

## **Budget Consultation analysis – overall budget consultation and the statutory consultations on Libraries, Council Tax Support and Parking**

### **Introduction**

The public consultation on the 2015 – 18 budget proposals launched on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2014 and ran for three months, closing on 29<sup>th</sup> December. Simultaneously, the Council undertook three specific statutory consultations on proposals related to the Library service, to Parking and to the Council Tax Support Scheme - all four strands were presented to the public as a linked suite of consultations (note the library consultation was extended to 5<sup>th</sup> January owing to a technical issue with the online form). Further statutory consultations will take place on other aspects of the savings proposals, e.g. youth services, in due course.

The consultation process was publicised and informed through Havering's own communication channels, with the processing of responses contracted to an independent company. Analysis of that data was completed by Council officers.

### **Consultation activity**

The consultation took a number of forms:

#### **Online**

The online element of the consultation was hosted on the Havering Council website, at [www.havering.gov.uk/yoursay](http://www.havering.gov.uk/yoursay). This URL was publicised consistently throughout the consultation period as the single gateway to all four consultations.

The supporting information provided online for each individual consultation also encouraged the public to 'have their say' on each of the other three strands, to ensure that respondents were made aware of the four separate, but linked, consultations.

When participants had been given a chance to read relevant information, they were directed to an online questionnaire hosted by the company providing the data processing service.

#### **By post**

The public also had the opportunity to respond to the consultation in writing, using pre-paid questionnaires available through libraries and other public buildings. A hard copy of the main budget questionnaire was delivered door-to-door throughout the Borough with a special 'budget' edition of Living in Havering, published in mid-October. In addition, all current recipients of Council Tax Support were sent a hard copy of the relevant pre-paid questionnaire and users of the Library Housebound

Service were sent the relevant pre-paid questionnaire, draft Library Strategy and Equality Impact Assessment.

Users of the Housebound Service with visual impairments were also sent an audio version of the covering letter, draft Library Strategy and Equality Impact Assessment.

A number of letters and emails have also been received from members of the public and from stakeholder groups and organisations. When members of the public wrote in directly, they were encouraged to also view the website and respond to the consultation online.

### **Public Meetings**

There were a number of public meetings held, allowing attendees to ask questions and make comments to relevant officers and Members of the Council. Some of these were informal in nature, such as the 'meet the Leader' sessions held at various locations around the Borough and attended by various Cabinet Members. Three formal budget consultation meetings were held at Elm Park Primary School, the myplace centre in Harold Hill and Romford Baptist Church. These were chaired by the Leader of the Council, supported by the Council's Chief Executive and Directors, as well as Cabinet Members.

There were five meetings held to discuss the library proposals - at Rainham, Hornchurch, Romford and Upminster Libraries, as well as myplace in Harold Hill - attended by the Head of Service, with the Cabinet Member also in attendance at several meetings. A record of the questions and answers from these meetings was made available online throughout the consultation period. A stakeholder meeting was also held at Romford Library where residents were able to raise questions, which were recorded by a member of staff. This meeting was attended by the Head of Service. An additional meeting took place at Romford library where a member of staff recorded questions which were later responded to by the Head of Service and made available online.

A meeting was held on the Fairkytes Budget Proposals, and this was attended by the Cabinet Member, Head of Service and Service Managers. A stakeholder meeting was also held on the Queens Theatre budget proposals.

### **Publicity and information**

The consultation was well supported with publicity, including:

- A 'Budget Special' Living in Havering, setting out the main thrust of the proposals
- Posters, press and radio advertisements across Havering
- Online promotion through the website, social media and e-bulletins
- Regular coverage of the proposals and the consultation process in the local press

- The winter edition of Living in Havering providing a further update and a reminder to comment.
- A supplementary letter was sent to all council tax support claimants in December, (approximately 10,000 people) enclosing a hard copy of the council tax support questionnaire encouraging them to respond to the council tax consultation and also making recipients aware of the wider budget consultation. Attention was drawn to the range of council tax support options initially considered by Councillors (which were available to view on the website) and views were sought on the preferred option, which was considered to be the fairest to residents in the circumstances.

The information provided to inform the consultation included draft strategy documents where appropriate, draft Equality Impact Assessments, a summary guide to the budget proposals and relevant cabinet papers.

This information was updated over the period to include new material, such as presentations from the public meetings and minutes of the library meetings.

### **Responses to the consultation**

What follows is a summary report of the responses received to the four consultations (the overall budget Consultation and three specific statutory consultations). In each case data is provided relating to the 'closed' questions asked – those that required a yes/no, or multiple choice answer.

The report also summarises the comments made in response to the 'open' or verbatim questions asked, as well as summarising correspondence and the comments and questions raised at the public meetings. While these summaries aim to be comprehensive, Cabinet Members have also been provided with files of verbatim comments, for their perusal.

### **Overall response rate**

The overall response rate was approximately 4000 responses (including attendances at public meetings), together with a number of letters, emails, a petition and responses on social media, which are listed below:

Overall budget consultation	1987 responses
Library consultation	898 responses
Parking consultation	364 responses
Council tax	396 responses

Public meeting attendances (estimated):

Romford	30
Elm Park	40
Myplace	<u>100</u>
Total	170

#### Library meetings attendances (estimated)

Rainham	12
Hornchurch	24
Romford	13
Upminster	120
Harold Hill	<u>22</u>
Total	191

An online petition to stop the reduction in hours at Upminster library received 266 signatures.

Around 160 pieces of direct correspondence were also received by the Leader's office. There were also comments and campaigns utilising social media.

#### **Significance of the consultation**

The results of this consultation are one element which the Council needs to take into account when setting priorities and making decisions. Other factors which should be given consideration include:

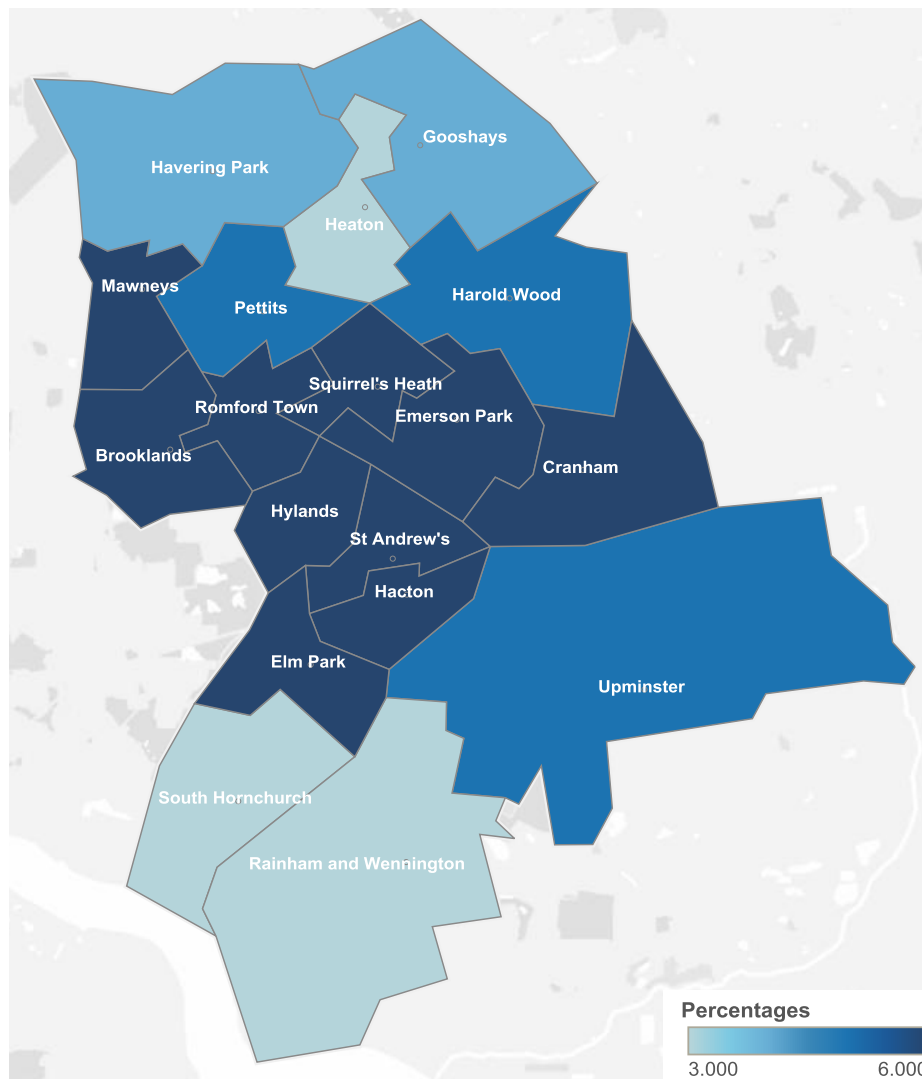
- The demographic makeup of the Borough and of changes taking place which impact upon demand for services
- Policy changes which impact on the Council such as the Care Act, the Children and Families Act and the SEND reforms
- Priorities of partner agencies
- Local political priorities
- Current performance and
- Results of other consultation exercises undertaken, for example, the 2013 'Your Council, Your Say' Borough wide survey, which has informed the direction taken by the Council, and had 7,252 responses and the key priorities then identified by residents which were:
  1. Reducing crime and anti-social behaviour
  2. Maintaining roads and pavements
  3. Keeping Havering clean and tidy
  4. Supporting local businesses and jobs
  5. Reducing traffic.

# Overall Budget consultation

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There were in total 1987 formal responses provided to the overall budget consultation, either in hard copy, or through the online portal. Of the respondents that disclosed gender information, approximately 48 per cent were male and 52 per cent were female, which is representative of the gender profile of the borough.

From the postcode data completed by respondents it is possible to provide a breakdown of responses according to the Ward respondents reside in. There were a total of 1420 respondents who provided full postcode data, which is illustrated in Figure 1 as a thematic map of Havering. Approximately, 61 per cent of respondents came from the Wards shaded darkest blue, towards the East and West of Havering borough (each of these 11 Wards contributed approximately between 6 to 7 per cent of total surveys). Wards with the lowest levels of responses were in Rainham and Wennington, South Hornchurch and Heaton, where each Ward contributed 4 per cent or fewer towards the total surveys.



**Figure 1: Thematic Map to illustrate the percentage of respondents according Havering Ward.**

The age profile of respondents is displayed in the table below:

Last Birthday	Count	Percentage
13-24	36	2%
25-44	317	16%
45-64	614	31%
65+	919	46%
Unanswered	101	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1987</b>	<b>100%</b>

Using the most up-to-date population estimates for Havering borough (2013 Mid-year population estimates, Office of National Statistics), it was found the population categorised between 10 to 24 years contribute approximately 17 per cent of Havering's total population. 51 per cent of Havering's population is categorised within

the age band 25 to 64 years and finally, approximately 19 per cent of the population are above the age of 65 years. The proportion of working age population respondents (47 per cent) is broadly comparable to the percentage of working age residents living in Havering (51 per cent) but the proportion of respondents 65 and over is significantly over-represented compared to the proportion of 65+ residents living in Havering.

Referring to the table below which displays both the Ethnic group breakdown of respondents and for Havering borough (data from the 2011 census), it was found 84 per cent of respondents identified themselves as White, compared to a Borough-wide profile of 88 per cent. However, the percentage of Black and Minority Ethnic respondents (4 per cent) is significantly lower than the proportion of BME residents living in Havering (13 per cent): only 1 per cent of respondents were identified as Black or Black British, 1 per cent as Asian or Asian British, 1 per cent as Mixed ethnic group and 1 per cent as belonging to another ethnic group.

Survey Ethnic Group	Count	Percentage	2011 Census Ethnic Group Count	2011 Census Ethnic Group Percentage
White	1674	84%	207949	88%
Mixed background	14	1%	4933	2%
Other ethnic group	15	1%	1324	1%
Black or Black British	25	1%	11481	5%
Asian or Asian British	29	1%	11545	5%
Prefer not to say	87	4%		
Unanswered	143	7%		
<b>Total</b>	<b>1987</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>237232</b>	101% (numbers above are round up)

In terms of the disability profile of respondents (see table below), 17 per cent of respondents identified themselves as having a disability and this percentage is lower than the proportion of disabled residents. According to the latest Annual Population Survey (2012-13), 21 per cent (31,400 residents) of working age (16-64) people living in Havering have disclosed that they have a disability or long-term illness / health condition. It is also estimated that approximately 53% (or 22,320) of older people (aged 65 and over) in Havering have a long term limiting illness where long term illness is considered to last 12 months or longer (2011 Census). 13 per cent of respondents preferred not to answer this question.

Illness or disability	Count	Percentage
Yes	343	17%
No	1376	69%
Unanswered	268	13%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1987</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Overall Budget Consultation Questions

The survey included two 'yes/no' questions:

- 1) Do you agree with the choice of priority services to be protected?
- 2) These proposals are based on annual Council Tax increases of not more than two per cent. Would you be willing to pay higher increases than two per cent in Council Tax to protect more services from cuts?

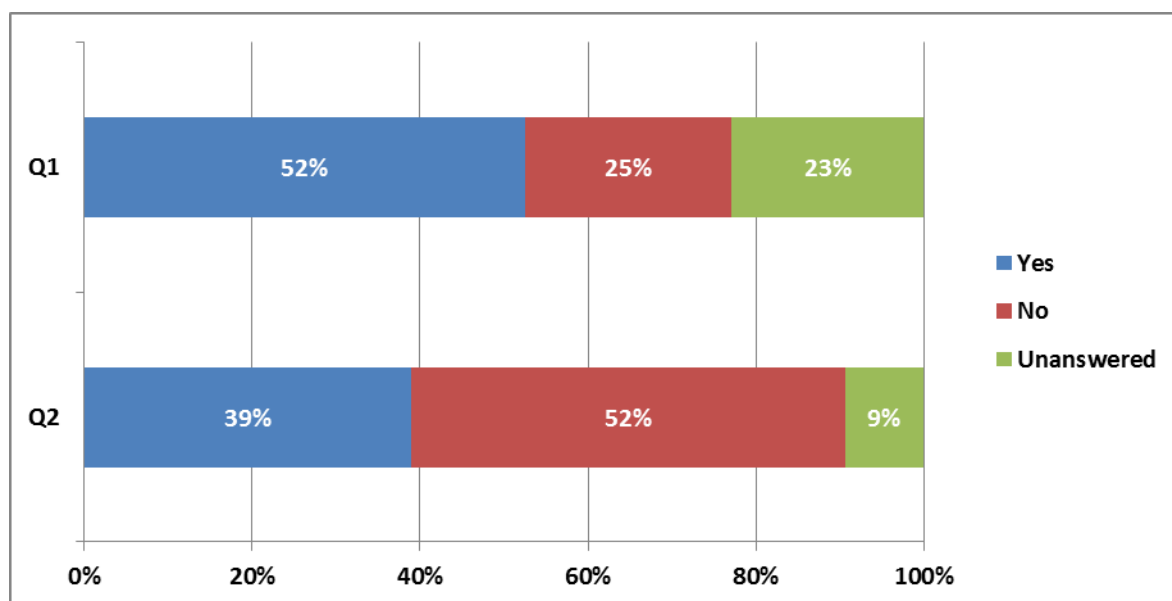


Figure 2: Bar chart illustrating the percentage of Yes/No responses for the 2 questions described above.

Respondents were asked to prioritise their top three most important services. In descending order, these were:

To clarify this, please tick your top three priority services:	Count	Percentage
Crime reduction & public safety	1007	17%
Rubbish & recycling collection	726	12%
Road & pavement repairs	682	12%
Cleaning the streets	613	10%
Social Services for adults (inc. older people)	448	8%
Parks & green spaces	405	7%
Public health	370	6%
Libraries	355	6%
Social Services for children	245	4%
Sports & leisure facilities	222	4%
Young people's Activities	212	4%
Support for schools	177	3%
Attracting businesses and jobs	131	2%
Environmental health & trading standards	125	2%



Public events & activities	98	2%
Housing services & advice	67	1%
Planning services & advice	36	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5919</b>	<b>100%</b>

**“Do you have any other general comments on the budget strategy as a whole?”**

Responses to this very broad question ranged across the Council’s services and the budget proposals. The following section summaries the responses collated from 29 September to 29 December 2014, when there were a total of 1987 surveys completed.

Figure 3 summarises the comments raised in Question 4, by theme. The bar chart splits the comments into those that support the proposed changes, those that disagree and those that are ‘neutral’ about the proposed changes. Figure 2 excludes the responses categorised under ‘General Budget Cut Distribution’ (including, for example, general comments on Havering’s proposed changes), ‘Survey Feedback’ and ‘Other’. The following categories presented in Figure 3 are ordered according to the volume of comments received by each theme. For example, there were 283 comments (approximately 14 per cent) which referenced ‘Public Events and activities’, (most commented theme, including the Queen’s Theatre) while 9 comments (0.5 per cent of total comments) (less commented theme) referenced ‘Public Health’.

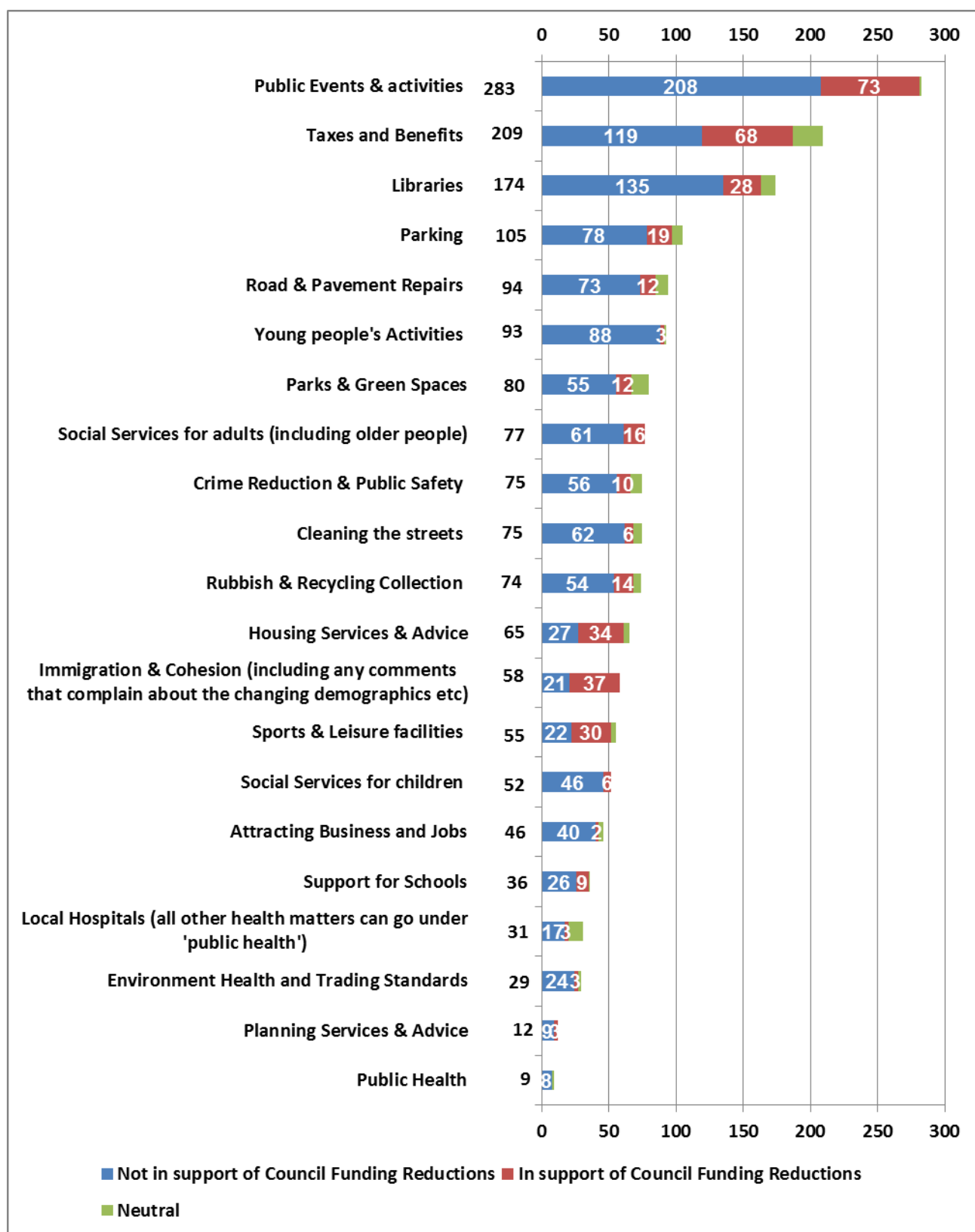


Figure 3: A Bar chart categorised according to the overall count of each category, which is further broken down according to whether responses were 'not in support', 'in support' or 'neutral' to proposed changes to Council Funding.

**Please note that this breakdown quantifies the number of comments made, not the number of individuals making comments.** Many respondents addressed multiple themes in their comments and these have been counted separately.

Please also note that comments have been grouped under the headings used in the consultation exercise rather than in relation to specific savings proposals. For this reason the introduction to each section lists the savings proposals covered under the broad heading.

#### **Public events & activities:**

##### **Savings proposals – Queens Theatre, Fairkytes, Pet Cemetery, Events, Information Kiosk, Communications.**

This broad theme included events and activities organised by the Council and those that received Council funding, but were delivered independently – including the Queen's Theatre and the Fairkytes Arts Centre.

Approximately 14 per cent of overall comments referred to this theme, with the bulk of these referencing the proposed reduction in funding to the Queen's Theatre, and to a lesser extent the Havering Show and Fairkytes Arts Centre. 74 per cent (208 comments) of these comments did not support a reduction in Council funding. Comments expressed shared a view that such services were important for the respective ward they are located in, as well as the borough as a whole.

Categorised under 'public events and activities', 73 per cent of comments (206 respondents) mentioned the need to specifically protect the Queen's Theatre from proposed funding cuts. This is in contrast to the 8 per cent of respondents (22 comments) which agreed to the proposed reduction in funding. Respondents considered the funding of cultural activities to be an investment into the borough that could attract people into the Havering. Comments also mentioned the potential loss to local businesses in Hornchurch where the Queen's Theatre is located.

However, over 26 per cent (73 comments) of 'public events and activities' comments supported the Council's proposed funding reduction, given the financial situation. This included the funding provided to the Queen's Theatre (8 per cent, 22 comments). Other areas raised were the funding provided to the proposed pet cemetery, as well as the Visitor Information Centre and Free Swimming Classes for over 50s. Some respondents also suggested that the 'Living in Havering' magazine ought to be provided only in electronic format in order to save money (12 comments).

The Council has also received feedback through social media, notably its Twitter feed. The tweets it received during the consultation period were primarily focussed on funding for the Queens Theatre and the work that it did in the community. Other tweets concerned the library proposals and the dates for the public meetings.

In addition a number of letters have been received in opposition to the proposed cuts which are referenced later.

## **Taxes and Benefits:**

### **Savings proposals – Council Tax support options**

Comments categorised under ‘taxes and benefits’, contributed approximately 11 per cent of the overall comments (209 comments) made in response to Question 4. The suggested changes in Council Tax were predominately referenced under the ‘taxes and benefits’ category. **For comments on the Council Tax Statutory consultation please see p.26.**

Approximately 33 per cent of respondents (68 comments) stated that a change to the tax and benefit system was required. While a proportion of respondents were in favour of council tax increases to offset the need for cuts, a clear majority were against Council Tax increases (57 per cent, 119 comments). The main reasons expressed were grouped in the following responses:

1. Efficient savings by the Council should mitigate the need for increases in Council Tax.
2. A rise in Council Tax would negatively impact vulnerable families and adults under financial hardship.

**Libraries:** The next highly topical category was ‘Libraries’, which contributed approximately 9 per cent of total comments (174 comments). **Comments on Libraries have been incorporated into the section on the Library statutory consultation – please see p.20.**

**Parking:** Approximately 5 per cent of total comments (105 comments) referenced ‘parking’, including street and town centre parking, as well as proposals around parking in parks. **Comments on parking have been incorporated into the section on the Parking statutory consultation – please see p.26.**

## **Road & Pavement repairs:**

### **Savings proposal – street lighting**

Approximately 5 per cent of the total comments (94 comments) were categorised under ‘road and pavement repairs’. Comments were predominately in support of continued Council funding of Streetcare (over 79 per cent, 73 comments). Many felt that the maintenance of road and pavements needed improvement in their local area and further investment was required for the local area to remain a pleasant place to live. Comments that suggested funding cuts to Streetcare suggest this is justified in order to protect youth services and social activities.

## **Young people:**

### **Savings proposals – youth service, myplace.**

Approximately 5 per cent of respondents (93 comments) commented on the suggested funding cuts to 'young people's activities'. Comments were predominately against the suggested funding cuts (95 per cent, 88 comments). Specifically, respondents felt strongly about the proposed cuts to youth services and suggested that the service helped foster the social and mental development and educational opportunities for children and young people. Respondents who commented on the proposed cuts to young people's activities felt that this would have long-term, negative implications for young people, particularly for vulnerable families and low-income households. Respondents also associated a funding cut to 'young people's activities' with a potential increase in anti-social behaviour and crime in the borough (14 comments), which would inadvertently lead to more costs in the future.

There were several comments which specifically mentioned the need to protect myplace in Harold Hill, which again is considered a vital resource for young people. Some respondents (approximately 11 comments) suggested that cuts to other services, for example in 'rubbish & recycling collection' or an increase in council tax, would be acceptable if this in turn protected 'young people's activities', the youth service and other services.

## **Parks & green spaces:**

### **Savings proposal – parks (To be noted that this represents increased income from parking, income from capital investments and achieving efficiencies through reorganising grounds maintenance operations)**

This theme contributed 4 per cent of all comments (80 comments). 69 per cent of comments (55 comments) on parks and green spaces wanted funding to continue, as parks were thought to promote healthy living for residents, add value to the borough and make Havering a pleasant and attractive place to live. Respondents were also concerned with construction/housing developments on remaining green spaces and the implications that this loss of green space could have for the appearance of Havering. On the other hand, comments in favour of reducing council funding (15 per cent, 12 comments) suggested the maintenance of green spaces (such as mowing green spaces) should be sacrificed in order to save money and protect other services. Recommendations also include using volunteers to maintain parks and green spaces.

There were a significant number of comments under this category relating to parking charges in parks. **For comments on parking in parks – see the section on the statutory Parking consultation – please see p.26.**

## **Social Services for adults (including older people):**

## **Savings proposals – adult social care, better care, older people, Royal Jubilee Court, supporting people, catering, younger adults, disability, workforce development**

Over 4 per cent of comments (77 comments) were in reference to ‘social services for adults’ and 79 per cent of these comments (61 comments) suggested that any cut to funding would be detrimental to the older and vulnerable residents of Havering. Respondents felt that investment into ‘social services for adults’ led to improved social interaction with others, prevented the elderly from feeling isolated and ensured positive mental health and wellbeing. Such responses tended to reference other services, for example the importance of maintaining funding towards libraries, the Queens Theatre and Fairkytes Centre, which it was felt, were used predominately by Havering’s older population. Thus, respondents were concerned that funding cuts could produce a negative cumulative impact upon Havering’s older population. On the other hand, approximately 21 per cent of comments (16 comments) suggested too much funding was targeted towards Havering’s elderly population (including library funding) and this funding allocation has become at the expense of ‘young people’s activities’.

### **Crime Reduction & Public Safety:**

#### **Saving proposal – CCTV, street lighting**

The category ‘crime reduction & public safety’ contributed approximately 4 per cent of total comments (75 comments). Comments under this category were varied, however 75 per cent of comments (56 comments) generally desired continued or increased funding to ‘crime reduction’. Respondents’ main concerns were for Havering to remain a pleasant and safe place to live and where people felt comfortable walking in the Borough’s streets at any time.

Over 13 per cent of comments (10 comments) supported the reduction of council funding for this category. Such responses suggested saving Council funding by scrapping school crossing patrols and reducing the use of CCTV (on the basis that it was considered ineffective in crime reduction). There were mixed views with regards to the cost-effectiveness of the new ‘LED’ street lighting as an anti-crime measure.

### **Cleaning the streets:**

#### **Savings proposal – streetcare efficiencies**

Approximately 4 per cent of comments referenced ‘cleaning the streets’ (75 comments). 83 per cent of these comments (62 comments) wanted to see improvements to this service and supported continued funding of Streetcare. The results of this category overlapped with several of the other categories including ‘crime and public safety’, where respondents stated they wished to see more fines for littering and that ‘road and pavement repairs’ needed further investment in order to promote public safety. Respondents considered ‘cleaning the streets’ important to

maintaining Havering as a safe, clean and pleasant place to live. Thus, for many respondents the main concern under this category was the extent of littering.

### **Rubbish & Recycling collection:**

#### **No savings proposal**

Approximately 4 per cent of comments (74 comments) were in reference to 'rubbish & recycling collection'. The majority of comments (73 per cent, 54 comments) wanted to maintain the funding targeted towards rubbish and recycling or have further investment provided by the Council. For example, there have been comments requesting improvements to the recycling collection of glass bottles or jars and to provide residents with collection bins, which will reduce the need for street cleaning on residential roads. Respondents felt improvements to the rubbish and recycling collection will improve the standard of living in Havering and maintain Havering's image as a safe and clean place to live.

### **Housing Services & Advice:**

#### **Saving proposal – private sector housing**

Approximately 3 per cent of total comments (65 comments) referenced 'housing services and advice'. Opinion was divided on whether to reduce or maintain council funding. This may be explained by a bringing together in the minds of respondents of housing services and house building. A number of respondents commented that there should be less council funding allocated to the building of new homes on green spaces in the borough, which it was felt led to Havering appearing overcrowded.

There was also a recommendation to increase tax on empty properties in order to raise council funds. Many respondents, who stated council funding should be maintained, felt it was important to invest in the Local Housing for Local Residents scheme (12 comments).

### **Immigration & Cohesion:**

#### **No savings proposal**

Approximately 3 per cent of total comments (64 comments) referenced Immigration and Cohesion where there is a concern of the rise of immigration into the borough and the related impact on council services. Some of the comments (23 per cent, 15 comments) specifically mentioned the value of translation services, where it was felt this funding could instead be invested into other services.

### **Sports & Leisure facilities:**

#### **Savings proposal – sports and leisure management contract**

Less than 3 per cent of comments (55 comments) mentioned 'sports & leisure facilities', with a majority of this small group arguing in favour of funding reductions (55 per cent, 37 comments). On the other hand, there was a concern, similar to public events & activities, that a funding cut to sports & leisure facilities would negatively impact on young people and adults who use these services (40 per cent, 22 comments) and could therefore increase the negative cumulative impacts on these groups.

### **Social Services for children:**

#### **Savings proposals – early help for troubled families, social care for children, catering and children with disabilities**

Over 3 per cent of comments (52 comments) related to Social Services for children, as opposed to 'young people's activities'. From the responses which specifically referenced 'social services for children', over 88 per cent (46 comments) stated this service ought to be protected from cuts – with some expressing a view that the priority in Havering is perceived to be older people.

**Others:** Small numbers of comments (fewer than 50 comments, approximately 2 per cent or less) were made regarding a host of other services and issues. These included: **support for schools** where comments suggested the need for more schools (to match the increasing development of housing); **attracting business and jobs** where concerns were raised about the losses to the local economy linked to public sector cuts; concerns around the pressures on **local hospitals** of a rising population and the need to invest in mental health services; concerns around the impact of cuts to the **Trading Standards** service – particularly with reference to high profile projects such as buy with confidence and the banking protocol; very low levels of comments about **planning services** and a few regarding **public health** and the need for further investment in mental health and GPs. Comments made about the **Voluntary Sector** concerned not relying upon volunteers for libraries although there were suggestions for the increased use of volunteers in other council services e.g. parks. Also there were questions about the capacity to take on e.g. youth services, at a time when funding to the sector was being cut. A wider consultation is being undertaken with the Sector on a draft Voluntary Sector Strategy and this will be reported to cabinet in March.

In addition to the statutory consultation, trading standards officers also consulted with some of their key stakeholders on the proposals for the service. Ten responses were received from local businesses who were concerned about the implications that ending the 'buy with confidence' scheme would have for local businesses, and for the public. They felt in general that the scheme helped protect the public and also generate business for local firms that had been approved by trading standards. In addition, they felt that this particular scheme was advantageous over others like 'checktrader' because it had the trading standards approved tag. Another key stakeholder was the not for profit trade association, called the anti-counterfeiter



group, which represents rights holders in the branded goods sectors. They commented that the proposals would have implications for national and local economies, because of tax avoidance and that it could affect the safety and welfare of consumers because there would be a reduction in the trading standards service. Other views came from a buy with confidence business breakfast that was held. These views reflected those already set out in this paragraph. Further to the local business comments, other stakeholders, including the branch manager of Halifax, Cranham Police, and the Citizens Advice Bureaux all raised concerns about the preventative work undertaken, for example, the banking protocol which sought to help prevent crime and protect vulnerable residents.

Proposals for the corporate policy and community restructure, the communications staffing and structure, channel shift proposals, the music school, disabled facilities grant or the terms and conditions review, did not attract any significant level of comment.

There were other comments made about the Council's general budget and financial management – ranging from the cost of councillors and senior executives, to positive comments about the Council's approach to managing its budget and action taken to balance the books. Other comments regarded the need to lobby against the cut in government funding more vociferously.

### **Summary of issues raised at public meetings for overall budget consultation**

The three formal public meetings to discuss the budget proposals took place in Elm Park on 12<sup>th</sup> November, Harold Hill on 17<sup>th</sup> November and Romford on 21<sup>st</sup> November. There was a presentation on the budget and the chance to ask clarification questions. A wide range of issues were raised in the three discussions.

The main themes raised at these meetings were:

#### **1. Youth Services**

There was significant support for youth services at all three meetings. At both Elm Park and Harold Hill a number of users of the services attended with families to stress the importance of the services to young people.

At Elm Park, there was a focus on the work at the Robert Beard centre – particularly working with young people who have complex needs. In Harold Hill, the focus was on myplace and its continuing role, particularly keeping young people away from crime and anti-social behaviour. In both cases, the panel stressed that there were no plans to close either centre, but more community involvement would be welcomed.

Supporters of youth services suggested that additional funding could be made available if funding to libraries or the Queen's Theatre was reduced – though these suggestions provoked debate among audience members. It was

stressed that proposals for Youth Services would be subject to a full separate statutory consultation.

## **2. Social Care & Education**

A number of attendees raised concerns around future funding for older adults in London's most elderly Borough and information was given on the new measures enshrined in the Care Act. There was a desire expressed by several attendees to protect funding for preventative measures.

There was also concern about the future of services for people with Learning Disabilities and for SEN provision in schools. It was explained that Learning disability services would be reviewed, to help shape the future of the service around the needs of service-users.

There was a general concern that the most vulnerable shouldn't suffer most from the budget cuts.

## **3. Libraries**

The proposals for libraries caused a good deal of debate, with many attendees voicing their concerns. Specific issues included charging for PC access, which some felt would penalise jobseekers and the poor, while also being counter-intuitive as services were increasingly being diverted online.

Others felt that the use of volunteers was a risky idea and that the reduction in hours and services would impact on the number of children who take up reading.

Others expressed the view that libraries were less vital than other services (youth services being an example given) and the move to online books meant that continued large-scale investment in libraries was unnecessary.

## **4. Parking**

The main discussion topic around the parking proposals was more charging in parks. This was opposed by a number of attendees, with specific concerns raised on behalf of sports players and the popular walking groups who use the parks.

Others questioned whether the loss of CCTV enforcement cars was leading to an increase in charges.

## **5. Trading Standards**

Members of staff and the public suggested that the cuts to the trading standards service would have a detrimental impact on safety in the Borough – stressing the team's work to combat rogue traders and other issues.

## **6. General Financial Management**

A number of questions and comments concerned ways that the Council could raise or save money – a number of which were already in motion. There was a general desire for the Council to try and get more money from Government; there were questions about Icelandic Banks, to confirm that the money had all been returned; and there were questions about how the Government allocated funding and what the impact was on staffing, particularly senior staffing at the town hall.

### **Other Correspondence**

Members and senior officers have also received separate correspondence on matters related to the budget proposals.

With very few exceptions, the correspondence has related to proposals for libraries (particularly Upminster Library), the youth service and The Queen's Theatre – from theatre supporters both within and outside Havering. The Council received a formal and detailed response to its proposals from the Queen's theatre trust which opposed the proposed budget reductions. In their response, the trust set out the contribution that Queen's make to the wider economy of Hornchurch and Havering. They also outline their education and outreach programme which helps to link young people with the national opera house, the royal national theatre and the national skills academy for the creative and cultural sectors. In their detailed response, the trust explores the benefits of having an in-house production team and the semi-resident acting community. In addition, the purpose built building means that the Queen's building can host a range of productions, from visiting tour groups such as the recent 'Return to Forbidden Planet' to in house productions, ballets, jazz and other guest performances.

There was also a letter received from the Arts Council outlining their concerns regarding the reduction in funding to the Queens Theatre.

On the whole the letters contained similar themes to those held at the public meetings and verbatim comments through the consultation. This included the importance of the summer reading challenge at the library, the high regard in which the local studies section of the library service was held and the importance of the house-bound scheme.

One letter was received from eight schools in Upminster highlighting the importance of the Upminster library to the community.

Many of the letters regarding the Queen's theatre were based on a standard template, emphasising the social and economic benefit of the theatre, in providing local jobs and about bringing business to the wider economy. This was also reflected in a series of template letters from local business. A further few letters, reflected concerns over the changes proposed to youth services and the learning disability centre of Avalon Place.

Approximate numbers of letters/emails, by subject:

100 – Queen' Theatre (approximately half from supporters based outside of Havering)

38 – Library Service

8 - Youth Service

2 – Learning disabilities.

2 – Voluntary sector from CAB & Romford Mosque

The Citizen's Advice Bureau stressed the role that contracting with the voluntary sector could play in meeting the challenges faced by the Council.

Tapestry (formerly Age Concern) also wrote to offer its support in the future in developing new solutions and saving public money.

#### Social media

A number of comments were received via Twitter and two notable campaigns were mounted on social media platforms such as Facebook and YouTube – regarding the library proposals and the Queen's Theatre.

# Statutory consultation – Libraries

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## Libraries Equality Data

Last Birthday	Count	Percentage
13-24	37	4%
25-44	222	25%
45-64	298	33%
65+	272	30%
Unanswered	69	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>898</b>	<b>100%</b>

Illness or disability	Count	Percentage
Yes	128	14%
No	619	69%
Unanswered	151	17%
<b>Total</b>	<b>898</b>	<b>100%</b>

Survey Ethnic Group	Count	Percentage
White	670	75%
Mixed background	17	2%
Other ethnic group	9	1%
Black or Black British	30	3%
Asian or Asian British	25	3%
Prefer not to say	65	7%
Unanswered	82	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>898</b>	<b>100%</b>

Gender	Count	Percentage
Male	292	33%
Female	523	58%
Unanswered	83	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>898</b>	<b>100%</b>

## **Introduction**

Between 29 September and 5<sup>th</sup> January 2015, 898 people completed the Library Service Budget Consultation Survey. Of these 52% were completed online.

The survey included 9 questions. Of these 6 were 'yes' or 'no' questions:

Q1) Do you agree with the Council's proposals to reduce opening hours, rather than close library buildings?

Q2) Do you agree with proposals to open four libraries (Harold Hill, Romford, Hornchurch and Rainham) for 50 hours per week and the other six libraries for at least 25 hours per week?

Q3) Would you prefer that all libraries were open for a consistent (but lower) number of hours per week?

Q4) Do you agree with the proposal to involve more volunteers to support the management of libraries, in order to extend opening hours?

Q5) The libraries' housebound service supports around 95 people at a cost of £15,000. Do you agree the Council should find more cost-effective ways to support this group of customers?

Q6) Users of computers in libraries will be charged 50p for an hours' usage under these proposals. Do you think this is a reasonable charge?

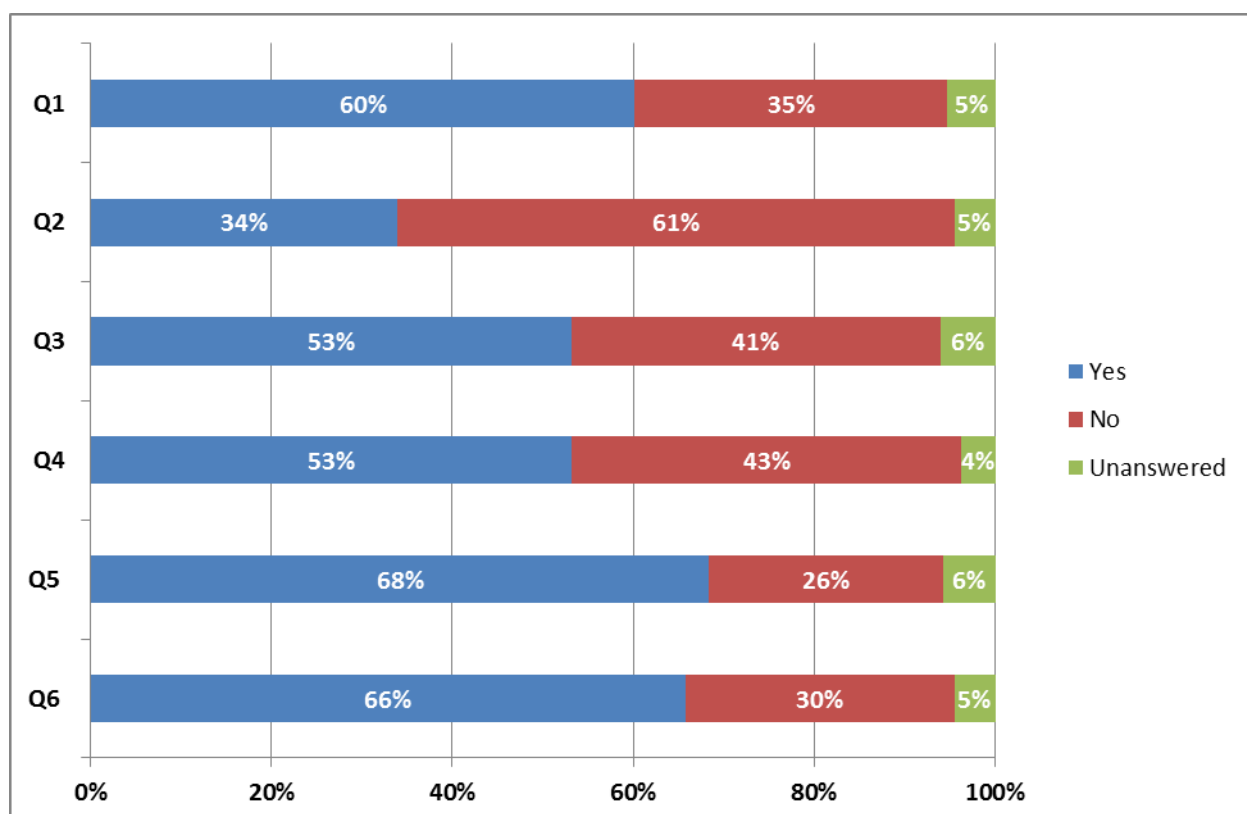


Figure 4: A Bar chart illustrating the percentage of Yes/No responses for the 6 questions described above.

The remaining questions were open ended and in total there were 2394 comments. The questions, along with a summary of the responses, are listed below.

- **Given the need to make savings, would you like to suggest alternative opening arrangements?** (Of the total comments for the Survey, 26% were in response to this question)
- **Do you have any other suggestions to save money in the library service, either by reducing costs or raising income – or other comments to make about these proposals?** (Of the total comments for the Survey, 50% were in response to this question)
- **Do you have any further comments to make about the library strategy?** (Of the total comments for the Library, 24% were in response to this question)

Whilst the first two open ended questions were quite specific, there were several themes that ran across responses to all three questions which are outlined below.

### Summary of comments

In total, 27.9% of comments were in relation to Library opening hours. 8.3% (198) of comments stated that opening hours should be changed, although 5.3% (127) stated they shouldn't.

Various alternative opening arrangements were suggested, including:

- reducing opening hours in some or all of the Libraries each day - 3.5% (83), although 2.5% (60) stated opening hours should not be reduced.
- closing all Libraries for an additional day per week or having an alternate closing day – 2.3% (64)
- closing some libraries – 2.1% (51), although 2.8% (66) comments stated that no Libraries should be closed.

Throughout the survey responses, there were various suggestions to raise income. These included:

- Reducing spend (e.g. books and utilities) – 4.1% (99).
- Sharing facilities with other organisations – 4.1% (99).
- Increasing the usage and fees of meeting room hire and / or advertising them better - 3.6% (86).
- Charging for events 3.1% (75).
- Introducing a membership, usage or borrowing fee - 1.4% (34).
- Increasing fines – 0.5% (11).

10.6% (254) of comments were about volunteers. Of these, a significant number (185) were not in favour of using volunteers 'instead of' existing staff. 4.6% (111) of comments stated staff should not be reduced, although 1.1% (26) comments were in favour of this, particularly reducing managerial staff.

2.2% (52) of comments were made in favour of retaining the Housebound Service and 1.6% (38) of comments in favour of retaining the Local Studies and Family History Centre. However, we are not able to identify whether or not respondents are service users.

7.6% (183) of comments were on the introduction of a fee to use computers in Libraries. The comments were quite evenly split with 3.8% (91) who disagreed with a fee, 3.6% (85) of these comments in favour of a fee and (0.3% (7) were neutral).

In total, 20% (471) of the comments disagreed with Libraries being cut, stating that savings should be made elsewhere.



## **Qualitative Responses from the General Budget Strategy Consultation**

Referring to Figure 3 on page 9, over 78 per cent (135 comments) of all Library comments mentioned council funding should continue to support this service. Many comments discussed the social value of libraries to local residents and the local community and thus, respondents disagreed with the proposed cuts to libraries. Such respondents felt libraries were a crucial service for the borough, an asset for vulnerable children and adults, an educational resource and provided facilities other than books, for example computers for those without access at home.

Many respondents were concerned in regards to:

- 1. Library opening hours:** Respondents desired that library hours continue as they are presently and disagreed to the proposed shortened hours of smaller libraries (18 per cent of Library comments, 32 in total). On the other hand, to a smaller extent other respondents (5 per cent, 9 in total) agreed that only the larger libraries in the borough should be open for over 50 hours per week.
- 2. Library volunteers:** Respondents felt that volunteers could not provide the consistent support that is required in order to manage library services as paid staff, nor would they have the knowledge required to complete the job sufficiently (approximately 10 per cent, 17 comments).

On the other hand, over 16 per cent (28 comments) of Library comments agreed with the proposed cuts to Library services where it was suggested, owing to the increase in resources available online, libraries were no longer a vital service.

## **Correspondence**

In addition to the survey, 37 responses to the Library Budget Consultation were sent to the Lead Member for Culture and Community Engagement and the Head of Culture and Leisure by letter and / or email. One of these was received from a local MP who had forwarded on a residents email.

The issues raised through this correspondence were very similar to many of the comments in the survey – should or should not be closed; suggestions for different opening arrangements and how additional income could be generated, such as sharing facilities, charging for events and increasing the hire or changes for meeting room usage. Some correspondence also argued against the use of volunteers and the introduction of charges for the use of PCs.

There were other comments in favour of retaining the Local Studies and Family History Centre and the Housebound Service, and the value of these services to local residents.

One letter received was from National Archives regarding their concerns for the Local Studies and Family History Centre and the use of volunteers.

An online petition to stop the reduction in hours at Upminster Library received 266 signatures.

### **Library Budget Consultation Meetings**

In addition to the public consultation meetings on the overall budget proposals, there were five public meetings in regard to the Library Service Budget Proposals throughout November and December 2014. . An additional meeting was held at Romford Library where residents were able to raise questions that were recorded by a member of staff. These were later answered by the Head of Service following the meeting. The purpose of these meetings was to set out the budget proposals for Library Services and answer questions from meeting attendees. All Questions and Answers from the Library Budget Consultation Meetings were made available online for the duration of the consultation.

The meetings were all well attended, in particular the meeting at Upminster Library in which approximately 120 local residents were present. There was particular depth of feeling from Upminster residents about the proposals given that it is the third busiest library in the borough but is not included as one of the four most 'strategically important' and therefore the opening hours are proposed to be reduced to 25 per week.

Various questions were asked at these meetings but there were some common themes. There were several questions about volunteers, including how the Council will recruit the number of volunteers required, how volunteers will be managed and trained, whether volunteers will get a formal qualification and how volunteers will be retained. There were also concerns about how the Council will manage the recruitment of volunteers, at the same time as making staff redundancies and what the cost of volunteer programme will be.

There were also many questions and comments about the proposal to introduce a 50p charge for the use of computers in Libraries. Many attendees were concerned about how it would work in practice and what the cost would be – for example arrangements for staff taking the money, managing a booking system, ensuring computers were always working and up to date. There were also a number of questions about whether concessions would be given for certain groups. Many felt 50p was a lot of money for those who are not working.

There were questions and comments about the future of the Local Studies and Family History Centre, including the value of this service and the knowledge of the staff currently in post. There were also concerns about current clubs and groups and if they would still be able to run. The Summer Reading Challenge was also mentioned on several occasions and people were worried about the future of this scheme.

There were various suggestions about how the Council could raise more income. These included the introduction of a charge for people to become a member of the library, increasing fines, selling books, introducing a charge for using some of the Local Studies and Family History Centre research tools and increasing the hire of rooms and/or promoting this more.

In addition there were various suggestions about how the Library Service could save money. These included reducing the amount of money spent on books, saving on utilities, increasing partnership working with other organisations and sharing resources and sharing services with other Councils.

There were lots of questions about the proposals to reduce Library opening hours and similarly lots of suggestions for how the hours could be reduced. Some meeting attendees urged the Council to keep libraries open in the evening so it's convenient for people who work, but there were also comments about keeping the Libraries open on Saturdays. There were suggestions to close some libraries one day per week and some people did suggest closing smaller libraries; although equally there was opposition to this suggestion as well.

Finally there was objection to Library Service budget reductions in principle and questions about the decision to define four libraries as strategically most important.

### **Alternative proposals**

As part of the consultation process, the Council received alternative proposals from the staff, which have been considered as part of the review of the consultation that has taken place. Staff proposals include: increased opening hours, including retaining current opening hours at Romford and Hornchurch; the retention of more front line staff across the service; a reduction in the working hours for a number of the managers; the retention of an additional Reader Development post, the retention of the Housebound service and the retention of a post to run the Local Studies and Family History Centre. This is being considered alongside the public feedback.

# Statutory consultation – Council Tax Support Scheme

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## Council Tax Equality Data

Last Birthday	Count	Percentage
13-24	5	1%
25-44	95	24%
45-64	232	59%
65+	27	7%
Unanswered	37	9%
Illness or disability	Count	Percentage

Survey Ethnic Group	Count	Percentage
White	306	77%
Mixed background	7	2%
Other ethnic group	5	1%
Black or Black British	17	4%
Asian or Asian British	4	1%
Prefer not to say	18	5%
Unanswered	39	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>396</b>	<b>100%</b>
Gender	Count	Percentage
Male	140	35%
Female	211	53%
Unanswered	45	11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>396</b>	<b>100%</b>

Yes	161	41%
No	157	40%
Unanswered	78	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>396</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Introduction

This consultation took place alongside the wider consultation undertaken on the Councils budget proposals as a whole (as mentioned above the consultations were treated as a linked set of proposals) and respondents had the opportunity to comment on those proposals and make alternative suggestions. A letter was sent out to all claimants as part of the consultation exercise which is referenced earlier in this report. It gave respondents a hard copy of the council tax support questionnaire and encouraged them to respond to the council tax consultation and also made them aware of the wider budget consultation. Attention was drawn to the range of council tax support options initially considered by Councillors (which were available to view on the website) and asked for views on the option being consulted upon which was considered to be the fairest to residents in the circumstances. No comments were received during the consultation which suggested an alternative option was preferable to the one being put forward by the Council.

## Consultation Proposals:

The consultation posed four questions:

1. Should everyone of working age pay at least 15 per cent of their council tax?
2. Should working age council tax payers with more than £6,000 savings or investments be disqualified from claiming Council Tax Support?
3. Should Second Adult Rebate be removed from the scheme for working age Council Tax Payers whose income is too high to receive Council Tax support?
4. Should people who own or rent a property which has been empty for more than two years, be charged 150 per cent Council Tax?

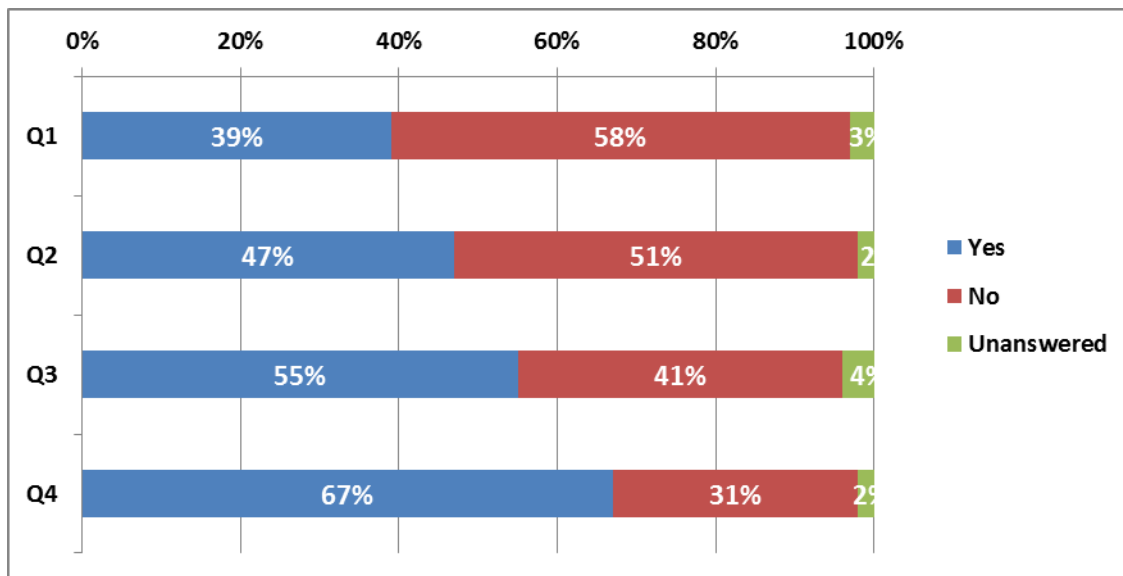


Figure 3: Bar chart illustrating the percentage of Yes/No responses for the 4 questions described above.

In relation to Q1 – whilst 58 % of respondents disagreed this represents 231 people as against 152 who agreed, so of all those responding (many of whom are likely to be council tax support claimants as there was a spike in responses after the letter went out to claimants) there was a majority of 79 who disagreed. As can be seen from the analysis of written comments some of the objections to the proposal seemed to relate to concerns about disabled people and people with long term health conditions, who receive more generous premiums and allowances in any event.

In relation to Q2 – whilst 51% of respondents disagreed this represents 202 people as against 184 who agreed, so of all those responding, there was a majority of 18 who disagreed.

### **Numbers responding and basic demographics**

Consultation questionnaires were sent to 9,887 working-age claimants of Council Tax Support. The consultation proposals were also made available online for the general public and any interested parties to submit comments.

Between 29 September and 29 December 2014, 396 people in total responded to the Council Tax Support consultation. 309 of these responses (78%) were completed on paper by Council Tax Support claimants and represent 3% of working age claimants. The remaining 87 completed surveys (22%) came through online.

### **Analysis of Written Comments**

Following each yes/no question, respondents were invited to make verbatim comments related to the question. The following breakdown shows the broad sentiment of the comments. Positive comments are those that supported the proposal, negative comments were against the proposal and neutral comments did not express a clear opinion either way.

The majority of respondents did not take the opportunity to make any additional comments. However, of those that did add comments, the findings were as follows:

1. 20 respondents (5%) to the survey commented that everyone should pay at least 15 per cent of their council tax compared to 126 respondents (32%) who disagreed. 63% of respondents (250 people) made no or neutral comments.

Some expressed the view that disabled people and people with long-term health conditions or those receiving disability benefits should be exempt from this change. It is worth noting that the CTS scheme does take sickness and disability into account, with more generous premiums and allowances awarded to this client group. This means that claimants with disabilities do receive higher rates of Council Tax Support.

One respondent said that they felt that 10 per cent “was high enough”. A few commented that people should pay council tax if they use council services.<sup>1</sup>

2. 8% of people’s comments (32) agreed with the proposal that working age council tax payers with more than £6,000 savings or investments should be disqualified from claiming Council Tax Support compared to 19% of people (77) who disagreed. 73 per cent of respondents (287) made neutral or no comment regarding this question.

Comments included the view that the £6,000 proposed limit was too high<sup>2</sup>. Others commented that the proposal penalised people who had saved for the future.<sup>3</sup>

3. 24 comments (6%) agreed with the proposal to remove Second Adult Rebate compared to 43 comments (11%) who disagreed. 329 people or 83% made no or neutral comments.

The comments that were in favour did so along the lines that if the higher wage earner could afford to pay the council tax, then their Second Adult Rebate should be removed.<sup>4</sup>

4. 18% of people (71) commented in favour of the proposal to increase the council tax to 150% where a property has been empty for more than two years. This compared to 9% or 34 people who disagreed. 73 % of people (291) gave no or neutral comment.

Most of the comments on this proposal were favourable and indicated that this would help to reduce the number of people who needed housing, encourage the return of the property into use which would benefit the local area and encourage owners to sell or let their property.

## **GLA Response**

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<sup>1</sup> The Council has policies in place to support people in emergency need

<sup>2</sup> Thurrock Council apply a £6,000 capital limit and maximum CTS = 75% council tax.

<sup>3</sup> The capital limit of £6,000 is not proposed for people of pensionable age.

<sup>4</sup> Less than 2% of working age claimants would be affected by the removal of second adult rebate.

The GLA was consulted regarding the draft council tax support (CTS) scheme options for 2015-16. The GLA responded on 15 December 2014, recognising that individual schemes need to be developed having regard to specific local circumstances, both in respect of the potential impact of any scheme on working age claimants (particularly vulnerable groups) and more generally the financial impact on the council and local council taxpayers.

The GLA noted Havering's preferred option recommended by London Borough of Havering officers. It also recommended that applicable amounts, personal allowances and non-dependent deductions are uprated in line with the national Housing Benefit scheme for 2015-16. The London Borough of Havering can confirm, and will advise the GLA accordingly, that it will be taking such action in relation to annual uprating in accordance with the national Housing Benefit scheme.

The GLA concluded that it had no further specific comments on the proposals at this stage as it regards them as being a legitimate matter for local determination. The full response is available on request.

### **Other activity**

As part of the consultation, meetings were held with two stakeholder groups: the financial inclusion group (made up of staff from a number of Council departments, the DWP, MIND, several housing associations and Disability Association Barking & Dagenham). The proposals to change the scheme were not unexpected as members dealt with neighbouring authorities who had made similar changes when they introduced the scheme. Most seated around the table felt Havering had been very generous by not reducing the Council Tax Support Scheme payments in 2014 when there were additional Government reductions in funding in that year.

A presentation was also made to the Housing Benefit Landlord Forum, which represents landlords who receive Housing Benefit payments direct on behalf of their tenants - the aim of the meeting is to update Landlords on the Benefits Services performance and to brief them on any legislation changes that may affect them or their tenants. As part of the Agenda council officers discussed the Council Tax Support Proposals for 2015/16, the effect these may have on Landlords, tenants and themselves. Chris Henry invited comment from the floor but none were forthcoming. The attendees were then reminded that they could have "their say" by viewing the Councils website and completing the survey by Monday 29<sup>th</sup> December 2014.



# Statutory consultation – Parking

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## Parking Equality Data

Last Birthday	Count	Percentage
13-24	4	1%
25-44	61	17%
45-64	125	34%
65+	142	39%
Unanswered	32	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>364</b>	<b>100%</b>

Survey Ethnic Group	Count	Percentage
White	291	80%
Mixed background	3	1%
Other ethnic group	2	1%
Black or Black British	7	2%
Asian or Asian British	3	1%
Prefer not to say	15	4%
Unanswered	43	12%
<b>Total</b>	<b>364</b>	<b>100%</b>

Gender	Count	Percentage
Male	164	45%
Female	172	47%
Unanswered	28	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>364</b>	<b>100%</b>

Illness or disability	Count	Percentage
Yes	47	13%
No	261	72%
Unanswered	56	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>364</b>	<b>100%</b>

In total for the Statutory Parking consultation there were 364 total surveys completed, out of which approximately 44 per cent were completed online (159 surveys) and 56 per cent (205 surveys) were completed via a paper copy.

## Questions

There were five yes/no questions asked, results of which are summarised below:

1. These proposals would allow for half an hour free parking (20 minutes free parking, plus 10 minutes 'grace' period) in on-street pay and display bays and in car parks outside Romford. We believe this would support local businesses and shoppers. Do you agree with this proposal?

2. Would you prefer no free period, but lower charges for longer stays?

3. Do you agree that parking tariffs should be set in a way that supports short term parking and deters long-stay commuters (higher charges for longer stays)?

4. Do you agree with the proposal that car parking in parks should cost less than it does in town centre car parks?

5. The 'school run' causes many issues for pedestrians, parents, children and motorists. Would you support more parking restrictions and enforcement around schools?

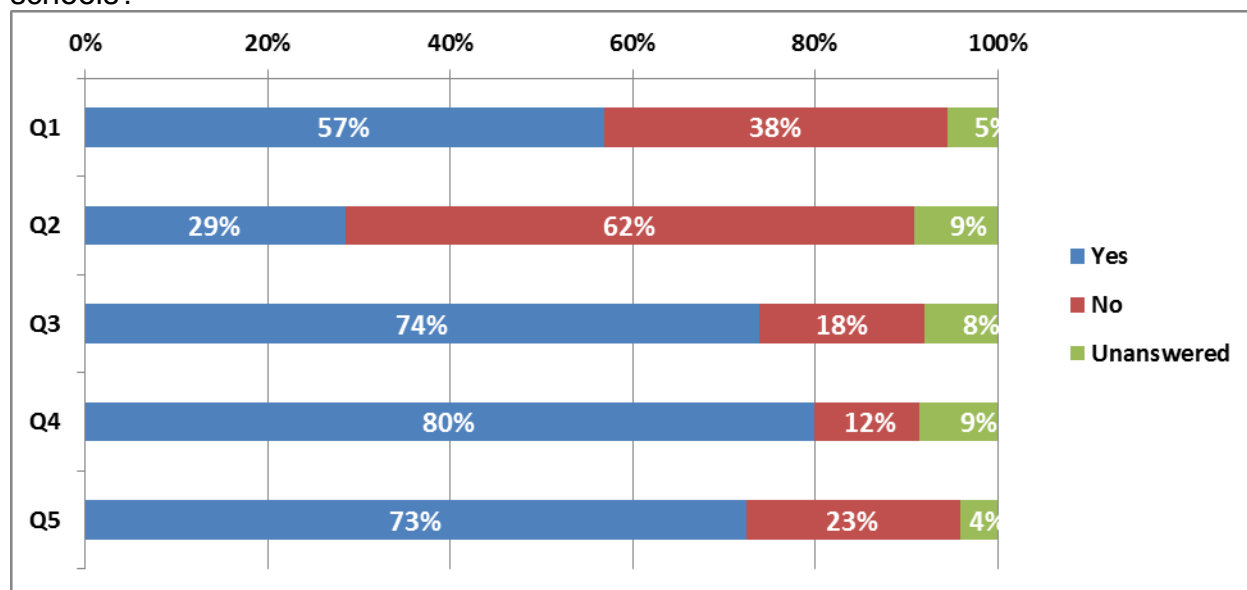


Figure 4: Bar chart illustrating the percentage of Yes/No responses for the 5 questions described above.

In relation to question 1, there was overall support for the proposal to introduce half an hour free parking to on-street pay and display bays and from question 2, the majority of respondents would prefer to have a free period of parking rather than lower charges for longer stays. The majority of respondents agreed that parking tariffs should support short term parking and deter long-stay commuters. Question 4 considered parking in parks and the majority of respondents stated that charges in parks ought to be less than the cost of town centre parking. Finally, question 5 was in

relation to the 'school run', where the majority of respondents agreed that more parking restrictions and enforcements ought to be implemented around schools.

The remaining questions, listed below were open ended:

6. The proposals would amend the arrangements for a number of parking permits used by residents and businesses in certain circumstances. Do you have any comments on these proposals?

In relation to parking permits, there were a total of 62 responses (17 per cent of total responses). Out of these responses 29 per cent (18 responses) stated there should be no increase to permit charges; 17 per cent (11) of responses thought parking permits should be free for residents; approximately 15 per cent of responses (9) suggested there ought to be no permit scheme in the borough and finally 5 per cent (3 responses) desired changes to visitor permits (to allow charging hourly or daily).

7. The Council wants to help local people park near their homes. If you have any requests for additional parking bays, residents' parking schemes or changes to parking restrictions in your local area, please list them here and we will consider them (subject to separate, local consultation).

For question 7, in total there were 104 responses, which called for a review of parking restrictions in respondent's respective local area. (This will be considered separately for further review).

8. Do you have any other comments on the parking proposals and strategy that you have not addressed in previous responses?

In relation to this broad question, there were several emerging themes, which it was found to overlap with the comments made in the general budget strategy consultation below. The main comments were categorised as:

1. Parking charges in **parks**: there were 160 comments in relation to parking charges in parks (44 per cent of total survey responses) and all responses objected to the suggested changes to parking charges. In addition to the issues raised below, for example the impact to 'Walking for Health' (43 responses, 27 per cent), there was also the concern in relation to the impact parking charges would have to Leisure Centre users (85 responses, 53 per cent). 7 comments (4%) raised the issue of the impact that the introduction of charges in parks would have on parking in residential streets. There were also suggestions to introduce a minimum charge for parking, for example 20p and a maximum free stay between 1.5 to 4 hours.
2. General **fees and charges** comments: altogether there were 48 responses (13 per cent of total survey responses) that fell under this category. 21 responses (44 per cent) under this category were in favour to have an initial free period, while 5 responses (10 per cent) were not in favour of a free period and 17 responses (35

per cent) were not in favour of increased charges or agreed only to a reduced hourly charge.

3. Parking at **schools**: in total there were 10 comments (over 2 per cent of total survey responses), which mostly comprised of suggestions to ease the pressure of parking at schools. For example, children should be encouraged to use school buses, provide specific parking for parents and finally, stricter restrictions during peak times.

### **Qualitative Responses from the General Budget Strategy Consultation:**

From the 5 per cent of total comments (105 comments) that referenced 'parking', over 74 per cent (78 comments) were against the suggested change to parking charges, stating the need to maintain free parking or parking charges as they are. On the other hand, respondents who agreed to the suggested parking charges, agreed to only short-time parking charges and to an increase in fines which could be reinvested into other services, such as road repairs. It was also suggested the increase in parking charges might consequently encourage the use of public transport.

The 'parking' category was split into two main themes:

1. Parking charges in **parks**: comments generally opposed the introduction of parking charges in parks (35 per cent of overall parking comments, 37 comments). It was felt introducing parking charges would prevent people from enjoying Havering parks and maintaining a healthy lifestyle, for example the 'Walking for Health' scheme. It was also suggested that introducing parking charges would encourage people to park in nearby residential streets. It was recommended that the 'free' period in regards to parking charges should be extended to 60 minutes.
2. Parking charges in **shopping/business** facilities: it was felt by respondents that introducing or increasing the parking charges in shopping areas would negatively impact local businesses (over 11 per cent, 12 comments). Instead, there was concern that customers would go to the Lakeside Shopping Centre.

### **Stakeholder Consultation**

The additional stakeholder consultation received only 5 direct responses and 3 further items of correspondence (a total of 129 surveys were provided). As stakeholders were invited to respond to the online questionnaire it is considered their responses were included in the general budget strategy consultation.

The stakeholders comments received separately to the main consultation were closely aligned to those of the main survey in that all correspondents raised concerns regarding the changes to charging in parks. Whilst generally none of the respondents wanted charging in parks to be introduced, there was the suggestion that free parking be allowed for the first hour and after 6.00pm. Other comments with regard to the

remaining areas being consulted indicated that 30 minutes of free parking may not be sufficient and that the hourly charge ought to be reduced.