

Budget Consultation Briefing – February 2023

1. Introduction

This briefing gives a full overview of the extensive public consultation and engagement activity undertaken to inform the budget process for 2023/24.

During October – December 2022, our consultation and engagement activity combined both the budget and Corporate Plan for 2022-27 as there are many synergies between our corporate outcomes and priorities and where we focus our resources. Activity included in person focus groups, online meetings and social media engagement with all of our communities on these important priorities.

While the Corporate Plan element of the survey closed on 28 November 2022 to allow us to report to Council in December 2022, the budget questions remained fully open until 29 January 2023. This has allowed us to continue gathering responses and increase engagement.

We will continue to engage with our communities and people on an iterative basis and working in partnership on priorities and issues that affect and matter to them. We will also continue to raise awareness of the Perth & Kinross Offer and how this is changing how we work with our communities.

2. Budget Consultation responses

Like all local authorities, Perth & Kinross Council is preparing for very significant financial challenges ahead as well as some difficult budget decisions. Between 18 October 2022 and 29 January 2023, we carried out a consultation exercise to gauge residents' views on budget issues and priorities.

Although the Corporate Plan element of the survey closed on 28 November 2022 to allow us to report to Council in December 2022, the budget questions remained open on our Perth & Kinross Council consultation Hub until 29 January 2023 to allow us to continue gathering feedback in this area.

Content remained broadly similar to the previous year with a few improvements made following suggestions from respondents and as a result of engagement with Elected Members. As in previous years, introductory information was presented to improve our residents understanding of the challenges we currently face, where the Council gets its money from and restrictions on the areas where we can make savings.

Respondents were asked for feedback around what issues concern them personally, preference for Council Tax setting for 2023/24, opinions regarding possibilities on how we deliver services, priorities for investment for our capital budget and feedback on how we work with our communities.

A social media campaign was launched across Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn with the aim to engage and inform the public and promote the consultation. Six in-person engagement sessions were also held throughout Perth & Kinross as well as 2 online sessions. In addition, the consultation was promoted to media outlets and promoted in the footer of every subscription email issued by the Council during the consultation period.

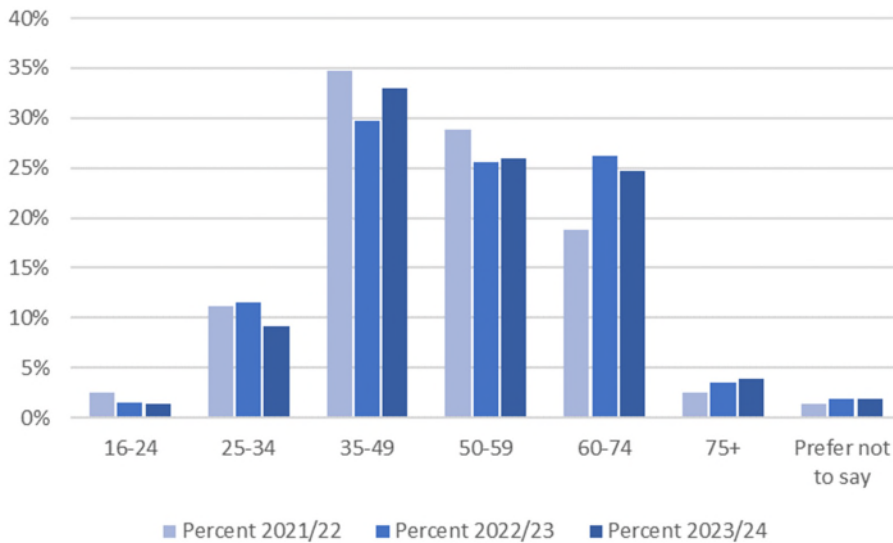
Overall, there were **1092** responses submitted to the on-line survey as a whole and **1084** of these visited the budget sections of the survey, a considerable increase on the previous 2 years (**739** in 2022/23, **642** in 2021/22, **484** in 2020/21). This report will provide details on the 1084 responses to the budget sections of the survey.

As with an opt-in exercise of this type, results cannot be considered fully representative of all PKC residents but are indicative and influenced by the demographic of participants. **95% of respondents live in Perth and Kinross** (99% in 2022-23; 95% in 2021-22), and 31% of respondents study or work locally (19% in 2022-23; 36% in 2021-22).

25% of responses stated that they are current employees of Perth & Kinross Council (17% in 2022-23), 4% said they had been employed by the Council in the last 3 years (2% in 2022-23). As in 2022-23, 2% said they would rather not submit this information.

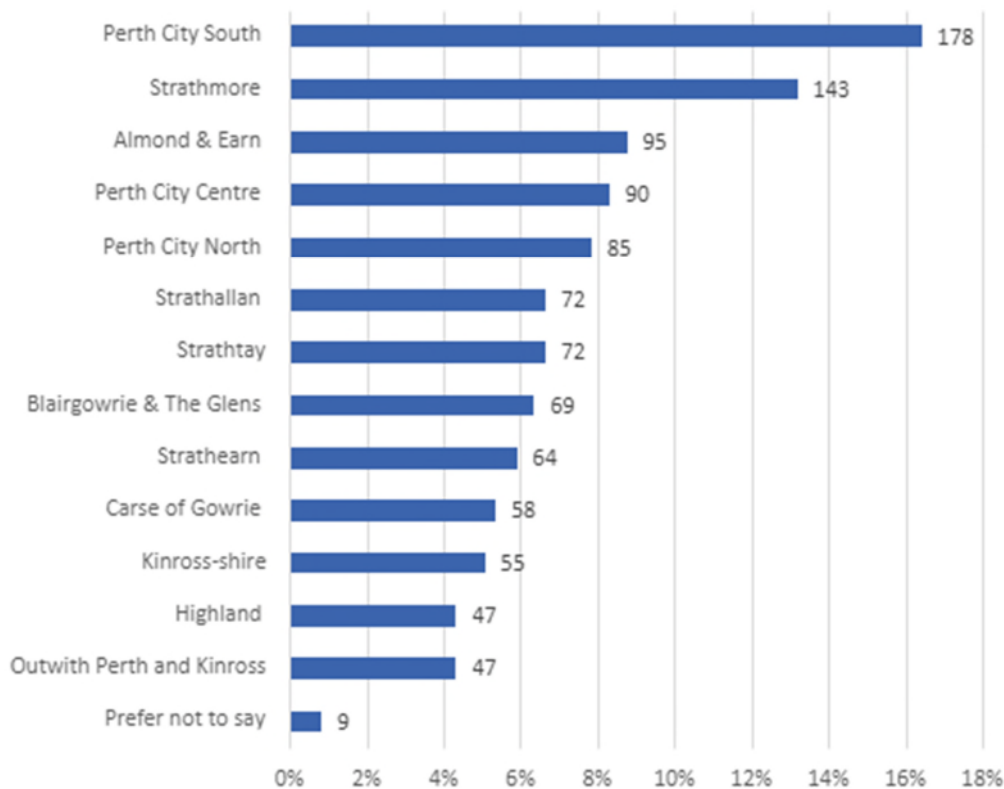
Encouragingly the age distribution of respondents is more balanced when compared to all-inclusive consultations such as this (see Figure 1). The profile of respondents is broadly similar to 2022-23 although a slight decrease (-2%) in responses from those aged under 35 years and a 3% increase from those aged 35-49 years are of note.

Figure 1: Breakdown of respondents by age



Respondents were asked to provide their Electoral Ward (done by describing common settlements within these). As shown in Figure 2, most responses were received from Perth City South and Strathmore wards, but all areas of Perth and Kinross are represented within the responses. Some care will be required with any geographic breakdown of results due to the small numbers from some wards, **however this can be made available if required.**

Figure 2: Breakdown of respondents by Ward

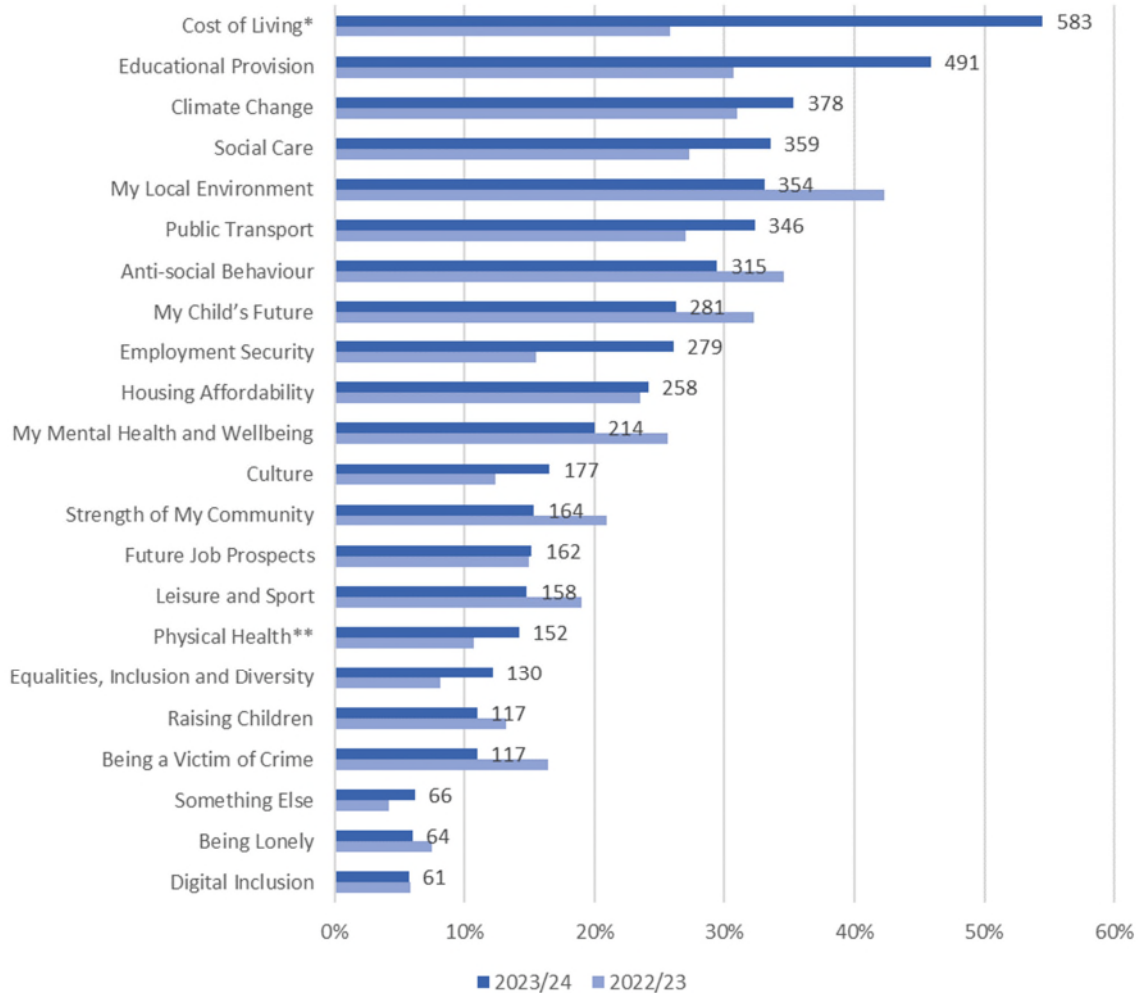


Results

2.1 *Setting the Council Budget – Issues of Most Importance for Individuals*

This question asked respondents to select the 5 most important issues facing individual respondents personally. These issues did not need to be ranked in order of importance. This question was asked in the previous 2 year's budget consultations. It should be noted that "Cost-of-Living" has been introduced as an issue this year to replace "Paying Bills" listed in 2022/23 as this is the term commonly used in the media. The issue "Physical Health in relation to Covid" has now been removed to reflect the progress made in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Figure 3. Percentage of respondents indicating an issue as of most importance personally (1068 responses)

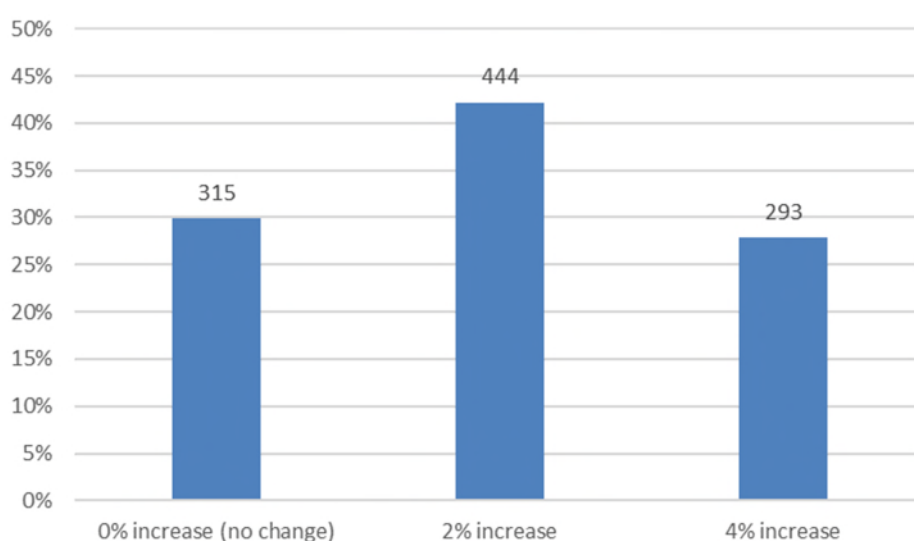


Cost of Living (most selected issue) and **Educational Provision** are the most commonly selected issues this year by some considerable margin. **Climate Change** and **Social Care** have consistently been popular issues and remain for 2023/24. These 4 issues now surpass **My Local Environment** which has been the top issue in the previous 2 years. Public Transport remains a top priority. Local **Anti-social behaviour** and **My Child's Future** were the second and third most selected issues last year but rank at seventh and eighth this year. **Employment Security** has emerged as a more common priority this year. **Housing Affordability** and **My Mental Health and Wellbeing** remain a concern for a considerable proportion of respondents. Amongst other issues, a notable increased proportion of respondents selected **Culture**, **Physical Health** and **Equality Inclusion and Diversity** compared to last year.

2.2 Change in Council Tax

Respondents were asked what **percentage change in Council Tax** was preferable (options of no change and 2% or 4%) – the survey highlighted that a 2% change in Band D Council Tax is equivalent to around 7p per day per household and a 4% change is around 15p per day per household. Respondents were unable to state a preference to reduce Council Tax.

Figure 4: Breakdown of preference on change in Council Tax (1052 respondents)



Overall, 70% of respondents opted for an increase in Council Tax of some kind rather than no change. Most respondents who would prefer an increase, opted for a 2% increase (42%). In the 2022/23 Budget Consultation, 56% opted for an increase of some kind.

2.3 Changes in how services are delivered

In a new approach this year, respondents were asked which services the Council should consider reducing standards of delivery, reduce or stop delivery, introduce or increase charging, maintain current standards/investments and maintain current standards/investments. It should be noted that the list of services presented under each of the following statements is restricted to those services for which this is a realistic possibility.

As would be expected, those services for which most respondents specified for a reduction in standard or frequency (Figure 5) were mirrored by those selected for reduction or even stop delivering (Figure 6). These were **Council-run events, How you access the Council, Adult learning, Repair and maintenance of Council-owned buildings** and **Cultural activity**. In turn, these were the least popular areas for service maintenance (Figure 7) or improvement (Figure 8).

Council-run events were by far the most popular choice for service reduction and selected by more than 70% of respondents. Almost 70% of respondents think we should charge for the events (Figure 9). Those wards in closer proximity to Perth generally were more supportive of events, remoter areas less favourable. The younger age groups, those who are probably more likely to be parents of younger children, are more supportive of events than the older age groups.

Figure 5. The Council reduces standard of service delivery, including frequency or time taken to carry it out

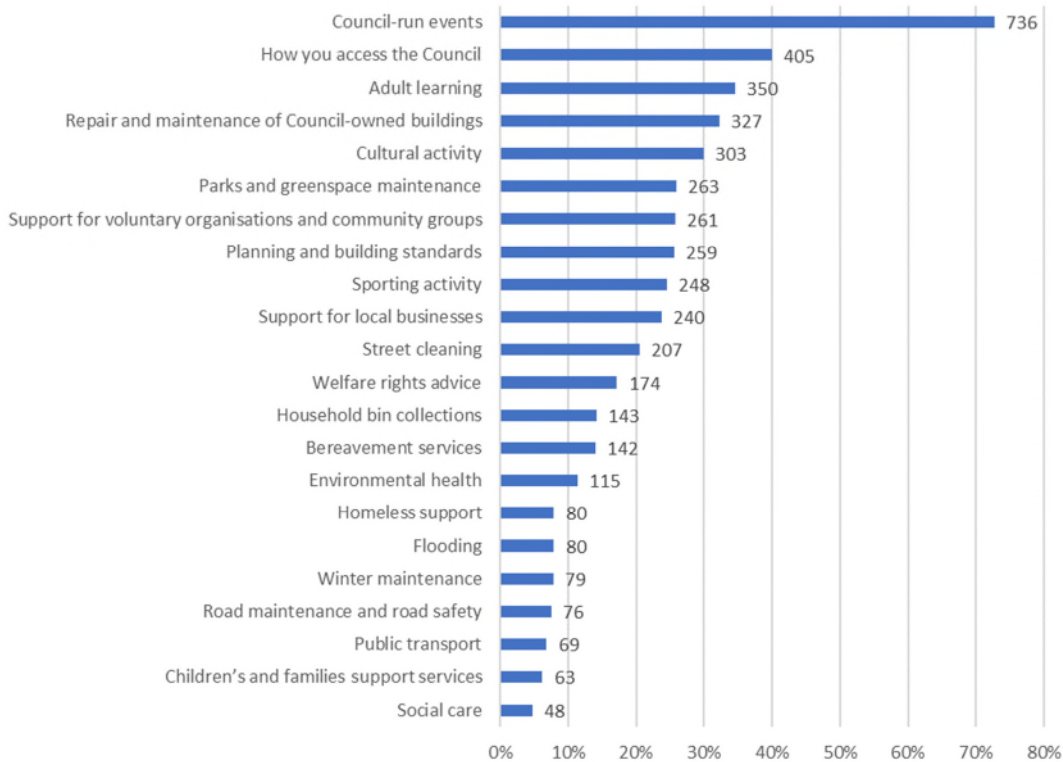
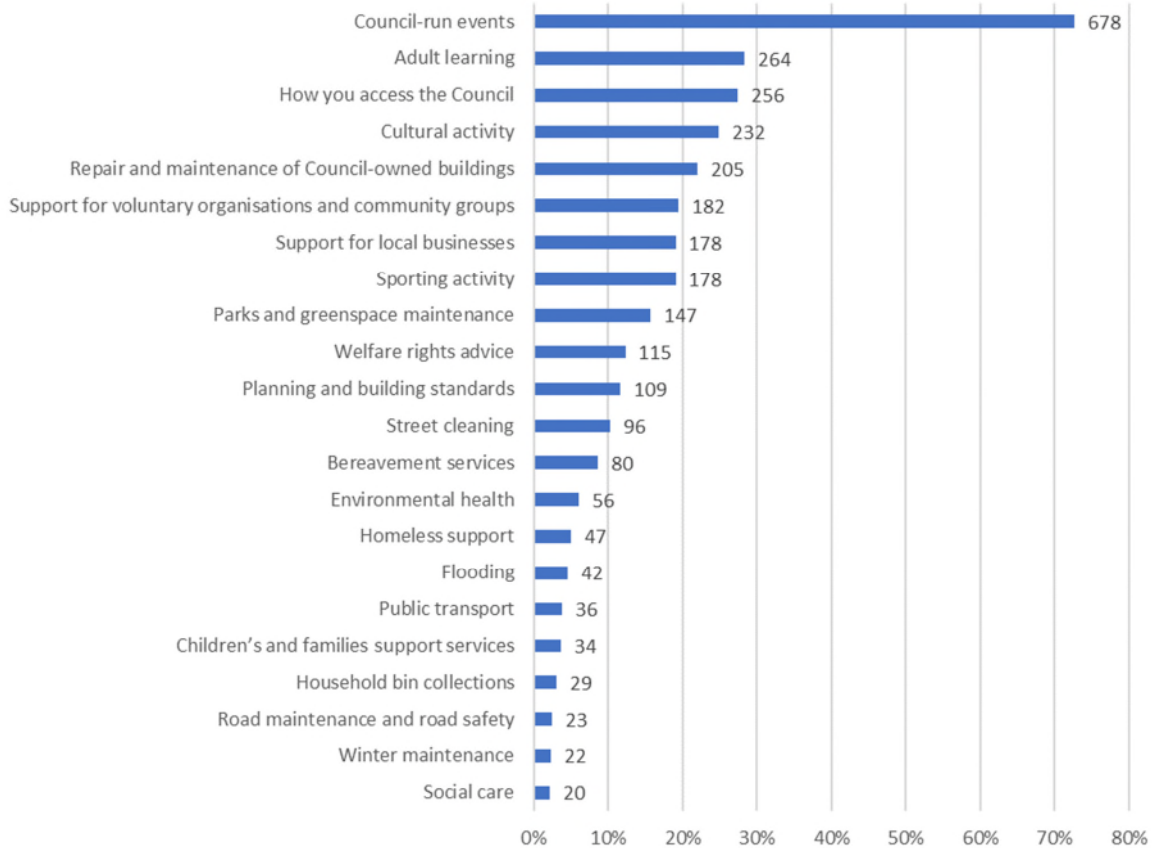


Figure 6. The Council reduces or even stops delivering this service to protect other services



Household bin collections, Winter maintenance and Road maintenance and Road safety were the most frequently selected areas for service maintenance, all being selected by more than 60% of respondents (Figure 7). **Children's and Families support services, Social care, Public transport and Flooding** were also popular choices for service maintenance and selected by over half of respondents.

The most favoured areas for improvement in service standards/investment broadly reflected those selected for maintenance (Figure 8) except for **Household Bin Collection** which was less favoured. People-focused services of **Social Care and Children's Family and Support** were most popular and selected by over 40% of respondents, more than **Public Transport, Roads and Winter maintenance and Flooding**.

Figure 7. The Council maintains current standards/ investment for this service

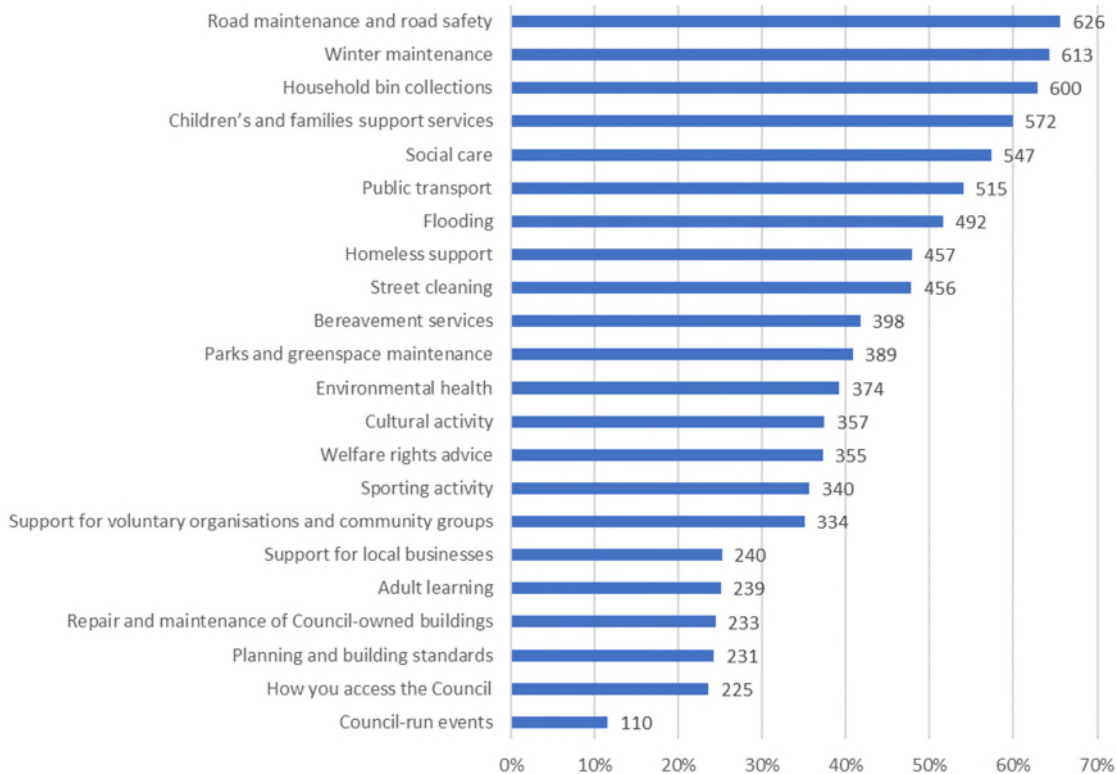
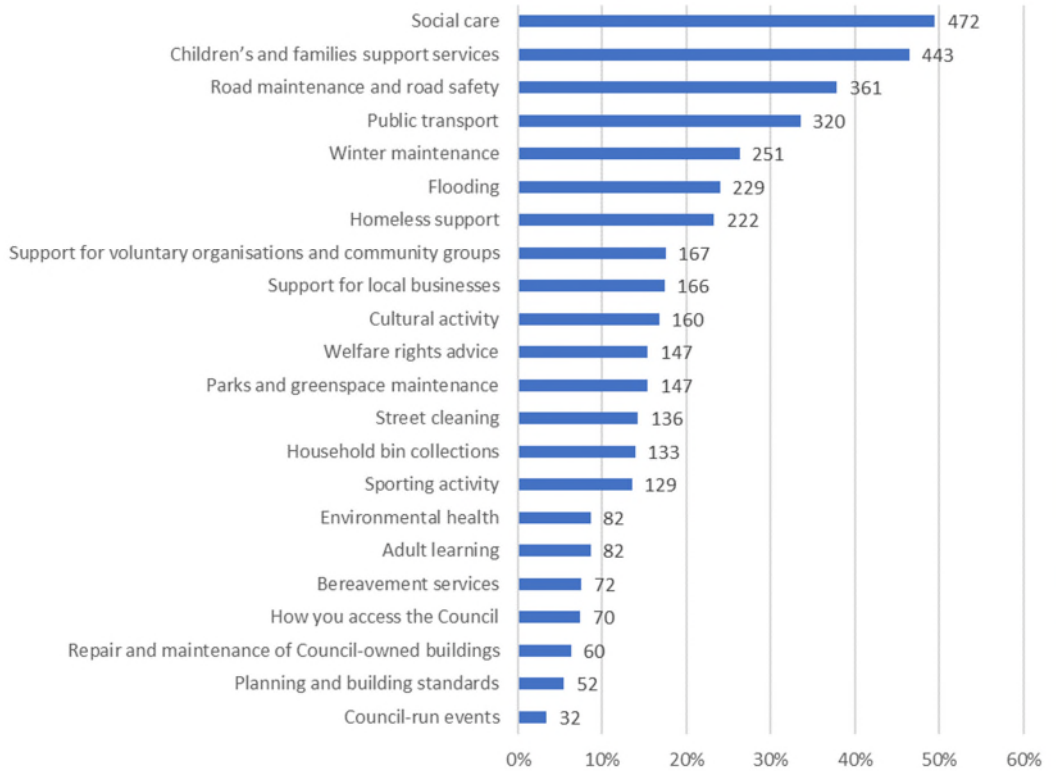
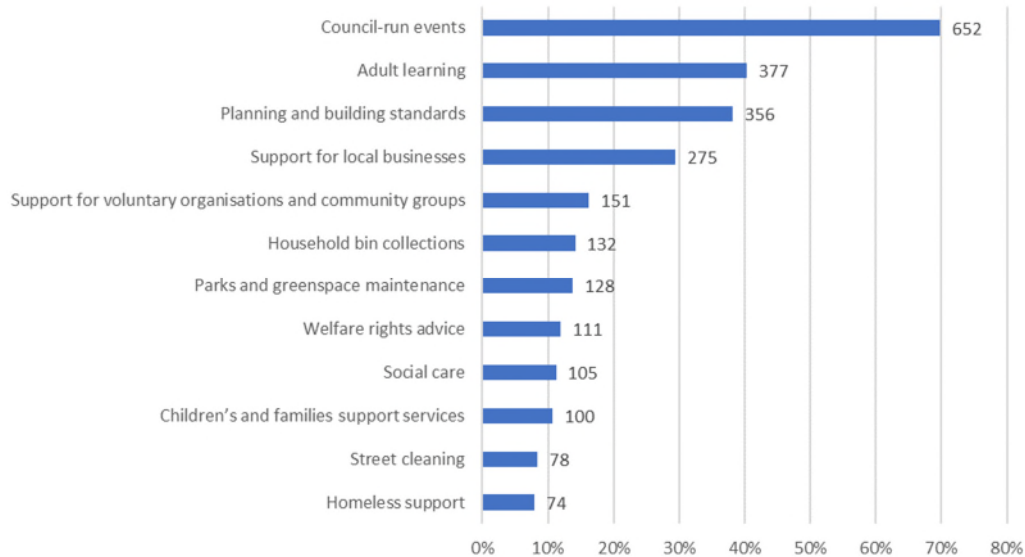


Figure 8. The Council improves current standards/ investment for this service



Council-run events were the most favoured area for introduction of charges. Over a third of respondents thought the Council should consider charging for **Adult Learning** and **Planning and Building Standards**. Over a quarter thought it would be reasonable to charge for **Support for local businesses**.

Figure 9. The Council introduces or increase charging for all or part of this service

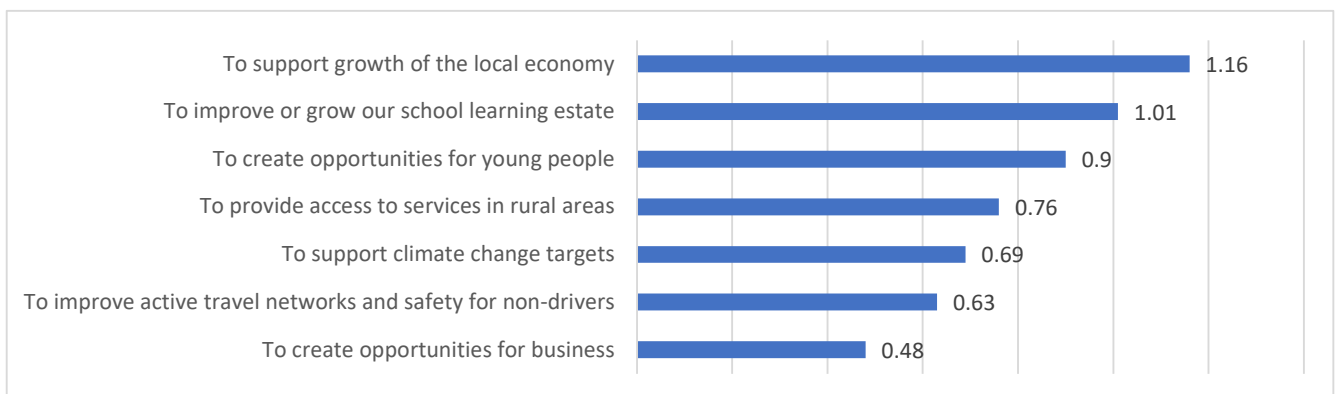


2.4 How Our Capital Budget is Spent

We asked what kind of projects we should invest our capital budget in. Respondents were asked to select their three priorities for investment. These priorities did not need to be ranked in order of importance. This was a new approach for 2023/24. Growth the local economy, followed by the learning estate and opportunities for young people were given the highest priority overall.

Figure 10. When considering the kinds of projects to invest in, please choose three of the following as your priorities for investment

1



¹ Scoring generated by survey system based on all responses received

2.5 How We Work With Communities

We asked about to what extent our respondents agree/disagree that individuals and communities can develop and delivery local solutions to local needs without relying on the Council to provide services as may have been the case in the past. There was **good agreement (>70%)** that the Council should encourage / support communities to deliver certain services and also help people to help themselves to reduce reliance on public services.

Figure 10. Perth & Kinross Council should encourage and support local people and communities to deliver certain services (1035 responses)

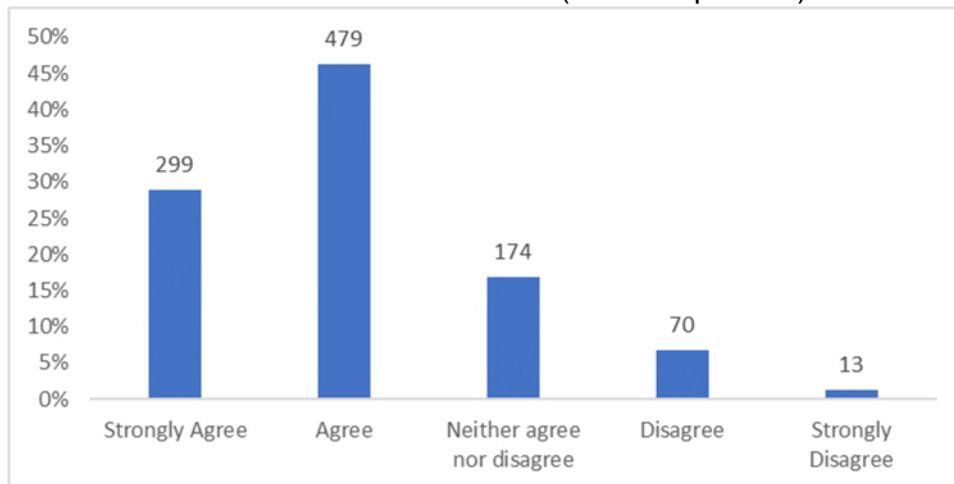
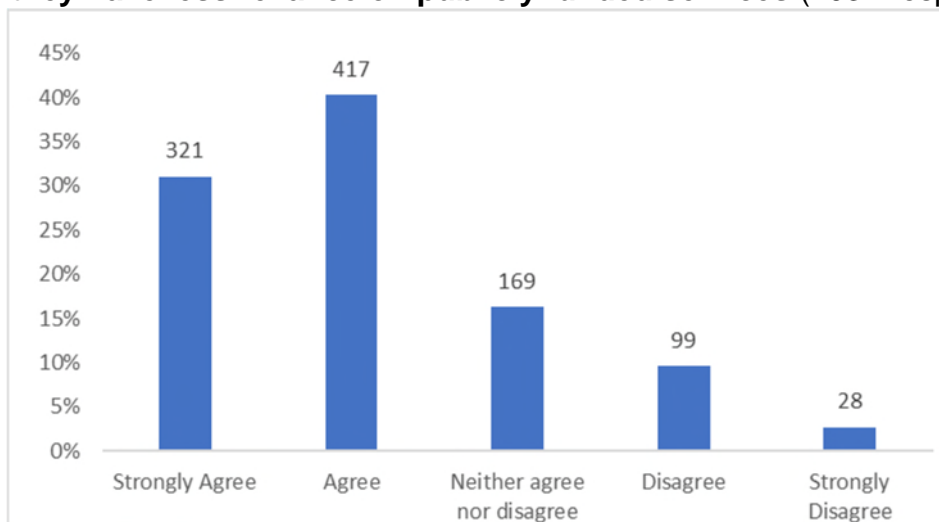


Figure 11. Perth & Kinross Council should help people to help themselves more so they have less reliance on publicly funded services (1034 responses)



3. Additional Comments

When asked to share ideas that could help the Council save money or generate additional revenue **571** (52%) people chose to leave a comment (compared with 44% in 2022/23 Budget Consultation and 41% in previous year). Many respondents offered multiple suggestions and comments cover a wide variety of themes. These are summarised below and will be analysed and detailed in a further report.

Number	Theme - Topic	Number	Theme - Topic
85	Service Delivery - New/Alternative Approach	22	Service Delivery - Invest
70	Workforce - Staff and Elected Member Nos	20	Assets- Lease / Rent
64	Service Delivery - Cut / Stop	18	Assets - Lookafter / Use what we have / Avoid New
57	Service Delivery - Community / 3rd Sector	18	Service Delivery - Service Standards
53	Local Economy - Organised Events/Attractions	18	Local Economy - Ambition
51	Assets - Sell / Get Rid of/Downsize/Consolidate	17	Charges - New Income Generation
46	Local Economy - Local Business	16	Service Delivery - Consolidate/Efficiency
40	Service Delivery - Focus on Priorities / Outcomes / Prevention	15	Workforce - Human Capital
33	Charges- Fees / Payments / Rent	13	Business Processes - Procurement / Wastage
33	Local Economy - Parking	9	Charges - Fines
31	Workforce - Ways of Working	8	Business Processes - Use Technology
28	Business Processes - Bureaucracy / Efficiency	8	Service Delivery - Outsourcing/Private
27	Charges - Council Tax	8	Service Delivery - Partnership Working (other LAs)
27	Workforce-Pay / Benefits / Expenses	5	Local Economy - Partnership Working
26	Local Economy - Flagship/Vanity Projects	4	Assets - Efficiency through Technology
23	Local Economy - Public Transport/Active Travel	29	Other
22	Assets - Energy Efficiency		

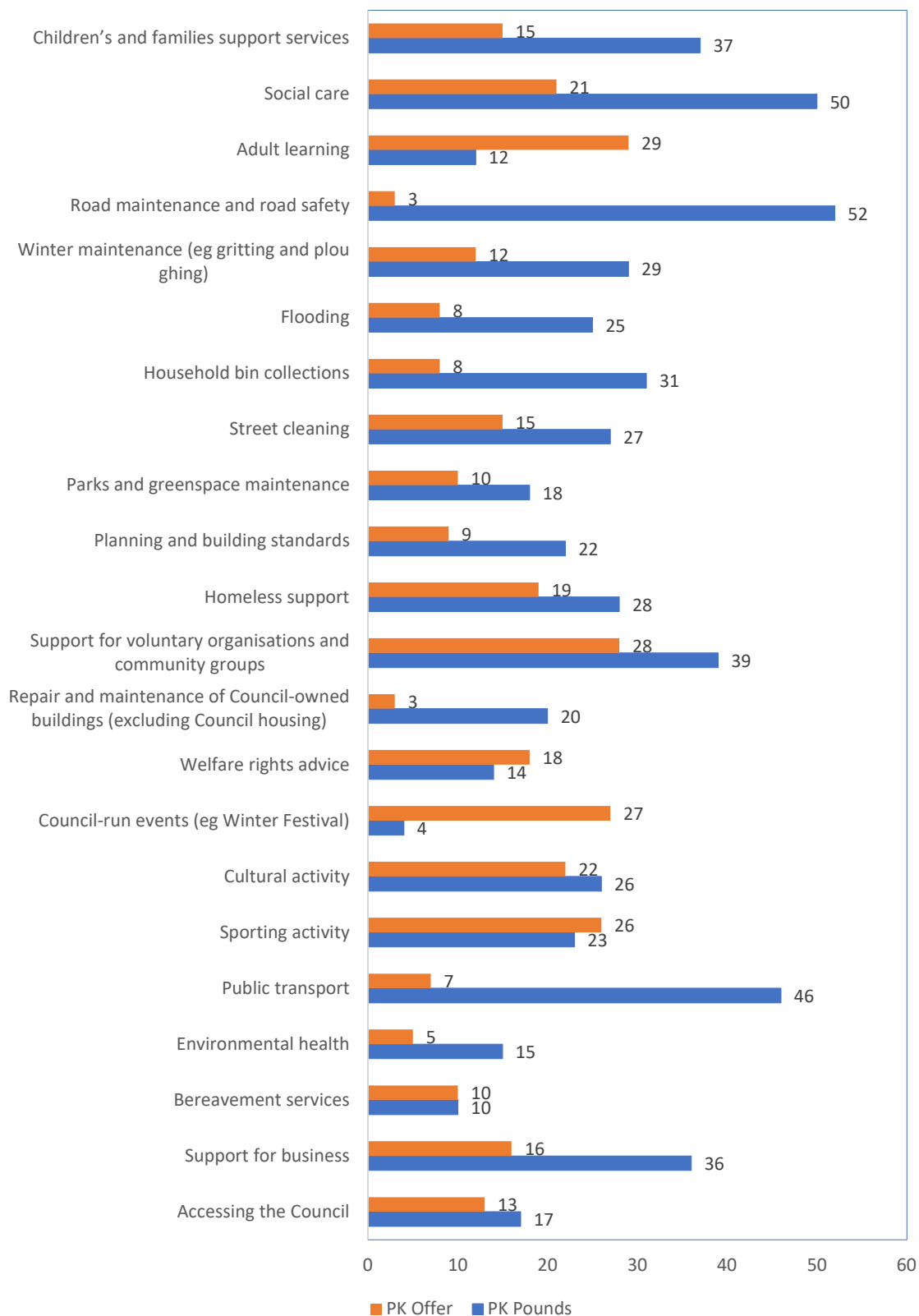
4. In person sessions

At our in person sessions, attendees were asked to take part in an interactive activity where they used stickers, or “PK pounds” to indicate where they would invest a money across 22 different service areas. They were advised to put one sticker on any service they thought should receive a basic level of investment, two stickers on any service that they thought should be invested to a good or average standard, and three stickers if this was a particularly important service that they thought should be a priority. Attendees were also given “Perth and Kinross Offer” stickers to add to services where they thought community groups, businesses or residents could get involved and supplement or replace Council investment.

Figure 12 shows the total number of PK Pounds (Council investment) and PK Offer (community/other delivery) stickers for each service. For reference 36 people took part in the sticker exercises in total across all of the in-person events.

The top three areas that were identified as a priority were road maintenance and road safety, social care and children’s and families support services. However, it must be noted that priorities varies from area to area. Given the small number of participants at these events we have not provided a breakdown by area.

Figure 12: In person sticker exercise



5. Social media

Information was shared across all of the Council’s social media channels using a combination of post types to prompt discussion and consideration of the difficult budget decisions ahead. Replies to public comment about Council budget spend during this period also highlighted the survey and the in person events during the period those were live.

While a number of people chose to make comments about priority areas for spend in reply to the social media posts as far as possible they were encouraged to complete the full online survey so that they could provide views on priorities within that wider context rather than the one or two services highlighted in that post.

Data below relates to content which appeared on the main corporate pages.

	Facebook		Twitter		Instagram		LinkedIn	
	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23
No. of posts	10	49	6	41	-	41	-	3
Comments	48	146	5	22	-	2	-	0
Reactions	284	229	23	27	-	330	-	33
Shares	45	151	11	60	-	0	-	22
Link clicks	2,444	849	0	477	-	33	-	63

5. Conclusion

Our budget consultation for 2023/24 has provided us with feedback on priorities and themes that are important to people in Perth & Kinross. It has also provided further suggestions which can be used to inform our budget process as well as in wider engagement exercises. This approach supports our Perth & Kinross Offer which details our commitment to working together with the communities we serve.

Continuous engagement and discussion are key to its success, and we are looking forward to continuing building trust and productive relationships. We will continue to build on our methods to involve communities who are seldom heard, benchmarking with our Community Planning Partners and local community groups to ensure that we understand the issues important to them.

everyone PKoffer
has something to offer



The budget consultation 2023/24 and wider engagement feedback gives a picture of the themes and issues that are important to the communities and citizens, who have responded to our wide ranging consultation activities.