Budget Consultation Report 2018

For the 2019/20 Budget

Produced by Staffordshire County Council On behalf of Tamworth Borough Council

Document Details

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1. Executive Summary

1.1: Spend on services

The most popular response in 10 of the 12 major cost areas was for spending to remain the same. These responses ranged from 63% in 'refuse and recycling' to 44% in 'commissioning services from voluntary organisations/charities.'

In 7 of the 12 cost areas, spending less was the second most common response. 'Improved access to information/customer services' was the biggest priority for reduced spend (51%). This was also the most frequently identified cost area for savings (56%).

In one cost area ('tackling anti-social behaviour'), half of respondents (50%) chose the option to increase spending. One third or more also wanted increased spending in the following two areas; 'parks, open spaces and street cleaning' (37%) and 'improving the economic, physical, social and environment condition of Tamworth' (34%).

More than half of respondents chose to increase charges for 'leisure and other activities' (57%) and 'public spaces' (53%). However general comments in section 3.5 give insight into variation in opinions. Conversely, 65% of respondents chose the option to decrease charges for 'car parking.'

Regarding any increase to the level of council tax, the most popular option was Option A, the lowest proposed increase of 0.6%,. This was selected by 44% of respondents. This was followed by option B (2.0% rise) selected by 26% of respondents. The maximum increase of 3.0% (option E) was selected by 15% of respondents. The maximum level of increase (3.0%) is still below the average level of increase witnessed for all authorities across the West Midlands (4.9%) according to CIPFA's (The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) latest annual council tax survey.

1.2: Views on spend over time

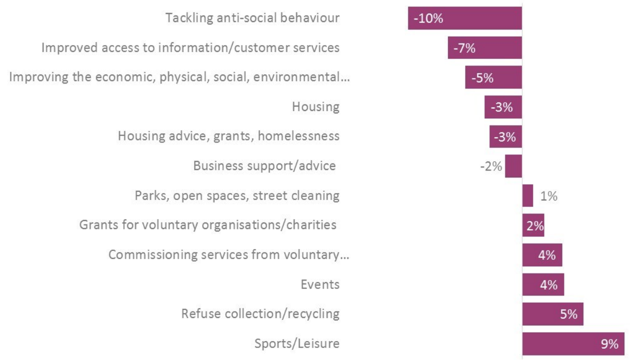
This year, as with last, it was most common for respondents to want the level of spend to remain the same. Respondents most wanted to maintain spend on 'refuse and recycling services.' However, during the last year, respondents strength of feeling has changed. The overall proportion of respondents wanting to maintain spend has declined in some key areas including 'waste and recycling services' and increased in others, for example, 'tackling anti-social behaviour.'

Figure 1.1: Percentage change between 2017 and 2018 in people saying they would maintain spend (% change)

Reduced and increased spend were less popular options with respondents. During the last year, respondents strength of feeling for both has changed within the overall proportion of respondents. This is illustrated in the graphs below.

Figure 1.2: Percentage change between 2017 and 2018 in people saying they would reduce spend (% change)

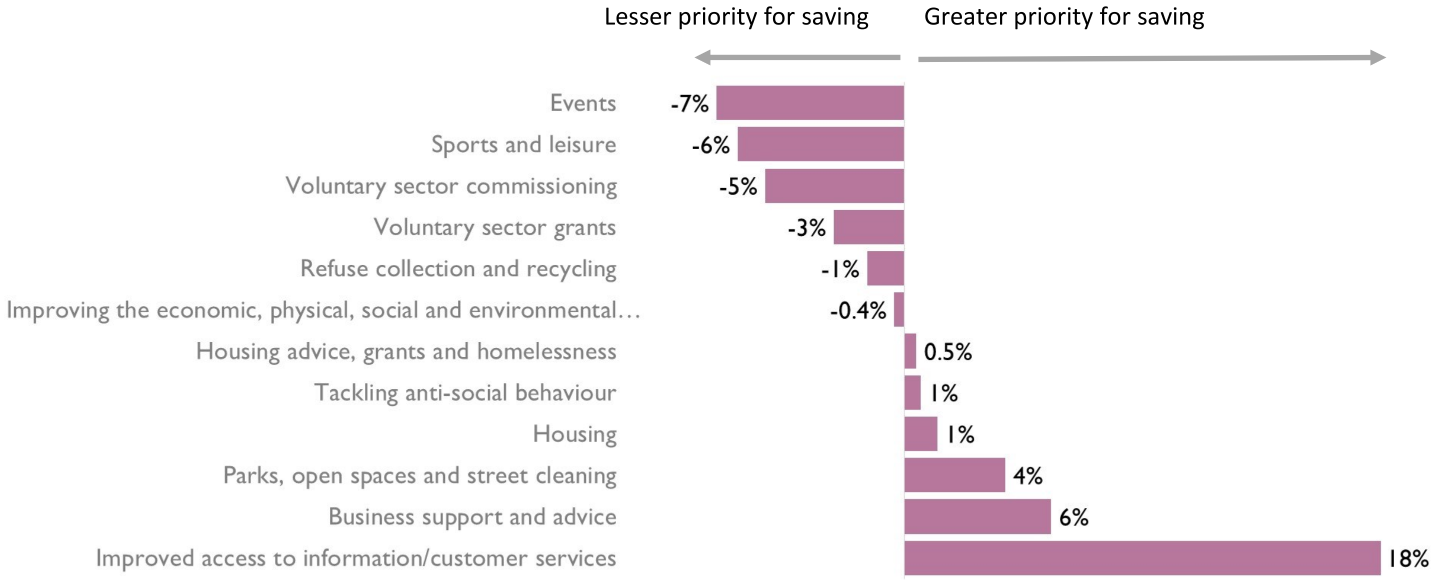
Figure 1.3: Percentage change between 2017 and 2018 in people saying they would increase spend (% change)



1.3: Priorities for savings over time

This year, the most important priority for saving was 'improved access to information/customer services.' During the last year, this has also become a much greater priority for saving amongst all respondents.

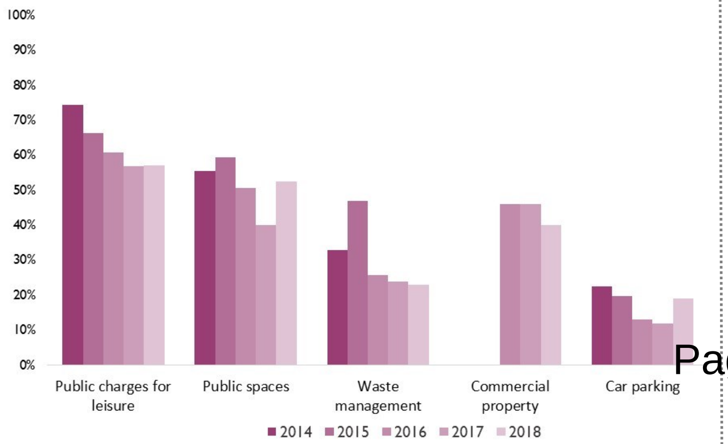
Figure 1.4: Percentage change in the priorities for saving between 2017 and 2018 (% change)



1.4: Increasing charges over time

Increased charges have become slightly more acceptable this year for 'public spaces' and 'car parking.'

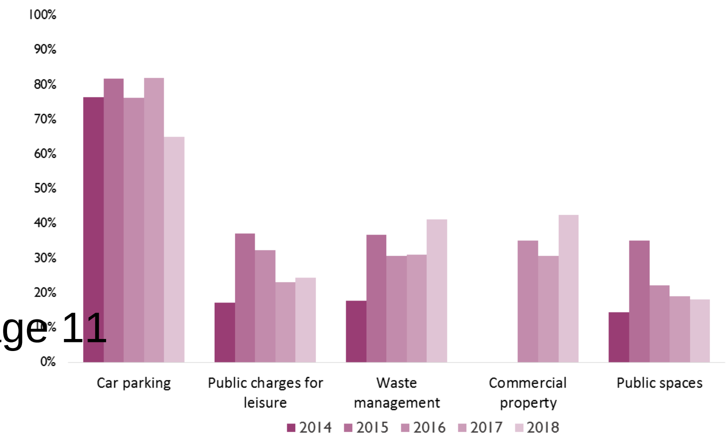
Figure 1.5: Increasing charges over time (%)



1.5: Decreasing charges over time

This year higher proportions of respondents supported decreased charges in 'waste management' and 'commercial property.'

Figure 1.6: Decreasing charges over time (%)



2.1: Introduction

Tamworth Borough Council reviews it's council tax and charges on an annual basis and this helps to develop the Council's budget and ensures funding is put into areas which are of priority.

Residents, businesses and the voluntary sector are always an important part of this process. Therefore this year as in previous years, all these groups were invited to share their views on spend, making savings and charges for the year ahead. Responses highlight some of the conversations the council might develop with these groups going forward.

This report summarises the views of those who participated. While this is not fully representative of Tamworth opinion it provides a helpful addition to the information that will inform the Council's budgeting decisions for the year ahead.

The report presents the analysis of the combined results from all three respondent groups and emphasises where there are differences in opinions between the distinct groups. Comparisons with the results of the consultation from previous years have also been made in order to identify commonality or differences in opinions over time. Full results for each of the thee groups are included in the appendix.

2.2: Methodology

The consultation for the 2019/20 budget ran from 1st August to the 14th September 2018 and three key groups (residents, businesses and the voluntary sector) were encouraged to share their views through tailored paper and online surveys.

These surveys were developed by Tamworth Borough Council in conjunction with Staffordshire County Council's Strategy Team. These were based on surveys used in previous years.

Tamworth Borough Council promoted all three surveys via a range of communications channels. These included press releases in the local newspaper (The Tamworth Herald), a prominent feature on the Tamworth Borough Council website and through social media including Twitter, Facebook and the Tamworth Borough Council blog.

Tamworth Borough Council (with support from Staffordshire County Council) also targeted specific groups to take part in the consultation. These included:

- Members of the Tamworth Borough Council Citizens' Panel and Tamworth Borough Council Housing Tenants. Both groups received a direct letter or email encouraging them to participate in the residents survey.
- Businesses received an email encouraging them to participate in the business survey. This was also widely promoted by the Economic Development Team.
- Voluntary sector organisations and recipients of small sports and arts grants were also emailed to encourage their involvement.
- Involvement was also supported and promoted by Support Staffordshire and Tamworth Borough Council's Community Development Team.
- Stakeholders including SCVYS, Age UK and groups representing race, disability and carers were also emailed and encouraged to participate in the surveys.

2.3: RESPONSES

A total of 168 responses were received to the consultation and these consisted of:

- 154 residents.
- 3 businesses; two (67%) were in a town centre location and one (33%) was in an out of town location.
- 11 community and voluntary organisations; four (36%) of these were 'a registered charity'; two (18%) were community interest companies; two (18%) were voluntary groups; two (18%) were community groups and one (9%) was a 'company limited by guarantee.'

For the purpose of analysis, responses from all three groups have been combined. Where differences were apparent by respondent type, these have been highlighted graphically or through a textual summary.

Some caution should be applied when interpreting the results, particularly in relation to those business and voluntary organisation responses. Responses from these groups were low and therefore should not be viewed as representative of the overall communities which they represent.

2.4: PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS FOR THE RESIDENTS SURVEY

In total, there were 168 responses to the Tamworth residents survey. This equates to 0.3% of the adult population of Tamworth[1] which is slightly lower than last years response rate.

In statistical terms, the 95% confidence level has been applied to the residents survey results. This means that if the survey was repeated, in 95 out of 100 cases, the same response would be achieved.

Residents responses have an overall confidence interval of +/-8% meaning that the percentage responses they have given to any questions could fall in the range of 8% higher or 8% lower than their actual response. A confidence interval of +/-3-4% is fairly typical for a statistically robust survey[2].

When considering key demographics, residents responses were representative of some key characteristics but were less so of others:

⇒ The residents survey falls within an acceptable range of representation by gender.[3]

⇒ It was more common for older residents to participate in the residents survey and therefore the results are generally over representative of those respondents aged 55-74. The survey is under representative by 18-34 year olds and 45-54 year olds. Good representation has been achieved from 35-44 year olds.[3]

⇒ The survey results are slightly over representative by those respondents who had a disability.[4]

⇒ Responses are representative of the most commonly occurring ethnicities of White British and White Other.[4]

[1] The adult population of Tamworth includes those residents who are aged 18 and above, Mid Year Estimates (MYE) 2017.

[2] To achieve a +/-4% confidence interval for the residents survey, 500 responses would need to be achieved from Tamworth Borough Residents and to achieve a +/-3% confidence interval, 800 responses would need to be returned.

[3] Mid Year Population Estimates (MYE), 2017, Office of National Statistics (ONS).

[4] Census 2011, Office of National Statistics (ONS).

3.1: Spending

Respondents were provided with planned spend on major cost areas for 2018/19 and were asked whether they felt the Council should increase, decrease or keep spending the same.

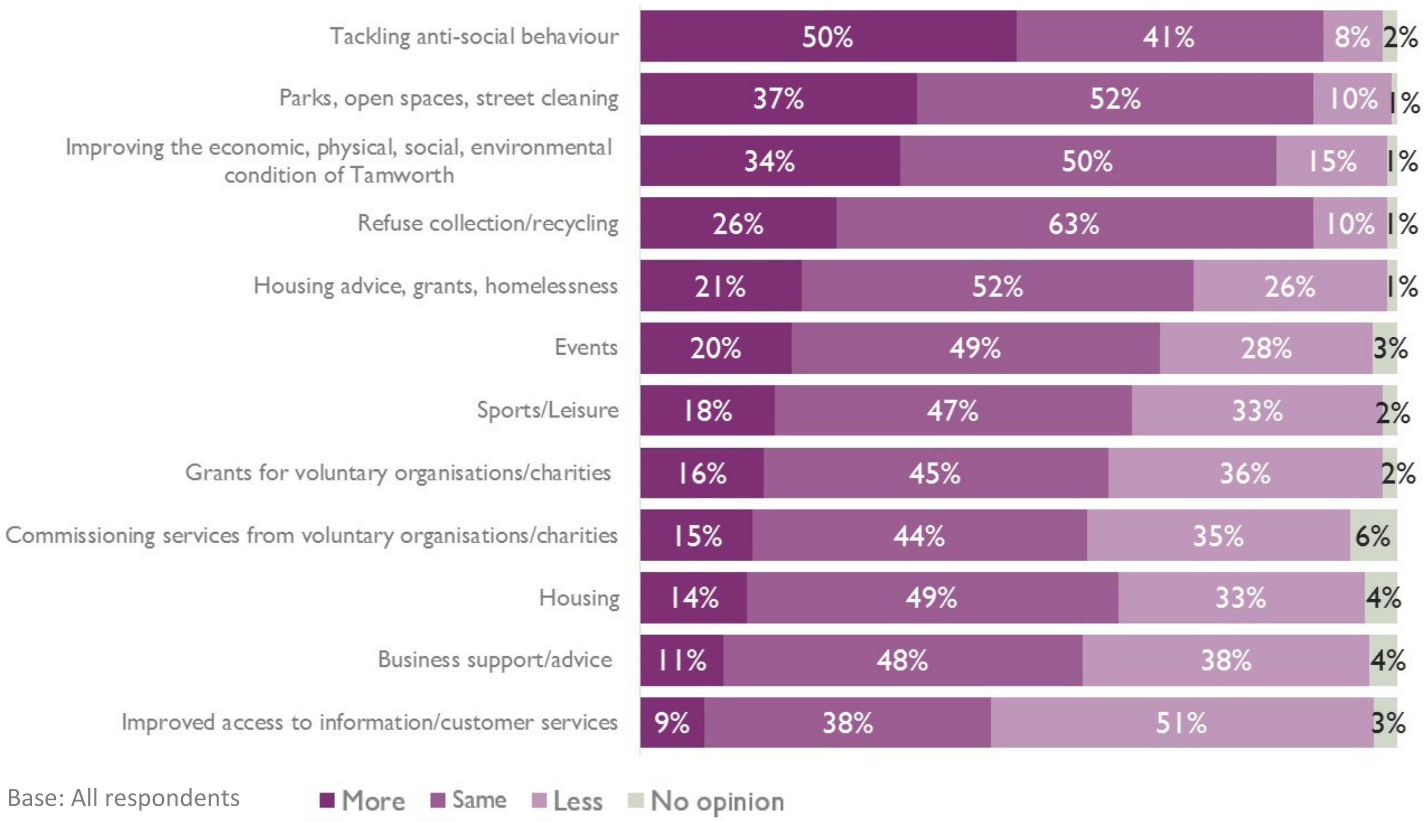
⇒ It was most common for respondents across the majority of service areas to say they would prefer the level of spend to remain the same. This was the case in 10 of the 12 major cost areas.

⇒ This was particularly apparent regarding spend on 'refuse and recycling' with 63% wanting to maintain the same level of spend on this service. In addition, half indicated their preference for keeping spend the same in three additional areas; 'parks, open spaces and street cleaning' (52%), 'housing advice, grants and homelessness' (52%) and 'improving the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of Tamworth' (50%).

⇒ Spending less was the second most common response (in 7 out of the 12 major cost areas) and the highest proportion of respondents wanted less spend in 'improved access to information/customer services' (51%).

⇒ Half of all respondents (50%) wanted spending more on 'tackling anti-social behaviour.' The collective views from all respondents are illustrated in the graph below:

Figure 3.1: Preferred spend for 2019/20 on major cost areas (%)



Base: All respondents

3.2: Maintain levels of spending[5]

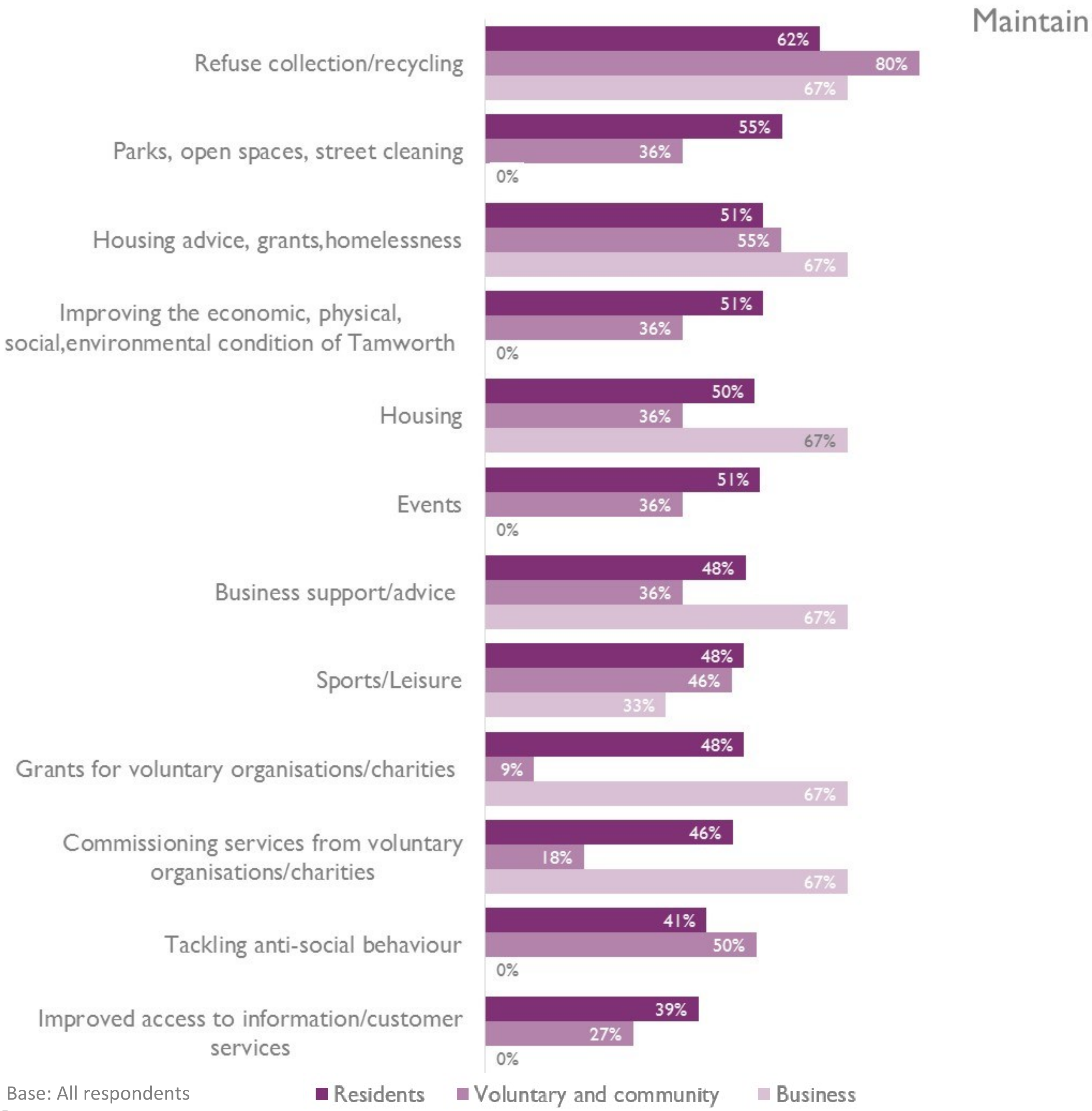
There were some similarities but also differences in views by respondent group. 'Residents' views generally mirrored those of the overall results (as these were the largest group).

⇒ 'Residents' expressed a preference for maintaining levels of spend in 10 of the 12 cost areas. 'Tackling anti-social behaviour' and 'improved access to information/customer service were the only exceptions to this.

⇒ Maintaining service levels was important for 'voluntary and community' and 'business' respondents in 6 of the 12 cost areas.

⇒ 'Voluntary and community' and 'business' respondents expressed a preference for maintaining spend in three cost areas; 'refuse collection and recycling', 'housing advice, grants and homelessness' and 'housing.'

Figure 3.2: Maintaining spend for 2018/19 on major cost areas by respondent group (%)



Base: All respondents

[5] When drawing conclusions from these responses, it is important to remember that the 'business' respondent group and the 'voluntary and community' group responses are considerably smaller than the 'residents' response group, therefore results may not be representative of their overall group.

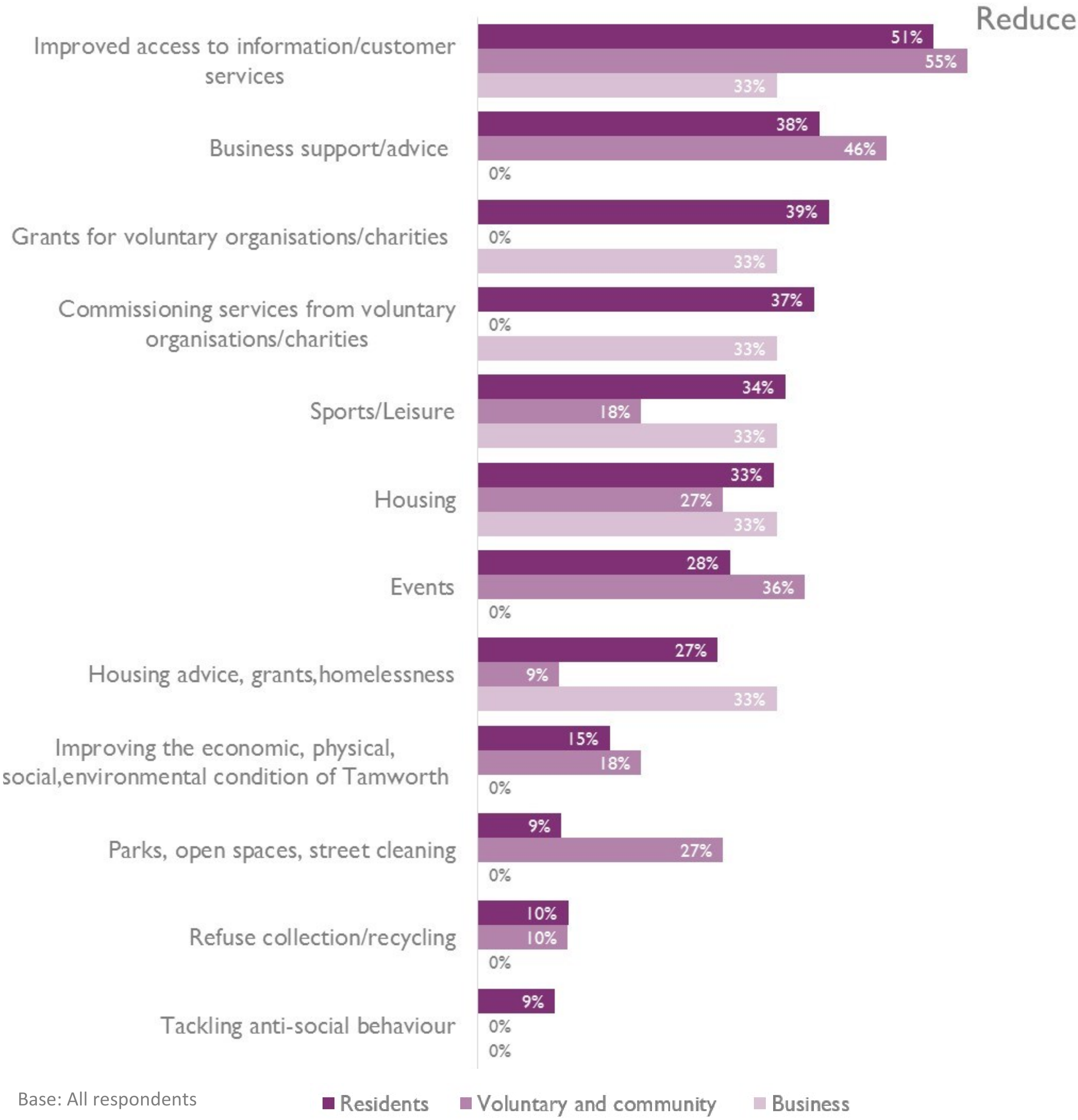
3.3: Reduce levels of spending[6]

Reducing spend was generally a less popular option amongst respondent groups. There were some differences in views illustrated in the graphic below.

⇒ Reducing spend was the second or third choice for each of the following cost centres by respondent group; ‘residents’ (11 of the 12 cost centres), ‘voluntary and community’ (10 of the 12 cost centres) and businesses (7 of the 12 cost centres).

⇒ Reducing spend for ‘improved access to information/customer services’ was important for both ‘residents’ and ‘voluntary and community’ respondents alike.

Figure 3.3: Reducing spend for 2018/19 on major cost areas by respondent group (%)



Base: All respondents

[6] When drawing conclusions from these responses, it is important to remember that the ‘business’ respondent group and the ‘voluntary and community’ group responses are considerably smaller than the ‘resident’ response group, therefore results may not be representative of their overall group.

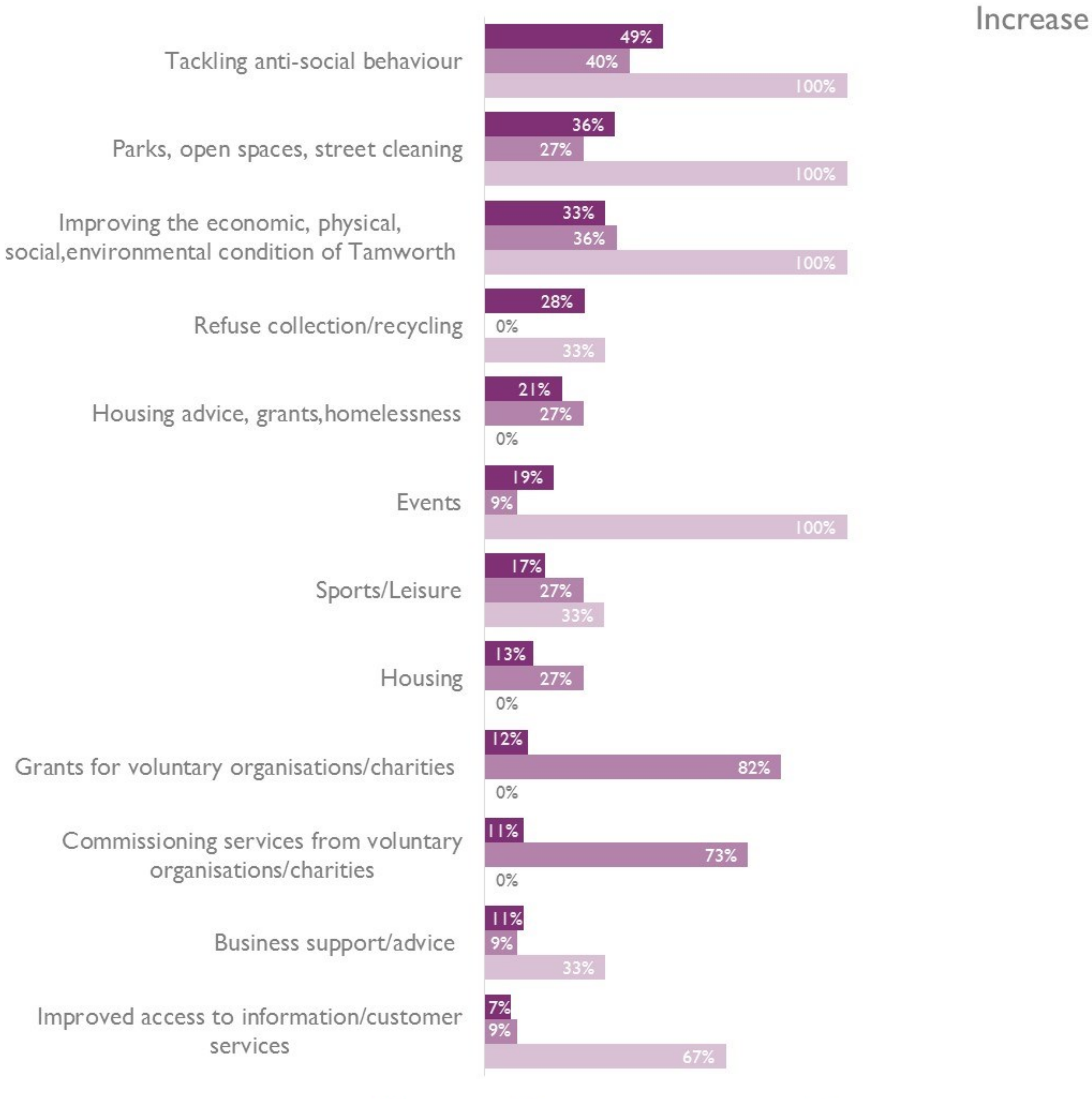
3.4: Increase levels of spending[7]

There were similarities but also differences in views by respondent group.

⇒ ‘Residents’ wanted to see increased level of spending in one cost area ‘tackling anti-social behaviour’ whilst ‘voluntary and community’ respondents wanted increased spending in three cost areas; ‘improving the economic, physical, social and environmental condition,’ ‘grants for voluntary organisations’ and ‘commissioning services from voluntary organisations.’

⇒ ‘Businesses’ wanted increased spend in 5 of the 12 cost areas; ‘events’, ’parks, open spaces and street cleaning,’ ’tackling anti-social behaviour,’ ‘improving the economic, physical, social and environmental condition’ and ‘improved access to information/customer services.’

Figure 3.4: Increasing spend for 2018/19 on major cost areas by respondent group (%)



Base: All respondents

[7] When drawing conclusions from these responses, it is important to remember that the ‘business’ respondent group and the ‘voluntary and community’ group responses are considerably smaller than the ‘residents’ response group, therefore results may not be representative of their overall group.

3.5: Comments on council spend

39 responses on council spend have been analysed. 36 of these were from 'residents', two were from 'voluntary and community' respondents and one was from a 'business.' Respondents commented on many of the cost centres. Both themed and individual comments are illustrated below. Respondents additionally raised wider questions on council spend. These included the need to *"scrutinise budgets,"* undertake *"service reviews/"* ensure *"efficient spend"* and pay attention to *"income generating services and funding initiatives."* These views were echoed by 'residents', 'voluntary and community' and 'businesses' alike.

<u>'Residents' comments</u>

Parks, open spaces and street cleaning (7 responses)

This is one of the service areas most frequently identified for investment. Comments are reflective of this and identify some areas where spend might be focused. 'Residents' expressed support for increased provision of parks and open spaces so for example *"children have somewhere to play especially on new build estates."* Maintenance was also a view frequently echoed by those 'residents' commenting. For example *"footpaths are very uneven and not maintained," "there are too many weeds"* and *"litter"* is an issue in some areas. More expenditure on street scene was supported to *"help the service clean the borough and keep the place tidy and looking smart."*

Refuse collection and recycling (6 comments)

A high proportion of respondents (63%) chose the option to maintain investment in this service area with a further 26% choosing to increase spend. Comments identify issues with the service that might be explored going forward. 'Residents' commenting on this cost centre most commonly mentioned the green waste collection charges. This was not a popular initiative amongst those commenting. It was felt to be "*an extra tax on top of the council tax increase"* and was not an approach which is being implemented universally by all authorities. 'Residents' also questioned how funds from green waste collection were now being spent. One 'resident' also complained that fortnightly bin collection is not enough, especially during the warm, summer months.

Sports and leisure (6 comments)

'Residents' commenting on this cost centre recognised the importance of *"preventing obesity"* and *"investing in the health and wellbeing of the nation to bring about long term savings in health care."* Respondents agreed that *"sports development do a fantastic job at increasing physical activity with the gym and summer activities covering all ages."* They also agreed that more should be spent on health initiatives. For example, *"I attend the referral gym and it's a fantastic and unique facility but could do with being bigger,"* some *"fun free water play in the park for the children in the summer"* would also be appreciated by one parent.

Tackling anti social behaviour (5 comments)

Half of respondents (50%) identified this service area as one where spend might be increased and comments identify the nature and impact of some of the anti social behaviour issues that might be addressed. Concerns included *"drug dealing," "drug use", "drinking", "drinking/driving"* and *"anti-social noise."* These 'residents' felt intimidated and were fearful of going outside. They also feared for their children going outside either alone or with friends.

Improving the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of Tamworth (5 comments)
Overall, 1 in 3 respondents (34%) identified this as an area for increased spend. The following comments reveal some of the areas where investment might be targeted. 'Residents' supported a town centre plan which makes it "*a place to be for small business rather than a place not to be." "Please support local start up businesses by lowering rates payable until shops have been able to build up a customer base.* Low pay was an associated concern echoed by one 'resident' who was *"struggling to pay the bills and had not had a pay rise since 1998."* For the physical environment, 'residents' expressed the need for *"road works and urgent repairs"* and for the social condition, one 'resident' cited the need for improved *"community spirit"* to *"help the town centre grow again."*

One response was also received from 'residents' about each of the following cost centres:
Housing: *"We have loads of houses up for sale and empty. Why not renovate those instead of using up green belt land, put houses on sites that are disused."*

Housing advice/grants and homelessness: *"How about converting the library into sheltered housing for the homeless/ emergency accommodation? The well off can look after themselves, but the vulnerable will always need your help."*

Events: *"Increase spending for Tamworth arts and events department." "I would love to see a continuation of the gateway project, a Gibbs and Canning statue on the Glascote Cemetery roundabout to further celebrate the towns heritage."*

Grants for voluntary organisations and charities: One 'resident' felt that the Council could help volunteer groups by offering use of their *"meeting rooms at reduced prices."*

Additional comments which have risk implications for particular vulnerable groups are illustrated below:

⇒ *"As a disabled driver I park in Little Church Lane in a disabled space on the left/alongside the houses. To the right of said space the weeds are such that it is increasingly difficult to park without being outside of yellow line. Can this be cut back urgently?"*

⇒ *"Clear leaves which become extremely slippery and cause accident risk to children on a school run."*

⇒ *"Streets also need better clearance in the winter with ice and snow which leave side roads just dangerous."*

‘Voluntary and community’ comments

Two ‘voluntary and community’ respondents also commented on the costs centres. Their opinions echoed sentiments previously expressed by ‘residents’ and also introduced some new ones. These are illustrated below:

⇒ ***Parks open spaces and street cleaning:*** Have less emphasis on flower displays in the town centre

⇒ ***Housing:*** remove areas of neglect in the estates.

⇒ ***Improved access to information and customer services:*** Ensure that residents can meet council officers face to face not via the telephone.

⇒ ***Tackling anti-social behaviour:*** Street wardens to actually patrol all areas of Tamworth and not just those that may be trouble free.

⇒ ***Improving the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of Tamworth:*** Work with the County Council to report dangerous potholes, improve the Council controlled car parks and invest in public toilets.

Business comments

One ‘business’ respondent also shared the comments documented below.

⇒ ***Improving the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of Tamworth:*** Invest in improving the attractiveness of the town to attract good businesses, reward businesses who take pride in their properties, prioritise attracting successful, high-end, international companies to enable the town to flourish.

⇒ ***Business support and advice:*** Start up businesses should be supported but established and expanding businesses should be prioritised as they have more disposable capital to spend on the area and maintain the appearance of their establishments (thus the town) to a better level.

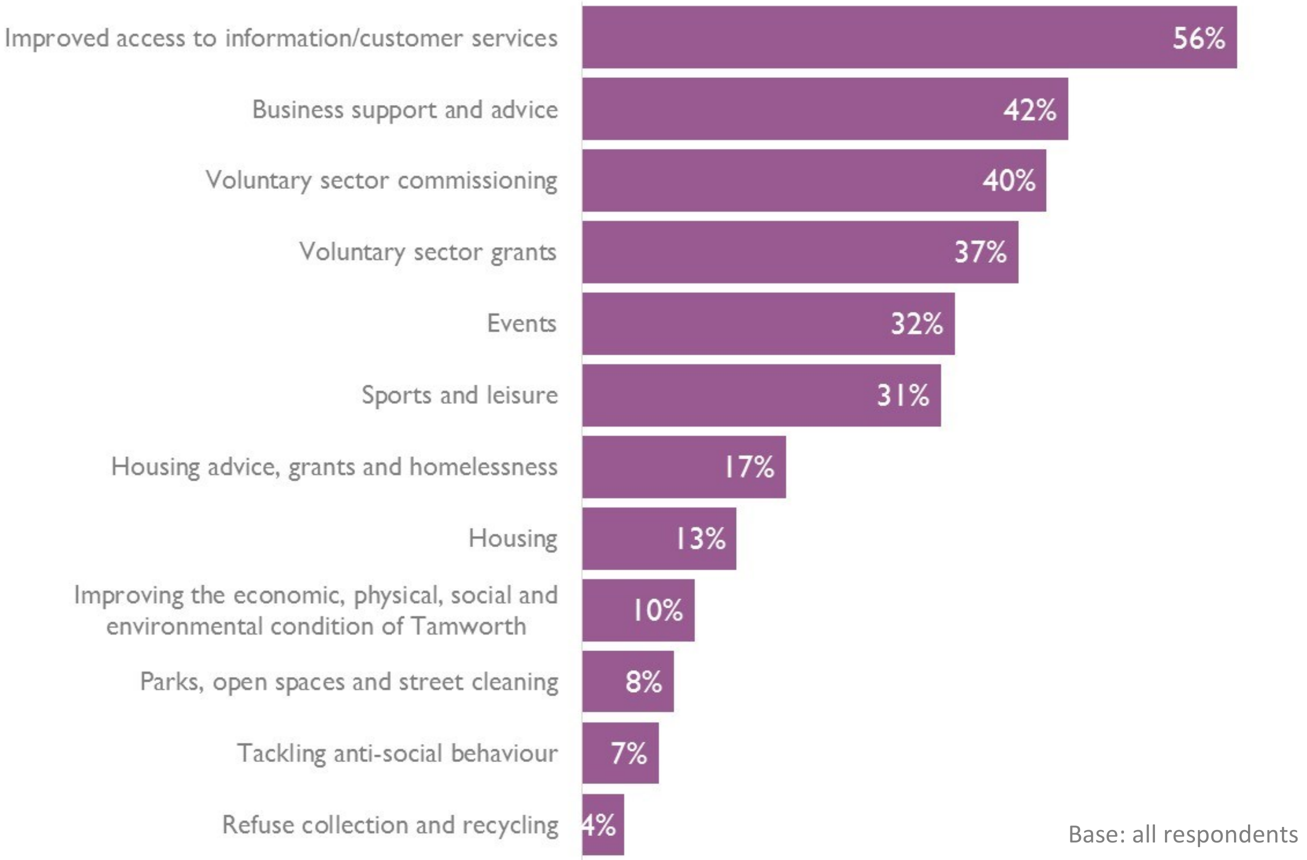
⇒ ***Housing:*** Reduce the ‘put off factors’ like council houses, to attract good businesses.

3.6: Savings and reducing costs[8]

Respondents were provided with a list of services and asked to indicate up to three for savings or reduced costs. Responses are broadly consistent with the overall assessment presented in figure 3.1 where the majority of respondents (51%) chose to spend less on 'improved access to information/customer services,' but a much lower proportion chose to spend less on 'refuse and recycling' (10%), 'parks and open spaces' (10%) and 'tackling anti-social behaviour' (8%).

It was most common for respondents to indicate that they would like to see savings or reduced costs in 'improved access to information/customer services.' Respondents were least likely to want savings made to 'refuse and recycling,' 'tackling anti-social behaviour' and 'parks, open spaces and street cleaning.' Preferences for saving/reducing costs by respondent group are illustrated below and in the graphic overleaf.

Figure 3.5: Which THREE services should the Council look at if they had to make savings or reduce costs? (%)

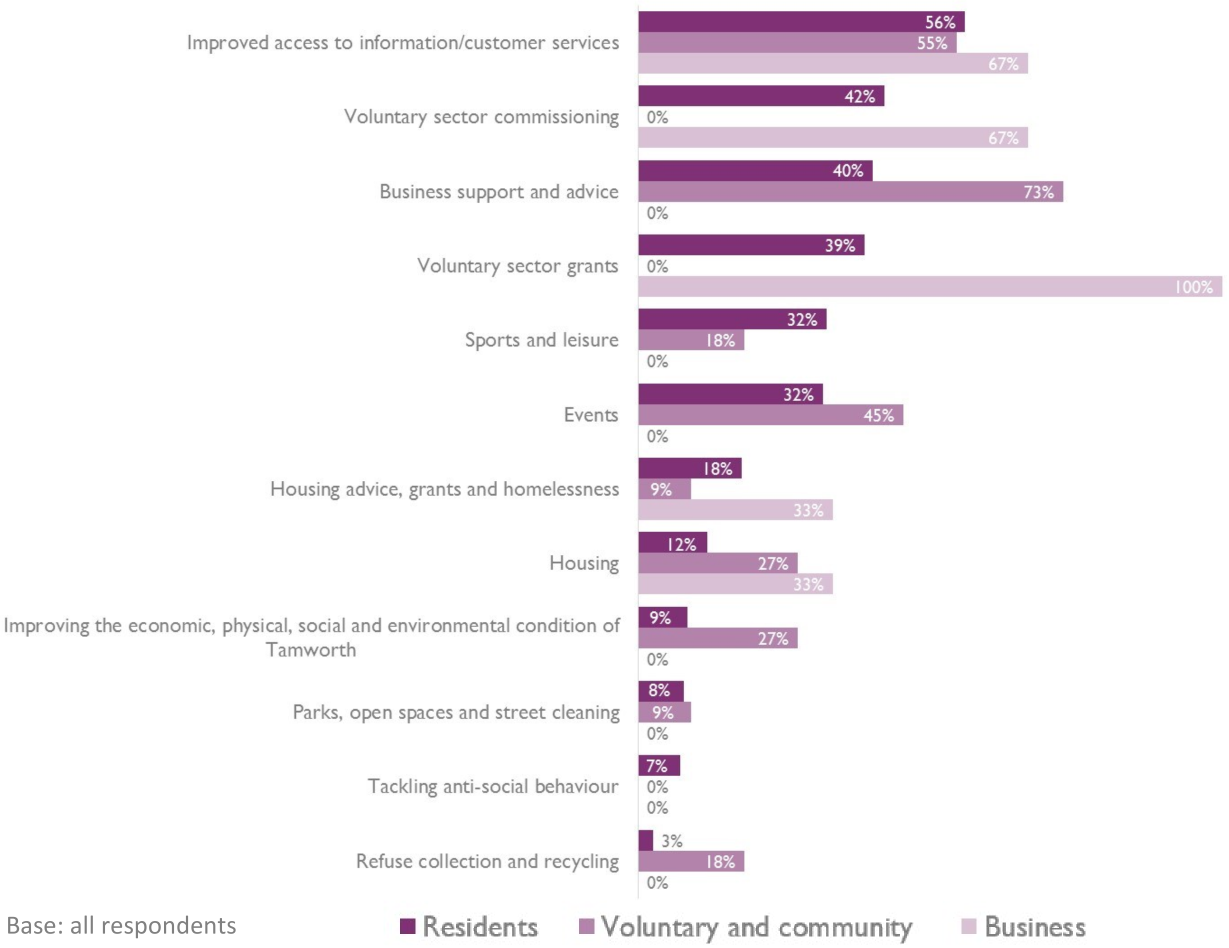


- ⇒ All groups prioritised savings for 'improved access to information/customer services'. This was ranked within the top three priorities for savings across all three respondent groups.
- ⇒ 'Resident' and 'community' respondents prioritised savings to 'business support and advice' (this was in both groups top three priorities for saving).
- ⇒ Both 'residents' and 'businesses' prioritised reductions in 'voluntary sector grants' and 'voluntary sector commissioning.' These were within the top four priorities for reduction amongst both groups.

[8] When drawing conclusions from these responses, it is important to remember that the 'business' respondent group and the 'voluntary and community' group responses are considerably smaller than the 'residents' response group, therefore results may not be representative of their overall group.

Looking at figures 3.3 and 3.6, 'businesses' and 'voluntary and community' respondents appear to be divided on sector lines. 'Residents' appear to be more interested in investment that has tangible impact in their community/local environment rather than with investment in 'business support and advice,' 'voluntary sector commissioning' and 'improved access to information/customer services.'

Figure 3.6: Which THREE services should the Council look at if they had to make savings or reduce costs by respondent group (%)



Base: all respondents

Comments about reducing costs or services

15 comments from 'residents,' 'voluntary and community' and 'businesses' have been analysed. Remarks included that all services were *"good"* but 'residents' reiterated the need to *"review expenditure"* across the board seeking *"efficiency"* in overall spend and other ways of continuing provision. 'Residents' also recognised the need to focus on *"core activities."* Comments on specific services from all three groups are illustrated below and referenced by respondent type.

Business support and advice (3 responses)

Views shared illustrated a wide range of viewpoints and included; *"as a resident, advice to wealth creating businesses that start up in town to aid economic regeneration is a key expectation I have of Tamworth Borough Council"* and *"reducing business support/advice is not going to save a huge amount based on your figures, I think a lot of the information is available from other sources"* and *"surely business support and information should not come from local public money?"*

Voluntary sector grants/commissioning (3 responses)

'Residents' commenting sought clarification on the *"differences"* between voluntary sector grants and commissioning and wanted an explanation of financial decisions in relation to both. They also sought examples of what can be *"achieved using volunteers."*

'Residents' also raised questions specific to grants or commissioning. These included; instead of *"draining council funds,"* voluntary services could *"access money from lottery funding, Princes Trust and other similar schemes,"* "grants should be reduced to able bodied people or those who are working," *"financial management would be more useful advice given"* and *"if commissioning the voluntary sector to cover various services the grants could be reduced."* One 'voluntary and community' respondent also asked whether *"community pay back volunteers or volunteers in general could cover more roles,"* for example looking after parks and open spaces.

Improving access to information/customer services (2 responses)

One 'resident' expressed the opinion that spend on this cost centre *"seemed expensive."* Especially considering people can increasingly use their *"own technology"* to access services. These 'residents' sought understanding of what *"improvements"* would be proposed to assess whether spend was worthwhile.

Sports and leisure (2 responses)

These responses illustrate that there can be a split in opinion, so continuing the conversation about priorities could be helpful. The diverse views expressed by these 'residents' included *"sports, leisure and events being a luxury which needs to be reduced. At least until Britain is back on its feet after reducing the deficit."* An alternative view of sports and leisure facilities as income generators was illustrated; *"they raise money, they get money from gyms, hall hire and classes."*

Events (2 responses)

"Events are nice" but the council spends *"way too much on the flower displays around town."* These residents felt the Council should get "*more sponsorship for events."*

Improving the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of Tamworth (2 response)

This theme was discussed by one 'resident' who prioritised the safety and condition of Tamworth but felt this could be *"funded in other ways."* One 'business' respondent voiced the opinion that *"raising the profile of the town should be prioritised."* "*Focus on businesses who actually understand their own role in making* the town more affluent."

Housing advice, grants and homelessness (1 response)

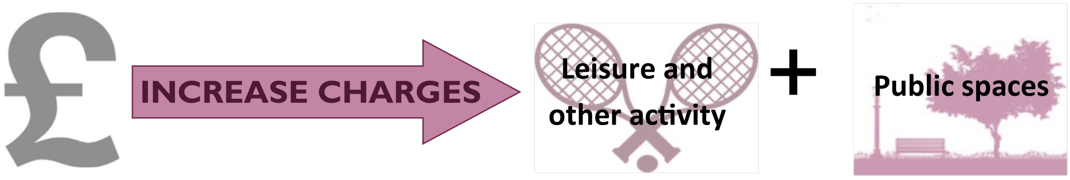
This respondent wanted costs on homelessness kept to *"a minimum to free up spending for other departments where its most needed." "The public can choose to help by giving food and money in the street should they wish to do so."*

3.7: Which TWO income areas do you think the Council could/should increase and decrease charges for?

Increase charges

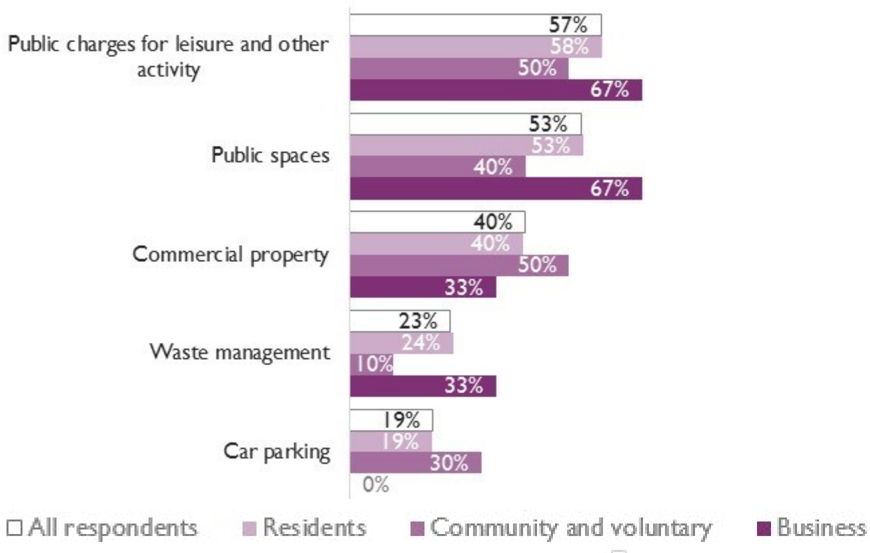
It was common for respondents to accept increases in public charges for 'leisure and other activities' (57%) and 'public spaces' (53%).

Figure 3.7: Increasing charges for income areas



Views from all respondent groups are illustrated in the graph below.

Figure 3.8: Which TWO of the below income areas do you think the Council should increase charges for (%)



Respondents comments are themed below. Overall, these reflect a genuine reluctance for increases in charges because of the impact on vulnerable people, as well as residents and businesses in general. 'Car parking' featured most prominently in these comments. 31 comments have been analysed, 30 from 'residents', also one 'voluntary and community' response.

Car parking (16 responses)

These 'residents' voiced strong opposition to increases in car parking charges. "*Charging for car parking is killing the town centre", "car parking in the town should be free to help businesses," "do not increase car parking fees due to Ventura Park offering free parking. It is already deterring people from visiting the town centre"* and "*there should be more disabled car spaces in Tamworth BUT more should be done against the misuse of these spaces."*

Waste management (6 responses)

'Residents' confirmed they *"accept some of the argument that green bin charges are fairer as some residents have no garden, though the charge does seem too high if you use the green bin infrequently."* Another 'resident' expressed the viewpoint that it was *"too soon to ask the people of Tamworth for more contributions for waste management you need to let the green bin charge settle in first."* Two 'residents' voiced the need to tackle dumping; *"we are beginning to see green waste being dumped because of the charge"* and if the Council *"just came and collected unwanted items then people would not just dump them anywhere."*

Commercial and property (5 responses)

'Residents' *"first instinct would be to charge extra for commercial property but given that the town has a lot of empty properties and shops it would likely make the situation worse." "Fill the empty properties by offering competitive rates which gets businesses into the town centre and creates money. Rent out more empty commercial property at lower prices and you have more income in both rent and rates." "We must not raise charges on commercial property or anything that throttles wealth creation and employment."*

Leisure and other activities (2 responses)

One 'resident' expressed the view that *"income for leisure and other activity seems very low."* Another echoed this viewpoint suggesting small charges for leisure activities. *"There could be a small cost on the fireworks night to enter the castle grounds, even if its just £2 per person that would bring in revenue."*

Public spaces (1 response)

According to one resident, ***"****we need more spent on public spaces as some estate areas are very neglected."*

An additional response was received from one 'voluntary and community' respondent who had found the question on increasing charges difficult to answer; *"you need more people to use the town centre and if you reduce the amenities people won't use the town and if you increase cost people will not be able to afford to use the town."*

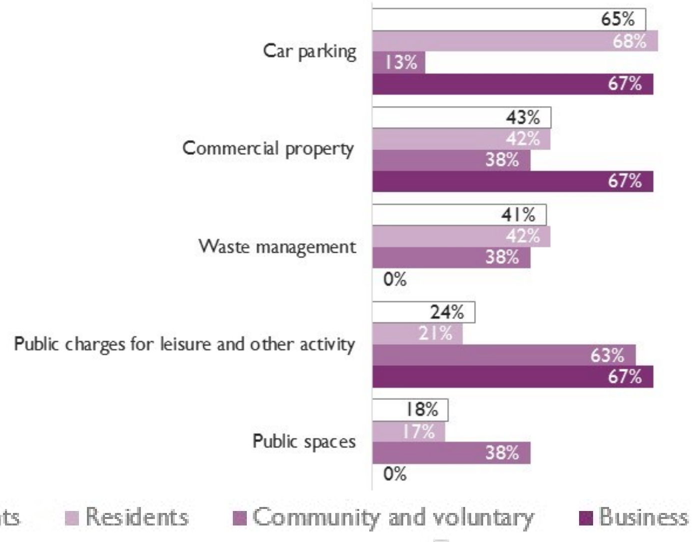
Decrease charges

Respondents were most likely to want decreased charges in car parking. This was important to both 'residents' and 'businesses' as illustrated in the graph below.

Figure 3.9: Decreasing charges for income areas (%)

34 comments on decreased charges were analysed, 32 'residents' and two 'business' responses. Car parking featured in the comments which are illustrated below.

Figure 3.10: Which TWO of the below income areas do you think the Council should decrease charges for (%)



Commercial property (12 responses)

11 residents and one business

'Commercial property' featured most prominently in the comments with 'residents' reiterating many of the comments already documented in the consultation. These included the importance of *"reducing rates to attract more businesses into the town centre."* This could *"generate more income and encourage more visitors."* 'Residents' also suggested improving *"the appearance of industrial sites to make them look more inviting to new businesses."* One 'business' also suggested *"decreases in commercial property charges would encourage start ups to grow into small businesses, and small businesses to become medium businesses"* and *"finding the right property at the right price for expansion is difficult here."*

Waste management (12 responses)

The new chargeable green waste collection service also featured in 'residents' 'waste management' comments. Comments included; *"I really object to the green bin collection fee"* and *"the majority of people do not want it - green waste goes into black bins and onto landfill"* and *"how about making a charge of £20 for a 6 month period (March to September) and £36 for the whole year? I didn't pay the charge for the simple reason that I do not have my green bin emptied from October to February."* 'Residents' commenting on 'waste management' also reiterated concerns that charges for green waste and bulky waste encourage *"fly tipping which is expensive to rectify."*

Car parking (10 responses)

9 residents and one business

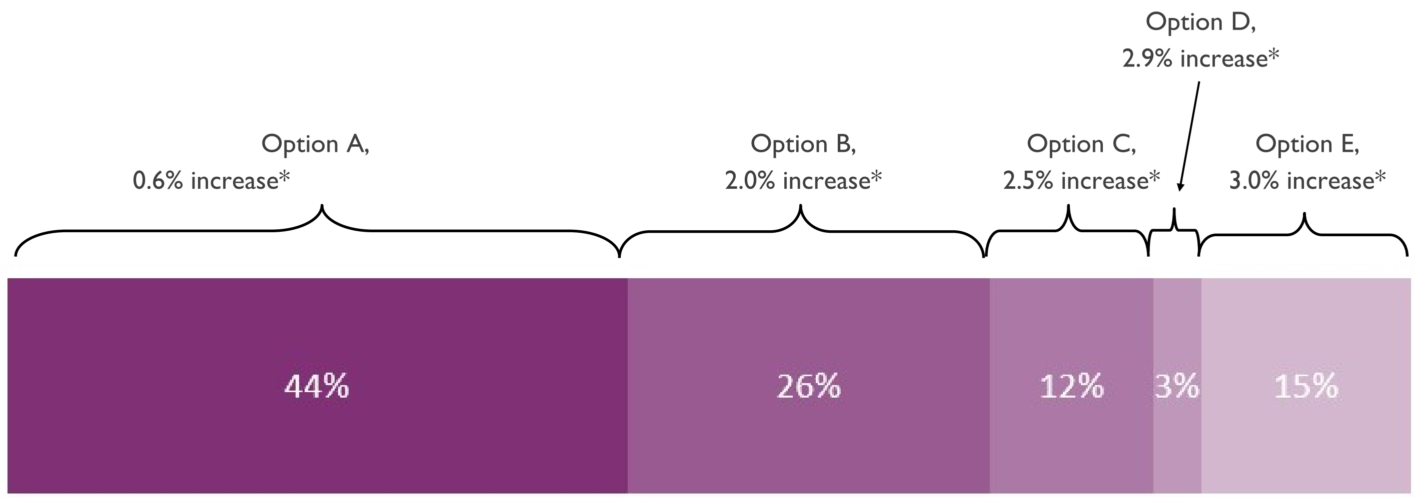
'Residents' expressed support for reduced charges to attract residents and visitors into the town centre. For example "*I have strong beliefs that car parking in the town centre should be 100% free. This seems so straight forward to achieve the towns regeneration which you talk about so often," "cheaper car parking would bring in more visitors to the commercial property area"* and *"free night time parking to boost the night time economy."* One *'business'* also suggested *"cheaper/free car parking for businesses should be granted." "Perhaps a 'registered Tamworth business' card could be left on the dashboard whilst parked to allow free parking?"*

4. Council Tax increase for 2019/20 budget

4.1: What would you consider to be an acceptable Council Tax increase for the 2019/20 budget?

70% of 'residents' would prefer the lowest levels of increase. 44% selected option A, a 0.6% increase and 26% selected option B, a 2.0% increase. The maximum increase of 3.0% (option E) was the third most popular option with 15% of 'residents'.

Figure 4.1: What would you consider to be an acceptable Council Tax increase for the 2019/20 budget?



*Increases shown are based on a Band D property

Base: all residents

5. WHERE DO YOU THINK THE COUNCIL COULD MAKE SAVINGS?

Respondents were encouraged to identify new opportunities for savings. Some respondents reiterated ideas already expressed earlier in this report. New ideas, not previously acknowledged are documented below.

⇒ *“Keep appealing to central government about our boundaries and seek the Council Tax that should rightly be allocated to Tamworth.”*

⇒ *“Sell off town centre properties which are poorly maintained.”*

⇒ *“Convert empty shops in the town centre into places to live to generate income, improve the appearance of the town centre and to help with the housing shortage.”*

⇒ *“Consider merging with Lichfield District Council.”*

⇒ *“Bring services in house or better manage value for money in contractors.”*

⇒ *“Introduce more digital services to save staff time/money.”*

⇒ *“Move to smaller, more cost effective offices.”*

⇒ *“Make better use of Council owned buildings and rent spaces out to other organisations.”*

⇒ *“Offer meeting rooms for external functions.”*

⇒ *“Review policies and processes e.g. final salary pensions, expenses, paper/equipment etc.”*

⇒ *“Review staff/councillors roles.”*

⇒ *“Seek collection of all council taxes from debtors.”*

6. MAKING TAMWORTH BETTER FOR BUSINESS

Respondents who completed the questionnaire from the perspective of a local 'business' were asked to provide their opinions and comment on a number of 'business' related questions in order to gather a picture of how Tamworth can be made better for them.[9]

Three 'businesses' responded to the survey. While there are only a small number of responses from this group, there are some useful suggestions which can be taken forward on behalf of the participating businesses. This section explores the questions they were asked and illustrates the responses given.

6.1: Business type and location

Of the 'businesses' that responded to the consultation, two were based in a 'town centre location' and one was based 'out of town.'

The status of the companies were as follows; 'an independent business with no other branches', 'a head office' and 'a branch or subsidiary of a larger company.'

When asked to disclose the main reasons why their business was based in Tamworth, respondents selected each of the following answers; the 'nature of the local economy', the 'proximity to customers,' the 'nature of the site/premises', the 'cost of the site/premises', the 'access to public transport', the 'transport links' and 'live in the area' (one response each).

6.2: Future business needs

'Businesses' were asked to indicate whether their current premises were likely to be suitable for their future needs. One 'business' said 'yes' and two said 'no'. Two of the 'businesses' 'saw themselves expanding' within the next two years and one would like to 'relocate'.

'Businesses' were asked to identify what they felt were the main barriers to expansion. Barriers amongst these respondents included; 'availability of suitable premises' (two responses), 'ability to expand' (two responses). Also 'cost of business rates', 'affordability of premises,' 'parking capacity,' 'opportunity to expand' and 'local access to necessary skills' (one response each).

Respondents were invited to indicate up to five priorities which could assist businesses and the economy and help to improve Tamworth. They were able to select their priorities from a list of 15 potential priorities. Respondents selected eight of the fifteen priorities and responses to these are documented below.

- ⇒ 'Improving the local environment' (three responses)
- ⇒ 'Improving litter/street cleanliness' (three responses)
- ⇒ 'Provide more networking opportunities' (three responses)
- ⇒ 'Reducing the number of empty business premises' (two responses)
- ⇒ 'Provide more employment land' (one response)
- ⇒ 'Reduce business rates and other charges' (one response)
- ⇒ 'Improve training and skills' (one response)
- ⇒ 'The provision of parking spaces' (one response)

[9] Business responses have not been statistically analysed by type as the number of responses does not allow this. When drawing conclusions from business responses, it is important to remember that business group responses are relatively small and therefore results may not be representative of their overall group.

7. Voluntary and Community services organisations

Those respondents who completed the 'voluntary and community' organisation questionnaire were asked to comment on both their organisational structure and the impacts of the public sector cuts upon their organisations and their clients. In total, eleven 'voluntary and community' responses were received.[10]

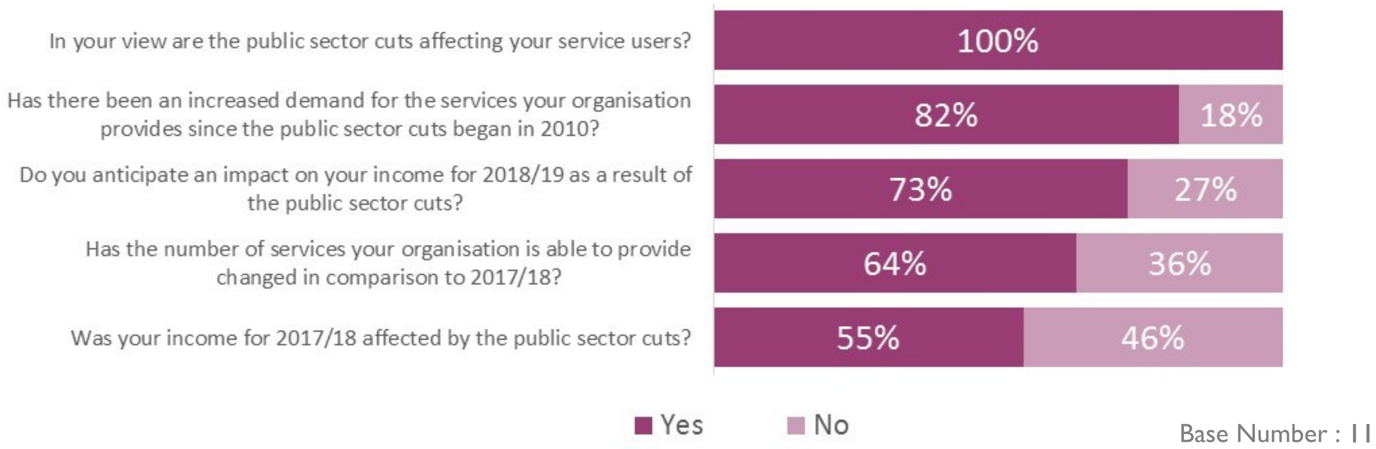
7.1:Type of organisation

Four of the 'voluntary and community' respondents described themselves as 'registered charities.' Two responses were also received for each of the following categories; 'community interest company', 'voluntary group' and 'community group'. One respondent also described themselves as a 'limited company by guarantee.'

7.2: The impact of budget cuts and the economic downturn on the services provided by 'voluntary and community' organisations

Organisations were invited to answer 'yes' or 'no' to a range of questions about the impact of the budget cuts and the economic downturn. All 'voluntary and community' respondents (100%) agreed their service users had been affected by the cuts. More than half had been impacted by each of the five elements illustrated below.

Figure 7.1: 'Voluntary and community' organisations responses to a range of questions about the impact of budget cuts and the economic downturn (%)



Organisations were encouraged to explain how their organisation and their service users had been impacted by the economic downturn. Their responses have been summarised below.

7.3: Impact on organisation

'Voluntary and community' responses indicate that services have been in great demand but have faced limited capacity to support e.g. *"fewer subsidies can be offered to families in need for learning and diversionary activities"* and therefore *"fewer people are able to access them."* One organisation had broadened their support to include children and family focused organisations and had focused their efforts on securing greater support for local groups e.g. *"in securing additional funding/more volunteers."* A few organisations had struggled to find suitable venues since the Council closures.

[10] When drawing conclusions from community and voluntary services organisations, it is important to remember that the base number of responses is small and therefore results may not be representative of the sector overall.

7.4: Impact on service users

Responses indicated that groups from within the sector are *"seeking to do their very best to mitigate the negative impact of a loss of service by filling gaps/maintaining services where they are able to." "The sector now provides and runs many more services from universal services such as youth, libraries to earliest help and intervention, tier 2 and tier 2+."*

However, *"demand for services is high"* and some users are *"unable to access the help and support required for them to enjoy a normal existence."* For example, *"families with local socio-economic status often have less family engagement with outdoors and less active lifestyles. If these activities are not subsidised, some families are even less likely to try them and less likely to learn how to use their local outdoor spaces for recreation and learning."*

8. Resident respondent profile

Are you male or female?

Gender 18+	Survey responses		Tamworth MYE 2017
	No's	%	%
Female	77	51%	52%
Male	67	44%	48%
Prefer not to say	7	5%	

What is your ethnicity?

	Survey responses		Tamworth 2011 census comparison
	No's	%	%
Asian/Asian British (including Chinese)	1	0.7%	1%
Black/Black British	1	0.7%	1%
Mixed Heritage	1	0.7%	1%
White British and other white groups	137	92%	97%
Other	0	0%	0.1%
Prefer not to say	9	6%	

What is your age?

	Survey		Tamworth MYE 2017
	No's	%	%
18-24	2	1%	10%
25-34	11	7%	17%
35-44	19	13%	16%
45-54	16	11%	19%
55-64	38	25%	16%
65-74	45	30%	14%
75+	14	9%	9%
Prefer not to say	5	3%	

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

	Survey responses		Tamworth 2011 census comparison
	No's	%	%
Yes	40	27%	18%
No	98	66%	82%
Prefer not to say	10	7%	

Ward

Survey responses							
Ward	No's	%	Population Estimates mid 2016 (18+)	Ward	No's	%	Population Estimates mid 2016 (18+)
Amington	20	17%	10%	Mercian	10	9%	9%
Belgrave	13	11%	10%	Spital	8	7%	9%
Bolehall	18	15%	10%	Stonydelph	9	8%	10%
Castle	12	10%	10%	Trinity	10	9%	10%
Glascote	7	6%	10%	Wilnecote	10	9%	12%

9. Combined tables of results

For the following services, do you think we should spend more, the same or less?

Survey responses				
	More	Same	Less	No opinion
Sports and Leisure	18%	47%	33%	2%
Events	20%	49%	28%	3%
Refuse collection and recycling	26%	63%	10%	1%
Parks and open spaces and street cleaning	37%	52%	10%	1%
Tackling anti-social behaviour	50%	41%	8%	2%
Improving the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of Tamworth	34%	50%	15%	1%
Grants for voluntary organisations and charities	16%	45%	36%	2%
Commissioning services from voluntary organisations and charities	15%	44%	35%	6%
Housing	14%	49%	33%	4%
Housing advice, grants and homelessness	21%	52%	26%	1%
Business support and advice	11%	48%	38%	4%
Improved access to information/customer service	9%	38%	51%	3%

From the services listed below, if the Council had to make savings or reduce costs, which services do you think we should look at. Please select THREE.

Survey responses			
Sports and leisure	31%	Voluntary sector grants	37%
Events	32%	Voluntary sector commissioning	40%
Refuse collection and recycling	4%	Housing	13%
Parks, open spaces & street cleaning	8%	Housing advice, grants & homelessness	17%
Tackling anti-social behaviour	7%	Business support and advice	42%
Improving the economic, physical, social & environmental condition of Tamworth	10%	Improved access to information/customer services	56%

Which TWO of the below income areas do you think the Council could/should increase?

	Survey responses
Car parking (£800,000)	19%
Public charges for leisure and other activity (£400,000)	57%
Waste management (£796,000)	23%
Public spaces (£651,000)	53%
Commercial property (£1,527,000)	40%

Which TWO of the below income areas do you think the Council could/should decrease charges?

	Survey responses
Car parking (£800,000)	65%
Public charges for leisure and other activity (£400,000)	24%
Waste management (£796,000)	41%
Public spaces (£651,000)	18%
Commercial property (£1,527,000)	43%

[17] Residents, Businesses and Community and Voluntary Organisations results combined

For the following services, do you think we should spend more, the same or less?

Survey responses	More	Same	Less	No opinion
Sports and Leisure	17%	48%	34%	1%
Events	19%	51%	28%	2%
Refuse collection and recycling	28%	62%	10%	1%
Parks and open spaces and street cleaning	36%	55%	9%	-
Tackling anti-social behaviour	49%	41%	9%	1%
Improving the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of Tamworth	33%	51%	15%	1%
Grants for voluntary organisations and charities	12%	48%	39%	1%
Commissioning services from voluntary organisations and charities	11%	46%	37%	6%
Housing	13%	50%	33%	4%
Housing advice, grants and homelessness	21%	51%	27%	1%
Business support and advice	11%	48%	38%	3%
Improved access to information/customer service	7%	39%	51%	3%

From the services listed below, if the Council had to make savings or reduce costs, which services do you think we should look at. Please select THREE.

Survey responses			
Sports and leisure	32%	Voluntary sector grants	39%
Events	32%	Voluntary sector commissioning	42%
Refuse collection and recycling	3%	Housing	12%
Parks, open spaces and street cleaning	8%	Housing advice, grants and homelessness	18%
Tackling anti-social behaviour	7%	Business support and advice	40%
Improving the economic, physical, social and	9%	Improved access to information/	56%

Which TWO of the below income areas do you think the Council could/should increase?

	Survey responses
Car parking (£800,000)	19%
Public charges for leisure and other activity (£400,000)	58%
Waste management (£796,000)	24%
Public spaces (£651,000)	53%
Commercial property (£1,527,000)	40%

Which TWO of the below income areas do you think the Council could/should decrease charges ?

	Survey responses
Car parking (£800,000)	68%
Public charges for leisure and other activity (£400,000)	21%
Waste management (£796,000)	42%
Public spaces (£651,000)	17%
Commercial property (£1,527,000)	42%

What would you consider to be an acceptable Council Tax increase for the 2019/2020 budget?

	Survey responses		Survey responses
Option A (0.6%)	44%	Option D (2.9%)	3%
Option B (2.0%)	26%	Option E (3.0%)	15%
Option C (2.5%)	12%		

11: BUSINESS TABLES OF RESULTS

Which of the following best describes your business location?

Survey responses			
Town centre location	2	A local neighbourhood area	0
Out of town location	1	Based at home	0
Industrial estate	0	Other	0
Out of town shopping park	0		

What is the status of your company at this location?

Survey responses			
Independent with no other branches	1	Public sector organisation	0
Head office	1	Other	0
Branch or subsidiary of a larger group	1		

What are the main reasons why your company is based here?

Survey responses			
Availability of suitable workforce	0	Availability of local facilities	0
Nature of local economy	1	Access to public transport	1
Proximity of suppliers	0	Availability of Broadband	0
Proximity to customers	1	Transport links	1
Quality of the environment	0	Live in the area	1
Nature of the site/premises	1	Other	
Cost of the site/premises	1		

Are the premises suitable for your current or likely future needs?

	Survey responses
Yes	1
No	2

What are your company's intentions with regard to this location?

Survey responses			
Expand	2	Stay the same	0
Contract	0	Relocate	1

In your opinion, what are the barriers to business expansion? (Please select three)

Survey responses			
Cost of business rates	1	Ability to expand	2
Affordability of premises	1	Opportunities to expand	1
Parking capacity	1	Local access to necessary skills	1
Availability of suitable premises	2	Access to finance	0
Cost of rent	0	Other	0

How can Tamworth be improved to assist businesses and the economy? We need your top five priorities from the examples given below, or if not listed tell us what they are by completing 'other'?

Survey responses			
Provide more employment land	1	Improve training and skills	1
Provide more housing	0	The provision of parking spaces	1
Improve road network	0	Reducing number of empty business premises	2
Improve public transport	0	Improving litter/street cleanliness	3
Improve the local environment	3	Provide more support for business start up	0
Improve Broadband connections	0	Provide more opportunities for business growth	0
Reduce business rates and other charges	1	Provide more networking opportunities	3
Provide more business advice	0	Other	0

For the following services, do you think we should spend more, the same or less?

Survey responses	More	Same	Less	No opinion
Sports and Leisure	33%	33%	33%	0%
Events	100%	0%	0%	0%
Refuse collection and recycling	33%	67%	0%	0%
Parks and open spaces and street cleaning	100%	0%	0%	0%
Tackling anti-social behaviour	100%	0%	0%	0%
Improving the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of Tamworth	100%	0%	0%	0%
Grants for voluntary organisations and charities	0%	67%	33%	0%
Commissioning services from voluntary organisations and charities	0%	67%	33%	0%
Housing	0%	67%	33%	0%
Housing advice, grants and homelessness	0%	67%	33%	0%
Business support and advice	33%	67%	0%	0%
Improved access to information/customer service	67%	0%	33%	0%

From the services listed below, if the Council had to make savings or reduce costs, which services do you think we should look at. Please select THREE.

Survey responses			
Sports and leisure	0%	Voluntary sector grants	100%
Events	0%	Voluntary sector commissioning	67%
Refuse collection and recycling	0%	Housing	33%
Parks, open spaces and street cleaning	0%	Housing advice, grants and homelessness	33%
Tackling anti-social behaviour	0%	Business support and advice	0%
Improving the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of Tamworth	0%	Improved access to information/ customer services	67%

Which TWO of the below income areas do you think the Council could/should increase?

	Survey responses
Car parking (£800,000)	0%
Public charges for leisure and other activity (£400,000)	67%
Waste management (£796,000)	33%
Public spaces (£651,000)	67%
Commercial property (£1,527,000)	33%

Which TWO of the below income areas do you think the Council could/should decrease charges ?

	Survey responses
Car parking (£800,000)	67%
Public charges for leisure and other activity (£400,000)	67%
Waste management (£796,000)	0%
Public spaces (£651,000)	0%
Commercial property (£1,527,000)	67%

12: Community and voluntary organisation results

What type of organisation are you?

	Survey responses
A registered charity	36%
Company limited by guarantee	9%
Community interest company	18%
Voluntary group	18%
Community group	18%
Other	0%

Was your income for 2017/18 affected by the public sector cuts?

	Survey responses
Yes	55%
No	46%

Do you anticipate an impact on your income for 2018/19 as a result of the public sector cuts?

	Survey responses
Yes	73%
No	27%

Has the number of services your organisation is able to provide changed in comparison to 2017/18?

	Survey responses
Yes	64%
No	36%

Has there been an increased demand for the services your organisation provides since the public sector cuts began in 2010?

	Survey responses
Yes	82%
No	18%

In your view are the public sector cuts affecting your service users?

	Survey responses
Yes	100%
No	0%

For the following services, do you think we should spend more, the same or less?

Survey responses				
	More	Same	Less	No opinion
Sports and Leisure	27%	46%	18%	9%
Events	9%	36%	36%	18%
Refuse collection and recycling	0%	80%	10%	10%
Parks and open spaces and street cleaning	27%	36%	27%	9%
Tackling anti-social behaviour	40%	50%	0%	10%
Improving the economic, physical, social & environmental condition of Tamworth	36%	36%	18%	9%
Grants for voluntary organisations & charities	82%	9%	0%	9%
Commissioning services from voluntary organisations & charities	73%	18%	0%	9%
Housing	27%	36%	27%	9%
Housing advice, grants and homelessness	27%	55%	9%	9%
Business support and advice	9%	36%	46%	9%
Improved access to information/customer services	9%	27%	55%	9%

From the services listed below, if the Council had to make savings or reduce costs, which services do you think we should look at. Please select THREE.

	Survey responses		Survey responses
Sports and leisure	18%	Voluntary sector grants	0%
Events	45%	Voluntary sector commissioning	0%
Refuse collection and recycling	18%	Housing	27%
Parks, open spaces and street cleaning	9%	Housing advice, grants and homelessness	9%
Tackling anti-social behaviour	0%	Business support and advice	73%
Improving the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of Tamworth	27%	Improved access to information/customer services	55%

Which TWO of the below income areas do you think the Council could/should increase?

	Survey responses
Car parking (£800,000)	30%
Public charges for leisure and other activity (£400,000)	50%
Waste management (£796,000)	10%
Public spaces (£651,000)	40%
Commercial property (£1,527,000)	50%

Which TWO of the below income areas do you think the Council could/should decrease charges ?

	Survey responses
Car parking (£800,000)	13%
Public charges for leisure and other activity (£400,000)	63%
Waste management (£796,000)	38%
Public spaces (£651,000)	38%
Commercial property (£1,527,000)	38%