



Committee and date
Whitchurch and Prees
Local Joint Committee

14 July 2010

7.00 pm

Item No

9

Public

OUTCOMES OF BUDGET CONSULTATION

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Summary

In December 2009 / January 2010, Shropshire Council undertook a consultation on the budget proposals for 2010/11. The feedback received from the budget consultation provided some valuable insight into the priorities of Shropshire residents. A number of changes were made to the final Budget Strategy agreed by Council as a direct result of this feedback.

Recommendations

- A. The Committee are asked to note and comment on the outcomes of the budget consultation.

Report

1. The budget consultations undertaken as part of the budget process for Shropshire Council are an integral part of the budget setting process. The feedback received helps to shape the Council budget proposals and changes the final budget agreed by Council in February.
2. Budget consultations with the public and interested parties took place over December and January through the following meetings and events:

- 21 Local Joint Committees.
 - Stakeholder meetings including Taking Part, the Learning Disability Board, the Senior Citizens' Forum and the Young Peoples' Forum.
 - 2 detailed Budget consultations held at the Shirehall.
 - Through the use of a web-based Budget Simulator.
 - Through a series of staff consultations.
3. The feedback received from these consultations was very useful and pertinent to the choices faced by the Council when considering the balance between keeping Council Tax increases to a minimum whilst meeting growing demand for services. A summary of the responses from the Public and Stakeholder Meetings is provided at Appendix A and the key issues are outlined below:
- i. The need for more regular public transport was raised by young people and adults with learning disabilities as their biggest issue.
 - ii. Older people were concerned that service levels need to be increased to reflect the growing numbers of older people.
 - iii. Increased charges for Meals on Wheels was not a popular savings proposal and concern expressed about proposed changes in service delivery.
 - iv. Support expressed for the council's measures to bring empty properties back into use.
 - v. Most people thought that council tax increases should be kept to a minimum and most people thought that the planned increases were acceptable.

Changes to Revenue Budget Strategy as a Result of Feedback at Budget Consultations

- 4. A number of changes were made to the revenue budget strategy as a direct result of feedback from the Budget Consultations.
- 5. Additional growth was added into the budget strategy for the following items:
 - i. £500,000 was invested into public transport to sustain and support existing bus routes, including ShropshireLink.
 - ii. £500,000 into services for Looked After Children in order to address budget pressures as a result of additional placements for children.

- iii. £335,000 was invested into Transition Cases for young people with learning disabilities due to an increase in demand for these services.
 - iv. £150,000 was built into the Physical Disabilities budget in order to meet additional costs resulting from high care packages and a general increase in numbers of service users. This helps to increase the resources available for services to older people.
 - v. £80,000 was built into the budget to fund two extra posts that would focus on bringing empty properties back into use.
 - vi. The proposed increases in charges for Meals on Wheels were removed from the savings proposals.
6. A review of Meals on Wheels procurement and provision is taking place and any savings generated will no longer contribute to meeting the Council's savings targets but will instead be reinvested within Older People's Services to provide more services to support people at home.
 7. The Council has provided these items of additional growth in priority service areas without further increasing the level of council tax to Shropshire residents.
 8. The Council has agreed to revise the present rate of relief on Council Tax on empty properties as a step to bring empty properties back into use across Shropshire. This policy change generated an additional £500,000 in council tax. It was also agreed to release the provision made for the pay award in 2010/11. This released additional resources of £1.3m to fund the service growth identified above.

Capital Programme 2010/11 – 2014/15

9. Shropshire Council approved a five year capital programme for the unitary council which will deliver £124m of building projects and other improvements.
10. For the Whitchurch and Prees Local Joint Committee area this includes capital works planned in the following areas:
 - Whitchurch library access improvements;
 - Capital and improvements works at Sir John Talbot's Technology College and the Primary Schools across the area;
 - Purchase of properties on Prees Square;
 - Affordable housing schemes across the area;

- Maintenance and strengthening of a number of bridges across the area;
 - Safety and traffic management improvements around Whitchurch Bus Station;
 - Village speed limits improvements.
11. The Council has recently received funding of £1.5m from the Department of Transport in relation to repairs to potholes caused over the severe winter. This funding will be spent in 2010 across the county to supplement our planned programme of highways maintenance.

Publicity Informing residents of Shropshire about Budget Proposals

12. Details of the revenue and capital budgets agreed have been publicised on Shropshire Council's website. A summary of the key issues and developments affecting each region of Shropshire has also been included in local press (Whitchurch Herald).

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Human Rights Act Appraisal

The recommendations contained in this report are compatible with the provisions of the Human Rights act 1998
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Environmental Appraisal

Risk Management Appraisal

Community / Consultations Appraisal
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Cabinet Member

N/A

Local Member

Gerald Dakin Thomas Biggins Peggy Mullock Paul Wynn
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Appendices

Appendix A – Outcomes from Public And Stakeholder Meetings
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Outcomes from Public and Stakeholder Meetings

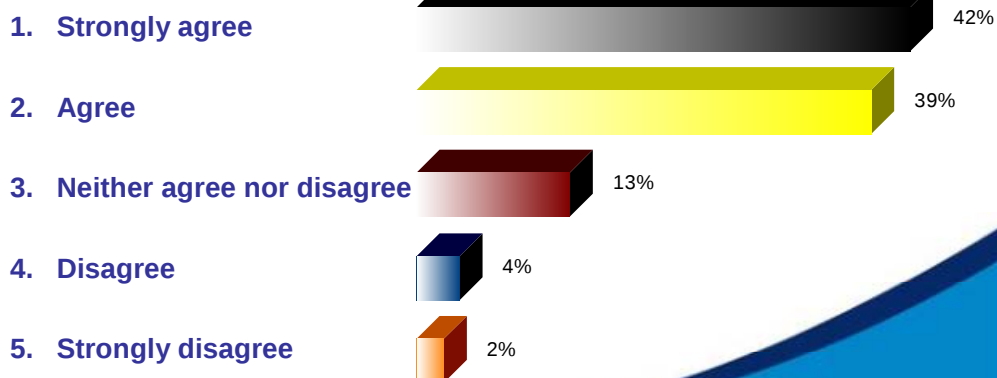


Budget Consultation 2010/11

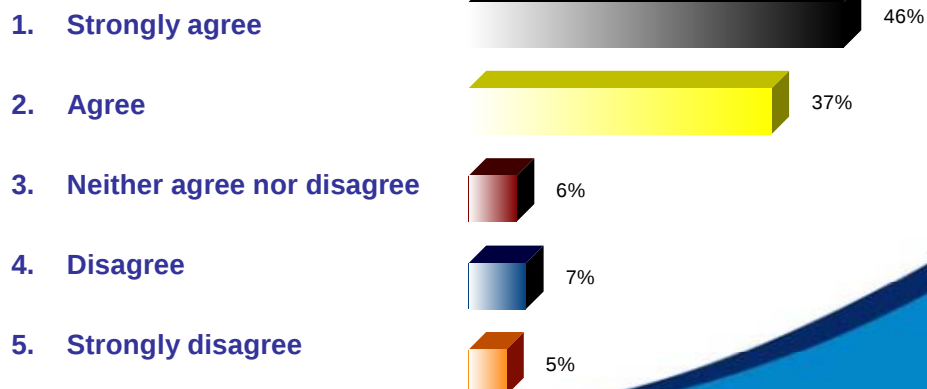
Results from Voting Sessions



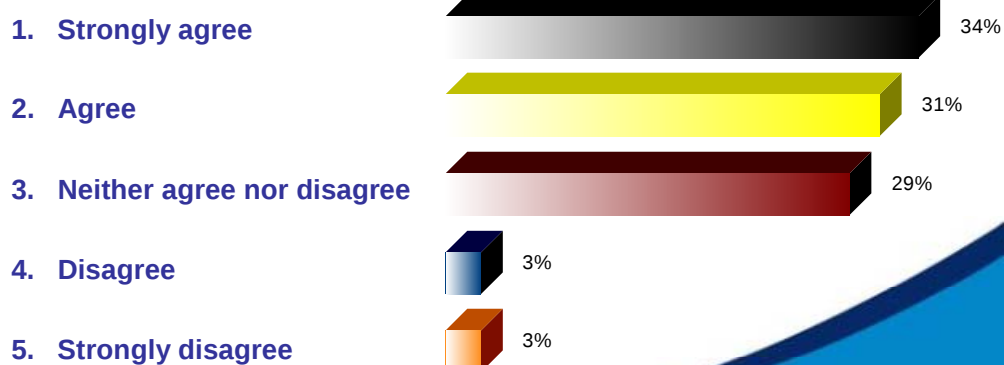
In 2010/11 there should be savings in administration, such as finance, personnel and legal services



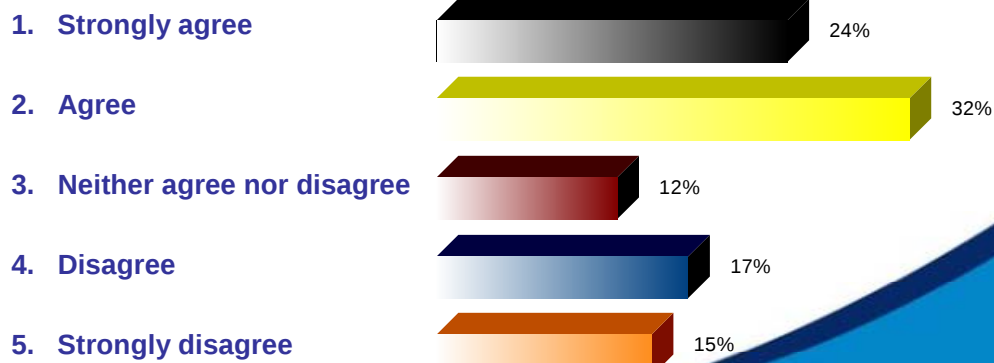
In 2010/11 the Council should take steps to reduce its future energy costs even if this requires some investment in new boilers, lighting etc.



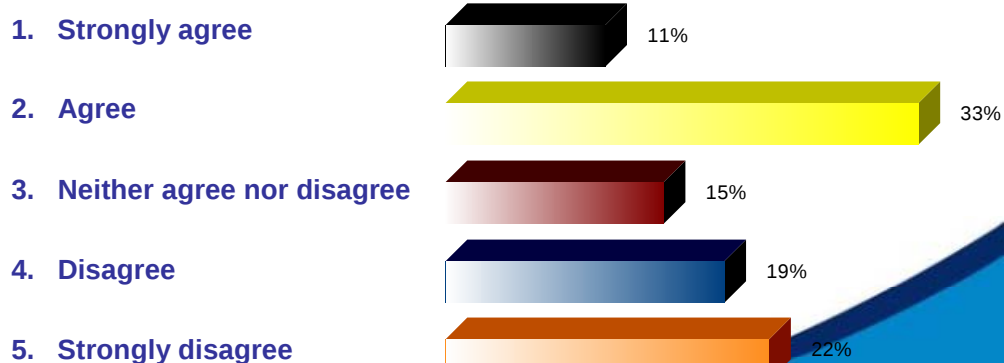
In 2010/11 the Council should deliver efficiency savings from Service Reviews in Housing, Planning and Environmental Services



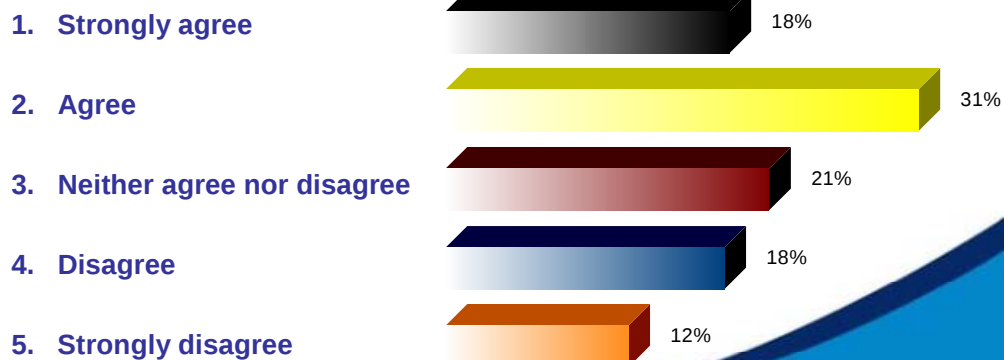
In 2010/11 there should be increases in charges for some services (10p an hour for parking in some areas, equalising charges for leisure, park and ride)



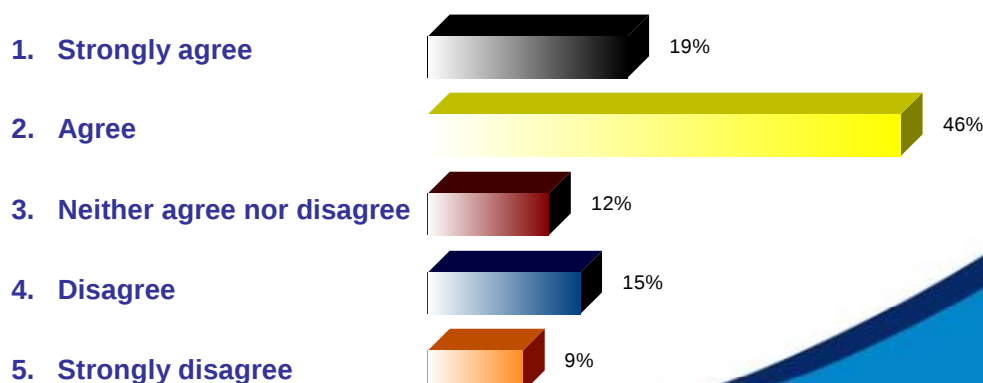
In 2010/11 there should be increases in charges for meals on wheels



**In 2010/11 the Council should withdraw
bus contracts with subsidy levels of over
£4 per journey**



**In 2010/11 we should increase the
contribution for home care but only if the
people assessed can afford to pay**



I would rather see the council tax rise than see cuts in local services.

1. Strongly agree



19%

2. Agree



34%

3. Neither agree nor disagree



18%

4. Disagree



18%

5. Strongly disagree



11%

Do you think that the proposed council tax increase for your area is:

1. Far too high



20%

2. Slightly too high



23%

3. Acceptable



43%

4. Slightly low



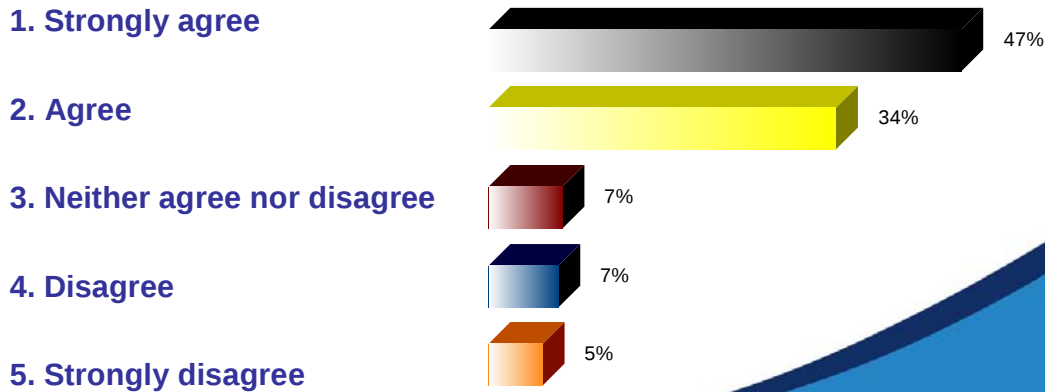
7%

5. Very low

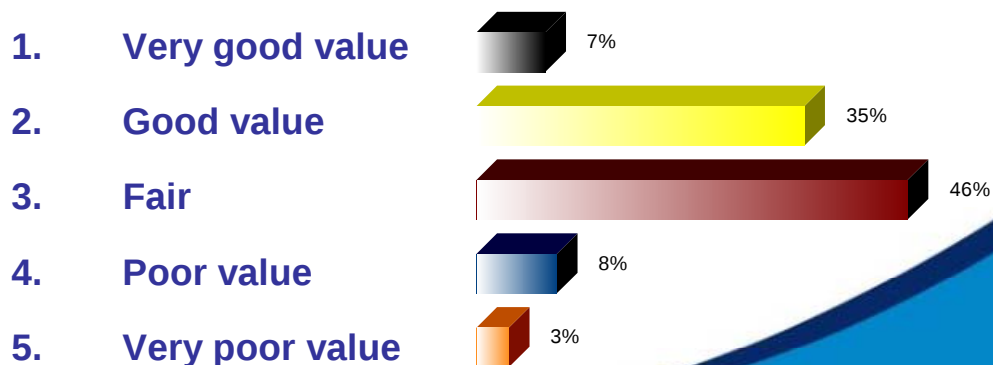


8%

The Council should reduce the Council Tax discount on empty properties so as to encourage homes back into use



Do you think that on the whole Shropshire Council provides value for money?



**"This type of consultation is a good way for
my local council to involve local people in
key decisions"**

