



Budget Consultation 2020/21 (Phase 2)

*Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough
Council*

February 2020



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This section provides a summary of the main findings from the Phase 2 Budget Consultation 2020/21.
- The consultation was conducted in-house. The consultation period ran from the 24th January and ended on the 7th February 2020.
- The following methods were used to consult with stakeholders;
 - An online questionnaire
 - A number of Engagement Events
 - Promotion through social media
 - Older Persons Advisory Group Meeting
 - Disability Forum Meeting
 - An easy read booklet and questionnaire
 - Meetings in 3 comprehensive schools
 - Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee
 - School Budget Forum
 - Promotion with the Citizen's Panel
 - An email sent to key stakeholders, including Community and Town Councils, Trade Unions, Councillors, Local AM's and MPs
- 402 people were engaged in the phase 2 budget consultation. Overall (including Phase 1) over 4000 people engaged on the Council's budget.
- The Council is proposing that Council Tax be increased by 2.85% for next year. The majority of respondents felt that this was reasonable (78%).
- 92% of respondents agreed that the Council should fully fund our schools for next year.
- 87% of respondents agreed with the Council's approach to efficiency savings and that the Council should continue with the approach next year.
- 79% of respondents agreed with the approach to fees and charges.
- 90% of respondents agreed with the approach of borrowing to enable investment.
- 88% of respondents agreed with the additional investment of £250,000 for youth engagement.
- 85% of respondents agreed with the investment in paddling pools.
- 76% of respondents agreed with the investment and approach proposed for the Muni Arts Centre.
- 90% of respondents agreed with the use of reserve funding.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of the Phase 2 Budget Consultation 2020/21.
- 1.2 Section 2 outlines some brief background to the consultation process.
- 1.3 Section 3 details the methodology.
- 1.4 Section 4 provides the results of the questionnaire.
- 1.5 Section 5 presents the feedback received at the Older Persons Advisory Group meeting and Disability Forum meeting.
- 1.6 Section 6 provides feedback on the young persons' engagement.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council undertakes a comprehensive approach to its annual budget consultation, involving a large number of residents and key stakeholders.
- 2.2 The widespread approach we use and the range of views we capture provides senior managers and Cabinet Members with the necessary information they need to set the budget for the year ahead.
- 2.3 Following the announcement of the General Election, the Welsh Government budget settlement to Local Government for the 2020/21 financial year was delayed. As a result Rhondda Cynon Taf's 2020/21 Budget Consultation is a phased approach, so that we can ensure residents and stakeholders have as much opportunity as possible to provide views on the budget and to make sure that views are informed by the most up to date and relevant information.
- 2.4 This report presents the findings of **phase 2** of the budget consultation, which asked for views on the draft budget strategy for 2020/21.
- 2.5 Phase 2 started on the 24th January and ended on the 7th February 2020.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 This section provides a summary of the main findings from the Phase 2 Budget Consultation 2020/21. The consultation was conducted in-house.

3.2 The consultation period ran from the 24th January and ended on the 7th February 2020.

3.3 The following methods were used to consult with stakeholders;

- An online questionnaire
- A number of Engagement Events
- Promotion through social media
- Older Persons Advisory Group Meeting
- Disability Forum Meeting
- An easy read booklet and questionnaire
- Meetings in 3 comprehensive schools
- School Budget Forum
- Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee
- Promotion with the Citizen's Panel
- An email sent to key stakeholders, including Community and Town Councils, Trade Unions, Councillors, Local AM's and MPs

Note: Views from the School Budget Forum and the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee have been recorded separately in the respective minutes of those meetings.

3.4 The following engagement events took place during the consultation;

Rhondda Cynon Taf
Budget Consultation - Phase 2
2020/2021

Public consultation events

Canolfan Pennar (Mountain Ash Hub)
January 31 (11am-1pm)

Rhondda Sports Centre, Ystrad
February 3 (5pm-7pm)

Pontypridd Town Centre
February 5 (10am-1pm)

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- 3.5 At the events, members of the public were invited to have a discussion with Officers about the Council's budget, investments and any queries they may have had, as well as being asked to fill in the survey on electronic tablets or paper hardcopies.
- 3.6 402 people were engaged in the phase 2 budget consultation. Overall (including Phase 1) over 4000 people engaged on the Council's budget.

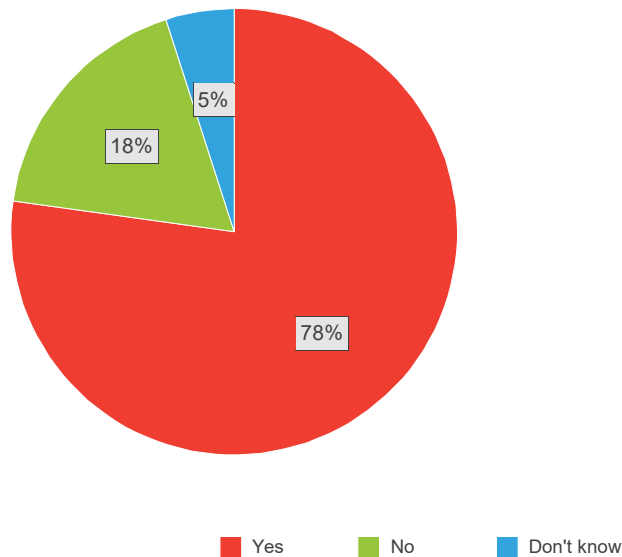
4 Questionnaire Results

- 4.1 The following section outlines the results from the phase 2 budget consultation questionnaire, which received 268 responses. A selection of comments are provided and the full list of comments will be provided to Cabinet and senior officers to assist with decision making.

Council Tax

- 4.2 The Council is proposing that Council Tax be increased by 2.85% for next year. **The majority of respondents felt that this increase was reasonable (78%).**

Do you agree that a Council Tax increase of 2.85% is reasonable?



Note: Where figures do not add up to 100% this is due to rounding.

- 4.3 Comments were mainly positive and included;

“support a low increase of 2.85%”

“Below 3% is good”

“excellent to see it kept below 5%”

- 4.4 One of the reasons the increase was seen as reasonable was the low increase in comparison to the rest of Wales.

“lowest Council tax in Wales”

“seems better than most I’ve seen”

“seems very fair and less than Conwy who are suggesting 7%”

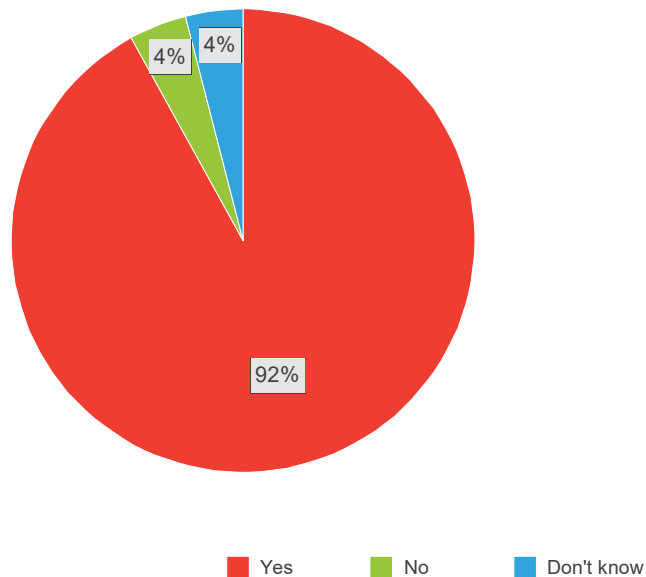
- 4.5 There were some concerns that any increase would impact on some people’s finances.

“this will put added financial stress on families already trying to keep their finances stable”

Schools Budget

- 4.6 The Council’s budget strategy aims to protect schools by ensuring they have the money they need to fund their increased costs for next year. In overall terms, the proposal sees the Schools Budget increase from £148.9M to £161.6M, an increase of £12.7M, or 8.5%.

Agreement with School Funding



- 4.7 **92% of respondents agreed that the Council should fully fund our schools for next year.**

Comments included;

“Children are our future and very important to protect school budgets”

“Pleased to see schools getting a proper increase and that they are being given priority by the council”

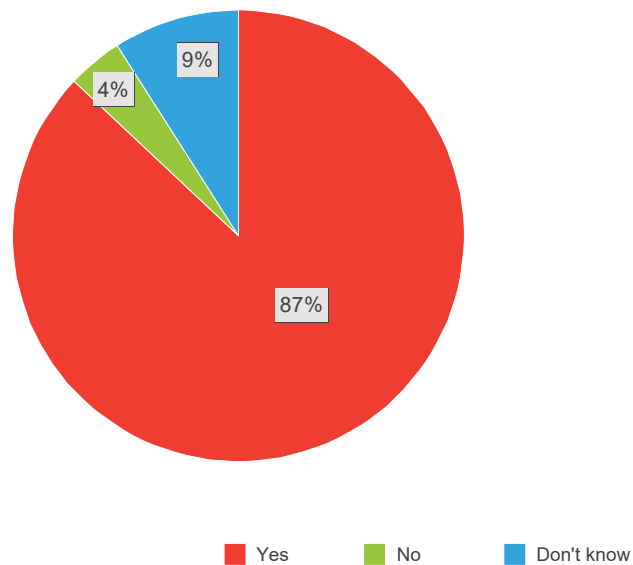
“Our schools are teaching our future generations, I would expect sufficient resources to be provided on the basis of being confident that the resources are administered properly”

“Education should always be a top priority to give children the best possible chance in life”

Efficiencies

- 4.8 Respondents were asked if they agreed with the Council’s approach to efficiency savings and if the Council should continue with the approach next year.

Agreement with Efficiencies Approach



87% of respondents agreed and comments on the importance of this approach included;

“Efficiency savings are important - getting the right balance is important.”

“Make savings wherever possible.”

- 4.9 Some of the respondents stressed that this must not impact upon frontline services;

“Yes agree as long as do not impact on services”

“Efficiencies are important, and it is welcomed that the Council will not impact front line services.”

“But services should not be cut.”

- 4.10 As in phase 1 of the consultation some suggestions for efficiencies were made;

“Need to look at procurement and if more can be saved”

“There should be more focus on process, online work where possible, reduced bin collections etc.”

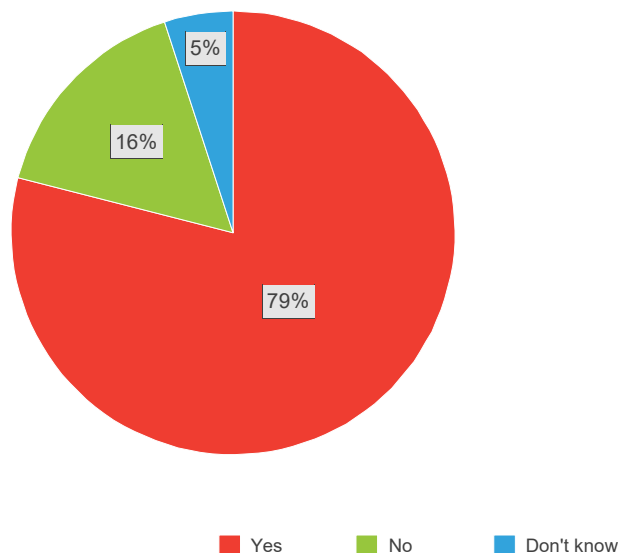
Fees and Charges

- 4.11 A standard increase of 1.5% (Consumer Prices Index) is proposed on all fees and charges with a number of specific exceptions:

Area of Charge	Proposed Exception
Leisure for Life	Freeze
Car Park Charges	Freeze
Summer and Winter Playing Fees (sports clubs)	Freeze
Meals on Wheels / Day Centre Meals	10p per meal
School Meals	5p per meal <i>and then freeze for 2 years</i>
Lido	50p Adult Swim

79% of respondents agreed with this approach to fees and charges.

Agreement with Fees and Charges Approach



4.12 The following are a selection of the comments received;

"These increases seem sensible."

"Most definitely"

"These increases are fair and affordable to the majority of people, well done once again no increases In Leisure for life and car park charges"

"If you increase a small amount overall I think the Council will be able to keep more services."

"Seems fair"

"Very pleased to see the charges are being fair"

4.13 There were some calls to increase the charges at the Lido and Leisure services;

"Possibly could charge more for the Lido due to its popularity"

"The Lido could charge a small fee for children, people are willing to contribute to activities."

4.14 There were some concerns about the 5p per meal increase for school meals and the meals on wheels 10p per meal increase.

"School meals should not be increased. Services like the Lido should be increased more to cover this"

4.15 Some of these comments relate to the previous section (4.14) with suggestions for increased fees to other services instead of meals on wheels and school meals;

"I'd rather pay an extra 10p per day parking than charge an elderly person more."

4.16 There were though comments in support of school meal increases, especially with the proposal to freeze the charge in the 2 years following 2020/21.

"5p dinner increase seems very fair if they are frozen for 2 years"

"Good to see school dinners only up 5p and then frozen"

"Pleased to see school dinners up only 5p over 2 years"

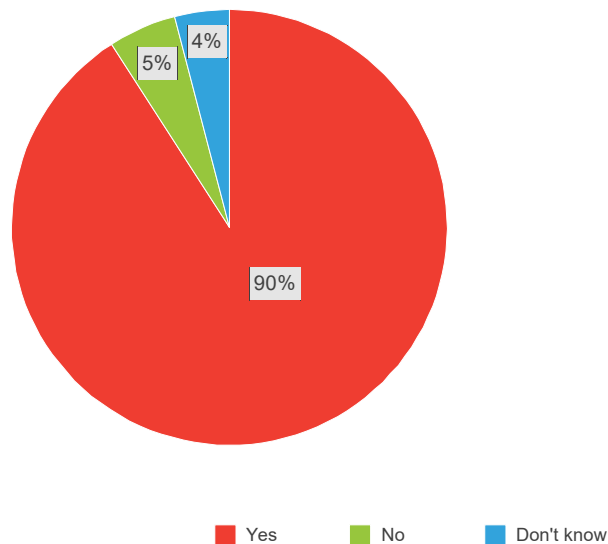
Council Investment

- 4.17 It is proposed to set aside £500k of the Council’s revenue resource to enable further investment in the following areas, through the use of prudential borrowing powers (£7.5M of capital resource, long term infrastructure).

21st Century Schools (new and remodelled schools)
Roads & Transport (repairs and resurfacing and major projects such as A4119 dualling, Llanharan bypass and Mountain Ash Cross Valley link)
Recycling & the Environment (improving recycling performance)
Town Centres & Regeneration (improving the town centres eg. Llys Cadwyn, Pontypridd)
Empty Properties (Grant to bring properties back into use)
Leisure (improvements to facilities)
Play Areas and Parks (upgrading the equipment and standard)
Extra Care/Community Hubs (focus on independence for older people)
Employment (apprenticeships and graduate placements)
Events/Arts (investment in attractions and theatres)
Flood Alleviation (investing in flood prevention schemes)

- 4.18 **90% of respondents agreed with this approach to investment**

Agreement with Borrowing to Invest



Note: Where figures do not add up to 100% this is due to rounding.

The following are a selection of comments received;

“Borrowing to invest is a sensible strategy - one I support.”

“Good to see the amount of investment in RCT”

“These are all key priority areas and any extra funding is welcomed.”

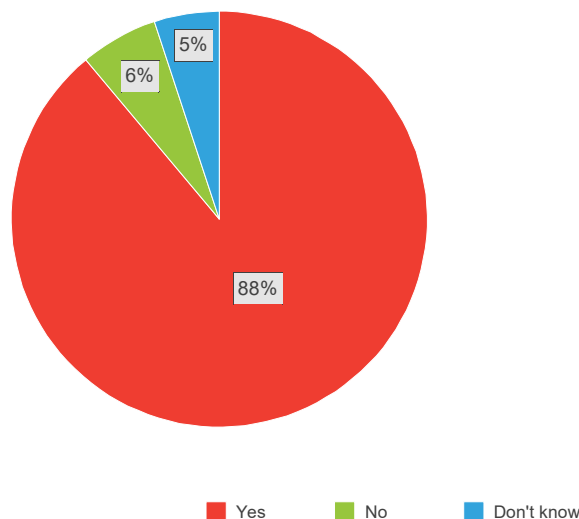
“It has been evident that investments have been made into areas at times of austerity. It is good to see the Council not just sitting back but being more forward thinking”

Youth Engagement

- 4.19 An additional revenue investment of £250K is proposed for youth engagement which amounts to an increase of 13% to the current budget for the service.

88% of respondents agreed with the additional investment of £250,000 for youth engagement.

Agree to additional investment in Youth Engagement



Note: Where figures do not add up to 100% this is due to rounding.

“Young people need investment. Investment in youth services are a priority for our family”

“Youth engagement is vitally important, particularly if children are struggling at school. I welcome the investment.”

“Youth investment should be the highest priority”

“Everybody will be happy with this proposal especially the young people”

- 4.20 There were a number of positive comments about the current service;

“The service is good as my children attend but the extra investment is welcomed”

“This is welcomed however the youth service is good I have family members that have used it”

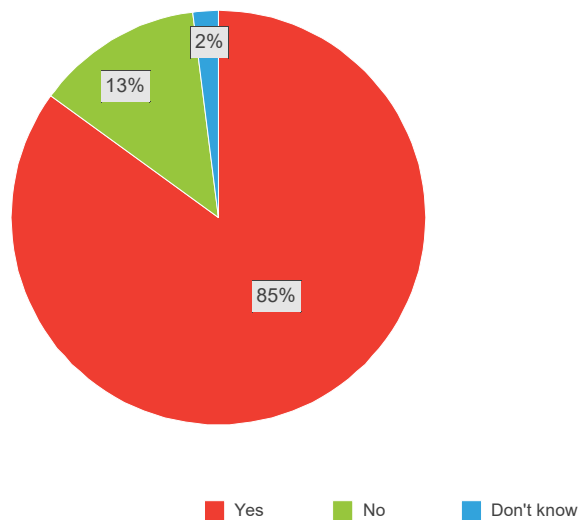
“Welcome to add to a really good service that’s making a difference”

Paddling Pools

4.21 The council is proposing to work with community groups and put in place a package of bespoke support that will enable paddling pools to open throughout the summer holiday period going forward. £50k is proposed to be included within the budget strategy for this purpose.

85% of respondents agreed with the investment in paddling pools.

Agree with additional investment in Paddling Pools



“I welcome this investment. Paddling pools were once essential services during the summer, and it is very positive to see them back in use.”

“A great suggestion will be well supported”

“Really important to get the paddling pools back open”

“....Any investment in this budget would be very welcome”

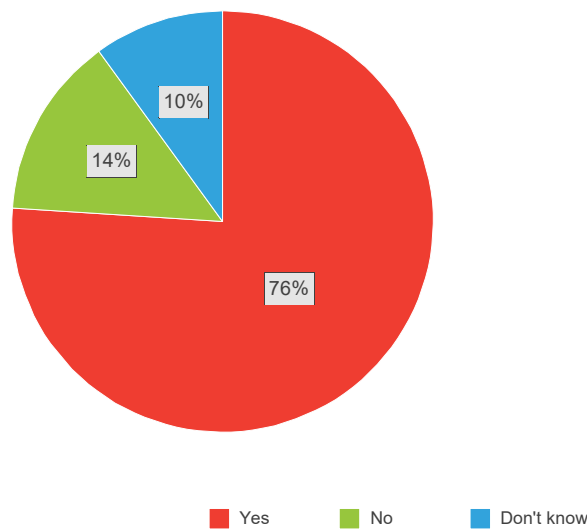
“Wholeheartedly agree with this. Paddling pools should remain open during the summer season and be upgraded as and when necessary.....”

Muni Arts Centre

4.22 The Council has been working in partnership to secure a long term sustainable future for the Muni Arts Centre and are developing an ambitious redevelopment of the Centre. Whilst these plans are being completed, it is proposed to re-open the Centre from the summer of 2020 and the Council will support its partner through a revenue contribution of £105k for 2020/21.

76% of respondents agree with this investment.

Agree to additional investment in Muni Arts Centre



“Again, this is positive. The Muni was a vital part of Pontypridd and it is wonderful to see it back up and running.”

“Great local venue so pleased it’s being reopened”

“Good to see Council working in partnership to keep Muni open”

“The Muni is a stunning building and deserves to have investment ploughed into it. On completion, I believe it will have a huge impact on visitor attraction to Pontypridd”

4.23 Some of the respondents were supportive with certain caveats;

“Providing the partner is putting into the budget and has a comprehensive long term business plan. The building needs utilising to its maximum potential.”

“This would be a good investment if people use the facilities”

“This would depend on whether the long term plans show a profitable or at least breaking even Arts Centre”

“It depends how well the building is managed”

Council Reserves

- 4.24 After taking account of the above and other budget requirements the remaining budget gap is £0.804M. The Council has set aside a reserve of one-off funding to support balancing the annual budget. It is proposed that an allocation of £0.804M is made from this funding for 2020/21. This would provide a balanced budget for 2020/21 and would leave £3.6M in the reserve fund.

90% of respondents agree with the use of this reserve funding.

“Any budget that seeks to make investment and maintain current service levels is welcome. Hopefully the Council can continue to make decisions like this in the future.”

“Doing this will keep the Council Tax at 2.85 percent well done I’m sure all the Council tax payers will agree with the decision taken”

“Makes sense to use some of this money”

“But long term it is not sustainable.”

Other Comments

- 4.25 A number of further positive comments were made on the budget strategy;

“Overall I think this is a good program of investment and look forward to seeing it implemented”

“Seems very positive with no cuts to services”

“Pleased to see new investments and no cuts”

- 4.26 There were some calls for more investment in social care;

“I am disappointed not to see more focus on social care, which is a huge issue for everyone, whether they want to admit it or not.”

“more investment needed in social care”

5. Disability Forum & OPAG Feedback

Disability Forum

5.1 A presentation was made and a discussion was held with the Disability Forum. Easy read versions of the information and questions were also provided to the group.

5.2 Overall the group thought the proposed increase in Council Tax was fair.

"2.85% is a fair increase"

Schools Budget

5.3 The importance of funding for schools was expressed;

"Got to educate the youngsters"

"keep them safe and secure in the school buildings"

"any increase in Council funding is a good bonus".

Efficiencies

5.4 There was support for continued efficiencies.

"Yes if you can, back office efficiencies very sensible and tangible thing to do, as long as there are no staff losses on the frontline"

Fees and Charges

5.5 General agreement on the approach to fees and charges.

"increase in costs is fair, due to inflation and other costs going up"

"I do think this is fair"

School meals were discussed and the need to ensure that the quality of the food doesn't go down.

Investments

5.6 The investment discussion focused on the need for play areas and facilities to be made accessible for people with physical disabilities and for sensory uses. There was also debate on town centres and accessibility and the suggestion that the group could investigate the possibility of a town centre accessibility grant *"to enable businesses to make their businesses and shops more accessible"*.

Youth Engagement

- 5.7 Forum Members agreed with the investment proposed for youth engagement.

“Yes agree with this”

“The spend here is worthwhile”

Paddling Pools

- 5.8 The investment in paddling pools was welcomed as long as they will be used.

“If they are being used then spend the money”

Muni Arts Centre

- 5.9 There was universal agreement on the funding proposed for the Muni Arts Centre;

“I think it should be reopened, it is one of the main things in Pontypridd”

“Will help with the wellbeing of disabled people when open, it is accessible for parking and in a good location for service users”

Use of Council Reserves

- 5.10 There was limited feedback provided on using the Council reserves, but the comment noted was in favour;

“You should still have enough reserves after this for the next 3 to 4 years”

OPAG (Older Persons Advisory Group)

- 5.11 A presentation and discussion was held with members of the Older Persons Advisory Group and members were asked to promote the consultation with their Forum members.

Council Tax

- 5.12 The group agreed that a rise in Council Tax of 2.85% was reasonable.

“Yes agreed we said 3% in phase 1”

Schools Budget

- 5.13 The increase in funding for schools was welcomed.

“Yes agreed they are our future, we have to look after the kids”

Fees and Charges

- 5.14 The discussions on fees and charges revolved around the increase to the Lido charge of 50p for adults.

“We need a weekly or monthly charge.

“Have you thought about an over 60’s discount”

“Only local pool in Pontypridd, which would be free, but we like to support the Lido”

“Put everything up but not the lido”

Youth Engagement

- 5.15 There was support for the additional investment in youth services and the suggestion that Forums could work more on intergenerational projects.

“Agree with it, but be good to consider some intergenerational work to equip young people for the future”

Paddling Pools

- 5.16 There was also support for the paddling pools investment and suggestions for some investment in splash pools.

“Always good for the kids”

“Splash parks as well” (Aberdare and Pontypridd)

Muni Arts Centre

- 5.17 The Group has used the centre in the past for Forum meetings and welcomed the investment.

“A major building, a focus - central meeting point”

“We will use again as a group”

Reserves

- 5.18 There was support for the use of reserves to address the remaining budget gap.

6. YOUNG PERSON ENGAGEMENT

6.1 The following section outlines some of the feedback received from the 3 schools that we engaged with;

- Treorchy Comprehensive School
- Y Pant Comprehensive School
- Aberdare Community School

The approach we took with the schools, was to meet with a small group at each school (between 5 and 8 young people) and hold a focus group to enable discussions around the consultation questions in the main survey. Each focus group lasted around one hour and was delivered by an officer from the Consultation team and Cabinet office, along with a Finance officer for support.

Officers met prior to the focus groups and decided to adapt the survey questions to assist the focus group discussions.

Fees and Charges

Please pick 3 services to freeze the cost of and 3 services to increase the cost of.

6.2 We started with an ice breaker question from the survey and decided to give young people a choice of 3 services to freeze the cost of and 3 to increase the cost of. The services in question can be seen below:

Leisure centre / gym membership
Car parking
Sport field costs to clubs / teams
Meals on Wheels (MOW)
School dinners
Lido entry fee

We gave the young people a few minutes to read over some information and to work out which 3 they would choose to freeze and why.

Comments and reasons for choosing the options above:

“Freeze MOW, school dinners and sports field costs. MOW are essential – if you increase this, what is the effect? Sports are expensive anyway, teams aren’t going to be able to pay that extra year on year.”

“Freeze leisure centre / gym membership, MOW and school dinners. A lot of people rely on MOW and school dinners. Leisure centres – not enough people use it... it would sway people even more if the cost went up.”

“Same as above (Freeze leisure centre / gym membership, MOW and school dinners)”

“Freeze School dinners, MOW and Lido because it’s such a large increase. A lot of people go to the Lido as it’s more accessible even if it’s just in the summer.”

“Freeze Sports, MOW and School dinners. MOW will impact on more people.”

“In regards to sports fields, I’d try to keep costs low to enable clubs to keep using them and encourage a greater number to use.”

“I know a lot more people who would go to a leisure centre rather than sports and would be more useful for young people to have cheaper gym than sports fields.”

“I’d freeze school dinners because it’s the only proper meal young people get in a day – it’s vital.”

“Meals on wheels are for people in a vulnerable position. It’s important.”

“Sports clubs are a bit inclusive, it puts people off if they aren’t good enough. If you go to the gym, there’s nothing stopping you. It’s already overpriced, but if leisure centre prices are increased, it would discourage people from going.”

“Sports fields gives people the opportunity to exercise and keep fit... any increases are going to kill off sports fields.”

“MOW – not just food, company, loneliness – very often it’s the only contact people get in a day.”

“Sports fields are a community, young kids can get involved in.!”

“MOW – give back to elderly, it’s about company and social isolation, one hot meal and the ability to talk to someone.”

“School dinners helps people less well off. One choice of meal per day.”

Lido and car parking were areas that were not chosen to be frozen.

Comments included:

“Lido isn’t a necessity; people won’t go there regularly anyway, it’s not as important as the others, like food.”

“There are swimming pools in leisure centres.”

“Lido is more seasonal, 50p won’t affect your life every now and then, increasing prices will help the local economy.”

“Car parking, if we increase prices, people are more likely to use public transport.”

“The increases of 1.5% only work out around 3p more which is not going to break the bank.”

“Encourage use of public transport over car parking, encourage this.”

“Public transport should be improved. Discussions on South Wales Metro will start things off, bans on travelling and congestion charges like private cars in Bristol.”

“With the Lido – people come all round to go there, if people can afford transport to get there etc., they can afford an increase.”

Investments

Borrowing for Investment in our Infrastructure

6.3 The second question was about Council investments. We explained to the groups that the Council doesn’t have enough money in the bank to improve all of these services previously identified as priority areas, however the Council can borrow money over a longer term with a low interest loan to make these improvements.

Young people were asked whether or not they agreed that the Council should borrow money to invest into these areas and what their comments were to support their answers.

21st Century Schools (new and remodelled schools)
Roads &Transport (repairs and resurfacing and major projects)
Recycling & the Environment (improving recycling performance)
Town Centres & Regeneration (improving the town centres)
Empty Properties (Grant to bring properties back into use)
Leisure (improvements to facilities)
Play Areas and Parks (upgrading the equipment and standard)
Extra Care/Community Hubs (focus on independence for older people)
Employment (apprenticeships and graduate placements)
Events/Arts (investment in attractions and theatres)
Flood Alleviation (investing in flood prevention schemes)

**Do
you**

agree that the Council should be doing this?

“We should borrow as the longer you leave it, more of a problem it will be. If we keep improving, services will be better and will have an effect.”

“You’ve got to invest money in a lot of things, if you improve town centres, it would improve other things.”

“Is there a worry about paying back interest?”

“It’s safer to do it now before interest levels go up.”

“Town centres are good to invest into especially as Treorchy won town of the year, people are more likely to visit.”

“I’d agree, if it’s been done already, it should continue to be done. The valleys’ towns need to be invested in.”

“In the long term, it would be worth it. If you look at this school (Y Pant) in comparison to the last one, it’s a lot nicer. More roads, less congestion. Recycling & environment – cut down on waste. In the valleys, there are lots of run down towns that need to be built back up again. Parks, leisure, extra care, employment & apprenticeships is important, a good alternative to university - could reduce student debts. Arts is a good investment, bring people in. Flood prevention – never nice to be flooded.”

“If it’s been done previously to improve facilities, it’s more likely to be a positive and could lead to a better sense of community if we had more funding, people are more likely to use services if they are better.”

“Apprenticeships – a lot of people think they are limited to manual jobs. University isn’t always the right option for them. If there were more apprenticeships in the fields they wanted to go into, they’d be more likely to go into them.”

“Businesses would be booming if more money went into town centres & regen.”

“I would be in favour of the loan, but there is a risk. We need to be looking at what we can do.”

“Seems like a good idea – if you’re already in debt, you don’t use your own money. If you have a plan with contingencies, then it seems like a good idea!”

Youth Engagement

- 6.4 We went on to discuss other elements of the budget survey, specifically youth engagement.

We know the importance of engaging with young people and highly value their input. The Council is proposing to increase the budget to increase engagement and participation of young people.

Do you support this? - Comments – What would you like to see from this?

“Social media – you can find it yourself, you’re more likely to take part.”

“More focus groups with young people, but would like more feedback.”

“Run by young people / students, get young people more involved in consultations.”

“I’d like to see what you could do with TikTok.”

“Do more things like this.”

“This is better because we’re talking through, bouncing ideas – I thought I wouldn’t have an opinion but I have loads.”

“Youth Engagement: No, as the money to pay for it has got to come from somewhere and the other services are more important.”

“Funding towards youth engagement should increase, as many of the R.C.T initiatives put forward for young people provide vital opportunities that people may not normally be able to experience. Schemes such as YEPS and the youth forums make young people feel listened to. It also can serve as a way for young people to escape any negatives faced within their own personal situations.”

“Yes - It is vitally important to engage with young people in this local authority area. Their opinions must be taken into consideration on a whole range of things from public spending to new local authority initiatives. Furthermore, with the introduction of Welsh Assembly votes at 16 in Wales the need for increased youth political engagement and participation has never been greater. Young people could be going to the polls in 2021 with very little ideas about political parties including what they represent and politics in general. This needs to be drastically changed in order to vindicate the decision to give the vote to such a young age demographic.”

Paddling Pools

6.5 Do you think the Council should set aside money every year to support groups to open paddling pools throughout the summer holidays?

“Definitely”

“Initially yes, but then they should become self-funded / independent.”

“I don’t feel the Council should prop up organisations that aren’t profitable.”

“Businesses need to survive on their own going forward.”

“I found the paddling pool essential for my family in the summer.”

“As long as it’s safe, trained life guards, proper upkeep etc ”

“It’s something that is so good for the community.”

“Volunteers run them – paddling pool is a real asset.”

“Funding shouldn’t be set aside as I don’t believe it would be used by many people. The funding should go towards other initiatives that would have more engagement.”

Supporting the Muni Arts Centre

6.6 Do you agree with the Council’s plan to contribute towards supporting the re-opening of the Muni Arts Centre?

“Same idea as pool, important in community, can’t completely rely on Council.”

“Needs to be self-sufficient, needs start from Council but needs to become independent.”

“They have to manage in a way that they will eventually be able to run it alone.”

“I agree with the plan as places like that can serve as good tourism opportunities, which can really boost the local economy for areas that need extra money. It could improve the arts scene in R.C.T and serve as a way to broaden the communities’ horizons.”

“Yes - As someone who has taken an active role in school productions which used to occur at the Muni in Pontypridd, I would be one of the first to sing the praises of the facilities available there...”

“Live music (we’d like to see).”

“The content at the Coliseum etc. doesn’t attract me... comedians and comedies would appeal to me over musicals – maybe they could be advertised more?!”

Schools Budget

6.7 Do you agree that the Council should fully fund our schools for next year?

“Schools budget needs to increase.”

“Yes - As someone who is a key believer in the educational process, I feel that any additional investment into schooling in our local authority area would be worth its weight in proverbial gold as any investment that you put in almost directly corresponds with the quality of education that pupils receive. As with additional funding schools will be able to cover existing budget shortfalls, increase educational provision in lessons and provide more extracurricular opportunities for students. All of this will serve to increase both pupils enjoyment of the educational process and the quality of education that they receive from it. Allowing Welsh pupils to achieve their full potential and become some of the best students across the United Kingdom.”

“This is important for us.”

“Teachers sometimes have to buy resources for their lessons.”

“School buildings need modernising in other areas.”

Other comments

6.8 We ended the session by asking the young people if they had any other comments. The comments were mainly in relation to the focus group sessions. The sessions were very well received with most of the young people keen to take part in future consultations in this format, to express their views.

“Will you be doing more of these (engagement sessions)?”

“This method really works, more of a discussion.”

“Bouncing ideas off each other.”

“More of these types of consultations.”

“Different groups of people.”

“I’d be happy to help with future activities, so long as they don’t conflict with my A-Level revision.”

“Happy to take part again.”
