

Budget Consultation Results **(for the Council's 2022/23 Budget)**

1. Executive Summary

This consultation was open from the 6 October 2021 to the 14 November 2021 and the results will be considered by both Cabinet and Council when shaping and approving the final Budget for 2022/23.

Residents and organisations have been giving their views on the services where they feel the Council should be spending more or reducing spending, and whether they agree with the overall budget proposals. Respondents were also invited to make any general comments or suggestions regarding next year's budget.

There was a total of 308 completed responses to this year's Budget Consultation, which includes 292 residents, 9 representatives of organisations and 7 MP/Councillors.

25% of respondents agreed with the proposed allocation of Buckinghamshire Council's annual budget for 2022/23 with 39% of respondents disagreeing with the proposal. 36% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal.

The top 10 services where respondents felt spending should increase are; Road maintenance (63%), Pavement maintenance including footpaths (55%), Community Safety (48%), Protecting the environment (46%), Waste management (41%), Services and support for children and young people (37%), Road infrastructure and planning (36%), Services and support for vulnerable adults and older people (35%), Educational services (32%) and Housing (31%).

This was a self-selecting, online consultation that was open to all stakeholders. A range of promotional activity was undertaken to raise awareness of the survey and to encourage participation, this included:

- Press releases – two press releases were distributed, one at the launch of the consultation and one towards the end, both sent to 523 recipients. Recipients include local media, town and parish councils, local magazines and newsletters, members and CMT. Also included as a news item on the BC website.
- Internal Communications - articles were included in the Member newsletter on three occasions and in the 'Together' newsletter sent to all council staff, twice as a leading feature and in two other weeks in the shorter 'To be aware of' section.
- Paid-for social media advertising – £50 paid for campaigns to Facebook which generated 31,381 reach¹ and 310 clicks. Highest ad reach was 20,551 and 261 clicks. Cost per result: £1.59
- Organic social media posts – a variety of posts on both Facebook (highest reach 3,225; total clicks 202) and Twitter (highest reach 2,906; total clicks 146)

¹ "Reach" refers to the number of individual social media accounts a post has been seen by. For example, if it shows up on one person's Facebook feed twice, that is counted as one reach, however if it shows up on the same person's Twitter feed and then their Facebook feed, that counts as two reaches.

- Engagement with Community Boards – a briefing note was sent to all boards to cascade out to local contacts, including Town and Parish Councils, earlier in the consultation and towards the end.
- E-newsletters sent to faith groups, hard-to-reach groups, partner organisations, BOD, schools bulletin for sixth forms, youth groups and for businesses via BBF, earlier in the consultation and towards the end
- Dedicated webpage and survey on Your Voice
- Article in residents' newsletter, T&PC newsletter

Media coverage:

<https://planetradio.co.uk/greatest-hits/beds-bucks-herts/news/bucks-residents-are-urged-to-have-their-say-on-budget-priorities/>

2. Results

2.1 The Council's plan for allocation of the annual budget

Respondents were presented with information regarding the Council's plan for allocating the 2022/23 budget.

This included information explaining that it is a legal requirement that the Council limits its spending to the income that it receives each year. It also explained that to ensure that the Council is able to provide statutory services, as well as other services that are most important to people, it is proposing to focus spending on priority areas and reduce spending in other areas.

Q1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed allocation of Buckinghamshire Council's annual budget for 2022/23?

Respondents were presented with the proposed budget allocation for the Council and then asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the proposal on a five point scale.

25% of all respondents agreed with the proposal but there were relatively high levels of disagreement at 39%. Over a third of respondents (36%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposed allocation of budget (Figure 1).

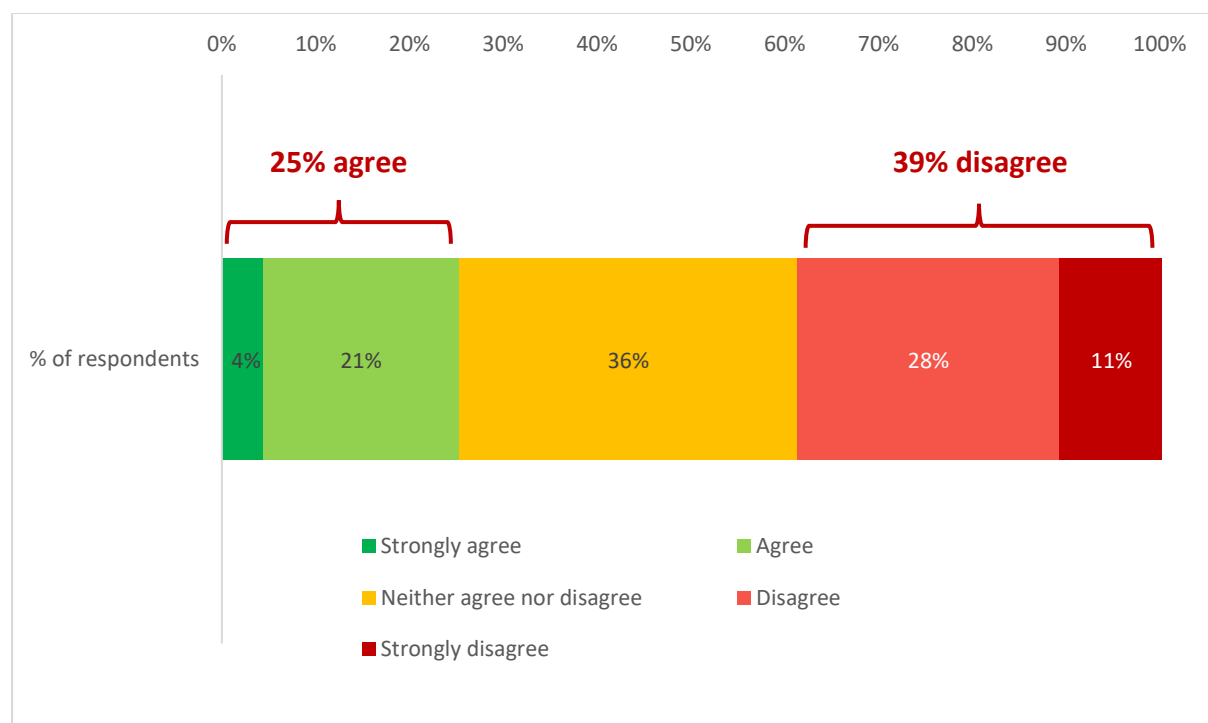


Figure 1: Proportion of respondents who agreed and disagreed with the proposed budget allocation. Based on 308 respondents. Due to the rounding up of figures, percentages may not equal 100.

Where possible, differences in opinion for different groups of residents will be included in the full version of this report.

2.2 Comments about the proposed spending plans

Q2. Do you have any comments about the proposed spending plans?

Out of the 308 respondents to the survey, 207 made specific comments. Each comment was categorised to understand common themes. Please note a respondent may have mentioned more than one theme – for example a respondent who commented on roads, education and waste and recycling would appear in all three categories.

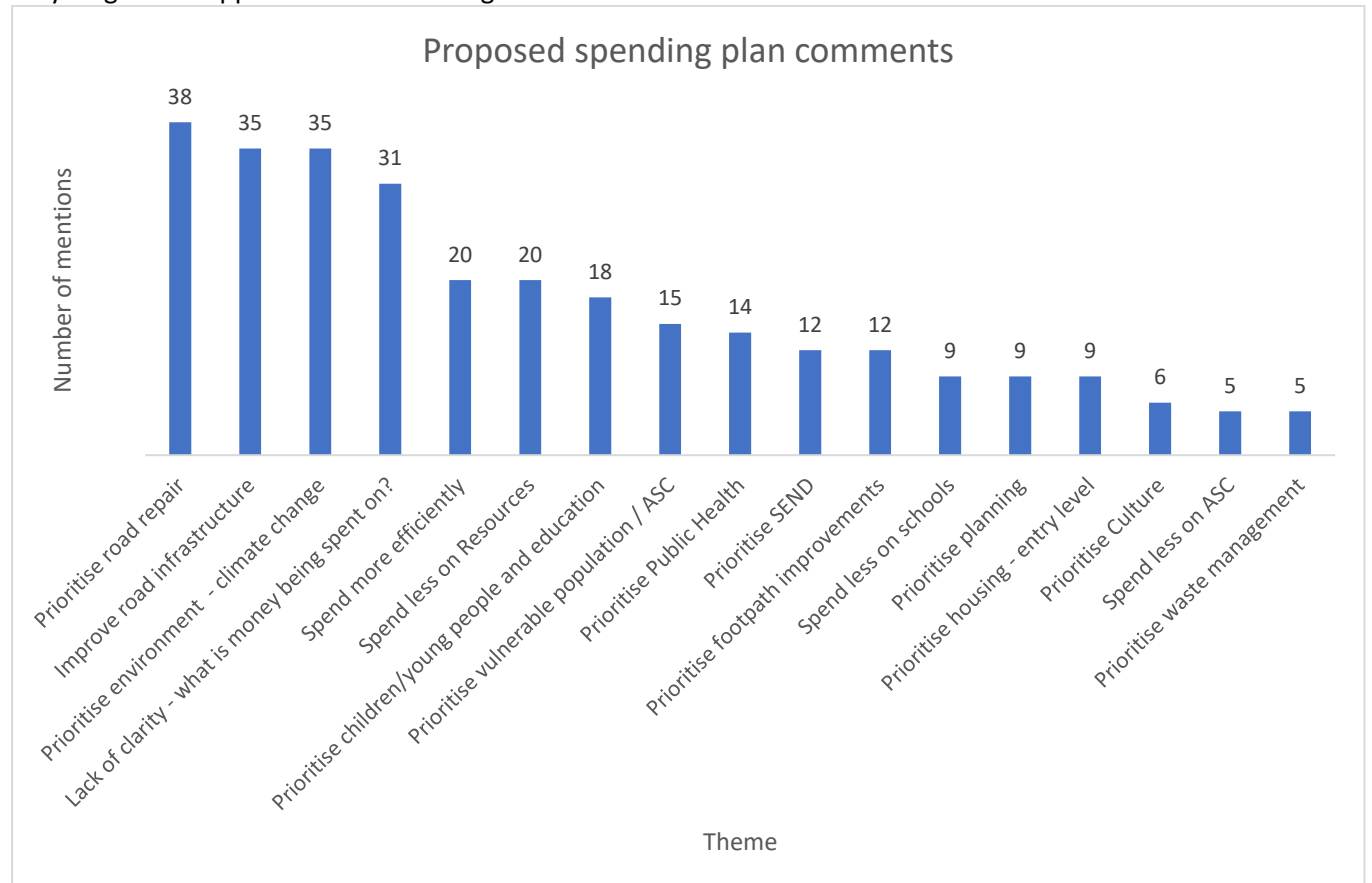


Figure 2: Count of comments by category. Based on 207 respondents who made an additional comment.

2.3 Service Priorities

Q3. Thinking about how we can balance our budget, please indicate for each of the following services, whether you think we should spend more, less or about the same.

When presented with a list of services, respondents were asked to select whether they felt the Council should spend more, less or the same on each service or area of spending. The option of 'I'm not sure' was also available as an answer. The number of respondents for each question varied as some respondents did not give an answer for some services. There were 7 respondents who skipped this section entirely.

According to Figure 3 shown below, the service areas which were selected by the highest proportion of respondents for increased spending are:

- Road Maintenance
- Pavement Maintenance
- Community Safety
- Protecting the Environment
- Waste Management

The service areas which were selected by the highest proportion of respondents for reduced spending are:

- Registrar Services
- Taxi Licensing
- Trading Standards
- Revenues and Benefits
- Culture and Tourism

Q3. Thinking about how we can balance our budget, please indicate for each of the following services, whether you think we should spend more, less or about the same.

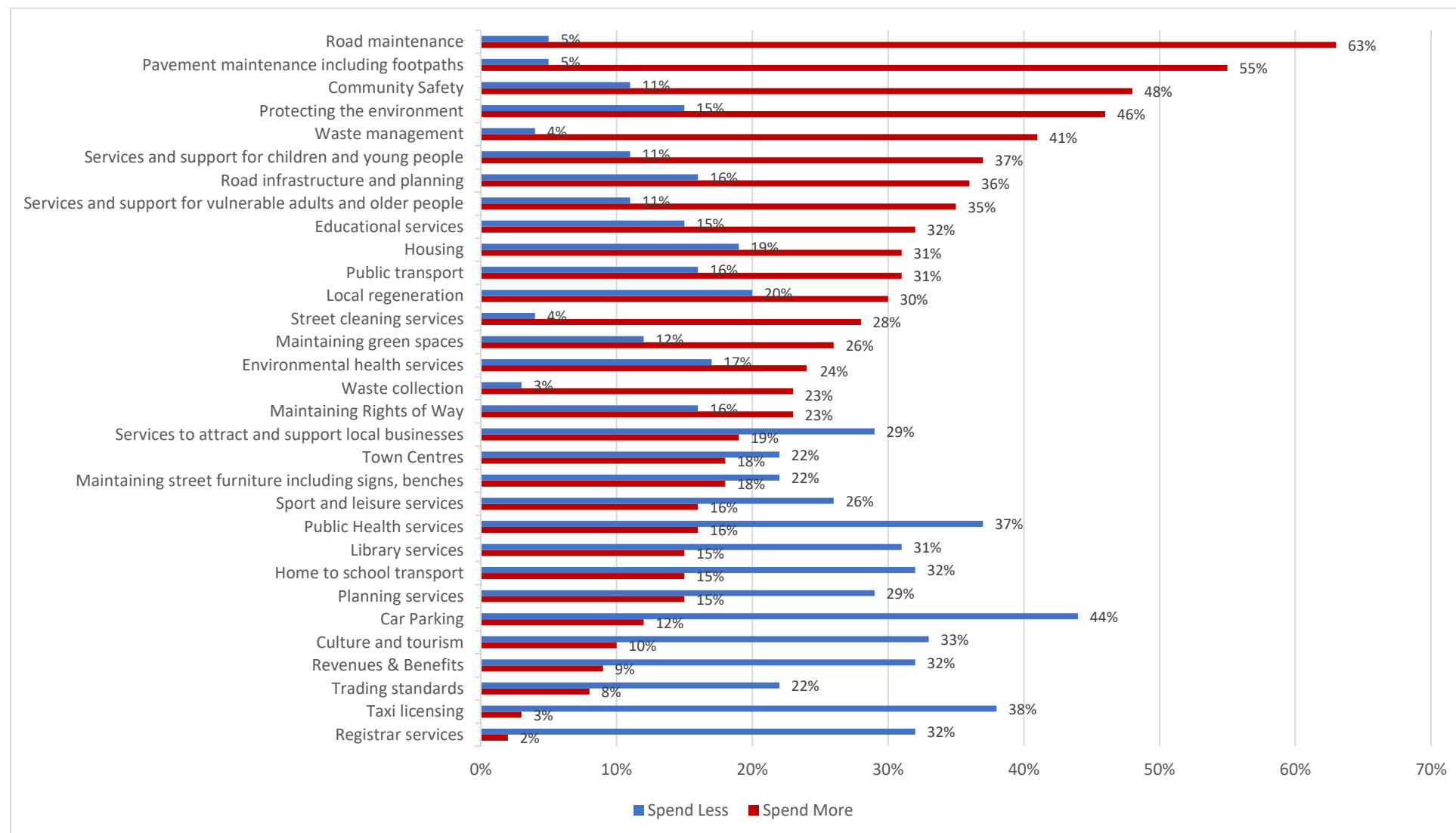


Figure 3: Proportion of the 308 residents and organisations responding to 'spend more', 'spend the same' or 'spend less' by service

Services net position on spending

The graph below shows the 'net' position for each service, by looking at the proportion of people who prioritised spending and then minusing the proportion who selected that spending should be reduced.

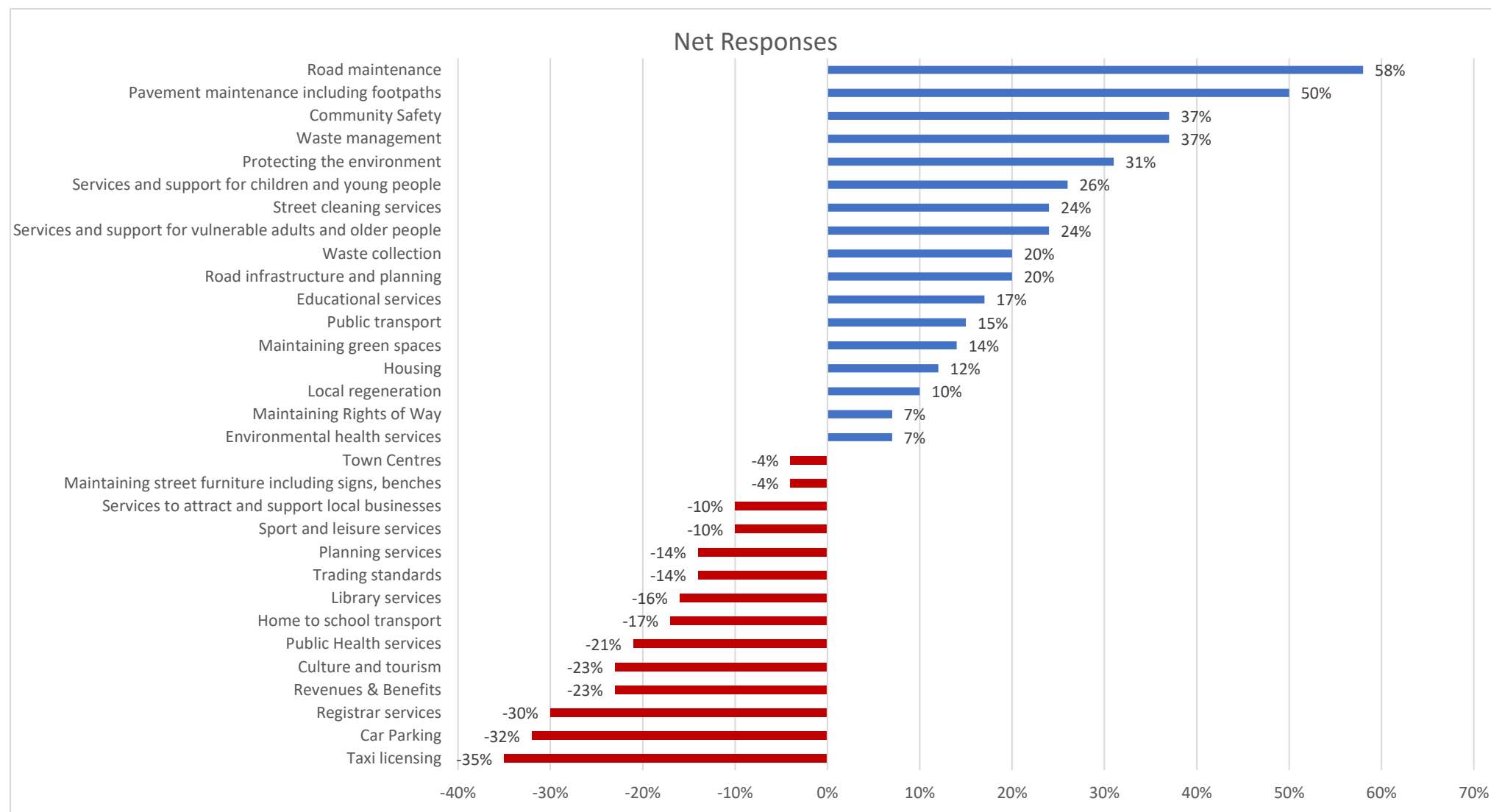


Figure 4: Net proportion of the 308 residents and organisations responding to the "Prioritise spending" and "Spend less" questions. Services in order of net priority high to low

Road maintenance has the highest net priority at 58%. This means that significantly more respondents overall chose to prioritise spending in this area than to reduce it.

Other areas which have a high net priority include Pavement Maintenance (50%), Community Safety (37%), Waste management (37%) and Protecting the Environment (31%).

Taxi Licensing has the lowest net priority at minus 35%. This means that significantly more respondents overall chose to reduce spending in this area than prioritise it.

Other areas which have a low net priority include Car Parking (-32%), Registrar Services (-30%), Revenues & Benefits (-23%) and Culture & Tourism (-23%).

2.4 Comments about the Council budget

Q4. Do you have any other comments about the Council Budget for 2022/23?

Out of the 308 respondents to the survey, 137 made specific comments. Each comment was categorised to understand common themes. Please note a respondent may have mentioned more than one theme – for example a respondent who commented on roads, education and waste and recycling would appear in all three categories.

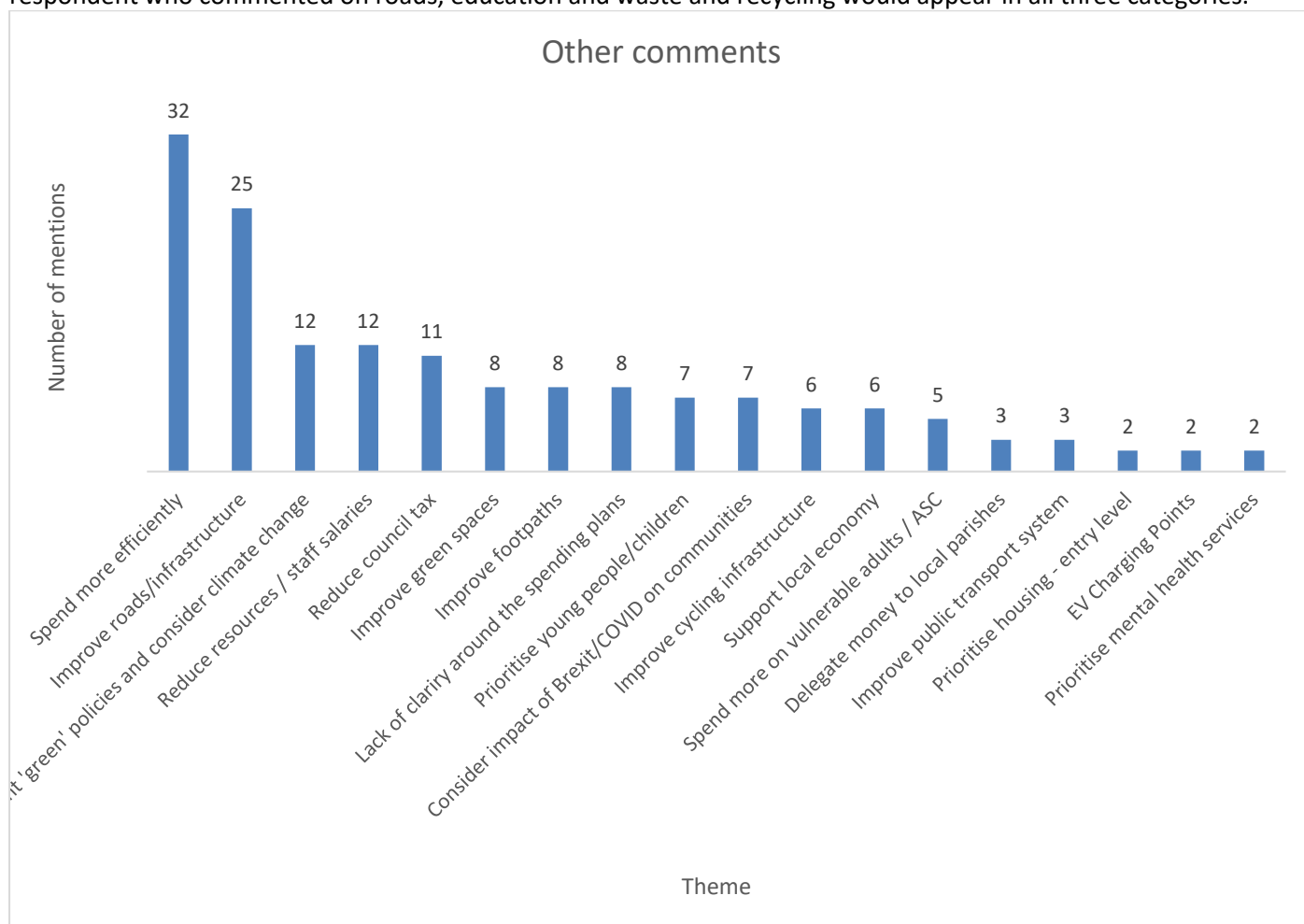


Figure 5: Count of comments by category. Based on 137 respondents who made an additional comment.

Verbatim will be included in the final revision of this report.

3. Respondent profile

3.1 Residents

The profile of those residents who responded to the survey was compared to the Buckinghamshire demographic profile to understand whether the survey sample contains an over or under representation of certain demographic groups.

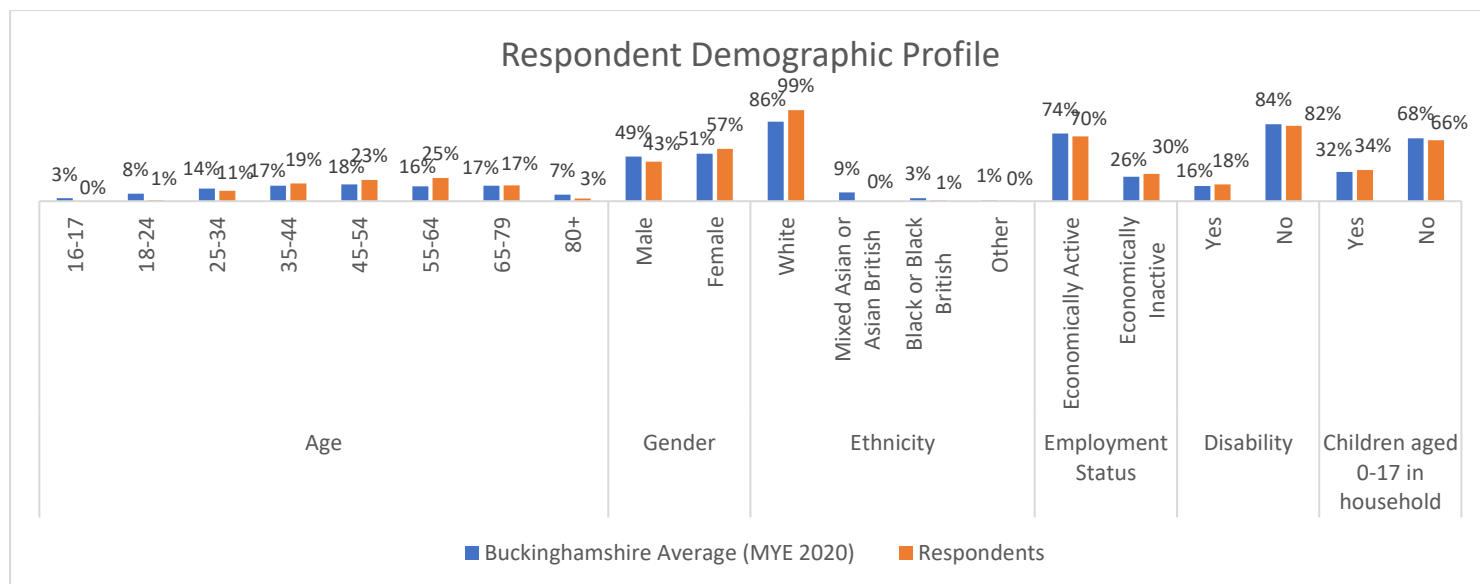


Figure 6: Demographics of respondents. Based on the following responses Gender (259), Age (272), Children aged 0-17 (289), Ethnicity (237), Disability (257), Present Job Category (265)

Sources: Census 2011 (Ethnicity, Disability, Children 0-17, Employment), ONS MYE 2020 (Gender and Age)

A higher proportion of respondents (48%) were in the 45-64 age groups compared with the Buckinghamshire population, where there are 34% in these age bands.

White ethnic groups (99%) were over-represented compared with the Buckinghamshire population (86%).

There was no statistically significant over/under-representation for Gender, Disability and Households with children aged 0-17 compared with the Buckinghamshire average.

Residents' postcodes were linked to an ACORN category for their local area. This is a classification of people according to a range of demographics (which help us understand their level of deprivation) based on the area that they live in (source: CACI 2021).

There are 5 categories that have been used in this analysis. Affluent Acorn Groups were over-represented, with 52% from the "Affluent Achievers" category, compared with 46% in Buckinghamshire.

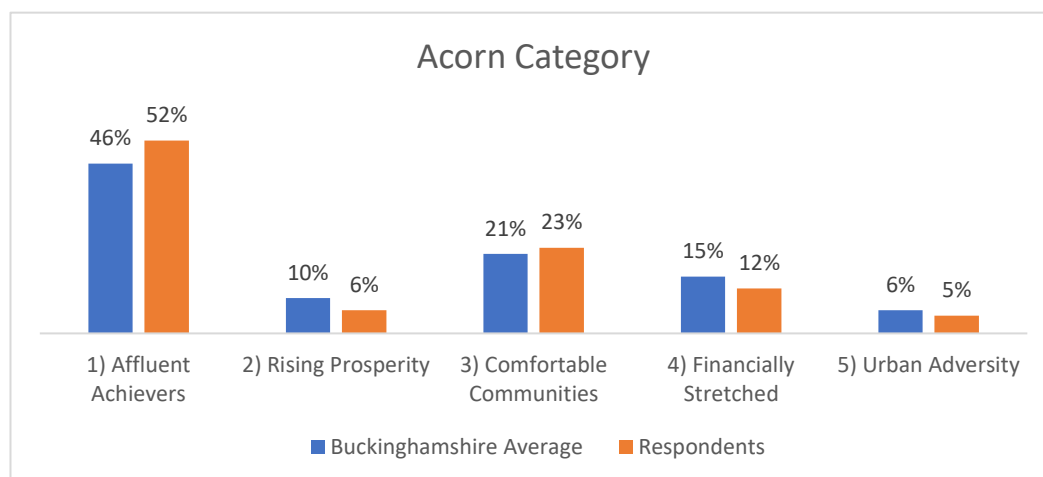


Figure 7: Respondents' ACORN categories. Based on 268 respondents with a valid postcode that could be matched to ACORN.

Residents' postcodes were also linked to Community Boards area. Areas to the north of the county had a larger representation than areas to the south. Aylesbury (22% vs. 14% Bucks average) and Buckingham and Villages (10% vs. 5% Bucks average) were over-represented, whilst High Wycombe (5% vs. 14% Bucks average) was under-represented.

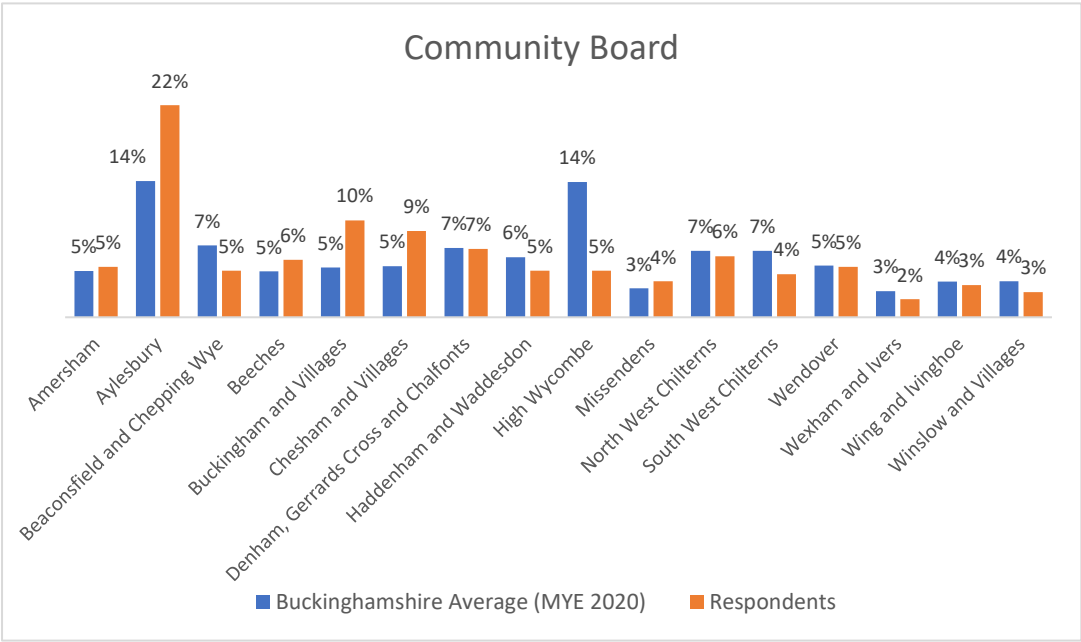


Figure 8: Respondents' Community Board area. Based on 272 respondents with a valid postcode that could be matched to Community Board area.

This is also illustrated in the map in Figure 9, which shows areas indexed against the Buckinghamshire average.

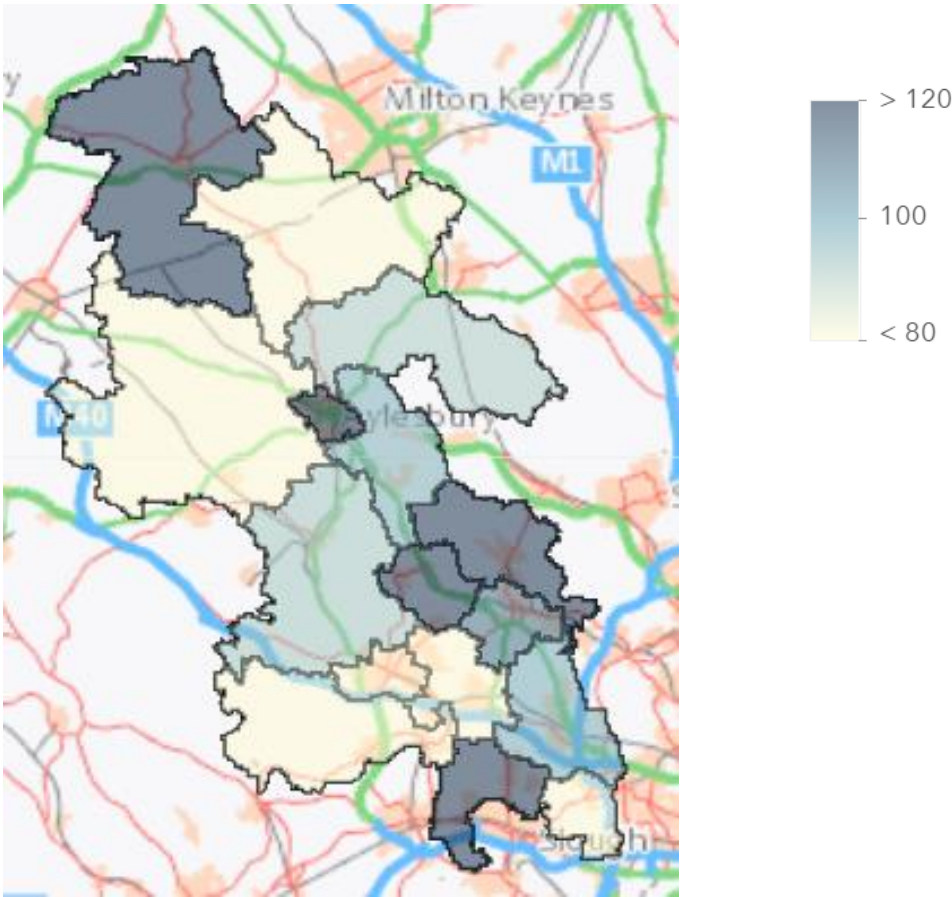


Figure 9: Respondents' location. Index vs. Buckinghamshire population. Based on 272 respondents with a valid postcode that could be matched to Community Board area.

3.2 Organisations

Of the 308 completed consultation responses, 9 were from representatives from an organisation or business. Due to the low response rate we do not have enough responses to understand the views of this group as a whole, however, of those organisations who provided a response to the free text questions, we have provided some verbatim comments below to give an insight into the views expressed.

Do you have any comments about the proposed spending plans?

"Too much money spent on central admin. Should streamline and automate more processes."

*"The current cost of road improvements or road safety changes **costs** far too much. i.e. it is not good value for money not that there is too much money allocated. Has this been benchmarked against other Councils and if so when?"*

"The amount allocated to Culture which includes all the County's libraries, is minimal..." "...If the library service, with all the communication facilities many of them offer, are run into the ground though lack of financial support it will be impossible to rebuild them." "...Burnham Library is a key example of this as it also sources the Village Information Point which documents a wide range of facilities, information and local resources available across a wide spectrum."

"More needs to be spent proactively and particularly in public health you need to spend money to save money rather than always reacting. Surely the last 2 years have proven this? Agreed that environment spending is important again if proactive."

"Adult Social Care & the environment should receive more funding."

"To answer this question we'd need to know: previous and current cost base, trends in the sector (e.g. schools won't have suffered as badly as hospitality in Bucks), social care risks and issues etc.."

"Try paying your staff proper wages at the tips in Buckinghamshire instead of putting everyone on minimum wage of £8.92."

Do you have any other comments about the Council Budget for 2022/23?

"Please consider how to better engage with the community to understand needs - I'd suggest focus groups and clear views on what the impact of 'more spend' would even be."

4. Appendix

Q3. Thinking about how we can balance our budget, please indicate for each of the following services, whether you think we should spend more, less or about the same.

This table of services and the detail provides more context for the graphs which are included in question 3.

Service short name	Service additional details
Car Parking	Including car parks and street parking
Community Safety	Including working with other organisations to tackle anti-social behaviour, violence and hate crime
Culture and tourism	Including museums, country parks and archaeology
Educational services	Including childcare, pre-school and school admissions
Environmental health	Including food hygiene inspections and air quality monitoring
Home to school transport	N/A
Housing	Including finding a home, tenancy issues and homelessness issues
Library services	N/A
Local regeneration	N/A
Maintaining parks, open spaces, playing fields and the countryside	N/A
Maintaining Rights of Way	N/A
Maintaining street furniture	Including signs and benches
Pavement maintenance	Including footpaths
Planning services	Including advice, enforcement, development plans, planning applications and building control
Protecting the environment	Including development of green spaces and renewable energy
Public Health	Including smoking cessation and drug/alcohol services
Public transport	N/A
Registrar services	Including civil weddings, register offices and births & deaths
Revenues & Benefits	Including Council Tax and Housing Benefit
Road infrastructure and planning	N/A
Road maintenance	N/A
Services and support for children and young people	N/A
Services and support for vulnerable adults and older people	N/A
Services to attract and support local businesses	N/A
Sport and leisure services	N/A
Street cleaning services	Including servicing public litter bins and dog bins
Taxi licensing	N/A
Town Centres	N/A
Trading standards	Including advice for businesses, product recalls and fraud / scams
Waste collection	N/A
Waste management	Including fly-tipping prosecutions and recycling

4.1 Appendix – full set of categories from comments

Q2. Do you have any comments about the proposed spending plans?

Note that there can be multiple categories per comment for the same respondents.

Theme	Mentions	Percentage
Prioritise road repair	38	13.0%
Improve road infrastructure	35	11.9%
Prioritise environment - climate change	35	11.9%
Lack of clarity - what is money being spent on?	31	10.6%
Spend more efficiently	20	6.8%
Spend less on Resources	20	6.8%
Prioritise children/young people and education	18	6.1%
Prioritise vulnerable population / ASC	15	5.1%
Prioritise Public Health	14	4.8%
Prioritise SEND	12	4.1%
Prioritise footpath improvements	12	4.1%
Spend less on schools	9	3.1%
Prioritise planning	9	3.1%
Prioritise housing - entry level	9	3.1%
Prioritise Culture	6	2.0%
Spend less on ASC	5	1.7%
Prioritise waste management	5	1.7%

Q4. Do you have any other comments about the Council Budget for 2022/23?

Note that there can be multiple categories per comment for the same respondents.

Theme	Mentions	Percentage
Spend more efficiently	32	25.2%
Improve roads/infrastructure	25	19.7%
Implement 'green' policies and consider climate change	12	9.4%
Reduce resources / staff salaries	12	9.4%
Reduce council tax	11	8.7%
Improve green spaces	8	6.3%
Improve footpaths	8	6.3%
Lack of clarity around the spending plans	8	6.3%
Prioritise young people/children	7	5.5%
Consider impact of Brexit/COVID on communities	7	5.5%
Improve cycling infrastructure	6	4.7%
Support local economy	6	4.7%
Spend more on vulnerable adults / ASC	5	3.9%
Delegate money to local parishes	3	2.4%
Improve public transport system	3	2.4%
Prioritise housing - entry level	2	1.6%
EV Charging Points	2	1.6%
Prioritise mental health services	2	1.6%



Each year the Council must prepare a budget and as part of the process we are asking residents and businesses to tell us their priority areas for the year ahead.

The last couple of years have been exceptional. The direct impacts of the pandemic, and the economic trauma it has caused, has led to significant additional costs and seen large reductions in income across a range of areas - such as parking revenue, planning applications, council tax and business rates, and rental from property we own.

At the same time we are taking on additional costs in providing new and further support to our most vulnerable children and adults and to help the recovery of the local economy and jobs.

Last year we had some support from government to help address these issues. However, we are still having to deal with many of these budget issues as we move through the pandemic and the economy slowly recovers.

In considering recovery from the pandemic, we will look to focus on the priority areas outlined in our Corporate Plan:

- Strengthening our communities
- Improving our environment
- Protecting the vulnerable
- Increasing prosperity

In preparing the budget, we also need to be aware of our statutory responsibilities: the services that we must continue to fund, such as Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care. We also need to consider those more limited areas of discretionary spend that improve the quality of life for all Buckinghamshire residents.

We are committed to making substantial savings and efficiencies next year and beyond, and prioritising those which do not reduce the levels of support and service we are able to offer. We will also continue to press government for fairer funding for the Council and the ability for us to more freely use some specific grants.

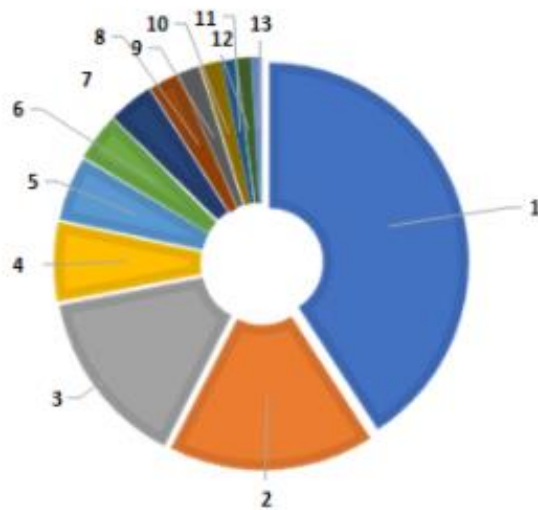
But there are many uncertainties. What will the 'new normal' look like for residents and businesses? How will the government fund local councils? Will there continue to be a lower income from services such as parking and property rental? What will happen if providers of essential services, such as care homes fail? Will we continue to see sharply increased demand for mental health services? Will we see inflation as the cost of goods, services and energy increase? All these factors make preparing the budget for 2022/23 extremely challenging.

In considering your response to the budget consultation survey, do take time to reflect on the wider needs of the whole of Buckinghamshire in addition to the specific priorities for yourself, your family, your immediate community, your business, or your organisation.

Budget allocation

All councils have a legal duty to limit their spending to the income they receive each year. So, our budget must balance. The vast majority of our budget each year needs to be spent on the services we are required by law to provide, such as social care for adults and children.

For every £100 we spend, this is how it is divided between the various services we provide:



Number	Service	Amount
1	Schools	£41
2	Adult Social Care	£17
3	Resources	£14
4	Children's Social Care	£6
5	Highways & Transport	£5
6	Borrowing costs, reserves	£4
7	Environment	£4
8	Economic development and infrastructure	£2
9	Public Health	£2
10	Education	£2
11	Planning	£1
12	Housing Regulatory Services	£1
13	Health & Culture	£1

We are proposing to allocate the 2022/23 budget in a similar way, in line with our recently agreed Cabinet structure following the election of our new members.

Give us your views

Please let us know what you think by completing our short online survey below. To request a printed version of the survey, please contact us on the email address above.

1 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed allocation of Buckinghamshire Council's annual budget for 2021/22?

(Required)

Please select only one item

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

2 Do you have any comments about the proposed spending plans?

Comments

3 Thinking about how we can balance our budget, please indicate for each of the following services, whether you think we should spend more, less or about the same.

	More	Same	Less	I'm not sure
Car Parking such as car parks, street parking <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Community Safety such as working with other organisations to tackle anti-social behaviour, violence and hate crime <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Culture and tourism such as museums, country parks and archaeology <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Educational services such as childcare, pre-school, school admissions <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Environmental health services such as food hygiene inspections and air quality monitoring <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Home to school transport <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Housing such as finding a home, tenancy issues, homelessness issues <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Library services <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Local regeneration <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Maintaining parks, open spaces, playing fields and the countryside <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Maintaining Rights of Way <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Maintaining street furniture including signs, benches <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pavement maintenance including footpaths <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Planning services such as advice, enforcement, development plans, planning applications, building control <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Protecting the environment such as development of green spaces, renewable energy <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Public Health services such as smoking cessation, drug/alcohol services <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Public transport <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Registrar services such as civil weddings, register offices, births & deaths <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Revenues & Benefits such as Council Tax, Housing Benefit <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Road infrastructure and planning <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Road maintenance <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Services and support for children and young people <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Services and support for vulnerable adults and older people <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Services to attract and support local businesses <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sport and leisure services <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Street cleaning services including servicing public litter bins, dog bins <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Taxi licensing <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Town Centres <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trading standards such as advice for businesses, product recalls, fraud / scams <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Waste collection <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Waste management such as fly-tipping prosecutions and recycling <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. Do you have any other comments about the Council Budget for 2022/23?

Your interest in this consultation

5 In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?

(Required)

Please select only one item

- ☐ Resident
- ☐ Representative of an organisation or business
- ☐ Councillor or MP
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Other

About you

Please fill in this section to complete the survey. This information is not compulsory but enables us to understand the views of different people.

The information you provide here will only be used for the purposes of this consultation, and will be stored securely in line with data protection laws. No personal information will be shared or published.

6 What age are you?

Please select only one item

- ☐ Under-18
- ☐ 18-24
- ☐ 25-34
- ☐ 35-44
- ☐ 45-54
- ☐ 55-64
- ☐ 65-84
- ☐ 85+
- ☐ Prefer not to say

7 What is your gender?

Please select only one item

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Transgender
- ☐ Other (please specify)
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Other

8 What is your ethnicity?

Please select only one item

- ☐ White
- ☐ Mixed
- ☐ Asian or Asian British
- ☐ Black or Black British
- ☐ Other (please specify)
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Other

9 Do you consider yourself to have a disability or long term health condition?

Please select only one item

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

10 What is your full postcode?

This field will need to be completed with a full standard postcode format. If you don't know your full postcode or you don't wish to provide it, please leave it empty.

11 Are there any children aged 0-17 in your household?

Please select only one item

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

12 What is your employment status?

(Required)

Please select only one item

- ☐ Employed full-time
- ☐ Employed part-time
- ☐ Self-employed full-time or part-time
- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Retired
- ☐ Carer
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Looking after the family or home
- ☐ Long-term illness or condition that prevents me from working
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Other

Your employment

13 Are you employed by Buckinghamshire Council?

Please select only one item

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Your organisation or business

14 Which category best describes the organisation you are representing?

Please select only one item

- ☐ Private business
- ☐ Voluntary, charity or community organisation
- ☐ Public sector organisation
- ☐ Town or parish council
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Other