



# BUDGET FEEDBACK

October 2024

## ABSTRACT

Summary results from the budget questions that were asked as part of the 2024 Resident Survey.

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[Course title]

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# METHODOLOGY

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The Budget Survey questions, this year, were included as part of the wider Resident Survey 2024. This is a bi-annual borough wide survey. This helps to prevent consultation fatigue with residents being asked to complete more than one consultation survey during the same time period which in turn helps maintain a good response rate.

The survey was open between 6 September and 20 October 2024.

The survey was open to all Maidstone Borough residents aged 18 years and over.

A total of 4262 responses were received. 2884 provided age and gender which allowed these responses to be weighted in line with the population of Maidstone.

The data in this report has been weighted according to the known population profile to counteract non-response bias. The weighting profile is based on the 203 mid-year ONS population estimates. However, the under-representation of 18- to 34-year-olds means that higher weights have been applied to responses in this group, for this reason, the results for this group should be treated with caution.

The economically active group includes respondents in employment (full, part-time or self-employed) or who are looking for work.

## **Statistical notes on the report**

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.

There were a total of 2884 weighted responses to the survey based on Maidstone's population aged 18 years and over this means overall results are accurate to  $\pm 1.81$  at the 95% confidence level. This means that if we repeated the same survey 100 times, 95 times out of 100 the results would be between  $\pm 1.81$  of the calculated response, so the 'true' response could be 1.81% above or below the figures reported (i.e. a 50% agreement rate could in reality lie within the range of 48.19% to 51.81%).

It should be noted that 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.

A percentage point is the difference between percentages. A value of 10% falling by 1 percent point becomes 9% (10% has 10 percentage points). A fall of 1% would result in a value of 9.9%.

Rounding means that some charts may not add up to 100%.

Responses have been separated into different, mutually exclusive subgroups and the data has been compared to see whether there are any significant differences between subgroups. When looking at subgroups within a sample, the sampling error increases.

Open questions were analysed through the use of code frames and assigning each issue or opportunity raised by respondents in their response a code. The use of coding allows the same issue or opportunity raised by multiple respondents to be logged and categorised together within the coding frame, thereby, making it possible to quantify how many times the same or very similar issue or opportunity was made by respondents.

## ENGAGEMENT REACH

The table below shows to level of engagement across the project on the Council's Let's Talk Consultation portal.

<b>Aware</b> <i>(Visited project Page)</i>	<b>Informed</b> <i>(Clicked on additional information)</i>	<b>Engaged</b> <i>(Participated in activity e.g. pin, survey response)</i>
3680	701	3763

In addition:

- A total of 5,539 postal surveys were mailed out, and 499 returned were received.
- Officers held 14 roadshows around the borough including in Marden, Lenham, Headcorn, Barming and Maidstone Town Centre. Paper copies of the survey were also handed out at engagement events held at various locations around the borough to support delivery of the consultation.
- Emails and reminders were sent to the consultation mailing list (13,583).
- In addition, the project was promoted on the Council's website, social media and in the local press.

# MANDATORY SERVICES

## MOST IMPORTANT MANDATORY SERVICES

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

There were 2869 responses to this question.

The top three 'most important' services that MBC is required, by law, to provide were:

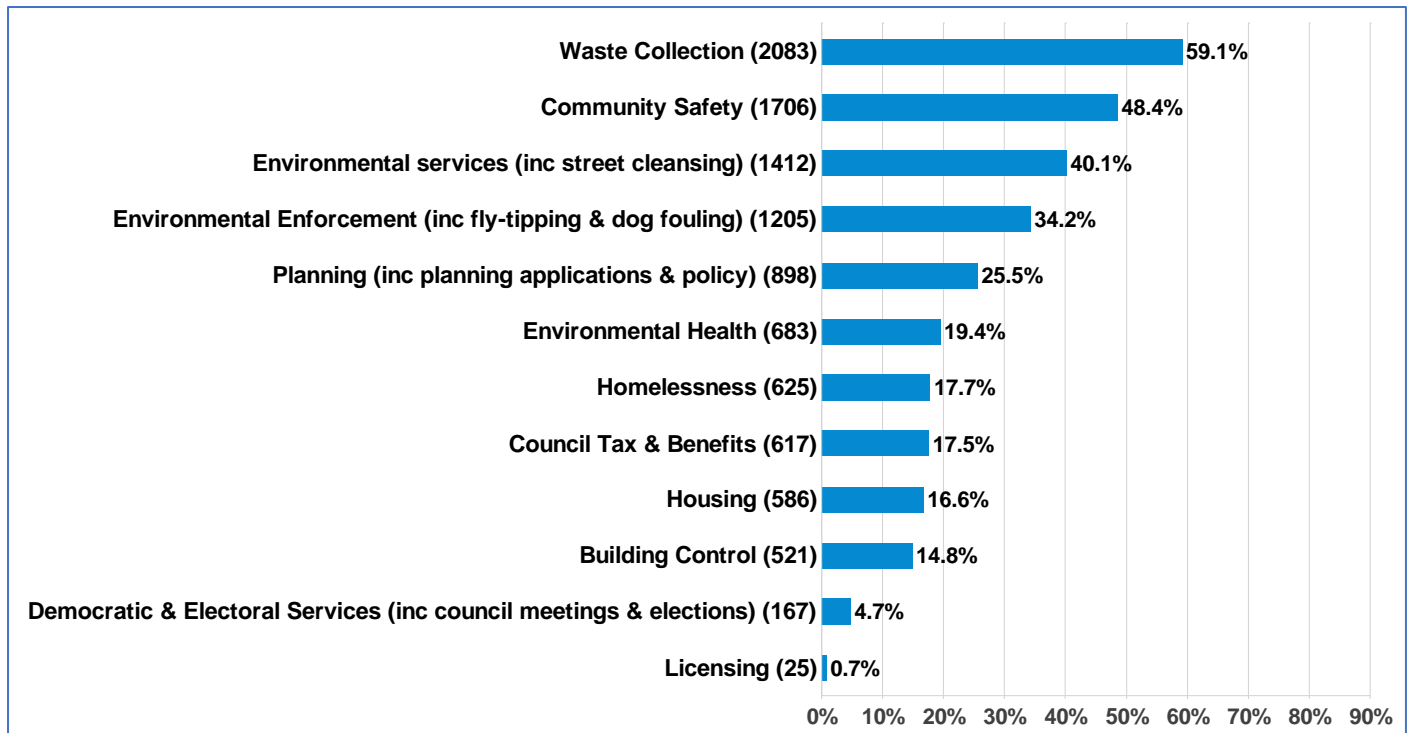
- Waste Collection 58.4%
- Community Safety 52.8%
- Environmental services (inc street cleaning) 43.1%

In the 2023 Budget survey 91.3% of respondents selected Environmental Services including waste collection and street cleansing as one of their top three services.



The bottom three 'most important' services that MBC is required to provide by law were:

- Licensing 0.9%
- Democratic Services (inc Elections) 4.2%
- Building Control 11.6%

Similarly, In the 2023 Budget survey Licensing had the lowest proportion of respondents that selected it as one of their top three mandatory services.



58.7% of female respondents selected Community Safety as one of their top three most important mandatory services compared to 47.0% of male respondents. Community Safety was the top mandatory service for female respondent while the top three for male respondents matched the overall response.

	<p>The most important service for respondents in the age groups 18 to 24 years and 35 to 44 years was community safety at 59.1% and 62.8% respectively, followed by Waste Collection and Environmental Services.</p> <p>The response from the remaining age groups was in line with the overall result.</p>
	<p>Community Safety was the top response for respondents from minority groups at 74.1%, followed by Environmental Services at 48.5% and then Waste Collection at 40.7%.</p>

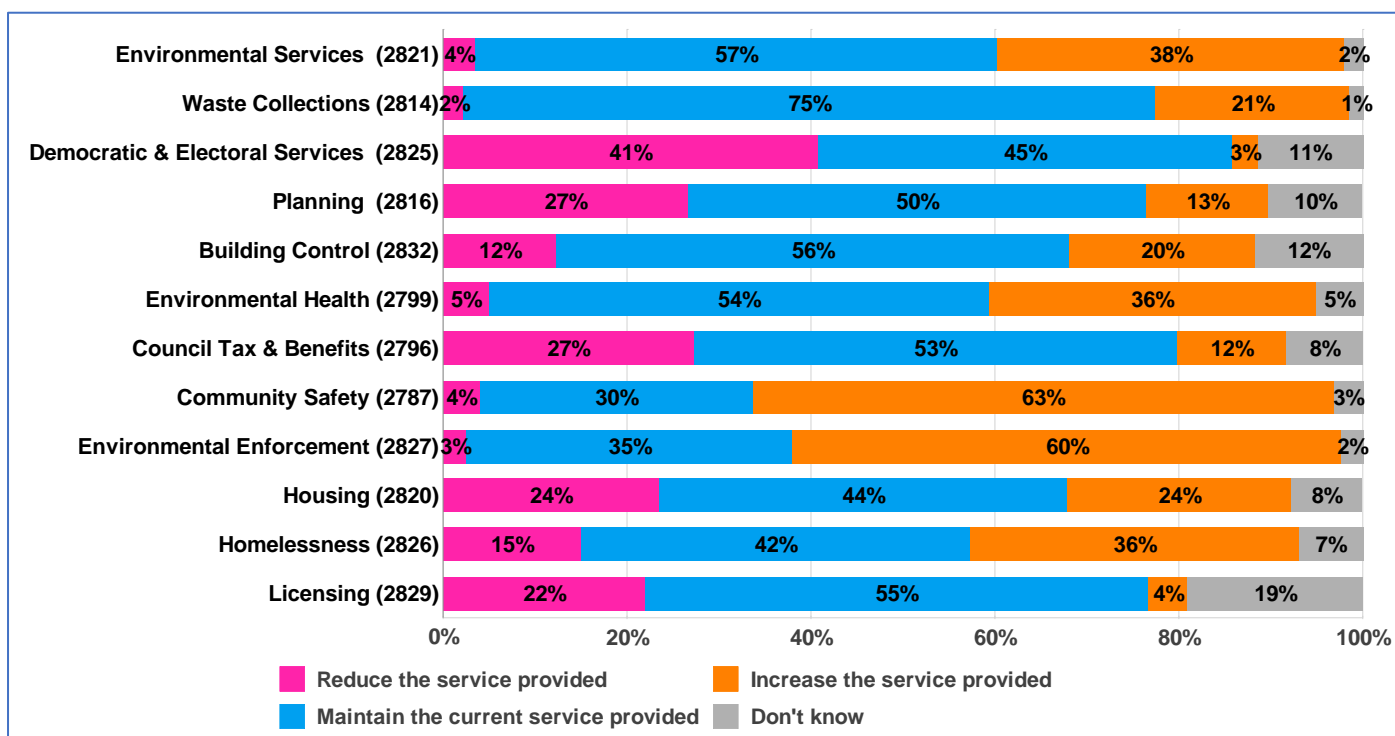
## SPENDING APPROACHES MANDATORY SERVICES

Survey respondents were asked to select the approach they felt the Council should take in terms of the delivery of each of its Mandatory Services in the next year.

They were provided with four options to choose from:

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

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






### REDUCE

The top three mandatory services respondents said should be REDUCED were:

- Democratic & Electoral Services at 40.8%
- Council Tax & Benefits at 27.3%
- Planning (inc applications & Local Plan) at 26.7%.

In the 2023 Budget Survey 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%).

	42.9% of economically active respondents had a significantly greater proportion that said Democratic Service should be reduced with 42.9% answering this way compared to 36.8% of economically inactive respondents.
	Across the age groups the 75 years and over group had the lowest proportion that said Democratic Services should be reduced at 34.2% and the 45 to 54 years group had the greatest proportion that said democratic services should be reduced at 47.1%.
	Minority groups had a significantly lower proportion that said that spending on Democratic Services should be reduced at 32.7% compared to 41.1% of respondents from white groups answering the same.




## **MAINTAIN**

The top three services respondents said should be MAINTAINED were:

- Waste Collections at 75.2%
- Environmental Services at 56.8%
- Building Control at 55.7%

In the 2023 Budget Survey 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%).



NOTE: In previous Budget Surveys, Waste Collection has been included as part of Environmental Services.



	The data shows that the proportion that responded to maintain Waste Collections increases as age increases.
	Respondents without a disability had a significantly greater proportion that that said spending on Waste Collections should be maintained at 77.5% compared to 66.9% of disabled respondents answering the same.
	Minority group respondents had a significantly lower proportion that said that spending on Waste Collections should be maintained at 64.1% compared to 75.9% of respondents from white groups answering the same.

## **INCREASE**

The top three services respondents said should be INCREASED were:

- Community Safety at 63.2%
- Environmental Enforcement at 59.7%
- Environmental Services at 37.7%

	Economically active respondents had a significantly greater proportion that said that Community Safety spending should be increased with 68.2% answering this way compared to economically inactive respondents where 52.9% answered this way.
	Respondents in the age groups 64 years and over had significantly lower proportion that said that Community safety spending should be increased at 49.1% and 42.2% respectively, compared to the other age groups. Respondents aged 35 to 44 years had the greatest proportion that said spending should be increased in this area at 72.8%.

	<p>Respondents without a disability had a significantly greater proportion that said that spending on Community Safety be increased at 64.6% compared to 57.8% of disabled respondents answering the same.</p>
	<p>Minority groups had a significantly greater proportion that said that spending on Community Safety should be increased at 71.8% compared to 62.6% of respondents from white groups answering the same.</p>

## DISCRETIONARY SERVICES

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### MOST IMPORTANT DISCRETIONARY SERVICES

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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.

- 3288 responses were received.

The top three most important discretionary services MBC provides were:

- Parks & Open Spaces 81.8%
- Car Parks 35.4%
- Mote Park Leisure Centre 32.0%

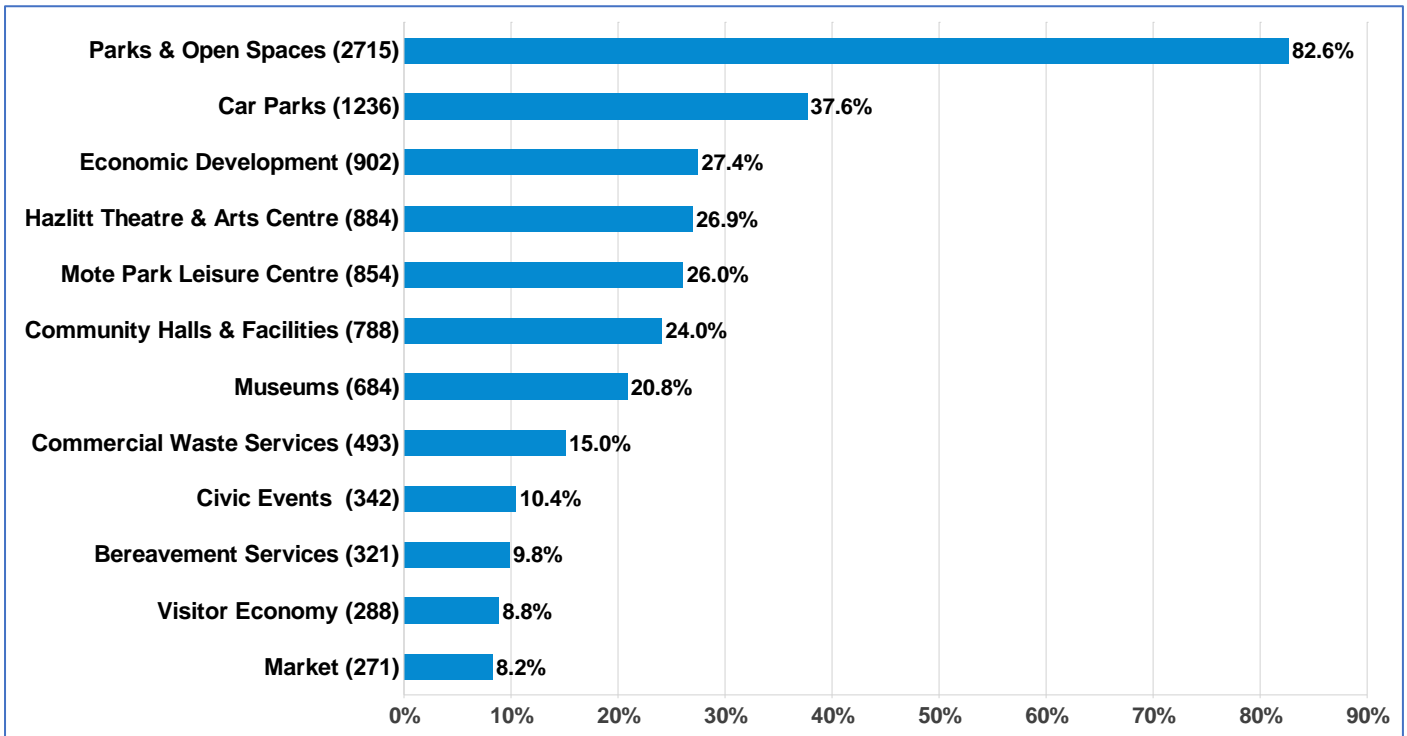
The top three responses are unchanged from when this question was last asked in the 2023 Budget Survey.

The bottom three most important discretionary services MBC provides were:

- Visitor Economy 8.7%
- Bereavement Services 9.3%
- Civic Events 10.4%

In the 2023 Budget Survey, Civic Events had the lowest proportion that said it was important at 4.0%, followed by the Market at 6.2%. In 2023, Bereavement Services was on the mandatory services list.





Park & Open Spaces was the top discretionary service across all demographic groups (Age, Gender, Ethnicity, Disability & Economic Activity)

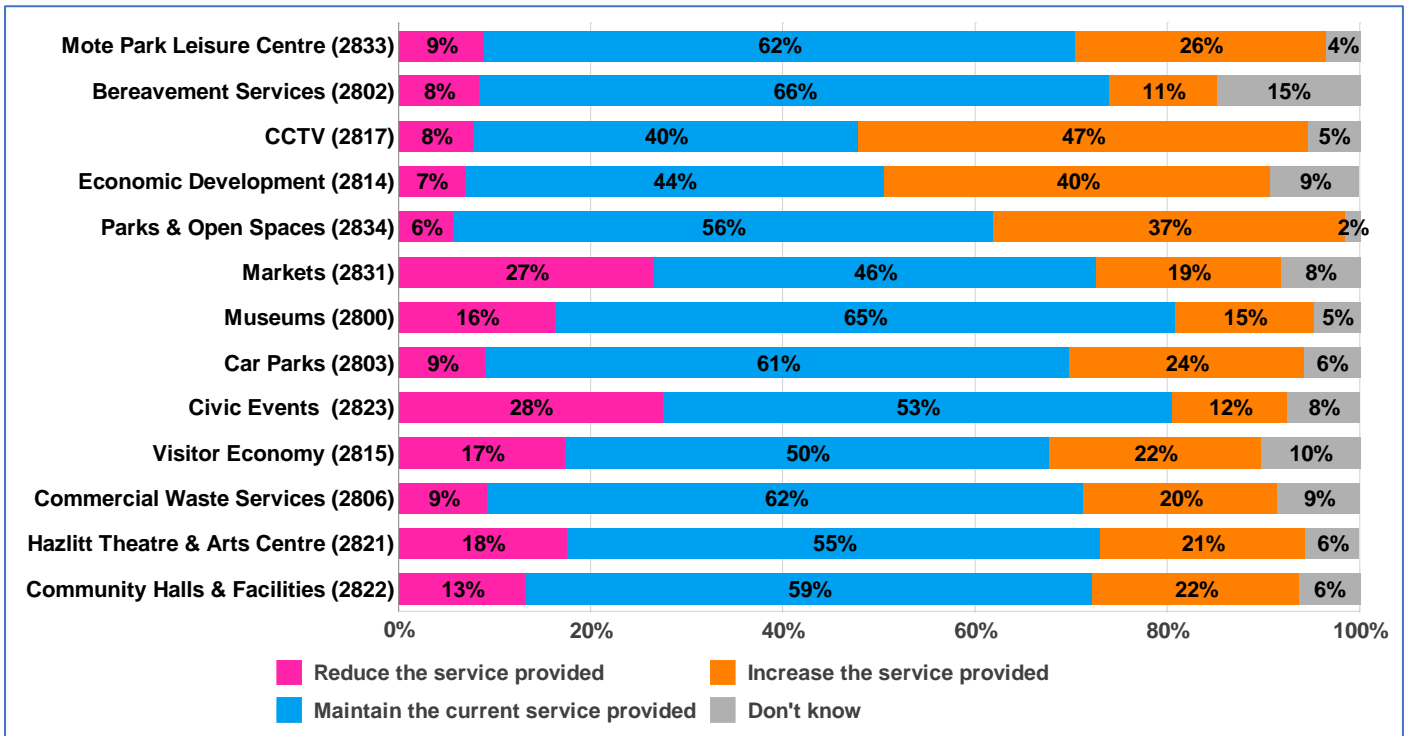
	<p>Economically active respondents had a significantly greater proportion that selected Mote Park Leisure as one of their top three discretionary services with 36.9% selecting this service compared to 21.8% of the economically inactive group. Making it the second most important service for the economically active group (whereas the economically inactive group's top three matches the overall result).</p>
	<p>The proportion of respondents selecting Mote Park Leisure Centre as one of their top three discretionary services declines as age increases from 43.5% for the 18 to 34 years age group to 16.8% for the 75 years and over age group.</p>
	<p>Respondents with a disability had a significantly greater proportion that selected car parks as one of their top three with 41.6% selecting this service compared to 33.0% of respondents without a disability. Respondents with a disability had Parks &amp; Open Spaces as first, Car Parks as second and Community Halls and facilities as third.</p>
	<p>Minority groups had a significantly lower proportion that selected Parks &amp; Open Spaces as one of their top three discretionary services at 62.8% compared to 82.9% of white groups. While this was still the top service for minority group respondents, this group had Economic Development as second most important and Mote Park Leisure Centre as third most important.</p>

## SPENDING APPROACHES 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
- Increase the service provided
- Don't know.

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



**REDUCE**

The top three discretionary services respondents said should be REDUCED were:

- Civic Events at 27.5%
- Market at 26.6%
- Hazlitt Theatre & Arts Centre 17.6%

In the 2023 Budget Survey the top three discretionary services which respondents said should be reduced were Civic Events (50.8%), Markets (43.3%) and Tourism (34.6%).



	<p>Male respondents had a significantly greater proportion that said that spending on Civic Events should be reduced with 31.4% answering this way compared to 23.7% of female respondents.</p>
	<p>Respondents aged 35 to 44 years had the lowest proportion that said Civic Events should be reduced at 21.4% - significantly lower than the proportions answering this way for all other age groups.</p>

**MAINTAIN**

The top three discretionary services respondents said should be MAINTAINED were:

- Bereavement Services at 65.6%
- Museums at 64.5%
- Commercial Waste Services at 62.0%



In the 2023 Budget Survey, 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%).

	<p>Respondents aged 18 to 34 years had a significantly lower proportion that said that Bereavement Services spending should be maintained at 57.1%, compared to all other age groups.</p>
	<p>Respondents without a disability had a significantly greater proportion that that said that spending on Bereavement Services should be maintained at 68.0% compared to 57.5% of disabled respondents answering the same.</p>

### INCREASE

The top three discretionary services respondents said should be INCREASED were:

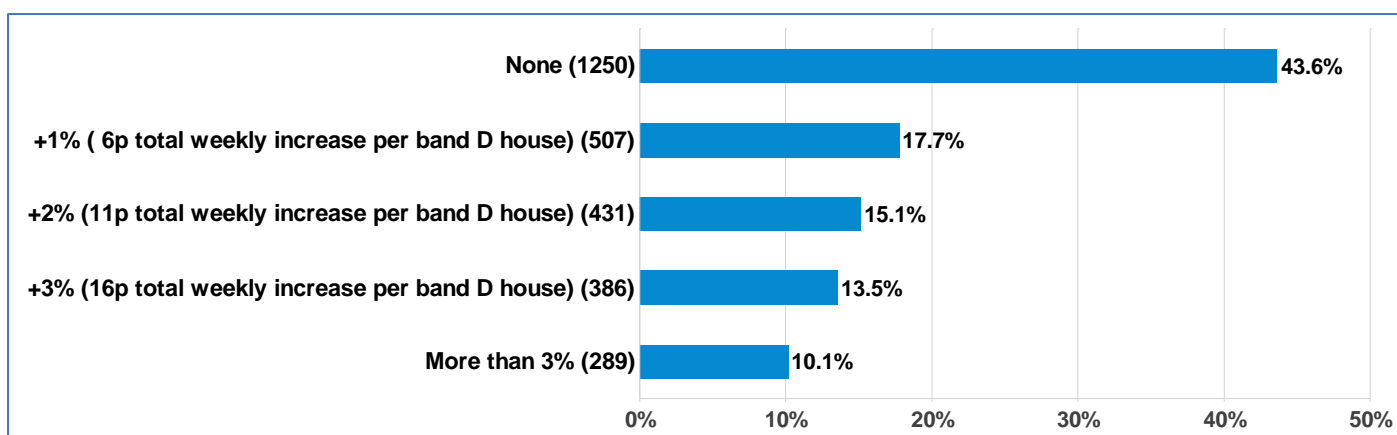
- CCTV at 46.8%
- Economic Development at 40.3%
- Parks & Open Spaces at 36.6%



	<p>Economically active respondents had a significantly greater proportion that said that CCTV spending should be increased with 48.3% answering this way compared to economically inactive respondents where 44.0% answered this way.</p>
	<p>55.3% of respondents aged 18 to 34 years said that CCTV spending should be increased, significantly greater than the proportions answering this way from all other age groups.</p>


## COUNCIL TAX INCREASES

There were 2865 responses to the question about how much should Council Tax increase by to protect services.

The most common response was 'none' with 1250 answering this way.



	<p>Male respondents had the greatest proportion that responded 'more than 3%' at 14.1%.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respondents aged 18 to 34 years had the greatest proportion that answered 'none' at 54.3%.</li> <li>• Respondents aged 55 to 64 years had the greatest proportion that answered '+2%' at 17.9%.</li> <li>• Respondents aged 65 to 74 years had the greatest proportion that answered '+3%' at 17.1%.</li> </ul>

	The proportion selecting the response 'none' decreases as age increases.
	Minority groups had the greatest proportion that selected '+1%' at 29.7%.

# DEMOGRAPHICS

