%) White British/English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish
- 4 (4%) Other White (please specify below)
- 1 (1%) Any other ethnic group (please specify below)
- 7 (7%) Prefer not to say

6 responses

Please tell us the first part of your postcode:

91 responses

Thank you for telling us your views, please click on the SUBMIT button below to send us your response.

