

Aberdeen City Council
Budget Consultation 2023 Phase 2
Summary Analysis

Introduction

Aberdeen City Council's Phase 2 Budget Consultation ran from 11th October, 2023 to 12th November 2023. The consultation used an online simulator tool which invited respondents to select preferences in

relation to a range of potential changes to Council Tax, Fees and Charges and the delivery of council services. These options reflected an anticipated budget gap of £83M over the financial years 2024/25 to 2027/28.

52 potential service change options were included in the consultation, as well as 6 fees and charges options and the level of Council Tax.

Number and Breakdown of Respondents

In total the consultation received 2,654 responses¹. Demographic information was collected from respondents² covering geography, age, employment, sex, sexual orientation, trans history, ethnicity and nationality, religion, marital status, disability and caring.

The overall respondent demography is shown below:

Please tell us the area where you live?	Number
Cults, Bieldside & Milltimber Ferryhill	209
Blank	203
Central	178
Bucksburn	164
Outside Aberdeen	146
West End	134
Kincorth, Leggart & Nigg Torry	121
Braeside, Mannofield, Broomhill & Seafield	117
Cove	90
Danestone	87
Kingswells	85
Balgownie & Donmouth	81
Dyce	81
Hazlehead	81
Rosemount	77
Oldmachar	75
Northfield	62
Mastrick	54
Ashgrove	50
Culter	50
Midsocket	49

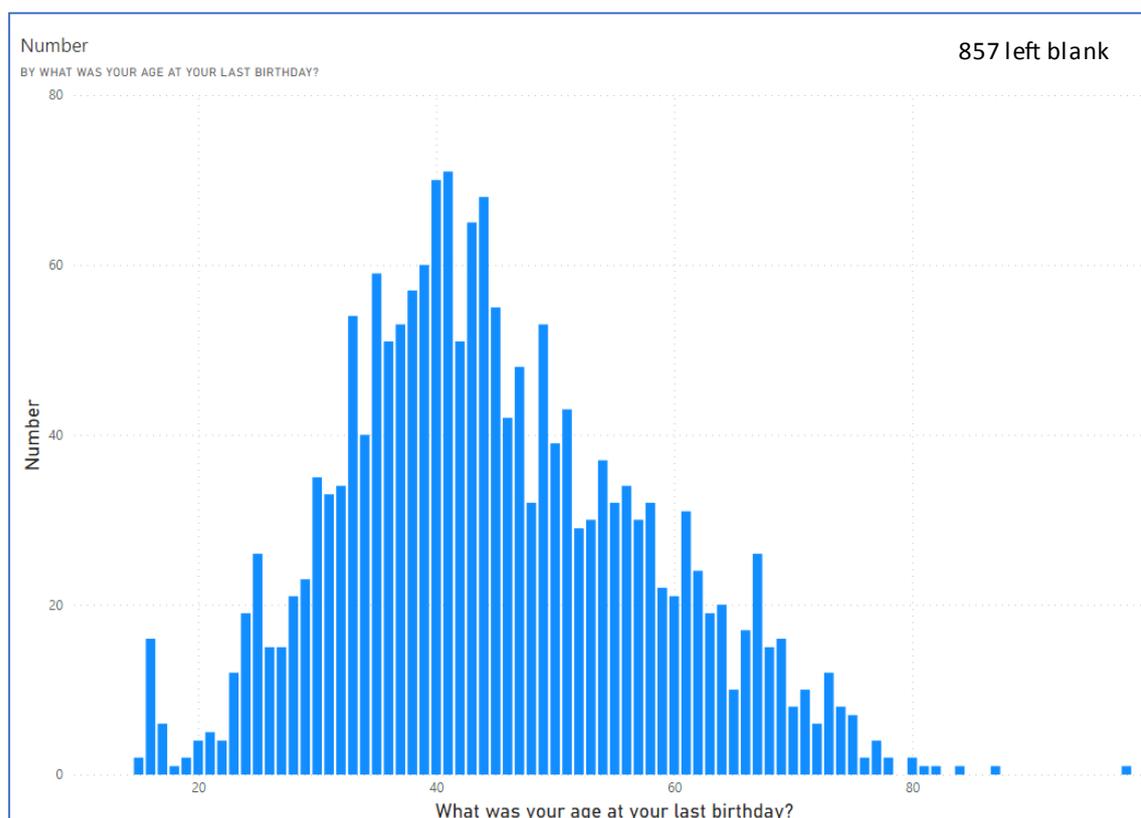
¹ It is not possible to determine if all responses are from different individuals.

² Completing demographic data was not necessary to complete the consultation.

Garthdee	46
Old Aberdeen	43
Hilton	42
Don't know	41
Sheddocksley	35
Woodside	34
Denmore	33
Summerhill	33
Tillydrone	31
George Street	28
Seaton	26
Stockethill	17
Froghall, Powis & Sunnybank	13
Heathryfold	13
Middlefield	12
Cummings Park	8
Hanover	5

What is your sex?	Number
Female	1124
Male	904
Blank	494
Prefer not to say	124
Other	8

What was your age at your last birthday?



What religion, religious denomination or body do you belong to?	Number
None	1259
Blank	655
Church Of Scotland	262
Prefer not to say	156
Other Christian	144
Roman Catholic	111
Other Religion or Body	25
Pagan	12
Muslim	11
Buddhist	8
Hindu	7
Jewish	3
Sikh	1

What is your employment status?	Number
Working full time	1418
Blank	422
Working part time	324
Retired	225
Prefer not to say	73
Undertaking full time education or training as a student	46

Other	43
Long-term sick or disabled	42
Unemployed	21
Full time carer	20
Undertaking full time education as a pupil at school	20

What is your sexual orientation?	Number
Straight / Heterosexual	1631
Blank	631
Prefer not to say	251
Gay or Lesbian	69
Bisexual	54
Other sexual orientation	18

What is your legal marital status?	Number
Married	994
Blank	931
Never married and never registered in a civil partnership	432
Divorced	117
Prefer not to say	103
Widowed	35
Separated but still legally married	33
In a registered civil partnership	4
Surviving partner from civil partnership	3
Formally in a civil partnership but now legally dissolved	1
Separated but still legally in a civil partnership	1

Do you look after, or give any help or support to family members, friends, neighbours or others because of either: long-term physical/ mental ill-health/ disability; or problems related to old age? Do not count anything you do as part of your paid employment.	Number
No	1223
Blank	888
Yes	403
Prefer not to say	140

Do you consider yourself to be trans, or have a trans history?	Number
No	1571
Blank	910
Prefer not to say	165
Yes	8

Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months? Include problems related to old age.	Number
No	1545
Blank	735
Yes	237
Prefer not to say	137

Please indicate your ethnicity and nationality by selecting the relevant option from the list below.	Number
White – Scottish	1205
Blank	853
White – British	332
Other White Ethnic Group	69
Prefer not to say	56
White - Eastern European	36
African, Scottish African or British African	24
Mixed Or Multiple	16
White – Irish	13
Indian, Scottish Indian or British Indian	11
Other Ethnic Group	11
Chinese, Scottish Chinese or British Chinese	9
African – Other Caribbean or Black	7
Other Asian, Scottish Asian or British Asian	5
Pakistani, Scottish Pakistani or British Pakistani	4
Arab, Scottish Arab or British Arab	1
White - Gypsy/Traveller	1
White – Roma	1

- There is some correlation between the numbers of respondents living in different areas of the City and levels of deprivation as measured by the Scottish Indices of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). Areas with more deprivation tend to have a lower level of response. 17% of all responses stated they lived in an area with some datazones in SIMD 1 (i.e. the 0 – 20% most deprived);
- Of those stating their sex, 55% were women;
- Very few (<10) respondents were under 18;
- For ethnicity and nationality 2,446 of 2,654 (92%) chose “White – Scottish”; “White – British”; “Prefer not to say”; or were “Blank”.

Analysis Methodology

Quantitative

The consultation tool (“Simulator”) required respondents to take a view on each option and select one of a number of possible positions for each. These were:

Council Tax (separately for the financial years 2024/25 to 2027/28)	Fees & Charges	Service Options
0% (increase)	2% (increase)	0% (reduction)
2%	4%	50%
4%	6%	100%
6%	8%	
8%	10%	
10%		
12%		
14%		
16%		

The data were extracted from the “Simulator” directly to MS Excel and, from there, transformed using PowerBi. The results were then charted in PowerBi.

Qualitative Analysis of Comments by Option

In order to make sense of the large number and variety of comments received and to identify the most important issues raised for each option, qualitative analyses of the comments was undertaken using an adapted Framework Analysis approach.

This Framework Analysis approach is a qualitative research method that provides a structured approach to qualitative analysis and helps to identify patterns, themes and relationships in the data. This was considered an appropriate approach as the online consultation used more than 60 pre-determined options.

There are a number of general steps in a Framework Analysis, including:

1. Familiarisation with the data
2. Coding (identifying themes and sub-themes)
3. Charting
4. Mapping and interpretation (understanding relationships within and between themes and sub-themes)
5. Reporting

Comments received on each of the options were inputted into Excel. The framework approach was followed, firstly through familiarisation with the data, whereby the researcher read all comments received. The remaining Framework analysis steps, coding, charting, mapping and interpretation and reporting, were then applied.

By grouping similar types of comments and suggestions, a range of response sub-themes emerged from the comments within each group of options. Once, the sub-themes were identified for each group, these were further refined so the prevalent issues were identified.

This process enabled the researcher to understand the content of the comments, identify similarities in content and meaning that came up repeatedly, and collate similar type comments to each sub-theme code. This was repeated across all groups. The number of comments coded within each sub-theme was charted using PowerBi.

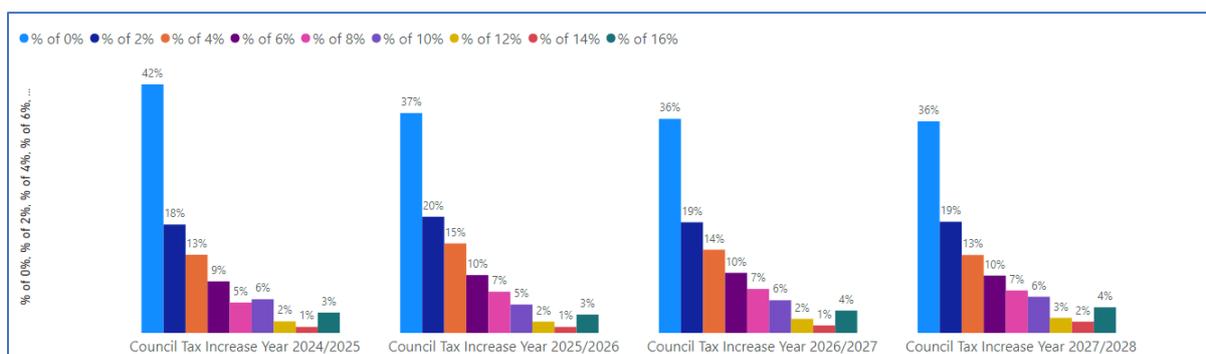
A text summary of the comments made in each group has been generated using Microsoft tools and reviewed and amended by the researcher.

Analysis of Individual Budget Options

1. Council Tax

Budget Options – Selections by Respondents

The following figures show the number and percentages of budget choices respondents made in the simulator.



	0%		2%		4%		6%		8%		10%		12%		14%		16%	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
2024/2025	988	42%	431	18%	311	13%	205	9%	121	5%	134	6%	46	2%	24	1%	81	3%
2025/2026	874	37%	462	19%	356	15%	230	10%	164	7%	113	5%	45	2%	24	1%	73	3%
2026/2027	851	36%	440	18%	331	14%	239	10%	175	7%	130	6%	56	2%	30	1%	89	4%
2027/2028	841	36%	442	18%	310	13%	228	10%	169	7%	144	6%	60	3%	45	2%	102	4%

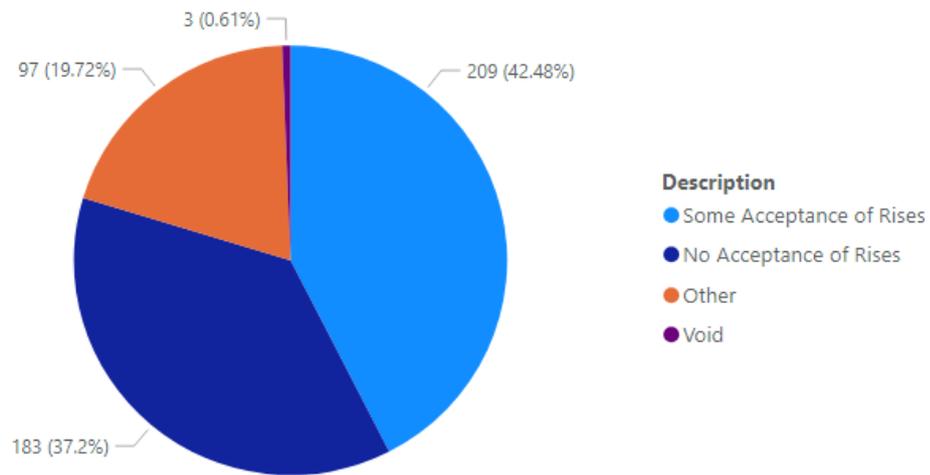
Summary of Comments

492 separate comments were received.

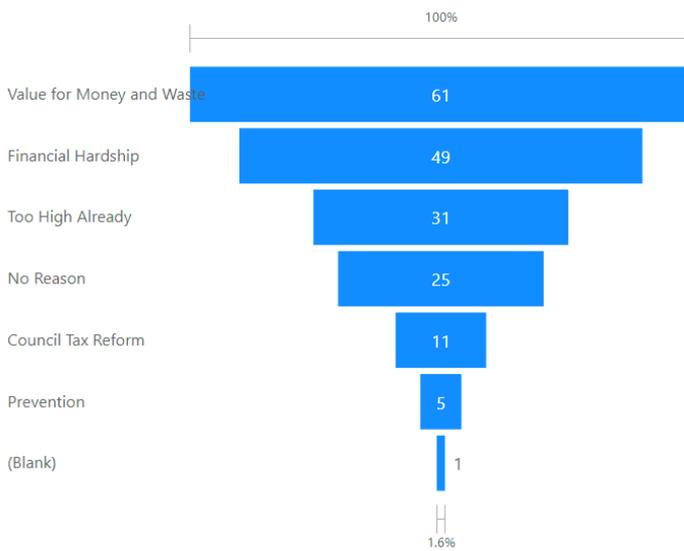
- **Council tax opinions:** Respondents’ opinions about the council tax were mostly negative or critical.
- **Council tax alternatives:** Some of the opinions suggest alternatives to the council tax, such as a local income tax, a revaluation of properties, or a more progressive system based on wealth or income.
- **Council tax impact:** Many of the opinions express concerns about the impact of council tax increases on low-income families, pensioners, single people, and renters, especially in the context of the cost of living crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Council tax services:** Some of the opinions question the value of the council tax for the services they receive, such as waste collection, road maintenance, libraries, and swimming pools. They also criticize the council for wasting money on projects, such as the bus gates and the low emission zone.
- **Council tax fairness:** A few of the opinions argue that the council tax is unfair or outdated, and that it does not reflect the current property values, the size of the household, the usage of services, or the ability to pay.

The comments have been categorized as follows:

Number of Responses by Main Category

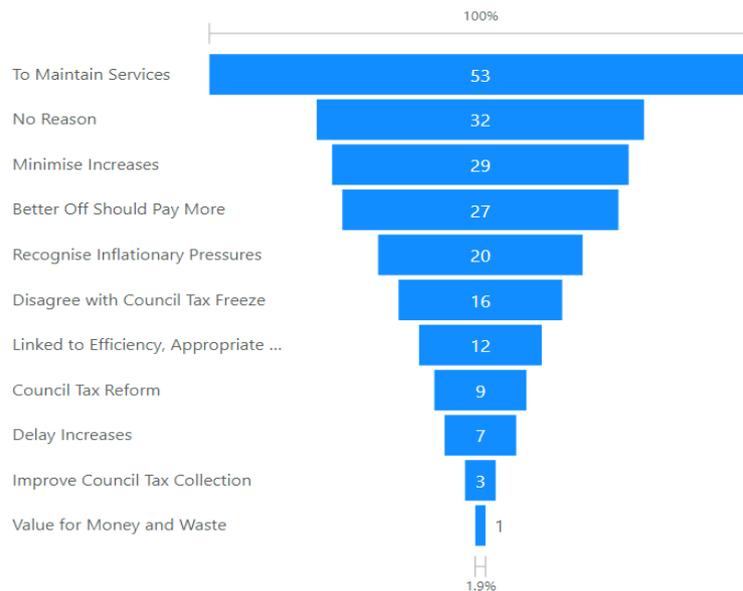


Number of Responses by Sub-Category



No Acceptance of Rise

Number of Responses by Sub-Category

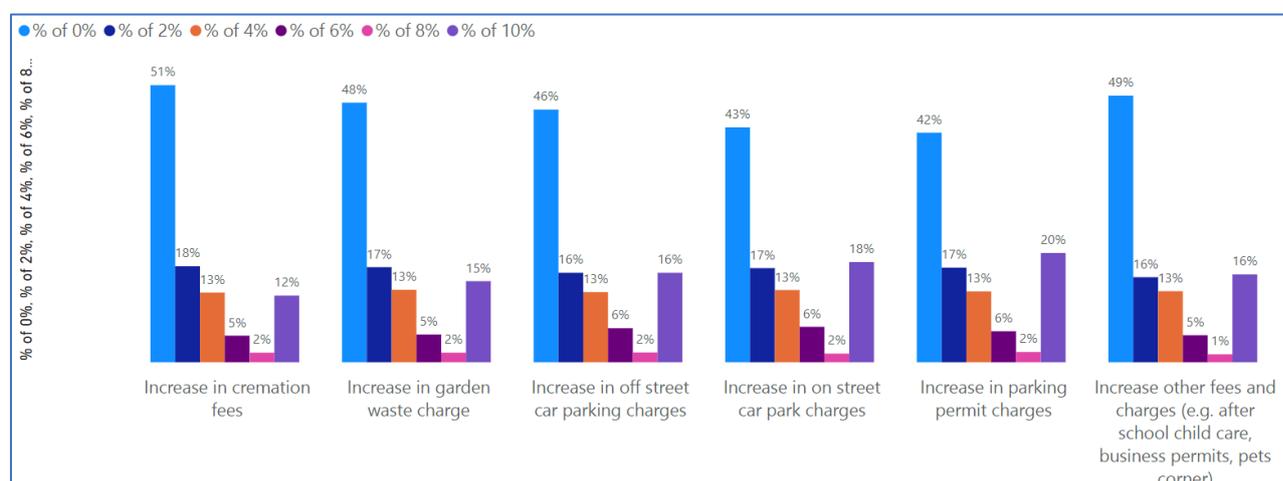


Some Acceptance of Rise

2. Fees and Charges

Budget Options – Selections by Respondents

The following figures show the number and percentages of budget choices respondents made in the simulator.



	0%		2%		4%		6%		8%		10%	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Increase in cremation fees	1189	51%	412	18%	299	13%	114	5%	41	2%	286	12%
Increase in garden waste charge	1114	48%	408	17%	311	13%	119	5%	41	2%	348	15%
Increase in off street car parking charges	1084	46%	384	16%	301	13%	146	6%	42	2%	384	16%
Increase in on street car park charges	1008	43%	404	17%	310	13%	152	6%	37	2%	430	18%
Increase in parking permit charges	985	42%	406	17%	304	13%	133	6%	44	2%	469	20%
Increase other fees and charges (e.g. after school child care, business permits, pets corner)	1144	49%	365	16%	305	13%	116	5%	34	1%	377	16%

Summary of Comments

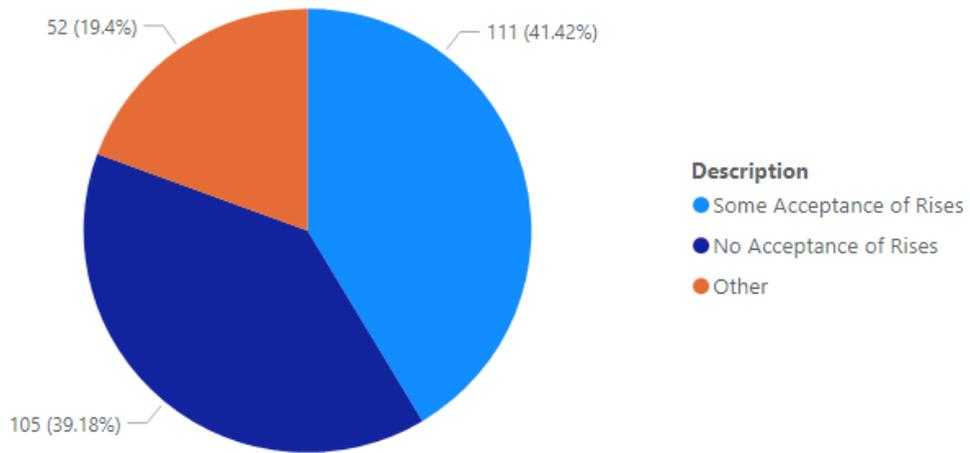
268 separate comments were received.

- The responses vary widely in their opinions and suggestions:** The responses show a range of opinions and suggestions. Some people support increasing the fees and charges, especially for car owners, to reduce traffic and pollution and encourage public transport. Others oppose any increase and argue that the fees and charges are already too high and discourage visitors and businesses from the city centre. Some people suggest cutting other costs, such as council staffing, administration, or projects, instead of raising fees and charges. Some people also comment on specific services, such as garden waste, after school child care, or pets corner, and how they should be treated differently.
- The responses reflect the current challenges and concerns of the residents:** The responses indicate that many people are facing financial difficulties and are worried about the cost of living, especially in light of the pandemic and the climate crisis. Some people express frustration with the council's

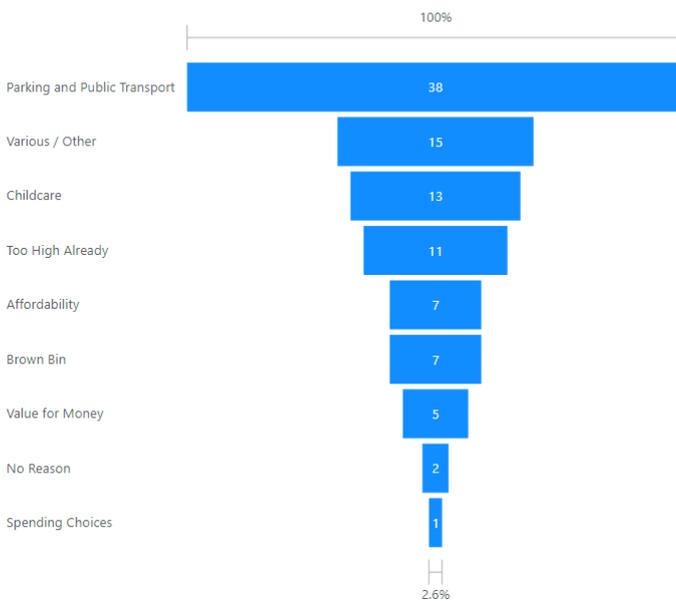
spending and decision-making, and call for more transparency and accountability. Some people also highlight the importance of protecting the environment, supporting families, and revitalising the city centre.

The comments have been categorized as follows:

Number of Responses by Main Category

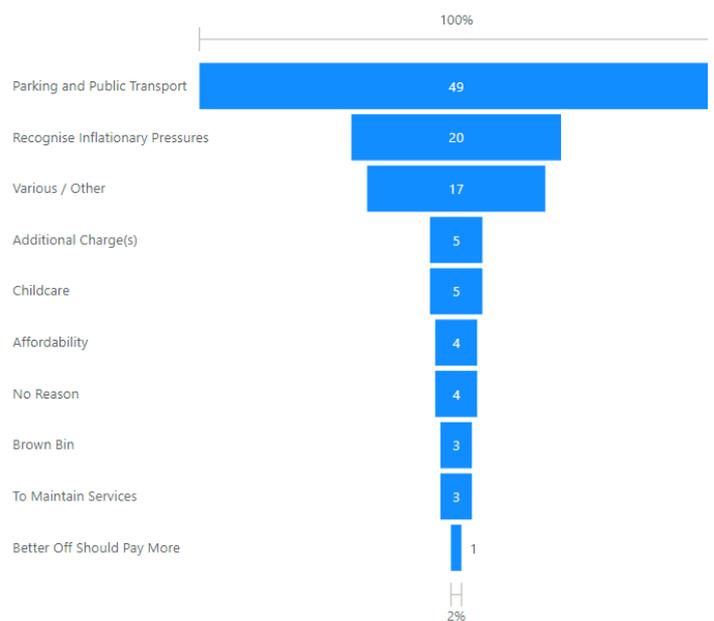


Number of Responses by Sub-Category



No Acceptance of Rise

Number of Responses by Sub-Category

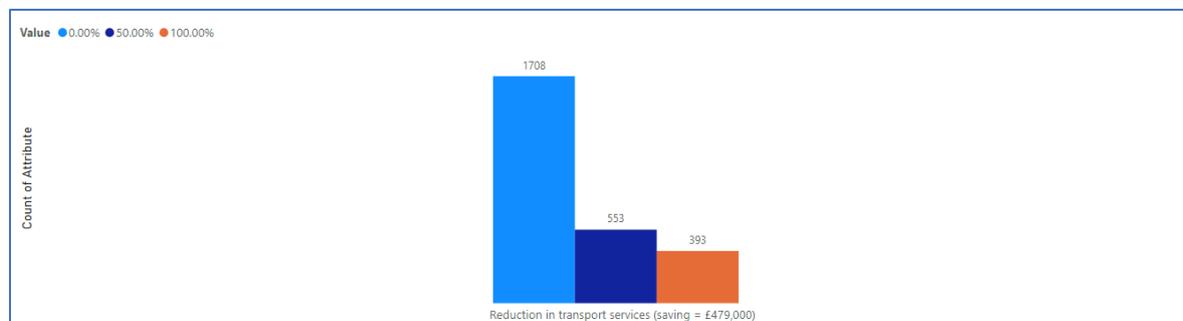


Some Acceptance of Rise

3. Adult Services

Budget Options – Selections by Respondents

The following figures show the number and percentages of budget choices respondents made in the simulator.



	0%		50%		100%	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Reduction in Transport Services	1708	64%	553	21%	393	15%

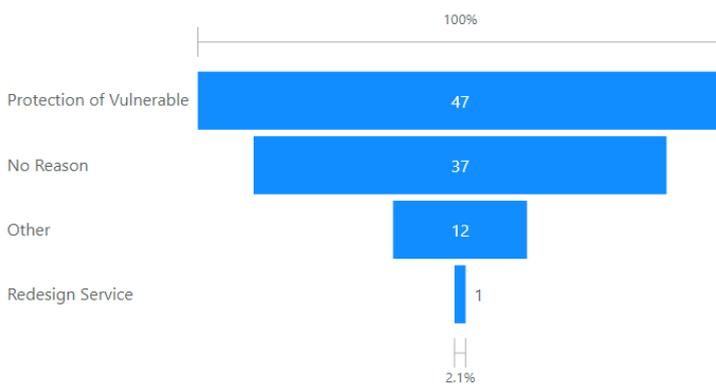
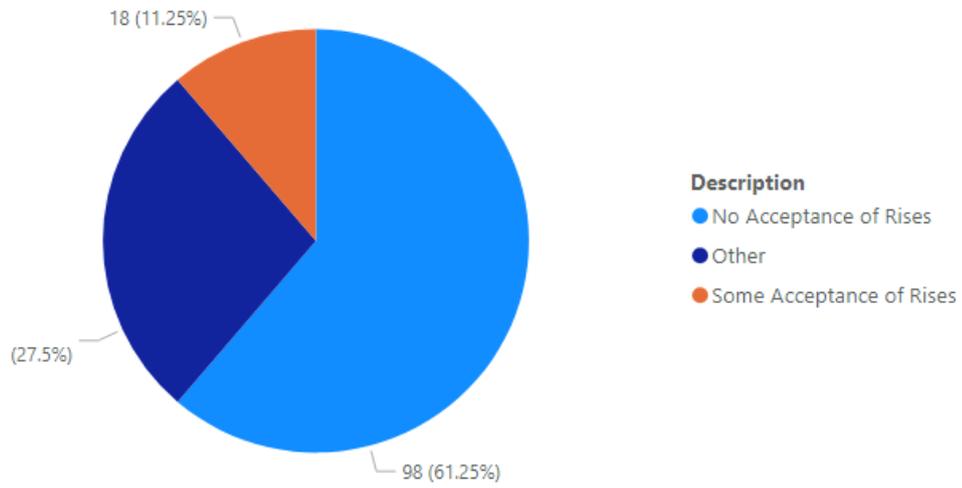
Summary of Comments

160 separate comments were received.

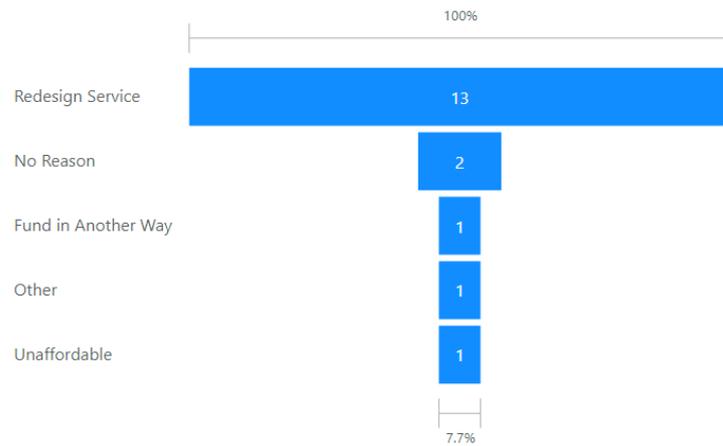
- **Impact of transportation cuts on service users:** Some people argue that cutting transportation would negatively affect the quality of life, health, and well-being of vulnerable adults who rely on the service to access day care, education, or social activities. They oppose any cuts to transportation, saying that it is an essential service, a lifeline, and a right for people who have little or no mobility. They also say that social care is already underfunded and that cuts would have long-term consequences.
- **Alternatives to transportation cuts:** Some people propose other ways to save money, such as charging for the service, using public transport, outsourcing, consolidating routes, or using volunteers.
- **Criticism of council spending priorities:** Some people criticise the council for spending money on other projects instead of focusing on statutory services and the needs of the most vulnerable citizens.
- **Suggestions for improving social care services:** Some people suggest that social care services need to be improved, overhauled, or reassessed, as they are being abused, underused, or inefficient. They also mention the need for more care, support, and inclusion for adults with disabilities or learning difficulties.

The comments have been categorized as follows:

Number of Responses by Main Category



Not Supportive of Savings Options

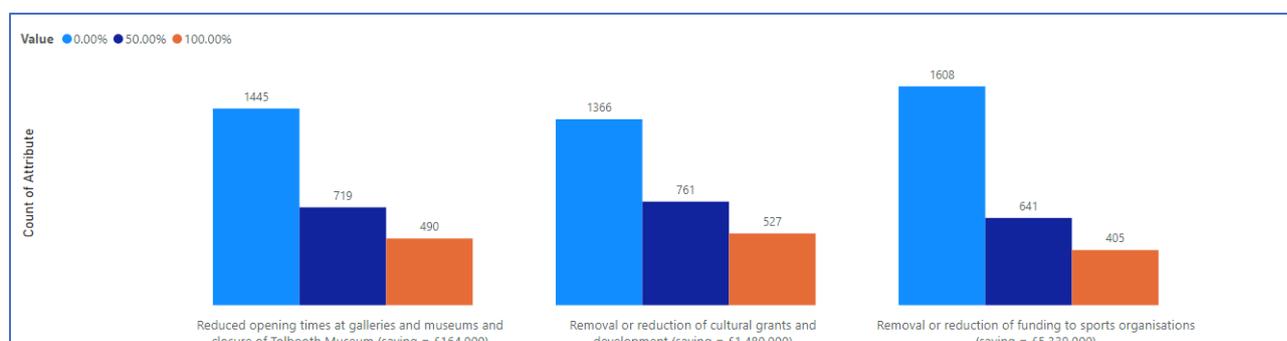


Some Acceptance of Options

4. Arts and Sport

Budget Options – Selections by Respondents

The following figures show the number and percentages of budget choices respondents made in the simulator.



	0%		50%		100%	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Reduced opening times at galleries and museums and closure of Tolbooth Museum (saving = £164,000)	1445	54%	719	27%	490	18%
Removal or reduction of cultural grants and development (saving = £1,480,000)	1366	51%	761	29%	527	20%
Removal or reduction of funding to sports organisations (saving = £5,339,000)	1608	61%	641	24%	405	15%

Summary of Comments

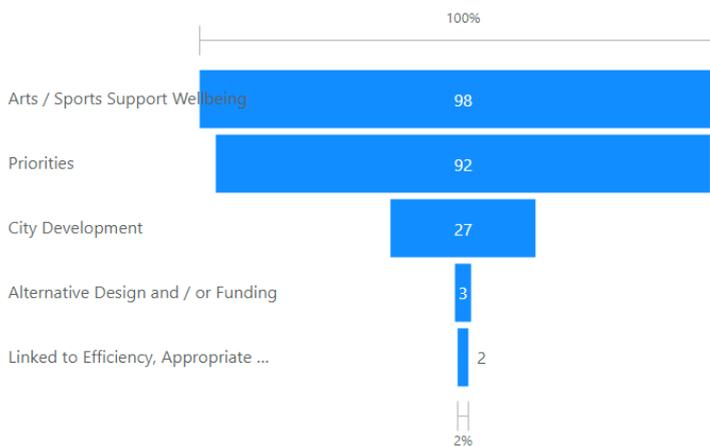
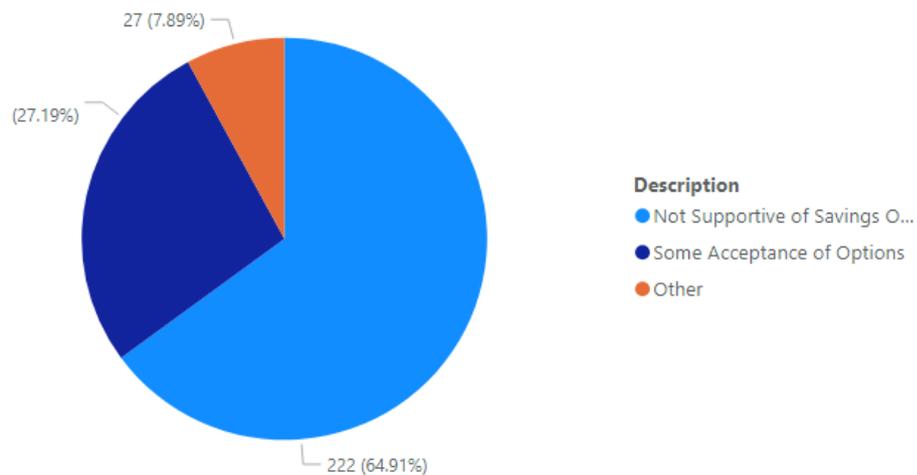
342 separate comments were received.

- **The importance of sport, art and culture for Aberdeen:** Most respondents oppose the reductions and argue that these services are vital for the well-being, health, tourism and identity of the city and its residents.
- **The suggestions for alternative sources of funding or savings:** Some of the respondents suggest that sport, art and culture services could generate more income by increasing fees, attracting sponsors, charging tourists or hosting corporate events. Others propose that the council should reduce its spending on pensions, staff or other non-essential projects.
- **The criticism of Sport Aberdeen and Aberdeen Sports Village:** A few of the respondents express dissatisfaction with the management and performance of Sport Aberdeen and Aberdeen Sports Village, the two main organisations that receive funding from the council for delivering sport services. They accuse them of being inefficient, wasteful, unaccountable or monopolistic, and suggest that they should be self-sufficient or reformed.
- **The demand for reopening Bucksburn pool and Beach Leisure Centre:** Several of the respondents demand that the council should reopen Bucksburn pool and Beach Leisure Centre. They claim that these pools were popular, accessible and beneficial for the local communities, and that their closure has reduced the availability and quality of swimming options in the city.

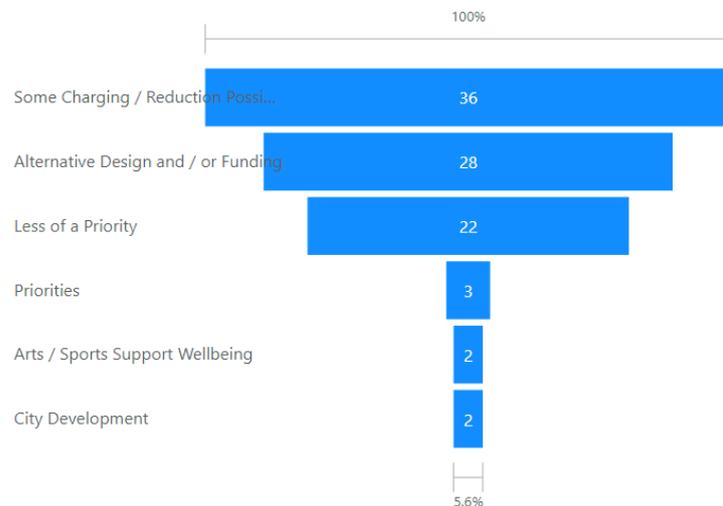
- The recognition of the challenges and trade-offs of the budget:** A few of the respondents acknowledge that the council faces a difficult situation and has to make hard decisions about the budget. They admit that some reductions in sport, art and culture services may be inevitable or necessary, and that the council should prioritise the most essential or valuable services or balance the needs of different groups.

The comments have been categorized as follows:

Number of Responses by Main Category



Not Supportive of Savings Options

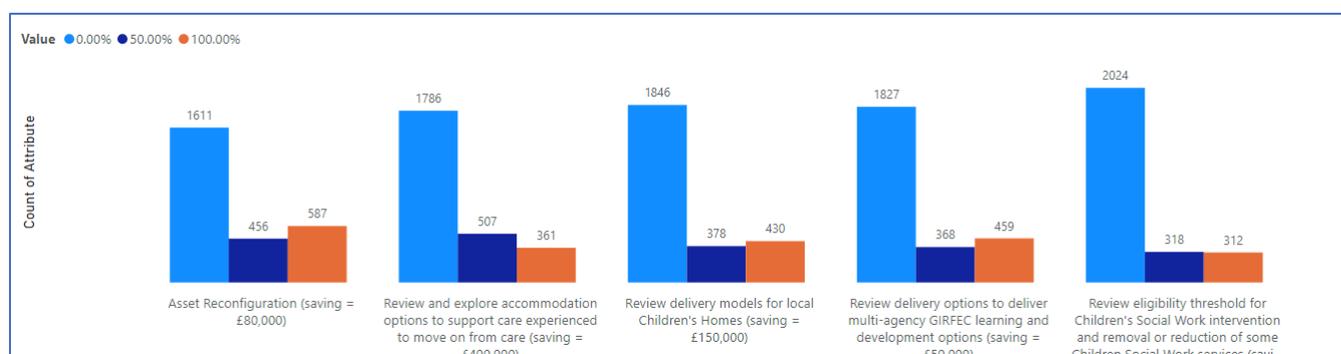


Some Acceptance of Options

5. Children’s Social Work

Budget Options – Selections by Respondents

The following figures show the number and percentages of budget choices respondents made in the simulator.



	0%		50%		100%	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Asset Reconfiguration (saving = £80,000)	1611	61%	456	17%	587	22%
Review and explore accommodation options to support care experienced to move on from care (saving = £400,000)	1786	67%	507	19%	361	14%
Review delivery models for local Children's Homes (saving = £150,000)	1846	70%	378	14%	430	16%
Review delivery options to deliver multi-agency GIRFEC learning and development options (saving = £50,000)	1827	69%	368	14%	459	17%
Review eligibility threshold for Children's Social Work intervention and removal or reduction of some Children Social Work services (saving = £180,000)	2024	76%	318	12%	312	12%

Summary of Comments

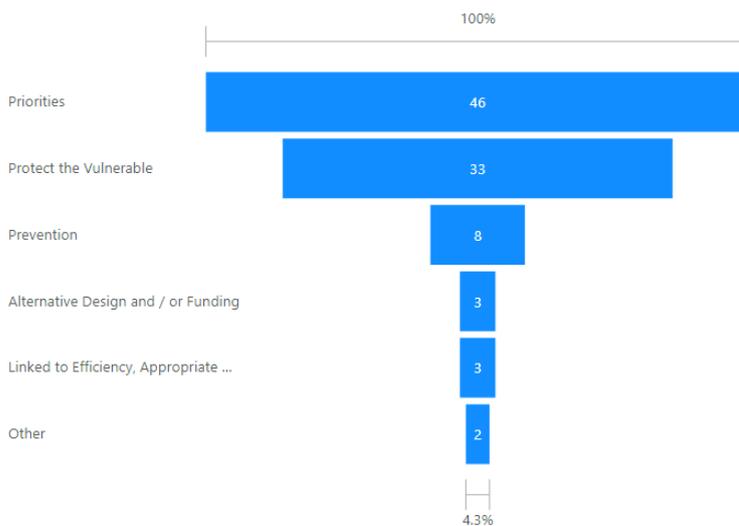
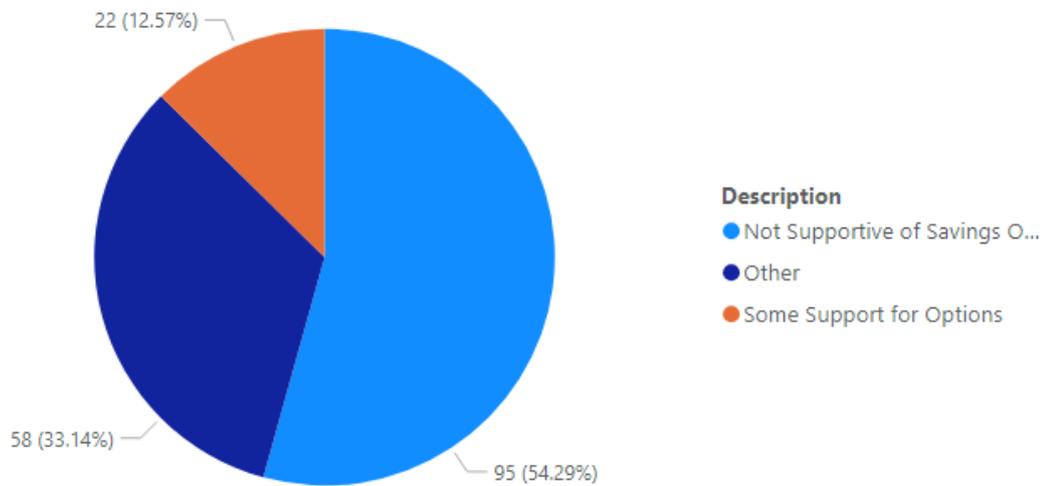
175 separate comments were received.

- **The most common themes in the feedback:** The feedback reveals that most respondents are opposed to any cuts in this area, and that they believe children's social work services are already underfunded and overstretched. Some of the common themes are: the need to protect the most vulnerable children, the importance of early intervention and prevention, the potential long-term costs of reducing support, and the dissatisfaction with the council's spending priorities.
- **The suggestions for alternative savings or revenue sources:** Some of the feedback also offers suggestions for how the council could save money or generate income in other ways, such as: reducing out of area placements and transport costs, reviewing staffing levels and pensions, outsourcing or collaborating with third sector organisations, fundraising or seeking sponsorship from local businesses and cutting non-essential projects.
- **The feedback on specific options for budget reductions:** The feedback also comments on some of the specific options for budget reductions that the council has proposed, such as: increasing the

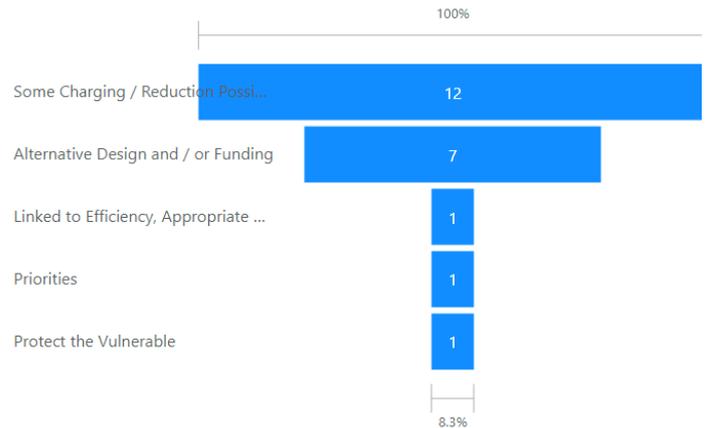
eligibility threshold for intervention, transferring children's homes to the third sector, changing accommodation support for care leavers, reviewing the delivery of GIRFEC, and relocating the Kincorth office. The majority of the feedback is negative or skeptical about these options, and expresses concerns about the impact on the quality and continuity of care, the safety and wellbeing of children, and the legal and ethical obligations of the council.

The comments have been categorized as follows:

Number of Responses by Main Category



Not Supportive of Savings Options

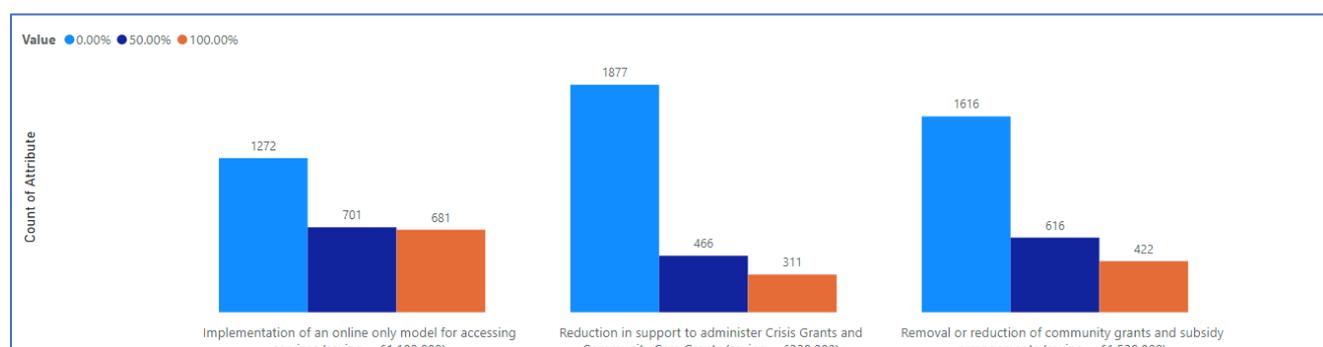


Some Acceptance of Options

6. Communities

Budget Options – Selections by Respondents

The following figures show the number and percentages of budget choices respondents made in the simulator.



	0%		50%		100%	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Implementation of an online only model for accessing services (saving = £1,108,000)	1272	48%	701	26%	681	26%
Reduction in support to administer Crisis Grants and Community Care Grants (saving = £239,000)	1877	71%	466	18%	311	12%
Removal or reduction of community grants and subsidy arrangements (saving = £1,538,000)	1616	61%	616	23%	422	16%

Summary of Comments

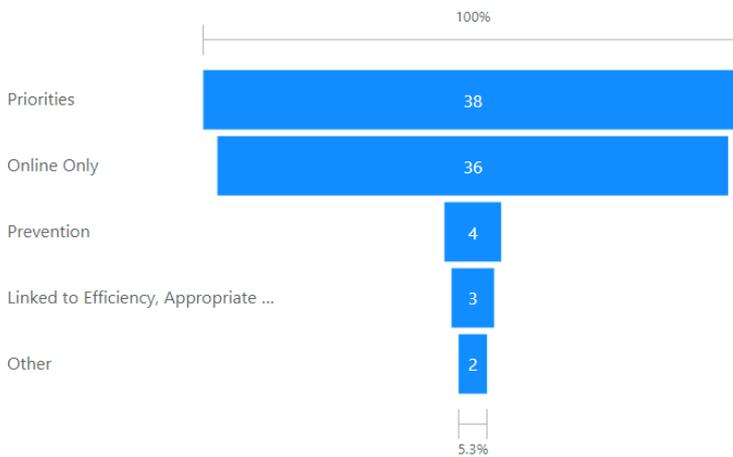
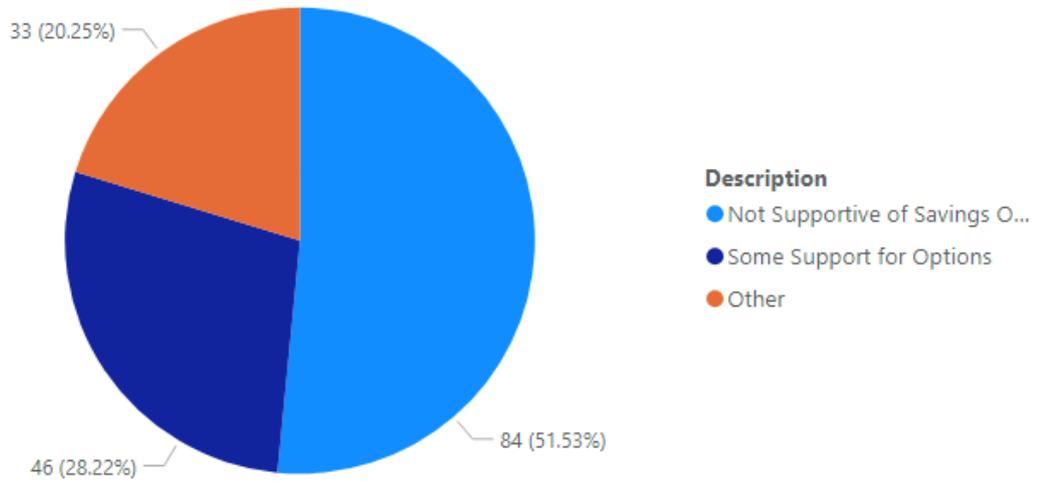
163 separate comments were received.

- **The responses varied widely in their opinions and suggestions:** The responses showed a range of opinions and suggestions on how to deal with the budget gap. Some respondents supported the online-only model, but a greater number argued that it would exclude the most vulnerable people. Some respondents suggested cutting council staff, pensions, or other services, while others opposed any reductions in vital services. Some respondents expressed frustration, anger, or confusion about the survey or the budget situation.
- **The responses highlighted the importance of early intervention and community projects:** Many responses emphasized the importance of early intervention and community projects for the well-being of the city and its residents. They argued that these services help prevent or reduce the need for more costly interventions later on, such as health care, social work, or criminal justice. They also pointed out the benefits of community projects for reducing poverty, inequality, isolation, and crime.
- **The responses reflected the diversity and complexity of the city's needs and challenges:** The responses reflected the diversity and complexity of the city's needs and challenges, as well as the

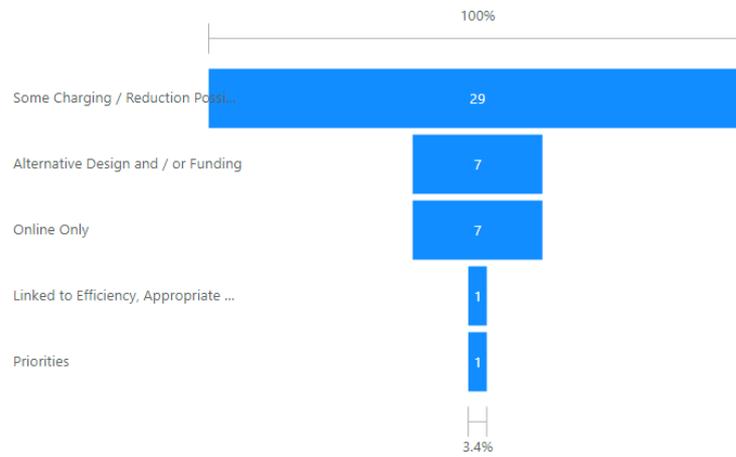
different perspectives and preferences of its residents. They showed that there is no easy or simple solution to the budget gap, and that any decision will have trade-offs and consequences.

The comments have been categorized as follows:

Number of Responses by Main Category



Not Supportive of Savings Options

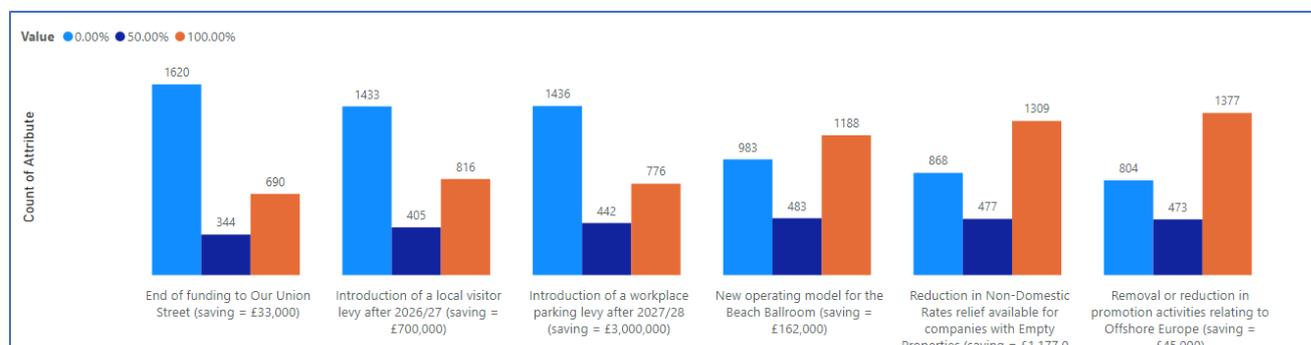


Some Acceptance of Options

7. Economic Development

Budget Options – Selections by Respondents

The following figures show the number and percentages of budget choices respondents made in the simulator.



	0%		50%		100%	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
End of funding to Our Union Street (saving = £33,000)	1620	61%	344	13%	690	26%
Introduction of a local visitor levy after 2026/27 (saving = £700,000)	1433	54%	405	15%	816	31%
Introduction of a workplace parking levy after 2027/28 (saving = £3,000,000)	1436	54%	442	17%	776	29%
New operating model for the Beach Ballroom (saving = £162,000)	983	37%	483	18%	1188	45%
Reduction in Non-Domestic Rates relief available for companies with Empty Properties (saving = £1,177,000)	868	33%	477	18%	1309	49%
Removal or reduction in promotion activities relating to Offshore Europe (saving = £45,000)	804	30%	473	18%	1377	52%

Summary of Comments

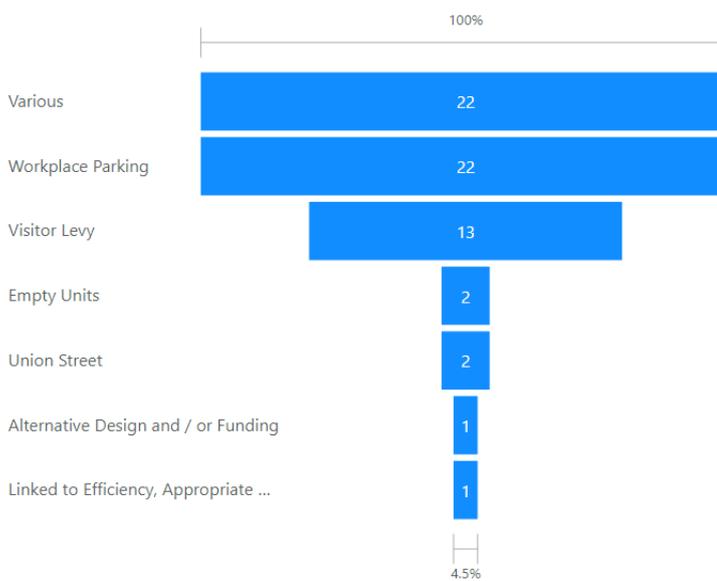
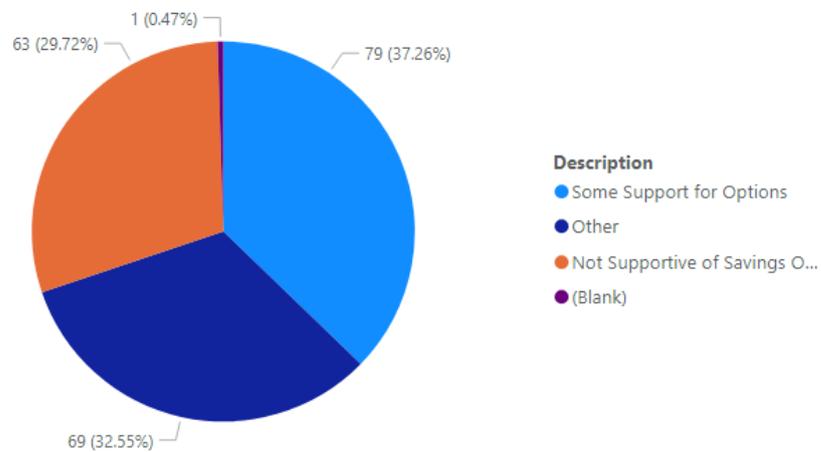
212 separate comments were received.

- **The responses varied widely in their opinions and suggestions:** Most of the comments gave views on more than one of the potential economic development options and had a mix of positive and negative opinions across these. There also appeared to be some misunderstanding of the nature of the options being considered.
- **Union Street funding:** There are various opinions on funding for Union Street regeneration. Some respondents support the funding, while others think it is a waste of money or too late.
- **Workplace parking levy:** The document also shows mixed views on the proposal to introduce a workplace parking levy, which would charge employers for providing parking spaces for their staff. Some respondents agree that this would discourage car use and encourage public transport, while others think it is unfair, costly, or impractical.
- **Local visitor levy:** Some respondents think this is a common practice in other places and would generate revenue for tourism infrastructure, while others think it would deter visitors and harm the local economy.

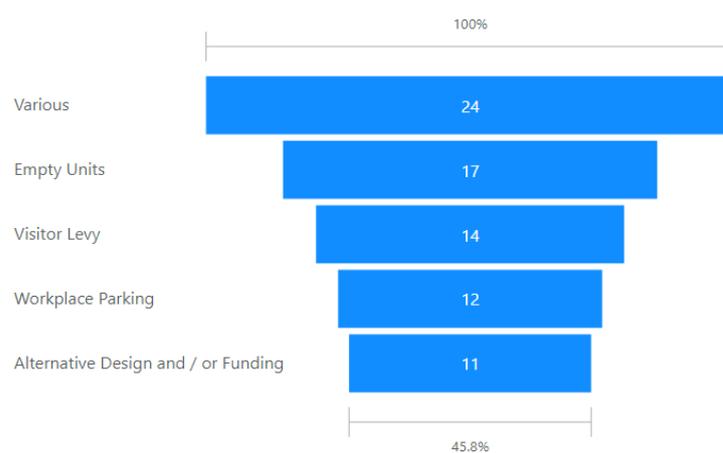
- **Non-domestic rates relief:** For the option to reduce non-domestic rates relief for empty properties, some respondents think this would encourage the use or sale of empty properties and revitalize the city, while others think it would penalize businesses or landlords who are struggling.
- **Offshore Europe promotion:** Some respondents think this is unnecessary, as the industry is well-established and profitable.
- **Beach Ballroom operation:** Some respondents think this is a positive step, as it would allow a more varied and profitable use of the facility, while others think it is a risky move, as it would compromise the quality and maintenance of the facility.

The comments have been categorized as follows:

Number of Responses by Main Category



Not Supportive of Savings Options

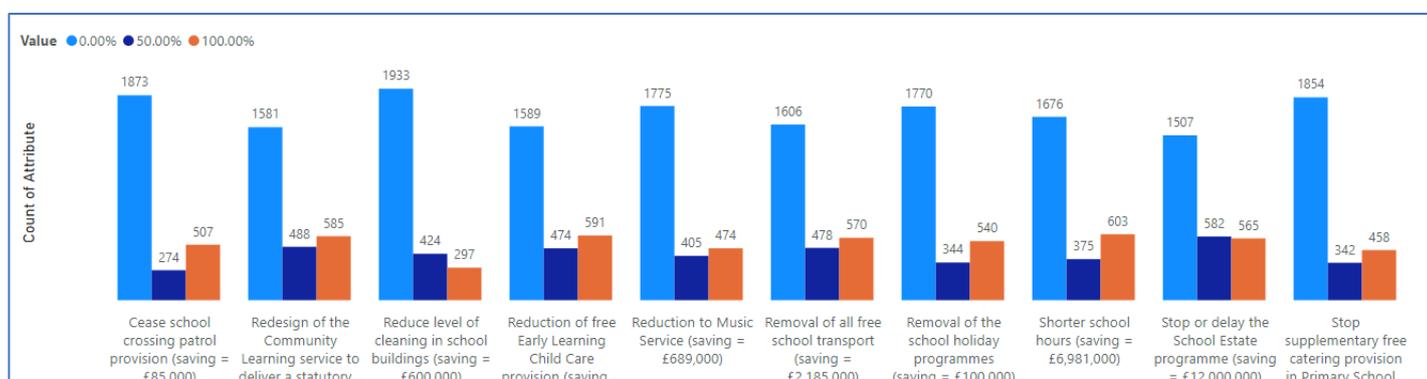


Some Acceptance of Options

8. Education

Budget Options – Selections by Respondents

The following figures show the number and percentages of budget choices respondents made in the simulator.



	0%		50%		100%	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Cease school crossing patrol provision (saving = £85,000)	1873	71%	274	10%	507	19%
Redesign of the Community Learning service to deliver a statutory minimum (saving = £1,215,000)	1581	60%	488	18%	585	22%
Reduce level of cleaning in school buildings (saving = £600,000)	1933	73%	424	16%	297	11%
Reduction of free Early Learning Child Care provision (saving = £7,000,000)	1589	60%	474	18%	591	22%
Reduction to Music Service (saving = £689,000)	1775	67%	405	15%	474	18%
Removal of all free school transport (saving = £2,185,000)	1606	61%	478	18%	570	21%
Removal of the school holiday programmes (saving = £100,000)	1770	67%	344	13%	540	20%
Shorter school hours (saving = £6,981,000)	1676	63%	375	14%	603	23%
Stop or delay the School Estate programme (saving = £12,000,000)	1507	57%	582	22%	565	21%
Stop supplementary free catering provision in Primary Schools, outside of Universal and statutory free school meals (saving = £200,000)	1854	70%	342	13%	458	17%

Summary of Comments

304 separate comments were received.

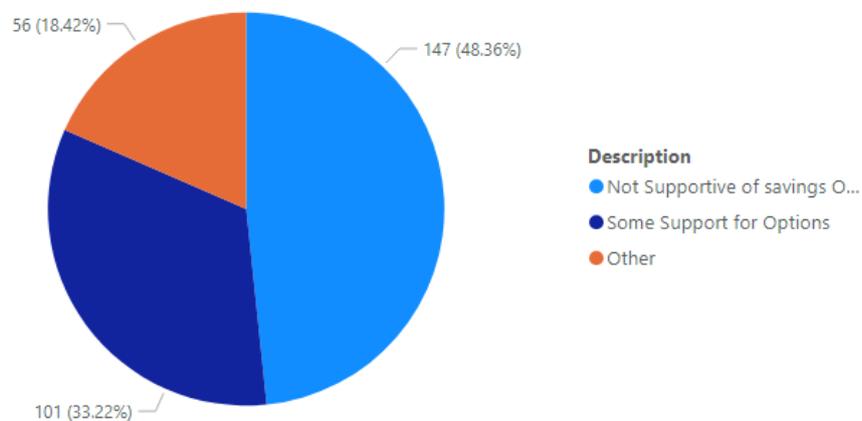
- Most comments are against reducing education services:** The majority of the comments are opposed to any reductions in education services, arguing that they are essential for the well-being, development, and future prospects of children and young people. Many comments also highlight the negative effects of the cuts on working parents, low-income families, vulnerable groups, and

staff working conditions. Some comments suggest alternative ways of saving money, such as increasing taxes, cutting council staffing levels, or reducing non-essential services.

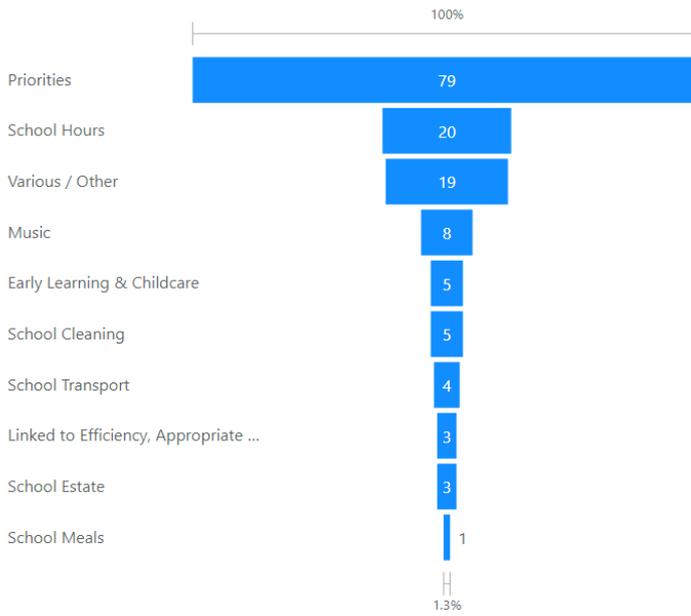
- **Some comments support reducing or charging for some education services:** A minority of the comments support reducing or charging for some education services, such as music service, school transport, school holiday programmes, or early learning. Some of these comments argue that these services are not necessary, not affordable, not equitable, or not effective. Some also suggest that parents should take more responsibility for their children's education, transport, and care.
- **Some comments question the validity of the survey or the council's decisions:** A few comments question the validity of the survey or the council's decisions, claiming that they are biased, misleading, unfair, or unrealistic. Some also doubt the feasibility or legality of some of the proposed reductions, such as shorter school hours or removal of school transport.
- **The document reflects the diversity of views and experiences of the public:** The document reflects the diversity of views and experiences of the public, as the comments vary in tone, length, style, and content. Some comments are more personal, emotional, or anecdotal, while others are more factual, logical, or statistical. Some comments are more specific, detailed, or constructive, while others are more general, vague, or critical. Some comments are more polite, respectful, or positive, while others are more rude, hostile, or negative.

The comments have been categorized as follows:

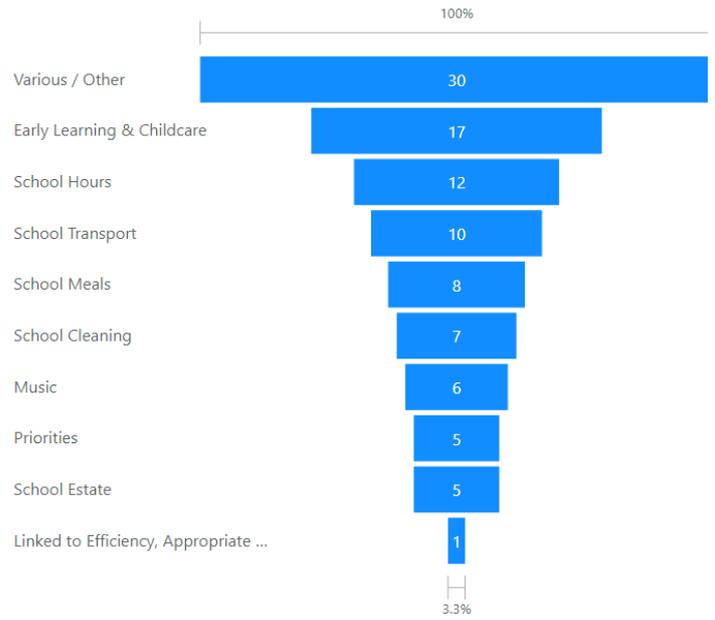
Number of Responses by Main Category



APPENDIX 1



Not Supportive of Savings Options

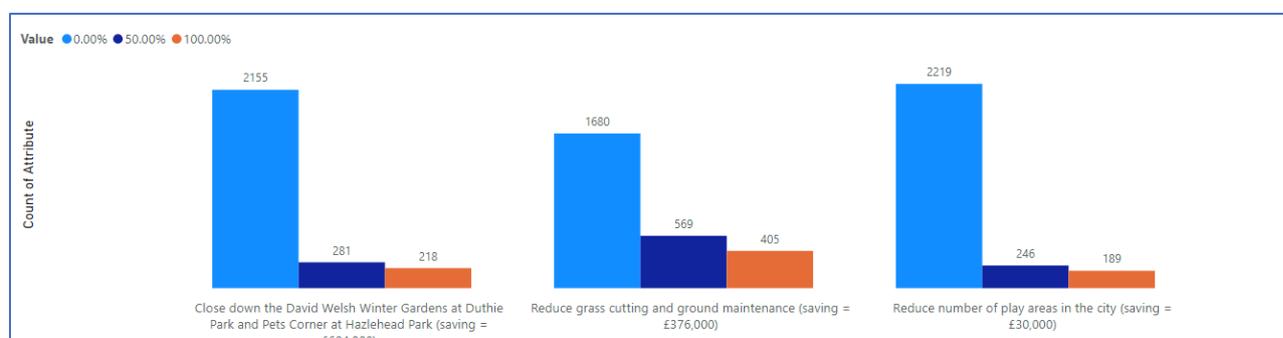


Some Acceptance of Options

9. Parks and Open Spaces

Budget Options – Selections by Respondents

The following figures show the number and percentages of budget choices respondents made in the simulator.



	0%		50%		100%	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Close down the David Welsh Winter Gardens at Duthie Park and Pets Corner at Hazlehead Park (saving = £604,000)	2155	81%	281	11%	218	8%
Reduce grass cutting and ground maintenance (saving = £376,000)	1680	63%	569	21%	405	15%
Reduce number of play areas in the city (saving = £30,000)	2219	84%	246	9%	189	7%

Summary of Comments

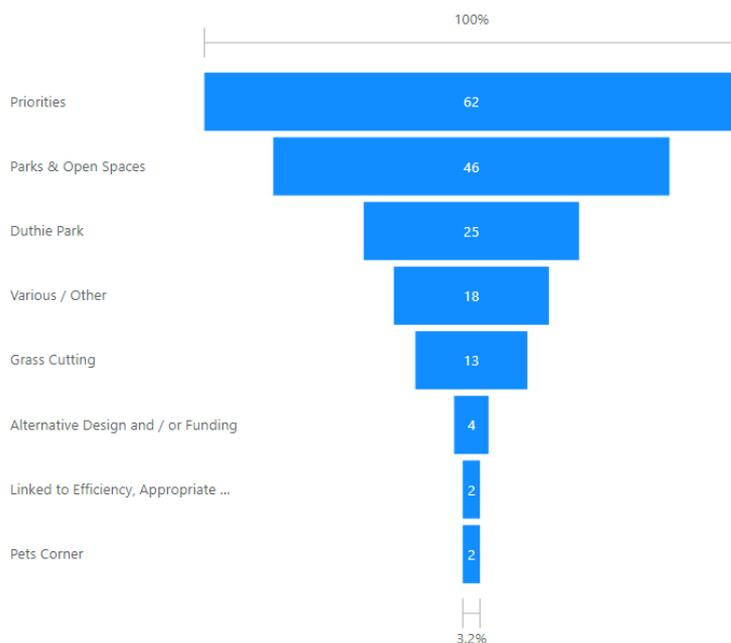
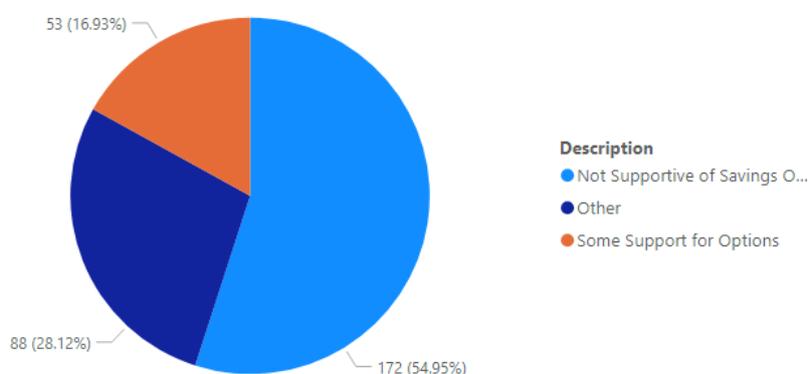
313 separate comments were received.

- **Grass cutting and maintenance issues:** Many people expressed dissatisfaction with the current level of grass cutting and ground maintenance, saying that the city looks shabby and untidy. Some suggested using community service workers or volunteers to help with the upkeep.
- **Winter Gardens and Pets Corner closure:** A large majority of people opposed the idea of closing down the Winter Gardens, arguing that they are an important attraction for visitors and residents alike. Opinion was more divided on the future of Pets Corner. Some proposed alternative ways to generate income, such as charging a small entry fee, hosting events, or seeking sponsorship.
- **Play areas reduction:** Some people agreed that reducing the number of play areas by 25 would not have a significant impact, as long as the remaining ones are well maintained and distributed. Others disagreed, saying that play areas are vital for children's health and well-being, and that closing them would lead to more social problems.
- **Environmental benefits of less grass cutting:** A few people suggested that reducing grass cutting could have positive effects on the environment, such as supporting biodiversity, creating wildflower meadows, and reducing emissions. They said that longer grass is better for wildlife and insects, and that some areas could be left to grow naturally.

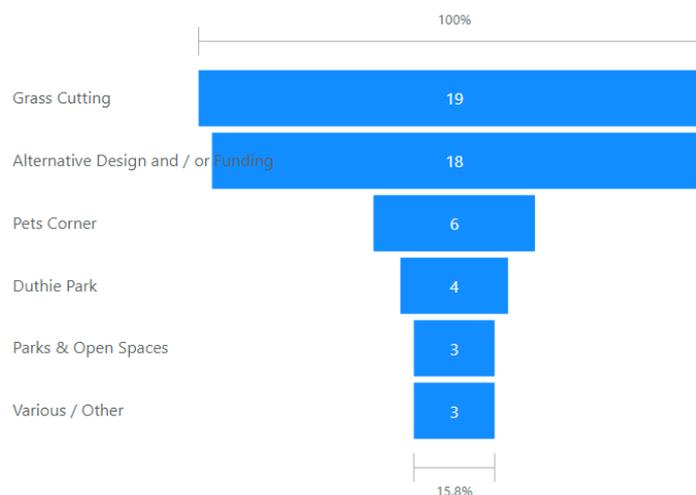
- **Other suggestions for savings or income:** Some people offered other ideas for saving money or generating income, such as reducing the heating in council buildings, charging dog owners more council tax, privatizing some services, or increasing the entry fee for Pets Corner.
- **Importance of parks and open spaces for mental health:** Many people emphasized the importance of parks and open spaces for mental health and well-being, especially during the pandemic and the cost of living crisis. They said that parks and open spaces are essential for people to enjoy nature, exercise, socialize, and escape from everyday problems.

The comments have been categorized as follows:

Number of Responses by Main Category



Not Supportive of Savings Options

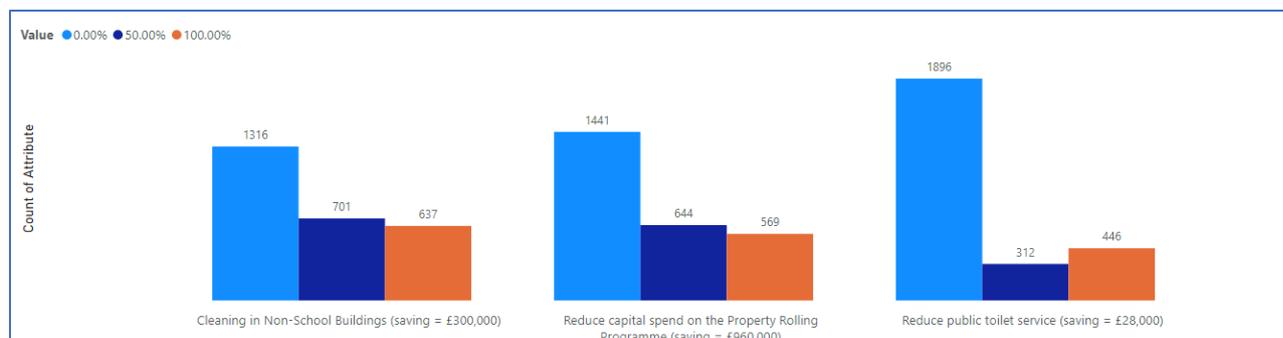


Some Acceptance of Options

10. Property and Building Maintenance

Budget Options – Selections by Respondents

The following figures show the number and percentages of budget choices respondents made in the simulator.



	0%		50%		100%	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Cleaning in Non-School Buildings (saving = £300,000)	1316	50%	701	26%	637	24%
Reduce capital spend on the Property Rolling Programme (saving = £960,000)	1441	54%	644	24%	569	21%
Reduce public toilet service (saving = £28,000)	1896	71%	312	12%	446	17%

Summary of Comments

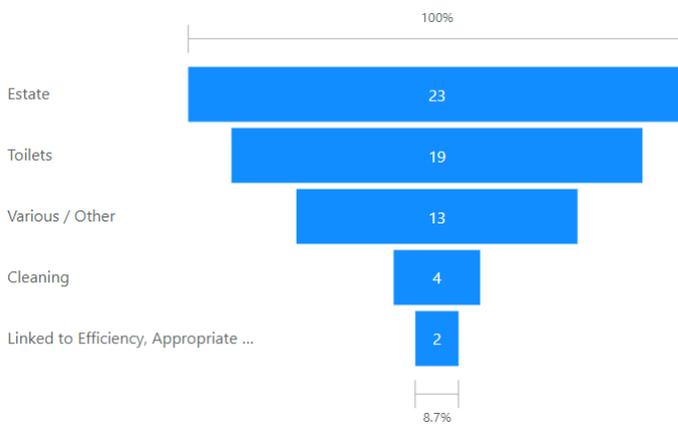
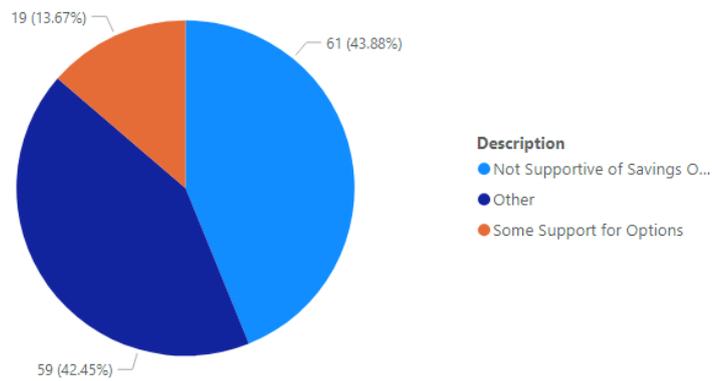
139 separate comments were received.

- Concerns over budget cuts for property and building maintenance:** Many respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with the proposed reductions in spending on public toilets, school buildings, and cleaning services. They argued that these cuts would have negative impacts on public health, safety, and tourism.
- Suggestions for alternative ways to save money:** Some respondents offered their ideas on how the council could reduce its expenses without compromising the quality of property and building maintenance. These included selling surplus assets or properties, outsourcing cleaning or maintenance services and relocating the council headquarters.
- Lack of public toilet provision in the city:** A common theme among the respondents was the scarcity of public toilets in the city centre and other areas. They questioned the accuracy of the budget figure for public toilet service, as they claimed that there were hardly any public toilets left. They also stressed the importance of public toilets for people with disabilities, tourists, and the general public.
- False economy of reducing capital spend on property rolling programme:** Several respondents warned that cutting the capital spend on property rolling programme would be a false economy, as it would lead to higher costs and more problems in the future. They also suggested that investing in property maintenance would save money and improve the city's image.

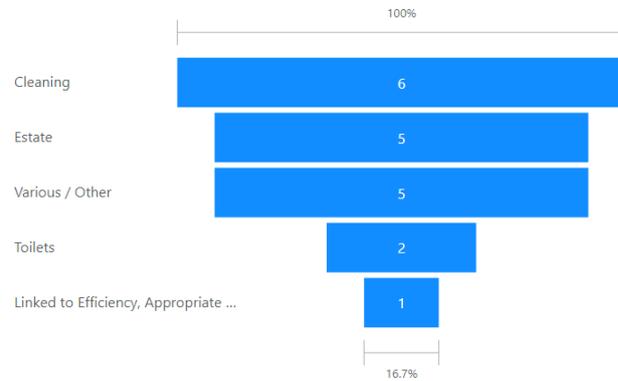
- Dissatisfaction with the budget consultation process:** Some respondents expressed their frustration with the budget consultation process, as they felt that it was not transparent, fair, or comprehensive. They complained that the budget figures were unclear, misleading, or inaccurate, and that the options for savings were limited and biased. They also demanded more information on how the council spends its money and how it allocates funds to different services.

The comments have been categorized as follows:

Number of Responses by Main Category



Not Supportive of Savings Options

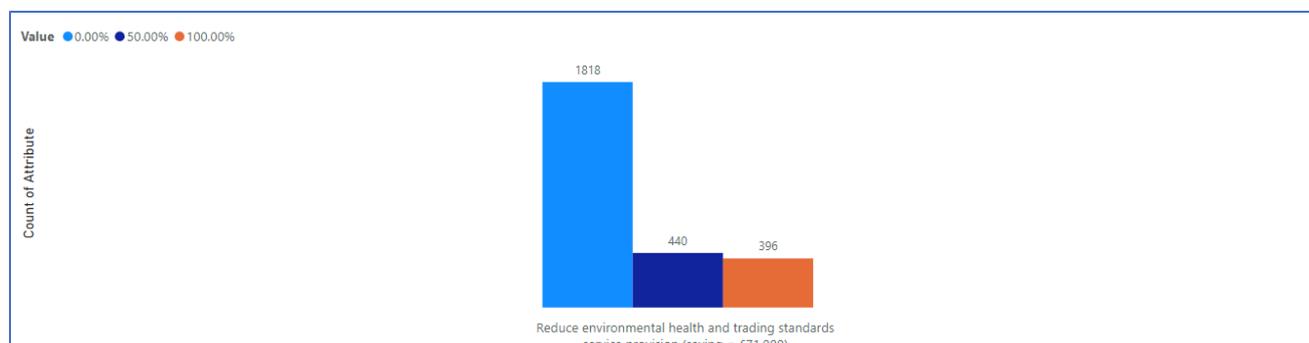


Some Acceptance of Options

11. Protective Services

Budget Options – Selections by Respondents

The following figures show the number and percentages of budget choices respondents made in the simulator.



	0%		50%		100%	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Reduce environmental health and trading standards service provision (saving = £71,000)	1818	69%	440	17%	396	15%

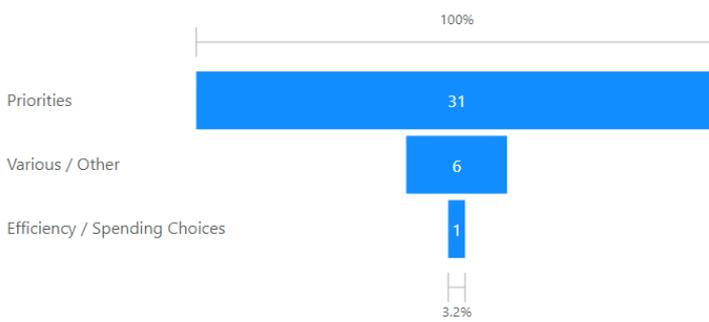
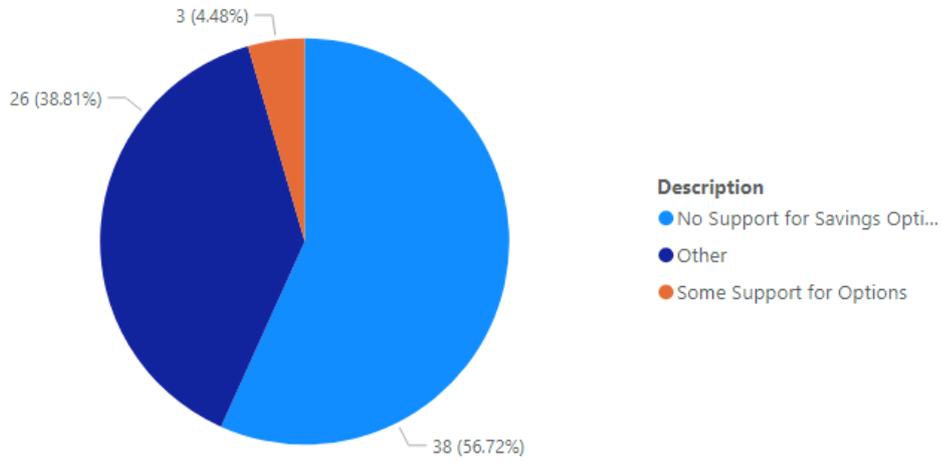
Summary of Comments

67 separate comments were received.

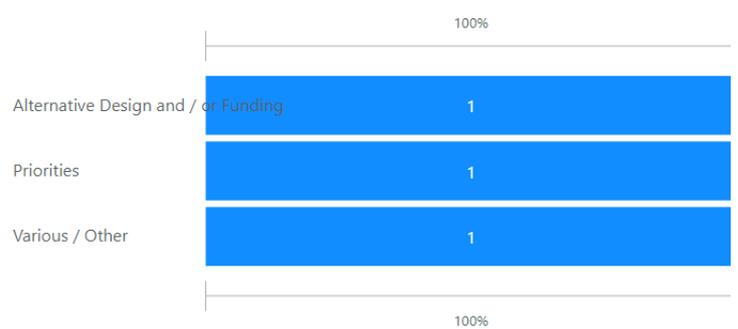
- **Service standards and council tax:** Some respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the service standards and the amount of council tax they pay, and suggested reducing staff pensions or laying off people.
- **Dog warden service:** Some respondents questioned the effectiveness or necessity of the dog warden service, and said they never saw a dog warden in their life.
- **Environmental health and trading standards:** Some respondents opposed any reduction in environmental health and trading standards, arguing that they are vital for public health, consumer protection and fraud prevention.
- **Budget transparency:** Some respondents criticized the council for not showing the whole budget or the impact of the proposed cuts, and accused the council of wasting money on non-essential projects.
- **Political influence and personal interests:** Some respondents expressed distrust in the council's decision-making process, and claimed that environmental health and trading standards are influenced by political or personal interests.

The comments have been categorized as follows:

Number of Responses by Main Category



Not Supportive of Savings Options

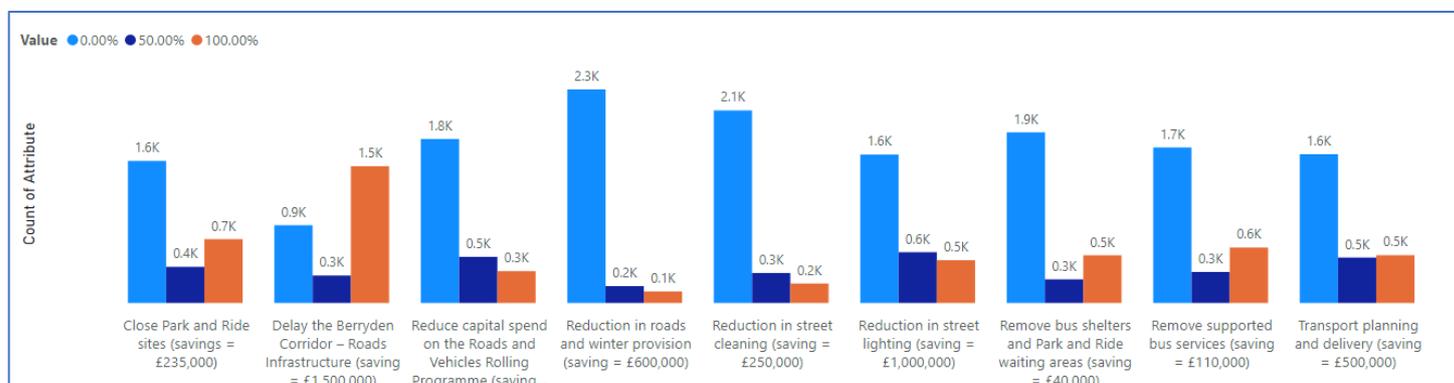


Some Acceptance of Options

12. Roads and Transport

Budget Options – Selections by Respondents

The following figures show the number and percentages of budget choices respondents made in the simulator.



	0%		50%		100%	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Close Park and Ride sites (savings = £235,000)	1558	59%	396	15%	700	26%
Delay the Berryden Corridor – Roads Infrastructure (saving = £1,500,000)	853	32%	301	11%	1500	57%
Reduce capital spend on the Roads and Vehicles Rolling Programme (saving = £1,920,000)	1799	68%	506	19%	349	13%
Reduction in roads and winter provision (saving = £600,000)	2343	88%	185	7%	126	5%
Reduction in street cleaning (saving = £250,000)	2112	80%	329	12%	213	8%
Reduction in street lighting (saving = £1,000,000)	1628	61%	557	21%	469	18%
Remove bus shelters and Park and Ride waiting areas (saving = £40,000)	1872	71%	259	10%	523	20%
Remove supported bus services (saving = £110,000)	1706	64%	340	13%	608	23%
Transport planning and delivery (saving = £500,000)	1632	61%	498	19%	524	20%

Summary of Comments

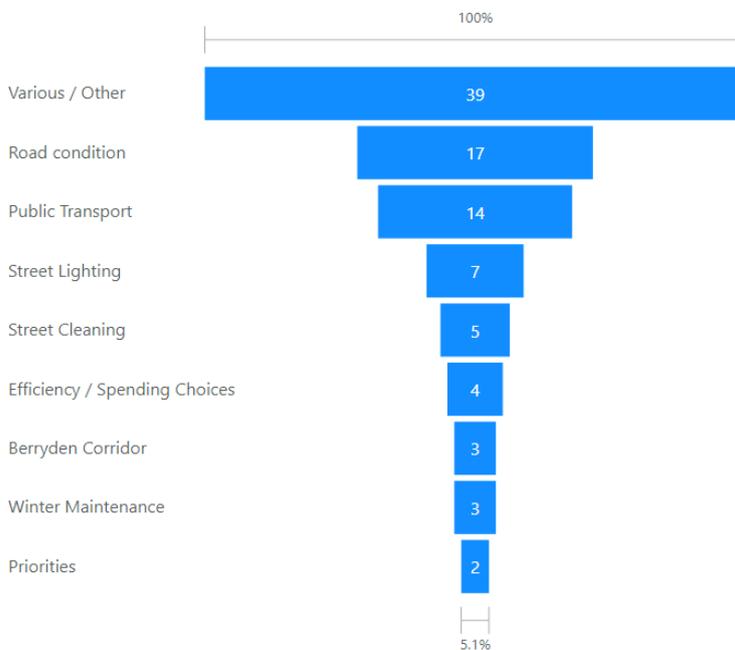
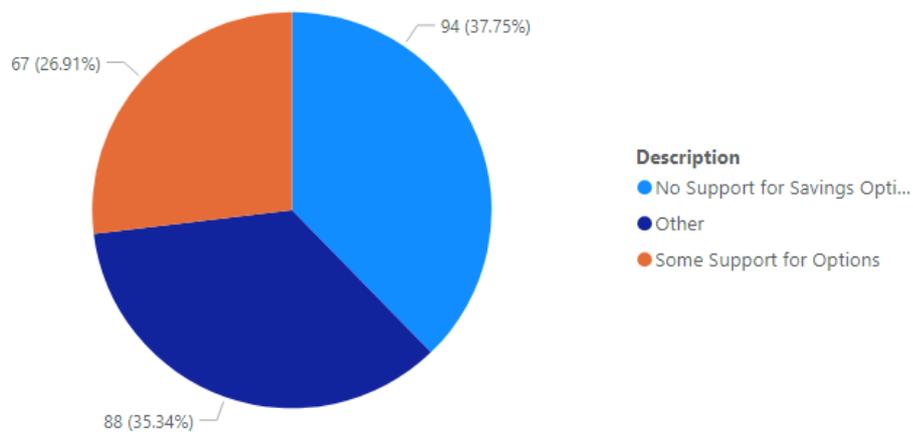
249 separate comments were received.

- Criticism of road planning and new projects:** Some respondents criticize the road planning and delivery team for wasting money on unnecessary or harmful projects, such as cycle lanes, bus gates, and low carbon vehicles. A number of respondents did not support the Berryden Corridor. They argue that these projects are either poorly executed, not in demand, or detrimental to the city's traffic and economy.
- Support for road and pavement maintenance:** A common theme among the respondents is the need for better road and pavement maintenance, as they complain about the poor state of the roads, pavements, and potholes. They suggest that the council should prioritize fixing the existing roads and pavements rather than building new ones or reducing the budget for maintenance.

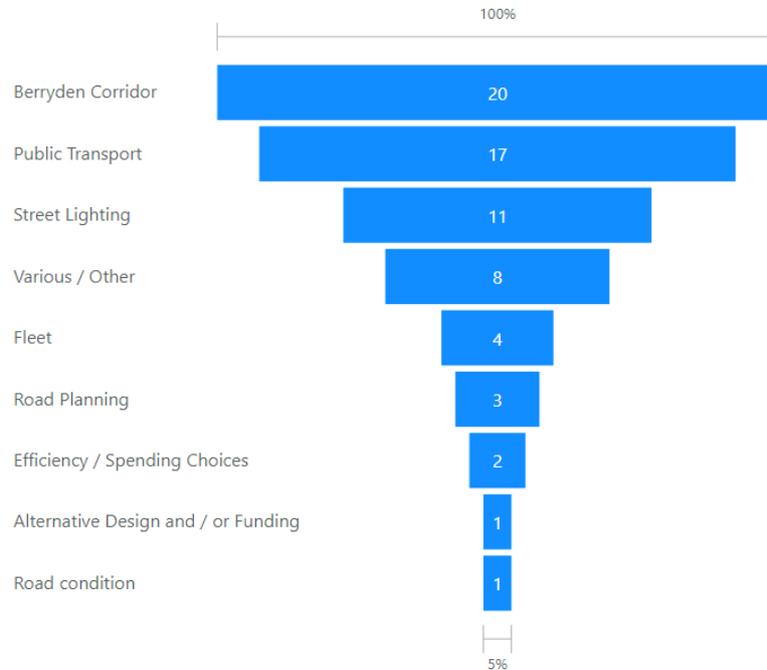
- Suggestions for improving public transport and environmental outcomes:** Some respondents offer suggestions for how to improve public transport and environmental outcomes, such as increasing the use of park and ride, charging lower fares, installing LED street lights, providing more bus shelters, and investing in cycling infrastructure. They also question the fairness and sustainability of some of the proposed cuts, such as removing the supported bus service.

The comments have been categorized as follows:

Number of Responses by Main Category



Not Supportive of Savings Options

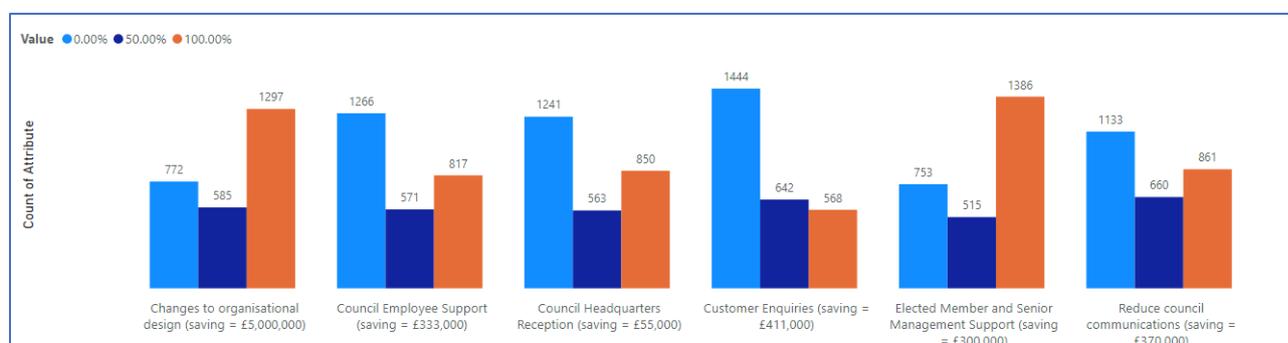


Some Acceptance of Options

13. Support and Corporate Service

Budget Options – Selections by Respondents

The following figures show the number and percentages of budget choices respondents made in the simulator.



	0%		50%		100%	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Changes to organisational design (saving = £5,000,000)	772	29%	585	22%	1297	49%
Council Employee Support (saving = £333,000)	1266	48%	571	22%	817	31%
Council Headquarters Reception (saving = £55,000)	1241	47%	563	21%	850	32%
Customer Enquiries (saving = £411,000)	1444	54%	642	24%	568	21%
Elected Member and Senior Management Support (saving = £300,000)	753	28%	515	19%	1386	52%
Reduce council communications (saving = £370,000)	1133	43%	660	25%	861	32%

Summary of Comments

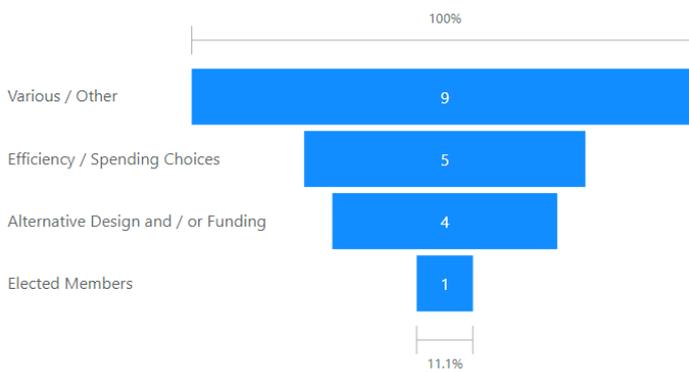
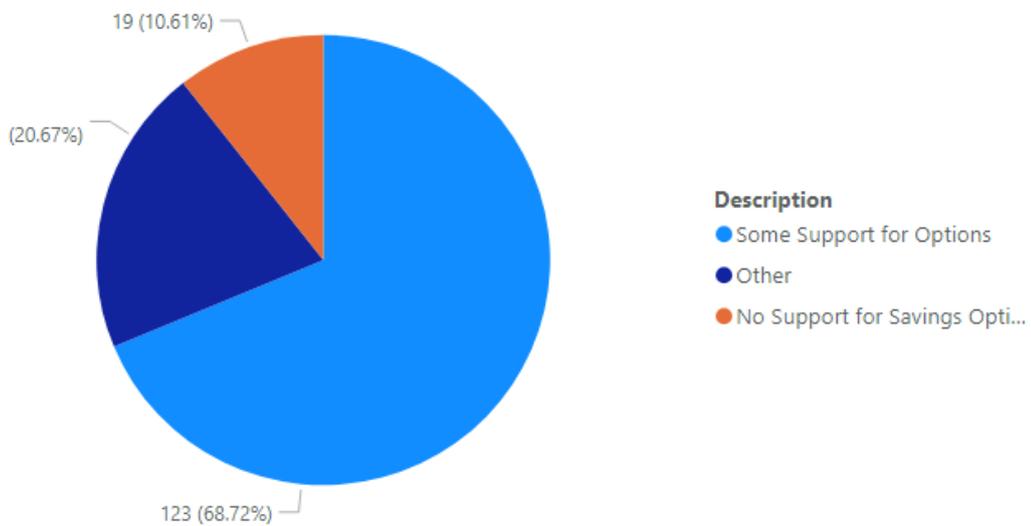
179 separate comments were received.

- Main themes of feedback:** Some of the main themes that emerge from the feedback are: dissatisfaction with the council's spending on non-essential projects; frustration with the lack of transparency and accountability of the council's decision-making process; concern for the impact of the cuts on essential services, such as education, social care, and roads; and suggestions for reducing the council's overhead costs, such as salaries, pensions, and benefits of senior management and elected members.
- Suggestions for improvement:** Some of the suggestions that the feedback offers for improving the council's performance and efficiency are: streamlining the management structure and reducing the number of councillors; increasing the use of digital technology and online platforms for communication and service delivery; collaborating with other public bodies and private sector partners to share resources and expertise; and engaging more with the public and the communities to consult on their needs and preferences.
- Positive feedback:** Some of the feedback also expresses appreciation and support for the council's efforts to cope with the financial challenges and to deliver quality services to the citizens. Some

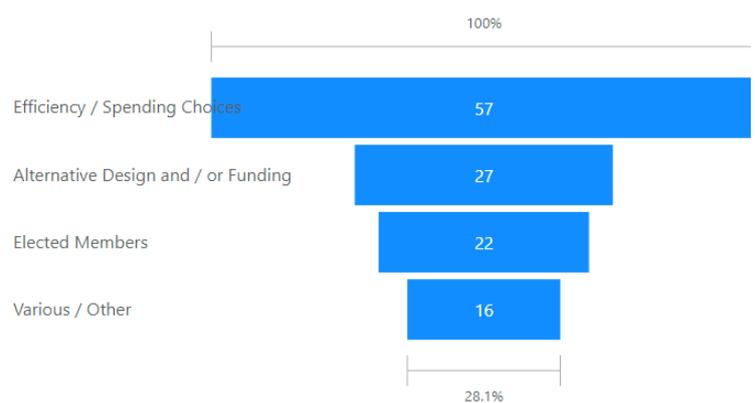
examples of positive feedback are: acknowledging the council's legal obligation to respond to FOI requests; praising the council's employee support programmes and apprenticeships; commending the council's reception and security staff for their professionalism and helpfulness; and recognising the council's need to reorganise and modernise its operations.

The comments have been categorized as follows:

Number of Responses by Main Category



Not Supportive of Savings Options

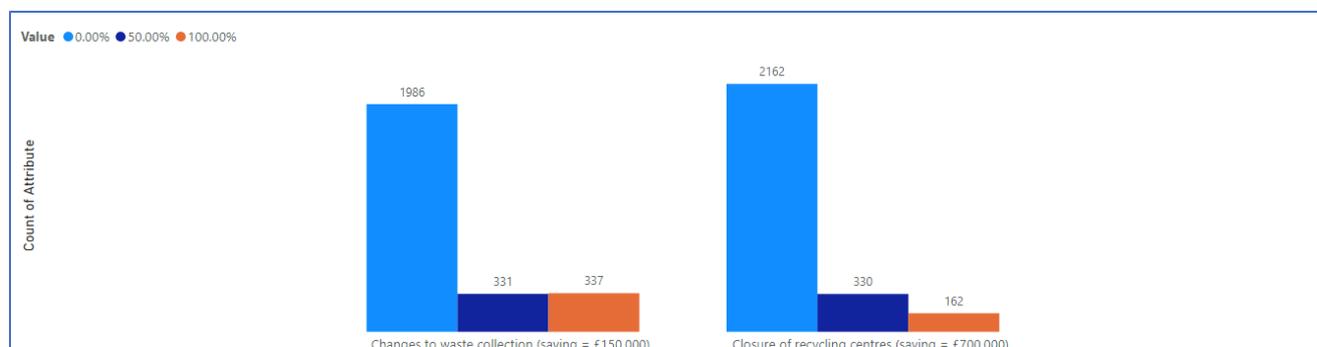


Some Acceptance of Options

14. Waste Collection and Disposal

Budget Options – Selections by Respondents

The following figures show the number and percentages of budget choices respondents made in the simulator.



	0%		50%		100%	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Changes to waste collection (saving = £150,000)	1986	75%	331	12%	337	13%
Closure of recycling centres (saving = £700,000)	2162	81%	330	12%	162	6%

Summary of Comments

198 separate comments were received.

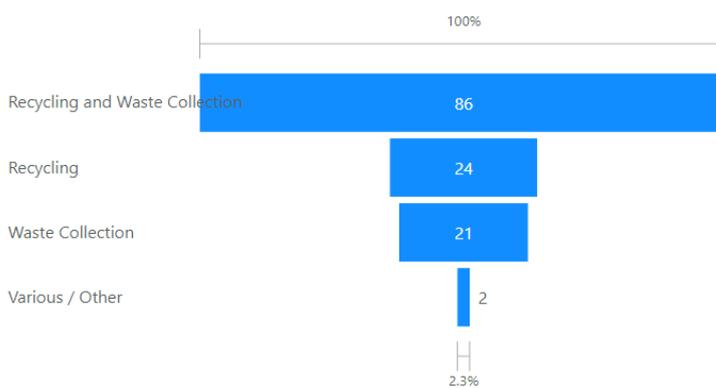
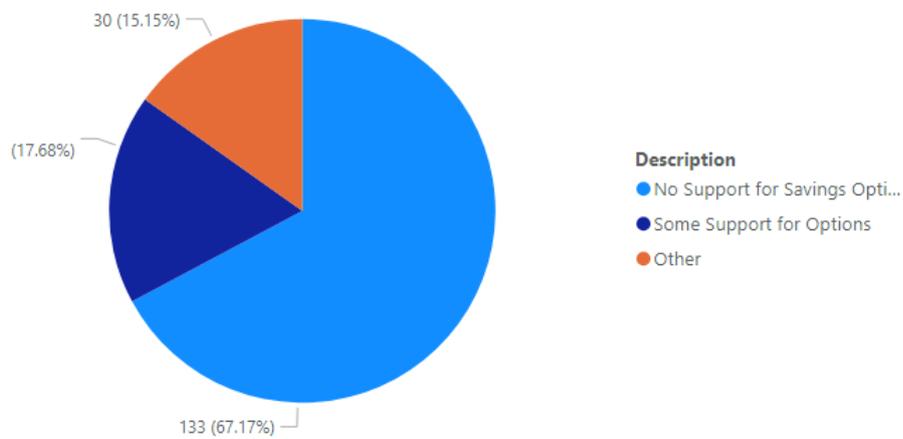
- The main concerns of the respondents are environmental, health, and aesthetic impacts of the proposed changes:** Many respondents express their worries about the negative effects of closing recycling centres or changing waste collection on the environment, such as increased fly tipping, reduced recycling rates, more waste going to landfill, and more greenhouse gas emissions. They also mention the health risks of having rotting waste in bins for longer periods, such as attracting rats, pests, and diseases. Some respondents also comment on the visual appearance of the city and how it would suffer from more littering and overflowing bins.
- Some respondents suggest alternative ways to save money or generate income from waste services:** A few respondents propose different ideas to reduce the costs of waste services or increase their revenue, such as charging more for garden waste collection, selling recyclable materials, privatizing the service, reducing staff or salaries, cutting council pensions, or increasing council tax. Some respondents also suggest ways to improve the efficiency or quality of the service, such as educating people on waste reduction, encouraging sharing of bins, increasing enforcement or fines for fly tippers, or providing more options for kerbside recycling.
- Some respondents express dissatisfaction with the survey design or the council's management:** A few respondents criticize the survey for being incomplete, biased, or misleading, and question the validity of the results. They claim that the survey does not show the full budget or the impact of the changes, and that it forces them to choose between bad

options. Some respondents also express their anger or frustration with the council's spending decisions, priorities, or competence, and accuse them of wasting money, being corrupt, or ignoring the public's views.

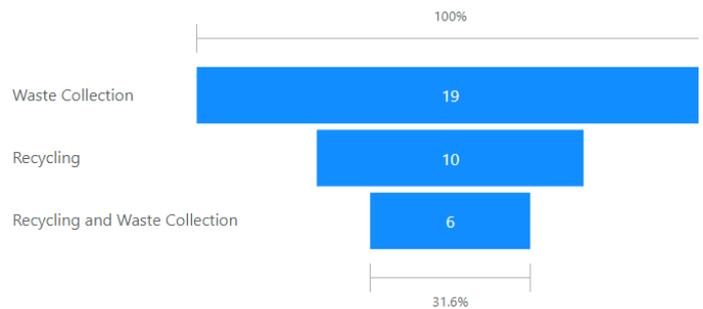
- **Some respondents support the changes or have no strong opinion:** A few respondents indicate that they are in favour of the changes or that they do not mind them, either because they think they are necessary, reasonable, or beneficial, or because they do not use the service or have other options. Some respondents also acknowledge the financial challenges that the council faces and the need to make savings.

The comments have been categorized as follows:

Number of Responses by Main Category



Not Supportive of Savings Options



Some Acceptance of Options

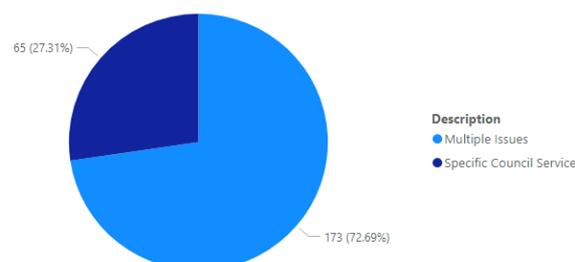
15. Final Comments

Respondents had the opportunity to make final comments, not specifically related to specific budget options.

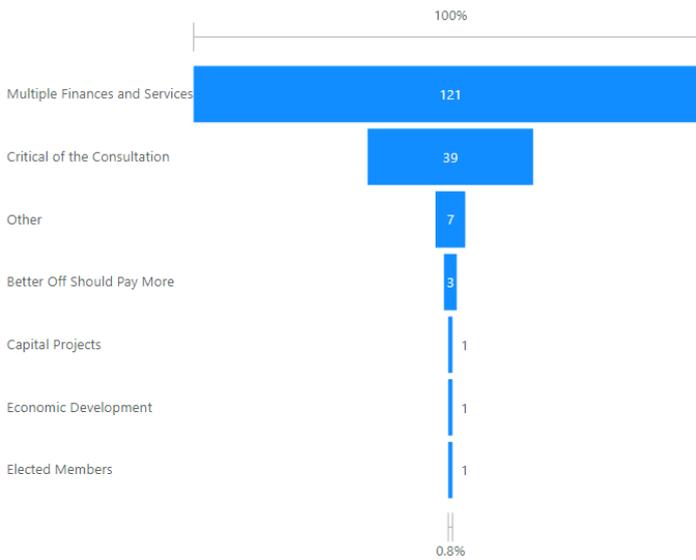
- **Concerns about the budget cuts and council tax increases:** Many of the respondents express their concerns about the impact of the budget cuts on essential services, especially education, social care, arts and culture, and public health. They also question the need for council tax increases when they are already paying high rates and getting less services.
- **Suggestions for alternative ways to save money or generate income:** Some of the respondents offer suggestions for alternative ways to save money or generate income for the council, such as reducing rent rates for city centre buildings, closing the DB pension scheme, means testing education funding, reducing council staff and salaries, postponing or cancelling capital projects, charging more for parking and business rates, making use of solar power and public-private partnerships, and negotiating more funding from the Scottish Government.
- **Criticism of the council's management and spending decisions:** Some of the respondents criticize the council's management and spending decisions, accusing them of being inefficient, wasteful, corrupt, or out of touch with the public's needs and wishes. They point out examples of money being spent on projects that they consider unnecessary, such as bus gates, cycle lanes, beach development, Union Terrace Gardens. They also challenge the council to be more transparent, accountable, and collaborative in their budgeting process.
- **Recognition of the difficulty and complexity of the budgeting task:** Some of the respondents recognize the difficulty and complexity of the budgeting task, and commend the council for creating the budget simulator tool and asking for the public's input. They acknowledge that there are no easy choices and that the council faces a challenging situation due to the reduced funding from the government and the impact of the pandemic. They also suggest some creative solutions, such as borrowing or, investing.
- **Support for the council's vision and priorities:** Some of the respondents support the council's vision and priorities, and agree with the proposed budget cuts and council tax increases. They emphasize the importance of protecting the environment, promoting sustainability, enhancing the city's vibrancy and attractiveness, and supporting the vulnerable groups and communities. They also express their appreciation for the council's services and initiatives, such as digital tools, energy efficiency, early learning and childcare, and arts and culture.

The comments have been categorized as follows:

Number of Responses by Main Category

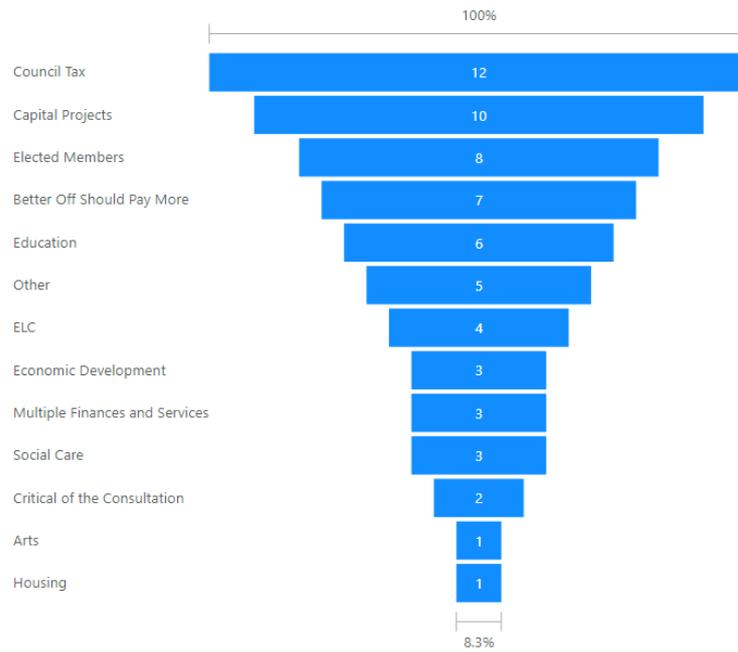


Number of Responses by Sub-Category



Multiple Issues

Number of Responses by Sub-Category



Specific Council Services

16. Balancing the Budget

Whilst the premise of the “Simulator” was that a combination of increases in Council Tax and Fees & Charges together with decreases through reducing spend on services would “close the budget gap” of £83M, respondents were not required to select options of sufficient value to achieve a balanced budget.

Of 2,654 respondents, 492 (18.5%) chose sufficient options to achieve a balanced budget.