

Priorities and Budget Consultation 2016-2020

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Strategic intelligence team

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Executive summary

- The consultation on Herefordshire Council's priorities and budget for 2016 to 2020 ran from late July to early October 2015. A questionnaire was available online and hard copies were distributed at promotion events in the city and market towns.
- There were 1,979 responses to the questionnaire; 60 per cent of which were completed on paper.
- Of the three council priorities that respondents were asked to rank (question 1), the general pattern of responses suggested that 'enable residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives' was most important, followed by 'keep children and young people safe and give them a great start in life' then 'support the growth of our economy and the number of people in work'.
- However, almost three quarters of respondents thought that the council should identify other priority areas (Q2). Most popular among these were keeping the libraries and customer services open; public transport and infrastructure were other highly preferred areas of priority.
- With regard to income and savings proposals (Q3), there was a general preference for those that would generate income and less preference for the savings options. In particular 'sell our smallholdings estate of 4,500 acres, including 45 farms, to reduce our debt repayments' was the most preferred option of almost a third of respondents. By far the least preferred proposal was the savings that would be generated by 'reducing customer services and libraries across the county' (least preferred option of more than half of respondents).
- Almost two thirds (63 per cent) of respondents thought that the council should continue to fund town and parish councils (Q4).
- Over half (58 per cent) of respondents thought that town and parish councils, community groups or voluntary organisations could do more to help deliver services if Herefordshire Council reduces or stops delivering a particular service (Q5). Suggestions for which services included grass cutting and the general maintenance of public spaces such as parks, streets, roads and footpaths; community transport services; and libraries and museums.
- The majority (61 per cent) of respondents would support an increase in council tax above two per cent to support services and defer savings for a year (Q6). Of these, half supported a three per cent increase and the other half supported a five per cent increase in council tax.
- An even larger majority (71 per cent) of respondents thought that the council should increase service charges to protect other services across the county (Q7).
- Just over half (52 per cent) of respondents would support an increase in council tax above two per cent and also thought the council should increase service charges.

Introduction

The consultation on Herefordshire Council's priorities and budget for 2016-2020 began on Friday 24 July 2015 and ended on Friday 9 October 2015. This report presents the key points from the analysis of responses received by 14 October. The consultation was publicised on the council's website with the following background documents:

- [Income and savings proposals](#)
- [Council's budget report 6 February 2015](#)

Methodology

The consultation questionnaire was published on the Herefordshire Council website and people were invited to complete it online. A printable version of the questionnaire was made available for the people who would like to download, print and complete. Paper questionnaires were also distributed at the events organised in all market towns to promote the consultation. The consultation was also promoted on social media via the council's Twitter and Facebook.

This report presents the results of the combined online and paper responses to the questionnaire. The sample base is the number of respondents to the question and is the base from which percentages are calculated. The sample base used is specified for each question. Percentages are presented rounded to the nearest whole number in the tables; however the charts are based on unrounded percentages.

Note that if respondents could select more than one answer to a particular question, the percentages may add up to more than 100 per cent.

Where comments have been provided these are listed in full but have been anonymised and corrected for spelling where appropriate.

There were a total of 1,979 responses to the questionnaire, of which 784 were submitted online and 1,195 were completed paper copies.

The consultation also received 30 other responses in the form of 16 letters and 14 emails. Because they didn't answer the standard questions it is not possible to include them in the analysis presented here.

Results

The council's priorities

Q1. How would you choose to rate these priorities in terms of most important and least important? (1 = most important and 3 = least important)

The three priorities that this question asked respondents to rank in order of importance were:

- Enable residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives
- Keep children and young people safe and give them a great start in life
- Support the growth of our economy and the number of people in work

In the final version of the online survey it was only possible for respondents to assign each rank to one option only, but in an earlier version and for people who responded on paper it was possible to assign ranks more than once. 615 respondents – 32 per cent of the total number who responded to this question – assigned at least one rank to more than one option. These responses have an impact on the overall result, because there was a tendency amongst them to say that all three priorities were equally (most) important. Details of how these responses varied from the rest, are given in Appendix A-Q1, but for simplicity and to ensure that all responses are taken into account the analysis below includes all responses to the question.

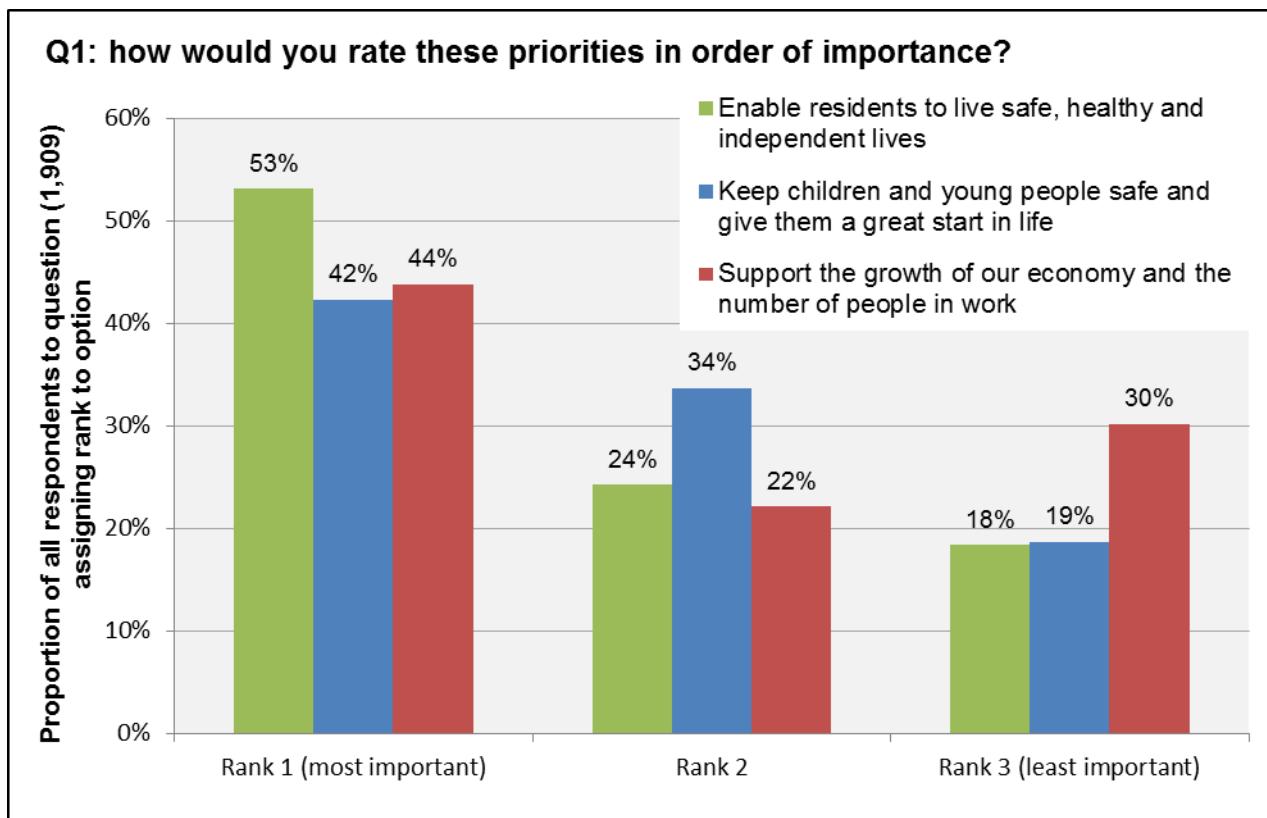
Because of the number of people who said that all priorities were equally important, when combining all 1,909 responses to the question the most common response for each option was 'most important' (see chart 1). However, it is possible to identify a general pattern of order of importance:

- '**Enable residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives' was most important** to more people than either of the other priorities (53 per cent of respondents compared to 44 per cent for the economic priority and 42 for children and young people)
- '**Keep children and young people safe and give them a great start in life' was second most important** to a higher proportion of people than any other (34 per cent), and was given first or second by a similar proportion to enabling residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives (76 per cent compared to 77 per cent)
- '**Support the growth of our economy and the number of people in work' was least important** to more respondents than either of the other priorities (30 per cent compared to 19 per cent for children and young people and 18 per cent for safe, healthy and independent lives)

Table 1: responses to question 1

Priority	Rank	All responses combined (1,909)		
		1	2	3
Enable residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives		53%	24%	18%
Keep children and young people safe and give them a great start in life		42%	34%	19%
Support the growth of our economy and the number of people in work		44%	22%	30%

Chart 1: proportion of respondents to question 1 who assigned each rank to each priority



Q2. Are there any other areas which you think the council should identify as a priority?

If yes, please specify the priorities you believe we should focus on.

Just under three quarters of respondents (72 per cent) thought that there were other areas that the council should identify as a priority, and 1,300 people made a suggestion as to what the other priorities should be. Please note that some respondents who answered 'No' to this question and people who did not answer Q2 also made suggestions.

Table 2: responses to whether council should identify other priorities

	Number of respondents	Per cent of respondents
Yes	1,166	72%
No	452	28%
Total respondents	1,618	100%
Not answered	361	

Chart 2: responses to whether council should identify other priorities

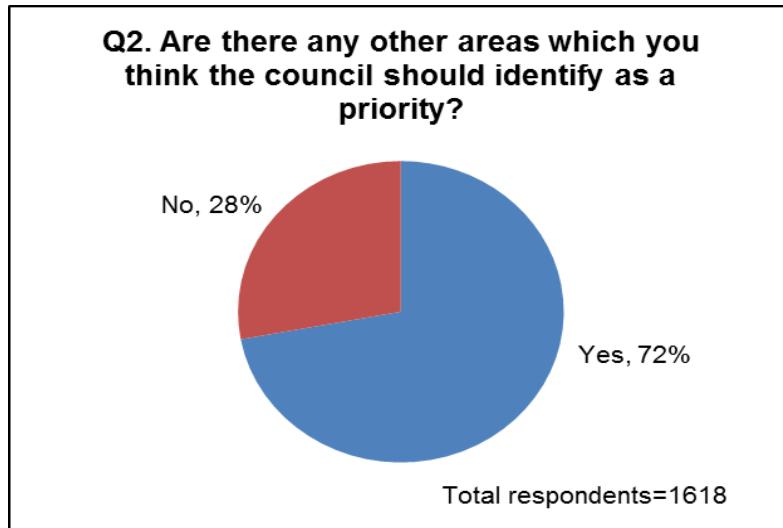


Figure 1: word cloud showing responses to Q2
(size of word relates to the number of times it was mentioned)



The word cloud in figure 1 identifies the words that featured in the 1,300 suggestions. From a more detailed analysis of the comments made to this question, the most frequently quoted priorities were:

1. Libraries, customer services and public toilets

“ Public library services, which under the 1964 Public Libraries Act are a statutory requirement, and provide education, entertainment & improve health, particularly for the young & disadvantaged. ”

2. Public transport including transport subsidies/grants, sustainable transport

“ Retaining public transport - if we don't want more problems associated with isolation in the rural communities in which we live then access to services is key. ”

3. Infrastructure including roads and broadband

“ Maintain the infrastructure of the county such as existing roads, bus travel and public rights of way. They have been neglected by the council yet all provide the services that support the above 3 objectives. ”

The next most common other priorities suggested were:

- support elderly to live an independent & healthy lives including adult social care
- children's wellbeing including education, provision of local school places, school transport
- cutting down council's internal costs e.g. high paid staff; interim consultants; short term funded projects
- focus on climate change / green energy / protect the environment

The council's budget

Q3. How would you choose to prioritise the following areas (see table 3 for full list) in terms of which you would implement first compared to last in order to reduce spending?

This question asked respondents to rank eleven options in order of preference (1 = first and 11 = last). Three of the options related to ways in which the council could generate income and the other eight related to areas of potential savings.

In the final version of the online survey it was only possible to assign each rank to one option only, but in an earlier version and for people who responded on paper it was possible to assign ranks more than once. 664 respondents – 34 per cent of the total number who responded to this question – assigned at least one rank to more than one option. These responses had the potential to skew the overall result, so they were looked at separately to the ‘correct’ responses. Respondents who used ranks more than once tended to favour either rank 11, i.e. to say that two or more options were their least preferred, or rank 1, i.e. to have joint favourite options: rank 11 was the most popular rank for all options except ‘introduce on street car parking charges in Hereford’ and ‘sell our smallholdings estate’ amongst these 664 respondents. For the latter, rank 1 was the most popular.

Details of how these 664 responses varied from the rest are given in Appendix A-Q3, but they did not significantly affect the overall findings. So for simplicity and to ensure that all responses are taken into account the analysis below includes all responses to the question.

To give an overall indication of relative preference between the options, the ranks assigned to each option by each respondent were given a weight (from -5 for least preferred to +5 for most preferred) which were then converted into an overall score out of 100 for each option – see chart 3 on the next page.

There were some clear messages from these scores and the distribution of the ranks (see table 3):

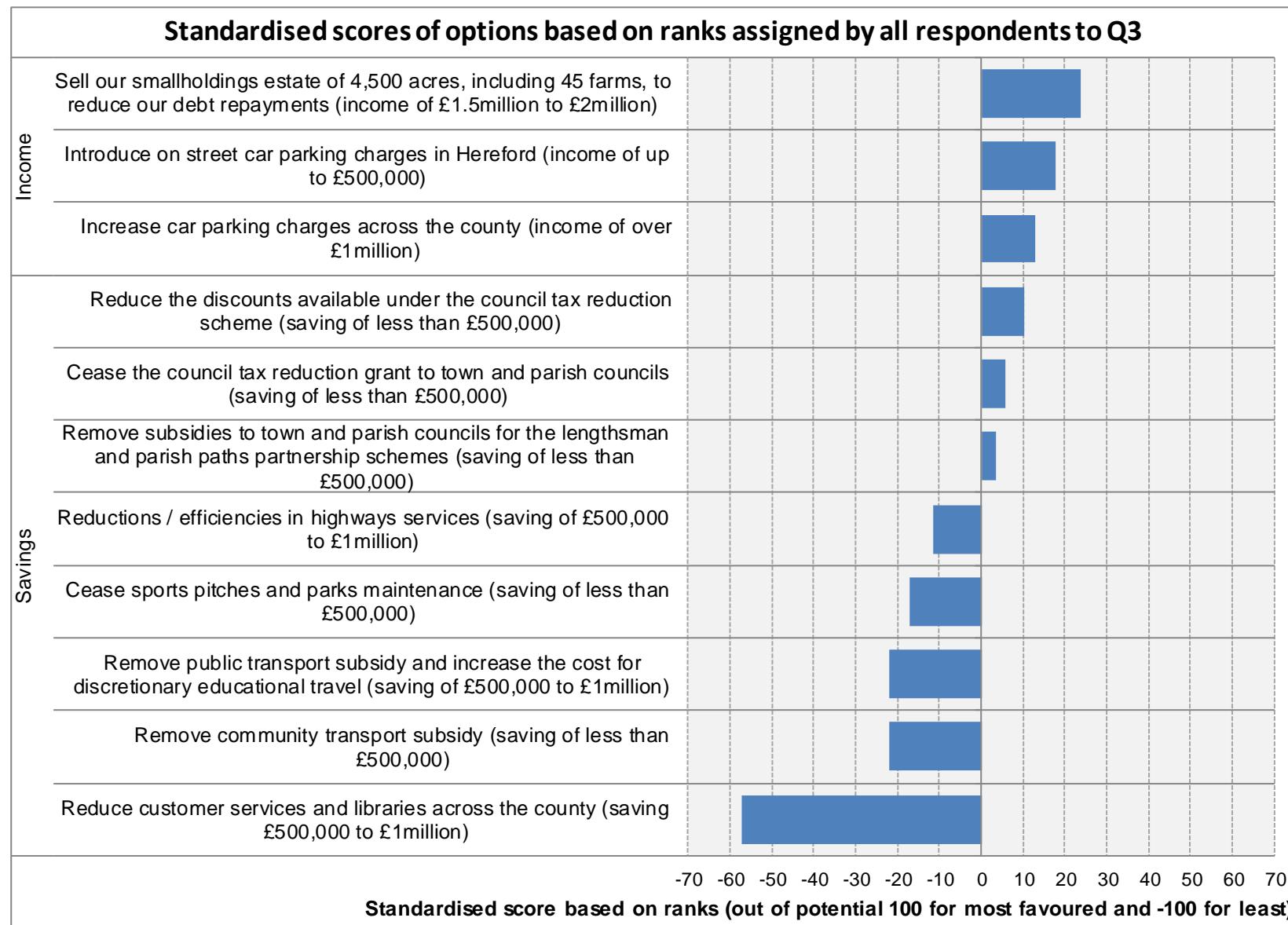
- There was a general preference for those that would generate income:
 - 37 per cent of respondents ranked ‘selling our smallholdings estate’ as their first or second preference
 - ‘Increase car parking charges across the county’ received the next highest number of first choices (22 per cent) and was the second choice of a further 10 per cent; but ‘introduce on street car parking charges in Hereford’ received more first and second choices combined (35 per cent)

- Altogether, these three options were ranked as most preferred by 70 per cent of respondents - and no other option received more first choices than any of them individually.
- There was less preference for the savings options, although a few were preferred over others:
 - 30 per cent of respondents ranked 'reduce the discounts available under the council tax reduction scheme' as either first, second or third preference
 - 'Cease the council tax reduction grant to town and parish councils' was first, second or third preference for 26 per cent; as was 'remove subsidies to town and parish councils for the lengthsman and parish paths partnership scheme' for 23 per cent.
- At the other end of the scale,
 - 'Reductions / efficiencies in highways services' and 'cease sports pitches and parks maintenance' were both the least preferred option of 13 per cent of respondents. In total, just under a third of respondents indicated that each of these options were amongst their three least preferred (ranks 9, 10 or 11).
 - 'Remove public transport subsidy and increase the cost for discretionary educational travel' was the least preferred option for 21 per cent of respondents and was amongst the bottom three options for almost 40 per cent. 'Remove community transport subsidy' was the least preferred for 16 per cent and was amongst the bottom three choices for 36 per cent.
- 'Reduce customer services and libraries across the county' was by far the least preferred option, being ranked as least preferred by over half (52 per cent) of respondents – and second least by a further 10 per cent.

Table 3: percentages of all respondents to question 3 that assigned each rank to each option
 (most common ranks for each option highlighted and notably large proportions in bold)

Proposal		Rank (1=first and 11=last)										
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Income	Sell our smallholdings estate of 4,500 acres, including 45 farms, to reduce our debt repayments (income of £1.5million to £2million)	31%	7%	10%	5%	6%	6%	4%	4%	5%	4%	13%
	Introduce on street car parking charges in Hereford (income of up to £500,000)	17%	18%	9%	6%	6%	5%	6%	5%	6%	5%	11%
	Increase car parking charges across the county (income of over £1million)	22%	10%	7%	6%	7%	7%	4%	6%	5%	7%	13%
Savings	Reduce the discounts available under the council tax reduction scheme (saving of less than £500,000)	11%	8%	12%	9%	11%	9%	7%	6%	6%	4%	9%
	Cease the council tax reduction grant to town and parish councils (saving of less than £500,000)	8%	8%	10%	10%	11%	11%	7%	7%	6%	6%	9%
	Remove subsidies to town and parish councils for the lengthsman and parish paths partnership schemes (saving of less than £500,000)	9%	7%	8%	10%	11%	11%	8%	8%	7%	5%	9%
	Reductions / efficiencies in highways services (saving of £500,000 to £1million)	5%	5%	7%	9%	9%	11%	8%	9%	10%	7%	13%
	Cease sports pitches and parks maintenance (saving of less than £500,000)	4%	3%	5%	8%	10%	10%	10%	10%	9%	10%	13%
	Remove public transport subsidy and increase the cost for discretionary educational travel (saving of £500,000 to £1million)	5%	5%	6%	8%	8%	8%	6%	9%	9%	10%	21%
	Remove community transport subsidy (saving of less than £500,000)	4%	3%	5%	7%	10%	9%	8%	10%	10%	10%	16%
	Reduce customer services and libraries across the county (saving £500,000 to £1million)	4%	2%	2%	3%	4%	5%	4%	4%	7%	10%	52%

Chart 3: scores of options based on ranks assigned by all respondents to Q3



Town and parish councils, community groups and voluntary organisations

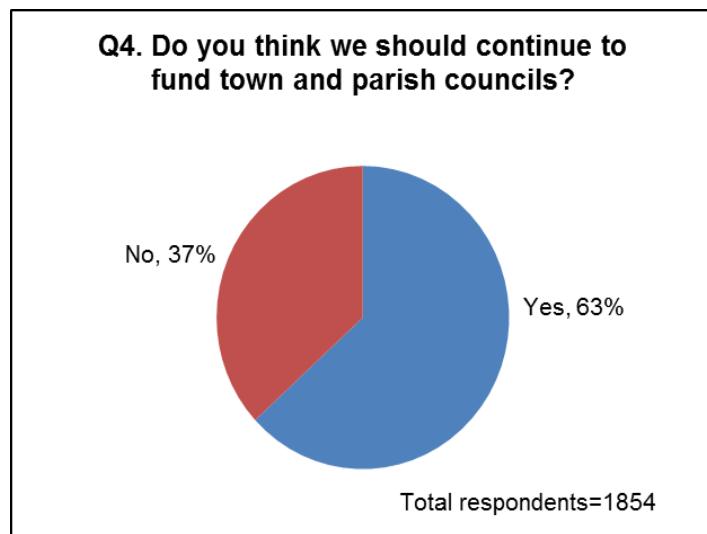
Q4. Do you think we should continue to fund town and parish councils?

Nearly two thirds of respondents (63 per cent) thought that the town and parish councils should continue to be funded by Herefordshire Council.

Table 4: responses to whether council should continue to fund town and parish councils

	Number of respondents	Per cent of respondents
Yes	1,171	63%
No	683	37%
Total respondents	1,854	100%
Not answered	125	

Chart 4: should the council continue to fund town and parish councils?



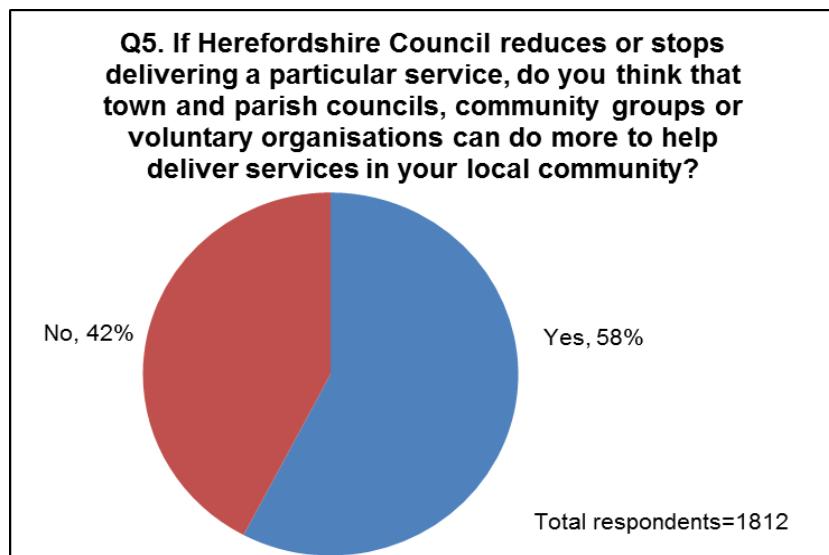
Q5. If Herefordshire Council reduces or stops delivering a particular service, do you think that town and parish councils, community groups or voluntary organisations can do more to help deliver services in your local community? If yes, please specify what services (this could include cutting the grass, maintaining parks or running a community bus service)

Nearly three fifths of respondents (58 per cent) thought that town and parish councils, community groups or voluntary organisations could do more to help deliver services in their local community if Herefordshire Council reduces or stops delivering a particular service.

Table 5: responses to whether town and parish councils, community groups or voluntary organisations could do more to help deliver services

	Number of respondents	Per cent of respondents
Yes	1,045	58%
No	767	42%
Total respondents	1,812	100%
Not answered	167	

Chart 5: do you think town and parish councils, community groups or voluntary organisations can do more to help deliver services?



There were around 1,000 comments made in relation to which services these groups could help with. The most common words are highlighted in the word cloud in figure 2.

Figure 2: word cloud of comments about which services town and parish councils, community groups or voluntary organisations could help to deliver (size of word relates to the number of times it was mentioned)



This question will be fully analysed in a later version of this report, but initial analysis indicated that the most common suggestions were:

- grass cutting
- maintaining parks and open spaces / communal areas / sport pitches,
- running a community bus service / car sharing
- helping in the community libraries and museums
- litter collection/street cleaning
- maintaining minor roads and footpaths

Some respondents expressed concerns about delegating the services to parish or town councils, community groups or voluntary organisations:

“ Possibly, but they would need support, which may negate any savings. Many services are already supported by an ageing group of voluntary workers and there is a limit to what local organisations and voluntary groups can do with very little funding.

“ There is a safety issue to consider but I believe all rural roads need to be adopted by the parish. I also feel that we could do a better job of filling in potholes! This would save one person marking the pothole and a second gang filling. The marked potholes often do not get filled and 'the marker' has to repeat the process. Otherwise summed up above - grass cutting, maintaining parks, sports grounds, community bus, litter picking, cleaning road signs.

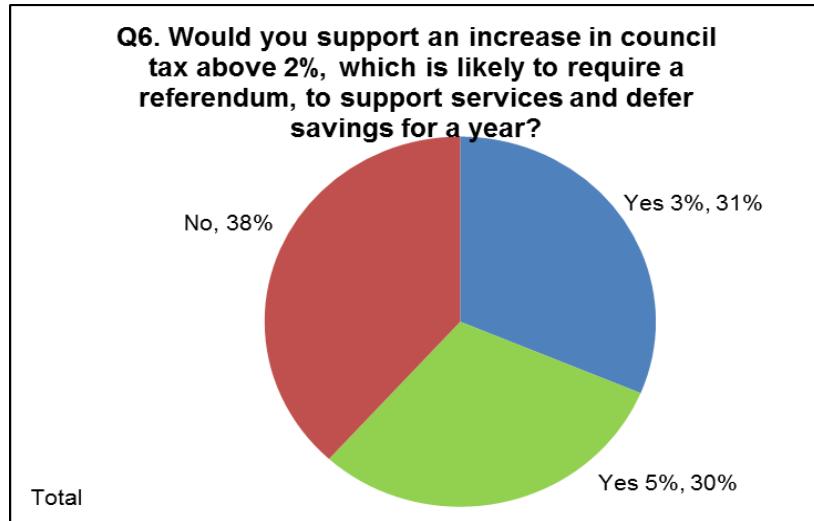
Q6. Would you support an increase in council tax above 2 per cent, which is likely to require a referendum, to support services and defer savings for a year?

Just over three fifths of respondents (62 per cent) would support an increase in council tax above 2 per cent (31 per cent by 3 per cent and 30 per cent by 5 per cent).

Table 6: responses to whether council tax should be increased by more than 2 per cent

	Number of respondents	Per cent of respondents
Yes, by 5%	574	30%
Yes, by 3%	591	31%
No	723	38%
Total respondents	1888	100%
Not answered	91	

Chart 6: would you support an increase in council tax?



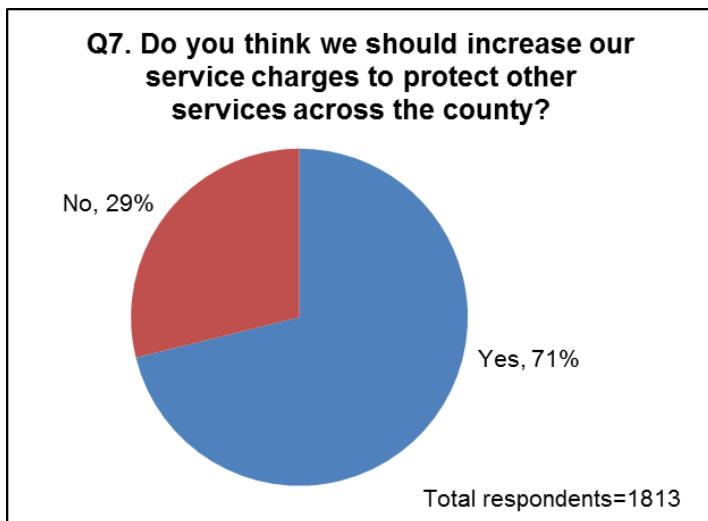
Q7. Do you think we should increase our service charges to protect other services across the county?

Just over seven in ten respondents (71 per cent) thought that Herefordshire Council should increase service charges to protect other services across the county.

Table 7: responses to whether service charges should be increased to protect other services

	Number of respondents	Per cent of respondents
Yes	1,290	71%
No	523	29%
Total respondents	1,813	100%
Not answered	166	

Chart 7: increase service charges to protect other services?



Council tax and service charges (Q6 and Q7)

Of the 1,787 respondents who answered both questions (Q6 and Q7), nearly a fifth (19 per cent) would not support an increase in either council tax or service charges.

Just over half of these respondents (52 per cent) would support both an increase in council tax (either by 3 per cent or 5 per cent) and increases in service charges.

Ten per cent of respondents would support an increase in council tax either by 3 per cent or 5 per cent but did not think the council should increase service charges. Twice as many (19 per cent) would not support an increase in council tax but did think the council should increase service charges.

Table 8: comparison of responses to questions 6 and 7

		Q6. Would you support an increase in council tax above 2%, which is likely to require a referendum, to support services and defer savings for a year?		
Total respondents	1,787	No	Yes, by 3%	Yes, by 5%
Q7. Do you think we should increase our service charges to protect other services across the county?	No	334 (19%)	108 (6%)	74 (4%)
	Yes	345 (19%)	460 (26%)	466 (26%)

Q8. Do you have any other comments you would like to make on our priorities, budget or income and savings proposals?

This question will be fully analysed in a later version of this report, but initial analysis indicated that frequently cited comments were about:

- reviewing car parking charges to support local businesses and introducing other incentives (park and ride)
 - investing in public transport especially to support rural communities
 - reducing high executive salaries and the number of managers in the council to release more money
 - requests to keep the local libraries open and review how it should be managed and staffed.

The following word cloud highlights the most common words that featured in the general comments.

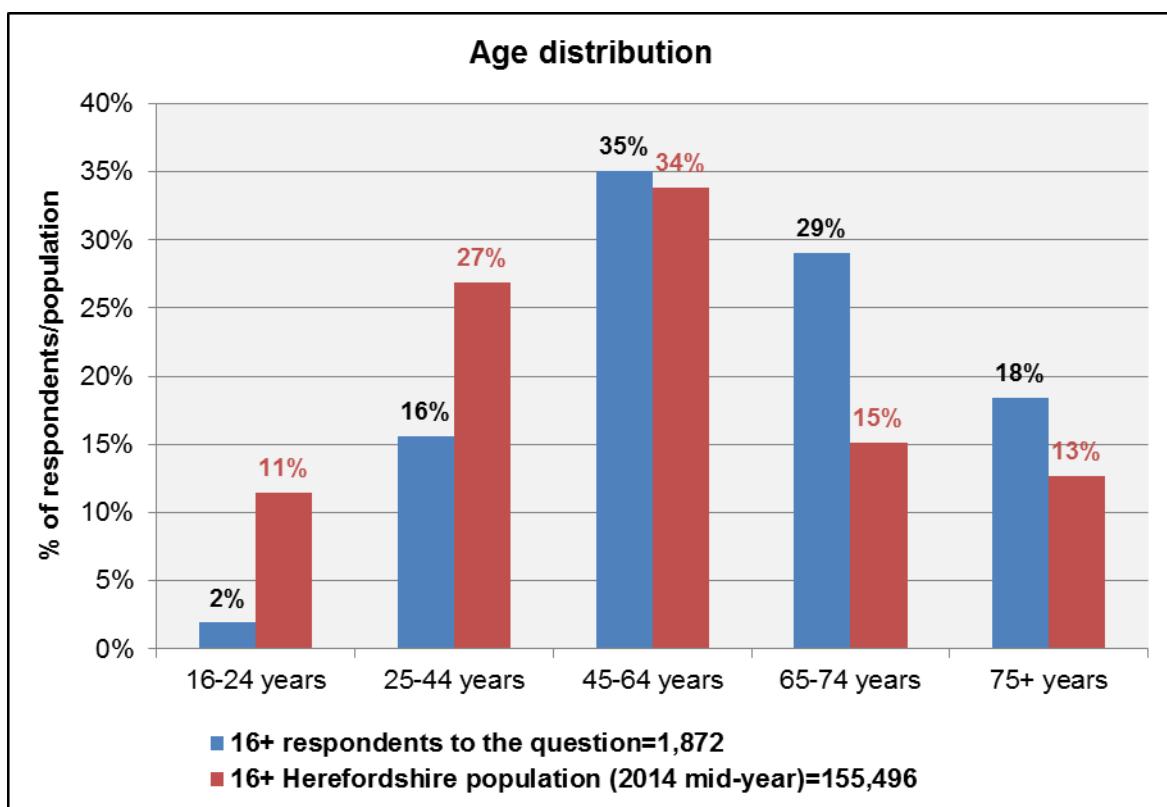
Figure 3: word clouds of comments made as any other comments on our priorities, budget or income and savings proposals



About the respondents

- One per cent of respondents represented an organisation or a group while 99 per cent were individuals.
- 54 per cent of respondents to the survey were males and 46 per cent were females.
- 47 per cent were aged 65 years or over, 35 per cent were aged 45-64 years and 18 per cent were 24 years or younger. It is clear from chart 8 that people aged 45 years and over are over represented in the consultation.

Chart 8: age distribution of survey respondents and Herefordshire population



- Nearly a fifth of respondents' day-to-day activities were limited a little or limited a lot because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months.
- The large majority (97 per cent) of respondents identified themselves as English, Scottish, Welsh or British; three per cent identified themselves as Irish or another national identity.
- All of the 93 per cent of respondents who answered the question about their ethnicity identified themselves as 'White' (97 per cent) or 'other White' (three per cent). This is quite different to the adult population of the county according to the 2011 Census: five per cent were 'other white' and two per cent were 'non-white'.
- One in ten respondents felt that they had been treated differently (positively or negatively) because of who they are.

Appendix A-Q1: Detailed analysis of responses to question 1

This section compares the responses of those who assigned ranks to more than one priority in question 1 to those who didn't. It is necessary to do this because different versions of the questionnaire allowed for different interpretations of the question. As mentioned on page 5, amongst the 615 **respondents who assigned tied ranks**, there was a tendency to say that all three options were equally (most) important: 80 per cent of respondents assigned rank 1 to the first option (enable residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives); 73 did to the second (keep children and young people safe and give them a great start in life) and a further 73 to the third option (support the growth of our economy and the number of people in work). Only five to seven per cent of these respondents assigned rank 3 (least important) to any of the options.

There was a clearer order of priorities from the 1,295 **respondents who assigned only one option to each rank**:

- 40 per cent felt that 'enable residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives' was most important
- 41 per cent felt that 'keep children and young people safe and give them a great start in life' was second most important
- 42 per cent felt that 'support the growth of our economy and the number of people in work' was least important

Table 9: responses to question 1 as a proportion of the 615 respondents who assigned at least one rank to more than one option and as a proportion of the 1,295 respondents who assigned one rank for each option

Priority	Rank	Respondents who assigned tied ranks (615)			Respondents who assigned one option to one rank (1,295)		
		1	2	3	1	2	3
Enable residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives		80%	14%	5%	40%	29%	25%
Keep children and young people safe and give them a great start in life		73%	18%	7%	28%	41%	24%
Support the growth of our economy and the number of people in work		73%	21%	5%	30%	22%	42%

Appendix A-Q3: Detailed analysis of responses to question 3

This section compares the responses of those who assigned ranks to more than one proposal in question 3 to those who didn't. It is necessary to do this because different versions of the questionnaire allowed for different interpretations of the question. As described on page 10, a third of respondents to question 3 assigned at least one rank to more than one option. These respondents tended to favour either rank 11, i.e. to say that two or more options were their least preferred, or rank 1, i.e. to have joint favourite options. As the highlighted cells in table 9 show, rank 11 was the most popular for all options except 'introduce on street car parking charges in Hereford' and 'sell our smallholdings estate' amongst these 664 respondents. For the latter, rank 1 was the most popular by a small minority.

Table 10: responses to question 3 as a proportion of the 664 respondents who assigned at least one rank to more than one option
 (most common ranks for each option highlighted and notable proportion in bold)

Per cent of respondents assigning each rank to each proposal		Rank (1=first and 11=last)										
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Income	Sell our smallholdings estate of 4,500 acres, including 45 farms, to reduce our debt repayments	28%	5%	7%	6%	6%	5%	2%	3%	6%	3%	27%
	Increase car parking charges across the county	24%	4%	4%	5%	10%	7%	3%	6%	4%	3%	26%
	Introduce on street car parking charges in Hereford	25%	6%	7%	4%	9%	8%	3%	4%	3%	3%	24%
Savings	Reduce the discounts available under the council tax reduction scheme	18%	4%	9%	5%	9%	10%	4%	3%	5%	5%	21%
	Cease the council tax reduction grant to town and parish councils	14%	4%	6%	8%	10%	11%	5%	5%	5%	5%	20%
	Remove subsidies to town and parish councils for the lengthsman and parish paths partnership schemes	16%	4%	7%	6%	9%	10%	6%	7%	6%	5%	22%
	Reductions / efficiencies in highways services	9%	4%	5%	7%	12%	11%	6%	6%	6%	5%	23%
	Cease sports pitches and parks maintenance	9%	4%	5%	7%	9%	9%	5%	6%	7%	8%	29%
	Remove public transport subsidy and increase the cost for discretionary educational travel	9%	3%	5%	5%	9%	8%	3%	6%	7%	6%	36%
	Remove community transport subsidy	8%	3%	3%	6%	9%	8%	4%	6%	6%	7%	36%
	Reduce customer services and libraries across the county	6%	2%	1%	2%	5%	3%	1%	2%	5%	5%	66%

There were 1,204 respondents who assigned one rank for each option. According to them, there was a clear order of preference for 'selling our smallholdings estates', 'introduce on street car parking charges in Hereford' and 'increase car parking charges across the county' as rank 1, 2 and 3 respectively. 'Reduce customer services and libraries across the county' was the least preferred choice (rank 11) for a large majority.

Table 11: responses to question 3 as a proportion of the 1204 respondents who assigned one rank for each option
 (most common ranks for each option highlighted and notable proportion in bold)

Per cent of respondents assigning tied ranks to each proposal		Rank (1=first and 11=last)										
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Income	Sell our smallholdings estate of 4,500 acres, including 45 farms, to reduce our debt repayments (income of £1.5million to £2million)	32%	8%	12%	5%	5%	6%	5%	5%	4%	4%	6%
	Introduce on street car parking charges in Hereford (income of up to £500,000)	12%	24%	9%	7%	5%	4%	7%	6%	8%	7%	3%
	Increase car parking charges across the county (income of over £1million)	21%	13%	8%	6%	6%	7%	5%	5%	5%	10%	6%
Savings	Reduce the discounts available under the council tax reduction scheme (saving of less than £500,000)	7%	10%	13%	12%	12%	8%	9%	7%	7%	4%	2%
	Cease the council tax reduction grant to town and parish councils (saving of less than £500,000)	5%	10%	12%	12%	11%	11%	8%	8%	7%	6%	2%
	Remove subsidies to town and parish councils for the lengthsman and parish paths partnership schemes (saving of less than £500,000)	5%	8%	9%	12%	13%	12%	10%	9%	8%	4%	1%
	Reductions / efficiencies in highways services (saving of £500,000 to £1million)	3%	5%	8%	10%	7%	10%	9%	10%	12%	8%	8%
	Cease sports pitches and parks maintenance (saving of less than £500,000)	1%	3%	5%	9%	11%	11%	13%	12%	10%	11%	4%
	Remove community transport subsidy (saving of less than £500,000)	1%	3%	6%	7%	12%	10%	11%	12%	12%	12%	5%
	Remove public transport subsidy and increase the cost for discretionary educational travel (saving of £500,000 to £1million)	2%	5%	7%	9%	7%	8%	7%	11%	10%	12%	12%
	Reduce customer services and libraries across the county (saving £500,000 to £1million)	4%	2%	2%	3%	4%	5%	6%	5%	8%	13%	44%

Appendix B: The questionnaire

Priorities and budget consultation 2016-2020

Consultation questions

The council's priorities

The council, as with any other organisation, works towards an agreed set of priorities which have been identified through in depth research, including public consultation, to ensure we are providing the services required to the residents who need them.

Despite the financial challenges we face, we remain committed to efficiently maximising the use of scarce resources in order to secure better services, quality of life and value for money whilst complying with our legal duties and corporate priorities.

The council needs to refresh its priorities for 2016 - 2020, to form the basis for our corporate plan, and after listening to what you've told us and analysing the available research in the 2014 Understanding Herefordshire report (<https://factsandfigures.herefordshire.gov.uk/Understanding-Herefordshire>), we propose to focus our resources so we enable residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives; keep children and young people safe and give them a great start in life and support the growth of our economy and the number of people in work.

1. How would you choose to rate these priorities in terms of most important and least important? (1 = most important and 3 = least important)

	1	2	3
Enable residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Keep children and young people safe and give them a great start in life	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support the growth of our economy and the number of people in work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. Are there any other areas which you think the council should identify as a priority?

Yes

No

If yes, please specify the priorities you believe we should focus on:

The council's budget

In order to meet our priorities, we allocate our annual budget accordingly and consult on it every year.

The council's budget for 2015/16 is just under £142million and we have had to take challenging decisions to make savings of £10million to remain within budget. For 2016/17 our budget will be £138million and a combination of reduced funding from central government (£7million) and increased demand on priority services (£4million), means that after taking into account any increased income from council tax and business rates, we will need to find further savings of £11million. From now until 2020, the council will need to have saved a total of £42million.

Increasing efficiency

The majority of our planned savings will be made from improving the efficiency of the organisation, including reducing management and staffing numbers and the reliance on agency staff; reducing our spend on external contracts; implementing better IT systems and reducing the number of buildings we occupy. We will also be investing in preventative strategies and working with public health to improve people's health and wellbeing, which in turn will reduce the demand for services and save money.

The efficiencies alone will not deliver all of the savings required, so we will need to consider increasing income or reducing service levels.

Where can we increase income or make savings?

We have identified a range of areas where we may be able to increase income or make savings. These proposals are needed in order to balance our budget and allow more funding to be available to spend on priority areas, especially those which are experiencing a significant increase in demand from residents such as adult social care.

3. How would you choose to prioritise the following areas* in terms of which you would implement first compared to last in order to reduce spending? (1 = first and 11 = last)

* Please note that there is additional information available for each area; simply read our income and savings proposals (www.herefordshire.gov.uk/budgetconsultation2016) for further details.

Income and savings

Town and parish councils, community groups and voluntary organisations

Herefordshire Council is looking to town and parish councils, community groups and voluntary organisations to, where possible, help deliver services in their local communities.

We currently provide funding to the 133 town and parish councils across Herefordshire through the council tax reduction grant. If we removed this funding, we'd save £289,000 a year.

4. Do you think we should continue to fund town and parish councils?

Yes

No

5. If Herefordshire Council reduces or stops delivering a particular service, do you think that town and parish councils, community groups or voluntary organisations can do more to help deliver services in your local community?

Yes

No

If yes, please specify what services (this could include cutting the grass, maintaining parks or running a community bus service):

How can we generate income?

The council could generate income from a number of areas to help balance the budget and protect services. It is therefore incredibly important that you give us your views on this section, so we can best decide how to proceed in future years.

Council tax

We could generate additional funding, which could be used to protect services, if we raised council tax above the current level. In 2016/17, it is proposed to raise council tax by 1.9%, however if we wanted to raise it above the 2% level, it is likely that we would be required to hold a countywide referendum (which would cost approximately £300,000), where we ask residents to say if they're for or against the proposal.

What this would mean for you

If the proposed 1.9% council tax increase is agreed by full Council in February 2016, this would mean an average increase to each household of 50p a week, which would generate additional income of approximately £1.5million.

Alternatively, we could raise council tax by 3% or 5%, which would mean...

	Additional weekly increase	Additional income generated
3%	25p	£1million*
5%	70p	£2.5 million

*This would provide sufficient funding to allow us to defer the savings proposals identified in question three for a year.

- 6. Would you support an increase in council tax above 2%, which is likely to require a referendum, to support services and defer savings for a year?**

Yes 3%

Yes 5%

No

Increase charges

There are a number of council services which are chargeable and provide an income, such as car parking, planning, licensing and burial services, which could be increased to protect other services. For example, if we increased charges it could help to protect transport or library services.

- 7. Do you think we should increase our service charges to protect other services across the county?**

Yes

No

- 8. Do you have any other comments you would like to make on our priorities, budget or income and savings proposals? Please state below:**

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

Organisation or group

Individual

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

If you are responding as an individual please answer the following questions about yourself. This will help us to better understand how views may differ between different people across the county.

About you

This information helps us to ensure that our services are accessible to all. It will only be used for the purpose of statistical monitoring, treated as confidential and not used to identify you.

What is your gender?

Male

Female

What is your age band:

0-15 years

16-24 years

25-44 years

45-64 years

65-74 years

75+ years

Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?

Yes - limited a little

Yes - limited a lot

No

If yes, please specify any particular requirements when using this service:

How would you describe your national identity? (Tick as many as apply)

English

Scottish

British

Welsh

Northern Irish

Irish

Other (please specify)

Other (please specify):

How would you describe your ethnic group? (Please tick one box only)

White British/English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish

Other White (please specify)

Any other ethnic group (please specify)

Other White (please specify)

Any other ethnic group (please specify)

Do you feel that you were treated differently (positively or negatively) because of who you are? (e.g. your age, gender, disability or ethnicity)

Yes

No

If yes, please specify:

Thank you for completing the questionnaire

Please send your completed questionnaire to:
Herefordshire Council Research Team, Freepost SWC4816, PO Box 4,
Hereford, HR4 0BR