

Draft Budget and Council Plan Consultation 2018-19 – Feedback Summary

Introduction

1. The purpose of this report is to set out the Draft Budget and Council Plan consultation process (including the separate processes that ran for a small number of proposals), and key consultation findings (including an understanding of who participated in the consultation). The results of which will be used to help inform decisions on the Council's final Budget for 2018-2019 and the Council Plan. This consultation ran alongside other consultations as outlined below.

Cabinet decisions and formal consultations

2. Consultation on the 2018-19 budget proposals ran in several phases. A MTP update report was presented to Cabinet on 19th October 2017. This included the first phase of 2018-19 budget proposals, totalling £9.6m. Consultation on these proposals commenced the day after the October meeting and concluded on 1st December 2017, with the exception of the Review of Northamptonshire's Library Service consultation which concluded on 13th January 2018 and the short breaks consultation which ran from 26th October 2017 to 6th December 2017.
3. The Draft Budget was approved by Cabinet on 19th December 2017 and consultation on the remaining 2018-19 budget proposals began immediately following this meeting. This second phase of consultation concluded on 30th January 2018, with the exception of the consultation on proposed changes to charging for adult social care services, which ran from 17th October 2017 to 6th January 2018. Whilst this proposal forms part of the 2018-19 budget, the decision to consult on proposed changes was agreed at Cabinet in September 2017.

How were the consultations promoted?

4. Councillors, local MPs and MEPs, district and borough councils, parish and town councils, partner organisations, voluntary and community sector organisations, representatives of protected characteristic groups, local business groups, customer and user groups and members of the Northamptonshire Residents' Panel were formally invited to give their views and asked to promote the consultation to their members, or within their local area where appropriate.
5. Opportunities to take part in the consultation were also promoted in the local media via press releases, through the council's website, e-newsletter and social media channels, allowing both internal (e.g. NCC staff) as well as external consultees to get involved in the process.
6. The Cabinet papers in relation to the Commissioned services for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), including short breaks and respite provision and Results and Analysis of Fair Charging Policy Consultation give details about specific consultation promotion amongst stakeholders who would be directly affected by these proposals.

How did consultees have their say?

7. Local people and organisations were able to have their say about the Draft Budget proposals in a range of ways, by:

- Visiting the Draft Budget and Council Plan Consultation webpage and completing the questionnaire or requesting a paper questionnaire from the Council
 - Emailing consult@northamptonshire.gov.uk
 - Writing to Draft Budget and Council Plan Consultation, Northamptonshire County Council, One Angel Square, Northampton, NN1 1ED
 - Attending one of eight drop-in consultation sessions held over the two consultation phases, one in each district/borough council area and two in Northampton
 - Using social media: Tweeting @mycountycouncil or posting comments on the mycountycouncil Facebook page
 - Using the toolkit to hold their own discussions and feeding back to us
 - Signing or submitting a petition or e-petition
8. Some consultees chose to submit their views about Draft Budget Proposals directly to local MPs, local Councillors, the county council's Chief Executive, or other senior officers or managers in NCC. These responses were forwarded to the 'Consult' mail box and have been included within the consultation analysis.

Budget Scrutiny

9. In addition to the above consultation channels, local people and organisations were also able to take part in Budget Scrutiny meetings. Budget scrutiny involves Councillors reviewing the draft budget proposals, looking at their aims and how their delivery may affect Council services. Although these scrutiny sessions happen at the same time as the Draft Budget Consultation process, they are separate from it.
10. The Budget Scrutiny Review included the following opportunities for members of the public to give their views in the following ways, through targeted scrutiny sessions:
- Wednesday 3rd January 2018 – The first meeting of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group, to identify which proposals should be subject to further scrutiny
 - Monday 8th January 2018 – An opportunity for members of the public to give their views about children, families and education services/ issues
 - Monday 8th January 2018 - An opportunity for members of the public to give their views about public health and wellbeing matters
 - Wednesday 10th January 2018 – An opportunity for members for the public to give their views on strategic and corporate matters
 - Thursday 11th January 2018 – An opportunity for members of the public to give their views about environment, development, transport and commercial matters (NCC Place directorate)
 - Friday 19th January 2018 – An opportunity for members of the public to give their views about adult social care services
11. The views expressed in these sessions have been summarised in the [Budget Scrutiny Review papers](#).

Number and type of responses received

12. During the draft budget consultation period, which covered the two phases, plus separate consultations relating to the libraries, short breaks and charging in adult social care proposals, excluding social media comments (which have been logged, but not counted as consultation

feedback) using the various means available to consultees, local people and organisations contributed to the consultations over 9,000 times (acknowledging that some people may have taken part in more than one consultation or responded to the same consultation via a number of different methods). Responses can be broken down as follows:

- Phase 1 Budget proposals – over 1,600 responses
- Library Service Review – almost 6,000 responses
- Short Breaks – almost 900 responses
- NASS Charging consultation – almost 400 responses
- Phase 2 Budget proposals – almost 300 responses

13. During the consultation period regular summaries of consultation responses received were circulated to decision makers to ensure such responses were considered in full and Cabinet Members had the opportunity to view unredacted consultation responses in a secure room in the County Council offices.

14. A number of responses, predominately letters and emails, relating to the Phase 1 proposals, were received after the Phase 1 consultation closed. Although receipt of these responses fell outside of the consultation timeframe, all of these responses have still been forwarded on to the senior officers within the relevant service for their consideration. Upon initial inspection of these late submissions the feedback contained within closely mirrored the responses submitted within the formal consultation timeframe.

What did people say?

15. Due to the number of proposals in the Draft 2018-19 Budget Proposals, the questionnaires were structured so that respondents could give their views on any of the individual proposals if they chose to do so, mirroring the feedback that came from letters, emails and petitions in relation to individual proposals. This means we are able to summarise views by proposal, collating the views from the different consultation channels.

16. In the development of the final budget, some proposals which were consulted on have been removed. However, because respondents took the time to comment on them, the feedback is shown below. More information on which proposals have been removed can be found in the associated [Cabinet Paper appendices](#).

Phase 1

Questionnaire

17. In total, 1,060 respondents completed a questionnaire, either online or by paper copy and either in standard or easy read format. Respondents did not have to answer every question and so the total number of responses for each question differs and is shown in relation to each question.

Optimum Service Delivery

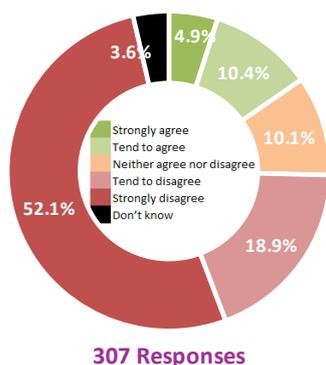
Trading Standards

18. Respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the following proposal:

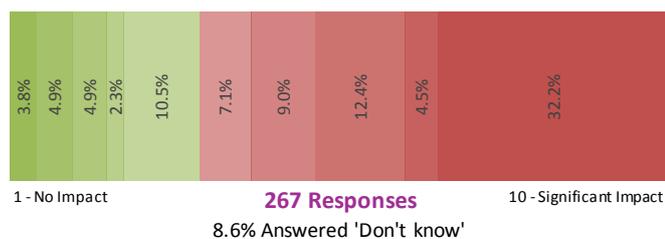
- Review the duties, responsibilities and standards of service provided by the Trading Standards Service, with a proposed reduction involving approximately 16 staff and the focus being on risk and priority and less prevention and enforcement activity. Testing and analysis of products/services for legal compliance will be significantly reduced (£600k saving).

Trading Standards

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?



Using a scale of 1 to 10, please tell us how much of an impact this proposal would have on you if implemented?



139

Respondents provided comments on what could be done to help mitigate the impact of this proposal

19. As shown in the above graph, the majority of respondents (71.0%) disagreed with the Trading Standards proposal, with 15.3% agreeing.

20. Although respondents value the Trading Standards service the most frequent reason given as to why respondents support this proposal is that they feel the Council has higher priorities to fund, for example health services and road infrastructure. Concerns were raised about the pressures placed on the remaining staff with such a large percentage reduction, although a small number of respondents felt the service is not currently cost effective and could sustain the proposed reduction.

21. Respondents also commented that enforcement activity should be maintained as a priority; that there is sufficient information available to the public warning of the risks of rogue traders; and that the service should be the responsibility of other organisations including central government.

22. By far the most frequent reason why respondents said they disagreed with the proposal were concerns over the level of impact this could have on public safety, with fears of increased rogue trading putting people, especially the most vulnerable, at risk of harm. Due to the proposal to reduce the testing and analysis of products/services for legal compliance, many respondents raised concerns over the potential increase of dangerous products being more readily available. These concerns ranged from products such as children's toys to unsafe food. Many respondents specifically raised their concerns that if the proposal were to go ahead then the elderly in particular would be left more vulnerable to fraudsters and rogue traders. Respondents feared a reduction of this scale would put lives at risk.

23. Many respondents also raised their concerns over the proposed reduction of prevention and enforcement activity. Respondents felt prevention was required to help keep residents of the

- county safe. Respondents felt a decrease in prevention was a false economy and would result in greater expense at a later date. Many respondents also felt that a reduction in prosecutions would have a detrimental effect and ultimately lead to an increase in criminal activity, with Northamptonshire being considered an easy target for rogue traders. Respondents wanted to see enforcements and have the knowledge that criminals are being prosecuted.
24. Some respondents felt that if illegal trading were to go unchecked then this would have a detrimental impact on legitimate businesses whose expenses are greater due to them complying with the law. Some respondents also felt that a reduction within Trading Standards would impact on other enforcement organisations, such as the Police and Environmental Health. One respondent suggested that a more collaborative approach to this service would be better than just cutting the service levels.
 25. Some respondents raised their concerns over the proposed percentage of staff reduction, saying that it is disproportionately large and would have a significant impact on service delivery, leaving the remaining staff unable to investigate all complaints.
 26. Some of the respondents who said they disagreed with the proposal simply said that a reduction should not be made to the Trading Standards service because they valued the service and felt it is simply too important to be reduced.
 27. Other comments received included wanting to know the rationale as to why Trading Standards is proposed to be reduced by this percentage in comparison to other services. Comments were also made stating that the service should not be subject to reductions due to what is felt as mismanagement of other areas within NCC; others just did not want it to be reduced. A few respondents also thought NCC should be receiving more money from central government to enable sufficient funding of services.
 28. A few respondents did not know what could be done to mitigate the impact of this proposal.
 29. The few respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with this proposal gave various reasons as to why, some of which mirrored the above, but the most frequent comments expressed the value placed on the service but considering the current financial circumstances of NCC felt a reduction to services is inevitable.
 30. Respondents who answered “don’t know” made no comments.
 31. The graph above shows that the majority of respondents felt the proposal would have a significant impact should it be instigated.
 32. When asked to consider what could be done to help mitigate the impact of the proposal, many respondents simply suggested that a reduction should not be made and that the staffing levels should remain as they are now, with some even stating they felt the service required more funding than it is currently receiving.
 33. Many respondents also suggested that NCC should seek alternative avenues for funding and savings. Frequent suggestions for increasing funding included raising council tax, increase business tax, and to increase amount offenders are fined. Saving suggestions included looking

elsewhere within NCC for salary savings, selling the newly built head office One Angel Square, and lobbying Central Government for more funding.

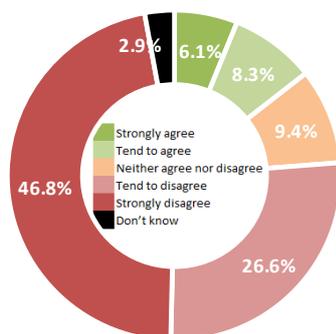
34. Some respondents said they accepted that a reduction in service is required although they felt the proposed percentage is too great. Some suggested a review of the service model might help find efficiency savings and help reduce what many perceive to be a large percentage in job losses, as some respondents believe the proposed reduction is unsustainable.
35. Some respondents also suggested there should be more collaboration with other public bodies such as district and borough councils, environmental health and Northamptonshire Police, as this could lead to efficiencies and lessen the impact of the proposal. Some felt this joined up working could share services with neighbouring counties or possibly be a national approach.

Review of Highways – Highways Maintenance Tranche 1

36. Respondents were then asked if they agreed or disagreed with the following proposal:
 - Budget reductions in highway maintenance and road safety and travel choice services of:
 - £285k - 2018/19 as one year only saving
 - £70k - 2018/19 as a permanent base budget saving
 - £300k - 2018/18 capital budget saving
 - The service will be able to continue to meet its statutory responsibilities, however, the amount of services provided will be reduced. Some of the proposals include a temporary reduction in services of one year.
 - The options that will be considered for amendment/reduction include:-
 - A reduction in weed killing treatment by half for one year only
 - A reduction in road marking maintenance for one year only
 - A reduction in traffic signal maintenance – extending the time taken to attend and repair failed traffic signals for one year only.
 - A reduction Road safety and travel modal choices services - reduction in activities such as road safety promotion and education at schools and across the community and promotion of other modes such as cycling, motorbike, bus and rail.
 - Parish enhancement gangs service will be removed for one year only - this service undertakes local priority highway maintenance activities.
 - Capital savings of £300k - rationalised and improved working methods for the planning and implementation of traffic management

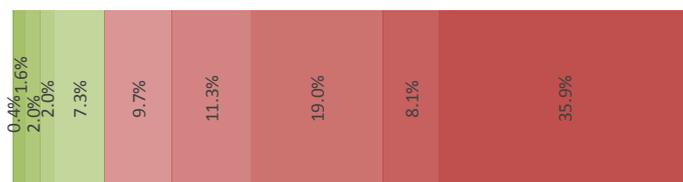
Review of Highways - Highways Maintenance Tranche 1

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?



278 Responses

Using a scale of 1 to 10, please tell us how much of an impact this proposal would have on you if implemented?



1 - No Impact

248 Responses

10 - Significant Impact

2.8% Answered 'Don't know'

136

Respondents provided comments on what could be done to help mitigate the impact of this proposal

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37. As shown in the above graph, the majority of respondents (73.4%) disagreed with the Review of Highways – Highways Maintenance Tranche 1 proposal, with 14.4% agreeing.
38. The most frequent comment made as to why respondents agreed with this proposal is that they felt these proposals were reasonable as they deemed that other services provided by the Council, such as social care, were of a higher priority. However, some of these respondents stated it was a reluctant agreement and given on the condition that maintenance in high level of need of repair was still carried out, especially where this poses a potential risk to public safety.
39. A few said they agreed to the proposals because they felt it would have little impact or that the impact would be distributed amongst many people and not targeted against a select few.
40. It appears that a few respondents answered that they agreed to the above question by mistake as their comments clearly indicated their disapproval of the proposal.
41. By far the vast majority of respondents who disagreed with the proposal told us they did so because of their concerns over public safety. They especially felt this would come about with a reduction in road maintenance including road markings and traffic light repairs; and weeds obscuring signs and visibility for drivers and other road and path users, including being trip hazards for pedestrians. Concerns were also raised about the lack of education of road safety within schools. Respondents raised strong concerns how this could result in a lot more accidents and subsequently more fatalities on the county's roads.
42. Many respondents criticised the current state of the county's roads and felt that they would deteriorate more quickly and significantly if they were left too long until they were repaired, and that not treating weeds would compound this issue. Respondents commented how they felt potholes were being left unrepaired or that repairs were too slow, and that some road markings had eroded. Respondents commented on how they perceived roads within other counties within the country to be in better condition than Northamptonshire's.
43. Some respondents felt that this proposal would be what they called 'a false economy', as they felt the cost of making repairs at a later date would outweigh the potential savings that would be made this year. They also felt that by implementing this proposal would expose the Council

to a number of claims for compensation, the litigation of which would again outweigh the savings being made. They said that the amount of accidents that could occur would result in demand being placed on other services in order to deal with road traffic accidents, including looking after those involved.

44. Some respondents commented on how this proposal would have a detrimental effect on rural communities. Some parish councils stated that they have not received the level of service the Council should already be applying and that this proposal would only make their situation worse. They commented on the good work being done by the parish enhancement gangs.
45. A few raised their concern that temporary reduction of half/one year would escalate and become a permanent removal of service, or that if services were reinstated they would not be the full service.
46. A few said how some aspects of the proposals were more important than others - for example they supported the reduction in weed killing but not with those that could compromise road safety.
47. Other comments included concerns over the potential impact of the effect made to the environment, especially where there could be traffic congestion; the view that public transport within the county was not a viable alternative, especially if bus services are reduced/removed; and disagreement with the reduction of promotion of alternative modes of transport.
48. A variety of comments were made from respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed to the proposal. Some selected this option because they agreed with some of the reductions listed but not others, whilst others raised similar comments already mentioned above.
49. Only one respondent gave a reason as to why they said don't know, and that was because they did not know what the effect of reducing the amount of weed killing would have on the safety of road users.
50. Again the graph above shows that the majority of respondents felt the proposal would have a significant impact should it be implemented.
51. When respondents were asked what they thought could be done to help mitigate the impact of this proposal, the majority of respondents suggested alternative methods of savings or income generation. Suggestions for income generation included increasing council tax, using the profits of speeding fines, increased parking charges, selling One Angel Square and leasing it back, demanding greater contributions from developers, implementing a congestion charge, and demanding better funding from central government. Suggestions for alternative means of savings ranged from straight forward requests for the Council to manage its finances better and/or finding savings from elsewhere, charging for all non-statutory functions, renegotiating contract(s), to looking for joint funding from/or encouraging schools deliver road safety education.
52. Many respondents commented on how they felt the Council should focus on essential maintenance, with some respondents listing which service(s) they thought should be

maintained and those that could be reduced, with road maintenance, including road markings, being flagged as a high priority by some, with weed killing being mentioned as a lower concern.

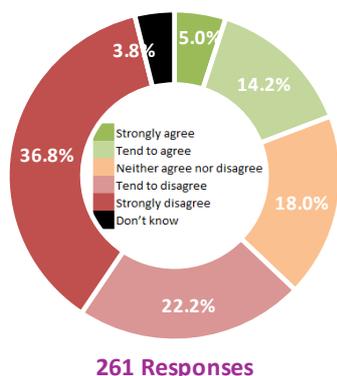
53. A similar number of respondents also suggested that the Council should work in closer partnership with other organisations, including parish councils, and communities in order to help deliver some of these services, at potentially reduced cost. Respondents felt community groups could do more to help with their local area; that local agencies could work closer to reduce duplication; and that responsibilities for weeding and similar maintenance could be devolved to parishes.
54. One respondent felt the service needs to respond directly to queries and faults. Another criticised the current volume of traffic on the roads and felt if roads deteriorated then the number of cars in use would reduce.
55. A similar number also called for the proposal to be stopped and for the services to stay as they are, with some saying that the service is already underfunded.

Review of Highways – Highways Maintenance Tranche 2

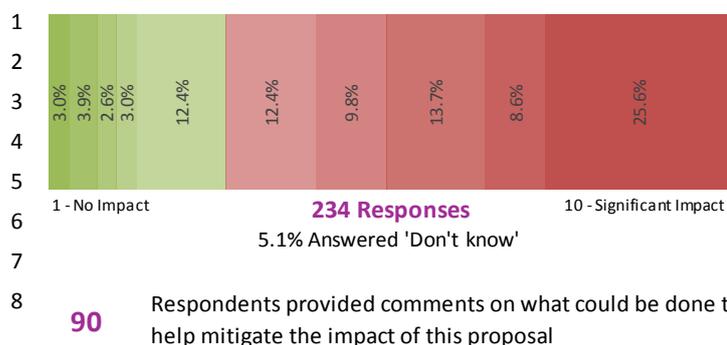
56. Respondents were then asked if they agreed or disagreed with the following proposal:
 - Budget reductions in highway maintenance and road safety and travel choice services of:
 - £805k in 2018/19
 - £185k in 2019/20
 - The service will be able to continue to meet its statutory responsibilities, however, the amount of services provided will be reduced.
 - The options that will be considered for amendment/reduction include:-
 - Reduction in cyclic gully cleansing programme
 - Reduction in numbers and types of smaller local priority maintenance works together with reduction in supervision and administration support for operational teams, plus reduction in Public Right of Way technical, inspection, enforcement and operational staff levels.
 - Savings in depot maintenance and accommodation plus plant and fuel savings arising from the rationalisation of depots.
 - Reductions in road safety and travel modal choices services – further reduced activities such as road safety promotion and education at schools and across the community and the promotion of other modes such as cycling, motorbike, bus and rail.

Review of Highways - Highways Maintenance Tranche 2

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?



Using a scale of 1 to 10, please tell us how much of an impact this proposal would have on you if implemented?



57. As shown in the above graph, the majority of respondents (59.0%) disagreed with the Review of Highways – Highways Maintenance Tranche 2 proposal, with 19.2% agreeing.

58. The most common reason given by respondents as to why they agreed with the proposal were general comments of approval, with some adding that they agree on the proviso that the Council meets its statutory responsibilities, and so long as public safety is not compromised or areas put at unnecessary risk of flooding.

59. Some respondents felt the proposal would have minimal impact on the majority of individuals.

60. A few said that they did not see some of these services as the responsibility of the Council, and that road safety education of pupils should be paid for by the schools.

61. A small number of respondents made reference to the feedback they provided during answering the questions in tranche 1.

62. Some of the reasons respondents gave as to why they disagreed with the proposal repeated those comments they made in relation to tranche 1.

63. The most frequent reason respondents gave as to why they disagreed with the proposal was concerns over public safety and the risk of localised flooding with a reduction in the cyclic gully cleansing programme. They felt further reduced road safety would lead to an increase in accidents and that the Council should be helping to prevent accidents, especially with the education of children. Respondents felt road safety was a fundamental role of the Council. Respondents raised their concerns over the problems that could occur with roads and property potentially being flooded, and the subsequent cost of rectifying this.

64. Some respondents raised their concern over the state of the roads and pathways and criticised the current level of service, with some saying the county's road infrastructure was already in a state of poor repair, and how they felt the drainage service is already inadequate with a number of roads flooding in heavy rain.

65. Some respondents mentioned how they felt the savings would be a false economy, saying that later repairs would cost more if left unattended, and that the long-term cost would outweigh

the short-term saving. Some raised again the consideration that compensation claims against the Council would also outweigh the amount being saved.

66. Respondents commented on the potential environmental impact that congestion could have on the local air quality with an increase in pollution. They also mentioned the need to promote environmentally sustainable alternative means of transport, and that people should be encouraged to cycle and use public transport.
67. A similar amount of respondents also expressed their concern over a reduction in the rights of way team, and that the team was important to help sustain accessible public footpaths throughout the countryside.
68. A few respondents also raised their concerns of the over detrimental effect this proposal would have on rural / parish communities, with areas being significantly impacted by the proposal and that the priorities of these communities appearing to be diminishing from the responsibility of the Council.
69. A small number of respondents stated that they have paid taxes for these services and expressed their anger at the potential of the services being reduced.
70. There were a variety of comments received from respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed, with some repeating comments already mentioned above. Some said that there was not enough information available or that they did not have enough knowledge on the subject, whilst others said that they supported some of the proposed reductions but not others. A few said that the proposal would have little impact.
71. Only one respondent gave a reason as to why they selected 'Don't know' and said that anything that impacts on the safety of road users which they would be unable to detect for themselves should not be reduced.
72. Again the graph above shows that the majority of respondents felt the proposal would have a significant impact should it be implemented.
73. When respondents were asked what they thought could be done to help mitigate the impact of this proposal, most commented on alternative methods of income or made suggestions as to how else savings could be made. Suggestions included requests to increase in council tax; increase parking charges; instigate congestion charges; reduce Cabinet members' allowances; reduce the size of maintenance teams; seek further funding from central government; sale of assets; and general calls to cut other services instead of these.
74. Some respondents said the only way to mitigate the impact would be to not carry out the proposals. They requested the services remain as they are and reiterated that any savings in maintenance would cost more in the long-term.
75. Some respondents commented that the Council should work more closely with partner organisations to help mitigate the impact of any changes, with some suggesting that the parish and town councils could undertake some of the maintenance work locally whilst others suggested that systems should be in place to make it easier for these organisations to work

with the Council. Others suggested that volunteers could undertake some of the tasks currently being delivered by the service.

76. A small number of respondents commented that they felt some of the services could be reduced but areas such as essential maintenance should always be carried out and that there should no reduction with this aspect of the funding.

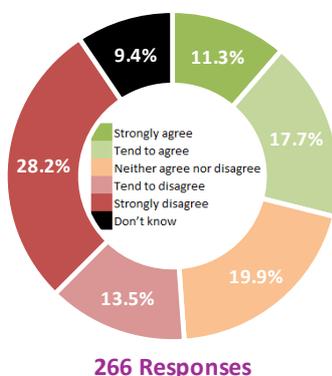
77. Other comments included the importance of education on road safety; requests for improved contract management and efficiency with external providers; and better promotion of more healthy and environmental friendly modes of transport. Again several respondents made reference to answers they provided to previous questions.

First Point of Contact Modelling in Children’s Social Care

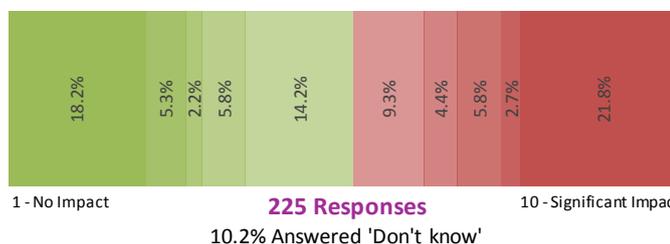
78. Respondents were then asked if they agreed or disagreed with the following proposal:
- This is about the arrangements we have in place to respond to an initial contact from a professional or a member of the public who is concerned about a child. We will make better use of signposting so that people know who to contact and when to do so, which should reduce telephone contacts. Some of this is about process improvement, but we also think that there is also scope for reducing staff costs in this area (£500k saving).

First Point of Contact Modelling in Children’s Social Care

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?



Using a scale of 1 to 10, please tell us how much of an impact this proposal would have on you if implemented?



84

Respondents provided comments on what could be done to help mitigate the impact of this proposal

79. As shown in the above graph, the majority of respondents (41.7%) disagreed with the First Point of Contact Modelling in Children’s Social Care proposal, with 29.0% agreeing.

80. Respondents who answered “strongly agree” or “agree” said that improvement to service design was important in order that the service meets the needs of its customers. Some thought that it was a sensible idea, that if improvements are made to the service and that there is no impact then the proposal should not be subject to consultation.

81. Many respondents made comments on efficient use of resources being a priority. They felt that streamlining and having a clear flow of who to contact and when to do so would be of benefit to professionals and children.
82. Respondents did comment that child safety should not be compromised when services are being devised or aligned.
83. A few comments were made about the language being used, in that the proposal implied a reduction in staff costs and numbers. Comments were made about the MASH team and what they did. Others said that if they were concerned about a child's wellbeing, then they would report it directly to the Police.
84. Respondents consistently commented on partnership working, clear communication and appropriate investment in the digital service/ infrastructure if this proposal is to be effective and not impact on children's safety. They commented on making sure that service and process improvement was prioritised from an end user perspective.
85. Respondents who strongly disagreed or disagreed with the proposals commented overwhelmingly about the impact on safeguarding children. Many respondents said that child protection ought to be paramount. They were concerned about putting children's safety at further risk and or danger. They felt the consequences of the budget proposal would be high in that the outcomes for vulnerable children would be poor. Respondents said that children's services should be a priority and that children were most vulnerable groups in society.
86. Respondents said that the current front door access was difficult enough, with high thresholds, and that overall they felt that there were fewer services for people to refer to due to reduction in children's social care over the past years.
87. Respondents said if telephone access was reduced, timely support and intervention would be compromised. Some said that current sign-posting was adequate, however it may be more appropriate for professionals to access rather than for the general public and that the public needed to speak to a person.
88. Respondents stated that operating procedures and systems can always be reviewed and tweaked for efficiencies and that the modern trend for online processes may seem like a good way forward but the information had to be relevant and up to date as well as being easy to navigate and access. However, they commented on the complex nature of child care cases in that signposting is no substitution for peer to peer discussion. They felt that telephone/ person to person interaction was crucial, especially due to the very sensitive, emotional and concerning issues that needed to be dealt with. Respondents were concerned that it would turn into "tick box" procedure and as a result of not fitting certain criteria, children would be at risk. They also felt that the size of the county warranted some localised contact.
89. Respondents felt that reducing staff in children's social care is a concern and that this could put children at risk and at danger. They said that current staff levels are stretched and that the proposal will increase workload, add to stress levels and may cause staff to leave the service. They commented on the pay of senior managers in the service and that reduction at that level could help achieve the £500K reduction proposed.

90. Respondents commented that there was no information or real depth to the proposal in order for them to comment on. Some said the proposal was “wishy washy”, that they were unsure of really how accessible the system would be and what safeguards would be in operation to “really” safeguard children. They commented on seeing no real evidence as to how this saving would be made. They also made reference to the lack of equality impact data.
91. Respondents comments about the service recently coming out of special measures and that this proposal may undo all the work that has been undertaken.
92. Respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed commented that they knew very little about the service. Others said that information provided was limited and as such they could make no comment.
93. Some respondents said they could not determine the impact the proposal would have due to issues such as not having a local school in their locality; or them not having the required specialist knowledge to do so.
94. Comments were made on access to digital infrastructure and access to digital services. Others said that NCC needed to be more transparent and open. They were not sure that the proposal was about getting a better and efficient service or whether it was a staff reduction proposal. In particular, they commented on not putting children at further risk.
95. A respondents said that the cost of the service was a small amount compared to others services, describing it as “a drop in the ocean”. Another respondent said that demands for the service could be reduced if the service did not accept cases from outside the county.
96. One comment received from respondents who answered “don’t know” said the vulnerable people should be protected whatever the cost is to society.
97. Again the graph above shows that the majority of respondents felt the proposal would have a significant impact should it be implemented.
98. Respondents, when asked what they thought could be done to mitigate the impact of this proposals commented on working with others to help deliver the service in collaboration.
99. Some commented that there was no personal impact to the proposal for them but that they wanted children protected.
100. They commented that sign posting with an option to contact staff was important and that signposting should be easy to access and navigate. They requested better education and training of parents and professionals to know who to contact. They stated that better training for health and education professionals was needed to understand the thresholds and the assessment of risk.
101. Respondents wanted staffing levels to be maintained, stating that the current service was already limited. They suggested that the proposal should be “worked up further” then brought forward for further consultation when the full information was available.

Respondents said that a “soft roll-out” could be applied to online signposting i.e. for professionals to be introduced first with public after, and then if required, a telephone service that is reduced in hours.

102. Respondents also made comments like “don’t do it”, “have compassion”, do not use agency staff, raise council tax/ ring fence the service to protect it; get fairer funding from central government and start prioritising what is important. They further made comments on the quality of the service being maintained and on the pay of managerial staff/ and or the reduction in managers posts.

103. Respondents also commented that this proposal was better than the whole loss of the service. They said that clear communication was required for all and that there may be opportunities by working with nearby county councils to share the function. They suggested that social media campaigns could be used to help share the messages on signposting/ on concerns. A respondent suggested more remote working out of schools or police stations.

104. Respondents commented on monitoring the impact of the proposal if implemented saying that children’s safeguarding was important and could not be compromised in system change.

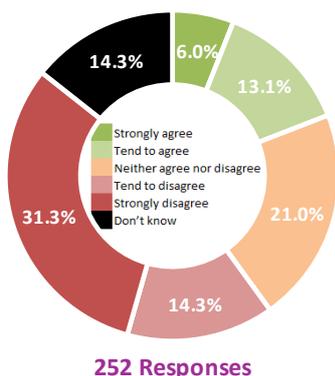
Contract Review Part 1

105. Respondents were then asked if they agreed or disagreed with the following proposal:

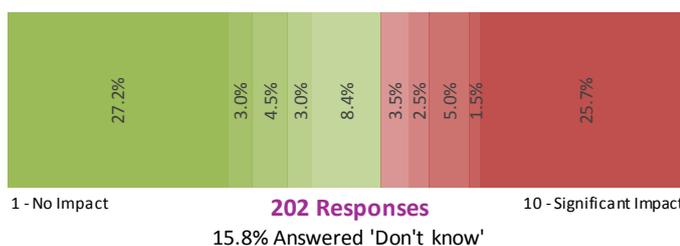
- Children’s service provision and location review and contract reductions. Part 1: This proposal would apply a 40% reduction in the remaining Children’s Centre contract in Corby, to be consistent with previous service reductions across the county. (In total, Parts 1 and 2 will deliver £692k saving).

Contract Review - Corby Children's Centre

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?



Using a scale of 1 to 10, please tell us how much of an impact this proposal would have on you if implemented?



73

Respondents provided comments on what could be done to help mitigate the impact of this proposal

106. As shown in the above graph, the majority of respondents (45.6%) disagreed with the Contract Review Part 1 proposal, with 19.1% agreeing.

107. Respondents who “strongly agree” or “tend to agree” commented on fairness and consistency being applied to resourcing the service in Corby in line with other children centre

services in the county. Some expressed concern that over the past years Corby had not taken its share of reduction in resources and as a result has had disproportionate investment. They wanted a resource allocation formula being consistency applied across the county. They expressed the view that services/ activity could be provided efficiently as opposed to “cutting”. They said that others areas of the county had managed the reductions. Respondents, however, mentioned that due to the complexity of environment, poverty and deprivation within Corby, it would require close analysis. Respondents also made comments like “good” and “ok” and some felt that the issue did not affect them; others said that parents need to take responsibility of own children’s welfare.

108. Respondents who strongly disagreed or disagreed commented on the vital services that are provided by children centre. They said that families rely on and need the types of services offered. Without this assistance, they felt that the most vulnerable will be the denied an essential service.
109. Respondents felt that the reduction of 40% was harsh and that it would harm and disadvantage the welfare of vulnerable children and their families. They felt the consequences would be significant and the “short sighted” proposal would lead to poor outcomes for children in Corby.
110. Respondents expressed the view that Corby is a “deprived” area and despite growth, regeneration and new infrastructure investment, it still has social and economic issues that require support and assistance compared to other areas of the county.
111. Respondents stated that current facility – Pen Green - is an outstanding and an internationally recognised facility. They added that children's centres are critical to those at risk. It was felt that removing or reducing services would compromise the future viability and sustainability of the services on offer and that a reduction in staff and other resources would mean that services on offer would be minimised. Respondents said that Pen Green Centre and the services it offers ought to act as a standard for others to aspire to. Respondents were concerned that overall there is little provision for children. They felt that Pen Green Centre was an easy target and that decision makers need to understand that early help and prevention is proven to help save money to public purse in later years.
112. Respondents stated that current information on the equality impact assessment was inadequate and that if the proposals affected families with disabilities more, then they would be least likely to find other places to access services. They said that NCC needed to make other services across the county inclusive and attentive to needs of the community/ area and or users of the service.
113. Respondents commented on children taking the brunt of local and national policies; on making a charge for using the service, and on what will happen to maintaining the asset infrastructure cost of the service.
114. Respondents stated that they did not know if decision makers knew the full impact of the proposals; they questioned the financial management at the Council and suggested that this proposal would increase the cost of statutory children’s services.

115. Respondents who “neither agree nor disagree” felt that they had little knowledge or experience about the children centres and their role to express a view. Some respondents stated that they were not aware of specific the situation in Corby and why it was out of line with others who provide the service in the county.
116. Respondents expressed concern for the wider implications or the unintended impacts of undertaking this proposal forward across the county. They did not want the service reduced.
117. Respondents also said that 40% was a significant reduction and that the impact was hard on communities. They mentioned applying consistency in approach and those most in need would, as a result of proposal, suffer the most.
118. Respondents who answered “don’t know” commented that they were not a resident of the location; that they did not find the information clear to understand; others said that they did not know enough about the subject area. Residents felt it was unfair for them to comment as they did not know the needs of Corby. One comment said that children centres were vital.
119. Again the graph above shows that the majority of respondents felt the proposal would have a significant impact should it be implemented.
120. Respondents were asked what could be done to help mitigate the proposals. Respondents made a variety of comments and offered general observations on both the approach and implementation of the policy/ subject matter. They suggested the Council engage in open discussion with other partners such as the local borough council, to seek collaborative ways of keeping the service open. They wanted more invested in the service as opposed to reduction. They wanted to invest in front level service delivery and remove the use of consultants and middle managers. Respondents suggested better use of Council assets.
121. Some suggested better use of all available resources and looking at how others areas of the county had adapted to deliver services on reduced funding. Respondents wanted to check to duplication of services for families; seek efficiency in service delivery, use and sell the training expertise to income generate. Respondents commented on decommissioning the service and bringing it back into council direct provision.
122. General comments were made on the financial status of the council, whether this related to financial management; asking for a better/fairer deal from central government; raising tax and local revenue; borrowing money; ring fencing monies to services in order to protect them and save in the long run; on leaving critical and vital services alone and to improve on council’s decision making. Respondents also suggested phasing in reduction over a period of years, selling off unused assets in Corby and using revenue to support children’s services. They commented that the Council needed to think intelligently on how to generate income.
123. Respondents stated that people could organise themselves to help each other through a variety of community/ support groups and that some of the services provided could be provided out of other community buildings including libraries.

124. Other comments stated that reductions could be found in other “unnecessary” service areas like libraries, landfill, “doing away” with concessionary travel and road networks. They commented on the use of One Angel Square and where the savings generated from closing other offices was being used.

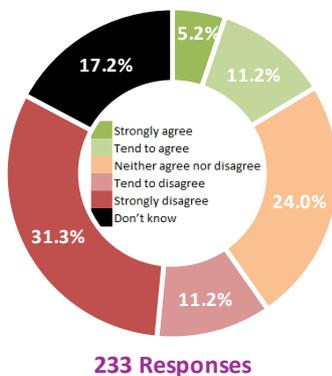
Contract Review Part 2

125. Respondents were then asked if they agreed or disagreed with the following proposal:

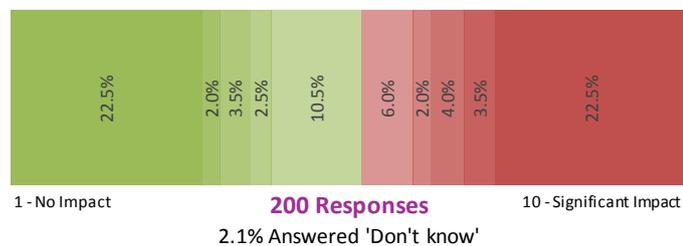
- Part 2: Review of existing support contracts and apply a reduction in line with proposals. Contracts under review include: Pilot Projects, Targeted NEET Support and Family Network Approaches. All contracts are countywide.

Contract Review - Support Contracts

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?



Using a scale of 1 to 10, please tell us how much of an impact this proposal would have on you if implemented?



58 Respondents provided comments on what could be done to help mitigate the impact of this proposal

126. As shown in the above graph, the majority of respondents (42.5%) disagreed with the Contract Review Part 2 proposal, with 16.4% agreeing.

127. Respondents who “tend to agree and strongly agree” stated that on the whole contracts should be reviewed. Some commented on the lack of understandable information/ data attached to the proposal and therefore they could not offer a comment.

128. Respondents expressed the need to look at existing contracts to see whether there were opportunities for making savings in light of the financial situation of the Council.

129. Respondents also commented on the manner in which services are commissioned resulting in what they perceived to be inadequate service delivery. They said that core services needed to be protected but risks needed to be taken and made inference to the role of “old” self interest groups.

130. They said that families must take control for themselves and that over years some services had been developed which parents could do themselves.

131. Respondents who strongly disagreed or disagreed with the proposals commented on issues which centred around understanding the proposal and the quality of the information

provided to make comments from; the effect on vulnerable families; putting children at risk; investment in the prevention services and in the development and management of commissioned contracts which deliver services to the most vulnerable residents of the county.

132. Respondents said that changes impact on the fabric of family life and may create pressures on the service delivery chain. Respondents expressed that these may present themselves in increases in mental ill-health, an increase in social isolation, leading to rise in socio-economic deprivation. They stated that this proposal – if not managed well - would effectively fail families that needed support, and in particular fail young people, and that again this would present itself as an extra burden on the public purse in increased statutory care costs.
133. Respondents stated the need for early help and prevention and that this was targeted at those most vulnerable, that specialist services were required and that front line service changes have already impacted on vulnerable families.
134. Respondents were critical of actions that may put children at risk. They emphasised the family support work and programmes as essential and needing to be kept; as it was they commented that services are at a minimum.
135. Respondents' comments on contract management stated that all contracts should be reviewed regularly not just at times of financial pressure, that money had to be spent effectively and efficiently and that contracts should be looked at and brought back into the Council if it saved money. Respondents also expressed views on pilot projects being undertaken in order to develop services or to innovate.
136. A few comments were expressed saying that the more that was done for families, the less families were doing for themselves.
137. Respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed stated that they had insufficient knowledge, information and/ experience to provide an opinion. Some respondents said that they were not personally affected.
138. Of those few respondents who offered specific comments, some stated that the statutory minimum should be offered; businesses could undertake the service with minimal support from the Council; and that universal services and schools could do more to provide support to families. They also commented that review of contracts was required due to financial circumstances and other respondents said that current arrangements need to reflect value for money along with appropriate targeting.
139. Respondents who said "don't know" had little knowledge or did not understand the service proposal. Some said that it was not relevant to them or that they were not a resident in that area.
140. Again the graph above shows that the majority of respondents felt the proposal would have a significant impact should it be implemented.

141. In mitigation, respondents stated that discussions needed to be held with district and borough councils along with other public and voluntary groups to help mitigate the impact. They felt that detail of the proposal needed to be worked out so that implications are clearer.
142. They said that priority needed to be given to families and young children.
143. A number of comments were made on the use of public finances and resources. These included raising council taxes, ending the duplication of services whether provided through local public bodies or charities; receiving fairer funding from central government; and considering an improved organisation or better management.
144. Respondents wanted to see efficiencies in service provision and delivery with adequate targeting of services to those who were eligible. They expressed the need to look the contracts associated with services, to bring services back in house and to ensure that customers were met and engaged with.
145. Some respondents felt the proposal did not hold enough information for them to understand or provide comments on. They felt that the proposal was not explained and that they had no idea in how to respond.
146. Responded also expressed the view that more families would suffer and be caused harm and that preventative services had been developed to avoid crisis situations which would cost society and public purse more. They felt that the proposal targeted the most vulnerable members of the community.

Review of Library Services

147. This proposal underwent its own separate consultation and the feedback from that is summarised in a separate paper, available via this [link](#).

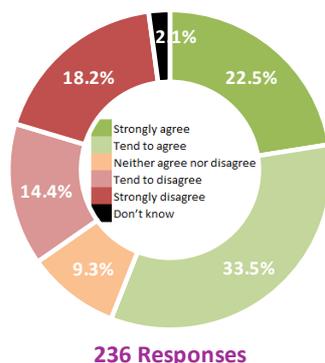
Demand Management

Digital Northamptonshire

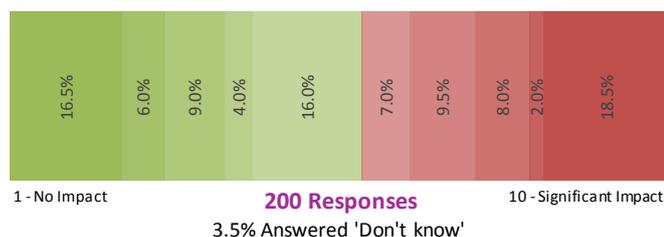
148. Respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the following proposal:
- Moving more towards online and digital services and less access by telephone. The average telephone/manual transaction costs £4, compared to 30p for a fully digital transaction. We could also reduce our licensing costs for applications and development costs by using LGSS (£75k saving).

Digital Northamptonshire

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?



Using a scale of 1 to 10, please tell us how much of an impact this proposal would have on you if implemented?



82

Respondents provided comments on what could be done to help mitigate the impact of this proposal

149. As shown in the above graph, the majority of respondents (56.0%) agreed with the Digital Northamptonshire proposal, with 32.6% disagreeing.

150. From the comments made by those respondents who strongly agreed or agreed with this proposal, the most frequent response given was that of general support. Many of the comments received mentioned how they felt the Council should make use of modern technology, and felt the proposal was a reasonable approach to help reduce costs. They felt it would make the Council more in line with other organisations with some respondents saying how they prefer to access services online.

151. Many respondents expressed their support for the proposal but raised their concern for those people who have difficulty in accessing or using the internet. They felt there should still be provision for people to access services through more traditional methods, such as by telephone. Respondents felt this was especially important for the elderly, who were highlighted by several respondents as a cohort of residents who may not be as familiar or comfortable with accessing services online.

152. Some respondents who were supportive of the proposal raised the importance of a user friendly internet presence for the Council and the need for there to be strong internet coverage across the county.

153. A few respondents also mentioned the importance of keeping libraries open to help enable easier access to the internet for those who may not have easy access elsewhere.

154. The most frequent reason respondents gave as to why they strongly disagreed or disagreed with the proposal was because the lack of internet access/use by many. They said that the internet is not widely available and that many people do not use it. Many respondents said the lack of internet access/usage was prominently by the vulnerable, including the elderly, and those on lower incomes. Respondents also felt these residents would be the most likely to need to access council services.

155. Some respondents said there is a need to keep telephone access for those residents who require it. They felt this was important for vulnerable people, including the elderly, as

well as for those instances where direct verbal dialogue with a Council employee would be more appropriate.

156. Again a few respondents mentioned here the impact that the potential closure of some libraries could have on enabling some people to access the internet.
157. Other comments received included some general dissatisfaction and disagreement with the proposal.
158. Not many comments were received by respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal. Those responses received varied and included concerns about the change not being cost effective and questioning whether the proposed change would work. Other comments included dissatisfaction with the quality of the current service, lack of access to the internet; and concern regarding the vulnerable who may not be able to use a computer.
159. Only one respondent gave a reason as to why they answered don't know, and that was predominately due to lack of readily available information about the proposal.
160. The graph above shows a relatively balanced split for how significant respondents felt the proposal would have should it be implemented.
161. When asked what could be done to help mitigate the impact of this proposal, the most frequent response was to ensure a telephone contact point was still available for those individuals who wanted to communicate with the Council via this method. It was felt that although the personal contact could be reduced, some respondents did not want it to be gone altogether, and one respondent felt that if it was withdrawn completely the Council would be in breach of its duties under the Equality Act.
162. Many of the respondents to this question also wanted improved IT within the Council to help support the delivery of this proposal, including a more user friendly web site with an online chat facility. Respondents wanted swift responses to online enquiries, with clearly defined response times.
163. Some respondents took this opportunity to express their support for the proposal and felt that no mitigating actions were required, whilst a similar amount requested the proposal does not go ahead.
164. A few respondents commented on the need for any changes of this nature to be clearly publicised.
165. Other suggestions included offering support or training for those people who are unfamiliar with computers; requests for further funding either via Council Tax increase or from Central Government; and more use of libraries to help facilitate people to access the internet.

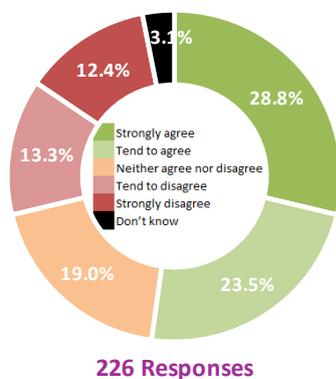
Customer Service Centre

166. Respondents were then asked if they agreed or disagreed with the following proposal:

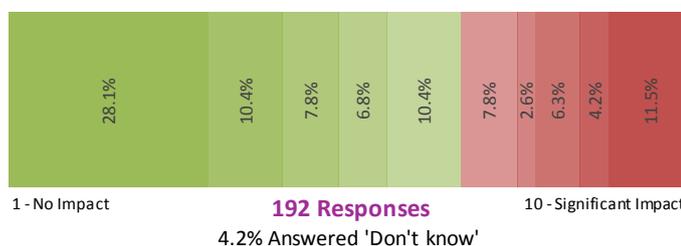
- Reduce opening hours of the Customer Service Centre from 8am-6pm to 9am-5pm (£66k saving)

Customer Service Centre

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?



Using a scale of 1 to 10, please tell us how much of an impact this proposal would have on you if implemented?



63

Respondents provided comments on what could be done to help mitigate the impact of this proposal

167. As shown in the above graph, the majority of respondents (52.0%) agreed with the Customer Service Centre proposal, with 25.7% disagreeing.
168. The vast majority of respondents who commented as to why they agreed with this proposal said it was a sensible approach. They felt it was in line with many other organisations with many respondents saying although they would rather the hours were not changed, they felt this proposal would likely have little impact, although some concern was raised for those people who work 9am-5pm being unable to contact the centre by telephone.
169. Some respondents expressed their preference for online contact whilst others felt online access needs to be improved first before a reduction in telephone hours was put in place.
170. Some respondents said they did not realise there was a Customer Service Centre or that they knew it was open from 8am-6pm.
171. A small number of comments were received from respondents who said they supported the idea as long as analysis has been carried out to demonstrate the lack of demand for service during these reduced hours.
172. A similar number of respondents felt the hours could be reduced even further.
173. Other comments included criticism for the Customer Service Centre and saw a reduction as no great loss; a request for staggered hours; and concern for pressures placed on staff who would be dealing with 10 hours of calls within the remaining 8 hours of operating time.
174. Most of the respondents who disagreed with this proposal commented that it would be difficult for people who work 9am-5pm to be able to telephone the Customer Service Centre, and the proposed reduction would disproportionately affect working people.

175. Some respondents stated that if a reduction in operating hours were to occur then they would rather have staggered opening hours, or at least an early or a late shift, such as an 8am-4pm or a 10am-6pm.
176. Other comments included concerns raised over how this might affect people with sight loss and other sensory impairments who have restricted access/use of the internet; to increase the hours instead of decreasing them; better use of technology to reduce demand on the Customer Service Centre; and that people's lives are not typically 9am-5pm and that this proposal goes against current national trends of longer opening hours and easier access to services.
177. From the respondents who commented as to why they said they neither agreed nor disagreed with this proposal, they mostly mirrored the comments already mentioned above. Respondents felt a strong online presence was needed; they were unsure as to what the demand on the service was either during the current opening hours or the proposed hours.
178. Comments were also made in support of the proposal as it would have limited impact, as well as concerns over the impact of the proposal would have for some people in accessing the service, especially those who were unable to do so between 9am-5pm. A request was also made asking for any changes to be well publicised.
179. Only one respondent gave a reason as to why they said don't know, which was due to the difficulty to find and lack of information and an equality impact assessment summary.
180. The graph above shows that the majority of respondents felt the proposal would have a little to no impact should it be implemented.
181. When asked how best to mitigate the impact of the proposal, the majority of respondents who commented stated that they felt staggered or different shifts of hours would help those who are unable to contact the Customer Service Centre between 9am-5pm. Various suggestions of alternative hours were put forward including opening the service later in the day so it can stay open later in the evening. Or by having one or two evenings a week where it could be open, or some opening hours during the weekend.
182. Some respondents used this opportunity to request that no change be made, whereas a similar number said that they supported the proposal, with a couple adding that they did not know the service even existed.
183. Some stated that their preference is to go online and that there should be a good online presence.
184. Other suggestions included alternative sources of income to maintain the current level of services such as increasing council tax or the reduction of expenditure on management consultancy fees; ensuring opening times were clearly published; and asking if there were some capacity for volunteers to assist.

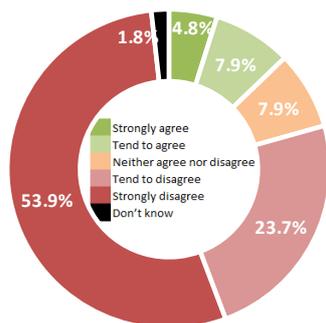
Winter Roads Maintenance

185. Respondents were then asked if they agreed or disagreed with the following proposal:

- The options that will be considered for amendment/reduction from Winter 2018 include:-
 - A reduction of salt stock levels and the quantity of salt that is spread in each treatment.
 - A reduction in gritting routes for winter 2018. Currently 43% of the network is gritted and this could reduce it to around 32%.
 - A review of the policy timescales taken to complete the gritting of the network which could result in an increase from the current three hour time limit.
 - Consideration of introducing charging to restock grit bins.
 - Shortening the minimum period of committed winter service for staffing purposes to reduce stand-by costs.

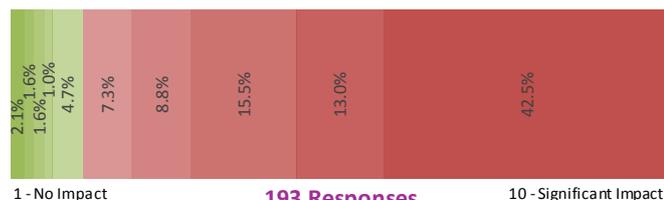
Winter Roads Maintenance

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?



228 Responses

Using a scale of 1 to 10, please tell us how much of an impact this proposal would have on you if implemented?



193 Responses

2.1% Answered 'Don't know'

82

Respondents provided comments on what could be done to help mitigate the impact of this proposal

186. As shown in the above graph, the majority of respondents (77.6%) disagreed with the Winter Roads Maintenance proposal, with 12.7% agreeing.

187. From the few respondents who agreed to the proposal and provided comments as to why, the majority mentioned their support for less gritting although their reasons varied from concerns over corrosion salt can cause on motor vehicles to the expense of having a stockpile of salt.

188. Some of the respondents in support of the proposal felt motorists should take responsibility themselves if they drive in poor weather conditions, and that motorists should be better equipped to drive in the ice and snow, for example by fitting winter tyres or snow chains.

189. A small number of respondents mentioned global warming and milder winters being their reason to support a reduction of funding to this service.

190. Other comments included general support for the proposal, whilst one respondent felt parish councils should be charged for salt bins, and another sought assurance that the main routes will be treated.
191. By far the most frequent reason respondents gave to disagreeing with the proposal were concerns over public safety with the fear of an increase in accidents if the above proposal were proceed, with the vast majority stating a reduction in gritting will put the public at risk (both pedestrians and road users), and raising their fears for people's safety and lives. Many respondents felt there is insufficient gritting at present and a reduction would only make matters worse. They also felt this would have a detrimental effect on the ability and speed of emergency services in responding to incidents.
192. Many respondents also mentioned how Northamptonshire was a rural county and the subsequent impact a reduction in gritting could have on rural communities, with comments made raising concern over people's ability to leave their village during icy and wintery conditions, and essentially being 'cut off', with concerns also being raised over the inability of school transport being able to effectively service rural areas.
193. Many respondents also felt that a reduction in winter maintenance would also affect the local economy. Respondents stated there would be an extra demand on NHS services due to an increase in accidents. Some respondents also said the smooth running of the roads was important to enable workers to effectively travel to their places of employment and to keep businesses and trade running, as well as the ability to provide social care within the community.
194. A few respondents felt that implementing a charge to restock the grit bins would only shift the expense to another tier of local government, which would be detrimental due to the increase in administration costs for each Parish Council.
195. Other comments included concerns over the vulnerable, including the elderly or disabled, being more isolated; that the cost of these services should be covered by taxes already being paid, including road tax. Some respondents also said that compensation claims would outweigh the amount the Council is intending to save. There were also some general comments made around respondents' disapproval of the proposal.
196. Only a few comments were received from the respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal. These comments varied greatly with many mirroring feedback given above. Comments ranged from concern over too much salt causing damage to cars and the roads, to comments about most drivers not being able to control their vehicle in icy conditions.
197. The only respondent who gave a reason as to why they chose don't know, said that it would result in more accidents and that cost would outweigh what would be saved.
198. The graph above shows that the vast majority of respondents felt the proposal would have a significant impact should it be implemented.

199. The most frequent comment respondents gave when asked what could be done to help mitigate the impact of this proposal was to not make the changes. Many respondents value the service and want it to stay at its current level.
200. Some respondents requested more efficient gritting, with a general feeling that often gritting is not proportionate to the weather conditions, causing waste, and that improved meteorological intelligence and forecasting is required.
201. Some respondents stated ways of finding alternative funding in order to maintain the service. Ideas included increasing council tax, the sale and lease back of One Angel Square, and securing fairer funding from Central Government.
202. Some respondents felt improved partnership working with District, Borough and Parish Councils would help mitigate potential impacts. It was felt this would be particularly useful in areas where these councils' budgets might be impacted by any NCC service changes. Ideas also included councils working together to provide and share equipment and staff at time of high demand, and for volunteers to help restock the grit bins.
203. Some respondents also took this opportunity to repeat comments they had previously made on this proposal.
204. Other comments received included a request for better information to be available to enable residents to manage travelling during poor weather conditions; for further information from NCC regarding when the service is excessively used; improved public transport to help keep vehicles off the road, publication of gritting routes; closure of non-gritted roads; prioritisation of main routes.

Marketing and Commissioning

205. The Council reviewed its targeted contract efficiencies in Children, Families & Education by proposing some changes to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities support services. This was subject to a separate consultation and Cabinet decision, and more information is available [here](#).

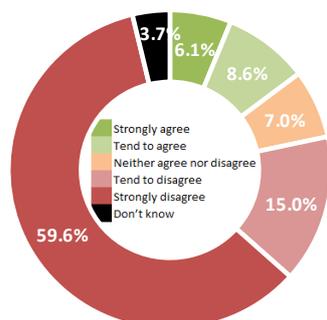
Financial Strategy and Income & Workforce Strategy

Removal of bus subsidies

206. Respondents were then asked if they agreed or disagreed with the following proposal:
- The removal of subsidies for bus services where there is no statutory duty to provide them. The amount of average subsidy per passenger varies from 40p on one of the inter-urban services to £15.47 on one of the more rural services. This would include the services listed below, delivering £1.16m saving:

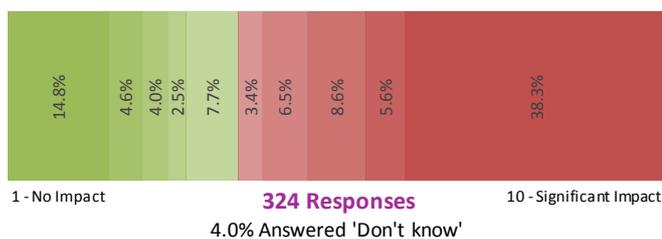
Removal of Bus Subsidies

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?



374 Responses

Using a scale of 1 to 10, please tell us how much of an impact this proposal would have on you if implemented?



168

Respondents provided comments on what could be done to help mitigate the impact of this proposal

207. As shown in the above graph, the majority of respondents (74.6%) disagreed with the removal of bus subsidies proposal, with 14.7% agreeing. Unfortunately the sum of £15.47 within the explanatory text was initially misquoted as £44.36. This was identified and amended on 8th November 2017. However, when comparing the feedback received to this question from before and after the correction was made, there was very little variation in the responses received, as it appears that most respondents commented on the principle of the proposal and not the actual cost of the delivery of the service on specific routes.
208. Respondents who strongly agreed or agreed provided comments on why they answered the question in the way they did.
209. It seemed from the range of responses that although some respondents said that they strongly agree or agree with the proposal, their comments reflected concern and issues with the outcome of the proposal should it be adopted by the Council. Respondents said that they were concerned about young people/ families, along with older people, who might be on low incomes and would face hardship as result of the proposal. They commented that vulnerable groups need to be connected to wide community networks to avoid isolation and that without the use of a rural bus services, access and choice of where they go to shop, go for education and learning, go to work, go for entertainment etc would be severely compromised.
210. Many respondents spoke about how it would limit access to employment with some having to leave their employment as they had no alternative affordable transport.
211. Many respondents expressed concerns about their access to primary health care providers such as GPs and pharmacies. They stated that they relied on the bus service to get them to medical appointments at the hospital. Respondents commented also on the overall issues of health, wellbeing and independence. They said that the lack of local public transport, especially in rural area, would make people more reliant on others.
212. Respondents who strongly agree or agree with the proposal commented that private companies, parish councils and volunteer car schemes could be asked to support the routes that are critical or that were commercially unviable. Some said that the bus service on offer was poor; that it should not be subsidised; that bus services should not be making a loss and

that buses were running around empty i.e. under capacity. They felt that it was an expensive service compared to the amount of people that use it.

213. A few respondents suggested that charging for and or making contributions to bus service/ route could be looked at and that those with concessionary bus passes ought to be asked to contribute.
214. A few respondents said that rather than looking at the blanket concept to stop all bus route subsidies, each individual route ought to be assessed for its necessity, use, viability and wider effect and impact on road use. A respondent also suggested routes within the town centre ought to be stopped and people encouraged to walk or cycle.
215. Majority of respondents who “strongly disagreed” or “disagreed” said access to bus transport and the public transport network was an essential service. They commented that to lose the bus service would be devastating to rural areas and to vulnerable people who rely on the service.
216. Respondents commented on the already limited transport services available to rural communities compared to those in urban areas. They felt that there was more choice in urban areas, of which some could be sacrificed to maintain a limited rural bus service.
217. Comments were made about the reduction in access to education, training and employment. They feared an increase in social isolation which would lead to decreases in mental health/ wellbeing.
218. Views were expressed about financial hardship. Respondents said that this proposal if implemented could backfire on the Council and cost more in increased social care provision as the Council may need to provide essential alternatives such as taxis to get people to statutory entitled services.
219. Many comments were received about access to medical appointments, medical facilities and educational establishment should buses stop. They expressed views on health and wellbeing; an increase in levels of social isolation and reduction in independence. Respondents said that their physical access needs would be compromised in that alternative transport – if affordable – may not be suitable and would effectively isolate them further.
220. Respondents said that resilient communities are based on having a reliable and sustainable transport system. Many felt that the hardship caused would be of a greater impact to those in rural/ village areas. They stated that residents would be socially and financially excluded and will become more reliant – if available - on local village shops/ services which would increase living expenses. Respondents commented that those in very rural areas would not be able to access everyday services that people in towns and large villages have. They would be further limited in where and when they go to shop and or go to places for entertainment or other social interactions.
221. Furthermore, they referred to the overall cumulative impact on their life / on their community by the loss of services such as library/ mobile library services saying that by not having a bus service and a local library/ mobile library they would be further alienated.

222. Respondents commented on specific routes as well as the Call Connect and County Connect services. On certain routes, they used the actual journey/ ride as a means to socially interact with other bus users. Respondents said that they felt that the uniqueness of the Call Connect/ County Connect service was an effective and responsive way to deal with the needs and requirements of residents in very rural areas of Northamptonshire.
223. Respondents expressed views on the environmental impact of the proposal. They said the transport policy direction should be about reducing traffic, about fewer journeys and reducing pollution and that this could be achieved by investing in the right services like bus services.
224. Respondents wanted the Council to consider each route carefully and work with others to come up with the best solution. They recognised the effect of wider government policy and its effect on a reduced public purse. The Council, they felt, needs to have regard to the rural economy and those employed in rural areas. The loss of bus services/ routes will affect local companies who rely on pools of employees, often the young coming from urban areas to work in rural areas. On the other hand, respondents also said that young people from rural areas need to go to urban areas for training and employment in order to improve their future outcomes.
225. Respondents expressed their thoughts on further “development growth and expansion” within Northamptonshire which requires a sustainable public transport network. Respondents commented that often buses are the only way that can connect village residents with towns, hospital and colleges etc.; and respondents placed a greater value on this as a means to developing a vibrant and attractive rural community.
226. Respondents commented that the County already has a “poor” public transport system and that the current proposal would make matters worse. They said that some routes have suffered as a result of unreliable service providers and where these have been changed, they have observed a difference in the rise of bus use.
227. Some respondents refer to the services as not being statutory requirement but said that they were essential as they enabled less pressure to be applied on stretched statutory services. They stated that the impact could be greater and one which could cost the tax payer more.
228. Overall respondents state that the proposal will have a multi-faceted effect on residents. In particular that it will affect rural communities disproportionately; it will have a greater impact on those who are vulnerable i.e. older people, young people and the disabled, that there will be an increasing isolation with people becoming less independent and becoming home bound, that mental ill-health will increase and financial hardship will occur at a faster rate. Increasing costs in social care and health may occur which effectively could heavily impact upon statutory services and provision. Individual bus routes should be looked as opposed to reduction in all subsidised routes; and concerns that commercial companies will not step in to run uncommercial routes and hence these routes ought to be supported by public funds.

229. A very few comments were made from respondents that “neither agree nor disagree” said that they were non users of the service; or they were concerned with potential rise in environmental pollution; or could not make a comment due to the lack of information on volume and demand of service.
230. Some respondents said that holders of concessionary bus passes should be charged i.e. charged a half price fare.
231. Some respondents recognised the value and the need to protect the bus service to villages and rural areas, especially for those residents that have no other means of transport available.
232. A couple of respondents who answered “don’t know” said that they did not use the service and did not know much about the service to comment on it. Some stated the bus service is vital in rural areas and the Council needs to talk providers to keep the services going, which may mean providing a subsidy to them.
233. Again the graph above shows that the majority of respondents felt the proposal would have a significant impact should it be instigated.
234. Respondents were asked what they thought could be done to help mitigate the impact of the proposal.
235. On the whole respondents continued to provide comments on the potential outcomes of the proposal being implemented. They were concerned about the loss of the services or their specific bus route, the lifeline that the service provided to people, and the increases in isolation and mental ill-health. They wanted the Council to maintain its subsidy provided for bus routes.
236. Respondents offered suggestions to avoid routes being stopped by asking that the Council to negotiate with commercial route operators; to look at better fleet management and review the size of vehicles used in order to increase utilisation and viability of the service. They said the results of which would then help cover and save some of the routes within the proposal.
237. Some respondents recognised that other local authorities had already taken the step to stop the subsidy to bus routes and that County Council may need to make the same difficult decision.
238. Other mitigating factors expressed included reducing services covered by more than one route; asking people to pay a contribution to keep the route; investigate alternative provision by working with others. They mentioned working with other local authorities, including parish and town councils, with key businesses and charities i.e. employers who relied on the services to bring employees into work, large supermarkets. Respondents further stated that when reviewing the routes, the price of the fare, timings and frequency of the service, usage at peak times, the types of people using the service/ route should be looked at carefully, in the same way urban routes ought to be reviewed.

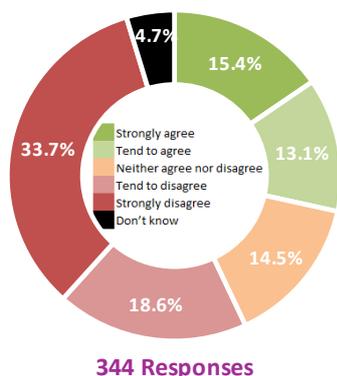
239. Respondents commented on raising resources to help pay for the subsidy. They said the Council could switch off more street lights; reduce Council's human resources/ staff bill, develop fixed charges and contributions from those in receipt of a concessionary bus pass; ask residents to pay extra council tax; and get developers to assist or contribute. Respondents felt the Council's limited funding for this service could be redirected to very local organisations, including community and voluntary groups, who could organise and provide the bus route/ services at a lower cost. A few respondents suggest training to be offered to local residents so the route etc could be self-managed which would save on administrative costs.
240. Others felt that the an improved road infrastructure and a change in the perception of public transport use and /or reviewing routes could make routes more viable and less reliant on subsidies.
241. Some respondents stated that there was no mitigation that they could offer. They said that it was an essential service. They also made references to asking the central government for fair funding for the County.
242. Many respondents stated that they wanted to retain Call Connect/ County Connect in rural areas and that the Council should prioritise the needs of rural areas. Some respondents said that the Council may need to reduce the subsidy but not remove it totally; another said that they did not understand the complete implications of what would happen to routes.
243. Respondents said that Council needed to sell off land and surplus buildings/ assets and or rent or lease the Council's headquarters to help support the service.
244. Others commented on environmental impacts; encouraging advertising and marketing the routes so more people would use them, supporting localised village car scheme and bringing back all services under Council control.
245. Respondents expressed the wish to review procurement contracts to ensure that route operators are made to take on non-profitable routes if they want to run the more profitable route. They further said that better partnership working and joint ownership of issues around access to transport – i.e. to share resource/ funding challenges – needed to take place in order that all areas of the county was able to access a bus service.
246. A few comments were made in this section about the library services proposal and the withdrawal of a mobile library service Comments were also referencing public sector pay and pensions as being too high or not needed; the capability of councillors to make the right decisions; and, reducing administration costs at the Council.

Remove subsidy to Royal and Dergate

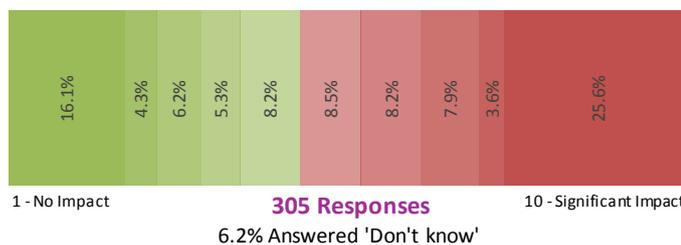
247. Respondents were then asked if they agreed or disagreed with the following proposal:
- The grant subsidy provides match funding for further grants that the Royal and Dergate receive from the Arts Council. This is not a statutory requirement (£100k saving).

Remove subsidy to Royal and Derngate

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?



Using a scale of 1 to 10, please tell us how much of an impact this proposal would have on you if implemented?



106

Respondents provided comments on what could be done to help mitigate the impact of this proposal

248. As shown in the above graph, the majority of respondents (52.3%) disagreed with the removal of subsidy to Royal and Derngate proposal, with 28.5% agreeing.

249. Respondents who “strongly agree” or “tend to agree” commented on the Royal and Derngate being a commercial business which could fend for itself. They felt as an enterprise it could be self-financing. Respondents suggested that patrons who use the Royal and Derngate ought to pay for price increases, or pay the real/ market cost of running the service/ programmes. They felt that the Royal and Derngate could make itself more attractive by what it showed or by using facilities i.e. restaurant to be self-sufficient in raising their own income.

250. Many respondents stated that critical front line services need to be provided to vulnerable people. Some stated that whilst it was a regrettable, they agreed with proposal, although they valued the contribution arts make to society. They said that in times of tight financial hardship, funding to the arts was a sacrifice that had to be made to protect core vital services. Some commented that the proposal was the least detrimental to the wellbeing of Northamptonshire citizens.

251. A few comments said the Royal and Derngate was a luxury to have; and that over the years it had benefited from significant public funds and that the funding should have stopped long ago. A few comments stated that it was a Northampton town venue and should be not funded by the county council purse, whilst others commented that other arts venue in the county did not receive any subsidised support like the Royal and Derngate has been receiving from the County Council over a number of years.

252. A few comments were expressed that they Royal and Derngate was only for the privileged few and was of poor value. They commented that it was not a necessity and those that used the Royal and Derngate would continue to use it if, for example, the price increase were modest.

253. Many respondents commented on why they “strongly disagree or disagree” with proposal.

254. Respondents commented that the Royal and Derngate is more than just a building, and that it was an important community arts hub which provided an arts venue that was key

to the town of Northampton, the county and to the region. Respondents were passionate in their views about the needs for an arts venue in the County. They stated the Royal and Derngate was a reputable organisation which provides cultural, arts and volunteering opportunities for many. They said that removing subsidy would be detrimental to the county.

255. Many respondents said that the proposal was short sighted of the Council to withdraw its relatively small contribution. They stated that the £100k subsidy was of exceptional value for money for the Council. This helped to attract and lever in other funds which meant the Royal and Derngate brought in £26 million each year to the local economy. They further made comments about the wider economic impacts which affected links to the associated spend from those attending the Royal and Derngate, employment, volunteering, promotion of the county, its links to the Cultural Quarter, its relationship with other local strategic partnerships and alliances.
256. Respondents pointed out that to cut the subsidy would mean the Royal and Derngate would have to provide a solely commercially driven programme, hence, it would not be able to put on programmes and activities which made arts accessible i.e. audio description service. They also mentioned the links the Royal and Derngate had with other theatre and arts venues in the county including the Core in Corby, the Errol Flynn Cinema and the youth theatre. They felt that all these activities would be compromised.
257. Some respondents said that the arts were being squeezed out and that they were an easy target for budget reduction. They felt that people's wellbeing would be compromised and that they well may present themselves to the statutory sector in another form, which would cost the tax payer more.
258. They described the Royal and Derngate as being the heart of the county's cultural offerings. They said that it was a flagship for the county and that it brought communities and people together. It was felt that the Royal and Derngate helped build skills and self-esteem, especially for the young or those who may not be able to access arts. Respondents commented that the Royal and Derngate was a driving force to bring people and pride to the Northampton and without it there would negative effects for the local economy.
259. Respondents commented also on the youth theatre and clubs provision being affected; the pressure of increased ticket price and the programme content which may not make the Royal and Derngate financially viable.
260. Respondents felt that the Royal and Derngate had has already made significant changes to its revenue model in order for it to become more self-sufficient. They felt that it was providing more than arts – it was good base for innovation, marketing, and design.
261. Comments by those respondents who “neither agree” nor “disagree” ranged from those who did not use the service and therefore could not comment to those that used the theatre and wanted the Council to not undertake the proposals.
262. Respondents said that the current economic climate meant that using the theatre was not always affordable; and that it is sometimes seen as a luxury. Some respondents said that

other priorities and things within the overall budget proposal were of greater importance to more people.

263. Others commented that the theatre was not an essential service but one that would be a significant loss to town if as a result of the proposal the Royal and Derngate was not able to continue. A comment was made about how the Royal and Derngate has been invested in for improved facilities and this would now be wasted monies.
264. Respondents were supportive of the arts but made comments about the Royal and Derngate being run as a business and therefore should not rely on subsidies; or that if they were making a profit then subsidy should not be made available.
265. A comment on applying equity to funding was made, in that community arts ought to be funded on an equal par with local sports teams.
266. Very few comments were made by respondents who said “don’t know”. They said they did not use the service to know enough about the service to comment. Another said that they supported the arts but it came down to choice then compared to “abolishing” the bus services, the reduction in subsidy to the theatre would be supported.
267. The graph above shows a relatively balanced split for how significant respondents felt the proposal would have should it be implemented.
268. Respondents were asked what could be done to help mitigate the impact of the proposal to withdraw the £100K the grant subsidy to the Royal and Derngate.
269. Respondents primarily stated that they the Council should not withdraw the grant and wanted the Council to reverse its thinking. Some said that they could offer no mitigation as it was an important service that over the years had consistently lost out on funding. They wanted the council to make greater savings in other services areas – but not to libraries or bus services - and also want the Council to be more financially efficient and better managed.
270. Respondents commented that the Council needed to find intelligent solutions which embraced and enhanced the facilities of the Royal and Derngate complex rather than put it at risk. They said that the Council should work with others to seek other sources of funding before they removed their contribution. They also said that the Council should gradually reduce the grant subsidy. This would enable the Royal and Derngate to make plans so the impact (of no subsidy) could be lessened and access could continue to be provided to vulnerable groups.
271. A number of respondents commented that the income generation had to be considered and that the Royal and Derngate was a business. They suggested price increases; a change in programming by having less costly productions. They suggested that private companies should support the Royal and Derngate.
272. Respondents also commented on increasing the council tax, selling or leasing the new council headquarters and also about reducing the rent and/or business rate/ tax relief for the Royal and Derngate to help assist in the raising the finances needed.

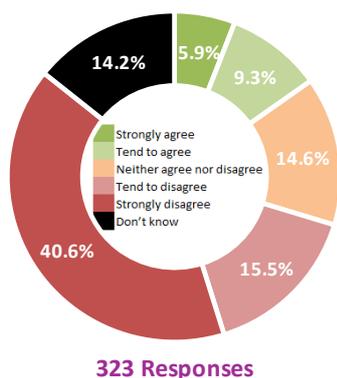
273. A few respondents said that the Council should not assist the Royal and Derngate, expressing views such as the view that it was a waste of money and or it was a service that was not needed. Some respondents said the proposal was an unfortunate sacrifice which may needed to be made as the Royal and Derngate is not an essential service.
274. A very few respondents said that they could comment as they did not use the Royal and Derngate or where unsure of what to say.

Review of non-statutory expenditure in Children, Families & Education

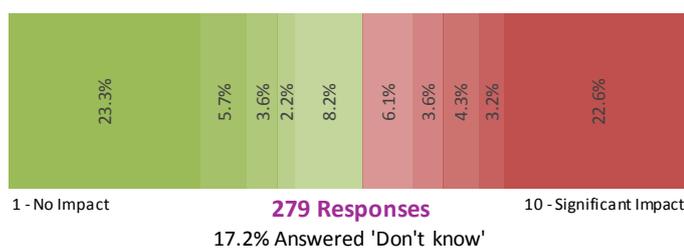
275. Respondents were then asked if they agreed or disagreed with the following proposal:
- There are some areas of spending in Children, Families & Education that, whilst not statutory, contribute to supporting children and families that are not able to access support from elsewhere. A review of these areas is required, including the potential safeguarding impact of the withdrawal of current expenditure (£500k saving).

Review of non-statutory expenditure in Children, Families & Education

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?



Using a scale of 1 to 10, please tell us how much of an impact this proposal would have on you if implemented?



85

Respondents provided comments on what could be done to help mitigate the impact of this proposal

276. As shown in the above graph, the majority of respondents (56.1%) disagreed with the review of non-statutory expenditure in Children, Families & Education proposal, with 15.2% agreeing.
277. Respondents who said strongly agreed or agreed on the whole commented that it seemed a sensible thing to do. They said if it was nonessential service then it needed to be reviewed.
278. They further stated that overlap in services needed to be removed; and that the council needed to ensure that it got better value for its money.
279. Some commented that it was still a lot of money to be cutting and that those people who are using these services may not be able to get help from somewhere else. They said that all families should have support from their existing services especially if this stopped families escalating into needing statutory services. They stated that safeguarding should be taken into

account on not just paid a lip service and that non-statutory services provide a valuable gatekeeper role.

280. Another commented that they felt that they were unsure about the impact of the support received by families and another said that they felt that the support system was abused by people.
281. A few comments stated the proposal was vague and that they could not comment until they had information on which services will have funding withdrawn.
282. Comments made by those that strongly disagreed or disagreed mainly stated that the Council was being short sighted in making the proposal and that the work provided by non-statutory services effectively enabled statutory services to work. They commented that cutting social care support and effectively prevention work with children and their families would increase council spending in the long run.
283. A number of current service providers, volunteers and customer made comments expressing the value of the service provided or received. They commented that providing support to children and families has already been significantly impacted by previous cuts, and some services have closed as a result. Current non statutory services reduce the pressure on statutory services and with early intervention, often prevent crises developing which in the long term would cost the statutory sector considerably more.
284. Overall, majority of the respondents said the support provided enabled over-stretched services and staff cope with caseloads. For example, that a little money invested in good volunteering support was better than dealing with preventable complex problems which would have to be managed by expensive trained staff.
285. Respondents wanted the Council to think for tomorrow instead of concentrating on the now. They stated that the policy drive is to push back referrals and cases to early help/non-statutory services, and therefore away from social work, but respondents consistently stated that if these services are cut then families would hit crisis point sooner. They said that there would be a real risk of more child protection concerns. In essence they said that just because the services are non-statutory doesn't make these vital services much needed by families.
286. They stated that safeguarding is non-negotiable; that current statutory services were in a fragile state and that social workers were stressed and working to capacity. They felt that reviewing service provision was acceptable but cutting services was not. Some respondents cited the intricate nature of the work that these services provide in that without them, for example, the family court system would be in jeopardy and children's welfare outcomes compromised.
287. A number of comments quoted the Council itself saying that the non-statutory services it provides cannot be accessed by families from elsewhere so they were not sure as to how this prevention work would be provided or how the Council could justify the proposal. They felt that the proposed saving was a small amount and the Council should find it from elsewhere rather than put families and children at risk.

288. Respondents commented that they felt betrayed; that vulnerable children's service should be the absolute last resort for budget cuts; that the most vulnerable should not face a reduction in services because of a perceived mismanagement of budgets. Respondents said that the Council was tampering with services which ultimately would cost them and society more.
289. Comments were also made on the lack of information about what services were actually affected. Respondents said that they did not know what services were statutory and which were non-statutory.
290. Respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed made a few comments that centred around not understanding the information; that the information was not specific enough and hence they could not provide a reaction to it. Some said that they did not have the information or had enough knowledge about the service or the support offered. Respondents expressed concern about the perceived harmful and dangerous outcome of the cutbacks and its impact of safeguarding.
291. Respondents who answered don't know commented overwhelmingly that they have insufficient information and knowledge from which to make an informed comment. A few respondents made comments which were about the "short sighted proposal" leading to a huge reactive cost to the council; that they felt the Council had made its decision so the information provided was unreadable and not easy to decipher, hence the Council was not really seeking an opinion.
292. The graph above shows a relatively balanced split for how significant an impact respondents felt the proposal would have should it be implemented.
293. Respondents were asked what could be done to help mitigate the impact of this proposal and made a number of comments and observations. They wanted the Council to work with others including other local authority partners and charities to help keep vital services. This included accessing money from joint health services funding.
294. Many respondents did not offer mitigation but made comments like "don't do it", "don't change it", "don't implement".
295. Some suggested that the funding should not totally be cut but reduced. They suggested that this would help reinstate the funding for some of the service providers; and open up a small grants pot for community and voluntary sector to bid from to provide services. On the other hand a couple of respondents said that the Council should not rely on the charity sector to pick this critical work up.
296. Respondents stated that the Council needed to fight more for government funding and the council should not only argue the need for fair funding but also for adequate funding.
297. Respondents wanted the Council to be more creative in its planning and use of resources. They wanted to see the better use of public assets and the sale and/or lease of the new council office, with the money gained being redirected back into critical and vital services

for children and families. Some respondents suggested that Councillors’ expenses ought to be reviewed and that money from this could be used to help vital services.

- 298. Some respondents suggested that the council could raise money including the increase of council tax. They also said that they could take from other services such as the theatre or through the renegotiation of contracts.
- 299. Respondents wanted the Council to invest in the services and to maintain the current service saying that it would prevent a crisis being reached.
- 300. A few respondents commented on wanting more details and information on the implications of the proposals before they could offer any mitigation.
- 301. Many respondents used this section to continue to make comments about impact to their specific service i.e. the Safe Families for Children. They expressed the financial and social value of service and the long-time gains for the council and ultimately better outcomes for children and their families.

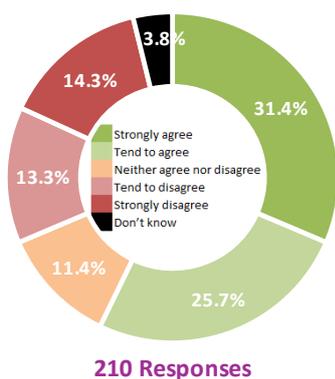
Workforce Strategy

Democratic Support Services – Empowering Councillors and Communities Scheme

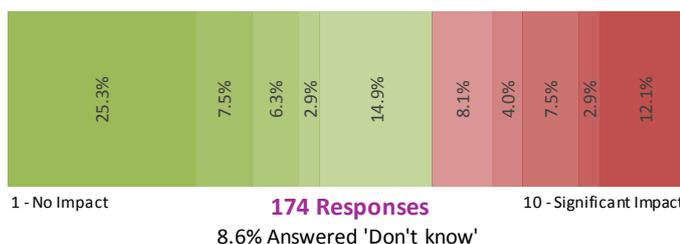
- 302. Respondents were then asked if they agreed or disagreed with the following proposal:
 - The Empowering Councillors and Communities Scheme is a scheme which grants a small amount of funding a year to each of Northamptonshire County Council’s 57 councillors to spend within their electoral division. This proposal would remove the fund (£285k saving).

Empowering Councillors and Communities Scheme

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?



Using a scale of 1 to 10, please tell us how much of an impact this proposal would have on you if implemented?



50

Respondents provided comments on what could be done to help mitigate the impact of this proposal

- 303. As shown in the above graph, the majority of respondents (57.1%) agreed with the Democratic Support Services – Empowering Councillors and Communities Scheme proposal, with 27.6% disagreeing.

304. The most frequent reasons given as to why respondents said they supported this proposal was because they felt other spending within the Council was more important. These respondents felt this funding was less important than supporting vulnerable people, and that cutting the Empowering Councillors and Communities Scheme funding was regarded as less detrimental than some other savings proposals. This funding was also considered a waste of public funding by many of these respondents, with some thinking it had been removed a long time ago.
305. Some respondents felt the funding was only allocated to what they described as 'vanity' and 'pet' projects of councillors.
306. A few respondents felt that the allocation of spending should be centrally controlled by Council officers who have a strategic oversight, as these respondents felt any spending would then be better allocated.
307. Other comments included the feeling that the groups and organisations who benefitted from the funding should raise the money themselves; that not many residents appear to benefit from the Empowering Councillors and Communities Scheme; as well as some general comments about dissatisfaction with Councillors and the way the Council has allocated its finances.
308. The majority of the respondents who strongly disagreed or disagreed with the proposal stated their support for the Empowering Councillors and Communities Scheme. They said how vital it was for the ongoing support and development of local community organisations and groups. They felt it strongly contributes to the empowerment of small local communities to help meet local needs, and that removal of the scheme would endanger the continuation of these initiatives.
309. Some of these respondents commented on the benefits of the scheme in keeping strong linkages with the community to their local Councillor, and how the local Councillor has good local knowledge of the community and knows where small investments could have the most positive impacts.
310. Some respondents stated how highly valued the scheme was by Parish Councils and the positive impact it has already made in small rural Parishes.
311. Other comments included a suggestion that Councillors expenses be reduced in order to better fund the Empowering Councillors and Communities Scheme; that the saving is relatively small and the amount should not be reduced; and that some of the projects can help prevent people accessing higher, more demanding and expensive services such as social care.
312. Only a few comments were received from respondents who said they neither agreed nor disagreed with this proposal. The most frequent comment made was about a lack of knowledge of the scheme by the respondent or the lack of clarity on how the money has previously been spent.

313. Respondents said they have no personal knowledge of any benefits of the scheme, whereas a similar amount said how the scheme had supported and made a positive impact on small communities.
314. Other comments included general criticism of Councillors and a suggestion that remuneration for elected members should be reallocated to the scheme to help keep it funded.
315. Only one respondent gave comment as to why they answered don't know, and said that they felt the funding could be used more effectively elsewhere.
316. The graph above shows that the majority of respondents felt the proposal would not have a significant impact should it be instigated.
317. When asked what could be done to help mitigate the impact of this proposal the vast majority of respondents suggested alternative methods to either increase funding or to reduce the spend for the scheme. A number of suggestions were made which included: signposting communities to alternative sources of income including grants; community/voluntary fund raising; increase council tax; sale and lease back of One Angel Square; reduction in the amount of funding in the current scheme but not removal of funding in its entirety; reduction in the number of Councillors/ Councillors pay; a restructure of the Council to either become a unitary authority or to become a trust and generate working capital; and for the Council to receive adequate funding from central government.
318. A few respondents commented that no mitigation is needed as they welcomed the decision. Whilst a small number of respondents asked for no reduction to be made, with one asking for the funding to be more closely monitored.
319. A number of other comments were made which included general dissatisfaction with councillors; the need for preventative services; reinstatement of the funding once the financial situation of the Council improves; and replacing the scheme with a needs-driven assessment process that covers all localities.

Proposals for reinvestment of Public Health funded Activities

320. Respondents were advised that the following services provided by First for Wellbeing (<https://www.firstforwellbeing.co.uk>) are fully or partially funded by the Public Health Grant - emotional wellbeing, smoking cessation, community alcohol service, community grants scheme and some Children's Centre provision in libraries. When a service is funded this way, it means that the Public Health Grant is allocated to activities meeting specific conditions set out by Public Health England.
321. Each of these service areas have been reviewed and the Council felt that changes can be made to service provision levels which could save money from 1 April 2018.

322. The table below shows the amount of Public Health Grant funding attached to each of the services. This does not mean that making changes to these services will produce £3m of savings, but that we can decide to use some of this money in a different way, whilst still making sure that we meet Public Health outcomes.

SERVICE	AMOUNT FUNDED BY PUBLIC HEALTH GRANT
Emotional wellbeing service	£1,300,000
Shared organisational structure with Adults*	£580,000
Smoking cessation service	£518,000
Community alcohol service	£125,000
Community grants scheme**	£319,000
Children's Centre provision in libraries**	£200,000
TOTAL	£3,042,000

*This proposal is covered in the next section in relation to non-customer facing proposals

**These two proposals do not form part of this consultation – notice has already been given on the Community Grants Scheme, and children's centre provision in libraries is included in the separate consultation on the review of the library service.

323. If agreed, the Public Health Grant funding being released through disinvestment from primary prevention services will be reinvested in line with Grant Conditions on areas of prevention where there is greater immediate need. These are yet to be confirmed.

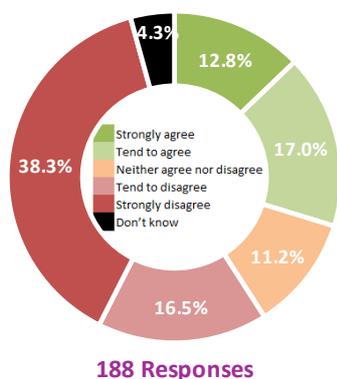
Emotional wellbeing service and community alcohol service

324. Respondents were then asked if they agreed or disagreed with the following proposal:

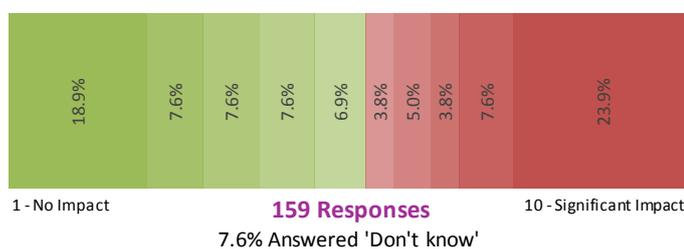
- The service is a universal primary prevention service although activity has been broadly targeted towards those who are at most risk of low level mental health conditions, most at risk of social isolation, are the least physically fit and healthy and are the furthest from the employment market. The proposal under consideration is to reduce the budget removing the full budget allocation for holistic wellbeing assessment and community development work. Additionally, the proposal further removes the £125,000 allocated to alcohol interventions.

Emotional wellbeing service and community alcohol service

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?



Using a scale of 1 to 10, please tell us how much of an impact this proposal would have on you if implemented?



45

Respondents provided comments on what could be done to help mitigate the impact of this proposal

325. As shown in the above graph, the majority of respondents (54.8%) disagreed with the Emotional wellbeing service and community alcohol service proposal, with 29.8% agreeing.
326. Respondents who “strongly agree” or “agree” commented that that elements of the service could be reduced but not cut. They said that services needed to target those most in needs.
327. They stated that before any changes to the services, including reduction and or cutting back, the Council needs to understand the broader social and economic impacts , such that impact on anti- social behaviour, rise in petty crime and the effect in other public services.
328. Other respondents said that they would like to understand what the tangible benefits of the service are.
329. A few respondents stated the service was non-statutory and stated that alcohol and drug taking was self-inflicted and therefore should not be supported; and that the services was abused.
330. Respondents felt that as the money was being saved from the service was being invested in services for the frail elderly, it appeared to be sensible and “needs driven”. They said that the reinvestment would reach a greater number of people than the current number of customers served i.e. they commented on the low number of users and the cost of the service being extraordinarily high.
331. A few comments stated that First for Wellbeing was not effective and also that the County Council had not invested in Mental Health Services.
332. Respondents who answered “strongly disagree” or “disagree” commented mainly on the significant impact of the proposal on a comprehensive and universal prevention agenda.
333. Many respondents stated that the wider health and wellbeing service would need to pick up some of the deficiencies created by the proposals. They said the consequences would be increased costs for the Clinical Commissioning Groups, acute providers, district and

borough councils and the Criminal Justice System. Respondents said that the results of the proposal could add unnecessary stress and strain to the NHS. Respondents expressed that society will see a rise anti-social behaviour and would see increased unemployment and mental ill-health.

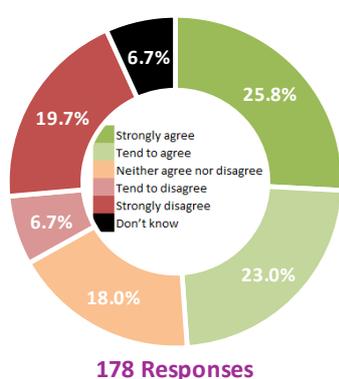
334. Many respondents said that preventative services for emotional wellbeing not only improve people's health and wellbeing but also save public money in the longer term. They said that the Council needed to think of joined-up care and come out of its silo budget thinking. A few respondents made reference to future increases in social care and child protection referrals.
335. Respondents referred to the Council taking services away from the vulnerable and those who were in crisis and that the vulnerable were an easy target.
336. Respondents overall said that the proposal would have a detrimental effect on the individual, on society, individual public authorities and on any collaborative plans such as the Sustainable Transformation Plan (STP).
337. Respondents who answered "neither agree" nor "disagree" commented that the service did not affect them; they did not know much about the services or that they did not know how effective the service was. Respondents suggested that making a grant to a voluntary organisation may have a better outcome; another said that it was a shame to lose the service but there little other choice at time when finances were tight.
338. Respondents who answered "don't know" made no comments.
339. The graph above shows a relatively balanced split for how significant respondents felt the proposal would have should it be instigated.
340. Respondents when asked what could be done to mitigate the proposal commented on joining up and collaborating with other organisations and health providers. A few respondents suggested that signposting could be developed, others questioned where people would go to get assistance.
341. Many respondents stated the need for preventative services, otherwise vulnerable people would present themselves at other public services with chronic issues. They said that this would cost the public purse more.
342. Respondents mentioned the positive impact of having First for Wellbeing services and looking at the whole person approach to wellbeing and illness prevention.
343. Others commented that the proposal should not be implemented, as they felt it provided vital support and was already being delivered at a minimum cost. Others suggested that it should be reduced and not cut. A few respondents suggested targeting the services further.

Smoking cessation service

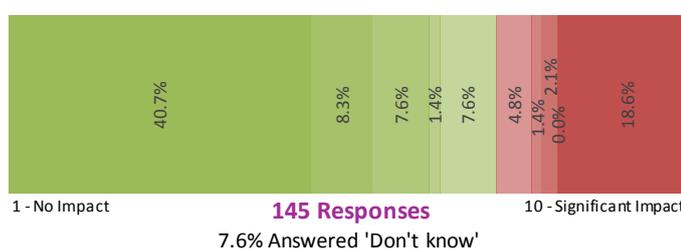
344. Respondents were then asked if they agreed or disagreed with the following proposal:
- The service is comprised of two components – a core specialist team and a network of Level 2 providers. The proposal allows the retention of a supported Level 2 network of providers preserving a countywide universal provision and a reduction in the specialist team - the residual team will focus on working with specific groups of people within local acute hospital trusts such as pregnant women, those known to cardiology and respiratory services, and those undergoing pre-operative assessments.

Smoking Cessation Service

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?



Using a scale of 1 to 10, please tell us how much of an impact this proposal would have on you if implemented?



32

Respondents provided comments on what could be done to help mitigate the impact of this proposal

345. As shown in the above graph, the majority of respondents (48.8%) agreed with the Smoking cessation service proposal, with 26.4% disagreeing.

346. By far the most frequent reason respondents gave as to why they agreed to this proposal was because they felt smoking was a life choice, with the risks attached to it well-publicised and common knowledge. They felt that as it was an individual's own choice to start smoking then they should be responsible themselves for stopping.

347. Some respondents felt there are plenty of other support services available to help people give up smoking, whilst a few felt this service should not be the responsibility and/or a priority of the Council and that limited funding would be better focussed elsewhere, with the NHS and GP surgeries providing smoking cessation support and not NCC.

348. The respondents who told us why they disagreed with the proposal mostly said that they felt it would be a false economy to reduce the funding as they believe it would have further, more expensive, cost implications in the future, with earlier intervention being preferable than putting demand on NHS budgets.

349. Many respondents felt the current system is important and is working well with effective programmes being delivered to help reduce the amount of smokers and should not be changed. Some respondents raised concerns over the impact a reduction would have on some vulnerable members of society, whilst a small number of respondents felt funding for

the whole service should be stopped altogether and viewed it as non-essential. A couple of respondents expressed how they value the specialist team and the support they provide.

350. Respondents' rationale for answering 'Neither agree nor disagree' was similar to the above. A couple felt smoking was an individual's choice and that a smoker would not truly stop until they wanted to and then it is their responsibility to do so.
351. A couple of respondents felt funding this service should not be the responsibility of the Council, with one person adding there are more vulnerable people in need of support. One respondent felt prevention was important, especially with young people. Another expressed the importance of having a specialist team with particular skills and knowledge.
352. Only two respondents explained why they said 'Don't know' and that was because they felt it would have little to no impact upon them and/or their local area.
353. The graph above shows that the majority of respondents felt the proposal would not have a significant impact should it be instigated.
354. When asked how to mitigate the impact many of the respondents to this question said the Council should work in partnership to help share the responsibility. Suggestions included closer working with the NHS, other councils, and the third sector to help develop outreach programmes.
355. Others felt there is a role for employers to help with smoking cessation, and that local businesses, including those who sell smoking products such as E-cigarettes, should sponsor smoking cessation programmes. Other methods of funding were mentioned by several respondents who felt the funding should not be reduced. Suggested funding methods included increasing council tax, selling One Angel Square, contributions to be made by tobacco companies, and more Customs and Revenue staff to prevent illegal importing.
356. Many respondents felt improved signposting to the dangers associated with smoking and more online support could help mitigate the impact of proposed service change, including mental wellbeing support and advice on how to live a healthy lifestyle, whilst a couple of respondents questioned whether or not the service was providing value for money and a few respondents took this opportunity to suggest the service should be withdrawn.

Non-customer facing proposals

357. In addition to the above already the Council proposed a number of budget proposals that it believes can deliver savings without having an impact on customers. These are set out below.

- **Centralisation of Communications staff**

All staff working in Marketing and Communications across all NCC services will be centralised and provided as a service back to the Divisions, with a proposed reduction in staff numbers of 5 staff overall (£155k saving).

- **Management of the Tiffield St John's site**

Return the management and liabilities for the Tiffield St John's site to its owner, generating savings on the property running costs and services (£235k saving).

- **Increase targeted In-House Foster Carer recruitment**

We have a lower proportion of foster care placements arranged by ourselves (in-house) compared to agency placements than other local authorities. In-house foster care placements are lower cost and therefore more sustainable. We will launch a sustained campaign to increase our numbers of foster carers (£150k saving).

- **Effective Commissioning services and focused prevention vehicles**

Reduce all strategic and corporate commissioning to 1 post so that all commissioning resources are based close to front line services and can quickly respond to their needs. There will be a single corporate lead for the link with Health and cross-cutting schemes (£250k saving).

- **Reduce Consultancy Spend**

Review and/or stop all consultancy spend where we can. We will make sure that in-house skills are used and only bring in consultants if we can't recruit to a particular role (£486k saving).

- **Negotiation on joint Health funded packages**

Negotiation with Health colleagues in relation to joint funded packages for nursing care elements where NCC should not be contributing to this part (£250k saving).

- **International Social Worker Recruitment**

We are using a company which recruits Social Workers from South Africa and help them with settling down in Northamptonshire in permanent roles to reduce our reliance on agency staff and the additional costs (£310k saving).

- **Agency Staff Conversion**

We have reviewed the roles where high agency rates are being paid and developed an offer for Agency Social Work staff to convert to permanent contracts. This offer was made to approximately 70 staff and 40 accepted. This is the 2018/19 full year effect of successful Agency to permanent staff conversion in 2017/18 (£992k saving).

- **Review IT Strategy**

Reduce Network & Telephony budgets and reduce costs through insourcing and technology changes (£361k saving).

- **Shared organisational structure with Northamptonshire Adult Social Services (NASS)**

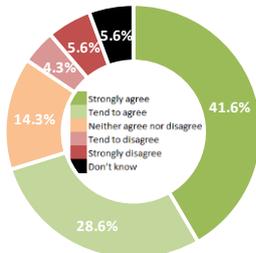
A review of service requirements with First for Wellbeing and NASS will take place over the coming weeks to make the most of the links between the two organisations and bring the

working relationships more closely together. The first step will be to create a joint management team to review the current arrangements to make sure we have the most cost effective systems, processes and structures.

Respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the above proposals.

Centralisation of Communications staff

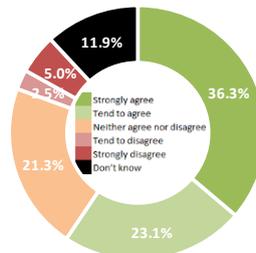
To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?



161 Responses

Management of the Tiffield St John's site

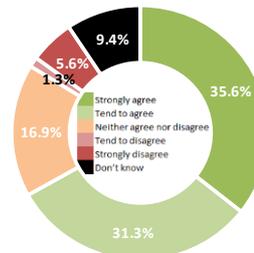
To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?



160 Responses

Increase in targeted In-House Foster Carer recruitment

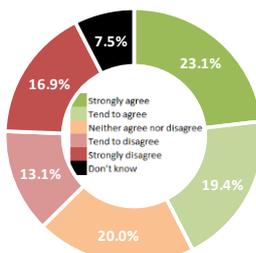
To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?



160 Responses

International Social Worker Recruitment

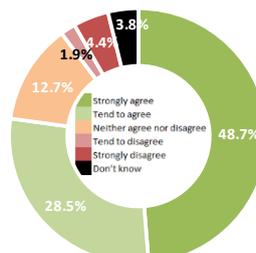
To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?



160 Responses

Agency Staff Conversion

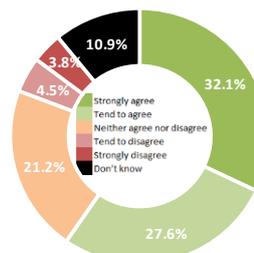
To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?



158 Responses

Commissioning services and focused prevention vehicles

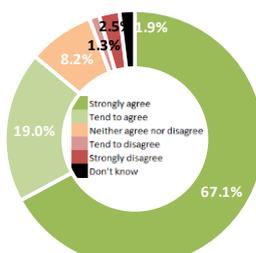
To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?



156 Responses

Reduce Consultancy Spend

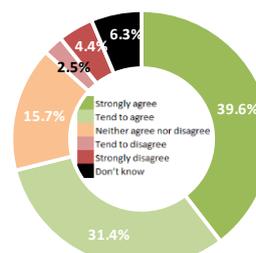
To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?



158 Responses

Negotiation on joint Health funded packages

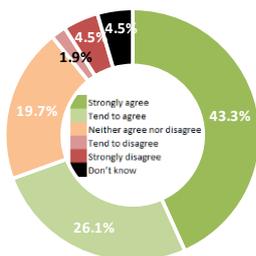
To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?



159 Responses

Review IT Strategy

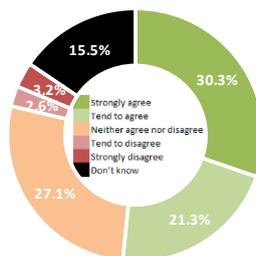
To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?



157 Responses

Shared organisational structure with NASS

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?



155 Responses

358. As shown in the above graphs, respondents agreed and disagreed as follows:

	Percentage agreed	Percentage disagreed
Centralisation of Communications staff	70.2%	9.9%
Management of the Tiffield St John's site	59.4%	7.5%
Increase in targeted In-House Foster Carer recruitment	66.9%	6.9%
Effective Commissioning services and focused prevention vehicles	59.7%	8.3%
Reduce Consultancy Spend	86.1%	3.8%
Negotiation on joint Health funded packages	71.0%	6.9%
International Social Worker Recruitment	42.5%	30.0%
Agency Staff Conversion	77.2%	6.3%
Review IT Strategy	69.4%	6.4%
Shared organisational structure with NASS	51.6%	5.8%

359. Respondents were invited to comment on these proposals. The most frequent comments respondents gave on these proposals were around social care. Respondents valued social workers and the role they undertake although there was dissatisfaction with the international recruitment of social workers with some feeling more focus should be put on more recruitment and training from within the UK. Some respondents stated how they supported the work done by foster carers and felt they needed to be further supported.

360. Several respondents commented that they thought the above proposals should have been addressed long ago, and were surprised that these savings had not already been made, resulting in some respondents criticising how the Council has been managed. Criticism was also received on the Next Generation Council model and Council restructuring, with some respondents regarding it as a waste of resources with the money being better used elsewhere.

361. Several respondents to this question also commented on the reduction in consultancy spend and how they supported the proposal. Although some acknowledged that consultants are required when the Council is lacking certain specialisms, a few felt consultants were being employed whilst the Council's own staff had the required skills to have undertaken the role.

362. There were mixed responses from the few respondents who commented regarding the Marketing and Communication Team proposal, with some believing it was already

centralised and others feeling it was an important team which should be allowed to be creative within its work.

363. A few respondents mentioned the importance of effective commissioning, and how it can lead to value for money and improved services, although concerns were raised about its performance and having its strategic and corporate function reduced to a single post.

364. A small number of respondents mentioned the Council's IT and regarded it as essential, although its current performance was questioned as was whether insourcing would be the most cost effective method for service delivery.

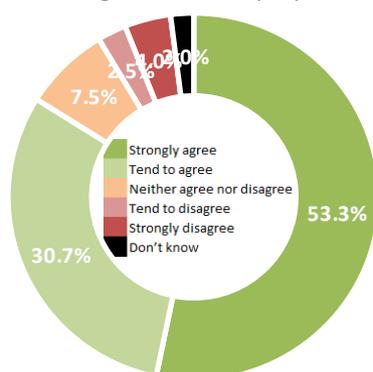
General comments

365. The consultation questionnaire then asked respondents to think about how public services as a whole in Northamptonshire are delivered, as the Council does not consider NCC services as being completely separate from those delivered by others (for instance, the link between Health and adult social care or the link between housing, which is a District/Borough council function and children's welfare). Equally, the questionnaire suggested there may need to be a change as to the way we think about traditional NCC services and consider whether other organisations may be better placed to deliver them at a more local, community-owned level.

366. Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the proposal that public services should be more joined up to deliver improvements for service users and be more efficient.

Public services should be more joined up to deliver improvements for service users and be more efficient?

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?



199 Responses

367. As shown in the above graph, the majority of respondents (84.0%) agreed that public services should be more joined up to deliver improvements for service users and be more efficient, with 6.5% disagreeing.

368. Many of the respondents who strongly agreed or agreed with commented that the proposal was “obvious” with some respondents describing it has a “no brainer” and that it made strategic sense.
369. Respondents stated that a joined-up approach between organisations serving the public is always positive and that liaison between different public authorities would be beneficial for all. Respondents said at present too much money was wasted on running separate organisations and creating “political wrangling”. A move to a one council model or other forms of unitary councils would deliver much needed public services efficiently and effectively, it was felt, and that it would minimise duplication, reduce political management costs; save on staff wage bills, give the public better access and join up on critical services. With modern technology, they felt, a new organisation(s) could be more accountable, accessible and reliable. Respondents stated by joining up public services it would still require the public sector to work with and learn from the private, community and voluntary sector.
370. Some respondents commented that in achieving efficiency this should not mean a reduction in service provision but that the same services are provided for a reduced cost. They also said that some services may suit to be delivered at a national and and/or at a town/village level.
371. Respondents pointed out that through any reorganisation, consideration should be given so that key services are not minimised or dropped from the radar. They said that creating joined up working arrangements itself sometime created a bureaucratic nightmare that impacted on service delivery.
372. A few respondents commented on the capacity of the Council to deliver and work towards creating a one council approach. They stated that this was due to previous and current performance.
373. Only a small number of respondents gave their reasons for disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the proposal. These comments most focused on the need for the Council to raise sufficient funding, i.e. increasing Council Tax, selling One Angel Square and then leasing it back, or by demanding more funding from central government. There was also a call for adult social services to receive no more budget reductions. A respondent also commented that the district and boroughs have not been able to engage fully with the county and welcomed the opportunity to do so.
374. A few comments were made by respondents who answered “neither agree” not “disagree”. They expressed that the proposal sounded good in theory but joined up working has been around for some time with little positive impact or future service security. They said joined up working needed financing. Other respondents said that they did not trust the County Council, or did not know enough to answer or felt it was an ambiguous question.
375. A few comments were made by those respondents that answered “don’t know”. Either they did not know what the statement meant or they could not answer as they wanted for information, including an assessment of risk before providing their thoughts.

376. When respondents were asked if they have any suggestions about traditional NCC services could be delivered differently a variety of comments were made. Respondents expressed a desire for the Council to increase collaboration and have a greater sharing of services with other public sector organisations. They wanted the public sector to be invested in and asked that Central Government be approached to support and assist, whether that be through the reorganising of local government or providing fair and equitable funding.
377. Respondents said that the demographics of the Northamptonshire meant that some residents may be disenfranchised and forgotten about.
378. Many respondents suggested that the time was right for the movement towards formal levels of collaborative working, namely joining up the public sector within one or more unitary authorities. They stated that some services need to naturally work together in order to bring change and stability. They mentioned that services may need to be contracted out whereas others need to be brought back in-house. Respondents indicated their concerns about private sector companies running public services. Concerns raised were that they were not sure whether private contractors/ companies had a real interest and affiliation to Northamptonshire and whether they were truly accountable.
379. Respondents consistently reiterated integration of work and projects in order to streamline services and reduce duplication. Some suggested the use of digital technology to be customer responsive; to change work patterns to meet the needs of customer demand and to invest in local communities to help deliver services.
380. Respondents said they wanted to maintain and protect traditional services for vulnerable people which included the employment of key trained personnel, for example supporting preventative services to children and families and alongside that the retention of highly competent front line workers such as social workers and family support officers.
381. Again, respondents expressed their concerns about councillors and senior management's competency and loyalty to the council and Northamptonshire; the necessity to build a new headquarters; the use of consultants/ agency staff and the overall low staff morale. A few respondents made suggestion about income generation, asset utilisation, and improving communications.

Other suggestions

382. Questionnaire respondents were then asked if they have any other suggestions as to how the Council could increase income, reduce costs or make savings to support the budget.
383. A variety of comments were put forward. They centred on methods to raise revenue; the use of council assets; the relationship with local and national partners; organisation management including governance and staffing; providing service level efficiencies and innovation.
384. Many respondents spoke about way in which the council was organised. They commented on staffing levels and seeking methods to reduce the council's overall

salaries and pension bill. They mentioned protecting front line staff, decreasing top and middle tier management, reduction in remuneration packages, being digital (where necessary) and combining back room functions. In particular, many expressed concern on the council's reliance on agency staff and the use of consultants, and that the employment of agency staff and consultants should be stopped. Respondents also mentioned the retention of good quality trained staff.

385. Respondents questioned the relevance and competency of both senior managers and councillors stating that the current financial problems were down to poor financial and organisational management. They wanted the Council to work with others, both in local and national government, to bring a solution to the financial crisis.
386. Respondents consistently made comments referencing the combining of local government structures in the Northamptonshire and having unitary local government. They said reducing tiers of local government would save on the public money, cut down on current duplication of services/ resources and increase democratic accountability.
387. Respondents made specific comments on current County Council governance. They expressed their concerns over the number of councillors, the competency of councillors, and the high amount of councillor expenses. Some said that councillors should forgo their expenses, or expenses be reduced or abolished. Respondents also made comments about the consequences of what they described as inadequate decision making. Some respondents wanted Councillors to leave their "office" or for them to ask for others i.e. government commissioners, to come and run the council.
388. Many comments were made about the Council's present and historic approach to maintaining a low level of council tax. Respondents said it had resulted in essential services being stopped or eroded and left the Council and the county with its current financial burden/ crisis.
389. High numbers of respondents comments on supporting a rise in council tax, with some saying that it should be raised to a very high level. If this called for holding a referendum then the Council should be prepared to hold one.
390. Respondents also mentioned that the Council, along with the support and backing of others, including local MPs of the same political party, should ask, if not demand, an increase in funding from central government. They said Northamptonshire was not being treated equally to other part of the country. On the other hand some respondents stated that the Council had to make tough decision like other authorities had done so and be prepared to stand by their decision making even if it challenged their political stance. They said that the Council needed to be more outward looking, daring and innovative.
391. Respondents commented that they wanted the council to be a lean organisation. They wanted the council's culture and practice to be transparent. They said the council should use strong organisation management processes including using strong performance data, engaging in effective in procurement/ contract practices, understanding the voice and requirement of citizens and customers. They wanted senior managers/ councillors to stop pet/vanity projects. Respondents said that the Council should make modest charges for

services; be engaged with the commercial sector; improve on digital services and strive to reduce pension and staffing costs. They wanted all unnecessary spend - such as staff travel, office redesign, refreshments, high remuneration packages - to be stopped or suspended.

392. Lots of comments were made about the necessity of the Council's new headquarters - One Angel Square, in Northampton. Respondents felt that it was an expensive building, built at a time when the Council could not afford it. Respondents stated that the building could be sold, rented/ or leased back. A few respondents mentioned other assets and building could be looked to help raise finances. This included suspending projects like Chester Farm, selling off surplus building such as the old library in Towcester.

393. Respondents also made comments and suggestions about the way in which the Council could save money in the way in which services are organised. This includes charging a contribution to those using concessionary bus passes; considering sponsorship deals on the council transport fleet, abolishing First For Wellbeing, effectively using section 106 monies (planning and growth development), merging back offices functions with other partners/organisations, encouraging community self-management of services; working with commercial, local and global businesses; letting private companies manage all council services and/ or contracts; reviewing specific services such as adult learning; replacing parking wardens with ANPR systems; reducing the Council's web team size; promoting donations; utilising the community and increasing the use of volunteers; devolving more services to smaller local parish and town councils.

Some respondents wanted to see specific services – like rural bus transport, libraries, trading standards and children services – maintained and protected. Other respondents commented on wanting the Council to think about the consequences of their decision making and the impact it would have on future statutory service. They wanted the Council to invest in preventative programmes, services and projects.

Letters and emails

394. We received almost 400 letters and emails in relation to phase 1 proposals.

Trading standards

395. We received a number of responses via email/letter regarding this proposal, including from a number of organisations such as Age UK, Northamptonshire Police and a number of Parish Councils. All disagreed with the proposed cuts to the service. The views expressed followed similar themes to those expressed via the questionnaire responses, with the main similarities being in relation to the impact on rogue trading, risks to public safety and the impact on vulnerable people, and concerns over the scale of the proposed cuts. There were also concerns that the proposal would have a negative impact on prevention and enforcement activities and on partners and local businesses. There were also concerns that this would impact on the Council's ability to meet statutory requirements and that it would have a knock-on effect on other services such as Adult Social Care.

396. In terms of mitigating actions, in addition to similar themes to those raised via the questionnaires, other suggestions included raising the profile of the Trading Standards service and providing a better measure of the impact and benefits of the service.

Removal of bus subsidies

397. 296 written correspondences via emails and letters were received to this proposal, predominantly from individual correspondents who lived in rural areas and/or in villages in Northamptonshire. However, some correspondents lived in urban areas of the county, on the edge of the adjoining county borders or outside the county boundary. MPs, Town and Parish councils, District and Borough councils as well as individual councillors, voluntary organisations and community representatives also wrote in.
398. All correspondence spoke of their dismay and concern over the impact of the proposal. Many wanted the Council to seriously “rethink” and “revisit” the proposal.
399. Correspondents shared very personal and emotional experiences and requirements; they mentioned specific bus routes and spoke of the impact that the proposal would have on where they lived e.g. their geographical location; and how it would affect their life or the lives of their families and loved ones.
400. Correspondence expressed concern over the real value of the savings and asked “can delivering ‘£1.16m saving affecting over 375,000 passengers’ be justified when the negative impact will lead to involuntary joblessness, stagnation, lack of accessibility to public services & shops and a potential emptying of villages, whose way of life is already threatened?”
401. They highlighted that residents who cannot drive either through choice or medical issues are “totally reliant upon the service”. They said that a higher impact would be on older residents who “cannot be discriminated against solely because of where they live (many having lived in the same home for most/all of their lives)”. They said that young people would be affected greatly as they could not get to school, college or university, to support services, or to work and training. They said that people would become isolated and trapped in their own homes.
402. Overall correspondents stated that “people's social mobility will be crippled”, and that “for everyday living ... a bus service is essential”. They felt that this proposal would heavily impact on the future of the villages and rural areas with them becoming “top heavy with those who can afford to travel”.
403. Many correspondents mentioned their inability to access medical facilities and appointments, fearing that this would cause further hardship, increase in mental ill-health, anxiety and ultimately present itself in poorer outcomes and higher presence in health and social care services.
404. Specifically on the matter of hardship, people were consistently highlighting the financial impact of the proposal, whether that be the cost of taxi fares; the inability shop or to partake in other social activities without it costing more to already “heavily-burdened” vulnerable and isolated members of the community.

405. Many correspondents said that the current services were minimal and to have them completely removed is short-sighted of the Council. They wanted their individual service/route to be reviewed as opposed to a blanket reduction in all subsidies. They wanted the Council to consider the social, economic and environmental impact of the proposal.
406. Some correspondents highlighted community safety issues. They stated that there “was no safe walking route to the nearest village” or that it was “too dangerous” to walk as “there are no footpaths” or that lighting was poor. They said that country roads were busy and often the traffic on them dangerous. They also outlined the practical time taken to walk to shops or medical centres i.e. 45 minutes to an hour one way, and the risk individuals, often vulnerable, would have to face walking alone.
407. A few correspondents suggested changes and increases to fares which would protect services; others suggested looking at more collaborative models of delivery.

Children services

408. We received 14 letters and emails on the Contract Review of Corby Children’s Centres. A total of 12 of these were pro-forma emails objecting to the proposal of a 40% reduction in funding to the service. One letter expressed the author’s concern about the impact on vulnerable families and their views on the Equality Impact Assessment. Another letter was written by a user representative group who expressed concern about the proposals on children and families, children’s wellbeing and their education, their safety and home and their life chances and that the cuts will put children at risk. The group submitted a jointly produced report, “Safeguarding our Children”, which was prepared by a group of voluntary organisations working with vulnerable children and families in Northampton.

Other comments

409. A further 83 written submissions to the consultation were received from individuals, organisations (public, private and voluntary), and from interest groups. Their comments ranged from providing views on the overall impact of the budget proposal, to views on a range of proposals to single issues/ proposals. They outlined the effect on the proposal(s) either to them, to their community, to place where they live and or specific customer group.
410. Nearly all of the submissions were asking that the Council reconsider the budget proposal in light of what was needed for them or the county. They felt strongly about the impact on and access to front line services, and the effects that proposals would have on the vulnerable residents/ communities. Many respondents acknowledged the difficult financial situation and the need to make difficult decisions.
411. Some respondents indicated feelings of frustration and anger in the way in which Council has ended up with its current financial problems. Other respondents acknowledged the “hard deal” that the Council was facing from central government. Respondents expressed passionately their thoughts on having good quality, safe, efficient and thriving local government services in Northamptonshire.

412. Parish and town councils were consistently concerned and reported on the cumulative effect of the proposals. They said that direct risks and consequences of proposals on rural Northamptonshire centred on reducing vital services which keep rural areas thriving; and that the budget proposals would be creating and furthering social exclusion and rural isolation, and contributing to unnecessary risks such as a decrease in road safety. In particular they referenced loss of libraries/ mobile libraries, bus routes and highways winter maintenance. They stated “severe reductions in services.... are likely to have material impact on rural communities”. Some stated that the Council would “be unfair to sidestep their responsibilities by transferring the financial burden to Parish Councils and its residents”.
413. Parish and Town Council made many comments in relation to winter highway maintenance compared to other respondents. They said “the prompt and thorough gritting of roads in one of NCC’s flag ship services” and that “residents in rural areas need to be assured that their safety and transport needs are taken seriously” and that road “gritting maintains access to the village for both residents and emergency vehicles”. Others commented on their fears over road safety matters saying that “our residents struggle to get out of the village due to the volume & speed of traffic. If roads are not maintained to a sufficient standard accidents will increase as will rural isolation due to our residents being too scared to venture out onto the roads”.
414. Parish and Town Councils also highlighted their willingness to work with Council to look for local solutions. They said “the crucial continuation of these services is essential to the extent that [they] would consider joining a consortium of other local authorities if necessary to support these services.” However they also stated that they needed more information which included financial resources without which “informed decisions cannot be made.... we do not have unlimited resources and in depth knowledge in every area that the County Council do”. These councils asked that any cuts ought to be carefully considered against wider impacts.
415. District and Borough Councils responses asked the council to have “an open, honest and timely dialogue” and that it was not in the “interests of our residents to simply ‘cost shunt’ between public sector bodies”. They acknowledged that in order “to deliver sustainable budget reductions, while ensuring services are provided to the residents of Northamptonshire, whole system transformation is necessary”. They commented that the dialogue may lead to a “co-designed service landscape”. District and Borough Councils recognised the significant financial challenges the County Council faced both now and into the medium term; and the pressures associated with demographic changes, social care and health. They expressed that Districts and Boroughs were key partners and as “leaders of the place/locality agenda should be central to designing and delivering solutions for our residents”. District and Borough councils indicated that they were willing to explore options and /or to collaborate with the Council and other service providers “to ensure outcomes for residents are central to any service re design”.
416. Countywide voluntary sector groups that provided a written submission told us about the impact on older people and vulnerable people. They had noticed “a huge decline the numbers eligible for and receiving social care” but were “seeing growing numbers of people struggling to cope in their homes and communities”. They stated that “older people should be able to live well, not just survive, and the right care and support can help them do this.”

On age friendly places, they said that “too many of our communities are significantly underprepared to manage the challenges and unlock the potential of our ageing population” and suggested the Council must consider impact of its budgets proposal on older people and their ability to cope and the affect it will have on wider social care systems. They said that it would not be fair for the Council to signpost older people to other financially vulnerable services. Another countywide organisation stated how they felt that combination of the budget proposals would cause a greater burden on families and vulnerable people, who depended on a mixture of both statutory and informal/ community services and facilities.

417. Respondents also informed us of their concerns on digital communications/ access and on the use of the council’s call centre. They said that over-reliance on digital platforms of communication would restrict access to older people or those who did not have access to internet, or have the skill sets and or confidence to use such methods. They felt telephone contact and /or one to one contact should still be an option. On call centres, they specifically mentioned that staff were polite, however, decreasing opening hours would result in more pressure on out of hour’s services and restrict contact times for those who were in work where they could not call the council during their working day.

418. A few written submissions expressed concern over projects/ funding organisations that did not serve the whole of Northamptonshire i.e. only served specific interest groups or geographical places; on the cost of the building One Angel Square at time when the Council could not afford it; on the recruitment and competence of staff recruited from outside the UK; on the use of agency staff; on staff retention and current staff morale. Other interest groups drew attention to the Council’s legal and statutory duties relating to Highways proposals such the “right of ways”.

419. A number of written submissions were in form of a pro-forma i.e. contained the same text/ points but were signed/ or sent from different people. These submissions concentrated their views on proposals for Children’s Services, removal of bus subsidies, asking the Council to reassess the impact of that with withdrawal of the services, which they said were vital, to the community.

Petitions, e-petitions, pro-forma letter campaigns and group submissions

420. At the time of writing this report we have received 4 petitions relating to the phase 1 proposals. The petitions covered the following subjects:

Topic	Signatories
Do not remove the subsidies for the 86 and 33/33A buses	324 (not submitted by the time the consultation closed)
Do not cut the subsidies for the 33/33A bus	155
Trading Standards	589
Maintain Trading Standards at its current level	889 (Not submitted by the time of the closure – 712 signatories at the time the consultation closed)

Feedback from public consultation events

421. Four public consultation events were held over the course of phase 1 of the budget consultation along with a specific event hosted by the Northamptonshire Learning Disability Partnership Board. The vast majority of people who attended spoke to officers and County Councillors to express their views on the library service review which was being conducted under a separate consultation. Feedback on the phase 1 proposals is presented below. Some subject matters did not receive any feedback during these events.

Customer Service Centre

422. Only one comment was received at the events regarding the Customer Service Centre. The attendee stated they would prefer the opening hours to be 10am-6pm to help make the service more accessible for people who work 9am-5pm.

Digital Northamptonshire

423. Responses received via the public events strongly disagree with proposal. They commented that websites are not always accessible for some people with a disability and that the option to telephone should be available for those that need it; broadband in rural areas is not as good as other places; a fear on increased isolation as loses the 'human' interaction; and the need to use libraries for internet access, especially for those who do not have internet at home.

Children Services Contract Review

424. The event in Corby attracted the most respondents with a focus group being held with the Children's Service Director. The discussion in the focus group was not recorded. Following the meeting, a number of scanned event feedback forms were received by email the day after day. The number of forms was greater than the number of people observed to have attended.

425. The feedback provided in response to why respondents strongly disagreed with the proposal said that it was a vital service for children and families of Corby. Corby was a "deprived" town, with low education and low wages. Cuts to the service meant that families would not be able to support themselves. Early prevention was proven to be a good solution to vulnerable families. The group work provided at the Pen Green Centre was critical to parents, families and children. Respondents felt that there should be an increase in funding arrangements not a decrease. The Pen Green Centre helped isolated families to make contact with others in similar situations. Over the years the accumulation of cuts to this area of work, they felt, was having an impact on the most in need. They said that the Council needs to look at its assets and consider why it had built a new headquarters at the expense of cutting critical front line services. The expertise of the staff at the centres was appreciated and important in providing what they felt was a very good service. The centres provided a socialising opportunity in a safe environment.

426. When respondents were asked to comment on what could be done to help mitigate the impact of the proposals, they said the Council needed to make good decisions and be confident in those decisions that affected vulnerable children and families - reduced services would not help maintain the level of the specialist early intervention services needed. They said that there was a need for more resources to be put into the centre - suggestions included

bringing an increase to the council tax. There was the view that the wrong services were being targeted for cuts; that duplication of officers in other council departments need to be looked at. They said that Children's Centres were a lifeline to families; that taking this service away would be putting children at risk and that they wanted no cuts to their services.

427. Overall, respondents regard the Children Centres as valuable and vital resource supporting the most vulnerable. They do not want to see services cut or reduced. Respondents express what services the centres offers personally to them, the value that they bring to their social and mental wellbeing. They firmly place the centres within a bank of critical resources needed for a town which is described as being "socially deprived".

Highways Maintenance Tranches 1 & 2

428. Attendees at the public events were not supportive of the proposals for either tranche 1 or 2. They felt a reduction in this service would result in more accidents. They felt essential repair works need to be carried out and by not carrying out essential repair works would be a false economy as it would cost more in the long-term to fix a fault with gets increasingly worse, as well as an increase in compensation claims. Some attendees also felt that an increase in accidents would put additional demand on emergency services. An attendee mentioned the importance of road safety education for children, and that this helps to prevent accidents. Another felt landowners should be prosecuted if they failed to maintain rights of way and that any income received by these fines should be reinvested into the service. An attendee said how they would support the reduction of road salting and felt the pavement should be gritted.

Removal of Bus Subsidies

429. Attendees for the Learning Disability Partnership Board event strongly disagreed with the proposal. They said that without those bus routes those in rural areas will be isolated, that it would reduce access to services, work, college/university and that it would cause a negative impact on wellbeing and that it was not healthy. They felt that there would no freedom for disabled non-drivers. Attendees said that people will end up spending more time at home, and therefore have increased isolation. They commented that there would be increased costs for alternative transport and that raised costs of costs of bus tickets may also cause isolation.
430. At the drop in events, most attendees had general discussions with officers about the bus routes and proposals. Individual questions were answered. Attendees suggested the use of the empty buses in urban areas being used in rural areas. The few that completed feedback asked why their route was being cut and asking for it not to be.

Remove subsidy to Royal and Derngate

431. An attendee commented that they were concerned about the impact the proposal would have on the Royal and Derngate as the current Council contribution attracts a lot of other leverage funding.

Trading Standards

432. Views on the Trading Standards proposal were also considered at the four public drop-in events held during Phase 1. The vast majority of attendees who gave their views on the Trading Standards service were not supportive of the proposal. They felt the size of the proposed reduction in staff would 'devastate the service' and could not see how it could operate with such a large reduction. Although some attendees were initially unsure of the

functions the Trading Standards service delivers, once explained, attendees felt it plays an important role in the protection of health and safety within the county. There was also a view that prevention was better than having to address problems further down the line, when expertise has been lost.

Winter Roads Maintenance

433. Attendees at the public events were not supportive of the proposal. They felt lives would be put at risk if winter roads maintenance was reduced, as there would be more accidents. They did not think it would be cost effective as claims for compensation would be increased. Attendees also raised concerns over the access of emergency services to incidents, particularly within rural communities. Grit bins should be retained and replenished in order for communities to have the resources to help themselves.

Feedback from group discussions

434. A total of 2 group feedback discussion forms were submitted.

Smoking cessation service

435. One feedback form was also received from a parish council on this proposal. It tended to disagree with the proposal and stated that the lack of service will have a knock-on effect on GPs and hospitals who are already overstretched, and that it is just deferring a long term problem which could be solved by early intervention / support. The Impact was rated as 8.

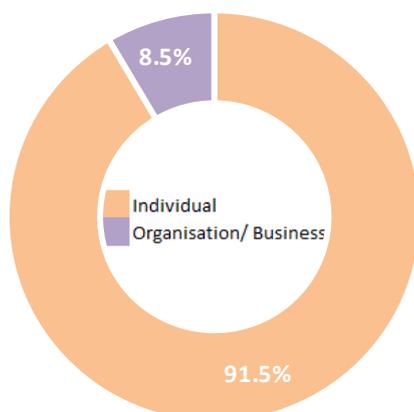
Trading Standards

436. A self-facilitated group feedback form from a local organisation was submitted. The group strongly disagreed with the proposal to cut Trading Standards budget, stating that participants felt the reduction will have a detrimental effect on the ability to protect older and more vulnerable adults, and rogue traders will target vulnerable people with less risk of being caught. There was concern that the cuts may impact on older and vulnerable people's ability to live independent lives.

Demographics of respondents to Phase 1

437. Whilst it has not been possible to ascertain the demographic characteristics of the individual consultation responses received via the email, letter or at public events, we have asked this information within the questionnaires. Not all respondents provided this information.
438. The responses to the demographic monitoring questions cover respondents' protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 (e.g. gender, age, sexuality, gender identity/reassignment, marital status, pregnancy/maternity, disability, religion, and ethnicity/ethnic origin) and is shown graphically as follows, without commentary.

Are you responding to this consultation as an individual or as a representative of an organisation/business?

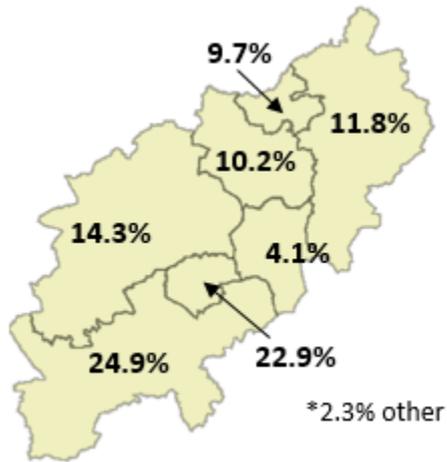


506 Responses

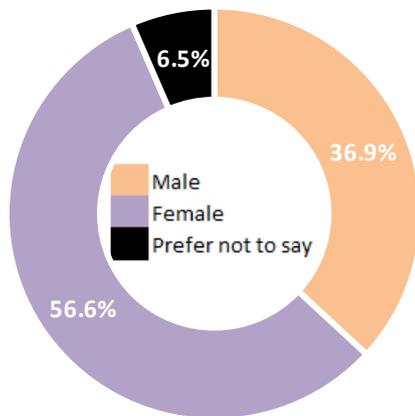
Capacity in which respondents were completing the questionnaire:

As a service user	152
A local resident	364
A Northamptonshire County Council/LGSS/First for Wellbeing/NASS employee	26
A Northamptonshire County Councillor	4
A Borough, District or Parish Councillor	15
A representative of the voluntary sector or community organisation	9
A representative of the local business community	3
A representative of a Borough/District Council	5
A representative of a Parish Council	17
A representative of a health partner organisation (e.g. Clinical Commissioning Group, Mental Health Trust)	0
A representative of a user group	1
Other	26

What district / borough of Northamptonshire do you live in?

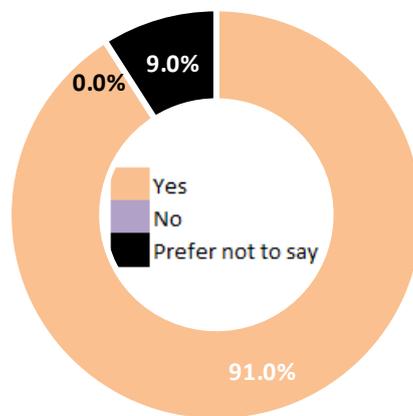


What gender are you?



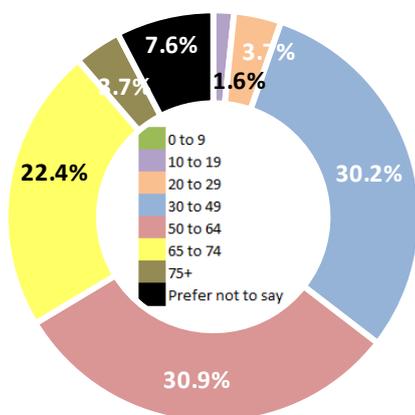
431 Responses

Is your gender identity the same as the gender you were assigned at birth?



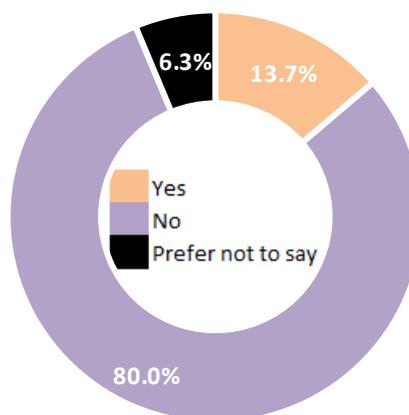
421 Responses

How old are you?



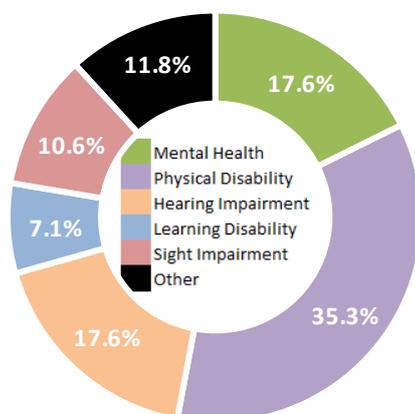
434 Responses

Do you have a disability?



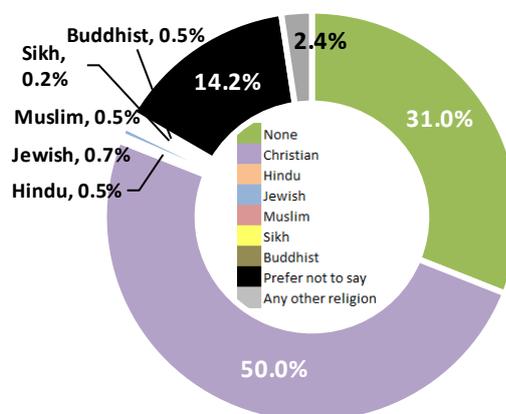
430 Responses

If Yes, please tick the appropriate box(es) which best describes your disability?



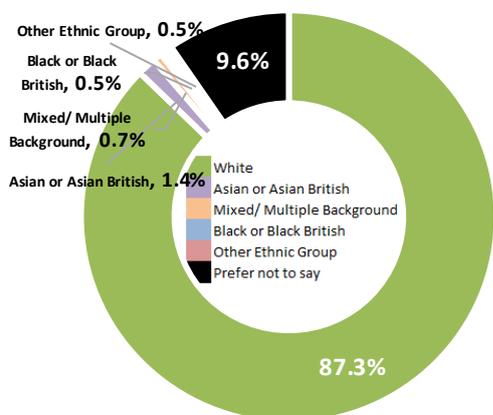
65 Responses

What is your religion or belief?



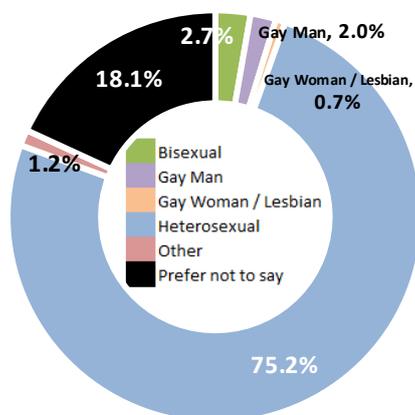
422 Responses

How would you describe your ethnic origin?



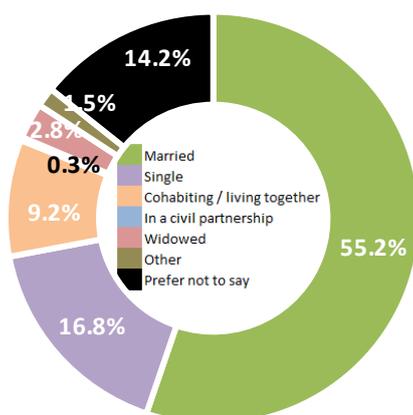
417 Responses

If you are 16 or over which of the following options best describes how you think of yourself?



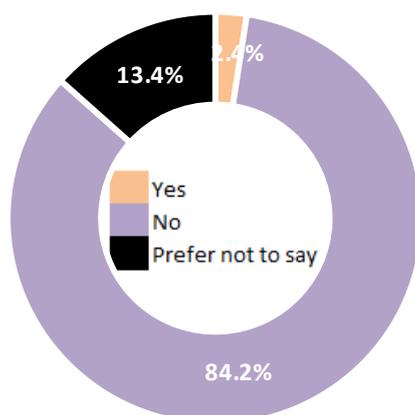
403 Responses

What is your marital status?



393 Responses

Are you currently pregnant or have you had a baby in the last six months?



411 Responses

Phase 2

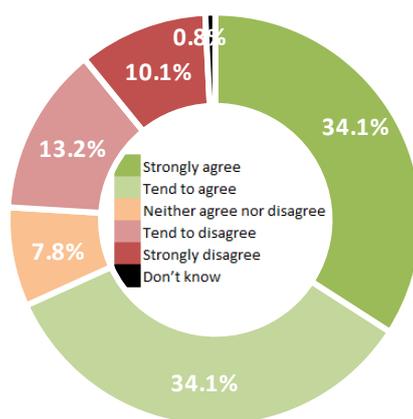
Questionnaire

439. In total, 270 respondents completed a questionnaire during phase 2 of the budget consultation, either online or by paper copy and either in standard or easy read format. Respondents did not have to answer every question and so the total number of responses for each question differs and is shown in relation to each question.

Proposed increase in Council Tax

440. As part of the Draft Budget Proposals, the Council was proposing to increase the council tax rate by 4.98% in 2018/19. For an average (Band D) council tax payer, this would mean an increase of £1.12 per week for the Northamptonshire County Council element.
441. This 4.98% increase consists of two parts: a 1.98% increase which will be used to fund all services provided by the county council, and an additional 3% increase which follows the government's decision to allow local authorities to increase council tax for the specific purpose of funding adult social care. Under current rules, the council would have to hold a referendum on the proposed increase in council tax if the total increase (including up to 3% for the Adult Social Care Precept) is equal to or greater than 5%.
442. Respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the proposed increase of 1.98% to fund all services provided by Northamptonshire County Council:

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed increase of 1.98% to fund all services provided by Northamptonshire County Council?



129 Responses

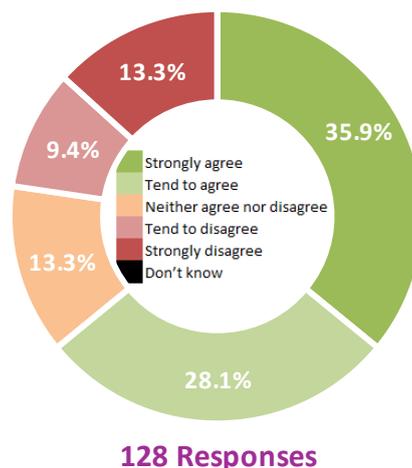
443. As shown in the above graph, the majority of respondents (68.1%) agreed with the proposal to increase Council Tax by 1.98% to fund all services provided by Northamptonshire County Council, with 10.9% disagreeing.
444. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. Nearly half of respondents leaving a comment indicated their support/understanding for the need to raise Council Tax. Reasons for this included acknowledgement of: inflationary pressures/increasing costs, services suffering due to underfunding, increase in demand, and lower rate than most others around the country.
445. However, a large number of the same people (and other respondents) were also sceptical about how the additional money would be managed and what it would be used for.

Comments covered: perceptions of mismanagement of the business and funds; and not funding services most in need over other expenses, such as children's centres and other services in need, rather than a new council buildings, latest technology, a chief executive, wage rise, extra cabinet members or buying in consultants.

446. Some suggested that there should be a greater increase and one respondent suggested increasing Council Tax revenue even further by charging 100% on empty properties and by having more bands above the current highest tax band. A number of respondents commented that they thought Council Tax should have increased before now to avoid the current situation.

447. Respondents were then asked if they agreed or disagreed with the proposed increase of 3.00% specifically to fund adult social care:

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed increase of 3.00% specifically to fund adult social care?



448. As shown in the above graph, the majority of respondents (64.0%) agreed with the proposal to increase Council Tax by 3.00% specifically to fund adult social care, with 22.7% disagreeing.

449. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. A number of respondents stated in the comments their support for the 3.00% increase and in some cases a higher amount, they acknowledged the need for social care and the need to support elderly and vulnerable people.

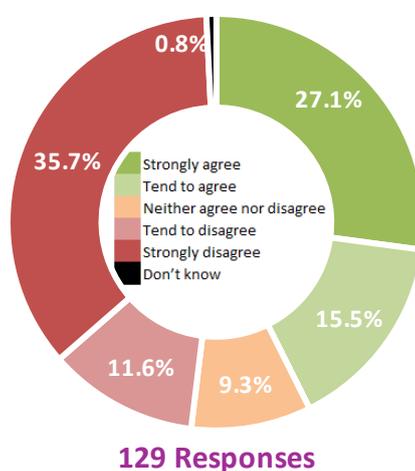
450. A number of respondents thought it should be funded by central Government and some thought it should be funded through making savings elsewhere.

451. Some thought the criteria for receiving adult social care services should be improved and a number of people thought that the need for additional funding comes from

inefficiencies and poor financial decisions by the Council, including: poor/ expensive commissioning decisions; not raising Council Tax in previous years; not spending money on the 'real needs of the electorate', inefficient/ overcomplicated processes in adult social care; consultants; failed projects; over-use of agency staff.

452. As the Council had requested permission from Central Government to increase Council Tax beyond the amount allowed under the current rules and without the need for a referendum respondents were then asked if they agreed or disagreed with an increase in council tax of more than 4.98%, should the Council be given permission by Central Government.¹

If we are given permission, to what extent would you agree or disagree with an increase in council tax of more than 4.98%?



453. As shown in the above graph, the majority of respondents (47.3%) disagreed with the proposal to increase council tax by more than 4.98%, should the Council be given permission by Central Government, with 42.6% agreeing.

454. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. Many of the themes from the previous two questions were reinforced here. A number of respondents agreed in principle that increases in Council Tax were needed; some up to the referendum limit and some supported increases beyond the current threshold. For those who supported increase beyond the referendum threshold, the following reasons were given:

- So all services in all the country can actually work
- For good services
- We all have to learn to pay our way
- Current services inadequate

¹ After the consultation was launched, local authorities were given the flexibility to add a further 1% increase in Council Tax, meaning that the total increase could be 5.98%

- Services need funding
- Will in the long term create savings and reduce the chaos
- Reduce isolation and poverty
- Local services need to be protected and maintained - this requires proper funding
- Efficient services cost money
- Money has to come from somewhere

455. However, as previously there was scepticism around how well additional money would be managed, how well budgets had been managed in the past and the quality of past financial decisions.

456. Another common theme was people's concerns over being able to afford an even bigger increase in Council Tax. A number of respondents commented that they wouldn't be able to manage this increase on top of other outgoings and a number also commented that their income is not increasing to be able to cover the additional cost.

Fees and Charges

457. Respondents were then asked to consider the Council's income from fees and charges in relation to the following:

- Children Services
 - Learning Skills and Education
 - School Admissions
- Fees and Charges in Place Services cover charges for services such as:
 - Trading Standards
 - Highways and Traffic Management
 - Blue Badge
 - Fire and Rescue
 - Archives and Heritage
- Fees and Charges in Wellbeing & Prevention Services cover charges for services such as:
 - Country Parks
 - Libraries
 - Registration Service
 - Everdon Outdoor Learning Centre
 - Grendon Outdoor Learning Centre
 - Longtown Outdoor Learning Centre
 - Knuston Hall
 - Adult Learning
 - Sport

458. Respondents were then asked to describe the impact they think this might have.

459. In general, many respondents felt that an increase in fees would deter people from accessing the services. There was some concern that by increasing fees fewer people may access the services provided, especially the most vulnerable, so these proposed increases could result in the Council receiving less income in the long-term - although some felt the

proposed increases listed were reasonable and that these fees were required in order to help keep the services running. A small number of respondents felt the increases were negligible and thought they should actually be higher.

460. With regards to wellbeing and prevention services, some people raised particular concern over the cost of parking at country parks and felt this would deter visitors whereas people should be encouraged to access country parks. It was felt these fees should be kept low to aid the prevention agenda. An increase in library fees was also criticised by some respondents, with fears it could reduce the number of people using the service and the effect this could have on some people, particularly the young. The disparity in cost of photocopying (printing) charges between the archive/record office and libraries was also highlighted. A small number of respondents also used this opportunity to voice their concerns over proposals regarding the proposed future of the county's library service, which was being consulted on separately.
461. Comments specifically on Place services were mostly focused on Blue Badges. A small number of respondents felt the cost for these should be increased due to Blue Badge holders being able to park in various places without incurring an additional charge, and that an increase would help deter abuse of the scheme, whereas another respondent said that Blue Badge holders may not be in receipt of high incomes to cover the cost of any increase. Concerns were also made over the safety impact on residents if Trading Standard's fees were increased.
462. Regarding Children Services fees, a respondent raised concern over the impact on a child with potentially delayed psychological support for children should the cost to a school be increased to access this support. There was concern raised over the long-term effect on children if children services were not sufficiently supported.
463. A variety of comments were made by respondents when they were asked what they thought could be done to mitigate against the impact of changes to fees and charges. Some stated how they were opposed to an increase, with parking charges being specifically mentioned several times, especially within country parks, with requests for the ability to pay for shorter time periods. A respondent also suggested the parking should be refunded if a purchase was made within the park's café as this could generate more income with a potentially greater spend.
464. Several respondents also took this opportunity to make other suggestions for alternative savings. Some of these were regarding libraries, with a suggestion of charges being attached to each book loan, or reducing the cost of computer hire at libraries so that more people could afford to use them and potentially raising more income from greater use. Another wanted the Council to lobby central government for further funding.
465. Some respondents took this opportunity to criticise the Council and its managing of fees and charges, as well as more general comments on its financial management ranging from salaries of staff and administrative costs to the condition of the county's roads.
466. A small number of respondents said they would rather the fees be increased more than proposed. Other comments on mitigation included having a full Equalities Impact

Assessment for each of the proposals; not charging schools for children's initial assessments; ensuring all charges are fair and means-tested where appropriate; having a phased increase of charges; and the Council being more commercially minded and working in partnership with other organisations, particularly with adult learning.

467. When respondents were asked if they have any alternative suggestions for raising income through fees and charges, some simply told us that they did not. Others made various suggestions including increasing the Blue Badge fee or charging holders for parking; being more restrictive on who receives a free bus pass; implementing a membership fee to join a library; adjusting fees according to the individual's financial circumstances so those on higher incomes pay more; introduce a membership fee for walking for health members; larger fines for fly tipping and antisocial behaviour; securing greater funding from central government including being able to use vehicle taxation for the counties roads; instigating a council lottery; applying for more external funding and grants; renting out office space.
468. A small number of respondents criticised the Council, its financial management, and the services it provides, with a suggestion that better services need to be provided in order to generate further income and that it should reduce its spend on staff and facilities. Other suggestions included having more volunteers and providing other services to generate more income i.e. cleaning refuse bins.

Adult Social Care Services

Adult Social Care Charging Proposals

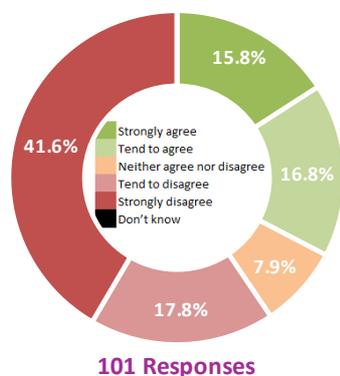
469. These were subject to a separate consultation which ended on 6th January 2018. The Fair Contributions Policy sets the charging framework for people who use services from Adult Social Care and have to make a contribution towards the cost, with proposed changes to this policy, including increasing an existing charge and introducing a new one, expected to deliver a £2m saving. Respondents wishing to participate within this consultation were directed to the Council's website for further information. The consultation findings are available in the Cabinet Paper at this [link](#).

Chief Executive Services

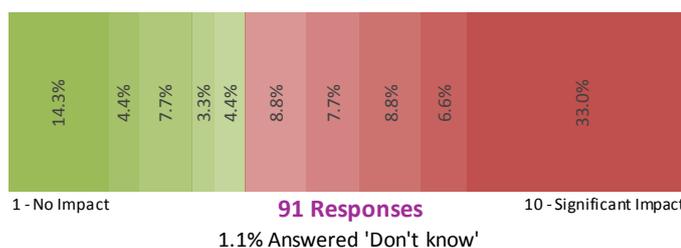
Customer Service Centre – Reduced Operations

470. Respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the following proposal:
- The removal of all telephone and e-mail contact methods for all services that are available online, i.e. Libraries, Adult Learning, Street Doctor, School Admissions (including days where school places are offered to parents) and Registrations. All other services provided by the Council that are not listed above will still be contactable by telephone and e-mail, where this is currently an option. (£187k saving).

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed removal of all telephone and e-mail contact methods for all services that are available online?



Using a scale of 1 to 10, please tell us how much of an impact this proposal would have on you if implemented?



471. As shown in the above graph, the majority of respondents (59.4%) disagreed with the proposed removal of all telephone and e-mail contact methods for all services that are available online, with 32.6% agreeing.

472. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. The majority of concerns about removing telephone and email contact methods for all services that are contactable online were about those who did not have access to facilities to use the internet. Many respondents felt that it would disadvantage those who could not or do not possess the skills to use online access, specific reference was made to groups such as the elderly, visually impaired and other vulnerable groups with some respondents commenting that it was discrimination. Further to this, some respondents said that they believe that if people do not have an alternative contact method then they will not be able to access services.

473. Some people agreed with the removal of telephone and email contact methods for all services that are contactable online stating that most people now have access to computers and that it will encourage people to do things for themselves. However, it was also suggested that in order to remove telephone and email contacts more comprehensive and accessible information needs to be available online.

474. There was also some concern about how people can access the internet if they do not have the facility in their home, this was mentioned with particular reference to the proposal regarding library closures.

475. Other considerations raised by respondents included:

- Lack of face to face contact
- It is a backwards step
- There will be an increase in calls if there is not the correct information/ technical problems
- It will isolate some vulnerable groups

476. The graph above shows that the majority of respondents felt the proposal would have a significant impact should it be implemented Respondents were asked what could be done to help mitigate the impact of the proposal.

477. The most common suggestion was to maintain a means of communication other than online. Suggestions included having a designated phone line to allow those vulnerable, disabled and elderly customers to still be able access services. Further to this, some respondents thought that some services needed to be available over the phone such as registration services. Other suggestions included keeping the phone service but increase training to make the telephone service more efficient or to offer a call back service.

478. Respondents also suggested that the council should give people that do not have the internet free access to it in public places, such as libraries. However, some expressed concern about the future of such resources such as libraries.

479. Other considerations raised by respondents included:

- Charge for phone calls
- Provide high-speed internet access, including rural areas
- Provide training to those who cannot use IT facilities

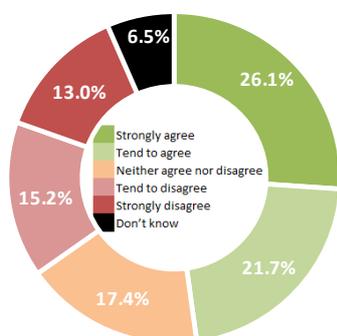
Children’s Services

New Models of Care Delivery

480. Respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the following proposal:

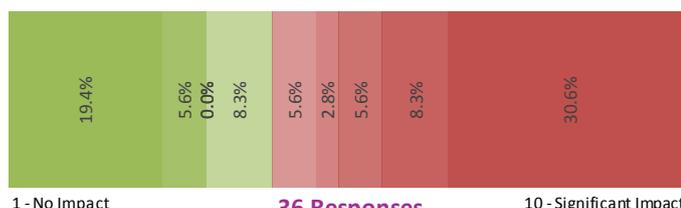
- New approaches to supporting young people on the edge of care through to leaving care, which will reduce the cost of complex care packages. (£1.349m saving).

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal of new approaches to supporting young people on the edge of care through to leaving care?



46 Responses

Using a scale of 1 to 10, please tell us how much of an impact this proposal would have on you if implemented?



36 Responses
13.89% Answered 'Don't know'

481. As shown in the above graph, the majority of respondents (47.8%) agreed with the proposal of new approaches to supporting young people on the edge of care through to leaving care, with 28.2% disagreeing.

Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did.

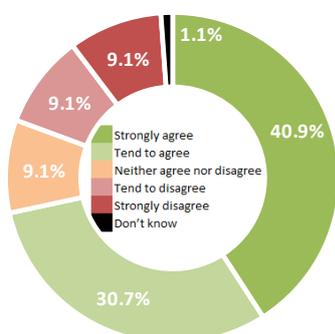
482. Some comments were provided around the concept of improving the model of care delivery in Children's Social Care to achieve reductions in the cost of complex care packages. Comments were very general, reflecting the limited amount of information about the proposal. Some respondents were concerned that any changes did not harm young people or have a detrimental impact on service delivery, some reiterated the importance of Children's Social Care and some disagreed that there should be any cuts to this area of activity.
483. A couple of respondents thought the proposal was not clear enough to provide a response.
484. The graph above shows that the majority of respondents felt the proposal would have a significant impact should it be implemented. Respondents were asked what could be done to help mitigate the impact of the proposal.
485. Ideas provided in the comments around mitigating the impact of the proposal varied and included:
- Conducting a full Equality Impact Assessment and properly considering the impact on those who may be affected
 - Good communication and explanation, with sufficient time to implement changes
 - Ensure transparency
 - Sufficient, well trained and experienced social workers
 - Ensure understand costs of making changes at outset
 - Recruit suitable volunteer mentors and ask the opinion of the young people leaving care for their suggestions
 - More practical support for families and children and easy access to one lead worker
 - Cut the executives' pay, reduce their numbers
 - Not to keep using temporary agency staff

Place Services

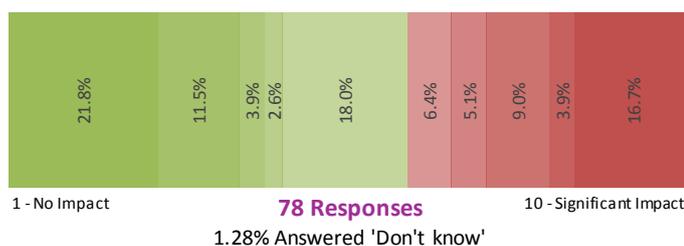
Trade Waste controls at Household Waste Recycling Centres Trading Standards

486. Respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the following proposal:
- Introduction of improved systems to control trade waste disposal at Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs). This is likely to be a permit system, which will require residents who wish to bring household waste to the nine HWRCs using a van, pick-up truck, horsebox, trailer, or any other vehicle without windows or seats in the rear, to register and use an e-permit. A permit will be issued for free to residents who drive commercial type vehicles and who wish to deposit household waste. The Permit will limit the number of visits to 6 per year. This will distinguish between household waste that has been transported in a vehicle other than a car, and trade waste, which is chargeable (£200k saving resulting from improved controls to stop the free disposal of trade waste).

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the introduction of improved systems to control trade waste disposal at HWRCs proposal?



Using a scale of 1 to 10, please tell us how much of an impact this proposal would have on you if implemented?



487. As shown in the above graph, the majority of respondents (71.6%) agreed with the introduction of improved systems to control trade waste disposal at Household Waste Recycling Centres proposal, with 18.2% disagreeing. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did.

488. Comments on this proposal were fairly mixed. Around half of respondents agreed with the concept of the proposal; mainly to achieve more legitimate disposal of trade waste and to see more traders paying. However, a similar number of respondents (including one or two who agreed with the concept of the proposal) were concerned that any changes could result in an increase in fly-tipping, whilst a few thought it would have the opposite effect. Some commented that fly-tipping was already an issue for their area.

489. A number of people thought that the introduction of the new permit scheme may not be cost effective due to the potential for increased administration and enforcement costs of the scheme and the cost to clear up additional fly-tipping. Some thought that there shouldn't be a restriction of 6 times per year for disposal of domestic waste in vehicles other than a car.

490. Other considerations raised by respondents were:

- Potential for conflict at point of use
- Open recycling centres longer to stop illegal dumping
- Charge more
- Some of the money needs to be used to combat fly tipping
- Given all the large services within this directorate, it is surprising that the proposals are limited to Trade Waste permits and On-street Parking charges
- Potential for certain persons to start running it as a business and start charging neighbours money for their services

491. The graph above shows that the majority of respondents felt the proposal would not have a significant impact should it be implemented.

492. A number of proposals were made to mitigate the impact of the proposal. These included:

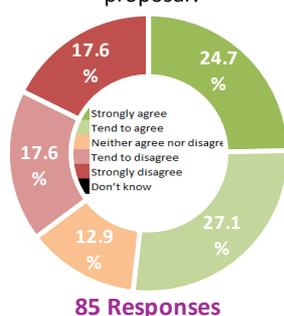
- Good communications about the proposal
- Make the permit scheme quick and easy

- Raise domestic permits from 6 to 10 per annum
493. Other comments and ideas included:
- Increase opening hours and days for the HWRCs
 - Encourage upcycling and earn more in recycling
 - Number plate recognition for anyone who is dumping daily indicating it is commercial waste
 - Improvements to trade disposal facilities
 - Make it easier and cheaper for people to dispose of their waste
 - Make sure fly tippers are prosecuted
 - Giving greater priority to preventing fly-tipping
 - Charging a % on all Trade Waste Users annual Turnover
 - Offer support to disabled people who are unable to do this

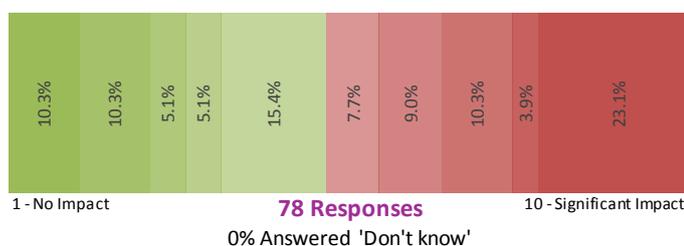
Changes to On-street Pay and Display Parking

494. Respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the following proposal:
- Changes to the on-street pay and display parking in Northampton town centre to include: extending the timescales for when pay and display charges will be applied to between 7am - 7pm Monday to Sunday inclusive (current operations are applied 8am - 6pm Monday to Friday with no charges on Sunday); increase on-street pay and display parking charges from £1 per hour to £1.20 per hour; and increase the maximum allowable stay to on-street pay and display parking from 1 hour to 2 hours. (£350k saving).

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the changes to on-street pay and display parking proposal?



Using a scale of 1 to 10, please tell us how much of an impact this proposal would have on you if implemented?



495. As shown in the above graph, the majority of respondents (51.8%) agreed with the changes to on-street pay and display parking proposal, with 35.2% disagreeing.

496. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. The majority of concerns raised around changes to on-street parking were about the potential negative impact on the number of visitors to Northampton town centre. Many respondents felt that the proposed changes would result in reduced trade/number of shoppers in the town. This included specific concerns were around competition with out of town retail parks and other larger, more attractive shopping locations.

497. Some people agreed with the increase in parking charges on the basis of encouraging more people onto public transport, whereas others felt that it was too much. Some people thought there should be no free parking. Some people disagreed with changes to timings of on-street parking, specific reasons included the effect on Sunday worshippers.
498. Other considerations raised by respondents included:
- The need to empty machines more regularly
 - The need to have more change available
 - Difficulties parking due to NCC employees in the town centre/taking all free parking
 - Car parks offer free 2 hours if people don't want to pay
 - Machines should take card payments or give change
 - There should be a free period of 20 minutes
 - Too many cars in busy areas
499. The graph above shows that there was fairly mixed feelings as to how much of an impact respondents felt the proposal would have if it was implemented. Respondents were then asked what could be done to help mitigate the impact of the proposal.
500. The most common response to this question was to offer free parking including: at weekends, free first 20 minutes and 'free' days for special events. Other suggestions to mitigate the impact of the proposals included:
- Better deals in car parks
 - Free park and ride
 - No free parking at weekends
 - Affordable parking for workers
 - Improvements for cyclists
 - Keeping the bus subsidy
 - Make it easier to pay on-street
 - Make sure parking is value for money compared to other, neighbouring shopping destinations
 - Stop abuse of parking spaces
 - Significant investment in towns to not cripple people using town facilities or alternative method of travelling to car
501. One person was sceptical about the results of this consultation on parking being used.

Non-customer facing proposals

502. The Council is also considering a number of budget proposals that it believes can deliver savings without having an impact on customers. These are set out below.

Chief Executive Services

- Centralisation of and commercialisation of Communications and Marketing functions: Centralisation of all communications and marketing staff into one unit followed by

restructure of this centralised team to streamline activity. Begin moving toward a fully self-funded model. This builds on the centralisation proposal in Phase 1 (£300k saving)

- BIPM Centralisation: A restructure of the Business Intelligence and Project Management (BIPM) service. The restructure will impact on all functions delivered by the service. (£1m saving)

Children’s Services

- Staff Vacancy Management: Management of staff vacancies within Children's Services (£250k saving).

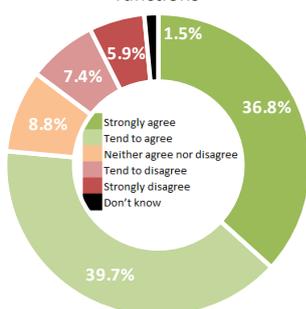
LGSS (Local Government Shared Services)

- LGSS Procurement: Propose charging a success fee to winning bidder(s). (£250k saving)

Place Services

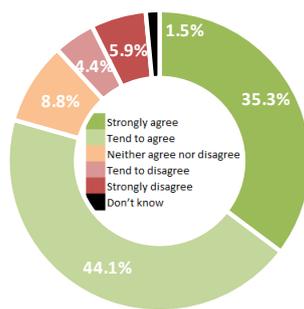
- Asset Restructure: Make the best use of office space within Angel Square (the Council’s head office). (£1.135m saving)
- Planning Resource: Deletion of a Senior Planning Officer post. (£40k saving)

Centralisation of and commercialisation of Communications and Marketing functions



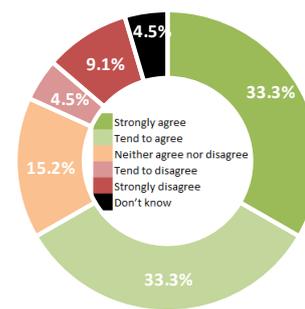
68 Responses

Business Intelligence and Project Management Centralisation



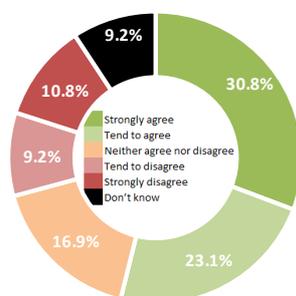
68 Responses

Staff Vacancy Management



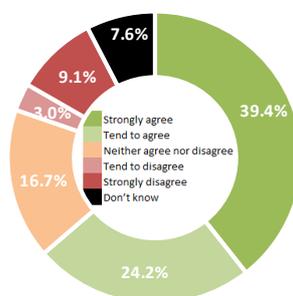
66 Responses

LGSS Procurement



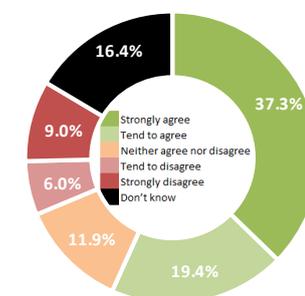
65 Responses

Asset Restructure



66 Responses

Planning Resource



67 Responses

503. As shown in the above graphs, respondents agreed and disagreed as follows:

	Percentage agreed	Percentage disagreed
Centralisation of and commercialisation of Communications and Marketing functions	76.5%	13.3%
Business Intelligence and Project Management Centralisation	79.4%	10.3%
Staff Vacancy Management	66.6%	13.6%
LGSS Procurement	53.9%	20.0%
Asset Restructure	63.6%	12.1%
Planning Resource	56.7%	15.0%

504. The Council advised respondents that it was also doing a number of things as part of the way it delivers 'business as usual' to help improve efficiencies and value for money, for instance by working with partners, removing duplication, changing/improving our contracts, making use of the flexible rules around how we can treat revenue and capital expenditure. These are listed below:

- Commissioning - Savings and Value for Money from Shaw Private Finance Initiative (Adult Services) (£1m saving)
- Financial Sustainability - Capitalisation of Community Equipment (Adult Services) (£900k saving)
- Commissioning - Maximisation of Disabled Facilities Grant (Adult Services) (£500k saving)
- Commissioning - Value for money review of Integrated Community Equipment Services (ICES) Contract (Adult Services) (£800k saving)
- Demand Management - Learning Disability Provision of Care (Adult Services) (£2.25m saving)
- Increased Use of Social Impact Bonds (Chief Executive Services) (£1.25m saving)
- Reduction in Staff Travel Expenditure (Children, Families & Education) (£300k saving)
- Reduction in Redundancy Budgets (Corporate) (£2m saving)
- Aged Debt Reduction (Corporate) (£1.1m saving)
- LGSS Operational Savings (LGSS) (£803k saving)
- Democratic Services (LGSS) (£71k saving)
- Audit and Risk Management (LGSS) (£60k saving)
- Finance Operations (LGSS) (£131k saving)
- Health, Safety and Wellbeing (LGSS) (£90k saving)
- Learning and Organisational Development (LGSS) (£300k saving)
- IT - NCC Business Systems (LGSS) (£71k saving)
- Customer Engagement and Reporting (LGSS) (£15k saving)
- LGSS Law (LGSS) (£196k saving)
- Concessionary Fares Reductions (Place Services) (£200k saving)
- Capitalisation of Superfast Broadband Team (LGSS) (£150k saving)

505. A variety of comments were received from respondents when asked for their views on the non-customer facing proposals. Some respondents felt there was not enough detail

given on each proposed saving listed on what this saving might mean and the impact it could have to enable them to sufficiently comment, with a request made for an equality impact assessment to be completed for each proposal.

506. Some of the respondents criticised the Council (including some of its service providers) and the way it has been managed by senior officers and councillors. Criticism also included the Council's attempts of income generation; financial control; the workforce; the highways; and risk management.
507. Some respondents made general suggestions about how savings could be made or alternative forms of income generated. These included support for centralisation of corporate functions; greater efficiencies; building a car park near One Angel Square where staff can pay to park during the daytime and residents at other times thus ensuring income generated via parking goes to NCC; increase in council tax for those categorised over Band D; and reduction in councillors' allowances.
508. A small number of respondents questioned the achievability of all of the savings listed and raised concern over the potential reduction to services. A respondents also thought that a proposed fee for successful contract bidders would not work as the extra expense would be added to the initial bids.
509. A comment was received about the need for closer partnership working with Districts and Borough councils to help co-design services.
510. Some respondents mentioned specific services and their feedback is outlined as follows:
- Aged Debt Reduction: this was regarded as something that should be standard practice.
 - Asset Restructure: there was disapproval of One Angel Square.
 - Capitalisation of Superfast Broadband Team: this was deemed to be a central government role and should not be a locally incurred cost.
 - Commissioning - Savings and Value for Money from Shaw Private Finance Initiative: there was disapproval of this contract.
 - Concessionary Fares Reductions: there was mixed feedback to this proposed budget reduction as it was felt that no reduction should be made as it helps to keep people mobile and independent; whereas another respondent felt the concessionary fares should be stopped altogether and children's bus passes should be means-tested².
 - Demand Management - Learning Disability Provision of Care: there was concern that this will affect the most vulnerable.
 - Learning and Organisational Development: it was felt that this could be delivered in a more streamlined, evidenced based approach; and that this proposed budget reduction could have an impact on recruiting and the success of students.
 - Maximisation of Disabled Facilities Grant: it was felt that there should be no reduction to this budget due to already existing delays for house adaptations.

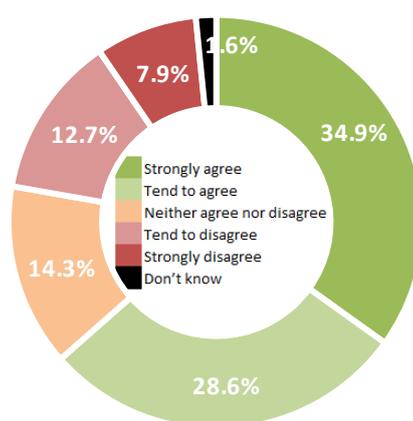
² This proposal relates to being able to reduce the budget allocated because of population forecasts, as opposed to reducing access to concessionary bus fares

- Reduction in Redundancy Budgets: respondents commented that transferring this budget to the services was moving the problem and not making a saving, and that services may now opt for the cheapest redundancy instead of the most appropriate.
- Reduction in Staff Travel Expenditure: respondents questioned how this saving would be achievable; and one would expect salaries to be increased for those staff who travel for their role in order to cover the cost of their travelling.
- Value for money review of Integrated Community Equipment Services: a respondent felt the Council should impose a financial limit for how much equipment it installs, with smaller items being self-funded.

Draft Council Plan

511. The Council consulted on a draft Council Plan 2018-19 to 2019-20 which sets out its short and medium-term vision, values and role in not only managing the difficult financial situation the county faces, but in ensuring that Northamptonshire will grow and thrive.
512. The Draft Council Plan sets out its vision, which is for Northamptonshire to be “a county where we all look after each other and take responsibility, where the vulnerable are protected and supported, and where the people who can help themselves receive the assistance they need to stay independent and healthy - making Northamptonshire a great place to grow up, live, learn, work and grow old.”
513. Respondents were asked to read the draft plan and asked to what extent do you agree or disagree with the Council’s vision within its contents.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the vision within the draft Council Plan?



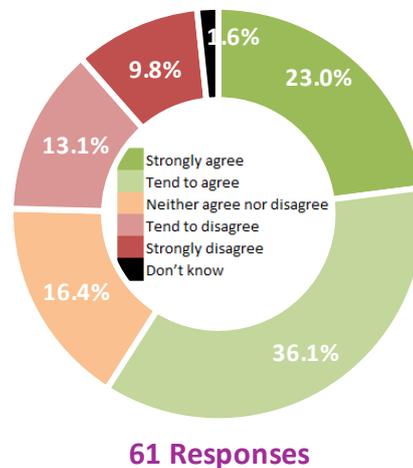
63 Responses

514. As shown in the above graph, the majority of respondents (63.5%) agreed with the vision set out in the Council Plan, which is for Northamptonshire to be “a county where we all look after each other and take responsibility, where the vulnerable are protected and

supported, and where the people who can help themselves receive the assistance they need to stay independent and healthy - making Northamptonshire a great place to grow up, live, learn, work and grow old.” proposal, with 20.6% disagreeing.

515. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. Many of the comments made about the Council Plan were concerned with its implementation. The comments reflected more agreement with the essence of the vision than disagreement. However many respondents were sceptical of its implementation and commented on what could be better and the challenges associated with implementing the vision.
516. This included:
- Need to properly determine the practical steps from bottom up/ plans of action
 - Vision not fulfilled in the Strategy
 - Too optimistic, not enough realism
 - Councillors and Directors need more commercial experience
 - Investing in preventative services/support
 - More volunteers
 - Reorganising into a unitary council
 - Council should take sufficient responsibility/not too much transferral of responsibility to others
 - Stay close to customers (not 'arms-length')
 - Willingness of people to help themselves
 - Dealing with increased demand and helping all who need it in times of austerity
 - Social complexities and changes that drive demand (families often no longer living close to each other)
 - Lack of investment in rural areas for the vision to apply there
 - Mental health should be given more importance
 - Importance of friends and friendships for disabled people to achieve happiness and safety in the community
517. A few people suggested that money shouldn't be spent on producing such documents.
518. The draft Council Plan also sets out what the Council believe its role should be:
- As a strategic influencer and facilitator, we take an active role in promoting and advocating the case of the county, regionally and nationally.
 - Over the medium term, we want to move towards becoming a more strategic Council, working with others to deliver services better targeted at those who need them most, and continuing to safeguard those vulnerable to abuse or neglect.
 - However, the reality in which we operate means that we are here to meet our statutory responsibilities within the budget envelope set by the Government. It is therefore important that we make it clear what our duties are, what we can and can't do for the people of Northamptonshire and what it is that residents and communities can do themselves, with the right support if they need
519. Respondents were asked to what extent do you agree or disagree with the role the Council have set out.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the role the Council have set out?



520. As shown in the above graph, the majority of respondents (56.1%) agreed with the role the Council have set out, with 22.9% disagreeing.

521. Respondents were then asked why they answered the previous question in the way that they did. Comments made about how the Council sees its role, as set out in the Council Plan, were varied. They included comments concerning:

- Council tax payers expecting more than a 'strategic influencer and facilitator'
- Disagreement with putting services at arm's length - away from the front end/also into the private sector
- NCC should provide services not use PFIs
- Next Generation Council vision has just created more layers of bureaucracy
- Language means little to people outside the Council - avoid business speak, have greater people-focus ("better lives" and "community")
- Scepticism that local people really have a say
- Agreement that the council should work on empowering people and be clear on what is provided
- Reminder that a lot of services that were out there available for people are not anymore (due to cuts)
- Reminder that it has become harder for communities to get funding to develop projects and many groups
- Residents already working in the community are struggling to make things work.
- Need for more volunteers within communities, as tend to know better what their community needs
- The emphasis on prevention and helping those who cannot help themselves is not reflected in budget proposals hitting the most vulnerable the hardest with no effective mitigations

522. Respondents were then asked if they have any other comments they would like to make about the draft Council Plan 2018-19 to 2019-20. More general comments about the Council Plan were mixed and included comments around:

The structure of the Council:

- Review the structure, remove duplication in different areas and support change
- Too many layers of bureaucracy
- Reorganise local government (incl. suggestions of 3 unitary, 2 unitary and 1 unitary)
- Need to early engagement and dialogue, sharing of information, insight and resources, and a willingness to co-design services and solutions for our customers are essential with District and Borough Councils and other public, private and voluntary sector partners
- One Angel Square

The vision and objectives of the plan:

- Unrealistic
- Not reflective of real life
- Offers nothing other than devolving responsibility to others

Communication with residents:

- More/better communication and consultation with residents and community groups needed
- Use plain English and more humility
- People not listened to
- A lot more information in the community and in Day Centre & Day Services & Town Centre.

Finances:

- Supportive of asking central government for more funding and freedom to raise Council Tax
- It's good to see evidence of better structures and savings
- Tighter controls when contracts written and breached to avoid losing/wasting money
- Some savings are questionable and other aspects of budget not clear

Staff:

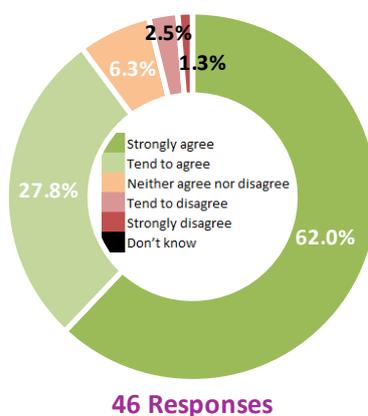
- Supportive of professionals managing increasing workloads and customers' expectations within budget constraints
- More PA staff and PA workers to allow disabled people to do more such as work and run own business

General comments

523. As with phase 1, the phase 2 consultation questionnaire then asked respondents to think about how public services as a whole in Northamptonshire are delivered.

524. Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the proposal that public services should be more joined up to deliver improvements for service users and be more efficient.

Overall, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal that public services should be more joined up to deliver improvements for service users and be more efficient?



525. As shown in the above graph, the majority of respondents (89.8%) agreed that public services should be more joined up to deliver improvements for service users and be more efficient, with 3.8% disagreeing.
526. Overall, respondents commented on public services needing to be joined up, accessible and transparent. They said the public sector needs to be efficient, and that public organisation could not operate on their own. The Council, and others, needed to work and join up in partnership with neighbouring authorities and others such as private and voluntary sector partners.
527. Respondents commented on the leadership required for joined up work with a few questioning the ability of the current Council leadership to do that. Joined and integrated working needs cooperation they stated but still would require someone to take responsibility. Respondents mentioned formal agreements and regular auditing. Other respondents mentioned that joined up work required sufficient funds and investment. Respondents expressed that some services would logically fit together well such as health and social care, yet others would not such as matching libraries and registration services with adult social care.
528. Respondents commented that large scale joined up working would be bureaucratic and required small providers, as they were better at creating efficient services. Another commented on what join up working means to them in that it was less of everything and harder to access what services were left. Another respondents stated that by working together, there would be less confusion between sections/ departments.
529. Many comments were provided on achieving savings, efficiencies, and stopping the duplication of services. Respondents said it would help drive economies of scale, better procurement and accountability and could lead to improvements.
530. Some respondents were personally concerned about their jobs, low staff morale at the Council and whether to condense services would lead to over-stretched and poor service delivery and ultimately further decrease in already low public satisfaction.

531. Respondents commented that where services have joined up, innovating and performing successfully, the Council is considering cutting/ reducing them i.e. libraries and therefore questioned whether joined up working is what the Council really wants to do.
532. Respondents said that unitary status was the way forward for Northamptonshire, with a respondent commenting “I need one councillor who represents me and a single authority to provide the services.”
533. When respondents were asked if they have any suggestions about traditional NCC services could be delivered differently they commented on redesigning a new dynamic organisation. Some suggested that personnel should be sought from the private sector; who should have the skills sets to develop highly effective and efficient work practice/ services, and at the same time improve customer service. Others suggested unitary status, investing in methods of reducing costs and increasing efficiency over the long term. A few comments stated the stopping of vanity projects and becoming a simple and straightforward transparent council that shared its work. Other said that staff should be more agile and mobile within the structure in order to help and assist in areas of high demand when required.
534. Some respondents told us that having improved social assessments would aid those customers who need social care as opposed to those who needed health. This may require investment in training professional front line workers who, they state, currently have to manage large workloads. On social care, comments suggested more assistance for home care, for volunteers and voluntary sector, for more equipment and mobile aids, and changing PFI contracts so that they meet the requirements of the Council. Other services mentioned the conversion of all local authority schools into academies, improve the digital customer journey, and the parking enforcement service being handed to the district and borough councils.
535. A few respondents spoke of a low staff morale, a challenging workplace and desire to increase public satisfaction. Another respondent said that an independent review of all senior and executive jobs was required.
536. Comments were expressed on sharing corporate assets and politicians making a difference and concentrating on what little they can control locally. A respondent said that we “need something that works for everyone”.

Other suggestions

537. Questionnaire respondents were then asked if they have any other suggestions as to how the Council could increase income, reduce costs or make savings to support the budget.
538. Respondents told us how they felt about the way in which the council was being run and having little trust in the ability of the council to function and change. They said the Council had weak leadership. Many respondents suggested a unitary/ one council approach.
539. Respondents also wanted staff and in particular senior management to be reviewed, both in terms of capacity, numbers and skill set requirement. They said that staff needed to

be valued and invested in and where possible to be local or to have an allegiance with the county. They wanted fewer consultants and locum staff.

540. Other respondents suggested reducing or removing any council incentives for senior/ executive managers especially when they leave the employment of the Council. Others wanted all types of staff “perks” removed.
541. Respondents stated that the number of councillors needs to be reduced and reviewed; and that the Cabinet needed to expand on the basis of skills and competence and not on party politics. They wanted all councillor expenses removed and of the Council, to adopt more transparent scrutiny.
542. Respondents wanted the council to “fight” for extra and fair funds from central government. Some suggested increases the council tax, or introducing local taxation that was fit for what was required for the county.
543. Many respondents made reference to the building of the new county headquarters – One Angel Square. Some suggested that assets of the council needed to be used better either by consolidating space within them, selling, part letting, renting. This could release funds or provide an avenue to maintain services such as the libraries.
544. Respondents made comments on how services could be improved. They mentioned going back to basics, bringing services under one roof, charging for certain services such as non-statutory ones or charging nominal fees for some social services. They wanted to stop unnecessary internal spending; and for staff to consider working a 4 day week instead of 5. They also on the other hand wanted look at productivity of staff/ staff performance and where appropriate have performance related incentives in operation.
545. Respondents also mentioned increasing business rates; looking at what other councils were doing, using effective performance management, stopping outsourcing, using volunteers more and being efficient about the housekeeping budget within council offices and setting up realistic budgets which are bottom up and deliverable. Respondents mentioned auditing, recouping loans and not lending money to others, and not always spending on reactive services but getting people to help themselves to sort out their issues.
546. A few comments were made about services that are not under the direct remit of the County Council, this include household waste collection and social housing.
547. Other general comments included not understanding the information or feeling unable to comment on the information provided.

Letters and emails

548. We received 13 letters and emails in relation to phase 2. Written submissions to Phase 2 of the budget consultation were received from individuals, organisations (public, private and voluntary), and from interest groups. The number of written submissions were a lot less than those received in Phased 1.

549. A national organisation told us of their concerns over the impact of services for deaf/hearing impaired children in relations to staff vacancy management approach and training provision. They commented that that there could be “no compromise in terms of training needs for staff covering Safeguarding; meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND; supporting children and young people with complex needs; improving the service for pupils who have chosen to communicate through British Sign Language (BSL) by training staff and assessing their competence in BSL; and appropriate provision of apprenticeships to support transition to work for young people with SEND.”

550. A respondent stated that the Council must be “mad” to remove all telephone and e-mail contact methods for all services that are available online.

551. Parish and Town councils continued to make reference to proposal in phase one consultation and the effects of library closures. They expressed comments like “useful services are being considered for withdrawal. The saving for some of the items in overall terms is insignificant, but the impact is disproportionately great”. Some Parish and Town Councils offered to write to central government to support fairer funding for the county and some also suggested holding a referendum in order to increase Council Tax, which they felt could generate additional funds. Another said that they would reluctantly accept the proposed increase to council tax.

552. In regards to efficiency and removing duplication, some smaller councils asked why it had not been done already and they would support this now being done, as this is what all of Northamptonshire wanted to see. A parish council also said that they were not in support of proposals which detrimentally affect vulnerable members of society, i.e. children, the elderly, the disabled, or those on a low income. They felt that services should not be reduced at all for the vulnerable and nor should they be charged more for them than at present. Another parish council stated that NCC should use reserves and/or look further at back office functions and ought to reprioritise the cuts to minimise the risk and impact on rural areas.

553. District and Borough Councils in Northamptonshire submitted a joint response suggesting way to raise and share resources; they had ideas on integrated working and possible collaboration on services. They asked for further dialogue. Individual district and borough councils provided responses on specific elements of the council’s joint response which were of significance to them, again asking for further discussion and involvement.

Petitions, e-petitions, pro-forma letter campaigns and group submissions

554. There has been no petitions, e-petitions, pro-forma letter campaigns or group submissions in response to the phase 2 proposals at the time of writing this report.

Feedback from public consultation events

555. Four public consultation events were held over the course of phase 2 of the budget consultation, although, as with phase 1, the vast majority of people who attended spoke to

officers and County Councillors to express their views on the library service review which was being conducted under a separate consultation.

556. Attendance during these four public events was a lot less than those during phase 1. There was only one response submitted at these events in relation to the phase 2 proposals. An attendee felt the Council Tax increase of 4.98% was too large.

Feedback from group discussions

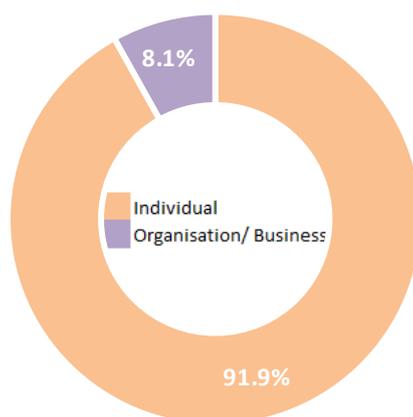
557. There has been no feedback from self-facilitated group discussions during phase 2.

Demographics of respondents to Phase 2

558. Whilst it has not been possible to ascertain the demographic characteristics of the individual consultation responses received via the email, letter or at public events, we have asked this information within the questionnaires. Not all respondents provided this information.

559. The responses to the demographic monitoring questions cover respondents' protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 (e.g. gender, age, sexuality, gender identity/reassignment, marital status, pregnancy/maternity, disability, religion, and ethnicity/ethnic origin) and is shown graphically as follows, without commentary.

Are you responding to this consultation as an individual or as a representative of an organisation/business?

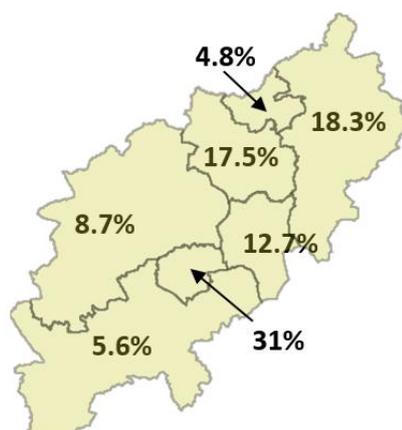


136 Responses

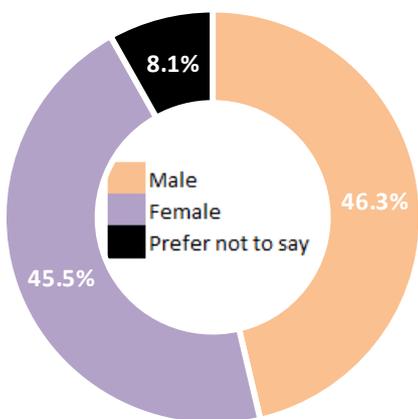
Capacity in which respondents were completing the questionnaire:

As a service user	40
A local resident	113
A Northamptonshire County Council/LGSS/First for Wellbeing/NASS employee	22
A Northamptonshire County Councillor	8
A Borough, District or Parish Councillor	9
A representative of the voluntary sector or community organisation	1
A representative of the local business community	0
A representative of a Borough/District Council	1
A representative of a Parish Council	5
A representative of a health partner organisation (e.g. Clinical Commissioning Group, Mental Health Trust)	1
A representative of a user group	1
Other	9

What district / borough of Northamptonshire do you live in?

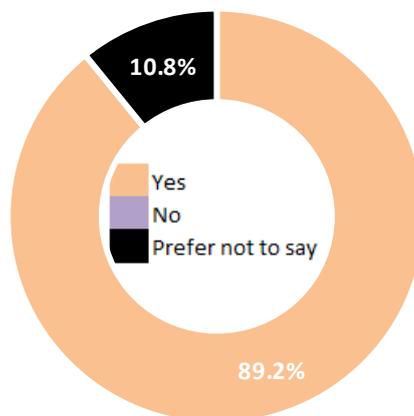


What gender are you?



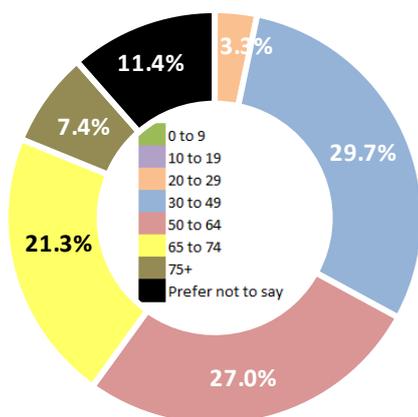
123 Responses

Is your gender identity the same as the gender you were assigned at birth?



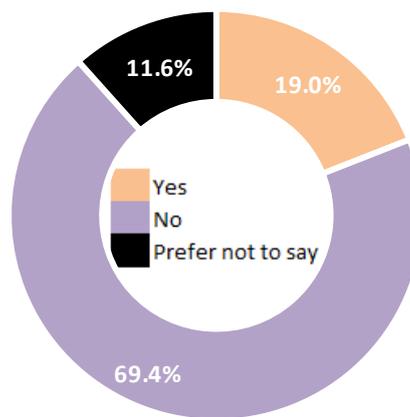
120 Responses

How old are you?



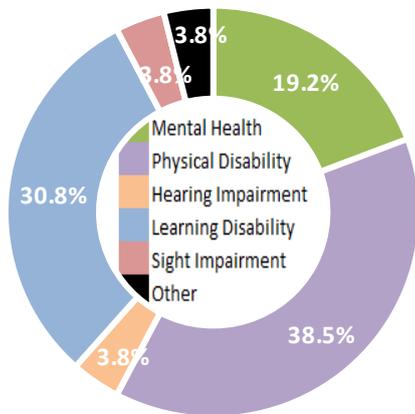
122 Responses

Do you have a disability?



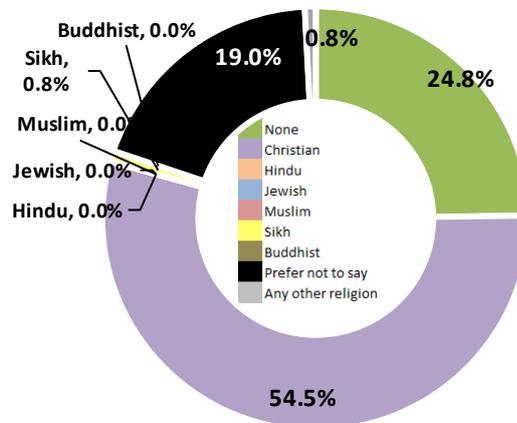
121 Responses

If Yes, please tick the appropriate box(es) which best describes your disability?



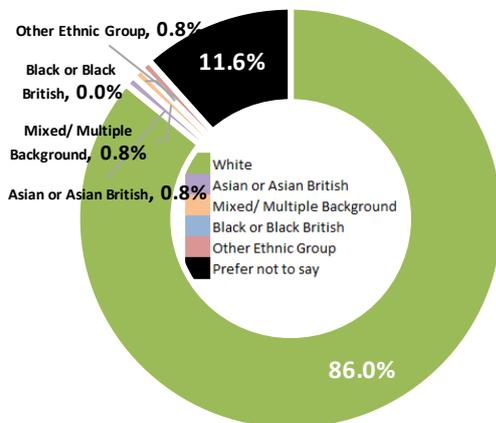
26 Responses

What is your religion or belief?



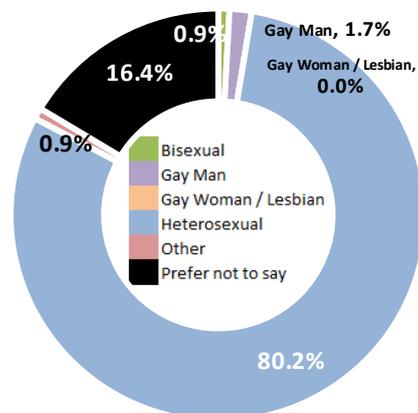
121 Responses

How would you describe your ethnic origin?



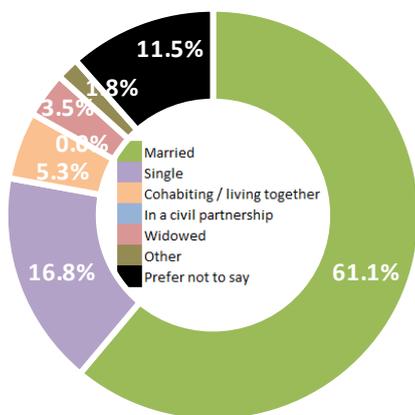
121 Responses

If you are 16 or over which of the following options best describes how you think of yourself?



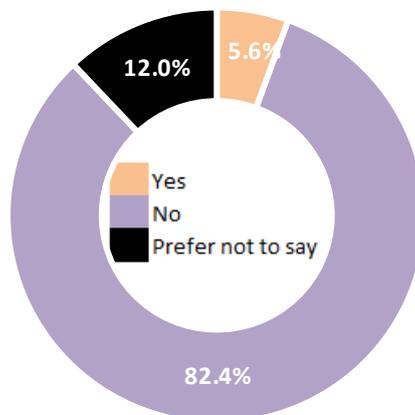
116 Responses

What is your marital status?



113 Responses

Are you currently pregnant or have you had a baby in the last six months?



108 Responses