

Budget and policy consultation 2017/18 survey responses

Report January 2017

The Ashfield District Council budget and policy consultation ran from Monday 31 October through to Monday 12 December 2016.

People could complete the survey online or by completing a printed booklet available in leisure centres and council offices across the district.

Response rates

A total of 1070 responses were received.

Respondents did not answer all questions and so the figures do not always add to the same total number of responses.

Budget and policy consultation 2017/18

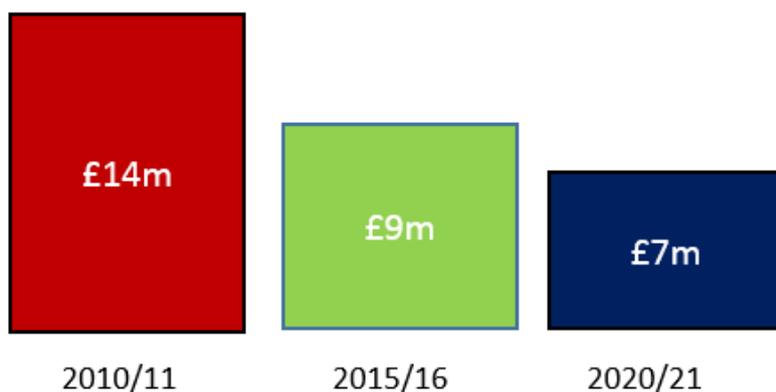
The Council is planning its Budget for the financial year which begins in April 2017.

Like all councils and companies it must plan to live within its means. The problem for many councils has been that funding is reducing.

Over a number of years, the Council has reduced its expenditure significantly to meet this challenge, whilst at the same time seeking to protect and improve its services. We have done this by reducing the number and layers of management, by sharing services with Mansfield and other councils, by raising more income where we can, and by reducing the number of buildings we occupy. Ashfield is not unique; all councils have been finding savings since 2011/12.

We value residents' views and have set out some questions. Your answers will help us decide how we meet the financial challenge.

How Government funding has been cut, and will be cut further by 2020



Over a number of years, the Council has reduced its expenditure significantly to meet this challenge, whilst at the same time seeking to protect and improve its services. We have done this by reducing the number and layers of management, by sharing services with Mansfield and other councils, by raising more income where we can, and by reducing the number of buildings we occupy. Ashfield is not unique; all councils have been finding savings since 2011/12.

We value residents' views and have set out some questions. Your answers will help us decide how we meet the financial challenge.

The Council's Strategy

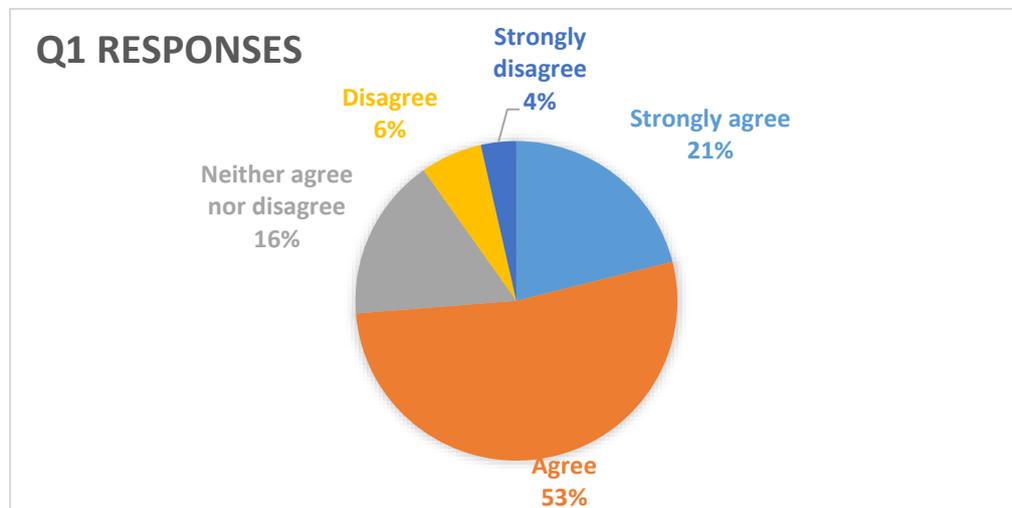
The Council has set out a strategy that focuses on the following areas to meet the financial challenge.

1. Invest in new business ventures and services which respond to local needs, but which also generate additional income to help meet reductions in our government funding;
2. Review all existing services over five years to ensure they are efficient and meeting customer needs, making efficiency savings where we can;
3. Introduce technology to reduce our costs and make the Council as efficient as possible;
4. Review and consolidate our buildings, sharing with other public sector partners where possible to reduce costs;
5. Review our procurement of goods and services to ensure we are cutting the costs for utilities and consumables;
6. Invest in green technology and power to reduce our energy costs.

Q1. The Council's strategy

How strongly do you agree or disagree with this strategic approach?

Strongly agree	166	Agree	415
Neither agree nor disagree	130	Disagree	49
Strongly disagree	28	No answer	282



Graphs do not include the 'no answer' figures so the percentages reflect the number of actual responses to each question.

Almost three-quarters (74%) of responses strongly agree or agree with the Council's stated strategy.

New business ventures

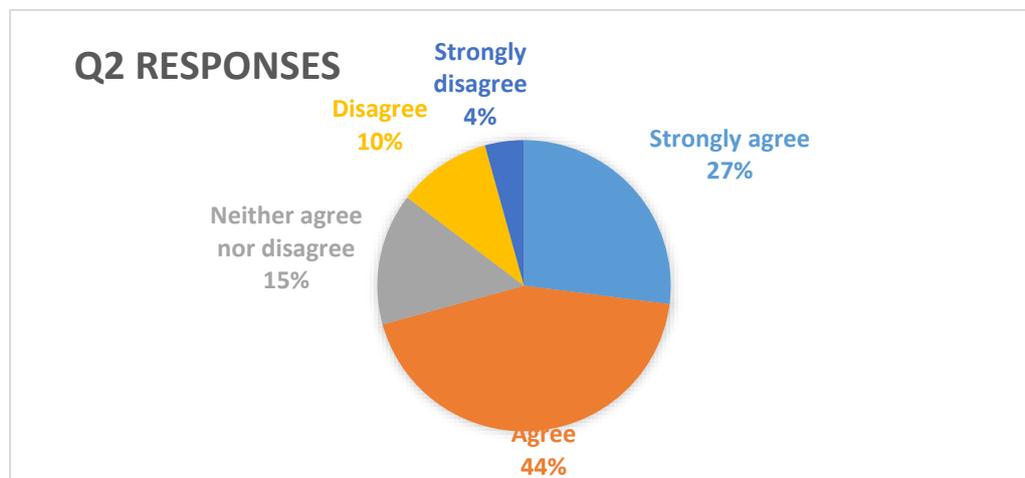
The Council is looking to invest in new services which both residents and businesses will value and which will generate additional income, enabling us to protect existing services.

Tree Surgery Business

Currently, the Council pays a contractor to maintain trees in parks and other public spaces. By delivering it directly, it could save the Council money, as well as making it possible to offer a quality, chargeable service to residents and businesses looking to undertake work on their own properties.

Q2. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Council should provide a chargeable tree maintenance service for residents and businesses?

Strongly agree	214	Agree	346
Neither agree nor disagree	116	Disagree	82
Strongly disagree	34	No answer	278



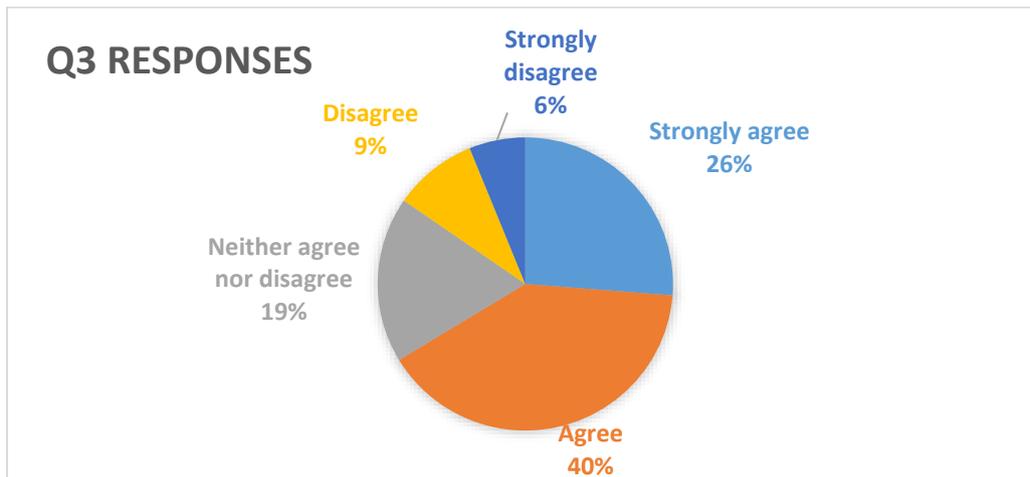
71% strongly agree or agree with the proposal to provide a chargeable tree maintenance service.

Lettings Agency for Private Landlords

The Council manages tenancies for over 6,000 council properties. Using our expertise, we could provide a similar service to private sector landlords for a fee. This has the potential to improve the quality of tenancy management in the private sector, whilst also creating a new income stream for the Council.

Q3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Council should provide a lettings agency to private landlords?

Strongly agree	205	Agree	313
Neither agree nor disagree	143	Disagree	72
Strongly disagree	48	No answer	289



Two-thirds (66%) strongly agree or agree with the proposal to provide a lettings agency to private landlords.

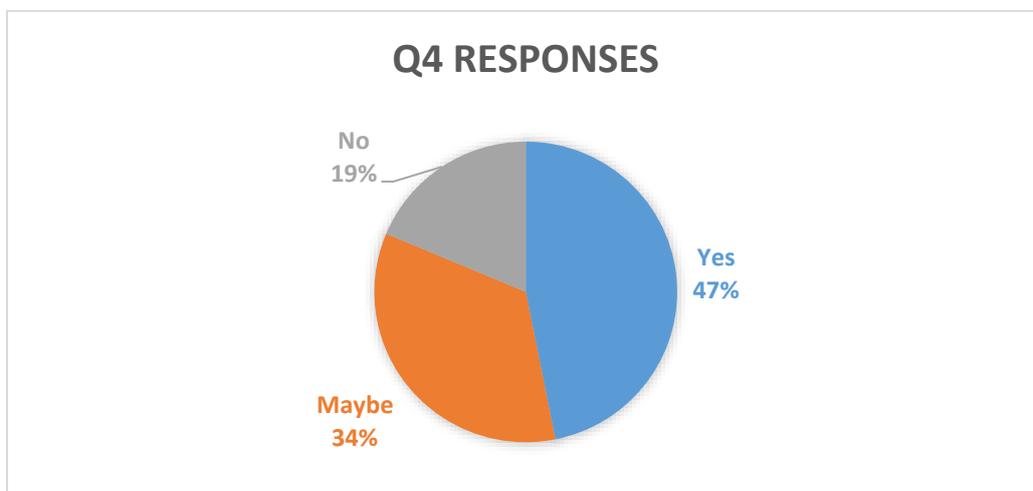
Providing Trusted and Qualified Tradespeople

The Council already employs a number of skilled tradespeople, like plumbers and electricians, who maintain and improve our Council houses. We are keen to know if private owners/occupiers would be interested in using one of the Council's skilled team to assist in their home.

Q4. If you were looking for a tradesperson to do some work in your own home, would you be prepared to pay a fee to use the Council's skilled team?

Yes 359 Maybe 264

No 143 No answer 304



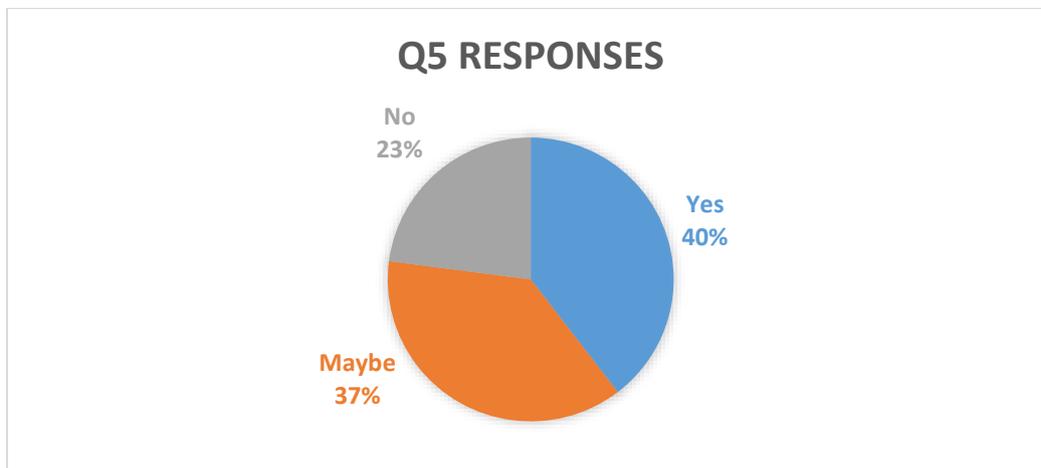
47% of responses said they would be prepared to pay to use Council's services.

Garden Design and Construction

The Council's skilled Landscape Architects develop and design improvement schemes for the district's town centres, parks and public spaces. The Council is considering whether it could provide a quality landscape design and construction service to homeowners looking to upgrade their gardens, whilst at the same time generating an income for the Council.

Q5. If you were looking for a garden landscape design and construction service, would you be prepared to pay a fee to use the Council's skilled team?

Yes	302	Maybe	286
No	175	No answer	579



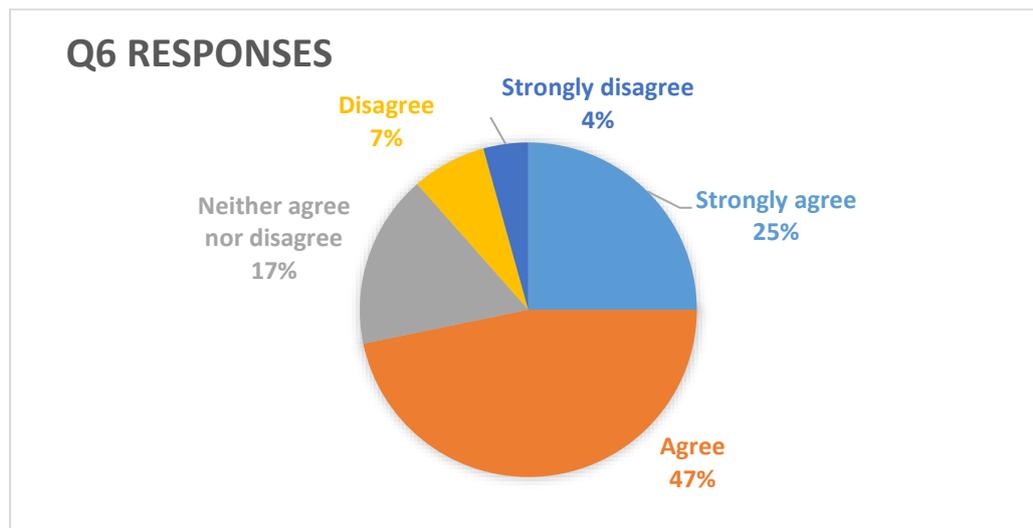
40% of responders said they would be prepared to pay a council's garden landscape team.

Using Our Town Centres More Commercially

To complement the existing retail and markets offer, the Council could sell promotional space in its town centres to national and regional companies; making up to £50k per year.

Q6. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the Council's proposal to allow national and regional companies to hire promotional spaces within our town centres for a fee?

Strongly agree	192	Agree	359
Neither agree nor disagree	129	Disagree	55
Strongly disagree	33	No answer	768



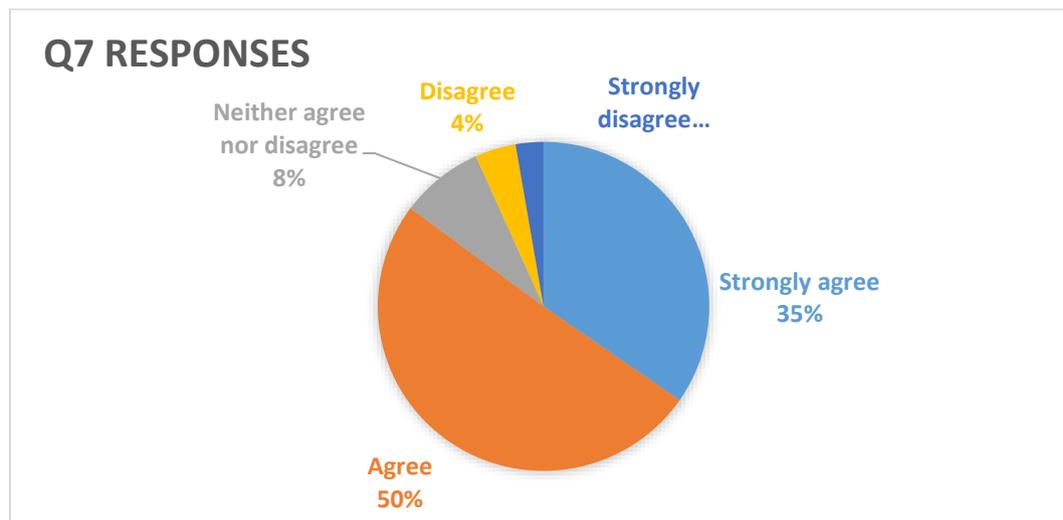
One quarter (25%) of those responding to this question said that they strongly agree with this proposal to allow companies to use promotional space in town centres. Almost half of those responding (47%) said that they agree with this proposal.

Providing More Events in Our Parks which Generate an Income

The Council has previously worked with external organisations to provide events and festivals on its premier parks. Providing a number of ticketed events at our premier parks could generate an income of £25k per year.

Q7. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to support the provision of festivals and events on the district's premier parks to generate additional income?

Strongly agree	269	Agree	392
Neither agree nor disagree	63	Disagree	31
Strongly disagree	21	No answer	294



Over one-third (35%) of those responding to this question strongly agree with the proposal to have events on the district's parks to generate additional income. Half (50%) of all those responding to this question agreed with the proposal.

Technology

Paying Your Bills

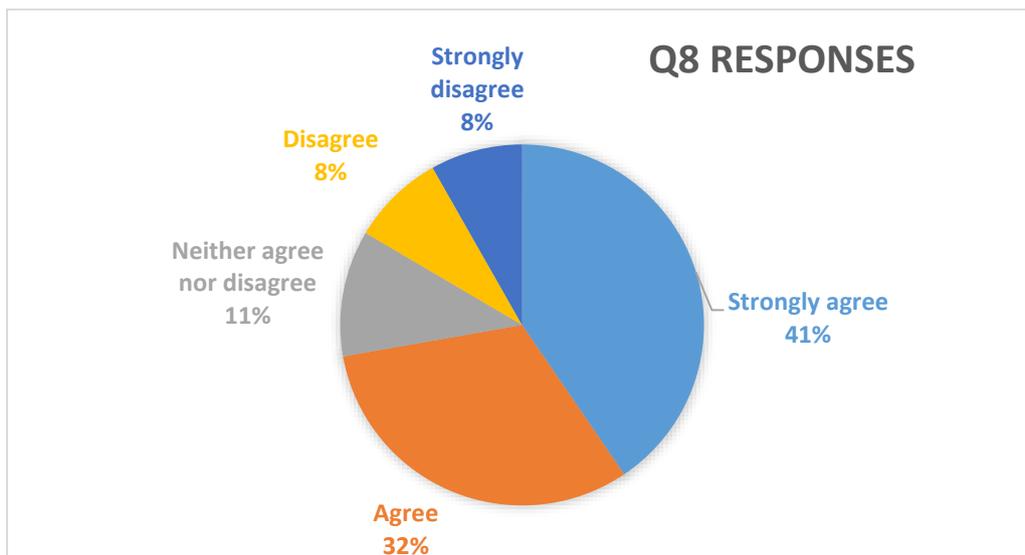
The Council currently provides cash collection services from its four offices. Many councils have modernised their arrangements so that they no longer handle cash, but increase the number of different ways that residents and businesses can pay their bills. Alternatives would be:

- Payment by direct debit
- Payment with cash or debit card via payment cards at “Pay Point” outlets and post offices (70 in the district)
- Payments via the Internet
- Payments via the telephone

Using these methods instead of providing cash collection at Council offices would save £93k annually.

Q8.To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Council should modernise the way it takes payments?

Strongly agree	312	Agree	244
Neither agree nor disagree	87	Disagree	64
Strongly disagree	63	No answer	300



Close to three-quarters (73%) of those responding to this question agree or strongly agree that the council should modernise the way it takes payments.

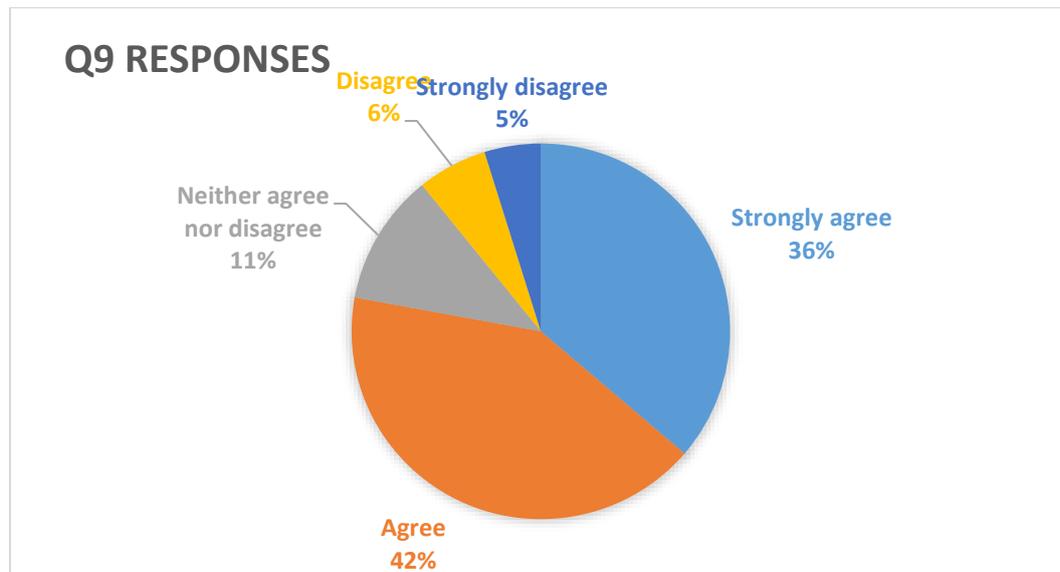
Leisure Provision Programme

The Council wants local people to have access to affordable, modern leisure facilities to help them lead healthier lifestyles. We are currently working on a five-year transformation programme for our Leisure Centre provision, including maximising and rationalising the use of the Council's assets, alongside co-ordinated provision from other sources.

The Council's vision is 'to secure a district-wide network of quality, affordable, accessible and sustainable Leisure Centres and services for the benefit of all residents of Ashfield'.

Q9. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the vision for leisure provision in the district?

Strongly agree	279	Agree	320
Neither agree nor disagree	87	Disagree	46
Strongly disagree	37	No answer	46

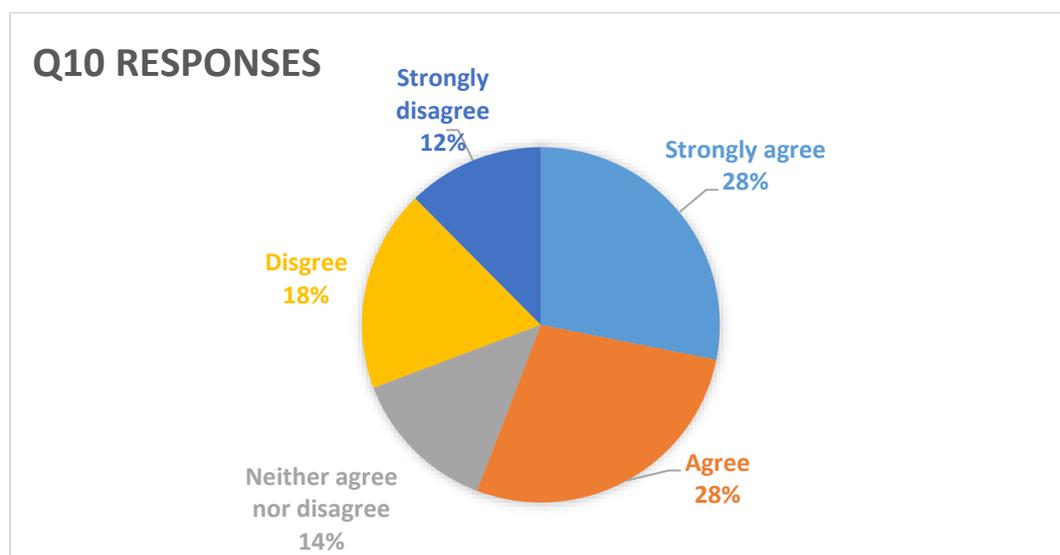


Over one-third (36%) of those responding to this question strongly agreed and 42% agreed with the council's vision.

92.5% of customers use Lammas in Sutton, Festival Hall in Kirkby and Hucknall leisure centres. The Council is therefore proposing to prioritise future investment in these sites.

Q10. To what extent do you agree or disagree that, at a time of diminishing resources, these three sites should be prioritised?

Strongly agree	216	Agree	212
Neither agree nor disagree	103	Disagree	141
Strongly disagree	95	No answer	303

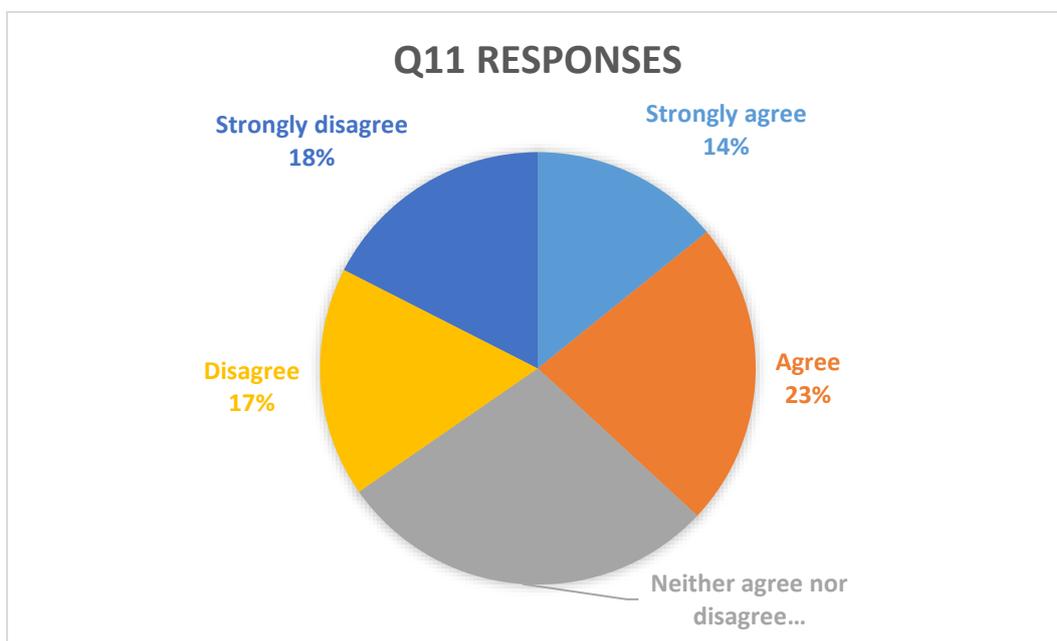


More than half (56%) of those responding to this question agreed or strongly agreed that the council should prioritise the three main centres.

To ensure the main leisure facilities are of modern standards, the Council is embarking on further feasibility work to replace the Festival Hall in Kirkby.

Q11. To what extent do you support the Council undertaking a detailed feasibility study for a replacement Leisure Centre in Kirkby?

Strongly agree	106	Agree	171
Neither agree nor disagree	213	Disagree	129
Strongly disagree	131	No answer	320



37% of those responding agree or strongly agree with this proposal.

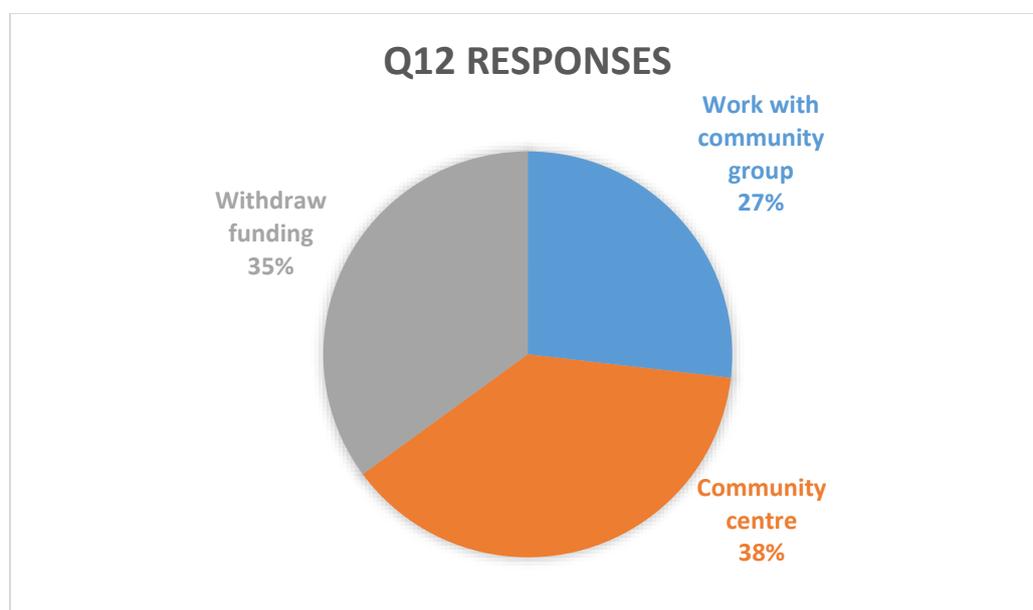
Following recent public consultation on the transformation of leisure services, we are seeking views on the following options relating to Huthwaite Leisure Centre and Edgewood Leisure Centre.

Options for Huthwaite Leisure Centre

Independent research tells us that despite investment and marketing, Huthwaite is the worst performing of our leisure facilities in terms of value for money. It costs us £5.23 per person per visit when compared to Lammas which costs £0.20. The consultation also showed that many people would be willing to use the Lammas Leisure Centre or Festival Hall.

Q12. Please tick your preferred option for the Huthwaite Centre

- | | |
|---|-----|
| a. The Council to work with the local community group and/or other providers to agree a lease (subject to a sustainable business plan) transferring the site to them. This could save the Council approximately £50k. | 167 |
| b. The Council to operate the site as a community centre, in a similar way to other Council Community Centres, saving approximately £60k | 237 |
| c. Withdraw Council funding for Huthwaite Leisure centre altogether and transfer bookings and activities to Lammas and Festival Hall Leisure Centres, saving £80k. | 218 |
| d. No answer | 448 |



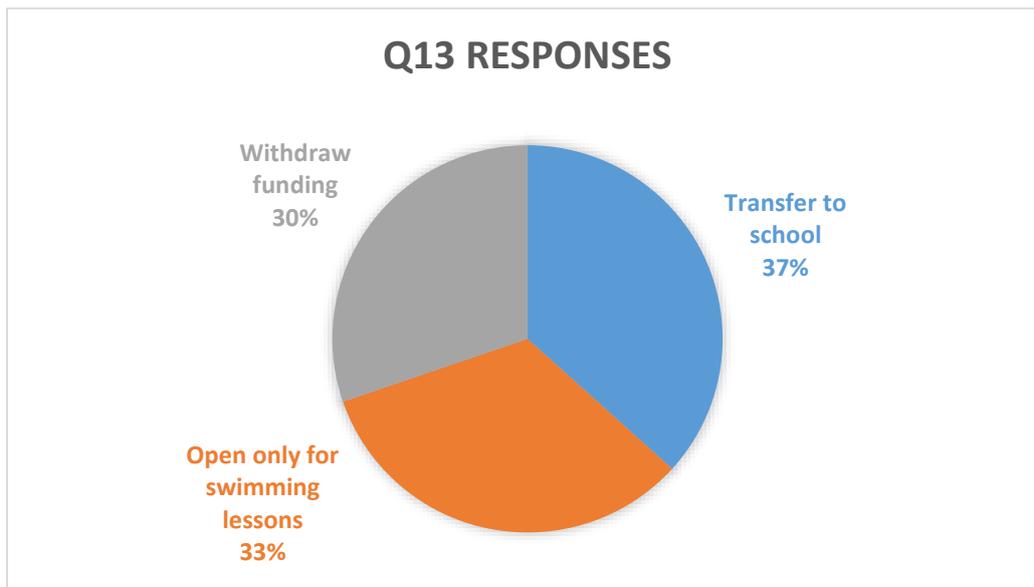
Of those responding, over one-third (38%) stated their preference as the centre being operated as a community centre. The second preference of responses (35%) was to withdraw funding.

Options for Edgewood Centre

Edgewood is a small site with a small pool and part of the primary school owned by the County Council. It is also generally a poor performing centre. The public consultation for Edgewood showed that the aspect of the service that most people valued was the swimming lessons.

Q13. Please tick your preferred option for the Edgewood Centre

a. Transfer the operation of the site to the school	239
b. Open the site only for swimming lessons, transfer all other activities to Hucknall or local community facilities	215
c. Open the site only for swimming lessons, transfer all other activities to Hucknall or local community facilities	197
d. No answer	419



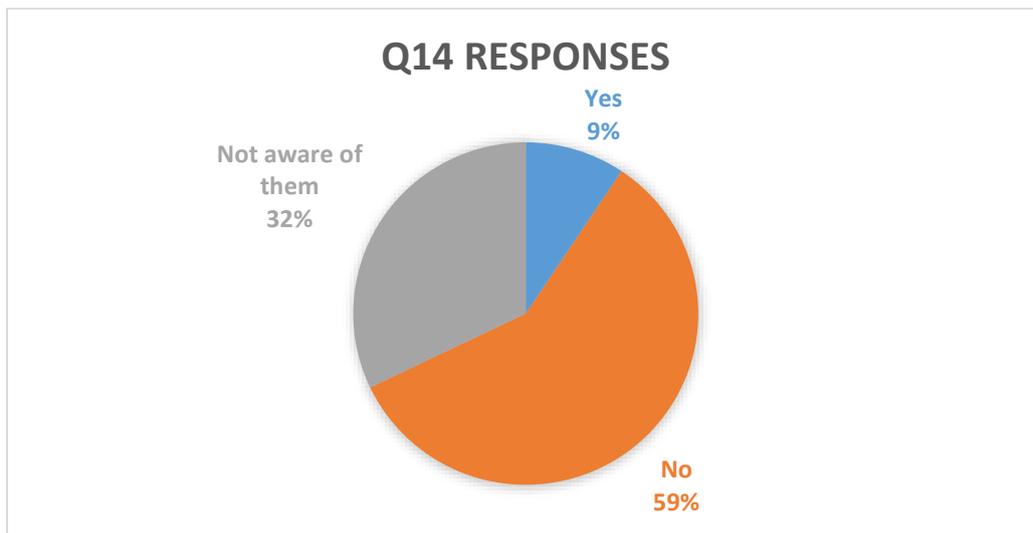
Of those responding, 37% selected their preference as being to transfer the operation to the school.

Community Engagement

The Council currently has several methods of engaging with residents: Member surgeries, four Area Committees (Kirkby, Sutton, Hucknall and the Rurals), social media and at Council Offices within the District. Dedicated Council staff support all of these methods of engagement. The Council is considering whether there are more cost effective ways to keep in touch with residents and the local areas in Ashfield.

Q14. Have you ever attended an Ashfield District Council Member surgery?

Yes	71
No	443
Not aware of them	243
No answer	313

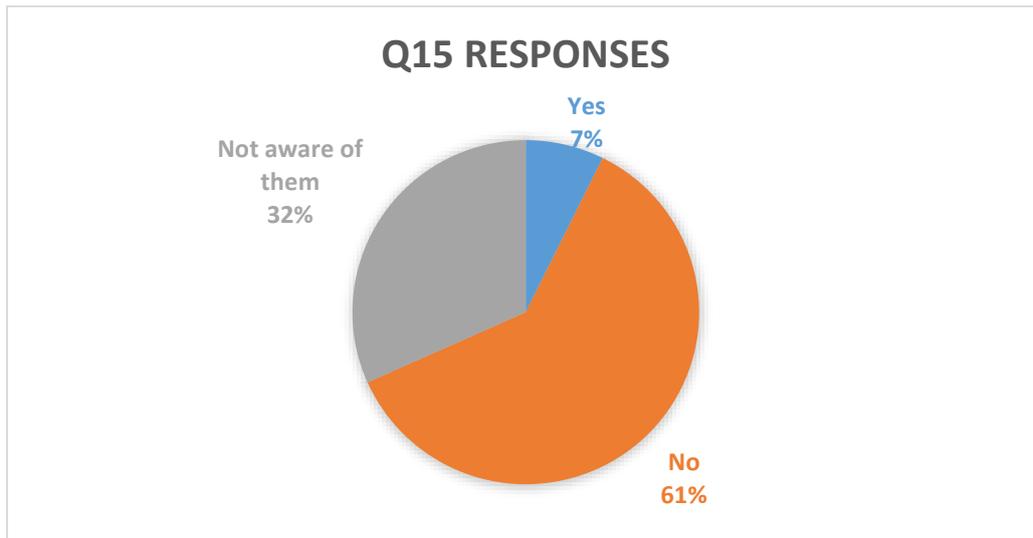


More than half (59%) of those responding have never attended a Member surgery.

Almost one-third (32%) stated that they are not aware of the surgeries. Only 9% having previously attended.

Q15. Have you ever attended an Ashfield District Council Area Committee?

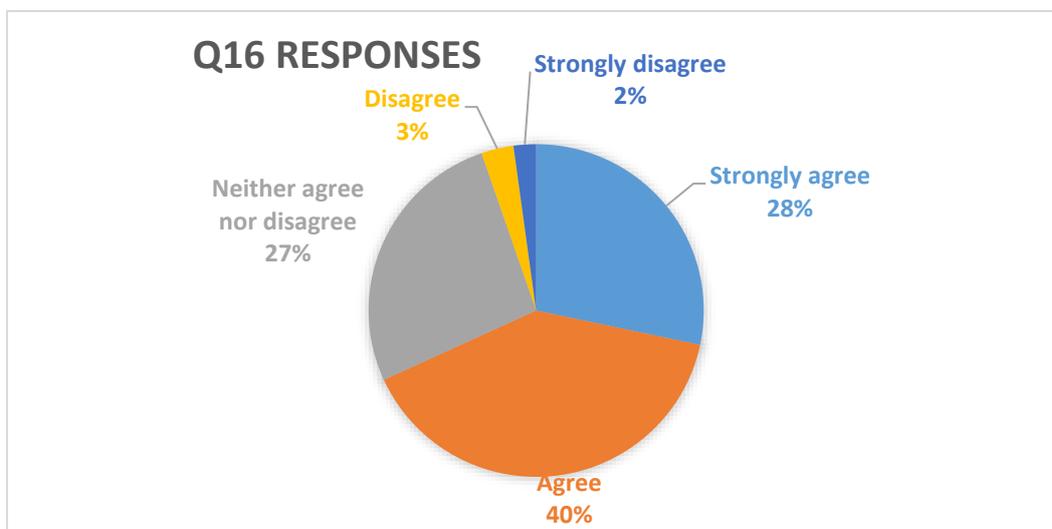
Yes	55
No	458
Not aware of them	238
No answer	319



61% have not previously attended an area committee.

Q16. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Council should consider alternative methods of community engagement?

Strongly agree	209	Agree	294
Neither agree nor disagree	196	Disagree	23
Strongly disagree	16	No answer	332



The majority, (68%) strongly agree or agree that the Council should consider alternative means of community engagement.

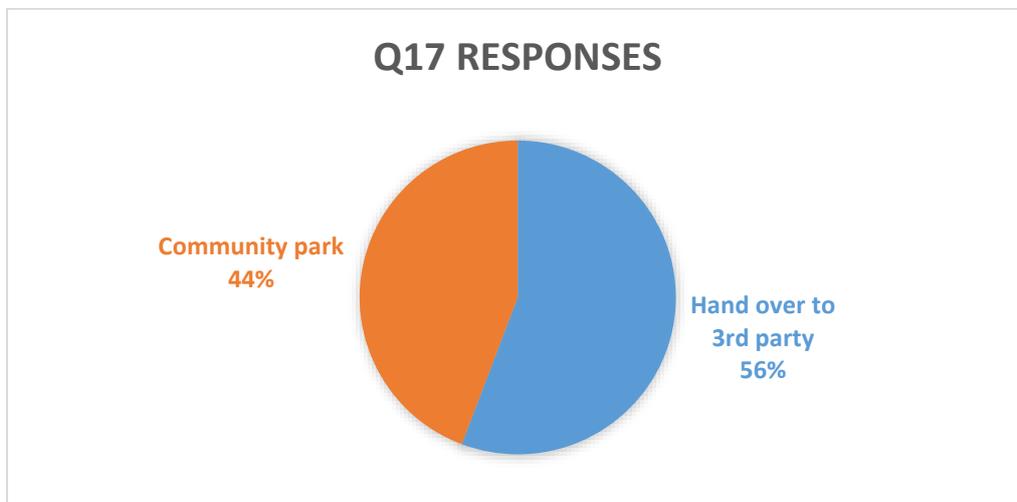
The Future of Selston Golf Course

The Council runs Selston Golf Course which costs approximately £50k per year. The Council is working with Selston Parish Council to explore future options for the site which would make better use of the area and reduce the deficit. Assuming an appropriate partner can be found, one option would be to transfer the site to a third-party who, under the overview of the Parish Council, would look to develop the course and run it as a commercial venture.

A second option would be to close the onsite cafe and turn the golf course into a community park available to all residents. Both options would significantly reduce the current cost to the District Council.

Q17. If you have a preference, please tell us which of the following options you feel would be the most suitable proposal for Selston golf course.

- | | |
|---|-----|
| a. Hand over to a 3 rd party | 334 |
| b. Turn in to a community park | 265 |
| c. No answer | 471 |



Recycling glass

Changes to Glass Collection Service (Blue Box)

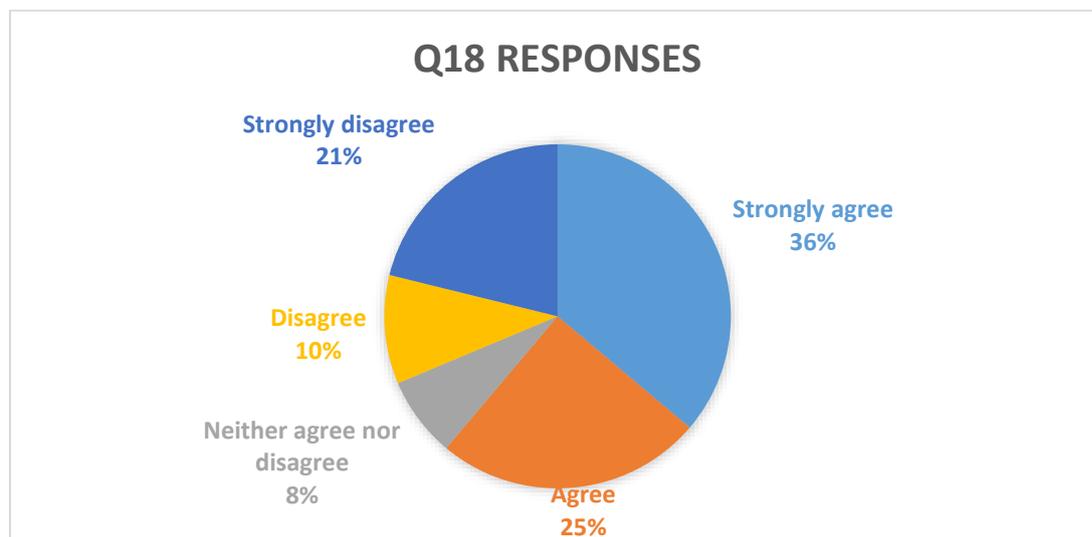
Although the Council collects over 2,000 tonnes of glass per year, recent research has highlighted that only 9% of households put out a blue box every collection, which suggests that the current 4-weekly collection frequency is not required.

The Council is considering whether to extend the time between collections from 4 weeks to 8 weeks, and also considering whether it would be preferable to provide residents with a 140-litre blue-lidded wheelie bin to use instead of the blue box. The bin would be nearly 25% smaller than the existing red-lidded bins, but would provide more than double the capacity of your blue box.

This option would offer a saving of £50k - to £75k each year.

Q18. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to replace the blue box with a small wheelie bin for glass recycling on an 8-weekly collection?

Strongly agree	269	Agree	185
Neither agree nor disagree	56	Disagree	76
Strongly disagree	157	No answer	327



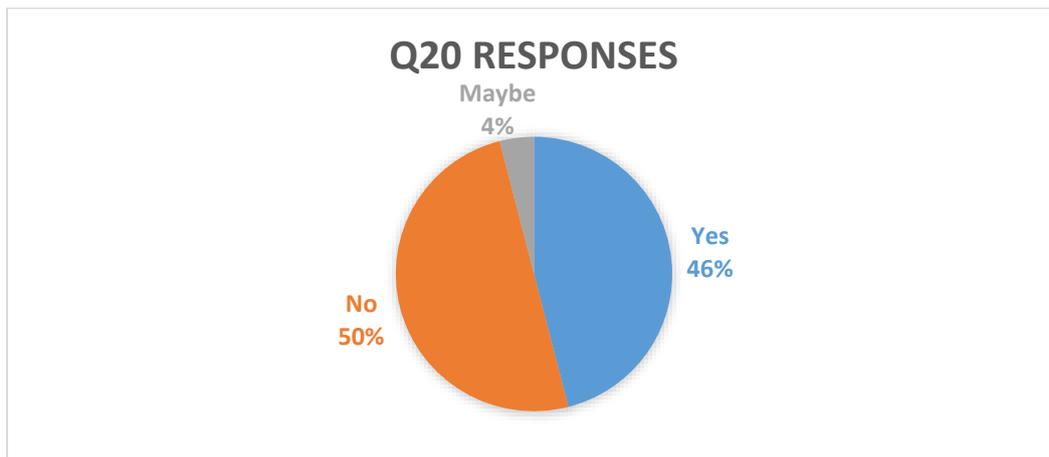
Overall, just over 60% agree or strongly agree with the proposal.

Q19. How often do you use the blue box glass collection?

Never	52	Every now and again	208
Most of the time	158	Always (ie every 4 weeks)	312
No answer	340		



Q20. If 'Never' will changing from a blue box to a blue bin encourage you to recycle more glass?*



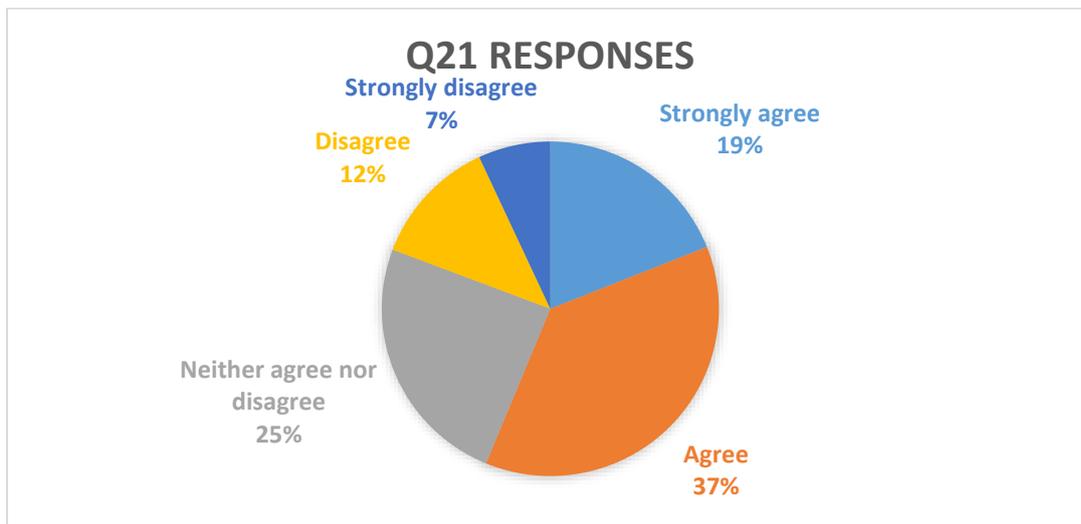
Investing

Commercial Investment Fund

The Council is looking at setting up a commercial investment fund where the Council would invest up to up to £10m into property and other commercial ventures to achieve an income that could be used to support services.

Q21. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Council should invest in industrial and commercial premises to generate profits in the future?

Strongly agree	137	Agree	269
Neither agree nor disagree	177	Disagree	89
Strongly disagree	50	No answer	348



Building High Quality Homes for Rent or Sale

The Council has successfully built a number of social housing schemes over the past few years. The Council is investigating the potential for developing homes for private rent and sale.

Q22. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal for the Council becoming a property developer for private sale and rental?

Strongly agree	148	Agree	213
Neither agree nor disagree	154	Disagree	121
Strongly disagree	88	No answer	346

