Report of the Portfolio of Resources and Personnel Policy

BUDGET CONSULTATION 2023/24

1. Purpose of report

To report the results of the 2023/24 budget consultation exercise that took place during October and November 2022.

2. Recommendation

Cabinet is asked to NOTE the outcome of the Budget Consultation and to consider the findings as part of the budget setting process for 2023/24.

3. Detail

As with earlier budget consultation exercises, a web-based survey publicised through social media has been used to consult on the 2023/24 budget. This included no reference to any specific policy options but sought views on all Council services and indications of satisfaction, or otherwise, with these as well as the way in which they are provided and with the local area generally.

Local people were asked for their preferred approach to balancing the Council's budget and to provide an indication as to which services they thought should have their funding increased, decreased or remain the same.

Residents were asked how frequently they access Council services and how satisfied they were with the way in which this can be done. They were also asked how they prefer to conduct business with the Council and if they would they would consider accessing services in another way. There was a question regarding the Council's approach to climate change. Finally, they were asked if they thought that the Council listened to them.

Respondents were also asked to provide demographic data, including which area of the Borough they live in so that any correlation between location and satisfaction levels could be analysed.

A total of 1,210 responses were received on the extended survey. This was significantly higher than the submissions received in 2021 (606), 2020 (277) and 2019 (407). The results are summarised in the appendix along with a summary of the demographic data for the respondents.

The feedback and comments received as part of the Budget Consultation survey suggested prioritised investment and focus on Community Safety, this is provided with partner support of the Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Commissioner. Another priority highlighted related to regeneration and this is being achieved through the Stapleford Towns Fund, UK Shared Prosperity Find and with the potential of Levelling Up Fund bids pending for Eastwood and Kimberley. Feedback from the survey also refers to the Council having a strong focus on Housing investment with the Housing Delivery and modernisation programmes; and finally the Council's Environmental objectives which are being delivered through the Climate Change Strategy and Green Futures programme.

4. Financial Implications

The comments from the Head of Finance Services were as follows:

The budget consultation with local residents provides useful feedback to inform the budget setting process that will culminate in the overall budget report being recommended to Council for approval on 1 March 2023.

5. Legal Implications

The comments from the Head of Legal Services were as follows:

Section 65 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 places a duty upon local authorities to consult representatives of non-domestic ratepayers before setting the budget. Whilst there is no specific statutory requirement to consult with residents, local authorities were placed under a general duty to 'inform, consult and involve' representatives of local people when exercising their functions by the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. This was repealed and replaced by more prescriptive forms of involvement by the Localism Act 2011.

6. Human Resources Implications

There were no comments from the Human Resources Manager.

7. Union Comments

There were no comments from UNISON.

8. Data Protection Compliance Implications

There are no Data Protection issues in relation to this report.

9. Equality Impact Assessment

As there is no change to policy an equality impact assessment is not required.

10. Background Papers

Nil

APPENDIX

SUMMARY OF RESPONDENTS

The analysis of ethnicity indicates a bias towards White British respondents (91%). A further 4% of respondents indicated they considered themselves to be White Irish or White Other. Only 59 responses, being 5%, were received from people who identified as being Asian or Chinese or Black or Mixed race and any other ethnic group categories (up from 22 responses (4%) last year). The sample of respondents was not considered to be wholly representative of the local communities in Broxtowe.

In terms of gender, the majority 52% of the respondents were female. Around 82% of respondents identified as being over 45 years old with 27% being between 45 and 59 years, 14% between 60 and 64 years and 42% over 65. The number of younger respondents was higher than previously with 18% of responders being under 45 compared to 16% in the previous year.

Around 24% of responders identified themselves as being disabled or with long term health problems limiting daily activity, a similar level to the previous year.

In terms of geographical location, Beeston residents responded the most (24%), with residents in Chilwell accounting for 14% of respondents and Stapleford accounting for 12% of respondents. Others included Bramcote (9%), Eastwood (9%) and Kimberley (6%). The splits across each area were broadly similar to the previous year. There was at least one respondent from every area.

A total of 1,165 responders confirmed that they were Council Taxpayers (96%).

A full breakdown of gender, age ranges, ethnicity, disability and location is included later in the appendix. As a proportion of the total population of Broxtowe, the number of respondents means that the results cannot be taken as statistically significant. It is advisable to only consider the results as indications of local views rather than attempt to draw strategic conclusions from the detailed responses.

Satisfaction with Services

The questionnaire asked residents “how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way in which the Council provides services; and your local area as a place to live”.

In overall terms, local people are satisfied with the borough of Broxtowe and the Council’s management of it. The results show that 76% of people (904 respondents) were either ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with the area in which they live which is the same as the positive response in 2021/22. Over 65% are either ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with the way that the Council delivers services (785 respondents), which again is the same as in the previous year. A further 25% had a neutral stance. However, 2% of people are ‘very dissatisfied’ in both categories which is a similar level to last year’s consultation.

The outcomes are broadly similar with an earlier Local Government Association (LGA) research report telephone questionnaire in October 2022 that contacted 1,001 British adults where it was found that 79% of respondents are ‘very satisfied’ or ‘fairly satisfied’ with their local area as a place to live and 62% of respondents are ‘very satisfied’ or ‘fairly satisfied’ with the way their local council runs things.

The progress with satisfaction rates between years, as part of the Budget Consultation process, can be seen in the following tables:

- Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way in which the Council provides its services?

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Response	575	414	275	604	1,204
Satisfied or very satisfied	63.5%	58.7%	63.6%	64.7%	65.2%
Neutral	26.9%	26.1%	28.4%	25.0%	25.17%
Dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	9.6%	15.2%	8.0%	10.3%	9.6%

- Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your local area as a place to live?

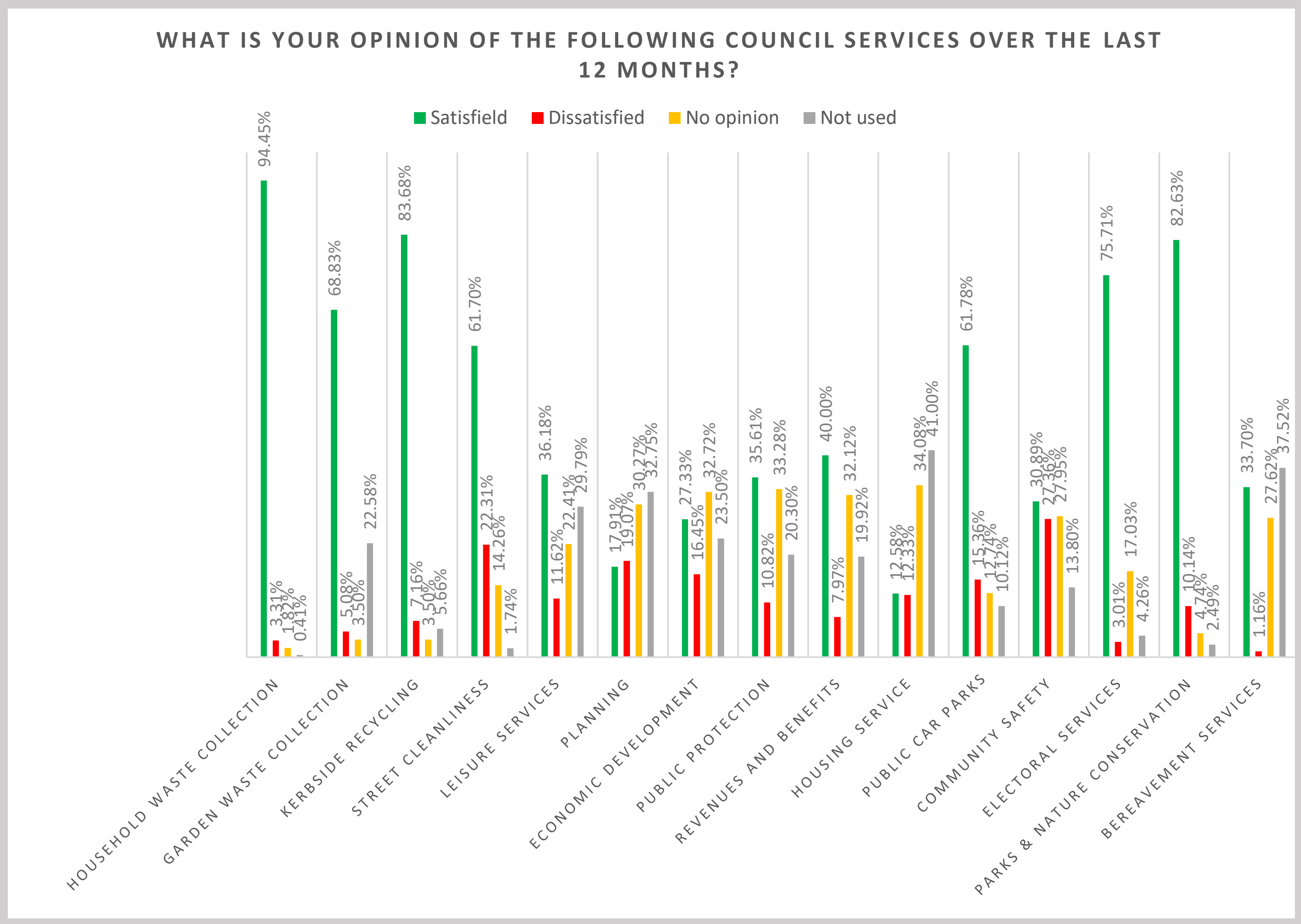
	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Response	578	409	275	602	1,189
Satisfied or very satisfied	73.9%	74.3%	72.7%	76.3%	76.0%
Neutral	16.1%	15.2%	10.9%	13.3%	14.1%
Dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	10.0%	10.5%	16.4%	10.4%	9.9%

Figure 1 below analyses the level of satisfaction with individual Council services over the last twelve months. The services with the highest satisfied responses were Household Waste Collection *(black lidded bin)* with 94% (up from 91%); Kerbside Recycling *(green lidded bin, glass bag or red lidded glass bin, textiles)* with 84% (up from 74%); Parks and Nature Conservation with 83% (up from 81%); Electoral Services with 75% (down from 78%); and Garden Waste Collection *(brown lidded bin)* with 69% (up from 66%) of responders being satisfied or very satisfied.

The services with the highest levels of dissatisfied responses were Community Safety *(anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse, alcohol awareness)* with 27% (worsened from 24%); Street Cleanliness *(litter collection, graffiti removal, fly tipping, neighbourhood wardens)* with 22% (improved from 29%); Planning (planning applications and planning policy) with 19% of responders (worsened from 15%); and Economic Development *(support to businesses, regeneration, Town Centre Management, business growth)* at 16% (improved from 19%).

These rankings are similar to those seen in previous years.

Figure 1:



Spending on Services

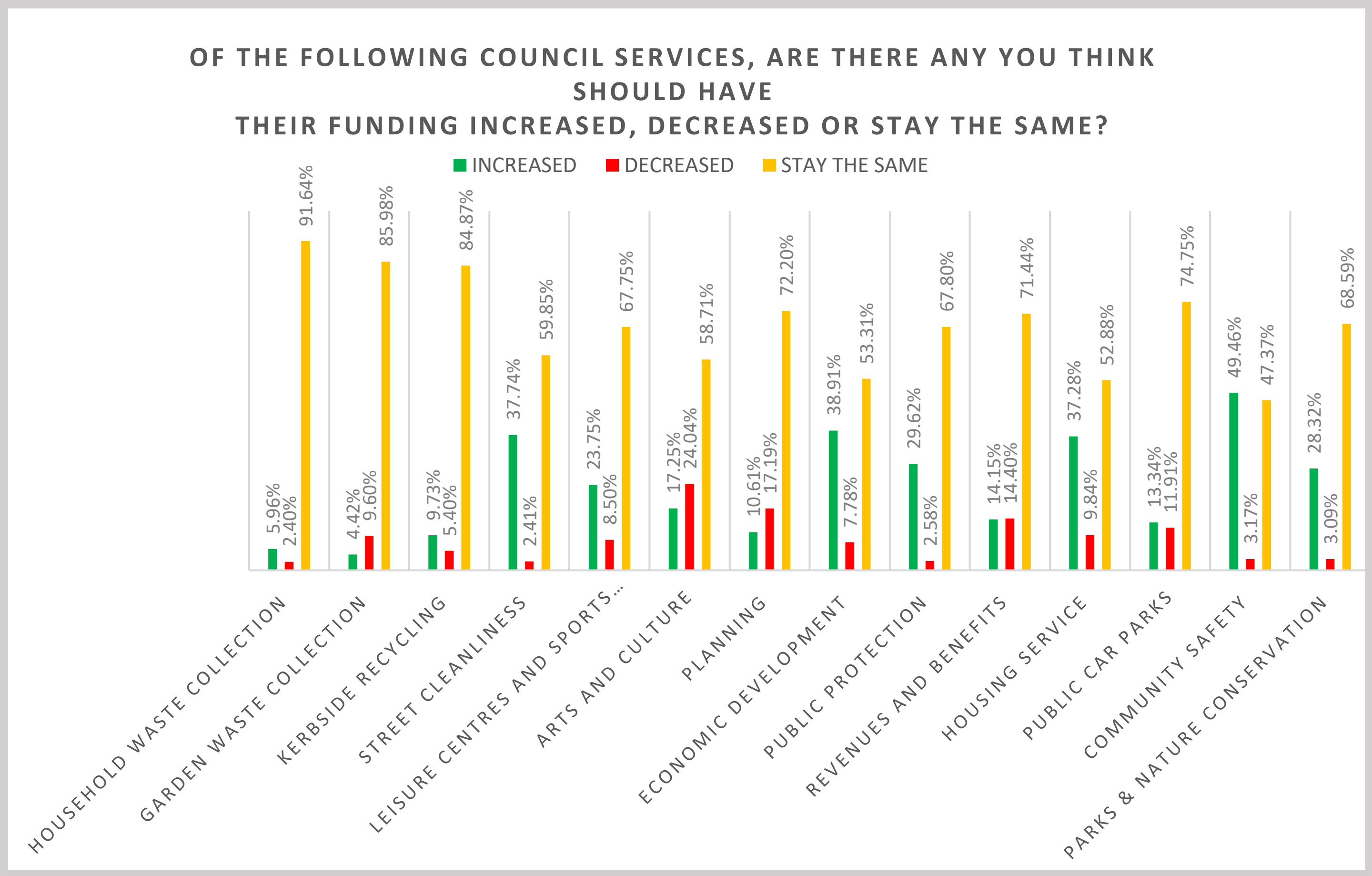
When asked about spending on services and whether the Council has the balance right or are there any services where funding should be increased, decreased or stay the same, Community Safety scored the highest again at 49% (up from 45%) in terms of respondents thinking their funding should be increased. This was followed by Economic Development at 39% (up from 35%); Street cleanliness at 38% (previously 41%); Housing service *(housing options advice, homelessness, provision of affordable housing, tenancies) at 37% (same)*; and Public Protection (licensing, food hygiene inspections, nuisance complaints) at 30% (down from 32%).

Arts and Culture at 24% (was 31%); Planning *(planning applications and planning policy)* at 17% (was 22%); Revenues and Benefits *(housing benefit and council tax support payments)* at 14% (was 18%) and Public Car Parks at 12% (was 15%) scored the highest in terms of respondents thinking their funding should be decreased. These were similarly ranked to previous years although the scores were generally lower.

Household Waste Collection at 92% (previously 88%), Garden Waste Collection at 86% (was 82%) and Kerbside Recycling at 85% (was 80%) scored highest in terms of respondents thinking their funding should stay the same. This could be interpreted as indicating a relationship with satisfaction levels as these services secured high satisfaction ratings. This pattern is reflected in most services with respondents consistently voting more for the funding of services to stay the same.

Figure 2 provides detailed analysis on whether spending on services should be increased, decreased or stay the same across a range of Council activities.

Figure 2:



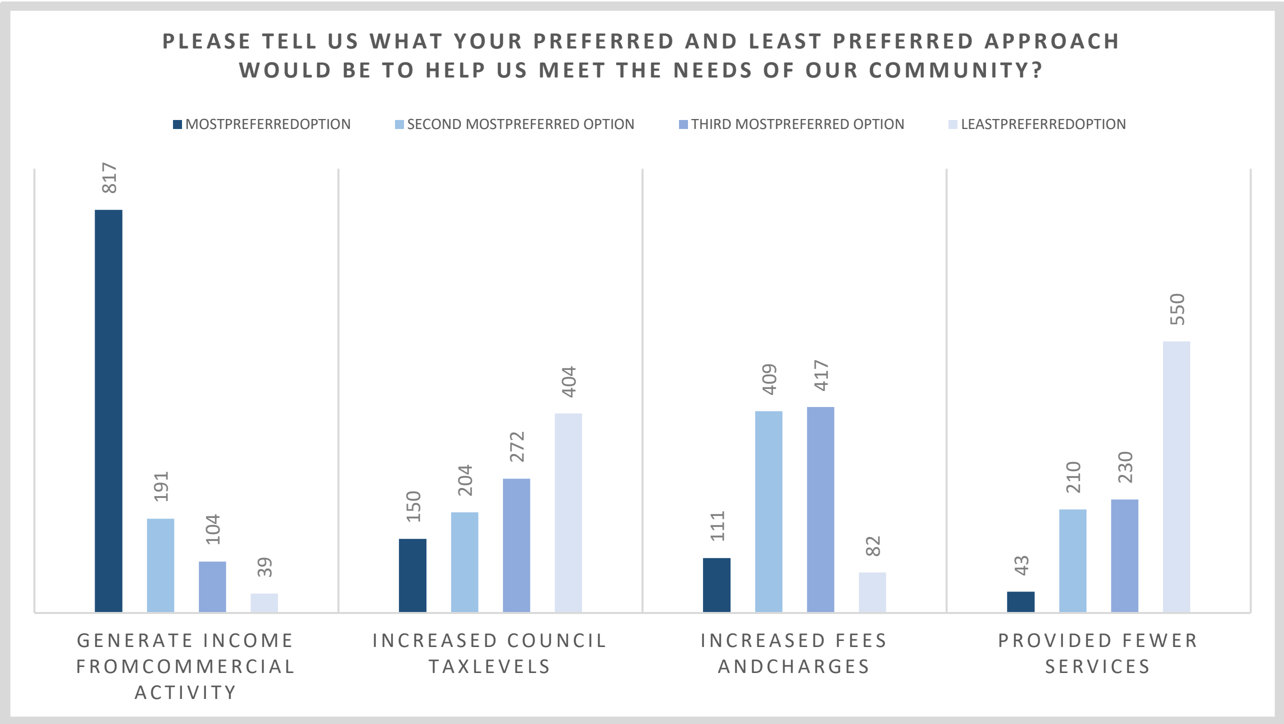
Balancing the Budget

The questionnaire asked that "Council tax is an important way of raising income to provide the services that we rely on in the community. Please tell us what your preferred and least preferred approaches are to help us meet the needs of our community?". Respondents were asked to state their preferred and least preferred approaches are to help us meet the needs of our community?

By far the most preferred option for balancing the budget was to “generate income from commercial activity” at 71% (previously 73%) with the next most preferred option being “increased council tax levels at 15% (previously 14%) and “increased fees and charges” at 11% (as previous). The least preferred option for balancing the budget was to provide fewer services with 53% of respondents (previously 55%) followed by increasing council tax levels with 39% (previously 40%).

Again, these rankings are similar to those seen in previous years and the responses are provided in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3:



Communicating with the Council

As in previous years, respondents were asked whether they feel the Council listens to them. Over 27% of responders agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, whilst 45% were neutral. Over 27% of responders disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. This appears to be a very similar profile to the previous year when the question generated a 50:50 return to a similar ‘yes/no’ question.

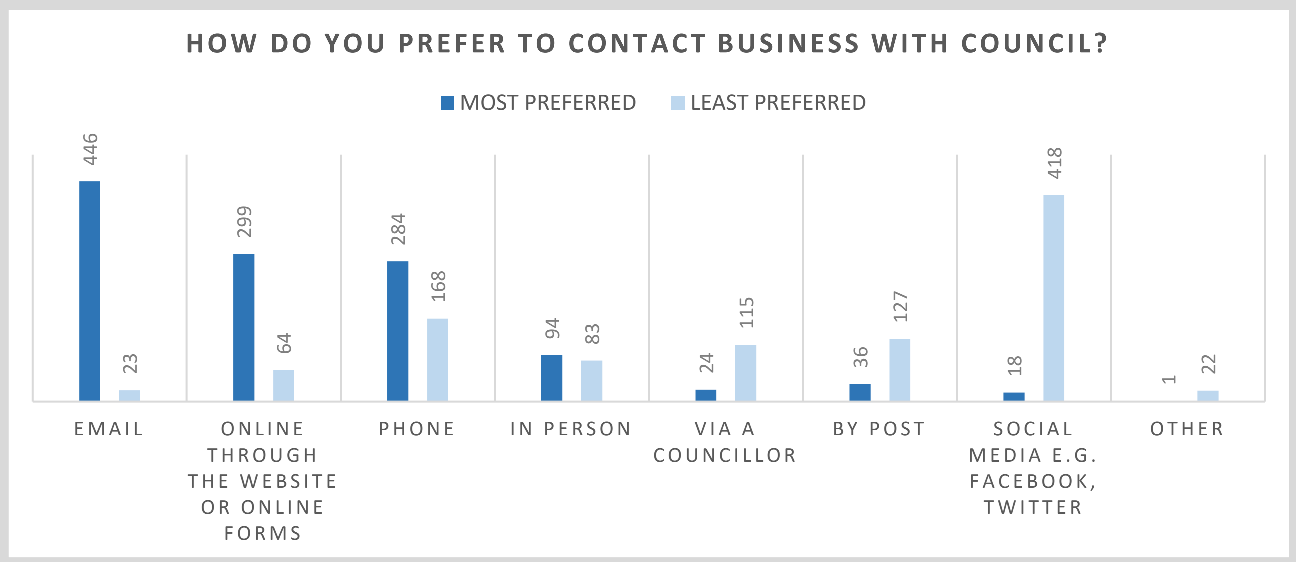
To obtain further information on how to shape services in future, local people were asked about how satisfied they are with the ways they can access Council services and how they prefer to contact the Council to do business. Over 57% of respondents were either very satisfied or satisfied with the way they can access Council services, which represents a similar figure to 2021/22. Around 14% of respondents were either very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with the way in which they can access Council services (increased 1% on the previous figure). However, 28% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (i.e. neutral) which represents a 1% decrease on 2021/22.

The large majority of responders at 76% only contacted the Council 'a few times a year" (up from 75%). Only 10% of responders contacted the Council more frequently than monthly (down from 14%).

In terms of what methods of communication local people prefer to use, there was again clearly a preference in the budget consultation for email contact (446 'positive' responses) and online which reinforced the results from recent years. It must be remembered however that all respondents were already able to access services online by virtue of them completing this survey.

Communicating via social media e.g. Facebook and Twitter was again the least preferred method of conducting business with the Council (418 responses) followed by 'phone' (168) and 'by post' (127. Further details are set out in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4:



Climate Change

The questionnaire asked "how satisfied are you with the Council's approach to tackling climate change?" This was the second time that such this question was included on the budget consultation.

Overall 29% of responders were either very satisfied or satisfied with the Council's approach (similar to 2021/22), with a further 60% providing a neutral response (was 56%). The remaining 11% were either very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with the approach (previously 15%).

Demographic Data

Gender	Number of Reponses	2022 %	2021 %
Male	532	44.7	52
Female	620	52.2	45
Another Way	5	0.4	0
Prefer not to say	32	2.7	3
Not stated – 21	1,189		

Age	Number of Reponses	2022 %	2021 %
Under 18	-	-	-
18 – 24	7	0.6	1
25 – 29	23	1.9	1
30 – 44	185	15.5	14
45 – 59	320	26.9	26
60 – 64	163	13.7	14
Over 65	494	41.4	44
Not stated – 18	1,192		

Ethnicity	Number of Reponses	2022 %	2021 %
White – British	1,073	91.2	92.8
White – Irish	9	0.8	1.0
White – Other	36	3.1	1.9
Asian or Asian British - Indian	10	0.9	0.7
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	3	0.2	0.2
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	-	-	-
Asian or Asian British – Other Background	3	0.2	0.9
British or Black British - Caribbean	4	0.3	0.9
British or Black British - African	3	0.2	0.2
British or Black British - Other Background	-	-	-
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	3	0.2	0.2
Mixed - White and Black African	1	0.1	-
Mixed - White and Asian	4	0.3	0.3
Mixed - Other Background	4	0.3	-
Chinese	8	0.7	0.5
Any Other Ethnic Group	16	1.4	0.5
Not stated – 33	1,177		

Do you consider yourself as disabled or have any long-term health problems that limit daily activity?	Number of Reponses	2022 %	2021 %
Yes	279	23.5	21.7
No	907	76.5	78.3
Not stated – 24	1,186		

Which of the following areas do you live in?	Number of Reponses	2022 %	*2021 %*
Attenborough	35	2.9	*2.5*
Awsworth	15	1.3	*1.7*
Beeston	284	23.8	*23.5*
Bramcote	112	9.4	*9.5*
Brinsley	24	2.0	*2.8*
Chilwell	171	14.3	*11.5*
Cossall	2	0.2	*0.5*
Eastwood	106	8.9	*6.7*
Greasley	37	3.1	*4.7*
Kimberley	77	6.5	*6.0*
Newthorpe	39	3.3	*3.2*
Nuthall	69	5.8	*5.0*
Stapleford	149	12.5	*12.9*
Strelley	3	0.3	*0.5*
Toton	51	4.3	*5.7*
Trowell	20	1.7	*3.3*
Not stated – 16	1,194		