

Meeting of:	CABINET
Date of Meeting:	17 FEBRUARY 2026
Report Title:	OUTCOME OF THE CONSULTATION 'TIME TO TALK BUDGET' 2026
Report Owner: Responsible Chief Officer / Cabinet Member	CHIEF OFFICER - FINANCE, HOUSING AND CHANGE CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES
Responsible Officer:	ZOE EDWARDS - CONSULTATION, ENGAGEMENT AND EQUALITIES MANAGER
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no impact on the policy framework or procedure rules.
Executive Summary:	To inform Cabinet of the outcome of the 'Time to Talk Budget' 2026 consultation. The consultation was undertaken over a three-week period from 7th January 2026 to 27th January 2026 and received 1,216 responses.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet of the outcome of the 'Time to Talk Budget' 2026 budget consultation which asked citizens their views on what they consider should be the priority areas for allocating the budget for the forthcoming financial year, and to examine those views against funding provided by the Welsh Government.

2. Background

- 2.1 Budget planning for the financial year 2026–2027 continues to be challenging. Local government faces sustained financial pressures from increased demand for services, inflationary costs and wider economic conditions.
- 2.2 The money we use to pay for services comes mainly from an annual Welsh Government budget settlement as well as council tax and income generated via fees and charges.

- 2.3 In order to set a balanced budget, the Council must consider a range of options including reviewing charges, transforming services, reviewing assets and partnership arrangements.
- 2.4 A public consultation exercise was undertaken over a three-week period from 7th January 2026 to 27th January 2026. Respondents were asked to provide views across the following areas:
- Increasing charges and introducing new charges
 - Reviewing services and related budgets
 - Reviewing use of assets and buildings
 - Reviewing agreements with external partners
 - Budget priorities and citizen focus
- 2.5 Budget consultation exercises have been undertaken annually since 2013–14. The ‘Time to Talk Budget’ 2026–2027 consultation built on previous approaches using Engagement HQ, Citizens’ Panel engagement, social media promotion and media coverage.
- 2.6 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. Paper copies of the consultation were also made available at all libraries and could be 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.
- 2.7 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 consultation surveys carried out by the council.
- 2.8 The consultation aimed to reach the following key stakeholders: general public/residents, Citizens’ Panel members, Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) employees, businesses, Bridgend Business Forum members, local media, town councillors.
- 2.9 The consultation was supported by a full communications and social media campaign. The main activities included media releases, various press release/editorials in the media, a social media/web campaign, direct marketing via Facebook adverts.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 The attached consultation report (**Appendix A**) sets out in detail the views expressed by those who participated.
- 3.2 Overall the consultation received **1,216** interactions from a combination of survey completions, social media engagement and via the Council’s Citizens’ Panel.
- 3.3 In addition to the public survey, qualitative engagement was undertaken through facilitated Citizen Panel focus group sessions and a Post-16 Learner Budget

Challenge Day. These sessions provided more in-depth insight into residents' and young people's views on budget priorities, service pressures and potential approaches to managing financial constraints. Key themes from this engagement are summarised in the attached consultation report.

3.4 **Marketing and engagement methods**

Prior to the consultation a budget awareness campaign was run on the council's social media channels during October-December 2025 highlighting key facts about the council's budget and budget setting process. This was a precursor to the budget consultation and aimed to promote awareness of how the council's budget is set and allocated.

Details of the consultation itself were shared with the following stakeholders: general public/residents, Citizens' Panel members, elected members, Council employees, businesses, Bridgend Business Forum members, local media and town councils.

3.5 **Social Media**

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. Social media posts about the consultation were issued regularly throughout the campaign. Details of the social media and website campaigns can be found in the full consultation report.

3.6 **govDelivery**

govDelivery is a digital communications platform that was introduced by the local authority 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 32,184 English language and 386 Welsh language users who have subscribed to receive the council's weekly update emails.

The 'Time to Talk Budget' consultation was included in the Residents' Bulletin, more detail of which can be found in the full consultation report.

3.7 **Media and publicity**

3.7.1 A press release about the launch of the consultation was issued on 8th January 2026. This was 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.

3.7.2 A standalone message was sent to staff encouraging them to complete the budget consultation.

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

3.8 **Promotional materials**

3.8.1 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/>. During the Autumn we promoted a budget awareness campaign (see 3.3 above) and at the beginning of October 2025.

3.8.2 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.

3.9 **Headline figures**

It is important to note that whilst some results are shown below in this section of the report, not all results are listed in this covering report. However, all results of the consultation can be found in the full consultation report.

3.9.1 **Increasing/introducing charges**

39.4% agree that we should be increasing charges for services where a charge is already in place and Introducing charges for services which are currently provided for free.

3.9.2 **Reviewing and transforming services**

73.5% of respondents agree that reviewing and transforming services is an important consideration.

3.9.3 **Reviewing the use of assets/buildings**

87% of respondents answered Yes to reviewing the use of assets/buildings being the right approach?

3.9.4 **Reviewing contracts**

88.6% of respondents agree that reviewing contracts with external partners is the right approach.

4. **Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)**

4.1 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 Equality Impact assessment 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.

5. **Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives**

5.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of this report.

6. **Climate Change and Nature Implications**

6.1 There are no climate change or nature implications from this report.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

7.1 There are no safeguarding and corporate parent implications from this report.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 The costs of carrying out the consultation were met from existing budgets. The outcome of the consultation will inform the final Medium Term Financial Strategy proposals.

9. Recommendation

9.1 Cabinet is recommended to note the outcome of the consultation as detailed in the attached consultation report.

Background documents

None