

## **Appendix A(i)**

### **Budget 2026 Consultation Results**

#### **1. Purpose of consultation on the budget proposals for 2026/27**

The Council has a specific legal responsibility to consult with non-domestic rate payers on its budget. It is also considered good practice for local authorities to consult with council taxpayers on budget proposals and Council Tax options.

Since its creation in 2009, Central Bedfordshire Council has conducted such consultation on an annual basis.

#### **2. The consultation process**

The Council summarised the budget proposals and prepared a survey which was launched on 7 January 2026 and ran for four weeks until 4 February 2026. This reflected the budget proposals for 2026/27 which were included in the draft Medium-Term Financial Plan that was considered by Executive on 6 January 2026.

The summary of the budget was made available online and paper copies were made available in various locations (children's centres, leisure centres, libraries and the council office at Priory House, Chicksands) and could also be requested by telephone.

Respondents were asked how far they agree or disagree with:

- Various efficiency proposals
- Council Tax increases
- Investment plans including spending more on care for older people, adults with disabilities and children's services and the capital budget plans

The consultation was supported by a communications campaign which alerted the public, businesses and stakeholders to the opportunity to express their views through various promotional activities, including traditional and social media, email bulletins and posters.

The Budget Consultation was promoted specifically to local businesses via the council's dedicated website and newsletters.

Some Town and Parish Councils also shared the Budget Consultation on their websites and the other media channels they use to inform residents. Town and Parish Councils were sent posters and paper copies to promote the consultation too.

Councillors, Members of Parliament and partner organisations were invited to help promote the consultation.

Respondents were asked how they had heard about the Budget Consultation, these results are provided below\*:

- 59% said through an e-mail from Central Bedfordshire Council
- 15% said they had heard through the Central Bedfordshire Council website
- 13% of respondents said that they had heard through various social media from Central Bedfordshire Council (92% via Facebook page, 2% for Instagram, 2% for Twitter/X, 1% for LinkedIn, with 3% stating 'other social media').

\*this question was multiple choice, so the total percentage is more than 100%.

The main budget consultation web page had over 11,700 page visits across the duration of the consultation.

### **3. Consultation responses**

In total, 1,536 people participated by completing the survey. Of the 1,536 responses, 29 paper copies were received. In addition, we received four written letters from town and parish councils and one from a countryside charity.

The findings are detailed below, please note that the overall percentages may total more or less than 100% due to rounding. The demographic profile of respondents and full tables are provided in section 5 and 7 of this report respectively.

### **4. Consultation results**

#### **4.1 Budget proposals**

Respondents were asked how far they agreed or disagreed with the main proposals set out in the draft budget. The results are as follows:

##### **Efficiency proposals**

87% (1,315) of respondents agreed with the proposal to reduce running costs by reviewing how the council is organised, removing duplication, automating processes, reviewing IT licencing costs and continuing to stop all but essential recruitment and spending. 7% (102) neither agreed or disagreed. 6% (96) disagreed with this proposal.

50% (762) of respondents agreed with the proposal not to add £8.5 million to reserves as originally planned. 29% (429) neither agreed or disagreed. 21% (316) disagreed with this proposal.

60% (905) of respondents agreed with the proposal to explore voluntary redundancy, reducing hours and buying back additional annual leave with staff. 21% (310) neither agreed or disagreed. 19% (291) disagreed with this proposal.

46% (686) of respondents agreed with the proposal to increase income in 2026/27 by reviewing and increasing some fees and charges to increase council income. 18% (269) neither agreed or disagreed. 36% (532) disagreed with this proposal.

57% (863) of respondents agreed with the proposal to increase income in 2026/27 by increasing crematorium fees in line with other crematoria. 18% (276) neither agreed or disagreed. 25% (359) disagreed with this proposal.

78% (1,177) of respondents agreed with the proposal to increase income in 2026/27 by reviewing rental income from council properties to ensure they reflect market rates. 11% (157) neither agreed or disagreed. 11% (167) disagreed with this proposal.

77% (1,154) of respondents agreed with the proposal to increase income in 2026/27 by exploring the use of Continuing Health Care (CHC) income from the NHS, to make more use of how the CHC can reduce need for high-cost social care. 15% (219) neither agreed or disagreed. 9% (128) disagreed with this proposal.

65% (969) of respondents agreed with the proposal to increase income in 2026/27 by considering how the Biggleswade Adult Centre is used, to either reduce running costs or

increase income. 27% (399) neither agreed or disagreed. 9% (133) disagreed with this proposal.

60% (886) of respondents agreed with the proposal to reduce funding to other organisations in 2026/27 by removing or reducing the Ward Councillor Grants. Each Ward Councillor currently has up to £2,000 per year to spend on local community projects. 15% (222) neither agreed or disagreed. 27% (390) disagreed with this proposal.

- The written letter from Marston Moreteyne Parish Council noted that the Ward Councillor Grant has supported a range of small-scale community projects that are often unable to secure alternative funding. Its removal risks preventing locally meaningful initiatives from progressing to the detriment of community wellbeing.

44% (669) of respondents agreed with the proposal to reduce funding to other organisations in 2026/27 by reviewing grant allocations to the advice sector and reducing by 10%. The Council currently provides £363,000 to three Citizen's Advice services and Advice Central. 16% (233) neither agreed or disagreed. 40% (599) disagreed with this proposal.

- The written letter from Marston Moreteyne Parish Council stated support for The Citizens Advice Bureau as it provides a vital service to residents. They felt that any funding reduction would be likely to increase demand on Council staff to resolve errors negating the intended savings.

26% (397) of respondents agreed with the proposal to reduce funding to other organisations in 2026/27 by ceasing funding for stroke support provided by the voluntary sector (£48,000 and £16,000 in 2027/28). This service is a health service, and the organisations will need to rely on other funding sources. 19% (292) neither agreed or disagreed. 55% (816) disagreed with this proposal.

43% (650) of respondents agreed with the proposal to reduce funding to other organisations in 2026/27 by ceasing funding for lunch / day clubs (£20,000 and £20,000 in 2027/28). The council may use Public Health funding for 2026/27. These organisations will need to rely on other funding sources. 20% (298) neither agreed or disagreed. 37% (554) disagreed with this proposal.

43% (646) of respondents agreed with the proposal to reduce funding to other organisations in 2026/27 by withdrawing the additional £50,000 planned for carer support. The council will continue to provide £200,000 each year to provide support to carers through arrangements commissioned jointly across Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes and will also retain funding of £62,000 for our Digital Carers Support offer. This efficiency relates to the removal of planned additional support. 20% (298) neither agreed or disagreed. 37% (556) disagreed with this proposal.

65% (968) of respondents agreed with the proposal to reduce funding to other organisations in 2026/27 by ceasing the contract for Community Health Services when the current contract ends in March 2026, as the NHS cannot tell us how this money is being used. This service will still be provided by the NHS, but the funding the council provides will stop. (£500,000) Discussions are on-going with the Integrated Care Board (local NHS) and the current provider of the service in relation to the impact of this decision and how this will be managed and mitigated where possible. 20% (294) neither agreed or disagreed. 16% (242) disagreed with this proposal.

50% (756) of respondents agreed with the proposal to make changes to council services in 2026/27 by meeting our statutory consultation obligations in communicating planning application consultations moving away from individual resident letters and focussing on prominently displayed site notices in streets and in the press to ensure information remains visible and accessible. Parish and town councils will continue to be informed and

can display on noticeboards. 14% (209) neither agreed or disagreed. 36% (536) disagreed with this proposal.

- Written letters from CPRE Bedfordshire, Langford Parish Council, Stanbridge Parish Council, Northill Parish Council, Marston Moreteyne Parish Council, were against the proposal, as they felt it impacts more than those in the near vicinity and that residents might miss planning applications. Both Langford Parish Council and Marston Moreteyne Parish Council also said that the responsibility for communicating planning should not be down to Town and Parish Councils. Northill Parish Council said that effective planning consultation is fundamental to transparency and community involvement.

35% (524) of respondents agreed with the proposal to make changes to council services in 2026/27 by reducing routine management and maintenance of 43 countryside sites to only focus on essential repairs where there is a danger to health and safety. 16% (236) neither agreed or disagreed. 49% (735) disagreed with this proposal.

- The written letter from Marston Moreteyne Parish Council noted this will limit maintenance to essential health and safety works, which raises concerns. also commenting that the information did not identify sites. They believe this reduction in maintenance will negatively impact public access and site quality.

37% (545) of respondents agreed with the proposal to make changes to council services in 2026/27 by reducing the reablement and hospital discharge service by five posts – the service is currently provided by 81 full time equivalent staff (£135,000 and £68,000 in 2027/28) The impact of this change will be managed through changes to structure of the service but may mean that we have reduced capacity to support our hospital discharge arrangements. 21% (317) neither agreed or disagreed. 43% (636) disagreed with this proposal.

71% (1,077) of respondents agreed with the proposal to make changes to council services in 2026/27 by exploring options to reduce the number of Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Sub-Committees and/or reduce the frequency of their meetings. This could result in fewer items being formally scrutinised outside the decision-making process, result in the grouping of a wider range of topics into fewer meetings and/or improve allocation of resource and focus on high priority topics. 15% (232) neither agreed or disagreed. 13% (193) disagreed with this proposal.

70% (1,036) of respondents agreed with the proposal to make changes to council services in 2026/27 by sharing Registration Services with another council, subject to agreement between the relevant councils. 21% (316) neither agreed or disagreed. 9% (128) disagreed with this proposal.

66% (986) of respondents agreed with the proposal to make changes to council services in 2026/27 by limiting plans for building new facilities - the plans for 2026/27 create costs of approximately £33.7 million from our revenue/service budget. 19% (276) neither agreed or disagreed. 14% (212) disagreed with this proposal.

## **Council Tax**

42% (625) of respondents agreed with the proposed 2% increase in Council Tax specifically for adult social care services. 14% (208) neither agreed or disagreed. 45% (674) disagreed with this proposal.

34% (508) of respondents agreed with the proposed 3% increase in Council Tax for other Central Bedfordshire Council services. 15% (230) neither agreed or disagreed. 51% (764) disagreed with this proposal.

## **Investment**

57% (859) of respondents agreed with the proposal to allocate additional funding to meet increased costs in key areas, such as providing care for more older people, adults with disabilities, and children's services. 17% (253) neither agreed or disagreed. 27% (393) disagreed with this proposal.

54% (806) of respondents agreed with the proposal to £35.9 million on schools - this includes school maintenance, new school places, transitioning schools to two-tier (£27.6 million) and special educational needs provision. 18% (267) neither agreed or disagreed. 28% (420) disagreed with this proposal.

87% (1,302) of respondents agreed with the proposal to spend £10 million on highways works, including resurfacing. 8% (114) neither agreed or disagreed. 6% (81) disagreed with this proposal.

21% (314) of respondents agreed with the proposal to spend £3 million completing the new leisure centre in Leighton Buzzard. 27% (401) neither agreed or disagreed. 52% (781) disagreed with this proposal.

50% (742) of respondents agreed with the proposal to spend £2.7 million on new care homes and technology equipment for care. 24% (355) neither agreed or disagreed. 26% (391) disagreed with this proposal.

## **Comments**

In response to the invitation to make a further comment about these proposals, 725 respondents chose to do so. Comments received centred around the following topics:

- Council Tax with comments that Council Tax is already too high, do not increase it higher than inflation, people are already struggling to pay Council Tax, and that services are currently poor/haven't seen an improvement in services despite Council Tax increases, that they don't use the services therefore why should they pay for others. Also, comments questioning the need for Council Tax rise and the income received from all the new housing developments – 232 comments.
  - 11 comments stated that they agreed with the Council Tax increase, 2 of which said that the Council Tax should be increased more -13 comments.
- Council efficiencies with comments about needing to review spending and quality of work/contracts, 14 commented to look at the current assets owned by CBC, to sell and create revenue, 8 comments that CBC should work/share job roles with neighbouring Local Authorities – 176 comments
- Condition of roads, potholes and pavements with comments around the poor condition of the roads, particularly the amount of potholes, how this must be a priority in spending, also the need for better initial repairs to roads and pavements to limit further costly remedial work – 98 comments
- Council staffing savings with comments around reviewing roles, salaries, pensions and working from home – 98 comments

- More information needed, with comments around this of needing clarity for specific areas of the consultation, some feeling that in order to answer they needed further information on planned proposals to make a decision – 51 comments
- Support for the budget proposals with comments around recognising the need to increase council tax in order to continue to provide services, how tough these decisions are to make and understanding this is as a result of the reduction of the funding from central government – 44 comments
- Comments about the 3 to 2 tier transition with comments around it not being needed, saving the money being used to transition – 33 comments
- Opposition to proposed reduction of support for Citizens Advice – 28 comments
- Support for theatres – 28 comments
- Funding for schools – 27 comments
- Supporting the continued funding of Stroke Services – 26 comments
- Improve services for people with disabilities/ in residential homes – 25 comments
- Focus only on essential services – 24 comments
- Prioritise healthcare GP surgery/health hub – 23 comments
- Planning applications – 23 comments within the questionnaire, in addition 5 written letters were received with the majority mentioning the opposition to the planning applications proposal due to this being preventative to the awareness of any residents, who might not see the application either in newspapers, online or on noticeboards or site notices
- Review expenditure for SEND – 22 comments
- Push back to Central Government over reduction of funding – 18 comments
- Prioritise the elderly – 17 comments

A sample of verbatim comments for the themes with the highest response is provided below.

### **Council Tax 232 comments**

*“The Council seems to be charging us more for less, which I don't think is at all fair or justified. I am not sure where the mentality comes from whereby council's feel it is justifiable to keep increasing council tax when even we are struggling to afford to pay, as a family who are all in full time work, but the cost of living has increased significantly whilst salaries have not.....”*

*“I understand that funding needs to increase... but when it continually exceeds inflation over an extended period Council Tax has a too much negative impact on disposable income.”*

*“I feel that council tax is for services for the taxpayer, increasingly most of the taxpayers are paying for services that they don't use....”*

*“With the thousands of new home being built the CBC will be receiving a huge increase in extra council tax. Therefore there is no need to increase the tax.”*

### **Council efficiencies 176 comments**

*“The Council must be just as prudent in its spending and considerations as all households are currently and this must be the core of their thinking during these difficult times.”*

*“While I appreciate short term solutions may be attractive they often result in long term increased costs. Especially in areas such as road resurfacing and repairs and maintenance.”*

*“The council needs to look at ways to cut their spending before imposing more increases on Council Tax.”*

*“CBC hold lots of assets in terms of land and buildings, these could be sold to developers or built on and the buildings leased to create income for years to come.....”*

*“.....As suggested the Council should consider ways to reduce costs through efficiencies, automation and reviewing cost/benefits of contracts as they come up for renewal. I like the idea of collaboration with other councils in a bid to save costs or create efficient/savings through scale”*

### **Condition of roads, potholes and pavements 98 comments**

*“Pothole damage to cars is more commonplace and extremely difficult to successfully seek compensation.”*

*“The local roads are in a shocking state and repairs (especially potholes) need to be urgently addressed to reduce accidents and damage to vehicles”*

*“More money needs spending on resurfacing pavements and roads. Increase gritting on residential roads.”*

*“Increase spending on safe/segregated cycle infrastructure. This will enable people to reduce personal transport costs (i.e. less reliance on cars), will reduce strain on health services (people will get more exercise) and will reduce the cost of road maintenance.”*

### **Council staffing savings 98 comments**

*“Focus should be placed on streamlining internal processes so that officer time is spent of serving communities rather than administration and bureaucracy. Cross cutting things like sustainability and net zero could be a driver for financial efficiencies through using less energy use etc.”*

*“Reduce management numbers, stop non-essential travel, review wages and pensions and align with private sector. The nondomestic rate bill levied by councils is now unaffordable and causing real hardship across communities.”*

*“Cut down on staff significantly. This will happen more with AI, but we need more hands-on staff....”*

*“...I would like you to consider reducing the salary and pensions of the high management. Considerable savings could be paid by paying more realistic salaries.....”*

### **More information needed 51 comments**

*“Hard to answer some of these questions as we do not have full story on them and what it entails...”*

*“It is important that it is clear what the council tax is paying for and what additional funding is required to be met by the residents individually for those services that these residents are requiring.”*

*“I would like to know how much income the council receives from providing services that are chargeable, i.e. The leisure centres? The budget process needs to be fully transparent.”*

*"In several instances I have indicated neither agree nor disagree as I do not have access to sufficient information...."*

### **Support for the budget proposals 44 comments**

*"These are hard decisions to make but necessary due to a restricted current and future funding."*

*"As it seems from the proposed budget it's a tough choice to balance between those lines of expenses however I would definitely support the idea of not cutting on essential services that could impact our current expectations"*

*"I wish you luck making difficult decisions but you're right to explore all options"*

*"...Given the cuts made by the Government, there are some very difficult decisions to be made..."*

## **4.2 Differences by different groups**

### **The age group 25-34, were less likely to be supportive of the following proposals:**

- to add £8.5 million to reserves as originally planned
- to explore voluntary redundancy, reducing hours and buying back additional annual leave with staff
- to cease funding for lunch / day clubs
- to limit plans for building new facilities - the plans for 2026/27 create costs of approximately £33.7 million from our revenue/service budget
- 3% increase in Council Tax for other Central Bedfordshire Council services

### **The age group 25-44, were less likely to be supportive of the following proposals:**

- the review and increase of some fees and charges to increase council income
- 2% increase in Council Tax specifically for adult social care services

### **The age group 75+, were more likely to be supportive of the following proposals:**

- plans to allocate additional funding to meet increased costs in key areas, such as providing care for more older people, adults with disabilities, and children's services
- the review and increase of some fees and charges to increase council income
- to reduce routine management and maintenance of 43 countryside sites to only focus on essential repairs where there is a danger to health and safety.
- the proposed 2% increase in Council Tax specifically for adult social care services
- the proposed 3% increase in Council Tax for other Central Bedfordshire Council services

### **White other respondents were less likely to be supportive of the following:**

- the review and increase of some fees and charges to increase council income
- the proposed 2% increase in Council Tax specifically for adult social care services
- the proposed 3% increase in Council Tax for other Central Bedfordshire Council services

### **and more likely to support:**

- the proposal to cease funding for stroke support provided by the voluntary sector (£48,000 and £16,000 in 2027/28). This service is a health service, and the organisations will need to rely on other funding sources.

### **Those who indicated that they were other ethnicity were less likely to be supportive of the following:**

- exploring the use of Continuing Health Care (CHC) income from the NHS, to make more use of how the CHC can reduce need for high-cost social care.
- the proposal to remove or reduce the Ward Councillor Grants. Each Ward Councillor currently has up to £2,000 per year to spend on local community projects.

### **Those who said they were from other religion would be less likely to be supportive of:**

- the proposal not to add £8.5 million to reserves as originally planned

### **Those with disabilities, were less likely to support the:**

- increase to crematorium fees in line with other crematoria.

### **Females were less likely to support the proposal to:**

- reduce the reablement and hospital discharge service by five posts – the service is currently provided by 81 full time equivalent staff

## **5. Demographic profile of respondents**

Responses were received from local businesses, voluntary organisations and Town or Parish Councils, we also received responses from respondents who identified themselves as other than the options provided, some said that they work in Central Bedfordshire although the majority of respondents were residents (93%).

The budget consultation is open to everyone to take part, this means that the responses are unweighted and will not necessarily be completely representative of the whole community. To help us assess how representative the responses are of the population we can compare the profile of the responses to the known population. This analysis is summarised below.

Postcode analysis shows that responses were received from all over Central Bedfordshire with clusters of responses in and around towns including Dunstable, Biggleswade and Flitwick, including a large cluster around Leighton Buzzard.

The data collected on demography indicates that:

Males (48%) were more likely to respond than Females (45%). 8% preferred not to say. This was broadly representative versus the population of Central Bedfordshire (Female 51%, Male 49%).

Responses were received from a wide range of households. Higher income households were much more likely to respond, accounting for almost a third of all responses (31% of responses versus 19% of the population). Almost two-thirds of responses came from middle income households, comparable to their proportion in the overall population, while lower income households were less likely to respond (8% of responses versus 17% of the population).

Although responses were received across all age groups, people over the age of 50 were overrepresented in the consultation results, and those under 34 years of age were underrepresented. Further detail is provided below.

People aged 55-64 years old were the largest group to respond (25%, compared to 16% of the population). Respondents aged 65-74 made 24% of the responses (compared to 12% of the population). Respondents over 75 made 15% of the response (versus the population of 11%).

There was only one respondent under the age of 16. This could be due to the unlikelihood of them being council taxpayers yet. Only 1% (10) of respondents were from the 18-24 years age group, whilst we know that approximately 8% of our population are this age. 5% of responses were from 25-34 year olds, versus a population figure of 16%.

There were no respondents from the 16-17 age group versus 3% for the population.

People with disabilities, who answered, were exactly in line compared to the Central Bedfordshire population, with both the response percentage and the population figure being 15%.

10% of the respondents said they were from an ethnic minority background compared with 17% of our population.

Less than half of all respondents indicated that they were Christian (45%), this is slightly lower than the population (48%), and 33% of respondents indicated that they had no religious belief, compared to the Central Bedfordshire population of 43%.

## **6. Equality Forum feedback**

As part of the Budget Consultation process, the proposals identified as having a potentially significant impact on equalities have been considered by the Central Bedfordshire Equality Forum which acts as an advisory and consultative body to the Council.

### **Place and Communities Budget Proposals**

**Planning Delivery: Stopping Consultation Letters** – Ending the printing and posting of planning consultation letters is expected to generate £22,000 in savings.

**Equality Impact Comments:** Members raised concerns about the impact on digitally excluded residents ability to access the information. They highlighted that planning documents are often complex and difficult to view on a mobile device, which could limit accessibility.

### **Monitoring Office Budget Proposals**

**Ward Councillor Grant Scheme** – Removing this scheme entirely would deliver £126,000 in savings.

**Equality Impact Comments:** Members suggested pausing the scheme for a year rather than stopping it immediately, given the current financial pressures on Central Bedfordshire.

They recommended conducting a further analysis to assess the actual impact of discontinuing the grants before making a final decision.

**Reduction in Grants to Advice Sector** – Cutting grant funding to advice services by 10% is expected to save £36,000.

**Equality Impact Comments:** Concerns were expressed that cutting grant funding could increase demand on CBC services, placing significant pressure on the council. Currently, there is no accessible location in Central Bedfordshire for residents to receive face-to-face advice, apart from Chicksands, which is difficult for many to reach, and there is no drop-in alternative. The proposed reduction represents a substantial cut to funding and is likely to result in redundancies and changes to service delivery, disproportionately affecting vulnerable residents. It was also highlighted that most advice services rely heavily on volunteers, with only a few paid staff. Investment in these services has a strong multiplier effect: for every £1 spent on advice, it can prevent £5–£10 worth of negative outcomes downstream. Supporting these volunteer-led services therefore generates a high return on investment, benefiting both individuals and the wider community.

### **Adult Social Care & Housing Budget Proposals**

**Reablement and Hospital Discharge Service** – A reduction in staffing from 8 FTE to 6 FTE is projected to save £135,000 in 2026/27 and £68,000 in 2027/28.

**Equality Impact Comments:** Members highlighted that reducing therapy input could lead to poorer outcomes for people, limiting their recovery of skills and independence, resulting in a less favourable quality of life and higher ongoing care needs. Changes to services, including reduced triage and screening capacity, could affect residents' ability to avoid hospital admissions or support timely discharge. It was also suggested that responsibility for funding and managing this service should be passed back to the NHS.

**Decommissioning Stroke Support** – Ending the Stroke Support service should generate savings of £48,000 in 2026/27 and £16,000 in 2027/28.

**Equality Impact Comments:** Members questioned whether this service is the council's responsibility, noting that stroke support may be more appropriately funded and managed by the NHS or through the Better Care Fund, rather than Adult Social Care. While Public Health is part of the council, members highlighted that this service may fall outside its usual remit.

**Ceasing Funding to Lunch/Day Clubs** – Withdrawing financial support from these clubs is expected to save £20,000 in both 2026/27 and 2027/28.

**Equality Impact Comments:** Members expressed strong concerns about stopping funding for lunch and day clubs. They highlighted that these clubs play a crucial role in combating isolation, depression, and anxiety—issues that became particularly evident during COVID-19. The clubs provide social interaction and support for older residents of all backgrounds,

and even volunteers benefit from participating. Members warned that discontinuing these services could have long-term negative effects on residents' engagement, wellbeing, and overall quality of life.

**Reducing Carers Support Funding** – A reduction in funding for carers' support is forecast to save £50,000 in 2026/27.

**Equality Impact Comments:** Members questioned how this reduction fits within the overall budget, noting that any cut is likely to lead to reduced services for carers. They emphasized that a significant part of the service involves identifying and supporting carers who are already isolated, meaning cuts could disproportionately affect the most vulnerable.

### **Cross-Cutting / Corporate Costs Budget Proposals**

**Additional Fees & Charges Income** – The introduction of new or revised fees and charges is expected to bring in £5.666 million, with further efficiencies still to be finalised.

**Equality Impact Comments:** Members highlighted that there is scope to create efficiencies but stressed the need to consider the actual costs the council incurs in collecting fees, such as council tax debt recovery, to ensure that income generation is cost-effective.

**Council Tax Support Scheme** Adjustments to the scheme are anticipated to raise an additional £2.75 million.

**Equality Impact Comments:** Members noted that the scheme is currently the most generous of its kind. However, changes could disproportionately affect mixed-age couples, where one partner is of pensionable age and the other is working age. In such cases, the household may be treated as working age, potentially reducing support for the older partner. Members also questioned whether the Hardship Fund would be used to mitigate the impact of these cuts.

## **7. Consultation tables**

Below is the full breakdown of response results from the consultation questions.

### **Investing in services**

**Plans to allocate additional funding to meet increased costs in key areas, such as providing care for more older people, adults with disabilities, and children's services**

Please note: some totals may not calculate to 100%, due to rounding

	Number of responses	% of total responses
Strongly agree	306	20%
Agree	553	37%
Neither agree nor disagree	253	17%

	Number of responses	% of total responses
Disagree	235	16%
Strongly disagree	158	11%
Total	1505	100%

### **Reducing costs**

**plans to reduce running costs by reviewing how the council is organised, removing duplication, automating processes, reviewing IT licencing costs and continuing to stop all but essential recruitment and spending**

Please note: some totals may not calculate to 100%, due to rounding

	Number of responses	% of total responses
Strongly agree	763	50%
Agree	552	37%
Neither agree nor disagree	102	7%
Disagree	63	4%
Strongly disagree	33	2%
Total	1513	100%

### **proposal not to add £8.5 million to reserves as originally planned**

Please note: some totals may not calculate to 100%, due to rounding

	Number of responses	% of total responses
Strongly agree	291	19%
Agree	471	31%
Neither agree nor disagree	429	29%
Disagree	236	16%
Strongly disagree	80	5%
Total	1507	100%

### **proposal to explore voluntary redundancy, reducing hours and buying back additional annual leave with staff**

Please note: some totals may not calculate to 100%, due to rounding

	Number of responses	% of total responses
Strongly agree	379	25%
Agree	526	35%
Neither agree nor disagree	310	21%
Disagree	201	13%
Strongly disagree	90	6%
Total	1506	100%

### **Proposals to increase income in 2026/27**

**Review and increase some fees and charges to increase council income (£1.5million)**

Please note: some totals may not calculate to 100%, due to rounding

	Number of responses	% of total responses
Strongly agree	140	9%
Agree	546	37%
Neither agree nor disagree	269	18%
Disagree	312	21%
Strongly disagree	220	15%
Total	1487	100%

**Increase crematorium fees in line with other crematoria (£36,000)**

Please note: some totals may not calculate to 100%, due to rounding

	Number of responses	% of total responses
Strongly agree	244	16%
Agree	619	41%
Neither agree nor disagree	276	18%
Disagree	232	16%
Strongly disagree	127	9%
Total	1498	100%

**Review rental income from council properties to ensure they reflect market rates. (£100,000)**

Please note: some totals may not calculate to 100%, due to rounding

	Number of responses	% of total responses
Strongly agree	587	39%
Agree	590	39%
Neither agree nor disagree	157	11%
Disagree	123	8%
Strongly disagree	44	3%
Total	1501	100%

**Explore use of Continuing Health Care (CHC) income from the NHS, to make more use of how the CHC can reduce need for high-cost social care. (£612,000)**

Please note: some totals may not calculate to 100%, due to rounding

	Number of responses	% of total responses
Strongly agree	473	32%
Agree	681	45%
Neither agree nor disagree	219	15%
Disagree	90	6%
Strongly disagree	38	3%
Total	1501	100%

**Consider how the Biggleswade Adult Centre is used, to either reduce running costs or increase income. (£60,000)**

Please note: some totals may not calculate to 100%, due to rounding

	Number of responses	% of total responses
Strongly agree	403	27%
Agree	566	38%
Neither agree nor disagree	399	27%
Disagree	98	7%
Strongly disagree	35	2%
Total	1501	100%

## **Proposals to reduce funding to other organisations in 2026/27**

**Remove or reduce the Ward Councillor Grants. Each Ward Councillor currently has up to £2,000 per year to spend on local community projects. (£126,000)**

Please note: some totals may not calculate to 100%, due to rounding

	Number of responses	% of total responses
Strongly agree	442	30%
Agree	444	30%
Neither agree nor disagree	222	15%
Disagree	293	20%
Strongly disagree	97	7%
Total	1498	100%

**Review grant allocations to the advice sector and reduce by 10%. The Council currently provides £363,000 to three Citizen's Advice services and Advice Central. (£36,000)**

Please note: some totals may not calculate to 100%, due to rounding

	Number of responses	% of total responses
Strongly agree	275	18%
Agree	394	26%
Neither agree nor disagree	233	16%
Disagree	408	27%
Strongly disagree	191	13%
Total		100%

**Cease funding for stroke support provided by the voluntary sector (£48,000 and £16,000 in 2027/28). This service is a health service, and the organisations will need to rely on other funding sources.**

Please note: some totals may not calculate to 100%, due to rounding

	Number of responses	% of total responses
Strongly agree	152	10%
Agree	245	16%
Neither agree nor disagree	292	19%
Disagree	537	36%
Strongly disagree	279	19%
Total	1505	100%

**Cease funding for lunch / day clubs (£20,000 and £20,000 in 2027/28). The council may use Public Health funding for 2026/27. These organisations will need to rely on other funding sources.**

Please note: some totals may not calculate to 100%, due to rounding

	Number of responses	% of total responses
Strongly agree	283	19%
Agree	367	24%
Neither agree nor disagree	298	20%
Disagree	401	27%
Strongly disagree	153	10%
Total	1502	100%

**Withdraw the additional £50,000 planned for carer support. The council will continue to provide £200,000 each year to provide support to carers through arrangements commissioned jointly across Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes and will also retain funding of £62,000 for our Digital Carers Support offer. This efficiency relates to the removal of planned additional support**

Please note: some totals may not calculate to 100%, due to rounding

	Number of responses	% of total responses
Strongly agree	229	15%
Agree	417	28%
Neither agree nor disagree	298	20%
Disagree	370	25%
Strongly disagree	186	12%
Total	1500	100%

**Cease the contract for Community Health Services when the current contract ends in March 2026, as the NHS cannot tell us how this money is being used. This service will still be provided by the NHS, but the funding the council provides will stop. (£500,000) Discussions are on-going with the Integrated Care Board (local NHS) and the current provider of the service in relation to the impact of this decision and how this will be managed and mitigated where possible.**

Please note: some totals may not calculate to 100%, due to rounding

	Number of responses	% of total responses
Strongly agree	458	31%
Agree	510	34%
Neither agree nor disagree	294	20%
Disagree	162	11%
Strongly disagree	80	5%
Total	1504	100%

## **Proposals to make changes to council services in 2026/27**

**Meet our statutory consultation obligations in communicating planning application consultations moving away from individual resident letters and focus on prominently**

**displayed site notices in streets and in the press to ensure information remains visible and accessible. Parish and town councils will continue to be informed and can display on noticeboards (£22,000)**

Please note: some totals may not calculate to 100%, due to rounding

	Number of responses	% of total responses
Strongly agree	302	20%
Agree	454	30%
Neither agree nor disagree	209	14%
Disagree	284	19%
Strongly disagree	252	17%
Total	1501	100%

**Reduce routine management and maintenance of 43 countryside sites to only focus on essential repairs where there is a danger to health and safety. (£30,000)**

Please note: some totals may not calculate to 100%, due to rounding

	Number of responses	% of total responses
Strongly agree	156	10%
Agree	368	25%
Neither agree nor disagree	236	16%
Disagree	520	35%
Strongly disagree	215	14%
Total	1495	100%

**Reduce the reablement and hospital discharge service by five posts – the service is currently provided by 81 full time equivalent staff (£135,000 and £68,000 in 2027/28) The impact of this change will be managed through changes to structure of the service but may mean that we have reduced capacity to support our hospital discharge arrangements.**

Please note: some totals may not calculate to 100%, due to rounding

	Number of responses	% of total responses
Strongly agree	190	13%
Agree	355	24%
Neither agree nor disagree	317	21%
Disagree	414	28%
Strongly disagree	222	15%
Total	1498	100%

**Explore options to reduce the number of Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Sub-Committees and/or reduce the frequency of their meetings. This could result in fewer items being formally scrutinised outside the decision-making process, result in the grouping of a wider range of topics into fewer meetings and/or improve allocation of resource and focus on high priority topics (£42,000)**

Please note: some totals may not calculate to 100%, due to rounding

	Number of responses	% of total responses
Strongly agree	486	32%
Agree	591	39%
Neither agree nor disagree	232	15%
Disagree	113	8%
Strongly disagree	80	5%
Total	1502	100%

**Share Registration Services with another council, subject to agreement between the relevant councils (£30,000)**

Please note: some totals may not calculate to 100%, due to rounding

	Number of responses	% of total responses
Strongly agree	402	27%
Agree	634	43%
Neither agree nor disagree	316	21%
Disagree	82	6%
Strongly disagree	46	3%
Total	1480	100%

**Limit plans for building new facilities - the plans for 2026/27 create costs of approximately £33.7 million from our revenue/service budget**

Please note: some totals may not calculate to 100%, due to rounding

	Number of responses	% of total responses
Strongly agree	434	29%
Agree	552	37%
Neither agree nor disagree	276	19%
Disagree	147	10%
Strongly disagree	65	4%
Total	1474	100%

## Council Tax

**Proposed 2% increase in Council Tax specifically for adult social care services**

Please note: some totals may not calculate to 100%, due to rounding

	Number of responses	% of total responses
Strongly agree	209	14%
Agree	416	28%
Neither agree nor disagree	208	14%
Disagree	294	20%
Strongly disagree	380	25%
Total	1507	100%

**Proposed 3% increase in Council Tax for other Central Bedfordshire Council services**

Please note: some totals may not calculate to 100%, due to rounding

	Number of responses	% of total responses
Strongly agree	133	9%
Agree	375	25%
Neither agree nor disagree	230	15%
Disagree	335	22%
Strongly disagree	429	29%
Total	1502	100%

## Investing in facilities

### Plans to spend £129.6 million on infrastructure projects

**£35.9 million on schools - this includes school maintenance, new school places, transitioning schools to two-tier (£27.6 million) and special educational needs provision (£2.9 million).**

Please note: some totals may not calculate to 100%, due to rounding

	Number of responses	% of total responses
Strongly agree	313	21%
Agree	493	33%
Neither agree nor disagree	267	18%
Disagree	254	17%
Strongly disagree	166	11%
Total	1493	100%

### £10 million on highways works, including resurfacing

Please note: some totals may not calculate to 100%, due to rounding

	Number of responses	% of total responses
Strongly agree	664	44%
Agree	638	43%
Neither agree nor disagree	114	8%
Disagree	44	3%
Strongly disagree	37	3%
Total	1497	100%

### £3 million completing the new leisure centre in Leighton Buzzard

Please note: some totals may not calculate to 100%, due to rounding

	Number of responses	% of total responses
Strongly agree	100	7%
Agree	214	14%
Neither agree nor disagree	401	27%
Disagree	402	27%
Strongly disagree	379	25%
Total	1496	100%

### **£2.7 million on new care homes and technology equipment for care**

Please note: some totals may not calculate to 100%, due to rounding

	Number of responses	% of total responses
Strongly agree	235	16%
Agree	507	34%
Neither agree nor disagree	355	24%
Disagree	226	15%
Strongly disagree	165	11%
Total	2020	100%