



Essex County Council



Budget Consultation Report 2024/25

**Chief Executive's office
December 2023**

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Introduction

Next year, Essex County Council (ECC) will spend over £2bn. This will include funding for essential services and investment in our county's infrastructure and future growth. This is a substantial amount of money, but it doesn't go as far as we would like. Just like households across Essex, we have to make difficult choices about where we spend, and where to make savings.

As we shape plans our financial plans for delivery of Everyone's Essex in 2024/25 and beyond, we want to hear from local people about their views and values.

We wanted to hear your views about:

- the big issues we face and the challenges that lie ahead for Essex.
- the things that concern you and your family; and
- where we should focus resources as we work to improve lives across our county.

For information on how ECC spends its money, and where it gets its money from can be found [here](#)

The financial outlook for ECC – and for local authorities in general – is highly uncertain. We face the significant impacts of the economic climate of high inflation and rising interest rates, the cost of living situation, while still waiting for a multi-year settlement from government. We do not yet know how much funding ECC will receive from government. What the lasting impact of the economic climate, speed of recovery and the pandemic will be on council spending and income also remains unclear. This makes forecasting future years' spending and income levels particularly challenging.

Fortunately, ECC has a track record of strong financial management. The council has already secured £235m in savings over the past five years.

Despite this ECC has, like other councils, faced financial pressure for a number of years because:

- more people need our services and support each year, with increasing levels of complexity, which are ongoing issues being seen nationally; and
- the costs of providing services have increased – partly due to inflation, and partly as a result of changes in the law.

As we think about the future, ECC want to ensure we understand our residents' aspirations, anxieties and are keen to understand how the financial situation has changed people's priorities for themselves, their families, and their communities.

For this reason, Essex launched a public consultation, inviting views on the challenges Essex face as a county and on priorities for the future of Essex County Council.

The consultation was divided into two parts. Part one focused on priorities for recovery across Essex and the challenges we face as a county. Part two focused on the financial pressures facing the county council itself and invited views and comments on how we should allocate resources to meet the needs of the residents.

The results of this consultation will inform our plans for the next eighteen months, the budgets set for the next financial year (2024/25) and our longer-term strategies.

This report shows the findings from this consultation. Respondents were given a list of proposals and options for services across the county and the analysis has been reported as an overall county wide view.

Demographic information was captured to understand who has responded to the consultation and understand the impact it has on the residents of Essex.

Interpreting the data within the consultation

This report contains several tables and charts that present the consultation findings. In some instances, responses may not add up to 100%. There are several reasons why this might happen:

- The question may have allowed each respondent to give more than one answer
- A response of between 0% - 0.5% will be shown as <1%.
- Percentages have been rounded up to 2 decimal places when applicable
- As the questionnaire was completed by respondents themselves (self-completion), not all respondents have answered all the questions. Therefore, the base size (the number of people answering a question) varies by question.
- To ensure inclusivity, the questionnaire was open for anyone to take part and was available online and in paper format.
- For the analysis of free text comments, all have been read through and a coding frame was developed on a theme-by-theme basis and quantified thereafter.

Key Conclusions

- **The most prominent issue that residents feel Essex faced today is the pressure on National Health service and health care services.**
- **More Residents are most concerned about the condition of roads and pavements within Essex, rising from 53% in 23/24, to 64% in 24/25.**
- **Concerns about Crime/Community Safety has risen by 3% over the past year, becoming one of the most important issues facing Essex Today.**
- **Nearly all of respondents believe inflation and current cost of living situation will have an impact on ECC finances over the next years (85%), however this has fallen from 96% in the previous year.**
- **Under three quarters of respondents would understand if there was an increase in council taxes and the biggest proportion of respondents would be willing to increase council tax to protect services for the most vulnerable or those without choice (69%).**
- **4 areas of which respondents would like to see prioritised spending would be; Developing Essex infrastructure, Supporting those who care for the sick or vulnerable people, Securing higher standards in education, and Protecting Vulnerable Children.**

Executive summary

- National Health Service/Healthcare remained the most important issue facing Essex today (52%) while Crime and community safety was viewed as the second most important issue from respondents (29%) followed by Social Care provision (28%).
- When looking at what ECC could do in relation to budget priorities, The following priorities had a high percentage of respondents agreeing –
 - Prioritise spending to protect services for the most vulnerable and those without choice (75% = Agree strongly or Agree slightly) (76% - 2022 response)
 - Help people to help themselves more so they have less reliance on publicly funded services (75% = Agree strongly or Agree slightly) (75% - 2022 response)
 - Streamline services so that we can deliver the same outcomes (67% = Agree strongly or Agree slightly) (68% - 2022 response)
 - Use / partner with other organisational bodies to provide services (65% = Agree strongly or Agree slightly) (65% - 2022 response)
 - Encourage local people and communities to deliver certain services (55% = Agree strongly or Agree slightly) (57% - 2022 response)
 - Introduce charges for some services which are currently free/subsidised (36% = Agree strongly or Agree slightly) (40% - 2022 response)
 - Reduce or stop delivering some services to protect others (26% = Agree strongly or Agree slightly) (29%-2022 response)
- When respondents were asked *ECC should consider increase in council tax*. The following responses were in level of agreement for the following statement
 - To protect services for the most vulnerable and those without choice (69% = Agree strongly or Agree slightly) (70%-2022 response)
 - Only when opportunities to streamline services have been exhausted (61% = Agree strongly or Agree slightly) (64%-2022 response)
 - When the only alternative is to stop delivering some services (57% = Agree strongly or Agree slightly) (60%-2022 response)
 - As an alternative to imposing/ increasing fees and charges for services) (42% = Agree strongly or Agree slightly) (40%-2022 response)
- Over 4 out of 10 respondents (44%) disagree strongly or disagree slightly with increasing council tax under no circumstances.

- The top five services that respondents felt should be prioritised when budget setting were: Developing Essex infrastructure = 45% (42%-2022), Supporting those who care for the sick or vulnerable people = 34% (36%-2022), Securing high standard of education = 29% (29%-2022), Protecting vulnerable children = 27% (26%-2022) and Good local jobs = 24% (22% - 2022).
- There was a high number of free-text comments which made comments about other budget issues which were not related to the actual proposals which are subject to the consultation (General Comments in Detailed Findings).

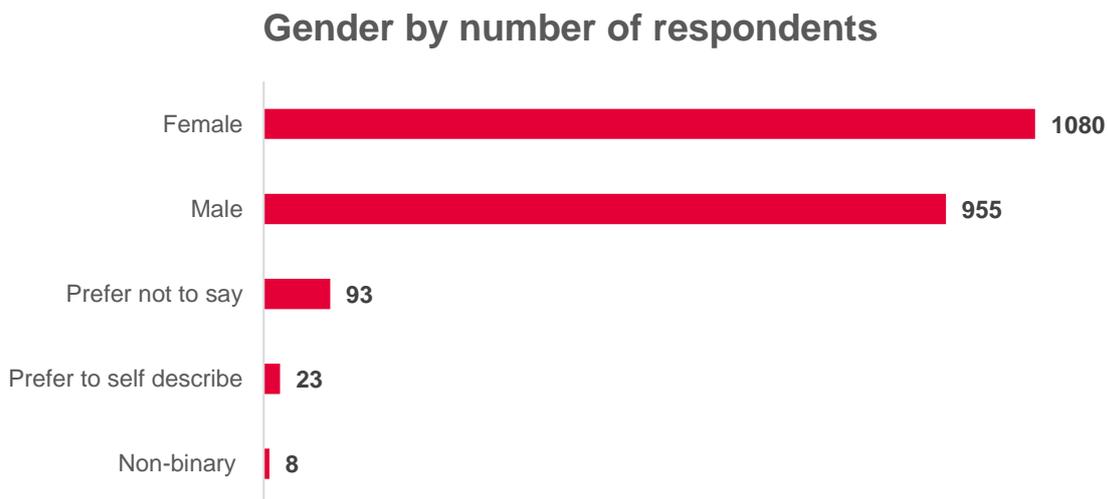
More detailed analysis can be found in the detailed section below.

Who gave their views

2159 responses to the online consultation. **94.67%** of respondents answered as residents (n=2044), **4.2%** answered as Resident and business owners (n=91), **0.92%** answered as Other (n=20) and **0.18%** as business owners only (n=4).

The business owner findings will be reported on in a section later in the report.

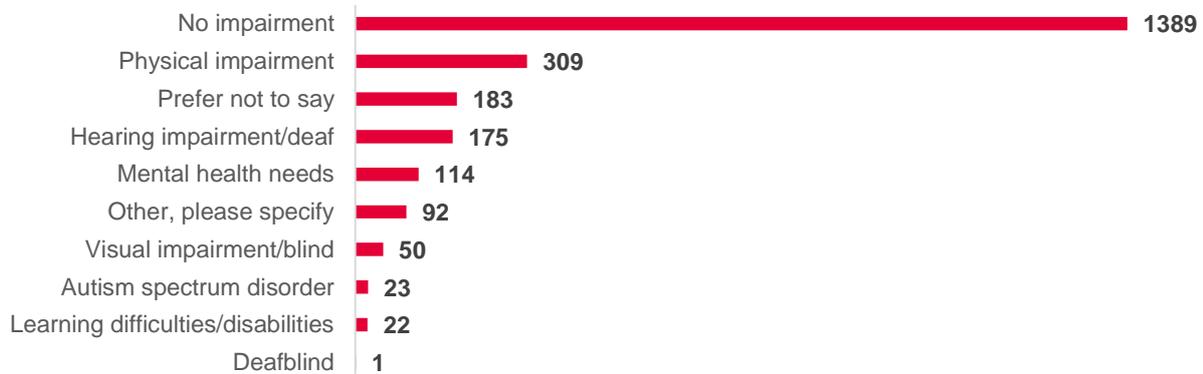
Of the respondents that declared their gender **50.02%** of respondents were **Female**, **44.23%** were **Male**, **4.31%** preferred not to say, **1.07%** Preferred to self-describe and **<1%** were Non-binary.



64.34% stated they had **no impairment**, **14.31%** of respondents said that they have a **physical impairment**, **8.48%** prefer not to say, **8.11%** have a **Hearing impairment/deaf**, **5.28%** have a **mental health need**, **4.26%** stated **other**, **2.32%** have a **Visual impairment/blind**, **1.07%** autism spectrum disorder and **1.02%** have a **Learning Difficulty or Disabilities** with **<1%** stated **Deafblind**.

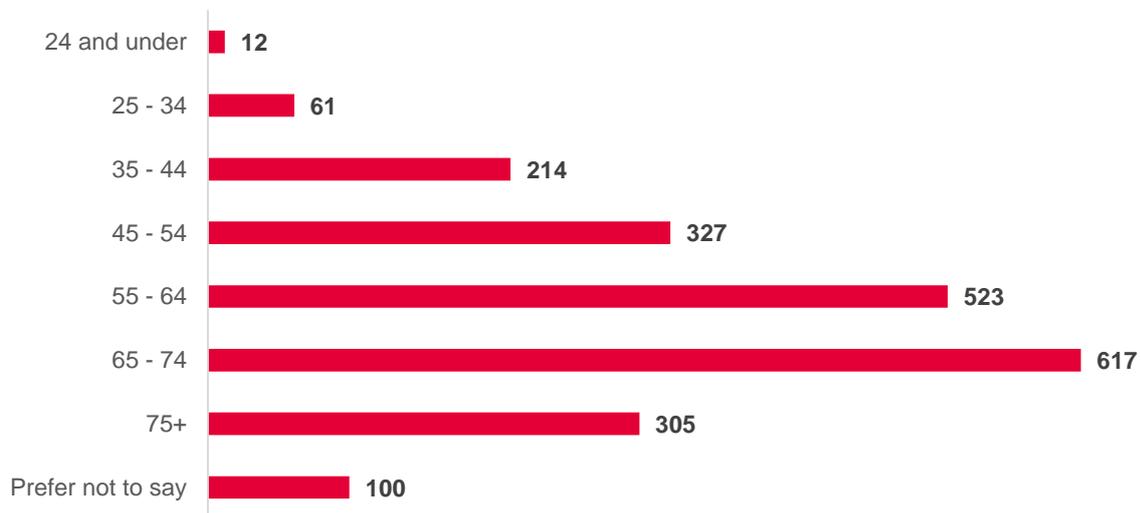
Respondents were asked to select all impairments that may apply to their own personal circumstance.

Impairment by number of respondents



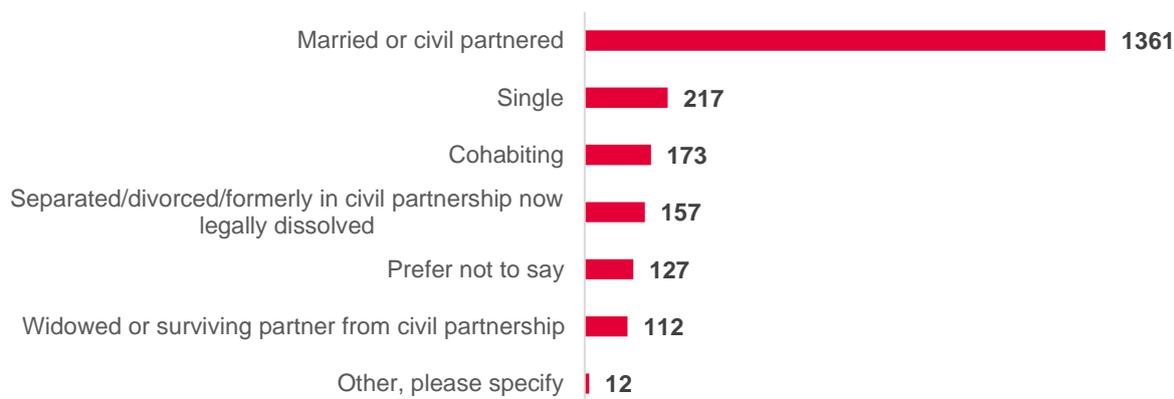
28.58% were aged between **65 – 74**, **24.22%** of respondents were aged **55 - 64**, **15.15%** were aged between **45 – 54**, **14.13%** were aged **75+**, **9.91%** were aged **35 - 44**, **2.83%** were aged **25 - 34** years old, **0.55%** were **24 and under** and **4.63%** of respondents **preferred not to say**. The rest of the respondents did not answer this question

Number of Respondents by Age group



63.04% of respondents were **Married**, **10.05%** were **Single**, **8.01%** were **Cohabiting**, **7.27%** were **Separated/divorced** and **5.88%** of respondents **preferred not to say**. **5.19%** are **widowed** and of respondents stated **Other, please state** there was **0.56%**, The rest of the respondents did not answer this question

Marital status of respondents



86.06% of respondents stated they were **White British**, **7.36%** of respondents **preferred not to say**, **2.13%** respondents said they were **White other**, and **0.88%** stated **Irish**, **0.65%** were **African**, **0.66%** respondents said they were **White and black Caribbean**, **0.51%** were **white and Asian** and All other stated ethnicities were below **0.5%** responses

<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>Count</i>
English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	1858
Prefer not to say	159
Any other white background, please describe	46
Irish	19
African	14
White and Asian	11
Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background, please describe	10
White and Black Caribbean	8
Indian	7
Caribbean	6
Any other ethnic group, please describe	5
Chinese	4
White and Black African	4
Any other Asian background, please describe	3
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	1
Any other Black/African/Caribbean background, please describe	1
Gypsy/Irish Traveller	1

The district breakdown number of respondents completing is shown in the table below

<i>District</i>	<i>Count</i>
Chelmsford	384
Colchester	297
Braintree	218
Tendring	203
Basildon	185
Brentwood	129
Maldon	128
Rochford	125
Uttlesford	119
Epping Forest	117
Castle Point	103
Harlow	70
Other, Please state	27
Prefer not to say	54

*Please note, respondents who had stated other are classified because they gave answers covering multiple districts or self-described. The remaining respondents did not complete the answer



Detailed findings - Residents

Detailed findings - Residents

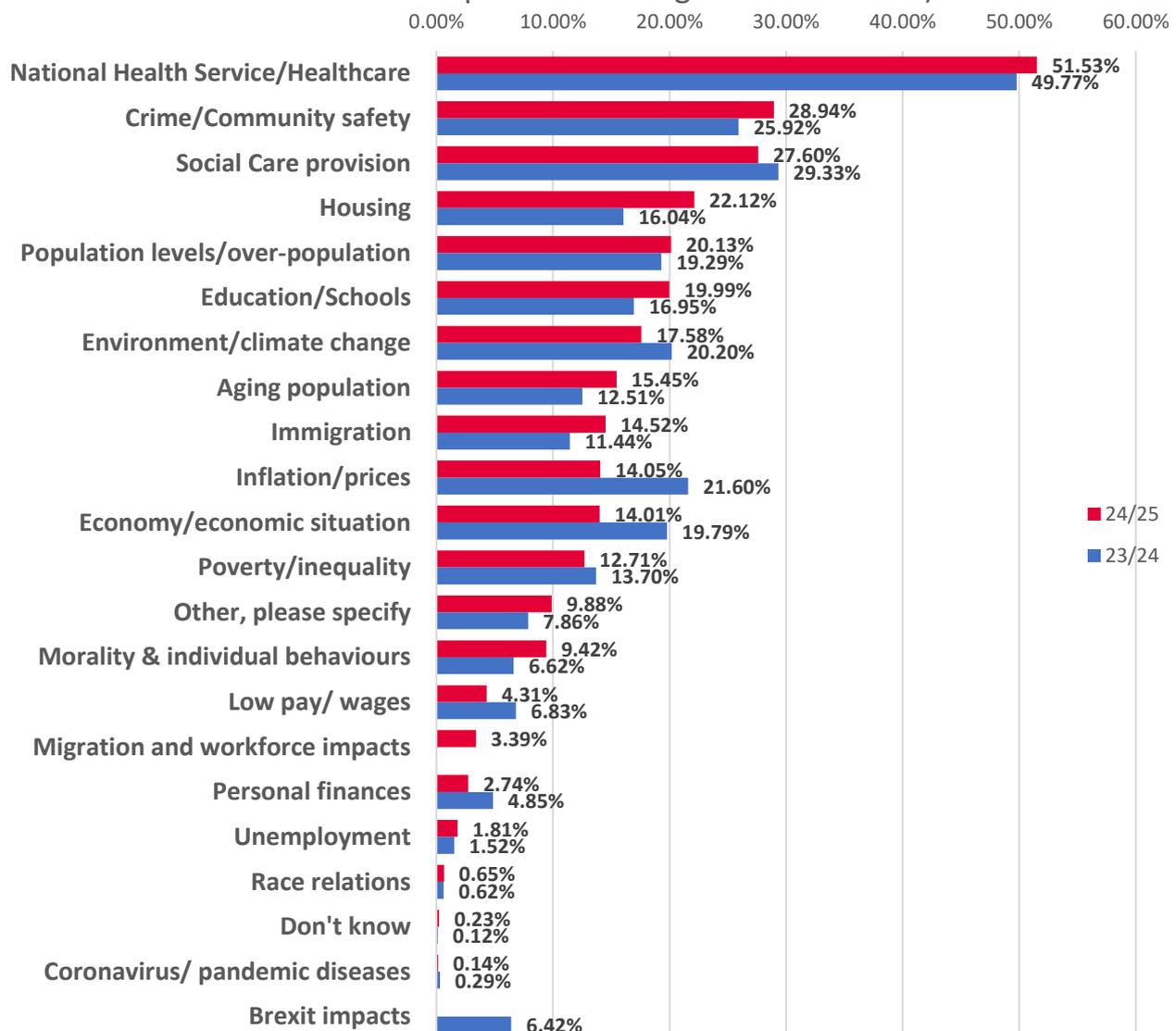
Views on challenges and priorities for budget setting of Essex County Council.

The consultation asked respondents about the most important issue facing Essex today.

The question asked for respondents to select their top 3 issues

Out of the 2042 respondents to this question, the following issues were selected

What would you say are the most important issues facing Essex today? - Residents (Max. 3 responses – figures reflect % of respondents who gave each answer)



In regard to the free text comments box for other, please specify, (n=213) these have been themed, coded and quantified below:

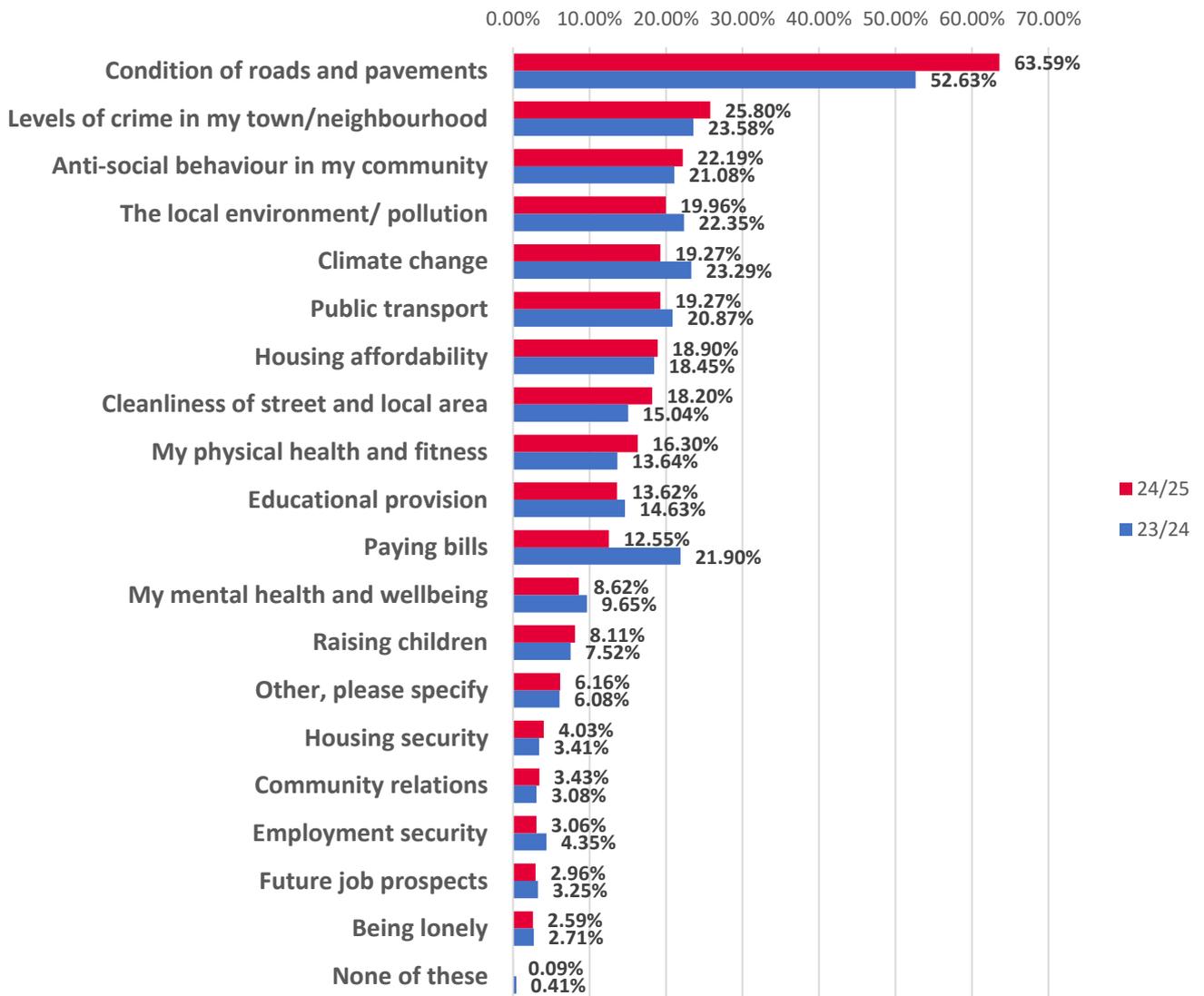
<i>Option</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Roads/traffic	101	47.41%
Infrastructure	28	13.14%
Public transport	20	9.39%
Pressure from housing developments	12	5.63%
Mental health	8	3.76%
Environment/climate change	5	2.35%
National Health Service/Healthcare	4	1.88%
Crime/Community safety	4	1.88%
All are priorities	4	1.88%
Population levels/over-population	3	1.41%
SEND/support for people with disabilities	3	1.41%
Immigration	2	0.94%
Library provision	2	0.94%
Economy/ economic situation	2	0.94%
Homelessness/rough sleeping	2	0.94%
Unemployment	1	<1%
Brexit impacts	1	<1%
Other	45	21.13%

The consultation asked respondents about thinking about their own situation what were they most concerned about.

The question asked for respondents to select their top 3 situations.

Out of the 2044 respondents to this question, the following situations were selected:

Which of the following are you concerned about? - Residents (Max. 3 responses – figures reflect % of respondents who gave each answer)



In regard to the Other, please specify free text comments box relating to responses from respondents describing issues that respondents are most concerned about, these have been themed, coded and quantified below.

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Availability of GPs/ healthcare	20	15.04%
Pressure from housing developments	18	13.53%
Traffic levels/ road safety	14	10.53%
Condition of roads and pavements	8	6.02%
Social care provision for older people	7	5.26%
Infrastructure	7	5.26%
SEND/support for people with disabilities	6	4.51%
Population levels/over-population/immigration	5	3.76%
Levels of crime in my town/neighbourhood	3	2.26%
Community relations	3	2.26%
Housing security	3	2.26%
The local environment/ pollution	3	2.26%
Support for active travel	2	1.50%
Cleanliness of street/local area	2	1.50%
Housing affordability	1	0.75%
Raising children	1	0.75%
Library provision	1	0.75%
Public transport	1	0.75%
Paying bills	1	0.75%
Anti-social behaviour in my community	1	0.75%
Protecting women and girls	1	0.75%
None of these	1	0.75%
Other comment non-related to the consultation	39	29.32%

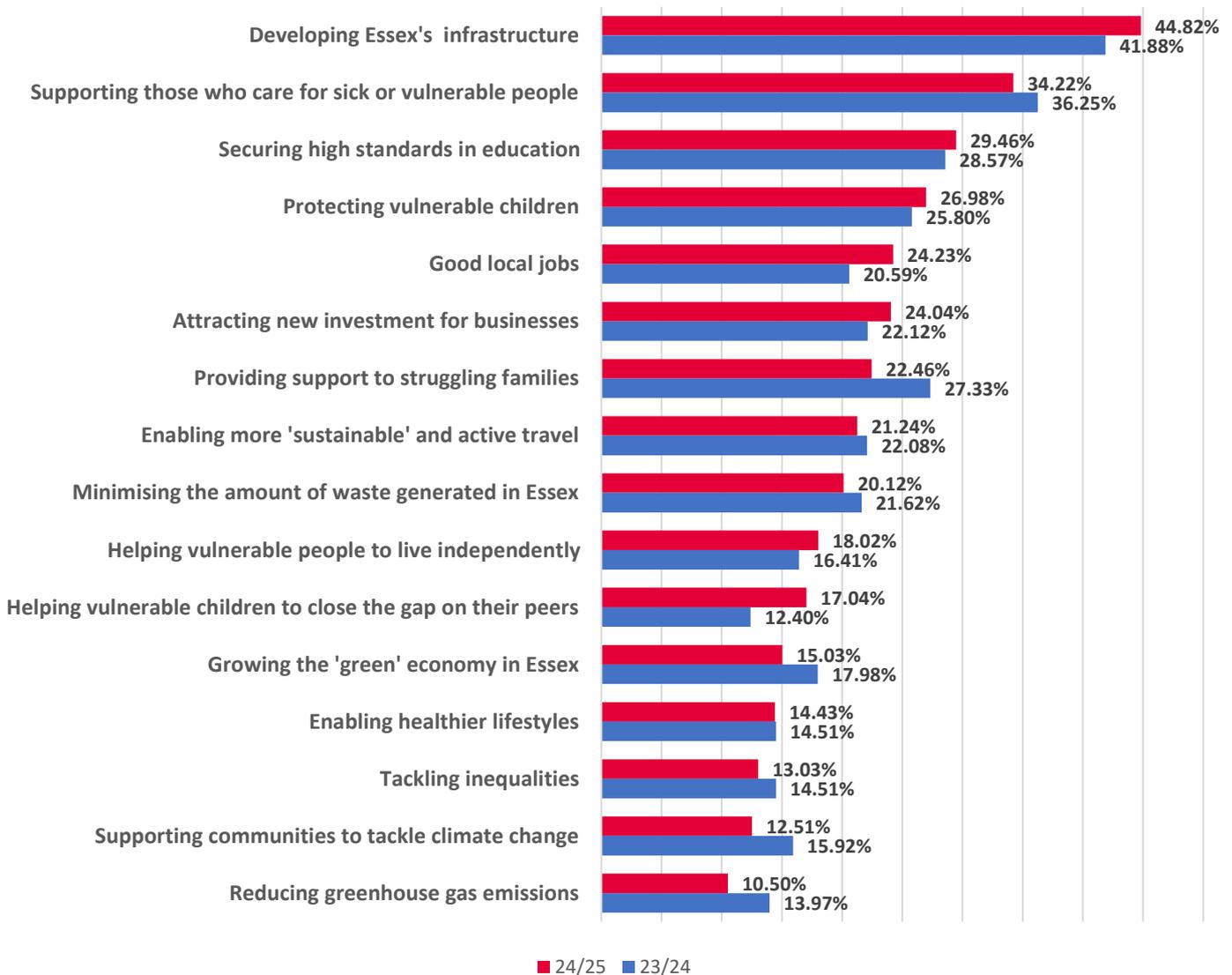
The consultation asked respondents to choose up to 4 commitments that they felt the council should prioritise for immediate action from the following.

The options were listed under the council’s 16 commitments.

The statistical breakdown of the responses has been combined together to show the most common responses on a commitment basis.

Out of the 2029 respondents to this question, the following commitments were selected:

What Should the Council Prioritise for Immediate Action? Residents (Max. 4 responses – figures reflect % of respondents who gave each answer)



In regard to the free text comments box relating to responses from respondents describing why they felt that these services should be prioritised, these have been themed, coded and quantified below.

Theme	Total	Percentage
Other comment not related to the consultation	163	11.52%
For the future/ future generations	159	11.24%
Climate changes	128	9.05%
Support for children and young people	123	8.70%
Education	121	8.55%
Environment	118	8.34%
Support for the most vulnerable	114	8.06%
Improve infrastructure (general)	103	7.28%
More effective employment / local employment	96	6.78%
Road improvements needed	95	6.71%
Health is key	93	6.57%
Most important improvements	78	5.51%
Address inequalities	73	5.16%
Lack of infrastructure for expanding community	71	5.02%
Help for carers	67	4.73%
Supporting businesses / attracting businesses to area	67	4.73%
Biggest impact on a number of people	65	4.60%
Improving public transport	59	4.17%
Will have knock on effect to improve other areas	50	3.53%
Community pride	49	3.46%
People/families are struggling	48	3.39%
Help economic growth	47	3.32%
Waste management/recycling	47	3.32%
Directly affect me	44	3.11%
Invest in local communities	43	2.90%
Improve healthcare/ availability of healthcare	40	2.83%
Not currently being addressed / under funded	40	2.83%
Too many new houses/ overpopulated	40	2.83%
Council waste too much on wrong things / woke agenda / don't spend on the important things	38	2.68%
Aging population	37	2.61%
Long term impact	34	2.40%
Social care provision	31	2.20%
Help people to help themselves/be independent	30	2.12%
Affordable housing	26	1.84%
Better standards of living	25	1.77%
Sign of a civilised society / basic requirement	25	1.77%
Improve policing / reduce crime	23	1.63%
Transport infrastructure	23	1.63%
Safety in the community	22	1.55%

Mental health important	21	1.43%
Poor education standards currently / education underfunded / not enough schools	21	1.48%
Achievable improvements	19	1.34%
All areas should be prioritised	18	1.27%
Encourage/accommodate alternative travel	17	1.20%
My opinion	14	0.99%
People matter / should care about people	13	0.92%
Common sense / obvious / the right thing to do	12	0.80%
Flooding concerns	11	0.78%
SEND	11	0.78%
Don't know / no answer	9	0.64%
Green spaces vital	9	0.64%
Physical health	9	0.64%
Economic stability	8	0.57%
Biodiversity measures	7	0.50%
Rail service improvements	7	0.49%
Reduced crime from Alcohol/drug schemes	6	0.42%
Mental health services in high demand	5	0.35%
Skills investment	4	0.28%
Education is foundation for a good future	3	0.21%
More leisure and fitness choices needed	3	0.21%
Protection for everyone	3	0.21%
Access to libraries	2	0.14%
Investment in early years is needed	2	0.14%
None of the options	2	0.14%
Brexit	1	0.07%
Coast protection measures	1	0.07%
Funding in early years	1	0.07%
More support needed from national government	1	0.07%
Secondary schools historically underfunded	1	0.07%

Views on how Essex County Council should allocate resources

The consultation asked respondents how strongly they agree, disagree or both should be equally considered for the pairs of the following services:

1st paired statement ...ECC should prioritise services that benefit the majority of residents and taxpayer's vs ...ECC should prioritise services that focus on those with the greatest needs.

Out of the 2043 respondents to this question, **32.80% (n=670) Agreed strongly that ECC should prioritise services that benefit the majority of residents and taxpayer's, 9.94% slightly agreed (n=203), 34.80% (n=711) believed both should be equally considered, 9.20% (n=188) slightly agreed that ECC should prioritise services that focus on those with the greatest needs, 12.97% (n=265) Strongly Agree and 0.29% (n=6) Don't know.**

...ECC should prioritise services that benefit the majority of residents and taxpayer's vs ...ECC should prioritise services that focus on those with the greatest needs.



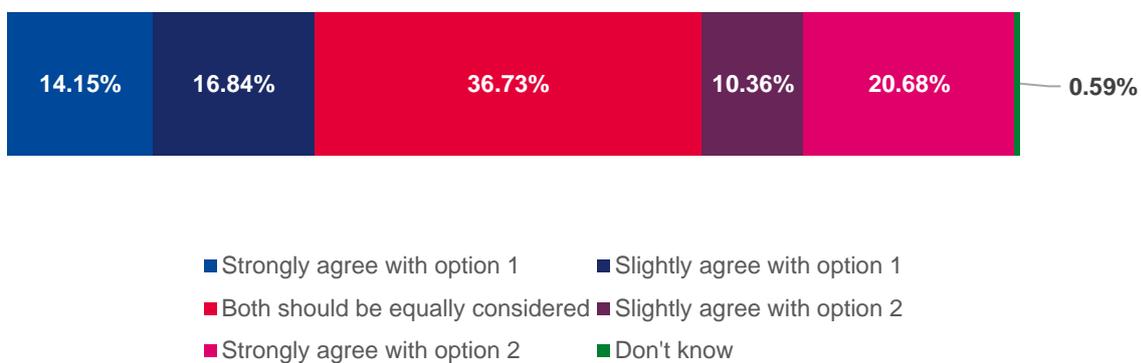
- Strongly agree with option 1
- Slightly agree with option 1
- Both should be equally considered
- Slightly agree with option 2
- Strongly agree with option 2
- Don't know

.....ECC should target services towards struggling neighbourhoods, towns or cities vs ...ECC should provide services that are available in all communities across Essex.

Out of the 2044 respondents to this question, **14.38% (n=294) Agreed strongly that ECC should target services towards struggling neighbourhoods, towns or cities, Slightly agreed 15.95% (n=326), 38.26% (n=782) believed both should be equally considered,**

10.03% (n=205) slightly agreed that ECC should provide services that are available in all communities in Essex, 20.79% (n=425) Strongly Agreed and 0.59% (n=12) Don't know.

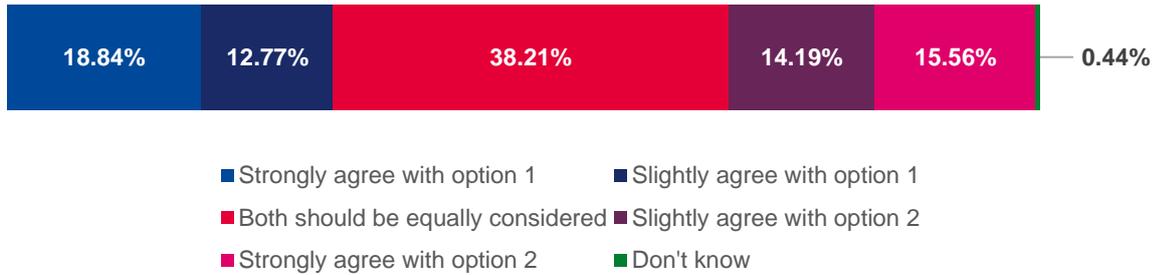
*.....ECC should target services towards struggling neighbourhoods, towns or cities vs
 ...ECC should provide services that are available in all communities across Essex.*



**...ECC should prioritise spending on meeting the needs of the people today VS
 ...ECC should prioritise spending on projects that will increase opportunities over the long term.**

Out of the 2044 respondents to this question, 18.84% (n=385) Agreed strongly that ECC should prioritise spending on meeting the needs of the people today, 12.77% (n=261) slightly agreed, 38.21% (n=781) believed both should be equally considered, 14.19% (n=290) slightly agreed that ECC should prioritise spending on projects that will increase opportunities over the long term, 15.56% (n=318) Strongly Agree and 0.44% (n=9) Don't know.

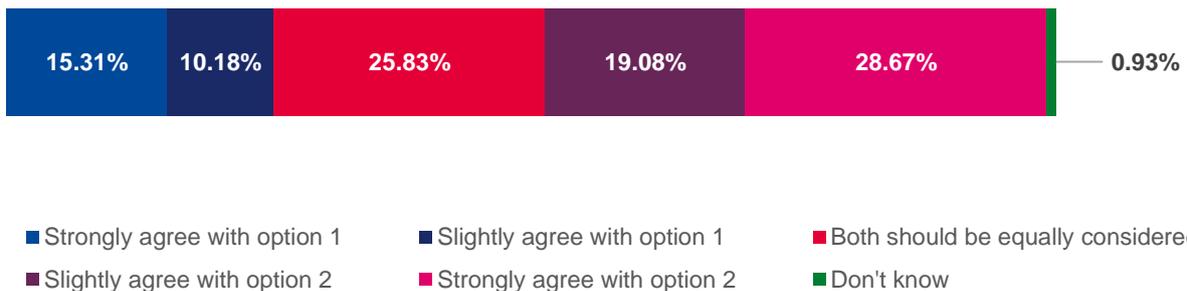
ECC should prioritise spending on meeting the needs of the people today vs ...ECC should prioritise spending on projects that will increase opportunities over the long term.



...Decisions on how to spend money in Essex should consider the county as a whole VS ...Decisions on how to spend money should be taken as close to local communities as possible.

Out of the 2044 respondents to this question, **15.31% (n=313) Agreed strongly that Decisions on how to spend money in Essex should consider the county as a whole, 10.18% (n=208) slightly agreed, 25.83% (n=528) believed both should be equally considered, 19.08% (n=390) slightly agreed that Decisions on how to spend money should be taken as close to local communities as possible, 28.67% (n=586) Strongly Agree and 0.93% (n=19) Don't know.**

...Decisions on how to spend money in Essex should consider the county as a whole vs ...Decisions on how to spend money should be taken as close to local communities as possible

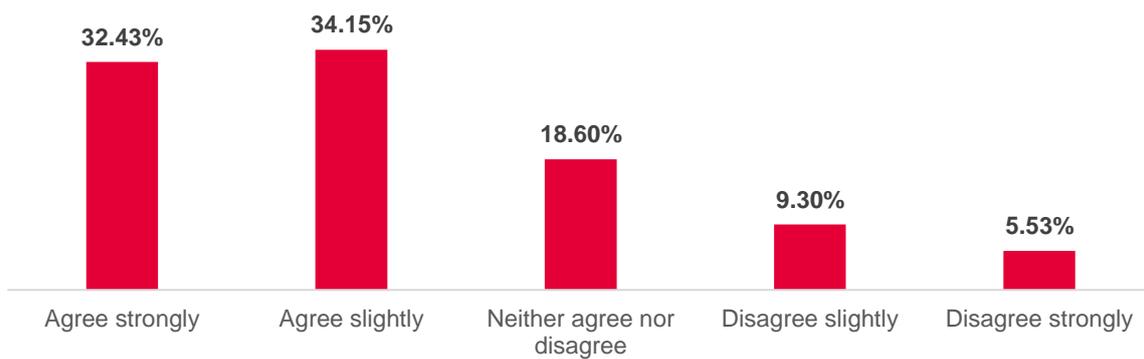


The consultation asked respondents how strongly do you agree or disagree that Essex County Council should do each of the following when faced with financial pressures?

Financial pressure - Streamline services so that we can deliver the same outcomes

Out of the 2044 respondents to this question, **32.43% (n=663) Agreed Strongly, 34.15% (n=698) Agreed Slightly, 18.60% (n=380) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 9.30% (n=190) Disagreed slightly and 5.53% Disagreed strongly (n=113).**

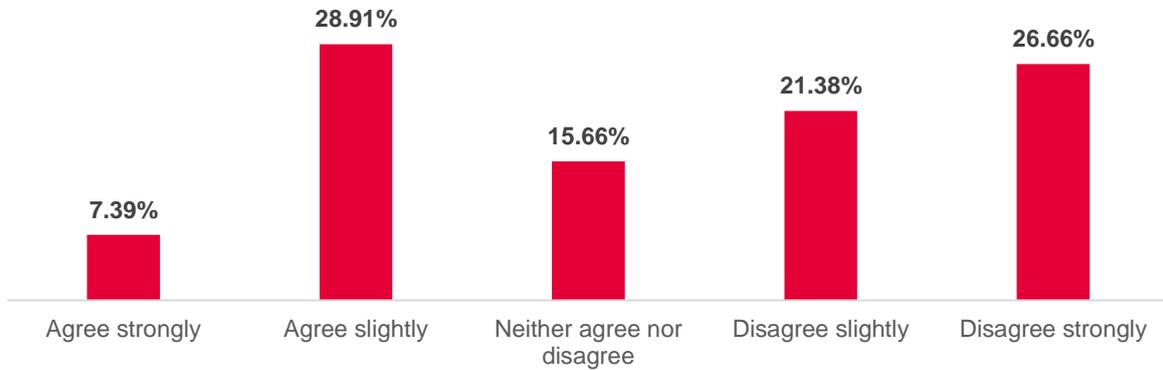
Streamline services so that we can deliver the same outcome



Financial pressure - Introduce charges for some services which are currently free/subsidised

Out of the 2044 respondents to this question, **7.39% (n=151) Agreed Strongly, 28.91% (n=591) Agreed Slightly, 15.66% (n=320) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 21.38% (n=437) Disagreed slightly and 26.66% Disagreed strongly (n=545).**

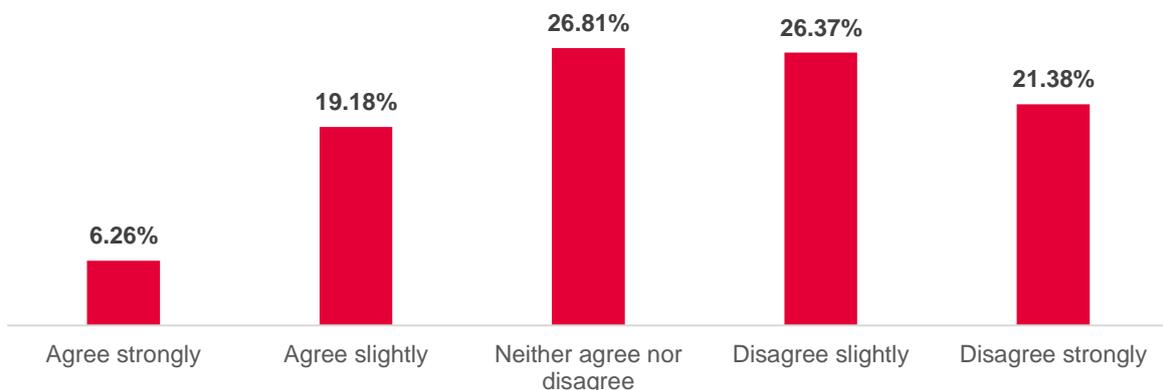
Introduce charges for some services which are currently free/subsidised



Financial pressure - Reduce or stop delivering some services to protect others

Out of the 2044 respondents to this question, **6.26% (n=128) Agreed Strongly, 19.18% (n=392) Agreed Slightly, 26.81% (n=548) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 26.37% (n=539) Disagreed slightly and 21.38% Disagreed strongly (n=437).**

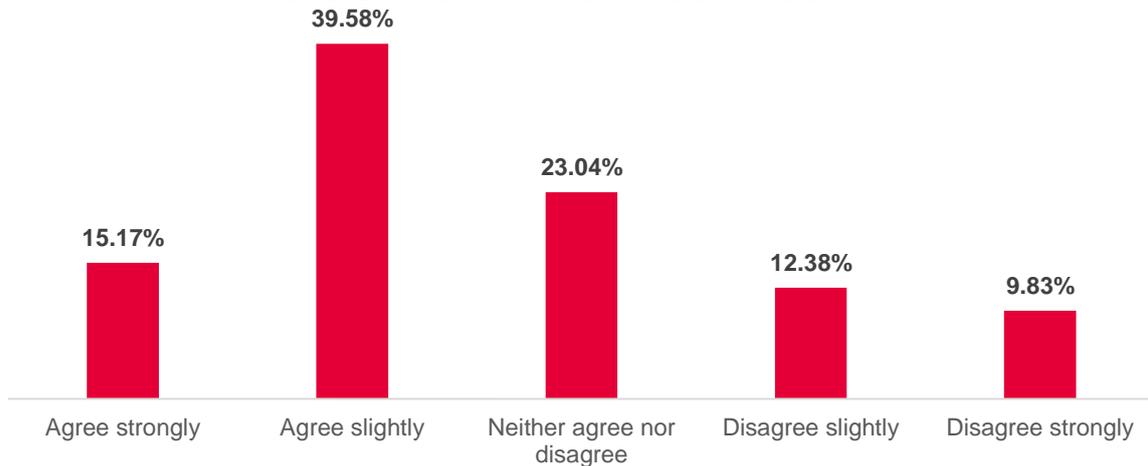
Reduce or stop delivering some services to protect others



Financial pressure - Encourage local people and communities to deliver certain services

Out of the 2044 respondents to this question, **15.17% (n=310) Agreed Strongly, 39.58% (n=809) Agreed Slightly, 23.04% (n=471) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 12.38% (n=253) Disagreed slightly and 9.83% Disagreed strongly (n=201).**

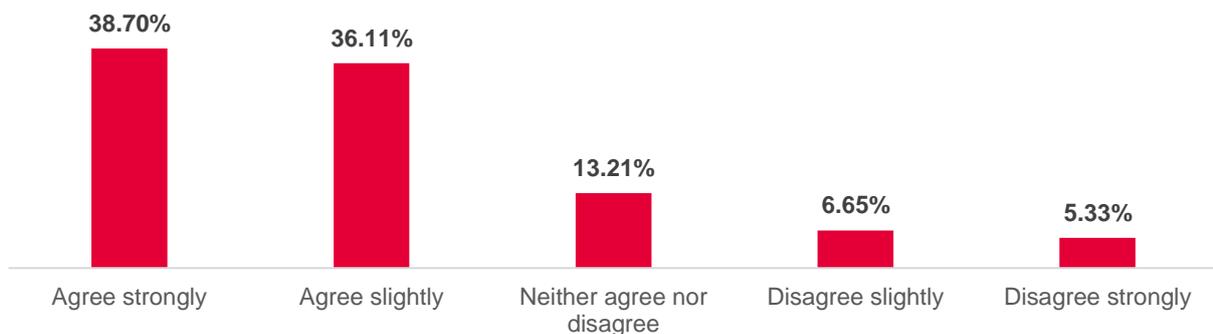
Encourage local people and communities to deliver certain services



Financial pressure - Help people to help themselves more so they have less reliance on publicly funded services

Out of the 2044 respondents to this question, **38.70% (n=791) Agreed Strongly, 36.11% (n=738) Agreed Slightly, 13.21% (n=270) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 6.65% (n=136) Disagreed slightly and 5.33% Disagreed strongly (n=109).**

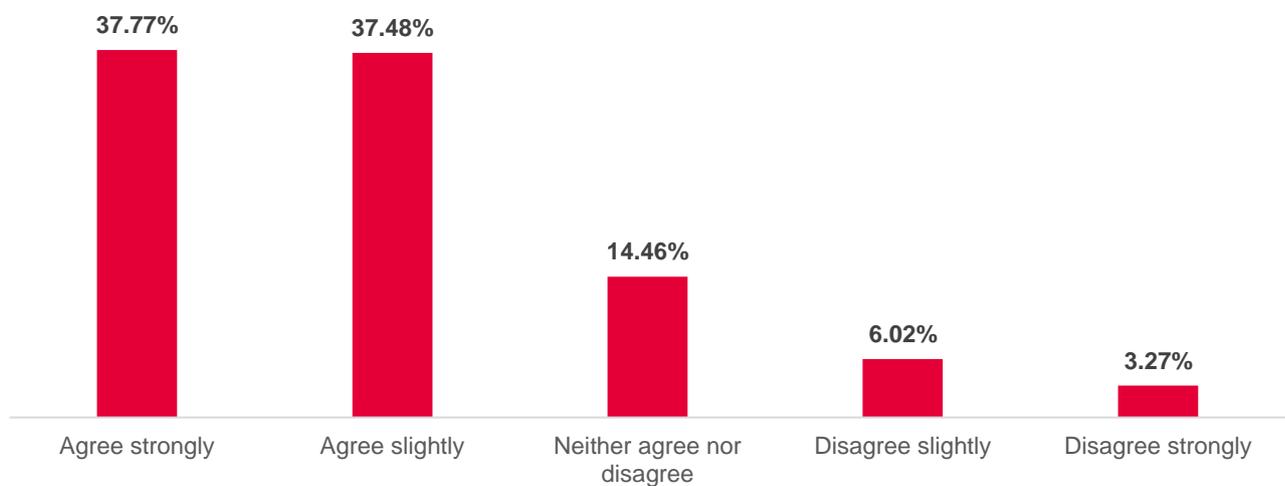
Help people to help themselves more so they have less reliance on publicly funded services



Financial pressure - Prioritise spending to protect services for the most vulnerable and those without choice

Out of the 2044 respondents to this question, **37.77% (n=772) Agreed Strongly, 37.48% (n=766) Agreed Slightly, 14.46% (n=316) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 6.02% (n=123) Disagreed slightly and 3.27% Disagreed strongly (n=67).**

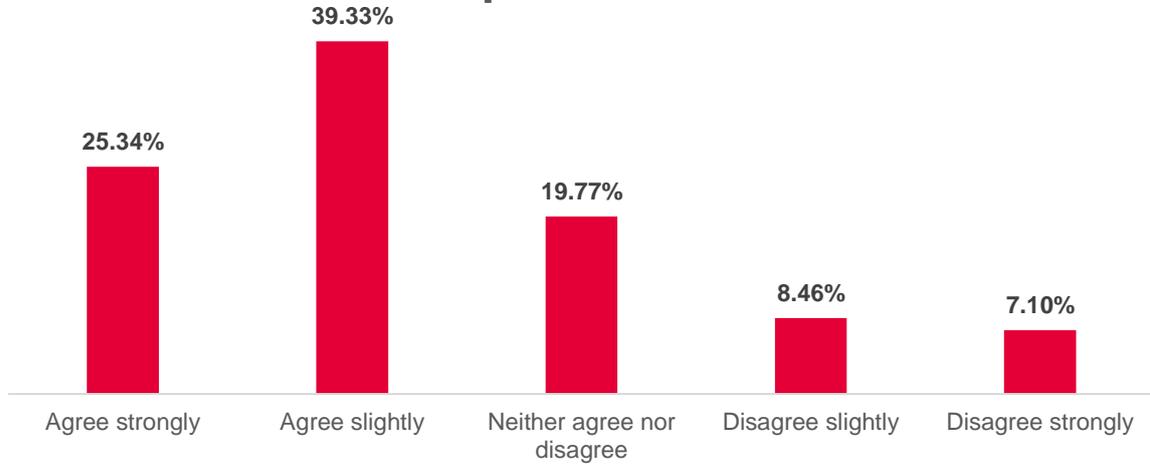
Prioritise spending to protect services for the most vulnerable and those without choice



Financial pressure - Use / partner with other organisational bodies to provide services

Out of the 2044 respondents to this question, **25.34% (n=518) Agreed Strongly, 39.33% (n=804) Agreed Slightly, 19.77% (n=404) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 8.46% (n=173) Disagreed slightly and 7.10% Disagreed strongly (n=145).**

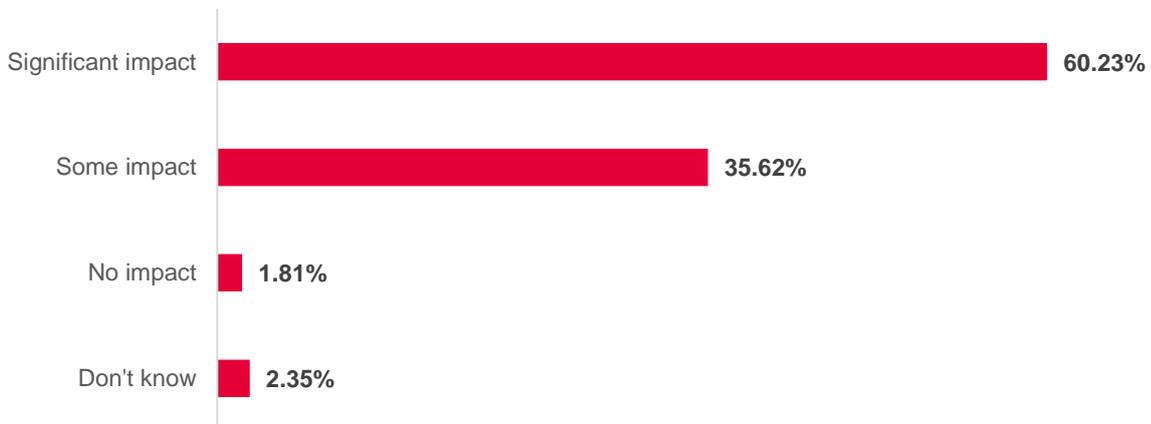
Use / partner with other organisational bodies to provide services



The consultation asked respondents if they thought inflation, interest rates and the current cost of living situation will have an impact on Essex County council's finances.

Out of the 2044 respondents to this question, 60.23% (n=1231) Significant impact, 35.62% (n=728) some impact, 1.81% (n=37) No impact, and 2.35% Don't know (n=48).

Inflation, interest rates and current cost of living situation impacting on ECC finances



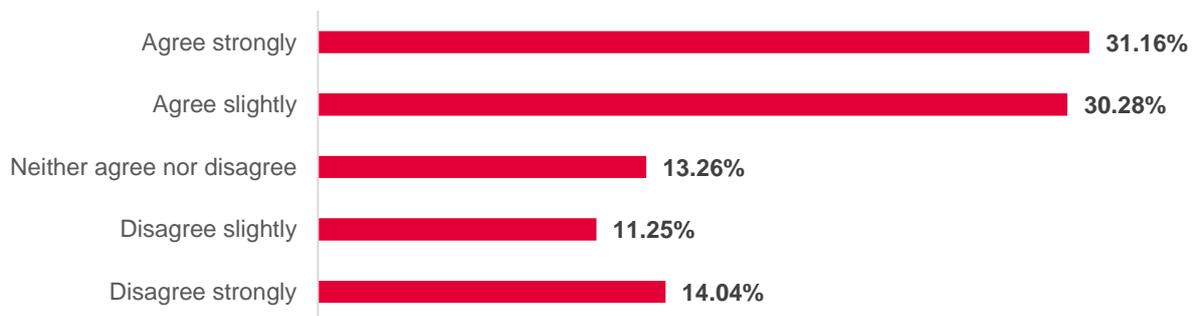
Increase in Council tax

The consultation asked respondents to agree or disagree with the following statements relating to increase in council tax...

1st statement - ...only when opportunities to streamline services have been exhausted

Out of the 2044 respondents to this question, **31.16% (n=637) Agreed Strongly, 30.28% (n=619) Agreed Slightly, 13.26% (n=271) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 11.25% (n=230) Disagreed slightly and 14.04% Disagreed strongly (n=287).**

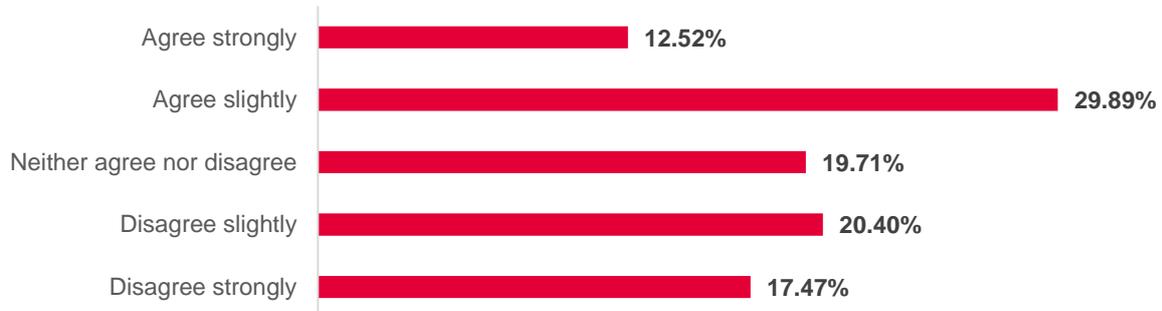
Increase in council tax only when opportunities to streamline has been exhausted



2nd statement - ...as an alternative to imposing/ increasing fees and charges for services

Out of the 2044 respondents to this question, **12.52% (n=256) Agreed Strongly, 29.89% (n=611) Agreed Slightly, 19.71% (n=403) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 20.40% (n=417) Disagreed slightly and 17.47% Disagreed strongly (n=357).**

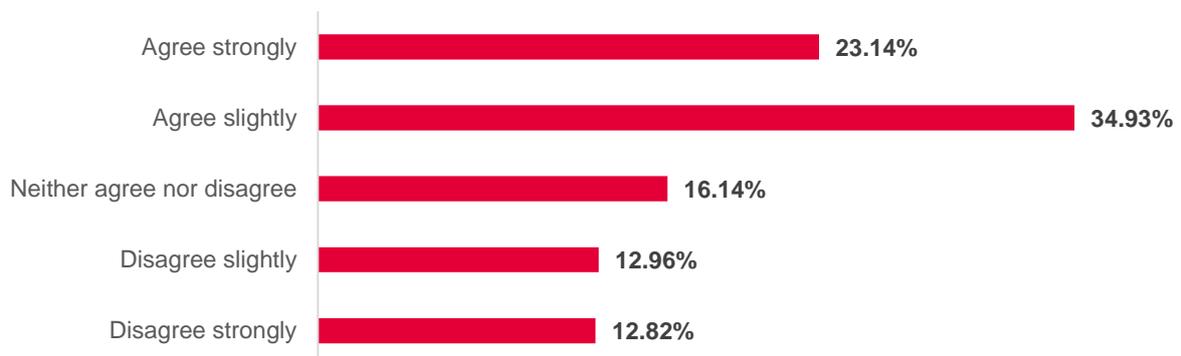
Increase in council tax as an alternative to imposing/increasing fees and charges for services



3rd statement - ...when the only alternative is to stop delivering some services

Out of the 2044 respondents to this question, 23.14% (n=473) Agreed Strongly, 34.93% (n=714) Agreed Slightly, 16.14% (n=330) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 12.96% (n=265) Disagreed slightly and 12.82% Disagreed strongly (n=262).

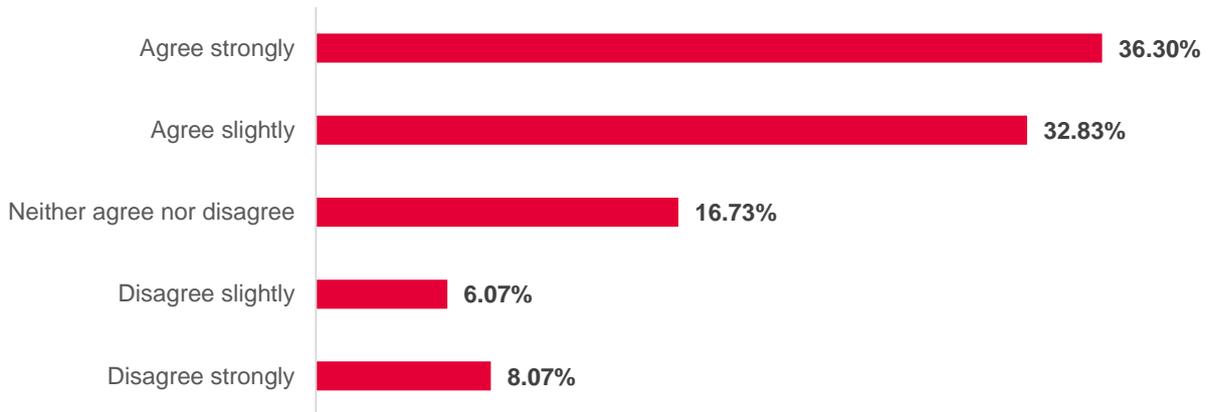
Increase council tax when the only alternative is to stop delivering some services



4th statement - ...to protect services for the most vulnerable and those without choice

Out of the 2044 respondents to this question, **36.30% (n=742) Agreed Strongly, 32.83% (n=671) Agreed Slightly, 16.73% (n=342) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 6.07% (n=124) Disagreed slightly and 8.07% Disagreed strongly (n=165).**

Increase council tax to protect the most vulnerable and those without choice



5th statement - ...under no circumstances

Out of the 2044 respondents to this question, **17.38% (n=355) Agreed Strongly, 11.50% (n=235) Agreed Slightly, 27.15% (n=555) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 19.28% (n=394) Disagreed slightly and 24.70% Disagreed strongly (n=505).**

Increase in council tax under no circumstances



The consultation then asked respondents to what other circumstances would they agree or disagree to an increase in council tax

The free text comments box responses have been themed, coded and quantified below.

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Prioritise efficiency/ eliminate wasteful spending	20	20.20%
Streamline ECC staff/ salaries/ benefits	17	17.17%
Do not increase Council Tax	8	8.08%
Increase Council Tax	8	8.08%
Increase Council Tax for the wealthiest	8	8.08%
ECC to deliver all services/ avoid partnerships	6	6.06%
Prioritise vulnerable people/ households	6	6.06%
Concentrate on the basics/ essentials/ higher impact services	5	5.05%
ECC to review its working practices first	5	5.05%
More support needed from national government	5	5.05%
Improve transparency around budget/ spend	4	4.04%
Need more information to answer	4	4.04%
Consider charging for some services	2	2.02%
Cut or charge for under-used/ unnecessary services	2	2.02%
Spend budget fairly across the county	2	2.02%
Invest in public transport	1	1.01%
Review benefits system	1	1.01%
Other	23	23.23%

Any other comments

The consultation asked respondents if there was anything else to consider regarding the consultation within a free-text box comments box.

Regarding the free text comments box relating to responses from respondents describing anything else ECC should consider have been themed, coded and quantified below

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Prioritise council efficiency / eliminate wasteful spending / streamline staff / stop working from home	143	19.72%
Improve road maintenance	54	7.45%
Avoid vanity or fashionable projects	47	6.48%
Improve roadside and pavement maintenance	34	4.69%
Revise highest pay grades for ECC staff	34	4.69%
Spend budget fairly across county	33	4.55%
Prioritise vulnerable people/ households	30	4.14%
Review outsourcing to private companies	30	4.14%
Listen to the concerns/needs of residents/businesses	28	3.86%
None/ nothing	28	3.86%
No increase in Council Tax	21	2.90%
Prioritise value for money	21	2.90%
Budget needs to be communicated better	20	2.76%
Share service delivery with district and boroughs	19	2.62%
Concentrate on the basics/ essentials	18	2.48%
Consider Council Tax increase	17	2.34%
Invest in infrastructure	17	2.34%
Negative comments about questionnaire/survey	16	2.21%
Streamline ECC management team	16	2.21%
Increase Police presence	15	2.07%
Invest in childcare and education for children	15	2.07%

Invest in public transport	15	2.07%
Take a long-term/ joined-up view	15	2.07%
Budget review needed	14	1.93%
Invest in high streets	14	1.93%
Improve social care services	13	1.79%
More support needed from national government	13	1.79%
Share service delivery with local groups, voluntary sector, charities, NGOs	13	1.79%
Renegotiate road maintenance contract or bring in house	12	1.66%
Action on environmental issues	11	1.52%
Focus on reducing crime	11	1.52%
Better healthcare provision	10	1.38%
Don't know	10	1.38%
ECC to review the way it works	9	1.24%
Limit over-development/ population growth	9	1.24%
Improve recycling services	8	1.10%
Review council owned buildings	8	1.10%
Improve individuals' self-reliance	7	0.97%
Wealthier households should pay more Council Tax and/ or vice versa	7	0.97%
Help families in need	6	0.83%
Stop duplication of services	6	0.83%
Support employment, work skills and adult education	6	0.83%
Charge for some services	5	0.69%
Improve road safety	5	0.69%
Improve Youth Services	5	0.69%
Invest now to make savings in the future	5	0.69%
Pair improved infrastructure with new housing developments	5	0.69%
Services for young people	5	0.69%
Become more entrepreneurial/ business-minded	4	0.55%

Focus on leisure, culture and tourism	4	0.55%
Funding for SEND	4	0.55%
Means test/ make sure resources are going to those truly in need	4	0.55%
Tackle issues with housing	4	0.55%
Don't cut services	3	0.41%
Green spaces key	3	0.41%
Invest in active travel	3	0.41%
Maintain libraries	3	0.41%
Speeding motorists	3	0.41%
Tackle poverty/ inequality	3	0.41%
Assess need for new bus and cycle lanes	2	0.28%
Cut under-used services	2	0.28%
More investment in the voluntary sector	2	0.28%
Attract industries/businesses to the area	1	0.14%
Improve health and wellbeing	1	0.14%
Improve parking	1	0.14%
Invest in sustainable travel	1	0.14%
Local government reform needed	1	0.14%
Review council house allocation	1	0.14%
Update or replace Council Tax	1	0.14%
Other comments	137	18.90%



Detailed findings – Businesses in Essex

Detailed findings – Businesses in Essex

Businesses within Essex were invited to take part within the consultation. 95 people who were undertook the consultation with 91 stating they were resident and business owners with 4 declaring that they were a Business in Essex.

For the purpose of this section this will reflect the findings from the 95 businesses within Essex.

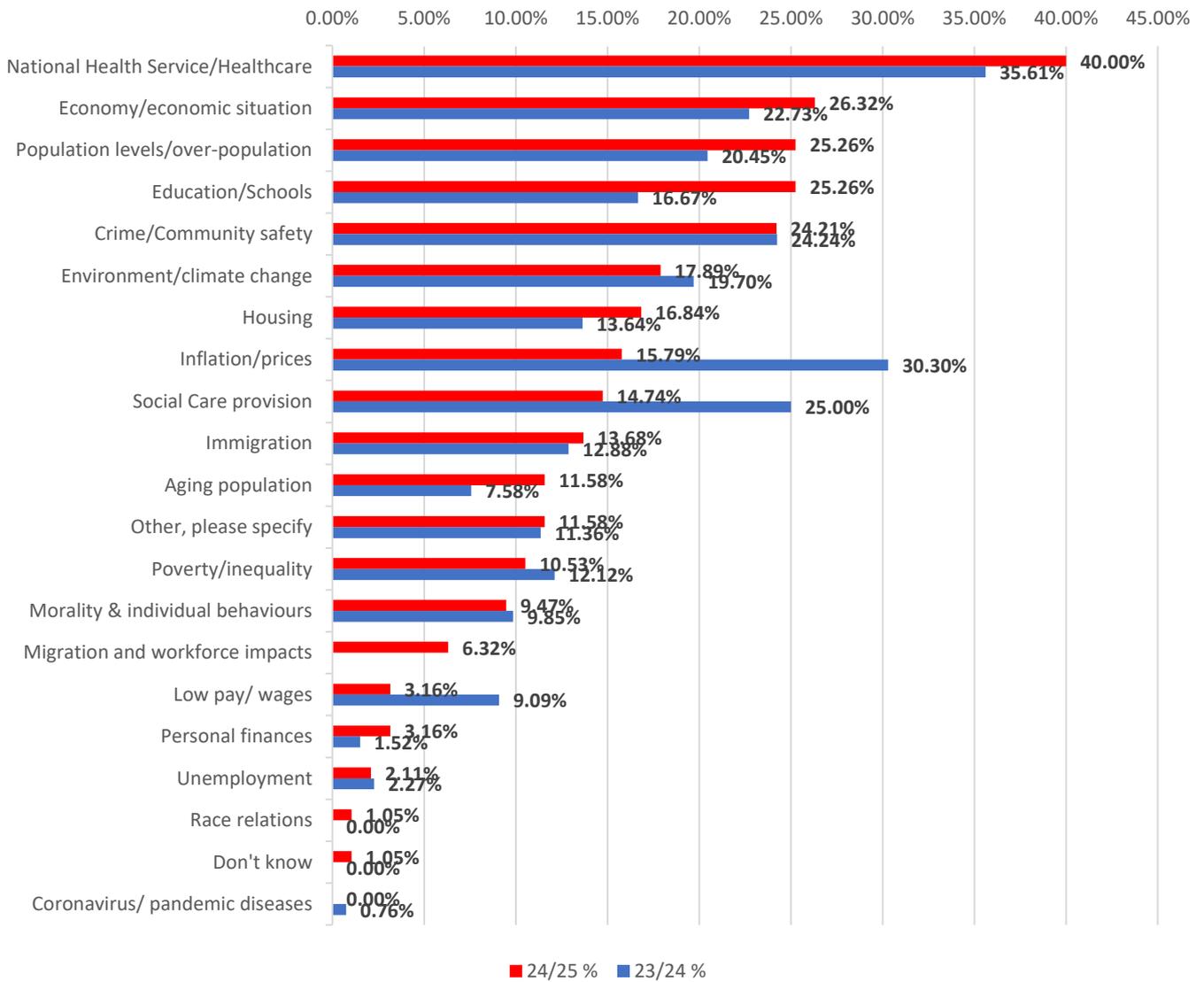
Views on challenges and priorities for budget setting of Essex County Council.

The consultation asked businesses about the most important issues facing Essex today.

The question asked for businesses to select their top 3 issues

Out of the 95 businesses to respond to this question, the following issues were selected

What would you say are the most important issues facing Essex today? - Business owners (Max. 3 responses – figures reflect % of respondents who gave each answer)



In regard to the free text comments box for other, please specify, (n=11) these have been themed, coded and quantified below:

<i>Option</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Roads/traffic	7	58.33%
Pressure from housing developments	2	16.67%
All are priorities	1	8.33%
Economy/economic situation	1	8.33%
Mental health	1	8.33%

The consultation asked businesses about thinking about their own situation what were they most concerned about.

The question asked for businesses to select their top 3 situations. Out of the 95 businesses who responded to this question, the following situations were selected

<i>Option</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Condition of roads and pavements	54	56.84%
Levels of crime in my town/neighbourhood	29	30.53%
Anti-social behaviour in my community	25	26.32%
The local environment/ pollution	20	21.05%
Housing affordability	19	20%
Cleanliness of street and local area	17	17.89%
Educational provision	17	17.89%
Paying bills	14	14.74%
My physical health and fitness	11	11.58%
Raising children	11	11.58%
Climate change	10	10.53%
Public transport	10	10.53%
My mental health and wellbeing	9	9.47%
Housing security	6	6.32%
Community relations	5	5.26%
Future job prospects	4	4.21%
Being lonely	3	3.16%
Employment security	3	3.16%
Other, please specify	6	6.32%

In regard to the Other, please specify free text comments box relating to responses from businesses describing issues they are most concerned about, these have been themed, coded and quantified below.

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Count</i>
Traffic levels/ road safety	2
The local environment/pollution	1
Cleanliness of streets/local area	1
Community relations	1
Other	1

The consultation asked businesses to choose up to 4 commitments that they felt the council should prioritise for immediate action from the following.

The options were listed under the council's 16 commitments.

The statistical breakdown of the responses has been combined together to show the most common responses to a commitment.

Out of the 94 responses to this question, the following commitment were selected

<i>Option</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Developing Essex's infrastructure	47	50%
Attracting new investment for businesses	36	38.30%
Securing high standards in education	31	32.98%
Good local jobs	28	29.79%
Protecting vulnerable children	28	29.79%
Supporting those who care for sick or vulnerable people	22	23.40%
Providing support to struggling families	16	17.02%
Helping vulnerable children to close the gap on their peers	14	14.89%
Helping vulnerable people to live independently	14	14.89%
Minimising the amount of waste generated in Essex	14	14.89%
Growing the 'green' economy in Essex	12	12.77%
Enabling healthier lifestyles	11	11.70%
Enabling more 'sustainable' and active travel	11	11.70%
Supporting communities to tackle climate change	10	10.64%
Reducing greenhouse gas emissions	9	9.57%
Tackling inequalities	6	6.38%

In regard to the free text comments box relating to responses from respondents describing why they felt that these commitments should be prioritised, these have been themed, coded and quantified below.

Theme	Total	Percentage
Education	12	7.55%
Will have knock on effect to improve other areas	9	5.66%
Address inequalities	8	5.03%
Environment	8	5.03%
Road improvements needed	8	5.03%
Supporting businesses / attracting businesses to area	7	4.40%
For the future/ future generations	6	3.77%
Improve infrastructure (general)	6	3.77%
More effective employment / local employment	6	3.77%
Support for children and young people	6	3.77%
Support for the most vulnerable	6	3.77%
Help economic growth	5	3.14%
Lack of infrastructure for expanding communities	5	3.14%
Better standards of living	4	2.52%
Health is key	4	2.52%
Improve policing / reduce crime	4	2.52%
Most important improvements	4	2.52%
Not currently being addressed / under funded	4	2.52%
Climate changes	3	1.89%
Help people to help themselves/be independent	3	1.89%
Poor education standards currently / education underfunded / not enough schools	3	1.89%
Aging population	2	1.26%
Council waste too much on wrong things / woke agenda / don't spend on the important things	2	1.26%
Help for carers	2	1.26%
Improve healthcare/ availability of healthcare	2	1.26%
Rail service improvements	2	1.26%
Safety in the community	2	1.26%
Too many new houses/ overpopulated	2	1.26%
Biggest impact on a number of people	1	0.63%
Directly affect me	1	0.63%
Economic stability	1	0.63%
Education is foundation for a good future	1	0.63%
Improving public transport	1	0.63%
Invest in local communities	1	0.63%

Investment in early years is needed	1	0.63%
Long term impact	1	0.63%
Mental health important	1	0.63%
My opinion	1	0.63%
People matter / should care about people	1	0.63%
Reduce crime from Alcohol/drug schemes	1	0.63%
SEND	1	0.63%
Transport infrastructure	1	0.63%
Waste management/recycling	1	0.63%
Other comment	9	5.66%

Views on how Essex County Council should allocate resources.

The consultation asked respondents how strongly they agree, disagree or both should be equally considered for the pairs of the following services:

1st paired statement ...ECC should prioritise services that benefit the majority of residents and taxpayer's vs ...ECC should prioritise services that focus on those with the greatest needs.

Out of the 95 businesses to this question, 33.68% (n=32) Agreed strongly that ECC should prioritise services that benefit the majority of residents and taxpayer's, 11.58% slightly agreed (n=11), 34.74% (n=33) believed both should be equally considered, 9.47% (n=9) slightly agreed that ECC should prioritise services that focus on those with the greatest needs, 9.47% (n=9) Strongly Agree and 1.05% (n=1) Don't know.

ECC should prioritise services that benefit the majority of residents and taxpayer's vs ...ECC should prioritise services that focus on those with the greatest needs.



- Strongly agree with option 1
- Slightly agree with option 1
- Both should be equally considered
- Slightly agree with option 2
- Strongly agree with option 2
- Don't know

.....ECC should target services towards struggling neighbourhoods, towns or cities vs ...ECC should provide services that are available in all communities in Essex.

Out of the 95 businesses to this question, 8.42% (n=8) Agreed strongly that ECC should target services towards struggling neighbourhoods, towns or cities, Slightly agreed 16.84% (n=16), 33.68% (n=32) believed both should be equally considered, 11.58% (n=11) slightly agreed that ECC should provide services that are available in all communities in Essex, 29.47% (n=28) Strongly Agreed and 0% (n=0) Don't know.

.....ECC should target services towards struggling neighbourhoods, towns or cities vs ...ECC should provide services that are available in all communities in Essex.



- Strongly agree with option 1
- Slightly agree with option 1
- Both should be equally considered
- Slightly agree with option 2
- Strongly agree with option 2
- Don't know

...ECC should prioritise spending on meeting the needs of the people today vs ...ECC should prioritise spending on projects that will increase opportunities over the long term.

Out of the 95 businesses to this question, 14.74% (n=14) Agreed strongly that ECC should prioritise spending on meeting the needs of the people today, 8.42% (n=8) slightly agreed, 38.95% (n=37) believed both should be equally considered, 11.58% (n=11) slightly agreed that ECC should prioritise spending on projects that will increase opportunities over the long term, 26.32% (n=25) Strongly Agree and 0% (n=0) Don't know.

ECC should prioritise spending on meeting the needs of the people today vs ...ECC should prioritise spending on projects that will increase opportunities over the long term.



- Strongly agree with option 1
- Slightly agree with option 1
- Both should be equally considered
- Slightly agree with option 2
- Strongly agree with option 2
- Don't know

...Decisions on how to spend money in Essex should consider the county as a whole VS ...Decisions on how to spend money should be taken as close to local communities as possible.

Out of the 95 businesses to this question, 16.84% (n=16) Agreed strongly that Decisions on how to spend money in Essex should consider the county as a whole, 9.47% (n=9) slightly agreed, 25.26% (n=24) believed both should be equally considered, 16.84% (n=16) slightly agreed that Decisions on how to spend money should be taken as close to local communities as possible, 30.53% (n=29) Strongly Agree and 1.05% (n=1) Don't know.

...Decisions on how to spend money in Essex should consider the county as a whole vs ...Decisions on how to spend money should be taken as close to local communities as possible



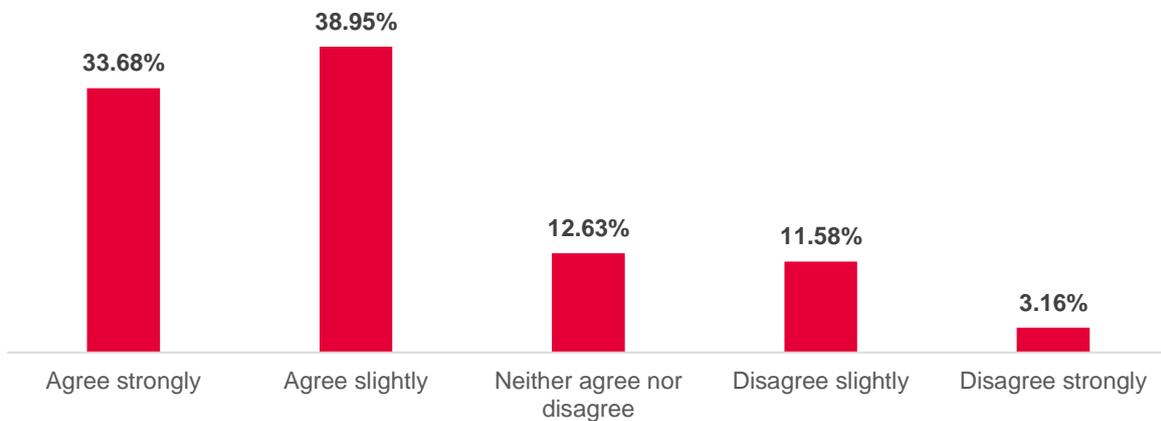
- Strongly agree with option 1
- Slightly agree with option 1
- Both should be equally considered
- Slightly agree with option 2
- Strongly agree with option 2
- Don't know

The consultation asked Businesses how strongly do you agree or disagree that Essex County Council should do each of the following when faced with financial pressures?

Financial pressure - Streamline services so that we can deliver the same outcomes

Out of the 95 Businesses to this question, **33.68% (n=32) Agreed Strongly, 38.95% (n=37) Agreed Slightly, 12.63% (n=12) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 11.58% (n=11) Disagreed slightly and 3.16% Disagreed strongly (n=3).**

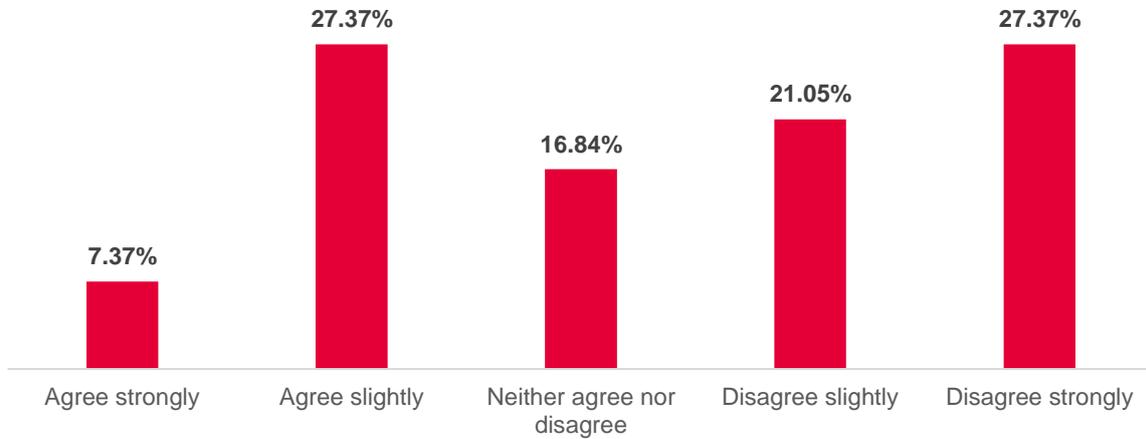
Streamline services so that we can deliver the same outcome



Financial pressure - Introduce charges for some services which are currently free/subsidised

Out of the 95 Businesses to this question, **7.37% (n=7) Agreed Strongly, 27.37% (n=26) Agreed Slightly, 16.84% (n=16) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 21.05% (n=20) Disagreed slightly and 27.37% Disagreed strongly (n=26).**

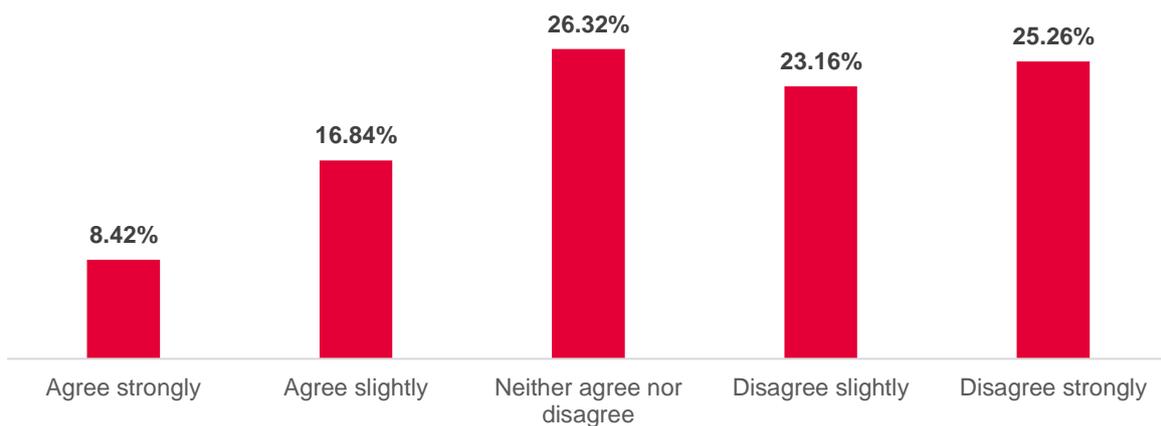
Introduce charges for some services which are currently free/subsidised



Financial pressure - Reduce or stop delivering some services to protect others

Out of the 95 Businesses to this question, **8.42% (n=8) Agreed Strongly, 16.84% (n=16) Agreed Slightly, 26.32% (n=25) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 23.16% (n=22) Disagreed slightly and 25.26% Disagreed strongly (n=24).**

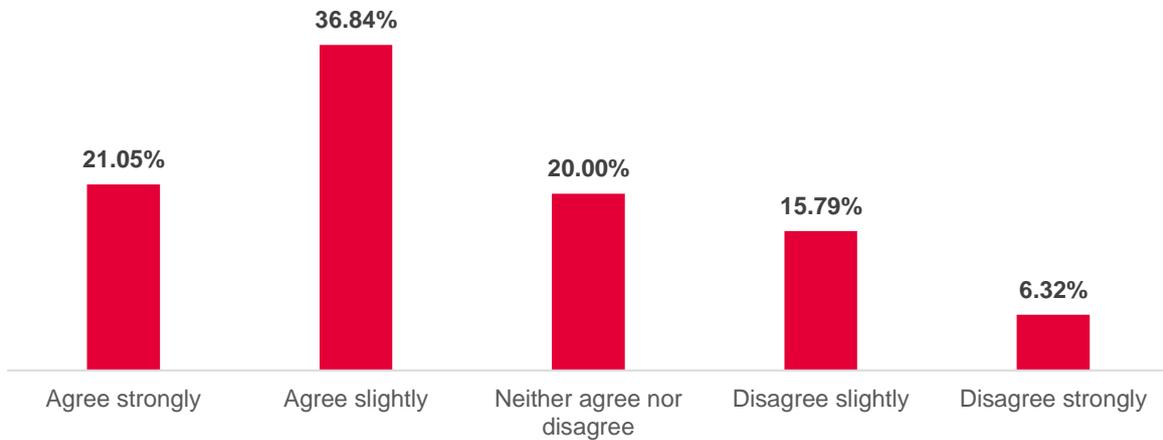
Reduce or stop delivering some services to protect others



Financial pressure - Encourage local people and communities to deliver certain services

Out of the 95 Businesses to this question, **21.05% (n=20) Agreed Strongly, 436.84% (n=35) Agreed Slightly, 20.00% (n=19) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 15.79% (n=15) Disagreed slightly and 6.32% Disagreed strongly (n=6).**

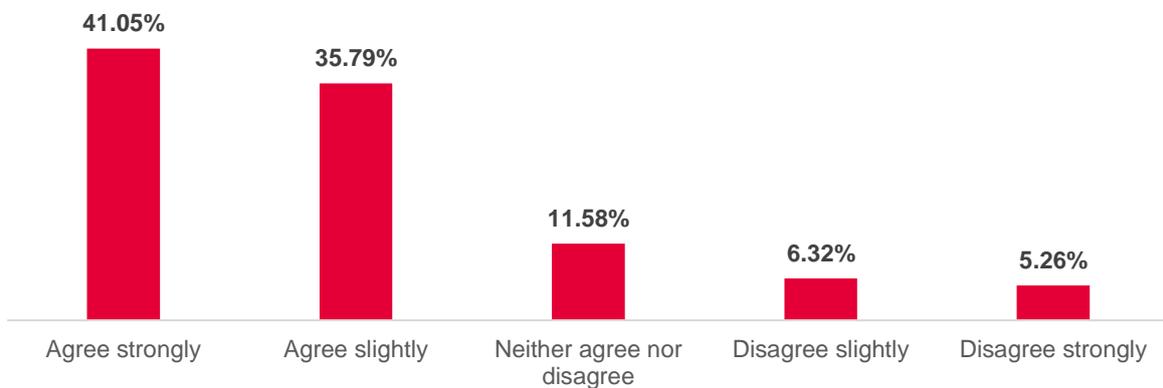
Encourage local people and communities to deliver certain services



Financial pressure - Help people to help themselves more so they have less reliance on publicly funded services

Out of the 95 Businesses to this question, **41.05% (n=39) Agreed Strongly, 35.79% (n=34) Agreed Slightly, 11.58% (n=11) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 6.32% (n=6) Disagreed slightly and 5.26% Disagreed strongly (n=5).**

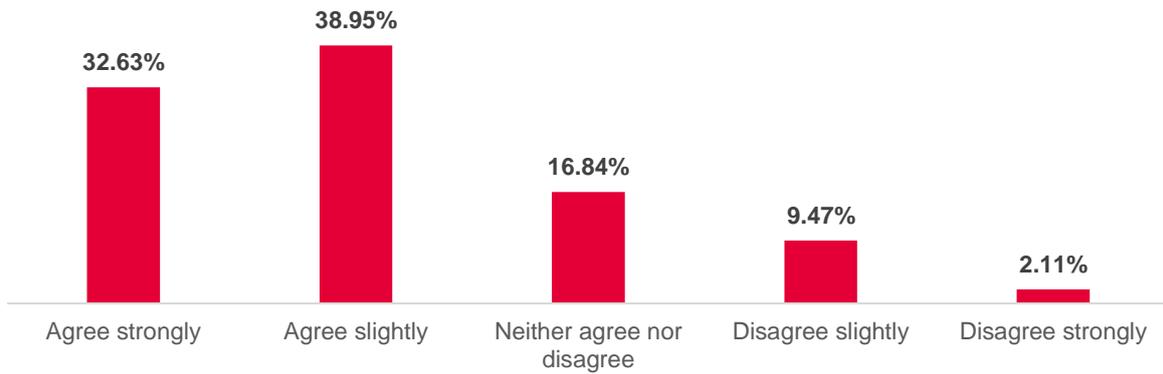
Help people to help themselves more so they have less reliance on publicly funded services



Financial pressure - Prioritise spending to protect services for the most vulnerable and those without choice

Out of the 95 Businesses to this question, **32.63% (n=31) Agreed Strongly, 38.95% (n=37) Agreed Slightly, 16.84% (n=16) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 9.47% (n=9) Disagreed slightly and 2.11% Disagreed strongly (n=2).**

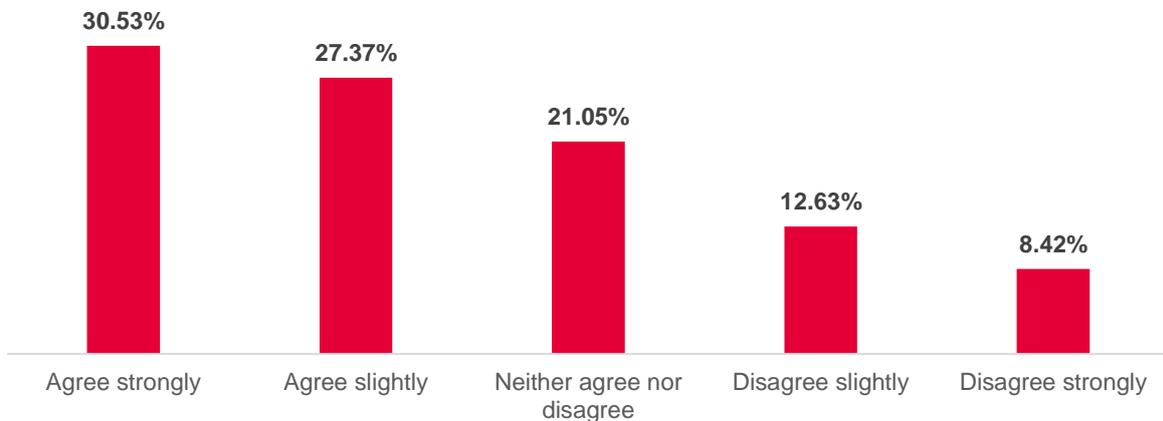
Prioritise spending to protect services for the most vulnerable and those without choice



Financial pressure - Use / partner with other organisational bodies to provide services

Out of the 95 Businesses to this question, **30.53% (n=29) Agreed Strongly, 27.37% (n=26) Agreed Slightly, 21.05% (n=20) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 12.63% (n=12) Disagreed slightly and 8.42% Disagreed strongly (n=8).**

Use / partner with other organisational bodies to provide services

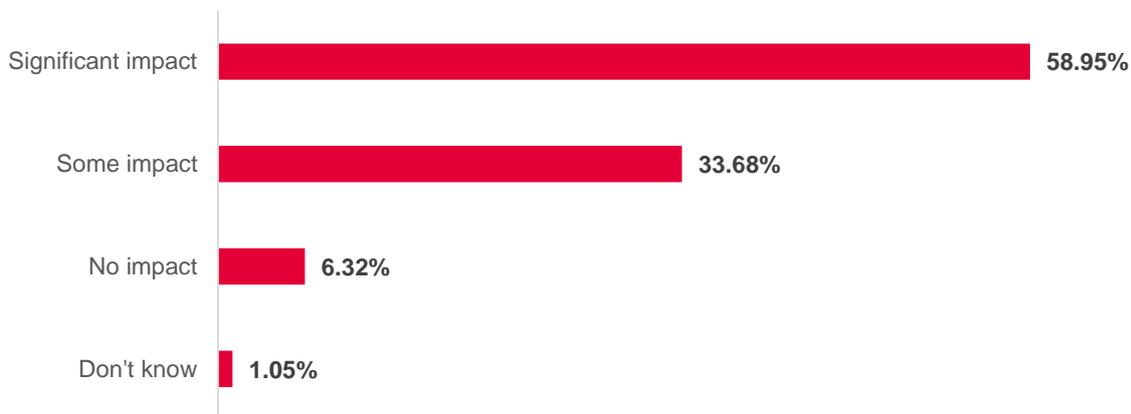


Impact of inflation and cost of living

The consultation asked businesses if they thought inflation and the current cost of living situation will have an impact on Essex County council's finances.

Out of the 95 businesses to answer this question, **58.95% (n=56) Significant impact, 33.68% (n=32) some impact, 6.32% (n=6) No impact, and 1.05% Don't know (n=1).**

Inflation and Current cost of living situation impacting on ECC finances



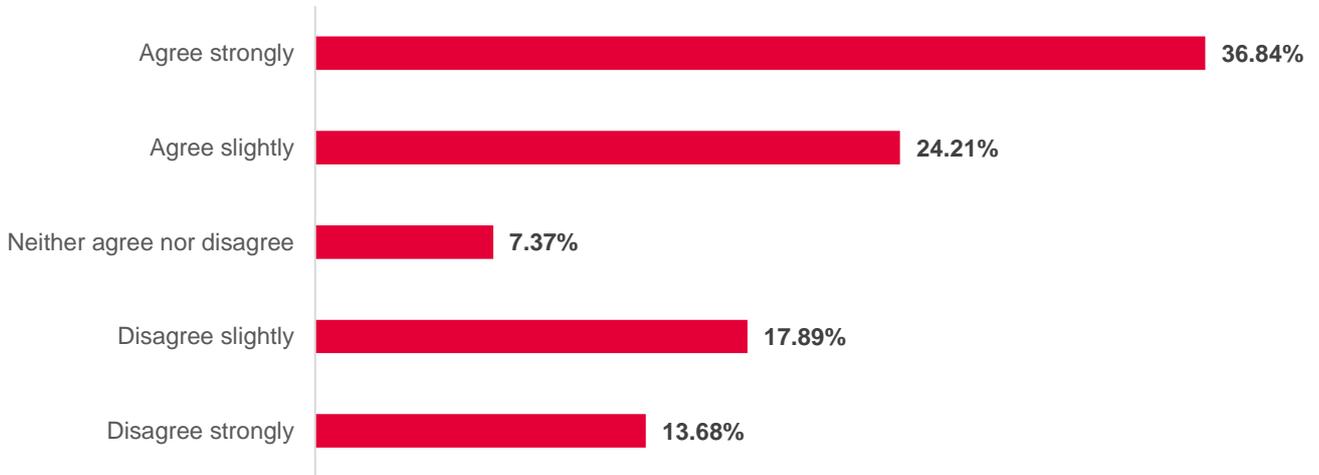
Increase in council tax

The consultation asked business to agree or disagree with the following statements relating to increase in council tax...

1st statement - ...only when opportunities to streamline services have been exhausted

Out of the 95 businesses to answer this question, **36.84% (n=35) Agreed Strongly, 24.21% (n=23) Agreed Slightly, 7.37% (n=7) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 17.89% (n=17) Disagreed slightly and 13.68% Disagreed strongly (n=13).**

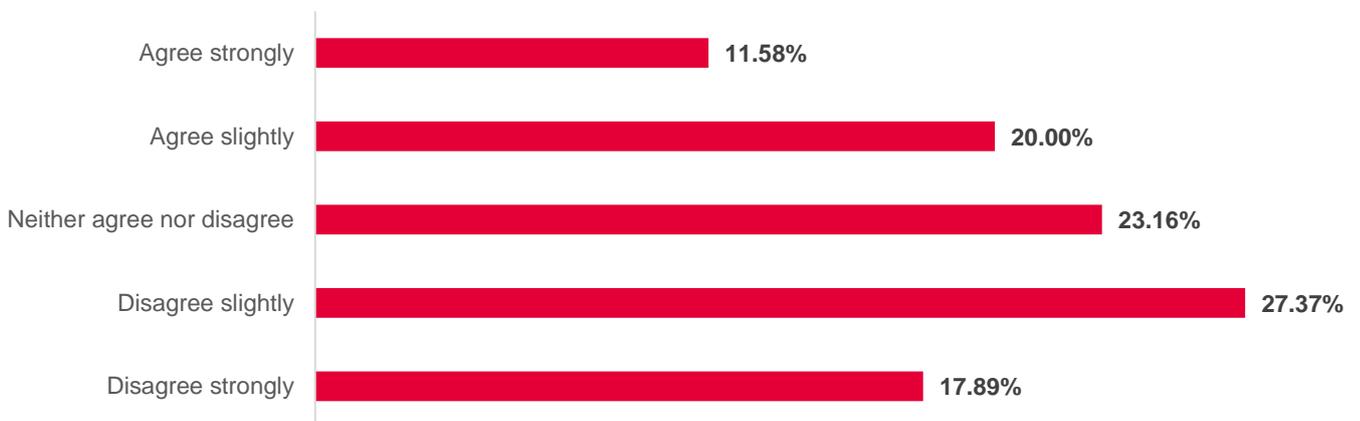
Increase in council tax only when opportunities to streamline services have been exhausted



2nd statement - ...as an alternative to imposing/ increasing fees and charges for services

Out of the 95 businesses to answer this question, **11.58% (n=11) Agreed Strongly, 20.00% (n=19) Agreed Slightly, 23.16% (n=22) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 27.37% (n=26) Disagreed slightly and 17.89% Disagreed strongly (n=17).**

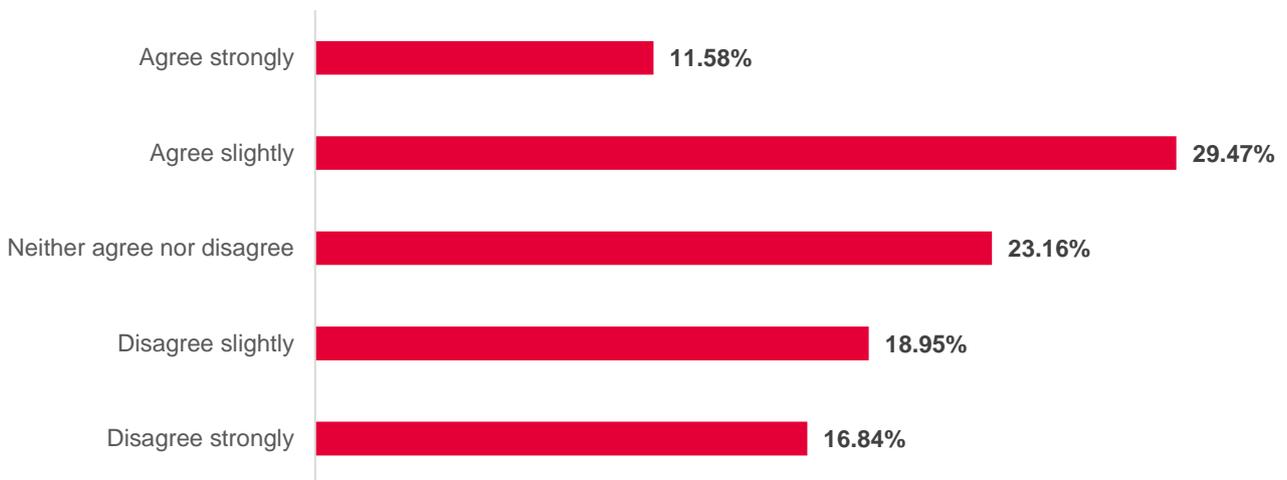
Increase in council tax as an alternative to imposing/increasing fees and charges for services



3rd statement - ...when the only alternative is to stop delivering some services

Out of the 95 businesses to answer this question, **11.58 % (n=11) Agreed Strongly, 29.47% (n=28) Agreed Slightly, 23.16% (n=22) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 18.95% (n=18) Disagreed slightly and 16.84% Disagreed strongly (n=16).**

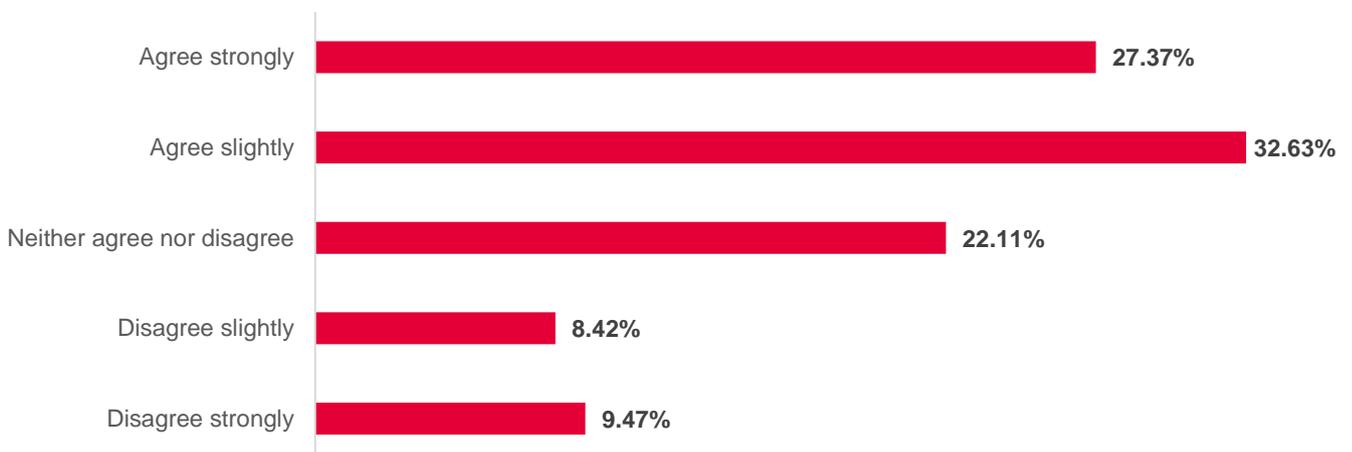
Increase council tax when the only alternative is to stop delivering some services



4th statement - ...to protect services for the most vulnerable and those without choice

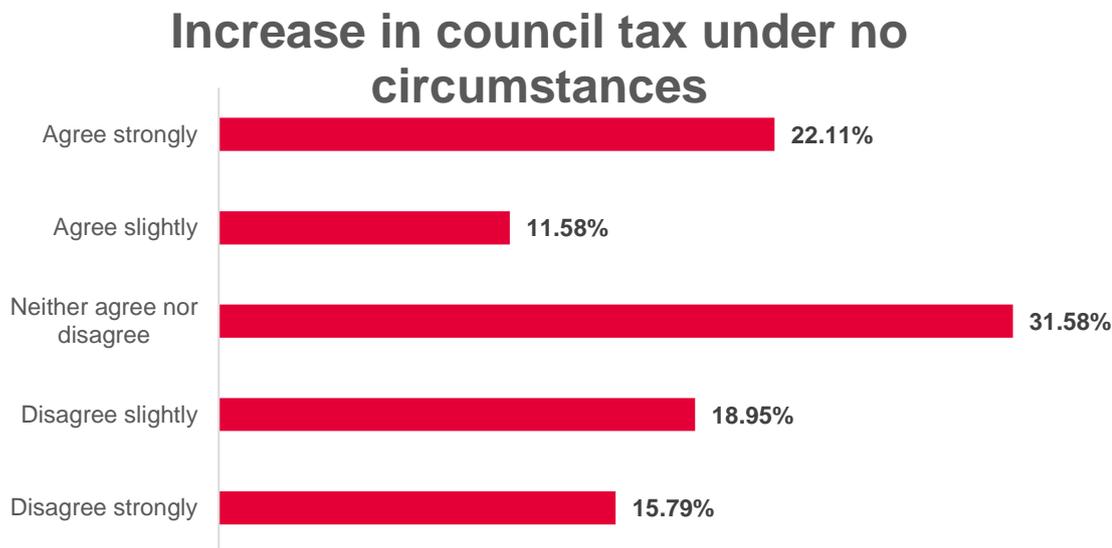
Out of the 95 businesses to answer this question, **27.37% (n=26) Agreed Strongly, 32.63% (n=31) Agreed Slightly, 22.11% (n=21) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 8.42% (n=8) Disagreed slightly and 9.47% Disagreed strongly (n=9).**

Increase council tax to protect the most vulnerable and those without choice



5th statement - ...under no circumstances

Out of the 95 businesses to answer this question, **22.11% (n=21) Agreed Strongly, 11.58% (n=11) Agreed Slightly, 31.58% (n=30) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 18.95% (n=18) Disagreed slightly and 15.79% Disagreed strongly (n=15).**



The consultation then asked Businesses to what other circumstances would they agree or disagree to an increase in council tax

The free text comments box responses have been themed, coded and quantified below.

Theme	Total	Percentage
Prioritise efficiency/ eliminate wasteful spending	5	38.46%
Do not increase Council Tax	2	15.38%
Increase Council Tax for the wealthiest	1	7.70%
Improve transparency around budget/ spend	1	7.70%
Streamline ECC staff/ salaries/ benefits	1	7.70%
Review outsourced contracts	1	7.70%
Reduce Council Tax	1	7.70%
ECC to deliver all services/ avoid partnerships	1	7.70%
Other	2	15.38%

Any other comments

The consultation asked respondents if there was anything else to consider regarding the consultation within a free-text box comments box.

Regarding the free text comments box relating to responses from respondents describing anything else ECC should consider have been themed, coded and quantified below

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Prioritise council efficiency / eliminate wasteful spending / streamline staff / stop working from home	11	12.36%
Listen to the concerns/needs of residents/businesses	8	8.99%
Improve road maintenance	6	6.74%
Review outsourcing to private companies	4	4.49%
Attract industries/businesses to the area	3	3.37%
Concentrate on the basics/ essentials	3	3.37%
Avoid vanity or fashionable projects	2	2.25%
Budget needs to be communicated better	2	2.25%
Consider council tax increase	2	2.25%
Improve roadside and pavement maintenance	2	2.25%
Invest in high streets	2	2.25%
No increase in Council Tax	2	2.25%
Tackle issues with housing	2	2.25%
Action on environmental issues	1	1.12%
Become more entrepreneurial/ business-minded	1	1.12%
Budget review needed	1	1.12%
Don't cut services	1	1.12%
Don't know	1	1.12%
Focus on leisure, culture and tourism	1	1.12%
Focus on reducing crime	1	1.12%
Help families in need	1	1.12%
Improve health and wellbeing	1	1.12%
Improve social care services	1	1.12%
Improve individuals' self-reliance	1	1.12%
Improve youth services	1	1.12%
Improve police presence	1	1.12%
Invest in childcare and education for children	1	1.12%
Invest in public transport	1	1.12%
Invest in sustainable travel	1	1.12%
More support needed from national government	1	1.12%
None/ nothing	1	1.12%
Prioritise value for money	1	1.12%
Prioritise vulnerable people/ households	1	1.12%

Review council owned buildings	1	1.12%
Share service delivery with district and boroughs	1	1.12%
Share service delivery with local groups, voluntary sector, charities, NGOs	1	1.12%
Spend budget fairly across county	1	1.12%
Stop duplication of services	1	1.12%
Streamline ECC management team	1	1.12%
Support employment, work skills and adult education	1	1.12%
Take a long-term/ joined-up view	1	1.12%
Other comments	12	13.48%

Appendix

Appendix A – Consultation Questionnaire

Everyone's Essex – Let's talk Budget Consultation 2024/25

INTRO

We want Essex to be the best local authority in the country – as judged by the people, the businesses, and the communities we support and serve. To achieve this, we need to be honest and open. We need the honesty to admit that we don't have all the answers when it comes to tackling complex problems. And we need to be open to new ideas and approaches – ensuring the services we provide and the investments we make are developed with our communities.

NEW PAGE

As we shape plans our financial plans for delivery of Everyone's Essex in 2024/25 and beyond, we want to hear from local people about their views and values. We would like to hear your views about:

- the big issues we face and the challenges that lie ahead for Essex.
- the things that concern you and your family; and
- where we should focus resources as we work to improve lives across our county.

Next year, Essex County Council (ECC) will spend over £2bn. This will include funding for essential services and investment in our county's infrastructure and future growth. This is a substantial amount of money, but it doesn't go as far as we would like. Just like households across Essex, we have to make difficult choices about where we spend, and where to make savings.

For information on how ECC spends its money, and where it gets its money from can be found [here](#)

NEW PAGE – SKIP TO SURVEY OR OPTION TO READ ON

The financial outlook for ECC – and for local authorities in general – is highly uncertain. We face the significant impacts of the economic climate of high inflation and rising interest rates, the cost of living situation, while still waiting for a multi-year settlement from government. We do not yet know how much funding ECC will receive from government. What the lasting impact of the economic climate, speed of recovery and the pandemic will be on council spending and income also remains unclear. This makes forecasting future years' spending and income levels particularly challenging.

Fortunately, ECC has a track record of strong financial management. The council has already secured £235m in savings over the past five years.

Despite this ECC has, like other councils, faced financial pressure for a number of years because:

- more people need our services and support each year, with increasing levels of complexity, which are ongoing issues being seen nationally; and
- the costs of providing services have increased – partly due to inflation, and partly as a result of changes in the law.

- You can help shape how we respond to the current uncertainty and to the pressures we face. Please click the >> button below to play your part.

NEW PAGE

SINGLE CODE/ ASK ALL

Q1a – Responding_as...

Are you completing the survey as a...?

- Resident 1
- Business owner 2
- Resident and business owner 3
- Other [specify] 4

RESTRICTED MULTICODE/ ASK ALL/ OPTIONAL/ LIMIT TO 3 RESPONSES/ RANDOMISE

Q1 – Important Issues

What would you say are the most important issues facing Essex today? (please select up to three responses)

- Coronavirus/ pandemic diseases (1)
- Economy/economic situation (2)
- Migration and workforce impacts (3)
- National Health Service/Healthcare (4)
- Social Care provision (5)
- Race relations (6)
- Poverty/inequality (7)
- Environment/climate change (8)
- Unemployment (9)
- Population levels/over-population (10)
- Immigration (11)
- Education/Schools (12)
- Crime/Community safety (13)
- Morality & individual behaviours (14)
- Housing (15)
- Aging population (16)
- Low pay/ wages (17)
- Inflation/prices (18)
- Personal finances (19)
- Other _____ (20)

RESTRICTED MULTICODE/ ASK ALL/ LIMIT TO 3 RESPONSES/ RANDOMISE

Q2 – QConcerns

Which of the following are you concerned about? (please select up to three responses)

- My physical health and fitness (1)
- My mental health and wellbeing (2)
- Being lonely (3)
- Climate change (4)
- Housing security (5)
- Housing affordability (6)
- Employment security (7)
- Future job prospects (8)
- Paying bills (9)
- Educational provision (10)
- Raising children (11)
- Levels of crime in my town/neighbourhood (12)
- Anti-social behaviour in my community (13)
- The local environment/ pollution (14)
- Cleanliness of street and local area (15)
- Condition of roads and pavements (16)
- Community relations (17)
- Public transport (18)
- Other _____ (19)
- None of these (20)

RESTRICTED MULTICODE/ ASK ALL/ OPTIONAL/ LIMIT TO 4 RESPONSES/ RANDOMISE

Q3 – QPriorities

Essex County Council has set out a range of commitments that it will deliver over the next four years. Which of these should the council prioritise for immediate action? (Please select up to four responses).

- Good local jobs
 Tackling inequalities
 Developing Essex's infrastructure
 Attracting new investment for businesses

Growing the 'green' economy in Essex	<input type="checkbox"/>	Reducing greenhouse gas emissions	<input type="checkbox"/>	Enabling more 'sustainable' and active travel	<input type="checkbox"/>	Minimising the amount of waste generated in Essex	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supporting communities to tackle climate change	<input type="checkbox"/>	Enabling healthier lifestyles	<input type="checkbox"/>	Helping vulnerable people to live independently	<input type="checkbox"/>	Supporting those who care for sick or vulnerable people	<input type="checkbox"/>
Securing high standards in education	<input type="checkbox"/>	Providing support to struggling families	<input type="checkbox"/>	Protecting vulnerable children	<input type="checkbox"/>	Helping vulnerable children to close the gap on their peers	<input type="checkbox"/>

OPEN/ IF Q3 <> BLANK/ OPTIONAL

Q4 – QReasonsForPriorities

Please let us know why you believe these areas should be prioritised

Open text box

HORIZONTAL SINGLE CODE/ ASK ALL/ SHOW ONE PAIR PER SCREEN, DON'T KNOW FOR ALL

Q5 – QSpendingAllocation

Considering how Essex County Council allocates spending, do you feel...

	Strongly agree		Both should be equally considered		Strongly agree	
...ECC should prioritise services that benefit the majority of residents and taxpayers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	...ECC should prioritise services that focus on those with the greatest needs
...ECC should target its services towards struggling neighbourhoods, towns or cities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	...ECC should provide services that are available in all communities across Essex
...ECC should prioritise spending on meeting the needs of people today	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	...ECC should prioritise spending on projects that will increase opportunities over the long-term.
...Decisions on how to spend money in Essex should consider the county as a whole	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	...Decisions on how to spend money should be taken as close to local communities as possible

GRID/ SINGLE CODE HORIZONTALLY/ ASK ALL

Q6 – QFinancialPressures

How strongly do you agree or disagree that Essex County Council should do each of the following when faced with financial pressures? (Select one per statement)

	Agree strongly (1)	Agree slightly (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Disagree slightly (4)	Disagree strongly (5)
Streamline services so that we can deliver the same outcomes (1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Introduce charges for some services which are currently free/subsidised (2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduce or stop delivering some services to protect others (3)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Encourage local people and communities to deliver certain services (4)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Help people to help themselves more so they have less reliance on publicly funded services (5)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prioritise spending to protect services for the most vulnerable and those without choice (6)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use / partner with other organisational bodies to provide services (7)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SINGLE / ASK ALL

Q7a – QMacroeconomic_impact

To what extent do you think inflation, interest rates and the current cost of living situation will have an impact on Essex County Council's finances?

- Significant impact 1
- Some impact 2
- No impact 3
- Don't know 4

GRID / ASK ALL

Q7 – QCouncilTax

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

ECC should consider increases in council tax...

	Agree strongly (1)	Agree slightly (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Disagree slightly (4)	Disagree strongly (5)
...only when opportunities to streamline services have been exhausted (1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
...as an alternative to imposing/ increasing fees and charges for services (2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
...when the only alternative is to stop delivering some services (3)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
...to protect services for the most vulnerable and those without choice (4)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
...under no circumstances (5)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (8) _____

OPEN/ ASK ALL/ OPTIONAL

Q8 – QOtherComments

If you have any other comments about the ECC budget or how we might do things differently, please tell us below

Open text box

ABOUT YOU

ASK ALL

In order to ensure the continued development of our Diversity and Equality practices, everyone that we work with is asked to complete the information below. You are not obliged to answer any of the questions, but the more information you supply, the more effective our monitoring will be. If you choose not to answer questions, it will not affect your participation. The information you supply below is confidential and will be used solely for monitoring purposes.

SINGLE/ ASK ALL

QID – QAgeGroup

What age group do you belong to?

- Under 16 1
- 16-17 2
- 18-24 3
- 25-34 4
- 35-44 5
- 45-54 6
- 55-64 7
- 65-74 8
- 75-84 9
- 85-94 10
- 95+ 11
- Prefer not to say 12

SINGLE/ ASK ALL

QID – QGender

To which gender do you most identify?

- Male 1
- Female 2
- Non-binary 3
- Prefer to self-describe_____ 4
- Prefer not to say 5

SINGLE/ ASK ALL

QID – QMaritalStatus

What is your marital status?

- Single 1
- Cohabiting 2
- Married or civil partnered 3
- Separated/divorced/formerly in civil partnership now legally dissolved 4
- Widowed or surviving partner from civil partnership 5
- Other _____ 6
- Prefer not to say (7)

SINGLE/ ASK ALL

QID – QDistrictStatus

What is the district you live in?

- Basildon
- Braintree
- Brentwood
- Castle Point
- Chelmsford
- Colchester
- Epping Forest
- Harlow
- Maldon
- Rochford
- Tendring
- Uttlesford
- Other
- Prefer not to say

SINGLE/ ASK ALL

QID – QEthnicity

To which of these ethnic groups do you consider you belong?

- **White**
 - English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British
 - Irish
 - Gypsy/Irish Traveller
 - Any other white background, please describe

- **Mixed/multiple ethnic origins**
 - White and Black Caribbean
 - White and Black African
 - White and Asian
 - Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background, please describe

- **Asian/Asian British**
 - Indian
 - Pakistani
 - Bangladeshi

- Chinese
 - Any other Asian background, please describe
- **Black/African/Caribbean/Black British**
 - African
 - Caribbean
 - Any other Black/African/Caribbean background, please describe
- **Other ethnic group**
 - Arab
 - Any other ethnic group, please describe _____
- **Prefer not to say**

MULTI/ ASK ALL

QID – QDisability

Do you consider yourself to have a health condition, disability, or impairment? Please tick all that apply.

- No impairment 1
- Hearing impairment/deaf 2
- Visual impairment/blind 3
- Deafblind 4
- Mental health needs 5
- Physical impairment 6
- Learning difficulties/disabilities 7
- Autism spectrum disorder 8
- Other (please specify) _____ 9
- Prefer not to say 10

SINGLE/ ASK ALL

QID – QDistrict

What is your current employment status? Please tick all that apply.

- Employed full-time 1
- Employed part-time 2
- Self-employed 3
- Employed on flexible/zero hours contract 4
- Business owner 5
- In full-time education or training (e.g. college, apprenticeship) 6
- Not currently employed 7
- Volunteering 8
- Retired 9
- Other (please state) _____ 10
- Prefer not to say 11

NEW PAGE/ SHOW TO NON-ERP MEMBERS

NEXT STEPS

Essex County Council undertakes research on a wide range of issues through its residents’ panel. We would love for you to be involved. This is an opportunity for you to tell us your views about the issues that matter to you.

There’s a quarterly prize draw for all new joiners where you can win a prize of up to £100!

If you would like to join the residents’ panel, please register via the link below

[LINK FOR CONSULTATION PANEL REGISTRATION].

Thank you for your time today.

[NEW PAGE/ SHOW TO ERP MEMBERS](#)

NEXT STEPS

We really appreciate your participation in this consultation survey and for being a member of the Essex Residents' panel. We'd love all Essex residents to join our panel and get involved as well.

If there is anyone else you know who lives in Essex, please share this link with them and encourage them to join. It is their opportunity to tell us their views about the issues that matter to them.

And, don't forget, there's a quarterly prize draw for all new joiners where they can win a prize of up to £100!

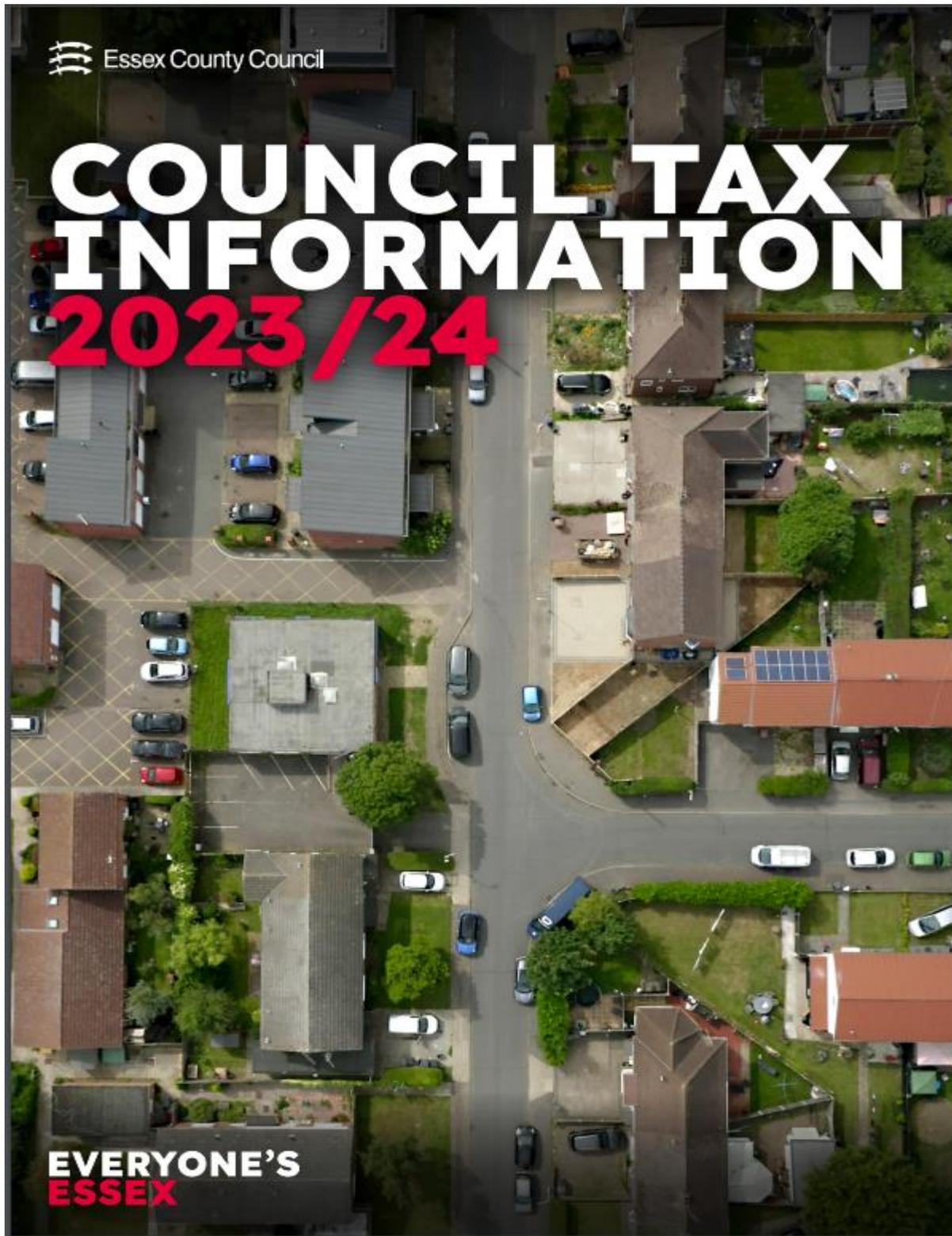
[LINK FOR REFER A FRIEND PANEL REGISTRATION].

You can share the link with a friend or family member or someone else in your household. The only requirement is that they are 18 or over and live in Essex.

Thank you for your time today.

E

Appendix B – Essex County Council - Council Tax Information



https://www.essex.gov.uk/sites/default/files/migration_data/files/assets.ctfassets.net/knkzaf64jx5x/NYX3NiI06oRdU4qUtTUnX/95cc724b47849c7cba923ddd9175014f/Council_Tax_Leaflet_2023-2024.pdf

This information is issued by:

Research and Citizen Insight team

Essex County Council

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The information contained in this document can be translated, and/or made available in alternative formats, on request.

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