



# BUDGET CONSULTATION DATA REPORT

DECEMBER 2020

## Background and introduction

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Crawley Borough Council (CBC) produced a consultation with residents in the form of an online questionnaire. The aim of the consultation was to identify residents' views on the relative importance of various council spending areas and views on current services being re-evaluated and reviewed in light of the coronavirus pandemic.

Like many councils up and down the country, CBC is facing a budget shortfall due to the coronavirus pandemic. The lockdown and subsequent restrictions has meant that the council's income has significantly reduced, while expenditure on services has increased.

This means that CBC has needed to reappraise its services in order to set a balanced budget in the current financial year and in the years going forward.

## Methodology and reporting

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The survey was made available online from 8 October 2020 until 5 November 2020 with data being gathered using an online survey hosted on the council's consultation page.

The survey was publicised and promoted via the council's website and social media channels, the local press, and via direct email through the council's consultation e-alerts system. Overall, 1,242 responses were received, and as the online survey used a self-completion approach, results have been presented in the main body of the report for comparative purposes.

In terms of statistical reliability, a total of 1,242 responses provides a confidence interval of  $\pm 2.77\%$  for a 50% statistic at the 95% confidence level. This simply means that if 50% of residents indicated they agreed with a certain aspect, the true figure (had the whole population been surveyed) could in reality lie within the range of 47.2% to 52.8% and that these results would be seen 95 times out of 100 on average.

## Survey results

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The quantitative and qualitative data for each question is contained under the corresponding headings, along with the supplemental information respondents were given within the survey.

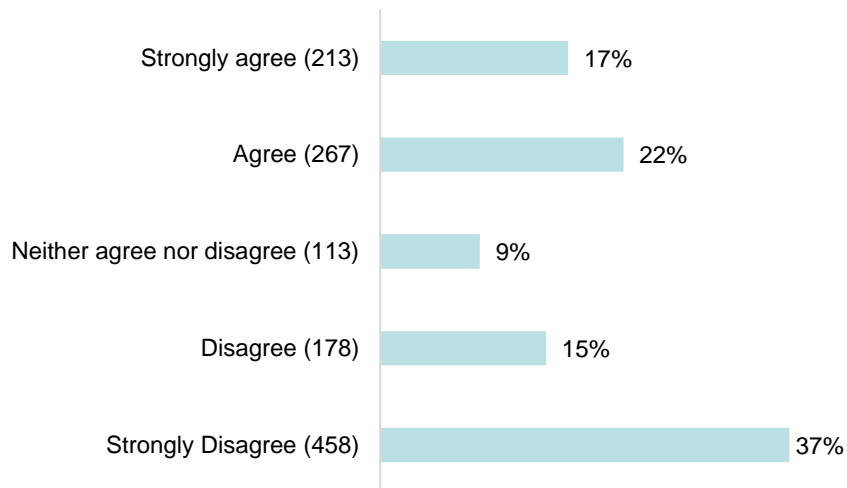
Analysis for agreement/level of support questions are reported for valid responses only, excluding residents who were unable to rate their level of agreement was therefore classified as a non-valid response. In addition, owing to the rounding of numbers, percentages displayed visually on charts within this report may not always add up to 100%.

A total of 3,033 comments were received and responses have been analysed and grouped into themes. The number of mentions indicates the number of comments that appear within a particular theme, however free text questions were not mandatory, therefore the number of responses to each question may vary.

## Waste collection

**Proposal: Reviewing waste collection, including potentially moving from weekly to fortnightly rubbish collections and considering the introduction of a weekly food waste collection.**

Fewer than one in five councils still have weekly collections. This would increase our recycling rate, helping us move towards our aim of being carbon neutral by 2050 and saving taxpayers' money.



Agreement level		
Net positive	Neutral	Net negative
39%	9%	52%

Just over half (52%) of respondents opposed the proposal that the council could move to fortnightly collections and introduce a weekly food waste collection, with 37% stating they 'strongly disagreed'. Just under four in ten (39%) agreed with the proposal.

## Comments (627)

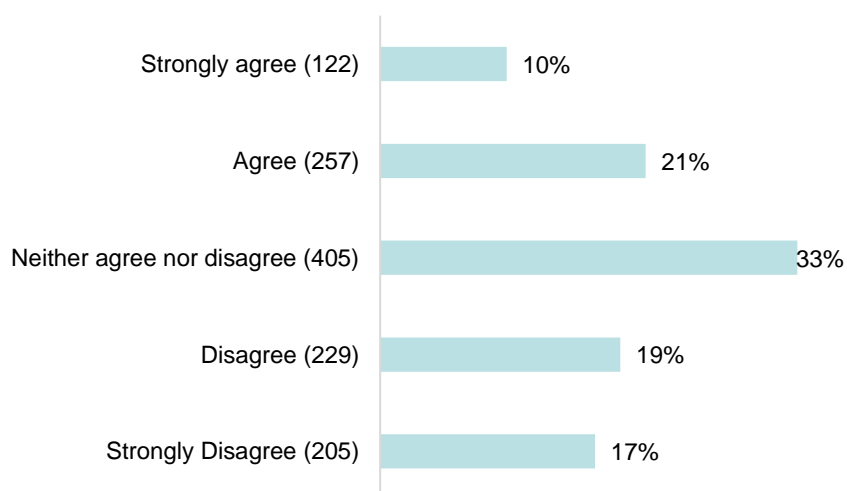
Theme	Mentions
Proposal will have negative impacts e.g. Increased fly tipping, vermin, overflowing bins and bad odours etc.	257
Larger or additional rubbish bins need to be provided for fortnightly collections	243
Support idea of weekly food waste collection	80
Support idea of fortnightly rubbish collections	68

Proposal is a false economy due to costs from increased fly tipping, vermin and providing waste bins etc.	61
Retain weekly rubbish collections	59
More information and details should be provided on proposal (e.g. cost savings, food waste scheme etc.)	40
Do not support idea of a food waste collection	33
Proposal will encourage residents to recycle more and produce less waste	18
Lack of space to store additional/ larger bins	13
Find and make savings in other areas	13
Proposal won't increase recycling rates	12
Education needed to encourage and enable residents to recycle more	9
Council tax should be reduced if moving to fortnightly rubbish collections	8
Crawley's waste and recycling site must be opened and facilities expanded for increased demand	8
Consider additional fees/ charges for residents wanting keeping weekly collections or bigger bins	7
Move to fortnightly rubbish collections during winter months only	5
Proposal shouldn't be considered during the pandemic	4
Retailers need to reduce excessive and unnecessary waste packaging	4
Encourage/ promote composting	3
Provide additional collections at Christmas	3
Proposal should be trialled first before implementation	3
Reduce frequency of garden waste collections	2

## Support for community and voluntary sector

### ***Proposal: Post-Covid, reviewing the support the council gives to the community and the voluntary sector***

*As well as the work of our Community Services teams, we currently spend more in this area than other districts and borough councils in West Sussex.*



Agreement level		
Net positive	Neutral	Net negative
31%	33%	36%

Just over a third (36%) of respondents either 'strongly disagreed' (17%) or 'disagreed' (19%) with the proposal that the council could review the support it gives to the community and voluntary sector. A third (33%) neither 'agreed nor disagreed' and just under a third (31%) agreed with this proposal.

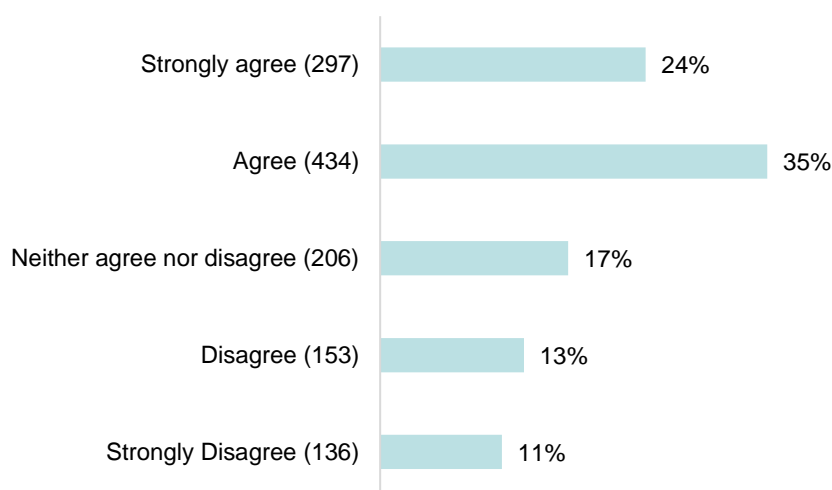
## Comments (378)

Theme	Mentions
These sectors provide essential and vital services	94
More information and details needed to comment on this proposal	80
Agree that council support to these sectors should to be reviewed and properly assessed	78
These sectors need to be supported to deal with impacts and issues caused by the pandemic	66
Reducing support to these sectors will have a severe detrimental impact on residents and the town	35
Crawley has a greater need/ demand for these sectors compared to other areas in West Sussex	30
Reducing support to these sectors will cause costs to increase in the long term	29
Council has a duty to support the community and voluntary sectors	17
Agree that savings should be made in this area	15
The current level of support provided by the council should be maintained	13
Community and voluntary sectors can obtain support and raise funding from other sources (e.g. fundraising activities, central government)	10
Identify and make savings in other areas	8
Any review must prioritise essential services and protect most vulnerable	8
No opinion/ haven't used these services	6
Support to the community and voluntary sector should be increased	6
Consider providing non-financial support to groups and organisations	6
Enable contributions/ donations for these services (e.g. Crowdfunding)	4
Central government should be responsible for providing funding and grants	3
Retain play areas	2
Provide support in line with other councils	2
Transfer council run community schemes to local voluntary and community groups	2
Consider increasing taxes to continue support	2
Disagree	2
Spending and providing more support for these sectors compared to other areas should be a source of pride	2

## Public toilets

### **Proposal: Closing or reducing the operating hours of public toilets**

The vast majority of our 14 public toilets receive very little use and cost a considerable sum to maintain and clean.



Agreement level		
Net positive	Neutral	Net negative
59%	17%	24%

Just under six in ten (59%) of respondents either 'strongly agreed' (24%) or 'agreed' (35%) with the proposal that the council could close or reduce the operating hours of public toilets. Around a quarter of respondents disagreed with this proposal for making budget savings, with 17% neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

## Comments (452)

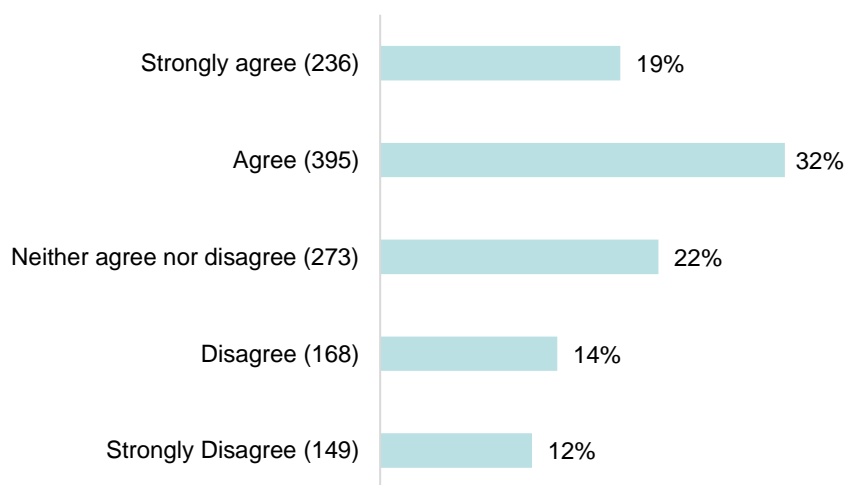
Theme	Mentions
Public toilet facilities are essential for those with medical needs, disabilities, the elderly and families with young children	110
Close unused and under-used public toilets	63
Keep public toilets in convenient and high footfall locations (e.g. town centre, parks, playing fields)	55
Usage is low due to poor hygiene and maintenance	51
Collaborate with/ incentivise retailers and businesses to enable public use of their facilities	46
Concern over negative impacts caused by proposal (e.g. people less inclined to go out, increased anti-social behaviour, public hygiene)	46
Close/ decommission public toilets	46
Make savings by reducing opening hours and or/ the number of public toilets	42

Usage is low due because public toilets are unsafe	32
Provide more information and details about proposal	24
Don't use any public toilet facilities	23
Public toilets need more investment	21
Consider introducing user charge to cover costs	10
Public toilet provision and usage should be carefully reviewed	9
Lack of public toilets will cause more long term costs (e.g. park/street cleaning)	9
Replace with in self-cleaning toilets to lower maintenance costs	8
Proposal is discriminatory against disabled and vulnerable people	7
Transfer running and maintenance to a third party (e.g. to voluntary/community groups)	5
Public toilets are important during pandemic	4
Keep the public toilets in neighbourhood parades	2
RADAR key scheme	2
Produce signage/ notices of nearest available public toilets	2

## Adventure play

### **Proposal: Reviewing adventure play, moving to a more flexible model of delivery**

*Children no longer visit adventure playgrounds in the numbers they once did. The wide variety of existing play opportunities available in the town means a more flexible approach could save money and provide children with different ways to play.*



Agreement level		
Net positive	Neutral	Net negative
51%	22%	26%

Just over half (51%) of respondents agreed with the proposal that the council could move to a more flexible model of delivery, with 19% stating they 'strongly agreed'. Just over a quarter (26%) disagreed with the proposal.

## Comments (377)

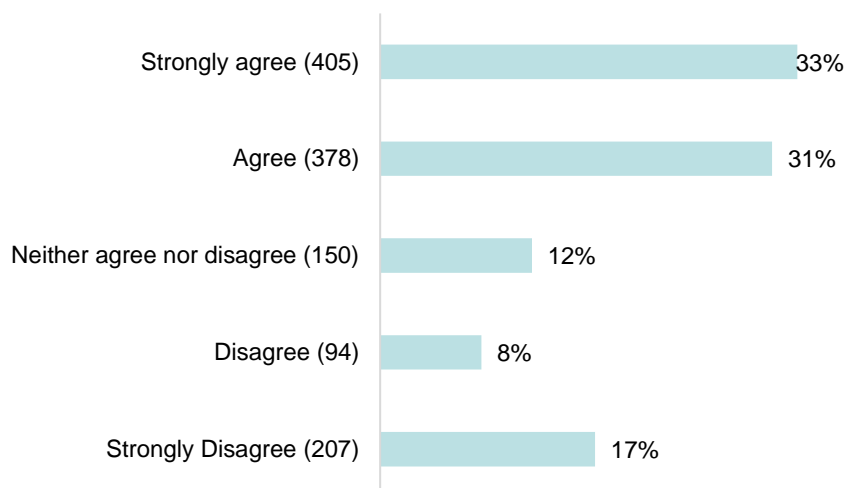
Theme	Mentions
Play areas provide essential benefits to children and families	67
Information and further details on what is being proposed and what pertains to a flexible model of delivery	53
Promote play areas more and encourage children to use them	39
Agree to review taking individual play area usage into consideration	31
Current offer and play areas should be retained	29
Concern over negative impacts proposal will have (e.g. increased childhood obesity, increased anti-social behaviour)	29
Invest in and better maintain play areas	27
Usage is low due to the pandemic	27
Play areas are well used and busy	21
Concept of play areas is outdated and facilities are poor	21
Close play areas	18
Usage is low because play areas are often closed	15
No opinion because don't have children	15
Introduce charges or fees to cover operational costs	11
Increase usage by making play areas feel safer (e.g. installing CCTV)	10
Crawley has parks and open spaces that children can use, reducing need for play areas	8
Extend opening hours (e.g. after school and weekends)	8
Transfer running and ownership to voluntary or community organisations	7
Outdoor play areas are important during the pandemic	4
Make savings in other areas	4
Move to a non-staffed model of delivery	4
Reduce opening hours to make savings (e.g. during winter)	4
Wider consultation on this proposal should be undertaken	3
Consolidate/ amalgamate play areas	3
Sell or develop the land that play areas occupy	2

## Cricket squares, bowling greens and croquet lawns

**Proposal: Reviewing the number, type and specification of cricket squares, bowling greens and croquet lawns**

*Some of these areas have low usage and a disproportionately high cost of maintenance.*





Agreement level		
Net positive	Neutral	Net negative
64%	12%	25%

The majority (64%) of respondents either 'strongly agreed' (33%) or 'agreed' (31%) the proposal that the council could review the number, type and specification of cricket squares, bowling greens and croquet lawns to make savings. A quarter (25%) opposed this proposal.

## Comments (432)

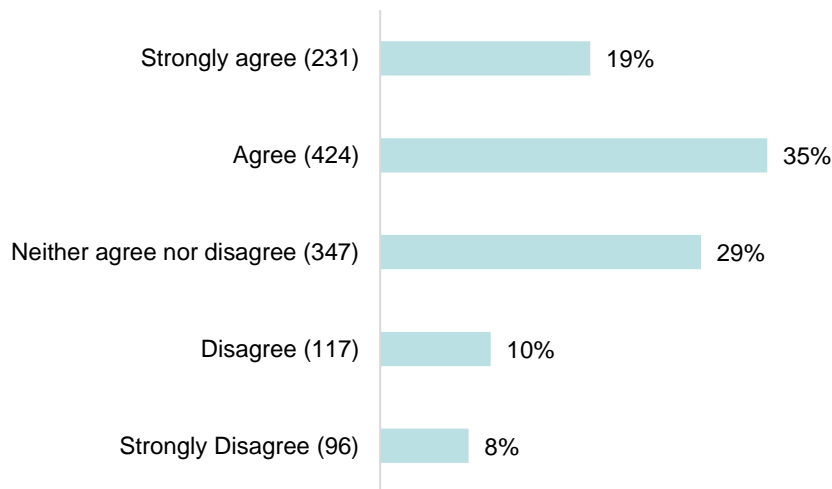
Theme	Mentions
These spaces provide essential physical, mental, social and community benefits	94
Charge users/groups/clubs to use spaces	53
Agree with reviewing the spaces that have little or no usage	52
Sell/lease/transfer spaces to clubs/third party organisations	39
Retain cricket squares	38
The number of these spaces should be reduced	33
Promote these spaces to increase usage	27
Negative effects on users, clubs, local community and participation in these activities	24
Collaborate with clubs and volunteers on maintenance	21
Provide more information and details about proposal	17
Revert/keep these areas to green fields for everyone to use	17
Do not repurpose these areas for housing developments	15
Agree that proposal should be reviewed for potential savings	15
No Opinion/ don't use these spaces	15
Investment and support should be increased for these spaces	12
These spaces receive high levels of usage	10
Retain bowling greens	8
These facilities are needed during the pandemic (e.g. providing opportunity to exercise)	7

Retain croquet pitches	7
Usage has declined due to pandemic	6
Convert for other uses (e.g. other sports activities)	5
Consolidate and amalgamate spaces into one site (e.g. Southgate playing fields)	5
Review transport links and provision to ensure users who have lost access to local pitches can access other sites	4
Spaces are poorly maintained	3
Make savings in other areas	3
Football not included in review	3
Disagree with proposal	3
Repurpose these spaces for housing development	2
Savings made should be put into essential services	2
Proposal will reduce council income revenues provided by clubs and users	2

## Fees and charges

**Proposal: Where appropriate, pricing our fees and charges accordingly so that costs are covered and provide value for money**

*Some services cost much less to use or access when compared to our neighbouring councils and those with similarities to Crawley. Discretionary services would be priced competitively, being attractive compared to private operators but covering the council's costs.*



Agreement level		
Net positive	Neutral	Net negative
54%	29%	18%

Over half (54%) of respondents either 'strongly agreed' (19%) or 'agreed' (35%) the proposal that the council could price fees and charges in order to cover operating costs. Just 18% opposed this proposal with 29% neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

## Comments (323)

Theme	Mentions
Provide more information, details and examples with this proposal	113
Pricing structures should be competitive and affordable with consideration given to those on low incomes	71
Charges and fees should be set to cover operating costs	62
Charges and fees should not be increased during current pandemic and economic climate	21
Negative effects and consequences of proposal (e.g. increased fly tipping, less participation in social/wellbeing/community activities)	18
Price increases will stop facilities being used and reduce income revenue	16
Current charges and fees are too expensive/unaffordable	14
Current pricing of charges and fees should be reviewed	14
Council Tax doesn't provide value for money and should not be increased	12
Crawley has greater socio-economic needs compared to other areas	11
Making pricing competitive and consistent	8
Make savings or generate income in other areas	6
Parking charges are too expensive	6
Disagree with proposal	6
Costing for charges and fees should be transparent	5
Increase parking charges	2
Introduce cheaper rates for residents over non residents	2

## Further suggestions

Residents were also asked if they had any other suggestions on how the Council could balance its budget, either by saving money or increasing income. A total of 444 suggestions were provided, however responses could have contained more than one theme and as such the total presented in the table may be higher than the number of responses.

The most common themes were:

- Review staff salaries/ pensions/ bonuses

*"How about some of the senior management team or chief exec etc taking a pay freeze or slight reduction in pay for a period of time like other companies and organisations have done?"*

*"Pay freeze across all council employees"*

- Get rid of pop-up cycle and bus lanes

*"Stop spending money on the Covid 19 pop up lanes, they're not needed and are very much disliked by most Crawley road users"*

*"Stop wasting money on things like Covid pop up cycle lanes which are unpopular, underused and unsafe"*

- Sell, rent or lease assets

*"If this is a temporary issue, do you need all your estate or could you sell assets or reduce capital to get back on track?"*

*"Rent out one floor of new council building when it's finished. Now that we know that working from home works!"*

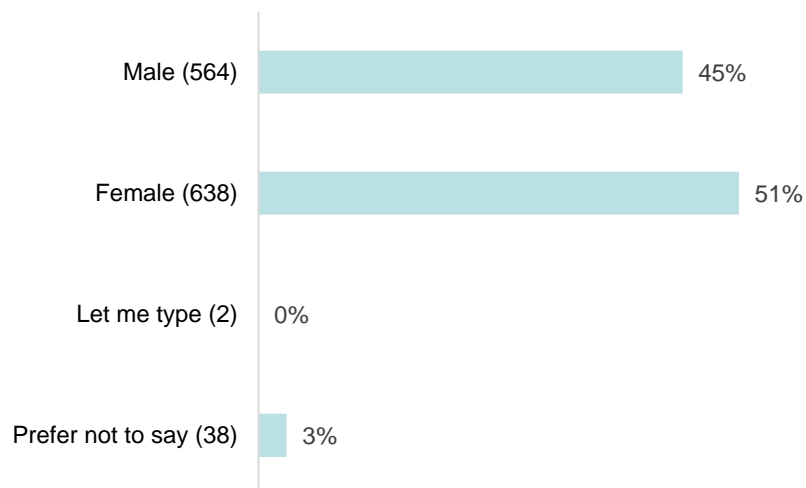
Theme	Mentions
Review staff salaries/ pensions/ bonuses	49
Get rid of pop-up cycle and bus lanes	43
Sell, rent or lease assets	32
Be more efficient with services/ funds	29
Reduce staff levels/ restructure	29
Stop or reduce maintenance of green spaces (e.g. wildflowers)	27
Review charges and fees	27
Fines for littering/ illegal parking/ fly-tipping etc.	22
Increase parking costs/ permit areas	21
Income generation through more community and fundraising events	21
Reduce/ make savings on non-essential projects, initiatives and services	18
Review councillor expenses and allowances	18
Collaborate with local businesses	18
Review council housing allocation, rents, repairs and maintenance	17
Review waste, recycling and green bin schemes	17
Proactively invest in facilities, schemes, projects and initiatives that will make future cost savings	17
Collaborate with local community services/ clubs and volunteers	17
Increase taxes and rates	15
Review contracts with suppliers/ the performance of contractors	12
Decrease taxes and rates	12
Review outsourcing of services and facilities	11
Provide more information on council finances	10
Lobby central government for additional funding	7
Invest in making town centre and parks more attractive and safe	7
Reduce subsidies and ensure costs are covered	6
Repair roads and potholes	6
Reduce car parking costs	6
Stop spending on council building and project developments (e.g. Town Hall, Queens Square fountain)	6
Focus on rates collection	5

Protect vulnerable residents when making savings	5
Merge/ Partner with other councils	4
Further consultation with local community	4
Build more housing	3
Review amenity tip charges and opening hours	3
Promote facilities and services	3
Reduce rents for businesses	3
Look into corporate sponsorship (e.g. flowerbeds, parks, roundabouts etc.)	3
Collect and sell compost	2
Introduce higher fees and charges for non-residents	2
Review benefits payments (e.g. housing benefit)	2
Make use of capital reserves until conditions are back to normal	2

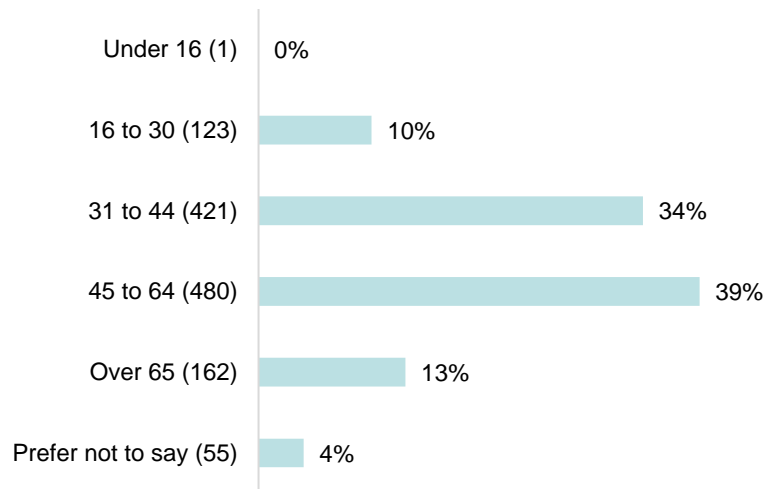
## Demographic profile

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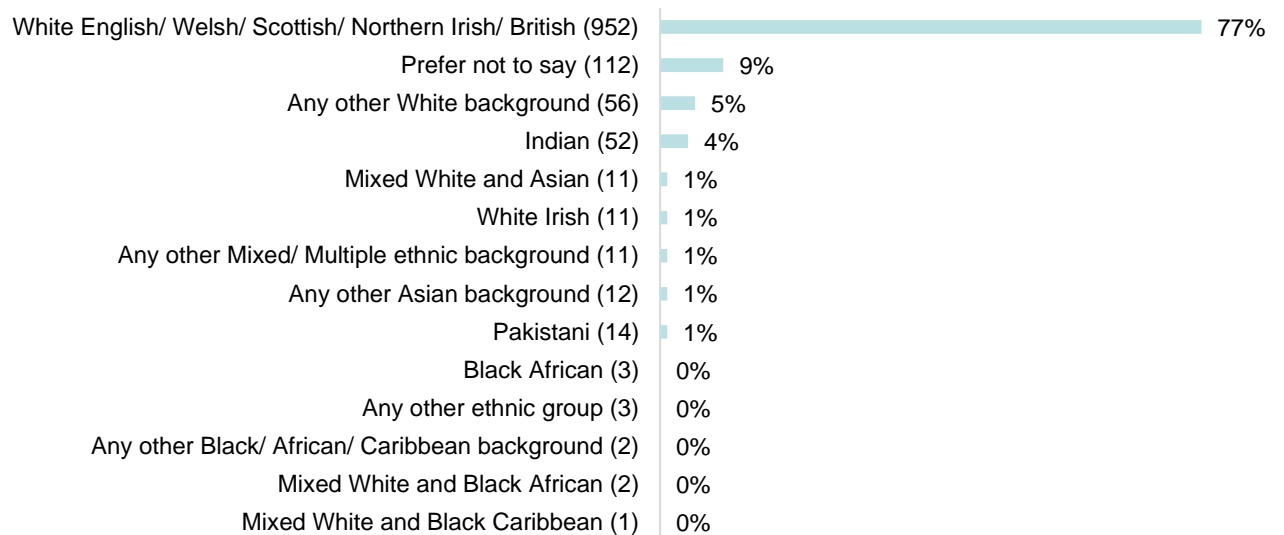
### Gender



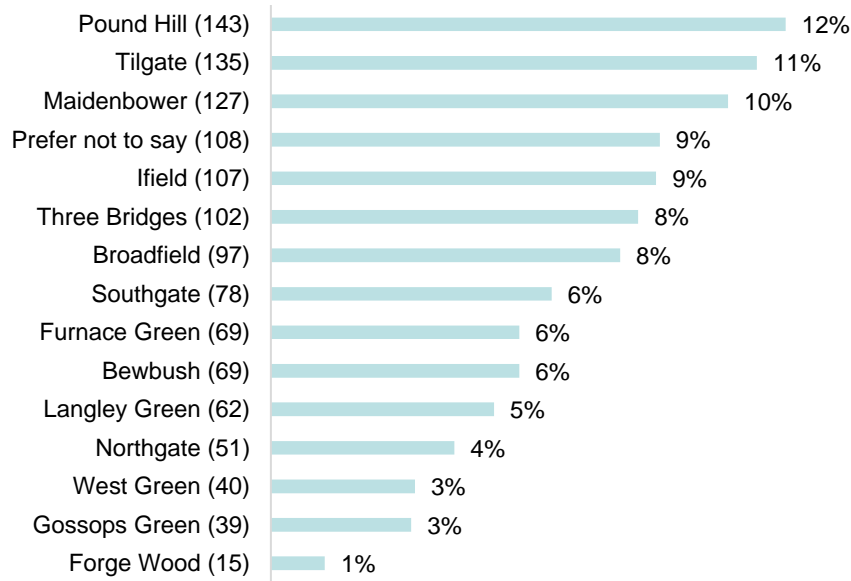
## Age group



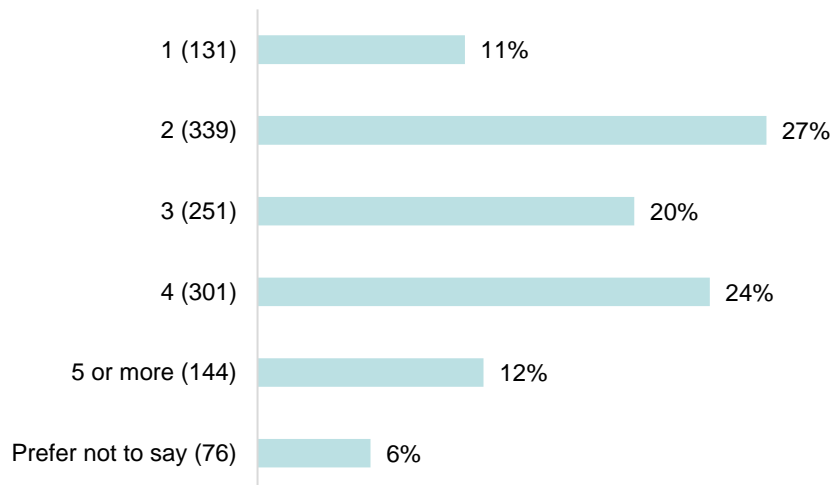
## Ethnicity



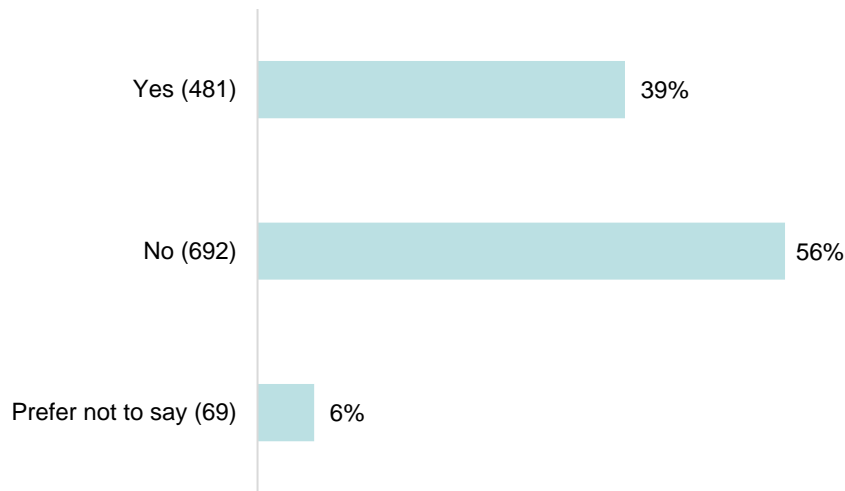
## Neighbourhood ward



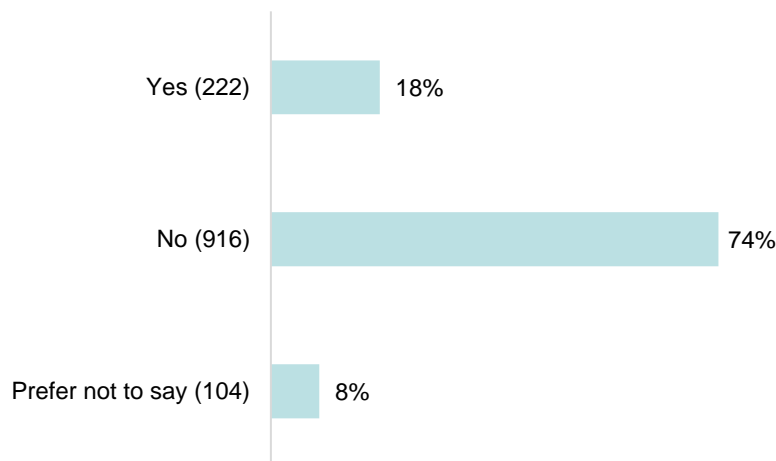
## Household member composition



## Children aged 15 or under within household



## Longstanding illness or disability



## Appendices

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### *Appendix A: Survey questions*



## Budget consultation

The coronavirus pandemic has had a major impact on Crawley Borough Council's finances.

The lockdown and subsequent restrictions meant that the council's income from K2 Crawley, The Hawth, Tilgate Nature Centre, car parking and community centres was significantly reduced.

At the same time, expenditure on services for our most vulnerable residents increased.



While the government has given us £1.4m to help pay towards this shortfall, we are still £1.2m short. This figure will grow to at least £1.7m in 2021/22.

This means that bold decisions are needed to save money in the current financial year and in future years. It's highly likely that several council services will have to be reduced. This is despite the development of new income streams for the council, for example the commercial space in the new Town Hall.

The council has already made internal savings of £500,000 without reducing or removing services. These potential savings options are being explored in parallel with a number of internal efficiency reviews and other initiatives.

We are now proposing to plug the remaining budget gap by:

1. Reviewing waste services, potentially moving from weekly to fortnightly rubbish collections and considering the introduction of a weekly food waste collection. Fewer than one in five councils still have weekly collections. This would increase our recycling rate, helping us move towards our aim of being carbon neutral by 2050 and saving taxpayers' money.
2. Post-Covid, reviewing the support the council gives to the community and the voluntary sector. We currently spend more in this area than other districts and borough councils in West Sussex.
3. Closing or reducing the operating hours of public toilets.
4. Reviewing adventure play, moving to a more flexible model of delivery.
5. Reviewing the number, type and specification of cricket squares, bowling greens and croquet lawns
6. Where appropriate, pricing our fees and charges accordingly so that costs are covered.

This survey will ask you to select your level of agreement with each of the proposals listed above, along with any additional comments you would like to make. There will also be an opportunity to submit any suggestions or ideas you may have regarding balancing the council's budget through savings and/or income generation.

**1. Reviewing waste collection, including potentially moving from weekly to fortnightly rubbish collections and considering the introduction of a weekly food waste collection.**

Fewer than one in five councils still have weekly collections. This would increase our recycling rate, helping us move towards our aim of being carbon neutral by 2050 and saving taxpayers' money.

Please select your level of agreement with this proposal:

Strongly agree

Agree

- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please use the free text box below for any comments regarding this proposal:

## **2. Post-Covid, reviewing the support the council gives to the community and the voluntary sector**

As well as the work of our Community Services teams, we currently spend more in this area than other districts and borough councils in West Sussex.

Please select your level of agreement with this proposal:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please use the free text box below for any comments regarding this proposal:

## **3. Closing or reducing the operating hours of public toilets**

The vast majority of our 14 public toilets receive very little use and cost a considerable sum to maintain and clean.

Please select your level of agreement with this proposal:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please use the free text box below for any comments regarding this proposal:

#### **4. Reviewing adventure play, moving to a more flexible model of delivery**

Children no longer visit adventure playgrounds in the numbers they once did. The wide variety of existing play opportunities available in the town means a more flexible approach could save money and provide children with different ways to play.

Please select your level of agreement with this proposal:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please use the free text box below for any comments regarding this proposal:

#### **5. Reviewing the number, type and specification of cricket squares, bowling greens and croquet lawns**

Please select your level of agreement with this proposal:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please use the free text box below for any comments regarding this proposal:

**6. Where appropriate, pricing our fees and charges accordingly so that costs are covered and provide value for money**

Some services cost much less to use or access when compared to our neighbouring councils and those with similarities to Crawley. Discretionary services would be priced competitively, being attractive compared to private operators but covering the council's costs.

Please select your level of agreement with this proposal:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please use the free text box below for any comments regarding this proposal:

**Do you have any other suggestions to make to the council about how to balance its budget through savings and/or income generation?**

- Yes
- No

Please state your suggestion using the free text box below:

To submit another suggestion, please select the option below:

Add another suggestion

### About you

To help us better understand where responses are coming from, we would like to ask some questions about you. Your answers to these questions will be used solely for the purpose of data analysis in compiling the results of this survey.

### Gender

- Male
- Female
- Let me type...
- Prefer not to say

### Age group

- Under 16
- 16-30
- 31-44
- 45-64
- Over 65
- Prefer not to say

### Ethnicity

- White English/ Welsh/ Scottish/ Northern Irish/ British
- White Irish
- Any other White background
- Mixed White and Black Caribbean
- Mixed White and Black African
- Mixed White and Asian
- Any other Mixed/ Multiple ethnic background
- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi

- Any other Asian background
- Black African
- Black Caribbean
- Any other Black/African/Caribbean background
- Any other ethnic group
- Prefer not to say

**Neighbourhood Ward**

- Bewbush
- Broadfield
- Forge Wood
- Furnace Green
- Gossops Green
- Langley Green
- Maidenbower
- Northgate
- Pound Hill
- Southgate
- Three Bridges
- Tilgate
- West Green
- Prefer not to say

**How many people live in your household including yourself?**

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 or more
- Prefer not to say

**Do you have any children aged 15 or under within your household?**

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

**Do you have a longstanding illness or disability?**

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say