



Budget Setting Consultation For City of York Council

Budget Consultation 2 & Community Groups: Report



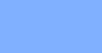



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QaResearch

Contents

-  1. Background & Objectives
-  2. Methodology
-  3. Key Findings
-  4. Conclusions



Background & objectives

This section outlines the background to the project and the objectives of this stage of the consultation.

1



Background to the project – Part 1

- The City of York Council is currently facing unprecedented financial challenges, exacerbated by being one of the lowest-funded unitary authorities in the country.
- Over the past decade, significant changes in local government financing have obscured the true extent of funding reductions since 2010-2011. The government's Core Spending Power measure shows a 6% funding increase for York, but when adjusted for inflation, this translates to a 28.5% decrease in real terms - an approximate shortfall of £43 million.
- This financial strain is deepened by increasing demand for services, driven by rising costs and an ageing population.
- As a result, the City of York Council must identify approximately £30 million in savings over the next three years. Without significant adjustments - whether through service reductions, cuts, or other measures - the Council may be unable to balance its budget.
- *"Our Big Budget Conversation"* is an essential step in engaging residents to help determine spending priorities and identify areas where savings can be made.



Background to the project – Part 2



So, what has been done so far...

- Since May 2024, City of York Council has been conducting “*Our Big Budget Conversation*”.
- Qa Research were commissioned to support this process by carrying out research and engagement activities aimed at understanding which services residents think are most essential to fund, where spending could be reduced, and how different levels of council tax increases would be received.
- This initial engagement involved a total of **1,097 residents and businesses** - 57 in workshops and community groups (taking place in August 2024), and 1,039 in an online survey which ran from 16th July – 1st September 2024).
- Using the findings from this engagement, The City of York Council developed a set of **budget proposals**. These proposals outlined plans to raise revenue, reduce costs, and ensure that key services continue to be delivered.
- In November 2024, Qa were commissioned to support with the second part of “*Our Big Budget Conversation*”. The purpose of this was to test the budget proposals with residents and businesses across York.





Budget Setting Consultation 2 aim

“To engage residents, communities and businesses in meaningful discussions about what the council delivers to ensure that the council’s financial decisions reflect the communities' priorities and preferences”.

Research objectives

- Understand residents' perspectives on various budget proposals and identify conditions under which they consider these proposals appropriate.
- Determine the most effective communication methods for conveying the 2024/25 budget.
- Gather diverse perspectives and promote inclusive participation by ensuring a broad and diverse community engagement

Methodology

This section outlines the methods used and breaks down the sample of who participated in the research.

2



Quantitative Research



Face-to-face on-street survey (61 residents) & Online survey (573 residents and 39 businesses or organisations)

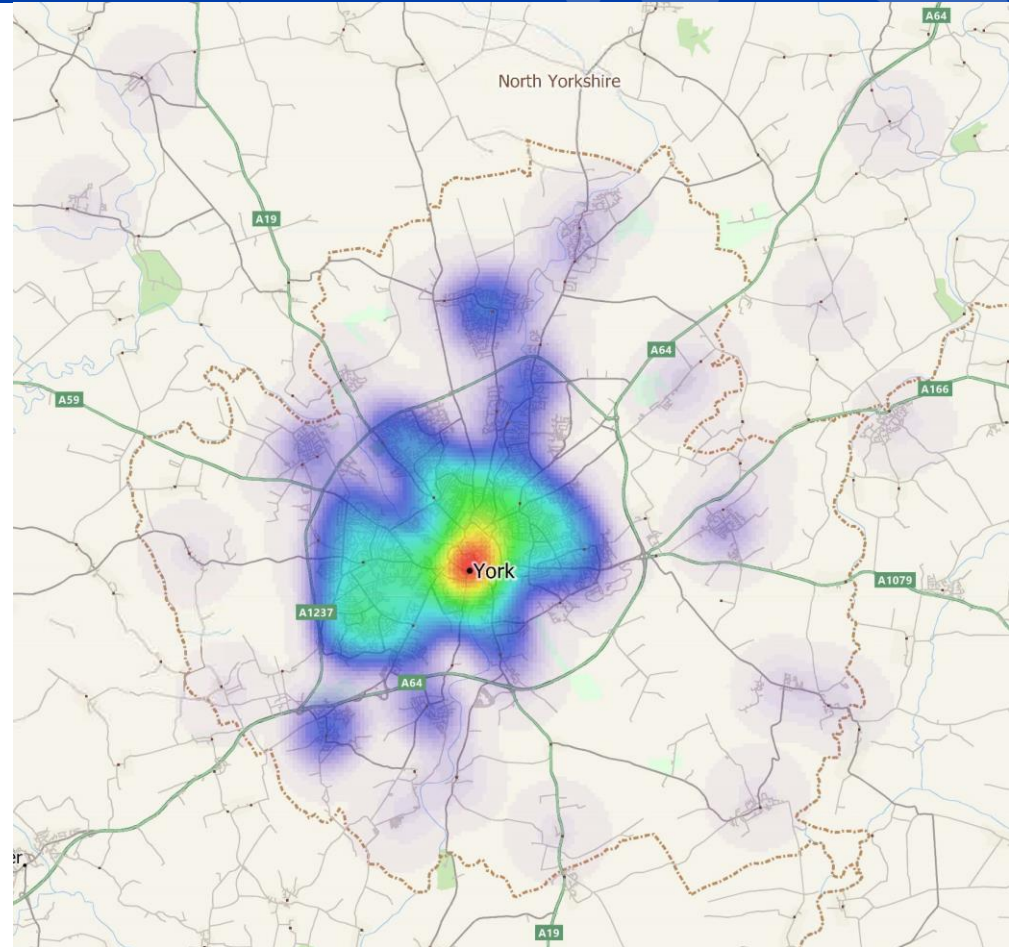
Qualitative Research



7 local community groups (47 residents)

Quantitative Sample

- Budget Consultation 2 surveyed a total of **673 residents and businesses** from various locations across York (refer to the map which shows York's boundary limits).
- Of these, 612 respondents were from the online survey, and 61 respondents were gathered through face-to-face surveying.
- Of these, 39 respondents provided feedback on behalf of a business or organisation.
- The purpose of doing the face-to-face was to top up underrepresented residents from the online survey.
- The sample therefore represented a diverse group, including participants of varying ages, genders, ethnicities, disabilities, religions, and sexual orientations.
- The map displays the distribution of respondents based on the postcodes they provided during the survey.



Qualitative Sample



Community Group Visits:

Group 1
Hoping
York

Group 2
Foxwood
Hub

Group 3
Poverty Truth
Commission

Group 4
Adult Carers
Group

Group 5
Young at
Hearts

Group 6
Lidgett
Grove

Group 7
Learning
disability
group

Community groups were attended by Qa researchers, and those who took part signed a consent form and demographic form.

Participants spoke to their specific experiences relating to the group as well as broader views on each of the budget proposals. They came from a mix of backgrounds in terms of:

- Age (predominantly 65+)
- Gender
- Ethnic background (predominantly white)
- Area of York

47 residents took part overall in the community groups.



Key Findings

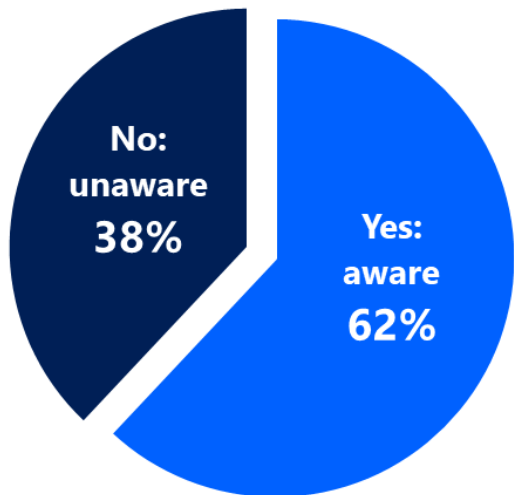
This section explores the key findings of this project, which is the second part of City of York Council's budget consultation

3



Nearly two-thirds of residents aware of CYC £30 million budget deficit

- At the start of the survey, residents were asked if they were aware that City of York Council was facing a £30 million deficit in the budget.
- Nearly two-thirds (62%) of residents were aware of the deficit, bearing in mind this is the second part of the consultation and there has already been widespread promotion and local press around the first consultation.
- This shows there is widespread awareness of the budget challenges, but there is still a sizeable minority who are unaware (38%).



Quantitative Survey Breakdown

- Awareness of the deficit was significantly more likely among residents aged 40 and above, with 68% of those aged 40-64 and 72% of those aged 65+ being aware, compared to only 48% of residents aged 16-39.
- Awareness also varied significantly by ethnicity, with 63% of residents from white ethnic backgrounds reporting awareness, compared to just 31% of those from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Awareness of budget difficulties in community groups was mixed

- In the community group visits, awareness of CYC's budget difficulties was mixed.
- Some of the groups had taken part in the first part of the consultation, so were naturally more aware of the specific challenges faced e.g. the £30 million deficit.
- A minority of qualitative participants were also aware via the local press.
- Other residents were aware of **more general budget constraints on national and local government and the broader economic challenges facing the nation**. However, this tended to be an assumption that all councils are struggling rather than knowing for certain that York was facing budget difficulties.
- When they became aware of CYC's budget difficulties, residents had some questions which helped them contextualise the challenge posed by this consultation:
 - How did CYC get into the £30 million deficit and over how long?
 - Has the money been mismanaged / misspent in the past?
 - Why are other councils not in as much deficit?



Findings: Ideas for Raising Money

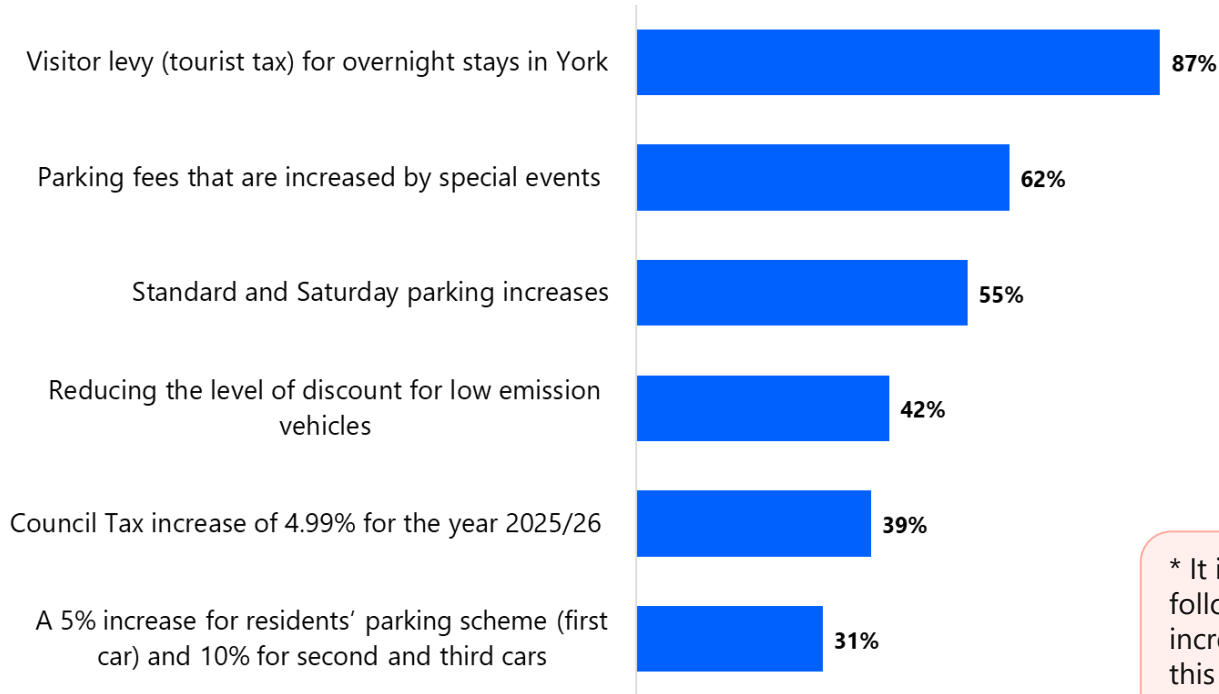
This section explores the key findings relating to City of York Council's proposed ideas for raising money in order to decrease the budget deficit

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Overview of support levels across Budget Proposals

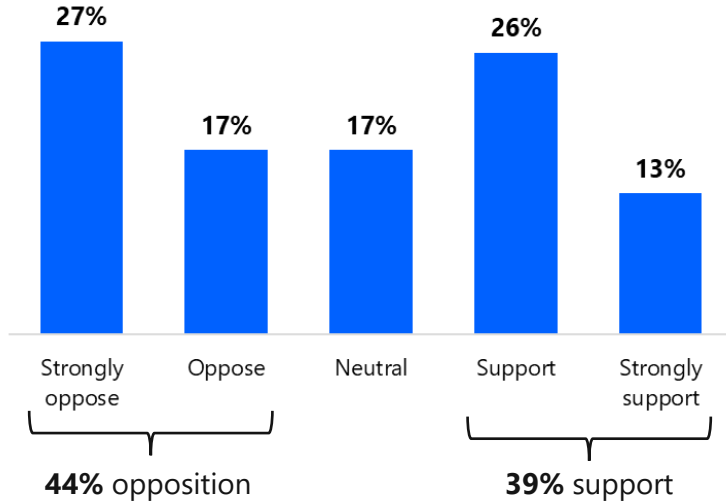
- The following budget proposals were gathered from both survey responses and community group feedback. The following section will examine each proposal in detail, with the graph showing how strongly residents supported each initiative according to the survey results:



* It is important to note that while the following section includes a proposal to increase Minster badge fees from £30 to £45, this option was not presented in the survey and is therefore not reflected in the graph data

Council Tax increase: survey shows 39% support for a 4.99% rise in bills

Proposal: Council Tax increase of 4.99% for the year 2025/26 and the next two years after.
For example, for a Band D property, this would mean an increase of about £96.99 more per year.



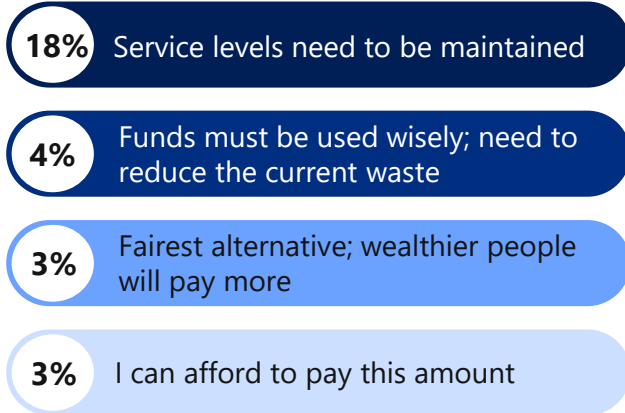
Quantitative Survey Breakdown

- Support for the 4.99% increase was significantly higher among residents aged 40-64 (45%) and over 65s (59%), compared to residents aged 16-39 (22%). This aligns with findings from Budget Consultation 1, which suggests that younger age groups, who are often less financially stable, are more likely to struggle with substantial increases.
- Interestingly, among those who supported the increase, 45% were aware of the deficit compared to 30% of residents who were not aware. This highlights that awareness of the broader context is linked to higher support levels for the council tax increase.

- Findings are consistent with Budget Consultation 1, where 42% of residents supported an increase of 4.99% or more.
- However, opposition has risen from 38% in Budget Consultation 1 to 44% in Budget Consultation 2, reflecting a 6% increase. Though, it is important to note that in the previous consultation, an additional option to 'increase council tax by less than 4.99%' was available, accounting for 19% of residents, which may have influenced the overall distribution of responses.

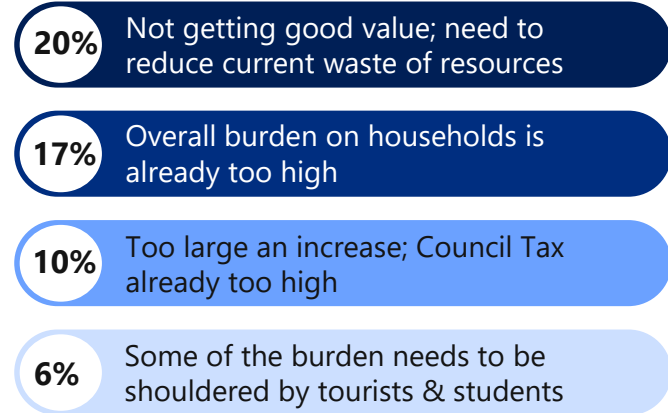
Council Tax increase: reasons for supporting or opposing a 4.99% rise

Support



- 18% expressed that it was **necessary to ensure currently levels of service** could be maintained. This sentiment was predominantly voiced by residents aged 65 and older.
- A smaller group (4%) stated they would support the increase provided there was **reassurance** that the funds would be used effectively, and efforts were made to reduce waste in the council.
- Others acknowledged that CYC charge less than other councils, viewing the increase as **reasonable**, especially given the reduced financial support from the government in previous years.

Oppose

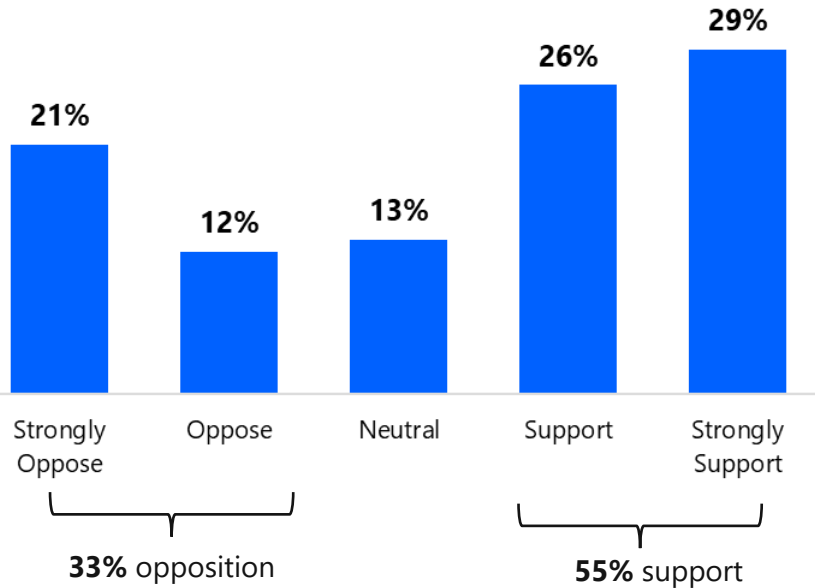


- On the opposing side, 20% of residents cited concerns about not receiving good value for money and **perceived inefficiencies** within the council. Younger residents aged 16-39 (24%) and those aged 40-64 (23%) were more likely to share this view, compared to only 10% of those aged 65+.
- Others (17%) opposed the increase due to the overall financial burden already placed on residents, while 10% specially felt the increase **was too steep**.
- Other comments referred to **concern as to whether this was the most effective solution** for addressing the deficit.

Standard and Saturday parking increases: survey shows over half support

Proposal 1: The cost for the first hour in premium and standard car parks would be £4.85, the same for the second hour. If you stay longer than two hours, the hourly rate drops to £4.10.

Proposal 2: There would be an extra 10% increase in charges on Saturdays.



Quantitative Survey Breakdown

- Residents aged 16-39 were significantly more likely to support the increase with 62% support compared to 50% support among residents aged 40-64.
- Interestingly, carers were significantly more likely to oppose the increase (41%), compared to non carers (29%).
- Face-to-face respondents gave their support for each proposal separately, due to a last-minute change to the online survey, meaning the responses to this question cannot be combined.
- Residents who answered the face-to-face survey had a different view to the online respondents. They gave lower support all round. Only 13% supported a parking increase and 18% supported a Saturday surcharge. However, the sample for these two questions is only 61 residents and therefore the larger, more robust online sample should be considered in this case.

Increasing parking rates & Saturday rates: support vs opposition

Support

18%

Encourage more people to use public transport

12%

Will help to reduce congestion

7%

Seems fair; we need more income generation for public services

7%

Drivers deserve to pay for it, including Blue Badges

- 18% of respondents supported an increase in parking and Saturday rates due to the increase **encouraging** more people to **use public transport**
- Further, 12% supported the increase due to the initiative helping to **reduce congestion**
- Some (7%) felt it was a **fair method** of increasing income for public services
- Others (7%) believe **drivers deserve to pay extra** as they are choosing not to use public transport, including Blue Badge holders

Oppose

19%

Current prices are already an unwelcome deterrent

13%

Damaging for businesses by discouraging footfall in the city

8%

Public transport is not cheap or reliable enough

5%

Current parking facilities are not attractive enough for high prices

- 19% of respondents opposed the increases, due to current prices already being **too expensive**, and acting as a **deterrent** from going into the city
- Further, 13% suggested this **could damage businesses** by **discouraging footfall** from both residents and tourists
- Others (8%) believe public transport, **especially the Park & Ride**, is not cheap or reliable enough to make parking more expensive
- A small group (5%), opposed due to current parking **facilities not being attractive enough** for high prices, with **calls for improvement**

Standard parking rate increases: community groups generally supportive

- Overall, community groups **accepted** that parking charge increases were **a sensible way to increase revenue while not impacting too detrimentally on residents.**
- **Non-drivers were particularly supportive** of increasing parking charges, as it would not affect their own lives and would rather the charges be passed on to other residents or visitors.
- Many viewed this as **mostly impacting tourists**, as locals felt they were aware of cheaper or free places to park, used public transport or avoided the city centre. As such, this was positively received, since residents generally would like to see tourists contribute more to the budget deficit rather than residents.
- Some think increased parking charges **may deter people from the city centre**, others think people will come regardless as parking is already high, so an increase is unlikely to further deter people who are keen to visit the city centre and were already going to pay for parking.
- Indeed, residents noted this **could even have a positive impact on public transport**, as it may make more financial sense to use public transport, which could improve traffic and air quality. However, for this to work, public transport would have to be reliable and frequent.

"I personally think, yeah, that's fine for visitors, yeah, but **I don't think it's fair for people that live in the city**"

"**I don't drive so I don't care**"



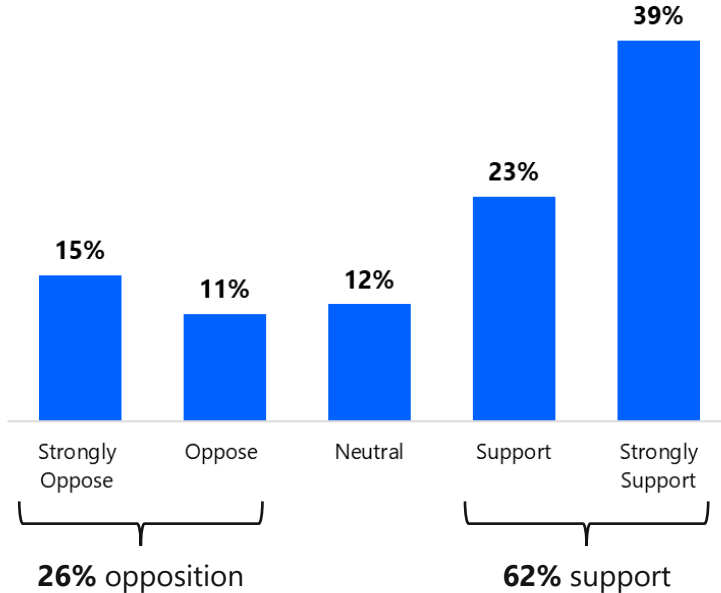
Saturday parking surcharge: community groups have mixed views

- Views towards a further parking surcharge on a Saturday received **mixed views** from the community groups, but their response appeared positive than an overall increase in standard parking.
- The key factor with parking is to what extent it affect York resident's vs tourists. Parking charge increases that **disproportionately affect tourists were seen as a positive thing** in the eyes of residents. Generally speaking, parking in the city centre on a Saturday is seen as something that tourists do more than local residents, therefore this proposal received more support.
- Once again, residents discussed the **other transport options** available if parking became too expensive, and that it may drive uptake of the park and ride, or buses. However, some residents then felt this made the surcharge pointless, as the aim is to increase revenue, not drive uptake of public transport.
- As with all parking charges, discussions touched on whether this would deter visitors and whether independent businesses in the city centre could cope with reduced footfall. **On balance, residents generally felt this was not enough to put off visitors entirely and would likely raise some revenue for the council.**



Special event parking surcharge: survey shows 62% of residents support

Proposal: Parking fees that are increased by 10% for visitors to events like the Christmas Market. This could bring in £230,000.



Quantitative Survey Breakdown

- 25–39-year-olds were significantly more likely than almost all other age groups to support (74%).
- Those living in Clifton (90%) were significantly more likely to support than almost any other ward.

Why did residents feel this way?

- 9% of residents supported a special event parking surcharge as they thought it **would encourage visitors to use alternative transport**.
- 12% of residents opposed the change as they believe the increase **may deter visitors** from visiting York.

Special event parking surcharge: community groups largely supportive

- The proposal to add an additional parking charge to special events like the Christmas markets was **largely supported** by residents in the community groups. This viewpoint was driven once again by the assumption it is mostly tourists who will drive to the Christmas markets, and that locals will either get public transport, park and ride or avoid the centre entirely. As such, this could be seen as an **indirect 'tourist tax'**, something most residents are in support of.
- It is important to recognise the fieldwork took place while the Christmas markets were on, and residents expressed frustration with how crowded the city centre was, and that parking increases may reduce the crowds. This proximity may have heightened support for this particular proposal.
- Some residents questioned which other events would be included in the surcharge, as the Christmas markets are seen as the most impactful and crowded events. Residents were undecided on which other events would be suitable for a surcharge.
- Some residents did mention, however, that not every York resident has the option to avoid the city centre car parks, and **this may disproportionately affect those without the ability to use public transport** e.g. those with health issues.
- Also, some residents questioned if all three parking proposals were added together, would this amount to an extremely high parking charge e.g. on a Saturday during the Christmas markets, and therefore be so high that it genuinely deterred a lot of visitors.



Minster parking badge increase: mixed views in community groups

Proposal: The Minster Badge is available for residents of CYC to purchase a “badge” at a cost of £30 for two years. This gives vehicle owners a discount of 10% per hour. It also allows a discounted evening rate of £1. **The proposal is to raise the cost of a minster badge from £30 to £45**

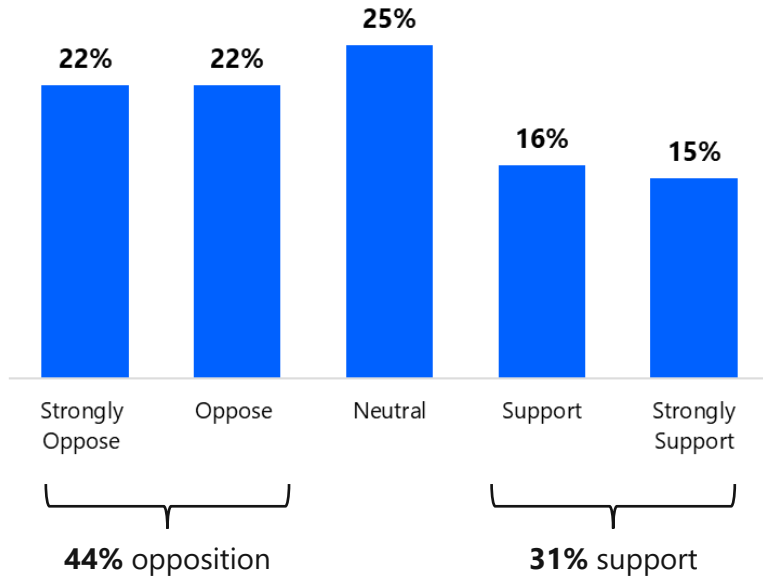
- Residents in the community group discussions had fairly **mixed views** on the proposal to increase charges for the Minster parking badge.
- Some residents were positive because, unlike some of the other proposals in the consultation, this was an **‘opt-in’ choice that residents could make for themselves**.
- Others were positive or ambivalent because they **had never heard of the Minster badge** or didn’t use it themselves, and were happy to support a change that didn’t affect their lives.
- Some supported the increase but argued that if the cost is going up by 50% (£30 to £45), then the level of discount should also increase to make purchasing the badge worthwhile.
- Some residents were not supportive of this proposal because it would **only impact on York locals**. As is a recurring theme, many residents perceive the strain on York city centre to be driven by high levels of tourism, therefore as much of the city maintenance costs should be passed onto tourists as possible. The Minster badge, being only available to residents, would therefore not be in keeping with this logic and as such received lower levels of support.

“I disagree, because you put **more money, more burden on the local people**”



Increase fees for resident parking: under a third support this change

Proposal: A 5% increase for residents' parking scheme (first car) and 10% for second and third cars. This could raise £50,000.



Quantitative Survey Breakdown

- Residents aged 40-64 (34%) and 65+ (36%) were significantly more likely to support than residents aged 16-39 (25%).
- Residents who consider themselves as disabled were significantly more likely to strongly support (23% vs 13%).

Why did residents feel this way?

- 5% of respondents supported the change and called for a higher increase for 2nd and 3rd cars.
- 15% of respondents opposed the change as they thought the council should not be charging residents to park where they live.

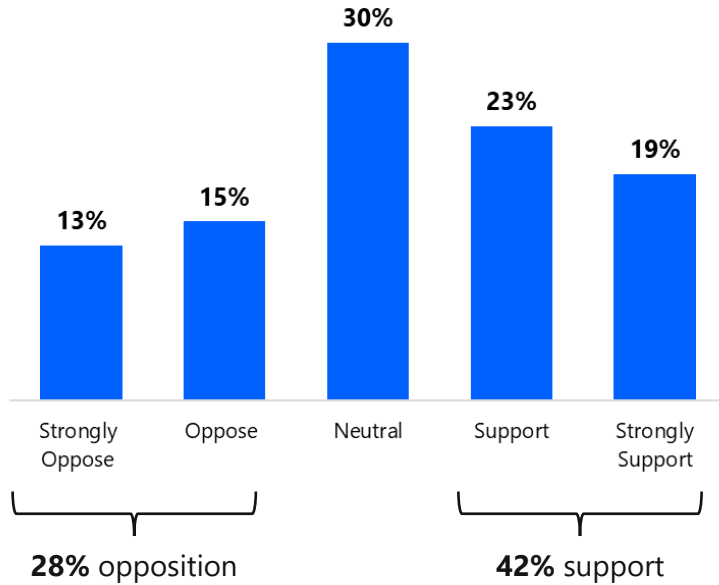
Increase fees for resident parking: mixed views from community groups

- Community groups also expressed mixed views on increasing fees for resident parking permits. Overall, residents accepted that there may have to be an increase to cover rising costs, and the increase on the first car (5%) was seen as fairly modest, however it was not as popular as other parking proposals.
- Given that a lot of houses in York have no choice but to park on-street, some residents felt it was unfair to raise the prices as many households need at least one car and need somewhere near their home to park. Therefore, **it wasn't seen as something residents could opt out of.**
- This proposal was **directly targeting residents, and therefore was not as popular as parking increases that would also impact tourists.** The burden on households was not seen as 'worth it' for the £50K increase in funds.
- Concerns were also raised about the higher charges for second or third cars. **Some residents felt this was reasonable** based on the assumption that more cars equals a higher income household, and therefore more able to pay. However, **other residents did not think all multi-car households were wealthy, and worried about the impact on larger families and houses of multiple occupancy** (e.g. shared house).
- Residents also expressed worries that it would **disproportionately affect people who relied on cars for mobility** and had to park outside their homes for this reason.



Reduce discount for low emission vehicles: under half support

Proposal: Reducing the level of discount for low emission vehicles to a 20% discount (from the current 50% discount) for residents parking and season tickets. This could raise £120,000.



Quantitative Survey Breakdown

- Residents who live in Holgate were significantly more likely to support than almost all other areas (61%).
- Those who strongly support the increase in council tax were significantly more likely (51%) to support reducing the discount, than those who oppose to the 4.99% increase (37%).
- 16-24-year-olds were significantly more likely to oppose (53%) than almost all other age groups.

Why did residents feel this way?

- 7% of residents supported reducing discounts for low emission vehicles based on the principle that it is still a vehicle taking up space
- 12% of residents opposed the change as they said it removes the incentive to be eco-friendly, where it instead needs encouragement

Reduce discount for low emission vehicles: community groups supportive

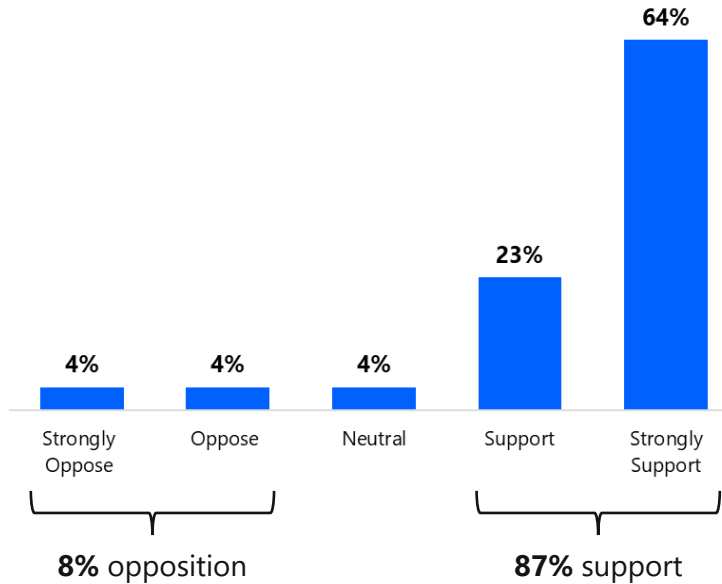
- On the whole, community groups were fairly supportive of the proposal reducing the resident permit discount for low emission vehicles.
- Conversations centred around whether low emission vehicle users would have the means to afford an increase, and most community groups made the assumption that **low emission vehicles are usually more expensive and therefore residents could likely afford to pay for the resident permit.**
- A **notable objection to this came from disabled residents**, who often get hybrid cars as part of their Personal Independence Payments. They pointed out that it is not always wealthy residents who have low emission vehicles, and that they are grateful for the current discount.
- However, some residents questioned why low emission vehicles had any discount at all, that the permit was paying to park and therefore **everyone should pay the same.**
- But some residents shared an understanding of why it is important to incentivise lower emissions vehicles because of pollution and environmental reasons. These residents supported low emission cars receiving some form of incentive but were still happy for it to reduce down to a 20% discount.

Yeah, I agree with that one, because **if you can afford an electric car, I think you've got enough money** to pay the extra



Tourism levy: survey exhibits overwhelming support

Proposal: If legislation was agreed to allow a visitor levy (tourist tax) for overnight stays in York, would you support this as a method of funding council services?



Quantitative Survey Breakdown

- 567 out of 646 (84%) residents supported a tourism tax, with 413 strongly supporting (64%), versus only 56 residents (8%) opposing.
- Between age groups, wards, gender and disability there were no significant differences between demographics. There remained high levels of support amongst all residents.



Common reasons residents support the tourist tax

24% It is effective in other cities

10% Tourists should pay more

8% Absolutely essential to implement

8% It would be a good source of income

- It is imperative to highlight that many residents stated that despite supporting this, it was critical that the tax generated needs to be invested into areas such as: bins, street cleaning, police, businesses / events that attract visitors, and subsidies to taxi drivers. Residents wanted reassurance that tourist tax funds would not be diverted into statutory services, such as social care.

- Many residents believed a tourist tax was the **fairest solution** to prevent the entire burden of the council's deficit from falling on local residents, especially given the substantial role that tourism plays in York's economy.
- For 24% of residents, seeing the **successful implementation of tourist taxes** in other UK cities and popular European destinations such as Rome and Barcelona was a key reason for their support.
- Some residents also felt that a tourist tax could help **discourage disruptive activities**, such as stag and hen parties, and provide necessary funding for local services.
- Among the minority opposed to the tax, 6% expressed **concern that it might reduce tourism**, while 2% simply opposed the introduction of any new tax.



While support was high, reassurance was needed for residents

We pay a tourist tax equivalent whenever we visit major European attractions - pitch it that way and we are comparable. However, the **money needs to be ringfenced** to be explicitly spent on improving the city and not drained by rising care costs.

I support this but it would have to be set at a sensible level so to not deter tourists from visiting the city. **Has there been any research conducted into tourists' appetite for this? If so, what was the result?** if not this needs to be done first.

I've been a fan of the Manchester model of a hotel BID in which money is collected and collectively spent. However, it would **need to be ringfenced** against tourism related services and economic development **rather than be absorbed into other statutory services like adult social care.**



Tourism levy: community groups in support despite not being prompted

We went on a holiday to Sicily... every visitor had to pay however many Euros it was for a visitor's tax, and it **was just accepted part of that holiday** because they were a) trying to keep cars off the road, you know, the emissions out of the place, but also to just **maintain the place** to be a tourist attraction [which is what York needs, given how much tourism it receives].

I wrote 2 things down before we started, **tax on visitors** and tax for walking round on the bar walls for non-residents.

A tourist tax is a **very popular idea** in lots of cities and **York is a big tourist city** and I think it's an excellent idea and that needs adding.



Summary of different income generation methods – parking and tourism

- Generally, residents saw increased parking charges in York City Centre as an **indirect 'tourist tax'**, as residents are frequently able to find cheaper places to park or use the public transport system.
- When discussed in this context, residents were far more likely to accept and support parking charge increases – showing **the importance of positioning and context**.
- Some **worried about the impact of expensive parking** on tourist numbers, given how central tourism is to the York economy. However, **most residents felt visitors would visit York regardless**.
- Ideas with **lower levels of support were those where residents are directly affected** and had little choice other than to accept the increased cost, for example the resident parking charges.
- Some were worried that an increase in parking would have a **huge impact for some residents** who are unable to use public transport. Many questioned whether the increase needed to be so substantial and whether this could still be increased, but at a lower rate.
- For the majority, parking increases were a **better option than service cuts** and therefore this was favoured once reflecting on the bigger picture. This illustrates that, in isolation, parking increases are not generally seen as positive but **taking a step back in the context of the deficit and possibility of service cuts, it was one of the more acceptable options**.



Findings:

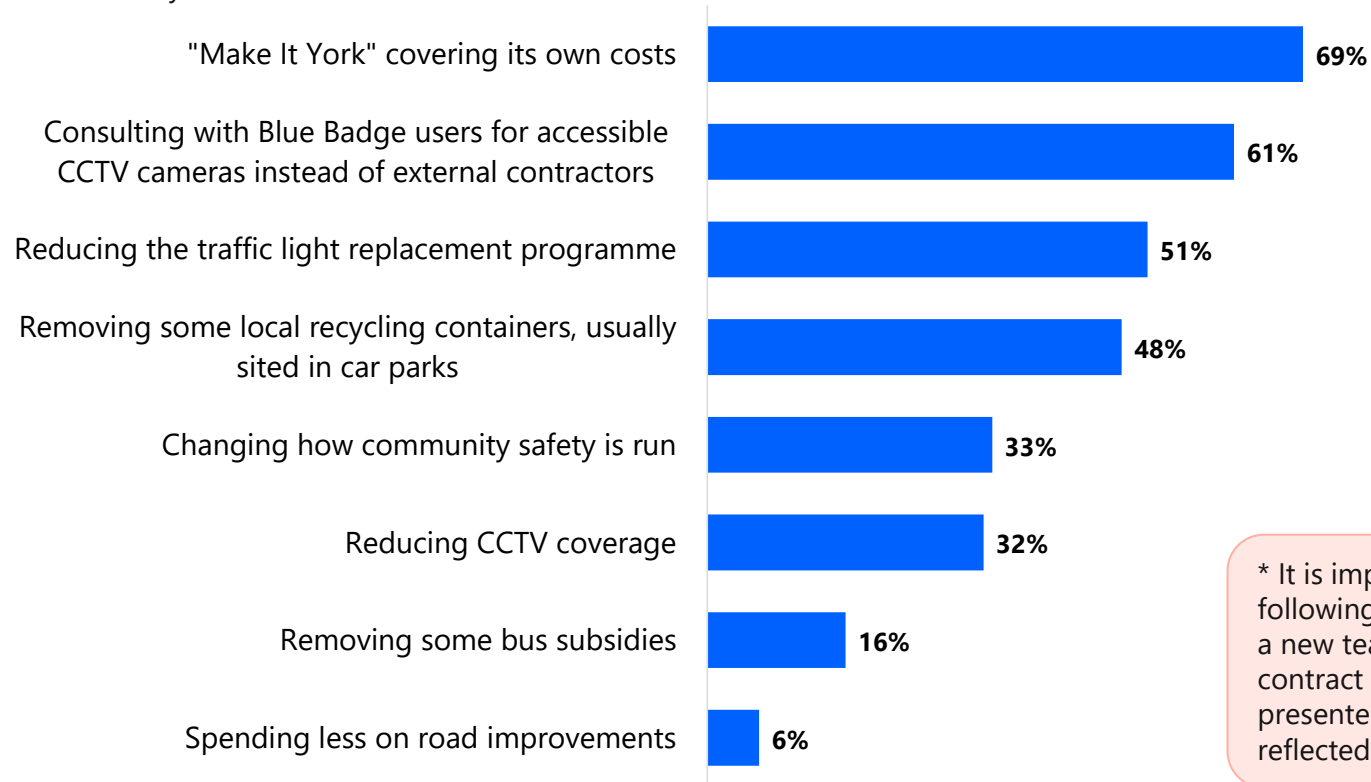
Saving Money & Cutting Costs

This section explores the key findings relating to City of York Council's proposed ideas for cutting costs with the aim of decreasing the budget deficit



Overview of support levels across Budget Proposals

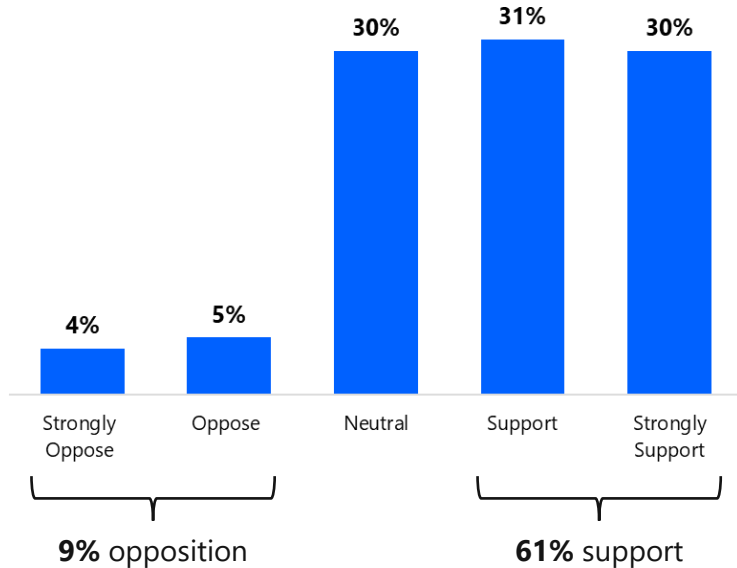
- The following budget proposals were gathered from both survey responses and community group feedback. The following section will examine each proposal in detail, with the graph showing how strongly residents supported each initiative according to the survey results:



* It is important to note that while the following section includes a proposal to create a new team for change and have better contract management, this option was not presented in the survey and is therefore not reflected in the graph data.

Blue badge monitored by CCTV: survey shows high support levels

Proposal: Consulting with Blue Badge users to determine whether we can install additional accessible CCTV cameras instead of using external contractors to enable city centre access. (£70,000 saved in 2025/26).



Base: 664 (Question was asked to all respondents)

Quantitative Survey Breakdown

- Residents living in Bishopthorpe (92%) were significantly more likely to support this change than almost any other ward, particularly in comparison to Fishergate (45%).
- Interestingly, there was no difference in support between those that consider themselves as disabled (62%) compared to those that are not (61%).

Why did residents feel this way?

- 13% of residents stated that this was a good use of technology as a way of saving money, and 9% stated that if in house is cheaper then it seems unquestionable that this is the best option.
- Of the small minority who opposed, some stated this was due to human control filling them with more reassurance (4%) or them being opposed to any car access in the city centre (3%)

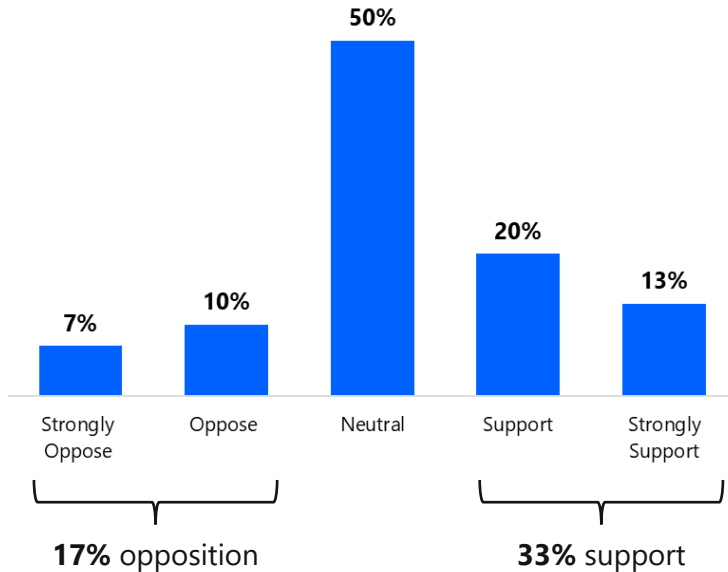
Blue badge monitored by CCTV: community groups mostly in favour

- There was also a fairly **high level of support** among community groups for the idea of monitoring accessible parking and access with CCTV instead of external contractors.
- Most residents, once they understood the proposal, felt that it was a **sensible cost-saving measure** as long as it worked. While a few residents worried that the cameras would break or not work properly, most were aware of other car parks or examples where automatic recognition of blue badges or number plates was smooth and effective, so thought this was a **realistic proposal**.
- It is important to note that some resident struggled to comprehend this proposal, which can help to explain the 30% of residents that felt neutral about this change across the surveys.
- If this proposal works as planned, it **shouldn't affect residents negatively in any way**. They would not have to pay any more and it might even make things more efficient for disabled residents driving through the city.
- Despite the general support, residents did note that it was not a major saving and would not make an enormous dent in the £30 million deficit.
- Another possible downside to this measure is that the current staff who monitor blue badges do not only grant access, but also check that the driver or passenger is actually the blue badge holder. Disabled residents shared anecdotal experiences of blue badges being used by non-disabled family members, which they found frustrating as disabled parking is limited. Without staff to monitor usage, they worried this would become a more regular occurrence.



Reorganising community safety: survey shows residents were unsure

Proposal: Changing how we run community safety without reducing the frontline service, which could save £65,000 each year starting in 2025/26.



Quantitative Survey Breakdown

- Residents aged 16-39 were significantly more likely to oppose (23%) than residents aged 40-64 (15%) and 65+ (8%).
- Male residents were significantly more likely to support this change than female residents (37% vs 28%).

Why did residents feel this way?

- 76% of residents in the open responses across those who opposed, supported or felt neutral, stated there was insufficient information to give their opinion, with the majority stating they were unsure what this would entail.
- 5% of residents stated so long as safety and frontline are not affected, they could justify this and 4% stated

Reorganising community safety: most are unable to comment

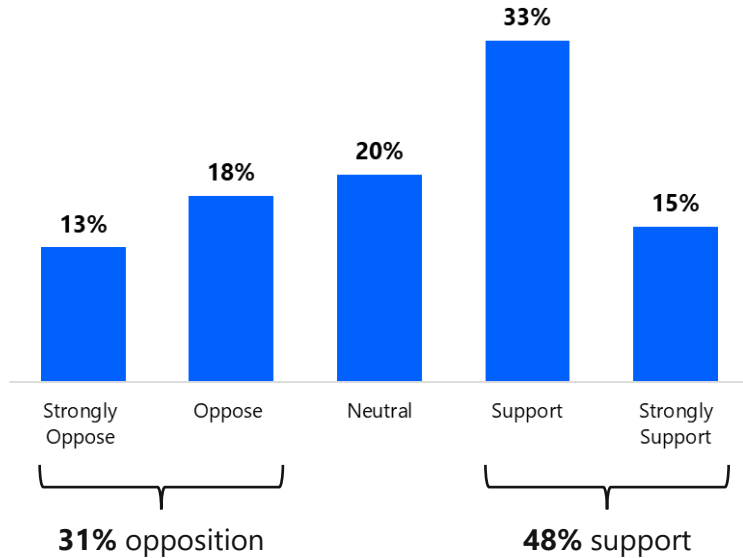
- This proposal was one of the more **difficult** ones to comment on for community groups, as there was not a great deal of detail on exactly how community safety would be reorganised or how frontline services would be protected.
- As a result, **residents tended to express a neutral or undecided view**, which is similarly reflected across the survey.
- While some residents could see this reorganisation as a 'no brainer' if it was genuinely going to have no impact on frontline services, **they were cautious to support a proposal of this nature without knowing the full extent of the possible changes.**
- Without any detail, residents did express some **concern about the knock-on impact**, as they expected reduction in community safety spending was likely to have some effect on how safe the city is in the longer term. Given that York is generally considered a safe city, some residents worried this would change if spending on community safety is reduced and make them **less comfortable living in York.**

I disagree to that one, just because **I came to York for safety reasons.** York is considered a very safe city, but it's because of the money that's invested in the city. **If you changed it to make it less, it makes a dramatic difference for the safety** of everybody in it. So, imagine, like, in a year's time, if you thought, oh God, we've saved 60,000 but there's been more muggings.



Reducing local recycling centres: survey shows just under half support

Proposal: Removing some local recycling containers, usually sited in car parks, to focus on household recycling and save money (£88,000 saved in 2025/26). We would retain those local recycling sites which serve a specific community need.



Quantitative Survey Breakdown

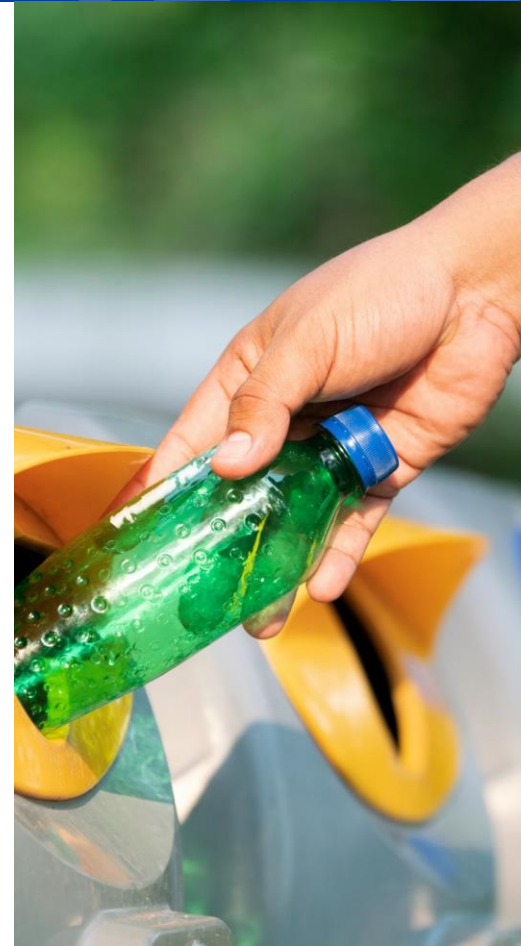
- Residents who look after or give support to anyone due to long term physical or mental health conditions were significantly more likely to oppose (39% vs. 29%). This may be linked to accessibility.

Why did residents feel this way?

- 16% of residents stated that CYC should encourage recycling, not make it more difficult, and 10% were concerned that this would cause more fly tipping and mess. 7% also stated that there is not enough recycling in York as it is.
- On the other hand, 6% of residents stated that households should recycle at home and 6% also stated they would support on the condition that household recycling is made easier.

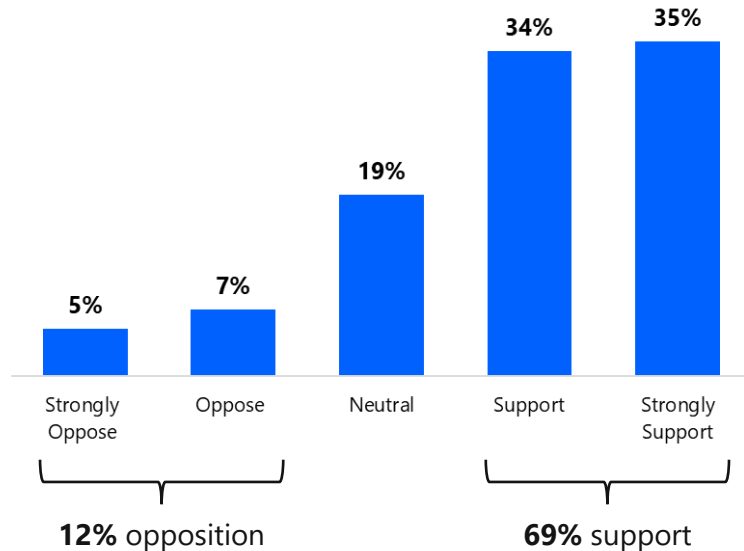
Reducing local recycling centres: community groups generally support

- Community groups initially shared mixed views on the proposal to remove some local recycling centres, as there was **some confusion over which recycling points these referred to**. Some residents assumed this would be the closure of local tips, or the reduction in household recycling waste collection.
- However, once they understood this would only affect some recycling centres in car parks, residents were generally supportive of the proposition.
- A few residents were **concerned that households without a car wouldn't be able to visit a local tip**, and therefore the recycling centres might be missed – even though this did not directly apply to members of the community groups themselves.
- However, many residents agreed that most households could manage their recycling by either limiting it to the household waste collection or supplementing this with trips to a local tip, or a recycling centre that is still open.
- There was some confusion over **which recycling would be removed**, and if this applied to charity and fabric collection points too. This should be clearly explained if the proposal is taken forward, and alternative collection points identified.



"Make It York" becoming self-funded: survey shows high levels of support

Proposal: "Make It York" (MIY) could cover its own costs through event and market fees, so it no longer needs council funding (£62,000)



Quantitative Survey Breakdown

- Support was higher from residents living in Strensall (93%) and Rural West York (89%) than almost any other ward.
- Residents who supported the increase in council tax were also more likely to agree with Make It York becoming self-funded (73%), than residents who were neutral regarding the council tax increase (62%).

Why did residents feel this way?

- 16% of respondents supported this as they believe 'MIY' needs to be profitable and self sufficient, with a further 10% stating it is a good, essential idea.
- 8% of respondents opposed as they thought 'MIY' as vital for tourism, and another 8% thought the Council have responsibility to support or control 'MIY'.

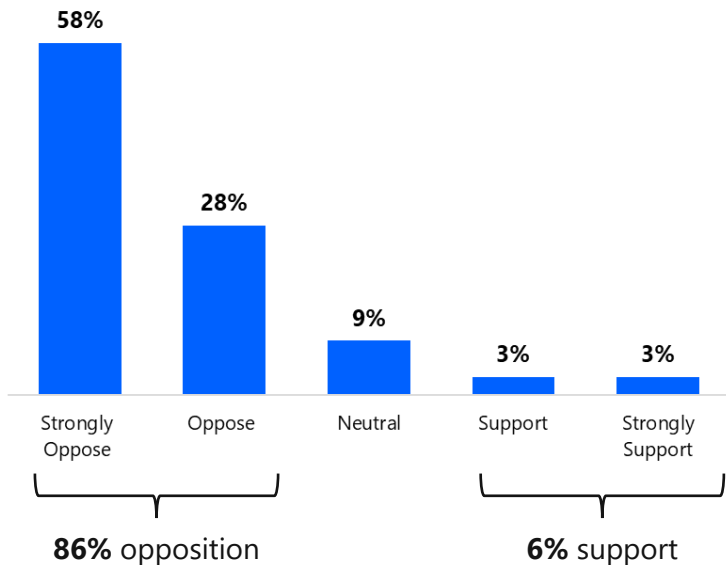
“Make It York” becoming self-funded: community groups support idea

- The idea of changing the funding of “Make it York” to pay for itself was **strongly supported** by residents.
- This chimes with the ongoing theme that **residents were more concerned about issues that affect local York residents** and less willing to spend council money on services tailored towards tourists and visitors to the city.
- Most residents shared the view that the **tourist economy in York is very strong**, and therefore some of that income could be used to fund the tourist information centre, rather than be funded or subsidised by council resources which are clearly stretched, given the scale of the budget deficit.
- On the whole this was a popular idea, as **residents felt the tourist information centre would be able to manage self-sufficiency in the same way a local business would**.
- However, some residents did question what would happen if “Make it York” was unable to support itself – would CYC then subsidise, or would it cease to exist? In this case, would there be a knock-on impact on tourism levels in York, and therefore the local economy?
- A more **well-developed plan** on how “Make it York” would self-fund is important for residents to feel fully comfortable with the proposal.



Less spend on road improvements: survey shows strong opposition

Proposal: Spending less on road improvements which will mean less money is spent on maintaining the roads and filling potholes (£60,000 saved each year from 2025/26).



Base: 665 (Question was asked to all respondents)

Quantitative Survey Breakdown

- Heworth Without, Holgate and Huntington and New Earswick were significantly more likely to oppose than almost all other wards, respectively 100%, 97% and 97%.

Why did residents feel this way?

- 41% of residents stated that York's roads are already in a bad way, and therefore felt this option was out of the question. Safety was also paramount to resident, and 13% stated this would result in a safety hazard, and 11% stated this would cause a risk to cyclists.
- 10% of residents also stated this would cause a false economy whereby spending less would ultimately lead to more money being spent or wasted than being saved.
- Of those that supported this measure, the only justification for supporting was that if it was essential to do, but only if this means other areas are prioritised.

Less spend on road improvements: community groups also opposed

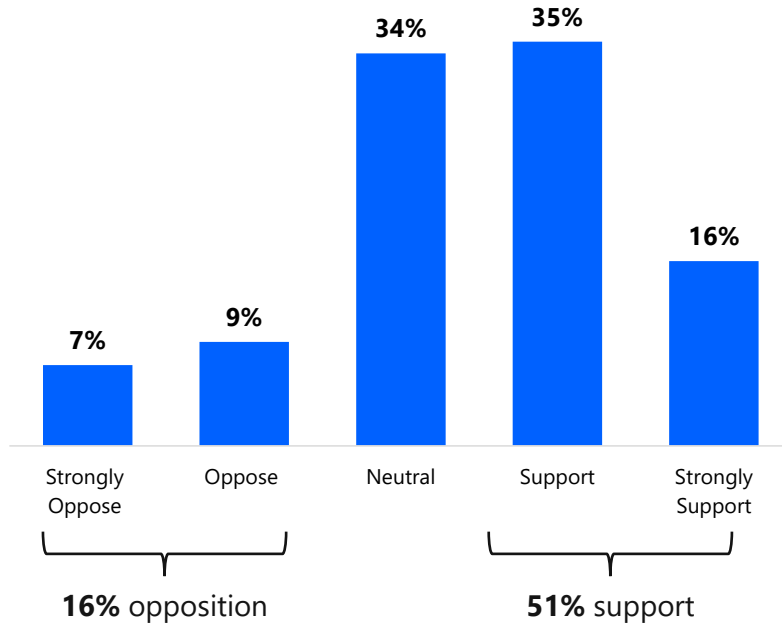
- The proposal to spend less on road improvements was **strongly rejected** by community groups. Many residents were **incredulous that this was being put forward** given their perception of the current state of York roads, particularly potholes.
- For those community groups who took part in stage 1 of the consultation, this proposal was received poorly as they felt their initial views (emphasising how important road improvements are) **were not listened to, as this proposal contradicts their requests for more funding in this area.**
- The main reasons for rejecting this proposal related to the **impact on safety and cars** when there are too many potholes. This can be dangerous and expensive for residents if the roads are not kept in good condition.
- Ultimately, residents felt they would bear the cost of this budget cut, and it was not seen as worthy of the projected £60,000 saving and was seen as negative in the long-run.

The roads in York are shocking, and actually there is a cost to residents. Of those who are fortunate enough to have cars, my **repair bills have shot up** over the last five years, and it's due to suspension problems. Yeah, so that has been passed on to residents. York's terrible.



Reduced traffic light replacement: over half of residents support

Proposal: Reducing the traffic light replacement programme which aims to replace old traffic lights (£60,000 saved each year from 2025/26).



Quantitative Survey Breakdown

- Female residents were more likely (55%) than male residents (48%) to support.

Why did residents feel this way?

- 17% of residents stated that so long as the traffic light replacement are working or seem reasonable, then they can see no harm in CYC reducing the traffic light replacement scheme. 5% of residents also failed to see how this was essential in the first place.
- Of those who opposed to this, concern was raised as they felt the traffic replacement was necessary (5%) and felt York's roads were already not in a good way (2%).

Reduced traffic light replacement: groups encourage big picture view

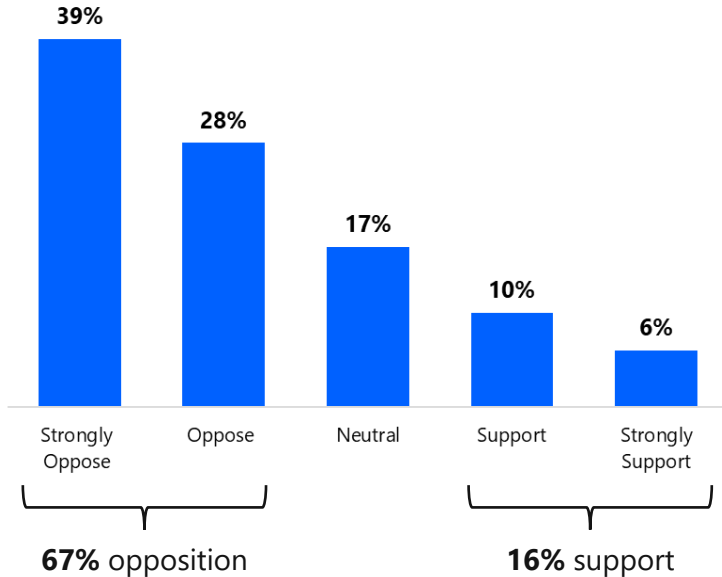
- There was **some confusion** in the community groups over this proposal, as residents were worried that it would mean broken traffic lights would not be replaced or repaired, leaving the roads dangerous. This confusion may justify why 34% of survey respondents selected neutral.
- Once it had been clarified that the proposal only referred to a slowing down of the traffic light replacement programme, many residents were happy with the proposal. Their reasons for support were that it was likely to have **minimal impact on residents** (unlike some of the other proposals that would financially impact residents) and if lights would all eventually be replaced, just at a slower rate, they could see no downside.
- However, other residents **encouraged CYC to consider the bigger picture** and whether or not this would actually save money in the long run. With older equipment, they suggested that repair and running costs would likely be higher. While residents couldn't know whether this was true or not, they encouraged CYC to look at the long-term implications before committing to this proposal.

If you put them to LED ones it costs a lot less to run it, so you save money on electricity. The other reason is if there's more chance of it breaking down, then it might cost £150 for somebody to go out and fix it, and then it breaks down again another week later. If we paid an extra £100, **we could get a new one, and it won't break down for three years. So it could actually save money** [replacing the lights], but they're only looking at saving £60,000 each year straight away.



Removing some bus subsidies: survey shows high opposition

Proposal: Removing some bus subsidies which the council do not have to statutorily provide, which will need more discussion (£720,000 saved in 2025/26).



Quantitative Survey Breakdown

- There was a significant different between genders, with 72% of female residents opposing this change, versus 59% of male residents.

Why did residents feel this way?

- 35% of residents were opposed of removing bus subsidies due to the negative impact on community, with many having concern over residents becoming isolated. 14% argued that the council should support bus usage, not reduce it. Buses were emphasised to be essential by 11% of residents to reduce traffic, and 11% argued that the bus service is already poor.
- For those that did support this change, this was either due to them not using buses, or comments stating that CYC need to remove some whilst also changing timings to optimise efficiently.

Removing some bus subsidies: groups share possible negative impact

- The proposal to remove non-statutory bus subsidies was generally **opposed** by community groups due to the impact it would have on elderly and vulnerable residents who rely on these services. Without cars or funds to pay for taxis, this may lead to residents feeling **isolated** which was of huge concern. This was already raised as an issue, for example some residents unable to access buses before 9am. Bus transport was clearly of importance, particularly to older residents and the learning disability community.
- There was also some concern that this would affect existing bus passes, suggesting residents will **need reassurances if bus subsidies are being changed** – what will and won't be affected.
- However, this was not a totally rejected suggestion. Residents appreciated that there were big savings to be made, and some **suggested optimising routes or reducing frequency during off-peak times**. While it may be inconvenient for some residents, people often can plan their day around bus times and could adjust to a new timetable.
- Unsurprisingly, this was particularly supported by residents who do not use the bus system.

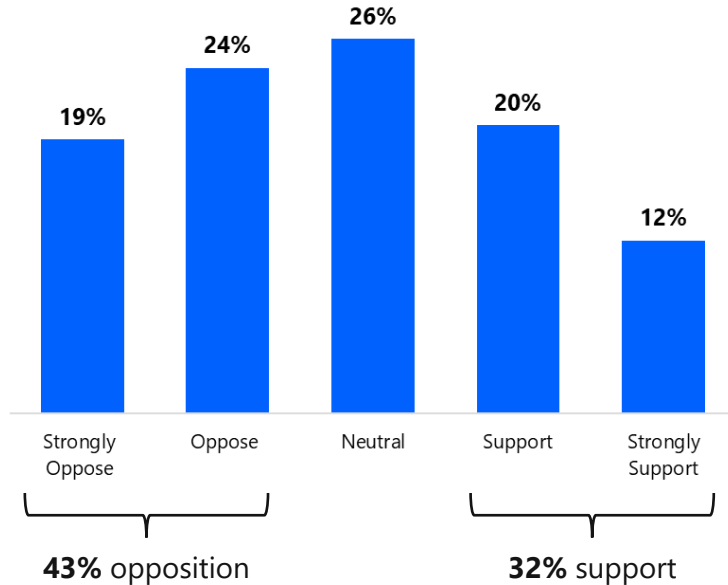
People who are using the buses, it's the last alternative, really, because **they haven't got a car. Most of us haven't got the money**. When you're looking around, everyone's struggling, and then that will be even taking the option away from them.

It's horrible being isolated, if you're stuck out in the sticks, the older residents, they wouldn't be able to get into town, yeah. So, **it's a lifeline for them as well**.



Reducing CCTV coverage: survey shows very mixed responses

Proposal: Reducing CCTV coverage, which may affect traffic and safety (£100,000 in 2025/26 and £120,000 in 2026/27).



Quantitative Survey Breakdown

- Support for reducing CCTV was higher among males (34%) compared to females (26%).
- Among those who were neutral (26%), open-ended responses indicated that this was largely due to a lack of sufficient information to form an opinion.

Why did residents feel this way?

- The majority (43%) of residents opposed to reducing CCTV. 37% of residents opposed due to concerns in regard to safety, and 8% stated that they would like more CCTV rather than less.
- On the opposing side, 13% of residents stated they felt that current CCTV is not useful and 8% stated that there is already sufficient cameras / too many cameras across the city.

Reducing CCTV coverage: community groups concerned about safety

- There were also very **mixed opinions** on the proposal to reduce CCTV coverage, as **concerns over safety** were balanced against the idea that there is far more private CCTV available now and businesses are likely to have decent coverage in the city centre.
- Some residents felt that safety in York city centre is paramount, given there is a lively nighttime economy. CCTV is not only important to deter criminal activity, but also the safety of residents for example who go missing or are near the river which can be dangerous.
- Residents were not supportive if they felt there would be a **knock-on impact on traffic or safety**, two things that are of high importance based on feedback so far.
- However, others felt there was enough CCTV collected by businesses and private residents (e.g. through doorbell footage) to make up for a reduction in coverage.
- There were also some **questions over what exactly the proposal is suggesting**, and whether this is reducing the cameras themselves or staff to review them, and whether this would be live (i.e. catching crime) or after the fact (i.e. searching for evidence). Some residents felt it was important for CYC to establish these details before residents could give their opinion.

I think CCTV can point the police in a lot of situations, I think it might mean they then spend **more money elsewhere** trying to solve crime.

What is the point having CCTV operators nowadays because everyone has CCTV on their doorbell cameras, **there's cameras everywhere.**



Investing in the future: community groups not clear on proposals

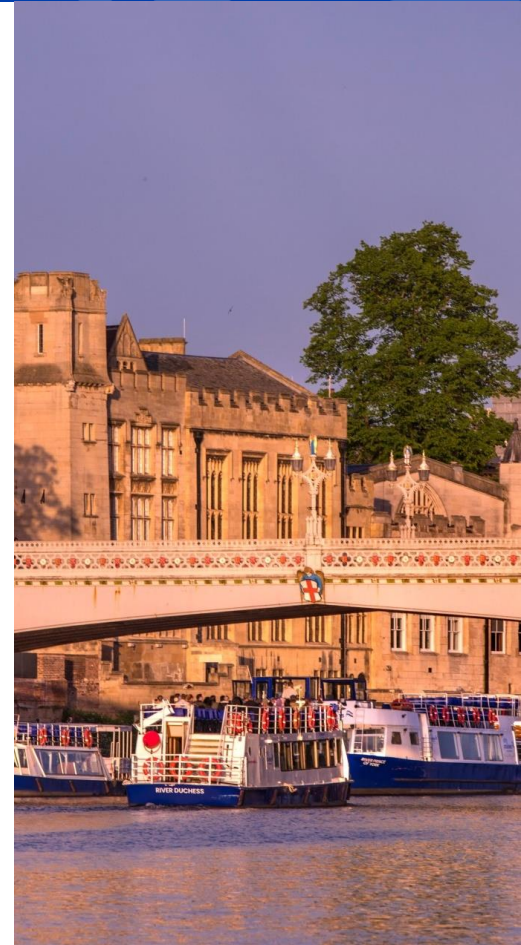
Proposal 1: New team for change: The Council will create a small team, of new and existing staff, to make changes and save money over the next three years. This team will help find ways to: Save money in the long run, make services better for everyone and help the Council adjust to new challenges and changes in the future

Proposal 2: Better contract management: We will add staff to help manage contracts, get best value for residents and meet legal rules. The council needs to follow new rules, i.e. new legislation. Additional support will help us continue to find the best deals and strengthen contract management. This will result in saving money.

These proposals were touched upon briefly in the qualitative community groups.

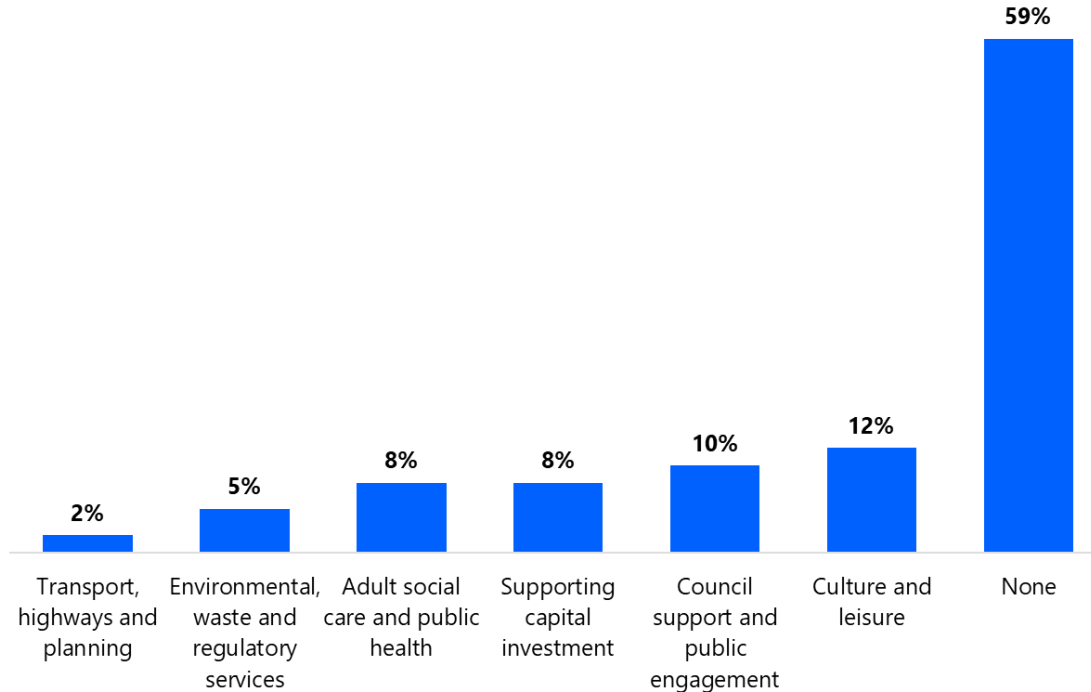
Proposal 1 'New team for change': many residents expressed concerns that proposing a new team appeared **contradictory**. They felt that while the council emphasises the need to reduce spending and make savings, it is simultaneously considering increased expenditure on additional staff. Although the potential for long-term savings was viewed positively, participants questioned why these measures had not already been implemented.

Proposal 2 'Better contract management': many questioned why the existing leadership team was not already managing contracts effectively and why additional staff were necessary to address this issue. This led to further frustrations, as **residents felt they were bearing the brunt of the budget cuts while the council opted to hire new staff rather than improve the efficiency within the existing team**. This perception contributed to a sense of unfairness and dissatisfaction among community members.



Which services do residents believe could be reduced to save money

* It is important to note that residents were not provided with any detailed description of the City of York Council services at this point in the survey.



Quantitative Survey Breakdown

- As exhibited in the graph, 59% of respondents believe that no services should be cut. Many suggested exploring alternative approaches before considering reductions.
- Among the 59% who selected 'None', in a further question asking them why, 19% emphasised that it was necessary that the council review their services and service management spending prior to services being cut.
- Additionally, 14% suggested that services should be made more efficient or cost effective.

Importance of community groups was a spontaneous theme

- Whilst this was not an area prompted on in the qualitative research, residents were keen to emphasise the **value of community groups** they attend.
- They wanted highlight the impact that these groups have on their sense of wellbeing to showcase the importance of keeping these community groups running.
- This was a **high-priority area for residents**. They stated that the Council should not consider reducing funding or support for the community groups which have a big impact on their lives.
- Many residents at these groups highlighted the potential **ripple effect** that funding cuts could have on the mental and physical health of those that attend, stressing that these groups often provide critical support. Residents expressed concern that reduced funding for such groups would **exacerbate existing challenges** – causing increased spending in other services – and disproportionately affect those that rely on them.
- Additionally, community groups emphasised that these groups should be seen as a **complement to council services**, not a substitute. They urged the council to maintain the services they offer alongside the work carried out by these groups, ensuring that essential services would continue to meet the needs of the wider community.



Findings: The importance of providing context

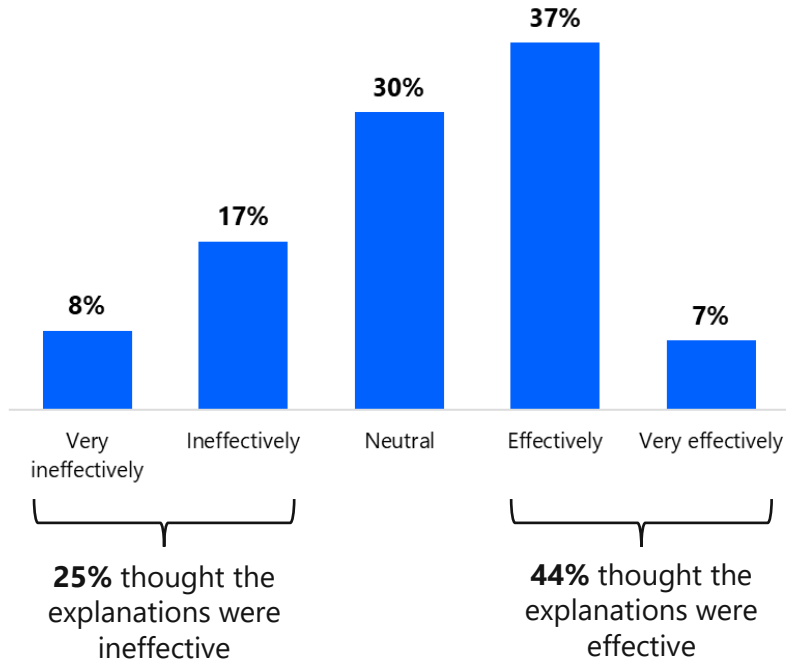
This section explores the key findings relating to how well the council communicated changes and solutions, and the importance of providing context and explaining service changes, providing reassurance and addressing resident concerns.

3c

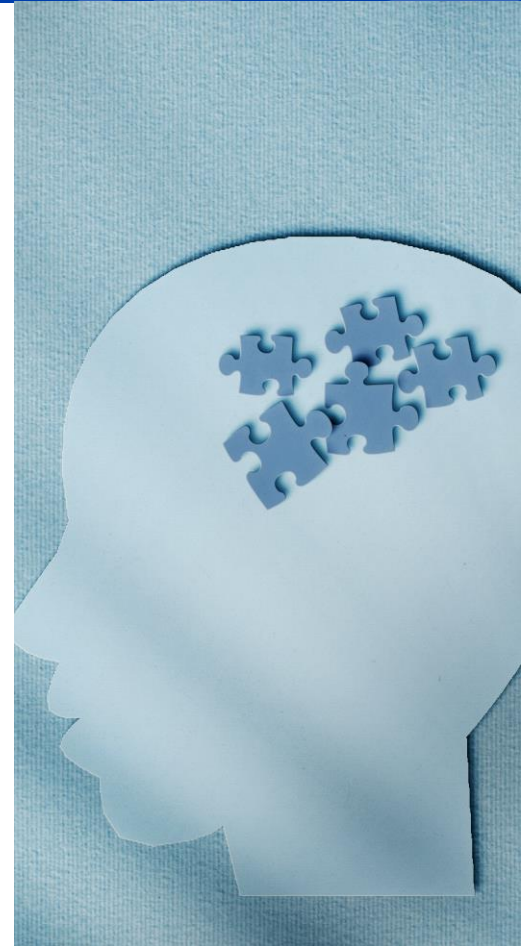


Less than half of residents felt the council had communicated effectively

- Residents were asked, both through the survey and in the community group discussions, how effectively they felt that the council had communicated its budget challenges and proposed solutions.



- The results exhibited a generally positive perception, with 44% of survey respondents agreeing that the council had explained these matters well. However, 30% of the residents remained neutral, and 25% felt the explanations were ineffective.
- These figures highlight the significant opportunity for improvement in how the council communicates complex issues and engages with the community to ensure understanding.
- The following few slides will exhibit how residents believe this can be improved.



Improving the Council's explanation of budget challenges and solutions

31% Give more explanation

21% More facts and figures

14% Be honest and transparent

13% Make communication accessible

11% Too vague and not clear

- **Clear communication** was a recurring theme among residents, with 31% stating that the council needed to provide more information, explanations and rationales – particularly regarding how the proposed actions would impact the public. Residents emphasised the need for greater context and clarity to better understand the services and broader implications of decisions.
- Furthermore, 21% of residents stressed they needed more detailed information, including the facts and figures, stressing the **importance of presenting a comprehensive picture to enhance understanding**.
- Honesty and transparency were highlighted by 14% of respondents, who expressed concerns about loaded questions and **emphasised the need for straightforward communication**. A further 13% advocated for making communication more accessible to all, ensuring inclusivity.
- Finally, 11% noted that the challenges and proposed solutions presented by the council were too vague, urging the council to be **more precise when outlining potential changes**.
- Others highlighted the need to listen to the public and make changes based on what residents had to say; emphasising the **need for residents to feel heard and valued** whilst making changes.
- All responses highlighted the crucial need for effective communication in ensuring residents are able to engage and make informed decisions.

This importance of understanding the bigger picture

- Understanding the **broader context** was vital in gaining residents support for smaller changes around York.
- Residents who did not participate in the initial stages of the consultation often lacked awareness of the council's financial challenges, such as the budget deficit. This lack of awareness made it more **difficult for residents to grasp the rationale** behind proposed decisions.
- Once residents were informed of the councils' difficulties, many expressed greater empathy.
- Despite this, some residents still struggled to understand the bigger picture, leading to frustrations or confusions about being asked to pay more and accept service cuts.
- Therefore, it was **difficult to engage meaningfully** without clarity on how funding is currently allocated and where cuts could be made.
- The findings emphasised a need for **transparent communication** in building understanding and acquiring support from residents for these changes. A proactive approach – through **clear, accessible and detailed information** - would help address misconceptions, increase understanding, and encourage a more educated and supportive community response.



The impact of not providing enough context on the budget proposals

What are the real implications of doing this? This is a **very one-sided offer/perspective**.

Again, without knowing the implications **it's impossible to say how supportive I'd be**.

I don't know enough about how possible this is and the impact that the loss of these valuable services might have on the city.

How do you run community safety currently? what is it? are you talking about salaries and on-costs? **Very unclear**.



Importance of communicating what is within the remit of the council

- When communicating changes to address the budget deficit, and explaining the context, it is also crucial to provide residents with clear descriptions of each council service to prevent any potential misconceptions.
- As highlighted in Budget Consultation 1, a lack of understanding about the City of York council's services has contributed to negative perceptions. Some residents mistakenly believe that services funded by central government are entirely funded by local council.
 - For example, parallel to Budget consultation 1, many **mistakenly assumed that services such as the NHS, doctors, and schools were all locally funded**
- Residents are often quick to suggest where funds should be allocated or which areas should be improved, however, many of these suggestions fall outside the council's responsibility. Providing clarification via newsletters or other communication channels would enhance residents understanding and help reduce frustrations.
- Clearly distinguishing what falls within the council's remit and what does not is essential to improve public understanding and help towards understanding any potential changes and price increases.



Appreciation for the challenges faced when context is given

- Residents who were aware of the council's financial challenges and had a strong understanding of the wide range of services funded by the council, particularly through the trade-off exercise in the previous part of the consultation, demonstrated a **heightened sense of empathy** towards the council.
- This awareness helped them appreciate the struggle of making budget decisions and the **importance of prioritising core services**.
- For example, some residents recognised there may be a **dual impact** of making cuts or increasing charges: a possible dissatisfaction from residents and potential harm to businesses due to reduced city-centre footfall (e.g., from parking changes). However, simultaneously there was acknowledgment that without these changes, core services would also face cuts, which was equally undesirable.
- Ultimately, many recognised the **importance of core services**, particularly adult social care, and articulated a strong desire to see these services as sustained as much as possible.
- With enhanced understanding, many stated a preference for measures like increased parking charges over cuts to core services, as **the impact of this was deemed as less detrimental**.



Increased empathy through greater awareness and understanding

I wouldn't want to be a councillor for love nor money, having to do that job, **but if they don't make the savings, that might mean that mental health services, it might mean that the free school means that they give to the kids for those who are in poverty, they won't be able to carry that on.** So actually, **they've got to make savings to make other things work.** So, they must go to bed on a night frustrated.

I'm glad I haven't got this job, that's what I'm going to say, because **I thought it was easy to go 'we need to reduce this'** but then you've got to think, who will you take the money off? **It's a very difficult decision isn't it.**

This for me, has been very productive [in enhancing understanding] just to hear **where they [the council] are coming from, and what the council are trying to consider as well.**

But more reassurance is needed for lower-income and vulnerable groups

- Many residents expressed ongoing concerns that budget cuts and changes would **disproportionately impact those on lower incomes and the most vulnerable** residents.
- There was a particular concern regarding the **combined effect of rising council taxes and increasing charges**, as even small increases could significantly affect those with limited income. For some, a few pounds is the difference between being able to access opportunities versus being isolated.
- Vulnerable groups, particularly those reliant on buses, voiced concerns about how these changes would have a far greater impact on them. These effects were described **as more than just an inconvenience** – many felt these would be **detrimental to their wellbeing**.
- Some residents acknowledged that not everyone is in poverty and can afford these changes and they recognised the **difficulty in striking a fair balance that supports those who need it most**.
- Ultimately, there was a clear call for greater reassurance, compassion and guidance to ensure vulnerable and lower-income groups are **not left struggling**.

It doesn't sit well with us making people suffer by increasing prices, but I've got to remember everyone's not in poverty. **I see it from my perspective, and I see £2 as being so much money**, but some people come and spend £1,000s, so **it is difficult to put myself in their perspective**.

If I had to pay that, then that would be **all my money gone** and I can't do any of that [buy anything I need to]... which would mean my PTSD would go sky high... there are **consequences for increases**.

Concerns about this not reaching £30m

- When considering the approximately 30 million deficit, many residents expressed concern about the limited impact of the proposed budgets in addressing the shortfall.
- Questions were frequently raised about **how much these proposals would realistically contribute**.
- If these proposals would only make a small contribution, residents wanted to know what **other strategies would be implemented to close the gap**, beyond council tax increases.
- Many residents raised further questions that they felt remained unanswered, such as, which specific services might face cuts, whether they would have an input, and how their views from Budget Consultation 1 would be considered.
- Emphasis was placed on the importance of clear communication to provide transparency. Ensuring residents **understand the full picture and long-term approach was seen as vital to maintaining trust** and gaining support for the proposals.

I need to know **how much we've saved** [out of the c.£30m].

What about the rest of the deficit?



Concern regarding CYC not looking inwards when considering changes

- Across both the community groups and open survey responses, frustrations **persisted regarding the perceived inefficiencies within the council**. Many expressed confusion and concern regarding council salaries, bonuses and staffing decisions, particularly in the context of the existing deficit.
- Parallel to Budget Consultation 1, many residents felt that resources were being wasted due to duplicated tasks and questioned how cuts that would affect resident-facing services could be justified without first addressing these assumed internal inefficiencies.
- These concerns **deepened feelings of frustration**, as residents felt they were already bearing the financial burden disproportionately – first over tourists and visitors, and now seemingly over council staff too.
- This perception added to the concern that the council's internal operations should face scrutiny and should be improved before further burdening residents.
- While the council may have turned a critical eye inward since Budget Consultation 1, and these perceptions may not be entirely true, these feelings persist for residents. Evidently, **clear communication is necessary** about ongoing efforts to demonstrate how the council is working to improve efficiency.



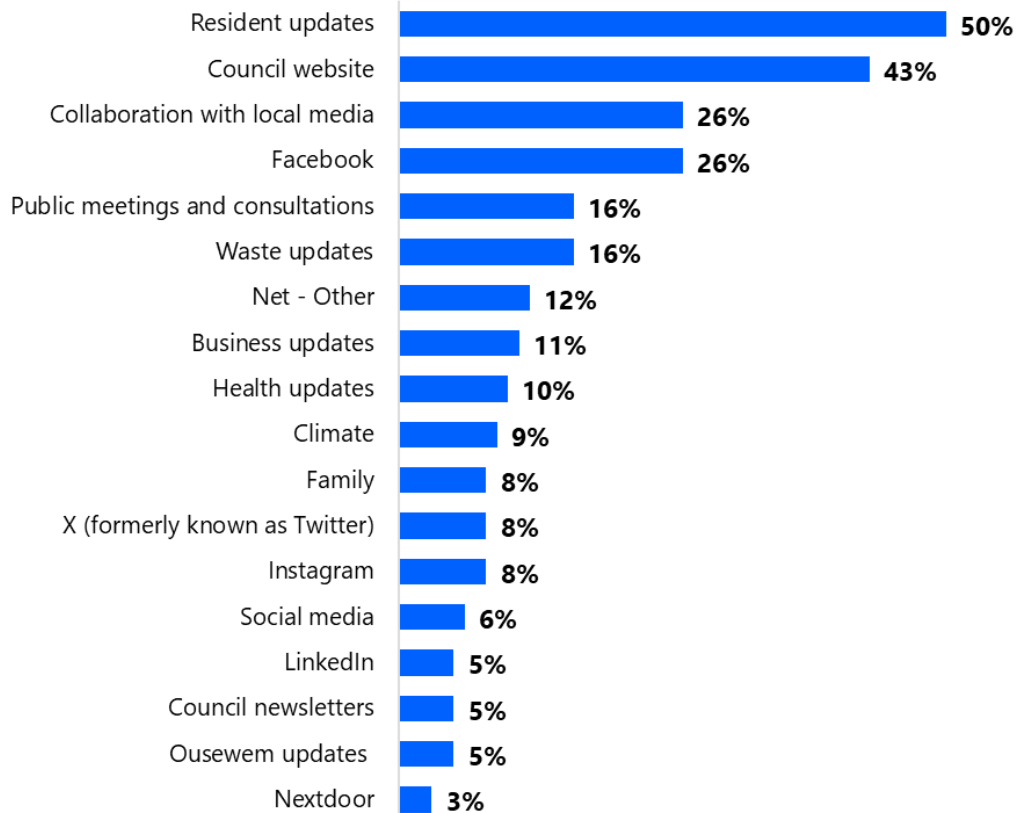
Findings: Council communication

This section explores the key findings relating to resident views on council communication.

3d



How residents like to receive updates from the CYC



- Half of the residents, across both the face-to-face and online survey, indicated that their preferred method for receiving updates was through **resident updates**.
- This was closely followed by the council website, 43% of residents identified as a valuable platform for updates. Notably, **residents aged 40-64 and over were significantly more likely to favour the website** (47%), in comparison to 34% of those aged 25-39.
- Meanwhile, just over a quarter (26%) of residents considered Facebook as an effective method for updates, though it was **less popular among those aged 65+**, with only 15% selecting this as their preference.
- Evidently, a **diverse mix of communication methods is necessary** to cater to the needs of all resident demographics.

Top 3 communication methods were also favoured across the groups

- Corresponding to the online survey, resident updates (e.g., through email / letter) emerged as the most preferred method for updating residents on Budget Consultation outcomes and any other news across York. It was highlighted as the most **effective way of reaching the broadest audience of residents**.
- The City of York **website** was also a popular communication tool, as it allowed residents to access information, they are interested in, without feeling it is imposed on them.
- A City of York council **Facebook page** was favourable amongst some residents, provided it was clearly official, including a City of York council logo for legitimacy. However, residents acknowledged that social media alone reaches a limited audience and should be complemented with other communication methods.
- Among community groups specifically, **public meetings and consultations** stood out as highly valued, despite only being preferred by 16% of residents among the surveys. Many residents noted that participating in such consultations made them **feel heard and appreciated**, emphasising the importance of using this approach more frequently.
- Residents also highlighted that giving them a platform to provide input could, in turn, **generate valuable ideas** for the council to address its budget deficit.



The importance of wording communication in an understandable way

- While Section 3c previously highlighted the significance of providing context, residents stressed that presenting this context – particularly when addressing potential service cuts or changes – needs to be handled with care. **Simply and appropriately explaining such changes was deemed crucial.**
- Framing this context and any proposed changes in a **straightforward, accessible way was considered essential.** Several residents felt that the **budget proposals were overly complex, making it difficult to engage fully,** particularly those with learning disabilities.
- Additionally, feedback from the online survey revealed that some residents selected levels of agreement that contradicted their written responses, highlighting the **consequences of failing to present information in universally accessible and user-friendly language.**
- Some residents did acknowledge that not every communication method is going to be understandable for all, and therefore emphasised the importance of **providing a clear method for addressing their questions and concerns regarding any changes.**
- Ensuring residents have an **opportunity to voice their worries and receive quick, straightforward answers was viewed as key** to the City of York council gaining trust and understanding.



Residents valued being informed and heard

- Residents appreciated being **listened to** during this consultation, with many viewing this as a **first step towards building trust** with the council.
- For some, it was the first time they felt **included** in any council-related matter, allowing them to express their views and contribute to decision-making.
- Many highlighted that their frustrations with the council often stem from feeling unheard, ignored or lacking in care.
- Therefore, community groups **valued the effort** made by the council in having an Qa Research attend their groups, which they saw as a genuine sign that their opinions really do matter.
- This consultation was ultimately seen as a **positive step** towards addressing some resident's frustrations and **gaining a sense of connection** with their local council.



Ultimately, residents felt this was a step in the right direction

[I think it's important] to **not only have my voice heard, but everybody's.**

You need to know that you've been heard, so they can put whatever they like in a magazine or local link or whatever. **If you haven't been heard, what's the point?**

We're constantly just told what they are going to be doing, and we've got no input in it. As far as I'm concerned, everything just seems to be going up, we've got to pay for more and pay for more and pay for more. We don't get the services that we feel we should get, **so to be included in this, I think is important, we feel we're involved in something.**

[This makes] residents feel like they have been able to speak and **at least involved in the cutbacks?...It's important to have a voice.**



Conclusions

This section outlines conclusions from data gathered throughout the entire consultation exercise

4



Conclusions (1)

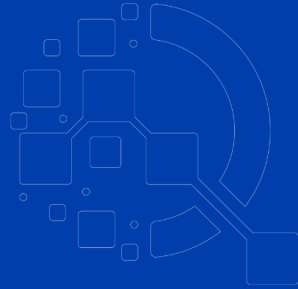
- Awareness of the City of York Council's deficit was relatively high. For residents who engaged in Budget Consultation 1, their heightened awareness enabled them to provide more informed and meaningful feedback. In contrast, those with less knowledge about council services and the full implications of not making changes were less able to engage effectively and more likely to oppose the budget proposals. This exhibited that **more awareness of the broader context resulted in more empathy and understanding across residents.**
- While there was higher levels of opposition to increasing council tax by 4.99% than support, there was a notably high levels of residents expressing concerns about poor value for money and perceived waste of resources. Results implied that support levels for increasing council tax could therefore be increased by **providing residents with reassurances and demonstrating a commitment to reviewing internal operations** and ensuring efficient use of resources.
- Support for budget proposals tended to increase when they were perceived as primarily impacting visitors, effectively functioning as an 'indirect tourist tax'. For example, increases in parking charges, particularly in car parks in the city centre, were more favourably received by residents. While some concerns were raised about the potential negative effects on the local economy, these measures were generally preferred over service cuts as they were seen in a way to **protect local services without putting an additional burden on residents.**
- This theme was consistent across all budget proposals. **Residents were more supportive of measures that had minimal impact on them**, such as changes to blue badge schemes and removing funding for Make It York. These proposals were viewed as reasonable and fair, leading to higher levels of support. Conversely, proposals that disproportionately affect residents, such as reducing spending on road maintenance or removing bus subsidies, were met with strong opposition. Residents felt these unfairly targeted them and shifted burden away from tourists.

Conclusions (2)

- Residents strongly backed implementing a tourist tax or visitor levy, viewing it as a necessary step forward. They considered this the most equitable approach to addressing the council's deficit, especially given that tourism is a major driver of York's economy. This would **prevent local residents from shouldering the entire financial burden alone**. Without a tourist tax in place, any reduction in resident services would likely spark backlash.
- Consistently presenting these changes as a **balanced strategy**: raising revenue, improving efficiencies, and making necessary cuts or reductions only when all other options have been exhausted was necessary. This helped enhance support for proposed budget changes as it provided residents with clear communication about the options and avenues that have been considered. Without this, residents automatically opposed to changes as they were frustrated that they were facing the consequences of the council's deficit.
- A **combination of communication methods proved necessary** in order to meet the diverse needs of residents. Resident updates emerged as the most preferred communication channel, followed by the council website, as these methods were seen as most effective in reaching a broad audience. While initially less favoured, public meetings and consultations gained significant popularity once residents experienced them firsthand.
- Both providing context and ensuring the **wording and framing of communication is straightforward and accessible** was notably essential for residents. When language is overly complex, support levels for budget proposals significantly decreased.
- Ultimately, residents offered mixed views on the range of proposals, but there are some clearly more popular than others. The **consultation has provided a robust evidence base** from which budget decisions can be based, along with recommendations for communicating changes to services and costs.

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