



## Consultation Report

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Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC

February 2024

# Home to School Transport Policy Consultation



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This report presents the findings of the consultation on the Council's Home to School Transport Policy.
- The Home to School Transport consultation was conducted in-house and ran from the 27<sup>th</sup> November 2023 and ended on the 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024. The Consultation was then extended for a further 3 weeks between the 18<sup>th</sup> January and the 8<sup>th</sup> February to provide a further opportunity for people to take part in the consultation.
- An email was sent to all schools, Headteachers, and Chair of Governors to be forwarded on to all parents and carers. An email was also sent to key stakeholders to promote the consultation and encourage participation in the online survey, including public transport operators.
- Respondents were also given the option to write in using a dedicated email address [HTSConsultation@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:HTSConsultation@rctcbc.gov.uk), and a telephone option was also in place through the Council's contact centre.
- The Council held 8 public engagement events, where officers were on hand to answer any questions on the proposal and encourage or assist people to take part in the survey.
- The majority of respondents were a parent/carer of a young person who uses or will use Home to School transport (79.8%). There were a high number of responses from Welsh schools overall (36.8%), considering that there are 17 Welsh medium schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf and 115 schools in total.
- The service change **proposal** was outlined in the survey as follows;

*To continue to provide a generous discretionary Home to School Transport Provision for over 6000 learners and bring mainstream English, Welsh and Faith primary and secondary school and college transport in line with statutory distance criteria. This option has the potential to deliver savings of approximately £2.5m*

79% of respondents **disagreed** with the proposal.

- The proposal would maintain discretionary school transport provision for over 6,000 learners. Respondents were asked if they agreed that this level of discretionary provision should be retained? 50% agreed that it should be retained, 36% disagreed and 14% stated don't know.
- The proposal would result in savings of approximately £2.5m to help towards safeguarding changes to other discretionary elements of the school transport provision. Respondents were asked if they agreed with the proposal if it helps to maintain future discretionary school transport provision. **70% disagreed.**

- The Council considered other options prior to consultation but deemed that they were either unaffordable, i.e. do nothing and risk more significant impacts in future years, or that the impact on learners was too great, i.e. removing all discretionary provision. Respondents were asked if they agreed that the proposal taken forward to consultation is the fairest option available to the Council. 69% responded that they did not agree that it was the fairest option, with 16% agreeing and 15% stated they didn't know.
- The 69% of respondents who disagreed that the proposal was the fairest option were asked to provide any alternative options that they would like the Council to consider. A number of themes were identified;
  - General disagreement with the proposal/ transport provision should remain as is currently provided;
  - Financial impact – on family and single/working parents/carers;
  - Respondents said they would be happy to pay a charge (including suggestions of a means tested or subsidised charge);
  - Impact on school attendance;
  - Safety concerns (particularly for younger learners);
  - Increased traffic / congestion and environmental concerns;
  - Unfair to 'exempt' faith and Welsh schools, they should be the same;
  - Impact on Welsh Language learners/Welsh Education standards;
  - Treating Welsh/English Medium and Faith learners equitably;
  - Savings should be found from elsewhere;
  - Alternative options should be considered such as looking at other possible distances that would qualify for free transport provision or retaining certain elements of current discretionary provision;
  - Issues with existing public transport provision.
- A number of comments raised concerns that up to 3 miles of walking each way to school is not achievable in many areas due to topography and weather conditions, alongside safety concerns.
- A number of comments were received in relation to the potential impacts of the proposal on protected characteristics of residents, particularly for preferred language/belief, disability, relationship status and sex.
- A large number of comments were received referring to the different provisions that are proposed for faith and Welsh language schools, with commenters believing they are being discriminated against as a result.
- A number of comments raised concerns about the effect of the proposals on parents/ guardians with disabilities being less able to walk or provide other transport for pupils to school. Some respondents were concerned that there will be a disproportionate impact on single/ lone parents.
- There are comments about a perceived higher risk to female pupils when walking to school, as well as a potential greater impact on women who are more likely to be primary caregivers.

- A number of comments highlighted impacts on socio-economic factors, including employment and lower-income families and those who cannot access public transport easily or regularly.
- A large number of comments were received that raise concerns about disincentivising parents from placing their children in Welsh Language Schools.
- 54% of respondents thought that the proposal would impact the opportunities and promotion of the Welsh Language negatively.
- 41% of the respondents said that the proposal does not treat the Welsh Language less favourably than the English Language, although 36% thought that it did.
- Overall, **2858** responses were received to the consultation survey and 39 emails.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of the consultation on the Council's Home to School Transport Policy.
- 1.2 Section 2 outlines some brief background to the consultation.
- 1.3 Section 3 details the methodology.
- 1.4 Section 4 provides the results of the survey.
- 1.5 Section 5 presents the feedback received from written responses.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Council is facing significant financial challenges into the medium term and is considering a range of options to contribute to addressing the shortfall in funding. Due to the financial pressures the Council is facing we are considering changes to current Home to School Transport Policy, to align transport provision more closely with Welsh Government statutory transport requirements. This is necessary for the Council to: -
  - maintain affordability within future financial constraints;
  - continue to be able to meet its statutory requirements; and
  - maintain discretionary transport for its most vulnerable users (i.e. ALN pupils).
- 2.2 Currently, the Council provides Home to School Transport to all pupils who live 1.5 miles away from their primary school and 2 miles from their secondary school. This is above the statutory legal requirement set out by Welsh Government. If the service change is approved, the Council will provide Home to School Transport to all pupils who live 2 miles or more away from their primary school and 3 miles or more away from their secondary school.
- 2.3 For almost 10 years, the Council has provided over 9,000 learners with access to free school transport on a discretionary basis. This means that the Council currently provides discretionary transport for more learners than almost every other Welsh Council's Home to School Transport operations.
- 2.4 The Council's Home to School Transport costs have increased from £8 million in 2015 to over £15 million for the 2023/24 financial year.

- 2.5 This service change would put the Council's transport policy in line with Welsh Government's statutory distance eligibility criteria and statutory walking distance policy, which 18 of the 22 Councils in Wales currently adopt. and deliver savings amounting to £2.5 million in a full year, meaning the Council would continue to provide some discretionary provisions amounting to £4.4 million per year.
- 2.6 The full details of the proposal are outlined in the [Cabinet Report](#) that initiated the consultation.

### **3 METHODOLOGY**

- 3.1 The Home to School Transport consultation was conducted in-house and ran from the 27<sup>th</sup> November 2023 and ended on the 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024. The Consultation was then extended for a further 3 weeks between the 18<sup>th</sup> January and the 8<sup>th</sup> February to provide a further opportunity for people to take part in the consultation. This section presents the methodology which was used to promote and collect the data.
  - 3.2 The consultation used an online survey which was built using Snap XMP. The survey aimed to gain feedback on the proposals.
  - 3.3 An email was sent to all schools who could be potentially impacted by the proposal to Headteachers and Chair of Governors to be forwarded on to all parents and carers.
  - 3.4 To ensure wide outreach and involvement of the wider community the consultation was promoted on the [Councils online consultation webpage](#). An FAQ was developed to provide further information.
  - 3.5 An email was also sent to key stakeholders to promote the consultation and encourage participation in the online survey, including public transport operators.
  - 3.6 Respondents were encouraged to write in using a dedicated email address [HTSConsultation@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:HTSConsultation@rctcbc.gov.uk), in order to allow them to share their views.
- Overall, there were a total of 39 emails/letters received from the public relating to the consultation.
- 3.7 A telephone consultation option was 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.

- 3.8 The Council held 8 public engagement events, where officers were on hand to answer any questions on the proposal and assist or encourage people to take part in in the survey.
- Rhondda Sports Centre, Ystrad 4th December 2023, 4pm-7pm
  - Llantrisant Leisure Centre, Llantrisant 6th December 2023, 12pm-2pm & 4pm-7pm
  - Sobell Sports Centre, Aberdare 11th December 2023, 4pm-7pm
  - Hawthorn Leisure Centre, Hawthorn 29th January 2024, 4pm-7pm
  - Sobell Leisure Centre, Aberdare 30th January, 12pm-2pm, 4pm-7pm
  - Rhondda Fach Leisure Centre, Tylorstown 31st January 2024, 4pm-7pm
- 3.9 The Council's YEPs team developed a young person's version of the proposal and shared with youth forum members The consultation was undertaken by sharing the HTS information with young people through a social media group for youth forum members and they were asked to complete a survey following this.
- 3.10 The proposals were presented and discussed at the [Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) on the 13<sup>th</sup> December 2023.
- 3.11 Overall, 2858 survey responses and 39 emails were received to the consultation. The map on the following page shows the distribution of responses.

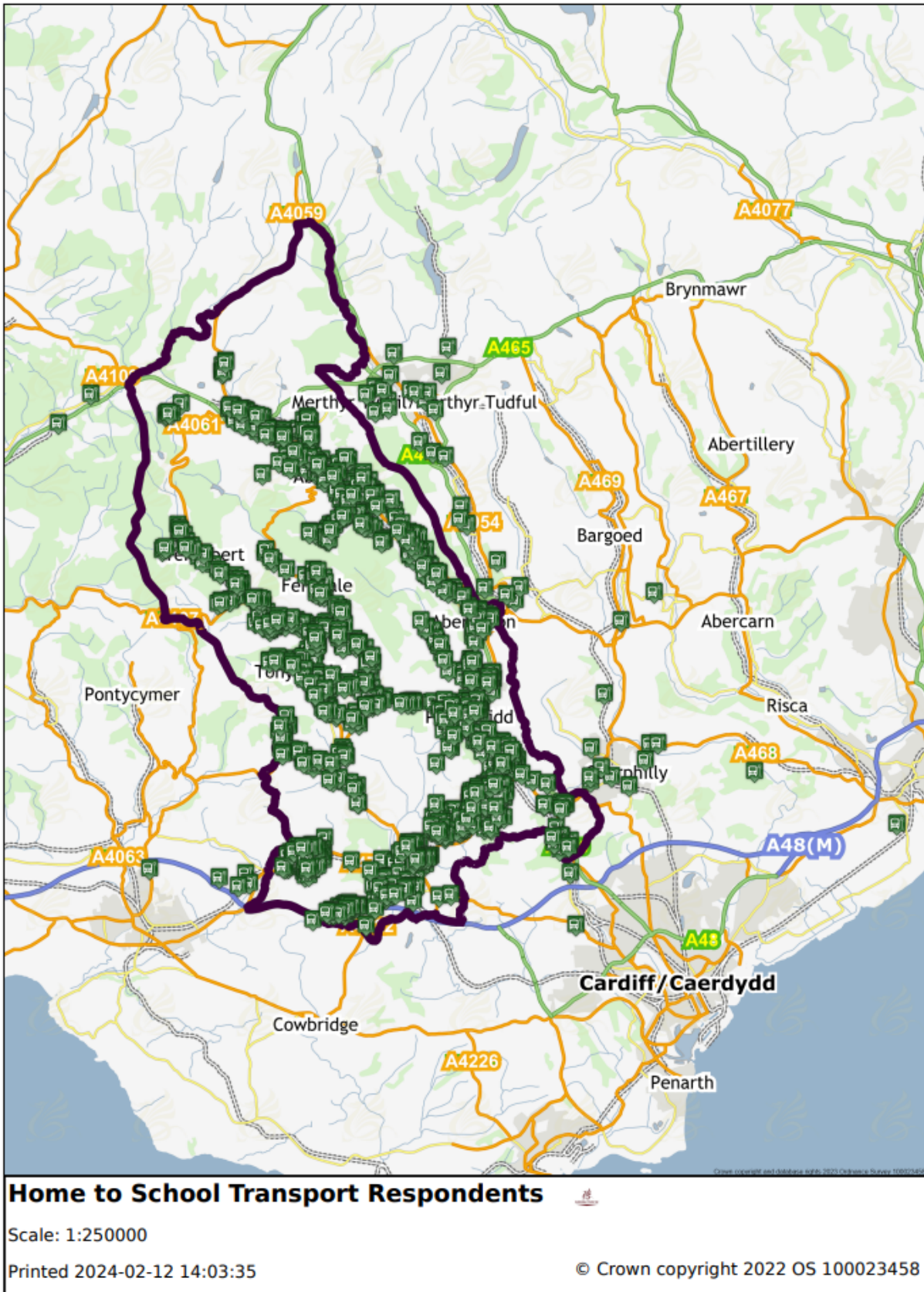


Figure 1 – Map of respondents

## 4 Questionnaire Results

- 4.1 The following section outlines the results from the online and paper questionnaires, which received 2858 responses. A selection of comments are provided and the full list of the comments will be provided to Cabinet Members and senior officers to assist with decision making.
- 4.2 Respondents were asked whether they were responding as a parent/carer of a young person who uses or will use Home to school transport, a young person/learner that uses the service, a person employed within a school or a school governor, or a person employed within the school transport industry.

The table below shows that the majority of respondents were a parent/carer of a young person who uses or will use Home to school transport (79.8%).

*Note: the tables that include type of respondent do not add up to 100% as this was a multiple response question. The base is the total number of respondents, some of whom will have provided more than 1 response. There were 10 no replies to this question.*

**Table 1: Respondents**

| <b>Counts<br/>Analysis %<br/>Respondents</b>   |               |
|--|---------------|
| <b>Base</b>  | <b>2858</b>   |
| <b>Are you...?</b>   |               |
| <b>A parent/carer of a young person/learner who uses or will use Home to School Transport?</b> | 2266<br>79.8% |
| <b>A young person/learner who uses or will use Home to School Transport?</b>                   | 118<br>4.2%   |
| <b>A person employed within the school transport industry?</b>                                 | 15<br>0.5%    |
| <b>A person employed within a school setting or a school governor?</b>                         | 154<br>5.4%   |
| <b>None of the above?</b>  | 287<br>10.1%  |

- 4.3 Respondents who stated that they were a parent/carer, or a young person who uses/will use School transport were asked what type of school setting they were in, table 2 shows the breakdown.

**Table 2: School Setting**

| Counts<br>Analysis %<br>Respondents                      | Total       |                             |                             |                           |
|--|-------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
|  |             | English                     | Welsh                       | Faith                     |
| <b>Base</b>  | <b>2943</b> | <b>1706</b><br><b>58.0%</b> | <b>1082</b><br><b>36.8%</b> | <b>259</b><br><b>8.8%</b> |
| <b>At a School Nursery Setting</b>                       | <b>143</b>  | 66<br>46.2%                 | 75<br>52.4%                 | 9<br>6.3%                 |
| <b>At Infant School</b>                                  | <b>150</b>  | 61<br>40.7%                 | 87<br>58.0%                 | 7<br>4.7%                 |
| <b>At Primary School</b>                                 | <b>717</b>  | 346<br>48.3%                | 332<br>46.3%                | 68<br>9.5%                |
| <b>At Secondary School</b>                               | <b>1560</b> | 991<br>63.5%                | 468<br>30.0%                | 147<br>9.4%               |
| <b>At Secondary School/college (Yr 12 - 13, post 16)</b> | <b>373</b>  | 242<br>64.9%                | 120<br>32.2%                | 28<br>7.5%                |

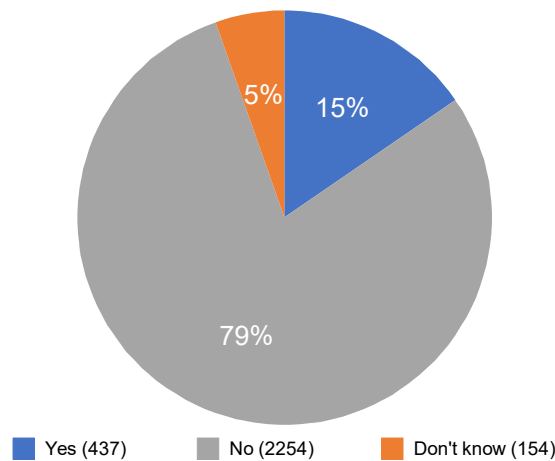
There were a high number of responses from Welsh schools overall (36.8%), considering that there are 17 Welsh medium schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf and 115 schools in total.

- 4.4 The service change **proposal** was outlined in the survey as follows;

*To continue to provide a generous discretionary Home to School Transport Provision for over 6000 learners and bring mainstream English, Welsh and Faith primary and secondary school and college transport in line with statutory distance criteria. This option has the potential to deliver savings of approximately £2.5m*

- 4.5 Respondents were asked if they agreed with the preferred proposal. 79% disagreed, 15 % agreed and 5% said they didn't know.

### Do you agree with the preferred proposal?



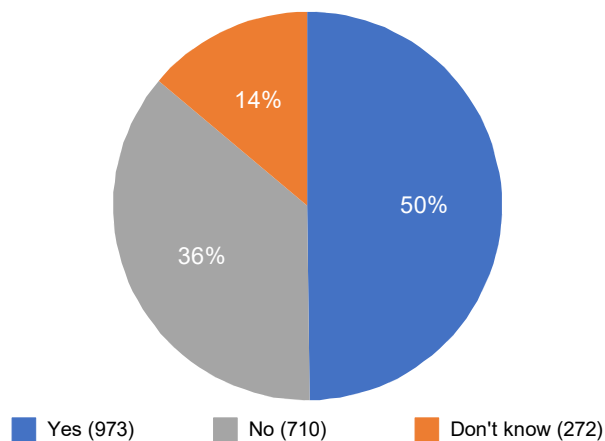
**Figure 2: Agreement with preferred proposal**

*Note: %'s may not total 100% due to rounding.*

#### 4.6 The proposal would maintain discretionary school transport provision for over 6,000 learners.

Respondents were asked if they agreed that this level of discretionary provision should be retained? 50% agreed that it should be retained.

This proposal will maintain discretionary school transport provision for over 6,000 learners. Do you agree that this level of discretionary provision should be retained?

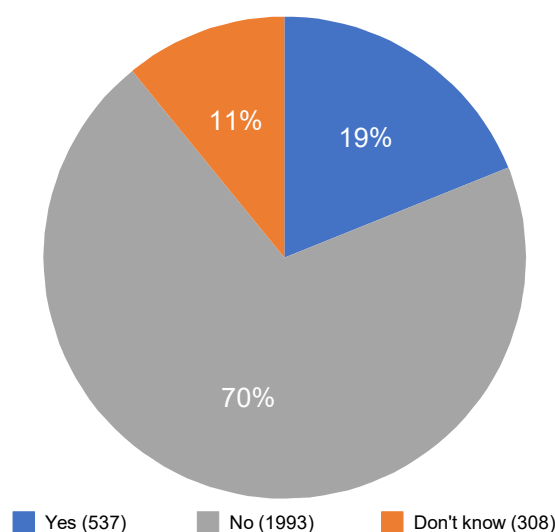


**Figure 3: Agreement with retention of discretionary provision**

4.7 The proposal would result in savings of approximately £2.5m which will help towards safeguarding changes to other discretionary elements of the school transport provision.

Respondents were asked if they agreed with the proposal, if it helped maintain future discretionary school transport provision. 70% disagreed.

This proposal will result in savings of approximately £2.5m which will help towards safeguarding changes to other discretionary elements of the school transport provision. Do you agree with this proposal if it helps to maintain future discretionary school transport provision?



**Figure 4: Agreement if it helps to maintain future discretionary provision**

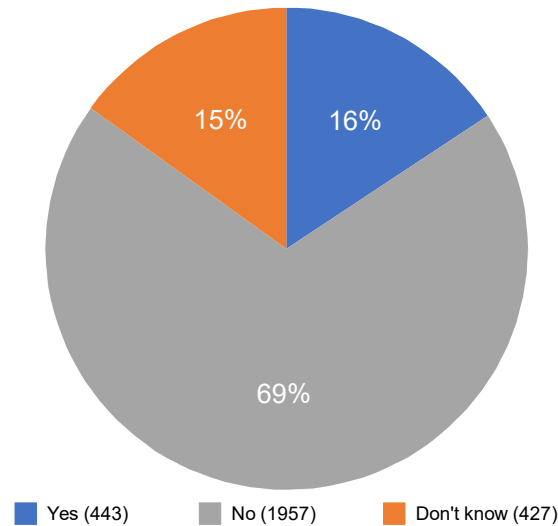
*Note: %'s may not total 100% due to rounding.*

4.8 The Council considered other options prior to consultation but deemed that they were either unaffordable, i.e. do nothing and risk more significant impacts in future years, or that the impact on learners was too great, i.e. removing all discretionary provision.

Respondents were asked if they agreed that the proposal taken forward to consultation is the fairest option available to the Council?

69% responded that they **did not agree** that it was the fairest option, with 16% agreeing and 15% stated they didn't know.

The Council considered other options prior to consultation but deemed that they were either unaffordable, i.e. do nothing and risk more significant impacts in future years, or that the impact on learners was too great, i.e. removing all discretionary provision. Do you agree that the proposal taken forward to consultation is the fairest option available to the Council?



**Figure 5: Agreement that the proposal is the fairest option**

Note: %'s may not total 100% due to rounding.

- 4.9 The 69% of respondents who **disagreed** that the proposal was the fairest option were asked to provide any alternative options that they would like the Council to consider.

A number of themes were identified, including;

- **General Disagreement/Keep the same**

*“Travel should be FREE for all children who need it despite of the distance.”*

*“Education is everything. No child should be at risk travelling to school or unable to attend regularly due to lack of available and affordable transport.”*

*“Children’s safety is more important than money. Lots of children will be expected to walk along dangerous roads to get to school. This is not acceptable.”*

*“Keeping school transport as it. Too many family will be affected! Children shouldn't have to pay the price!”*

- **Would pay/subsidise/means test**

*“Subsidise the transport to support the status quo but charge parents who can afford it and provide free transport for those who can’t, those who are on benefits, free school meals or low earners.”*

*“People need to understand we cannot provide all that they want. They need to take some responsibility for getting their children to and from school. this is a significant saving for an already stretched council.”*

*“Reconsider services that parents can pay for. Such a service exists for Graig pupils who go to Pontypridd High”.*

*“Stop school transport to Welsh medium schools. This is parental choice - they should get their children there themselves or pay for transport.”*

*“Means tested or discounted transport either on current home to school transport or discount schemes offered for public transport users.”*

- **Impact on family/pressure on working parents.**

*“It’s too far for them to walk. What about those whose parents work full time and leave early and are unable to drop them off at the school.”*

*“We live in a valley that has high rain fall and no train line! It is also a deprived area - our children have suffered enough with cutbacks - no youth clubs, closed swimming pools etc - there is nothing easily available to them! And now education, this will have a massive impact on their education!”*

*“Proposals being considered by the council directly impact children and working families. No school in the local RCT area has the capacity to manage these levels of traffic during the school run. This is a poor choice by RCT.”*

- **Impact on school absence**

*“There won’t be any savings in the long-term when you find that children aren’t getting to school due to lack of transport”*

*“Why is it always schools and our future generations that are always affected by financial cuts? If this is implemented in the long run, you’ll lose more money chancing and trying to improve lower attendance in children.”*

*“Plus not all parents drive and can afford to send children by public transport.. this again will affect children not attending school”*

- **Safety**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <i>“Mae’n rhaid ystyried y taith bydd rhaid i’r plant cymryd i gyrraedd yr ysgol hefyd. Fel engrhaifft nid yw’r taith i Ponty High o Glyncoch yn ddiogel o gwbl gan fod</i> | <i>(The journey the children will have to take to get to school must also be considered. For example the journey to Ponty High from Glyncoch is not safe at</i> |
|---|---|



|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><i>goleuo gwael ar y llwybr sy'n neilltuedig ofnadwy. Mae'n rhaid ystyried yr effaith sydd gan y tywydd ar blant a'u taith i'r ysgol"</i></p> | <p><i>all as there is poor lighting on the route. The effect the weather has on children and their journey to school must be considered).</i></p> |
|--|---|

*"The children walking to and from school in my area would have to walk along main busy roads. It is not safe and if it was to rain these children would be soaking wet."*

*"Yes, to provide safe, well-lit walking and cycling routes to and from the schools. Provide all evidence of this routes in a well-documented handbook so parents and carers know how to access them."*

- **Increased traffic/congestion and environmental concerns**

*"Have you thought about the environment the congestion around schools are crazy at the moment, it will be much higher if parents are taking all the children to comprehensive schools. Not to mention the increased risk of accidents to children running out in front of vehicles etc."*

*"Its impossible to walk to bryncelynnog safely from southgate . There are going to be more young people caught up in accidents road if expected to walk through the narrow streets of old llantrisant with increased road traffic also the bypass is unsafe no lights secluded areas ."*

*"More people will come in cars which will effect the environment in a negative way"*

- **Financial Cost**

*"I would also hope that there would be financial support for families who are unable to pay for public bus transport. A child return bus ticket currently costs £3.50 days a week, which would be £17.50 a week and £682.50 for the 39 week school year. The public transport company should provide a reduced-price school pass for school journeys, which they don't currently offer (only 16+-year-olds are entitled to a student bus pass)."*

*"This would add a further 1.5 hours onto her school day and means her having to get up even earlier than she does now. I cannot afford to pay for bus fares or a bus pass for her during what is a cost of living crisis."*

*"I would be paying almost 200 a month for my children to go to school if this proposal goes ahead. This is completely unacceptable and unaffordable for families. Neither one of the comprehensives closest to my family I deem safe for my children to walk"*

- **Unfair to exempt faith and Welsh schools, they should be the same**

*"Treat all schools the same; it is deeply unfair that faith and Welsh language schools are treated differently."*

*“My daughter has a choice of a Faith College because CNS lost their 6th form - this is in Cardiff and I think it is fair this choice and transport should remain Also, under 5s by taking transport away will add to congestion at drop off and pick up”*

*“Remove transport from faith schools. Choosing a Faith school is an option. Choosing Welsh Medium is a right for all Welsh people.”*

*“To remove free transport from Mainstream schools, while remaining with free transport for Faith & Welsh speaking schools is discriminatory”.*

- **Make savings elsewhere/waste/expenses**

*“Stop vanity projects within RCT, paying ridiculous amount of money to senior managers at the detriment of our community.”*

*“You keep giving away free travel on buses within RCT to encourage people to use public transport. This proposal seems contrary in that you are going to take children off the bus and they will have to go in cars.”*

*“No change needed. Otherwise, negotiate with bus companies for a better deal. The council needs to cut costs in other areas or get more money from Welsh Government.”*

- **Alternative Distance suggestions.**

*“Transport should be available for anyone living more than 1.5 miles from place of learning.”*

*“Take a more risk based and targeted approach to this policy- remove the policy for post 16 education and reinstate the >2mile secondary policy. This is a more targeted and risk based approach to take - i.e. concerning the safeguarding of children (particularly younger children year 7/8 commuting to secondary school) it will also have a bigger impact ( i.e. effecting all children In secondary school , not just the 16+)”*

*“Transport should be provided and fully funded if more than a 10 minute reasonable walk”*

- **Concerns about impact on Welsh language schools**

*“I think it's scandalous that the council would take thus away from families. I wanted to provide my children with Welsh language, the local school Is in Cwmdare which is difficult when working to get to without free transport!”*

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <i>“Mae cludiant ysgol yn gorfod bod yn flaenoriaeth, yn enwedig ar gyfer addysg gyfrwng Gymraeg. Mewn nifer fawr o achosion nid oes dewis am ysgol Uwchradd Gymraeg o fewn pellter cerdded. Nid yw'n resymol</i> | <i>School transport has to be a priority, especially for Welsh medium education. In a large number of cases there is no choice of a Welsh secondary school within walking distance. It is not reasonable to ask</i> |
|---|---|

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><i>gofyn i ddisgybl gerdded dros dwy filltir i gael addysg Gymraeg - yn y rhan fwyaf o achosion mae'r mwyafrif o ddisgyblion di-Gymraeg â dewis ysgol o fewn pellter cerdded resymol. Bydd hwn hefyd yn diriwio niferoedd addysg Gymraeg ac felly yn mynd yn erbyn WESP yr ALI. Rhaid edrych ar arbedion y tu allan i addysg e.e. costau cynghorwyr y cyngor lle mae nifer ohonynt yn cael arian sylweddol am eistedd lawr mewn ambell gyfarfod”.</i></p> | <p><i>a pupil to walk over two miles to receive a Welsh education - in most cases for the majority of non-Welsh speaking pupils, their choice of school is within a reasonable walking distance. This will also negatively impact the number of children receiving Welsh education and therefore go against the LA's WESP. You have to look at savings outside of education, e.g. the costs of councillors where many of them receive significant money for going to the occasional meeting.</i></p> |
|--|--|

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><i>“Rhywbeth sydd ddim yn peryglu addysg Gymraeg. Nid yw'n deg eich bod yn cyfyngu gallu disgyblion y cymoedd i dderbyn addysg uwch trwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg. Mae'n mynd yn erbyn egwyddorion a ddylai fod yn gadarn.”</i></p> | <p><i>Something that does not endanger Welsh language education. It is not fair that you limit the ability of pupils in the valleys to receive education through the medium of Welsh. It goes against principles that should be set in stone</i></p> |
|---|--|

A Member of the School Budget Forum voiced concerns in respect of the proposed changes to Home to School Transport and the impact on Welsh medium schools.

- **Problems with public transport**

*“Yes, improve public transport for the area, more busses more frequently and on time. Consider the increased traffic to the area of Church Village, Llantwit Fardre and Beddau and considering the 20-mph speed limit, this will bring areas to standstill”.*

*“The council does not have enough public transport provision to cover for all those who can no longer get the school transport.”*

*“My child lives 2.9 miles away and would require 2 buses. This is completely unacceptable.”*

- 4.10 All respondents were asked if they had any other comments they would like the Council to consider.

Many similar points were raised here to the previous question. In addition, there was criticism of the consultation process and content, and perceived inconsistencies in policies across RCTCBC.

*“Your wording of the proposal is purposefully misleading. Your timing over consultation Xmas period is purposefully misleading. How can a council on one hand say use public transport citing environmental policies then on the other hand force far more cars on to the road?”*

*“Your second point is ambiguous. You need to add another option - do you wish to keep provision as is. You’re giving yourself too much leeway there to interpret answers in a which fits your agenda”.*

*“The legal jargon in these proposals and the way they are presented are misleading, where the questions and answer options are purposely confusing to the general public. Yes explain the proposal details but use simple language in the questions as it is unclear which proposal or even which answer should be given for the desired outcome.”*

*“Not informing the public of the 'other options' that were considered makes it difficult for us to provide a measured response or propose viable alternatives.”*

*“This proposal is not in agreement with Llwynr Newydd: The Welsh transport strategy. Have you carried out a survey to understand how much this will increase private car usage and in turn, increase congestion on our arterial routes during peak times. We are meant to encourage a change in modal shift due to an overreliance on private car usage - in my opinion, a lot of younger people will not choose to walk or cycle to school particularly during inclement weather. The current council policy of is a much more reasonable approach because it strikes the correct balance with regards to active travel and home to school transport.”*

- 4.11 A number of comments in this and the previous question also raised concerns that up to 3 miles of walking each way to school is not achievable in many areas due to topography and weather conditions, alongside safety concerns.

*“Yes i believe that if the council agreed to this then they should also rent out their own car parks for extra funds and tell their staff to park 2 miles away and walk to work to aid in the need for funding or start charging staff who live within 2 miles for the use of the car parks.”*

*“What about when it’s raining? Or parents who can’t afford a stage coach bus everyday? Especially if they have more than one child. What child should have to walk nearly 3 miles to get to school and then home!? Absolutely shocking!!”*

*“The distance proposed is completely impractical for the majority of children. The streets/lighting/safe crossing points are in no way appropriate for a 3 mile journey. A journey which for most would take more than an hour.”*

*“Given the Geography of the area and the shameful lack of safe cycling routes, 3 miles can be a long journey within RCT”.*

*“We live in church village - we do not have the infrastructure for lots of school children to catch local transport - how can I expect my two children to cycle/walk 3 miles to and from school every day? The main road has lots of on street*

*parking, there will be so much rush hour traffic, and how do you expect parents to afford these bikes and helmets? Will the schools have the space for all these bikes? Showers for when the kids come in wet or muddy?"*

### **About you**

4.12 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 you 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

The following are a selection of the comments received.

### **Preferred language and Religion/ belief**

4.13 A large number of comments were received referring to the different provisions that are proposed for faith and Welsh language schools, with commenters believing they are being discriminated against as a result.

*"Preferred language is English and proposals are discriminatory against me as Welsh school parents / pupils get treated differently."*

*"Transport is not going to be provided to me due to my child's religion and language. If they were to change this then they would continue to receive transport."*

*"The council's decision will have an impact upon my preferred language"*

### **Disability**

4.14 A number of comments raised concerns about the effect of the proposals on parents/ guardians with disabilities being less able to walk or provide other transport for pupils to school.

*"My disability means getting my children to school without free school transport would be impossible."*

*“Myself and my partner are disabled and will find it hard to find/afford alternative transport”*

*“I am disabled so don't drive . I possibly couldn't afford public transport every day . I would be extremely concerned my 12 year old walking to school especially in the winter months”*

- 4.15 There is also concern at the impact on children with neurodiverse and other health issues that do not qualify for additional transport provision.

*“Not all children can easily walk to a school when they have other health concerns”*

*“My son is autistic. He would not be able to walk on his own and I have no means to get him to school by car.”*

*“As a disabled parent myself with 1 of my two children affected by neuro diversity disability, that cannot do public transport and due to my disability I can't always drive them.”*

*“My daughter is type 1 diabetic which is a disability, walking 6 miles each day 3 before even starting school would make her school day a lot more difficult with the possibility of low blood sugars then affecting her day and all the complications that come with that”.*

### **Relationship Status**

- 4.15 Some respondents were concerned that there will be a disproportionate impact on single/ lone parents.

*“I am a single mother who lives just over 2 miles from the school. The public transport buses are every hour which would make my child late for school which would result in poor attendance and probably fines. This is not affordable whatsoever.”*

*“I'm a single working mother of 2 girls and I'd find it a struggle with arranging transport back and for work 2. My youngest is 9. There's no way I could expect her to walk this distance twice a day. Imagine if the weather is bad. She wailed have to spend the day in soaked clothes.”*

## Sex

- 4.16 There are comments about a perceived higher risk to female pupils when walking to school, as well as a potential greater impact on women who are more likely to be primary caregivers.

*“duty of care (driving to and from school) is more likely to fall to women.”*

*“It is like they want us to return to the old days with women at home doing all the school drop offs and pickups. It will become harder and harder for me to go out to work. My eight year old can't walk two miles to school on their own can they?”*

*“it gets dark early young girls walking home potentially in the dark bullying will happen”.*

*“It is not safe for my daughters them to walk on a dark route home in the winter months. When they do walk home from the service bus if they stay in school late, they are targeted by sexist abuse and catcalling on a daily basis by male drivers.”*

## Other Concerns

- 4.17 A number of comments highlighted impacts on socio-economic factors, including employment and lower-income families and those who cannot access public transport easily or regularly.

*“I will have to take time off work to do the school runs again when I've only just started working longer.”*

*“I am a working parent not entitled to benefits. However I would not be able to work full time if the provision is removed.”*

*“It's discrimination against single and low income families, it's an assault on children's education - I can't afford to pay to send my kid every day in public transport. Some kids have free school meals and go without food as it is!”*

*“Public transport is unreliable & can be dangerous for the vulnerable children”.*

*“This would affect us under the socio-economic Duty Wales 2021”.*

- 4.18 As part of our Welsh Impact Assessment (WIA) process, the Council has identified that there is a possibility of impacts on the Welsh Language. Respondents were asked for views after considering the WIA.

A large number of comments were received that raise concerns about disincentivising parents from placing their children in Welsh Language Schools, as well as raising other concerns based upon the Impact Assessment.

*“You have identified within the WIA that students who attend Welsh language schools are more reliant on school transport. This policy clearly discriminates against those attending Welsh language education.”*

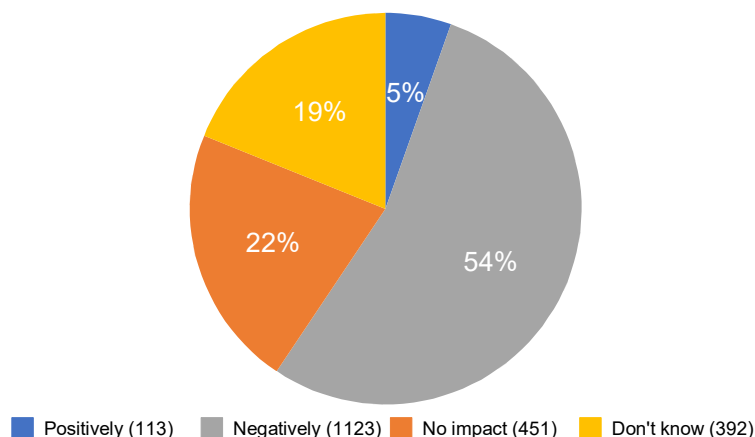
|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><i>“Trwy gydnabod y gallai'r polisi hwn effeithio ar addysg cyfrwng cymraeg mae'r cyngor yn ymwybodol o'r sgil effeithiau niweidiol posib - er hynny yn parhau i ymgynghori ar y mater. Fel y nodwyd gan y cyngor, mae HYRWYDDO mynediad at addysg gyfrwng cymraeg yn un o'i gofynion statudol, ond teimlaf bod y cynigion gerbron yn tynnu yn groes i hyn.”</i></p> | <p><i>“By recognising that this policy could affect Welsh medium education the Council is aware of the possible harmful side effects - nevertheless continuing to consult on the matter. As stated by the Council, PROMOTING access to Welsh medium education is one of its statutory requirements, but I feel that the proposals go against this.”</i></p> |
|---|---|

*“There will be a massive impact on Welsh language, especially in the catchment area for Ysgol Llanhari. The area of the school itself is absolutely horrendous at school drop off and pick up times, it's very dangerous”.*

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><i>“Parhau I roi'r dewis ond cynyddu'r cost, sut all hyn fod yn niwtral o ran effaith?”</i></p> | <p><i>“Continue to offer the choice but increase the cost, how can this be neutral in terms of its impact?”</i></p> |
|--|---|

4.19 With regards to the proposals, and the impact it may have, respondents were asked “How do you feel the proposal could impact on opportunities for pupils and staff to use and promote the Welsh Language?”

How do you feel the proposal could impact on opportunities for learners to use and promote the Welsh Language?



**Figure 6: Impact on opportunities and promotion of Welsh Language**

4.20 54% of respondents thought that the proposal would impact the opportunities and promotion of the Welsh Language negatively.



4.21 Respondents were asked how any positive effects could be increased, or negative effects be decreased. The following are a selection of comments received.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><i>“Trwy cael polisi hir dymor sy’n hybu hyrwyddo’r iaith Gymraeg ac addysg Gymraeg yng nghymunedau Rhondda Cynon Taf”</i></p> | <p><i>“By having a long term policy which promotes the Welsh language and Welsh education in Rhondda Cynon Taf’s communities”</i></p> |
|---|---|

*“The parking around YGG bodringallt is appalling now! I think more transport should be put on as long as parents pay for their spot for the child. It would be less congestion on the roads.”*

*“The free transport should be maintained for Welsh schools as there are less options available to parents wishing to send their children to Welsh schools.”*

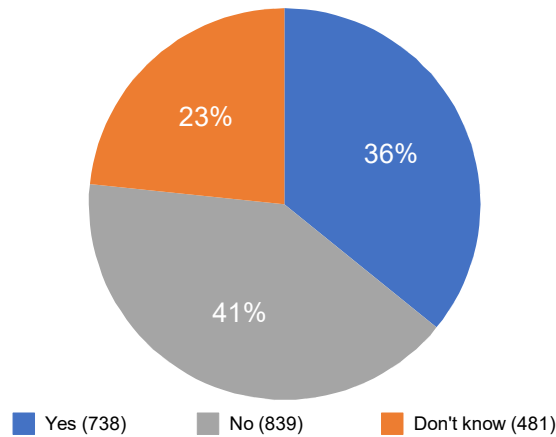
|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><i>“Oes modd i rannu’r costiau - e.e ble mae’r cyngor yn darparu’r trafndiaeth ac y talu 50% o’r costiau gyda rhieni yn talu 50% hefyd (neu debyg)”</i></p> | <p><i>“Is there a way to share the costs - e.g. where the Council provides the transport and pays 50% of the costs with parents paying 50% as well (or similar)”</i></p> |
|--|--|

*“I think the busses should be capped and school children should be able to pay a school bus fare on a public bus”*

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><i>“Mae darparu addysg Gymraeg lleol mor bwysig. Mae teithio milltiroedd i’r ysgol, yn enwedig i blant cynradd, yn andwyol.”</i></p> | <p><i>“Providing local Welsh language education is so important. Traveling miles to school, especially for primary school children, is detrimental”.</i></p> |
|---|--|

4.13 41% of the respondents said that the proposal does not treat the Welsh Language less favourably than the English Language, although 36% thought that it did.

Does the proposal, in any way, treat the Welsh Language less favourably than the English Language?



**Figure 7: Does the proposal treat Welsh less favourably than English?**

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

## Respondent Demographics

- 4.14 Respondents were provided with an option to provide further demographic information. The full data will be used to inform the Impact Assessments where relevant. The below provides some of the demographic data provided by respondents.

### Age

|                          |              |
|--------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Base</b>              | <b>552</b>   |
|                          |              |
| <b>15 or under</b>       | 8<br>1.0%    |
| <b>16-24</b>             | 21<br>2.6%   |
| <b>25-34</b>             | 115<br>14.2% |
| <b>35-44</b>             | 400<br>49.4% |
| <b>45-54</b>             | 215<br>26.5% |
| <b>55-64</b>             | 33<br>4.1%   |
| <b>65-74</b>             | 13<br>1.6%   |
| <b>75+</b>               | 1<br>0.1%    |
| <b>Prefer not to say</b> | 4<br>0.5%    |

### Sex

|                          |              |
|--------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Base</b>              | <b>1171</b>  |
|                          |              |
| <b>Female</b>            | 912<br>77.9% |
| <b>Male</b>              | 231<br>19.7% |
| <b>Prefer not to say</b> | 28<br>2.4%   |

### Disability (Do you consider yourself to be disabled?)

|                          |              |
|--------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Base</b>              | <b>1140</b>  |
|                          |              |
| <b>Yes</b>               | 124<br>10.9% |
| <b>No</b>                | 970<br>85.1% |
| <b>Prefer not to say</b> | 46<br>4.0%   |

**Table 3-5 – Respondent Demographics**

## 5 Young Person Consultation

5.1 The Council's YEPs team developed a young person's version of the proposal and shared with youth forum members. The consultation was undertaken by sharing the HTS information with young people through a social media group for youth forum members and they were asked to complete a survey following this. 15 young people took part in the exercise.

The proposal had a direct impact on 20% of the young people.

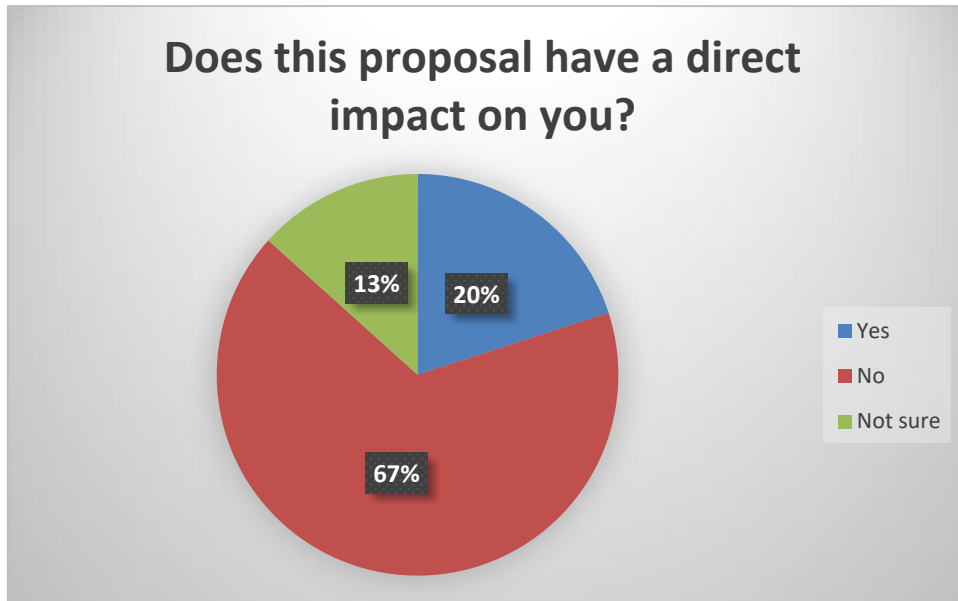


Figure 8: Direct impact of proposal on respondent

5.2 53% thought that the proposal was not a fair way to save money.

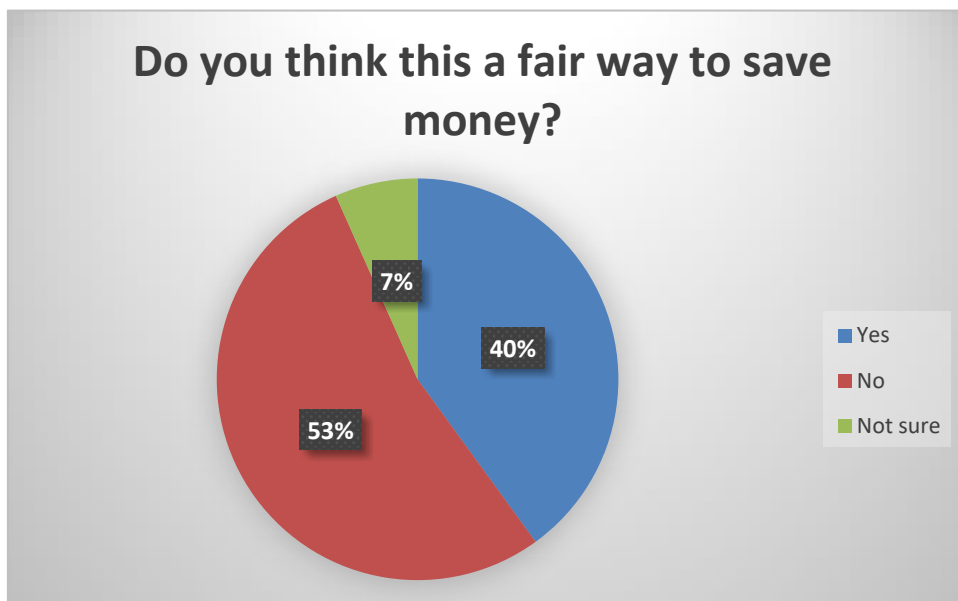


Figure 9: Is the proposal a fair way to save money?

What do you think about the proposal?

- 5.3 The young people were asked what they thought of the proposal, the comments below are a selection of those received;

Positive

*It's good*

*I think it's fair*

Negative

*I think that it is quite an issue for people who live outside of the new circle for school transport because parents can't always take on board the responsibility of getting their children to school and public transport is expensive*

*Puts kids at risk of poorer education standards and by proxy impacts schools' overall review standards (limited amount of payed bus passes, expensive bus passes, parents unable to take pupil to school, unsafe walking routes, therefore pupil does not attend at all)*

*Its okay, the government would save more money but where is that money going? If we make students get public transport and walk because they're not close enough to the school this can stress them out and affect their gcse's. some families may not be able to afford public transport and others won't be able to drop their kids off at school. This means more kids walk. The parents who would start driving will create more traffic on the roads meaning earlier starts for kids and this cannot help their gcse's*

*Less people will be able to get to school which will result in less GSCE results*

*It's not good anyone who need transport to school or college should get transport*

*School transport should be allocated to anyone in need of a transport to school. It is unsafe for a young person to be walking home or to school. Especially when it's dark! We need to think about the safety of our young people rather than money*

*It doesn't affect me at all.*

*I think it's very inconvenient for people who use school transport because some parents can't take upon themselves to drive their kids to and from school everyday and public transport is expensive*

Can you provide some other ideas on ways that RCT Council could save money?

5.4 Some of the other ideas suggested by the young people to save money were;

*More £1 bus fares through the year*

*There is none they are wasting money on things that does need to be wasted on it could be used on better things*

*Idfk not my problem xx*

*less unnecessary buses, improve council tax, close council cash offices...*

*To many councillors and less offices*

*possibly a fundraiser?*

## **6 Written Responses**

- 6.1 A total of 39 emails/letters were received from a range of consultees. The responses reflect the themes outlined in the main report, with the majority against the proposal. These responses have been made available for Cabinet to review.