

YOUR SAY ON HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL'S BUDGET AND TAX FOR 2023/24: RESULTS

Version 1.0

Herefordshire Council Intelligence Unit

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If you need help to understand this document, or would like it in another format or language, please contact us on 01432 261944 or e-mail researchteam@herefordshire.gov.uk

Introduction

The following results are from 243 respondents to the online questionnaire.

The percentages are based on respondents to each question/statement.

Key considerations to be aware of when interpreting these top line results:

- The online survey was open from Friday 16 December until Tuesday 3 January: a period of less than three weeks over the Christmas and new year holidays. It didn't go live until most of the engagement events carried out by Impact Consultancy had taken place.
- 243 individuals completed the survey, which should not be considered a representative view of the population of Herefordshire.
- These results should be read in conjunction with Impact's summary report of the findings from the qualitative engagement exercise. A decision was made to significantly alter the wording of the questions about possible changes to services mid-way through the engagement (equivalent to Q3 of the online survey), mainly involving the replacement of the word 'reduce' with 'transform'. Impact's report highlights how this change affected the way that people interpreted and answered this question.
- The online survey that the results in this report relate to used the revised wording, and there is a similar pattern in the results for Q3 of this online survey compared to the results of the equivalent question in the later part of the engagement exercise (post wording change).

Results

Section 1: What do you think of our services?

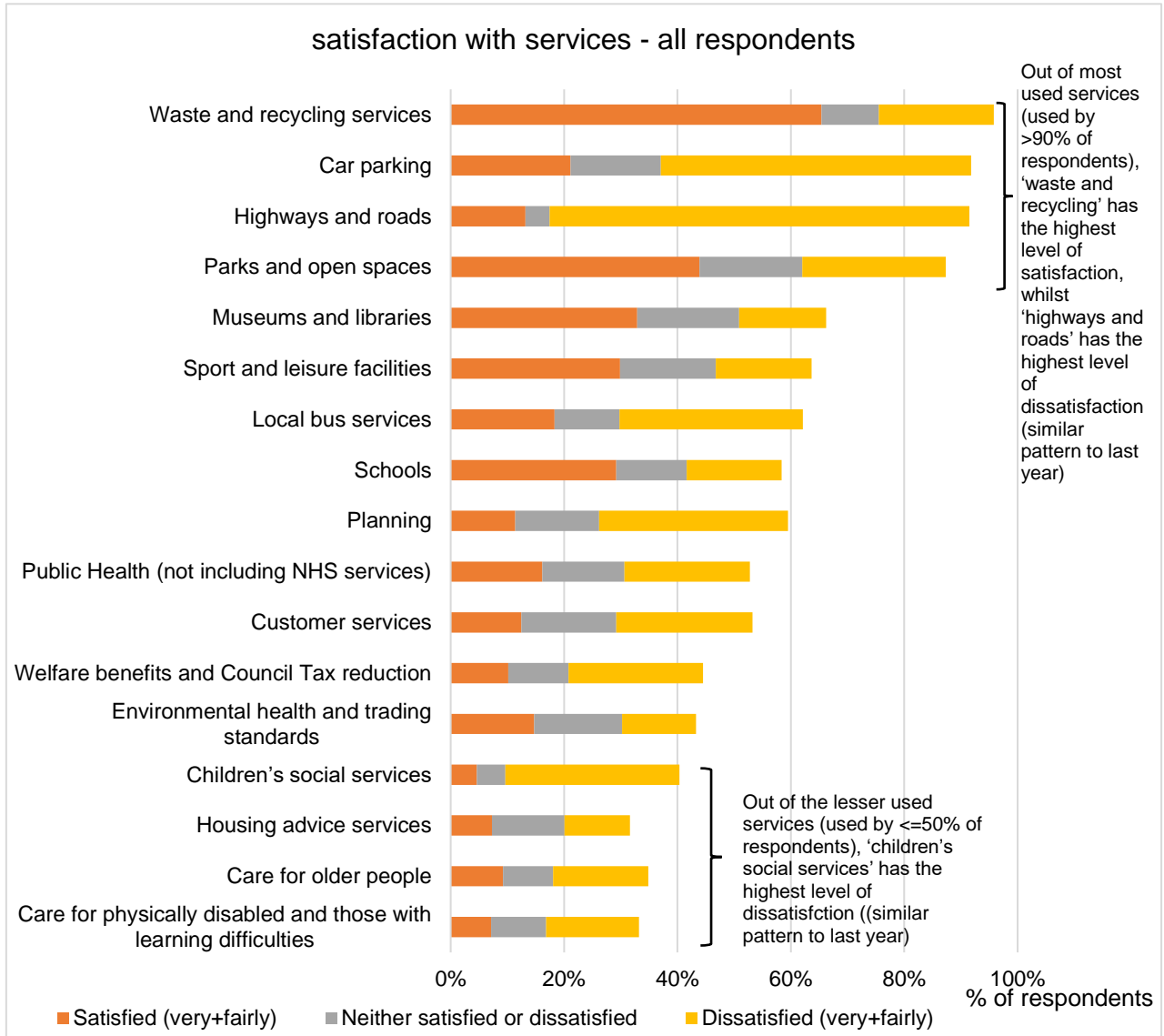
Q1 Thinking about services you have used in the last year, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with each of the following services provided, or supported by, Herefordshire Council?

Table 1: responses to Q1 by percentage of respondents giving each answer

	Not used	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	Fairly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't know
Care for older people	50%	2%	8%	9%	6%	11%	16%
Care for physically disabled and those with learning difficulties	50%	3%	5%	10%	7%	9%	16%
Children's social services	46%	1%	3%	5%	7%	24%	14%
Customer services	37%	5%	8%	17%	14%	10%	10%
Environmental health and trading standards	43%	6%	9%	16%	7%	6%	14%
Housing advice services	48%	1%	6%	13%	5%	6%	20%
Highways and roads	6%	1%	12%	4%	23%	51%	2%
Museums and libraries	27%	9%	24%	18%	9%	7%	6%
Local bus services	32%	4%	14%	11%	14%	18%	6%
Parks and open spaces	10%	11%	32%	18%	11%	14%	3%
Planning	33%	4%	8%	15%	13%	20%	7%
Public Health (not including NHS services)	35%	3%	13%	14%	10%	12%	12%
Schools	33%	11%	18%	12%	9%	8%	9%
Sport and leisure facilities	30%	9%	21%	17%	7%	10%	6%
Waste and recycling services	3%	31%	34%	10%	9%	11%	1%
Welfare benefits and Council Tax reduction	41%	4%	6%	11%	8%	16%	15%
Car parking	6%	4%	17%	16%	19%	36%	2%

Figure 1: Residents' satisfaction with council services (ordered by usage)

Note: the difference between the end of the bar and 100% is the proportion of respondents who said they didn't use that particular service



Q2 Which of the following approaches to saving or generating money would you support or not support?

Table 2: responses to Q2 by percentage of respondents giving each answer

	Strongly support	Tend to support	Tend to oppose	Strongly oppose	No opinion
Helping communities to help themselves by building community capacity to help reduce demand on the social care and health system.	23%	48%	12%	10%	8%
Raise money in ways which mean people who can afford it pay more towards services.	16%	36%	18%	27%	3%
Continuing the 100% discount on Council Tax for people most in need.	25%	37%	22%	14%	3%
Selling council owned buildings or land to raise one-off money.	20%	28%	23%	24%	5%
Making more services available online.	24%	42%	17%	11%	6%
Paying a voluntary contribution in addition to your Council Tax to protect specific services.	4%	21%	20%	47%	8%
Other (please specify below)	28%	1%	5%	15%	51%

- There were 71 write-in responses to 'other, please specify'. See appendix 1 for a full list.

We are currently facing a budget shortfall of at least £22 million in 2023/24 and this requires a review of the services the council can and cannot provide.

This consultation presents some options that could contribute towards balancing the budget for 2023/24 and the impact of these approaches, which include reducing and changing services, increasing charging for services, and increasing Council Tax. For more detail about each of these options, including the estimated savings, please see the background information to savings proposals.

Q3 To what extent would you support the following cost-saving options:

Please refer to the introduction when considering the responses to this question

Table 3: responses to Q3 by percentage of respondents giving each answer

Transform

	Strongly support	Tend to support	Neither support nor oppose	Tend to oppose	Strongly oppose	No opinion
Transform the delivery of domestic abuse services.	16%	26%	20%	6%	12%	17%
Transform accommodation provision for homeless people.	13%	35%	17%	7%	11%	14%
Review investment in learning disability residential care.	11%	31%	21%	9%	14%	13%
Reduce the level of funding for carers' services.	4%	10%	12%	28%	40%	5%
Review funding to provide weight management support for children and adults.	19%	25%	19%	11%	17%	7%
Review online mental health support following the end of a pilot.	16%	29%	21%	7%	12%	12%
Remove oral health checks for children aged 4-6 months	15%	17%	12%	16%	32%	6%

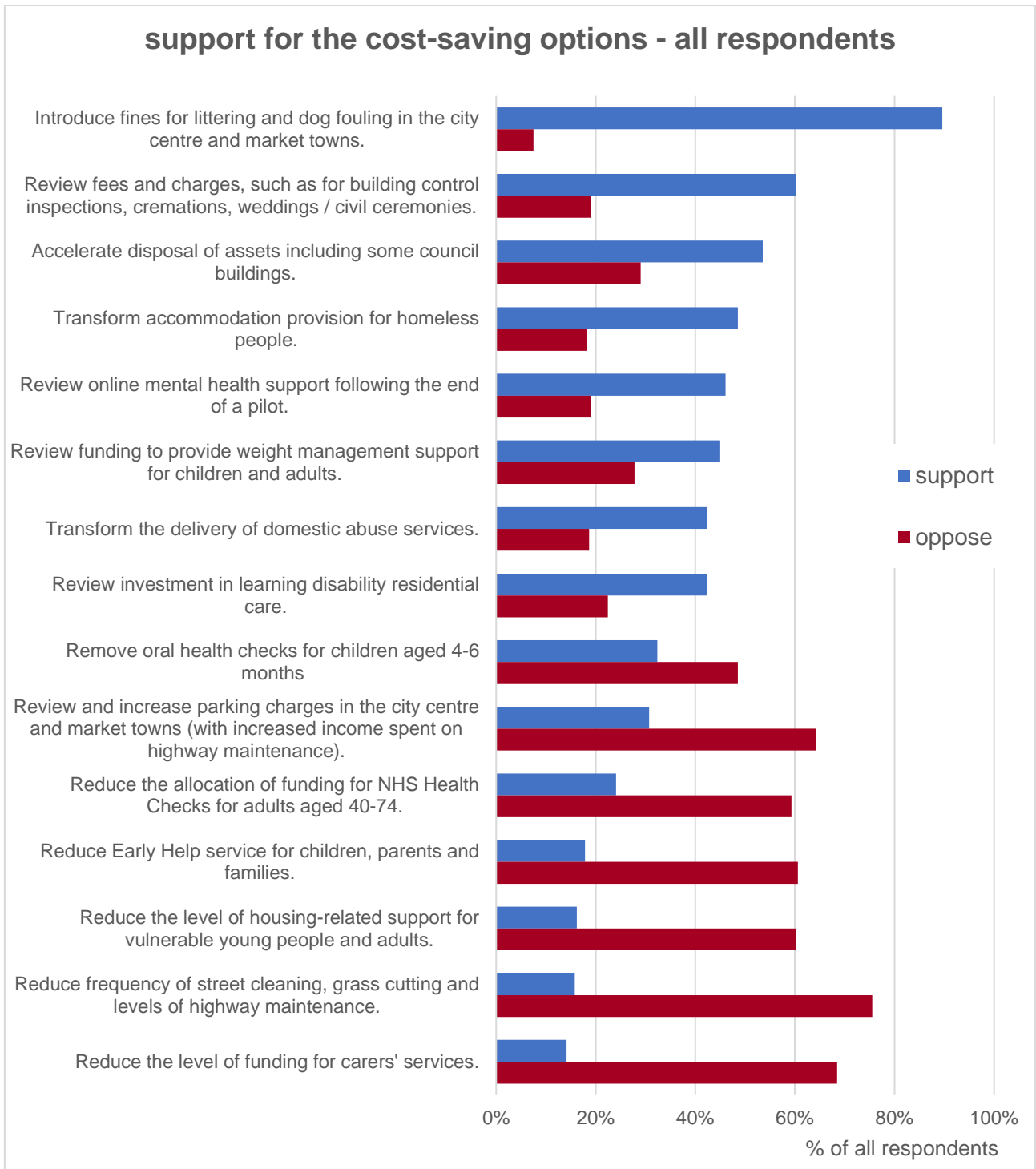
Reduce

	Strongly support	Tend to support	Neither support nor oppose	Tend to oppose	Strongly oppose	No opinion
Reduce Early Help service for children, parents and families.	7%	11%	15%	23%	37%	6%
Reduce frequency of street cleaning, grass cutting and levels of highway maintenance.	3%	12%	8%	30%	45%	0%
Reduce the level of housing-related support for vulnerable young people and adults.	5%	12%	21%	28%	32%	2%
Reduce the allocation of funding for NHS Health Checks for adults aged 40-74.	9%	14%	12%	25%	34%	2%

Increase

	Strongly support	Tend to support	Neither support nor oppose	Tend to oppose	Strongly oppose	No opinion
Review and increase parking charges in the city centre and market towns (with increased income spent on highway maintenance).	11%	19%	5%	15%	49%	0%
Introduce fines for littering and dog fouling in the city centre and market towns.	70%	19%	2%	3%	5%	1%
Review fees and charges, such as for building control inspections, cremations, weddings / civil ceremonies.	28%	32%	18%	8%	11%	2%
Accelerate disposal of assets including some council buildings.	27%	26%	12%	14%	15%	5%

Figure 2: Residents' support for cost saving options (ordered by level of support)



Any comments about the specific proposals above or any other suggestions for increases or decreases in funding for other services?

- There were 66 write-in responses. See appendix 2 for a full list.

Section 2: Council Tax options for 2023/24

Proposed Council Tax increase

Council Tax was increased by 2.99% in 2022/23, which included a 1% precept to fund growing adults social care needs and a 1.99% increase in core Council Tax to fund all other council services. This raised an additional £3.4 million in Council Tax.

For next year, the council would like your views on the level of Council Tax that it should consider for 2023/24.

Please note: the council has no control over the Council Tax collected on behalf of the police, fire service, or parish and town councils. Each of these bodies will make their own independent decisions.

Option A: To increase Council Tax in 2023/24 by 4.99% general Council Tax. This would be an increase of £84.91 per year (or £7.08 per month) for an average band D household and would raise an additional £6.0 million.

Option B: To increase Council Tax in 2023/24 by 2.99% general Council Tax. This would be an increase of £50.88 per year (or £4.24 per month) for an average band D household and would raise an additional £3.6 million.

Option C: To increase Council Tax in 2023/24 by 1.99% general Council Tax. This would be an increase of £33.86 per year (or £2.82 per month) for an average band D household and would raise an additional £2.4 million

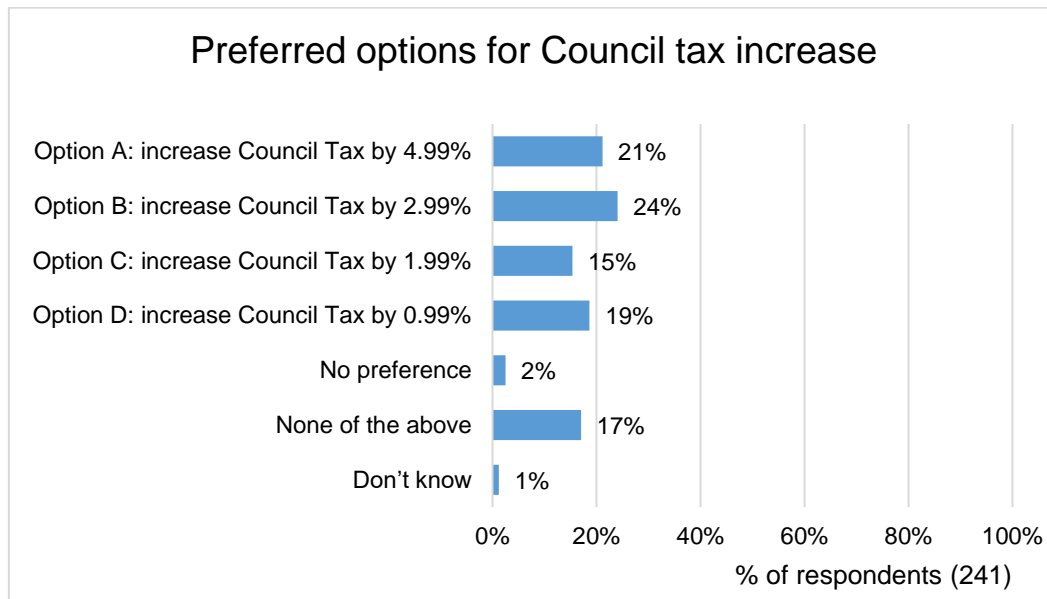
Option D: To increase Council Tax in 2023/24 by 0.99% general Council Tax. This would be an increase of £16.85 per year (or £1.40 per month) for an average band D household and would raise an additional £1.2 million.

Q4 Which of the following options would you prefer?

Table 4: responses to Q4 by percentage of respondents giving each answer

	Percentage
Option A: increase Council Tax by 4.99%	21%
Option B: increase Council Tax by 2.99%	24%
Option C: increase Council Tax by 1.99%	15%
Option D: increase Council Tax by 0.99%	19%
No preference	2%
None of the above	17%
Don't know	1%

Figure 3: preference on increasing Council Tax



Q5 Have you taken part in a budget consultation previously?

Table 5: responses to Q5 by percentage of respondents giving each answer

	Percentage
Yes	22%
No	71%
Don't know	7%

Section 3: About you

Please answer the following questions about yourself. This information helps us to understand the profile of respondents and whether views vary amongst different groups of people across the county.

It will only be used for the purpose of statistical monitoring and will be treated as confidential and not used to identify you.

You do not have to answer these questions. If you do not wish to complete them please indicate this below:

- 32 respondents (13%) indicated that they did not wish to complete this section

Which Council Tax band are you in? (if you are not sure a rough guess is fine)

Table 6: percentage of respondents and percentage of dwellings in Herefordshire by Council Tax band

Council Tax Band	Percentage of respondents	Percentage of dwellings (2021)
A	4%	15%
B	16%	23%
C	16%	19%
D	26%	15%
E	16%	14%
F	7%	8%
G	4%	4%
H	1%	0%
Don't know	5%	-

Your gender?

Table 7: percentage of respondents and percentage of Herefordshire 16+ population by gender

Gender	Percentage of respondents	Percentage of population (Census 2021)*
Male	47%	49%
Female	49%	51%
Other	0%	-
Prefer not to say	5%	-

* Note this is sex of all people, not gender identify of adults

What is your age band?

Table 8: percentage of respondents and percentage of Herefordshire population by age band

Age band	Percentage of respondents	Percentage of population (Census 2021)
16-17 years	0%	
18-24 years	0%	
25-44 years	33%	26%
45-64 years	40%	34%
65-74 years	14%	16%
75+ years	8%	15%
Prefer not to say	4%	-

Do you have a disability, long-term illness or health problem (12 months or more) which limits daily activities or the work you can do?

Table 9: percentage of respondents and percentage of Herefordshire 16+ population by disability status

Disability or LLTI	Percentage of respondents	Percentage of population aged 16+ (Census 2011)
Yes	19%	21%
No	75%	79%
Prefer not to say	6%	-

Appendix 1: free text comments to Q2 – other suggestions for saving or generating money

Q2. free text comments to Q2 – other suggestions for saving or generating money
Communities helping themselves is an avenue for mismatched way forward for meeting of needs. These schemes fail as they are often championed by civic minded industrious individuals but when they leave the support fails. More robust collection of all outstanding charges owed to the council and more fraud investigations such as including benefit fraud. When people are having housing benefit paid but not even living in the property as they have moved in with a working partner.
Community capacity for individuals to help themselves is grotesquely abused by social workers failing to provide statutory care and support for some of the most vulnerable who don't fit the "can't wash, can't feed themselves" category. There is no hierarchy of care needs and those who need lower level support to prevent worsening should be eligible for robust appropriate support as needed to support them to maintain independence.
Making services available online will only work if a manual workaround is also available.
Stop wasting money on silly, unnecessary, vanity projects
Disabled people and those with learning difficulties cannot use online services. Herefordshire council staff fail to follow guidance from professionals when considering the aforementioned residents. The LA has statutory duties to provide services the problem with community capacity doesn't allow for community projects folding being replaced.
How on earth do you thinking people can keep paying for your bad discussions and the wasteful use of tax payers money. This council needs investigating and its directors.
Selling off parks, playgrounds and greenspaces
Stop funding projects such as feasibility studies for Greenways without conducting effective due diligence to ensure that the studies present a balanced view. How many other projects were funded because they appear to tick the "green" credentials box without checking on their true sustainability and viability?
Stop wasting money on pointless stuff it is appalling, offices for overpaid staff being refurbished, plant pots, cycle paths. Why should anyone pay more to support your waste. Start at root level cut your own salaries and make redundancies basic principle if you can't afford don't have it. In 7 years of living in Hereford the only decent service is provided by the waste disposal service the bins are emptied well and frequently.
Stop wasting money on un-necessary schemes to alter the road system that currently works for the majority of people in Hereford.
Change the banding system from property banding to adults residing in the property. Why should 2 adults living in a band E property pay more tax than 2 adults living in a Band B? If there are 4 adults living in Band C then there should be a higher level of tax paid and potentially 4 incomes which can afford it and 4 people take more council resource than 2!
Herefordshire should prioritise a goal to be a publicly owned energy generator, seeking to become energy independent and eventually a net exporter to the grid. Utilising hydroelectric generation from the Wye as a 'base load' and local hilltop wind coupled with a scheme to have council owned solar PV on local factory and housing rooftops by a roof space rental with discounted electricity to contributors. Additionally Herefords plentiful public parks could be generating energy through 'Heat pump' technology that after installation would have no impact on public amenity. I recognising that this proposal is more 'strategic' in concept, non the less the impact if successful will be profound. Energy independence for the City would transform the options for all public services, providing Hereford council and community with long term income and ongoing energy resource benefits, stable income streams such as have only been the remit of central government are within the grasp of local council.

Q2. free text comments to Q2 – other suggestions for saving or generating money
In the middle of a cost of living crises I am astonished at the priorities our council have chosen. How can we as a city, and you as a council continue to support the exorbitant schemes that you have chosen. Widemarsh Street is one such scheme. Yes, it needs to be tackled, it has since you did the work on it, but at a cost of over 1 million pounds!!! Really. Also the Christmas lights, how, as a council you can promote environmental schemes, (which on the whole I support) but then think it is OK to have the Christmas lights running day and night is frankly obscene.
Increase all fees by inflation of at least 10%
Looking at levels of staffing and the associated salary costs. Is everyone really working their contracted hours, how is this monitored with more people working from home. Paying salaries relateable to the County not bigger cities.
Make libraries, swimming pools etc. self-financing
Make mistakes with spending issues more open and transparent to the public where council officers have not been competent in their role. Such as having debts owed to the council written off, if due to staff errors and incompetence as well as poor management.
More rural buses. Don't put the onus on communities for services that need central funding. What services need to be protected by voluntary contributions? It's shocking that this should be the case.
Not allowing the council to spend money on wasteful projects such as the extortionate amount spent on office furniture.
Reduce discretionary services and focus on what is core to the community.
Reduce home working for council staff with more time in the offices as home working is having a massive negative impact on the efficiency of the council with communication and delivery of services adversely affected.
Remove work from home and build efficiency in administration at the council.
Restricting vanity expenditure such as the refurbishment of council offices.
Re-think policies and plans for City Centre "Improvements", towards a realistic assessment of the needs of the citizen rather than environmentalist loonies.
Stop Herefordshire Council spending money on vanity projects i.e. cycle lanes; purchasing a defunct shopping centre; and ignoring the needs of the communities who do not live in the city of Herford.
Stop picking on the tax paying rich and pensioners. You should only get what you pay for. I no longer wish to subsidise those who don't pay in and live a more lavish life style than me!
Stop spending money on refurbishing council buildings and their signage/lettering and use the money for something useful, like pothole filling / road resurfacing.
Stop wasting money on gimmicks such as moss air cleaners and planters etc.
The council has a very high rate of Looked-After Children which is very costly. It should reduce this by spending more on much cheaper support for families to enable children to remain with their families. Reunification of children with their families and the introduction of Family Group Conferences expedited.
The council to stop spending & wasting money on vanity projects, i.e. St Owen St cycle route. Stricter auditing of projects to prevent overspending. Also more auditing of Balfour Beatty services provided & sub contracts. Much tax payers money is seen to be wasted by overtaxed council payers.

Q2. free text comments to Q2 – other suggestions for saving or generating money
The local and national economies are shrinking. The Council should decide which services are discretionary and plan to reduce them. In anticipation of a need for endless reductions in Council budgets a team of officers should be established to help local areas set up local care and food services. Current Council services should NOT be pushed on to local areas, that perpetuates the current mind-set/culture. Local innovation must be supported - including deregulation of development control - e.g. to enable food shops to be opened.
You need to stop wasting our money on expensive consultants & poor inefficient services. A change of leadership is required as new leaders are overspending for the first time in many years.
Keep it simple. The cycle way pass the town hall could have been done cheaper, but using a 3rd party increases costs. Consultants costs are out of control.
Stop wasting money on unnecessary projects when other things are more important.
A. To see well-publicised cuts in salaries by Council Members and Council Officials, at least no increase in actual amounts from the previous financial year. B. All Councillors to undertake voluntary, unpaid, work involving the poor and needy at least once per week.
Agree with more services online for those that are happy and confident to do so but need to be careful don't create a group who cannot access services.
Children care home waste lots of money so let look into services to see how to help them reduce their spending like house kids together where there school closer to each other etc.
Concentrate on core services and not spend on optional costs relating to climate change. Spread spending through the county rather than prioritise Hereford city leading to 'knock on' improvements in the wider community, giving better value for money.
Cut the Directors wages
Cuts to librarians who are not even visible in libraries, who work Mondays when library is closed and not on a Saturday. Down to library assistants on a fraction of the pay to operate and manage day to day openings. Surely then they are not essential to the front line service.
Focus on adequate / effective services that improve the economy of the county and people's quality of life, and reduce funding for politically driven activities.
Get a Hereford bypass ASAP
Greater clarity over the meaning of some of the suggestions would have been helpful. The questions are unlikely to receive a reward from the Plain English Society!
Herefordshire Roads are a disgrace. County signs are not necessary the change in road surface tells you when you have left Herefordshire, particularly going into Wales, Gloucester and Worcester.
How about looking at your spending rather than who you can take money from. Streamline your services. Get better value quotes on work, you overpay on every project. Stop using the same contractors for every job.
I personally feel Council services should amalgamate into fewer buildings e.g. the Ross-on-Wye library has an abundance of space to facilitate a local Council office, tourist information centre, social services etc. With less buildings owned by the Council this means a lot less running costs and it makes it so much easier for residents to have a "one stop shop".
I think the people of Herefordshire already pay enough in council tax. With the cost of living crisis people are going to struggle even more than they do now. If money can be raised via other process's I encourage the council to please do so.
If you as a council stopped wasting valuable resources and money on stupid things like trees in pots in station approach and costly consultation processes then you would have more to spend on the areas in which you are woefully failing at. Like for instance, would children's social care, lack of early years provisions, crumbling roads, empty shops and low foot fall in the city.

Q2. free text comments to Q2 – other suggestions for saving or generating money
Improving planning to reduce wasted money on schemes that have too little to no effect on traffic in Hereford. Reduction in salary for keg council members.
In the current financial climate, longer term projects of a non-urgent nature, like beautifying the city, projects that cater to (or pander to) a small proportion of the population (mire cycle routes etc.) and those which are still going ahead despite the clear unpopularity amongst many, need to be put on hold and the money redirected as appropriate to those areas that actually need it. Stop the non-essential spending like every household is having to do. It's called prioritising, it has to be done in extreme circumstances. If you want extra money from the public you need to spend it wisely.
Increasing tourism, encouraging visitors to Herefordshire
Look to raise money from the wealthy, business owners and those with large properties. The working class struggle enough.
Managing existing funds effectively and stop wasting money on unnecessary and unwanted schemes.
Not supporting wasting money on planters, st Owen street.
Online services are great but no service should currently rely totally on online use. We have a high % of older people many of whom are uncomfortable or unable to use online services. This will change with time but currently would exclude some vulnerable members of our community.
Reduce council tax by eliminating jobs at council for anybody earning over£45k a year. No increase pay over that level.
Reduce use of consultancies, especially those which are London-based and have no understanding of rural areas!
Reducing councillors expenses which are grossly inflated.
Scrap the proposed new library in Maylord and instead spend the money on the Shirehall building. The libraries `footfall` is lower and numbers are dwindling. Internet access can be made available in other council buildings for public use i.e. Blueschool House.
Sort your procurement/ tendering system out. There needs to be at least 3 options with preferences given to value for money not just because it's your mate you've always used.
Stop our council wasting money on stupid vanity projects that do not benefit anyone.
Stop the ridiculous situation whereby millions are spent by Councillor Harrington on "bird brain" unworkable transport schemes, specifically cycle tracks!!!!
Stop wasting money on nonsense green projects.
Stop wasting money and overspending on un needed vanity projects, like moss filters, bike sheds and the current works on St Owens street.
Stop wasting money on your stupid green agenda.
Take-up campaign for unclaimed benefits to bring Westminster money into the local economy. NOT for advice services responding to problems, important though that is, but a positive outreach to get at people who aren't aware of potential entitlement. Very strong business case for this.
Taxing second homes and buy-to-lets more including air bnbs.

Q2. free text comments to Q2 – other suggestions for saving or generating money

The work done on upkeep of areas is great though perhaps for a year or two we need to stop redesigning parks. Reduce the cost of planting flowers etc. On benefits/tax cuts this is an area that could anger a lot of people and support for the council would decrease massively - 100% discount is staggering and discounts for those on some benefits, were all affected by cost of living so to ask those earning more to foot the bill for those paying nothing or far far less won't put the council in favourable light - you tend to live within your means so just because someone earns more and has a bigger house doesn't mean they've pots of cash left at the end of the month. In terms of help in the community, maybe a drive on 'what you can do to help' to encourage people to get stuck in, or push out information on how to volunteer with local charities etc. Selling buildings and land - Reading Council did this as well as selling items they had, I assume to museums etc. - in support of reviewing.

There should be an option for reducing the senior management and assessing the value they bring especially considering the number of interims and agency staff.

Why is there no apparent benefit to CT income following the large increase in houses in the county? Are these being offset by the remission of the tax to others? You should publish the CT base in statistics.

You need to publish surveys in plain English.

Appendix 2: free text comments to Q3 – comments about specific proposals or any other suggestions for increases or decreases in funding for other services

Q2. free text comments to Q3 – comments about proposal or other suggestions
A. Decrease the salaries of Councillors (who ought to be doing their public service freely). B. Reduce any increase in proposed salary incomes for Councillors and Council Officials. The levels are currently exorbitant for the nature of the County and its inhabitants who pay them, for little benefit in turn.
All dependent on whether any savings created actually get spent as described. History shows that this is rarely the case.
As a county, funding should be prioritised from the basic requirements first. We must ensure that the basics are provided for, e.g. NHS, Roads and Travel, Bins and area maintenance, before we look to spend money on all other aspects. That is what the basis of council tax is and should be for. All other services, as harsh as it sounds are a nice to have. You should focus on getting these basics right before looking at anything else. It would also help if you stopped wasting money and continually overspending on unnecessary projects, as you currently are.
As there is an implied cost saving I regard "transform" as a rather pathetic attempt to avoid admitting that what you are actually talking about are cuts -if this is the case should have the courage to say so rather than trying to hoodwink the public - sadly this sort of behaviour seems to be typical of Herefordshire Council.
Could you reduce business costs by changing buildings, making a bigger push to WFH? Not sure what current arrangements are. Also I am unable to find information on some of the transform options so I am unable to provide an opinion. Some of the options listed there are vital services for the most vulnerable people in society and normally transform doesn't mean it's good for them.
Do not sell off assets for one off gain, once gone it's gone for good
Do not sell off assets. It would be better to refurb and let them out.
Don't understand why health checks aren't carried out by GP Practices.
Driving up parking costs is just driving people to other locations.
Far too little is spent on the Early Help service for children, parents families and spending much more on this (e.g. by commissioning) would reduce the very expensive and rising cost of Looked-After Children and care proceedings which is also detrimental to children and their families. For example, the average cost of ONE child in "Residential" care is almost£170,000 EACH YEAR. The total cost Looked-After Children will be about£18,000,000 in 2022-23 (excluding the cost of care proceedings). If Children's Services acted in accordance with the law and good practice (e.g. using Family Group Conferences) this would reduce the number of Looked-After Children and care proceedings.

Q2. free text comments to Q3 – comments about proposal or other suggestions

Fees for weddings etc. are already expensive - don't make things unobtainable for those that can't afford it. Parking charges - this would probably be unpopular but as an example in Ledbury, one of the car parks is 50p for an hour -£1 is still cheap though people would complain at 50% increase but that surely would generate a lot of extra income over a few months.

Funding should definitely not be reduced for carer's services.

Get a grip.

Grass cutting and levels of highway maintenance need increasing as currently it is poor & unsafe at times.

How about a look at you how much you pay the senior staff..... Your top dogs. No one in this mismanaged council deserves to earn more than the prime minister. If you want to support Herefordshire to grow and level up then take a pay cut and show us that you want to change for the better.

How anyone could be expected to hold views on things proposed here without having considerable in depth knowledge. These things are all subject to the judgement of supposedly informed officials and require an act of trust in their judgment on the part of the average citizen. The complete lack of trust in such 'top down' decision making has been on clear display. We have all witnessed the extreme biases and cruel incompetence of the very highest officials in the UK. This 'so called' consultation is ridiculous, serving only to reinforce public views that the system is irredeemably corrupt. Where is the regular council debate and reporting 'streaming service' Hereford Council TV and online library of council reports policies and debates for public transparency? There has got to be much more direct democratic decision making involving the public and far more effective methods of working this stuff out.

I am worried about the concept of 'transform' if this results in less funding then I strongly oppose. If the transformation results in more/better services in this area then I am in favour but not if it results in lower funding.

I don't like the use of the word transform here. It might mean less funding which would not be good. I don't know what "weight management" is. I can't comment on disposal of assets as I don't know what assets you are talking about. I would not want to see a reduction in domestic abuse services as these need more support not less.

I find answering the 'Transform' questions difficult as the word transform can mean improve or reduce a service - each question should have been supported by background information regarding what it would mean in practice.

I happened to notice that review of counsellor's wages is not an option on here. But I feel strongly that should be considered before the cutting of vital services to the people who need it most in Herefordshire.

I think a every department needs looking in old children services case where they could be with the parents not in children services how children service are spending money. I like the public we have to save before us buying, if we don't need it then don't spend it. More houses which are being built will help.

Q2. free text comments to Q3 – comments about proposal or other suggestions
I'd love people to be fined for littering but who would impose these fines and how would it be collected. Surely the policy would cost more than it collected. Street cleaning, grass and hedge cutting is now almost none existent and its loss is highly detrimental to neighbourhoods and pedestrians. 'Transform the delivery of domestic abuse services', into what?
If furniture is functional and useable while 70% of your workforce is still working from home you don't need to buy anymore to replace than you have. Don't pay a 3rd party to complete works when you have people already contracted to do it- why do Balfour Beatty and connects cut the grass in moor farm? Surely one company doing it would be enough??
If you increase parking costs city centres and market towns will lose revenue to online businesses which creates more white van traffic congestion in Herefordshire. Vulnerable young people and adults are not being supported well and support staff are not well trained to support them correctly. The council should impose financial deterrents when services are not up to the standards required. The Council should be much more robust in checking these services. Checking every element of the contracts are being provided and not some wishy-washy version of the contract which is allowed to fail the young person under the guise of allowing them to do things as independent people. They are vulnerable for good reasons so should be supported properly. If the contracts were being challenged when not being fulfilled then money saved or reclaimed could be put back into the services for these young people. To ensure they get quality services which continue for as long as they are needed.
Increase in parking charges would generate extra revenue and help deter car usage in the town centres in line with the authorities green policy and help reduce dangerous carbon emissions
Increase support for reducing isolation for elderly
Introduce harsher penalties for fly-tipping
Introducing fines... This needs to be a costed plan. It may cost more to administer than employing a wrest cleaner!
Is engaging contractors to provide services more cost effective than directly employed staff? Highways for example it appears a repair is made one day but a similar pot hole a few meters away is ignored because it was not on the list? The repairs in Bromyard junction with the Leominster road are a case in point. Pot holes left a few meters from the resurfacing work.
It is appalling to suggest cuts to support those affected by Domestic Abuse and those who could benefit from early help provision. Both services, if well supported financially and by full engagement from other departments, can contribute to the reduction of young people and adults who end up requiring support from Social Care.
It is not clear what you mean by 'transform' so this makes the options had to assess. It would also help to know roughly how much would be involved in each of the options to make a judgement.
It's quite scary that some of these are even on this list. Prevention is key to ensuring we don't keep seeing further pressure on services over the coming years. NHS Health Checks, early help, weight management support and mental health support must all be protected to reduce demand on services and make us all better able to look after ourselves. It would be good to see communities looking after their own green spaces and reduce some costs to the council this way. Reduce parking charges and get more people into towns.

Q2. free text comments to Q3 – comments about proposal or other suggestions
It's really disappointing to see nothing in the transform section about the council's workforce. The recent restructures have seen salary costs increase for the top 3 tiers, with new roles being created that the council has managed without before. The other area of higher workforce spend than in previous years is on interims / agency workers. I know of several very long standing interims / agency workers in post now, covering 'routine' roles which absolutely could be filled on a fixed term employed basis, if nothing else. Instead, the council has been paying around an average of £500 per day since summer / autumn 2021 for these interims. All whilst, at the same time, carrying vacancies in those teams which is what I'm told is really putting people in those teams under pressure. It's a gross misuse of public monies now, as it's gone on far longer than it ever should or than it actually needs to. Why is the council putting up with this for non-specialist roles that absolute (not completed)?
Make council staff pay the going rate to park in council car parks, why should they get a special price? Cut councillors expenses. Make All council staff use public transport to and from work. Get quotes not estimates for work to be carried out. Stop wasting our money on stupid moss air cleaners.
Most individuals have no idea what you are offering by way of the above services and only have an opinion if they've used them and no knowledge if they haven't. I very much doubt enough is being spent in any of those areas. They, however, are not the areas where money can be saved and everyone knows that.
Parking should be free to encourage shopping and tourism.
Proposed solutions don't support what city needs. Where is box to tick about council staff wages???
Provide the 30 hours funding to those eligible but live on the border and childcare in Wales. STOP PUTTING FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN INTO POVERTY!!!
Reduce leaders and council's wages. Stop using consultant's Get a better price for work needed and do not overspend.
Reduce staffing levels and numbers of local councillors.
Reduce wage bill by eliminating as many jobs as possible over £50k annum. Selling assets is not correct. Reduce head count on high paid jobs by amalgamating job roles.
Review contracts much more vigorously for services provided to the Council to ensure they are being provided properly and give value for money to the Council. Include more financial penalties to service providers for inadequate services. Such as the low standard of cleaning being provided at Hope Centre.
Review contracts with contractors. Review pay for council members, including bonuses.
Review council leadership salaries and bonuses. These are disproportionate with the size and effectiveness of the council.
Review of staffing. In certain areas/departments there is spare capacity or inefficiency within the staffing structure. Yet some departments that can generate income, such as licensing, enforcement etc., have minimal staff who cannot cope with the level of demand, when income could be increased by increasing capacity.

Q2. free text comments to Q3 – comments about proposal or other suggestions
Stop allowing council workers to take their vehicles home after work.
Stop recruiting new staff. Shift staff doing discretionary tasks to vacancies in essential work.
Stop relying on online mental health support, some people really do need face to face services.
Stop wasting money on overpriced consultations for products / deliveries.
The questions in the Transform section are meaningless - how can we comment on whether or not we want something transformed if you don't tell us HOW and what TRANSFORM means. It would be beyond short-sighted to cut early help for families, particularly as this is one of the few departments in Children's Services which does good work. Likewise, cutting funding for DA services only results in more dramatic costs when DA is NOT prevented.
The situation with Herefordshire Children's Services has been caused by repeated funding cuts to early help. Families are losing children and being torn apart because help which they are entitled to is being cut. More funding is needed for early help and the fact you don't even suggest it shows how out of touch you aren't.
The transform section does not make it clear in what way and therefore impossible to comment - does it mean the original Best Value principles i.e. reduced cost / improved outcomes? Similarly, 3 of the total options still do not have a saving / target for increased income set against them - how does that make budget setting fully quantifiable? Disposal of assets, which could have the biggest (but one off, not cumulative) impact is simply a generic idea with no specifics identified. This consultation has not increased my confidence in the council. I do not have a sense of the impact of many of these proposals on the most vulnerable in society.
The transform section is poorly designed and confusing because it gives no indication of whether the service would be better or worse if 'reviewed'. Also, introducing fines for littering etc. would cost more than the fines collected.
This a controlled / random set of services and not all the council perform including statutory services that could be made more efficient. A consideration could start with what services have overspent and why poor budget management from finance? Where has there been an increase in workforce and why? It is clear the council cannot run Children Services and should become a trust rather than wasting time on improvement plan after improvement plan.
To increase parking charges can only reduce the number of visitors coming to our wonderful city. The charges are already considerably higher than neighbouring towns such as Abergavenny and Ludlow just to name two.
'Transform' just means to make a significant change. The supporting material says nothing about maintaining or improving the existing service level in these areas - so I have assumed by 'Transform' you are using the prevalent euphemistic meaning or 'significantly reduce quality of service. It shouldn't mean this but you've provided no evidence to the contrary.
Urgently review some of the hobby policy spending such by the Green Party such as expensive and unnecessary cycle lanes being built in city centre!
We haven't seen a street cleaner in bartestree in 3 years!! Grass cutting is a joke!

Q2. free text comments to Q3 – comments about proposal or other suggestions
What a useless survey using a system of double negative to get the answer you want. BE OPEN ANF HONEST ABOUT YOUR AIM!!!! I.e. the question is To what extent you would support the following cost-saving options: if I strongly oppose a sentence that means I support the option!!! This is not what I want. You should all resign and get in a proper management team who can manage.
What does transform mean in this context? Reduce? Increase? Or do you have a specific idea of how to change it. A lot of your suggestions seem very short sighted. You may save some money by getting rid of mental health support, weight loss support and dental checks. But you'll have an unhealthy and unproductive population who will need more intense support in the future. Prevention is better than cure.
What is meant by transform, increase or decrease spending?
What is the point of fines for littering and dog fouling when there are no patrols? Revalue and change the council tax bands to be fairer.
Wide spread incompetence of spending tax payers money the right way has led to the roads of Herefordshire being one of or the most poorly maintained parts in Britain , BALFOUR BEATY are a joke in this county.
With almost no public transport in rural areas further increase in parking charges will penalise those living in our rural areas reducing access to services in town. Many of these people are older or on low incomes.
Without explanation of what 'transform' and 'review' mean, it's hard to imagine them being other than reductions. Hardly transparent and extremely 'dodgy' if the survey results are going to be used.
You need to concentrate on the basics not vanity projects.

Appendix 3: Alternative responses

Email 1:

The economy is shrinking.

A "big picture" approach to budget shrinkage should be developed. Based on discretionary and essential spending. With an option in later years to re-categorise essentials as discretionary.

The work involved should be reported weekly online, with opportunities for public innovations.

IT IS SO IMPORTANT THAT EMPLOYEES AND THE PUBLIC ARE FULLY INVOLVED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF AWARENESS OF THE IMPERATIVE TO PLAN FOR SHRINKAGE.

Email 2:

Please do not commit to any more schemes like the one just nearing completion in St Owens St. This was a waste of money benefitting a minority of people and serving no useful purpose. Any future schemes must be for consideration of the majority of council tax payers and not at the whims of individual councillors. I have recently had visitors from Belgium who have visited the city on previous occasions and they could not believe the deterioration in the look and feel of the surroundings. They also described it as the "Holy City" a description that needs no explanation. The recent description by a councillor as a vibrant place can only justify his visit to an optician.