

# Time to Talk Budget 2025

## Consultation Report

**Date of issue:** February 2025

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## 1. Overview

A public consultation was undertaken over a three-week period from **6<sup>th</sup> January 2025** to **26<sup>th</sup> January 2025**. The consultation received **1,637** survey completions and 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/consultations](http://www.bridgend.gov.uk/consultations). Paper copies of the consultation were available at all libraries and life centres and also sent directly to residents upon request. Surveys were available in several formats, including easy-read, large print, and standard. 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 **14,515** followers on its English Twitter account and **384** on its Welsh Twitter account, **21,457** followers on its English Facebook page and **279** on the Welsh Facebook page, **3,526** followers on Instagram and **8,320** followers on LinkedIn and **242** 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.

Facebook: 3 posts

Language	View	Impressions	Reach	Reactions comments & shares	Reactions	Comments	Shares
English	17,197	10,629	10,007	123	40	47	36
Welsh	152	80	71	0	0	0	0

Twitter: 5 posts

Language	Views	Impressions	Reach	Reactions comments & shares	Reactions	Comments	Shares
English		1,652			1	2	5
Welsh		96			1	0	1

Facebook adverts

	Reach	Impressions	Reactions	Shares	Comments	Clicks
English	27,921	132,800	75	32	89	1,682
Welsh	14,225	49,640	3	1	0	263
Total	42,146	182,440	78	33	89	1,945

Definition Guide:

Page likes	Total number of Facebook users who liked your page. Meta defines this metric as Page fans.
Impressions	Total number of times any content from your page or about your page was seen by a Facebook user. This includes organic and paid posts, stories, and content about your page.
Post Reach	This is the number of people who have seen your post. Your post counts as reaching someone when it's shown in their News Feed.
Page engagements	Total number of times Facebook users engaged with your posts through reactions, comments, shares, and more
Link clicks	Total Facebook logged-in users who clicked the link on the post
Other Clicks	This is a measurement of clicks not on the content of your Facebook Page post, but rather of clicks on the Page title or to "see more
Impressions	Total number of times your posts have been viewed by people. The posts include links, statuses, images, videos, stories, and more
Total reactions	Total reactions your post received
Likes	Total number of people who like your page and engaged with your post
Clicks	Total number of people who clicked on your posts
Share	Total number or people who shared your post to their pages, to their friends' pages, or to groups that they are members of.

### 3.1.2. Website

#### Views

The below table shows the number of views to our Budget Consultation page and from what source:

Session source/medium	page_view
google / organic	1584
(direct) / (none)	1128
m.facebook.com / referral	988
lm.facebook.com / referral	406
l.facebook.com / referral	143
bing / organic	108
google / organic	73
bridgend-self.achieveservice.com / referral	57
gov.uk / referral	54
(direct) / (none)	31
gov.wales / referral	29
(direct) / (none)	27

### 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.

The survey was sent to 33,837 different residents as a standalone message through our govDelivery platform.

In total, the email was opened a total of 21,014 times and 404 different subscribers clicked through to the survey on Engagement HQ.

#### **Weekly Residents Bulletin (Included as one of 10 weekly stories)**

Total number of English subscribers:	33,837
Total number of Welsh subscribers:	318
Number of times included in the bulletin (Every week throughout the consultation):	3

Total number of clicks through to the survey on Engagement HQ (English):	357
Total number of clicks through to the survey on Engagement HQ (Welsh):	4

### **News bulletin for councillors**

The consultation was also included in the news bulletin for councillors, which is sent to all Bridgend County Borough Council members and Town and Community Councils.

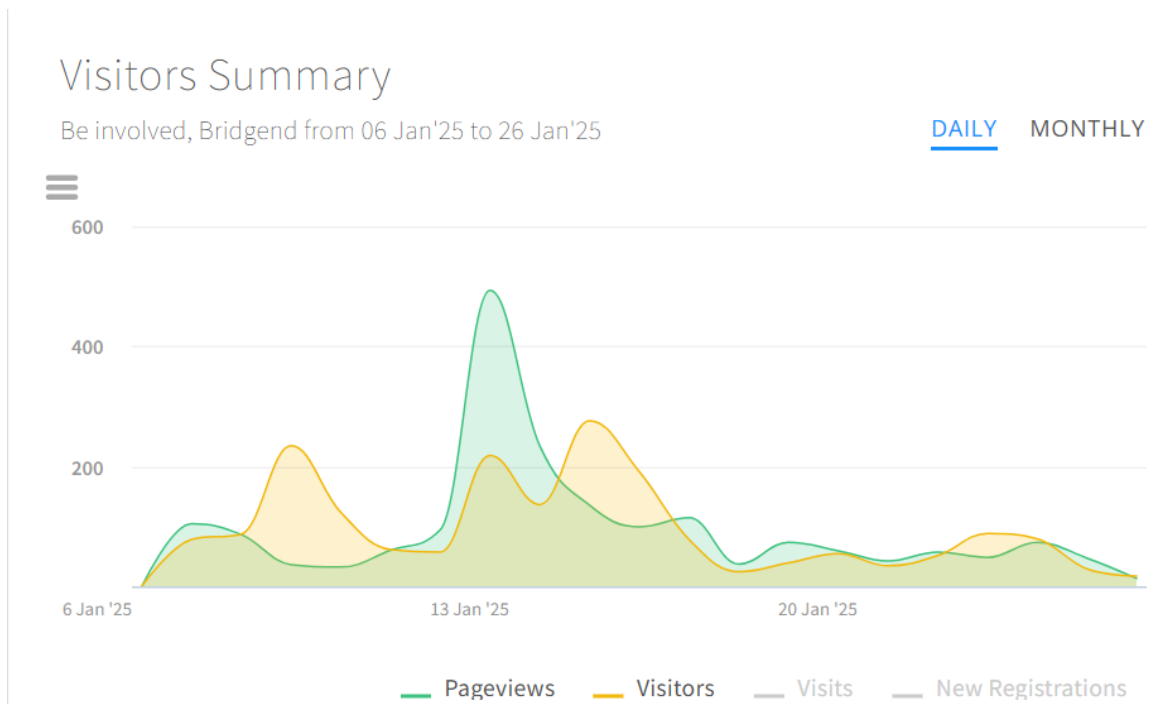
The bulletin was included twice (10 and 15 January) and gave councillors the opportunity to promote the consultation to their residents.

#### 3.1.4. Engagement HQ

Engagement HQ is a digital engagement platform that the council has used since 2022 to support 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 budget consultation project page on Engagement HQ.



The table below shows the traffic to the Engagement HQ project page for the Time to Talk Budget consultation.

<b>Aware visitors</b>	1,473
<b>Informed visitors</b>	1,356
<b>Engaged visitors</b>	1,327
<b>Visits referred from social media</b>	415
<b>Visits referred from council's website</b>	1128
<b>Visitors from search engine</b>	12
<b>Direct</b>	1,473
<b>Email</b>	0

### 3.1.5. Media and Publicity

A press release promoting the launch of the consultation was issued on 10 January 2025 and the consultation was also referenced in a budget related press release on 14 January 2025. Regular reminders of the survey were also included in our weekly news round-up on three occasions.

These were sent to the council's press mailing list which includes BBC Wales, ITV Wales, Channel 4 News, Wales Online, Glamorgan Gazette newspaper, Glamorgan Star newspaper, Nation Cymru, Bridge FM, Global Radio, Sky News, News From Wales, Herald Wales and Bridgend Local.

The consultation was referenced in an article in the Glamorgan Gazette on 16 January 2025. Also, the media release was used [on the The Herald website](#).

### 3.1.6. Internal communications

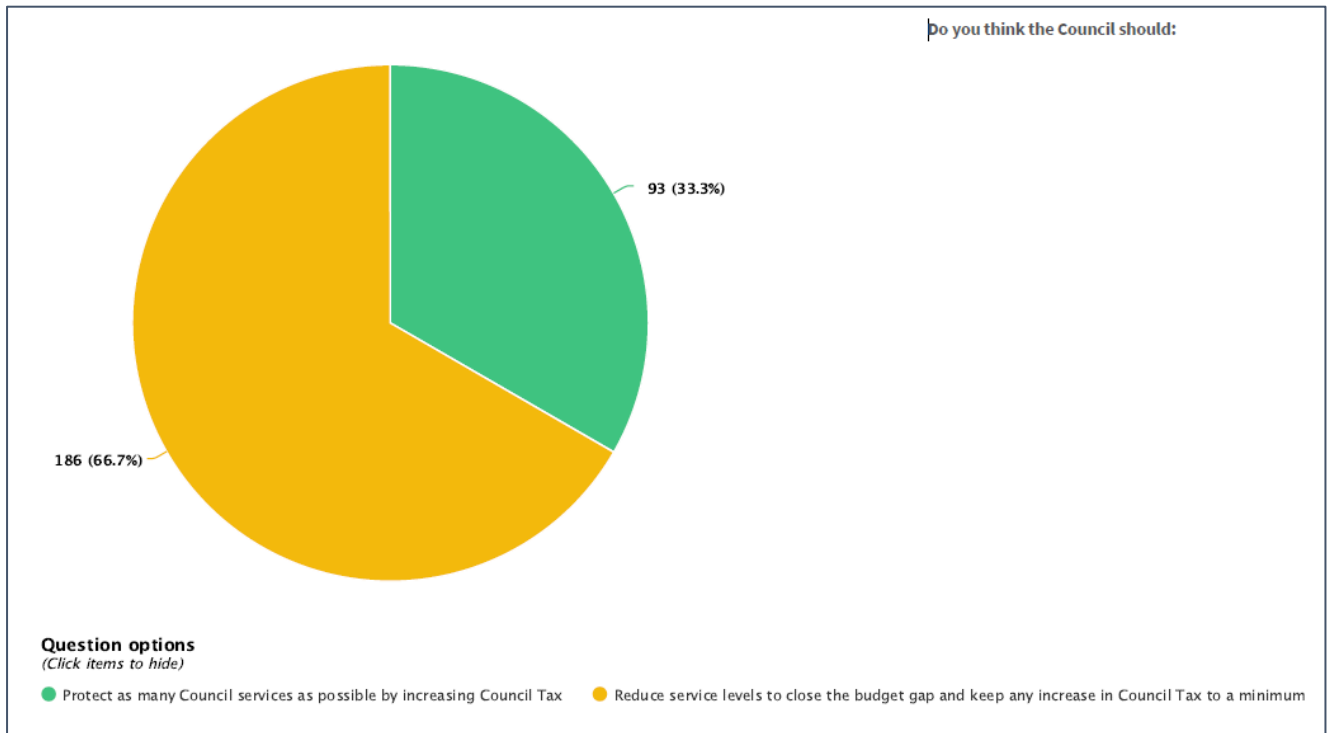
Messages were included in staff bulletins to encourage staff to complete the budget consultation.

The consultation was also promoted on the staff intranet.

Number of subscribers to staff messages:	4,260
Number of times included:	3
Total number of clicks through to the survey on Engagement HQ (English):	191

### 3.1.7. Promotional Materials

An explainer webpage was produced to help people understand how the council's budget works and the challenges it faces: <https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/news/time-to-talk-budget-2025/>. At the beginning of December 2024, we ran a quick poll for a two- week duration, as part of our budget campaign promotion asking residents if we should protect as many services as possible by increasing council tax. The results to the quick poll question were as follows:



### 3.1.8 Promotion at libraries and life centres

All libraries and life centres were provided with a poster to promote the survey. The poster included a link to the consultation page and also advised that paper copies were available to complete with a member of staff on site.

## 4. Response Rate

In total there were 1,637 responses to the survey, of which there **1,623** responses to the online survey, (29 of these via the easy-read version) and **14** were submitted by paper.

## 5. Methodology

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 had the option to complete the easy-read version of which 29 did. There was the option to complete the survey in English or Welsh and there was only 1 Welsh completion received.

## 7. Survey Questions and Analysis

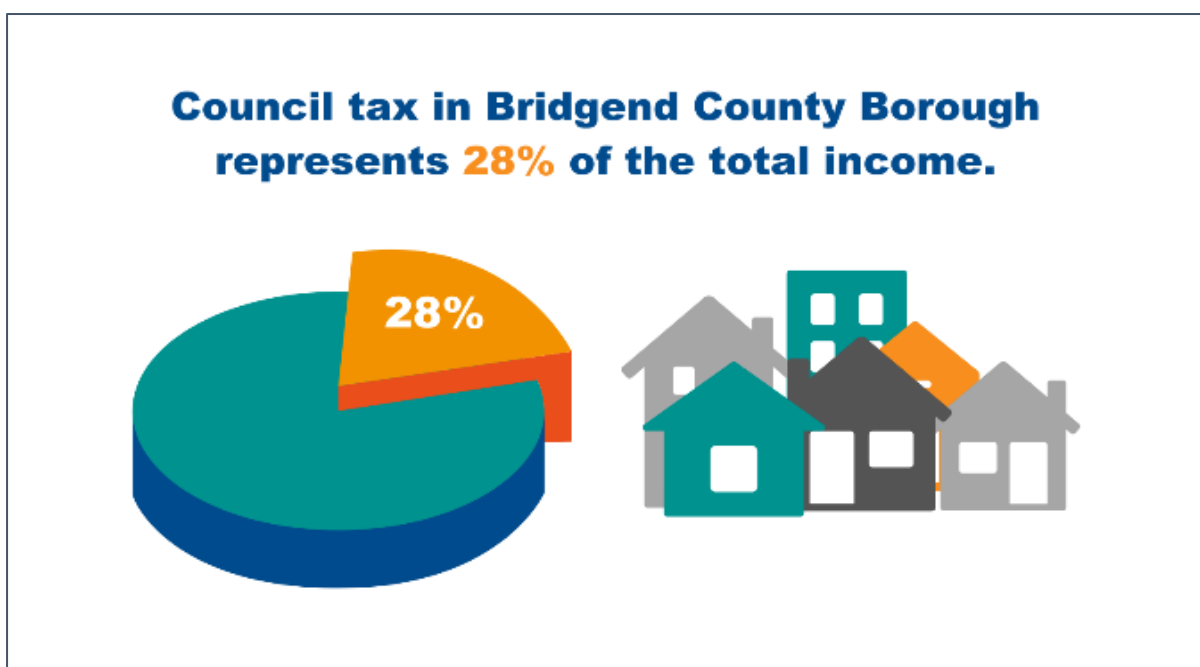
This section outlines and analyses all questions asked in the online survey. The survey was split into 5 sections.

- Budget awareness campaigns
- Reducing/removing services
- Council tax
- Citizen Focused
- Residents' suggestions

### 7.1. Budget awareness campaigns

Did you see our budget-related infographics which were shared recently on our social media channels, website and in our weekly emails to residents?

Here are a few examples:



# How is my council tax spent?



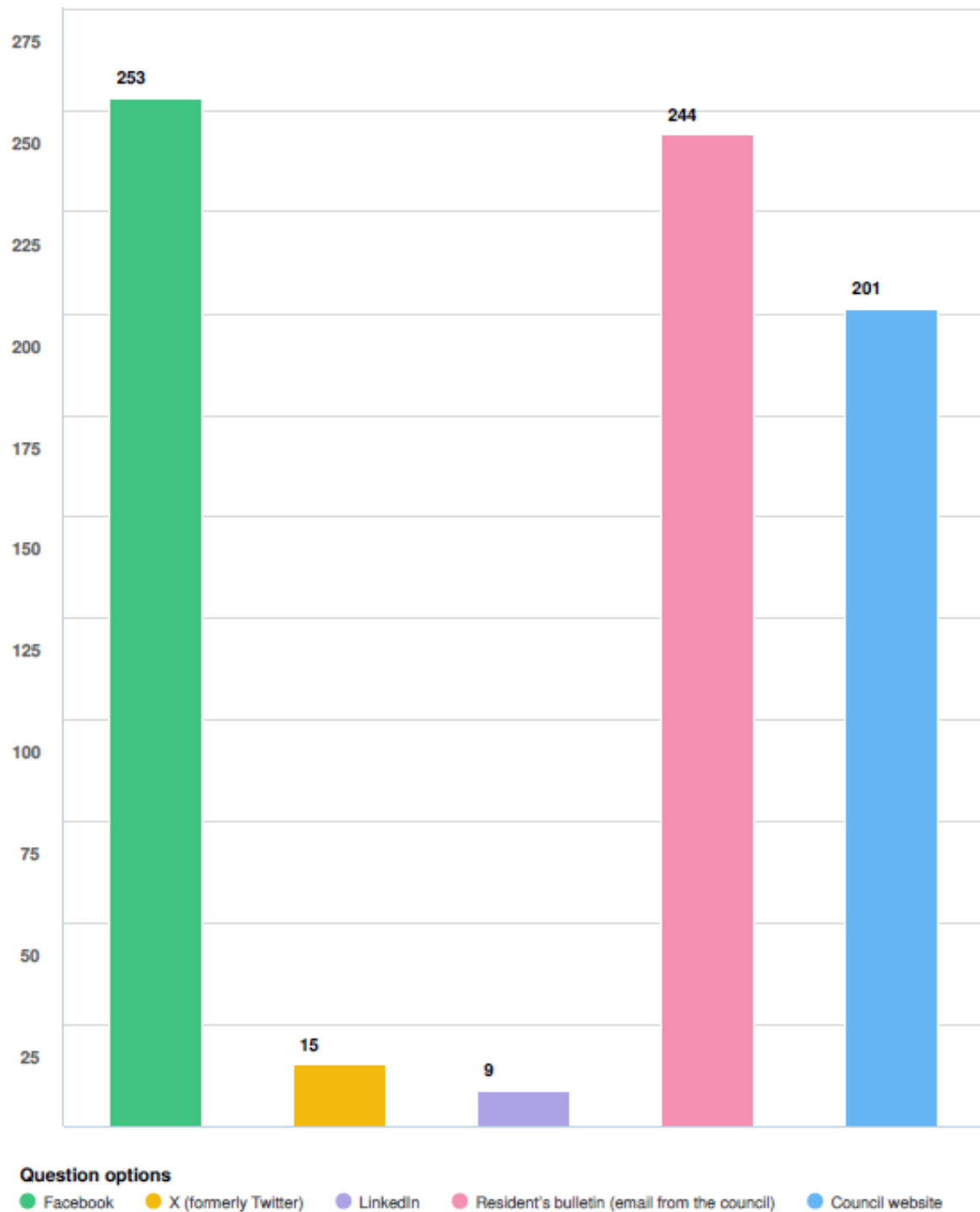
## Where we spend our money



38% (586) responded that they saw the infographics, and 61% (939) did not see these infographics and the remaining 1% skipped the question.

The following question asked, If yes, where did you see them?

Respondents were able to select more than one option:



Optional question (639 response(s), 1008 skipped)

Question type: Checkbox Question

## 7.2 Reduce/Removing services.

To enable us to maintain our vital and statutory services we will need to reduce or cease the provision of other council services.

**To help us prioritise the services that are important to you, please select one statement from the following for each council service:**



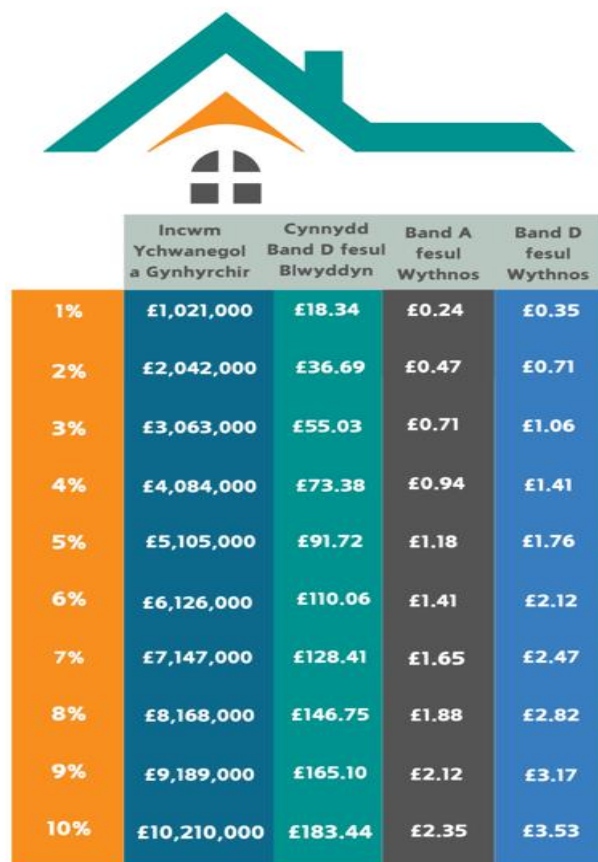
As shown above, the top five service areas people supported to cut are, achieving of our 2030 Net Zero pledge (950), Concessionary pricing and discounted rates for Leisure (765), Review of CCTV provision (591), Improving school attendance (546) and provision of library services (473).

The service areas that people feel should not be cut are Protection of children and young people (773), Funding for schools (712), Maintaining highways and road surfaces (667), and protection of vulnerable adults (516).

### 7.3. Council Tax

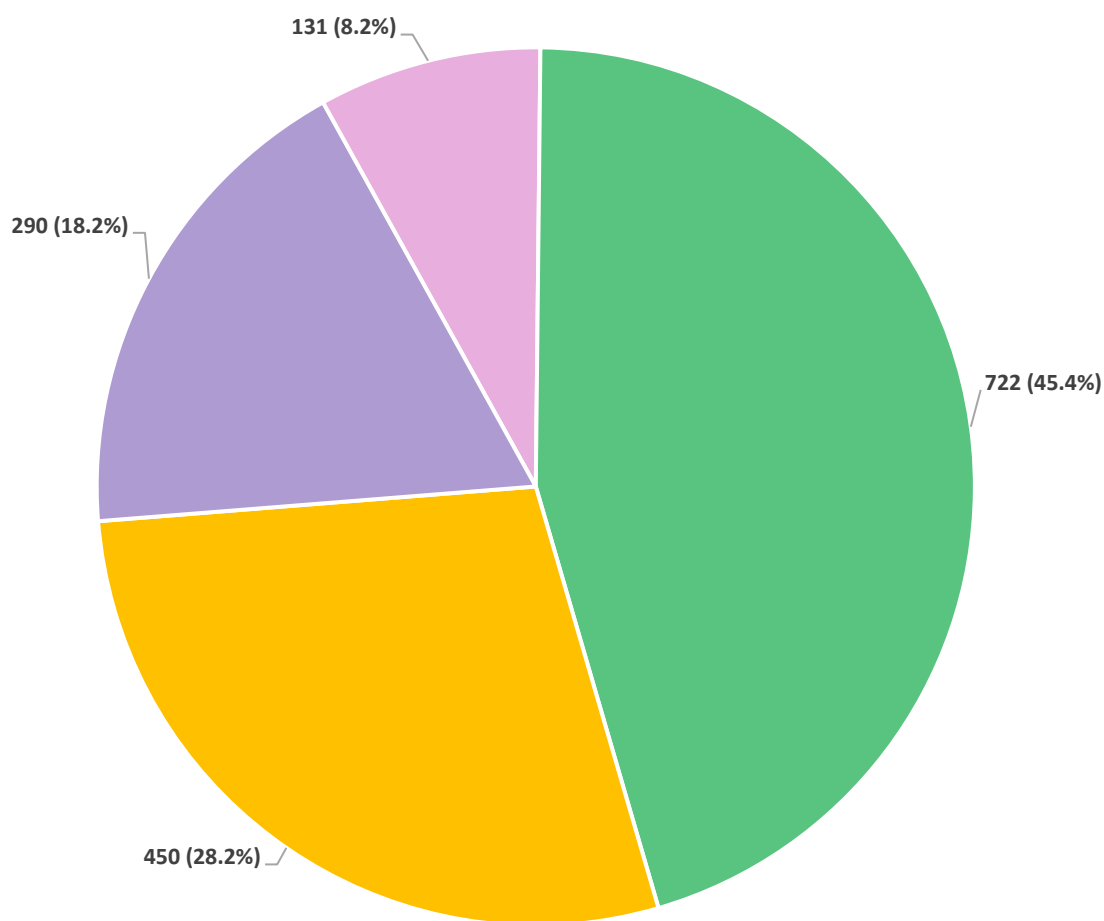
As outlined in this survey, the financial position for the council means that difficult decisions will have to be made for the coming financial year. Budget reduction proposals of £9m have been proposed which impact on all service areas in the council, however this is still not sufficient to balance the budget shortfall. Therefore, the draft budget is suggesting a council tax increase of 4.5% for 2025/2026.

To give you an illustration of the cost of a percentage increase in council tax between 1% and 10%, please see infographic below:



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

- Keep council tax as low as possible even though this would mean more services being reduced or stopped. Every 1% reduction in the council tax increase will require additional savings of £1m to fund the budget gap putting vital services at risk.
- Agree that the proposed 4.5% council tax increase is needed to protect services acknowledging that the proposed reductions will have to be implemented (a 4.5% increase in council tax would result in an increase of £1.59 a week for a Band D property).
- Increase council tax by 5.5% to protect the education of children and young people and avoid reducing direct school budgets (a 5.5% increase in council tax would result in an increase of £1.94 a week for a Band D property).
- Increase council tax by more than 5.5% to protect as many other council services as possible.



### Question options

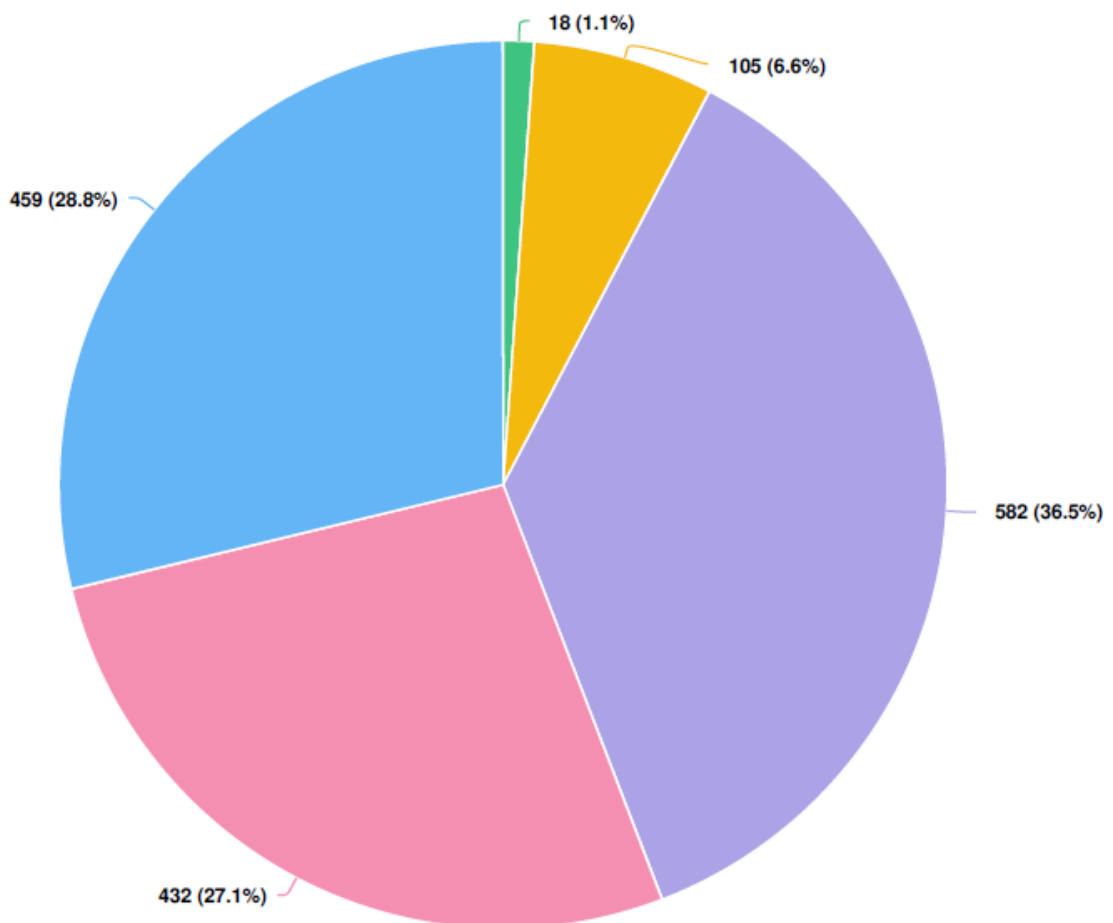
- Increase council tax by more than 5.5% to protect as many other council services as possible.
- Increase council tax by 5.5% to protect the education of children and young people and avoid reducing school budgets (a 5.5% increase in council tax would result in an increase of £1.94 a week for a Band D property).
- Agree that the proposed 4.5% council tax increase is needed to protect services acknowledging that the proposed reductions will have to be implemented (a 4.5% increase in council tax would result in an increase of £1.59 a week for a Band D property).
- Keep council tax as low as possible even though this would mean more services being reduced or stopped. Every 1% reduction in the council tax increase will require additional savings of £1m to fund the gap putting vital services at risk.

## 7.4. 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 below, 36.5% of respondents (582) think we have been OK in meeting our aim of being citizen focused over the last 12 months. 27.1% of respondents (432) feel that we have not been effective. 28.8% (459) believe we have not been effective at all over the last 12 months. 6.6% (105) of respondents think we have been effective, and 1.1% (18) of respondents feel we have been very effective.



#### Question options

● Not effective at all   ● Not effective   ● Ok   ● Effective   ● Very effective



## 7.5. Further suggestions

An open text response question asking Do you have any further suggestions on how the council can address the budget gap in 2025/2026 concluded the survey.

Several key themes emerged, the main themes that identified from the responses, ordered by frequency:

1. Reduce Waste/Improve Efficiency (142 responses, 16.5%)
  - Suggestions focused on identifying and eliminating wasteful spending
  - Improving operational efficiency across council services
  - Better resource management and allocation
  
2. Service Reduction (124 responses, 14.4%)
  - Proposals to reduce or streamline certain council services
  - Focusing on essential services only
  - Prioritizing critical services over non-essential ones
  
3. Council Tax Related (110 responses, 12.8%)
  - Suggestions about council tax adjustments
  - Discussion of tax collection and management
  - Proposals for different tax structures or rates
  
4. Reduce Senior Management Pay (108 responses, 12.5%)
  - Suggestions to cut senior management salaries
  - Reducing executive compensation
  - Restructuring management pay scales
  
5. Staff Reduction (84 responses, 9.8%)
  - Proposals for reducing overall staff numbers
  - Suggestions for restructuring departments
  - Staff optimisation recommendations

#### 6. Asset Management (80 responses, 9.3%)

- Ideas about better use of council properties and assets
- Suggestions for property sales or optimisation
- Building management efficiency

#### 7. Review Outsourcing/Contracts (31 responses, 3.6%)

- Suggestions to review external contracts
- Proposals to optimise outsourcing arrangements
- Contract renegotiation recommendations

#### 8. Other themes:

- During the course of the budget consultation the council received communications from students, parents, teachers and members of the public regarding the impact of the proposal to remove the music service. A range of concerns were expressed about the detrimental impacts of removing the service including that it would create a barrier to participation especially for those from low-income backgrounds.

### 8. Methodology

The consultation received a total of 1,637 interactions from a combination of survey completions, social media engagement and via the authority's Citizens' Panel.

Participants largely opposed reductions in services for vulnerable populations, education, and child protection, showing a strong community focus on safeguarding these areas.

Lesser priority was given to services like leisure facilities or nursery provision, reflecting a community inclination to prioritize essentials.

It is notable that those supporting a 4.5% or above increase would be over 54%.

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 2025-2026 onwards.