

Committee: Finance & Administration

Agenda Item

Date: 16 September 2010

14

Title: 2011/12 Budget Strategy

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Item for decision

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Summary

1. This report summarises the financial outlook for 2011/12 and asks Members to approve a strategy for drawing up the 2011/12 budget.
2. The report also sets out the results of the recent round of public consultation. Further consultation will be carried out following which implications for the Council's priorities and budget will be analysed and reported to Members.
3. Based upon the approved strategy officers will draw up a proposed budget for discussion by the relevant Committees in the January cycle. Final determination will be by the Finance & Administration Committee on 8 February and Full Council on 17 February.
4. Significant uncertainty exists about major items of expenditure and funding available; clarity on many areas will not exist until late Autumn. The Committee will be advised of developments as soon as practicable after they occur.

Recommendations

5. The Committee is recommended to approve the 2011/12 Budget Strategy and key actions as set out in this report.

Financial Implications

6. There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendation.

Background Papers

Medium Term Financial Strategy (as revised) – elsewhere on today's agenda.

Impact

Communication/Consultation	Consultation on Council spending priorities has been carried out and indicative results are presented in this report. Further consultation is to be carried out.
Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Health and Safety	None
Human Rights/Legal Implications	It is a legal requirement to ensure a balanced budget.
Sustainability	The budget is to be set within the context of the Medium Term Financial Strategy which is designed to ensure stability and sustainability of budget decisions.
Ward-specific impacts	None
Workforce/Workplace	Some of the decisions made as part of the budget setting process could have implications for staff.

Outlook

7. The following is a summary of the outlook for 2011/12, extracted from the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy. It shows that after allowing for a planned withdrawal from the Budget Equalization Reserve, savings of £600,000 need to be found.

2011/12 outlook – General Fund	£m
Service expenditure	33.947
Service Income	-24.785
Net service expenditure	9.162
Capital financing costs	0.887
Investment income	-0.084
Transfers to HRA	-1.197
Pension Fund	0.554
Working Balance top up	0.048
Transfer to earmarked reserves	0.030
Withdrawal from Budget Equalization Reserve	-0.312
Net budget requirement	9.088

<u>Estimated Funding available</u>	
Local Government Finance Settlement (0.5% increase)	3.849
LGFS adjustment for Concessionary Fares	-0.385
Area Based Grant	0.000
Council Tax	4.902
Government compensation for Council Tax Freeze	0.123
Council Tax (assumes 3.9% increase)	-4.843
Collection Fund balance	0.000
Total funding available	-8.488
Savings target	0.600

8. A lot of uncertainty exists about the funding available. The above table assumes:

- Local Government Finance Settlement – a 6.25% cut, being the first of instalment of a 25% cut to be implemented over 4 years. The actual position will not be known until late November/early December.
- Adjustment for Concessionary Fares – to reflect the transfer of responsibility to the County Council from April 2011. The Government is examining 4 options for calculating the adjustment; the impact on UDC ranges from £0.4 million to £1 million.
- Council Tax – assumes a 1% growth in taxbase and a freeze on the UDC Band D level.
- Government compensation for Council Tax freeze – based on the announcement that the Government will work with local authorities to freeze Council Tax. Details of how this is to be accomplished have not been published. The table assumes a payment from Government equivalent to a 2.5% increase.
- Area Based Grant – Although UDC is to receive £39,000 in 2010/11, there is no information about any ongoing funding in 2011/12, so the table prudently assumes nil.

9. Other key assumptions in the budget model are as follows:

- No staff cost of living pay award, except for staff earning less than £21,000, who will received £250. This is consistent with the Government's announced public sector pay policy. It is not yet confirmed whether this will be applied in local government.
- An increase in pension fund deficit contributions equivalent to 1.3% of staff pay. The actual figure will not be known until late Autumn.

- No land charges income, due to continued uncertainty about Government policy on the legality of levying fees for this service.
- No additional provision required in relation to the Landsbanki risk, other than that already provided for in the Landsbanki Contingency Fund.
- Utilities price inflation of 10%
- Supplies and services inflation of 2.5% where contractual indexation applies, and 0% otherwise.
- Fees & charges income average increase of 1.5%, except for car park charges, development control and building control, where nil increase is assumed.
- Government subsidy for Housing & Council Tax Benefits will be paid at 98% of expenditure.
- No Housing & Planning Delivery Grant, or LABGI income.

Sensitivity Analysis

10. The following shows the effect on the 2011/12 projections of a 1% variance from the assumptions made.

Staff pay (& oncosts)	£82,000
Supplies & services (contractual)	£39,000
Supplies & services (non-contractual)	£16,000
Utilities costs	£6,000
Fees & charges income	£40,000
Housing & Council Tax Benefits Government Subsidy	£184,000
Local Government Finance Settlement	£41,000
Council Tax	£49,000
Interest Rates (additional income if base rate is 1% above prediction)	£144,000

Consultation Results

11. An initial round of consultation has been carried out via the new Citizens Panel (Uttlesford Voices) and via Uttlesford Life and online. The results of the consultation are attached to this report, and summarised below. A second round of consultation will be undertaken, to obtain more clarity on some of the

issues raised. The results will be analysed and implications for Council priorities and the budget will be reported to Members.

Uttlesford Voices Key Results

12. Panel members were asked to rate the importance of the council's current corporate priorities under the four headings of Finance, Partnerships, People and Environment. Under the "Finance" priorities, well over half of respondents thought that "continually improving financial management" should be the most important priority (58%). In partnerships, improving prosperity, safety health and well-being was considered most important (36%) while "developing and maintaining a motivated and high performing workforce" was the most important priority under "People" (37%). Opposing further expansion at Stansted Airport was the most important environmental concern (43%).
13. Under the Financial management section of the questionnaire, the majority of panelists (54%) tended to agree that the council provides enough information to residents about its financial performance and management. However, while 34% believe value for money has improved and 20% believe it has not, some 38% were unable to give an opinion.
14. When asked about council tax rises (the questionnaire was formulated prior to the Government's announcement of a council tax freeze) 49% said they would favour an increase in the district part of the bill in line with inflation compared to 36% who wanted no increase and 16% who wanted a 4% increase (ie about 2% above inflation).
15. The survey also asked about spending on council services. Respondents consider the council should maintain the same level of spending on the majority of services, with Benefit Fraud being the only area identified as requiring extra funding (55%). By comparison, 56% said less money should be spent in committee information and members. A significant majority (68% to 32%) believe pursuing partnerships for service delivery was the right way to go.
16. When asked to consider whether a selection of frontline services represented good value for money, refuse and recycling collection was considered to do so by 80%. In contrast, members, elections and democracy was not considered good value for a majority of more than 2:1.

Uttlesford Life and Online Consultation Key Results

17. This consultation was based on a simplified version of the council's corporate priorities to those presented to the citizens panel and asked respondents to rate each priority from 1 to 5 depending on how important they considered them (1 being not at all important, 5 being very important).
18. By totalling the scores, it is possible to demonstrate the relative importance of each priority.

19. All three elements listed under “Finance” scored highly, with “Ensuring the council remains financially sound” the most important. Elsewhere, “Stepping up enforcement against environmental crime” was highly rated, closely followed by “Promoting recycling” and “Working with other organisations... to improve the safety and health of people in the district, including those affected by the recession”.
20. The lowest scoring priority overall was “Improving access to services for all sections of the community” despite this being rated “very important” by more than a third of respondents (35%).

Key actions

21. The following actions will be progressed during the 2010/11 budget process:

- a) Further public consultation.
- b) Views of the business community will be sought and the statutory NNDR consultation will be carried out.
- c) The Service Planning timetable has been brought forward and integrated with budget planning.
- d) Strategic Solutions will be progressed in order to meet the savings target of £600,000.
- e) Each line in the budget will be scrutinised by the responsible Head of Division and service accountant with subsequent review by the ACE Finance and Strategic Management Board.
- f) New Pricing & Concessions Policy to be implemented with effect from April 2011.
- g) A review of the Council’s discretionary NNDR relief policy will be initiated with a view to implementation during 2011/12.
- h) Funding will be allocated to ensure that the Benefits service is adequately resourced to cope with expected increase in caseload and to ensure smooth transition into shared services partnership.
- i) The Capital Programme will be reviewed by the Capital Officer Working Group before proposals are put to Members.

Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Changes in circumstances and/or new information becomes available that affects the assumptions in the budget strategy	2 (inherent risk of variability in any budget model)	3 (sums involved are potentially significant)	<p>A detailed risk assessment will be prepared and incorporated with budget approval papers in February.</p> <p>The Working Balance is to be maintained at a minimum safe contingency level.</p> <p>Medium Term Financial Strategy outlines clear criteria for decision making.</p>

- 1 = Little or no risk or impact
- 2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.
- 3 = Significant risk or impact – action required
- 4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.

UTTLESFORD VOICES

SURVEY RESULTS, DETAILED FINDINGS

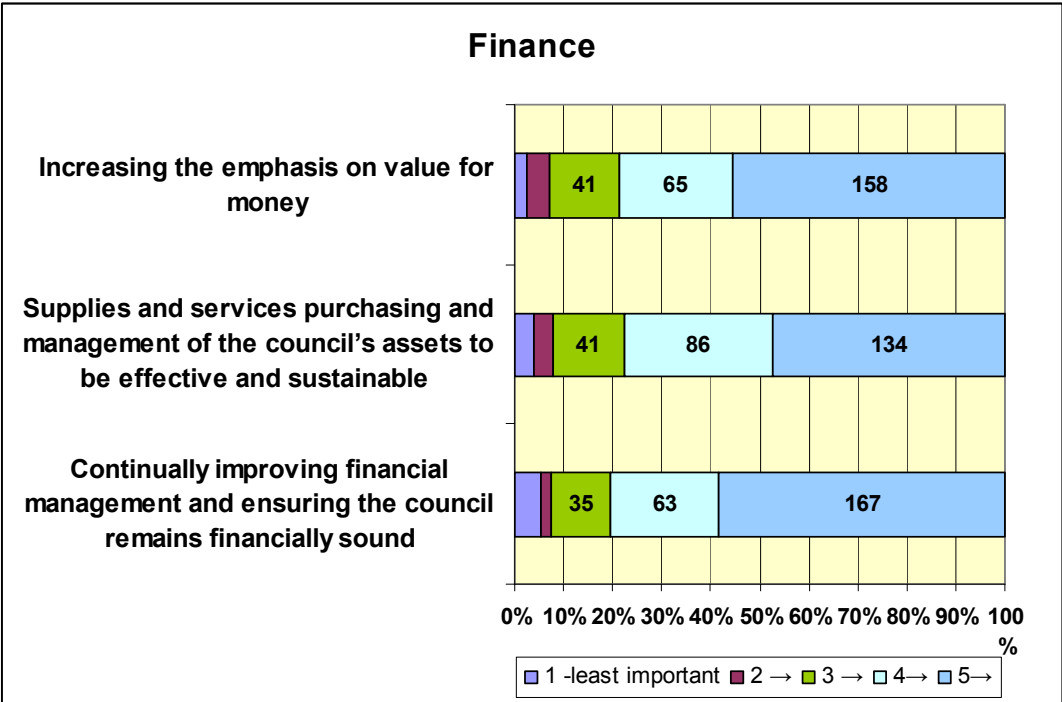
1. Overview

Each year Uttlesford District Council undertakes public consultation in preparation for the budget setting process. In order to develop the Corporate Plan which underpins future plans for the authority, officers need the views of those who work, live, visit and do business in the district. Panelists were asked to identify priority areas for improvement, to comment on the council's financial management, indicate a preferred level of council tax and to identify areas in which they thought the council should concentrate resources. Where applicable, results have been correlated against the relative returns from the 2008/9 Place Survey.

2. Priority areas for improving services

Panel members were asked to rate in order of importance elements of the council's priority areas for improving services as determined from the Uttlesford District Council Corporate Plan 2010-15.

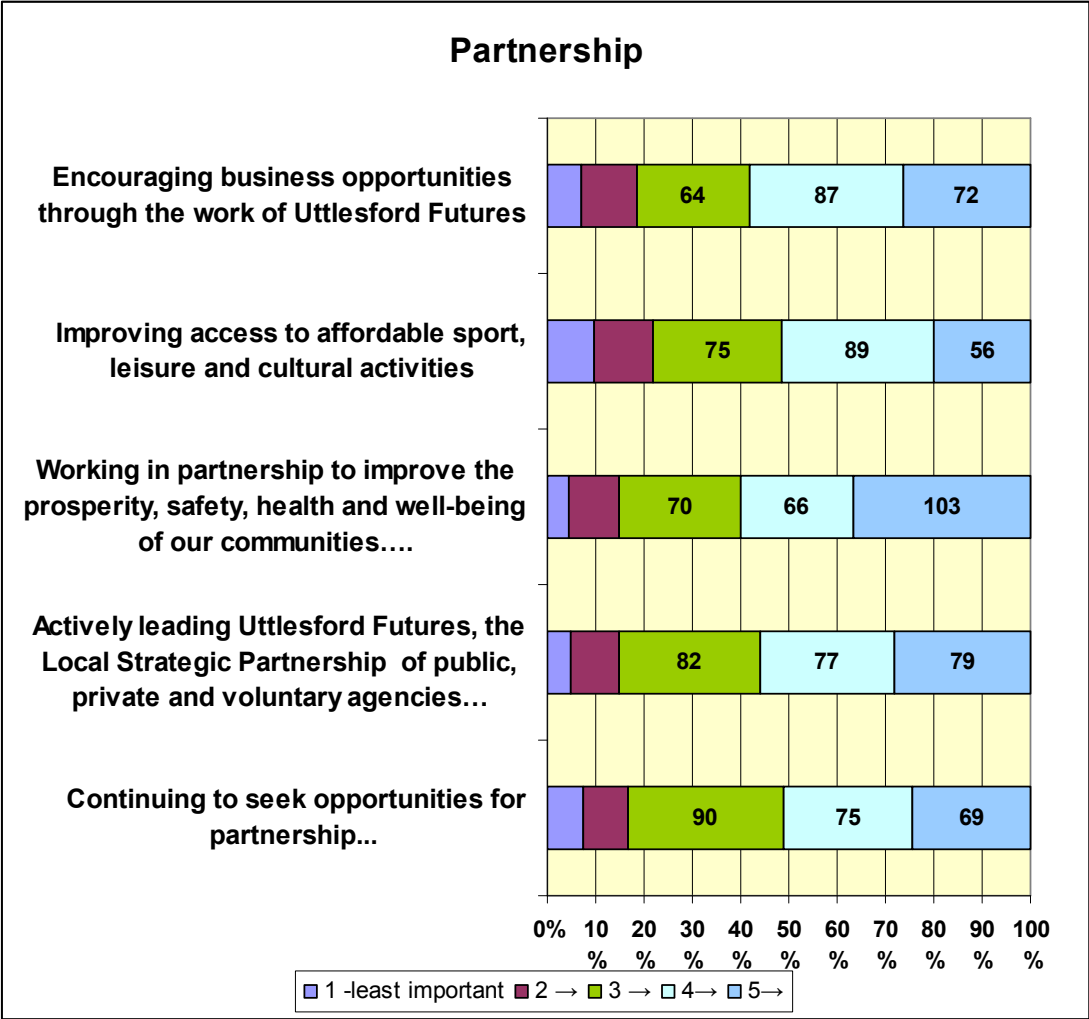
Q2.1 Finance Rated using a 5 point scoring system, 1 being the least important and 5 being the most important



Base 1330

All three priorities have been placed in the same chart. Well over half of respondents thought that continually improving financial management should be the most important priority (58.4%, in total 167) while 5.2% of respondents considered this to be the least important (in total, 15). Just under a half (47.3%, in total 134) indicated that they thought supplies and services were of importance to the financial good management of the council. On increasing the emphasis of value for money 55.6% thought (in total, 158) that this option was of high importance. However, between a third and half of respondents to each of the questions ticked boxes 2-4 to show that they considered the options to be neither very important nor unimportant.

Q2.2 Partnerships Rated using a 5 point scoring system, 1 being the least important and 5 being the most important



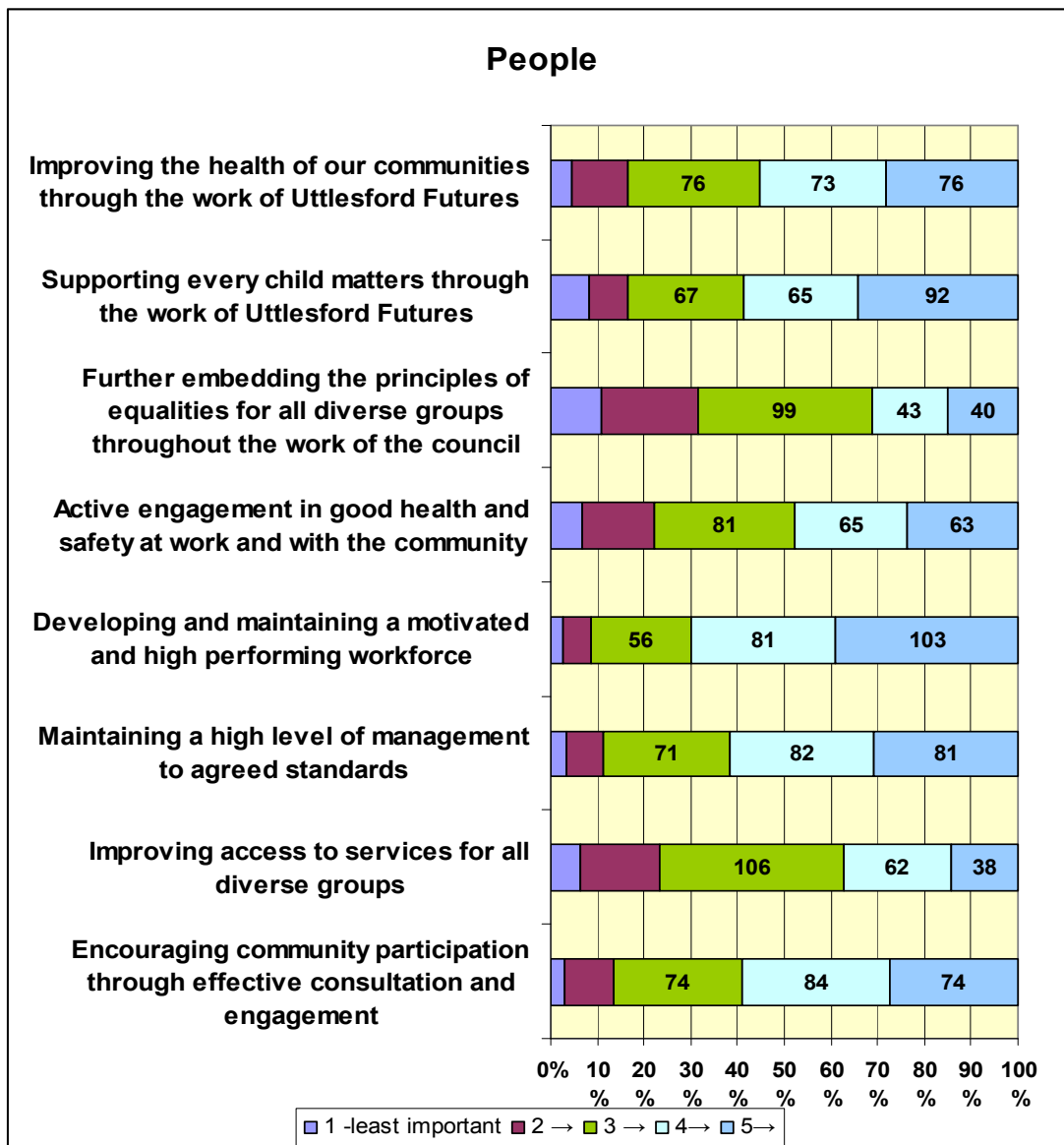
Base 1396

For ease of analysis all the partnership priorities have been grouped together into a single table instead of analysing each separately. This facilitates comparison and the identification of any emerging trend in relation to respondents' preference when it comes to gathering information about where they consider resources should be concentrated. Respondents were also asked to tick all options that applied, hence the higher base number.

The most highly rated option, as answered by respondents, was 'working in partnership to improve the prosperity, safety, health and well-being of our communities, particularly to meet the needs of people affected by the current recession' with 36.7% (in total 103) considering this to be a highly important priority.

'Continuing to seek opportunities for partnership with other organizations' was considered to be important by just under a quarter (24.6%, in total 69) and 'actively leading Uttlesford Futures' was highly rated by 28.3% (in total 79). By comparison, 'improving access to affordable sport, leisure and cultural activities' was considered to be the least important overall with only 19.9%, (in total 56) rating it highly and 9.6% (in total 27) thinking it should be rated as a low priority.

Q2.3 People Rated using a 5 point scoring system, 1 being the least important and 5 being the most important.



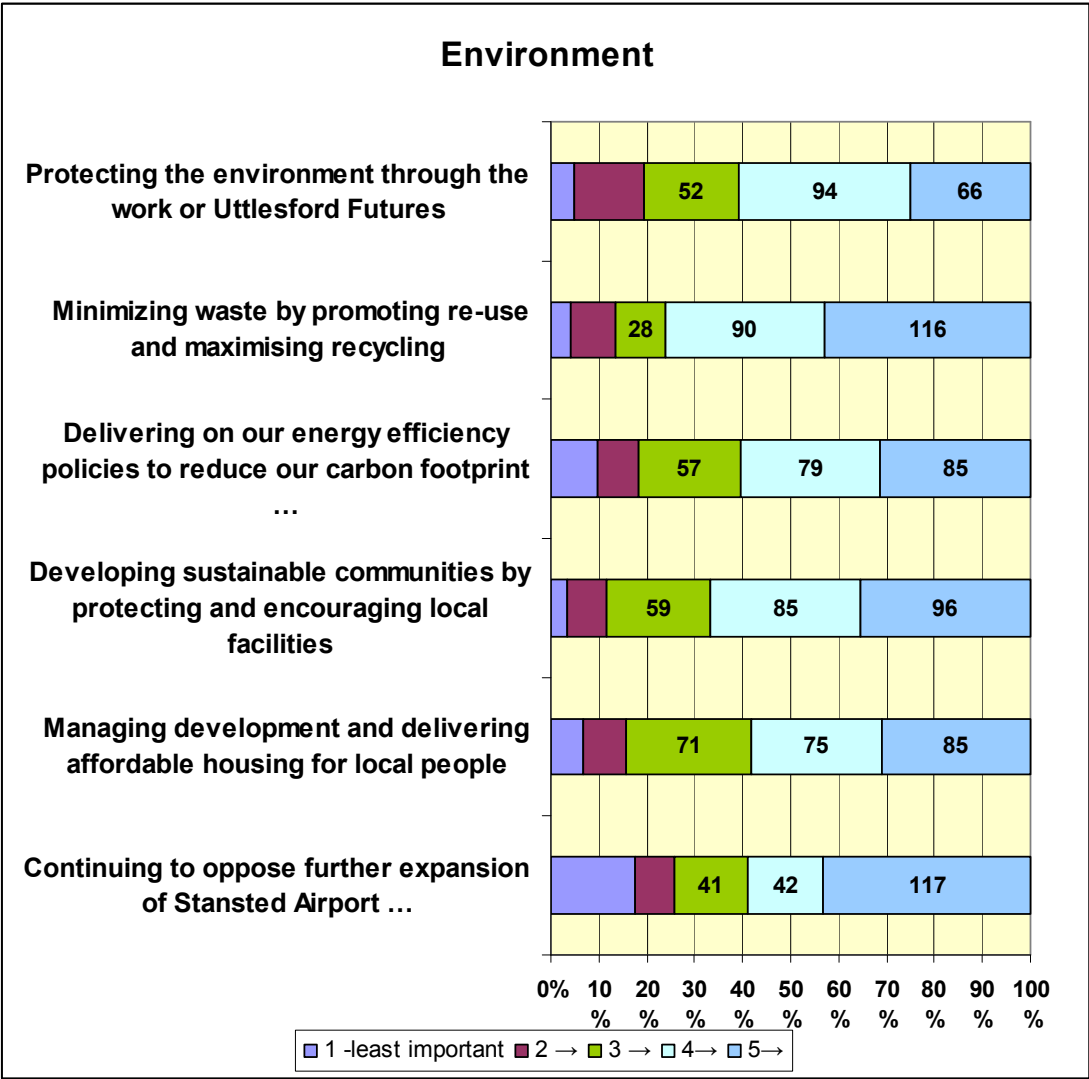
Base 2134

For ease of analysis all the people priorities have been grouped together into a single table instead of analysing each separately. This facilitates comparison and the

identification of any emerging trend in relation to respondents' preference when it comes to gathering information about where they consider resources should be concentrated. Respondents were also asked to tick all options that applied, hence the higher base number.

The top two options as answered by respondents were 'developing and maintaining a motivated and high performing workforce' (39.2%, in total 103) and 'supporting every child matters through the work of Uttlesford Futures' (34.3% in total 92). However, 106 panel members (39.6%) said they had no opinion on 'improving access to services for all diverse groups' and only 40 (15%) thought that 'further embedding the principles of equalities for all diverse groups throughout the work of the council' should be considered important.

Q2.4 Environment Rated using a 5 point scoring system, 1 being the least important and 5 being the most important



Again, the reason for the high base number is because respondents were asked to rate all options using a scale of one to five with one representing the least important to five being their most important representing priority.

The top two environmental priorities when the two top scores were correlated are:

- 1 Continuing to oppose further expansion of Stansted Airport while noting its role in the regional local economy (43.3%, 117 in total)
- 2 Minimizing waste by promoting re-use and maximising recycling (43%, in total 116)

‘Developing sustainable communities’ and ‘improving environmental management’ were also considered to be of relative significance with 35.4% and 35.5% of panellists according them a ‘highly important rating’.

As illustrated on the table, the least popular option was that of ‘protecting the environment through the work of Uttlesford Futures’ with 25.1% (66 in total) stating that they thought that this should be of high priority.

Q 2.5 Respondents were given the option to comment on any other priorities that they thought that the council should be concentrating on. A top line summary of the results is listed in the table below and a full list of responses can be found in Appendix 2.

Major Themes	Examples
Reducing costs	<p>“Reducing overheads and costs on administration and bureaucracy and improving value for money rather than increasing taxes</p> <p>“Reduce very expensive pensions provision and securing more of the tax paid for UDC rather than ECC</p> <p>“Not to waste money on unnecessary leafleting, advice sheets etc. To minimise government.</p>

Major Themes	Examples
Planning	<p>“Ensuring section 106 planning agreements are fully delivered on by developers</p> <p>“Encourage community participation for local planning and development issues</p> <p>“Wrap up the local development framework as a matter of urgency.</p>
Roads and transport	<p>“Filling the hundreds of potholes in the roads.</p> <p>“Car parking needs to be top priority if any new developments are to take place in this area.</p>
Waste and environment	<p>“Providing more glass recycling centres</p> <p>“Promotion of cycling and initiation on public transport.</p> <p>“Regular inspection of locally used areas - the Flitch and surrounding woods and regular maintenance of footpaths there.</p> <p>“Supporting local farmers wherever possible and protecting the countryside and historic buildings</p>
Young people	<p>“Social services for young people</p> <p>“Something for young people to do to stop them hanging around.</p>
Crime	<p>“Need to see a policeman now and again on foot on the beat.</p> <p>“ Reducing anti-social behaviour and criminality</p> <p>“Managing petty thieves and vandals known in areas</p>

Financial management

Q2.6 Panel members were asked to say whether they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements about the council’s current financial position and how this position is communicated to the public.

	Total	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion
Base	554	38	243	119	27	127
Uttlesford District Council provides enough information to residents about its financial performance and management	280	21	151	65	19	24
Uttlesford District Council provides better value for money now compared to a year ago	274	17	92	54	8	103

Headline view:



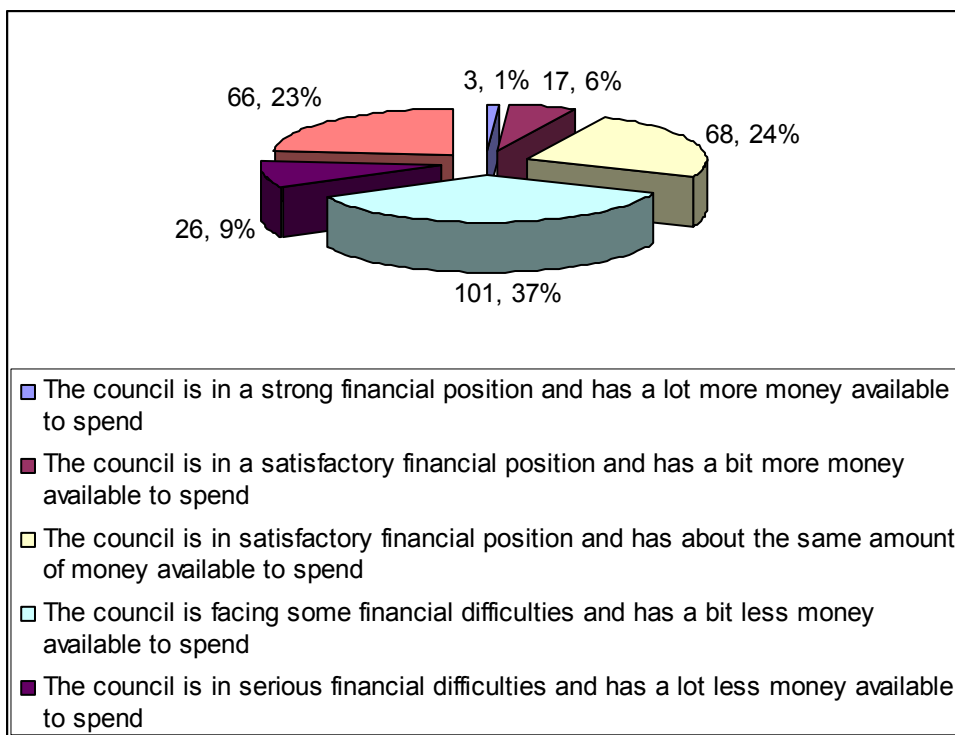
The majority of panellists (53.9%, in total 151) tended to agree that the council provides enough information to residents about its financial performance and management as against those, 19 in number (6.8%), who considered that they were

not provided with sufficient detail on the fiscal situation of the authority. Balancing the 'agrees' against the 'disagrees' produces a net score of 88 or a net 31.4% of those who expressed an opinion. In the 2008/9 Place Survey respondents were similarly asked to comment on how well informed they considered they were on the way their council tax had been spent. Then, 19% considered they were very well informed, 47% fairly well informed with 8% being not informed at all. This generated a net 35% score.

Just over one third conceded that value for money had been improved over the past year (33.6%, 92 in total) with 54 members (19.7%) tending to disagree. However, a relatively high proportion of respondents (37.6%, in total 103) indicated that they had no opinion on this statement. When asked in 2008 as part of the 2008/9 Place Survey (section 7.4), more than a third (36%) of respondents agreed that Uttlesford District Council provided value for money; however, there was a larger proportion of neutral responses with 39% opting to give no opinion. In the 2008/9 Place Survey respondents were asked to comment on how well informed they considered they were on the way their council tax had been spent.

Q2.7 In order to identify how residents perceive the council's current financial situation, all panel members were asked to select one of five statements indicating how much money they felt the authority has to spend. Please note, that a sixth option for those with no opinion was also offered.

The majority (36.1%, in total 101) felt that the council is 'facing some financial difficulties and has a bit less money available to spend', whilst 24.3% (68 in total) considered the council to be in a 'satisfactory financial position and has about the same amount of money available to spend'. Just under a quarter of respondents (23.6%, in total 66) declined to express an opinion with only 3 (1.1%) saying they felt the council to be in a strong financial position and 26 (9.3%) thinking that the authority is in 'serious financial difficulties'.



Base: 280

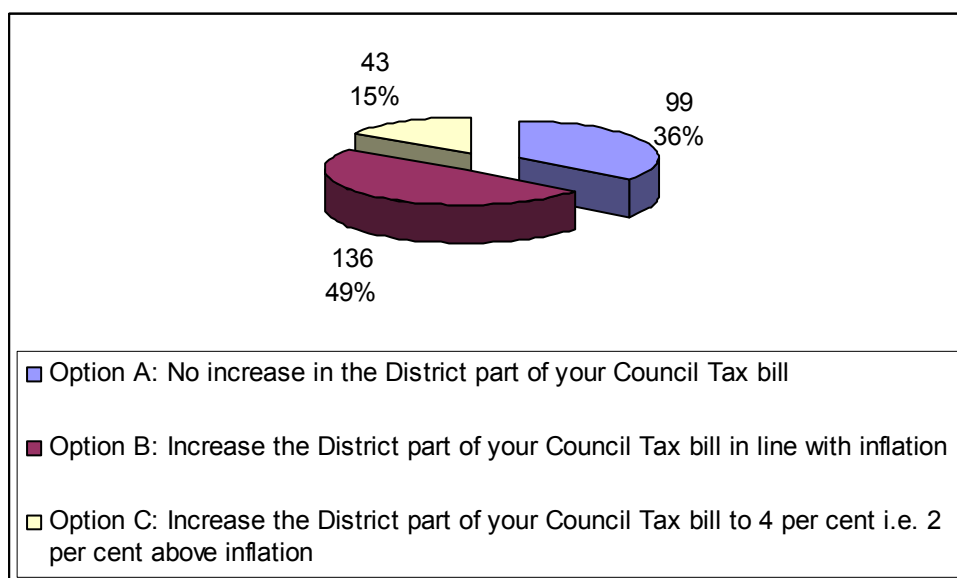
Council tax increases

Q2.8 Panellists were informed that each year the council needs to collect £49.2 million in council tax. For every £1 of council tax the District Council receives 10p. The remainder is shared between Essex County Council, Essex Police Authority, Essex Fire Authority and Parish and Town Councils.

The Government has proposed there should be a freeze on council tax for the 2011-2012 tax year. Panel members were asked to consider the impact on services and select one of three options which represented the level of increase in the district part of their council tax bill they would be willing to support.

Option	Respondents number	Respondents %
Option A: No increase in the District part of your Council Tax bill	99	35.6%
Option B: Increase the District part of your Council Tax bill in line with inflation	136	48.9%

Option	Respondents number	Respondents %
Option C: Increase the District part of your Council Tax bill to 4 per cent i.e. 2 per cent above inflation	43	15.5%



Base: 278

This question was formulated prior to the Government’s announcement to freeze Council Tax in England for at least one year and seek to freeze it for a further year, in partnership with local authorities.

Of the three options, 48.9% panelists strongly indicated that they would favour an increase in the district part of the Council Tax bill in line with inflation over those (35.6%) who wanted no increase in the district part of the Council Tax bill. This represents a 13.3% majority. Only 15.5% wanted an increase in the district part of their Council Tax bill to 4 per cent i.e. 2 per cent above inflation.

Services

Q2.9 Panellists were asked to consider the services provided by the Council and select whether more money, the same amount of money, or less money should be spent on providing the service. They were not provided with any information on the specific expenditure made by the council on individual services but were expected to make their judgements on their general perceptions of service delivery.

The results are summarized in the table below and indicate that residents consider that the authority should continue to maintain the same level of spend on the majority of its services. This includes dealing with abandoned vehicles, collecting business rates, council house repairs, the museum and planning enforcement. Benefits fraud was the only area indentified by panellists (55%, 153 in total) as requiring extra funding. By comparison, 56.2% (155 in total) felt less money should be spent on committee information and a narrow majority (45.8% -spend less against 44% maintain current level of expenditure) considered Council Housing Right to Buy should warrant a funding decrease. The website, though, was singled out as being overfunded by 61% (166 in total) and with only 2 people (0.7%) in favour of spending more on this resource, though, as for all services, they were not provided with information on the council's expenditure in this area.

	Spend less money on service	Maintain current level of spending	Spend more money on service	Conclusion
Abandoned vehicles	29.70 %	68.50 %	1.80%	Maintain current level of spending on service
Animal warden	32.60 %	62.30 %	5.10%	Maintain current level of spending on service
Benefits fraud	4.70%	40.30 %	55.00 %	Spend more money on service
Building control	15.80 %	72.20 %	12.10 %	Maintain current level of spending on service

	Spend less money on service	Maintain current level of spending	Spend more money on service	Conclusion
Business rates	30.40 %	65.20 %	4.40%	Maintain current level of spending on service
Car parks and on-street parking enforcement	42.40 %	48.20 %	9.40%	Maintain current level of spending on service
Committee information - Public meetings and elected councillors	56.20 %	41.30 %	2.50%	Spend less money on service
Community Safety	17.40 %	61.20 %	21.40 %	Maintain current level of spending on service
Concessionary travel	27.60 %	65.10 %	7.40%	Maintain current level of spending on service
Council Housing - Adaptations	34.30 %	56.50 %	9.20%	Maintain current level of spending on service
Council Housing - Day centres	19.40 %	67.80 %	12.80 %	Maintain current level of spending on service
Council Housing - Homelessness	21.00 %	63.20 %	15.80 %	Maintain current level of spending on service
Council Housing - Housing benefits	45.10 %	49.80 %	5.10%	Maintain current level of spending on service
Council Housing - Rent	32.60 %	63.70 %	3.70%	Maintain current level of spending on service
Council Housing - Repairs	21.50 %	70.80 %	7.70%	Maintain current level of spending on service

	Spend less money on service	Maintain current level of spending	Spend more money on service	Conclusion
Council Housing - Right to buy	45.80 %	44.00 %	10.30 %	Spend less money on service
Council Housing - Sheltered housing	17.30 %	69.10 %	13.60 %	Maintain current level of spending on service
Council Housing - Tenant Liaison	40.70 %	56.40 %	2.90%	Maintain current level of spending on service
Council tax - Benefits and enquiries	39.00 %	56.10 %	4.80%	Maintain current level of spending on service
Elections and electoral register	41.70 %	56.20 %	2.20%	Maintain current level of spending on service
Environmental Health - air/water/noise complaints	18.40 %	66.50 %	15.10 %	Maintain current level of spending on service
Flytipping	9.00%	57.40 %	33.60 %	Maintain current level of spending on service
Land charges	34.10 %	64.40 %	1.50%	Maintain current level of spending on service
Leisure centres	23.60 %	62.20 %	14.20 %	Maintain current level of spending on service
Licensing (e.g. taxis, premises)	32.20 %	66.30 %	1.50%	Maintain current level of spending on service

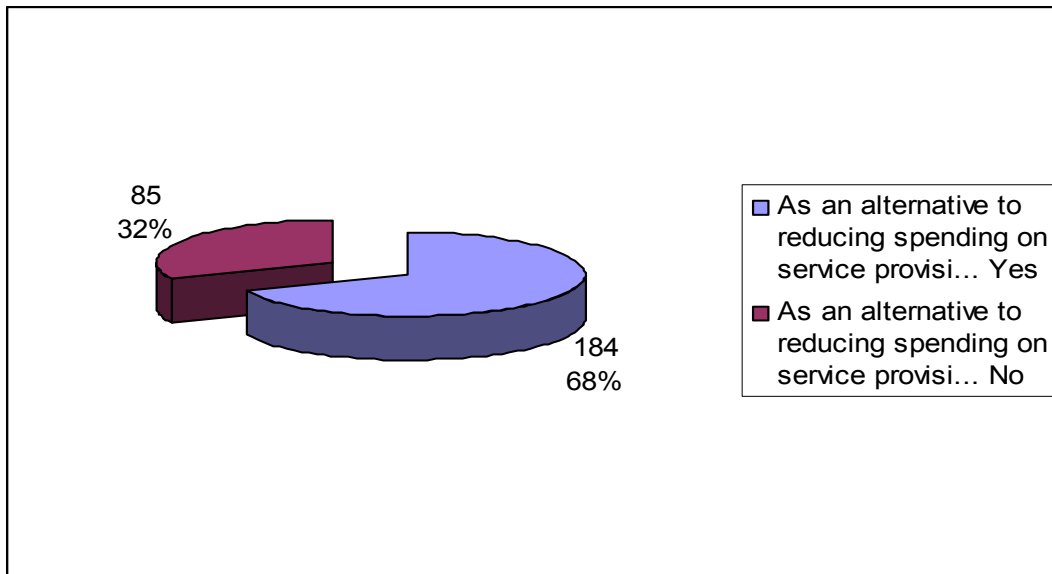
	Spend less money on service	Maintain current level of spending	Spend more money on service	Conclusion
Littering	8.40%	66.90%	24.70%	Maintain current level of spending on service
Museum	31.00%	60.60%	8.30%	Maintain current level of spending on service
Pest control	14.10%	76.90%	9.00%	Maintain current level of spending on service
Planning advice	29.90%	66.50%	3.60%	Maintain current level of spending on service
Planning applications	29.20%	68.60%	2.20%	Maintain current level of spending on service
Planning enforcement	20.80%	58.00%	21.20%	Maintain current level of spending on service
Septic tank emptying	19.20%	75.70%	5.10%	Maintain current level of spending on service
Waste and recycling	8.70%	62.80%	28.50%	Maintain current level of spending on service
Website	61.00%	38.20%	0.70%	Spend less money on service

Headline view:



Base 264-278

Q2.10 Following on from the corporate priority identified in Q2.2 and as an alternative to reducing spending on service provision, panellists were asked if they would be happy for services to be delivered by another organization, or another council, or by Uttlesford District Council in conjunction with another council.



Base 269

The majority view of respondents was hugely in favour of the council pursuing partnership options with 68.4% (a total of 184) saying 'yes', as against only 31.6% (85 in total) saying 'no'. This represents a majority view of 36.8%.

Q2.11 With reference to Council Tax and Q2.8, panellists were asked to comment on whether they thought the council has the right level of tax relative to other councils and if they felt that this provided value for money. Just over half, (54.4%, 153 in total) agreed that council tax is set at the right level, although a comparatively high number, 21% (59 in total) considered that they had no opinion on this matter. Similarly, 54% (150 in total) agreed that the council provided good value for the tax, although, 24.1% (67 in total) tended to disagree with this statement and 2.5% (7 in total) strongly disagreed.

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion	Base
Uttlesford District Council has the right level of council tax, relative to other councils	4.3%	54.4%	18.1%	2.1%	21.0%	281
Uttlesford District Council provides good value given the tax residents pay	6.1%	54.0%	24.1%	2.5%	13.3%	278

Value for money

Q2.12 In the current financial year council tax from residents contributes £4.9m towards council services, which works out at approximately £150 per Uttlesford District household. The questionnaire reproduced a table which summarized at an upper tier the total amount the council spends on each service set against the contribution made by each resident in the district through council tax. It was noted that not all the funding for these services comes from council tax as other public sector organisations, such as the Police and Essex County Council, also have some responsibility for funding some of these services.

When asked to consider whether a selection of front line services represented good value for money based on the information provided, panel members gave an overwhelming endorsement for refuse collection and recycling with 80.1% (229 in total) considering that the service represents good value for money. Similarly, 67.5% (193 in total) thought street cleaning and litter collection provided good value as did 62.5% (177 in total) in respect of public health. The Museum and Community Services however, still considered to represent good value, had a less clear endorsement with 46% and 40.2% approval respectively.

Members, elections and democracy, though, was not considered to represent very good value by a more than 2:1 majority (138 to 62). Planning and Building Control was also considered to represent less than good value by 39.4% (113 in total) as against 91 (31.7%) who thought that this service does represent good value.

	I think it represents good value for money	I do not think it represents good value for money	Don't know	Conclusion
Planning and Building control (advice, applications and enforcement)	31.7%	39.4%	28.9%	Not good value
Refuse collection and recycling	80.1%	17.5%	2.4%	Good value
Members, elections and democracy	22.3%	49.6%	28.1%	Not good value
Sport and leisure	53.4%	28.8%	17.8%	Good value
Public health (food safety inspection, pest control, animal warden, noise, air and water pollution, fly-tipping, abandoned vehicles)	62.5%	18.4%	19.1%	Good value
Housing benefit and council tax benefit	36.7%	32.2%	31.1%	Good value
Street cleaning and litter	67.5%	27.3%	5.2%	Good value
Saffron Walden Museum	46.0%	28.4%	25.6%	Good value
Community services (community safety, funding grants)	40.2%	22.8%	37.0%	Good value
Public conveniences	52.4%	30.1%	17.5%	Good value

Headline view:



Base 281-287



Council spending - have your say

Survey Results

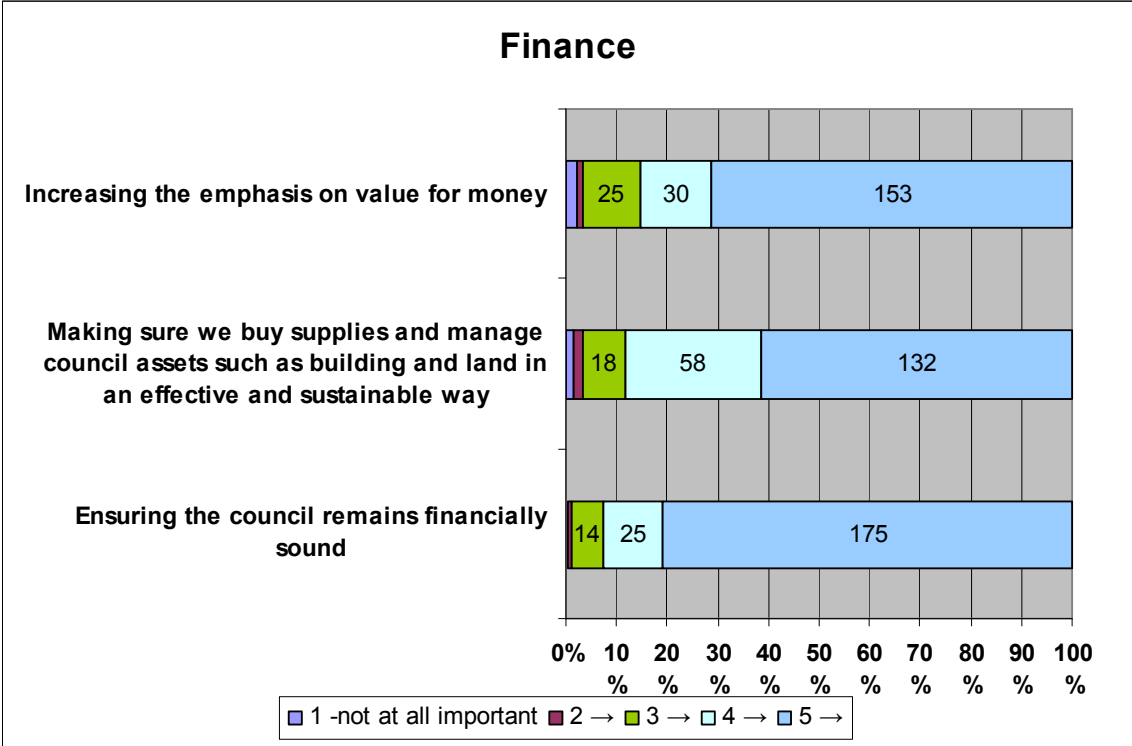
The summer 2010 edition of Uttlesford Life invited residents to participate in a consultation which, although not identical, reflected the questions put to members of the Uttlesford Voices¹ citizens' panel regarding the council's priority areas for improvement.

Residents were given the option to either participate in an online version of the survey via the council website or to submit their responses by post. 202 postal responses were received and 15 residents took part online.

The survey similarly asked participants to rate elements of the four priority areas in order of importance using the same 5 point scoring system used in Uttlesford Voices, 1 being 'not at all important' and 5 being 'very important'.

Finance

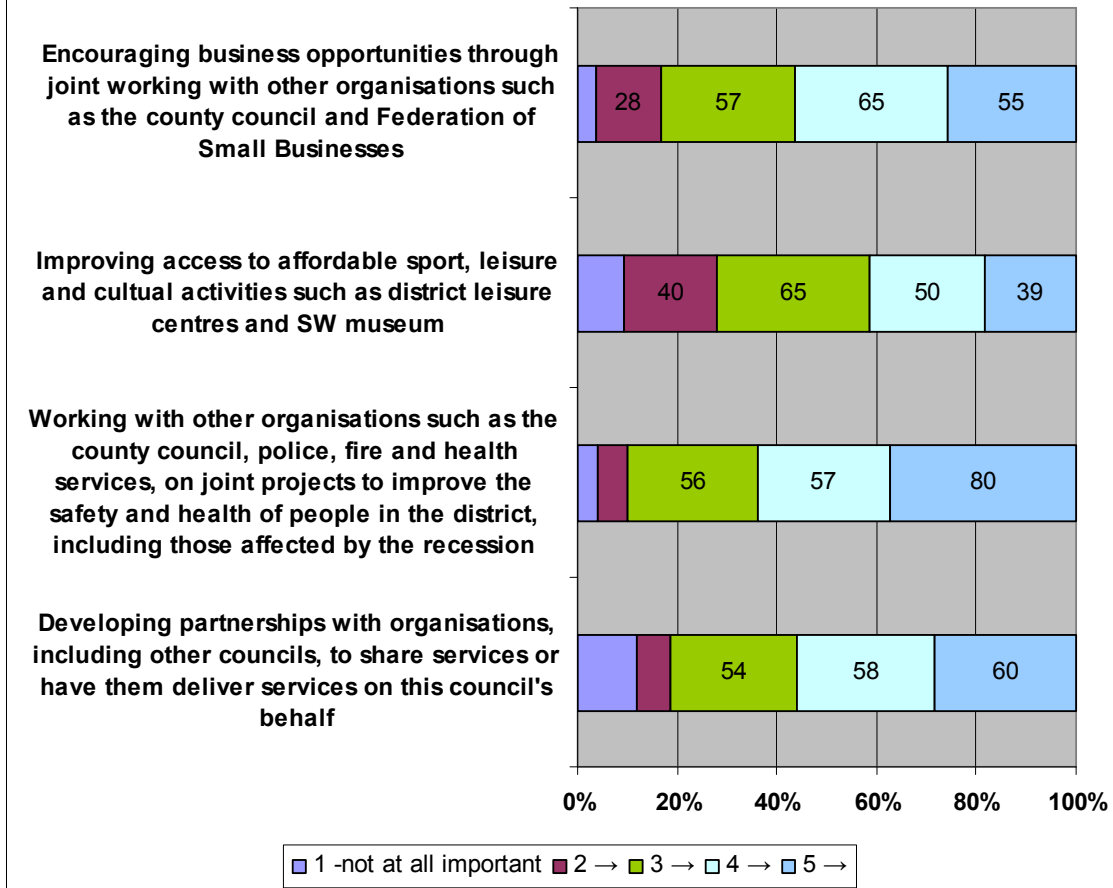
Of the three priorities 'ensuring the council remains financially sound' was given the highest rating with 80.6 % (175 in total) selecting it as very important. This was a considerably larger proportion than the 58.4% of the citizens' panel who selected the same priority



Partnerships

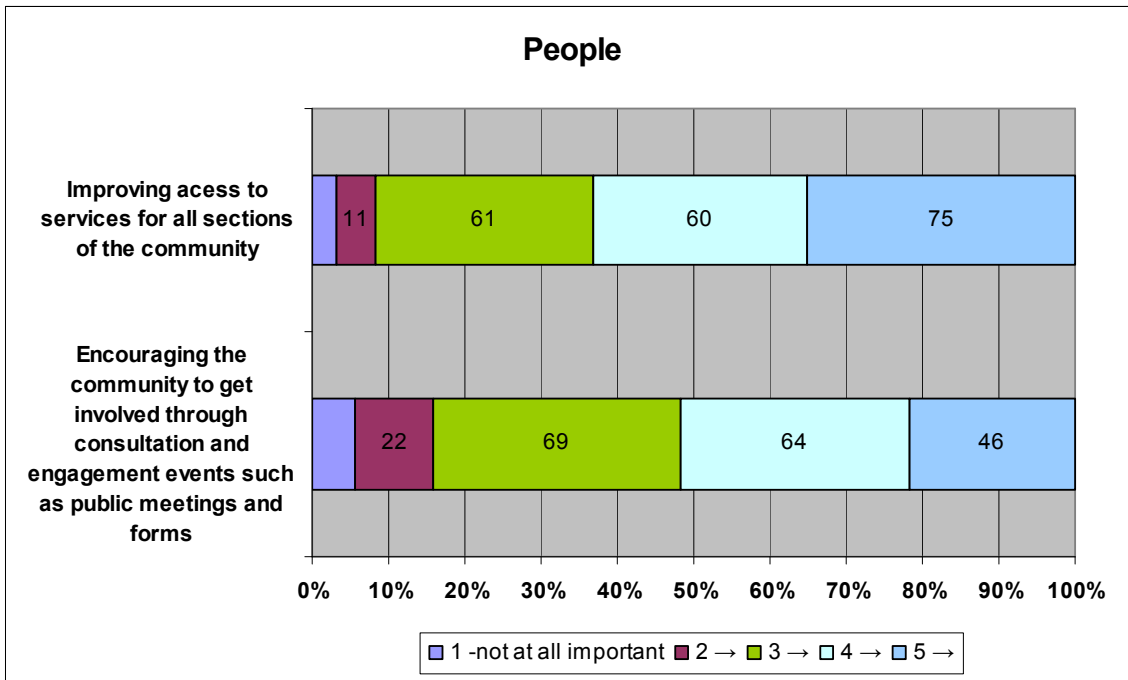
The responses to the Uttlesford Life and online survey were very similar to those from the Uttlesford Voices 1 citizens panel questionnaire. The chart shows that 37% (in total 80) selected ‘working with other organisations such as the county council, police, fire and health services, on joint projects to improve the safety and health of people in the district, including those affected by the recession’ as very important which compared with the 36.7% of the citizens’ panellists for whom this was similarly the most highly rated option. By contrast the element least selected as very important was, for both surveys, ‘improving access to sport, leisure and cultural activities’.

Partnerships



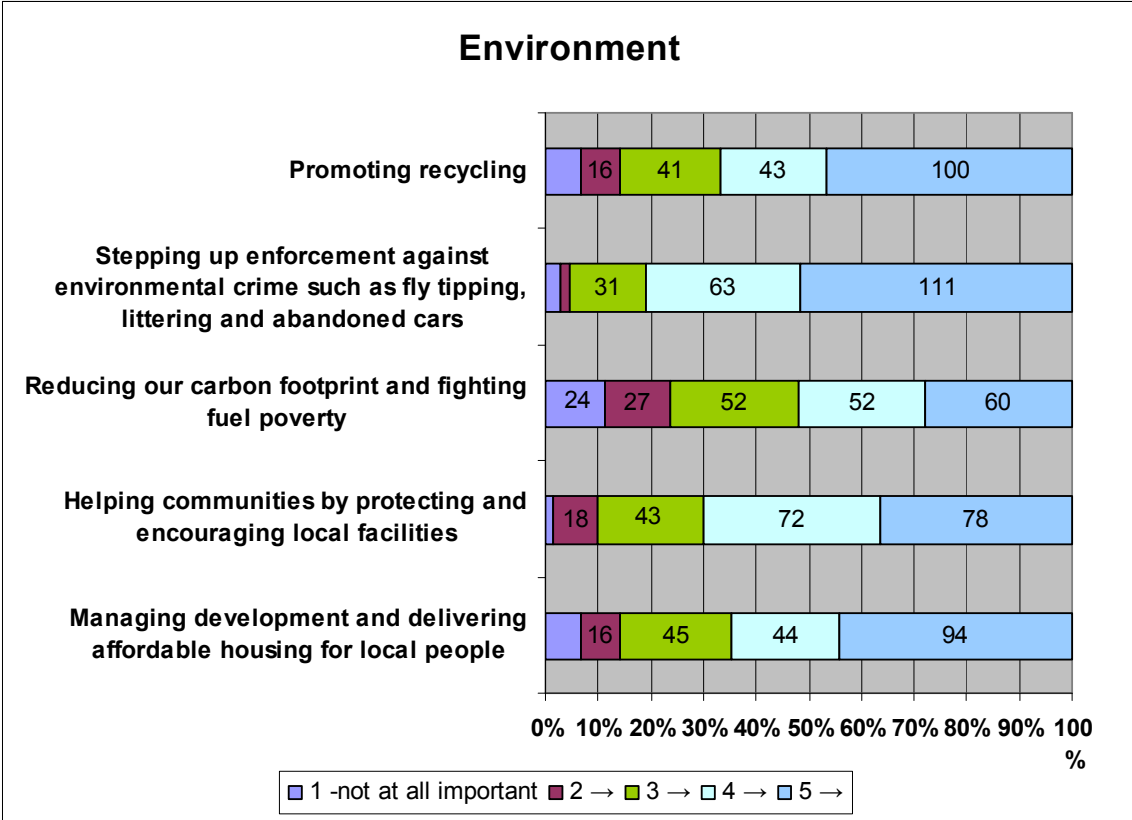
People

Under 'People' the scores for both surveys were very similar for 'encouraging the community to get involved through consultation and engagement events'. However 'improving access to services for all sectors of the community' was selected as the headline 'people' priority by 34.9% of the Uttlesford Life and online respondents but only 19.9% of the citizens' panellists selected this as very important.



Environment

For 'Environment' The results for 'reducing our carbon footprint and fighting fuel poverty' , 'managing development and delivering affordable housing for local people' and 'helping communities by protecting and encouraging local facilities' were comparable with those from the Uttlesford Voices 1 citizens panel. In both surveys between 66 to 70% of respondents selected the latter as either important or very important. Over half (51.4%, 111 in total) of the Uttlesford Life and online respondents gave 'stepping up enforcement against environmental crime such as fly tipping, littering and abandoned cars' a 'very important' rating.



Summary of results

By totalling the scores assigned by all Uttlesford Life postal and online survey respondents to each of the elements listed (e.g. very important = 5 points), it is possible to determine which of the areas overall were considered of highest importance by the participants as shown in the table below.

All the three elements listed under the main priority Finance, scored highly, with ‘ensuring the council remains financially sound’ as the headline priority. ‘Stepping up enforcement against environmental crime’ was similarly highly rated, closely followed by ‘promoting recycling’ and ‘working with other organisations....to improve the safety and health of people in the district, including those affected by the recession’.

‘Improving access to services for all sections of the community’ was the least rated overall despite being considered as ‘very important’ by 75 of the 215 respondents.

Corporate Plan Consultation

