



CABINET REPORT

Date Written	25 th February 2020
Report Author	Ceri Dinham
Service Area	Communications, Consultation and Engagement
Committee Division	Strategic
Exempt/Non-Exempt	Non-Exempt
Committee Date	4 th March 2020

To: Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen

Council Priorities and Budget Consultation 2020/21

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 As part of the budget setting process, the Council has a requirement to consult with the residents of the County Borough on how we spend their money and what should be the Council's priorities for 2020/21.
- 1.2 As part of this process, over a twelve-week period a series of consultation events were held across the County Borough. The results of which are contained in this report. (Appendix 1).

2.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 The results of the Council Priorities, Budget Consultation and Council Tax exercise be received and considered.

3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Engagement with citizens is essential as part of the priority and budget setting process. This provides the Council with opinions from the public on the delivery of services, priorities and potential Council Tax increases. The aim of the consultation was to speak to a variety of citizens across the County Borough via:

- Cabinet Roadshows
- On-line survey available via the Council website and social media
- Engagement through social media

4.0 COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION METHODOLOGY FOR THE COUNCIL PRIORITIES AND BUDGET CONSULTATION EXERCISE

- 4.1 The methodology used for consultation took a three-pronged approach which was coordinated by the Communications, Consultation and Engagement Team, in partnership with the Council's Cabinet and the Chief Finance Officer.
- 4.2 An article raising awareness of the Budget Consultation and the roadshows of the opportunity for our residents to have their say on how the Council spends its budget. was included in the December 2019 edition of Contact community newspaper.
- 4.3 An online survey was designed using the Smart Survey consultation software and placed on the Council website.
- 4.4 Updates reminding citizens of the online survey, Cabinet road shows and how to engage were sent periodically via the Council social networking accounts (namely Facebook and Twitter) to followers during the consultation process.
- 4.5 A press release raising awareness to the on-line survey was published on the Council website.
- 4.6 Emails were also sent out to all MTCBC staff and elected members at the start of the consultation process to raise awareness and to increase engagement.
- 4.7 Results were analysed using the consultation software in order to determine citizens' opinions and preferences.

Cabinet Road shows

- 4.8 Cabinet Roadshows were held between 24th October 2019 and 20th November 2019 across the County Borough. Citizens were asked to use only eight counters to choose eight of the 10 priority areas, which represented a service that the Council provides.
- 4.9 Cabinet Roads shows were held on:
- 24th October – College, Merthyr Tydfil
 - 1st November – Treharris Library
 - 13th November – Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Centre
 - 18th November – Tesco
 - 20th November – Civic Centre

Owing to the General Election being called on 12th December 2019 some of the roadshows had to be cancelled and could not be re-scheduled. This was due to publicity restrictions which had to be observed during the purdah period.

Key Findings

4.10 Below is a table indicating how participants in the consultation prioritised Council services:

Budget Priority Area	Responses
Schools and Education	820
Children's and Adults' Social Care	673
Adult Social Care	621
Leisure & Culture	505
Refuse & Waste	486
Highways & Infrastructure	483
Environment, Health & Community Safety	453
Street Scene	400
Community Regeneration	372
Physical Regeneration	318

5.0 COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION METHODOLOGY FOR THE COUNCIL TAX SETTING

- 5.1 Due to the Welsh Government Budget Settlement announcement being delayed the Council was not in a position to engage with the Council Tax setting at the same time as the Council Priorities exercise.
- 5.2 As a result of this, the Council Tax engagement exercise took place for one week between Tuesday 11th and Tuesday 18th February 2020.
- 5.3 An online survey was designed using the Smart Survey consultation software and placed on the Council website.
- 5.4 Updates reminding citizens of the online survey were sent via the Council social networking accounts (namely Facebook and Twitter) to followers during the consultation process.
- 5.5 Emails were also sent out to all MTCBC staff, elected members and Leisure Trust staff at the start of the consultation process to raise awareness and to increase engagement.
- 5.6 Results were analysed using the consultation software in order to determine citizens' opinions and preferences.

Key Findings

5.7 Consultees were asked the following three questions:

Q1: Do you think 5.99% is a fair increase?

Q2: If you answered 'No' to Q1, please tell us what % increase you think is fair

Q3: Do you have any comments?

5.8 **1399** took part in the survey.

5.9 Responses to Q1 were as follows:

9.36% (131 respondents) answered 'Yes'

85.92% (1202 respondents) answered 'No'

4.72% (66 respondents) answered 'I don't know'

5.10 1010 people answered Q2. Many of those used this open text response as a place to write comments, therefore of those 1010 responses only 678 gave a % figure.

5.11 Responses given ranged from -50% to +5%.

5.12 The overwhelming majority 54.42% (369 respondents) suggested a 0% increase with the second preferred option of a 2% increase being suggested by 13.13% (89 respondents).

5.13 706 people responded to Q3 (Do you have any additional comments). The full engagement report can be found in the background documents.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

6.1 Financial implications arising from the consultation process will be considered within the final budget process where appropriate.

7.0 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts	Not Applicable
1. Merthyr Tydfil Well-being Objectives	0 of 4	0 of 4	4 of 4
2. Sustainable Development Principles - How have you considered the five ways of working: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long term • Prevention • Integration • Collaboration • Involvement 	1 of 5	0 of 5	4 of 5
3. Protected Characteristics <i>(including Welsh Language)</i>	0 of 10	0 of 10	10 of 10
4. Biodiversity	0 of 1	0 of 1	1 of 1
<p><u>Summary:</u></p> <p>The main positive impact is that the public were consulted with as part of the public consultation in order to seek their view on what Council services they think should be prioritised and where they think the Council's budget should be spent.</p> <p>There were no negative impacts, as this report is presenting the findings of the public consultation, with no proposals being put forward at this stage.</p>			

ELLIS COOPER
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

COUNCILLOR ANDREW BARRY
CABINET MEMBER FOR GOVERNANCE
& CORPORATE SERVICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Council Tax Engagement Feedback	February 2020	Communication and Consultation Office
Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?		

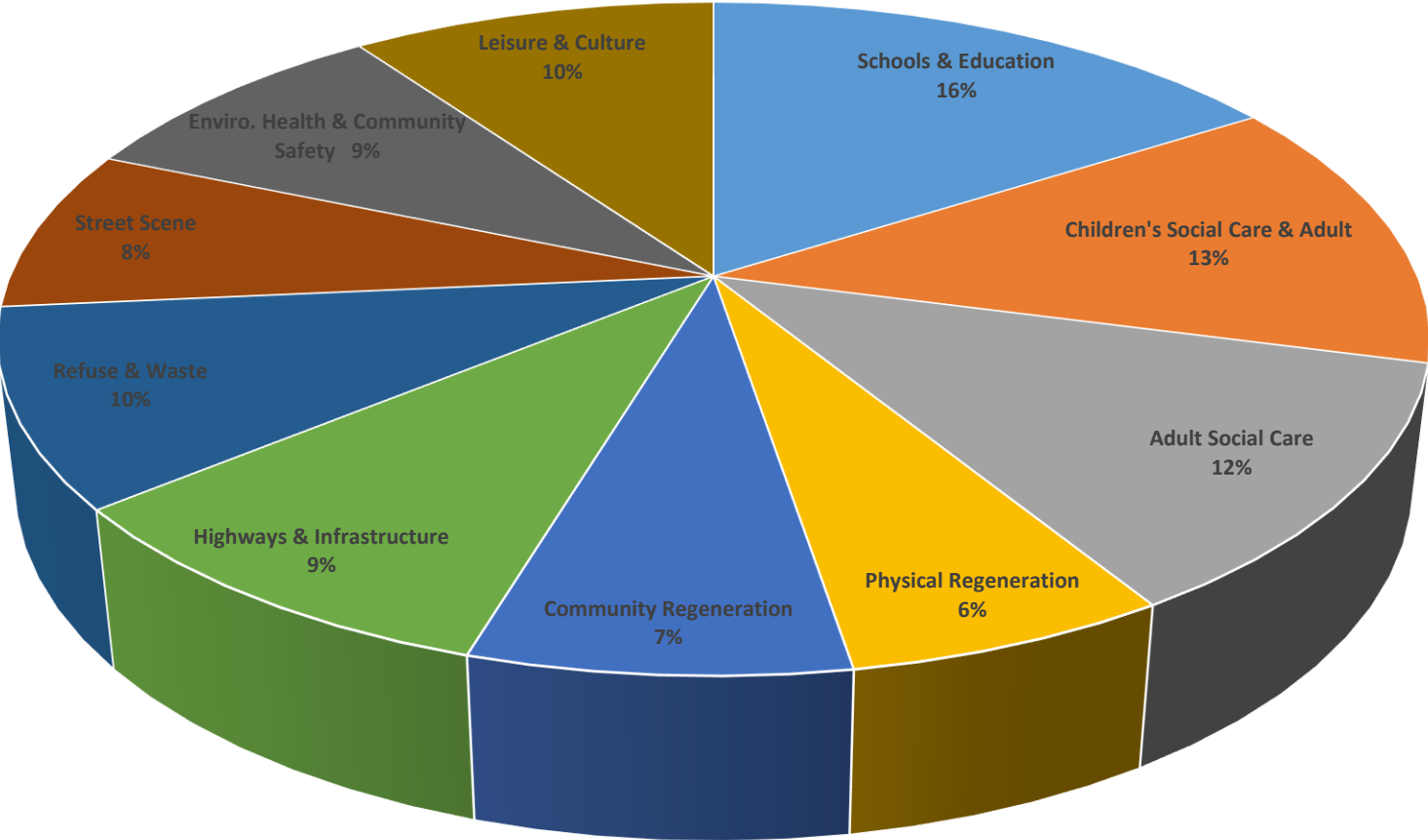
Consultation has been undertaken with the Corporate Management Team in respect of each proposal(s) and recommendation(s) set out in this report.

Appendix 1

	Schools & Education	Children's Social Care & Adult	Adult Social Care	Physical Regeneration	Community Regeneration	Highways & Infrastructure	Refuse & Waste	Street Scene	Enviro. Health & Community Safety	Leisure & Culture	TOTAL (Responses)	TOTAL (Respondents)
College, Merthyr Tydfil	207	190	135	50	70	70	73	121	86	134	1136	142
Treharris Library	20	11	8	3	7	13	4	6	7	17	96	12
Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Centre	110	57	41	49	18	40	28	22	28	71	464	58
Tesco	99	89	105	32	28	50	53	66	41	53	616	77
Civic Centre	132	102	103	40	37	65	67	47	51	44	688	86
Online *	252	224	229	144	212	245	261	138	240	186	2,131	292
Total	820	673	621	318	372	483	486	400	453	505	5,131	667

* Due to restrictions within the software we were unable to apply a minimum number of answers per response, as well as a maximum number; therefore, some online respondents selected fewer than 8 services. As a result, the figures in this line do not equate to 8 options per person (i.e. $292 \times 8 = 2,336$ not 2,131 as per the table).

Results



- Schools & Education
- Children's Social Care & Adult
- Adult Social Care
- Physical Regeneration
- Community Regeneration
- Highways & Infrastructure
- Refuse & Waste
- Street Scene
- Enviro. Health & Community Safety
- Leisure & Culture