Report of the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Personnel Policy

Budget Consultation 2025/26

1. Purpose of Report

To report the results of the recent 2025/26 budget consultation exercise. This is in accordance with all of the Council's Corporate Plan Priorities.

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 2025/26.

3. Detail

As with earlier budget consultation exercises, a web-based survey publicised through social media has been used to consult on the 2025/26 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 1,290 responses were received on the extended survey. Although the response was slightly lower than the 1,393 received in 2023, it is still above the 1,210 received in 2022 and 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. Updates from Scrutiny

Not applicable.

6. 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 5 March 2025.

7. 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.

8. Human Resources Implications

There were no comments from the Human Resources Manager.

9. Union Comments

Not applicable.

10. 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.

11. Data Protection Compliance Implications

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

12. Equality Impact Assessment

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

13. Background Papers

Nil.

Appendix

Summary of Responses

The analysis of ethnicity indicates a bias towards White British respondents (87%). A further 5% of respondents indicated they considered themselves to be White Irish or White Other (similar to previous years). Around 8% (98 responses) were received from people who identified as being Asian or Chinese or Black or Mixed race and any other ethnic group categories (increased from 69 responses, 5% 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 48% female and others being another way or prefer not to say. Around 84% of respondents identified as being over 45 years old with 23% being between 45 and 59 years, 14% between 60 and 64 years, 31% being between 65 and 74 years and 16% over 75. The number of younger respondents was lower than previously with 16% of responders being under 45 compared to 17% 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 (25%), with residents in Chilwell accounting for 12% of respondents and Stapleford at 13%. Other areas included Bramcote (10%), Eastwood (7%), Kimberley (5%), Nuthall (5%) and Toton (5%). The splits across each area were broadly similar to previous years and there was at least one respondent from every area. Further consideration needs to be given as to how take up of the survey can be improved in Stapleford and in the north of Broxtowe.

A total of 1,241 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 69% of people (871 respondents) were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the area in which they live which is slightly less than the 71% positive response in the previous year. Over 55% are either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the way that the Council delivers services (706 respondents), which again is less than 58% in the previous year. This level of satisfaction is very similar to the national picture.

A further 29% had a neutral stance. However, 3% of people are 'very dissatisfied' with the way that the Council delivers services which is slightly improved on last year's consultation.

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?

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Responses	275	604	1,204	1,377	1,284
Satisfied or very satisfied	63.6%	64.7%	65.2%	58.2%	55.0%
Neutral	28.4%	25.0%	25.2%	26.5%	29.0%
Dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	8.0%	10.3%	9.6%	15.3%	16.0%

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

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Responses	275	602	1,189	1,379	1,268
Satisfied or very satisfied	72.7%	76.3%	76.0%	71.1%	68.7%
Neutral	10.9%	13.3%	14.1%	15.8%	15.0%
Dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	16.4%	10.4%	9.9%	13.1%	16.3%

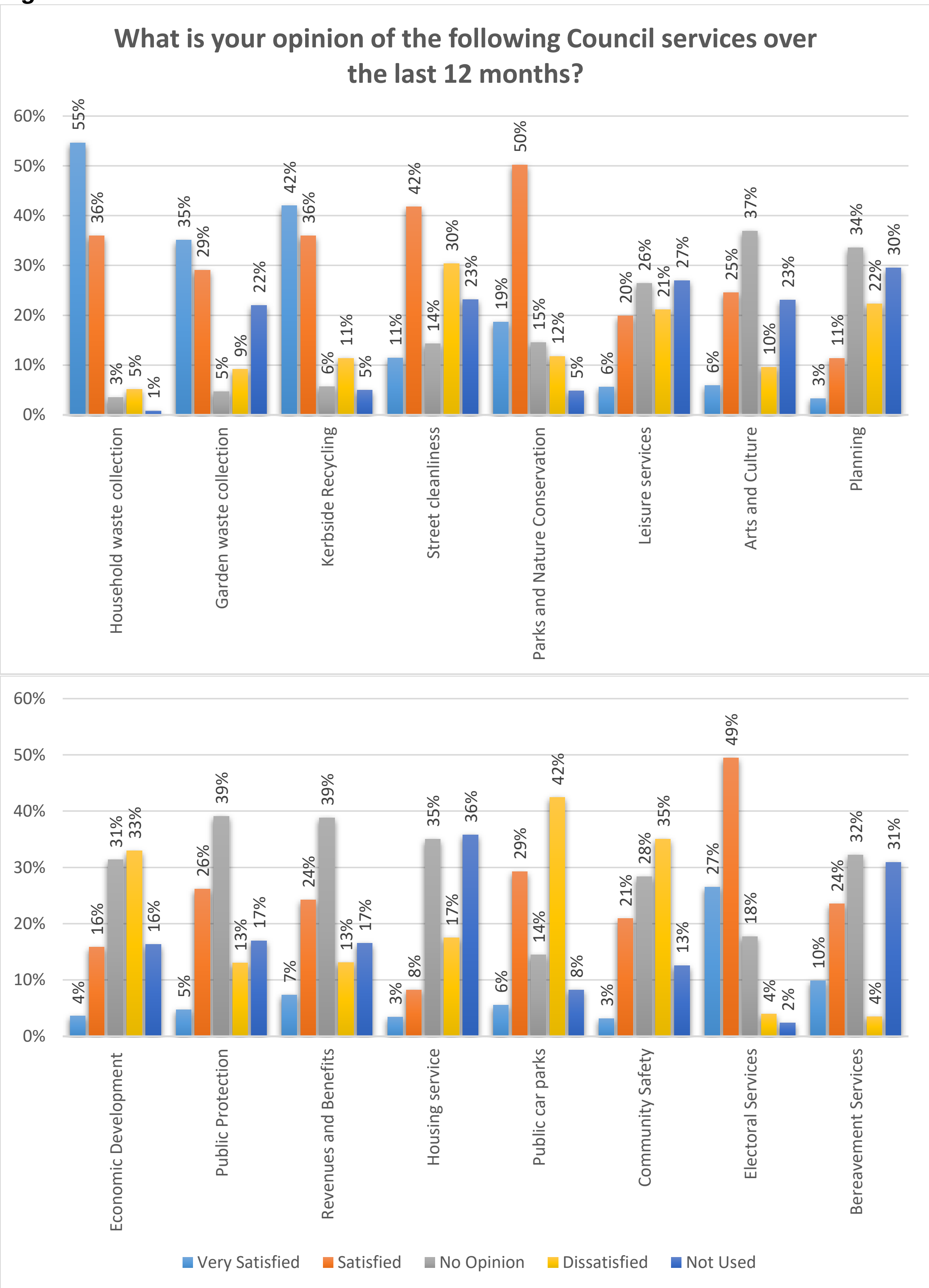
By way of national comparison, the LGA's local government customer satisfaction survey in October 2024 gave a score of 56% of people being very or fairly satisfied with the service their council gives, and 74% of people being very or fairly satisfied with their area as a place to live in.

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 91% (down from 92%); Kerbside Recycling *(green lidded bin, glass bag or red lidded glass bin, textiles)* with 78% (no change); Electoral Services with 76% (up from 71%); Parks and Nature Conservation with 69% (down from 76%); and Garden Waste Collection *(brown lidded bin)* with 54% (down from 65%) of responders being satisfied or very satisfied.

By way of national comparison, the LGA's local government customer satisfaction survey in October 2024 gave a score of 76% very or fairly satisfied with waste collection; 74% satisfied with parks and open spaces; 57% satisfied with street cleansing and 50% satisfied with sport and leisure.

The services with the highest levels of dissatisfied responses were Public Car Parks at 42% (worsened from 24%); Community Safety *(anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse, alcohol awareness)* with 35% (worsened from 31%); Economic Development *(support to businesses, regeneration, Town Centre Management, business growth)* at 33% (worsened from 23%); Street Cleanliness *(litter collection, graffiti removal, fly tipping, neighbourhood wardens)* with 30% (worsened from 28%); Planning *(planning applications and planning policy)* with 22% of responders (worsened from 20%); and Leisure Services *(leisure centres, sports development)* with 21% of responders (worsened from 18%). These rankings are similar to those seen in previous years.

Figure 1:


What is your opinion of the following Council services over the last 12 months?
Household waste collection
Garden waste collection
Kerbside Recycling
Street cleanliness
Parks and Nature Conservation
Leisure services
Arts and Culture
Planning
Economic Development
Public Protection
Revenues and Benefits
Housing service
Public car parks
Community Safety
Electoral Services
Bereavement Services
Very Satisfied
Satisfied
No Opinion
Dissatisfied
Not Used

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 53% (previously 49%) in terms of respondents thinking their funding should be increased. This was followed by Economic Development at 46% (up from 38%); Street Cleanliness at 42% (previously 41%); Housing Service *(housing options advice, homelessness, provision of affordable housing, tenancies)* at 34% (*down from 36%)*; Public Protection (licensing, food hygiene inspections, nuisance complaints) at 32% (up from 29%); Leisure Centres and Sports Development 32% (no change); and Parks and Nature Conservation 27% (down from 29%).

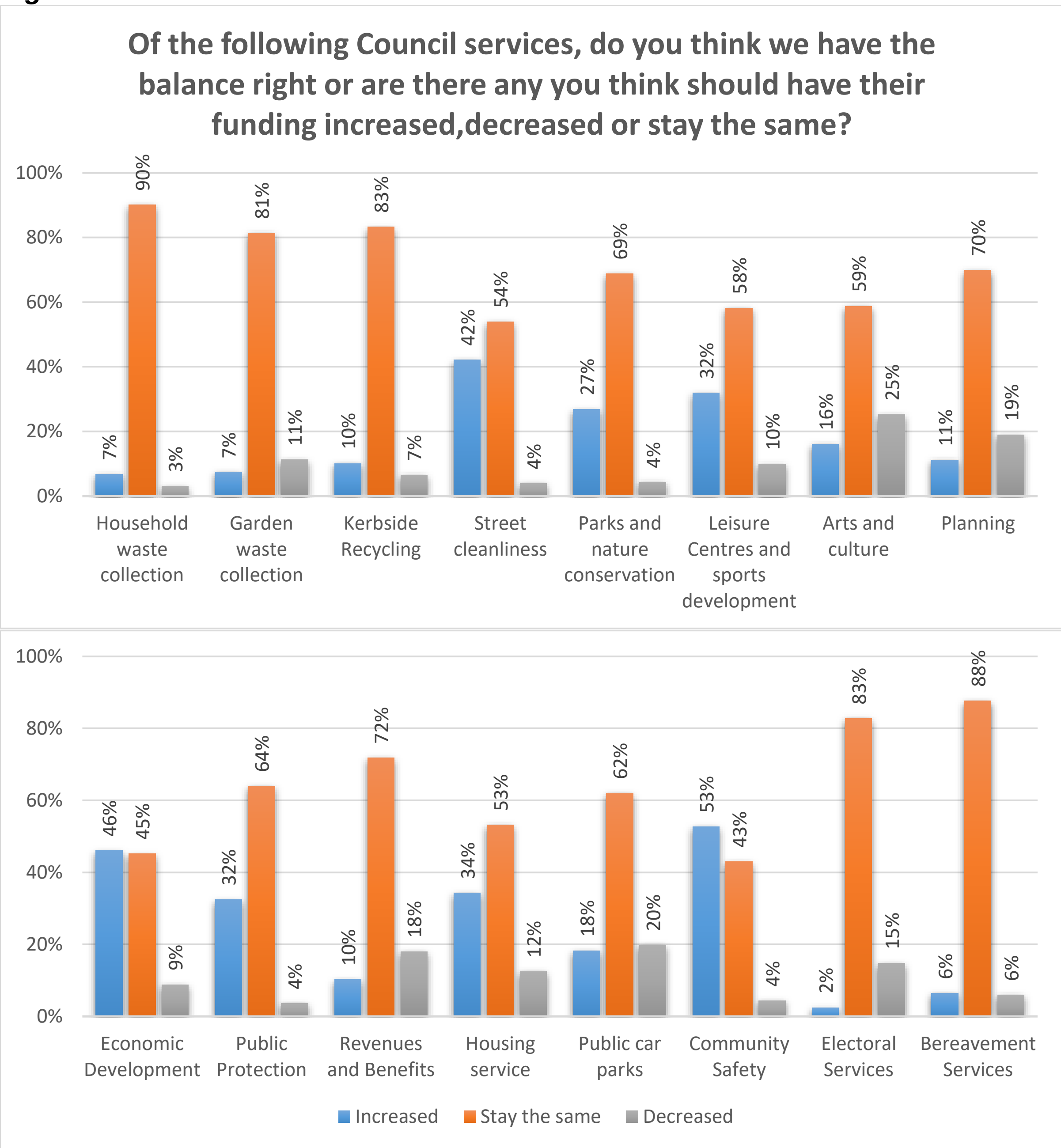
Arts and Culture at 25% (was 24%); Public Car Parks at 20% (was 12%); Planning *(planning applications and planning policy)* at 19% (was 18%); Revenues and Benefits *(housing benefit and council tax support payments)* at 18% (was 18%); Electoral Services (elections, voting) at 15% (no previously listed) and Housing Service 13% (was 12%) scored the highest in terms of respondents thinking their funding should be decreased.

These are similarly ranked to previous responses although the scores were generally higher.

Household Waste Collection at 90% (previously 91%), Kerbside Recycling at 83% (was 82%) and Garden Waste Collection at 81% (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:

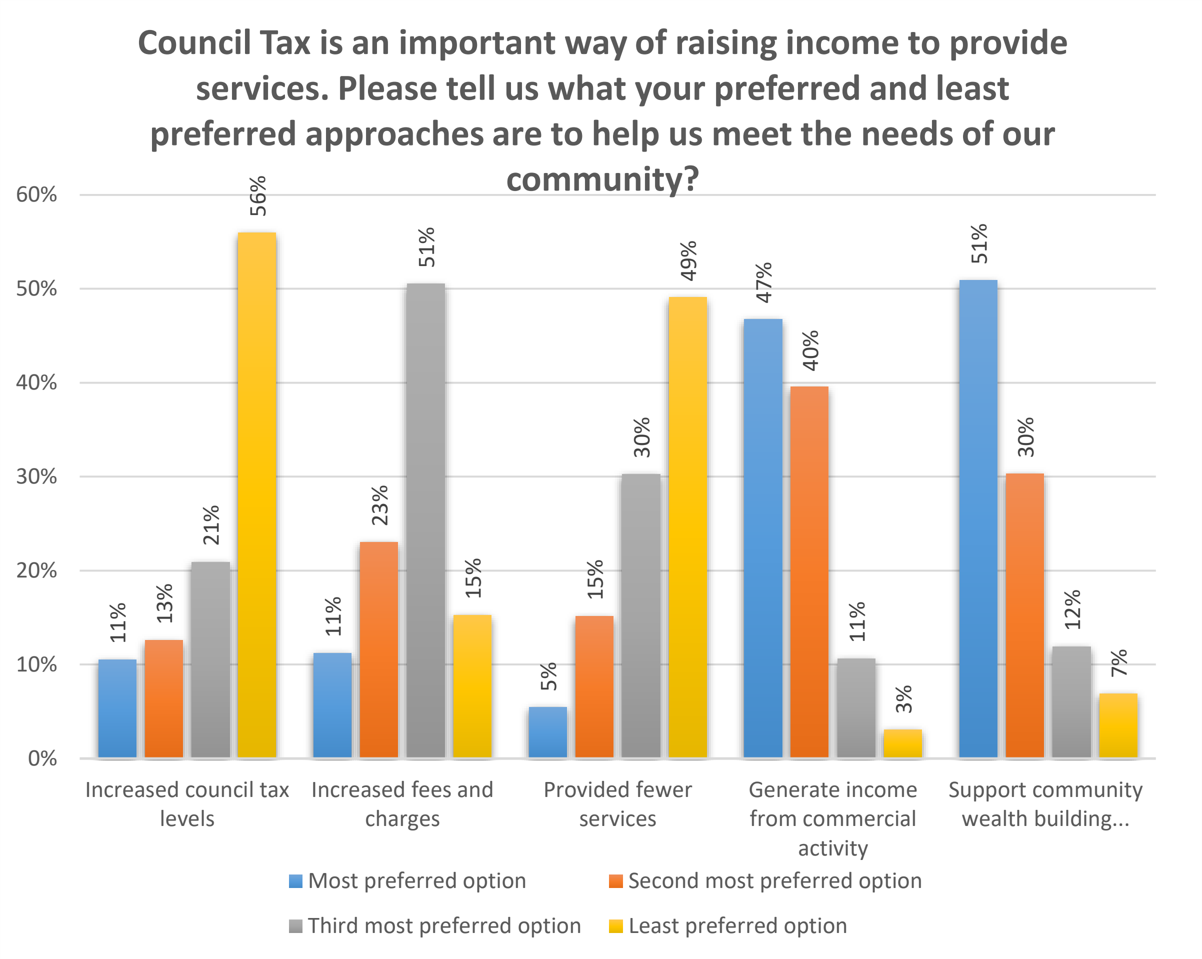


Balancing the Budget

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 a new option to "support community wealth building approach to economic development, which redirects wealth back into the local economy and places control and benefits into the hands of local people" at 51%. The next most preferred option was to "generate income from commercial activity" at 47% (previously 72%), followed by "increased fees and charges" at 11% (previously 8%) and "increased council tax levels at 10% (previously 14%). The least preferred option for balancing the budget was increasing council tax levels with 56% (previously 40%) followed by to provide fewer services with 49% of respondents (previously 52%). 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 24% of responders agreed or strongly agreed with the statement (up from 22% previously), whilst 42% were neutral. Almost 34% of responders disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement (was 32%). This is a slightly improved position from the previous consultation.

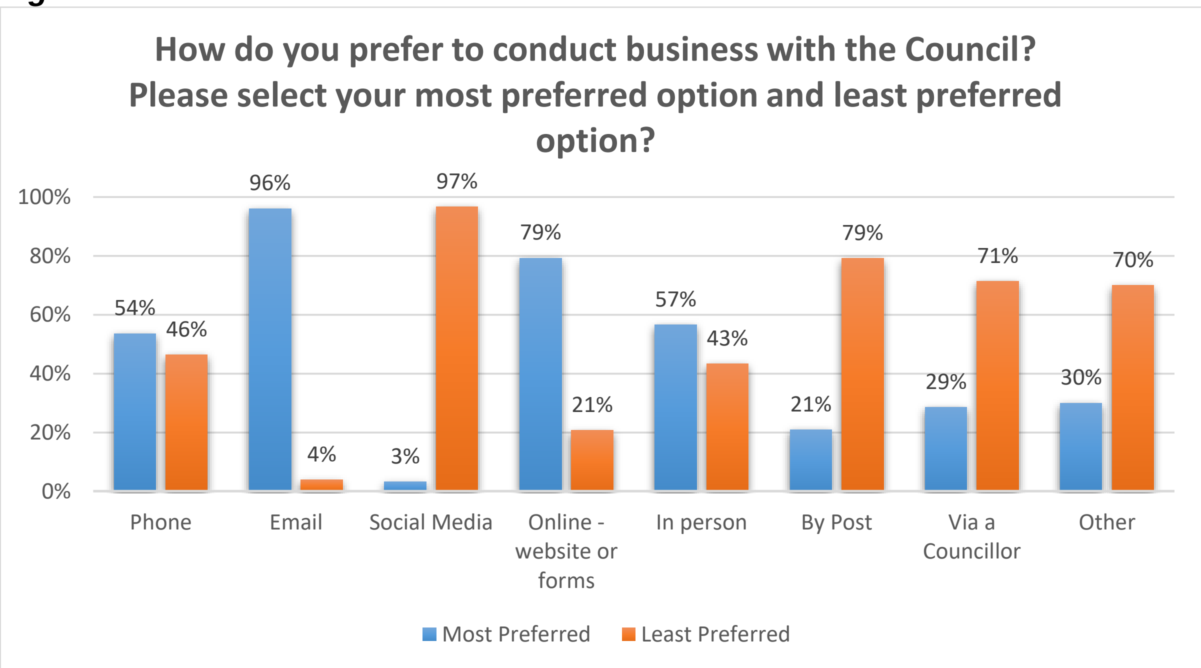
To obtain further information on how to shape services in future, local people were asked about how satisfied they are with the ways they can access Council services and how they prefer to contact the Council to do business. Over 51% of respondents were either very satisfied or satisfied with the way they can access Council services (previously 51%). Around 16% of respondents were either very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with the way in which they can access Council services (was 17%). However, 32% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (i.e. neutral) which is similar to previous years.

The large majority of responders at 78% only contacted the Council 'a few times a year" (up from 75%), with 20% of responders stating that they contact the Council on a weekly or daily basis (up 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 (548 'positive' responses being 96%) 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 (415 responses) followed by 'phone' (199) and 'by post' (140). Further details are set out in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4:



Digital Strategy

The Council is reviewing its Digital Strategy as it looks to continually develop and enhance its services to the community The questionnaire asked “Do you believe the Council provides an appropriate level of digital accessibility?” Overall 48% of responders stated ‘yes’ with 27% saying ‘no’. The remaining were listed as ‘others’ and provided comments which have been taken on board by management.

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 33% of responders were either very satisfied or satisfied with the Council’s approach (up from 26% previously), with a further 55% providing a neutral response (was 62%). The remaining 12% were either very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with the approach (previously 12%).

Implications and potential responses to the survey for budget setting

1. Apart from surveillance cameras, which is a significant funding commitment and where the Council has maintained and improved provision over recent years, the budget for community safety is modest and reliant on external sources of funding which have to be bid for from agencies whose funding is being scaled back in future years by government. Even a relatively modest increase (say £10,000) in the revenue budget for community safety could make a difference in the Council being able to fund small initiatives which could enable work with voluntary groups for example with young people to address anti-social behaviour or diversionary activity. This may be worth consideration by Members.

2. In response to public demand for more investment in street cleansing, the Council is entering into a contact with a supplier which will result in more capacity to address enforcement activity targeted at littering and fly tipping. Any proceeds from this activity will be reinvested back into street cleansing services.

3. In response to public demand for more investment in economic development, work will continue to fully implement investment projects in Stapleford and Kimberley for which funding is already obtained. This represents significant additional investment and will be visible in these areas. The Council will continue to work with the East Midlands Combined Counties Authority (EMCCA) to try to attract funding for places such as Eastwood, and a share of any future UKSPF funding for our communities.

4. In response to public demand for more investment in Housing, the Council intends to continue to commit within its capital programme to the most substantial investment in new housing and buy back of former council homes

and other sites for redevelopment than it has ever done. The Council will continue to bid for external resources for new housing through EMCCA and Homes England.

5. On health and leisure, the completion of a new community leisure facility for Stapleford at Hickings Lane will be a substantial and additional investment in leisure in that area. The Council will continue to attempt to find sufficient funding to develop a new leisure centre at Bramcote and already has a significant sum within its capital programme committed to continue feasibility work.

6. The Council intends to keep under review the quality of charges for and the cost of provision of car parking. It continues to have ongoing discussions with local businesses in town centres about schemes to support the attraction of shoppers into the Borough's towns. There are no plans to further propose any increases to charging and free charge periods have been extended during the current financial year, and could be in next year as well.

Demographic Data

Gender	Number of Reponses	2024 %	2023 %
Male	620	48.9	49.4
Female	604	47.6	46.8
Another Way	9	0.7	0.4
Prefer not to say	36	2.8	3.7
Not stated – 21	1,269		

Age	Number of Reponses	2024 %	2023 %
Under 18	2	0.2	0.1
18 – 24	11	0.9	0.3
25 – 29	17	1.3	1.9
30 – 44	176	13.9	14.8
45 – 59	293	23.1	26.3
60 – 64	172	13.6	12.4
65 – 74	391	30.9	27.8
Over 75	204	16.1	16.5
Not stated – 24	1,266		

Ethnicity	Number of Reponses	2024 %	2023 %
White – British	1,090	87.0	90.1
White – Irish	17	1.4	0.7
White – Other	48	3.8	4.1
Asian or Asian British – Indian	14	1.1	1.2
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	10	0.8	0.2
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	2	0.2	-
Asian or Asian British – Other background	10	0.8	0.4
British or Black British – Caribbean	8	0.6	0.4
British or Black British – African	9	0.7	0.2
British or Black British – Other background	1	0.1	0.1
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	4	0.3	0.4
Mixed - White and Black African	-	-	-
Mixed - White and Asian	6	0.5	0.3
Mixed - Other background	7	0.6	0.1
Chinese	8	0.6	0.4
Any other ethnic group	19	1.5	1.5
Not stated – 37	1,253		

Do you consider yourself as disabled or have any long-term health problems that limit daily activity?	Number of Reponses	2024 %	2023 %
Yes	310	24.5	24.4
No	954	75.5	75.6
Not stated – 26	1,264		

Which of the following areas do you live in?	Number of Reponses	2024 %	2023 %
Attenborough	36	2.9	2.5
Awsworth	14	1.1	1.2
Beeston	312	24.7	23.0
Bramcote	132	10.4	7.8
Brinsley	21	1.7	1.8
Chilwell	156	12.3	12.9
Cossall	3	0.2	0.5
Eastwood	94	7.4	7.8
Greasley	38	3.0	3.4
Kimberley	64	5.1	7.1
Newthorpe	35	2.8	3.7
Nuthall	67	5.3	6.1
Stapleford	163	12.9	12.7
Strelley	12	1.0	0.1
Toton	63	5.0	4.7
Trowell	31	2.5	3.1
Watnall	24	1.9	1.7
Not stated – 25	1,265		