

# Shaping Bridgend's Future 2024

## Consultation Report

**Date of issue: February 2024**

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## 1. Overview

A public consultation was undertaken over a three-week period from **15<sup>th</sup> January 2024** to **4<sup>th</sup> February 2024**. The consultation received **2,839** interactions from a combination of survey completions, and engagements at drop in events. This paper details the analysis associated with the consultation.

## 2. Introduction

The public survey was available to complete online through a link on the consultation page of the council's website or by visiting [www.bridgend.gov.uk/future](http://www.bridgend.gov.uk/future). Paper copies of the consultation were also made available which could be sent directly to residents upon request. Surveys were available in several formats, including easy-read, large print, standard and a youth version. All were available in Welsh and English.

Respondents could choose to answer all or some questions. All survey responses offered the option of anonymity. The council's standard set of equality monitoring questions were also included within the survey, in line with recommended good practice for all public-facing surveys carried out by the council.

## 3. Marketing and engagement methods

Details of the consultation were shared with the following stakeholders: general public/residents, Citizens' Panel members, elected members, Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) employees, local media, and town and community councils.

### 3.1. Promotional tools

This section details the methods used to raise the profile of the consultation and encourage participation.

#### 3.1.1. Social Media

The council runs the following social media accounts: Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube.

Budget consultation information was posted bilingually to the council's corporate social media channels throughout the consultation period to raise awareness of the consultation and to encourage citizens to share their views on the proposals.

The council currently has **14,766** followers on its English Twitter account and **373** on its Welsh Twitter account, **20,087** followers on its English Facebook page and **262** on the Welsh Facebook page, **3,335** followers on Instagram and **7,298** followers on LinkedIn and **209** subscribers on YouTube.

While content is most likely to be seen by these users, it is also displayed to users who are not connected to the accounts.

	Impressions	Comments	Shares	Link clicks
<b>English</b>	20,936	105	78	420
<b>Welsh</b>	227	0	0	1

### 3.1.2. Website

#### Views

The below table shows the number of views to our Budget Consultation page and Our Budget challenges explained webpage.

Page path and screen class	budget-consultation-shaping-bridgends-future-2024-25/	council-budget-challenges-explained/
<b>Source</b>		
(direct)	285	160
beloud.com	1	2
bing	61	79
bridgend-self.achieveservice.com	30	25
bridgend-self.test.achieveservice.com	1	0
bridgenders.net	22	37
bridgendtowncouncil.gov.uk	1	0
caerauprimary.co.uk	1	0
content.govdelivery.com	8	0
coychurchprimary.co.uk	0	1
digitalhealth.wales	0	1
duckduckgo	2	3
ecosia.org	8	0
email.bt.com	2	0
google	824	438
gov.uk	39	16
gov.wales	5	11
hafod.org.uk	1	0
instagram.com	1	1
inyourarea.co.uk	0	1
ip.e-paycapita.com	11	6
l.facebook.com	35	102
linkedin.com	8	0
linktr.ee	0	1
lm.facebook.com	126	130
lnks.gd	952	103
m.facebook.com	180	202
maestegschool.co.uk	0	1

Page path and screen class	budget-consultation-shaping-bridgends-future-2024-25/	council-budget-challenges-explained/
<b>Source</b>		
news.google.com	1	11
oggybloggyogwr.com	11	0
ogmorevaleprimary.co.uk	0	1
qwant.com	6	0
sbs.e-paycapita.com	2	1
search.aol.co.uk	1	0
sites.google.com	2	0
srs.wales	1	1
swansea.gov.uk	1	0
t.co	11	1
theguardian.com	0	1
uat.penybontarogwr.gov.uk	0	1
uk.search.yahoo.com	8	9
visitwales.com	3	0
wppp.org.uk	2	0
	<b>2,653</b>	<b>1,346</b>

### 3.1.3. govDelivery

govDelivery is a digital communications platform that was introduced by the council in June 2020 to improve communication. It is currently used to issue council updates directly to residents' email inboxes in the language of their choice.

There are currently 35,143 English language and 283 Welsh language users who have subscribed to receive the council's weekly update emails.

Shaping Bridgend's Future Budget consultation was included in the following bulletins:

#### English:

Bulletin Subject	Date Sent	Unique clicks	Total clicks
<b>Standalone Budget Consultation bulletin</b>	29 <sup>th</sup> January 2024	1,405	1,557
<b>Residents Bulletin (included three times)</b>	18 <sup>th</sup> January 2024	361	417
	25 <sup>th</sup> January 2024	70	76
	1 <sup>st</sup> February 2024	163	174

## Welsh:

Bulleting Subject	Date sent	Unique clicks	Total clicks
<b>Standalone Budget Consultation bulletin</b>	29 <sup>th</sup> January 2024	4	5
<b>Residents Bulletin (included three times)</b>	18 <sup>th</sup> January 2024	1	1
	25 <sup>th</sup> January 2024	2	2
	1 <sup>st</sup> February 2024	3	3

### 3.1.4. Engagement HQ

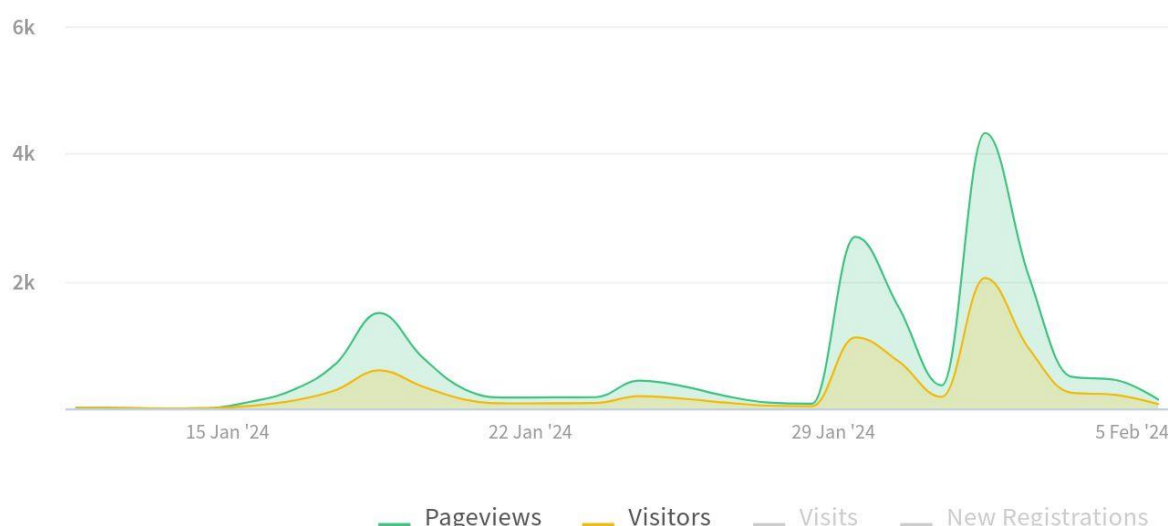
Engagement HQ is a digital engagement platform that was implemented by the local authority in December 2022, to support the council's online consultation and engagement activities. The platform is available in both English and Welsh Language.

The online survey was published using Engagement HQ, with the link available on the consultation page of the council's website.

The below image shows an overview of visitors to the Engagement and Participation Strategy project page on Engagement HQ.

## Visitors Summary

Be involved, Bridgend from 08 Jan'24 to 05 Feb'24



The table below shows a highlight of traffic to the Engagement HQ project page for the Shaping Bridgend's Future 2024 consultation.

<b>Aware visitors</b>	7,212
<b>Informed visitors</b>	4,868
<b>Engaged visitors</b>	2,831
<b>Visits referred from social media</b>	409
<b>Visits referred from council's website</b>	1,166
<b>Visitors from search engine</b>	98
<b>Direct</b>	3,930
<b>Email</b>	3

### 3.1.5. Media and Publicity

A media release was issued on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024 to flag up the upcoming budget consultation.

A link to the consultation was included in the medium-term final strategy press release on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2024 to encourage people to have their say.

<https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/news/medium-term-financial-strategy-discussed-by-cabinet-as-national-financial-challenges-continue/>

### 3.1.6. Internal communications

Messages were included in staff bulletins to encourage staff to complete the budget consultation.

The consultation was also promoted on the staff intranet.

	<b>Date Sent</b>	<b>Unique Clicks</b>	<b>Total clicks</b>
Staff Bulletin	1 <sup>st</sup> February 2024	8	12

### 3.1.7. Promotional Materials

An explainer video was produced to help people understand how the council's budget works and the challenges it faces. The video was featured on the webpage for the consultation.



### 3.1.8. Engagement drop in events

The consultation team held two engagement events during the consultation period at Garw Valley Life Centre and Ogmore Valley Life Centre. Business cards with links to the online survey were given out to encourage participation.

## 4. Response Rate

In total there were **2,839** interactions from a combination of survey completions, both online and paper, some of which were in response to engagement at drop-in sessions.

In total there were **2,813** responses to the online survey and **26** were submitted by paper, including English Language and Welsh language submissions: from our standard, Citizen Panel, Easy read, and large print versions.

This is double the response rate on the previous year's consultation, despite the period being only for three weeks.

## 5. How effective was the consultation?

The data collection methods, which include the online survey and a paper survey were developed using plain English to maximise understanding. These response methods were designed to give a consistency to the survey across multiple platforms.

## 6. Consultation Survey

### 6.1. Language used to complete the survey.

Respondents to the consultation survey were initially asked in which language they would like to complete the survey. Overall, 99.7% of respondents selected English with 0.3% selecting Welsh.

Language	#	%
English	2,831	99.7%
Welsh	8	0.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,839</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## 7. Survey Questions and Analysis

This section outlines and analyses all questions asked in the online survey. The survey was split into 9 sections.

- Budget Principles
- Reduce / close services.
- Increasing charges and introducing new charges
- Review services and related budgets
- Review use of assets/buildings
- Review contracts with external partners for leisure services
- Review agreements with external partners



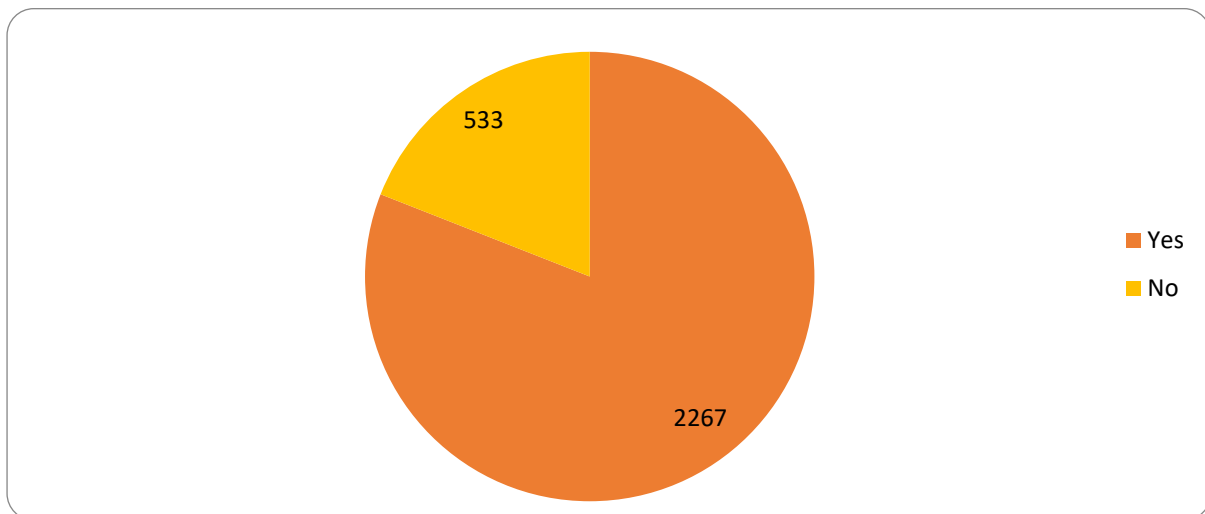
- Council Tax
- Citizen Focused

### 7.1. Budget Principles

We are proposing the following principles should underpin the development of the budget for the coming financial year:

- The Council will seek to safeguard and protect the most vulnerable people in our communities.
- The Council will encourage residents and communities to support themselves and provide advice to enable this to happen.
- The Council will seek to limit service growth in the coming financial year.
- All Directorates will be required to contribute to the overall savings required in the coming years.
- The Council must have an efficient “back office” service that supports service delivery and transformation.
- In setting the budget, the Council will be mindful of the predicted financial austerity across the public sector in the coming years and plan to ensure the financial viability of the Council, and.
- The Council will seek to recover the cost of services via fees and charges where it is able to do so.

**Do you agree with these principles?**

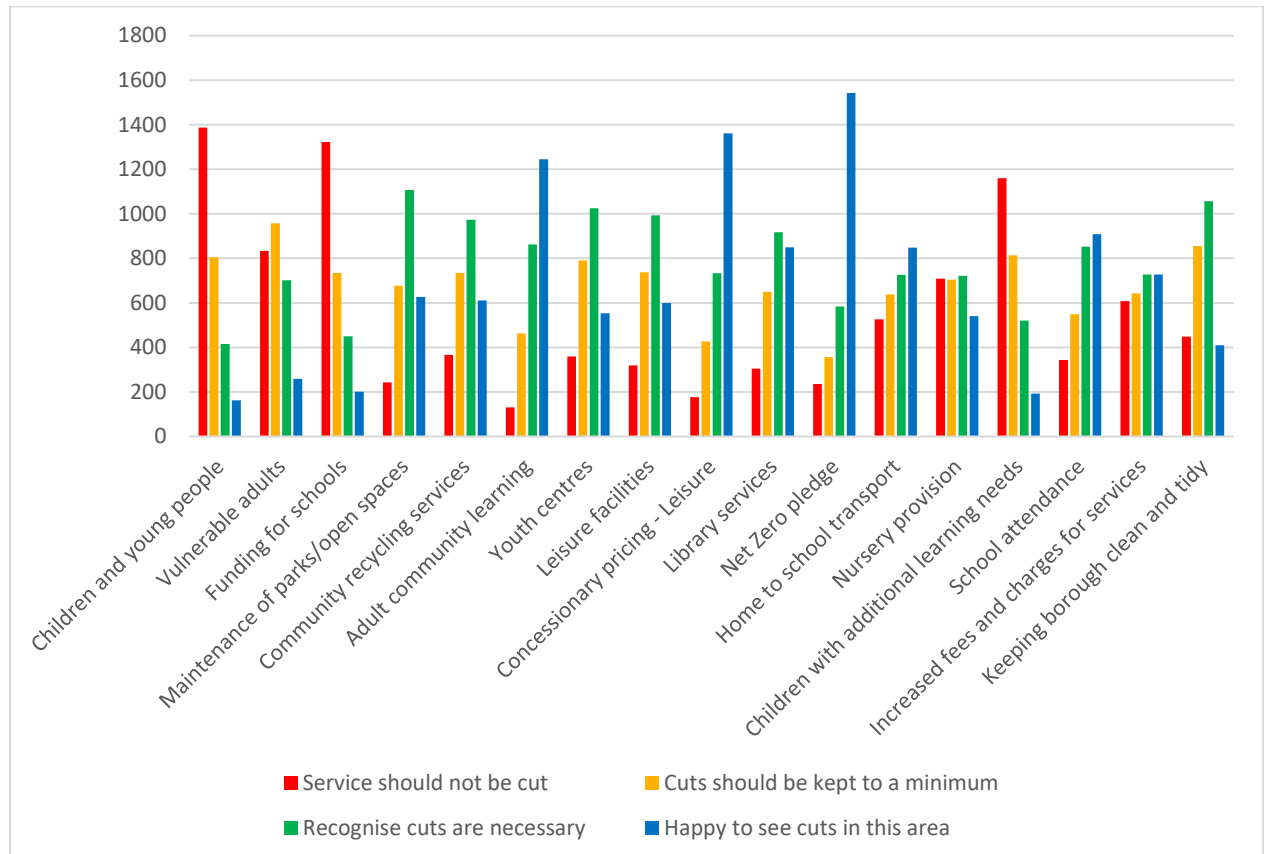


As shown above, 81% (2267) of respondents agree with the budget principles, and 19% (533) disagree with the principles.

## 7.2. Reduce/Close services.

In order to maintain our vital and statutory services we will need to reduce or cease the provision of other council services.

**To assist us with this please indicate the importance of each of the following services to you using the following statements:**



As shown above, the top five service areas people supported to cut are, Net Zero (1,543) Concessionary pricing for Leisure (1,362) Adult community learning (1,245), School attendance (909) and Library services (850).

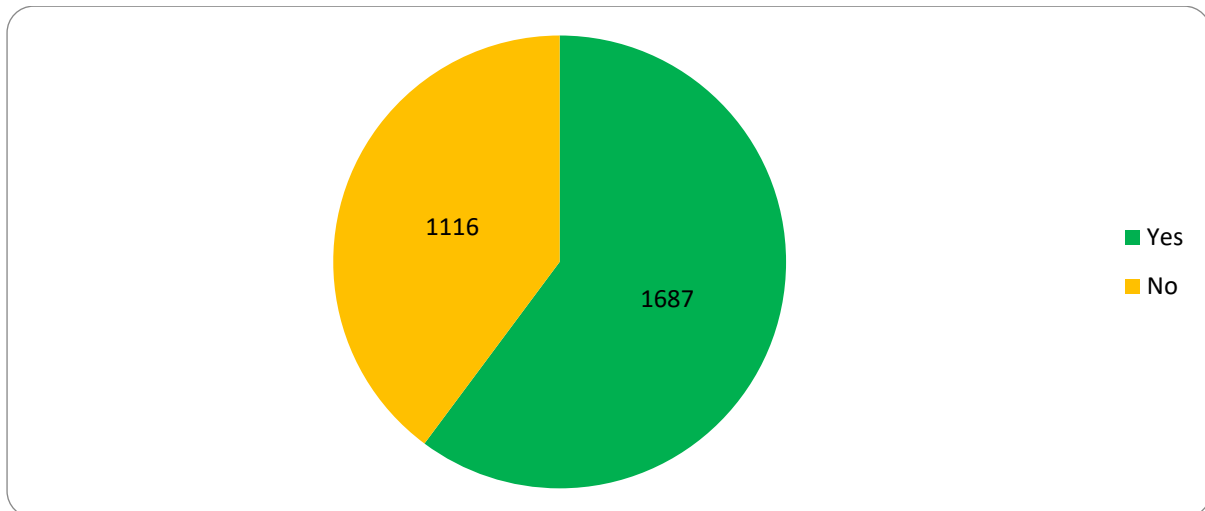
The service areas that people feel should not be cut are Children and young people (1,388), Funding for schools (1,322), Children with additional learning needs (1,160), Vulnerable adults (843) and Nursery provision (708).

## 7.3. Increasing charges and introducing new charges

The rising costs of maintaining current service levels mean we have to explore all cost recovery options including charging fees for selected services which are currently offered without charge, or at a subsidised charge. It has become unavoidable that we will need to review charges for our services in order to continue fulfilling our statutory requirement by:

- Increasing charges for services where a charge is already in place, such as bereavement services, school meals, garden, and bulky waste subscriptions, Porthcawl marina berthing fees and non-residential social care charges.
- Introducing charges for services which are currently provided for free such as pest control and educational music service.

**Do you think moving towards a full cost recovery model for services is the right approach?**



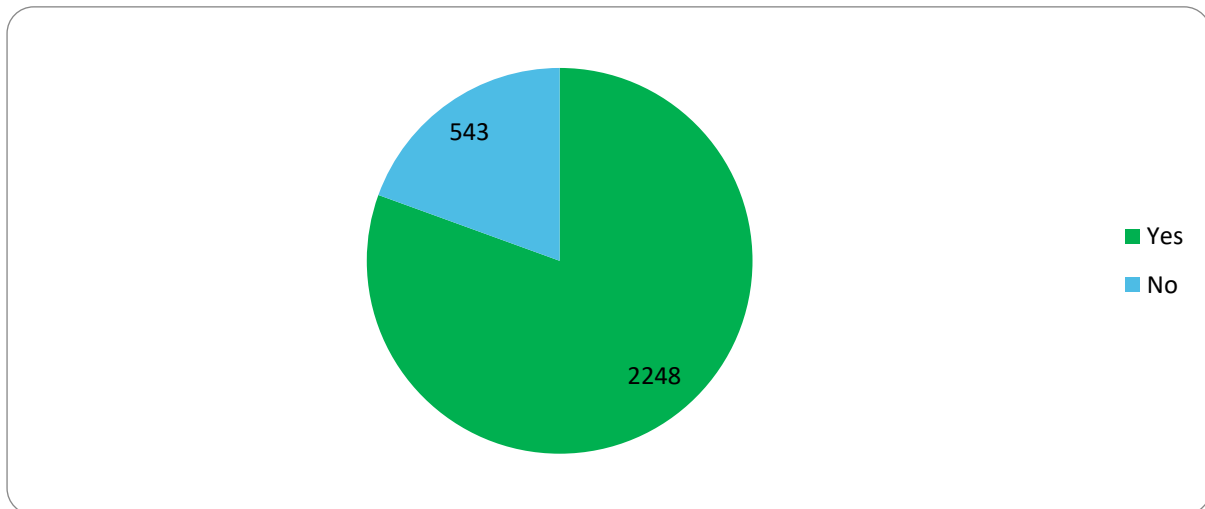
As shown above, 60% of respondents (1,687) agree that moving towards a full cost recovery model for services is the right approach. 40% of respondents (1,116) do not think it is the correct approach.

**7.4. Review services and related budgets**

In order to achieve the required budget reductions in the 2024/25 financial year, we will have to review and remodel many of our services. This means that whilst our vital services will still be affected, it will help to ensure these services can continue to operate.

- Reduce our staffing costs by not filling all of our vacant posts. This will result in fewer staff undertaking the work which will mean delays.
- Restructuring of internal departments. This will result in fewer staff undertaking the work which will reduce the amount of work that can be done.
- Review the level of service that can be provided. If staff numbers are reduced the level of service will also need to be adjusted and work will have to be prioritised.

## Do you think reviewing and remodelling services is an important consideration?

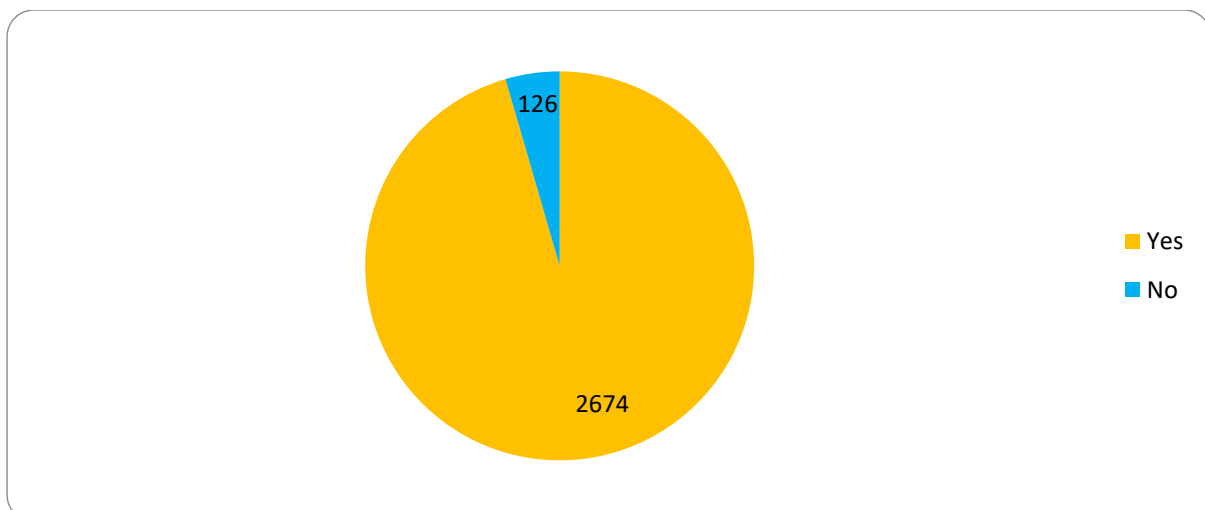


As shown above, 80.5% (2,248) of respondents think that reviewing and remodelling services is an important consideration. 19.5% (543) of respondents do not think it is an important consideration.

### 7.5. Review of assets and buildings

In balancing our future budget and ensuring our resources are used effectively, we plan to review our assets and buildings to ensure we are being as environmentally and financially efficient as possible. This involves considering our current office space utilisation and the most cost-effective means to run our commercial vehicles.

## Do you think reviewing the use of assets/buildings is the right approach to have a meaningful impact?



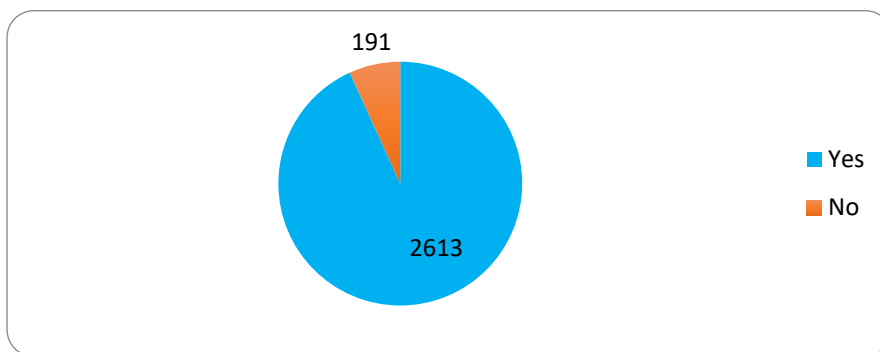
As shown above, 95.5% of respondents (2,674) agree that reviewing the use of assets/buildings is the right approach. 4.5% of respondents (126) do not think this is the right approach to have a meaningful impact.

## 7.6. Review contracts with external partners for Leisure Services

In order to achieve savings in this area for the 2024/25 financial year, we propose to review our partnership arrangement with Halo for the provision of leisure services. This would include :

- Extending Healthy living partnership with GLL/Halo by up to 5 years to reduce management fee by reprofiling expenditure over a longer period.
- Reviewing opportunities to amend the current energy payment arrangements for the leisure contract.

**Do you think reviewing contracts with external partners for Leisure Services is a reasonable approach?**

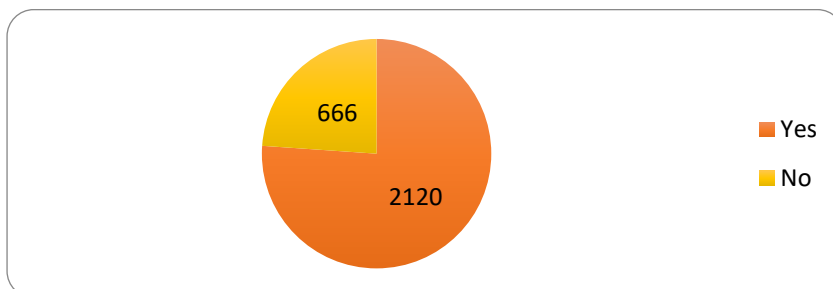


As shown above, 93.2.% of respondents (2,613) think reviewing contracts with external partners for Leisure services is a reasonable approach. 6.8% of respondents (191) do not think it is a reasonable approach.

## 7.7. Reviewing agreements with external partners

In order to achieve savings in this area for the 2024/25 financial year, we propose to request efficiency savings from the current arrangements with our external partners such as hospital discharge and services relating to bereavement, dementia, substance misuse and stroke.

**Do you think reviewing agreements with external partners is a reasonable approach?**



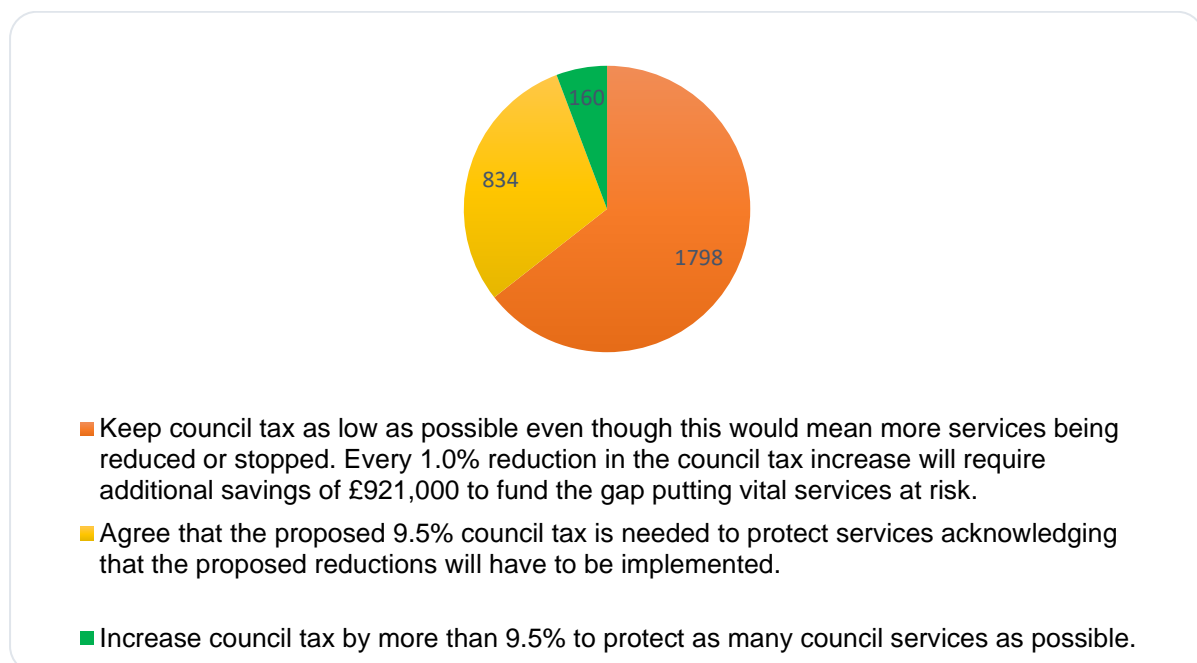
As shown above, 76% (2,120) of respondents think reviewing agreements with external partners is a reasonable approach. 24% of respondents (666) disagree that this is a reasonable approach.

## 7.8. Council Tax

As outlined in this survey, the financial position for the Council means that difficult decisions will have to be made for the coming financial year. Budget reduction proposals of £16m have been proposed which impact on all service areas in the Council however this is still not sufficient to balance the budget shortfall.

Therefore, the draft budget is suggesting a council tax increase of 9.5% for 2024/2025.

**Taking account of the level of savings proposed, which of the following statements would you support:**



As shown in the chart above, 64.4% of respondents favour keeping council as low as possible even though this would mean reducing or stopping more services.

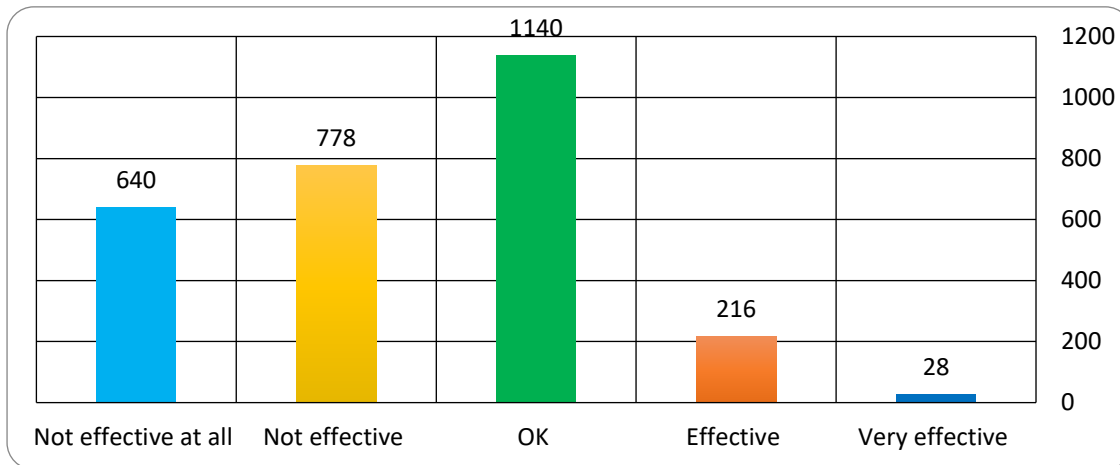
29.9% of respondents (834) agree that the proposed 9.5% council tax is needed to protect services and proposed reductions will have to be implemented.

5.7% of respondents (160) agree to increasing council tax by more than 9.5% in order to protect as many council services as possible.

## 7.9. Citizen Focus

The Council is committed to serving our local communities.

## How effective do you think we have been in meeting our aim of being citizen-focused over the last 12 months?



As shown above, 40.7% of respondents (1,140) think we have been OK in meeting our aim of being citizen focused over the last 12 months. 27.8% of respondents (778) feel that we have not been effective. 22.8% (640) believe we have not been effective at all over the last 12 months. 7.7% (216) of respondents think we have been effective, and 1% (28) of respondents feel we have been very effective.

## 8. Conclusion

Despite this year's consultation period being three weeks, response rates doubled compared to the previous year.

The consultation received a total of 2,839 interactions from a combination of survey completions, engagement at various meetings, social media engagement and via the authority's Citizens' Panel.

Due to the short consultation period, face to face meetings were reduced. The consultation and engagement team attended two drop-in sessions in Ogmere Valley Life Centre and Garw Valley Life Centre.

The consultation document was available in a variety of formats: standard; easy read; large print and youth in Welsh and English. Respondents were able to select online or request paper surveys in all formats.

The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty, and the impact on the use of the Welsh language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales, the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services, and functions. This is an information report; therefore, it is not necessary to carry out an EIA in the production of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

This report is to be shared with Cabinet in order to inform the Medium-Term Financial Strategy for 2024-2025 onwards.