



BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL
BUDGET 2017+ CONSULTATION REPORT

February 2017

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Executive summary

This report summarises responses to Birmingham City Council's Budget Consultation 2017+ which ran from 8 December 2016 to 16 January 2017, based on the 'Budget 2017+: Consultation' document.

This year's consultation referred to £50.6million of new savings required in the coming 2017/18 financial year and the longer-term financial challenge of identifying a total of 96.6million by 2019/20. This is on top of the savings of £590million already made since 2010/11.

In addition to the consultation document the consultation process also included:

- 183 people attending two public meetings in the north and south of the city led by the council's leader and cabinet;
- A consultation meeting aimed at the business community, attended by representatives of Birmingham-based businesses, Chamber of Commerce, council leader and several cabinet members;
- A series of question and answer sessions on Twitter ('Twitter takeovers') hosted by all cabinet members.

In addition, each directorate is expected to carry out individual consultations with its service users and the general public, as appropriate, before implementation of any decisions.

Responses were received as follows:

- **1,639** responses to the online survey on the 'Be Heard' portal;
- **1,290** paper responses to the survey from voluntary organisations accompanied by 234 letters commenting on proposed savings on the budget for Supporting People;
- **201** comments made through submissions to 'Budget Views' includes emails and letters;
- **3** letters (posted);
- Petitions on savings to Supporting People and museums budgets.

Overall, Budget Consultation 2017+ received far more comments than last year.

The focus was to encourage people to participate via the online survey and to rank the services that were most important to them – thus enabling the consultation to take account of residents' genuine preferences and concerns rather than being skewed towards individual popular campaigns. Despite this, the consultation was still subject to campaigning action and through those actions received very high numbers of responses.

This consultation was overarching – on overall resource allocation – whilst council directorates will be supplementing this with more detailed consultations around specific proposals.

The consultation asked which services were most important to the respondents, to the extent with which they agreed/ disagreed with the five themes and the proposals within those, whether they agreed with further opportunities for communities to be involved more in delivering some of our services, the level of Council Tax and the social care precept, and finally suggestions on how the council can save money.

Services most important to citizens

The online survey asked respondents to rank the top five services that were most important to them and their families from a list of 25 key services – ranging from child protection to environmental health and from transport planning to older and disabled people. The top five themes in the questionnaire based upon the totals are outlined in the table below.

Top five themes based on all responses – online and paper surveys

Top five – based on total score (rank 1 = 5 points, rank 2 = 4 points, rank 3 = 3 points and so forth)	Top five – based on most rank '1' given to service
Mental health Issues	Mental health issues
Older and disabled people	Older and disabled people
Child protection	Child protection
Families	Families
Parks	Parks

Top five themes based on online surveys only

Top five – based on total score (rank 1 = 5 points, rank 2 = 4 points, rank 3 = 3 points and so forth)	Top five – based on most rank '1' given to service
Older and disabled people	Child protection
Child protection	Older and disabled people
Mental health issues	Parks
Parks	Families
Families	Mental health issues

Table showing agreement / disagreement with key themes

Response	Cross cutting		Jobs & skills		Homes & neighbourhoods		Health & wellbeing		Children	
	All	Online only	All	Online only	All	Online only	All	Online only	All	Online only
Strongly agree	7%	9%	5%	6%	3%	3%	3%	4%	4%	4%
Agree	25%	32%	22%	29%	18%	23%	12%	20%	17%	21%
Neither agree nor disagree	21%	25%	25%	28%	22%	25%	16%	26%	24%	27%
Disagree	14%	11%	18%	16%	21%	20%	15%	18%	16%	14%
Strongly disagree	26%	13%	21%	12%	29%	21%	48%	25%	30%	25%
Don't know	8%	9%	9%	9%	7%	7%	5%	8%	9%	9%
Total agree	32%	42%	27%	34%	21%	27%	15%	24%	21%	25%
Total disagree	39%	24%	39%	29%	49%	41%	63%	43%	46%	39%

The online budget consultation survey asked whether respondents agreed or disagreed with the key themes. The table on the previous page shows the results split into the online and paper-based submissions.

By theme, the responses can be summarised as follows:

- Cross cutting theme: more people agreed than disagreed online but this was reversed with paper submissions;
- Jobs and skills theme: more people agreed with the proposals than disagreed online but this was reversed with paper submissions;
- Homes theme: narrowly more people disagreed than agreed;
- Health theme: more people disagreeing than agreeing;
- Children theme: more disagreed than agreed.

If a participant disagreed with a theme, they were asked which proposal they disagreed with. The key disagreements were:

- Health and wellbeing / homes and neighbourhoods: parks and Supporting People – particularly mental health but also homelessness and domestic violence.

Other significant themes identified through the consultation were:

- Housing
- Roads and pavements
- Street cleaning
- Museums

Contributors at the public meetings raised the following key issues:

- Parks: their role in preventing inequality and growing community spirit, and contribution to wellbeing. In particular there was real concern about proposed reductions to the park ranger service because of the cuts to the Parks budget.
- Supporting People and its role in prevention: concerns about the proposed cuts to the budgets for domestic violence, mental health and homelessness and the impact that would have on people.
- Young people: calls to give them more support and concerns about educational psychology savings.
- Concerns that elderly people are being left out.
- Concerns about day centres.
- Concerns about the online survey being too difficult to fill in.
- Suggestions for raising income.
- Suggestions that there should be a campaign to get Birmingham the funding it needs.

The business meeting raised issues such as:

- Maximising social value through the council's Business Charter for Social Value.
- Concern about Supporting People budget cuts and their impact.
- Issues about the public estate: it being more available for community/charity use and the process being more transparent.
- Suggestions on how businesses could help fill gaps e.g. in schools.

Council Tax and Social Care Precept

- Just over half of all respondents to the online questionnaire agreed with the proposed general 2% increase in Council Tax. With just under half disagreeing.
- However, when combined with raising the Social Care Precept to 3.99% the proposal to increase Council Tax by a further 2% to pay for adult social care (known as the Adult Social Care Precept) was agreed by only 44%.

Opportunities for communities to be more involved in delivering our services

With just 10% of the council’s total spend raised by Council Tax and the ongoing severity of the budget reductions (plus population pressures) facing the council, it remains vitally important to come up with new ways of working and delivering services through partnerships, communities and volunteers both to save money and deliver services differently.

A question was included in the online survey to gauge support for this approach and also ideas were requested around saving money.

Participants were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed and also to explain their answer (see table below).

Agreement / disagreement with delivering services through community involvement

Responses	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
All – online and paper (responses)	17%	32%	19%	13%	14%	5%
Online only (responses)	17%	36%	20%	14%	9%	4%

Different groups had different reactions to this theme. Among online survey respondents, there was more agreement – but many highlighted that volunteers would need some council staff support and structure. Many of the paper surveys disagreed and felt that it was not appropriate for health-based care. **An important point made was that the council should look at putting in place an easy-to-use system which allows volunteers to offer their services.**

Finally, respondents to the online survey were asked for further comments and suggestions on how the council could save money. Overall there were 866 comments made on this.

Respondents could make a number of suggestions, which resulted in 89 themes including savings on expenses, making money through entrance charges and around recycling more.

-----**End of executive summary**-----

1. Introduction

The consultation

Having already made savings of approximately £590million and cut its workforce by around 40% since 2010, Birmingham City Council will continue to face an extremely challenging financial situation over the next four years, needing to save £180m out of its annual budget by the end of 2021. (£82m of this has already been included in our plans; £96m was the subject of this consultation.)

This is partly a result of reductions in grants from central government and from expenditure pressures resulting in the growing demand for services such as adult social care as well as new statutory service provision requirements. For the coming financial year, 2017/18, **£51m of new savings** has to be identified, and consulted and agreed on. The council published its proposals for these savings in a 'Budget 2017+ Consultation' document on 8 December 2016.

This report summarises the responses to Birmingham City Council's Budget Consultation 2017+ which ran from 8 December 2016 to 16 January 2017, based upon the 'Budget 2017+ Consultation' document.

The consultation process involved:

- 183 people attending two public meetings led by the council's leader and cabinet in Stirchley Baths and the Lighthouse Centre in Erdington;
- 1,639 responses to the online survey on the 'Be Heard' portal;
- 1,290 paper responses to the survey from voluntary organisations, primarily concerned with savings to the Supporting People budget together with 234 letters;
- 201 comments made through submissions to 'Budget Views' via emails and attached letters;
- Petitions on Supporting People and museums;
- A consultation meeting aimed at the business community, attended by representatives of Birmingham-based businesses, Chamber of Commerce, council leader and several cabinet members;
- Twitter 'takeover' question and answer sessions hosted by cabinet members;
- In addition, each directorate is expected to carry out consultation with its service users and the general public, as appropriate, before implementation of any decisions.
- Overall, Budget Consultation 2017+ received far more comments than last year's consultation: including over 1,000 more responses to the online 'Be Heard' survey (details below).

Overall, the budget consultation for 2017+ received over 3,000 responses – significantly more than in previous years' consultations. There were some key issues highlighted (Parks and Supporting People received extensive comments) and publicity both on the local news and other media.

Many respondents showed a keenness to work in partnership with the council to develop new ways of working and deliver services collaboratively. Many submissions suggested new ways of working and savings ideas as well as commenting on what they saw as good ways in which the council was managing its budget reductions – plus there were many comments about the short-sightedness of some of the budget reductions, particularly those for parks and Supporting People and pitfalls in the new ways that we would need to work.

This year's consultation referred to **£96.5m of new savings** required by 2021 **with 50.6m required in the 2017/18 financial year**. These savings are on top of the cash savings of around £590m per annum already made since 2010/11.

Five themes

The proposals in this year's consultation document were organised under five themes, with the table below showing the breakdown from the online and paper responses to the survey.

There were also a large number of individual submissions to Budget Views via letter and email (including petitions) as well as submissions from organisations. The paper responses were more strongly against the proposals than online responses, perhaps reflecting the fact that almost all of them were received at a demonstration against Supporting People cuts.

Response	Cross cutting		Jobs & skills		Homes & neighbourhoods		Health & wellbeing		Children	
	All	Online only	All	Online only	All	Online only	All	Online only	All	Online only
Strongly agree	7%	9%	5%	6%	3%	3%	3%	4%	4%	4%
Agree	25%	32%	22%	29%	18%	23%	12%	20%	17%	21%
Neither agree nor disagree	21%	25%	25%	28%	22%	25%	16%	26%	24%	27%
Disagree	14%	11%	18%	16%	21%	20%	15%	18%	16%	14%
Strongly disagree	26%	13%	21%	12%	29%	21%	48%	25%	30%	25%
Don't know	8%	9%	9%	9%	7%	7%	5%	8%	9%	9%
Total agree	32%	42%	27%	34%	21%	27%	15%	24%	21%	25%
Total disagree	39%	24%	39%	29%	49%	41%	63%	43%	46%	39%

Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the proposals:

- Cross cutting theme: online, more people agreed than disagreed but when combined with paper survey responses, more people disagreed.
- Jobs and skills theme online, more people agreed with the proposals than disagreed but when combined with paper survey responses, more people disagreed.
- Homes and neighbourhoods theme: slightly more people disagreed than agreed.
- Health and wellbeing theme: more people disagreed than agreed.
- Children theme: more disagreed than agreed.

If a participant disagreed, they were asked which proposal they disagreed with.

The key disagreements are below.

- Health and wellbeing / homes and neighbourhoods: key proposals that respondents objected to were:

- Parks;
- Supporting People – both in terms of mental health and homelessness.

The Budget Consultation 2017+ Budget Views submissions – including responses from a number of voluntary organisations – was primarily concerned with care and support, parks, and nature conservation and museums.

As well as asking for views on specific savings proposals and for new ideas for savings, the consultation asked for views on: the level of Council Tax next year; the vision for the city; the role of the council and its partners in delivering that vision; and devolution.

Council directorates are supplementing this overarching consultation with more detailed consultations with service users and the general public, as appropriate, about specific proposals. Some have been run in parallel with this consultation. Responses to the consultation underline the importance of ongoing engagement by the council with citizens, stakeholders and current and potential delivery partners on the details of the proposals and their delivery.

The report

Comments submitted through all the channels outlined above are summarised under the headings used in the online survey. For each of the five themes there is a table showing the proportion of people agreeing or disagreeing with it. If the respondent disagreed, they were asked to give their comments on the proposals that they disagreed with.

Reference is also made to comments on particular proposals through other consultation routes where relevant.

The final section addresses views expressed on issues that do not neatly fall under one of the other themes and comments on some of the approaches taken.

2. Key services

These are the top five services in order of importance to the respondent.

Top five services based on all responses – online and paper surveys

Top five – based on total score (e.g. rank 1 = 5 points, rank 2 = 4 points, rank 3 = 3 points and so forth)	Top five – based on most rank '1' given to service
Mental health Issues	Mental health issues
Older and disabled people	Older and disabled people
Child protection	Child protection
Families	Families
Parks	Parks

Top five services based on online surveys only

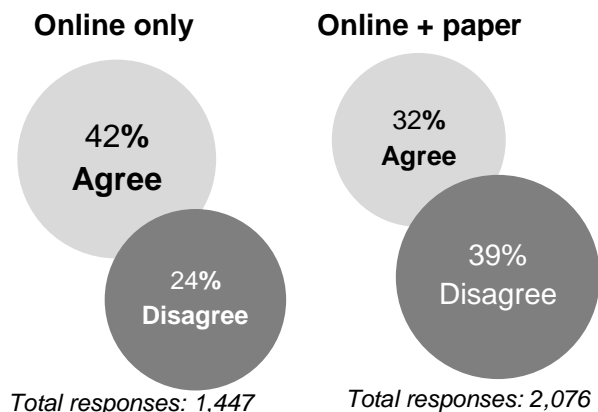
Top five – based on total score (e.g. rank 1 = 5 points, rank 2 = 4 points, rank 3 = 3 points and so forth)	Top five – based on most rank '1' given to service
Older and disabled people	Child protection
Child protection	Older and disabled people
Mental health Issues	Parks
Parks	Families
Families	Mental health Issues

Key points

The online survey asked respondents to rank the top five services that were most important to them and their families from a list of 25 key services ranging from child protection to environmental health and from transport planning to older and disabled people. As can be seen from the table above, services to vulnerable people such as those who are older and disabled, plus parks and families, were most important to the respondents.

3. Key theme: cross cutting

This includes changes to services that support the council – e.g. IT, democracy, HR and the way that the council operates, including income generation and ways to save money in general.



Method	Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Don't know	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Online only	133	9%	469	32%	367	25%	160	11%	190	13%	128	9%
Online + paper	148	7%	509	25%	431	21%	284	14%	536	26%	168	8%

Key findings

The online survey supported the cross cutting proposals, but when combined with the paper responses there was not general support for these proposals. The comments suggest the public found it a little more difficult to comment on cross cutting compared to other themes. Many of the comments in this section were actually for other proposals and these comments have been collated within the relevant parts of the report.

14% of comments received were about the new IT&D Strategy, with many mentioning that new IT technology may save money in the long term, but is unlikely to make any savings during the period proposed. Some people also spoke of why expanding IT could cause issues as a high percentage of elderly people do not have access. Many respondents felt there was too much money spent on external contractors and we should consider moving the service in-house with comments such as: “I cannot see any possible way you will be able to make £10million savings on IT in the next 12 months.”

9% of comments concerned streamlining management structures, including that the council should be concentrating on legal requirements and lean strategies in the future.

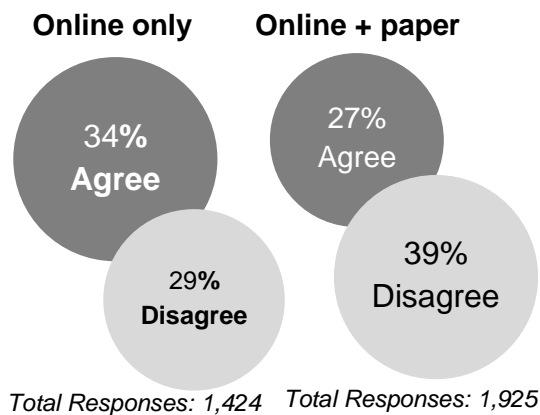
7% of comments were made about the reduction in an equalities service. Many disagreed with these cuts as they felt Birmingham was a divided and multicultural city and the council should represent the diversity of its citizens.

5% of comments were on the new operating model, where some felt that the redesign for cross cutting services was not a financial imperative.

4% of comments were about the European and International Affairs team being funded externally. The proposal to make this service find 100% of its income was considered unrealistic and unfair. It was seen as a crucial service in the current climate of ‘Brexit’ and was a strong advocate and enabler for drawing in significant funds to the city.

4. Key theme: jobs and skills

JS1: Reduce Birmingham Museum Trust contract fee by £500k pa.
JS2: Marketing Birmingham to be self-financed.
JS3: Reduction in staff and activities, and income generation in Economy directorate.
JS4: Reduce WMCA transport levy.
JS5: Review local car park charges to generate extra income.
JS6: Parking tariff increase for city centre car parks.



Method	Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Don't know	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Online only	81	6%	409	29%	400	28%	233	16%	176	12%	125	9%
Online + paper	98	5%	431	22%	476	25%	341	18%	413	21%	166	9%

Key findings

Two out of five (39.2%) respondents are not in favour of the jobs and skills set of proposals. This compares to 27.5% in favour of the proposals.

Of the 754 respondents that either strongly disagree or disagree, 341 commented on the proposals.

Around 50% of the comments received were about proposal **JS1 Museums and Arts**. Respondents are against the cuts of £500,000 in this budget. They feel that museums and arts help represent the culture of the city, and cutting back on these services could have an impact on education for children as well as inward investment. Suggestions were made to introduce an entrance fee which could bring in revenue, but may impact on the number of visits.

Around **one in five (19.2% of comments)** were related to proposal **JS6 Parking Tariff Increase – city centre car parks**. It was felt that increasing parking charges will have an adverse impact on people travelling into the city centre, with public transport being too expensive and not fit for purpose. It was felt that if parking charges were to be increased then public transport should be more affordable and improved.

The following comments are typical of many points raised.

“We risk losing important (free) cultural assets for the city if placed under this financial pressure. Cultural venues make a city good to live in but are also a draw for inward investment.”

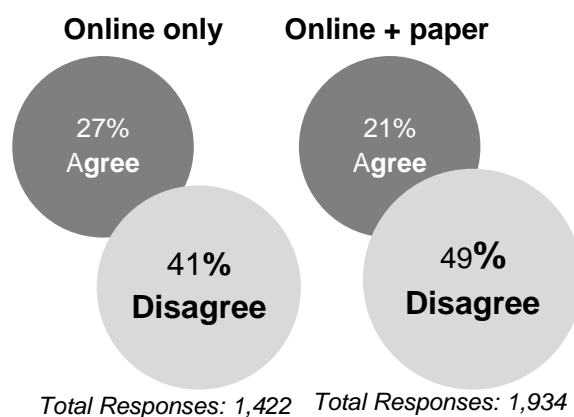
“Increased parking charges are one thing, but what measures will be put in place to support those who are unable to switch from car use to public transport?”

“The increases in parking charges should only be considered if public transport services are also to be improved in proportion.”

5. Key theme – homes and neighbourhoods

This includes Place directorate-based proposals:

- Reduce funds to parks;
- Business waste contracts and management cost savings in street cleansing;
- Commercialisation including income generation in Bereavement Services and Adult Education;
- A joint venture with the Rep for the Library of Birmingham;
- Realignment of specific housing services and increase the number of market rent houses.



Method	Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Don't know	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Online only	49	3%	329	23%	355	25%	281	20%	305	21%	103	7%
Online + paper	63	3%	349	18%	432	22%	403	21%	553	29%	134	7%

Key findings

There is general disagreement about these homes and neighbourhoods set of proposals, with 49% actively disagreeing compared to 21% actively agreeing.

The three areas most commented upon proposals were about parks, housing and street cleansing. Of those who responded with reasons for disagreeing (over 500 respondents) approximately 64% disagreed with the parks proposals.

The second (6%) most commented upon proposal was about housing advice services (HN12). However many respondents were concerned about housing in general if not directly about this proposal and homelessness was specifically mentioned by many respondents throughout the consultation.

Similarly on the waste management proposals (HN5 and HN3) although only 4% disagreed with HN5 and only 2% disagreed with HN3 – for many this was not because they did not agree but because they were worried that charging businesses and changing the service may result in more fly tipping.

For the parks service, there was general concern about the environment of the city and respondents feeling that parks were important as a “green lung” for biodiversity, for health and as one of the last free places within the city. Mention was made of air quality. The park ranger service was specifically commented upon both online and in the public meetings, including how the amount of activity the rangers generate with the help of friends of the parks groups was extremely important in achieving many of the city’s aims.

Key findings continued

Many people accepted the necessity of cuts and felt that volunteers/community could take on more responsibility, but that they needed the support of the council to do so.

Ideas were given around sponsorship and areas of commercial activity particularly in parks, e.g. cafes and sponsorship of displays.

It was suggested that people could take on a little more responsibility for their own neighbourhood e.g. tend the roads immediately outside their homes – but others felt it was the council's responsibility to make sure the street cleaning service worked efficiently and well.

4% of concerns were raised about the Youth and Careers service – worrying about the impact changes to it would have on young people.

The following comments are typical of many points raised.

“Well-maintained parks and open spaces are crucial to healthy urban living. Cutting parks budgets further will cause fewer people to use them as they will become badly maintained. Volunteers are now critical to help with the task of caring for parks but they must have the support and supervision of rangers and park keepers. Parks provide safe walking and cycle routes, contributing to less traffic, less air pollution and more exercise. Parks contribute to good health in many ways – through trees (which help reduce pollutants), by providing space and activities (‘Active Parks’ scheme) for physical exercise, and aiding mental health by providing a connection to nature. Parks left untended will be a bigger drain on resources in the medium and longer term in many ways.”

“Our local park provides a safe walking and cycling route to work and school. It is the social focus of the community. Without the park keepers and their work, much of the value of this community resource would be lost.”

“I think that you should look for some support with keeping the city looking beautiful where you could pay for the flowers but people could volunteer their time to help.”

“I am concerned for youth services. I already feel there is little for children to do.”

“I am also concerned for council housing.”

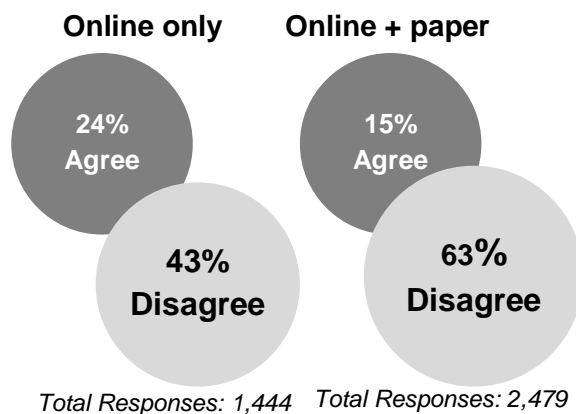
“Disposal of assets – where feasible these sites should be considered for affordable homes either via the council or local housing associations.”

“Volunteers can do a lot to support the work necessary to maintain and improve these areas but they need to be supported by adequate staff with the oversight, expertise, responsibility and accountability expected from the council.”

“Volunteers cannot and should not carry out duties without skilled council staff support. The council needs to retain ownership of the delivery of services even if it seeks support from volunteers to increase the capacity of the delivery.”

6. Key theme – health and wellbeing

These proposals cover a range of public health and social care service areas. Proposals are a mix of service redesign leading to efficiencies, e.g. the Better Care at Home proposals, recommissioning services as with the Supporting People proposals (HW1), transfer of services to other providers as in the proposals around leisure centres (HW2) and cost reductions as with the postponement of the Birmingham Care Wage.



Method	Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Don't know	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Online only	56	4%	284	20%	374	26%	257	18%	358	25%	115	8%
Online + Paper	84	3%	298	12%	404	16%	364	15%	1197	48%	132	5%

Key findings

There is significant disagreement about the health and wellbeing set of proposals: 63% of respondents actively disagreed compared to 15% actively agreeing.

534 respondents made specific comments on Be Heard, the majority of which relate to three linked themes/proposals as outlined below.

- The highest number of comments (43%) was concerned with the impact these proposals would have on the most vulnerable members of our society. Respondents feel it is the duty of the council to protect vulnerable people and that services must be provided to ensure they can lead full and active lives and contribute to society.
- Supporting People was the service proposal that most respondents expressed specific concerns about (37%). The impact of the proposals on those with mental health issues and the homeless were of particular concern. In addition to the responses on Be Heard, we have also received 1,290 hard copy survey responses and 234 letters protesting against the Supporting People proposals. This has had the effect of increasing the total 'disagree' rate by 20%.

(Both the above were also key themes flagged up in the survey's cross cutting question.)

- Many of the services in this area are considered by respondents to be preventative. Concerns have been raised that reducing these services is short-sighted and presents a false economy since it will inevitably lead to increased demand on other, often more costly, areas (28%). The impact on other public sector bodies including the NHS and the police as well as on the third sector was raised as an issue.

Key findings (continued)

Other issues raised in Be Heard survey responses included:

- Health and wellbeing considered a priority for the city by a significant number of respondents (14%) who believe it should not be impacted by cuts.
- Concerns expressed that services have already been cut substantially, that they will not withstand further cuts and that a different approach is needed (a variety of approaches have been suggested).

There have been a small number of comments by individuals on the Health & Wellbeing proposals submitted to Budget Views; Supporting People is the area of most concern.

There have also been responses submitted by:

- Birmingham Mind on behalf of Anvil House, Birmingham Mind, Friendship Care and Housing, R & J Support and Care, Swanswell, Stonham Home Group and Trident;
- St Basils; and
- BVSC.

The following comments are typical of many points raised.

“Overall I think there is a risk of making the most vulnerable in society suffer. We all get old, or need support at some point in life. It is a safety net we cut at our peril.”

“No impact on me and my family, but these are some of our city's most vulnerable groups and money should not be cut in this area.”

“I am very concerned about the proposal to reduce funding to Supporting People services by £10 million. These services provide invaluable support to some of Birmingham's most vulnerable citizens. These services have already been significantly reduced over a number of years. “

“The services have been shown to ultimately save more money than they cost due to their critical preventative function.”

“There will be increased pressure on statutory services including more hospital admissions, more costly care interventions and increased homelessness.”

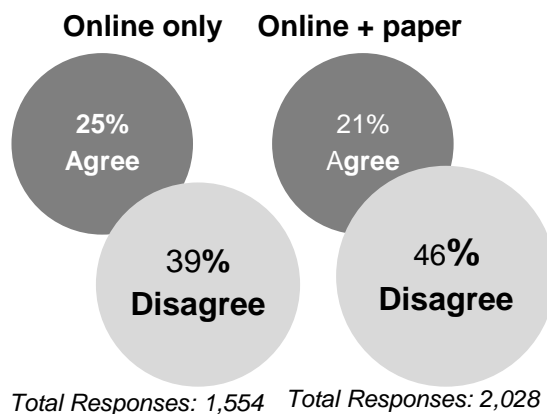
“I strongly urge the council to reconsider this proposal.”

“I am just beginning to get my life back on track with the help I receive from my support worker.”

“I strongly disagree with the further funding cuts to Supporting People services for people requiring support to remain independent and acquire the skills to maintain their tenancy, find work, manage their physical and mental health and make informed decisions. These preventative services are crucial to stop people hitting a crisis and putting additional financial strain on social services, the council and health services.”

7. Key theme – children

The proposals relate to these children’s services:
CH1: Reduce Contact and escort sessions.
CH2: Increase foster carers, merge two residential homes, and review residential short breaks.
CH3: Reduce Child protection assessment staff.
CH4: Reduce post-16 education travel provision, and more efficient quality services.
CH5: Reduce Early Help commissioning costs.
CH6: Reduce funding for Educational psychologists.



Method	Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Don't know	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Online only	61	4%	330	21%	417	27%	222	14%	388	25%	136	9%
Online + paper	81	4%	345	17%	479	24%	318	16%	615	30%	190	9%

Key findings

46% of respondents actively disagree with these proposals compared to 21% who actively agree.

Around 540 respondents provided comments – three-quarters were about cuts in general to children and families services, rather than specific proposals, with statements such as:

- Children and their families are a priority and should be protected yet the council’s record in child protection, underfunding and the many cuts suggests otherwise. It needs more funding and resources, not less (21%).
- Children are the future. The proposals impact on some of the most vulnerable people or who have the most needs, and they need our support (12%).
- It will put vulnerable families and children at more risk of harm and lead to further costs elsewhere. The cuts will have a long-term negative impact on these families, on services, and the city (10%).
- There were a large number of responses linked to a specific school – respondents commented on the impact of underfunding to SEND services overall (25%).

The two proposals with the most direct comments are: 1) child protection resources (10%), on the need for the service to be flexible and that cuts should not be made in this area as the protection of vulnerable children is vital; and 2) educational psychologists (12%), with general disagreement to cuts in the SEND services as it is vital for the most vulnerable children, and it is already underfunded and there is a lack of them.

The following comments are typical of many points raised.

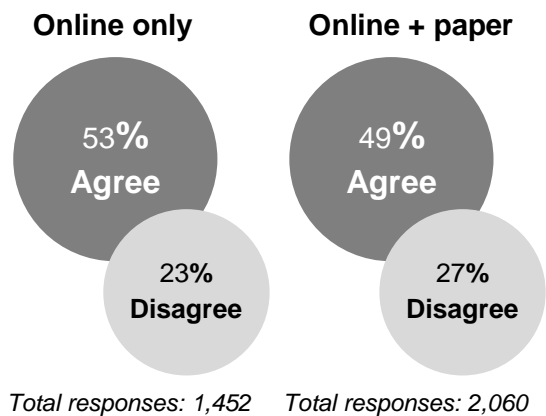
“It wouldn't have any impact on my family as we have no children, but it doesn't seem right to reduce funding to services that support the most vulnerable children in our city.”

“If a child has a bad start in life, their life opportunities are greatly limited. We should therefore be increasing funding here, not decreasing it. Spending more now could reduce future costs dealing with crime, health issues, homelessness etc.”

8. Opportunities for communities, partnerships and volunteers

The council’s role in the future will be less about direct service delivery and more about supporting a wider range of partnerships and providers, including social enterprises and the contribution of voluntary effort and the community.

The new role of the council will be more about empowering bottom-up action and brokering partnerships between communities and organisations that contribute to the future of the city.



Method	Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Don't know	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Online only	248	17%	519	36%	292	20%	204	14%	130	9%	59	4%
Online + paper	344	17%	660	32%	384	19%	275	13%	291	14%	106	5%

Key findings

There is general support for community involvement and volunteering, with 49% actively agreeing.

Of those respondents that agree:

- 7% stated that organisations/volunteers that take on this work would need the support and expertise of paid council staff to show them the ropes, be organised and monitor their workload.
- 6% felt that transferring services to volunteer/community groups or partnerships should include funding to ensure the service continues in the community and that funding should not be withdrawn at short notice.
- 6% felt that delivery was important as this included saving essential services, ensuring quality of the service continues and that regulations are followed.
- 4% felt it was import to empower the communities, to ensure they were heard and allowed to help shape the services they wanted and understand this might differ from ward to ward.
- 4% felt that having the correct resources was essential. This included having specialist skills, knowledge of service and service users. Volunteers/organisations would require training to take on new roles but this could be used to set up a work experience programme allowing the volunteers to build on employable skills so that they can get jobs in the future.

Key findings continued

Of those respondents that disagree:

- 5% felt that without funding the services would fail and become privately operated and cost more in the long term. Many saw that volunteers should not be seen as cheap labour.
- 5% felt that council services should continue to run by the council and saw this as a way of off-loading responsibility onto other organisations. Some were very concerned that essential services should remain with the council due to the vulnerable nature of the service users.
- 4% felt that there would be no accountability for volunteers as they were not paid staff and would not be reliable. Then this would lead to services being lost.
- 4% felt that delivery could suffer as the quality of the services would decrease without the specialist staff, regulations and monitoring.
- 4% felt that the correct resources should be there as this work should be done by council experts / professionally trained staff. Also volunteers would not want the burden of learning new skills.

The following comments are typical of many points raised.

“The council should look at putting in place an easy-to-use system which allows volunteers to offer their services.”

“All services should be joined-up, some parts may work better with closer working together.”

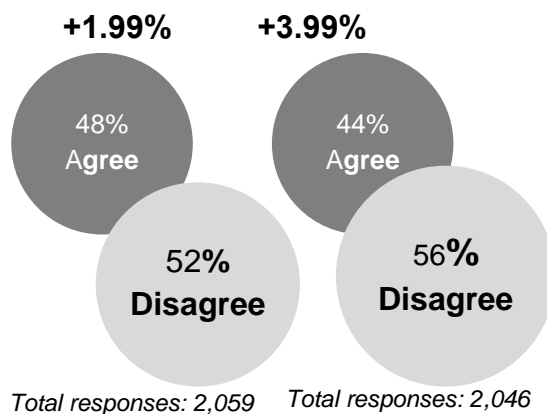
“These services will not be run by volunteers because they will be closed.”

“Working in partnership and working with social enterprises is fine but we need to accept that this can be more costly and not always as good.”

9. Council Tax and Social Care Precept

Two questions were asked in relation to Council Tax:

- Firstly, if they agree to a **1.99%** increase each year from 2017/18, and then
- If they agree to a further 2% increase each year from 2017/18, i.e. **3.99%** in total, to support social care (Social Care Precept).



Key findings

Generally, respondents disagree with both the 1.99% and 3.99% increases.

However, it should be noted that for the responses made online only (i.e. not including the 1,290 paper responses from the Supporting People related groups), there would have been in fact 56% agreeing to the 1.99% rise, and 49% agreeing to 3.99%.

The main reason given for disagreeing with both the proposed rises of 1.99% and 3.99% were that it is not affordable for the respondent themselves or others, especially those on low incomes. There were concerns that, for a lot of families, this would potentially push them into poverty/homelessness. Many said they already struggle and have faced increased costs to daily living and do not know how they would pay.

In relation to the Social Care Precept increase, respondents state that it is too high a rise and that, with previous cuts to social care services and those proposed, they were “paying more for less” and questioned what this money was for. Many also state that the 3.99% is more than inflation and more than wage/pension increases, and unfair.

There was also scepticism in the council's ability to use the money effectively to improve services, often based on perceptions that the council have poorly managed services and budgets previously and that it should stop waste and provide better services.

Even those who agreed with the tax rise often commented that this was only if the extra money was spent wisely to improve/maintain important services for Birmingham. Many did not want to pay Council Tax when services are getting cut.

Other reasons given include:

- This is central government's fault and they should provide more funding, and fund social care in particular. Some also stated that the council should lobby/fight back against the government;
- The council should look for more savings within the current budget;
- Council Tax is high enough already;
- Only have one rise for one year, or review it every year;
- Adjust Council Tax bands to make it fairer in terms of lower versus higher incomes, with some suggesting that only the more well-off pay or that it is means tested.

10. Comments and suggestions for delivering services differently

Key findings

Overall there were 866 comments made to this section of the survey which asked how the council could save money, resulting in 89 different themes.

16.2% (140) of the comments were related to actual delivery of services. There was a major concern about effective delivery of services, in particular focusing on the services local people need and cutting out bureaucracy.

There were concerns about services being provided (15.9% of all comments). It was felt that vital services to the community were being cut, and that some of the services/projects provided are not needed (community centres, translation services) but others are essential (those for vulnerable people). ***“A priority is to put people and their welfare at the forefront of council spending.”***

Alongside this was to ensure council services were reviewed to identify those most needed and most effective in terms of delivery and costs. ***“Tighter controls, internal auditing.” “Ensure services are vetted and are subject to constant reviews to check value for money.”***

Other suggestions made about services were to have an entrance charge for museums and art galleries, and parking fees at parks to help generate income. ***“Some of the facilities that are free to visit could introduce a nominal fee.”***

8.5% of all comments were raised about contractors delivering services, specifically about the costs and the agreement between the council and the contractor. The most mentioned contractors were Service Birmingham and Amey.

An integrated approach to help deliver services was raised in 8.5% of the comments: the council joining up more effectively with other local authorities, the health service and the police to run services together, plus sharing office buildings. ***“More collaboration with other local authorities in the WMCA.” “Work with the NHS, police etc. There are some services that are overlapping.”***

Additional to this was the use of volunteers to help run local services such as parks and street cleaning. ***“I strongly encourage more opportunities for community participation in caring for the city.”***

7.6% of the comments were related to fortnightly waste collections, reducing fly tipping and better recycling. ***“Cut waste collections to fortnightly. This will save money and force people to recycle more.”***

Generating revenue (7.5%) suggestions, included ensuring unpaid Council Tax is paid, fining people for illegal parking and for fly tipping. ***“Heavily fine traders and individuals who fly post on council property such as street furniture.”***

6.1% of comments related to councillors. It was felt that councillors should minimise their expenses and put pressure on government to minimise cuts to the council's budget. ***“Councillors continue to put pressure on government to minimise the continued cuts to public services.”***

11. Other issues

As in previous years, there were calls through most of the consultation mechanisms to set a needs budget and for stronger campaigning against the cuts and for fair funding. One contributor asked whether there would ever be an end to the cuts.

At these meetings, the cabinet explained they would not be allowed to set a deficit budget, as it would not be signed off by the legally responsible council officer. The council had been campaigning for fair funding and the leader said he would continue to campaign against the cuts and austerity.

Representativeness and consultation approach

Although strenuous efforts were made to publicise ways in which people could make comments on the budget proposals, it is not possible to simultaneously have an open access online survey and ensure that responses by different groups of people are proportional to their numbers in Birmingham's population. The original intent for the consultation was to direct the majority of response through the Be Heard online survey.

This has the advantage of allowing respondents to make overarching comments on all the proposals and to rank the services most important to them. Balancing the needs of caring for vulnerable people and providing services that the general public would like and that are synonymous with a major city is tricky and the Be Heard survey allowed the respondents to give more considered responses. The Budget Views email address was opened in response to suggestions from voluntary organisations that vulnerable people would not be able to access the online survey. In fact the majority of responses to Budget Views have not been from vulnerable service users, but from organisations, many as a result of campaigns e.g. about museums funding, parks and Supporting People services.

Paper copies of the survey were accepted and over 1,400 were delivered on one day through a campaign that also featured in the media. These had a very different profile of respondent than the online responses and were often filled in by groups of service users – sometimes in residential settings – and included photocopied forms with parts prefilled. To avoid a domination of one sector as a result of this campaign, paper results are reported separately from the online survey.

The approximately 200 responses on Budget Views and areas of concern raised are taken into account in the individual sections and a table of responses from organisations is included in Appendix I of this report. The online survey respondents were asked to complete personal profiles, answering questions on gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability and long-term condition/illness. A large majority of respondents also answered these questions and a detailed analysis of this data is contained in Appendix II.

During the 'Twitter Takeovers' questions were asked of all the cabinet members and points made to them about budget issues relevant to their portfolios. They echoed concerns that came out strongly e.g. about Supporting People and museums, as well as questions of an ongoing nature e.g. on waste management. In general this medium catered to a group of more digitally aware/enabled respondents but it did also form the purpose of directing respondents to the online survey where more detailed responses could be submitted.

Before the publication of the consultation document, the council's scrutiny function also undertook a review of the proposals and their approach to consultation and these reports are available online at www.birmingham.gov.uk/scrutiny

Appendix II also contains an analysis of online respondents by ward where possible, that is, if they gave a full postcode.

An important principle of the consultation process was open access. However, this has meant that the responses are not statistically representative of the views of Birmingham residents. As well as the lower representation of some groups of residents than their proportion in the city's population, responders to any consultation process tend to be those concerned about a particular issue. However these views do reflect the views of a large number of people in the city and are thus most important.

Some respondents did not feel that there was sufficient detail in the proposals to make a decision, however that detail will be provided by individual directorates at service level in consultation with service users and the general public, as appropriate, when proposals are taken forward.

APPENDIX I: Responses from organisations

No.	Organisation name	Theme	Topics covered
1	Southbank Centre, London (1 of 2 individual letters)	Job and Skills _ Museums	Birmingham Museums Trust – objecting to the scale of the proposed budget cut – compromises support from Arts Council Collection
2	Southbank Centre, London (2 of 2 individual letters)	Job and Skills _ Museums	Birmingham Museums Trust – objecting to the scale of the proposed budget cut – compromises support from Arts Council Collection
3	Museum's Association, London	Job and Skills _ Museums	Birmingham Museums Trust – objecting to the scale of the proposed budget cut – undermines aim to secure future
4	Unite Birmingham – Community Youth Workers	Homes and Neighbourhoods- Youth and Careers	Objects to merging Youth Service and Careers Service – approaches differ and so not appropriate to merge
5	Victoria and Albert Museum, London	Job and Skills _ Museums	Birmingham Museums Trust – objecting to the scale of the proposed budget cut – case made on level of usage and the specific access provided to Islamic and South Asian art
6	Institute of Contemporary Arts, London	Job and Skills _ Museums	BMT – level of cuts detrimental to arts provision in the area
7	University of Leicester	Job and Skills _ Museums	Objects to BMT cuts
8	Modern Art Oxford	Job and Skills _ Museums	BMT – cuts compromise public services that drive cultural tourism, bring revenues and drive re-generation and make the city a world-class place to work and live in
9	University of Birmingham	Job and Skills _ Museums	BMT – cuts will affect the long-term health of the service
10	Tate Britain, London	Job and Skills _ Museums	BMT – cuts risk access to unique collections
11	Delaware Art Museum, USA	Job and Skills _ Museums	BMT – risk to the collection
12	Birmingham Civic Society	Job and Skills _ Museums	BMT – cuts will affect the long-term health of the service
13	Anvil House, Erdington	Supporting People	Supporting People – risks to service provision / impact on service users and effect on staff of proposed cuts

No.	Organisation name	Theme	Topics covered
14	National Portrait Gallery, London	Job and Skills _ Museums	BMT – reduction in funding could severely impact participation in learning and participation programmes and work with partners in the arts world
15	Museum of London	Job and Skills _ Museums	BMT – particular concern about the impact on the work of the Conservation service
16	UoB – Ironbridge Institute	Job and Skills _ Museums	BMT – objects to level of cuts – harms potential to raise profile
17	Drakon Heritage	Job and Skills _ Museums	BMT – objects to level of cuts and in particular the consequences for conservation / The Staffordshire Hoard
18	Natural History Museum, London	Job and Skills _ Museums	BMT – objects to level of cuts which could compromise BMT's agreed hosting of the NHT "Dippy" exhibition
19	Yardley Neighbourhood Forum / Friends of Oaklands	Homes and Neighbourhoods- Parks	Parks – objects to loss of Oaklands Recreation Ground park keeper
20	Brandwood Ward Labour Party	General comments	Results of a local opinion survey
21	Birmingham Education Partnership	Job and Skills _ Museums	BMT – objects to level of cuts – in particular the impact on access for educational purposes
22	Glen Howells Architects	Job and Skills _ Museums	MAC and BMAG – objects to cuts and suggests engaging with DCMS and Treasury for funds to help with more gradual transition
23	Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne	Job and Skills _ Museums	BMT – objects to level of cuts – currently co-curating a touring exhibition
24	Supporting people collective organisational response	Health and Wellbeing- Supporting People	Detailed letter and presentation regarding services users of Supporting People services
25	Forward Thinking Birmingham (consortium of supporting young people with MH issues)	Health and Wellbeing- Supporting People	Supporting People – objects to proposals – particularly that they are not being considered in the context of broader strategic health and social care work
26	Birmingham Civic Society	Job and Skills _ Museums	BMT – objects to level of cuts – refers to 5,000-strong petition
27	RNIB, Action and BID Services	Health and Wellbeing- Supporting People	Detailed response on the impact of Supporting People and other cuts such as Access Services and Public Health – requesting that detailed impact assessments be undertaken
28	Kids in Museums	Job and Skills _	BMT – objects to level of cuts – in particular how it might

No.	Organisation name	Theme	Topics covered
		Museums	affect access for children to the city's museums
29	The British Museum. London	Job and Skills _ Museums	BMT – objects to level of cuts – specifically the impact on partnership working
30	Gateway Family Services / Health Exchange	Health and Wellbeing- Supporting People	Health Trainer service – case for retaining the service
31	Healthwatch Birmingham		Objects to cuts to Museums and Heritage, Parks, Supporting People services and children's travel; also objects to increase in Council Tax; overall, how these things impact on health and wellbeing
32	Midland Mencap (for Short Break providers network)		Short Breaks for Children – objects to the 25% cut
33	Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust		Concerned that the proposed 20% cut to the Parks and Nature Conservation budget
34	BID Services	Health and Wellbeing- Supporting People	Supporting People – objects to proposals – and impact on people with sensory impairments
35	Birmingham and Black Country Local Nature Partnership		Making the case for greater consideration of local nature in priorities – specifically concerned about cuts to HN7 including proposals to sell public open space, on top of an existing commitment to sell eight acres of green space each year
36	St Basils	Health and Wellbeing- Supporting People	Supporting People – objects to proposals – particularly that they are not being considered in the context of broader strategic health and social care work
37	Birmingham MIND	Health and Wellbeing- Supporting People	Supporting People – objects to proposals – particular focus on what their contract delivers
38	BM Trust	Job and Skills _ Museums	BMT – objects to level of cuts
39	Birmingham South Central CCG		Objects to cuts in a variety of health and care related areas – seeks further discussions in the context of BCF and STP
40	Wordsley Manor, Dudley	Job and Skills _ Museums	BMT – objects to level of cuts – specifically ref the Public Picture Gallery Fund - issues relating to free access
41	BVSC		Report detailing impact assessment of the items set out in the consultation document
42	Midland Heart	Health and Wellbeing- Supporting People	SP – objects to proposals – particular focus on those relating to their service users and tenants

No.	Organisation name	Theme	Topics covered
43	Anvil House Birmingham Mind Friendship Care and Housing R&J Support and Care Services Ltd Stonham/HomeGroup Swanswell Trident Reach	Health and Wellbeing- Supporting People	Supporting People mental health providers collective response setting out the impact on their service users of Supporting People related cuts
44	ICON Museum, London	Job and Skills _ Museums	BMT – particular concern about the impact on the work of the Conservation service
45	Art Fund, London	Job and Skills _ Museums	BMT – objects to level of cuts and how this might impact on free access
46	BCU School of Art	Job and Skills _ Museums	BMT – objects to level of cuts – specifically the impact on students of BCU and their access to BMAG through partnership arrangements

APPENDIX II: Profile of survey respondents

Age (years)	Online and paper % of total	Online only % of total
Under 18	0%	0%
18 to 24	5%	4%
25 to 34	16%	15%
35 to 44	21%	23%
45 to 54	23%	21%
55 to 64	16%	15%
65 to 84	8%	9%
85+	0.2%	0.2%
Prefer not to say / not answered	10%	13%
Total	100%	100%

Gender	Online and paper % of total	Online only % of total
Female	46%	47%
Male	38%	36%
Prefer not to say / not answered	16%	17%
Total	100%	100%

Sexual orientation	Online and paper % of total	Online only % of total
Bisexual	2%	2%
Gay or lesbian	3%	4%
Heterosexual	66%	64%
Other	1%	1%
Prefer not to say / not answered	29%	29%
Total	100%	100%

Ethnicity	Online and paper % of total	Online only % of total
Asian / Asian British	9%	5%
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	7%	3%
Mixed / multi-ethnic groups	5%	2%
Other ethnic group	1%	0.5%
White	65%	74%
Prefer not to say / not answered	14%	15%
Total	100%	100%

Religion	Online and paper % of total	Online only % of total
Christian	40%	37%
Buddhist	1%	1%
Hindu	1%	1%
Jewish	0.4%	0.4%
Muslim	6%	3%
Sikh	1%	0.4%
No religion	25%	32%
Prefer not to say / not answered	25%	25%
Any Other	1%	0.4%
Total	100%	100%

Physical or mental health conditions lasting or expecting to last 12 months or more	Online and paper % of total	Online only % of total
No	46%	62%
Yes	34%	17%
Prefer not to say / not answered	20%	21%
Total	100%	100%

Specific conditions or illnesses (people could choose more than one)	Online and paper % of total	Online only % of total
Dexterity	7%	9%
Hearing	11%	16%
Learning	46%	12%
Memory	15%	12%
Mental health	62%	38%
Mobility	25%	30%
Social or behaviour	10%	6%
Stamina	14%	18%
Vision	7%	8%
Other	6%	10%

Note: percentages do not add up to 100% as respondents allowed more than one option

Caring responsibilities	Online and paper % of total	Online only % of total
None	49%	46%
Primary carer of child	16%	21%
Primary carer disabled child	2%	2%
Primary carer disabled adult	3%	3%
Primary carer older person	4%	4%
Secondary carer	6%	7%
Prefer not to say / not answered	21%	17%

Respondent type (Question 1)	Online and paper % of total	Online only % of total
Resident	88%	87%
Local business	3%	4%
Charity	6%	7%
Community	4%	7%
Work for council	6%	11%
Councillor	0.03%	0.1%
Public sector	2%	3%
Other – total	3%	4%

Note: percentages do not add up to 100% as respondents allowed more than one option.

Respondents by ward – all responses

Of the respondents who provided a postcode (2,275), 4% live outside Birmingham. The remaining 96% live, or are based, in the following wards.

Ward (ranked highest first)	Total respondents	% total respondents in council
MOSELEY AND KINGS HEATH	226	10%
BOURNVILLE	117	5%
SPARKBROOK	113	5%
LADYWOOD	111	5%
BRANDWOOD	95	4%
STOCKLAND GREEN	70	3%
SOUTH YARDLEY	65	3%
NECHELLS	64	3%
WEOLEY	64	3%
NORTHFIELD	62	3%
EDGBASTON	61	3%
HARBORNE	60	3%
LONGBRIDGE	60	3%
SUTTON VESEY	57	3%
SELLY OAK	50	2%
HALL GREEN	49	2%
ACOCKS GREEN	47	2%
BARTLEY GREEN	47	2%
BILLESLEY	46	2%
OSCOTT	46	2%
SHELDON	46	2%
SPRINGFIELD	44	2%
SUTTON TRINITY	42	2%
HANDSWORTH WOOD	40	2%
QUINTON	40	2%
SOHO	40	2%
TYBURN	38	2%
ASTON	37	2%
KINGSTANDING	37	2%
ERDINGTON	35	2%
KINGS NORTON	35	2%
SHARD END	35	2%
HODGE HILL	33	2%
STECHFORD AND YARDLEY NORTH	28	1%
SUTTON NEW HALL	28	1%
SUTTON FOUR OAKS	26	1%
WASHWOOD HEATH	25	1%
BORDESLEY GREEN	24	1%
LOZELLS AND EAST HANDSWORTH	21	1%
PERRY BARR	15	1%
Grand total	2,179	100%