

Annex H – Consultation and Engagement

1. Between July 2023 and January 2024, the Council delivered a programme of consultation and engagement with residents, organisations and Members to inform the development of the budget for 2024/25 and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). This aligns to one of the Council's priority objectives to have empowered and thriving communities where more people participate, engage and have a say in how things are done on matters that impact them and where they live.
2. The objectives of this consultation and engagement activity were to:
 - a. Inform SCC decision-makers of residents' relative priorities and preferences for budget allocation and approaches to achieving a balanced budget for 2024/25
 - b. Enhance transparency and accountability around budget decisions, including proposals around additional investment and efficiencies
 - c. Ensure inclusive and representative engagement by activity involving marginalised and underrepresented groups.
3. The work was split into two phases. The first phase aimed to gather insight on what residents thought were the most important outcomes that the Council should prioritise. It also sought views on how the Council should allocate resources and tactics for balancing the budget, including circumstances under which a council tax increase would be supported.
4. The second phase was a consultation with stakeholders on the draft budget for 2024/25, including proposals for investment and for closing the budget gap, which was £13.5m at the time the draft budget was agreed by Cabinet in November 2023.

Methodology

5. Across both phases, more than 2,700 stakeholders provided their views. The Council used a range of methods to gather quantitative and qualitative data to generate insight from stakeholders.
6. In the first phase, which ran from September to November 2023, methods used included:
 - a. Commissioning a YouGov survey with a statistically representative sample, by age and gender, of 614 Surrey residents. Participants were selected from each of Surrey's 11 district and borough authority areas.

This produced the quantitative data used for this report so the views of the whole of Surrey's adult population are reflected.

- b. Running an open survey exercise simultaneously on the Surrey Says consultation platform so all residents had an opportunity to have their say. The survey ran from 8 September 2023 to 6 October 2023, and 891 residents took part. The results from this were used to inform the qualitative findings of this report. Survey respondents were self-selecting, which means the results should not be treated as representative of the whole of Surrey's population.
 - c. Surveying partner organisations and elected officials at the same time as the open resident survey. Responses were received from 50 stakeholders – 39 represented a charity, voluntary or local community group, 1 was from a local business, 1 from a local authority in Surrey and the 3 were from organisations such as local authority trading companies or community centres. The remaining 6 were elected officials representing county, district, borough or parish and town areas. As above, these also informed the qualitative findings of this report.
 - d. Officers attending existing community events, such as Surrey Pride, to promote the open survey and gather residents' views in person. Over 100 residents were spoken to across these events.
 - e. Carrying out a desk-based review of existing insight gathered by the council since 2021 to assess how residents' priorities had changed, or stayed the same, over time.
 - f. Early engagement with Members including informal Select Committee meetings, Budget Task Group meetings and political group briefings.
7. For the second phase, which ran from November 2023 to January 2024, methods used were:
- a. Running an open survey exercise on the Surrey Says consultation platform following Cabinet's approval of the draft budget on 28th November 2023. The survey ran from this date to 5th January 2025, and 1,133 residents took part. A full stakeholder profile of respondents to this consultation can be read in Appendix A on pages 19 to 22.

An information pack, including EasyRead and Large Print formats, was published alongside the survey to provide information on the investment proposals and efficiencies in each area of the council's spending. Survey respondents were self-selecting, meaning the results should not be treated as representative of the whole of Surrey's population. This survey was promoted through the Surrey Matters E-

Newsletter, social media, and through all libraries across Surrey. Surrey County Council Members, Community Link Officers, and other Engagement Officers were also encouraged to promote the survey with local residents in their areas.

- b. Officers facilitated a focus group discussion with children and young people representing the Surrey Youth Cabinet, Consulting Youth Advisors and Accept, Teach, Listen, Access, Support (ATLAS) groups to learn more about the views of children and young people in Surrey and what their priorities for the county are.
- c. Member Engagement – officers provided briefings to and met with Members across a range of meetings including informal and formal Select Committees, Budget Task Group and all-Member briefings. These sessions provided updates on the budget position and proposals with investment measures and efficiencies outlined and explained. Members had the opportunity to scrutinise proposals and the approach to consultation, and make recommendations to Cabinet for changes to the budget.

Phase 1 results

Priority outcomes

- 8. During the first engagement phase, stakeholders were asked to indicate their top priorities out of 11 outcomes. These outcomes were based on the Community Vision for Surrey in 2030 and Organisation Strategy 2023 – 2028 and simplified to make it easy for all residents to respond. These outcomes were:
 - a. Better public transport connections for easier, more predictable journeys
 - b. Better roads and pavements
 - c. Enabling people of all ages to access education and skills
 - d. Making our communities safer
 - e. Promoting better health and wellbeing for all residents
 - f. Protecting and enhancing Surrey’s countryside and biodiversity
 - g. Providing care for adults and children who need us most

- h. Reducing waste and increasing recycling
- i. Reinvigorating town centres and high streets
- j. Stronger community relations through local community networks and support
- k. Supporting local businesses to prosper and grow the economy

9. Supporting the most vulnerable residents, particularly providing care for adults and children who need it, was a top priority for all stakeholders. 80% of residents responding to the Yougov survey said this was a top priority, and organisations rated this as the most important area for the council to focus on. Residents taking the open survey also believed focusing resources on supporting the most vulnerable was important, with some also highlighting the needs of people experiencing inequalities:

“Providing care to those who most need it is the most basic and fundamental requirement.”

“Social care is very underfunded, puts families under greater stress, nothing done until crisis point reached, causing even more misery.”

“It feels that the divide between those who can afford to live, and those who can’t and need help is growing. Those right at the bottom on benefits, in social housing, unemployed, dealing with addictions, mental health problems and debt are drowning and more needs to be done to help them earlier.”

10. The other top priorities highlighted by the Yougov survey were improving the county’s roads and pavements (89%), making communities safer (83%) and better public transport (80%).
11. On roads and pavements, some residents who responded to the open survey were keen that the council invested more in maintenance and repairs to keep motorists and pedestrians safe and avoid incurring costs from damage caused to their vehicles. Others saw the importance of this outcome as helping contribute to reductions in the use of road vehicles and building more cycling infrastructure.

“Dangerous roads and pavements lead to accidents which result in health issues for constituents.”

“Better roads and pavements will lead to less accidents, less braking and accelerating, make life easier for those using wheelchairs or pushing children’s buggies.”

“By improving roads, pavements and cycleways, and making them safer, this will encourage more people to walk and cycle for short journeys which will improve the environment and reduce the number of cars locally.”

12. Residents wanted more of a focus on safety across a range of different areas, including road safety and areas outside of the council’s responsibility, such as policing.

“Crime is rising and more police need to be seen around [Guildford], with PCSOs [Police Community Support Officers] back patrolling the areas.”

“Safety for our community is my main concern. Reducing speeding cars, motorbikes, lorries etc should be a priority.”

13. Residents expressed their desires for more investment in public transport and active travel solutions. This included expanding the bus and rail offer in Surrey, and more infrastructure and options for residents who wanted to cycle more. Some referred to increased public transport and accelerating the move to electric vehicles as key tactics for helping to tackle climate change, and the positive impacts for health and wellbeing from increased cycling.

“Public transport and good care are vital for the well-being of vulnerable people...this is also vital for the economy, tackling air pollution and improving job prospects for mobility.”

“Public transport must be improved if we are to move away from the current dependency on cars.”

14. A strong theme that emerged through the open survey was residents’ desire for the council to do more to tackle the climate emergency. Their motivations were based on the impact of climate change on current and future generations, need to find ways to mitigate against it and anxiety on what might happen if no action is taken:

“The climate emergency is the most pressing issue of our time...it is even more pressing that local authorities to step up, be brave about their targets and put funding where it is most needed – saving our planet.”

“All the above outcomes are about the Surrey Community, however there will be no communities if we (residents, Councillors, Governments) globally do not do anything about Climate Change now, our children's children will suffer because we did nothing to combat this.”

“[Climate change] would be my top priority for the council.”

15. Organisations that responded were more likely to suggest the council should prioritise providing care for adults and children that need it most, promoting better health and wellbeing for all residents and enabling greater access to education and skills for all ages. They were least likely to prioritise improvements to roads and pavements, reinvigoration of town centres and high streets and reduced waste and increased recycling.
16. On promoting the population's health and wellbeing, organisations felt that this would lead to better overall outcomes for people across their lifetimes, and important for preventing future demand that could exacerbate existing pressures on acute services across health and social care. Some participants thought that a healthier population would also lead to more progress on other priorities:
- "...if you empower residents and put their wellbeing first, you will have a stronger community who will help themselves."*
- "The priority of the population has to be health. Without that and education, society cannot function to its full potential."*
17. By focusing on getting investment in these priority outcomes right, and taking a preventative approach, stakeholders thought that this would support efficiencies over the longer term and less demand for crisis response:
- "If we catch people who are struggling earlier, I believe we can provide them with less help over the timeframe, ultimately costing less in resources."*
- "Whilst there has for many years been a big push to keep older people in their own homes, the reality is that much of the preventative work has either been cut back completely or disappeared."*
18. Some respondents to the open surveys struggled with the idea of prioritising outcomes among those presented as they felt that all of them were important and worthy of equal attention. However, others felt the council had a core set of specialisms that should be prioritised and it should try to do less in some spaces:
- "Faced with difficult choices, the county council needs to prioritise getting its unique areas of expertise right rather than having too wide an agenda. Where other organisations can pick up activity, everyone shouldn't feel they need to be involved."*
- "Such difficult choices for us and those making final decisions, they're all important."*

Use of resources

19. Stakeholders taking the representative and organisation surveys were asked for their views on how the council should allocate its resources. The choices offered to them were to allocate resources to:

- a. services that benefit the majority of residents or services that benefit those with the greatest needs, such as residents with disabilities and additional needs.
- b. local areas with the highest number of people with poor health or across all local areas in Surrey.
- c. meet the needs of residents today or meet the long-term future needs of residents.

20. Residents said it was more important to allocate resources to:

- a. services that benefit the majority of residents (58%). Younger residents aged 18 to 25 however preferred to allocate resources to benefit those with greatest needs (47%).
- b. all local areas across Surrey (65%). This reflected the even views of respondents across all parts of the county wanting resources to be allocated equitably. Again, younger residents were more likely than other age groups to prefer allocating resources to places where residents were in poor health (48%), although the majority still wanted broad distribution across the county.
- c. meet the future long-term needs of residents (47%), although a significant minority still wanted the focus to be on issues impacting residents now (45%).

21. Organisations were more likely to say it was more important to allocate resources to:

- a. services that benefit those with the greatest needs such as residents with disabilities and additional needs.
- b. meeting the long-term future needs of residents.
- c. local areas with the highest number of people with poor health.

Balancing the Budget

22. Stakeholders were asked to give their views on different approaches that the council could approach to balancing its budget. This is defined as the total costs of delivering services not exceeding income received from sources such

as council tax. They were asked for their views on:

- a. introducing charges for services which are currently free or subsidised.
- b. reducing or stopping some services to protect others.
- c. providing local people and communities with the tools to support others and set and deliver local priorities.
- d. equipping Surrey County Council staff with the skills to work together with communities and partners to deliver services across the county.
- e. working with partner organisations to provide services.

23. Most residents supported equipping staff to work with partners and communities (83%), increased partnership working (80%) and providing local communities with tools to support themselves more (80%). Most residents opposed the idea of reducing or stopping services to protect others (51%) and introducing charges for free or subsidised services (62%).

24. Organisations were most likely to support the council on providing local communities with the tools they need to support others and set local priorities, empower them to help themselves so they are less reliant on publicly funded services and work with partner organisations to provide services.

25. There was more division on issues of introducing charges for services and the idea of reducing or stopping some services to protect others. On charging, 20 stakeholders either tended to support or strongly supported this approach, while 22 either tended to oppose or strongly opposed this. On reducing or stopping services, 17 stakeholders either tended to support or strongly supported this while 24 either tended to oppose or strongly opposed these approaches.

26. 26 organisations put forward suggestions for other tactics the council should adopt to support a balanced budget. These suggestions were wide-ranging and included enhanced partnership working, tackling fraud, reducing reliance on consultants and removing barriers for smaller local organisations to be more competitive in tendering processes for contracts.

Council Tax Increase - Scenarios

27. Finally, residents in the Yougov survey were asked to indicate the circumstances under which they would support or oppose a council tax increase. The scenarios residents had to respond to were:
- a. as an alternative to imposing/increasing fees and charges for services.

- b. if the additional funds will be used to finance long-term investment plans.
 - c. only when opportunities to streamline services have been exhausted.
 - d. to protect services for the most vulnerable and those without choices.
 - e. under no circumstances.
 - f. when the only alternative is to stop delivering some services.
28. The two scenarios that were most supported and least opposed were to protect services for the most vulnerable (65% supported, 28% opposed) and when opportunities to streamline services had been exhausted (59% supported, 31% opposed).
29. The most opposed scenario was where council tax was increased as an alternative to imposing or increasing fees and charges (33% supported, 56% opposed). There was also less appetite for an increase to support the financing of long-term investment (39% supported, 49% opposed).
30. Residents were also offered an option to say that they would not support any council tax increase under any circumstances. 38% of residents indicated that they supported this option. However, 44% of residents did not agree with this, reflecting that there were legitimate circumstances when council tax may need to rise.
31. The results from this engagement work informed the basis of investment proposals, and measures to close the budget gap for 2024/25, when Cabinet agreed the draft budget on 28 November 2023. This signalled the start of draft budget consultation exercise with stakeholders.

Phase 2 results

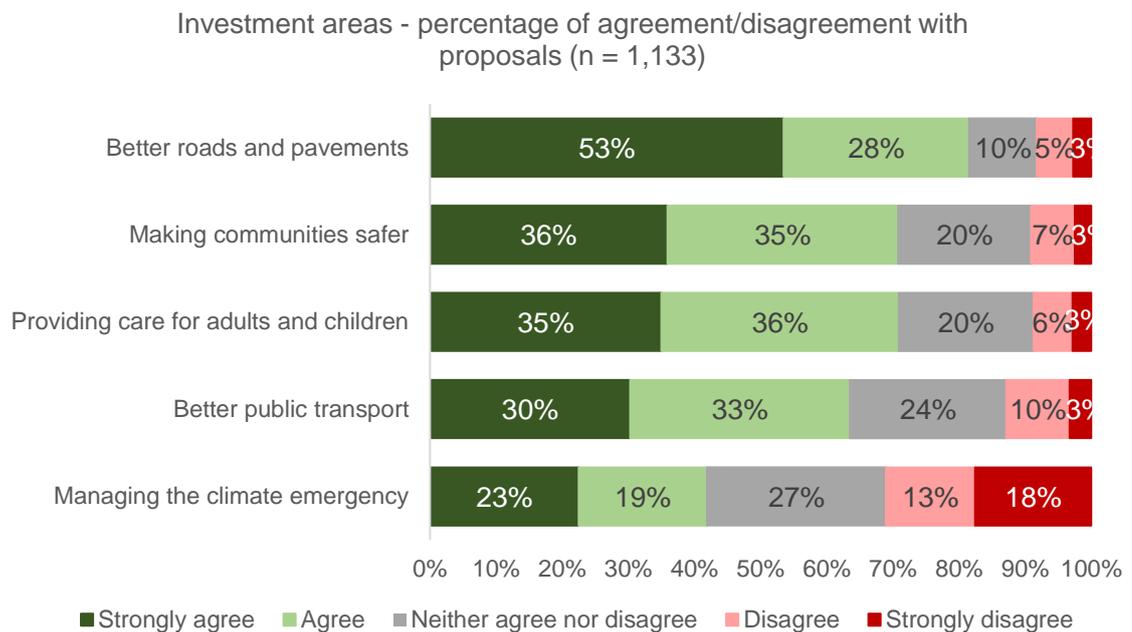
32. In this phase, the Council asked residents and other stakeholders, such as partner organisations, for their views on proposed investment and measures to close a £13.5m budget gap for 2024/25. The aim was to generate insight on potential impacts to inform planning, design of any further consultation, and implementation.
33. An open survey was conducted on the Surrey Says consultation platform between 28 November 2023 and 5 January 2024. A total of 1,133 stakeholders, including 1,079 residents, responded to this consultation. This was the largest response rate to a draft budget consultation in recent history.

34. To help stakeholders to complete the survey, an information pack was developed to summarise the draft budget, including key information on investment proposals and efficiencies. EasyRead and Large Print versions of this information pack were created to make the exercise more accessible for residents who may be digitally excluded, have disabilities or other needs. Hard copies of the survey and information pack were made available through Surrey's libraries network.
35. The survey was also promoted through the Surrey Matters E-Newsletter, social media and shared by Members, Community Link Officers and Engagement Officers at SCC.
36. Stakeholders were asked to tell us:
- a. To what extent the investment proposals outlined in the draft budget reflected their priorities
 - b. To share their views on any additional priorities they felt were not reflected in our budget proposals
 - c. If and why they supported our proposed measures to balance the budget

Investment proposals

37. Residents were generally supportive of the investment proposals to address their priority areas contained in the draft budget report. They validated that these were the priority areas they wanted to see more investment in, which aligned to stakeholders' priority outcomes identified in Phase 1.
38. Stakeholders were asked to confirm the extent to which they agreed, or disagreed, that the draft budget supported the top five priorities that mattered most to residents. These were:
- a. Better roads and pavements
 - b. Making communities safer
 - c. Providing care for adults and children
 - d. Better public transport
 - e. Managing the climate emergency.
39. The chart below shows that stakeholders broadly agreed that the draft budget supported most of these priority areas. There was less consensus about the

extent to which 'Managing the climate emergency' was being invested in sufficiently, or whether it should even be an investment priority for the Council.



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40. 81% of stakeholders agreed that the budget was prioritising improvements to Surrey’s roads and pavements. Many were critical of Surrey’s road infrastructure and called on the Council to improve the road network to protect road users from vehicle damage and potential road accidents. Some wanted better traffic management and suspension of highways works. Some stakeholders explicitly referenced the need for improved highways safety measures, such as improved street lighting and road conditions, and introducing stricter speed limits and enforcement of those limits were all specific proposals raised. The strength of feeling among respondents towards the state of Surrey’s roads was clear.

“Better, safer roads with less hold ups.”

“Safer pavements are needed, I have lost count of the number of people who have had really bad falls in Farnham, including me.”

“Majority of the pavements are uneven, and darkly lit.”

“Surrey's roads are a disgrace. You MUST REPAIR the 1000's of potholes PROPERLY. They are a danger to cyclists and drivers.”

41. 71% of respondents agreed that the draft budget included clear investment proposals to make communities safer. In addition to safety concerns about

roads and pavements, many respondents wanted higher levels of policing (although this is outside the Council's control) and policies introduced to address anti-social behaviour, particularly among young people. Some respondents wanted more investment in preventative activity in children's services and facilities such as youth clubs. Some respondents highlighted that the community safety measures could be supported by other priorities.

"A safer community with visible police on the streets and more respect for senior citizens."

"Making communities safer should mean more police on the streets."

"I do feel unsafe in Redhill these days, particularly once it starts getting dark. So, tackling anti-social behaviour is also very important."

- 8
42. 71% of respondents agreed that the draft budget included sufficient investment proposals to support care for vulnerable adults and children. Many of them recognised that adult's and children's social care services are statutory services that the Council is legally obliged to provide. They also wanted to see investment in these areas to support the most vulnerable in Surrey. Care for children from education provision, including SEND to mental health services, to community facilities and after-school clubs was highlighted by some respondents as areas for further investment.

"My priority is the vulnerable, elderly and children. On-line does not work for older people, they need help with forms and paperwork and contact with people. More support to stay in their homes when they are able too"

"Priorities should be towards the elderly and children and facilities to assist them"

"Providing good social care for vulnerable adults and children. With our rapidly aging population more people need care and support. With increasing pressure on families more support needs to go to children, to try and prevent more children going into care."

"Preventative action from children's social services is vital."

43. 63% of respondents agreed that the draft budget investment proposals for public transport were sufficient. Many were critical of the existing provision of bus and rail services in Surrey and wanted further investment. Many felt this would support efforts to reduce the county's carbon emissions by reducing the number of drivers on the road. Some respondents wanted to see more investment in cycling and walking infrastructure to reduce carbon emissions and improve the physical and mental wellbeing of residents.

“Bus travel needs to be made much more attractive.”

“Money is being wasted on expanding on-demand bus services which very few people use, when it could be spent on providing better bus routes, bus lanes, and better active travel infrastructure.”

“Public transport needs to be improved particularly with regard to connection to Kingston Hospital from Esher.”

44. Stakeholders were more divided on the proposed investments to manage the climate emergency. 42% agreed with the proposed measures while 31% disagreed with them. Opposition was either due to scepticism on the extent to which human activity affects climate change, the limited impact of the Council’s activity on mitigating a global issue or due to other priorities taking precedent.

“Regarding Climate Change, there is no emergency, Surrey County Councils efforts will have NO discernible effect on what may be natural climate change and I object to any money being wasted on this to satisfy a lunatic fringe.”

“Climate change is LESS important than the cost of living issues people in our great county face.”

Additional investment priorities

45. Stakeholders were asked if the draft budget proposals overall met their wider priorities for Surrey. In addition to the five areas they were asked about, some respondents shared their views on services that they would prioritise for further investment or to be protected from any reductions.
46. Some discussed education and lifelong learning provision in Surrey, both for Children and Adult Learning. They wanted further provision for SEND pupils and protection of vital services that support greater knowledge and learning, health and wellbeing such as libraries.

“[I] feel that there needs to be more emphasis on meeting the needs of both SEN children and supporting those who have experienced educational disruption and disadvantage following COVID.”

“I’d like to see more investment in to SEND provision in mainstream schools as well as the (important) proved specialist places”

“Libraries, day centres, leisure activities, children's activities. These are essential for the long-term health benefits they provide.”

47. While the Council has limited influence over these areas, many stakeholders wanted to see further investment in housing and support for residents experiencing homelessness. Specifically, respondents wanted to see more affordable housing made available.

“More affordable housing - ignore the protests about building outward. We need more houses.”

“Where are your plans to build affordable homes? Why not drastically reduce the size of the council offices and turn the rest of this enormous plot over for council houses?”

“Do something about homeless people still living outside in these freezing winter temperatures.”

48. Some wanted more investment in restoring their local high streets, bemoaning the quality of amenities, the cleanliness of the town centre, and the impact that this has on community safety with limited options for young people.

“Reinvigorate shopping centres to encourage community focus.”

“Our High Streets have become barren, deserted wastelands mainly populated with dodgy nail bars, cafes and fast-food outlets.”

“Invest in lower rent to support town and shops. Local new development is an embarrassment.”

49. Stakeholders also wanted further investment in overall maintenance and cleanliness of local places. Some respondents commented specifically on further investment to maintain verges, grass-cutting and protection of open spaces.

“Basic and regular maintenance of public areas, pavements etc to include cutting back overgrown hedges blocking paths, sweeping slippery leaves and waste, more and larger waste bins with lids, maintaining cemeteries regularly.”

“I would like to see the grass cut more frequently and with more care. At the moment the grass cutting is disgraceful.”

“Maintenance in general is a serious issue in Surrey, and I would like to see improvements to grass verges and other public areas included as part of improved maintenance of roads and pavements.”

Closing the budget gap

50. Overall, most stakeholders supported the proposed measures to close the budget gap of £13.5m in 2024/25. Of the 1,133 responses received, 738 (65%) supported the proposed measures, while 395 (35%) opposed them.
51. Many respondents recognised the legal requirement on the Council to deliver a balanced budget each year and this was a reason cited for supported the proposed measures. Others stressed how important it is for the Council to enact effective financial management and to take the necessary steps to ensure financial resilience.
52. Many respondents were concerned that the measures outlined would have an adverse impact on residents due to proposed service reductions. This was mainly directed towards the most vulnerable in Surrey who make use of vital, often statutory, services.

“We need a healthy local authority that does not carry debt and can confidently invest in the local area.”

“It's essential to avoid our council becoming bankrupt like others, but the cuts MUST be made in the right places and not affect the vulnerable and needy in our community.”

53. Some respondents made general observations on the overall budget and the position of the council. Some reflected on the broader financial challenges local authorities are facing and there were some comments were critical of central government's role in this.

“Unfortunately, it is necessary given the financial implications of both the expected level of government funding and the current state of the council's finances.”

54. However, there were still clear expectations on the Council to deliver statutory services, invest across the county, and, where possible, avoid adversely affecting residents through higher council taxes or a reduction in services. Many respondents wanted SCC to work harder to identify further efficiencies before looking to raise more money through charges or council tax increases.

“Residents are suffering from the cost of living and need the council to live within its means and look for better efficiencies and not put-up taxes.”

“I do support the proposed measures but wonder where is the money coming from. Our council tax is extortionate for the service we have.”

“All monies overspent needs to be paid for by the people. This is my council charge we are discussing. Any proposal made by the council has to be paid for by the tax payer and council employees and councillors need to always

make decisions with this fact foremost in mind.”

55. Efficiency proposals were generally opposed if this was going to adversely affect service provision. Residents expect the Council to make sound financial decisions to protect those services.

“I understand the financial constraints facing the council, I also see the loneliness and hardships facing people every day. Your cost cutting and penny-pinching result in loneliness and misery.”

“I don’t know how realistically Surrey are going to close this gap without making more cuts to services so desperately needed.”

“The efficiencies are not viable without causing a deterioration to the most vulnerable in society.”

56. Some respondents outlined very specific proposals where they hoped the Council would act. This may have been a request for an additional service, a change to an existing service, or closure/cancellation of existing services. Each of those specific proposals that were shared by residents has been captured and will be shared with relevant Directorates to respond to.
57. Many ideas or concerns shared are not within the Council’s remit to address unilaterally. This information will be shared with other public sector bodies who may be responsible, or the Council will engage in collaborative action with partners to address them.

Children and Young People’s Focus Group December 2023

58. On 11 December 2023, the council engaged with children and young people from across Surrey to get their views on the draft budget. Representatives included members of the Surrey Youth Cabinet, a representative of Consulting Youth Advisors, a group focused on emotional wellbeing and mental health, and a representative from Accept, Teach, Listen, Access, Support (ATLAS), a group focused on the views of children and young people with additional needs and disabilities.
59. Participants mainly focused on issues with their local high streets and town centres. They were disappointed at the lack of facilities and services available to them, particularly for leisure and recreation. Better public transport, pedestrianised high streets, and improving community safety were additional priorities they said would help to encourage young people to the town centres. Specific measures included expanding free bus travel and an extending the Guildford E-Bike scheme. Community events such as the Camberley Armed Forces Day was one example of the types of events that would attract young

people to town centres.

60. Attendees wanted to be proud of their local areas and wanted support from the Council to make it a safe place to be. Attitudes towards policing varied quite considerably. Young people wanted drug and knife crimes to be addressed but their background had an impact on their level of trust.

Member Engagement

61. Throughout this year's budget-setting process, Members have been engaged extensively to be appraised of the latest information being used to inform the shape of the budget and to provide opportunities for them to scrutinise and constructively challenge how the budget was developed. Activities included:

- a. Briefing each political group in July 2023.
- b. Informal briefings of all Select Committees in July, October and November 2023.
- c. Facilitating meetings of the Budget Task Group in July and November 2023.
- d. Cabinet Members and Executive Directors attending formal Select Committees, in public, in December 2023.
- e. All Member briefing sessions in July and November 2023.

62. Issues raised by Members included:

- a. More information provided to Members at an earlier stage on the impacts of budget decisions, such as equality and environmental impacts. There were also requests to better understand how impacts would be mitigated and monitored as efficiencies were implemented.
- b. Concern that efficiency proposals may lead to a deterioration of services and seeking assurance for residents that this will not take place.
- c. Concerns on the ambitions of the capital budget and whether this should be tempered in light of the challenging financial climate.
- d. Assurances that certain capital programmes, such as Your Fund Surrey, and the assumptions made around spending were reliable and affordable. Members also wanted to make sure that worthwhile projects were properly funded after a lengthy application process.

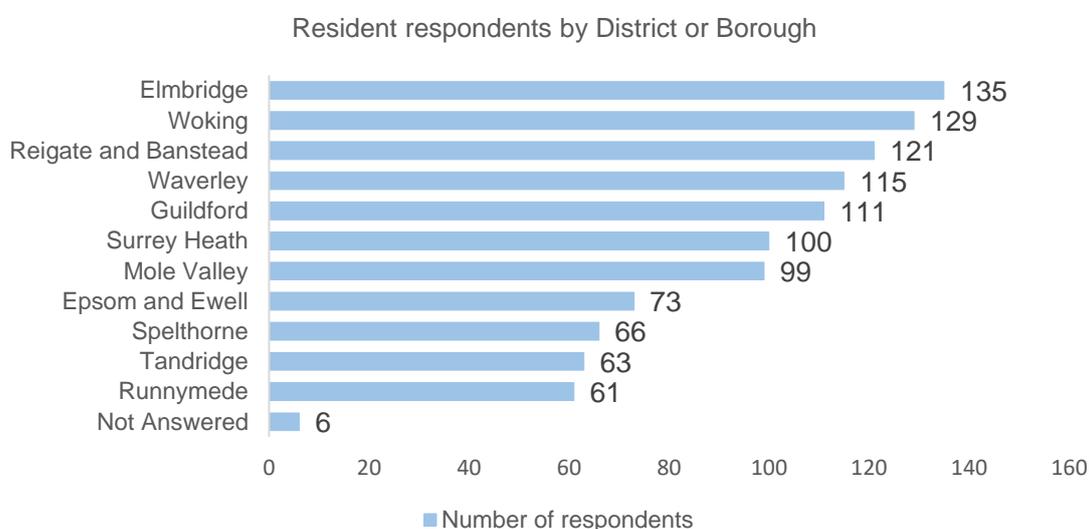
- e. Assurance on investment in preventative services as a way to mitigate additional demand for acute, crisis response services.
- f. Funding reductions to voluntary, community and faith sector (VCFS) organisations with many charities relying on this to deliver their vital services, in particular their contributions to preventative activity and early intervention. There were suggestions to work closely with the sector to co-produce solutions.
- g. How to maximise the returns on investment properties and accelerating progress on the disposal of any surplus assets, such as Consort House and the Bittoms car park in Kingston-upon-Thames.
- h. More detail wanted on the impacts on service provision of procurement and re-commissioning of contracts. Renegotiation and better business practices in relation to contracts were also identified as measures to meet efficiencies targets.
- i. Concerns about growth pressures on high demand service areas, such as the home to school travel assistance budget, and the knock-on impact on these areas through other activities of the Council, such as Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) timelines on travel plans.

Appendix A – Draft budget consultation stakeholder profile

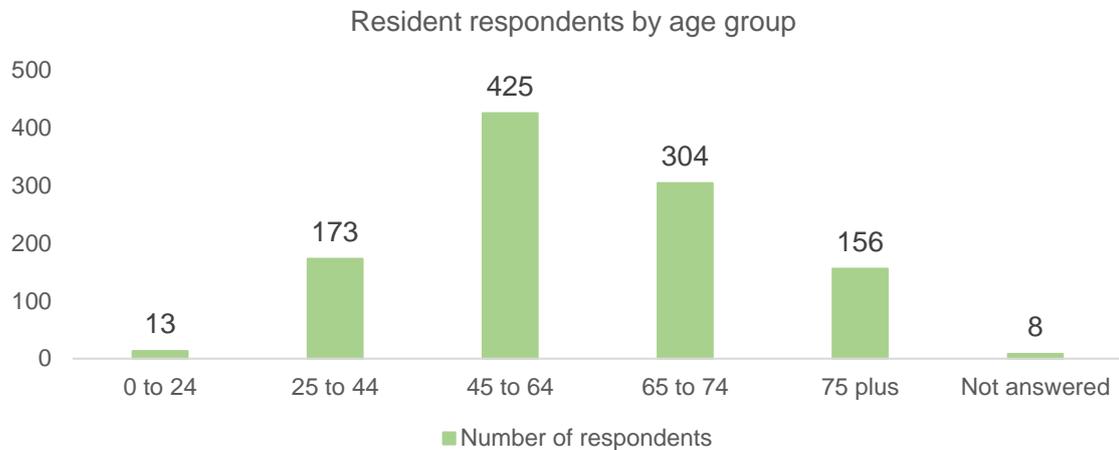
63. Between 28 November 2023 and 5 January 2024, 1,133 stakeholders responded to the draft budget consultation for 2024/25. This is the largest response rate to a survey of this type for Surrey County Council in recent years.
64. Of the 1,133 stakeholders that responded, just over 95% of respondents were residents. Other stakeholders included local businesses, public sector organisations, voluntary, community and faith groups and elected Members.

| Respondent type | Number of respondents | Percentage (%) of all consultation respondents |
|--|-----------------------|--|
| Surrey resident | 1,079 | 95.23% |
| Works in Surrey but lives elsewhere | 10 | 0.88% |
| Surrey County Council employee | 10 | 0.88% |
| Local business | 6 | 0.53% |
| Voluntary, community or faith organisation | 4 | 0.35% |
| Public sector partner (e.g. NHS) | 2 | 0.18% |
| Councillors | 2 | 0.18% |
| MPs | 0 | 0.00% |
| Other | 18 | 1.59% |
| Not answered | 2 | 0.18% |

65. Of the residents who responded to the consultation, the greatest number of responses were submitted by people living or working in Elmbridge borough (135). The lowest number of responses came from residents living or working in Runnymede (61).

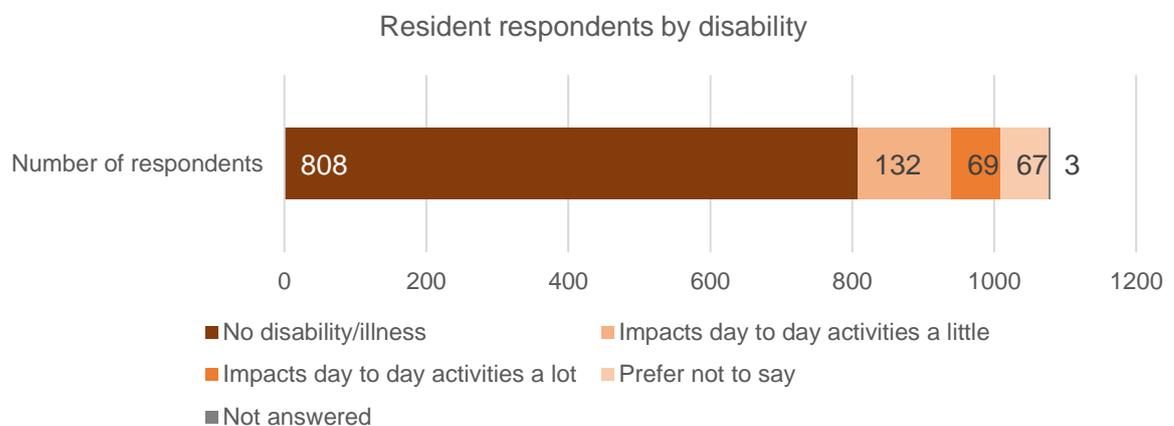


66. Residents aged between 45 and 64 (425) were most likely to respond to the draft budget consultation survey. The lowest response rate was from residents aged between 0 and 24 (13). This was mitigated by the insight gained from a focus group with children and young people’s user groups on 11 December 2023.



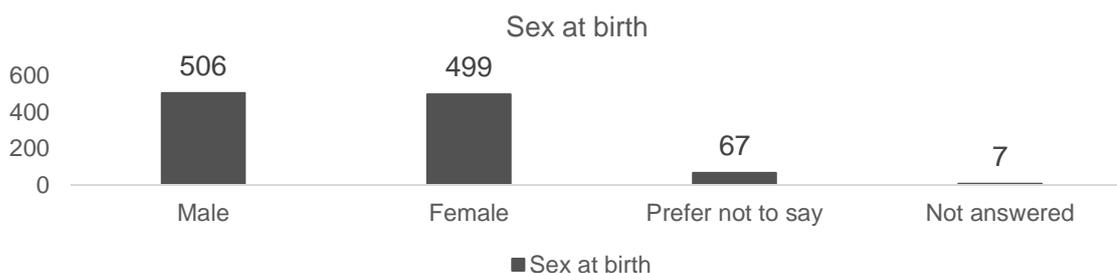
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67. Nearly 75% of respondents did not have a physical or mental health condition or illness lasting, or expected to last, 12 months or more that reduced their ability to carry out day-to-day activities. Almost 19% of respondents said they did have a condition or illness that impacted their day-to-day activities either a little or a lot. This means people with a disability are well represented in the responses against the Surrey disabled population of 13.7%¹.



68. There were similar numbers of Male and Female respondents to the consultation. Just over 6% of respondents preferred not to declare the sex they were assigned at birth. Of those that responded, only 3 residents declared that their current gender identity was not the same as the sex they were assigned at birth.

¹ Disability from the 2021 Census – Surrey-i, [2021 Census: Disability | Surrey-i \(surreyi.gov.uk\)](https://surreyi.gov.uk/2021-census-disability)



69. In terms of ethnicity, nearly 84% of respondents said they were from a White ethnic background, which is broadly in line with, but not statistically representative of, Surrey's wider population². People of mixed ethnicity and Asian or Asian British backgrounds were the next most represented at just over 2% for each ethnicity – they were underrepresented compared to the wider population. Nearly 9% of respondents said they would prefer not to disclose their ethnic identity.

| Ethnic background | Number of respondents | Percentage (%) of all consultation respondents |
|---|-----------------------|--|
| White – English/Welsh/Scottish/Nothern Irish/British, Irish, Gypsy or Irish Traveller, Other | 904 | 83.78% |
| Mixed/multiple ethnic groups – White and Black Caribbean, White and Black African, White and Asian, Other | 26 | 2.41% |
| Asian/Asian British – Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Other | 26 | 2.41% |
| Other ethnic group – Arab, Other | 16 | 1.48% |
| Black/African/Black British – African, Caribbean, Other | 6 | 0.56% |
| Prefer not to say | 96 | 8.90% |
| Not answered | 5 | 0.46% |

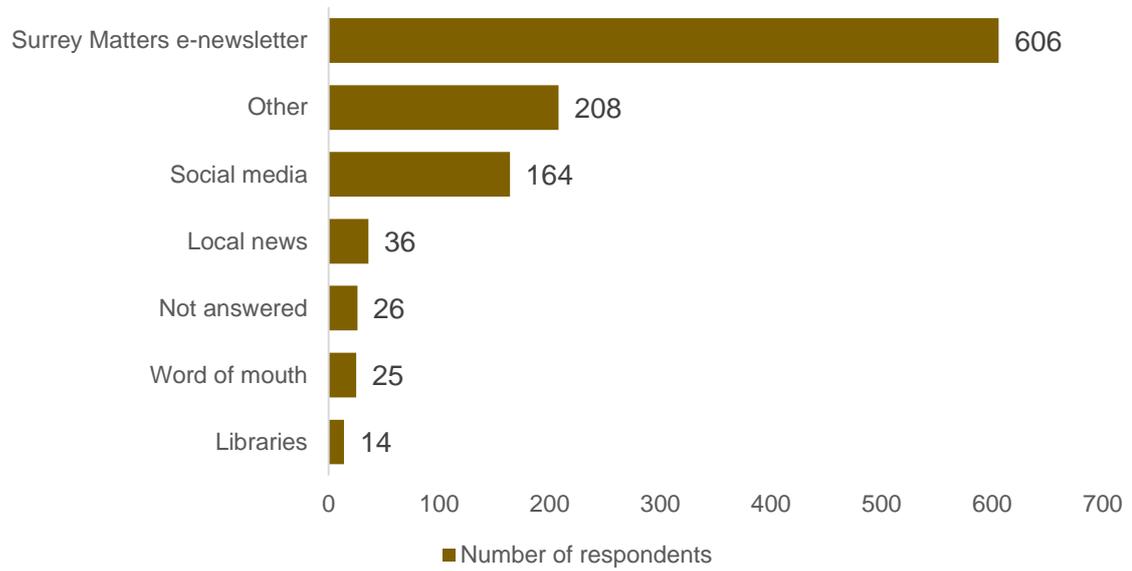
70. When asked how they had heard about the consultation, most respondents were prompted to participate through the December edition of the Surrey Matters e-newsletter (606). 164 residents had heard about the consultation through social media, while 75 respondents had heard about it through more traditional methods, such as word of mouth or local newspapers.

71. Over 200 respondents said they had learned of the consultation through other channels. For example, some local voluntary, community and faith organisations

² Ethnic Group from the 2021 Census, Surrey-i, [Census 2021: Ethnic Group | Surrey-i \(surreyi.gov.uk\)](https://surreyi.gov.uk/census-2021-ethnic-group)

were promoting the consultation through their own newsletters, so residents accessed the consultation through those means.

How residents were made aware of the draft budget consultation



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