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<b>Report To:</b>	<b>Policy and Resources Committee</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>19 May 2015</b>
<b>Report By:</b>	<b>Patricia Cassidy, Corporate Director, Education, Communities and Organisational Development</b>	<b>Report No:</b>	<b>PR/129/15/PC/KB</b>
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<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Future Budget Consultations</b>		

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## 1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of feedback on the Council's Budget Consultation 2016/17 process and to suggest changes to future consultations.

## 2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 A community consultation on the Council's Budget 2016/17 took place during late 2014/early 2015. Feedback has been obtained on the methodology and this has been used to develop a revised, draft consultation process for future Council budgets. More information is outlined in the Appendices.

Appendix 1  
Appendix 2  
Appendix 3  
Appendix 4  
Appendix 5

- 2.2 A number of positive results emerged from the feedback:

- more than 70% of respondents found the budget simulator very easy or fairly easy to use;
- more than two thirds of respondents said the Council had supplied enough information to help them make choices about the Budget for 2016/17;
- 71% of people rated the Budget Consultation process as very good or fairly good; and
- the vast majority of people (93.6%) agreed that we could contact them about future Council consultations.

## 3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- a. notes the main findings from the feedback on the Budget Consultation 2016/17 process; and
- b. agrees that the suggestions for improvement are taken into account when future Budget Consultation exercises are being devised.
- c. approves that the budget consultation process is funded as outlined in section 7.0.

**Angela Edwards**  
**Head of Inclusive Education, Culture and Corporate Policy**

## 4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Council wished to gather people's opinions of their experience of participating in the recent Budget Consultation exercise.
- 4.2 A Survey Monkey poll was therefore issued to everyone who had taken part in the Budget Consultation process and who had provided an e-mail address, together with their permission to be contacted.
- 4.3 The survey, comprising nine questions, was issued on 23 February 2015 with a closing date of 6 March 2015. The poll was issued to 506 e-mail addresses and 117 people responded.

## 5.0 MAIN FINDINGS

- 5.1 The first question asked people how they found out about the Budget Consultation exercise. The majority of people (47%) heard about it because they are members of the Council's Citizens' Panel. Just under a quarter (22%) read about the exercise on the Council's website, with the same number reading about it in the local media. A small number of people (8%) heard about the Consultation from their child's school/nursery, while 7% of people read about it in the Winter 2014 edition of InView. A very small number (3%) heard about the Consultation from their Councillor, while a similar percentage (4%) picked up a questionnaire at their local library.
- 5.2 The second question asked people what consultation methods they used. The vast majority of respondents expressed their views either via the budget simulator (43%) or by completing a Citizens' Panel questionnaire (43%). Just over a fifth of people (20.2%) sent an e-mail to [yoursay@inverclyde.gov.uk](mailto:yoursay@inverclyde.gov.uk). Just under 10% (9.7%) of people attended one of the five public meetings held in early December 2014. Questionnaires picked up in local libraries were the consultation method used by 4.4% of respondents, with the same number attending a parent council meeting. A very small number (1.8%) of people contacted their Councillor to express their views. No respondents said they had participated in a Citizens' Panel focus group meeting.
- 5.3 We then asked people how easy they found their chosen method of consultation to use. More than 70% of people (71.7%) found the budget simulator very easy or fairly easy to use, while 16.8% said it was fairly difficult or very difficult to use. Just under three quarters (73%) of respondents said that contacting the Council via the dedicated e-mail address was very easy or fairly easy. The majority of people (84.1%) who completed a Citizens' Panel questionnaire said it was a very easy or fairly easy way of giving their opinions; in contrast, only 3.2% of people said it was either fairly difficult or very difficult to express their views in this way. Providing their opinions at public meetings was fairly easy or very easy for 41.4% of people while a similar number (40.9%) said it was fairly easy or very easy to express their views at parent council meetings. Just over a third (37.5%) of respondents said that completing a questionnaire they had picked up in a library was a very easy or fairly easy method of participating in the Consultation exercise.
- 5.4 The survey then asked people if there was any other way they would have liked to express their views about the Council's Budget for 2016/17. The responses to this question are attached at Appendix 2, grouped under the following headings: positive responses; suggested areas for improvement; public meetings and provision of information.
- 5.5 When we asked people if they thought the Council had supplied enough information to help them make choices about the 2016/17 Budget, more than two thirds (68.6%) said that we had supplied enough information while just under a third (31.4%) said we had

not.

- 5.6 People were then asked to rate the budget consultation process. Encouragingly, more than two thirds of people (71.3%) said the process was very good or fairly good. A small number of people thought it was fairly poor or very poor (8.3% and 3.7% respectively).
- 5.7 The next part of the survey asked people if there is anything the Council could do to improve the Budget Consultation process in future. The responses to this question are attached at Appendix 3, grouped under the following headings: positive responses; suggested areas for improvement; public meetings and provision of information.
- 5.8 The penultimate section of the survey invited people to make additional comments about any aspect of the Budget Consultation exercise. The responses are attached at Appendix 4, grouped under the following headings: positive responses; suggested areas for improvement; provision of information; and comments not directly related to the budget consultation process.
- 5.9 The final question in the survey asked people if they would be happy to be contacted via e-mail about future Council consultations on the Budget and other topics. The overwhelming majority of people (93.6%) agreed to participate in forthcoming consultation exercises.

## **6.0 PROPOSED CHANGES TO FUTURE BUDGET CONSULTATIONS**

### **6.1 Budget simulator**

More than 70% (71.7%) or 49 respondents used the online budget simulator.

We have been asked to make the budget simulator easier to use or provide a more detailed explanation on how to use it. This feedback perhaps explains why 16.8% of people said they found it fairly difficult or very difficult to use. Additionally, requests were made to provide a facility on the budget simulator for the public to make comments and suggestions or request further clarity on issues.

602 people completed the budget simulator exercise during the budget consultation process.

### **6.2 Public meetings**

Just under 10% (9.7%) or 11 respondents attended one of the five public meetings held in December 2014.

While people told us that they welcomed the opportunity to express their opinions at public meetings, a number of comments were made about the need for them to be more widely publicised to encourage more people to attend. It was also said that a greater number of public meetings could have been held and perhaps they could be more accessible in terms of time and locations.

191 people attended the public meetings in December 2014.

### **6.3 Provision of information**

More than two thirds of respondents (68.6%) thought the Council had supplied enough information to help them make choices about the 2016/17 Budget.

However, a number of people said they would welcome more information. Suggestions for improvement were made about provision of information including:

- a request for full, draft accounts/budgetary proposals

- provide details on how much each option would save
- year-to-year comparisons
- details of the potential effect of each budget saving, together with the facility for people to request clarity on particular statements
- more financial data in an easy-to-read format
- details of the remit and expectations of Services
- Services' budgets showing the spend breakdown and comparisons with other Scottish local authorities
- statements about how much each budget option would save
- information regarding potential problems created by budget cuts.

#### 6.4 General areas for improvement

While almost three quarters of respondents (71%) rated the Budget Consultation as very good, we recognise that there are aspects of the process that could be improved in future. For example, a newsletter (attached as Appendix 5) on the Budget was issued to the Citizens' Panel, alongside their Spring 2015 questionnaire. A similar communication could be provided in future to the local media and community groups outlining the feedback received and what action we took in response to the feedback.

Respondents to the survey also made a number of general suggestions for improvement, including the following:

- be more transparent
- greater use of social media throughout the consultation process
- start the consultation process earlier
- issue advance warning of the Full Council meeting, together with the reports
- provide comparator information with other Scottish Local Authorities
- provide details of how people's views were taken in account
- follow through on problems highlighted and issues raised.

The Council will endeavour to improve how it carries out future budget engagements. However providing comparator information with other Scottish Local Authorities could prove difficult, as has been shown by the work being carried out via the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF). This has shown that Councils' services are set up differently and budgets are allocated in different ways making true comparisons very difficult.

## 7.0 IMPLICATIONS

### 7.1 Financial Implications - one-off costs:

Cost centre	Budget heading	Budget year	Proposed spend this report	Virement from	Other comments
02400-999-60005	Budget Consultation Workplan	2015/16	£10,000		

Financial implications - annually recurring costs/(savings):

Cost centre	Budget heading	With effect from	Annual net impact	Virement from	Other comments
n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

### 7.2 Human Resources: There are no direct human resources implications arising from this report.

7.3 Legal: There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

7.4 Equalities: There are no direct equalities implications arising from this report.

7.5 Repopulation: Provision of Council services which are subject to close scrutiny with the aim of delivering continuous improvement for current and potential citizens of Inverclyde support the Council's aim of retaining and enhancing the area's population.

## **8.0 CONSULTATION**

8.1 Corporate Communications facilitated the provision of the Survey Monkey poll.

## **9.0 CONCLUSION**

9.1 The results of the Survey Monkey poll on the recent Budget Consultation and suggestions for improving the process in the future are presented for consideration and action, as appropriate.

## **10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

10.1 There are no background papers directly relating to this report.

## Inverclyde Council - Budget Consultation 2016/17

Thank you for taking part in Inverclyde Council's Budget Consultation Exercise 2016/17 and for agreeing that we could contact you via e-mail.

The Council set its budget for 2016/17 on 19 February 2015.

Your views were used to assist the Council to decide what services we will reduce spending on and the services that will be protected.

To find out more about the Council's budget for 2016/17, visit:

<https://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/committees/details/1771/> (agenda items 03 and 03a).

We would now like to ask you about your experience of taking part in this consultation exercise. The survey only contains 9 questions and should not take long to complete.

The closing date for completing this survey is Friday, 6 March 2015.

### 1. How did you find out about the budget consultation exercise?

- Council's website
- Feature in the local media (e.g. the Greenock Telegraph, Inverclyde Now)
- Council's InView newspaper
- From my Councillor
- I am a member of the Citizens' Panel
- I picked up a questionnaire in my local library
- From my child's school/nursery

Other (please specify)

### 2. What consultation method did you use? (Tick all that apply)

- On-line budget simulator
- E-mail to [yoursay@inverclyde.gov.uk](mailto:yoursay@inverclyde.gov.uk)
- Citizens' Panel questionnaire
- Public meeting
- Parent Council meeting
- Questionnaire in my local library
- Citizens' Panel focus group meeting
- Contacted my Councillor

Other (please specify)

**3. How easy did you find this method to use?**

	<b>Very Easy</b>	<b>Fairly Easy</b>	<b>Neither/Nor</b>	<b>Fairly Difficult</b>	<b>Very Difficult</b>
<b>On-line budget simulator</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Easy	<input type="checkbox"/> Fairly Easy	<input type="checkbox"/> Neither/Nor	<input type="checkbox"/> Fairly Difficult	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Difficult
<b>E-mail to yoursay@inverclyde.gov.uk</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Easy	<input type="checkbox"/> Fairly Easy	<input type="checkbox"/> Neither/Nor	<input type="checkbox"/> Fairly Difficult	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Difficult
<b>Citizens' Panel questionnaire</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Easy	<input type="checkbox"/> Fairly Easy	<input type="checkbox"/> Neither/Nor	<input type="checkbox"/> Fairly Difficult	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Difficult
<b>Public meeting</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Easy	<input type="checkbox"/> Fairly Easy	<input type="checkbox"/> Neither/Nor	<input type="checkbox"/> Fairly Difficult	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Difficult
<b>Parent Council meeting</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Easy	<input type="checkbox"/> Fairly Easy	<input type="checkbox"/> Neither/Nor	<input type="checkbox"/> Fairly Difficult	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Difficult
<b>Questionnaire in my local library</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Easy	<input type="checkbox"/> Fairly Easy	<input type="checkbox"/> Neither/Nor	<input type="checkbox"/> Fairly Difficult	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Difficult
<b>Citizens' Panel focus group meeting</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Easy	<input type="checkbox"/> Fairly Easy	<input type="checkbox"/> Neither/Nor	<input type="checkbox"/> Fairly Difficult	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Difficult
<b>Contacted my Councillor</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Easy	<input type="checkbox"/> Fairly Easy	<input type="checkbox"/> Neither/Nor	<input type="checkbox"/> Fairly Difficult	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Difficult
<b>Other</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Easy	<input type="checkbox"/> Fairly Easy	<input type="checkbox"/> Neither/Nor	<input type="checkbox"/> Fairly Difficult	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Difficult

If you chose Fairly Difficult or Very Difficult, what was the reason for this?

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**4. Is there any other way you would have liked to express your views? Please state.**

**5. Do you think the Council supplied enough information to help you make choices about the Budget for 2016/17?**

Yes

No

If No, what other information would you have found useful? Please state.

**6. Overall, how would you rate the budget consultation process?**

Very Good

Fairly Good

Neither/Nor

Fairly Poor

Very Poor

**7. Is there anything else the Council could do to improve the budget consultation process in future? Please state.**

**8. Please use the space below to make additional comments about any aspect of the Council's budget consultation exercise.**

**9. Finally, are you happy to be contacted via e-mail about future Council consultations on the budget and other topics?**

Yes

No



Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

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**Question 4: Is there any other way you would have liked to express your views?  
Please state.**

### **Positive responses**

- Happy with the comprehensive variety of options offered by the Council
- No (14 responses)
- In a survey like this
- None
- No. Budget simulator is fine.
- No, good range of public meetings etc available
- No. I feel I had every opportunity to share my views.
- No. This was okay.
- None at this time
- No, this is easy and a response can be given quickly
- No, this was perfectly adequate
- No. As (I am) quite busy work-wise, the form is the best way for me
- Not applicable
- No. It was very good.

### **Suggested areas for improvement**

- Electronic Citizens' Panel questionnaire
- To be able to clarify exact poor experiences
- Contact via e-mail with Councillors but having contact(ed) a few on other matters and got no response, I felt this was a waste of time
- E-mail and text
- A contact (via a) website which goes directly into the Council
- By e-mail (2 responses)
- Online (2 responses)

### **Public meetings**

- I would have liked to attend meetings but have had no information at all about these
- I intended to attend the local meeting about it but had another commitment

### **Provision of information**

- If we had been given more information from the start, that would have helped instead of the feeling that information was being kept 'from us'

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**Question 7: Is there anything else the Council could do to improve the budget consultation process in future? Please state.**

### **Positive responses**

- No, I think they covered everything
- No, it was informative and explained clearly
- Nothing comes to mind
- More of the same but I feel it was already pretty good. Well done to the Council.
- I think they did all they could
- No. Please consult in future, too.
- No! This was good consultation.
- Not sure at the moment
- Not that I can think of
- Don't know
- No (2 responses)
- Not applicable
- Let's walk before we can run. So far, on the right track.

### **Suggested areas for improvement**

- Be more transparent
- Explain(ing) cuts clearly and (do) not camouflage with flowery language
- Let people know ahead of time
- Listen to the people
- Advise all Councillors to encourage participation by answering e-mails
- Use social media for a first response. This would give a good idea of what people are generally thinking.
- Give more advance warning in the build-up to the decision(s)
- Difficult to answer. Probably shorten (the Budget Consultation process) and send options/suggestions/yes's/no's.

**Question 7: Is there anything else the Council could do to improve the budget consultation process in future? Please state.**

- Tell folk. I know nothing about this.
- Yes. There was a huge focus on education (I understand this is where the majority of [the] money is spent). There are other services that don't require funding i.e. the Beacon.

**Public meetings**

- More accessible public meetings in terms of time and locations
- More public meetings
- Better publicity for public meetings. The one I went to was very badly attended.
- Advertise in libraries and community centres about public meetings. Not everyone uses *Twitter* or (reads) the *Greenock Telegraph*.
- Hold general public meetings and ask (the) public their views
- By having panel members from each area of Inverclyde, where they can discuss where the money can be spent
- There was a similar presentation given at (the) focus (group) meetings. This was very good, however, more time to discuss particular issues relevant to particular group(s) would be good i.e. more time to talk about education cuts in parent council group meetings.

**Provision of information**

- Provide easy access to full, draft accounts/budgetary proposals
- Get information out as soon as possible and (do) not rely on the budget simulator which is biased towards the Council
- Inexpensive leaflets to each household
- Make the budget simulator easier to use – or explain how to use it properly
- More detail
- Give a year-to-year comparison
- Set up a website with information on the effect of each (budget saving) and the facility for members of the public to ask for further clarity on particular statements

**Question 7: Is there anything else the Council could do to improve the budget consultation process in future? Please state.**

- Give more numbers, for example, the number of people requiring alcohol support within the population
- More financial data in an easy-to-read/find format would help
- A little more information about the remit and expectations of departments
- More detailed statements within the (Citizens' Panel) questionnaire
- More information supplied before the Consultation process
- Information, information, information
- More information. Departmental budgets showing spend breakdown and comparison with all other Scottish councils.
- Maybe by making sound information available, saying how much each option would save
- More information regarding (the) problems created by budget cuts
- The results were not very clear, (I) had to do a bit of searching to find out the results. East Renfrewshire (Council) had their budget clearly explained on *Twitter*
- Very difficult to make correct choices with so many alternatives given
- Receipt of actual proposals by e-mail prior to vote

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**Question 8: Please use the space below to make additional comments about any aspect of the Council's budget consultation exercise.**

### **Positive responses**

- Worthwhile exercise and feel public concerns were taken into account
- Can I congratulate the Council in involving the community of Inverclyde. I particularly liked the budget simulator as it gave you an idea of the difficulties faced by those having to make the decisions.
- It is a good idea and I was grateful to be able to take part and would like it to be a more regular thing for (the) Council to gauge public opinion on a variety of issues
- Very good
- Keep it going
- I did not realise how hard it is
- Was happy to be consulted in this way and it did illustrate the difficulties faced with competing uses for funds. More information on what some of the options were would have helped, perhaps.
- Happy to be part of the Consultation
- It made me appreciate the difficulty Councillors face to meet declining budgets
- Think I (am) done meantime
- Maybe the exercise could have been produced a wee bit earlier – but, as long as we got it, that is the main object

### **Suggested areas for improvement**

- The Consultation process is a good concept and provides the facility for individuals to state their views and preferences. However, apart from an acknowledgement that I had participated, there is no follow-up information (to) show how/if my views were actually considered. An analysis document showing the categories of responses and the numbers/statistics involved might provide a balanced overview of how people responded, what the majority of the inputs suggested were (for example, no decrease in the number of teachers) to reflect any strong requests/suggestions etc and an indication as to how these opinions were considered when the budget process was being followed.
- Provide the public with adequate knowledge of constraints within local government control

**Question 8: Please use the space below to make additional comments about any aspect of the Council's budget consultation exercise.**

- A lot of the areas where I would have made savings appeared to be 'protected' and you were unable to make those savings
- I am lucky my son's school parent/teacher association found out about (the) budget (consultation exercise) or I would never have known
- Follow through on identifying problems highlighted and issues raised
- Feedback on what has been decided and why
- Probably wasted money that would have been used in better ways
- Shockingly bad. If I had not received this e-mail, I'd be none the wiser.
- It was good that you were able to express a view in a variety of formats. However, using the on-line simulator meant that you could not include additional suggestions.

**Provision of information**

- How much does the Council cost to run, salaries etc?

**Comments not directly related to the Budget Consultation process**

- Space for ideas, for example, Council Tax rebranding, combiner campus for St Mary's and Ardgowan Primary Schools on the site of the old Greenock Academy would have saved the education budget money. Improve access to areas for sport.
- By having a forum group set up where members from the Council and the public can put forward ideas on how to regenerate the area
- We see the cost for big items (for example) libraries, cleansing minus weekend work. Let's see the small items. We have a terrible problem with the youth smashing *Buckfast* bottles on the Tower Hill. We, as residents, now have our own brush and shovel for cleaning this up before a child or a dog is seriously injured, especially on a Saturday and Sunday morning. How much would this cost to be monitored?

# INVERCLYDE COUNCIL CITIZENS' PANEL NEWSLETTER

## SPRING 2015

Inverclyde  
council



**Dear Panel Member**

**Welcome to the latest Citizens' Panel newsletter.**

We were pleased with the response to the survey issued in Winter 2014. 63% of you completed a questionnaire and provided valuable feedback that assisted the Council to make decisions regarding its Budget for 2016/17. To find out more about the Council's Budget for 2016/17, visit <https://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/committees/details/1771/> (agenda items 03 and 03a).

At this link, you will find the report which was considered by Inverclyde Council's Elected Members, as well as a budget proposals booklet which includes a wide range of information covering the budget proposals, the feedback from all methods used for consultation on the budget and the equality impact assessments of the budget proposals.

As well as your responses to the Citizens' Panel questionnaire, the Council has considered feedback from the Budget Simulator, consultation events, focus groups and e-mails to the 'Have your Say' e-mail address.

Topics covered in the Winter 2014 questionnaire were:

- *Council services where spending should be reduced or protected*
- *budget saving options*
- *satisfaction with Council services*
- *participation in sport and leisure activities*
- *charging for Council services*
- *the Council as a Service Provider*
- *access to Council buildings*
- *the role of carers.*

The Spring 2015 survey covers a variety of issues including Child Protection, Alcohol, Mental Health and Stigma, Inverclyde Council's Website and Satisfaction with Council Services. We look forward to receiving your completed questionnaire.

## This newsletter outlines the key results from the Winter 2014 survey and what we are doing in response to the feedback you provided.

The main focus of the Winter 2014 survey was the Council's Budget for 2016/17. Given the scale and pace of the savings the Council will be required to make, we asked your opinion on a number of areas around the budget-setting process for the period 2016/17.

### 1. Inverclyde Council - Services

We asked for your views on the five services you think the Council should reduce spending on. The top five services that you chose to reduce spending on are:

Alcohol services	36%
Drugs services	34%
McLean Museum and Art Gallery	26%
Develop and support businesses	24%
Welfare benefits/money advice	23%

The main reasons you gave for reducing spending on alcohol and drugs service were that you thought support was already provided by other agencies and that these are services which benefit only a minority of local people. Panel members also suggested that it is the role of the NHS and other agencies - rather than the Council - to assist people who have problems with alcohol and drugs. It was also felt by many that such problems are the result of personal choice.



## What are we doing with your feedback?

We took the responses of Citizens' Panel members into account when we decided to reduce alcohol counselling services in Inverclyde. We also plan to conduct a review of the service delivery model of alcohol and drugs services. A review of the services provided by the Young Persons' Alcohol Team School Worker will be prepared for consideration by The Members' Budget Working Group.

We then asked you what Council services you would choose to **protect or invest in**. The top five services that you chose to protect or invest in are:

Care for older people	56%
Care for children and young people	35%
Care for people with a disability	35%
Repairs to roads and footpaths	26%
Schools - primary	24%

The reasons people would choose to protect or invest in care for older people, children and young people and people with a disability were that such frontline services provided a social good and engaged with vulnerable members of the public. In addition to this, people did not want to see a reduction in services that would preserve a good local environment such as roads maintenance.

## What are we doing with your feedback?

The Elected Members have taken account of, and echo, the desire to protect services for vulnerable people in their budget decision processes.

Roads maintenance is a priority for the Council. We have prepared and implemented an asset investment strategy and recent investment in roads has allowed us to carry out more preventative or resurfacing work rather than solely responding to emergency pothole repairs or patches to roads. We have allocated enhanced funding of £4,600,000 to our Roads Asset Management Plan for both 2016/17 and 2017/18.

## 2. Charging for Council services

95% of respondents said they accepted the principle of charging for Council services to either avoid reductions in service or to improve the level of service provided.

Panel members said the top five Council services that we should **charge less** for are:

Respite charges for older people and other adults	43%
Waste uplifts from charities	35%
Cremation (adult)	20%
Home helps subject to financial assessment	20%
Music tuition in secondary schools	20%

The top five services that respondents said **charges should remain the same** for are:

Home helps subject to financial assessment	68%
Burial (adult)	67%
School meals and day care meals	67%
Cremation (adult)	66%
Musical instruments in secondary schools	66%

When asked about **increasing charges** for Council services, Panel members opted for the following five services:

Library overdue book/cd	71%
Lost/replacement library tickets	64%
Golf - adult per round	62%
Library cd hire	62%
Animal boarding licence for fewer than 4 animals	61%

We then asked your views on whether we should **introduce charging** for a number of Council services that people do not currently pay for. The five services that most Panel members chose were:

Winter maintenance service for private businesses	78%
Advertising and events sponsorship	77%
Library requests	68%
Replacement or additional black bins	64%
Use of computers in libraries	58%

The five **least popular services** that people thought the Council should **introduce charges** for were:

Day care	31%
Musical instruments in primary schools	33%
Musical tuition in primary schools	33%
Swimming for under 16 year olds	34%
Community alarms	35%

### What are we doing with your feedback?

More than three quarters of Panel members said the Council should introduce charging for advertising and events sponsorship. We have therefore made plans to generate income of £20,000 from advertising and the sponsorship of events during 2016/17. The Council also plans to prepare a report on swimming for under 16 year olds and swimming lessons for Primary 6 pupils. The Council will continue to review its charging policies and will take your feedback into account during this review process.

### 3. Budget saving options

The next section of the questionnaire asked for Panel members' views on budget saving options. The Council identified a range of specific proposals that could assist it to make the required budget savings. Panel members were asked to consider the options and indicate how acceptable or otherwise these would be.

The top five suggestions that respondents felt are acceptable options are:

Maximise the collection of Council Tax and pursue all non-payment	84%
Review the Council's policy in respect of Council Tax liability for long term empty properties	76%
Develop community trusts to maintain flower beds and other landscaped areas	65%
Review all non-teaching staff in schools, moving those not on term time to term time contracts	52%
Investigate shared headships between nurseries and primary schools	48%

### What are we doing with your feedback?

The Council collected 94.51% of its income due from Council Tax in the financial year 2013/14 and continues to look at ways of increasing income from current and prior years' Council Tax charges.

Additionally, given that more than three quarters of Citizens' Panel members said the Council should review its policy regarding the Council Tax liability for properties which are empty on a long term basis, we have decided to conduct a review of this policy in 2016/17.

#### **4. Satisfaction with Council services**

Eighty-five percent of Panel members said they are either fairly or very satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live. A similar number (87%) said they were either fairly or very satisfied with Council services while just over three quarters (78%) of respondents thought the services provided by the Council were either fairly or very good value for money.

Panel members were then asked about the following statement: 'By working together, local people can influence decisions that affect the local area'; 74% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they could influence decisions that affect their local area.

Just under half (48%) of respondents said they were very or fairly satisfied with the way Inverclyde Council takes residents' views into account when making decisions affecting the local area; a similar number (47%) agreed or strongly agreed that they could influence decisions that affect the local area.

#### **What are we doing with your feedback?**

It is pleasing to note that satisfaction with Inverclyde as a place to live has increased since the last time Panel members were asked this question. Over time this rate has increased from 72% in 2011, to 85% in 2014. In 2014, the Council invested £1 million to help reverse the declining population in Inverclyde, and with partners has been working to encourage more people to move to the area which has suffered population decline over a long period. It is encouraging that there has been an increase in the number of people who are satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live.

In terms of influencing decisions that affect their local area, 74% of Panel members felt they had a say in what happens in Inverclyde; this is an increase of 9% since the Panel was last asked the question in 2012.

The percentage of people who are fairly or very satisfied with Council services has increased by 25% since 2012. The results of Citizens' Panel surveys are shared with Council Services to help them identify areas for improvement. This practice may have helped contribute to the improvement in satisfaction levels with Council Services.

There has also been a substantial increase in the percentage of people who think the services provided by the Council are good value for money, up from 54% in 2012 to 88% in 2014.

The Council is keen that residents feel they have the opportunity to have their say in the decisions that affect them; the Citizens' Panel is one way that local people can provide their opinions. The percentage of respondents who are satisfied with the way the Council takes residents' views into account when making decisions that affect the area has increased to 48% from 34% in 2012.

#### **5. Access to Council buildings**

Just under half (41%) of respondents said they had visited the main Council buildings within the last 12 months. Among those respondents that stated they had visited the main Council buildings, 88% said that it was either fairly or very easy to access them.

#### **What are we doing with your feedback?**

The last time these questions were included in a Citizens' Panel survey was in 2012 when the figures were 29% and 79% respectively. The Council's office modernisation/rationalisation programme has resulted in improved accommodation and, as expected, we have seen performance improve. We will continue to improve our buildings over the next few years.

#### **6. Sport and leisure**

Panel members were asked about their participation in sport and leisure activities. Just over half (51%) of respondents said they regularly participate in any kind of sport or leisure activity (i.e. at least once a week). In contrast to this, however, just over a third (34%) of respondents do not regularly participate in any kind of sport or leisure activity.

#### **What are we doing with your feedback?**

An *Inverclyde Sports Framework* has been developed and a steering group was established to oversee the implementation of the Framework, the vision of which is to inspire a sporting way of life for all in Inverclyde.

#### **7. Carers**

Forty-one percent of respondents said they look after, or give help or support to family members, friends, neighbours or others because of long term physical or mental ill health or disability or problems related to old age. Just over half (53%) of respondents felt they received enough support in their role as a carer.

#### **What are we doing with your feedback?**

The Inverclyde Carers' Centre offers information, advice and support to individual carers at a number of locations including Inverclyde Royal Hospital and community venues, as well as at the Centre itself. With additional funding from the Inverclyde Community Health and Care Partnership, the Centre provides a range of relaxation therapies and counselling, together with short breaks for carers and their families. The Centre can be contacted on ☎ 01475 735180.