

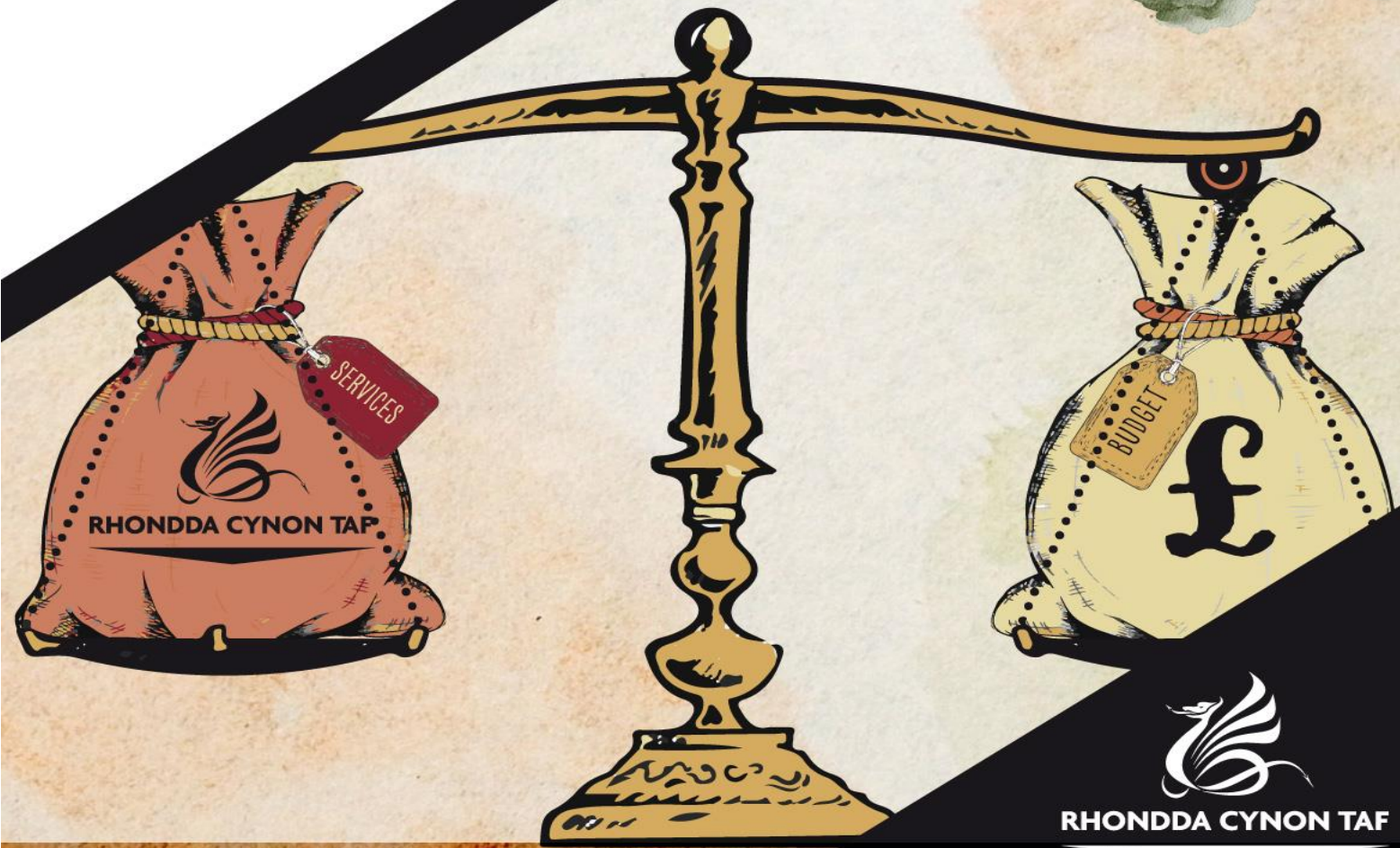
# 2023/24 BUDGET (PHASE 2)

Dewch i  
siarad RhCT  
Let's talk  
RCT

## Budget Consultation

Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC

February 2023



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This section provides a summary of the main findings from the Phase 2 Budget Consultation 2023/24.
- Rhondda Cynon Taf's 2023/24 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.
- Phase 1 provided residents and stakeholders with the opportunity to feedback their views on some of the key strategic building blocks used to construct the Council's budget. The [Phase 1 consultation report](#) was available to support the preparation of the budget strategy proposals and was presented to Cabinet on the 23rd January 2023, where a draft budget strategy was agreed.
- This report presents the findings of **phase 2** of the budget consultation, which asked for views on the draft budget strategy for 2023/24. Phase 2 of the consultation started on the 24<sup>th</sup> January and ended on the 6<sup>th</sup> February 2023.
- The Council is proposing that Council Tax be increased by 3.5% for next year, likely to be one of the lowest increases in Wales. 64.3% of respondents felt that the increase was not reasonable compared to 30.8% who felt the proposed increase was reasonable. The Poll question on the Let's Talk Budget Engagement site was completed by 181 people, with 61.3% in opposition to the proposal.
- The main reasons provided by respondents who disagreed with the proposed increase in Council Tax were: paying more for less of a service with specific references to the recent waste service changes and the current United Kingdom wide cost of living crisis and that people were finding it difficult financially, with the increasing price of food, energy etc.
- The respondents who thought that the proposed increase in Council Tax was reasonable indicated that they understood the need for an increase in Council Tax and the level suggested was fair. The Older Persons Advisory Group (OPAG) members agreed that this is a reasonable increase in Council Tax compared to likely Council Tax increases in other Local Authorities across Wales.
- The Schools Budget next year is once again being prioritised and will contribute a far lower efficiency saving than other Council Services. It is proposed to increase the Schools Budget by £13.7 million, an increase of 7.9% compared to the 6.6% increase in funding the Council has received from Welsh Government. 66.3% of respondents agreed with the approach to continue to prioritise our schools and the proposed increase to the Schools budget for 2023/24.

- Significant work has been undertaken across all Council Services and budget reduction measures totalling £16.16 million for 2023/24 have been identified which can be delivered without impacting on our front-line services. 70.0% of respondents agreed that the Council should continue to maximise efficiency and pursue these efficiency savings for next year.
- 55.3% of respondents agreed with the proposals for fees and charges.
- 67.6% of respondents agreed with the proposed approach for the use of the Council's reserves.
- Over 900 people were engaged in the phase 2 budget consultation. Overall (including Phase 1) over 2,300 people were engaged in the Council's budget setting process.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of the Phase 2 Budget Consultation 2023/24.
- 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 Let's Talk engagement tools and the feedback received from the OPAG.
- 1.5 Section 5 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 Rhondda Cynon Taf's 2023/24 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 Phase 1 provided residents and stakeholders with the opportunity to feedback their views on some of the key strategic building blocks used to construct the Council's budget.
- 2.5 The [Phase 1 consultation report](#) was available to support the preparation of the budget strategy proposals and was presented to Cabinet on the 23rd January 2023, where a draft budget strategy was agreed.
- 2.6 This report presents the findings of **phase 2** of the budget consultation, which asked for views on the draft budget strategy for 2023/24.
- 2.7 Phase 2 of the consultation started on the 24<sup>th</sup> January and ended on the 6<sup>th</sup> February 2023.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 This section provides a summary of the methodology used for the Phase 2 Budget Consultation 2023/24. The consultation was conducted in-house.
- 3.2 The consultation period ran from the 24<sup>th</sup> January and ended on the 6<sup>th</sup> February 2023.
- 3.3 The approach included the following methods to consult with a range of stakeholders:
  - Publication of information on the Rhondda Cynon Taf [“Let’s Talk”](#) website, which included
    - A survey
    - “Quick Polls”
    - A simplified “Easy Read” document that could be downloaded and printed for use by any audiences that felt unable to engage with the full survey format
    - Key background documents
  - Promotion through social media
  - A face-to-face meeting with the OPAG
  - [Overview & Scrutiny Committee virtual meeting](#)
  - School Budget Forum virtual meeting
  - Joint Consultative Committee virtual meeting
  - A face-to-face session with young people and engagement through Instagram
  - An email sent to key stakeholders.
- 3.4 The Council provided a number of alternatives to online engagement, as it is important to continue to consider hard to reach groups, those having reduced or no access to the internet and those who prefer to engage through traditional methods. A telephone consultation option was also in place, through the Council’s contact centre. This option allows people to discuss their views or request consultation materials. Individual call backs were available on request and a consultation Freepost address was available for postal responses.
- 3.5 The Team designed an Easy Read/Plan English Document in paper format and online, to simplify some of the consultation materials.
- 3.6 Over 900 people were engaged in the phase 2 budget consultation. Overall (including Phase 1) over 2,300 people were engaged in the Council’s budget setting process.



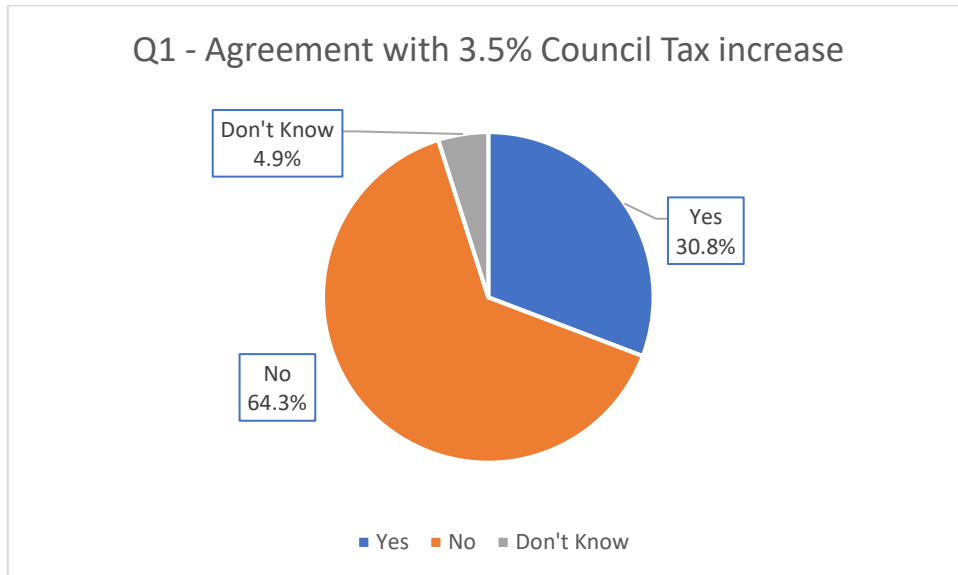
## 4. Consultation Findings

4.1 The following section outlines the results from the phase 2 budget consultation questionnaire, which received 510 responses, and also includes the feedback received from the Older Persons Advisory Group.

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

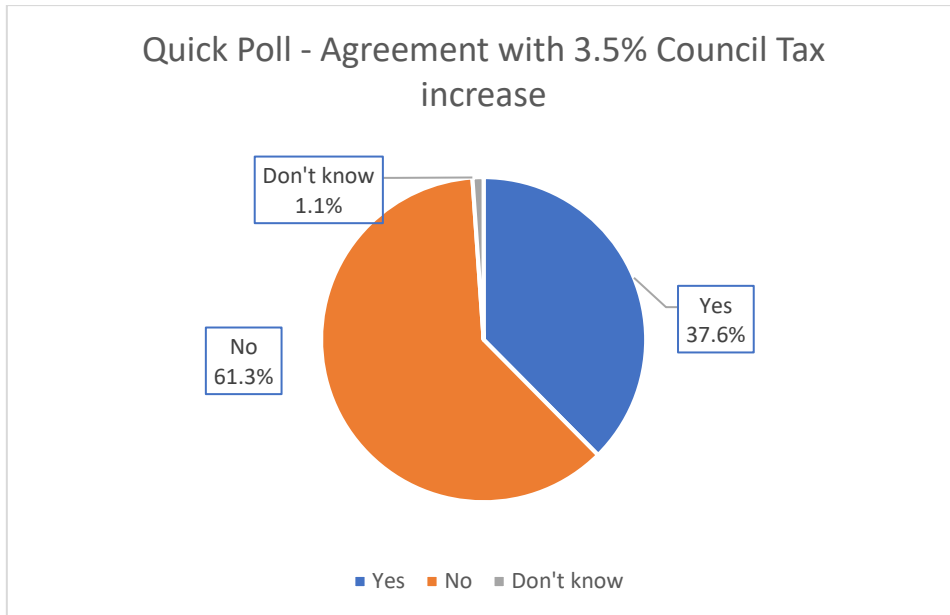
4.2 The Council is proposing that Council Tax be increased by 3.5% for next year. The majority of respondents to the questionnaire felt that the increase was not reasonable (64.3%).



		Number	%
<b>Q1 - Do you agree that 3.5% is a reasonable increase in Council Tax?</b>	Yes	157	30.8%
	No	328	64.3%
	Don't know	25	4.9%
	Total	510	

Figure 1 – Council Tax

4.3 The Poll question on the Let’s Talk Budget Engagement site was completed by 181 people, with 61.3% in opposition to the proposal.



<b>Quick Poll: Do you agree with the proposed Council Tax increase of 3.5%?</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	68	37.6%
No	111	61.3%
Don't know	2	1.1%
	181	

Figure 2 – Council Tax Quick Poll

4.4 The comments received on Council Tax can be placed under a number of themes, as follows:

**Disagreement/Removal of services**

4.5 A large number of comments disagreed with an increase in Council Tax, as respondents felt that they were paying more for less of a service, most of these comments were in relation to the recent waste service changes:

*“You’re dropping collections, we’re all struggling with bills, you want more money from us for a drop in service!”*

*“You have reduced bin waste removal so what are we paying council tax for exactly? I think we need a reduction not increase”*

*“We seem to be asked to pay more towards a council delivering less and less”*



*“You can’t increase when you are decreasing services left right and centre!”*

### **Cost of Living**

- 4.6 Another reason cited for disagreement with the suggested increase in Council Tax was the current cost of living crisis and that people were finding it difficult financially, with the increasing price of food, energy etc.

*“With the current cost of living, the increase in income tax and the reduction of services by the council I don’t think it’s reasonable to ask individuals to pay more”*

*“With the cost of living some residents will not be able to afford to pay the increase”*

*“With the cost of living increased, across the board from energy, food and inflation rises, wages not increasing yet you want to put up council tax? Think a more realistic approach is required. People on benefits would be less affected by this than people working”*

*“With the cost of living crisis this puts further pressure on families!”*

### **Fair increase**

- 4.7 A number of respondents said that they understood the need for an increase in Council Tax and the level suggested was fair.

*“Very reasonable taking into account inflation, another pressure for households but could be much worse”*

*“This is neither too high or too low, it enables front line services to be protected, for this year at least. Those who would find this difficult may be eligible for CTRS”*

*“Prepared for an increase if services need to be paid for”*

*“Probably could manage a bit higher if this helps safeguard services”*

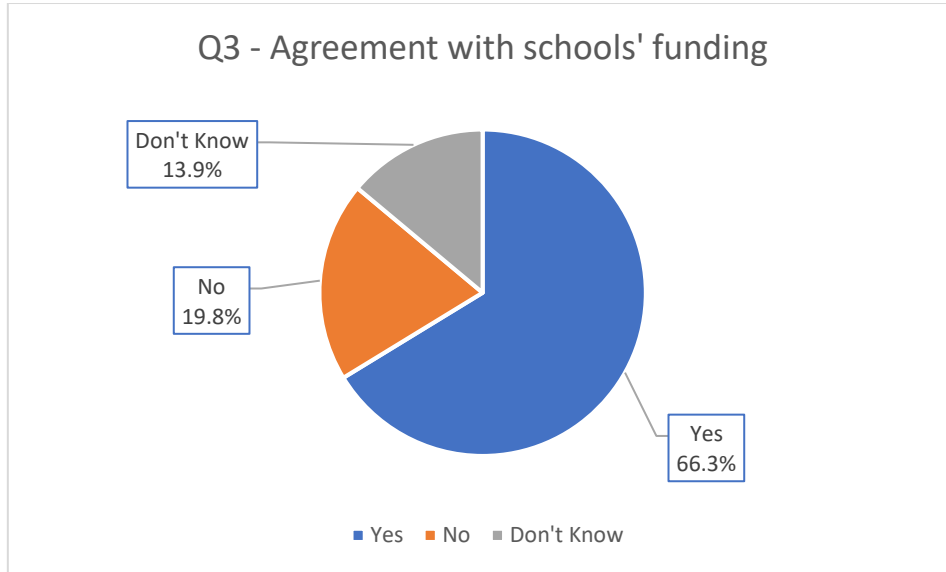
*“A small increase seems inevitable to avoid cuts in services”*

- 4.8 OPAG members agreed that this is a reasonable increase in Council Tax when compared to likely Council Tax increases in other Local Authorities across Wales. The group noted the increase in the cost of living and the increase in Council Tax is expected.

**Schools Funding**

4.9 The Schools Budget next year is once again being prioritised and will have to contribute a far lower efficiency saving than other Council Services. It is proposed to increase the Schools Budget by £13.7 million, an increase of 7.9% as compared to the 6.6% increase in funding the Council has received from Welsh Government.

**66.3% of respondents agreed with the approach and the proposed increase to the Schools budget for 2023/24.**



		Number	%
<b>Q3 - Schools</b>	Yes	338	66.3%
	No	101	19.8%
	Don't know	71	13.9%
	Total	510	

Figure 3 – Schools

4.10 The majority of comments welcomed the approach for funding schools.

*“The schools teach the future generation and need to be fit for purpose”*

*“The education of our children is important for the future”*

*“Schools should have unlimited funding”*

*“Schools need more money - more than this really”*

4.11 Of those who were not in support, the main reason was that respondents thought that the funding should be provided to other service areas, mainly social care:

*“With the NHS in crisis I believe our social care system needs greater investment”*

*“Unless social care has the same level of protection against efficiencies”*

*“Social care services are just as essential. There is limited scope for efficiencies across the councils, don't think schools should be protected”*

- 4.12 Some of the comments raised concerns over the efficiency within schools.

*“Schools management needs to be more prudent across the board, in particular with regard to the staffing levels of agency / supply teaching staff”*

*“I am sure schools can be more efficient but they must be a priority”*

*“A lot of school funding is completely wasted by the schools”*

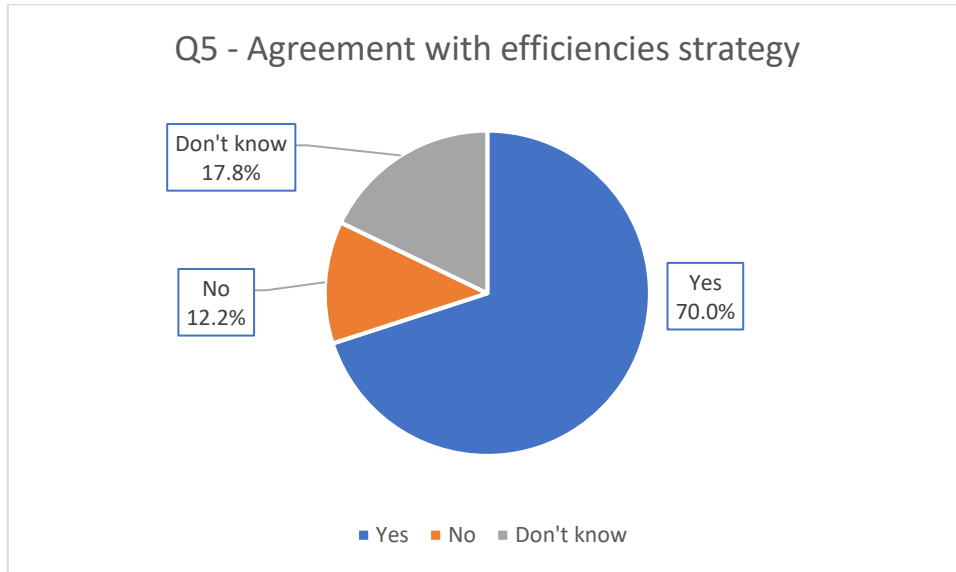
*“Needs better management of finances”*

- 4.13 The OPAG agreed with the proposal, urging the importance of education for the current and future generations. A question was raised regarding the expectation of schools as they are receiving extra funding and feedback was provided that the additional funding will cover increases in costs that are being experienced by schools as a result of rises in the cost of living, amongst other things.

**Efficiencies**

4.14 Significant work has been undertaken across all Council Services and budget reduction measures totalling £16.16 million for 2023/24 have been identified which can be delivered without impacting on our front-line services

**70% of respondents agreed** that the Council should continue to maximise efficiency and pursue these efficiency savings for next year.



		Number	%
<b>Q5 - Efficiencies</b>	Yes	357	70.0%
	No	62	12.2%
	Don't know	91	17.8%
	Total	510	

Figure 4 – Efficiencies

4.15 Many of the responses were in agreement with the need for efficiencies:

*“Reducing waste and making efficiencies should always be the starting point when budgets are tight.”*

*“Maximise efficiency but do not reduce essential services”*

*“Making efficiencies is a must for all organisations and the council should be no different”*

*“It's to your credit that Council is still driving hard on savings through efficiencies”*

4.16 Some of the comments on this proposal noted that efficiencies should not be found at the expense of staffing levels or support.

*“This should take place although not at the expense of additional roles or recruitment to look at budget reductions”*

*“Only if it doesn't impact on staff and the quality of the services you provide”*

*“Efficiency- yes but not if it means putting pressure on the workforce and more is expected of them for the same money”*

*“As long as there are no pay cuts or increased workload due to a decrease in staff for front line workers”*

- 4.17 A number of suggestions for efficiencies and savings were made in the comments, including:

*“Covid lockdown has demonstrated that many council and related services can be delivered via home or hybrid working, reducing the need for many buildings across the borough which could be sold off and used for other means, building more schools, housing or community hubs, rather than us paying to heat large office spaces which are surplus to requirements in the 21st century working environment”*

*“With technology advancements to improve the efficiency of processes, I think this should be continued to look at efficiencies. Also the move to three weekly waste collections will save and hopefully improve the waste management in residential properties across the region.”*

*“For example do we need libraries in Abercynon and Hirwaun when there are libraries in Aberdare and Mt Ash etc.”*

*“Efficiencies should be sort but not to the detriment of front line services I would suggest introducing a streamline structure and a dynamic team”*

*“Service levels should be maintained through smart working”*

- 4.18 A number of comments called for cuts to managers and Councillors:

*“It is vital to maintain your workforce as much as possible, however have less people sitting at the top receiving stupidly high wages and employ more people to get things done efficiently”*

*“Every penny counts. Maybe look at how many managers you employ or those on high wages”*

*“Less councillors”*

- 4.19 A number of respondents queried the statement outlined in the question that the efficiencies could be made without impacting upon frontline services. This was mainly in relation to the recent service changes (NB:

the savings that will be realised from the recent service changes do not form part of the £16.1M efficiencies proposals).

*“The waste collection moving to 3 weeks is not an efficiency saving, it is a cost cutting as you are removing a service. Call it what it is”*

*“How can you say this will not impact front line services when clearly it will, one such service is cutting hot meals from May 2023 and cutting hours of staff delivering those meals to the most vulnerable people in our society”*

*“You have cut extremely valuable front line services to do this.”*

- 4.20 The OPAG agreed that the Council should continue to maximise efficiency and pursue those efficiencies for the year to follow.

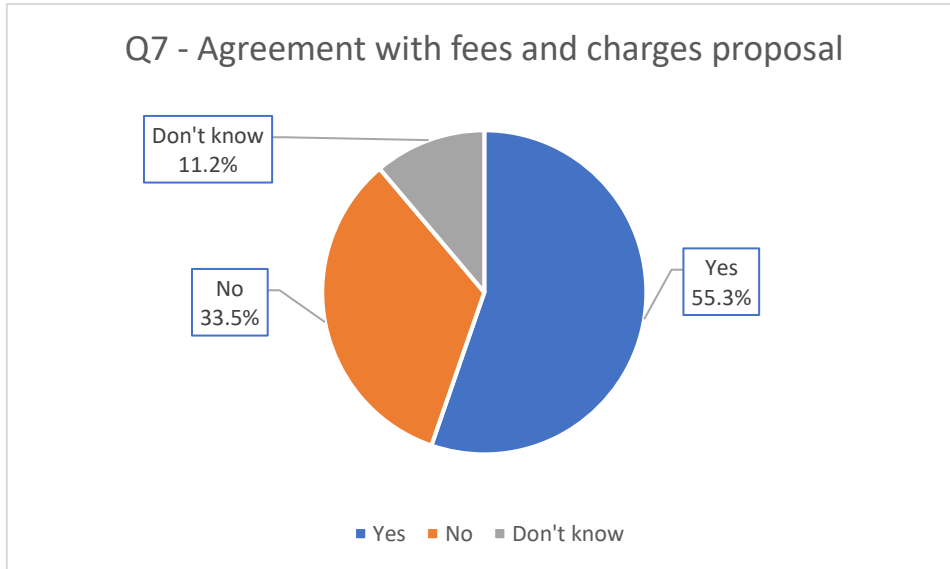
### **Fees and Charges**

- 4.21 The Council reviews the level of fees and charges on an annual basis in the context of the rate of inflation. The current level of inflation (Consumer Prices Index to December 2022) is 10.5%. It is proposed that for the year ahead, the general rate of increase across our fees and charges is set at 5% with the Council absorbing the implications of not applying an uplift in line with inflation. A number of areas are proposed to be subject to specific changes, as shown in the table below:

<b>Area of Charge</b>	<b>Specific Fees and Charges Proposals</b>
Car Park Charges	Freeze
Licenses (Hackney Carriage / Private Hire)	Freeze
Cinema Entrance Fee	Freeze
School Meals (Primary and Secondary Schools)	£2.70 Primary School (per meal) £2.95 Secondary School (per meal)
Leisure for Life – Membership / Pay and Play	Membership £37.50 (with further proposals set out in the full Fees and Charges Review)
Bereavement Services (Burial and Cremation fees)	Cremation Fee £812.90 Burial Fee £2,116.40
Rhondda Heritage Park	£9.95 Adult Entry (with further proposals set out in the full Fees and Charges Review)
Lido (Pontypridd)	£3.00 Adult Entry (Children Under 16 remain free)
Dare Valley Country Park (Caravan Pitch charge)	£28.00 per caravan pitch
Day Services – Meal price	£4.55 per meal
Home Care Hourly Charge / Day Centre Daily Charge	£20 Home Care Hourly Charge £20 Day Centre Daily Charge
Bulky Waste Collection	£17.00 (for up to 3 items)
Residential Parking	£12.00 (first permit), £17.50 (second permit) and £60 (for subsequent additional permits)
Registrar (non-statutory fees)	For example, Marriage and Civil Partnership fee at an approved premises Monday – Friday £435.00
Building Regulations	For example, Domestic Extension: Single storey extensions <10m2 £346.00
Non-Statutory Food Export Health Certificates	£35.75



4.22 All of these changes would generate additional income of £750k per year. **55.3% of respondents agreed with the proposals for fees and charges.**



		Number	%
<b>Q7 - Fees and Charges</b>	Yes	282	55.3%
	No	171	33.5%
	Don't know	57	11.2%
	Total	510	

Figure 5 – Fees and Charges

4.23 Overall there were a wide range of comments on all the areas of fees and charges proposals, based on services used and people’s understanding of each of the services.

There was some general agreement with the overall approach:

*“Seem very reasonable to me”*

*“This is an appropriate set of steps to take”*

*“Inflation makes these charges necessary, so they are reasonable.”*

*“I agree because these services deserve to be priced equal to other similar s revives across Wales. But consideration needs to be taken that footfall may drop”*

4.24 In addition there was some general disagreement, with many comments referring to the cost of living crisis.

*“You are proposing an increase in costs when many of us have had a real term pay cut for a dozen years.”*

*"If my pay increases to compensate for the last 12 years and also matches or, god forbid, exceeds inflation, then by all means go ahead. Until then, no."*

*"People's income is not increasing so why would you impose more fees"*

*"Again it will affect struggling families who are unable to claim any help"*

- 4.25 The following areas received the most comments and a selection of those comments are provided.

### **Lido Charge**

*"Lido would benefit from a membership or being brought within the L4L scheme"*

*"Why not make the lido fees exactly the same as the rest of the leisure pools in Rct. This would stop people booking and not turning up and increase funds"*

*"The lido charge is far too low. It is a highly popular attraction visited by more people outside the borough who benefit from a great attraction at a low price. . Minimum charge of £7.50 an adult in line with LC2 etc."*

*"Lido fee seems rather low when considering how much it costs to run. Shouldn't it be self-funding?"*

### **Leisure**

*"Should be encouraging use of sports facilities by lowering the cost of leisure for life to help reduce obesity and ill health."*

*"I would've liked to see a reduction in cost for the Leisure for Life fitness subscription to encourage more people to take up fitness activities."*

*"Do not increase cost to use leisure centres as this will detract from their usage and prevent people living healthier."*

### **School Dinners**

*"I believe that school meals should be free"*

*"I do for the majority but not for the school meal increase. Lots of the school meals provided are pretty abysmal considering this is the only hot meal some children will be having."*

*"Apart from school dinners. It's very expensive when you have more than one in school and needing to pay. An increase isn't great"*

*“An increase on school meals cost, when families are already struggling with the cost of living”*

### **Bulky Waste**

*“Increase non-essential such as cinema fees. The bulky waste collection increase will only mean more fly tipping”*

*“I think the bulky collection rate is a bit high, surely reduce or freeze this and then hopefully reduce the fly tipping costs”*

*“I feel that some of the optional activities should cost more and things like bulk waste disposal less to help reduce fly tipping.”*

*“I don't agree with the bulky waste increases currently sitting at £12.5. Increased will push even further an already high level of people dumping their stuff wherever they can”*

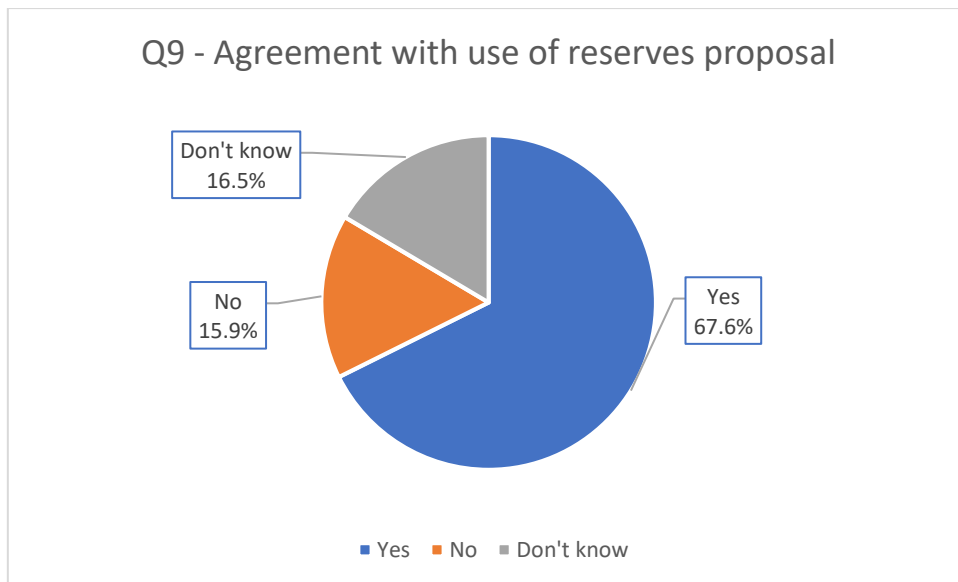
- 4.26 The OPAG noted increases in fees and charges are expected, however advised the Council to consider the increases in entrance cost of the Lido to £3. A member of the group noted the importance of the Lido to older people as a means of exercising and socialising.

**Use of Reserves (Transitional Funding)**

4.27 The latest estimates for the Council’s energy costs in 2023/24 show an increase of 283% for gas and 147% for electricity. It is proposed that a contribution from the Council reserves of £5 million is used to reduce the impact of these increases and that we continue to monitor the volatility closely and consider any temporary government support which might be available.

The Council is also proposing to use a further £4.1 million of reserves (transition funding) to balance the budget for next year.

**67.6% of respondents agreed with the proposal to use the Council’s reserves in this way.**



		Number	%
<b>Q9 - Use of Reserves</b>	Yes	345	67.6%
	No	81	15.9%
	Don't know	84	16.5%
	Total	510	

Figure 6 – Use of Reserves

4.28 A number of respondents were happy with the proposed use of reserves suggested:

*“We need to ensure the continuity of services i.e.. Social services, education etc.”*

*“Use reserves instead of hiking tax and costs on public”*

*“This is sensible financial management”*

*"I would expect the reserves to be used this way"*

4.29 There were a number of suggestions for savings:

*"Some reserves could be used this way, however wherever possible, staff in my view should be working from home, less money spent on traveling of staff, and a saving to energy usage"*

*"Yes in principle, however it would not be a prudent allocation of resources if other measures were not being used in conjunction, for example, increasing insulation in public buildings, good care and maintenance etc - in the same way that households are expected to do to manage energy costs."*

*"Please close the unnecessary offices that the council has and move employees to working from home."*

*"Measures should be taken to reduce gas and electricity consumption e.g. staff working from home, downsizing premises"*

*"Do you really need the amount of buildings you have? Especially when a large proportion of your workforce are now working from home?"*

4.30 The question on reserves stated that the latest estimates for the Council's energy costs in 2023/24 show an increase of 283% for gas and 147% for electricity. As a result, there were a number of comments on the Council's energy costs:

*"Unprecedented times as far as energy concerned - but energy efficient measures need to be continually reviewed"*

*"This needs to be reviewed in line with the prices as prices are reducing. Need to implement energy saving plans during the Sumner period to help keep winter costs to a minimum."*

*"The council should make sure all premises are managed correctly i.e. energy saving. Knocking lights off etc. Minimise the use to save on bills"*

*"Try turning lights and heating down like the rest of us, wasted lighting on buildings is unbelievable. How about using some of those reserves to help us out with our council tax."*

4.31 There were also calls for the Government to help out with more assistance and for the Council to request further support from central government.

*"The government need to do more"*

*“The council should also ask for further assistance from the Welsh and UK governments to limit the reliance on reserves”*

*“So much more needs to be done to counteract the ridiculous increases in fuel costs but, unfortunately, it's not at your level.”*

*“Balance the reserves? Councils and governments need to stand up to energy companies”*

*“Need to get more funding from government- England”*

- 4.32 The OPAG commented on the importance of reserves within the Council and agreed with the proposed use of the Council reserves as outlined.

## **Other Comments**

- 4.33 A wide range of general comments were received regarding the budget. Some of the most frequent themes are described below, with relevant quotes.

### **Appreciation for the current budget climate**

*“I understand councils do not get adequate funding from government but a lot of people are struggling with bills so a more sympathetic approach would help, also explore more options for people who are struggling to pay with council tax etc.”*

*“I suppose they are doing their best, but if the funds are not available they are between a rock and a hard place”*

*“Overall the council does a very good job given the circumstances and it’s resident profile which I trust will continue even with the restrictions on budgets.”*

*“The council is stuck between a rock and a hard place and I don’t envy you these decisions”*

### **Recent changes to Waste Management**

*“Leave the bin collections alone, nobody wants 3 weekly collections and recycling sacks. Listen to the residents”*

*“The budget will need to consider the treatment of extra vermin and litter in the Rhondda with the new bin collection time scales”*

### **Calls for the Rhondda Fach Bypass and Investment**

*“Desperately need a new bypass from Pontygwaith to Maerdy, the current road system is not suitable for the amount of traffic”*

*“Where is the commitment to fulfilling the promise to complete the Rhondda Fach (known locally as ‘the forgotten valley’ for obvious reasons) relief road reflected in the budget?”*

*“New bypass needed in Rhondda Fach, from Pontygwaith to Maerdy. Will enable traffic to flow easier in busy times. Especially with new Welsh school due to be built in Maerdy”*

*“Spend some money on the Rhondda Fach. Extend the bypass to maerdy”*



### **Councillor and Management Costs/ Levels**

*“Review the pay structure of councillors and consider paying them the living wage for the little they contribute to the community. RCT are a disgrace , rises in council tax for less services when everyone is struggling to even eat”*

*“Cut the pay for the leaders”*

### **Key areas for investment or protection**

*“look to increase money provided for the care sector. This is an area that has lacked improvement and requires addressing.”*

*“... Please ensure the young and old have something to look forward too. We are all in a struggle and need to work together .. More food banks ,more coffee mornings . And a cheap run club for children from ages 2 to 10... I'd even volunteer”*

- 4.34 A number of comments described feelings that people are not listened to during the Council's consultations. This feeling was mainly due to the recent service change on waste services and the feeling amongst respondents that they were not listened to.

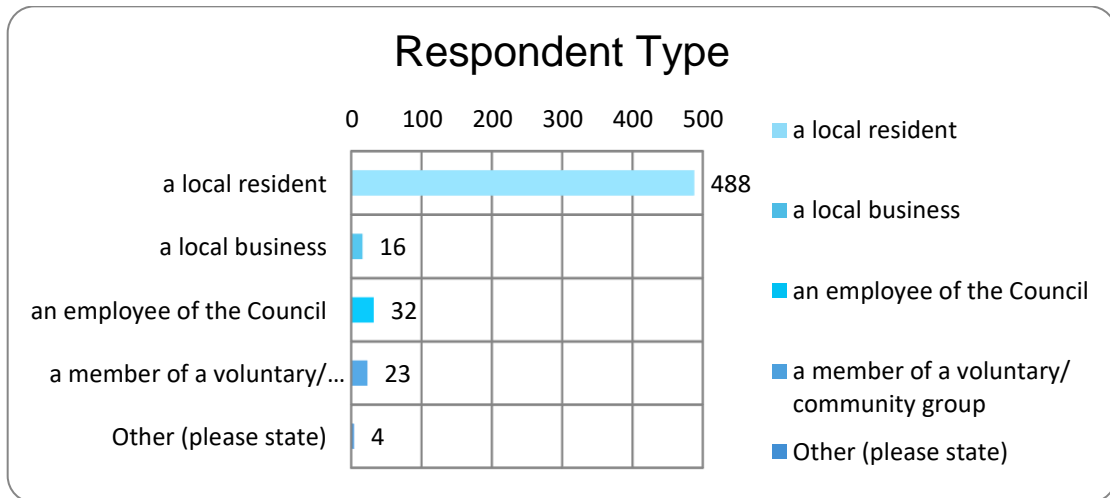
*“Detail is required along with clear reasoning to better inform decisions from the public on budget related surveys.”*

*“I debated whether to complete this survey or not as I genuinely believe you don't listen to our concerns.”*

*“It won't matter what residents say because the decisions have already been made.”*

**About You**

4.35 The majority of respondents to the survey were residents (96.1%).



Note: This was a multiple response question.

**Figure 7 – Respondent Type**

4.36 Under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duties, the Council has a legal duty to look at how its decisions impact on people because they may have particular characteristics. Respondents were asked how the proposals affect them because of:

1. Gender
2. Age
3. Ethnicity
4. Disability
5. Sexuality
6. Religion / belief
7. Gender identity
8. Relationship status
9. Pregnancy
10. Preferred language

4.37 The most frequent theme in the comments was age, with a number of respondents expressing concern over the impact of rising costs and indicated pensions and other income remaining static.

Other comments also referred to the recent change proposed to the waste collection frequency across RCT and reiterated concerns about the impact of this change on large families and those with disabilities.

Single-adult families facing rising costs were also mentioned in a number of comments.

The following are a selection of the comments received.

*"I will have even more less money which is already now quite hard as a single parent."*

*"As a single person with 2 young children an increase to council tax is a worry especially with the cost of living crisis. I am already struggling"*

*"Bin collection 3 weekly will be a serious problem as we can be 6 people in 1 house"*

*"My son has an ALN which is not being supported appropriately due to lack of funding"*

*"I will no longer afford to heat my house because of the increase in council tax and service fees, as an old age pensioner my health will be affected"*

*"I am a pensioner and my income is being eroded by higher costs of living and I am unable to earn extra."*

- 4.38 With regards to the proposals, and the impact they may have, respondents were asked how they could impact opportunities for people to use and promote the Welsh Language (Positive, Negative or Neutral) and if, in any way, it treats the Welsh Language less favourably than the English Language, and how neutral effects could become positive, how positive effects could be increased, or negative effects be decreased.

A number of respondents commented on Welsh language education, from early years through to adult education. They stressed the importance of Welsh language provision at all ages and expressed concern that schools might not be able to offer full support through the medium of Welsh if facing budget reductions.

Multiple comments stated the importance of community activities and spaces that promote the Welsh language and provide social space for using the Welsh language.

Many comments stated that there was no effect on the Welsh language or shared the view that too much money is spent on current bilingual/ Welsh language communications and services.

The following are a selection of the comments received.

*"Welsh schools need better resources and bigger budgets to encourage children to attend. There needs to be more Welsh language cylch meithrin's in the area to promote being bilingual."*

*"I can't see any way the strategy negatively affects use of the Welsh Language. As a Welsh Language learner, I strongly believe that the*

*Welsh language should continue to be promoted/used as much as possible.”*

*“I do not feel the Welsh language is being promoted at all but this does not need to cost money. Just setting up a local group of people who want to learn Welsh and who already speak Welsh and getting them conversing via local walking tours of RCT would be a perfect way. We live in a beautiful area of the world with a deep multilingual heritage and culture. We are quite unique and have a wonderful sense of community. This does not cost money to promote but initiatives always seem to cost money”*

*“Welsh language should be prioritised in all aspects, more information regarding the school budgets would assist on how much the council are putting into Welsh schools in RCT.”*

*“There is a severe lack of Welsh language early education, childcare and holiday provision in RCT. This goes against the Wellbeing Act, the Welsh Language and children's rights.”*

*“I am for the development of the Welsh language but perhaps we need to reconsider all signs/paperwork etc in both languages as it costs so much and the majority speak and read English. When we have lots of cash great but could this be a way of saving?”*

*“It will affect my son attending Welsh medium education, because we may need to move him to an English language school if he is not supported appropriately”*

*“If more cuts to community centres are cuts and to schools, the opportunity to speak Welsh will become affected. As a Welsh speaker I don't feel there's a lot opportunity to speak Welsh and feel that a lot of English schools has more funding than Welsh”*

*“People are taking an interest in the language so more free classes would be appreciated thus promoting the language”*

**The detailed comments received for the above 2 questions have been made available to officers for the development of the associated impact assessments.**

## 5. YOUNG PERSONS ENGAGEMENT

- 5.1 A presentation was delivered to 12 students at the Ysgol Nant Gwyn School on the 31<sup>st</sup> January at 11am. During the session, we aimed to gather students' thoughts towards the Council's budget for 2023/24.
- 5.2 The presentation gave some background on the Council's budget, including where the Council get its money from, the budget for 2023/24, what Council Tax is and the views received in the Phase 1 consultation.
- 5.3 The questions were centred around Council Tax levels, Efficiencies, Fees and Charges and School budgets.
- 5.4 The following comments were provided by the students:

### **Slide 7: Council Tax**

*Do you think it is fair to increase Council Tax by 3.5% to help pay for services?*

All students agreed that the Council Tax increase was fair due to the increase in the cost of living.

### **Slide 8: Fees and Charges**

*Which ones would you freeze/decrease/increase and why?*

Students agreed to freeze leisure centre membership / pay and play and Lido entry. However, the students choose to decrease Car Parking charges and Cinema fees. Lastly, the students agreed to decrease the Bulky Waste Collections fee as a means of deterring people from littering.

### **Slide 9: Efficiencies**

*Do you think the Council should continue working this way?*

All students agreed that the Council should continue operating this way.

### **Slide 10: Schools**

*Do you think we should increase the money schools get so we can cover all the costs that have gone up?*

All students agreed that the Council should continue providing funding for schools as there are a number of resources which the schools requires and areas which need improvement.

The students commented on the need for more printers within the schools as there are currently only 3. This presents difficulties for the school as students need the printers for course work etc.

The students also expressed a need to improve Wi-Fi connection within the school as its weak and impacts on completing work and getting access to the internet for work.

Lastly, the students commented on the need for more classes in order to reduce the number of children in one class.

### **Instagram and Facebook**

- 5.5 Budget content involving information followed by polls were created and shared on the YEPS' Instagram account. Two separate decks of Instagram 'stories' were posted on February 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, advertising the Budget Consultation. Specifically focusing on school funding and Council efficiencies detailing how young people could take part. There was a link to the Consultation's Let's Talk website which had a dedicated Budget project page consisting of web polls, an 'Idea' tool and the Council's main survey.
- 5.6 The Council's Budget Content was also shared by YEPS' Facebook account. The information shared on the decks of stories can be seen in the table below:

<b>Schools</b>			
<b>First Story</b>	<b>Second Story</b>	<b>Third Story</b>	<b>Fourth Story</b>
BUDGET 2023/24 - SCHOOLS	The Schools Budget next year is once again being prioritised and will contribute a far lower efficiency than other Council Services.	The school's budget is proposed to increase by £13.7 million, an increase of 7.9% as compared to the 6.6% increase in funding the Council has received from Welsh Government.	Do you agree that 7.9% is a reasonable increase?

<b>Post Four: Efficiencies</b>			
<b>First Story</b>	<b>Second Story</b>	<b>Third Story</b>	<b>Fourth Story</b>
BUDGET 2023/24 - EFFICIENCIES	Significant work towards budget reduction measures has been undertaken across all Council Services	The total budget reduction measures for 2023/24 equal £16.16 million	Do you agree with this approach? - Yes - No - Don't Know

- 5.7 The following table shows the engagement and views from YEPS, totalling 350 views and 34 responses.

Story	Views	Votes		
Schools	182	Yes - 9 (39%)	No - 8 (35%)	Don't know - 6 (26%)
Efficiencies	168	Yes - 4 (36%)	No - 1 (9%)	Don't know - 6 (55%)

5.8 As evidenced in the graph below, the responses had mixed views on whether the school’s budget should increase at the proposed rate, with a slight majority of 39% of respondents stating that they agree with the proposed funding increase.

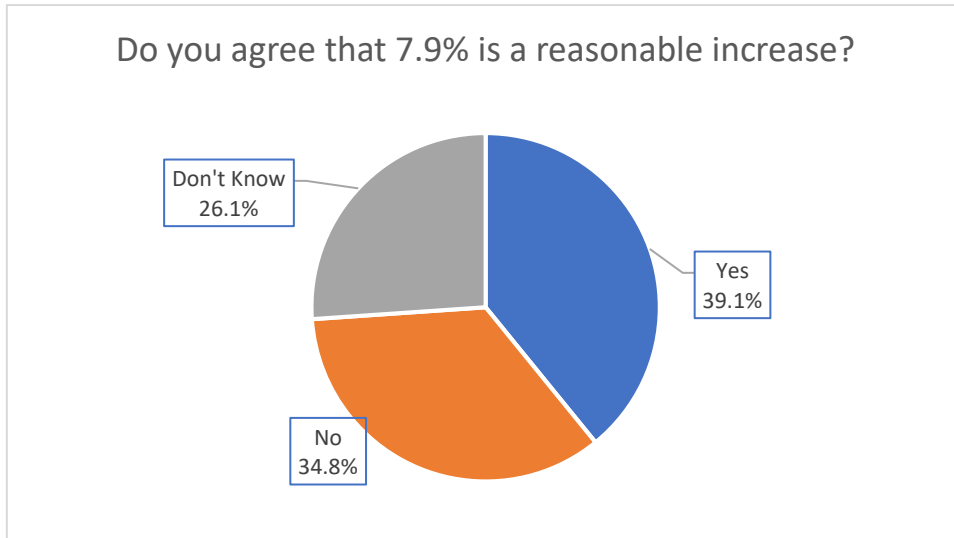


Figure 8 - YEPS Instagram: *School Funding*

5.9 As evidenced in the graph below, the majority of responses were not sure on whether the Council’s approach to efficiencies across its services was an approach that they agreed with. However, more people agreed than not with the proposed approach..

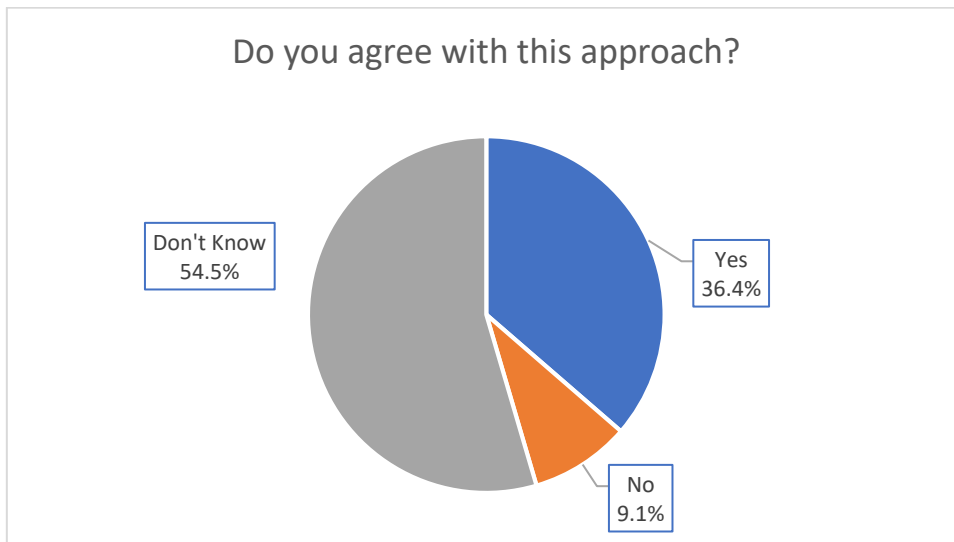


Figure 9 - YEPS Instagram: *Efficiencies*