

Time to Talk Budget 2026

Consultation Report

Date of issue: February 2026

Contents

1. Overview	2
2. Introduction	2
3. Marketing and engagement methods	2
3.1. Promotional tools	2
3.1.1. Social Media	2
3.1.2. Website	4
3.1.3. GovDelivery	5
3.1.4. Engagement HQ	5
3.1.5. Media and Publicity	6
3.1.6. Internal communications	7
3.1.7. Promotional Materials	7
3.1.8. Promotion at libraries and life centres	7
3.1.9. Promotion by Councillors	7
4. Response Rate	Error! Bookmark not defined.
5. Methodology	8
6. Consultation Survey	8
6.1. Language used to complete the survey	8
7. Survey Questions and Analysis	8
7.1. Increasing charges and introducing new charges	8
7.2. Review services and related budgets	9
7.3. Review of assets and buildings	10
7.4. Review agreements with external partners	11
7.5. Your priorities	12
7.6. Citizen focused	13
7.7. Further suggestions	14
8. Citizen Panel focus groups	14
9. Post-16 Learner Budget Challenge	15
10. Conclusion	15

1. Overview

A public consultation was undertaken over a three-week period from **7th January 2026** to **27th January 2026**. The consultation received **1,216** 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. 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 was 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 **14,139** followers on its English Twitter account and **360** on its Welsh Twitter account, **24,403** followers on its English Facebook page and **316** on the Welsh Facebook page, **3,816** followers on Instagram and **9,479** followers on LinkedIn and **307** 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: 8 posts

Language	Views	Reach	Reactions comments & shares	Interactions	Comments	Shares
English	41,852	19,600	44	120	33	41
Welsh	203	0	0	4	4	0

Instagram: 4 posts

Language	Views	Reach	Reactions comments & shares	Reactions	Comments	Shares
English	846	404	0	2	0	0
Welsh	81	0	0	1	0	0

X (formerly Twitter): 8 posts

Language	Impressions	Reach	Reactions comments & shares	Reactions	Comments	Shares
English	661	0	26	0	1	0
Welsh	70	0	2	0	0	0

Facebook adverts

Language	Reach	Impressions	Reactions	Shares	Comments	Shares
English	17,150	57,861	35	12	36	0
Welsh	33,171	509,834	11	1	3	0

LinkedIn: 4 posts

Language	Impressions	Reach	Reactions comments & shares	Reactions	Comments	Shares
Bilingual	1,312	0	61	3	0	3

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	Views
google / organic	373
direct	117
bing / organic	58
bridgend-self.achieveservice.com / referral	17
gov.uk / referral	16
penybontarogwr.gov.uk / referral	15
bridgend.net / referral	7
bbc.co.uk / referral	4
codigroup.co.uk / referral	3
Facebook / social	2
ip.e-paycapita.com / referral	2
l.facebook.com / referral	2
lm.facebook.com / referral	2

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 32,502 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:	32,184
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):	566
Total number of clicks through to the survey on Engagement HQ (Welsh):	1

News bulletin for councillors

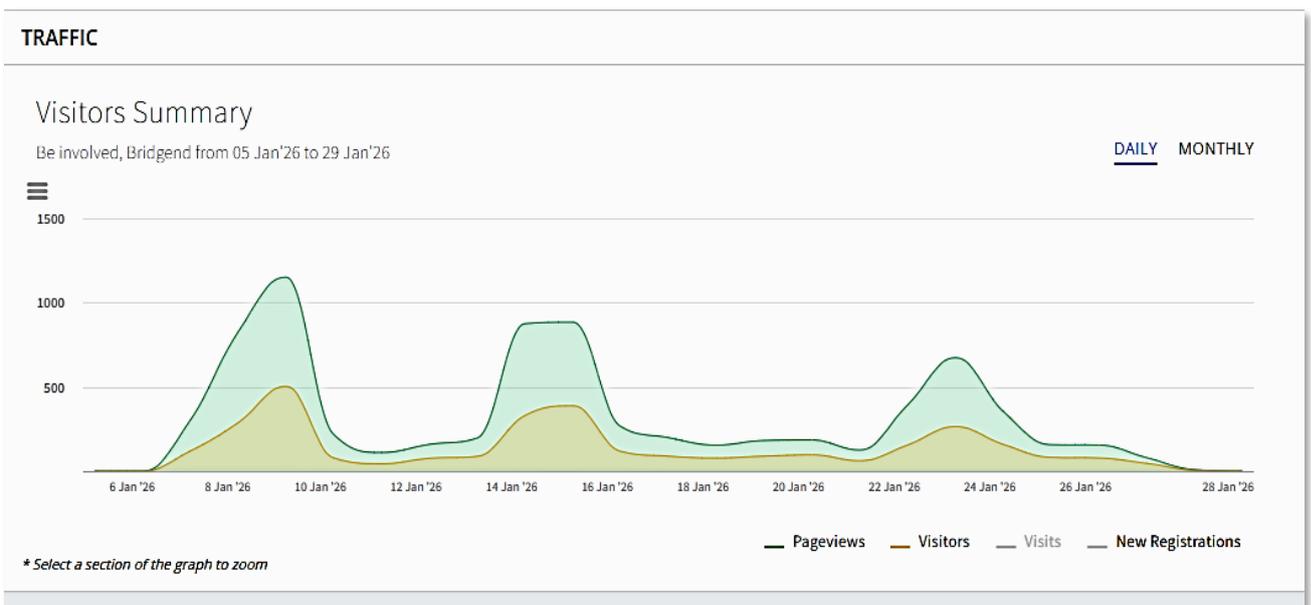
The consultation was also included in the news bulletin for councillors, which is sent to all Bridgend County Borough Council members and Town and Community Councils.

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.

Aware visitors	1,974
Informed visitors	1,046
Engaged visitors	689
Visits referred from social media	927
Visits referred from council's website	190
Visitors from search engine	16
Direct	1,972
Email	6

3.1.5. Media and Publicity

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.

As a result of this, the media release was included in an article in the Glamorgan Gazette on 15th January 2026. Gaining newspaper coverage is an example of how we reach people who are not online users and this was an opportunity to highlight how to obtain a hard copy of the survey if they are unable to access it digitally.

Also, large parts of the media release was used in an article on [Wales Online](#), this included some key points from the council pre-budget campaign. The same article was also used by [Nation Cymru](#) as part of the Local Democracy Reporting Service.

The press release was also uploaded to [Bridgend County Borough Council's website](#) as well as featuring on the [Bridgend Local 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:	4,131
Total number of clicks through to the survey on Engagement HQ (English):	147

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-2026/>.

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.

3.1.9. Promotion by Councillors

An educational toolkit was developed to support councillors in promoting the 'Time to Talk Budget' consultation within their communities. The toolkit included key messages, background information and supporting materials to help explain the Council's financial position and the purpose of the consultation. Business cards were also produced, providing a simple way for members to share the consultation link directly with residents.

4. Response Rate

In total there were 1,216 responses to the survey, of which there were **1,213** responses to the online survey, (352 of these via the easy-read version) and **3** 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 352 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.

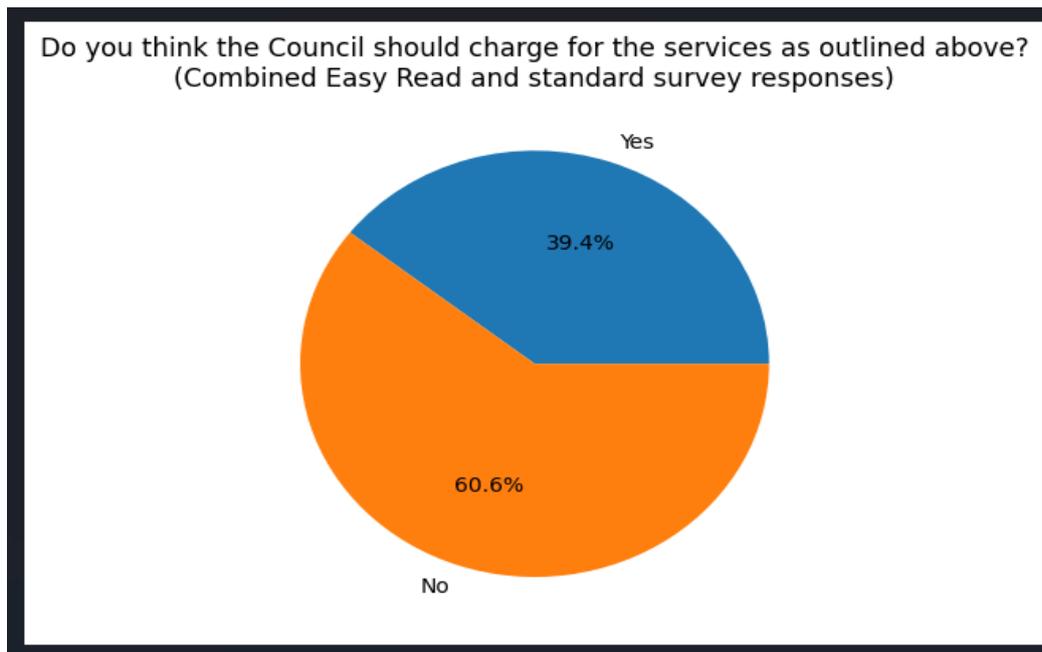
- Increasing charges and introducing new charges
- Review services and related budgets
- Review use of assets/buildings
- Review agreements with external partners
- Your priorities
- Citizen Focused

7.1. 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.
- Introducing charges for services which are currently provided for free.

Do you think the council should charge for services as outlined above?



As shown above 61% (711) of respondents answered No, compared to 39% (463) of the respondents who answered Yes.

This was followed by a further comments text box where several key themes emerged. The main comments that identified from the responses, ordered by frequency, were:

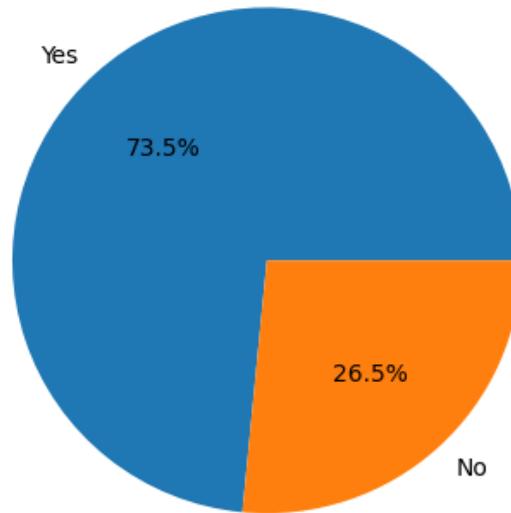
- Penalties for littering
- Already pay enough
- Specific services not specified
- There is still a cost of living crisis
- Pay for what you use
- Nominal charges
- Council tax is already too high
- paying more for less
- Good idea
- Spend more efficiently

7.2. Review services and related budgets

In order to balance the budget in future years, we will have to review and transform many of our services. This means the way we deliver some services may change for example by using digital technology and AI (artificial intelligence) to make our services more effective and efficient.

Do you think reviewing and transforming services is an important consideration?

Q1: Do you think reviewing and transforming services is an important consideration?



As shown above 73.5% (875) of respondents answered Yes, compared to 26.5% (316) of the respondents who answered No.

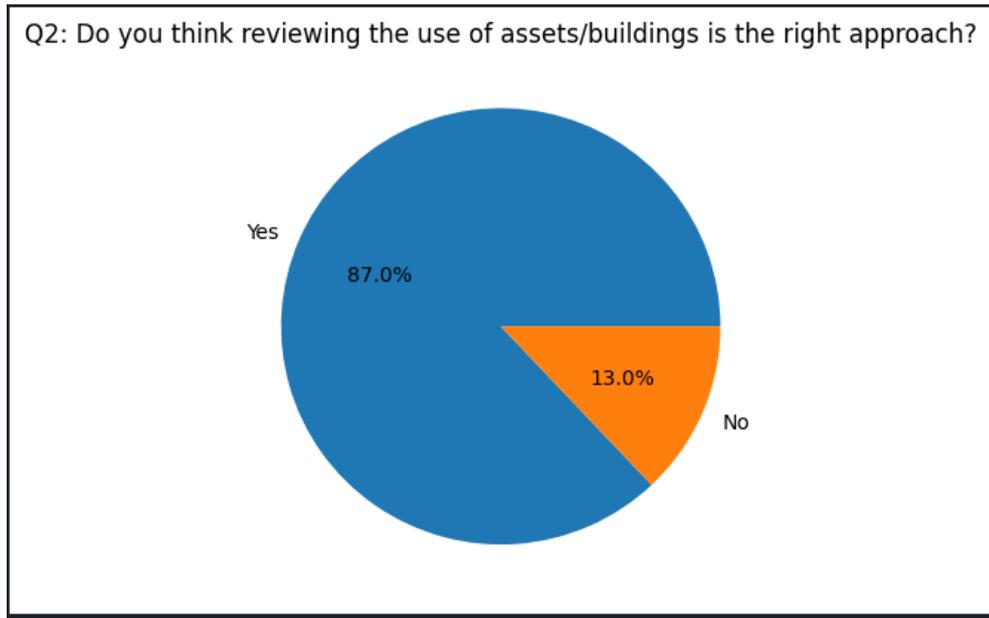
This was followed by a further comments text box where several key themes emerged. The main comments identified from the responses, ordered by frequency, were:

- Yes to AI
- Continue to review
- Council has to keep up with the times
- Efficiency is key
- Cost effective
- No to AI
- Good idea
- People need people
- Approach AI with caution
- Ensure cost effectiveness
- Stop wasting money
- As long as it's more effective

7.3. Review of assets and buildings

In balancing our future budget and ensuring our resources are used effectively, we will continue to review our assets and buildings to ensure we are being as environmentally and financially efficient as possible. For example, this involves considering our current office space utilisation and the most cost-effective means to run our fleet of vehicles.

Do you think reviewing the use of assets/buildings is the right approach?



As shown above 87% (1,041) of respondents answered Yes, compared to 13% (155) of the respondents who answered No.

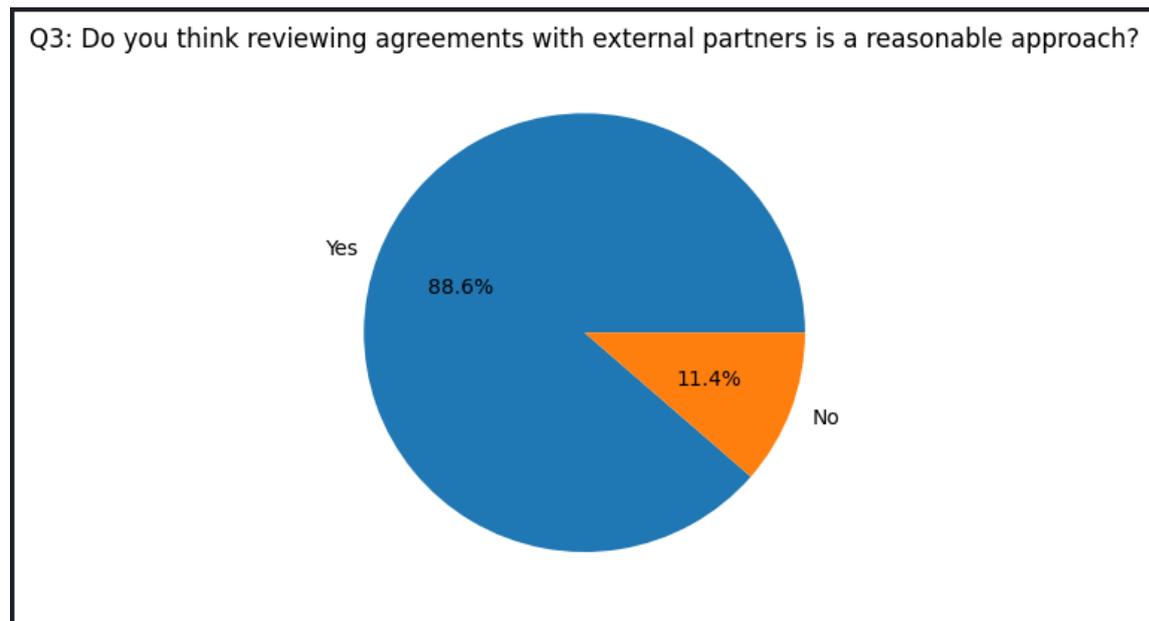
This was followed by a further comments text box where several key themes emerged, The main themes that identified from the responses, ordered by frequency were:

- Offices not needed with staff home working
- Sell off unused assets
- Continuously review all decisions that impact budget
- Sensible
- Should already be doing this
- Make use of empty buildings
- Utilise existing buildings
- Use what you have
- Turn off lights when building not in use
- Take care of building you have
- Rent empty buildings

7.4. Review agreements with external partners

In order to achieve savings in this area for the 2026/27 financial year, we propose to request efficiency savings from the current arrangements with our external partners such as other local authorities, trusts and third sector organisations.

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



As shown above 88.6% (1,057) of respondents answered Yes, compared to 11.4% (136) of the respondents who answered No.

This was followed by a further comments text box where several key themes emerged. The main themes identified from the responses, ordered by frequency were:

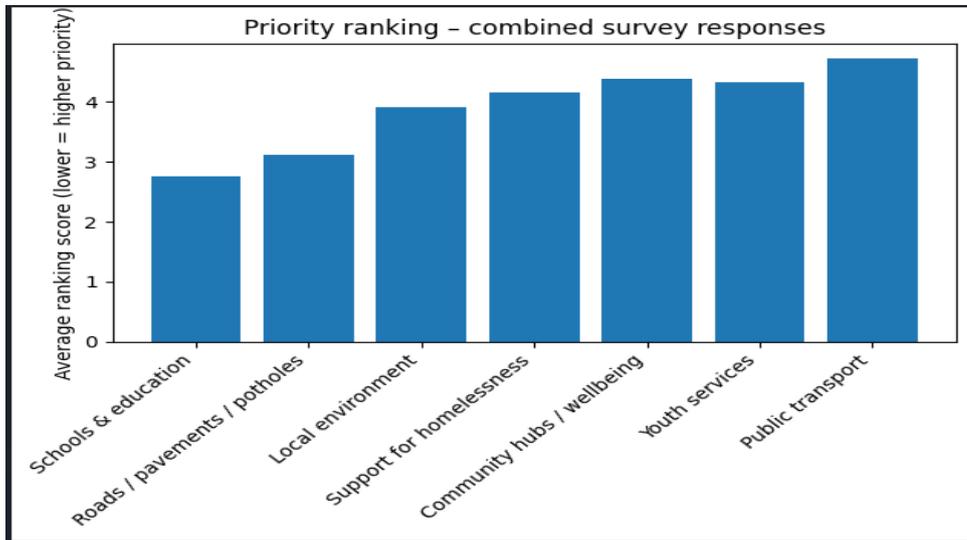
- Agreements should be reviewed
- Should already be doing this
- Continue to review
- Sensible
- Find cheaper contracts
- Yes if services are improved
- Bring services in house
- Partners not specified
- Make savings
- Private contractors are paid too much

7.5. Your priorities

While the council has worked hard to protect its key services for vulnerable people in the draft budget for 2026-27, we are seeking your views on how to allocate additional funding for the following areas. Please rank your priorities from 1- 7:

- Schools and education
- Local environment e.g. street and other cleaning, grass cutting, painting
- Highways, pavements and potholes
- Wellbeing e.g. support for sports clubs, community hubs and local groups

- Youth related services e.g. youth clubs
- Support for homelessness
- Public transport – bus subsidies

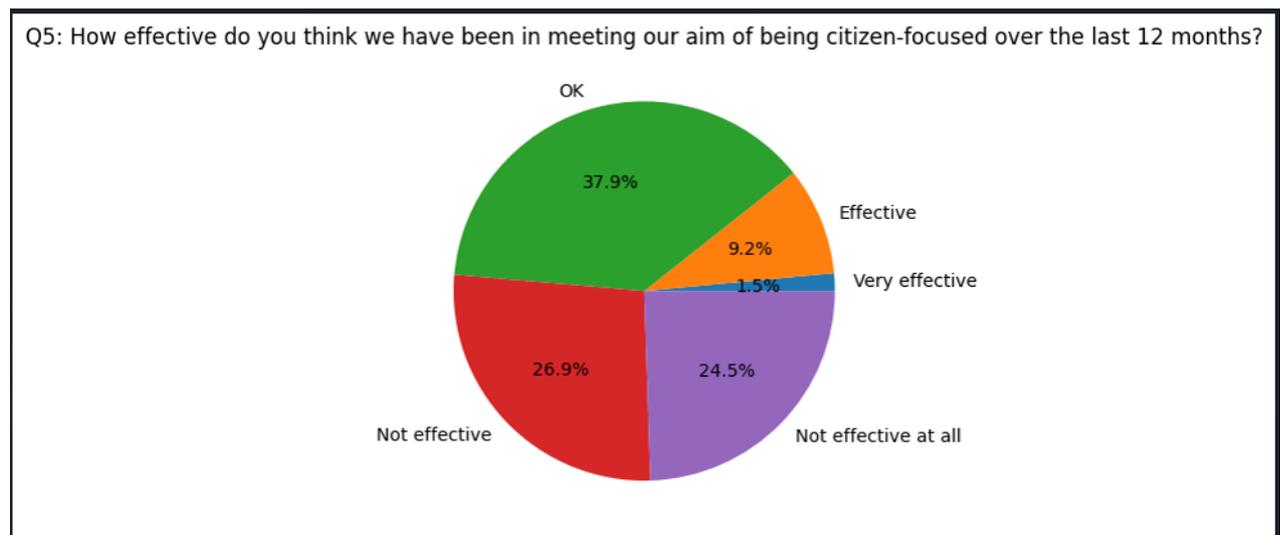


As shown in the table above the Priority order (highest → lowest)

7.6. Citizen focused

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 in the table above 1.5% (18) responded very effective, 9.2% (110) responded effective, 37.9% (454) responded OK, 24.5% (454) responded not effective and 24.5 (322) responded not effective at all.

7.7. Further suggestions

Do you have any further suggestions on what the council's budget priorities should be for 2026-2027?

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

- Maintain the roads
- Invest in the town centre
- Stop wasting money on vanity projects
- Cleaner streets
- Stop increasing council tax
- Reduce council tax
- Reduce anti-social behaviour
- Support for the elderly
- Finance for SEN is needed
- Save money
- Mandatory upkeep of empty buildings
- Support the elderly
- Improve public transport
- Enforce any littering
- Look after working people
- Stop the 20mph scheme
- Support the homeless
- Protect the vulnerable

8. Citizen Panel focus groups

Two Citizen Panel focus group sessions were held in January 2026 to explore residents' views on the Council's approach to setting the budget. Participants generally recognised the financial pressures facing the Council and understood the need to consider changes to how services are delivered and funded.

There was cautious support for charging for some services where this helps protect essential provision, although participants stressed that charges should be fair, proportionate and, where appropriate, means-tested. Stronger enforcement against issues such as fly-tipping, littering and illegal parking was widely supported. Participants also highlighted the potential impact of charges on town centres and local businesses.

There was broad support for greater use of digital tools and AI to improve efficiency, provided this does not replace human contact and takes account of digital exclusion. Libraries and community assets were seen as important in supporting access to technology. Reviewing the use of Council buildings and assets was strongly supported, with emphasis on reducing under-used space, increasing multi-use and developing community hubs.

In terms of service priorities, Schools and Education, Wellbeing, and Highways/Local Environment were consistently ranked highest, while Public Transport was generally ranked

lowest. Views on how citizen-focused the Council has been mixed but broadly moderate, with participants valuing opportunities for engagement while calling for clearer feedback on how consultation responses influence decisions.

9. Post-16 Learner Budget Challenge

A Post-16 Budget Challenge Day was held in January 2026 at the Civic Offices, involving sixth-form learners from all Bridgend secondary schools. The event was designed to amplify young people's voices in the budget process, improve understanding of local government finances, and gather learner-led priorities to complement wider public consultation feedback.

Learners took part in structured sessions exploring the Council's financial position, followed by breakout discussions on key themes including education, early years, young people, wellbeing, communities, prevention and social care. Working collaboratively, learners developed and presented budget proposals to elected members and senior officers, outlining their priorities and the rationale behind them.

The activity demonstrated strong engagement and provided valuable insight into the services learner's value most, alongside increasing awareness, financial literacy and understanding of the complexity of budget decisions.

10. Conclusion

The consultation and engagement activities have provided a robust and diverse evidence base to inform the Council's budget-setting process.

Feedback from the public consultation, Citizen Panel focus groups and post-16 learner engagement highlights both areas of consensus and concern, helping to clarify priorities and the potential impact of different budget options.

This feedback will be considered as part of the budget-setting process alongside financial, statutory and corporate considerations.

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 2026-2027 onwards.