

From: Peter Oakford, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance,
Corporate and Traded Services

Shellina Prendergast, Cabinet Member for Communications,
Engagement and People

Subject: Budget Consultation and Engagement Campaign 2019

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary:

This report sets out an evaluation of the levels of participation and engagement and the key feedback and insight obtained through the 2019 budget consultation and engagement campaign.

The key headlines this year are:

- Lower level of engagement through on-line questionnaire than last year (but higher than the year before)
- Broader range of other qualitative engagement opportunities
- Facebook is the most popular way for respondents to find out about the consultation
- Proportionately more responses from over 50s than last year
- Majority of respondents' support Council Tax increases in order to protect valued services and to support social care
- Support and care for the elderly and helping them to live independent lives; feeling safe in local communities; and investment in education, early years and youth services; were the three most popular "People Based" priorities
- Highways; waste and environment were the three most popular "Place Based" priorities
- Face to face events revealed a higher priority for "Community/Place Based" spending than the quantitative research

1. Budget Consultation

- 1.1 The Budget consultation campaign was launched on 16th October and closed on 25th November 2019. The campaign was aimed at reaching a wide audience of Kent residents and other interested parties to inform them of the budget challenge facing the council next year. The key message conveyed was that despite rising government funding, spending demands/costs are greater. It also explained that the ability to raise additional funding through Council Tax is restricted by the Government. As a result of the campaign we hoped to raise awareness of these issues and encourage residents to respond with their views, specifically on their spending priorities. The campaign was led by the Revenue and Tax Strategy team within Finance with support from representatives from the Engagement and Consultation team and Kent Communications.

- 1.2 The consultation was primarily delivered through the council's website www.kent.gov.uk/budget. This dedicated page provided a high-level summary of the financial challenge and the services the council provides with links to the consultation questionnaire, and more detailed supporting information. There were 7,834 page views made by 6,584 users. About 68% of on-line activity came from social media – predominately Facebook (accounting for 95% of all web traffic from social media channels). The link to the consultation survey was clicked 2,152 times.
- 1.3 A press release was issued on 15 October to mark the launch of the consultation, focusing on the budget challenge and encouraging residents to have their say. This release achieved print coverage in the Kent Messenger editions across the county and the Times of Tunbridge Wells; online coverage on the Isle of Thanet News website and kentonline; and bulletin reports on BBC South East, ITV Meridian, BBC Radio Kent, kmfm and Academy FM. Some parish councils also reported the consultation on their own message boards.
- 1.4 The press release encouraged those residents who did not have personal access to a computer to visit their local library and complete the questionnaire online there either through one of our free public access computers or if they have their own device by using the free public Wi-Fi. Hard copies and alternative formats of the consultation material were also publicised through the press release as was Text Relay facility. Large Print and audio versions were available.

2. Consultation Strategy

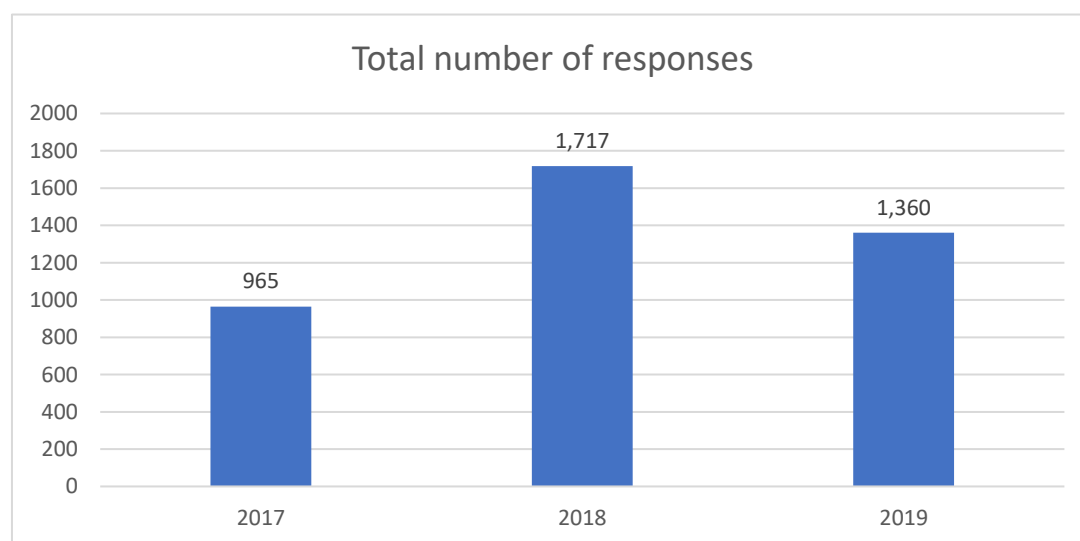
- 2.1 Our consultation and engagement strategy this year involved working in partnership with colleagues in Strategy, Policy, Relationships and Corporate Assurance who are producing the next Strategic Statement. The Council was looking for a closer alignment of this statement and the Medium-Term Financial Plan. Activity focused on a formal budget consultation and a series of face to face engagement events with residents, businesses, voluntary community and social enterprise organisations, Kent Association of Local Councils and staff. We have evidence that a combination of quantitative research (based on a survey) and qualitative research (based on face to face events) produces the most reliable results to gather public opinion. This paper provides information and insight from this approach.
- 2.2 As part of this year's consultation, we asked respondents to tell us how they found out about the consultation. Respondents were able to select as many options as applied. The responses are shown in Table 1 below. This table shows that social media is much more effective for raising awareness and we should consider using this for other communications e.g. launch of draft budget in January.

Table 1

<u>How did you find out about this consultation?</u>	<u>Responses</u>	<u>%</u>
Facebook	748	55
An email from KCC	196	14
kent.gov.uk website	107	8
Other, including TV news, local radio and KM website	86	6
Twitter	60	4
From a friend or relative	44	3
Newspaper	38	3
Instagram	34	3
A voluntary or community sector organisation	28	2
LinkedIn	16	1
Kent library or Gateway	15	1
District Council/Councillor	14	1
Local KCC Councillor	5	0
Total	1,391	100

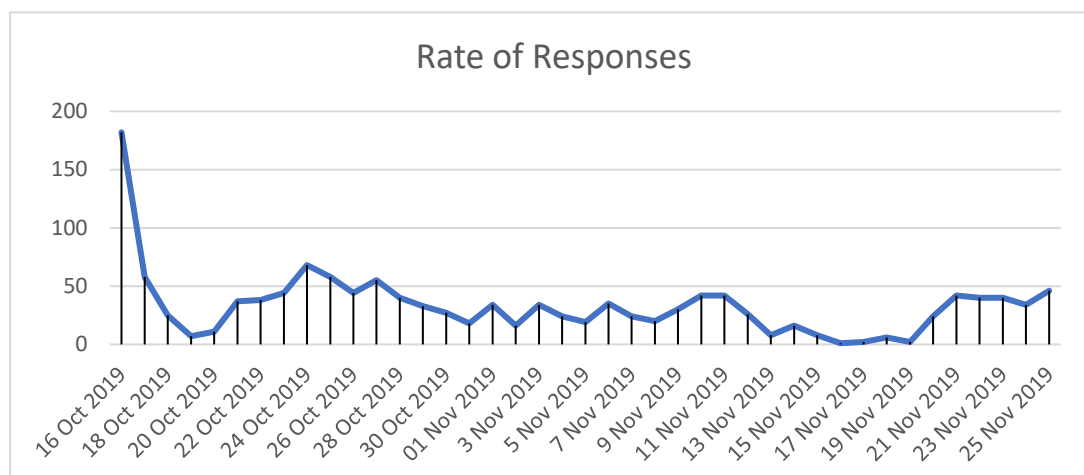
3. Consultation Responses

- 3.1 In total 1,360 responses were received, and this represents a slight decrease compared to last year, but higher than the 2017 campaign, as shown in Chart 1. We do not have any empirical evidence to explain this slight decline in responses this year.

Chart 1

- 3.2 Chart 2 shows a timeline of when the responses were received with a peak of 182 on the launch date, 16th October. This pattern is consistent with previous budget consultations with an initial burst of responses followed by a steadier flow. This indicates that we do need to keep the consultation open for a reasonable period to accommodate this pattern of responses.

Chart 2



- 3.3 We asked respondents to tell us in what capacity they are completing the consultation questionnaire. The responses to this question are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

<u>What capacity are you completing this consultation questionnaire?</u>	<u>Responses</u>	<u>%</u>
As a Kent Resident	1,164	87
As a KCC employee (Kent Resident)	120	9
On behalf of an educational establishment, such as a school or college	11	1
On behalf of a Parish/Town/Borough/District Council in an official capacity	11	1
As a KCC employee (non-Kent Resident)	9	1
As a Parish/District or County Councillor	8	1
As a representative of a local community group or resident's association	6	0
Other	3	0
On behalf of a charity, voluntary or community sector organisation (VCS)	0	0
As a resident from somewhere else, e.g. Medway	0	0
As a Kent business owner	0	0
Total	1,332	100
As % of potential total responses	97.9	

3.4 We also asked respondents to provide the first part of their post code to enable us to analyse and understand their location within Kent. Using this data, the Strategic Commissioning Analytics team have undertaken a spatial analysis of the 1,360 responses, to show the level of engagement by each district. They were also able to provide a district analysis of the two council tax questions and the spending priority question around targeting an extra £1. A copy of their report is attached at Appendix 1. The key headlines from this report are:

- The districts with the highest amount of responses were Maidstone, Ashford and Canterbury
- An analysis of the responses per district expressed as a percentage of the post 16 population shows the districts with the greatest response rate as Ashford, and the lowest response rate as Dartford.

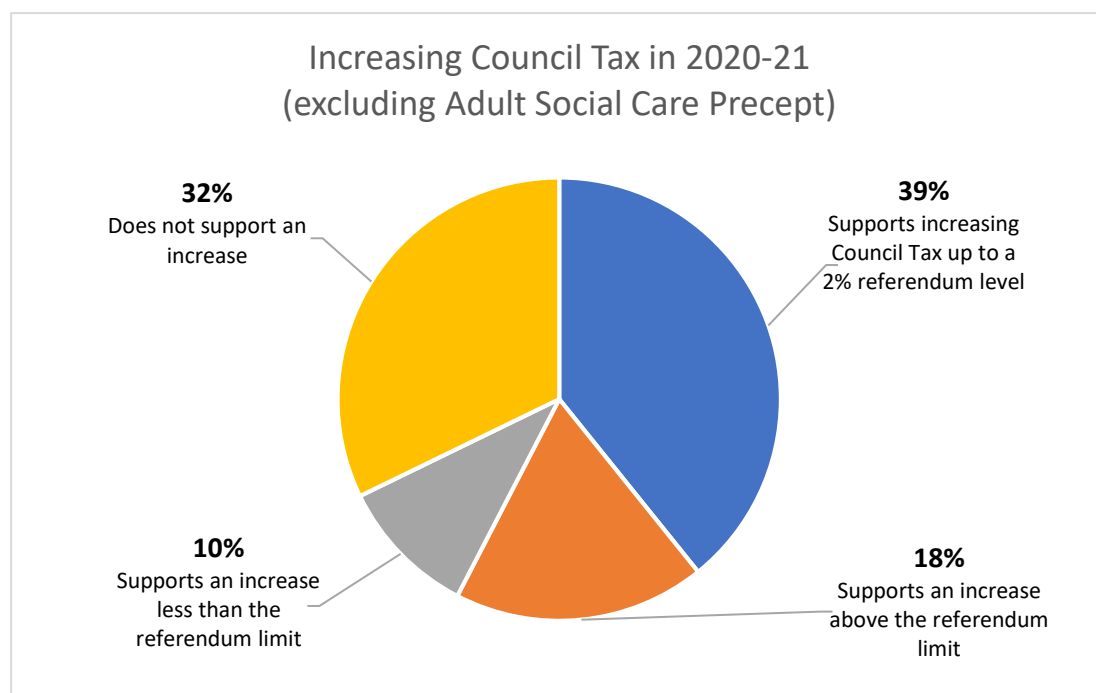
3.5 The consultation questionnaire then explored three key issues:

1. Views on a general increase in Council Tax, up to the referendum limit
2. Views on an increase in Council Tax, specifically for Social Care (known as the Adult Social Care Precept)
3. Views on Spending Priorities

3.6 Responses to question 4 are shown in Chart 3 below. Question 4 asked the following question; **In order to protect the services you value the most, KCC suggests raising Council Tax by no more than the level Government expects us to set before a county-wide referendum is required (currently assumed to be just under 2%). This would partly help meet rising demand for our services but, won't be enough to fully cover the rising costs we have for 2020-21. Savings would still be needed to balance our budget.** Respondents were asked to choose between one of the following options:

- I support increasing Council Tax up to the referendum level (currently assumed at just under 2% which would mean an increase of £23.04 per year (44p per week) for a typical band C property taking the total KCC element to £1,178.08 (£22.60 per week)).
- I support a **higher** increase (even if it means having a county-wide referendum). Every extra 1% adds approximately 22p per week, or £11.55 per year for a typical band C property and increases KCC's income by approximately £7.15m.
- I support an increase **less** than the referendum limit. Each 1% less means we would have to find further £7.15m of spending reductions to balance the budget.
- I do not support an increase. This means we would have to find a further £14.3m of spending reductions to balance the budget.

Chart 3



3.7 Table 3 below provides a summary of the responses to question 4, with a comparison to last year's responses.

Table 3

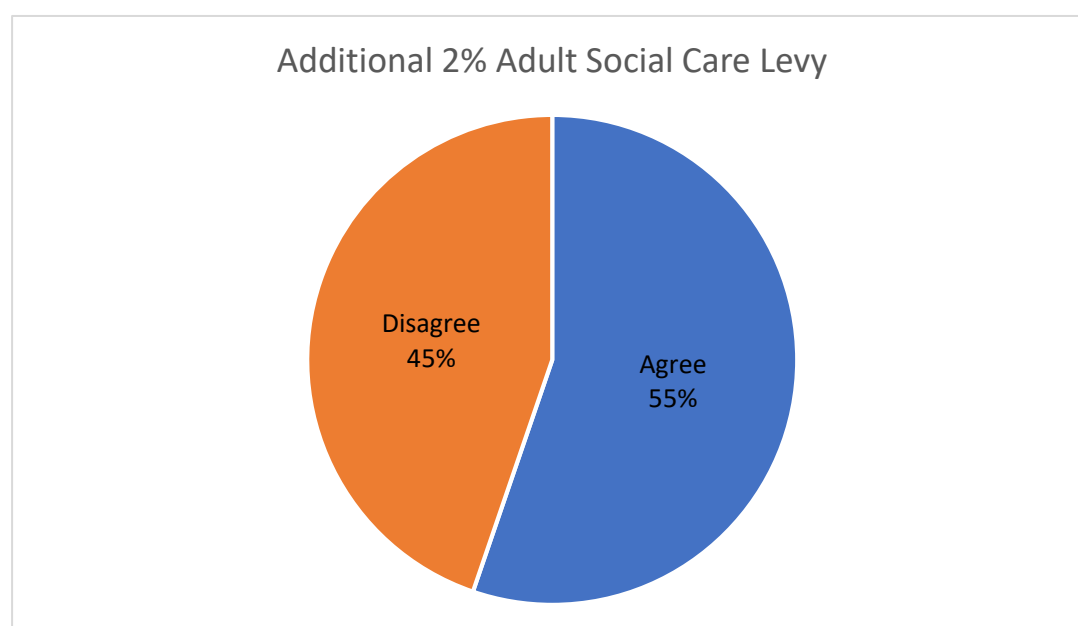
	This year	Last year	Change
Support increasing Council Tax up to a 2% referendum limit	39%	27%	+12%
Supports an increase above the referendum limit	18%	14%	+4%
Sub Total (1)	57%	41%	+16%
Supports an increase less than the referendum limit	10%	12%	-2%
Sub Total (2)	67%	53%	+14%
Does not support an increase	32%	46%	-14%

Note: Totals in table subject to rounding

3.8 These responses show a majority (67% as shown in sub-total 2) of support for increasing Council Tax to some degree, and they also show that 57% (as shown in sub-total 1) support an increase to Council Tax up to the referendum limit or higher. This is slightly different to last year's consultation responses, showing an increase of 14% in support of increased Council Tax (and an increase of 16% up to the referendum limit or above).

- 3.9 This year's responses show that 39% support raising council tax up to the referendum limit, 18% support increasing Council Tax above the referendum limit, and 10% support increasing Council Tax to a level below that of the referendum limit. 32% of respondents do not support increasing Council Tax for the 2020-21 budget and presumably would accept further savings to address the financial challenge arising from rising spending demands.
- 3.10 Historically over a longer period we have seen higher levels of support for Council Tax increases particularly from qualitative research once people have a better understanding how Council Tax funds valued front-line services. We will consider how future research could look into whether this shift is purely down to squeezed household finances (increases in recent years not kept pace with pay) or the need for a more fundamental reform to the Council Tax system with more support from government/reform of valuations. The open comments section (see paragraph 3.25) featured all three of these issues
- 3.11 Responses to question 5 are shown in Chart 4 below. Question 5 asked the following question; **Local authorities like KCC, who are responsible for adult social care, are allowed to raise an additional 2% in Council Tax, provided this is spent directly on the care of the most vulnerable adults and older people.**

Chart 4



- 3.12 These responses show a return to pre-2018 years, indicating a majority support the adult social care levy. The consultation question was a straightforward choice between agreeing or disagreeing with the social care levy. Last year 41% supported the levy, so this year we can see from Chart 4 that this has increased by 14% to 55%.

- 3.13 We have been able to analyse the responses to the above two questions in more detail between residents and KCC staff. The analysis shows that there is stronger support from KCC staff to increase Council Tax, than residents. This may be explained by a greater awareness of the financial challenge faced by the Council. Table 4 below shows the results of this analysis.

Table 4 – Comparison of KCC Employee and Kent Resident responses to Council Tax increase questions (please note KCC employees account for only 10% of all responses)

	KCC Employee	Kent Resident
Support a general increase to Council Tax	86%	58%
Support +2% Social Care levy	70%	54%

- 3.14 The next section of the consultation focused on spending priorities. Respondents were given a choice of whether to respond to this part of the questionnaire. 94% of those who responded to the Council Tax questions also completed this section on spending priorities. We asked respondents to imagine that they were in charge of setting the Council's budget and provided them with two lists of frontline services. The first list included seven people based service areas. The second list included seven community/place based service areas. Respondents were asked to choose their top three spending priorities from within each list.
- 3.15 Responses to question 6, which focused on spending priorities for **people based** services, are shown in Chart 5 below. Question 6 specifically asked respondents to choose their top three priorities from the following list:

Adult Social Care (18-64) We support 12,900 adults to live independently at home and access services in their community, including helping people with learning disabilities, mental health, sensory (deaf/blind) and physical disability. We also provide placements in residential and nursing care homes for people with long term, complex needs.

Older People Social Care (65+) We help 20,700 older people. This includes support to help older people live safely and independently at home (e.g. meals on wheels, other daily tasks) and provide day care services to help older people enjoy a good quality life. When people need more support or end of life care, we provide 5,300 placements in residential and nursing care homes.

Social Support We help people with issues such as homelessness, drugs and alcohol, domestic abuse or those going through a crisis. We provide advice for 152,000 carers to help families and carers find the support they need. We provide help to people who may feel lonely or isolated. We support people to do more for themselves at home, by learning or re-learning skills to make them feel safe, happy and live a fulfilled life.

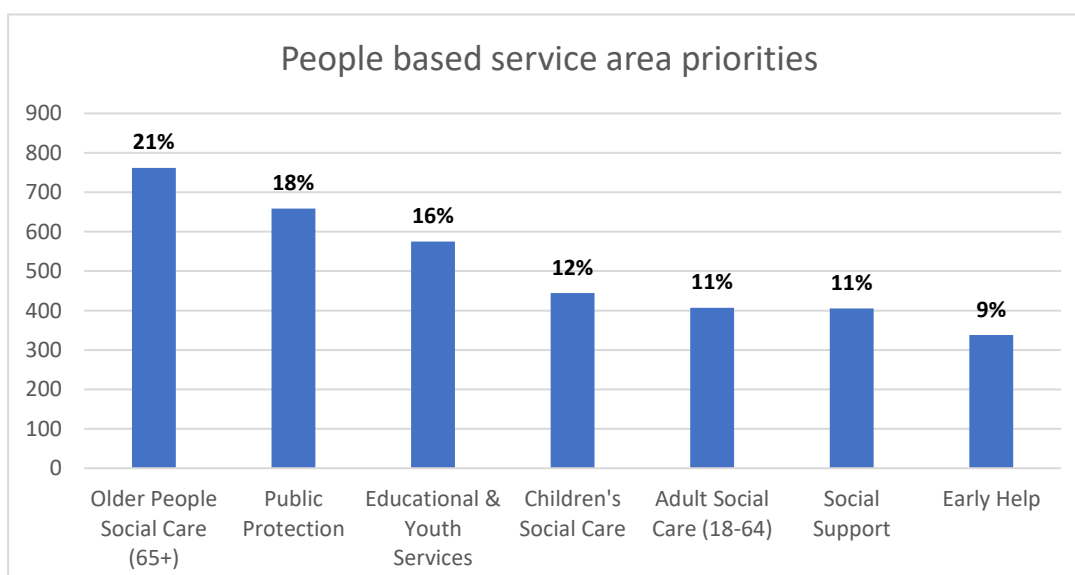
Children's Social Care We support children and families in communities find the right fostering and adoption placements and currently look after 1,600 children in care. We help 1,700 care leavers find the right education, training and housing opportunities up to the age of 25. We help children with complex social care needs, such as physical and learning disabilities and mental health, with additional support to live at home, in their community or in residential placements.

Early Help We have 84 children's centres which are open to all children and families to access activities, support and advice (e.g. weigh clinics, parenting classes). We want to provide the right support for families at an early stage, to prevent problems getting worse and to stop children going into social care.

Educational and Youth Services We support children to be ready for school, working with nurseries and pre-schools to provide quality childcare places. We work with 583 primary, secondary and special schools, so that all children can access a school place that meets their needs. We work with schools to ensure they deliver quality education and improve standards. We help children who need support with complex issues such as special educational needs and disability, emotional wellbeing, attendance and behaviour services and young offenders. We provide activities for young people including youth groups and youth workers.

Public Protection We work with partners such as District Councils and Kent Police on community safety issues (e.g. crime, gangs, domestic abuse). Our Community Wardens cover 128 communities, tackling antisocial behaviour and encouraging communities to work together. We also have responsibilities to support communities to be prepared for emergency and planned events such as disasters, floods and Brexit and Trading Standards work to tackle rogue traders, scams, promote trusted traders and keep goods safe. We also work with coroners' services to investigate inquests and deaths.

Chart 5



3.16 The responses indicate the three most prioritised people based services are Older People Social Care (21%), Public Protection (18%) and Education & Youth Services (16%). Other services were very much on par with each other.

3.17 Question 6a asked respondents to say why they had picked their top three people spending priorities. The qualitative responses to this question supports the data displayed in Chart 5, with 301 comments being made around 'Invest in Education, Youth Services & Early Years', 238 comments being made around 'support and care for the elderly, concerns around an aging population, and supporting older people to remain living independently in their own homes', and 185 comments made around 'safe communities, better policing & public protection'. Examples of specific respondents' comments to this question are provided below:

"Children and young people are our future. If they get a bad start in life it will be very costly for the community in the future. Investing in our youth is the only way to save ourselves money and provide a good outcome for all citizens of the future."

"Older people should be encouraged to live independently at home if possible - next best thing is to support those that can't do that."

"No tax paying resident should feel unsafe in their local area, no matter the time of day. Improving protection against anti-social behaviour, crime and gang culture, especially in conjunction with the police, will increase community safety and bring pride and happiness back to our public areas"

3.18 Other themed comments received are listed below:

- 'Support the disabled, vulnerable, and those suffering from mental health issues' (116)
- 'Improved funding/provision for the support of those suffering from drug abuse, homelessness and poverty, and to introduce preventative measures to mitigate these problems arising' (53)
- 'The importance of preventative services and early intervention' (44)
- 'Provide services to support young families, new parents, and those struggling to raise their family, whilst increasing awareness and accessibility to Family Support services' (40)
- 'Joint working with the NHS to alleviate pressure on the NHS' (12)
- 'Greater support for vulnerable children and young people with excellent and efficient fostering and adoptive services' (8)
- 'Invest in youth and children centres' (7)

3.19 Responses to question 7, which focused on spending priorities for **community/place** based service areas, are shown in Chart 6 below.

Environment Services We enhance and protect Kent's natural environment for

everyone to enjoy. This includes our 9 Country Parks, over 6,000km of public rights of way, areas of outstanding natural beauty and natural habitats such as woodlands, coastline and wetlands. We also look to the future, tackling issues such as climate change, green energy opportunities and protecting heritage conservation. We deliver flood protection and defend coastal erosion.

Highways We manage over 8,500km of highways, 5,000 km of pavements, 120,000 streetlights and maintain other assets such as bridges, road signs and drains. We work with districts and parishes to manage grass, trees and weeds next to our highways. We fix potholes and deliver a winter service to keep roads gritted and safe in bad weather. We are also responsible for road safety, working with partners to prevent accidents and deaths on Kent's roads. We are not responsible for motorways and major 'A' roads which are the responsibility of Highways England.

Regeneration and Economic Development These services focus on regenerating communities and creating the right conditions for the economy to grow and thrive. We work with lots of different types of businesses, colleges, universities and other partners to ensure we have the right skills, infrastructure and job opportunities for the future. We also promote apprenticeships to provide new training and work opportunities. We work with international, national and regional partners to attract funding to support key projects that will support growth, provide loans for new businesses and tackle empty properties.

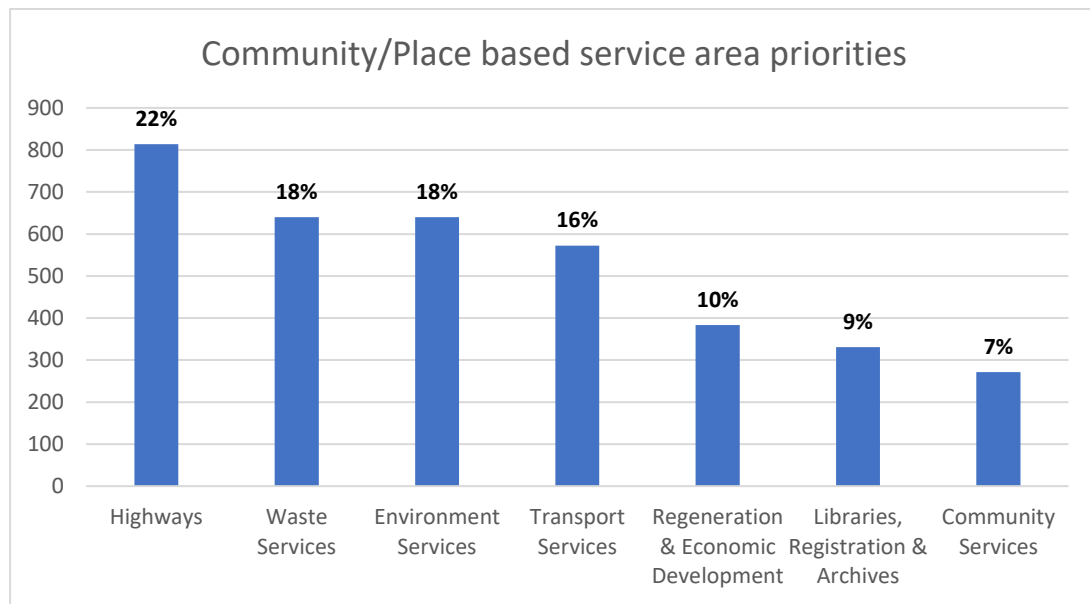
Waste Services We are responsible for disposing of waste through our Household Waste Recycling Centres. District Councils are responsible for on-street collections. We work closely with districts on issues such as recycling, composting and fly tipping.

Community Services We provide services which are important for enjoying life in Kent, such as supporting projects and bids that attract funding for culture, arts and sports. We deliver adult education, supporting people to develop new skills. Our Gateways and contact centres help people get in touch with the council and work with other partners to provide advice or support to resolve queries or issues online, on the phone or face to face.

Libraries, Registration and Archives We have 99 libraries, a mobile library service and support for older and vulnerable people to access library services at home. In addition to reading and learning opportunities, libraries also provide community projects such as baby bounce and rhyme, dementia friendly libraries and summer reading challenges. We also host archives and history projects to protect Kent's cultural heritage and deliver registration of births, deaths and marriages.

Transport Services These are services which are about travel, not physical roads and highways. We have responsibility for transport planning, to ensure the right networks are there to support growing communities. This includes active travel options such as cycling. We subsidise bus travel and concessionary fares (discount rates for older people and people who need support with travel costs) and we can maintain bus routes for isolated and rural communities, which older, younger and vulnerable people may depend on. We manage home to school transport for school children, young people (with the Kent Travel Saver cards) and those with special educational needs.

Chart 6



- 3.20 The responses indicate the three most prioritised place/community based service areas are Highways (22%), Waste Services (18%) and Environment Services (18%). The latter two services received the same number of prioritisations (640), with Transport Services close behind at 572 (16%). The remaining services received considerably less.
- 3.21 Question 7a asked respondents to say why they had picked their top three community/place spending priorities. The comments received were very variable and crossed many aspects of different services. Therefore, the three most mentioned areas do not quite match up with the data shown in Chart 6, although relative themes do run throughout. Most comments were focussed on 'Highway Maintenance', with 248 comments. 'Environment and Open Spaces' received 231 references, whilst a need to 'improve/increase Public Transport' received 181. Arguably, these topics are intrinsically linked, which is shown in multiple themes being identified in the same comment. Examples of specific respondents' comments to this question are provided below:

"The roads are in a terrible state and need urgent attention especially with more and more homes being built which brings ever increasing vehicles to the area."

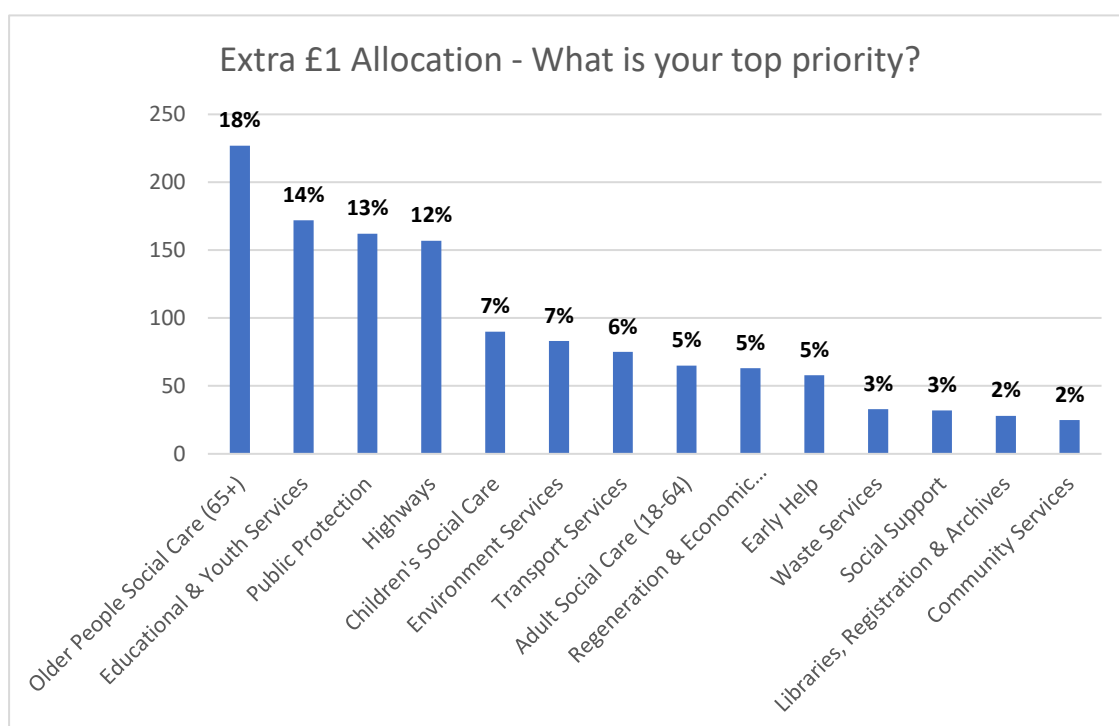
"The future of the environment and climate change are the most critical challenges we face, and these services all have a key role to play."

"Help us recycle, reduce and reuse. What KCC has done already has been brilliant, at least what Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells Borough have done with the new bins."

- 3.22 Other themed comments which received repeated mention are listed below:
- 'Waste Services, concern around new charging policy and the subsequent effect on fly-tipping' (153)
 - 'Support for libraries, art & community services, promoting and increasing opportunities within these community buildings' (116)
 - 'Invest in sensible, efficient infrastructure to assist with a growing demographic, ensuring it has a positive environmental impact' (91)
 - 'Regeneration, revival of local economies and Invest-to-Save initiatives' (74)
 - 'Increased/improved recycling schemes to benefit the environment' (52)
 - 'Concern around housing development and green-field building projects' (49)

3.23 Respondents were then asked in question 8 where they would spend an extra £1 if it were available. The question was designed to identify their top spending priority across both people and community/place service areas. Respondents were only allowed to select one service area and were not allowed to spread their £1 over multiple services areas. Responses to question 8 are shown in Chart 7 below.

Chart 7



3.24 Responses show that the top three 'Extra £1' allocations were Older People Social Care (18%), Educational & Youth Services (14%) and Public Protection (13%), with Highways coming very closely behind in fourth place (12%). The top three 'Extra £1' allocations match with the top 3 prioritised

people services, whilst the high number of allocations given to Highways matches with its position as the most prioritised place/community based service.

3.25 Respondents were asked whether they would like to make any other comments on Council Tax or our budget priorities. As can be expected, responses were varied in their content and depth of detail. There was a total of 549 responses to this question. A number of similar themes and topics were expressed, and the most numerous of these have been described and tallied below:

- 'Salaries at KCC are too high, and there are too many managers/directors' (53)
- 'Rises in Council Tax are above the rate of pay increases, meaning residents are unable to afford any increase' (47)
- 'Public transport and infrastructure need to be improved, in order to provide a healthier environment and help with congestion issues' (17)
- 'Residents feel unsafe in their communities with rising crime rates – more policing is needed' (14)
- 'Management and working practises in KCC need to be made more efficient' (14)
- 'The waste service is confusing and new charges are contributing to increased fly-tipping' (12)
- 'Road conditions are in a poor state and should be addressed with lasting measures, not 'band-aid' fixes' (12)
- 'Focus on protecting and improving the natural environment' (12)
- 'Invest in education and youth services, especially SEN provision' (11)
- 'Government grants should increase instead of Council Tax – certain services ought to be centralised into central government' (9)
- 'KCC should campaign for Council Tax reform, as 1991 house prices is an outdated basis' (9)
- 'Rescind the 15% pay rise given to Council Members, and stop any future increase in pay' (8)
- 'Improve cleanliness of streets and regularity of waste collections' (7)
- 'Re-evaluate costly contracts/arrangements agreed to by KCC' (7)
- 'Consideration is needed to local services and infrastructure in relation to any new housing developments being agreed' (7)

3.26 Respondents were asked whether they felt that the questionnaire was easy to understand, and were given the option of selecting 'Yes', 'No' or 'Partly', as well as a free-text box in which to provide further comments. The majority - 65% - said it was easy to understand the questionnaire, 1% did not find the questionnaire easy to understand, 7% partly, and 28% did not answer.

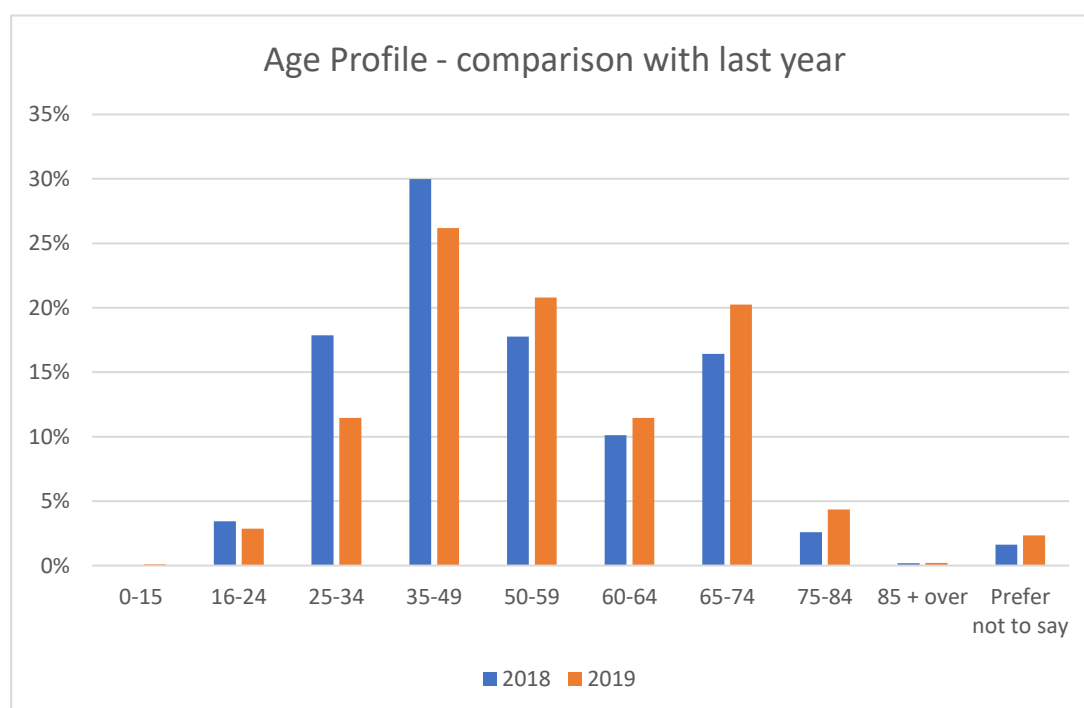
Feedback shows a wide variety of reasons why respondents answered the way they did. Some examples are listed below:

- Some questions were too long-winded or involved language which some respondents did not understand.
- Questions seem to be worded in such a way so as to receive pre-designed answers.
- Prioritising only three services was too difficult and restrictive – being given the chance to rank services on a scale would have been better.

About those who responded

- 3.27 The age profile of those who responded to the consultation (and indicated their age group – this was voluntary) is shown in Chart 8 below. It shows that in 2019 a higher proportion who responded to the consultation were over the age of 50 (59%) compared to last year (49%).

Chart 8



- 3.28 We have been able to further analyse the responses to the two Council Tax questions (question 4 and 5) based on the age, gender, ethnicity and those that indicated that they are disabled. We have excluded “don’t knows” and blank responses. The data has been provided in the following tables, which can only be read vertically:

Age (68% of all responses)		% who supported an increase	% who did not support an increase
Q4. Council Tax (referendum limit)	Under 50's	38%	51%
	Over 50's	62%	49%

Q5. Social Care levy	Under 50's	37%	49%
	Over 50's	63%	51%

Gender (68% of all responses)		% who supported an increase	% who did not support an increase
Q4. Council Tax (referendum limit)	Male	40%	51%
	Female	60%	49%

Q5. Social Care levy	Male	38%	52%
	Female	62%	48%

Disabled (67% of all responses)		% who supported an increase	% who did not support an increase
Q4. Council Tax (referendum limit)	Disabled	14%	15%
	Not Disabled	86%	85%

Q5. Social Care levy	Disabled	15%	13%
	Not Disabled	85%	87%

- 3.29 In terms of those Kent residents who provided their ethnicity, the analysis showed no significant difference between ethnicities between those in favour and those opposed to Council Tax increases.

4. Other Consultation and Engagement Activity

Resident Engagement workshops

- 4.1 This year we held three resident engagement events which focused on the development of the Strategic Statement and the MTFP. The Council commissioned Westco, an independent market research agency, to organise and facilitate these events. A broadly representative sample of residents

were recruited and in total 121 residents attended one of the following three events:

- Sunday 8th September am – Spitfire Cricket Ground, Canterbury
- Saturday 14th September pm – Angel Centre, Tonbridge
- Sunday 15th September am – Woodville Theatre, Gravesend

4.2 In terms of the MTFP, these events focused on residents' views on spending priorities. Residents were asked to undertake two prioritisation exercises focusing on 14 frontline service areas. The first exercise asked residents to either 'prioritise more', 'prioritise the same' or 'prioritise less' for each service area. Residents had no restrictions on prioritising these services. The results of this activity found that there were six priority areas, whereby a larger percentage of residents stated they would prefer to prioritise more than prioritise the same. These areas were:

- Highways (69%)
- Education and youth services (60%)
- Environment (54%)
- Social support (53%)
- Public protection (52%)
- Early help (47%)

4.3 In the remaining service areas, roughly five in ten would like to see prioritisation remain the same for older people social care (50%), transport services (47%), children's social care (51%), adult social care (55%), and regeneration and economic development (53%). Waste services and libraries, registration and archives received slightly higher percentages at 72% and 64% respectively.

4.4 Significantly, when not forced to do so, there was very little appetite amongst the public to spend less on any service area.

"You want to spend more on everything" – West Kent, Female, 35-54 years.

4.5 In the second prioritisation exercise, residents were asked to focus on the same 14 frontline service areas. However, this time residents were given an insight into the 'hard choices' Members and Senior Officers have to make; if they chose to prioritise more in one area, they had to prioritise less in another. If they wanted to prioritise the same on one area, they were not penalised anywhere else.

4.6 Residents' top priorities remained consistent. These were:

- Highways (49%)
- Education and youth services (41%)
- Environment (38%)

- Public Protection (38%)
- Older people social care (38%)

- 4.7 The analysis of the results of this exercise also indicated that some residents were reluctant to choose some service areas to prioritise less. The mindset tended to be fuelled by perception that prioritising less means a reduction in funding or a reduction in the service offered, and that some people in Kent will suffer as a result of a reduction of the service.

“Choosing ‘prioritise less’ was a lot harder. You don’t want their [KCC’s] job. But at the same time, it needs to be done” – East Kent, Female, 55+ years

Voluntary Community & Social Enterprise sector event

- 4.8 On the 28th October we hosted a VCSE sector wide event specifically focusing on the development of the budget and seeking attendees’ views on spending priorities and how the sector can help us achieve our strategic objectives. Attendees’ feedback has been summarised and is attached at appendix 2.

Internal Consultation Engagement with Staff - T200 Event

- 4.9 On 26th September, we hosted an internal T200 event designed at asking a wide selection of KCC managers what their spending priorities were. Attendees were asked to rank their three most prioritised services (1 being the highest, 2 second highest, 3 third highest). They were also asked to allocate an ‘Extra £1’, constituting a fourth highest priority service. The three highest priorities areas identified were:

1. Education & Youth Services
2. Environment
3. Regeneration & Economic Development

The fourth highest was Children’s Social Care.

- 4.10 Attendees were also invited to explain why they had chosen those priorities over other services. The three most highly prioritised services, as described above, were those which received the most commentary. Some of the recurrent themes and comments included focus on:
- Invest to Save – this was a theme that was mentioned across a broad range of areas, including regeneration and economic development, education and social care.
 - The future, especially through the environment, education and dealing with a changing demographic – the impetus was placed in investing for a better future.
 - Health & Wellbeing, a theme spreading through the environment, public protection and social support services

Examples of specific respondents' comments to this question are provided below:

"Without regeneration the county cannot improve and move forward"

*"As long as statutory services are **adequately** funded, priority should be around prevention and investing to save"*

"Social Support, if effective, can be preventative and save money, while improving society"

"Education and Youth Service because...if we get this right everything else will fall into place"

"Older People care...because this is a growing need with [people] living longer"

"Save the planet first - must reduce our carbon footprint (e.g. electric buses, staff based locally, less reliance on fossil fuels)"

"Caring for the environment now is the only way we can protect its' future - plus the benefits it provides for helping to prevent/treat mental health issues"

"Public Protection is vital to ensure residents feel safe - particularly important with increasing gang & knife crime"

"[KCC has a] duty of care to keep vulnerable adults safe from harm"

- 4.11 Appendix 3 provides a high-level graphical view of the explanations provided by staff who attended the T200 event.
- 4.12 In addition to the above events, high level engagement alongside the development of the Strategic Statement also took place with:
- Kent Association of Local Councils
 - Kent Youth County Council
 - Cross Party Member workshop
- 4.13 The feedback from the high level engagement has also been considered alongside the other consultation and engagement activity.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 There has been a marked increase in the number of responses in favour of an increase to Council Tax compared to last year. Overall 68% of respondents support an increase, with 57% supporting an increase up to the referendum limit (estimated at 2%) or higher. Further information can be found in paragraphs 3.6 to 3.10 and 3.13.
- 5.2 A majority of respondents (55%) support an additional 2% increase in Council Tax specifically for Adult Social Care. This again is an increase on last year, where only 41% supported this levy. Further information can be found in paragraphs 3.11 to 3.13.
- 5.3 There was stronger support for these two Council Tax increases from:
- a) KCC employees than Kent residents. Further information can be found in paragraph 3.10.
 - b) Over 50's than under 50's. Further information can be found in paragraph 3.25.
- 5.4 In relation to Council Tax, amongst a number of points, respondents also highlighted the following three general points:
- 'Rises in Council Tax are above the rate of pay increases, meaning residents are unable to afford any increase'
 - 'Government grants should increase instead of Council Tax – certain services ought to be centralised into central government'
 - 'KCC should campaign for Council Tax reform, as 1991 house prices is an outdated basis'
- 5.5 Respondents told us that Older People's Social Care, Public Protection and Educational & Youth Services were their top three people based spending priority areas. Further information can be found in paragraphs 3.15 to 3.18.
- 5.6 Respondents told us that Highways, Waste and Environmental Services were their top three community/place based spending priority areas. Further information can be found in paragraphs 3.19 to 3.22.
- 5.7 When asked where they would spend an additional £1 if it were available, respondents told us that Older People's Social Care, Educational & Youth Services, Public Protection and Highways were their top four spending priority areas. Further information can be found in paragraphs 3.23 to 3.24.
- 5.8 This year the Council undertook a greater amount of engagement activity to inform our Budget planning, alongside the development of our new Strategic Statement. We carried out three resident workshops, attended by 121 Kent residents in total. Similar to the budget consultation, we asked residents to undertake a spending priority exercise. The top five spending priority areas identified were Highways, Educational and Youth Services, Environment and

Public Protection and Older People Social Care. Further information can be found in paragraphs 4.1 to 4.7.

- 5.9 In addition, we hosted a Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise sector event to seek their views on spending priorities and how the sector can help us achieve our strategic objectives. Their top spending priority areas were Social Support, Educational and Youth Services, Early Help and both Adult and Older People's Social Care. Further information can be found in paragraph 4.8 and appendix 2.
- 5.10 We engaged with staff at the T200 event and sought their views on spending priorities. Their top spending priority areas were Education & Youth Services, Environment and Regeneration & Economic Development. Further information can be found in paragraphs 4.9 to 4.11 and appendix 3.
- 5.11 Education & Youth Services was identified as a spending priority area by respondents to our consultation and by all the different groups (resident, voluntary community and social enterprise and staff) we engaged with. Highways, Older People Social Care, Public Protection and the Environment also featured as important spending priority areas.

Contact details:

Report Author:

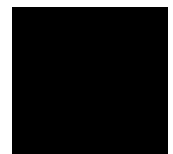
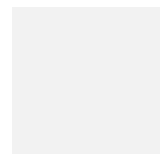
- Simon Pleace, Revenue and Tax Strategy Manager
- 03000 416947
- simon.pleace@kent.gov.uk

Relevant Corporate Director:

- Zena Cooke, Corporate Director of Finance
- 03000 419205
- zena.cooke@kent.gov.uk

Budget Consultation 2019 – Appendix 1

Spatial Analysis



Introduction

The Engagement and Consultation Team approached the analytics team in Strategic Commissioning to undertake a spatial analysis of 1,360 responses to the 2019 budget consultation. The responses to three questions are included in this report:

- Respondents preferred option for council tax (i.e. no increase, a small increase, an increase up to the Government's referendum level or an increase above this level)
- Whether respondents agree with the 2% Adult Social Care Levy on Council Tax
- If there was an extra £1 available, where would respondents spend it?

Method

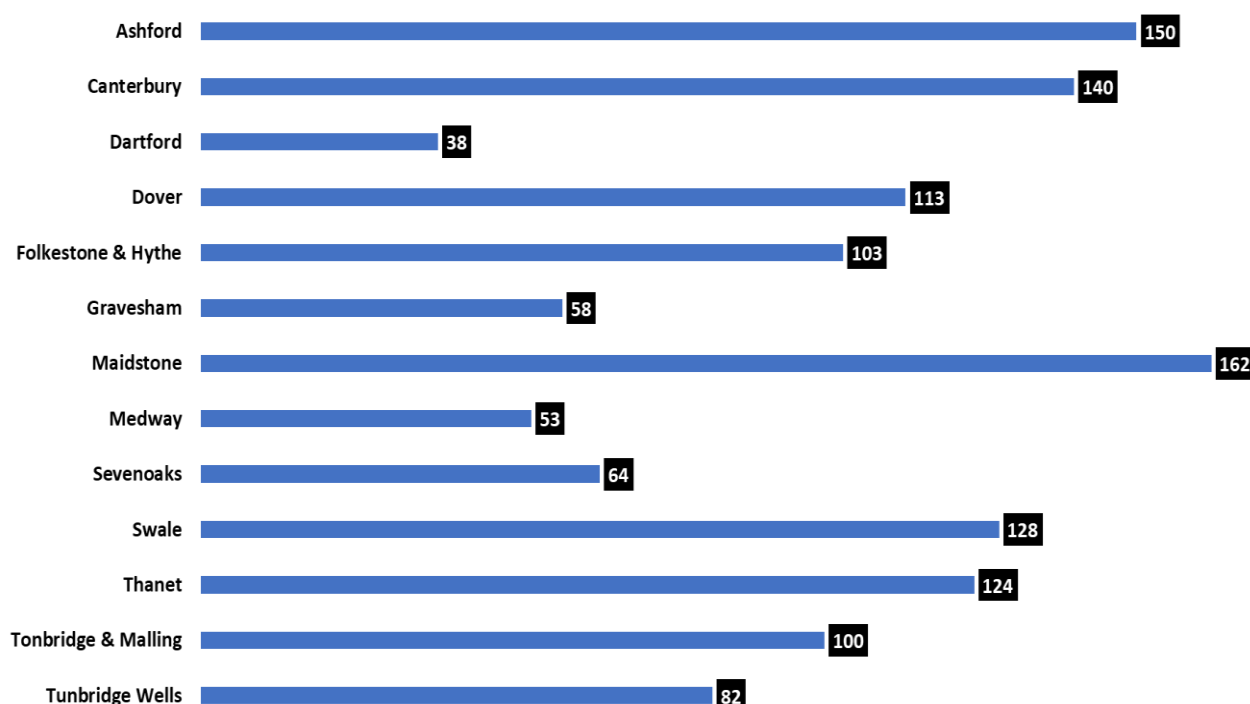
Respondents were asked to provide the first section of their postcode. This allows us to map and analyse responses at postcode district level, to see if support for council tax increases and the Adult Social Care levy vary across the county. We can also see if the spending priorities of respondents is different in some parts of Kent compared to others.

For the most part, postcode districts align with district boundaries e.g. Thanet, Dartford etc. This enables us to analyse the data at this higher level of geography, which is more appropriate, given the number of responses. In the few cases where postal district boundaries are in more than one administrative district, it has been classified to whichever district it covers more of.

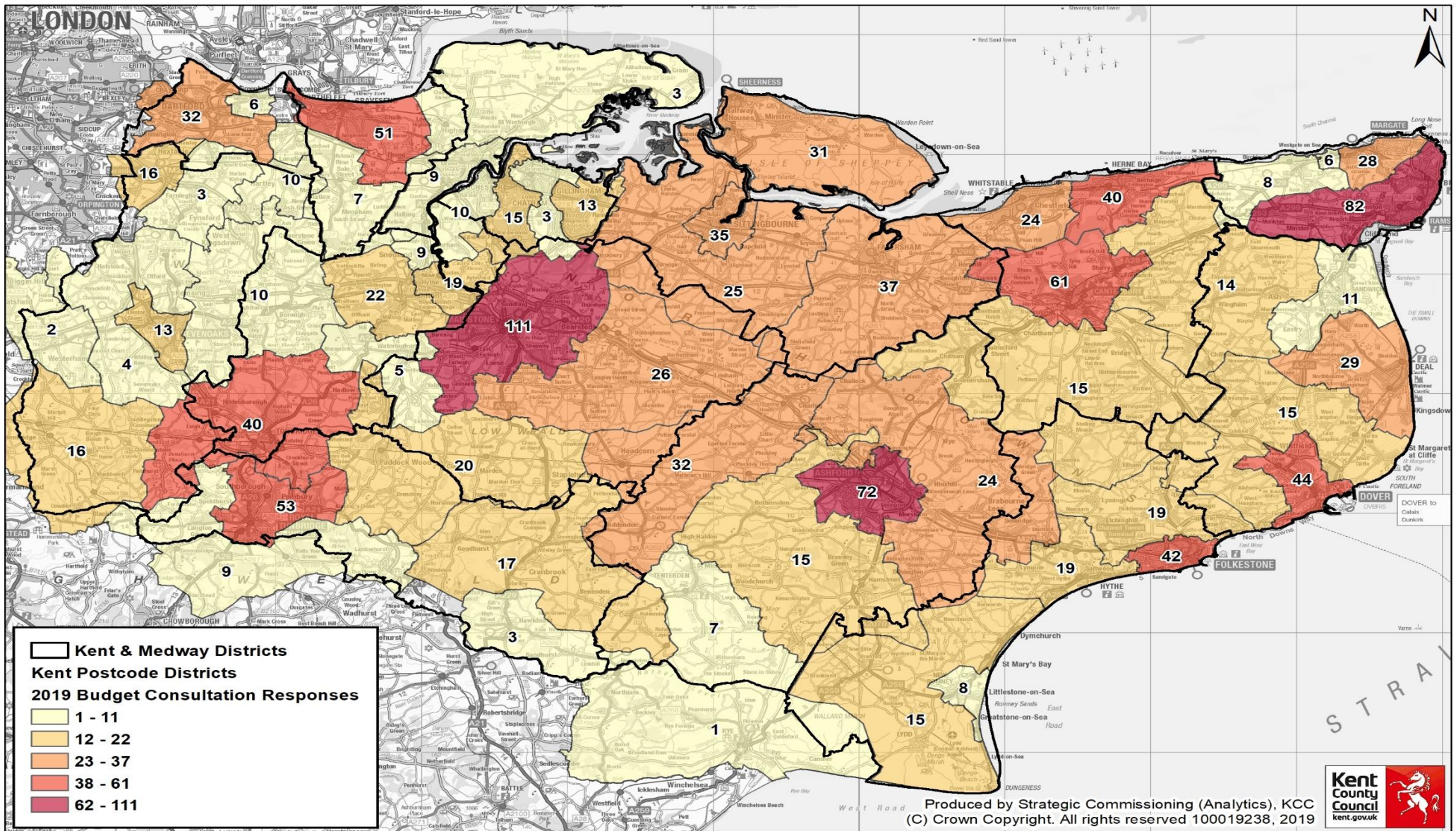
Analysis

There were 1,262 responses from residents living in KCC and 53 who live in Medway. Chart 1 shows that the number of responses by district varied from 38 in Dartford to 162 in Maidstone. Map 1 shows the number of responses by postcode district.

Chart 1: Budget Consultation Responses by District



Map 1: Budget Consultation Responses by Postcode District



Map 2: % of respondents who supported a council tax increase by postal district

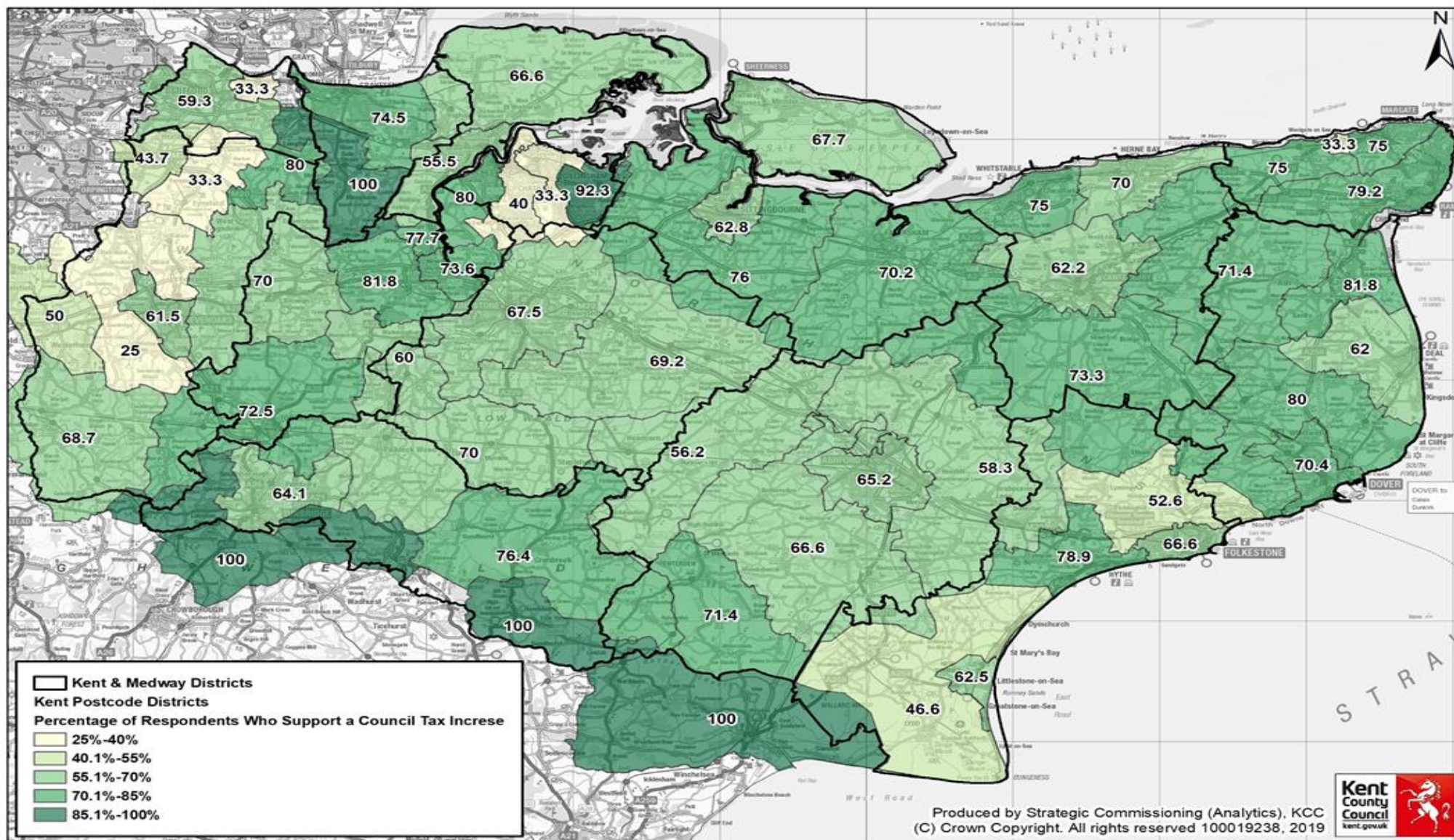


Chart 2 shows the response rate per 16+ population by KCC district. This shows that Ashford had the highest response rate, 0.12%, whilst Dartford had the lowest response rate, 0.03%. There are some statistically significant differences in this response rate by district. Dartford, Gravesham, Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells have response rates that are significantly lower than the KCC average.

Chart 2: Response rate by District

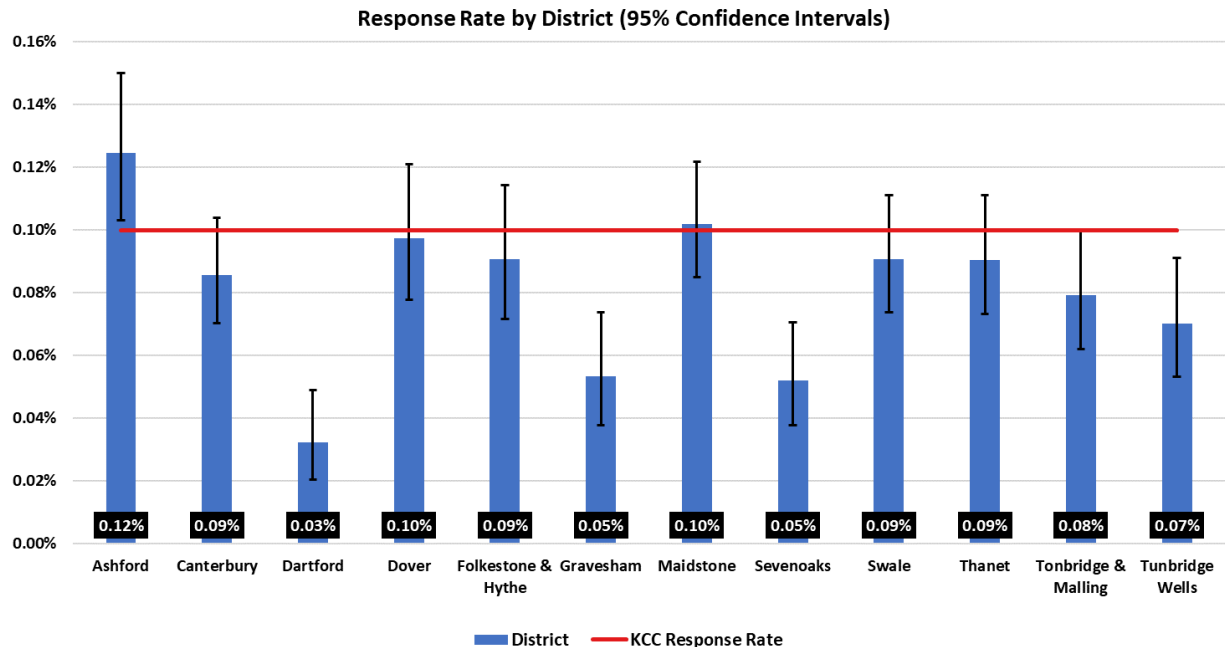


Chart 3 shows the proportion of respondents that supported an increase in council tax in 2020/2021, by district. Overall, 68% of respondents supported a council tax increase. Whilst this varied from 55.3% in Dartford to 75% in Tonbridge & Malling, the differences are not statistically significant. Map 2 shows the percentage of respondents that support a council tax increase by postcode district.

Chart 3: % of respondents who supported a council tax increase by district

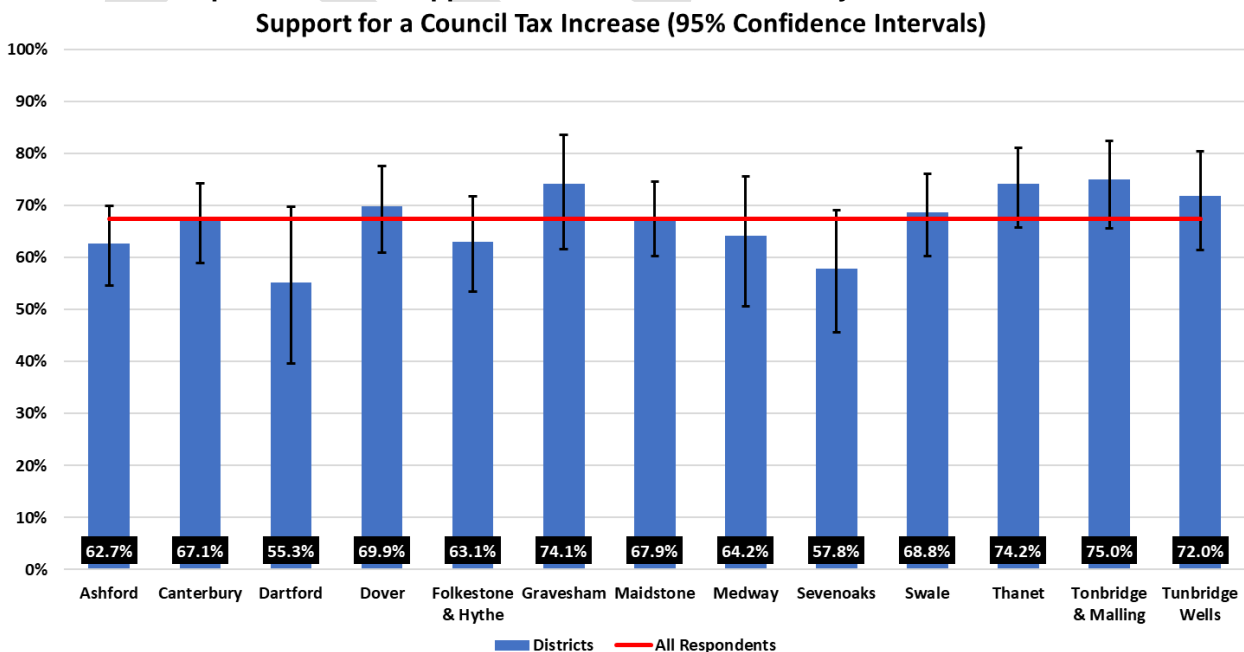
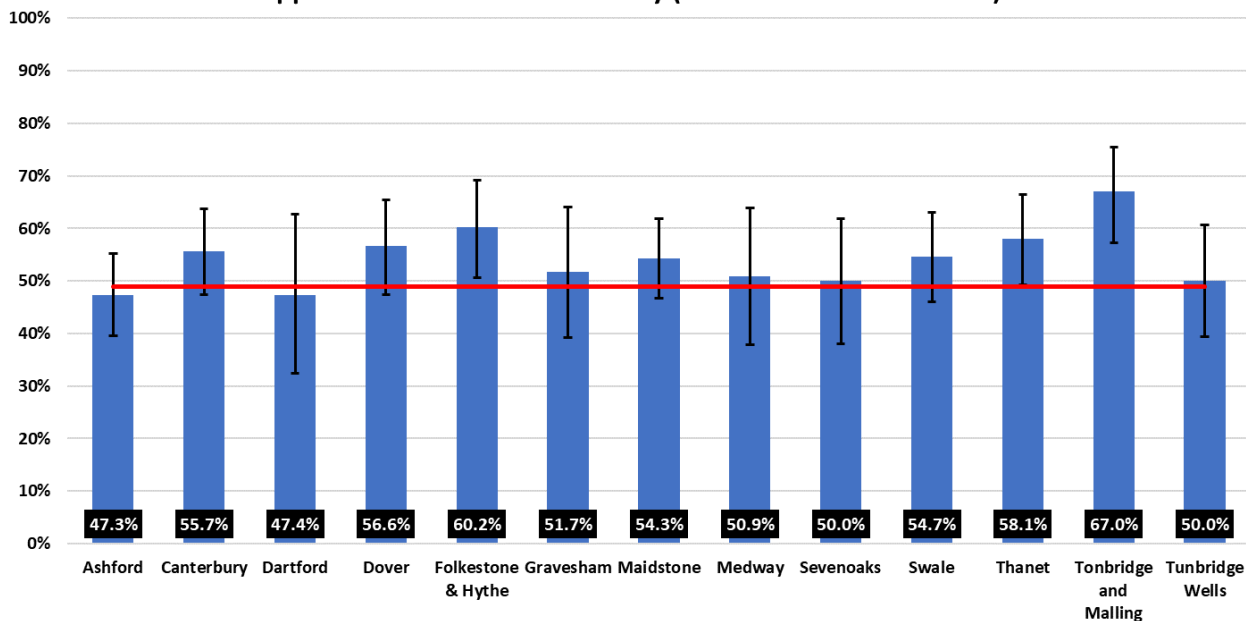


Chart 4 shows the proportion of respondents that agree with the additional 2% Adult Social Care Levy on Council Tax in 2020/2021, by district. Overall, 55% of respondents supported the levy. Whilst this varied from 47.3% in Ashford to 67% in Tonbridge & Malling, the differences are not statistically significant, although support in Tonbridge & Malling and Folkestone & Hythe was significantly higher than average. Map 3 shows the percentage of respondents that support the additional Adult Social Care Levy, by postcode district.

Chart 4: % of respondents who agreed with the additional 2% Adult Social Care Levy
Support for Adult Social Care Levy (95% Confidence Intervals)



Map 3: % of respondents who agree with the 2% Adult Social Care Levy

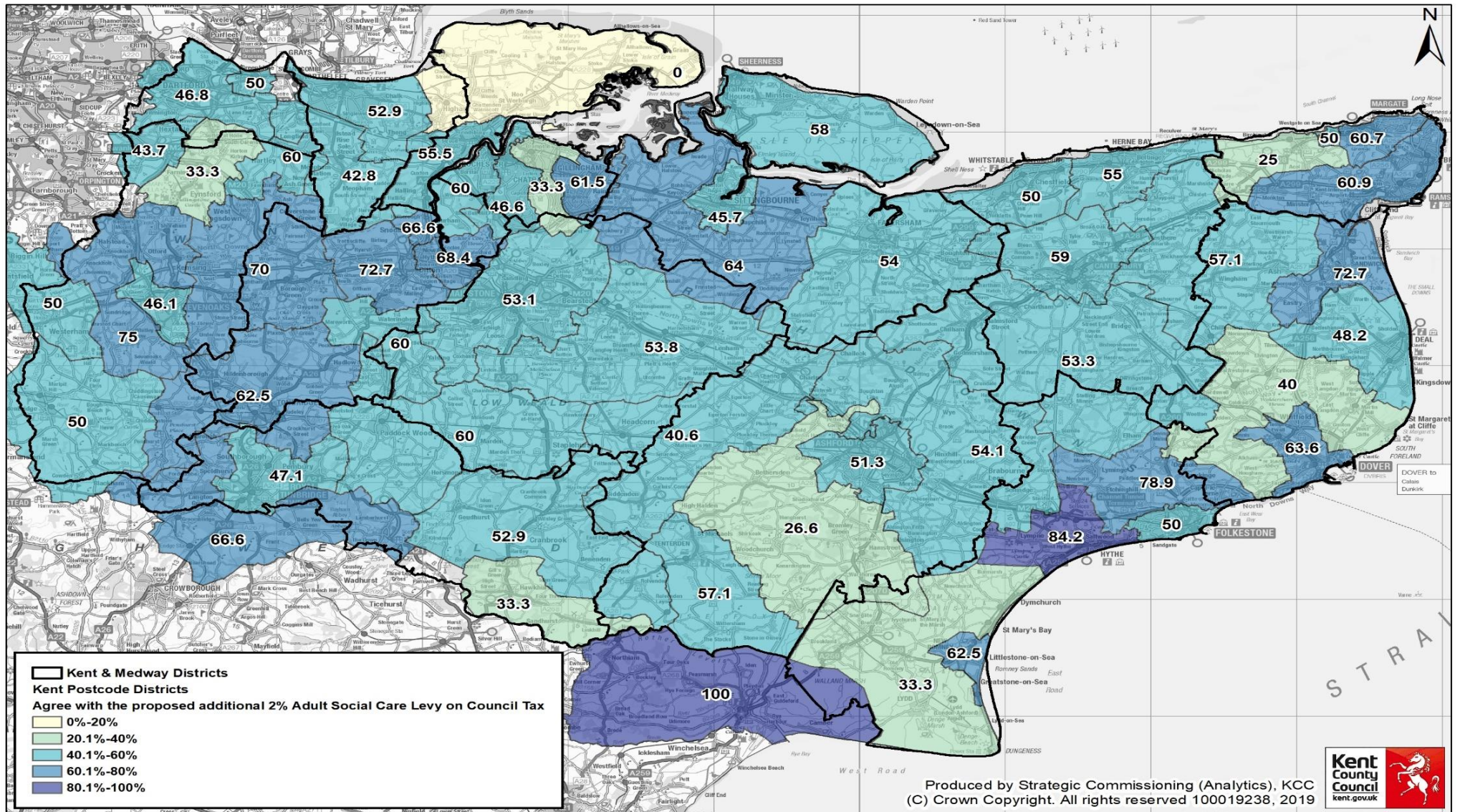


Chart 5 shows where respondents would prioritise extra spending within the council. This shows that respondents would prioritise spending on Older People Social Care 65+ (17.9% of respondents), followed by Education and Youth Services (13.5%) and Public Protection (12.8%). Community Services and Libraries, Registration and Archives were the lowest priorities for additional spending from respondents. Chart 6 shows this broken down by district.

Chart 5: Spending Priorities of Respondents

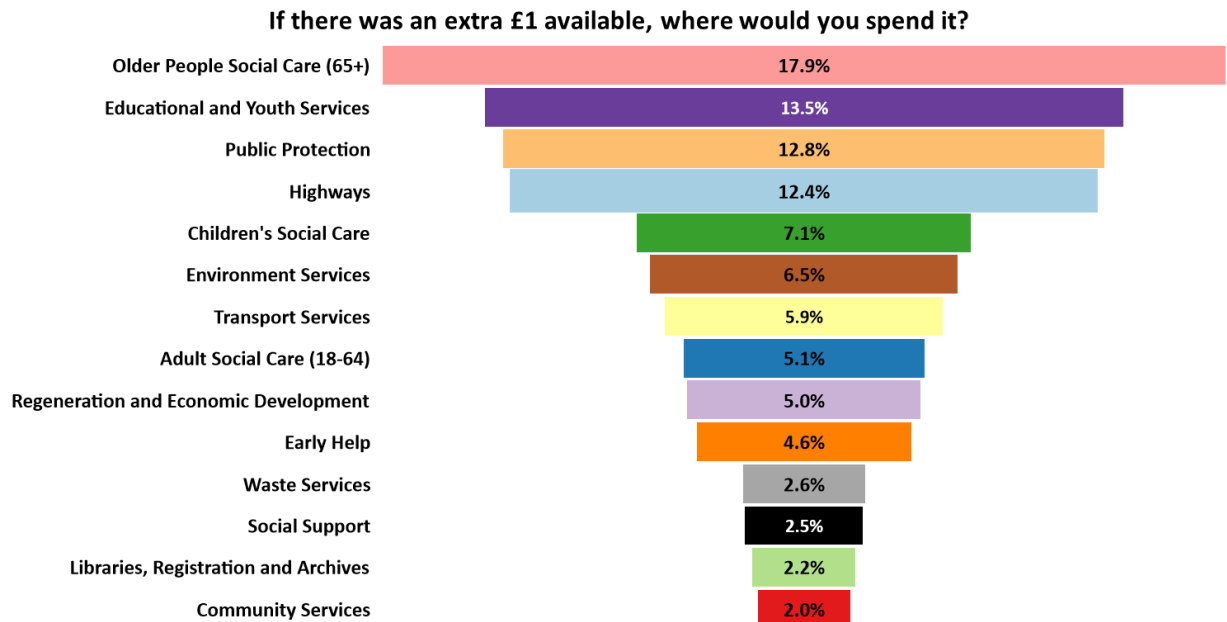
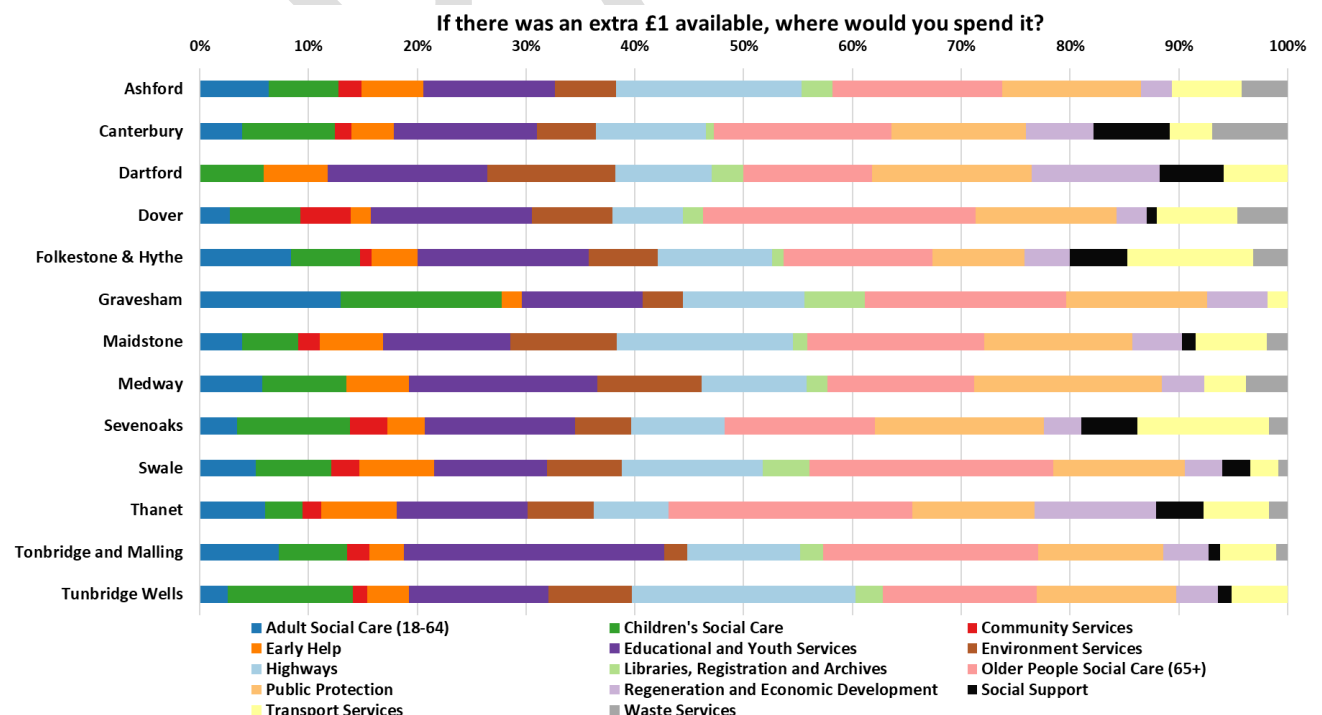


Chart 6: Spending Priorities of Respondents by District



Budget 2020-21 VCSE Consultation Event – Summary of Feedback

28 October 2019, County Hall, Maidstone

1. Introduction

This event was open to all Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector organisations in Kent. Invites were distributed via KCC's central Engagement and Consultation team, colleagues across KCC and Healthwatch Kent.

Organisations represented	
Action with Communities in Rural Kent	Funding for All
Age Concern Deal	Howard de Walden Community Centre
Age UK Folkestone	Involve Kent
Age UK Herne Bay and Whitstable	Kent Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus
Ashford Age UK	Kent Association for the Blind
Beaver Community Trust	Kent Community Foundation
Canterbury & Coastal Homestart	MADM Maidstone
Cheerful Sparrows Thanet	Mental Health Resource
Children and Families	Porchlight
Citizens Advice North & West Kent	Safer Kent
Clay Colour Works CIC	West Kent Housing Association
Compaid	

This event shared a high-level overview of how KCC spends money on services and some of the challenges of not having enough money to meet spending demands, and proposed solutions to these challenges.

The presentation was followed by a question and answer session and facilitated group discussions which focused on:

- How KCC can work better with the VCSE sector to help meet our strategic objectives.
- The spending priorities that are important to the VCSE.
- Views on KCC's Council Tax and Adult Social Care Levy proposals.

Summary of Feedback

1.1 How KCC can work better with the VCSE sector to help meet our strategic objectives

Participants were asked to address the following questions:

1. Thinking about the people of Kent who access your VCSE organisation for its services or support, what would you say is the one thing KCC could do to help improve people's quality of life?
2. Is it in KCC's gift? Or would KCC need to work collaboratively with the VCSE or other partners to make it happen?
3. What could KCC do better to help the VCSE sector?

A number of strong themes emerged from the table discussions, including the need for greater collaboration and communication between KCC and the VCSE sector and within the sector itself, comments around funding, commissioning and specific areas of need.

Collaboration and communication

General points were raised around the need for KCC to understand the importance of the VCSE sector and to recognise the benefits and added value they provide. Also, KCC should allow them to identify solutions using their knowledge of local needs and to form longer-term partnerships with the sector.

There was a desire for more information sharing, better communication and more frequent / meaningful dialogue at all levels (particular reference was made to "strategic level").

Examples of the feedback received:

Increase communication with VCSE organisations to identify how services can be delivered in a better way (optimising resources). At the moment there are many charities addressing the same or similar issues. Could we work together with support from KCC?

Create a "framework" platform for people to be able to identify all different services provided by VCSE organisations. This will also help to identify synergies.

Create an umbrella entity for voluntary sector – can be used as a vehicle for consultation, sharing information and greater collaboration.

Set up a "Rural Commission" along the lines of the new (2019) North Yorkshire Rural Commission and 2009 Essex Rural Commission collaboratively with VCS and other bodies.

Provide a platform of all services available to the public – who provides what and where to go.

Ensure staff are aware of services that are available in their local sector.



In addition to the comments on collaboration and communication some participants also had suggestions in relation to policy:

- “Develop a coherent VCSE policy that KCC actively supports the implementation of.”
- “Strategic indication of support by KCC decision makers.”

Funding relationships

Participants were able to draw on their experiences of working in the sector when considering funding relationships with KCC. The experiences outlined in the following section outline some suggestions for proposed ways of working in the future.

On a few of the tables, participants suggested that KCC look to make contracting easier / more attractive to smaller / local organisations and / or consortium bids.

They suggested the need for a more flexible commissioning system that makes it easier for smaller organisations to put in joint bids for contracts.

Some participants also flagged concerns around the sustainability of funding, for example, that available funding is always changing which impacts on the projects they deliver and the need for KCC to recognise that in many cases, such as mental health, long term support is needed and will require funding for many years. Funding for one year does not provide the security many organisations need.

You have to do the job or see what's happening on the front line to sympathise/empathise and possibly make the right decision.

It was suggested that KCC could specify in more detail the level of services they expect a voluntary organisation to provide and jointly agree the proportion of funding KCC could provide and the proportion the voluntary organisation would need to self-fund to provide that service. This would enable clear decisions to be made by the VCSE organisation. There was a sense from one table that KCC has a "haphazard" approach to providing funding and that funding is not increasing in line with spending. One organisation reported not having had an uplift in the fees they receive from KCC for several years which has now had a knock-on effect on their clients.

There were comments from participants across the tables on the need for grants rather than contracts and for there to be more of them. Some participants wanted unrestricted and multi-year grants so that voluntary community organisations can spend the grant where they need it most. It was suggested that flexibility in how services are delivered is needed to best meet the needs of communities.

Comments were also made around the amount of paperwork required by KCC, which takes time away from being able to do the work. One participant provided the example of supplying information on "staffing and all sorts" and not having seen any real benefit from doing this.

A number of participants flagged concerns around commissioning. There was a sense amongst some that the nature of commissioning has changed in recent years and that communication seems to be "breaking down".

One participant questioned the distance travelled down the road of commissioned contracts. It was acknowledged that there is value in them for supporting individual's needs. However, the reduction in wider grant schemes means that wider community support doesn't always exist to further support the outcomes the individual needs.

Another felt that commissioned services are under a lot of scrutiny from KCC and it feels like they are held to a higher standard than KCC's own services.

A couple of participants flagged the need for KCC to provide a hardship fund so for example when a family asks for free school meals, they should be offered further support, such as help buying school uniform. There are existing provisions in place within schools, such as the Pupil Premium but perhaps more could be done to promote their availability and to work in partnership with VCSE partners to provide further support and signposting to those in need.

Specific areas of need

The issue of **transport** was raised on four of the five tables. Participants stressed the importance of transport, particularly for vulnerable adults, older people and young people living in rural areas, to **tackle social isolation** and to enable them to access activities, appointments and opportunities. The need for more funding for volunteer drivers was also raised.

Not enough transport options for getting people out of their homes and being less socially isolated, help get them to appointments etc.

Funding to get people to places and be part of their local communities – not just older people, but also young people, and not just linked to rural isolation, public transport difficulties are still faced by people who live close to towns.

Involve have their own volunteer drivers but more are needed to help get people to local places. KCC could provide them more volunteer drivers.

Transport is something that is crucial, without that people can't get to job centre appointments etc, more isolated, less opportunities.

In addition, one participant felt that this was a good time to look into the development of more travel training; "Adults with disabilities need to get to appointments and different activities and are accompanied by their increasingly elderly parents – they need more support."

On two of the tables **Mental Health resources and support** was identified as area that KCC needs to do more to support parents and children with issues such as isolation, anxiety / depression, lack of family networks, fleeing domestic abuse, postnatal depression and housing issues.

The need to maintain and increase the availability of services was flagged as an issue, with there being high demand but low capacity, which was linked to the funding currently available. Again, the issue transport was raised, on this occasion around getting clients to venues. The cost of services is a barrier and long-term support is required (another reoccurring theme). Whilst it was felt that it is within KCC's gift to address these issues it was recognised that greater collaboration and discussion with VCSE organisations could **generate innovative solutions**.

Dementia care and outreach was flagged as an area where more support is needed and where there are currently no grants (although some people are funded on an individual basis). It was felt that more support is needed for those caring for people with Dementia.

One organisation wanted more **Community Wardens**, tasked with community projects; "Community Wardens doing a great job. In places that have Community Wardens, they make a huge difference. KCC could fund more community wardens BUT could also approach Safer Kent for funded activity."

Additional feedback:

Concessions for adults to use sports facilities / gyms / swimming / sports teams.

Empowering people to be independent. Helping people cope with the problems they face.

Preventative services are vital

Increase funding for Early Years Care and Education in line with inflation. KCC should have the ability to do this.

Invest in work with disadvantaged groups living in poverty.

DRAFT

2.2 Spending Priorities

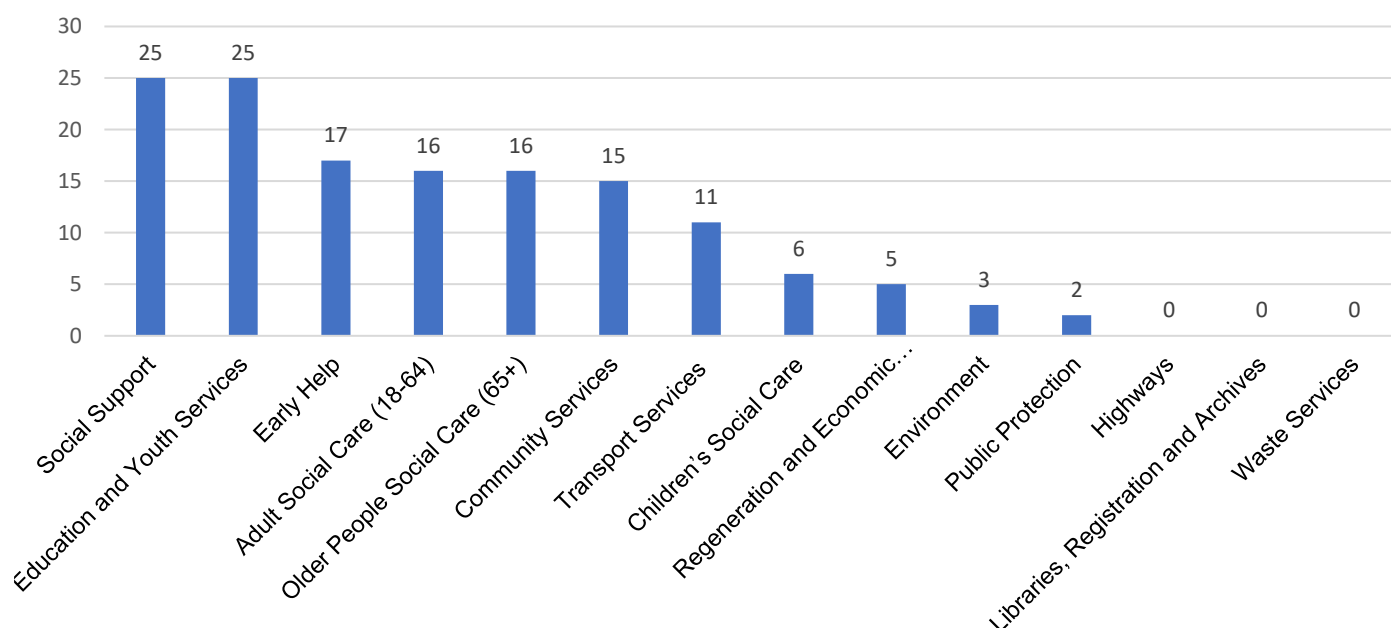
Participants were asked to choose and rank their top three priority service areas from a list of 14. An information sheet with a brief description of each of the service areas was provided to help.

The below table and graph show how participants ranked the service areas.

Spending Area	Priority score*
Social Support	25
Education and Youth Services	25
Early Help	17
Adult Social Care (18-64)	16
Older People Social Care (65+)	16
Community Services	15
Transport Services	11
Children's Social Care	6
Regeneration and Economic Development	5
Environment	3
Public Protection	2
Highways	0
Libraries, Registration and Archives	0
Waste Services	0

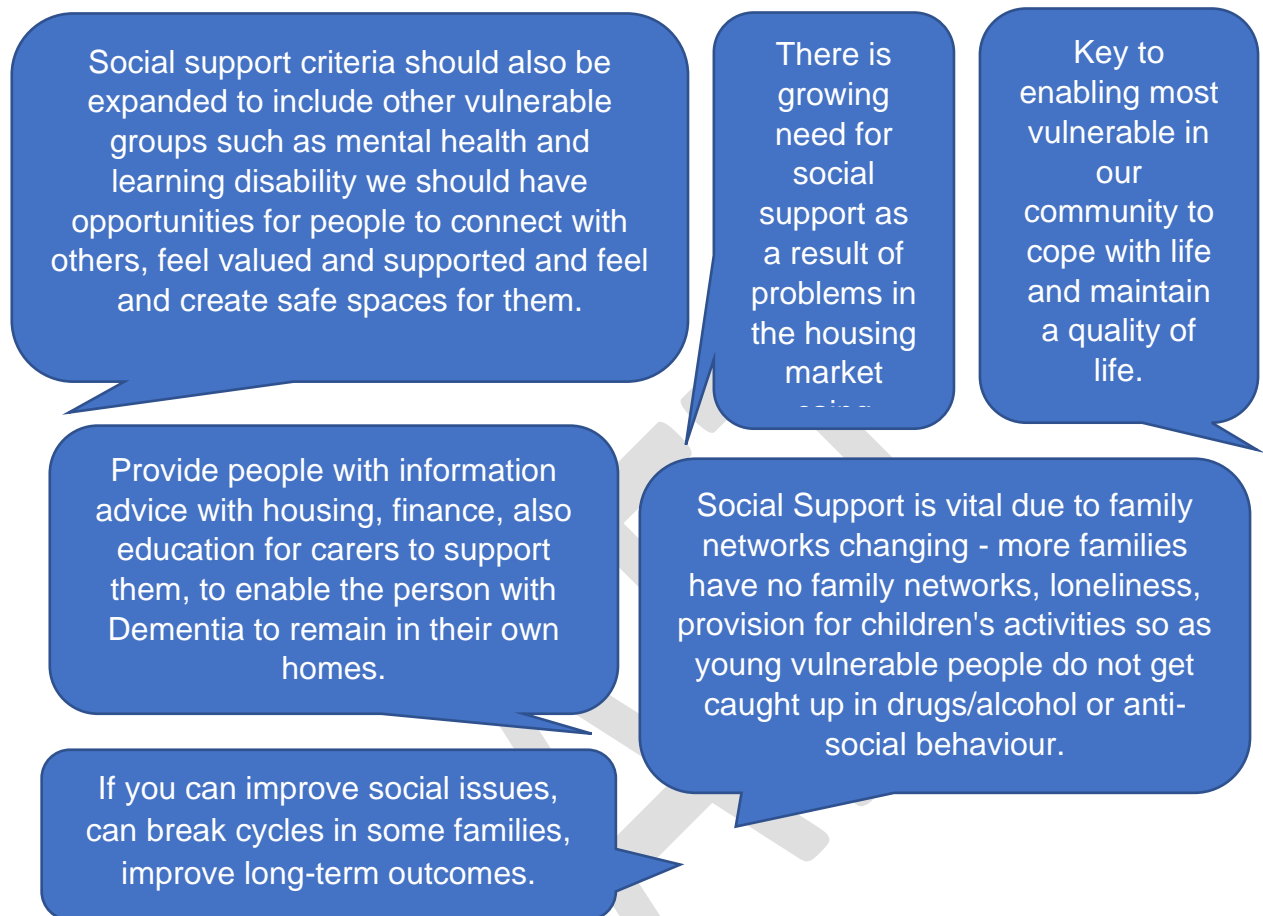
*A score of 3 has been given to their highest priority dropping to a score of 1 for their third. This have been added together to provide a score for each service.

Spending Priorities

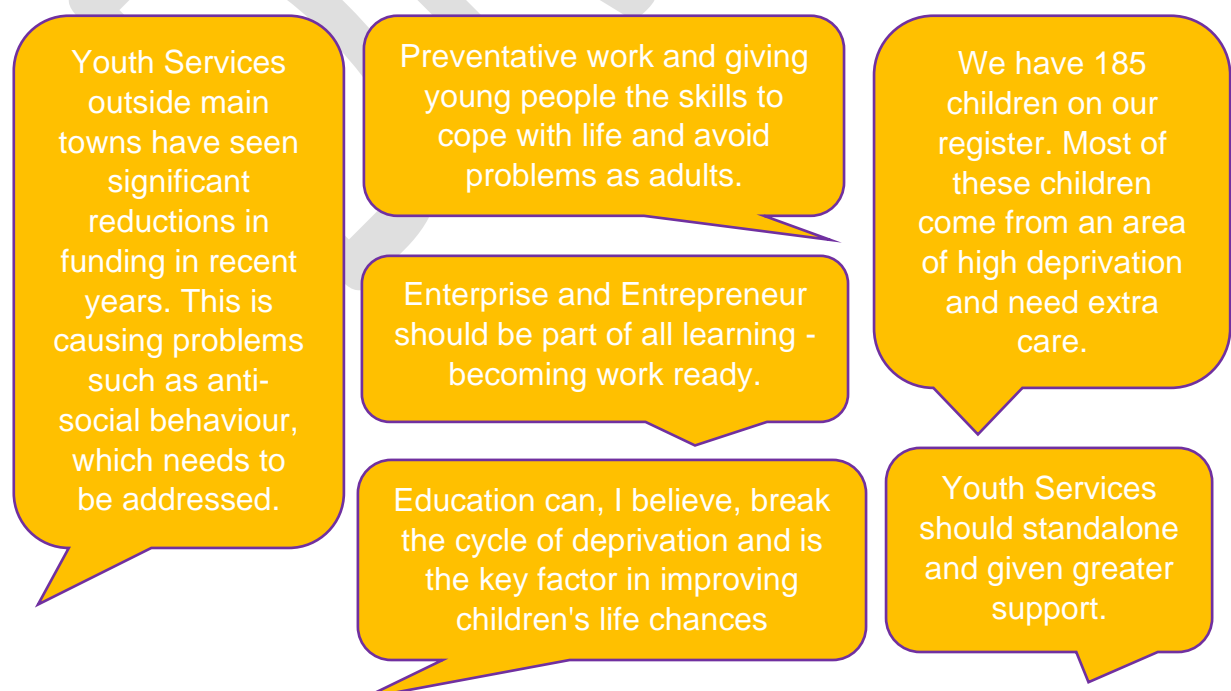


There was also a free text box where participants could explain why they chose their top priorities. Below is an illustration of the comments provided:

Social Support



Education and Youth Services



Early Help

Early Help, Education and Youth Services are vital for future generations to feed in to all those other priorities. Every child deserves the best start in life and without these services we are doing the society a disservice.

Get the right start / early intervention to reduce future problems/spend

Early help is vital – it is linked to KCC having better relationships with schools as well

Support to children and families (early help) otherwise will fall through the net and need more help down the line

There is an increasing requirement for SEND and child protection services. I do not think that KCC appreciate how much providing these services cost an Early Years Setting.

Formative years support for children and their parents is key to building resilience, so that issues later in life are able to be coped with. Raising aspirations can relate change in both families and communities. Where there are generational barriers towards education, there can be explored and have a better understanding to build relationships between authorities and families. While Early Help is essential to help family's long-term outcomes the actual term "Early Help" needs to be looked at again as very often "Early Help" may be high complex needs.

Younger vulnerable people from disadvantaged families, not a lot of help here, looking at person from a holistic point of view, families are key – if they're struggling with child with SEND/or have money problems etc, they are probably not going to quit smoking whatever help is available for that, it's too much for them, so if they had the support for the main problems in their life, they would be more likely to engage in a quit smoking course. Most of the troubled family's issues could be solved earlier and this needs to be a priority for KCC and KCC needs to use the VCSE more efficiently to support this work.

Adult Social Care (18-64)

Our Day Centre and Care Services for older people depend on KCC funding to operate at a meaningful level and provide the needed services for the increase in Dementia Care for older people.

Larger numbers, 13,000 adults in that sector who couldn't support themselves.

They should have access to activities, housing and opportunities – fair access to services and funding.

Investment in older people's services meets urgent needs and saves money from other budgets.

Isolation is a big problem with older people. Day centres provide social interaction, hot meals and activities that support older people being able to remain in their own homes. Age UK offer hot meal delivers 365 days a year, for many this is the only contact they have.

Older People Social Care

Isolation is a big problem with older people. Day centres provide social interaction, hot meals and activities that support older people being able to remain in their own homes. Age UK offer hot meal delivers 365 days a year, for many this is the only contact they have.

Our Day Centre and Care Services for older people depend on KCC funding to operate at a meaningful level and provide the needed services for the increase in Dementia Care for older people.

Investment in older people's services meets urgent needs and saves money from other budgets.

Focus on people, on their quality of life is essential.

Community Services

I am prioritising preventative measures from a social prescribing point of view, I believe it's more important to focus on improving community services and improving volunteer transport links especially to vulnerable adults in rural areas to key services as well as focusing on Early Help. The focus should be on deprived areas and families with young children, focusing on potential adverse childhood experiences and what services could prevent this in communities across Kent have.

We need to create resilient communities and give opportunities to learn ways to be more sustainable and optimise resources we have (environment). New generations should have priority to access these services.

Transport Services

Transport need to grow to meet the rural and wider needs especially the older person.

Essential in preventing isolation, accessing services, getting to job centres.

Regeneration and Economic Development

Our County is dependent on a strong economy for future jobs and being a great place to live and support within this community to give purpose is essential.

Public Protection

Relevant to my client group. Plus no. 2 is relevant to our community, as the immense changes in our society, due to increase in crime / drugs / knife crime and influx of families into social housing from London Boroughs and other areas of Kent.

General comment

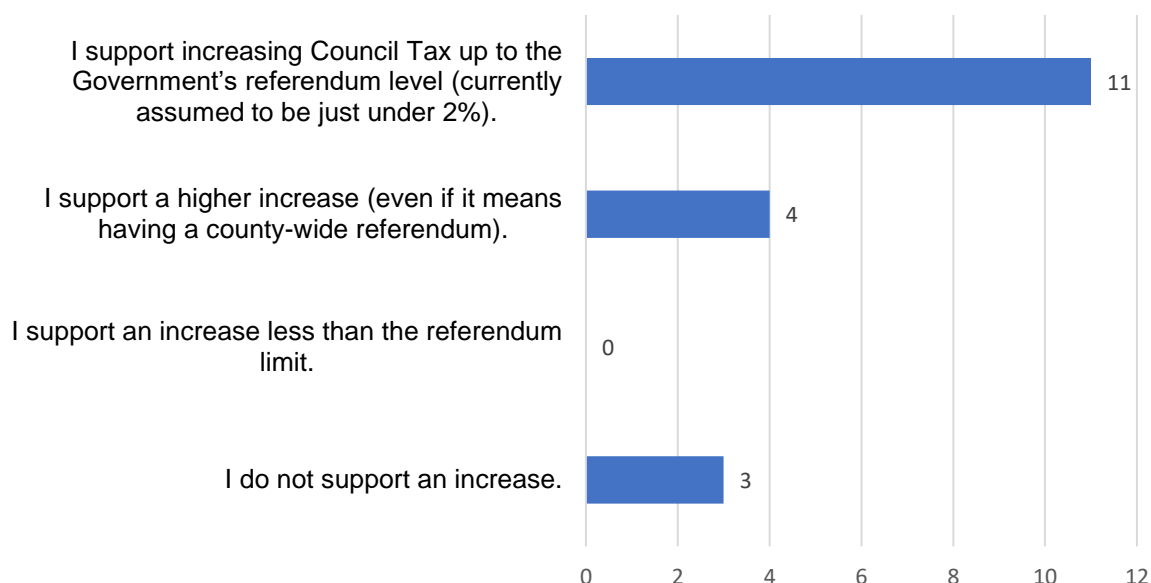
All of these services are valuable, and the VCSE can/does already add value so KCC work on each. We wish to see all of these delivered in a way that ensures equitable access for people in rural communities.

Can't just cut services in one place as it will have a knock-on effect on other services/service users.

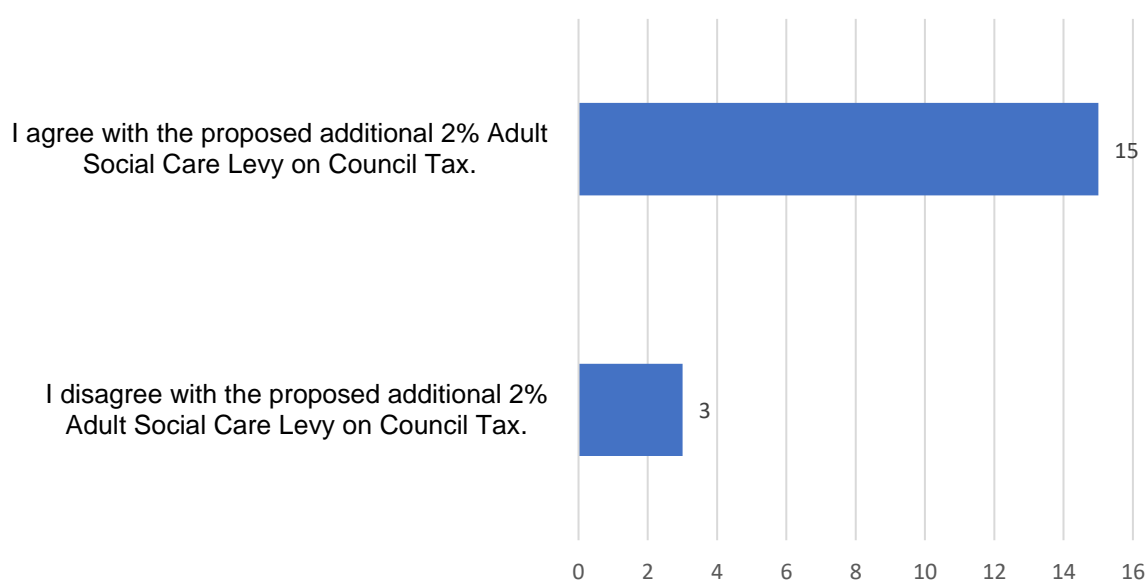
Council Tax and Adult Social Care Levy

Finally, participants were asked to complete the same questions put forward in the public consultation questionnaire regarding our proposals for Council Tax and the Adult Social Care Levy. The below charts show how they responded.

Please tick one of the following options to tell us your preference for Council Tax:



Please tick one of the following options to tell us your preference about the Adult Social Care Levy:



Appendix 3

Graphical presentation of views received from staff through the T200 event held on 26 September



DRAFT