



Let's talk about

Council spending

Final report

January 2026

BEST VALUE

Overview

Like all councils, Fife is experiencing a rising demand for services, particularly as the cost of living continues to impact people and families across Fife. Tackling poverty and inequality is a priority and the council focuses on support to help people increase their income, meet rising fuel bills and access quality food and housing.

Last year, Fife Council spent over £528 million on education, schools and childcare - and £249 million on health and social care, supporting people facing a range of health problems. Together these services use over two thirds of the council's total budget.

Fife's financial position is stronger than many other councils. Prudent use of resources and careful investment has meant council tax rates have stayed among the lowest in Scotland, and bigger cuts to services seen elsewhere have been avoided. But more will need to be done over coming years to balance the books and protect Fife's strong position.

Last year councillors outlined a 3-year budget to help with forward planning. This included an intention to increase council tax by 5% in 2026/27. Although it was not known how much Fife Council's government grant for 26/27 would be until the Scottish budget in January, estimates assumed a £5 million gap between income and expenditure for 2026/27, rising to £36 million by 2028/29. Without any other action a 7.5% council tax rise will be needed to cover costs in 2026.

Let's talk about Council spending

Between 8 December 2025 and 11 January 2026, Fife residents were invited to help shape options as to how we spend or save – for the year ahead and beyond – through the [Let's talk about Council spending](#) engagement process.

By completing a survey or contributing to a facilitated conversation, Fife residents were able to have their say on the following topics:

- Prioritising our spending
- How we could save money
- Council tax

In total 2,840 people shared views through this engagement.

2,454 completed surveys were received: 93 of these were paper surveys, and 2,361 were online surveys.

The number responding from each area was as follows: City of Dunfermline (432), Cowdenbeath (208), Glenrothes (318), Kirkcaldy (392), Levenmouth (227), North East Fife (461), South and West Fife (295), not stated (121). A quarter of respondents were Fife Council employees (600).

A total of 386 people participated in one of 34 facilitated conversations across Fife: Fife wide (4), City of Dunfermline (1), Kirkcaldy (4), Levenmouth (20), and North East Fife (5).

This report sets out the main findings from the community engagement to inform discussions within political groups ahead of Fife Council setting its budget for 2026/27 on 26 February 2026.

Key findings

Prioritising our spending

The three most important guiding principles are: helping children and young people achieve more in school; improving health and wellbeing for all; and increasing household income.

The three least important guiding principles were: improving the look and feel of places across Fife; delivered by the council rather than private, partner, third sector or community run, and changes that have delivered benefits or improvements elsewhere.

Service priorities

When asked about service priorities in council spending decisions, there is strong public support for investment in home care packages, repairing roads, skills and training, council care homes and improving school buildings.

A lower level of priority is given to council-owned network of swimming and leisure facilities, bus service improvement, town centre footfall and attractiveness, and holiday meal schemes for children and families. However, there is little support for investing in low carbon heat schemes that improve energy efficiency across Fife.

The top three things that were identified as missing from priorities were council operations, education and skills, and access and inclusion.

How we could save or raise money

Residents were asked what they thought of a number of potential ways to make savings or cover costs. Public support is strongest for making more use of technology in frontline services, changing corporate office opening hours, and reviewing pricing concessions across services.

There is a moderate level of support for changing the free bulky uplift service to cover costs, introducing a visitor levy, and changing who receives free school transport. There is least support for introducing a small annual charge for garden waste bins, and for increasing council owned car parking charges in line with other local authorities and commercial rates.

When asked to choose one savings idea to support, the top three were introducing a visitor levy, making more use of technology in frontline services, and reducing the number of council buildings used by communities across Fife.

Council Tax

Two out of three respondents were not willing to pay more than a 5% uplift in council tax. Among those who did express a view, the clear preference is for a 6% increase, the lowest of the options presented. Support then falls away sharply for higher increases, with all options receiving less than 10% support.

Prioritising our spending

Lots of different things are weighed up before money is shared out. We always consider what people ask for and say they need the most. But there are other things to consider too. Residents were asked to identify which of the guiding principles was most and least important to them.

Guiding principles

- Helps children and young people achieve more in school
- Helps increase household income
- Prevents crisis and improves quality of life for people in difficulty
- Helps anyone living with long term health issues to be as independent as possible
- Improves the look and feel of places across Fife
- Helps improve health and wellbeing for all
- Changes that have delivered benefits or improvements elsewhere
- Has a positive impact, or minimises negative impact, on the environment
- Delivered by the council – rather than private, partner, third sector or community run
- Supports long-term financial stability for services

Most important (2,422 responses)

The three most important guiding principles were:

- Helps children and young people achieve more in school (824)
- Helps improve health and wellbeing for all (387)
- Helps increase household income (352)

Figure 1: Bar chart showing most important guiding principles based on number of responses

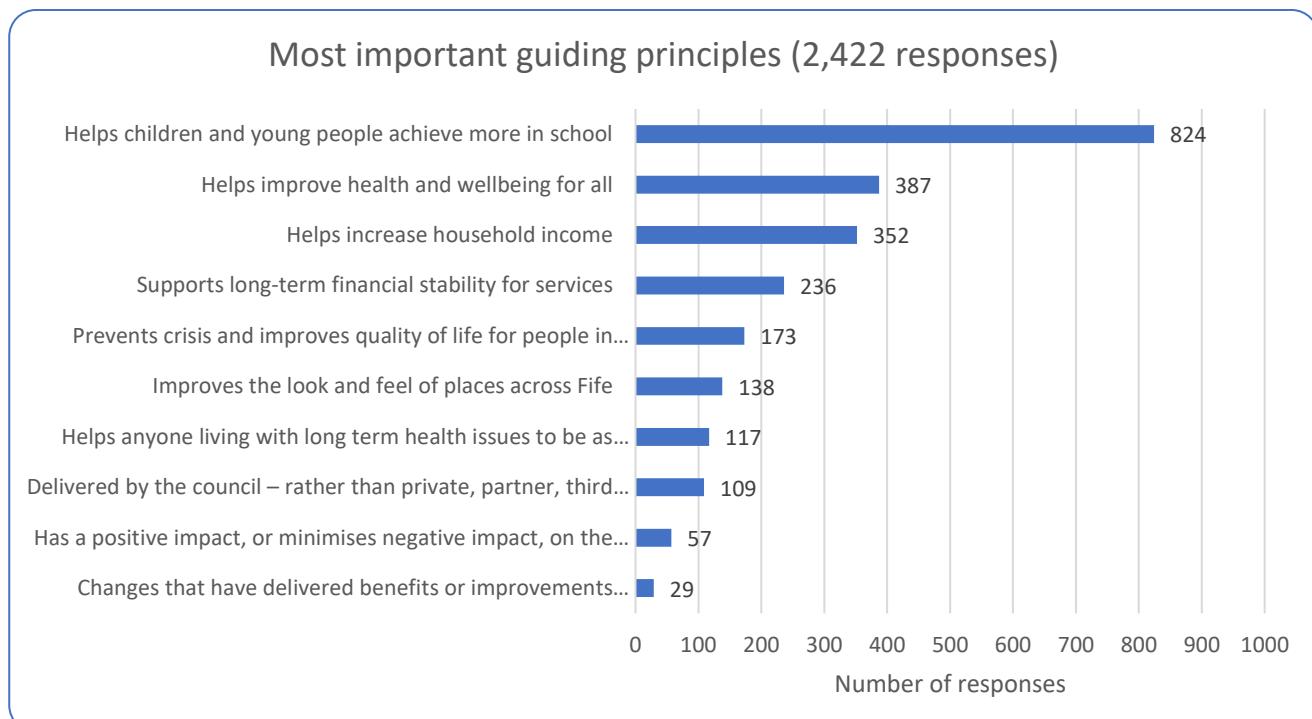


Table 1: Table showing most important guiding principles (from highest to lowest) based on 2,422 responses

Option	Total	Percent
Helps children and young people achieve more in school	824	34.0%
Helps improve health and wellbeing for all	387	16.0%
Helps increase household income	352	14.5%
Supports long-term financial stability for services	236	9.7%
Prevents crisis and improves quality of life for people in difficulty	173	7.1%
Improves the look and feel of places across Fife	138	5.7%
Helps anyone living with long term health issues to be as independent as possible	117	4.8%
Delivered by council rather than private, partner, third sector, community run	109	4.5%
Has a positive impact, or minimises negative impact, on the environment	57	2.4%
Changes that have delivered benefits or improvements elsewhere	29	1.2%

See Appendix 1 for Table 11 and Table 12 (page 37) which provide an overview of which principles are seen as **most important** by age and area.

Most important by area

Across all areas, the factor most commonly rated most important was “Helps children and young people achieve more in school” closely reflecting the overall Fife pattern. While support for this priority was slightly lower in Cowdenbeath and South West Fife, no area diverged substantially from the Fife average. Improving health and wellbeing for all and helping to increase household income were generally the second and third most important factors across areas, although their relative order varied locally. South West Fife stood out for placing greater emphasis on health and wellbeing, while Cowdenbeath and Glenrothes gave slightly more weight to household income. Beyond these differences, priorities were broadly aligned, with only minor variation between areas

Most important by age

Across age groups, there are clear differences in what is considered most important. While those under 55 broadly share the same top priorities as the Fife overall results, older age groups place relatively greater emphasis on supporting long-term financial stability for services over increasing household income. The 35-44 age group stands out as the most likely to prioritise helping children and young people achieve more in school. In contrast, older respondents (55+) increasingly prioritise improving health and wellbeing for all.

Most important by council employee

The top three most important guiding principles are the same irrespective of whether a respondent is a council employee or not. A greater proportion of council employees thought that helping children and young people achieve more in school was most important, while non-employees were more likely to say that improving health and wellbeing for all was most important. There were similar proportions of council employees and non-employees rating helping increase household income as most important.

Least important (2,423 responses)

The three least important guiding principles were:

- Improves the look and feel of places across Fife (593)
- Delivered by the council rather than private, partner, third sector, community run (543)
- Changes that have delivered benefits or improvements elsewhere (380)

Figure 2: Bar chart showing the least important guiding principles based on number of responses

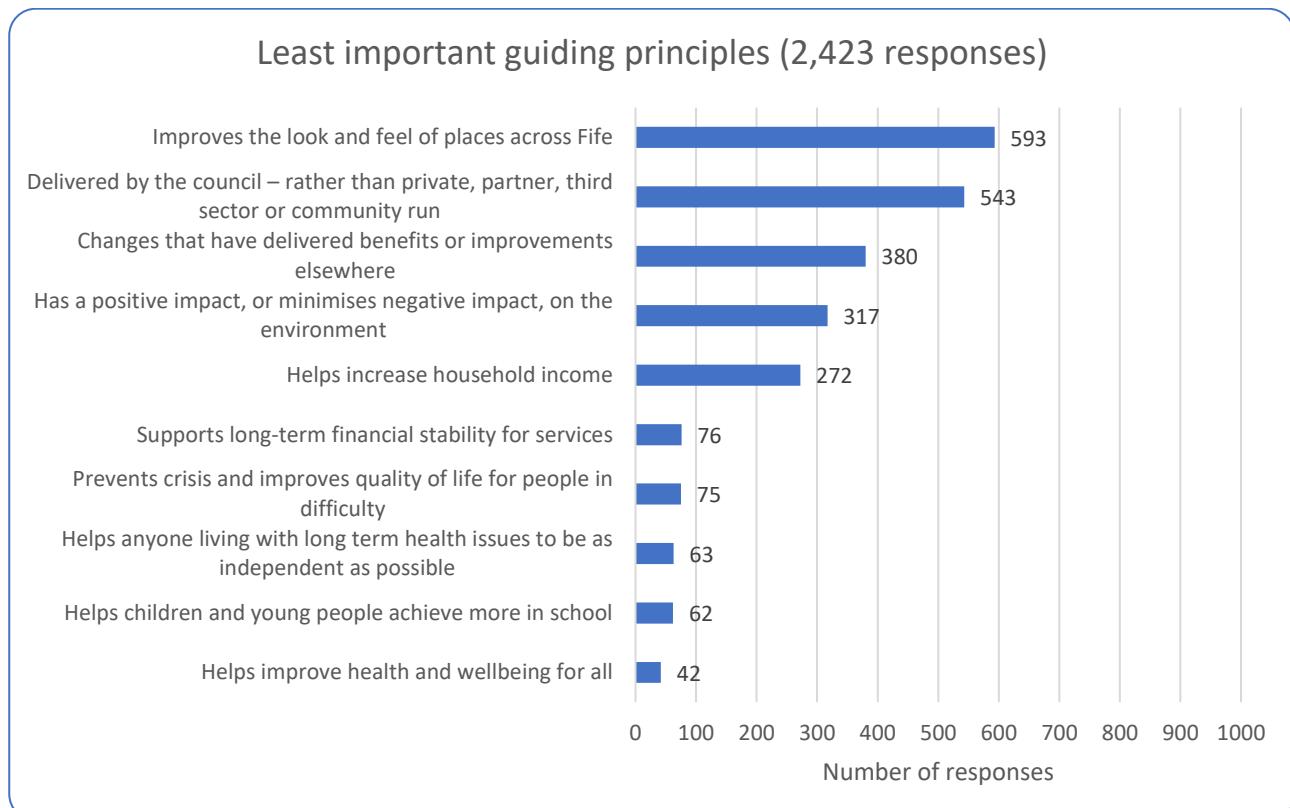


Table 2: Table showing least important guiding principles based on number of responses (from highest to lowest)

Option	Total	Percent
Improves the look and feel of places across Fife	593	24.5%
Delivered by council rather than private, partner, third sector, community run	543	22.4%
Changes that have delivered benefits or improvements elsewhere	380	15.7%
Has a positive impact, or minimises negative impact, on the environment	317	13.1%
Helps increase household income	272	11.2%
Supports long-term financial stability for services	76	3.1%
Prevents crisis and improves quality of life for people in difficulty	75	3.1%
Helps anyone living with long term health issues to be as independent as possible	63	2.6%
Helps children and young people achieve more in school	62	2.6%
Helps improve health and wellbeing for all	42	1.7%

See Appendix 1 for Table 13 and Table 14 (page 38) which provide an overview of which principles are seen as **least important** by age and area.

Least important by age

Across all age groups, the factor most commonly considered least important was “Improves the look & feel of places”, particularly among younger respondents. “Delivered by the council (vs others)” was generally the second most selected least-important factor across all age groups, with relatively little variation. Aside from the youngest age group, there was little difference in responses across ages, with most groups broadly aligned with the Fife average and no other large deviations observed.

Least important by area

Across all areas, the two factors most commonly considered the least important were “Improves the look and feel of places” and “Delivered by the council (vs others)”, mirroring the overall Fife response. There were relatively few differences between areas in terms of which factors were rated least important, with no area deviating substantially from the Fife average (no differences greater than 6 percentage points). The main exception was North East Fife, where a slightly lower proportion of respondents (around 5 percentage points below the Fife average) viewed environmental impact as the least important factor.

Least important by council employee

Again, the top three least important guiding principles are the same irrespective of whether a respondent is a council employee or not. A greater proportion of council employees thought that improving the look and feel of places across Fife was least important, while non-employees were more likely to say that delivered by the council (rather than private, partner, third sector, or community run) was least important. There were similar proportions of council employees and non-employees rating changes that have delivered benefits or improvements elsewhere as least important.

Service priorities

Public funding is distributed across hundreds of services. As well as keeping services like education, housing, social work and bin collections going – money is also invested in specific priorities.

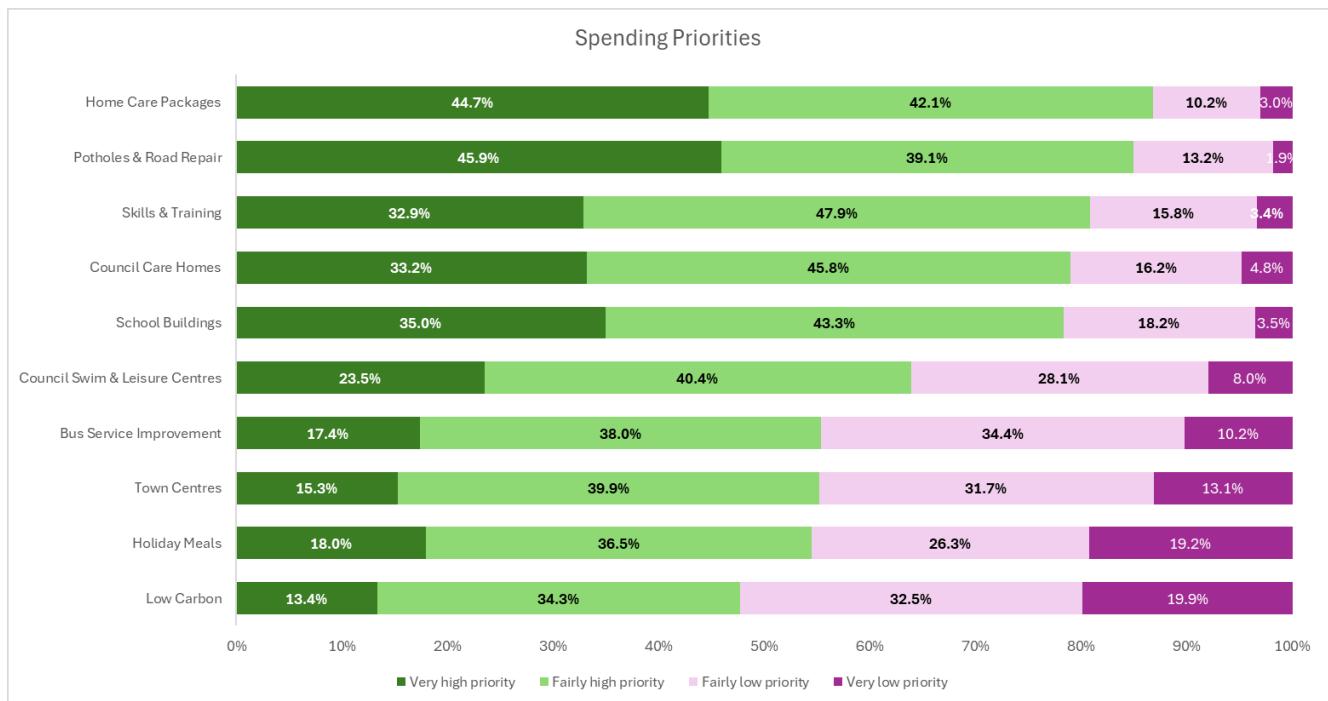
Table 3: Table showing priority that should be given to service priorities in council spending decisions

Service priorities	Responses	Very high	Fairly high	Fairly low	Very low	Net (+/-)
Reducing waiting times for home care packages	2,411	44.7%	42.1%	10.2%	3.0%	73.6%
Fixing potholes and doing more / longer-term road repairs	2,409	45.9%	39.1%	13.2%	1.9%	69.9%
Skills and training programmes to help people into work	2,411	32.9%	47.9%	15.8%	3.4%	61.6%
Council-owned and run care homes	2,412	33.2%	45.8%	16.2%	4.8%	58.0%
School building improvements / new schools	2,421	35.0%	43.3%	18.2%	3.5%	56.6%
Council-owned network of swimming and leisure facilities	2,411	23.5%	40.4%	28.1%	8.0%	27.8%
Bus service improvements	2,411	17.4%	38.0%	34.4%	10.2%	10.8%
Town centre footfall and attractiveness	2,413	15.3%	39.9%	31.7%	13.1%	10.4%
Holiday meal schemes for children and families (on top of cash payments made to families entitled to free school meals)	2,423	18.0%	36.5%	26.3%	19.2%	9.0%
Low carbon heat schemes that improve energy efficiency across Fife	2,416	13.4%	34.3%	32.5%	19.9%	-4.7%
A net score (+/-) is worked out by combining all the positive responses - in this case, <i>very high priority</i> or <i>fairly high priority</i> - and all the negative responses – <i>fairly low priority</i> and <i>very low priority</i> . Each group is turned into a percentage of all responses, and the negative percentage is subtracted from the positive percentage. The resulting figure shows the balance of opinion: a positive score means more people rate this as a priority, overall, while a negative score means this is not a priority.						

When considering what priority should be given to service priorities in council spending decisions, results indicate strong public support for investment in home care packages, repairing roads, skills and training, council care homes and improving school buildings.

A lower level of priority is given to council-owned network of swimming and leisure facilities, bus service improvement, town centre footfall and attractiveness, and holiday meal schemes for children and families. However, more respondents believe that it is not a priority to invest in low carbon heat schemes that improve energy efficiency across Fife, than those who say it should be a priority.

Figure 3: Bar chart showing priority that should be given to investment in particular service priorities



Service priorities by age

Across age groups, there are clear shifts in spending priorities. Younger adults (16-24) place much stronger importance on skills and training, holiday meal schemes, low carbon initiatives and bus service improvements, while giving lower support to home care and town centres. Adults in their mid-30s to mid-40s show the highest support for investment in school buildings, standing out from other age groups.

Service priorities by area

Across Fife, home care packages and potholes and road repair are consistently the top net priorities in every area (high 60s-80s net priority rating), while the widest place-based differences appear on bus service improvements, Council swimming and leisure centres, town centres and low carbon schemes. Skills and training is comparatively even across all areas.

Variations to highlight from the Fife average are:

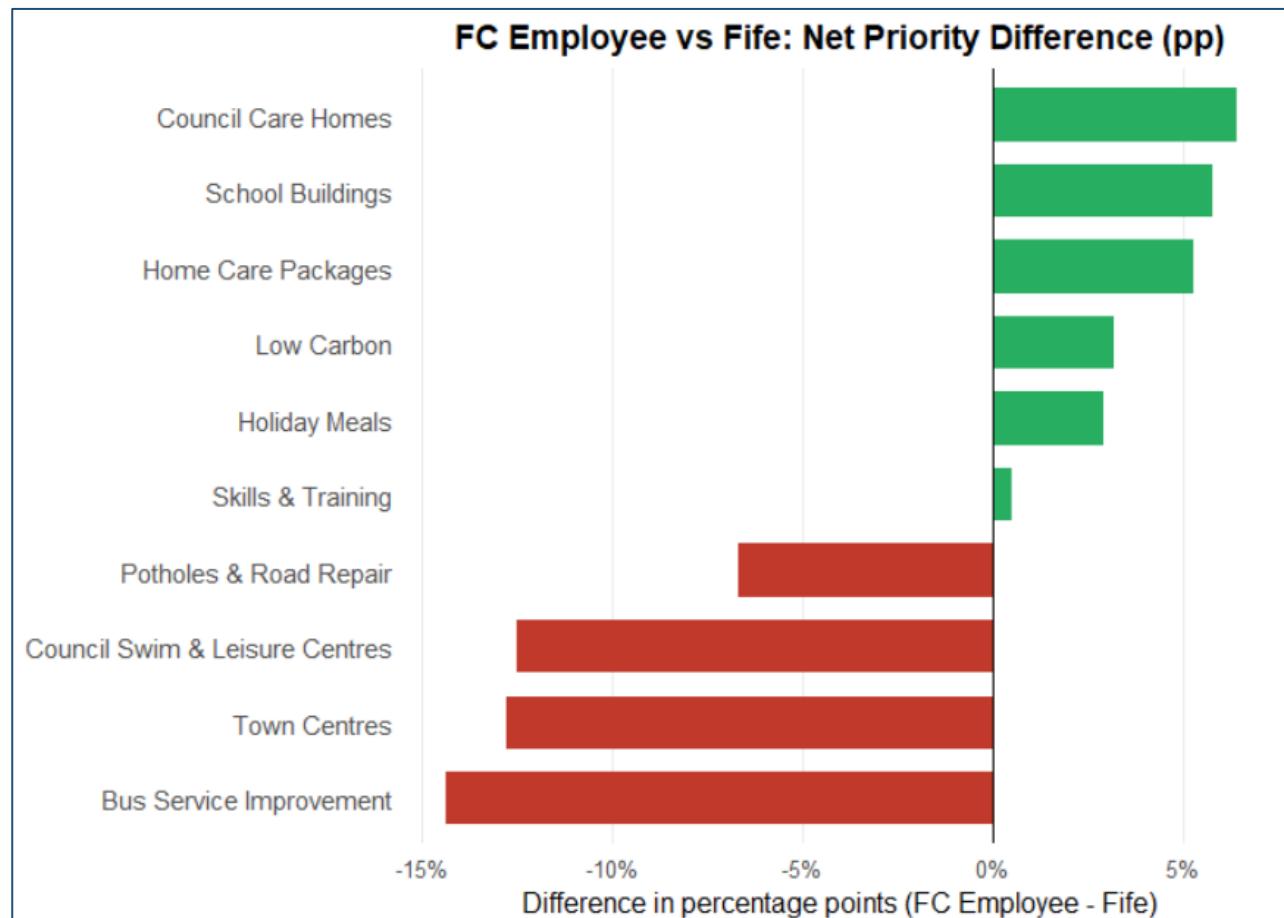
- Bus service improvement is higher in North East Fife (+20.6) but lower in City of Dunfermline (-12.6)
- Council care homes much higher in Cowdenbeath (+16.5)
- Council swimming & leisure centres higher in South West Fife (+12.7) and City of Dunfermline (+12.6) but lower in Glenrothes (-13.4) and Levenmouth (-14.4)
- Town Centres higher in Kirkcaldy (+13.0) but lower in Cowdenbeath (-12.3)
- Low Carbon notably higher in North East Fife (+12.7).

See Appendix 1 for Table 15 (page 39) and Table 16 (page 40) which provide an overview of service priorities by age and area.

Service priorities by Council employee

The main differences between Council employees and respondents overall are that employees place slightly more priority on Council care homes (+6.4 pp), school buildings (+5.8 pp) and home care packages (+5.3 pp), and are slightly more positive on low carbon (+3.2 pp) and holiday meals (+3.0 pp). They place less priority on bus service improvement (-14.4 pp), town centres (-12.8 pp), Council swimming & leisure Centres (-12.5 pp) and potholes & road repair (-6.7 pp).

Figure 4: Bar chart showing differences in net priority between Fife Council employees and overall responses for Fife

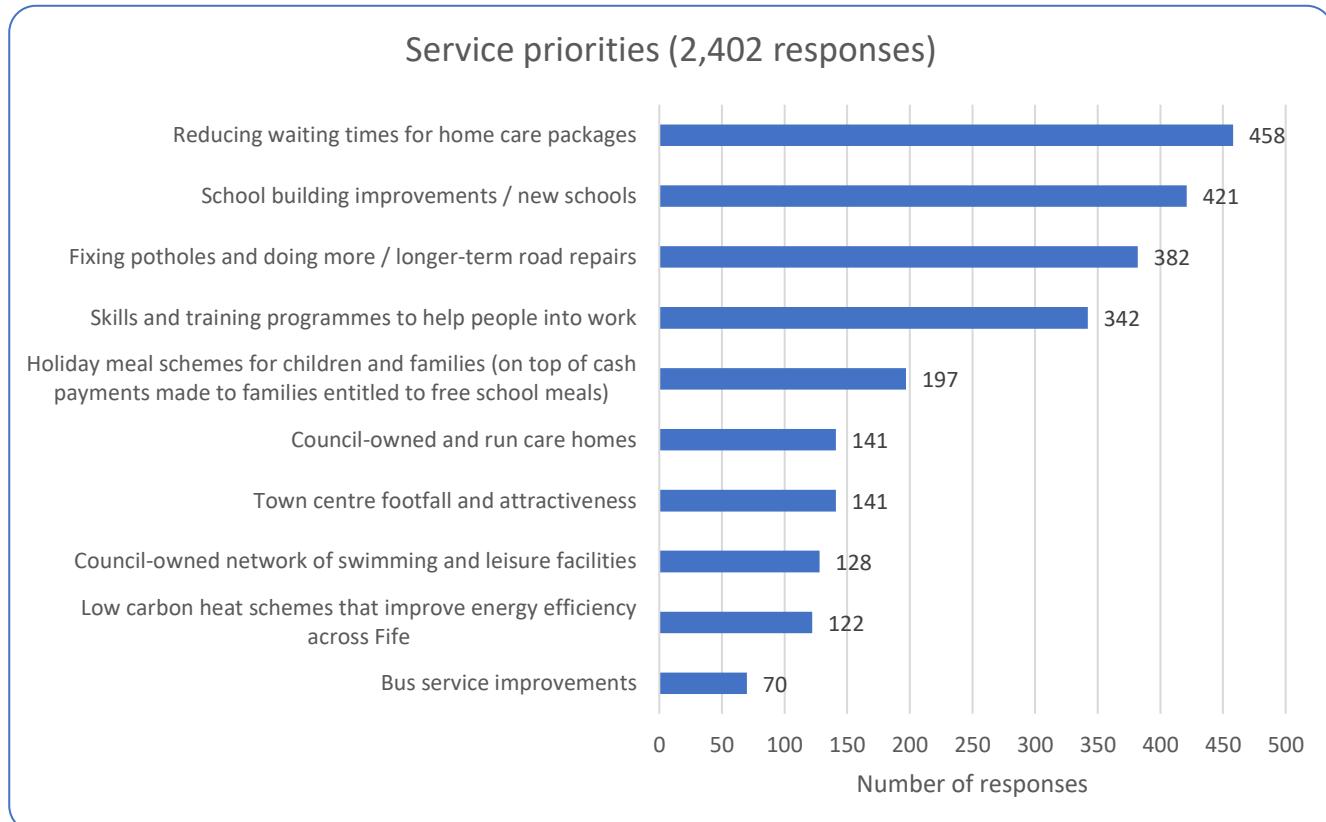


Highest priority (2,402 responses)

The three spending priorities that were rated as the highest priority were

- Reducing waiting times for home care packages (458)
- School building improvements / new schools (421)
- Fixing potholes and doing more / longer-term road repairs (382)

Figure 5: Bar chart showing highest service priority by number of responses



Highest priority by age

Across age groups, there is a shift in the highest spending priority identified. Younger respondents are most likely to prioritise holiday meal schemes and skills and training. Those aged 25-44 stand out for prioritising school building improvements, which are the clear top choice for this age group and well above the overall Fife average. From the mid50s onwards, priorities shift towards reducing waiting times for home care packages and fixing potholes and longterm road repairs, becoming increasingly dominant, particularly among those aged 65 and over. Overall, the pattern shows a progression from education, household support and skills among younger adults to care, infrastructure and service reliability among older age groups.

Highest priority by area

Across all areas, the highest single spending priority broadly aligns with the Fife-wide picture, with home care packages, school building improvements, and potholes and road repairs dominating choices. Glenrothes stands out most clearly for prioritising school building improvements, where this is notably higher than in other areas. South West Fife places comparatively greater emphasis on reducing waiting times for home care packages, while Cowdenbeath shows stronger than average focus on potholes and long-term road repairs. North East Fife is distinct in placing relatively more priority on skills and training and low-carbon heat schemes compared with other areas. Kirkcaldy stands out for giving greater weight to town centre footfall and attractiveness. Overall, while the same core issues tend to dominate across Fife, the relative ordering of priorities reflects local needs and characteristics, with no single area diverging sharply from the overall pattern.

See Appendix 1 for Table 17 (page 41) and Table 18 (page 42) which provide an overview of what is rated the highest priority by age and area.

Highest priority by Council employee

When selecting the highest spending priority, a higher proportion of Council employees prioritised School building improvements and new schools than the general population – placing it highest at 31.2% of respondents choosing this, compared with 17.5% for Fife overall.

Discussion on service priorities

From the qualitative data gathered through the facilitated groups, Health and care and Transport and infrastructure were the most common themes for important service (18 mentions), followed by culture and leisure (16 mentions).

Comments regularly noted home care packages, support workers for independent living, and health and wellbeing. The protection of community centres, groups and leisure facilities that provide social contact and support was also important to majority respondents. There is strong links throughout to the impact that community centres and groups have on wellbeing as they provide a safe supportive space for everyone.

Transport to community groups was noted as an important service along with the fixing of potholes. Access and inclusion was highlighted through the need to continue with free school meals and holiday meals for those in need whilst providing support to individuals by getting them back into work. Support for cost-of-living struggles was also a high priority for the groups.

Other priorities

Residents were asked to identify one thing they thought was missing that would be their top priority. There were 1,436 responses to this part of the question.

The top three things that were identified as missing from priorities were:

- Council operations (419) (including efficiency, value for money)
- Education and skills (371) (including increase school staffing, ASN support, community learning, life / employability skills)
- Access and inclusion (264) (including fair access to services and support, housing / transport / infrastructure accessibility)

Figure 6: Bar chart showing other priorities by number of responses

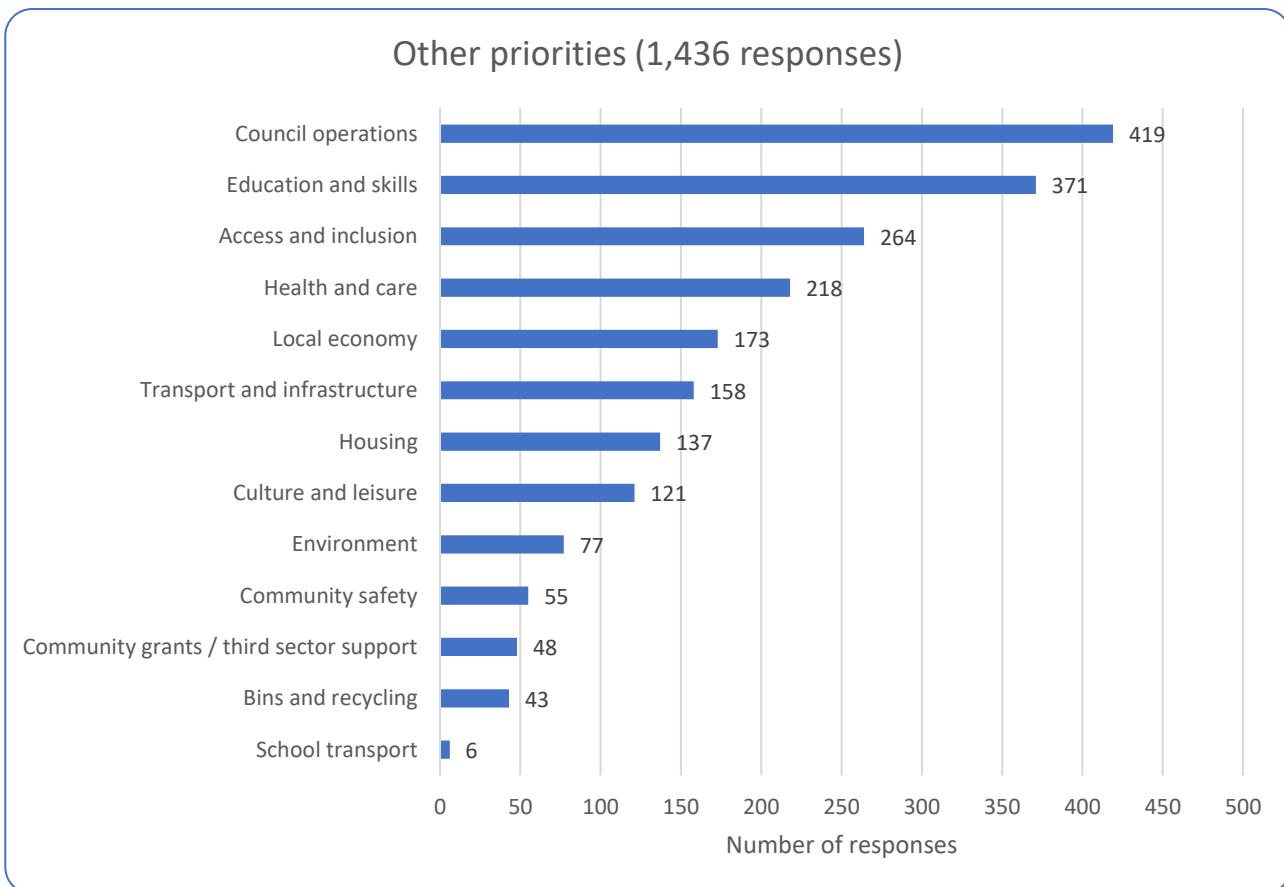


Table 4 provides a summary of the comments on other priorities by theme and topic.

Table 4: Summary of comments on other priorities by theme and topic

Theme	Topic	Summary
Council operations (419)	Deliver core services at an acceptable standard	The general feeling is that the council should be prioritising delivering and maintaining core services at an acceptable level as cost effectively as possible, over non-essential or low-impact projects with poor return on investment and limited tangible benefits to residents.
	Streamline senior/middle management structures and remuneration	Many respondents express strong dissatisfaction with senior pay, pension provision and management structures, viewing them as excessive, top-heavy and poorly aligned with performance.
	Better pay and resourcing for frontline services	While critical of senior pay, respondents are strongly supportive of higher wages for frontline staff delivering essential, high value services.
	Smarter procurement	Suggestions around opening up purchasing beyond expensive approved lists, to enable buying goods and services at more competitive prices to achieve better value for money.
Education and skills (371)	Prioritise staffing over technology and buildings	Respondents overwhelmingly call for investment in nurseries and schools for teachers, Pupil Support Assistants (PSAs), specialist support staff and stability of permanent contracts, with strong opposition to spending on iPad and non-essential projects.
	Additional Support Needs (ASN)	There is a general view that ASN provision is under pressure with the system being described as overstretched and under resourced. There is demand for smaller class sizes, specialist units and schools, more one-to-one support, better-trained staff, and realistic alternatives where mainstream education is not meeting children's needs.
	Improve education quality, behaviour and wellbeing support	Respondents highlight stretched staff, poor behaviour, inadequate facilities and declining standards, alongside a strong call for mental health support, behaviour interventions, staff training (neurodiversity/ASN), and "getting the basics right" before new initiatives.
	Strengthen life skills, employability and post-school pathways	Strong support exists for life skills education (budgeting, cooking, confidence, parenting), skills based further education / apprenticeships, supported employment and structured pathways for school leavers, neurodiverse young people and adults with learning disabilities.
	Expand community learning, youth work and inclusive enrichment	Respondents want better access to libraries, Community Learning and Development (CLD) services, youth clubs, arts, music, sports, outdoor learning and affordable holiday provision, using schools and community facilities more effectively to support inclusion.

Theme	Topic	Summary
Access and inclusion (264)	Access to Additional Support Needs (ASN) services, inclusive access to education, and transitions	Mainstream schools are identified as struggling to meet rising levels of need, specialist provision overstretched, and long waiting times for assessment and support across education, health and transitions into adulthood. Staffing capacity is the single biggest barrier to inclusion, particularly shortages of Pupil Support Assistants (PSAs), specialist teachers, educational psychologists and carers, resulting in reduced or inconsistent access to services for those who are technically eligible. Concerns that current inclusion models are under resourced, leaving some children who have additional support, neurodiversity or behavioural needs without appropriate environments, 1:1 support or alternative pathways. Transitions are a significant point of exclusion, particularly for disabled young people and those with learning disabilities moving from school into adulthood, with limited access to postschool education, training, employment or supported social opportunities.
	Eligibility criteria for financial support / benefits / exemptions	Seen as inconsistent and, at times, inequitable, with many respondents highlighting gaps for working low-income families and carers, alongside concerns that some universal or benefit schemes are poorly targeted. There are concerns about wider fairness and equity, and there is a strong sense that working, taxpaying households are carrying a disproportionate burden.
	Access to community, leisure, cultural and holiday services	Is constrained by cost and availability, disproportionately affecting disabled people, young people, carers and families on modest incomes who fall outside eligibility thresholds.
	Accessibility issues	These extend beyond services to infrastructure, including transport, school facilities, parking and calming or sensory appropriate environments, which directly limit participation for disabled and neurodiverse individuals.
Health and care (218)	Persistent access issues across health services	Particularly GP, dental, hospital and mental health care, with long waiting times, workforce shortages and infrastructure not keeping pace with population growth repeatedly highlighted.
	Preventative and community-based approaches	People with disabilities and those with long-term conditions face barriers to independent living, including insufficient specialist community provision, delays in adaptations and limited access to supported education, employment and social opportunities. Strongly needed, including investment in family support, wellbeing, healthy living, dementia friendly communities and tackling social isolation to reduce future demand on health and care services.

Theme	Topic	Summary
	Social care	Capacity and quality are under significant strain, with respondents citing difficulties securing timely home care, care packages, respite and residential placements – contributing to delayed hospital discharge and avoidable admissions. The care workforce is viewed as undervalued and overstretched, with widespread calls for better pay, conditions and job security for home carers, social care workers and support staff, alongside reduced reliance on private agencies and greater inhouse provision. Respondents call for stronger integration between council services, education, health partners and the third sector, with more proactive planning, sustainable funding and joined up pathways to improve outcomes and value for money, and to prevent higher downstream costs.
	Carers	Report severe financial, emotional and practical pressures, including inadequate allowances, council tax burdens, lack of respite and limited long-term planning as cared for children transition into adulthood.
	Mental health support	Is a concern, especially for children and young people, unpaid carers, neurodivergent individuals and those unable to attend school or work, with strong calls for earlier intervention, community-based provision and continuity beyond short-term support.
Local economy (173)	Town centres	Strong calls to revitalise town centres across Fife, with emphasis on attracting diverse, quality retail and leisure usage, addressing empty and derelict buildings, improving cleanliness and civic pride, and making high streets more accessible and attractive to residents, visitors and businesses.
	Local businesses	Sustained support for small and local businesses is a priority, including reduced business rates, affordable rents, startup and growth support, fair access to high street locations, and closer scrutiny of council spending to ensure income is being reinvested to stimulate local economic activity.
	Employment	Clear links drawn between economic growth, employment and skills, with support for apprenticeships, training and progression routes (including for young people, school leavers and adults with additional needs) to help people access better paid, sustainable work and reduce reliance on benefits.
	Tourism and heritage	Are seen as underused economic assets, with suggestions to invest in historic environments, improve visitor infrastructure and consider modest tourism levies to fund maintenance while balancing resident needs and community capacity.

Theme	Topic	Summary
	Planning and infrastructure	Viewed as critical to economic resilience, with concerns that housing growth is not being matched by investment in shops, amenities, transport and services, risking disconnected communities, weaker local economies and reduced quality of place.
Transport and infrastructure (158)	Prioritise core infrastructure basics	Including road and pavement repairs, potholes, drainage and gully clearance, street lighting, gritting, litter removal and routine maintenance, with widespread frustration at perceived spending on high-profile or “vanity” projects instead.
	Transport affordability, reliability and coverage	Key concerns, particularly cheaper and more reliable bus and rail services, improved rural connectivity, better community transport, reinstated or enhanced routes, and safer, more accessible journeys for older people, children and disabled residents.
	Traffic management, parking and road safety	Significant concern, including inconsistent parking enforcement, pavement parking, lack of disabled parking, congestion, traffic light schemes, review of 20mph limits, and calls for safer crossings, targeted speed enforcement and better junction design.
	Accessibility and active travel	Divided opinion, with support for safe, well maintained walking, wheeling and cycling routes that connect communities, alongside opposition to schemes perceived as poorly used, poorly sited and maintained, or diverting funds from road repair and maintenance.
	Planning and development	Seen as poorly integrated with infrastructure, with repeated concerns that housing growth is not being matched by investment in roads, schools, health centres, public transport, drainage, green space and community facilities.
	Public buildings, green spaces and community assets	Require sustained investment, including schools, parks, play areas, public toilets, health centres and community hubs, with particular emphasis on accessibility, flood resilience, long-term maintenance and consultation with local communities. Maintain common good asset buildings to a high standard and to the satisfaction of the communities involved.
Housing (137)	Increasing affordable and council housing	The highest priority under the theme of housing was more council housing, affordable homes and better availability. Respondents described long waiting lists, the rising cost of private rents with young people unable to access housing. Some suggestions include the buy-back of council houses.
	Repairs and maintenance	Respondents feel that a top priority should be repairs to current council housing, citing poor living conditions with damp, mould and long wait times for repairs.

Theme	Topic	Summary
	Homelessness	A large portion of responses stated the need for reducing homelessness to be a top priority for the council. Supporting vulnerable people into stable homes and ensuring a quick process to housing.
Culture and leisure (121)	Libraries	Participants highlighted libraries as essential community assets, offering access to books, digital resources and learning. There is a strong need for library services to be protected.
	Youth activities	There was an emphasis on the lack of youth clubs, after-school activities and social opportunities for young people. A common concern is how the youths spend their time without these available to them. A priority for some was providing low-cost accessible activities for youths.
	Leisure centres and swimming pools	Respondents often raised concerns about the quality, availability and accessibility of leisure centres in Fife. A priority for some participants was for facilities to be improved with more swimming pools and better opening hours.
	Community centres	A top priority under this theme was maintaining the community centres with responses stressing the importance of the activities offered and the impact on wellbeing that they have.
Environment (77)	Maintenance of local environment	Participants highlighted the need for better standards and cleaning throughout Fife. They discuss how Fife feels poorly maintained with increasing amounts of litter, fly-tipping, graffiti and weeds.
	Parks and green spaces	The need for well-maintained local parks and green spaces was a key priority discussed. Safe play areas with an investment in paths, woodland and green spaces was highlighted.
	Climate	Responses around climate priorities were varied with some responses indicating it was a top priority whilst others viewed it as unnecessary spending.
Community grants/ third sector support (48)	Local and community services	Respondents frequently identified the need to preserve and strengthen community infrastructure highlighting the role of community centres and voluntary groups in supporting local wellbeing. It is a priority to several respondents that community buildings remain open with local facilities as these are labelled as essential for the community.
Community safety (55)	Antisocial behaviour	A recurring priority was reducing antisocial behaviour, particularly involving young people at bus stops, parks and town centres. Respondents want more prevention focused activities as well as quicker responses to issues surrounding this behaviour.

Theme	Topic	Summary
	Policing	Respondents frequently called for a greater visible police presence and expanded use of CCTV to improve safety and reduce crime. Increased community policing and reopening of police facilities were also suggested as ways to create safer neighbourhoods.
Bins and recycling (43)	Street cleanliness	Comments highlighted that a priority should be improving street cleaning and more maintenance as there is large amounts of litter throughout Fife.
	Bin collections	Respondents expressed the need for more frequent or reliable bin collections and easier access to recycling centres. Several emphasised the need for at home glass recycling and raised concerns about the long queues, booking systems and restricted opening hours at recycling sites.
School transport (6)	Taxi service	Some respondents viewed the free taxi transport service to school as an insufficient use of resources. They felt taxis were being used where a school bus or public transport is suitable. Tighter eligibility criteria would be a priority to reduce cost.

How we could save money

With a small budget gap next year that's set to increase in future, we will have to change the way money is spent. But there are options about how we do that.

Just some examples of ways the council could save money or generate income in the years ahead are listed below – to give a feel for the kind of choices available.

Table 5: Table describing example savings ideas

Savings ideas	What this could look like
Reduce the number of council buildings used by communities across Fife	For example, putting learning, leisure, welfare and care services under one roof and reducing the number of office buildings used for support services.
Introduce a small annual charge for garden waste bins	The council must collect general household rubbish, but we aren't legally required to collect grass etc. Lots of other councils charge for this so people can choose between a household collection, home composting or taking waste to a recycling centre.
Change the free bulky uplift service to cover some of our costs	Free collections cost the council more than just running the lorries. People often mix up items that could have been recycled, so we're paying extra landfill charges – and legislation means we now have to pay extra to dispose of upholstered furniture which contains Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs). We could change the way the service runs or reintroduce a charge.
Change who receives free school transport	Our policy is more generous than other places. For example, for children over 8 we could limit free school transport to those who live 3 or more miles from school, instead of the current 2-mile radius we use. Young people are all entitled to free travel on public buses now. We'd still provide buses if there's no recognised safe walking route or public transport to the catchment school.
Review pricing concessions across services	A range of people and groups get discounts for a variety of services – effectively the council is subsidising them. We do that for good reasons because people live in very different circumstances. But, for example, we could target this support more or reduce the concessions.
Increase parking charges in car parks the council owns – in line with other local authority and commercial rates	We haven't raised the base price in our car parks since 2016, and there are charging variations in locations, venues and facility types across Fife. We know that lots of people are happy to pay to park – and to pay via RingGo, for example, which adds 20p to existing prices. Income from car parks could be used to support services and facilities that people park for.
Introduce a visitor levy (a small additional charge) on overnight stays in Fife	Income raised could be reinvested in things like community street cleaning, cultural activity, public toilets and green spaces. Early engagement has started around the new law and the options open to Fife. Under the new legislation, if we did propose to introduce a visitor levy scheme, we would have to consult people on the details.
Make more use of technology in frontline services	We could use more artificial intelligence (AI) and automated processes to help people access information and services. If most people were happy to self-serve, or have more online and less physical interactions, we could work more efficiently and use staff time to deal with complex and sensitive issues.
Changing our corporate office opening hours	For example, we could reduce opening hours of some offices to lower operational costs. Staff would need to work flexibly around opening times, work from other locations or work from home.

Savings ideas

Residents were asked what they thought of a number of potential ways to make savings or cover costs.

Table 6: Table showing extent of support for savings ideas examples

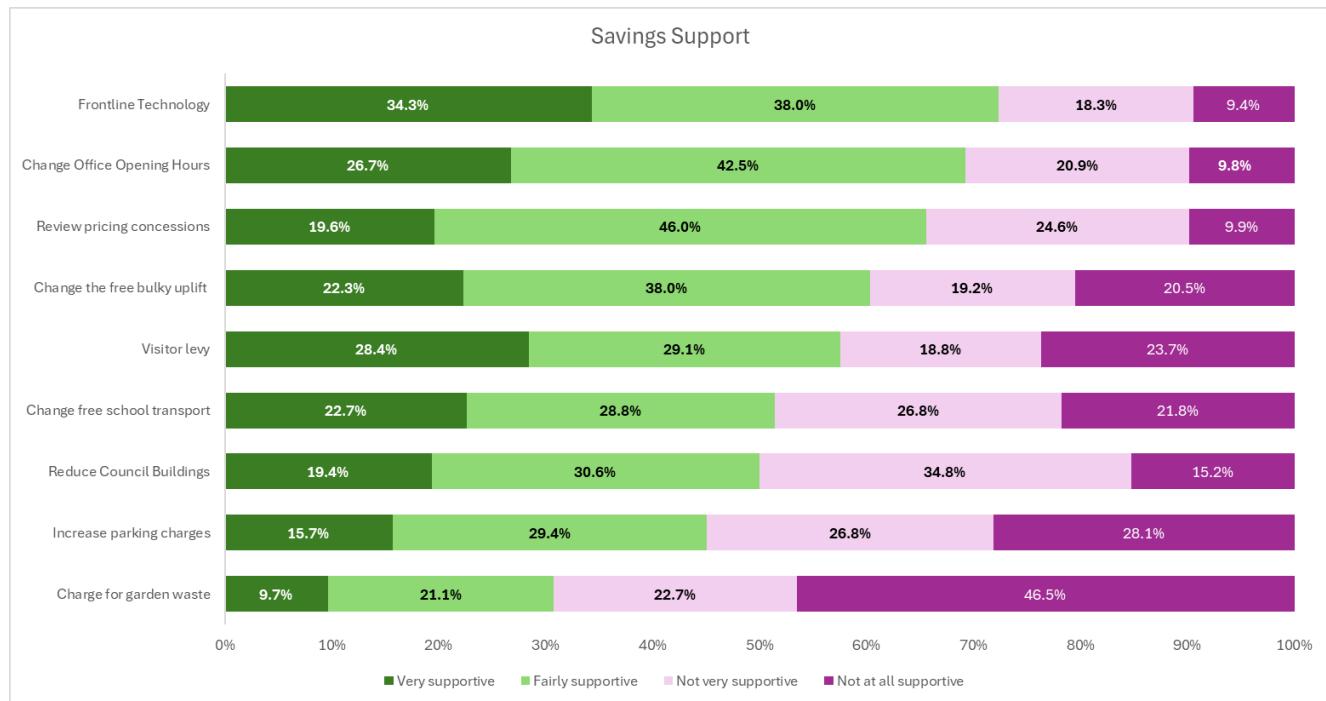
Savings ideas	Responses	Very supportive	Fairly supportive	Not very supportive	Not at all supportive	Net (+/-)
Make more use of technology in frontline services	2,432	34.3%	38.0%	18.3%	9.4%	44.6%
Changing our corporate office opening hours	2,431	26.7%	42.5%	20.9%	9.8%	38.5%
Review pricing concessions across services	2,422	19.6%	46.0%	24.6%	9.9%	31.1%
Change the free bulky uplift service to cover some of our costs	2,438	22.3%	38.0%	19.2%	20.5%	20.6%
Introduce a visitor levy (a small additional charge) on overnight stays in Fife	2,439	28.4%	29.1%	18.8%	23.7%	15.0%
Change who receives free school transport	2,432	22.7%	28.8%	26.8%	21.8%	2.9%
Reduce the number of council buildings used by communities across Fife	2,408	19.4%	30.6%	34.8%	15.2%	0.0%
Increase parking charges in car parks the council owns – in line with other local authority and commercial rates	2,440	15.7%	29.4%	26.8%	28.1%	-9.8%
Introduce a small annual charge for garden waste bins	2,435	9.7%	21.1%	22.7%	46.5%	-38.4%
A net score (+/-) is worked out by combining all the positive responses - in this case, people who said they were <i>very supportive</i> or <i>fairly supportive</i> - and all the negative responses - those who said they were <i>not very supportive</i> or <i>not at all supportive</i> . Each group is turned into a percentage of all responses, and the negative percentage is subtracted from the positive percentage. The resulting figure shows the balance of opinion: a positive score means more people are supportive overall, while a negative score means more people are not supportive.						

Public support is strongest for making more use of technology in frontline services, changing corporate office opening hours, and reviewing pricing concessions across services.

There is a moderate level of support for changing the free bulky uplift service to cover costs, introducing a visitor levy, and changing who receives free school transport.

There is least support for introducing a small annual charge for garden waste bins, and for increasing council owned car parking charges in line with other local authorities and commercial rates.

Figure 7: Bar chart showing extent of support for savings ideas examples



Savings ideas by area

The biggest place-based differences around savings support emerge around:

- Reviewing pricing concessions, with higher support in Glenrothes (+44.2%), and weaker overall support in Levenmouth (+18.8%)
- Changing the free bulky uplift, which sees higher support in City of Dunfermline (+41.5%) but low overall support in Cowdenbeath (+2.9%)
- Visitor levy, which is strongly positive in North East Fife (+34.2%) but marginal Cowdenbeath (+5.3%) and Glenrothes (+4.1%)
- Changing free school transport is supported in City of Dunfermline (+15.2%) and Kirkcaldy (+12.1%) but strongly opposed in South West Fife (-13.9%) and Cowdenbeath (-6.8%)
- Reducing Council buildings is relatively supported in Glenrothes (+9.6%) and North East Fife (+5.1%) yet negative in most other areas
- The biggest area difference is around increasing parking charges, where North East Fife (+12.2%) is the only area with net support, while Glenrothes (-30.8%) and Cowdenbeath (-21.7%) show the strongest opposition.

Savings ideas by age

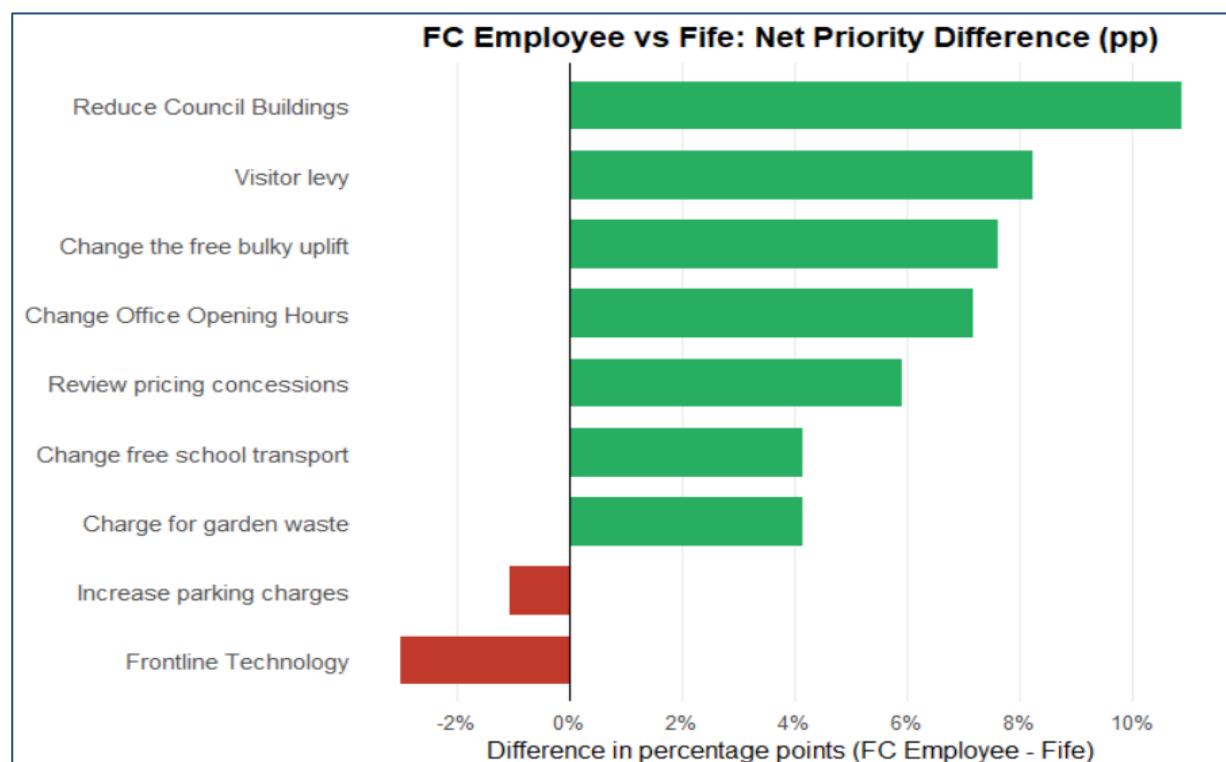
Across age groups, there are clear differences in savings support. Younger adults (16-24) show much higher support for changing the free bulky uplift, and far lower support for changing free school transport, reducing council buildings, and charging for garden waste collection standing out as the most negative age group on these options. Those aged 25-34 also show lower support than average for school transport changes and parking charges, but higher support for changing office opening hours. Adults in their mid-30s to mid-40s sit closer to the Fife average overall, with slightly higher support for changing office opening hours and marginally lower support for reducing council buildings. The oldest adults (75+) generally show lower support for frontline technology than the Fife average, however, are more supportive of reviewing pricing concessions. Charging for garden waste collection is universally not supported across all age groups.

See Appendix 1 for Table 19 (page 43) and Table 20 (page 44) which provide an overview of what is rated the highest savings ideas by age and area.

Savings ideas by Council employees

The main differences between employees and the Fife average in terms of net support for savings options is that employees are more supportive of reducing Council buildings (+10.9 pp), introducing a visitor levy (+8.2 pp), changing the free bulky uplift (+7.6 pp), changing office opening hours (+7.2 pp), reviewing pricing concessions (+5.9 pp), and to a lesser extent changing free School transport (+4.1 pp) and charging for garden waste (+4.1 pp). They are less supportive of use of technology in frontline services (-3.0 pp) and slightly more opposed to increasing parking charges (-1.1 pp).

Figure 8: Bar chart showing differences in net support between Fife Council employees and Fife overall

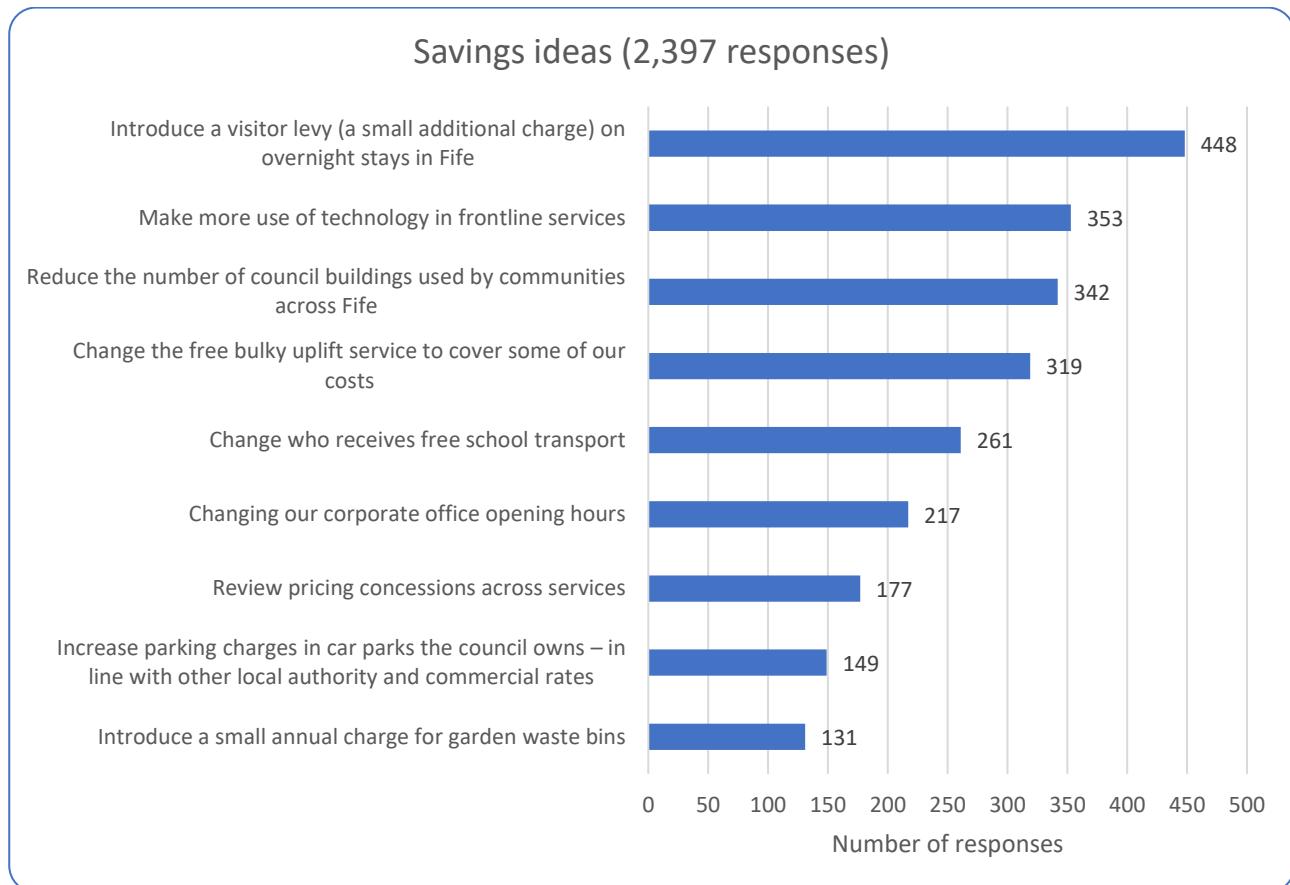


One savings idea to support

When asked to choose only one savings idea to support, the three ideas that respondents supported the most were:

- Introduce a visitor levy (a small additional charge) on overnight stays in Fife (448)
- Make more use of technology in frontline services (353)
- Reduce the number of council buildings used by communities across Fife (342)

Figure 9: Bar chart showing example savings ideas with most support based on number of responses



Discussions on savings ideas

Through the facilitated discussions, participants expressed a preference for efficiency of services rather than cutting services. The most common theme shown in the comments was council operations (20 mentions), followed by bins and recycling and transport and infrastructure (11 mentions each).

Comments stated savings could be made through repurposing council buildings, changing how the council operates such as more communication between services. Council wages were often discussed as well as technology with some stating to make more use of it and others urging more human contact.

Introducing a small charge for garden waste and bulky uplifts was acceptable by some respondents with others stating that this would result in more fly tipping and therefore increasing clean-up costs.

Reviewing transport was highlighted as well as unnecessary spending on roadworks and cycle path projects. Community centres being vital to socialisation was also discussed.

Overall, the public would rather more targeted changes over the reduction of services.

Other savings ideas

Residents were asked about other services that could be stopped or reduced to save money or ways the council could increase income to cover some costs.

There were 1,075 responses to this part of the question.

Savings ideas that had the most mentions, and reflected some of the other priorities identified included:

- Council operations (657)
- Transport and infrastructure (239)
- Access and inclusion (174)

Figure 10: Bar chart showing other savings ideas by number of responses

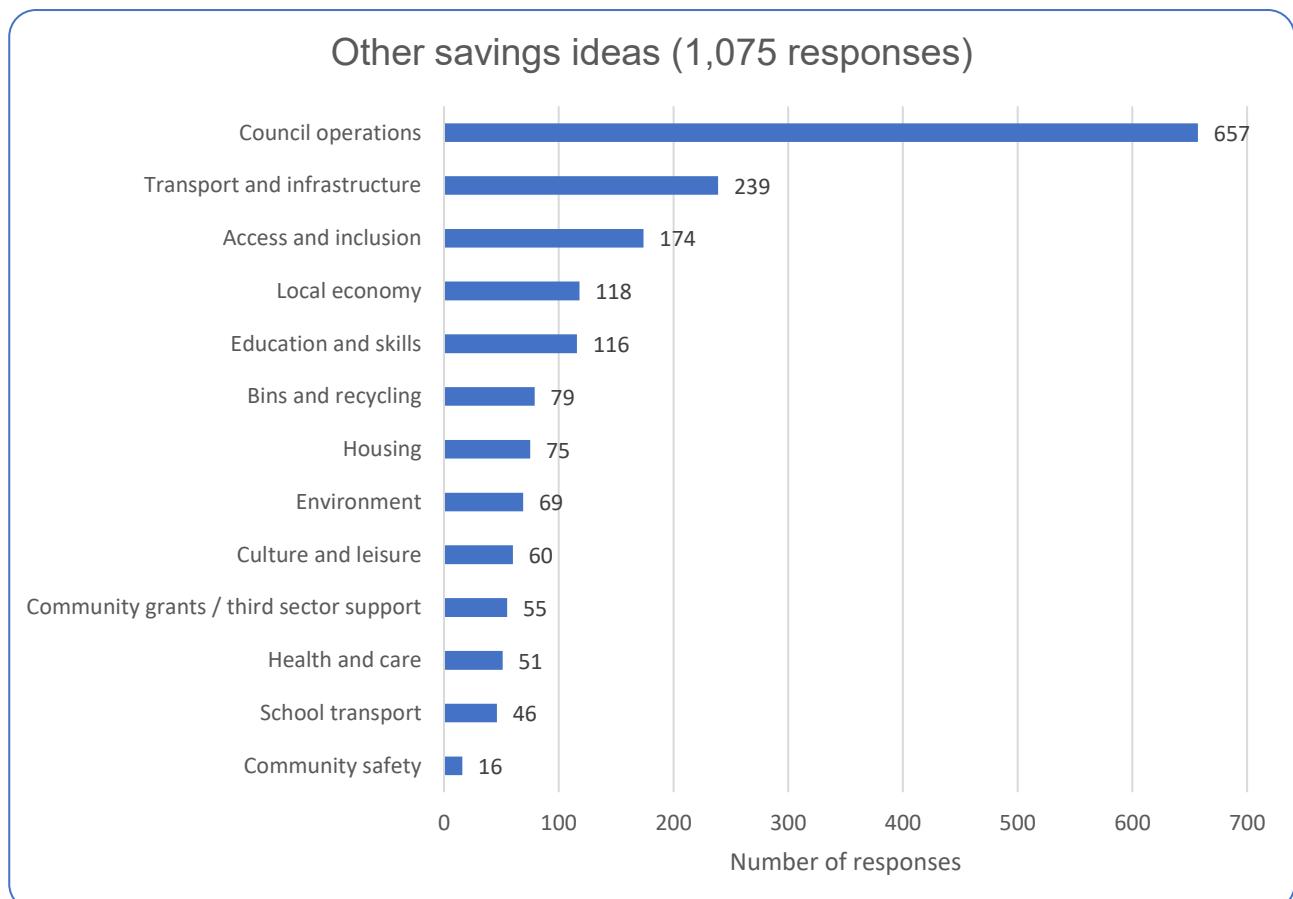


Table 7 provides a summary of the comments on other savings ideas by theme and topic.

Table 7: Summary of comments on other savings ideas by theme and topic

Theme	Topic	Summary
Council Operations (657)	Organisational structure	Respondents repeatedly said that the council has layers of unnecessary management with a duplication of roles. It is expressed that reducing these roles can reduce costs.
	Staff wages	Participants suggest that top earners at the council have a high salary which could be reviewed and reduced to use towards funding.
	Productivity	Comments were made around the number of council workers attending jobs or working short hours that could save costs if this was stopped. Respondents felt that there is a sense of lack of accountability around council operations which contributes to inefficiently and poor productivity.
	Sickness and absence	People feel that council sick pay and absence policies are too generous which allows long-term sickness and contributes to costs. Reducing this policy can limit long-term absence and save costs.
	Home working	Mixed views, with some believing individuals working from home lowers productivity, others believe more home working can save costs as offices can be reduced.
	Outsourcing	There was frustration around outsourcing within the council as it increases costs. Responses suggest that reducing outsourcing will reduce costs.
Transport and infrastructure (239)	Road repairs and potholes	Comments often noted the need for road repairs as well as the high cost of roadworks. It is suggested that roadworks are uncoordinated and an unnecessary spend.
	Under-22s bus passes	A number of responses suggest that free bus passes for children are creating antisocial behaviour resulting in more costs for the council. Some state it should be removed entirely whilst some believe restrictions would be beneficial.
	Bus service	People propose smaller buses on less used routes as well as better connections and timetables. Some suggest the buses do not show up at the correct time.
	Parking charges	Some suggest that increasing parking charges would directly impact footfall whilst others suggest free time periods. Charges for visitor parking especially in St Andrews was suggested to increase income.
	Active travel	Cycle path investments have been labelled as a “waste of money” as they are rarely used resulting in funds being wasted on these investments.
Access and inclusion (174)	Free meals	Respondents feel free school meals and holiday food payments should be means tested. Participants feel that savings by limiting providing free meals to those in need will reduce council spending. There were concerns around Café Inc and the families that receive both cash and food provision which could be reduced.
	Benefits	Some responses related to reducing who receives benefits from the council. Participants stated that there is benefit misuse and having more checks can prevent this. Others

Theme	Topic	Summary
		suggested more support was required for those just above the benefit threshold with bills and council tax constantly rising and any cost saving measures would have a negative impact.
Local economy (118)	Town centre investment	Many feel like current investments by the council aren't addressing aspects that boosts local economy activity. Investing into areas that will boost the economy will produce more long-term income and reduce waste.
	Efficiency	Responses suggest that efficiency rather than reducing services will provide more savings and increased income in the local economy.
Education and skills (116)	iPad rollout	Children receiving iPads was the most common response under Education and skills. Many respondents voiced their concern over a large sum of funding being spent on it which could be more appropriately used elsewhere in education.
	Nursery staff	Some comments responded stating a need for nursery hours to be reviewed as there is a wasted number of staff.
Bins and recycling (79)	Bulky uplifts	There was a strong concern that introducing a charge to bulky uplifts would increase the number of fly tipping which would result in more clean-up costs.
	Recycling centres	Comments stated that removing the booking system would make recycling centres easier to use and reduce costs as well as allowing vans and businesses for a small charge.
Housing (75)	Council housing eligibility	Comments refer to who should get access to council housing. Many believe it should be a regular review which allows tenants with improved circumstances from remaining in council housing while others face a long wait.
	Repairs	Some state that savings could be made through housing repairs such as unnecessary repairs and multiple visits.
	Rent costs	Some respondents believe the current rent system is unfair as similar rent is charged for different levels of homes. It was also suggested that money could be saved through lowering the number of people that have free rent or increasing the rent paid in a council home.
Environment (69)	Gardening	Participants stated the floral displays could be reduced as this is not essential and can be used to save money and reduce waste.
	Grass cutting	Comments referred to reducing the number of times the grass is cut around Fife as this would reduce costs.
	Energy efficiency	Responses suggest investing in solar panels, wind turbines, and heating controls to cut long-term operational costs.
Culture and leisure (60)	Libraries, museums, theatres	Comments include the reduction of cost heavy cultural services. Some suggestions include reducing hours, charging a small fee for usage or combining facilities.

Theme	Topic	Summary
	Efficiency	Various responses state that no services should be cut or reduced and instead make improvements and investments to support long term growth. There were also participants that stated third sector community organisations should be represented more when decisions around funding are made. Comments stated that community organisations such as groups in the community centres are important and should not be reduced.
	Renting out council buildings	Comments suggested that through charging for council buildings such as leisure facilities (swimming pools) and community centres would increase council money.
Community grants/third sector support (55)	Third sector funding	Participants commonly highlighted community grants as an area where spending could be reviewed with costs saved through reducing grants. Other comments stated if community grants were given, they should be more targeted ensuring that only groups that demonstrate a need with clear outcomes should be awarded grants. A more strategic approach to community funding should reduce costs. Some respondents stated that multiple charities receive overlapping funding and through reducing this, costs could be saved.
Health and care (51)	Council run care homes	One method of saving money for the council is to make more care homes council owned.
	Care packages	The council can save money long-term by providing more care packages as this will allow more individuals to stay at home longer.
School transport (46)	Taxi service	A number of people believe stopping the free taxi service to school is an effective way to reduce council costs. Participants state that there are too many free school taxis which requires significant funding that can be spent elsewhere. Comments note that all school children have access to free travel with their bus pass and this should be utilised to save council money on free school transport.
Community Safety (16)	Crime prevention	Some suggest more police on the streets and fines for antisocial behaviour in order to address disruptive behaviour. Introducing community work to repair any damages would result in cost savings as suggested.
	Street safety	Some responses note the need for increased safety measures on roads and street lighting. Improving street safety will reduce community risk and therefore accidents and claims.

Council tax

Council tax contributes 18% of the total council budget. The rest comes from central government, inward investment and non-domestic rates. But your council tax has a significant impact - every 1% increase means over £2 million to invest in services. We know it also increases household bills – each 1% increase adds around £15 per year for a household in Band D.

The budget plans agreed last year already assume a 5% increase in council tax this year. Even with this we estimate a £5 million budget gap between income and expenditure.

The table below provides an overview of the impact that different levels of a potential annual increase in Council tax could have on the potential increase to the Council budget.

Table 8: Table showing potential annual increases in council tax by percentage

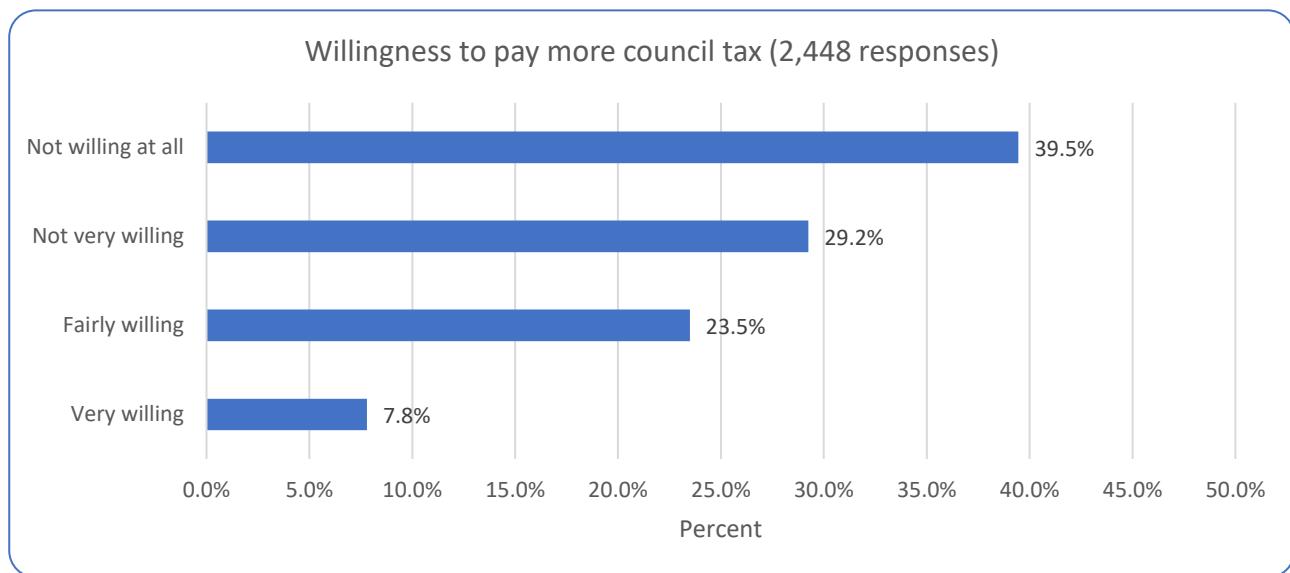
Potential annual increase in council tax							
Valuation Band	Annual Council Tax 2025/26	+5%	+6%	+7%	+8%	+9%	+10%
A	£999.17	+£49.96	+£59.95	+£69.94	+£79.93	+£89.93	+£99.92
B	£1,165.70	+£58.29	+£69.94	+£81.60	+£93.26	+£104.91	+£116.57
C	£1,332.23	+£66.61	+£79.93	+£93.26	+£106.58	+£119.90	+£133.22
D	£1,498.76	+£74.94	+£89.93	+£104.91	+£119.90	+£134.89	+£149.88
E	£1,969.20	+£98.46	+£118.15	+£137.84	+£157.54	+£177.23	+£196.92
F	£2,435.49	+£121.77	+£146.13	+£170.48	+£194.84	+£219.19	+£243.55
G	£2,935.07	+£146.75	+£176.10	+£205.45	+£234.81	+£264.16	+£293.51
H	£3,671.96	+£183.60	+£220.32	+£257.04	+£293.76	+£330.48	+£367.20
Potential increase to Council budget		£10.595m	£12.714m	£14.832m	£16.951m	£19.070m	£21.189m

Willingness to pay more in council tax

Respondents were asked how willing they would be to pay more in council tax to maintain or improve existing council services. There were 2,448 responses to this question.

Two out of three survey respondents were not willing to pay more in council tax (29.2% not very willing, and 39.5% not at all willing). The net score (+/-) is -37.4% against.

Figure 11: Bar chart showing willingness to pay more in council tax



Feedback on the facilitated sessions showed that half of the groups were not willing at all to increase their council tax payment. A net score of -44.1% mirrors the survey feedback that more people are against a council tax increase than open to an increase.

Willingness to pay more by council tax status

Across council tax statuses, net willingness to pay more is negative in every group, with only small differences between them: those who pay full council tax are effectively in line with the overall result, those on a discounted rate are very similar (slightly less negative), and those who do not pay council tax are least opposed overall. Overall, the pattern suggests broadly consistent views regardless of status, with no major divergence from the Fife-wide picture.

Table 9: Table showing willingness to pay more, by council tax status

Council tax status	Responses	Very willing	Fairly willing	Not very willing	Not at all willing	Net (+/-)
All respondents	2,448	7.8%	23.5%	29.2%	39.5%	-37.4%
Those who pay full council tax	1,969	8.2%	23.1%	29.4%	39.4%	-37.5%
Those who pay a discounted rate of council tax	431	5.6%	26.2%	28.5%	39.7%	-36.4%
Those who do not need to pay council tax	40	15.0%	20.0%	30.0%	35.0%	-30.0%

See Appendix 1 for Table 21 and Table 22 (page 45) which provide an overview of net willingness to pay more council tax, and the amount of council tax increase willing to pay by age and area.

Willingness to pay more by age

Across age groups, there is a clear age gradient in willingness to pay more council tax. Younger adults tend to show the lowest willingness, with net opposition strongest among those under 45, while willingness becomes less negative with increasing age. From midlife onwards, attitudes shift more positively, with older residents (55+) showing comparatively higher willingness to pay and the 75+ group coming closest to balance between support and opposition. Overall, the pattern indicates that opposition is greatest among younger age groups and steadily reduces with age, suggesting views on council tax are strongly linked to life stage rather than being evenly distributed across the population.

Willingness to pay more by area

Across all areas, there is net opposition to paying more council tax, but this varies noticeably by location. North East Fife and Kirkcaldy stand out as relatively less opposed, indicating a greater openness to higher council tax compared with other parts of Fife. In contrast, Cowdenbeath and Levenmouth show the strongest resistance, with consistently higher levels of unwillingness. City of Dunfermline and Glenrothes also display more opposition than the Fife average, while South West Fife broadly mirrors the overall Fife position. Overall, the pattern suggests that willingness to pay more council tax is strongly place based, with some areas notably more receptive than others, even though opposition remains the dominant view everywhere.

Willingness to pay more by Fife Council employees

Across FC employee status, net willingness to pay more council tax is negative for all groups, but FC Employees tend to be slightly less opposed than nonemployees and the overall Fife result. Employees show a modestly higher level of willingness and a lower level of strong opposition, while nonemployees show a somewhat stronger tendency to oppose any increase. Overall, the pattern suggests that employees are more open to the idea than the wider public, though the differences remain relatively small.

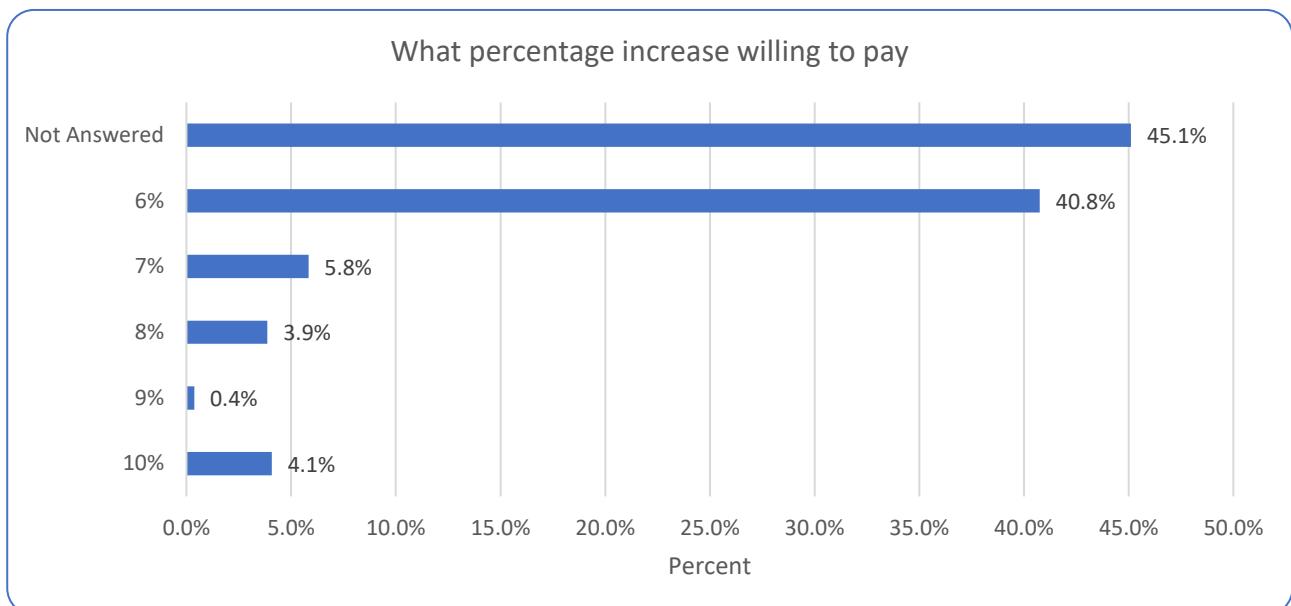
Percentage council tax increase willing to pay

If respondents were willing to pay a bit more council tax, they were asked to indicate what percentage increase they would be willing to pay.

1,107 of the 2,454 respondents chose not to answer this question, reflecting the unwillingness of the majority of respondents to pay more in council tax.

Almost half of respondents did not select any option at all (45.1%). Among those who did express a view, the clear preference is for a 6% increase, the lowest of the options presented. Support then falls away sharply for higher increases, with all options receiving less than 10% support.

Figure 12: Bar chart showing what percentage of council tax people would be willing to pay



Percentage council tax increase willing to pay by age

Across ages, most respondents don't state a figure, and when they do the clear default is 6% in every group. The younger to mid-life groups are more likely to leave the question unanswered, whereas older groups are more willing to name a figure above 6%, showing a gradual increase in openness to higher percentages with age. In general, 6% is predominant across all ages, with non-response higher among younger/middle-aged respondents and willingness to consider higher increases rising with age.

Percentage council tax increase willing to pay by area

Across areas, most respondents do not state a specific figure, and when they do the most commonly selected option is 6% across all areas. A small number of areas show greater openness to higher percentages (7-10%) – most notably North East Fife and, to a lesser extent, Kirkcaldy – while other areas cluster more tightly around 6% with limited appetite beyond that. Nonresponse is higher in Levenmouth and lower in North East Fife, however overall the pattern is consistent, with only modest place-based variation in willingness to consider higher increases.

See Appendix 1 for Table 23 and Table 24 (page 45) which provide an overview of the amount of council tax increase willing to pay by age and area.

Percentage council tax increase willing to pay by Council Tax status

Across Council Tax statuses, most respondents do not state a specific figure, and when they do the most commonly selected option is 6% in every group. Those who do not pay or pay a discounted rate are more likely to choose 6% than full Council Tax payers, while full payers show a slightly wider spread across the higher options (7-10%) and a slightly higher non-response. Overall, appetite for increases above 6% is limited across all statuses, with only modest differences between groups.

Percentage council tax increase willing to pay by Fife Council employees

Fife Council employees had a similar but slightly lower level of non-response to this question. A slightly higher proportion FC employees were supportive of a 6% rise (41.7%), a 7% rise (6.3%) and showed greater support for a 10% rise (4.8%) than non Fife Council employees (3.8%).

Table 10: Table showing percentage of council tax people would be willing to pay, by council tax status

Council tax status	Responses	6%	7%	8%	9%	10%	Not answered
All respondents	2,454	40.7%	5.8%	3.9%	0.4%	4.1%	45.1%
Those who pay full council tax	1,974	39.4%	5.9%	4.1%	0.4%	4.3%	45.9%
Those who pay a discounted rate of council tax	431	45.9%	5.3%	3.0%	0.2%	3.2%	42.2%
Those who do not need to pay council tax	40	52.5%	5.0%	5.0%	0.0%	2.5%	35.0%

Facilitated conversations

Across Fife, a total of 386 people participated in a facilitated conversation to gather views on council spending priorities from different communities of interest.

The council's community teams and Fife Health & Social Care Partnership Participation and Engagement team proactively contacted groups who may have been less aware of, or less likely to engage with, an online survey. Feedback from these conversations reflects the views of people linked by shared experiences, circumstances and community conversations and connections. Among the participants there was representation from mental health support groups, adults with learning disabilities and community groups of all ages.

Feedback was received from 34 group discussions: Fife wide (4), City of Dunfermline (1), Kirkcaldy (4), Levenmouth (20), and North East Fife (5).

Figure 13: Bar chart showing number of groups by area

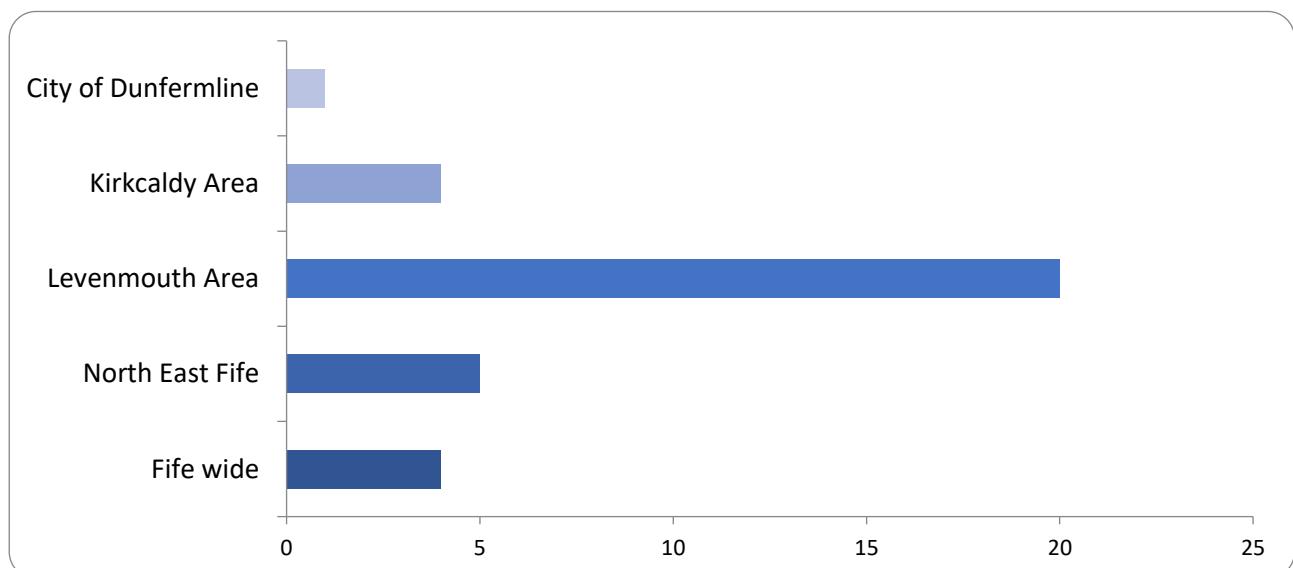
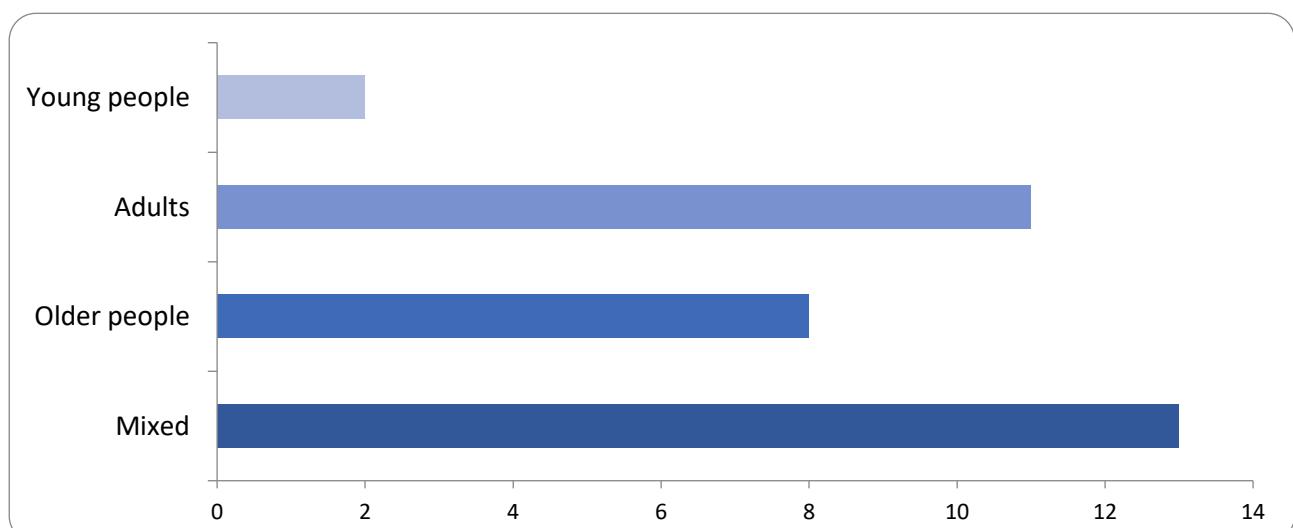


Figure 14: Bar chart showing participants identified themselves as young people, adults, mixed age and older people



Key headlines

Community centres are seen as a lifeline to participants with fears over cuts and funding. Centres and leisure facilities provide impactful groups that offer warm spaces, support and social connection. A number fear closures would in turn impact their mental health.

Supporting vulnerable people is a top priority as well as ensuring health and wellbeing for all. Health and care is a top theme throughout with multiple responses around supporting health and wellbeing including mental health. There were also concerns around the wait times for care packages.

Transport cuts would also increase social isolation if community groups could not be accessed. There were calls for more reliable bus services and safer roads including pothole repairs.

Half of the facilitated groups were not willing to pay more council tax. The main reason was due to affordability and cost of living fears. Some responses said 5% would be more than enough increase whilst some could not even afford this increase. Participants typically would like transparency around what the increase in council tax would be used for.

Discussion on guiding principles

Through the 34 facilitated group discussions, health and care was the most common theme (19 mentions), followed by access and inclusion (14) and council operations (7).

Across all sessions, participants strongly emphasises that council spending should focus on improving health and wellbeing for all, with those that are vulnerable and suffering from mental health being a key component. Participants stressed financial difficulties that individuals are in and the need to be supported.

Key priorities from facilitated conversations

- Health and social care services (including wait times for care, mental health and wellbeing)
- Protection of community centres and council-owned facilities
- Transport and infrastructure (bus service, road repairs, transport to community groups)
- Holiday meal schemes for vulnerable people and families

Top savings ideas

- Visitor levy on overnight stays.
- Review free school transport eligibility.
- Small charges for bulky uplifts and garden waste

Discussions on Council Tax

In the feedback from the facilitated discussions there were 32 comments in relation to paying more council tax, with the majority expressing strong concerns about affordability and finances due to the cost of living (16 mentions).

Half of respondents were not willing at all to increase their council tax payment. A net negative value is calculated (-44.1%) which would suggest more people are against the council tax increase than open to an increase

It was suggested 5% was an acceptable increase with others suggesting they would not feel able to afford a 5% increase or anything more. Others were conditionally willing to increase council tax at a 5% max increase or asking only higher earners to increase (12 mentions).

Participants demanded transparency about how funds would be spent and assurance that services would improve or local services would be protected (9 mentions). Comments included making efficient savings before council tax would be raised (4 mentions).

One group rejected discussing it further after they have responded they were not willing to pay an increase.

Similarities between online survey and facilitated sessions

- Reducing wait time for care packages and roads and potholes are top priorities
- Improve health and wellbeing for all second most important guiding principle for both
- Top savings are both introducing visitor levy
- Not willing at all to increase council tax is highest for both

Discussion on how reduction or change of services would affect you

In the facilitated group sessions, participants were asked how reduction would or change to council services affect you or your family with the most common theme in the responses being access and inclusion (15 mentions). This was followed by health and care (13 mentions) and transport and infrastructure (8 mentions). They focus on the financial concerns this would bring upon them and the worries that those already struggling would face if council tax were to increase.

A number of responses stated that free meals for school children and holiday meals were a success and should not be cut as this may have financial implications. Health and care was shown through a large discussion on the impact that council tax increase would have on wellbeing due to mental health struggles expected.

There was a strong emphasis on culture and leisure and the impact that cutting community centres and leisure facilities would have on individuals. Cuts for these services would result in mental health struggles as stated by the groups responses.

Discussions reiterated the need for transport services to allow individuals to attend community groups and encourages connectivity. While few said they could manage, most felt any cuts would harm vulnerable groups.

Additional reflections

Participants expressed mixed views but shared strong concerns about protecting local services, particularly community centres and groups which provide safe spaces of support, which they described as lifelines. There was an emphasis on supporting vulnerable groups, such as those with learning difficulties and people with financial difficulties.

A number were resistant to an increase in council tax due to financial struggles that already occur and individuals felt they would be further stretched. A recurring theme was for protection of local services as previously discussed.

Overall, the reflections indicated that the group stressed the importance of protecting current council services already in place, particularly community centres. There was once again a stated need for transparency over the council spending as groups felt there was wasted money and unnecessary work taking place.

One reflection noted there needed to be easily accessible information and communication from the council.

Overall

The facilitated sessions responses show the key themes of access and inclusion, health and care, culture and leisure and transport and infrastructure most commonly throughout.

Key comments include the financial concerns that would arise due to budget cuts and the impact this would have on mental health and wellbeing.

Respondents also highlighted the need for funding for care along with community centres and groups to remain open to provide connectivity for individuals.

Transport was a key component of discussions with fears that cuts on transport would no longer allow individuals to attend these impactful groups. Road improvements and pothole repairs were also a topic of discussion as a number of groups felt this needed addressed.

Appendix 1: Survey findings by age and area

Prioritising our spending - most important

Table 11: Table showing most important guiding principles by age (top three highlighted in green)

Most important	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	Overall
Helps children and young people achieve more in school	25.0%	37.8%	47.4%	37.3%	19.8%	16.2%	14.7%	34.0%
Helps improve health and wellbeing for all	17.9%	13.0%	12.8%	15.8%	19.6%	21.1%	19.8%	16.0%
Helps increase household income	25.0%	26.9%	16.8%	12.7%	10.6%	8.9%	9.5%	14.5%
Supports long-term financial stability for services	0.0%	3.8%	6.7%	8.9%	13.4%	17.0%	19.0%	9.7%
Prevents crisis and improves quality of life for people in difficulty	7.1%	8.4%	5.6%	7.4%	8.8%	5.3%	6.9%	7.1%
Improves the look and feel of places across Fife	7.1%	2.9%	3.9%	5.7%	7.7%	10.1%	6.0%	5.7%
Helps anyone living with long term health issues to be as independent as possible	3.6%	2.5%	2.6%	3.8%	7.7%	8.1%	13.8%	4.8%
Delivered by the council – rather than private, partner, third sector or community run	3.6%	2.5%	2.2%	5.3%	7.2%	6.9%	4.3%	4.5%
Has a positive impact, or minimises negative impact, on the environment	10.7%	1.7%	1.2%	2.1%	3.9%	4.0%	1.7%	2.4%
Changes that have delivered benefits or improvements elsewhere	0.0%	0.4%	0.7%	1.1%	1.3%	2.4%	4.3%	1.2%

Table 12: Table showing most important guiding principles by area (top three highlighted in green)

Most important	DUN	COW	GLE	KDY	LEV	NEF	SWF	Fife
Helps children and young people achieve more in school	38.2%	28.6%	32.8%	35.4%	32.6%	34.4%	30.0%	34.0%
Helps improve health and wellbeing for all	16.1%	13.3%	12.4%	15.1%	12.1%	17.7%	24.2%	16.0%
Helps increase household income	13.5%	18.7%	17.2%	12.5%	16.5%	13.6%	12.3%	14.5%
Supports long-term financial stability for services	9.8%	11.8%	8.3%	10.2%	11.6%	9.0%	9.2%	9.7%
Prevents crisis and improves quality of life for people in difficulty	6.5%	6.4%	10.5%	7.8%	8.9%	5.0%	6.1%	7.1%
Improves the look and feel of places across Fife	6.1%	5.9%	4.8%	7.3%	6.7%	5.5%	3.4%	5.7%
Helps anyone living with long term health issues be as independent as possible	4.2%	4.9%	5.7%	3.9%	4.9%	4.4%	6.8%	4.8%
Delivered by the council – rather than private, partner, third sector or community run	3.0%	8.4%	5.1%	4.7%	3.6%	4.6%	3.1%	4.5%
Has a positive impact, or minimises negative impact, on the environment	1.6%	1.0%	1.6%	2.9%	1.8%	4.6%	2.0%	2.4%
Changes that have delivered benefits or improvements elsewhere	0.9%	1.0%	1.6%	0.3%	1.3%	1.3%	2.7%	1.2%

Prioritising our spending - least important

Table 13: Table showing least important guiding principles by age (top three highlighted in green)

Least important	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	Overall
Improves the look and feel of places across Fife	50.0%	32.4%	28.5%	22.9%	19.8%	16.7%	20.3%	24.5%
Delivered by the council - rather than private, partner, third sector or community run	21.4%	22.7%	21.5%	20.5%	25.3%	24.8%	25.4%	22.4%
Changes that have delivered benefits or improvements elsewhere	0.0%	11.8%	15.2%	18.2%	14.9%	17.9%	11.9%	15.7%
Has a positive impact, or minimises negative impact, on the environment	7.1%	15.1%	11.7%	12.7%	13.7%	15.4%	13.6%	13.1%
Helps increase household income	7.1%	5.9%	9.1%	11.9%	13.7%	14.6%	16.1%	11.2%
Supports long-term financial stability for services	0.0%	3.4%	3.2%	3.3%	3.6%	2.0%	2.5%	3.1%
Prevents crisis and improves quality of life for people in difficulty	3.6%	3.8%	4.4%	2.7%	1.8%	1.6%	3.4%	3.1%
Helps anyone living with long term health issues to be as independent as possible	3.6%	3.4%	3.3%	2.3%	2.3%	1.6%	1.7%	2.6%
Helps children and young people achieve more in school	7.1%	1.7%	1.2%	3.3%	3.1%	3.7%	3.4%	2.6%
Helps improve health and wellbeing for all	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%	2.3%	1.8%	1.6%	1.7%	1.7%

Table 14: Table showing least important guiding principles by area (top three highlighted in green)

Least important	DUN	COW	GLE	KDY	LEV	NEF	SWF	Fife
Improves the look and feel of places across Fife	24.2%	30.2%	26.1%	18.7%	26.2%	24.7%	22.3%	24.5%
Delivered by the council – rather than private, partner, third sector or community run	23.5%	18.3%	21.0%	23.6%	21.3%	24.7%	21.6%	22.4%
Changes that have delivered benefits or improvements elsewhere	15.8%	12.4%	13.7%	14.5%	13.8%	18.6%	17.8%	15.7%
Has a positive impact, or minimises negative impact, on the environment	10.9%	17.3%	15.9%	15.1%	16.4%	8.1%	13.7%	13.1%
Helps increase household income	10.5%	7.9%	9.9%	12.5%	9.3%	13.3%	13.7%	11.2%
Supports long-term financial stability for services	2.8%	4.5%	4.5%	4.4%	2.2%	2.4%	1.4%	3.1%
Prevents crisis and improves quality of life for people in difficulty	4.9%	3.5%	2.2%	3.6%	1.8%	2.6%	2.7%	3.1%
Helps anyone living with long term health issues to be as independent as possible	3.0%	1.5%	2.5%	3.1%	2.2%	2.4%	2.7%	2.6%
Helps children and young people achieve more in school	2.6%	3.0%	3.5%	1.8%	3.6%	1.8%	3.4%	2.6%
Helps improve health and wellbeing for all	1.9%	1.5%	0.6%	2.6%	3.1%	1.3%	0.7%	1.7%

Service priorities

Table 15: Table showing net priority (+/-) given to service priorities by age

Service priorities	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	Fife
Reducing waiting times for home care packages	33.3%	67.7%	67.0%	77.9%	82.3%	78.9%	72.8%	73.6%
Fixing potholes and doing more / longer-term road repairs	57.1%	58.1%	65.1%	69.2%	78.2%	79.7%	79.0%	69.9%
Skills and training programmes to help people into work	71.4%	53.2%	53.9%	63.5%	65.9%	74.3%	69.8%	61.6%
Council-owned and run care homes	42.9%	58.3%	55.3%	60.2%	59.4%	62.4%	53.6%	58.0%
School building improvements / new schools	42.9%	56.8%	71.3%	52.7%	46.6%	46.9%	50.8%	56.6%
Council-owned network of swimming and leisure facilities	7.1%	15.7%	28.5%	31.5%	28.1%	36.8%	17.5%	27.8%
Bus service improvements	35.7%	-10.6%	-3.1%	8.9%	26.1%	34.9%	38.7%	10.8%
Town centre footfall and attractiveness	-35.7%	-11.6%	0.4%	14.1%	26.9%	22.0%	24.4%	10.4%
Holiday meal schemes for children and families (on top of cash payments made to families entitled to free school meals)	57.1%	35.3%	12.4%	9.9%	-11.3%	4.7%	-4.8%	9.0%
Low carbon heat schemes that improve energy efficiency across Fife	35.7%	16.6%	-7.3%	-4.4%	-10.4%	-12.9%	1.6%	-4.7%

Table 16: Table showing net priority (+/-) given to service priorities by area

Service priorities	DUN	COW	GLE	KDY	LEV	NEF	SWF	Fife
Reducing waiting times for home care packages	69.5%	78.6%	71.9%	83.1%	80.3%	69.7%	68.0%	73.6%
Fixing potholes and doing more / longer-term road repairs	69.6%	81.6%	68.7%	69.6%	76.8%	63.2%	71.2%	69.9%
Skills and training programmes to help people into work	55.7%	63.7%	63.1%	58.3%	65.3%	63.1%	60.4%	61.6%
Council-owned and run care homes	56.5%	74.5%	55.6%	60.5%	57.3%	53.6%	60.3%	58.0%
School building improvements / new schools	55.7%	53.4%	65.7%	51.3%	61.1%	51.9%	59.2%	56.6%
Council-owned network of swimming and leisure facilities	40.3%	24.9%	26.4%	14.3%	13.3%	27.2%	40.4%	27.8%
Bus service improvements	-1.9%	9.7%	2.1%	3.2%	11.6%	31.3%	15.6%	10.8%
Town centre footfall and attractiveness	12.5%	-1.9%	23.4%	13.5%	15.2%	9.9%	-0.7%	10.4%
Holiday meal schemes for children and families (on top of cash payments made to families entitled to free school meals)	9.4%	5.8%	4.4%	15.9%	4.4%	7.4%	9.9%	9.0%
Low carbon heat schemes that improve energy efficiency across Fife	-4.0%	-14.6%	-7.3%	-4.2%	-9.4%	8.1%	-6.8%	-4.7%

Highest service priority

Table 17: Table showing highest service priority by age (top three highlighted in green)

Highest service priority	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	Fife
Reducing waiting times for home care packages	7.1%	15.1%	15.7%	17.2%	23.8%	28.6%	27.0%	19.1%
School building improvements / new schools	14.3%	28.2%	27.4%	17.9%	6.8%	1.7%	1.8%	17.5%
Fixing potholes and doing more / longer-term road repairs	7.1%	13.0%	14.5%	15.8%	19.1%	17.2%	17.1%	15.9%
Skills and training programmes to help people into work	21.4%	10.1%	11.4%	13.4%	16.2%	20.6%	23.4%	14.2%
Holiday meal schemes for children and families (on top of cash payments made to families entitled to free school meals)	28.6%	14.7%	9.8%	7.2%	5.8%	4.6%	0.9%	8.2%
Town centre footfall and attractiveness	7.1%	2.9%	4.4%	6.5%	8.4%	5.0%	11.7%	5.9%
Council-owned and run care homes	3.6%	2.5%	3.7%	6.8%	7.3%	9.7%	8.1%	5.9%
Council-owned network of swimming and leisure facilities	3.6%	4.2%	7.4%	5.6%	3.1%	4.2%	3.6%	5.3%
Low carbon heat schemes that improve energy efficiency across Fife	7.1%	5.5%	3.3%	6.3%	6.0%	5.5%	4.5%	5.1%
Bus service improvements	0.0%	3.8%	2.3%	3.3%	3.4%	2.9%	1.8%	2.9%
Total	100%							

Table 18: Table showing highest service priority by area (top three areas highlighted in green)

Highest service priority	DUN	COW	GLE	KDY	LEV	NEF	SWF	Fife
Reducing waiting times for home care packages	16.9%	19.6%	20.5%	18.3%	21.4%	17.7%	23.4%	19.1%
School building improvements / new schools	18.0%	15.6%	23.1%	20.9%	18.6%	11.3%	15.5%	17.5%
Fixing potholes and doing more / longer-term road repairs	15.9%	20.6%	13.5%	13.6%	15.5%	18.1%	16.2%	15.9%
Skills and training programmes to help people into work	12.2%	15.6%	12.5%	13.3%	14.1%	17.9%	13.7%	14.2%
Holiday meal schemes for children and families (on top of cash payments made to families entitled to free school meals)	6.8%	8.0%	9.0%	6.8%	11.4%	7.3%	8.2%	8.2%
Town centre footfall and attractiveness	6.3%	2.5%	4.8%	11.7%	7.3%	2.2%	4.8%	5.9%
Council-owned and run care homes	6.3%	7.5%	4.8%	6.5%	3.2%	7.9%	4.5%	5.9%
Council-owned network of swimming and leisure facilities	10.8%	4.5%	2.9%	2.3%	2.3%	4.6%	6.9%	5.3%
Low carbon heat schemes that improve energy efficiency across Fife	4.0%	3.5%	6.1%	4.7%	3.6%	8.4%	3.8%	5.1%
Bus service improvements	2.8%	2.5%	2.9%	1.8%	2.7%	4.6%	3.1%	2.9%
Total	100%							

Savings ideas

Table 19: Table showing net support (+/-) for a sample of savings ideas by age

Savings ideas	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	Fife
Make more use of technology in frontline services	28.6%	34.2%	42.6%	45.8%	57.2%	45.1%	35.9%	44.6%
Changing our corporate office opening hours	14.3%	49.4%	44.6%	36.2%	42.4%	29.9%	6.3%	38.5%
Review pricing concessions across services	14.3%	23.1%	26.8%	36.6%	37.7%	21.7%	47.7%	31.1%
Change the free bulky uplift service to cover some of our costs	42.9%	12.7%	28.3%	28.5%	8.0%	6.6%	17.6%	20.6%
Introduce a visitor levy (a small additional charge) on overnight stays in Fife	14.3%	16.0%	11.8%	13.2%	18.2%	22.7%	17.8%	15.0%
Change who receives free school transport	-42.9%	-22.9%	-3.3%	1.8%	23.3%	10.2%	24.0%	2.9%
Reduce the number of council buildings used by communities across Fife	-64.3%	-6.0%	-6.4%	2.9%	10.8%	0.8%	8.5%	0.0%
Increase parking charges in car parks the council owns – in line with other local authority and commercial rates	7.1%	-27.4%	-10.5%	-2.0%	-12.8%	-13.3%	-2.3%	-9.8%
Introduce a small annual charge for garden waste bins	-50.0%	-39.6%	-44.8%	-35.7%	-35.1%	-30.5%	-36.9%	-38.4%

Table 20: Table showing net support (+/-) for a sample of savings ideas by area

Savings ideas	DUN	COW	GLE	KDY	LEV	NEF	SWF	Fife
Make more use of technology in frontline services	50.5%	40.1%	42.9%	48.2%	41.0%	45.4%	43.1%	44.6%
Changing our corporate office opening hours	44.9%	35.9%	40.5%	35.6%	40.2%	39.6%	37.4%	38.5%
Review pricing concessions across services	34.7%	23.1%	31.4%	44.2%	18.8%	25.8%	34.7%	31.1%
Change the free bulky uplift service to cover some of our costs	41.5%	2.9%	15.1%	10.1%	8.8%	27.7%	21.8%	20.6%
Introduce a visitor levy (a small additional charge) on overnight stays in Fife	14.2%	5.3%	16.2%	4.1%	13.7%	34.2%	9.8%	15.0%
Change who receives free school transport	15.2%	-6.8%	12.1%	9.8%	0.0%	-3.9%	-13.9%	2.9%
Reduce the number of council buildings used by communities across Fife	-4.0%	-1.9%	-0.3%	9.6%	0.9%	5.1%	-7.2%	0.0%
Increase parking charges in car parks the council owns – in line with other local authority and commercial rates	-9.8%	-21.7%	-30.8%	-8.9%	-21.6%	12.2%	2.4%	-9.8%
Introduce a small annual charge for garden waste bins	-33.5%	-54.4%	-36.1%	-52.5%	-53.1%	-15.9%	-40.8%	-38.4%

Council tax

Table 21: Table showing net willingness (+/-) to pay more council tax by age

Age group	Responses	Very willing	Fairly willing	Not very willing	Not at all willing	Net (+/-)
16-24	28	10.7%	10.7%	35.7%	42.9%	-57.1%
25-34	238	5.5%	16.4%	32.8%	45.4%	-56.3%
35-44	726	5.1%	17.1%	28.5%	49.3%	-55.6%
45-54	665	8.1%	26.2%	28.7%	37.0%	-31.4%
55-64	390	9.5%	29.0%	28.2%	33.3%	-23.1%
65-74	255	11.0%	29.4%	29.8%	29.8%	-19.2%
75+	131	13.0%	34.4%	30.5%	22.1%	-5.3%
Fife	2,448	7.8%	23.5%	29.2%	39.5%	-37.4%

Table 22: Table showing the amount of council tax increase willing to pay by age

Age group	Responses	6%	7%	8%	9%	10%	Not answered
16-24	28	39.3%	7.1%	3.6%	3.6%	0.0%	46.4%
25-34	238	47.5%	2.5%	2.1%	0.4%	3.4%	44.1%
35-44	726	38.8%	3.9%	2.3%	0.3%	2.5%	52.2%
45-54	665	43.3%	7.5%	3.8%	0.2%	3.9%	41.4%
55-64	391	38.9%	6.1%	4.6%	0.8%	5.6%	44.0%
65-74	257	38.9%	7.0%	7.4%	0.0%	6.6%	40.1%
75+	133	37.6%	10.5%	7.5%	0.8%	6.8%	36.8%
Fife	2,454	40.7%	5.8%	3.9%	0.4%	4.1%	45.1%

Table 23: Table showing net willingness (+/-) to pay more council tax by area

Area	Responses	Very willing	Fairly willing	Not very willing	Not at all willing	Net (+/-)
City of Dunfermline	431	7.0%	20.6%	32.7%	39.7%	-44.8%
Cowdenbeath	208	5.8%	19.2%	30.3%	44.7%	-50.0%
Glenrothes	318	4.1%	24.5%	29.2%	42.1%	-42.8%
Kirkcaldy	390	11.8%	23.3%	26.9%	37.9%	-29.7%
Levenmouth	227	3.1%	22.5%	27.8%	46.7%	-48.9%
North East Fife	460	13.3%	28.0%	27.4%	31.3%	-17.4%
South West Fife	294	5.8%	25.5%	31.0%	37.8%	-37.4%
Fife	2,448	7.8%	23.5%	29.2%	39.5%	-37.4%

Table 24: Table showing the amount of council tax increase willing to pay by area

Area	Responses	6%	7%	8%	9%	10%	Not Answered
City of Dunfermline	432	41.7%	7.2%	2.3%	0.5%	2.1%	46.3%
Cowdenbeath	208	39.9%	4.8%	1.9%	0.5%	3.4%	49.5%
Glenrothes	318	43.1%	4.7%	1.6%	0.3%	3.8%	46.5%
Kirkcaldy	392	38.8%	6.4%	5.4%	0.5%	6.9%	42.1%
Levenmouth	227	40.1%	5.3%	1.8%	0.4%	0.9%	51.5%
North East Fife	461	40.6%	6.1%	7.6%	0.4%	6.5%	38.8%
South West Fife	295	42.4%	5.8%	4.1%	0.0%	3.4%	44.4%
Fife	2,454	40.7%	5.8%	3.9%	0.4%	4.1%	45.1%