



Bolton Council Budget Proposal

2025 - 2027

Report by Consultation & Engagement Team
January 2025

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1. Background

In December 2024, Bolton Council's Cabinet approved proposals for the 2025/27 budget for consultation with residents, businesses, staff, partner organisations and other stakeholders. The proposals reflected the continuing financial challenges faced by the organisation, resulting in a £25 million budget shortfall.

Local authorities across the country are struggling due to increased demand for services and reduced income. Whilst Bolton Council will always try to protect the most vulnerable people in our society and meet the needs of our residents, the reality is that the organisation is now faced with making more reductions to services and increasing or introducing direct charges for the services we provide. This will include using £16.8 million of the Council's reserves and making the following £8.2 million cuts across the 5 Directorates, over a 2-year period:

- Adults and Housing: £4.126 million
- Children's Services: £690,000
- Public Health: £474,000
- Place: £1.424 million
- Chief Executive's and Corporate Services - £1.522 million

The ways we are proposing to make cuts and bring in more money are outlined across 11 themes. In addition, the Council is proposing to increase the Council Tax General Levy (2025/2027) by 2.99%, as well as increase contributions towards the Adult Social Care Levy by 2%. This will result in a proposed rise in Council Tax of 4.99% each year.

Eleven proposed themes:

- Increasing sales revenue
- Increasing charges
- Changing the way we deliver services
- Adult Social Care & Housing
- Reviewing Children's Services
- Corporate Resources
- Making contract efficiencies
- Reviewing staffing costs
- Digital Services
- Reviewing charges to Bereavement Services
- Licensing and grants

As part of the review process residents and stakeholders were asked to reflect on the proposals to make £25 million of savings for the year 2025-2027, via a public consultation. Views from all stakeholders will be considered, alongside other information to help the Council decide on the final budget options in February 2025. However, once detailed options have been drawn up, residents and stakeholders could expect to be engaged in further consultations.

2. Methodology

Between 3rd December 2024 and 6th January 2025, the Council ran a public consultation, seeking to engage residents and stakeholders impacted by future funding cuts in sharing their reflections on a proposed reduction in Council budgets of £25 million, including using £16.8 million of the Council's reserves.

During that period a comprehensive communication plan was implemented to raise awareness of the proposed budget cuts and areas that would see cuts to services as a result. Information was distributed to all stakeholders, including the Vision Partnership, elected members, trades unions, businesses, community and voluntary groups, as well as residents across the borough. A press release¹ was distributed to local print media and posters and hard copy surveys were distributed to all libraries and Family Information Services across the borough (refer to Appendix A and B). The consultation was also shared via E-View, a Council consultation database. Bolton News also published an article on the budget consultation on the 23rd November², increasing awareness of the budget proposals.

Documentation was made accessible on the Council's consultation webpage and social media was heavily utilised throughout the period to share key messages about the consultation. Partners, community leaders, Community Alliances and Community Champions were also asked to cascade the consultation to their staff, service users and wider community networks. In addition, the Bolton Council workforce was presented with the consultation and key information in a staff briefing and subsequent direct emails, online messages and Frequently Asked Questions.

Participants were surveyed using a questionnaire tool made up of open and closed questions, providing respondents the opportunity to reflect and share their thoughts on the proposal. The questionnaire was made available both digitally and offline, with the survey and supporting documentation being accessible on the council's consultation web page, as well as in hard copy format on request.

¹ Bolton Council. (2024) *Bolton Council lays out budget options*. Available at: <https://www.bolton.gov.uk/news/article/1818/bolton-council-lays-out-budget-options#:~:text=In%20all%2C%20the%20council%20estimates,significant%20changes%20to%20future%20budgets> (Accessed 8th January 2025)

² Harrigan, J. (2024) *Bolton Council sets out cuts with £8.2M to be slashed*, Bolton News, 23rd November 2024. Available at: <https://www.theboltonnews.co.uk/news/24744535.bolton-council-sets-cuts-8-2m-slashed/> (Accessed 8th January 2025).

*A copy of the questionnaire is included at the end of this document, located in Appendix A.

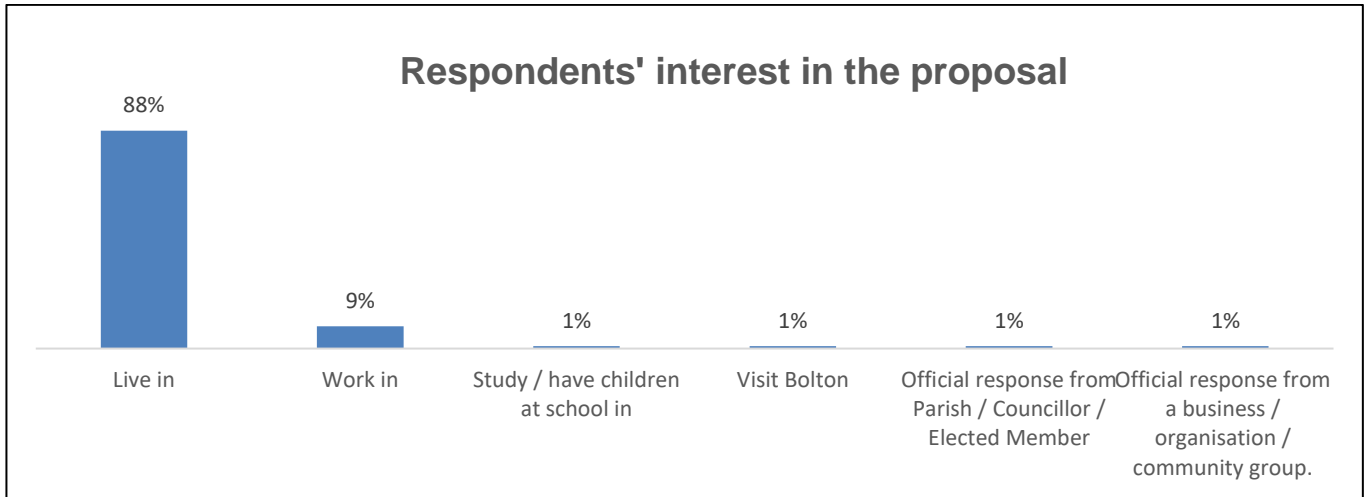
Analysis notes

- Results are presented in the questionnaire format with 'Don't know' type responses removed unless stated.
- Comments have been categorised where feasible. Unless otherwise stated, categories with 10 or more responses are shown. Categories may overlap and a comment from one respondent included in multiple categories. A sample of comments [verbatim] are included in the report. Comments may be abbreviated so that only the relevant extract is included. One comment may be coded into multiple categories, and each category may only cover a certain aspect of the comment, for example a respondent may have made both positive and negative comments about the same aspect.
- Base: unless otherwise stated the base is the number of respondents to a particular question.
- Data has been cleansed where appropriate, e.g. comments moved into existing responses.

3. Digital and paper-based survey responses

A total of 898 residents and stakeholders took part in the digital survey, outlining their reflections on the proposals to reduce Bolton Council's overall budget by £25 million. The majority (88%) of those taking part in the consultation are resident within the borough, with a further 9% commuting into Bolton for work. A small number of stakeholders (1%) stated their interest in the consultation was that they study or have children being educated in the borough, with a further 1% visiting the borough. Those that responded in an official capacity, as a Ward Councillor, business or community group are representatives of:

- Age UK Bolton
- Horwich Town Council
- Floral Fusion
- George House Trust
- PHL Design & Interiors Ltd
- Transforming Lives Group - CIC
- Farnworth South Councillor
- Horwich Councillor
- Horwich North Councillor
- Queens Park & Central Ward Councillor



Base: 898

Note: Whilst 88% of the residents responding to the consultation live in the borough, 54% (433) of respondents reside in the West of the borough (see demographic section: 16a). This disproportionate response rate has been attributed to a hyperlocal car parking campaign from the 'My Westhoughton' Facebook group on the 5th and 6th January. During this period, an additional 297 responses from residents in West of the borough were received (equating to 69% of the total returns for West). This has resulted in an overall increase of 37% in total responses and a significant rise in the responses to the car parking proposal.

3

my. My Westhoughton
5 Jan · 🌐


The budget consultation for Bolton council is closing on midday on Monday 6th January.

Included in the possible options is to charge for council car parks which currently free such Library Street and Ditchfield Gardens in Westhoughton.

Will that have a detrimental effect on Westhoughton Town Centre?³

PLEASE MAKE SURE THAT YOU USE THE BUDGET CONSULTATION TO MAKE YOUR VIEWS KNOWN TO BOLTON COUNCIL

<https://www.bolton.gov.uk/directory-record/5881/budget-consultation-2025-2027>



my. My Westhoughton
6 Jan · 🌐


Bolton Council want to charge you to use Westhoughton's public car parks and limit stays to a maximum 3 hours. The proposals would affect the Library Street and Ditchfield Gardens car parks, and possibly even the Central Park car park.

If you disagree with the proposals, SIGN OUR PETITION before 31 January:
<https://www.mywesthoughton.co.uk/carparks>

We will share it with Bolton Council ahead of the Cabinet meeting's decision on 5 February.

Please share with your friends and family.

We mustn't let Labour bosses at Bolton Council destroy our thriving Westhoughton town centre.

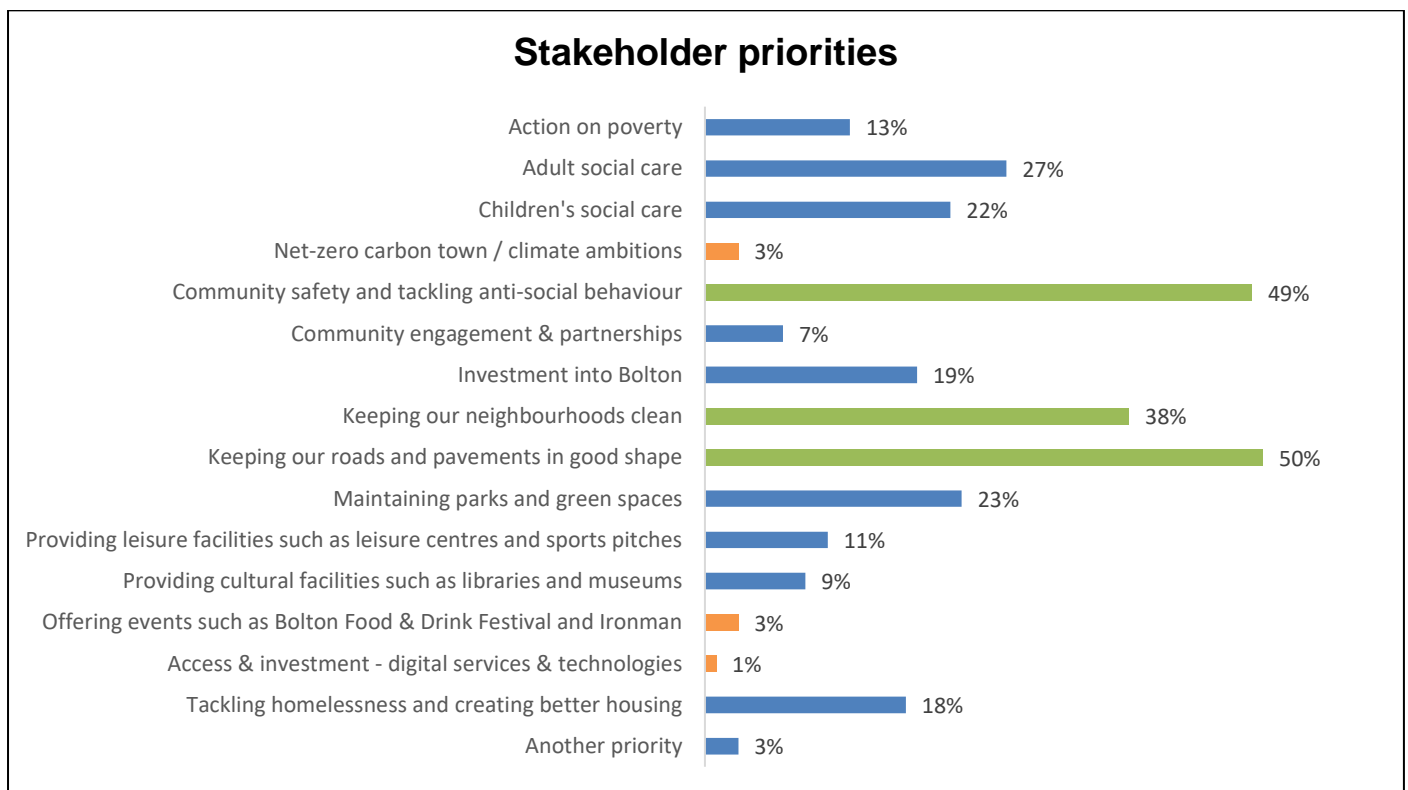


³ My Westhoughton (2025) Budget Consultation [Facebook] 5th & 6th January. Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1BMnutonGJ/>

4. Resident and stakeholder priorities

All stakeholders were asked to consider their priorities for the budget period 2025/2027. 15 overarching themes were provided, with respondents asked to choose their top three priorities. Of the 890 responses received, the top priorities for residents and stakeholders are *'Keeping our roads and pavements in good shape'* (50%), *'Community safety and tackling anti-social behaviour'* (49%), and *'Keeping our neighbourhoods clean'* (38%). These have been highlighted in green in the table below.

Areas which were seen as being less of a priority are *'Net-zero carbon town / climate ambitions'* (3%), *'Offering events such as Bolton Food & Drink Festival and Ironman'* (3%) and *'Access & investment - digital services & technologies'* (1%). These have been highlighted in orange in the table below.



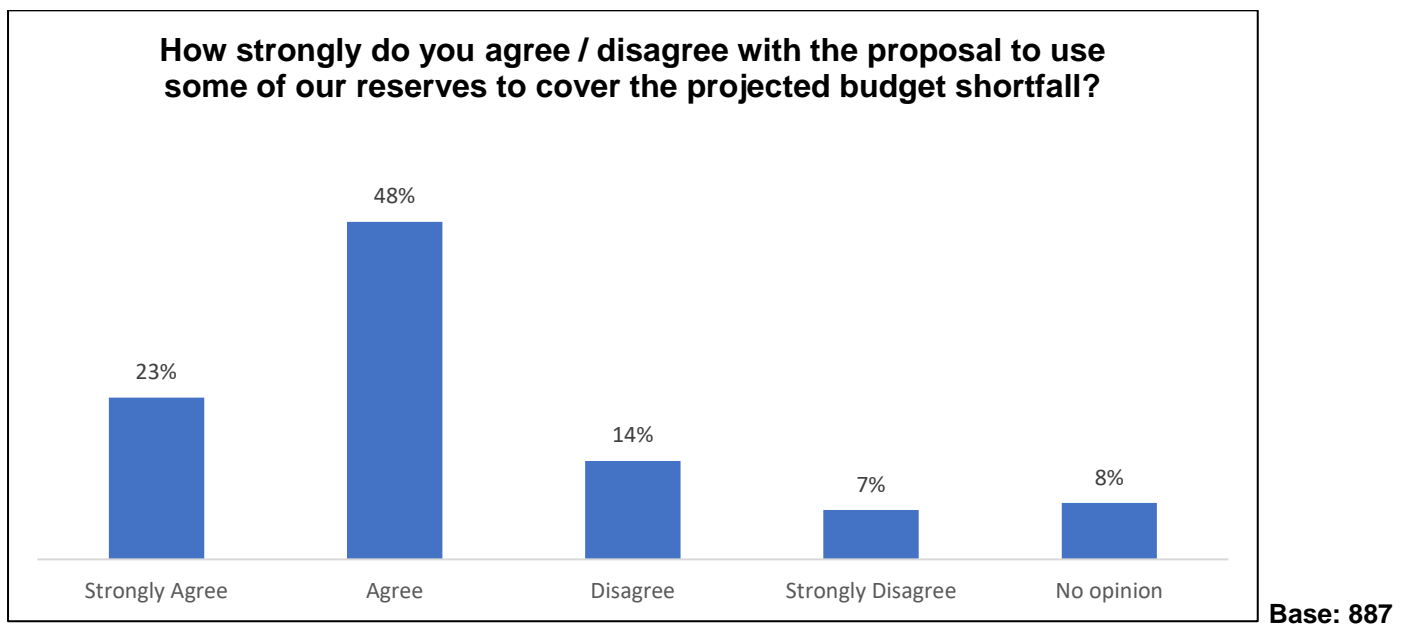
Base: 890

29 respondents suggested further priorities that could not be allocated to existing categories. Carparking / high street were reflected on by 10 respondents, stating the significance of commercial growth and protecting business, *"keeping car parks free otherwise the shops will loose out"* and *"keeping small towns accessible and access to free parking"*. 5 respondents reflected the need to prioritise resident waste collection, *"emptying bins no extra charge for green bin"*, *"waste and recycling"*. Other suggestions include improving education, particularly SEND, increasing filming, prioritising health, reducing Active Travel schemes, housing and immigration.

5. Using reserves

Bolton Council proposes to use £16.8 million from the £35.5 million reserves that the organisation holds to support the budget process. This is a significant proportion of the reserves. The organisation can only access the reserves once, and taking too much can put the council into severe financial difficulty. Residents were made aware of the need to maintain some reserves to help balance budgets and reduce the need for future service cuts.

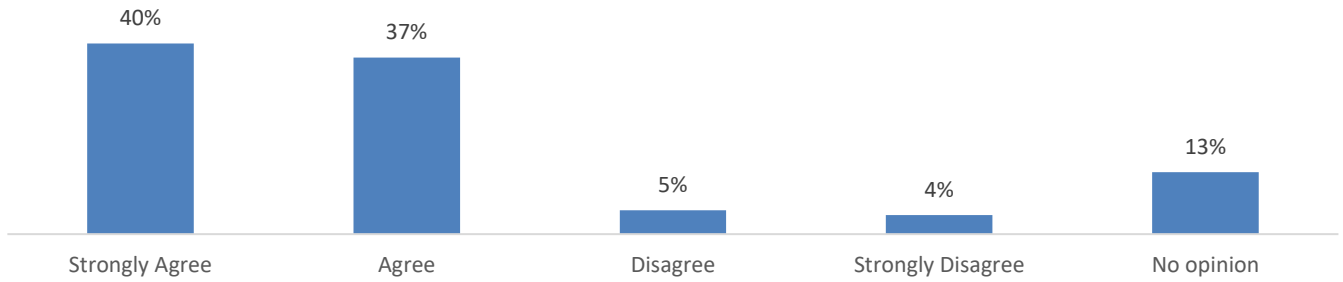
Given this information, all stakeholders were asked how strongly they agreed with the proposal to use a proportion of the reserves to cover the projected budget shortfall. Of the 887 responses received, 71% agreed with the proposal and just over one-fifth disagreed (21%).



6. Increase sales revenue

Residents and stakeholders were asked whether the organisation should look to increase sales revenue at Heaton Fold Garden Centre by a target of £5k. This could involve holding additional events and special markets at the garden centre. Of the 891 responses received, just over three-quarters (77%) agreed with the proposal. 9% disagreed.

How far do you agree / disagree that we should look at holding additional events and special markets to increase sales income at Heaton Fold Garden Centre?



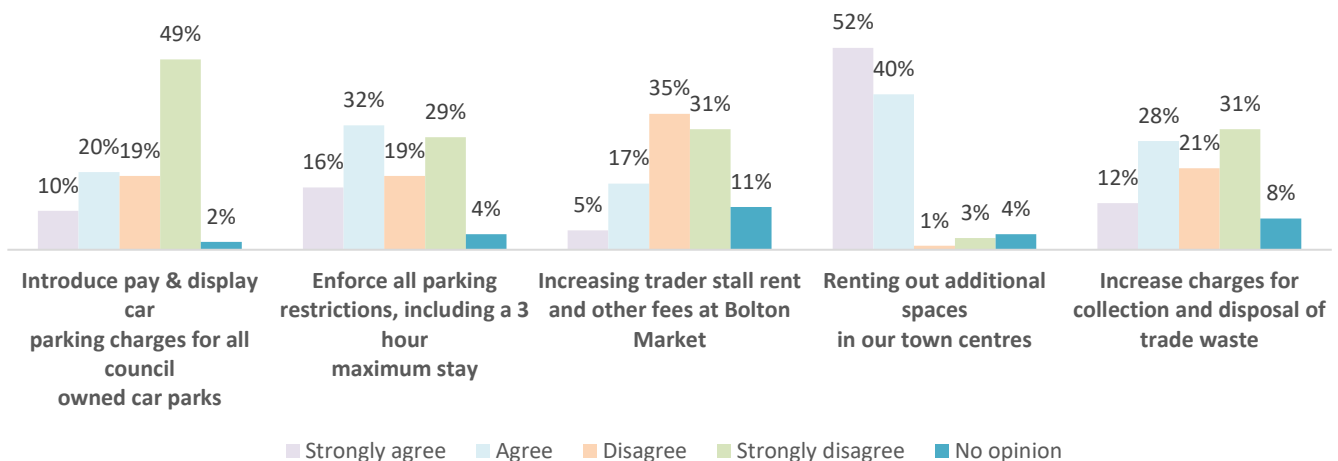
Base: 891

7. Increasing charges for residents

All stakeholders were asked to consider whether the Council should consider charging for some of its non-statutory services that are currently financed by the organisation, whilst increasing the fees for some services that are charged for. Areas for consideration include introducing and enforcing car parking fees on council owned car parks, including at the borough’s parks; increasing stall rent and fees at Bolton Market; renting out additional spaces in the town centres; charging for collection and disposal of trade waste (not public). Within this proposal the consultation highlighted how a chargeable garden waste scheme was also under consideration, but responses were being captured through a separate consultation, which took place at the end of 2024.

The option seeing greatest agreement is the proposal to rent out additional spaces within our town centres (92% agreement). The option receiving the least agreement is increasing trader and stall rent (22% agreement).

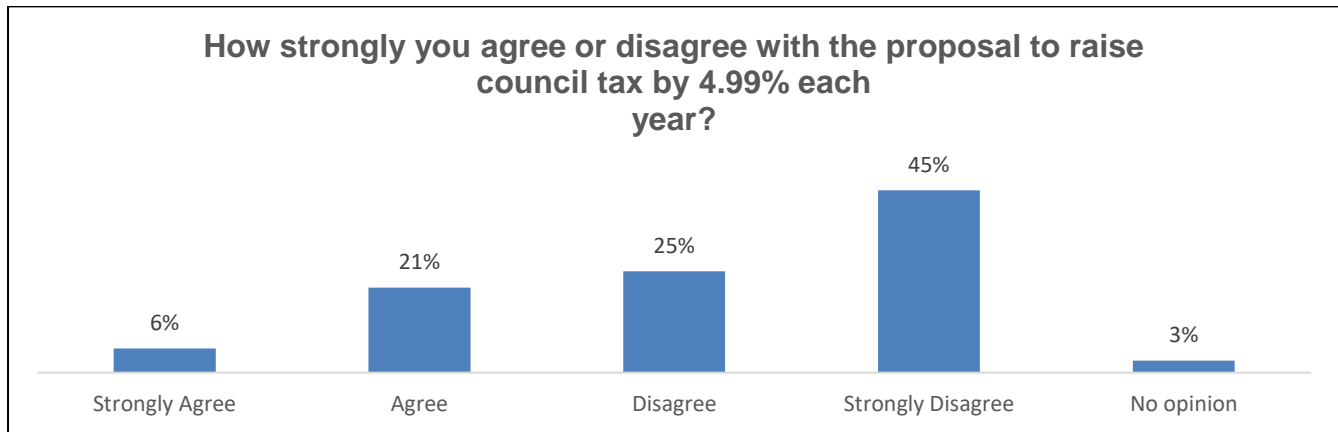
How far do you agree / disagree with the following proposals around increased fees and charges



Base average: 889

8a. Proposal to increase Council Tax

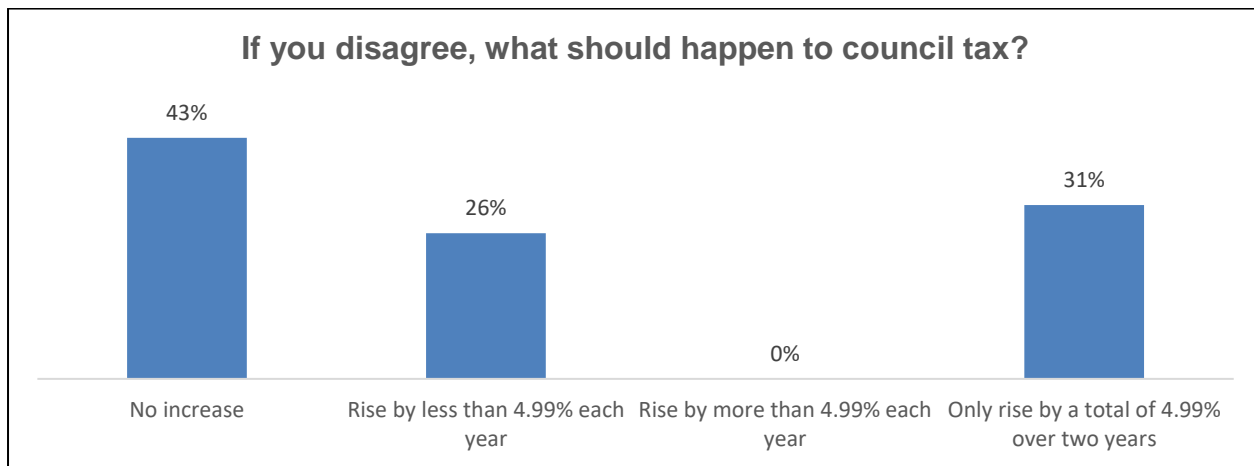
Respondents taking part in the survey were asked whether or not they supported the proposal to increase Council Tax by 4.99% per year, proposing a 2.99% increase in the General Levy, plus a 2% rise for Adult Social Care. Of the 896 responses to this question, 70% were opposed to the increase and 27% of respondents agreed with the increase.



Base: 896

8b. Preferred Council Tax percentage increase

Of the 625 respondents who disagreed with the percentage increase and went on to provide further detail, 43% wanted no further increases in the current Council Tax rates. 31% stated that the 4.99% rise should span across the 2-year period. 26% of stakeholders felt that the rise should be less than 4.99% each year.



Base: 625

8c. Suggested rate rises

120 respondents suggested amounts that Council Tax should rise by. The table below outlines what the preferred rise should be. The highest number of respondents (31) felt that the rise should be 2%. However, 28 respondents stated that the rise should only be in line with inflation.

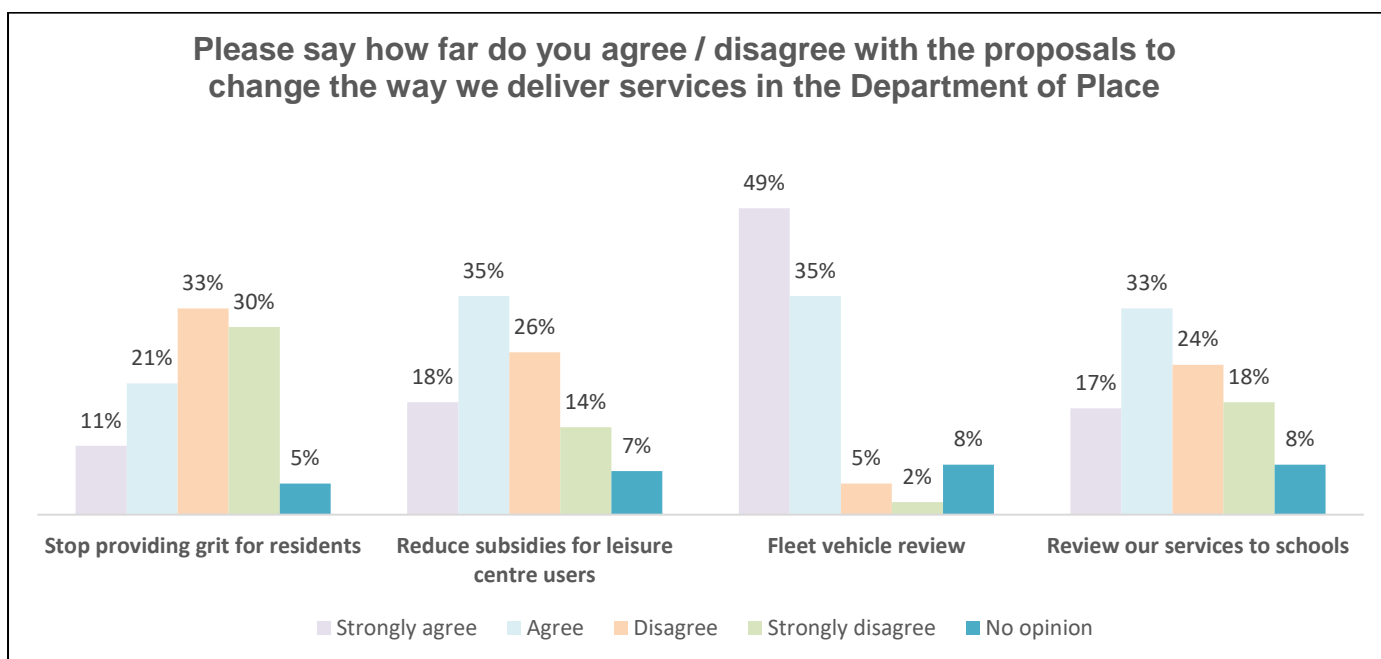
Percentage increase	Number	Sample comments
Raise by 1%	7	"Same as public sector pay increases plus 1%"

Raise by 2%	31	
Raise by 2.5%	14	<i>"The same percentage as income. Last year my salary only went up by 2.5%"</i>
Raise by 3%	25	
Raise in line with inflation	28	<i>"Raises should be limited to inflation only! Peoples incomes are not rising each year by 4.99% and the mayoral precept should also be counted in the 5% government cap each year"</i> <i>"Should rise by inflation level if below 4.99 percent."</i>

9. Changing the way we deliver services

Residents and stakeholders were asked to reflect on the proposal to look at different ways the Council could deliver services to save money. Suggestions include stopping providing grit bins for residents; reducing subsidies for leisure services; reviewing fleet vehicles; and reviewing service to schools.

889 responses were received. The proposal seeing the greatest level of agreement is undertaking a review of the council's fleet vehicles (84% agreement). The proposal seeing the least level of agreement is ceasing grit bin provision across the borough (63% disagreement).



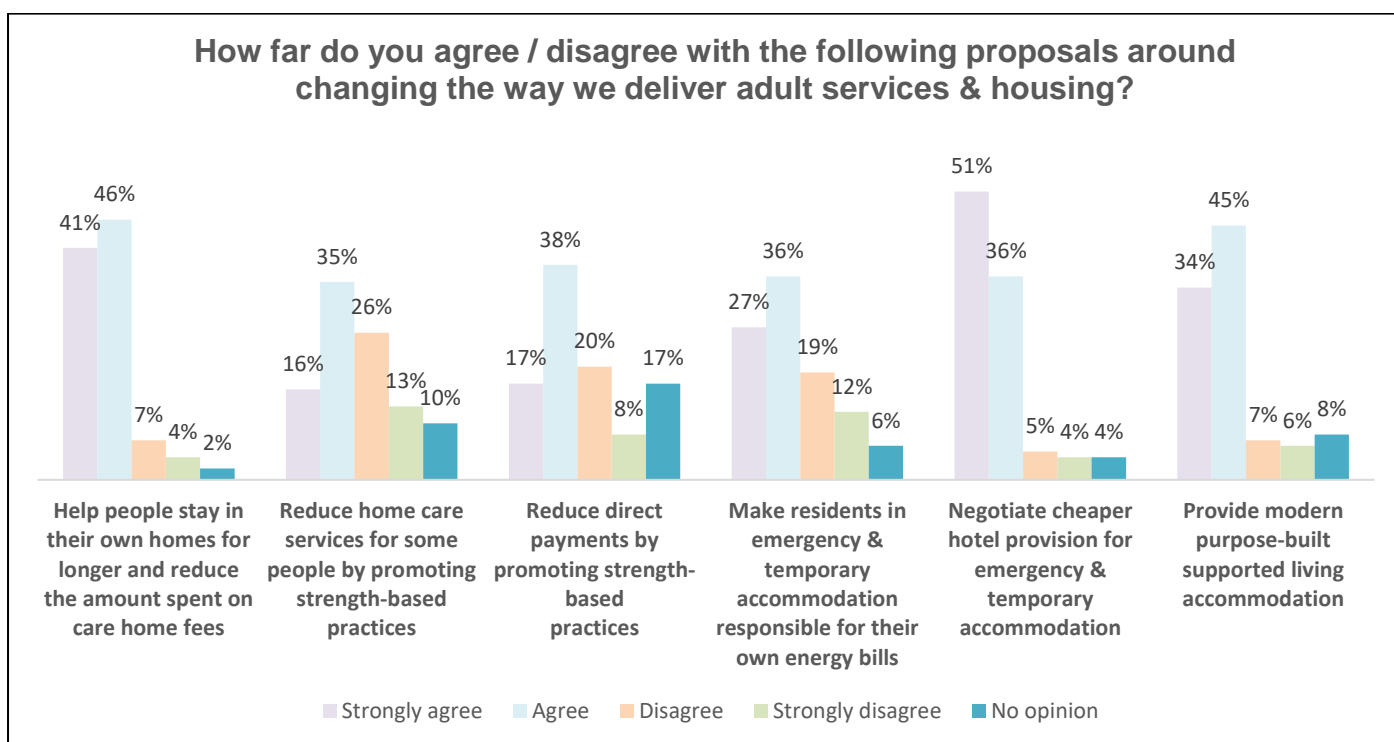
Base: 889

10. Adult Social Care & Housing

Residents and stakeholders were made aware that £1.72 million of savings could be made by reducing the expenditure on residential and nursing home fees. This could be achieved by working closely with health and social care professionals and putting in extra social care services and technology, which would enable more people to stay safely in their homes for longer. This principle could be applied to Home Care and Direct Payments, emergency and temporary housing, and Supported Living.

All residents and stakeholders were asked to consider whether they agreed with the proposals to change the way the organisation delivers adult services and housing. Of the 885 responses received, the areas seeing the greatest level of agreement are *'Helping people stay in their own homes for longer and reduce the amount spent on care home fees'* (87% agreement); *'Negotiating cheaper hotel provision for emergency and temporary accommodation'* (87% agreement); and *'Providing modern purpose-built supported living accommodation'* (79% agreement).

The area seeing the greatest disagreement is *'Reducing home care services for some people by promoting strength-based practices'* (39% disagreement).



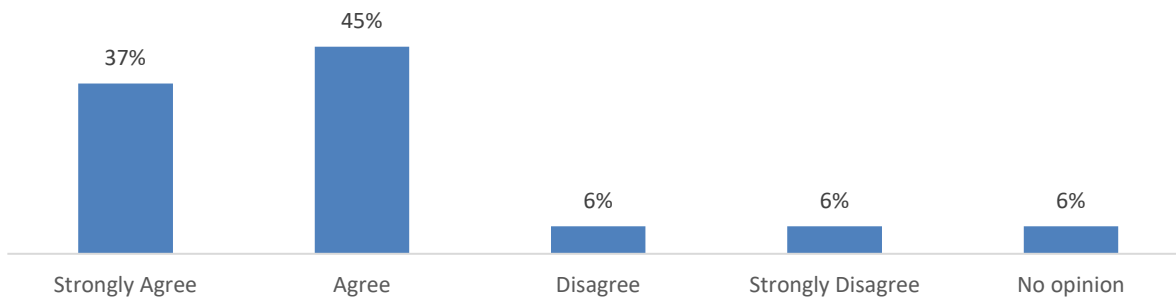
Base: 885

11. Reviewing Children's Services

Residents and stakeholders were made aware that £390k savings could be made by thoroughly reviewing the way services are delivered within the Children's Directorate. Every effort would also be made to maintain inflationary budgets in line with the 2024/2025 budget, which will create an additional saving of £230k.

When asked whether stakeholders agreed with this proposal, 82% of the 894 responses received agree with the proposal. 12% disagree.

How far do you agree / disagree with the proposal to undertake a thorough review of the way children's services are provided?



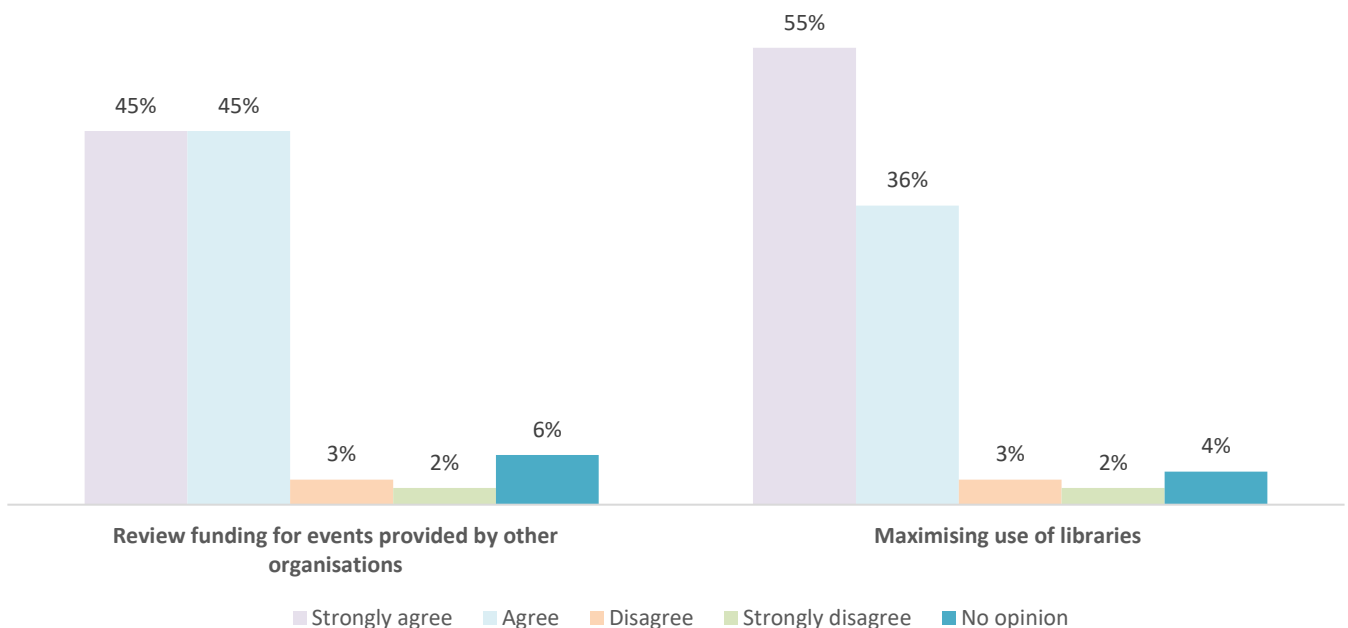
Base: 894

12. Corporate Resources

Currently, Bolton Council supports local organisations in running events for our communities. By reviewing these events, including reducing payments to these organisations, the organisation could save £25k. In addition, by maximising the use of our library buildings across the borough, an additional saving of £100k could be made. No libraries would be subject to closure.

All stakeholders were asked to provide their reflections on this proposal, with 889 responses received. Significant agreement was provided across both proposals, with 90% agreement in reviewing funding for events by other organisations, and 91% agreement to maximise the use of libraries.

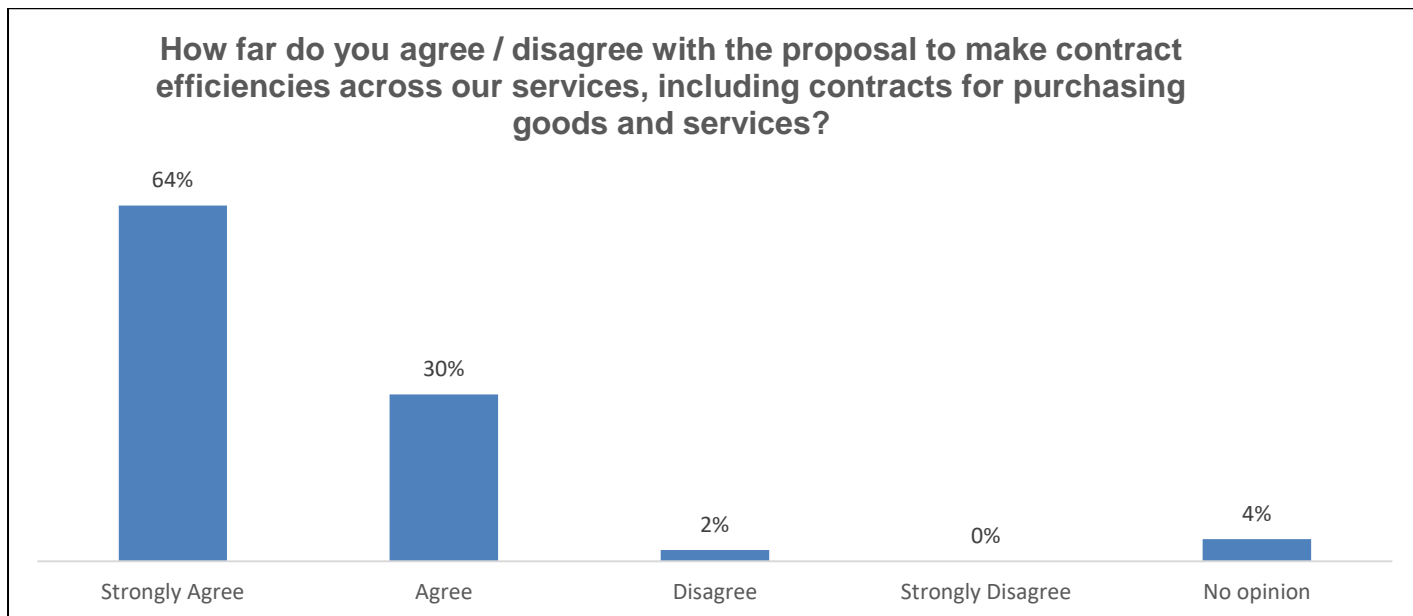
How far do you agree / disagree with the following proposals around changing the way we deliver services in Corporate Resources?



Base: 889

13. Contract efficiencies

Residents and stakeholders were asked to reflect on whether the council should explore making additional savings by making contract efficiencies, including reviewing contracts for purchasing goods and services. Of the 891 responses received, 94% of respondents agree with the proposal. Only 2% disagree and 4% had no opinion.

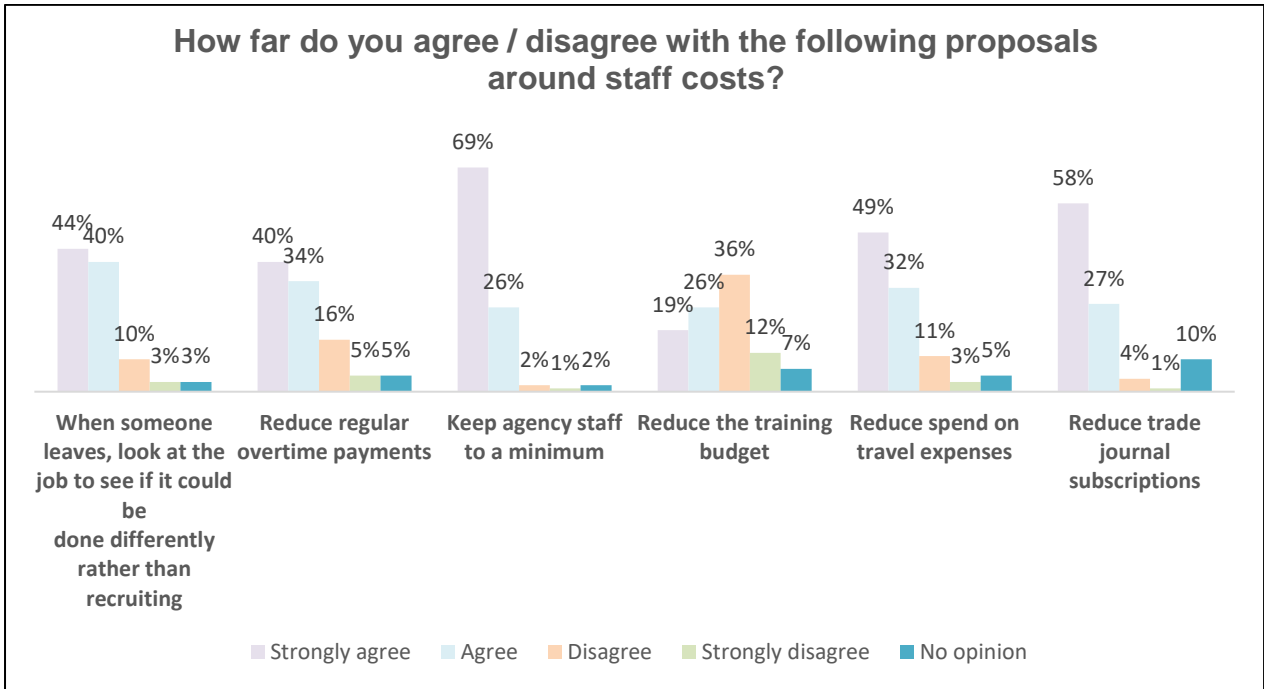


Base: 891

14. Staffing costs

Those taking part in the consultation were asked to consider whether the Council should undertake regular staff service reviews, determining where efficiencies could be made, including reviewing vacancies; employing more staff and in doing so, reducing regular and enhanced overtime rates; reducing the number of agency staff; and reducing training and subscription budgets.

890 responses were received, with agreement being made in most areas. The top area for agreement is *'keeping agency staff to a minimum'* (95% agreement). The area seeing least agreement is *'reducing the training budget'*, seeing 48% disagreement.

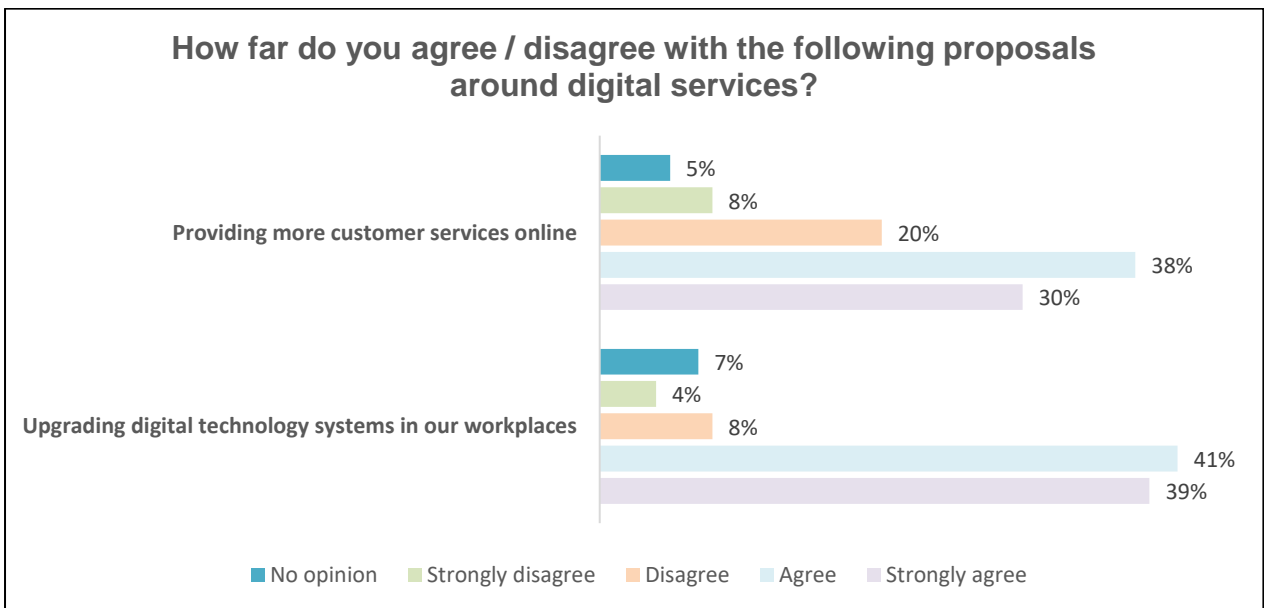


Base: 890

15. Digital Services

With the advances in technology, Bolton Council could look to make around £652k of savings within the digital programme, by switching more of our service provision online and making increased use of digital technology and ICT systems, which would reduce administrative costs. The Council is committed to creating inclusive environments for our service users, staff and stakeholders and will provide accessible alternatives where needed.

892 responses were received, with 80% of respondents agreeing to 'upgrading digital technology systems in our workplaces'. 68% of residents and stakeholders agree with the proposal to 'provide more customer services online'.

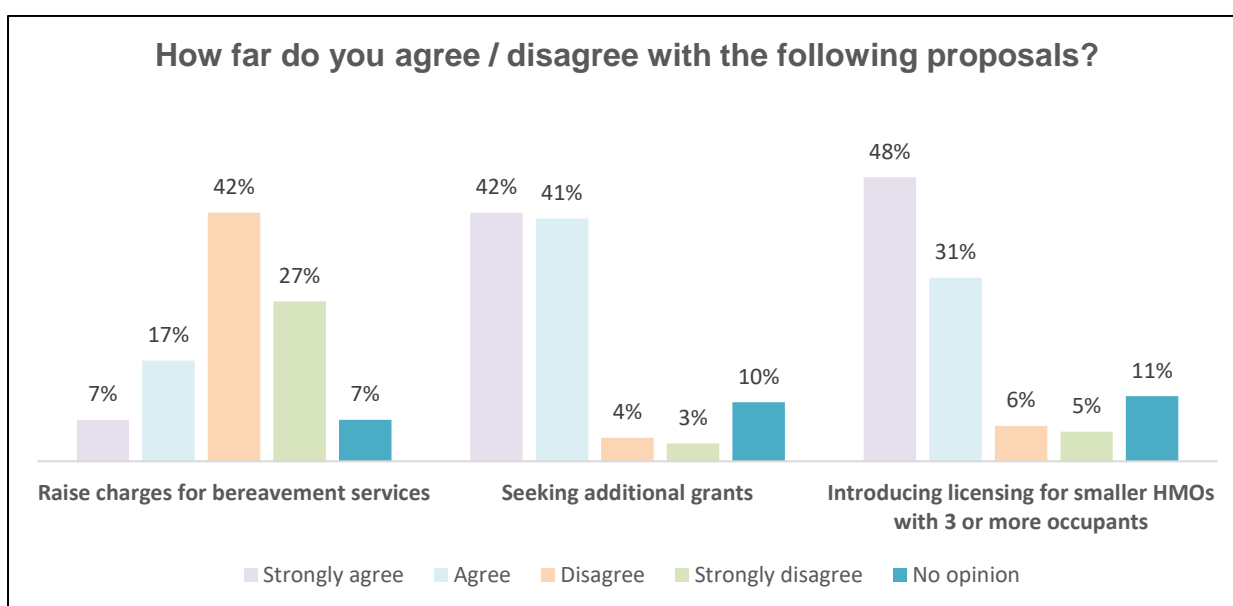


Base: 892

16. Other proposals

Residents and stakeholders were made aware of several other ways the council could look to save money, by reviewing our charges for cremations, burials and grave upkeep; increasing our grant income; and introducing 'additional licensing'. Introducing 'additional licensing' would mean that all Houses in Multiple Occupation [HMO], with three or more occupants, who aren't part of the same household, would need to be licensed.

884 responses were received, with engagement in all proposals. Significant agreement was provided for the proposal to seek additional grant income (83%) and introducing licensing for smaller HMOs (79%). However, there was significant disagreement with the proposal to increase bereavement charges (69% disagreement)



Base: 884

17. Impact to stakeholders

All respondents were asked to reflect on how the proposals would impact either themselves or the people they care about, should they be implemented. A total of 426 comments were received, which have been categorised into the following 12 themes. A number of the comments are cross-cutting and have been captured in more than 1 category; this is particularly the case with protected groups and Council Tax.

The most significant impacts noted were to groups with protected characteristics, notably older people, people with disabilities and carers. Comments highlighted a cause for concern for residents who are economically vulnerable, including families and older people who have recently experienced the ceasing of Winter Fuel Allowance payments. People with mortgages or who rent, particularly those who are not entitled to benefits and are on low incomes could be pushed into economic hardship, resulting in a subsequent rise in applications for support.

Other significant impacts were raised around the proposal to introduce car parking charges. Those in the West of the borough, who engaged as a result of the local campaign, outlined the impact to residents and businesses in this locality.

Each thematic area is outlined in the table below, with further explanation provided beneath.

Q. Please describe how you, your family or the people you represent will be affected if the budget proposals are carried out		
Rank	Category	No. of respondents
a.	Impact to protected groups	177
b.	Council Tax	119
c.	Car parking	108
d.	Challenges with Bolton Council, including not agreeing with the budget proposals	90
e.	Children's & Adult Services	57
f.	Staffing, including Councillors	36
g.	Bins	33
h.	Bolton Town Centre	28
i.	Gritting Services	25
j.	Wider proposals & service areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Libraries & Leisure Centres (19) - Green spaces and highways (12) - Digital Services (12) - Community Safety (10) - Housing & Infrastructure (9) - Contract efficiencies (8) - Bereavement Services (5) 	75
k.	Immigration & benefit claimants	13

a. Impact to protected groups

177 comments were received which highlight the impact to residents with protected characteristics, or reflected concern about how the proposals could have wider implications for vulnerable groups. A significant number of the comments outline the socio-economic challenges of increasing the cost of Council Tax by 4.99% per year. Other comments reflect concern over the physical vulnerability of older residents should grit bins be removed. Wider comments by carers also highlight reflections with the Adults and Children's proposals, particularly to elderly adults, children with SEND and those with personal budgets. Subsequent comments provide general reflections of how the proposals could lead to a widening in inequalities.

Council Tax

- *“We are pensioners we are on a limited income, we have already lost our heating allowance and don't qualify for any benefits and we think it is wrong to put our council tax up to pay for other adults”.*
- *“As a pensioner on the old state pension and a very small private pension I have lost the Winter fuel allowance. My home is in Band D and I already struggle to pay.”*
- *“As a pensioner on a fixed income any increase above inflation will have a major impact on us as we are not able to claim any additional benefits.”*
- *“We have a child of school age and my husband is retired, so although we are managing financially at the moment, we only have one income and my husband's pension. It's already a struggle to make sure all the bills are paid, with everything increasing without the council tax being increased so much as well.”*
- *“We work with many of our most vulnerable & disadvantaged individuals in Bolton who already are in financial crisis & struggle to make ends meet. Significant increases in Council Tax will genuinely make current housing unaffordable for many.”*
- *“Additional council tax means my family would have to cut money from food or heating / energy use.”*

Grit Bins

- *“Older people are terrified of falling, breaking a bone and not being able to get to work to make a living. Side roads and pavements need some grit”.*
- *“Without gritbins there would likely be an increase in accidents (both on the road & pavements). Elderly left to feel isolated as too scared to go outside”.*
- *“I do think that grit bins on dangerous roads are important in preventing slips and falls for elderly people ... saving a few thousand may cost you more in community based services for more people.”*

Digital Services

- *“Already have problems accessing services when they are online. More help needed for people who have to contact you by phone because they do not have internet access.”*
- *“I think it is important that services do not discriminate against the elderly. My mother is 90 years old and does not have the internet. In addition as people age they become more vulnerable when using the internet.”*
- *“People with limited access to technology, limited English, elderly already struggle with getting assistance with their benefits for example.”*

Children & Adult Services

- *“We have a disabled child so removing direct payments would make life very difficult for us, it's bad enough trying to negotiate life as it is and direct payments is a life line.”*
- *“Consideration also has to be given to the digital transformation of certain services & what this will mean for older adults who are not technically confident, etc.”*
- *“Cutting adult and children's social care will impact families and will only create further problems down the line.”*
- *“I am very concerned about “strength-based practice” being used as a cover for cuts to caring services which need more resources not less. This will have a terrible effect not only on service users but on unpaid carers who will have to plug the gaps”.*
- *“I have a son who is SEN and age 16 my fear is that he could be let down should cuts be made to adult services or the support living.”*

General socio-economic impacts

- *“We only just manage to pay our bills now if they increased we would really struggle to cover any extra... thats with 2 adults working 60 hours a week each.”*
- *“We will be financially impacted. We have had pay cuts and can't afford any more increases for less services. It is impacting on mental health with the worry and stress about the cost of everything.”*

- *"I'm just surviving feeding a family of 5. It's like war rations these days. Everything is expensive. Everything has go one up. If it goes up any further I'll have to sell my house."*
- *"With the living crisis, many families are struggling financially. Some increases and cuts proposed would worsen the situation."*
- *"We understand the need to make up a deficit but as a couple who receive no benefits and live just above the bread line this would be a struggle."*
- *"As a single adult on low wages, these increased payments will cripple me and my income."*
- *"As a single parent who gets no benefits, no reductions to bills, no help with finances, nothing free etc, all these suggested increases add to the financial pressures that higher food, energy, insurance and general household costs are subjecting me to - making ends meet is hard enough."*
- *"As a young working family with a small child, if multiple costs from the council potentially go up that could heavily impact our household financially."*
- *"Me and my wife are both nhs healthcare clinicians. As a family, we're putting more in to the community and local government than we're getting. I compare this with Preston or Garstang and it's becoming very tempting to consider a move when peers are able to compete better than Bolton for quality of life indicators."*

b. Council Tax

119 comments were received which reflected on the proposal to raise Council Tax by 4.99% each year. Whilst a significant number comments highlighted the impact to protected group (see theme above), others reflect general objection to the proposal.

- *"4.99% increase is an absolute joke!"*
- *"5% increase exceeds inflation and is not sustainable to continue on this path."*
- *"Always being increased and receiving less for our money, it's a joke!"*
- *"An increase in CT will mean less money to spend at local businesses, which in turn will mean those businesses suffer".*
- *"Any significant increase in council tax will have an impact on the hardworking people keeping the borough 'ticking over'."*
- *"I'm fed up with maximum increases year upon year & nothing getter better. I'm at the point now where I'm not sure that I want to live here when I retire. I appreciate that the cost of everything is going up but it's always the working folk that have to pay more and more."*
- *"Council tax in Bolton is high, wages are not increasing."*
- *"Council tax is already too high for the level of service residents receive. Raising this doesn't represent value for money in a deprived part of the country during a difficult financial climate."*

c. Car parking

108 comments were made which reflected concern of the proposal to introduce car parking charges, particularly in relation to Westhoughton residents and visitors. Some residents were concerned by the possible cumulative impact to businesses, which could result in further decline to the high street.

- *"Addition parking charges would ruin the town centre and affect all of the brilliant small businesses on our high street".*
- *"Car parking charges will restrict us from visiting towns across Bolton as it already affects us visiting Bolton town centre due to the cost of parking."*
- *"Car park charges will be detrimental to the town centre and have implications for both business owners and older local residents".*
- *"Businesses will be impacted if you start charging extortionate car parking fees as customers will start to go elsewhere, where parking is free (retail parks)."*

- *“As a business owner and daily user of council car parks, as do my customers, I believe that the FREE use of these is what actually makes Westhoughton appealing. If these were now to be charged for and timed to 3 hour stays, long term this is actually going to close my business down!”*
- *“As a small business owner the proposal to start charging at local car parks would have a very negative impact on our staff and customers. Westhoughton is a busy town but you will ruin it if you start charging to park.”*
- *“Charges on currently free council car parks will reduce the amount I visit Westhoughton town centre. I am more likely to instead go to retail parks where the car parks are free rather than visit the high street.”*
- *“Charging for car parks will make it more difficult to shop locally as everyone will park on the free shopping car park therefore hindering shoppers and business”.*
- *“Having recently moved to Westhoughton (from Lostock) I strongly believe that the free parking is what makes the high street viable - parking charges will kill it (unless the first hour remains free of charge).”*
- *“Westhoughton has become a vibrant and thriving shopping and social community. Paying for parking will set this back years.”*

d. Challenges with Bolton Council, including not agreeing with the budget proposals

90 comments were received which highlight general concern in the way that the council runs and manages its services. Residents and stakeholders feel frustrated with, year upon year, financial increases, when services seem to be deteriorating, or money seems to be wasted on non-statutory projects and events. Other comments reflect general disagreement in the proposal.

- *“Stop wasting public money”.*
- *“Vanity projects such as cycle lanes or woke diversity roles should be scrapped as a starter for ten”.*
- *“You should maximise saving money internally before taking more money from residence’s”.*
- *“The money is not being managed effectively, and its the average working man that keeps being punished.”*
- *“Austerity does not work, short term gains create long term problems.”*
- *“Need to look at all possible options before passing increases on to those in the borough.”*
- *“Bolton Council are a disgrace, there is so much waste and inefficiency. Every year the council attempts to pull the wool over residents eyes by increasing council tax, charging additional for services that should be included and generally providing poor value for money. There is also a lack of commercial nouse and an inability to maximise and look for new commercial ways of generating cash.”*
- *“Bolton Council gives the strong impression it really doesn't care about residents. Only interested in spending as little money as possible.”*
- *“It appears that the council wants to squeeze the life out of working class people and hinder small businesses.”*
- *“Bolton's economy has to improve for the townsfolk to benefit and lessen council cash calls. This council has made some strides to reorder the town centre but lacks the competency to sustain the trajectory of gains which are presently patchwork as evidenced by subdued trading conditions and lack of visitors.”*
- *“Cutting budgets when services are already stretched is not the answer”.*
- *“I am concerned that changes in the budget should be in line with Council strategy and values to regenerate Bolton and Town centre, increase trade and inward investment into Bolton, improve transport links with Greater Manchester and Lancashire and beyond, and improve the public health and wellbeing of Bolton residents, particularly by reducing inequalities.”*

e. Children & Adult Services

57 comments were received which highlight the current challenges to both Adult and Children's services. Whilst some residents and service users agree that changes are needed, others highlight the caution that should be applied if the proposals are implemented. Note, this theme is cross-cutting with protected characteristics.

- *"Cutting adult and children's social care will impact families and will only create further problems down the line."*
- *"Social care (Adult and Children) is already in dire straits. Social services are collapsing under the case load, I don't even know the name of my social worker I have been assigned, so many have come and gone. Simply put, the so called 'care' that is provided is ineffective."*

Children's Services:

- *"Access to children's services is lengthy currently taking years to achieve a result for my grandchild. Would be fuming if this was made more difficult."*
- *"With a new born baby I would like to see more support for children as this is now my priority."*
- *"I worry about the lack of services for young parents, children (especially those in care) and young people. The future, with these continual cuts, looks bleak."*
- *"Children and families need more help, earlier to prevent things from getting worse. This would reduce the cost on social care services. Getting help earlier should be the 'norm' and it needs to be accessible in communities."*
- *"Mental health support for children and adults must be improved not cut. Social care changes will affect many vulnerable people and must be carefully considered."*
- *"Education in schools and colleges must remain accessible to families with disabilities and/or disadvantages".*

Adult Services:

- *"The provision of adult social care is already difficult and operationally this requires risk management to ensure that vulnerable adults are safe."*
- *"There needs to be more clarity as to whether a greater investment will be made into Carers Support, befriending services, day care services and other such interventions. It is important to be really clear exactly where cuts and disinvestment will land and what services will be impacted."*
- *"It's taken me six months to get a Care Needs Assessment for a relative and this is down to lack of funding"*
- *"LA services which are cut will become reliant on NHS. As we have now the NHS is paying for social care through BCF. Secondly the residents who are no longer being support end up in deteriorated health."*
- *"A reduction in funding for adult social care would only exacerbate an already substandard system. The current level of service is far from satisfactory, and further cuts would be devastating to families like mine who rely on these essential services."*
- *"Adult social care needs more input from health services and in particular occupational therapy and physiotherapy in order to create change in increasing independence and self management. If supported living facilities were more modern and better equipped individuals could live more independently for longer with a better quality of life".*
- *"Adult social care also needs extensive review, as well as strengthening links with the VCRSE sector."*
- *"More training and investment should be made into workforce so that the asset based practice and neighbourhood model of work is strengthened and becomes part of everybody's practice."*
- *"Understand that strength based practice has tremendous limitations and is impractical. The proposals in this budget are outrageous and unfair and would only serve to further perpetuate the inequalities in our borough and broaden the impact of austerity".*

- *“Already utilise a strengths based approach, if this could be rolled out correctly across all departments it would benefit not only the councils budget, but those receiving services in a positive way”.*

f. Staffing, including Councillors

36 comments reflected on staffing challenges, as well as a call to review the number of senior roles and their reflective salaries, including Councillors. Some residents call for a transparency of salaries, whilst Bolton Council employees highlight concerns with recruitment and services running on a minimal workforce.

- *“You list suggestions of HR and job management that should have been already in place years ago.”*
- *“The frustration to residence is the big spending on senior management. At a time when services are being squeezed, those earning £60k plus is increasing.”*
- *“Try making senior leadership take a pay cut”.*
- *“Of the overall spend on staff it would be good to see the breakdown to understand if there are any persons considered excessive payments and whether there are too many layers of management.”*
- *“There is not that many high paid staff needed!! Cut the top of the workforce!!”*
- *“Stop the excessive expenses claimed by councillors and reduce number of councillors.”*
- *“Reduce the number of councillors. The town does not need 60 councillors.”*
- *“By streamlining our workforce to only the most essential personnel, we can dramatically reduce costs while maintaining core services. This lean approach will foster innovation and efficiency in government operations.”*
- *“As a member of staff there has been a trend to freeze recruitment during previous phases of cuts. The staffing numbers are now 'down to the bones' in many sections. If agency staffing is cut and there is a move to review some posts then it is vital that key/essential positions are identified and filled quickly, not left vacant.”*
- *“How will deletion of these vacancies impact on the workload of other services? For example, if HR post is deleted, what additional work will be transferred to supervisors in my team?”*

g. Bins

Whilst this consultation did not consult on resident waste collection, stakeholders still provided reflections on recent proposals. 33 comments were received.

- *“Recycling charges wouldn't be paid as pay council tax already.”*
- *“Waste and litter needs to be disposed of, if it isnt then the area will decline.”*
- *“Charging for green bins being emptied is just as bad”.*
- *“We have to phone almost every week as our bins haven't been emptied. It been a complete shambles since the collection day changed and you want to charge us more??”*
- *“If you think us paying for green bins is the way you are wrong you will cause more fly tipping and people stealing others bins”.*
- *“We shouldn't be charged for green bin empty when we pay top rate in council for Westhoughton.”*

h. Bolton Town Centre

28 comments reflect concern with Bolton Town Centre, both in its appearance, lack of investment and its comparison with other neighbouring towns. Stakeholders urge caution with the proposals, stating they could lead to further decline and less engagement from residents in these spaces.

- *“Bolton's economy has to improve for the townsfolk to benefit and lessen council cash calls. This council has made some strides to reorder the town centre but lacks the competency to sustain the trajectory of gains which are presently patchwork as evidenced by subdued trading conditions and lack of visitors.”*
- *“The towns a mess, disrepair and parks not safe.”*
- *“Keeping the town clean and tidy is vital to attract investment and visitors.”*
- *“Consideration should be applied regards how to use the town centre space differently. It's a concrete jungle that in unpleasant.”*
- *“The proposals will eventually turn business and trade away from Bolton which will affect the future economy”.*
- *“Lack of investment in the local town and services will gravely affect their future and result in migration from Bolton”.*
- *“Other increases will just make us opt out of using the town center and service's”*
- *“If these proposals are implemented it really will be the final nail in the coffin for an already dying town centre. I regularly visit Bury and Chorley and as I walk round I do wonder why other councils seem to have thriving town centres and looked after green spaces when Bolton doesn't.”*
- *“You need to do something to bring life back to the town centre, our neighbouring town, Bury, has a thriving centre and lots of people go there instead of Bolton now”.*

i. Gritting Services

25 residents and stakeholders are concerned by the proposal to remove grit bins, worsening driving conditions and potentially leading to more accidents and increase pressure to NHS and Adult Services.

Note, this theme is cross-cutting with protected characteristics.

- *“Loss of salt bins would make the roads near me much more dangerous in icy conditions.”*
- *“I would hope grit bins continue so people aren't in A&E with broken limbs if icy, its a false saving to reduce in this area.”*
- *“I had to pick up an elderly man who had fallen because he slipped on ice. There was no gritting on the pavements.”*
- *“Strongly disagree with not funding grit bins - roads where there are inclines are dangerous without grit. They rely on the good will of individuals putting out the grit - without such supplies you will be increasing the probability of accidents”.*
- *“For £40k to potentially risk people's lives seems something that should not be an option”.*
- *“If the grit bins are removed I would not be able to get to work. It may seem like a small thing but the impact of removing them is significant.”*

j. Wider proposals & service areas:

75 comments were received which outline reflections on the wider proposals within the budget consultation. These have been broken down by proposal and are cross-cutting with the protected characteristics theme above.

Libraries & Leisure Centres (19 comments)

- *“We would suffer dreadfully if our local Bromley Cross Library were to close”.*
- *“Detrimental impact if any closure of the libraries”.*

- *"I would hope our library would become a visitor centre as well as a library and community centre with warm space for people in heating difficulties."*
- *"If services are cut at the library this would be detrimental to my family."*
- *"It would be beneficial to us to maximise the use of libraries as we visit the library regularly and would really miss it if branches were closed."*
- *"Money spent on training and repairs and renewals and the maintenance of libraries is money well spent and promotes growth and, if you add support for leisure services you promote growth at a personal level too."*
- *"We are regular users of Westhoughton leisure centre, for swimming lessons, so any funding affecting leisure facilities could impact us".*

Green spaces and highways (12 comments)

- *"I feel if the budget is cut from green spaces and keeping your area clean will have a big impact within the area where I live and other areas . The streets are already full of litter and look a mess."*
- *"I've noticed a big decline over the past few years in the maintenance of parks."*
- *"Our roads are a disgrace, grids aren't being cleared causing flooding"*
- *"Green spaces are not tended to, dogs cannot be walked in the summer as the grass is too long."*
- *"Cutting services to parks and green space that are already very neglected and essentially maintained by volunteers is also ridiculous."*
- *"Green areas and parks have been forgotten and ignored largely since Covid last years poor mowing season. Roads and pavements are in a terrible state. We'll reduce the amount of cycling as a result... and be more reliant on motor vehicles."*

Digital Services (12 comments)

- *"I welcome the commitment to provide more online, but I fear you're just not very good at online and the user experience isn't the best. It needs a lot more investment to make it more accessible."*
- *"Increased use of digital services would be positive."*
- *"What impact will this have on other Council services supported by the Digital Strategy team?"*
- *"Moving customer services online is a good idea providing it is simple to use and the most tasks can be done online."*
- *"AI can be seriously reviewed for money-saving when it comes to budget and tech reviews."*
- *"Consideration also has to be given to the digital transformation of certain services & what this will mean for older adults who are not technically confident, etc."*

Community Safety (10 comments)

- *"Reduction in maintaining green areas makes people not care about their local community and increases anti social behaviours which can also bring house prices down and make areas less desirable to live in"*
- *"New research by Dr Gillian Pepper shows a direct link between how safe people feel, and making healthier choices. People who feel unsafe make unhealthy choices, and vice versa".*
- *"I never go into the town centre to spend my hard earned money due to level of aggressive beggars. It intimidating & unpleasant. I feel that efforts be it the council, the police, or/& others should look to address it."*
- *"Anti social behaviour must be a priority to make our town safe".*

Housing & Infrastructure (9 comments)

- *"Housing services are particularly disappointing. Despite being on the council housing list, my rent continues to put me into debt, yet my application remains in a Priority Need Band. Meanwhile, there is a property on my street that has been sitting vacant for over a year due to disrepair."*
- *"Money need to be put into supporting the infrastructure of towns where multiple areas of 1000s of houses have been approved. No extra GPs, dentists, schools, nurseries."*
- *"We need more affordable homes for the housing crisis."*
- *"Re. the raising of council tax. I wouldn't have thought it necessary considering the amount of new houses being built in Westhoughton (on green belt) and without the infrastructure needed to raise it at all."*

- *“With the number of new-build properties which you are allowing to be built on green field sites (each of which is earning you £1000-£2000 per year in tax), there is absolutely no need to increase tax for the rest of us.”*

Contract efficiencies (8 comments)

- *“So much money is wasted on procurement processes”.*
- *“While looking for efficiencies in contract reviews, there is a need to ensure that the quality of the service provision is not effected.”*
- *“I know this first hand as I can see the results of council contractors work in our environment and also know how much is being wasted due to contractors and service providers overcharging.”*
- *“I feel that contracts should be reviewed on a regular basis and that any members need to own up if anyone has a connections with anyone bidding”.*
- *“A thorough overall of buying in services needs looking at, your system is broken”.*

Bereavement Services (5 comments)

- *“I am happy to pay more for council tax and grave/cemetery services if it protects services.”*
- *“I agree with all the proposals apart from increasing the cost of funerals”.*
- *“Raising costs for bereavement services is basically cashing in on someone’s misery and is fundamentally wrong!”*

k. Immigration & benefit claimants

12 comments were received that highlight residents’ frustration in programmes supporting refugees / asylum seekers, as well as benefit claimants. Sentiment outlines that funding should be prioritised to programmes that support local citizens and ‘hard working’ communities.

- *“Stop paying for migrant services and look after Bolton people.”*
- *“All you are doing is helping foreign people, not our own who have lived in the town for decades.”*
- *“Too much money spent on housing refugees & not enough on local families when new social housing is built”.*
- *“I am 100% behind helping legal immigrants, however if this is contributing to increased cost, then it needs to stop! We the residents are not responsible for paying others ways!”*
- *“About time people in social housing are reviewed!”*
- *“Plenty of people in the bolton area claiming benefits and working cash in hand and accessing all the free benefits available to them. This needs to be addressed”*
- *“Get people off benefits and in work as it shouldn't be the workers that are continuously battered.”*

Other comments

Other comments reference the role of volunteers and voluntary sector within the proposal and the wider impacts to these groups. In addition, some further comments provide a sentiment of agreement and acceptance to the proposals outlined within the consultation.

Voluntary Sector

- Reference to libraries *“Maybe using more volunteers could keep costs down.”*
- *“Use of volunteers, will help the community & bring it together.”*
- Reference to social care *“The strain is then felt by the voluntary sector, who must pick up the pieces and the council seems quick to pass the responsibility onto a third party when it is a statutory right to have needs met.”*
- *“The voluntary sector is able to provide better services for children than council staff and this should be utilised better across all areas of the council.”*

- *“As a VCSE organisation we want nothing more than to work in partnership with Bolton Council to support those most in need. In order to do that, we need access to non competitive funding, preferably middle to long term.”*

General agreement / acceptance of the proposals within the budget

- *“It will cost us more, but if efficient running of the services with a fully supported workforce is required then everyone will be better off and Bolton will have a strong and healthy future”.*
- *“More costs and potentially fewer services, but given the situation faced, this is something we can and will live with.”*
- *“Obviously this will impact our household budget but it is important to see the bigger picture for the community. I do believe council funds need to be spent wisely and support a review of the council tax system to make it fairer for everyone”.*
- *“Not everyone I know is this fortunate and I would be happy to pay more in council tax if it were to be ring fenced to support the most vulnerable families, and especially children, in our Borough.”*

14. Alternative Solutions

Respondents were asked to suggest alternative approaches that could be explored in order to address the £25m budget shortfall. 460 comments were received, which have been broken down into the following 8 themes.

Q16. Please use this space if you want to suggest any other ways Bolton Council could address the £25m budget shortfall whilst still delivering statutory services		
Rank	Category	No. of respondents
a.	Staff efficiency savings	167
b.	Review/Reduce – services	112
c.	Investment Opportunities	100
d.	Management of finances	81
e.	Align services/review agency staff	28
f.	Immigration/benefits	28
g.	Utilise Community groups	20
h.	Alternative housing solutions	16

a. Staff efficiency savings

167 respondents state that Bolton Council could make staff efficiency savings. Two main themes were evident within this strand; ‘review staffing roles across the council (including councillors)’ and ‘reducing wages for staff’.

The majority of comments state that there should be a review/audit of staffing roles across the Council; reducing the number of managers across the organisation; managers salaries to be on a pay freeze; staff pensions/benefits to be reviewed. Other respondents state that the number of councillors per ward should be reduced, as well as having their expenses reduced. Other comments include making reductions from the Mayoral budget.

Review staffing roles (including councillors)

- *“Carry out a total review and reorganisation of management structure of council officers, all payed managers, employees, advisors, consultants etc.”*
- *“Review your processes and job descriptions and what people actually do.”*
- *“Review headcount. The number of council staff earning huge salaries is excessive.”*
- *“Undertake a thorough review of the entire workforce.”*
- *“Reduce the number of councillors for wards.”*
- *“Reduce number of councillors to two per ward.”*
- *“Abolish the mayors office.”*
- *“As a priority, get rid of the role of mayor.”*

Reduce staffing wages (including councillors)

- *“Look at staff wages and generous pension packages.”*
- *“Cut higher management and council wages down.”*
- *“Cut staffing levels.”*
- *“Freeze pay of staff.”*
- *“Management right at the top should have pay increases frozen for the next 3 years (if not already).”*
- *“Reduce expenses for MP they have a salary that is x3 higher than average wage don't need to have expenses as well.”*
- *“No allowance/pay increases for staff and councillors for 2 years.”*

b. Review/Reduce services

107 responses were received from residents suggesting a review or to reduce current services. Some residents suggest that reviews should take place on building use, as well as reducing energy consumptions in council run buildings (turning down heating/lighting). Other comments made were around reducing car parking charges, with respondents stating that charges are currently too high, effecting inward investment by visitors to the town. Respondents suggest that there should be a reduction in the number of overall events, which include Christmas light displays, Iron Man and the Food and Drink Festival. Comments were also made stating that the introduction of cycle lanes, and the renewing of paving, have had limited impact, as are rarely used. Respondents also made suggestions about reviewing household waste services, with comments outlining the reduction in the frequency of bin collections and ceasing providing food waste bags.

Building use (including energy consumptions)

- *“Address the heating in the Town Hall, and other work spaces, and look at other ways to reduce energy consumptions.”*
- *“Close all libraries, facility from a bygone time and sell buildings.”*
- *“More efficient use of council buildings.”*
- *“I have been in the town hall several times and have been astounded at the heating that has been blasting out. Turning that down would help to save money.”*
- *“Cut down on lighting / heating in council offices.”*
- *“Sell off or change use of office buildings to generate revenue (e.g rent our office spaces to other organisations, turn then into accommodation).”*

Parking fees

- *“Reducing the parking fees to attract more shoppers into town.”*
- *“Remove parking charges in the town centre and allow new business to thrive.”*
- *“Why dont you attract more buisness into town by supporting independent shops with a reduced rental rate until they are established and making money.”*
- *“Shops have closed due to a loss of foot fall, and high car parking charges (over zealous parking wardens). Years ago when there was free parking (at allotted times, weekends etc.) the town benefited, surely it could be tried again?”*
- *“The car parking charges are high, which puts me off coming to the few shops there are, and the NCP dominance in the town centre needs to be reviewed.”*

Cancel events

- *“Please cancel the Food & Drink festival. The event in the past 2 years has not been as enjoyable as past years. I view this as a luxury as well as the yearly and disruptive Iron Man event.*
- *“Reduce all spending on arts and cultural events.”*
- *“Are Christmas lights appreciated in towns like Horwich, Westhoughton etc are they needed?”*
- *“The amount of money spent on events such as food fayres, Iron Man etc is probably very high.”*
- *“Food and drink festival is a waste of money and makes town centre too busy.”*

Services

- *“Have a yearly bin collection calendar online as a printable version.”*
- *“Stop translation services and reduce transport availability for some social cases.”*
- *“Review the way recycling bins are collected - make it monthly for beige, burgundy and green - and drop the green from November til March.”*
- *“Stop giving food waste bags which would save £212,000 per year, ending free rodent poison service to save money.”*
- *“Grit bins, I've never used.”*

c. Create revenue and investment opportunities

100 comments were received by residents who suggest that the Council could create revenue by implementing fines for fly tipping and parking. Residents also made comments on attracting businesses into the town, which could be done by reducing business rates. It was also suggested that the council should be mirroring the best practice implemented in other towns, particularly Bury. Respondents also made comments that the council could use money from filming.

Fines

- *“A small charge to be made to users/customers at The Bolton Food & Drink Festival. E.g £ 2 for sale of a wristband for adults. £ 1 for children.”*
- *“More.paid events.”*
- *“You should increase fining people who throw rubbish outside waste etc it is disgusting they kept doing it everyday or weekends or months!”*
- *“Fines for people using mobile phones whilst driving. More speed cameras and on places such as Chorley New Road to detect driving offences for income.*
- *“Maybe cctv with an outlay but residents pay to reduce fly tipping as Bolton is a disgrace with the amount.”*
- *“raising up fly tippings fines etc.”*

Filming

- *“use the money from filming which is alot.”*
- *“Increase the payments for TV recording that will bring in money.”*
- *“Using our beautiful buildings a film backdrops, renovate Hall'ith wood to be used.”*
- *“many TV/Films are made in Bolton, why not an annual film/cultural festival and set up a TV/film Academy with the University.”*

Encouraging businesses into the town centre

- *“Encourage more businesses into the town by reducing rents for new commercial tenants and even reduce business rates. It's better that 10 new businesses all pay 75% less rent and business rates than 1 business paying the full rates.”*
- *“Encourage people back into the town to spend money not by limiting parking and increasing rents. Create jobs and a nightlife.”*
- *“Reduction in rents, business rates to increase businesses to town centre, getting customers back into centre to increase revenue. Like Bury. Reduced parking in town centre car parks.”*
- *“People would rather go to Bury where they can park for free and there is more shopping.”*
- *“Improve rent for businesses and take note of what Bury have done. People go to Bury and Manchester for a day out shopping not Bolton.”*
- *“Maybe look to chorley council as they seem to be doing a much better job.”*

d. Management of finances

81 comments outline the frustration with how the Council manage finances. Comments made were based around several themes, which include undertaking a full audit to reduce spending across the organisation; claiming back payments from NCP; and claiming back money from other local authorities.

Respondents to the survey suggest that more could be done to claim back money from those who have Council Tax arrears. Residents also suggest that the Council could seek additional funding from central government.

Seeking funding from central government

- *“A better settlement from Westminster.”*
- *“Apply for more funding from central government.”*
- *“Keep lobbying national government to change the way councils are funded.”*
- *“Unite with other councils and fight back at the government who have caused this.”*
- *“Ask the Labour government to fund this as they're supposed to be making things better aren't they??”*

Management of finances

- *“Stop writing off 1.25million in debt to NCP car parks who have billions in profit who van sfford it instead of raising council tax for poor people. Don't write off debt for large companies collect it would fill massive short fall. Regular audits to stop fraud and abuse of people's finances.”*
- *“Stop allowing companies like NCP get away without paying what they owe.”*
- *“Collect all outstanding council tax arrears. Stop letting residents get away with not paying.”*

- *“pursue Council Tax defaulters more vigorously.”*
- *“It would be good to look closely to see that people who don’t pay council tax are genuine cases.”*
- *“Also we need to get the money owed from other Councils which they’ve borrowed.”*
- *“Using the money efficiently.”*
- *“Look at ways to save instead of spend.”*
- *“Proper management of funds.”*
- *“Recall loans that you have made to other councils and groups.”*
- *“Double check expenses, review salaries, start from within!”*
- *““Ask for repayments of the £m’s given to other councils.”*

e. Review agency staff/aligning services

A total of 28 comments were made about reviewing agency staff, who are currently employed by the Council. Respondents also suggested aligning services to ensure they were more streamlined, by using staff and resources that are already available.

- *“Stop the use of agency or contract staff, stop senior leaders commissioning work from external contractors and instead train their staff to do the work instead.”*
- *“Reduce agency staff.”*
- *“Temporary staff spending is beyond a joke millions spent with agencies.”*
- *“Stop spending a fortune on contractors and get permanent staff in the jobs instead.”*
- *“By all means, upgrade your IT systems if needed, but do NOT hire overly expensive contractors to carry out the work.”*
- *“Reviewing contracts with external services that maybe over calculating”*
- *“Bring as many services as possible 'in-house'. Such as children in care.”*
- *“being streamlined as we should have these services organised and ready to use we can do this without extra staff and maybe cut the amount of staff.”*

f. Immigration/benefits

There has been an increase in the level of comments received in relation to immigration and benefit claimants, compared to previous budget consultations. 28 comments contain a sentiment that local authority support and provision should prioritise ‘hard working’, local residents and communities.

- *“House our locals first.”*
- *“Stop providing so many services for people who have just moved to the country, look after our children and elderly first.”*
- *“Maybe you could stop bringing in immigrants and having them take up the housing that many locals need. Not to mention the cost of their benefits and free medical help.”*
- *“Stop giving immigrants everything they ask for without good reason.”*
- *“Stop accepting more immigrants into Bolton. We are at breaking point already. There has to be a level of this but currently it’s gone mad. No housing, no jobs no food as it’s expensive. The hard working common folk are being stripped by the tax man now.”*
- *“Stop housing people in hotels, I understand people have a reason to live in the uk but why should they be in hotels when our own veterans live on the streets.”*
- *“Look at people’s benefits, see who really need them.”*
- *“Take a closer look at peoples finances before giving more and more benefits.”*
- *“Crack down on benefit fraud, too many people are claiming benefits or not working. Support the working people or the people who have put into the system at least.”*
- *“Stop paying rent for people on benefits.”*

g. Utilise Community groups

20 comments have been made suggesting that the Council could engage further with the voluntary and charity sector to support current services the organisation has to offer and potentially create revenue for events.

- *“Engage consistently with the VCSE Sector.”*
- *“Work much more collaboratively with the VCRSE sector.”*
- *“Look at charities to deliver training e.g. Samaritans offer free training and ask for a small donation.”*
- *“Look at ways of sharing buildings with community groups etc.”*
- *“Make use of more volunteers.”*
- *“Maybe voluntary groups could try and raise some money for their own objectives by having coffee mornings, bring and buy sales, raffles etc to help reduce the money they need from the council.”*

h. Alternative housing solutions

16 comments were received around the housing agenda, stating that more should be done to create new housing schemes. Comments include building more houses and using brownfield sites for development, as well as using current buildings/empty homes for accommodation needs.

- *“Look at current contracts and how they offer value for money, look at all current empty homes that are not occupied can these be used to support the community with homeless?”*
- *“Build more houses to reduce the cost of temporary accommodation.”*
- *“investment build on more brown land to achieve the new housing market.”*
- *“make it easier for older people to downsize houses to create movement in the housing market.”*

15. Further comments

All residents and stakeholders were provided the opportunity to reflect further on the proposals and provide additional feedback. 230 comments were received. Comments were wide ranging and have been analysed and categorised into the following 14 themes.

Q17. Please use this space for any further comments about the budget proposals		
Rank	Category	No. of respondents
a.	Council tax / business rates / rents – freeze or reduction	43
b.	General negative comments	32
c.	More consultation / communication / information	31
d.	No more cuts to services	27
e.	Reductions in staff / councillors / salaries	27
f.	Reduce car park charges / chase money owed	24
g.	Prioritise / back to basics / invest in what’s important	18
h.	Outsource less / monitor and re-negotiate contracts	12
i.	Proposals (reviewing costs / practices) should be happening anyway	11
j.	Income-generate	11

k.	Outsource more services / independent advice / voluntary sector help	10
l.	Don't change bin services	10
m.	General positive comments – doing best under difficult circumstances	10
n.	More central government funding	8

a. Council tax / business rates / rents - freeze or reduction

43 comments were received urging the Council to freeze or reduce Council Tax, business rates or rents. Respondents felt they were 'paying more to get less' and that people would struggle under the current economic climate. They also felt increasing business rates and rents would have a detrimental effect - as the increase would just be passed on to the customer.

- *"Proposing an increase when the current service is already substandard is unreasonable."*
- *"People cannot afford to keep paying more and getting a reduced/worse service"*
- *"Every year council tax is raised and every year there are budget shortfalls. A different approach is needed."*
- *"Don't charge small business an arm and a leg trying to make an honest living."*
- *"Hitting businesses is not good as then the consumer pays."*
- *"Rather than pushing up rents - use the reserves to speculate and accumulate."*
- *"I don't agree with increasing market stall costs... because this has a knock-on effect to the customers who end up paying more."*

b. General negative comments

32 respondents made general negative comments, explaining that they had no confidence in the local authority and had complaints about the town in general (especially the town centre).

- *"I don't have any confidence in Bolton council whatsoever. It fails on keeping the streets clean, cutting the grasslands and emptying the bins, and has done so for years."*
- *"I have seen the town deteriorate over 10 years with a master plan that under-delivers consistently."*
- *"Everyone I talk to is so disappointed with the council."*
- *"Evidence of long-term failure of this council and the catalogue of compounded mistakes that has diminished the town."*
- *"Absolutely disgusting and making us seriously consider moving away from this area!"*
- *"It's a disgrace how many shops are stood empty. Bolton used to be thriving and now it's on its knees"*

c. More consultation / communication / information

31 respondents made comments in this category explaining that the Council should listen to what residents want through more communication and effective consultation and engagement, and that they should make more information available and have more accountability.

- *"Ensure Bolton people are the voice on their own town - not people who know nothing about Bolton."*
- *"Work on getting in touch and communication."*
- *"Disappointing to see such limited information."*

- *“More regular financial up-dates”*
- *“Listen to people’s suggestions and hear what their concerns are. “*
- *“Councils need to be made more accountable with spending tax-payers money”*

d. No more cuts to services

27 respondents state there should be no more cuts to services, explaining that further cuts could be dangerous and would affect the most vulnerable.

- *“Street lighting is ineffective, reducing grit is dangerous. “*
- *“To keep cutting services is really stretching the patience of the general public.”*
- *“The council should be looking at efficiencies and not cutting services.”*
- *“To keep putting up council tax & cutting adult care you are targeting the vulnerable in Bolton.*
- *“My fear is that you cut costs and services that never return, or never return to what they were.”*

e. Reductions in staff / councillors / salaries

27 comments were received suggesting the Council could save money by reducing the number of councillors or staff and reviewing salaries. They also mentioned reducing overtime, sick-leave, expenses and perks.

- *“A lot of councillors on a lot of money, this needs stopping! “*
- *“Reduce the overall numbers of council staff who are paid substantially above the minimum wage.”*
- *“Look at your own staff costs and you’d be surprised how much you could save by having staff become much more efficient.”*
- *“Question what perks, benefits the top 1% are getting.”*
- *“The council appears too heavy on management and directors.”*

f. Reduce car parking charges / chase money owed

A total of 24 comments related to car parking charges. This number was initially 4 but increased by an extra 20 following a campaign on the ‘My Westhoughton’ Facebook page. Respondents felt that charging for parking (or charging extra) has / would impact negatively on town centre businesses (comments mainly related to Westhoughton town centre). Chasing the money owed from the NCP was also mentioned.

- *“Ramping up car parking charges is a false economy - people will just be pushed to retail parks and local towns that offer free or very cheap parking.”*
- *“Westhoughton town centre has improved a lot over the last few years with previously empty units being filled. One reason I go there is the free parking.”*
- *“I think introducing parking charges in small town centres will "kill" the small businesses as it has done in Bolton town centre. People will use out of town retail centres or do online shopping”*
- *“Claim the money back from NCP!”*

g. Prioritise / back to basics / invest in what's important

18 respondents made comments suggesting the Council needed to prioritise the most vulnerable residents in Bolton and basic, fundamental services.

- *"Are Christmas lights more important than regular emptying of bins? Begin with priorities."*
- *"Focus on the fundamental basics first."*
- *"The elderly need our support and care as a priority. Too many people are seeking refuge in our town and being given accommodation and money from the budget when we have many other people already here and services which need this money first."*
- *"Keep our lowest paid Boltonians warm and fed and look after our children."*

h. Outsource less / monitor and re-negotiate contracts

12 people said the Council should review the use of consultants and contractors, monitor and re-negotiate contracts and look at keeping services internal.

- *"You should be reviewing contracts, purchasing arrangements"*
- *"Look at prices you pay private contractors. Train and recruit council electricians, plumbers, trades instead of using private contractors who charge 3 times as much."*
- *"Everyone knows that that the public sector pays top rates for everything. Your staff just do whatever is easiest for them and never get value for money as its just public money."*
- *"Get residents to scrutinize how money is spent and review whether certain tenders provide value for money."*
- *"Dramatically reduce the number of consultants engaged by the council."*
- *"Stop wasting money on expensive contractors."*

i. Proposals (reviewing costs / practices) should be happening anyway

11 respondents felt that some of the proposals that had been put forward (especially those related to reviewing costs, processes or practices) were common sense and should be happening as a matter of course.

- *"Some of these questions are no brainers... why are we consulting staff and the public about the obvious?"*
- *"Why do you even need to ask if it's a good idea to save money by renegotiating contracts?"*
- *"Why do you need to ask permission to negotiate better deals with providers? Should be standard practice!"*
- *"A lot of these proposals to cut waste should have been implemented years ago,"*

j. Income-generate

Income generation ideas were suggested by 11 respondents, these include selling off empty buildings, attracting more visitors to the town (but only if this made a profit) and increasing or implementing fines / penalty notices.

- *"Attracting visitors is a great way to enhance the town and bring in further revenue to meet budget shortfalls."*
- *"Some nonprofit making Leisure Centres could be sold off the private sector."*

- *“If you are going to introduce markets and activities in the town centres as a way of bringing in additional revenue, please ensure this does not impact council finances.”*
- *“Are there any empty or underused council buildings that could be sold off to raise funds,”*

k. Outsource more services / independent advice / voluntary sector help

10 people suggested that the Council outsource some services, feeling that this could provide better value for money. Some also suggested the Council should support the voluntary and community sector to deliver more services.

- *“Look to outsource more stuff to get a better service and without carrying the overhead.”*
- *“Outsource internal support services like HR and Financial services.”*
- *“Look at ways the voluntary and community sector could operate some non-essential services”*
- *“The council needs to look at avoiding duplication of services, which VCSE sector is providing, instead they could provide additional resource to local VCSE partners.”*

l. Don't change bin services

10 people took the opportunity to comment about bin services, urging the Council to re-think the monthly collection of paper and cardboard and not implement the proposal to charge for the collection of green waste.

- *“Do NOT charge for green bins, it is such a short-sighted idea and will lead to more fly tipping”*
- *“Bring back fortnightly beige bin collections - every month is idiotic when everything is moving towards paper/card packaging.”*
- *“Do not apply the Bin tax costs due to the backlash.”*

m. General positive comments – doing their best under difficult circumstances

10 respondents made generally positive comments, feeling like the organisation was doing its best in difficult times.

- *“Good job under continued difficult times.”*
- *“They (the proposals) seem pretty reasonable to me.”*
- *“The majority of the proposals are common sense and should have been done years ago.”*
- *“I don't like to see any cuts being made but I understand the difficulty the council, like all councils, is in.”*

n. More central government funding

Finally, 8 people felt that the Council should pursue the availability of central or regional government pots of money or other funding sources such as the National Lottery.

- *“I feel that the GM area should also look at the allocation of finances and resources as in Bolton we seem to fair off worse.”*
- *“We need to secure a bigger part of the central government pot, seems to me that we have sat on our hands for far too long whilst most of the money is used to keep the south of the country maintained.”*

- *“The Council should prioritise efforts to find new sources of funding for services, for example a Central fund for repairs of road surfaces (potholes) has just been announced by the Government.”*
- *“Blackrod has done well recently in getting lottery money for leisure services. Perhaps Bolton should apply for specific project work too.”*

Other comments

Other (39) comments which didn't really fit into a theme included reducing the number of people moving into the town, looking at ideas from other local authorities, and putting money into other services such as policing and schools.

- *“The council should look carefully at models of internal economic organisation utilised by other authorities which have been successful e.g. Preston.”*
- *“Look at the larger costs around housing on Non-UK citizens. Priority should always be the services for the citizens of the UK.”*
- *“Regardless of cost.”, policing out of Bolton centre needs to be addressed.”*

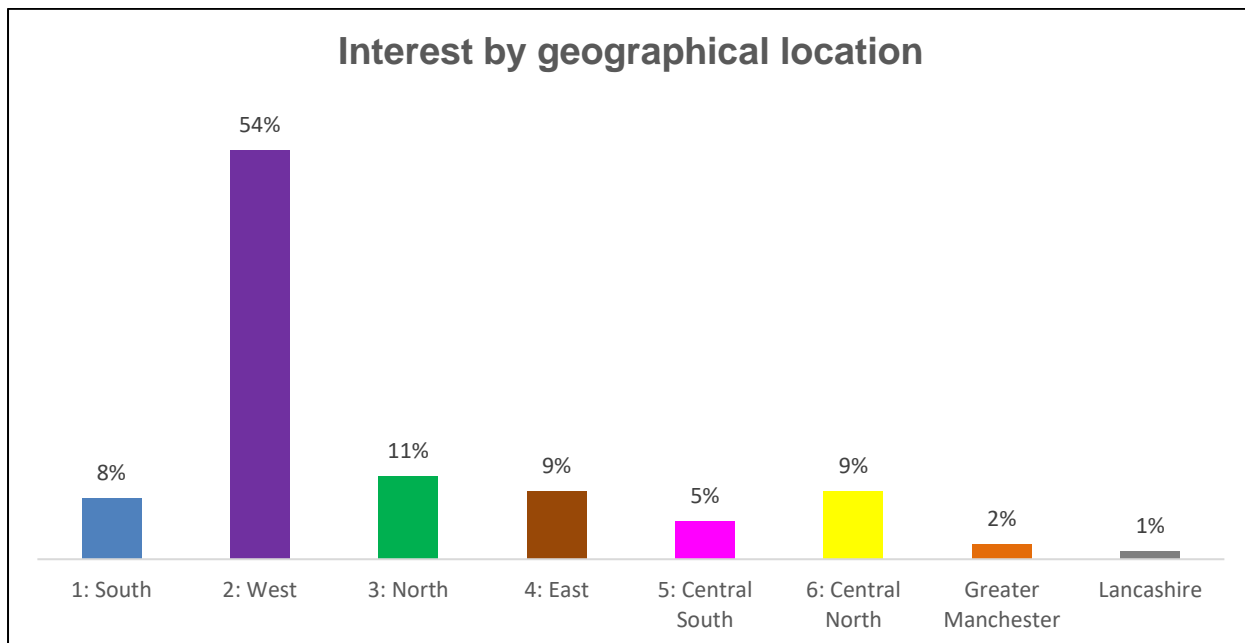
16a. Demographics: Geographical location

The table below outlines the demographics of respondents by geographical district. A total of 801 respondents provided a full, valid postcode. Residents in the West of the borough (purple bar) represent over half (54%/ 433) of the responses received. This response rate is attributed to the hyperlocal campaign highlighted in section 3 of the report. Prior to this campaign, 136 responses had been received from residents in the West of Bolton.

Just over one-tenth (11%) of comments were received from residents in the North of the borough (green bar). All other neighbourhood areas had less than 10% engagement levels. 2% of responses came from residents in Greater Manchester and 1% from residents in Lancashire (orange and grey bars).



*Neighbourhoods are a local geography for integrated health and social care; all have a population of around 50,000 residents.



Ward level engagement

Neighbourhood engagement has been broken down further, providing Ward level engagement.

Ward Area	Number
Astley Bridge	17
Bradshaw	34
Brightmet	29
Bromley Cross	25
Farnworth North	19
Farnworth South	17
Great Lever	12
Halliwell	13
Heaton, Lostock & Chew Moor	29
Horwich North	36
Horwich South & Blackrod	32

Ward Area	Number
Hulton	18
Kearsley	20
Little Lever & Darcy Lever	24
Queens Park & Central	19
Rumworth	12
Smithills	30
Tonge with the Haulgh	35
Westhoughton North & Hunger Hill	163
Westhoughton South	194

16b. Sex

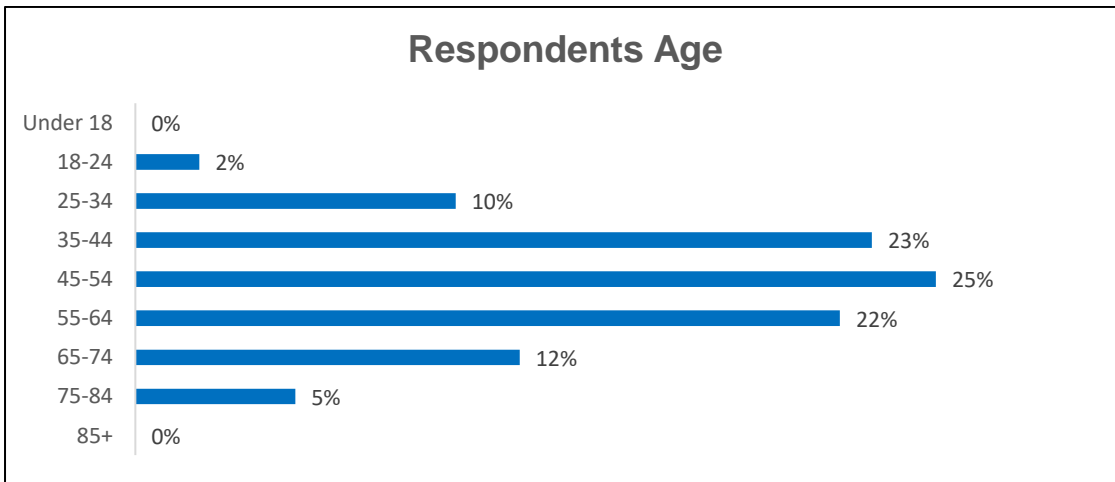
853 responses were received providing the respondent's sex. 57% of respondents' identity as female, 41% as male and 2% of respondents identify as 'other'.



Base: 853

16c. Age

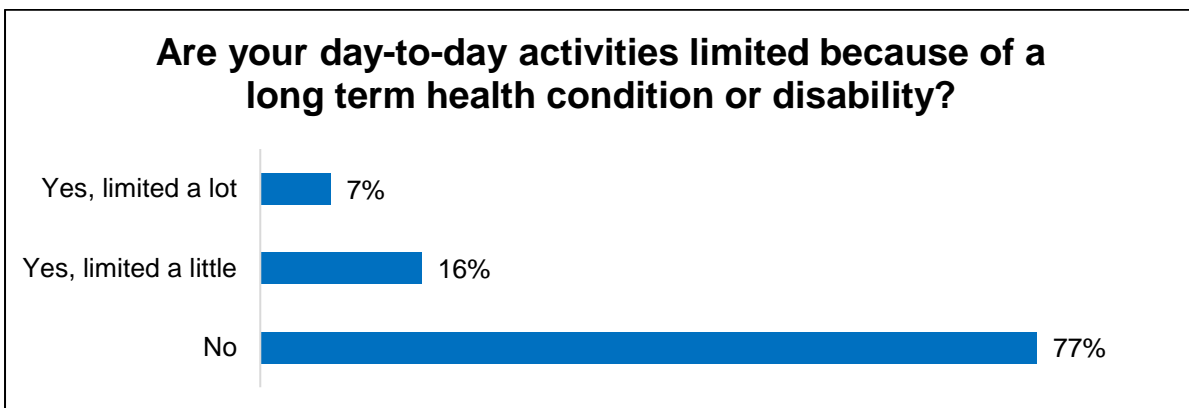
855 responses were received from individuals in all age categories. 2% of responses are under the age of 25 years. 80% of respondents are aged between 25 – 64 years. 17% of responses were received from individuals above the age of 65 years.



Base: 855

16d. Health and disability

Of the 840 stakeholders responding to the consultation, nearly one-quarter (23%) have their day-to-day activities limited due to a long-term physical or mental health condition or illness.

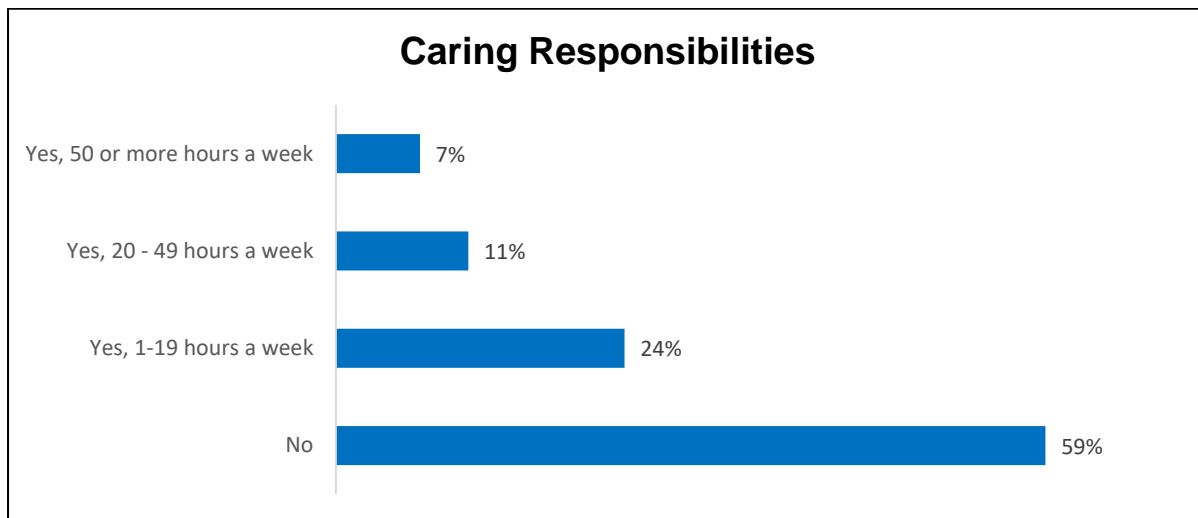


Base: 840

16e. Caring responsibility

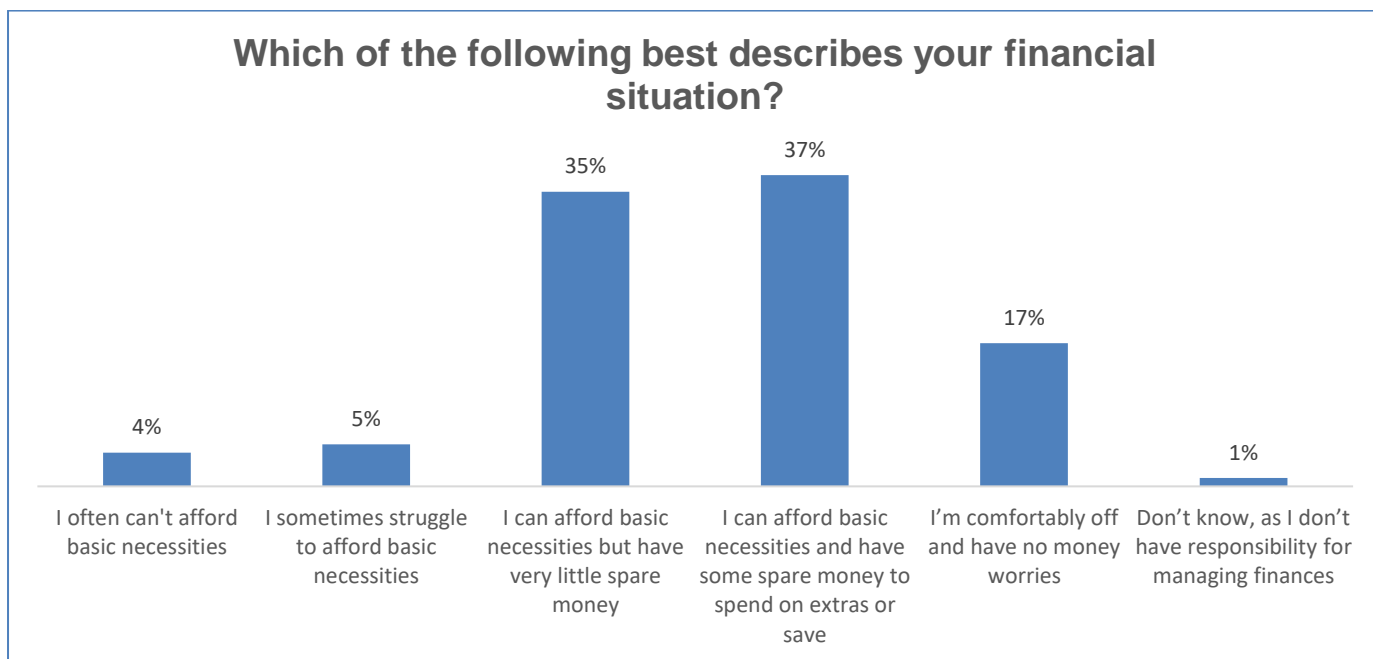
846 respondents stated whether they had a caring responsibility. Over two-fifths (42%) of individuals taking part in this question look after or provide some form of help or support to family members, friends,

neighbours and others, who need help because they have a long-term physical or mental ill-health / are disabled or have problems relating to old age.



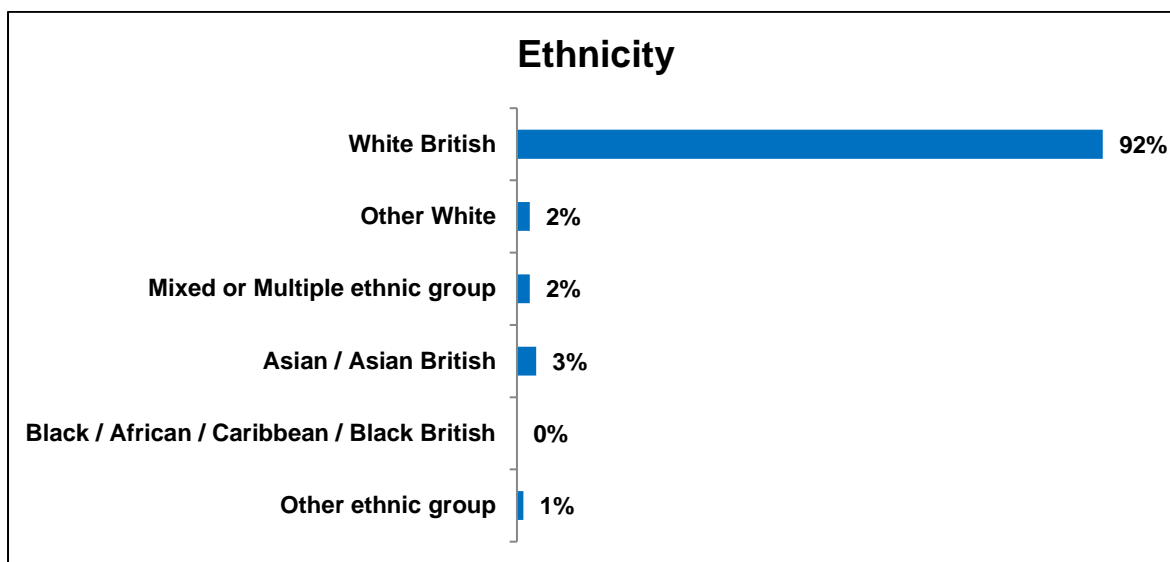
16f. Cost of Living

All stakeholders were asked to reflect on the cost-of-living impact and how financially stable they considered themselves. Of the 842 responses received, over two-fifths (42%) have financial challenges.



16g. Ethnicity

Of the 847 responses received, 92% are from residents and stakeholders who identify as being 'white British'. 8% of responses are representative of communities other than 'white-British', with 3% of those being from the Asian/Asian British community.



Base: 847

17. Summary

In December 2024, Bolton Council’s Cabinet approved proposals for the 2025/27 budget for consultation with stakeholders. The proposals reflected the continuing financial challenges faced by the organisation, resulting in a £25 million budget gap. Between 3rd December 2024 and 6th January 2025, the Council ran a public consultation seeking to engage residents and stakeholders impacted by future funding cuts, in sharing their reflections on the proposed reduction, the use of Council reserves and increasing Council Tax.

During this period 898 residents and stakeholders engaged in the consultation process, with significant engagement from residents in the West of the borough (54% of total responses). This was due to a hyperlocal campaign, taking place on the 5th and 6th January, encouraging residents to share their views on the carparking proposal.

The following information outlines a summary to the consultation responses.

Resident and stakeholder priorities

Top 3 priorities	%	Top 3 least popular priorities	%
Keeping roads and pavements in good shape	50%	Net-zero carbon town / climate ambitions	3%
Community Safety / Tackling anti-social behaviour	49%	Offering an events programme, inc Bolton Food & Drink	3%
Keeping our neighbourhoods clean	38%	Access & investment in digital & technology	1%

Reserves and Council Tax increases

Overall, 71% of stakeholders responding to the consultation agree with the proposal to access £16.8 million from the £35.5 million reserves. However, there is significant disagreement with the proposal to raise Council Tax by 4.99% each year. 70% of respondents oppose this rise. Of those that disagreed with the

proposal, 43% state that there should be no further increase. Those providing additional comment felt that a 2% rise, or a rise in line with inflation, would be more accessible to residents.

Directorate proposal areas

Of the 11 budget proposal areas put forward for consultation, the following tables outlines the saving areas that are most and least popular.

Top 5 proposal areas seeing the greatest agreement	% agreement
Keeping agency staff to a minimum	95%
Make contract efficiencies across our services	94%
Renting out additional spaces in our Town Centres	92%
Maximising use of libraries	91%
Review funding for events provided by other organisations	90%

Top 5 proposal areas seeing the least agreement	% disagreement
Raising charges for bereavement services	69%
Introducing pay and display carparking charges	68%
Increasing trader stall rent & fees	66%
Stopping providing grit bins	63%
Increasing charges for the collection & disposal of trade waste	52%

Impacts

Where residents and stakeholders outline the impact of the proposal on themselves and others, comments received highlight the significant impact to those with protected characteristics, namely older residents, children and those with SEND, as well as carers and those with personal budgets. Significant comments were received which highlight the socio-economic impacts, particularly in light of the Council Tax increases. This will particularly hit older residents that are struggling financially since the removal of the Winter Fuel Allowance, as well as those on low incomes and not able to seek support and those in the rent sector.

Alternative solutions

Alternative solutions put forward concentrate on a number of key themes, predominantly making staffing efficiency savings, reviewing / reducing services, and creating better revenue and investment opportunities.

Further comments

Those taking the time to provide additional reflections again highlight the challenges of raising Council Tax and request a freeze or reduction in business rates and rent. General negative reflections were also received, outlining a lack of confidence in the Council and the town in general. Respondents call for



greater communication and engagement, with better transparency and accountability by those charged with having responsibility for the town, its residents and its wider stakeholders.

2025/27 Budget consultation

Please complete this form online if possible by going to the 'Active Consultations' section of Bolton Council's website at www.bolton.gov.uk, where all background documents can also be found.

If you would like paper copies of any of the documents however, please contact the Consultation & Engagement Team on 01204 334875.

Consultation closes on 6 January 2025

Bolton Council is consulting on a two year plan to balance our 2025/27 budget and would like your views.

Along with other Local Authorities across the UK, Bolton Council continues to face financial challenges. We need to make some difficult decisions if we are to balance the books and protect the essential services that some of our most vulnerable residents depend on.

We invite you to give your views on the main proposals in the budget review, which are outlined within the questionnaire.

Please read the background documents, including the Frequently Asked Questions, for more information. These can be found online at www.bolton.gov.uk/directory/13/consultations/category/195

Your views will be considered alongside other information to help Bolton Council decide on the final budget options in February 2025.

Your response - keeping your data safe

Most questions are optional; just miss out any that you don't want to answer.

The results of this consultation may be made public. If you're responding as an individual you won't be identified in any report as your responses will be anonymised and grouped with those from other people. If you're responding in an official capacity your response may be published but no personal details will be included.

Any personal data you provide will be held securely, in line with our retention schedule and privacy policy, which can be found online at www.bolton.gov.uk/data-protection-freedom-information/privacy-notice

We use Snap Surveys professional software to collect and process your data. Snap Surveys Ltd. follow the UK General Data Protection Regulation, and their privacy policy can be found online at: www.snapsurveys.com/survey-software/privacy-policy-uk/

Budget outline

Throughout this consultation we use '£m' to mean million pounds and '£k' to mean thousand pounds.

As things stand, we estimate that we will need to spend £1,167m to provide services in 2025/26 and 2026/27.

Our income for 2025/26 and 2026/27 is estimated at £1,142m. This includes grants, council tax, business rates, charges for services, filming revenue and other income.

This leaves us with a £25m shortfall.

We have looked at how we can best cover this shortfall to balance our budget. This is becoming increasingly difficult as we've been dealing with budget cuts for many years.

We are proposing to use £16.8m from our reserves, with the remaining £8.2m from increasing our income and making savings where we can.

One of the ways to increase income is to charge more for our services, including starting to charge for services that we haven't charged for before. We will try to find other ways to bring in extra income, but will also have to look at making cuts to services that we'd prefer not to make.

These are difficult decisions that we don't take lightly, as we know this will affect people in our community.

As well as the proposals we're asking about in this questionnaire, we will make further savings by taking common sense action - such as reviewing all contracts that come up for renewal to make sure they are competitive and provide value for money.

Your priorities

Understanding what services are a priority for you is important to us. Your priorities will help inform the way we deliver services and the decisions we make in the future.

Q1. Please select the **THREE** things that are most important to you from this list

- Action on poverty
- Adult social care
- Children's social care
- Becoming a net-zero carbon town and supporting our climate ambitions
- Community safety and tackling anti-social behaviour
- Community engagement, partnership working and support for voluntary services
- Investment into Bolton
- Keeping our neighbourhoods clean, including fly-tipping and littering
- Keeping our roads and pavements in good shape
- Maintaining parks and green spaces
- Providing leisure facilities such as leisure centres and sports pitches
- Providing cultural facilities such as libraries and museums
- Offering events such as Bolton Food & Drink Festival and Ironman
- Supporting residents to access digital services & technologies and investment into digitalising services
- Tackling homelessness and creating better housing
- Another priority- please give you priority below
- No opinion

If you've ticked 'Another priority' please give it here

Using reserves

During 2025/27, we're proposing to use £16.8m from the £35.5m reserves we hold specifically to support the budget process. This is a significant proportion of these reserves.

Reserves can only be used once and taking out too much could put us into severe financial difficulties in the future.

We need to maintain reserves to help balance budgets, and to reduce the need for service cuts in future years.

Q2. How strongly do you agree / disagree with the proposal to use some of our reserves to cover the projected budget shortfall?

- Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree No opinion

Increase sales revenue

By looking at ways to increase sales income at Heaton Fold Garden Centre - such as holding additional events and special markets - we could potentially raise £5k.

Q3. How far do you agree / disagree that we should look at holding additional events and special markets to increase sales income at Heaton Fold Garden Centre?

- Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree No opinion

Increasing charges

We could raise income by increasing how much we charge for some of the services we provide. This could include charging for some services that we don't charge for at the moment.

Car parks

We could bring in £20k by introducing charges on council car parks across the borough - including parks, introducing a three hour maximum stay, and enforcing all parking restrictions.

Bolton Market

Increasing stall rent and other fees charged to traders on Bolton Market could bring in £16k.

Bolton town centre

By renting out additional spaces in our town centres, we could increase our revenue and better commercialise our shopping and visitor attractions, for example having makers markets. This could raise £30k.

Trade waste

Charges for collection and disposal of trade waste could increase, bringing in £60k.

Garden waste

We're also considering charging for garden waste removal [which would bring in £1m].

We're not consulting on this now as the proposal has recently been consulted on separately. The proposal will be presented as an alternative savings option alongside the findings from this budget consultation.

Q4. How far do you agree / disagree with the following proposals around increased fees and charges?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion
Introduce pay & display car parking charges for all council owned car parks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Enforce all parking restrictions, including a 3 hour maximum stay	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increasing trader stall rent and other fees at Bolton Market	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Renting out additional spaces in our town centres	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increase charges for collection and disposal of trade waste	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Council tax

Council tax is made up of a General Levy [for general services provided by Bolton Council] and Adult Social Care Levy [social care support for adults], as well as two Greater Manchester Mayoral Precepts [Fire Services, Police and the Greater Manchester Mayor].

Residents in Blackrod, Horwich and Westhoughton pay an additional Parish Levy, which goes towards the cost of their Town Councils.

Under government regulations, we're currently able to increase council tax by up to 5% a year without having to hold a referendum. If this limit doesn't change, we propose to increase council tax as follows:

2025/26 - we propose to raise council tax by 4.99%, made up of 2.99% for the General Levy and 2% for the Adult Social Care Levy.

This would mean an increase of £58.93 for a Band A property and £78.57 for a Band C property.

Each 1% rise in council tax would bring in around £1.43m, so the proposed 4.99% rise would bring in an extra £7.1m

2026/27 - we propose to raise council tax again by 4.99%, made up of 2.99% for the General Levy and 2% for the Adult Social Care Levy.

This would mean an increase of £61.88 for a Band A property and £82.51 for a Band C property.

Each 1% rise in council tax would generate around £1.51m, so the proposed 4.99% rise would bring in an extra £7.5m

If council tax doesn't rise by 4.99% each year, further cuts would need to be made to services in order to balance the budget.

In 2025/26 there would be no change to the council tax support scheme, which allows those in most need to apply for help towards paying their council tax. This would be reviewed for 2026/27.

Q5. How strongly you agree or disagree with the proposal to raise council tax by 4.99% each year?

- Strongly agree - please go to Q7
- Agree - please go to Q7
- Disagree - please go to Q6
- Strongly disagree - please go to Q6
- No opinion - please go to Q7

Q6. If you disagree, what should happen to council tax?

- No increase - please go to Q7
- Rise by less than 4.99% each year - please tell us how much below
- Rise by more than 4.99% each year - please tell us how much below
- Only rise by a total of 4.99% over two years - please go to Q7

How much do you think council tax should rise by?

Changing the way we deliver services

We could make saving by changing the way we deliver services. This section explains the main changes we're considering for each department.

Department of Place

Grit bins

Steeper areas of roads that have grit bins are currently provided with grit which residents can use to grit local pavements and roads in icy conditions.

Whilst Bolton Council would continue to grit main traffic routes, we're proposing that grit will no longer be provided for residents to use. This would save £40k.

Subsidies for leisure centres users

Reviewing the level of subsidies we provide to service users at our leisure centres could save £200k.

Fleet vehicles

Our mileage data shows that some vehicles have a very low mileage. By undertaking a review of the number of vehicles the council has on its core fleet, we can reduce our stock whilst maintaining service delivery, resulting in a £200k saving.

Services to Schools

By reviewing our services to schools and increasing our contracts, we could save £200k.

Q7. Please say how far do you agree / disagree with the proposals to change the way we deliver services in the Department of Place

- | | Strongly agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly disagree | No opinion |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Stop providing grit for residents | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Reduce subsidies for leisure centre users	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fleet vehicle review	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Review our services to schools	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Adult social care & housing

Residential and nursing home fees

Savings of £1.72m could be made by reducing the amount we spend on residential and nursing home fees. By working closely with health and social care professionals and putting in extra social care services and technology [such as medication reminders, falls and epilepsy detectors, and the Careline personal alarm system] we can help people to safely stay in their own homes for longer. This is generally better for them and reduces costs for the council.

Home care and direct payments

For some people, home care could be replaced by 'strength-based practices'. Rather than focussing on what people can't do, these look at what people are able to do for themselves, and the care and support available locally from family and voluntary services in the community. This would save £808k, and would also allow us to save around £776k on direct payments [where we give people money to arrange their own care].

Emergency and temporary accommodation

Emergency and temporary accommodation is provided for people in crisis who have nowhere else to go. We could save £70k by negotiating cheaper contracts for putting people up in hotels, and by transferring responsibility for paying energy bills from the council to the residents themselves.

Supported living

Supported living is when people are provided with specially designed accommodation and given higher levels of support than they would get in their own home.

Some of our supported housing is quite old and doesn't meet current standards. This can make it expensive to maintain and means it's difficult to provide the standard of support we would like to offer. By replacing unsuitable housing with modern, purpose built facilities we could save around £696k and provide residents with better care.

A separate consultation would take place around any proposals to change supported living schemes. These would give residents and other stakeholders the opportunity to consider the options and share any views and concerns.

Q8. How far do you agree / disagree with the following proposals around changing the way we deliver adult services & housing?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion
Help people stay in their own homes for longer and reduce the amount spent on care home fees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reduce home care services for some people by promoting strength-based practices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reduce direct payments by promoting strength-based practices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Make residents in emergency and temporary accommodation responsible for their own energy bills

Negotiate cheaper hotel provision for emergency & temporary accommodation

Provide modern purpose-built supported living accommodation

Children's services

Children's services provide a range of services and support designed to give children the best possible start in life. Savings of £390k could be made by thoroughly reviewing the way we deliver these services. In addition, Bolton Council are going to make every effort to keep inflationary budgets in line with the 2024/2025 budget, creating a saving of £230k.

Q9. How far do you agree / disagree with the proposal to undertake a thorough review of the way children's services are provided?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

No opinion

Corporate Resources

Events provided by other organisations

We could look at reviewing the events we fund, including reducing payments to organisations who we currently fund to provide local events. This could save £25k.

Instead of being funded by the council, organisations could apply to other funders for example Arts Council England or Bolton's Fund, which provide grants to a range of organisations, including the voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors.

Bolton's Fund has been operating for five years and supports all sorts of activities that local voluntary and community sector organisations undertake. The fund is managed by Bolton Community & Voluntary Services, and all decisions about funding are made by trained independent assessors.

Libraries

£100k could be saved within the library service, however, we want to avoid closing libraries and a great way to do this is by maximising the use of library buildings across the borough.

A service-wide review would take place of all our assets, such as buildings, staff, books, computers and other ICT equipment. We already encourage partners, other services and groups to use our library spaces, which not only allows us to share costs, but also improves the services for our visitors and helps us to attract new customers.

The review would also look at new way of providing library services, including the use of new technology. These could be more efficient and open up new opportunities so that more people use our libraries. Other operational matters such as reviewing contracts, raising more income and exploring new suppliers will be looked at to increase value for money.

Once more detail is known, we will seek the views of the public and other stakeholder if any major changes are proposed.

Q10. How far do you agree / disagree with the following proposals around changing the way we deliver services in Corporate Resources?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion
Review funding for events provided by other organisations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Maximising use of libraries	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Contract efficiencies

£1.013m could be saved by making efficiencies across the council, including reviewing contracts for purchasing goods and services.

Q11. How far do you agree / disagree with the proposal to make contract efficiencies across our services, including contracts for purchasing goods and services?

- Strongly agree
 Agree
 Disagree
 Strongly disagree
 No opinion

Staffing costs

Staffing costs cover all costs associated with employing staff, such as salaries, payroll taxes, overtime, agency costs and recruitment. We're continually looking to look at way to reduce staffing costs but could save a further £503k.

This could be done in a number of ways, such as by continuing to review vacancies, so that when someone leaves they aren't automatically replaced and instead we look to see if the job could be done in a different way.

Where there's increased need for a service, we could employ more staff instead of paying regular and enhanced overtime rates, and could reduce the number of agency staff, who cost more than staff we directly employ.

Whilst it's important that staff are well trained, we currently allocate money for training that isn't used, so this could be deleted from the budget, and subscriptions to trade journals could be reviewed [including looking at digital rather than print subscriptions], as could travel expenses. These measures could save £51k.

Q12. How far do you agree / disagree with the following proposals around staff costs?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion
When someone leaves, look at the job to see if it could be done differently rather than recruiting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reduce regular overtime payments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Keep agency staff to a minimum	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reduce the training budget	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reduce spend on travel expenses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reduce trade journal subscriptions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Digital services

New technology is being developed all the time and savings of around £652k could be made by switching more services online and making increased use of digital technology and ICT systems to reduce administration costs.

This often provides a better, more efficient service, in a way that many customers prefer. However we're aware that not all our residents are able to use technology, so alternatives would be provided where needed.

Q13. How far do you agree / disagree with the following proposals around digital services?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion
Upgrading digital technology systems in our workplaces	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Providing more customer services online	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other proposals

Bereavement services

We could review charges made for cremations and burials and grave upkeep to cover more of our costs. We could also trim overheads where possible, review contracts and cost to save £335k.

Licensing and grants

Licensing and grant income could increase by £56k, by seeking additional grants, and by introducing 'additional licensing', so that all Houses in Multiple Occupation [HMO] with three or more occupants who aren't part of the same household need to be licensed.

Q14. How far do you agree / disagree with the following proposals?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion
Raise charges for bereavement services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Seeking additional grants	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Introducing licensing for smaller HMOs with 3 or more occupants	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Impact of the proposals

Q15. Please describe how you, your family or the people you represent will be affected if the budget proposals are carried out

Q15.a No impact

No comments

Alternatives

Q16. Please use this space if you want to suggest any other ways Bolton Council could address the £25m budget shortfall whilst still delivering statutory services

Q16.a No comments

Further comments

Q17. Please use this space for any further comments about the budget proposals

Q17.a No comments

Your interest

Q18. Which of the following best describes you / your family's interest in this consultation? You must answer this question

- Live in Bolton borough [Bolton Council area] - please go to Q19
- Work in Bolton borough - please go to Q19
- Study / have children at school in Bolton borough - please go to Q19
- Visitor to Bolton - please go to Q19
- Official response from Parish / Bolton borough Councillor / Elected Member - please answer Q18b and c, then end the survey without completing the 'About you' section
- Official response from a business / organisation / community group. You must have their permission to submit an official response on their behalf - please answer Q18b and c, then end the survey without completing the 'About you' section
- None of the above - please answer Q18a, then end the survey without completing the 'About you' section

Q18a Please say what your interest is

Q18b Please say which ward, business organisation or community group you represent

Q18c Please say what your role is - in what official capacity do you represent the ward, business, organisation or community group?

About you

Your answers in this section help us to make sure we are getting views from different types of people. They won't be used to contact or identify you.

Q19. Please give your full postcode

Q20. Are you...?

- Female Male Identify in another way

Q21. Which age group are you in?

- Under18 55 - 64
 18 - 24 65 - 74
 25 - 34 75 - 84
 35 - 44 85 or over
 45 - 54

Q22. Do you look after, or give any help of support to family members, friends, neighbours or others who need help because they have a long-term physical or mental ill-health / disability, or have problems relating to old age?

Please don't count anything you do as part of paid employment.

- No Yes, 20 - 49 hours a week
 Yes, 1-19 hours a week Yes, 50 or more hours a week

Q23. Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a long-term physical or mental health condition / illness?

- Yes, limited a lot Yes, limited a little No

Q24. What is your ethnic group?

- White British Asian or Asian British
 White other Black, Black British, Caribbean or African
 Mixed or Multiple ethnic group Other ethnic group

Q25. Which of the following best describes your financial situation?

This question helps us to see how people are being affected by the cost of living

- I often can't afford basic necessities [food, heating etc]
- I sometimes struggle to afford basic necessities
- I can afford basic necessities but have very little spare money
- I can afford basic necessities and have some spare money to spend on extras or save
- I'm comfortably off and have no money worries
- Don't know, as I don't have responsibility for managing finances

Thanks! Please post to: Freepost RTTT-YTEL-YSXS, Consultation & Engagement Team, 2nd Floor, Town Hall, Victoria Square, Bolton, BL1 1RU.



Have your say on Bolton Council's budget for 2025-2027

We are facing a challenging financial situation and need to make cuts of £8.2m.

A range of options are being considered and we want to hear what you think.

Don't miss out, the consultation closes at midday on January 6 2025.

Have your say here: bit.ly/budgetquestionnaire



**Bolton
Council**