

Budget Consultation Report 2025/26

Research & Citizen Insight

December 2024



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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 2025/26 and beyond, we wanted to hear from local people about their views and values.

We wanted to hear residents' views about:

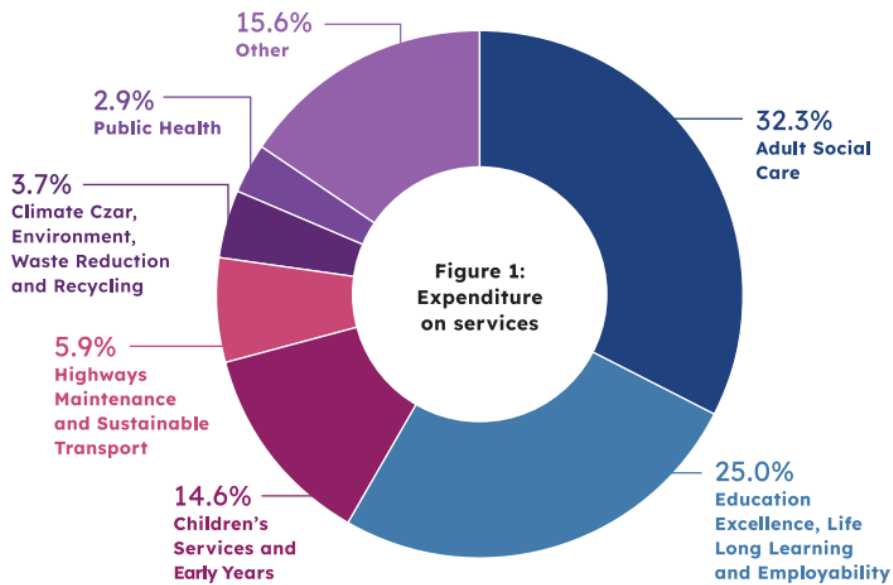
- the big issues we face and the challenges that lie ahead for Essex.
- the things that concern you and your family; and
- where we should focus resources as we work to improve lives across our county.

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 high 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 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 £207m 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 because of changes in the law.



Expenditure 2024/25. Further information on how ECC spends its money, and where it gets its money from can be found [here](#) (see Appendix B).

The consultation

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 (2025/26) 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 also 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 coded thematically.







Key Conclusions

- The primary issue for residents and business owners in Essex today is the strain on the National Health Service and healthcare services.
- More residents are most concerned about the condition of roads and pavements within Essex (64%).
- Concerns about Social Care has risen by 4% over the past year, overtaking crime as the second most important issue facing Essex residents today.
- Nearly all of respondents believe inflation and current cost of living situation will have an impact on ECC finances over the next years (94.73%).
- Under three quarters (73.80%) of respondents would understand if there was an increase in council tax and the biggest proportion of respondents would be willing to increase council tax to protect services for the most vulnerable or those without choice (68.21%), followed by when opportunities to streamline has been exhausted (66.44%).
- Respondents identified four key areas for prioritised spending: developing Essex infrastructure and supporting those who care for the sick or vulnerable people as urgent issues, securing higher standards in education as need to do it better, and attracting new investment for businesses as an area needing increased focus.


Executive summary


As we shape plans our financial plans for delivery of Everyone’s Essex in 2025/26 and beyond, we sought input from residents about their views. This section provides a summary of their feedback.


The top three issues facing Essex today are:

<i>Residents</i>	<i>Businesses</i>
 <p>National Health Service/ Healthcare -52%</p>	 <p>National Health Service/ Healthcare – 42%</p>
 <p>Social care – 32%</p>	 <p>Crime/ community safety – 36%</p>
 <p>Crime/ community safety – 28%</p>	 <p>Economy/economic situation – 30%</p>

The top three concerns reported by both residents and businesses were:

- 

Condition of roads and pavements –
(Residents 64%, Business 67%)
- 

Levels of crime in my town/neighbourhood
– (Residents 26%, Business 40%)
- 

Anti-social behaviour in my community –
(Residents 23%, Business 27%)

When looking at what ECC could do in relation to budget priorities, The following priorities had a high percentage of respondents agreeing:

- Help people to help themselves more so they have less reliance on publicly funded services (78% agree slightly/strongly) (Up from 75% - 2023 response)
- Prioritise spending to protect services for the most vulnerable and those without choice (75% agree slightly/strongly) (75% - 2023 response)
- Streamline services so that we can deliver the same outcomes (70% agree slightly/strongly) (67% - 2023 response)
- Use / partner with other organisational bodies to provide services (68% agree slightly/strongly) (65% - 2023 response).
- Encourage local people and communities to deliver certain services (59% agree slightly/strongly (55% - 2023 response)

- Introduce charges for some services which are currently free/subsidised (38% agree slightly/strongly) (36% - 2023 response)
- Reduce or stop delivering some services to protect others (25% agree slightly/strongly) (26% - 2023 response)











Almost all (95%) said inflation would have some or significant impact on the Council’s finances over the next few years.

Respondents were asked in what circumstances should ECC consider an increase in council tax. The following responses were in level of agreement for the following statements:

- To protect services for the most vulnerable and those without choice (68% agree slightly/strongly) (69% - 2023 response)
- Only when opportunities to streamline services have been exhausted (66% agree slightly/strongly) (61% - 2023 response)
- To enable investment to improve services and infrastructure (61% agree slightly/strongly)
- When the only alternative is to stop delivering some services (60% agree slightly/strongly) (57% - 2023 response)
- As an alternative to imposing/ increasing fees and charges for services) (40% agree slightly/strongly) (42% - 2023 response)

Over 4 out of 10 respondents (45%) disagree strongly or slightly with increasing council tax under no circumstances (44% - 2023 response).

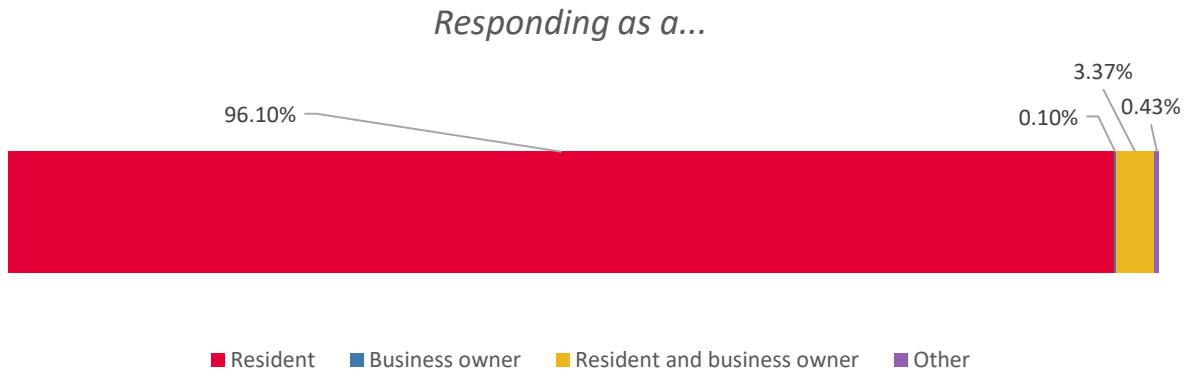
The top five services that respondents felt should be prioritised when budget setting:

<i>Residents</i>	<i>Businesses</i>
 Developing Essex’s infrastructure 46%	 Developing Essex’s infrastructure – 54%
 Supporting those who care for the sick or vulnerable people 39%	 Attracting new investment for businesses – 41%
 Securing high standard of education 31%	 Protecting vulnerable children – 33%
 Attracting new investment for business 27%	 Securing high standards in education– 33%
 Protecting vulnerable children 24%	 Supporting those who care for sick or vulnerable people -26%

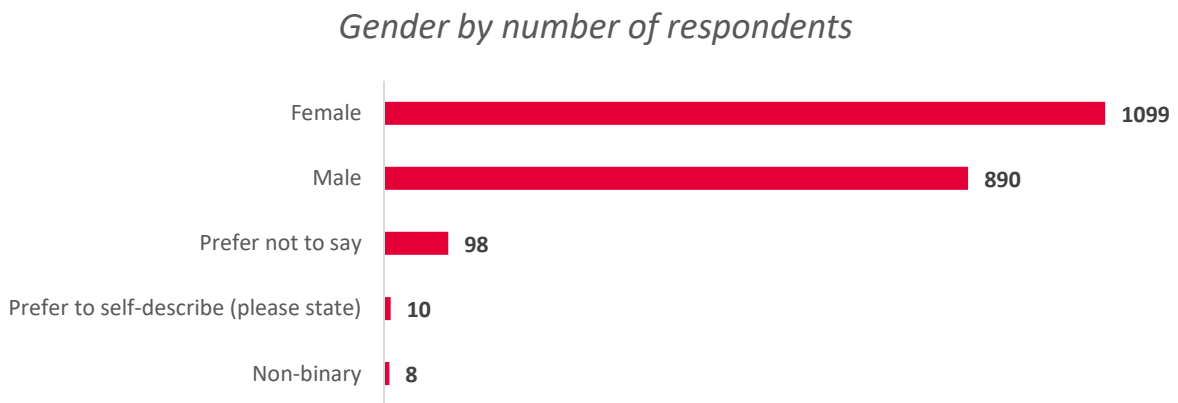
More detailed analysis can be found in the detailed section below.

Who gave their views?

We received a total of 2,105 responses to the online consultation. Of these, 96.10% of respondents answered as residents (n=2,023), 3.37% answered as Resident and business owners (n=71), <1% answered as other (n=9) and <1% as business owners (n=2).

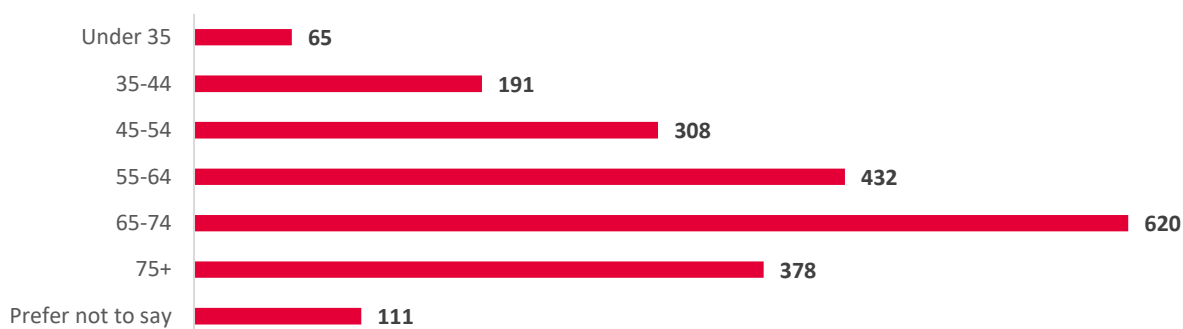


The survey asked several demographic questions to help understand who has responded to the consultation and understand the impact it has on the residents of Essex. Respondents were asked which gender identity they most identify with, 52.21% (n=1,099) were Female, 42.28% (n=890) were Male, 4.66% (n=98) preferred not to say, <1% (n=10) preferred to self-describe and <1% (n=8) were non-binary.



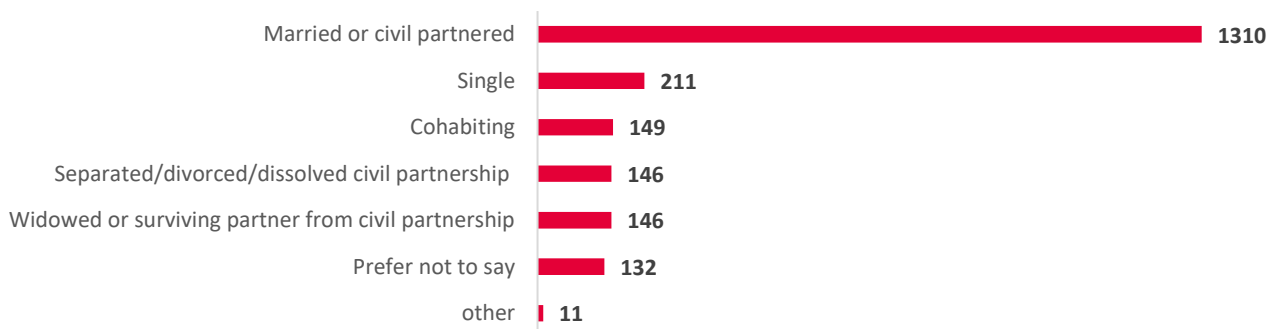
The majority of respondents were aged 65-74 (29.45%, n=620), 20.52% (n=432) were 55-64, 17.96% (n=378) were 75 and over, 14.63% (n=308) were 45-54, 9.07% (n=191) were 35-44, 3.09% (n=65) were under 35, and a further 5.27% (n=111) preferred not to say.

Age by number of respondents



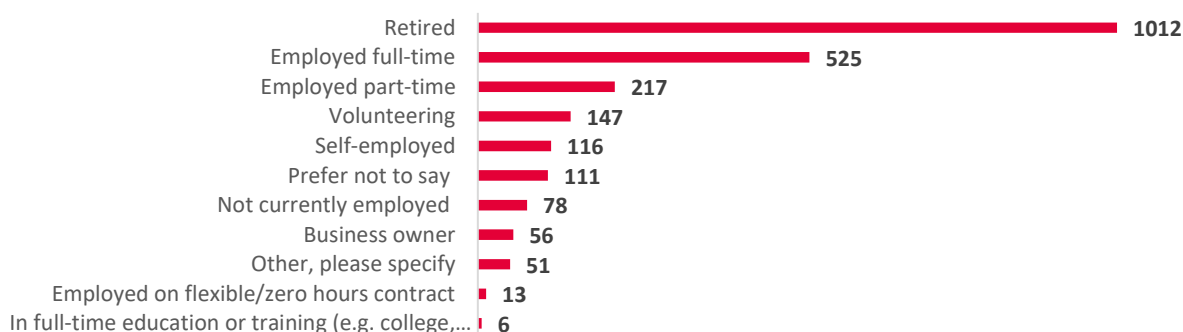
In terms of marital status 62.23% (n=1,310) of respondents were Married, 10.02% (n=211) were Single, 7.08% (n=149) were Cohabiting, 6.94% (n=146) were separated/divorced/formerly in civil partnership now legally dissolved, 6.94% (n=146) were widowed or surviving partner from a civil partnership and 6.27% (n=132) of respondents preferred not to say. A further 0.52% (n=11) said other.

Marital status of respondents



Just under half (48.08%) of respondents were retired, a quarter (24.94%, n=1,012) were employed full-time, 10.31% (n=525) employed part-time, 6.98% (n=147) volunteering, 5.51% (n=116) self-employed, 3.71% (n=78) currently not employed, 2.66% (n=56) business owner, 2.42% (n=51) other, 0.62% (n=13) Employed on flexible/zero hours contract, <0.5% (n=6) in full-time education, whilst 5.27% (111) preferred not to say.

Employment status of respondents



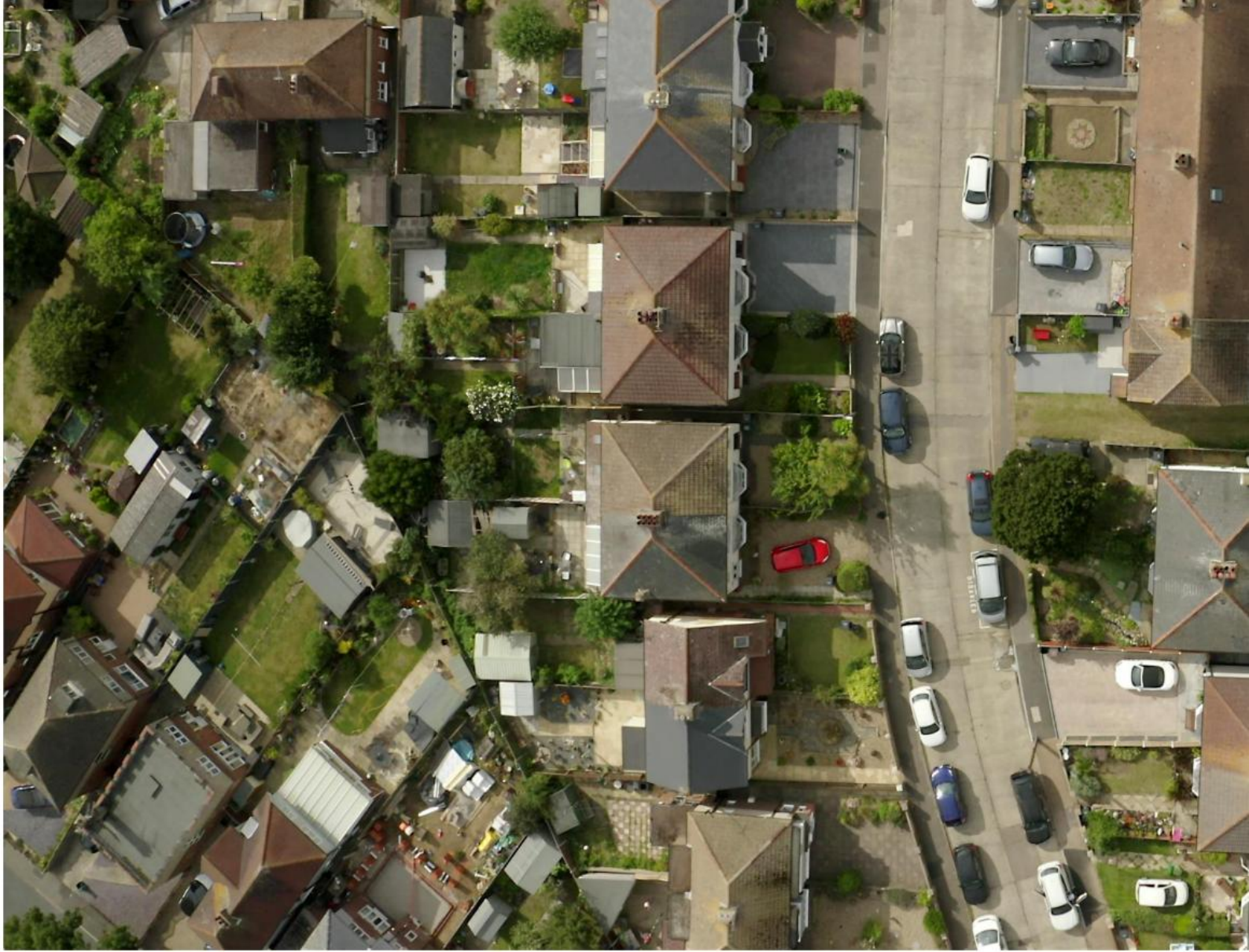
Of the 2,105 respondents, a large majority (87.60%, n=1,844) stated they were White British, 2.04% (n=43) said they were White other, 0.71%(n=15) described themselves as other mixed or multiple ethnic background, and 0.71% (n=15) were Irish, and all other stated ethnicities were below 0.5% responses. Whilst 6.46% (n=136) preferred not to say.

Ethnicity	Count
English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	1,844
Any other white background, please describe	43
Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background, please describe	15
Irish	15
African	10
White and Black Caribbean	8
White and Asian	7
Indian	6
Chinese	5
Any other Asian background, please describe	4
Caribbean	3
White and Black African	3
Any other ethnic group, please describe	2
Any other Black/African/Caribbean background, please describe	1
Arab	1
Bangladeshi	1
Gypsy/Irish Traveller	1
Prefer not to say	136

Respondents were asked whether they consider themselves to have a health condition, disability, or impairment. Respondents could select all impairments that apply to their own personal circumstance. Overall, 62.90% (n=1,324) had no impairment, 14.54% (n=306) said that they have a physical impairment, 9.12% (n=192) had a hearing impairment/deaf, 8.50% (n=179) preferred not to say, 4.75% (n=100) have a mental health need, 4.47% (n=94) stated other, 2.57% (n=54) have a visual impairment/blind, 1.47% (n=31) autism spectrum disorder and 0.90% (n=19) have a Learning Difficulty or Disabilities with <1% stating Deafblind.

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

District	Count
Colchester	355
Chelmsford	345
Tendring	213
Braintree	206
Basildon	154
Rochford	128
Epping Forest	121
Brentwood	119
Maldon	116
Uttlesford	107
Castle Point	99
Harlow	78
Other, please state	22
Prefer not to say	42



Detailed findings – Essex Residents

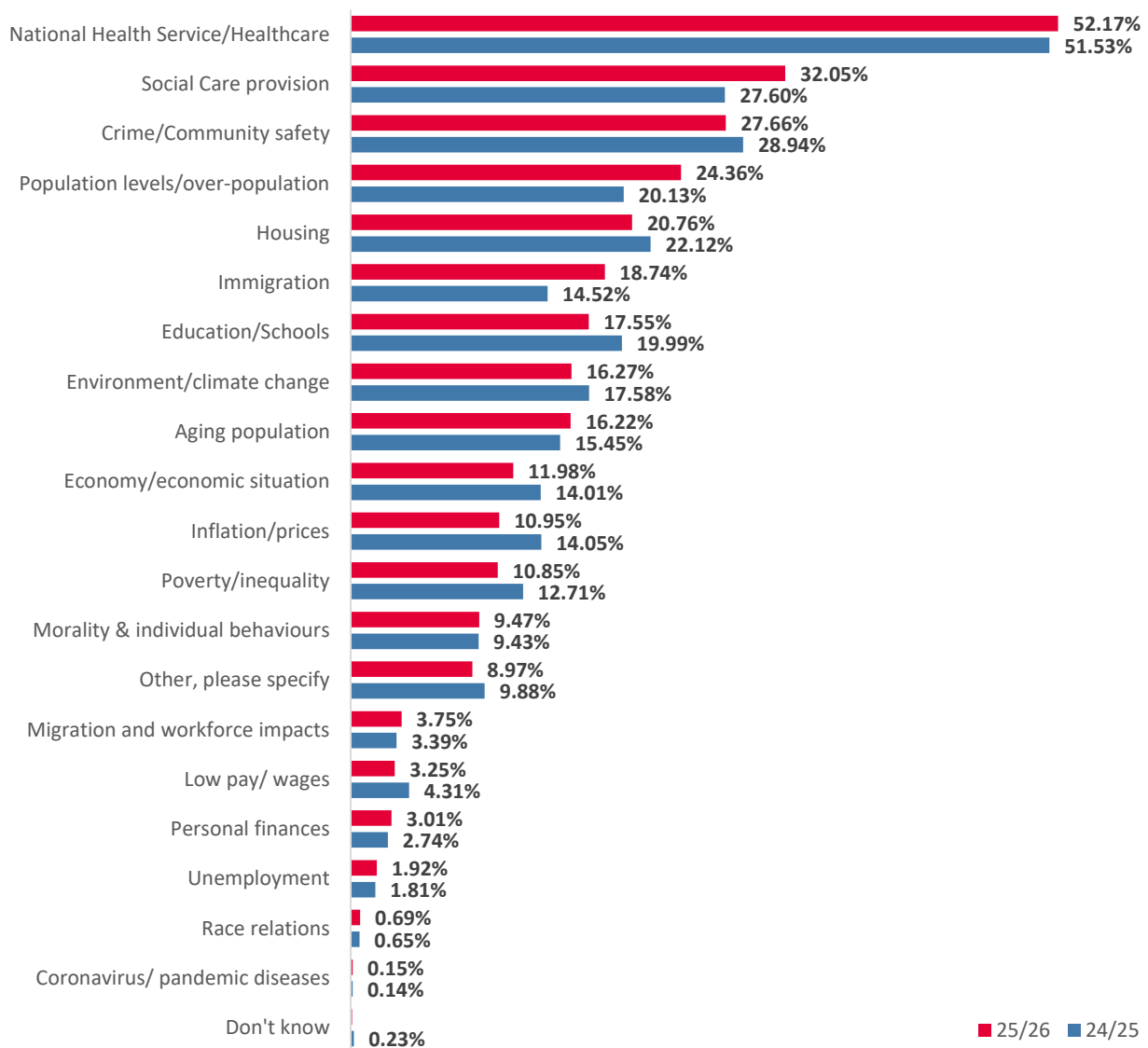
Findings

This results in this section of the report reflect the findings from a total of 2,023 residents of Essex who responded to the consultation. Firstly, it will look at residents' views on challenges faced and how ECC should prioritise areas for budget setting. Secondly, it looks at how ECC should allocate resources.

Views on challenges and priorities for budget setting.

The consultation asked respondents about the most important issues facing Essex today. The question asked residents to select their top 3 issues. In total there were 2,028 resident responses.

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

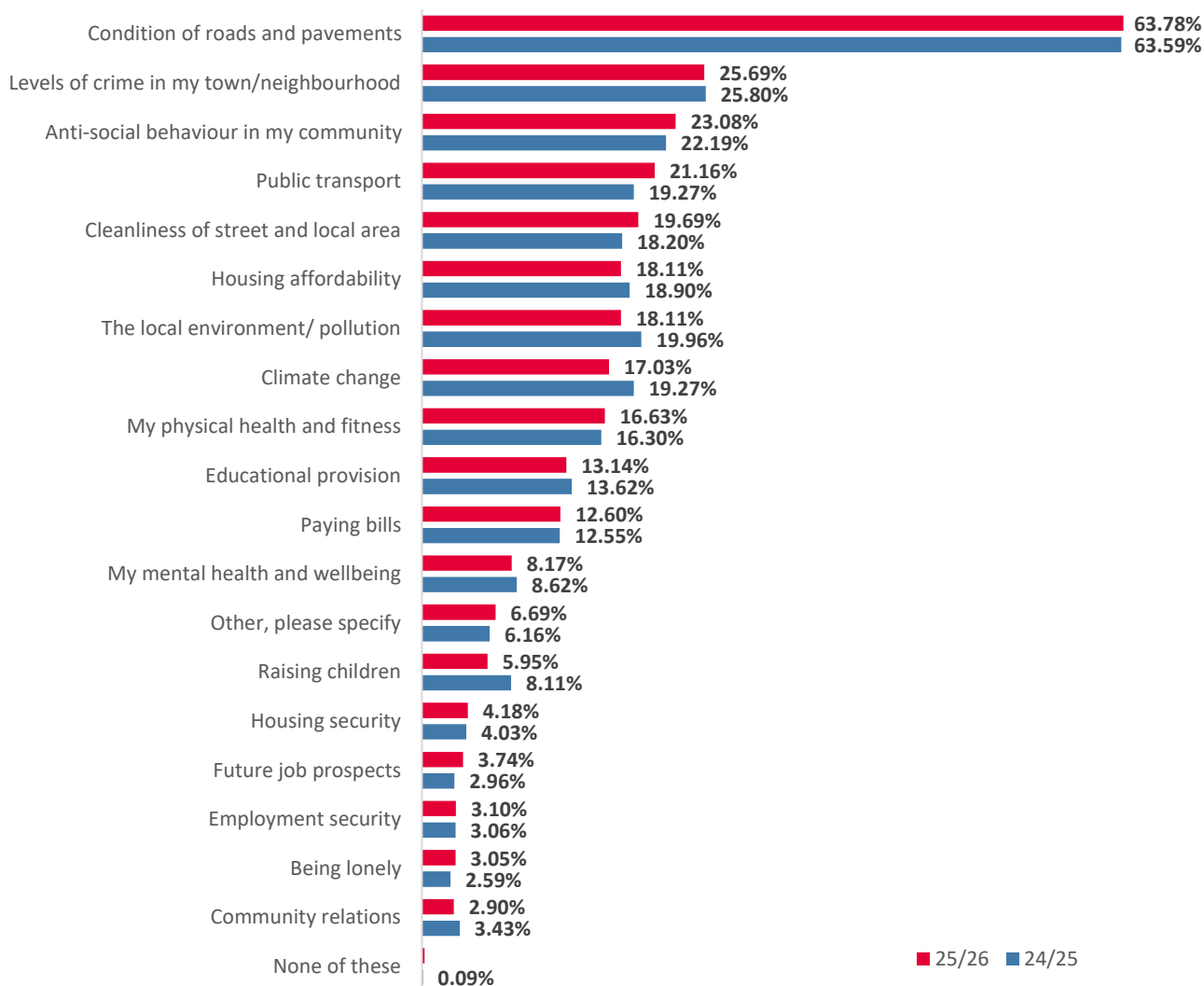


In regard to the free text comments box for 'other, please specify' (n=182) these have been themed, coded and quantified below:

Option	Total	Percentage
Roads/traffic	82	45.05%
Infrastructure	26	14.29%
Public transport	21	11.54%
Pressure from housing developments	14	7.69%
SEND/support for people with disabilities	6	3.30%
National Health Service/Healthcare	4	2.20%
Immigration	3	1.65%
All are priorities	3	1.65%
Poverty/inequality	2	1.10%
Unemployment	2	1.10%
Library provision	2	1.10%
Mental health	2	1.10%
Brexit impacts	1	0.55%
Social Care provision	1	0.55%
Race relations	1	0.55%
Environment/climate change	1	0.55%
Population levels/over-population	1	0.55%
Crime/Community safety	1	0.55%
Morality & individual behaviours	1	0.55%
Housing	1	0.55%
Don't know	1	0.55%
Other	37	20.33%

The consultation asked residents about what they were most concerned about. The question asked residents to select their top 3 situations. Out of the 2,032 residents who responded to this question, the following concerns were selected.

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



In regard to the 'Other, please specify' free text comments (n=136) relating to responses from respondents describing issues that respondents are most concerned about, these have been themed, coded and quantified below.

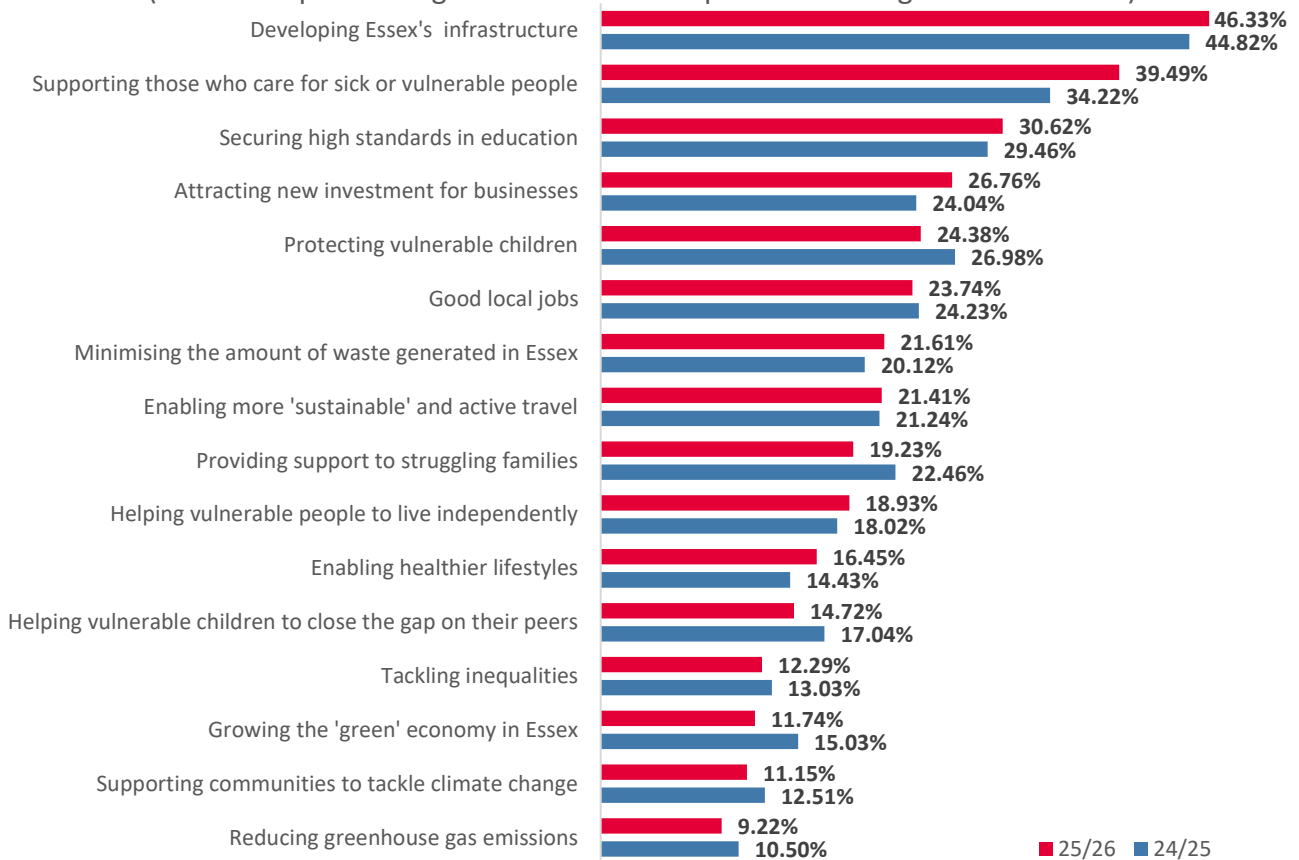
Theme	Total	Percentage
Pressure from housing developments	23	16.91%
Availability of GPs/ healthcare	18	13.24%
Traffic levels/ road safety	12	8.82%
Population levels/over-population/immigration	12	8.82%
Infrastructure	11	8.09%
Social care provision for older people	10	7.35%

Condition of roads and pavements	7	5.15%
SEND/support for people with disabilities	7	5.15%
Levels of crime in my town/neighbourhood	3	2.21%
Community relations	3	2.21%
Support for active travel	3	2.21%
My physical health and fitness	1	0.74%
Climate change	1	0.74%
Housing security	1	0.74%
Housing affordability	1	0.74%
Educational provision	1	0.74%
Raising children	1	0.74%
Anti-social behaviour in my community	1	0.74%
Public Transport	1	0.74%
Other	45	33.09%

The consultation asked respondents to choose up to 4 commitments that they felt the council should prioritise for immediate action. The options were listed under the council’s 16 commitments. The statistical breakdown of the responses have been combined to show the most common responses to a commitment. Out of the 2,018 responses to this question, the following commitments were selected for immediate action.

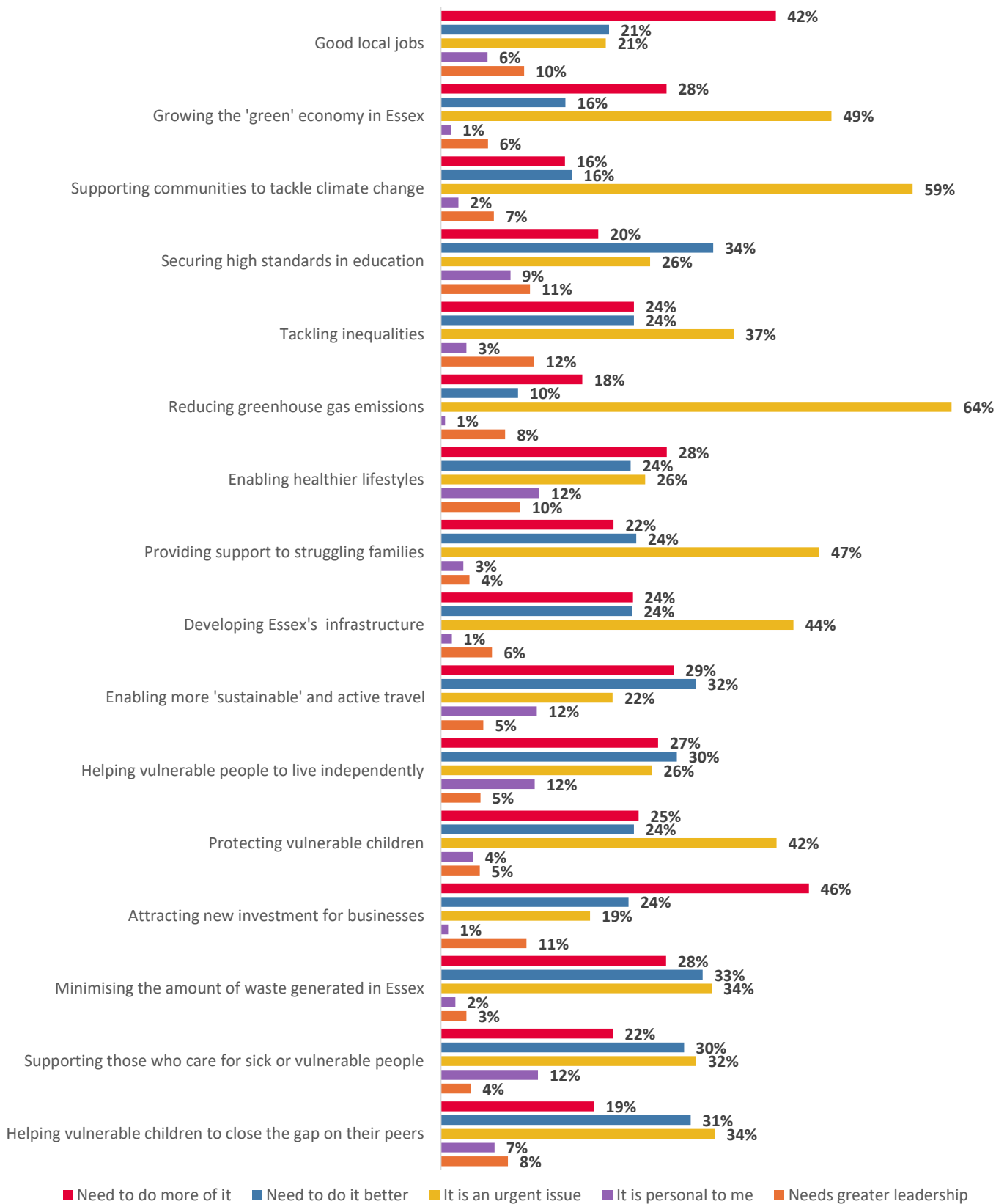
Which of these should the council prioritise for immediate action?

(Max. 3 responses - figures reflect % of respondents who gave each answer)



For each of the above priorities' respondents were then asked what the main reason for it being an immediate priority. The results are shown below:

What is the main reason for it being an immediate priority.



In regard to the free text comments (n= 722) 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
For the future/ future generations	59	8.17%
Support for the most vulnerable	51	7.06%
Lack of infrastructure for expanding community	46	6.37%
Improve infrastructure (general)	45	6.23%
Education	42	5.82%
More effective employment / local employment	41	5.68%
Road improvements needed	40	5.54%
Biggest impact on a number of people	35	4.85%
Climate changes	32	4.43%
Health is key	32	4.43%
Not currently being addressed / under funded	31	4.29%
Help for carers	30	4.16%
Will have knock on effect to improve other areas	30	4.16%
Council waste too much on wrong things / woke agenda / don't spend on the important things	30	4.16%
Supporting businesses / attracting businesses to area	27	3.74%
Environment	25	3.46%
Too many new houses/ overpopulated	25	3.46%
Support for children and young people	23	3.19%
Improving public transport	22	3.05%
Long term impact	21	2.91%
Aging population	20	2.77%
Social care provision	20	2.77%
Address inequalities	19	2.63%
Improve healthcare/ availability of healthcare	19	2.63%
Help people to help themselves/be independent	18	2.49%
Community pride	17	2.35%
SEND	16	2.22%
Poor education standards currently / education underfunded / not enough schools	16	2.22%
Encourage/accommodate alternative travel	15	2.08%
People/families are struggling	15	2.08%
Transport infrastructure	14	1.94%
People matter / should care about people	14	1.94%
Waste management/recycling	13	1.80%
Don't know / no answer	13	1.80%
Better standards of living	12	1.66%
Help economic growth	12	1.66%
Most important improvements	11	1.52%
Mental health important	10	1.39%

Sign of a civilised society / basic requirement	10	1.39%
Education is foundation for a good future	10	1.39%
Green spaces vital	9	1.25%
Invest in local communities	9	1.25%
Improve policing / reduce crime	9	1.25%
None of the options	7	0.97%
Skills investment	7	0.97%
Affordable housing	6	0.83%
Directly affect me	6	0.83%
My opinion	6	0.83%
Recycling collection review	6	0.83%
Safety in the community	6	0.83%
Common sense / obvious / the right thing to do	6	0.83%
Economic stability	4	0.55%
Physical health	4	0.55%
All areas should be prioritised	3	0.42%
Flooding concerns	3	0.42%
Protection for everyone	2	0.28%
Reduced crime from Alcohol/drug schemes	2	0.28%
Access to libraries	1	0.14%
Achievable improvements	1	0.14%
More leisure and fitness choices needed	1	0.14%
More support needed from national government	1	0.14%
Secondary schools historically underfunded	1	0.14%
Would be willing to pay more council tax to keep all services	1	0.14%
Other comment	94	13.02%

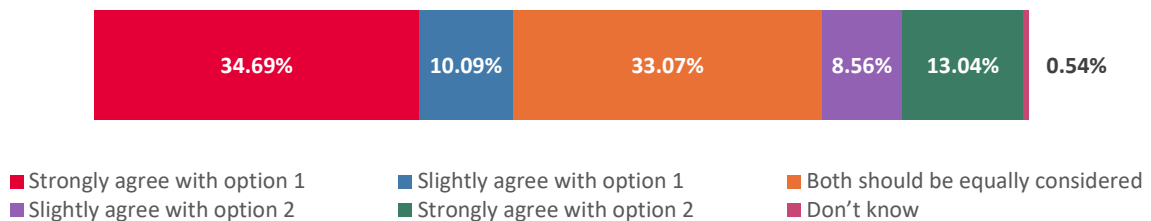
Views on how Essex County Council should allocate resources.

The consultation asked respondents how strongly they agree, disagree or whether both should be equally considered for following priorities:

1. *Services that benefit the majority of residents and taxpayer's vs services that focus on those with the greatest needs.*

Most residents (44.78%, n=910) agree slightly/strongly that ECC should prioritise services that benefit the majority of residents and taxpayers, whilst 21.60% (n=439) agreed slightly/strongly that services should focus on those with the greatest need. Out of the 2,032 responses to this question, many strongly agreed that ECC should prioritise services that benefit the majority of residents and taxpayer's (34.69%, n=705), closely followed by both should be equally considered (33.07%, n=672).

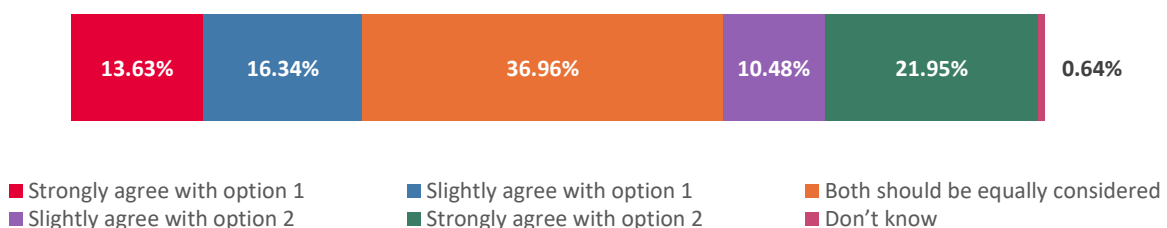
ECC should prioritise services that benefit the majority of residents and taxpayer's vs ...ECC should prioritise services that focus on those with the greatest needs.



2. *Target services towards struggling neighbourhoods, towns or cities vs services that are available in all communities across Essex.*

Out of the 2,032 respondents to answer this question, the majority believed both struggling neighbourhoods, towns and cities and all communities should be equally considered (36.96%, n=751). Overall, 32.43% (n=659) agree slightly/strongly to provide services that are available in all communities, whilst 29.97% (n=609) said to focus on struggling neighbourhoods, towns or cities.

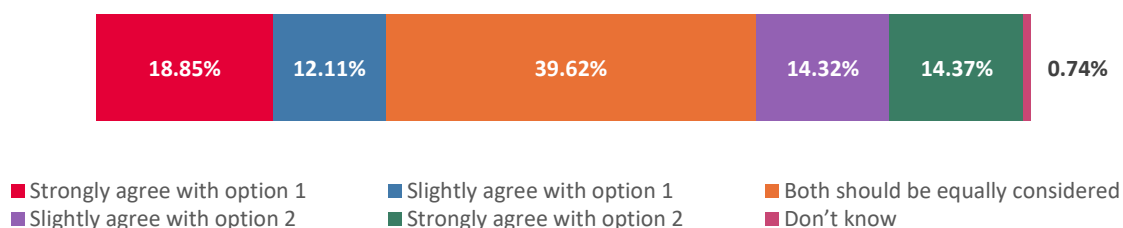
ECC should target services towards struggling neighbourhoods, towns or cities vs ...ECC should provide services that are available in all communities in Essex.



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

Out of 2,032 responses to this question, the majority of respondents felt that both the needs of today and long-term opportunities should be equally considered (39.62%, n=805). Overall, 30.95% (n=629) agree slightly/strongly to prioritise spending to meet the needs of people today, compared to 28.69% (n=583) who agree slightly/strongly to prioritise spending on projects that will increase opportunities over the long term.

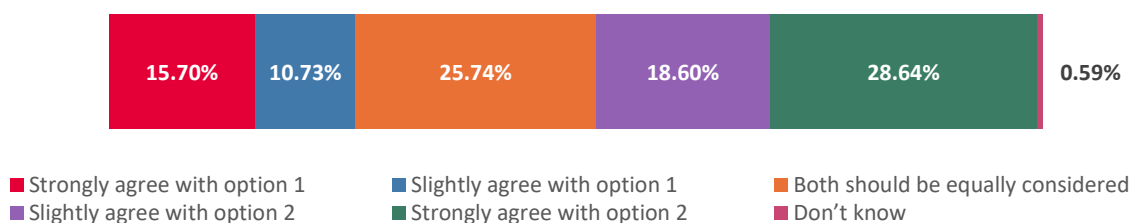
ECC should prioritise spending on meeting the needs of the people today vs ...ECC should prioritise spending on projects that will increase opportunities over the long term.



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

Out of the 2,032 responses to this question, most strongly agreed that decisions should be taken as close to local communities as possible (28.64%, n=582), closely followed by both should be equally considered (25.74%, n=523). Overall, almost half (47.24%, n=960) agree slightly/strongly to decisions being taken as close to local communities as possible compared to 26.4% (n=537) who slightly/strongly believe decisions on how to spend money in Essex should consider the whole county.

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.

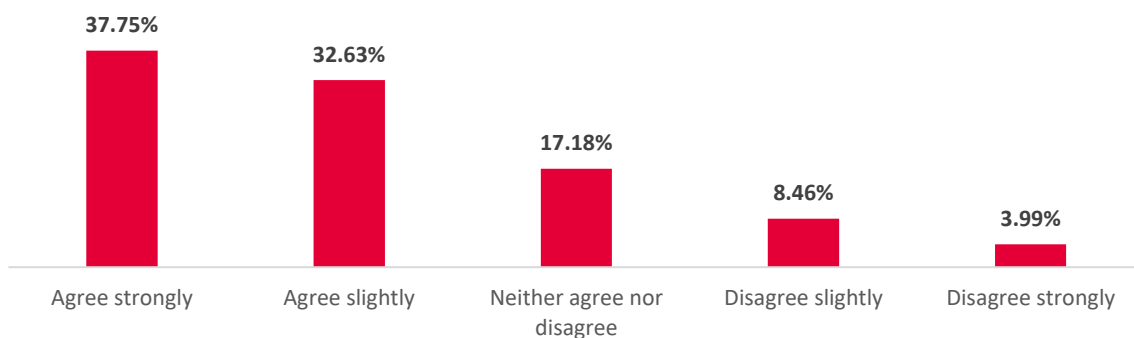


The consultation asked respondents how strongly do you agree or disagree that Essex County Council should do each of the following when faced with financial pressures?

1. Streamline services so that we can deliver the same outcomes.

Out of the 2,032 responses to this question, most strongly agree to streamline services so we can deliver the same outcome (37.75%, n=767). Overall, 70.37% (n=1,430) agreed slightly/strongly to streamline services, compared to 12.45% (n=253) who disagreed slightly/strongly.

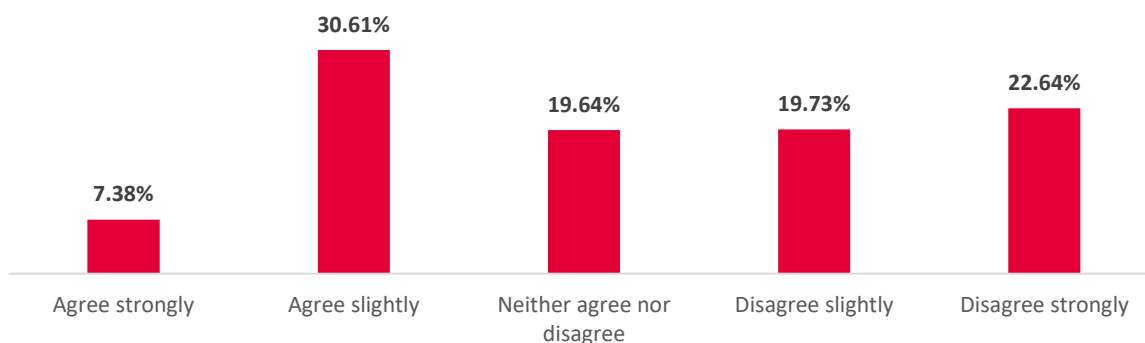
Streamline services so that we can deliver the same outcome



2. Introduce charges for some services which are currently free/subsidised.

Most respondents agree to introducing charges for services which are currently free or subsidised (30.61%, n=622). However overall, 42.37% (n=861) disagree slightly/strongly, whereas 37.99% (n=772) agreed slightly/strongly.

Introduce charges for some services which are currently free/subsidised

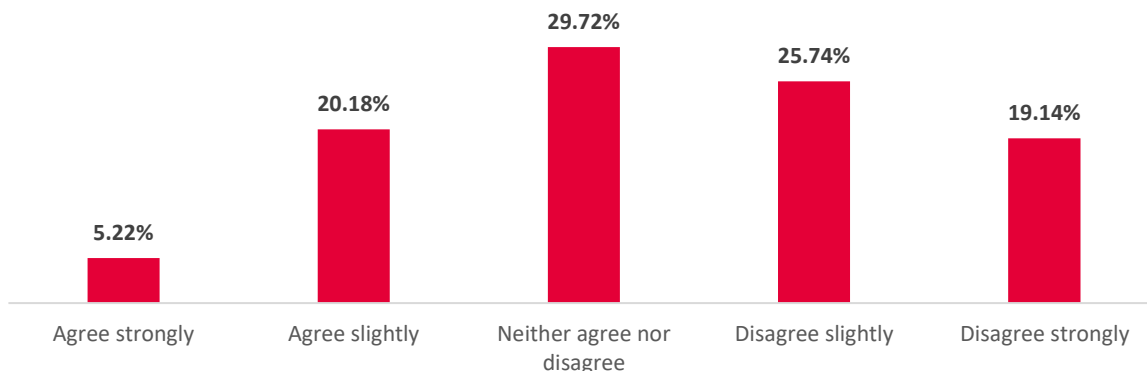


3. Reduce or stop delivering some services to protect others.

Of the 2,032 respondents to the question, most neither agree nor disagree that ECC should reduce or stop delivering some services to protect others (29.72%, n=604).

Despite this, overall, 44.88% (n=912) disagree slightly/strongly, compared to 25.39% (n=516) who agreed slightly/strongly.

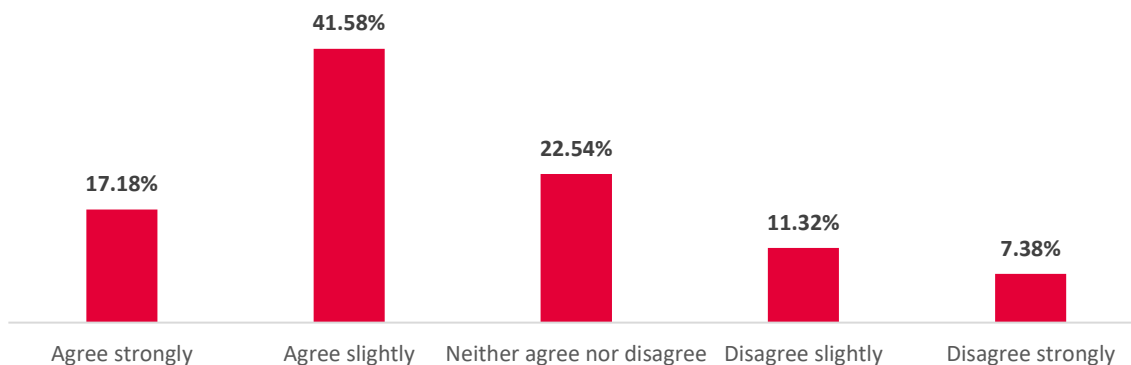
Reduce or stop delivering some services to protect others



4. Encourage local people and communities to deliver certain services.

Of the 2,032 respondents to the question, most slightly agreed that ECC should encourage local people and communities to deliver certain services (41.58%, n=845). Overall, 58.76% (n=1,194) agreed slightly/strongly compared to 18.70% (n=380) who disagreed slightly/strongly.

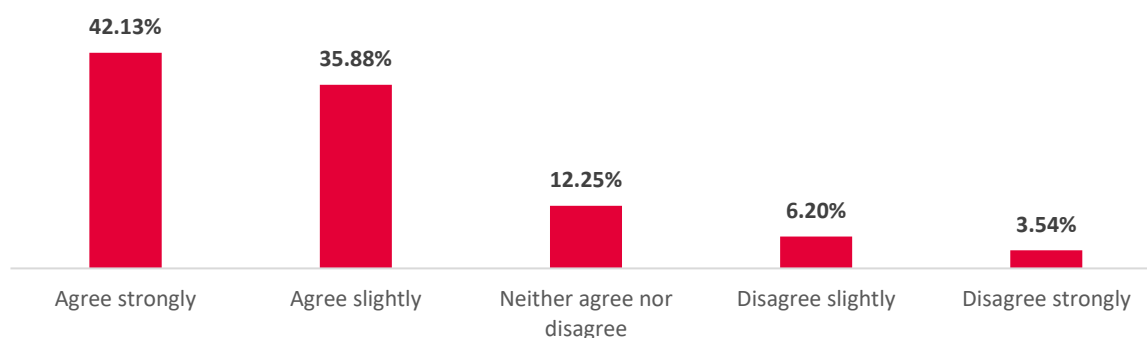
Encourage local people and communities to deliver certain services



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

Of the 2,032 respondents to the question, most strongly agreed that ECC should help people to help themselves more, so they have less reliance on publicly funded services (42.13%, n=856). Overall, 78.00% (n=1,585) agreed slightly/strongly compared to just 9.74% (n=198) who disagreed slightly/strongly.

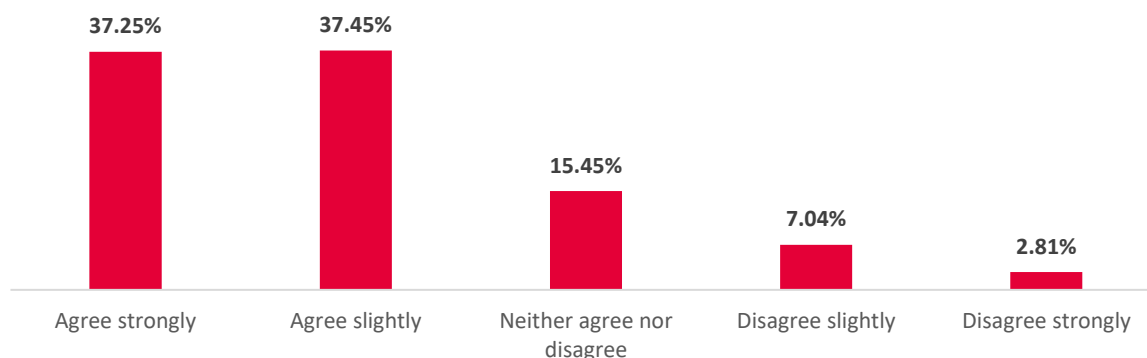
Help people to help themselves more so they have less reliance on publicly funded services



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

Three quarters of respondents (74.70%, n=1,518) agreed slightly/strongly that ECC should prioritise spending to protect services for the most vulnerable and those without choice, compared to 9.84% (n=200) who disagreed slightly/strongly.

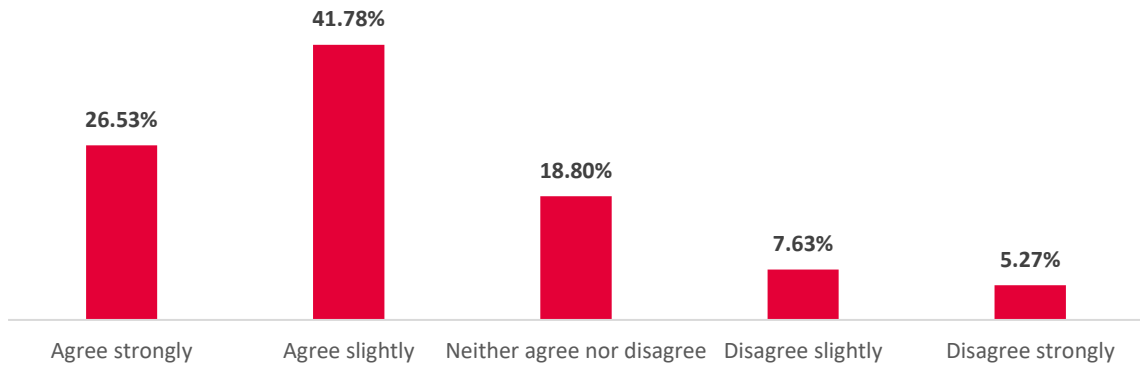
Prioritise spending to protect services for the most vulnerable and those without choice



7. Use / partner with other organisational bodies to provide services.

Of the 2,032 respondents, 68.31% (n=1,388) agreed slightly/strongly that ECC should use/partner with other organisational bodies to provide services, compared to 12.89% (n=262) who disagreed slightly/strongly. A further 18.80% (n=382) neither agreed nor disagreed.

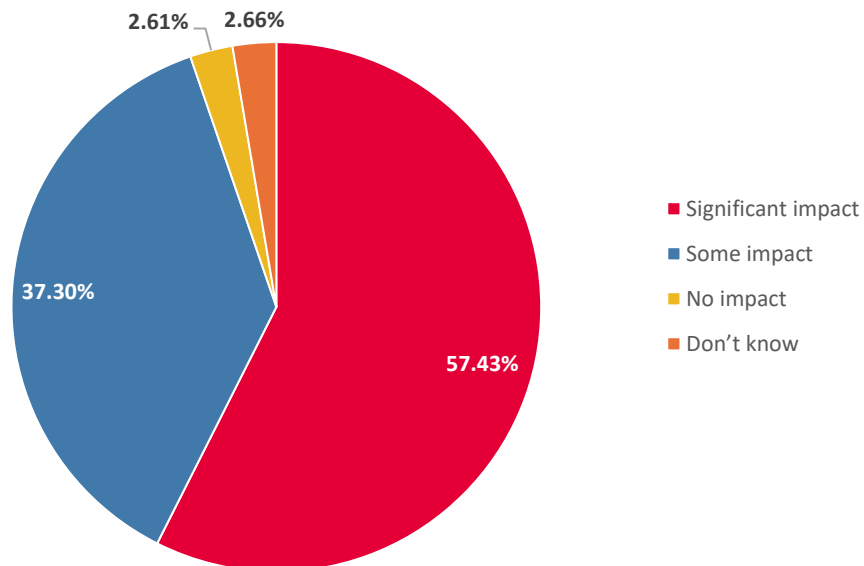
Use / partner with other organisational bodies to provide services



Impact of inflation

The consultation asked residents to what extent they think inflation, interest rates and the current cost of living situation will have an impact on Essex County Council's finances. Almost all (94.73%, n=1,925) felt there would be some or significant impact. Out of 2,032 respondents to answer this question, 57.43% (n=1,167) felt it would have significant impact, 37.30% (n=758) some impact, 2.61% (n=53) No impact, and 2.66% (n=54) don't know.

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



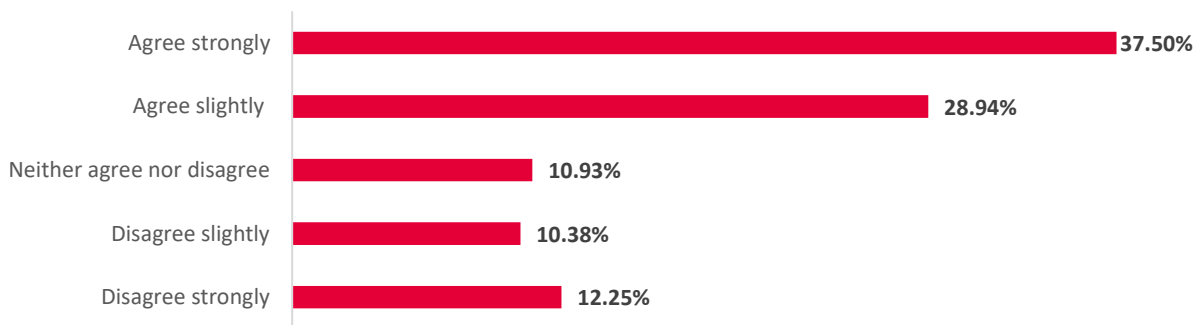
Increase in council tax.

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

1. *...only when opportunities to streamline services have been exhausted.*

Of the 2,032 respondents, 66.44% (n=1,350) agreed slightly/strongly that ECC should increase council tax only when opportunities to streamline services has been exhausted, compared to 22.64% (n=460) who disagreed slightly/strongly.

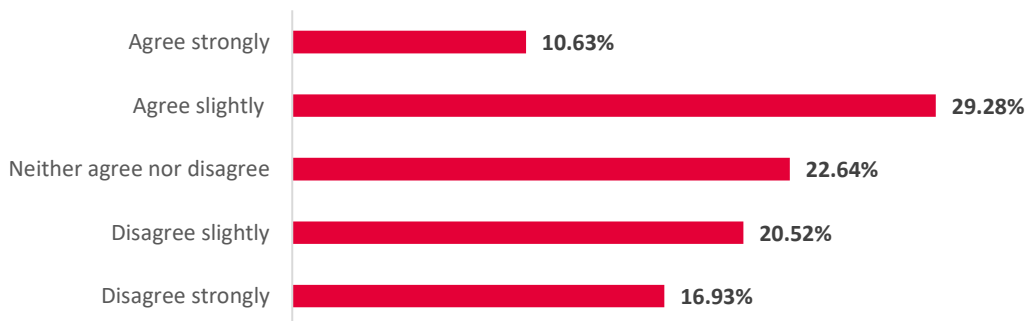
Increase in council tax only when opportunities to streamline has been exhausted



2. *...as an alternative to imposing/ increasing fees and charges for services.*

Of the 2,032 respondents, 39.91% (n=811) agreed slightly/strongly that ECC should increase council tax as an alternative to imposing/ increasing fees and charges for services, compared to 37.45% (n=761) who disagreed slightly/strongly.

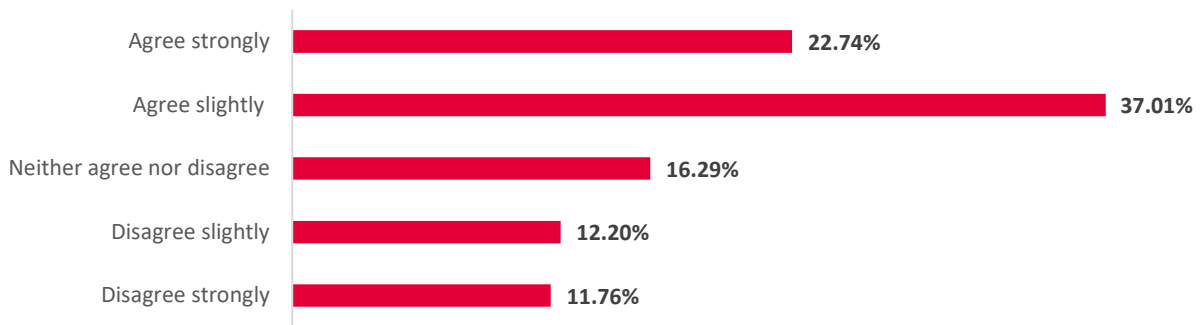
Increase in council tax as an alternative to imposing/increasing fees and charges for services



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

Of the 2,032 respondents, 59.74% (n=1,214) agreed slightly/strongly that ECC should increase council tax when the only alternative is to stop delivering some services, compared to 23.97% (n=487) who disagreed slightly/strongly.

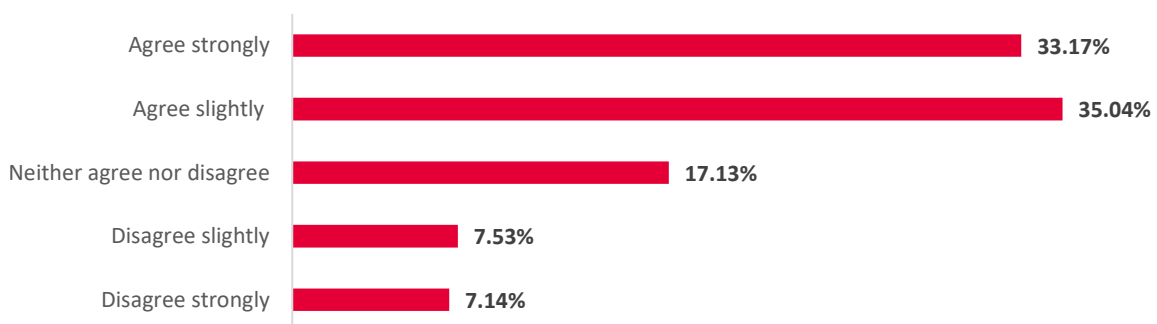
Increase council tax when the only alternative is to stop delivering some services



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

Of the 2,032 respondents, 68.21% (n=1,386) agreed slightly/strongly that ECC should increase council tax to protect services for the most vulnerable and those without choice, compared to 14.67% (n=298) who disagreed slightly/strongly.

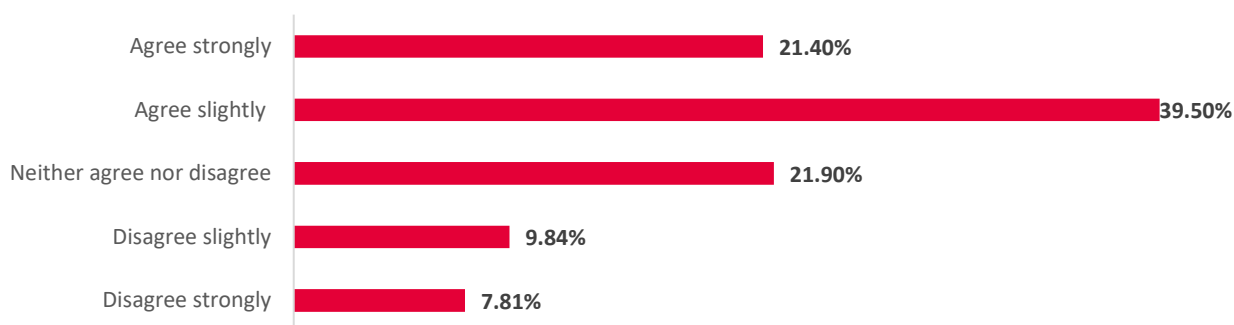
Increase council tax to protect the most vulnerable and those without choice



5. ... to enable investment to improve services and infrastructure.

Of the 2,032 respondents, 60.90% (n=1,232) agreed slightly/strongly that ECC should increase council tax to enable investment to improve services and infrastructure, compared to 17.65% (n=357) who disagreed slightly/strongly.

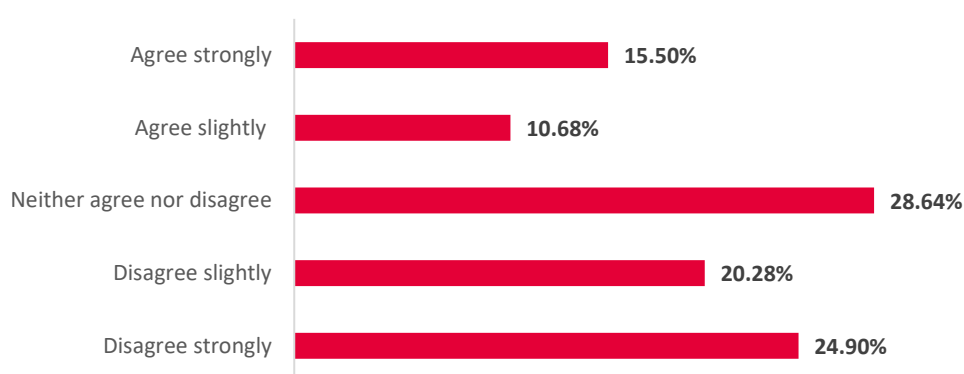
Increase council tax to enable investment to improve services and infrastructure



6. ... under no circumstances.

Of the 2,032 respondents, 45.18% (n=918) disagreed slightly/strongly to council tax increasing under no circumstances, whilst 26.18% (n=532) agreed slightly/strongly, while a large proportion neither agreed nor disagreed (28.64%, n=582).

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 (n=89) have been themed, coded and quantified below.

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Prioritise efficiency/ eliminate wasteful spending	20	22.47%
Streamline ECC staff/ salaries/ benefits	17	19.10%
ECC to review its working practices first	5	5.62%
Improve transparency around budget/ spend	5	5.62%
Increase Council Tax for the wealthiest	4	4.49%
Increase Council Tax to guarantee better quality services	4	4.49%
Concentrate on the basics/ essentials/ higher impact services	3	3.37%
More support needed from national government	3	3.37%
Need more information to answer	3	3.37%
ECC to deliver all services/ avoid partnerships	2	2.25%

Prioritise vulnerable people/ households	2	2.25%
Review outsourced contracts	2	2.25%
Spend budget fairly across the county	2	2.25%
Don't know / no answer	2	2.25%
Cut or charge for under-used/ unnecessary services	1	1.12%
Improve individuals' self-reliance	1	1.12%
Local taxation needs to be reformed	1	1.12%
Invest in public transport	1	1.12%
Other	24	26.97%

Any other comments

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

In total, 558 respondents left free text comments describing anything else ECC should consider. These have been themed, coded and quantified below:



Theme	Total	Percentage
Prioritise council efficiency / eliminate wasteful spending / streamline staff / stop working from home	106	19.00%
Improve road maintenance	43	7.71%
Avoid vanity or fashionable projects	31	5.56%
Streamline ECC management team	27	4.84%
Revise highest pay grades for ECC staff	25	4.48%
Take a long-term/ joined-up view	23	4.12%
Invest in infrastructure	19	3.41%
Spend budget fairly across county	19	3.41%
No increase in Council Tax	17	3.05%
Prioritise value for money	17	3.05%
Public service review/ consultation needed	17	3.05%
None/ nothing	15	2.69%
Budget needs to be communicated better	14	2.51%
Invest in public transport	14	2.51%
Renegotiate road maintenance contract or bring in house	14	2.51%
Review outsourcing to private companies	14	2.51%
Improve social care services	13	2.33%
Means test/ make sure resources are going to those truly in need	13	2.33%
Prioritise vulnerable people/ households	13	2.33%
Improve roadside and pavement maintenance	12	2.15%
Share service delivery with district and boroughs	12	2.15%
Stop duplication of services	12	2.15%
Pair improved infrastructure with new housing developments	11	1.97%
Share service delivery with local groups, voluntary sector, charities, NGOs	10	1.79%
Improve recycling services	9	1.61%
Invest in childcare and education for children	9	1.61%

Limit over-development/ population growth	9	1.61%
Update or replace Council Tax	9	1.61%
Negative comments about questionnaire/survey	9	1.61%
Consider Council Tax increase	8	1.43%
Listen to the concerns/needs of residents/businesses	8	1.43%
Concentrate on the basics/ essentials	7	1.25%
Improve individuals' self-reliance	7	1.25%
Not answered	7	1.25%
Better healthcare provision	6	1.08%
Budget review needed	6	1.08%
Funding for SEND	6	1.08%
Maintain libraries	6	1.08%
Wealthier households should pay more Council Tax and/ or vice versa	6	1.08%
Action on environmental issues	5	0.90%
Charge for some services	5	0.90%
Cut under-used services	5	0.90%
Don't cut services	5	0.90%
Improve Youth Services	5	0.90%
Tackle issues with housing	5	0.90%
Attract industries/businesses to the area	4	0.72%
ECC to review the way it works	4	0.72%
Invest in high streets	4	0.72%
Support employment, work skills and adult education	4	0.72%
Don't know	4	0.72%
Become more entrepreneurial/ business-minded	3	0.54%
Green spaces key	3	0.54%
Improve health and wellbeing	3	0.54%
Increase Police presence	3	0.54%
Services for young people	3	0.54%
Speeding motorists	3	0.54%
Focus on reducing crime	2	0.36%
Help families in need	2	0.36%
Improve road safety	2	0.36%
Invest now to make savings in the future	2	0.36%
Local government reform needed	2	0.36%
More support needed from national government	2	0.36%
Review council owned buildings	2	0.36%
ECC to continue to streamline spending	1	0.18%
Invest in sustainable travel	1	0.18%
Review council house allocation	1	0.18%
Tackle poverty/ inequality	1	0.18%
Other comments	107	19.18%



Detailed findings – Businesses in Essex

Findings

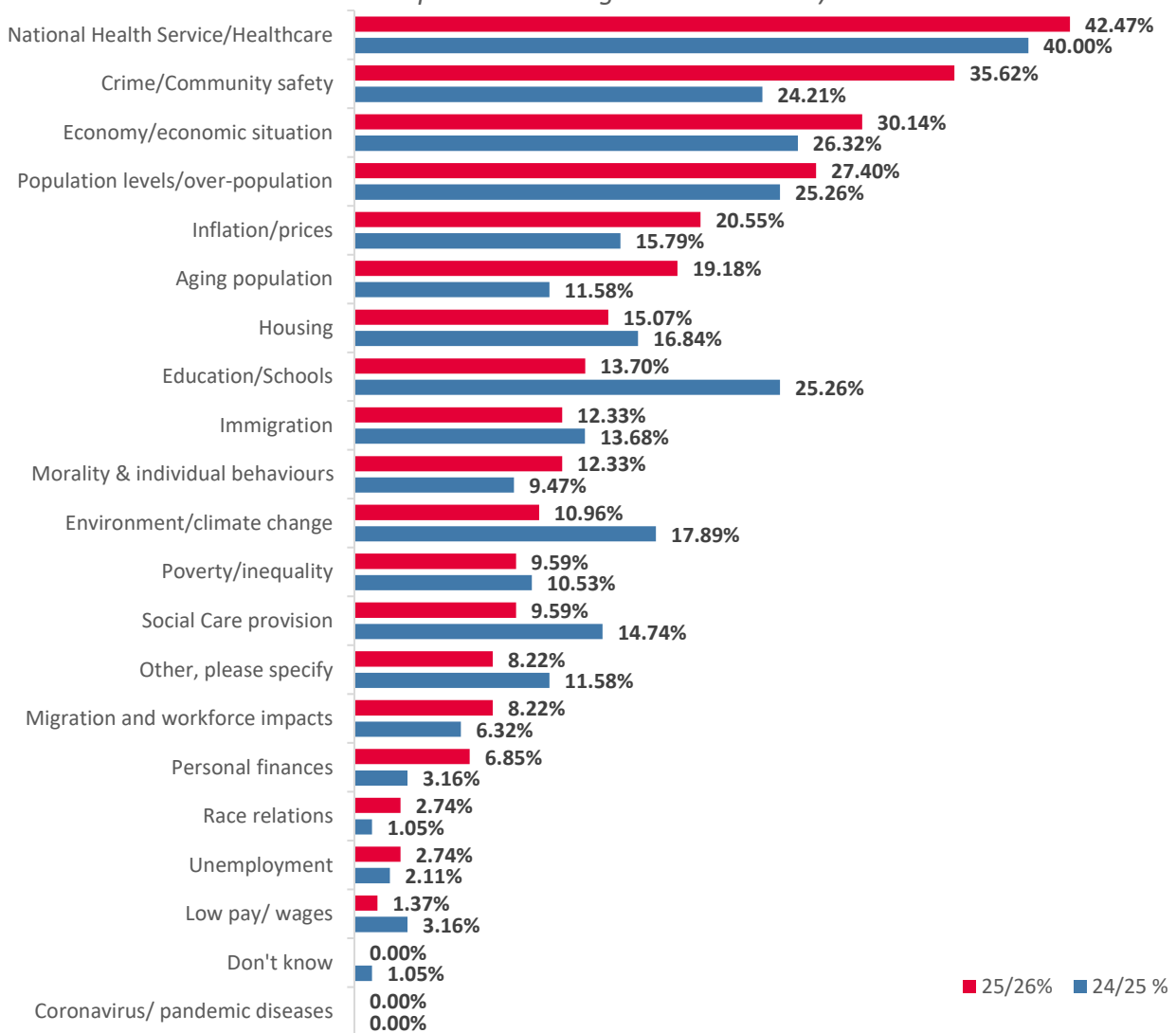
Businesses within Essex were invited to take part in the consultation. To specifically target businesses, the consultation was advertised via the Business for Essex newsletter and Chamber of Commerce. In total, 73 business owners undertook the consultation with 71 stating they were a resident and business owners and 2 declaring that they were a business owner in Essex.

This section of the report will reflect the findings from a total of 73 businesses within Essex.

Views on challenges and priorities for budget setting.

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 73 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)

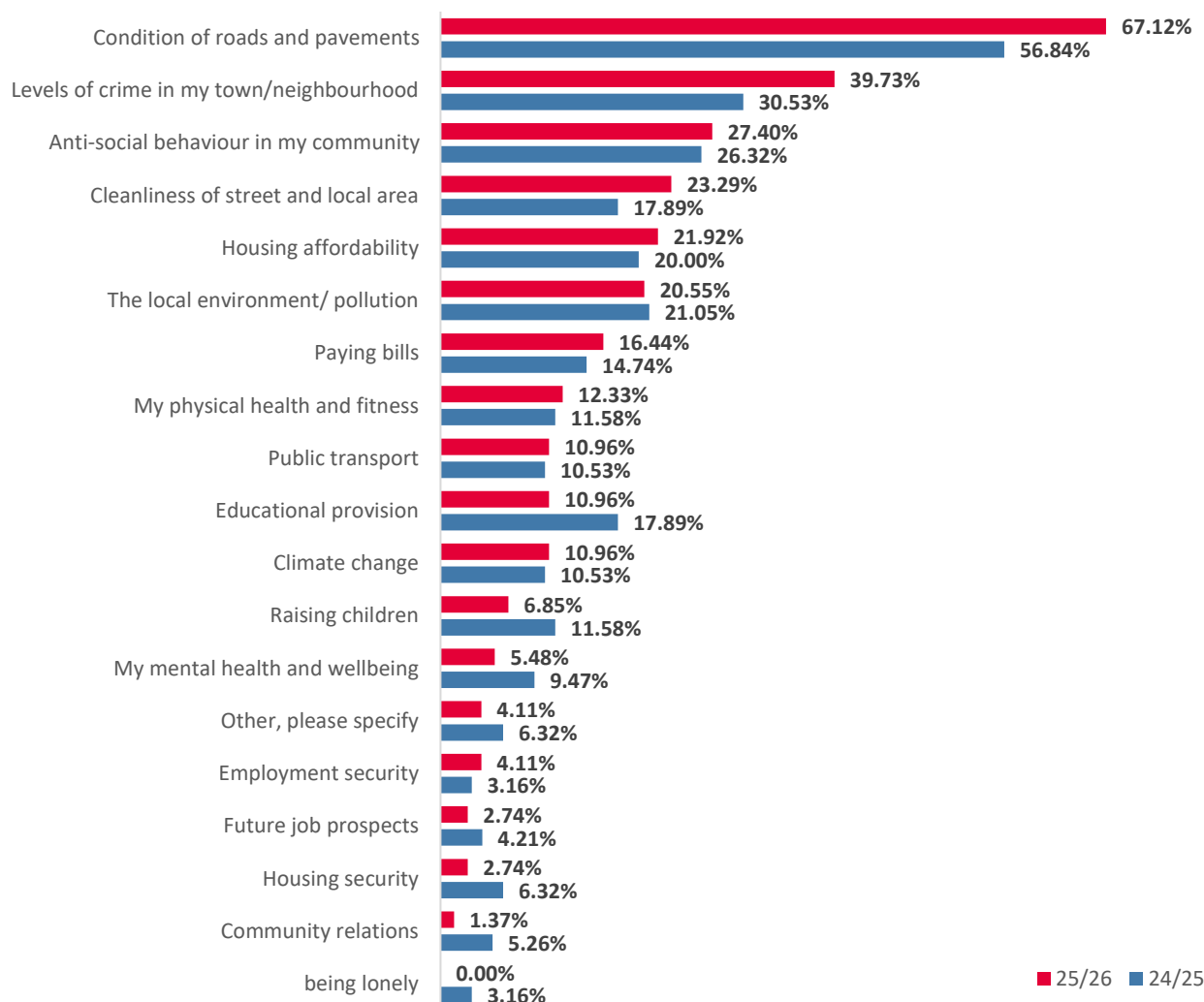


There has been a large increase in those choosing crime/community safety, meaning it is now one of the top 3 issues. Whilst fewer have said education than last year. In regard to the free text comments box for 'other, please specify' (n=6) these have been themed, coded and quantified below:

Theme	Total	Percentage
Roads/traffic	4	66.67%
Public transport	1	16.67%
Other	3	50.00%

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 73 businesses who responded to this question, the following situations were selected.

Which of the following are you concerned about? - Business owners
(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 businesses (n=3) describing issues they are most concerned about, these have been themed, coded and quantified below.

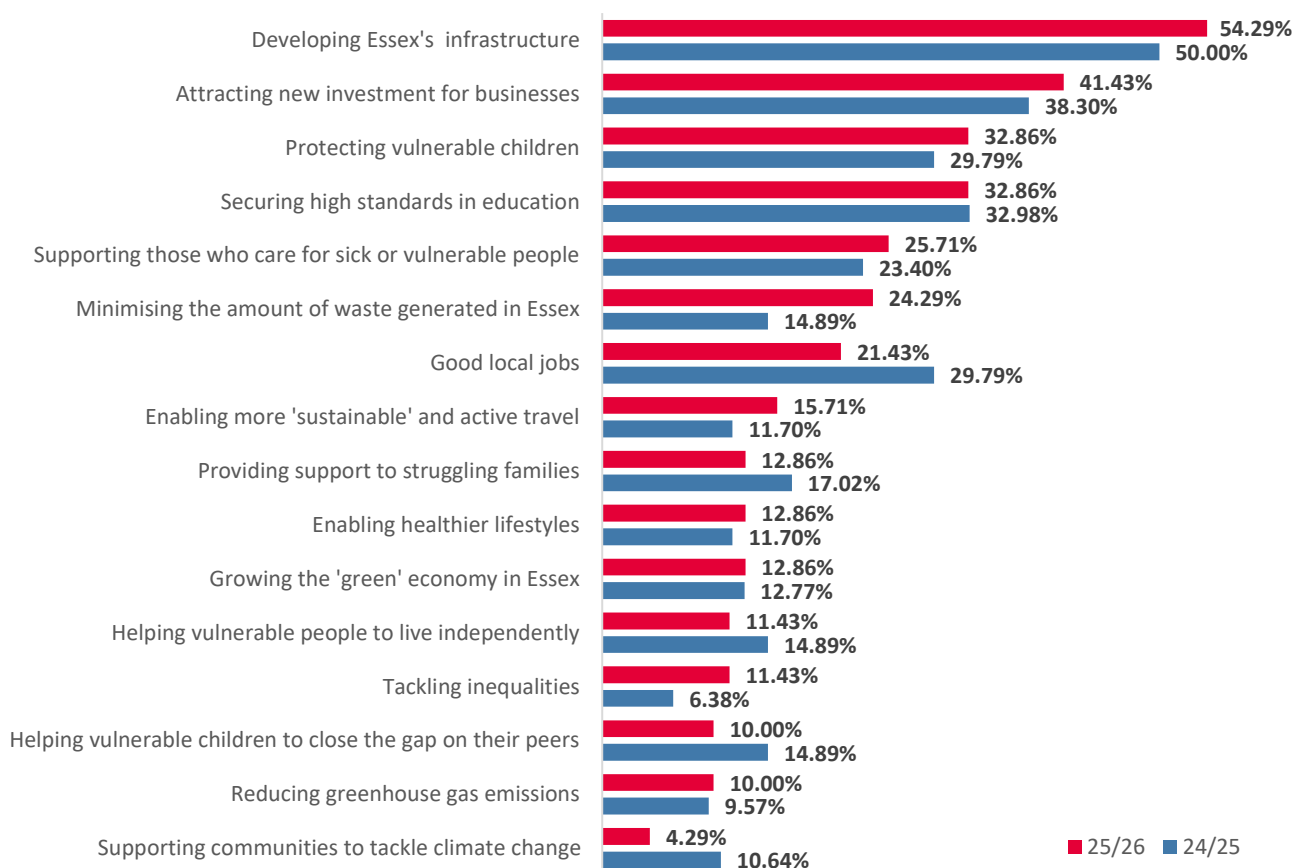
Theme	Total	Percentage
Housing security	1	33.33%
Population levels/over-population/immigration	1	33.33%
Other	1	33.33%

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

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 70 responses to this question, the following commitments were selected:

Which of these should the council prioritise for immediate action? - Business owners

(Max. 3 responses - figures reflect % of respondents who gave each answer)

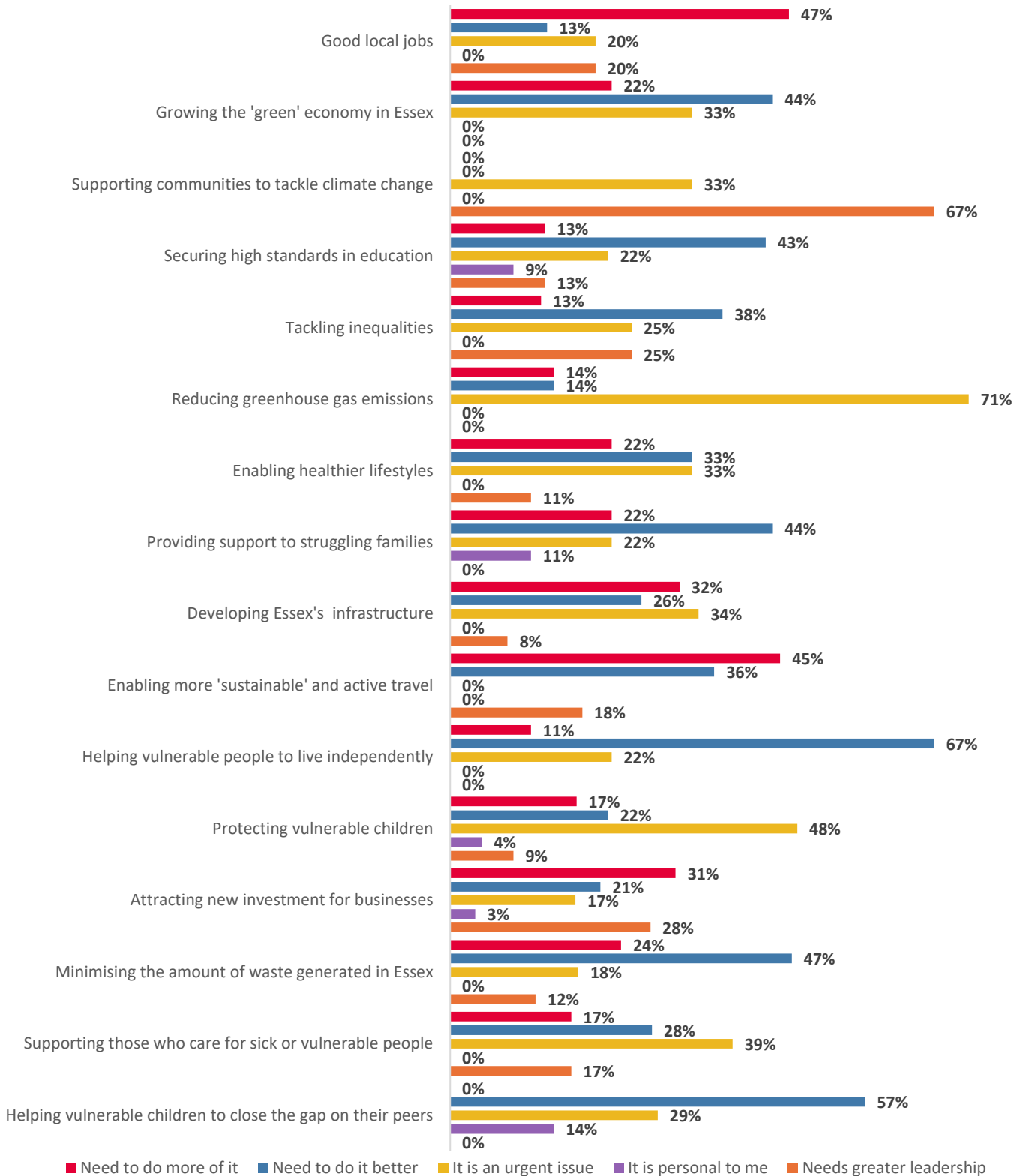


In regard to the free text comments box relating to responses from respondents describing why they felt that these commitments should be prioritised (n=32), *these have been themed, coded and quantified below.*

Theme	Total	Percentage
Road improvements needed	8	25.00%
More effective employment / local employment	6	18.75%
Improve infrastructure (general)	4	12.50%
Biggest impact on a number of people	3	9.38%
Not currently being addressed / under funded	3	9.38%
Transport infrastructure	3	9.38%
Will have knock on effect to improve other areas	3	9.38%
Supporting businesses / attracting businesses to area	3	9.38%
Affordable housing	2	6.25%
Help for carers	2	6.25%
Safety in the community	2	6.25%
Support for the most vulnerable	2	6.25%
Better standards of living	1	3.13%
Climate changes	1	3.13%
For the future/ future generations	1	3.13%
Health is key	1	3.13%
Help economic growth	1	3.13%
Improve healthcare/ availability of healthcare	1	3.13%
Mental health important	1	3.13%
Too many new houses/ overpopulated	1	3.13%
Sign of a civilised society / basic requirement	1	3.13%
Help people to help themselves/be independent	1	3.13%
Poor education standards currently / education underfunded / not enough schools	1	3.13%
Education is foundation for a good future	1	3.13%
Council waste too much on wrong things / woke agenda / don't spend on the important things	1	3.13%
People matter / should care about people	1	3.13%
People/families are struggling	1	3.13%
Don't know / no answer	1	3.13%
Other comment	1	3.13%

For each of the above priorities' respondents were then asked what the main reason for it being an immediate priority. The results are shown below:

What is the main reason for it being an immediate priority? -Business owners



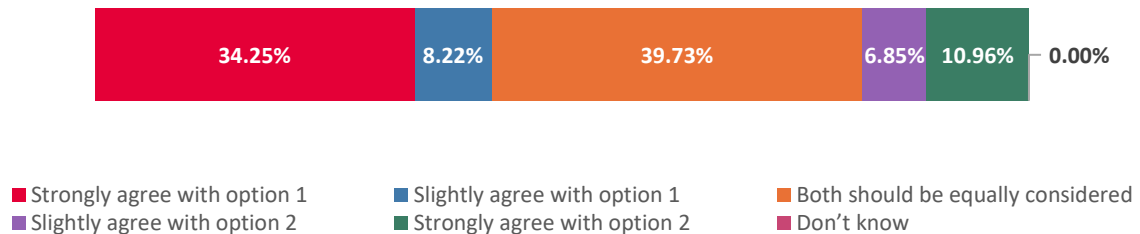
Views on how Essex County Council should allocate resources.

The consultation asked respondents how strongly they agree, disagree or whether both should be equally considered for following priorities:

1. *Services that benefit the majority of residents and taxpayer's vs services that focus on those with the greatest needs.*

Out of the 73 business owners to this question, 42.47% (n=31) agreed slightly/strongly that ECC should prioritise services that benefit the majority of residents and taxpayers. Almost two in five (39.73%, n=29) felt both services that benefit the majority of residents and taxpayer's and those that focus on those with the greatest needs should be equally considered. A further 17.81% (n=13) felt services should focus on those with the greatest needs.

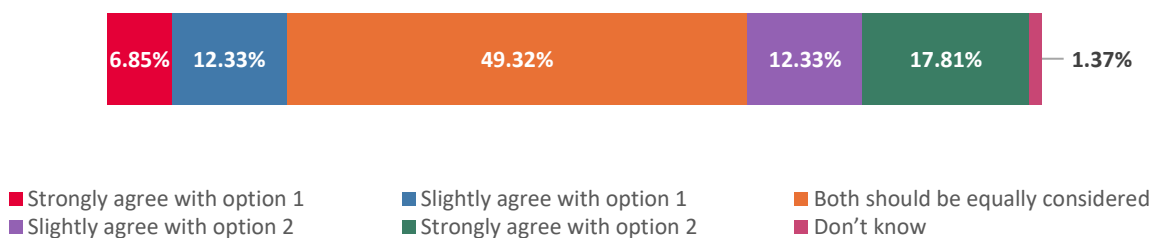
ECC should prioritise services that benefit the majority of residents and taxpayer's vs ...ECC should prioritise services that focus on those with the greatest needs.



2. *Target services towards struggling neighbourhoods, towns or cities vs services that are available in all communities across Essex.*

Out of the 73 business owners to answer this question, almost half (49.32%, n=36) believed both struggling neighbourhoods, towns and cities and all communities should be equally considered. More slightly/strongly agreed on prioritising services available in all communities (30.14%, n=22), than slightly/strongly agreed to prioritise struggling neighbourhoods, towns (19.18%, n=14).

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



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

Out of 73 business responses to this question, the majority of respondents felt that both the needs of today and long-term opportunities should be equally considered (41.10%, n=30). More slightly/strongly agreed on prioritising projects to increase longer term opportunities (41.10%, n=30), than slightly/strongly agreed to prioritise meeting the needs of today (17.81%, n=13).

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

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

Out of the 73 responses to this question, most slightly/strongly agreed that decisions should be taken as close to local communities as possible (45.21%, n=33), fewer slightly/strongly agreed decisions on how to spend money should consider the county as a whole (30.14%, n=22), around a quarter felt both should be equally considered (24.66%, n=18).

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.



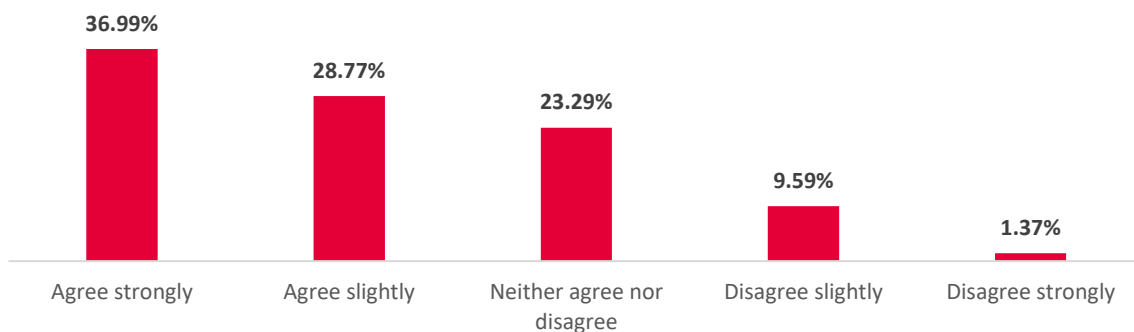
■ Strongly agree with option 1
 ■ Slightly agree with option 1
 ■ Both should be equally considered
■ Slightly agree with option 2
 ■ Strongly agree with option 2
 ■ Don't know

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?

1. Streamline services so that we can deliver the same outcomes.

The majority of businesses agree slightly/strongly to streamline services so we can deliver the same outcome (65.76%). Out of the 73 Businesses to this question, 36.99% (n=27) Agreed Strongly, 28.77% (n=21) Agreed Slightly, 23.29% (n=17) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 9.59% (n=7) Disagreed slightly and 1.37% Disagreed strongly (n=1).

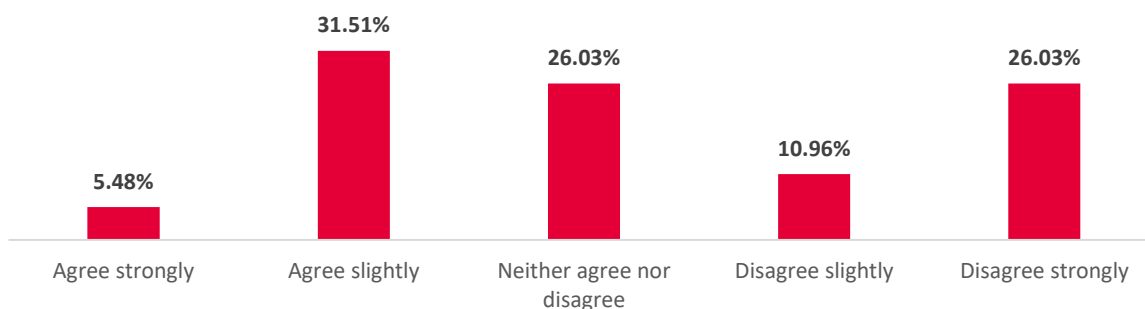
Streamline services so that we can deliver the same outcome



2. Introduce charges for some services which are currently free/subsidised.

Overall, the same proportion said they slightly/strongly agree to introduce charges for services which are currently free/subsidised (36.99%), to those saying they disagree slightly/strongly (36.99%). Out of the 73 Businesses to this question, 5.48% (n=4) Agreed Strongly, 31.51% (n=23) Agreed Slightly, 26.03% (n=10) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 10.96% (n=8) Disagreed slightly and 26.03% Disagreed strongly (n=19).

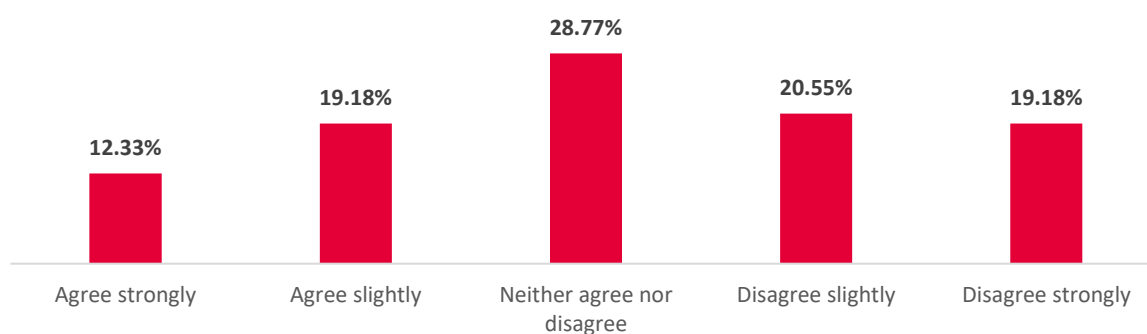
Introduce charges for some services which are currently free/subsidised



3. Reduce or stop delivering some services to protect others.

Most disagree slightly/strongly to reducing or stopping some services to protect others (39.73%). Out of the 73 Businesses to answer this question, 12.33% (n=9) Agreed Strongly, 19.18% (n=14) Agreed Slightly, 28.77% (n=21) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 20.55% (n=15) Disagreed slightly and 19.18% Disagreed strongly (n=14).

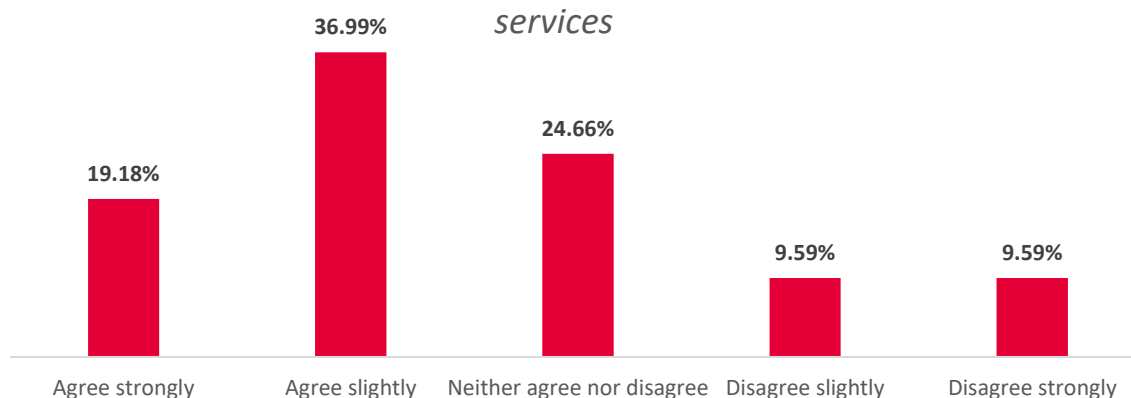
Reduce or stop delivering some services to protect others



4. Encourage local people and communities to deliver certain services.

The majority of business owners agree slightly/strongly that we should encourage local people and communities to deliver certain services (56.17%). Out of the 73 Businesses to respond to this question, 19.18% (n=14) Agreed Strongly, 36.99% (n=27) Agreed Slightly, 24.66% (n=18) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 9.59% (n=7) Disagreed slightly and 9.59% Disagreed strongly (n=7).

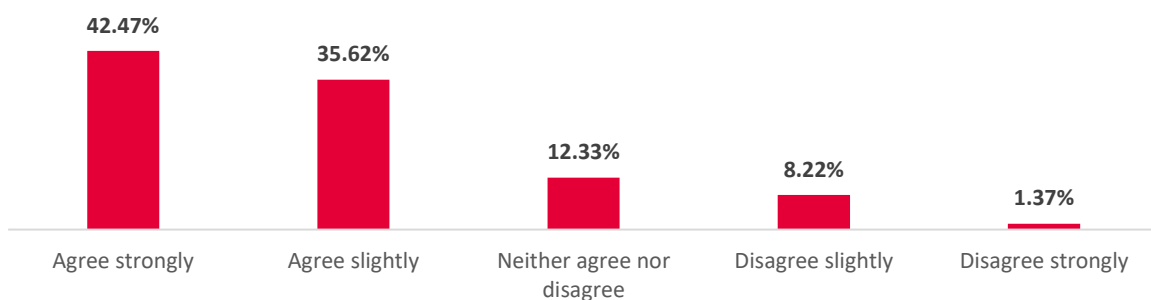
Encourage local people and communities to deliver certain services



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

More than three quarters (78.09%) agree slightly/strongly to helping people to help themselves more, so they have less reliance on publicly funded services. Out of the 73 Businesses to respond to this question, 42.47% (n=31) Agreed Strongly, 35.62% (n=26) Agreed Slightly, 12.33% (n=9) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 8.22% (n=6) Disagreed slightly and 1.37% Disagreed strongly (n=1).

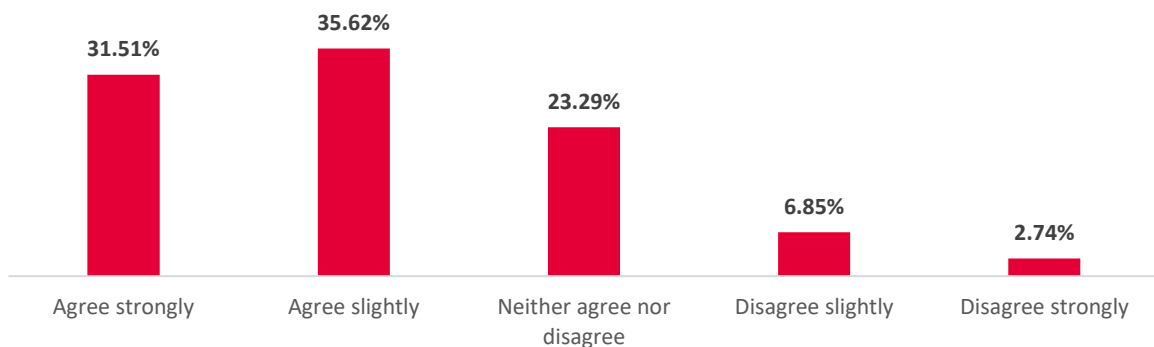
Help people to help themselves more so they have less reliance on publicly funded services



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

Overall, most agree slightly/strongly to prioritise spending for the most vulnerable and those without choice (67.13%). Out of the 73 Businesses, 31.51% (n=23) Agreed Strongly, 35.62% (n=26) Agreed Slightly, 23.29% (n=17) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 6.85% (n=5) Disagreed slightly and 2.74% Disagreed strongly (n=2).

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

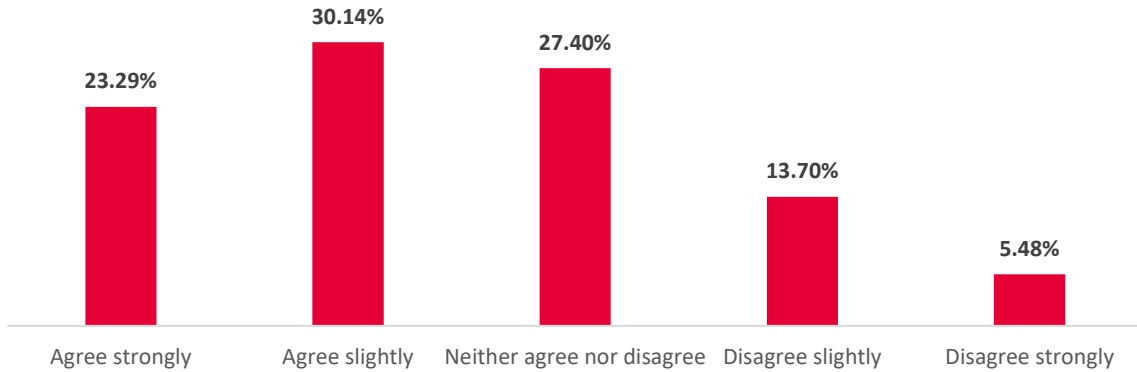


7. Use / partner with other organisational bodies to provide services.

Over half of business owners agree we should use/partner with other organisations to provide services (53.43%). Of the 73 business owners 23.29% (n=17) Agreed Strongly, 30.14% (n=22) Agreed

Slightly, 27.40% (n=20) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 13.70% (n=10) Disagreed slightly and 5.48% Disagreed strongly (n=4).

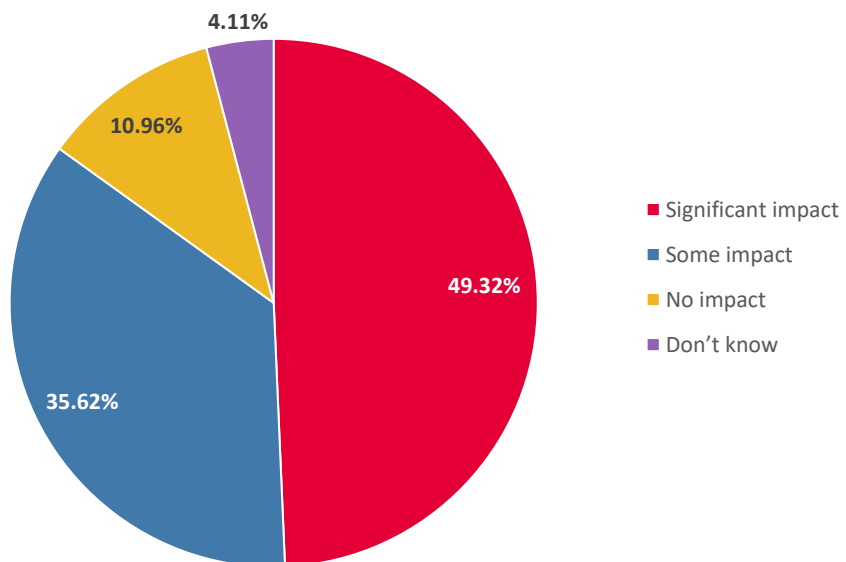
Use / partner with other organisational bodies to provide services



Impact of inflation

The consultation asked businesses to what extent they think inflation, interest rates and the current cost of living situation will have an impact on Essex County Council's finances. Out of the 73 business owners to answer this question, 49.32% (n=36) said significant impact, 35.62% (n=26) felt there would be some impact, 10.96% (n=8) No impact, and 4.11% Don't know (n=3).

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



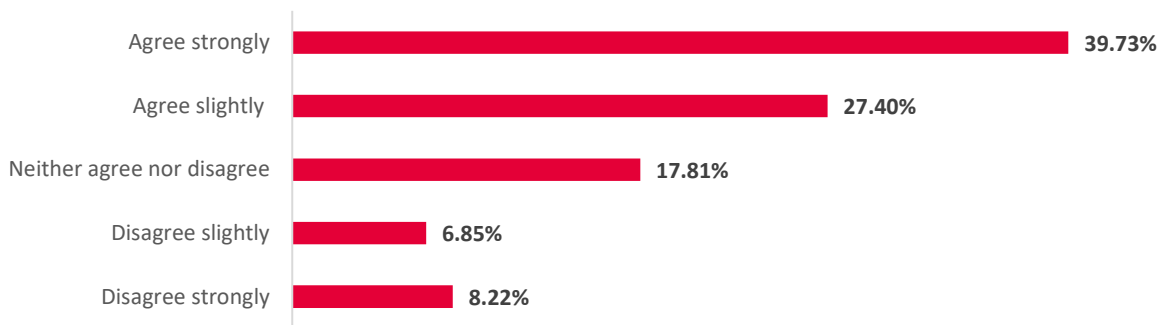
Increase in council tax.

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

1. *...only when opportunities to streamline services have been exhausted.*

Overall, most business owners agree slightly/strongly to increase council tax when opportunities to streamline services have been exhausted (66.93%). Out of the 73 businesses to answer this question, 39.73% (n=29) Agreed Strongly, 27.40% (n=20) Agreed Slightly, 17.81% (n=13) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 6.85% (n=5) Disagreed slightly and 8.22% Disagreed strongly (n=6).

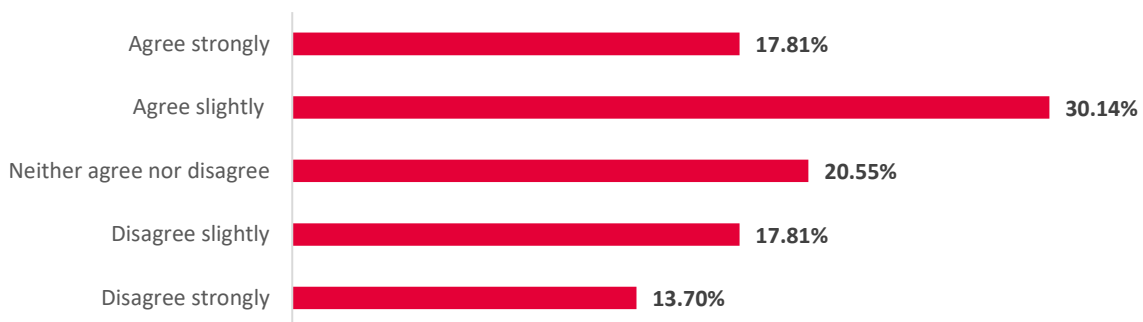
Increase in council tax only when opportunities to streamline has been exhausted



2. *...as an alternative to imposing/ increasing fees and charges for services.*

Almost half (47.95%) agreed slightly/strongly to increase council tax as an alternative to imposing/increasing fees and charges for services. Out of the 73 businesses to answer this question, 17.81% (n=13) Agreed Strongly, 30.14% (n=22) Agreed Slightly, 20.55% (n=15) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 17.81% (n=13) Disagreed slightly and 13.70% (n=10) Disagreed strongly.

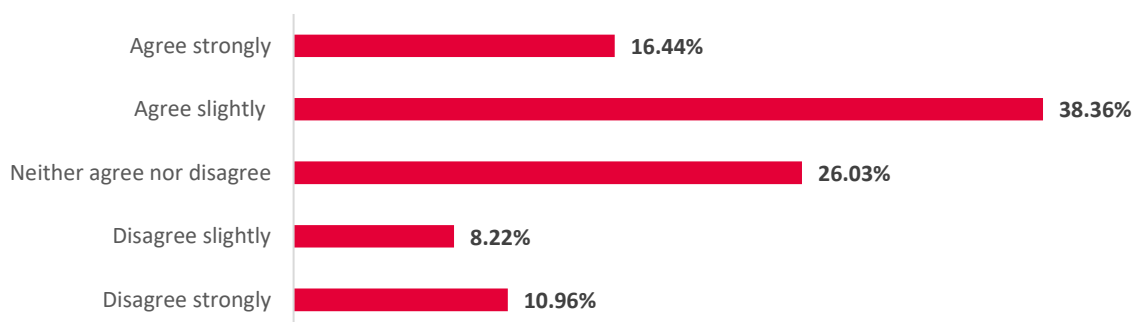
Increase in council tax as an alternative to imposing/increasing fees and charges for services.



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

Over half (54.80%) agreed slightly/strongly to an increase in council tax when the only alternative is to stop delivering some services. Out of the 73 businesses to answer this question, 16.44% (n=12) Agreed Strongly, 38.36% (n=28) Agreed Slightly, 26.03% (n=19) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 8.22% (n=6) Disagreed slightly and 10.96% Disagreed strongly (n=8).

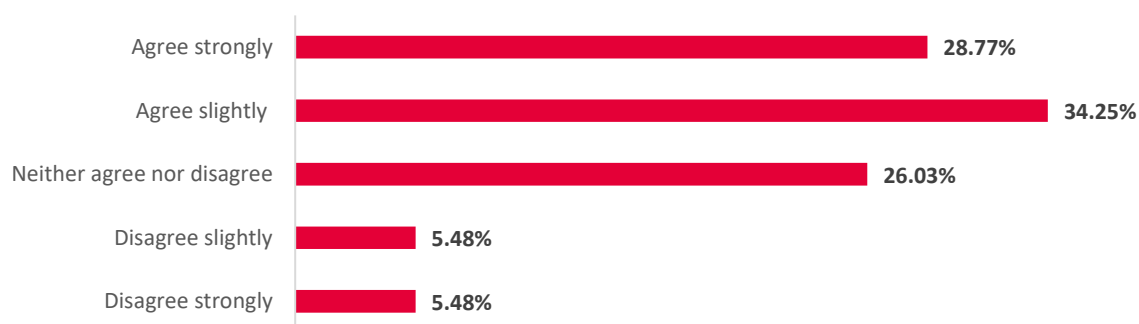
Increase council tax when the only alternative is to stop delivering some services



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

Overall, 63.02% agree slightly/strongly to increasing council tax to protect the most vulnerable and those without choice. Out of the 73 businesses to answer this question, 28.77% (n=21) Agreed Strongly, 34.25% (n=25) Agreed Slightly, 26.03% (n=19) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 5.48% (n=4) Disagreed slightly and 5.48% Disagreed strongly (n=4).

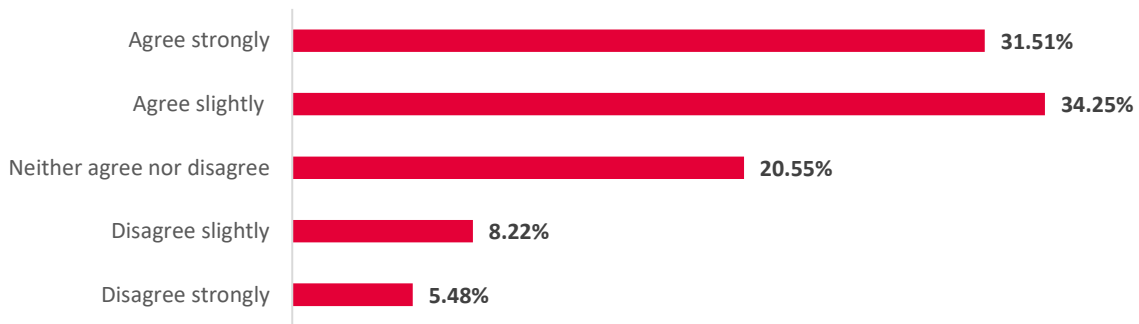
Increase council tax to protect the most vulnerable and those without choice



5. ... to enable investment to improve services and infrastructure.

The majority agreed slightly/strongly to increase council tax to enable investment to improve services and infrastructure (65.76%). Out of the 73 businesses to answer this question, 31.51% (n=23) Agreed Strongly, 34.25% (n=25) Agreed Slightly, 20.55% (n=15) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 8.22% (n=6) Disagreed slightly and 5.48% Disagreed strongly (n=4).

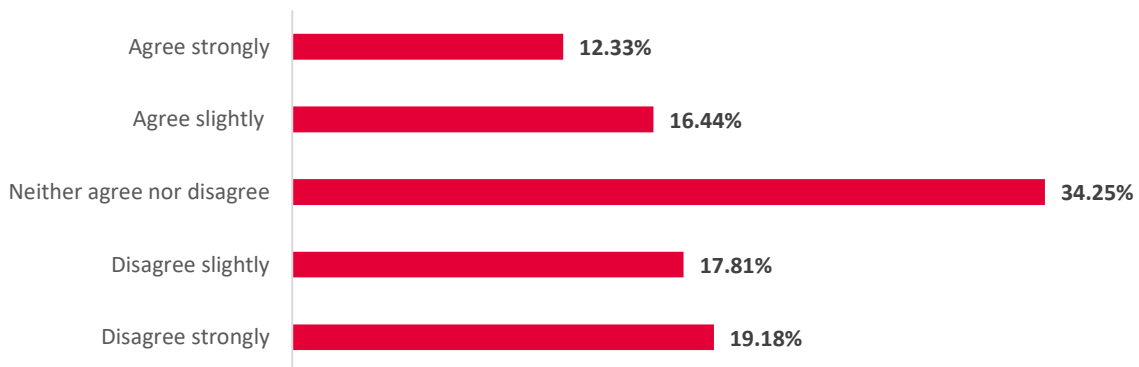
Increase council tax to enable investment to improve services and infrastructure



6. ... under no circumstances.

Just over a third (36.99%) of business owners disagree to increasing council tax under no circumstances. Out of the 73 businesses to answer this question, 12.33% (n=9) Agreed Strongly, 16.44% (n=12) Agreed Slightly, 34.25% (n=25) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 17.81% (n=13) Disagreed slightly and 19.18% Disagreed strongly (n=14).

Increase in council tax under no circumstances



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 (n=9) have been themed, coded and quantified below.

Theme	Total	Percentage
Streamline ECC staff/ salaries/ benefits	4	44.44%
Prioritise efficiency/ eliminate wasteful spending	2	22.22%
Increase Council Tax	1	11.11%
Partner with other organisations to deliver services	1	11.11%
ECC to review its working practices first	1	11.11%
Other	2	22.22%

Any other comments

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

In total, 34 respondents left free text comments describing anything else ECC should consider. These have been themed, coded and quantified below:



Theme	Total	Percentage
Prioritise council efficiency / eliminate wasteful spending / streamline staff / stop working from home	8	23.53%
Become more entrepreneurial/ business-minded	3	8.82%
Avoid vanity or fashionable projects	2	5.88%
Consider Council Tax increase	2	5.88%
Improve road maintenance	2	5.88%
Invest in infrastructure	2	5.88%
Public service review/ consultation needed	2	5.88%
Renegotiate road maintenance contract or bring in house	2	5.88%
Share service delivery with district and boroughs	2	5.88%
None/ nothing	2	5.88%
Attract industries/businesses to the area	1	2.94%
Better healthcare provision	1	2.94%
Means test/ make sure resources are going to those truly in need	1	2.94%
Pair improved infrastructure with new housing developments	1	2.94%
Prioritise vulnerable people/ households	1	2.94%
Spend budget fairly across county	1	2.94%
Streamline ECC management team	1	2.94%
Tackle issues with housing	1	2.94%
Take a long-term/ joined-up view	1	2.94%
Negative comments about questionnaire/survey	1	2.94%
Other comments	7	20.59%

Appendices

Appendix A – Consultation Questionnaire

Everyone's Essex – Let's talk

Budget Consultation 2025/26

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 2025/26 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 the longer term impact of high inflation and high 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 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 £207m in savings over the past five years, and has recently been ranked the third most productive council in the country.

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 ALLQ1a –

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	<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"/>

Q3A – QPriorities – further insight

For each of the priorities selected, what is the main reason for it being an immediate priority?
(One response for each action)

- Need to do more of it (1)
- Need to do it better (2)
- It is an urgent issue (3)
- It is personal to me (4)
- Needs greater leadership (5)

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 disagree	
...ECC should prioritise services that benefit the majority of residents and taxpayers	?	?	?	?	?	...ECC should prioritise services that focus on those with the greatest needs
...ECC should target its services towards struggling neighbourhoods, towns or cities	?	?	?	?	?	...ECC should provide services that are available in all communities across Essex
...ECC should prioritise spending on meeting the needs of people today	?	?	?	?	?	...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	?	?	?	?	?	...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)	?	?	?	?	?
...as an alternative to imposing/ increasing fees and charges for services (2)	?	?	?	?	?
...when the only alternative is to stop delivering some services (3)	?	?	?	?	?
...to protect services for the most vulnerable and those without choice (4)	?	?	?	?	?
...to enable investment to improve services and infrastructure (5)	?	?	?	?	?
...under no circumstances (6)	?	?	?	?	?

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.

- | | |
|---|----|
| <input type="checkbox"/> No impairment | 1 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hearing impairment/deaf | 2 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Visual impairment/blind | 3 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deafblind | 4 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health needs | 5 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Physical impairment | 6 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Learning difficulties/disabilities | 7 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Autism spectrum disorder | 8 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 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.

- | | |
|--|----|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employed full-time | 1 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employed part-time | 2 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Self-employed | 3 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employed on flexible/zero hours contract | 4 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business owner | 5 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> In full-time education or training (e.g. college, apprenticeship) | 6 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not currently employed | 7 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteering | 8 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Retired | 9 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state) _____ | 10 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 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.

END

Appendix B – Council Tax Information



**COUNCIL TAX
INFORMATION
2024/25**



**EVERYONE'S
ESSEX**

The image features a woman with long brown hair, wearing a light-colored cardigan and blue jeans, holding a young child. The child is laughing joyfully. They are standing in a grassy field with trees in the background. The bottom of the image has a blue diagonal overlay with the text 'EVERYONE'S ESSEX'.

Available at: <https://www.essex.gov.uk/running-council/spending-and-council-tax/what-council-tax-pays>

This information is issued by:
Research and Citizen Insight team.
Essex County Council

Contact us:
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Essex_CC



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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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