

**Manchester City Council  
Report for Information**

**Report to:** Executive – 20 January 2021

**Subject:** Council Tax Consultation Results 2021/22

**Report of:** The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer, and the Head of Strategic Communications

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**Summary**

This report provides a summary of the results of phase one of the consultation on the potential increases to council tax for financial year 2021/22, as well as a summary of the responses received.

**Recommendations**

The Executive is asked to note the report.

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**Wards Affected:** All

<b>Environmental Impact Assessment</b> - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city
Council Tax and the budget support all 8 corporate priorities including the zero-carbon target for the city.

<b>Our Manchester Strategy Outcomes</b>	<b>Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS</b>
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	The Council's budget, including the monies generated by council tax, supports the delivery of the Our Manchester Strategy outcomes and all of Our Corporate Priorities.
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	

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**Background documents (available for public inspection):**

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy, please contact one of the contact officers above.

Online budget consultation (consultation now closed)  
<https://www.manchester.gov.uk/CTconsultation>

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 The Council consulted with residents on the potential council tax increases for a 16-day period from 8 December 2020 to 24 December 2020.
- 1.2 This report provides the full results of the consultation and a summary of coded free text responses and comments.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 In previous years, the annual budget consultation has sought to allow residents to feedback on the following areas at the same time:
  - Proposed council tax increases
  - Proposed Adult Social Care (ASC) precept
  - Budget/savings options
- 2.2 Due to the timing of the 2021/22 Spending Review and Finance Settlement the budget consultation for 2021/22 will be a two-phase approach:

**Phase 1** - Council tax and ASC precept consultation (8 December 2020 – 24 December 2020)

**Phase 2** - Budget consultation (20 January 2021 – 21 February 2021)

## **3.0 Phase 1- Council Tax and ASC Precept**

- 3.1 The Government's recent Spending Review allowed councils to increase council tax by up to 1.99 per cent plus an additional 3 per cent precept to help meet ASC costs.
- 3.2 Phase 1 of the consultation asked residents for their comments on the potential increases – which together would be a 4.99 per cent increase and raise around £8.5m – to help protect services from further cuts and especially to support adult social care for those in need.

## **4.0 Channels and engagement**

- 4.1 A general budget narrative and the consultation form were available on the Council website at [www.manchester.gov.uk/CTconsultation](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/CTconsultation). Paper versions were sent to open libraries and available for those who preferred not to use the online form.
- 4.2 The consultation was shared with partners and supported by a social media campaign across a range of platforms using a mix of organic, boosted and paid-for targeted posts and proactive media releases and reactive media statements.
- 4.3 Staff were also signposted to the council tax consultation via the intranet, Forum and Chief Executive's broadcast.

4.4 A total of 2,090 people completed the consultation survey.

## **5.0 Consultation questionnaire**

5.1 The consultation questionnaire comprised two closed questions to understand levels of agreement/disagreement with the potential level of increase, and one open text question to gather comments on the potential increases.

Q1 - Do you agree or disagree that we should protect adult social care by increasing council tax by 3%?

*Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree / Don't know*

Q2 - Do you agree or disagree that we should continue to protect and invest in the services which residents told us matter most, such as roads, neighbourhoods and homelessness, even if this would require a further increase in council tax of 1.99%? *Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree / Don't know*

Q3 - Please give any general views and comments on the potential increases.

## **6.0 Consultation questionnaire analysis**

### **6.1 Question 1 – Do you agree or disagree that we should protect adult social care by increasing council tax by 3%?**

6.2 In question 1, members of the public were asked in a closed question whether or not they 'agree or disagree that we should protect adult social care by increasing council tax by 3%'. 36% of respondents agreed (22% strongly agree and 14% agree). 55% of respondents disagreed (17% disagree and 38% strongly disagree).

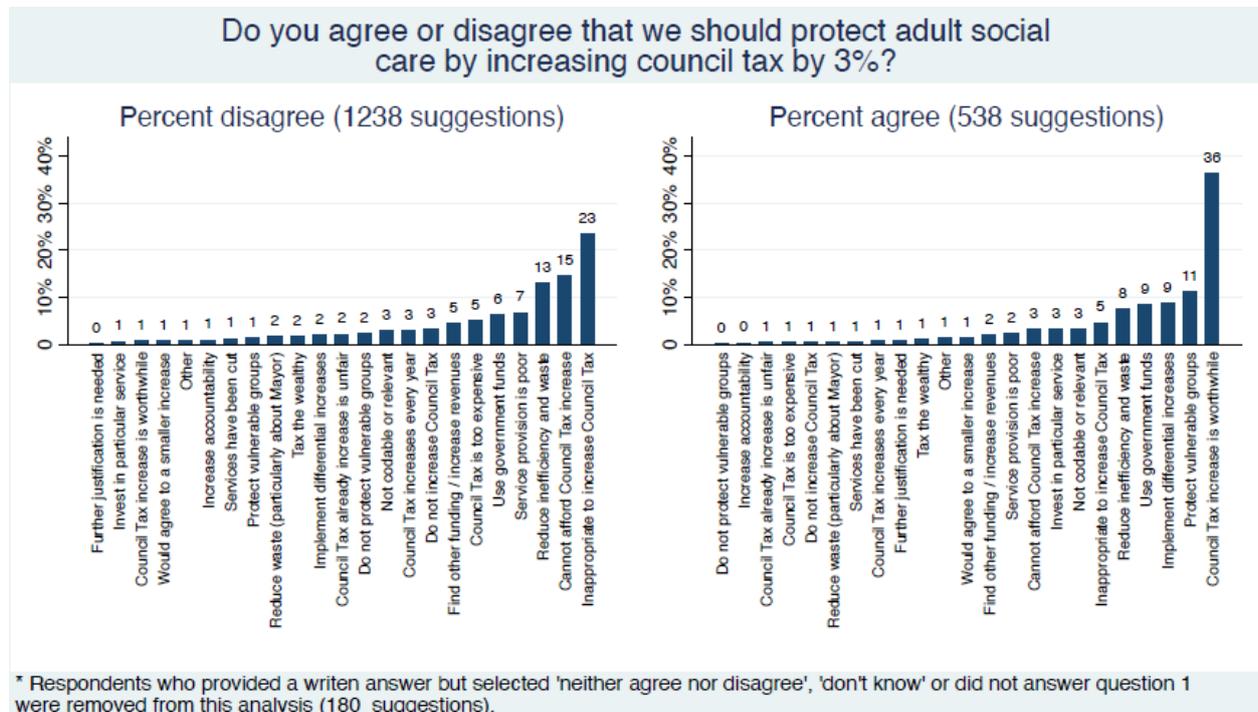
6.3 Members of the public were also asked to share any comments or alternatives they thought we should consider. Overall, 30% of suggestions (538) were given by individuals who were in favour of the potential increase (agreed or strongly agreed with the increase).

6.4 Graph 1 shows that of those respondents who agreed with the proposal, the following suggestions were made:

- 36% (195 suggestions) restated their agreement, while 11% (60 suggestions) specifically mentioned that vulnerable groups should be protected
- 8% (41 suggestions) advised that the Council should reduce inefficiency and waste or consider using government funds, either instead of increasing Council Tax or to cover part of the shortfall (9%; 46 suggestions)
- 9% (47 suggestions) suggested that MCC implement differential increases to council tax rates, whereby residents with lower income (or on benefits) would see their tax increased less

- 5% (25 suggestions) expressed concerns that it was inappropriate to increase council tax in light of current circumstances, notably the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on unemployment, wage freezes and the burden of having to cover mortgage costs

Graph 1 – Responses split by whether they agreed or disagreed with the potential to increase council tax by 3% to protect adult social care

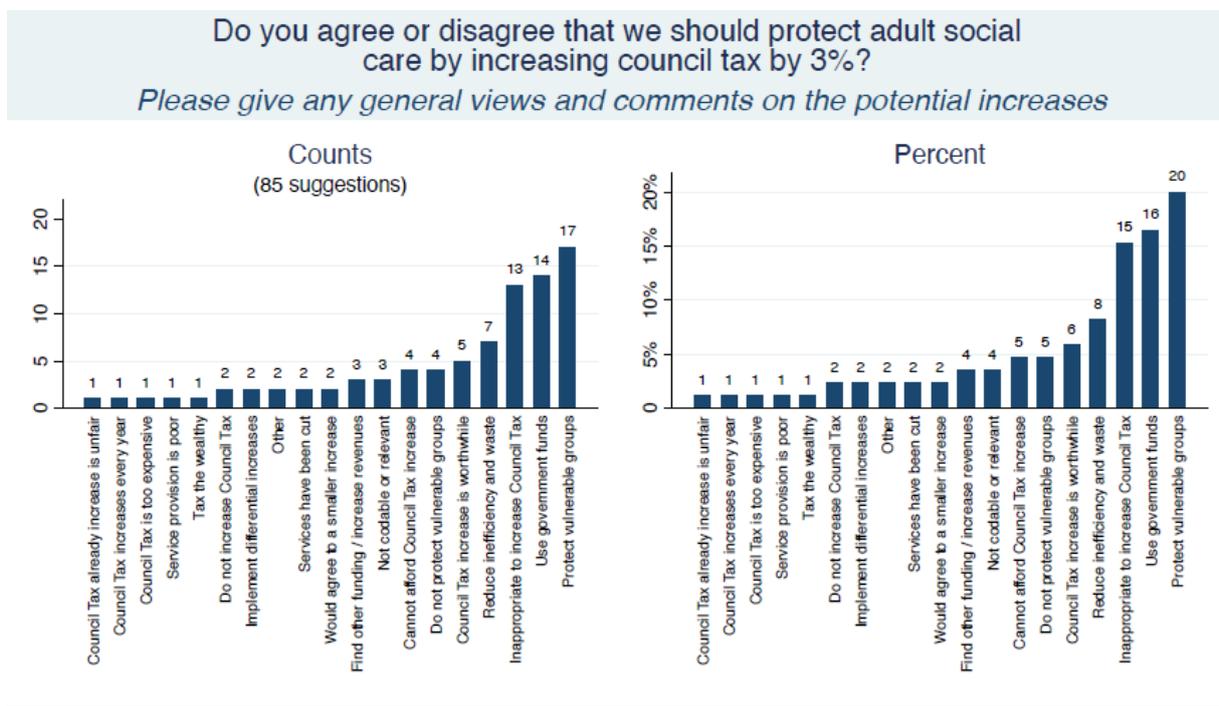


6.5 Of those respondents who disagreed with the proposal, the following suggestions were made (1238 suggestions):

- 23% (289 suggestions) commented that it was inappropriate to increase council tax given current circumstances, notably the COVID-19 pandemic
- 15% (182 suggestions) commented that they would not be able to afford the increase, which may be related to the COVID-19 pandemic or due to other personal reasons, with 5% (64 suggestions) stating that the existing council tax rate was already too expensive
- 13% (162 suggestions) advised that the Council should find ways to reduce inefficiency and waste. Among 7% of respondents (84 suggestions), there was a perception that existing service provision was poor
- 6% (79 suggestions) stated that the Council should use government funds
- 5% (57 suggestions) suggested that the Council should find other funding sources or increase revenue.

6.6 In addition, we identified 53 respondents whose comments in response to Question 3, the open text question asking for general comments on the potential increases, we believed to be specifically relevant to Question 1 (protecting adult social care). We extracted 85 suggestions, as shown in Graph 2.

Graph 2 - Coded responses expressing views pertaining to the potential increase

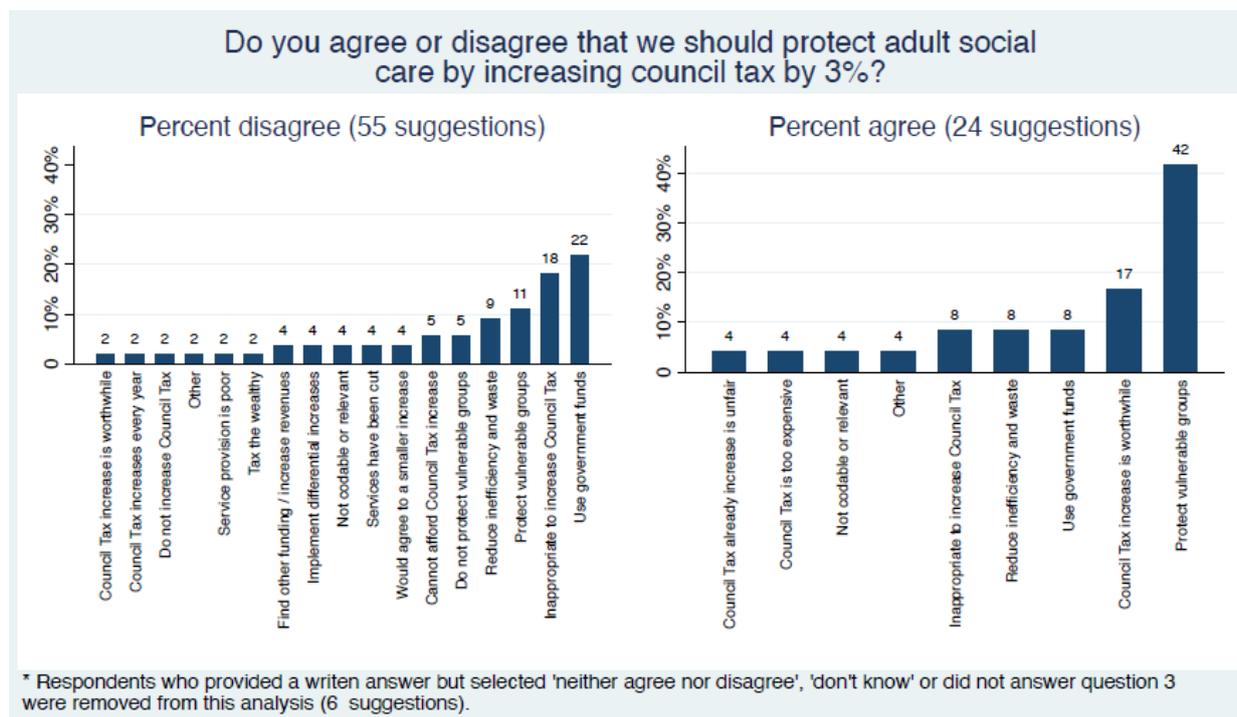


6.7 Graph 2 shows that:

- 20% (17 suggestions) agreed that the council should protect vulnerable groups or more broadly, that the justification for increasing council tax was worthwhile (5 suggestions)
- 16% (14 suggestions) indicated that the Council should use government funds, or they should find other funding streams or increase revenues (3 suggestions)
- 15% (13 suggestions) commented that it was inappropriate to increase council tax given current circumstances, notably the COVID-19 pandemic, and 4 suggestions stated that they would not be able to afford the increase in council tax
- 7 suggestions highlighted that the Council should aim to reduce waste and inefficiency in the use of existing funds
- 4 respondents felt that vulnerable groups should not be protected
- 3 responses were not codable or not relevant (responses that were out of context, unintelligible or presented particular situations without actually addressing the issue under consultation)

6.8 Graph 3, below, displays the suggestions by whether respondents agreed or disagreed with the potential ASC increase (Question 1).

Graph 3 – Responses split by whether agreed or disagreed with the potential increase



6.9 Overall, 30% of suggestions were given by individuals who were in favour of the potential increase (agreed or strongly agreed with the increase). Suggestions from those who agreed with the potential increase (24 suggestions) included:

- 42% (10 suggestions) highlighted that vulnerable groups should be protected. 4 comments restated their agreement with the proposal
- 2 suggestions mentioned that the Council should use government funds
- 2 suggestions mentioned that the Council should reduce inefficiency and waste
- While in agreement with the proposals, 2 suggestions indicated that it was inappropriate to increase council tax given current circumstances, notably the COVID-19 pandemic

6.10 Suggestions from those who disagreed with the potential increase (55 suggestions) included:

- 22% (12 suggestions) indicated that the Council should use government funds instead, and 2 suggestions mentioned that the Council should find other funding sources or increase revenue
- References to challenging current circumstances, notably the COVID-19 outbreak were highlighted by 18% of respondents (10 suggestions). 3 comments indicated that council tax increase would be unaffordable, which may be related to the COVID-19 pandemic or for other personal reasons
- While in disagreement with the proposal, 6 suggestions within this group still maintained that vulnerable groups should be protected

- 5 suggestions mentioned that the Council should try to reduce inefficiency and waste
- 3 suggestions mentioned that vulnerable groups should not be protected
- As seen in Graph 3, there were a large number of additional suggestions that drew few responses

**6.11 Q2 Do you agree or disagree that we should continue to protect and invest in the services which residents told us matter most, such as roads, neighbourhoods and homelessness, even if this would require a further increase in council tax of 1.99%?**

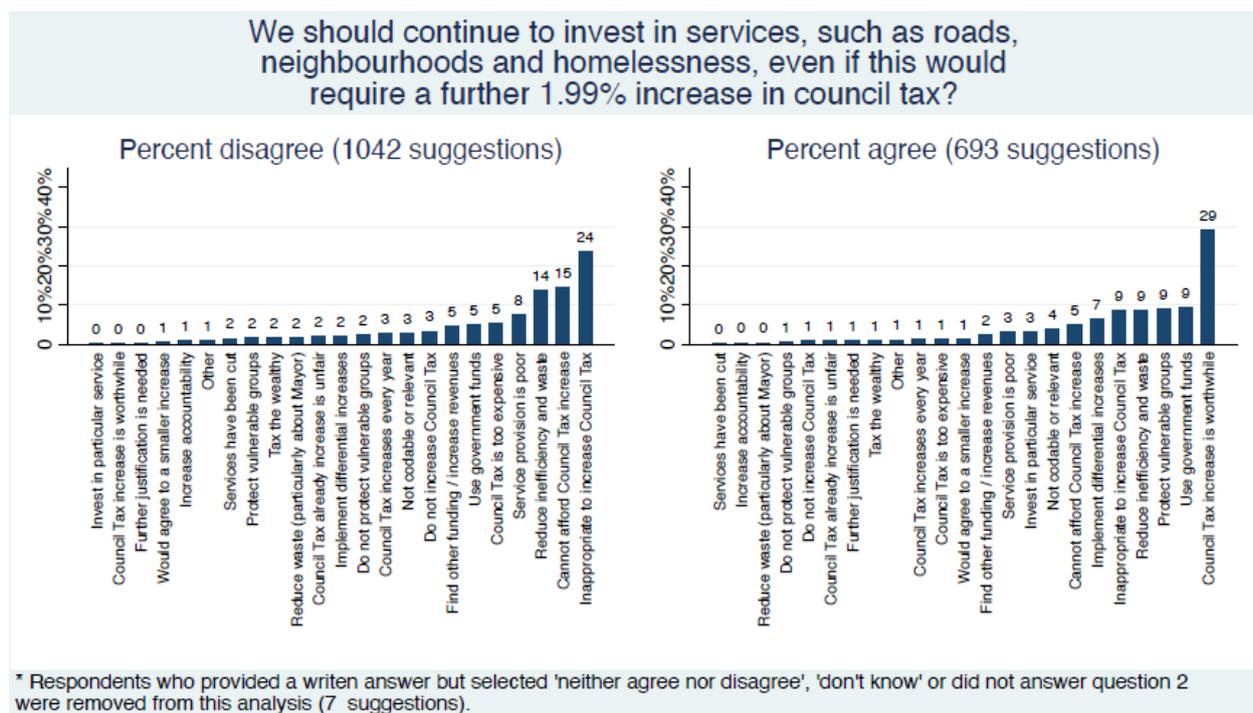
6.12 In question 2, members of the public were asked in a closed question whether or not they agree or disagree that we should continue to protect and invest in the services which residents told us matter most, such as roads, neighbourhoods and homelessness, even if this would require a further increase in council tax of 1.99%. 45% of respondents agreed (25% strongly agree and 20% agree). 44% of respondents disagreed (16% disagree and 28% strongly disagree).

6.13 Members of the public were also asked to share any comments or alternatives they thought we should consider. Overall, 40% of suggestions (693) were given by individuals who were in favour of the potential increase.

6.14 Of those respondents who agreed with the potential increase, the following suggestions were made, these are shown in Graph 4:

- 29% (201 suggestions) restated their agreement, and 9% (63 suggestions) specifically agreeing that vulnerable groups should be protected
- 9% (65 suggestions) suggested using government funds
- 9% (61 suggestions) mentioned that the Council should reduce inefficiency and waste
- 9% (61 suggestions) expressed concerns it was inappropriate to increase council tax given current circumstances, notably the COVID-19 pandemic, and 5% (34 suggestions) stated that they would not be able to afford the council tax increase
- 7% (46 suggestions) stated that the Council should implement differential increases to council tax rates

Graph 4 – Responses split by whether agreed or disagreed with the potential to increase Council Tax by a further 1.99% to continue to invest in services such as roads, neighbourhoods and homelessness.

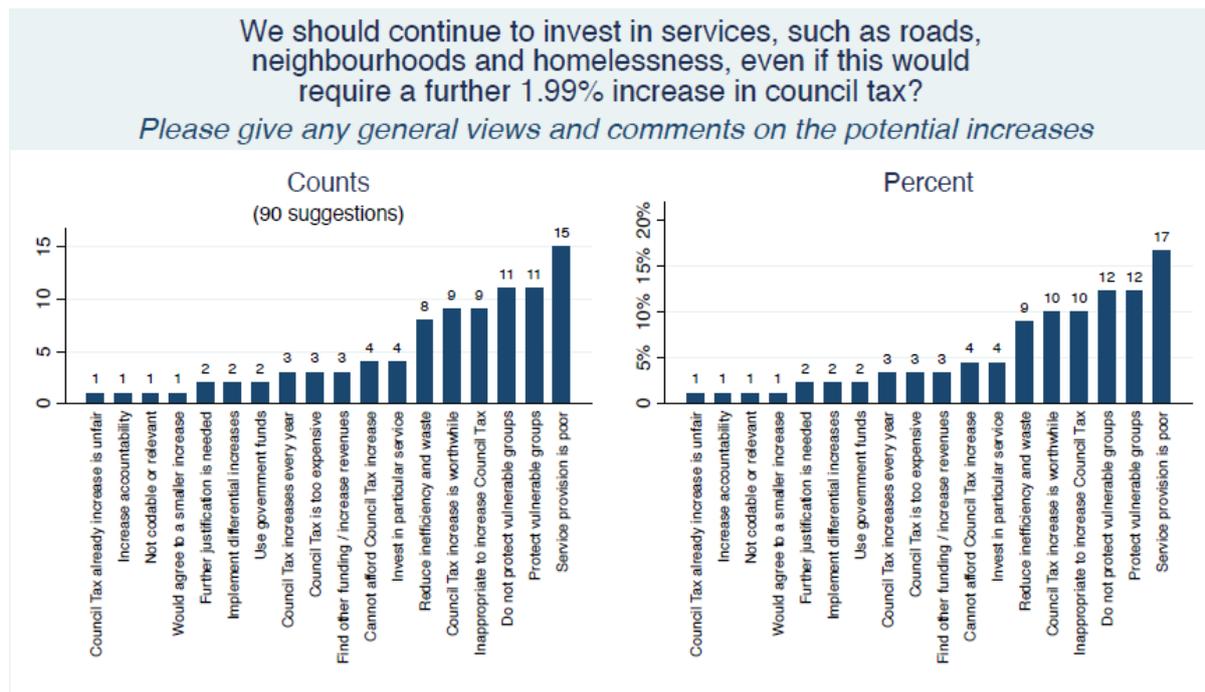


6.15 Of those respondents who disagreed with the potential increase, the following suggestions (1042) were made:

- 24% (245 suggestions) commented that it was inappropriate to increase council tax given current circumstances, notably the COVID-19 pandemic
- 15% (153 suggestions) stated that they would not be able to afford the increase, which may be related to the COVID-19 pandemic or for other personal reasons, with 5% (56 suggestions) highlighting that the existing council tax rate was already too expensive
- 14% (143 suggestions) advised that the Council should reduce inefficiency and waste
- 8% (79 suggestions) suggested that service provision is poor
- 5% (52 suggestions) stated that the Council should use government funds
- 5% (48 suggestions) suggested that the Council should find other funding sources or increase revenue

6.16 In addition, we identified 52 respondents whose comments in relation to Question 3, the open text question asking for general comments on the potential increases, we believed were particularly relevant to Question 2 (protecting other services, including the homeless). We extracted 90 suggestions.

Graph 5 – Coded responses expressing views pertaining to the proposed increase



6.17 Graph 5 shows that:

- 17% (15 suggestions) felt that service provision was poor, and 9% (8 suggestions) commented that the Council should reduce inefficiency and waste
- 12% (11 suggestions) stated that vulnerable groups should be protected. More broadly, 10% (9 suggestions) restated their agreement to the proposal
- 12% (11 suggestions) indicated that vulnerable groups should not be protected
- 9 suggestions indicated that it was inappropriate to increase council tax given current circumstances, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic, and 4 suggestions stated that they would not be able to afford the increase, for reasons related to the COVID-19 pandemic or due to other personal reasons
- 4 suggestions mentioned that the Council should invest in a particular service
- As seen in graph 5, there were suggestions that drew fewer responses

6.18 Graph 6, below, displays the suggestions by whether respondents agreed or disagreed with the potential increase (Question 2).

6.19 Overall, 47% of suggestions (39 suggestions) were given by individuals who were in favour of the potential increase of 1.99% to council tax (agreed or strongly agreed with the increase):

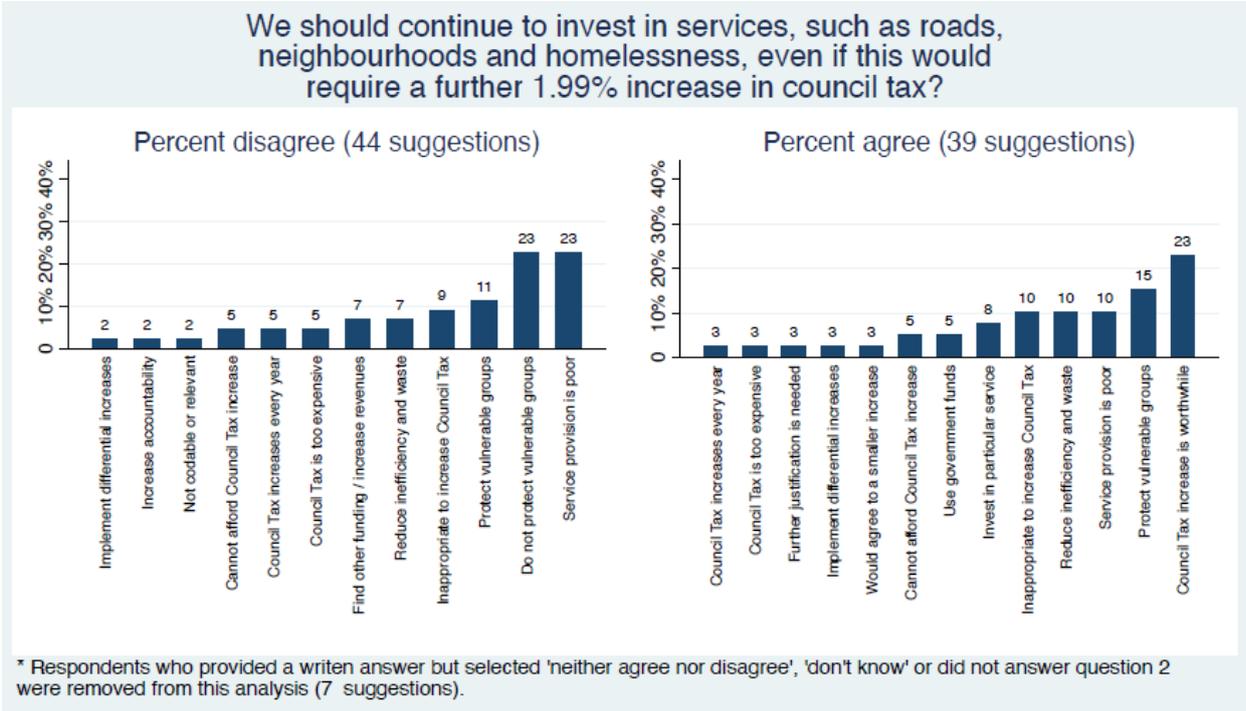
- 9 suggestions simply restated respondents' agreement, and 6 suggestions highlighted that vulnerable groups should be protected

- Again, while in agreement with the proposals, 4 suggestions expressed concerns that it was inappropriate to increase council tax given current circumstances, notably the COVID-19 pandemic. 2 respondents mentioned that they would not be able to afford the increase
- While in agreement with the proposals, 4 suggestions mentioned that service provision was poor, and 4 suggestions contained advice that the Council should reduce inefficiency and waste
- 3 suggestions indicated that the Council should invest in a particular service
- 2 suggestions mentioned that the Council should use government funds
- As seen in Graph 6, there were a large number of additional suggestions that drew few responses

6.20 Suggestions from those who disagreed with the potential increase (44 suggestions) included:

- 23% (10 suggestions) did not feel that vulnerable groups, in particular the homeless, should be protected
- 23% (10 suggestions) suggested that service provision was poor
- While in disagreement with the proposal, 5 suggestions stated that vulnerable groups should be protected
- 4 suggestions indicated it was inappropriate to increase council tax given current circumstances, notably the COVID-19 pandemic. 2 suggestions indicated that they could not afford the council tax increase
- 2 suggestions felt that council tax was already too expensive and 2 suggestions also commented that council tax increases every year
- Again, as seen in Graph 6, there were suggestions that drew fewer responses

Graph 6 – Responses split by whether respondent agreed or disagreed with the potential increase

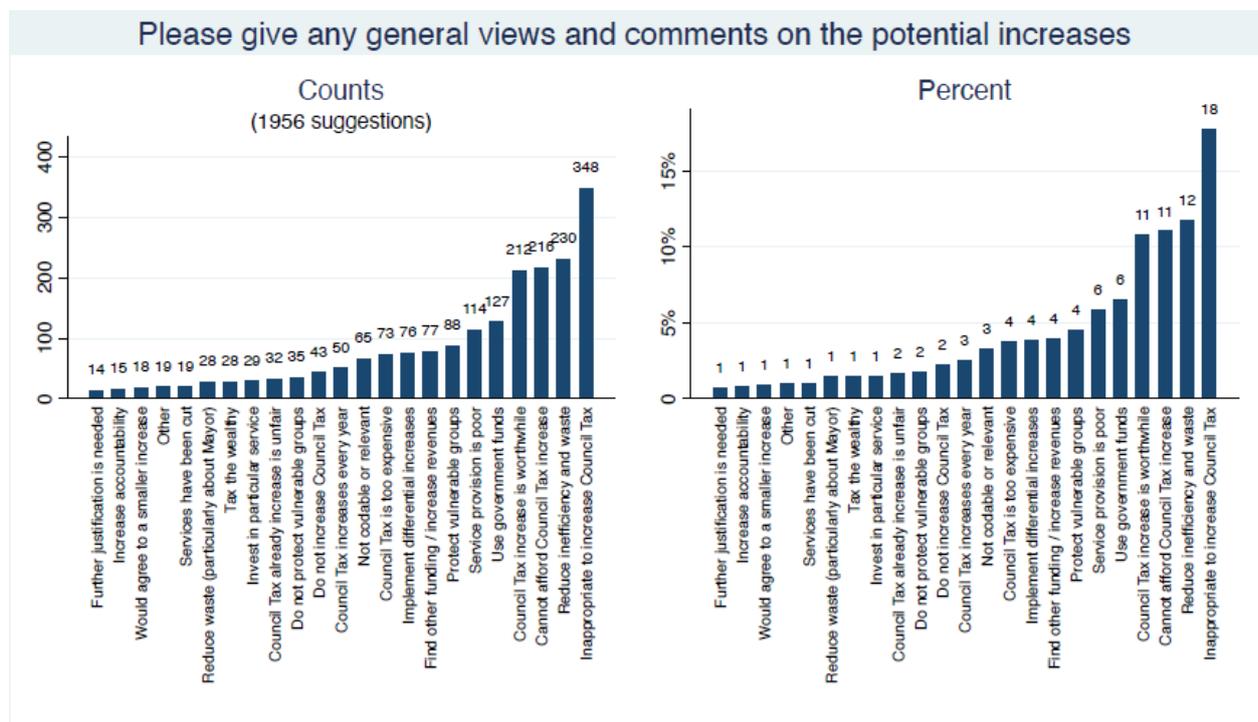


**6.21 Q3 - Please give any general views and comments on the potential increases.**

6.22 In question 3 members of the public were given space to provide general comments or views on the potential increases. In their comment, each respondent could include one or several suggestions.

6.23 Overall, the consultation generated 2,090 responses with 1,277 respondents providing an answer to question 3. Based on these answers we extracted 1,956 suggestions. These are shown in Graph 7.

Graph 7 – Coded responses expressing views pertaining to the potential increases (Q3)



- 6.24 As shown in Graph 7, the most prominent theme across all open-ended responses was the perception that it would be inappropriate to increase council tax given current circumstances (18% respondents, 348 suggestions), with concerns regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on unemployment and people’s ability to cover additional outgoings particularly highlighted; concerns regarding Brexit were also noted.
- 6.25 11% (216 suggestions) commented that they would not be able to afford the increase, which may be related to the COVID-19 pandemic or for other personal reasons, with 4% (73 suggestions) stating that the existing council tax rate was already too expensive.
- 6.26 12% (231 suggestions) advised that the Council should find ways to reduce inefficiency and waste. Closely related to this was a feeling that existing service provision was poor (6%; 114 suggestions).
- 6.27 6% (127 suggestions) indicated that the Council should use government funds to (at least partly) cover the shortfall while 4% (77 suggestions) suggested that the Council should find other funding sources or increase revenue.
- 6.28 11% (212 suggestions) restated that the council tax increase is worthwhile, and 5% (88 suggestions) agreed that the Council should protect vulnerable groups.
- 6.29 4% (76 suggestions) stated that the Council should implement differential increases to council tax. Other suggestions were also provided, but with lower frequency.

## 7.0 Demographic and equality data

- 7.1 The demographic characteristics of the respondents to the survey were compared to those of the resident population in Manchester.
- 7.2 The consultation received a spread of respondents from across the city. However, analysis shows that the consultation was underrepresented in North and South areas of the city. 24% of respondents were from wards in North Manchester, which make up 37% of the city's population. 31% of respondents in the South, which make up 42% of the city's population.

Locality	Budget Responses	MCR comparator %
North	24%	37%
Central	21%	21%
South	31%	42%
No response	8%	-
Outside of Mcr or Postcode not recognised	16%	-

- 7.3 Respondents aged 50-64 and 40-49 were overrepresented, as has been typical in previous budget consultations. Those aged 16-25 were underrepresented. There were no responses from children under 16.

Age Group	Budget Responses	MCR Comparator
Under 16	0%	20%
16 - 25 years	4%	20%
26 - 39 years	33%	26%
40 - 49 years	21%	11%
50 - 64 years	28%	13%
65 - 74 years	12%	5%
75 + years	3%	4%

- 7.4 As regards ethnicity, White British respondents were overrepresented at 72% compared to 59% of the city's population. A full demographic analysis is provided in Appendix 1.

## 8.0 Recommendations

- 8.1 Members are asked to note the results of the consultation provided in the report.

## Appendix 1 Demographic analysis

<b>Ethnicity</b>		<b>Budget Responses</b>	<b>MCR Comparator</b>
Asian / Asian British	Bangladeshi	1%	1%
	Chinese	1%	3%
	Indian	2%	2%
	Kashmiri	0%	0%
	Pakistani	4%	9%
	Other Asian	1%	2%
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	African	3%	5%
	Caribbean	1%	2%
	Somali	0%	0%
	Other Black	0%	1%
Mixed / Multiple Ethnic Groups	White and Black Caribbean	1%	2%
	White and Black African	1%	1%
	White and Asian	1%	1%
	Other Mixed	1%	1%
White	English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	72%	59%
	Irish	2%	2%
	Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0%	0%
	Other White	10%	5%
Other Ethnic Group	Any other Ethnic Group	0%	3%