

Appendix 5

RCT Budget Consultation

2017/18 Budget Strategy



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This report presents the findings of the General Budget Strategy Consultation for 2017/18. The report is a summary of the main points made during the process and separately all comments and suggestions will be passed to the relevant service managers.
- The Council faces a budget gap and needs to close an initial budget gap of approximately £2.8M for 2017/18. The consultation is an essential part of the budget setting process and assists the Cabinet with its deliberations.
- The Council's budget consultation ran from 7th November to the 19th December 2016.
 - The methods of consultation included;
 - An online Budget Simulator
 - A number of Town Centre, Leisure Centre and Day Centre Roadshow events
 - Leader Engagement Events
 - Promotion through Social media, including a Youtube video
 - A Young Person's Budget Engagement Event
 - Older Persons Advisory Group Meeting
 - Promotion with the Citizen's Panel and through the Cwm Taf Engagement Hub.
- For the second year running the Council engaged with relevant stakeholders through the use of an online Budget Simulator. The Budget Simulator outlined a range of services that the Council provides and their associated budgets and then asked people to make £2.8m of savings by adjusting the budget for each service, as well as the level of council tax.
- The overall average budget was reduced by the 323 respondents who attempted to balance the budget. The average income increased by £1,251,725 and the average revised expenditure put forward showed a decrease of £824,487.

- The top 10 services that received the highest % decrease in average budget were;

Service Item	Original Budget	Average Change %
Music	£116,000	-0.98%
Cultural Services	£919,000	-0.88%
Support Services	£26,861,000	-0.85%
Customer Care	£2,155,000	-0.81%
Tourism & Heritage	£362,000	-0.66%
Waste (Black bags)	£5,361,000	-0.63%
Transport	£14,038,000	-0.60%
Access, Engagement & Inclusion	£8,383,000	-0.58%
Parks	£ 5,102,000	-0.53%
Leisure	£4,111,000	-0.52%

- The services that received the lowest % decrease in average budget were;

Service Item	Original Budget	Average Change %
Assessment Care Management	£7,073,000	-0.23%
Supported Accommodation	£9,043,000	-0.23%
Equipment and Adaptations	£1,895,000	-0.16%
Homecare	£19,991,000	-0.15%
Care Support & Other Services	£5,245,000	-0.15%
Highways	£7,548,000	-0.12%
Children Looked After	£26,220,000	-0.11%
Children's Services	£18,828,000	-0.10%
Apprenticeship Scheme	£213,000	-0.09%
Residential & Nursing Services	£ 23,775,000	-0.07%
Schools	£ 149,590,000	-0.04%

- A 2.5% increase in Council Tax had been factored in to the budget simulator as it was used for modelling purposes in calculating the budget gap of £2.8m. Taking this into account the average % change increase in Council tax was reported to be 3.42%.
- Respondents to the questionnaire were asked what their preferred level of Council Tax increase for next year would be. The results show that 31.5% of respondents answering this question said that their preferred increase would be 3%.

- When presented with the list of investment areas for 2016/17, 71.9% of respondents agreed with continued investment in these areas and details of where improvements had been seen were discussed. The most positive comments were received with regards to apprenticeships, play areas, leisure and schools.
- 78.7% of respondents agreed with the approach to service efficiency, i.e. The Council making £6m of efficiency savings in 2017/18, achieved by reducing spend in back office functions that will not impact upon frontline services.
- The schools budget is proposed to increase by +1.5%. This is compared to an overall increase in funding the Council has received from Welsh Government of +0.2%. Respondents were asked if they thought that this increase was reasonable for schools, 66% said they agreed.
- Respondents were given the option to state up to a maximum of 5 services that they would protect from an increase in fees and charges. The most noted services were School Meals, Meals on Wheels and Sport and Leisure charges.
- A large number of engagement events were held across Rhondda Cynon Taf, The Roadshow events and the meetings that were held are part of the Council's ongoing approach to face to face resident engagement. The events provided a large number of views on Council Investments and these are summarised in Section 6. Once again the most positive comments were received with regards to apprenticeships, play areas, leisure and schools.
- All comprehensive School Councils were invited to send up to 2 pupils from their school, along with representatives from the new youth forums, to take part in the first RCT County Wide Youth Forum event. The event included short presentations, an interactive key pad question and answer session and a facilitated group discussion on Council Investment. A summary of the discussions are found in section 7.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of the General Budget Strategy Consultation for 2017/18, which was undertaken to support the decision making process, required to set the Council's budget for the coming financial year.
- 1.2 Section 2 outlines some brief background to the consultation process.
- 1.3 Section 3 details the methodology.
- 1.4 Section 4 and 5 provide the results of the online budget simulator exercise and the accompanying questionnaire.
- 1.5 Section 6 presents the feedback received at the engagement roadshow events and the Older Persons Advisory Group meeting.
- 1.6 Section 7 provides some feedback on the young persons' engagement event.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 For the financial year 2017/18 the Council must decide upon its Budget Strategy and priorities.
- 2.2 The Council faces an initial budget gap of approximately £2.8M for 2017/18, which it needs to reduce in order to meet the requirement of setting a legally balanced budget.
- 2.3 The consultation is an essential part of the budget setting process and assists the Cabinet with its deliberations, prior to constructing the final revenue budget strategy for the financial year ending 31st March 2018.
- 2.4 The Council has already undertaken thorough spending reviews but has not yet made a final decision. The purpose of the consultation was therefore to seek the views of the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 2.5 The consultation process aimed to provide residents with enough information on the Council's budget, including where and how the Council's money is spent, to enable people to more easily understand and take part in the budget engagement.
- 2.6 The Council's budget consultation ran from 7th November to the 19th December 2016.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 The Council's budget consultation ran from 7th November to the 19th December 2016.

3.2 The aims of the consultation were to;

- Inform and raise awareness of the budget setting process and the difficult decisions that need to be made
- Outline the current budget by service area and to ask people to think about which services are the most important to them
- Ask people for views on Council Tax levels
- Ask people for their views on Council investment over the previous financial year
- Increase the levels of engagement on previous years.

3.3 The following methods were used to consult with stakeholders;

- An online Budget Simulator
- A number of Town Centre, Leisure Centre and Day Centre Roadshow events
- Leader Engagement Events
- Promotion through Social media, including a Youtube video
- A Young Person's Budget Engagement Event
- Older Persons Advisory Group Meeting
- Promotion with the Citizen's Panel and through the Cwm Taf Engagement Hub.

3.4 The Budget Simulator outlined a range of services that the Council provides and their associated budgets and then asked people to make £2.8m of savings by adjusting the budget for each service, as well as the level of council tax. The simulator allowed respondents to;

- See current Council service spend
- See the consequences of increasing or decreasing funding for each service
- Suggest savings in specific services
- Set a hypothetical legally balanced budget
- Provide comments on the services.

3.5 The following engagement events took place during the consultation;

Leader Events

DATE (w/c)	Detail/Events
23rd Nov (6-8pm)	Leader Event 1 - Rhondda Sports Centre
7th Dec (6-8pm)	Leader Event 2 - Hawthorn Leisure Centre
13th Dec (1-3pm)	Leader Event 3 - Aberdare St Mairs Day Centre

Town Centre Roadshows

DATE (w/c)	Detail/Events
Tuesday 22nd November (10am - 2pm)	Aberdare Town Centre
Thursday 24th November (9am - 12pm)	Mountain Ash Town Centre
Tuesday 29th November (10am - 2pm)	Pontypridd Town Centre
Friday 2nd December (9am -12pm)	Porth Town Centre
Friday 9th December(10am -2pm)	Tonypandy Town Centre

Day Centres

DATE (w/c)	Detail/Events
11th Nov (11.30-12.30pm)	Tonyrefail Day Centre - Mill Street
15th Nov (12-2pm)	Nazareth House Day Centre Tonypandy
16th Nov (12-2pm)	St Mairs Day Centre
18th Nov (12-2pm)	Teifi House Day Centre, Maerdy
24th Nov (12-2)	Mountain Ash Day Centre
2nd Dec (12-2pm)	Alec Jones Day Centre Porth
5th Dec (12-2pm)	Gelli Day Centre, Ystrad
14th Dec (12-2pm)	Gilfach Goch Day Centre

Leisure Centres

DATE (w/c)	Detail/Events
16th Nov (3-6pm)	Aberdare Leisure Centre
17th Nov (3-6pm)	Hawthorn Leisure Centre
25th Nov (3-6pm)	Abercynon Sport Centre
6th Dec (3-6pm)	Rhondda Sport Centre (Ystrad)
14th Dec (3-6pm)	Llantrisant Leisure Centre
15th Dec (3-6pm)	Rhondda Fach Sport Centre
16th Dec (8.30- 11)	Tonyrefail Leisure Centre

- 3.6 The Town Centre events were held in the Council's Environmental Services mobile trailer vehicle. Members of the public were invited into the trailer to have a discussion with Officers and Members about the Council's budget, investments, car parking charges and any problems or queries they may have had. Budget boards were designed to create an interactive activity for people to leave comments and ideas and these were noted for this report.
- 3.7 All comprehensive School Councils were invited to send up to 2 pupils from their school, along with 21 people from the new youth forums, to take part in the first RCT County Wide Youth Forum event.
- 3.8 Discussions were also held with a meeting of the Older Persons' Advisory Group (OPAG) on the 23rd November 2016.
- 3.9 Over 900 people were engaged in the budget setting process.

4. BUDGET SIMULATOR RESULTS

Responses received

- 4.1 323 responses were received with submitted budgets. In addition, 5,773 people viewed the simulator, whilst not necessarily completing and submitting a budget (google analytics data).

The Overall Budget

- 4.2 As can be seen below the overall average budget was reduced by the 323 respondents who attempted to balance the budget. The average income increased by £1,251,725 and the average revised expenditure put forward showed a decrease of £824,487.

Original Total Income	£	77,355,000
Original Total Expenditure	£	379,755,000
Average Revised Total Income	£	78,606,725
Average Revised Total Expenditure	£	378,930,513

Table 1: The overall budget

- 4.3 However, the above figures include a level of decrease to some services where the Council does not have the ability to decrease the budget.

Overall Summary of Services

- 4.4 The table overleaf shows the average percentage change of all service areas included in the simulator. All service areas received a reduction in their budget. A summary of the services with the highest and lowest decrease are shown on the next page.

Education and Skills	
Schools (Total Budget £149,590,000)	-0.04%
School Support Services (Total Budget £12,443,000)	-0.31%
Libraries & Adult Learning (Total Budget £2,293,000)	-0.43%
Apprenticeship Scheme (Total Budget £213,000)	-0.09%
Youth Provision (Total Budget £2,118,000)	-0.36%
Access, Engagement & Inclusion (Total £8,383,000)	-0.58%
Adult Social Care	
Assessment Care Management (Total Budget £7,073,000)	-0.23%
Residential & Nursing (Total Budget £23,775,000)	-0.07%
Supported Accommodation (Total Budget £9,043,000)	-0.23%
Homecare (Total Budget £19,991,000)	-0.15%
Day Care Services (Total Budget £6,287,000)	-0.26%
Equipment and Adaptations (Total Budget £1,895,000)	-0.16%
Care Support & Other Services (Total Budget £5,245,000)	-0.15%
Children's Services and Wellbeing	
Children's Services (Total Budget £18,828,000)	-0.10%
Children Looked After (Total Budget £26,220,000)	-0.11%
Public Health (Total Budget £4,409,000)	-0.24%
Housing (Total Budget £994,000)	-0.32%
Parks (Total Budget £5,102,000)	-0.53%
Frontline Services	
Highways (Total Budget £7,548,000)	-0.12%
Streetcare (Total Budget £3,888,000)	-0.33%
Recycling (Total Budget £8,527,000)	-0.43%
Waste (Black bags) (Total Budget £5,361,000)	-0.63%
Transport (Total Budget £14,038,000)	-0.60%
Customer Care (Total Budget £2,155,000)	-0.81%
Support Services (Total Budget £26,861,000)	-0.85%
Leisure, Culture and Regeneration	
Tourism & Heritage (Total Budget £362,000)	-0.66%
Cultural Services (Total Budget £919,000)	-0.88%
Planning (Total Budget £474,000)	-0.39%
Regeneration (Total Budget £1,493,000)	-0.34%
Leisure (Total Budget £4,111,000)	-0.52%
Music (Total Budget £116,000)	-0.98%

Table 2: Overall summary of all services

4.5 The **top 10 services** that received the highest % decrease in average budget were;

Service Item	Original Budget	Average Change %
Music	£116,000	-0.98%
Cultural Services	£919,000	-0.88%
Support Services	£26,861,000	-0.85%
Customer Care	£2,155,000	-0.81%
Tourism & Heritage	£362,000	-0.66%
Waste (Black bags)	£5,361,000	-0.63%
Transport	£14,038,000	-0.60%
Access, Engagement & Inclusion	£8,383,000	-0.58%
Parks	£ 5,102,000	-0.53%
Leisure	£4,111,000	-0.52%

Table 3: Services receiving highest % decrease in average budget

4.6 The services that received the lowest % decrease in average budget were;

Service Item	Original Budget	Average Change %
Assessment Care Management	£7,073,000	-0.23%
Supported Accommodation	£9,043,000	-0.23%
Equipment and Adaptations	£1,895,000	-0.16%
Homecare	£19,991,000	-0.15%
Care Support & Other Services	£5,245,000	-0.15%
Highways	£7,548,000	-0.12%
Children Looked After	£26,220,000	-0.11%
Children's Services	£18,828,000	-0.10%
Apprenticeship Scheme	£213,000	-0.09%
Residential & Nursing Services	£ 23,775,000	-0.07%
Schools	£ 149,590,000	-0.04%

Table 4: Services receiving lowest % decrease in average budget

Analysis by Service Groups

Education and Skills

4.7 The education and skills budget expenditure was reduced on average by -0.11%, the reductions vary from -0.58% for Access Engagement & Inclusion to -0.04% for schools.

Service Item	Average Change %
Education and Skills (Expenditure)	-0.09%
Schools (Total Budget £149,590,000)	-0.04%
School Support Services (Total Budget £12,443,000)	-0.31%
Libraries & Adult Learning (Total Budget £2,293,000)	-0.43%
Apprenticeship Scheme (Total Budget £213,000)	-0.09%
Youth Provision (Total Budget £2,118,000)	-0.36%
Access, Engagement & Inclusion (Total £8,383,000)	-0.58%

Table 5: Average change % for Education and Skills

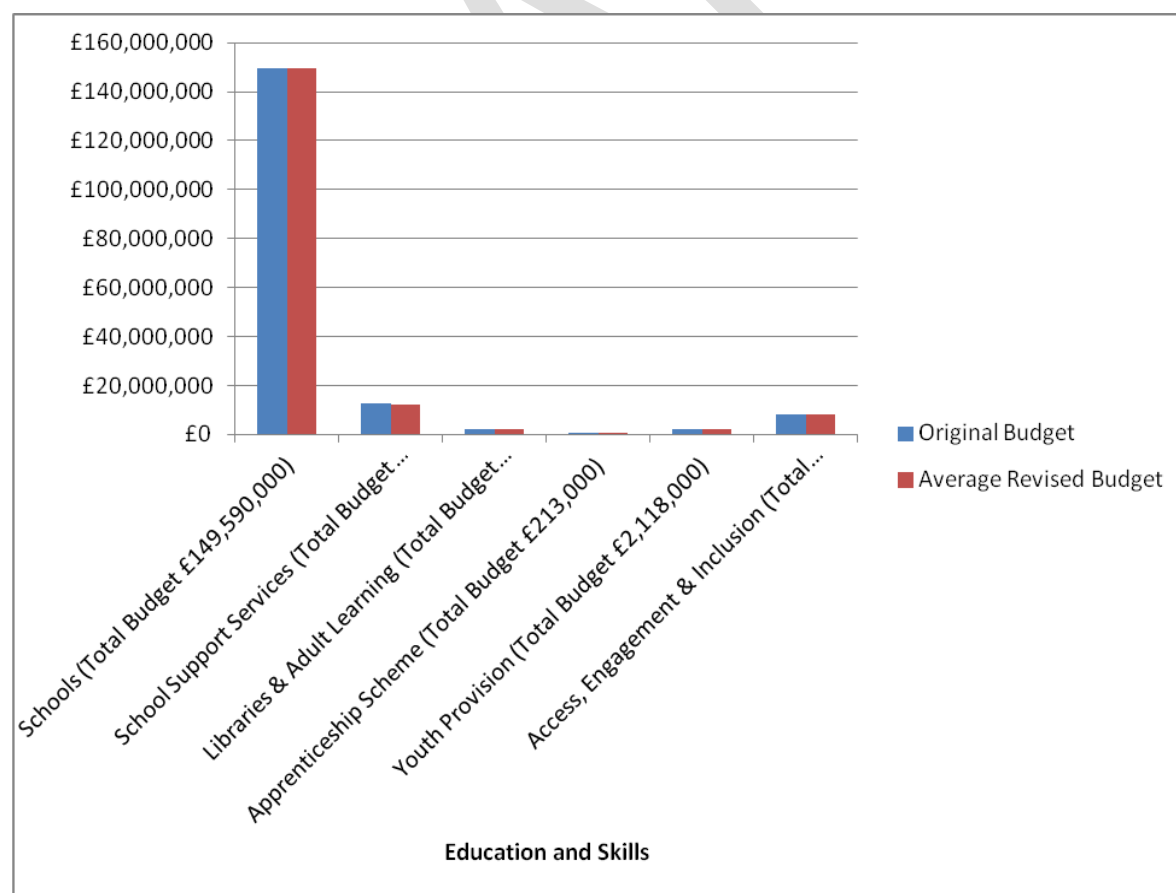


Figure 1 –Education and Skills Budget Change

Education and Skills Comments

- 4.8 The following are a selection of comments made in the budget simulator;

Schools

The amount spent on schools and school support seems astronomical when considering the school closures and reduction of sixth forms that have taken place in the Rhondda Fach.

Given that the schools budget is the biggest I have chosen to cut this as they would have the most room to find savings. We've all heard the phrase "tighten your belts" but what happens when you run out of holes?

You need to shake up junior schools and make them a priority as if you have a good foundation of education and help with problems early on it will be more cost effective and by the time the children are in comprehensive they will be easier to teach and the education system will be more appreciated.

We need the investment. Education makes life better all round

Libraries & Adult Learning

Library services still seem to have a surfeit of "big bosses" - do we need them all?

Libraries are lovely but who even uses them anymore?

Full review of library staffing across RCT needed & automate the whole system. It will save a lot of money. Follow example of Norfolk library services.

Better use of library data to target service to what people need/want.

Meanwhile, libraries should not be receiving a public purse budget and should be self-sufficient, especially in the 21st Century. Any additional funding from the public purse should be considered a bonus to libraries, not a necessity.

A lot of money is wasted on adult education. My local community centre (Darren Las) offers courses to people on benefits to encourage them in to work. I would be interested to see the return on investment in these courses as having grown up with many of the people who attend some do not ever wish to work.

Adult learning should be monitored as people really have had 18 years free schooling

I don't know of any adult learning that would be accessible to myself so what's the point in funding it?

Make RCT a centre of opportunity and excellence for adult learning and encourage parental involvement in Education

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are the way forward and also should benefit all people in the future

Are we getting value for money for the services provided? A recent report states apprenticeship schemes in England do not provide apprentices with jobs, etc. Do our schemes?

Apprentice schemes need support to educate young people in a skill.

There is a great need for apprenticeships

Youth Povision

Look to other areas for providing Youth provision such as accessing Communities First funding and engaging more with Voluntary Sector organisations.

Access, Engagement & Inclusion

More joined up working, several services working to achieve same outcomes but not actually working together which is a waste of time and money.

Other

Investing in future generation is vital for RCT to be a successful community in years to come. Concentrate resources on statutory areas only and ensure they are the best they could possibly be.

Savings could be found in this large budget.

Adult Social Care

- 4.9 The Adult Social Care budget was reduced on average by -0.15%, the reductions vary from -0.26% for Day care Services to -0.07% for Residential & Nursing.

Service Item	Average Change %
Adult Social Care (Expenditure)	-0.15%
Assessment Care Management (Total Budget £7,073,000)	-0.23%
Residential & Nursing (Total Budget £23,775,000)	-0.07%
Supported Accommodation (Total Budget £9,043,000)	-0.23%
Homecare (Total Budget £19,991,000)	-0.15%
Day Care Services (Total Budget £6,287,000)	-0.26%
Equipment and Adaptations (Total Budget £1,895,000)	-0.16%
Care Support & Other Services (Total Budget £5,245,000)	-0.15%

Table 6: Average change % for Adult Social Care

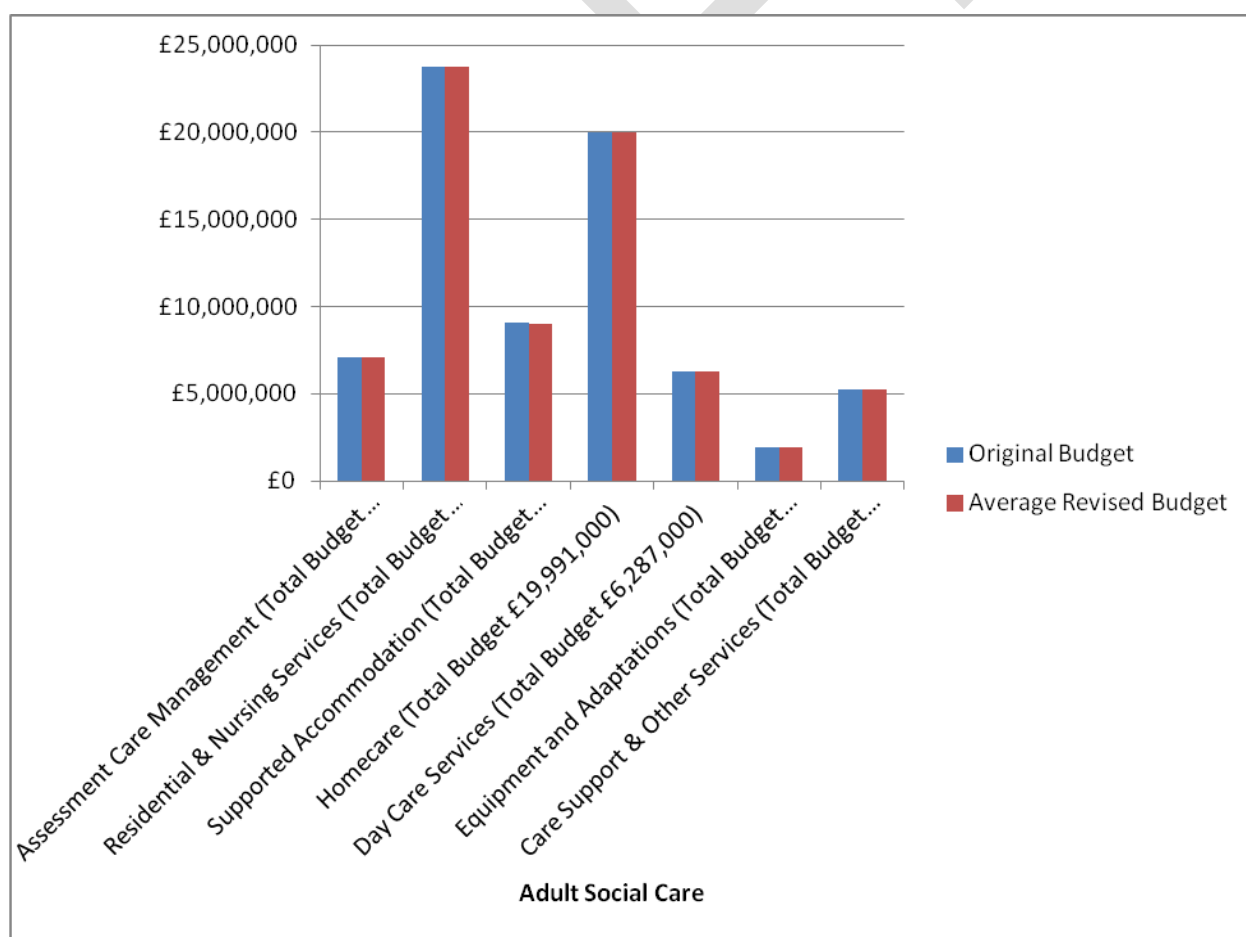


Figure 2 – Adult Social Care Budget Change

Adult and Social Care comments

- 4.10 The following are a selection of comments made in the budget simulator;

Overall

Adult social care cannot have funding reduced. But perhaps we should make health pay more, e.g. medication scheme, health should pay in full for the administration of medication to people in the community, including the time staff spend administering it and traveling to and from clients houses. Administration of medication is a health task not a social care task.

Essential support so keep budget as it is

Not enough is done by the council in this area too many elderly are not getting the care they deserve after paying into the social system all their working life

This is an area which needs to be at least maintained at its current level or it will result in implications for NHS and may lead to bad private facilities getting a foot hold.

Whilst it is regrettable that there would need be a reduction in the support in Adult Social Care, the truth is RCT cannot afford to maintain the services at this level.

We have an aging population with great demand for care services.

Independent Living

Encourage independence

Focus on ensuring people can stay well in their own homes for as long as possible, and don't have to be admitted to residential care.

Homecare

Homecare, some people who are dependent on 24 hour care should be placed in a hospice as a more effective and cheaper alternative.

Little less "rush" on home care visits

Equipment & Adaptations

Equipment and Adaptations should be recharged where people get a benefit to cover care.

Make better use of existing materials and equipment

Day Care Services

Day service provision could be re-thought along Social Firm model ideals Elderly Day Centres - raise the cost of lunch provision for those who can afford it?

Overall, need to find more every year due to increasingly older population, but some day centres hardly seem to be used and could be closed. Also, those who could afford to do so (or everyone) could be asked to pay more to attend the day centres that remain open.

Children's Services and Wellbeing

- 4.11 The Children's Services and Wellbeing budget was reduced on average by 0.16%, the reductions vary from -0.53% for Parks to -0.10% for Children's Services.

Service Item	Average Change %
Children's Services and Wellbeing (Expenditure)	-0.16%
Children's Services (Total Budget £18,828,000)	-0.10%
Children Looked After (Total Budget £26,220,000)	-0.11%
Public Health (Total Budget £4,409,000)	-0.24%
Housing (Total Budget £994,000)	-0.32%
Parks (Total Budget £5,102,000)	-0.53%

Table 7: Average change % for Children's Services and Wellbeing

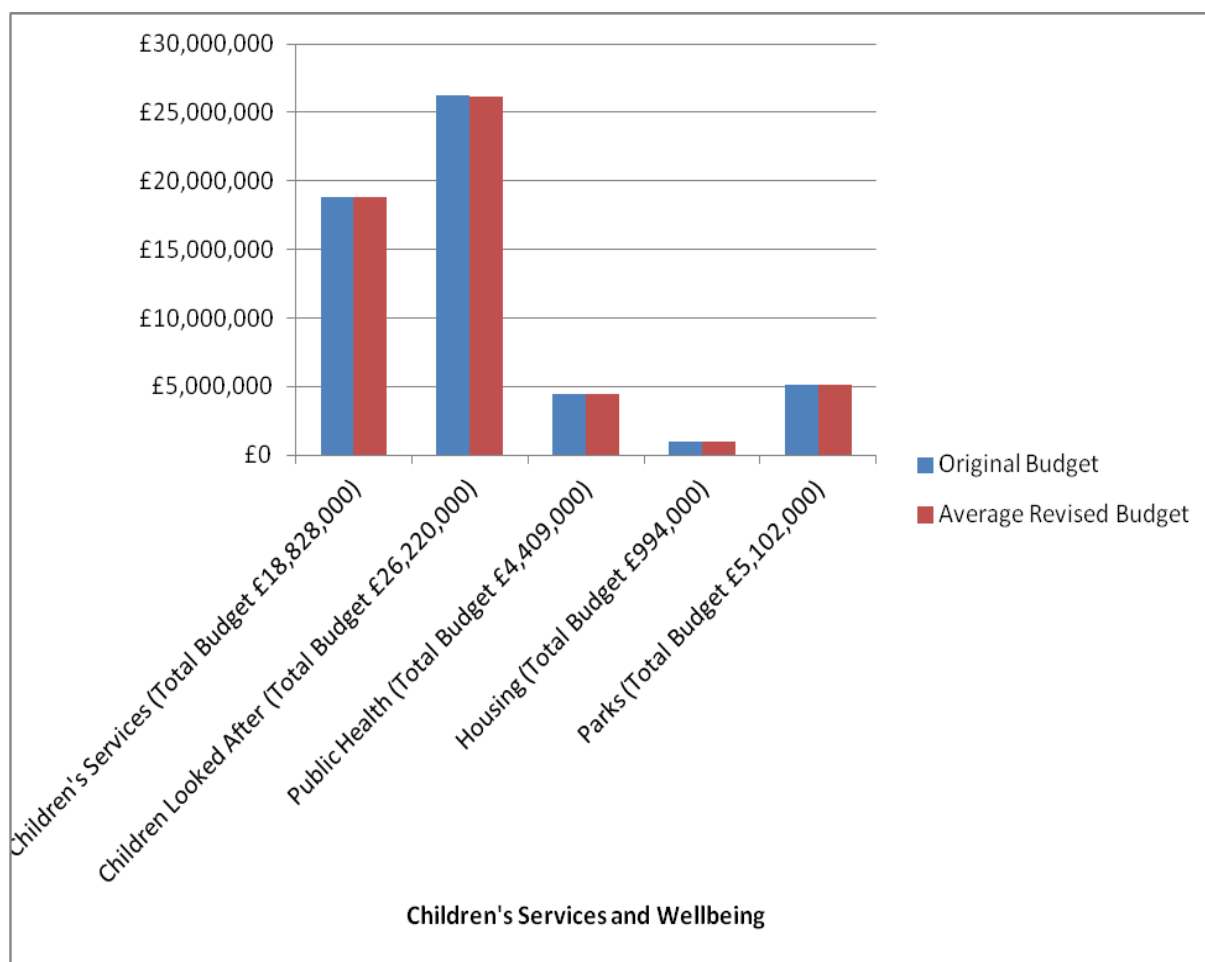


Figure 3 –Children's Services and Wellbeing Budget Change

Children's Services and Wellbeing comments

4.12 The following are a selection of comments made in the budget simulator;

Children's Services

Like Adult services, a reduction in Children's services is regrettable, but required considering the large chunk of the RCT budget it takes.

Children's services are stretched enough as it is staffing wise. Maybe they could look at reducing the amount they give to families under children's services - ie - they shouldn't need to pay for household items (washing machine, fridge freezer, etc) when the family already has a 50" TV with sky and a contract mobile telephone!

Looked After Children

More focus on prevention and early intervention, to reduce the number of children taken into care,

Open more council run children's homes (possibly rent homes) and reduce spending to private companies who provided care at increased cost

Housing

Closer working with the Housing Associations to provide the support. Better use of systems and data to support with this.

Good housing improves children's lives

Parks

Couldn't communities be empowered for maintaining local parks?

Kids have got parks that are falling apart

Likewise, Parks are a large price that we cannot afford. Things like sports fields should be privately funded, not publically funded and considered a luxury rather than an element for the public purse

Make better use of volunteers to clean up parks and roads

Frontline Services

- 4.13 The Frontline Services budget was reduced on average by -0.62%, the reductions vary from -0.85% for support services to -0.12% for Highways.

Service Item	Average Change %
Frontline Services (Expenditure)	0.62%
Highways (Total Budget £7,548,000)	-0.12%
Streetcare (Total Budget £3,888,000)	-0.33%
Recycling (Total Budget £8,527,000)	-0.43%
Waste (Black bags) (Total Budget £5,361,000)	-0.63%
Transport (Total Budget £14,038,000)	-0.60%
Customer Care (Total Budget £2,155,000)	-0.81%
Support Services (Total Budget £26,861,000)	-0.85%

Table 8: Average change % for Frontline Services

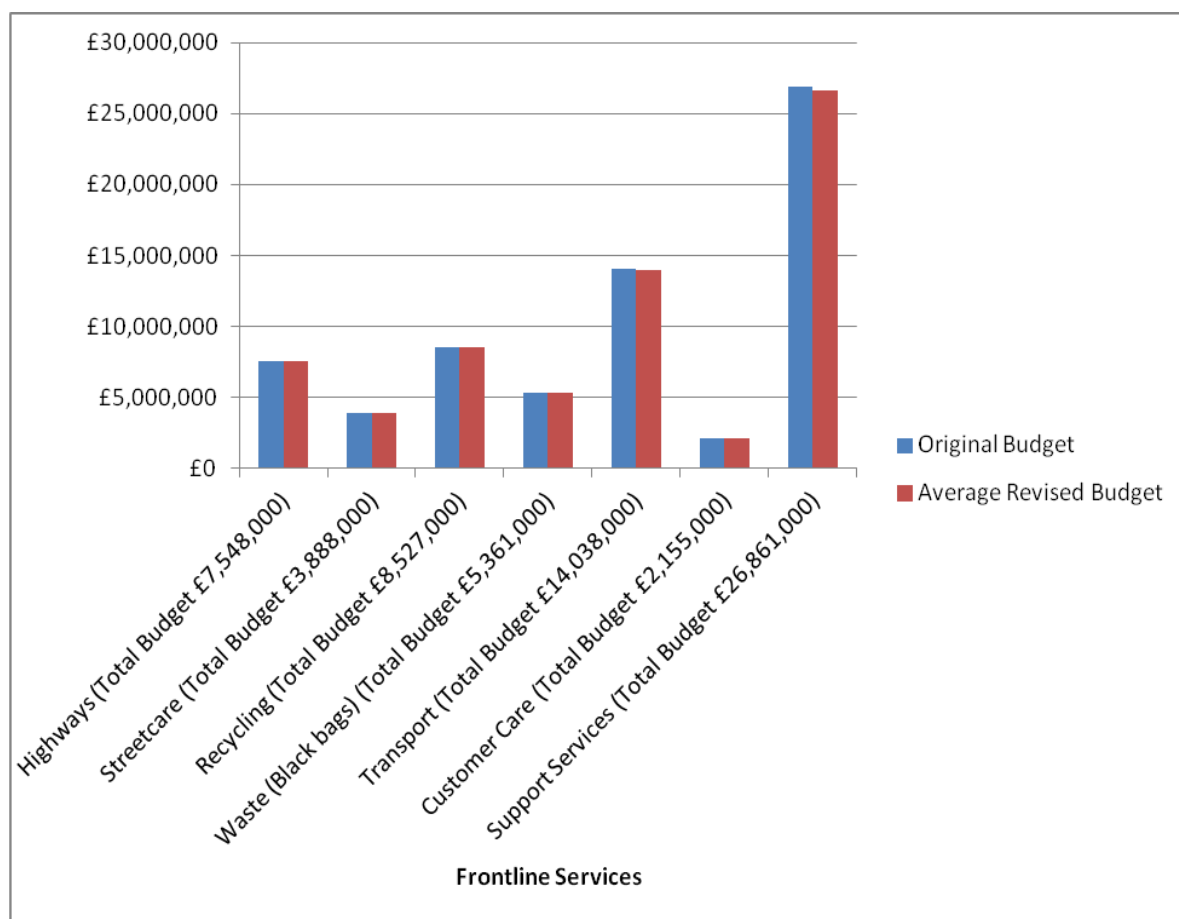


Figure 4 - Frontline Services Budget Change

Frontline Services comments

- 4.14 The following are a selection of comments made in the budget simulator;

Highways

Repair the defects properly the first time. Ensure works are carried out to the proper standard and that they do not require constant work due to shoddy initial work

Streetcare

Rubbish in the streets blights RCT. It's disgusting. Increase fines to minimum £1000 for anyone caught throwing/leaving rubbish.

The drive to change to LED streetlights should be sped up considerably. This may present a cost but will save money in the long run as they use less energy and require less maintenance

Recycling

Don't spend money on raising awareness to recycle- fine those that don't!

Recycling scheme and bags left with stickers does not work effectively where there are shared collection points

Recycling waste could easily be reduced to fortnightly along with black bag waste as I'd prefer the collections reversed if anything black bags weekly

More education is required. People should be recycling more.

Waste

black bags are not expensive. get better use of transport ,too many vans running around empty better management

Transport

Spending over £14 million pound on community transport is a massive amount. Could the users be asked to contribute to the cost if they don't do this already?

Improve transport links. incentivise a better service. Promote car sharing schemes. Transport is key to prosperity

Customer Care

Rationalisation of council services including better access to online services.

Supporting more residents to access services online, and through other settings like libraries

Leisure Culture and Regeneration

- 4.15 The Leisure, Culture and Regeneration budget was reduced on average by -0.54%, the reductions vary from -0.98% for Music to -0.34% for Regeneration.

Service Item	Average Change %
Leisure, Culture and Regeneration (Expenditure)	0.54
Tourism & Heritage (Total Budget £409,000)	-0.66%
Cultural Services (Total Budget £929,000)	-0.88%
Planning (Total Budget £514,000)	-0.39%
Regeneration (Total Budget £1,504,000)	-0.34%
Leisure (Total Budget £4,592,000)	-0.52%
Music (Total Budget £261,000)	-0.98%

Table 9: Average change % for Leisure, Culture and Regeneration

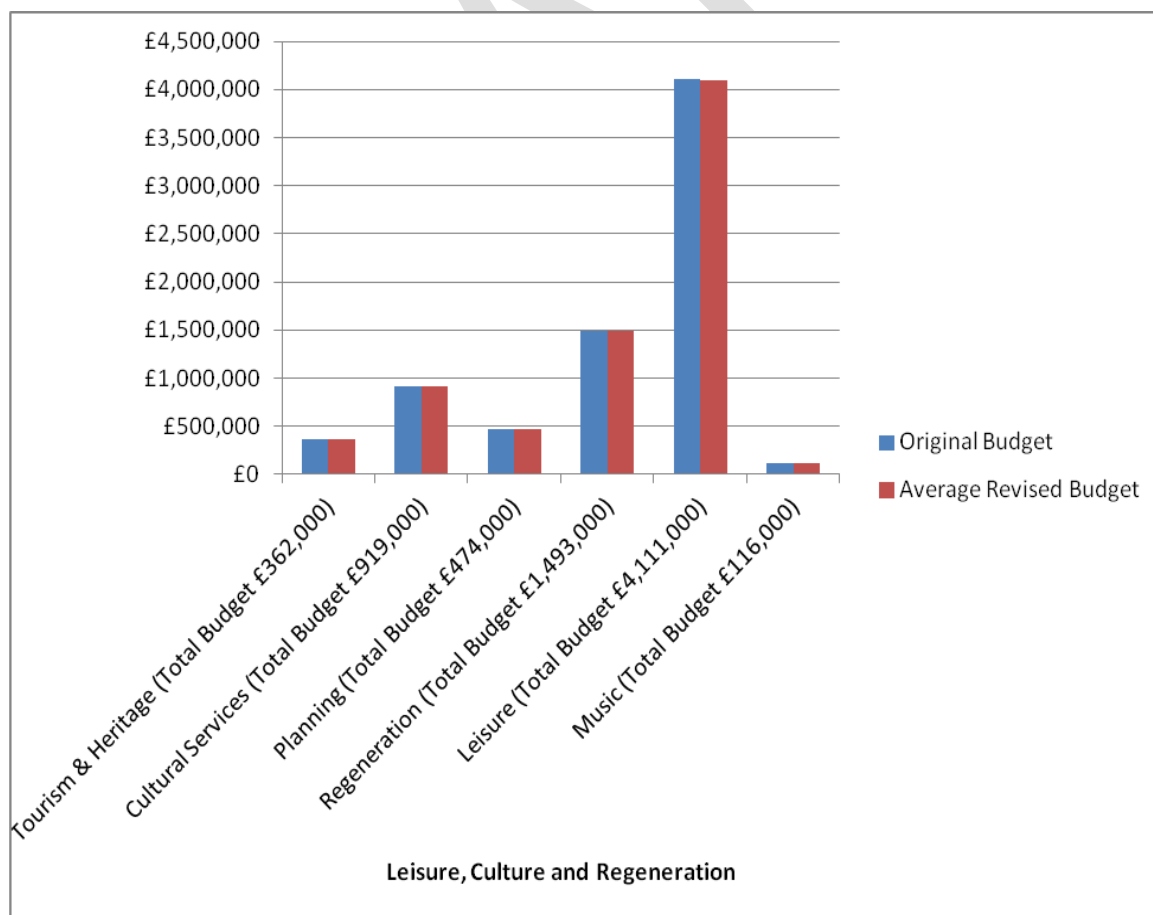


Figure 5: Leisure, Culture and Regeneration Budget Change

4.16 The following are a selection of comments made in the budget simulator;

Leisure Culture and Regeneration comments

Overall

More important things on other pages

Enough cuts have already been made here

People must pay more themselves.

Tourism, Cultural Services, Leisure... these should be luxury's not necessities. Leisure should be privately funded enterprises, not public purse endeavours.

Tourism

Tourism, properly promoted, can bring in revenue which can help regeneration

A slight increase to access cultural and tourism would not directly impact the people and at this time of austerity we need to cut our cloth to fit.

Cultural Services

the community facilities such as community centres are vital to communities who need support etc.

Although it doesn't appear specifically in this survey a huge amount of money is spent on Welsh translations when a very small percentage of the borough actually see Welsh as their first language. I am a very passionate Welsh person but in times of austerity this seems like a huge investment for something used by a small fraction of the population.

As with the Muni cultural services could in time become community run services

Regeneration

Greater scrutiny on regeneration plans and only approve those with greatest benefit.

Leisure

Leisure centres could improve their own income by charging rct staff the same prices as the public. Or by reducing the price to all and advertising this you'll get a full centre instead

I also don't agree that being on benefits should automatically entitle you to free or reduced leisure services. There are a number of working families who earn broadly the same or less.

We need to increase leisure activities that have positive health benefits e.g leisure centres. A slight increase to access cultural and tourism would not directly impact the people and at this time of austerity we need to cut our cloth to fit.

Music

Music services need to be encouraged as not all children are academic or sporty.

Music tuition fees should be classed the same as dinner money - free to those who are disadvantaged, but not to those who can afford to pay. Schools could contribute towards the fees where they feel there is need.

I made an exception for Music because Music is art and costs very little on the public purse. Good music makes for cheery citizens during these dire times. However, reality is that this is a luxury too and could also be cut if required.

Transitional Funding

- 4.17 Respondents who completed the budget simulator felt that the budget gap, at least in part could use some of the transitional funding available. Respondents had the option of using 0%, 50% or 100% of the transitional funding of £2.8M available. The average percentage was 20.19% which results in using transitional funding totalling £0.565M.

Comments on Transitional Funding

- 4.18 The following are a selection of comments;

We should use more of the transitional funding;

Give us a break so Council can evaluate recent changes. Sort stress and low morale among staff.

here you go, no one lost any jobs or services, spend some reserve cash.

Utilise this during 2018/19

We should maintain the current level of transitional funding;

Ridiculous idea will just increase future problem

This is not required if the rest of my plan is followed, meaning we are not giving ourselves future debt.

Council Tax

- 4.19 A 2.5% increase in Council Tax had been factored in to the budget simulator as it was used for modelling purposes in calculating the budget gap of £2.8m. Taking this into account the average % change increase in Council tax was reported to be 3.42%.

Table 10: Average change % for Council Tax

Service Item	Average Change %
Council Tax (Income)	0.92%

- 4.20 The following are a selection of comments that were suggested alongside the Council tax submitted changes in the budget simulator.

Those in favour of an increase;

I understand that the council needs to balance the budget and therefore a rise is necessary.....

A rise of just 99p for £1.9m seems to make sense and be good value for everyone to help keep services going.

Happy for an increase in Council Tax to save services

I believe that an inflation rise in Council Tax is more than fair. Over inflation rises can also be considered to protect services but this should be a last resort to protect services.

I would put it up by more to save public services, I would happily pay more.

As long as there is an associated improvement or maintaining of service standards;

residents will not object to paying a little more provided services are at an appropriate level

Think up to 4% is ok if you make no cuts

I think we should all pay a little extra through our council tax to keep the same level of services.

If there was slight increase in council tax that would go to social care then I would be happy with that

There was a feeling from some people that an increase was expected each year,

A small rise is generally anticipated anyway

It always goes up - it's expected.

A number of comments suggested that there should be no increase or a small increase, as people are struggling in the current financial climate;

Council tax is high enough in RCT

Council tax payments are a killer every month and are extremely high as it is

I have never agreed with council tax it's not fair

Families are facing the same budget pressures that the council are, any increase will see an impact on poverty levels within the area.

It may only be a small amount but with stagnant wages, a little increase can be the final straw

Overall Comments

- 4.21 The simulator included a question that asked for overall comments. The responses were mainly in relation to ideas for savings and ways that the Council could save money, they included the following;

Reducing the costs of Managers and Councillors

Cut down the middle management in all departments.

Reduce overall management costs

The best way to save money is to cut out middle management!!! Don't have managers looking after managers!!!

Do we need the amount of Senior Managers that are in post.

Efficiency Savings

Cut out duplication, consider reducing council members expenses, reduce cost of paper by changing photocopying paper to a less expensive one.

Increasing Revenue

There is great potential for the local authority to generate income, events, shows etc...

Can we organise events in the parks... concerts, open air theatres? Festivals, we have great venues, which are not properly used..

Suggested Budget priorities

Look after vulnerable children, adults and the elderly. Increase council tax if necessary - most people could afford a few pounds extra a year to help those in need

If nothing else the Council needs a bit of breathing space to evaluate changes to services that have already been made. Invest in services that will encourage resilience and support the most vulnerable. Invest in things that will help bring desperately needed prosperity to the area

Partnership Working

Sharing services with other local authorities could result in large scale savings in manpower and IT. The political will needs to be there though

Other

During 6 weeks holiday student can do work experience with the council working towards full time. All students can use leisure facilities for free

Move the margin for the protected spending on schools to allow a reduction. Other areas are equally important. Most of which could have a small reduction other than large cuts in specific areas.

Charge for entry into the Lido when it re-opens to make revenue, people WILL pay! You can then use it as a prize to give away free entry when people take part in meetings / focus groups and questionnaires!

Best price services should be procured from locally sourced goods and services to reduce costs and budget wastage.

The budget simulator is really good. I think a focus on increasing tourism in the area will keep and attract spend in RCT for the benefit of all

5. Questionnaire Results

- 5.1 Once respondents had completed the budget simulator, they were given the opportunity to answer a number of questions about the budget and council priorities,

Council Tax

- 5.2 Respondents were asked what their preferred level of Council Tax increase for next year would be. The results show that 31.5% of respondents answering this question said that their preferred increase would be 3%.

Preferred level of Council Tax increase	Count	%
0%	47	26.0
1%	35	19.3
3%	57	31.5

5%	37	20.4
Over 5%	5	2.8
Base	181	100

Table 11 – Preferred level of Council Tax increase (Questionnaire)

- 5.3 Respondents felt that the Council should maintain as many services at the current level as possible, even if it means a reasonable increase in Council Tax. A selection of comments can be found below.

Agree

a few pence per household a week increase is a small price to pay for maintaining services

But everyone should pay it!!!

Don't mind increase if services not cut

I think we should all pay a little extra through our council tax to keep the same level of services.

reasonable I consider to be 2% and under.

Those in higher tax bands for council tax could afford more than a 5% increase in council tax

Willing to pay slightly more Council Tax to protect services

Obviously a balance has to be struck, but from my point of view if departments have already made efficiency savings and cannot cut anymore without impacting frontline services then Council Tax going up is an acceptable decision, ideally by less than inflation.

Disagree

Of those who disagreed with a council tax rise, the following are a selection of comments;

Council tax is high enough as it is.

Council tax is higher in this area compared to other areas in Wales already

Families are facing the same budget pressures that the council are, any increase will see an impact on poverty levels within the area.

We pay far too much council tax as it is. Take the money from benefits

Why should the council increase council tax every year and reduce services wages do not increase by the level council tax does

You cannot continue to expect hard working people to pay ever increasing amounts well above the rate of inflation every year, because too many inhabitants don't contribute sufficiently. If the budget cannot stretch, then cuts have to be made.

Other comments under Council Tax question

Cut inefficiency rather than services

The Council should consider more innovative ways of delivering services

People in RCT are having less disposable income and the in work poverty is increasing. Increasing council tax will affect those who are working at minimum wage levels and will result in increased poverty and a possibility of individuals reverting back to the benefit system

No increase over 4%

No increase over 5%

The Council's Priorities

- 5.4 The Corporate Plan (2016 – 2020) sets out what the Council's vision means for people across 3 **Priorities**. These priorities have been decided based on information that residents have already told us about their needs. People were asked if they thought these priorities were the right ones. (**Base=178**)

Are these still the right priorities?			
	Yes	No	Don't know
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economy - Building a strong economy People - Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone Place - Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work 	73.6% (n=131)	15.2% (n=27)	11.2% (n=20)

Table 12 – Council Priorities

5.5 As you can see the majority of respondents thought the priorities were still the right ones (73.6%)

The following are a selection of comments received on the Council's Corporate Plan Priorities;

Economy

Bringing jobs to the area should be the number one priority so that less people are reliant on frontline services. The impact of frontline services should be measured (if not already done so) e.g. if there has been a campaign (and funding) to encourage people to recycle/walk to work/exercise more has this had a measurable impact? If not, is it a waste of money?

Cannot build a strong economy when the area is struggling as badly as it is.

Should be more along to lines of promoting the re-growth of the economy.

Councils should be focusing on income generation opportunities, but realistically have little impact on building a strong economy in isolation to WAG policies and Government funding. Economically it is still beneficial for too many people to be out of work than working in low paid jobs, and R.C.T will not change this, so funds allocated are wasted in this respect.

Economy, infrastructure, education and local health services are key

More jobs are needed. More should be done to encourage corporations and the civil service to open large offices/business in RCT rather than in Cardiff.

Cardiff suffers from traffic congestion, and there is a higher turnover of employees. RCT has a workforce which is loyal - staff turnover is less, and high quality output is guaranteed.

Prioritise getting adults into work. Less priority on children

Show us how you're going to create the economy.

Yes, strongly believe to have a strong economy, well being for people and a vibrant place for RCT we need to prioritise housing, the current empty homes grants has been long awaited and is a fantastic resource to improve the current dilapidated empty housing stock of RCT.

People

In the order of people; place then economy.

Promotion of positive lives should be something for each individual to address for themselves, and if they made a bit more effort, the council could divert these

resources to other areas.

Providing essential services to all our vulnerable and disabled children and adults, including mental health.

Cardiff suffers from traffic congestion, and there is a higher turnover of employees. RCT has a workforce which is loyal - staff turnover is less, and high quality output is guaranteed.

It should be the people who live in an area to make it better for themselves. Small steps like stop dropping litter and rubbish. Ensure neighbours are safe and not ignored like they did when I was younger. These are just 2 small steps that would make a big difference to any community but it comes from the people to do something. The council could help by placing reminders on the council tax bills what community really means.

There is a significant increase in the amount of people around Pontypridd Town who are either clearly on drugs or drunk, people are living in shop door ways.

preventing those being dependent on services where possible

Providing essential services to all our vulnerable and disabled children and adults, including mental health.

Social care and health should be a priority.

People felt that young people and education were important to include in the People priority:

Childcare, education , children's services & health

More safe play areas for young children, youth services for the older children. Reduce anti social behaviour due to boredom. Invest in areas other than the Cynon valley.

Youth As they are the next generation

Education and leisure should be priorities. Education as the children are the future. Leisure as there are far too many overweight people which impacts on their ability by reducing obesity the health service wouldn't be so stretched and the impact on social care would decrease

Improving education, employment and improving technology such as improve phone and Internet signal.

Opportunities and education for young people. More support for people facing mental health crisis, especially with schools.

Priorities should be education. Regeneration of Pontypridd centre would also bring an increase to revenues

Schools should be a priority

Place

Infrastructure, make it more appealing for business.

I feel that Community facilities are vital in helping to promote the Councils key priority of "place"

Place surely is not just a council matter.

Place surely is not just a council matter. It should be the people who live in an area to make it better for themselves. Small steps like stop dropping litter and rubbish. Ensure neighbours are safe and not ignored like they did when I was younger. These are just 2 small steps that would make a big difference to any community but it comes from the people to do something. The council could help by placing reminders on the council tax bills what community really means.

Build a learning community for better understanding of each other, better relationship, better democracy, new skills and a stronger economy. Overhaul transport and develop a new cross valley strategy

I feel that Community facilities are vital in helping to promote the Councils key priority of "place"

I think the third priority above should include a place where people are safe to live, work and socialise.

Council Investment Opportunities

- 5.6 Respondents were asked if they thought that the Council's investment in the following areas should be continued.

Education - School Facilities
Housing grants – Grants to tackle empty homes
Employment – Apprenticeships
Highways – road improvements
Flood Alleviation Schemes
Regeneration of towns and villages
Leisure Centres
Play areas
Highways infrastructure (bridges/roads)

Waste Facilities
Energy efficiency (including street lights)
Improving Information Technology (IT)
Outdoor sports facilities (3G pitches)

Continue investment?	Count	%
Yes	128	71.9
No	36	20.2
Don't know	14	7.9
Total respondents	178	100

5.7 71.9% of respondents agreed with continued investment in these areas.

5.8 Respondents were also asked if they had seen improvements in any of the areas above as a result of the investment, the following are a selection of the comments received;

Leisure centres & 3G

Improvement in leisure facilities

I have seen improvements in leisure facilities and feel more thought should be given to how these can become community hubs and replace provision such as elderly day care. As well as already being a very important community and social resource the leisure centres could be used to encouraging health and fitness in the aging population.

Leisure centres. Energy efficiency. Play areas. Sports facilities.

Llantrisant Leisure Centre is greatly improved and projects like the Church Village bypass have helped the area.

No improvements noticed for most areas apart from leisure centres and street lighting hopefully with further investment more improvements will be seen.

yes , leisure centres are a better place to visit

leisure and sporting facilities

Yes - Leisure & 3G Pitches used.

3G pitches

Rhondda Sports Centre Gym

3G pitch at Ton Pentre

Schools

Creation of the various 3 to 16 (18) schools planned in the Rhondda

new schools

Super school being built in Tonyrefail

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeship scheme has proved successful for many young people and needs extending.

Apprenticeships are providing training opportunities for young people

The Council should at trade skills for young people we do not have any tradesmen other than mechanical employed by RCT

Highways / infrastructure

Highways (very little)

Highways are a lot better than they used to be - particularly the Upper Boat A470 roundabout. It would be nice to find a way to reduce congestion in Hopkinstown at rush hour, but I appreciate it's a difficult problem to solve.

More road works so assuming more repairs to highways, some flood alleviation work has been carried out near me, yet to see if it helps.

Highways infrastructure improvements such as the new bridge in place at Hopkinstown.

Highways improvement - but limited consideration for cyclists

and roads are much better

Yes roads much better than other councils

Overall

There is an obvious investment in RCT services etc which is nice to see given all the cuts over recent years.

I am very pleased to see I have witnessed improvements in all the above.

improvements in all areas

Negative

No / None (n=15)

No improvements

5.9 Other areas that were suggested for further investment and not included in the current investment, included;

- Adult Social Care including care homes
- Adult training and education
- Careers advice for teenagers and under 25s
- Public conveniences
- Street cleansing, more bins and recycling areas in streets etc
- Youth service and facilities
- School counseling
- Access & traffic management (including access for cyclists)
- Projects generating income
- Attracting private industry to towns
- Mountain roads & Pavements
- Wellbeing strategy
- Transport
- Parking enforcement and policing
- Lighting
- Support of theatres

Service Efficiency

5.10 Efficiency savings do not affect the standard or level of a front line service, rather they aim to get more from the same resources or achieve the same results with fewer resources. The Council is targeting making £6m of efficiency savings in 2017/18. This will be achieved by reducing spend in back office functions that will not impact upon frontline services. Respondents were asked if they agreed with this approach.

Save through reduced spend in back office?	Count	%
Yes	137	78.7
No	14	8.0

Don't know	23	13.2
Total respondents	174	100

78.7% of respondents agreed with the approach.

5.11 Other suggestions for efficiencies included;

Ask staff / voluntary redundancies

already submitted to management

As I do not work for the Council I can't really comment on this, but staff should be asked the same question if they have not already as they have the experience and knowledge to find them.

Voluntary Redundancy, Restructures

More efficient working / cut back office costs

Cut paperwork and do more online

Cut back office costs

Make better use of technology/information systems/online services. Look at the overlap in services being provided, review procedures and processes to make them more efficient - Make sure that managers encourage change and that they make sure staff are not threatened by it, that it is a good thing and not to be afraid.

Look to the long term and plan change with care

Many Front Line services can be scrapped from the public purse and returned (or handed over to) private enterprises. Things like Leisure Centres and Libraries and sports fields should not be subsidised by the public purse.

Only send information in the person's language of choice - don't send everything in English once and then in Welsh! I'm happy to only have my correspondence in Welsh.

Some back office functions are necessary to support front line staff.

Spend less on medication bags for life and mindfulness courses etc

Update the efficiency of what we have. In analysing the data and putting money to where there is a tangible effect

Reduction in managers / expenses / salaries

Number of Councillors should be halved in number immediately

restructure management to make savings

By reducing councillors pay and expenses. Also service directors and next level managers have wage cuts and stop essential user mileage allowance

Merge directors roles with Merthyr, Caerphilly etc.

Reduce all senior roles salaries, no-one should earn more than £50k a year working for the council

cut your wages

Staff need to be cut. There are far too many people being paid to do very little, for example over staffing in libraries.

the style of Rhondda should be reflected in council officer paycales, all officers should live in RCT and be paid a non elite wage, if there are 80 people on over 100,000 a year then the council will be mistrusted and people will not engage in these consultations for a start

Privatisation of services and outsourcing

Outsource less, less use of agency staff/resources.

Outsource ICT; Reduce printing costs; Councillors to not claim expenses for attending committees or council meetings; Sell unused buildings or land; Senior management to take a 1.5% cut in pay; introduce parking charges for staff at Council Buildings.

Better contracts with suppliers

Reducing spend to private companies in areas of care and education.

Stop outsourcing to expensive companies keep as much as possible in house.

Income generating

Lean approach to services, seeking to only do the activities with substantial benefits, and not do those with marginal benefits or harm.

Explore options for income generation - small scale green energy generation schemes.

Agile working

more home working when appropriate so less office space required - this will require team managers to accept this and allow staff to work remotely - tighter control on wastage of electricity such as pc's and monitors being left on when not being used

Need to look at rolling out agile working, which would free up some desk space, also means that staff can complete work on computer without all the necessary interruptions.

Other

Cuts are in front line services are inevitable, and having worked as an NHS manager throughout the 1990s where we just put plasters over gaping wounds to try and keep services going, in hindsight it would have caused less damage to fewer people if we had let the service fail, make government recognise that this is politically unacceptable, and rebuild with adequate resources. We achieved nothing apart from keeping a lid on an ever increasing explosion.

Reduction in buildings wastage

Reduction in parks we live in an area where it is green and plenty of outdoors to walk and keep fit..

The Schools Budget

- 5.12 The schools budget is proposed to increase by +1.5%. This is compared to an overall increase in funding the Council has received from Welsh Government of +0.2%. Respondents were asked if they thought that this increase was reasonable for schools. 66% said they agreed.

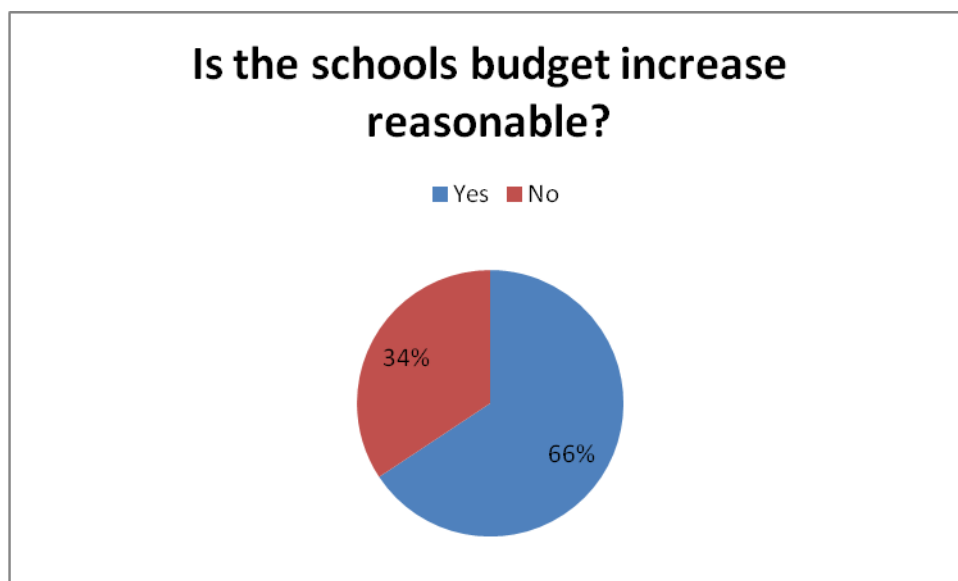


Figure 6 – The School Budget

Fees and Charges

- 5.13 Fees and Charges provide income which can help the Council to continue to provide important services. Each year the level of these charges are reviewed. Fees and charges for 2017/18 are likely to be increased by RPI plus 3%, but if there is an opportunity to freeze charges in some areas we wanted to know which areas residents would prioritise. Respondents were given the option to state up to a maximum of 5 services that they would protect from an increase in charge.

Service to Protect from increase in charge	No.
School meals	38
Meals on Wheels	36
Sport Centres / Leisure / sports fee charges	28
All / Everything	13
Day centres / adult care / social services / elderly care	6
Car parking	5
Waste / large household items / Bulky Goods Collection	5
council tax	2
Transport (including HTST)	2
Other	11

Table 13 – Fees and Charges

- 5.14 The most noted services were School Meals, Meals on Wheels and Sport and Leisure charges. **'Other' included:**

Anything that encourages exercise and education should be protected.

Support the 4 listed above

Remove free school meals and parents should pay for packed lunches out of benefits received

Housing

Schools

Streetcare / highways

Library fees

Recycling / Waste

Some comments included:

If school meals increased I would be paying over £100 a month. Quality is no great so my kids would have packed lunch if price increased

Leisure Centre Membership - promotes and increase health and wellbeing for residents making it more affordable.

Playing fees - helping sports clubs retain more funds to support own development.

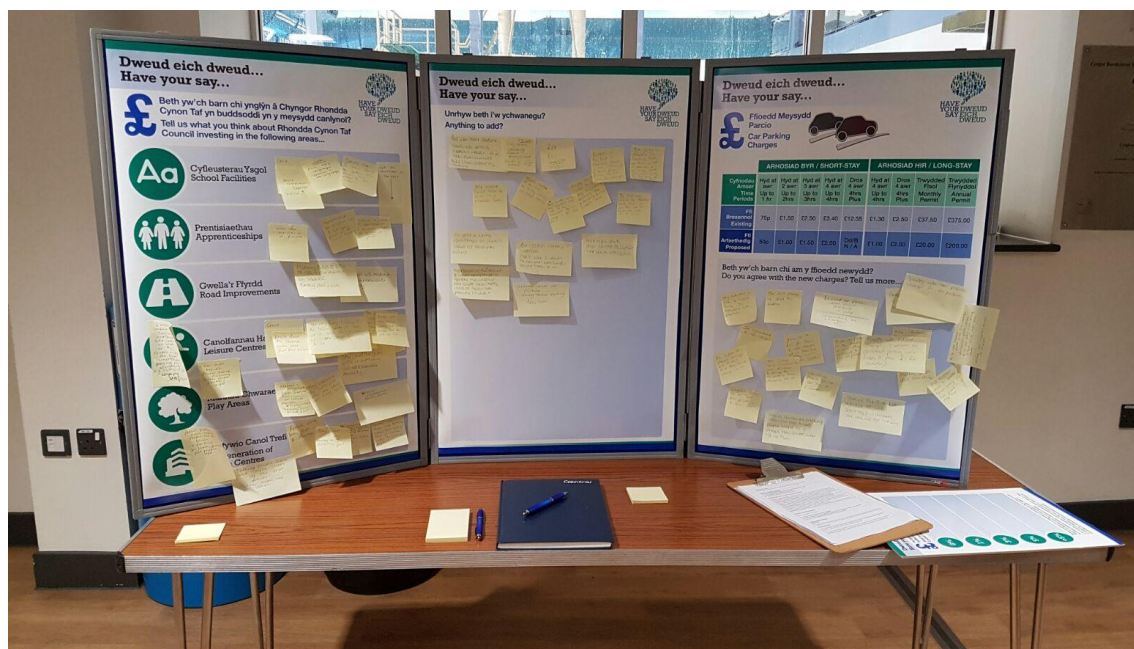
Meals on Wheels should definitely be a priority for protection. Providing free school meals are still provided for low-income families I don't mind if school meal costs go up slightly.

School Meals - if it is continually increased parents won't pay, which will then mean less jobs for this sector.

6. ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

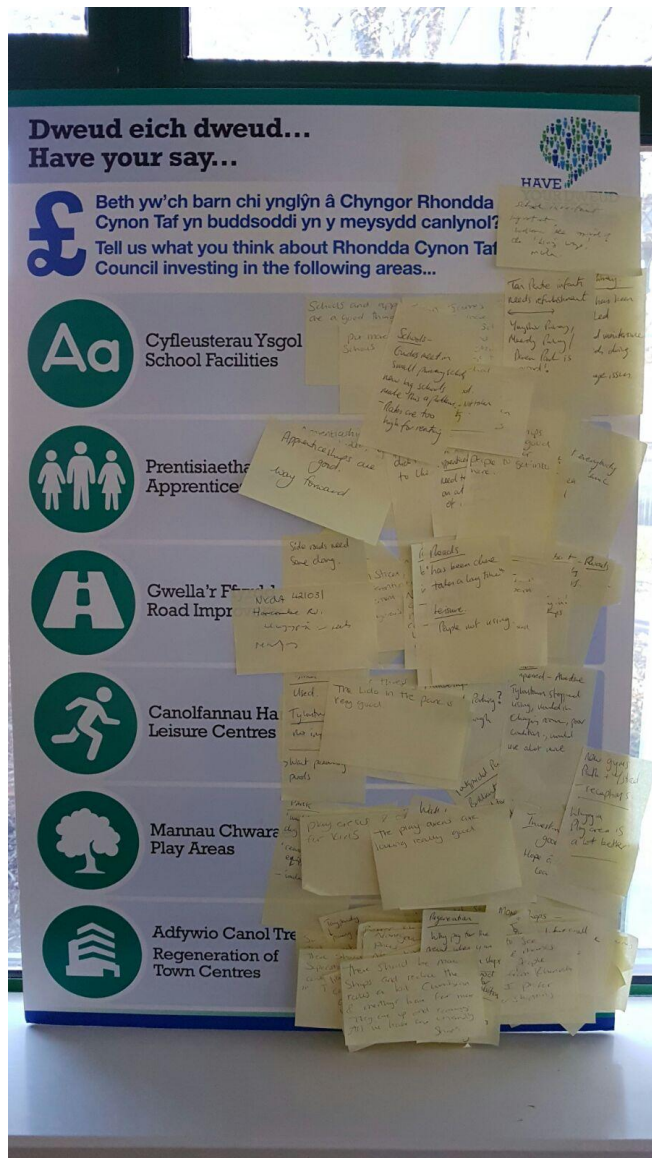
- 6.1 This section outlines the results of the consultation discussions held in the town centres, leisure centres and day centres along with feedback received from the OPAG meeting.

- 6.2 A large number of engagement events were held right across Rhondda Cynon Taf, the details of which are found in the methodology.
- 6.3 The Roadshow events and the meetings that were held are part of the Council's ongoing approach to face to face resident engagement, following the success of our engagement in the summer.
- 6.4 The events used a number of boards to aid discussion and a number of discussion prompts were available to the facilitators.



Note: The results of the car parking charges discussions are found in the Car Parking Charges Consultation Report

Results – Council Investments



6.5 Respondents were told about the investments that the Council had made in 2016/17 as part of the RCTInvest programme. They were then asked the following questions on each;

1. What do people think about the Council investing in these areas?
2. Have people seen a difference as a result?
3. Should we continue to invest in these areas?

Education - School Facilities

- 6.6 A selection of comments received at the engagement events are shown below;

Positive

“got to invest in the future, very important... continue to invest”

“should be investment for grandchildren to have good education”

“money well spent it’s the future”

“Education – obvious spend in this, you can see this”

Negative

“Schools should be open more for the community to use and if they are open for the community more people need to be aware of this” (OPAG)

“Don't approve of 21st Century schools - too large and quite intimidating for younger children”

There were individual suggestions that some schools were in need of refurbishment and or specific issues were raised and these will be reported back to service managers separately.

Employment and training opportunities

Positive

- 6.7 There was widespread support for further investment in apprenticeships and the graduate schemes.

“very important... not everyone wants to go to University”

“apprenticeships are really good, beneficial for people to get into work”

“apprenticeships are a good idea – practical”

Porth Day Centre service users - broadly supportive of further investment in the Council’s apprenticeship and graduate schemes. There was recognition that there needed to be more jobs available for school and university leavers as there was a lack of quality placements available. However, it was emphasised that the placements created needed to be of a high quality that would lead to meaningful employment and career progression...

Tonypandy Day Centre service users - All service users believed that the apprenticeship/graduate scheme was a great investment and one that should be expanded.

Maerdy day centre service users - Most service users believed the apprenticeship scheme was a good investment and that it should continue and expand as well as the graduate scheme...

Negative

- 6.8 There was very little opposition to the Council's investment in Apprenticeship Schemes and graduate officers, as long as the Council was prepared to keep the staff on at the end of the schemes.

Highways - Road improvements/schemes and infrastructure (bridges)/flood alleviation

- 6.9 There were mixed opinions on the investment the Council had made in roads and infrastructure;

Positive

"flood alleviation schemes are working, no problems in recent rain"

Positive feedback that the bridge in Ystrad is to be repaired

"big improvements in Maerdy, not as bad as it was"

"seen in Cwmdare, has made a difference"

"the roads aren't too bad, the Council should continue to invest when needed"

Tonypandy Day Centre -Service users who had first hand experience of the investment in highways, such as Rhigos, said that the work completed was to a very good standard. However, there was a general consensus amongst the group that the highways of RCT are full of potholes.

Negative

"side roads need doing"

"not enough money spent on roads"

"Too much money invested in roads, much higher priorities should be addressed"

"Ongoing problem, the Council haven't got enough money off the WG / UK Govt"

- 6.10 Some of the negativity that related to the issue of pot holes was a perception that there were a lot of them and that they were not being filled in properly. Again, there were a number of individual reports of poor road conditions/issue and these will be reported back to service managers
- 6.11 A number of participants stated that they didn't notice investment in roads, people said they just drove along and unless the roads were in a poor condition you wouldn't notice.

Leisure Centres/3G pitches

Positive

- 6.12 A large number of positive responses were made by those respondents who use leisure services;

"I go to Porth leisure centre, it is good for kids..."

"seen improvements in 3G artificial pitches"

"Grandson uses the Gym, good for youngsters" (Tonyrefail day centre service users)"

"Happy with leisure facilities in Aberdare Uni gym is cheaper but I prefer the facilities here."

"Totally agreement, hoping it doesn't go private!"

Tonypandy Day Centre service users - agreed that leisure facilities and parks were to a good standard. Free swimming for the elderly was something that was enjoyed by some service users and something that they appreciated, and the investments in pools and leisure centres were very good..

Negative

"3G pitches are they really expensive? Would depend on this"

"cost is an issue with limited income"

"Need better access to more diverse leisure activities, trials e.g. Roller skate skiing - something different"

"Expensive swimming lessons"

"Issues with transport to get to the centres after 5.30pm, due to a lack of bus services in the evening (OPAG)."

Play Areas

- 6.13 Participants who had young children/grandchildren had mainly seen improvements in play areas and those that hadn't stated that they would like investment to continue in this area, so that other parks could be improved year.

Positive

"play areas are really good"

"Good idea for children..... they need it..... spent well in park near me, Llanharan park" (Tonyrefail day centre service user)

"use play areas, good investment"

"Play parks need more investment as its important for children to play outside"

Negative

"there's a need to invest in play areas"

Maerdy day centre service users - Regarding parks, play areas and youth facilities there was a feeling amongst service users that there was not enough investment and that more needed to be done.

Regeneration of Town Centres

- 6.14 When discussing the investment in streetscape in the town centres, the majority of people felt that this was a good idea and had made a difference.

Positive

"looks nice.. the paving"

"looks better, few benches good"

"They have regenerate the Library area nicely" (St Mairs Day Centre service user)

"Toilets are being upgraded, refurbished."

"should put more money into paving and seating in town centres, in agreement about putting money into regeneration" (Teifi House service user)

- 6.15 Although there were some issues identified with the paving;

"paving stone issues in Pontypridd, issues with Kerbs" (OPAG)

Negative

- 6.16 When discussing town centre regeneration more generally, comments were not always as positive, with many referring to a lack of shops and high business rates;

"there should be more shops and reduce the rates a bit"

"too many take aways and charity shops"

"shop owners pay high rates"

"need a mix of stores to cater for different people"

"Support for small businesses... regeneration"

"out of town is killing the town centre"

"Take away the pedestrianisation and install one way system in Tonypany to regenerate town"

Porth Day Centre Service users - Pontypridd used to be a vibrant market town and it would be nice for that to happen again. There were concerns that the major stores were moving out of the town and that the departure of M&S had a detrimental impact. Service users believed that to regenerate the town then it had to attract the major stores such as M&S or Primark as well as a wider range of shops. Service users were supportive of the Taff Vale Precinct, although noted it was currently an eyesore.

Tonypany Day Centre Users -there were several comments made about the cost of rent in commercial properties in Tonypany, with service users believing they were too high. Secondly, the empty buildings in Tonypany town centre are eyesores and it doesn't attract people to come into the town for shopping or investment.

There was a lot of conversation over boarded up shops and houses, the departure of amenities from Maerdy such as post office and banks, and untidy lanes behind houses. Many felt community focal points had been lost, that supermarkets were a cause in the decline of shops in

the area and that investment would be welcomed if it could help stop what they saw as the decline of the area. – (Maerdy day centre service users)

Council Tax

- 6.17 A small number of comments were received on levels of Council Tax at the events, including;

“people assume a Council tax rise.... better to increase a little bit, along as the money goes to service we need” Older Persons Advisory Group

“Council tax should remain at 0% don't feel increase are value for money.”

“I'd increase Council tax to 20% if it protected services.”

“As long as the services reflect the price of Council tax I will be happy - think current services are good.”

“Council tax - too much, doing their best, could do without an increase”

- 6.18 All members of the OPAG group agreed that a 2.5% rise was the maximum it should be, “anything above 2.5% would be challenged”.

Day Centres – Council Tax Views

Tonypandy

The service users' view on Council Tax increases was varied. Some felt that Council Tax was already too high and that there should be no more increases to the Council Tax, however, there were some who believed that Council Tax increases were inevitable. There was a realisation that when factoring in inflation and increased demand that Council tax had to increase, although it was felt that a 1%-2% increase was as much as they would like to accept.

Maerdy

When discussing a possible increase of Council Tax for 2017/18 all service users said they would either like no increase or even a possible reduction. However, after discussing the implications of both these options, namely a possible reduction in services, there was an understanding that Council Tax may have to rise, but they would prefer that rise to be very small.

Porth

There was a firmly held belief that Council Tax should not rise next year, and some believed a freeze of several years was needed. One service user stated that when his pension increases so does his

Council Tax, meaning that the supposed increase in his pension was wiped out by the rise in Council Tax meaning he is no better off than he previously was.

- 6.19 As we undertook consultation in the Council's day centres we received comments on the centres themselves and a selection of these are found below;

Day Centres

During our visits to the Council's Day Centres there were a number of comments regarding satisfaction with the centres themselves and these included;

Tonypandy – Looking at the day centre itself, they all could not have praised it higher. They mentioned that the food was of an excellent quality, that it was comfortable, warm and a great place to socialise and chat to others. Their only concerns with the centre itself were that it is not advertised.

Maerdy –

All service users were happy with the day centre, commending the staff, quality and price of food, and the classes that are offered throughout the week in the day centre.

Porth –

Service users spoke highly of the staff at the centre, they thought the value of the meals were ok, however they would like to see the menu freshened up slightly. One service user also commented that the Day Centre should open slightly earlier for users to be able to sit in the Centre before the kitchen opened as they currently wait outside until the kitchen opens around 10am.

Teifi House – food and staff are excellent, if they close the day centre they may as well close Maerdy

Nazareth House – Day centre – food is lovely, staff are friendly... don't advertise enough.

St Mairs Day Centre – Food is much better than it was.... lamb was excellent.....excellent place to come and socialise.

7. YOUNG PERSON ENGAGEMENT EVENT

7.1 All comprehensive School Councils were invited to send up to 2 pupils from their school, along with representatives from the new youth forums, to take part in the first RCT County Wide Youth Forum event.

7.2 The following schools/youth Forums sent representatives;

- Rhondda, Cynon and Taf Youth Forums
- Aberdare
- Bryncellynnog
- Cardinal Newman
- Tonypany College
- Pontypridd High School
- St. Johns
- Rhydywaun
- Y Pant
- Tonyrefail

7.3 The event included short presentations, an interactive key pad question and answer session and a facilitated group discussion on Council Investment. The Programme of the event was as follows;

Programme for the event:

4.15pm Welcome and Introductions - Cllr Norris

4.20pm What is the RCT Youth Council? – Sarah Evans

*Outline structure and how it all fits together
Ask y/p how they think it should run*

4:30pm Viewpoint findings and next steps – Claire Hutcheon

4.40pm Youth Parliament Update – 2 MYPs to introduce

*What does the role involve?
Make Your Mark Debate*

5.10pm RCT Investments/Budget Consultation - Christian Hanagan
Short presentation
Video and Quiz questions

5.30pm Group Session on Council Investments (ALL)

6.00pm Feedback - Cllr Norris

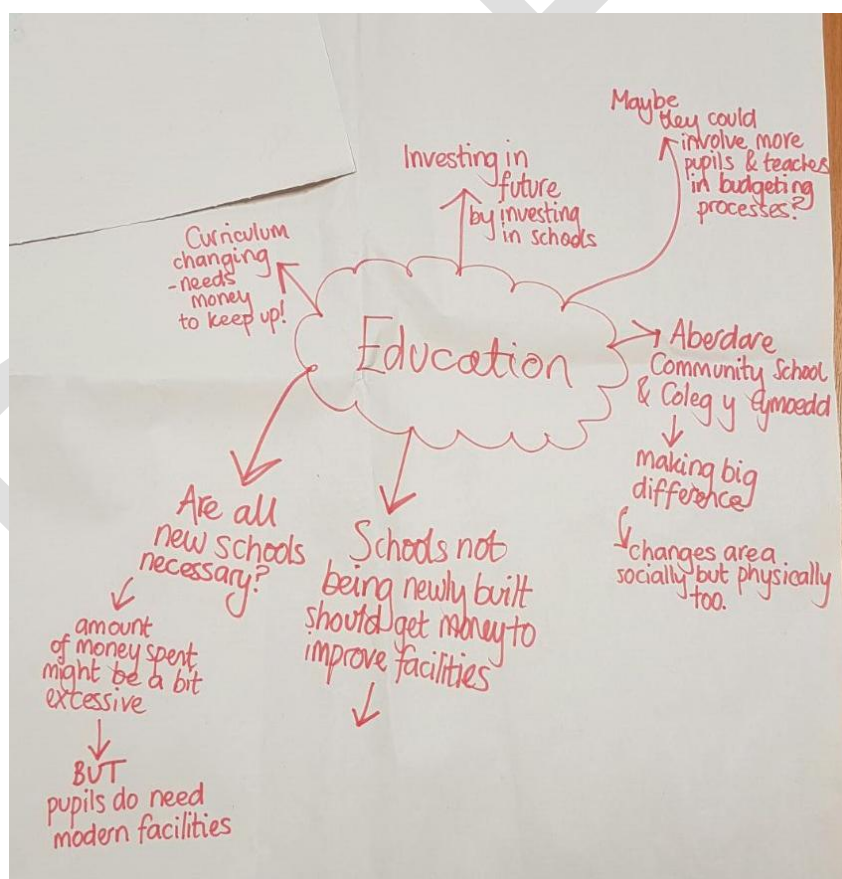
6.15pm Thank you and Close – Cllr. Norris

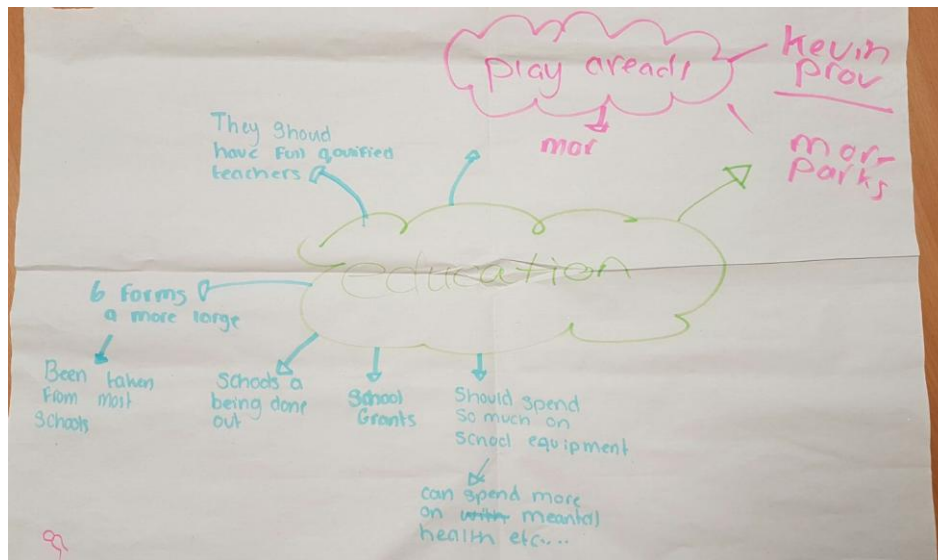
Feedback

7.4 The following section outlines some of the feedback received from the break out groups. The young people explored and gave their opinions on how money was spent on the below.

Education:

- Money spent is concentrated on mainstream schools and not so much on the special schools
- Money being spent on other schools and not others
- Not enough music in schools and their resources are poor
- Music helps with stress and there are positive links with maths and music
- Music is a great medium for young people with special needs
'Music speaks the words of young people who can't express them'
- Schools have an institutional culture when it comes to LGBT young people
- Welsh Bac in schools are a waste of time, should be more about politics
- School meals are poor and not enough choice, no vegan options and use same utensils for serving – not good if you are a vegetarian
- Faith school re PSE - The question of abortion – answer, don't have sex
- No difference felt on their experience of school





Jobs and training:

- Apprenticeships and graduate schemes are a good idea
- Spend more money on awareness workshops to raise awareness of routes available
- More money on apprenticeship variety
- Schemes on young people, housing schemes
- More prominent careers officers

Roads:

- Agree that roads should be repaired but how much do other councils spend in relation to RCT?
- Bypass good investment
- More investments like Church Village bypass, but on a small scale
- Door mice crossings seem a waste of money, so spend more money wisely

Leisure:

- Not enough concessions for young people.
'Leisure centres should be cheaper, especially if you are under 18yrs, trying to change and turn your life around'
'I'm poor and just can't afford to go'

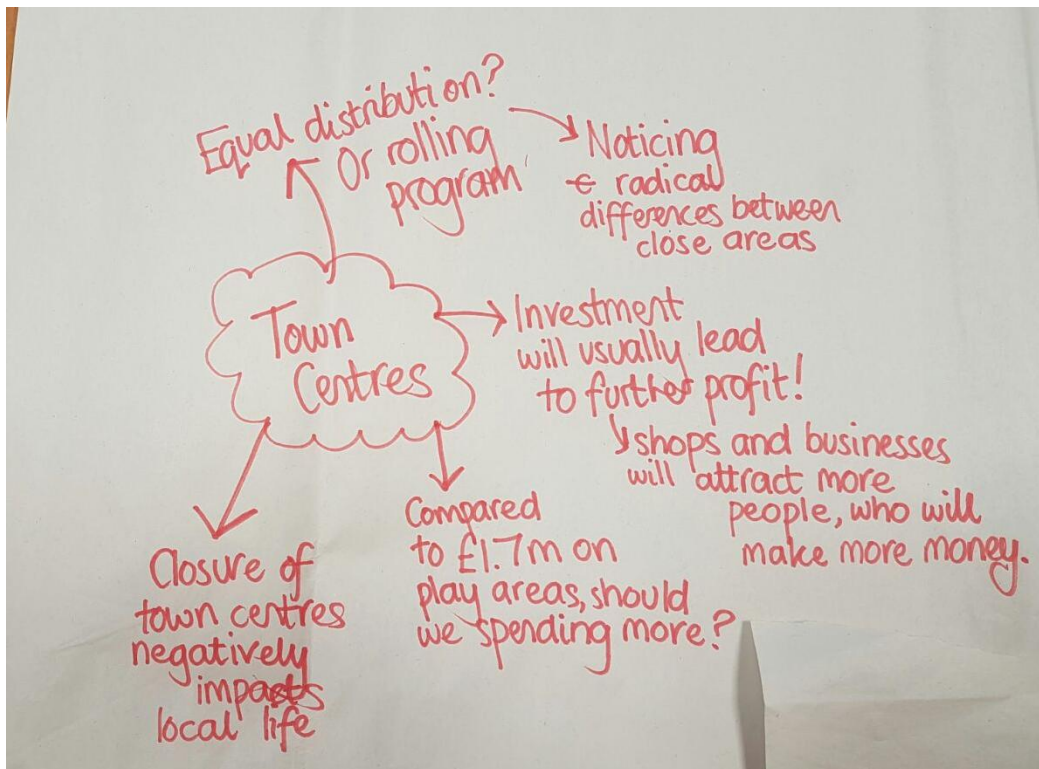
Play areas:

- Hard to find somewhere for young people with special needs to enjoy a park, more facilities are needed
- Play areas are just not appropriate for children with disabilities and they deserve to be treated equally e.g. the new park in Pontypridd has just one swing for disabled children and it is not very good for children in wheelchairs
- Not improved
- Although parks are beneficial, can be known to attract Anti-social behaviour
- Perhaps invest more in youth centres etc.

Town centres:

- There is too much litter
- Some improvements, eg. library area
- Cleanliness – relatively pleasant

- Chewing gum removal
- People drink in the nearby parks
- Would like clubs for young people in Pontypridd
- Best not to waste money e.g. the Cardiff Christmas tree example where they rented a tree from abroad for thousands.
- Should help the homeless more, it's important
- Town centres are a bit better but still not great
- As a contrast – Merthyr town centre is really nice and would prefer to go there



NOTE: This report presents a summary of all of the views received during the consultation process. At a later date all of the detailed comments will be supplied to relevant service managers to inform policy and decision making over the coming year.

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