

COMMUNITIES, LEISURE AND ARTS POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Tuesday 5 December 2023
Time: 6.30 pm
Venue: Town Hall, High Street, Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors Bryant, Eagle, Forecast (Chairman), Fort, Mrs Gooch (Vice-Chairman), Harper, Hinder, Naghi and T Wilkinson

The Chairman will assume that all Members will read the reports before attending the meeting. Officers are asked to assume the same when introducing reports.

AGENDA

Page No.

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Apologies for Absence | |
| 2. Notification of Substitute Members | |
| 3. Urgent Items | |
| 4. Notification of Visiting Members | |
| 5. Disclosures by Members and Officers | |
| 6. Disclosures of Lobbying | |
| 7. To consider whether any items should be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information | |
| 8. Minutes of the Meeting held on 3 October 2023 | 1 - 4 |
| 9. Forward Plan relating to the Committee's Terms of Reference | 5 - 10 |
| 10. 2nd Quarter Financial Update & Performance Monitoring Report | 11 - 28 |
| 11. Fees and Charges 2024/25 | 29 - 110 |
| 12. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - Annual Update | 111 - 125 |

INFORMATION FOR THE PUBLIC

In order to make a statement in relation to an item on the agenda, please call **01622 602899** or email committee@maidstone.gov.uk by 4 p.m. one clear working day before the meeting (i.e. by 4 p.m. on Friday 1 December 2023). You will need to tell us which agenda item you wish to speak on.

Issued on Monday 27 November 2023

Continued Over/:

Alison Broom

Alison Broom, Chief Executive

If you require this information in an alternative format please contact us, call **01622 602899**.

To find out more about the work of the Committee, please visit the [Council's Website](#).

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES, LEISURE AND ARTS POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3 OCTOBER 2023

Present:

Committee Members:	Councillor Forecast (Chairman) and Councillors Bryant, Eagle, Mrs Gooch, Harper, Hastie, Hinder and Naghi
Cabinet Members:	Councillor Russell, Cabinet Member for Communities, Leisure and Arts

43. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Fort.

44. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Councillor Hastie was present as Substitute Member for Councillor Fort.

45. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

46. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

47. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

48. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

49. EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED: That the exempt Appendix to item 10 (Maidstone Leisure Centre – Operator Contract) be considered in public but the information contained therein should remain private.

50. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 5 SEPTEMBER 2023

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed.

51. FORWARD PLAN RELATING TO THE COMMITTEE'S TERMS OF REFERENCE

RESOLVED: That the Forward Plan relating to the Committee's Terms of Reference be noted.

52. MAIDSTONE LEISURE CENTRE - OPERATOR CONTRACT

Councillor Russell, the Cabinet Member for Communities, Leisure and Arts, introduced the report relating to the leisure services contract for the operation of Maidstone Leisure Centre, Mote Park Outdoor Adventure and Lockmeadow Health Club. It was noted that:

- Although the report was titled Maidstone Leisure Centre – Operator Contract, it related to the leisure services contract for the Maidstone Leisure Centre, Mote Park Outdoor Adventure and Lockmeadow Health Club, and this was reflected in the recommendations.
- The first sentence of the Biodiversity and Climate Change section of the report should read 'The implications of this report have been considered and there are multiple opportunities to greatly reduce utilities and carbon emissions through the minor practical improvements that can be delivered.' This was because the minor practical improvements were a Council-led initiative and were possible with a new leisure operator or with an extension of the existing contract.
- In February 2023, the Executive agreed to proceed with minor practical improvements to the Leisure Centre and pursue a contract extension with Maidstone Leisure Trust (MLT) and Serco Leisure Ltd (Serco) for the continued operation of the Centre until 2031. The Council's contract was with MLT, an independent not-for-profit community benefit society. Day to day running of the Leisure Centre was carried out by Serco who operated as agent for MLT.
- Since the meeting of the Executive in February 2023, the Council had acquired the Lockmeadow Health Club and the Government had announced capital funding for swimming pool upgrades to mitigate the rising cost of managing public swimming pools.
- Discussions and negotiations with MLT and Serco included incorporating the delivery of the minor practical improvements as part of the contract extension; building upon Serco's experience of delivering similar cost-saving and income-generating schemes in other leisure centres; and the submission of a bid by the Council to the new Sport England Swimming Pool Support Fund.
- It was proposed that the contract, if extended, should continue to include the Lockmeadow Health Club which had been operating under the leisure services contract since June 2023 and shared the same termination date.
- Accepting the current proposal from MLT and Serco and extending the existing contract was not recommended as the Council would incur additional expenditure and need to make changes to its budgets which would impact other priority areas across the Council. The recommendation was to put the leisure services contract for the Leisure Centre, Mote Park Outdoor Adventure and Lockmeadow Health Club out to tender and invite offers from other

operators as this would provide flexibility if a more acceptable offer was not received from MLT and Serco.

- By contracting with MLT, the Council had access to significant tax exemptions and other benefits.

During the ensuing discussion reference was made to the need to undertake the minor practical improvement works to the Leisure Centre as soon as possible to reduce the costs of running the building and increase revenue.

In response to questions, the Cabinet Member/Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement advised the Committee that:

- It was not unusual for local authorities to outsource leisure provision to a charitable trust because of the tax and other benefits. If the Council were to bring the service back in-house, it would be liable for business rates. There would also be the challenge of mobilising the skills and experience needed to run what was quite a complex operation. With a third-party operator, it was possible to tap into their technical expertise and knowledge.
- Maidstone Leisure Trust was an independent, charitable organisation subject to Charity Commission regulation so if, for example, it used Council employees as its agents to run the leisure centre, the Trust would still be in control. The Trustees were local people who were very focused on ensuring good leisure provision and were comfortable working with Serco because the company had the skills to meet the requirements. In theory, it would be possible for the Council to set up its own Leisure Trust which could consider a bid from the Council to operate the facility.
- In terms of whether the Council should be represented on the Maidstone Leisure Trust or a different Trust, leisure trusts were organisations set up to independently run local authority leisure services and it was important to maintain the separation of roles, although Members were invited to attend meetings of the Trust and could be involved.
- Members had already approved the minor practical improvements to the Leisure Centre, and this had been taken into account in the discussions.
- The minor practical improvements were additional to the improvements being progressed through the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan to decarbonise the Council's buildings.
- For logistical reasons it might not be possible to complete the minor practical improvements during the 2023/24 financial year, but there was provision to carry the budget forward.
- The Sport England Swimming Pool Support Fund was intended to help with running costs rather than larger projects, with grants of around £50k potentially available.
- Consideration was being given to the installation of solar panels in the Mote Park car park. They could not be installed on the roof of the Leisure Centre as it was not load-bearing.

The Committee supported the recommendations set out in the report.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to the CABINET:

1. That it be noted that agreement has not yet been reached with the Maidstone Leisure Trust and Serco Leisure Ltd. on a contract extension.
2. That the leisure services contract for Maidstone Leisure Centre, Mote Park Outdoor Adventure and Lockmeadow Health Club for the period August 2024 onwards be let via competitive tender.
3. That leisure consultants be employed to assist the Council with the procurement process and contract award for this contract.
4. That a procurement strategy and tender documentation for the contract opportunity be developed.
5. That delegated authority be given to the Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities, Leisure and Arts, to sign off the procurement documentation before it is issued via procurement channels.

53. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 6.55 p.m.

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

FOR THE FOUR MONTH PERIOD 1 NOVEMBER 2023 TO 29 FEBRUARY 2024

This Forward Plan sets out the details of the key and non-key decisions which the Cabinet or Cabinet Members expect to take during the next four-month period.

A Key Decision is defined as one which:

1. Results in the Council incurring expenditure, or making savings, of more than £250,000; or
2. Is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more Wards in the Borough

The current Cabinet Members are:

5	 Councillor David Burton Leader of the Council DavidBurton@maidstone.gov.uk 07590 229910	 Councillor Paul Cooper Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development PaulCooper@Maidstone.gov.uk 01622 244070	 Councillor John Perry Cabinet Member for Corporate Services JohnPerry@Maidstone.gov.uk 07770 734741
	 Councillor Claudine Russell Cabinet Member for Communities, Leisure and Arts ClaudineRussell@Maidstone.gov.uk	 Councillor Patrik Garten Cabinet Member for Environmental Services PatrikGarten@Maidstone.gov.uk 01622 807907	 Councillor Lottie Parfitt-Reid Cabinet Member for Housing and Health LottieParfittReid@Maidstone.gov.uk 07919 360000

Anyone wishing to make representations about any of the matters listed below may do so by contacting the relevant officer listed against each decision, within the time period indicated.

Under the Access to Information Procedure Rules set out in the Council's Constitution, a Key Decision or a Part II decision may not be taken, unless it has been published on the forward plan for 28 days or it is classified as urgent:

The law and the Council's Constitution provide for urgent key and part II decisions to be made, even though they have not been included in the Forward Plan.

Copies of the Council's constitution, forward plan, reports and decisions may be inspected at Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone, ME15 6JQ or accessed from the [Council's website](#).

Members of the public are welcome to attend meetings of the Cabinet which are normally held at the Town Hall, High St, Maidstone, ME14 1SY. The dates and times of the meetings are published on the [Council's Website](#), or you may contact the Democratic Services Team on telephone number **01622 602899** for further details.

David Burton
Leader of the Council

Details of the Decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Relevant Cabinet Member	Expected Date of Decision	Key	Exempt	Proposed Consultees / Method of Consultation	Documents to be considered by Decision taker	Representations may be made to the following officer by the date stated
<p>2nd Quarter Finance, Performance and Risk Monitoring Report</p> <p>7</p>	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services	20 Dec 2023	No	No Open	<p>Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee 8 Nov 2023</p> <p>Housing, Health and Environment Policy Advisory Committee 14 Nov 2023</p> <p>Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee 5 Dec 2023</p> <p>Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee 13 Dec 2023</p>	2nd Quarter Finance, Performance and Risk Monitoring Report	<p>Paul Holland, Adrian Lovegrove</p> <p>Head of Finance</p> <p>paulholland@maidstone.gov.uk, adrianlovegrove@maidstone.gov.uk</p>

Details of the Decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Lead Member	Expected Date of Decision	Key	Exempt	Proposed Consultees / Method(s) of Consultation	Documents to be considered by Decision taker	Representations may be made to the following officer by the date stated
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - Annual Update	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Communities, Leisure and Arts	20 Dec 2023	No	No Open	Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee 5 Dec 2023	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - Annual Update	Anna Collier, Orla Sweeney annacollier@maidstone.gov.uk, orlasweeney@maidstone.gov.uk
Fees and Charges 2024/25 F&Cs for the PAC that will be used to charge for services in 24/25 ∞	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services.	20 Dec 2023	Yes	No Open	Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee 5 Dec 2023 Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee 7 Dec 2023 Housing, Health and Environment Policy Advisory Committee 12 Dec 2023 Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee 13 Dec 2023	Fees and Charges 2024/25 CS PAC	Adrian Lovegrove Head of Finance adrianlovegrove@maidstone.gov.uk

Details of the Decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Lead Member	Expected Date of Decision	Key	Exempt	Proposed Consultees / Method(s) of Consultation	Documents to be considered by Decision taker	Representations may be made to the following officer by the date stated
Maidstone Leisure Centre - Leisure Services Contract A report on Maidstone Leisure Centre	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Communities, Leisure and Arts	20 Dec 2023	Yes	No Part exempt	Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee 3 Oct 2023	Maidstone Leisure Centre	Mark Evans mikeevans@maidstone.gov.uk
Parish Charter Review Review of Parish Charter 6	Cabinet Member for Communities, Leisure and Arts	Cabinet Member for Communities, Leisure and Arts	Not before 6 Feb 2024	Yes	No	Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee 6 Feb 2024	Parish Charter Review	Anna Collier, Orla Sweeney annacollier@maidstone.gov.uk, orlasweeney@maidstone.gov.uk
Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan Update	Cabinet		7 Feb 2024	No	No Open	Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee 29 Jan 2024 Housing, Health and Environment Policy Advisory Committee 30 Jan 2024 Corporate Services Policy Advisory	Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan Update	James Wilderspin Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager jameswilderspin@maidstone.gov.uk

Details of the Decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Lead Member	Expected Date of Decision	Key	Exempt	Proposed Consultees / Method(s) of Consultation	Documents to be considered by Decision taker	Representations may be made to the following officer by the date stated
						Committee 5 Feb 2024 Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee 6 Feb 2024		

COMMUNITIES, LEISURE & ARTS 5 December 2023
POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**2nd Quarter Finance Update & Performance Monitoring
 Report 2023/24**

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Communities, Leisure & Arts Policy Advisory Committee	5 December 2023
Cabinet Meeting	22 November 2023

Will this be a Key Decision?	No
Urgency	Not Applicable
Final Decision-Maker	Cabinet
Lead Head of Service	Mark Green, Director of Finance, Resources & Business Improvement
Lead Officer and Report Author	Paul Holland, Senior Finance Manager Carly Benville, Senior Information Analyst
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

This report sets out the 2023/24 financial and performance position for the services reporting into the Communities, Leisure & Arts Policy Advisory Committee (CLA PAC) as at 30th September 2023 (Quarter 2). The primary focus is on:

- The 2023/24 Revenue and Capital budgets; and
- The 2023/24 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that relate to the delivery of the Strategic Plan 2019-2045.

The combined reporting of the financial and performance position enables the Committee to consider and comment on the issues raised and actions being taken to address both budget pressures and performance issues in their proper context, reflecting the fact that the financial and performance-related fortunes of the Council are inextricably linked.

Budget Monitoring

Overall net expenditure at the end of Quarter 2 for the services reporting to CLA PAC is £0.407m, compared to the approved profiled budget of £0.248m, representing an overspend of £0.158m.

Capital expenditure at the end of Quarter 2 for CLA PAC was £0.198m against a total budget of £4.216m.

Performance Monitoring

50% (2 of 4) of the KPIs falling under this PAC achieved their quarter 2 targets.

Recovery & Renewal Update

A number of actions across the five areas of focus in the Recovery and Renewal Action have now been completed. This is shown in the update at Appendix 3.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund Update

An update on progress made against schemes using this funding is shown at Appendix 4.

Purpose of Report

The report enables the Committee to consider and comment on the issues raised and actions being taken to address both budget pressures and performance issues as at 30th September 2023.

This report makes the following recommendations to the Communities, Leisure & Arts Policy Advisory Committee:

1. That the Revenue position as at the end of Quarter 2 for 2023/24, including the actions being taken or proposed to improve the position, where significant variances have been identified, be noted;
2. That the Capital position at the end of Quarter 2 for 2023/24 be noted;
3. That the Performance position as at Quarter 2 for 2023/24, including the actions being taken or proposed to improve the position, where significant issues have been identified, be noted;
4. That the Recovery & Renewal Update, attached at Appendix 3 be noted; and
5. That the UK Shared Prosperity Fund update, attached at Appendix 4 be noted.

2nd Quarter Finance Update & Performance Monitoring Report 2023/24

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<p>This report monitors actual activity against the revenue budget and other financial matters set by Council for the financial year. The budget is set in accordance with the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy which is linked to the Strategic Plan and corporate priorities.</p> <p>The Key Performance Indicators and strategic actions are part of the Council's overarching Strategic Plan 2019-45 and play an important role in the achievement of corporate objectives. They also cover a wide range of services and priority areas.</p>	Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement (Section 151 Officer)
Cross Cutting Objectives	This report enables any links between performance and financial matters to be identified and addressed at an early stage, thereby reducing the risk of compromising the delivery of the Strategic Plan 2019-2045, including its cross-cutting objectives.	Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement (Section 151 Officer)
Risk Management	This is addressed in Section 5 of this report.	Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement (Section 151 Officer)
Financial	<p>Financial implications are the focus of this report through high level budget monitoring. Budget monitoring ensures that services can react quickly enough to potential resource problems. The process ensures that the Council is not faced by corporate financial problems that may prejudice the delivery of strategic priorities.</p> <p>Performance indicators and targets are closely linked to the allocation of resources and determining good value for money.</p>	Senior Finance Manager (Client)

	<p>The financial implications of any proposed changes are also identified and taken into account in the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy and associated annual budget setting process. Performance issues are highlighted as part of the budget monitoring reporting process.</p>	
Staffing	<p>The budget for staffing represents a significant proportion of the direct spend of the Council and is carefully monitored. Any issues in relation to employee costs will be raised in this and future monitoring reports.</p> <p>Having a clear set of performance targets enables staff outcomes/objectives to be set and effective action plans to be put in place.</p>	<p>Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement (Section 151 Officer)</p>
Legal	<p>The Council has a statutory obligation to maintain a balanced budget and the monitoring process enables the Committee to remain aware of issues and the process to be taken to maintain a balanced budget.</p> <p>There is no statutory duty to report regularly on the Council's performance. However, under Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 (as amended) a best value authority has a statutory duty to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. One of the purposes of the Key Performance Indicators is to facilitate the improvement of the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of Council services. Regular reports on Council performance help to demonstrate best value and compliance with the statutory duty.</p>	<p>Senior Finance Manager (Client)</p>
Information Governance	<p>The recommendations do not impact personal information (as defined in UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018) the Council processes.</p>	<p>Policy and Information Team</p>
Equalities	<p>There is no impact on Equalities as a result of the recommendations in this report. An EqIA would be carried out as part of a</p>	<p>Equalities and Communities Officer</p>

	policy or service change, should one be identified.	
Public Health	The performance recommendations will not negatively impact on population health or that of individuals.	Senior Finance Manager (Client)
Crime and Disorder	There are no specific issues arising.	Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement (Section 151 Officer)
Procurement	Performance Indicators and Strategic Milestones monitor any procurement needed to achieve the outcomes of the Strategic Plan.	Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement (Section 151 Officer)
Biodiversity and Climate Change	The implications of this report on biodiversity and climate change have been considered and there are no direct implications on biodiversity and climate change.	Senior Finance Manager (Client)

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Medium-Term Financial Strategy for 2023/24 to 2027/28 - including the budget for 2023/24 - was approved by full Council on 22nd February 2023. This report updates the Committee on how its services have performed over the last quarter with regard to revenue and capital expenditure against approved budgets.
- 2.2 The financial position for CLA needs to be considered within context of the overall financial position for Maidstone. Currently there is a forecast overspend that will need to be managed over the rest of the year to come back within budget. We know this may fluctuate as demand as costs settle during the year. The CLA PAC will need to consider any actions it may need to take to ensure it manages within its controllable budgets.
- 2.3 Attached at Appendix 1 is a report setting out the revenue and capital spending position at the Quarter 2 stage. Overall net expenditure at the end of Quarter 1 for the services reporting to CLA PAC is £0.407m compared to the approved profiled budget of £0.248m, representing an overspend of

£0.158m. Capital expenditure at the end of Quarter 2 for CLA PAC was £0.198m against a total budget of £4.216m. There are two significant revenue budget variances that are currently forecast by the end of the year, and these are detailed in Appendix 1.

- 2.4 Attached at Appendix 2 is a report setting out the position for the KPIs for the corresponding period. Attached at Appendix 3 is an update on progress against the Recovery & Renewal Plan and attached at Appendix 4 is an update on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

3. **AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

- 3.1 The Committee is asked to note the contents but may choose to comment.

4. **PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 In considering the current position on the Revenue budget, the Capital Programme, and the KPIs at the end of September 2023, the Committee can choose to note this information or could choose to comment.

5. **RISK**

- 5.1 This report is presented for information only and has no direct risk management implications.
- 5.2 The Council produced a balanced budget for both revenue and capital income and expenditure for 2023/24. The budget is set against a continuing backdrop of limited resources and the continuation of a difficult economic climate. Regular and comprehensive monitoring of the type included in this report ensures early warning of significant issues that may place the Council at financial risk. This gives the Cabinet the best opportunity to take actions to mitigate such risks.

6. **CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

- 6.1 The KPIs update ("Performance Monitoring") are reported to the Policy Advisory Committees (PAC) quarterly: Communities, Leisure & Arts PAC, Housing, Health & Environment PAC and Planning, Infrastructure & Economic Development PAC. Each committee also receives a report on the relevant priority action areas. The report is also presented to the Corporate Services PAC reporting on the priority areas of "A Thriving Place", "Safe, Clean and Green", "Homes and Communities" and "Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure".

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 The Quarter 2 Budget & Performance Monitoring reports are being considered by the relevant Policy Advisory Committees during November and December 2023.
-

8. REPORT APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Second Quarter Budget Monitoring 2023/24
 - Appendix 2: Second Quarter Performance Monitoring 2023/24
 - Appendix 3: Recovery & Renewal Update 2023/24
 - Appendix 4: UK Shared Prosperity Fund Update 2023/24
-

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

APPENDIX 1 – SECOND QUARTER BUDGET MONITORING

Contents

Part A: Second Quarter Revenue Budget 2023/24

- A1) Revenue Budget
- A2) Significant Variances

Part B: Second Quarter Capital Budget 2023/24

- B1) Capital Budget
- B2) Significant Variances

Part A - Second Quarter Revenue Budget 2023/24

A1) Revenue Budget: Communities, Leisure & Arts (CLA) PAC

- A2.1 The table below provides a detailed summary of the budgeted net expenditure position for the services reporting directly into CLA PAC at the end of Quarter 2. The financial figures are presented on an accruals basis (i.e. expenditure for goods and services received, but not yet paid for, is included).
- A2.2 This table now shows the variance split between expenditure and income to give more of an insight into the nature of the variance.

CLA Revenue Budget: NET EXPENDITURE (@ 2nd Quarter 2023/24)

Cost Centre	Approved Budget for Year	Approved Budget to 30 September 2023	Actual as at 30 September 2023	Variance as at 30 September 2023			Forecast March 2024	
	Net £000	Net £000	Net £000	Expenditure £000	Income £000	Net £000	Forecast Net £000	Forecast Variance £000
Cultural Development Arts	72	58	25	33	0	33	61	11
Museum	20	6	-8	30	-16	14	20	0
Carriage Museum	4	1	3	0	-2	-2	4	0
Museum-Grant Funded Activities	0	-4	-14	7	3	10	0	0
Hazlitt Arts Centre	331	161	164	-4	0	-4	331	0
Festivals and Events	9	26	-3	-10	40	30	9	0
Leisure Centre	-153	-93	-46	-52	5	-47	-73	-80
Mote Park Adventure Zone	-72	-36	-45	0	9	9	-72	0
Cobtree Golf Course	-35	0	0	0	0	0	-35	0
Mote Park Cafe	-68	-34	-34	-2	2	0	-68	0
Parks & Open Spaces Leisure Activities	-2	-1	-2	0	1	1	-2	0
Mote Park Leisure Activities	-43	-41	-40	0	-1	-1	-43	0
Tourism	11	6	-7	3	10	13	11	0
Museum Shop	-22	-11	-5	-1	-6	-6	-22	0
Lockmeadow	243	177	128	49	0	49	193	50
Lockmeadow Complex	-1,452	-1,325	-1,035	-29	-261	-290	-1,052	-400
Market	26	30	23	7	-1	7	26	0
Performance & Development	117	94	73	21	0	21	117	0
Press & Public Relations	5	-35	-42	4	3	7	5	0
Grants	166	83	71	12	0	12	166	0
Delegated Grants	2	2	1	1	0	1	2	0
Parish Services	144	75	69	6	0	6	144	0
Leisure Services Section	71	56	54	2	0	2	71	0
Cultural Services Section	343	171	206	-34	0	-34	363	-20
Visitor Economy Section	134	68	80	-13	0	-13	134	0
Market Section	98	49	41	7	0	7	98	0
Communications Section	265	134	124	10	-0	10	265	0
Policy & Information Section	558	281	269	11	1	12	558	0
Customer Services Section	744	373	356	17	0	17	744	0
Salary Slippage	-43	-22	0	-22	0	-22	-43	0
Totals	1,473	248	407	55	-213	-158	1,912	-439

19

These budget areas are all covered by the Cabinet Member for Communities, Leisure & Arts.

A2) CLA Revenue Budget: Significant Variances

A2.1 Within the headline figures, there are a number of both adverse and favourable net expenditure variances for individual cost centres. It is important that the implications of variances are considered at an early stage, so that contingency plans can be put in place and, if necessary, be used to inform future financial planning. Variances will be reported to each of the Policy Advisory Committees on a quarterly basis throughout 2023/24.

A2.2 The table below highlights and provides further detail on the most significant variances at the end of Quarter 2.

CLA PAC Variances (@ 2nd Quarter 2023/24)

	Positive Variance Q2	Adverse Variance Q2	Year End Forecast Variance
Communities, Leisure & Arts	£000		
Leisure Centre – Under the terms of the current contract with the operator the Council is responsible for excess utility costs, and with utility prices continuing to be at a high level this is reflected in this overspend.		-47	-80
Lockmeadow Complex – A number of units at the complex have fallen vacant during the period, leading to a shortfall against budget. However, progress has been made in identifying new tenants. The former David Lloyd unit now operates as the Lockmeadow Health Club, under the same management as the council’s leisure centre. A tenant offering virtual reality experiences has moved into another unit. Head of terms have been agreed with a prospective tenant at the former Frankie & Benny’s. Note that the business case for the Lockmeadow acquisition anticipated that at the end of existing leases there would be a period during which these units would be non-income producing.		-290	-400

Part B - Second Quarter Capital Budget 2023/24

B1) Capital Budget 2023/24 (@ 2nd Quarter 2023/24)

Capital Programme Heading	Adjusted Estimate 2023/24	Actual to September 2023	Budget Remaining	Q3 Profile	Q4 Profile	Projected Total Expenditure	Projected Slippage to 2024/25
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Communities, Leisure & Arts							
Mote Park Lake - Dam Works	188	39	149	10		49	139
Museum Development Plan	389	68	321	100	222	390	-1
Leisure Provision	3,100	73	3,027		500	573	2,527
Tennis Courts Upgrade	40	13	26	26		40	
Riverside Walk Works	250		250				250
Mote Park Kiosk Refurbishment & Extension	250	5	245	7	2	14	236
Total	4,216	198	4,018	143	724	1,066	3,151

B2) Capital Budget Variances (@ 2nd Quarter 2023/24)

Communities, Leisure & Arts
<p>Leisure Provision – Discussions are ongoing with the current operator regarding this budget, and at present it is anticipated that there will be some initial spend on improvements at the centre in the final quarter of the year. There will be a further update on this in the 3rd quarter report.</p>
<p>Riverside Walk Works – This project has now been subsumed into the overall plans for Town Centre improvement works, arising out of the emerging Town Centre Strategy. The budget will therefore be carried forward to 2024/25.</p>



APPENDIX 2 – SECOND QUARTER PERFORMANCE MONITORING

Key to performance ratings

RAG Rating	
	Target not achieved
	Target slightly missed (within 10%)
	Target met
	Data Only

Direction	
	Performance has improved
	Performance has been sustained
	Performance has declined
N/A	No previous data to compare

Note

Where KPIs are 'data only' PIs, the short/long term trend arrows represent whether the numbers are higher or lower than the previous comparison period.

Performance Summary

RAG Rating	Green	Amber	Red	N/A ¹	Total
KPIs	2	1	1	4	8
Direction	Up	No Change	Down	N/A	Total
Last Quarter	3	0	3	2	8
Last Year	3	0	0	5	8

- 50% (2 of 4) key performance indicators (KPIs) falling under this PAC achieved their quarter 2 (23/24) targets.
- Compared to last quarter (Q1 23/24), performance has improved for 50% (3 of 6) the indicators and declined for 50% (3 of 6) of the indicators.
- Compared to last year (Q2 2022/23), performance has improved for 100% (4 of 4) the indicators.

Communities, Leisure & Arts Q2 Performance

Performance Indicator	Q2 2023/24				
	Value	Target	Status	Short Trend (Last Quarter)	Long Trend (Last Year)
Number of households at risk of (or in) financial crisis (LIFT data) <i>September 2023</i>	633				N/A
Percentage change in Utility costs for public use leisure assets <i>Q4 & Q1 data (Jan 2023 – June 2023)</i>	-9.67%			N/A	N/A

¹ PIs rated N/A are not included in the summary calculations.

Performance Indicator	Q2 2023/24				
	Value	Target	Status	Short Trend (Last Quarter)	Long Trend (Last Year)
Number of outreach projects/work undertaken by the Hazlitt	22				N/A
Percentage of tickets sold at the Hazlitt	68%	50%			
Footfall at the Museum and Visitors Information Centre	12,984	12,500			
Number of users at the Leisure Centre	120,270	126,183			
Market Hall Occupancy Percentage	56.04%	75.00%			N/A
Extra visits to the Borough for Events (HUQ)	Annual Indicator				

We are currently unable to provide data for Q1 and Q2 of the 2023/24 fiscal year for the KPI "**Percentage change in Utility costs for public use leisure assets**". This is due to a recent change in the methodology, which dictates that the data will now be reported in the Q4 and Q1 sections of each bi-annual report. It's important to note that the overall utility costs at the leisure centre have seen a significant reduction of 9.6% in the first half of 2023 (Q4 and Q1) when compared to the first half of 2022. Specifically, gas costs have decreased by 27%, while electricity costs have increased by 12%. When taken together, these changes result in an overall reduction of 9.6%.

The **Number of households at risk of (or in) financial crisis** is a new indicator for 23/24 tracking the number of low-income households in Maidstone. The September 2023 (Q2) figure of 633 households is lower than the previous quarter, which was 756 households. 'At risk' or 'in crisis' households are those who can cover their rent and council tax each month, but nothing more than this (i.e., cannot cover their food or fuel).

The KPI tracking the "**Number of users at the Leisure Centre**" missed its target of 126,183, achieving 120,270 in the quarter. However, it's important to consider that the Centre's usage is significantly affected by seasonality. In comparison to the same quarter last year, Q2 has shown a 1.3% increase in patronage, based on our newly adjusted performance assessment.

The key areas of change when compared to the same quarter last year are as follows:

- Health & Fitness has seen a substantial 20% increase.
- Pool usage has decreased by 9%.
- Dry Sport patronage is down by 8%.

To address the reduced patronage in specific areas, the operator is actively providing incentives to attract more visitors.

The KPI monitoring the "**Market Hall Occupancy Percentage**" achieved 56.04% against its target of 75%. It's important to note that July and August months have consistently experienced lower occupancy rates over the years. These months tend to be less attractive for hosting events due to the summer holiday season, resulting in reduced foot traffic. Additionally, even our reliable auctioneer takes 1-2 weeks off during August, impacting our ability to maintain higher occupancy.

Appendix 3 Recovery and Renewal Action Plan

RESILIENT COMMUNITIES					
<p>Support and Encourage Volunteering in the Borough.</p>	<p>£25,000 Recovery Fund</p>	<p>Jun-21</p>	<p>Oct-22</p>	<p>Increase in the number of volunteers, volunteering in the Borough and as a consequence more community initiatives delivered. Work with Involve to develop an indicator</p>	<p>Volunteering & Funding online event held on 20 July 2023, focussing on supporting VCS organisations with funding opportunities and managing and supporting volunteers. Presentations with information and advice were given by: National Lottery Space Hive & Crowd Fund Kent Refer Kent MBC Community Larder Imago</p> <p>Representatives from the below 14 organisations attended: Involve Street Pastors The Stones Community Trust Maidstone Interfaith Network Headcorn Community Group Hi Kent MADM Tenterden Counselling Maidstone Operatic Society CAB Maidstone WINTER shelters St Martin’s Church Mid Kent Motor Neurone Assoc. The Princess Project Making Miracles</p> <p>Event was well received with interest on this becoming a regular forum. The Next event will be held in November.</p>

Appendix 3 Recovery and Renewal Action Plan

<p>Community Resilience Fund</p>	<p>£150,000 Recovery Fund</p>	<p>Oct-21</p>	<p>Oct-24</p>	<p>30 projects delivered by a variety of community and voluntary sector groups and organisations.</p>	<p>The latest round of funding was to support projects to help improve mental health through a range of activities and therapies across the borough, and to a range of different groups. 45 Projects received funding to the Value of just over £54K.</p> <p>Projects included A mobile sight centre to increase access to community support for those affected by sight loss. Improved community facilities, social groups, support groups for men. Sessions for those experienced or beginners in Fishing to learn a new sport and to chat and animal therapies amongst other projects.</p> <p>Just under £60K remains and discussions have started as to how to maximise the effectiveness of this pot of money.</p>
-----------------------------------------	-------------------------------	---------------	---------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Appendix 3 Recovery and Renewal Action Plan

<p>Online Community Participation</p>	<p>£15,000 Recovery Fund</p>	<p>Sep-21</p>		<p>Online tool in place and used to successfully engage with the public on projects and initiatives.</p>	<p>Complete</p>
<p>Establish Community Compact</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>May-21</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Partnership in place between the community and voluntary sector and the council. Joint projects completed and greater resilience achieved.</p>	<p>Project closed</p>
<p>Love Where You Live and Get Involved.</p>	<p>£35,000 Recovery Fund</p>	<p>Sep-21</p>	<p>Sep-22</p>	<p>8 community environmental projects delivered. Civic Pride increased as measured by the Residents' Survey. Baseline the number of participants in the project.</p>	<p>Complete</p>

UKSPF 2023/4 Quarter 2 Update:

In July 2023 the Department for Levelling up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) confirmed that the End of Year Report submitted in May 2023 for the year 2022/23 was approved, this also confirmed our approach to the underspend from Year 1 is accepted. We have also returned the Memorandum of Understanding and received our allocation of funding for Year 2. We will be submitting our 6-monthly report to DLUHC for activities so far this year in November.

Rural Fund: The authority has been allocated £134,932 for this financial year, the first round for submissions was opened in April and closed in June. The submissions were reviewed by a panel in July. A total of four bids were successful with all funds allocated. The Panel have also committed a further £49,438 of 2024/25 funding to support two of the bids received this year. A further £409,358 will be available in the final year of the Rural Fund.

Year 2 projects and an update:

Intervention	Project	Detail	2023/24 budget	Amount spent:	£ Committed	Q2 Update:
E6: Local arts, cultural, heritage & creative activities	Project A - Building Pride in Place through promotion of the Town Centre and Events.	Creative communities fund for local organisations and groups to support events	£35,830	£21,000	£0	19 applications were received with 11 bids awarded funding in Round three. Round four is now open and closes November 30 th 2023.
		Literature Festival	£15,000	£0	£9,606	The event was held in October. A company has been commissioned to support the delivery of the event.
		Iggy Sculpture Trail	£60,000	£26,410	£49,400	Locations for the sculptures have been agreed. The trail will be supported by a digital trail app which is being populated with information, this is expected to launch in the new year.
		Equipment purchases to support events	£2,751	£3083	£0	Purchases of a set of temporary exhibition walls and 2 microphones have been completed. An underspend in Year 1 has been carried over for purchases this year.
		Arts Carnival	£20,000	£29,000	£606	The Arts Carnival, which was rearranged due to adverse weather, took place on Saturday 9 th September. The next Carnival will take place in 2025.

		Partner for Elmer 2	£40,000	£0	£40,000	Contract is in the process of being signed.
	Project C- A Community Arts Hub & Maker Space	Feasibility Study	£5,000	£0	£4,911	The final amended feasibility report was received in August with an MBC working group set up to action the results of the report.
E8: Campaigns to encourage visits and exploring of local area	Project A - Building Pride in Place through promotion of the Town Centre and Events.	Advertising budget to promote events across all channels	£15,000	£4,576	£560	The majority has been allocated to promote events in Q3 such as the illuminations trail and activities in the build up to Christmas.
		Borough Insight Events and Town centre focussed	£30,000	£0	£0	This will be spent on the Autumn 2023 edition of the magazine which was due to be delivered to residents from October 2023.
		Promotional video for business and events in TC	£5,000	£5000	£0	This will be used later in the year to capture footage of events.
E9: Impactful Volunteering and/or Social action Projects	Project B- A Safe and Attractive Town Centre achieved through Greening and Lighting	An externally commissioned green Volunteering Project to Improve Town Centre Green Spaces, Increase Volunteering and Improve Wellbeing.	£60,000	£0	£0	Five sites have been worked with 25 volunteers involved with 59 volunteering events. The sites are Maidstone Community Support Centre, Trinity House, Brenchley Gardens, Fairmeadow and planters in the Town Centre.
Management Overheads			£9,897	£4,949	£4949	
Total:			£298,478	£94,018	£110,032	
				£204,050		

Communities, Leisure and Arts 5 December 2023
Policy Advisory Committee

Fees and Charges 2024-25

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee	5 December 2023
Cabinet	20 December 2023

Will this be a Key Decision?	Yes
Urgency	Not Applicable
Final Decision-Maker	Council
Lead Head of Service/Lead Director	Mark Green, Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement
Lead Officer and Report Author	Adrian Lovegrove, Head of Finance
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

This report sets out the proposed fees and charges for 2024/25 for the services within the remit of this committee. Fees and charges determined by the council are reviewed annually, and this forms part of the budget setting process. Changes to fees and charges agreed by this committee will come into effect on 1 April 2024 unless otherwise stated in the report.

This report forms part of the process of agreeing a budget for 2024/25 and setting next year’s Council Tax. Following consideration by this Committee at its meeting on 5 September 2023 of the draft Medium Term Finance Strategy for 2024/25 – 2028/29 and savings budget proposals for services within the remit of the Committee.

The draft MTFS described how, in bridging the budget gap, the Council would need to balance the requirement to make savings and generate increased income of 5%. This 5% increase could be delivered by price increase and or volume increases. This needs to be considered in respect of any potential changes be recommended by the PAC.

This report also includes an update on the Budget Survey. Public consultation on the budget has been carried out. Details are set out in Appendix C and D. Members are encouraged to review the findings and assess whether the budget proposals

being presented later this year are consistent with public expectations and aspirations.

This report makes the following recommendations: That

1. The contents of the report be noted;
2. The Fees & Charges Policy as detailed in appendix b to the report, be noted;
and
3. The Cabinet be recommended to approve the Fees and Charges as detailed in Appendix A to the report.

Fees and Charges 2024-25

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<p>The Medium Term Financial Strategy and the budget are a re-statement in financial terms of the priorities set out in the strategic plan. They reflect the Council’s decisions on the allocation of resources to all objectives of the strategic plan.</p> <p>The Council’s policy on charging has been developed to support corporate priorities as set out in the strategic plan and the proposals within the report have been made with reference to this.</p>	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Cross Cutting Objectives	The MTFs supports the cross-cutting objectives in the same way that it supports the Council’s other strategic priorities.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Risk Management	This has been addressed in section 5 of the report.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Financial	The budget strategy and the MTFs impact upon all activities of the Council. The future availability of resources to address specific issues is planned through this process. It is important that the committee gives consideration to the strategic financial consequences of the recommendations in this report.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	The recommendations do not have any staffing implications.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Legal	<p>Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003 permits best value authorities to charge for discretionary services provided the authority has the power to provide that service and the recipient agrees to take it up on those terms.</p> <p>The authority has a duty to ensure that taking one financial year with another, income does not exceed the costs of providing the service.</p> <p>A number of fees and charges for Council services are set on a cost recovery basis only, with trading accounts used to ensure that the cost of service is clearly related to the charge</p>	Team Leader (Contentious and Corporate Governance)

	<p>made. In other cases, the fee is set by statute and the Council must charge the statutory fee. In both cases the proposals in this report meet the Council’s legal obligations.</p> <p>Where a customer defaults on the fee or charge for a service, the fee or charge must be defensible, in order to recover it through legal action. Adherence to the MBC Charging Policy on setting fees and charges provides some assurance that appropriate factors have been considered in setting such fees and charges</p>	
Information Governance	The recommendations will not have an impact on the processing of personal data.	Information Governance Team
Equalities	The MFTS report scopes the possible impact of the Council’s future financial position on service delivery. When a policy, service or function is developed, changed or reviewed, an evidence-based equalities impact assessment will be undertaken. Should an impact be identified appropriate mitigations will be identified.	Head of Finance
Public Health	The resources to achieve the Council’s objectives are allocated through the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.	Head of Finance
Crime and Disorder	The resources to achieve the Council’s objectives are allocated through the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Procurement	The resources to achieve the Council’s objectives are allocated through the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Biodiversity and Climate Change	The resources to achieve the Council’s objectives are allocated through the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.	Head of Finance

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Medium Term Financial Strategy

- 2.1 The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets out in financial terms how the Council’s Strategic Plan will be delivered over the next five years, given

the resources available. In so doing, it establishes the framework for the annual budget setting process.

- 2.2 The MTFS and relevant savings proposals for 2024/25 were presented to CLA PAC on 5 September 2023. Across the council, these savings and fees and charges increases of 5% overall would cover the budget gap. The 5% increase can be delivered by increases to fees and charges or by increased volumes. Any reduction to savings or F&Cs would require further savings options to be considered.
- 2.3 This assumes that Council Tax is increased up to the referendum threshold and there are no significant changes to funding when government announce the funding settlement. If there are variations to our assumptions in the MTFS we will need to review the position again.

Fees and Charges

- 2.4 The council is able to recover the costs of providing certain services through making a charge to service users. For some services, this is a requirement and charges are set out in statute, and in other areas the council has discretion to determine whether charging is appropriate, and the level at which charges are set.
- 2.5 In recent years, the use of charging has become an increasingly important feature of the council's medium term financial strategy, as pressures on the revenue budget limit the extent to which subsidisation of discretionary services is feasible. Recovering the costs of these services from users where possible helps to ensure sustainability of the council's offer to residents and businesses, beyond the statutory minimum.
- 2.6 A charging policy (attached at Appendix 2 for reference) is in place for charges which are set at the council's discretion and this seeks to ensure that:
 - Fees and charges are reviewed regularly, and that this review covers existing charges as well services for which there is potential to charge in the future.
 - Budget managers are equipped with guidance on the factors which should be considered when reviewing charges.
 - Charges are fair, transparent and understandable, and a consistent and sensible approach is taken to setting the criteria for applying concessions or discounted charges.
 - Decisions regarding fees and charges are based on relevant and accurate information regarding the service and the impact of any proposed changes to the charge is fully understood.
- 2.7 The policy covers fees and charges that are set at the discretion of the council and does not apply to services where the council is prohibited from charging, e.g. the collection of household waste. Charges currently determined by central government, e.g. planning application fees, are also outside the scope of the policy. However, consideration of any known

changes to such fees and charges and any consequence to the medium term financial strategy are included in this report for information.

2.8 Managers are asked to consider the following factors when reviewing fees and charges:

- The council's strategic plan and values, and how charge supports these;
- The use of subsidies and concessions targeted at certain user groups or to facilitate access to a service;
- The actual or potential impact of competition in terms of price or quality;
- Trends in user demand including an estimate of the effect of price changes on customers;
- Customer survey results;
- Impact on users, both directly and on delivering the council's objectives;
- Financial constraints including inflationary pressure and service budgets;
- The implications of developments such as investment made in a service;
- The corporate impact on other service areas of council wide pressures to increase fees and charges;
- Alternative charging structures that could be more effective;
- Proposals for targeting promotions during the year and the evaluation of any that took place in previous periods.

Discretionary Charges for 2024-25

2.9 It is important that charges are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they remain appropriate and keep pace with the costs associated with service delivery as they increase over time.

2.10 Charges for services which fall within the remit of this committee have been reviewed by budget managers in line with the policy, as part of the development of the MTFS for 2024/25 onwards. The detailed results of the review carried out this year are set out in Appendix 1 and the approval of the committee is sought to the amended fees and charges for 2024/25 as set out in that appendix.

2.11 Table 1 below summarises the 2023/24 outturn and 2024/25 estimate for income from the discretionary fees and charges which fall within the remit of this committee. Please note that the table only reflects changes relating to fees and charges and does not include other budget proposals which may impact these service areas.

2.12 The overall increase in income if these changes are agreed and implemented as planned is expected to be £5,580 which amounts to a 3.2% increase in the budgeted income figure for this committee for the current financial year.

Fees and Charges

Service Area	2022-23 Outturn	2023-24 Estimate	Proposed change in income	2024-25 Estimate
	£	£	£	£
Museum	36,580	42,800	0	42,800
Parks and Open Spaces- Leisure Activities	55,790	44,630	0	44,630
Market	87,000	87,930	5,580	93,510
Total income from fees set by the Council	179,370	175,360	5,580	180,940

Table 1: Discretionary Fees & Charges Summary

- 2.13 Detailed proposals are set out within Appendix A to this report, and considerations relating to these proposals have been summarised below.
- 2.14 Museum – Some changes are proposed to charges driven by costs of supplying the service. No increase in the budget as actual income levels are currently under budget.
- 2.15 Parks and Open Spaces-Leisure Activities and Charges – Some changes are proposed to charges driven by costs of supplying the service. No increase in the budget proposed as income levels are not expected to increase.
- 2.16 Market – Moderate increases are proposed to Hire of Agricultural Hall. It is anticipated that this may generate additional income of £5,580.

Budget Survey

- 2.17 Public consultation on the budget has been carried out. Details are set out in Appendix C and D. Members are encouraged to review the findings and assess whether the budget proposals they have reviewed are consistent with public expectations and aspirations.

Services Spending Approaches

- 2.18 Respondents were provided with the list of mandatory services detailing the current spend for each per council tax band D household. They were asked to indicate what approach they felt the Council should take in delivering the mandatory services. Three options were provided for respondents to select from:
- Reduce the service provided
 - Maintain the current service
 - Don't know.
- 2.19 The key points from the responses are (Appendix C):
- The top three mandatory services that respondents said should be maintained were Environmental Services (96.7%), Environmental Health (84.1%) and Community Safety (82.0%).

- The top three mandatory services which respondents said should be reduced were Democratic & Electoral services (47.0%), Licensing (38.5%) and Council Tax & Benefits (34.8%).
- The top three discretionary services which respondents said should be maintained were Parks & Open Spaces (96.4%), Leisure centre (79.7%) and Car Parks (74.3%).
- The top three discretionary service which respondents said should be reduced were Civic Events (50.8%), Markets (43.3%) and Tourism (34.6%).
- Investment priorities – infrastructure including flood prevention and street scene remain the highest priority.

2.20 We have also compared the changes between the 2022 and 2023 surveys (Appendix D). There are small swings in the figures on reducing services. Those with a decrease in the percentage for 'reducing the service provided' are Environmental Services and Planning.

2.21 Those with a larger increase in the percentage for 'reducing the service provided' are Democratic and Electoral Services, Bereavement Services, Environmental Enforcement and Licensing.

2.22 The most important services were also compared across the 2 surveys. There were no changes in the priority order.

Investment Programme

2.23 Survey respondents were asked to place a list of investment programme priorities into their preferred order of importance. The result is consistent with the 2022 survey with Infrastructure (including flood presentation and street scene) the highest preference and housing the lowest.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

3.1 Option 1

The committee could recommend approval to adopt the fees and charges as proposed in Appendix A. As these proposals have been developed in line with the council's policy on fees and charges, they will create a manageable impact on service delivery whilst maximising income levels.

3.2 Option 2

The committee could recommend alternative charges to those set out within Appendix A. Any alternative increases may not be fully compliant with the policy, would require further consideration before implementation and may not deliver the necessary levels of income to ensure a balanced budget for 2024-25. The impact on demand for a service should also be taken into account when considering increases to charges beyond the proposed level.

3.3 Option 3

The committee could recommend to do nothing and retain charges at their current levels. However, this might limit the Council's ability to recover the

cost of delivering discretionary services and could result in the Council being unable to set a balanced budget for 2024-25.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 The Cabinet must recommend to Council at its meeting on 21 February 2024 a balanced budget and a proposed level of Council Tax for the coming year. The budget proposals and Fees and Charges included in this report will allow the Cabinet to do this. Accordingly, the preferred option is that this Committee agrees the Fees and Charges at Appendix A.

5. RISK

5.1 The Council's finances are subject to a high degree of risk and uncertainty. The draft MTFS includes an evaluation of the Council's financial resilience, from which it can be seen that it has adequate, but not excessive, reserves and is positioned well to manage the financial challenges that it faces.

5.2 In order to address risk on an ongoing basis in a structured way and to ensure that appropriate mitigations are developed, the Council has developed a budget risk register. This seeks to capture all known budget risks and to present them in a readily comprehensible way. The budget risk register is updated regularly and is reviewed by the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee at each of its meetings.

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

6.1 Communities, Leisure and Arts PAC (5 September 2023) received details of MTFS and savings proposals which will be needed to deliver a balanced budget for 2024/25.

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

7.1 The timetable for developing the budget for 2024/25 is set out below.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Action</i>
24 January 2024	Cabinet	Agree 24/25 final budget proposals for recommendation to Council
21 February 2024	Council	Approve 24/25 budget

8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix A Fees and Charges Proposals 2024/25
 - Appendix B: Fees and Charges - Charging policy
 - Appendix C: Budget Survey 2023
 - Appendix D: Comparison of 2022 and 2023 Service Spending Approaches.
-

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are no background papers.

Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25
Fees and Charges
Communities, Leisure and Arts PAC

Fees and Charges April 2024- March 2025	* Includes VAT	Discretionary Fee	Statutory Fee	Actuals	Current Estimate	Current	Proposed	Change	+ / - Income	Estimate	Comments
				2022-2023	2023-24	Charges 2023-2024	Charges 2024-2025		2023-24	2024-2025	
				£	£	£	£	%	£	£	
Museum											
School Education Activities		x		26,097	24,300					24,300	No increase proposed as schools are unable to meet any increases.
First workshop		x				90.00	90.00	0.00%			
Each Subsequent workshop		x				75.00	75.00	0.00%			Per additional class.
Craft Sessions		x				75.00	75.00	0.00%			No increase as we aim to raise interest.
Lunch room hire						20.00	20.00	0.00%			School charged to use lunch room (studio/AL room) if on an unpaid for visit - only if available and not already in use by another school.
Outreach to schools											
Out with 1 staff member											
1 workshop		x				200.00	200.00	0.00%			
2 workshops		x				275.00	275.00	0.00%			
3 workshops		x				350.00	350.00	0.00%			
4 workshops		x				450.00	450.00	0.00%			
Room Hire											
Glass Room - Per day		x		1,555	5,000					5,000	
Library - Per day		x				145.00	145.00	0.00%			
Museum out of hours (based on 4 hours))		x				230.00	230.00	0.00%			
		x				650.00	650.00	0.00%			
Events											
Holiday activities -per child minimum charge depending on activity		x		8,928	8,000					8,000	
Talks (external speaker)						3.00	3.85	28.33%			Now £3.50 so Hazlitt 10% ticket fees are covered plus 10%
Talks (external speaker) + refreshment						6.00/5.00	7.00/6.00				
Talks (external speaker + refreshment + free entry to exhibition (if charged)						10.00/8.00	11.00/9.00				Increase to cover Hazlitt 10% booking fees.
Tour or film showing + refreshments						12.00/10.00M	14.00/12.00				MMF = Maidstone Museum Foundation
Father Christmas						15.00/13.00M	16.50/14.50				
Market - stallholders per space						10.00	11.00	10.00%			
						20.00	20.00	0.00%			
Exhibitions											
Charged entry											
Adult						4.00	4.00	0.00%			
Child						2.00	2.00	0.00%			
Family ticket						10.00	10.00	0.00%			
Sponsored or charged to exhibitor (& therefore free visitor entry) per 4 weeks											
Large space						600.00	600.00	0.00%			
Smaller space						300.00	300.00	0.00%			

Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25
Fees and Charges
Communities, Leisure and Arts PAC

Fees and Charges April 2024- March 2025	* Includes VAT	Discretionary Fee	Statutory Fee	Actuals 2022-2023	Current Estimate 2023-24	Current Charges 2023-2024	Proposed Charges 2024-2025	Change	+ / - Income 2023-24	Estimate 2024-2025	Comments
				£	£	£	£	%	£	£	
Children's Parties	*			0	5,000					5,000	
Per Child minimum charge depending on activity		x				13.00	13.00	0.00%			
Collections enquiries											
QORWK - enquiries (Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment)		x		0	500	20.00	20.00	0.00%		500	QORWK enquiry £15 per family history enquiry. The fee is waived for collections based enquiries or where the museum gains research/information
Museum Total				36,580	42,800				0	42,800	
Parks and Open Spaces-Leisure Activities											
Events											
Fairs and circuses - per day (min. charge)	exempt	x				635.00	665.00	4.72%			
Hire of Parks											
Fitness Classes (10-70 participants) - per session (min charge) B904		x		2,860	5,200	19.95	19.95	0.00%		5,200	
All Events											
Event day fee (min charge) per day				52,930	39,430					39,430	
- up to 100 participants	exempt	x				55.00	60.00	9.09%			
100 to 499 participants	exempt	x				105.00	115.00	9.52%			
500 - 899 participants	exempt	x				460.00	485.00	5.43%			
901+ by negotiation	exempt	x									Based on multiplier of participant fees
Plus Booking and disruption fee (min charge) per day on site (including all event days and build days)											
Commercial and charity ticketed events - Mote Park		x				325.00	345.00	6.15%			
Free events - Mote Park		x				70.00	75.00	7.14%			
Additional hire fee for event parking per day (Mote Park on site)		x				325.00	345.00	6.15%			Price point should be in multiples of £5 for customer ease.
Commercial and charity ticketed events - All other Parks		x				165.00	175.00	6.06%			
Free events - All other Parks		x				65.00	75.00	15.38%			In line with all free events in parks
Filming companies -(min charge) per day											
- Mote Park	exempt	x				380.00	405.00	6.58%			In line with small one day event
- Brenchley Gardens	exempt	x				230.00	240.00	4.35%			
- others by negotiation											
Commercial medical units - per day		x				145.00	150.00	3.45%			
				55,790	44,630				0	44,630	

Maidstone Borough Council

Charging Policy

September 2023

1 Introduction and Context

- 1.1 At Maidstone Borough Council, fees and charges represent an important source of income which is used to support the delivery of the Council's objectives. Currently income from fees and charges constitutes just under a third of the council's funding.
- 1.2 The Council needs to ensure that its charges are reviewed regularly, and that they contribute towards the achievement of its priorities. It is also important to ensure that fees and charges do not discriminate against individuals or groups by excluding them from accessing council services.
- 1.3 Pressure on the Council's budgets has increased the incentive to make best use of charging opportunities and to recognise the importance of using this as a means of recovering the costs of delivering services.
- 1.4 Under the Council's constitution, responsibility for setting discretionary fees and charges is the Cabinet. Policy Advisory Committee will review the fees and charges for the services within its remit at least annually as part of the budget setting process to ensure that they remain relevant and appropriate and make recommendations to Cabinet.
- 1.5 Where the Council has the discretion to set the charge for a service, it is important that the implications of this decision are fully understood, and that decision makers are equipped with sufficient information to enable rational decisions to be made.

2 Policy Aims and Objectives

- 2.1 The aim of this policy is to establish a framework within which fees and charges levied by the Council are agreed and reviewed.
- 2.2 The Council must ensure that charges are set at an appropriate level which maximises cost recovery. Unless it would conflict with the Council's strategic priorities, other policies, contracts or the law then the Council should aim to maximise net income from fees and charges.
- 2.3 The policy aims to ensure that:-
 - a) Fees and charges are reviewed regularly, and that this review covers existing charges as well as services for which there is potential to charge in the future.
 - b) Budget managers are equipped with guidance on the factors which should be considered when reviewing charges.
 - c) Charges are fair, transparent and understandable, and a consistent and sensible approach is taken to setting the criteria for applying concessions or discounted charges.
 - d) Decisions regarding fees and charges are based on relevant and accurate information regarding the service and the impact of any proposed changes to the charge is fully understood.

3 Scope

- 3.1 This policy relates to fees and charges currently being levied by the Council and those which are permissible under the wider general powers to provide and charge for “Discretionary Services” included within the Local Government Act 2003 and Localism Act 2011. It does not cover services for which the council is prohibited from charging.
- 3.2 Fees for statutory services delivered by the council, but for which charges are set by central government, rents, leases, council tax, and business rates are outside the scope of this policy.
- 3.3 In general, charges should ensure that service users make a direct contribution to the cost of providing a service. However, there may be certain circumstances where this would not be appropriate. For example:
- Where the council is prohibited from charging for the service (e.g. collection of household waste)
 - Where the introduction of a charge would impede delivery of corporate priorities;
 - Where administrative costs of charging outweigh the potential income;
 - Where the service is seen to be funded from Council Tax (i.e. services which are provided and delivered equally to all residents)
 - Where the government sets the fee structure (e.g. pollution permits and private water fees)

4 Principles

- 4.1 The following overarching principles apply for the consideration and review of all current and future fees and charges levied by the council:
- Fees and charges should maximise cost recovery and where appropriate, income generation, to the extent that the Council’s legal powers permit, providing that this would not present any conflict with the Council’s strategic objectives;
 - Fees and charges should support the improvement of services, and the delivery of the Council’s corporate priorities, as set out in the strategic plan;
 - Where a subsidy or concession is provided for a service, this must be targeted towards the delivery of strategic priorities, for example, by facilitating access to services;
 - The process for setting and updating fees and charges should be administratively simple, transparent and fair, and for budgeting purposes, income projections must be robust and rational.

5 Process and Frequency for Reviewing Charges

- 5.1 The following arrangements for reviewing charges will be applied throughout the Council, for existing charges as well as those which in principle could be introduced.
- 5.2 In accordance with the Council's constitution, *'Discretionary fees and charges will be reviewed each year by the Policy Advisory Committee responsible for the function having considered will recommend approval to Cabinet, as part of the estimate cycle.'*
- 5.3 This annual review will ensure consistency with the Council's priorities, policy framework, service aims, market sensitivity, customer preferences, income generation needs and that any subsidy made by the Council is justifiable.
- 5.4 Heads of Service and budget managers will be asked to complete a schedule setting out all proposed fees and charges for the services in their area (including those which are not set by the council). This will usually take place in autumn for the following financial year and review the current year. By this means, any growth or savings resulting from fees and charges can be built into the budget strategy. An example schedule is provided at Appendix B. The schedule will indicate:
- The service or supply to which the charge relates;
 - Who determines the charges;
 - The basis for the charge (e.g. units or hourly rates);
 - The existing charge;
 - The total income budget for the current year;
 - The proposed charge;
 - Percentage increase/decrease;
 - Effective date for increase/decrease; and
 - Estimated income for the next financial year after introducing the change (price and volume).
- 5.5 Following this, the proposals will be collated by the Finance section into a report for each Policy Advisory Committee to consider the appropriateness of proposed fees and charges for the services within their remit. The report will clearly identify the charges for which the committee can apply discretion, and distinguish these from the charges which are set externally and included for information only. Cabinet will then receive a final report which brings together the proposals from each of the three service committees, in order to assess the overall impact of the proposed changes, and consider the potential impact on customers and service users.
- 5.6 The timing of the annual review will ensure that changes can be incorporated into the council's budget for the forthcoming financial year, although changes to fees and charges may be made outside of this process if required through a report to the relevant director or service committee.
- 5.7 It is possible that the review may lead to a conclusion that charges should remain at the existing level. If this is the case, then the outcomes of the review, including the justification for

not increasing the charge need to be documented and reported to the relevant service committee.

- 5.8 For the avoidance of doubt, periodic reviews of the rents and leases are not covered by the above. Individual reviews will be implemented by the relevant officer as long as market levels at least are achieved.

6 Guidance

- 6.1 A checklist of issues for budget managers and Heads of Service to consider when determining the level at which to set fees and charges is provided at Appendix A to this policy.
- 6.2 Below is a list of guiding principles intended to assist decision makers in determining the appropriate level at which to set fees and charges:
- a) Any subsidy from the Council tax payer to service users should be transparent and justifiable.
 - b) Fees and charges may be used to manage demand for a service, and price elasticity of demand should be considered when determining the level at which charges should be set.
 - c) Fees and charges should not be used to provide subsidies to commercial operators.
 - d) Concessions for services should follow a logical pattern and a fair and consistent approach should be taken to ensuring the ensure recovery of all fees and charges.
 - e) Fees and charges should reflect key commitments and corporate priorities.
 - f) Prices could be based on added and perceived value, which takes account of wider economic and social considerations, as well as cost.
 - g) There should be some rational scale in the charge for different levels of the same service and there should be consistency between charges for similar services.
 - h) Policies for fees and charges should fit with the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and, where appropriate, should be used to generate income to help develop capacity, to deliver efficiency and sustain continuous improvement.
 - i) In certain areas, charging may be used to generate surpluses which can be used to finance other services.
- 6.3 Wherever possible, charges should be recovered in advance or at the point of service delivery. If this is not possible, then invoices should be issued promptly and appropriate recovery procedures will be followed as required. Use of direct debit should be encouraged for periodic payments where this would improve cost effectiveness and enable efficient and timely collection of income.

7 Cost Recovery Limitation

- 7.1 Generally speaking, charges should be set at a level which enables all the costs of delivering a service to be recovered, although there are some exceptions to this identified earlier in this document. This includes direct costs such as the purchase of goods for resale, as well as indirect costs such as management and accommodation costs.
- 7.2 For certain services, legislation prohibits the Council from generating surpluses through charging. The general principle is that, taking one financial year with another, the income from charges must not exceed the costs of provision. Examples where this applies include building control and local land charges.
- 7.3 Any over or under recovery that resulted in a surplus or deficit of income in relation to costs in one period should be addressed when setting its charges for future periods so that, over time, income equates to costs.
- 7.4 Councils are free to decide what methodology to adopt to assess costs. Maidstone Borough Council follows the Service Reporting Code of Practice definition of total cost, including an allocation of all related support costs, plus an appropriate share of corporate and democratic core and non-distributed costs. Further guidance and support on calculating the full cost of service provision can be obtained from the Finance section.

8 Concessions & Subsidies

- 8.1 The normal level of fees and charges may be amended to allow for concessions targeted at certain user groups to encourage or facilitate access to the service.
- 8.2 Where concessions are proposed or already in place they must be justified in terms of overall business reasons, or implementation of key strategic considerations e.g. community safety, healthy living.
- 8.3 Examples of concessions and the reasons why they are awarded are:-
- Reductions for older people or children to encourage different age groups to participate in the sport which is linked to the promotion of public health;
 - Free spaces for disabled drivers in Council car parks to support social inclusion;
 - Concessions for new casual traders at the market to stimulate new usage;
- 8.4 In some cases, it may also be justifiable to subsidise a service for all users, where it would support delivery of strategic priorities.
- 8.5 In some circumstances, it may also be suitable to implement a system of means testing for managing access to concessions and subsidies, in order to ensure that subsidy can be targeted appropriately.

- 8.6 A fair and consistent approach should be taken to the application of concessionary schemes, and decisions should recognise the Council's broader agenda on promoting equality, as set out in the Equality Policy. When considering new charges, or significant changes to an existing charge, the budget manager should complete an Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA).
- 8.7 All decisions regarding concessions and subsidies should include consideration of the impact the Council's ability to generate income and the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

9 Introducing a new charge

- 9.1 Proposals to introduce new charges should be considered as part of the service planning process and income projections should be factored into the Council's medium term financial plan.
- 9.2 Reasonable notice should be given to customers and service users prior to the introduction of a new charge, along with advice on concessions and discounts available.
- 9.3 Proposals should be based on robust evidence, and will incorporate the anticipated financial impact of introducing the charge, as well as the potential impact on demand for the service.
- 9.4 Performance should be monitored closely following implementation to enable amendments to the charge to be made if required, and the charge will subsequently be picked up as part of the annual review process.

10 Monitoring

- 10.1 Income levels will be monitored throughout the year and reported to committees through the quarterly reporting process. Significant variances may be addressed through an amended to charges, which will require approval from the appropriate Director or Service Committee.
- 10.2 The impact of changes in demand for services will be monitored through quarterly performance monitoring reports, where this is identified as a key performance indicator.

Appendix A - Discretionary Fees & Charges Review Checklist

The below checklist may be used as a guide for managers when reviewing existing charges or implementing a new fee structure.

Have you considered the following?	Y/N/NA	Comments
1. How does the charge link to the Council's corporate priorities?		
2. Does the charge enable the council to recover all costs of providing the service?		
3. If the answer to question 2 is 'No', have you considered increasing the charge to enable full cost recovery?		
4. Has the impact of inflation on the cost of service delivery been reflected in the proposed charge?		
5. Do the administrative costs of charging or increasing the charge outweigh the potential income to be generated?		
6. Is the charge being used to deter or incentivise certain behaviours?		
7. Has there been any investment in the service to effect an increase in charges?		
8. If there is a market for the service or supply, has the impact of market conditions and competition be considered in setting the charge?		
9. How sensitive is the price to demand for the service? Is there a risk that an increase in charge could deter potential customers?		
10. If applicable, have consultation results been taken into account?		

Appendix A - Discretionary Fees & Charges Review Checklist

11. Could the charges or income budget be increased to support the delivery of a savings target?		
12. What would the impact of the change be on customers, and how does this affect the delivery of corporate priorities?		
13. Have any alternative charging structures been considered?		
14. How will the service be promoted? How successful have previous promotions been in generating demand?		
15. New charges only - are there any legal factors which impact on the scope for charging (e.g. an obligation to limit charges to cost recovery only)?		
16. New charges only - has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed?		
17. If applicable, have concessionary charges been considered on a fair and consistent basis?		

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Name: _____

Chargeable Service/Supply: _____

Job Title: _____

Department: _____

Appendix B – Example Schedule of Fees & Charges

Fees and Charges April 2017 - March 2018		Includes VAT	Discretionary Fee	Statutory Fee	2016-2017 Actuals	2017 -2018 Current Estimate	Current Charges 2017-2018	Proposed Charges 2018-2019	% Change	2017-2018 + / - Income	2018 -2019 Estimate	Comments
EA31	Street Naming & Numbering				66,995	49,000				0	49,000	
	Name change						25.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	Addition of Name to numbered Property						25.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	Amendment to Postal Address						25.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	New Build - Individual Property						75.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	Official Registration of Postal Address previously not Registered						50.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	New Development - Fee per unit/flat						40.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	Creation of New Street						100.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	Renumbering of Development or Block of Flats - Fee per unit/flat						20.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	Street Naming & Numbering Total				66,995	49,000				0	49,000	



BUDGET SURVEY

September 2023

ABSTRACT

Summary of the results of the 2024/25 Budget Survey.

Consultation@maidstone.gov.uk

Contents

Findings.....	2
Methodology	3
Mandatory Services.....	4
Mandatory Services Used	4
Spending Approach Mandatory Services.....	8
Most important Mandatory Services	20
Discretionary Services	24
Discretionary Services Used.....	24
Approach to Discretionary Services.....	28
Most important Discretionary Services	42
Future fees and Spending	45
Priorities & Investment.....	50
Budget Comments	54
Demographics.....	55

Findings

- The top three most used mandatory services were Environmental Services (91.8%), Democratic & Electoral Services (70.3%) and Council Tax & Benefits (60.6%).
- The top three mandatory services that respondents said should be maintained were Environmental Services (96.7%), Environmental Health (84.1%) and Community Safety (82.0%).
- The top three mandatory services which respondents said should be reduced were Democratic & Electoral services (47.0%), Licensing (38.5%) and Council Tax & Benefits (34.8%).
- The top three selected 'most important' mandatory services were Environmental Services 91.3%, Community Safety (45.8%) and Environmental Health (33.5%).
- The top three most used discretionary services were Parks & Open Spaces (87.9%), Car Parks (78.7%) and Museums (49.8%).
- The top three discretionary services which respondents said should be maintained were Parks & Open Spaces (96.4%), Leisure centre (79.7%) and Car Parks (74.3%).
- The top three discretionary service which respondents said should be reduced were Civic Events (50.8%), Markets (43.3%) and Tourism (34.6%).
- The top three selected 'most important' discretionary services were Parks & Opens Spaces (84.4%), Car parks (39.0%) and Leisure Centre (30.7%).
- The majority of respondents were not in favour of increasing fees and charges for Car Parking (77.7%), Garden Waste (66.5%) or leisure facilities (58.9%).
- The top priority areas are unchanged with all areas ranked in the same order in 2022, with Infrastructure the top priority and new homes the lowest priority.
- Satisfaction with the local area a place to live declined from 57.8% in 2022 to 50.9% for this year – a decline of 6.9%.
- The proportion of people who said they were proud of Maidstone Borough has declined from 50.7% in 2022 to 43.8% - a decline of 6.9%.
- The most common theme from the Budget Comments was the Council Budget itself with people disappointed they did not have the option to select increase services as well as feeling Maidstone should get a bigger proportion of the Council Tax. There were also comments within this theme about money being wasted and suggestions to reduce or get rid of the number of Councillors (both Parish and Borough).

Methodology

The survey was open between 30th June and 28th August 2023. It was promoted online through the Council's website and social media channels. Residents who had signed up for consultation reminders were notified and sent an invitation to participate in the consultation.

There was a total of 646 responses to the survey.

As an online survey is a self-selection methodology, with residents free to choose whether to participate or not, it was anticipated that returned responses would not necessarily be fully representative of the wider adult population. This report discusses the weighted results to overall responses by demographic questions to ensure that it more accurately matches the known profile of Maidstone Boroughs population by these characteristics.

The results have been weighted by age and gender based on the population in the 2022 Mid-year population estimates. However, the under-representation of 18 to 34 year olds means that high weights have been applied to responses in this group, therefore results for this group should be treated with caution.

There was a total of 531 weighted responses to the survey based on Maidstone's population aged 18 years and over this means overall results are accurate to $\pm 3.6\%$ at the 90% confidence level. This means that if we repeated the same survey 100 times, 90 times out of 100 the results would be between $\pm 3.6\%$ of the calculated response, so the 'true' response could be 3.6% above or below the figures reported (i.e. a 50% agreement rate could in reality lie within the range of 46.4% to 53.6%).

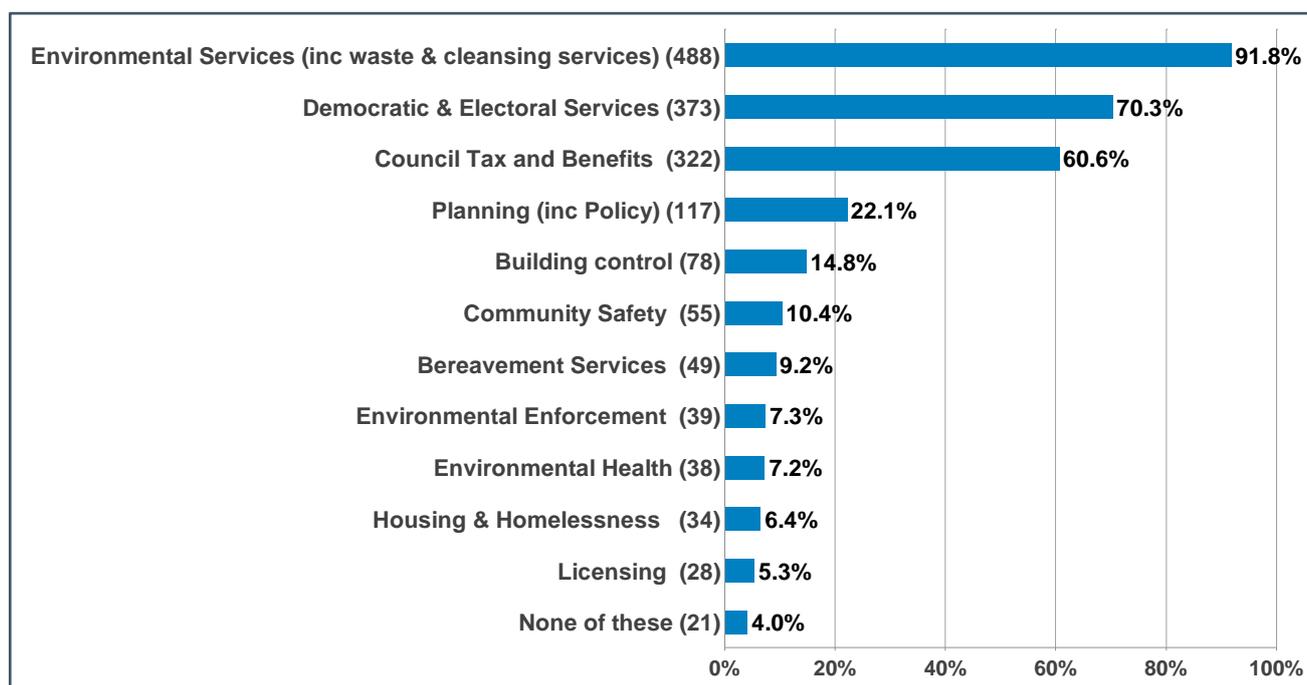
Please note not every respondent answered every question, therefore the total number of respondents refers to the number of respondents for the question being discussed not to the survey overall.

Mandatory Services

Mandatory Services Used

Survey respondents were provided with a list of services Maidstone Council is required to provide and were asked to select which they had previously used. They could select as many as applied to them.

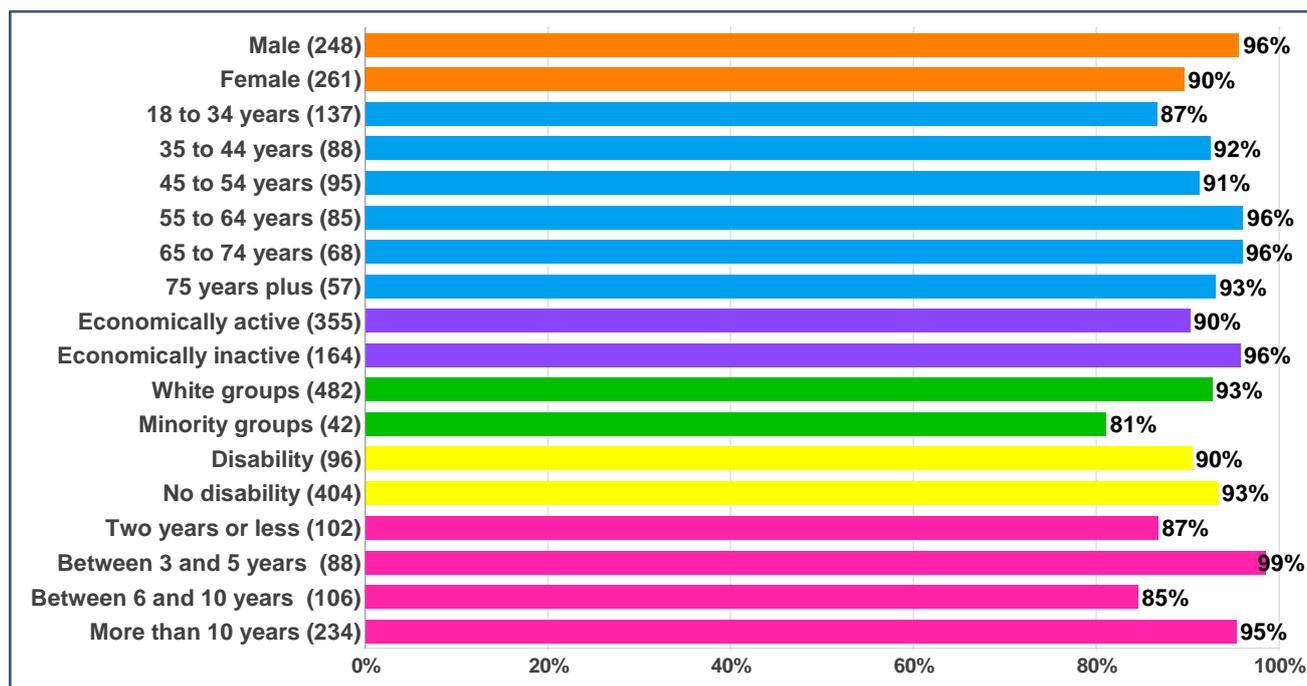
- 531 responses were received.
- Overall, the top three services that respondents had used were Environmental Services, Democratic & Electoral Services and Council Tax & Benefits.
- The least used service by respondents was Licensing with 28 selecting this service.
- 21 respondents said they had not used any of the mandatory services listed.



Demographic differences for the top three services are explored in more detail in the charts and tables below.

Environmental Services

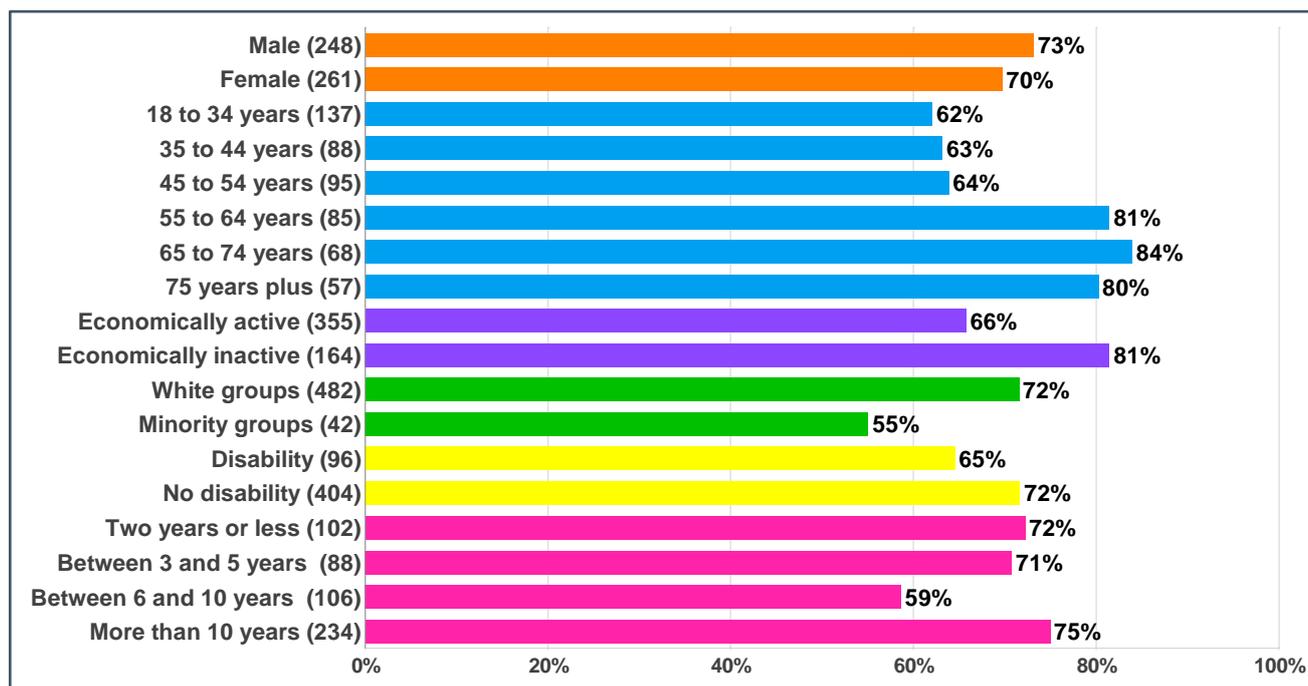
The differences in the proportions selecting Environmental Services across the demographic groups are shown in the chart below with differences outlined in the following table.



Mandatory Service Used – Environmental Services	
	Male respondents were significantly more likely to have used the Council’s Environmental Services with 96% selecting this as a service they had used compared to 90% of female respondents.
	87% of respondents aged 18 to 34 years had used Environmental Services compared to 96% of 55 to 64 years group.
	Economically inactive respondents were significantly more likely to have used the Council’s Environmental Services with 96% selecting this as a service they had used compared to 90% of economically active respondents.
	Minority group respondents were significantly less likely to have used Environmental Services with 81% selecting this as a service they had used compared to 93% of respondents from white groups.
	Respondents who had lived at their current address for between 6 and 10 years had the lowest proportion that said they had used Environmental services at 85%. This is significantly lower than the proportion who had lived at their current address for between 3 and 5 years where 99% have used Environmental Services provided by the Council.

Democratic & Electoral Services

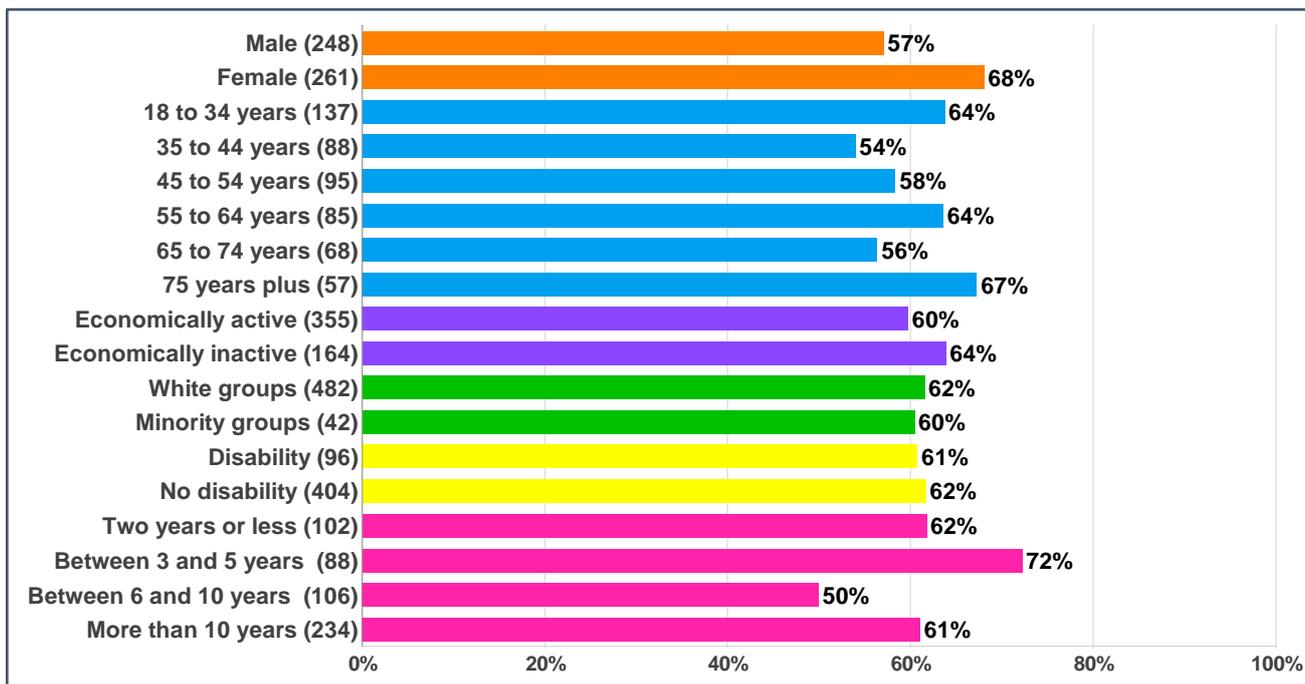
The differences in the proportions selecting Democratic & Electoral Services across the demographic groups are shown in the chart below with differences outlined in the following table.



Mandatory Service Used – Democratic & Electoral Services	
	Respondents aged 54 years and under had significantly lower proportions stating that they have used Democratic & Electoral services than the those aged 55 years and over.
	Economically inactive respondents were significantly more likely to have used the Council’s Democratic & Electoral Services.81% selected this as a service they had used compared to 66% of economically active respondents.
	Minority group respondents were significantly less likely to have used Democratic & Electoral Services with 55% selecting this as a service they had used compared to 72% of respondents from white groups.
	Respondents who had lived at their current address for between 6 and 10 years had the lowest proportion that said they had used Democratic & Electoral Services at 59% This was significantly lower than the proportion that responded this way for all the other length of time at address categories.

Council Tax & Benefits

The differences in the proportions selecting Council Tax & Benefits across the demographic groups are shown in the chart below with differences outlined in the following table.



Mandatory Service Used – Council Tax & Benefits	
	<p>Female respondents were significantly more likely to have used Council Tax & Benefits services with 68% selecting this as a service they have used compared to 57% of male respondents.</p>
	<p>Respondents who had lived at their current address for between 6 and 10 years had the lowest proportion that said they had used Council Tax & Benefits services at 49.9%. This is significantly lower than the proportion that responded this way for those who had lived at their current address for between 3 and 5 years where 72% said they had used Council Tax & Benefit Services.</p>

Spending Approach Mandatory Services

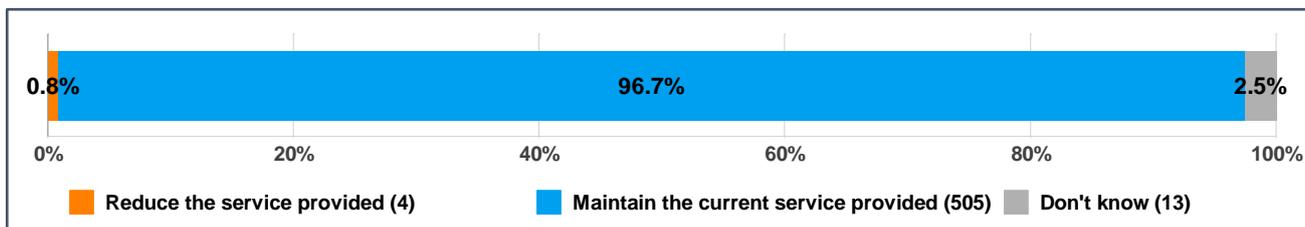
Survey respondents were asked to select what approach they felt the Council should take in delivering each of its Mandatory Services next year. They were given three options to pick from:

- Reduce the service provided
- Maintain the service provided
- Don't know

To provide context the current spend on each service per Council Tax band D was shown.

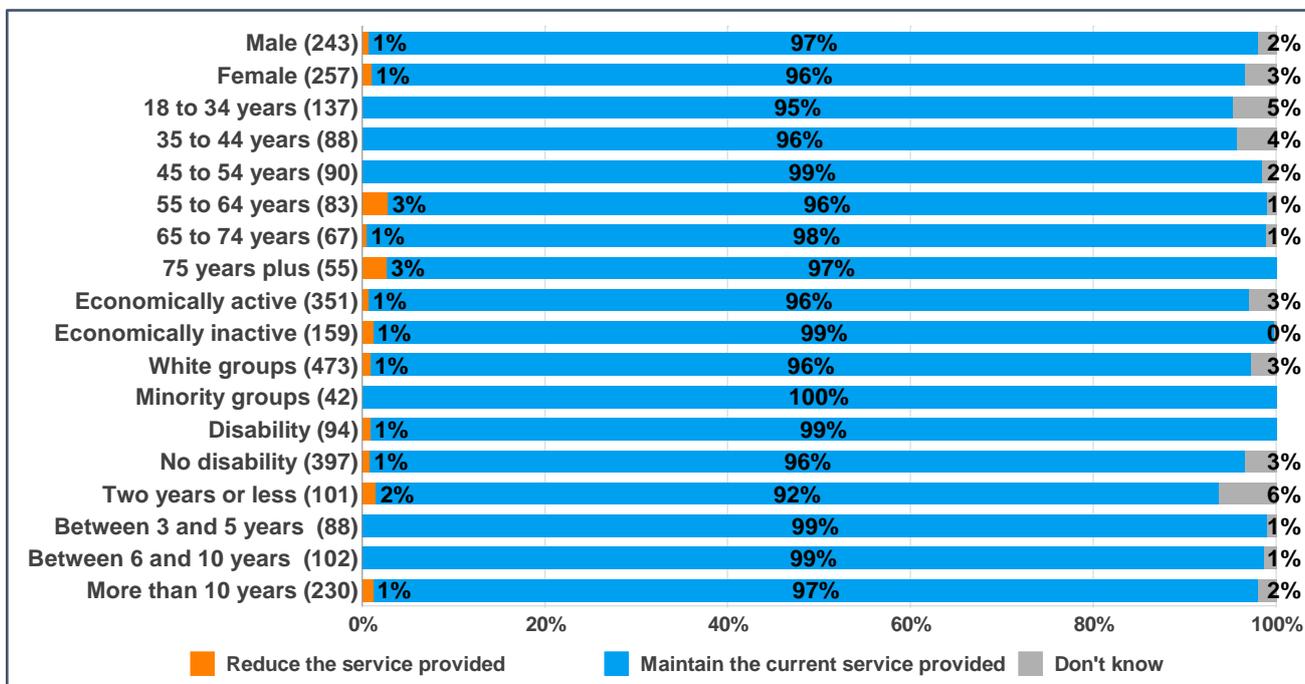
Environmental Services

- 522 responses were received.
- The most common response was 'maintain current service' with 505 (96.7%) answering this way.



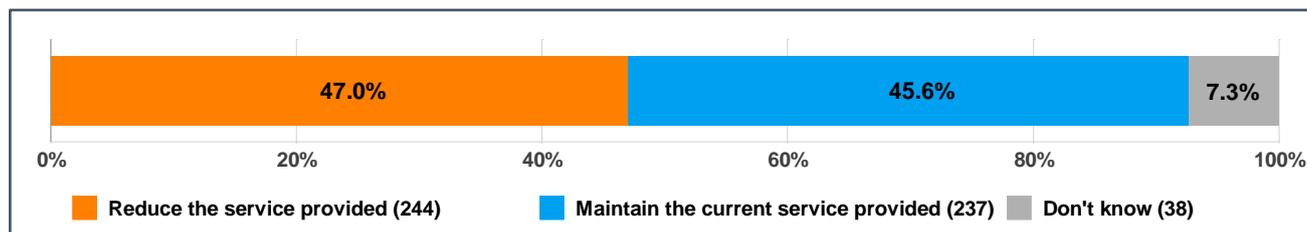
Demographic Differences

The chart below shows the response for each demographic group. There were no significant differences in the response for the demographic groups.



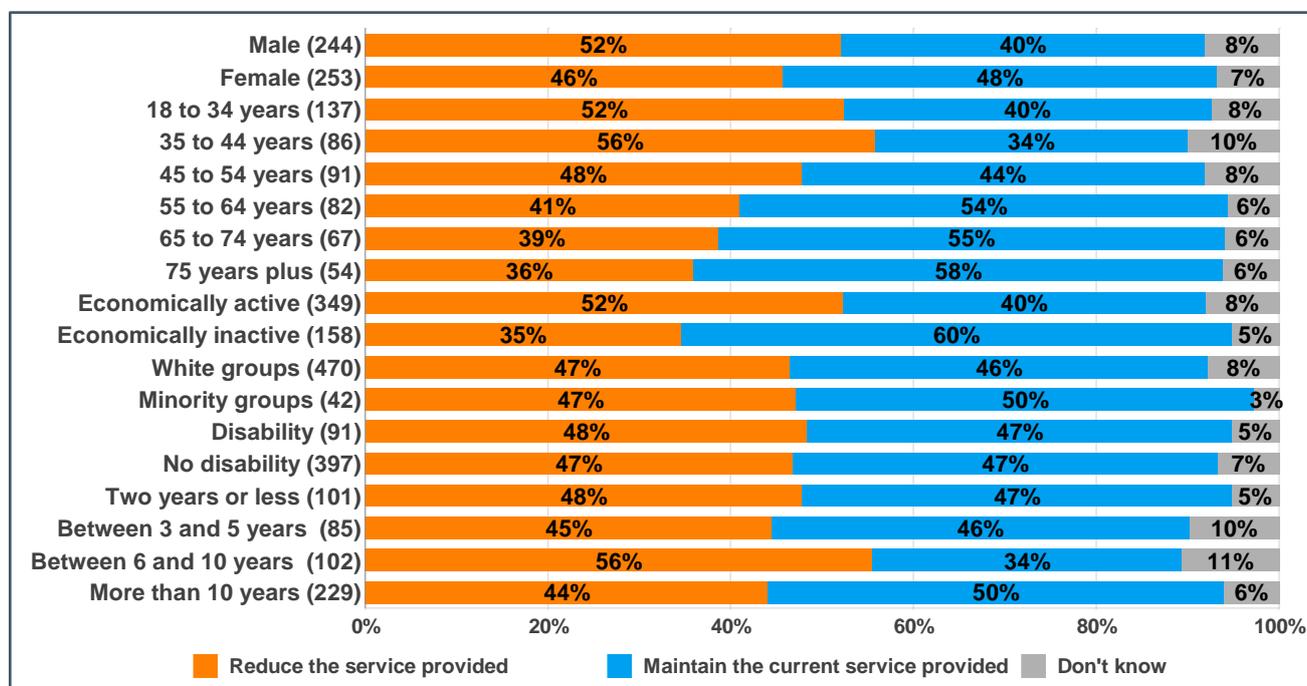
Democratic & Electoral Services

- 519 responses were received to this question.
- The most common response was 'reduce the service provided' with 244 (47.0%) answering this way.



Demographic Differences

The chart below shows the response for each demographic group with significant differences outlined in the table below.

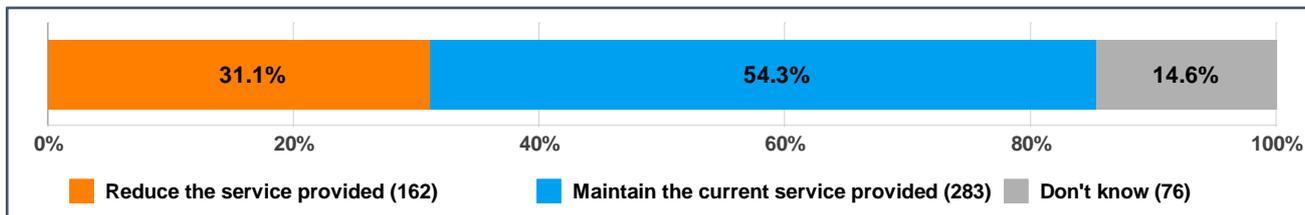


Significant Differences - Democratic & Electoral Services Approach

	<p>Respondents aged 75 years and over had the greatest proportion that felt this service should be maintained at 58%. This result is significantly greater than the proportions answering this way for the age groups 18 to 34 years and 35 to 44 years. Overall, 56% of respondents aged 35 to 44 years were in favour of reducing Democratic & Electoral Services and 52% of 18 to 34 year olds also answered this way.</p>
	<p>Economically inactive respondents had a significantly lower proportion in favour of reducing Democratic & Electoral Services with 35% answering this way compared to 52% of economically active respondents.</p>
	<p>Respondents who had lived at their current address for between 6 and 10 years had the lowest proportion in favour of maintaining this service at 34%. This is significantly lower than those who have lived at their current address for more than 10 years where 50% said they were in favour of maintaining Democratic & Electoral Services.</p>

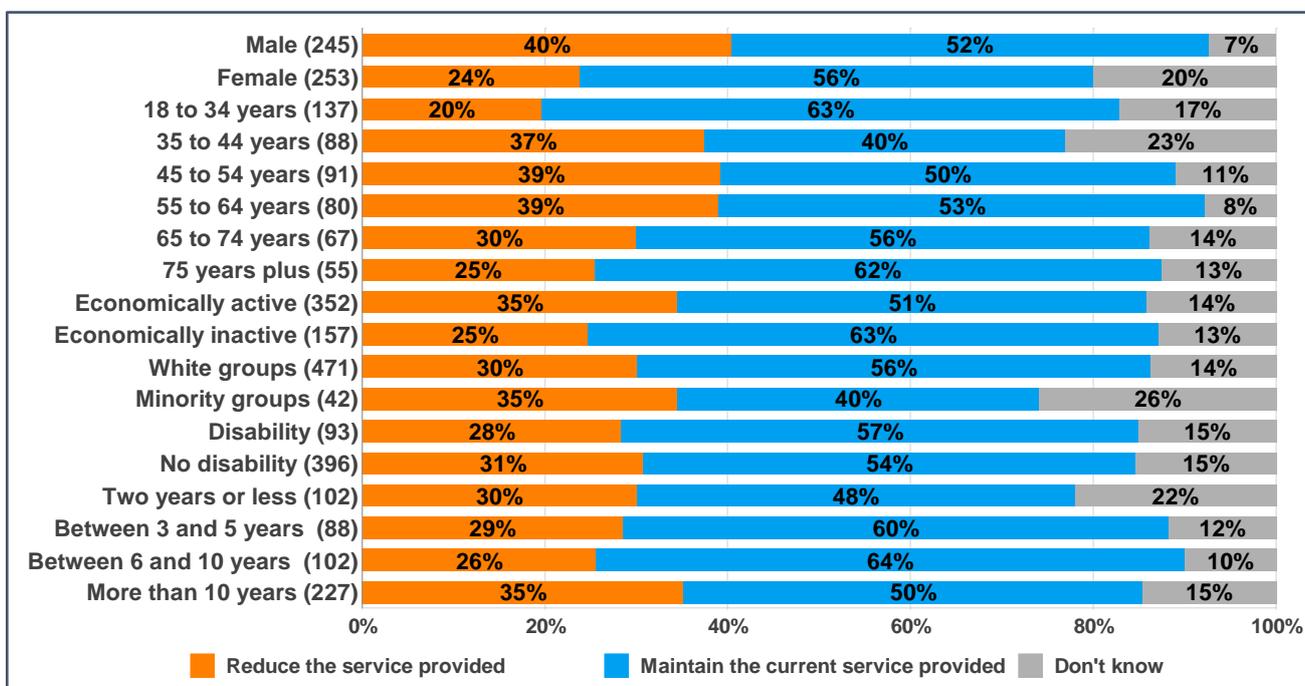
Planning (including Planning Policy)

- 520 responses were received to this question.
- The most common response was ‘maintain the current service provided with 283 (54.3%) answering this way.



Demographic Differences

The chart below shows the response for each demographic group with significant differences outlined in the table below.



Significant Differences -Planning Approach

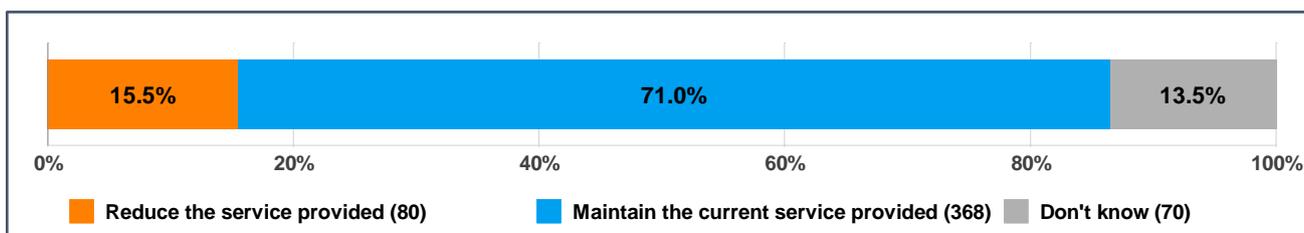
	<p>A greater proportion of males were in favour of reducing Planning services with 40% answering this way compared to 24% of female respondents. However, more than half of each group were in favour of maintaining the current service in this area.</p>
	<p>One in five respondents aged 18 to 24 years (20%) were in favour of reducing Planning services, this was significantly lower than the proportions answering this way from the age groups covering 34 to 64 years. The 35 to 44 years group was the only one when less than half of respondents were in favour of maintaining the current service.</p>
	<p>Economically active respondents had a significantly greater proportion in favour of reducing Planning services with 35% answering this way compared to 52% of economically active respondents.</p>



Respondents who had lived at their current address for two years or less had the lowest proportion that were in favour of maintaining planning services at 48%. This was significantly lower than those who had lived at their current address for six to ten years (64%). There were no significant differences between length of time at current address and the response option 'reduce the service'.

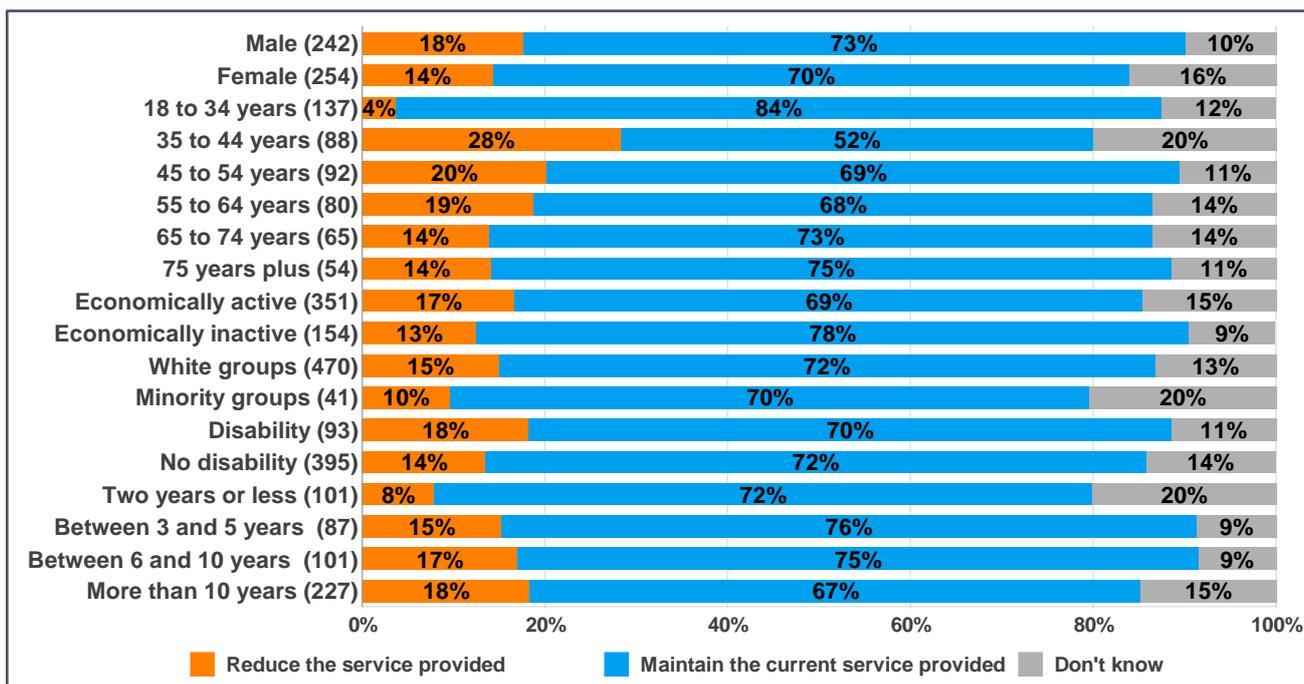
Building Control

- 518 responses were received to this question.
- The most common response was 'maintain the service provided' with 368 (71.0%) answering this way.



Demographic Differences

The chart below shows the response for each demographic group with significant differences outlined in the table below.



The 18 to 34 years group had a significantly lower proportion of respondents compared with other aged groups that said that Building Control services should be reduced with 3.7% answering this way.

The most common answer across all groups however was 'maintain the current service provided'.

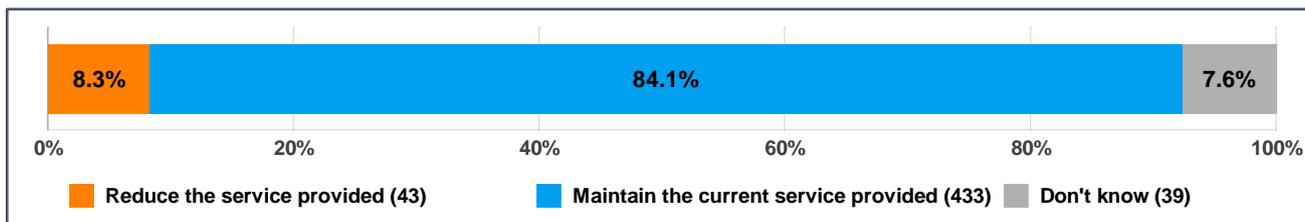


Economically active respondents had a significantly lower proportion in favour of maintaining the Building Control service with 69% answering this way compared to 78% of economically inactive respondents.

	<p>Respondents who have lived at their current address for two years or less had the greatest proportion that were uncertain about the approach that should be taken for Building Control with 20% answering this way. This was significantly greater than respondents who had lived at their current address for the categories covering three years to ten years.</p>
	<p>There were no significant differences across length of time at current address for the remaining answer options.</p>

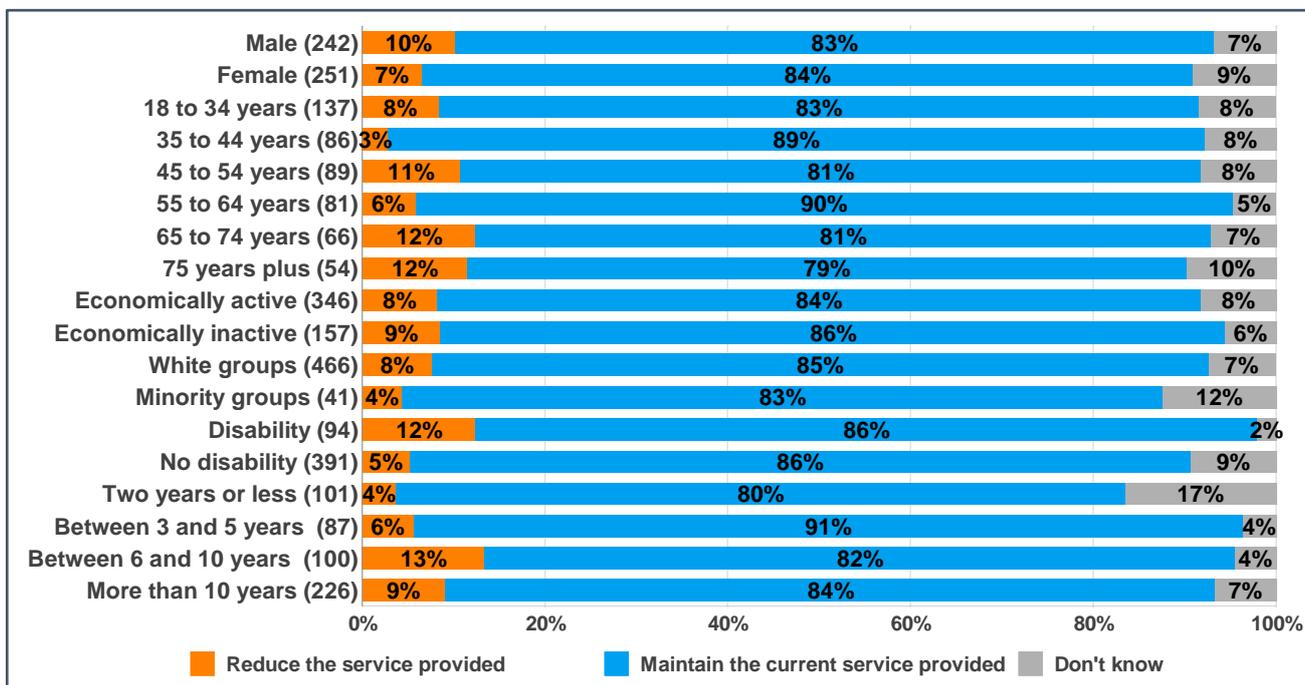
Environmental Health

- 515 responses were received to this question.
- The most common response was ‘maintain the current service provided’ with 433 (84.1%) answering this way.



Demographic Differences

The chart below shows the response for each demographic group with significant differences outlined in the table below.

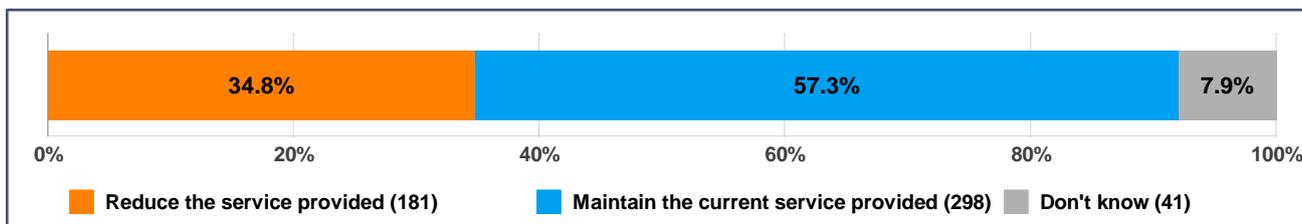


	<p>The proportion that responded ‘reduce the service provided’ from the 18 to 34 years group was significantly lower than for the 45 to 54 years, the 65 to 74 years and the 75 years and over age groups. There were no significant differences between age groups for the remaining answer options.</p>
	<p>Respondents with a disability had a significantly greater proportion that said this service should be reduced with 12.4% answering this way compared to 5.2% of respondents without a disability.</p>

	<p>Respondents who have lived at their current address for two years or less had the greatest proportion that were uncertain about the approach that should be taken for Environmental Health with 17% answering this way, significantly greater than the other groups who had been at their properties for longer (3 years +).</p>
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

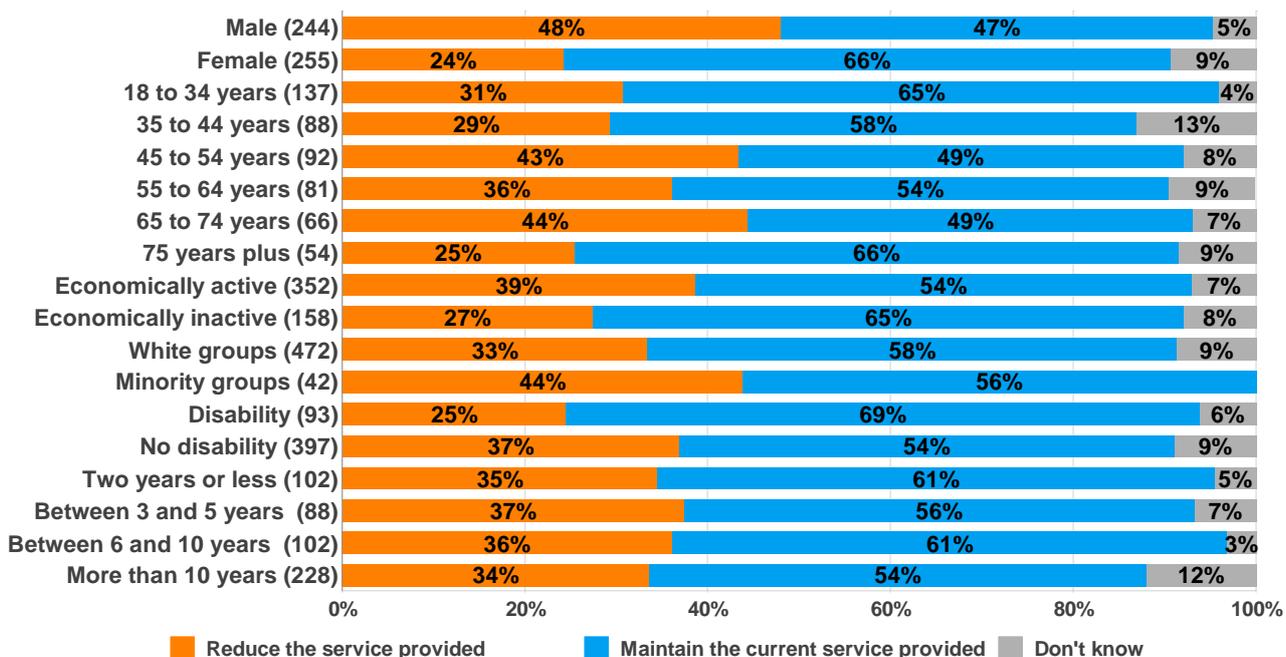
Council Tax & Benefits

- 521 responses were received to this question.
- The most common response was ‘maintain the service provided’ with 298 (57.3%) answering this way.



Demographic Differences

The chart below shows the response for each demographic group with significant differences outlined in the table below.

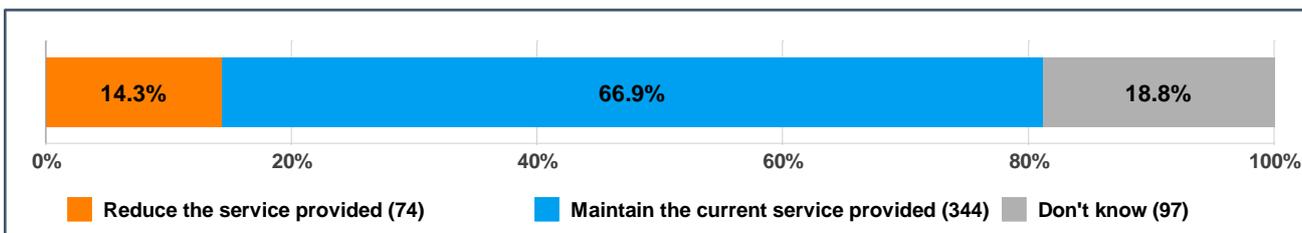


	<p>A significantly greater proportion of male respondents were in favour of reducing Council tax and Benefits with 48% answering this way compared to 24% of female respondents. ‘Reduce the service’ was the most common response from men and ‘maintain the current service’ was the most common response for women.</p>
	<p>The proportions answering ‘maintain the current service’ were significantly greater for the 18 to 34 years and the 75 years and over age groups at 65% and 66% respectively, when compared to the proportions answering this way for the 45 to 54 years and the 65 to 74 years age groups both at 49%.</p>
	<p>Economically active respondents had a significantly lower proportion in favour of maintaining the current council tax and benefits services with 54% answering this way compared to 65% of economically inactive respondents.</p>

	<p>Respondents with a disability had a significantly greater proportion that said that Council tax and Benefits services should be maintained with 69% answering this way compared to 54% of respondents without a disability.</p>
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

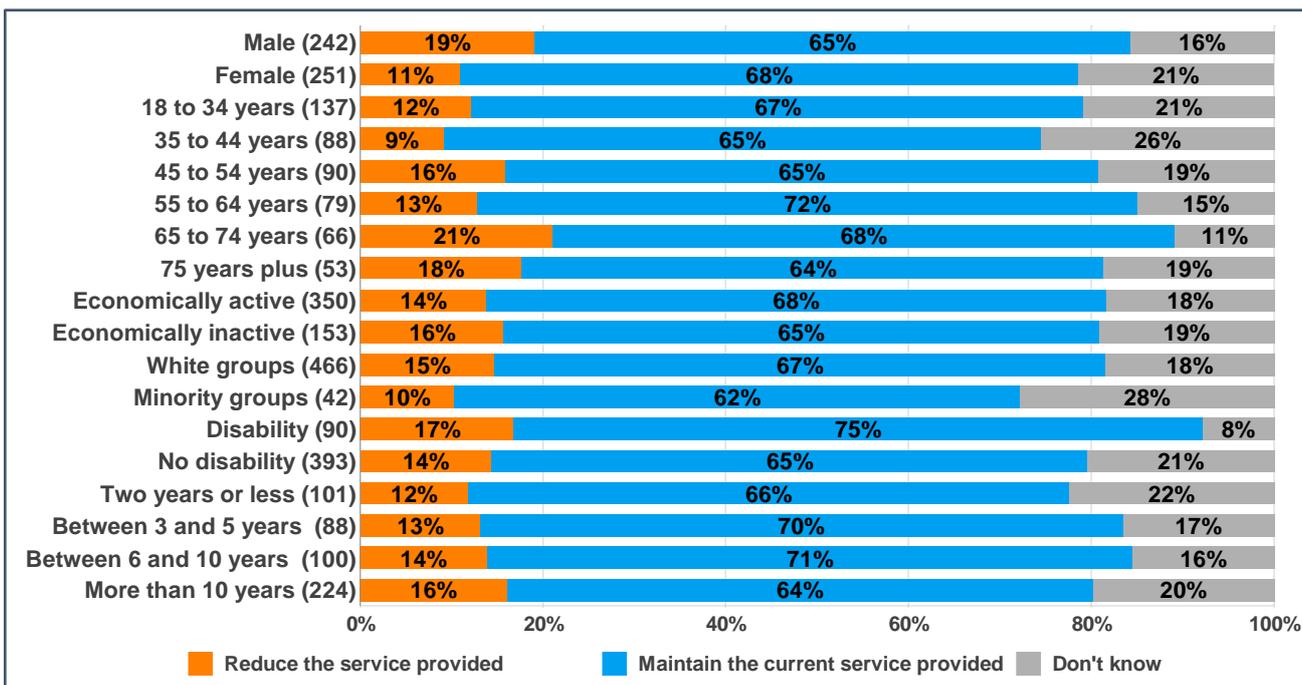
Bereavement Services

- 515 responses were received to this question.
- The most common response was ‘maintain the service provided’ with 344 (66.9%) answering this way.



Demographic Differences

The chart below shows the response for each demographic group with significant differences outlined in the table below.

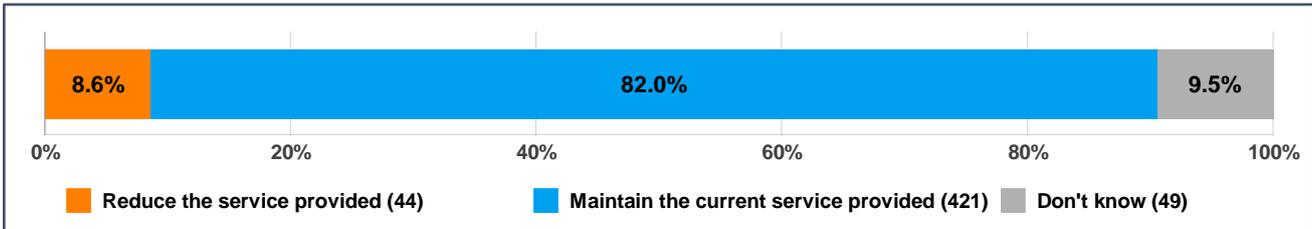


	<p>Male respondents had a significantly greater proportion that were in favour of reducing Bereavement Services with 19% answering this way compared to 11% of female respondents.</p>
	<p>A significantly greater proportion of 65 to 74 years olds said Bereavement Services should be reduced with 21% answering this way, compared to 9% of 35 to 44 year olds</p>

	<p>Respondents without a disability had a significantly greater proportion that were uncertain about the approach that should be taken for Bereavement Services, with 21% answering this way, compare to 8% answering the same who have a disability.</p>
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

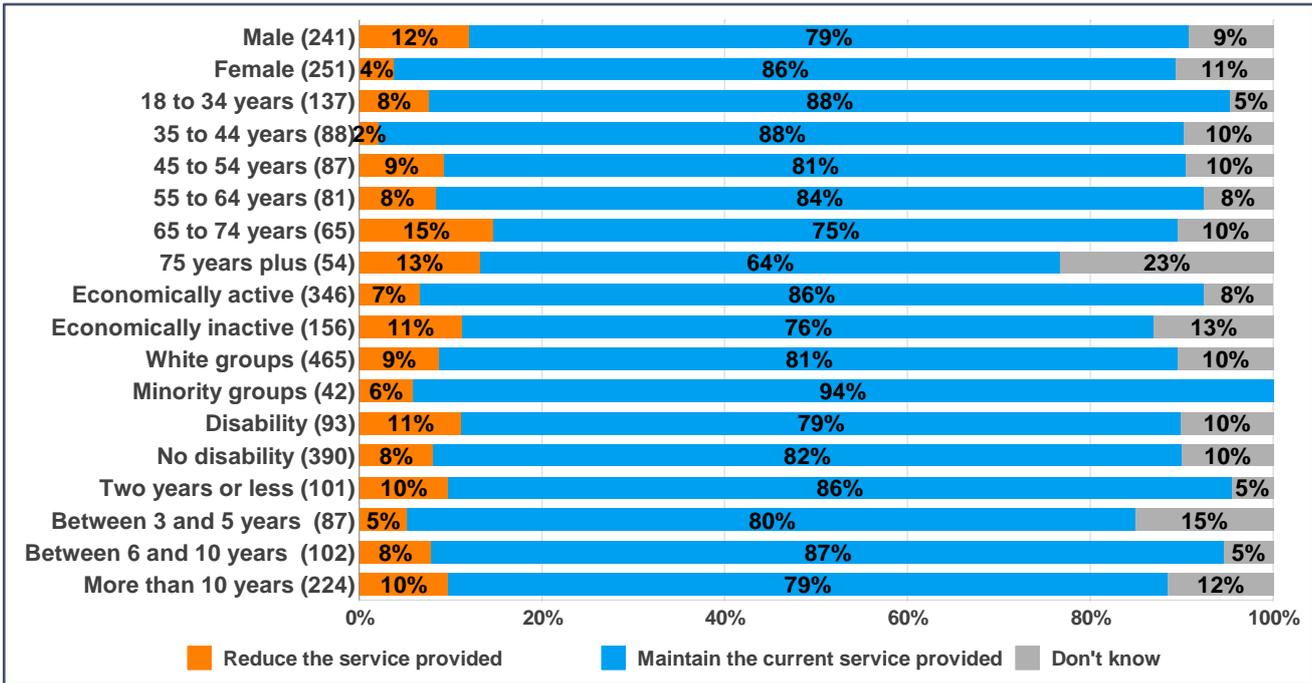
Community Safety

- 514 responses were received to this question.
- The most common response was ‘maintain the current service provided’ with 421 (82.0%) answering this way.



Demographic Differences

The chart below shows the response for each demographic group with significant differences outlined in the table below.

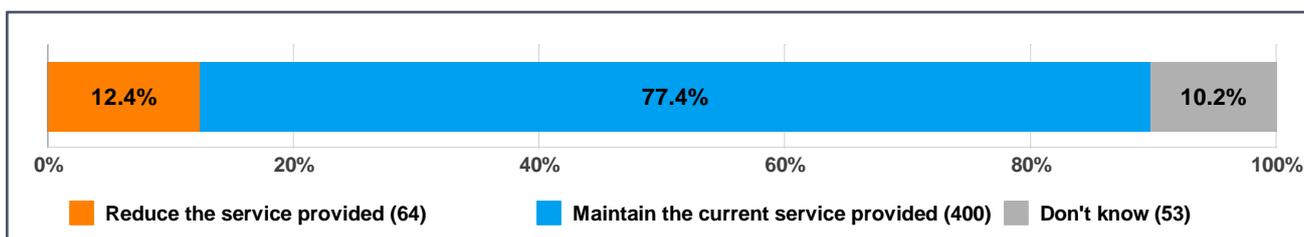


	<p>Female respondents had a significantly greater proportion that said Community Safety services should be maintained with 86% answering this way compared to 79% of male respondents.</p>
	<p>The proportion that responded ‘Maintain the current service’ from the 75 years and over group were significantly lower than the proportions answering this way for the age groups up to 64 years. The 75 years and over group had a significantly greater proportion that answered ‘Don’t know’ compared to the other age groups.</p>

	<p>Economically active respondents had a greater proportion in favour of maintaining the current community safety services with 86% answering this way compared to 76% of economically inactive respondents.</p>
	<p>Minority group respondents had a significantly greater proportion that were in favour of maintaining the current community safety services with 94% answering this way compared to 81% of respondents from white groups. There were no respondents from minority groups that answered, 'Don't know'.</p>

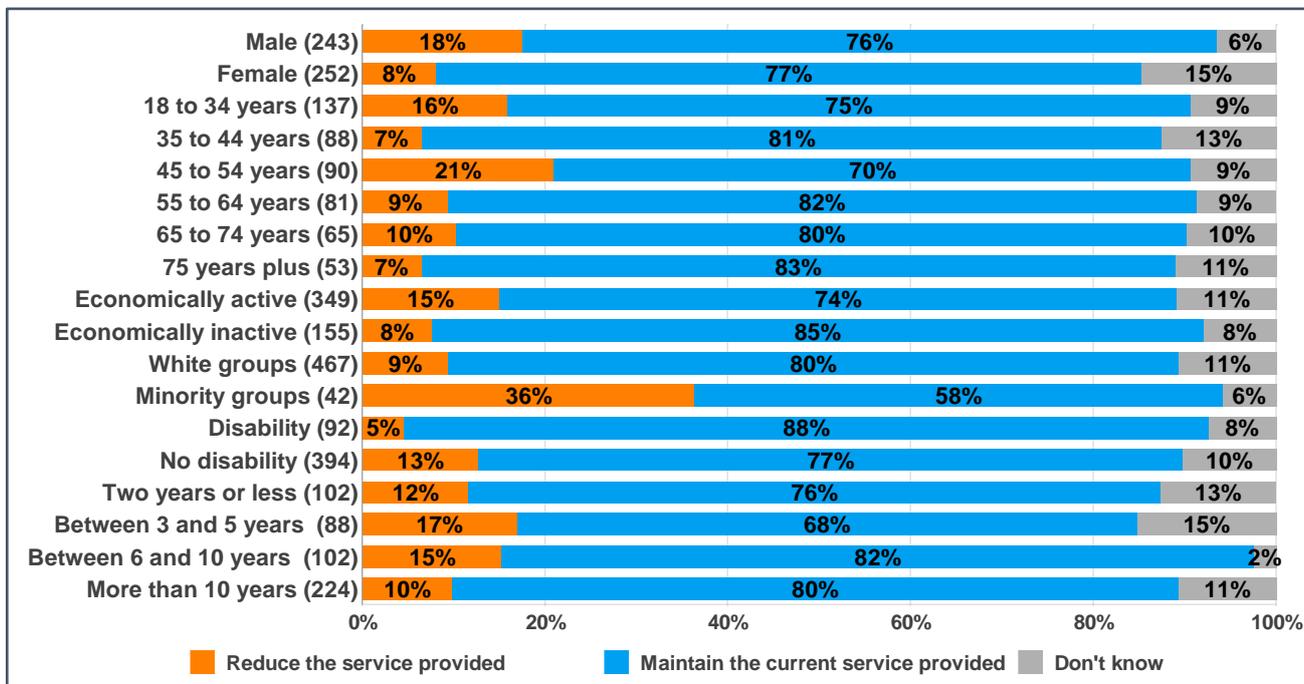
Environmental Enforcement

- A total of 517 responses were received to this question.
- The most common response was 'Maintain the service provided' with 400(77.4%) answering this way.



Demographic Differences

The chart below shows the response for each demographic group with significant differences outlined in the table below.

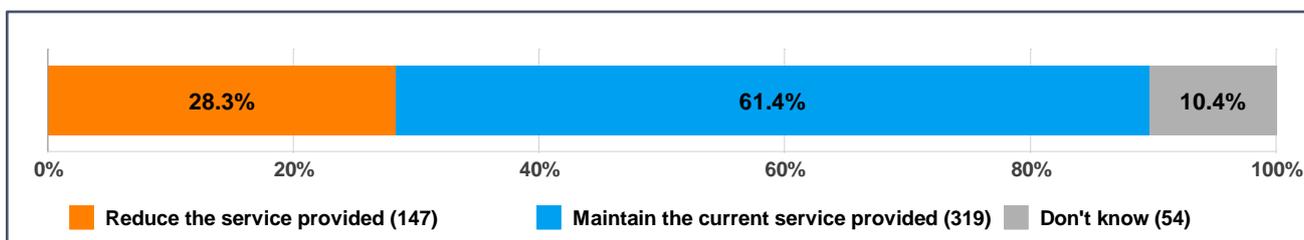


	<p>A significantly greater proportion of males were in favour of reducing Environmental Enforcement services with 18% answering this way compared to 8% of female respondents.</p> <p>A significantly greater proportion of female respondents were uncertain with 15% answering this way compared to 6% of male respondents.</p>
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

	<p>A significantly greater proportion of 45–54-year-olds that responded ‘reduce the service provided’ compared with other age groups: 35 to 44 years = 7% 55 to 64 years =9% 75 years and over =7%</p>
	<p>Economically inactive respondents were more in favour of maintaining the current environmental enforcement services with 85% answering this way compared to 74% of economically active respondents.</p>
	<p>Minority group respondents were more in favour of reducing the current service provided with 36% answering this way compared to 9% of respondents from white groups.</p>
	<p>Respondents were significantly more in favour of maintaining the current Environmental Enforcement services, with 77% answering this way, compared to 88% that answered the same who have a disability.</p>
	<p>Respondents who have lived at their current address for between two and five years had the lowest proportions responding that they were in favour of maintaining the current service provided for Environmental Enforcement with 68% answering this way. This was significantly lower than the ‘longer length of time at current address’ groups (6 years+)</p>

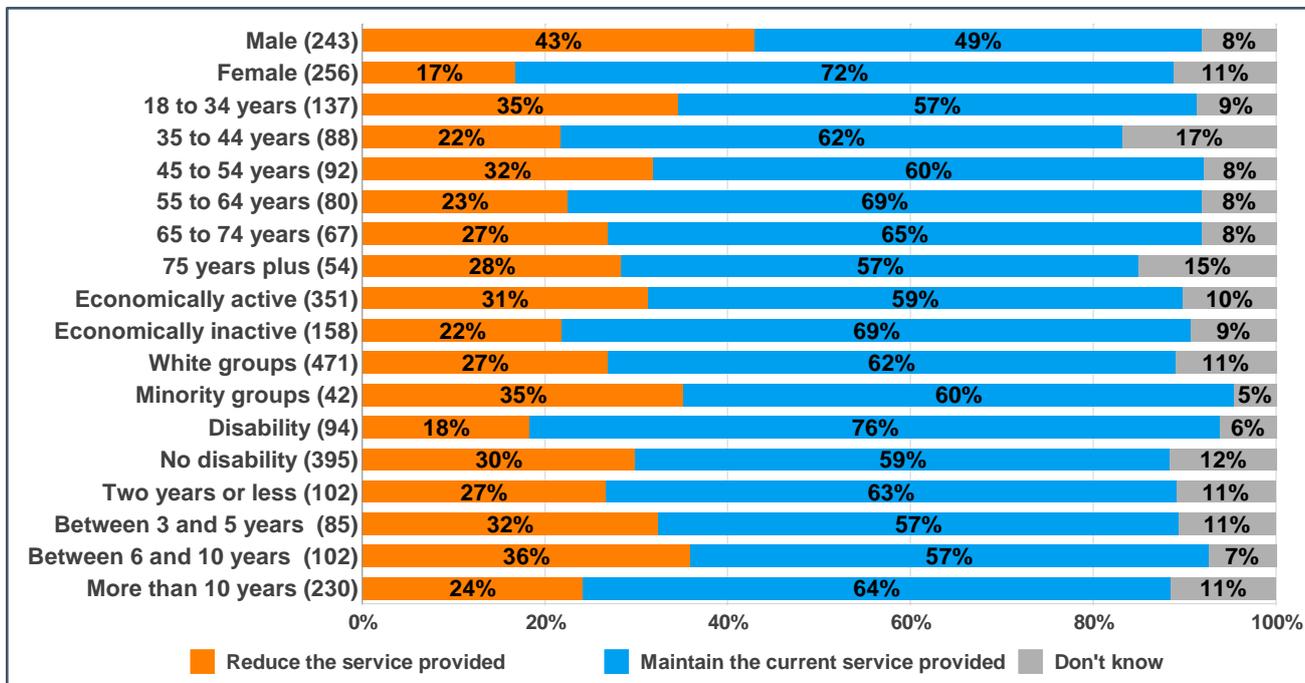
Housing & Homelessness

- 520 responses were received to this question.
- The most common response was ‘maintain the current service provided’ with 319 (61.4%) answering this way.



Demographic Differences

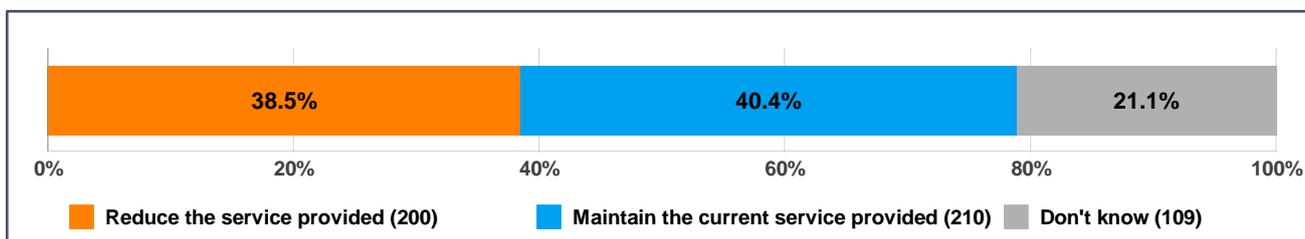
The chart below shows the response for each demographic group with significant differences outlined in the table below.



	Male respondents were more in favour of reducing Housing and Homelessness services with 43% answering this way compared to 17% of female respondents. 72% of female respondents said the current Housing and Homelessness service should be maintained compared to 49% of male respondents.
	69% of economically inactive respondents favoured maintaining the current Housing and Homelessness service with 69% answering this way compared to 59% of economically active respondents.
	Respondents with a disability were more in favour of maintaining the current service, with 76% answering this way, compared to 59% of respondents without a disability.

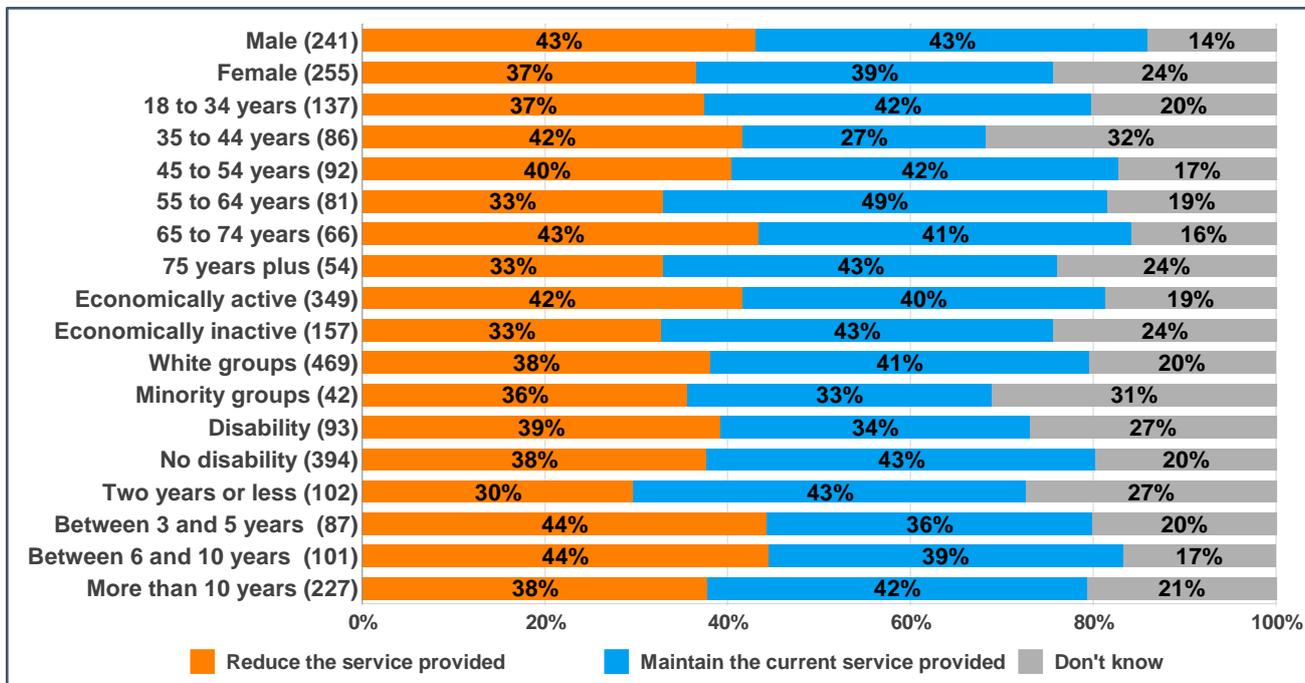
Licensing

- 518 responses were received to this question.
- The most common response was ‘maintain the current service provided’ with 210(40.4%) answering this way.



Demographic Differences

The chart below shows the response for each demographic group with significant differences outlined in the table below.

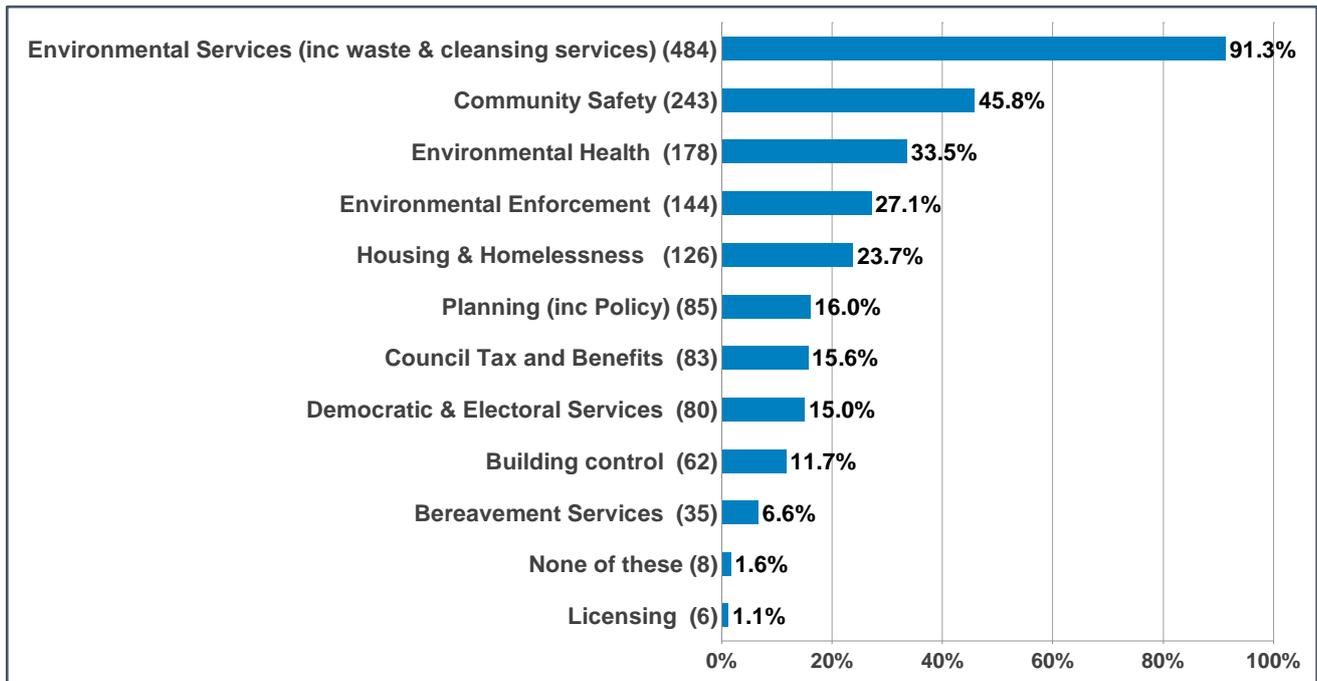


	<p>Female respondents answered 'don't know' in response to this question with 24% answering this way compared to 14% of male respondents.</p>
	<p>The proportion that responded 'maintain the current service provided' from the 35 to 44 age group was lower than the proportions answering this way for the all the other age groups.</p>
	<p>Respondents who have lived at their current address for less than 2 years had the lowest proportion of respondents in favour of reducing the current service provided for licensing with 30% answering this way, significantly lower than the 'length of time at current address' for the groups covering 3 to 10 years.</p>

Most important Mandatory Services

Survey respondents were asked to select, from the list of mandatory services, which three were most important to them.

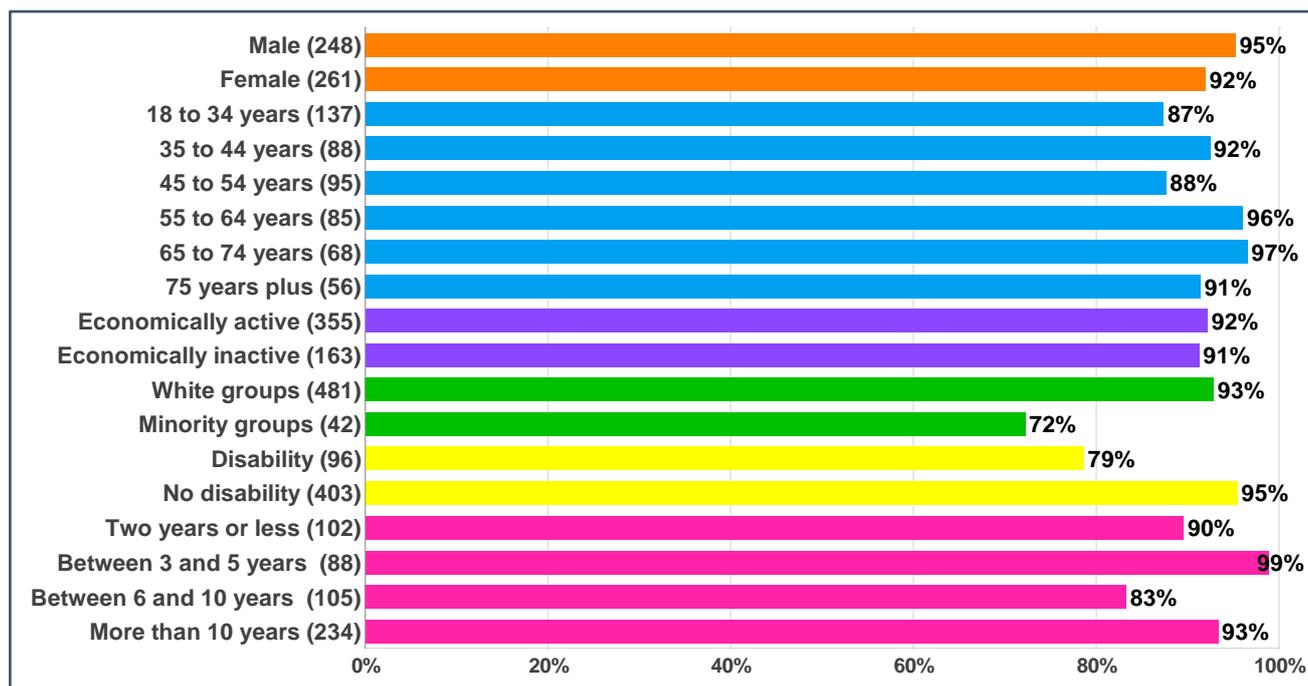
- 530 respondents answered this question.
- The top three most important services were Environmental Services, Community Safety and Environmental Health
- The three services that respondents felt were least important were Licensing, Bereavement Services and Building Control.



Demographic Differences for the top three services are explored in more detail in the charts and tables below.

Environmental Services

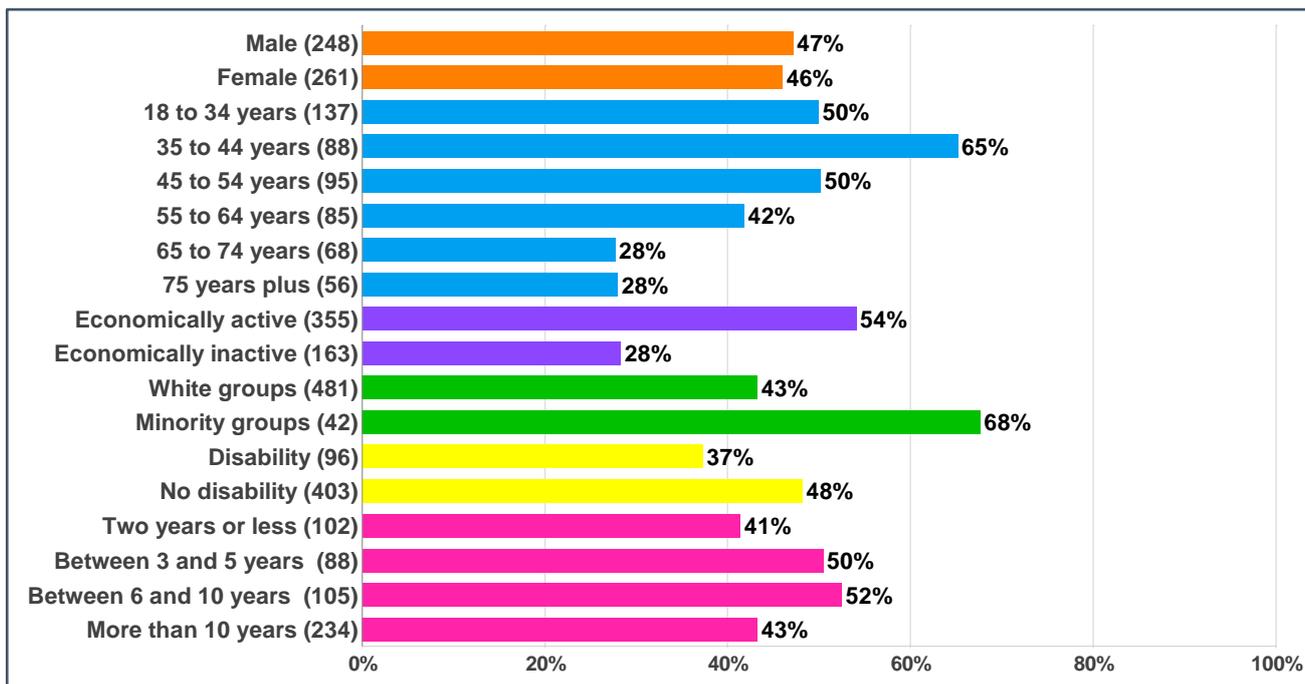
The differences in the proportions selecting Environmental Services across the demographic groups are shown in the chart below with differences outlined in the following table.



	<p>Respondents aged 18 to 34 years and 45 to 54 had the lowest proportions that selected Environmental Services as one of their top three 'most important services' at 87% and 88% respectively. This was significantly different than respondents in the 55 to 64 years and 65 to 74 years ages groups where 96% and 97%, respectively selected Environmental Services.</p>
	<p>Respondents from white groups had a significantly greater proportion that choose Environmental Services as being one of the most important services to them with 93% selecting this compared to 72% of respondents from minority groups.</p>
	<p>Respondents with a disability were more likely to selected Environmental Services as one that is most important to them with 79% making this selection compared to 95% of respondents without a disability.</p>
	<p>99% of respondents who had lived at their current address for between three and five years selected Environmental Services as being important which was significantly higher than all other time periods at address options.</p>

Community Safety

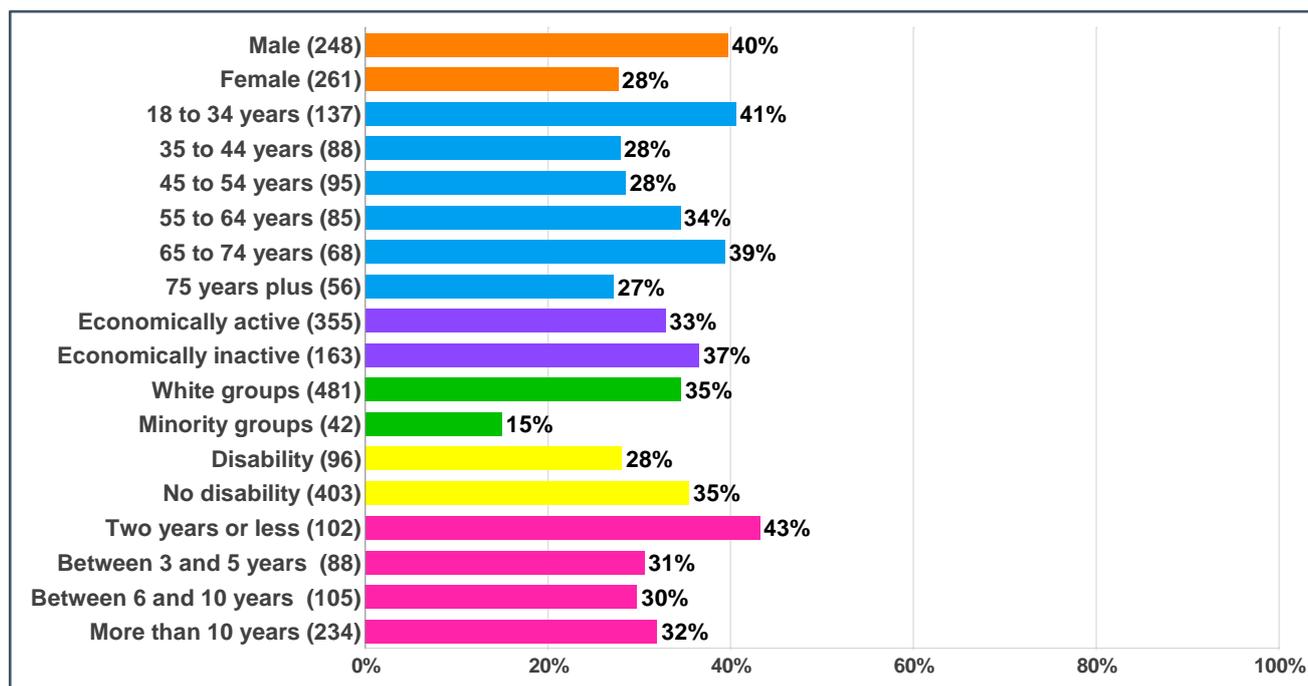
The differences in the proportions selecting Community Safety across the demographic groups are shown in the chart below with differences outlined in the following table.



	<p>65% of respondents aged 35 to 44 years selected Community Safety as one of the most important services. This was significantly greater than the other age groups.</p>
	<p>54% of economically active respondents selected community safety as being one of the most important services compared to 28% of economically inactive respondents.</p>
	<p>68% of respondents from minority groups choose Community Safety as being one of the most important services to them compared to 43% of respondents from white groups.</p>

Environmental Health

The differences in the proportions selecting Environmental Health across the demographic groups are shown in the chart below with differences outlined in the following table.



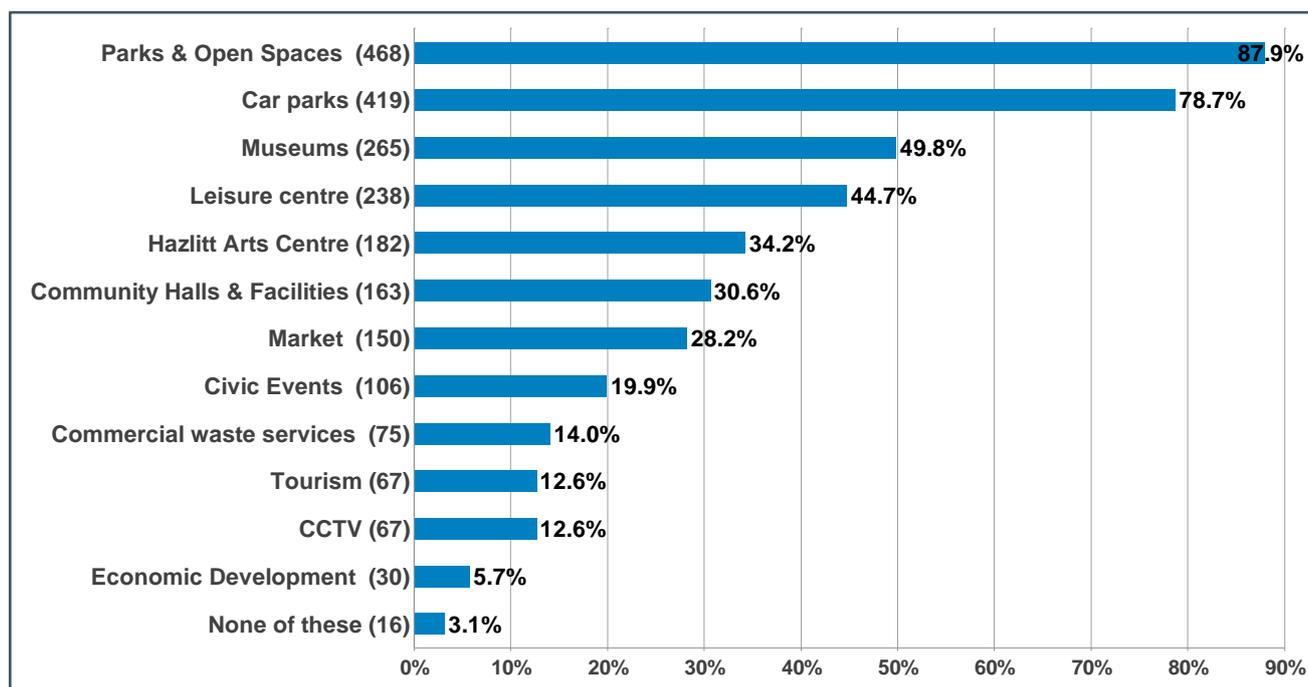
	<p>40% of male respondents selected Environmental Health as being one of their most important services compared to 28% of female respondents.</p>
	<p>35% of respondents from white groups choose Environmental Health as being one of the most important to them compared to 15% of respondents from minority groups.</p>
	<p>99% of respondents who had lived at their current address for between three and five years selected Environmental Services as being important. This was significantly greater than the other length of time at current address groups.</p>

Discretionary Services

Discretionary Services Used

Survey respondents were provided with a list of discretionary services provided by Maidstone Council and were asked to select which they had previously used. They could select as many as applied to them.

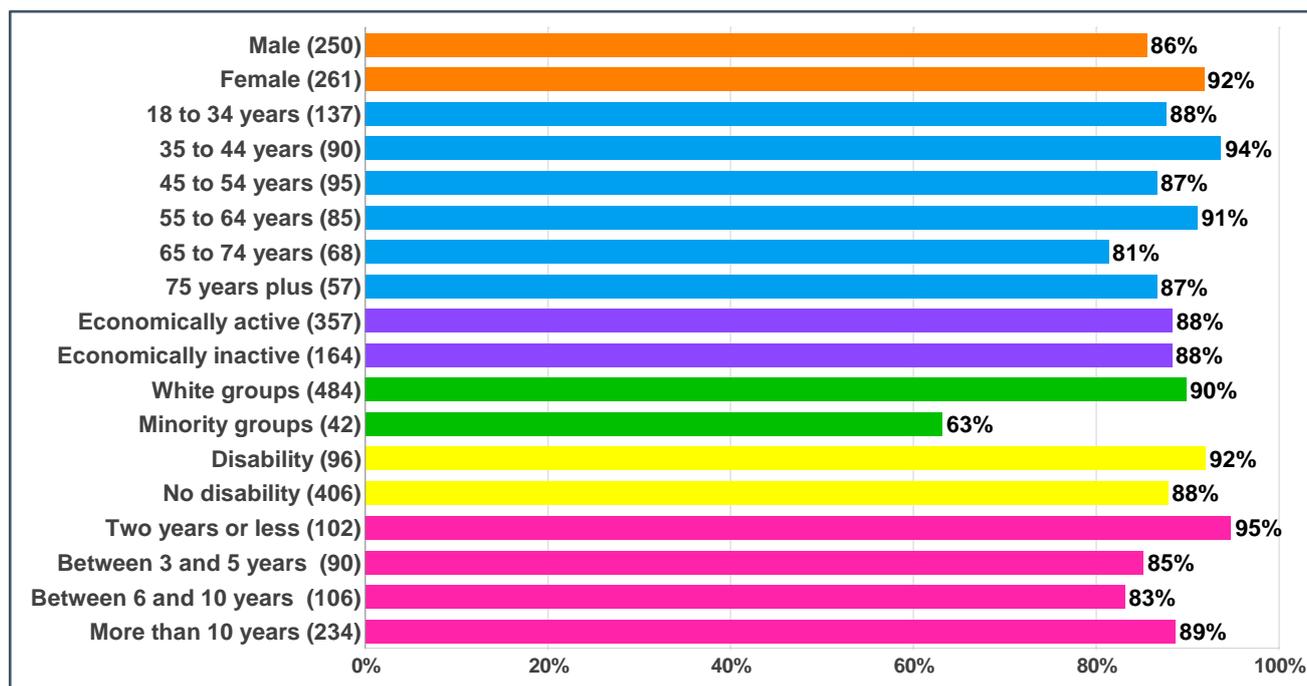
- 533 responses were received.
- Overall, the top three services that respondents had used were Parks and Open Spaces, Car Parks and Museums.
- The least used service by respondents was Economic development with 30 selecting this service.
- 16 respondents said they had not used any of the services listed.



Demographic Differences for the top three services are explored in more detail in the charts and tables below.

Parks & Open Spaces

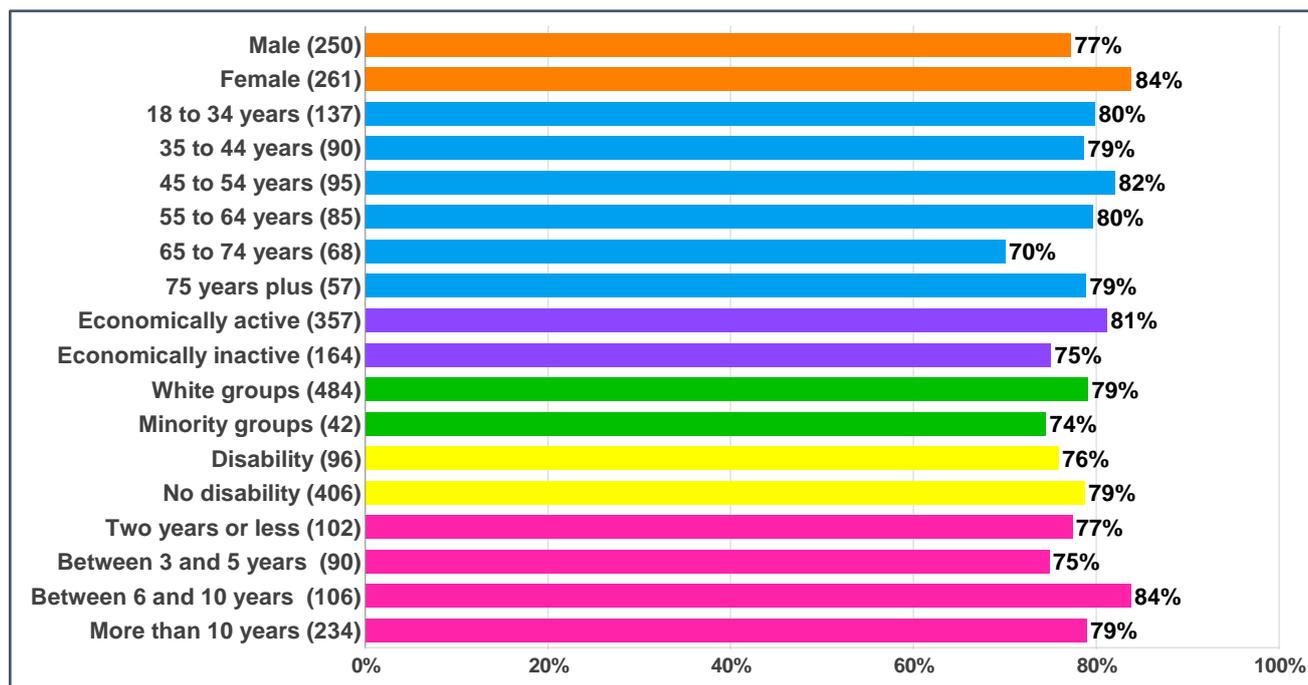
The differences in the proportions selecting parks and opens spaces across the demographic groups are shown in the chart below with differences outlined in the following table.



	<p>92% of female respondents have used Parks & Opens Spaces in the borough compared to 86% of male respondents.</p>
	<p>65 to 74 year olds were less likely to have used Parks & Opens Spaces in the borough with 81% selecting this as a service they have used compared to 94% of 35 to 44 years olds.</p>
	<p>90 % of respondents from white groups said they have used a Maidstone park or open space compared to 63% of respondents from minority groups.</p>
	<p>95% of respondents who have lived at their current address for less than two years have used Maidstone parks and open spaces. This is significantly greater than the other length of time at address categories.</p>

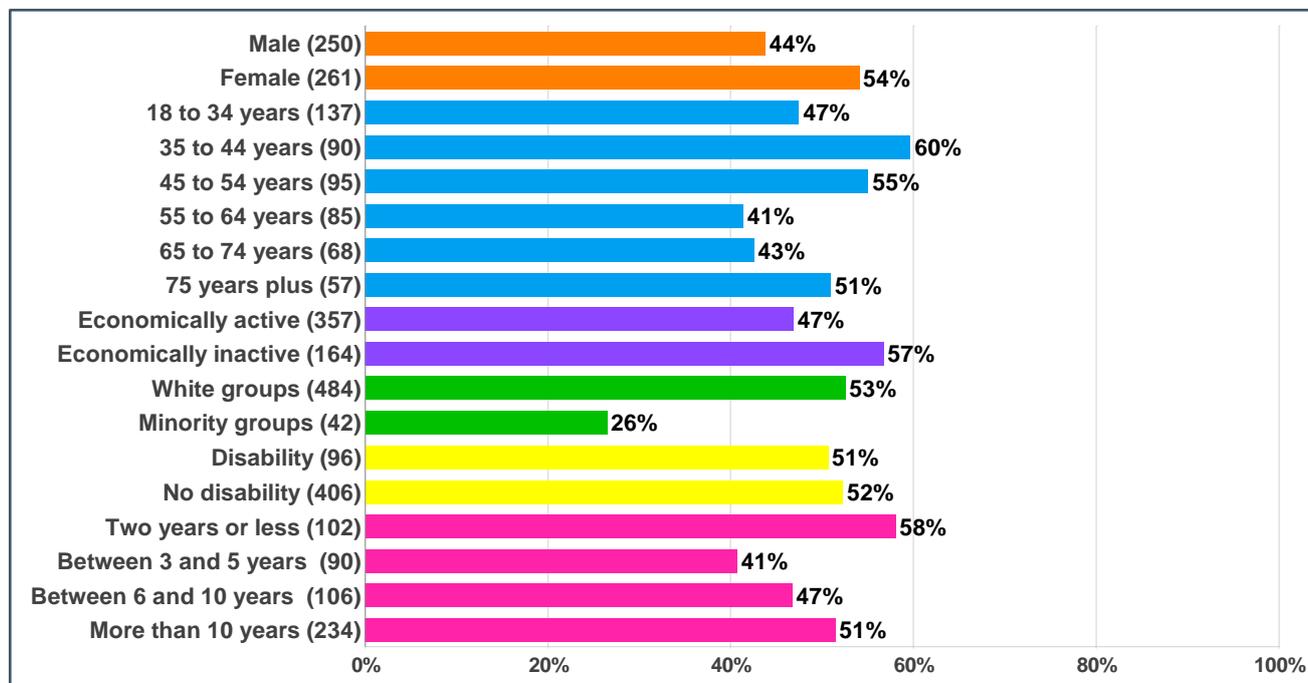
Car Parks

There were no significant differences in the proportions of each group selecting 'Car Parks' as a service they have used.



Museums

The significant differences in the proportions selecting 'Museums' across the demographic groups are shown in the chart below with differences outlined in the following table.



Female respondents were more likely to have visited Museums in the borough with 54% selecting this as a service they have used compared to 44% of male respondents.

	<p>Respondents aged 35 to 44 years were the most likely to have visited museums in the borough with 60% selecting this as a service they had used. This was significantly greater than the 55 to 64 years group at 41%.</p>
	<p>Economically inactive respondents were more likely to have utilised a Maidstone Museum with 57% selecting this as a service they have used compared to 47% of economically active respondents.</p>
	<p>53% of respondents from white groups said they had visited a Maidstone Museum compared to 26% of respondents from minority groups.</p>
	<p>58% of respondents who have lived at their current address for less than two years had visited Maidstone Museums. This is significantly more than those for the three and five years groups at 41%.</p>

Approach to Discretionary Services

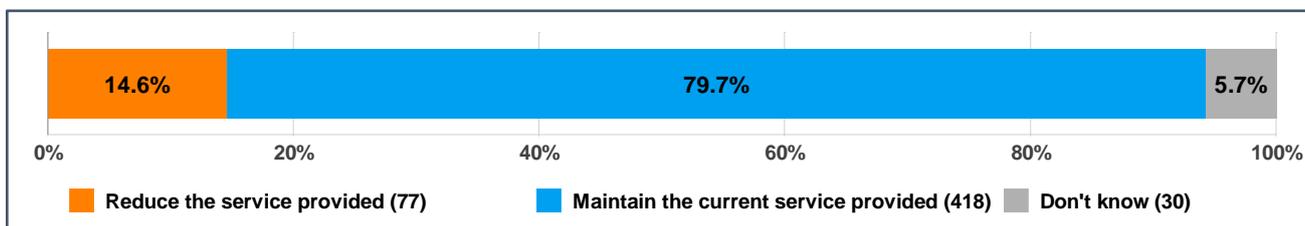
Survey respondents were asked to select what approach they felt the Council should take in delivering each of its Discretionary Services next year. They were given three options to pick from:

- Reduce the service provided,
- Maintain the service provided
- Don't know.

To provide context the current spend on each service per council tax band D was shown.

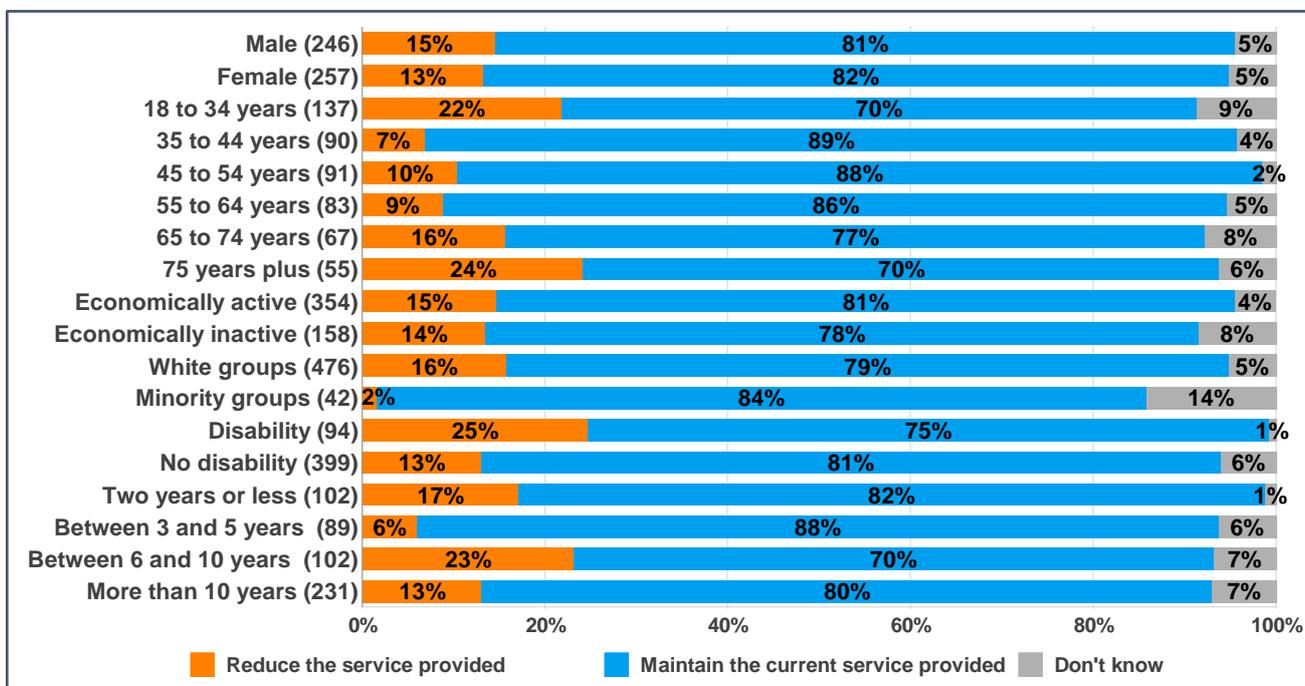
Leisure Centre

- 525 responses were received to this question.
- The most common response was 'maintain the current service provided' with 418 (79.7%) answering this way.



Demographic Differences

The chart below shows the response for each demographic group with significant differences outlined in the table below.

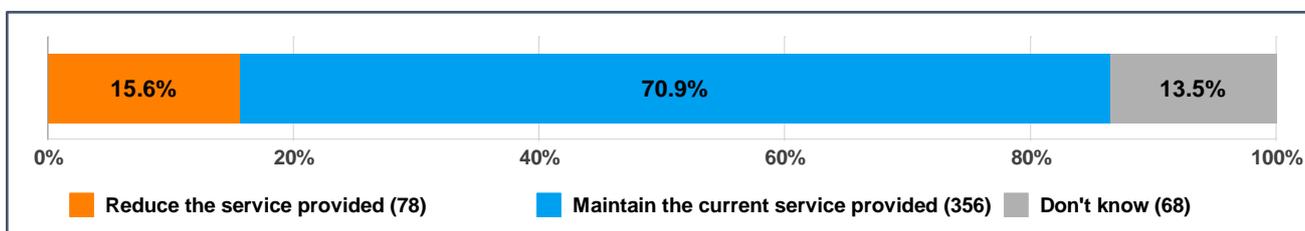


The 75 years and over and the 18 to 34 years age groups were most in favour of reducing the current service provided at 21% and 22% respectively.

	<p>16% of respondents from white groups said the Leisure Centre service should be reduced compared to 2% of respondents from minority groups.</p>
	<p>25% of respondents with a disability were in favour of reducing Leisure Centre services compared to 13% without a disability.</p>
	<p>6% of respondents who had lived at their current address for between three and five years said that the Leisure centre services should be reduced. This is significantly lower than the other length of time at current address groups.</p>

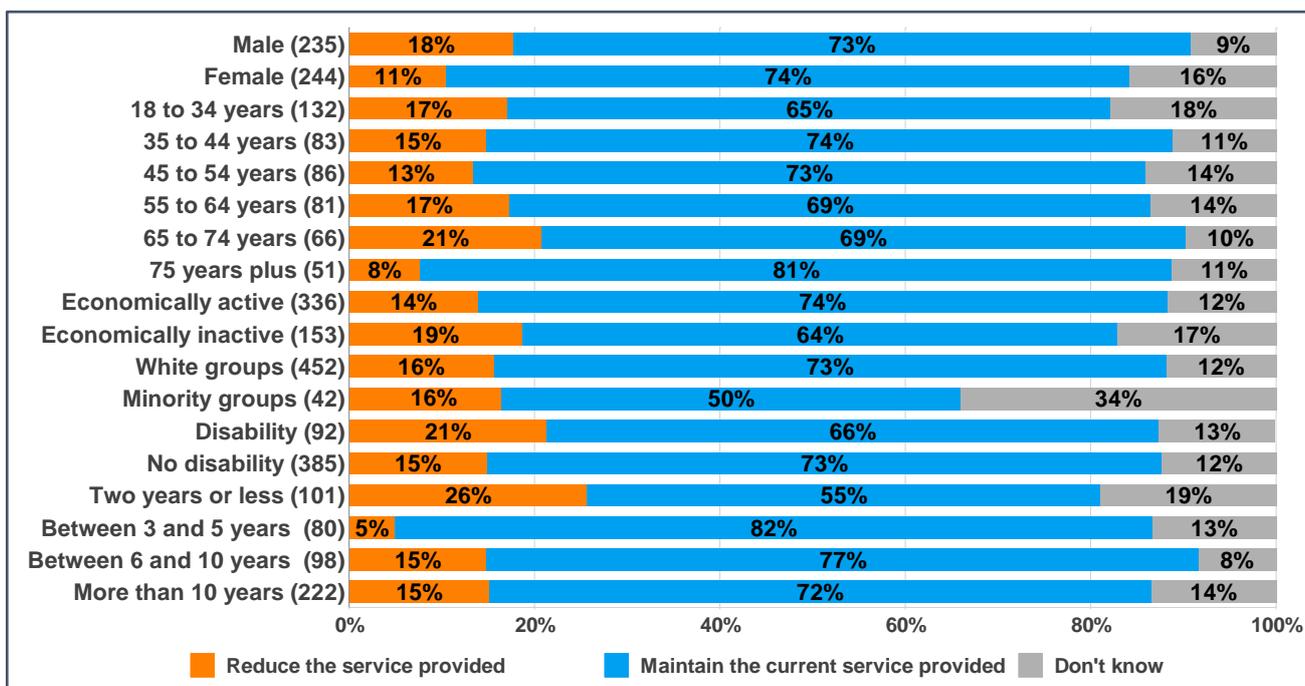
CCTV

- 502 responses were received to this question.
- The most common response was ‘Maintain the current service provided’ with 356 (70.9%) answering this way.



Demographic Differences

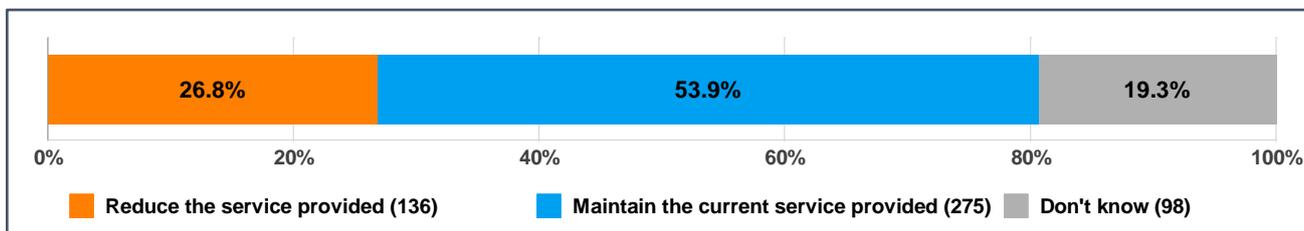
The chart below shows the response for each demographic group with significant differences outlined in the table below.



	<p>18% of male respondents were in favour of reducing CCTV services compared to 11% of female respondents.</p>
	<p>81% of respondents aged 75 years and over were in favour of CCTV services being maintained. This result is significantly greater than that for the 18 to 34 age group at 65%.</p>
	<p>74% of economically active respondents said the CCTV service should be maintained compared to 64% of economically inactive respondents.</p>
	<p>50% of respondents from minority groups were in favour of maintaining the current CCTV service to 64% of respondents from white groups. More than a third of respondents from minority groups answered 'don't know'.</p>
	<p>26% of respondents who have lived at their current address for less than two years said that the CCTV services should be reduced. This is significantly lower than the proportion selecting this approach for the other length of time at current address groups.</p>

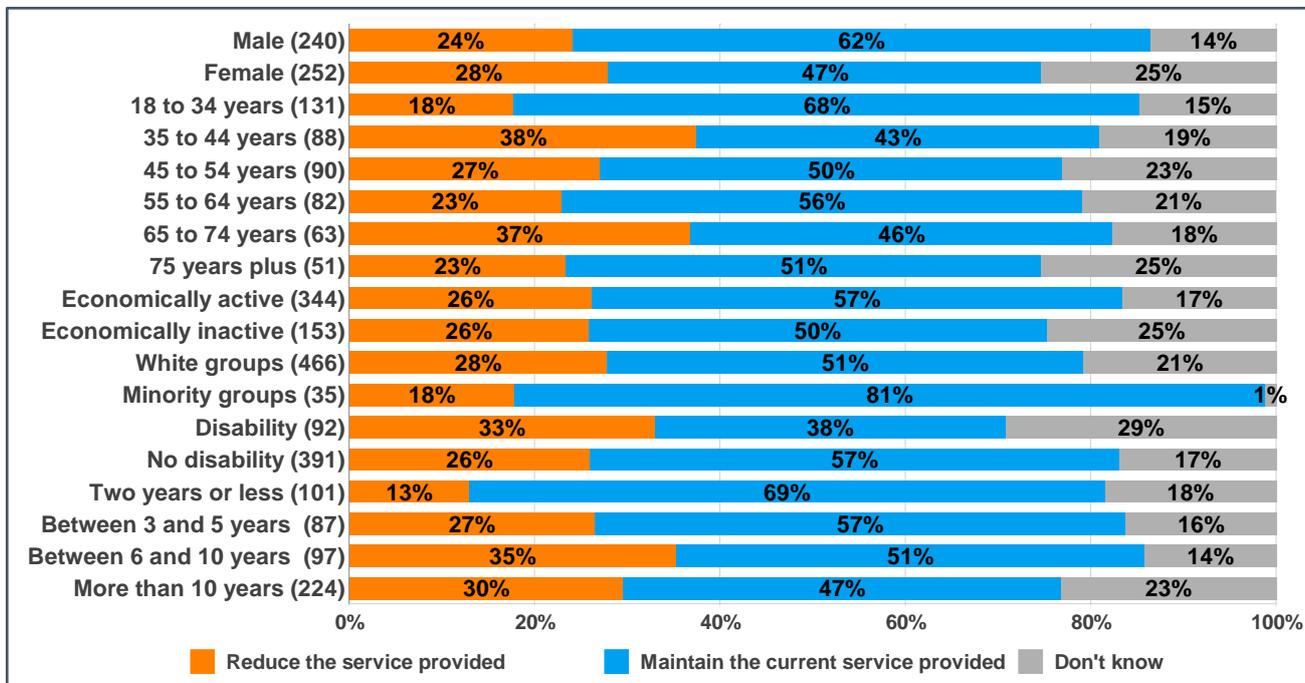
Economic Development

- 509 responses were received to this question.
- The most common response was 'maintain the current service provided' with 275 (53.9%) answering this way.



Demographic Differences

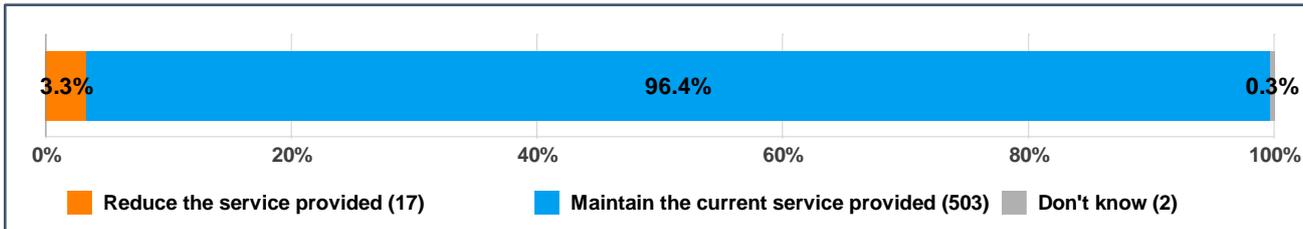
The chart below shows the response for each demographic group with significant differences outlined in the table below.



	62% of male respondents were in favour of maintaining the current Economic Development service compared to 47% of female respondents.
	68% of respondents aged 18 to 34 years said that the Economic Development service should be maintained. This is significantly greater than the other age groups.
	25% of economically inactive respondents said they didn't know what approach should be taken towards Economic Development services compared to 17% of economically active respondents.
	81% of minority group respondents were in favour of maintaining the current Economic Development service compared to 54% of respondents from white groups. More than one in five respondents from white groups answered, 'don't know'.
	57% of respondents without a disability were in favour of maintaining the current Economic Development service compared to 38% answering the same with a disability. More than a quarter of respondents with a disability answered, 'don't know'.
	13% of respondents who have lived at their current address for less than two years said that the Economic Development service should be reduced. This is significantly lower than the the other length of time at current address groups.

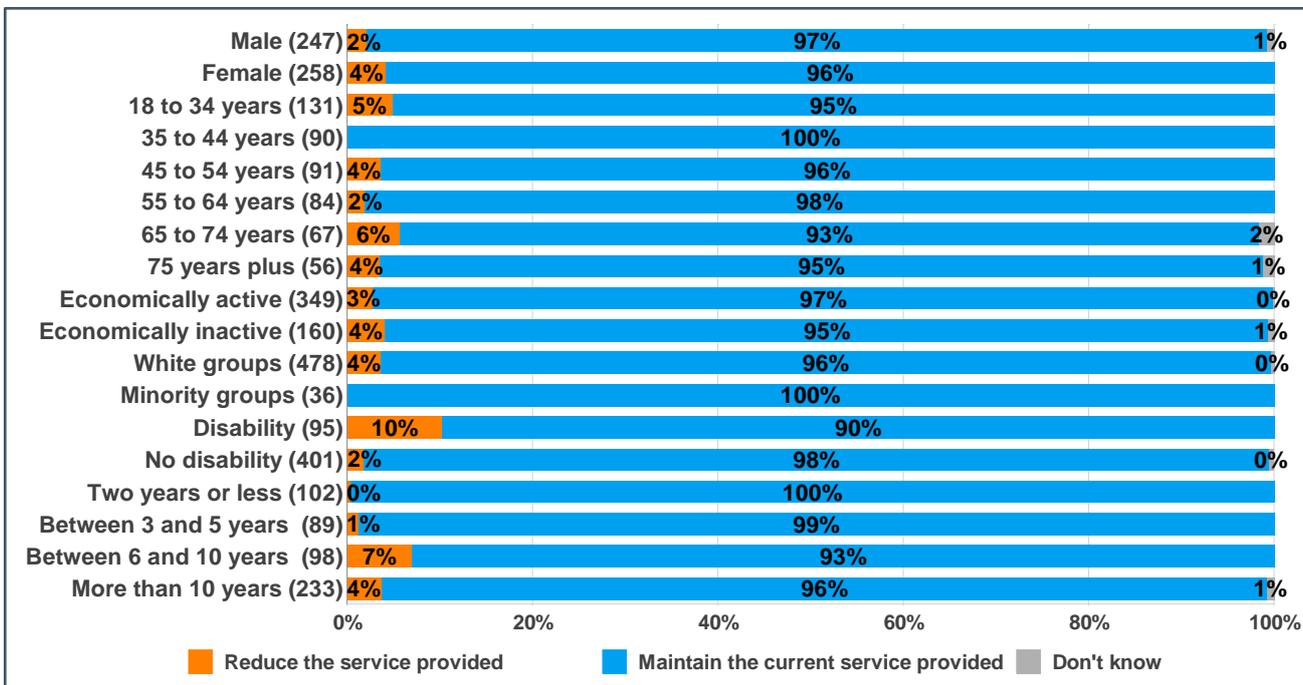
Parks & Open Spaces

- 522 responses were received to this question.
- The most common response was ‘Maintain the current service provided’ with 503 (96.4%) answering this way.



Demographic Differences

The chart below shows the response for each demographic group with significant differences outlined in the table below.



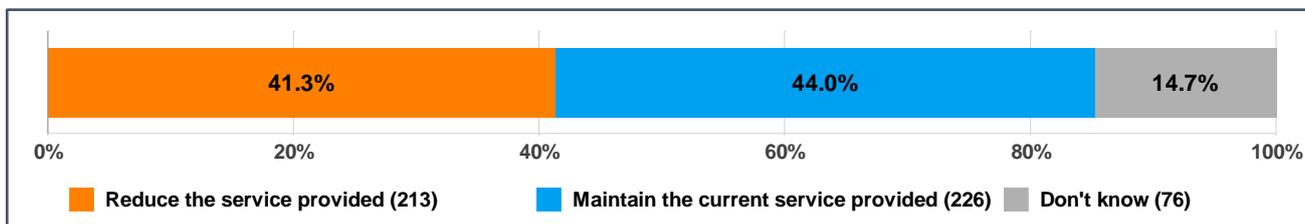
98% of respondents without a disability had a significantly greater proportion that were in favour of maintaining the current Parks and Open Spaces service compared to 90% answering the same with a disability.



7% of respondents who have lived at their current address for between six and ten years said that the Parks and Open Spaces service should be reduced compared to 0.4% of respondents who had lived at their current address for less than two years.

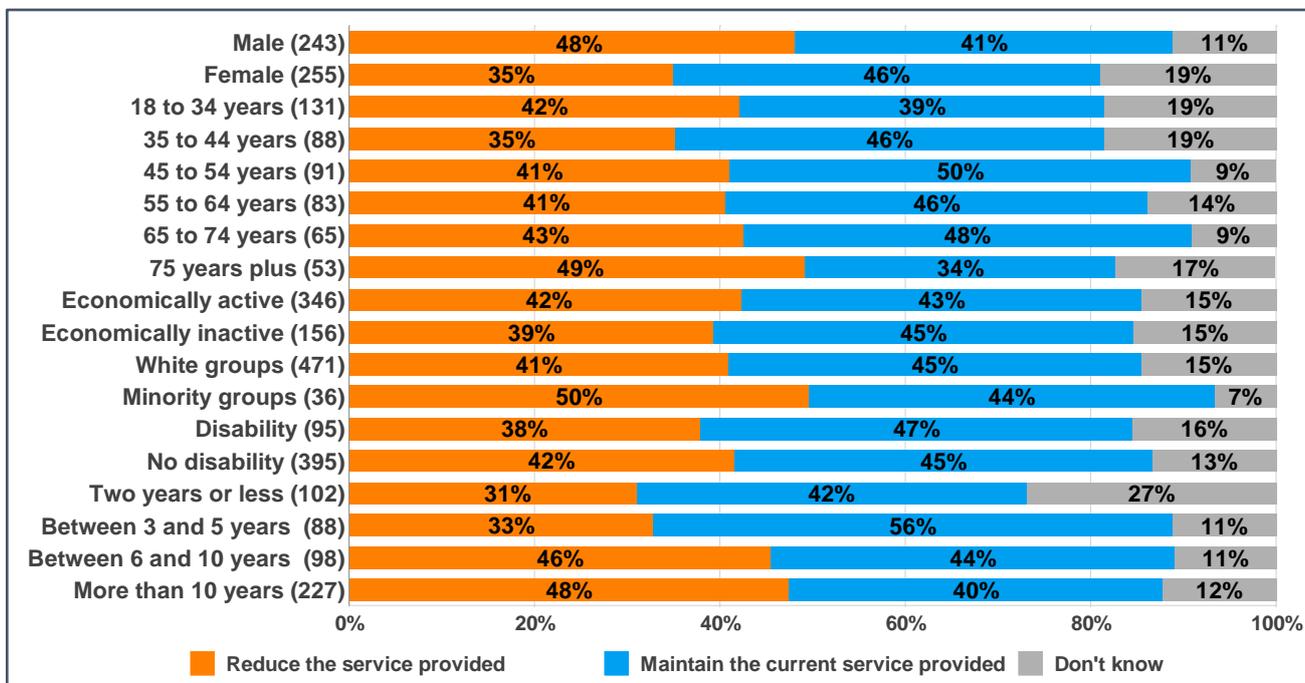
Markets

- 514 responses were received to this question.
- The most common response was 'Maintain the current service provided' with 226 (44.0%) answering this way.



Demographic Differences

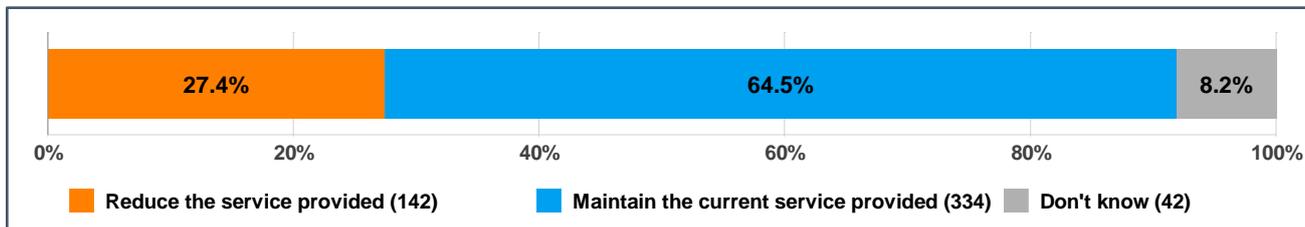
The chart below shows the response for each demographic group with significant differences outlined in the table below.



	<p>48% of male respondents were in favour of reducing market services compared to 35% of female respondents.</p>
	<p>48% of respondents who have lived at their current address for more than ten years said that market services should be reduced compared to 31% of respondents who had lived at their current address for less than two years.</p>

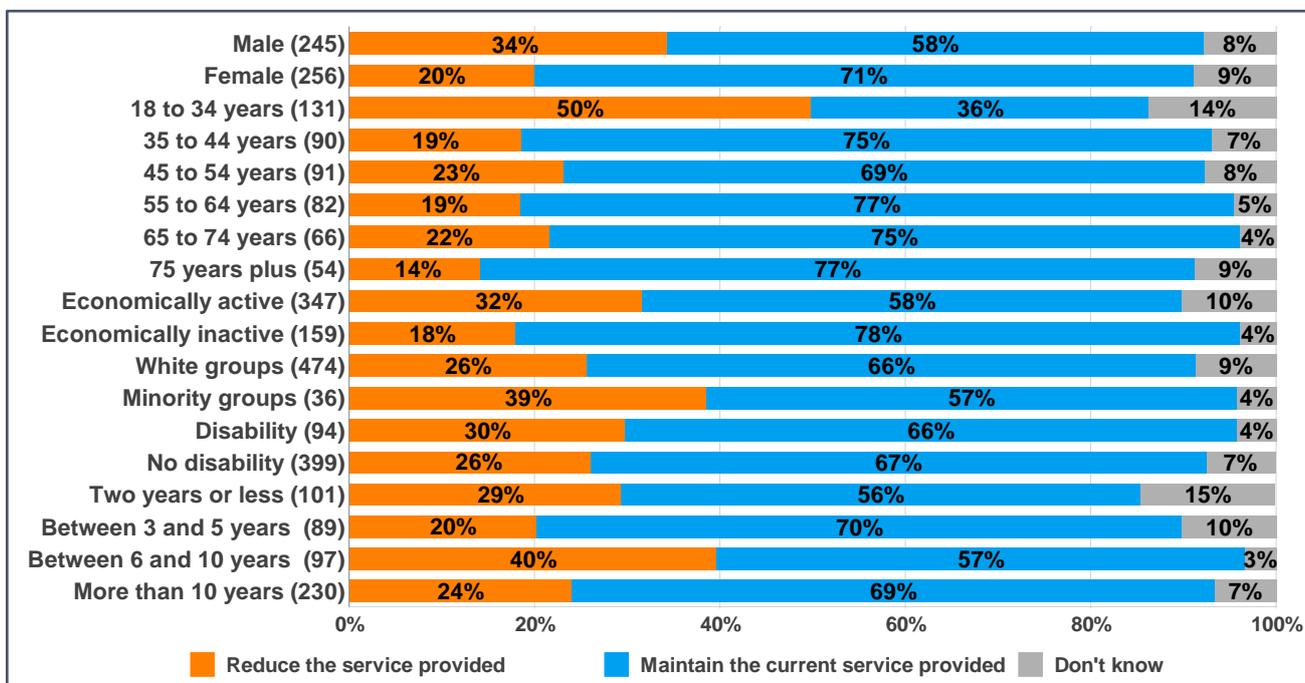
Museums

- 517 responses were received to this question.
- The most common response was 'Maintain the current service provided' with 334 (64.5%) answering this way.



Demographic Differences

The chart below shows the response for each demographic group with significant differences outlined in the table below.



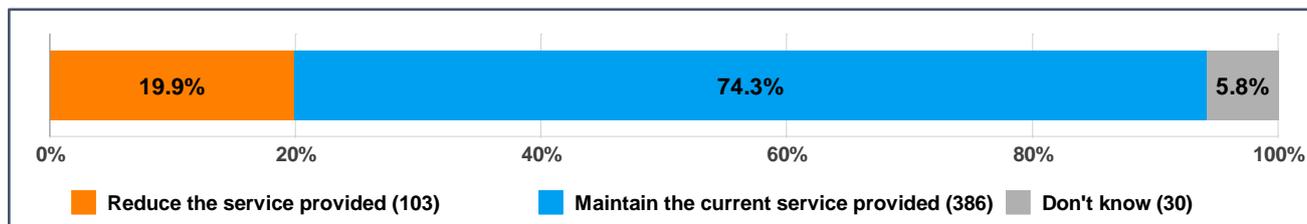
	<p>34% of male respondents were in favour of reducing Museums service compared to 20% of female respondents.</p>
	<p>50% of respondents aged 18 to 34 years said that the Museums service should be reduced. This is significantly greater than the other age groups.</p>
	<p>58% of economically active respondents were in favour of maintaining the Museums service compared to 78% of economically inactive respondents.</p>



40% of respondents who have lived at their current address for between six and ten years said that the museums service should be reduced. This is significantly greater than the respondents who had lived at their current address for the between three and five years (20%) and more than ten years groups (24%).

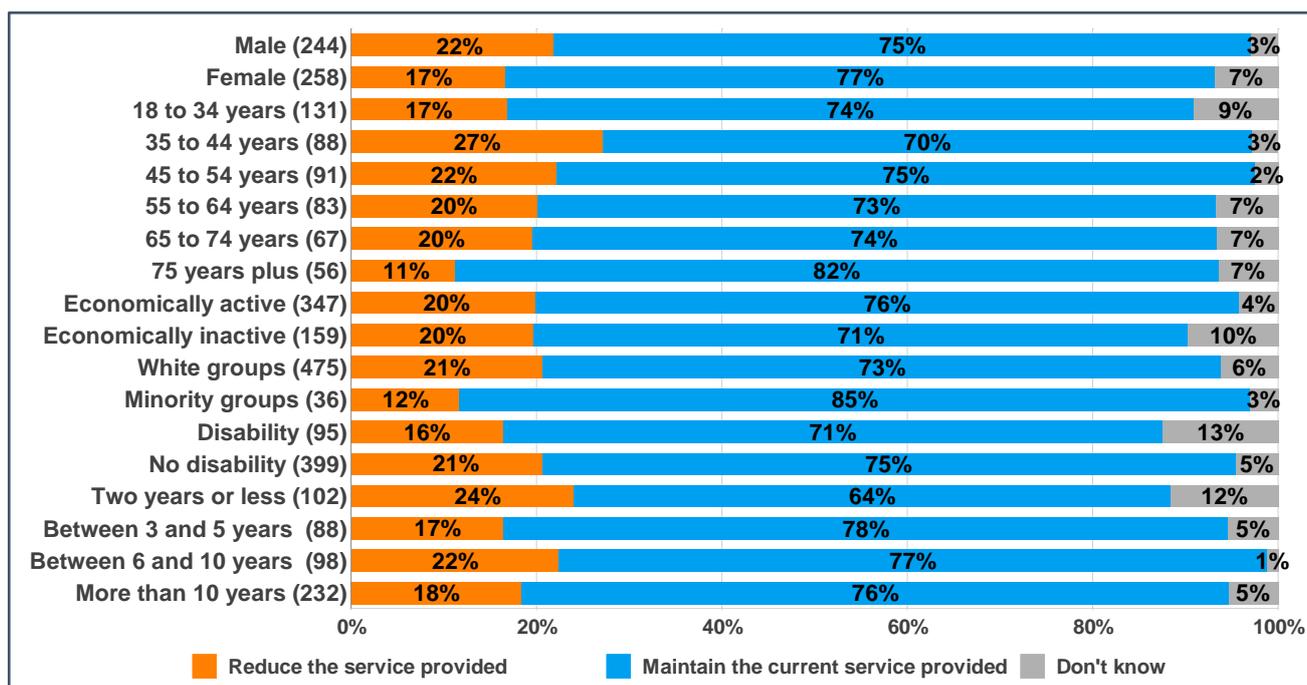
Car parks

- 519 responses were received to this question.
- The most common response was ‘maintain the current service provided’ with 386 (74.3%) answering this way.



Demographic Differences

The chart below shows the response for each demographic group with significant differences outlined in the table below.



10% of economically inactive respondents answering ‘don’t know’ compared to 4% of economically active respondents answering the same suggesting a higher level of uncertainty or understanding for the economically inactive group

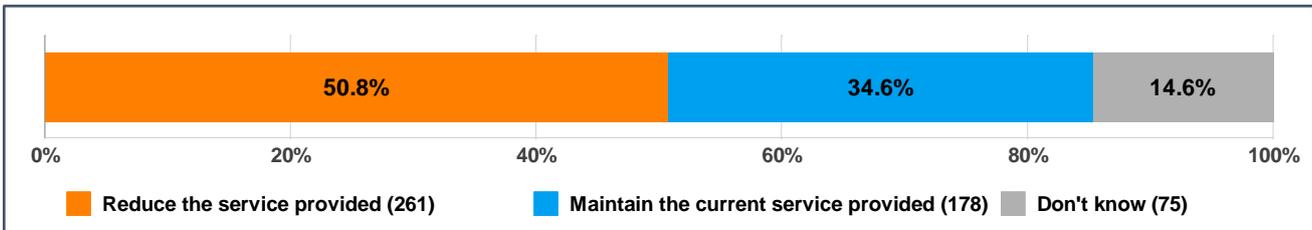


13% of respondents with a disability answered ‘don’t know’ compared to 5% of respondents without a disability.

	<p>64% of respondents who have lived at their current address for less than two years said that Car Parks should be maintained. This is significantly lower than the proportion selecting this approach for all the other length of time at current address groups.</p>
--	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

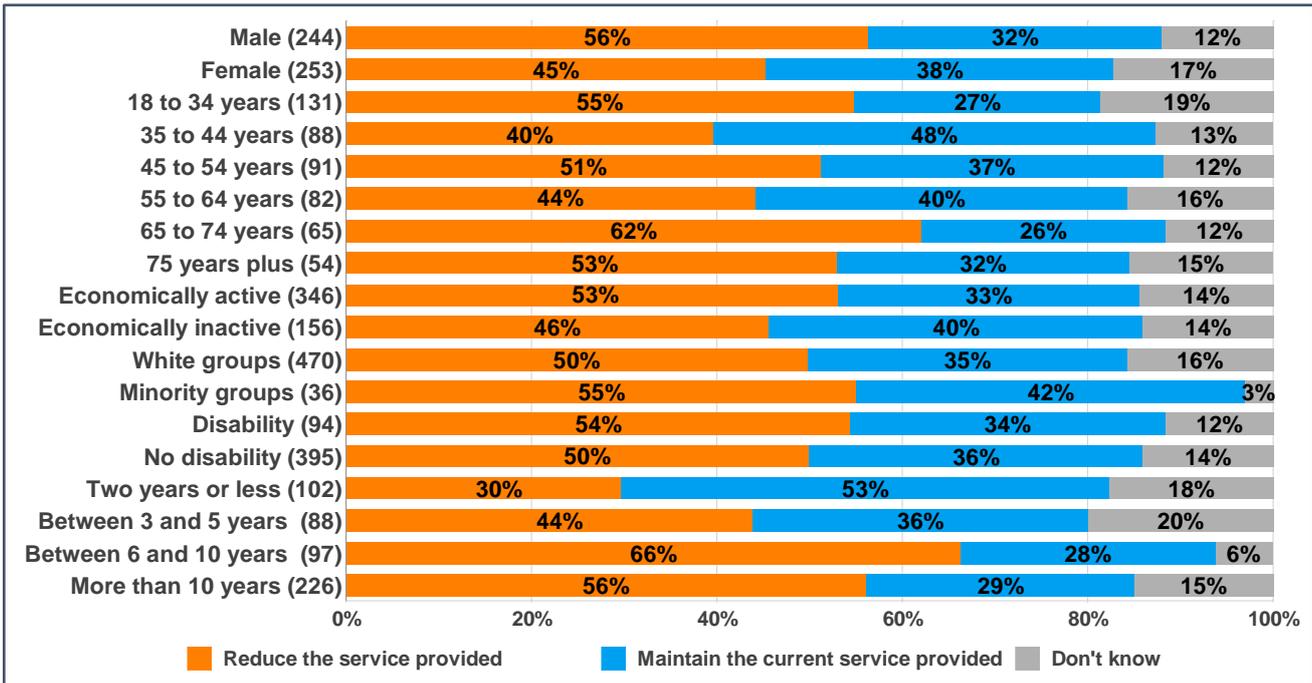
Civic Events

- 514 responses were received to this question.
- The most common response was ‘reduce the service provided’ with 261 (50.8%) answering this way.



Demographic Differences

The chart below shows the response for each demographic group with significant differences outlined in the table below.

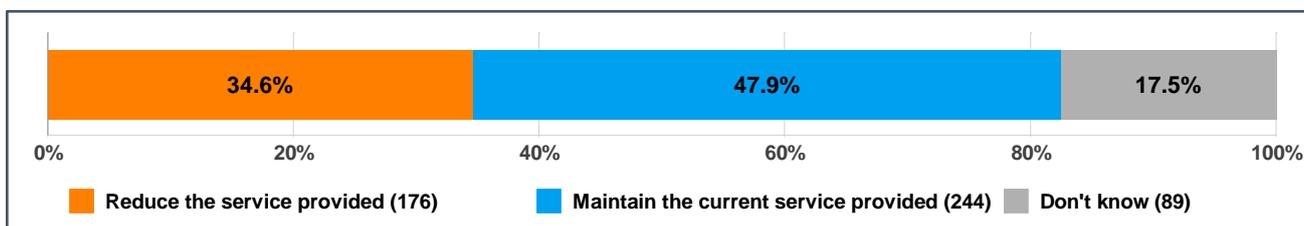


	<p>56% of male respondents were in favour of reducing civic events compared to 45% of female respondents.</p>
	<p>40% of respondents aged 35 to 44 years said that the civic events should be reduced. This is significantly lower than the response from 18 to 34 year olds and 65 and 74 year olds age groups.</p>

	<p>16% of white group respondents responded 'don't know' when asked about approaches for civic events with 16% answering this way compared to 3% of respondents from minority groups.</p>
	<p>53% of respondents who have lived at their current address for less than two years said that civic events should be maintained. This is significantly greater than for all the other length of time at current address groups.</p>

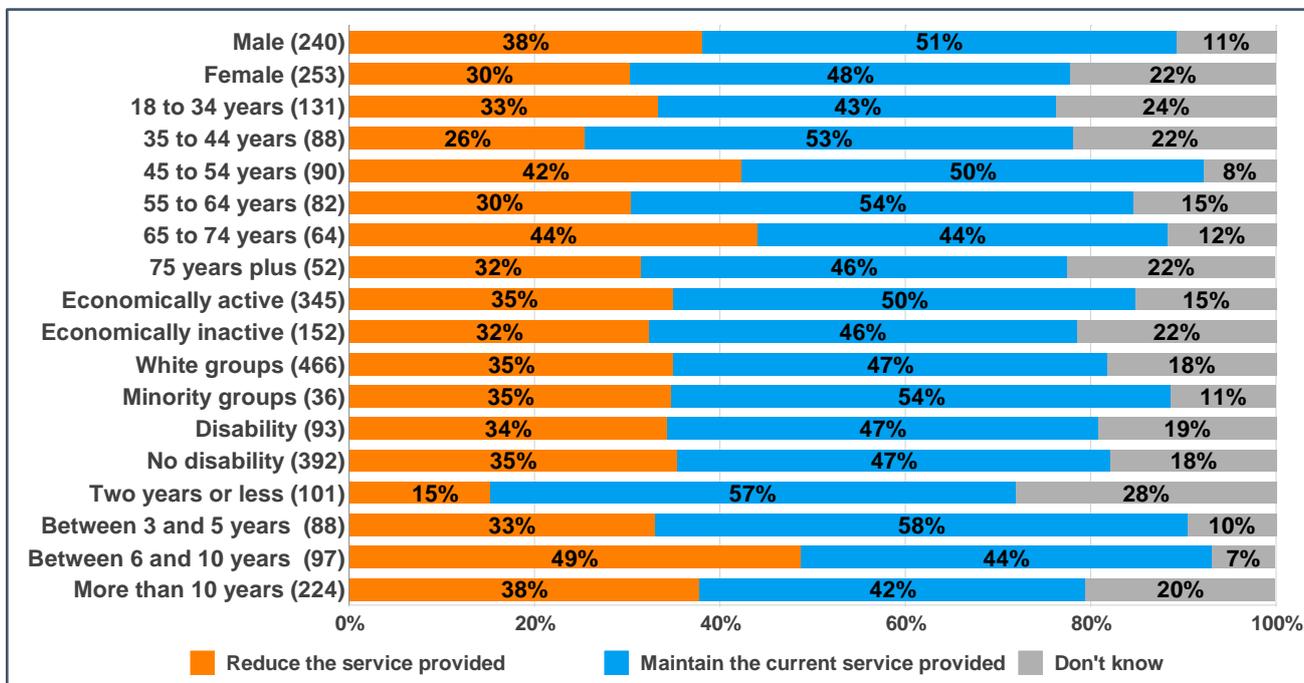
Tourism

- 510 responses were received to this question.
- The most common response was 'maintain the current service provided' with 244 (47.9%) answering this way.



Demographic Differences

The chart below shows the response for each demographic group with significant differences outlined in the table below.

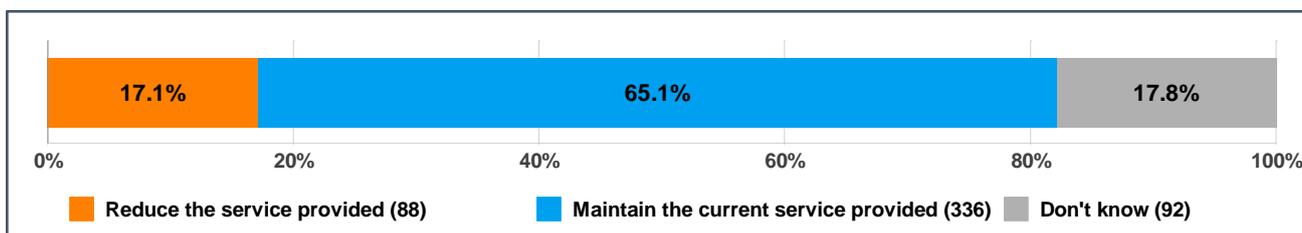


	<p>22% of females responded 'don't know' when asked about approaches for the Tourism service compared to 11% of male respondents.</p>
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

	<p>26% of respondents aged 35 to 44 years said that the Tourism service should be reduced. This is significantly lower compared to the 45 to 54 years (42%) and the 65 to 74 years (44%) old age groups.</p>
	<p>49% of respondents who have lived at their current address for between six and ten years said that Tourism should be reduced. This is significantly greater for all the other length of time at current address groups.</p>

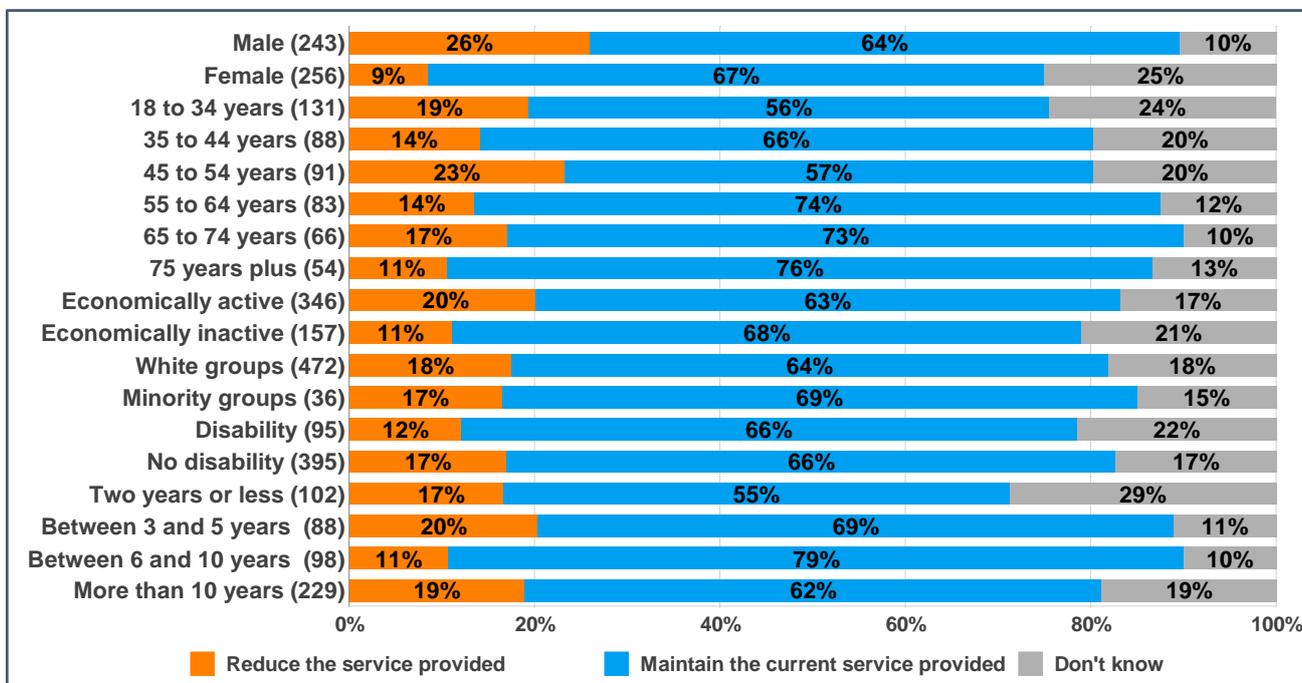
Commercial Waste Services

- 516 responses were received to this question.
- The most common response was ‘maintain the current service provided’ with 336 (65.1%) answering this way.



Demographic Differences

The chart below shows the response for each demographic group with significant differences outlined in the table below.

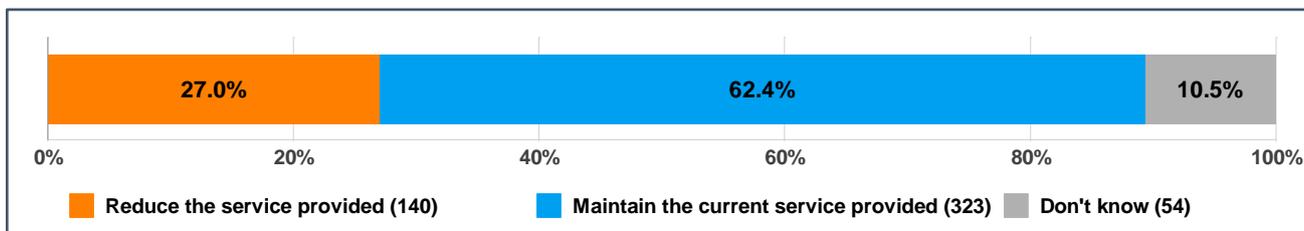


	<p>Male respondents were more in favour of reducing Commercial Waste services with 26% answering this way compared to 45% of female respondents.</p> <p>22% of female respondents answered ‘don’t know’ compared to 10% of male respondents.</p>
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

	<p>The age groups 55 years and over were more in favour of maintaining the Commercial waste service compared to respondents aged 18 to 34 (56%) and 45 to 54 (57%).</p>
	<p>20% of economically active respondents were in favour of reducing the Commercial Waste services compared to 11% of economically inactive respondents.</p>
	<p>79% of respondents who have lived at their current address for between six and ten years said that the Commercial Waste service should be maintained. This is significantly greater than for all the other length of time at current address groups.</p>

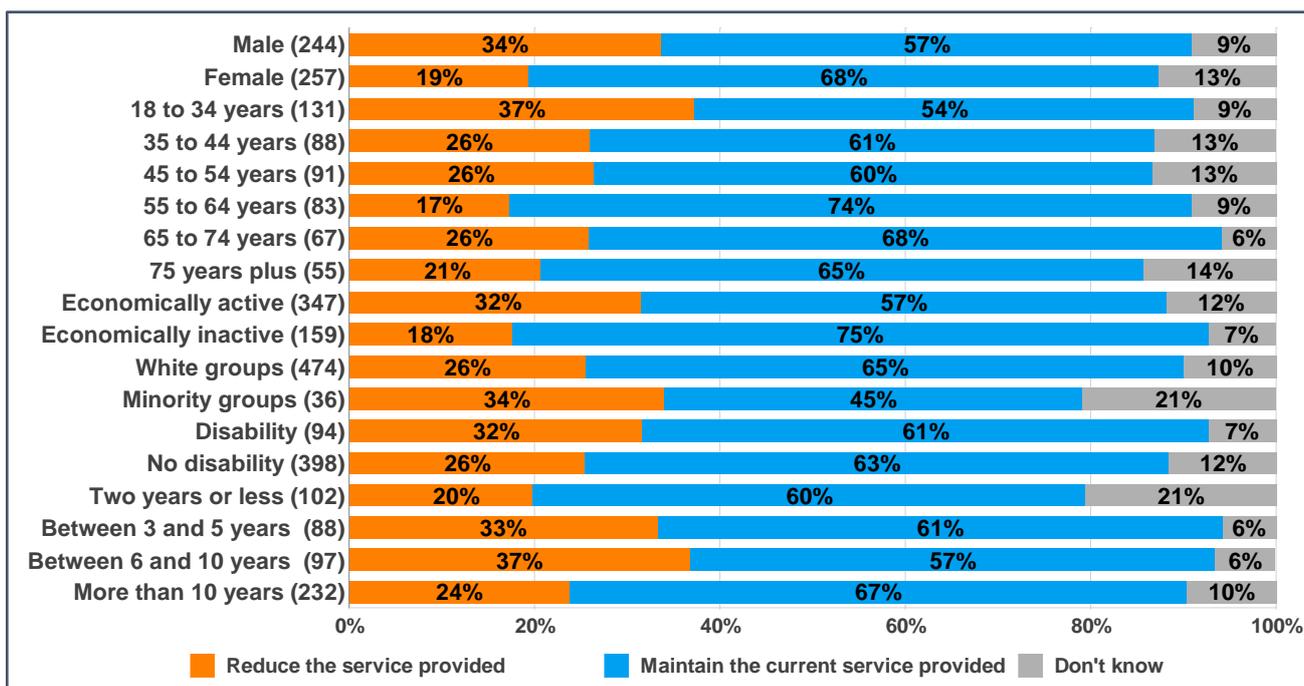
Hazlitt Arts Centre

- 518 responses were received to this question.
- The most common response was ‘maintain the current service provided’ with 323 (62.4%) answering this way.



Demographic Differences

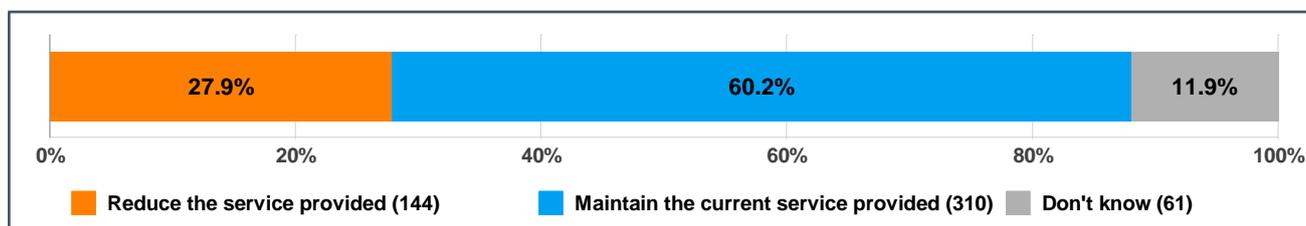
The chart below shows the response for each demographic group with significant differences outlined in the table below.



	<p>34% of male respondents were in favour of reducing the Hazlitt Arts Centres compared to 19% of female respondents.</p>
	<p>76% of respondents aged 55 to 64 years said that the Hazlitt Arts Centre should be maintained. This is significantly greater than for age groups covering 18 to 54 years.</p>
	<p>57% of economically active respondents had a significantly lower proportion in favour of maintaining the Hazlitt Arts centre compared to 75% of economically inactive respondents.</p>
	<p>65% of white groups respondents were in favour of maintaining the Hazlitt Arts centre compared to 45% of respondents from minority groups. More than one in five respondents from minority groups responded, 'don't know'.</p>
	<p>21% of respondents who have lived at their current address for less than two years responded 'don't know' when asked about the approach for the Hazlitt Arts Centre. This is significantly greater than for all the other length of time at current address groups.</p>

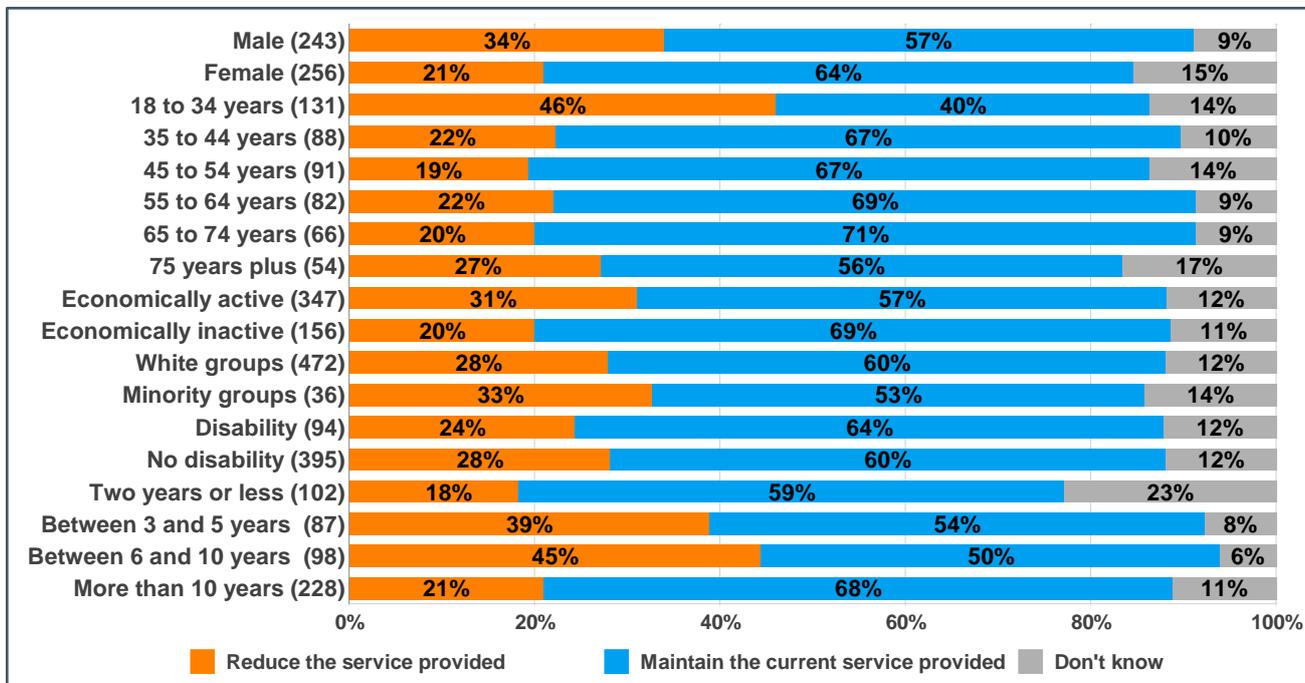
Community Halls & Facilities

- 515 responses were received to this question.
- The most common response was 'maintain the current service provided' with 310 (60.2%) answering this way.



Demographic Differences

The chart below shows the response for each demographic group with significant differences outlined in the table below.

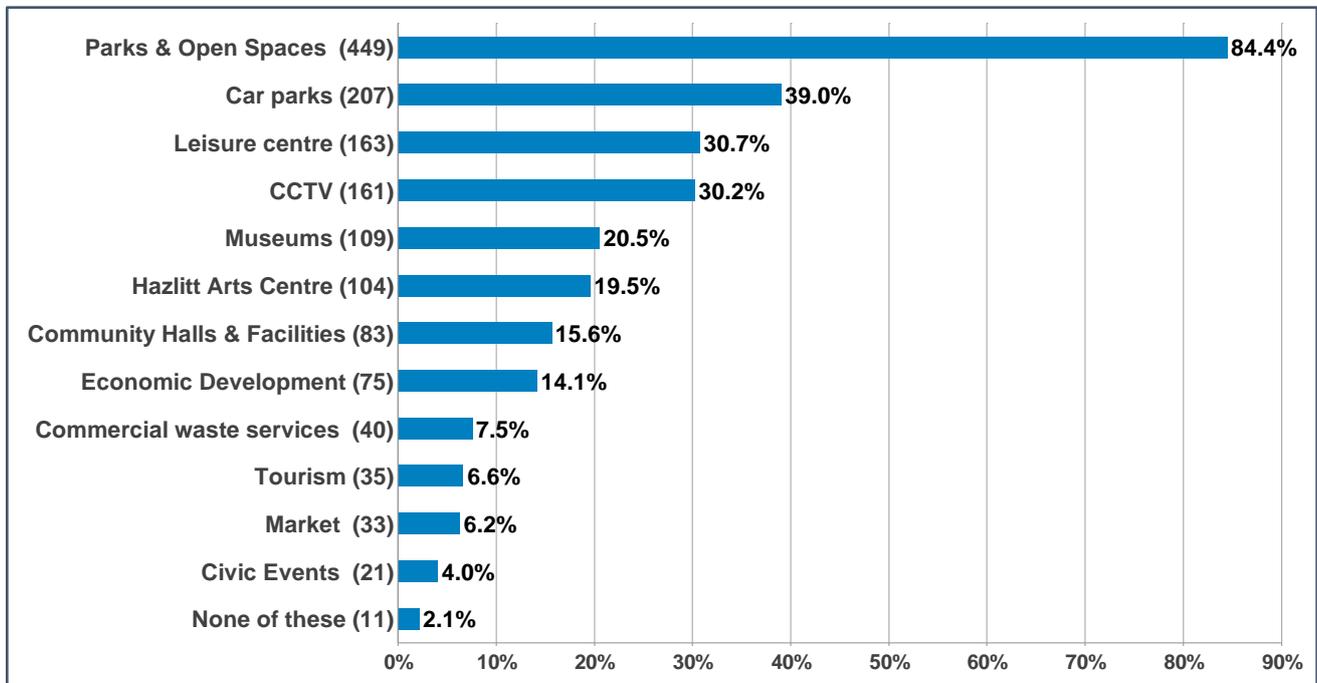


	<p>Male respondents were more in favour of reducing Community Halls and Facilities with 34% answering this way compared to 21% of female respondents. Female respondents could be considered to be more uncertain of the approach to take for commercial waste with 15% answering 'don't know' compared to 9% of male respondents answering the same.</p>
	<p>46% of male respondents aged 18 to 34 years felt that Community Halls and Facilities should be reduced at 46%. This result is significantly greater than the other age groups.</p>
	<p>Economically active respondents were more in favour of maintaining community halls and facilities with 57% answering this way compared to 69% of economically inactive respondents.</p>
	<p>23% of respondents who had lived at their current address for less than two years responded 'don't know' when asked about the approach for community halls and facilities. This was a significantly greater than for all the other 'length of time at current' address groups.</p>

Most important Discretionary Services

Survey respondents were provided with a list of services Maidstone Council provide and were asked to select up to three which they felt were the most important.

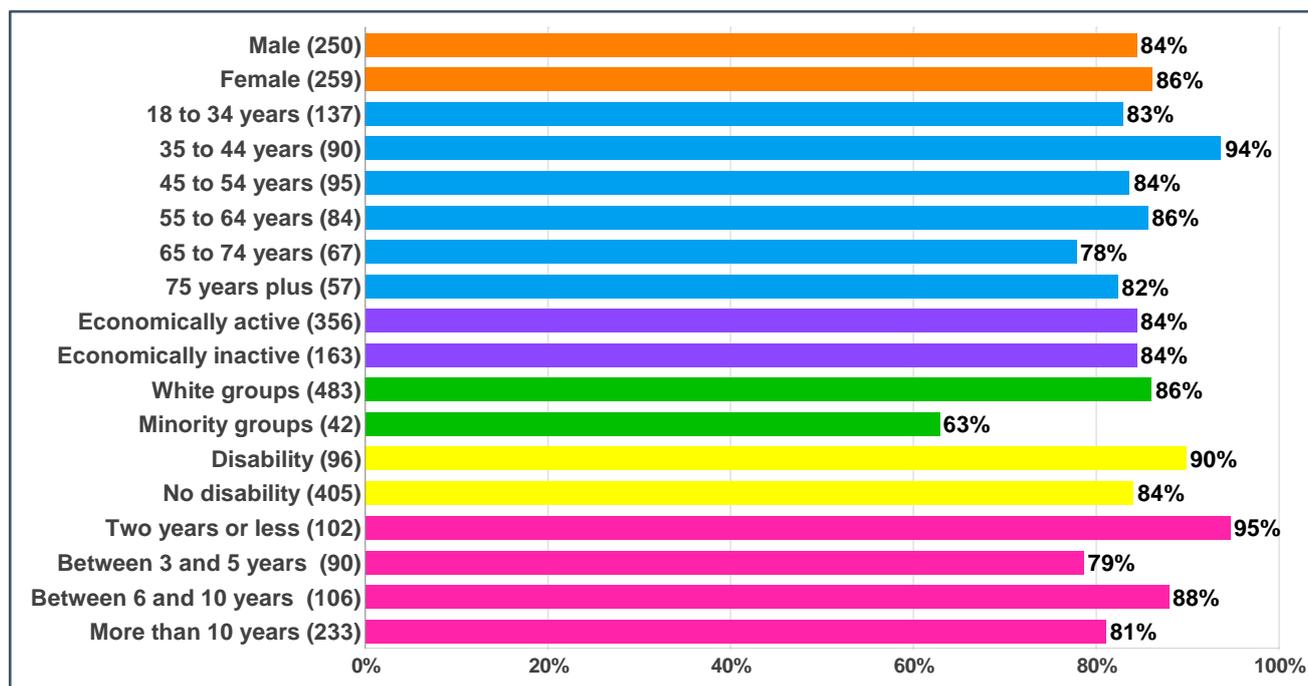
- 532 responses were received.
- The top three most important services were Parks & Open Spaces, Car Parks and the Leisure Centre.
- The three services that respondents felt were least important were Civic Events, Market and Tourism.



Demographic Differences for the top three services are explored in more detail in the charts and tables below.

Parks & Open Spaces

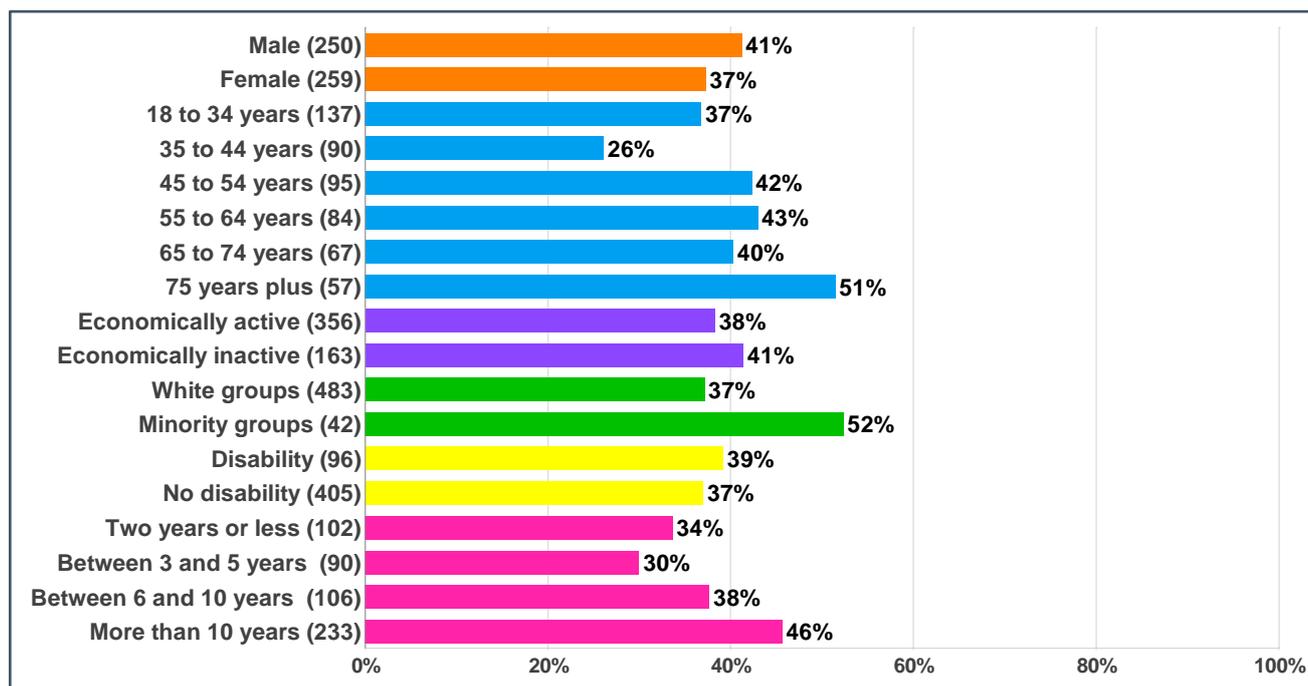
The differences in the proportions selecting Parks & Open Spaces across the demographic groups are shown in the chart below with differences outlined in the following table.



	<p>94% of respondents aged 35 to 44 years selected Parks & Open Spaces as being one of their most important services. This is significantly greater than for all the other age groups.</p>
	<p>Respondents from white groups choose Parks & Open Spaces as being one of the most important to them with 86% selecting this service compared to 63% of respondents from minority groups.</p>
	<p>95% of respondents who had lived at their current address for less than two years selected Park & Open Spaces as being one of the most important services. This is significantly greater than the other 'length of time at current address' groups.</p>

Car Parks

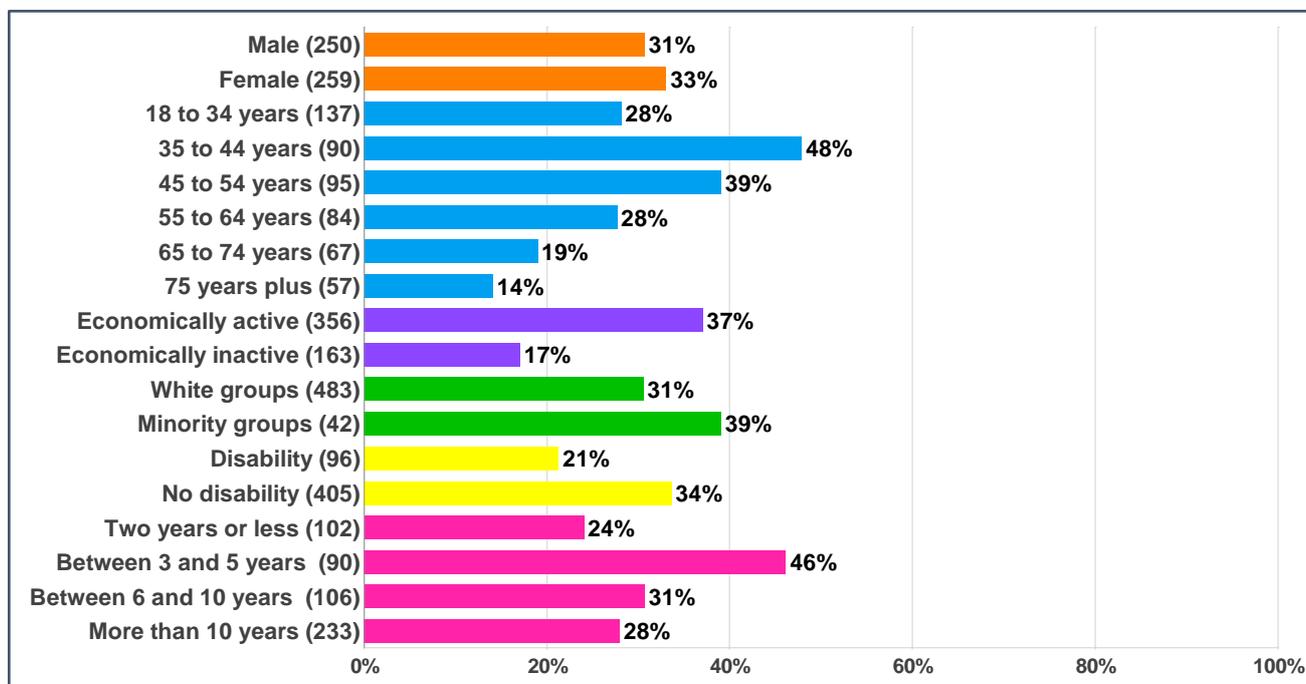
The differences in the proportions selecting Car Parks across the demographic groups are shown in the chart below with differences outlined in the following table.



	<p>26% of respondents aged 35 to 44 years selected Car Parks as being one of their most important services. This is significantly lower than for all the other age groups.</p>
	<p>46% of respondents who have lived at their current address for more than ten years selected Car Parks as being one of the most important services to them. This is significantly greater than for those who have lived at their address less than five years.</p>

Leisure Centre

The differences in the proportions selecting the Leisure Centre across the demographic groups are shown in the chart below with differences outlined in the following table.



	14% of respondents aged 75 years and over selected the Leisure Centre as being one of their most important services. This is significantly lower than the proportion selecting this service for the other age groups up to 64 years.
	Economically active respondents were more likely to choose the Leisure Centre as more important to them with 37% selecting this service compared to 17% of economically inactive respondents.
	A lower proportion of respondents with a disability choose the Leisure Centre as being one of the most important to them with 21% selecting this service compared to 34% of respondents without a disability.
	46% of respondents who have lived at their current address for more than ten years selected the Leisure Centre as being one of the most important services. This was a significantly greater proportion than for all the other 'length of time at address' groups.

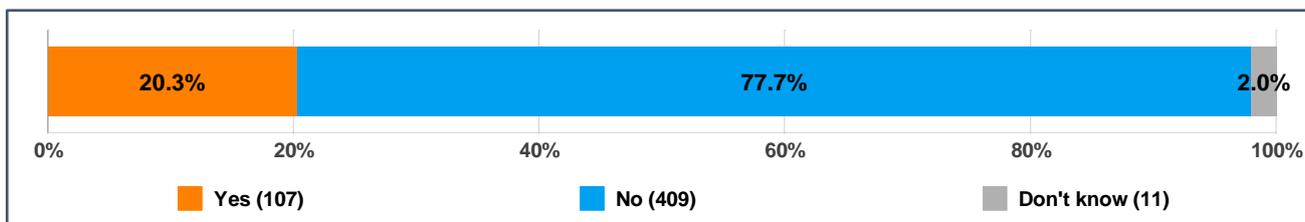
Future fees and Spending

Survey respondents were asked if they were willing to pay more for some of the discretionary services that the Council provided.

Car Parking

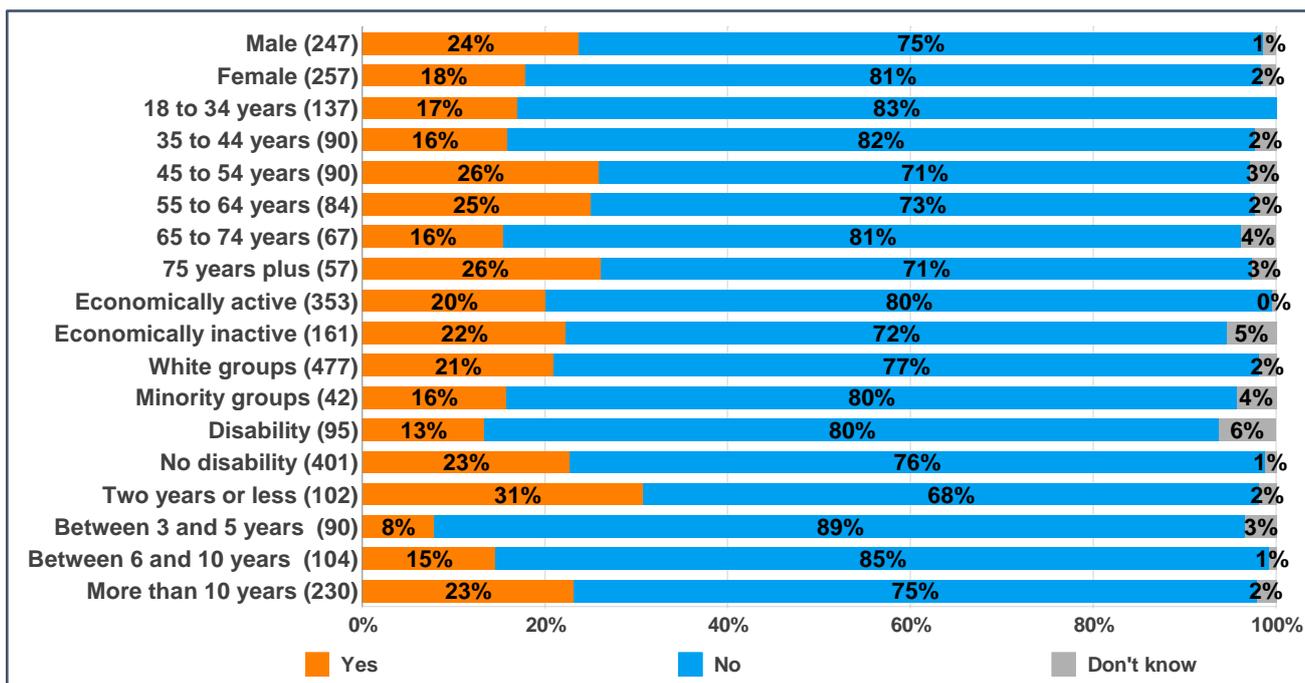
Survey respondents were asked if they would be willing to pay more for car parking in the borough. They were provided with the current costs of parking in the borough for context.

- 526 responses were received to this question.
- Overall, respondents were not in favour of increasing charges for car parking.
- The most common response was 'no' with 409 (77.7%) answering this way.



Demographic Differences

The chart below shows the response for each demographic group with significant differences outlined in the table below.

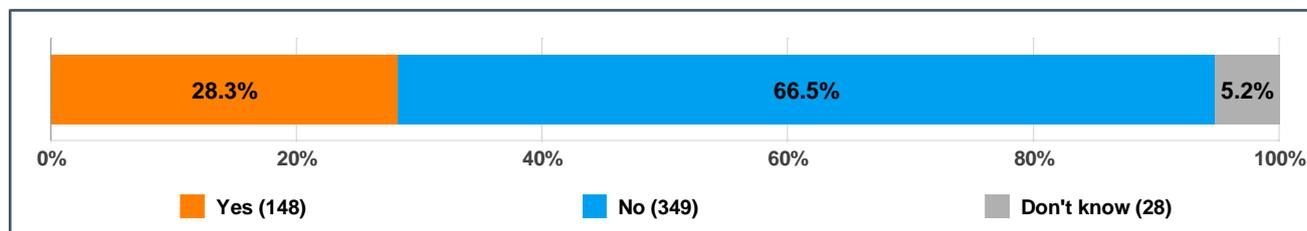


	<p>83% of respondents aged 18 to 34 years said they were unwilling to pay more for car parking, significantly more than for the 45 to 54 years group where 71% were against raising charges for car parking.</p>
	<p>Economically inactive respondents were more uncertain about raising charges for car parking with 5% answering this way compared to 0.4% of economically active respondents answering this way.</p>
	<p>Respondents without a disability were willing to pay more for car parking with 23% selecting this service compared to 13% of respondents with a disability.</p>
	<p>31% of respondents who had lived at their current address for less than two years were willing to pay more for car parking. This is significantly greater than respondents who had lived at their current address for between three and five years and between six and ten years.</p>

Garden Waste

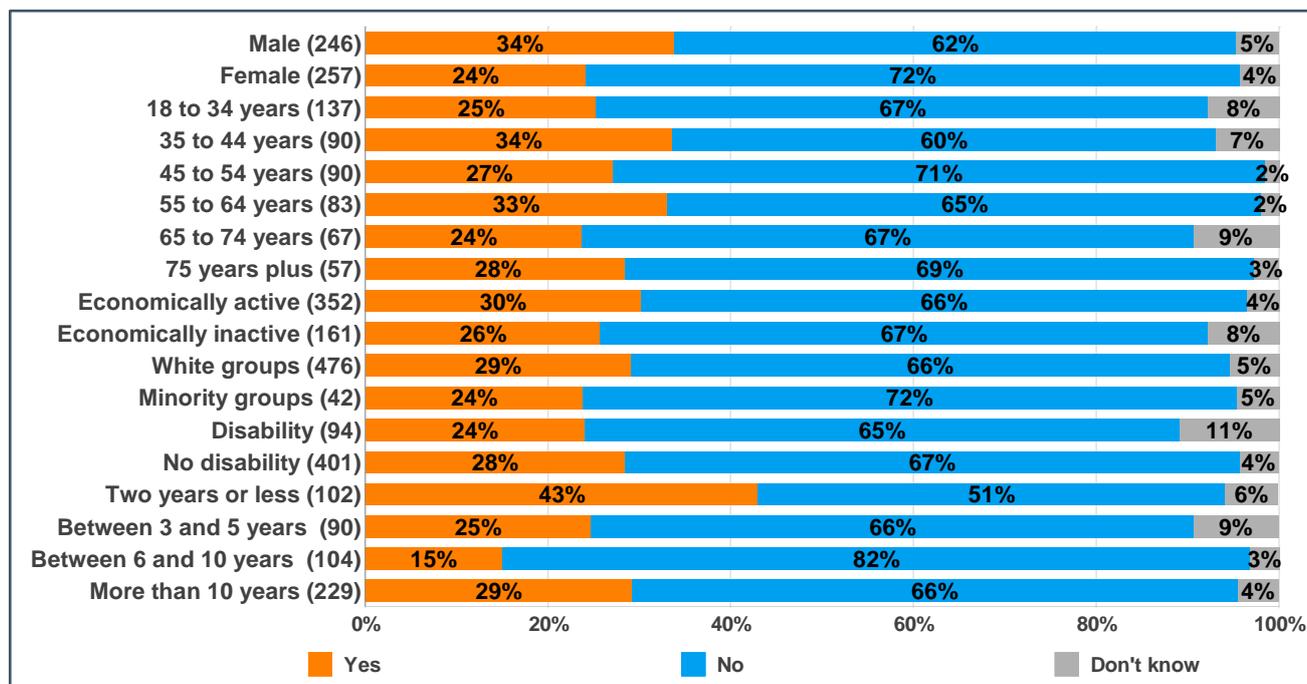
Survey respondents were asked if they would be willing to pay more for garden waste collections. They were provided with the current costs of garden waste collections in the borough for context.

- 525 responses were received to this question.
- Overall, respondents were not in favour of increasing charges for the garden waste service.
- The most common response was ‘no’ with 349 (66.5%) answering this way.



Demographic Differences

The chart below shows the response for each demographic group with significant differences outlined in the table below.



	<p>Male respondents were willing to pay more for the garden waste service with 34% answering this way compared to 24% of female respondents.</p>
	<p>Economically inactive respondents were more uncertain about raising charges for garden waste with 8% answering this way compared to 4% of economically active respondents.</p>
	<p>Respondents with a disability were more uncertain about raising charges for garden waste with 11% answering this way compared to 4% of respondents without a disability.</p>

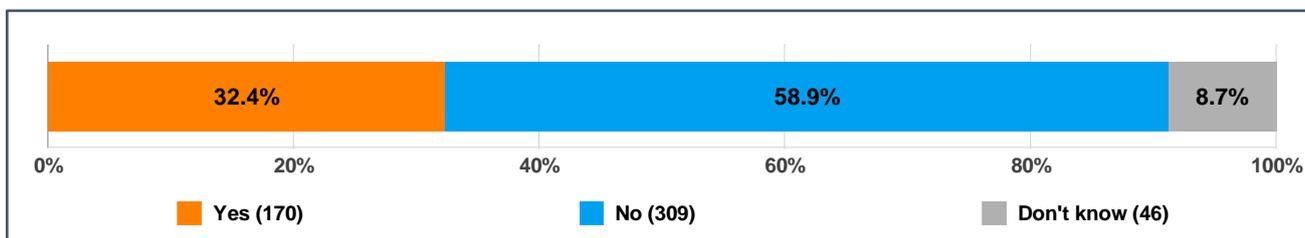


82% of respondent who have lived at their current address for between six and ten years said they were not willing to pay more for garden waste services. This is significantly greater than the 'other length of time at current address' groups.

Leisure Facilities

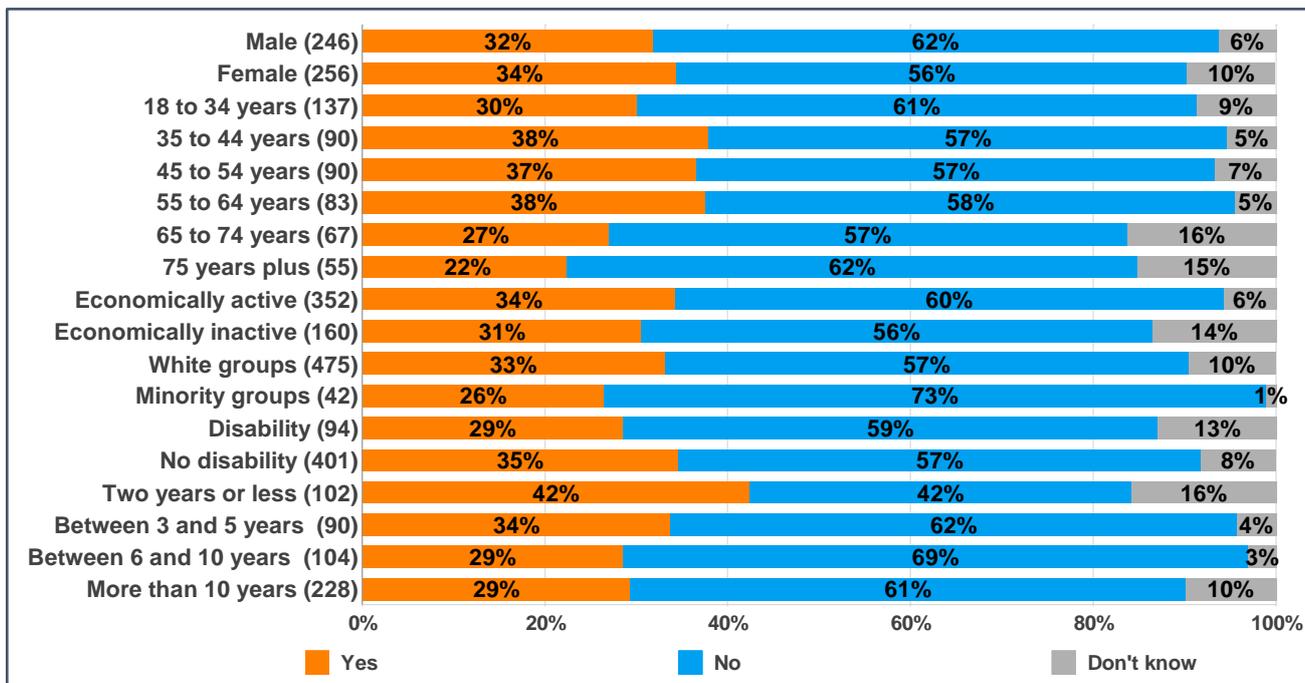
Survey respondents were asked if they would be willing to pay more for leisure facilities in the borough. They were provided with the current costs of leisure services per council tax band D property in the borough for context.

- A total of 524 responses were received to this question.
- Overall, respondents were not in favour of increasing charges for leisure facilities.
- The most common response was 'No' with 309 (58.9%) answering this way.



Demographic Differences

The chart below shows the response for each demographic group with significant differences outlined in the table below.

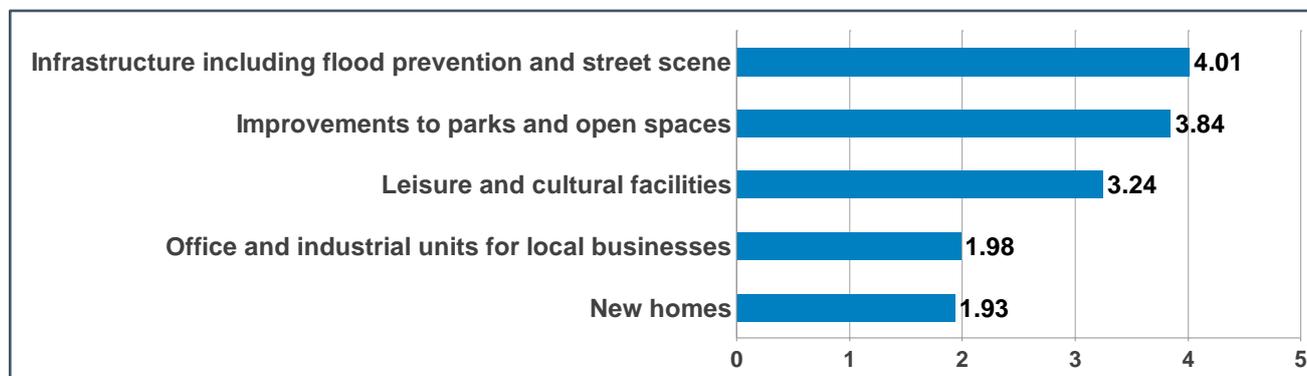


	<p>The 65 to 74 years and 75 years and over age groups had the greatest proportion of respondents that were uncertain if they would be willing to pay more for leisure facilities at 16% and 15% respectively. These was significantly more than the proportions of respondents that answered this way for the younger age groups.</p>
	<p>Economically inactive respondents were more uncertain about paying more for leisure services with 14% answering this way compared to 6% of economically active respondents.</p>
	<p>42% of respondents who have lived at their current address for less than two years said they were unwilling to pay more for leisure services. This is significantly lower than all the other 'length of time at current address' groups.</p>

Priorities & Investment

Survey respondents were asked to place a list of investment programme priorities into their preferred order of importance. A total of 518 respondents ranked the investment priorities.

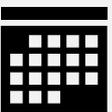
To assess this data, a weighted average has been used. The programmes placed first received 5 points and the programmes ranked last were given 1 point. These were then added together and divided by the number of respondents to give a weighted average.



This question was asked in the 2022 Budget Survey. The order of priorities is unchanged.

Demographic Differences

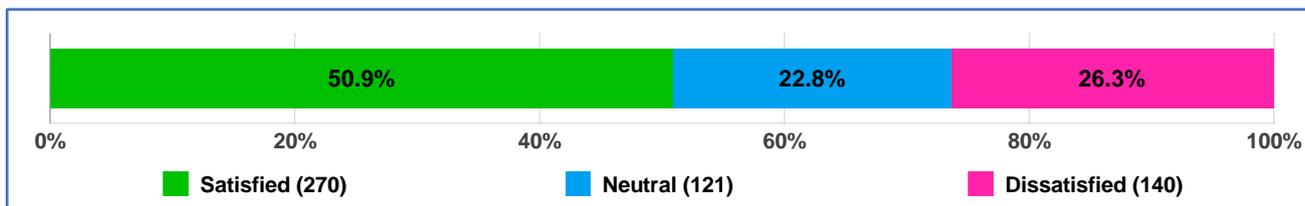
The table below outlines the differences between the ranking of the priorities across the demographic groups.

	Male respondents ranked new homes as their lowest priority while female respondents' ranked office and industrial units for local businesses was their lowest priority. The top three priorities for both groups align with the overall results.
	Respondents aged 35 to 44 years placed 'improvements to parks and open spaces' as their top priority whereas all the other age groups places this second. Both the 18 to 34 years and 55 to 64 years placed 'office and industrial units for local businesses' as their lowest, all of the other age groups places 'new homes' as their lowest priority.
	Economically active respondents ranked 'new homes' as their lowest priority, economic inactive respondents placed 'office and industrial units for local businesses' as their lowest priority.
	Respondents from minority groups placed 'improvements to parks and open spaces as their top priority and infrastructure including flood prevention and street scene' as second. The response profile for white groups matched the overall result.
	Respondents with a disability ranked industrial units for local businesses' as their lowest priority. The profile for respondents without a disability matched the overall result.
	Respondents who had lived at their current address for between 3 and 5 years placed 'improvements to parks and open spaces as their top priority and infrastructure including flood prevention and street scene' as second. Respondents who have lived at their current address for less than 2 years placed 'Office and industrial units for local businesses' as their lowest priority.

Local Area Satisfaction

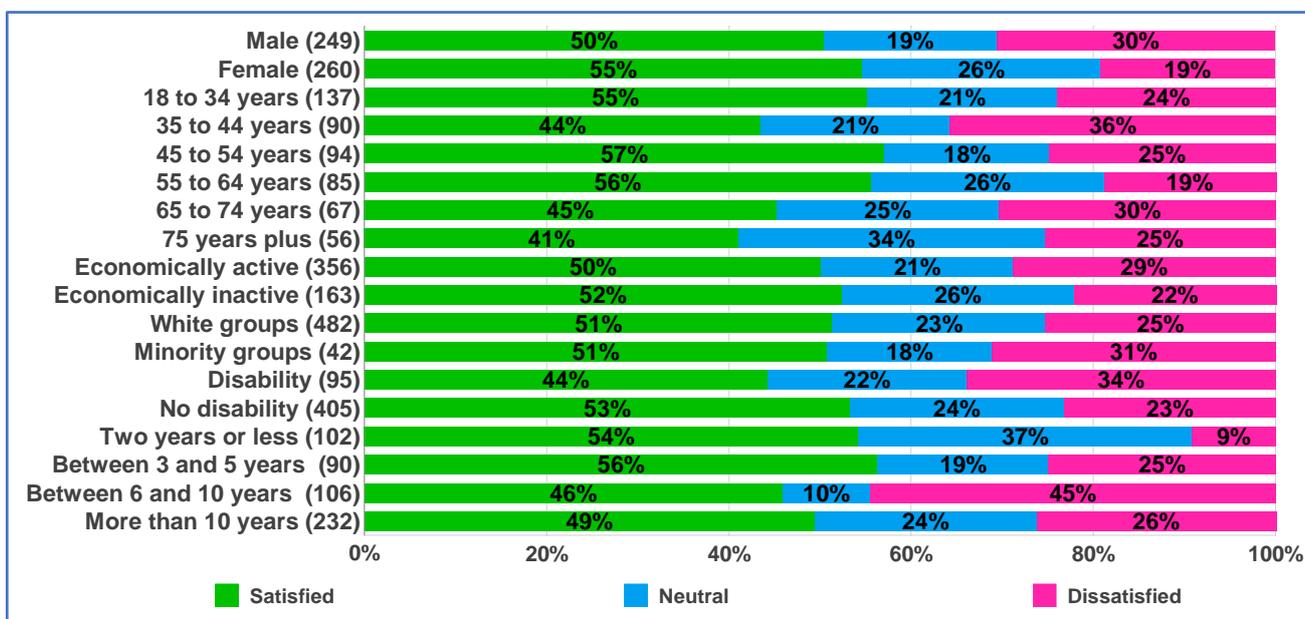
Survey respondents were asked: ‘How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your local area as a place to live?’ and given a five-point scale from ‘very satisfied’ to ‘very dissatisfied’.

- 531 respondents to this question.
- The most common response was ‘fairly satisfied’ with 224 answering this way.
- Overall, 50.9% of respondents were positive about the local area in which they live.
- In the last Budget Survey, undertaken in Autumn 2022, 57.8% of respondents answered positively.



Demographic Differences

The chart below shows the response for each demographic group with significant differences outlined in the table below.



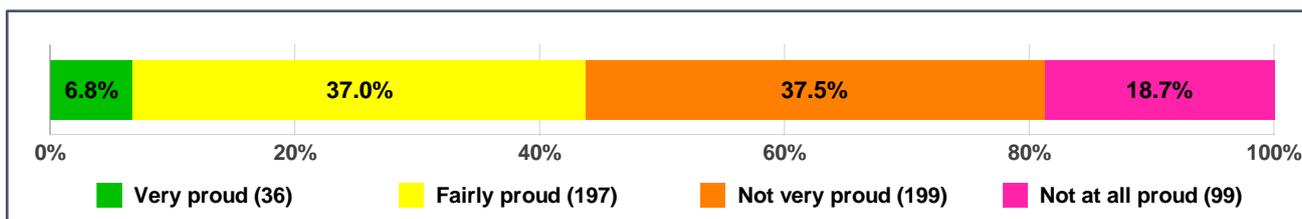
	<p>A greater proportion male respondents were dissatisfied with their local area as a place to live with 30% answering this way compared to 19% of female respondents.</p>
	<p>19% of respondents aged 55 to 64 years dissatisfied, this is significantly lower than the proportion answering the same for the 35 to 44 years group where 36% answered this way.</p>
	<p>A greater proportion of respondents with a disability were dissatisfied with their local area as a place to live with 34% answering this way compared to 23% of respondents without a disability.</p>

	<p>45% of respondents who have lived at their current address for between six and ten years were more dissatisfied than the proportions answering this way across the other length of time at current address groups.</p>
--	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Pride in Maidstone Borough

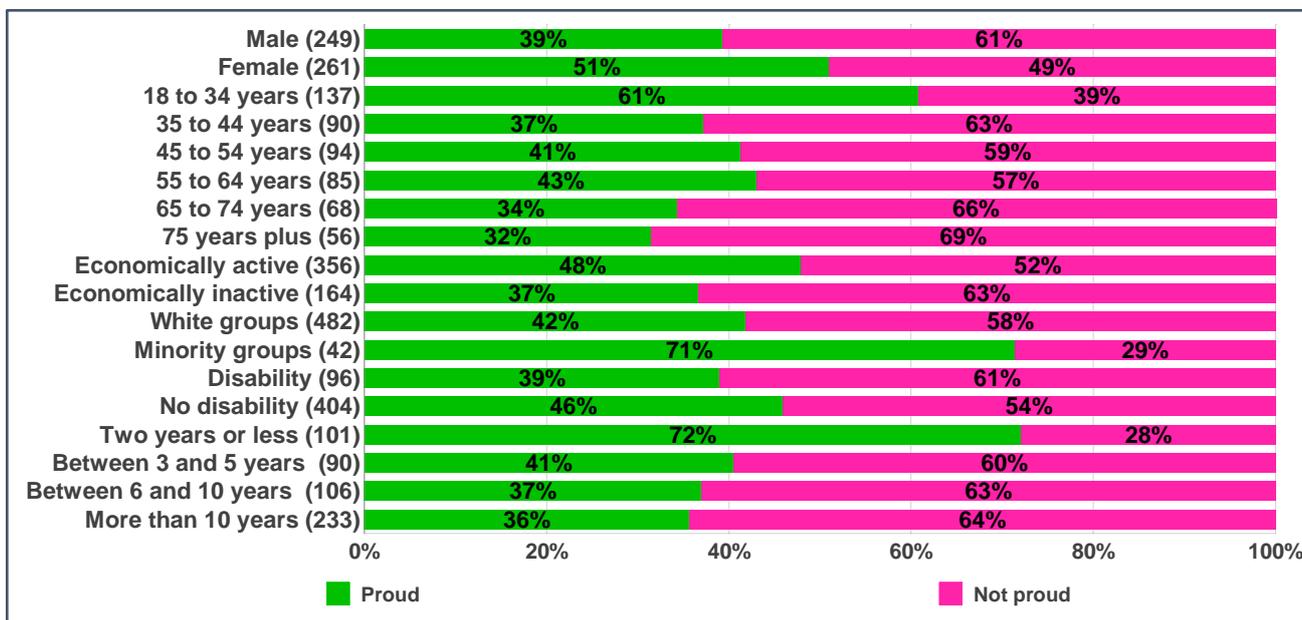
The survey asked respondents: 'How proud are you of Maidstone Borough?'

- 531 responded to this question.
- The most common response was 'not very proud' with 199 answering this way.
- Overall, 43.8% said they were either 'very proud' or 'fairly proud' of Maidstone Borough.
- In the last Budget Survey, undertaken in Autumn 2022, 50.7% of respondents answered positively.



Demographic Differences

The chart below shows the proportions that answered positively and negatively for each demographic group with significant differences outlined in the table below.



	<p>A greater proportion of Male respondents answered negatively when asked how proud they are of Maidstone Borough with 61% answering this way compared to 49% of female respondents.</p>
	<p>39% of respondents aged 18 to 34 years answered negatively, this result was significantly lower than the proportions answering this way across the other age groups.</p>

	More economically inactive respondents answered negatively when asked how proud they are of Maidstone Borough with 63% answering this way compared to 52% of economically active respondents.
	A greater proportion of respondents from minority groups answered positively when asked how proud they are of Maidstone Borough with 71% answering this way compared to 42% of white group respondents.
	72% of respondents who have lived at their current address answered positively. This was significantly greater than the proportions answering this way across the other 'length of time' at address groups.

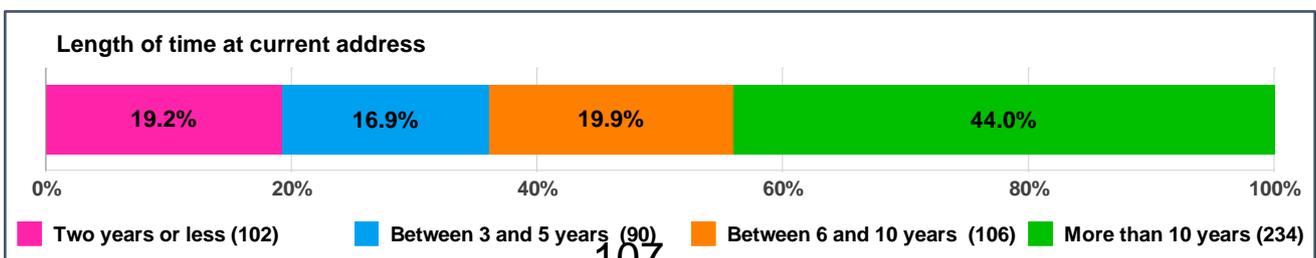
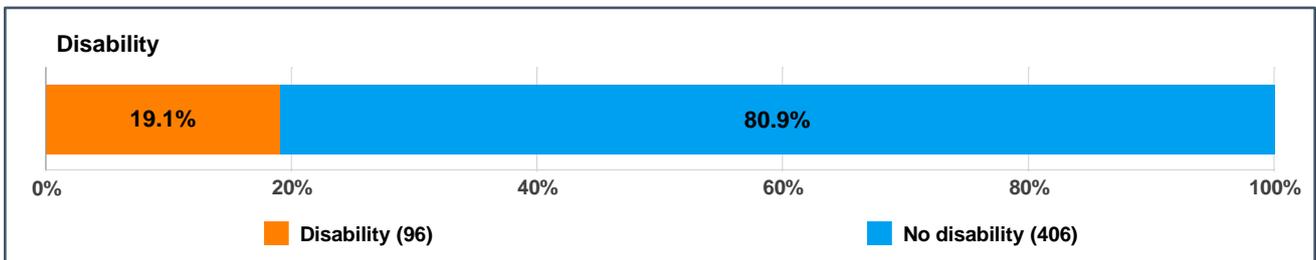
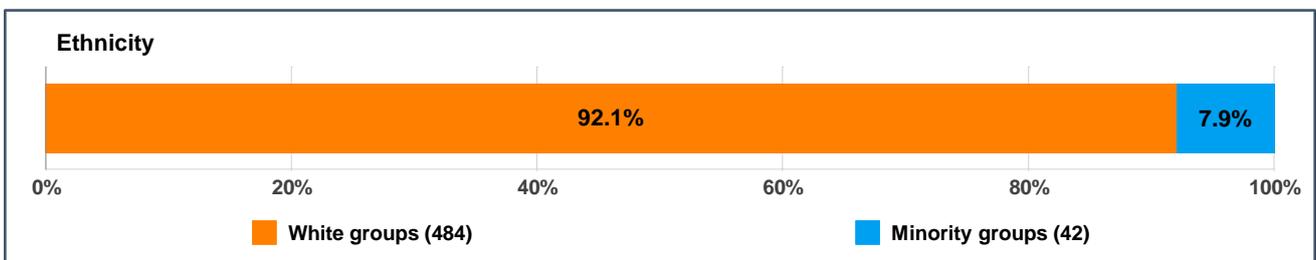
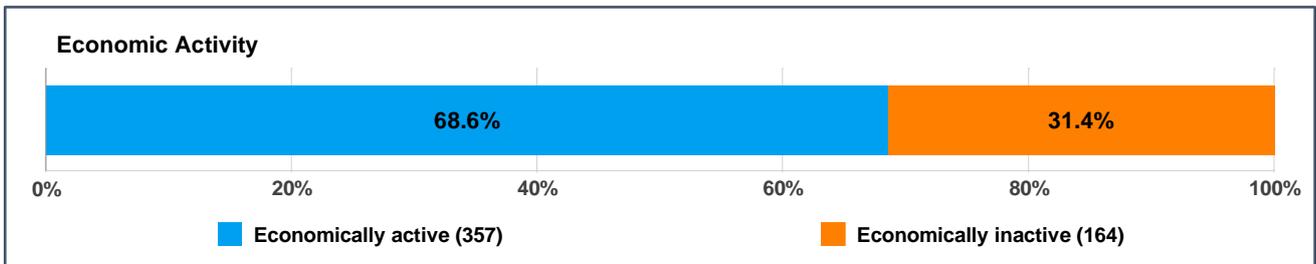
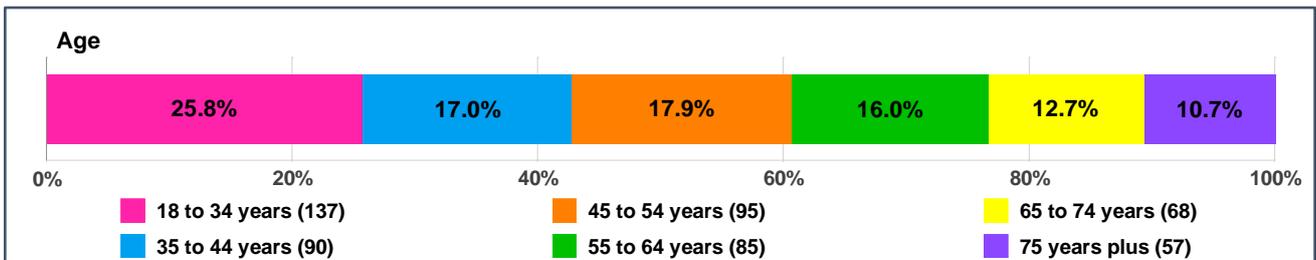
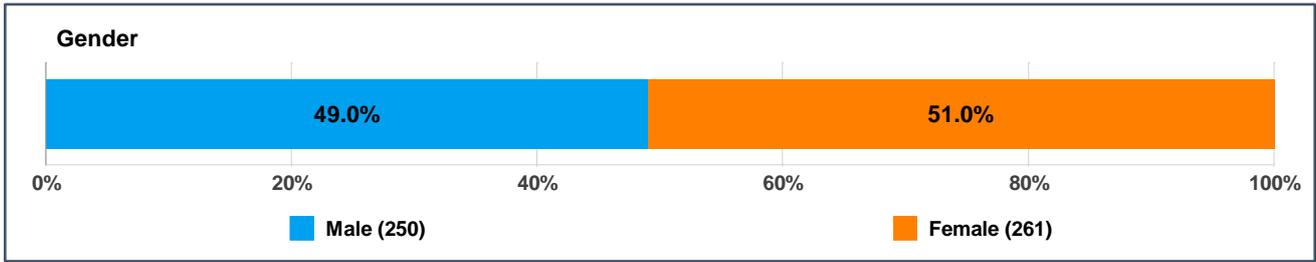
Budget Comments

Respondents to the survey were given the opportunity to make additional comments about the Council's budget and the funding of services. A total of 175 comments were received. These comments have been grouped into themes, with some comments containing multiple themes.

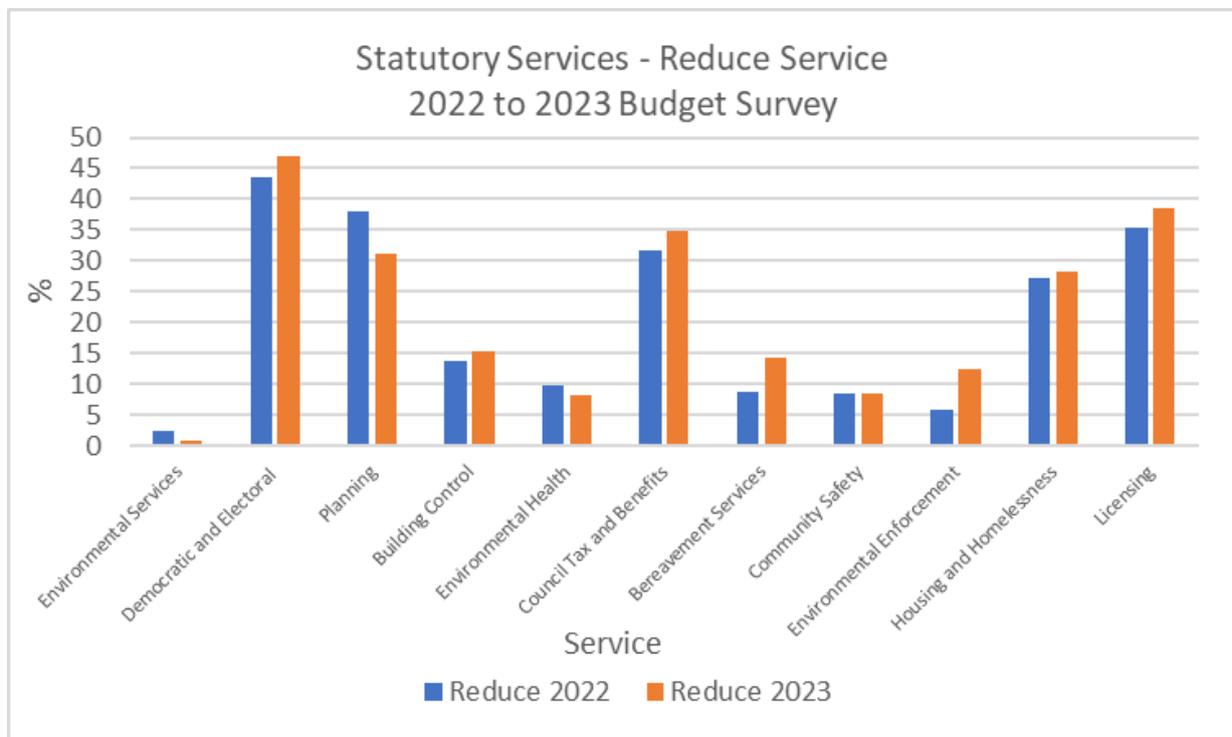
The table below provides a summary of the comments for each of the top ten themes identified.

Theme	No.	Summary
Budget	39	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No option to select increase services/spending. • Too much money is wasted. • Invest in income generating assets. • Get rid of Parish Councils • Get rid of Borough Councillors. • Maidstone should get a larger proportion from Council Tax.
Planning & Development	37	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No more new homes. • Maidstone has been spoilt by over development. • Stop building until appropriate infrastructure in place.
Roads & Traffic	32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a ring road. • Maidstone gridlocked. • The current road network cannot support all of the development/house building in the borough. • Too many roadworks and closures – this puts off investors and visitors.
Crime & Policing	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough visible policing. • A lot of anti-social behaviour – especially in the Town Centre. • Focus on maintaining safety.
Infrastructure	19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lot of development without relevant infrastructure. • Stop building until infrastructure is sorted. • Current infrastructure is not being maintained or improved.
Town Centre	18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maidstone Town Centre requires improvement. • Empty shops deter visitors. • The Town Centre needs to attract new businesses and investment. • Too much focus on housing in the Town Centre rather than shops.
Cleanliness	17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spend money on cleaning and litter picking. • The town centre is like a rubbish tip. • The Town Centre is filthy and smells bad.
KCC Function	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep Tovil Waste Management Site • Unblock drains. • Fill potholes.
Parking	14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinstate P&R Service. • Reduce or scrap parking charges in the Town Centre. • New homes need parking facilities.
Waste	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fly-tipping will increase if Tovil Top closes. • Would pay more for garden waste if the service was better. • The cost of all domestic waste disposal should be free to avoid fly tipping

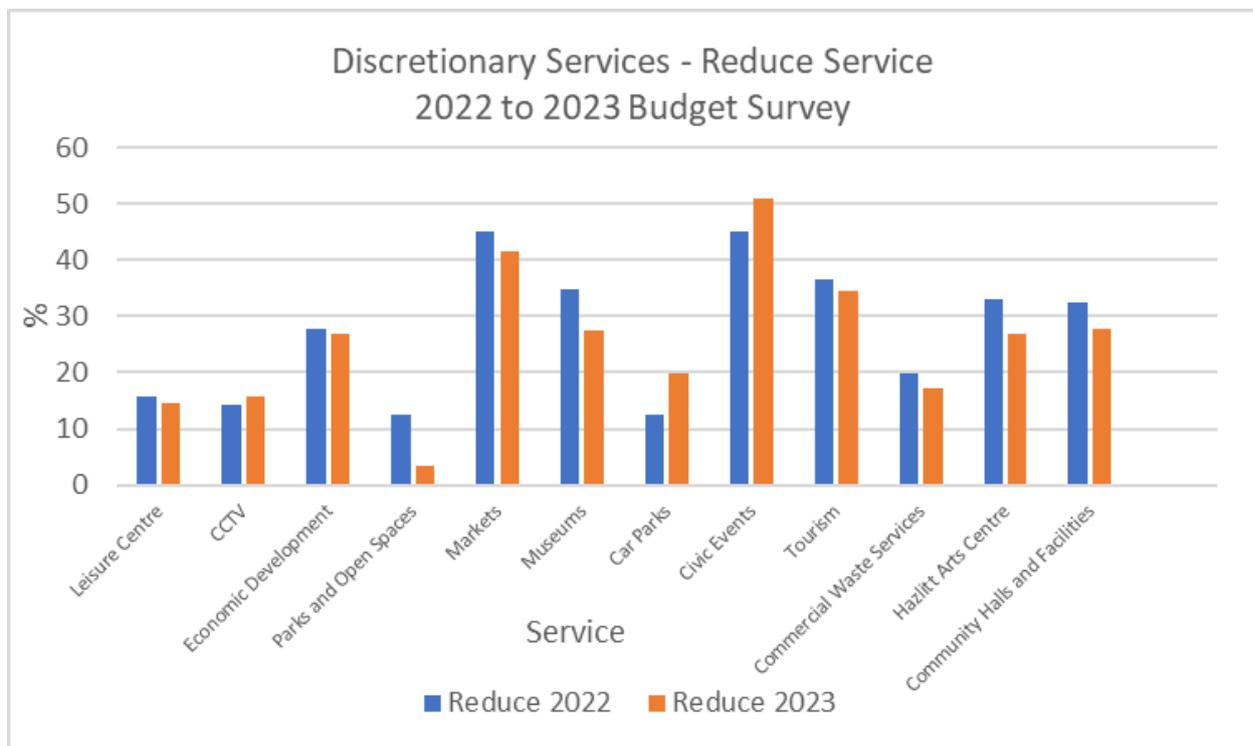
Demographics



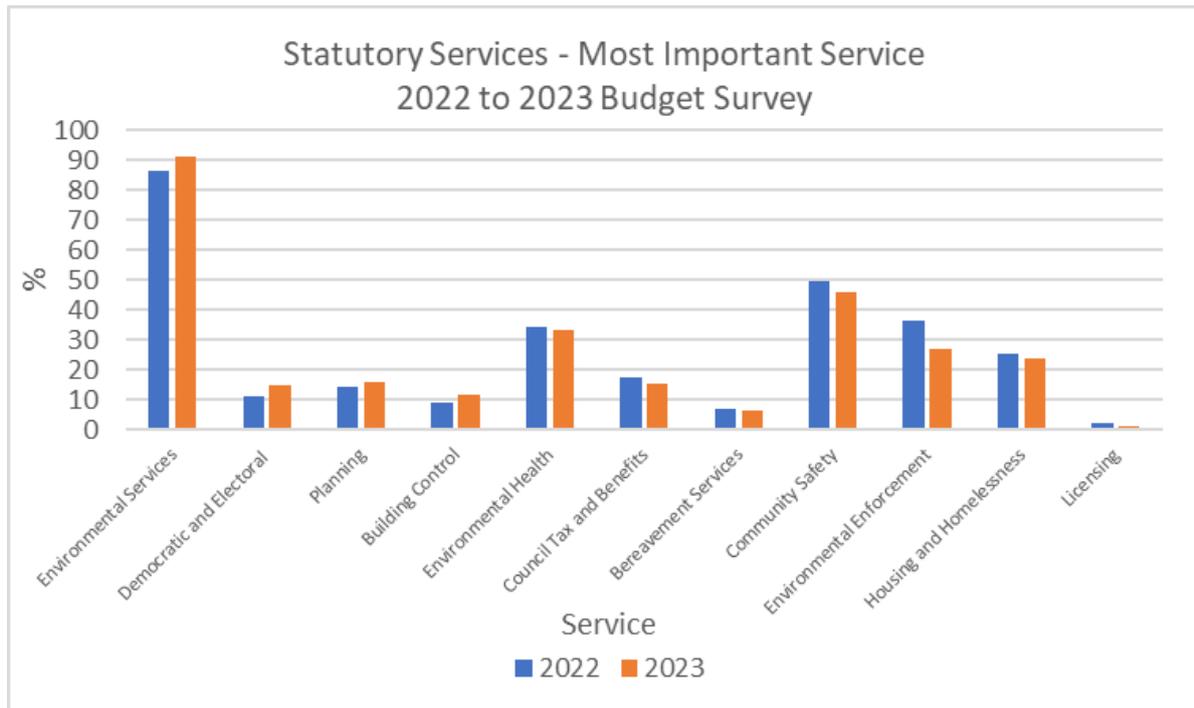
Reduce Statutory Services.



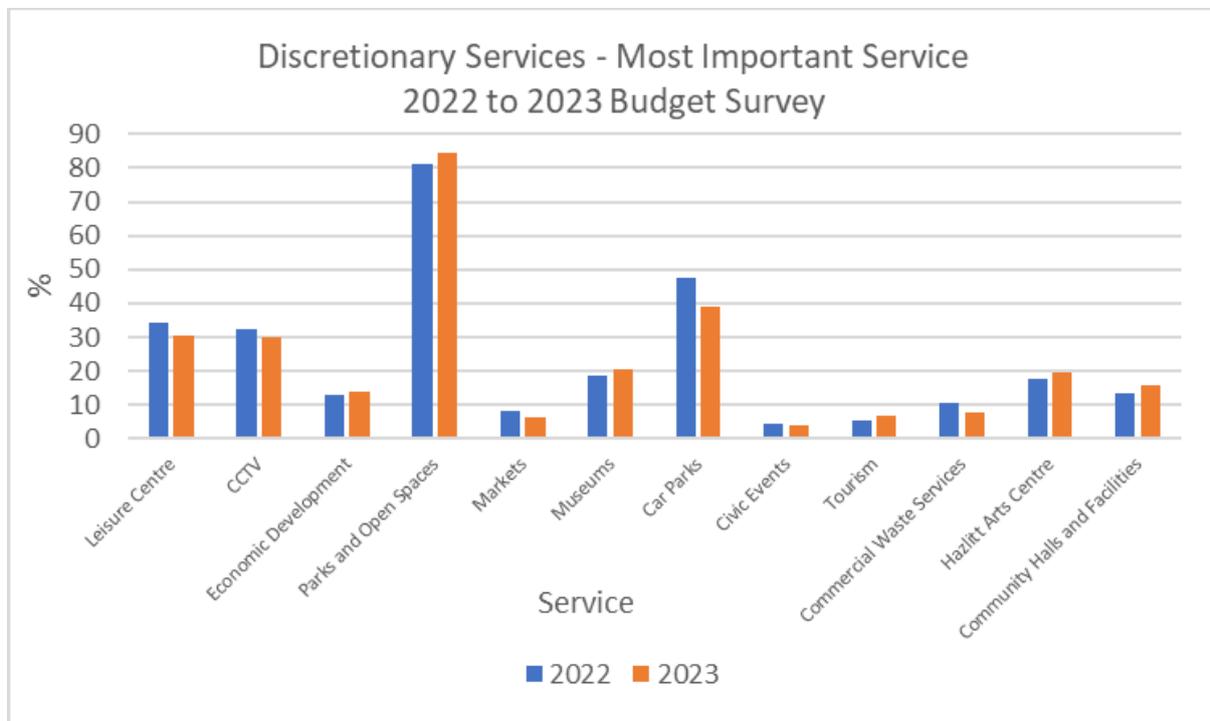
Reduce Discretionary Services.



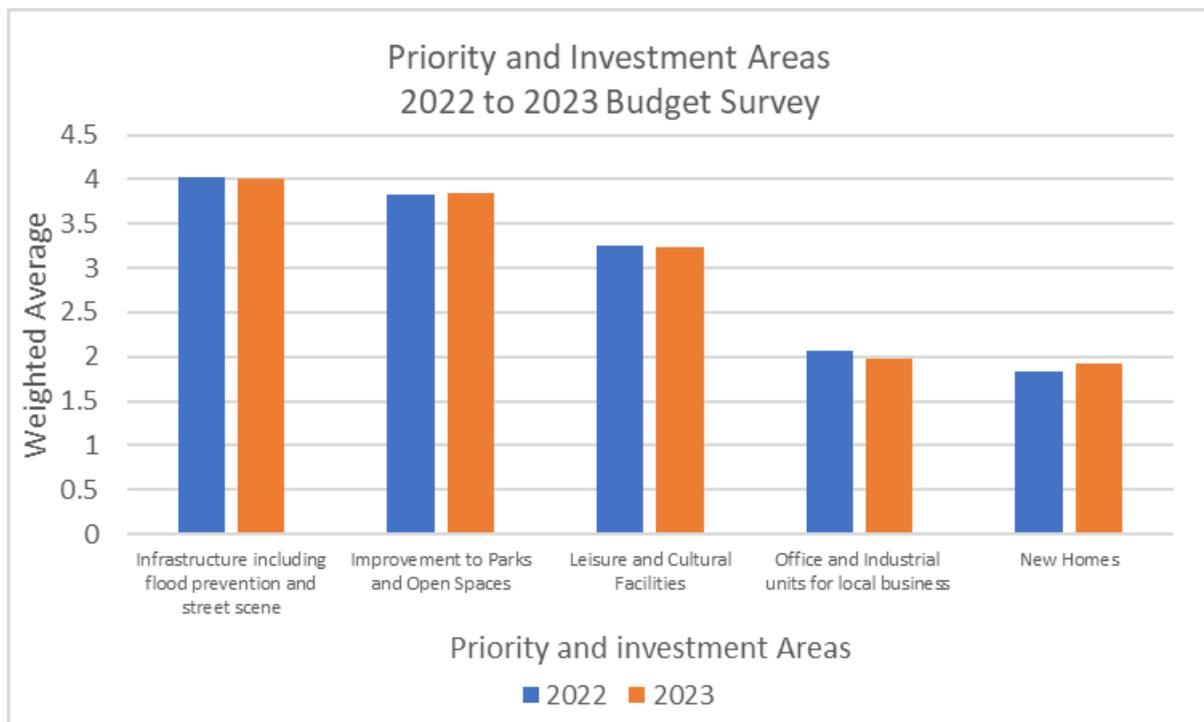
Most Important Statutory Services.



Most Important Discretionary Services.



Priorities and Investment Areas



The weighted average has been used. The programmes placed first received 5 points and the programmes ranked last were given 1 point. These were then added together and divided by the number of respondents to give a weighted average.

Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee	5 December 2023
--------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Annual Update

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
CLT	21 November 2023
Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee	5 December 2023
Cabinet	20 December 2023

Will this be a Key Decision?	No
Urgency	Not Applicable
Final Decision-Maker	CABINET
Lead Head of Service	Angela Woodhouse, Director of Strategy, Insight and Governance.
Lead Officer and Report Author	Anna Collier, Insight and Communities and Governance, Orla Sweeney, Senior Policy and Communities Officer.
Classification	Public
Wards affected	ALL

Executive Summary

This report provides an update on the current Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion action plan which was agreed by Cabinet in January 2023.

New actions have been developed in consultation with officers and members. It is important that we have an up-to-date plan to reflect the current challenges faced by residents and staff so that the Council can deliver on its Equality, Diversity and Inclusion objectives.

Purpose of Report

To note the update on the current EDI objectives and action plan.

To consider and agree the new actions for Cabinet Decision.

This report asks the Committee to consider the following recommendations to the Cabinet:

1. To consider and agree the recommended actions for the Equalities Action Plan highlighted at para 2.6 to 2.13 (Appendix 2).
2. To note the progress on the Equalities Objectives and Action Plan at Appendix 1 to the report and highlighted at para 2.4 – 2.5.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) – Annual Update

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	We do not expect the recommendations will by themselves materially affect achievement of corporate priorities. However, they will support the Council’s overall achievement of its aims in the delivery its strategic plan objectives.	Anna Collier Insight Communities and Governance Manager
Cross Cutting Objectives	The report recommendations help deliver the achievement of cross cutting objectives: Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced and Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved.	Anna Collier Insight Communities and Governance Manager
Risk Management	Please refer to paragraph 5.1 of the report	Anna Collier Insight Communities and Governance Manager
Financial	The majority of the proposals set out in the recommendation are all within already approved budgetary headings.	Anna Collier Insight Communities and Governance Manager
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Anna Collier Insight Communities and Governance Manager
Legal	Accepting the recommendations will fulfil the Council’s duties under Equality Act 2010. Failure to accept the recommendations without agreeing suitable alternatives may place the Council in breach of Equality Act 2010.	Anna Collier Insight Communities and Governance Manager
Information Governance	The recommendations do not impact personal information (as defined in UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018) the Council processes. However, some of the actions in the revised action plan could result in the collection and	Anna Collier Insight Communities and

	processing of personal data. Should this be Information Governance Officer the case, the Information Governance Team will be asked to review the processing of personal data affected and the associated documentation has been/will be updated accordingly, including a data protection impact assessment.	Governance Manager
Equalities	Accepting the recommendations will fulfil the Council's duties under Equality Act 2010. Failure to accept the recommendations without agreeing suitable alternatives may place the Council in breach of Equality Act 2010. We recognise the recommendations may have varying impacts on different communities within Maidstone. Therefore, we will complete a separate equalities impact assessments at project level.	Anna Collier Insight Communities and Governance Manager
Public Health	We recognise that the recommendations will have a positive impact on population health or that of individuals.	Anna Collier Insight Communities and Governance Manager
Crime and Disorder	Training in cultural competencies is likely to have a positive impact on crime and disorder in terms of understanding challenges faced by new and existing communities.	Anna Collier Insight Communities and Governance Manager
Procurement	No impact identified	Anna Collier Insight Communities and Governance Manager
Biodiversity and Climate Change	The implications of this report on biodiversity and climate change have been considered and it has been identified that there are actions that will support delivery of the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan.	Anna Collier Insight Communities and Governance Manager

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 The Equality Act (2010) Section 149 creates the single public sector Equality Duty and specific duties which are set out in secondary legislation. The

Council is required to have an Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policy, reviewed every 3 years and a robust Action Plan. This is reported on and updated annually.

2.2 The Policy sets out the Council's three objectives:

- **Community Leader** – To lead by example, to ensure every individual resident is connected and supported.
- **Employer** – To lead a diverse and inclusive workforce that is reflective of the borough of Maidstone where residents and colleagues feel safe, confident and empowered to challenge and bring about change.
- **Service Provider**– To deliver inclusive services in accordance with the Council's values.

2.3 The Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan is in place to deliver these objectives and is refreshed on an annual basis. It is informed by service led insight and is reflective of current workstreams. The action plan is monitored on a quarterly basis by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Officer group.

Overview of progress on current Action Plan

2.4 An overview of progress made this year is outlined below and detailed in full at Appendix 1.

As a Service Provider

- The 9 protected characteristics were expanded to include Poverty and the Armed Forces to help ensure the Council considers all vulnerable groups as part of its decision making, particularly in relation to financial exclusion.
- The EqIA template document and guidance was updated to support data led decision making.
- High-level Census 2021 data was published on dashboards on the Council's website. Unit Managers, Wider Leadership Team, Inclusion Board and EDI staff group were informed on how to use Census data to understand resident need.

As an Employer

- The Council's first Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Staff Survey was carried out. This survey provides a baseline understanding of the organisation's diversity and allows us to explore and respond to unknown staff need. For example, the survey identified that almost a third of staff who responded to the survey had carer responsibilities. This has been added as an action in the new plan for exploration.
- EDI Training programme for staff delivered. Modules included: Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Hidden Disabilities
- Mental Health Support continues to be provided. This has included training and development of Mental Health first aiders.

As a Community Leader

- Ongoing Homelessness Prevention work continued with the OneView project. This has also included working with Golding Homes to deliver hardship payments to those in financial hardship.
- Additional project areas using OneView were identified including Violence Reduction, Health Inequalities, Food Insecurity and Damp and Mould.
- The Digital training and support suite became operational at Trinity House.
- EDI staff group was expanded to include more frontline service areas to ensure the knowledge base and perspective is broadened.
- Events were delivered to Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) groups on funding advice and guidance via external speakers at the last event included: Space Hive - Crowd Fund Kent, National Lottery, ReferKent, Shepway Community Larder and Imago Community. A further event scheduled for November 2023.
- Two further rounds of Household Support Grant funding have led to additional funding being allocated to the VCS and Parishes, increasing access to food and fuel support for vulnerable communities.

2.5 Some actions continue into this year's plan to meet ongoing need. For example, the 'no wrong door' project, OneView and the Welfare Officer role which is the point of contact for those experiencing immediate financial need and support.

Development of revised Action Plan

2.6 The full action plan for 2023-34 can be seen at Appendix 2.

2.7 Actions to support delivery of the action plan which reflect the Council's roles as a 'Community Leader' and a 'Service Provider' have been informed by discussions with key service areas and reflect new or ongoing workstreams that support the Council's EDI objectives.

2.8 In addition, the current EDI Policy and Action Plan has been audited by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) for compliance with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) . Whilst the findings were positive, it was identified that more work could be done to analyse service user data to ensure we can see if our services are inclusive and accessible and that this data should be published on our website.

2.9 As a result, demographic data analysed by age, ethnicity, economic activity and disability that we have collected when carrying out consultation will be available on the website and refreshed annually. In addition to this, and a project is proposed to review services across Council collecting EDI data and make publicly available. Both projects have been included as new actions in the Action Plan update (Appendix 1).

2.10 It is important that the role of elected Members, the community knowledge they provide, and the residents they represent is recognised and supported. Cabinet have considered actions to support Councillors in the role. In addition to ensuring that training such as the Cultural Competencies is available to Members, the following actions have been included:

- Implement a new Member survey to ensure all new Members have equitable access to support and resources for their role.
- Provide Members with access to profiles of their local communities to inform their work.

2.11 The EDI Action Plan states, in its overarching commitments, that the Council will take an evidence-based approach to supporting financial inclusion. This commitment was first included in the action plan in response to recovery from the pandemic and supported delivery of the Financial Inclusion Strategy. The current Financial Inclusion Strategy is under review. The review is data led and being informed by the LIFT Dashboard, Community Insight Tool alongside wider measurements of Poverty and disadvantage are informing the strategy aims and workstreams. The Strategy will seek to respond to the wider determinants of financial exclusion affecting residents in Maidstone.

2.12 The results of the staff Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) survey have been used to develop actions under the Council's role 'as an employer.' The survey identified areas of focus that may not otherwise have emerged for example almost a third (27%) of staff have caring responsibilities, A follow up Carer's survey is required to understand what type of support staff need at work.

2.13 The survey also identified religious and cultural diversity within the organisation. For example, for 5% of staff, English is not their first language. The existing actions relating to Cultural Competencies training and a Diversity Calendar remain in the action plan with some additional actions identified as next steps. This includes a team talk for staff on significant dates and how these could be celebrated.

2.14 New actions are identified in the refreshed Workforce Strategy to support Inclusion and Belonging for staff.

Next Steps

2.15 Once approved by Cabinet the updated Action Plan will be published on our website and shared with responsible officers to ensure actions are delivered. The action plan will continue to be monitored by the EDI officer group and updates on the plan will be reported to the Cabinet Member.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The report asks Cabinet to note the EDI Action Plan update and consider and agree the revised actions.
- 3.2 Alternatively, the Cabinet could choose to add or remove actions for the action plan or ask for additional work to be completed. Cabinet could choose not to have an EDI Action Plan, however this this would not be recommended as it would be a significant risk to the Council demonstrating how it is delivering against its equality objectives and compliance with the public sector equality duty.
-

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 That Cabinet note the EDI Action Plan update and consider and agree the revised actions at Appendix 1. The action plan has been shaped by key officers, conversations with Members and feedback from the Equalities and Human Rights Commission.
-

5. RISK

- 5.1 The Council's responsibilities as a Public Sector Authority are set out in the Equality Act 2010. The Annual Update report provides an opportunity for the Council to review its progress against its objectives and ensure they are still fit for purpose. Not taking this opportunity to review progress and respond to the needs of its staff and residents could cause reputational damage to the Council and we would not be fulfilling our responsibilities under the Act.

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 Progress on the existing EDI Action Plan has been monitored by the Staff EDI Officer Group. The results of the staff EDI survey were used to inform discussions with Wider Leadership Team and the staff EDI Officer group on actions to include in the action plan to support the 'as an Employer' objective.
-

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 Once approved by Cabinet the updated Action Plan will be published on our website and shared with responsible officers to ensure actions are delivered. The action plan will continue to be monitored by the EDI officer group and updates on the plan will be reported to the Cabinet Member.
-

8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix 1: Progress against actions 2022-23.
 - Appendix 2: Action Plan 2023-24
-

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Appendix 1 – Updates on actions from 2022-23.

As a Community Leader

Objective: **To lead by example, to ensure every individual resident is connected and supported**

Commitments	Action	Update
<p>We will work closely with our partners (Voluntary and Community Sector, Anchor Institutions, Parishes and Church and Faith groups) to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify opportunities for joined up working and improving our ability to share information to support and engage our wider communities. Increase volunteering opportunities and participation, funding and support. <p>We will undertake a review of consultation and engagement activities to ensure that they maximise resident participation and are representative of Maidstone's demographic.</p> <p>We will support and promote diversity and inclusion in the borough through our communications and events – with a focus on our seldom-heard communities.</p> <p>We will support our serving and veteran communities through our commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant and responsibilities under the Armed Forces Act 2021 with guidance provided to staff across all services.</p>	Ongoing delivery of One View project.	<p>The Housing team continue to work on developing the OneView system A second advisor was recruited to support the project. Join up has been created with Housing Associations to deliver hardship payments. The project has won an award and has been identified was also recently reviewed by The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) have reviewed this project and highlighted it as an example of a project using innovative technology is advancing equality of opportunity and are currently working with Maidstone to develop it as a case study. Further project areas were identified, Violence Reduction, Health Inequalities, Food Insecurity and Damp and Mould.</p> <p>This action remains ongoing in the new plan.</p>
	Implement no wrong door (local campaign to signpost to services) – increasing access to services.	<p>There is join up between several frontline services and other local service providers. For example, Housing and the CAB have undertaken a Debt advice Pilot at Trinity.</p> <p>The Welfare Officer role which supports delivery of the Council's Hardship Fund works closely with community groups, community wardens and is the point of contact for those experiencing immediate financial need and support. The role also works closely with internal services including Housing and Revenues and Benefits to maximise support and support the prevention of homelessness.</p> <p>The role is supported by Policy in Practice's Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT dashboard) which enables the Council to identify families and individuals who are impacted by Welfare Reforms, struggling financially, and could be missing out on benefits.</p> <p>This action remains ongoing in the new plan.</p>
	Provide access to digital training and support at Trinity House.	<p>The Training suite up at Trinity House is now up and running. Training and Support has been offered and a pilot with Digital Kent Volunteer Programme to support residents at Trinity House has been undertaken.</p> <p>This action is now closed</p>
	Increase response rates from underrepresented groups through us of Let's Talk Maidstone (the Council's new public engagement platform)	<p>The Let's Talk Maidstone site was launched in 2022 and provides a variety of engagement tools for Public consultation and engagement activities.</p> <p>It is recognised that there are some groups that remain difficult to reach. Analysis has been undertaken of all consultation demographics to identify those seldom heard groups. Support has been sought from the consultation institute to best approach engagement and new action has been identified for year 2023-24.</p> <p>This action has now developed in the new plan.</p>
	Expand internal Equality Diversity and Inclusion Group to provide internal direction and challenge.	<p>The group continues to meet and has informed the development of the new action plan. It has been expanded to include wider group of front-line service areas providing expertise and insight on community and seldom heard groups.</p> <p>This action has now developed in the new plan.</p>
	Annual calendar of events to celebrate diversity and promote inclusion in Maidstone.	<p>Google calendar developed for Intranet and website. Further work is required on this to embed the calendar of events both internally and externally.</p> <p>This action remains ongoing in the new plan.</p>

Appendix 1 – Updates on actions from 2022-23.

	Provide guidance to enable all staff to support Armed Forces Community	Armed Forces pages have been updated on the Website. It has been identified that Forces Connect App not sufficient in terms of information for Veterans in local community so more work needs to be done. This action remains ongoing in the new plan.
As an Employer		
Objective: To lead a diverse and inclusive workforce that is reflective of the borough of Maidstone where residents and colleagues feel safe, confident, and empowered to challenge and bring about change.		
Commitments	Action	Update
<p>We will train our staff so that they are skilled in inclusive practice, to work with communities who are less able, or willing, to participate in life in their local neighbourhoods.</p> <p>We will provide training and support to staff so they can recognise and manage unacceptable behaviours.</p> <p>We will look after the mental health of our staff and recognise when this offer needs to change</p>	Introduce Equalities Champions (including elected member and senior leadership)	A Senior Leader Champion and a Member Champion agreed. This action is now closed
	Deliver the Culture change project.	The culture change project has been delivered and new actions are identified in the refreshed Workforce Strategy to support Inclusion and Belonging for staff. This action is now closed
	Introduce Bi-Annual staff EDI survey to identify need and benchmark progress	Carried out first EDI Staff Survey (the detailed questions considered best practice are not included in the biannual staff survey). The survey is intended to provide a baseline understand of the organisations diversity and provide the basis for exploring and responding to staff need. This action is now closed
	Provide training and support for Mental Health Champions	The Staff EDI Survey suggests that employee Mental Health is better than national picture (1 in 6) however there has been an increase in Mental Health sick days and an increase in counselling referrals. There has been continued provision of Mental Health Champions (including training and development of mental health first aiders). The use of Mental Health Champions has been low and it has been identified that support is required for managers in terms of training and resilience. So further work is required here. This action remains ongoing in the new plan.
As a Service Provider		
Objective: To deliver inclusive services in accordance with the Council's values		
Commitments	Action	Updates
<p>We will use specific and meaningful language when referring to diverse communities.</p> <p>We will support access to services and support through ICT process, communication and join up with partners.</p>	Adopt of LGA Inclusive Language Guide	The inclusive language guide has not yet been released for adoption. This has been retained as an action with alternative options to be explored in place of the LGA guide. This action remains ongoing in the new plan.
	Proactively use 'neutral spaces' to increase access to support and services for residents	Face to face support has been provided at Trinity House and other sites for debt advice, and digital services. Cost-of-living events, Community Larders, Council tax, Welfare support and Housing. This action will be retained/ This action remains ongoing in the new plan.

Appendix 1 – Updates on actions from 2022-23.

<p>We will take an evidence-based approach to leading recovery supporting financial inclusion and social well-being in Maidstone. including a specific work stream on communities.</p> <p>We will review the Equalities Impact Assessment processes.</p> <p>We will review and identify our policies where we consider equalities impacts and identify how we can improve outcomes through revisions to policy.</p>	Identify emerging needs from Census data.	<p>Analysis of the Census data has been undertaken. Results have been published of all high-level data on dashboards on the Council's website. Significant engagement with Unit Managers, Wider Leadership Team, Inclusion Board and EDI staff group on how to use census to understand resident need.</p> <p>This action is now closed</p>
	Include 'Poverty' as a local protected characteristic with the EqIA process	<p>9 protected characteristics were expanded to include Poverty (and Armed Forces) to ensure we continue to look beyond existing perceptions of vulnerable groups.</p> <p>EqIA template document and guidance updated to support data led decision making. Training was rolled out to Unit managers.</p> <p>This action is now closed</p>
	Include Armed Forces Act 2021 in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy	<p>Armed Forces included in revised Policy and guidance and template documents for EqIAs alongside Poverty as 'local protected characteristics.</p> <p>This action is now closed</p>
	Prioritise existing policies by review date and implement process of review for equalities	<p>The process has been reactive to date rather than priority. It has been identified that further work is required to support unit managers to implement EDI into policy and service development so this action has been broadened to include working with services to increase knowledge.</p> <p>This action remains ongoing in the new plan.</p>

Appendix 2 – EDI Action Plan 2023-24.

As a Community Leader			
Objective: To lead by example, to ensure every individual resident is connected and supported			
Commitments	Action Title	Actions	Responsible Service
<p>We will work closely with our partners (Voluntary and Community Sector, Anchor Institutions, Parishes and Church and Faith groups) to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify opportunities for joined up working and improving our ability to share information to support and engage our wider communities. Increase volunteering opportunities and participation, funding and support. <p>We will undertake a review of consultation and engagement activities to ensure that they maximise resident participation and are representative of Maidstone’s demographic.</p> <p>We will support and promote diversity and inclusion in the borough through our communications and events – with a focus on our seldom-heard communities.</p> <p>We will support our serving and veteran communities through our commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant and responsibilities under the Armed Forces Act 2021 with guidance provided to staff across all services.</p>	Delivery of One View project - Ongoing Project	Continue to deliver the One View homelessness prevention project including exploring additional cohorts and new projects including Damp and Mould	Housing
	Implement no wrong door (local campaign to signpost to services) – increasing access to services - Ongoing Project	Ongoing project and It is important that this action remains and continues to be developed with partners in response to ongoing need.	Housing, Revenues and Benefits, Policy, Communities and Engagement.
	Develop a greater understanding of our communities through the Implementation of the Community Insight system - NEW	Provide members with access to profiles of their local communities to inform their work. Provide information and training to relevant services to help inform strategy, policy and service development, embedding a culture of community. Distribute access to local insight to our VCS partners to enable them to access community data to inform funding bids and service development	Data Analytics/Democratic Services
	Provide access to digital training and support at Trinity House. Ongoing Project	Training suite up and running. Training and Support offered. Pilot with Digital Kent Volunteer Programme to support residents at Trinity House undertaken.	Housing/ICT/Policy, Communities and Engagement
	Increase engagement from our Seldom Heard Communities - Ongoing Project NEW FOCUS	Work with the consultation institute and successful partner to identify and implement actions to increase engagement with those groups that are seldom heard.	Policy, Communities and Engagement
	Delivery of Community Grants and support to Community Groups - NEW	Continue to ensure the delivery of grants to those organisations best placed in our communities to ensure the delivery of services at a local level.	Policy, Communities and Engagement
	Develop the Equality Diversity and Inclusion officer group to provide internal direction and challenge- Ongoing Project NEW FOCUS	Group has been expanded to include wider group of front-line service areas providing expertise and insight on community and seldom heard groups. Continue to develop the group, its remit and influence to ensure it is embedded.	Policy, Communities and Engagement
	Implement the Diversity Calendar to ensure join up between our communities and key internal teams- Ongoing Project	Developing the use of a Diversity Calendar that reflects the curiosity and diversity of staff and the wider community. Dates of meaning to the organisation to be tied into existing events, community events, well-being week. Internal ‘celebration’ – information in Inside MBC newsletter, books and art/culture recommendations. Develop a Team talk for Unit Managers to identify dates of meaning to the organisation to celebrate and promote diversity and inclusion.	Policy, Communities and Engagement HR/L&D, Comms and Events, Museums, Civic team, Economic Development, Communities lead

Appendix 2 – EDI Action Plan 2023-24.

	Provide guidance to enable all staff to support Armed Forces Community Ongoing Project	Continue to ensure the Council supports the armed force community in accordance with the covenant. It has been identified that Forces Connect App not sufficient in terms of information for Veterans in local community, explore more ways in which to reach and connect with local veterans in the community.	Policy, Communities and Engagement
	Explore structural inequality impact of climate change in Maidstone	Undertake a review to identify and understand areas of inequality and impacts in the borough related to the effects of climate change and explore measures for intervention	Policy, Communities and Engagement/ Data Analytics/ Climate Change and Biodiversity
Connections to other plans and Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Plan • Communications Plan • Financial Inclusion Strategy • Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy 			
As an Employer			
Objective: To lead a diverse and inclusive workforce that is reflective of the borough of Maidstone where residents and colleagues feel safe, confident, and empowered to challenge and bring about change.			
Commitments	Action Title	Actions	Responsible Service
<p>We will train our staff so that they are skilled in inclusive practice, to work with communities who are less able, or willing, to participate in life in their local neighbourhoods.</p> <p>We will provide training and support to staff so they can recognise and manage unacceptable behaviours.</p> <p>We will look after the mental health of our staff and recognise when this offer needs to change</p>	Provide Staff training in Cultural Competencies NEW	Pursue cultural competency training with the Homelessness Prevention Forum	Housing/Human Resources
	Support delivery of actions to support Inclusion and Belonging for staff in the Workforce Strategy NEW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training to create awareness on EDI • Support employees to develop staff network groups i.e. carers, disabilities, LGBTQI+ • Support the outcomes of the staff survey on equalities. • Develop team talks on EDI to discuss at team meetings. • Develop creative, inclusive communication mechanisms so all council staff, including those who don't access information online, are informed of council news and developments. • Embed our values and behaviours with all staff. • Encourage staff to declare their protected characteristics confidentially through employee self-service. • Continue to analyse application and shortlisting data to identify ways to make our recruitment more inclusive and to ensure non-discrimination. • Support services to develop appropriate career grade structures for succession planning • Continue to promote the benefits package to all staff • Review our rewards and employee benefits offer to ensure its competitive with other public sector employers 	Human Resources/ Policy, Communities and Engagement
	Ensure all new Members have equitable access to support	Implement a new member survey to identify needs.	Democratic Services/ Policy, Communities and Engagement

Appendix 2 – EDI Action Plan 2023-24.

	and resources for their role. NEW		
	Maintain understanding of the organisation's diversity and staff need. NEW	Bi-Annual staff EDI survey to respond to need and benchmark progress. Staff Carers Survey to be undertaken to understand the needs of staff with caring responsibilities and how best the organisation can provide support.	Policy, Communities and Engagement/ Human Resources
	Provide training and support for Mental Health Champions – ongoing Action	Roll out of Corporate Leadership Team 'lived experiences of working for MBC' listening exercises Support Delivery of Workforce Strategy Well-Being and Reward Actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop initiatives to increase awareness of resilience and wellbeing. Continue promoting national health and wellbeing initiatives. Continue roll out of Resilience Training to managers and staff. Increase awareness of Mental Health First Aiders. 	Human Resources
Connection to other plans Strategic Plan Workforce Strategy			
As a Service Provider			
Objective: To deliver inclusive services in accordance with the Council's values			
Commitments	Action Title	Actions	Responsible Service
We will use specific and meaningful language when referring to diverse communities.	Adopt Inclusive Language Guide – Ongoing Action	Continue to watch for release of LGA Inclusive Language Guide Explore appropriate alternative options	Policy, Communities and Engagement
We will support access to services and support through ICT process, communication and join up with partners.	Proactively use 'neutral spaces' to increase access to support and services for residents – Ongoing Action	Continue to explore new and existing spaces for Face-to-face support provision and services that it may be appropriate to provide from these spaces	Policy, Communities and Engagement
We will take an evidence-based approach to leading recovery supporting financial inclusion and social well-being in Maidstone. including a specific work stream on communities.	Understand where relevant who is accessing our services and ensure that this informs service deliver NEW	Undertake a review of all services to identify EDI data collected and identify purpose and where relevant make improvements to data collection. Undertake analysis of demographic data to inform service development and ongoing monitoring. Create space on the website for publication of demographic data.	Data Analytics/Information Governance/ Policy, Communities and Engagement
We will review the Equalities Impact Assessment processes.	Support delivery of Maidstone becoming a Compassionate borough. NEW	The Compassionate Maidstone Project has restarted with Heart of Kent Hospice. Review bereavement policy Explore bereavement, death and dying and its impact on service delivery and how this is addressed in policies and procedures. Work internally with relevant teams and the EDI Officer group and externally with community partners to explore how death and dying can become a part of conversation.	Policy, Communities and Engagement/Communication and Events
We will review and identify our policies where we consider equalities impacts and identify how we can improve outcomes through revisions to policy.	Support delivery of the Financial Inclusion and	The current Financial Inclusion Strategy is under review. The review is data led and being informed by the LIFT Dashboard, Community Insight Tool alongside wider	Policy, Communities and Engagement/Data Analytics

Appendix 2 – EDI Action Plan 2023-24.

	Social Well-Being Strategy and Action Plan. NEW	measurements of Poverty and disadvantage are informing the strategy aims and workstreams. This Strategy will seek to respond to the wider determinants of financial exclusion affecting residents in Maidstone.	
	Ensure EDI is embedded in policies and service development - Ongoing Action	Prioritise existing Policies by review date and implement process of review for equalities. Work with Service Managers on understanding of the Public Sector Equality duty.	Policy, Communities and Engagement/HR
Connections to other plans Strategic Plan Digital Strategy Financial Inclusion Strategy			