

Shropshire Council Budget for 2025/26

Consultation Report

February 2025



1 Introduction and Methodology

Like councils all over the country, Shropshire Council's day-to-day budget is under pressure as costs have increased and a growing number of people need essential services like social care (which accounts for almost 80% of the budget). To save money, the council has already made some tough choices such as charging for garden waste collections, reducing road repairs, making changes to CCTV monitoring and moving out of Shirehall to a smaller and more sustainable building.

The budget consultation launched in December 2024 set out a series of proposals for how further budget savings could be achieved in 2025/26. These proposals include moving to three weekly general waste collections, reducing opening hours of the museum and castle in Shrewsbury, switching off some streetlights for part of the time and changing park and ride bus services in Shrewsbury. These were discussed prior to the launch of the consultation by all party group leaders. All are keen to learn more about the views of local residents. The consultation feedback summarised in this report will be used to inform decision making.

The consultation ran from 12th December 2024 to the 26th January 2025. A survey to gather views was made available on the 'Get Involved' section of Shropshire Council's website. The opportunity to participate was promoted widely using a range of communication methods and those unable to participate online were encouraged to make use of other response methods including printable survey forms available in libraries and the opportunity to request large print and other alternative formats. Email and postal options were also made available for those who wished to provide written responses. A robust communications plan was implemented to ensure as many local residents as possible were aware of the opportunity to participate and share their views.

There was a significant response to the consultation, with more responses than the previous year. Over 3,500 people took part in the engagement. 18,261 comments were submitted within the survey and written submissions; all have been read and categorised. This report summarises the feedback, but additional analysis can be undertaken and provided on request where officers and decision makers require more granular analysis. The results of the feedback are considered in detail within this report with findings set out within the following sections:

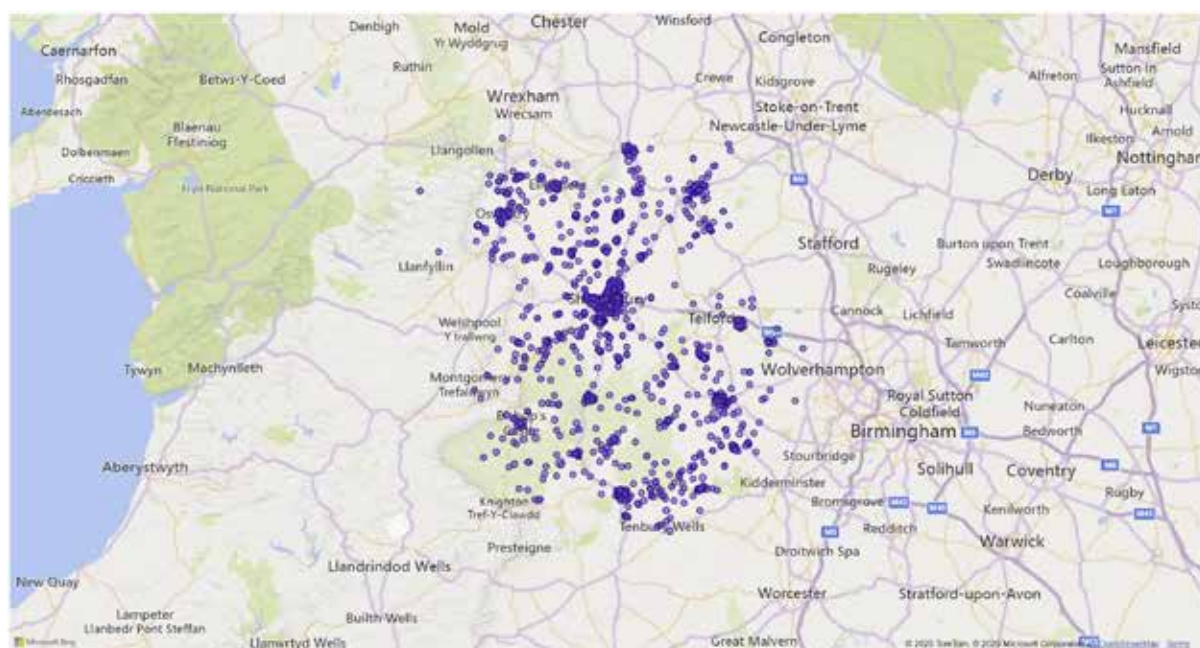
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2 Respondent Demographics

There were 3,585 responses to the budget consultation. 3,556 people responded to the online survey and 28 people submitted written consultation responses (a small number commented that they sent a written response and completed a survey). Demographic data was only collected through the survey, but this provides important information to help Shropshire Council understand the profile of respondents and whether any feedback has been missed from key groups or respondent types. The volume of responses received means that the feedback is representative of the wider population.

Map 1 below highlights that responses were received from communities and locations across the whole county and a few from beyond the local authority boundaries. The locations shown on the map are often based on partial postcodes to ensure individual respondents cannot be identified. The distribution of responses aligns with areas of greater populations with concentrations in the county's main market towns but also a good distribution across more rural areas of the county.

Map 1 Geographical spread of survey respondents



Mapping survey respondents is particularly important for some of the themes within the budget consultation and additional analysis can be provided because it should be noted that many comments highlighted that feedback was influenced by location. For example, people living in rural areas were less likely to wish to see significant capital investments in Shrewsbury. This is explored further within other sections of the report.

Figure 1 highlights that the majority of survey respondents described themselves as local residents (72.2%) rather than representatives of local organisations. 218 employees of Shropshire Council responded to the survey along with 63

representatives of town, parish or rural councils and/or elected members of Shropshire Council. 129 respondents answered the survey as a representative of a local business or voluntary and community sector group or organisation. An 'other' option was also provided for additional comments. Themes within the responses included ex-employees of Shropshire Council and people with caring responsibilities.

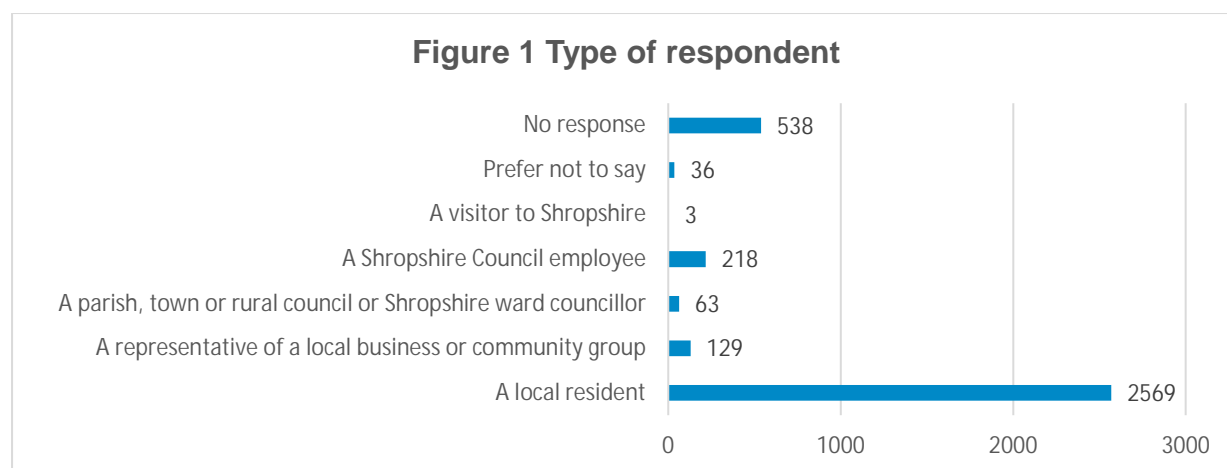
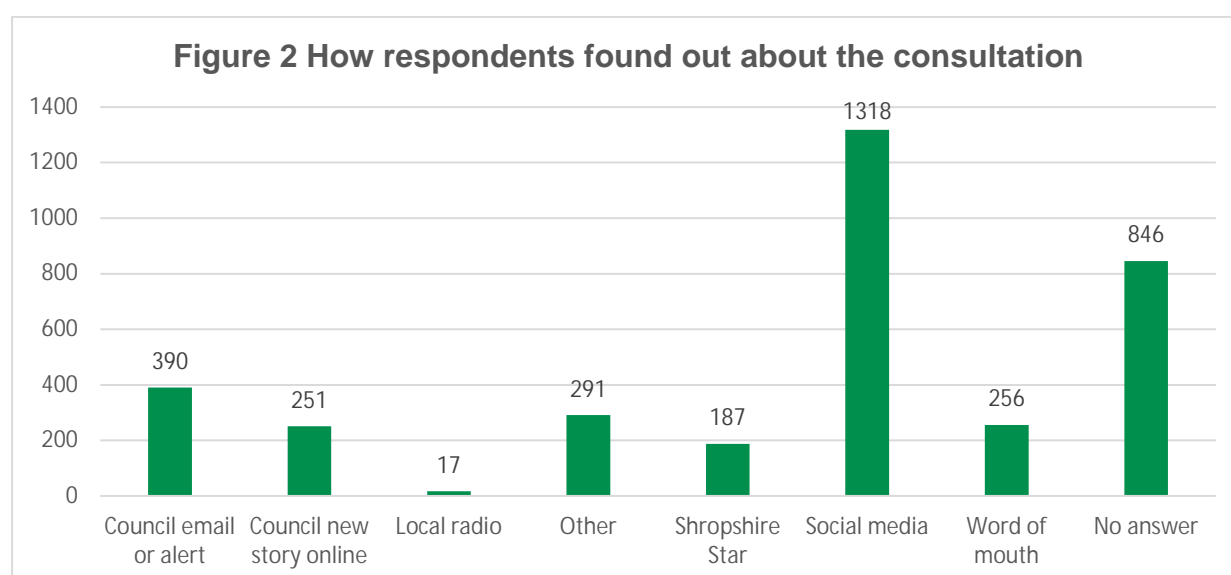


Figure 2 displays how online survey respondents heard about the consultation. Social media was the main method with 37.1% of people finding out in this way. Other forms of communication were much less effective although 23.8% of respondents chose not to answer the question so may have access the information in one of these ways or through other sources. The information is helpful and highlights how social media has become a dominant communication method over recent years for many local residents.



In order to find out more about the survey respondents a series of demographic questions were included in the survey. The response is briefly summarised within this report but can be used to undertake more detailed analysis where this can assist decision making or a deeper understanding of people and their views. Figure 3 displays the gender of respondents. 41.9% of online survey respondents were female and 27.9% male. This is common within survey responses and national

research suggests that women are more likely to respond to a survey or consultation on behalf of a household compared to men.

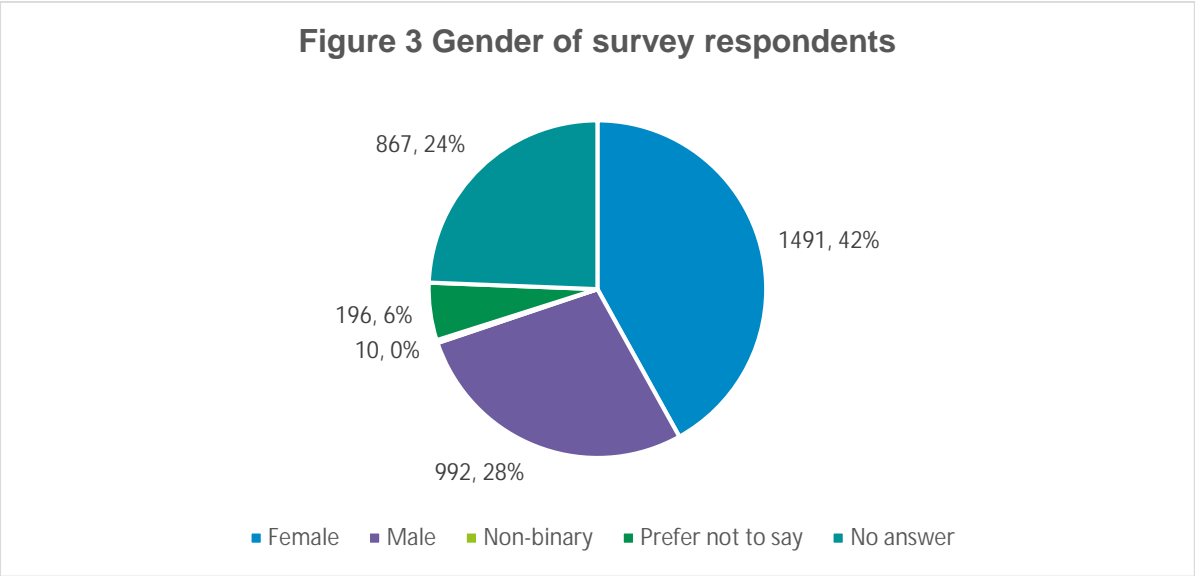
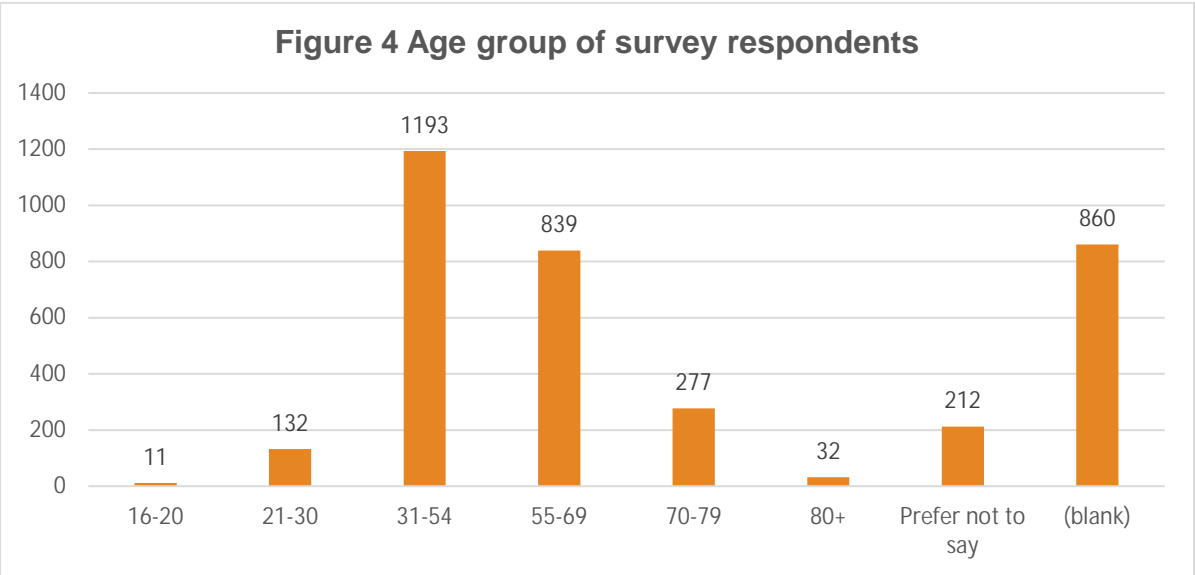
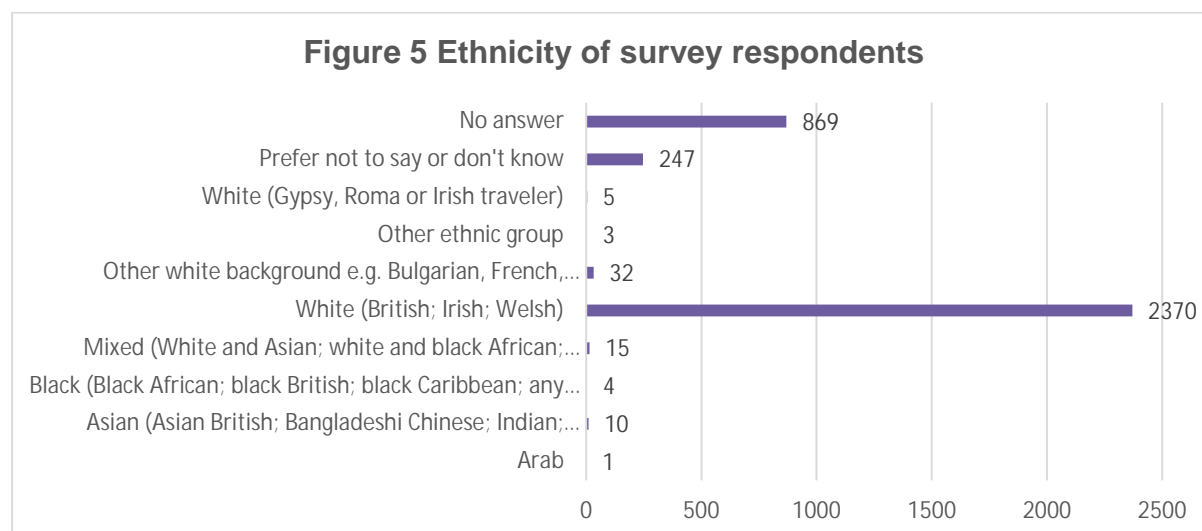


Figure 4 illustrates the distribution of responses by age group. Interestingly the distribution of respondents by age group is not typical of Shropshire Council survey respondents which tend to see a skew towards older age groups. Within this survey the 31-54 age group was dominant with slightly lower than average responses for the 55-69 and 70-79 age groups. This may reflect the fact that social media was the most successful form of consultation (perhaps with fewer older people relying on social media as a main communication method).



In any consultation it is important to understand whether people of all characteristics are represented and often people of different ethnic backgrounds can be underrepresented in surveys. This may be less of a concern within this type of survey but can be a challenge within surveys used to inform the design of services (e.g. opening hours/days, facilities that need to reflect cultural and religious considerations etc.) Figure 5 shows that the response to the budget consultation was

fairly typical proportionately, but the larger sample helped to ensure a little diversity. 66.6% of the respondents were White British, Irish and Welsh with 2% from other ethnic groups and a significant proportion preferring not to say (24.4%).



Household size was the next characteristic explored within the online survey. This information will be used alongside other information e.g. responses to waste service questions to inform decision making (presenting all cross tabulations and further analysis within this report would result in a long, less accessible document). Figure 6 shows that most individuals responding to the budget consultation survey live in households where there are no more than 2 individuals aged over 16. 45.6% of respondents are from households with 2 people aged 16 or over and 11.9% from households with one person aged 16 or over. This result reflects the demographics of Shropshire with its older population.

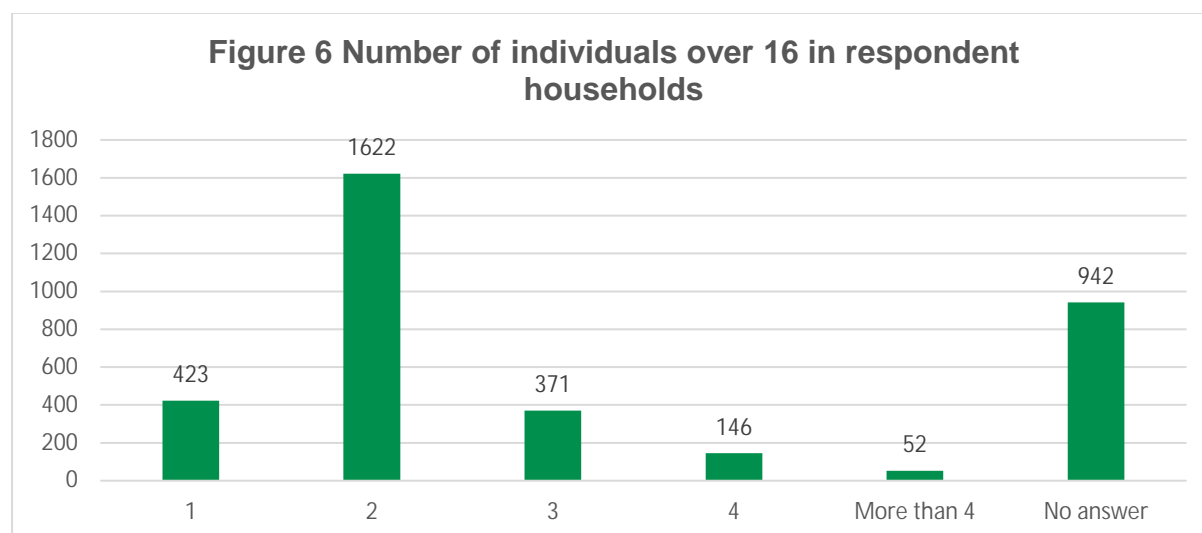
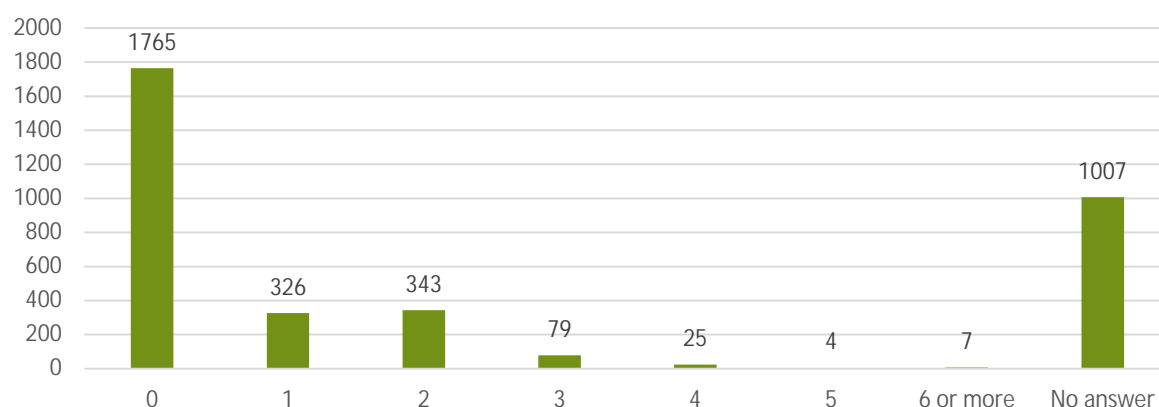


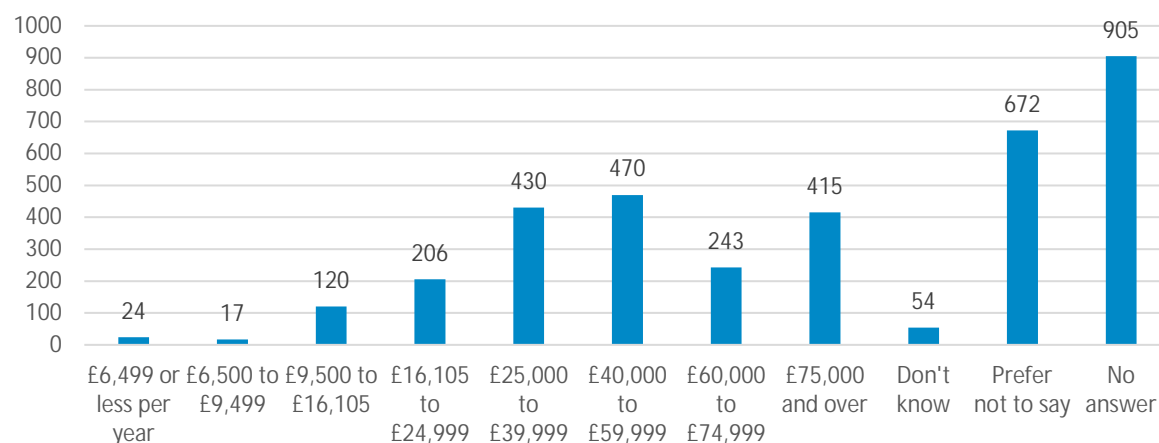
Figure 7 confirms the results above and highlights that 49.6% of respondent households do not have any children aged 15 or under living within them (22.0% of respondents do live with one or more children aged 15 or under).

Figure 7 Number of children 15 or under in respondent households



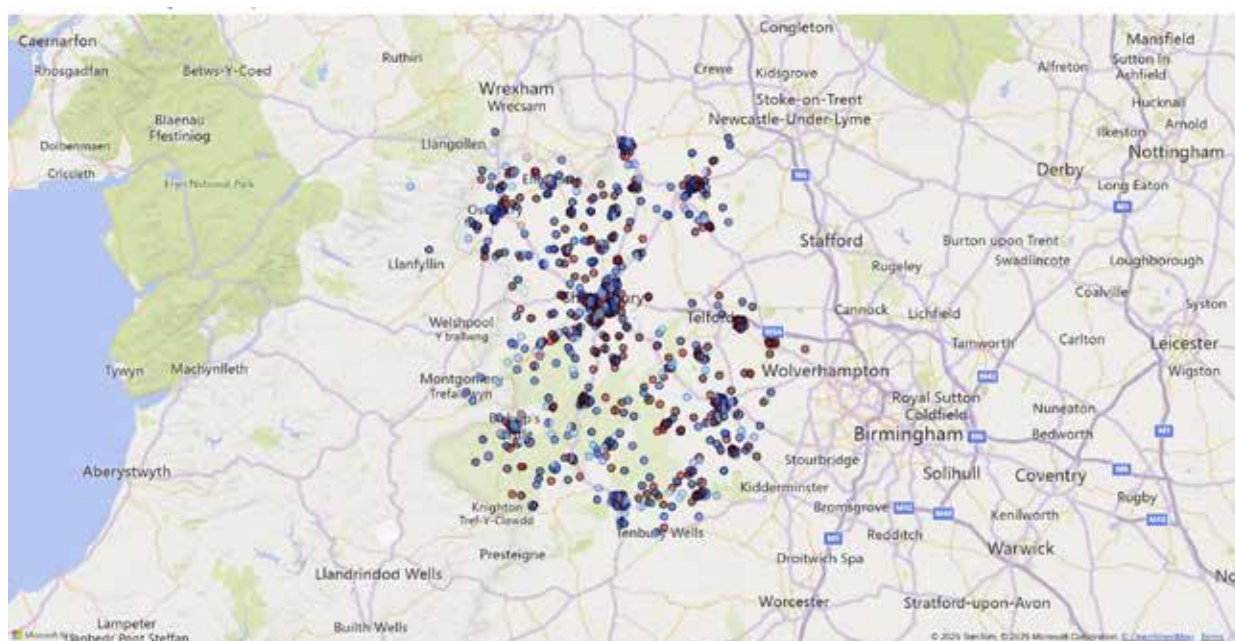
The budget consultation collected information on household income bands due to the financial impact of many of the difficult decisions that will need to be taken over the coming months and year. This can be analysed further to better the understand impact of some of the proposals being made to reduce spending. Figure 8 below shows that 4.5% have a household income of £16,015 or below, 31.1% have a household income between £16,105 and £59,999 and 18.5% have a household income of £60,000 or more. Many survey respondents preferred not to say or did not answer the question.

Figure 8 Respondent household incomes

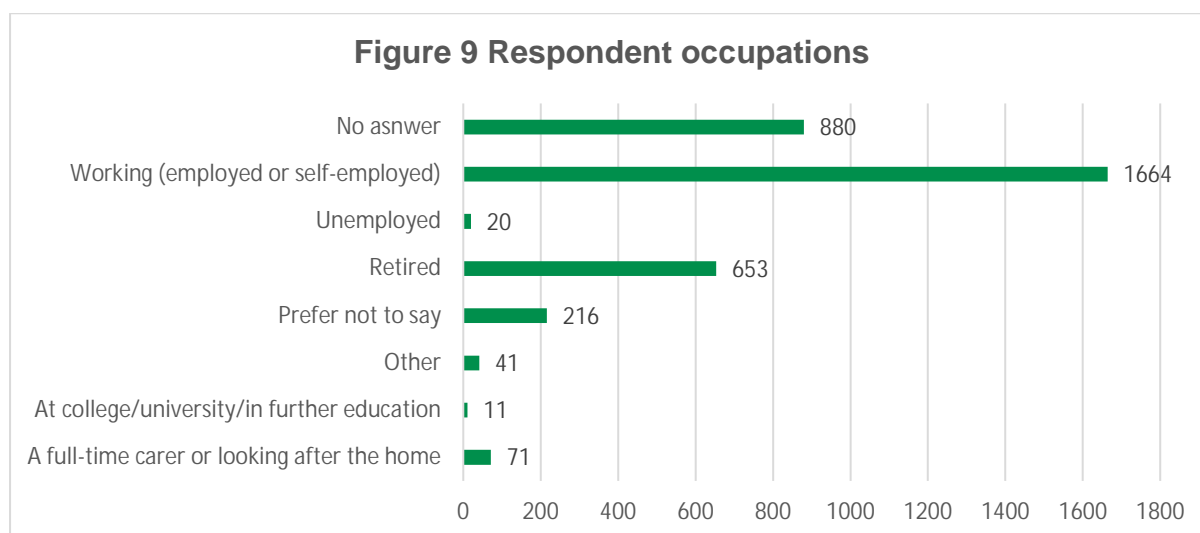


Map 2 displays the responses geographically, removing those who did not provide a response. The lowest income households are pale blue, moving to darker blue, pale red and then darkest red representing the highest household incomes. The results suggest that some of the lowest incomes are within some of the less accessible rural areas of the county, furthest from some of the main settlements (with concentrations of pale blue particularly evident in the more rural areas to the mid and south west of the county). However, a view of each household income band separately highlights a fairly even dispersal across the county displaying strongly that Shropshire has significant diversity of household incomes in every community and does not have clusters which may be more evident in other areas of the UK.

Map 2 Respondent household income by location



The survey was also used to gather information on occupation and the results can be seen in Figure 9. Most respondents (46.8%) are working as employees or in self-employed roles. This links to the earlier results highlighting that 33.5% are aged 31-54 and 23.6% aged 55-69 (many below retirement age). 18.4% of survey respondents are retired. Very few students or people who are unemployed completed the survey.



Shropshire Council is conscious that full impact assessments are needed before any difficult decisions impacting service provision are undertaken. To help in this work to assess impact, questions were included in the survey to determine if survey respondents have disabilities, caring responsibilities or come from residential or foster care backgrounds. Figure 10 below displays the proportion of respondents whose daily activity is limited through disability or long-term illness. 49% do not have limitations to daily activity whilst 13% have their daily activity limited a little and 4% a lot.

Figure 10 Respondents by whether they have a disability or long-standing illness limiting daily activity

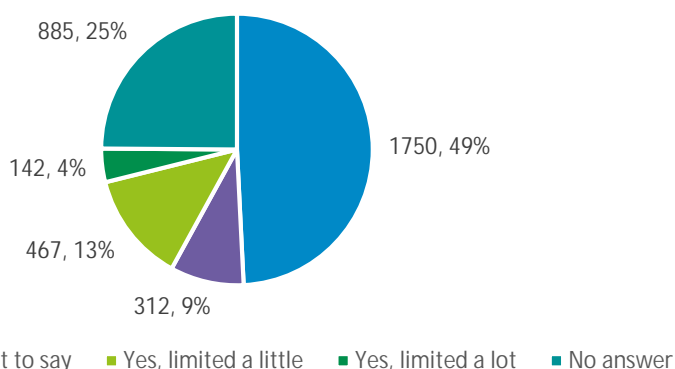


Figure 11 highlights that very few people who have previously been in residential or foster care are represented within the survey sample, but it is encouraging that some are (33 people). This may be too small a proportion to undertake significant additional analysis but could be interesting to use within additional analysis should a more in-depth view be needed for some of the budget decisions.

Figure 11 Respondents by whether they have ever been in residential or foster care

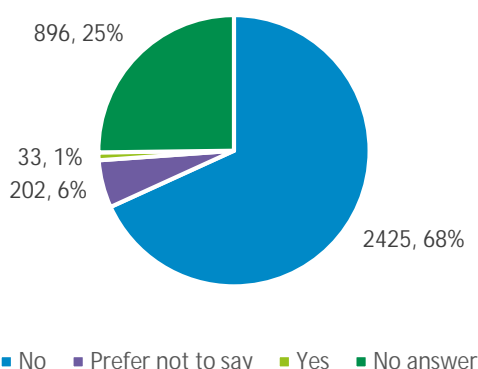
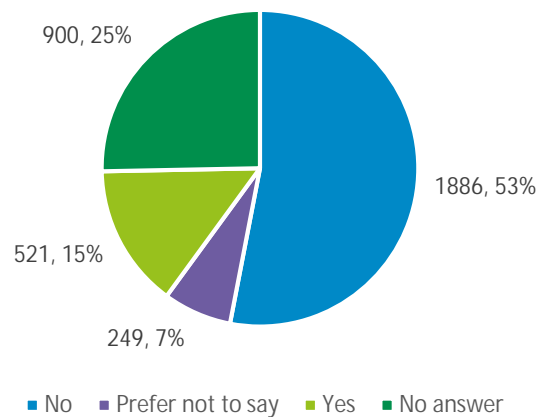


Figure 12 suggests that unpaid carers are represented within the survey sample with 521 unpaid carers having taken the time to support Shropshire Council by sharing their views on the budget proposals set out within the consultation. In the same way as other characteristics will be used in impact assessment, caring responsibilities are important and Shropshire Council will be seeking to minimise the impact of service changes on unpaid carers where that is possible (recognising the need to ensure services can be sustainable with available budgets and resources). Regular engagement with unpaid carers is undertaken and will be increasingly important as service changes are required over time. Unpaid carers form 15% of the survey sample.

Figure 12 Respondents by whether they have caring responsibilities (regular care and support as an unpaid carer)



The summary analysis of the demographic information gathered through the online survey highlights that most respondents consider themselves as individual respondents and local residents (72.2%) rather than representative of local groups, business or communities (e.g. representatives of town, parish or rural councils and Shropshire Council councillors). The annual budget consultation can often attract a significant proportion of responses from Shropshire Council employees, keen to influence the decisions that are taken due to the impact on the services they run and support. However, as shown in Figure 1, there were limited numbers of survey respondents describing themselves as employees (218 of 3,556 (6.1%). It is possible that this is under-reported, and some members of staff could have been reluctant to identify themselves as such.

Social media was the main method through which respondents found out about the consultation and this is helpful information to inform consultations which will take place over the coming year to take forward some of the suggestions included, but not covered in full within the consultation (see section 9 of the report).

The demographic data collected helps the council understand the profile of respondents and ensure feedback from key groups is not missed. This information can be used for further analysis and to assist in the production of, and further development of equality and social inclusion health impact assessments (known locally as ESHIAs).

The next section of the report considers feedback on Shropshire Council's approach and prioritisation to seek to deliver a balanced budget.

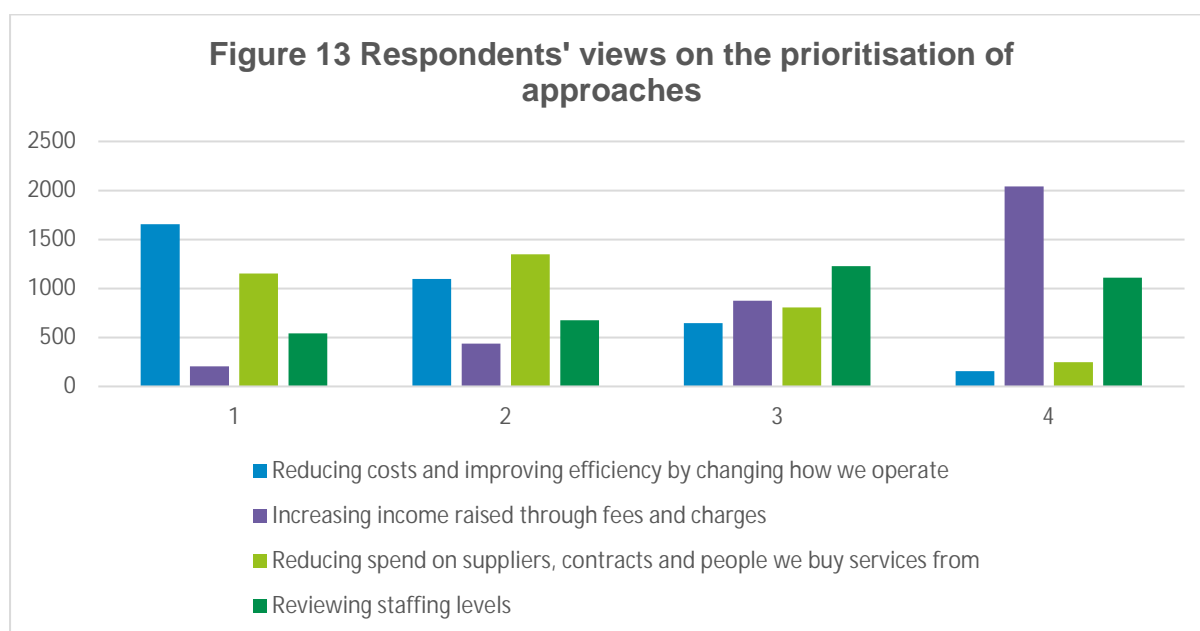
3 Prioritisation

The budget consultation survey set out the following approaches that can be used to achieve a balanced budget:

- Reducing costs and improving efficiency by changing how we operate
- Increasing income raised through fees and charges
- Reducing spend on suppliers, contracts and third parties
- Reviewing staffing levels

Survey respondents were asked to rank these approaches to suggest which should be prioritised. Figure 13 displays the results. The results are quite clear and although there are more mixed views on which of the 4 approaches should be ranked third the majority view presents the options in the following order:

1. Reducing costs and improving efficiency by changing how we operate
2. Reducing spend on suppliers, contracts and third parties
3. Reviewing staffing levels
4. Increasing income raised through fees and charges



Increasing income through fees and charges is the least popular option (ranked 4th by 57.4% of the survey respondents). There are more mixed views on reviewing staffing levels. The most popular approach ranked top by 46.6% of respondents (and second by 30.8%) is to reduce costs and improve efficiency within the way Shropshire Council operates. Reducing spend on suppliers and contracts was ranked second overall. Many of these approaches are referred to within comments responding to other questions within the survey and touched on later in this report. To understand the views of respondents to a greater extent there was an opportunity to add a comment to explain the ranking selected.

1,053 survey respondents added a comment. Each of these comments has been read and categorised. Table 1 below displays the response. A small proportion of respondents covered more than one theme within their reply (as shown below). The top theme was reducing the cost of agency staff and consultants followed by protecting core services and stopping any unnecessary activity. The third top theme was reducing the wages of senior managers and minimising spend on management costs and organisational hierarchy.

Table 1 Respondents' views on approach and prioritisation

Theme	Count	%
Agree with the approach / positive comments	30	3%
Concern - Reductions to staffing/resources will lead to service shortfalls	52	4%
Concern - Need to protect core services / stop unnecessary activity	210	18%
Cost saving - Reduce agency staff and consultants	223	19%
Cost saving - Reduced staffing levels and staff benefits	104	9%
Cost saving - Improved management /delivery of services	159	14%
Cost saving - community and partnership working	18	2%
Cost saving - Reduction in senior managers / wages and hierarchy	118	10%
Review Social Care activity and spending	71	6%
Review wasteful spending/ better financial control/ better value for money	69	6%
Cannot afford another increase in council tax	34	3%
Other	74	6%
Total	1,162	100%

Example comments are helpful, and a selection are shown below to help further understand the nature of the feedback obtained.

Example comments – Approach to prioritisation

1. Reducing costs and improving efficiency by changing how we operate

- *“All staff including management should consider what could be done to reduce costs in general being more energy efficient, less wasteful in general, costs shouldn't automatically be passed onto residents.”*
- *“There are still services provided that are not statutory. You're going to the wrong places first.”*
- *“If we spend about 75-80% of our budget on adult and social care then we have to look at how we can reduce these costs as well as cutting/rationalising everything else. We have to support people to be more resilient - people cannot expect the Council to pay for everything with ever diminishing finances. We need to take tough (and yes unpopular) decisions about care provision including things like transport to day care etc.”*
- *“Living in rural South Shropshire means that we have an exceptionally poor service from the council, with road surfaces being appalling for the vast majority of the year, and school bus routes never being gritted putting people at risk and a total lack of interest from anyone around resolving these matters. The best service we currently receive is around waste collections, so to see this proposal is slightly concerning. I work in business and understand the cost pressures that everyone is currently facing, but when you add this onto how difficult you've made it to use the local recycling centres, I do really wonder what the overall strategy is for the short, medium and long term.”*

2. Reducing spend on suppliers, contracts and third parties

- *"You should stop using expensive private consultants. You have already cut staff numbers way below what is needed to provide a service for council tax payers. Adult social care is a big problem nationally and should be taken back to central government control."*
- *"As a local authority we are already doing the majority of these things, but third party could be reduced even further. Senior leaders need to consider the talent within the organisation and invest in their own people before hiring consultants in. The answer lies within the skills and knowledge of the people already in the council, its untapped and underutilised and not invested in."*
- *"It seems that outsourcing much of the work that used to be done by Shropshire Council own staff leaves us open to increased costs and complaints from public about poor quality job (potholes) which we have little influence over. Every private company is going to charge a fee on top of the real cost in order to make a profit - which is passed on to Shropshire Council."*
- *"Cut back on unnecessary services. Make more use of private contractors to deliver services more efficiently."*

3. Reviewing staffing levels

- *"Already long waits on the phone so staffing should not be cut."*
- *"Reviewing staffing levels shouldn't even be on here. People need jobs and cutting the last dregs of workers you have left would be pure idiocy."*
- *"More frontline staff and reduced bureaucracy."*
- *"Cut the wages and bonuses of the higher earners on the council's payroll!!!"*

4. Increasing income raised through fees and charges

- *"You cannot keep increasing charges to cover for your mismanagement. Charging for green waste collection is equivalent to an increase in charges. Your performance on repairs to existing roads is disgraceful, yet you continue to push for the unnecessary NW relief road. Potholes have resulted in 3 burst tyres on my car, as well as a destroyed alloy wheel and a steering rod, costing me hundreds of pounds in replacements and repairs. This must have happened to hundreds - if not thousands of other ratepayers. To us the costs we have borne are equivalent to rates increasing."*
- *"Putting council tax up will push more households into poverty."*
- *"I live in Market Drayton and am tired of seeing our contributions constantly going up, yet we get no return for our extra expenses being charged. In effect we pay more for it to benefit Shrewsbury!"*

Other comments

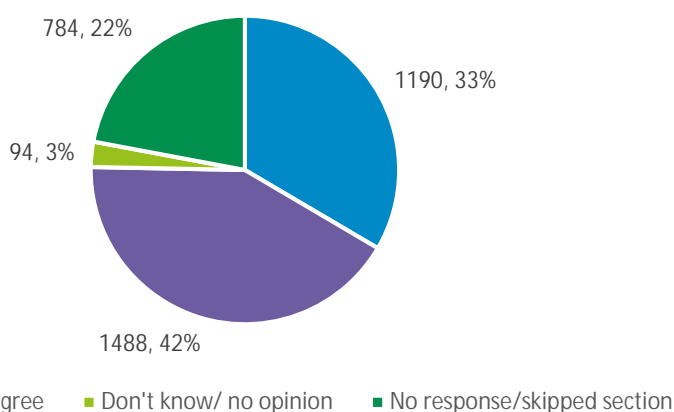
- *"What about reviewing assets, Shropshire retains some council housing."*
- *"Too general questions for us to have opinions on. You are running the business sort it out from within. They are all equally important."*

Many of these types of comments are covered later in the report in relation to more specific proposals. The next section considers feedback when asked about proposals to increase council tax.

4 Council Tax

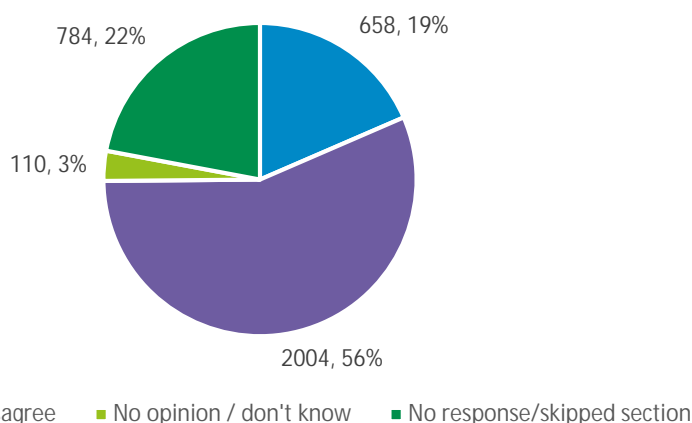
2,837 of the 3,556 survey respondents chose to answer the section of the survey linked to council tax increases (17.7% skipped this section and 2.5% viewed the section but did not necessarily wish to comment). Survey respondents were asked 'What is your view on Shropshire Council's proposal to increase council tax by 4.99% (2.99% on council tax, 2% on the adult social care precept)? This is equivalent to an extra £1.65 a week for a band D property.' The results are shown in Figure 14 below. Of all respondents, 33% agree and 42% disagree with the proposal (removing those who skipped the question, the result is: 43% agree; 54% disagree; 3% don't know).

Figure 14 Views on proposed 4.99% council tax increase



The survey also asked 'If allowed by Government, please indicate whether you would agree or disagree with applying council tax increases at a higher level? (For example, on a band D property, 2% additional council tax above the 4.99% increase would be equivalent to an additional 66p per week.)' Figure 15 displays the response.

Figure 15 Views on a higher level of council tax



The result is that 658 of 3,556 would be happy to pay a higher level of council tax if agreed by the Government (18.5% of all respondents). Removing those who skipped this section of the survey or didn't respond, the result is 24% agree, 72% disagree and 4% don't know.

1,291 people added a comment on council tax. Every comment was read and categorised. Some comments touched on more than one point and were categorised to more than one theme. Table 2 displays the results.

Table 2 Respondents' views on proposals to increase council tax

Theme	Count	%
Agree with the proposed increase in council tax to cover the costs	92	7%
Disagree with an increase to cover Social Care costs	83	6%
Disagree with increase as services are poor/non existent	357	25%
Increase in council tax will be difficult to afford/unaffordable/lower increase proposed	320	23%
Improve financial management of the council	145	10%
Reduce costs/increase efficiency instead of increasing council tax	165	12%
Increase income instead of raising council tax (e.g. sell assets)	43	3%
Review of Councils funding allocation / lobby central government	50	4%
Tiered payments / affluent populations to contribute more	45	3%
Reassess council tax bandings / outdated bandings / larger houses should not pay more	63	4%
Other	48	3%
Total	1,411	100%

As Table 2 shows, 92 comments were made expressing agreement with council tax increases, but the majority of comments expressed some concerns. Concerns ranged from criticism of Shropshire Council's management of finances and efficiency to suggestions that savings/income should be obtained in other ways or that central government should be lobbied for additional resources. To pick out the top themes below:

- 25% of comments highlighted that service delivery is poor and council tax increases do not result in any benefit for the council taxpayer.
- 23% expressed concerns around their ability to afford an increase in council tax.
- 12% suggested that the council could improve efficiency and use other methods as an alternative to increasing council tax.

Example comments are included below to help illustrate the type of feedback received:

Example comments – Council tax

- *"We pay enough for nothing already."*
- *"I don't think it's right to increase council tax when you are cutting services, especially in towns outside Shrewsbury."*
- *"Why is our council tax continuing to rise yet our town is being left behind?! Potholes need filling, barriers near steep inclines and roads need repairing. Our*

town looks tired and requires refreshing. Use our money effectively so that Bridgnorth becomes a town worth visiting like Ironbridge and Shrewsbury."

- *"If the money from increased council tax was distributed fairly to towns such as Bridgnorth, Ludlow etc. instead of all going into upgrading facilities in Shrewsbury I would be happy to pay more."*
- *"Living in a rural village I see very little for my council tax as it is - raising it would also cause me to have to use the food bank more."*
- *"I can only just afford my council tax on our band d property as it is. To add another £120.12 on top would be crippling for many."*
- *"As you know, budgets are finite. At what point do SC stop breaking working families to fund excessive salaries?"*
- *"I'm struggling to pay my council tax at present so can't afford much."*
- *"You're assuming people have the money to pay these increases - we don't!!"*
- *"We cannot afford the increase. We have 2 young children and cannot afford school lunches let alone a council tax rise! My children are at risk of poverty!"*
- *"We are paying more for less as it is. Businesses are paying business rates for absolutely nothing in return."*
- *"Increases are fine alongside the protection of services, libraries and social care are both important and might seem like short term cost savings but inevitably cost more in the long run with the negative effects on people."*
- *"How is it fair that people in, for example band d, have a bigger increase, they already pay more than the lower bands and get nothing extra for it?"*
- *"The council need to stop wasting money and look at their own waste rather than making the community pay for their mistakes and inefficiencies."*
- *"Extra Council Tax increases would have to be proportional and attributed to specific spending targets."*
- *"This would be the maximum increase I would consider, however with the increase I would expect a clearer budget including a spend analysis along with voting potential over spend."*
- *"You made poor decisions and have carried on with your plans despite being at breaking point. Vote of no confidence in Shropshire Council needed."*
- *"I truly believe the ineffective budget management isn't going to get any better by chucking more of our money at it. The council needs to prove itself driving down contracts, amending and removing inefficient processes and practises and reviewing staff and corporate structures before getting its residents to bail it out year on year!"*

The example comments help to illustrate the strength of feeling within the community. The large response to the survey suggests that concerns have increased as council tax increases have been necessary over recent years. Now many of the comments received highlight concerns about the way Shropshire Council is using its resources and many question value for money and whether Shropshire Council is being run as efficiently as needed to limit the financial impact on residents.

The next section of the report covers the first service specific feedback received through the budget consultation on the theme of household waste and recycling.

5 Household Waste and Recycling

Information relating to household waste and recycling was gathered through both the online survey and through the submission of written consultation responses. Both are explored within this section of the report.

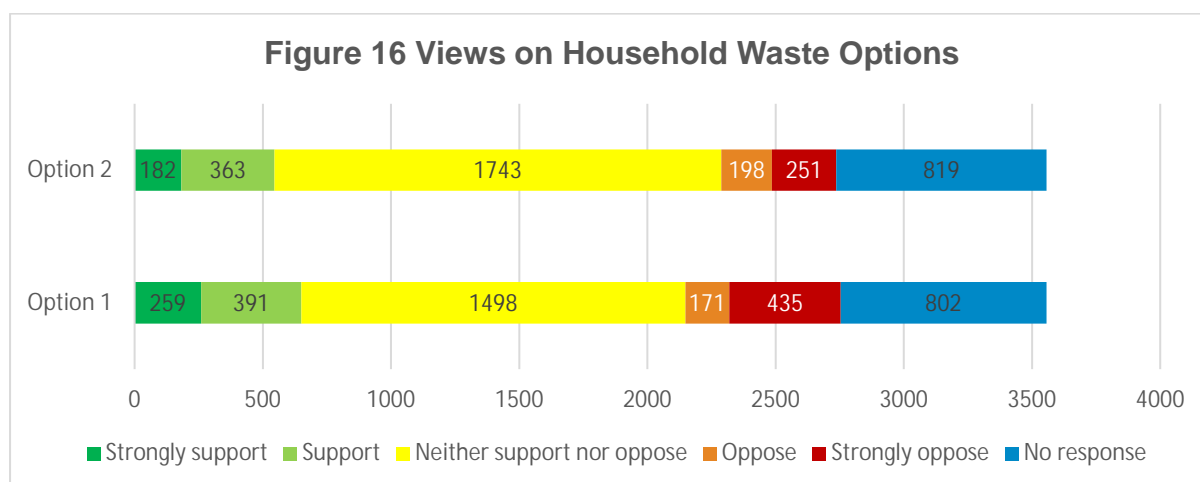
Those responding to the budget consultation were given the option within the online survey of answering questions on household waste and recycling or skipping the section and moving to the next theme. Only 221 (6.7%) of the 3,556 respondents decided to miss this section of the survey, highlighting the importance of this topic to most households. The survey included text to explain that Shropshire Council is exploring changing how frequently it collects non-recyclable waste bins. Currently, nonrecyclable waste is collected every two weeks, recyclable waste is collected every two weeks, and garden waste is collected every two weeks. It is suggested that garden waste should continue on a two-week collection cycle. However, the suggestions are that savings could be made through three-week collections of either non-recyclable waste collections or both non-recyclable waste and recycling collections. In 2026, Shropshire Council will be introducing a free weekly food collection.

The two proposed options were presented as follows:

Option 1 Your non-recyclable waste bin would be emptied every three weeks. All recycling would continue to be collected every two weeks. Garden waste subscription collections would remain every two weeks. This option could start from April 2025 at the earliest.

Option 2 Both non-recyclable waste and other recycling would now be on a three-week schedule. Garden waste subscription collections would remain every two weeks.

Survey respondents were asked which of the two options they preferred, and the results are shown in Figure 16.



As Figure 16 illustrates, there is more support overall for option 2 although neither option is popular, and the results are fairly close. To clarify the result, it is helpful to remove the nil responses. When this assessment is undertaken the calculations are:

Option 1 – 23.6% support or strongly support (650), 54.4% have a neutral view (1498) and 22% oppose or strongly oppose (606).

Option 2 – 19.9% support or strongly support (545), 63.7% have a neutral view (1743) and 16.4% oppose or strongly oppose (449).

More people both support and oppose Option 1 and fewer people support and oppose option 2. Large proportions have no opinion.

NOTE: A number of people said they did not want to tick either option but had to, in order to be able to move on with the consultation. Many added comments to suggest that there should have been a third option to retain the current waste collection timescales. More information is covered in the analysis of comments (see Table 3).

Table 3 Respondents' views on alternative suggestions to the options

Theme	Count	%
Agree with the proposals to reduce waste collections	45	2%
Reduced waste collections will lead to an increase in fly tipping	272	10%
3-week collections will lead to a health hazard (rodents/unpleasant smells)	364	13%
Recycle bins/ bags to every three weeks or longer is manageable	389	14%
Bin is at capacity after 2 weeks/ remain with current collection timescales for grey bin	961	34%
Provide support/ education to encourage more recycling	74	3%
Food waste in grey bin so 3 weeks is not practical/ revert to using green bin for food waste	159	6%
Consideration for larger families/ larger or additional bins required	213	8%
Accessibility to recycling centres/ ability to remove waste	123	4%
Efficiencies/ savings from elsewhere in the council	113	4%
Increase the current number of collections (e.g. weekly)	40	1%
Other	58	2%
Total	2811	100%

Top themes within comments were that general waste should be collected every 2 weeks (961 mentions), that recycling could be collected at 3-week intervals (389 comments) and that general waste collection every 3 weeks will lead to health hazards including smells, rodents and other concerns. Fly-tipping and the impact on larger households were also commonly mentioned within the comments received. The examples below help to illustrate the concerns.

Example comments – Waste options proposed and alternative suggestions

- *"You haven't given us a choice, the answer option 1 and option 2 amounts to the same thing. 3-week collections. I don't agree with either, but you cannot go forward without choosing one; an absolute fiddle."*
- *"This question is flawed; the survey will be bias."*

- *"So, we have to make a selection even if we don't agree!!! How does that make this a fair survey? The numbers won't tally. I do not agree with either. But we all know this council will do what they want. Non recycling bins are full at two weekly collection even when we recycle. We are a four-person household and in summer despite recycling, washing containers etc our bin is disgusting and gets flies and maggots in. The council have a responsibility and rather than cut waste collections you should look at how you waste money in other areas like excess managers. You also wasted god knows how much issuing every household with tiny recycle boxes and how long did that last!!! You are pushing for fly tipping and health being at risk."*
- *"Don't agree with either but there is no option – so this will be portrayed as we all agreed with one option – poor show of choice. During the Summer - Non-Recycling if it's every 3 weeks - Flies and maggots will increase Recycling would be the one that could be pushed to every 3 weeks surely? The Bin size would need to be increased?"*
- *"Weekly cycle, i.e. Week 1-Recycling, Week 2-Rubbish, Week 3 Garden Waste."*
- *"Not sure how you can be discussing raising our council tax but also reducing our bin collections. Utterly disgraceful."*
- *"Keep the current schedule. It reduces risk of fly tipping, fly tipping is incredible costly to councils as it is very difficult to find the culprit. Most cases will result in the council spending more money on resources to clear fly tipping."*
- *"Recyclable waste could move to three-week collection. Could it be increased at peak times e.g. Christmas?"*
- *"Keep it as it is. Remember that collection used to be weekly! My recycling bin is often nearly full after 2 weeks as I recycle as much as possible, whereas my black bin has space so if you move recycling to every 3 weeks, I'd have to put some recycling in my black bin."*
- *"Ridiculous to only have 2 options both with the same outcome for non-recyclable waste. A very misleading question and the response should not be used in any statistics saying residents' favour one option over another."*
- *"Now that food waste is included in non-recyclable bin the suggesting of a three-week collection is ridiculous. On collection day now some bins are overflowing. How can this be safe and hygienic to anyone, including the staff."*
- *"Continue as is. In particular, collecting the black bin every 3 weeks will create a public health problem, encourage vermin, and fly-tipping too, especially in the summer. We can have temperatures exceeding 30C here, inside a black bin it will be even warmer. The smell will be horrific. And if a resident is away or forgets, it will then be 6 weeks uncollected, which is unacceptable. I object to any change."*
- *"Keep as is - we don't get a lot from high council tax and bin management keeps down infestations and helps reduce fly tipping."*
- *"As head of a large family, a three week collect for the black bins would not be manageable, unless it were possible to purchase an additional black bin perhaps (full size, not half size)."*
- *"Maintaining the current services. As a family with a baby and nappies, it could become a health hazard having used nappies in a bin for almost 3 weeks. You're also not currently collecting food waste, which has increased our non-recycling"*

waste from peeling vegetables etc. Your proposals only give the option of a 3 weekly non recycling collection. That isn't a consultation, that's a decision made."

- "If you want residents to wait longer to have bins emptied you need to supply bigger bins to accommodate this."
- "Education about producing less waste would be useful. Most people waste far too much and generate too much that needs to go in landfill. I would be happy with monthly collections."
- "As you would still be collecting the same amount of rubbish and the people employed to do this work will still have to be paid it is difficult to see where the real savings are. Lorries will be full more often on days they are collecting so will need to return to depots more often to empty."

There were 28 written responses to the budget consultation. Of the 28, 22 were predominantly, or exclusively, on the theme of household waste and recycling. 20 of the 22 were linked to the proposal to reduce the general waste collection to a 3-week collection frequency and 2 were comments about Household Recycling Centres (HRCs). This feedback is considered here, and an overview of the remaining feedback from written responses is covered in section 11 of the report.

Example comments – Written consultation responses (Waste and Recycling)

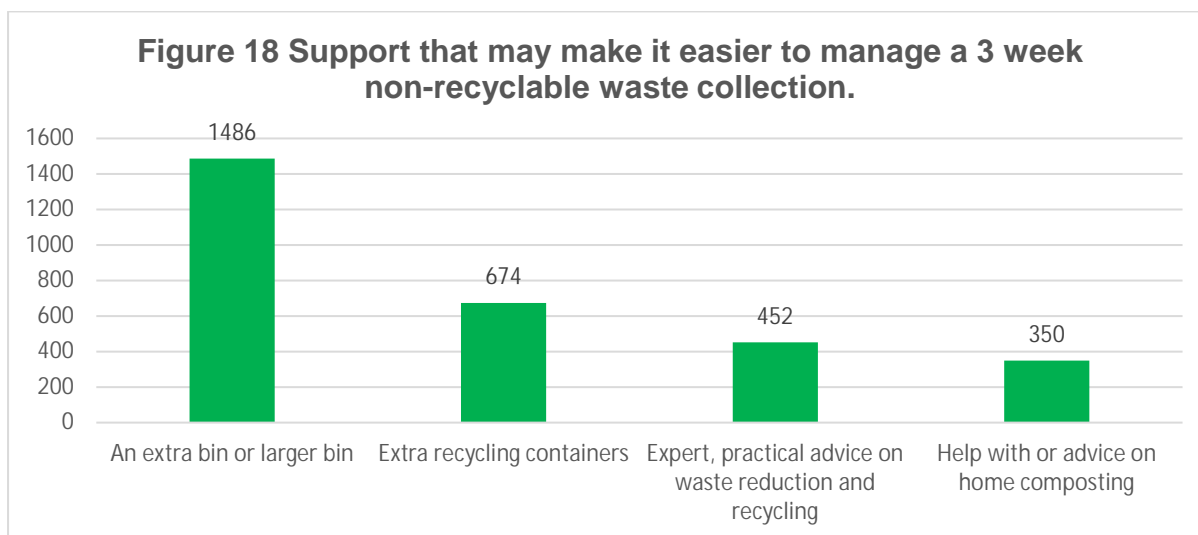
- "The proposal to extend non-recyclable waste collection to three weeks is quite frankly moronic, in the summer months the odour and decay will be unacceptable. Keep the rubbish collection at two weeks but push the recycling to three weeks, having to pay for the garden waste collection is already an insult."
- "I am concerned about the change to three weekly collections for our non-recyclable because this next year our food waste is in our black bins this could be up to three weeks which will cause terrible smells flies maggots this could lead to a health hazard as I understand next year we are supposed to have our food waste taken every week but this year the council expects us to go from every 2 weeks to every 3 weeks I find this unacceptable."
- "Small families or couples might be ok with a 3-week collection but it's a ridiculous idea. There's already fly tipping and litter chucked everywhere. That would be the next thing that is mentioned that the increase of rodents due to bags lying around & fly tipping. I'd have at least 4 bin bags left over. If you provide another black bin, then this would solve a problem but doubt that would happen."
- "We are a landlord with a number of 6 and 5 bed HMOs in Shrewsbury. While these houses are very good by other HMO standards at recycling and these houses already have the oversized grey general waste bins due to the number of occupants, the grey bins are full most fortnights. The two above proposals are going to lead inevitably at some points to bin bags being left outside the bin and rubbish accumulating leading to vermin and posing real health risks...."
- "I cannot support the proposal of introduction of three weekly domestic waste collections from residential properties...As a Council Tax payer I cannot be asked to pay more and more for what I perceive as reduction in service provision form SCC. A proposal has been mooted for a 4.99% increase in Council Tax for the 2025 – 2026."

- *"I write to strongly object to your recent consultation exercise on the frequency of refuse and recycling collections."*
- *"I am writing to you to show my concern regards the black bin collection move to every 3 weeks."*
- *"I do think it absolutely necessary to have the black bins collection on a regular basis to avoid risk of vermin and more mess on the streets. Perhaps the Council could consider reducing the recycling collections to 3 weeks (including garden waste) as we find that those bins are less full."*
- *"When you have to book slots to go to the local skip these days & some are only open set days. To leave the extra bags outside for animals to rip apart?"*
- *"We already see houses with overflowing bins in our streets, some homes with multiple bins which have been stolen from others (if you recorded this and charged them this would benefit you). It is detrimental to the health of the public, increase in smell and rats in the area. Public bins are already overflowing with dog poo. ...Fly tipping is ok the rise already, you will make it worse."*
- *"I have received no messages of support for the move to three weekly residual waste. Several people thought the extended period would lead to vermin in the bins. More thought that the smell would become intolerable, even for bagged waste. The proposal would be unhygienic. Would the council collect black bags of rubbish alongside the bin for overflowing rubbish? The problem of disposing of nappies was highlighted. Medical waste was also an issue. This is one poignant comment: "My daughter is going through chemo; her night nappies are quite literally toxic because of the chemo. I have to wear surgical gloves to change her because of the toxins. Then there's all the bloods etc stuff from the nursing team when they visit. Doesn't bear thinking of. It must be a hazard surely?!"....."I see significant problems with reducing black bin collections to three-weekly. I am particularly concerned about the difficulties it will create for the many residents in my division who live in flats without external storage space. Even when bagged, decaying waste stinks."*
- *"We are in the process of moving to a system where more care for the elderly and the sick is based in the home. In coming years, even more people will be disposing of nappies and medical waste in their black bins. This will become unhygienic and unpleasant with three weekly collections."*
- *"Three weekly collections allegedly may save around 1 million pound per annum. I have not however seen any evidence to support this and how this perceived saving has been calculated."*

The next question asked survey respondents if they could manage if the non-recyclable waste collection was every 3 weeks. Figure 17 displays the response. 29.8% say they would not manage and 12.1% say they would struggle. 14.1% would find it a challenge at certain times of year. 22.7% would manage.



Of the 22.7% who would manage, 1.7% suggest they would manage with some support. The next question asked about the types of support that could be helpful. A question read 'Is there any additional support the Council could provide, which would make it easier for people to manage a reduced non-recyclable waste bin collection?' Figure 18 displays the response. Multiple options could be selected and there were 2,962 responses in total from approximately 1,486 respondents – many disagree with the proposal so did not answer the question. The most popular type of support is an extra bin or larger bin followed by extra recycling containers.



People were asked for any other suggestions. There were 1,133 comments made and some comments covered multiple themes, as shown in the following table. 223 comments were made expressing concerns about the impact of the proposal. There was also a top theme related to smells and health impacts of uncollected waste, a lack of collection of food waste and the suggestion that the proposal would lead to increased costs rather than savings.

Table 4 Respondents' views on whether households can cope with 3-week waste collections

Theme	Count	%
Yes - Three weekly is manageable for my household	61	5%
No - Keep the schedule as it is / I could not manage	223	19%
Encourage people to recycle more / different items (e.g. Tetra packs, soft plastic)	102	9%
Need additional/ bigger bin for non-recyclable waste	70	6%
Need bigger bin for recycled items /improved recycling container for cardboard and paper	90	8%
Would create a health hazard (vermin, smells, fly tipping, etc)	146	12%
No space for additional bins / unsightly	89	7%
Waste food collection needs to be implemented / revert to putting in green bin	128	11%
Accessibility to recycling centres / remove booking system	78	7%
Proposals will increase costs / unsure of how this will make savings	107	9%
Provide a compost bin / suggest community composting sites	29	2%
Other	64	5%
Total	1187	100%

Top themes within the comments included:

Concerns

- Concerns about the proposals and calls to keep collections as they currently are at 2 weeks.
- Concerns that 2026 is not soon enough for the food waste service.
- Concerns about the blue recycling bag and calls for better containers for recycling and cardboard (to keep it dry).
- Concerns larger bins will be too heavy, difficult for people to manage or lack space for more bins.
- Comments that the HRC booking system is unhelpful and people should be allowed to drop off waste at any time.
- Concerns about the impact of less frequent collections of waste including rats, smells, public health concerns and increased fly tipping.
- Concerns that Shropshire Council has not understood the challenges some households face with examples including large household sizes, lack of gardens for composting, lack of space for bins and containers etc.
- Comments expressing dissatisfaction with Shropshire Council and its efficiency.

Suggestions

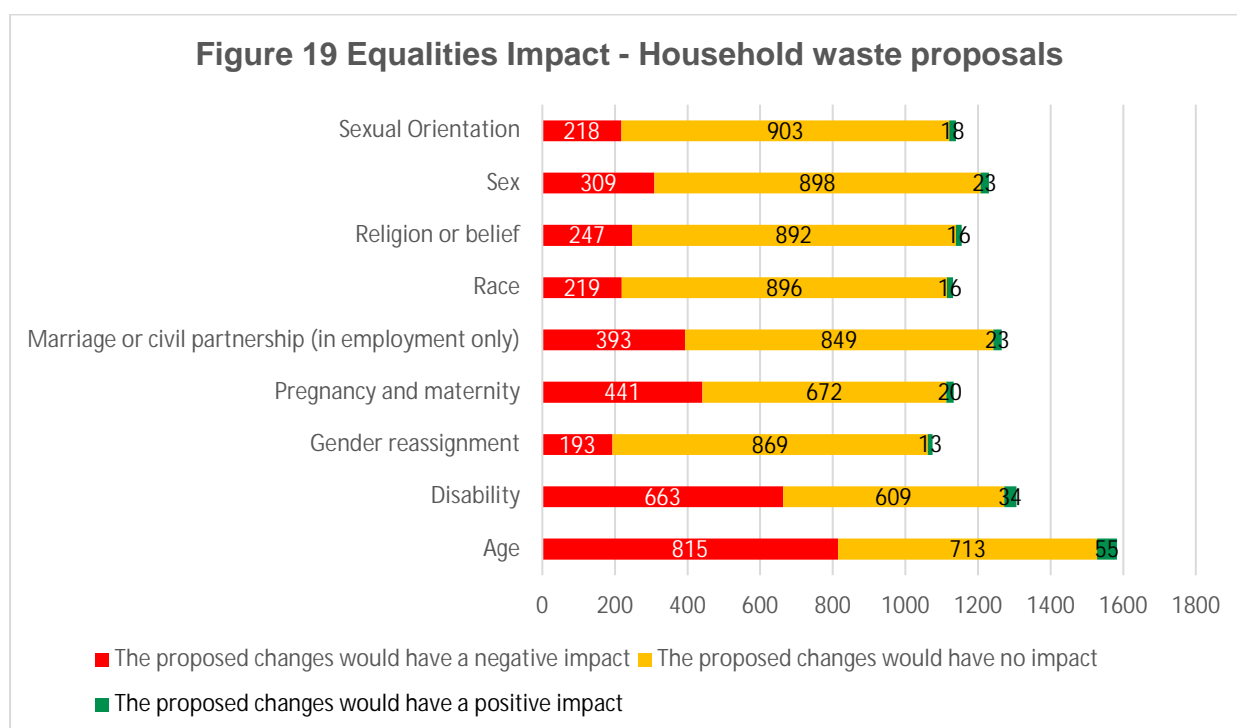
- Suggested larger bins will be helpful.
- Suggestions of dog waste, nappy and incontinence collections.
- Suggestions of an expanded recycling offer with additional recyclable materials collected.
- Suggestions that Shropshire Council allows food waste to be added to the green waste.
- Suggestion that free composting bins should be provided.

Example comments – 3 weekly waste collections

- *“Please bring back the food waste collection sooner.”*
- *“Additional bin with hygiene considered for food.”*
- *“Additionally, if you are away for a week, then it would be six weeks before your regular bin has its collection. It would be beneficial if more items could be collected at the kerbside for recycling, such as bags and tetra packs. Additionally, providing more detailed information on what items can be recycled would be helpful. For example, it took considerable time and effort to find out where to recycle my crisp packets and this information was not readily available on your website.”*
- *“A bigger with a lid that seals, at three weeks it will stink.”*
- *“People live in flats, small houses with no gardens or land, bins on their doorstep. Unhygienic, unsightly, smelly. It's a potential health risk. I personally have no indoor space to store food waste (porch or garage) I do not want rotting smelling food in my kitchen. It's hard enough to find room for paper and card, to keep it dry.”*
- *“Adding to the additional recycling containers, a larger one to carry cardboard is necessary. We, a household of 3 regularly fill the bag and have to put out a recycling container full. There are a lot of general household items that come in boxes. Small storage encourages non recycling.”*
- *“Extra bin would be the only answer but where are you meant to keep all these bins and boxes!!!”*
- *“Definitely a larger bin or 2 bins would help store the non-recyclable waste for me, but other properties may struggle to accommodate more bins. It should be an option though.”*
- *“Receptacles for cartons. Ensure that there are options in public waste bins to recycle. Visit any other town and this is common.”*
- *“I went to the tip and was refused access because I had not booked. The change of policy was news to my house. The 2 Veolia lads were very apologetic. The site was empty. Nobody bringing in rubbish. In all the years I've used the site, I've never known it not to be busy with 30+ cars emptying garden refuse and recyclables and a queue waiting. They said that they could not let me in and were only following orders and that they were on CCTV...It is vastly outweighed by the unintended but wholly predictable consequences: A disincentive to recycle; Incentive to break the law; Ill-will towards the council; Overloading of bins; Poor value for money from Veolia services as they process less for the same contract. I'd like to ask: By how much (tonnes) has waste brought to the tip fallen in the past month? By how many, have visits by the public fallen? How many more reports have there been of fly tipping?....”*
- *“Don't complicate recycling because a large number of people will decide to not bother with the system.”*
- *“The reduction of green waste collection is going to result in an increase of bonfire complaints in the summer months. Altering waste collection schedules, particularly encouraging everyone to keep a kerbside larder of waste food at their properties, is going to increase rodent issues. Make sure that your staffing levels for the additional complaints is appropriate.”*

- *“Why stop at reducing bin collections? Let’s scrap them altogether! Imagine the charming aesthetic of rubbish mountains adorning our streets. A true nod to the bygone days of historical waste management. The nightly bonfires of decomposing waste would not only eliminate the need for costly street lighting but also create a unique, dystopian atmosphere. As the rat population flourishes, Shropshire could position itself as the proud rat-catching capital of Europe, an innovative tourism angle sure to put us on the map. Better yet, we could introduce rat meat as a staple of the local diet. Not only would this bring a daring, exotic culinary flair to the county, but it would also help feed the most vulnerable in our community. “Ratatouille” could take on a whole new meaning. A Michelin-starred opportunity for local eateries, perhaps? And let’s not forget the unintentional fitness initiative. Dodging the vermin on your way to work would surely reduce reliance on gyms, saving residents even more money. Truly, the possibilities are endless when we think creatively about waste management.”*
- *“We have very little non-recyclable waste. 6-weekly would be adequate for us!”*

A proportion of the comments touched on equalities impact (for example disabilities and mobility limiting ability to move waste containers, pregnancy and maternity leading to the need to dispose of nappies etc.) However, to understand impact more, members of the public were asked to answer a question which read ‘Shropshire Council works to meet the Equalities Duty and consider social inclusion and health impact within all policy and service changes. We would like to know if the proposals would affect you because of your protected characteristics. There are nine protected characteristics defined in the Equality Act 2010. For each of the protected characteristics below, please say if the proposals would have a positive, or negative, or no effect on you because of your protected characteristic. If you do not meet one of these protected characteristics, you do not need to answer this question.’ The results are shown in Figure 19.



As Figure 19 shows, very few people believe the proposals would have a positive impact. The protected characteristics where most impact is likely are recorded as age, disability and pregnancy and maternity.

The survey included a space for further comments. 487 people left comments, and these have been categorised. The results are shown in the following table. The top theme was criticism that the question had been included in the survey. The second top theme referred to concerns moving or lifting bins. Many people spoke of the particular impact on the elderly, people with disabilities and women who are pregnant. The third top area of concern is for people who need sanitary projects collected frequently. Many people wrote about their household needs including waste collections of nappies, incontinence pads, feminine hygiene products, medical waste etc. Example comments are shown to help illustrate the feedback (negative comments about the question have not been included as examples).

Table 5 Respondents' views on the equality impact of waste collection proposals

Theme	Count	%
Some people will struggle to understand/follow the revised routine of 3 weeks	18	4%
Sanitary products (nappies, hygiene products, medical waste etc.)	66	13%
Weight of the bin (50% more waste each collection) for less mobile	72	14%
People with a disability and older people will need extra help	42	8%
Will create a health hazard (e.g. smells, rodents, fly tipping, etc)	62	12%
General negative comment about the consultation/ this question and the council	167	33%
Access/ ability to use the HRC	22	4%
Need to encourage recycling more/ environmental impacts of reduced collections	12	2%
Impact on mental health	6	1%
Other	40	8%
Total	507	100%

Example comments – Equalities impact of waste collection proposals

- *“Although single parenthood isn't technically a protected characteristic, you should be including it when you're checking you're not discriminating especially as it disproportionately impacts women.”*
- *“It will negatively affect families with young children and also families with complex medical needs.”*
- *“This will significantly harm maternity as nappies build up very quickly and cannot be recycled.”*
- *“Those with increased non-recyclable waste such as young mothers, the disabled, care homes and facilities (mostly those who care for vulnerable people) would be more likely to struggle.”*
- *“We care for a 99-year-old. She uses a lot on incontinence aids. Three-weekly collection would be awkward and very unsanitary.”*

- *“The only group for which I could see an impact are the elderly who might be confused by a 3-week collection, especially if they are relying on relatives to put the bins out.”*
- *“As a disabled person it is already hard enough to wheel a heavy bin out for collection. To have an extra week's rubbish in it would make this difficult. What will the council be doing to assist me?”*
- *“It will potentially make it more challenging for the above groups to manage their recycling. I speak here as a carer for my elderly mother.”*
- *“Disabled individuals like my husband or females like myself would struggle to move a black household bin or recycling bin that been filled for three weeks!!! As a fit young woman, I really struggle to do the recycling once every 2 weeks and my husband (who has a disability) has to do it. There's no way we'd be able to move a three week one without hurting ourselves.”*
- *“For the neurodivergent community, missing a single collection would have a huge impact as the consequences would be much harder to manage.”*
- *“We are struggling now with bins bags mess smell, sort out the system.”*

Overall comments on waste service proposals were greater than for other areas of service. This may have been slightly influenced by the fact that these questions were towards the start of the survey and it was a long and detailed survey. The next section of the report considers proposals for street lighting.

6 Street Lighting

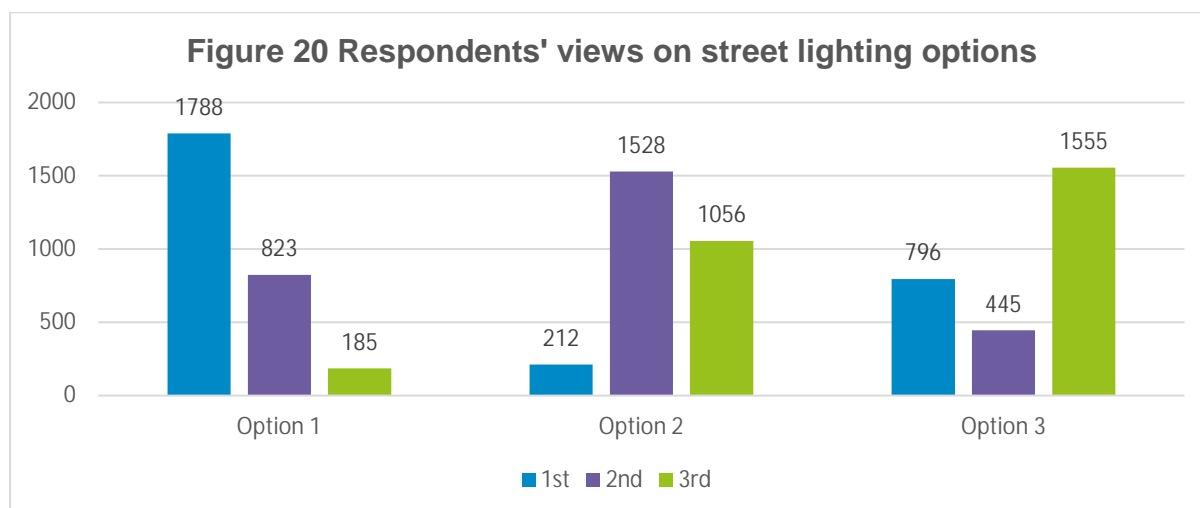
Shropshire Council used the budget consultation to propose three options for achieving savings through changes to street lighting. Each of these options would require some capital investment, usually equipment or machinery, but would save crucial day-to-day costs of running this service. The options being considered are:

Option 1: Convert all remaining streetlight bulbs to LEDs (circa 1133 lights). This would require capital investment of £500,000 but yield estimated revenue savings of £109,000 per year.

Option 2: Convert Heritage Lantern bulbs to LEDs (circa 950 lanterns). These are street lamps in a historic style. This would require capital investment of £950,000 but yield an estimated revenue savings of £104,000 per year.

Option 3: The council currently turns streetlights off for several hours during the dark hours every night. Currently, in some areas, streetlights remain on all night in areas where there are more people and traffic, typically at junctions. We could shut off some or all of these during dark hours, which could save up to £209,000 of revenue per year with a £395,000 capital investment.

Online survey respondents were asked for their views on the options presented. Figure 20 displays the results when survey respondents were asked to rank the options from preferred to least preferred.



As figure 20 shows, the majority prefer the options in the order in which they were presented: option 1, option 2 then option 3. Of all respondents, 50.3% chose option 1 first (a proportion skipped the question). 22.4% preferred option 3 and only 6% preferred option 2. To clarify these results a question was included in the survey which read 'Please tell us to what degree you would support each option.' The feedback is shown in Figure 21.

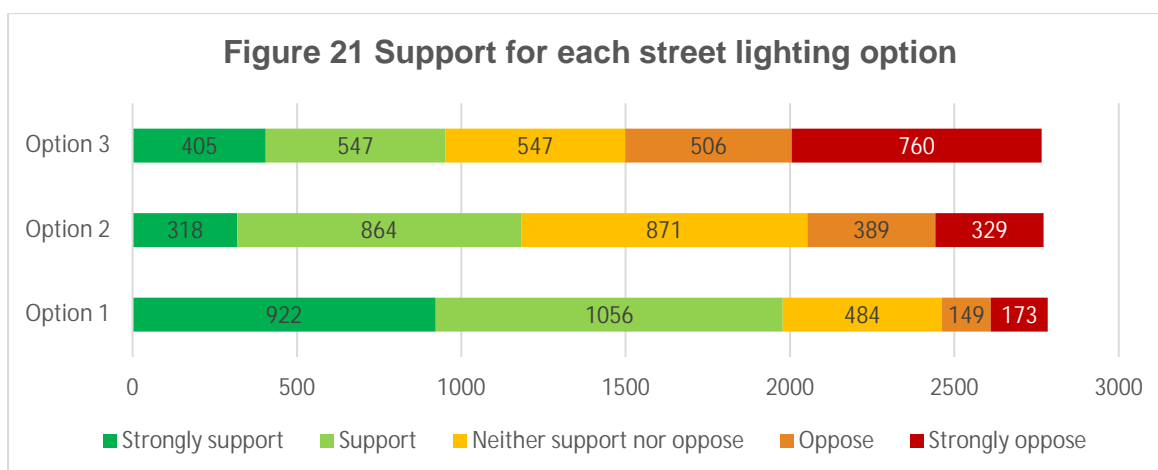


Figure 21 even more clearly highlights respondents' views on the streetlighting proposals set out. Option 1 has the most support and least number of people who oppose or strongly oppose the option. Option 2 is second most popular and option 3 least popular.

A space was included within the survey to allow people to comment. 746 people added a comment (many made more than one different point). The results are shown in Table 6. A theme commonly raised within the comments related to ensuring value for money and questioning costs, within this theme there were suggestions that Shropshire Council may not be in a position to make the investment to deliver the options outlined. The second top theme within the comments related to safety concerns if streetlighting is reduced or not as bright. Many people mentioned concerns for people with particular characteristics including women, children and the potential to increase crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB).

Table 6 Respondents' comments on streetlighting proposals

Theme	Count	%
Replace bulbs/lights as needed rather a blanket approach	36	4%
Turn off streetlights all evening (wherever possible)	26	3%
Some areas e.g. rural populations do not have street lighting	51	6%
[Blue] LED lights are not effective/ too bright/ too dim/ need replacing more frequently	34	4%
Need to consider safety concerns (e.g. single women, children, ASB, property crime etc)	134	16%
Need to ensure lighting matches the historic nature of the environment	11	1%
Do not turn off lights/ night-time economy and shift workers	51	6%
Ensure value for money/ costs seem high/ delay investment	146	18%
Choose options 1.2.3 or a combination	51	6%
Save resources - switch on/off streetlights later/earlier/ different lighting arrangement e.g. every other light, PIR, solar etc	96	12%
More information required to make an informed decision / no worthy choice	19	2%
Should have been implemented years ago	14	2%
Many streetlights not working/on all of the time - sort these first	20	2%
Reduction in light pollution / environmental impact of moving to LED	28	3%
Other	99	12%
Total	816	100%

Example comments - streetlighting

- *"Shropshire has many historic sites that are frequented by tourists bringing money into Shropshire, not sure if option 2 means no longer have heritage style lamps (or just the bulb changes?) but it would, I feel, be detrimental to change the look of them to save money at the risk of losing part of Shropshire heritage/history."*
- *"Lighting is needed at night e.g. shift workers and people feel safer."*
- *"Crime is minimised when the area is lighted So are you going to provide more police? It is bad enough as a female to walk to your car, but no lighting is scary and dangerous plus accidents happen with badly lite areas."*
- *"Option 3 affects safety aspects for both pedestrians and motorists. It should never happen."*
- *"The capital investment of Option 2 is too high and would take years to recover the benefits."*
- *"Option 2 investment is considerable whilst option 3 offers greater savings - review safety issues again for option 3 and consider reducing the number of hours the lights are off - say from 2am - 5am."*
- *"The LED lights are useless; they do not spread any light. There is one LED streetlight in my cul-de-sac, it lights 3 square meters of road underneath it and nothing else, it provides no light that touches the properties."*
- *"Why on earth has Shropshire Council not already done this conversion to LEDs given it declared a climate emergency in 2019...?"*
- *"Make sure whoever does the contract achieves value for money."*
- *"Turning the lights off during midnight and 5 am is a no brainer."*
- *"Turn off more streetlights! Everyone drives, everyone has outside lighting, everyone can carry a torch! Great for the environment too!"*

As the table and example comments illustrate, there are mixed views on streetlighting. Some people support the proposals for reasons including cost savings, environmental impact and the fact that rural areas manage without the same level of street lighting. Others strongly oppose any reduction in streetlighting due to concerns over crime and safety, loss of light using LED bulbs and concerns that heritage designed lighting options will be removed. Overall, there is more support for the proposed options than opposition. Members of the community seem to understand that this is a difficult financial decision and their concerns need to be understood to minimise impact. To understand concerns further, a question was included to assess equality impact.

Figure 22 presents summary views on equality impact of the street lighting proposals. The protected characteristics most likely to be impacted are considered to be age, disability and sex. This is reflected in the previous comments linked to concerns around the potential of reduced street lighting to influence crime and community safety. People were given the option of adding comments to explain their answers or to raise any further concerns they may have. Table 7 and the example comments summarise the feedback received.

Figure 22 Equalities Impact - Streetlighting proposals

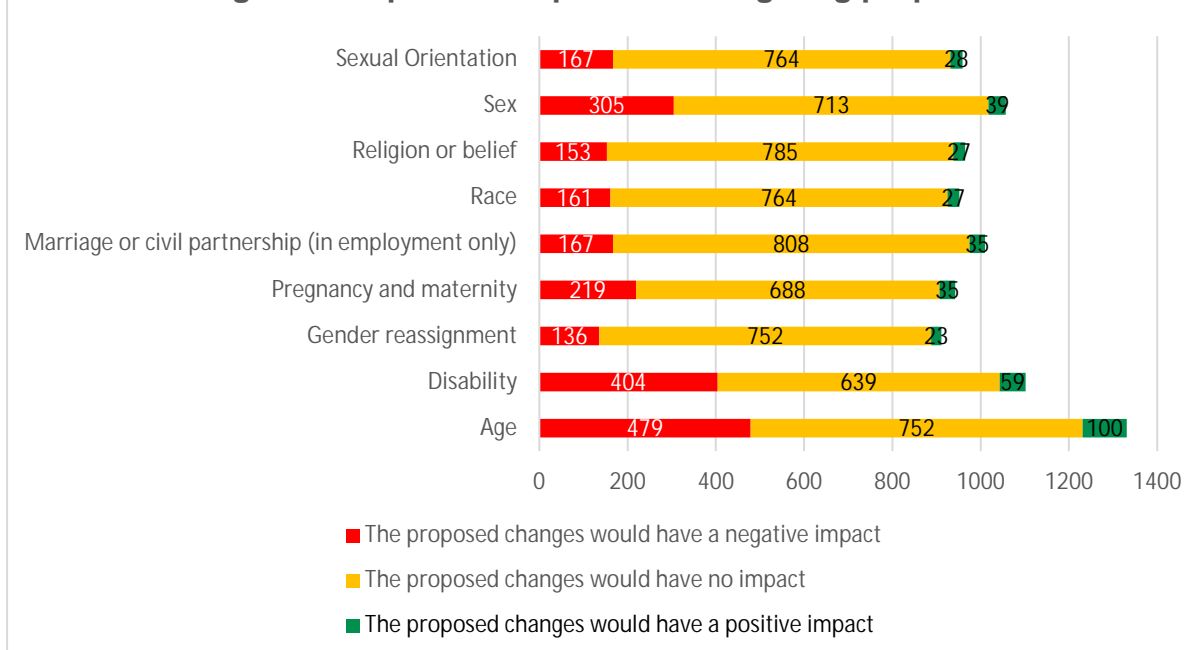


Table 7 Respondents' views on the equality impact of streetlighting proposals

Theme	Count	%
Safety - of women and children / risk of property crime	78	25%
Shift workers / night-time economy will be affected	6	2%
Safety - of people with disabilities (e.g. sight loss) and the elderly	54	17%
Negative comments on consultation / council	23	7%
Will not affect me	10	3%
Negative impact on wildlife/environment of LEDs	3	1%
Positive environmental and safety impact	4	1%
Nothing wrong with current lights	3	1%
Increased crime and ASB, impacts on minority groups	23	7%
Other	109	35%
Total	313	100%

There were over 300 comments to support with equalities impact assessment of the streetlighting options and proposals. The 'other' category shown in the table contained a large proportion of comments criticising Shropshire Council for asking the question. Many people added 'anti-equalities' comments and failed to understand the importance of this type of assessment. A minority expressed some prejudiced opinions expressing disregard for anyone who may be more vulnerable. Of those who considered and answered the question, the top theme within comments was concerns for the safety of women and children followed by concerns for the safety of people with disabilities and/or the elderly. The third most commonly mentioned themes were both negative comments about the council and fears of crime and antisocial behaviour (ASB) increasing and impacting the wider community or all protected characteristics groupings. Some example comments are shown below.

Example comments – Equalities impact of streetlighting proposals

- *"I know females or youth/elderly will likely feel more vulnerable where there are no lights, so this should be a factor to consider to protect them from abuse/attacks."*
- *"Turning off streetlights could adversely affect women's safety and therefore would have to be carefully planned out."*
- *"As a woman, I would not be keen for option 3 as I would feel unsafe walking home at night."*
- *"I want to feel safe from people and vehicles and I need to be able to see where I am going clearly to avoid falls, etc."*
- *"The elderly and disabled may be impacted by the turning off of street lighting completely (however I doubt during these hours either group is frequently outdoors at this time)."*
- *"Option 3 would significantly impact the older generation and those with sight related disabilities who are already more vulnerable at night and increasing the number of streets that are dark will make this problem worse."*
- *"Partially-sighted people might struggle. Be prepared for an increase in road accidents and casualties."*
- *"It's already dangerous in unlit areas for people at night. You must keep streets lit."*
- *"All hardships when first put in place effect minorities and vulnerable people the hardest."*
- *"A reduction in the overnight lights may have road and personal safety implications for everyone."*
- *"I don't have a problem with the change to LED street lighting, as long as there is sufficient illumination. I do have an issue with turning off street lighting at night, as well as making it more dangerous for vulnerable people, ambulance crews & first responders among others, who work 24/7."*
- *"I am disgusted in Shropshire Council's huge proposed cuts while increasing costs. Why are the people running Shropshire Council not being fired and investigated? The budget is their job and we are being made to pay for their mistakes."*
- *"I think that these proposals need some more consideration. Instead of the council passing these budget adjustments. They need to look at their own in-house management structure and pay. When was the last time the management went out and spoke to the public, probably NEVER."*
- *"You're going to switch lights off anyway so no point in writing."*
- *"It would help to save the planet as well as save money in the long term."*

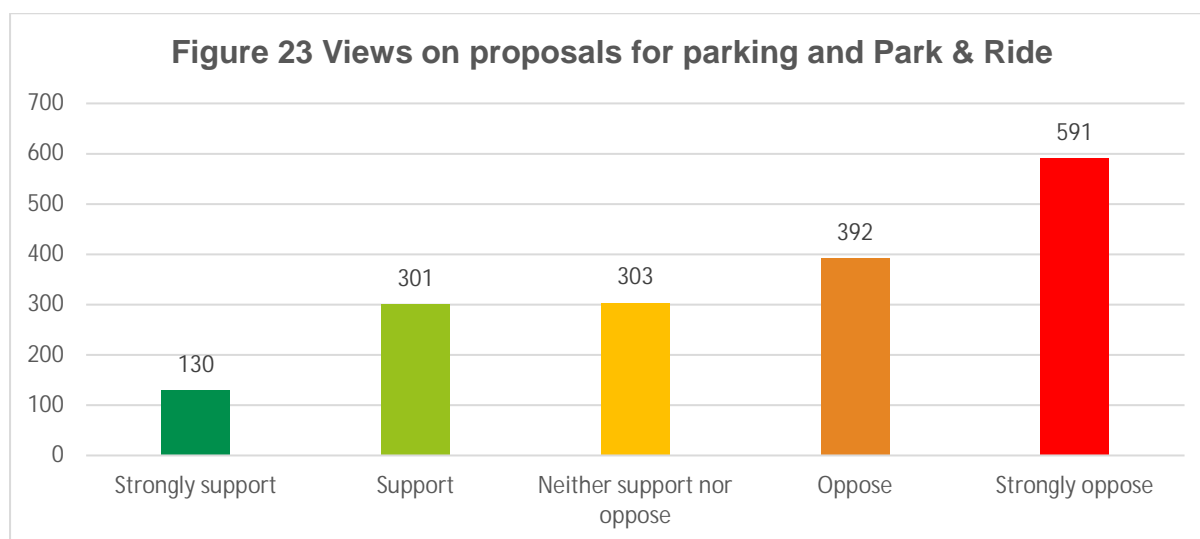
Feedback highlights that although people are generally accepting of the need to achieve savings through streetlighting (with some commenting they are surprised changes haven't been implemented already) a proportion of people have concerns about increased risk and impact. A number of people fear community safety will be impacted, whilst others comment that there are advantages in reducing streetlighting, particularly for environmental benefit. Some express the importance of achieving value for money, question Shropshire Council's financial management and fear investment will be difficult in this area within the current climate.

7 Parking and Park & Ride

Of the 3556 survey respondents, 1,250 decided that they did not wish to respond to the survey questions on parking and park & ride. The remaining survey respondents were asked 'To what extent do you support the proposal to increase car parking charges across the county?'. The proposal read as follows:

The Council has responsibility to manage traffic within Shropshire. We do this through a range of measures including signage, repairs, road layout, traffic controls such as traffic lights, for example. Another part of this is charges for car parking. Charges are levied to encourage responsible parking in designated areas and enforced by penalties being applied as appropriate. Income received from car parking charges is then used to help support out traffic management responsibilities. The Council is considering increasing car parking charges to reduce the cost of our overall traffic management operations, potentially reducing costs by £0.5m.

Figure 23 shows that more people oppose the proposal to increase car parking charges across the county than those in support. Overall, 12.1% support or strongly support the proposal, 8.5% have a neutral view and 27.6% oppose or strongly oppose (51.7% chose not to respond).



Survey respondents were asked if they had any comments to make and 735 people made a comment (many made more than one main point). The comments were allocated to one or more categories and the results are shown in the table below. The top theme mentioned within comments was the concern that increased car parking charges will discourage people from using shops and negatively impact on local businesses and the economy (21% of the comments). The second top theme (12%) called for increases in public transport and the third most commonly mentioned issue was the suggestion that car parking charges should be reduced, and incentives used to encourage visitors and bring in income for local businesses. Example comments are used to help illustrate the feedback received.

Table 8 Respondents' comments on parking proposals

Theme	Count	%
Increasing car parking charges will discourage shoppers / impact business	196	21%
People will shop out of town/ online	86	9%
Better public transport is required	110	12%
Variable pricing depending on the location	31	3%
Encourage active travel (walking, cycling, etc) and reduce car usage	20	2%
Maintain current parking charges / already too expensive	58	6%
Agree with increasing car parking charges	32	4%
Reduce current car parking charges to encourage visitors/support business	102	11%
Will encourage parking on residential streets close to towns	24	3%
Other	255	28%
Total	914	100%

Example comments – car parking

- *"I won't bother going into town anymore. Along with many others."*
- *"Increased parking charges mean I have reduced the number of times I shop in Shrewsbury. From weekly to monthly. It will affect high street trade adversely."*
- *"It will kill trade and small business when people are visiting Shrewsbury at weekends or on special events. You halfwits!!!"*
- *"Protection should be given to support town centre parking to create and encourage thriving town centres for both retail and service industries."*
- *"Make short stay free and then charge for longer."*
- *"Lower costs for short term parking of under one hour."*
- *"Reduce car parking fee to increase viability of town centres."*
- *"Increase car parking charges in places where public transport is regular and readily available. This is fair and commonly done in cities."*
- *"Park and ride should be cheaper or free. Reduce all charges for electric vehicles."*
- *"You need to promote park and ride where available more. If charges do need to go up, you need to charge more for the centre of towns and make it cheaper to park further out or perhaps even provide a discounted system where some may be able to claim money back after making purchases at certain stores/shops."*
- *"Extra revenue to be spent on improved bus services."*
- *"How can you ask me to support a proposal without the details you're asking me to sign a blank cheque."*
- *"It costs enough to park in town now. There is never enough spaces and where will all council staff park when you move."*
- *"People avoid parking fees by dangerously clogging residential roads."*
- *"Ultimately, it is a choice to drive and park for shopping, etc., and you should thus accept that there are costs to that. Car parking charges are an entirely legitimate way to raise income."*

- *“Whether increases are made, or not please make sure payment can be made with card/contactless and not just Apps. Not everyone wants to subscribe or has a smart phone.”*
- *“If you are not already charging disabled motorists for parking, then consider doing so, as having a disabled sticker doesn't mean to say you can't afford parking.”*
- *“A small rise in line with inflation would be fair. This question is poorly worded - I can't say if I agree or disagree because there is no detail about the cost of the proposed rise for the service user.”*
- *“You need somewhere to abandon cars damaged by the potholes in the never repaired roads.”*

As illustrated by the table and examples above, very few people agree with the proposal (4% of the comments). Due to the opposition to the proposal it is even more important to understand how this could impact on people with protected characteristics or negatively influence equality and social inclusion. All respondents were asked about impact. Comments highlight that many people don't understand the importance of assessing impact. Those who responded highlight that the impact on age and disability are likely to be top concerns. Figure 24 displays the results.

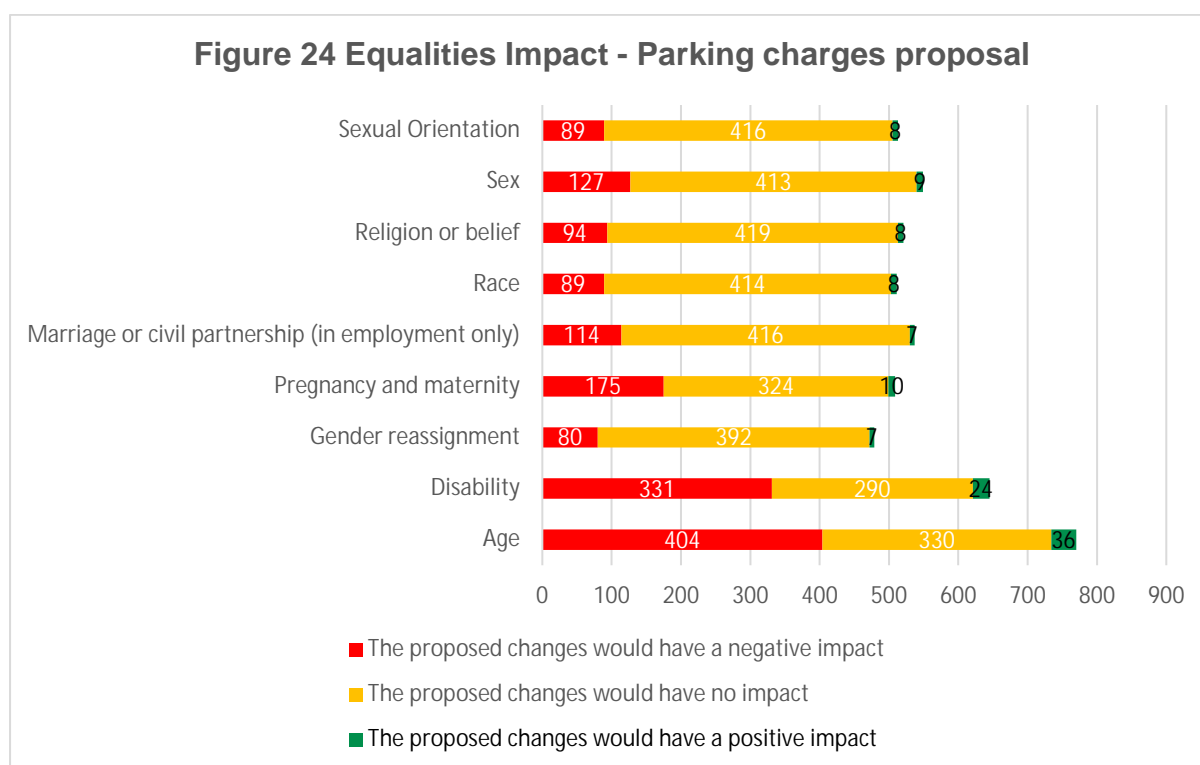


Table 9 summarises the themes that were highlighted within the 138 comments provided. The top concern is for the impact on people who are disabled, use disabled car parking spaces or have limited mobility. The second main concern is less related to protected characteristics and more linked to the economic impact that increased car parking could have, by reducing footfall within town centres.

Table 9 Respondents' views on the equality impact of car parking proposals

Theme	Count	%
Impact on people who work in the town centre	4	3%
Impact on disabled drivers / disabled parking places	32	21%
Will discourage people from visiting the town /economic impact	27	18%
Encourage active travel / improve public transport	15	10%
Other	72	48%
Total	150	100%

Example comments – Equalities impact of car parking proposals

- *“Women, the elderly, pregnant women and people in employment are more likely to need to park near the town centre if they are less able to walk long distances, don't have public transport alternatives or risk being attacked walking home.”*
- *“Female safety and disabled parking would have impact for me.”*
- *“Support for disabled parking near to town centres is appalling.”*
- *“Increasing parking charges will have a negative impact on other people such as those who have to park for work, medical appointments and also impact on town centre business and vibrancy.”*
- *“If part of your consideration is about replacing pay meters with card only or app only payment schemes then this would negatively impact older people who do not necessarily have the necessary tech to support this.”*
- *“Concentrate on maintaining bus services giving people a choice of how they travel into a town.”*
- *“Shropshire is a retirement county with an above average aging population. Please therefore STOP all these cycle and walking routes and give more parking!!!”*
- *“Everyone will go shopping in Telford. How do they manage their parking?”*
- *“Detrimental to local people and business.”*

The next question was focused on park & ride. Two options to achieve budget savings were presented within the consultation. The options are shown below:

Park & Ride services in Shrewsbury currently cost Council Tax payers £250,000 per annum. To remove this subsidy in the next financial year, the service area is considering the following two options for making these savings:

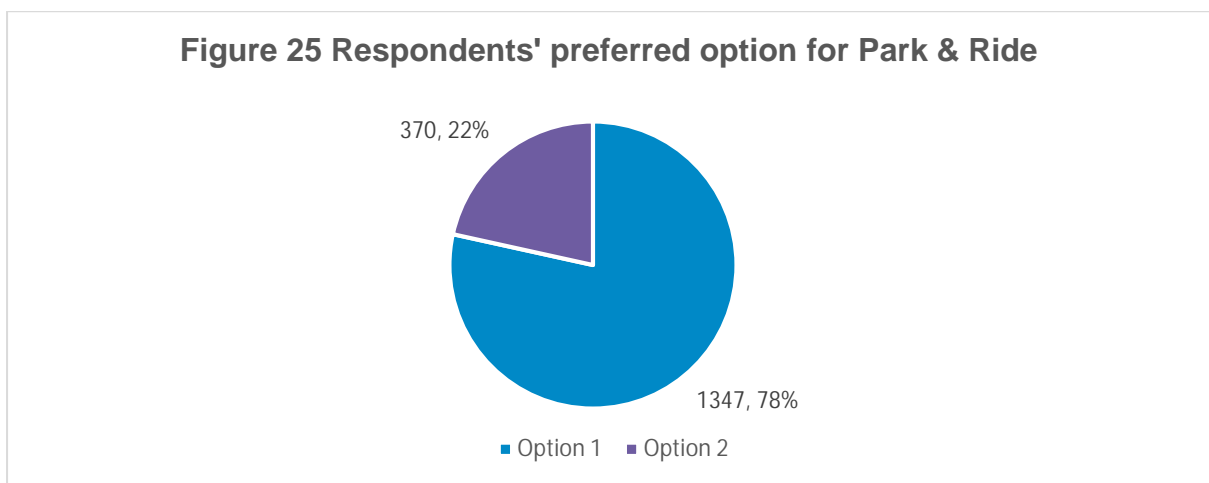
Option 1: Increase usage of Park & Ride to reduce its costs. The council could invest some of the funding allocated through the Bus Service Improvement Plan process, increasing the frequency of the service to provide more journeys between the sites and the town centre. As a result of those frequency improvements, we believe that passengers numbers would grow and revenues increase, which would bring about a reduction in overall council costs.

Option 2: Pause or cease Park & Ride services to realise a cost reduction in public transport of £250k.

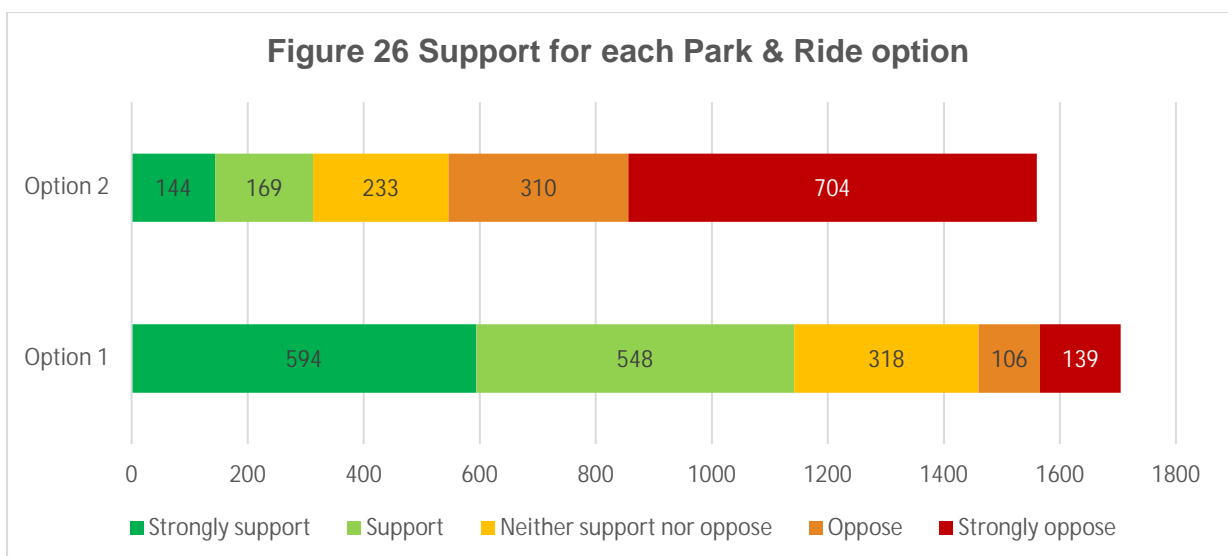
For transparency, the council's preferred option is Option 1.

Note: Ludlow park and ride services aren't included as part of this consultation. This service is grant funded until 2026/27 so doesn't form part of the council 2025/26 revenue budget plans.

Figure 25 shows that there is a strong preference for option 1 (Shropshire Council's preferred option) which aims to increase service routes, frequency, usage and result in the generation of revenue. Of those with an opinion, 78% prefer option 1 compared to 22% who prefer option 2.



To check preferences, a question was included to confirm views on the two options. Figure 26 shows considerably more support for option 1 (67% of question respondents strongly support or support this option and 14.4% oppose or strongly oppose. For comparison, 20.1% support or strongly support option 2 and 65% oppose or strongly oppose.



There were 606 separate comments made by 469 survey respondents. Table 10 below highlights the categories that these comments were placed in after each one was read and considered. The most commonly mentioned theme was on the need to improve the reliability and frequency of the Park & Ride service (12% of comments) followed by calls to maintain the Park & Ride service and comments that it is valued (10% of comments).

Table 10 Respondents' comments on Park & Ride Proposals

Theme	Count	%
Need to reduce the levels of traffic in the town centre	36	6%
Improve current park and ride reliability/frequency	74	12%
Improve awareness of park and ride / publicise the service	28	5%
Increased hours of current park and ride (e.g. run until 8pm)	45	7%
Need to consider public transport in areas with no Park and Ride	39	6%
Increase the pickup zones for Park and Ride (e.g. business park)	32	5%
Costs need to be reasonable otherwise people will not use	39	6%
Park and Ride is not always convenient	41	7%
Maintain Park and Ride/ Valued service	63	10%
Run a reduced service or scrap it	24	4%
Improve current park and ride locations and buses, clean and modernise and improve sign posting	7	1%
Increase cost of using park & ride	13	2%
Other	165	27%
Total	606	100%

Example comments – Park & Ride proposals

- *“The Shrewsbury park and ride scheme is one of the best I have used anywhere in the country. At a time when councils should be encouraging public transport use to reduce carbon emissions, local pollution and congestion, it would be criminal to cut this service.”*
- *“I use the park & ride all the time, it's a great service as it is. Don't over charge.”*
- *“The park and ride is a fantastic service and should be prompted for more use. A small increase to say £1.50 or £2 per ticket would help fund the service.”*
- *“Paying £1 at the moment is great. I wouldn't pay more because it's more convenient to park in town and when there's two of us it's cheaper to park in town.”*
- *“Raising car park prices at the same time as ceasing park and ride services would be evil.”*
- *“P&R is important if you want to reduce congestion in town but increase footfall.”*
- *“Park and ride on Sundays and to run earlier and later to support more workers.”*
- *“To increase use of the park and ride site there also needs to be investment in the Park and Ride sites where the shelters are in a very poor condition and there are no facilities such as toilets. Improving electronic signage to say how long the next bus will be would also be helpful.”*
- *“Removing park and ride and ensuring a more effective local bus service, as well as meaning more use of the current priced car parks will not only save the £250k but generate more revenue.”*

- *“My only issues with park and ride have been that I have a young son and a partner with a mobility issue. Parking nearer the centre is easier/ more convenient for us.”*

To better understand potential impacts of this proposal, survey respondents were asked about any impacts on those with protected characteristics. Figure 27 shows that most concerns relate to age and disability with fewer for the other groupings. 96 people made comments, and these have been read and categorised and summarised in the following table.

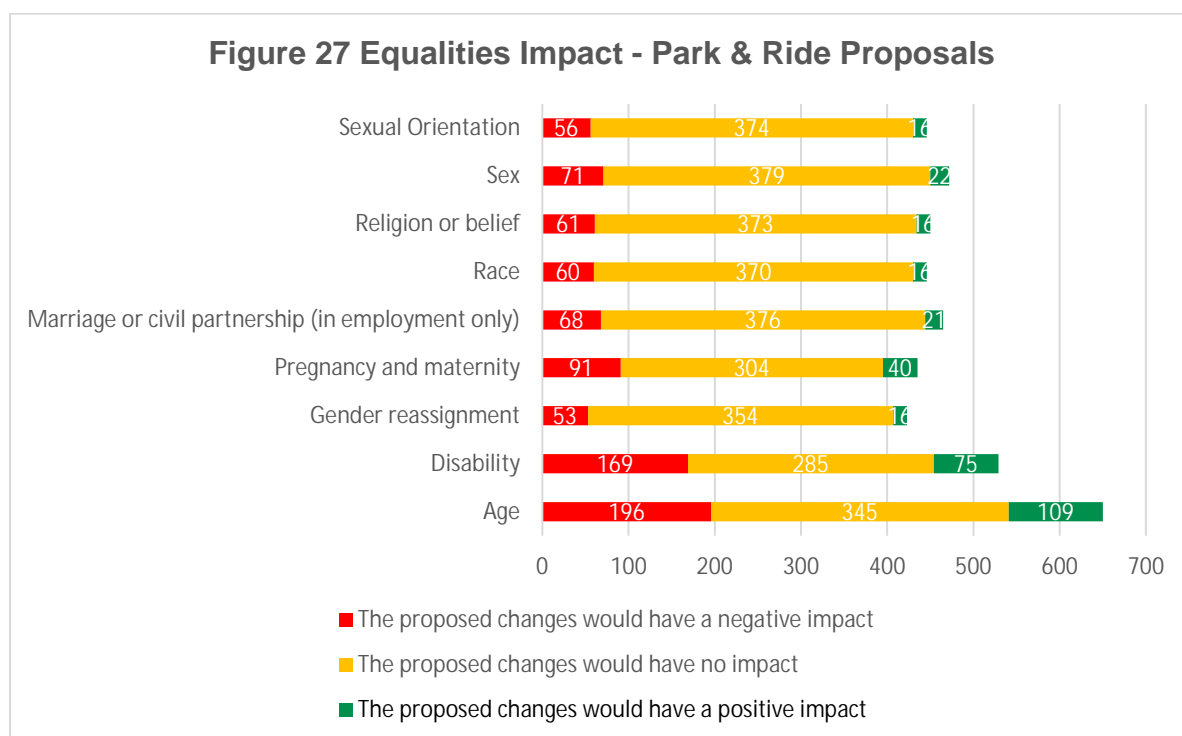


Table 11 Respondents' views on the equality impact of Park & Ride proposals

Theme	Count	%
Age	13	16%
Disability	12	15%
Non-drivers	4	5%
Children and families	5	6%
Safe mode of transport for women	1	1%
Ethnic minorities	1	1%
Other	45	56%
Total	81	100%

There were relatively few comments on the equality impact of the Park & Ride service but the top themes among the comments received was the impact on age and disability. Some example comments below help to illustrate the nature of the feedback received. Again, a significant proportion of people objected to the consideration of equalities impact.

Example comments – Equalities impact of Park & Ride proposals

- *“The services should fully support anyone with protected characteristics and there are some fantastic drivers that go above and beyond to help service users.”*
- *“It would impact those who use the service, whether costs increased, or services are paused or ceased.”*
- *“The current busses are not particularly disability or push chair friendly owing to their design.”*
- *“Taking money from public bus services will adversely affect those who can't drive and who rely on public transport to get to hospital appointments, work etc.”*
- *“Your proposed changes would have zero impact on the lives of elderly or disabled people living in rural Shropshire who cannot access bus services to even get into Shrewsbury - wake up!”*
- *“My elderly parents would definitely use the park and ride more if the buses were frequent and reliable. If parking charges are increased and park and ride ceased it will be the death of the town centre.”*
- *“Elderly population requires more affordable and more frequent bus services e.g. I have an elderly relative who has to pay £10 each way for taxi journey into Oswestry for medical appointments because there is no bus service which stops within an accessible distance.”*
- *“Disabled people are always disproportionately affected by any changes to public transport or bus funding not being appropriately allocated for all areas of Shropshire for public transport. Areas other than Shrewsbury are already struggling and more investment is urgently needed.”*
- *“Many elderly and disabled individuals heavily rely on the park and ride service. Getting rid of these could completely alienate individuals. Which could result in many people suffering ill mental health, especially in winter months.”*
- *“Withdrawing funds from standard bus services relied on by elderly and disabled people who are not able to drive or not able to use technology to book a bus ride will badly disadvantage them. Pregnant women would be subjected to more unnecessary stress if they are forced to drive to park and ride (if they can drive), possibly with other young children and pushchairs, rather than pick up a bus close to their house.”*
- *“My child has learning disabilities, using the bus will teach her independence as she becomes an adult so the more regular and easy to use it is the better.”*
- *“People from minority backgrounds and the elderly are statistically more likely to use buses than any other group.”*
- *“Building a decent waiting space at the P&R would make use by elderly, disabled, pregnant women and families with young children much more likely.”*
- *“This woke stuff at every point is really annoying because largely irrelevant.”*
- *“Stop considering protected characteristics.”*

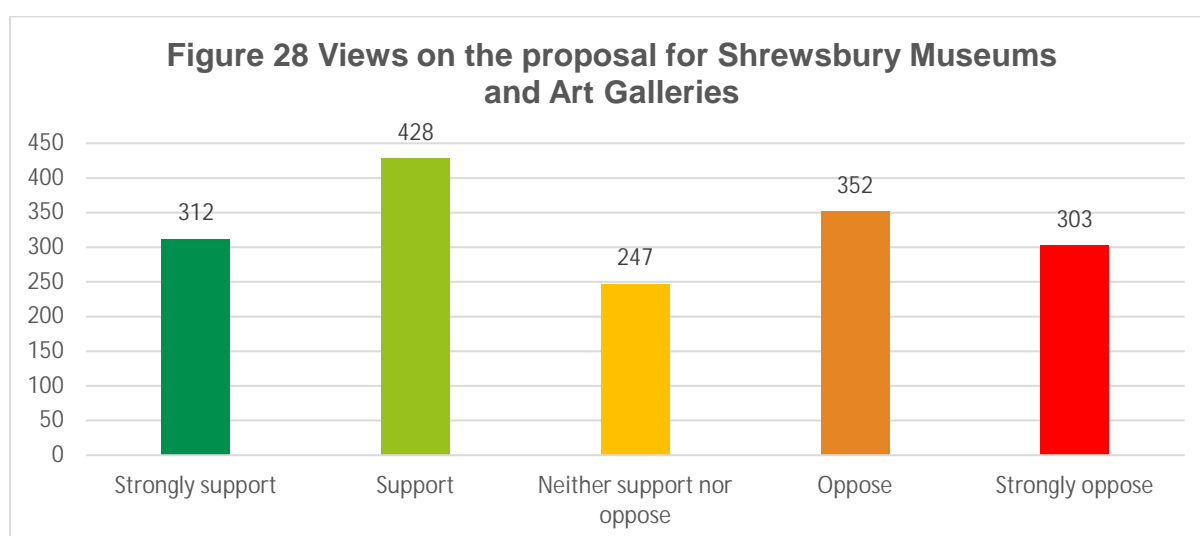
The feedback received suggests that many people value the Park & Ride service and do not wish to see it reduced or lost. There are suggestions that it needs improvement, and this aligns with the feedback suggesting that option 1 (investment to increase use and income) is preferred. The next section of the survey considers feedback related to proposals for Shrewsbury Museums and Art Galleries.

8 Shrewsbury Museums and Art Galleries

All 3,556 budget consultation survey respondents were asked if they would like to answer questions related to Shrewsbury Museums and Art Galleries. 1,300 chose not to respond to this section of the survey. This could also have been influenced by the fact the survey was longer than surveys are usually. Despite the slightly lower interest in this area of service there was still an excellent response. The first question asked was whether people support the savings proposal outlined. This is shown in the box below:

Savings Proposal: It is proposed that a change of operating hours at Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery (SM&AG) and Shrewsbury Castle is implemented from early 025. Under current operating hours, both facilities close on a Monday from November to April. It is proposed that from early 2025, these sites move to closure on a Sunday and a Monday all year round, opening Tuesday to Saturday. It is estimated that this change will help to meet a savings target of under £50,000.

Figure 28 displays the response to the proposal. The feedback was very mixed overall with 740 people (45.1% of those who responded) supporting the proposal and 655 (39.9%) opposing (15% had no opinion).



To understand the feedback a comment box was included to gather views and explanations. Table 12 shows that there were a number of different themes within the comments made. The most common theme within the comments was a request for closure during the week (some suggested a Monday rather than a Sunday). The next top theme related to the impact Sunday closures will have on visitors and tourism followed by impact on local residents (children were often mentioned within the comments). The example comments presented on the following page help to provide a better insight into the views of local people.

Table 12 Respondents' views on the Shrewsbury Museums and Art Galleries proposal

Theme	Count	%
Sunday closures will impact on visitors to the town	210	21%
Sunday closures will impact on local residents (e.g. children)	135	14%
Mid-week closure would be more sensible	309	31%
Close the museum	28	3%
Museum to attract external funding/ generate income	49	5%
Improved marketing/ increased visitor numbers	29	3%
Make use of volunteers	13	1%
Agree with the proposal	22	2%
More information about footfall required to make a decision	49	5%
Open seasonally	27	3%
Need to protect arts and culture	16	2%
Shrewsbury focussed what about the rest of the county?	8	1%
Not enough of a saving/Save elsewhere	35	4%
Close on more days	7	1%
Other	44	4%
Total	981	100%

Example comments – Shrewsbury Museums and Art Galleries proposal

- *"This is a terrible idea - we need more arts and culture in our lives rather than less."*
- *"Closing on a Sunday will impact our growing tourist economy."*
- *"Closing on Sunday limits the visitor demographics - has an investigation been done with visitor numbers for each day... would prefer closure on a week day alongside Monday than a weekend when working more affluent visitors would be available?"*
- *"I would think that closing on a Sunday would have an impact. A lot of people work during the week. Also, I know it's free, but consider a nominal charge for adults even a £1 would add up. Leave children free admission."*
- *"Close Mondays and Tuesdays. Sunday opening is appealing to many people who frequent the town centre at the weekend. If there is less and less open on Sundays this will be detrimental to encouraging Sunday shopping etc. and another downward spiral occurs."*
- *"I work in the week and find Saturdays difficult to plan ahead for. A Sunday however is the day I like to plan for, including trips out, including museums & galleries."*
- *"Open Saturday and Sunday because that's when visitors are in town. Close Monday and Tuesday and half days only on weds/ Thursday?"*
- *"I think that the museums provide a visitor attraction increased visitor footfall into the town will increase revenues through spending on food, drink and other shopping opportunities. Better marketing to encourage visitors will increase revenues from car parks and park and ride as well as benefitting local business."*

- *"This is a valuable resource for the area. Again though, it is too simple without telling us visitor numbers, vs costs to run etc."*
- *"Make more use of volunteers."*
- *"I think it could close more days in winter."*
- *"Close them for more than 2 days a week."*
- *"Just close them. A complete waste of time and barely anyone visits."*
- *"If council is short of money just close these elite establishments as they have no impact on people's day to day living."*
- *"You could try to use the facilities to actually make some money??? It is a fantastic building that should be marketed as a brilliant local resource. Craft workshops, business conferences, weddings, weekly business networking. Any space has the potential to earn if marketed and run by a business minded person who can jump quickly on new opportunities. This is definitely another supporting comment on increasing your in-house efficiencies."*
- *"I've lived in Shrewsbury for 15 years and have never needed or felt the need to visit any museums or the library."*
- *"Too Shrewsbury centric - This is a Shropshire wide issue not just Shrewsbury!"*
- *"£50,000.00 is a drop in the ocean. Not even worth including in the survey!"*

In the same way as for previous service proposals, survey respondents were asked their views on the equality impact of this proposal to reduce opening hours for Shrewsbury Museums and Art Galleries. Figure 29 highlights that age and disability are considered to be the protected characteristics in need of most attention for this proposal.

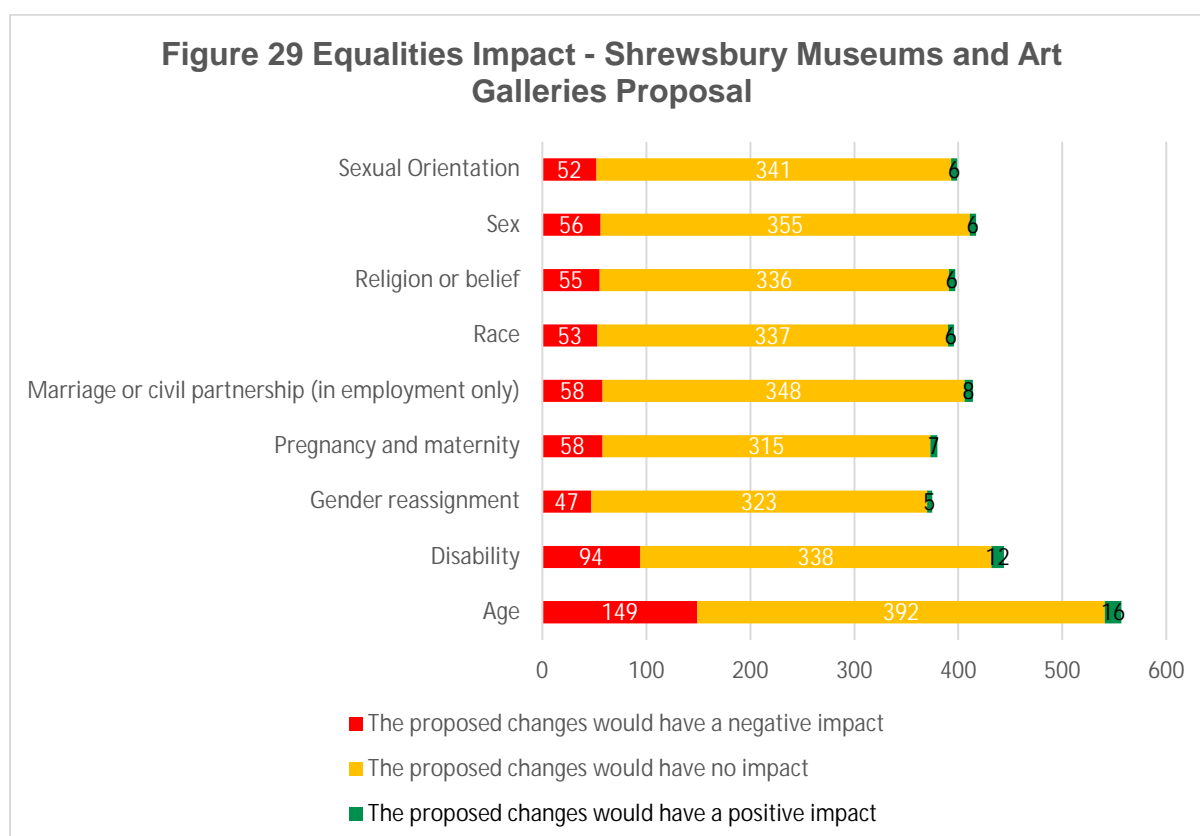


Table 13 Respondents' views on the equality impact of the Shrewsbury Museums and Art Galleries proposal

Theme	Count	%
Impacts negatively on local people e.g. families	18	26
Shrewsbury focussed what about the rest of the county?	2	3
Close the museum	2	3
Impacts tourism	4	6
Close more days	3	4
Importance of protecting culture	7	10
Negative comments about the question/measuring equality impact	15	22
Nothing to add	8	12
Other	9	13
Total	68	100%

62 comments were made in relation to the impact the proposal could have on people with protected characteristics. The main area of concern, as shown in the table, is that Sunday closures will impact on children and their families (29%). Some example comments are shown below to illustrate the feedback (negative comments about the equality assessment have not been included).

Example comments – Equalities impact of Shrewsbury Museums and Art Galleries proposal

- *“Closing the museum just excludes everyone!”*
- *“Discriminates against local working age people.”*
- *“Unable to visit with family if Sundays will be closed.”*
- *“Not visited recently but are we making the museum sufficiently attractive through offering 'hidden disability' type toilet facilities.”*
- *“This proposal is very short sighted. Children, students and working adults should be encouraged to visit museums and galleries, as well as other leisure facilities in their free time, which is generally weekends, not restricted to 1 day a week. This policy impacts education, socialisation, leisure, mental health and will lead to greater pressures on other parts of the council's budget in the medium to long term.”*
- *“These establishments should support Sunday as a day of rest and I'm sure they will not be missed if they don't open on Mondays either (people will find it harder to get into the town centre anyway if the Shrewsbury traffic loops go ahead).”*
- *“Closing on a Sunday really does indicate how ridiculously out of touch the Council is on what people want, and how the public use services.”*
- *“No buses on a Sunday to access the museum anyway.”*
- *“Very important to have cultural activities available as often as possible.”*
- *“Life is made richer and more amazing by art and culture. We need more of it, not less. Those of us who are already struggling with ill health need lifting up, our rich heritage, culture and art help sustain us. Don't cut the opening hours of our galleries and museums.”*

The next section of the report considers feedback on other savings proposals.

9 Other savings proposals

The budget consultation was used to explain that Shropshire Council is considering a number of possible options for achieving the necessary savings or generating income to offset budget pressures. 9 suggested actions were set out:

1. Increasing the number of foster carers across the county (estimated £1.375m savings)
2. Increasing debt collection by the council (estimated £1.4m savings)
3. Household recycling centres will be closed on certain days (estimated £0.39m)
4. Greater enforcement of car parking tickets, littering fines, and other civil measures (estimated £0.30m savings)
5. Introduce and enforce residential parking permits (estimated £0.1m savings)
6. Review and potentially reduce some leisure provision (estimated £0.35m savings)
7. Asking other organisations (such as town or parish councils) to take on and run council operated leisure centres. (estimated £0.2m savings)
8. Management of green spaces will be passed to town or parish councils, where they choose to take that on. (estimated £0.2m savings)
9. Asking people self-funding for social care to make a greater contribution (estimated £1m savings)

The overall views on each of these options were collected and the combined response is shown in Figure 30. The majority of survey respondents strongly support or support increasing debt collection and increasing the number of foster carers in Shropshire. There is also more support than objection for the proposal to increase enforcement of fines. The proposals with very limited support are the review and reduction of leisure provision and asking for greater contributions for social care. Closing Household Recycling Centres (HRCs) is another a proposal which attracted a high number of oppose and strongly oppose responses. To summarise briefly:

General Support

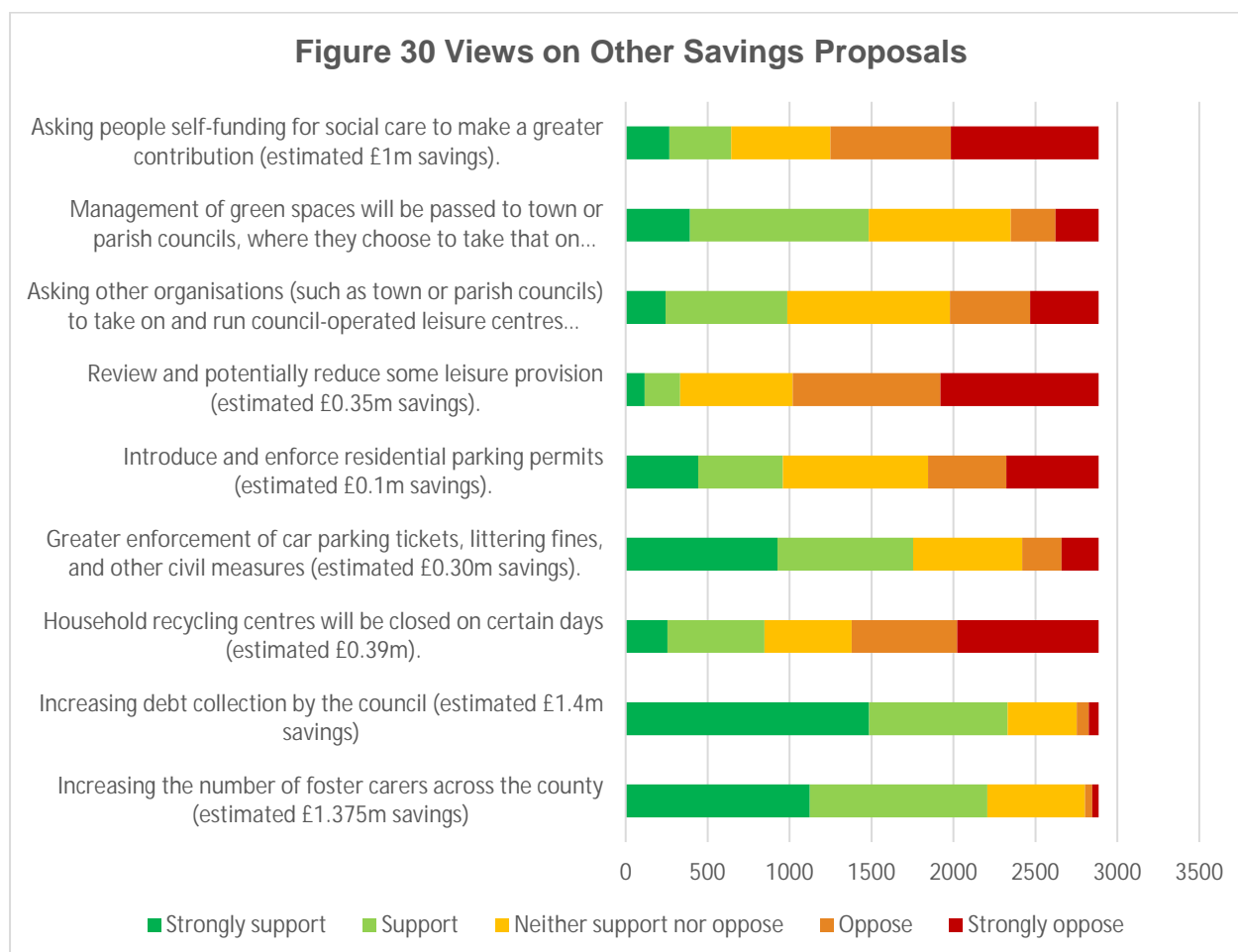
- **Proposal 2** Debt Collection – 80.7% strongly support or support and 4.6% oppose or strongly oppose.
- **Proposal 1** Foster Carers – 76.5% strongly support or support and 2.9% oppose or strongly oppose.
- **Proposal 4** Enforcement and collection of fines – 60.8% strongly support or support and 16.2% oppose or strongly oppose.
- **Proposal 8** Town and Parish Council management of green spaces – 51.4% strongly support or support and 18.6% oppose or strongly oppose.

Mixed Views

- **Proposal 5** Parking permits – 33.3% strongly support or support and 36.1% oppose or strongly oppose.
- **Proposal 7** Town and Parish Council or other led leisure centres – 34.2% strongly support or support and 31.4% oppose or strongly oppose.

General Opposition

- **Proposal 6** Reductions in leisure provision – 11.5% strongly support or support and 64.7% oppose or strongly oppose.
- **Proposal 9** Contributions for social care – 22.3% strongly support or support and 56.7% oppose or strongly oppose.
- **Proposal 3** HRC opening hours – 29.3% strongly support or support and 52.3% oppose or strongly oppose.



To understand feedback at a more granular level comments were gathered for each proposal and these have been analysed below. For each a table is used to show the themes contained within the comments and example comments are used to illustrate the type of feedback received. This information should assist in decision making around whether to develop these proposals further and implement future consultations.

1. Increasing the number of foster carers across the county

There was overall support for this proposal. 294 comments were made by survey respondents resulting in 343 separate points which were categorised. Table 14 displays the themes within the feedback and shows that the main areas of concern relate to the need for improved support for foster carers (including financial

incentives) and the challenge of finding additional foster carers. Others expressed concerns that this proposal would not necessarily result in cost savings when other factors were considered (e.g. vetting, social worker support, training etc.)

Table 14 Respondents' comments on increasing foster carer numbers

Theme	Count	%
Good idea (general comments)	33	10%
Better value for money than residential/ children's homes/ agencies	32	9%
Better option for children within a supportive home environment	37	11%
Need to improve support (including financial) to recruit / retain/ vetting of foster carers	47	14%
Remove barriers to becoming foster carers / review current processes	23	7%
Invest in preventative work to support families before crisis	15	4%
Will lead to costs/ Doesn't save money/ Private companies drive up costs	33	10%
Foster caring shouldn't be for monetary gain/ seen as a job	7	2%
Should have been implemented already	10	3%
Negative comments about Shropshire Council	8	2%
How feasible? / Challenge finding foster carers - need recruitment	36	10%
Other suggestions within children's social care	11	3%
Other	51	15%
Total	343	100%

Example comments – Increasing foster carer numbers

- *“Good to get kids out of bad homes or soulless institutions.”*
- *“There needs to be more foster carers to save the obscene costs of residential and private care agencies. More social workers are needed to get more foster carers. Happy for council tax increase to be spent on children.”*
- *“Presumably foster care is in place of residential care. It presumably creates a more stable and caring environment for children and therefore to be encouraged. Cost saving is a side benefit.”*
- *“More children will go into the system if you keep rising costs of living for families trying to support their own children.”*
- *“I am a foster carer - independent agency. There is no proper family support in local authority foster care - the money is pretty similar - but I would not consider working for the LA as a single carer. I can rely on immediate family support in a crisis, but I know that with the LA they would expect me to rely on family and friends. Increasing the level of family support is the answer and will attract carers back from the agencies - but it has to be guaranteed as it is for my Outstanding rated agency.”*
- *“We would need to improve the recruitment and retention of social workers and continue to improve the quality of training, assessment and support of foster carers. Also do we know if any reduction or plateau in fostering has also been impacted by households having to use that available room as a 'home office' since the increase of homeworking. How if at all can we encourage some employers to allow personnel back to office-based working.”*
- *“There should be an option to use kinship carers for emergency foster placements if they are suitable and willing especially if they have a child with them on SGO as they have the knowledge and experience.”*

- *"Foster care does not generate income by and of itself - it costs to place children there. However, it is a cheaper option than care homes so presumably this proposal is a disguised way of close by care homes. Children in care homes are usually there because they cannot remain in foster placement, so this question is a very suspect one indeed."*
- *"Private fostering agencies and competition with other councils drive up the costs to the council. You need to tackle that issue to prevent foster families being paid more by the council through private companies."*
- *"I am a foster carer, too much money goes into private fostering."*
- *"It's unclear how increasing the number of foster carers would save money. This is only an estimated saving - may well end up being a scheme where lots of money is spent implementing but the savings are never seen which further contributes to the debts."*
- *"It's a great option but foster carers require really good quality support to ensure that foster placement do not break down. There will be a requirement for significant investment if this is to happen and a cost benefit analysis would be needed to ensure it is financially viable."*
- *"The council really, really, need to look at RETENTION...not recruitment. Foster carers are currently treated appallingly and so are leaving the local authority."*
- *"Increasing adopters would work even better as there isn't the ongoing cost."*
- *"Make foster to adopt more viable for those who want to do it. Many people are put off by the thought of not being able to adopt a child if they wish to."*
- *"Improve adoption services in the region instead, lots of people are willing to adopt however the process is too archaic and prolonged."*
- *"When people want to foster, they are not allowed."*
- *"Stop putting lots obstacles in way people fostering..."*
- *"Definitely needed, think multi-race/multi-sex/older or same sex couples should be more openly considered."*
- *"It strikes me that if you could have increased the number of foster carers, you might have done so already. That is, is this proposal a red herring?"*
- *"Not sure how practical this is due to national difficulties in foster carer recruitment."*
- *"I work in fostering recruitment (for a charity not SCC) and recruitment is extremely challenging at the current time due to families needing one or both parents to work - it is not financially viable for them to foster, so good luck and I would love to see more foster carers in the council and my own organisation."*
- *"You keep advertising for these, so presume nobody wants to do the job."*
- *"You need to be careful you don't recruit unsuitable carers in a rush to up the numbers - that could cost you more in the long run. How about supporting families more before it gets to the point of children needing to be taken into care?"*
- *"Your recent adverts made it all about the money - knowing about this service - the right people definitely need to be paid handsomely for a fantastic job - but don't make it all about the money as that attracts the wrong people for the wrong reasons."*
- *"For some, foster caring is a money-making venture and it attracts the wrong people. Vulnerable children then don't get the support they need or deserve. There needs to be better vetting. Money needs to be spent to prevent children and families requiring fostering."*

2. Increasing debt collection by the council

360 people wrote comments in response to the proposal to increase debt collection. There was widespread support for the proposal. The 360 comments were relatively simple compared to some other topics and these have been categorised and summarised in Table 15. The main theme was that Shropshire council should be collecting outstanding debts followed by a call from some to be sympathetic to people's individual circumstances. Only a few comments are shown as examples because the topic lacked the nuanced feedback seen for other proposals.

Table 15 Respondents' comments on increasing debt collection

Theme	Count	%
Needs to be sympathetic to people's circumstances	65	18%
Need more information on the costs to implement/collect the debts	35	10%
Outstanding debts need to be collected	121	34%
Systems need to be fair, regulated and open to challenge	11	3%
Other	128	36%
Total	377	100%

Example comments – Increasing debt collection

- *"Debt collection agencies harassing the vulnerable because the council cannot manage budgets is not a good look."*
- *"Debt collectors can be brutal. Care to be taken around the vulnerable."*
- *"Does the saving take into account the cost of collecting the debt?"*
- *"All council tax should be paid or recovered. It is unfair on those of us who cough up every year if that doesn't happen."*
- *"I worked for a company that was chased for £30 by a debt collector following the instruction by the council. It would have been cheaper to contact us directly - we were in regular contact. I doubt chasing debt is going to make a big difference on the balance sheet in real terms."*
- *"Will this include recovering the millions you have lent to Cornovii? We wouldn't need to be messing with stupid things like lights and bins if you weren't lending mass amounts to Cornovii."*
- *"£1.4 million in savings by improving the process would of course be beneficial but does beg the question why this isn't being done already if such a significant saving can be easily made."*
- *"If you have £1.4m annually of unpaid debt savings, then I can assure you, you do not have a good track record for collecting debts!"*
- *"Get on with it!"*
- *"Why has this not been done already?"*
- *"I do not support paying other companies to do this on your behalf."*

There were relatively few concerns raised within this topic and few people had any detailed comments to make about the proposal. The majority of people are supportive and some question why Shropshire Council has so much outstanding debt and hasn't taken more action on the issue previously.

3. Household recycling centres will be closed on certain days

Information on the proposal to close household recycling centres on certain days was captured through the recent focused consultation on Garden Waste and Household Recycling Centres which ran from 8th April 2024 to 20th May 2024. Full reports of the findings have been published. The consultation resulted in widespread concerns about reductions in access to Household Recycling Centres, but budget pressures mean Shropshire Council must continue to explore savings in this area. There were 885 individual comments in response to this proposal resulting in 1,103 separate points categorised into the table below. As mentioned in the section earlier in the report on Waste and Recycling, 22 of the 28 written consultation responses focused on the topic of waste and recycling and these included comments relating to the importance of good access to HRCs.

Dominant themes within the feedback received were concerns about the impact of reducing access to Household Recycling Centres (HRCs) including concerns about increases in littering and fly-tipping (263 comments) and the inconvenience of the new booking system (243). Calls for weekend and bank holiday opening featured strongly within the feedback (126 comments). A proportion of people felt the proposals were contradictory and that reductions in household waste collections should lead to increased opening of HRCs (104 comments). Others supported reducing opening on quiet days (103 comments). The example comments below help to highlight the type of feedback received.

Table 16 Respondents' comments regarding reductions in HRC opening

Theme	Count	%
Remove the booking system / inconvenient	243	22%
Reduced days will encourage fly-tipping and littering	263	24%
Need to have the recycling centre open at the weekend and bank holidays	126	11%
Recycling centre needs to be open the majority of the time	25	2%
Need to promote the new system to ensure people are aware	16	1%
Close the recycling centre on the quieter days	103	9%
Will reduce recycling rates / need to support increased recycling	55	5%
Reduction in staffing levels	11	1%
Essential service / do not reduce	65	6%
Join up thinking - reduced household/charging for green waste - need more access to HRCs	104	9%
Other	92	8%
Total	1103	100%

Example comments – Reduced HRC opening

- *“Depends which days. Weekend access is needed for those that work full time.”*
- *“I would support closures of household recycling sites on certain days rather than a complete closure of sites.”*
- *“Don’t necessarily mind the tip being closed on certain days but booking times has made me use the tip less.”*
- *“This will increase fly tipping which costs more to collect.”*
- *“You are cutting our waste options in all directions. Not good enough.”*

- *“Bad mistake with the booking system. There's never a queue at Bridgnorth and the staff are never working just standing around the cabin.”*
- *“Whitchurch has never had problems & it seems as if the earlier proposal (to have a booking system) was just there to quieten things down enough to make it not viable to open all week.”*
- *“We need feedback on how the new booking system is working- the recycling centre at Battlefield was virtually empty when visited recently - two men managing the check in - how can this be cost effective and efficient?”*
- *“Your current booking system is stupid, if you're only going to offer 15-minute slots then people should be able to pick a 15-minute slot, not a 2-hour slot that you then randomly allocate.”*
- *“Small saving for negative impact.”*

4. Greater enforcement of car parking tickets, littering fines, and other civil measures

456 people made comments in response to the proposal to increase enforcement and collect fines. This resulted in 571 separate points matched into the categories shown in the table below. The feedback was spread out over quite a few themes and many resulted in similar numbers of responses. It was clear from the feedback that there is much more support for enforcement in relation to littering than for car parking and other measures. Many people felt littering, dog mess and fly-tipping have become greater issues within communities and need to be addressed, however, in relation to parking tickets there was considerably less support. Some commented that it will require investment (including staffing) to undertake increased enforcement, others raised concerns regarding the impact on communities should the perception of enforcement ‘drive people away’ or present a view of a ‘less welcoming and accepting community’. Some encouraged better education and provision of other facilities and support to resolve issues and more felt that the proposal was not based on sound economic assessment.

Table 17 Respondents’ comments regarding increased enforcement

Theme	Count	%
Encourage education e.g. action on littering	55	10%
Provide sufficient alternatives e.g. litter bins/ parking meters	18	3%
Should have been implemented already	48	8%
Littering and dog mess is a big issue/ 'Yes' to littering and 'no' to parking	83	15%
Littering and fly tipping will increase due to other change/proposals	16	3%
Unsure of what the proposals mean? (e.g. other civil measures)	5	1%
Enforcement punitive/ overzealous/ don't drive people away	68	12%
Negligible savings/increased costs	55	10%
Need increased staffing levels to carry out enforcement/ collect fines	43	8%
General disagreement	47	8%
General agreement	55	10%
Don't outsource or use private contractors	8	1%
Other	70	12%
Total	571	100%

Example comments – Increased enforcement

- *“As long as there is a clear, sensible, fair, easily accessible appeals process.”*
- *“Illegal parking and litter is a huge problem that people get away with because they know they can. Make your traffic wardens into traffic/litter wardens and then they can fine people for both without having to hire additional staff.”*
- *“I do believe that there should be greater enforcement of certain fines, however there must be a human approach to this and not another 3rd party commercial contract awarded. If the council are proposing to tackle this, then they must do so with council staff and not an external contractor.”*
- *“The problem with this proposal is that car parking is the easy target. Please get tough on littering fines and dog fouling. In particular dog excrement on pavements and public areas. Have there been any fines so far? Dog mess is a health hazard which would relate to cost saving for the NHS.”*
- *“Strongly agree re littering and antisocial behaviour. Car parking fines not so much. Car parking fines put people off visiting the towns and spending money.”*
- *“Parking tickets no, but yes to pursuing the litter louts AND fly tipping!”*
- *“I do not support more parking enforcement. However, I do support fines for littering as our town is a disgrace!”*
- *“Littering & fly tipping already increasing due to recycling centre changes.”*
- *“The sheer amount of ticket machines within the area that are non-functional is already ridiculous. Individuals without access to mobiles are penalised due to this. All parking machines would need to be in full working order before this is even considered.”*
- *“Negligible saving. Increased recovery efforts likely to intimidate and draw people away from using parking and consequently draw people away from spending locally.”*
- *“I think you need to look at the bigger picture. These kinds of petty infractions go up when people are downtrodden and feel bad about the state of things. Try to improve stuff.”*
- *“You’ve just made reduction in enforcement officers!! I think the public would support more enforcement of environmental crime though it generally is not self-financing it may yield savings in reduced waste and cleaning costs and better compliance less abuse of household waste services by commercial premises etc.”*
- *“I believe that educating is better than punishing. Is a waste of resources if you truly leave on a free country.”*
- *“This type of enforcement has been attempted by local authorities around the country. Typically, it involves paying a contractor to enforce petty fines, often on a commission basis so they earn more for issuing more fines. It results in excessive fines being applied in absurd situations, often impacting people on low incomes, and it is very unpopular for good reason. Many neighbourhoods in Shrewsbury are affected on a daily basis by illegal and selfish parking, on junctions and on pavements. It would be more effective and beneficial to improve the enforcement and penalty for this.”*
- *“Against overenthusiastic enforcement which discourages people from coming into town centre. Should not be a money-making policy.”*
- *“Not just enforcement but also the penalties. Achieving Compliance should be the policy NOT revenue generation BUT the FULL cost of enforcement should be covered by the penalties.”*

- *“NB My support for greater enforcement is for the purpose of achieving compliance and NOT for the purpose of making savings. There should be no financial targets behind enforcement. This drives unacceptable behaviours and undermines the value of enforcement.”*
- *“Civil measures are there to encourage good social behaviours - not as a means of generating income.”*
- *“Had experience of these in Birmingham where the service has been contracted out; nothing but bad news with contractors making areas of the city no go zones due to overzealous Judge/Jury/Executioner application of fines. If this was introduced, I would avoid Shrewsbury town centre and do more online shopping.”*
- *“While I understand the need to generate savings through enforcement measures, I believe it’s important to approach this with a balance between fairness and efficiency. Increased enforcement of car parking tickets and littering fines could generate savings, but it should not disproportionately impact lower-income residents or those who may face difficulties with parking or waste disposal. I would support enforcement measures if they are applied fairly and if efforts are made to educate the public on parking rules and littering before imposing fines. Additionally, the council could consider using the funds generated from fines to support local community projects or improve public spaces, which could create a more positive outcome for everyone.”*

5. Introduce and enforce residential parking permits

The proposal to introduce and enforce residential parking permits was responded to with 339 comments, and 417 separate points within those comments. Table 18 summarises the response and highlights that many people believe residents should be able to park by their homes without permits, and many also feel that the suggestion will not be that financially successful. The example comments better demonstrate the feedback received. There was more mixed feedback on this proposal but overall, more concerns than support.

Table 18 Respondents’ comments regarding income from parking permits

Theme	Count	%
People should be able to park free near homes	80	19%
Should have good public transport as an alternative	9	2%
Just trying to raise money and charge individuals	14	3%
Generating inconvenience and problems for residents	30	7%
Alternative parking very limited	8	2%
Negative impact on visitors and carers	14	3%
Cost and effort to raise little income	73	18%
Agree it will generate income	19	5%
Consultations required for each area	6	1%
Increase enforcement	18	4%
Depends on the location	33	8%
Need more information	26	6%
Other comments	87	21%
Total	417	100%

Example comments – Parking permits

- *“Parking permit aka known as another tax!! NOOOOOOOO!!!!”*
- *“We shouldn't have to pay for permits to park outside our own homes.”*
- *“This would be an absolute boon for those residents who cannot park outside their homes.”*
- *“I don't agree with this. We already are being targeted with extra costs from all directions. Parking permits for residential areas is just another tax.”*
- *“Residential parking permits? We are not a city, that just feels money grabbing and you don't explain why that makes a 10k 'saving' - do you mean residents would have to pay for a permit? On top of paying their road tax and council tax? Um re-think this BAD plan please.”*
- *“People need a sense of community and to be able to have extended family and friends visit without having to worry about parking. It will have a mental health impact.”*
- *“Absolute nightmare for visitors & those who need family carers (doing the work of paid carers but for free due to the lack of paid carer availability / funds).”*
- *“Things like this price people out of areas. I've intentionally not moved to places because of this issue.”*
- *“In areas with limited parking, the introduction of parking quotas and permits does not benefit the community but rather causes tension in neighbourhoods where currently folk get on. This would be an unwelcome antisocial money grab.”*
- *“You could send parking wardens out to residential areas to enforce safe parking. Or introduce on street parking permits for households with more vehicles than can fit on their driveways.”*
- *“Would be better to invest in traffic free town centres, walking & cycling.”*
- *“This would only work in areas you have enforcement officers employed.”*
- *“Depends on location.”*
- *“More information about this needed.”*
- *“How can introducing and enforcing save money?”*

6. Review and potentially reduce some leisure provision

The proposal to review and potentially reduce some leisure provision (estimated at £0.35m savings) was responded to with 588 comments. Leisure issues are a key concern (although not as popular/leading to less feedback than household waste and recycling). Table 19 displays the analysis of comments. The 588 comments contained 719 separate points which were then categorised. A top theme within the comments (37.8%) was that reductions in investment in leisure services would potentially lead to an increased need for other services due to the positive impact leisure services has on health and reducing the need for health and social care services. Another top theme was a concern that the proposal was not specific enough and lacked information (84 mentions). Other themes within the feedback was the concern that leisure provision in Shropshire is limited, that leisure services are essential for children and young people, that rural areas need access to leisure facilities and that existing services should be retained. The example comments are again helpful and better illustrate the points made.

Table 19 Respondents' comments regarding leisure review and reductions

Theme	Count	%
Leisure has a positive impact on health and social care (cuts only risk increase in other costs)	272	37.8%
Leisure services already limited in Shropshire	54	7.5%
Importance of leisure for children and young people	48	6.7%
Make income from leisure cover costs	12	1.7%
Invest to ensure can make money and improve health	33	4.6%
Ensure rural access/better access in all areas to leisure facilities	44	6.1%
Increase charges	12	1.7%
Retain all existing services	40	5.6%
Reduce spend on lesser used services	17	2.4%
Would like more information to comment	84	11.7%
Sort out/ make a decision on the [Quarry] swimming pool	8	1.1%
Other comments	95	13.2%
Total	719	100%

Example comments – Leisure savings

- *"Disastrous suggestion in terms of public health, mental health and community."*
- *"False economy. Will have negative effect on health and wellbeing."*
- *"This will impact health and lifestyles of people - it is not a good option. Preventing ill health in the future is very important."*
- *"Leisure provision supports both physical and mental health in our rural county - it is an investment not a cost."*
- *"Giving people the facilities to maintain fitness and health should be a national and local priority - we are always being told that people need to look after themselves to reduce pressure on the NHS - reducing access to leisure centres or reducing their opening hours is not a good way to support people who are seeking to maintain their health - both physically and mentally."*
- *"Our sports centre provision is appalling for a county town. Sell the quarry pool site and build a modern pool on the site of the sports village with buses running to it - you increase the health of your population and reduce your social care costs long term. You could even co-locate other services there to support people live healthy fulfilled lives."*
- *"People need to exercise more! Children need to learn to swim. Reintroduce free swimming sessions."*
- *"This might have un-foreseen consequences by removing opportunities for young people to be gainfully occupied instead of wandering the streets and further knock on effects to the social care budget and people maintaining fitness."*
- *"Our local leisure centre is an essential hub for many users both as a venue to exercise and socialise."*
- *"Not if this reduces access to swimming, cultural activities and libraries. We must protect these, they're not optional."*
- *"I can't believe there isn't a profit to be made from leisure? Or at least run at level. How do private gyms survive otherwise? Form Enterprise companies to run the leisure at cost and promote it. This is also important for the ongoing welfare of our residents. Health and mental health, it's a bigger picture and should be viewed as long term picture for society."*

- *“One of the biggest issues facing the county is the long-term care of the population, with issues around poor health driving a lot of the poor health issues in Shropshire. Rather than reduce access to leisure facilities more resources should be put into them, and residents encouraged to use them to improve their health - such as through exercise on referral or post-operative rehabilitation. Whilst the current financial situation of the Council clearly needs to be addressed reducing access to leisure facilities is going to create massive future health implications for future versions of Shropshire Council to have to deal with.”*

7. Asking other organisations (such as town or parish councils) to take on and run council operated leisure centres.

496 people made comments in response to the proposal to ask other organisations (such as town or parish councils) to take on and run council operated leisure centres (estimated £0.2m savings). The 496 comments resulted in 618 separate points being made and Table 20 displays that qualitative analysis. 196 people asked questions about how this could work and whether savings could be made (32% of the points raised). Other common themes were that the proposal was merely passing on the financial burden and not finding a solution, and others commented that they would support this but only if town and parish councils or other organisations were willing to take on leisure centres. Many people felt the proposal was too general and that more specific information was needed in relation to options for each leisure centre.

Table 20 Respondents’ comments regarding town and parish councils or other organisations running leisure services

Theme	Count	%
How will it be funded and how would it create savings?	196	32%
Concerns over expertise	50	8%
Passing on financial burden	95	15%
Supportive if T&C's can cope and agree	93	15%
Not enough information on proposal	30	5%
Private sector for/against	15	2%
Will create geographic inequality/should be same provision countywide	11	2%
Oppose/should be centrally managed	30	5%
Manage in partnership/depends on what's best for each location	8	1%
Other	90	15%
Total	618	100%

Example comments – Leisure services run by town and parish councils or other organisations

- *“I support this being passed to parish councils where they are capable of running facilities better in the public interest.”*
- *“Residents already pay for leisure services in their council tax. Asking, in effect, for an additional contribution from smaller towns means residents would be paying twice.”*
- *“Do they have the funding? This could lead to closures.”*
- *“How can a small parish council be able to take on such a responsibility? They don’t have the knowledge, management skills, legal or financial know how to run*

this and would be full-time work but parish councils do their work in their own leisure time.”

- *“This is not a fair consultation question as the leisure facilities around the county are managed by different companies, some are successful and some struggle. If handing these facilities over it must be done in the best interest of the community.”*
- *“The council recently took over Church Stretton and Bishop's Castle leisure centres, so assume that it was deemed a good idea then. Instead of shifting the problem to someone else, why not review the individual centres and implement measures to make them profitable/more profitable.”*
- *“From personal experience SC is better at running leisure centres than other bodies.”*
- *“Do not give to private companies... They up the price (profit driven) less people go defeats the object.”*
- *“These centres are used extensively by local schools and must remain part of Shropshire council provision and planning to ensure equality of access.”*
- *“Telford and Wrekin have hit the nail on the head with this one. They have multiple leisure centres spread out across their borough you can pay 1 membership charges to access these. It allows people from all areas access, it supports different people, and sees a regular income and an increase in jobs.”*

8. Management of green spaces will be passed to town or parish councils, where they choose to take that on.

Proposal 8 was that the management of green spaces will be passed to town or parish councils, where they choose to take that on, leading to an estimated £0.2m of savings. 419 people took the time to add a comment in relation to this proposal and those 419 comments included 476 separate points which have been categorised and displayed in Table 21. Top themes were that resources would be needed to enable the proposal to be implemented, agreement that it could work well, concerns that this would be passing on the financial burden to another organisation and concerns that town and parish councils may not agree to take on such a responsibility. The example comments are helpful to illustrate the feedback and concerns that were shared in response to the proposal.

Table 21 Respondents’ comments regarding town and parish councils managing green spaces

Theme	Count	%
Passing on financial burden	52	11%
Concerns over expertise to manage them	12	3%
This proposal needs resources	78	16%
Positive comments agreeing with the proposal	74	16%
Unclear how this creates savings	20	4%
Town and parish councils need to be able to choose to accept	26	5%
Concern for protection of green spaces	16	3%
Other	198	42%
Total	476	100%

Example comments – Green spaces managed by town and parish councils

- *“Local people taking care of local places.”*
- *“Again, wherever possible this is a welcome move - important that not all is lost in this financial crisis.”*
- *“Again, I would potentially be in favour of this option, but it needs to be very carefully thought through and managed by Shropshire Council, to ensure an equitable level of service throughout the county.”*
- *“Our open and green spaces have been identified and linked to good physical and mental health. It is not so important who manages them so long as any transfer includes sustainable financial resources for their retention and appropriate management.”*
- *“As long as the decision is made by the town or parish councils and it is not forced upon them.”*
- *“Important to keep this in central hands. Plus, maintain green spaces and prevent any attempt to build houses on them!”*
- *“Implementation of bespoke nature recovery plans could be a game changer across Shropshire. SALC already engaged in work with the LNRS to initiate this - support from the local authority would be good.”*
- *“This must be fully funded if this were to happen and sadly I fear it would not be.”*
- *“My town council is already far better at this than Shropshire.”*
- *“Again, this really would then depend on the funding ability in that area. South Shropshire Hill areas would have more cost, but perhaps enterprise companies could actually run them better. Green areas should look at being gifted to Wildlife Trust or National Trust.”*
- *“Whilst some larger councils in Shropshire have their own maintenance teams who can maintain green spaces, many do not so would have to commission these services from private operators, who generally are much more costly and do a very poor job, and the green spaces become over grown and less attractive for residents to use.”*
- *“Turkeys voting for Christmas! Of course, they won’t.”*
- *“Town Councils are also stretched and in the past have not received a fair share of the pot as spending is focused on Shrewsbury to the detriment of the rest of the county.”*
- *“Robbing Peter to pay Paul” - Our green spaces are of critical importance.”*
- *“Promote voluntary opportunities for maintenance and education regarding green spaces. Increasing people’s awareness and increasing their connection, involvement and responsibility to maintaining green spaces.”*
- *“Maybe community help or community service could help with maintenance with green spaces.”*
- *“Let them grow wild.”*
- *“Stop managing green spaces by cutting grass, plant flowers, wild, native plants and let nature sort it out. Just control noxious weeds.”*

The feedback for this proposal links closely to the previous proposal to work with town and parish councils in relation to leisure services. Many members of the public were keen to express their view that they support the suggestions on condition that the town and parish councils felt able to take on the responsibility without risk of passing on financial challenges.

9. Asking people self-funding for social care to make a greater contribution

The last proposal to ask people self-funding for social care to make a greater contribution (estimated £1m savings) was met with strong opposition. 22.3% strongly support or support this suggestion and 56.7% oppose or strongly oppose. The comments received contained some strong feelings on this subject. There were 579 comments, and these included 732 separate points, all categorised and displayed in Table 22. As the table shows, there were a lot of different themes covered within the comments made. The top theme (155 mentions) was in relation to how unfair this proposal is, and people expressed that those who have worked and saved should not be asked to pay more to subsidise the costs of others. The example comments help to illustrate this further. Other top themes include concerns that charging people more will mean they will need funded support sooner or risk losing their homes, and there were concerns that self-funders are already paying too much for care. A lot of examples are shown because people felt very strongly about the issue.

Table 22 Respondents' comments regarding social care contributions

Theme	Count	%
Unfair for those with properties or savings	37	5.1%
Unfair to subsidise costs for others on lower incomes/ already payed taxes and contributions	155	21.2%
People cannot afford to pay more/ will need funded support sooner/risk losing homes	84	11.5%
Costs of residential and nursing care too high (profit to private companies)	34	4.6%
Social care in need of review/ national policy changes	35	4.8%
Funding into social care needs to increase nationally	27	3.7%
Residential care can cause loss of independence	2	0.3%
People who don't self-fund should still pay a contribution	31	4.2%
More effective means testing required	51	7.0%
Self-funders already paying too much/ full costs	75	10.2%
Care should be provided by family and community	8	1.1%
Too little information about proposal to comment	47	6.4%
Council ineffective, inefficient, money wasted	20	2.7%
People with money/assets should pay more to protect vulnerable	46	6.3%
Other	80	10.9%
Total	732	100%

Example comments – Social care contributions

- *"I'm assuming that these people will be people who have had a job and worked hard through their lives. Asking them to pay more for social care, which they need through no fault of their own, is unfair. It feels like people who have already lived their entire life via benefits and living off the state won't be affected by this. What a shame that having a job and working for a living is not a protected characteristic."*
- *"In other words, if you spend all your money you will be taken care of and if you pay your bills and save for your later life it gets taken off you!"*

- *“Again, those who have worked hard all their life are punished where those who are work shy are yet given everything on a plate.”*
- *“Already very unfair to expect someone who has worked and saved all their lives to fund their care, when others who have contributed nothing to society throughout their lives get it all for nothing!”*
- *“I have to pay for everything because I have a job, savings and family money why shouldn’t everyone else have to contribute?”*
- *“Social care later in life has already been paid for in many instances through taxes. People who have paid in should not be expected to pay again.”*
- *“Perhaps a better option would be to allow those having to self-fund to opt out of any council tax contribution as they will be receiving no services from the council.”*
- *“Social care shouldn’t be based on personal wealth or savings ever. It should be equal and available to all. But more importantly, it shouldn’t be outsourced; this is a phenomenal expense to the council, and therefore is, the council tax payers.”*
- *“My son pays a monthly contribution towards his Social Care. My understanding is that a Minimum Income Guarantee is set by Central Government. Paying more in Social Care charges would have a negative impact on his and other people with learning disabilities quality of life.”*
- *“Having had relatives who have had to pay for nursing home care and home care I feel that it’s unfair for people to work hard all their lives to spend their savings completely. It should have a cap. They would have been better off spending extravagantly.”*
- *“Social care is vital. It isn’t sufficient now and needs much more resourcing. Sadly, most receivers are vulnerable in age, health and financial means and my experience is that they need it to be provided and sufficiently, not required to try to fund it.”*
- *“This would just bring in a divide in the standard of care. Those with assets would get good care, those without would be back to the days of the workhouses. Disgraceful.”*
- *“We already operate a two-tier system in this country. In some care homes residents sit next to each other - one may have lost their home and/or life savings to pay for it whilst the other resident hasn’t paid a single penny - why should self-funding residents continue to be penalised?”*
- *“This is an additional burden on vulnerable people and will lead to some people not accepting the care that they need.”*
- *“I would feel concern for those on the financial threshold for self-funding; it may be financially untenable for them and need to withdraw from the support needed.”*
- *“If people are self-funding (care) how can they make an additional contribution? They are already paying the full amount by being 'self-funding'.”*
- *“Social care is incredibly expensive. The system needs to be reviewed to regulate care providers more.”*
- *“The social care system is an inefficient bureaucratic monster- no one is cooperating with each other-(NHS, hospitals social workers etc) and the poor people that need the service are already suffering, many can’t afford the help they need and personal financial responsibility is just penalized when you need*

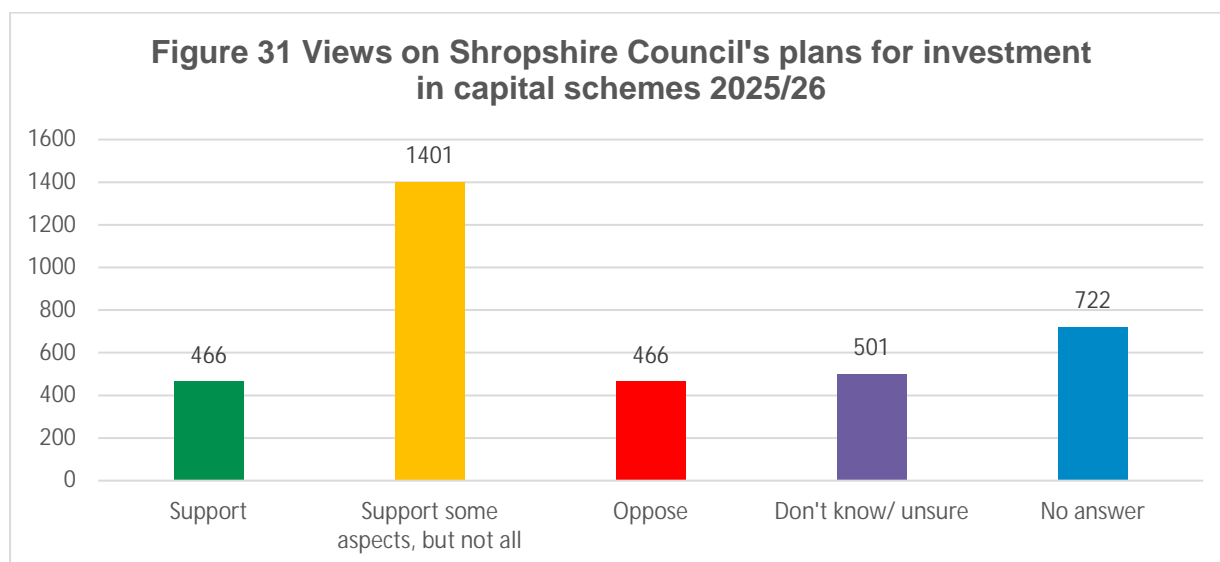
assistance. The council should be pressing for this service to be reformed and provided by NHS and central government."

- "The council could work much more efficiently with its Social Care provision - a root & branch reorganisation of how Social Services dept' works within the council is required - less time on pointless admin, more delivery!"*
- "Social care is the biggest burden on the council, so surely this is the area which requires most focus in terms of service reduction, cost increases, and cost efficiencies."*
- "Utilise technology to reduce costs e.g. technology enabled care to replace face to face visits. Charge people for Telecare where possible."*
- "My mother is self-funding social care and has almost burnt through the entirety of her assets (including the value of her home). She will shortly become dependent upon the local authority for funding. Charging her more would have simply hastened that day. Savings are illusionary."*
- "This could mean that self-funders run out of savings quicker, and would have to revert to Social Care Funding."*
- "From personal experience, this just depletes the funds of the individual faster, meaning that they would reach the threshold for Council funded care sooner. Then they have less choice about the service and might be placed in a care environment where their care is sub-standard."*
- "How do you possibly make a saving on something you're not currently paying for. My wife had to pay for her own social care, and the council made no contribution at all - how do you work out you can make a saving from that situation?"*
- "This is again significantly "kicking the can down the road" and will actually undermine any chance of the Government actually making national policy on what ought to be done to address the crumbling health and social care system, which is failing people across the country (not only in Shropshire). Again, such proposals are failing to address the fundamental problem of insufficient resources and such savings (even with the other suggestions) are not going to "save the Council" and will instead only serve to mask the financial position and allow the Council to continue to limp from one financial year to the next, which is totally unacceptable for both local communities and Council staff."*

This section of the report has demonstrated that there were very different responses to each of the 9 other savings proposals covered in the budget consultation. Some issues such as HRC opening hours, social care contributions and leisure service reductions promoted many concerns and some strongly expressed responses, other proposals were met with less concern and fewer different types of comments/ issues. Some proposals were widely accepted and members of the public suggested that these proposals should have been implemented previously (e.g. collection of debts, enforcement action with collection of fees and use of foster carers). There are other areas of service where more questions were asked and survey respondents expressed a desire for more detail and further engagement, these tended to be issues where opinion was more mixed. The next section of the report considers the proposed capital investment programme.

10 Capital Programme

Shropshire Council's budget consultation briefly outlined a £143m programme of capital investment for 2025/26. Capital projects are one-off investments typically into buildings or infrastructure or machinery. Capital funding cannot by law be used to meet the day-to-day costs of running council services - for example a local authority cannot move money from a capital scheme to pay for adult social care costs. However, the aim is to invest in projects that will help deliver the Shropshire Plan priorities and schemes that may help deliver efficiencies within the revenue budget. The first question on this topic within the online survey asked 'Overall, how supportive are you of Shropshire Council's plans for investment in capital schemes as outlined for 2025/26?' The results are shown in Figure 31. 13.1% support the investment in capital schemes, 39.4% support some elements but not all, and 13.1% oppose. The remainder did not answer the question or didn't know.



The consultation explained that the Council identifies high priority capital schemes which, once a clear business case has been approved, will be included in the capital programme. The Council has currently identified a further £239m of such schemes to be considered over the next 5 years. Most of the Council's capital investment is funded from external grants (such as government grants) and contributions (such as developer contribution linked to key schemes). Other schemes can be funded through capital asset sales or borrowing from Government. The Council always seeks to maximise external contributions and capital receipts, so reducing the cost to the council taxpayer.

The outline areas of spend for the priority schemes includes developments. Investing in maintaining and improving primary and secondary schools across the county, measures to reduce the carbon footprint of the Council's housing stock, and development of new social and affordable housing for local people. Other specific projects across the county include SpArC Leisure Centre in Bishops Castle, Whitchurch Civic Centre, Whitchurch Leisure Centre, the Shrewsbury Smithfield

Riverside Development, Swimming in Shropshire, and Highways projects including the North West Relief Road.

To obtain feedback members of the public were asked three main questions:

- Please tell us which capital investment plans you particularly like.
- Please tell us which capital investment plans you particularly don't like.
- Please tell us anything else you wish to about Shropshire Council's capital investment plans for 25/26.

Table 23 below summarises comments in relation to the capital investment plans people like. There were 1,158 comments and some people covered multiple points, requiring comments to be allocated to more than one category.

Table 23 Capital investment schemes respondents like

Theme	Count	%
Don't like any of the proposals	53	3.4%
Highways improvements/ NWRR/ transport	291	18.6%
Leisure facilities including swimming and civic centres	268	17.1%
School improvements and education	334	21.3%
Environmental and carbon reduction	68	4.3%
Health, wellbeing and prevention	41	2.6%
Social and affordable housing	194	12.4%
Shrewsbury town centre/ Smithfield Riverside	60	3.8%
Essential projects only	10	0.6%
Capital investment in social care	32	2.0%
Investment in business and economic growth	18	1.1%
Suggestions for other investment	33	2.1%
Not enough information to comment	39	2.5%
Other comments	127	8.1%
Total	1568	100%

The area of capital investment that attracted the most support is for capital investment in school improvements and education (334, 21.3%). Second most popular was investment in highways projects including the North West Relief Road (NWRR) (291, 18.6%) followed by investment in leisure facilities including the swimming in Shrewsbury and Whitchurch, SpArC Leisure Centre in Bishops Castle, and Whitchurch Civic Centre (268, 17.1%). Investment in social and affordable housing was also commonly mentioned as an area that should see capital investment.

Example comments are shown below. Within the other comments category there were lots of comments highlighting that capital investment was not benefitting towns across the county and seemed to be concentrated in particular areas, including Shrewsbury. As the analysis later in this section highlights, this was a common theme within the survey feedback and should be considered further.

Example comments – Elements of the capital programme respondents like

- *“All of them are vital.”*
- *“All except the Relief Road because you fail to maintain the roads we have.”*
- *“I support all the above capital projects apart from the vanity project which is the Northern Relief Rd, which I strongly oppose.”*
- *“North West road should go ahead asap! Swimming projects for sure. Penalise river pollution culprits too!! Majorly prosecute them. The Severn should be our towns mascot! I won't dip a finger in it here in Shropshire in Wales it's great to use. Get on it asap.”*
- *“North West Relief Road, Smithfield Riverside Development (but not to include the construction of new Council offices, just use the Guildhall) and the maintenance and/or improvement of Primary and Secondary School buildings.”*
- *“Highways. I like how you made this such a massive chunk of the capital distribution so when people complain about the disproportionate amount. When they point out potholes you can just shrug and say "well, you didn't want that fixed." You need to introduce impact fees on new building developments to offset a portion of the investment into highways and redistribute that portion into other areas...specifically in increasing the amount of taxable entities (i.e. Economic growth of NEW businesses).”*
- *“The riverside project.”*
- *“Support wellbeing, roads & drainage and flooding prevention.”*
- *“Affordable housing, improving schools & leisure facilities.”*
- *“Affordable housing. Leisure activities...must have more youth facilities.”*
- *“I agree with new affordable homes, but the council are doing nothing about the surrounding infrastructure to support this- roads, public transport, school places, dentists and docs - none of these are changing so more people and less infrastructure sounds a disaster.”*
- *“Those that improve the infrastructure (Schools, Hospitals, Leisure Facilities, Roads) in line with increases in house building and population.”*
- *“Housing both reducing carbon footprint (providing the work is done correctly first time round) and more affordable housing providing it is built where needed and with the right infrastructure in place, not just putting more strain on our deteriorating roads and our struggling schools, medical facilities etc*
- *“School improvement, reduction in carbon footprint of housing stock.”*
- *“Schools and social care. Too many houses have been built in our village recently with many more planned and our small school can't cope with an influx of more families moving here, our local health and social care infrastructure is under extreme pressure too.”*
- *“Investment in schools is paramount as schools in the south of the county are in a serious state of repair and require significant investment. SC have a carbon neutral strategy and have done for a number of years but have done very little to address this and become carbon neutral by 2030 so investment in assets to reduce carbon and running costs is also vital.”*
- *“Schools and leisure facilities are a must. Young people are our future, we must invest in them. Affordable and social housing is a must.”*
- *“Bishops Castle Business Park has been a great investment for the local economy and community and had been talked about for decades before it was*

built. I'm delighted to see the investment in Leisure facilities. I would like to see the North West Relief Road coming forward."

- *"Leisure improvements and anything that improves the condition of schools."*
- *"I support the investment in swimming and leisure facilities listed, Whitchurch Civic Centre, affordable housing, reducing the council's carbon footprint for housing and school improvements and the Smithfield redevelopment."*
- *"Investing in maintaining and improving primary and secondary schools across the county, Swimming in Shropshire SpArC Leisure Centre in Bishops Castle, Whitchurch Civic Centre, Whitchurch Leisure Centre."*
- *"More investment in leisure. You can see young kids getting into no good and getting involved in county lines already. They need to be enticed to go to leisure and community centres for something good! They may find a purpose or a hobby such as fitness or boxing and stay away from trouble."*
- *"Sparc leisure centre in Bishops Castle. The small rural community has worked tirelessly to raise a huge amount of money to keep the leisure centre going. It is utilised by all ages and demographics where many are isolated from accessing other services due to distance and limited public transport options. Capital support from Shropshire council will enable Sparc to have sustainable longevity to continue meeting the needs of South Shropshire residents."*
- *"More things for physically disabled children to be able to socialise instead of putting them with neurodivergent disabilities as well. They deserve to be support just as much as other disabilities."*
- *"Nothing here for North Shropshire, Oswestry, Ellesmere."*
- *"Depends on location, shouldn't all be in or around Shrewsbury."*
- *"Anything outside of Shrewsbury - the county is bigger than just Shrewsbury."*
- *"More money spent in Ludlow. Shrewsbury isn't the only place in Shropshire."*
- *"All I hear is Shrewsbury, Shrewsbury and more Shrewsbury. Nowhere else in the county is important. All major expenditure is funnelled into the county town!"*
- *"They are all good, but I live in Wem and yet again I see there is no consideration there. Through changes of Councils, Shropshire Council were gifted the Morgan Library originally gifted to the town of Wem. This is a listed building in a conservation area and has been left by Shropshire Council to fall into disrepair through negligence in the upkeep of the building. Why can that not be brought back up to standard so it can once again be used as a community building for the town."*
- *"Has the council not made unwise decisions regarding purchase of land and property which has contributed to massive debt - who made these decisions and how will it not be repeated?"*
- *"None. This council has proved itself unfit to dispose of public money."*
- *"VFM assessments must be made with return on investment paramount."*

To ensure balanced feedback survey respondents were also asked to explain anything about the capital programme they dislike. There were 1,111 comments and some people included more than one theme within their response. The following table highlights the themes that appeared within the comments. A significant proportion of the comments (484 mentions) related to people expressing that they do not wish to see investment in the North West Relief Road (although this was also a theme for others in what they like best about the capital programme).

Table 24 Capital investment schemes respondents dislike

Theme	Count	%
Disproportionately high for roads/highways	49	3.7%
North West Relief Road (NWRR)	484	37.0%
Too little investment in health and social care	39	3.0%
Too much investment in health and social care	14	1.1%
Spend less on environment/carbon reduction	62	4.7%
Spend more on schools	22	1.7%
Spend less on leisure	83	6.4%
Shrewsbury Smithfield Riverside development	220	16.8%
Vanity projects (shopping centres)	21	1.6%
Traffic changes proposed in Shrewsbury	14	1.1%
Housing - too much spend	63	4.8%
Housing - too little spend	10	0.8%
Lack of capital investment in rural areas outside Shrewsbury	55	4.2%
Reduce spend on property and assets	23	1.8%
Other comments (including revenue related comments)	148	11.3%
Total	1307	100%

The least popular capital investment schemes include the North West Relief Road (484 mentions) and the Smithfield Riverside development (220). Although spend on leisure projects was one of the areas most liked, there are some who expressed concerns that this type of spend was not essential at the current time given pressures in other areas (83 comments). The examples below help to give a better insight into the nature of the feedback received.

Example comments – Elements of the capital programme respondents dislike

- *“Do you need to spend that much on highways?”*
- *“The Highways expenditure seems disproportionately high. Maintenance is badly needed on rural roads, but the Relief Road is an unaffordable luxury.”*
- *“Any further spending on NWRR. This is a waste of money and will result in a huge increase in carbon emissions, doing little to help congestion (may worsen it in some areas) and nothing to help more environmentally friendly transport methods.”*
- *“NWRR- will traffic decrease once extra properties are built along/near its route? Smithfield Riverside Development, waste of money, knocking down concrete to build concrete with an odd tree. Try stopping that area from flooding first.”*
- *“The NWRR is in no way a project for all of Shropshire as it's being advertised. It doesn't help those outside Shrewsbury, and even those in Shrewsbury oppose it due to the destruction of the Darwin Oak. The Riverside redevelopment could be good, but the plans aren't in keeping with Shrewsbury at all. The designs are out of scale with Shrewsbury's medieval character, will look dated in 20 years and look like something you would find in Birmingham or Cardiff.”*
- *“Smithside river development - more soulless buildings.”*
- *“Smithfield riverside development and cutting the carbon footprint, both utter waste of time and money.”*

- *“Measures to reduce Carbon. We as a Country produce only 1% of the worlds carbon. Such ideas will cost money but will have such miniscule effect on the overall (god help us) net zero target.”*
- *“Carbon footprint reduction. It should not be a priority given the poor state of the finances. This obsession with carbon reduction is getting tiring and financially out of reach for the most part.”*
- *“Homes there are too many already.”*
- *“Housing, property and assets.”*
- *“Providing less things for the Arts and Leisure facilities in Shropshire would be detrimental.”*
- *“New swimming pools are being opened whilst the plan is to potentially close Much Wenlock leisure centre. This seems to be contradictory and a false economy.”*
- *“Proposed spending on things such as swimming pools - there are enough private businesses such as gyms that schools could approach to arrange a deal with, not be reliant on councils providing this for them.”*
- *“It would be interesting to understand why and how capital is being invested in some leisure facilities but funding under review for others.”*
- *“I don't like more buildings. We are running out of room and our Medical practices... and hospitals... cannot cope. Please, stop building.”*
- *“Would ensuring that most schools move over to academy trusts help off-set some financial burden?”*
- *“Concern about the amount of spend focused in Shrewsbury and North Shropshire, leaving South and mid Shropshire with failing services and buildings.”*
- *“All the others more investment in South Shropshire- always left out!”*
- *“Most seem to be befitting Shrewsbury. Certainly, don't see a fair spread of capital projects spread across the whole county. Especially when you consider the council tax unfairness across the county.”*
- *“All capital projects should go to public consultation.”*
- *“Even though capital and revenue budgets are separate, it is wrong to spend on vanity projects at a time when we are providing fewer and fewer services. It really is the wrong message.”*
- *“I think you should seriously consider putting a hold on all capital programmes until your budget is in order. Particularly those that will not achieve the targeted savings...a lack of strong programme management exists in the Council. It's time to get back to basics and reset.”*

Other feedback covers concerns that carbon reduction investment cannot be a priority at the current time; concerns relating to housing development and a lack of investment in infrastructure and services to meet the needs of an increased population. Other concerns relate to a lack of investment across Shropshire (repeating concerns highlighted within the previous question). The last question in the survey related to the capital investment programme provided the opportunity for any other comments. There were 466 comments and some covered multiple themes.

Table 25 Capital investment – other comments

Theme	Count	%
Shropshire Council become efficient/ make better decisions/ poor track record	88	18.1%
Stop/pause/re-think capital investment, ensure good return on investment	20	4.1%
NWRR not affordable	33	6.8%
Need for more effective road improvements/ better use Highways budget	52	10.7%
Improvements to waste services	8	1.6%
Importance of leisure facilities for health	6	1.2%
Increase capital investment in health and social care	18	3.7%
Should maximise income from tourism	8	1.6%
Reconsider external contracts and costs	18	3.7%
Social care taking up too much budget in need of review	6	1.2%
Need for investment in rural areas or outside Shrewsbury	61	12.6%
Sustainable transport, active travel and parks	14	2.9%
Need more engagement, listen/consult local people	21	4.3%
Too little detail to comment/ give informed view	26	5.4%
Sell off property or hand to private sector to lead	15	3.1%
Other comments	91	18.8%
Total	485	100.0%

Table 25 highlights that many of the same themes highlighted under the ‘like’ and ‘dislike’ questions were repeated for other comments related to the capital programme. However, there were also new themes under this question and the most commonly mentioned issue was concern about Shropshire Council’s handling of money and abilities to manage capital schemes (88 comments, 18.1%). The second top theme was the importance of investment outside of Shrewsbury (61 comments, 12.6%) and the third theme related to improved use of the highways capital budget to improve roads.

Example comments – Other comments regarding the capital programme

- *“You can’t please everyone, and I would like to thank you all for all your efforts on behalf of your county. You have a really hard job with lots of balancing and compromise required, and your efforts are so appreciated. Thank you.”*
- *“Public investment is vital for local prosperity.”*
- *“It must be ensured that capital investment is not just centred around Shrewsbury as tends to be the norm. Capital investment should be spread across the area, to local parishes as well as larger towns where facilities are needed to ensure that communities do not end up being isolated due to lack of infrastructure investment.”*
- *“There is a constant focus on Shrewsbury. There appear to be no advocates or plans for Bridgnorth despite a growing population and large-scale development planned. We are increasingly neglected and isolated.”*
- *“Investment should be more fairly distributed. NOT JUST SHREWSBURY. Other towns are being neglected! It’s just not fair! We pay our council tax and our towns are falling into disrepair.”*

- *"I can only speak regarding Bridgnorth as this is the town I live in. Bridgnorth is an affluent area over all- but not all residing own their properties nor do they have well paid employment. Council tax is one of the biggest bills a household has to contend with. I personally feel I would not be so opposed in the amount of council tax I pay (band c) if the services the town required were functional. The roads are in a terrible state. There are no streetlights. The council have quite blatantly decided we will be going to 3 weekly bin collections- for a family of 5 where we already struggle with bin space this is a huge concern. Not only this, we can't just use the local recycling centre to dispose of additional waste. My proposal is: As Bridgnorth seems to be the 'lost town' when it comes to Shropshire Council's input or backing, perhaps the ever rising and despicable increase in council tax, will be used for investing in Bridgnorth, levelling up, increasing infrastructure and services so sorely needed! Should no action be taken, the town will crumble, the young will leave, and independent businesses will die."*
- *"There should be a change in the laws regarding "capital expenditure" and "service expenditure" it's ludicrous that you cannot afford to repair roads or street lights, or having to shut a leisure centre, yet you can lose money on shopping centres, and then knock it down to build an "open space" that isn't needed at this time. Whoever is responsible for this at government level needs tackling to create some flexibility. And that would mean spending it on improving service to residents, NOT propping up what you're already doing."*
- *"Unless essential all should be paused unless related to a danger to life or health issues."*
- *"Given the circumstances I believe you need to be really REALLY certain that the developments are as beneficial as stated and critically, that costs won't go up. It would be disgraceful to see unnecessary projects balloon in costs when there is no money for this."*
- *"As a Council you probably spend capital funding in the wrong areas. Have noted the works going on by the railway station, widening the footpaths etc, total waste of public funding. The traffic lights in this area are always out of sequence leading to massive queues along Ellesmere Road - what happens when the lights are out after flooding?... the traffic flows so much better. I believe you as a Council drive people away from the town centre by not having any understanding or doing anything about the traffic build up in the town."*
- *"I have no confidence whatsoever in the current Shropshire Council's ability to make sound and just decisions in this field. The overpriced purchasing (and subsequent severe loss of their capital value) of shopping centres in Shrewsbury is just one example of why I have little no confidence in this current council's capital investment credentials."*
- *"I imagine that all the decisions have already been taken and this has been a waste of my time."*

The comments suggest survey respondents feel strongly about capital investment or lack of investment in some areas and the responses clearly show the areas of spend that are more and less popular (with some areas where opinion is split). The next section considers overall feedback on the budget proposals.

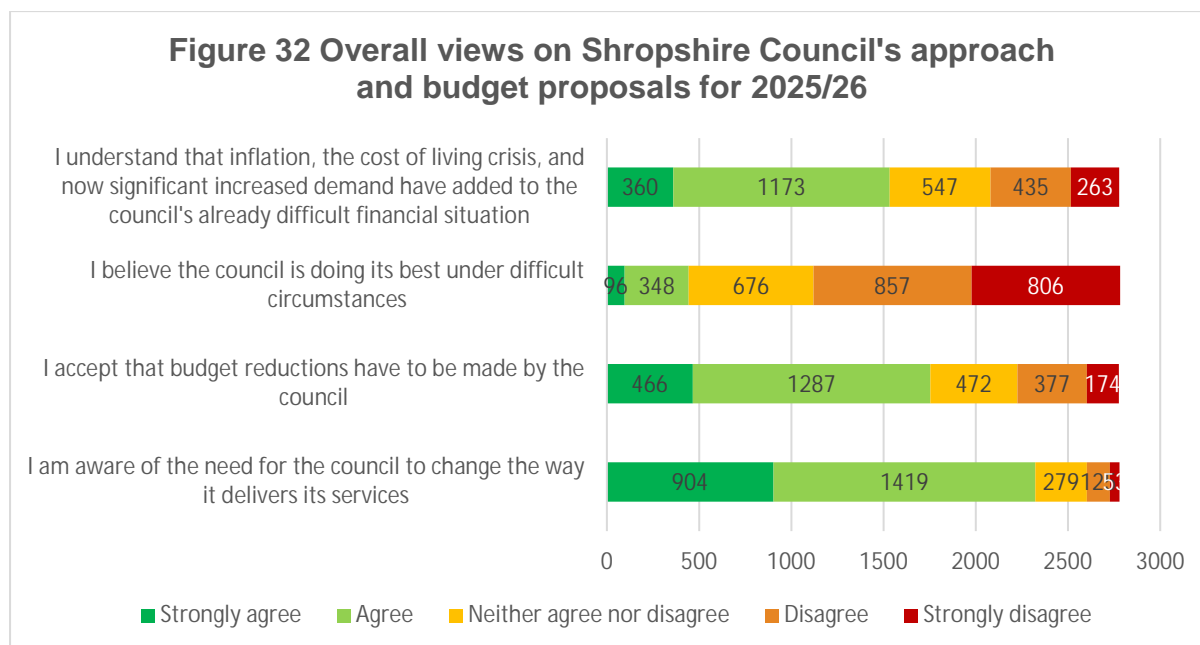
11 Overall Feedback

This section of the report considers the more general feedback gathered through the online budget consultation survey and the written consultation responses submitted (28 written responses).

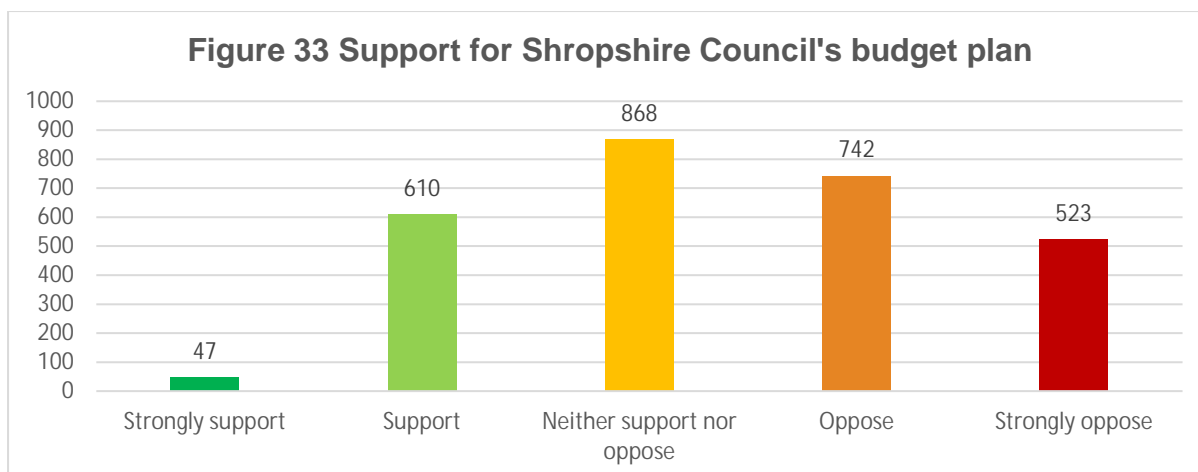
Survey respondents were presented with a series of statements and asked to give their view for each:

- I am aware of the need for the council to change the way it delivers its services
- I accept that budget reductions have to be made by the council
- I believe the council is doing its best under difficult circumstances
- I understand that inflation, the cost of living crisis, and now significant increased demand have added to the council's already difficult financial situation

Figure 32 displays the result. There is overall agreement that Shropshire Council needs to change the way it delivers its services (83.6% strongly agree or agree and 6.4% disagree or strongly disagree). There is a relatively high level of agreement that budget reductions have to be made (63.1% strongly agree or agree and 19.8% disagree or strongly disagree). There is also more agreement than disagreement that the costs of living crisis and increased demand have added to a difficult financial situation (55.2% strongly agree or agree and 25.1% disagree or strongly disagree). The disagreement with the last statement is quite striking and should be a cause of concern that is explored further. 59.8% disagree or strongly disagree that the council is doing its best under difficult circumstances (compared with only 16.0% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement).



The survey included a question to measure overall agreement with the council's budget plan for 2025/26. Figure 33 shows that 1,265 respondents (45.3% of those who responded to the question) oppose the budget plan and 657 support it (23.5%). There were also significant numbers with no opinion.



Analysis of the 28 written consultation responses received is included below. The dominant theme was waste and household recycling, and this has been covered earlier in the report. Other themes were covered to a lesser extent. 10 of the 28 comments included some criticism of Shropshire Council's financial management. All of the comments tended to focus on concerns with a few also including suggestions for how the challenges could be overcome. Full comments are available for Shropshire Council officers to read and use to inform future work. Example comments are included below.

Table 26 Analysis of issues raised within written consultation responses

Theme	Count	%
Waste collection and household recycling centres	22	51%
Streetlighting	3	7%
Highways	2	5%
Parking and Park & Ride	2	5%
Shrewsbury Museums and Art Galleries	1	2%
Capital investment	3	7%
Shropshire Council's budget management	10	23%
Total	43	100%

Example comments – Written consultation responses (extracts)

- *"In respect of street lighting absolutely need to move to led but can you apply as a fix as and when needed rather than rolling out in large scale? For example, an old bulb fails so you send the team to replace this with a new led bulb and cover close by replacements at the same time as and when needed. Saves time and avoids wasting bulbs that were still functional."*
- *"The cost of repairing secondary and minor roads could be greatly reduced if oversized contract farming equipment was not allowed or restricted from using roads..."*
- *"Charge the same for parking at out of town areas as car parks in town. These should fairly be applied to all including Meole Brace and Sundorne."*
- *"Park & Ride must be a lot cheaper than parking in town."*
- *"Do not close Museums and Galleries as they are important resources for tourism."*

- *“Cease all work on the rebuilding of the Ravens Meadow site. Mothball it until a) there is a provable high demand for it and b) a budget which is surplus, and which does not in any way restrict essential spending instead focus on reducing the costs to small independent shops and businesses.”*
- *“Invest in a capital project in Market Drayton.”*
- *“Furthermore, judging by the last survey completed on Garden Waste Subscriptions, approximately 18,000 respondents, only a tiny proportion supported the proposal, and still the subscription service was introduced. Why have a consultation and ignore the views of the public who replied? As a council you are in office to represent us (the Council Tax payers) not to drive forward your own agenda.”*
- *“I am sorry, but you cannot keep coming to us your customers for more money in CT and other charges (e.g. green waste) until you have got your own house in order. It is simply becoming not fair. We have all suffered in recent years with large mortgage rate increases, the cost of living crisis and above inflation rises in CT from yourselves probably the second biggest expense for many of your customers....”*
- *“The situation is not as simple as raising the council tax again. The root causes need to be addressed. Unfortunately, the public sector has a history of wasting money. This needs to be addressed, and it's clear that someone with proper business acumen is required to oversee the way things are done. I realise that this isn't the only factor. However, you really should be consulting someone from the private sector to get a grip on our financials otherwise you will carry on in the same vein.”*
- *“I do not support an increase in council tax above 4.99% at a time when basic prices for energy and food are still rising. As the council has said publicly that although its financial position is very challenging, it is in control of its budget. There is in these circumstances, no case for an increase in council tax above the referendum maximum.”*
- *“I'm opposed to increases especially as you carry on wasting money. If it were run as an owner business, I can assure you there would be less waste. I speak as a Financial Director and business owner with over 20 years' experience in employing many people.”*
- *“I suggest that council tax is already high and no longer offers value to the taxpayer. The insistence on alternatives to service cuts being an increase in price to the taxpayer is becoming concerning. I ask that before demanding more from taxpayers, you first, examine and justify how the money already being received from taxpayers, is being spent by the Council. For example, are your contractors really being monitored and challenged on the quality of the work done?... Successful commercial organisations cannot solely rely on increasing prices, but also have to constantly challenge their cost base; so too should the public sector. I hope such assurance could be offered before withdrawing even more service provision or seeking yet more from the community you serve.”*
- *“I understand that the council is under financial pressure...The community would obviously benefit from being engaged but I fear that the narrow breadth of this consultation renders fairly limited results.”*

The last main question within the online survey read 'Please share your ideas for how we might make further savings or provide any alternative suggestions to those set out within the proposals. The council will consult further on any significant changes to services or policy as it works to implement the agreed budget plan.' 939 people took the time to add a comment. 1,122 points were made within those comments and they are summarised in Table 27.

Table 27 Ideas for further savings or alternative suggestions

Theme	Count	%
Attracting investments, sponsorship etc. enabling income generation	17	1.5%
Increased efficiency (inc. reducing staffing, salaries and less home working)	150	13.4%
Improved communication and engagement with public	60	5.3%
Reduced consultancy use	68	6.1%
Mismanagement, Change in/reductions in senior management or councillors	180	16.0%
Improve/reduce external provision/contracts and agency staff	75	6.7%
Collect debt	7	0.6%
Allocations to rural areas/ other than Shrewsbury	29	2.6%
Introduce new charges e.g. planning, late delivery on contracts	9	0.8%
Analyse spend on social care	84	7.5%
Suggestions	246	21.9%
Other comments	197	17.6%
Total	1122	100.0%

As Table 27 highlights, many members of the public expressed criticism for the management of the organisation (180 comments). Others feel that Shropshire Council is not working efficiently and needs to reduce staffing, salaries or prevent work from home (150 comments). There were 246 suggestions and themes within those suggestions included:

- Reducing staffing levels
- Scrapping the North West Relief Road
- Not increasing council tax
- Reversing decisions on waste services
- Using volunteers
- Selling assets including the shopping centre and council buildings
- Promoting tourism, economic growth and business development
- Adopting better environmental practices
- Increased use of technology (a few used libraries as an example)
- Improved procurement and commissioning practice
- In-house rather than external delivery
- Improved community engagement

The example comments give a better insight into the nature of the comments made.

Example comments - Ideas for further savings or alternative suggestions

- *"We all understand the financial pressures on the Council (and the population in general). However, residents need to feel they are getting value for money when they pay Council Tax - as well as paying separately for services within the community provided by the Council. Aside from all the statutory commitments that a council must provide, it should be mindful that residents want to live in a safe and engaging community - with facilities like leisure centres, libraries, museums that enhance people's lives, rather than just feel we are having to "make do" with the bare minimum. I am convinced that small changes, some of which have been outlined in the consultation, will make a big difference and people will get used to certain tweaks to services e.g. bins/recycling being collected every 3 weeks."*
- *"Cost cutting is at the expense of tax payers while private companies are profiting from the council's years of mismanagement."*
- *"Once again, all I see on this "survey" are options for service cuts and price increases. The council has made this mess and wants to pass the burden onto the people of Shrewsbury. The folks in charge should be fired and investigated."*
- *"You're simply making excuses for your own poor money management and incompetence."*
- *"I understand changes have to be made. I am deeply concerned by the way the changes are being researched, designed and implemented."*
- *"No doubt you will disregard any views and comments which suggest anything other than your proposals just as you ignored residents with the green bin scheme and introduced regardless of the opposition."*
- *"Too much use of consultants, too much wasted monies, not focusing on what the good people of Shropshire are flagging, blinkered outlook."*
- *"There has been a lot of waste of Council money. Has efficiency been looked at not redundancy efficiency? Phone SC and you are waiting 30 minutes - why? Now Shirehall is closed who is monitoring staff WFH? Why is it the public always suffer, and we don't seem to get value for money. No waste bins, street cleaning rare, drains full, salt bins non-existent and potholes. Shrewsbury looks dirty, scruffy and uncared for. It's very sad."*
- *"I think you need to consider getting local residents more involved and invested in decision making. There are many examples of community owned projects where loan stock has been raised to bring certain services into community ownership. I think the focus on economic growth, without a clear vision of what this could look like without being environmentally destructive is futile- ultimately, unless we ensure that projects are regenerative and circular and that growth is measured in terms other than GDP it is likely that the economic benefits we get will be short term."*
- *"On the basis that is not just external factors that have put Shropshire Council in its current situation it is important that greater deliberative and inclusive democracy be employed in the future through: 1) Greater powers for scrutiny and performance assessment on decisions made by council committees. 2) engaging in more participate democracy such as citizens assemblies on key issues."*

12 Summary and Conclusion

The report outlines the findings from Shropshire Council's budget consultation, which ran from December 2024 to January 2025. The consultation aimed to gather public opinion on various budget-saving proposals. These budget savings proposals have become necessary as budget pressures have increased over recent years as a result of increased costs and demand for essential services like social care.

The consultation resulted in 3,585 responses. 3,556 people responded to the online survey and 28 people submitted written consultation responses. 18,261 comments were submitted and all of them have been read and categorised. The majority of consultation respondents were local residents (2,569, 72.2%), with some Shropshire Council employees (218) and representatives from local councils, Elected Members and local businesses (192).

When asked about the approaches Shropshire Council should take to achieve savings, the top priority for respondents was to reduce costs and improve efficiency within the council's operations. Other priorities included reducing spend on suppliers, reviewing staffing levels, and increasing income through fees and charges

There was a mixed response to the proposal of increasing council tax by 4.99%. While 33% agreed, 42% disagreed. A higher level of council tax increase was also largely opposed.

Two options for savings in household waste collection were presented, with more support for maintaining the current schedule rather than moving to a three-week collection. Concerns were raised about health hazards, fly-tipping, medical and personal waste, and the impact on larger households.

The majority of consultation respondents were satisfied with the proposal to convert streetlight bulbs to LEDs, but some expressed concerns in relation to safety, crime and anti-social behaviour.

Increasing car parking charges was opposed by more respondents than those who supported it. There was strong support for increasing the usage of Park & Ride services to reduce costs.

The proposal to change operating hours at Shrewsbury Museums and Art Galleries received very mixed feedback, with concerns about the impact on visitors and tourism. Many people suggested Monday closure as an alternative to Sunday closures.

When asked to consider a series of other savings proposals the feedback was as follows:

- There was strong support for increasing debt collection and the number of foster carers.
- Proposals like greater enforcement of fines and passing the management of green spaces to town councils received mixed responses. Fines for littering were

supported whereas there were concerns relating to raising income from parking enforcement.

- The least supported proposals were to review leisure provision, ask for greater contributions to social care and closing Household Recycling Centres (HRCs) on certain days.

When asked about the Capital Investment Programme which includes investments in schools, housing, and leisure facilities, there was support for school and education investment, highways projects (including the North West Relief Road) and investment in leisure facilities. Least popular areas of capital investment are the North West Relief Road (it is a project that divides opinion) and the Smithfield Riverside development. There were also concerns that carbon reduction investment cannot be a priority at the current time; concerns relating to housing development and a lack of investment in infrastructure and services to meet the needs of an increased population. Other concerns related to the council's ability to manage these schemes.

When asked for some overall feedback, there is a general agreement that Shropshire Council needs to change how it delivers services and that budget reductions are necessary. However, there is significant opposition to the budget plan, with many respondents feeling the council is not doing its best under difficult circumstances. The feedback includes some strong messages for Shropshire Council and a significant proportion of consultation respondents express dissatisfaction with Shropshire Council's delivery of services and financial management. Some recognise the challenging circumstances faced by all local authorities and others recommend raising issues and requests for support at a national level.

The feedback from this consultation will help Shropshire Council make informed decisions and identify areas where further public engagement is needed.

Lastly it is important to thank all those who participated in the consultation and took the time to write comments and share their views. Special thanks are extended to those members of the Overview and Scrutiny Team and the Feedback and Insight Team who were involved in reading and categorising all of the 18,261 comments received.

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