

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Executive – 12 February 2020

Subject: Budget Consultation 2020/21 - Results

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

Summary

This report provides a summary of the results of the budget consultation on the Executive's draft budget proposals for 2020/21, as well as a summary of the responses received.

Recommendation

To note the report.

Wards Affected: All

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city

The budget supports all corporate priorities including the zero-carbon target for the city.

Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	The Council's budget 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	

Contact Officer:

Name: Alun Ireland
Position: Head of Strategic Communications
Telephone: 0161 234 5377
E-mail: alun.ireland@manchester.gov.uk

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) -
www.manchester.gov.uk/budget

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Council consulted with residents on the Executive's draft one-year 2020/21 budget options and proposed Council Tax increases for a four week period from 6 January 2020 to 2 February 2020.
- 1.2 As the budget for 2020/21 is a one-year forward planning budget, and there have been no statutory consultations around individual options identified, a full 12 week budget consultation was not required.
- 1.3 This report provides the full results of the consultation and a summary of coded free text responses and comments.

2.0 Budget consultation

- 2.1 Due to the pre-Christmas political uncertainties the Government's announcement of the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement was delayed. A one-year budget was set for 2020/21 with budget options proposed for consultation.
- 2.2 As a result of the delays, budget communications were split into two distinct phases:

Phase one:

- 23 December 109 - 5 January 20: **Budget update**

Phase two:

- 6 January 20 - 2 February 20: **Budget options consultation** – have your say on our options (residents and businesses)
- 7 January – 5 March 20: **Budget messages** - You said, we did
- 6 March 20 - **Budget confirmation** - Confirmation of the agreed budget post full Council.

- 2.3 Phase one provided staff and residents with information about the budget setting process, the delays to the announcement of the provisional budget settlement from Government, the anticipated one-year budget and the budget timetable.
- 2.4 Phase two provided opportunities for residents, businesses and other stakeholders to comment on the council tax proposals, and provide suggestions and comment on the budget options overall.
- 2.5 The 'you said, we did' communications will deliver broad awareness of:
 - the breadth of services the Council provides
 - how the Council is funded
 - how the Council's budget is currently spent
 - the work undertaken by staff to reduce the budget deficit
 - the scale of the budget challenge, as far as we are currently aware, faced by the Council – both in increasing need and decreasing resources

2.6 The final stage of phase two will communicate the budget decision post full Council on 6 March and share more detail on how we'll spend our budget.

3.0 Channels and engagement

3.1 All the budget option information was available on the Council website at www.manchester.gov.uk/budget. This included a plain English narrative of the budget and consultation process and summaries of all the directorate papers, including links to the full committee reports. The summaries were produced to provide an outline of the budget options that is easier for residents to read and digest.

3.2 Communications channels comprised an online and paper questionnaire and a social media campaign across a range of platforms using a mix of organic, boosted and paid-for targeted posts, supported by engaging digital content.

3.3 Activity was supported by proactive media releases and reactive media statements. Simple infographics were used to explain some of the key facts and figures in an easily digestible way.

3.4 Staff were also actively engaged with content in The Buzz and The Forum informing people of the budget options and signposting staff to the consultation.

3.5 2,188 unique visitors visited the budget and budget consultation website pages, 25% were referred from activity on Facebook (the top referral channel) and 10% from Twitter. After the budget homepage, the majority of users (36%) visited the 'Introduction page', followed by the council tax page (12%), homelessness budget page (7%) and Neighbourhoods page (6%). The least visited was the Corporate Services budget update page (3%).

3.6 The consultation has been promoted on Council social media channels including Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn signposting them to the online survey. Messages have also been shared on active local Facebook groups in Didsbury, Gorton, Levenshulme, Moston/Harpurhey and Chorlton to increase reach.

3.7 Responses were monitored at intervals throughout the life of the consultation paid social media activity was used to target particular areas of the city and ethnicities to increase engagement where there were imbalances in completion.

3.8 Across social media channels 15 organic budget messages have been posted to date with a reach of 95,000 users on Facebook and 37,982 impressions on Twitter. Activity resulted in 808 click throughs to the consultation pages.

3.9 Budget messages were shared with residents via the Council's monthly e-bulletin, resulting in 162 click throughs to the web pages.

3.10 Printed questionnaires were sent to all libraries and issued to all Councillors to distribute at a local level if desired. 32 printed questionnaires were returned.

4.0 Consultation questionnaire

4.1 The consultation asked five questions, two main questions, with three additional open text boxes included to give residents the opportunity to fully express their views and give general comments on the budget options.

1. Do you agree or disagree that we should protect adult social care by increasing council tax by 2%?
2. Additional free text box

3. Do you agree or disagree that we should continue to invest in the services which residents told us matter most, such as roads, neighbourhoods and homelessness, even if this would require a further 1.99% increase in council tax?
4. Additional free text box

5. Please give any general views and comments on the proposed budget. Please also suggest any ways that you and your community could support the things that matter to you. (Free text box)

4.2 200 people completed the consultation questionnaire, 168 online and 32 filled in and returned a printed copy. Whilst this is a much lower response rate when compared to the 2017/20 consultation, this budget consultation is on council tax increases, with a general request for comment, rather than a consultation on budget cuts, closures and savings which would usually generate more interest, engagement and comment.

5.0 Consultation questionnaire analysis

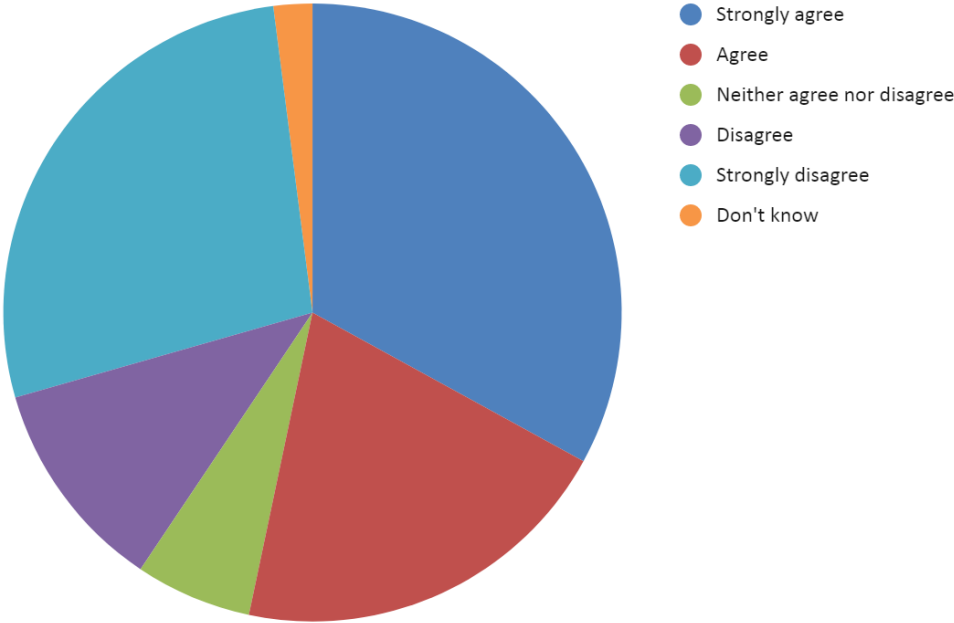
5.1 Q1 & Q2 Increasing council tax by 2% to protect adult social care.

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 2%'. 53% of respondents agreed (33% strongly agree and 20% agree). 11% disagreed and 27% strongly disagreed. See table 1 below.

Table 1

Do you agree or disagree that we should protect adult social care by increasing council tax by 2%?			
Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree	33.0%	65
2	Agree	20.3%	40
3	Neither agree nor disagree	6.1%	12
4	Disagree	11.2%	22
5	Strongly disagree	27.4%	54
6	Don't know	2.0%	4
		answered	197
		skipped	5

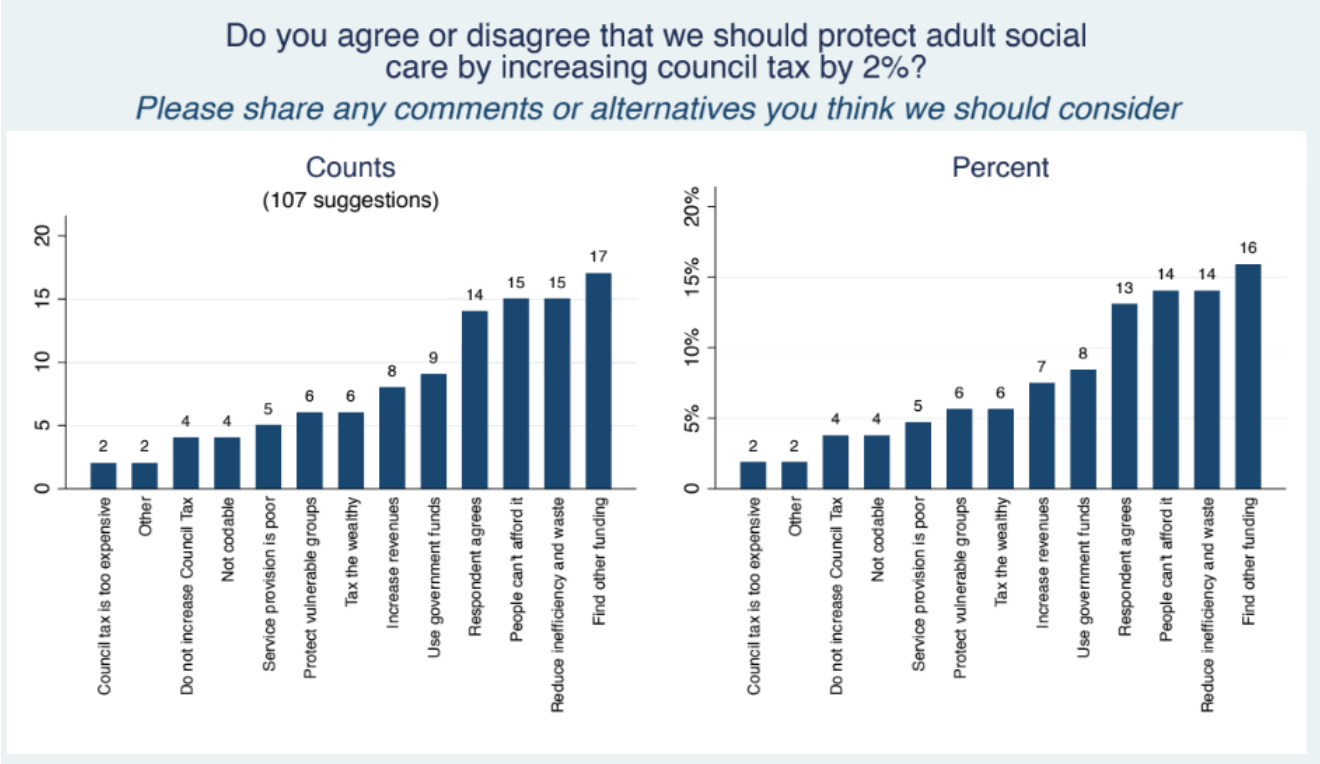
Do you agree or disagree that we should protect adult social care by increasing council tax by 2%?



- 5.2 Respondents were also presented with a free text field to leave comments. In their comment, each respondent could include one or several suggestions. Overall, 107 suggestions were provided in response to this question by 81 respondents. These are shown in Graph 1 below.
- 5.3 16% (17 suggestions) suggested finding alternative funding from within the Council's existing funds, with an additional 14% (15 suggestions) suggesting reducing waste and inefficiency in the use of existing funds. Moreover, 7% (8 suggestions) suggested that MCC revenues should be increased (through fines or events). Finally, 5% (5 suggestions) mentioned that current service provision is poor.

- 5.4 14% (15 suggestions) expressed concern that people won't be able to afford the increase, with an additional 2% (2 suggestions) suggesting that Council Tax is too expensive. 4% (4 suggestions) of respondents simply stated that Council tax should not be increased. 13% (14 suggestions) stated their agreement with the increase.
- 5.5 8% (9 suggestions) mentioned that government funds should be used. A further 6% (6 suggestions) mentioned that vulnerable groups should be protected.
- 5.6 As seen in Graph 1 below, of the overall number of responses, 4 responses could not be coded or were not relevant (responses that were out of context, unintelligible or presented particular situations without actually addressing the issue under consultation).

Graph 1 – Coded responses expressing views pertaining to the proposed increase



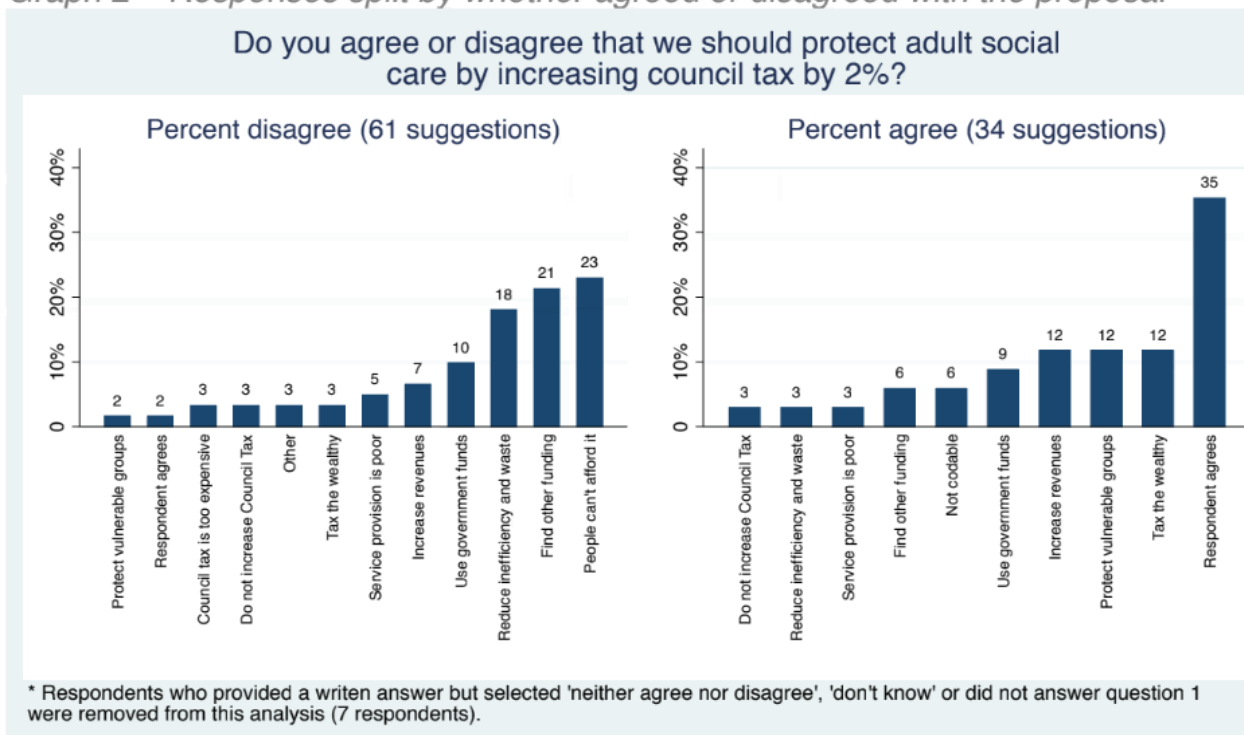
- 5.7 Overall, 36% of suggestions were given by individuals who were in favour of the proposal. Of those respondents who agreed with the proposal, the following suggestions were made:
 - 35% (12 suggestions) restated their agreement
 - 12% (4 suggestions) suggested taxing the wealthy
 - 12% (4 suggestions) suggested that MCC should increase revenues
 - 12% (4 suggestions) mentioned that vulnerable groups should be protected
 - 9% (3 suggestions) suggested using government funds,

- 6% (2 suggestions) suggesting finding alternative funding from within the Council's existing funds

5.8 Of those respondents who disagreed with the proposal (see Graph 2), the following suggestions were made:

- 23% (14 suggestions) said people will not be able to afford the increase
- 21% (13 suggestions) suggested finding alternative funding from within the Council's existing funds
- 18% (11 suggestions) focused on the need to reduce inefficiency and waste
- 10% (6 suggestions) mentioned using government funds

Graph 2 – Responses split by whether agreed or disagreed with the proposal



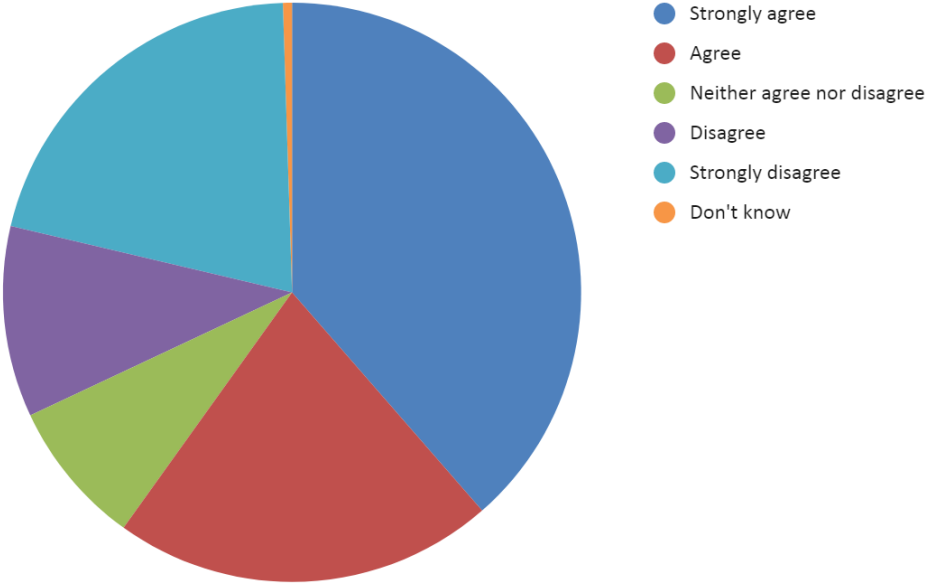
5.9 Q3 & Q4 Manchester City Council should continue to invest in the services which residents told us matter most, such as roads, neighbourhoods and homelessness, even if this would require a further 1.99% increase in council tax?

In Question 3, members of the public were asked in a closed question whether or not they agree or disagree that Council Tax should be increased by a further 1.99% to invest in roads, neighbourhoods and homelessness. Almost 60% agreed (39% strongly agreed and 21% agreed). 11% disagreed, 22% strongly disagreed.

Table 2

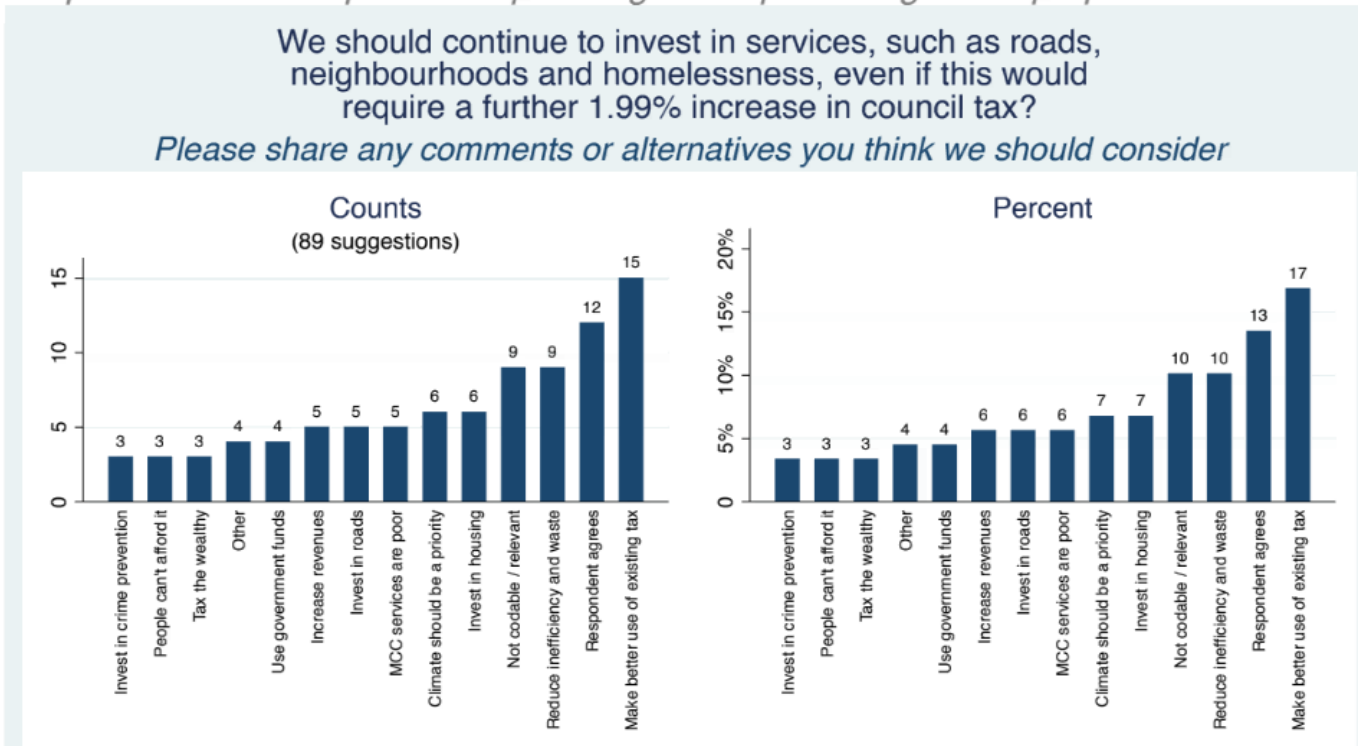
Do you agree or disagree that we should continue to invest in the services which residents told us matter most, such as roads, neighbourhoods and homelessness, even if this would require a further 1.99% increase in council tax?			
Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree	38.6%	76
2	Agree	21.3%	42
3	Neither agree nor disagree	8.1%	16
4	Disagree	10.7%	21
5	Strongly disagree	20.8%	41
6	Don't know	0.5%	1
		answered	197
		skipped	5

Do you agree or disagree that we should continue to invest in the services which residents told us matter most, such as roads, neighbourhoods and homelessness, even if this would require a furthe...



5.10 All those who participated in the consultation were provided space to leave comments. In their comment, each respondent could include one or several suggestions. Overall, 89 suggestions were provided by 77 respondents. These are shown in Graph 3.

Graph 3 – Coded responses expressing views pertaining to the proposed increase



5.11 17% (15 suggestions) mentioned making better use of existing tax. A further 10% (9 suggestions) suggesting that inefficiency and waste should be reduced, while another 6% (5 responses) mentioned that MCC services are poor. Finally, 6% (5 responses) suggested increasing revenues.

- 13% (12 suggestions) stated their agreement with the increase
- 7% (6 suggestions) suggested investing in housing to tackle homelessness
- while investment in roads was mentioned by 6% (5 suggestions)
- 7% (6 suggestions) mentioned that climate should be a priority
- 4% (4 suggestions) argued that government funds should be used
- 3% (3 suggestions) mentioned investment in crime prevention

5.12 As seen in Graph 3, there were a number of other suggestions such as taxing the wealthy (3% - 3 suggestions) and the fact that people cannot afford the increase (3% - 3 suggestions).

5.13 Finally, 9 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).

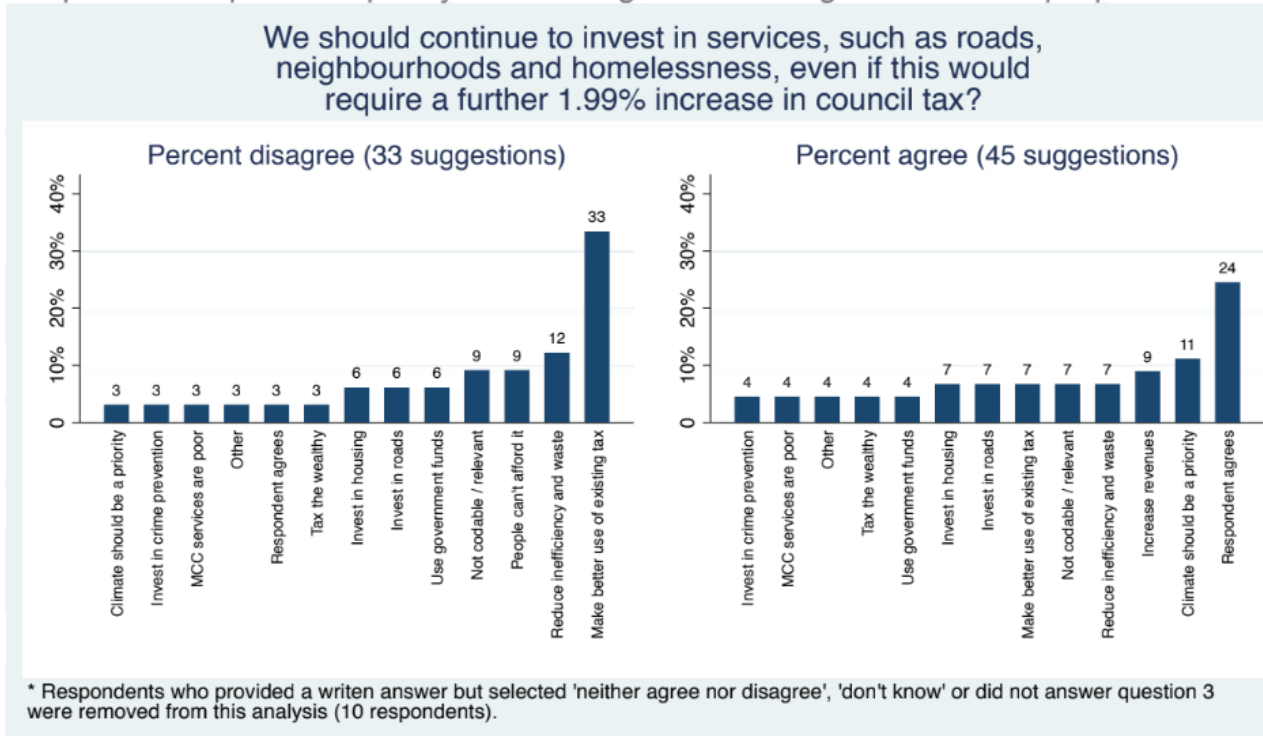
5.14 Graph 4, below, displays the suggestions by whether respondents agreed or disagreed with the additional increase (question 3).

5.15 Overall, 58% of suggestions were given by individuals who were in favour of the proposal (agreed or strongly agreed with the increase). Among the suggestions provided by respondents who agreed with the additional 1.99% increase to Council Tax:

- 24% (11 suggestions) simply restated their agreement
- 11% (5 suggestions) mentioned that climate should be a priority

5.16 With regard to those respondents who disagreed with the proposal, 33% (11 suggestions) suggested that MCC should make better use of the existing tax.

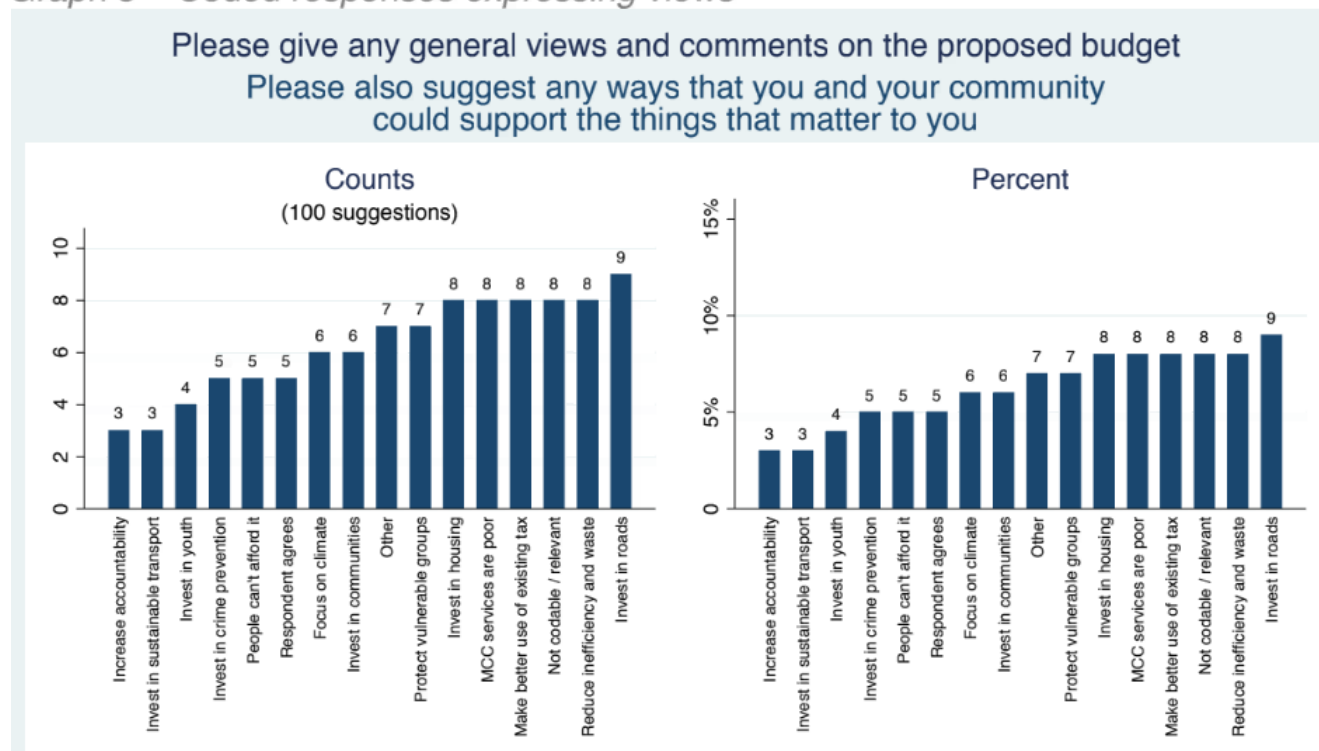
Graph 4 – Responses split by whether agreed or disagreed with the proposal



5.17 Q5 Please give any general views and comments on the proposed budget. Please also suggest any ways that you and your community could support the things that matter to you.

In question 5, members of the public were given space to provide general comments or views on the budget options. In their comment, each respondent could include one or several suggestions. Overall, 100 suggestions were provided by 89 respondents. These are shown in Graph 5.

Graph 5 – Coded responses expressing views



5.18 The results displayed in Graph 5 show that:

- 27% (27 suggestions) refer to the activity and performance of Manchester City:
 - 8% (8 suggestions) suggest reducing inefficiency and waste
 - A further 8% (8 suggestions) suggested making better use of existing tax
 - A further 8% (8 suggestions) mentioned that MCC services are poor
 - 3% (3 suggestions) mention the need to increase accountability and transparency in the use of public funds
- 33% (33 suggestions) mention the need for investments in various areas:
 - 9% (9 suggestions) mention a need to invest in roads
 - 8% (8 suggestions) mention a need to invest in housing as a way of tackling homelessness
 - 6% (6 suggestions) mention a need to focus on climate related issues
 - 6% (6 suggestions) mention a need to invest in communities
 - 5% (5 suggestions) mention a need to invest in crime prevention
 - 4% (4 suggestions) mention a need to invest in youth
 - 3% (3 suggestions) mention a need to invest in sustainable transport (bus lanes, cycling, etc.)
- 7% (7 suggestions) mention a need to protect vulnerable groups.
- 5% (5 suggestions) mention that people will not be able to afford the proposed increases.
- 5% (5 suggestions) mention their agreement with the increases.
- Finally, 8 responses were not codable and a further 7 responses did not fit in any of clear categories (these were included in 'other').

6.0 Demographic and equality data

- 6.1 The demographic characteristics of the respondents to the survey were compared to those of the resident population in Manchester.
- 6.2 The consultation received a spread of respondents from across the city. However, analysis shows that the consultation was over represented by respondents in Central Manchester. 30% of respondents were from wards in Central Manchester, which make up 21% of the city’s population. The consultation was under represented by respondents in North Manchester with 23% of respondents in the North, which make up 37% of the city’s population.

Locality	Budget Responses	MCR comparator %
North	23%	37%
Central	30%	21%
South	47%	42%

- 6.3 Respondents aged 40-49 and 50-64 years were over represented in the consultation as has been the case in previous consultations. Those aged 16-25 were underrepresented, but less so than in previous consultations (10% vs 3% in 2017). As would be largely expected, there were no responses from children aged under 16.

Age Group	Budget Responses	MCR Comparator
Under 16	0%	20%
16 - 25 years	10%	20%
26 - 39 years	34%	26%
40 - 49 years	23%	11%
50 - 64 years	24%	13%
65 - 74 years	9%	5%
75 + years	1%	4%

6.4 As regards ethnicity, White British respondents were overrepresented at 81% compared to 59% of the city’s population. Asian / Asian British; Pakistani (3% vs 9%), Asian / Asian British; Chinese (0% vs 3%), Black / African / Caribbean / Black British; African (2% vs 5%) and White & Black African (0% vs 1%) respondents continue to be underrepresented. A full demographic analysis is provided in Appendix 1.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 Members are asked to note the results of the consultation and the information provided in the report.

Appendix 1 Demographic analysis

Ethnicity	Budget Responses	MCR Comparator
Asian / Asian British; Bangladeshi	1%	1%
Asian / Asian British; Chinese	0%	3%
Asian / Asian British; Indian	2%	2%
Asian / Asian British; Kashmiri	0%	0%
Asian / Asian British; Pakistani	3%	9%
Asian / Asian British; Other Asian	0%	2%
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British; African	2%	5%
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British; Caribbean	1%	2%
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British; Somali	0%	0%
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British; Other Black	1%	1%
Mixed / Multiple Ethnic Groups; White and Black Caribbean	2%	2%
Mixed / Multiple Ethnic Groups; White and Black African	0%	1%
Mixed / Multiple Ethnic Groups; White and Asian	0%	1%
Mixed / Multiple Ethnic Groups; Other Mixed	2%	1%
White; English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	81%	59%
White; Irish	4%	2%
White; Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0%	0%
White; Other White	2%	5%
Other Ethnic Group; Any other Ethnic Group	1%	3%