

Introduction and methodology

Tamworth Borough Council reviews its 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 an important part of this process and all are invited to share their views on priorities for the year ahead. The consultation for the 2014-2015 budget ran throughout August and September 2013 and residents, businesses and the voluntary sector were encouraged to share their views through tailored online surveys.

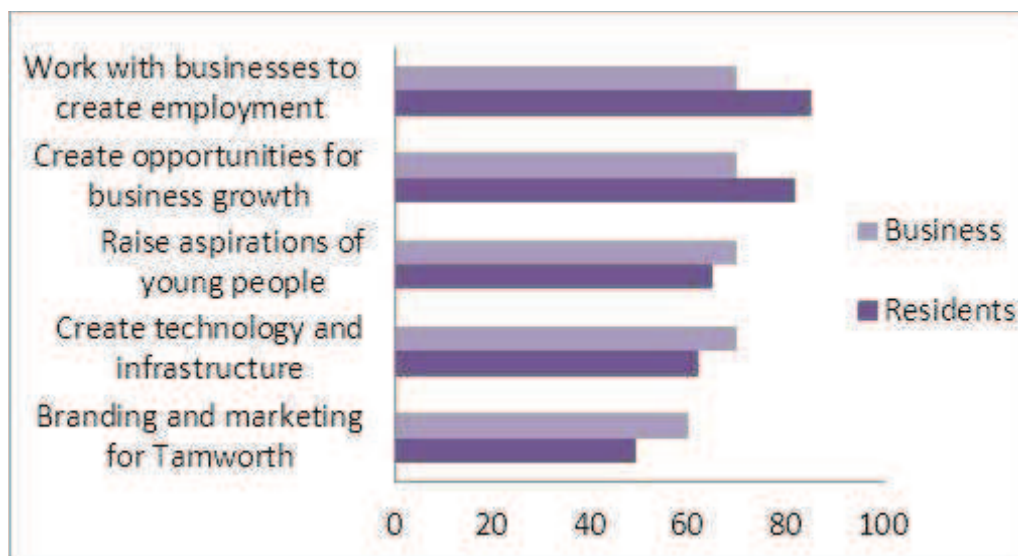
A total of 261 responses were received to the consultation and the majority of these were from Tamworth residents (251 responses). Ten businesses also shared their views and the majority of these were independent businesses sited on business estates, local neighbourhoods or in the town centre.

Views on the corporate priorities for Tamworth

Aspire and prosper

Residents expressed clear priorities under the vision to 'aspire and prosper' believing that the Council should work with businesses to create employment and to create opportunities for business growth. Businesses held different views feeling that four of the five priorities were equally important with just branding and marketing being viewed as less significant.

Priorities for Tamworth for Tamworth to 'Aspire and Prosper' (%)



Respondents were clearly supportive of the overall aim for Tamworth to 'aspire and prosper' and in their comments they identified clear steps which Tamworth should follow to ensure success:

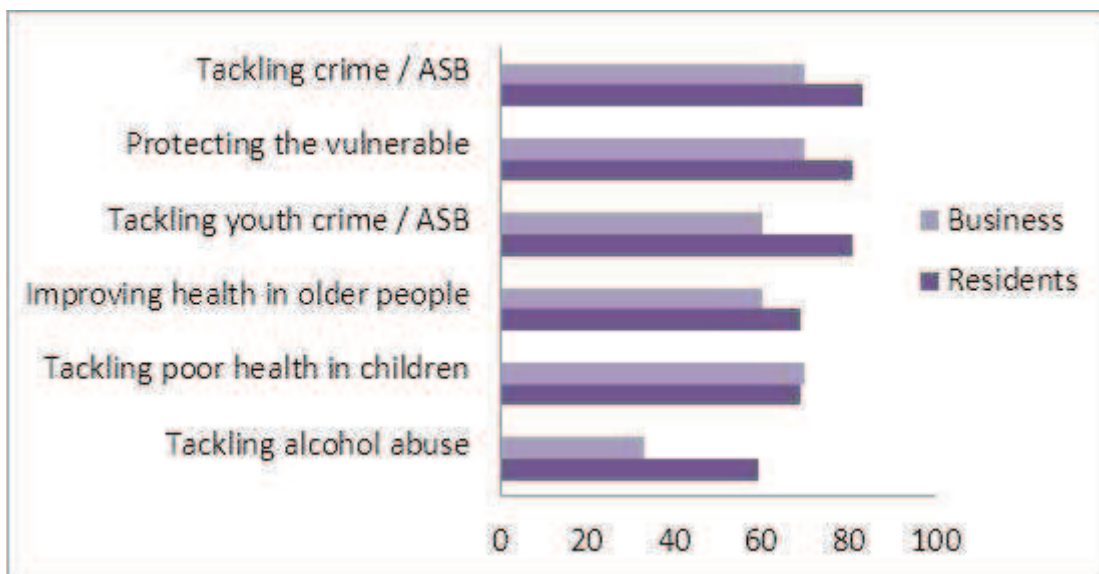
- Provide a positive, welcoming environment to attract new businesses.
- Focus on creating more business opportunities and stronger communities.

- Encourage regeneration in the town centre and stop charging for parking.
- Ensure good transport links.
- Develop a skilled workforce to meet the needs of the economy.
- Create an environment in which people can live independently and be self sufficient.
- Support smaller businesses by providing help with lower rent and rates.

Healthier and Safer

Residents held broadly positive views on the ‘healthier and safer’ priorities and tackling crime / anti-social behaviour (ASB) generally and for the young as well as protecting the most vulnerable people were clear priorities. Whilst businesses also prioritised tackling crime / ASB and protecting vulnerable people, their third priority was to tackle poor health in children.

Priorities for Tamworth for Tamworth to be ‘Healthier & Safer’ (%)



Resident’s comments also showed clear support for the vision and priorities for a ‘healthier and safer’ Tamworth and these are summarised below:

- Encourage a “*healthier community*” and “*tackle obesity*”. There are currently “*far too many takeaway food outlets*” which “*encourage unhealthy lifestyles*”,
- Tackle alcohol and youth crime issues because it will “*lessen the effects of anti-social behaviour*”,
- Ensure there are activities for “*the young and the old*” which provide “*nurture*”, encourage “*good health*” and “*reduce isolation for the elderly*”,
- Provide more support for “*people with mental illnesses and for victims of drug abuse*”,
- Support those with “*invisible needs*” (such as autism and dyslexia) in their educational achievements to “*increase their chances of finding work*”,

- Provide “*closer Accident & Emergency services*”, also additional services including “*maternity*” services.

Comments on Tamworth’s vision and priorities

Whilst most were supportive of Tamworth’s priorities and agreed that concentrating on “*two things*” would “*ensure success*”, some of the comments received were more negative in their nature. Some expressed the view that the priorities were “*national problems*” and should be dealt with nationally because they are “*beyond the local remit*”. Other respondents were not convinced that the priorities contained “*the necessary depth required to succeed*” whilst others still were concerned that “*council tax would need to rise for the Council to be able to achieve the performance that they were looking for*”.

Those who were supportive of the vision described it as “*excellent*” and commended the partnership approach commenting that it is “*essential for the police and local authority to work together to tackle issues including rising anti-social behaviour*”.

A view expressed by some respondents was that it is difficult to visualise success because of the “*current level of decline in Tamworth town centre*” whilst others were opposed to the vision feeling that the Council should concentrate on “*running Tamworth in a rational and competent fashion*” feeling that health and safety issues should be left to “*the NHS and police*”. Others were supportive of having a vision but felt that it should challenge how services can be delivered more efficiently and effectively, for example through “*private initiatives and enterprises*”. The vision should also highlight “*the historical infrastructure which sets Tamworth apart from other towns*” and this heritage should be part of Tamworth’s future.

Making Tamworth a good place to live

What makes somewhere a good place to live?

Whilst it is clear that it is a variety of factors that combine to make somewhere a good place to live, there are three factors that stand out as being most important to Tamworth residents in making somewhere a good place to live. These are a low level of crime, good job prospects and good health services.



What needs improving in Tamworth?

Two of the three most important indicators which make somewhere a good place to live need improving in Tamworth. These are job prospects and the level of crime and both need improving according to Tamworth residents. The provision of affordable, decent housing is also considered to be important and in need of improvement.

Residents also commented that Tamworth would be a better place to live if:

- *“Healthcare is improved”.*
- *The “town centre is regenerated”.*
- *“Cleanliness is improved”* and residents *“take pride in their local area”.*

Service and spending priorities for Tamworth

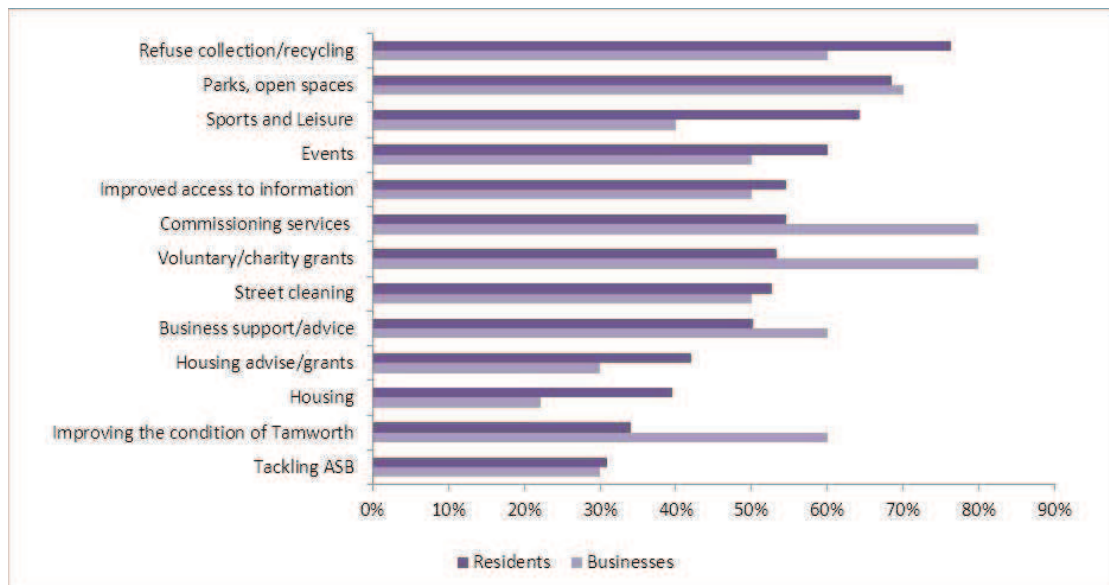
Respondents were asked whether the Council should increase, decrease or keep spending on major cost areas the same.

The majority supported keeping spending the same

For the majority of cost areas, both residents and businesses felt that the level of spending should stay the same and this remains consistent with responses received last year.

Residents agreed that keeping spending the same was particularly important in relation to refuse collection / recycling, parks and open spaces and leisure services. Businesses, however had a different view and were most likely to agree that grants and commissioning of services to the voluntary and community sector should remain unchanged.

Support for keeping spending the same (%)



There is a high level of support for increased spending in four cost areas

There are four cost areas where a high proportion of residents would support increased spending; tackling anti-social behaviour, improving the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of Tamworth, street cleaning and housing. Residents prioritised spending on safety and improving the condition of Tamworth and whilst businesses were broadly supportive of these same priorities, they gave a higher priority to housing and housing advice and grants than residents did. Residents' priority areas for spending have remained largely unchanged over the last year with the first three priorities remaining the same. During the last 12 months however, housing has replaced parks and open space as the fourth cost centre where increased spending is supported.

Cost areas where increased spending is supported (%)

	Residents	Businesses
1. Tackling Anti-social behaviour	67	50
2. Improving the condition of Tamworth	54	40
3. Street cleaning	47	40
4. Housing	46	67

There is some support for decreased spending in three cost areas

Broadly speaking, decreased spending was the least popular of the three options with both residents and businesses. There was however some support for decreased spending and these related to the cost areas outlined below:

Cost areas where decreased spending is supported (%)

	Residents	Businesses
1. Housing advice and grants	25	20
2. Grants for voluntary organisations	18	20
3. Improved access to information	17	30

If the Council needs to make savings or reduce costs, residents would also be less resistant to cuts in events services, commissioning services from voluntary organisation and charities and improved access to information / customer services. Businesses were least resistant to making savings in access to information / customer services, voluntary sector grants and business advice and support.

Views on changing charges for services

Respondents were asked to indicate where they would most like to see increased or decreased charges. There was broad support for encouraging town centre revival by decreasing car parking fees and market and shop rentals. Residents were also supportive of increasing charges to leisure activities and residents and businesses both supported increased charges for public open spaces.

Car parking:

Reducing fees for car parking was a clear priority for residents and businesses of Tamworth. Businesses that supported increasing charges tended to be located out of town or on neighbourhood sites and were unlikely to be negatively affected by higher car parking fees, in town centres.

Support for increases or decreases to car parking fees (%)



Town centre market and shop rentals:

Clear support was evident from both residents and businesses for decreasing town centre charges for market and shop rentals and comments included that something needs to be done to “improve Tamworth’s town centre” instead of always concentrating on “new developments”.

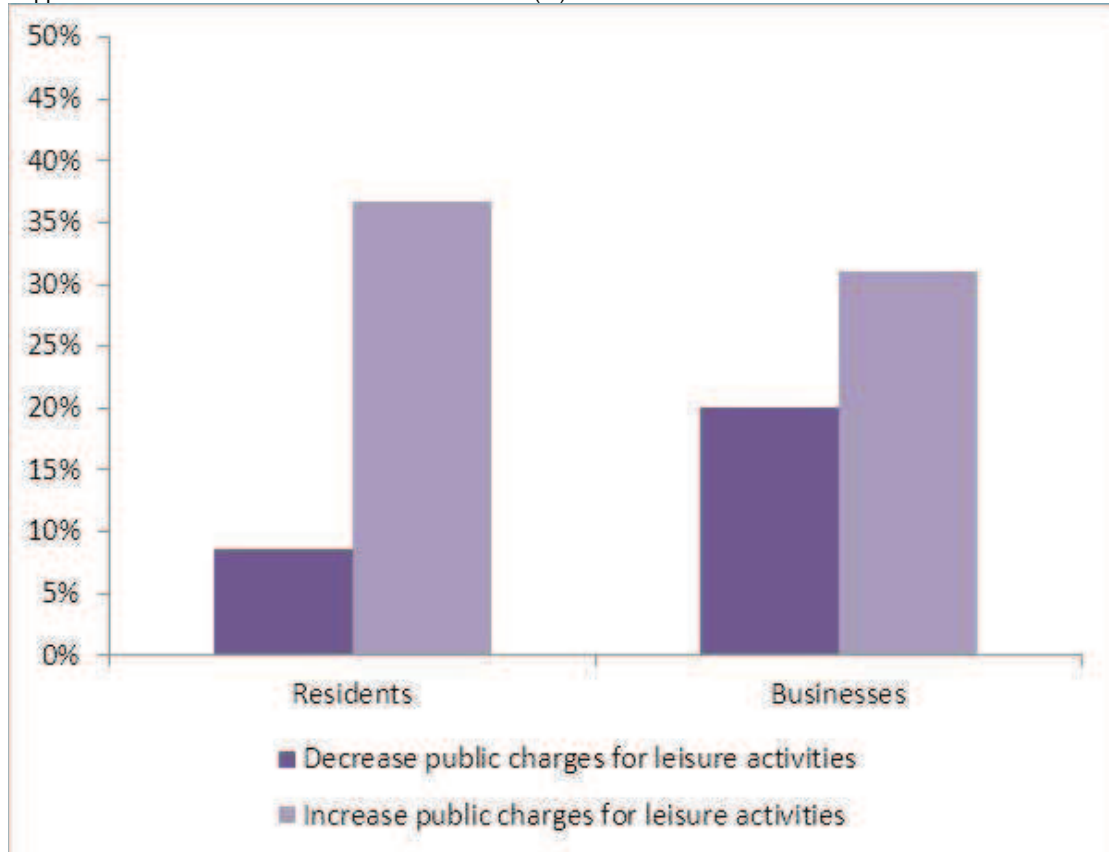
Support for increases or decreases to market and shop rentals (%)



Public charges for leisure activities:

Views from residents and businesses were similar with both mainly in favour of increasing public charges for leisure activities.

Support for increases or decreases for leisure activities (%)



Waste management:

Waste management was not a top priority for residents or businesses, but both would prefer to see increases rather than decreases in charges.

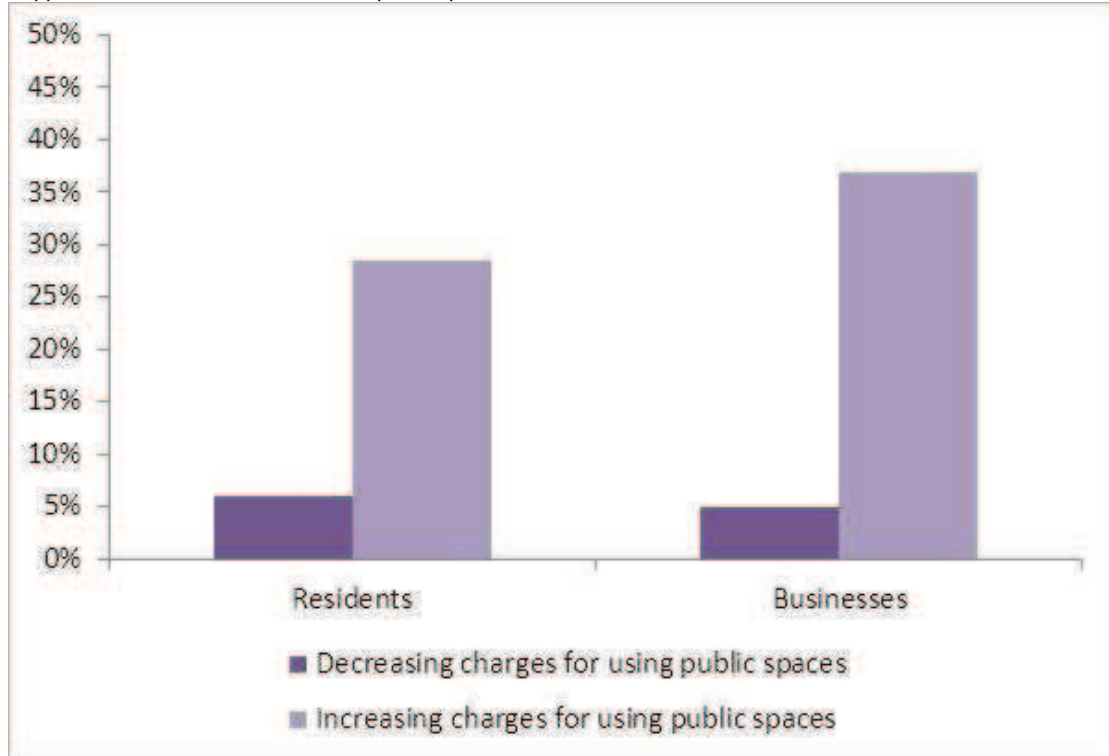
Support for increases or decreases in waste management



Public spaces:

Both residents and businesses were supportive of increasing charges for using public open spaces.

Support for increases or decreases for public spaces



Setting the level of council tax

Residents were asked for their views on what the acceptable increase in council tax should be for the year 2014 / 2015. Four options for increases were outlined and generally speaking, the lower the level of increase, the more supportive residents would be of the increase.

Support for increasing council tax (based on a Band D property)



Tables of Results (Residents)

Please tell us how important our priorities under 'aspire and prosper in Tamworth' are to you, with 1 being the most important and 5 being the least important.

	1	2	3	4	5
Work with businesses to create more employment locally	66.7%	18.3%	7.7%	4.1%	3.3%
Create opportunities for business growth	57.8%	23.8%	10.7%	4.9%	2.9%
Raise aspiration and attainment levels of young people	39.4%	25.2%	16.7%	11.4%	7.3%
Create the technology and physical infrastructure necessary	37.6%	24.5%	20.8%	9.4%	7.8%
Brand and market "Tamworth" as a great place to "live life to the full"	28.5%	20.7%	19.5%	14.2%	17.1%

Please tell us how important our priorities under 'be healthier and safer in Tamworth' are to you, with 1 being the most important and 6 being the least important.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Tackle crime and anti-social behaviour	64.3%	18.4%	6.1%	4.5%	4.1%	2.5%
Protect those most vulnerable in our local communities	56.7%	24.3%	7.3%	4.9%	3.6%	3.2%
Tackle youth crime and anti-social behaviour	56.3%	24.9%	6.9%	3.7%	4.5%	3.7%
Tackle poor health in children	44.9%	24.1%	15.1%	5.3%	5.7%	4.9%
Improve the health of older people	44.5%	24.7%	13.4%	6.9%	6.5%	4.0%
Tackle alcohol abuse	37.8%	21.5%	17.1%	9.3%	3.7%	10.6%

Please select FIVE things from the list below that you believe are the most important for making somewhere a good place to live

What makes a good place to live?	% and no's	What makes a good place to live?	% and no's
Low levels of crime	17.2% (216)	Clean streets	9.5% (119)
Good job prospects	15.0% (188)	Good parks and open spaces	8.4% (105)
Good health services	14.0% (176)	Good shopping facilities	8.2% (103)
Good education provision	10.6% (133)	Good sports and leisure facilities	4.0% (50)
Affordable decent housing	10.4% (130)	Community events	2.8% (35)

Please tick FIVE things you feel need to improve most to make Tamworth a better place to live

What needs improving?	% and no's	What needs improving?	% and no's
Job prospects	17.0% (205)	Health service	11.0% (132)
Level of crime	14.6% (176)	Education provision	7.2% (87)
Affordable decent housing	12.0% (144)	Parks and open spaces	7.0% (84)
Shopping facilities	11.5% (138)	Community events	4.4% (53)
Cleanliness of streets	11.1% (134)	Sports and leisure facilities	4.2% (51)

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

	More	Same	Less	No opinion
Tackling anti-social behaviour	67.5%	30.9%	1.2%	0.4%
Improving the condition of Tamworth	54.3%	34.1%	7.8%	3.9%
Street cleaning	46.5%	52.7%	0.8%	0.0%
Housing	46.3%	39.6%	9.2%	5.0%
Business support and advice	30.2%	50.2%	11.8%	7.8%
Parks, open spaces	26.8%	68.5%	3.8%	0.9%
Housing advice and grants	25.4%	42.1%	25.0%	7.5%
Grants for voluntary organisations and charities	23.5%	53.4%	17.6%	5.5%
Improved access to information/customer services	22.5%	54.5%	16.8%	6.1%
Refuse collection and recycling	20.4%	76.3%	2.4%	0.8%
Commissioning services from voluntary organisations and charities	20.2%	54.5%	16.7%	8.6%

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

Events	15.0%	Improving the condition of Tamworth	4.7%
Commissioning services	14.5%	Housing	3.3%
Improved access to information	13.6%	Parks, open spaces	3.1%
Grants for voluntary orgs / charities	13.2%	Refuse collection and recycling	1.5%
Business support and advice	10.7%	Street cleaning	0.4%
Housing advice and grants	10.4%	Tackling anti-social behaviour	0.4%
Sports and leisure	8.9%		

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

Public charges for leisure and other activity	36.8%
Public spaces	28.5%
Waste management	19.0%
Car parking	8.2%
Town centre market and shop rentals	7.5%

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

Car parking	39.5%
Town centre market and shop rentals	39.1%
Public charges for leisure and other activity	8.6%
Waste management	6.7%
Public spaces	6.1%

What would you consider to be an acceptable Council Tax increase for the 2014/2015 budget?

	% support
Option A—£1 weekly increase on band D property	46.7%
Option B—£1.53 weekly increase on band D property	29.7%

	% support
Option C- £3.05 weekly increase on band D property	16.6%
Option D—£3.81 weekly increase on band D property	7.0%

Tables of Results (Businesses)

Please tell us how important our priorities under 'aspire and prosper in Tamworth' are to you, with 1 being the most important and 5 being the least important.

	1	2	3	4	5
Raise aspiration and attainment levels of young people	50.0%	20.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%
Create opportunities for business growth	50.0%	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%	10.0%
Create the technology and physical infrastructure necessary	40.0%	30.0%	10.0%	20.0%	0.0%
Work with businesses to create more employment locally	30.0%	40.0%	0.0%	10.0%	20.0%
Brand and market "Tamworth" as a great place to "live life to the full"	30.0%	30.0%	10.0%	20.0%	10.0%

Please tell us how important our priorities under 'be healthier and safer in Tamworth' are to you, with 1 being the most important and 6 being the least important

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Protect those most vulnerable in our local communities	60.0%	10.0%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	10.0%
Tackle crime and anti-social behaviour	40.0%	30.0%	10.0%	0.0%	10.0%	10.0%
Tackle youth crime and anti-social behaviour	40.0%	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%	10.0%	10.0%
Tackle poor health in children	30.0%	40.0%	10.0%	0.0%	10.0%	10.0%
Improve the health of older people	20.0%	40.0%	10.0%	30.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Tackle alcohol abuse	22.2%	11.1%	33.3%	11.1%	11.1%	11.1%

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

	More	Same	Less	No opinion
Housing	66.7%	22.2%	11.1%	0.0%
Housing advice and grants	50.0%	30.0%	20.0%	0.0%
Tackling anti-social behaviour	50.0%	30.0%	20.0%	0.0%
Improving the condition of Tamworth	40.0%	60.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Street cleaning	40.0%	50.0%	10.0%	0.0%
Business advice and support	30.0%	60.0%	10.0%	0.0%
Refuse collection and recycling	30.0%	60.0%	10.0%	0.0%
Parks, open spaces	20.0%	70.0%	10.0%	0.0%
Improved access to information/customer services	20.0%	50.0%	30.0%	0.0%
Events	20.0%	50.0%	20.0%	10.0%
Sports and leisure	20.0%	40.0%	20.0%	20.0%

Commissioning services from voluntary orgs & charities	10.0%	80.0%	10.0%	0.0%
Grants for voluntary organisations and charities	0.0%	80.0%	20.0%	0.0%

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

Improved access to information	200%		Sports and leisure	6.7%
Voluntary sector grants	16.7%		Housing	3.3%
Business advice and support	16.7%		Parks, open spaces	0.0%
Housing advice and grants	13.3%		Refuse collection and recycling	0.0%
Voluntary sector commissioning	10.0%		Street cleaning	0.0%
Events	6.7%		Tackling anti-social behaviour	0.0%
Improving the condition of Tamworth	6.7%			

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

Public spaces	37.5%
Public charges for leisure activities	31.3%
Waste management	18.8%
Car parking	12.5%
Town centre market and shop rentals	0.0%

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

Car parking	35.0%
Town centre market and shop rentals	35.0%
Public charges for leisure activities	20.0%
Public spaces	5.0%
Waste management	5.0%