

Budget Consultation report 2023/24

Chief Executive's Office

December 2022

Contents

Introduction

Interpreting the data within the consultation

Key conclusions

Executive summary

Who gave their views?

Detailed findings

Appendix

Quality Assurance

Introduction

In 2023/24, 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.

The financial outlook for ECC – and for local authorities in general – is highly uncertain. We still have the ongoing effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, and we now face the significant impacts of inflation at a 40-year high and the cost-of-living situation, while still waiting for a multi-year funding settlement from government. We do not yet know how much funding ECC will receive from government or what ministers might expect regarding council tax increases. The lasting impact of the pandemic and the economic recession 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 £258m 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; 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 (2023/24) 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 important issue that residents feel Essex faces today is the pressure on National Health Service and health care services.**
- **Nearly 77% of respondents believe ECC should prioritise spending to protect the most vulnerable and those without choice.**
- **Nearly all of respondents believe inflation and current cost of living situation will have an impact on ECC finances over the next years (96%)**
- **Over half of the 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 (70%).**
- **Residents are most concerned about condition of roads and pavements within Essex with over half of the respondents stating this (53%)**
- **The three areas of which respondents would most like to see prioritised spending would be; Developing Essex infrastructure, Supporting those who care for the sick or vulnerable people and Securing high standards in education.**

Executive summary

- Half of respondents listed National Health Service/Healthcare as the most important issue facing Essex today (50%) and nearly a 3/10 of respondents believed that Social Care provision as the most important issue (29%).
- 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 (76% = Agree strongly or Agree slightly) (75% - 2021 response)
 - Help people to help themselves more so they have less reliance on publicly funded services (75% = Agree strongly or Agree slightly) (77% - 2021 response)
 - Streamline services so that we can deliver the same outcomes (68% = Agree strongly or Agree slightly) (66% - 2021 response)
 - Use / partner with other organisational bodies to provide services (65% = Agree strongly or Agree slightly) (63% - 2021 response)
 - Encourage local people and communities to deliver certain services (57% = Agree strongly or Agree slightly) (59% - 2021 response)
 - Introduce charges for some services which are currently free/subsidised (40% = Agree strongly or Agree slightly) (37% - 2021 response)
 - Reduce or stop delivering some services to protect others (29% = Agree strongly or Agree slightly) (26%-2021 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 (70% = Agree strongly or Agree slightly) (71%-2021 response)
 - Only when opportunities to streamline services have been exhausted (64% = Agree strongly or Agree slightly) (63%-2021 response)
 - When the only alternative is to stop delivering some services (60% = Agree strongly or Agree slightly) (64%-2021 response)
 - As an alternative to imposing/ increasing fees and charges for services) (40% = Agree strongly or Agree slightly) (44%-2021 response)
- Just 3 out of 10 respondents (30%) disagree strongly or disagree slightly with increasing council tax under no circumstances. This also had the highest level of disagreement in 2021 response with 49% of respondents stating this. This movement may suggested that members of the public maybe more receptive to an increase in council tax within these financial circumstances.

- The top five services that respondents felt should be prioritised when budget setting were: Developing Essex infrastructure = 42% (41%-2021), Supporting those who care for the sick or vulnerable people = 36% (39%-2021), Securing high standard of education = 29% (31%-2021), Providing support to struggling families = 27% (24% - 2021) and Protecting vulnerable children = 26% (32%-2021).
- 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).

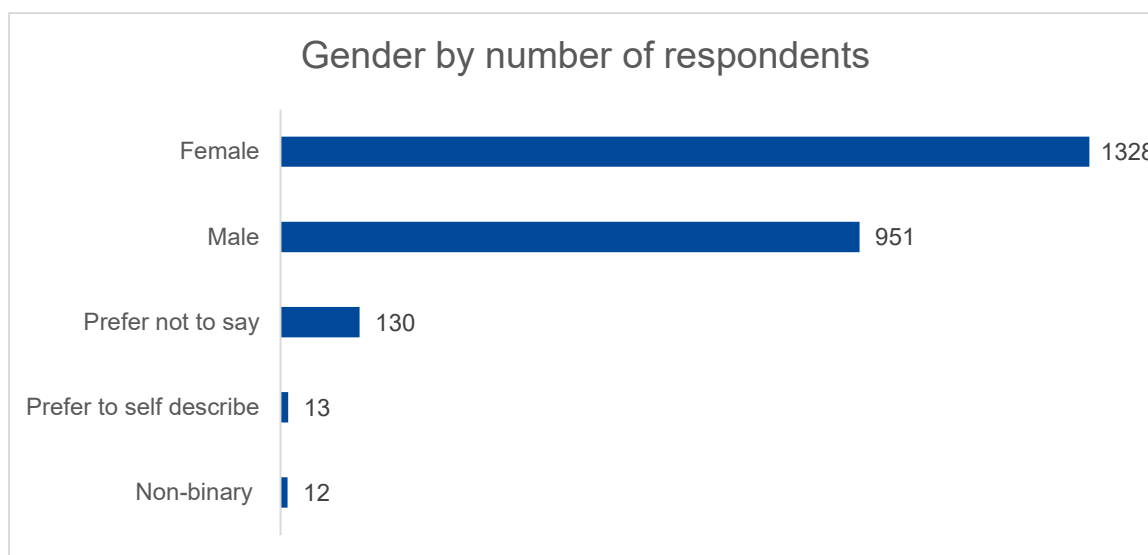
More detailed analysis can be found in the detailed section below.

Who gave their views

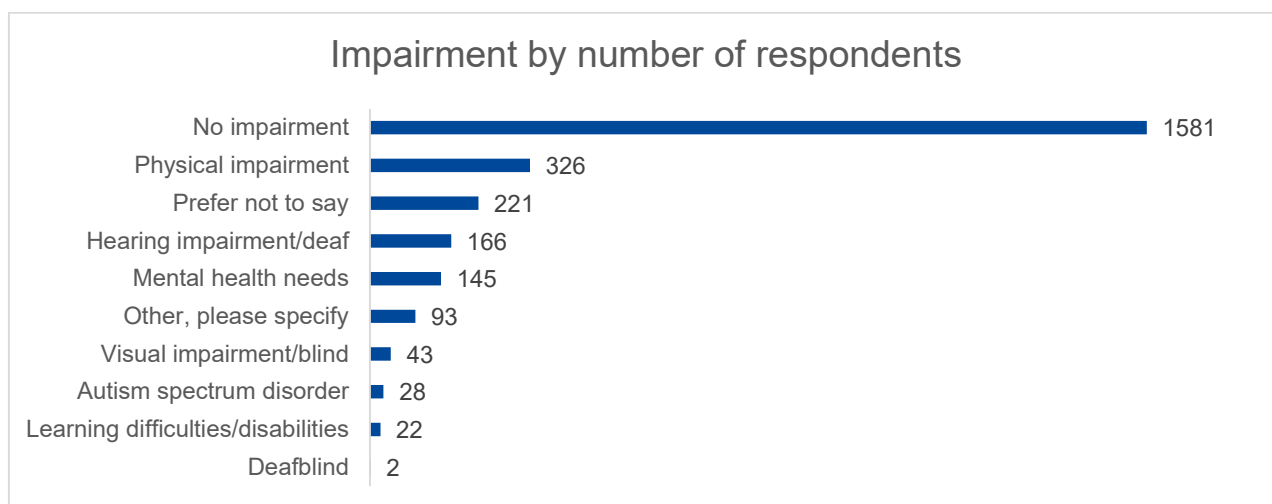
2434 responses to the online consultation. **93.2%** of respondents answered as residents (n=2268), **4.89%** answered as Resident and business owners (n=119), **1.40%** answered as Other (n=13) and **0.53%** as business owners only (n=13).

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

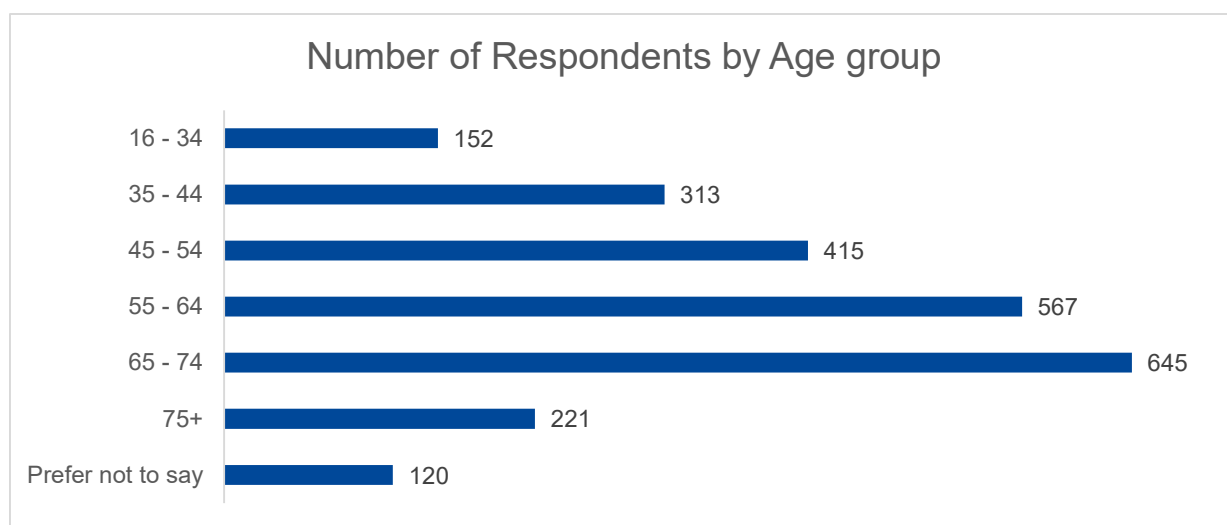
Of the respondents that declared their gender **54.56%** of respondents were **Female**, **39.07%** were **Male**, **5.34%** preferred not to say, **<1%** Preferred to self-describe and **<1%** were Non-binary.



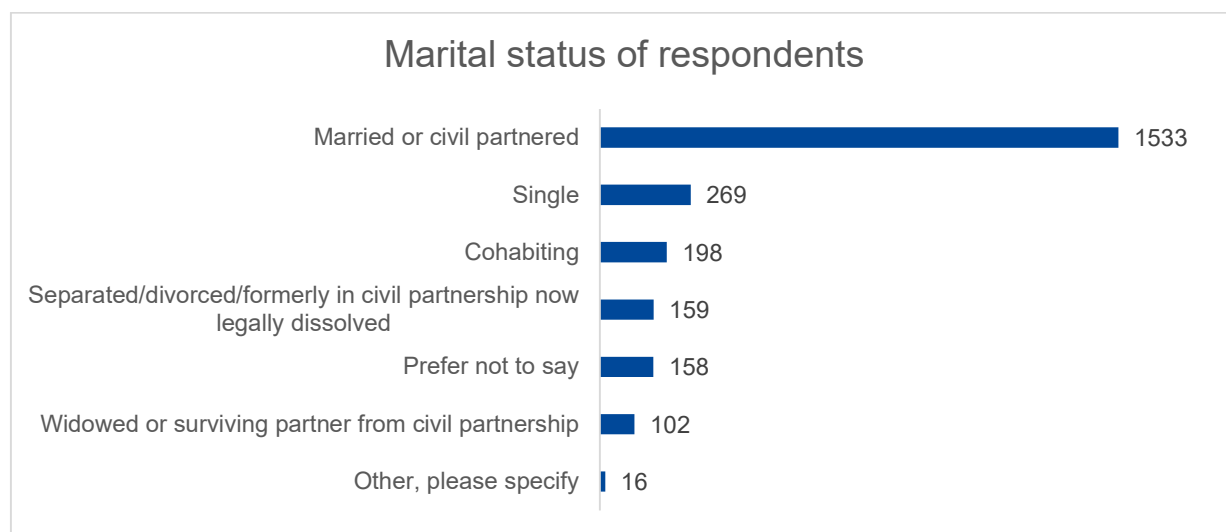
60.18% stated they had **no impairment**, **12.41%** of respondents said that they have a **physical impairment**, **8.41%** **prefer not to say**, **6.32%** have a **Hearing impairment/deaf**, **5.52%** have a **mental health need**, **3.54%** stated **other**, **1.64%** have a **Visual impairment/blind**, **1.07%** **autism spectrum disorder** and **0.84%** have a **Learning Difficulty or Disabilities** with **<1%** stated **Deafblind**.



26.51% were aged between **65 – 74**, **23.30%** of respondents were aged **55 - 64**, **17.06%** were aged between **45 – 54**, **12.86%** were aged **35 - 44**, **9.08%** were aged **75+**, **6.25%** were aged **16 - 34** years old and **4.93%** of respondents **preferred not to say**. The rest of the respondents did not answer this question



62.96% of respondents were **Married**, **11.05%** were **Single**, **8.13%** were **Cohabiting**, **6.53%** were **Separated/divorced** and **6.49%** of respondents **preferred not to say**. **4.19%** are **widowed** and of respondents stated **Other, please state** there was **0.66%**, The rest of the respondents did not answer this question



85.05% of respondents stated they were **White British**, **7.19%** of respondents **preferred not to say**, **2.63%** respondents said they were **White other**, and **1.15%** stated **Irish**, **0.66%** respondents said they were **White and black Caribbean**, **0.62%** were **African**, **0.62%** were **Indian** and **0.57%** were **white and Asian**. All other stated ethnicities were below **0.5%** responses

<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>Count</i>
English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	2071
Prefer not to say	175
Any other white background, please describe	64
Irish	28
White and Black Caribbean	16
African	15
Indian	14
White and Asian	11
Any other Asian background, please describe	8
Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background, please describe	7
Any other ethnic group, please describe	6
Bangladeshi	4
Caribbean	4
Pakistani	3
White and Black African	2
Chinese	2
Any other Black/African/Caribbean background, please describe	2
Arab	2
Gypsy/Irish Traveller	1

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

<i>District</i>	<i>Count</i>
Braintree	244
Chelmsford	176
Basildon	150
Epping Forest	126
Tendring	124
Colchester	122
Rochford	106
Brentwood	61
Maldon	60
Castle Point	57
Uttlesford	35
Harlow	14
Other, Please state	24

*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 2265 respondents to this question, the following issues were selected

Option	Total	Percentage
National Health Service/Healthcare	1,153	50.91%
Social Care provision	668	29.49%
Crime/Community safety	593	26.18%
Inflation/prices	477	21.06%
Environment/climate change	456	20.13%
Economy/economic situation	445	19.65%
Population levels/over-population	441	19.47%
Education/Schools	380	16.78%
Housing	360	15.89%
Poverty/inequality	314	13.86%
Aging population	287	12.67%
Immigration	257	11.35%
Other, please specify	171	7.55%
Low pay/ wages	153	6.75%
Morality & individual behaviours	148	6.53%
Brexit impacts	140	6.18%
Personal finances	115	5.08%
Unemployment	33	1.46%
Race relations	15	0.66%
Coronavirus/ pandemic diseases	6	0.26%
Don't know	3	0.13%

In regard to the free text comments box for other, please specify, (n=171) these have been themed, coded and quantified below:

<i>Option</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Roads/traffic	79	46.20%
Infrastructure	28	16.37%
Public transport	22	12.87%
Pressure from housing developments	20	11.70%
National Health Service/Healthcare	4	2.34%
Environment/climate change	3	1.75%
All are priorities	3	1.75%
Education/Schools	2	1.17%
Inflation/prices	2	1.17%
Poverty/inequality	1	0.58%
Population levels/over-population	1	0.58%
Immigration	1	0.58%
Crime/Community safety	1	0.58%
Mental health	1	0.58%
Library provision	1	0.58%
SEND/support for people with disabilities	1	0.58%
Other	34	19.88%

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 2268 respondents to this question, the following situations were selected:

<i>Option</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Condition of roads and pavements	1,213	53.48%
Levels of crime in my town/neighbourhood	543	23.94%
Climate change	530	23.37%
The local environment/ pollution	510	22.49%
Paying bills	494	21.78%
Anti-social behaviour in my community	482	21.25%
Public transport	479	21.12%
Housing affordability	410	18.08%

Cleanliness of street and local area	344	15.17%
Educational provision	318	14.02%
My physical health and fitness	317	13.98%
My mental health and wellbeing	215	9.48%
Raising children	173	7.63%
Other, please specify	132	5.82%
Employment security	92	4.06%
Housing security	77	3.40%
Future job prospects	69	3.04%
Community relations	68	3.00%
Being lonely	63	2.78%
None of these	10	0.44%

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	22	16.67%
Traffic levels/ road safety	14	10.61%
Social care provision for older people	13	9.85%
Pressure from housing developments	13	9.85%
Population levels/over-population/immigration	11	8.33%
Condition of roads and pavements	9	6.82%
Infrastructure	9	6.82%
Levels of crime in my town/neighbourhood	4	3.03%
My physical health and fitness	4	3.03%
Educational provision	3	2.27%
Public transport	3	2.27%
Housing security	2	1.52%
The local environment/ pollution	2	1.52%
Library provision	2	1.52%
SEND/support for people with disabilities	2	1.52%
Support for active travel	2	1.52%
My mental health and wellbeing	1	0.76%
Paying bills	1	0.76%
Anti-social behaviour in my community	1	0.76%
Protecting women and girls	1	0.76%
Other comment non-related to the consultation	32	24.24%

The consultation asked respondents to choose up to 4 commitments as possible 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 2253 respondents to this question, the following commitments were selected:

Option	Total	Percentage
Developing Essex's infrastructure	941	41.77%
Supporting those who care for sick or vulnerable people	834	37.02%
Securing high standards in education	636	28.23%
Providing support to struggling families	624	27.70%
Protecting vulnerable children	580	25.74%
Enabling more 'sustainable' and active travel	501	22.24%
Minimising the amount of waste generated in Essex	496	22.02%
Attracting new investment for businesses	479	21.26%
Good local jobs	455	20.20%
Growing the 'green' economy in Essex	402	17.84%
Helping vulnerable people to live independently	378	16.78%
Supporting communities to tackle climate change	363	16.11%
Enabling healthier lifestyles	329	14.60%
Tackling inequalities	324	14.38%
Reducing greenhouse gas emissions	318	14.11%
Helping vulnerable children to close the gap on their peers	279	12.38%

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
Climate changes	190	12.39%
For the future/ future generations	176	11.47%
Will have knock on effect to improve other areas	173	11.28%
Support for the most vulnerable	169	11.02%
Improve infrastructure (general)	167	10.89%
Support for children and young people	143	9.32%
More effective employment / local employment	142	9.26%
Too many new houses/ overpopulated	140	9.13%
Road improvements needed	122	7.95%
Education is foundation for a good future	108	7.04%
Biggest impact on a number of people	91	5.93%
Supporting businesses / attracting businesses to area	91	5.93%
Improve healthcare/ availability of healthcare	85	5.54%
Improving public transport	81	5.28%
Help economic growth	79	5.15%
Environment	78	5.08%
Help for carers	76	4.95%
Most important improvements	76	4.95%
Not currently being addressed / under funded	75	4.89%
Poor education standards currently / education underfunded / not enough schools	74	4.82%
Address inequalities	66	4.30%
Social care provision	56	3.65%
Health is key	49	3.19%
Better standards of living	48	3.13%
Waste management/recycling	48	3.13%
Help people to help themselves/be independent	46	3.00%
Encourage/accommodate alternative travel	44	2.87%
Council waste too much on wrong things / woke agenda / don't spend on the important things	41	2.67%
Aging population	38	2.48%
Long term impact	38	2.48%
Community pride	35	2.28%
Affordable housing	32	2.09%
Improve policing / reduce crime	31	2.02%
Green spaces vital	25	1.63%
SEND	24	1.56%
Sign of a civilised society / basic requirement	24	1.56%
People matter / should care about people	24	1.56%
Directly affect me	22	1.43%

Education	16	1.04%
Mental health important	16	1.04%
Safety in the community	16	1.04%
Transport infrastructure	16	1.04%
All areas should be prioritised	13	0.85%
Rail service improvements	11	0.72%
Common sense / obvious / the right thing to do	11	0.72%
Don't know / no answer	11	0.72%
Achievable improvements	10	0.65%
Economic stability	10	0.65%
Need to be addressed following the pandemic	10	0.65%
Recycling collection review	8	0.52%
My opinion	7	0.46%
Flooding concerns	6	0.39%
Mental health services in high demand	6	0.39%
Skills investment	6	0.39%
More leisure and fitness choices needed	5	0.33%
Funding in early years	4	0.26%
Physical health	4	0.26%
Biodiversity measures	3	0.20%
Brexit	3	0.20%
Invest in local communities	3	0.20%
More support needed from national government	3	0.20%
Secondary schools historically underfunded	3	0.20%
Cheaper Health Checks to aid early diagnostics	1	0.07%
Coast protection measures	1	0.07%
Lack of infrastructure for expanding community	1	0.07%
Protection for everyone	1	0.07%
Reduced crime from Alcohol/drug schemes	1	0.07%
Would be willing to pay more council tax to keep all services	1	0.07%
Access to libraries	1	0.07%
Other comment not related to the consultation	230	14.99%

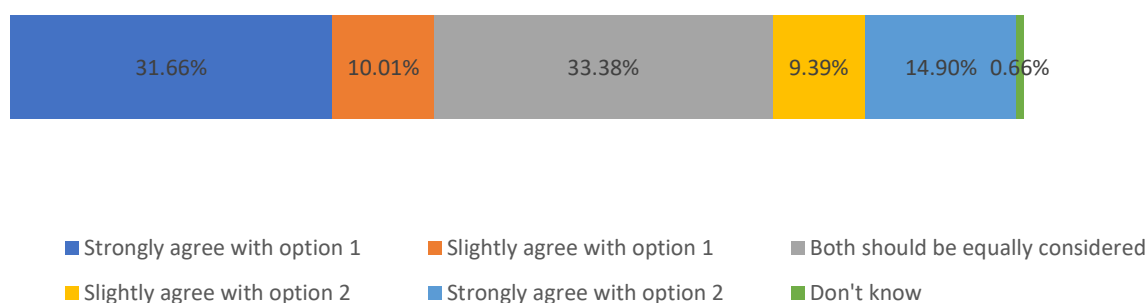
Views on how Essex County Council should allocate resources

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

First 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 2268 respondents to this question, 31.66% (n=718) Agreed strongly that ECC should prioritise services that benefit the majority of residents and taxpayer's, 10.01% slightly agreed (n=227), 33.38% (n=757) believed both should be equally considered, 9.39% (n=213) slightly agreed that ECC should prioritise services that focus on those with the greatest needs, 14.90% (n=338) Strongly Agree and 0.66% (n=15) Don't know.

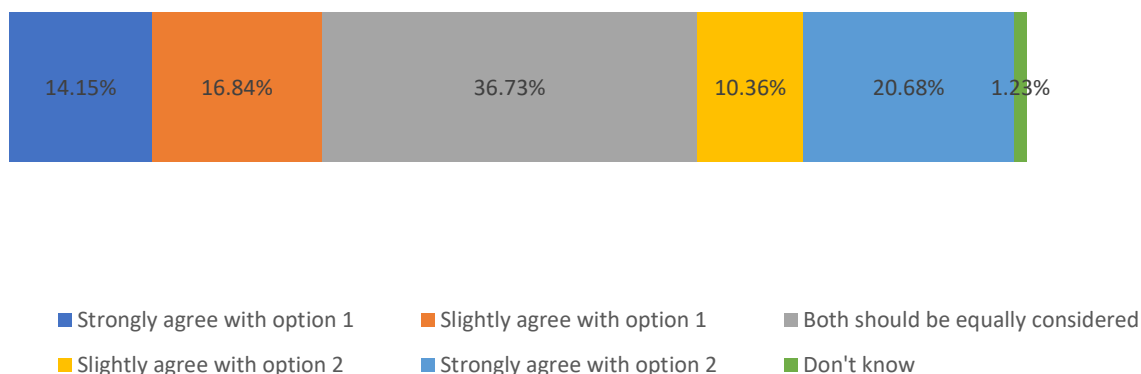
...ECC should prioritise services that benefit the majority of residents and taxpayer's vs ...ECC should prioritise services that focus on those with the greatest needs.



.....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 2268 respondents to this question, 14.15% (n=321) Agreed strongly that ECC should target services towards struggling neighbourhoods, towns or cities, Slightly agreed 16.84% (n=382), 36.73% (n=833) believed both should be equally considered, 10.36% (n=235) slightly agreed that ECC should provide services that are available in all communities in Essex, 20.68% (n=469) Strongly Agreed and 1.23% (n=28) Don't know.

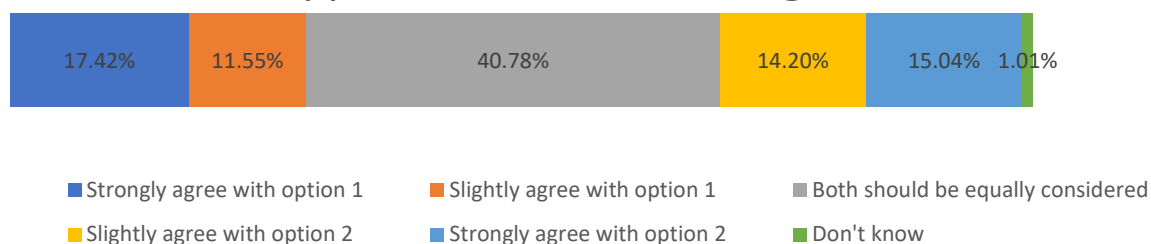
.....ECC should target services towards struggling neighbourhoods, towns or cities vs ...ECC should provide services that are available in all communities in Essex.



...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 2268 respondents to this question, **17.42% (n=395) Agreed strongly that ECC should prioritise spending on meeting the needs of the people today, 11.55% (n=262) slightly agreed, 40.78% (n=925) believed both should be equally considered, 14.20% (n=322) slightly agreed that ECC should prioritise spending on projects that will increase opportunities over the long term, 15.04% (n=341) Strongly Agree and 1.01% (n=23) Don't know.**

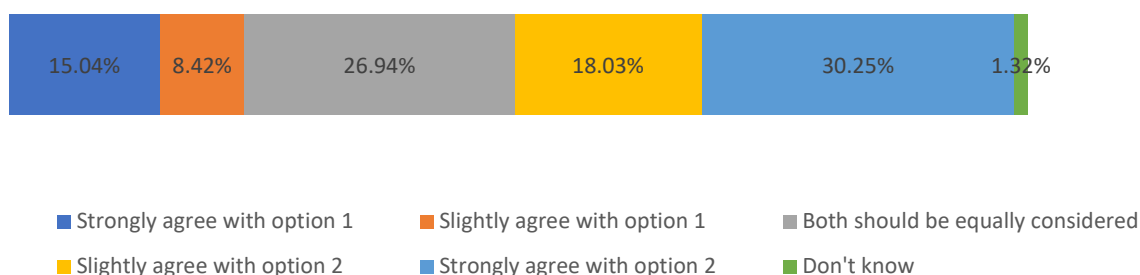
ECC should prioritise spending on meeting the needs of the people today vs ...ECC should prioritise spending on projects that will increase opportunities over the long term.



...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 2268 respondents to this question, **15.04% (n=341) Agreed strongly that Decisions on how to spend money in Essex should consider the county as a whole, 8.42% (n=191) slightly agreed, 26.94% (n=611) believed both should be equally considered, 18.03% (n=409) slightly agreed that Decisions on how to spend money should be taken as close to local communities as possible, 30.25% (n=686) Strongly Agree and 1.32% (n=30) Don't know.**

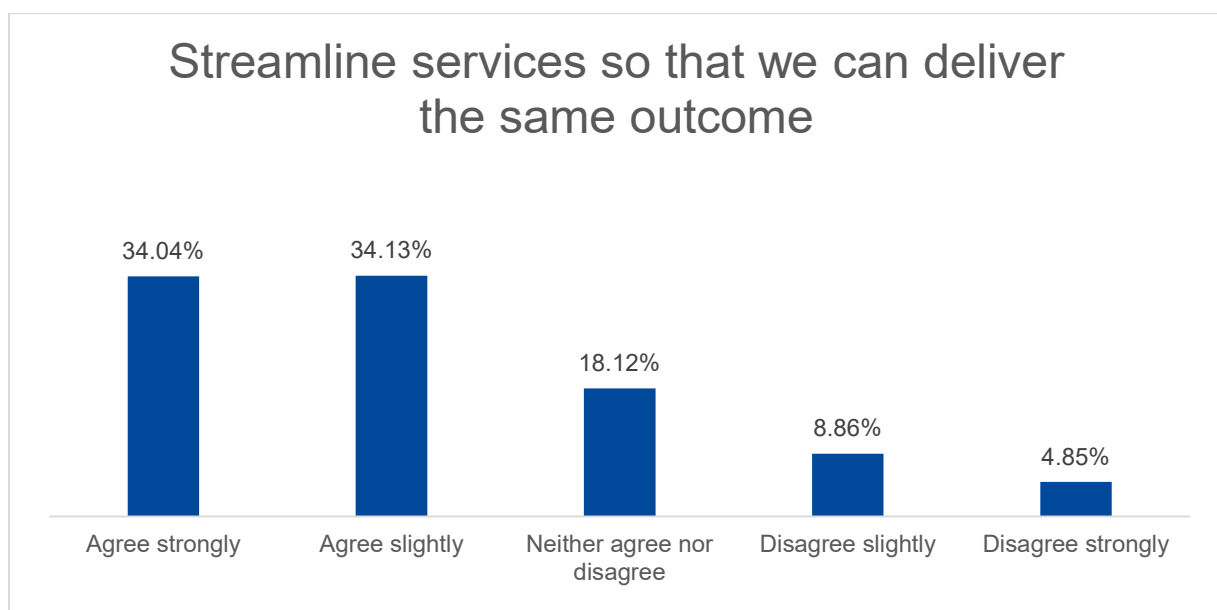
...Decisions on how to spend money in Essex should consider the county as a whole vs ...Decisions on how to spend money should be taken as close to local communities as possible



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?

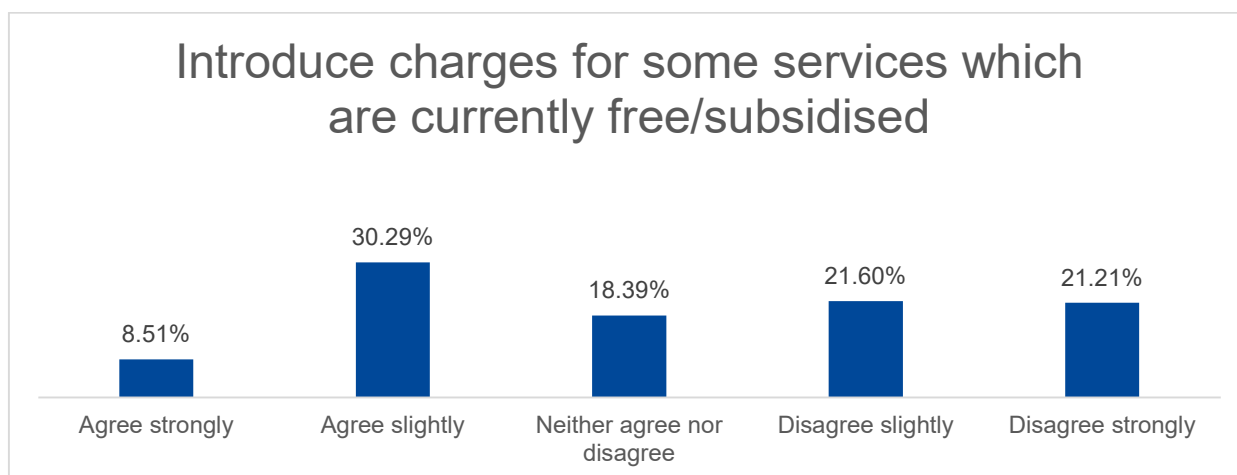
Financial pressure - Streamline services so that we can deliver the same outcomes

Out of the 2268 respondents to this question, **34.04% (n=772) Agreed Strongly, 34.13% (n=774) Agreed Slightly, 18.12% (n=411) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 8.86% (n=201) Disagreed slightly and 4.85% Disagreed strongly (n=110).**



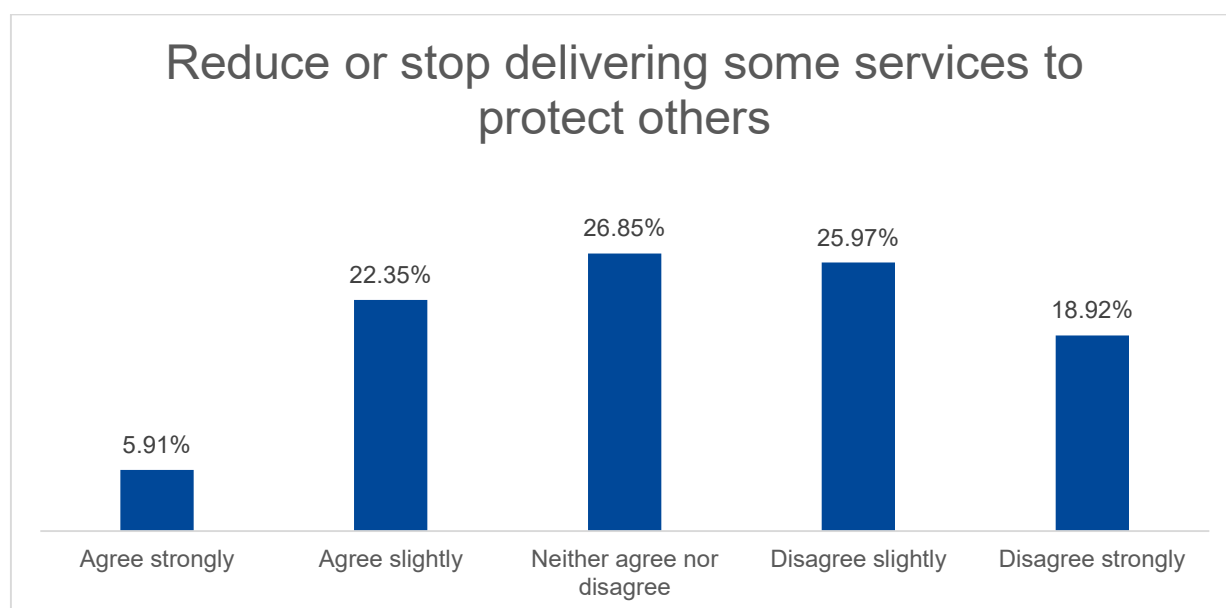
Financial pressure - Introduce charges for some services which are currently free/subsidised

Out of the 2268 respondents to this question, **8.51% (n=193) Agreed Strongly, 30.29% (n=687) Agreed Slightly, 18.39% (n=417) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 21.60% (n=490) Disagreed slightly and 21.21% Disagreed strongly (n=481).**



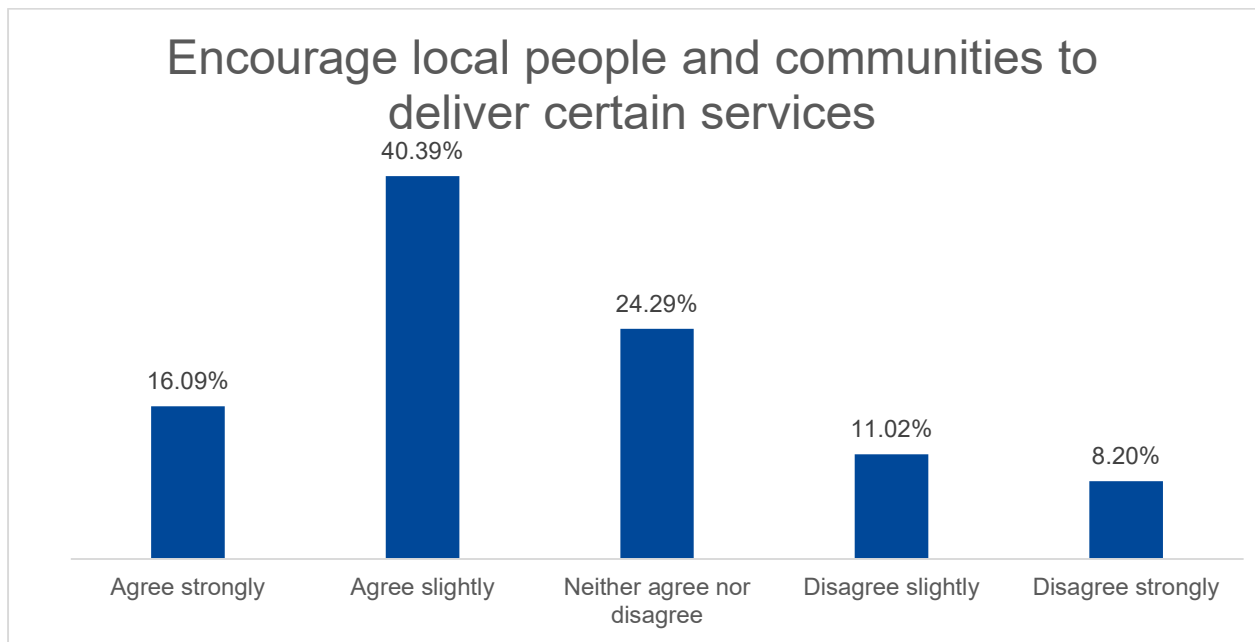
Financial pressure - Reduce or stop delivering some services to protect others

Out of the 2268 respondents to this question, **5.91% (n=134) Agreed Strongly, 22.35% (n=507) Agreed Slightly, 26.85% (n=609) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 25.97% (n=589) Disagreed slightly and 18.92% Disagreed strongly (n=429).**



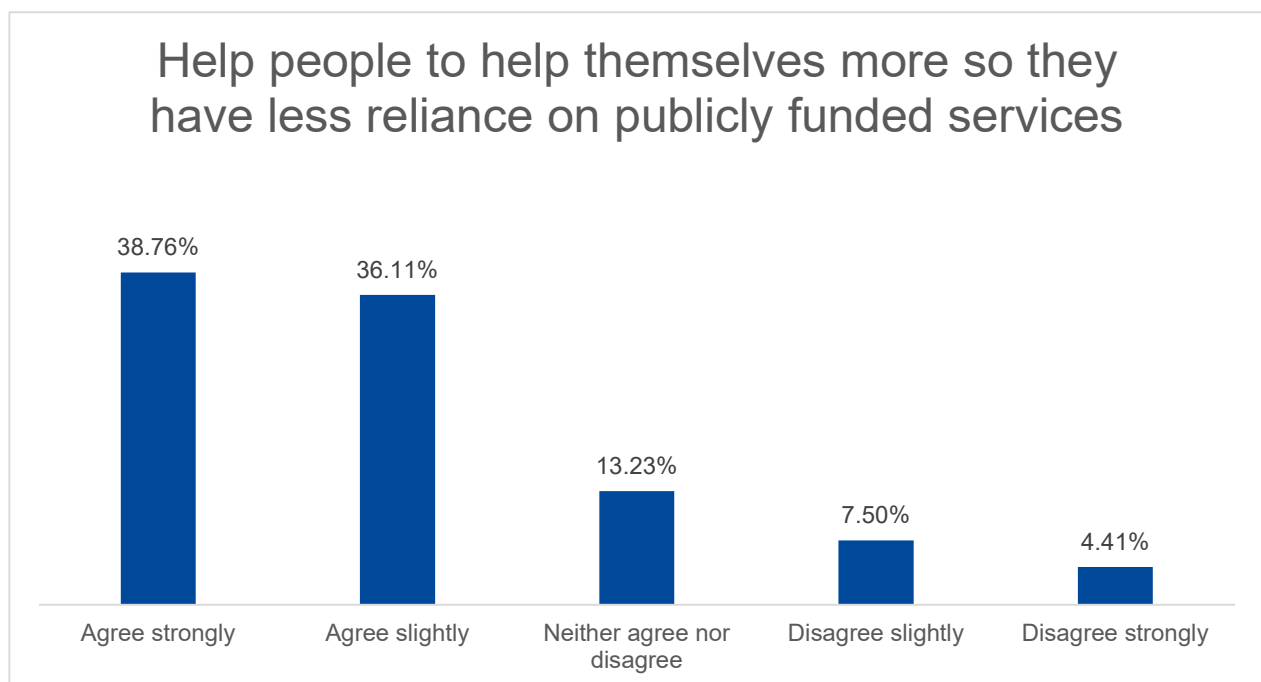
Financial pressure - Encourage local people and communities to deliver certain services

Out of the 2268 respondents to this question, **16.09% (n=365) Agreed Strongly, 40.39% (n=916) Agreed Slightly, 24.29% (n=551) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 11.02% (n=250) Disagreed slightly and 8.20% Disagreed strongly (n=186).**



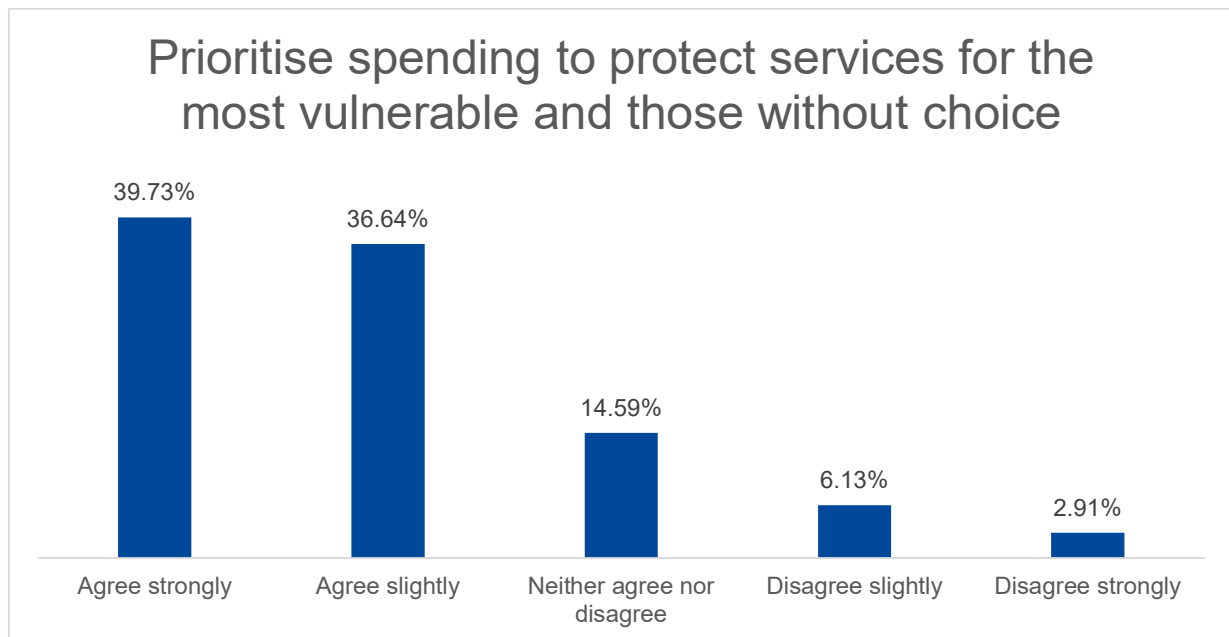
Financial pressure - Help people to help themselves more so they have less reliance on publicly funded services

Out of the 2268 respondents to this question, 38.76% (n=879) Agreed Strongly, 36.11% (n=819) Agreed Slightly, 13.23% (n=300) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 7.50% (n=170) Disagreed slightly and 4.41% Disagreed strongly (n=100).



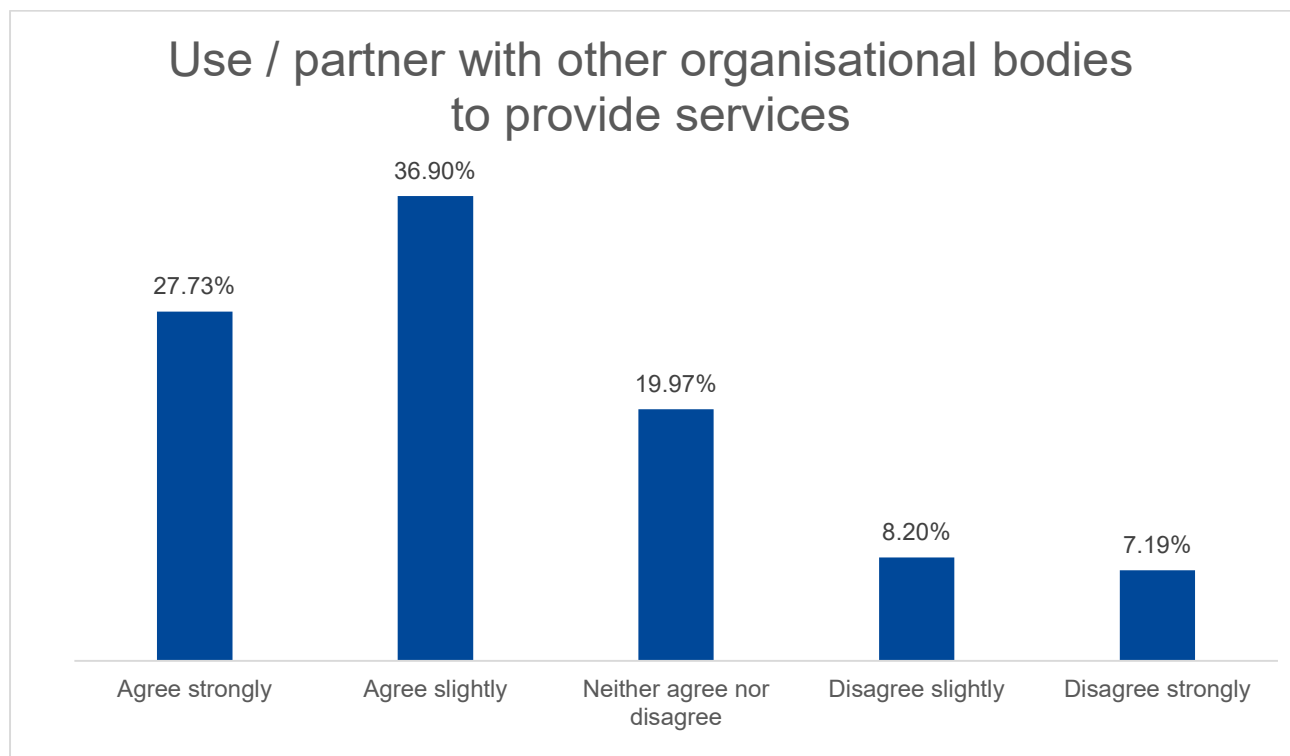
Financial pressure - Prioritise spending to protect services for the most vulnerable and those without choice

Out of the 2268 respondents to this question, **39.73% (n=901) Agreed Strongly, 36.64% (n=831) Agreed Slightly, 14.59% (n=353) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 6.13% (n=139) Disagreed slightly and 2.91% Disagreed strongly (n=66).**



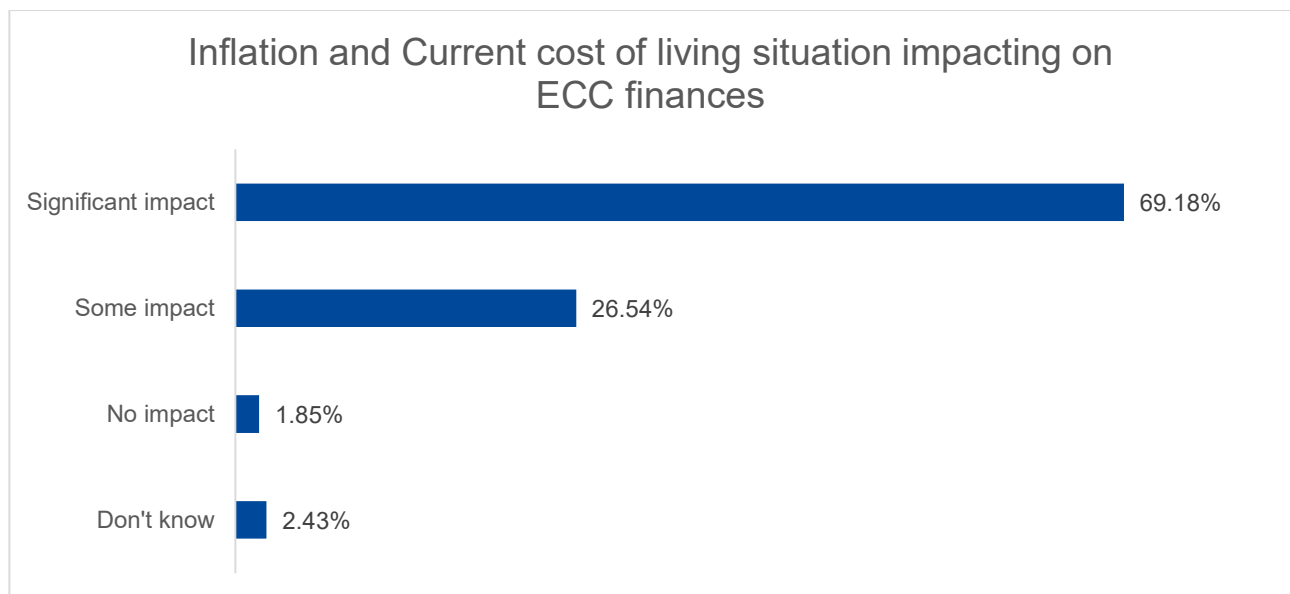
Financial pressure - Use / partner with other organisational bodies to provide services

Out of the 2378 respondents to this question, **27.73% (n=629) Agreed Strongly, 36.90% (n=837) Agreed Slightly, 19.97% (n=453) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 8.20% (n=186) Disagreed slightly and 7.19% Disagreed strongly (n=163).**



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

Out of the 2268 respondents to this question, 69.18% (n=1569) Significant impact, 26.54% (n=602) some impact, 1.85% (n=42) No impact, and 2.43% Don't know (n=55).

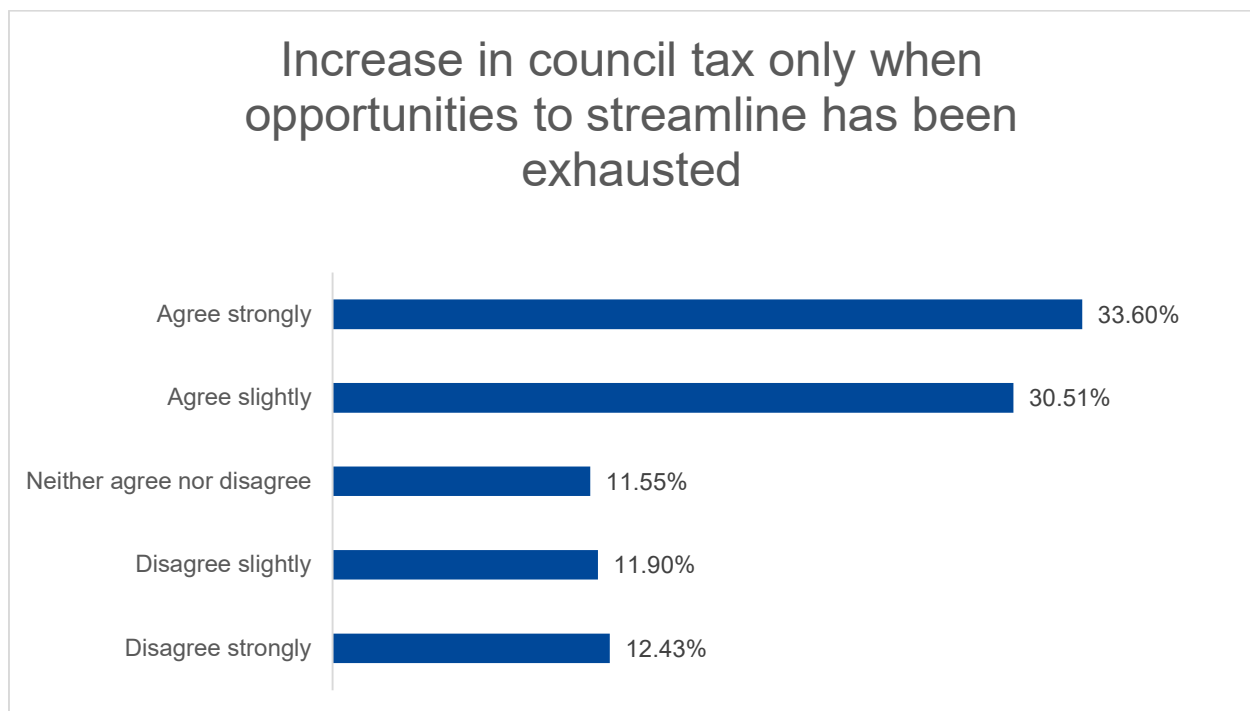


Increase in Council tax

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

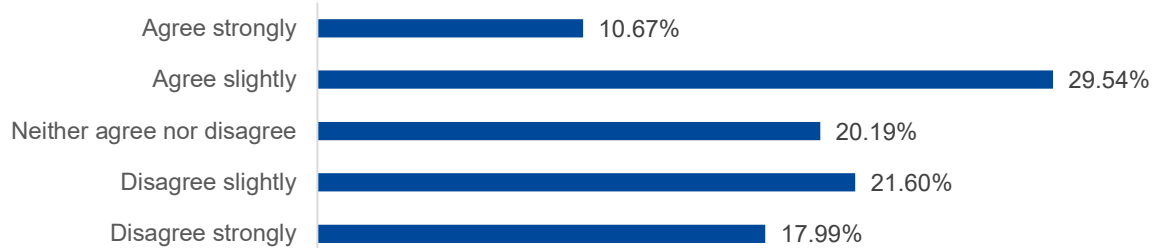
Out of the 2268 respondents to this question, **33.60% (n=762) Agreed Strongly**, **30.51% (n=692) Agreed Slightly**, **11.55% (n=262) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed**, **11.55% (n=270) Disagreed slightly** and **12.43% Disagreed strongly (n=282)**.



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

Out of the 2268 respondents to this question, **10.67% (n=242) Agreed Strongly**, **29.54% (n=670) Agreed Slightly**, **20.19% (n=458) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed**, **21.60% (n=490) Disagreed slightly** and **17.99% Disagreed strongly (n=408)**.

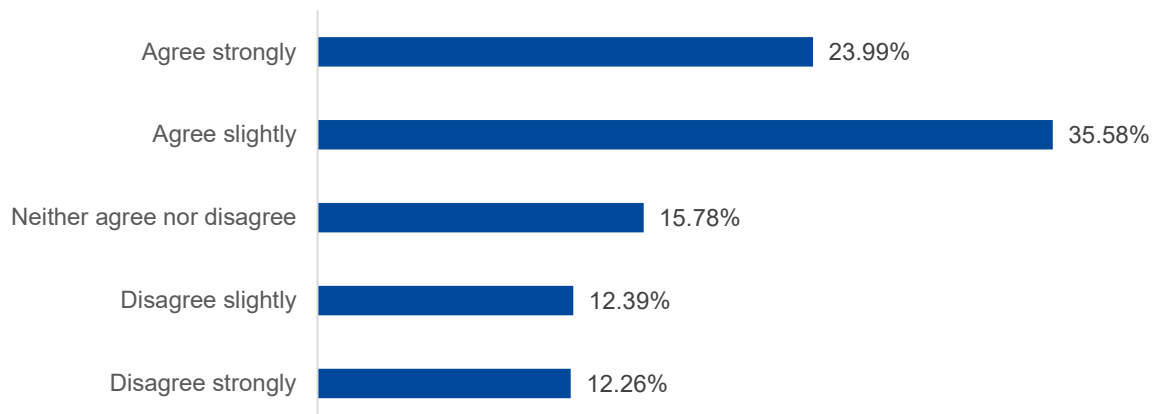
Increase in council tax as an alternative to imposing/increasing fees and charges for services



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

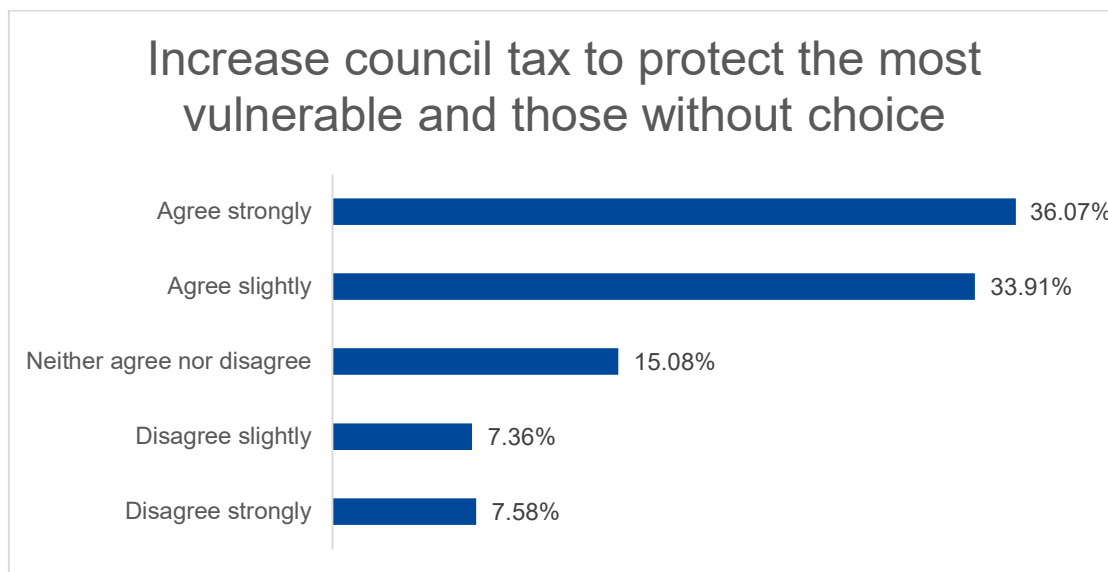
Out of the 2268 respondents to this question, 23.99% (n=544) Agreed Strongly, 35.58% (n=807) Agreed Slightly, 15.78% (n=358) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 12.39% (n=281) Disagreed slightly and 12.26% Disagreed strongly (n=278).

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



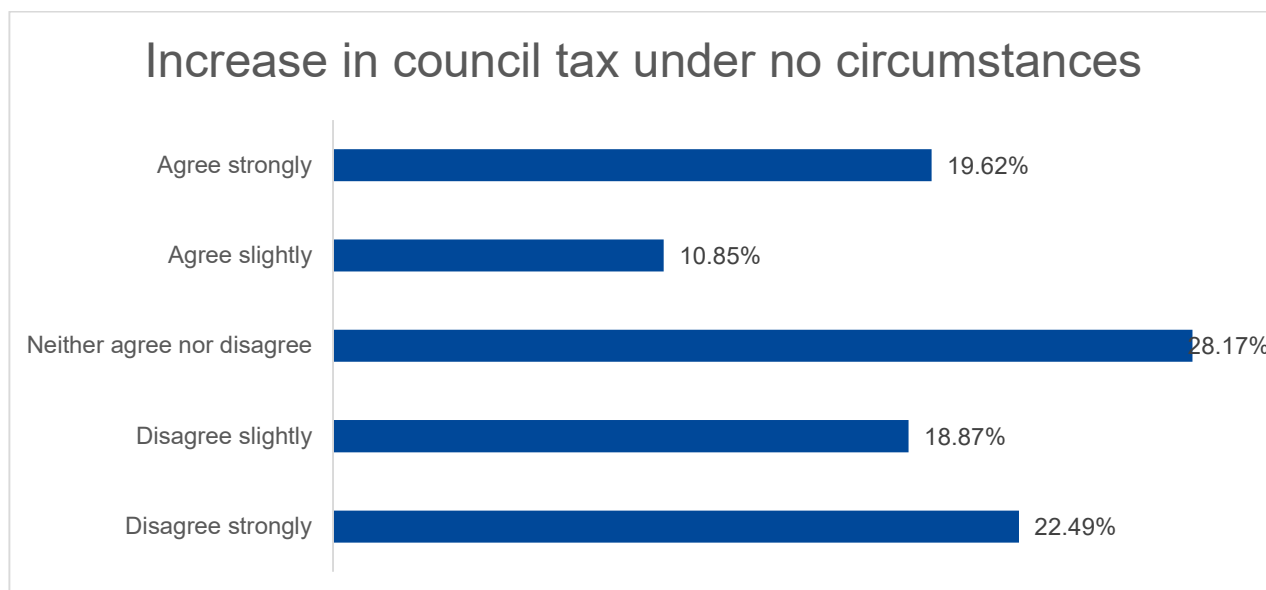
4th statement - ...to protect services for the most vulnerable and those without choice

Out of the 2268 respondents to this question, **36.07% (n=818) Agreed Strongly, 33.91% (n=769) Agreed Slightly, 15.08% (n=342) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 7.36% (n=167) Disagreed slightly and 7.58% Disagreed strongly (n=172).**



5th statement - ...under no circumstances

Out of the 2268 respondents to this question, **19.62% (n=445) Agreed Strongly, 10.85% (n=246) Agreed Slightly, 28.17% (n=639) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 18.87% (n=428) Disagreed slightly and 22.49% Disagreed strongly (n=510).**



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.

Theme	Total	Percentage
Streamline ECC staff/ salaries/ benefits	14	14.43%
Do not increase Council Tax	13	13.40%
Prioritise efficiency/ eliminate wasteful spending	11	11.34%
Increase Council Tax	7	7.22%
Increase Council Tax to guarantee better quality services	5	5.15%
Need more information to answer	5	5.15%
ECC to review its working practices first	5	5.15%
Improve transparency around budget/ spend	5	5.15%
Increase Council Tax for the wealthiest	4	4.12%
Prioritise vulnerable people/ households	4	4.12%
Concentrate on the basics/ essentials/ higher impact services	4	4.12%
Local taxation needs to be reformed	3	3.09%
More support needed from national government	3	3.09%
ECC to deliver all services/ avoid partnerships	2	2.06%
Review benefits system	2	2.06%
Consider charging for some services	1	1.03%
Cut or charge for under-used/ unnecessary services	1	1.03%
Reduce Council Tax	1	1.03%
Other	28	28.87%

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

Theme	Total	Percentage
Prioritise council efficiency / eliminate wasteful spending / streamline staff / stop working from home	109	13.64%
Improve road maintenance	78	9.76%
Revise highest pay grades for ECC staff	55	6.88%
Avoid vanity or fashionable projects	46	5.76%
Spend budget fairly across county	41	5.13%
Budget needs to be communicated better	37	4.63%
Invest in public transport	34	4.26%
Improve roadside and pavement maintenance	28	3.50%
Increase Police presence	28	3.50%
ECC to continue to streamline spending	27	3.38%
Review outsourcing to private companies	27	3.38%
None/ nothing	27	3.38%
Concentrate on the basics/ essentials	26	3.25%
Take a long-term/ joined-up view	26	3.25%
Prioritise value for money	24	3.00%
Share service delivery with district and boroughs	24	3.00%
Share service delivery with local groups, voluntary sector, charities, NGOs	23	2.88%
No increase in Council Tax	22	2.75%
Streamline ECC management team	22	2.75%
Negative comments about questionnaire/survey	21	2.63%
Improve social care services	20	2.50%
Better healthcare provision	19	2.38%
Don't cut services	19	2.38%
Listen to the concerns/needs of residents/businesses	19	2.38%
Prioritise vulnerable people/ households	18	2.25%
Action on environmental issues	18	2.25%
Invest in infrastructure	16	2.00%
Limit over-development/ population growth	16	2.00%
Charge for some services	15	1.88%
Invest in childcare and education for children	15	1.88%
Consider Council Tax increase	14	1.75%

ECC to review the way it works	14	1.75%
Maintain libraries	14	1.75%
Pair improved infrastructure with new housing developments	14	1.75%
Focus on reducing crime	12	1.50%
Review council owned buildings	12	1.50%
Wealthier households should pay more Council Tax and/ or vice versa	12	1.50%
Green spaces key	11	1.38%
More support needed from national government	11	1.38%
Improve parking	10	1.25%
Attract industries/businesses to the area	9	1.13%
Means test/ make sure resources are going to those truly in need	9	1.13%
Invest in active travel	8	1.00%
Invest in high streets	7	0.88%
Public service review/ consultation needed	7	0.88%
Improve recycling services	6	0.75%
Improve individuals' self-reliance	6	0.75%
Don't know	6	0.75%
Focus on leisure, culture and tourism	5	0.63%
Tackle issues with housing	5	0.63%
Tackle poverty/ inequality	5	0.63%
Stop duplication of services	4	0.50%
Close libraries	3	0.38%
Improve building standards	3	0.38%
Improve health and wellbeing	3	0.38%
Support employment, work skills and adult education	3	0.38%
Not answered	3	0.38%
Budget review needed	2	0.25%
Community resilience	2	0.25%
Cut under-used services	2	0.25%
Funding for SEND	2	0.25%
Improve Youth Services	2	0.25%
Services for young people	2	0.25%
Speeding motorists	2	0.25%
Update or replace Council Tax	2	0.25%
Assess need for new bus and cycle lanes	1	0.13%
Become more entrepreneurial/ business-minded	1	0.13%
Encourage change of behaviours	1	0.13%
Help families in need	1	0.13%
Improve road safety	1	0.13%
Invest in sustainable travel	1	0.13%
Local government reform needed	1	0.13%
More investment in the voluntary sector	1	0.13%
Renegotiate road maintenance contract or bring in house	1	0.13%

Review council house allocation	1	0.13%
Other comments	165	20.65%



Detailed findings – Businesses in Essex

Detailed findings – Businesses in Essex

Businesses within Essex were invited to take part within the consultation. 132 business owners undertook the consultation with 119 stating they were resident and business owners with 13 declaring that they were a Business in Essex.

For the purpose of this section this will reflect the findings from the 132 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 132 businesses to respond to this question, the following issues were selected

Option	Total	Percentage
National Health Service/Healthcare	47	35.61%
Inflation/prices	40	30.30%
Social Care provision	33	25.00%
Crime/Community safety	32	24.24%
Economy/economic situation	30	22.73%
Population levels/over-population	27	20.45%
Environment/climate change	26	19.70%
Education/Schools	22	16.67%
Housing	18	13.64%
Immigration	17	12.88%
Poverty/inequality	16	12.12%
Other, please specify	15	11.36%
Brexit impacts	13	9.85%
Morality & individual behaviours	13	9.85%

Low pay/ wages	12	9.09%
Aging population	10	7.58%
Unemployment	3	2.27%
Personal finances	2	1.52%
Coronavirus/ pandemic diseases	1	0.76%
Race relations	0	0.00%
Don't know	0	0.00%

In regard to the free text comments box for other, please specify, (n=15) these have been themed, coded and quantified below:

<i>Option</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Roads/traffic	6	30%
Infrastructure	3	15%
Public transport	3	15%
Morality & individual behaviours	2	10%
Pressure from housing developments	2	10%
National Health Service/Healthcare	1	5%
Education/Schools	1	5%
Mental health	1	5%
Other	1	5%

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 132 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	40.91%
Paying bills	31	23.48%
Educational provision	31	23.48%
Levels of crime in my town/neighbourhood	29	21.97%
Climate change	28	21.21%
The local environment/ pollution	28	21.21%
Anti-social behaviour in my community	27	20.45%
Housing affordability	26	19.70%
Cleanliness of street and local area	20	15.15%
Public transport	18	13.64%

My mental health and wellbeing	15	11.36%
My physical health and fitness	14	10.61%
Other, please specify	13	9.85%
Employment security	10	7.58%
Future job prospects	9	6.82%
Raising children	9	6.82%
Housing security	5	3.79%
Community relations	3	2.27%
Being lonely	2	1.52%

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>	<i>Percentage</i>
Condition of roads and pavements	2	15.38%
Availability of GPs/ healthcare	2	15.38%
Pressure from housing developments	2	15.38%
Traffic levels/ road safety	1	7.69%
Social care provision for older people	1	7.69%
None of these	1	7.69%
Other	4	30.77%

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 132 responses to this question, the following commitment were selected

<i>Option</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Developing Essex's infrastructure	61	46.21%
Attracting new investment for businesses	51	38.64%
Securing high standards in education	48	36.36%
Good local jobs	37	28.03%

Supporting those who care for sick or vulnerable people	33	25.00%
Protecting vulnerable children	32	24.24%
Providing support to struggling families	29	21.97%
Growing the 'green' economy in Essex	28	21.21%
Enabling more 'sustainable' and active travel	22	16.67%
Enabling healthier lifestyles	19	14.39%
Minimising the amount of waste generated in Essex	19	14.39%
Tackling inequalities	18	13.64%
Helping vulnerable children to close the gap on their peers	18	13.64%
Supporting communities to tackle climate change	17	12.88%
Reducing greenhouse gas emissions	15	11.36%
Helping vulnerable people to live independently	12	9.09%

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.*

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Will have knock on effect to improve other areas	19	8.41%
Improve infrastructure (general)	13	5.75%
Supporting businesses / attracting businesses to area	13	5.75%
Climate changes	12	5.31%
More effective employment / local employment	10	4.42%
Support for children and young people	10	4.42%
Support for the most vulnerable	10	4.42%
Too many new houses/ overpopulated	10	4.42%
Biggest impact on a number of people	8	3.54%
Road improvements needed	8	3.54%
Help economic growth	7	3.10%
Improve healthcare/ availability of healthcare	7	3.10%
Not currently being addressed / under funded	6	2.65%
Improving public transport	5	2.21%
Address inequalities	4	1.77%
Better standards of living	4	1.77%
Environment	4	1.77%
For the future/ future generations	4	1.77%
Health is key	4	1.77%

Most important improvements	4	1.77%
Poor education standards currently / education underfunded / not enough schools	4	1.77%
Education is foundation for a good future	4	1.77%
Affordable housing	3	1.33%
Community pride	2	0.88%
Education	2	0.88%
Encourage/accommodate alternative travel	2	0.88%
Green spaces vital	2	0.88%
Help for carers	2	0.88%
Social care provision	2	0.88%
Waste management/recycling	2	0.88%
Long term impact	2	0.88%
Council waste too much on wrong things / woke agenda / don't spend on the important things	2	0.88%
Improve policing / reduce crime	2	0.88%
Achievable improvements	1	0.44%
Aging population	1	0.44%
Brexit	1	0.44%
Directly affect me	1	0.44%
Economic stability	1	0.44%
Invest in local communities	1	0.44%
Mental health important	1	0.44%
Safety in the community	1	0.44%
Secondary schools historically underfunded	1	0.44%
SEND	1	0.44%
Transport infrastructure	1	0.44%
Help people to help themselves/be independent	1	0.44%
Common sense / obvious / the right thing to do	1	0.44%
People matter / should care about people	1	0.44%
Don't know / no answer	1	0.44%
Other comment	18	7.96%

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 132 businesses to this question, **35.61% (n=47) Agreed strongly that ECC should prioritise services that benefit the majority of residents and taxpayer's, 12.88% slightly agreed (n=17), 31.06% (n=41) believed both should be equally considered, 5.30%% (n=7) slightly agreed that ECC should prioritise services that focus on those with the greatest needs, 14.39% (n=19) Strongly Agree and 0.76% (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.

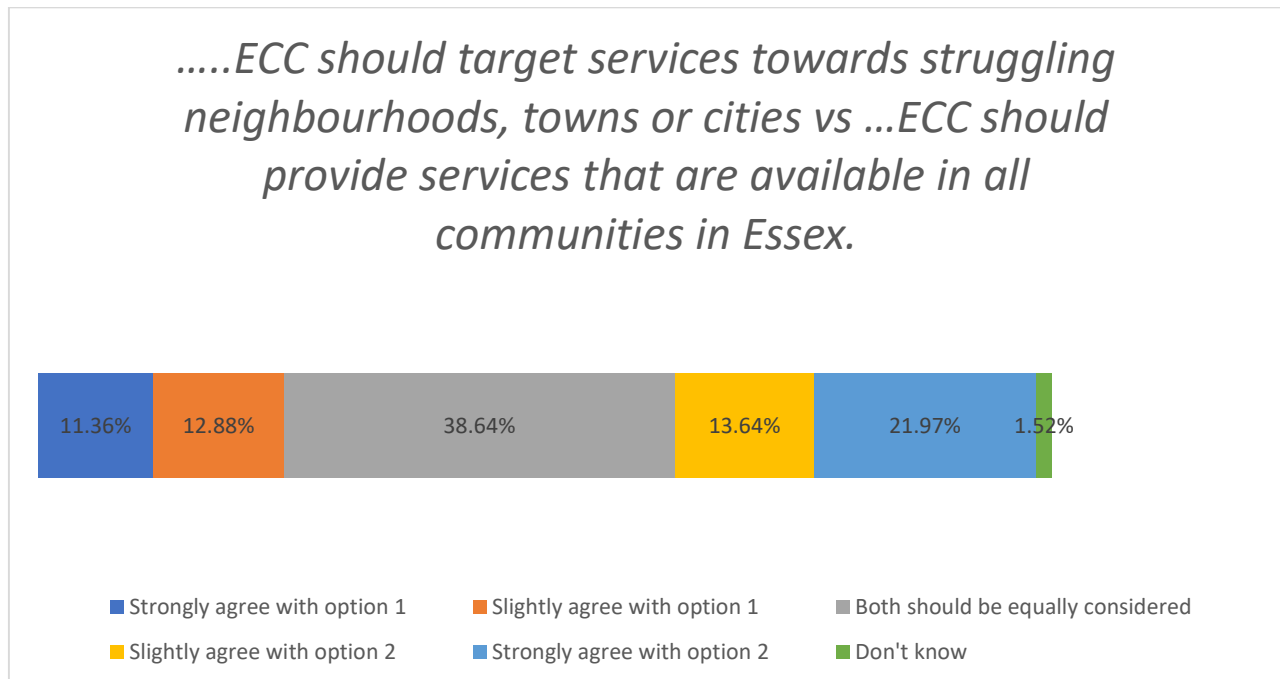


■ Strongly agree with option 1
■ Slightly agree with option 1
■ Both should be equally considered
■ Slightly agree with option 2
■ Strongly agree with option 2
■ Don't know

.....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 132 businesses to this question, **11.36% (n=15) Agreed strongly that ECC should target services towards struggling neighbourhoods, towns or cities, Slightly agreed 12.88% (n=17), 38.64% (n=51) believed both should be equally considered,**

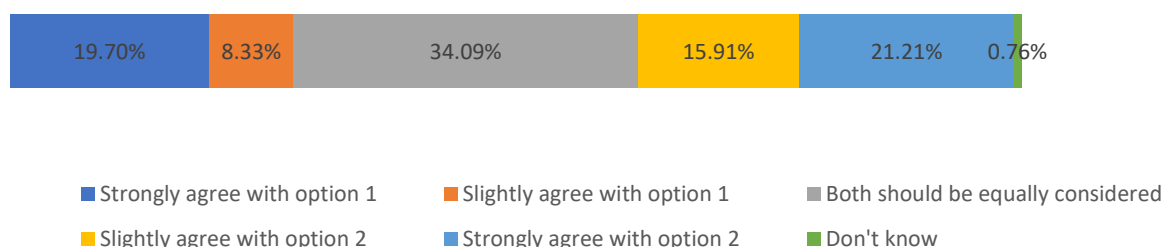
13.64% (n=51) slightly agreed that ECC should provide services that are available in all communities in Essex, 21.97% (n=29) Strongly Agreed and 1.52% (n=2) Don't know.



...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 132 businesses to this question, 19.70% (n=26) Agreed strongly that ECC should prioritise spending on meeting the needs of the people today, 8.33% (n=11) slightly agreed, 34.09% (n=45) believed both should be equally considered, 15.91% (n=21) slightly agreed that ECC should prioritise spending on projects that will increase opportunities over the long term, 21.21% (n=28) Strongly Agree and 0.76% (n=1) Don't know.

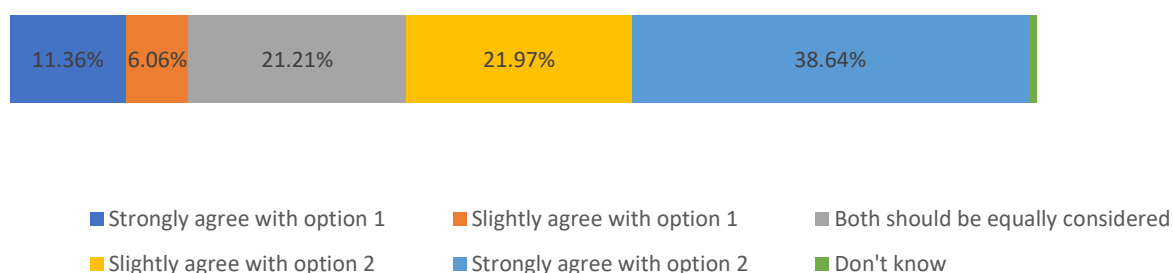
ECC should prioritise spending on meeting the needs of the people today vs ...ECC should prioritise spending on projects that will increase opportunities over the long term.



...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 132 businesses to this question, **11.36% (n=15) Agreed strongly that Decisions on how to spend money in Essex should consider the county as a whole, 6.06% (n=8) slightly agreed, 21.21% (n=28) believed both should be equally considered, 21.97% (n=29) slightly agreed that Decisions on how to spend money should be taken as close to local communities as possible, 38.64% (n=51) Strongly Agree and 0.76% (n=1) Don't know.**

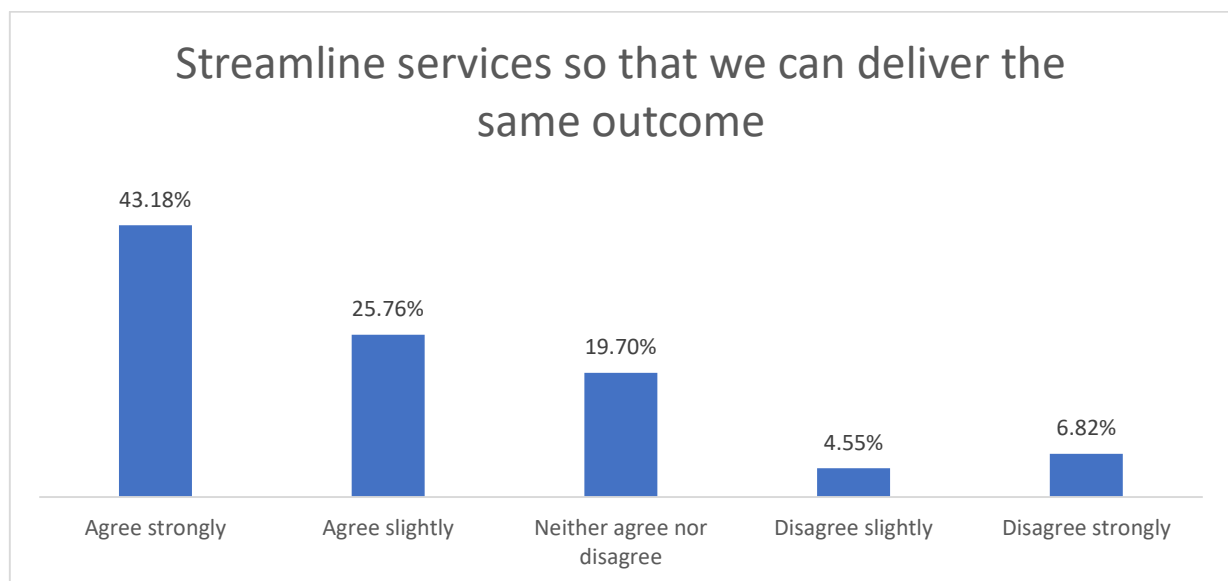
...Decisions on how to spend money in Essex should consider the county as a whole vs ...Decisions on how to spend money should be taken as close to local communities as possible



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?

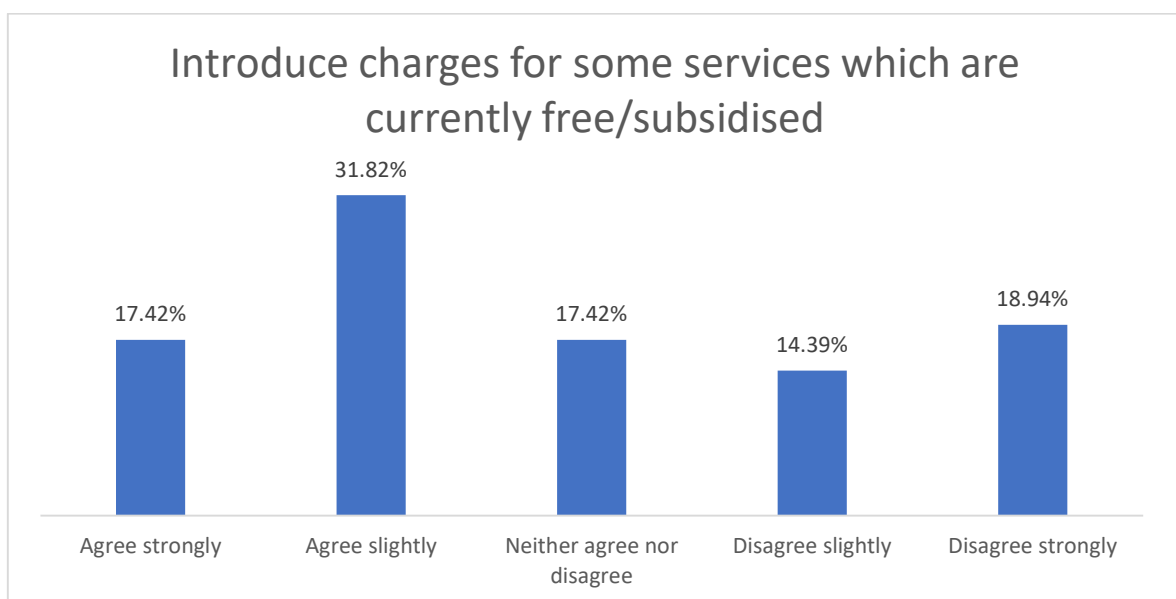
Financial pressure - Streamline services so that we can deliver the same outcomes

Out of the 132 Businesses to this question, **43.18% (n=57) Agreed Strongly, 25.76% (n=34) Agreed Slightly, 19.70% (n=26) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 4.55% (n=6) Disagreed slightly and 6.82% Disagreed strongly (n=9).**



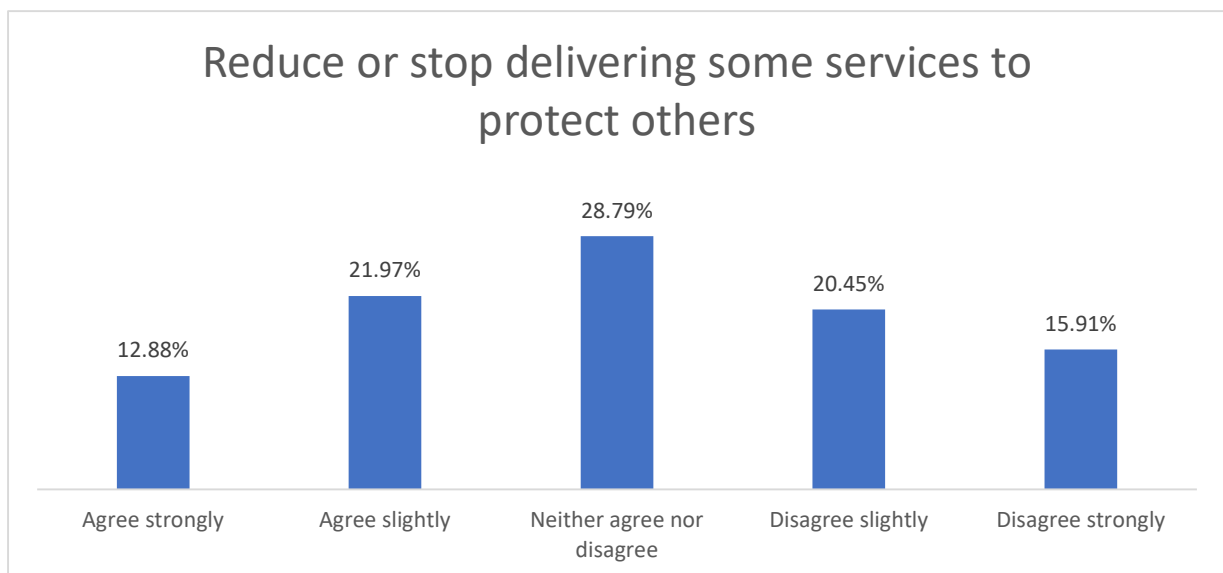
Financial pressure - Introduce charges for some services which are currently free/subsidised

Out of the 132 Businesses to this question, **17.42% (n=23) Agreed Strongly, 31.82% (n=42) Agreed Slightly, 17.42% (n=23) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 14.39% (n=19) Disagreed slightly and 18.94% Disagreed strongly (n=25).**



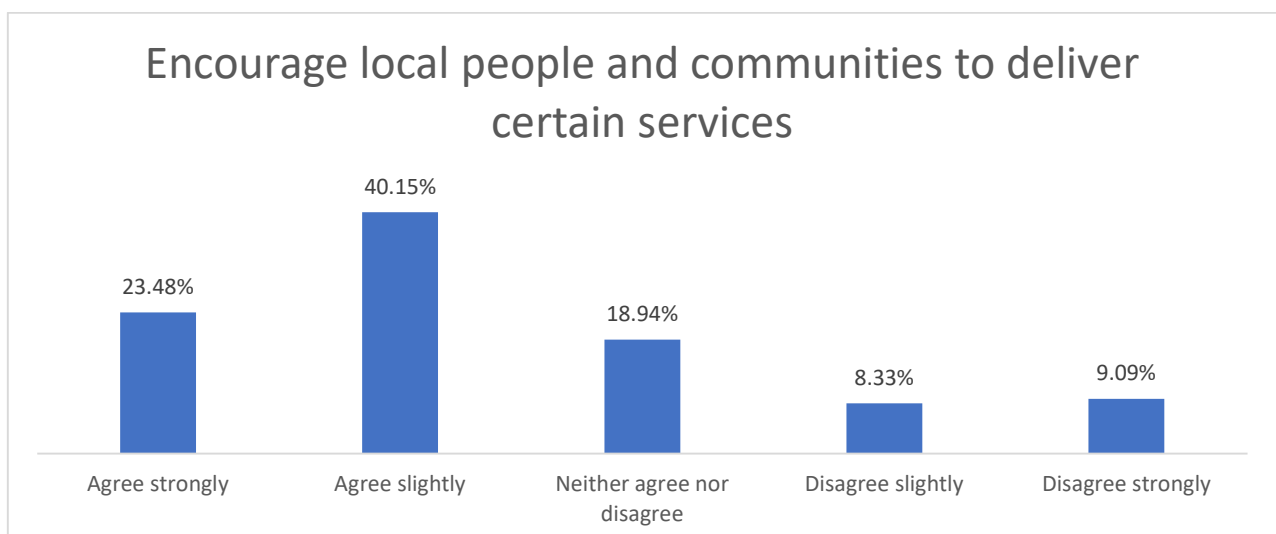
Financial pressure - Reduce or stop delivering some services to protect others

Out of the 132 Businesses to this question, **12.88% (n=17) Agreed Strongly, 21.97% (n=29) Agreed Slightly, 28.79% (n=38) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 20.45% (n=27) Disagreed slightly and 15.91% Disagreed strongly (n=21).**



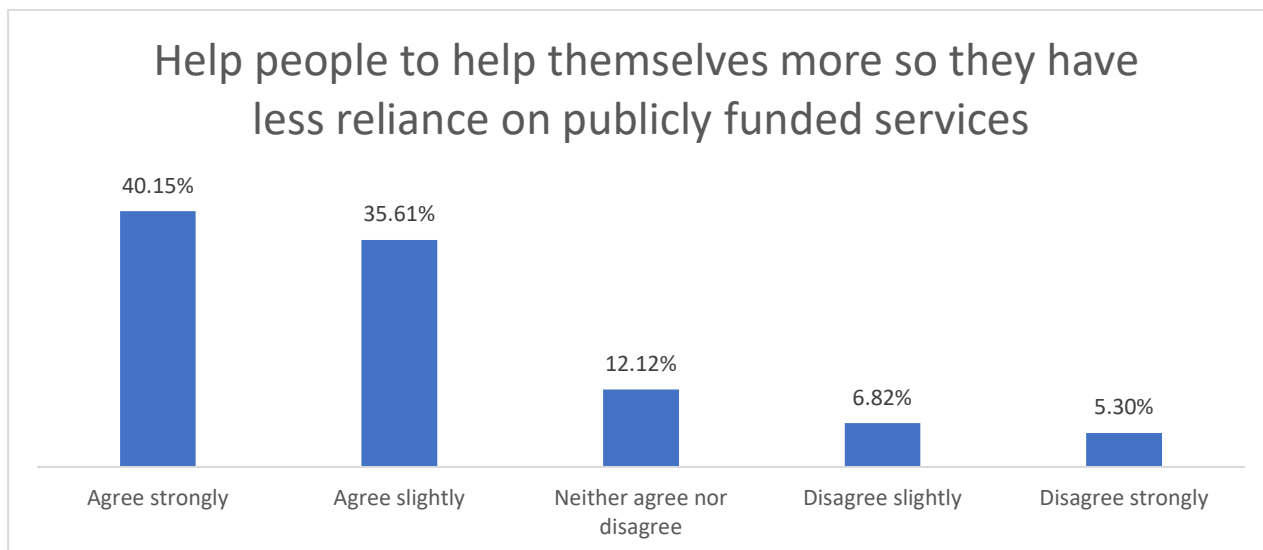
Financial pressure - Encourage local people and communities to deliver certain services

Out of the 132 Businesses to this question, **23.48% (n=31) Agreed Strongly, 40.15% (n=53) Agreed Slightly, 18.94% (n=25) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 8.33% (n=11) Disagreed slightly and 9.09% Disagreed strongly (n=12).**



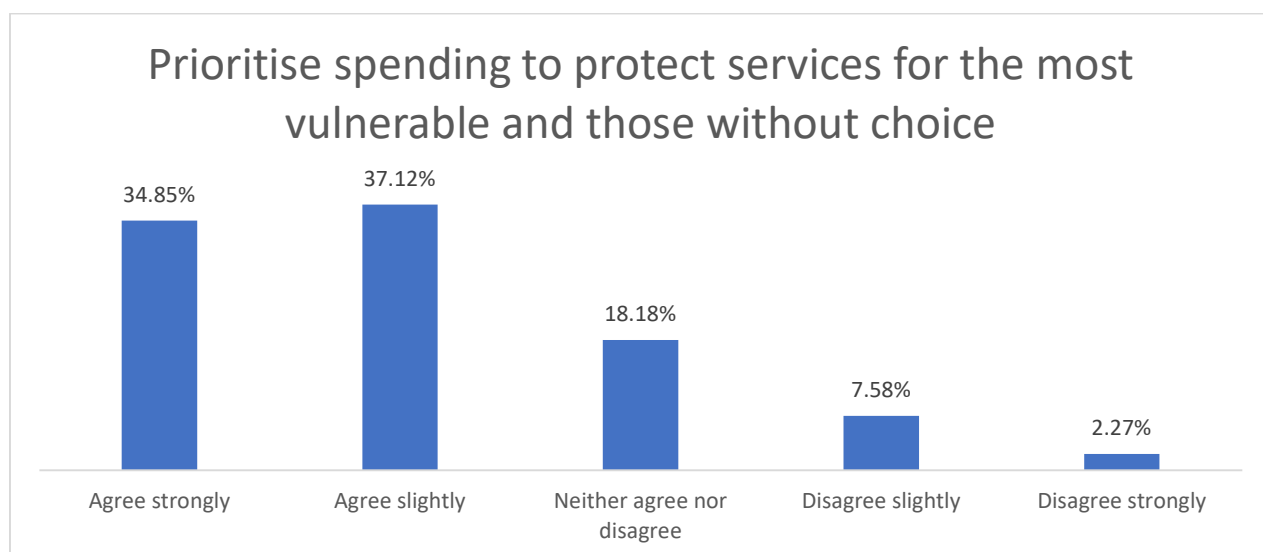
Financial pressure - Help people to help themselves more so they have less reliance on publicly funded services

Out of the 132 Businesses to this question, **40.15% (n=53) Agreed Strongly**, **35.61% (n=47) Agreed Slightly**, **12.12% (n=16) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed**, **6.82% (n=9) Disagreed slightly** and **5.30% Disagreed strongly (n=7)**.



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

Out of the 132 Businesses to this question, **34.85% (n=46) Agreed Strongly**, **37.12% (n=49) Agreed Slightly**, **18.18% (n=24) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed**, **7.58% (n=10) Disagreed slightly** and **2.27% Disagreed strongly (n=3)**.



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

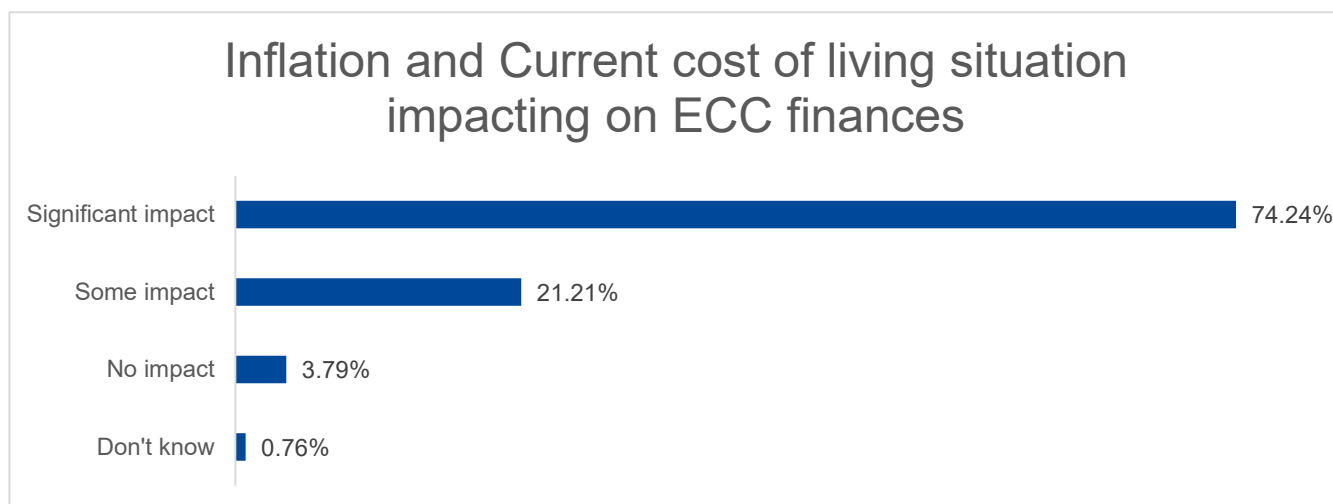
Out of the 132 Businesses to this question, **25.00% (n=33) Agreed Strongly**, **34.09% (n=45) Agreed Slightly**, **20.45% (n=27) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed**, **8.33% (n=11) Disagreed slightly** and **12.12% Disagreed strongly (n=16)**.



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 132 businesses to answer this question, **74.24% (n=98) Significant impact**, **21.21% (n=28) some impact**, **3.79% (n=5) No impact**, and **0.76% Don't know (n=1)**.

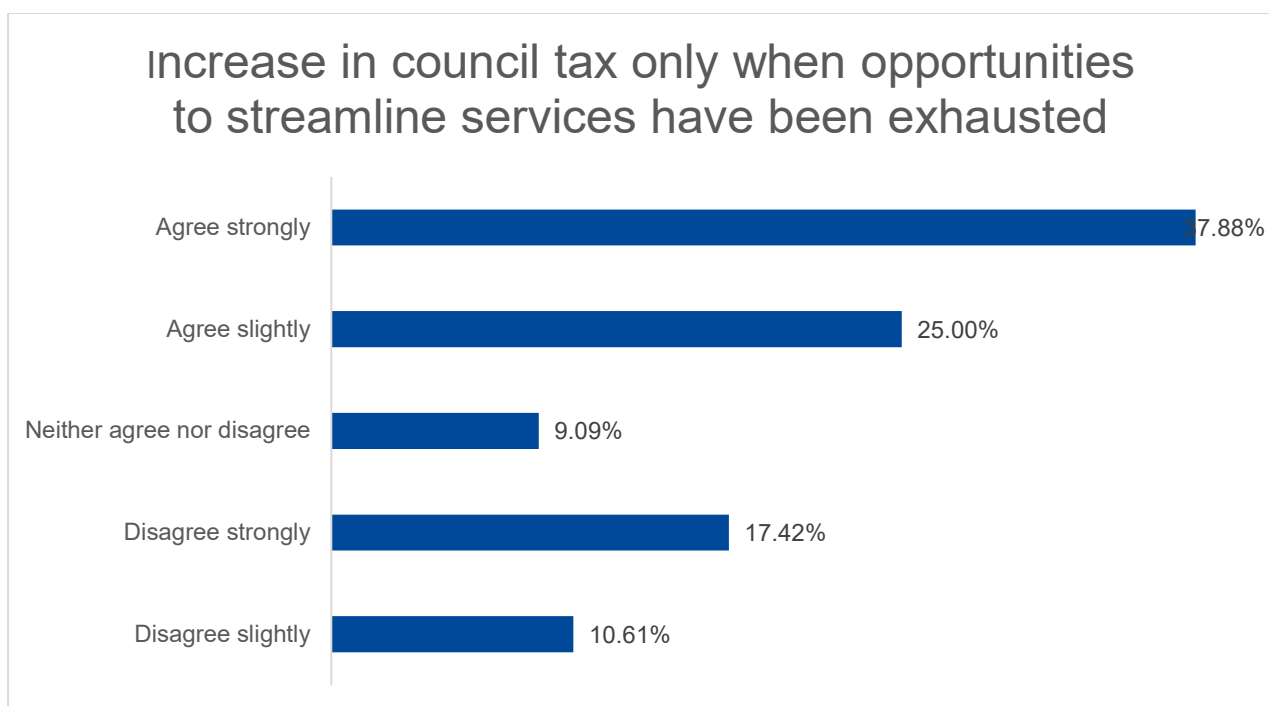


Increase in council tax

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

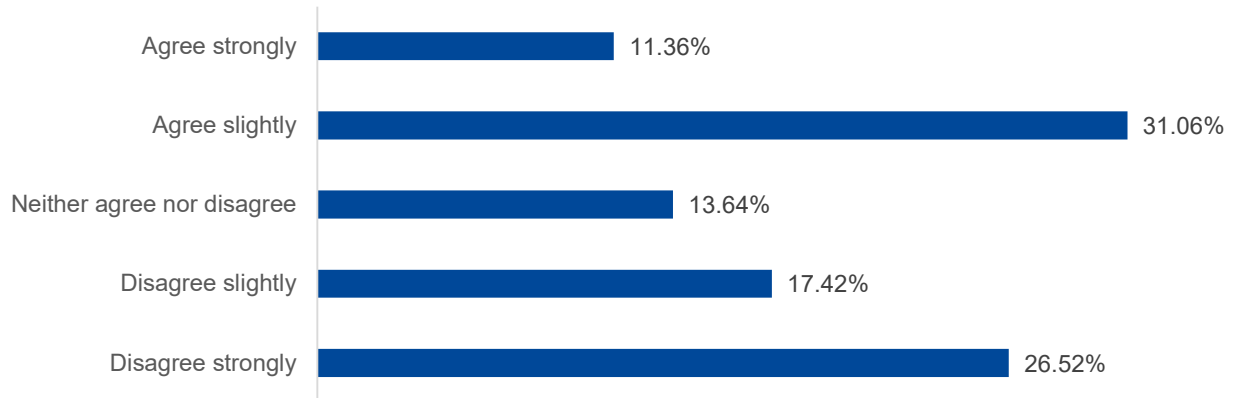
Out of the 132 businesses to answer this question, **37.88% (n=50) Agreed Strongly**, **25.00% (n=33) Agreed Slightly**, **17.42% (n=23) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed**, **10.61% (n=14) Disagreed slightly** and **9.09% Disagreed strongly (n=12)**.



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

Out of the 132 businesses to answer this question, **11.36% (n=15) Agreed Strongly**, **31.06% (n=41) Agreed Slightly**, **13.64% (n=18) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed**, **17.42% (n=23) Disagreed slightly** and **26.52% Disagreed strongly (n=35)**.

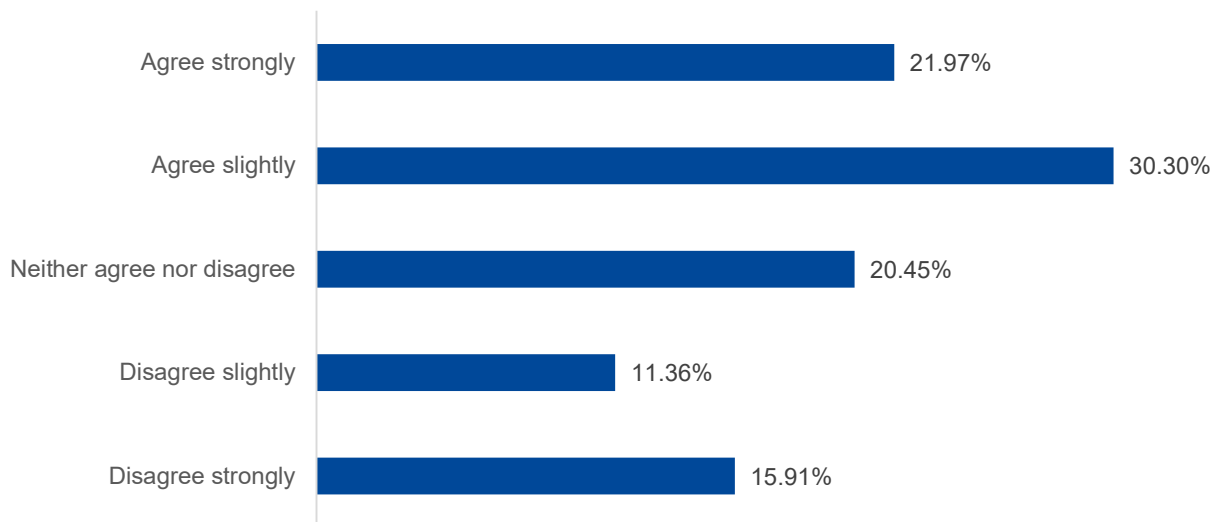
Increase in council tax as an alternative to imposing/increasing fees and charges for services



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

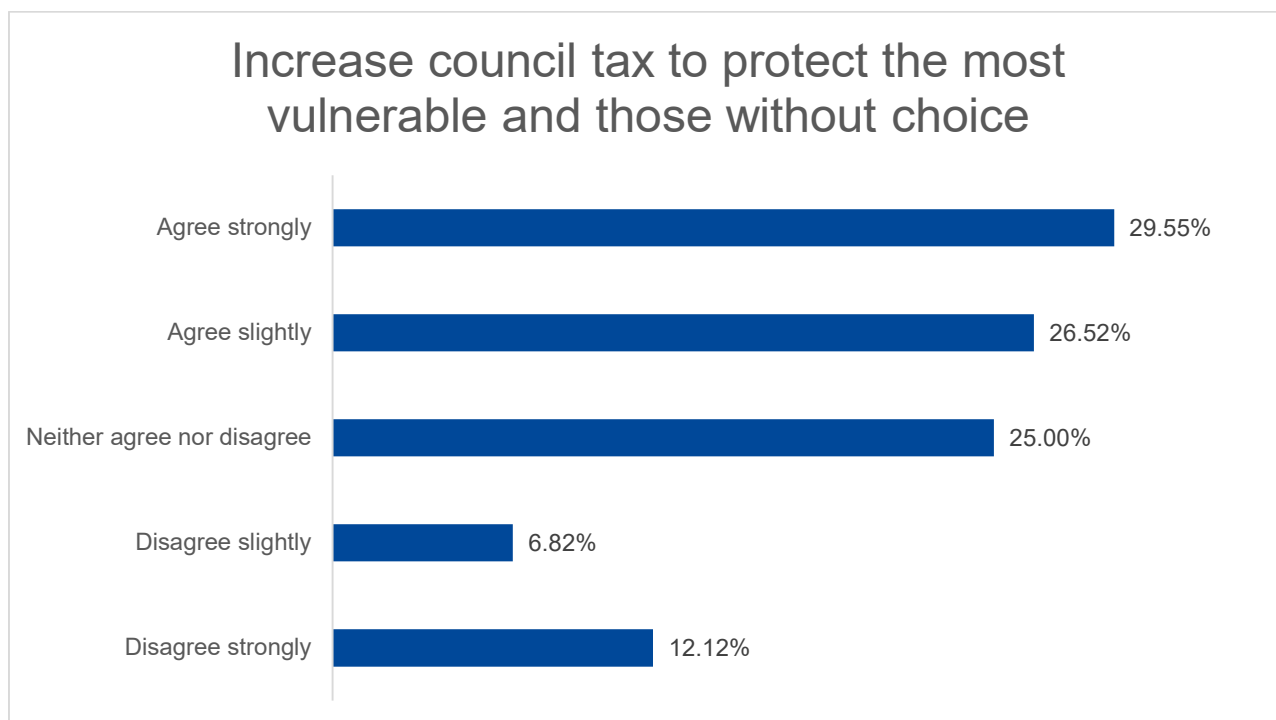
Out of the 132 businesses to answer this question, 21.97% (n=29) Agreed Strongly, 30.30% (n=40) Agreed Slightly, 20.45% (n=27) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 11.36% (n=15) Disagreed slightly and 15.91% Disagreed strongly (n=21).

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

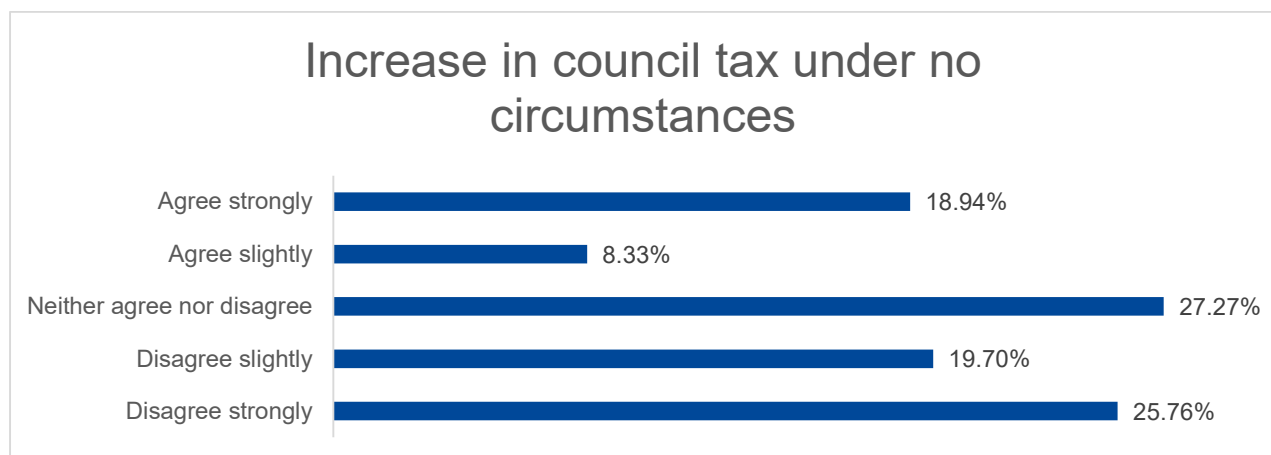


4th statement - ...to protect services for the most vulnerable and those without choice

Out of the 132 businesses to answer this question, **29.55% (n=39) Agreed Strongly**, **26.52% (n=35) Agreed Slightly**, **25.00% (n=33) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed**, **6.82% (n=9) Disagreed slightly** and **12.12% Disagreed strongly (n=16)**.

**5th statement - ...under no circumstances**

Out of the 132 businesses to answer this question, **18.94% (n=25) Agreed Strongly**, **8.33% (n=11) Agreed Slightly**, **27.27% (n=36) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed**, **19.70% (n=26) Disagreed slightly** and **25.76% Disagreed strongly (n=34)**.



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.

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Increase Council Tax for the wealthiest	3	13.64%
Need more information to answer	2	9.09%
Prioritise efficiency/ eliminate wasteful spending	2	9.09%
Streamline ECC staff/ salaries/ benefits	2	9.09%
Do not increase Council Tax	2	9.09%
Cut or charge for under-used/ unnecessary services	1	4.55%
Increase Council Tax to guarantee better quality services	1	4.55%
Make green/ environmentally friendly choices	1	4.55%
ECC to review its working practices first	1	4.55%
Other	7	31.82%

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

Theme	Total	Percentage
Prioritise council efficiency / eliminate wasteful spending / streamline staff / stop working from home	11	11.22%
Improve road maintenance	5	5.10%
Prioritise vulnerable people/ households	4	4.08%
Review outsourcing to private companies	4	4.08%
None/ nothing	4	4.08%
Avoid vanity or fashionable projects	3	3.06%
Concentrate on the basics/ essentials	3	3.06%
Improve roadside and pavement maintenance	3	3.06%
Invest in public transport	3	3.06%
Invest in childcare and education for children	3	3.06%
Prioritise value for money	3	3.06%
Revise highest pay grades for ECC staff	3	3.06%
Take a long-term/ joined-up view	3	3.06%
ECC to review the way it works	2	2.04%
Improve recycling services	2	2.04%
Improve social care services	2	2.04%
Invest in high streets	2	2.04%
Invest in infrastructure	2	2.04%
No increase in Council Tax	2	2.04%
Share service delivery with district and boroughs	2	2.04%
Spend budget fairly across county	2	2.04%
Listen to the concerns/needs of residents/businesses	2	2.04%
Action on environmental issues	1	1.02%
Better healthcare provision	1	1.02%
Budget needs to be communicated better	1	1.02%
Charge for some services	1	1.02%
ECC to continue to streamline spending	1	1.02%
Focus on leisure, culture and tourism	1	1.02%
Improve parking	1	1.02%
Improve road safety	1	1.02%
Maintain libraries	1	1.02%
More investment in the voluntary sector	1	1.02%
More support needed from national government	1	1.02%

Review council owned buildings	1	1.02%
Share service delivery with local groups, voluntary sector, charities, NGOs	1	1.02%
Tackle issues with housing	1	1.02%
Wealthier households should pay more Council Tax and/ or vice versa	1	1.02%
Don't know	1	1.02%
Negative comments about questionnaire/survey	1	1.02%
Other comments	11	11.22%

Appendix

Appendix A – Consultation Questionnaire

Everyone's Essex – Let's talk

Budget Consultation 2023/24

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 for our financial plans for 2023/24 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 still have the ongoing effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, and we now face the significant impacts of inflation at a 40 year high and the cost of living situation, while still waiting for a multi-year funding settlement from government. We do not yet know how much funding ECC will receive from government or what ministers might expect regarding council tax increases. The lasting impact of the pandemic and the economic recession 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 £258m 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; 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 – ImportantIssues

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)
- Brexit 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)

Q2 – QConcerns**Which of the following are you concerned about? (please select up to three responses)**

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

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 <input type="checkbox"/>	Tackling inequalities <input type="checkbox"/>	Developing Essex's infrastructure <input type="checkbox"/>	Attracting new investment for businesses <input type="checkbox"/>
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"/>

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

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 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

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 – 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

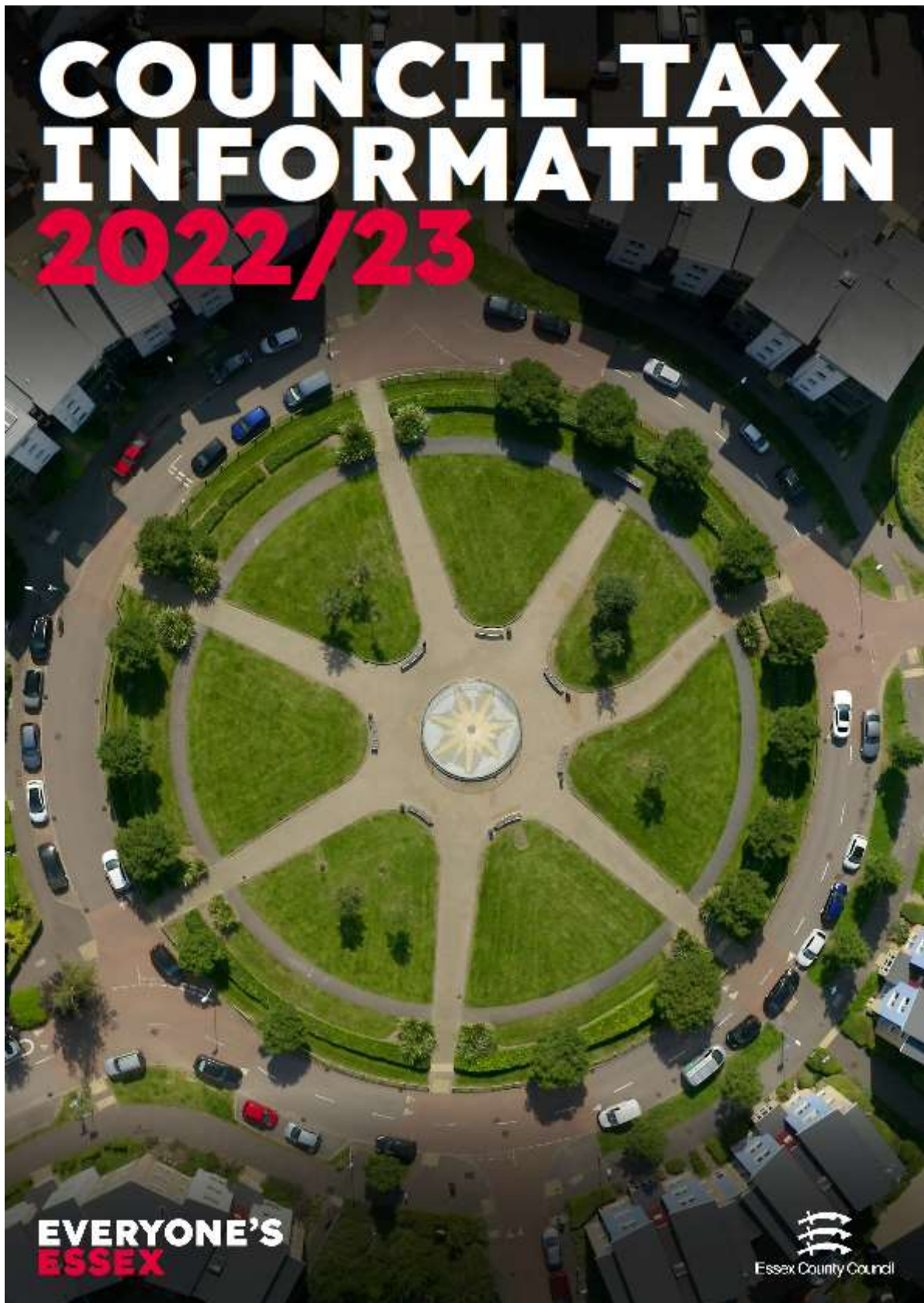
SINGLE/ ASK ALL

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

Appendix B – Essex County Council - Council Tax Information



<https://assets.ctfassets.net/knkzaf64jx5x/1foTZrBS12FCMiDgxkqyOf/e82550b64504c62d0dc8343f2556e21/Council-tax-leaflet-2022-to-2023.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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