

Business Plan and Budget 2026-27 – 2028-29: Phase 1 Engagement survey results

Demographics

Table 1: Location of respondents

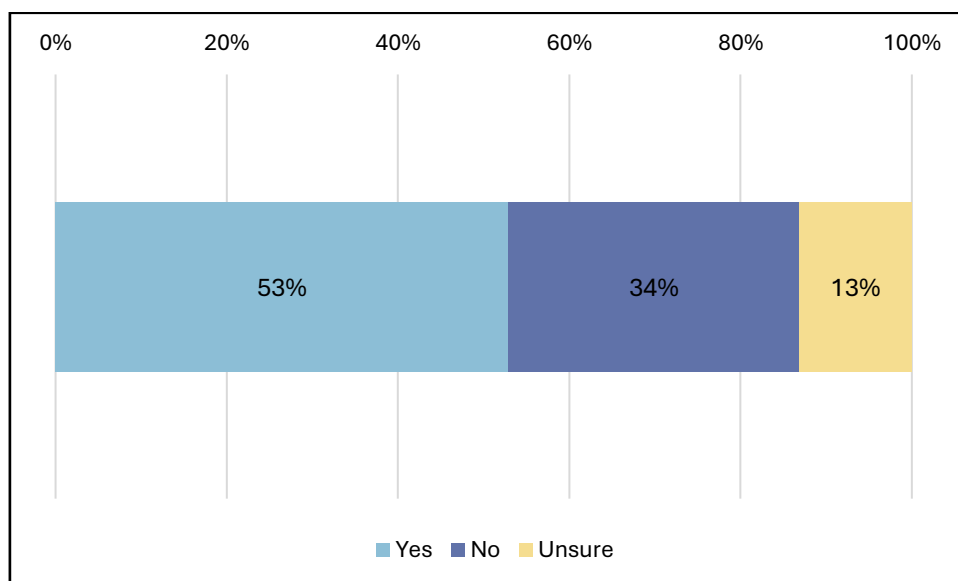
District of Residence	Number of respondents
Cambridge	34
East Cambridgeshire	64
Fenland	35
Huntingdonshire	104
South Cambridgeshire	86
I don't live in Cambridgeshire	14
Prefer not to say	7
Total	344

Question 1: Would you support an increase in council tax of up to 4.99% – which amounts to an extra £7.07 per month for a Band D property – to maintain or improve essential services?

342 respondents answered this question.

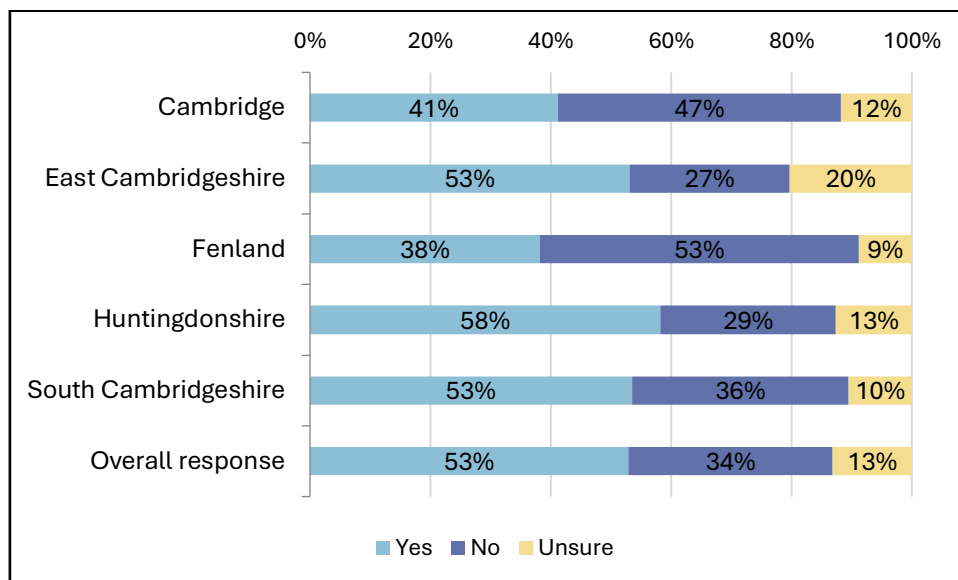
- Over half supported an increase in council tax of up to 4.99% (53%).
- Just over a third opposed (34%).

Figure 1: Support an increase in council tax



Differences in response to “Would you support an increase in council tax of up to 4.99% – which amounts to an extra £7.07 per month for a Band D property – to maintain or improve essential services?”

Figure 2: Differences in support for an increase in council tax



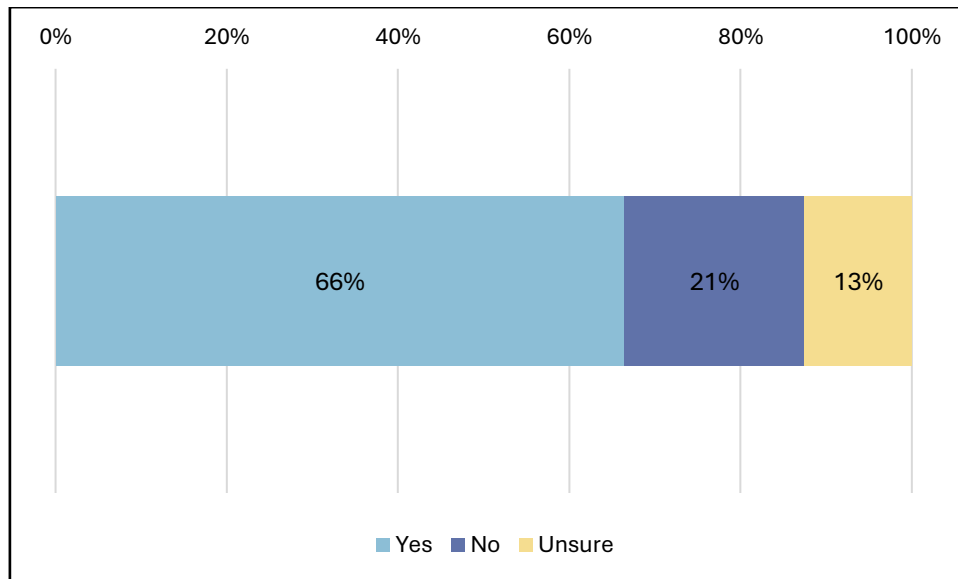
- Respondents from Huntingdonshire were more supportive than the overall response (58%).
- Respondents were less supportive than the overall response when they indicated they lived in Cambridge (41%) or Fenland (38%). Please note that these districts had low response rates (34 for both districts to this question).
 - Nearly half of respondents from Cambridge were opposed (47%).
 - Over half of respondents from Fenland were opposed (53%).

Question 2: Would you support an increase in our fees and charges to help balance our budget by keeping our spending power in line with inflation? An increase in line with inflation would be around 3.6%.

343 respondents answered this question.

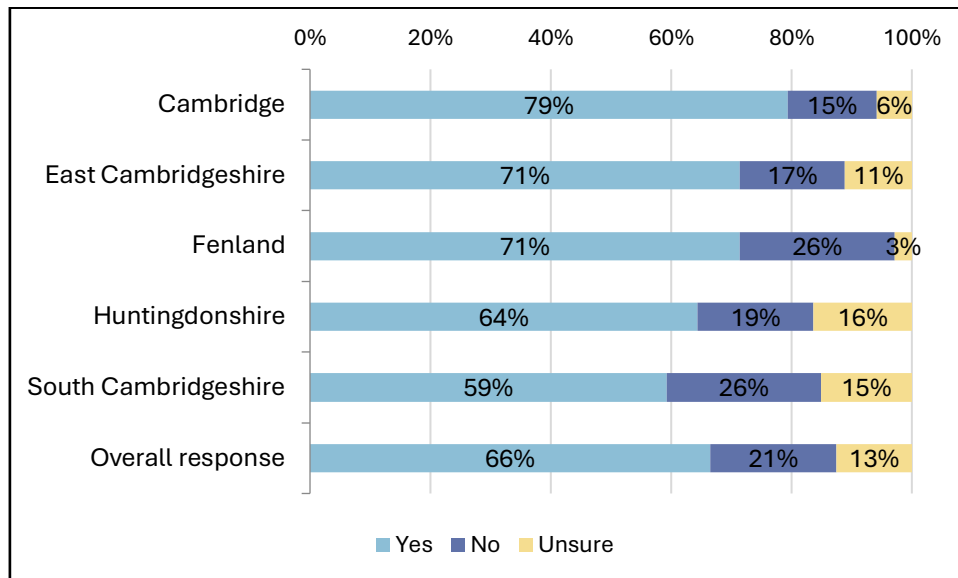
- The majority of respondents supported an increase in fees and charges of around 3.6% (66%).

Figure 3: Support an increase in fees and charges



Differences in response to “Would you support an increase in our fees and charges to help balance our budget by keeping our spending power in line with inflation? An increase in line with inflation would be around 3.6%.”

Figure 4: Differences in support for an increase in fees and charges



- The majority of respondents from each district supported an increase in fees and charges.
- Respondents were more supportive than the overall response when they indicated they were from Cambridge (79%), East Cambridgeshire (71%), or Fenland (71%).
 - Please note that Cambridge and Fenland had low response rates (34 and 35 responses respectively to this question).
- Respondents were less supportive than the overall response when they indicated they were from South Cambridgeshire (59%).

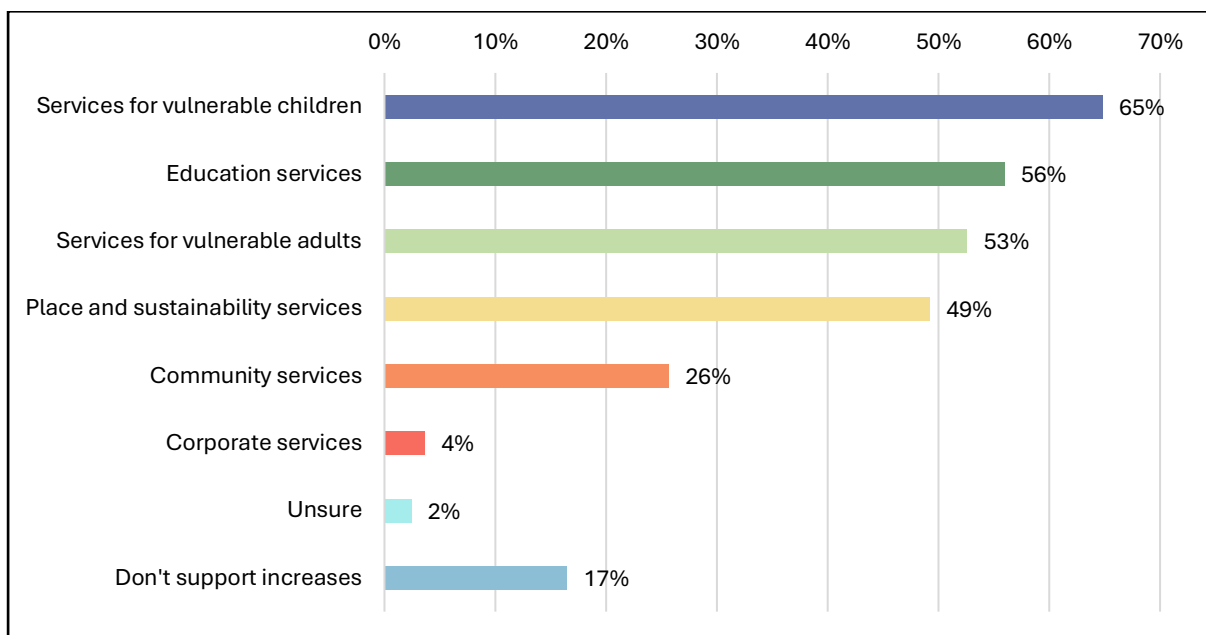
Question 3: If you support an increase in council tax and/or fees and charges, which of the following services do you think the increase(s) should go toward?

327 respondents answered this question. Respondents could select up to three answers.

From most selected to least selected service area:

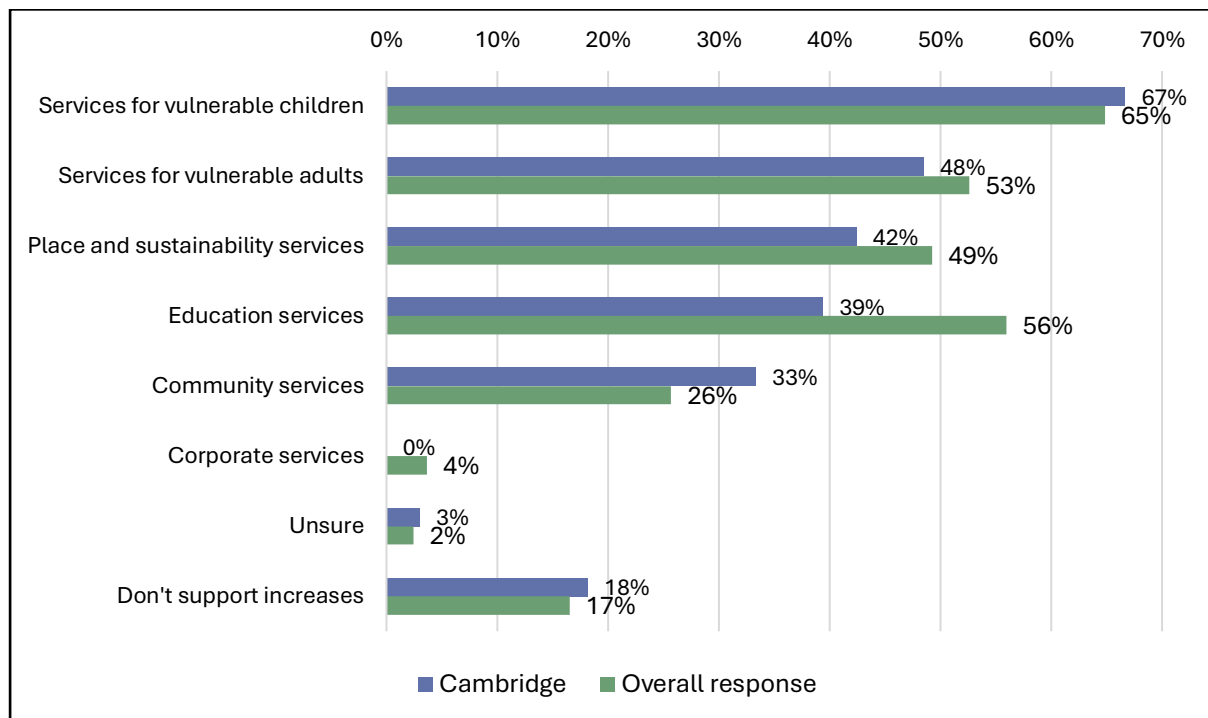
- Services for vulnerable children (65%),
- Education services (56%),
- Services for vulnerable adults (53%),
- Place and sustainability services (49%),
- Community services (26%),
- Corporate services (4%).

Figure 5: Services that the increase(s) should go towards



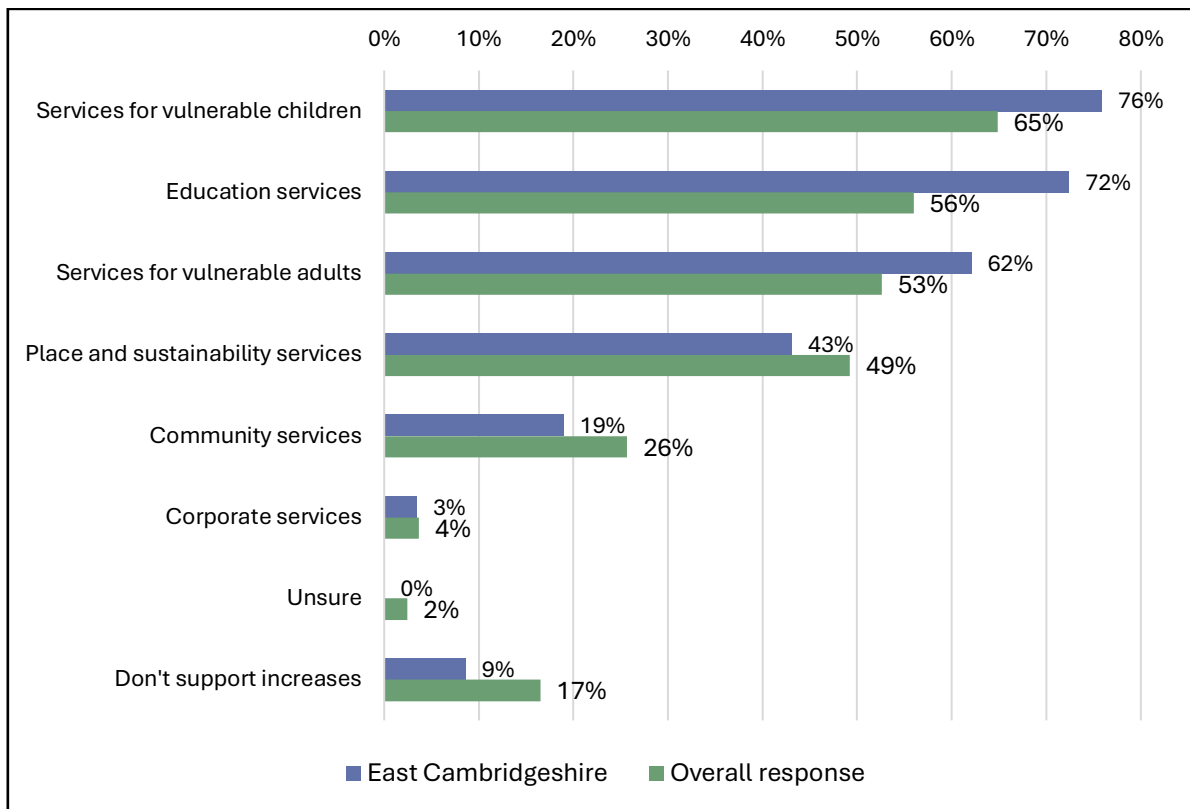
Differences in response to “If you support an increase in council tax and/or fees and charges, which of the following services do you think the increase(s) should go toward?”

Figure 6: Cambridge responses to services that the increase(s) should go towards



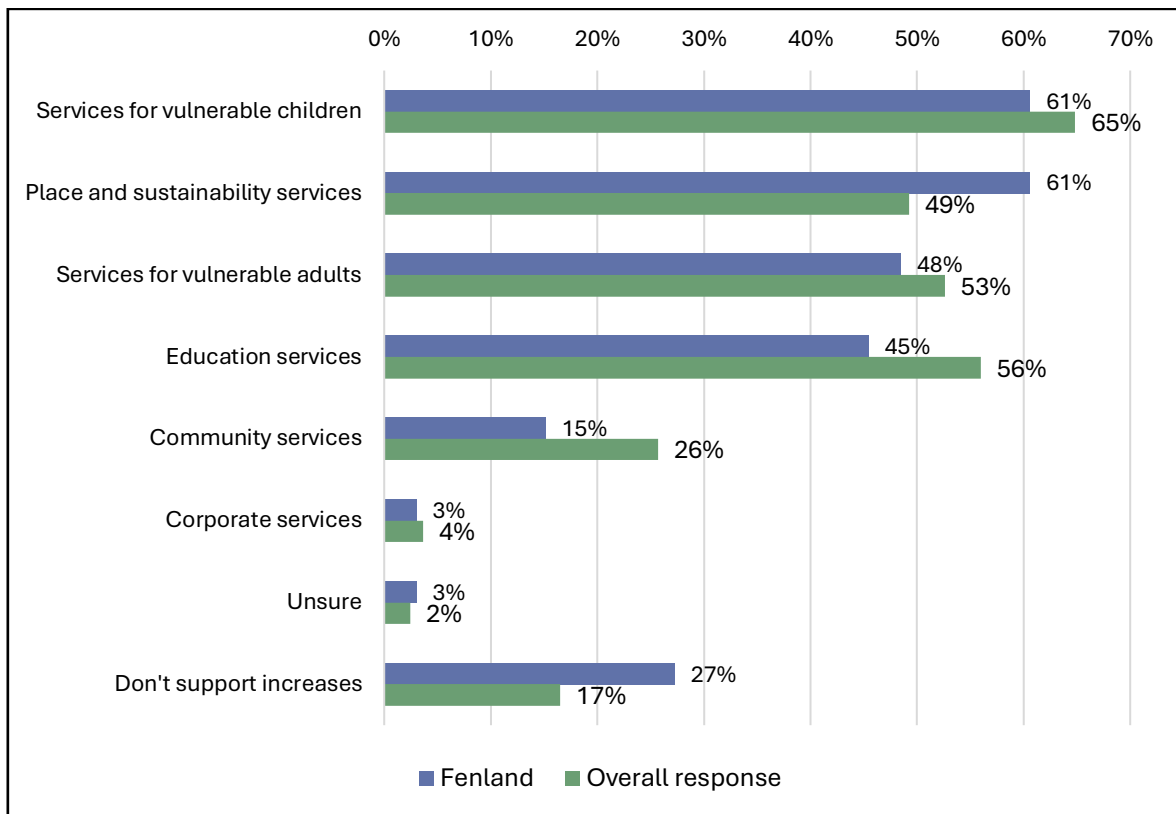
Cambridge respondents were less likely than the overall response to select “Education services” (39%), “Place and sustainability services” (42%), and “Corporate services” (no responses). These respondents were more likely to select “Community services” (33%). Please note that Cambridge had low response rates (33 responses to this question).

Figure 7: East Cambridgeshire responses to services that the increase(s) should go towards



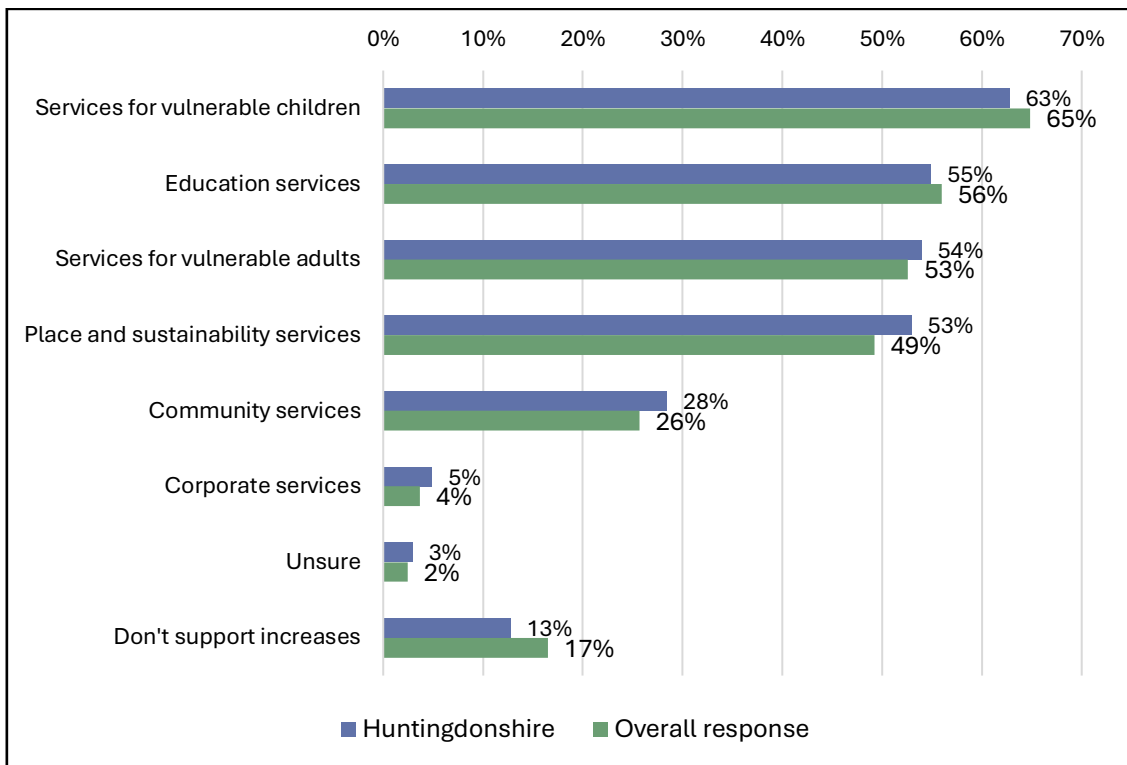
East Cambridgeshire respondents were less likely than the overall response to select “Community services” (19%) and “Place and sustainability services” (43%). These respondents were more likely to select “Education services” (72%), “Services for vulnerable children” (76%), and “Services for vulnerable adults” (62%).

Figure 8: Fenland responses to services that the increase(s) should go towards



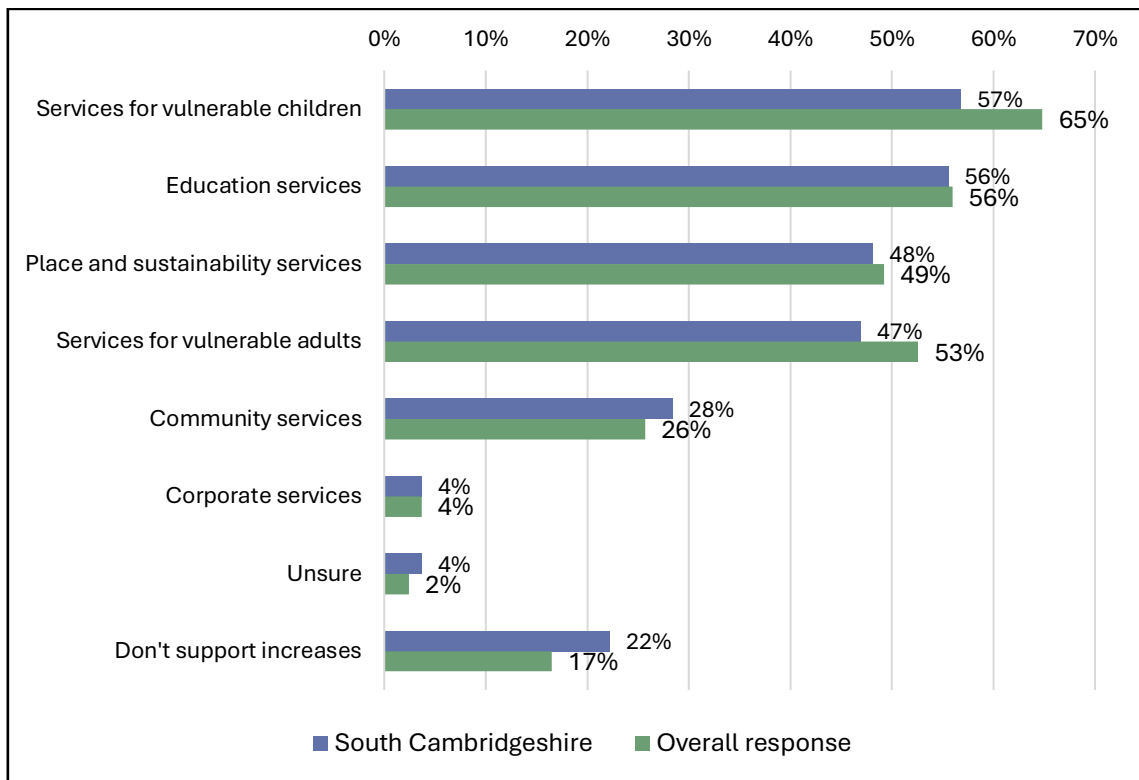
Fenland respondents were less likely than the overall response to select “Education services” (45%) and “Community services” (15%). These respondents were more likely to select “Place and sustainability services” (61%). Please note that Fenland had low response rates (33 responses to this question).

Figure 9: Huntingdonshire responses to services that the increase(s) should go towards



Huntingdonshire respondents were similar to the overall response.

Figure 10: South Cambridgeshire responses to services that the increase(s) should go towards



South Cambridgeshire respondents were less likely than the overall response to select “Services for vulnerable children” (57%) and “Services for vulnerable adults” (47%).

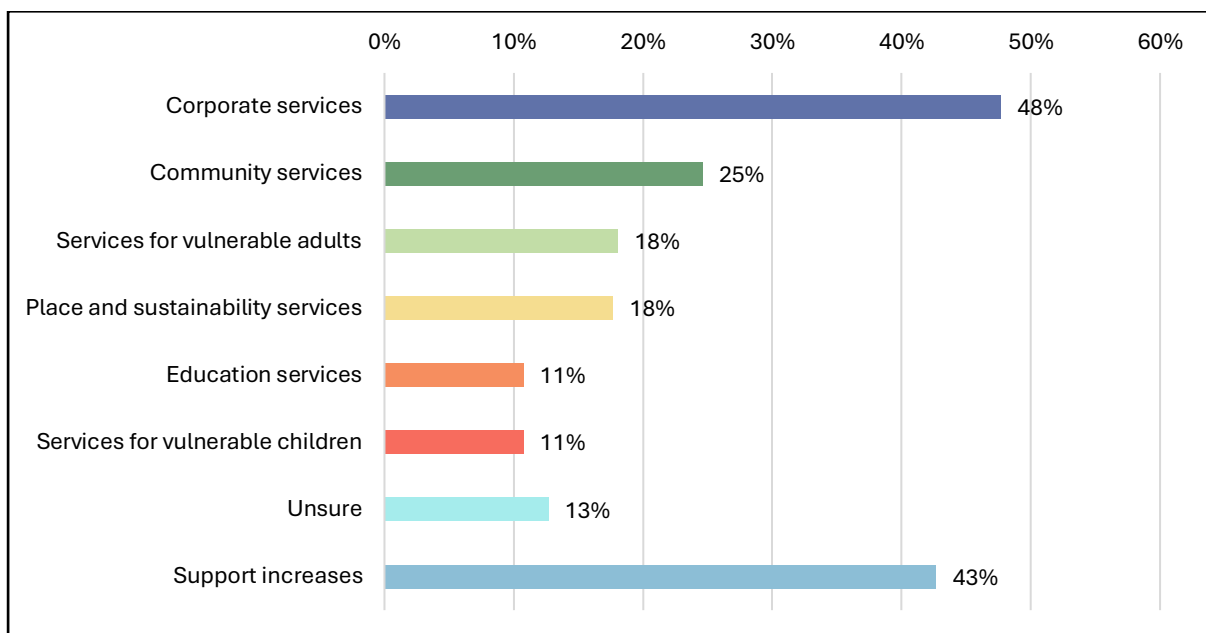
Question 4: If you do not support an increase in either council tax or fees and charges, which of the following services do you think should receive less funding to help balance the budget?

260 respondents answered this question. Respondents could select up to three answers.

From most selected to least selected service area:

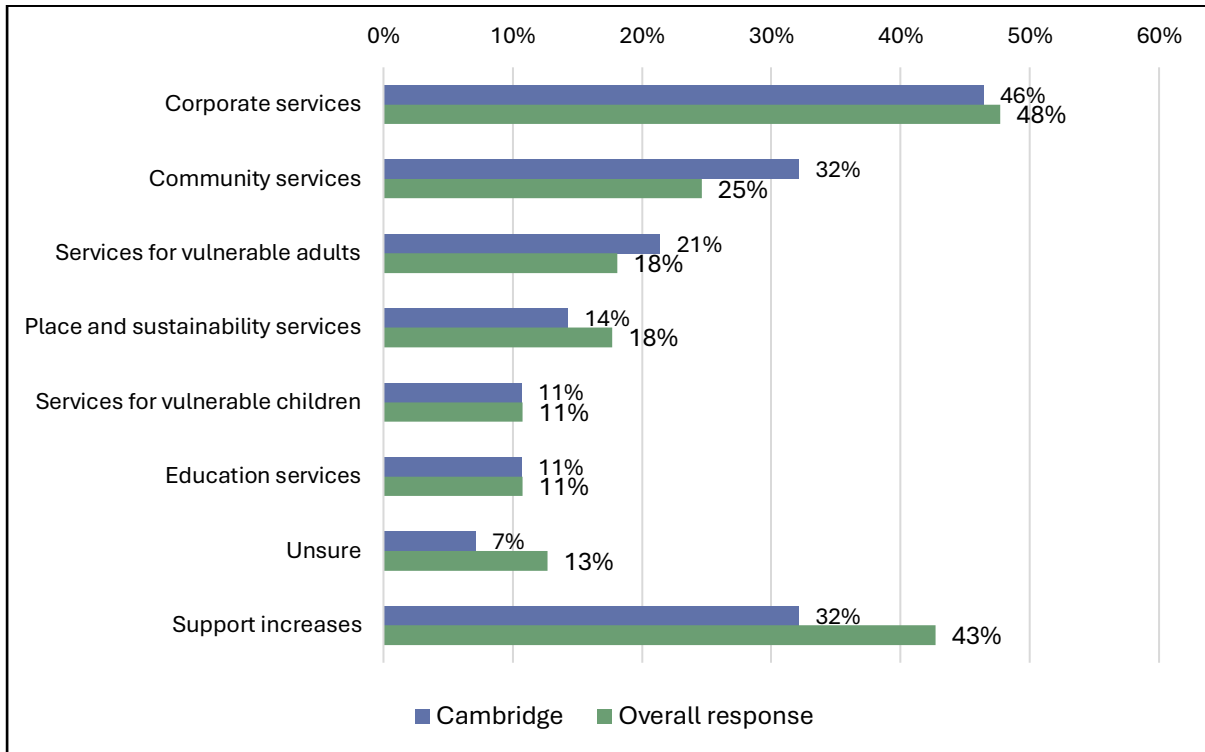
- Corporate services (48%),
- Community services (25%),
- Services for vulnerable adults (18%),
- Place and sustainability services (18%),
- Education services (11%),
- Services for vulnerable children (11%).

Figure 11: Services that should receive less funding



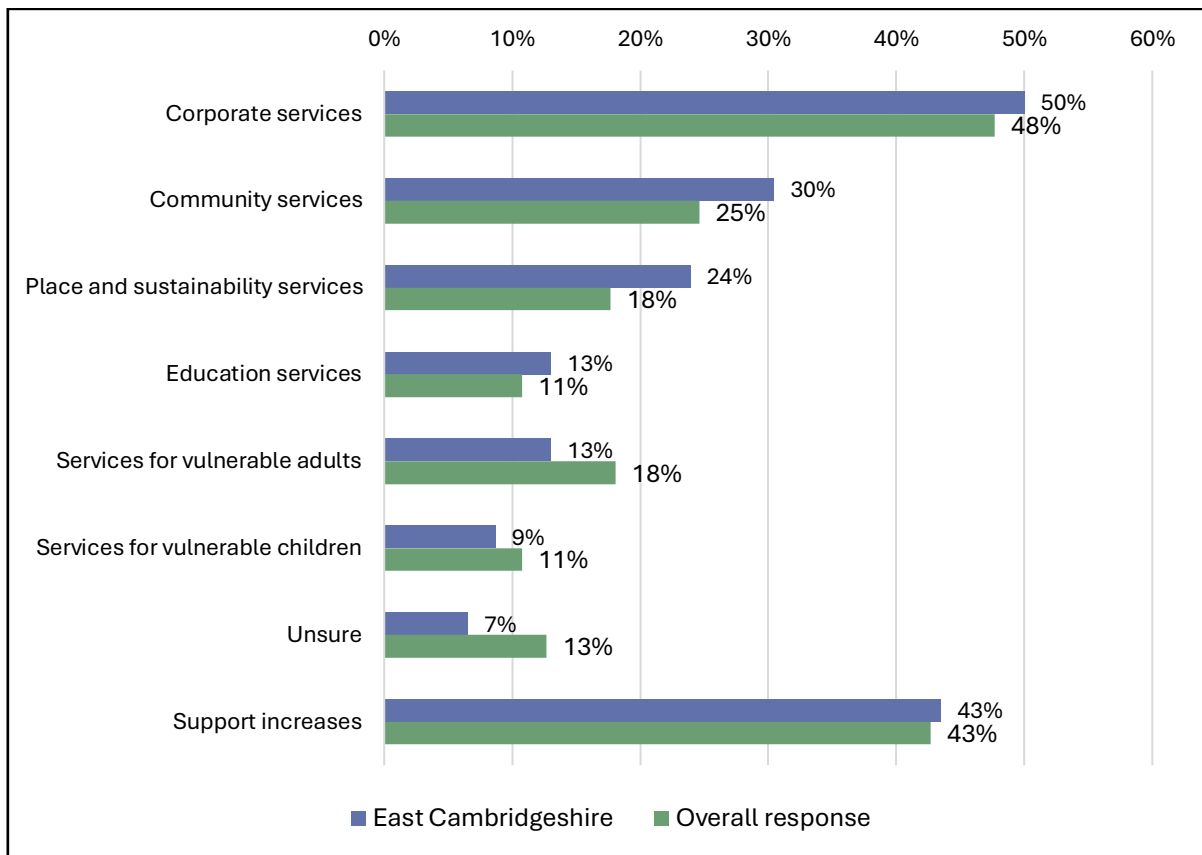
Differences in response to “If you do not support an increase in either council tax or fees and charges, which of the following services do you think should receive less funding to help balance the budget?”

Figure 12: Cambridge responses to services that should receive less funding



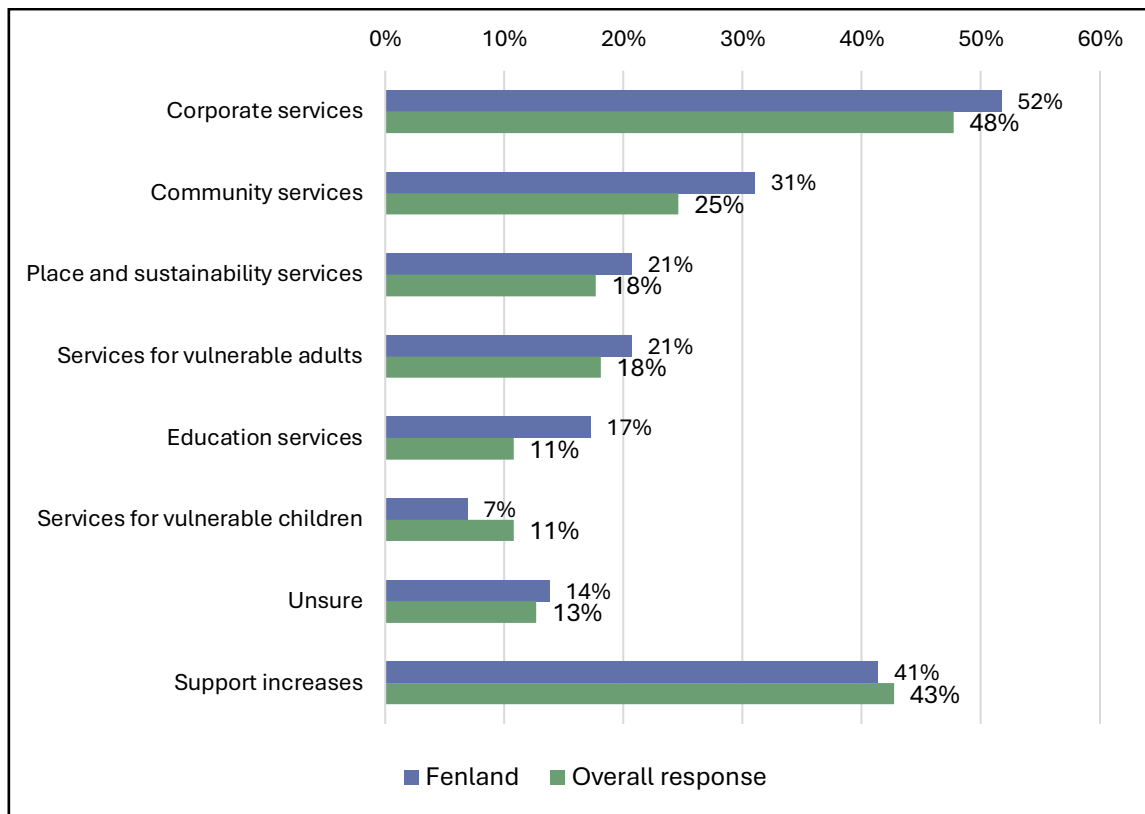
Cambridge respondents were more likely than the overall response to select “Community services” (32%). Please note that Cambridge had low response rates (28 responses to this question).

Figure 13: East Cambridgeshire responses to services that should receive less funding



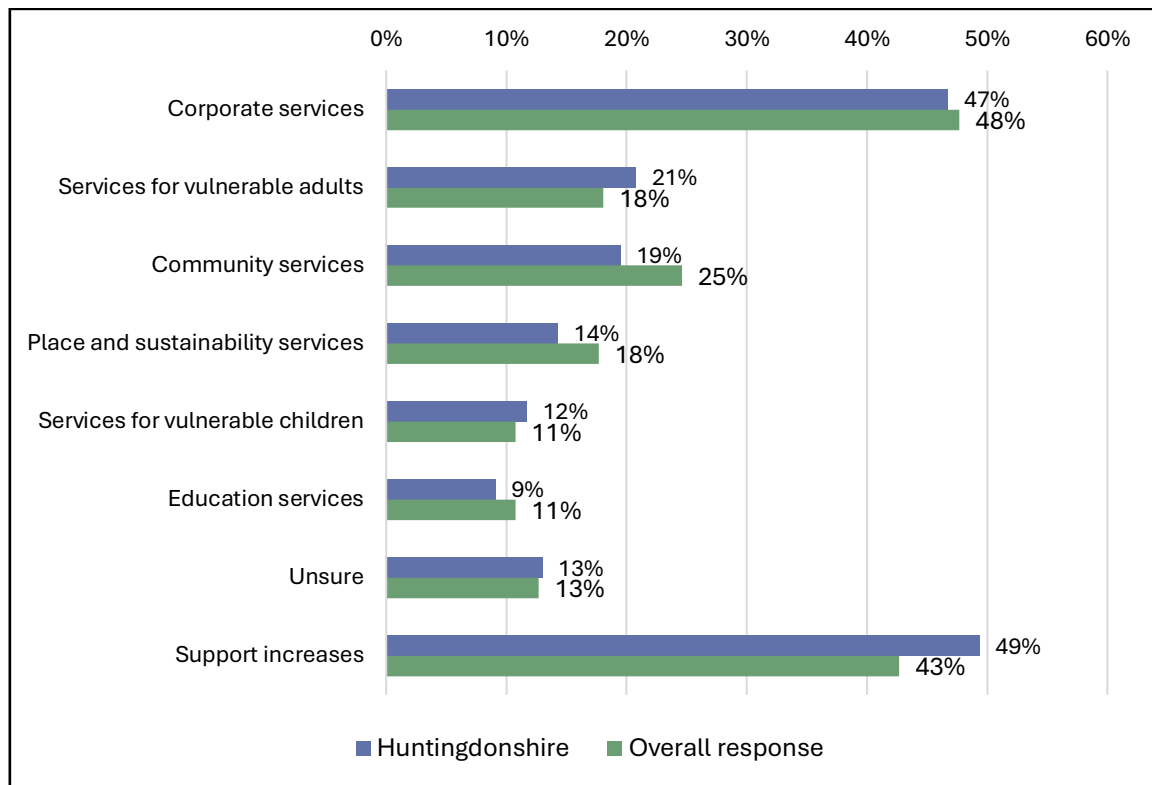
East Cambridgeshire respondents were more likely than the overall response to select “Community services” (30%) and “Place and sustainability services” (24%). These respondents were less likely to select “Services for vulnerable adults” (13%). Please note that East Cambridgeshire had low response rates to this question (46 responses).

Figure 14: Fenland responses to services that should receive less funding



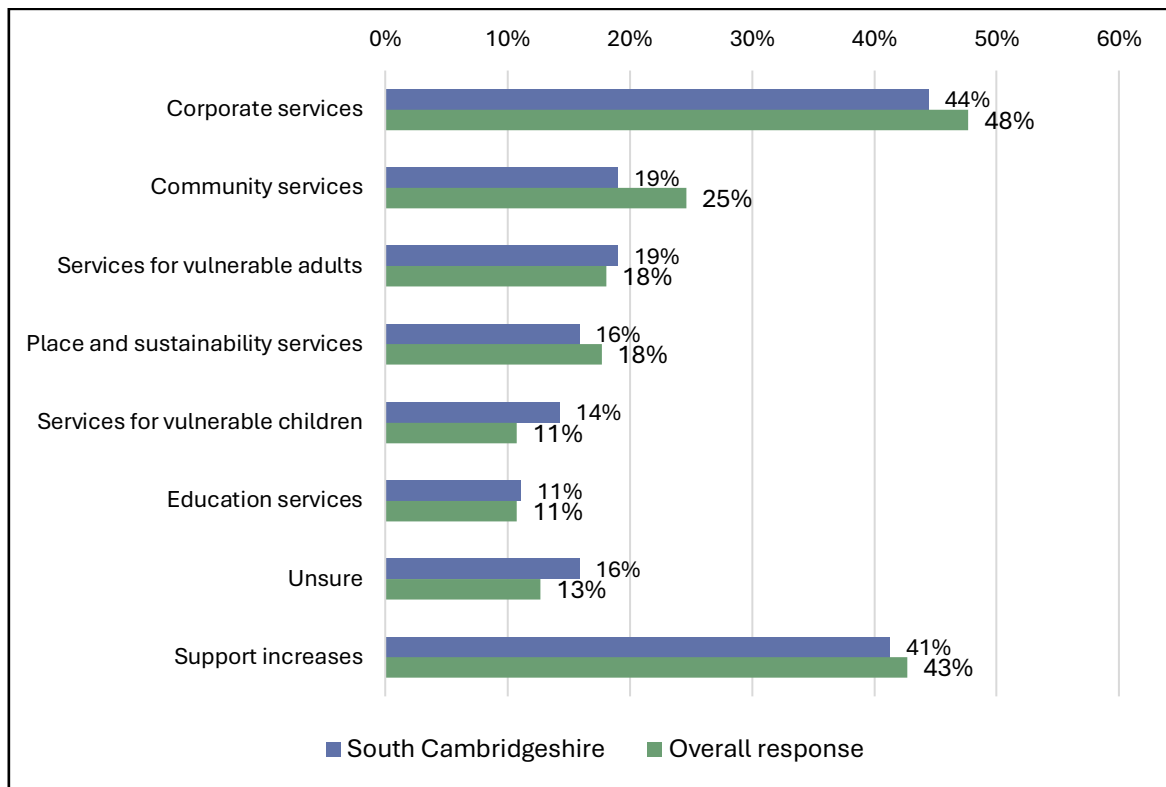
Fenland respondents were more likely than the overall response to select “Community services” (31%) and “Education services” (17%). Please note that Fenland had low response rates (29 responses to this question).

Figure 15: Huntingdonshire responses to services that should receive less funding



Huntingdonshire respondents were less likely than the overall response to select "Community services" (19%).

Figure 16: South Cambridgeshire responses to services that should receive less funding



South Cambridgeshire respondents were less likely than the overall response to select “Community services” (19%).

If you have any further comments on how we should prioritise and plan our services for the future, please leave your comments here. For example, are there any council services that you think should receive a greater or lesser amount of funding from our budget (regardless of changes to council tax or fees and charges)? We ask you not to identify yourself or anyone else within your answer.

137 respondents left comments on this question. The main themes were:

- Education
 - Some of the respondents who discussed this theme indicated that they felt funding for education services, particularly SEND support, was a priority. These respondents felt this was important to protect vulnerable children, prevent future social care needs, ensure those requiring SEND support would receive it in a timely manner, and that schools would get better maintenance.
 - Some of these respondents made specific mention of the need for outdoor education spaces such as Burwell House and Grafham Water.
 - Some of the respondents who discussed this theme felt there was scope for cost savings within education services. In particular reducing or charging for school transport provision (with a few suggestions of replacing with a bus or volunteer service rather than private taxis), but also in reducing SEND spending (with a few suggestions of tightening the criteria for EHCPs) and a reduction in grants to schools.
 - A few of these respondents queried how funding worked for schools with central government funding and how academies were being funded.
- Place and sustainability
 - Most of the respondents who discussed this theme felt that funding for highways and transport was a high priority, with most of these respondents feeling that more funding should be allocated to road and path maintenance. These respondents felt that improving transport connectivity and quality would be beneficial to the economy for Cambridgeshire, improve green initiatives, and ensure residents could access services, work, and education.
 - Some of the respondents who discussed road maintenance felt that long-term savings could be made by improving the quality of the materials and repairs.
 - Some of the respondents who discussed this theme felt that less should be spent on cycleways and pedestrianisation (as these were felt to be used too little to justify the costs), traffic calming measures (as they were either unwanted or increased wear on the roads and vehicles using them), and the guided busway.
 - A few of the respondents who discussed this theme felt that the cost of contractors needed to be reviewed, as they were felt to be too

expensive. There were some suggestions of prioritising local providers over national or multi-national companies, who it was felt would be more cost effective and would benefit the local economy.

- Social care
 - Most of the respondents who discussed this theme felt that social care, particularly for children, was a high priority. Some of these respondents felt that savings could be realised without reducing funding by: looking at preventative measures to reduce the need for social care (including increasing funding to community services and public health), making more use of technology, using more “in-house” services, and reducing the use of contractors.
 - Some of the respondents who discussed this theme felt that social care, particularly adult social care, was too costly. These respondents felt that the definitions of “vulnerable” needed tightening as social care services were going to those who may not need them.
- Community services
 - Respondents who discussed this theme felt that funding for community services, particularly libraries, was a high priority. These respondents felt these services worked as preventative measures to reduce the strain on social services and, that libraries in particular, gave communities inclusive spaces that ensured access to learning and resources. Most of these respondents felt that library services were particularly underfunded.
- Duplication and waste
 - Respondents who discussed this theme felt there was too much waste or duplication in services and felt there were saving opportunities by looking into ways of doing things more efficiently or collaboratively. Some of these respondents felt the council should reduce services down to statutory minimums until the funding gap was resolved.
- Green initiatives
 - Some of the respondents who discussed this theme felt that more should be done to protect the environment. Some of these respondents discussed the need for improved active travel and public transport, as this would help the environment and improve connectivity in the county. Some of these respondents felt there was scope for making longer-term savings alongside helping the environment, by installing more solar panels or wind turbines. These respondents pointed towards initiatives by Peterborough City Council and suggested getting local businesses involved in funding in exchange for benefits.
 - Some of the respondents who discussed this theme felt that less should be spent on green initiatives, as they felt it was a waste or that there was no climate crisis.
- Year-round budget management
 - Respondents who discussed this theme felt more consistent oversight was needed over budgets across the years. These respondents felt that better monitors needed to be in place to measure the impact of

projects, value for money, and productivity. These respondents felt there needed to be a better understanding of where and when overspends were occurring so interventions could be put in place early enough to make a change.