

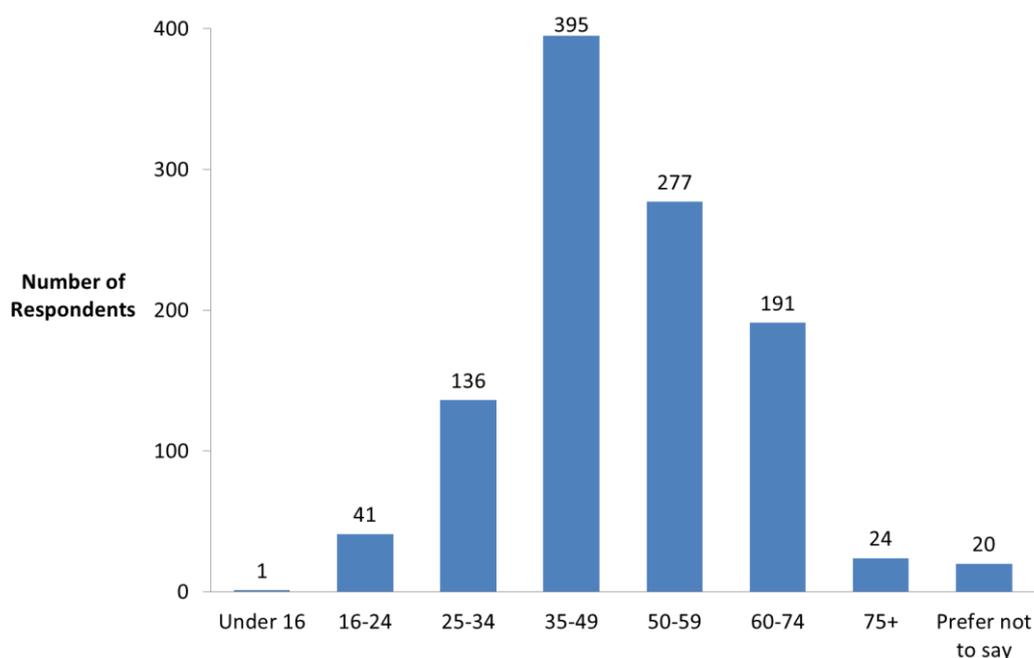
### **Background**

Like all local authorities, Perth and Kinross Council is preparing for very significant financial challenges ahead and budget decisions. To gauge residents' views on budget issues/ priorities, consultation was undertaken between 23 Jan 2019 and 3 Feb 2019. As well as visualisations to improve understanding of income and expenditure, a survey was made available on the Perth and Kinross Council website, and promoted via various channels.

### **Response**

The PKC Budget Consultation page received **521** unique page views by the public (not including internal staff views). This is an increase on last year (382). Overall, there were **1085** completed surveys, this shows a significant increase on previous years (736 in 2018, 332 in 2017, 91 in 2016) and indicates a growing public interest in how the Council budgets for services.

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 representative of all PKC residents. 93% of respondents live in Perth and Kinross, and 25% 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 53% were under 50 years of age.



**Figure 1: Age breakdown of respondents**

### **Results**

#### **Setting the Council budget - Service area importance**

Question three asked respondents to rate the relative importance (within a budget setting context) of twelve identified service areas, where **10** signified 'greatest importance'. Not all respondents chose to complete this question for the twelve areas; the figure noted at the end of each service area indicates the number of people who responded (see Figure 2).

The results show that people favour Education; Services for Older People; Children & Families Services; Services for Adults with Disabilities; Roads, Waste and Housing Services over Corporate & Democratic Services; Property; Planning; Transport and Culture/ Leisure. These views mirror last years’ survey results, with the same areas identified as being important/ less important.

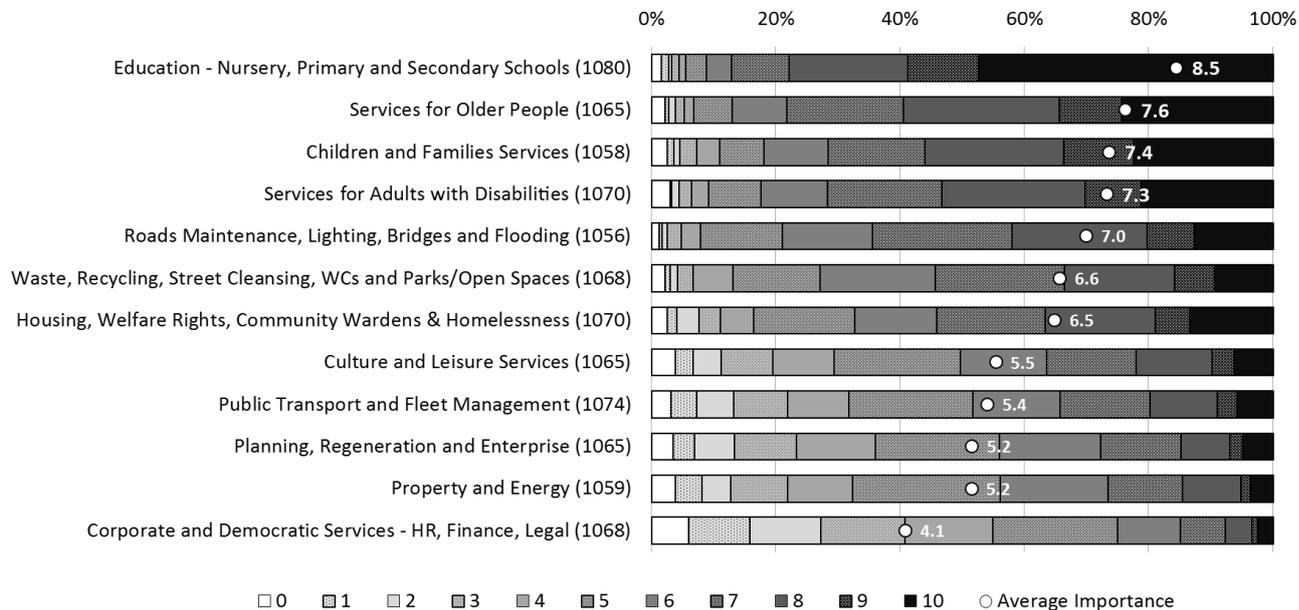
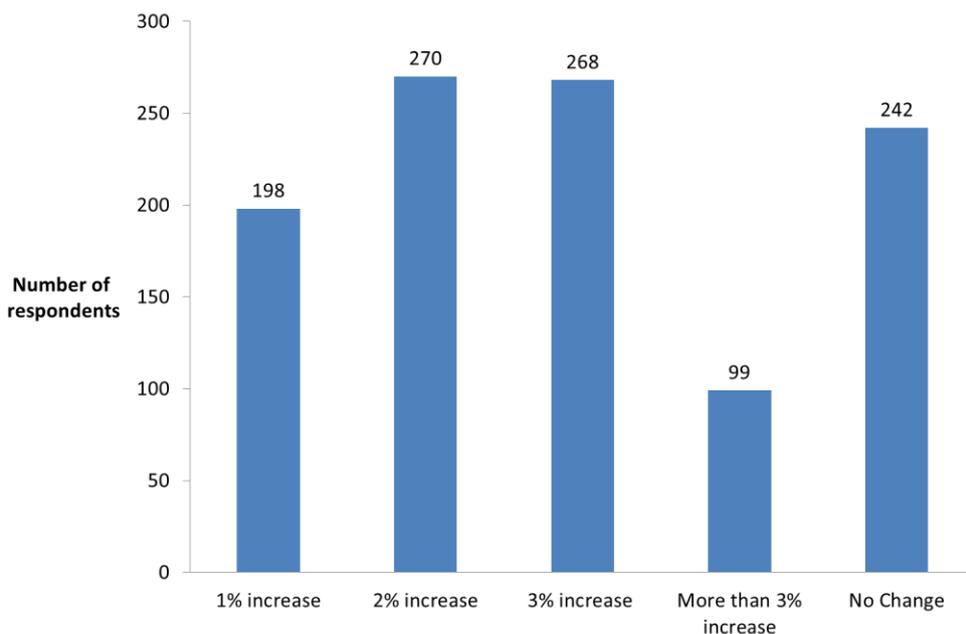


Figure 2: Overall importance of service areas

**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. Unlike in previous years respondents were unable to state a preference to reduce Council Tax. 78% of respondents opted for an increase in Council Tax rather than no change and a third would prefer an increase of 3% or more.

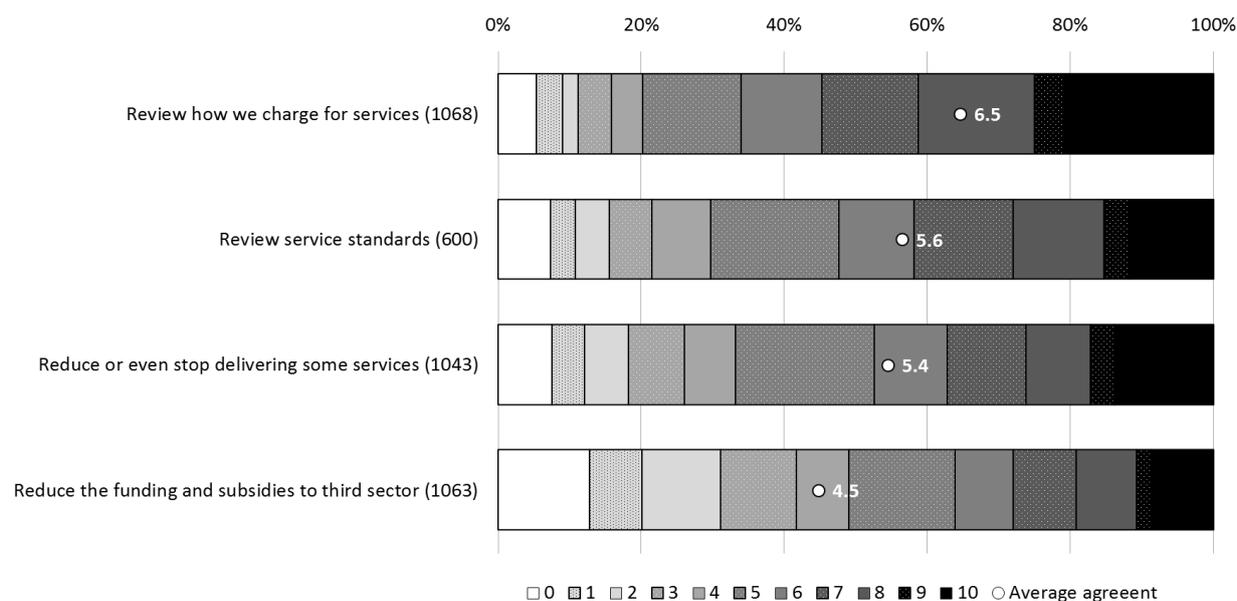


### Figure 3: Breakdown of preference on change in Council Tax Changes in how services are delivered

Respondents were asked how much they agreed with four statements about how the Council provides services, with 10 indicating complete agreement.

- The Council should **review how it charges for services**, even if this means having to introduce or increase some charges to allow services to continue.
- The Council should **review its service standards**, even if this means that to continue the service, service levels are reduced and delivery times increased.
- The Council should **reduce or even stop delivering some services** to protect other services.
- The Council should **reduce 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 6.5 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 (4.5). Results showed little change in agreement when compared to last year's responses.

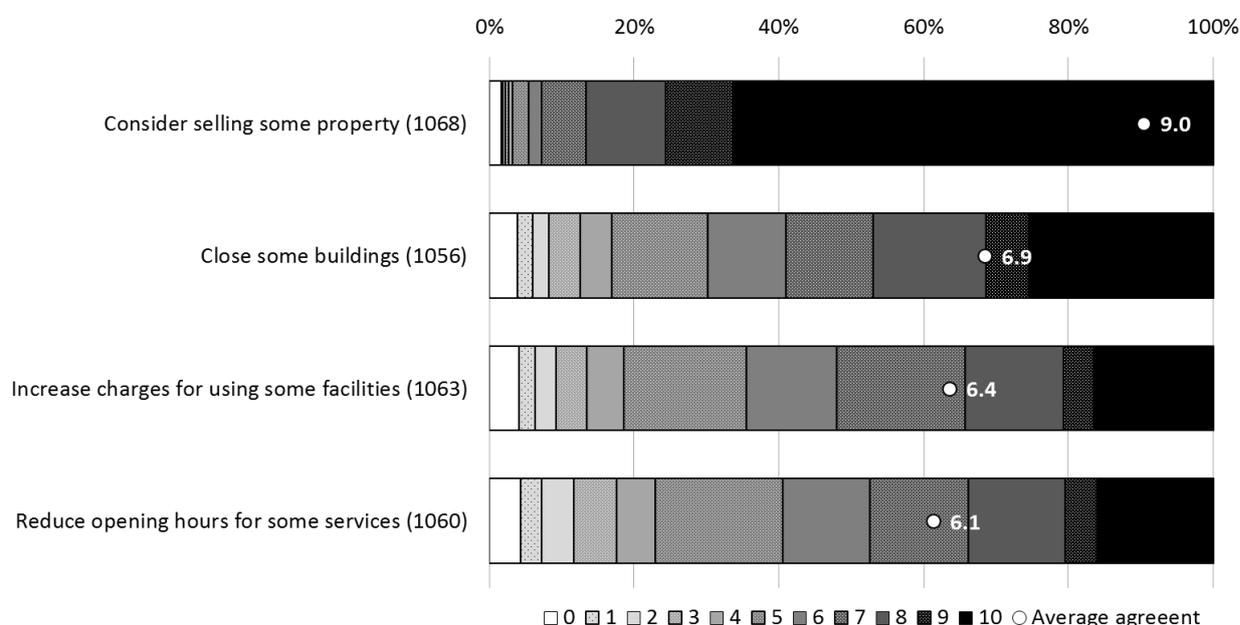


### Figure 4: Changes to Council spending and income

Respondents were asked how much they agreed with a further four statements, with 10 representing complete agreement.

- The Council should change or **reduce opening hours** for some public services and facilities to reduce running costs.
- The Council should **close some buildings** in order to maintain others.
- The Council should **consider selling some of the property** it owns and no longer has a use for.
- The Council should **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 9.0 out of 10). They were less in favour of the possibility of increasing charges for the use of facilities (6.4) and reducing opening hours for some services (6.1). Selling property had almost 66% of respondents indicating full agreement; extremes of opinion were rarer for three statements. Results broadly mirror the findings from last year's consultation.



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

### Comments

As with the overall response rate this year the number of people choosing to leave comments has also increased. When asked to share ideas that could help the Council save money or generate additional revenue **549** (51%) people chose to leave a comment (compared with 397 in 2019). Many respondents offered multiple suggestions for reducing expenditure, generating income or expressing which services should be protected.

Comments cover a range of themes, but largely fall into six main categories: Workforce; Service Delivery; Local Economy; Physical Assets; Charges and Business Processes. An initial trawl of comments indicates commonly recurring topics on a broad range of themes. These include:

- Charging for attendance at PKC events.
- Reducing spending on events and non-essentials to focus on delivering key services.
- Reducing PKC staff numbers (largely centred on making reductions from managerial positions, including Councillors).
- The value of volunteers and community groups in helping the Council deliver services
- Energy efficiency in PKC premises.
- A reduction in outsourcing of public services to private contractors.

A further **42** comments were also expressed to inform the development of the Council's budget.

**Social Media**

This year's budget consultation generated far more engagement via social media when compared to 2018. **129** comments were posted in response to the PKC Facebook post to promote the consultation (23<sup>rd</sup> January 2019). Only 6 comments were posted in 2018

In addition the Facebook promotion received 21 reactions and 38 shares (17 reactions and 17 shares in 2018).