Report of the Portfolio of Resources and Personnel Policy

BUDGET CONSULTATION 2024/25

1. Purpose of report

To report the results of the 2024/25 budget consultation exercise that took place during October and November 2023.

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 2024/25.

3. Detail

As with earlier budget consultation exercises, a web-based survey publicised through social media has been used to consult on the 2024/25 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 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 1,393 responses were received on the extended survey. The response rate has grown again from 2022 (1,210), which in turn was significantly higher than those 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.

4. Key Decision

This is not a key decision.

5. 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 6 March 2024.

6. 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.

7. Human Resources Implications

There were no comments from the Human Resources Manager.

8. Union Comments

There were no comments from UNISON.

9. Climate Change Implications

The budget consultation exercise included asking how satisfied residents are with the Council's approach to tackling climate change. The outcome is considered in the appendix.

10. Data Protection Compliance Implications

This report does not contain any OFFICIAL(SENSITIVE) information and there are no Data Protection issues in relation to this report.

11. Equality Impact Assessment

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

12. Background Papers

Nil.

APPENDIX

Summary of Respondents

The analysis of ethnicity indicates a bias towards White British respondents (90%). A further 5% of respondents indicated they considered themselves to be White Irish or White Other (similar to previous years). Only 69 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 (similar at 5% from 59 responses last year). The sample of respondents was not considered to be wholly representative of the local communities in Broxtowe.

In terms of gender, 49% of the respondents were male, with 47% female and others being another way or prefer not to say. Around 83% of respondents identified as being over 45 years old with 26% being between 45 and 59 years, 12% between 60 and 64 years, 28% being between 65 and 74 years and 16% over 75. The number of younger respondents was lower than previously with 17% of responders being under 45 compared to 18% 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 (23%), with residents in Chilwell accounting for 13% of respondents and Stapleford accounting for 13% of respondents. Others included Bramcote (8%), Eastwood (8%), Kimberley (7%) and Nuthall (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 1,340 responders confirmed that they were Council Taxpayers, which at 96% was similar to previous years.

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 71% of people (980 respondents) were either ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with the area in which they live which is slightly less than the 79% positive response in the previous year. Over 58% are either ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with the way that the Council delivers services (801 respondents), which again is less than 65% in the previous year. A further 26% had a neutral stance. However, 4% of people are ‘very dissatisfied’ with the way that the Council delivers services which is slightly up on last year’s consultation.

The outcomes are broadly similar with the latest Local Government Association (LGA) research report telephone questionnaire in October 2023 that contacted 1,000 British adults where it was found that 75% of respondents are ‘very satisfied’ or ‘fairly satisfied’ with their local area as a place to live and 56% 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?

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Responses	414	275	604	1,204	1,377
Satisfied or very satisfied	58.7%	63.6%	64.7%	65.2%	58.2%
Neutral	26.1%	28.4%	25.0%	25.2%	26.5%
Dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	15.2%	8.0%	10.3%	9.6%	15.3%

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

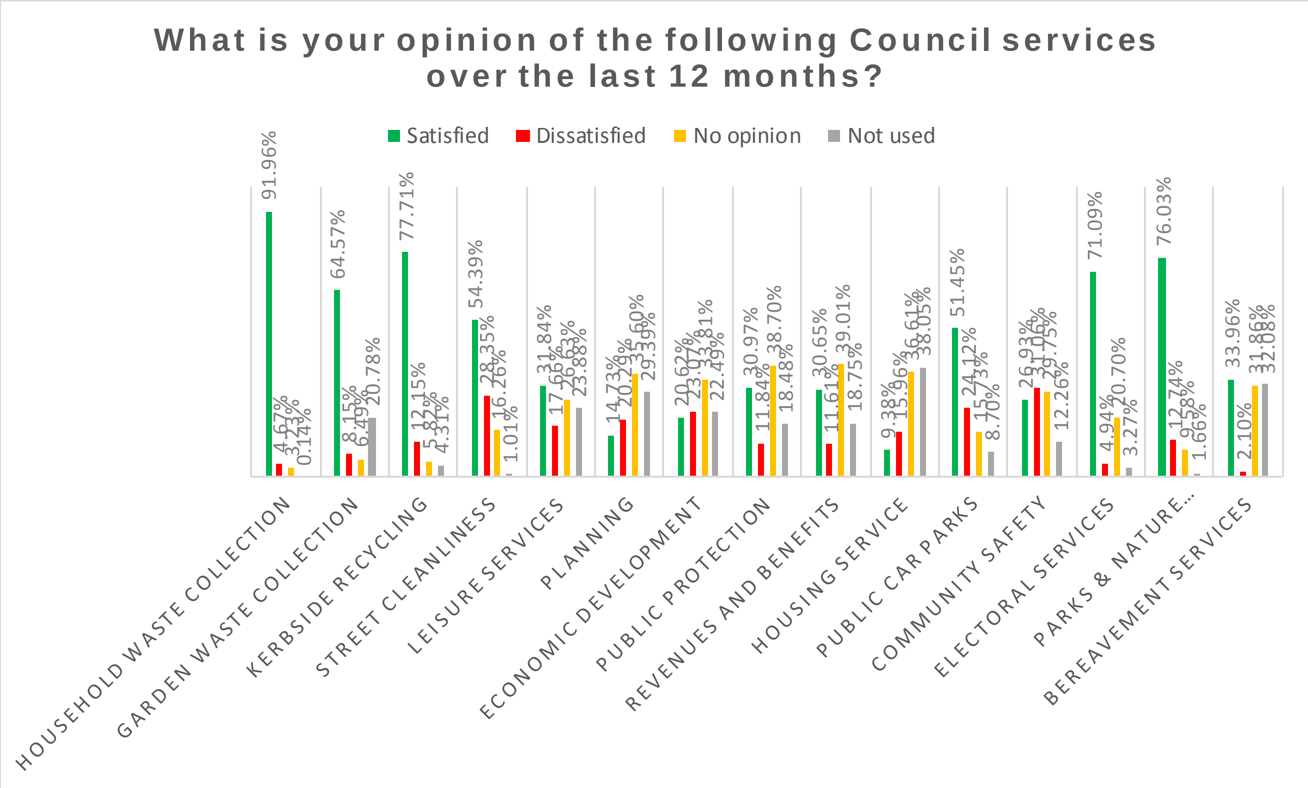
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2022/23
Responses	409	275	602	1,189	1,379
Satisfied or very satisfied	74.3%	72.7%	76.3%	76.0%	71.1%
Neutral	15.2%	10.9%	13.3%	14.1%	15.8%
Dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	10.5%	16.4%	10.4%	9.9%	13.1%

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 92% (down from 94%); Kerbside Recycling *(green lidded bin, glass bag or red lidded glass bin, textiles)* with 78% (down from 84%); Parks and Nature Conservation with 76% (down from 83%); Electoral Services with 71% (down from 75%); and Garden Waste Collection *(brown lidded bin)* with 65% (down from 69%) 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 31% (worsened from 27%); Street Cleanliness *(litter collection, graffiti removal, fly tipping, neighbourhood wardens)* with 28% (worsened from 22%); Public Car Parks at 24% (worsened from 10%); Economic Development *(support to businesses, regeneration, Town Centre Management, business growth)* at 23% (worsened from 16%); and Planning (planning applications and planning policy) with 20% of responders (worsened from 19%).

These rankings are similar to those seen in previous years.

Figure 1:



Spending on Services

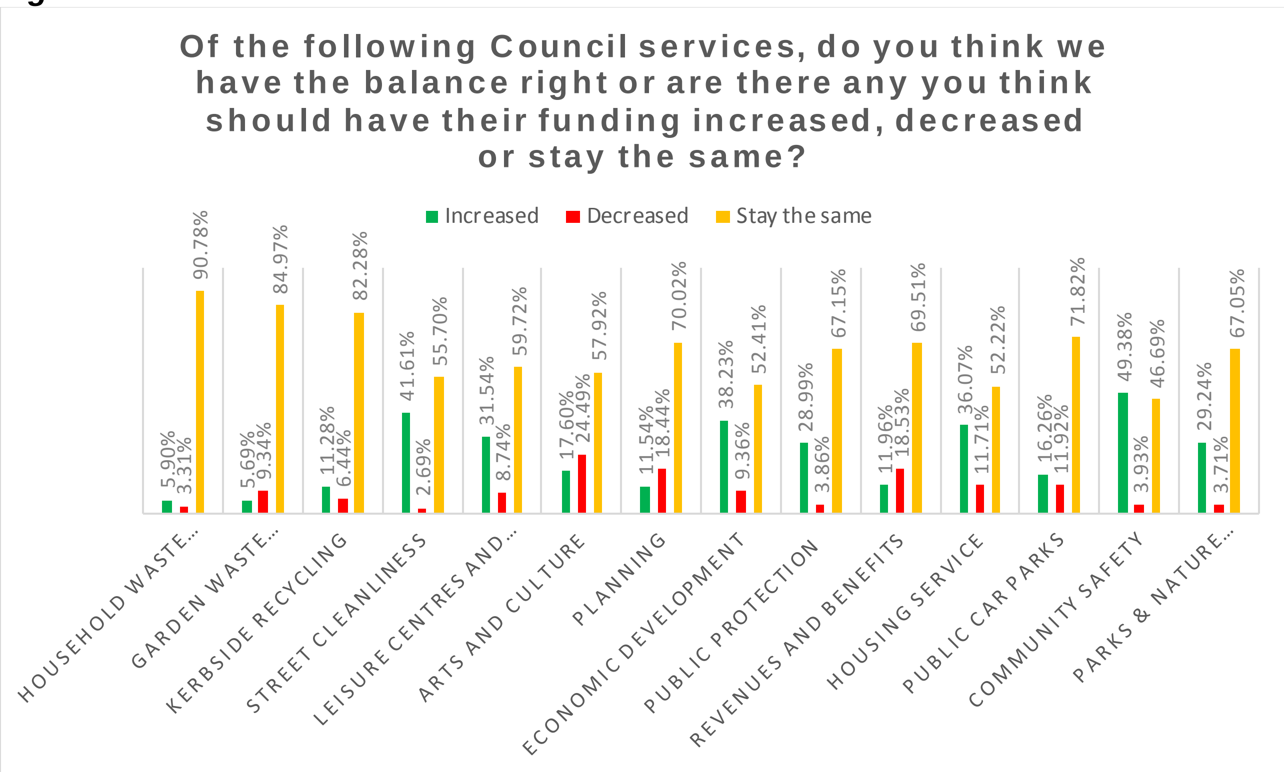
When asked about spending on services and whether the Council has the balance right or are there any services where funding should be increased, decreased or stay the same, Community Safety scored the highest again at 49% (previously 49%) in terms of respondents thinking their funding should be increased. This was followed by Street Cleanliness at 41% (previously 38%); Economic Development at 38% (down from 39%); Housing service *(housing options advice, homelessness, provision of affordable housing, tenancies)* at 36% (*down from 37%)*; Leisure Centres and Sports Development 32% (up from 24%); Parks and Nature Conservation 29% (up from 28%); and Public Protection (licensing, food hygiene inspections, nuisance complaints) at 29% (down from 30%).

Arts and Culture at 24% (was 24%); Revenues and Benefits *(housing benefit and council tax support payments)* at 18% (was 14%); Planning *(planning applications and planning policy)* at 18% (was 17%); Public Car Parks at 12% (was 12%); and Housing Service 12% (was 10%) 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 higher.

Household Waste Collection at 91% (previously 92%), Garden Waste Collection at 85% (was 86%) and Kerbside Recycling at 82% (was 85%) 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:



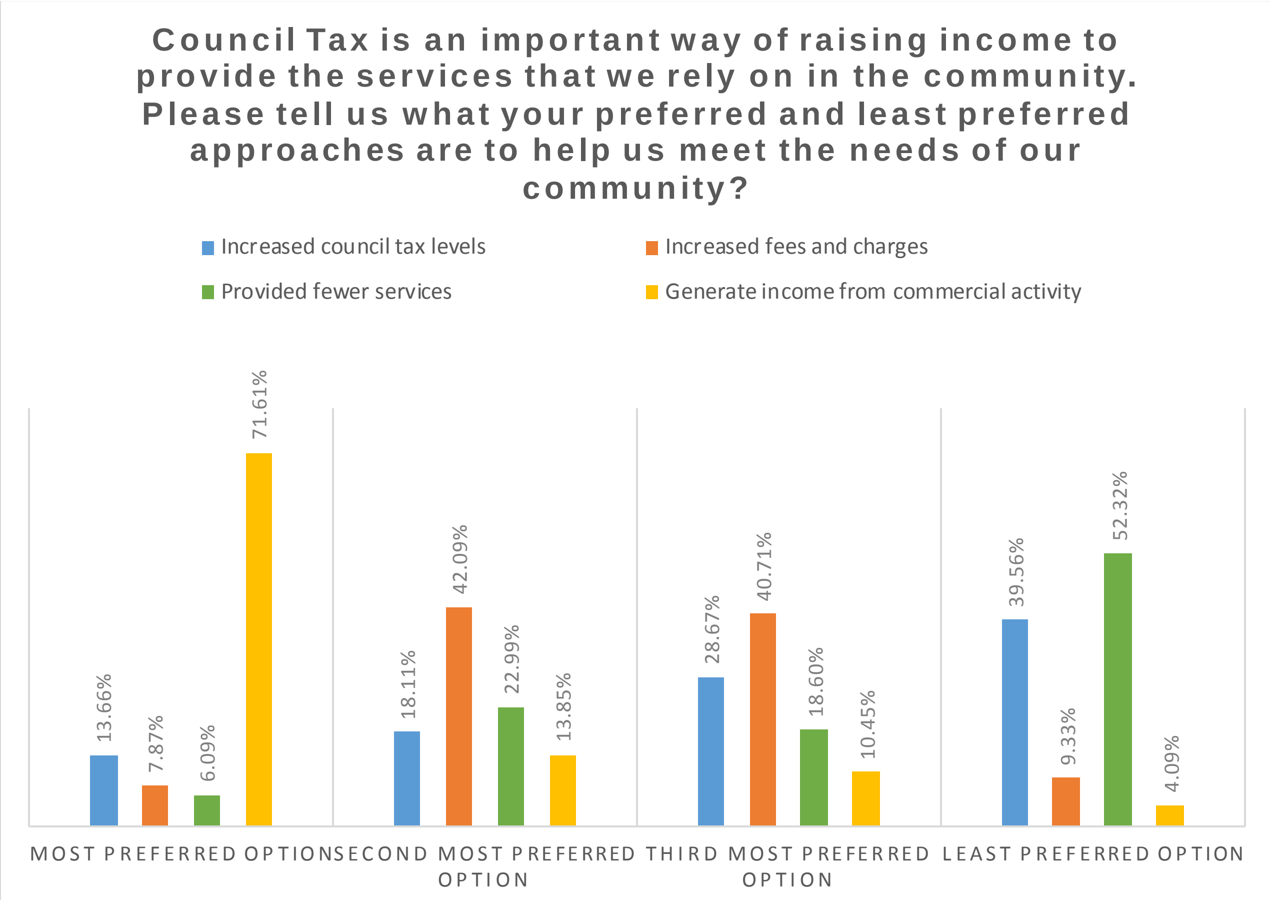
Balancing the Budget

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 72% (previously 71%) with the next most preferred option being “increased council tax levels at 14% (previously 15%) and “increased fees and charges” at 8% (previously 11%). The least preferred option for balancing the budget was to provide fewer services with 52% of respondents (previously 53%) followed by increasing council tax levels with 40% (previously 39%).

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 22% of responders agreed or strongly agreed with the statement (down from 27% previously), whilst 46% were neutral. Over 32% of responders disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement (was 27%). This is a slightly worsened position from the previous year's consultation.

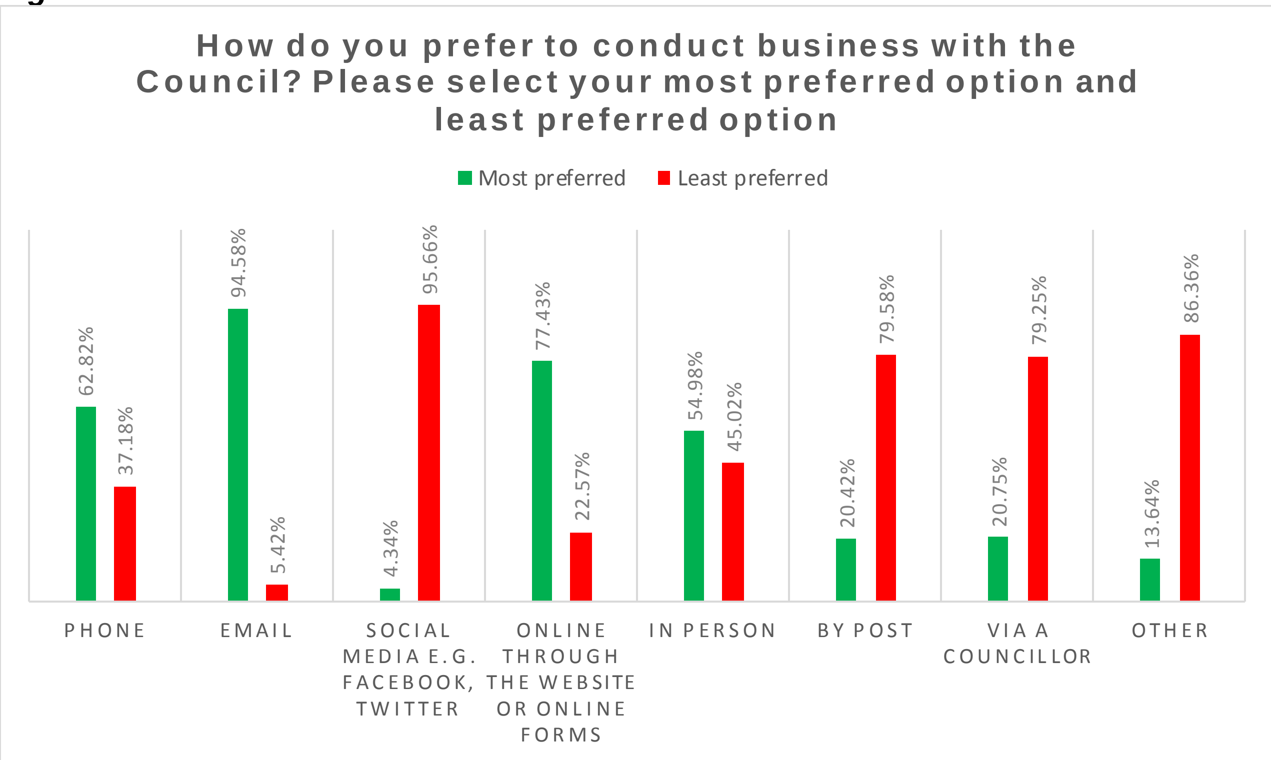
To obtain further information on how to shape services in future, local people were asked about how satisfied they are with the ways they can access Council services and how they prefer to contact the Council to do business. Over 51% of respondents were either very satisfied or satisfied with the way they can access Council services (previously 57%). Around 17% of respondents were either very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with the way in which they can access Council services (was 14%). However, 32% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (i.e. neutral) which is similar to previous years.

The large majority of responders at 75% only contacted the Council 'a few times a year" (down from 76%), with 14% of responders stating that they contact the Council on a weekly or daily basis (up from 10%).

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 (524 ‘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 (463 responses) followed by ‘phone’ (187) and ‘by post’ (152). 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 third time that such this question was included on the budget consultation.

Overall 26% of responders were either very satisfied or satisfied with the Council’s approach (slightly down from 29% previously), with a further 62% providing a neutral response (was 60%). The remaining 12% were either very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with the approach (previously 11%).

Budget Proposals 2024/25 – Feedback from Survey

The Council’s 2024/25 revenue and capital budget proposals are closely aligned to the recent feedback received from the budget consultation exercise.

The Council has developed a significant housing delivery plan, with a pipeline of new homes both through acquisitions and new build. There also continues to be a large investment in the existing housing stock covering compliance, meeting decent homes standards and decarbonisation.

In terms of economic development and regeneration, the Council is developing on a range of exciting projects funded by the Stapleford Towns Fund (£21m), Kimberley Levelling-Up (£16m) and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (£3m).

The successful ‘Greener Futures’ programme, reflects the Council’s ambition and delivery on climate change (e.g. electric vehicles, HVO fuel, decarbonisation plans, housing energy efficiency measures). Also, both the revenue and capital budget plans include investment in parks, open spaces, play areas and waste and recycling services.

Demographic Data

Gender	Number of Reponses	2023 %	2022 %
Male	677	49.4	44.7
Female	641	46.8	52.2
Another Way	6	0.4	0.4
Prefer not to say	46	3.7	2.7
Not stated – 23	1,370		

Age	Number of Reponses	2023 %	2022 %
Under 18	1	0.1	-
18 – 24	4	0.3	0.6
25 – 29	26	1.9	1.9
30 – 44	202	14.8	15.5
45 – 59	360	26.3	26.9
60 – 64	169	12.4	13.7
65 – 74	380	27.8	41.4
Over 75	225	16.5	n/a
Not stated – 26	1,367		

Ethnicity	Number of Reponses	2023 %	2022 %
White – British	1,219	90.1	91.2
White – Irish	10	0.7	0.8
White – Other	55	4.1	3.1
Asian or Asian British - Indian	16	1.2	0.9
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	3	0.2	0.2
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	-	-	-
Asian or Asian British – Other Background	6	0.4	0.2
British or Black British - Caribbean	5	0.4	0.3
British or Black British - African	3	0.2	0.2
British or Black British - Other Background	1	0.1	-
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	5	0.4	0.2
Mixed - White and Black African	-	-	0.1
Mixed - White and Asian	4	0.3	0.3
Mixed - Other Background	1	0.1	0.3
Chinese	5	0.4	0.7
Any Other Ethnic Group	20	1.5	1.4
Not stated – 40	1,353		

Do you consider yourself as disabled or have any long-term health problems that limit daily activity?	Number of Reponses	2023 %	2022 %
Yes	332	24.4	23.5
No	1,029	75.6	76.5
Not stated – 32	1,361		

Which of the following areas do you live in?	Number of Reponses	2023 %	2022 %
Attenborough	34	2.5	2.9
Awsworth	17	1.2	1.3
Beeston	317	23.0	23.8
Bramcote	107	7.8	9.4
Brinsley	25	1.8	2.0
Chilwell	177	12.9	14.3
Cossall	7	0.5	0.2
Eastwood	107	7.8	8.9
Greasley	47	3.4	3.1
Kimberley	98	7.1	6.5
Newthorpe	51	3.7	3.3
Nuthall	84	6.1	5.8
Stapleford	174	12.7	12.5
Strelley	1	0.1	0.3
Toton	64	4.7	4.3
Trowell	42	3.1	1.7
Watnall	24	1.7	n/a
Not stated – 17	1,376		