

Southampton City Council 2017-2021 budget proposals – Consultation feedback

Introduction

1. Southampton City Council undertook public consultation on budget proposals to set a balanced General Revenue Account for the period 2017 to 2021 between 16 November 2016 and 8 February 2017.
2. It is vital that the council has a transparent, comprehensive and co-ordinated process to consult on budget proposals. Over the last few years, Southampton City Council has developed an approach to consultation that includes online questions supported by the use of more pictorial and accessible explanations of the background to the budget situation, themed information sheets, frequently asked questions and consultation questionnaires that include highlights of the relevant information. This aims to ensure stakeholders understand the proposals, and therefore make the consultation more meaningful.
3. It is also important that feedback received on previous year's budget consultation is taken into account when developing subsequent consultations. The consultation on the proposed 2017/21 budget has built on the approach used in the two previous rounds of consultation. For the first time, Southampton City Council is consulting on budget proposals for the next four years, rather than just one year. An outcomes based approach to planning and budgeting has been adopted, and this was reflected in consultation materials. Improvements were made that condensed the information and reduced duplication across documents in line with feedback from last year's consultation.
4. The proposed budget was discussed at Cabinet on 15 November 2016 and the Cabinet agreed that the draft budget should be consulted with key stakeholders and the public before final decisions are taken.

Aims

5. Southampton City Council is in a challenging financial position, with significant reductions in its funding from Central Government, at a time when demand for certain services such as adult and children's social care continues to increase. Therefore the aim of this consultation was to:
 - Communicate clearly and make residents aware of the financial pressures the council is facing
 - Ensure residents understand what is being proposed in the draft 2017/21 budget and are aware of what this will mean for them
 - Ensure any resident, business or stakeholder who wishes to comment on the proposals has the opportunity to do so, enabling them to raise any impacts the proposals may have
 - Provide feedback on the results of the consultation to elected Members to enable them to make informed decisions
 - Ensure that the results are analysed in a meaningful, timely fashion, so that feedback is taken into account when final decisions are made.
6. This report summarises the processes and activities undertaken by Southampton City Council to achieve these aims and includes a summary of the consultation responses both for the consideration of decision makers and any interested individual or organisation.

Consultation principles

7. The council takes its duty to consult with residents and stakeholders on changes to services very seriously. The council's consultation principles ensure all consultation is:
 - Inclusive: so that everyone in the city has the opportunity to express their views.
 - Informative: so that people have adequate information about the proposals, what different options mean, and a balanced and fair explanation of the potential impact, particularly the equality and safety impact.
 - Understandable: by ensuring that the language used to communicate is simple and clear and that efforts are made to reach all stakeholders, for example people who are non-English speakers or disabled people.

- Appropriate: by targeting people who are more likely to be affected and using a more tailored approach to get their feedback, complemented by a general approach to all residents, staff, businesses and partners.
 - Meaningful: by ensuring decision makers have the full consultation feedback information so that they can make informed decisions.
 - Reported: by letting consultees know what was done with their feedback.
8. Southampton City Council is committed to consultations of the highest standard, which are meaningful and comply with the following legal standards:
- Consultation must take place when the proposal is still at a formative stage
 - Sufficient reasons must be put forward for the proposal to allow for intelligent consideration and response
 - Adequate time must be given for consideration and response
 - The product of consultation must be carefully taken into account.
9. Public sector organisations in Southampton also have a compact (or agreement) with the voluntary sector in which there is a commitment to undertake public consultations for a minimum of 12 weeks wherever possible. This aims to ensure that there is enough time for individuals and voluntary organisations to hear about, consider and respond to consultations. This consultation was for a total of 12 weeks with a 10 week period to submit written consultation feedback.

Approach and methodology

10. The consultation on the 2017/21 draft budget sought views from relevant staff, residents, stakeholders and partner organisations. The formal written consultation ran from 16 November 2016 to 24 January 2017 with an extended period up to 8 February where responses could still be received to enable as many people to respond on the proposal as possible.
11. Deciding on the best process for gathering feedback from stakeholders when conducting a consultation requires an understanding of the audience and the users of the service. It is also important to have more than one way for stakeholders to feedback on the consultation, to enable engagement with the widest range of the population.
12. The agreed approach for this consultation was to use a combination of online and paper questionnaires. This approach enables an appropriate amount of explanatory and supporting information to be included in a structured questionnaire, helping to ensure that residents are aware of the background and context to each of the proposals. It is therefore the most suitable methodology for consulting on a complex issue such as the whole draft council budget.
13. In addition to the main questionnaire, a general response email and postal address was also advertised. This was to enable respondents who, for whatever reason, would not wish to use the questionnaire.
14. Representatives from the council also attended a range of face to face sessions with key stakeholder groups, feedback from these sessions was captured and included in the analysis of consultation results. The council also wrote to key partners across the city, to make them aware and seek their views.

Appointment of contractor

15. It was recognised that the small in-house Research and Consultation team did not have the capacity to deliver this work. A decision was taken in 2015 to appoint an external contractor to undertake budget consultations for the period 2015-2017. This was also in recognition of the fact that any proposed changes to council services create significant public interest, and that having a third party manage and analyse responses ensures impartiality as they are completely independent from the council.
16. As part of the procurement process, a specification was drawn up by the Southampton City Council Research and Consultation team. The scoring criteria within the specification allocated 50% of points for quality, broken down equally into: understanding the brief, being able to deliver in the correct time scales, and experience of similar projects. The remaining 50% was allocated according to the cost of

the proposal. Once agreed, it was advertised through the UK SBS Market Research Purchasing Framework. This is a national government framework that enables a group of (80) research providers who have met all the technical and organisational requirements for working with government bodies to compete for projects under an agreed set of rules.

17. There was an opportunity for all the providers within Lot 2 'Quantitative and Qualitative' specialism (53 providers) to express an interest in seeing the full project research specification. In total, three submitted a tender for the project. The tenders were carefully evaluated using scoring criteria laid out in the research specification. The council appointed the highest scoring tender, ICM Unlimited.

Promotion and communication

18. Throughout the consultation, every effort was made to ensure that as many people as possible were aware of the proposed budget and had an opportunity to have their say. Particular effort was made to communicate the proposals in a clear and easy to understand way. This was achieved by using an easy to read background to the proposal at the start of the questionnaire, grouping the proposals into themed groups with information sheets, and providing a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document and Equality and Safety Impact Assessments. All of these were available on a dedicated council webpage.

19. The consultation was promoted in the following ways:

- Media briefing to outline proposals and field questions.
- Subsequent media engagement and management of enquiries.
- E-alerts, sent to subscribers of the council's email marketing service via a range of bulletins (City New, Community News and events, Your City Your Say). These featured hyperlinks to further information about the consultation and the questionnaire itself as well as links to a highlight piece on alternate weekly collections (AWC). The explicit reference to the alternate weekly bin collections proposal was included to ensure as many members of the public as possible were aware of this proposal. This is the proposal with the most universal impact and therefore the Cabinet were keen to promote the AWC proposal in particular in communications about the budget consultation.
- A link to the budget consultation web pages was included on the council website 'have your say' page for the duration of the consultation.
- The budget consultation was promoted via a high profile banner on the homepage of the Southampton.gov.uk website for the first four and last two weeks of the written consultation period.
- Web news story giving more background to the AWC proposal which was published on the Southampton.gov.uk website.
- Links to AWC information included on the waste and recycling section of the website.
- Emails were sent to a range of support organisations and stakeholders.
- The council's Facebook and Twitter accounts were used to signpost people to the consultation information, questionnaire and information about the AWC proposal.
- Paper versions of the budget questionnaire and information were available in libraries and council offices.

Consultation respondents

20. In total, 1,498 people responded to the consultation on the budget 2017/2021, either through a paper or online questionnaire, or a general letter/ email or comment, the vast majority (95.5%) used the online questionnaire. All the questionnaire submissions that had at least one question completed were included in the analysis, to ensure every piece of feedback was considered.

21. This section shows the demographic makeup of respondents to the questionnaire, enabling us to see which groups were represented in terms of age, gender, whether they consider themselves to be disabled and whether they are currently in receipt of care. It is important to note that:
 - As consultations should be open for anyone to answer, they will not necessarily be representative of the whole population of Southampton. It is however important that as wide a range as possible are engaged and are given the opportunity to share their views on the proposals
 - The analysis provided below does not cover all respondents, as some did not complete this section.

22. Figure 1 shows the age breakdown of the consultation respondents compared to the mid-2015 population estimate for Southampton. The groups with the lowest representation were under 16, 16-24,

25-34 and 85+ year olds, all having less than 20 respondents. The most over-represented groups were the 35-44, 45-54, 55-64 and 65-74 year olds, which represent 40% of the Southampton population but in the consultation represented 78% of the overall respondents. This is in line with normal expectations as the over 45s tend to participate in greater numbers. As an example, in Southampton City Council's budget consultation for 2014/2015, 48% of respondents were between 50-69 years old and 7% were between the ages of 17 and 29. Within this particular questionnaire, 68% of those who engaged with this consultation were over the age of 45, and 33% were 44 or under. The remaining 4% preferred not to state their age. See Figure 1 for the full breakdown.

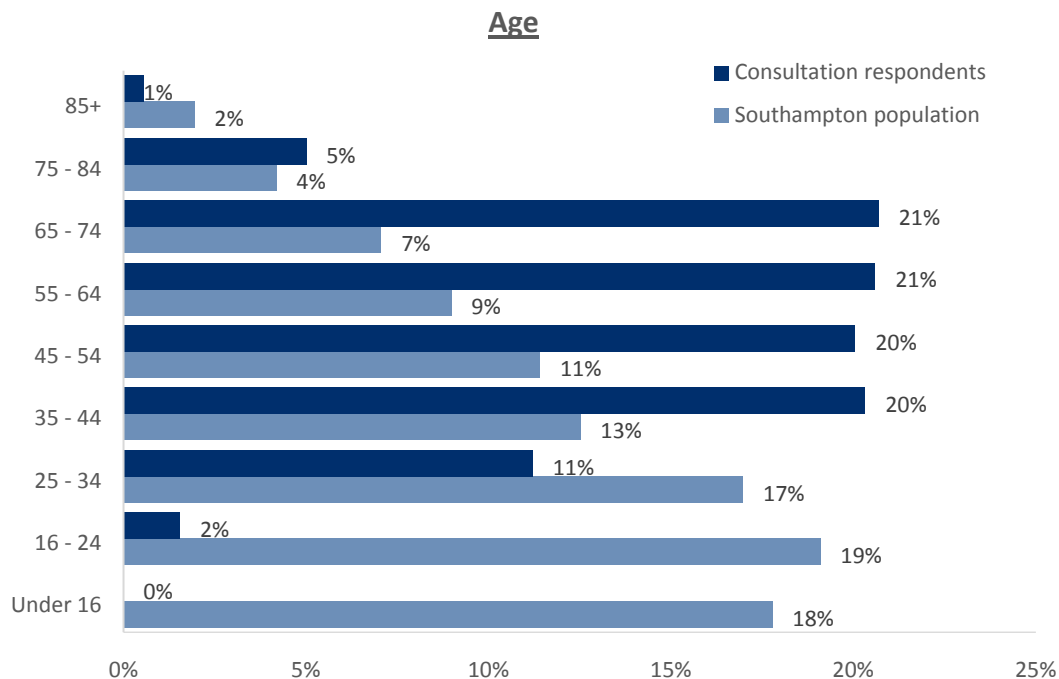


Figure 1

23. The gender breakdown of consultation respondents was 54.6% male, 44.8% female with 0.2% transgender and 0.4% not identifying as female, male or transgender. Overall this is representative of Southampton as it is similar to the mid-2015 population estimate for Southampton which reports 51% male and 49% female.

24. The ethnicity breakdown of consultation respondents was:

- 87% White
- 2% Mixed/multiple ethnic groups
- 2% Asian/Asian British
- 1% other ethnic group
- Less than 1% Black/African/Caribbean/Black British.
- 9% of respondents preferred not to state their ethnic group.

25. This is broadly representative of the Southampton population as recorded in the 2011 census in which 86% of the population describe themselves as White, 2% Mixed/multiple ethnic groups, 2% Black/African/Caribbean/ Black British and 1% other ethnic group. However, as 8% of the Southampton population describe themselves as Asian/Asian British compared to 2% of consultation respondents, this ethnic group were underrepresented in the consultation.

26. In total, 10% of questionnaire respondents considered themselves disabled, 84% did not consider themselves disabled and 7% of respondents preferred not to say.

27. Of the questionnaire respondents 29% look after, help or support others.

28. The majority of respondents stated that they were not employed by Southampton City Council (91%), 9% are employed by Southampton City Council.

Consultation results

29. Respondents were asked for their views on eight main areas of the budget and were then given the opportunity to state concerns, impacts and alternatives. These areas are based around the four council priority outcomes plus a fifth outcome of 'modern, sustainable council' which is used for internal planning purposes. The eight areas were:

- Southampton is a city with Strong and Sustainable Economic Growth
- Children and young people in Southampton get a good start in life - Education, Early Help
- Children and young people in Southampton get a good start in life - Libraries and Children's Social Care
- People in Southampton lead safe, healthy, independent lives - Adult Social Care
- People in Southampton lead safe, healthy, independent lives - Public Health and Commissioning
- Southampton is a modern, attractive city where people are proud to live and work - Living in and visiting the city
- Southampton is a modern, attractive city where people are proud to live and work - Waste and environment
- Modern, Sustainable Council.

30. Within each of these areas, respondents were asked about their general agreement with the proposals. If respondents answered in the negative (disagree or strongly disagree), they were asked to state which specific parts of the proposal they disagreed with and which part they disagreed with the most.

31. The breakdown of which areas questionnaire respondents chose to answer is shown in figure 2 below. Clearly, the proposals on waste and environment were of particular interest with 80% of respondents completing this section.

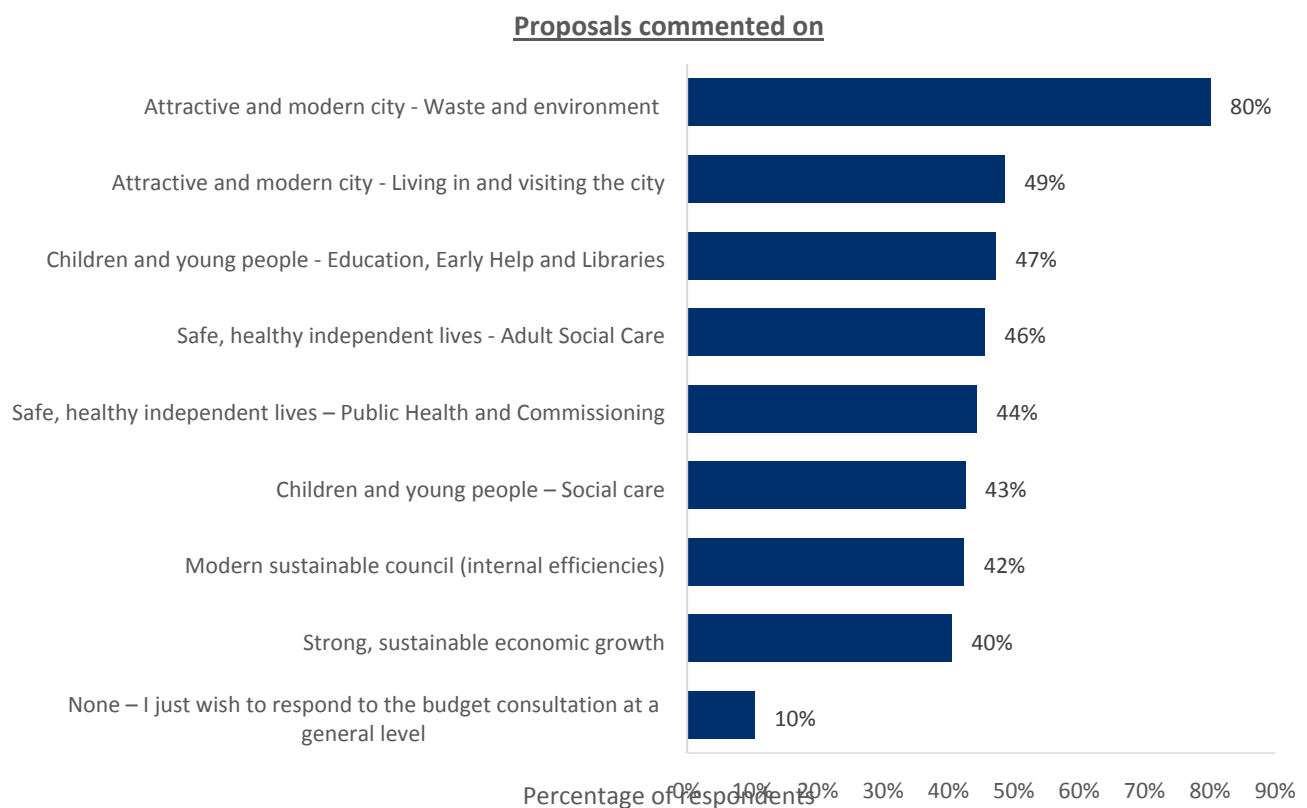


Figure 2

Strong and Sustainable Economic Growth

32. Figure 3 shows the breakdown in the level of agreement of the following statement; "To what extent do you agree or disagree with the strong and sustainable economic growth savings proposals?". Within the

document itself (whether it was conducted online or on paper) details were provided about these savings proposal, so that respondents were able to make an informed decision.

- 46% of the total respondents who completed this question answered in the positive, stating that they either strongly agreed or agreed with the proposal.
- 25% of the total respondents who completed this question answered by stating that they were neutral about the proposal
- The remaining 29% of the total respondents who completed this question answered in the negative, stating that they either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the proposal.

33. If respondents stated that they disagreed with the proposal (strongly or otherwise), they were given the opportunity to say which areas of the proposal they disagreed with. The most common area of the proposal that respondents disagreed with was council tax and business rate growth.

34. Once respondents outlined which proposals they disagreed with, there was an additional question which let them select the individual proposal they disagreed with the most. The council tax and business rate growth proposal was singled out as the one that respondents disagreed with most, with 43% of respondents selecting it.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the ‘Strong sustainable economic growth’ savings proposals?

Base: 486 respondents

Overall

By demographics

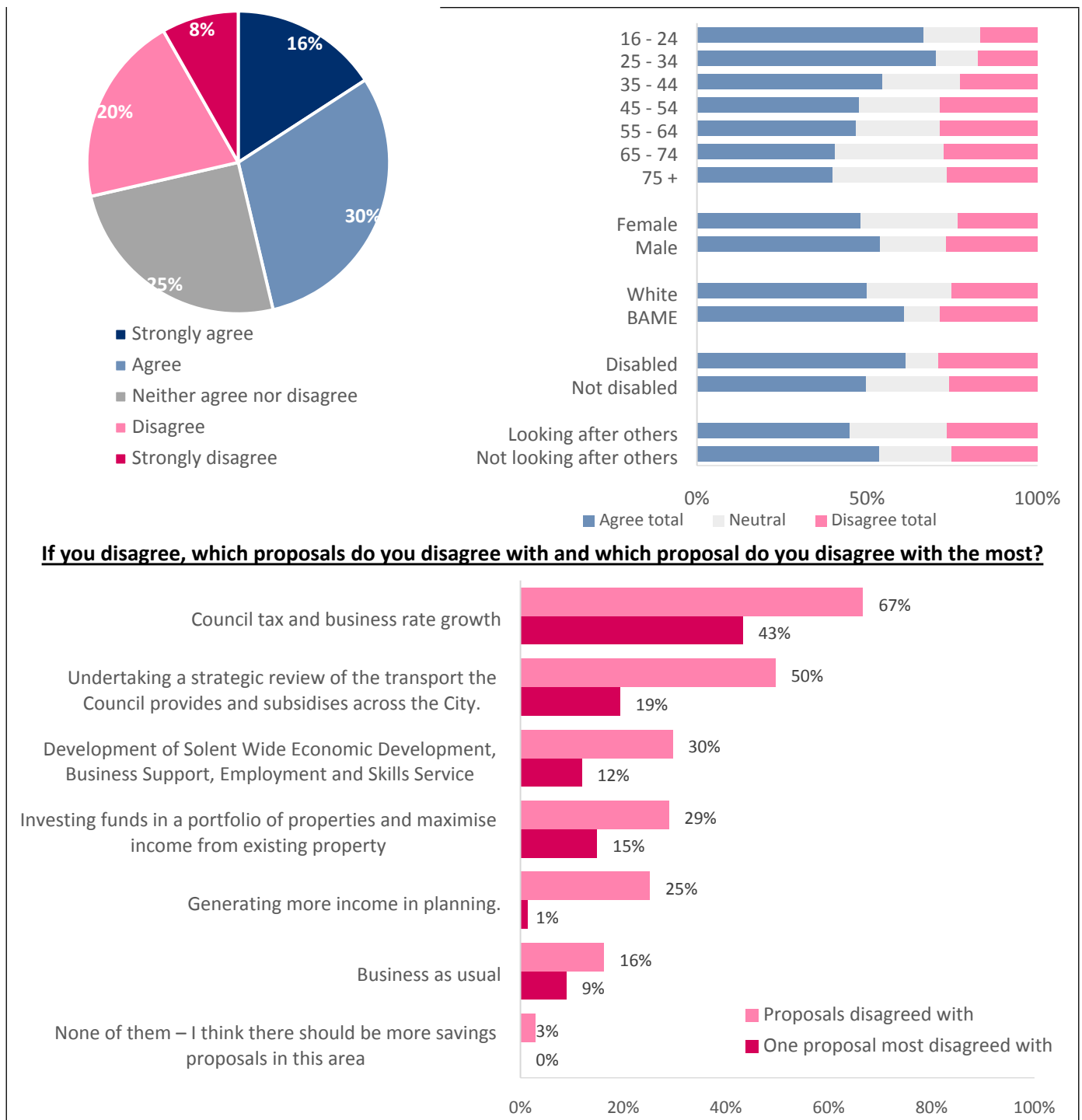


Figure 3

Children and young people get a good start in life - Children's Social Care

35. Figure 4 shows the breakdown in the level of agreement of the following statement; "To what extent do you agree or disagree with the children's social care savings proposals?". Within the document itself (whether it was conducted online or on paper) details were provided about these savings proposal, so that respondents were able to make an informed decision.

- 57% of the total respondents who completed this question answered in the positive, stating that they either strongly agreed or agreed with the proposal.
- 22% of the total respondents who completed this question answered by stating that they were neutral about the proposal
- The remaining 21% of the total respondents who completed this question answered in the negative, stating that they either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the proposal.

36. If respondents stated that they disagreed with the proposal (strongly or otherwise), they were given the opportunity to say which areas of the proposal they disagreed with. The most common area of the

proposal that respondents disagreed with was: Reviewing and redesigning services. There was then an additional question which let them select the individual proposal they disagreed with the most. Reviewing and redesigning services was singled out here, with 39% of respondents selecting it.

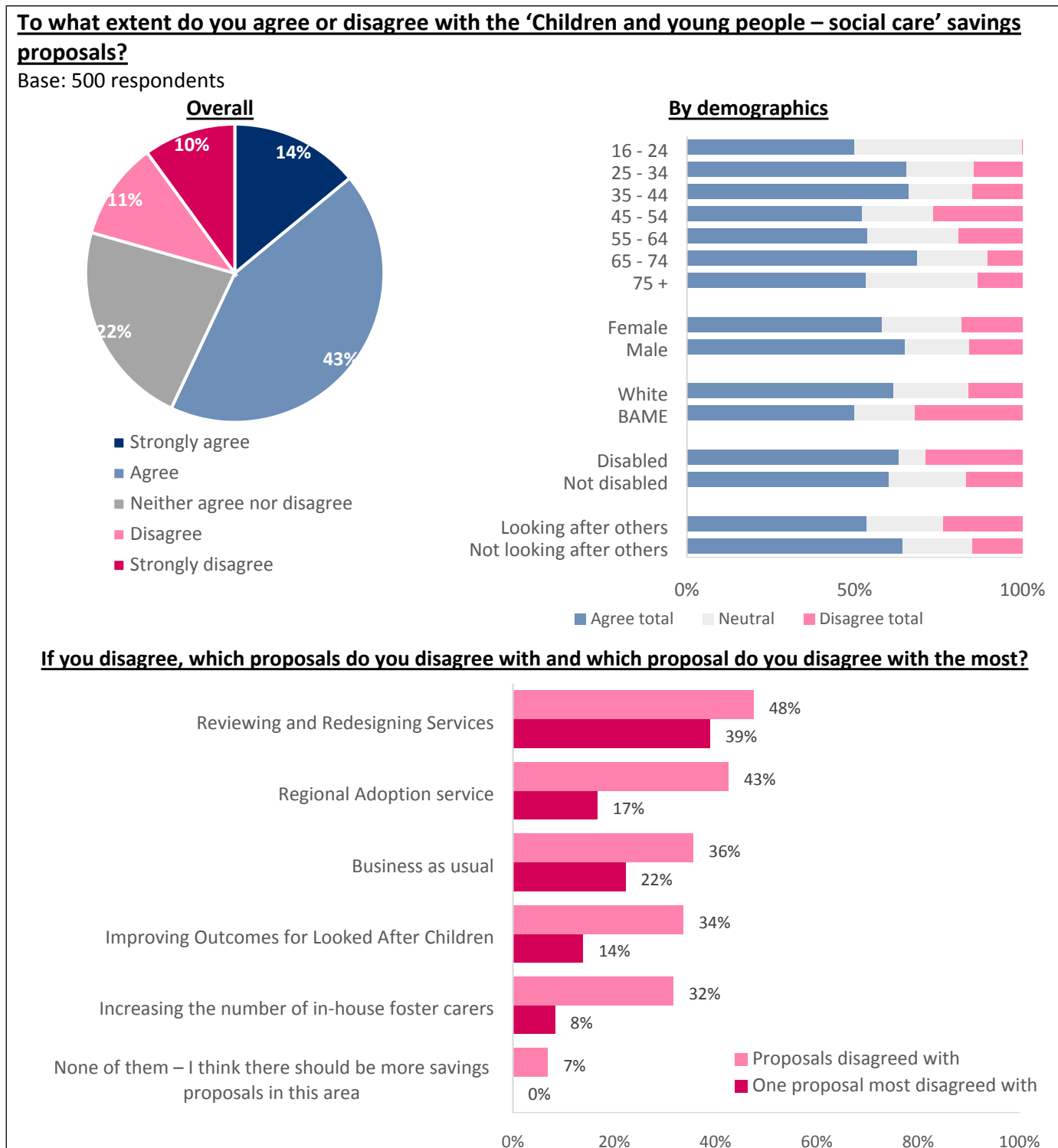


Figure 4

Children and young people get a good start in life - Education, Early Help and Libraries

37. Figure 5 shows the breakdown in the level of agreement of the following statement; “To what extent do you agree or disagree with the education, early help and libraries savings proposals?”. Within the document itself (whether it was conducted online or on paper) details were provided about these proposals, so that respondents were able to make an informed decision.

- 48% of the total respondents who completed this question answered in the positive, stating that they either strongly agreed or agreed with the proposal.
- 23% of the total respondents who completed this question answered by stating that they were neutral to the proposal
- The remaining 28% of the total respondents, who completed this question, answered in the negative, stating that they either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the proposal.

38. If respondents stated that they disagreed with the proposal (strongly or otherwise), they were given the opportunity to say which areas of the proposal they disagreed with. Out of hours access to libraries had the largest level of disagreement with 54% of respondents selecting it.

39. Once respondents have outlined which proposals they disagreed with, there was an additional question which let them select the individual proposal they disagreed with the most. Both out of hours access to libraries and redesigning an integrated early help service had 25% of respondents select them as the proposal they most disagreed with.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the ‘Children and young people – education, early help and libraries’ savings proposals?

Base: 539 respondents

Overall

By demographics

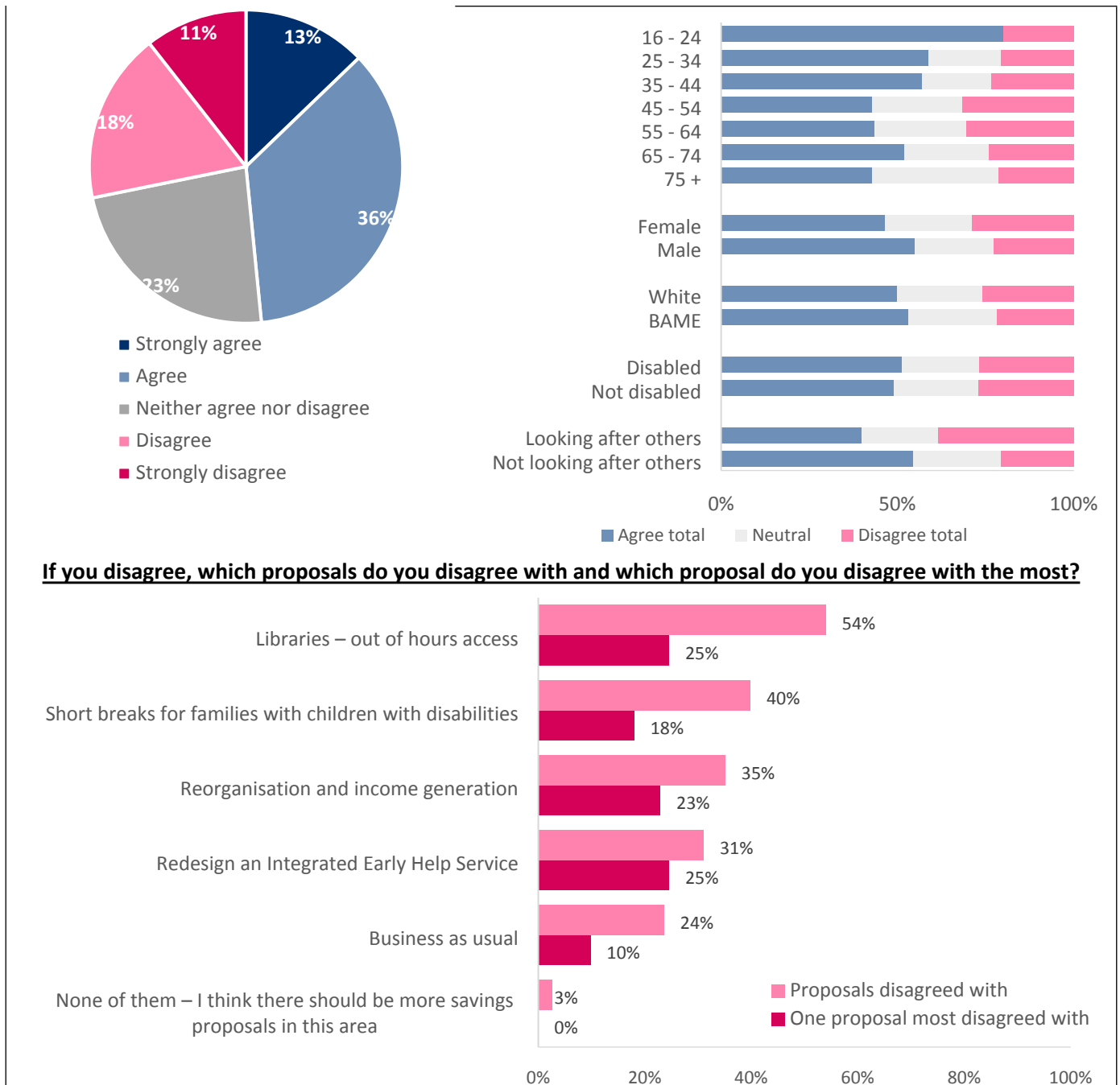


Figure 5

People in Southampton lead safe, healthy, independent lives - Adult Social Care

40. Figure 6 shows the breakdown in the level of agreement of the following statement; “To what extent do you agree or disagree with the adult social care savings proposals?”. Within the document itself (whether it was conducted online or on paper) details were provided about these savings proposals, so that respondents were able to make an informed decision.

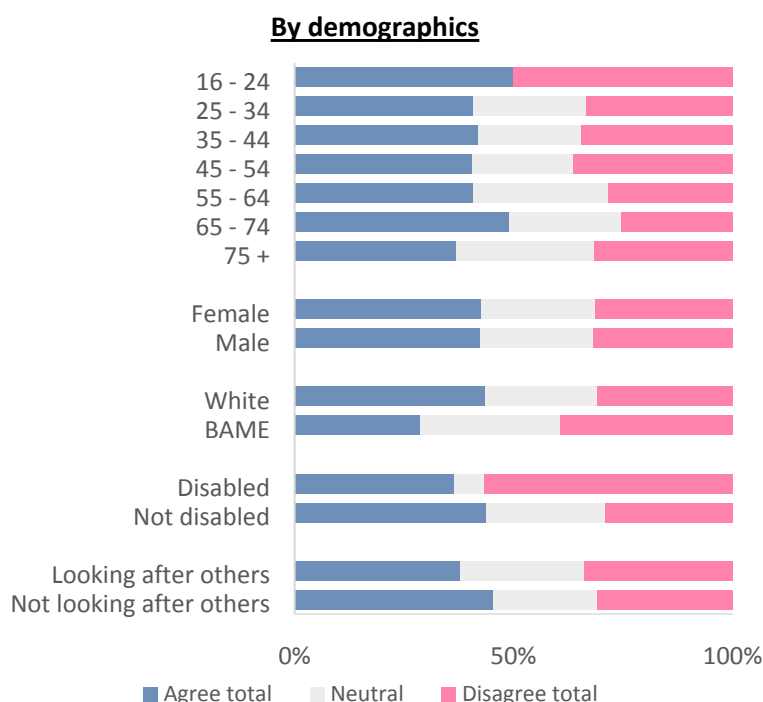
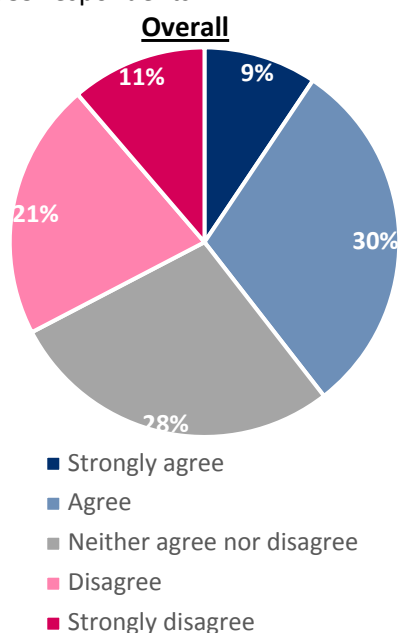
- 39% of the total respondents who completed this question answered in the positive, stating that they either strongly agreed or agreed with the proposal.
- 28% of the total respondents who completed this question answered by stating that they were neutral about the proposal
- The remaining 33% of the total respondents who completed this question answered in the negative, stating that they either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the proposal.

41. If respondents stated that they disagreed with the proposal (strongly or otherwise), they were given the opportunity to say which areas of the proposal they disagreed with. The most common area of the proposal that respondents disagreed with was: reducing subsidies, reviewing mental health contracts

and integrated learning disability teams. This was also the individual proposal which respondents disagreed with the most, with 48% selecting it.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the 'Adult Social Care' savings proposals?

Base: 585 respondents



If you disagree, which proposals do you disagree with and which proposal do you disagree with the most?

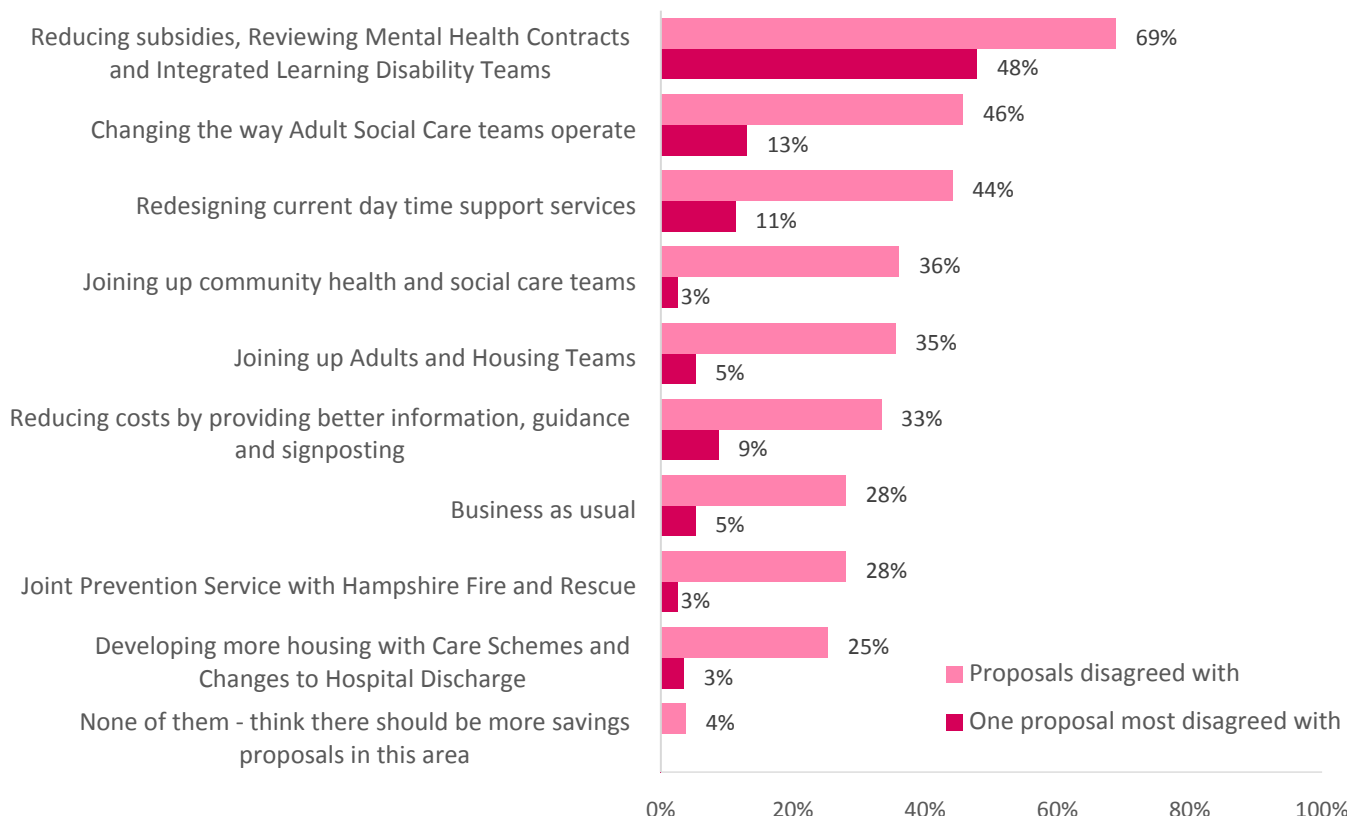


Figure 6

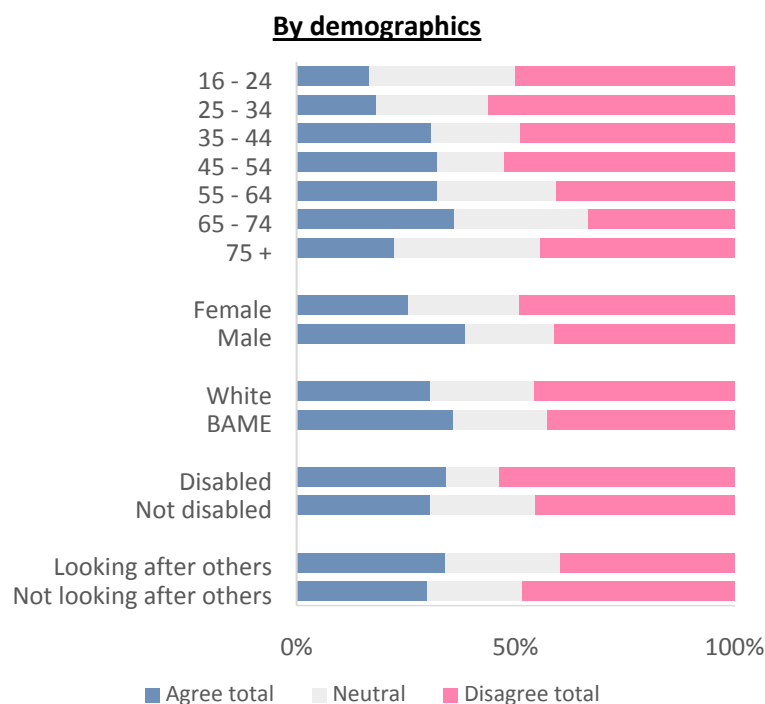
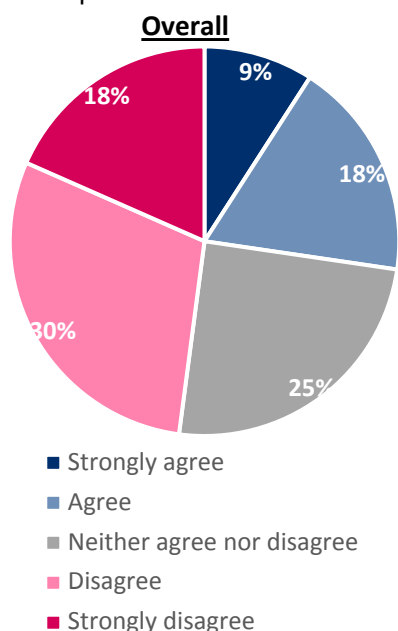
People in Southampton lead safe, healthy, independent lives - Public Health and Commissioning

42. Figure 7 shows the breakdown in the level of agreement of the following statement; "To what extent do you agree or disagree with the public health and commissioning savings proposals?". Within the document itself (whether it was conducted online or on paper) details were provided about these savings proposal, so that respondents were able to make an informed decision.

- 27% of the total respondents who completed this question answered in the positive, stating that they either strongly agreed or agreed with the proposal.
- 25% of the total respondents who completed this question answered by stating that they were neutral about the proposal
- The remaining 48% of the total respondents who completed this question answered in the negative, stating that they either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the proposal.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the 'Public Health and Commissioning' savings proposals?

Base: 549 respondents



If you disagree, which proposals do you disagree with and which proposal do you disagree with the most?

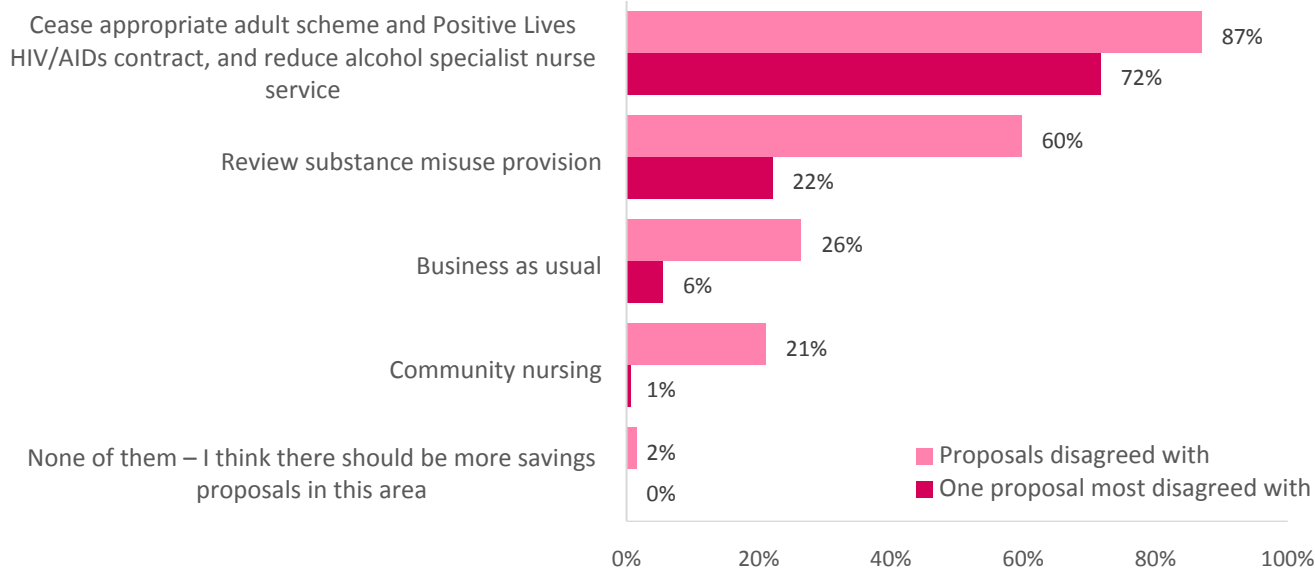


Figure 7

43. If respondents stated that they disagreed with the proposal (strongly or otherwise), they were given the opportunity to say which areas of the proposal they disagreed with. The most common area of the proposal that respondents disagreed with was: cease appropriate adult scheme and Positive Lives HIV/AIDs contract, and reduce alcohol specialist nurse service

44. Once respondents have outlined which proposals they disagreed with, there was an additional question which let them select the individual proposal they disagreed with the most. The proposal to cease

appropriate adult scheme and Positive Lives HIV/AIDs contract, and reduce alcohol specialist nurse service was singled out, with 72% of respondents selecting it.

Modern, attractive city where people are proud to live and work - Waste and environment

45. Figure 8 shows the breakdown in the level of agreement of the following statement; “To what extent do you agree or disagree with the waste and environment proposals?”. Within the questionnaire details were provided about these savings proposals, so that respondents were able to make an informed decision.

- 34.1% of the total respondents who completed this question answered in the positive, stating that they either strongly agreed or agreed with the proposal.
- 7.5% of the total respondents who completed this question answered by stating that they were neutral about the proposal
- The remaining 58.4% of the total respondents who completed this question answered in the negative, stating that they either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the proposal.

46. If respondents stated that they disagreed with the proposal (strongly or otherwise), they were given the opportunity to say which areas of the proposal they disagreed with. The most common area of the proposal that respondents disagreed with was alternate weekly bin collections. Once respondents outlined which proposals they disagreed with, there was an additional question which let them select the individual proposal they disagreed with the most. Alternate weekly collections was again the proposal with the highest level of disagreement.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the ‘Waste and Environment’ savings proposals?

Base: 1164 respondents

Overall

By demographics

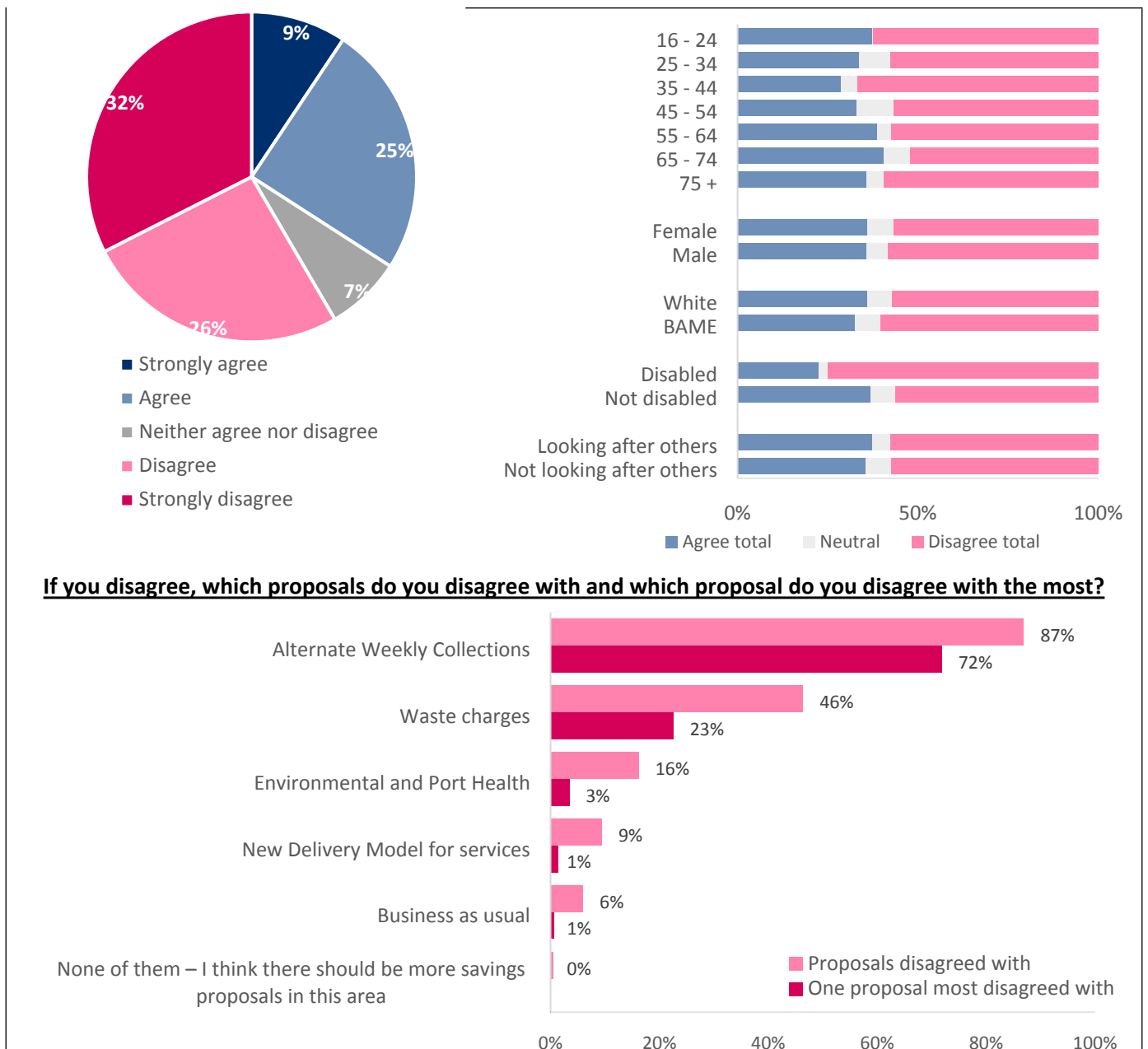


Figure 8

Modern, attractive city where people are proud to live and work - Living in and visiting the city

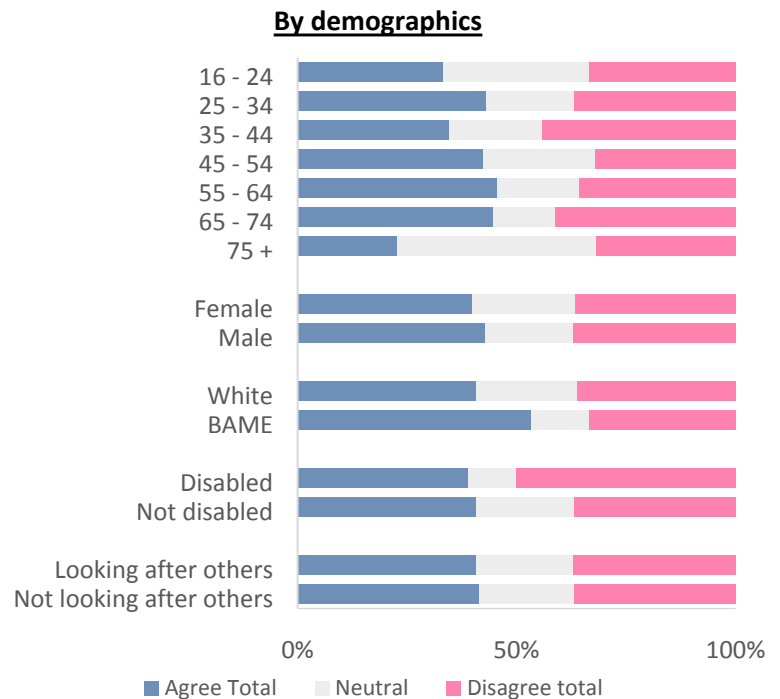
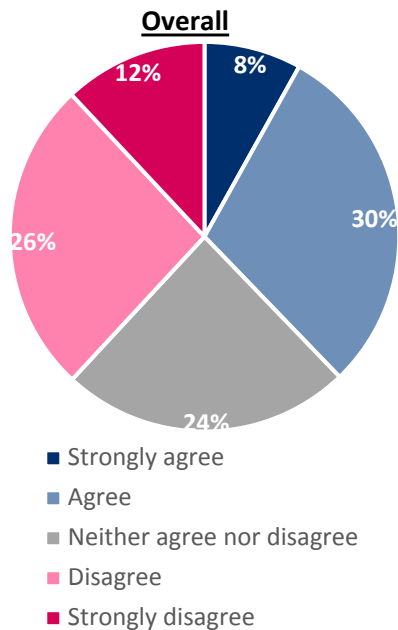
47. Figure 9 shows the breakdown in the level of agreement of the following statement; “To what extent do you agree or disagree with the living and visiting the city savings proposals?”. Within the document itself (whether it was conducted online or on paper) details were provided about these savings proposal, so that respondents were able to make an informed decision.

- 38% of the total respondents who completed this question answered in the positive, stating that they either strongly agreed or agreed with the proposal.
- 24% of the total respondents who completed this question answered by stating that they were neutral about the proposal
- The remaining 38% of the total respondents who completed this question answered in the negative, stating that they either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the proposal.

48. If respondents stated that they disagreed with the proposal (strongly or otherwise), they were given the opportunity to say which areas of the proposal they disagreed with. The most common area of the proposal that respondents disagreed with was the reduction in free parking in district centres. Once respondents have outlined which proposals they disagreed with, there was an additional question which let them select the individual proposal they disagreed with the most. The reduction in free parking in district centres was also singled out here.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the 'Living in and Visiting the City' savings proposals?

Base: 643 respondents



If you disagree, which proposals do you disagree with and which proposal do you disagree with the most?

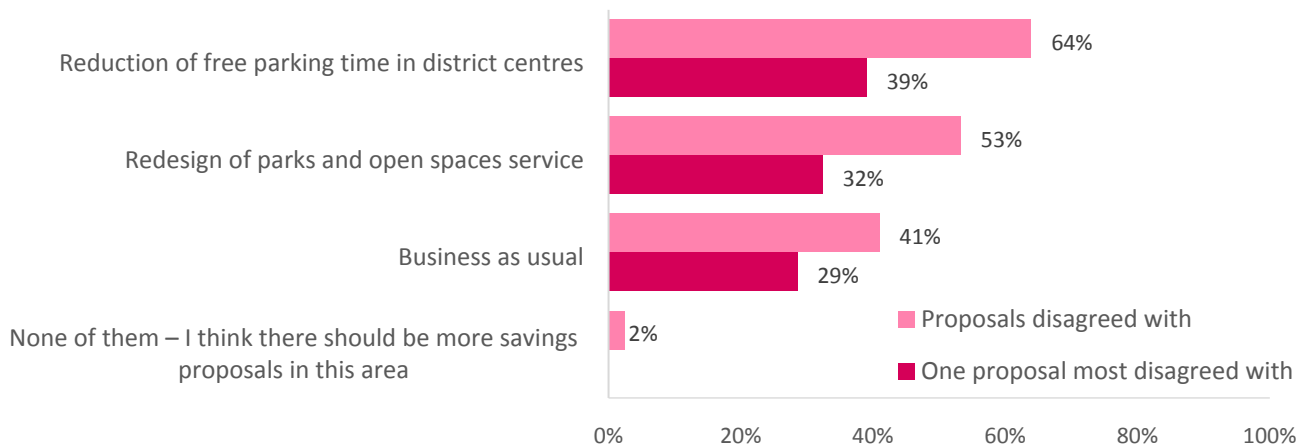


Figure 9

Modern, Sustainable Council

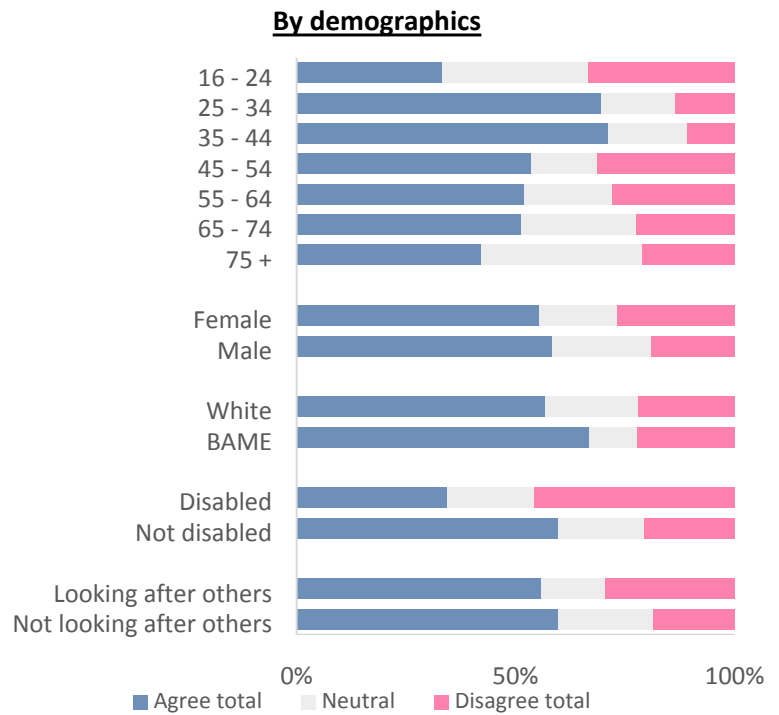
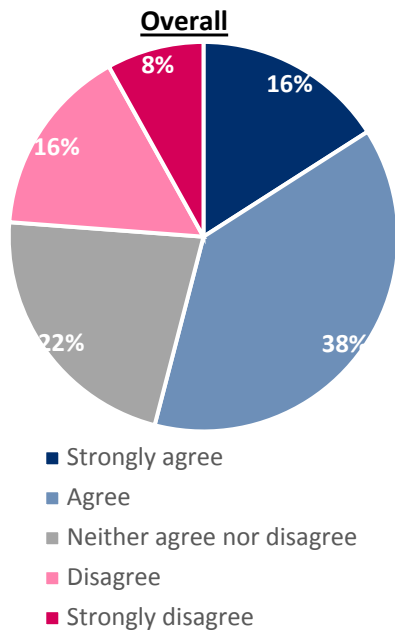
49. Figure 10 shows the breakdown in the level of agreement of the following statement; “To what extent do you agree or disagree with the modern, sustainable council savings proposals?”. Within the document itself (whether it was conducted online or on paper) details were provided about these savings proposal, so that respondents were able to make an informed decision.

- 54% of the total respondents who completed this question answered in the positive, stating that they either strongly agreed or agreed with the proposal.
- 22% of the total respondents who completed this question answered by stating that they were neutral about the proposal
- The remaining 24% of the total respondents who completed this question answered in the negative, stating that they either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the proposal.

50. If respondents stated that they disagreed with the proposal (strongly or otherwise), they were given the opportunity to say which areas of the proposal they disagreed with. The most common area of the proposal that respondents disagreed with was the review of the Cash Office. Once respondents outlined which proposals they disagreed with, there was an additional question which let them select the individual proposal they disagreed with the most. The business as usual proposal was singled out as the one that respondents disagreed with most with 39% of respondents selecting it.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the 'Modern sustainable council' savings proposals?

Base: 483 respondents



If you disagree, which proposals do you disagree with and which proposal do you disagree with the most?

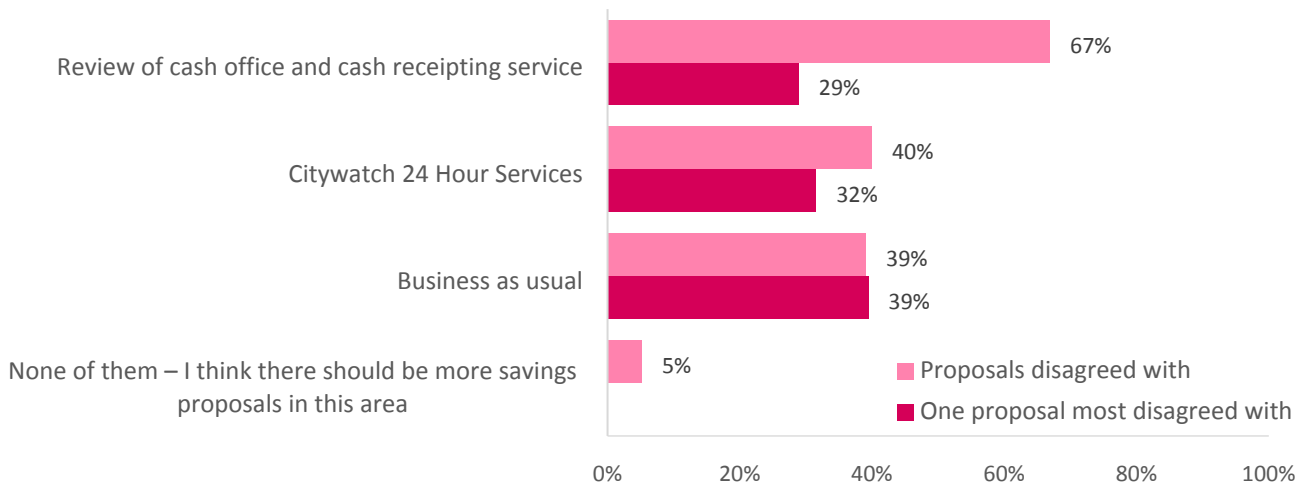


Figure 10

Overall opinions on the budget

51. Towards the end of the consultation questionnaire, respondents were given the opportunity to say what their overall views on the budget proposals were. The question asks respondents to rate their overall level of agreement with the proposals outlined in the budget on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is very unfavourable and 10 is very favourable (figure 11). The average score is 4.8 which is fractionally on the unfavourable side of average.

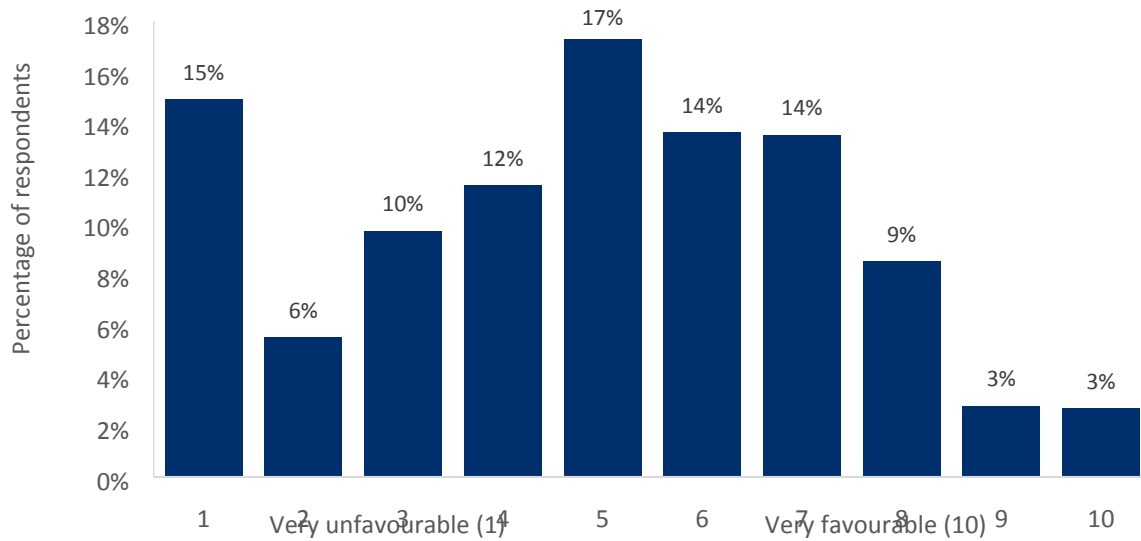


Figure 11

General comments

52. In total 768 general feedback comments were received as a part of the consultation, this also includes any letters or emails that were received during the written consultation period. The majority of the overall comments linked directly to the proposals to move to alternate weekly collections. Figure 12 shows the 15 most prevalent themes that the general comments covered.

Overall Views

15 most common themes of comments

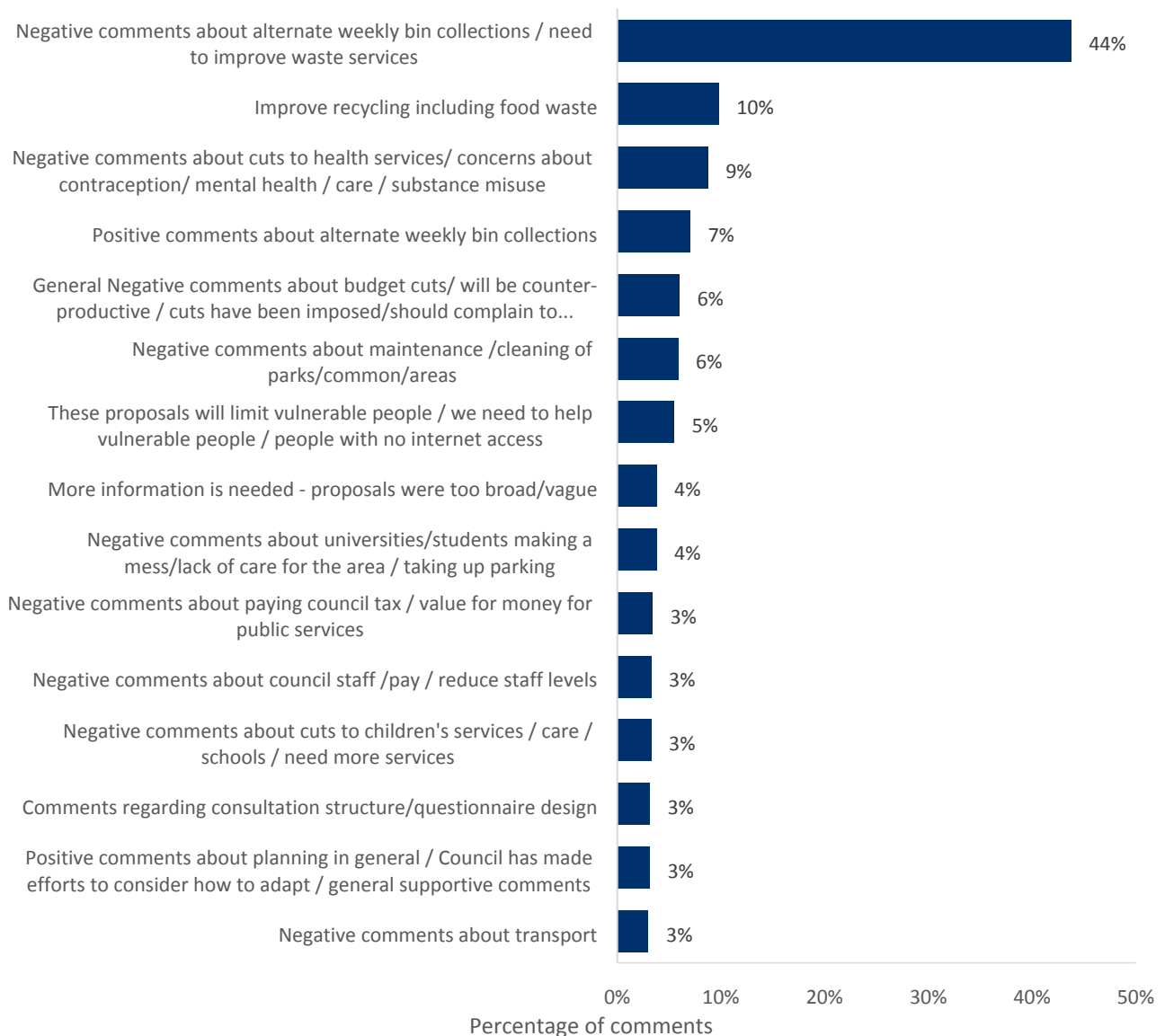


Figure 12

53. Negative comments surrounding alternate weekly bin collections represented 44% of comments. Examples include:

“Already there is a large amount of litter in residential areas and by reducing the collection of the green waste bins to fortnightly is likely to exacerbate the situation as bins overflow and rubbish is strewn about, increasing the risk of vermin.”

“Alternate week collections won't work in our small block of flats. Currently 7 flats use two wheelie bins in a cupboard. Two weeks worth of waste will overflow and smell in the building. Recycling is limited to paper, cans and bottles, and takes up space waiting for two weekly collection.”

“Alternate weekly refuse collections are simply unacceptable, particularly for families with two children or more. Once a week is barely enough.”

54. Despite the large number of negative comments surrounding proposals to introduce alternate weekly bin collections, 7% of respondents provided a positive response to the proposal. For example:

"I am happy for an alternate waste collections. There are only two people living in our house so not a problem."

"Alternate weekly collection is a sensible way to save money and encourage households to recycle."

"The proposals you have detailed make a lot of sense to me, especially the bi-weekly bin collections which is cost-effective and also environmentally friendly. We just have to be sure that appropriate warnings/fines are in place to prevent trash bags being dumped, and you may want to increase the statutory number of shared bins for multiple occupancy residences (e.g. blocks of flats)."

55. Comments related to the need for improvements to recycling represented 10% of comments. Many of these comments suggested an increase in the number of collected recyclable items including food waste collections. Examples of the comments can be seen below:

"A simpler recycling policy would make it easier for people to commit to recycling. For example, the situation regarding which plastics can be recycled is very unclear and I suspect many items get discarded when they could be recycled."

"I am glad that Southampton City Council are aiming to increase recycling rates by having alternating bin collections. However I would encourage the Council to consider recycling plastic packaging - for example food packaging such as meat trays, yoghurt pots etc."

"I would like to see an increase in what can be recycled including food and other plastics before moving to bi-weekly collections."

56. A further 9% of comments related to cuts in funding to health services, concerns about contraception, mental health, care and substance misuse. This group of comments were particularly about, the substance misuse reduction, changes to the Alcohol Specialist Nurse, Hepatology Nurse, the needle exchange and the Shared Care service. A wide range of comments were provided but some examples include:

"These cuts, including the ones to the alcohol nurse service at SGH will make a significant impact on the very large number (far higher than the UK average) of people who are alcohol dependent, their families, as well as the life course of the children living with them."

"Think it would be very detrimental to cut substance misuse services when there is already a massive increase in using."

"The proposal to end the support of people living with HIV is very disappointing. One HIV charity has already closed in the past few months. It leaves very little specialist care for this group of people."

"In Southampton, women sought access to EHC through the council funded pharmacy service on 4,200 occasions in 2015-16. I feel very strongly that there will not be significant savings made by this proposal to outweigh the social, health and environmental costs. Not to mention the huge impact to women's rights. Surely the cost of emergency contraception is a fraction of the cost if the Council end up funding c. 4,000 unwanted pregnancies."

57. Around 6% of respondents provided a generally negative comment about overall budget cuts and reduction in services. Examples of the comments can be seen below:

"As usual all the council are interested in are cutting services."

"Get more funding, make less service cuts, restore services cut in recent years."

"I feel that the council are losing sight that the tax payer is paying for a service that is

constantly being reduced. I fear that this shrinkage of council services will not stop until there are none.”

58. In addition to these themes one of the specific proposals that received a significant amount of comments was around reductions to Parks and Open spaces maintenance, with 6% of all comments about this issue. An example of this is below:

“I cannot imagine how the City can carry out their aims, given the reduction in finances. We love our parks and open spaces, like the Common, but reducing expenditure on them would harm fewer citizens than reductions in other areas.”

Potential impacts of the proposals

59. In total 268, questionnaire respondents answered the question about impacts the proposals would have if implemented. Figure 13 shows the 15 most prevalent themes of impacts raised.

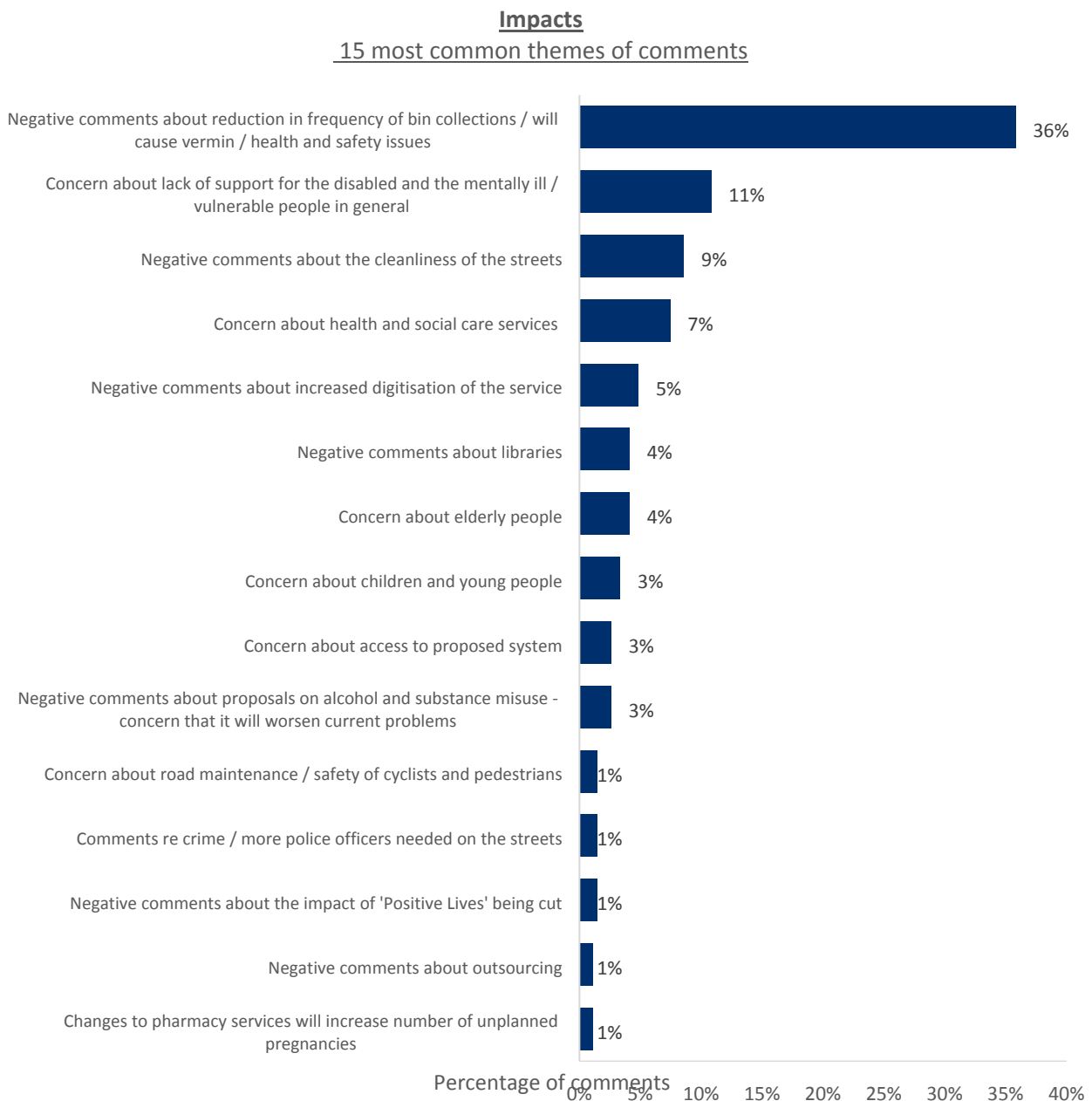


Figure 13

60. The most frequently identified impacts were related to the alternate weekly collections. This represented 36% of all comments. Impacts within this theme included potential health issues and attracting vermin. Examples of these impacts can be seen below:

“Alternate collections of bins in the summer months will mean that rotting food matter will be on the street albeit in bins for up to 14 days, this will encourage vermin rats etc to flourish.”

“Bins that have to be kept at the front of properties may be overflowing after two weeks!”

61. The second most frequent theme for impacts related to the lack of support for the disabled or mentally ill and vulnerable people in general. Examples include:

“The effect on mentally-vulnerable adults and young persons of the phasing out of funding for the Appropriate Adult Scheme.”

“There are quite a lot of older people living in the suburbs. At the moment most of them can get themselves to appointments using bus services. If these are cut then they will either call upon patient transport etc or miss appointments.”

“These suggested proposals have an over-representative impact on already marginalised and deprived populations within the city and are likely to worsen social inequalities within the city”

62. The third largest group of comments was around the cleanliness of streets with 9% of comments being about this. Examples include:

“I dont want to live among litter...you will save on collections but have to pay out for street cleaners”

“A city in which people could once feel proud of its heritage is fast becoming a DUMP city”

63. 7% of comments were about concerns about health and social care services. Examples below:

“Adult social care should be for the well being of the client. The budgets that have been proposed will damage the care of some of the clients that are being looked after.”

“If day services are closed, people will become isolated, bored and ill. This will cost more in the long run”

64. The next group of potential impacts were around increasing the digitising of services. Examples include:

“I also object to much of the drive to digitalise services at the expense of staff. People need and benefit from human contact.”

“Why assume that everyone has access to a computer; or indeed is able to use one?”

“My concern is that yet again those that have no access to technology will suffer. You need to ensure that every citizen is covered by your changes.”

65. In addition to these themes, one of the specific proposals that received a significant amount of comments in terms of impacts was around the review of Short Breaks for children with disabilities. An example of this is below:

“Just the well-being of some children short breaks are great because our children feel safe they are in an understanding environment, I just hope that cutting the budget on buzz network short breaks will not effect people too badly I know for my daughter it will cause great distress, as it's the only hoildays she felt comfortable and confident and safe as she suffers with low self-esteem as well as learning disability, hearing loss and unclear speech.”

Alternatives

66. Finally, respondents were given the opportunity to offer alternative ideas for generating income or areas where savings could be made. 488 suggestions of ways Southampton City Council could save or generate money were made. Below in figure 14 are the main themes that appeared within these comments.

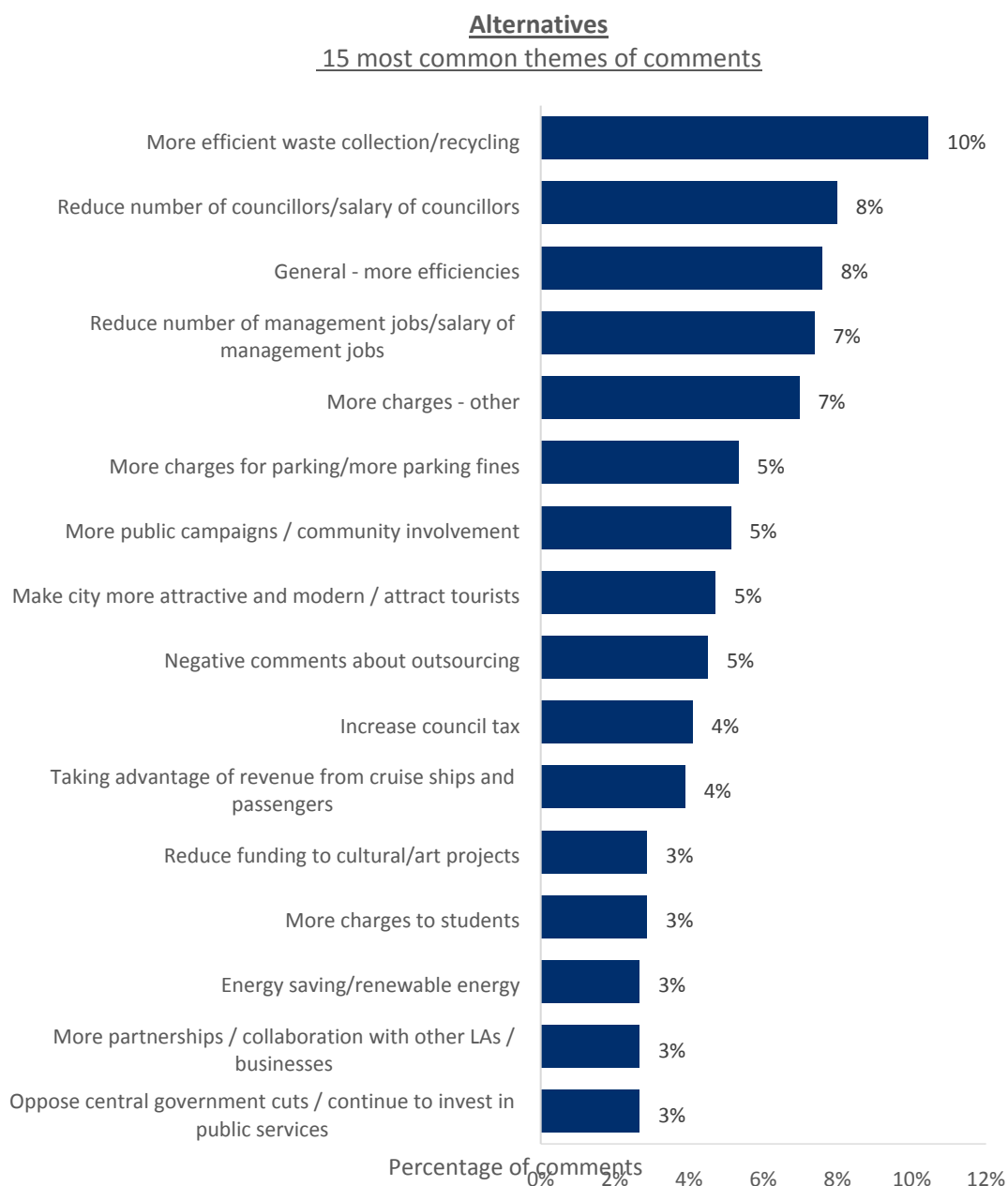


Figure 14

67. The most frequently suggested alternatives were related to more efficient ways of collecting waste and recycling. This represented 10% of all comments. Suggestions included introducing food waste collections, providing larger sized bins, recycling a greater variety of items, differing seasonal collection schedules. Examples of suggestions provided can be seen below:

“Introduce a food waste scheme it may seem an expense but in the long run it would contribute to increased recycling and if the Council is selling the recycled goods this could increase revenue.”

“Make recycling bins bigger so we can recycle more”

“Could there not be a compromise arrangement whereby from, say, May to October there are weekly collections, and November to April bi-weekly? This would mitigate the risk to public-health aspect of only having fortnightly collections over warmer/hotter months.”

“If fortnightly collections are to be implemented, supply bigger waste bins”

68. Reducing the number of councillors or the salary of councillors was suggested by 8% of respondents that provided a comment. Respondents felt that the amount that councillors were paid and expenses such as travel were too high. Suggestions were made to reduce the number of councillors or reduce the amount they are paid so that money could be used elsewhere. Comments included:

“Make an overall reduction in Councillors salaries and expenses.”

“Reduce the number of councillors from 3 per ward to two per ward thus saving direct and associated costs.”

“We have too many councillors. They have already rejected the suggestion that their numbers be reduced but this should be reconsidered (and not by the councillors themselves but by an independent body).”

“Cut number of counsellors to one per ward, I might believe you are serious about sharing the load”

69. Similarly, 7% of respondents also suggested a reduction in the number of management jobs and the salary of managers. Comments suggested that the number of managers was too many in proportion to the number of staff reporting to them, the salaries of managers were too high, and that the difference between the salary of managers and other staff was too great. Examples of the suggestions made include:

“Yes, stop having layers and layers of managment who's salary's are obscene....”

“Perhaps the city is top heavy in managers and not enough workers.”

“Perhaps review the amount senior managers get paid. Although this won't save huge amounts, their wages are disproportionate to those in front line services.”

70. There were also a number of suggestions made about general efficiencies that could be made across the council. These were often very specific to different service areas. For example a few respondents commented on the spending money on artwork around the city or other aesthetic changes to buildings. Other comments were broader and suggested looking more widely across the whole council and where work may be duplicated or could be made more efficient. Examples include:

“I would like to see even more integration of roles and responsibilities. I am sure that there is duplication within the various departments of the council.”

“Stop wasting money on useless politically based initiatives and first properly fund the ESSENTIAL services, if any money is left that can go to whatever politically essential cause our council sees fit.”

“Savings-driven thinking is a real worry for people who care about people in need in our community. Make sure you seek genuine efficiencies rather than reducing and removing services.”

“Stop spending money on ridiculous sculptures!”

71. There were also a number of suggestions around increasing charges to help meet the budget gap. Many of these comments referred to increasing or collecting penalties for certain behaviours. Examples include:

“Seek out and penalise more litter, illegal parking, unsafe taxis and begging offenders”

“You could quite easily increase library fines for overdue items”

“Only charge £1 a visit for taking waste to the tip, or £5 annually (not garden waste). A small charge would bring in money but not cause flytipping”

Engagement with voluntary, community and faith organisations

72. In addition to the questionnaires and written responses to the budget there were a range of face to face sessions to ensure as many people could take part in the consultation as possible. The council organised meetings that were attended by residents and tenants associations and other groups and organisations across the city. These meetings provided representatives with the opportunity to understand the budget proposals and give feedback.

73. A meeting was held with organisations to discuss proposals linked to adult social care. The following organisations attended the meeting:

- Age UK Southampton
- Mencap (also on behalf of Carers in Southampton)
- Choices Advocacy
- Healthwatch.

74. Some of key themes raised were:

- The move to digital has taken time, with the move to online assessments taking 2 years to complete
- Telecare comes with fear that people will lose that face-to-face contact
- Care Managers must promote the benefits of using Direct Payments
- There is a need to do more to promote less isolation
- Fresh ideas are needed to help with reducing isolation and help support vulnerable people within society
- Street parties are a good and cheap way to foster community spirit. The council could support by reducing red tape
- Concerns were raised about the lack of funding the council will have beyond 2021
- Any grand visions for services must be linked to reality.

75. Council representatives also attended the Learning Disability Partnership Forum to discuss proposals.

The following points were raised:

- Acknowledgement that the council has some difficult decisions to make.
- Integration of learning disability services need to be carefully planned and must be centred around the person and in consultation with individuals and their families and all agencies involved.
- Generally, agreement with the idea of extra support for employment and volunteering – but concerns that employers will not offer these opportunities and Day Services would suddenly stop. Any changes need to be carefully thought through.
- Day Services are valued by people – they give people the opportunity to meet friends and socialise.

76. Residents and Tenants Associations across the city were invited to a meeting to hear about the proposals and to provide feedback. The following organisations engaged with the process:

- Newtown Residents Association
- Freemantle Triangle Residents Association
- Eastchurch, Manston and Odiham Tenants Association
- North East Basset Residents Association
- Sholing Community Action Forum
- Residents Action (Polygon)
- St Marys Tenants Association
- Maybush Triangle Residents Association.

77. The following key themes raised by representatives were:

- Alternate Weekly Collection: Residents felt this would be difficult in student areas; waste contamination in recycling bins was noted as an issue, as was people keeping more rubbish in their homes, and the potential for it to present huge concerns in the summer
- Digital / gateway service. Attendees noted that the online noise nuisance forms are not appropriate for quick use – Southampton My Account is not reliable, staff need to be more considerate in Gateway when someone is struggling, the online shift is a major problem for older people and it can be difficult online – people do like face to face relationships.
- Other issues included:
 - The adult social care Council Tax precept
 - Air quality in the city
 - Art Gallery going over budget
 - The Bargate and its current poor state
 - Wildlife areas across the city look untidy.
- Residents raised an alternative suggestion that the council should work with universities to recycle items that are dangerous to recycle, such as fridges.

78. Council officers also attended the Tenants Winter Housing Conference. The following was raised as being a concern: residents are finding council's move towards the digital agenda very difficult, and need face to face contact.

79. Furthermore, a meeting was held in the inner city, which provided key community representatives and organisations to come together to discuss the 'Alternate Weekly Bin Collection' proposal. The key themes raised by residents were:

- The area currently suffers from bulk rubbish and fly tipping, the proposal to introduce AWC would add to the problems.
- Concerns were raised that people are paying more and receiving fewer services.
- What would happen with side waste created when bins are full.
- Health and safety issues linked to full bins.
- The need for larger bins.
- More needs to be done to educate the local community on recycling more effectively.

80. Other points included:

- Prostitution is increasing in the area and this also presents other late night issues/ noise
- Can revenue created from Parking and visitors permits be spent on weekly bin collections.

81. The following stakeholder organisations were also sent the information on the consultation; they were offered an opportunity to meet but did not request this.

- Friends of Parks Groups in the city – via Groundwork Solent
- Neighbourhood Watch groups in the city – via the Police
- Southampton Council of Faiths
- Southampton Pensioners Forum
- Spectrum CIL
- Carers Together
- Southampton Clinical Commissioning Community Stakeholder Group – via Stakeholder Group facilitator.

Scrutiny

82. Alongside the consultation with residents and stakeholders the budget proposals were also discussed at Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC) and Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel (HOSP). This is an important part of the democratic process, and supports the overall consultation through further discussion in public forums.

83. The General Fund Revenue Budget proposals were discussed at the 10 November 2016 meeting of the OSMC. The only recommendation was as follows: 'That, to help inform decision making and the budget setting process, officers analyse the increase in the levels of income accrued by the council per annum as a result of the growth of Southampton's economy.' A response was provided.

84. There were also discussions at Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel (HOSP), the panel feedback was that whilst they appreciate the difficult financial position the council is in, they expressed concerns about the collective impact of the proposals.

85. The panel made a range of recommendations under the information sheet headings:

Adult Social Care

- To avoid unplanned cuts to services the Executive reviews the proposals, particularly SHIL 2,3,6,7, to ensure that the proposed savings are realistic and achievable.

Public Health / Commissioning

- That, to support informed decision making, the impact assessments are updated prior to the 14 February 2017 meeting of Cabinet to include an assessment of the potential cost implications the proposals could have on the public sector in Southampton.
- That, if following the updating of the impact assessments, it is clear that the negative financial impact of a proposal to partners or the Council outweighs the Council's short term cost saving, then Cabinet reconsiders the proposal.
- That the potential impact of the proposal to control spending on long acting reversible contraceptives (LARC) on people with learning disabilities is reviewed, and the ESIA is updated prior to 14th February Cabinet meeting if required.
- That the Executive commit to undertaking a health impact assessment for all proposed savings in future budget rounds for all proposals not just those in health and care.
- That the Executive consider all options available to continue to deliver key aspects of the commissioned HIV/AIDS service.
- That, reflecting concerns that the proposals cannot be achieved without a negative impact on provision and outcomes, the Executive reconsider the published proposals to reduce funding for substance misuse services and develop new proposals based on the model for substance misuse in the city that is currently in development. Specific aspects include the proposed removal of funding for the needle exchange.

Consultation and engagement

- When planning future budget consultation programmes further efforts are made to encourage and facilitate feedback from 'harder to reach groups', many of whom find it difficult to engage with traditional consultation processes.
- When budget proposals are confirmed and the impact of the proposals is understood, Cabinet commits to fully engaging with target groups to ensure that they are aware of the proposals and the likely impact and actions that can be taken to mitigate negative consequences.

Feedback from key partners

86. In addition to the other feedback mechanisms, the Chief Executive of the council sent a letter to all partner organisations inviting their views on the budget proposals. Letters were sent to the following organisations:

Balfour Beatty	Health and Wellbeing Board	Southampton City CCG
Business South	Housing Associations in the area	Southampton City College
Chair of Primary Heads Conference	Itchen Sixth Form College	Southampton Connect Members
Chair of Secondary Heads Forum	Jobcentre Plus	Southampton Improvement District
Chair of Southampton Schools Forum	Local Safeguarding Adult's Board	Southampton Solent University

Chair of Special Heads Conference	Local Safeguarding Children's Board	Southampton Voluntary Services
Education Business Partnership	National Probation Service	Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust
Hampshire and Isle of Wight Community Rehabilitation Company	PUSH	University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust
Hampshire Chamber of Commerce	Richard Taunton Sixth Form College	University of Southampton
Hampshire Constabulary	Safe City Partnership	Solent LEP
Hampshire Fire & Rescue Service	Skills Funding Agency	

87. A range of these organisations provided feedback on the budget proposals, and the key themes from this feedback has been picked up in the overall comment analysis. In addition, some of the key points are summarised below.
88. All health partners expressed concerns about the proposals relating to substance misuse including the appropriate adult scheme. Common themes were around the potential extra costs created in other parts of the system by making this reduction and concerns were raised about the impact on a particularly vulnerable group. Concerns were also expressed around the proposals relating to Tier 3 weight management and LARC prescribing.
89. Within the proposals for adult social care, responses from health partners supported the proposal to improve advice and guidance and noted that they would like to be involved in the process of its development, as well as the further development and improvement of the Southampton Information Directory. Their position was similar on the proposals around Telecare. Concerns were raised by a range of partners about changes to the appropriate adult scheme, how this would work in practise and whether changes could lead to delays in the sourcing of appropriate adults, increasing the length of time vulnerable individuals are detained. Concerns were also raised around how the changes to the way Adult Social Care teams work would be delivered. Concerns were raised about how realistic savings proposals were from integrating Learning Disability teams.
90. There was a range of feedback on the proposals for children's services including:
- General support for the 0-19 integration proposals
 - Concerns about the proposals relating to short breaks for children with disabilities
 - Concerns about proposals to make savings in mental health
 - Concerns about the proposed level of savings from integrating Learning Disability teams.
 - Some concerns raised about income generation impacting on service provision
 - Concerns about the changes to the LADO role and Virtual School in terms of how they would work in practise.
91. Other comments showed support for reducing the length of free parking slots in district parking centres citing the potential to increase visitor numbers.
92. Broader comments on the consultation related to the way the outcomes had been used to prioritise spending over the four year period, how expenditure has been mapped against these, whether expenditure reductions were fair and proportionate across outcomes, and whether the outcomes were too broad to enable effective prioritisation. Some comments raised the issues of whether the financial impact of some proposals on other partners had been fully considered, and whether sufficient detail had been provided on the consultation to enable partners to respond. Assurances were also sought that the proposals would still enable the council to meet its statutory obligations, as well as its fiduciary duties.

93. There was also some feedback from partners encouraging the council to share emerging ideas for savings at an earlier stage so that any risk can be discussed and mitigated, and opportunities maximised. Health partners, in particular, were keen to continue discussions around further integration of commissioning and provision of health and care services in order to maximise efficiencies and benefits.

Feedback on the consultation process

94. The council is committed to make the whole consultation process as transparent as possible. As a part of this, any feedback on the consultation process itself received during the course of the consultation is summarised in this section.

95. Overall, out of the 1,498 people who took part in the consultation, a total of 22 commented on the consultation process itself, representing less than 2% of total consultation responses.

96. A selection of the comments made regarding the consultation process are shown in Table 1.

<i>I know that you are doing your best in an impossible situation but I think that in every case and in every communication with the public you should reiterate that these are central government cuts being unnecessarily imposed on councils as part of an ideologically driven agenda to undermine the ability of the state to properly function.</i>
<i>In each category I agreed with most of the suggestions while remaining dubious about the rest, which made scoring difficult. In particular: * cutting port health, official vet and shellfish sampling services may lead to health risks * reduction of free parking will lead to more congestion and poorer air quality in the city centre * does the strategic review of subsidised transport in the city include an environmental brief?</i>
<i>There's a lot of good, genuine saving in here but some of it crosses the line. Be honest about where you are making genuine savings, and be proud of that, but where you are having to cut services beyond what should be offered then be honest about that too - and tell the public that you're not happy with it. The public don't understand the effect that central government cuts have on local councils - they need to.</i>
<i>As usual, there is minimal real detail in this 'information' and lots of empty phrases like 'business as usual'. These proposals see like they will come very short of the necessary savings or you are being intentionally disingenuous. Also, on the questionnaire, it is unlikely that someone will feel the same way about all the proposals listed for one section; I know that you don't really want feedback but this is farcical.</i>
<i>Four year planning is sensible - but the devil is in the detail and that is hard to follow - especially with the on line consultation structured in this way. It is important that SCC protect services to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in the city - but they don't need to provide all those services and should work more closely with the voluntary sector .</i>
<i>my view is you have made this survey too time consuming considering you do not take much notice of what the general public want and you will do just as you please anyway.</i>
<i>It would help if the council could design a decent survey form as this was far too restrictive and did not allow proper responses at all. In the same way the finance figures were not presented in an understandable way at all and the business as usual proposal was not detailed at all making it impossible to comment on.</i>
<i>Very difficult to understand what 'redesign & restructure' means so really impossible to give meaningful answers - also 'business as usual'... what 'increase' do you mean? Am not sure this consultation means anything. Do trust employees consulted properly.</i>

Table 1

97. The feedback on the consultation process was in two broad themes, firstly around lack of detail for the proposals and the grouping of proposals making it harder to answer, secondly that the consultation had not been properly promoted. Both these concerns will be considered when developing future consultations on budget proposals.

Conclusion

98. This consultation sought views on a set of budget proposals for the next four years which were developed around the four priority outcomes for the council. The consultation has engaged with a wide range of individuals through a variety of methods to allow residents across the city to provide their views and to elicit a full discussion on the proposals required for Southampton City Council to set a balanced budget
99. Overall there was a significant level of engagement with the consultation. In total there were 1,498 written responses. Compared to 702 across both parts of the budget consultation last year, this represents an improved response rate. The total includes 851 respondents who made a comment of some description; a total of 1,524 individual comments that have been analysed.
100. The consultation also gathered views via a range of other channels such as, public meetings and letters. The themes that emerged from these broadly mirrored the views held by the respondents to the consultation questionnaire.
101. The demographic breakdowns of the respondents to the consultation has shown that whilst certain groups were less represented than others there was still significant engagement across the board.
102. The consultation questionnaire showed that agreement with the budget proposals is fairly evenly divided with opposition and support for key proposals. Overall agreement with the budget proposals was asked on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 was very unfavourable and 10 was very favourable. The average score was 4.8 which is fractionally on the unfavourable side of average.
103. Out of the eight information sheet sections, five had higher levels of agreement than disagreement, one had equal agreement and disagreement and two had higher levels of disagreement. These two were Waste and Recycling and Public Health and Commissioning.
104. One learning point from this budget consultation was around how some of the proposals have been misunderstood, examples are growth in Council Tax and Business Rate income, out of hours library service and reduction in free parking in district centres. As these all received higher levels of disagreement than expected. In future budget consultations a greater effort will be made to clearly explain all proposals.
105. In response to the consultation feedback Cabinet have revised the draft proposals. The main changes are:
- Reducing the proposed reduction to substance misuse budgets services;
 - Withdrawing some Public Health proposals in 2017/18;
 - Reducing the proposed reduction to Parks & Open Spaces services;
 - Deferring the saving for delivering school improvement differently;
 - Investment in support to the introduction of Alternative Weekly Collection;
 - Investment in a dedicated team to support waste collection and street cleaning;
 - Investment in cultural events in the city to pump prime match funding.
106. This consultation has ensured compliance with local and government standards. This report outlines the full picture of the consultation results and will be used to inform decision makers.
107. In conclusion, this consultation allows Cabinet to understand the views of residents and stakeholders on the budget proposals that have been consulted on. Therefore it provides a sound base on which to make a decision.