

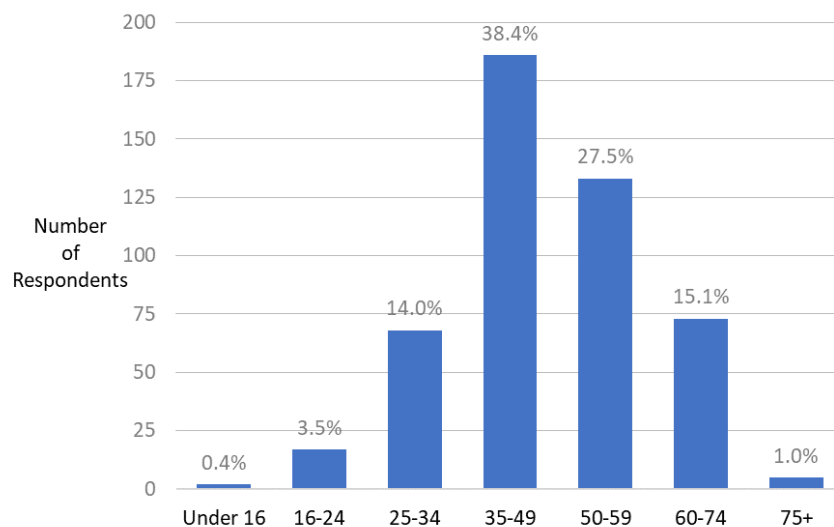
## **Background**

Like all local authorities, Perth & Kinross Council is preparing for very significant financial challenges ahead and budget decisions. To gauge residents' views on budget issues and priorities, consultation was undertaken between 06 Jan 2020 and 16 Feb 2020. The consultation was published on the Perth & Kinross Council Consultation Hub, [consult.pkc.gov.uk](http://consult.pkc.gov.uk). Content included explanatory text, visualisations aimed to improve understanding of expenditure and strategic objectives and an online survey. The consultation was promoted via various channels.

## **Response**

The PKC Budget Consultation page received **765** unique page views by the public (not including internal staff views). This is an increase on last year (521). Overall, there were **484** completed surveys, this shows a significant decrease on last year (1085 in 2019, 736 in 2018, 332 in 2017, 91 in 2016).

As with any exercise of this type, results are indicative and will be influenced by the demographic of those who choose to make a submission, and cannot be considered fully representative of all PKC residents. 92% of respondents live in Perth and Kinross, and 45% of respondents study or work locally. The age distribution of respondents has remained more balanced than is often seen in open consultations such as this (see Figure 1). 16% of respondents were under 35 years of age, and 56% were under 50 years of age.



**Figure 1: Age breakdown of respondents**

## **Results**

### **Setting the Council budget – Importance of strategic objectives**

This question asked about the importance of the Council's five strategic objectives and replaced questions asked in previous years about the importance of twelve service areas.

Respondents were asked to rate the relative importance (within a budget setting context) of the strategic objectives, where 10 signified 'extremely important' and 0 signified "not important". Not all respondents chose to complete this question for "Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and

sustainable economy”; the number of people who responded is noted at the end of each strategic objective (figure 2).

The results show that people favour “Giving every child the best start in life” with almost 63% of respondents indicating extreme importance (score of 10). In 2019 Education and Children & Families Services were service areas which people viewed as of relatively high importance and this would broadly reflect the views this year.

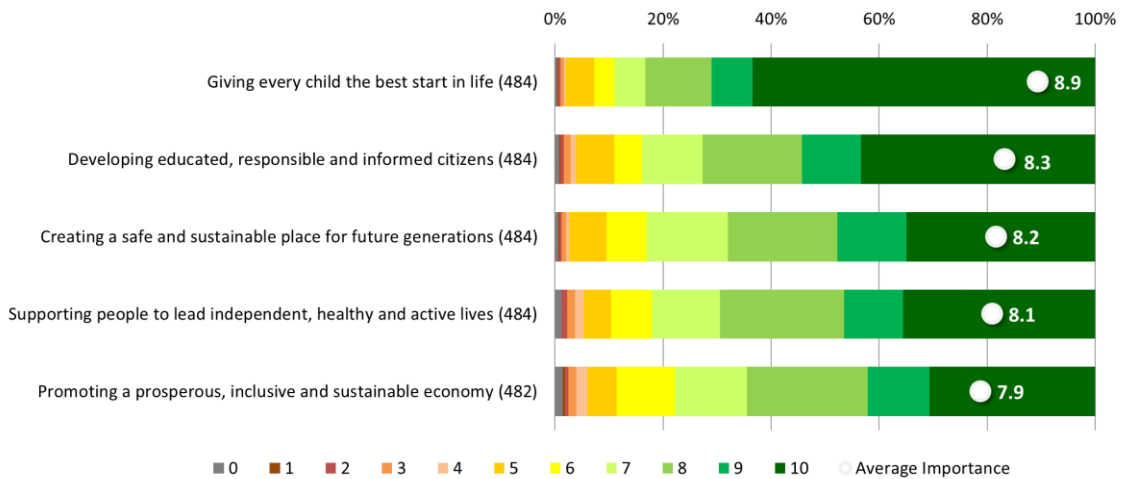


Figure 2: Overall importance of strategic priorities

**Change in Council Tax**

Respondents were asked what percentage change in Council Tax was preferable – the survey highlighted that a 1% change would be equal to around £0.9M difference to Council income. Respondents were unable to state a preference to reduce Council Tax. 81% of respondents opted for an increase in Council Tax rather than no change (78% in 2019). 38% of respondents would prefer an increase of 3% or more (34% in 2019).

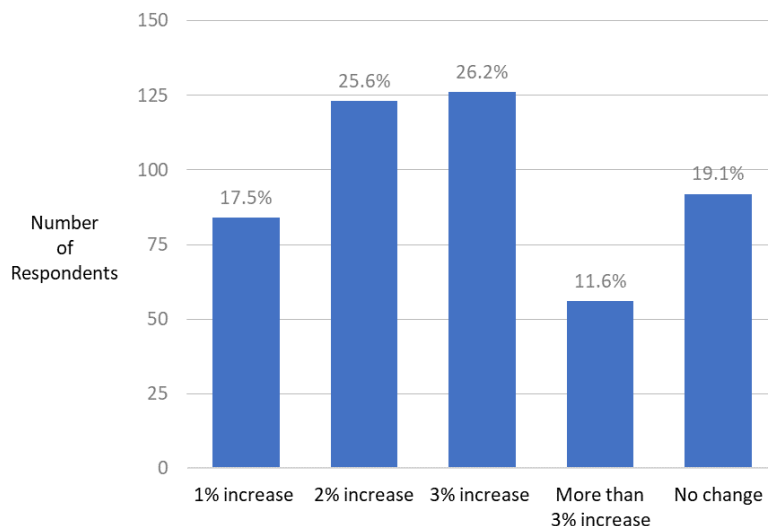


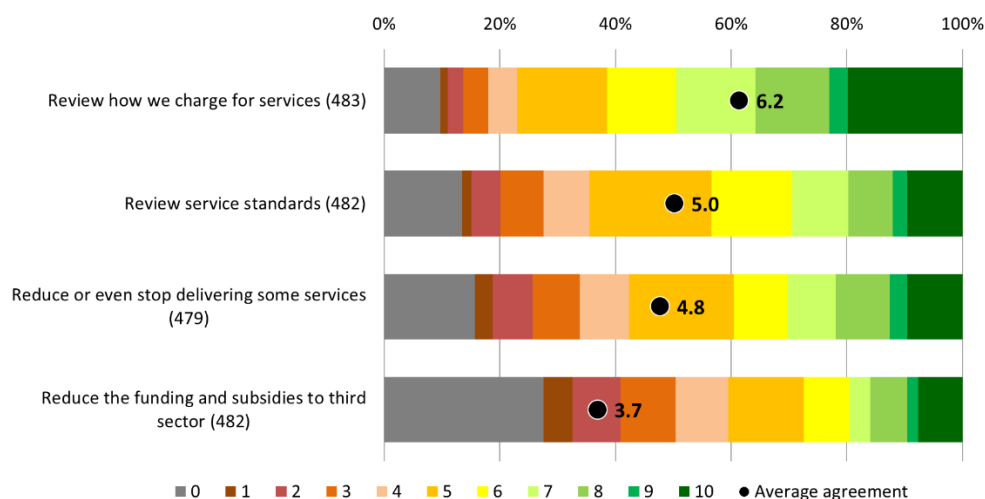
Figure 3: Breakdown of preference on change in Council Tax

### Changes in how services are delivered

Respondents were asked how much they agreed with four statements about how the Council provides services, with 10 indicating “strongly agree and 0 indicating “strongly disagree”.

- The Council **reviews charges for services**, even if this means having to introduce or increase some charges to allow services to continue.
- The Council **reviews service standards**, even if this means that to continue the service, service levels are reduced and delivery times increased.
- The Council **reduces or even stop delivering some services** to protect other services.
- The Council **reduces the funding and subsidies** it provides to voluntary organisations and community groups to make savings. These organisations help deliver a range of essential services to vulnerable and other groups across our communities, working together with the Council and other bodies.

From the options available, results shown in Figure 4 indicate that the public were most in favour of changes to how the Council charges for services (average score 6.2 out of 10), even if this means having to introduce or increase some charges to allow services to continue. Respondents are least in favour of reducing funding or subsidies to voluntary organisations and community groups (3.7). Results showed little change in agreement when compared to last year’s responses.



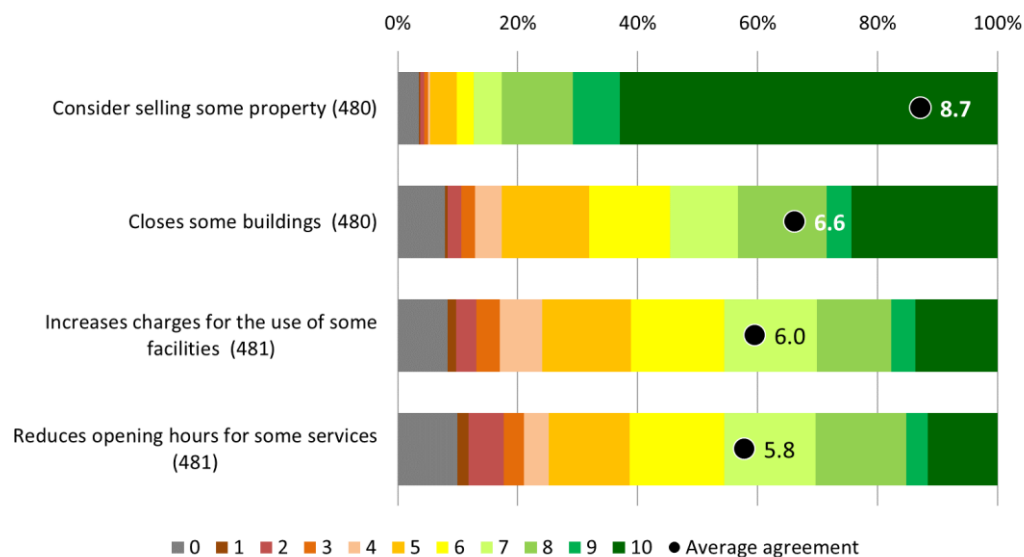
**Figure 4: Changes to council spending and income**

Respondents were asked how much they agreed with a further four statements, with 10 indicating “strongly agree and 0 indicating “strongly disagree”.

- The Council changes or **reduces opening hours** for some public services and facilities to reduce running costs.
- The Council **closes some buildings** in order to maintain others.
- The Council **considers selling some of the property** it owns and no longer has a use for.
- The Council **increase charges for the use of some facilities** to ensure they can continue to be provided.

Responses detailed in Figure 5 show that the public were most in favour of the Council considering selling some of the property it owns and no longer has a use for (average score 8.7 out of 10). They were less in favour of the possibility of increasing charges for the use of facilities (6.0) and reducing

opening hours for some services (5.8). Selling property had almost 63% of respondents indicating full agreement. Results broadly mirror the findings from last year's consultation.



**Figure 5: Changes to Council spending and income**

### Comments

When asked to share ideas that could help the Council save money or generate additional revenue **235** (49%) people chose to leave a comment (compared with 51% in 2019). Many respondents offered multiple suggestions for reducing expenditure, generating income and protecting specific services. Comments cover a range of themes, but largely fall into six main categories: Workforce; Service Delivery; Local Economy; Physical Assets; Charges and Business Processes. Commonly recurring themes include:

- Reducing spend on events and non-essentials to focus on delivering key services.
- Reducing PKC staff numbers/costs (largely focused on managerial positions and Councillors).
- The value of volunteers and community groups in helping the Council deliver services
- Improving efficiency in PKC
- A reduction in outsourcing of public services to private contractors.
- Reviewing procurement.

A further **153** comments were expressed to inform the development of the Council's budget and again these covered many topics. Commonly recurring themes include:

- The cost and efficiency of PKC staff
- Council Tax
- Protecting vulnerable people
- Environmental sustainability

### Social Media

This year's budget consultation generated far less engagement via social media when compared to 2019. 9 comments were posted in 2020 in response to PKC Facebook posts to promote the consultation, in 2019 there were **129** comments posted. In addition, Facebook promotions received 14 reactions and 22 shares (21 reactions and 38 shares in 2019).

Promotion on Twitter generated 1 comment, 9 reactions and 23 retweets.