



Research to Support the Big Conversation

Final Report

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Glossary

AAS	Alcohol & Addiction Service
ASC	Adult Social Care
CAVE	Craven Arms Volunteers for the Environment
CCG	Clinical Commissioning Group
CIC	Community Interest Company
CWP	Community Wellbeing Programme
GRCC	Gloucestershire Rural Community Council
LJC	Local Joint Committee
LEP	Local Enterprise Partnership
RSG	Revenue Support Grant
RCC	Rural Community Council
RSDG	Rural Services Delivery Grant
STW	Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin
YSS	Youth Support Services
VCS	Voluntary and Community Sector
VCSA	Voluntary and Community Sector Assembly

Executive summary

Overview of the research

The Big Conversation, initiated in autumn 2015, represents the beginning of a five-year conversation, with the people of Shropshire. Like all local authorities, Shropshire Council faces the challenge of needing to make substantial savings in the coming years due to the national effort to reduce overall public sector indebtedness. This means that Shropshire Council will not be able to deliver the same services to the same extent as they do now and there is an urgent need to prioritise how the budget will be spent in future.

Therefore, Shropshire Council initiated a conversation with the people of Shropshire to gather their views on the services they value most and least, and the services they believe might be delivered in other ways; e.g. by volunteers or local communities. For Phase 1 of the Big Conversation, Shropshire Council commissioned Pye Tait Consulting to engage with individuals, communities and stakeholders across Shropshire in order to better understand perceptions of service spending priorities, and ways to make savings and to increase local involvement in delivering services.

The agreed research methodology, over three stages, comprised a large survey, five focus groups, three action-planning workshops, a feedback presentation, and a final report with each stage informing the next.

Overall, the research has engaged a wide range of local people and the results represent a good spread across social segments and geographic areas. The survey achieved 2,271 responses and a further 177 people were involved through the focus groups and workshops. It was noteworthy that as the research progressed there was an increased willingness and enthusiasm to get involved in the Big Conversation.

Key findings

Local service delivery and community involvement

Local people welcomed the opportunity to comment and contribute to the Big Conversation and in the main, are supportive of enhanced community involvement. A wide range of community activities are cited by participants, for example litter picking, active church groups, community car services and walking groups, as one participant said: *“Shropshire is awash with community groups.”* Six in ten survey respondents volunteer or participate in community activities to some extent or a great deal.

Six in ten respondents generally agree that Shropshire Council should make more use of local residents and volunteers to deliver services in order to make savings. Encouraging further volunteering and community involvement in delivering services is seen as a positive step to reducing costs of delivering services.

There is a high level of agreement in relation to enabling communities to do more for themselves to make savings, with 71% of survey respondents in general agreement. Greater partnership-working to provide integrated services for the community is a common theme in the quantitative and qualitative feedback. The majority of participants said that partners such as the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and Town and Parish Councils should be working together to streamline and combine services (such as back office functions). Many participants warned however that combining services will take time.

Local Joint Committees (LJC)¹ and Parish Clerks are seen as essential connectors between Shropshire Council and the Community, but some caveats were expressed around the continuing purpose of some or all of the LJCs, which were set up in a less austere era.

Reducing services and making savings

In the early stages of the research, respondents were asked to consider the services Shropshire Council provides and choose the ones that should be protected from reductions in spending. This was achieved through a special statistical tool called “Max-Diff analysis” which produces genuine priorities across many options.

Respondents consider services for vulnerable children (i.e. fostering and adoption, support for looked-after children, ensuring they remain safe from harm) the most important to protect from reduction in spending, followed by education services (i.e. schools and educational services) and older people and vulnerable adults services (i.e. to help them live independently and enhance their quality of life). Vulnerable children services are considered to be twice as important as employment services and almost three times as important to protect from reductions in spending as leisure, housing and health services.

Participants are open to discussions about delivering services differently. Participants say that some services are essential, but others should be cut back or delivered in a different way for example, theatres, leisure facilities, museums and outdoor recreation. That is not to say they were happy to lose any of the services; rather it probably reflects a more pragmatic view of the current economic situation.

The qualitative feedback suggests that local people want to find out more about funding and the associated costs in delivering services. Furthermore, they are keen to find out more about the usage and value of the individual services as this information would enable them to make informed decisions about which could be cut and which could be delivered as effectively if outsourced in partnership with other agencies and specialists. Public sector partners feel that this information would enable them to make informed decisions on service delivery.

¹ The LJCs were established in 2009 across Shropshire in accordance with Sections 101 and 102 of the Local Government Act 1972 and they are the Joint Committees for decision-making. Membership is drawn from representatives of Shropshire Council and Parish/Town Councils from the electoral division(s) and ward(s) within the LJC area. The remit for the LJCs is to encourage public participation and engagement in the decision-making of the Council.

Health and supporting older people

Adult Social Care services represent the biggest proportion of the Councils expenditure. Participants said the adult social care budget is a fundamental priority issue in need of urgent attention. Early interventions and prevention to address long-term health issues policy shift is a pivotal activity for the reduction of costs over the longer term. Shropshire Council has a role to play in signposting people to existing VCS and community groups to help tackle social isolation and ensure that a holistic care plan for a person is well planned and delivered. The Village and Community Agents² working with over-50s in Gloucestershire is an example of good practice.

In principle, participants support domiciliary care and helping to ensure that people remain within their communities. Into the future, volunteers and local groups are seen as fundamental in looking after the interests of vulnerable elderly. Many participants cite a lack of resources and inadequate training as a barrier to further involvement in supporting older people.

Generating new income and business growth

Participants state that income generation is as important as, if not more important than, making savings. Many participants provided suggestions about how the Council might generate further income, for example charges and fees for some services, attracting more businesses to the area to raise the revenue generated from business rates, and encouraging new builds to increase the revenue generated from Council Tax. The survey data reveals that almost six in ten agree with introducing or increasing fees and nearly half agree with increasing Council Tax.

The businesses engaged in the research say they have knowledge and experience they could share with the Council to help them to plan into the future.

The main improvements businesses suggest for growth are to:

- Improve broadband connectivity and connecting communities without broadband;
- Create better linkages between businesses and University Centre Shrewsbury to bring people into the area and build skills; and
- Encourage further involvement from businesses and ensure partners are working together.

² <https://www.villageagents.org.uk/>

Moving forward

Phase 1 of the Big Conversation provides a good baseline of understanding of local perceptions of service spending priorities, ways of making savings, and ways to increase local involvement in delivering services. However, such an early study by itself can only go so far, and there are restrictions to the depth to which any one component or relationship can be developed.

Further research is required in a number of areas – for example, the extent to which the costs of community involvement weighed against the potential savings, and how businesses can be more involved in the delivery of services.

By contracting-out the running of more Council assets this could be a more sustainable approach into the future than reliance on the Town and Parish Council and the VCS.

Further engagement in relation to education, children and young people services is required. Since schools are already set up with facilities and assets, greater involvement of parents, children and schools in the Big Conversation and youth services would be of enormous value going forward.

Moving forward, the results from Phase 1 will feed into Phase 2 of the Big Conversation and Council plans and strategies including the 'Financial Strategy', 'Corporate Plan' and 'Performance Management Framework'.

1. Introduction and approach

1.1. Phase 1 - Big Conversation

The Big Conversation, initiated in autumn 2015, represents the beginning of a five-year conversation, over a number of Phases, with the people of Shropshire. Like all local authorities, Shropshire Council faces the challenge of needing to make substantial savings in the coming years due to the national effort to reduce overall public sector indebtedness.

For 2016/17, Shropshire Council has a gross budget of £597m³. The gross budget covers everything from adult social services, to collecting the bins and disposing of waste, schools, safeguarding and child protection services, to maintaining the roads, delivering cultural services and public health. However, as a result of a gap in funding, there is only £565m available to spend. This funding gap will create a deficit of £32m. In addition, savings planned for the previous year were not achieved, meaning that the funding gap will actually be £47m in 2016/17. This gap constitutes the difference between the Council's spending commitments and its available funds. It is anticipated this deficit will grow to exceed £61m by 2018/19. Not only that, but rising inflation and the increasing demand on services due to, for example, demographic change, mean that Shropshire Council anticipate spending will grow from £597m to almost £630m over the next two years (2.7% growth per year).

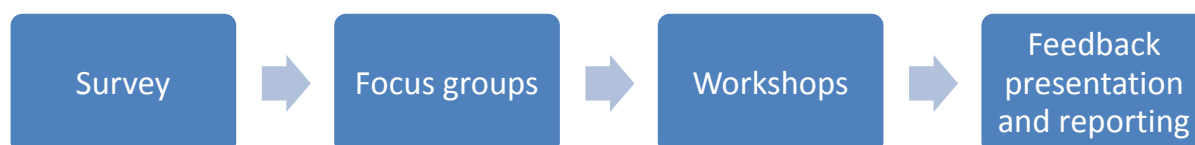
This means that Shropshire Council will not be able to deliver the same services to the same extent as they do now and there is an urgent need to prioritise how the budget will be spent in future. Therefore, Shropshire Council initiated a conversation with the people of Shropshire to gather their views on the services they value most and least and the services they believe might be delivered in other ways; e.g. by volunteers or local communities.

1.2. Purpose of the research and methodology

For Phase 1 of the Big Conversation, Shropshire Council commissioned Pye Tait Consulting to engage with individuals, communities and stakeholders across Shropshire in order to better understand perceptions of service spending priorities, ways to make savings, and to increase local involvement in delivering services. The results will feed into Shropshire Council's Financial Strategy.

The agreed Phase 1 research methodology comprised a survey, five focus groups, three action-planning workshops, a feedback presentation, interim and a final report (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Stages of the research



³ Data: sourced from Shropshire Council's financial presentation.

Designed in partnership between Shropshire Council and Pye Tait Consulting, the survey included a mix of structured and open questioning. It targeted residents, businesses and the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), Town and Parish Councils, key partners and providers of public services.

The questionnaire covered a wide range of topics and proposed actions, including:

- Reductions to specific services;
- Ways of making savings and delivering services;
- Working with communities;
- Locally raised income;
- Working with businesses and the VCS; and
- Public sector organisations working together.

An open-ended question box gave the respondent an opportunity to provide any additional comments. Contact details of those willing and interested in taking part in future research enabled the recruitment for the focus groups, workshops and future surveys. The survey also collected core demographic information, such as gender, age, postcode, number of residents in the household, working status, ethnic background and disability status.

Local media and emails sent to individuals, businesses, groups and public sector partners explained the purpose and encouraged responses to the online survey.

There were a number of means to encourage wider participation and increase accessibility:

- On-street interviews with 16 to 34 year olds took place at different sample points across Shropshire;
- Over 2,000 paper copies of the Big Conversation survey were made available at locations such as libraries and customer service points;
- Local people could also telephone the Big Conversation phone line to take part in the survey by phone or to request a paper copy;
- A Big Conversation web site (<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/big-conversation/>) was established providing further detail and context to the Big Conversation including a video, an A-Z of Shropshire Council services, FAQ and access to the online survey; and
- People who wanted to express their views outside of the survey were able to email the dedicated bigconversation@shropshire.gov.uk email account; and
- Local councillors were supported with information including information postcards, flyers and posters to promote the survey in their local area.

The survey launched on 17th November 2015 and ended on 6th January 2016. The survey achieved a statistically-impressive 2,271 responses, the breakdown of which is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Response rates

Approach	Number of responses
Online	1,961
On-street interviews	193
Paper	117
Total	2,271

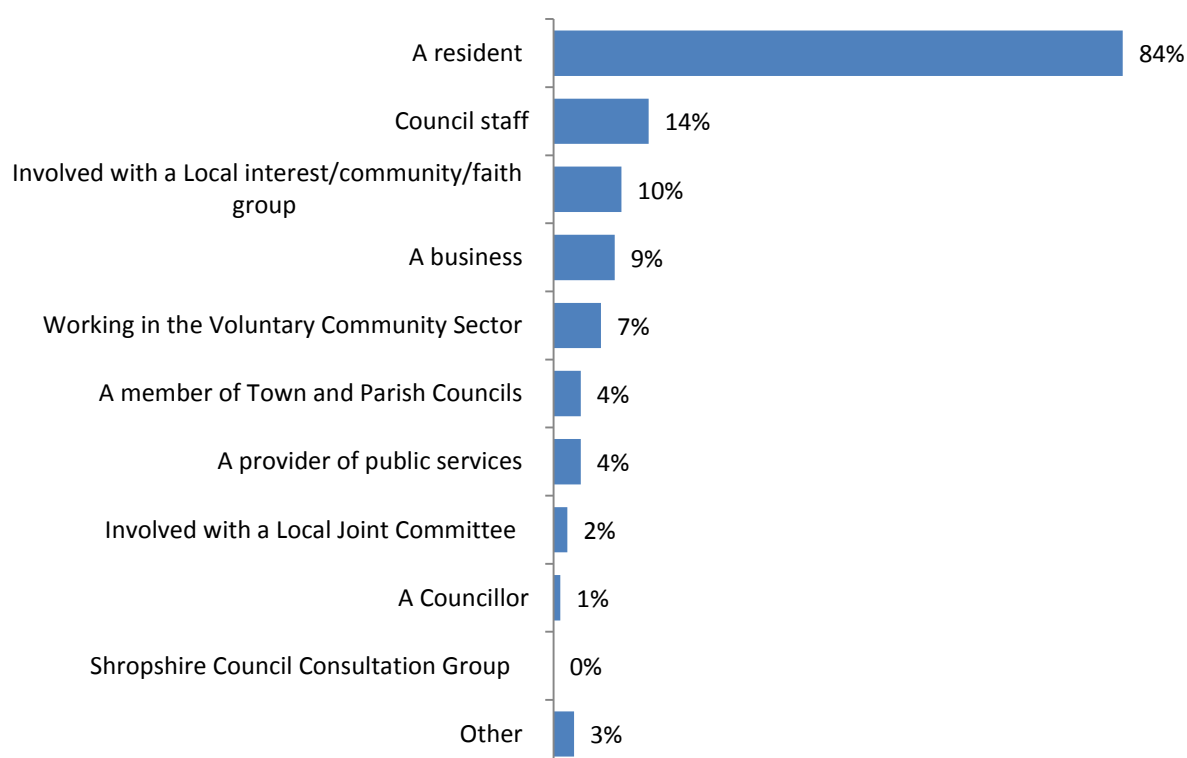
Based on a Shropshire population of 252,979 (Census 2011) this sample provides results with an overall margin-of-error of +/-2% at the 95% confidence level^[1] – that is a good deal more accurate than the overall margins to which most public opinion polls work– including election polls.

Respondents self-selected their respondent type(s). From the list as shown in the figure below, they could select as many as are applicable. Just over 84% are residents of Shropshire, the remainder (16%) did not identify themselves as residents but instead selected a different respondent type such as Council staff, businesses etc. (Figure 2).

Appendix 1 provides further information about the profile and characteristics of survey respondents.

Figure 2: Respondent type (all survey respondents)

(Percentage total exceeds 100% as respondents could select more than one answer)



Base: 2,258

^[1] The margin of error may vary for any single question depending on how many people answered that question.

To further enrich the survey findings and explore key issues in greater depth, five focus groups for residents, businesses and Councillors ran between 19th and 27th January 2016. In total, 49 people attended the focus groups. Table 2 shows the composition of each group attending these events.

Table 2: Focus group composition

Group number	Target group attending	Number of attendees
1	Older people, people with disabilities and carers	11
2	Councillors	8
3	Mixed residents	9
4	Businesses (mixed size and sector)	12
5	Younger residents	9

Shropshire Council wished to expand upon the survey and focus group findings and explore other partners' and stakeholders' feelings about a series of draft actions, with a particular emphasis on increasing community and voluntary sector control of services. The purpose of the workshops was to identify in the light of the financial challenges:

- what activities might be initiated or existing activities which that could be increased,
- or conversely, what activities might be stopped or undertaken in lesser amounts.

The actions for discussion in the workshops include:

- Making more use of local residents and volunteers to deliver services in order to make savings/Enabling communities to do more for themselves in order to make savings;
- Working with the Town and Parish Councils, private or voluntary sector to take on the delivery of services;
- Stop delivering some services altogether to maintain funding in other areas;
- Combining services with other Councils and joining up with other public sector organisations;
- Manage demand and greater use of prevention/provide a stronger focus on helping people back to independence;
- Introducing or increasing fees for some services; and
- Attract and grow business.

The delivery of three action planning half-day workshops were scheduled for mid-January 2016 and again in March.

The first engaged with representatives from Town and Parish Councils and the voluntary community and social enterprise sector.

Two subsequent workshops with partners, stakeholder and the VCS took place on 29th February and 1st March 2016. Shropshire Council organised the recruitment for all the workshops, ensuring that

participants reflected a wide range of voluntary and partner sectors across Shropshire (see Appendix 3).

In total over 80 participants attended the first workshop, 31 attended the second and 17 participants attended the third. Appendix 3 provides more detail about the content of the workshops including a list of attendees.

Section 5 about prevention and supporting older people incorporates feedback from a meeting on 28th January 2016 with Shropshire Older Peoples Assembly.

Participants also responded via email, their responses have been included where appropriate.

1.3. Presentation of findings

The findings within this report describe responses to the survey, focus groups and workshops, including views and feedback obtained from local people through open questioning and detailed discussions.

The sub-sections within the report present the findings thematically. Some of the themes were included in the survey, focus groups and workshops with some explored in the workshops only, e.g. prevention and supporting older people (section 5).

The majority of the survey results are segmented by gender, age and working status. The full results for these sub-groups in relation to the Max-Diff exercise (explained on page 30-31) are presented in Appendix 2.

Note: in certain tables and charts the percentages may not add up to precisely 100% due to the effect of rounding.

2. Local service delivery and community involvement

This section of the report focuses on involvement in volunteering and community activity and differing services more locally.

2.1. Volunteering and participation in community activities

To develop a deeper understanding of community involvement in Shropshire, survey respondents were asked the extent to which they volunteer or participate in community activities. The majority (61%) participate either to some extent or a great deal (Table 3).

Participation levels in community activities are similar between males and females. The extent to which people volunteer or participate in community activity appears to increase with age; nearly three quarters of retired respondents participate to some extent or a great deal.

Table 3: Volunteering or participating

	Not at all	To some extent	A great deal
All survey respondents	39%	45%	16%
Male	40%	43%	17%
Female	38%	47%	16%
16-24	68%	27%	5%
25-34	60%	32%	8%
35-44	41%	46%	13%
45-54	39%	47%	14%
55-64	32%	49%	18%
65+	25%	50%	25%
Employee/Self-employed	43%	44%	13%
Not working for other reasons/students ⁴	55%	34%	11%
Retired	26%	50%	24%

Base: varies from 186 to 2,252

Survey respondents who volunteer or participate provided examples of the sorts of activities they undertake within their community. In total 1,135 survey responses took the time to provide detail about their volunteering activities.

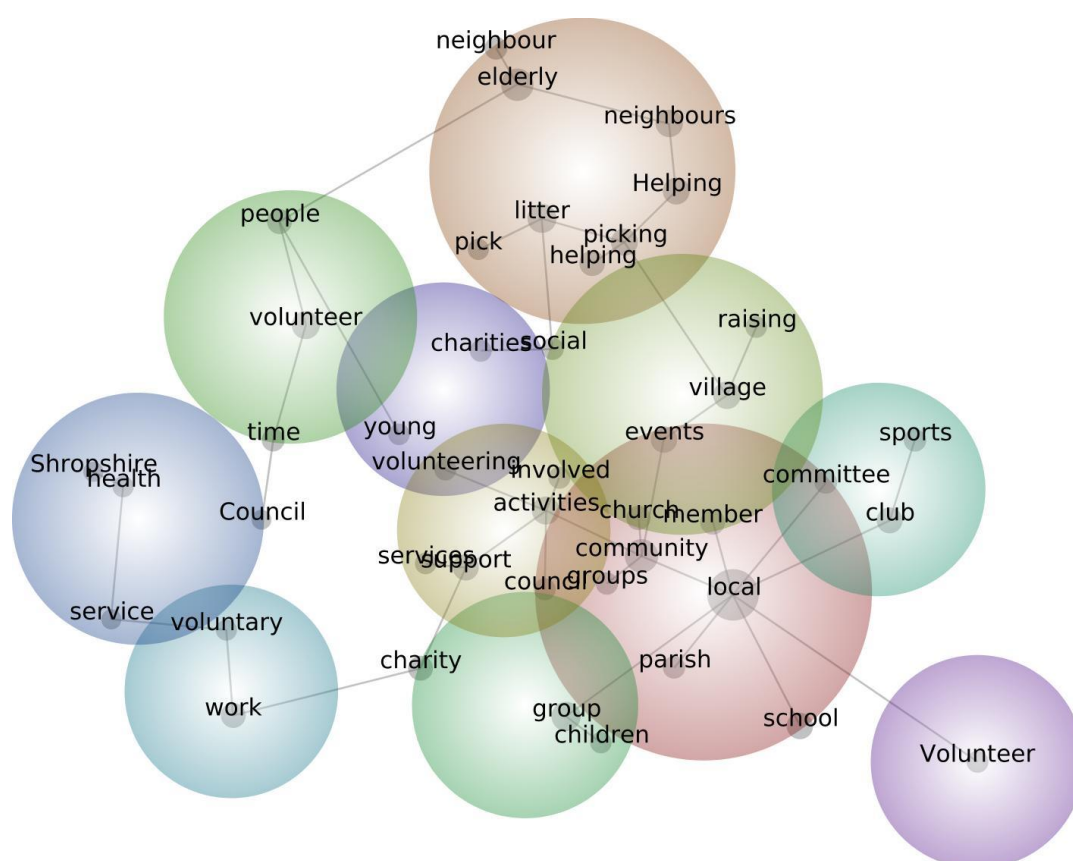
Figure 3 illustrates, in a slightly different way, the themes and linkages that emerged from this survey question. The size of the bubbles show the relative weight of the words and linkages within them and the lines show the main ways in which the words are linked in the responses (more information about thematic bubbles is provided in Appendix 5). The main themes with reference to (largest bubble in the diagram) “local” activities include helping the elderly, helping your neighbours,

⁴ This includes the following respondent types: Long-term sick or disabled/Looking after the home or family/Unemployed/Other not working/Student (working and not working).

supporting community events and schools. Litter picking is one of the most mentioned activities outside pure health and social volunteering but, clearly, a number of residents are willing to engage in voluntary activities across a wide range of themes and service areas.

Volunteering to support sport and coaching activities is another common activity mentioned by survey respondents, along with church related activities, for example bell ringing, singing in the choir, supporting the Sunday school and fund raising.

Figure 3: Activities undertaken by communities



Base: 1,135

"I help run a Ranger Guide group for 14-25 year olds, which includes training and supervising them for their Duke of Edinburgh awards. I help out when needed with groups of Rainbows, Brownies and Guides, teaching games, songs and country dancing."

Involved with a local interest/community/faith group, a resident and working in the VCS- survey

“We are a small, very rural community and have a great sense of helping each other. We ask younger people to cut wood for elderly neighbours and lift or move heavy things for them. Quite a few folk give each other lifts to shops or services when needed...We share vegetables and fruits we grow...When someone is ill or there is a bereavement, we rally round to support them and their family.”

Resident - survey

Thinking about activities that are happening within their communities, focus group and workshop participant discussions reflect very similar findings to the survey. Community activities ranged from, for example active church groups, community car services, walking groups and the Craven Arms Volunteers for the Environment (CAVE). One participant reinforced the willingness of residents to get involved: “*Shropshire is awash with community groups.*”

The Youth Health Champions, supported by Shropshire Council’s Children Services and Shropshire’s Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) are involved in numerous projects including promoting mental health to running a race for life to raise money for cancer to raising awareness about sexual health and type 2 diabetes.

“There is an active church within the ward....if it was not for the church there would not be anything for the demographic of people, it is helping people.”

Councillors’ focus group

“The community car service is for people that need doctors or hospital appointments who don’t have their own transport. The community car service is essential if you live in Highley.”

Older people, people with disabilities and carers focus group

On a scale from 1 ‘not at all willing’ to 5 ‘very willing’, survey respondents were asked how willing they would be to contribute through volunteering or to participate in other ways to community activities.

Whilst 30% are not at all/not willing to contribute, nearly a third (32%) of survey respondents are generally willing or very willing to volunteer or participate in community activities. A similar pattern was noted across all survey respondent groups (gender, age and working status) (Table 4), albeit with a slight increase in willingness by those older/retired residents as opposed to those who are younger or in work.

Table 4: Willingness to volunteer/participate

	1 (Not at all willing)	2	3	4	5 (Very willing)	Don't know
All survey respondents	15%	15%	28%	19%	13%	10%
Male	17%	14%	28%	19%	13%	9%
Female	12%	16%	28%	20%	13%	12%
16-24	19%	13%	30%	16%	9%	12%
25-34	13%	21%	31%	19%	7%	8%
35-44	14%	18%	29%	20%	11%	8%
45-54	16%	16%	27%	17%	12%	12%
55-64	15%	12%	28%	21%	15%	9%
65+	13%	13%	25%	20%	17%	11%
Employee/Self-employed	16%	17%	29%	18%	11%	9%
Not working for other reasons/students ⁵	16%	13%	25%	21%	13%	13%
Retired	12%	12%	27%	22%	16%	11%

Base: varies from 186 to 2,252

Feedback from the focus groups and workshops suggests that encouraging further volunteering and community involvement in delivering services is a positive step to reducing costs of delivering services. A common motivational factor for volunteering is the potential to help change lives for the better. Participants said that advertising of opportunities should focus on tapping into this passion and promote the positive outcomes volunteering could lead to, such as work experience.

“There are youngsters that want to get a CV together who want to apply for a job or do an apprenticeship. It’s about getting everyone engaged and involved in the community.”

Councillors’ focus group

“I work in a university and higher education achievement awards will count for a lot when you are competing with someone who has the same degree as you.”

Mixed residents focus group

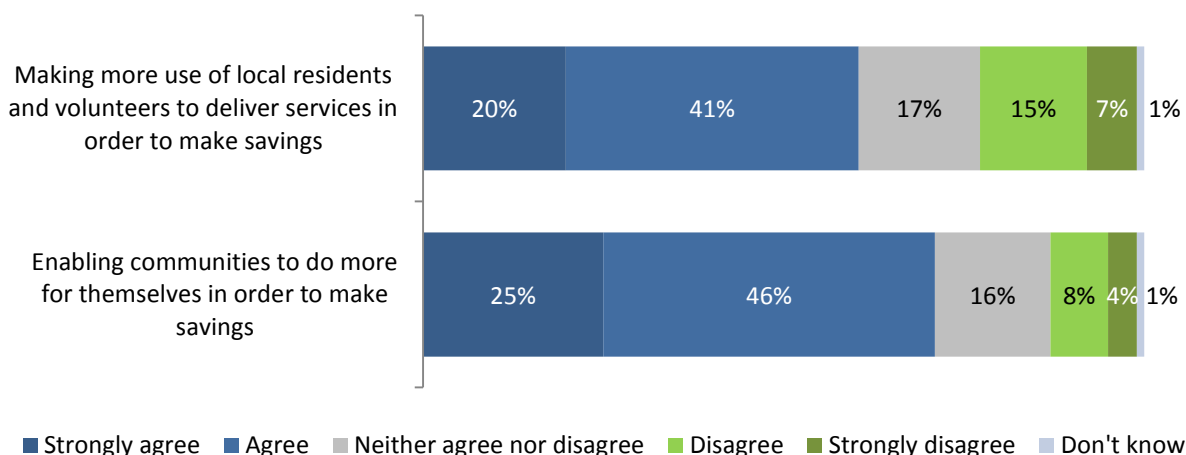
⁵ This includes the following respondent types: Long-term sick or disabled/Looking after the home or family/Unemployed/Other not working/Student (working and not working).

2.2. Delivering services with help from local residents and volunteers

Six in ten respondents generally agree that Shropshire Council should make more use of local residents and volunteers to deliver services in order to make savings, whilst 22% disagree (Figure 4).

There is a high level of agreement in relation to enabling communities to do more for themselves to make savings, with 71% in general agreement and only 12% disagreeing.

Figure 4: Extent of agreement or disagreement with possible actions (all survey respondents)



Base: 2,248

When examining the survey respondent groups these differences emerge with regard to making more use of local residents and volunteers to deliver services to make savings: (Table 5)

- Exactly the same proportions of males and females agree;
- High proportions of survey respondents in the youngest (16-24, 78%) and oldest (65+, 67%) age categories agree compared to those in other age categories; and
- Higher proportions of those surveyed who are not working for other reasons/students agree (70%) compared with working (57%) and retired people (63%).

Table 5: More use of local residents and volunteers (by respondent group)

Subgroup	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Male	23%	38%	17%	13%	8%	1%
Female	17%	44%	16%	15%	6%	1%
16-24	30%	48%	12%	3%	1%	7%
25-34	21%	42%	17%	11%	6%	2%
35-44	17%	41%	19%	12%	9%	1%
45-54	17%	37%	16%	21%	9%	0%
55-64	16%	38%	18%	17%	10%	1%

Subgroup	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
65+	23%	44%	16%	14%	3%	1%
Employee/Self-employed	18%	39%	17%	17%	8%	1%
Not working for other reasons/students ⁶	25%	45%	14%	5%	5%	5%
Retired	21%	42%	17%	14%	5%	0%

Base: varies from 187 to 1,192

Further subgroup analysis of the survey data illustrates there is little difference in agreement between respondent groups in relation to enabling communities to do more for themselves in order to make savings (Table 6).

Table 6: Enabling communities (by respondent group)

Subgroup	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Male	28%	43%	15%	8%	4%	1%
Female	22%	49%	17%	8%	3%	1%
16-24	33%	37%	18%	3%	1%	8%
25-34	19%	54%	16%	6%	3%	2%
35-44	21%	47%	16%	9%	6%	1%
45-54	23%	42%	16%	13%	5%	1%
55-64	25%	46%	17%	7%	4%	1%
65+	26%	49%	15%	7%	2%	0%
Employee/Self-employed	23%	46%	16%	9%	4%	1%
Not working for other reasons/students ⁷	29%	40%	18%	6%	3%	5%
Retired	26%	48%	15%	7%	3%	0%

Base: varies from 187 to 1,193

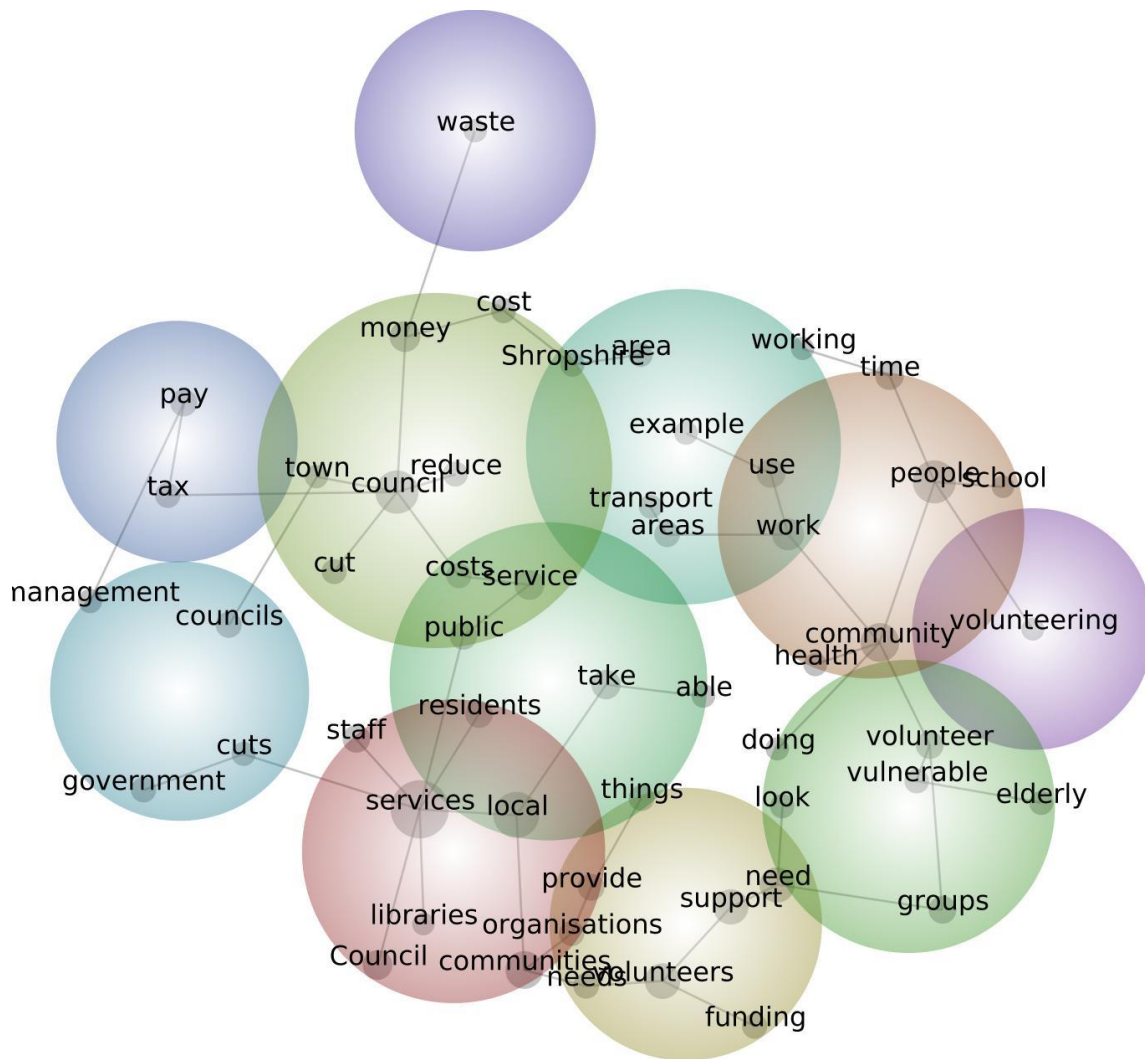
⁶ This includes the following respondent types: Long-term sick or disabled/Looking after the home or family/Unemployed/Other not working/Student (working and not working).

⁷ This includes the following respondent types: Long-term sick or disabled/Looking after the home or family/Unemployed/Other not working/Student (working and not working).

How communities can do more for themselves to protect or increase important services in the county prompted more than 1,047 sets of ideas and suggestions.

As illustrated in Figure 5 the dominant themes concern the need to save Council financial resources (“money”) from being “wasted” or spent on the “wrong things.” Volunteering and supporting schools and health services themes frequently appear, as illustrated in the larger bubbles in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Communities can do more for themselves to protect services



Base: 1,047

The focus group and workshop discussions reveal a strong desire to see enhanced voluntary involvement in delivering services. But, there are also barriers to further involvement – in particular issues around insurance, lack of expertise and legal responsibilities. Participants referred to the perceived difficulties in recruiting and then maintaining a committed group of individuals able to give their time on a regular basis.

“The younger ones won’t have time to volunteer. There are a lot of groups that cannot get enough people to do it and young people just aren’t coming forward.”

Older people, people with disabilities and carers focus group

“Fear, risk (e.g. insurances, lack of expertise/paid staff), why would the community and voluntary sector take that on and feel like they are in the firing line? They might help but they don’t want to take charge legally.”

Partners, providers and stakeholders - workshop C

Qualitative feedback reveal that Local Joint Committees (LJC)⁸ and Parish Clerks are essential connectors between Shropshire Council and the Community, but some caveats were expressed surrounding the continuing purpose of some or all of the LJCs, which were set up in a less austere era.

Furthermore, advice regarding recruitment of volunteers is welcomed alongside more signposting of interested volunteers to existing networks. Participants are looking for grants, incentives and toolkits (the latter to avoid duplication of resources or reinventing wheels) to kick-start interest and to ensure the community activities are sustainable over the longer term. The linkages between volunteering, support and funding are also evident in the survey data as shown Figure 5 above.

“You need to incentivise the communities that you want to transfer responsibility to. There will be a need to provide some kind of financial support (e.g. small grants) and access to expert advice (still from within the Council but on a liaison basis)...If communities feel they have support they are more likely to take on services that the Council can no longer afford to run directly.”

Resident - survey

⁸ The LJCs were established in 2009 across Shropshire in accordance with Sections 101 and 102 of the Local Government Act 1972 and they are the Joint Committees for decision-making. Membership is drawn from representatives of Shropshire Council and Parish/Town Councils from the electoral division(s) and ward(s) within the LJC area. The remit for the LJCs is to encourage public participation and engagement in the decision-making of the Council.

Another common theme running through the qualitative and quantitative responses relates to communities working together and helping each other out. Survey respondents feel that communities should be encouraged to support their local schemes and help vulnerable people with activities such as shopping, clearing leaves, and gardening (this theme is also evident in responses in relation to supporting older people discussed in section 5.2).

“Devolve responsibility to local communities. Organise them and supply sufficient funding to set them up.”

Resident - survey

There is some level of opposition to the idea of communities doing more for themselves. The feedback suggests it takes time and investment for the community to develop the capacity to take responsibility for a service or an asset and that the Council should not rely fully on the community, instead the community should provide a supporting role.

“...reliance on communities to fully deliver services increases the risk of failure...Minimum standards should be applied with use of communities to provide additional support.”

Council staff - survey

“We have developed reliant communities for years, and now we can't just expect those communities to be in a position of resilience overnight.”

A member of Town and Parish Councils, Council staff, involved with a local interest/community/faith group and a resident - survey

To encourage further involvement by communities, participants said Shropshire Council should do more to engage and share information with communities to understand local needs. Similarly, a small number of focus group participants recommend the use of central information hubs within local communities, similar to Ludlow Assembly Rooms, particularly in the more urban areas like Shrewsbury to enable local people to find out about support, advice about services and volunteering opportunities. Libraries and community centres are suitable locations as these buildings already exist within the community.

“We need to be talking and most important listening. Also we need to look at a more local level.”

Town and Parish Councils and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector - workshop A

“In a bigger place like Shrewsbury we really should have a place that we can go (to). The Ludlow Assembly Rooms is quite a good model for the development of Council services generally, a central hub, which kinds of acts like a parent body. It should look to establish a hub in every area for services of all sorts.”

Older people, people with disabilities and carers focus group

3. Working together and delivering services differently

This section focuses on the challenges around working together and provides insights into the perceptions of partners and stakeholders in relation to delivering services locally.

3.1. Working with the Town and Parish Councils, private or voluntary sector

The survey and workshops explored the theme of working with Town and Parish Councils and the voluntary sector to change the management and delivery of services locally. Shropshire Council was keen to explore whether services could be delivered differently, with little or no funding from Shropshire Council.

Workshop participants highlighted that due to the differences in sizes and diversity of areas (very rural and urban) *“one size does not fit all”* when it comes to the delivery of services. Large areas have more resources, skills and facilities. The demographics of these populations also differ greatly.

“We have large Town Councils who have the resources, skills and facilities to perhaps take over the running of libraries and rural Parish Councils with much less capacity and budgets...These things need to be considered in terms of taking on anything from a voluntary point of view.”

Partners, providers and stakeholders - workshop C

Greater partnerships working to provide integrated services for the community is a common theme in the quantitative and qualitative feedback. Survey respondents said that partners should be working together to streamline services and workshop participants state Parish Councils should work together to deliver services locally. Participants said that the maintenance of footpaths and grounds are possible services that Town and Parish Councils could take over greater control.

“Can I suggest that public footpaths be taken over and maintained by Parish Councils/Parish Meetings either individually or collectively (preferably) depending on size.”

Email response

There was a strong message within the workshops that the Town and Parish Councils and VCS sector should take over the delivery of services, who responded that that they cannot take on more without resources and clarity over the services in scope. The Town and Parish Councils also confirmed that there is insufficient investment in the infrastructure to recruit and manage volunteers.

Participants said there is very little coordination and that work is needed to establish how the LJs, Voluntary and Community Sector Assembly (VCSA) and Parish Clerks can support and coordinate across the areas. This work does need to be properly funded and coordinated.

“More working together of Parish Councils – using cluster support via highly trained clerks and LJs.”

Town and Parish Councils and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector - workshop A

Providers of public services identify communication issues between organisations. They said there is scope to improve communication and develop a better understanding of what is happening at the parish and town level.

“Getting different agencies to talk more, and not replicate each other’s work. In Ludlow this is happening, under the auspices of ‘Hands Together Ludlow.’”

A provider of public services, involved with a local interest/community/faith group, resident and working in the VCS - survey

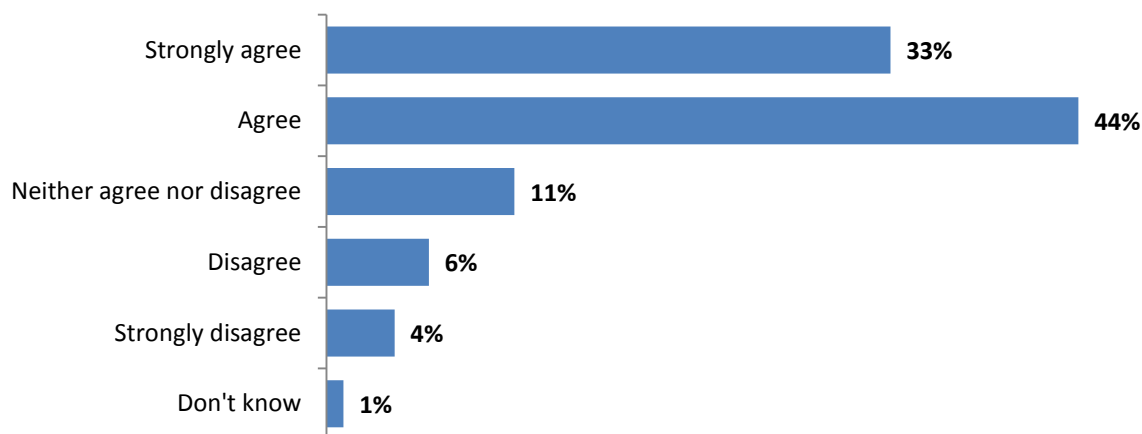
“Closer cooperation with Telford & Wrekin, particularly taking notice of how Telford & Wrekin has helped to build the capacity of Town and Parish Councils to take on new services before expecting them to take them over. Improve and formalise consultation with Parish Councils on service provision.”

A member of Town and Parish Councils, provider of public services, involved with a local interest/community/faith group and a resident - survey

3.2. Working together and combining services

Over three quarters of survey respondents generally agree that Shropshire Council should combine services with other Councils and join up with other public sector organisations locally (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Combining services (all survey respondents)



Base: 2,252

Table 8 shows the extent to which survey respondents (by separate groupings) agree or disagree with combining services with other Councils and joining up with other public sector organisations locally. A slightly greater proportion of male respondents agree with the action compared to females (81% and 76% respectively). Higher proportions of the older age groups (82% of 55-64 year olds and 81% of over 65s) agree with combining services compared with those in the younger age groups (66% of 16-24 years old and 69% of 25-34 year olds) (Table 7).

A slightly higher proportion of those who are retired agree (81%) with combining services compared with those not working for other reasons/students (71%) and those currently in work (79%) (Table 7).

Table 7: Combining services with public sector organisations locally (by respondent group)

Subgroup	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Male	40%	41%	9%	5%	4%	1%
Female	28%	48%	13%	6%	3%	1%
16-24	21%	45%	17%	6%	4%	6%
25-34	23%	46%	13%	11%	4%	3%
35-44	37%	42%	12%	4%	4%	1%
45-54	32%	46%	12%	5%	4%	0%
55-64	37%	45%	8%	6%	4%	1%
65+	38%	43%	11%	4%	3%	1%
Employee/Self-employed	33%	45%	11%	7%	4%	1%

Subgroup	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Not working for other reasons/students ⁹	24%	47%	17%	5%	4%	4%
Retired	38%	43%	10%	5%	3%	1%

Base: varies from 187 to 1,195

Focus group and workshop participants support the combining and sharing of services. A number of participants cite the duplication of effort by local and national organisations as an issue, saying that there is scope for sharing back office functions such as human resources and administration. Furthermore, some participants say that health and youth services need closer integration. One participant said the 'Sustainability and Transformation Plan' will force the Clinical Commissioning Group and local authorities to work together as it is a strategic plan about their integration.

Participants acknowledge the need to share buildings between public sector organisations. A number of participants say that this is more complex than it sounds and it will take time to develop.

"The statutory organisations within Shropshire...should not be separate organisations with the multiple resources they require to operate. The opportunities to bring these organisations together and rationalise the areas of duplication should be taken."

Council staff- survey

"Increased shared services is not as simple as it sounds but the current situation in the public sector can only be achieved by creating economies of scale wherever possible. Increasing outcomes by developing the synergy that should be derived from joint working and overcoming petty politics and short term solutions."

A provider of public services, a business and a resident - survey

"Combining back office functions with neighbouring councils and the CCG, the hospital trust, fire service and the police, such as legal services and human resources, IT services and back office functions. The barriers include the potential political and cultural. The other barrier is to what degree are these specialised?"

Partners, providers and stakeholders - workshop C

There may be greater scope for multi-functional buildings within the community, for example, combining libraries with community centres and Town Councils. One participant said it would be easier to support fewer buildings within the community through fund raising.

⁹ This includes the following respondent types: Long-term sick or disabled/Looking after the home or family/Unemployed/Other not working/Student (working and not working).

“Libraries may have had their day... is there an under-utilised asset that could absorb a library.”

Business focus group

4. Stopping or reducing services and making savings

This section considers participant perceptions of delivering services differently such as stopping, reducing and protecting services and making savings.

4.1. Reductions to specific services

In the early stages of the research, one of the objectives was to understand perceptions of the perceived importance of different Council services. To achieve this, a social research technique to determine the Maximum Difference (Max Diff) between each type of service was employed to find out which is most and least important.

Max-Diff analysis is a powerful statistical tool which enables researchers to pinpoint priorities in quite complex sets of services. In the case of Shropshire there is a good number of services to be considered with which traditional “ranking” approaches do not work very well. This is because respondents find it almost impossible to hold the priorities of large numbers of variables, perhaps for example beyond the top 4 or 5, in their heads at the same time. The Max-Diff approach gives respondents just a few alternatives in each question from which they select just one most and one least important. The specific software developed for this purpose then analyse all the results from all of the prioritising questions and delivers a composite ranking which is far more reliable than any other method.

In this case, each respondent was presented with twelve different services in different combinations of four and asked to ‘trade off’ within each grouping, (i.e. within that particular grouping, which service was the most and which the least, important). The different types of support are presented nine times in different combinations of four (the process is computer generated to ensure equal chances for all alternatives).

Below there is an example of a single iteration of a MaxDiff question. The respondent is asked to select one of the rows to be the most important and another as the least important in this set.

Most important to protect		Least important to protect
	Transport - maintaining roads, public transport, schools transport services and concessionary travel	
	Employment - helping people gain employment, access to education and support for economic development and investment into Shropshire	
	Births, marriages and deaths - registration, coroners and inquests and bereavements	
	Education - schools and educational services	

Trading off the types of services in this way achieves a much more reliable indicator of overall priorities than by asking survey respondents to develop one-off rankings from a long list.

The services for priority ranking via this method were decided upon by Shropshire Council and are as follows:

1. **Births, marriages and deaths** - registration, coroners and inquests and bereavements.
2. **Education** – schools and educational services;
3. **Employment** – helping people gain employment, access to education and support for economic development and investment into Shropshire;
4. **Environment** - waste collection, recycling services and maintaining and protecting Shropshire’s green spaces and countryside;
5. **Health** – healthier lifestyles and services to help prevent ill health;
6. **Housing** – such as supported housing and planning services;
7. **Leisure** - libraries, cultural, tourism and outdoor recreation services;
8. **Older people and vulnerable adults** – to help them live independently and enhance their quality of life;
9. **Running the Council** – overseeing services that manage Shropshire Council’s budget, buildings and Council staff;
10. **Safety** - regulation and protection for businesses and consumers as well as communities;
11. **Transport** - maintaining roads, public transport, schools transport services and concessionary travel; and
12. **Vulnerable children** - fostering and adoption, support for looked after children, ensuring they remain safe from harm.

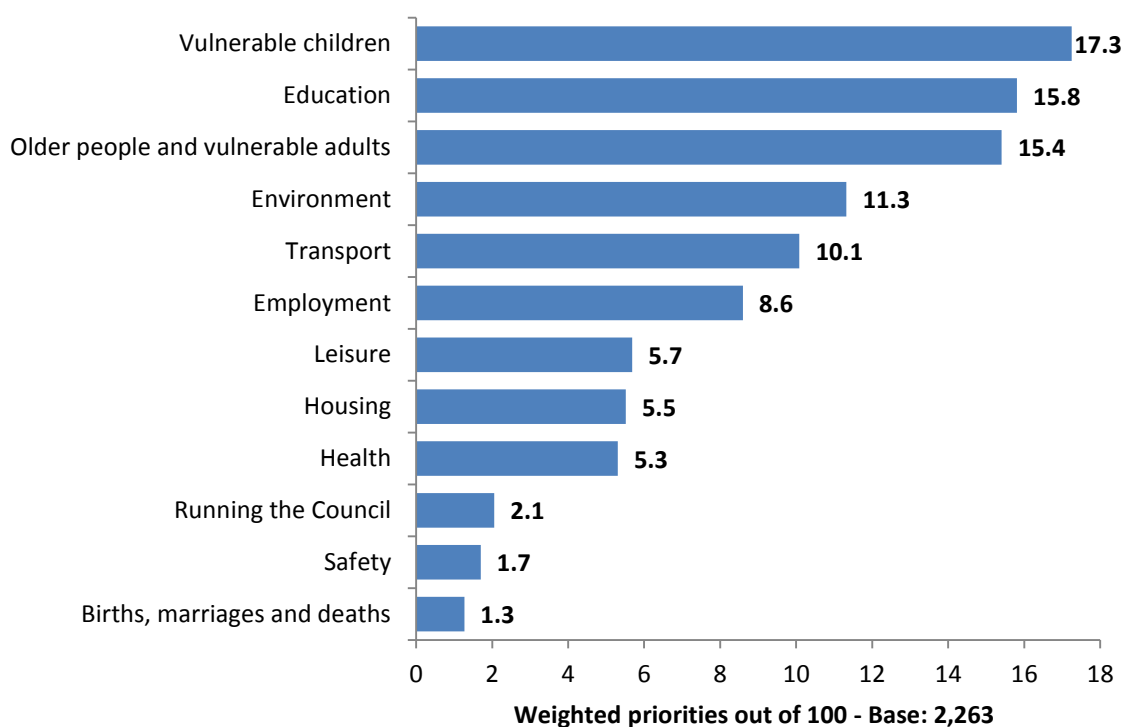
To produce a true, scalable ranking of the different types of services the scores are transformed into a ranking to each of which the software gives a priority weight out of 100. The technique employed here is known as ‘ratio scaling’, which allows us to say that a service with a score of, say, 10 can be considered “twice as important” as a service with a score of 5. In Figure 1, the scores assigned to the different types of services total 100 when combined.

As a result of this exercise it is evident that respondents consider services to vulnerable children the most important to protect from reduction in spending, followed by education services and older people and vulnerable adults services (Figure 7).

Respondents consider vulnerable children services to be twice as important as employment services and almost three times as important to protect from reductions in spending as leisure, housing and health services.

The ratio scaling between male and female survey respondents is generally very similar, with both considering vulnerable children, education and older people and vulnerable adults services the most important to protect from reduction in spending. Females tend to perceive housing services as more important to protect than males, and males tend to perceive health services as of greater relative importance than females¹⁰.

¹⁰ See Appendix 2 for the results broken down by gender.

Figure 7: Perceived importance of areas to protect from reductions (all survey respondents)

The service areas which respondents feel should be protected from reductions in spending differ by age¹¹:

- Respondents aged 44-54, 55-64 and 65+ ranked older people and vulnerable adults higher than those aged 16-24, 25-34 and 35-44;
- Those aged 16-24 and 25-34 ranked employment as more important to protect from reductions in spending compared to those aged 35 and over and the sample as a whole;
- Running the Council is ranked lower amongst those aged under 35 compared to the sample as a whole;
- Environment is ranked lower amongst those aged under 35 compared to those aged over 35 and the sample as a whole; and
- Leisure is ranked lower amongst those aged 16-24 compared to those aged 65+ and the sample as a whole.

¹¹ See Appendix 2 for the results broken down by age.

When looking at survey results by working status¹², differences can also be observed in the results:

- As seen with those aged 65 and over, those that are retired ranked older people and vulnerable adults higher than those who are working and those who are not working for other reasons/students¹³;
- Vulnerable children's services are considered less important amongst those that are retired, compared to the survey sample as a whole;
- Employment services are considered more important amongst those who are not working for other reasons/students, compared to survey respondents that are retired or employees/self-employed;
- Survey respondents that are not working for other reasons/students perceived environmental services as less important than those that are retired or working (employees/self-employed); and
- Housing services are considered more important amongst survey respondents that are not working for other reasons/students and working (employee/self-employed) compared to those that are retired.

Focus group participants were asked to consider why vulnerable children's services are considered the most important to protect from reductions in spending and which parts of the service should be protected most.

Feedback from the focus groups reflects the survey findings. Participants said vulnerable children can do the least to protect themselves from harm. The young people's focus group explain how young people are the next generation so need to be protected as they have years ahead of them

Ensuring children remain safe from harm is a core service area requiring trained professionals, therefore, it is more difficult to get volunteers involved. Participants also said that as abuse of children is regularly in the news, it heightens people's perceptions of the need to protect them.

"Because of our culture it's considered important and children are in the news a lot. It's 'ensuring children remain safe from harm' that is the most important."

Councillors' focus group

¹² See Appendix 2 for the results broken down by working status.

¹³ This includes the following respondent types: Long-term sick or disabled/Looking after the home or family/Unemployed/Other not working/Student (working and not working).

Services nominated the least important for protection against reduction in spending, included running the Council (overseeing services that manage Shropshire Council's budget, buildings and Council staff), births, marriages and deaths (registration, coroners and inquests and bereavements) and safety (regulation and protection for businesses and consumers as well as communities) (Figure 7).

This was explored in the focus groups where participants described how births, marriages and deaths, as well as safety, are "*not regularly used*" and are, to a certain extent, self-funding or can be delivered at little cost. They feel that people are not going to prioritise running the Council over other services such as keeping people safe.

"Not surprised because you don't use births marriages and deaths very often and the vast majority have no interface with safety."

Councillors' focus group

"A lot of these are self-funding, and births, deaths and marriages don't cost much to provide. It's difficult for people to understand what the costs in the running the Council are, and why they are necessary. They are never going to say protect the Council."

Mixed residents focus group

4.2. Stop delivering some services altogether to maintain funding in other areas

A series of questions were asked during the survey, focus groups and workshops on the theme of removal of discretionary expenditure and protecting some service areas.

Table 8 shows the extent to which survey respondents agree or disagree with protecting some services and cutting back other services in order to make savings by respondent groups (gender, age and working status).

Nearly two-thirds of survey respondents (62%) generally agree that Shropshire Council should protect some services and cut back others in order to make savings, while 17% disagree.

Table 8: Protecting some services and cutting back others services (by respondent group)

Subgroup	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
All survey respondents	18%	44%	19%	11%	6%	2%
Male	21%	43%	18%	9%	7%	2%
Female	14%	45%	21%	12%	6%	2%
16-24	15%	36%	24%	12%	4%	10%
25-34	18%	37%	23%	13%	6%	3%

Subgroup	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
35-44	18%	44%	18%	10%	10%	1%
45-54	22%	45%	16%	11%	6%	1%
55-64	17%	48%	17%	11%	6%	0%
65+	15%	46%	22%	9%	6%	2%
Employee/Self-employed	19%	45%	18%	11%	6%	2%
Not working for other reasons/students ¹⁴	16%	35%	23%	14%	6%	5%
Retired	16%	47%	20%	9%	6%	1%

Base: varies from 187 to 2,243

Sub-analysis of the question on protecting some services and cutting back other services in order to make savings between groups show:

- Similar proportions of males and females agree ;
- Slightly higher proportions of those aged 35 and over (64%) tend to agree compared to those under 35 (53%); and
- The majority of working and retired people (64% and 63% respectively) agree compared to those that are not working for other reasons/students (51%).

The qualitative feedback provided explanation for these findings. Participants say that some services are essential, but others should be cut back or delivered in a different way. Theatres, leisure facilities, museums and outdoor recreation should be cut back (Acton Scott farm being a specific example). They say that these activities should be contracted out to businesses and Town and Parish Councils to run.

Furthermore, the Ellesmere Boathouse which was previously managed by Shropshire Council is now run by a private company and is considered to be doing well. One participant said that advice about running/managing a business is best sourced from the Chamber of Commerce rather than Shropshire Council.

“Reduce expenditure on the arts, theatres and museums. They need to be self-funding or sponsored. Sadly they are luxury for more prosperous times.”

Business focus group

¹⁴ This includes the following respondent types: Long-term sick or disabled/Looking after the home or family/Unemployed/Other not working/Student (working and not working).

“Acton Scott, if it’s not good enough to make profit it should be given to the private sector to make a go of it.”

Email response

There was a mixed opinion about the extent to which Shropshire Council should stop delivering arts, leisure and outdoor recreation activities. Participants involved in those sectors tend to disagree with cuts backs to these services due to what they call the “*unintended consequences*.” For example, health issues due to a lack of physical activity and mental health problems with young people. Another concern relates to match funding, Shropshire Council provides revenue grants to various organisations and these grants are used to lever external funding from other sources. These interdependencies between discretionary and statutory services and funding streams warrant further investigation to avoid unforeseen consequences wherever possible.

“For a small amount of money you can maintain the footpath network, park facilities and health facilities then you can keep your eye on the bigger game which is making people healthier and reduce the money spent on adult social care.”

Partners, providers and stakeholders – workshop C

“There are hundreds of examples across the country where creative activity has effectively been used to tackle problems especially with prevention work for adult social care or children and young people... They are also very effective in providing intervention for e.g. mental health problems - especially with young people.”

Email response

In the main, qualitative feedback suggests that local people wanted to find out more about funding and the associated costs in delivering services such as music hall and leisure centres. They are keen to find out more about the usage and value of the individual services as this information would enable them to make informed decisions about which could be cut and delivery that is more effective. Early in 2016, Town and Parish Councils have been involved in initial decisions about the services in scope for working differently, including libraries, leisure centres and outdoor maintenance.

“They need to know how much is attached to each of these services and also the usage should be told to us...It is a question that I have been asked by people because they want to take part [in the survey]. People want to make an informed decision. We have to save £77 million pounds.”

Councillors’ focus group

There is a mixed attitude towards outsourcing services: the focus group of older people, those with disabilities and carers disagree with the principle of outsourcing. They feel it is only profitable

services that would attract businesses interested in leasing or purchasing. They criticise the fragmentation of services and fixed term contracts. In contrast, participants in the other focus groups are more open to the idea of outsourcing but point to the need for professionally-written contracts and service level agreements to ensure that Shropshire Council gets the best deal.

“Outsource more enforcement and regulatory functions and remove ineffective layers of management.”

A business and resident - survey

4.3. Invest in IT to increase productivity and reduce staff costs

A small majority (53%) of survey respondents agree that the Council should invest in IT to increase productivity and reduce staff costs, just over a fifth (21%) disagree (Table 9). Where IT is concerned respondent groups perceptions differed but not markedly (Table 9):

- Similar proportions of those that are working, not working for other reasons/students and retired agree;
- A higher proportion (59%) of males agree compared to females (48%); and
- There is only slight difference in opinion between age groups.

Table 9: Investing in IT to increase productivity

Subgroup	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
All survey respondents	17%	36%	25%	15%	6%	2%
Male	21%	38%	23%	11%	5%	2%
Female	14%	34%	28%	18%	5%	2%
16-24	21%	28%	24%	13%	5%	9%
25-34	19%	38%	19%	18%	4%	2%
35-44	20%	34%	25%	12%	6%	2%
45-54	19%	33%	26%	15%	6%	1%
55-64	14%	35%	27%	16%	7%	1%
65+	14%	42%	27%	12%	3%	1%
Employee/Self-employed	18%	34%	26%	15%	6%	1%
Not working for other reasons/students	21%	32%	21%	17%	4%	5%
Retired	15%	42%	25%	13%	4%	1%

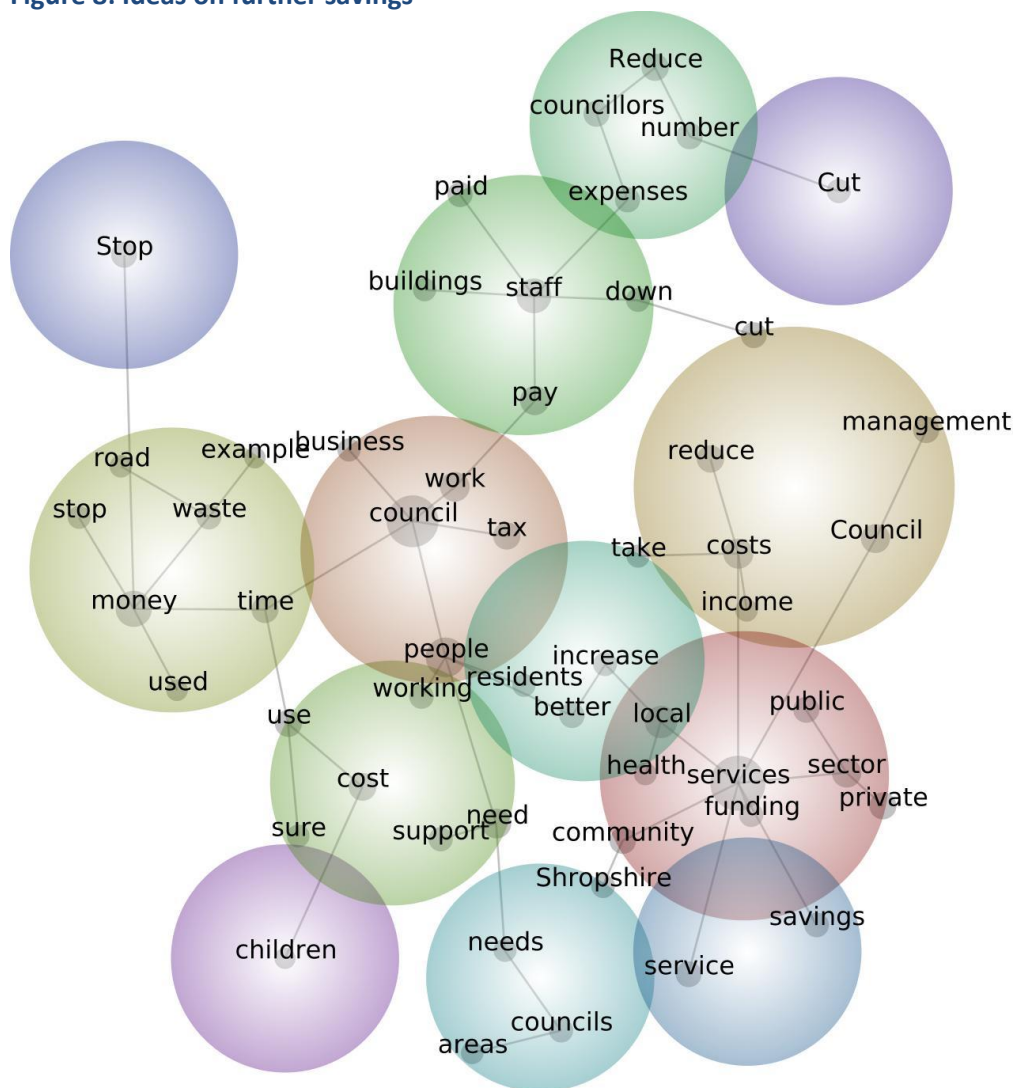
Base: varies from 187 to 2,240

4.4. Making further savings

In total 1,142 survey responses commented on how the Council can make further savings. Figure 8 illustrates the themes and linkages emerging from this question.

The main themes centre on reducing Council costs in the form of salaries and expenses, reducing what is seen by some as “waste” (this was particularly evident in its linkage with road spending). Another dominant theme shown in Figure 8 relates to increasing the numbers of services provided either by volunteers (“community”) or by businesses (“private”). Discussions around Council Tax also featured in the responses to this question.

Figure 8: Ideas on further savings



Base: 1,142

The written responses to this survey question closely reflect the discussions at the focus groups and the workshops on ways the Council can make further savings: avoiding duplication of services, setting up commercial partnerships, increasing efficiencies and operating more like a business, selling redundant assets, and increasing Council Tax.

5. Prevention and supporting older people

During workshops, discussions took place about a key action of managing demand and the greater use of prevention. This was defined as identifying opportunities and implementing developments that specifically target preventing people needing to enter services. Examples include how to help people to avoid falling and injuring themselves, or enabling them to better manage their health conditions so that they can remain independent and in their own home.

5.1. Manage demand and greater use of prevention

Many participants are in favour of early interventions and prevention to address long-term health issues. Investment in prevention is considered a long-term cost saving. Participants said that the cost of adult social care (ASC) is a fundamental issue and that options to reducing ASC services to their statutory minimum should be the focus of further discussion.

“Adult social care is a fundamental issue – all the others are tinkering. What needs to be done has to focus on adult social care.”

Partners, providers and stakeholder workshop B

5.2. Supporting people within their communities

In principle, participants support domiciliary care and helping to ensure that people remain within their communities. Participants in Shropshire Older People’s Assembly said better support for people who are discharged out of hospital is needed.

“It's about keeping people out of the acute hospital sector...it's bad for them and expensive, so it's about facilitating settings to keep them out”.

Partners, providers and stakeholder workshop C

Several participants said that networks of volunteers and local groups could play a more fundamental role in looking after the interests of vulnerable elderly and the existing community group roles should be expanded. Town and Parish Councils said they could contribute by working together more closely. A number of participants cite a lack of resources and inadequate training as a barrier to further involvement in supporting older people.

“[What should we do more of] to keep an eye out for vulnerable people within their own communities.”

Shropshire Older People’s Assembly event

A number of local and national initiatives are cited with the aim to spread positive health messages and reducing isolation. The Compassionate Communities model in Broseley whilst in its early days is considered to be pulling people together to support the terminally ill. The 'Make Every Contact Count' national agenda was discussed as an opportunity to reduce social isolation.

Having more contact with people through lunch clubs and day care centres is thought to improve people's quality of life and instead of seeking medical advice participants said that people should be better signposted to existing voluntary groups and befriending services. It was felt that a signposting service should be set up that could direct people to all the groups available in the person areas, as people tend to go to the GP as their first port of call.

"If our aim is to get that top line budget down for adult social care, which to a large extent is about the health of the local population, if we can improve the health of the older population that will reduce that figure. 'Making Every Contact Help'. There are lots of groups in local areas and they interact with older people and local people so they could get people in to raise awareness of the preventative agenda. The big win is to get people to live healthier lives."

Partners, providers and stakeholders - workshop C

"More use of social prescribing. We have thousands of voluntary groups, are we maximising our sign-posting to these community bodies, just having social contact can make a difference to people lives...Sheffield is a bit of a trailblazer for social treatment instead of medical treatment".

Partners, providers and stakeholders - workshop C

As mentioned in section 3.2, some participants think that public sector services should work more closely together in order to best meet the needs of those who are growing older. Participants at Shropshire Older People's Assembly event said that health and social care budgets need to be combined rather than being treated as separate entities. Shropshire Council is cited as a "neutral organisation" without any political and religious focus that should take on a coordination role.

6. Generate income locally

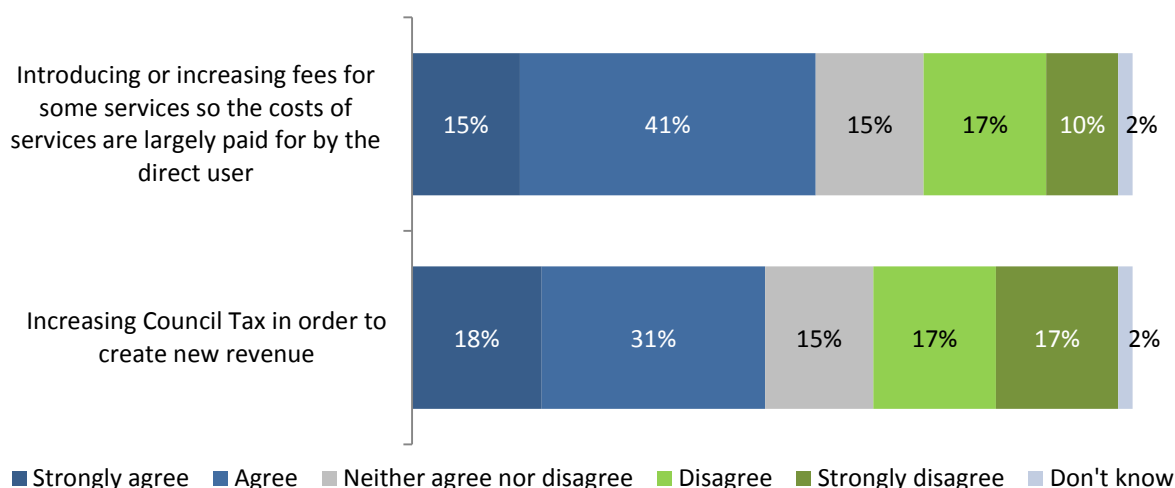
This section focuses on the extent to which participants agreed with different ways of raising income locally and the perceived barriers and solutions to the issues raised.

6.1. Council Tax and increasing charges and fees

Almost six in ten of survey respondents agree with introducing or increasing fees for some services so that the costs of services are largely paid for by the direct user. This is in contrast to 27% disagreeing with this suggestion (Figure 9).

Increasing Council Tax in order to create new revenues was a less popular action. However the proportion that agree (49%) with this course of action does outweigh those who disagree (34%).

Figure 9: Generating income (all survey respondents)



Varies from 2,218 to 2,239

Slightly more (59%) male survey respondents agree with introducing or increasing fees for some services so the costs of services are largely paid for by the service user compared to female respondents (53%) (Table 10). Only 37% of those in the youngest age category (16-24) agree with this action compared to six in ten (61%) of those aged 45-54 and 58% of those aged 65+ (Table 10).

Just over 40% of survey respondents that are not working/long-term sick or disabled/looking after the home or family/students agreed with this action compared to six in ten (59%) that are working.

Table 10: Service fees (by respondent group)

Subgroup	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Male	20%	39%	15%	14%	11%	2%
Female	11%	42%	16%	20%	9%	2%

Subgroup	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
16-24	9%	28%	19%	19%	13%	11%
25-34	14%	40%	13%	22%	10%	2%
35-44	19%	38%	14%	17%	10%	2%
45-54	19%	42%	12%	15%	11%	0%
55-64	13%	43%	18%	15%	10%	1%
65+	15%	43%	16%	16%	9%	1%
Employee/Self-employed	18%	41%	14%	17%	9%	1%
Not working for other reasons/student	8%	33%	18%	19%	13%	7%
Retired	13%	43%	17%	16%	10%	1%

Base: varies from 186 to 1,108

Agreement with increasing Council Tax differs by survey respondent groups - age and working status, but is generally similar by gender (Table 11). Higher proportions of survey respondents over 45 years old agree with the idea of increasing Council Tax compared to those under the age of 35.

Table 11: Increasing Council Tax (by respondent group)

Subgroup	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Male	22%	30%	14%	14%	18%	2%
Female	15%	33%	16%	19%	15%	2%
16-24	4%	13%	23%	18%	29%	13%
25-34	14%	24%	18%	20%	21%	3%
35-44	21%	24%	16%	22%	17%	1%
45-54	23%	35%	11%	14%	15%	1%
55-64	18%	38%	14%	16%	14%	0%
65+	22%	37%	15%	15%	11%	1%
Employee/Self-employed	20%	31%	15%	17%	16%	1%
Not working for other reasons/student	8%	19%	20%	20%	25%	9%
Retired	21%	39%	14%	15%	11%	0%

Base: varies from 186 to 1,122

Generation of income from sources such as Council Tax and raising incomes locally was discussed in more detail in the focus groups and workshops.

Participants think that increasing revenue is a way the Council can continue to deliver the vital services. They feel that this was equally as important as making savings and want to hear more about the Council's ideas on generating income. In addition many participants provided suggestions about how the Council can generate further income, for example charges and fees for services,

attracting more businesses to the area to raise the revenue generated from business rates and encouraging new builds to increase the revenue generated from Council Tax.

“We need to streamline planning for the County for change of use and reuse, and encourage businesses to raise revenue...in about four years the business rates should be going direct to the Council, they should be encouraging planning and buildings to raise revenue now, it’s the quickest way to raise money and jobs.”

Businesses focus group

Participants feel that increasing Council Tax is the best way to collect large sums of money across the County and will be more effective than charging for services. The removal of the referendum limit to increase Council Tax further was not something discussed in any detail.

“We have to pay more. We have to address the income as well. It’s a question of how they run things, the Council Tax in whatever form is the easiest way to charge a lot of money.”

Mixed residents focus group

The feedback from the qualitative focus groups and workshops shows that participants are in support of increased fees and charges for some services. A number of services are cited as possible areas for further fees and charges for example, pest control, planning, leisure facilities, park and ride and parking. There is a willingness to pay for fees like libraries and professionally delivered services. Many participants objected to the charges and fees being applied to all and they said there needs to be a way to find a way to exclude the vulnerable through means testing and concessions as not everyone can afford to pay.

“I believe that the public are prepared to pay higher taxes to benefit from reliable, consistent, professionally delivered services.”

A member of Town and Parish Councils - survey

“I would be willing to pay a fee for libraries, but not everyone can pay, so it needs to be means tested.”

Older people, people with disabilities and carers focus group

“...the private sector could take over a lot of things...You could make concessions for certain groups. There is scope for the Town and Parish councils to take on more responsibility for running some services i.e. swimming pools.”

Partners, providers and stakeholders - workshop C

7. Business growth

Attracting and growing business in Shropshire was a possible future action considered in the business focus groups and workshops, and this section focuses on perceptions of barriers and possible solutions to delivering this action.

7.1. Further involvement from businesses and developing new relationships

The businesses engaged in the research through the focus groups (including and the survey generally agree with the principle of further involvement. They say they have knowledge and experience they could share with the Council to help them to plan into the future. This suggests greater collaboration and that the Council should learn from and liaise more with them more frequently. New relationships between business and organisations should be encouraged with private business seen as the “*lifeblood of our community*”.

“Learn from businesses...learn from how we handle austerity (for example, how we cut nice to have activities, how we review operations from the most effective processes etc.)...business will probably help if it means a better future.”

Business focus group

“Treat services like a business so you don’t spend money unnecessarily. It’s important that the Council treats everything it has like it’s a business.”

Younger residents focus group

Most of the smaller businesses had not heard of the Shropshire Business Ambassador network¹⁵, but others are engaged with Shropshire Council through Shropshire’s Business Board and the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP). The general feeling amongst the business focus group is that there is work to do to increase confidence in the Council to enable and encourage more businesses to become involved. A key message from this group is that Shropshire Council needs to connect with businesses far more. More cooperation between businesses and with the Council is one way the Council can create efficiencies and deliver services together. Given the small number of businesses involved in the research, this warrants further investigation.

“...they should set up mechanisms to get groups together like this [the focus group] to talk about business and Council policy.”

Business focus group

¹⁵ Shropshire Business Ambassadors is a network of business people who raise awareness of the business expertise in the county and promote Shropshire. Ambassadors sit on the Shropshire Business Board to ensure the business community have a strong voice.

Poor broadband connectivity especially in rural areas is a barrier standing in the way of attracting and growing business. Examples of neighbouring councils were cited as having the necessary infrastructure to attract businesses into their areas. Participants describe how improving broadband connectivity and connecting communities without broadband would enable better outcomes, particularly for businesses in the more rural parts of Shropshire.

“Shropshire is a large county that is full of small businesses, for that you need internet connections and phone lines that work. Internet connections are patchy.”

Business focus group

“We are trying to save money but my most important thing is good communication we can’t have thriving business without communication between the Council and businesses and mobile, roads, transport.”

Businesses focus group

7.2. Skills gaps

A number of businesses report skills gaps pointing out that they struggle to recruit local people with the technical skills. Overcoming these issues presents a challenge. Participants said they often source employees from outside the local area to expand their businesses and that better linkages between universities and businesses to build local skills and attract people to the area could improve the skills base of the area. A Councillor said that the University is already working with businesses to develop courses and more businesses are invited to input into course development.

“A lot of people can’t find the skills that they need. If there was someone at the University or college that could build a list of what people need.”

Business focus group

“Greater liaison with the University, more needs to be done to attract more people here with courses that are needed for skills to be retained in the county.”

Partners, providers and stakeholders - workshop B

Business workshop participants question the unique selling point of Shropshire – the ‘crown jewels’ of Shropshire, the message being that local specialisms are not highlighted or well-known and that as a result this is in need of a plan to bring these to the fore.

8. Conclusions and recommendations

Overall, the research has engaged a wide range of local people and the results represent a good spread across social segments and geographic areas. It was noteworthy that as the research progressed there was an increased willingness and enthusiasm to get involved in the Big Conversation. The focus groups, workshops and feedback sessions were all well attended and covered a wide range of issues and actions.

Common overall themes:

The research elicited a number of key messages and themes:

- The dominance of the adult social care budget over all others, is a fundamental priority issue in need of urgent addressing;
- There is a broad acceptance that some services should be protected and that the costs of some services should reduce;
- There is a strong desire to see enhanced voluntary involvement in delivering services, with the caveat of financial support to leverage greater activity;
- Where possible back office functions (for example, payroll, HR) should be integrated with other public sector organisations;
- There is support for increasing the income of the area via increasing the Council Tax and introducing or increasing charges and fees for services;
- Town and Parish Councils working together is a valuable way forward but feel that support such as knowledge and expertise is essential;
- Some issues have been identified with communication, awareness and engagement, for example between Shropshire Council and business and Shropshire Council and Town and Parish Councils; and
- There is scope for better coordination of health services between organisations such as the Shropshire Council and the CCG.

Adult social care and learning from other councils:

Adult services represents the biggest proportion of the Councils expenditure. Participants cite that a fundamental redesign is necessary to make the savings required. Early interventions and prevention to address long-term health issues policy shift is a pivotal activity for the reduction of costs over the longer term. The need to tackle social isolation is a key message. Shropshire Council has a role to play in signposting people to existing VCS and community groups to help tackle social isolation and ensure that a holistic care plan for a person is well planned and delivered.

The Village and Community Agents working with over 50s in Gloucestershire is an example of good practice¹⁶. Village and Community Agents are employed and managed by Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC), and are funded by Gloucestershire County Council and Gloucestershire

¹⁶ <https://www.villageagents.org.uk/>

Clinical Commissioning Group. They provide easy access to information that enables older people to make informed choices about their needs. The Community and Village Agents aim to help make older people feel more independent, secure, cared for and to have a better quality of life.

Sheffield City Council is described as a trailblazer for using social rather than medical treatment. Sheffield City Council's Community Wellbeing Programme (CWP) programme focuses on interventions to increase access to services and to tackle the issues that can lead to health problems. It seeks to build on the skills that already exist in these communities. This social prescribing activity to support people to improve their health is an approach that Shropshire Council could consider as an early intervention model to divert people away from primary care to other support networks within the community. For this, we recommend that Shropshire Council has direct conversations with other councils such as Sheffield to find out about the programme set-up, the barriers and any solutions in relation to implementation. Over the longer term, this should reduce the expenditure on capital funds but will still rely on signposting from an appropriate source.

Local residents and volunteers delivering services:

A wide range of community activities is already taking place across Shropshire. There is much that can be learned from existing community-led services, such as Ludlow Visitor Information Centre and library activities already taking place within the community.

Participants are in definite support of more community involvement in running of services such as libraries. At the same time however, participants comment how difficult it is to recruit and maintain a committed group of individuals able to give up their time on a regular basis. Regular volunteers said it tends to be the same people volunteering their time repeatedly.

A perceived barrier to volunteering relates to health and safety and legal implications. One way to overcome this was to provide communities with advice and guidance over such matters. This is where Parish Clerks and LJs – 'essential connectors' between the Council and the community can play an important role.

Voluntary and community organisations:

Most participants are positive about the VCS organisations taking on a more active role in delivering services. There is a will for the VCS to work together to deliver services to provide an integrated service for the community. However, participants emphasise the need for more resources and support by Shropshire Council in order to deliver them effectively.

In particular, the VCS feel that appropriate financial support was essential to help with the cost of training. Providing support for such groups would help to assure communities and individuals that they will receive a high quality service.

Where services are being taken over by community or voluntary groups, participants recommend that there is a gradual hand-over process to ensure change happens properly. We recommend that

Shropshire Council continues to recognise the contribution of voluntary and community organisations and support them appropriately.

Gathering and sharing information:

Across the survey, focus groups and workshops participants talked about the need for Shropshire Council to further engage with customers and communities to understand local needs and share information and knowledge. Participants wanted to find out more about the funding of services and the associated costs in delivery. They also requested more information about services that Shropshire Council anticipates being delivered by others and the budgets associated. Public sector partners feel that this information would enable them to make informed decisions on service delivery.

In tune with this, Phase 1 of the Big Conversation has highlighted that those who got involved are very keen to share their views and help share in the development of Shropshire's future. Interest in participating in the focus groups and workshops was high, and the insights, attitudes and opinion explored demonstrate that participants were enthusiastic about being able to contribute to the spending plans and actions in whatever way possible.

During the Phase 1 research, a wide range of local people put their names forward to be involved further in the Big Conversation research. We recommend Shropshire Council continues its good work in engaging with residents and local communities and communicates effectively and regularly about activities and next steps. These messages should be cascaded to communities via a variety of mechanisms. These include the Big Conversation website, this will need to be widely and cheaply promoted. Existing community groups have a key role to play in sharing information alongside the Town and Parish Councils and Local Members existing events/meetings. Given the willingness to get more involved within the community, the Big Conversation website should be used to promote one-off and longer term volunteering opportunities.

Working together locally and combining services:

In order to take on the delivery of services, Town and Parish Council said they needed knowledge and expertise to help with health and safety and legal matters, perhaps in the form of toolkits. Discussions have already taken place with Town and Parish Councils regarding services such as libraries, leisure centres and outdoor maintenance. Parish and Town Councils are now deciding if they want to run the services themselves, contract with others to deliver services and contract with Shropshire Council to deliver the services. Examples of how well these are working, the pitfalls and preparation needed could also be included on the Big Conversation website to encourage and advise others.

Shropshire Council's role in the future should increasingly become as facilitator - ensuring partners are working together and developing new relationships with organisations to provide integrated services for the community. Moving forward Shropshire Council should continue to encourage

dialogue and closer working relationships between other councils, partners, stakeholders and businesses with the key aim of greater coordination and adopting strategic approaches.

Participants in the workshops with experience in the voluntary sector highlight the need to establish the purpose of the LJs and how they and others such as the Shropshire's Voluntary and Community Sector Assembly (VCSA) and Parish Clerks can support and coordinate across the area.

Attract and grow business

Qualitative feedback indicates that further involvement from businesses and the VCS should be encouraged. Greater cooperation between the partners is one way the Council can create efficiencies and deliver services together. Businesses said they have knowledge and experience they could share with the Council to help them to plan into the future. We recommend that the Shropshire Business Ambassadors network is promoted to provide further linkages between businesses and Shropshire Council.

The acquisition of appropriate skills is a concern for local businesses. Closer relationships between businesses and University Centre Shrewsbury would be a positive way forward to bring people into the area and build skills. There are opportunities for closer links between the Town and Parish Councils and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). The Marshes Growth Hub a business website will be launched later this year. This will provide local business support and if successful, could be replicated across Shropshire to provide support to a range of business sectors. Shropshire's Business Board also provides an opportunity for further involvement of businesses.

Participants suggest more work is needed to attract businesses to the area by improving local conditions such as internet connections and mobile networks especially in rural areas. Participants also discussed the importance of promoting Shropshire to attract businesses - the enterprise zone at Riverside Mall in Shrewsbury provides such an opportunity. It may be timely to reconsider the decision taken earlier to discourage heavy industry into the area?

Moving forward:

Phase 1 of the Big Conversation provides a good baseline of understanding of local perceptions of service spending priorities, ways of making savings and ways to increase local involvement in delivering services. However, there is only so far such an early study can reach and there are restrictions to the depth to which any one component or relationship can be developed.

The survey was essential to gain an overview of local perceptions and experiences. The results from the mainly quantitative survey helped with the development of the topics and actions for further discussion at the focus groups and workshops.

The Phase 1 research has involved a small number of businesses in Shropshire, but further research is required to examine how businesses of all sizes can be more involved in the delivery of services (following models such as the Boathouse, Ellesmere and the Foundry restaurant at Theatre Severn).

By contracting out the running of further Council assets this could be a more sustainable approach into the future than reliance on the Town and Parish Council and the VCS.

Further engagement in relation to education, children and young people services is required. Since schools are already set up with facilities and assets, greater involvement of parents, children and schools in the Big Conversation and youth services would be of enormous value going forward.

Given the energy and ideas shown in the young people's focus group, there is certainly a need and a will to involve younger people and children in planning for Shropshire's future. However, the opportunities for residents to do more in relation to improving the education and wellbeing of children and young people warrants further investigation.

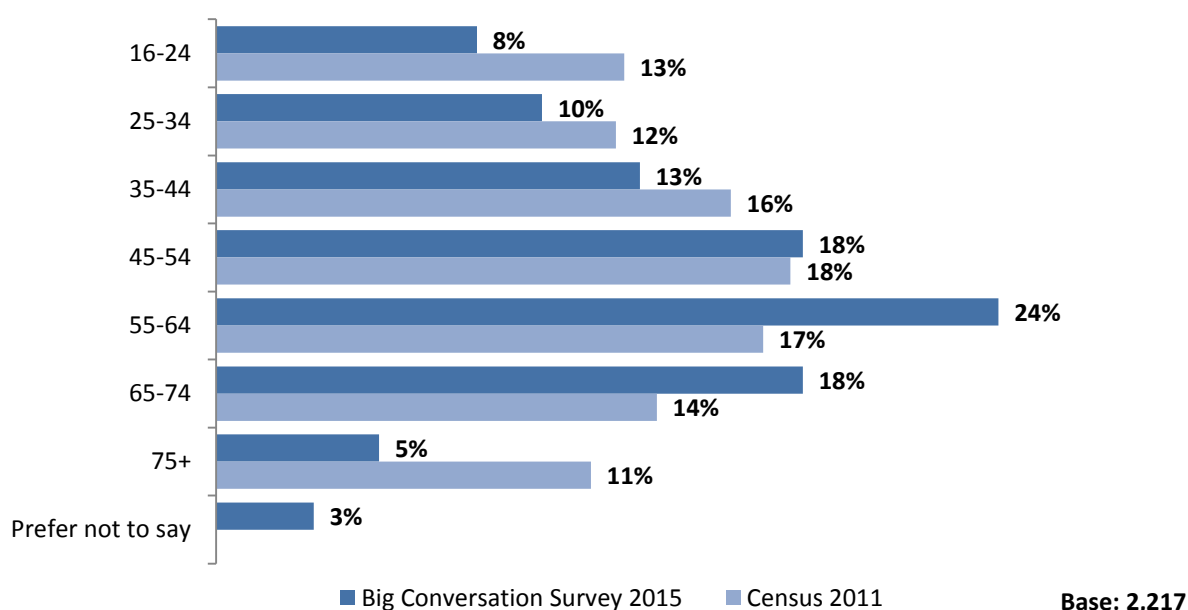
A final recommendation is to consider further in-depth research to understand Council staff views on ways of reducing Shropshire Council's running costs. Some already mentioned include sharing council buildings with other public sector partners and innovative ways of using IT and web-based interfaces for the delivery of services. Whilst Shropshire Council has invited comments from staff on ways to run services more efficiently, there is certainly, further scope to explore how the workforce can be developed further to respond to the financial challenges and change their culture to one that is more commercially-centred.

Appendix 1 – Survey respondent profile

In terms of gender breakdown, 51% of survey respondents are females, 46% are males and 2% prefer not to say. In comparison, the 2011 Census population data for the Shropshire area shows 50% females and 50% males¹⁷.

Figure 11 compares the age bands of survey respondents to the population of Shropshire as a whole (Census 2011). The survey has captured a broad spread of age groups and appears to reveal a slight under-representation among the younger age groups collectively (16-44s) and those aged 75 and over.

Figure 10: Age (excluding businesses only)



Survey respondents were asked how many members of their household fall within each of the age categories listed in Table 12. Some 57% are adults aged under 65.

Table 12: Households by age band (excluding businesses only)

Age band	Total reported	% mix
0-4	501	11%
5-11	426	9%
12-17	446	9%
18-24	427	9%
25-34	347	7%
35-44	560	12%
45-54	585	12%
55-64	758	16%

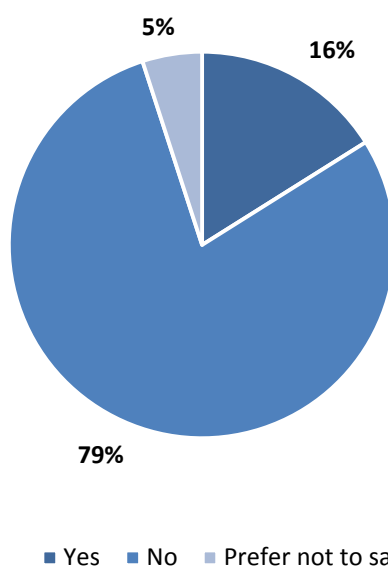
¹⁷ The census data for gender is based on all age groups.

Age band	Total reported	% mix
65-74	499	11%
75-84	127	3%
85+	33	1%

Base: 2,217

One in six (16%) claim that they act as informal or unpaid carers to a relative or friend who need regular care and support (Figure 12).

Figure 11: Informal or unpaid carers to a relative or friend (excluding businesses only)



Base: 2,217

The Big Conversation has generated a broad spread of responses from across the wards (Table 13). The percentage mix is similar to that achieved by the 2011 Census.

Table 13: Ward (excluding businesses only)

Ward	Number of Big Conversation survey respondents	%	Ward population (Census 2011)	%
Abbey	37	2%	3767	1%
Albrighton	16	1%	4628	2%
Alveley and Claverley	18	1%	4032	1%
Bagley	28	2%	4621	2%
Battlefield	5	0%	4193	1%
Bayston Hill, Column and Sutton	90	5%	11982	4%
Belle Vue	59	3%	4550	1%
Bishop's Castle	43	2%	3728	1%
Bowbrook	21	1%	3904	1%
Bridgnorth East and Astley Abbots	33	2%	6614	2%
Bridgnorth West and Tasley	71	4%	6830	2%

Ward	Number of Big Conversation survey respondents	%	Ward population (Census 2011)	%
Broseley	25	1%	4929	2%
Brown Clee	7	0%	3906	1%
Burnell	18	1%	4597	2%
Castlefields and Ditherington	47	3%	4231	1%
Cheswardine	6	0%	4240	1%
Chirbury and Worthen	15	1%	3049	1%
Church Stretton and Craven Arms	120	7%	8936	3%
Clee	17	1%	4595	2%
Cleobury Mortimer	30	2%	7226	2%
Clun	25	1%	3964	1%
Copthorne	56	3%	4105	1%
Corvedale	22	1%	3783	1%
Ellesmere Urban	33	2%	3835	1%
Gobowen, Selattyn and Weston Rhyn	27	1%	5060	2%
Harlescott	24	1%	3605	1%
Highley	12	1%	4429	1%
Hodnet	27	1%	3988	1%
Llanymynech	18	1%	3967	1%
Longden	21	1%	4119	1%
Loton	13	1%	4129	1%
Ludlow East	26	1%	3696	1%
Ludlow North	40	2%	4136	1%
Ludlow South	29	2%	4808	2%
Market Drayton East	26	1%	8654	3%
Market Drayton West	19	1%	4375	1%
Meole	53	3%	4283	1%
Monkmoor	25	1%	4543	1%
Much Wenlock	25	1%	3988	1%
Oswestry East	30	2%	9056	3%
Oswestry South	27	1%	4300	1%
Oswestry West	44	2%	3749	1%
Porthill	20	1%	4558	1%
Prees	11	1%	4281	1%
Quarry and Coton Hill	46	3%	4474	1%
Radbrook	30	2%	3979	1%
Rea Valley	43	2%	4174	1%
Ruyton and Baschurch	38	2%	4333	1%
Severn Valley	17	1%	4504	1%
Shawbury	30	2%	6866	2%
Shifnal North	15	1%	4211	1%
Shifnal South and Cosford	14	1%	4666	2%

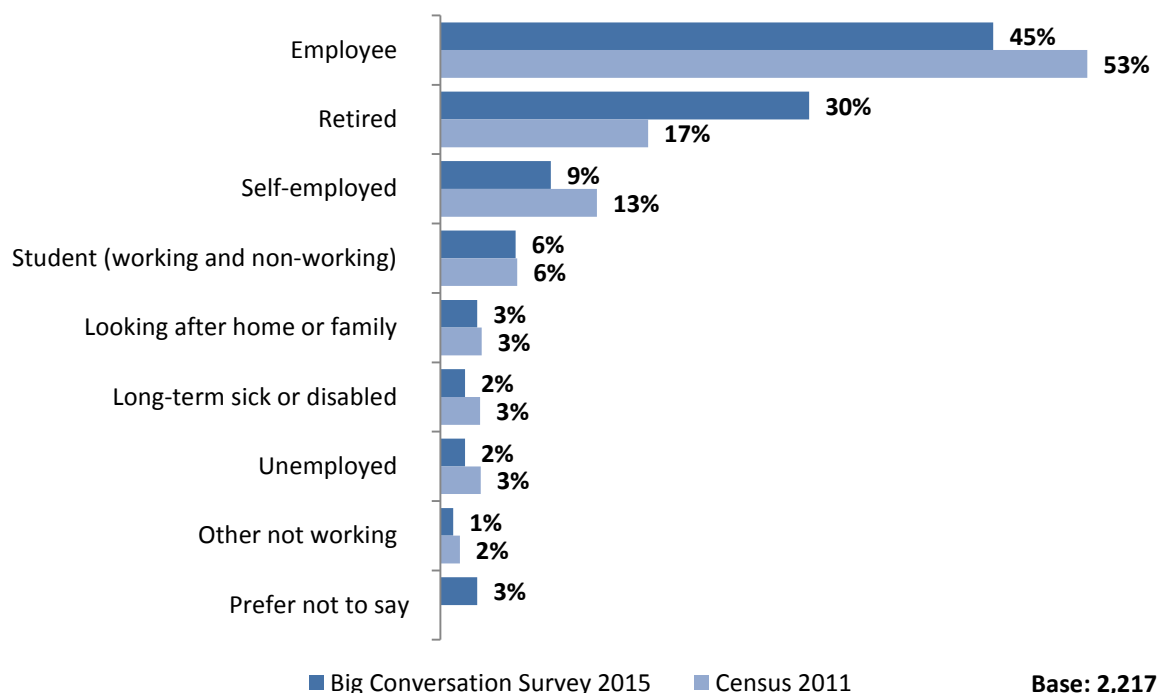
Ward	Number of Big Conversation survey respondents	%	Ward population (Census 2011)	%
St Martins	17	1%	4746	2%
St Oswald	9	0%	5248	2%
Sundorne	31	2%	3957	1%
Tern	11	1%	4411	1%
The Meres	14	1%	4590	1%
Underdale	25	1%	4495	1%
Wem	52	3%	8324	3%
Whitchurch North	28	2%	7005	2%
Whitchurch South	16	1%	4399	1%
Whittington	11	1%	4067	1%
Worfield	3	0%	3711	1%
Please note for comparison purposes percentages exclude: (1) respondents that did not know what ward they lived in (n = 279), (2) respondents who prefer not to say (n = 71), and (3) respondents who do not live in Shropshire (n = 58). The census data for ward populations includes all age groups.				

Base: 1,809

Some 11% of survey respondents reported that their day-to-day activities are limited because of a health problem or a disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months.

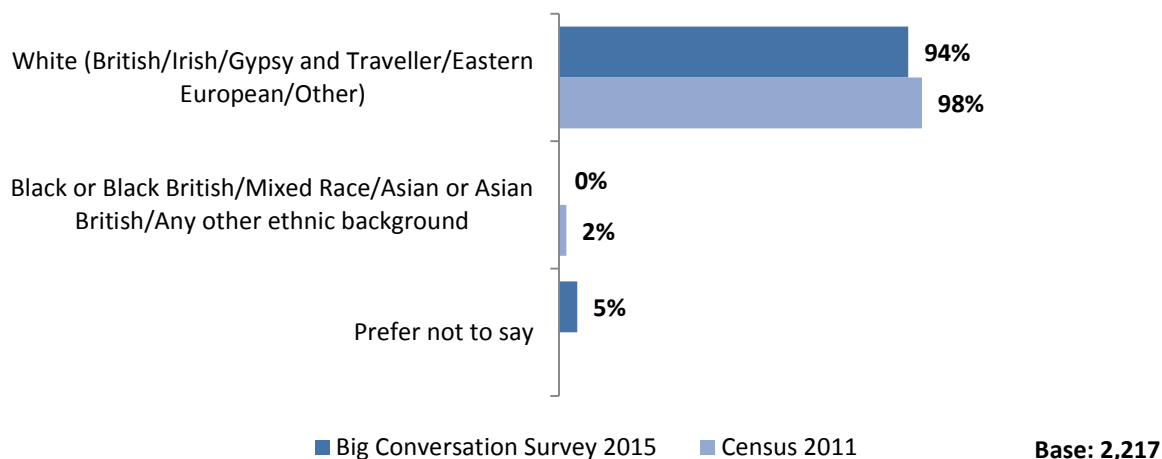
In total, 45% of survey respondents are employees, with 30% indicating that they are retired and 9% self-employed. In comparison, the 2011 Census population data for the Shropshire area shows a higher proportion of employees (53%), and a lower proportion of retired people (17%) (Figure 13)¹⁸.

Figure 12: Employment status (excluding businesses only)



The vast majority of survey respondents (98%) identify themselves as White, compared to 94% responding to the Census 2011 (Figure 14).

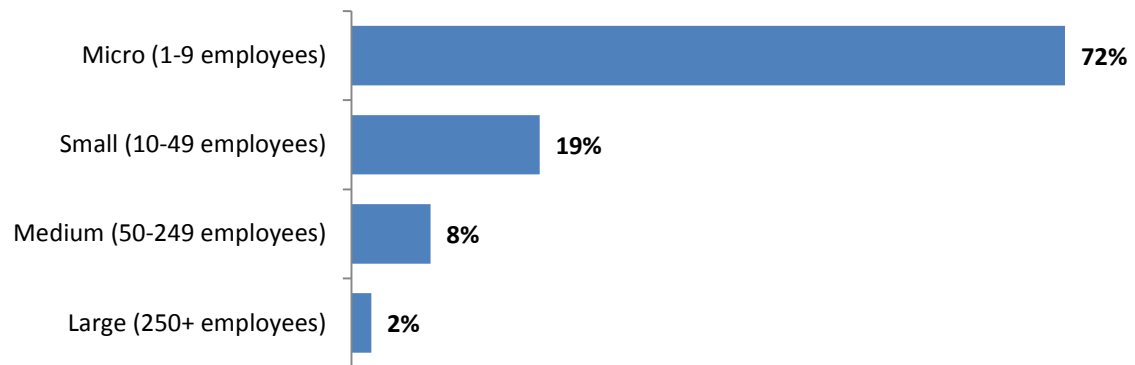
Figure 13: Ethnicity (excluding businesses only)



Nearly three-quarters (72%) of businesses are micro businesses and a further 19% are small. Only 2% are large employers in the Shropshire area (Figure 15).

¹⁸ The census data for ethnicity includes all age groups.

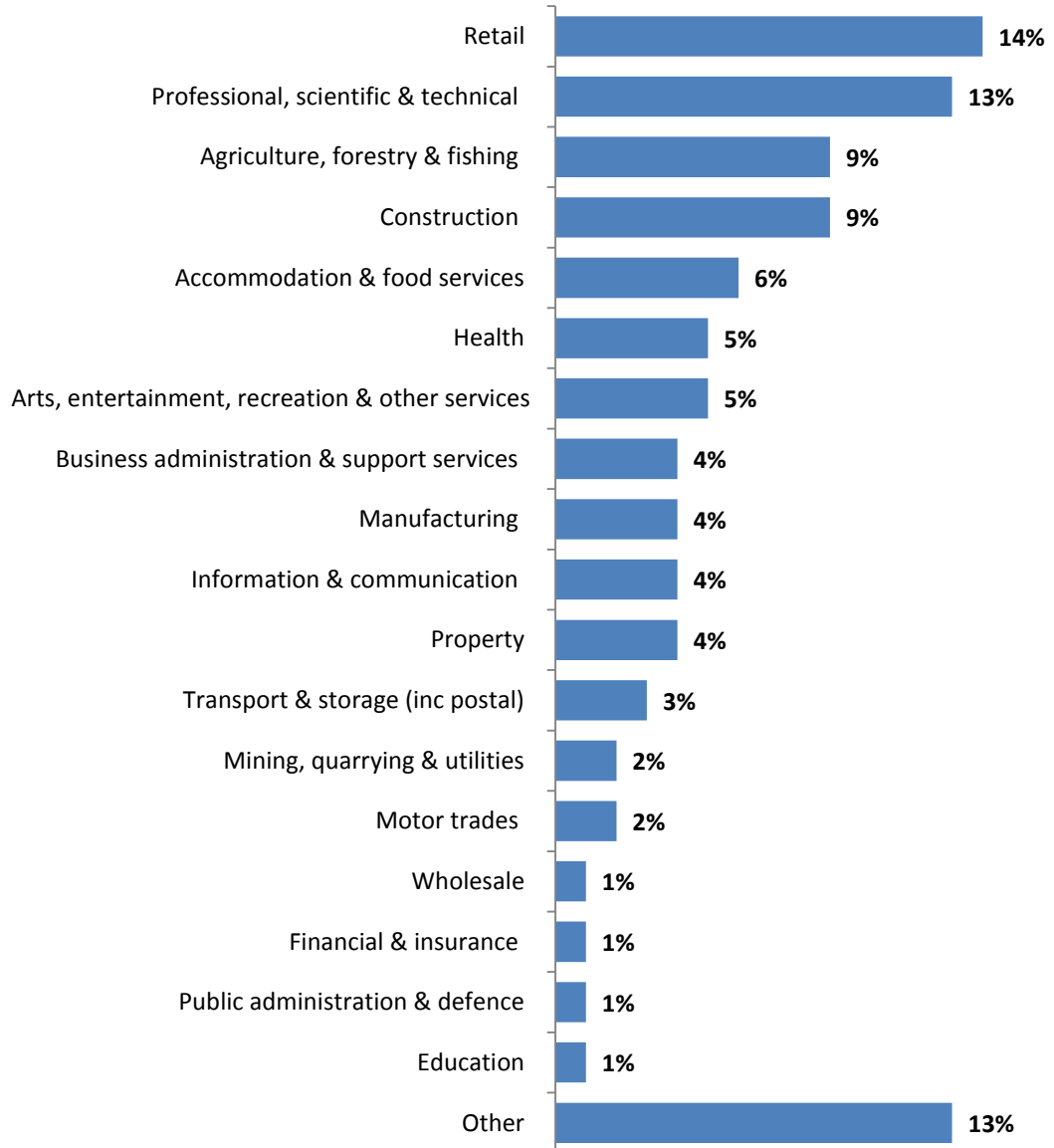
Figure 14: Business size (businesses only)



Businesses only - Base: 113

Some 14% of businesses are from the retail sector, 13% are from professional, scientific & technical sector and a further 9% are from the agriculture, forestry & fishing sector (Figure 16).

Figure 15: Business sector (businesses only)



Businesses only - Base: 113

Appendix 2 – Protection from reductions in spending

This Appendix presents the complete set of survey data tables for all survey respondents for the perceived importance of the service areas.

Figure 16: Perceived importance of services to protect from reductions (males)

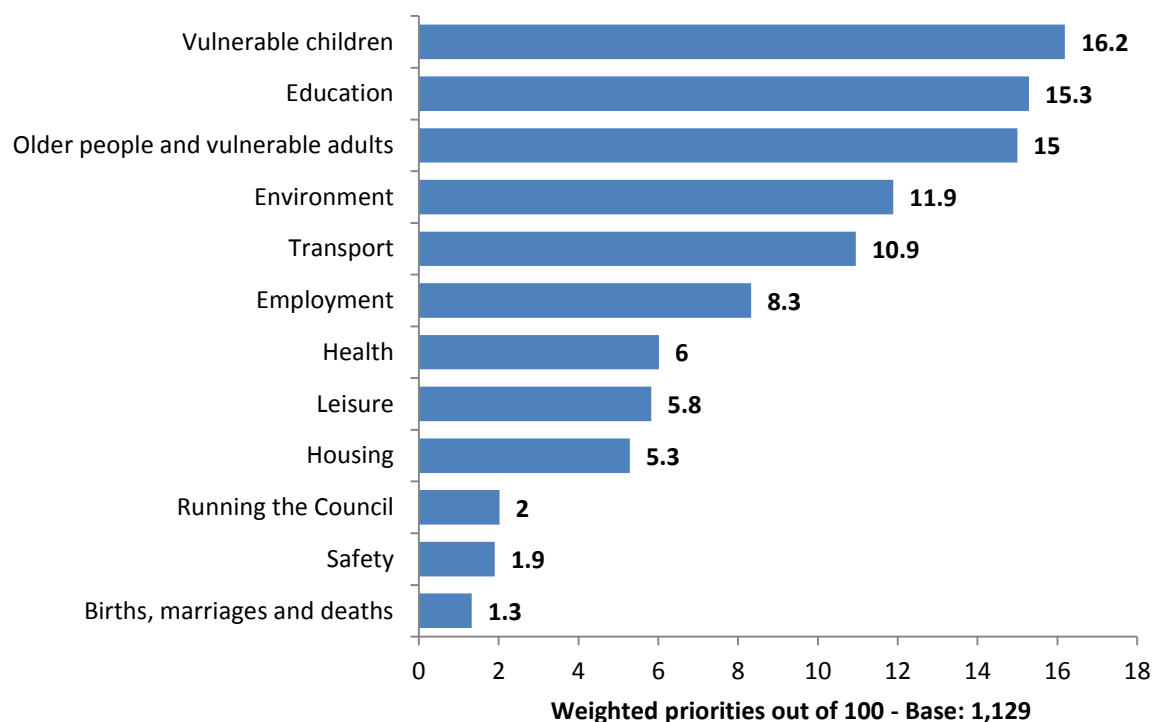


Figure 17: Perceived importance of services to protect from reductions (females)

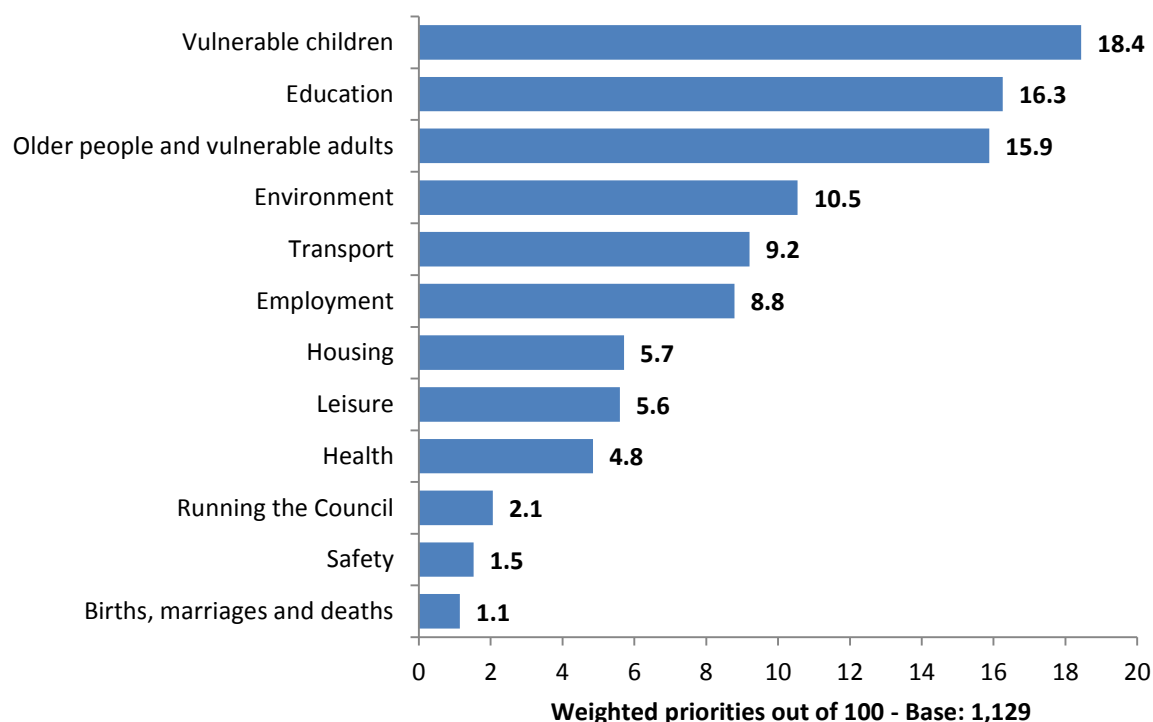


Figure 18: Perceived importance of services to protect from reductions (16-24 years old)

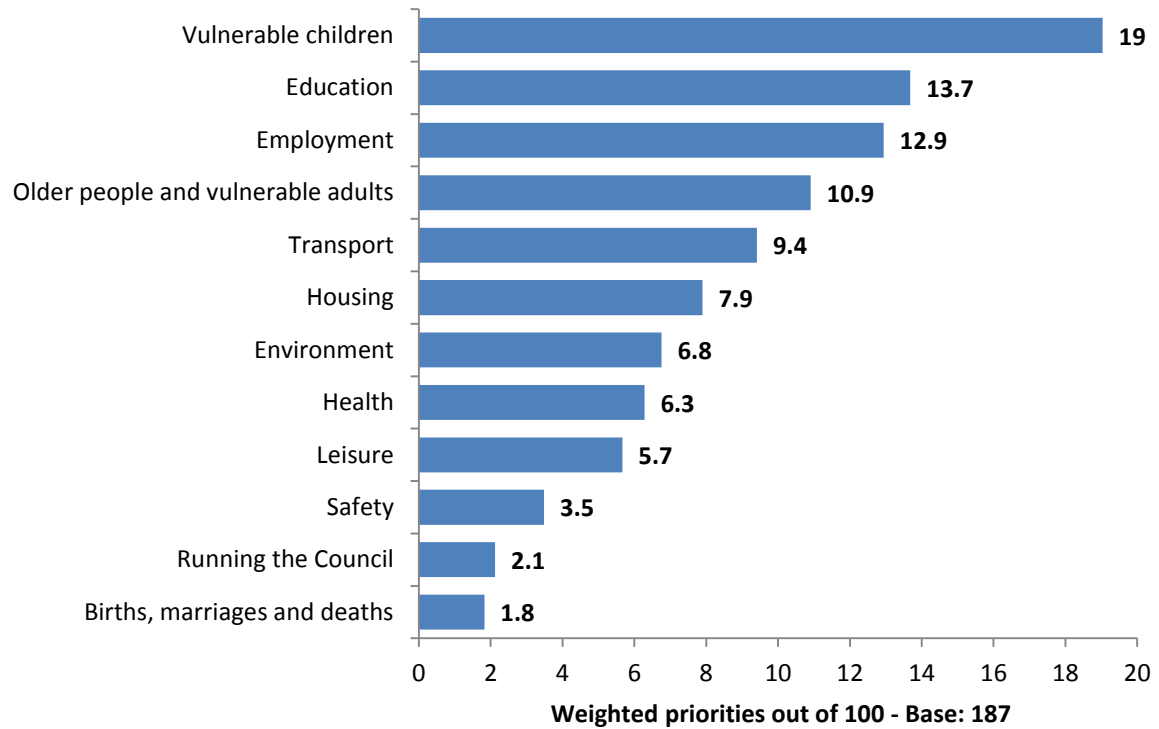


Figure 19: Perceived importance of services to protect from reductions (25-34 years old)

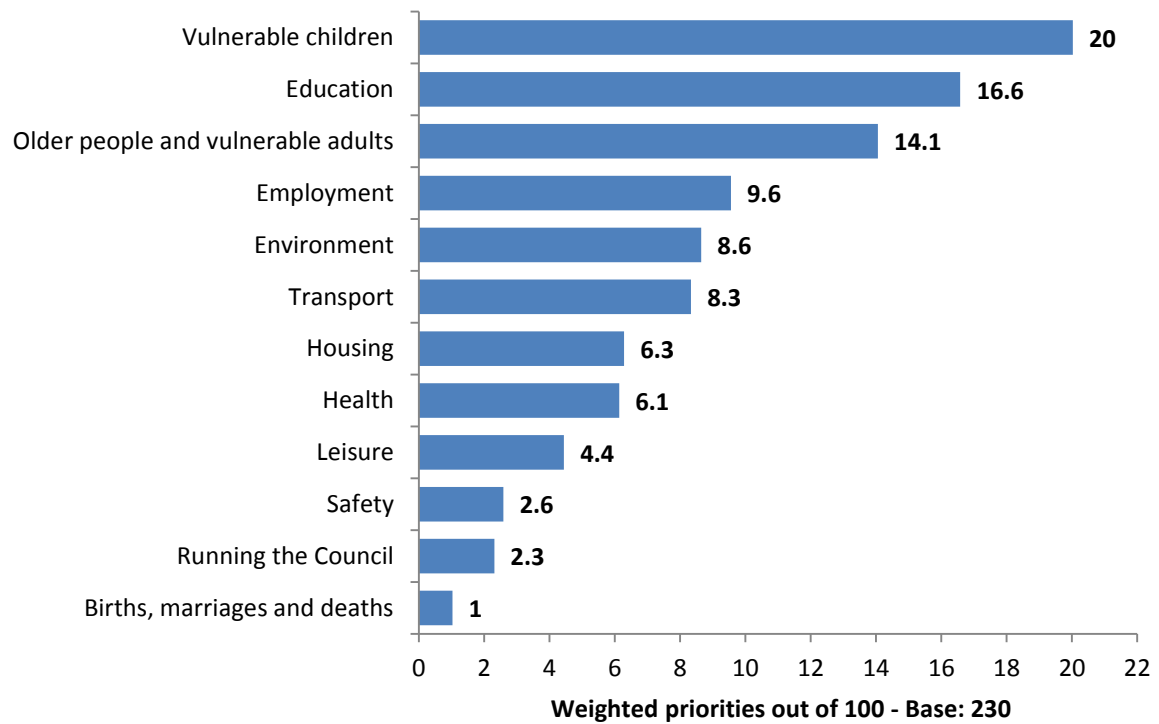


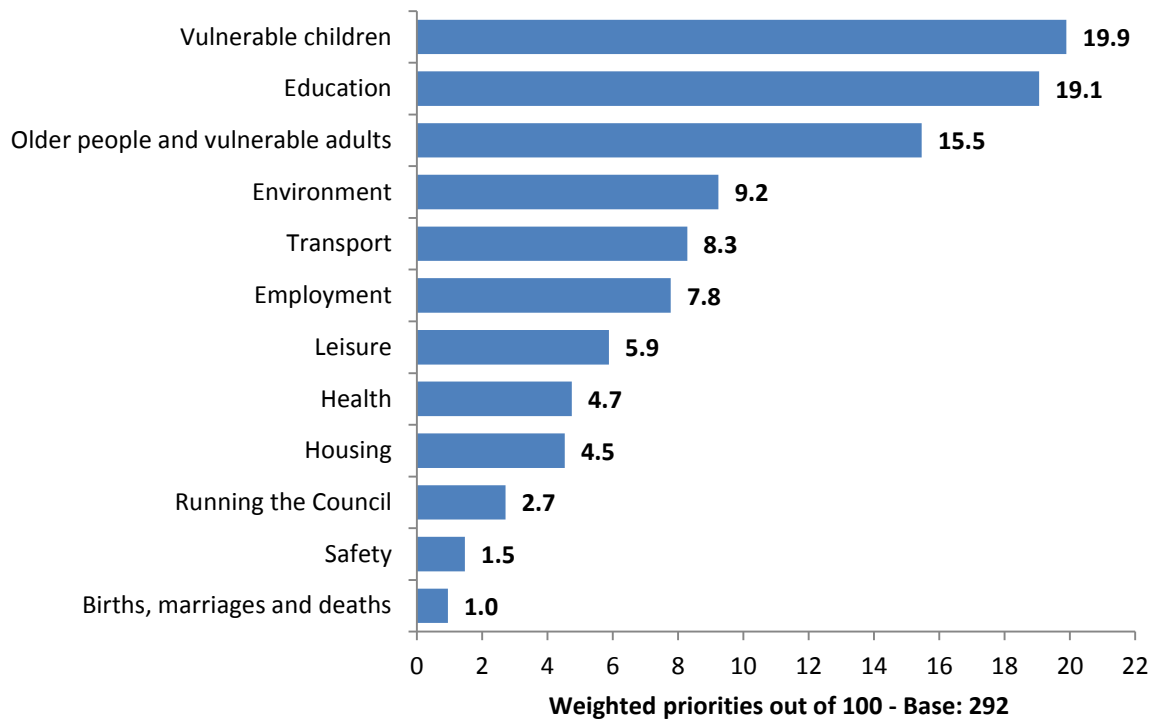
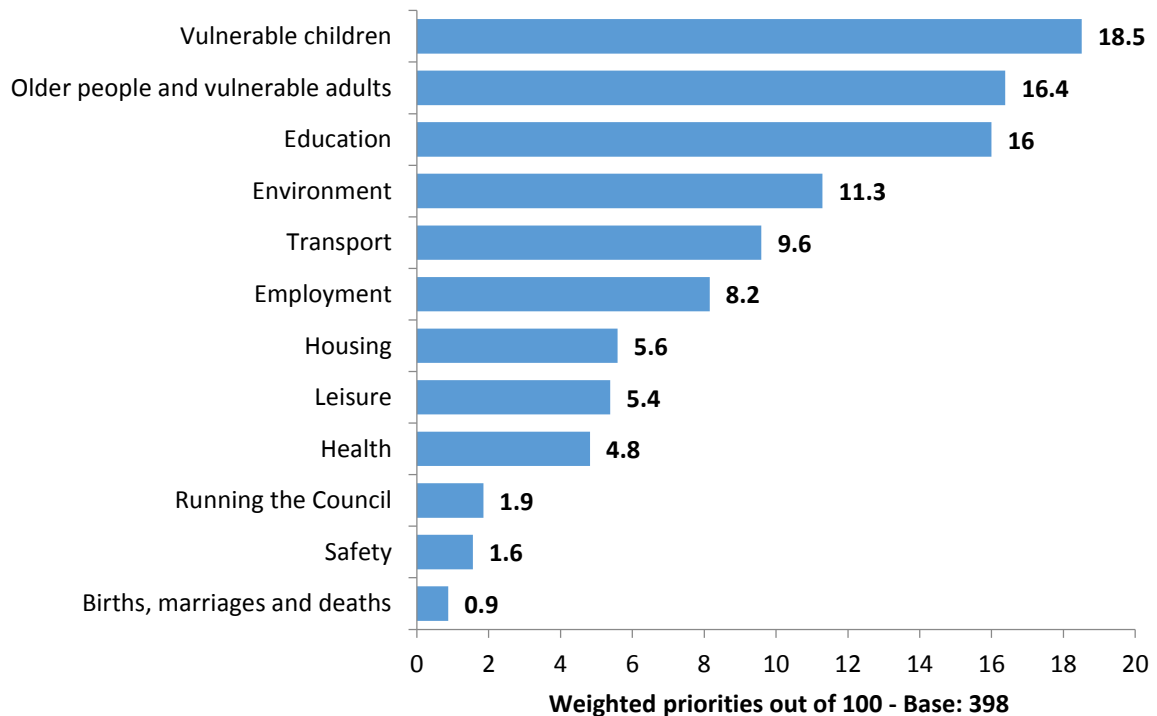
Figure 20: Perceived importance of services to protect from reductions (35-44 years old)**Figure 21: Perceived importance of services to protect from reductions (45-54 years old)**

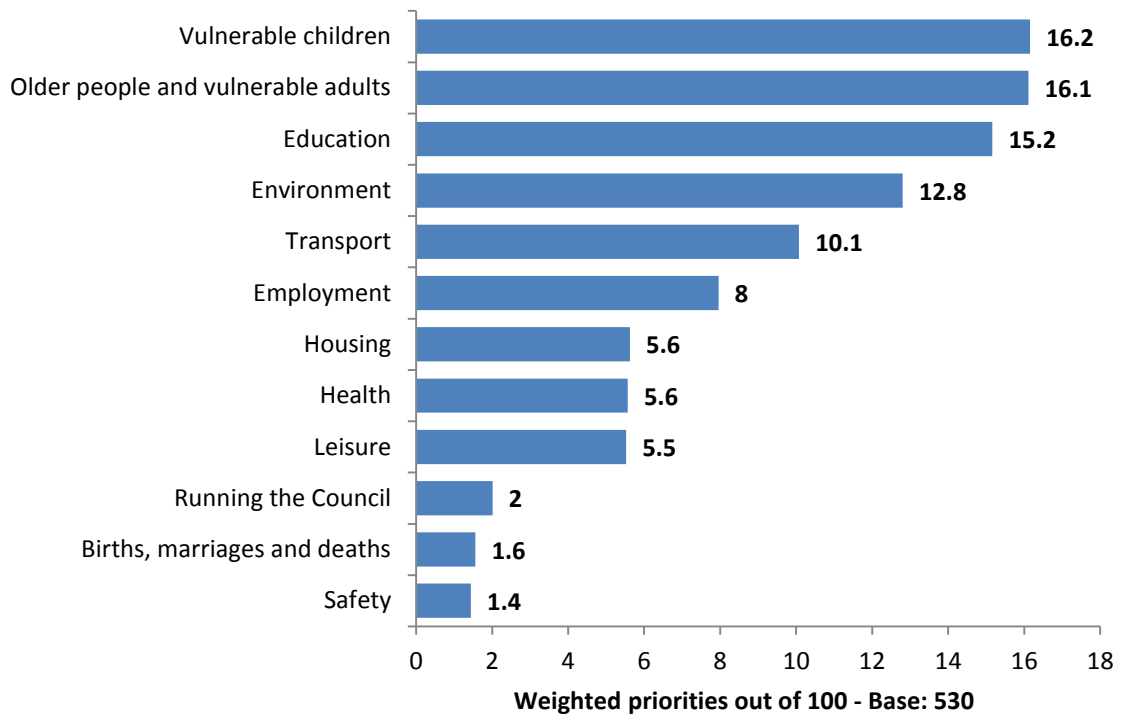
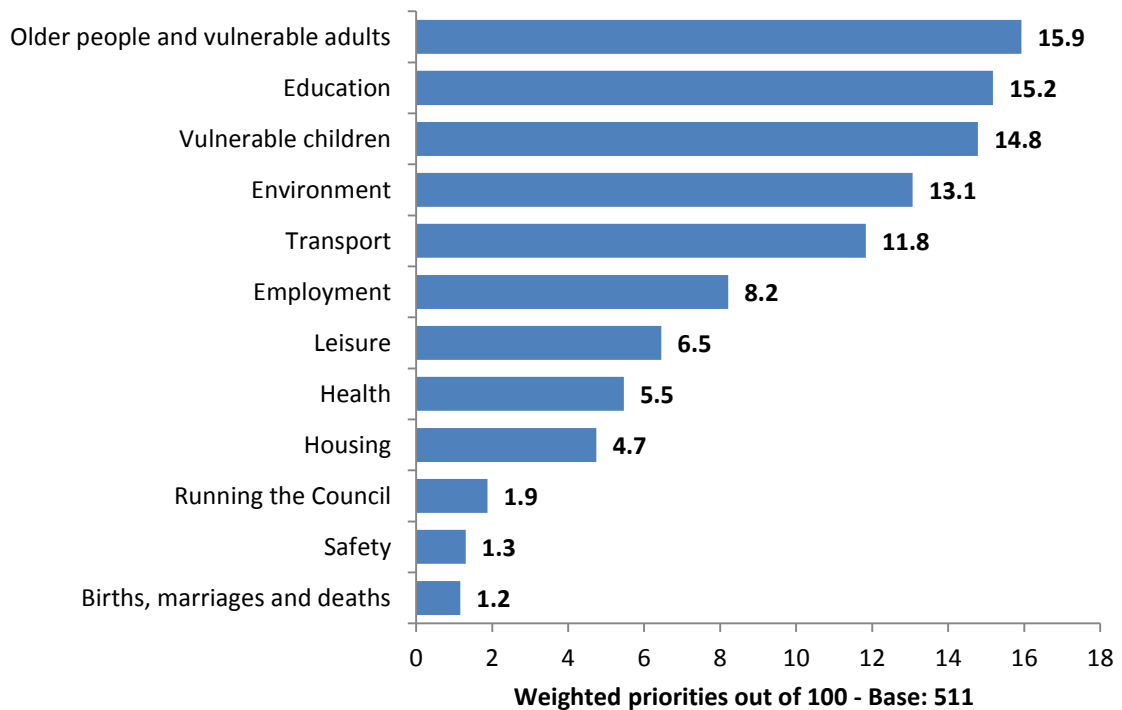
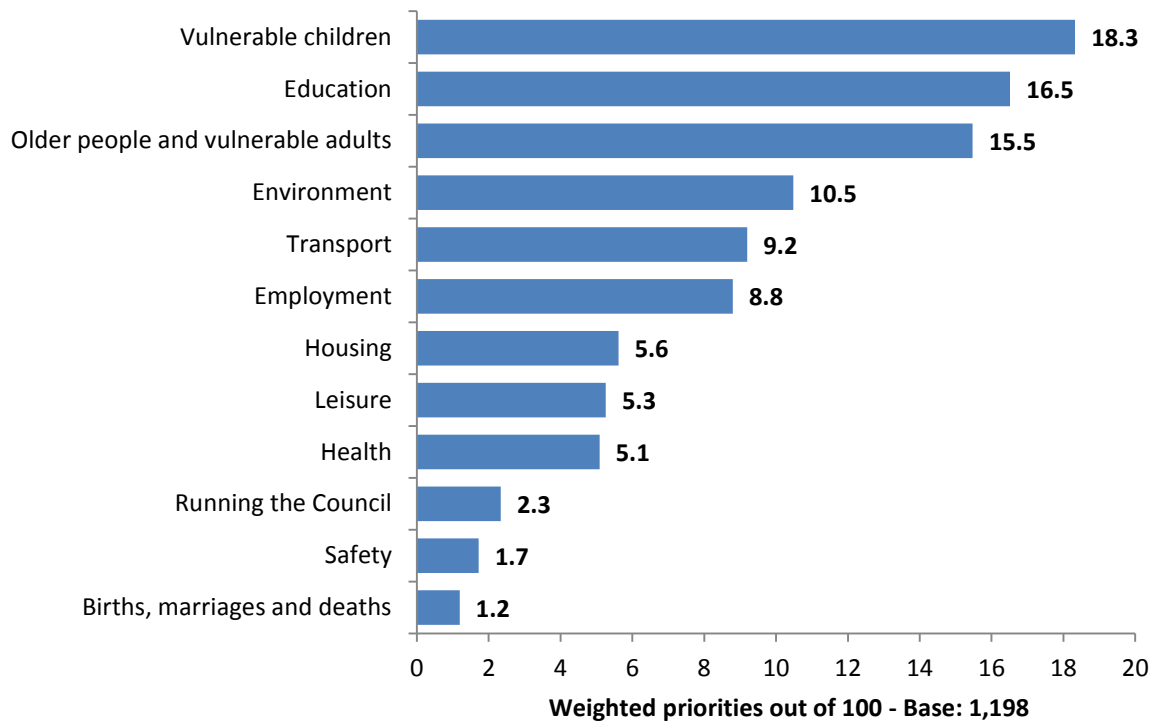
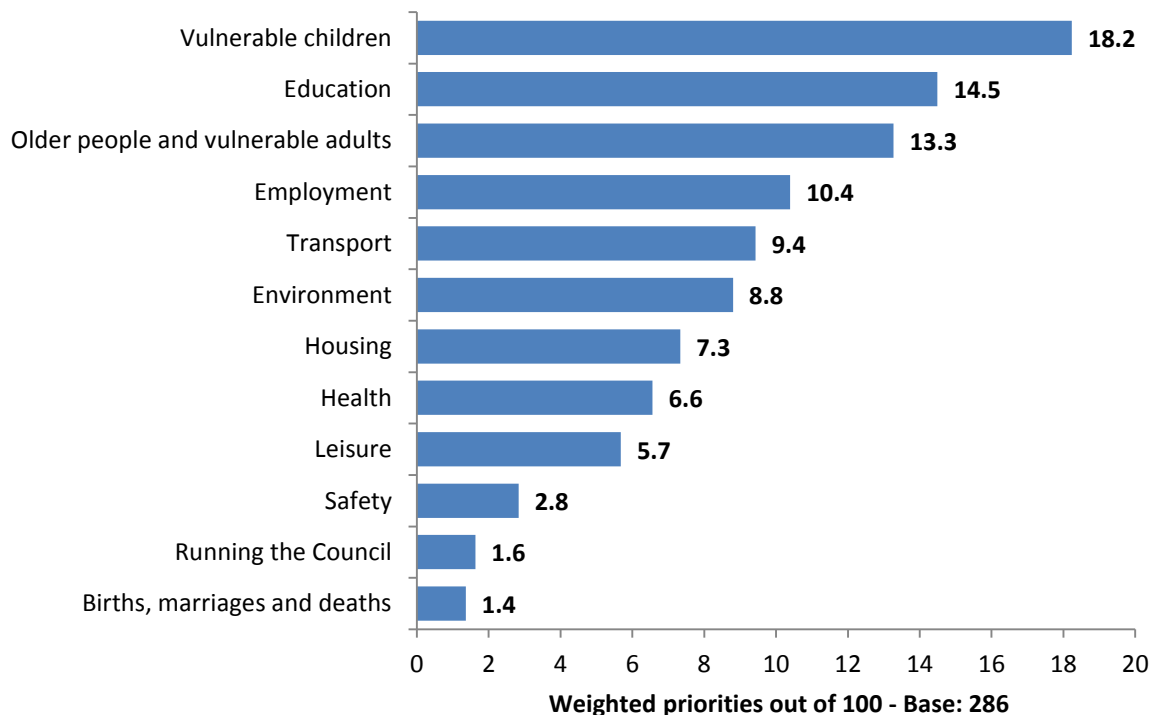
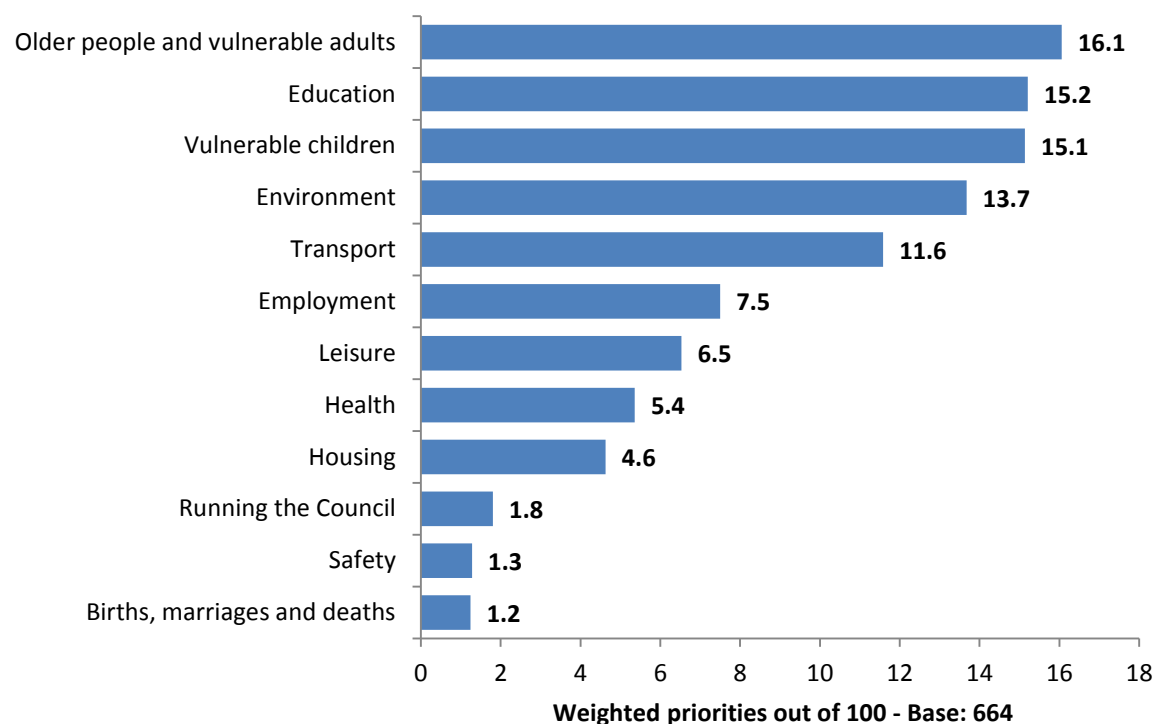
Figure 22: Perceived importance of services to protect from reductions (55-64 years old)**Figure 23: Perceived importance of services to protect from reductions (aged 65 and over)**

Figure 24: Perceived importance of services to protect from reductions (employee/self-employed)

Figure 25: Perceived importance of services to protect from reductions (other not working/students¹⁹)


¹⁹ This includes the following respondent types: Long-term sick or disabled/Looking after the home or family/Unemployed/Other not working/Student (working and not working).

Figure 26: Perceived importance of services to protect from reductions (retired)



Appendix 3 – Workshop content and participants

Workshop content

The workshops started with an initial outline of the day (Table 14). In response to feedback in earlier phases of the research, a presentation by Shropshire Council highlighting their current position in terms of the budget gave some valuable context to the discussions and debates. The content of the financial strategy presentation is summarised in Appendix 4.

Participants were then divided throughout the workshops into smaller groups to discuss the draft actions (Table 14). Smaller groups of attendees allowed detailed views to be gathered and fostered effective group dynamics. Council officers were present to help facilitate the workshops, providing additional information and clarification of participants' queries as they considered the draft actions from service transformations.

Table 14: Workshop agenda

Timing	Task
12.45-1:00	Arrival <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Registration and collection of delegate packs Tea/coffee and networking
1:00-1:20	Session 1 - Introduction to the day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A warm welcome to the Big Conversation partners, providers and stakeholders workshop Introduction to the team What the day will be about Ground rules, health & safety Context - findings from survey and focus groups
1:20-1:40	Session 2 – Shropshire Council's budget challenges – presentation and Q&A Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation by James Walton (Head of Finance, Government & Assurance) Question and answer session - Clive Wright, (Chief Executive), Councillor Cecilia Motley (Portfolio Holder Rural Services and Communities) and James Walton
1:40-2:10	Session 3 – Break out groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introductions Ways of making savings and delivering services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with Town and Parish Councils, private or voluntary sector to take on the delivery of services Making more use of local residents and volunteers to deliver services in order to make savings/enabling communities to do more for themselves in order to make savings
2:10-2:20	Break (tea/coffee)
2:20-3:00	Session 4 – Break out groups - Ways of making savings and delivering services cont. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stop delivering some services altogether to maintain funding in other areas

Timing	Task
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Combining services with other Councils and joining up with other public sector organisations locally (e.g. Police, Health, and Council) Manage demand and greater use of prevention/provide a stronger focus on helping people back to independence
3:00-3:40	Session 5 – Break out groups - Locally raised income: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attract and grow business Increasing charges and fees for services
3:40-4:00	Session 6 – Round up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback from break out group sessions Next steps
4:00	End <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete and return feedback questionnaires

Workshop participants

- Acton Burnell
- Adderley Parish Council
- Age UK
- Age UK Shropshire Telford & Wrekin
- Albrighton Parish Council
- Alveley & Romsley Parish Council
- Atcham Parish Council
- Bayston Hill Parish Council
- Bethphage
- Bomere Heath & District Parish Council
- Bridgnorth Town Council
- Caterpillar Shrewsbury Limited
- Citizen Engagement Community Interest Company (CIC)
- Citizen's Advice Shropshire
- Clee St. Margaret Parish Council
- Clun Parish Council
- Clun Town Council
- Clunbury Parish Council
- Condover Parish Council
- Coverage Care Services LTD
- Craven Arms Town Council
- Cressage, Harley and Sheinton Parish Council
- Cruse Bereavement Care Shropshire
- Culmington Parish Council
- Department for Work and Pensions
- Designs in Mind
- Diddlebury Parish Council

- Ditton Priors Parish council
- Edgton Village
- Ellesmere Town Council
- Energize –Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin (STW)
- Grinshill Parish Council
- Headway Shropshire
- Healthwatch Shropshire
- Hearing Loss Support Group
- Highley and Chelmarsh Parish Council
- Home-Start Shropshire
- Hyde and Rugg Associates
- IMPACT – Alcohol & Addiction Service (AAS)
- Leighton & Eaton Constantine Parish Council
- Leighton and Eaton Constantine Parish Council
- Llanfair Waterdine Parish Council
- Ludlow Town Council
- Lydbury North Parish Council
- Market Drayton Seniors' Enterprise
- Mayfair Community Centre
- Men in Sheds in Shropshire
- Munslow Parish Council
- National Probation Service West Mercia – Midlands Division
- Oswestry Community Action
- Oswestry Town Council
- Phoenix Centre Management Community Interest Company (CIC)
- POhWER
- Pontesbury Parish Council
- Ruyton XI Towns Parish Council
- Seeds
- Selattyn and Gobowen Parish Council
- Severnside Housing
- Shifnal Town Council
- Shrewsbury College for Arts and Technology
- Shrewsbury Hard of Hearing Group
- Shrewsbury Samaritans
- Shrewsbury Town Centre Residents' Association
- Shrewsbury Town Council
- Shropshire Association of Local Councils
- Shropshire Business Board/Marches Care LTD
- Shropshire Citizens Advice Bureau
- Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Group
- Shropshire Community Health NHS Trust

- Shropshire Community Leisure Trust
- Shropshire Council
- Shropshire Disability Network
- Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service
- Shropshire Housing
- Shropshire Housing Alliance
- Shropshire Housing Support Group
- Shropshire Parent and Carer Council
- Shropshire Partners in Care
- Shropshire Rural Community Council (RCC)
- Shropshire Towns and Rural Housing
- Shropshire Voluntary & Community Sector Assembly (VCSA)
- Shropshire Wildlife Trust
- Shropshire Youth Association
- Shropshire Youth Association/0-25 Summit
- Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Local Nature Partnership
- Sight Loss Shropshire
- Signal
- St Martins Parish Council
- Stoffesdon Parish Council
- Sure Start Children Centres
- Taking Part
- The Friendly Transport Service
- The Friendly Transport Service/Shropshire Community Transport Consortium
- The Furniture Scheme/Fuse Enterprise Community Interest Company
- Tickwood Care Farm
- Trident Reach
- Uffington Parish Council
- University Centre Shrewsbury
- West Mercia Police
- Whitchurch Town Council
- Woore Parish Council
- Wroxeter & Uppington Parish Council
- Youth Support Services (YSS)
- 360 Platform for Life

Appendix 4 – Shropshire Councils financial strategy presentation summary

For 2016/17, Shropshire Council has a gross budget²⁰ of £597m. This is due to its commitments to the various services it provides. However, as a result of a gap in funding, there is only £565m available to spend. This funding gap will create a deficit of £32m. As well as this, planned savings were not achieved last year, meaning that the funding gap will actually be £47m in 2016/17. This gap constitutes the difference between the Council's spending commitments and its available funds. It is anticipated this deficit will grow to exceed £61m by 2018/19. Not only that but rising inflation and the increasing demand on services due to, for example, demography, mean that Shropshire Council anticipate spending will grow from £597m to almost £630m over the next two years (2.7% growth per year).

Some vital services, like Public Health are funded through Government grants. This is because the grants are administered by bodies such as the Department of Health. This limits what control the Council has over how they are spent. Once these Government grants are subtracted from the £565m in available resources, the net resources²¹ of the Council amounts to £205m, which funds an array of vital services. By far the largest proportion of the budget is spent on adult social care, waste and children's safeguarding services.

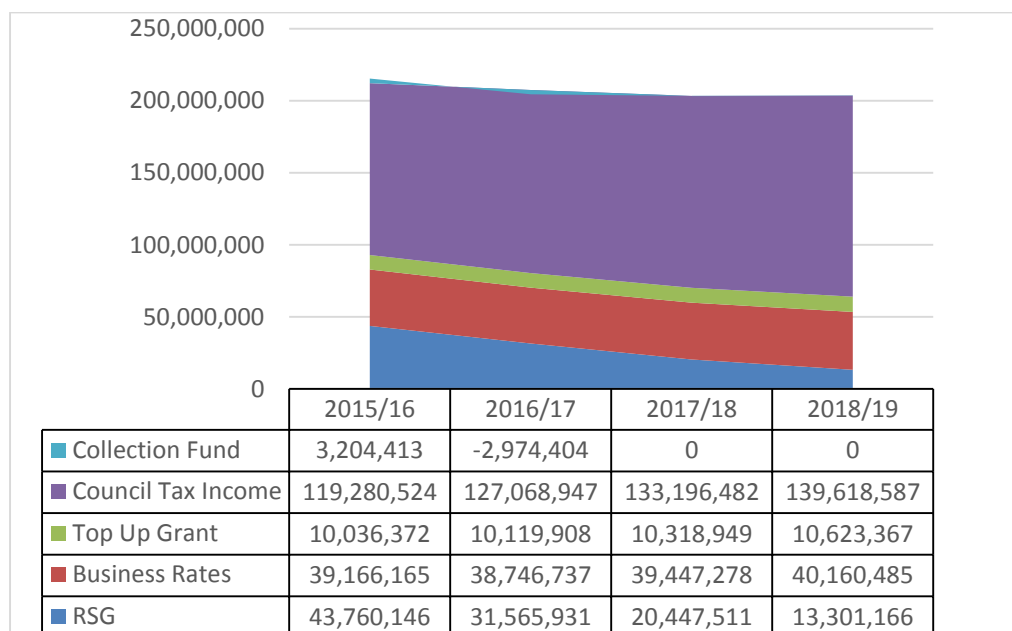
The net resources of £205m comes from three principle areas:

- Council Tax;
- Business Rates ; and
- Revenue Support Grant (RSG).

The chart overleaf demonstrates where the resources come from and how funding will change over time. Currently the £205m net resources come from the 50% centrally held business rates. RSG is the area the Government has and still is cutting. In 2015/16 RSG alone was worth £44m to Shropshire; in 2019/20, it will be worth around £6m and by the following year it is expected to have disappeared altogether. The remaining 50% of the business rates are split; 1% goes to Fire Services, while the other 49% is retained locally. This 49% is subject to national redistribution, with each authority either paying a tariff or receiving a top up grant. Shropshire Council will receive a grant of £10m in 2016/17.

²⁰ The gross budget covers everything from Adult Social Services, to collecting the bins and disposing of waste; from schools, safeguarding and child protection services, to maintaining the roads, delivering cultural services and public health.

²¹ The remaining resources over which the Council has control of.



Shropshire Council anticipate collecting over £119m From Council Tax in 2015/16. From 2016/17, they will be able to increase Council Tax by 2%. For general increases, a public referendum must be held if the increase is 2% or over. As such, the general increase will be 1.99%. The overall 3.99% increase will see Council Tax income grow to over £127m in 2016/17.

The 'Final' Local Government Settlement, which was released on 8th February 2016, outlined the settlement for the next four years. The settlement is a mixture of cuts, fund redistribution and new grants. Overall, it demonstrates significant reduction in resources. It indicated a faster than anticipated drop in RSG and announced that the New Homes Bonus is being cut from 2018/19 from six yearly allocations to four. Rural Services Delivery Grant is being introduced from 2016/17; this will be new money for the most sparsely populated areas in the Country. The Final Settlement indicated that there will be an increase to the allocations for RSDG for the first two years and that there will also be a transitional grant, likewise for 2016/17 and 2017/18. Better Care Funding is being provided from 2017/18, but this will be funded by redirecting money from the New Homes Bonus reduction.

In the longer term, if the Council are to address this deficit in the funds, they will need to consider the removal of the Council Tax referendum limit. The Council will also need to take 100% of the locally raised business rates. Ultimately, there will need to be a policy of national redistribution of funds to reflect local needs.

Shropshire Council has a few options on how to address the budget. They can:

- Focus only on protected service areas. However, this will impact on cultural services;
- Reduce support costs and improve shared services. However this requires short term investment for only small long term gains;
- Reduce protected services to their statutory minimum. This would require more assessments;

- Grow income from sustainable sources like Council Tax. This has limited gains, due to Shropshire's geography; and
- Identify new streams of revenue like house building. This requires investment and has long timescales with uncertain returns.

Managing the impact

What is certain is that Shropshire Council must be open to all new ideas, and maintain a standard of excellent communication between partners and services, in order to find a joint solution. The Council must identify interdependences between discretionary and statutory services so as to avoid unforeseen consequences wherever possible.

Appendix 5 – A note on thematic bubble charts

Where open questions elicit strong interest – as in this Conversation – they cannot be effectively analysed using manual means. Most of the open questions in this survey attracted well over 1,000 responses, many of them quite lengthy and detailed. The level of interest in the “Big Conversation” meant that single questions could generate upwards of 200,000 words – the size of a 400 page novel (and there were many such questions).

With such detailed and complex data Pye Tait Consulting uses the latest content analysis software to identify the main themes, concepts and ideas running through the vast mass of data from any given question.

The data are analysed and then reviewed manually and, although by no means the only output, one useful representation of the data is what we call a “Thematic Bubble Chart.” There are several such charts in this report and they warrant a little explanation.

As with most visual representations of complex data they are simplifications. The charts show a limited number of the major themes together with the words most associated with them.

The size of each bubble is a rough indication of the weight of the theme in the data and the words inside each bubble are the most commonly-found words associated with that broad “theme”. A theme is not necessarily a coherent whole – as indicated by overlaps – and a good deal of manual analysis is required to fully identify a theme even after it has been roughly sketched out by the software.

The lines within and between the bubbles are the main ways in which the words are linked together. Words can appear in different themes because they are used in different ways alongside other words and within different contexts.

The diagrams are, therefore, simplified representations of a mass of very complex textual data, but, as we have found in this analysis, they highlight the main themes and ideas in the response set and, more often than not, conform closely with results from both the quantitative aspects of the research and the other qualitative aspects from focus groups and workshops.