



MAIDSTONE  
BOROUGH  
COUNCIL

## Budget Consultation Research



### Executive Summary

Prepared by Lake Market Research for Maidstone Borough Council

5<sup>th</sup> February 2013

*"This report complies to ISO 20252 and any other relevant codes of conduct."*



The clear majority (68%) of respondents agreed (21% agreed strongly) that the council ***‘should provide services directly itself’***. 21% were neutral and 9% disagreed.

Just over half of respondents (53%) agreed that ***‘Handing over some council services to voluntary, business and charity organisations would be acceptable to me’***. 14% were neutral and 29% disagreed. Younger respondents (18 - 34) were more likely to agree to this than older respondents.

60% of respondents agreed that ***‘The council should provide profit-making commercial services such as trade waste collections and property redevelopment’***. 13% were neutral and 25% disagreed. Again, younger respondents (18 - 44) were more likely to agree to this than older respondents while those living in Maidstone were slightly less likely to agree than those not living in the town.

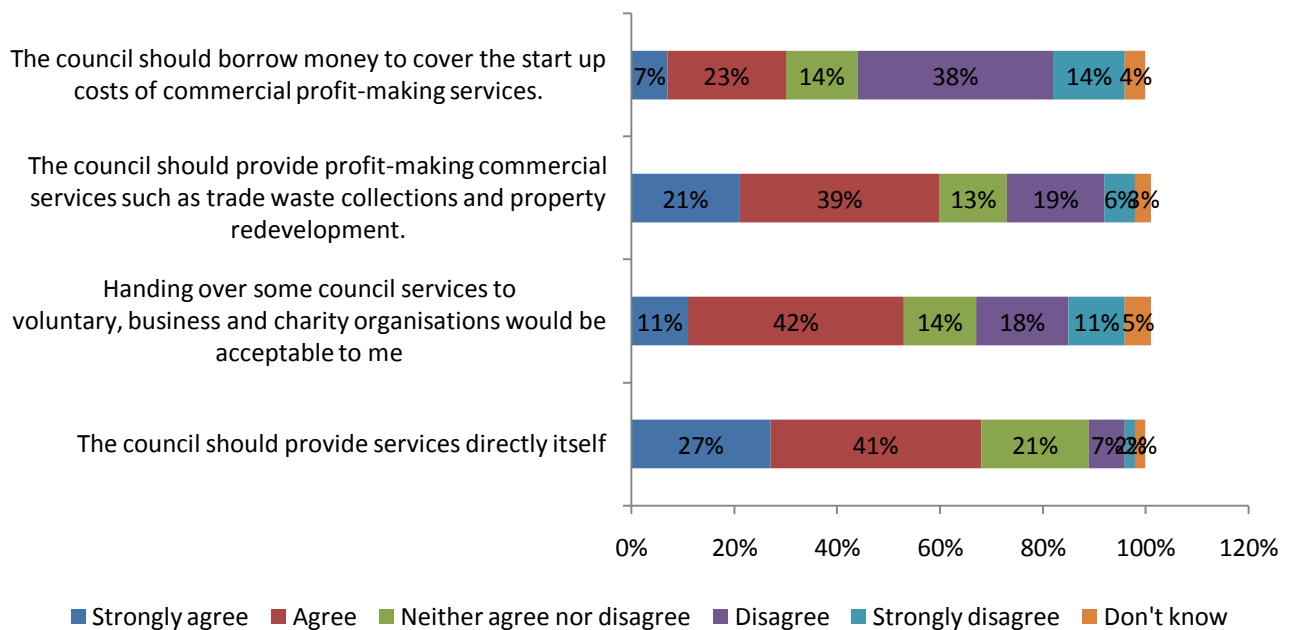
A minority (30%) agreed that ***‘The council should borrow money to cover the start up costs of commercial profit-making services’***. 14% were neutral and just over half (52%) disagreed. Male respondents were more likely to agree while females were less likely. Also those in the 45 - 54 age groups were more likely to disagree.

When asked how they wanted to contact the council to obtain services, amongst those giving an answer, 51% wanted to make contact via E mail or through the web site, 28% by telephone and 17% face to face at council offices. 4% suggested other ways or gave no answer.

Just under half of the sample (46%) wanted to be contacted to find out the results of the survey (31% by E mail and 15% by letter)

80% of the sample lived and 21% worked in Maidstone. 45% were male and 55% female while the age profile was broadly representative of the age profile of the town. 16% had a long term disability or illness.

**Strength of agreement with proposals:**



**OPEN ENDED COMMENTS**

**Q4 What do you think about the cabinet's savings proposals?**

<b>COMMENT</b>	<b>N</b>
Acceptable / OK / Agree	103
Difficult to know what to do / unavoidable / just have to do it	56
Don't cut key services	47
Not sure what the proposals are	42
Other	34
Disagree (No comment)	33
Should cut high council / government earners	26
Don't know / No comment / Couldn't say	24
Taking money from tax payers who are already hard pushed is not right	24
Don't agree with them - find money from somewhere else	14
Accept what they say / just get on with it	13
Council wastes too much money on pointless things	13
Understand there have to be cuts but not from everywhere / too much too quickly	11
Shouldn't increase charges	10
Enough cuts have already been made	8
Should look to the welfare system to save money	7
Don't agree with them - Government should give more money	6
Should run it more like a business	6
Don't agree with them - plans are all wrong	4
Ambitious	2

**WHAT THE PEOPLE SAY:**

I am sure there are better ways of doing it. People on the dole should be sweeping the roads, caring for the elderly, they should be made to work to get the money, and the government should be employing them. Old houses should be repaired.

Good idea, need to cut pay for top earners in the council £100,000+ and above if they think they can get that in private sector let them, public service is not about the money you can make. In the same way police, nurse, fire-fighters aren't in it for the money, or the person sweeping the streets in all weathers.

I do not like any of the proposals, because I think they are trying to change too much too quickly.

I can understand them but I do not necessarily agree with them, I would like to understand more and I would like the council to give more detail about the proposals.

I don't take a lot of notice; I just let them get on with it.

I don't agree with the government's basic premise that cutting any kind of public service will get us out of the financial mess we are in. History shows us that no country has ever cut spending and successfully got itself out of financial difficulties - quite the reverse I believe that providing massive investment in public building etc etc will create jobs and ensure that citizens have money to spend and the confidence to spend is the way it will solve the financial crisis - and then we wouldn't be required to cut services at all - and most especially not to those who need it most! we would be able to resume responsibility for providing adequate care for the most vulnerable members of society an immediate tax on all financial transactions wouldn't hurt either!

**Q6 In what other ways can the council save money?**

<b>COMMENT</b>	<b>N</b>
Don't know / Can't comment / No idea	142
Greater efficiency / don't waste money / be stricter with money spent	70
Reduce highly paid council wages	34
Run more like a business / improve staff work rate / productivity	30
Other	29
Reducing staffing levels in council	26
Look at the welfare state for savings	22
Stop wasting money on Maidstone town centre	14
Tendering process - ensure value for money when outsource	10
Combine more functions across councils / overlap departments / collaborative	9
Review non essential services	9
Turn off street lights	5
Reinforce / implement more charges	4
Make use of empty housing	3
Don't take from key services	2
Do things properly the first time round	2

**WHAT THE PEOPLE SAY:**

I think they should be able to raise money by getting services out that they can make money on. It just seems all they do is raise council taxes to make the money. People out there not earning much could work for the

More collaborative working with other authorities. Innovative business solutions.

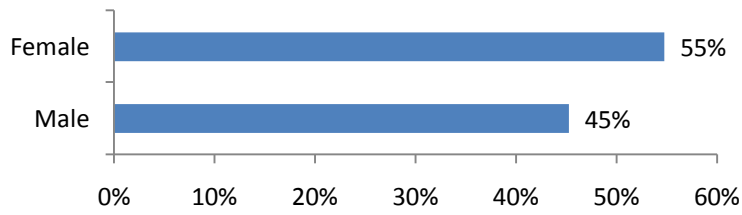
Get people doing the same amount of work as they do in the private sector? I've worked in both the public and private sector and there is a gulf in work rate and expectations

Making sure they get value for money from outsource services, making sure they get good quality for the price they pay. Focus on the services that are really needed. Making sure the staff are capable and competent to act efficiently. Encouraging new ways of doing things, can't just always do the same. Easy to add new services but harder to re-think services from scratch. Local government are better at doing this than central government.

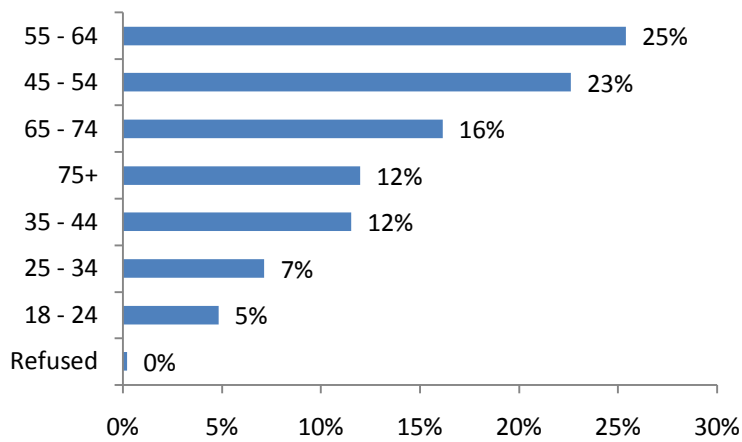
I don't really know because I think they have wasted money on the high streets in the past. I can't think of any services that need to be cut. I haven't found anybody who thinks it was money well spent on the high street.

By not having so many councillors, paying the councillors less and not having so many highly paid offices in top jobs

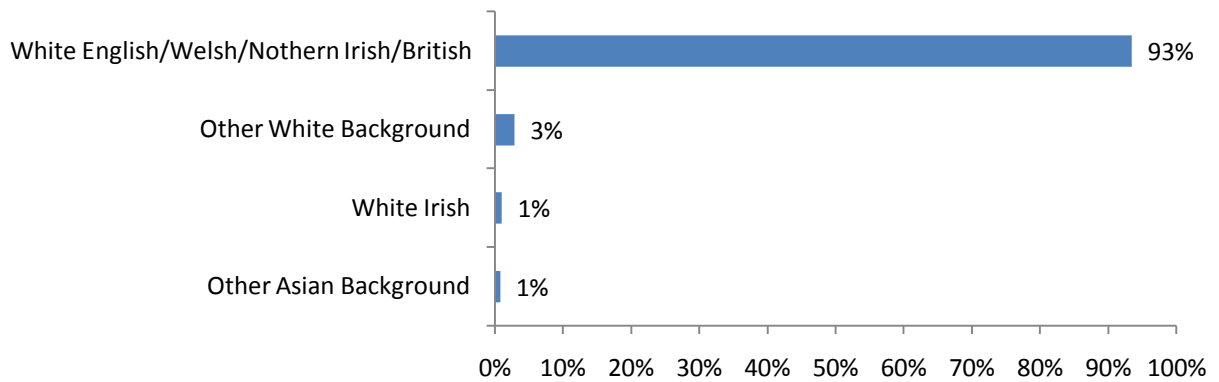
**Gender:**



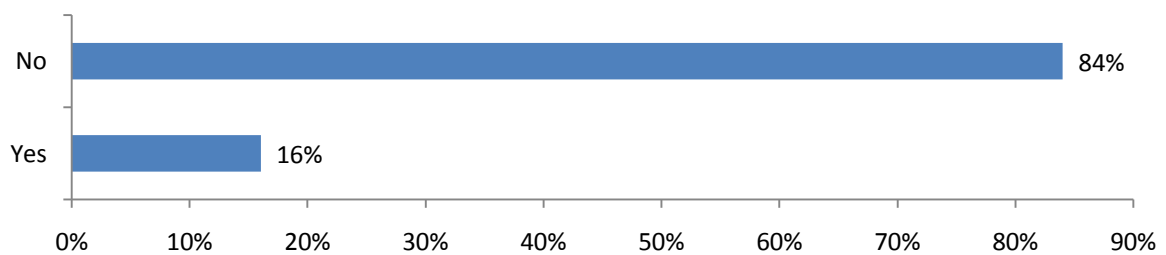
**Age:**



**Ethnicity:**

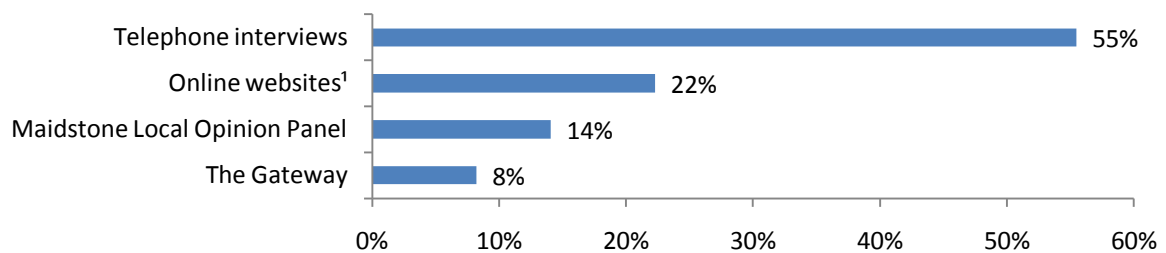


**Illness or disability:**



## METHODOLOGY

The methods used for this study comprised of a mixture of online and telephone interviewing. A total of 264 telephone interviews were conducted amongst Maidstone residents, in addition 212 interviewers were conducted online through a number of different forums including, Maidstone.gov, twitter, facebook, Maidstone resident panel and Maidstone Local Opinion panel. A total of 476 interviews were achieved overall.

**Methods Used:**

<sup>1</sup> Maidstone.gov ; Maidstone facebook ; Maidstone Twitter ; Maidstone resident panel