

The Highland Council

21 January 2016

Agenda Item	4
Report No	HC/2/16

Budget Consultation for 2016/17

Report by Head of Policy and Reform

Summary

The report details the feedback from the Citizens' Panel to the Budget Consultation Survey for 2016/17. Members are asked to consider and note the results.

1. Background

- 1.1 At the Council meeting on 29 October 2015, it was agreed that a survey would be undertaken with the Citizens' Panel to ask about a potential increase in Council Tax. The results of the survey would be collated, analysed and provided to Members to consider at a Special Meeting of the Council in January 2016.
- 1.2 In addition to the question on Council Tax, it was agreed to include a number of other questions on specific savings proposals. This report provides Members with the results of the Budget Consultation survey for 2016/17.

2. Budget Consultation for 2016/17 – Methodology

- 2.1 Following the Council meeting in October, a series of questions were drafted on key budget proposals for inclusion within a survey. It is important to note that the survey was designed prior to details of the Government settlement being known and also within a short timescale to enable distribution, return and analysis in advance of the Special Council meeting. Given this, it was not possible to include a wider set of budget proposals which will now be considered in order to address the scale of the budget gap.
- 2.2 The survey concentrated on 9 key types of saving proposals. A decision was taken not to consult on proposals that were not public facing or on proposals where consultation had already been undertaken. The exception to this was a question on the primary school week given the significance of this proposal. A copy of the questionnaire can be found at Appendix 1.
- 2.3 A similar approach to the 2014 consultation was adopted for framing questions. Generally the questions focused upon the impact or difference the proposal would have on the respondent and their family but also asked respondents to consider what they think the impact may be upon the wider community. The results demonstrate that Panel members have clearly distinguished between these two.
- 2.4 The survey was distributed to all 2,346 members of the Citizens' Panel. The

panel were given three weeks to respond, with the deadline for responses the 21 December 2015. 1,043 responses were received – 459 electronically and 584 in paper – providing a response rate of 44%. This is line with the response rate received during the 2014 Budget Consultation. A profile of respondents can be found in Appendix 2.

- 2.5 As in previous years, we calculate the level of accuracy for the consultation in terms of confidence intervals. The normal confidence level used for surveys is 95% which means that taking into account the sample size, there would be a 95% chance that if the whole population responded then the answer would lie within a particular range. This does depend upon the percentage of the sample giving a particular answer – for example, the higher the percentage of people responding e.g. 90% to a question, the lower the range of confidence interval. For this survey, the confidence levels are detailed below. This means that there is a 95% chance that that the results will be within $\pm 3.0\%$ of the result should half of respondents give a particular answer to a question.

Sample Size	Percentage of the sample giving the particular answer		
	10%/90%	30%/70%	50%/50%
Budget Consultation for 2016/17: sample size = 1,043	± 1.8	± 2.8	± 3.0

- 2.6 For many questions, the sample size is lower than 1,043 as not all respondents chose to answer every question. Some elected to answer only those relating to the impact upon them and their family, whilst others only responded regarding the potential impact on the wider community. The numbers that responded to each question are provided in the analysis, therefore the confidence margin increases slightly to a maximum of $\pm 3.3\%$, where the number of respondents is 910.
- 2.7 When analysing the results of the consultation, consideration has been given to whether there are any particular differences in patterns of response depending upon gender, age, geography (rural/urban), disability and whether the respondent has children. The numbers for this are low and therefore cannot be said to be representative however they do provide Members with an indication of varying views. Where applicable, these are detailed within the results.
- 2.8 This report focuses on the feedback to the survey from the Citizens' Panel; however the survey was also open and available on the Council's website for individuals to respond to. 548 individuals elected to complete the survey, and whilst the results of this are helpful, Members should note that these cannot be said to be representative of the wider population. A summary of the feedback from the general survey can be found at Appendix 3 and the full report on the Council's website.
- 2.9 In addition to the survey, a series of Budget chats were held via Facebook during the Autumn. Chairs of Committees, Directors and Senior Officers took part in the chats, supported by Corporate Communications, during which

members of the public were able to pose questions and respond to informal polls about particular topics. A summary of the feedback from this can be found at Appendix 4.

3. Budget Consultation for 2016/17 – Feedback

3.1 The following provides the detailed results of the Citizens’ Panel Budget Consultation survey for 2016/17. The feedback is organised by service – specifically Community Services and Care and Learning – with separate sections on Council Tax and also on questions relating to the working week.

3.2 Council Tax

3.2.1 It was agreed at a meeting of the Council on 29 October 2015, that the Citizens’ Panel should be consulted regarding a potential increase in Council Tax. The current context was provided within the question including what a proposed increase could potentially generate, along with details of the potential Government penalty for increasing Council Tax.

3.2.2 The first question sought views on 2 potential percentage increases in Council Tax. Panel members were first asked to indicate were they in favour of a 5% increase in Council Tax and secondly whether they were in favour of a 10% increase. The results can be found in Table 1 below. 61.6% of respondents reported they were in favour of a 5% increase in Council Tax and 29% in favour when asked about a 10% increase. Disabled respondents were slightly less supportive of a 5% increase in Council tax.

Table 1: Increasing Council Tax – Citizens’ Panel Feedback

	5% Increase (%)	10% Increase (%)
Yes	61.6%	29.0%
No	30.8%	62.3%
Don't Know	7.6%	8.7%

N=962

N=913

3.2.3 The Panel were also asked if there was a different additional percentage they would be prepared to pay. 15% of respondents indicated that there was. 29% of this group indicated they would be prepared to pay between a 1 and 5% increase, 29% between a 5 and 10% increase and 19% between a 10 and 15% increase. A small number of respondents reported they would be willing to pay between a 15 and 30% increase whilst others indicated any increase should be linked to inflation.

3.3 Community Services Proposals

3.3.1 A series of questions were asked in this year’s survey about a range of Community Services proposals. The feedback to each of these is outlined below.

3.3.2 Play areas

The survey asked about a proposal to stop maintaining around half of play areas in Highland, by either giving them to community groups to run or closing

them. The play areas impacted would be on small residential sites, attached to housing estates or reasonably close to another play area. Panel members were asked what the impact of this would be on them and their family and also on the wider community.

3.3.3 Table 2 shows that 64% of respondents indicated that the proposal *would make no difference* to them. Individuals with school aged children were more likely to indicate that the proposal *could cause some difficulty* and *would cause significant difficulty* to them and their family. Disabled respondents were more likely to indicate that the proposal could be *a change for the better* or *may be a helpful change*. When asked about the wider community, respondents were more likely to identify potential impact, with 41% indicating that it *could cause some difficulty* and a further 15% that it *would cause significant difficulty*.

Table 2: Play Areas – Citizens’ Panel Feedback

Difference to you and your family	%	Difference to the wider community	%
A change for the better	7.3%	A change for the better	11.3%
May be a helpful change	10.7%	May be a helpful change	25.1%
Would make no difference	64.0%	Would make no difference	8.1%
Could cause some difficulty	12.7%	Could cause some difficulty	41.0%
Would cause significant difficulty	5.3%	Would cause significant difficulty	14.5%

N=983

N=1005

3.3.4 The survey also asked whether people would be interested in being part of a group taking on and running play areas within their area. 13% indicated that they would be interested. Respondents with children and those in age groups 25-44, were more likely to indicate that they would be willing to be involved in a group taking on and running play areas. Men were slightly more likely than women to indicate they would be involved in a local group.

3.4.5 Recycling

The survey asked about a proposal to close 5 rural recycling centres where there are low levels of waste. Panel members were asked for their views on the difference this would make to them and their family and also to the wider community.

3.4.6 52% of respondents reported that the proposal *would make no difference* to them. A further 26% expressed some concern that it *could cause some difficulty*. Respondents living in rural communities were more likely to indicate that the proposal could have an impact on them. A third of respondents from rural areas noted that this proposal *could cause some difficulty* to them or their family compared to only 10% from respondents living in urban areas. When considering the impact upon the wider community, 53% of respondents noted that the proposal *could cause some difficulty* and a further fifth that it *would cause significant difficulty*. Rural respondents were more likely to indicate that the proposal *would cause significant difficulty*.

Table 3: Recycling – Citizens’ Panel Feedback

Difference to you and your family	%	Difference to the wider community	%
May be a helpful change	10.1%	May be a helpful change	14.8%
Would make no difference	51.6%	Would make no difference	11.1%
Could cause some difficulty	26.4%	Could cause some difficulty	52.7%
Would cause significant difficulty	11.9%	Would cause significant difficulty	21.4%

N=986

N=1003

3.4.7 Burials

A further proposal contained within the consultation was one to extend internment times from 3-4 to 7 days. The proposal notes that people would still be able to request to be interred within 3 to 4 days for religious or cultural reasons. The panel were asked about what difference this would make to them and their family and to the wider community.

3.4.8 72% of respondents indicated that the proposal *would make no difference* to them or their family. Just over half of individuals responding (53%) also reported that the proposal *would make no difference* to the wider community and a further third indicated that the proposal *could cause some difficulty*.

Table 4: Burials – Citizens’ Panel Feedback

Difference to you and your family	%	Difference to the wider community	%
Would make no difference	71.6%	Would make no difference	53.4%
Could cause some difficulty	20.1%	Could cause some difficulty	33.8%
Would cause significant difficulty	8.2%	Would cause significant difficulty	12.8%

N=983 not 100% due to rounding

N=988

3.4 Care and Learning Proposals

A series of questions were asked in this year’s survey about a range of Care and Learning proposals. The feedback from these is outlined below.

3.4.1 Secondary Staffing

The survey asked about the potential impact of a 1% reduction in secondary school staffing. This would be in addition to a 1% saving which has already been agreed, and would equate to around 15 full time staff. The panel were asked what difference this would have on them and their family and also upon the wider community. The feedback is outlined in table 5 below.

3.4.2 68% of respondents noted that this proposal would make no difference to them or their family. When considering individuals with school aged children, just under three quarters (71%) indicated that the proposal *could cause some difficulty* or *would cause significant difficulty*.

When considering the impact on the wider community, 47% of respondents indicated the proposal *could cause some difficulty* and a further 26% that it *would cause significant difficulty*. Respondents with school aged children were

more likely to report that the proposal could or would cause some or significant difficulty to the wider community.

Table 5: Reducing Secondary Staffing by 1% - Citizens' Panel Feedback

Difference to you and your family	%	Difference to the wider community	%
May be a helpful change	6.6%	May be a helpful change	20.4%
Would make no difference	68.4%	Would make no difference	7.2%
Could cause some difficulty	16.2%	Could cause some difficulty	46.6%
Would cause significant difficulty	8.8%	Would cause significant difficulty	25.8%

N=965 N=1009

3.4.3 Music Tuition

The survey sought views on reducing the overall budget for music tuition by 10%. The majority of respondents, 75%, indicated that the proposal *would make no difference* to them or their family. Respondents with school aged children were more likely to indicate that the proposal *could cause some difficulty* or *would cause significant difficulty*.

When considering the impact on the wider community, just under half of all respondents reported that the proposal *could cause some difficulty* and a further 15% that it *would cause significant difficulty*.

Table 6: Music Tuition – Citizens' Panel Feedback

Difference to you and your family	%	Difference to the wider community	%
May be a helpful change	10.1%	May be a helpful change	24.2%
Would make no difference	74.6%	Would make no difference	14.1%
Could cause some difficulty	10.0%	Could cause some difficulty	46.6%
Would cause significant difficulty	5.2%	Would cause significant difficulty	15.0%

N=966 not 100% due to rounding N=998 not 100% due to rounding

3.4.4 School Crossing Patrollers

The survey asked about proposed changes to safety measures in getting children to school. It is proposed to remove school crossing patrollers over three years in light of the introduction of safer routes to school, new road crossings and traffic calming. Panel members were asked about the impact this could have on them and their family and the wider community.

3.4.5 The majority of respondents indicated that the proposal *would make no difference* to them or their family.

However, when asked about the impact on the wider community, 43% noted that the proposal *could cause some difficulty* and a further 35% that it *would cause significant difficulty*.

Table 7: School Crossing Patrollers – Citizens’ Panel Feedback

Difference to you and your family	%	Difference to the wider community	%
A change for the better	3.9%	A change for the better	5.8%
May be a helpful change	4.9%	May be a helpful change	8.2%
Would make no difference	72.6%	Would make no difference	8.7%
Could cause some difficulty	9.4%	Could cause some difficulty	42.7%
Would cause significant difficulty	9.2%	Would cause significant difficulty	34.6%

N=971 N=1002

3.4.6 The survey also asked about whether people would be willing to be involved in safer routes to school within their community. 13% of respondents indicated that they would be willing to be involved. Respondents with school aged children (23%) and from age groups 16-44, were more likely to indicate they would be involved.

3.4.7 Community Support Services

Panel members were asked about proposed changes to services for children such as befriending, mentoring and peer support provided by third sector and community groups. It was noted that children with high levels of need would still receive the support required. The survey asked for views on reducing the budget by 6%, 10% or removing the budget entirely.

3.4.8 45% of respondents indicated that they would agree or strongly agree with a 6% reduction in the community support services budget. Respondents were less supportive of the proposal to reduce the budget by 10% or to remove it entirely; with 53% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing to reduce the budget by 10% and 71% to removing it entirely.

Table 8: Reduction in Community Support Services

	6% Reduction (%)	10% Reduction (%)	Remove the Budget (%)
Strongly Agree	10.9%	8.8%	7.3%
Agree	34.0%	15.4%	7.4%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	22.9%	23.1%	15.1%
Disagree	16.8%	26.8%	22.9%
Strongly Disagree	15.3%	25.9%	47.5%

N=933 not 100% due to rounding N910 N=910 not 100% due to rounding

3.4.9 Further to the question on community support services, respondents were also asked about the potential impact upon them and their family and the wider community if this budget was reduced.

3.4.10 84% indicated that such a reduction *would make no difference* to them or their family. However, when considering the impact on the wider community, 57% reported that it *could cause some difficulty* and a quarter that it *would cause significant difficulty*.

Table 9: Impact of a Reduction in Community Support Services – Citizens’ Panel Feedback

Difference to you and your family	%	Difference to the wider community	%
May be a helpful change	3.4%	May be a helpful change	7.3%
Would make no difference	84.4%	Would make no difference	10.5%
Could cause some difficulty	8.2%	Could cause some difficulty	57.3%
Would cause significant difficulty	3.9%	Would cause significant difficulty	25.0%

N=958 not 100% due to rounding

N=986 not 100% due to rounding

3.5 The Working Week

The survey asked for views on 2 questions relating to changing the working week for most Council staff and also reducing the primary school week.

3.5.1 The first of these questions detailed the proposal to reduce the standard working week to 4.5 days for most Council staff. It asked for views on the difference this would make to the respondent and their family as well as the wider community.

3.5.2 Just under 60% of respondents indicated that the proposal to change the Council’s working week would make no difference to them or their family. The Panel were more divided about the impact upon the wider community with a third reporting that it *could cause some difficulty* however a further 43% indicated that it was either a *change for the better* or that it *may be a helpful change*. Respondents with school aged children were slightly more likely to indicate that the proposal *could cause some difficulty* or *would cause some difficulty* both to them and their family and the wider community.

Table 10: Changing the Working Week – Citizens’ Panel Feedback

Difference to you and your family	%	Difference to the wider community	%
A change for the better	11.4%	A change for the better	14.5%
May be a helpful change	15.9%	May be a helpful change	28.1%
Would make no difference	59.5%	Would make no difference	15.0%
Could cause some difficulty	9.5%	Could cause some difficulty	34.1%
Would cause significant difficulty	3.7%	Would cause significant difficulty	8.3%

N=986

N=1008

3.5.3 The survey also sought views on changing the primary school week from 25 to 22.5 hours for primary 4-7 pupils. The panel were asked what difference this would make to them and their family and also to the wider community.

3.5.4 63% of respondents reported that this change would have no impact upon them or their family. Panel members with school aged children were more likely to indicate that the proposal could have a negative impact upon them, with just fewer than 50% reporting that the proposal *could cause some difficulty* or *would cause significant difficulty*.

Although overall feedback suggested limited individual impact, when asked about the impact on the wider community, 43% of respondents indicated that the proposal *could cause some difficulty* and a further quarter that it *would cause significant difficulty*.

Table 11: Changing the Primary School Week – Citizens’ Panel Feedback

Difference to you and your family	%	Difference to the wider community	%
A change for the better	8.5%	A change for the better	10.9%
May be a helpful change	8.3%	May be a helpful change	16.1%
Would make no difference	63.2%	Would make no difference	5.2%
Could cause some difficulty	9.9%	Could cause some difficulty	42.7%
Would cause significant difficulty	10.1%	Would cause significant difficulty	25.2%

N=968

N=994 not 100% due to rounding

3.6 Additional Comments

- 3.6.1 The final question in the survey asked respondents for any additional ideas that they may have for savings. The ideas for additional savings can be grouped into several key areas: Management, Staffing and Councillors; Efficiency and Improved Ways of Working; Community Involvement; Education; Community Services; and Income Generation.
- 3.6.2 Management, Staffing and Councillors: management reduction, both in numbers and pay were commented on, as were certain jobs. A more general sense of scrutinising the work done and efficiency, both through employees and Councillors was given. Wages, expenses, numbers and hospitality for Councillors were suggested as areas for reduction. Travel and, relatedly, technology such as videoconferencing were also discussed here.
- 3.6.3 Efficiency and Improved Ways of Working: offices, heating and lighting were seen as areas for saving, with some seeing renewables as income generators. Comments were also made surrounding reducing streetlights or using LEDs. Equipment maintenance and greater collaboration between services and within the public sector was also commented on.
- 3.6.4 Community Involvement: greater community involvement to deliver community based services was generally commented on, with incentives seen by some as important to encourage. Community councils were seen as a vehicle for this by some, although others questioned their current form.
- 3.6.5 Education: on education, a number saw a 4 rather than 4.5 day week as beneficial. Some respondents see a move ‘back to basics’ as key. School transport was discussed by some as an area for potential savings, as was stopping P1-3 free school meals. In relation to the proposal on crossing patrollers, some comments were received that suggested incentivising volunteers to undertake this role. Reducing investment in Gaelic education and in the language more generally was also seen as an area for potential savings.

3.6.6 Community Services

Recycling was generally seen as something to encourage, with less need to pick up green bins for example as a result. Road maintenance was generally seen as something to sort out properly when the need arises, rather than piecemeal repairs adding up. Utilising alternative providers or doing less grass-cutting, verge cutting and gardening were also discussed.

4. Overall conclusions

4.1 The results of the Budget Consultation for 2016/17 demonstrate that, as in 2014, the respondents from the Citizens' Panel continue to differentiate the potential impact of the budget proposals upon them and their families and upon the wider community. This is summarised in tables 12 and 13 below.

Table 12: Summary of Responses – Difference to You and Your Family

Proposal	% Indicating: A change for the better, May be a helpful change or Would make no difference *	% Indicating: Could cause some difficulty or Would cause significant difficulty
Reduction in Community Support Services	87.8	12.1
Changing the working week	86.8	13.2
Music Tuition	84.7	15.2
Play Areas	82	18
Crossing Patrollers	81.4	18.6
Changing the primary school week	80	20.0
Reducing Secondary School Staffing by 1%	75	25
Burials	71.6	28.3
Recycling	61.7	38.3

**not all proposals had each answer option*

***do not all total 100% due to rounding*

Table 13: Summary of Responses – Difference to the Wider Community

Proposal	% Indicating: A change for the better, May be a helpful change or Would make no difference *	% Indicating: Could cause some difficulty or Would cause significant difficulty
Changing the working week	57.6	42.4
Burials	53.4	46.6
Play Areas	44.5	55.5
Music Tuition	38.3	61.6
Changing the primary school week	32.2	67.9
Reducing Secondary School Staffing by 1%	27.6	72.4
Recycling	25.9	74.1
Crossing Patrollers	22.7	77.3
Reduction in Community Support Services	17.8	82.3

**not all proposals had each answer option*

***do not all total 100% due to rounding*

4.2 In general, the majority of the panel do not anticipate the proposals *could cause some or would cause significant difficulty* for them or their family. The picture is reversed however when considering the potential impact upon the wider community where, with the exception of changing the working week and burials, the majority of panel members have indicated the proposals *could cause some or would cause significant difficulty*.

4.3 It is also important to note that for a number of the proposals – play areas, secondary school staffing, music tuition, the working week and primary school week – respondents with school aged children generally indicated greater impact to them and their family than the panel overall.

5. Implications

5.1 Resource implications: the report provides feedback from the Citizens' Panel Budget Consultation survey to assist Members in the decisions regarding resources. The survey was developed, distributed, collated and analysed in-house in order to avoid additional costs.

5.2 Legal implications: Best Value requires the Council to consult the public on matters affecting them (Local Government Scotland Act 2003). There will be new legal duties involve the public on resource allocation under the Community Empowerment Act. We await the statutory guidance for that. Other legal implications relate to our equalities duties set out below.

5.3 Equalities:
The Council's duties under the Equality Act require us to assess for any negative impact relating to characteristics that people have that are protected in law e.g. age, disability, gender, and give due regard to these in the decision making process. The feedback from the survey will assist towards assessing for any potential impacts.

5.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever: Just over 40% of the panel now respond to surveys electronically. This reduces paper and distribution costs which also reduce carbon emissions.

5.5 Gaelic implications: there are no Gaelic implications.

5.6 Risk implications:
There has been an ongoing challenge to recruit younger members to the Citizens' Panel which is not untypical for panels or surveys. Attempts have been made to boost numbers through the college network and youth voice but also to engage with younger age groups through different approaches. As in previous years, it will be important to feed back to the panel what difference their views have had in order to maintain engagement.

5.7 Rural implications:
74% of respondents live outwith the Inverness area. Where meaningful, differences in response patterns between urban and rural areas have been provided.

6. Recommendation

Members are asked to:

1. Consider and note the results of the Budget Consultation Survey for 2016/17.

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Date: 8 January 2016

Appendix 1

A copy of the survey is provided in a separate PDF document.

Respondent Profile

Note: not all respondents provided respondent profile information

Gender	No.	%
Male	467	47.0%
Female	527	53.0%
Total	994	100%

Age	No.	%
16-24	23	2.3%
25-34	34	3.4%
35-44	78	7.8%
45-54	159	15.9%
55-64	278	27.8%
65-74	305	30.5%
Over 75	124	12.4%
Total	1001	100.1%

School Aged Children in Household	No.	%
Yes	150	15.2%
No	840	84.8%
Total	990	100%

Disability	No.	%
Yes	112	11.3%
No	881	88.7%
Total	993	100%

Ethnicity	No.	%
White	990	98.7%
Mixed	2	0.2%
Asian, Asian Scottish, Asian British	5	0.5%
African	3	0.3%
Carribbean or Black	1	0.1%
Other Ethnic	2	0.2%
Total	1003	100%

Council Ward	No.	%
1.North, West and Central Sutherland	30	2.99%
2.Thurso	31	3.09%
3.Wick	25	2.49%
4.Landward Caithness	59	5.88%
5.East Sutherland and Edderton	41	4.08%
6.Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh	65	6.47%
7.Cromarty Firth	41	4.08%
8.Tain and Easter Ross	49	4.88%
9.Dingwall and Seaforth	49	4.88%
10.Black Isle	58	5.78%
11.Eilean a' Cheò	61	6.08%
12.Caol and Mallaig	21	2.09%
13.Aird and Loch Ness	55	5.48%
14.Inverness West	35	3.49%
15.Inverness Central	32	3.19%
16.Inverness Ness-side	44	4.38%
17.Inverness Millburn	37	3.69%
18.Culloden and Ardersier	53	5.28%
19.Nairn	67	6.67%
20.Inverness South	58	5.78%
21.Badenoch and Strathspey	50	4.98%
22.Fort William and Ardnamurchan	43	4.28%
Total	1004	100%

Budget Consultation for 2016/17

Web Survey Summary

Council Tax

- **63%** of respondents were in favour of a 5% increase
- **39%** of respondents were in favour of a 10% increase

Community Services

Play Areas

- **55.6%** reported that the proposal *would make no difference* to them or their family.
- **41.2%** indicated that it *could cause some difficulty* to the wider community and a further **20.5%** that it *would cause significant difficulty*.
- **14%** indicated that they would be happy to be involved with a local group running a play area.

Recycling

- **53.6%** of respondents indicated that the proposal *would make no difference* to them or their family.
- A further **37%** reported that it could have some impact on them and their family; **22.7%** that it *could cause some difficulty* and **14.2%** that it *would cause significant difficulty*.
- The majority of respondents indicated that the proposal could impact on the wider community; **49.9%** that it *could cause some difficulty* and **23.5%** that it *would cause significant difficulty*.

Burials

- **70.8%** of respondents reported that the proposal *would make no difference* to them or their family.
- **Half** of respondents indicated that the proposal *would make no difference* to the wider community. A further **35.6%** reported that it *could cause some difficulty* to the wider community.

Care and Learning

Secondary Staffing

- **46.5%** of respondents reported that the proposal *would make no difference* to them or their family.
- Just under half of respondents indicated that the proposal may impact upon them and their family; **22.9%** that it *could cause some difficulty* and **25.9%** that it *would cause significant difficulty*.
- The majority of respondents indicated that the proposal could impact on the wider community; **38.5%** that it *could cause some difficulty* and **41%** that it *would cause significant difficulty*.

Music Tuition

- **56.6%** of respondents reported the proposal *would make no difference* to them or their family. A further **fifth** were concerned that it *would cause significant difficulty*.
- The majority of respondents indicated that it could impact on the wider community; **39.7%** that it *could cause some difficulty* and **28.1%** that it *would cause significant difficulty*.

School Crossing Patrollers

- **66.2%** of respondents indicated that the proposal *would make no difference* to them or their family.
- **42.8%** reported that the proposal *could cause some difficulty* to the wider community and a further **32%** that it *would cause significant difficulty*.

Community Support Services

- **45%** of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposal to reduce the community support services budget by 6%.
- **58.2%** disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposal to reduce the budget by 10% and just under **70%** disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposal to remove the budget altogether.
- **78.5%** of respondents reported that the proposal *would make no difference* to them or their family however respondents were concerned at the potential impact on the wider community with **45.9%** reporting that it *could cause some difficulty* and **36.3%** *would cause significant difficulty*.

The Working Week

General Working Week

- **46%** indicated that the proposal *would make no difference* to them or their family.
- **18.7%** indicated that it *could cause some difficulty* and a further **10.5%** that it *would cause significant difficulty* to them and their family.
- **41.7%** reported that the proposal *could cause some difficulty* to the wider community and **16.2%** that it *would cause significant difficulty*.

Primary School Week

- **43.1%** reported that the proposal *would make no difference* to them or their family.
 - **20.2%** reported that it *could cause some difficulty* and a further **21.4%** that it *would cause significant difficulty* to them or their family
 - The majority of respondents reported that it would have an impact on the wider community; **38.7%** that it *could cause some difficulty* and a further **36.2%** that it *would cause significant difficulty*.
-

Budget Facebook Chats – Feedback Summary

Highland Council has held a series of Budget Facebook Chats with members of the public over the autumn.

Over 10,000 people like the Council's Facebook page. The vast majority of these people live in the Highlands, with around a quarter living in the Inverness area. There is a wide spectrum of ages, with 74% of people aged between 25 and 54. 10% are over 55's and 16% under 25's.

Facebook chats were held on:

- 27 October 2015 – Council Tax
- 3 November 2015 – Community Services
- 11 November 2015 – Care and learning
- 1 December 2015 – Council Budget

Chairs of Committees, Directors and Senior Officers took part in the chats, supported by Corporate Communications.

Council Tax

The first chat in October focussed on explaining the budget situation and sought to gain views on council tax. A council tax rise of 5% would equate to just under £5 per month for properties on Band D.

The chat reached 5,200 people. Around 150 comments were made on the page.

A poll was included on the page which asked the question "The Council has to save around 6% across all services next year. Would you be willing to pay a bit more council tax to protect some services against cuts eg. education, care, roads, voluntary groups etc?"

144 people responded to the poll with 45% saying they would be prepared to pay more, 40% saying they would not wish to pay more and 5% said they didn't know.

A wide range of opinions were expressed on the topic of raising the council tax. However, many people said that they would be happy to pay a bit extra on their Council Tax as long as it helps to protect frontline services and doesn't affect the poorest disproportionately.

Community Services

Over 1,200 people took part in the second chat which focussed on community services, including bin collections.

The facebook chat posed some questions on bin collection, car parking charges and whether people would be prepared to do a bit more in their communities to protect frontline services."

There were a total of more than 600 comments on the event page relating to frontline services such as bin collection and car parking.

Participants were asked a series of questions relating to frontline services such as bin collection and car parking.

Participants were asked the question: "Should green bins move to three-weekly collections to save money for other essential services?"

To date, a total of 1,231 people responded. 1,153 people (93.66%) said no to this idea. 71 people (5.77%) said yes and 7 (0.57%) indicated that they weren't sure. In response to the feedback regarding green bin collection, participants were given a list of Community Services and were asked what area the Council should look to save money in?

Of the 169 that responded to date, 95 (56.21%) suggested grass cutting, 42 (24.85%) suggested that car park charges should be increased, 13 (7.69%) said public toilets, 12 (7.10%) said playparks, 4 (2.37%) said recycling and 3 (1.78%) said gritting.

173 people to date have responded to the question "The Council needs to find ways of increasing income as well as saving money. Should the council charge for all car parks over 20 spaces?"

100 (57.80%) said no to this idea. 69 (39.88%) said yes and 4 (2.31%) said they weren't sure.

Respondents were also asked if they would be willing to do a little more in their community to protect frontline services, such as carrying out grass cutting, gritting and footpath clearing.

Of the 298 people who have responded to date, 163 (54.70%) said that they wouldn't, 43 (14.43%) said they would and 92 (30.87%) said that they would need more information.

Care and Learning

The third event focused on Care and Learning. Around 300 comments on were made on the event page. These included questions and comments from members of the public and answers from Cllr Millar and Mr Alexander.

Participants were asked questions relating to a number of issues including the Primary School week and children's Social Workers.

Participants were asked the question: "If we can protect services by reducing the Primary School week to 22.5 hours (over 4.5 days) which is the nationally agreed class contact time for teachers, would to this be acceptable to you?"

Of the 428 that responded to date, 357 (83.41%) said no, 66 (15.42%) said yes and 5 (1.17%) said they didn't know.

When asked the question “Highland Council’s Care and Education budget could be reduced by £17m next year and we may need to make 6% savings. Do you think that the savings should apply EQUALLY across the service in: Schools; Additional Support Needs; Children’s Social Work and Adult Social Work?”

71 (71.72%) of the 99 respondents to date said no, 26 (26.26%) said yes and 2 (2.02%) said they didn’t know.

A follow up to this question was posted asking “If you have said No, we should not make savings EQUALLY across the Service. Which part of Care and Learning would you protect?”

Of the 133 respondents to date, 84 (63.16%) said Schools, both Additional Support Needs and Children’s Social Work were selected by 21 people each (15.79%) and 7 (5.26%) selected Adult Social Work.

When asked “If the Care budget was £3m less next year, should we have fewer children’s social workers?”

90 (81.08%) of the 111 respondents to date said no, 14 (12.61%) said yes and 7 (6.31%) said they didn’t know.

Council Budget

The facebook chat on 1 December reached over 1800 people and 67 people engaged in the event by sharing, liking and commenting.

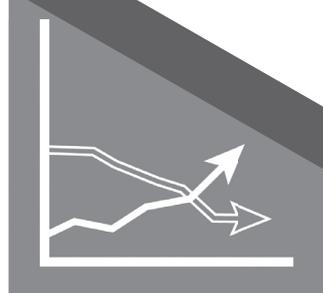
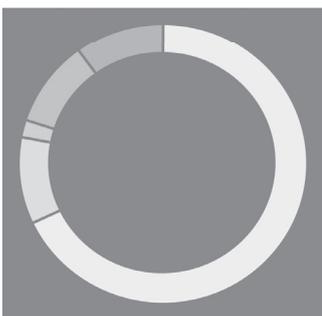
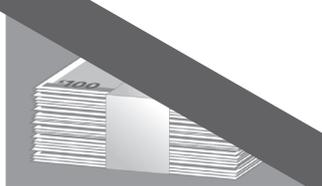
399 people took part in a further poll on the council tax. 56% said they did not wish to pay more council tax, 44% said they would pay more. 25% said they would pay a 5% increase; 14% said they would pay a 10% increase and 5% said they would be prepared to pay more than 10%.

The facebook chats can be viewed in the events section of our facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/>

Budget consultation survey 2015

Suirbhidh co-chomhairle buidseit 2015

Citizens' Panel Survey





If you would like
someone to help you complete
this questionnaire, or, if you would
like to receive it in an alternative format,
e.g. **large print**, braille, email, audio tape,
or suitable language, please phone: **01463 702006**



Dear Citizens Panel Member,

Budget consultation survey 2015

Thank you for agreeing to be part of The Highland Citizens' Panel.

This is a difficult time for The Highland Council, we have a budget gap currently projected at over £21 million for 2016/17. The reasons for this are explained more fully on the next page.

This survey is very important; it outlines proposals to save money and how these proposals may change the services we provide. This is your opportunity to let us know how these proposals could affect you or your family and the wider community.

Any information we receive from you will be treated in the strictest confidence and will not be used for any purposes other than this research.

Please return your completed survey in the pre-paid envelope provided by the 21st December 2015. Should you have any queries, you can contact the Policy team on:

Phone: **01463 702006**; or

Email: **policy6@highland.gov.uk**

Thank you in advance for your help and I will take your responses to these proposals very seriously.

Yours faithfully,

Steve Barron

Chief Executive, The Highland Council



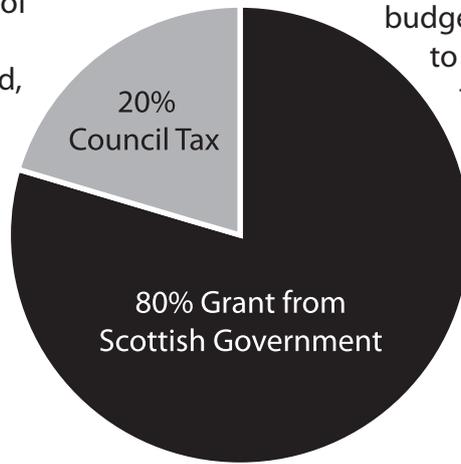
Current position

The Council's forecast budget deficit for the next three financial years is currently £46.3 million. This takes into account new pressures including pay awards, teacher pensions, changes to national insurance and a projected grant cut of 1.6% p/a but makes no provision for Council Tax increases over this period, which could reduce the funding gap.

We expect that the Scottish Government will announce its budget and Council grant for 2016/17 in late December. This leaves very little time to finalise the Council's budget.

Councils may face financial penalties if they reduce teacher numbers or increase council tax due to the Scottish Government's current policies.

Councillors have a statutory duty to balance the budget each year and have no choice but to work within the resource available from Council Tax and the grant from Scottish Government plus any income raised locally from charges.



The Council is looking at every area of expenditure to try and maximise the use of the money available.

Sources of Council funding

What have we already done?

The Council has already made substantial savings from efficiencies and reducing management costs over the past few years. Since April 2007 the council has reduced its management structure by 47 posts which produced annual savings of £3.7 million.

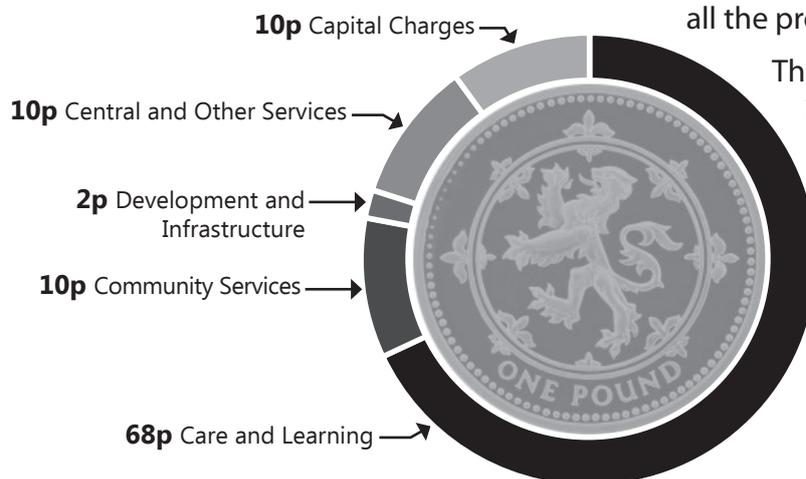
In December 2014, the Council agreed a package

of savings proposals totalling £42.8 million which included a reduction of 312 Full Time Equivalent posts over 4 years. The savings included some reductions to winter gritting resources, increased parking charges, a reduction in funding available for community groups from 2016 and an increase in Council Tax for long term empty properties.

What are we doing now?

The budget gap for 2016/17 is £21.622 million. This represents the most challenging year and services have been asked to identify savings proposals amounting to 6% savings.

Services have now submitted a list of potential savings totalling £17.1 million. This still leaves a further £4.5 million savings to be identified, but clearly this will increase if members do not accept all the proposals suggested.



The biggest part of the Council's budget is spent on Care and Learning of which a large proportion is teacher salaries. Identifying savings which don't impact on teacher numbers is difficult. The service is currently £6.6m short of its target saving. This could mean that other services may have to make even bigger savings.

How each £ is spent



Consultation and Engagement

As in previous years, we want to hear from you about your views on the savings we are proposing. We are not consulting on all of our proposals; some because we have consulted on them previously and on others because they are not public facing functions. We are therefore seeking your views on 9 types of savings proposals.

Given the savings we have already had to make, none of the savings proposals contained in this consultation are easy decisions to take. For this reason we want to understand how the proposals will impact upon you and your family and also your view on how they may impact on the wider community. The scale we ask you to consider varies depending upon the type of saving proposed.

We are also speaking with our partners; organisations we commission services from; Unions and staff. The Budget Leader has a Blog on the Council's website to hear views from people and there is also a series of Facebook chats taking place weekly on the Council's website.

Budget Blog: www.highland.gov.uk/budgetblog

1a Changing the Working Week

The Council's standard working week for most staff is across 5 days, Monday to Friday. If the Council was to change this working pattern and move to a 4.5 day week, there would be potential savings to be made in terms of utilities. In the last year, the Council spent £3.9m on heating and lighting in our buildings not including schools. Most staff would still be working their existing hours but doing so over 4.5 days.

What difference would this change make:

Please tick one option in each column	To you and your family	To the wider community
A change for the better	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
May be a helpful change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Would make no difference	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Could cause some difficulty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Would cause significant difficulty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1b Primary School Week

In line with the proposal for the Council's standing working week we propose to reduce the school week for primary 4-7 pupils from 25 to 22.5 hours (over 4.5 days). By doing this we can still support a full curriculum and it means we need less costs savings in other areas. The savings would involve energy and other utility costs, cleaning, administrative costs and more efficient timetabling. This could save us around £4.1m per year.

What difference would this change make:

Please tick one option in each column	To you and your family	To the wider community
A change for the better	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
May be a helpful change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Would make no difference	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Could cause some difficulty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Would cause significant difficulty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



2a Play Areas

We currently spend £342,000 each year maintaining 300 play areas across Highland. This means inspecting the equipment annually and repairing or replacing equipment depending upon the results. We are proposing to stop maintaining a half of these play areas by either giving them to community groups to run or closing them. Those play areas that we would consider giving to groups or closing are on small residential sites, attached to housing estates or reasonably close to another facility. Large, well-used play areas - for example Bellfield Park in Inverness, the Links in Nairn, Pine Grove in Fort William and Castle Green Road in Thurso - are not being considered. By giving half of play areas to groups or closing them, we could save £112,000 per year.

What difference would this change make:

Please tick one option in each column	To you and your family	To the wider community
A change for the better	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
May be a helpful change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Would make no difference	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Could cause some difficulty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Would cause significant difficulty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2b Would you consider being part of a group taking on and running play areas in your community?

Please tick one box Yes No Don't Know

3 Recycling

We currently operate 21 recycling centres across Highland. We are proposing to close 5 rural centres where there is a low level of waste collected. A number of households are likely to be affected by this change, meaning they would need to travel further to access a recycling centre. This would save us £35,000 per year.

What difference would this change make:

Please tick one option in each column	To you and your family	To the wider community
May be a helpful change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Would make no difference	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Could cause some difficulty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Would cause significant difficulty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



4 Music Tuition

We spend £1.28m per year on providing specialist instrument tuition in primary and secondary schools. This is done through visiting music teachers. It is not a teaching service that is available to all but only to those who demonstrate particular music skills. Pupils, who are able to pay, make a contribution towards this teaching but this does not cover all costs. We propose to undertake a review of music provision in order to reduce the total budget by 10%, £128,000.

What difference would this change make:

Please tick one option in each column	To you and your family	To the wider community
May be a helpful change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Would make no difference	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Could cause some difficulty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Would cause significant difficulty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5a School crossing patrollers

In recent years we have been introducing new safety measures around primary schools to support children getting to school. This includes new road crossings, traffic calming and safer routes to school. There is no statutory requirement to provide school crossing patrollers. Removing school crossing patrollers could save around £300,000 over the next 3 years.

What difference would this change make:

Please tick one option in each column	To you and your family	To the wider community
A change for the better	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
May be a helpful change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Would make no difference	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Could cause some difficulty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Would cause significant difficulty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5b Would you be willing to be involved in safer routes to schools options in your local community?

Please tick one box

Yes	No	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



6a Reduction in community support services

The Council provides a range of services for children who need support by funding third sector and community groups, but there is not a legal need to provide these services since they are early intervention. We can reduce services such as befriending, mentoring and peer support without reducing support for children with high level needs; although without such support the needs of some families and children could increase. We could reduce these services by the same proportion as all other Council services or completely.

To what extent would you agree with each of the following savings options:

Please tick one option in each row

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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6% budget reduction

<input type="checkbox"/>				
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10% budget reduction

<input type="checkbox"/>				
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

Remove the budget

<input type="checkbox"/>				
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

6b If these budgets were to reduce, what difference would this make:

Please tick one option in each column

To you and your family	To the wider community
------------------------	------------------------

May be a helpful change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Would make no difference	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Could cause some difficulty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Would cause significant difficulty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7 Secondary school staffing – reducing staffing by 1%

We propose to reduce the level of secondary school staffing by a further 1% to make savings of around £600,000. A 1% reduction has already been made in the current year. A further 1% saving is the equivalent of 15 full time staff. This could change the number of subjects on offer, particularly at Higher and Advanced Higher where teaching groups can be small. However the Council is looking at different ways of delivering some of these subjects in schools, for example greater use of distance learning. This should help to maintain subject choice.

What difference would this change make:

Please tick one option in each column

To you and your family	To the wider community
------------------------	------------------------

May be a helpful change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Would make no difference	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Could cause some difficulty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Would cause significant difficulty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



8 Burials

The Council works with funeral directors to support making the arrangements for interments to take place which includes managing burial grounds and the actual burial. Currently the aim is to inter (bury) people within 3 to 4 days. If we were to aim to do this within 7 days we would be able to make savings on staffing levels and better manage resources. People would still be able to request to be interred within 3 to 4 days if there were cultural or religious reasons for doing so.

We could save £88,000 over 2 years.

What difference would this change make:

Please tick one option in each column	To you and your family	To the wider community
Would make no difference	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Could cause some difficulty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Would cause significant difficulty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9 Council Tax

Council tax has been frozen for 8 years (during which time the Scottish Government has provided additional resources). However in the current financial context the Council may consider increasing Council Tax to provide more funding for services rather than implement some of the cuts in service currently being considered.

(Note that 19,286 households (16.7%) in Highland, which will include the most vulnerable, do not pay or pay a reduced level of Council Tax.)

A 5% increase in Council Tax would provide an additional £5m or £2m if the Scottish Government put a penalty in place. A 5% increase would be the equivalent of just over £1 per week for a band D property.

A 10% increase in Council Tax would provide an additional £10m or £7m if the Scottish Government put a penalty in place. A 10% increase would mean just over £2 per week for a band D property.

Increase in Council Tax proposed	Additional revenue raised	Additional revenue raised minus the government penalty *
5%	£5m	£2m
10%	£10m	£7m

* Should the Council agree to increase Council Tax, the Government may impose a penalty of £3m.

9a Would you be prepared to pay more Council Tax?

Please tick one option in each row	Yes	No	Don't Know
5% Council Tax increase	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10% Council Tax increase	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9b Is there a different additional percentage increase that you would be prepared to pay?

Please tick one box	Yes	No	Don't Know
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If yes, what % would this be? %



10 Additional Ideas

**We would welcome any additional ideas that you may have for savings.
Please provide these below.**



11 About you

Gender

Please tick one box only

Male Female

Age

Please tick one box only

16 - 17 18 - 24 25 - 34
35 - 44 45 - 54 55 - 64
65 - 74 Over 75

Disability

Do you consider yourself to have a disability (i.e. a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect upon your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities)?

Please tick one box only

Yes No

Families with children

Are there school age children in your household?

Please tick one box only

Yes No

How would you describe your ethnicity?

Please tick one box from one section (A-F) only

A - White

Scottish
Other British
Irish
Gypsy/Traveller
Polish
Other (please state)
.....

B - Mixed or multiple ethnic groups

Any Mixed or multiple ethnic group:

(please state)
.....

C - Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British

Pakistani, Pakistani Scottish
or Pakistani British
Indian, Indian Scottish
or Indian British
Bangladeshi, Bangladeshi Scottish
or Bangladeshi British
Chinese, Chinese Scottish
or Chinese British
Other (please state)
.....

D - African

African, African Scottish
or African British
Other (please state)
.....

E - Caribbean or Black

Caribbean, Caribbean Scottish
or Caribbean British
Black, Black Scottish or Black British
Other (please state)
.....

F - Other ethnic background

Arab, Arab Scottish or Arab British
Other (please state)
.....



How have you found being a citizen's panel member?

Please tick one box for each

My views have been listened to:

Yes No

Useful:

Yes No

Time consuming:

Yes No

Worthwhile:

Yes No

This is my first survey:

Yes No

Would you like to complete future surveys electronically?

Please tick one box only

Yes No

If yes please provide your email address below (your anonymity will be protected):

Name:

Email address:

Please return your completed questionnaire in the reply paid envelope provided
by 21st December 2015. No stamp is necessary.

Thank you for taking part in this survey