



Analysis of Public Consultation

2025-26



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Introduction

Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) has a vision of creating a greener, fairer, and more caring Cambridgeshire. To achieve this vision, the council aims to work with residents and partner organisations to make services responsive to the diversity of people and places in Cambridgeshire. Doing this effectively requires the council to be an evidence-led, listening organisation that is responsive to resident priorities. Like most councils across the country, the financial outlook for Cambridgeshire County Council is increasingly challenging, with pressures on budgets having increased significantly in recent years. Through business planning the council sets out how it will respond to the challenges and set a legal budget.

Between 09 December 2024 and 09 January 2025, the second phase of the council's engagement and consultation work on business planning was undertaken. This second phase was a consultation survey seeking residents' and stakeholders' views on the spending and savings proposals in the County Council's draft Business Plan for 2025-26 to 2029-30. Residents and stakeholders were invited to share their views on the council's proposed priority areas for spending and residents were also asked to share their views on proposed increases to council tax.

149 responses were received across the online and paper surveys. Eight respondents indicated they do not live in Cambridgeshire and their responses have been excluded from the following question summaries, apart from the question on location and the open comment questions, however any key differences from this group are noted within the commentary.

Note: percentages presented in the Charts are rounded, and so may not necessarily sum to 100%.

Executive summary

The key findings of this consultation survey are:

- The majority of respondents supported the County Council's approach to:
 - climate change,
 - improvements to highways,
 - prevention, early intervention, and working 'Closer to Communities' in the way services are designed and delivered,
 - adult social care services,
 - supporting those struggling most with the cost of living,
 - developing a Local Growth Plan for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough region and an Economic Development Framework for the county council, and
 - children's social services.

- The majority of respondents (57%) preferred the proposed option of increasing Council Tax by 4.99%.

- From the detailed comments received the main themes were:
 - The high priority of funding highways and road maintenance, particularly regarding road and pothole repair.
 - The high priority of funding children's services.
 - Concerns about internal waste with regards to spending.
 - Concerns about the impact of the proposed Council Tax increase on those struggling with the cost of living crisis.
 - The need for the council to work more closely with the community.

Demographics

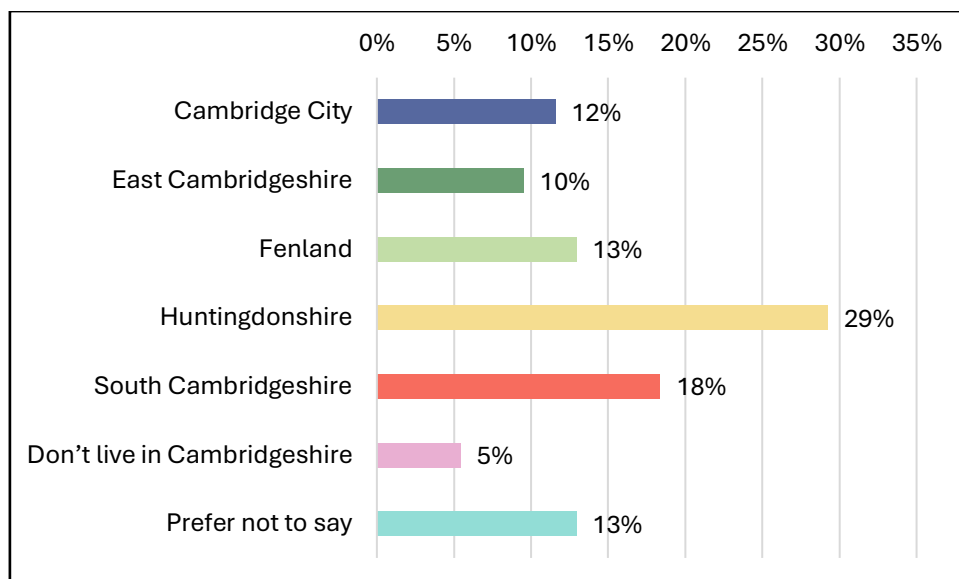
Of the 149 respondents who answered the survey, 2 indicated they were responding “on behalf of a group or business, or as an elected representative”. Due to the small number of responses and potential to identify individual stakeholder responses, details of their responses have not been included in this report.

Location

135 respondents answered the question on which district of Cambridgeshire they lived in. 12 respondents skipped this question, for the purposes of this summary they have been included in the ‘prefer not to say’ category:

- ‘Huntingdonshire’ had the highest number of respondents (29%) while ‘East Cambridgeshire’ had the lowest number of respondents (10%).

Figure 1: Location



*Number of responses: 147

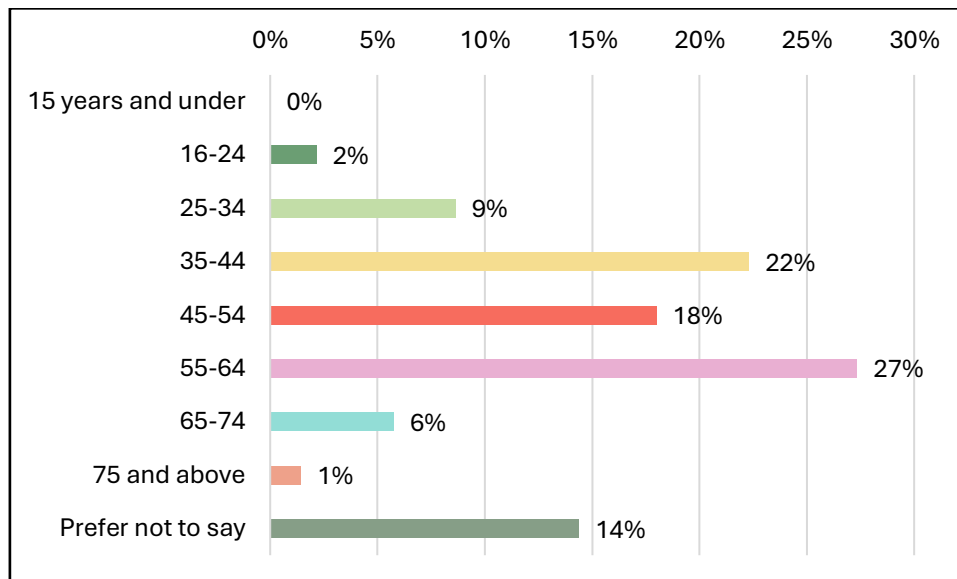
The 8 respondents who indicated they didn't live in Cambridgeshire have been excluded from the following summaries, however any key differences are noted alongside.

Age

126 respondents answered the question on which age group they belonged to. 13 respondents skipped this question, for the purposes of this summary they have been included in the 'prefer not to say' category:

- Age group '55-64' had the highest number of respondents (27%) while age group '75 and above' had the lowest number of respondents (1%), with no respondents indicating they were aged '15 years and under'.

Figure 2: Age group



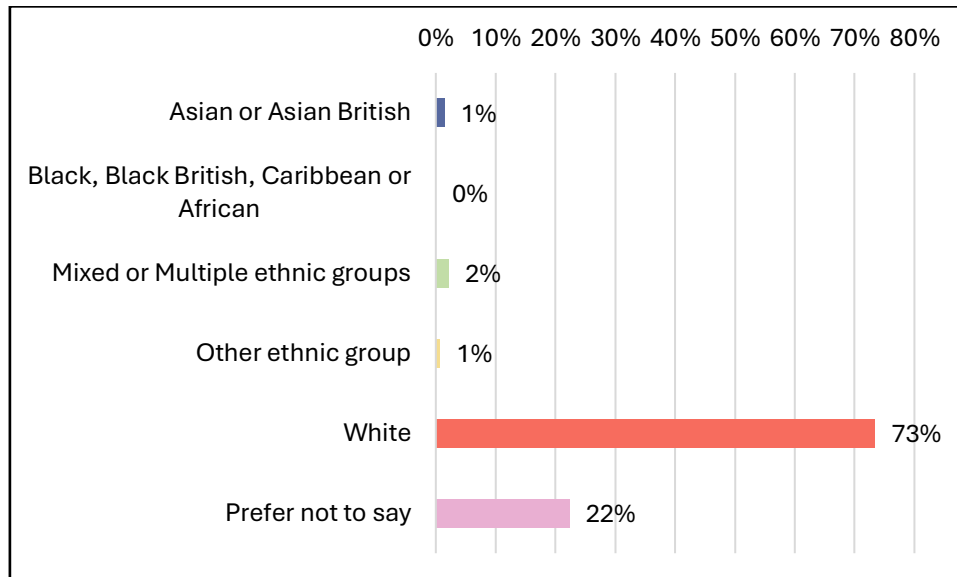
*Number of responses: 139

Ethnicity

124 respondents answered the question on which ethnic group they belonged to. 15 respondents skipped this question, for the purposes of this summary they have been included in the 'prefer not to say' category:

- The majority of respondents (73%) were in the 'white' ethnic group, with 4% belonging to other ethnicities. However, no respondents indicated they were 'Black, Black British, Caribbean or African'.

Figure 3: Ethnic group



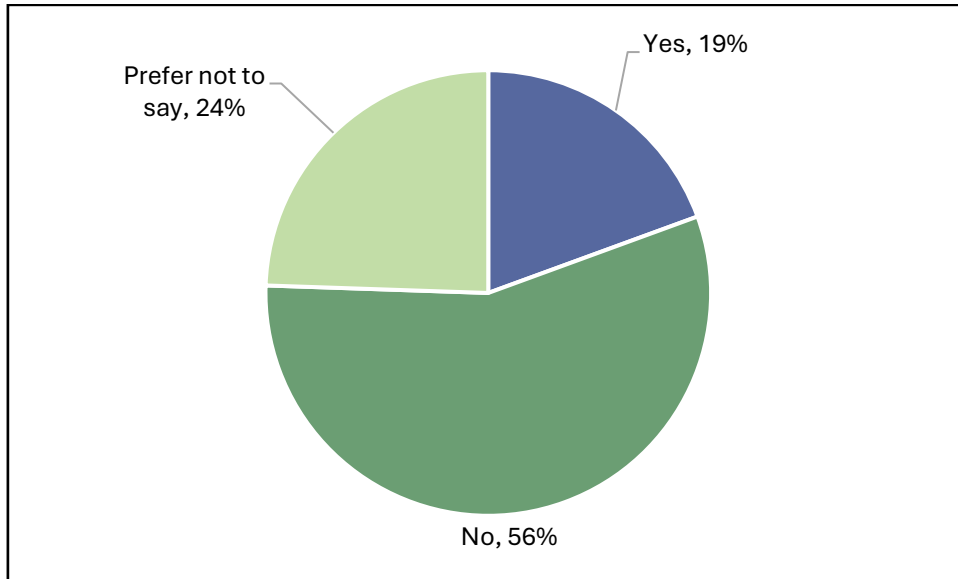
*Number of responses: 139

Disability or long-term health condition

118 respondents answered the question on whether they considered themselves to be a disabled person and/or have a long-term health condition. 21 respondents skipped this question, for the purposes of this summary they have been included in the 'prefer not to say' category:

- Just under a fifth of respondents (19%) indicated that, 'yes', they do consider themselves a disabled person and/or have a long-term health condition.

Figure 4: Disabled person and/or have long-term health condition



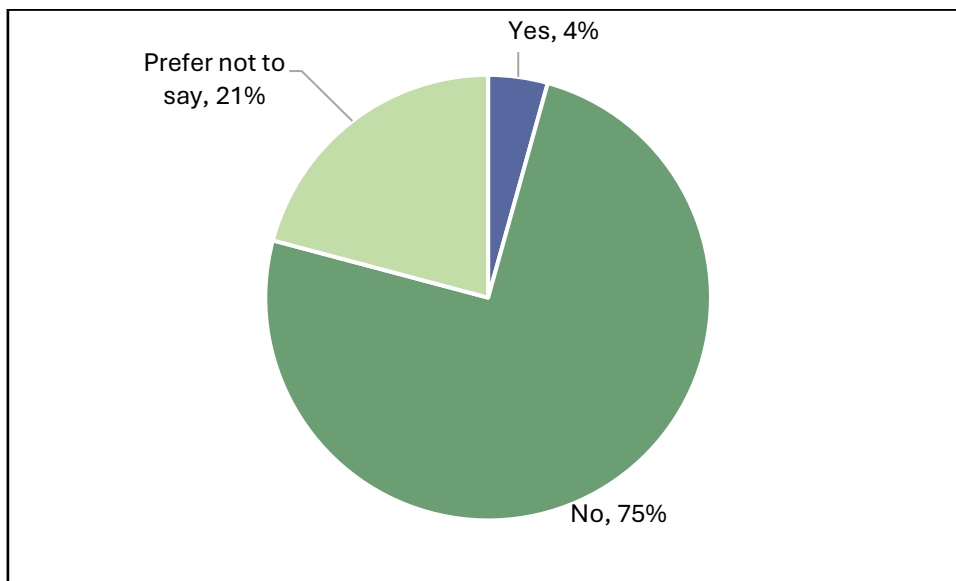
*Number of responses: 139

Care experienced

123 respondents answered the question on whether they considered themselves to be care experienced. 16 respondents skipped this question, for the purposes of this summary they have been included in the 'prefer not to say' category:

- 4% of respondents indicated that, 'yes', they do consider themselves care experienced.

Figure 5: Care experienced



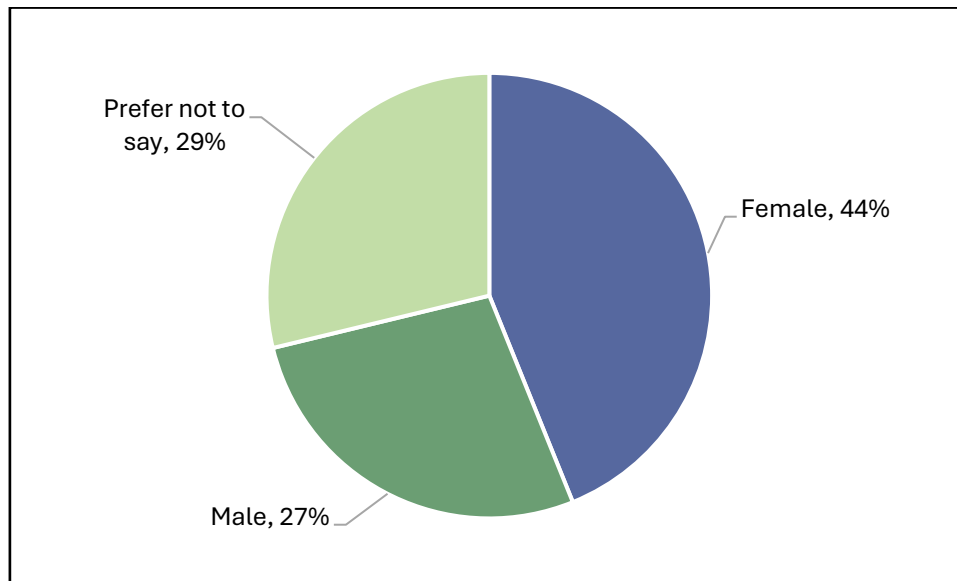
*Number of responses: 139

Sex

115 respondents answered the question on what sex they were. 24 respondents skipped this question, for the purposes of this summary they have been included in the 'prefer not to say' category:

- Over two-fifths of respondents (44%) indicated they were 'female' while over a quarter (27%) indicated they were 'male'.

Figure 6: Sex



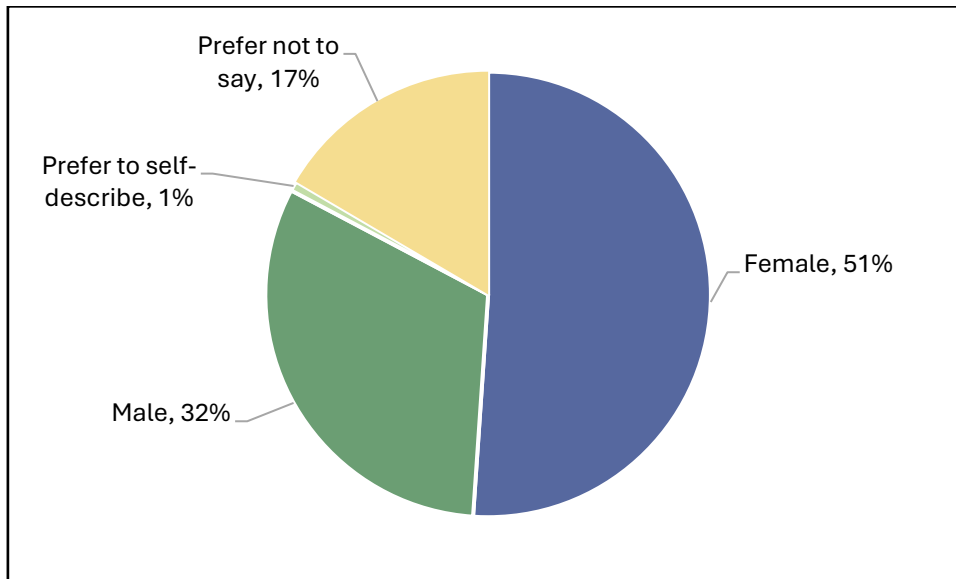
*Number of responses: 139

Gender

136 respondents answered the question on what gender they were. 3 respondents skipped this question, for the purposes of this summary they have been included in the 'prefer not to say' category:

- Just over half of respondents (51%) indicated they were 'female' while nearly a third (33%) indicated they were 'male'. 1 respondent indicated they would 'prefer to self-describe'.

Figure 7: Gender



*Number of responses: 139

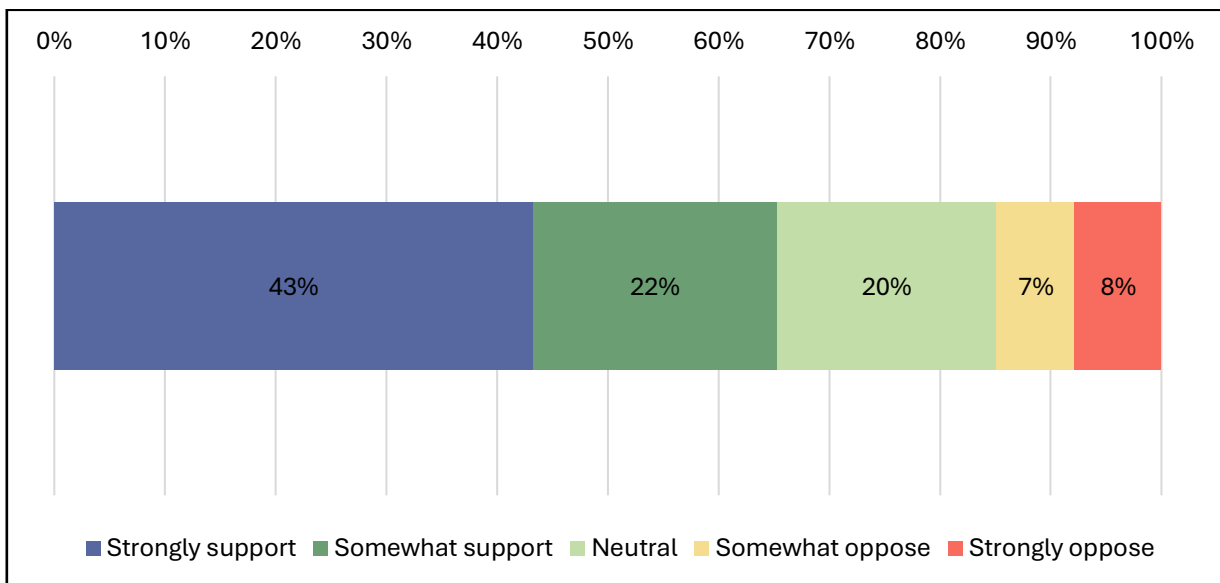
Response to the consultation

Question 1: “As we continue the journey to Net Zero for Cambridgeshire by 2045, we will respond to climate change through decarbonisation, enhancing the natural environment and improving water management. This will include building on our recent experience with several major income-generating energy projects, such as the Swaffham Prior Heat Network, to bring green energy ‘Closer to Communities’ by implementing further projects with local groups. To what extent do you support or oppose this approach?”

141 respondents answered the question on to what extent they supported or opposed the outlined approach to climate change.

- The majority of respondents (65%) supported (either answering ‘strongly support’ or ‘somewhat support’) the outlined approach to climate change.

Figure 8: Support for approach to climate change



*Number of responses: 141

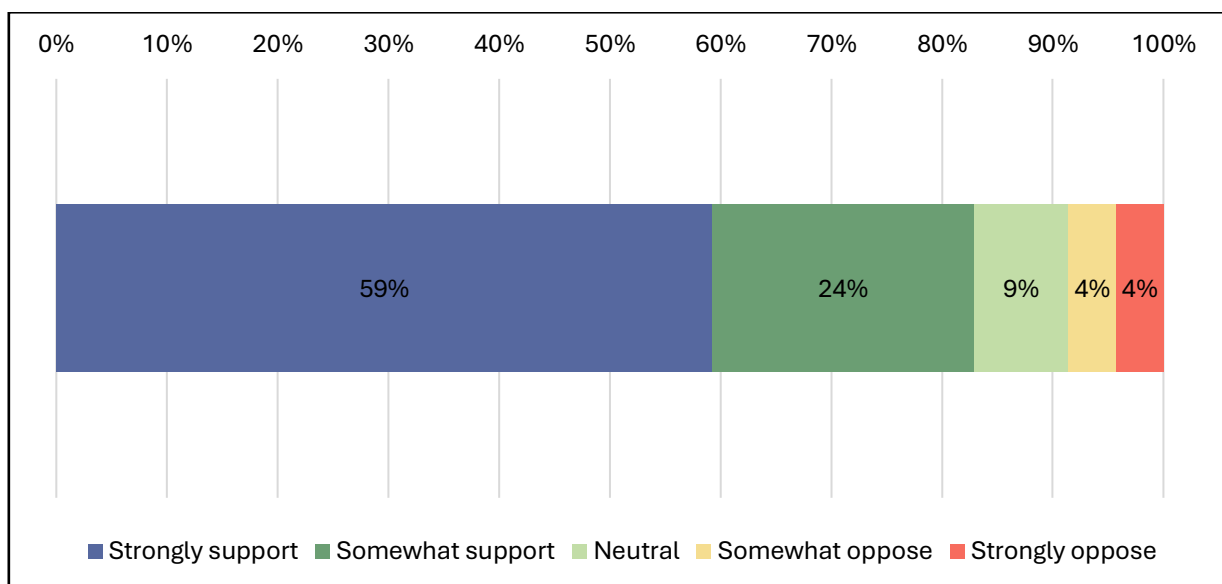
**N.B. Figures in the graph may not exactly match the text in the report due to rounding*

Question 2: “To further address these concerns, an additional £21 million has been allocated to support improvements in highways, targeting roads, pavements, drainage systems, public rights of way and cycleways in poor repair. Supporting this investment is a new focus on digital technology and artificial intelligence to improve customer service. To what extent do you support or oppose this approach?”

140 respondents answered the question on to what extent they supported the approach to improvements to highways.

- The majority of respondents (83%) supported (either answering ‘strongly support’ or ‘somewhat support’) the outlined approach to improvements to highways.

Figure 9: Support for approach to improvements to highways



*Number of responses: 140

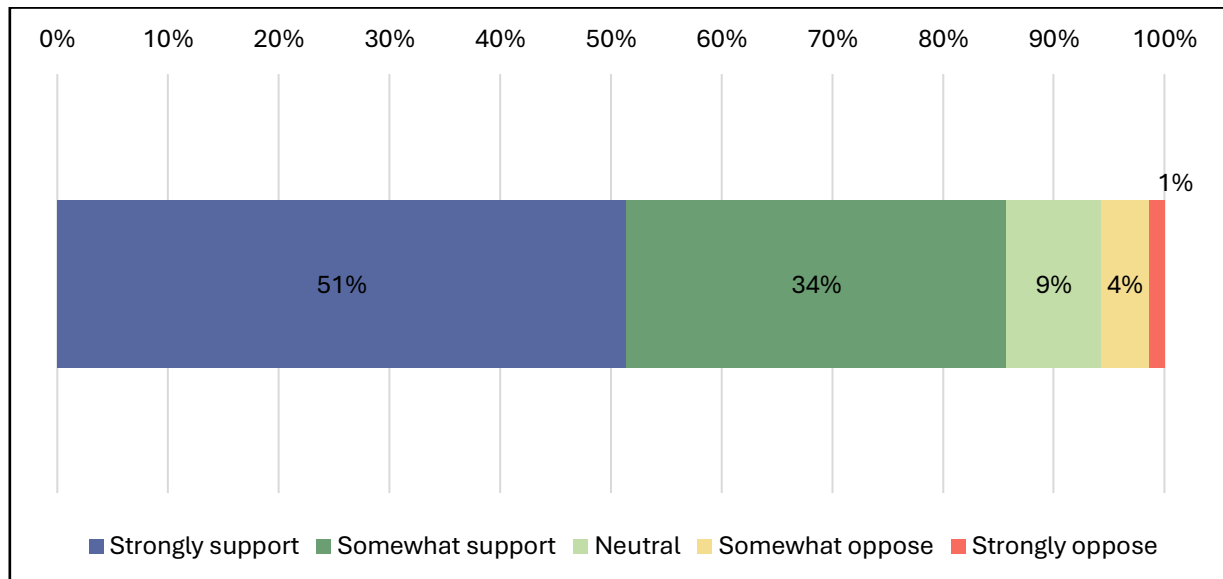
**N.B. Figures in the graph may not exactly match the text in the report due to rounding*

Question 3: “Going forward, we will put greater emphasis on prevention, early intervention, and working ‘Closer to Communities’ in the way services are designed and delivered. We will commission services to improve physical health – such as support to quit smoking, health checks for older adults and sexual health services – as well as health and wellbeing services in partnership with local NHS organisations. To what extent do you support or oppose this approach?”

140 respondents answered the question on to what extent they supported or opposed the approach to prevention, early intervention, and working ‘Closer to Communities’ in the way services are designed and delivered.

- The majority of respondents (86%) supported (either answering ‘strongly support’ or ‘somewhat support’) the outlined approach to prevention, early intervention, and working ‘Closer to Communities’ in the way services are designed and delivered.

Figure 10: Support for approach to prevention, early intervention, and working ‘Closer to Communities’ in the way services are designed and delivered



*Number of responses: 140

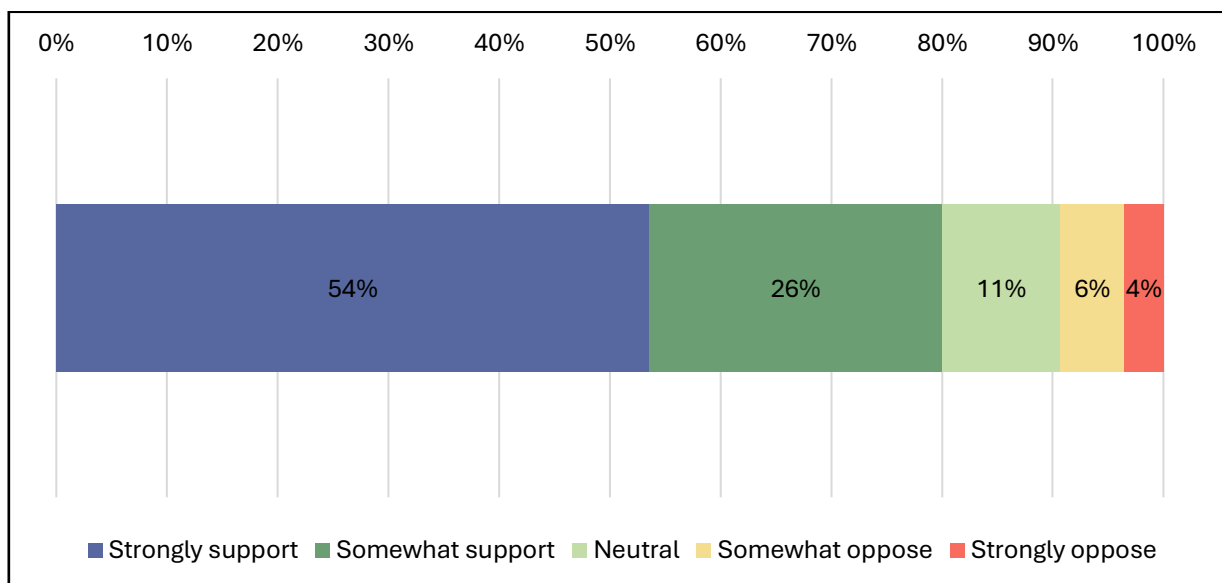
**N.B. Figures in the graph may not exactly match the text in the report due to rounding*

Question 4: “To help with these and related issues, our adult social care services plan to improve the self-service offer with more dynamic information, advice and guidance that gives people the knowledge they need to plan for their future. We also intend to boost our strengths-based and ‘Home First’ approaches that ensure people are supported with short-term interventions in their own home to recover and maintain independence and keep the delivery of care based in their local area as much as possible. To what extent do you support or oppose this approach?”

140 respondents answered the question on to what extent they supported or opposed the approach to adult social care services.

- The majority of respondents (80%) supported (either answering ‘strongly support’ or ‘somewhat support’) the outlined approach to adult social services.

Figure 11: Support for approach to adult social care services



*Number of responses: 140

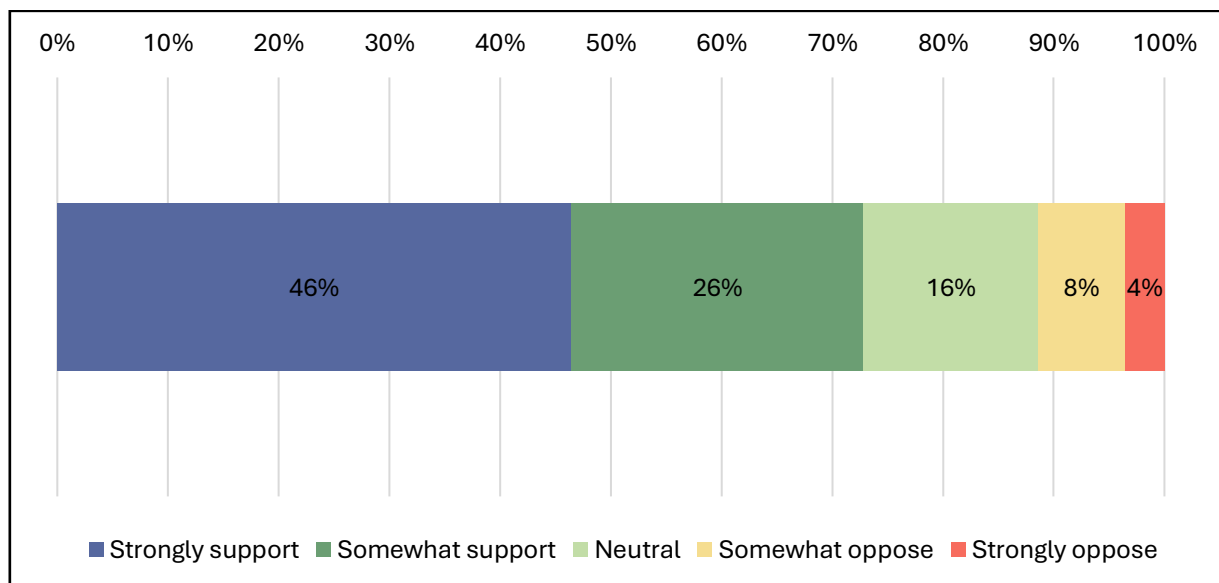
**N.B. Figures in the graph may not exactly match the text in the report due to rounding*

Question 5: “Taking a targeted approach to support those struggling most with the cost of living, we plan to use the extension of the Household Support Fund from Government to deliver an income maximisation service that helps people manage their personal budgets and invest £2.2 million of our budget to support the evidence based recommendations of the Cambridgeshire Poverty Strategy Commission. To what extent do you support or oppose this approach?”

140 respondents answered the question on to what extent they supported or opposed the approach to supporting those struggling most with the cost of living.

- The majority of respondents (73%) supported (either answering ‘strongly support’ or ‘somewhat support’) the outlined approach to supporting those struggling most with the cost of living.

Figure 12: Support for approach to supporting those struggling most with the cost of living



*Number of responses: 140

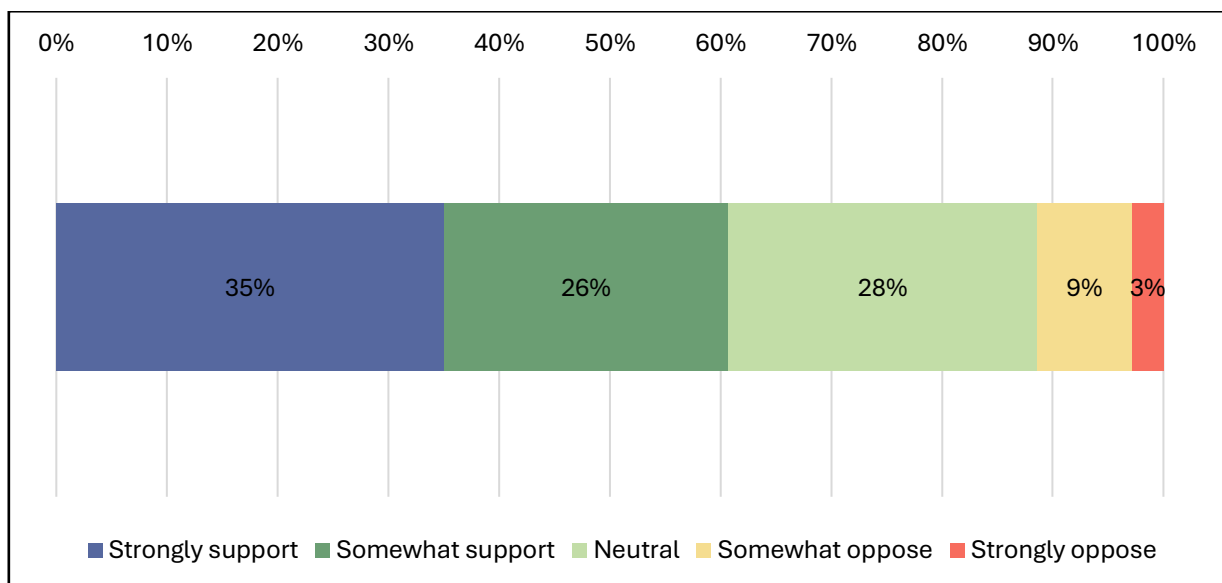
**N.B. Figures in the graph may not exactly match the text in the report due to rounding*

Question 6: “As part of our commitment to the ‘Shared Ambition’ we plan to work with partners to develop a Local Growth Plan for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Region and an Economic Development Framework for the county council. To what extent do you support or oppose this approach?”

140 respondents answered the question on to what extent they supported or opposed the approach to developing a Local Growth Plan for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough region and an Economic Development Framework for the county council.

- The majority of respondents (61%) supported (either answering ‘strongly support’ or ‘somewhat support’) the outlined approach to developing a Local Growth Plan for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough region and an Economic Development Framework for the county council.

Figure 13: Support for approach to developing a Local Growth Plan for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough region and an Economic Development Framework for the county council



*Number of responses: 140

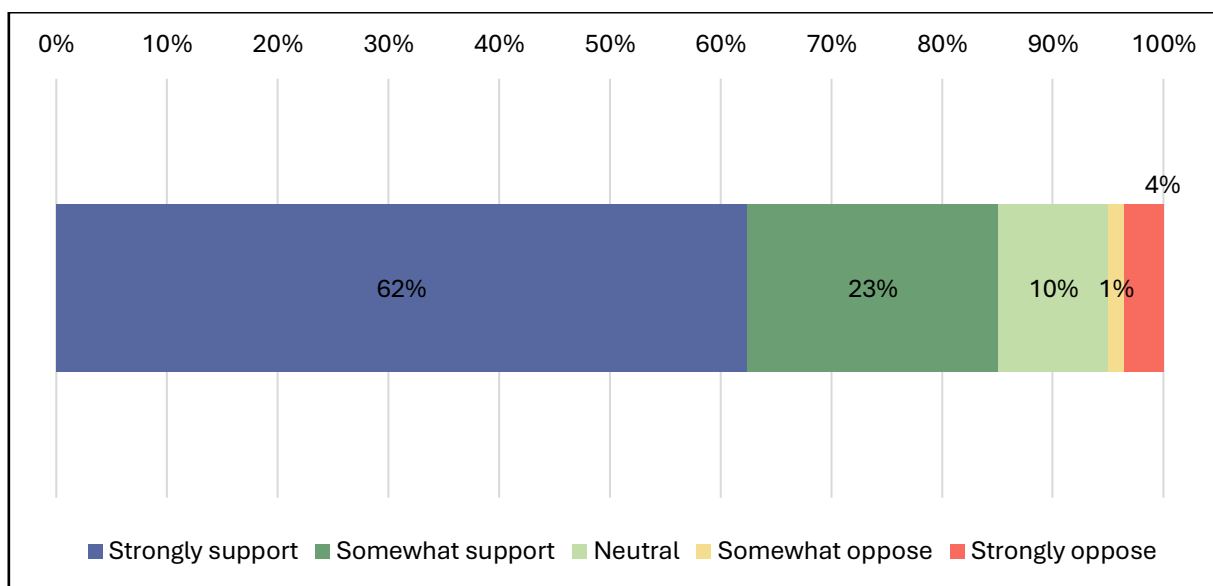
**N.B. Figures in the graph may not exactly match the text in the report due to rounding*

Question 7: “In response to issues and concerns like these, our children’s services will prioritise early intervention with children and families, supporting them to make positive changes earlier on that improve outcomes and remove the need for statutory interventions later. To improve the timeliness and quality of Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) assessments and reviews, we will invest £920,000 to increase capacity in SEND services. To what extent do you support or oppose this approach?”

141 respondents answered the question on to what extent they supported or opposed the approach to children’s services.

- The majority of respondents (85%) supported (either answering ‘strongly support’ or ‘somewhat support’) the outlined approach to children’s services.

Figure 14: Support for approach to children’s services



*Number of responses: 141

**N.B. Figures in the graph may not exactly match the text in the report due to rounding*

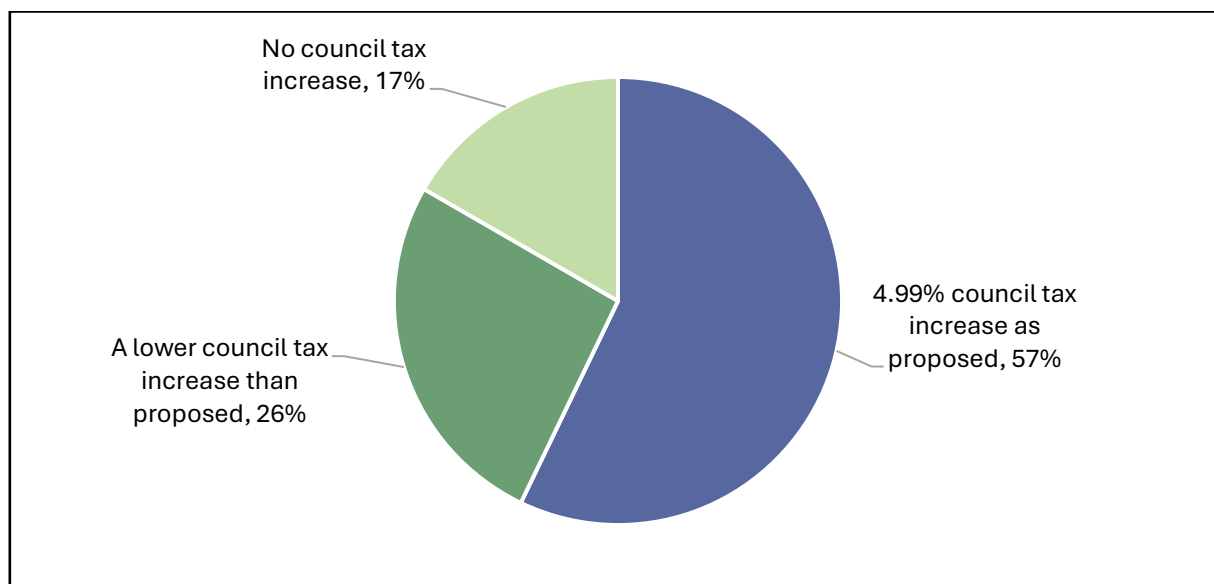
Question 8 to question 11 were related to identifying stakeholders and stakeholder specific questions, which will be outlined after question 13.

Question 12: “If the proposed increase goes ahead, we want to align our use of this additional funding with residents’ priorities and ensure that valued services such as highways and road maintenance, education, and children’s and adults’ social care are sustained – services where the majority of respondents in our recent Business Plan and Budget 2025-26 Engagement Survey said they would be ‘somewhat uncomfortable’ or ‘uncomfortable’ with spending reductions. With our most vulnerable residents continuing to receive council tax discounts and exemptions, which option do you prefer?”

126 respondents answered the question on which council tax option they preferred. Please note, stakeholders were not asked this question.

- The majority of respondents (57%) preferred the proposed 4.99% council tax increase.

Figure 15: Preferred council tax option



*Number of responses: 126

Question 13: “If you have any further comments on the how we should prioritise and plan our services for the future, please leave your comments here. We ask that you refrain from identifying yourself or anyone else within your answer.”

50 respondents left comments on the question asking if they had any further comments.

Summary of main themes

Theme	Description
Highways and road maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of the respondents who discussed this theme felt that road repairs, such as fixing potholes, should be a high priority. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Most of these respondents also felt that use of personal motorised vehicles was being penalised and schemes focused on traffic reduction, bus gates, 20mph zones, and active travel should receive less funding in order to pay for these repairs. • A few of the respondents who discussed this theme felt that there should be more improvements to transport infrastructure that improved safety for pedestrians and cyclists while increasing access to public transport.
Children’s services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of the respondents who discussed this theme felt that funding for children’s services, SEND, and early years intervention was a high priority. Those who elaborated as to why discussed it helping to avoid escalation to social care and that it would help those living in poverty. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Most of these respondents felt similarly about adult social services. ○ A few of these respondents discussed the specific need for more funding for outdoor education as they felt it would help young people make connections, improve their mental health, and help educate them on environmental issues. ○ One of these respondents discussed the Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill and wanted to see how this would be implemented in Cambridgeshire. ○ One of these respondents felt that funding for arts and culture was important for young

	people and improving provision by working with partners should be prioritised.
Internal waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents who discussed this theme felt there was too much internal waste within the council, with those who elaborated mentioning too high a cost for projects, too much spending on debt repayment, and too much on middle management or staff in roles they were not suited for. Respondents' suggestions for reducing waste included: selling buildings/assets that were under-utilised, focusing on "the basics" or "traditional basic services", reducing executive or middle management positions, improving working and relationships with partners, and educating staff on the impacts of spending on the wider budget.
Cost of living	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents who discussed this scheme were concerned about the impact of a council tax increase, highlighting that many were struggling with the cost of living who may not qualify for help or council tax reductions. These respondents highlighted that wages were not increasing for many and that the proposed 4.99% was higher than inflation.
Working with communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents who discussed this theme felt that more could be done to improve communication and working with communities. Some of these respondents highlighted things they felt were working well in this area, such as the libraries, Care Together, and Care Micro-Enterprises. Suggestions for improvement included: making use of polling websites, helping parish councils communicate with their communities, more investment into libraries, supporting village magazines, and working with outdoor education centres.

Consultation and Analysis Methodology

Background

The consultation strategy for this stage of the Business Planning and Budget 2025-26 process was designed by Cambridgeshire County Council's Policy and Insight Team and Communications Team.

Consultation Strategy

Identification of the Audience

The consultation was open for anyone to contribute to. The key target audience was individual residents of Cambridgeshire. Stakeholders were also engaged with and invited to participate in the survey and submit their views.

Design of Consultation Materials

The consultation exercise was designed to share information with residents ahead of asking respondents for their views. It was identified that the audience for the consultation required detailed information upon which to base their responses. The supporting documentation was created to provide an overview of information related to business planning, budget and the vision and ambitions of the organisation. The questions were: how far they supported or opposed the County Council's approach to funding for; climate change; improvements to highways; prevention, early intervention, and working 'Closer to Communities' in the way services are designed and delivered; adult social care services; supporting those struggling most with the cost of living; developing a Local Growth Plan for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough region and an Economic Development Framework for the county council; and children's social services. They were also asked if they preferred an increase in Council Tax of up to 4.99% as proposed, a lower increase to Council Tax than proposed, or no increase to Council Tax.

Design of Consultation Questions

The consultation questions were designed to be neutral and clear to understand. They were structured to enable people to comment on all the key areas of decision making. This was done in order to help respondents to understand and comment on CCC's approach and the local implications of this.

For the first half of the consultation survey there was a focus on questions relating to the vision of creating a Greener, Fairer, More Caring Cambridgeshire and for respondents to indicate their preferred Council Tax option. Respondents also had the opportunity to explain why they had chosen particular options through the free text question. The second half of the survey focused on multiple choice questions relating to respondents' personal characteristics, allowing assessment of the impact of the Business and Budget 2025-26 on various groups, as outlined in more detail below.

The main tool for gathering comments was an online survey. Recognising that online consultation, whilst in theory available to all residents, could potentially exclude those without easy access to the internet, the survey was advertised online and via posters within council buildings and paper copies of the information document and survey were available on request.

The survey included the opportunity for a 'free text' response and the analysis approach taken has enabled an understanding of sentiment as well as the detailed points expressed.

Diversity and Protected Characteristics

Information was collected on age, ethnicity, disability or long-term health condition, care experience, sex, and gender. Respondents were not required to answer these questions, with the option of selecting they would 'prefer not to say' or skipping these questions entirely.

Analysis

The strategy for analysis of the consultation was as follows:

- The Policy and Insight team monitored the survey whilst it was open to identify any issues with the survey or barriers to completion.
- An initial quality assurance review of the data was conducted and a review with the engagement team carried out to identify any issues or changes that occurred during the consultation process.
- A set of frequencies was then produced and checks made against the total number of respondents for each question and the consultation overall. A sense check of the data was made at this point with issues such as checking for duplicate entries, data entry errors and other quality assurance activities taking place.
 - **Duplicate Entries.** Measures were in place to avoid analysing duplicated entries. The online survey software collects the timestamp of entries so patterns of deliberate duplicate entries can be spotted and countered.
 - **Partial Entries.** The system records all partial entries as well as those that went through to completion (respondent hit submit). These partial entries were reviewed separately and in a limited number of cases - where a substantial response has been made (as opposed to clicking through without answering) - these were added to the final set for analysis.
 - Within the analysis a search for any unusual patterns within the responses was carried out, such as duplicate or 'cut and paste' views being expressed on proposals.
- Closed questions (tick box answers) were then analysed using quantitative methods, and these are presented in the final report through charts, tables, and descriptions of key numerical information.
- Free text questions were analysed using qualitative methods, namely through thematic analysis. Key themes were identified using specialist software and then responses tagged with these themes (multiple tags can be given to the same response). Totals of tagged themes were then created and sample quotes chosen for the final report that typify particular tagged themes.
- The final report was then produced to provide an objective view of the results of the consultation.

Quality Assurance

Data Integrity

- A visual check of the raw data shows no unusual patterns. There were no large blocks of identical answers submitted at a similar time.
- Date / time stamp of submissions showed no unusual patterns.
- Text analysis showed no submissions of copy/pasted text.