

# Priorities Engagement

## Survey results

17 August 2023 – 4 September 2023

By

**Neville Stratton**

Consultation Officer

Community Intelligence

Communications, Insight and Engagement

**A great place to live and work.**

## Purpose of the survey

The new Independent administration is looking to update the Council's Strategic Plan and were keen to enable residents to put forward their views to help inform the new Plan.

Central Bedfordshire Council, as a unitary council, provides a vast range of different services and initiatives, some of which everyone uses and some only small portions of the population use. Some elements of these services are statutory and some are discretionary. Some discretionary services are important to help people avoid more reliance on council support later on in life. The priorities survey is not designed to convey this complexity but to get resident's perspective on the areas they think the Council should focus on more.

The Council also has strong insight into residents' long term priorities through the Vision 2050 exercise and the bi-annual resident's survey which is a statistically reliable telephone survey.

## The survey process

The survey ran from 17 August 2023 to 4 September 2023. The survey was available on the Council's website and paper copies were available on request.

The survey was widely promoted to residents. Promotional activities included:

- Email bulletins
- Press release
- Leader's column in local newspapers
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)
- Posters in libraries etc.

The survey was also promoted to Town and Parish Councils and community partners.

## How we analysed the responses

In total, **3,012** responses were received for this survey.

We can assess how representative the survey respondents are by comparing the results of the demographic questions (e.g. age, disability etc.) against our population profile.

To make sense of the feedback received, we have employed two types of analysis. We have looked at the quantitative results for the tick box questions and we coded every single free text comments into common themes to help understand the

sentiment behind responses. This coding then allows us to quantify the common themes made in the commentary.

We also analysed the results by demographic data where responses were large enough. This helps us to see if there are different views coming through from different groups.

Any survey findings reported should *only* be those identified in this report.

Please note, all quotes are shown as received, so may contain spelling mistakes. Also, the percentages shown in the charts may not total 100% due to rounding.

## The findings

### Executive summary

Focus more on:	Focus less on:
Road and pavement repairs (55%) 1,649 responses	Promoting building homes and new communities with services and infrastructure (46%) 1,226 responses
Working with the Health Service to increase health service provision (41%) 1,221 responses	Cultural activities (41%) 1,090 responses
Tackling anti-social behaviour and working with the Police to reduce crime (41%) 1,220 responses	Parking (31%) 812 responses
Providing care services for the elderly (33%) 985 responses	Initiatives related to climate change and sustainability (29%) 770 responses
Supporting town centres to be vibrant and thriving places (30%) 879 responses	Activities for young children (24%) 630 responses

Focus more on:	Focus less on:
<p>Key themes from comments to focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All of the priorities selected need investment/ vital/not enough provision currently</li> <li>• Improve access to Health services NHS/HUB/GP surgery, dentists, waiting times etc</li> <li>• Roads (mostly the amount of potholes currently) /poor repair quality</li> <li>• Environment/green/sustainability/ climate change/global warming</li> <li>• Schools/education vital needs investment</li> </ul>	<p>Key themes from comments to focus on less:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All are important/keep focus</li> <li>• No more houses/too much development</li> <li>• Some services least important/impact/not essential</li> <li>• Could be run by other groups/privatized/commercial/ outsourced/ grants/provided elsewhere</li> <li>• Improve infrastructure/there's not enough infrastructure for the existing population</li> </ul>

The comments received often indicated that priorities differ depending on lifestage/experience/ demographics. It is important to note that:

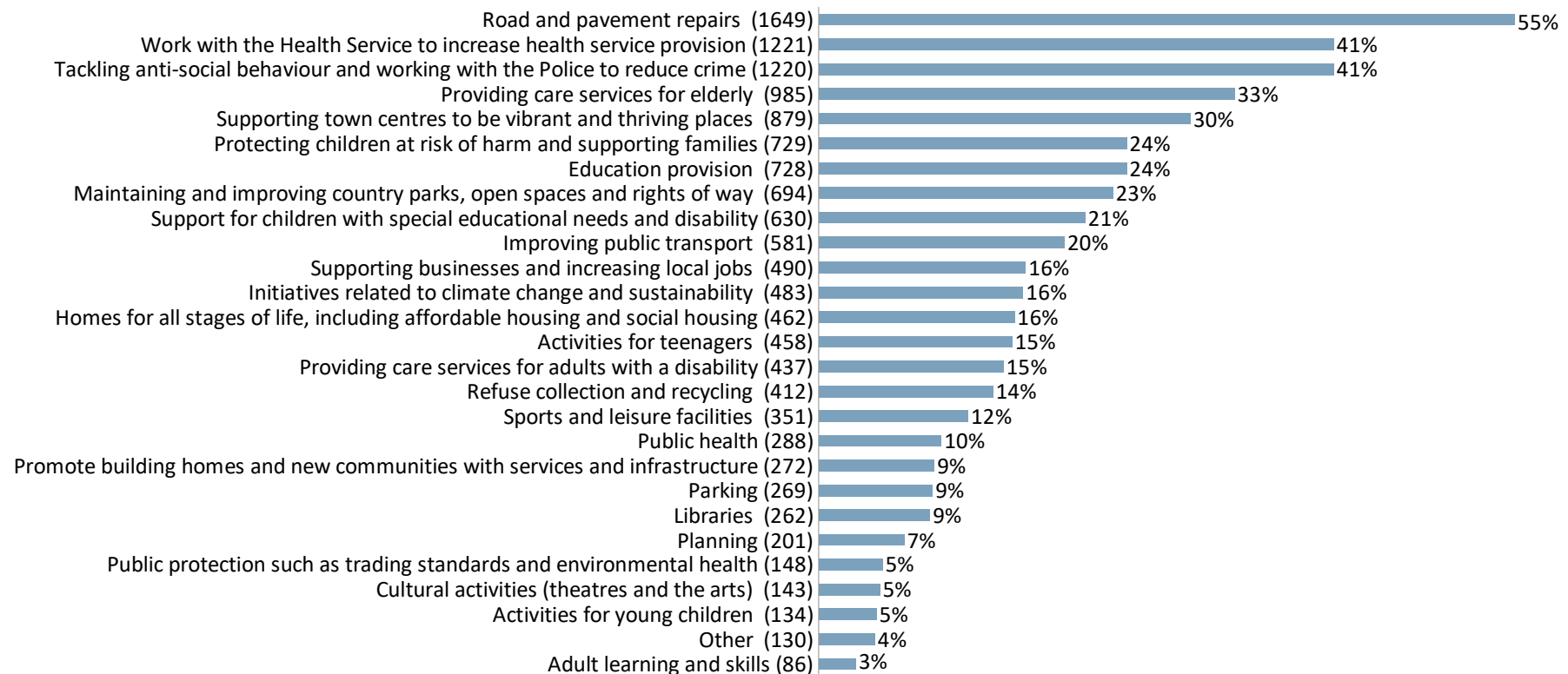
- Those under 35 are under represented in the survey response in comparison to the population of Central Bedfordshire. Those over 65 were over represented.
- There was a larger response from affluent households compared to the makeup of Central Bedfordshire overall. There were slightly fewer responses from 'Middle' households and a much lower response from 'Deprived' households.
- Responses came from across the area, but with higher concentrations of response in Biggleswade, Stotfold, Leighton-Linslade and Flitwick.

## Full survey results

### Priorities to focus on

Q1. Respondents were asked which five services they believed should be a priority for Central Bedfordshire Council.

Below is a broad list of services provided by the Council. Please tick the five areas you think the Council should focus on.



2,984 of the respondents chose to give an answer to this question. 28 respondents chose not to respond to this question.

The top five areas to focus on were:

- Road and pavement repairs (55%)
- Tackling anti-social behaviour and working with the Police to reduce crime (41%)
- Working with the Health Service to increase health service provision (41%)
- Providing care services for the elderly (33%)
- Supporting town centres to be vibrant and thriving places (30%).

Q1a. Of those which stated 'other', **126** chose to provide more information and they have been summarised below:

Respondents were most likely to state the need for infrastructure for towns and prior to any new build housing.

Theme	No. of comments
Infrastructure for town/ new build housing	17
Trees/wildlife/shrubs/allotments	12
Too many houses	9
Speeding	9
Walking and cycling	8
Do not build on greenbelt	7
Public transport/villages	7
*All of the broad list of priorities (*26 in total) are important	7
Schools for the Future/ schools	6
Social care/ safeguarding adults	5

Theme	No. of comments
Highways/ signage	4
Environment noise/ air pollution	4
Support local charities and organisations	3
Transparency/control spending	3
ASBO/drug use	3
Policing	3
EV charging	3
Roads/potholes	2
SEND	2
Better street cleaning/litter	2
Other	29

### Demographic differences

This is not a representative sample so we cannot calculate statistical significance, but it's worth noting that there was some variation in the responses for different groups. Results that were at least five percentage points different to the overall response are noted below.

- Those aged 25-34 were more likely to want the Council to focus on maintaining and improving country parks, open spaces and rights of way
- Those aged 25-34 and 65+ and males were more likely to want the Council to focus on road and pavement repairs
- Those aged 65-74 and females were more likely to want the Council to focus on working with the NHS to increase health service provision
- Those aged 65+ were more likely want the Council to focus on providing care services for elderly

- Those with disabilities were more likely to want the Council to focus on care services for adults with a disability and support for children with SEND
- Those without disabilities were more likely to want the Council to focus on supporting town centres to be vibrant and thriving places
- Black or Black British and Mixed were less likely to want the Council to focus on working with the NHS to increase health service provision
- Heterosexuals were more likely to want the Council to focus on tackling antisocial behaviour.

## **Comments about Priorities to focus on**

Q2. Respondents were asked to explain why they chose their particular priorities.

1,956 chose to provide comments and they have been summarised below.

The most common comment was that the priorities the respondent had selected were all vital, in need of more investment and greater provision. A further 134 respondents said everything on the list was a priority and 103 said five was too few to prioritise.

Better access to healthcare and improving the condition of the roads were common comments which is reflective of question one.

In terms of healthcare, comments indicated a lack of provision and long waiting times to see doctors or dentists or to have a medical procedure. Comments about roads, related to potholes and repair/resurface work being a key priority.

After these initial most frequent comments, the comments started to diversify from the results to question one.

Although initiatives related to climate change and sustainability was not a strong priority in question one (16%), it was an area that received a lot of comments recognising its importance and the impact of development on the environment and sustainability.

The next most popular comment related to education, this was prioritized by 24% of respondents in question one. The comments recognized the importance of education for future generations and covered concerns about the quality of education, changes to two-tier and the availability of provision.



Theme	No. of comments
All of the 5 priorities that they as an individual have selected need investment/ vital/not enough provision currently	554
Improve access to Health services NHS/HUB/GP surgery, dentists, waiting times etc	437
Roads (mostly the amount of potholes currently) /poor repair quality	414
Environment/green/sustainability/climate change/global warming	230
Schools/education vital needs investment	201
Infrastructure before building	191
Care/provision/lack of services for elderly	180
Policing/crime feeling safe	177
Anti-Social Behaviour is a problem, needs to be more done	171
Need better support for town centres/ shops	165
Poor pavements/maintenance of footpaths/verges/accessibility	163
Better public transport/ buses in rural areas	151
Children /youth their future and protection should be priority	148
Engaging/activities for teenagers/children lacking will help ASB	147
SEND/EHCP provision needs improvement	144
More support for local jobs and businesses	139
Could have ticked them all, all of the broad list list of priorities (26 in total) are important	134
Social Caring provision/vulnerable	118
More social housing/starter/affordable homes	110

Theme	No. of comments
5 is too few (priorities) to choose	103
Need to have pride back/a better community feel/ focus	96
Parking	95
Priorities chosen were most relevant to the respondent's individual circumstances	90
Improve open spaces for all	87
Lacking services/support for people with disabilities	87
Road safety/speeding	66
No more housing	61
Need new/ leisure provision, not getting a good service	58
Better recycling/refuse collecting/including glass collection	56
Rural village lack of services comments	56
More support for our libraries	51
Comments regarding Schools for the Future/ Two-tier system	35
More housing	26
Mental health provisions	25
Walking and cycling	24
Adult learning	21
Arts/cultural provision	19
Not getting a return of service for the tax paid/ value for money	17
More cycleways	16

Theme	No. of comments
Residents don't feel listened to	10
Many are a statutory duty to provide?	7
Build on brownfield sites	7
Electric vehicles/charge points etc	5
Housing appropriate for the area	5
Better for all	4
Should be down to Central Government	4
Litter	4
Traffic	3
Digital exclusion comments	3
Care for homeless residents	2
Support for working families	2
Focus on not wasting Council resources	2
Other	30

Some examples of the top themes that respondents commented on are included below:

In addition to the comment we have also listed the priorities chosen by that individual, to give an understanding of the range of selections, we received.

**All of the 5 priorities they individually selected need investment/ vital/not enough provision currently**

*“These are considered prime priorities”* - Maintaining and improving country parks, open spaces and rights of way, Refuse collection and recycling, Road and pavement repairs, Planning, Work with the Health Service to increase health service provision

*"I think these are the most important. Services for all general public"* - Supporting town centres to be vibrant and thriving places, Sports and leisure facilities, Libraries, Improving public transport, Road and pavement repairs

*"I feel that the council should address a broad spectrum of the needs of the local community and I feel that the chosen priorities represent these."* - Providing care services for elderly, Supporting town centres to be vibrant and thriving places, Road and pavement repairs, Tackling anti-social behaviour and working with the Police to reduce crime, Work with the Health Service to increase health service provision

*"Supporting the weakest and poorest in society should always be a priority. Despite advances far too many who cannot stand up for themselves are cast to one side in favour of the able"* - Providing care services for elderly, Providing care services for adults with a disability, Protecting children at risk of harm and supporting families, Support for children with special educational needs and disability, Homes for all stages of life, including affordable housing and social housing

*"Most appropriate currently"* - Activities for teenagers, Supporting businesses and increasing local jobs, Road and pavement repairs, Homes for all stages of life, including affordable housing and social housing, Initiatives related to climate change and sustainability

### **Improve access to Health services NHS/HUB/GP surgery, dentists, waiting times etc**

*"Health provision has vast inequalities across the region and improving health service provision will also help to build a thriving sustainable community".* - Protecting children at risk of harm and supporting families, Education provision, Supporting town centres to be vibrant and thriving places, Homes for all stages of life, including affordable housing and social housing, Work with the Health Service to increase health service provision

*"There is a huge need for improved NHS services; reduced waiting lists for hospital appointments and treatment, good GP services in all areas. as well as NHS dental services. Dental health is so important to whole body health!"* - Providing care services for elderly, Support for children with special educational needs and disability, Road and pavement repairs, Homes for all stages of life, including affordable housing and social housing, Work with the Health Service to increase health service provision

*"I think a much needed focus ought to be on working with the health service to increase health service provision, with all the planning applications for new dwellings and all of the new houses being built our health care provisions can not cope. We no longer have an NHS dentist within a 7 mile radius, which is absolutely absurd! Doctors appointments face to face are still hard to come by, hospitals are over run with extensive waiting times for consultations, operations & emergency care."* - Activities for teenagers, Road and pavement repairs, Homes for all stages of life, including affordable housing and social housing, Public health, Work with the Health Service to increase health service provision

*"Only build new homes where the infrastructure is already in place to support the increase in residents and work with developers ..to ensure services are in place and funded by them. Health service provision should be further extended to outside of hospitals 7 days per week so easily accessible to all residents. Include services such as Ultra sound scans, ct scans etc in health centres to take*

*the pressure of the local hospital.” - Supporting town centres to be vibrant and thriving places, Road and pavement repairs, Tackling anti-social behaviour and working with the Police to reduce crime, Promote building homes and new communities with services and infrastructure, Work with the Health Service to increase health service provision*

### **Roads (mostly the amount of potholes currently) /poor repair quality**

*“The standard of road maintenance is disgraceful, there are dangerous potholes and road surfaces everywhere. The focus is currently on covering up the problem and not fixing it. Temporary repairs only last a few weeks.” - Providing care services for elderly, Refuse collection and recycling, Road and pavement repairs, Tackling anti-social behaviour and working with the Police to reduce crime, Work with the Health Service to increase health service provision*

*“In the current climate where money is tight for many people it is important that the potholes are repaired quickly to avoid unnecessary expense to be incurred when a car is damaged by a pothole.” - Providing care services for elderly, Protecting children at risk of harm and supporting families, Supporting town centres to be vibrant and thriving places, Road and pavement repairs, Work with the Health Service to increase health service provision*

*“As someone who used to cycle to work twenty years ago, I would be afraid to cycle safely along these pot-holed roads!” - Providing care services for elderly, Providing care services for adults with a disability, Libraries, Road and pavement repairs, Other*

*“The roads have so many potholes it is actually dangerous for cyclists and motorbike riders and causes thousands of pounds in damage to cars” - Education provision, Refuse collection and recycling, Road and pavement repairs, Tackling anti-social behaviour and working with the Police to reduce crime, Work with the Health Service to increase health service provision*

### **Environment/green/sustainability/climate change/global warming**

*“The climate change is the most important thing happening at the moment and not enough is being done about it, if nothing is done it will cause more problems for everyone and more money for the council to spend” - Education provision, Maintaining and improving country parks, open spaces and rights of way, Planning, Initiatives related to climate change and sustainability, Other*

*“Climate change and sustainability - individuals can only do so much to address the climate crisis - local and national government have to lead the way for there to be a meaningful impact Parks, open spaces etc - important for community and climate well-being” - Education provision, Support for children with special educational needs and disability, Supporting town centres to be vibrant and thriving places, Maintaining and improving country parks, open spaces and rights of way, Initiatives related to climate change and sustainability*

*“Health and Wellbeing and Climate Change are 2 priority areas which underpin so much of lives and the challenges are increasing; so greater investment is needed in these areas; especially the overlapping areas where a healthy environment will increase physical and mental wellbeing” - Protecting children at*

risk of harm and supporting families, Maintaining and improving country parks, open spaces and rights of way, Improving public transport, Initiatives related to climate change and sustainability, Public health

*“Rather than building new buildings, converting existing structures could help offset costs, and including microgeneration as part of conversion (such as solar panels on roofs) will help with environmental goals and bills.”* - Cultural activities (theatres and the arts), Public protection such as trading standards and environmental health, Tackling anti-social behaviour and working with the Police to reduce crime, Homes for all stages of life, including affordable housing and social housing, Initiatives related to climate change and sustainability

### **Schools/education vital, needs investment**

*“Education provision should always be of the highest importance; our young people are our future”* - Education provision, Improving public transport, Road and pavement repairs, Tackling anti-social behaviour and working with the Police to reduce crime, Initiatives related to climate change and sustainability

*“I must say education is the major issue here, as one of the most common reasons for people to live in an area. There aren't enough schools serving the area, particularly Secondary schools. with most schools either inadequate or required improvement. Having good & outstanding schools delivering proper education for our children & teenager will reflect on their behaviour and the future of the county.”* - Education provision, Maintaining and improving country parks, open spaces and rights of way, Road and pavement repairs, Tackling anti-social behaviour and working with the Police to reduce crime, Promote building homes and new communities with services and infrastructure

*“The education provision had been a a mess since my son starting school, with the change over to a 2 tier system has been shambolic. There has been numerous times when we have been told that the change will happen only for the change to be delayed time and time again. it is very disruptive for children's learning.”* - Protecting children at risk of harm and supporting families, Education provision, Support for children with special educational needs and disability, Road and pavement repairs, Work with the Health Service to increase health service provision

*“Children and education are the foundation for years to come, invest in children and facilities to reduce anti social behaviour in the future. Getting children into sports and education is key them making better decisions in the future”* - Education provision, Sports and leisure facilities, Maintaining and improving country parks, open spaces and rights of way, Road and pavement repairs, Tackling anti-social behaviour and working with the Police to reduce crime

### **Infrastructure before building**

*“Please stop approving planning permission before the infrastructure is in place. Make sure the developers build schools, health facilities, leisure and roads BEFORE they are allowed to build houses.”* - Education provision, Supporting town centres to be vibrant and thriving places, Tackling anti-social behaviour and working with

the Police to reduce crime, Parking, Work with the Health Service to increase health service provision

*“Need to make sure the infrastructure is in place to support new communities. Lots of young people are unable to afford to rent/buy a property so need to make sure there are affordable homes for all stages of life. Work with public health to ensure that communities have an adequate provision of health care facilities. Improve public transport in rural areas so people are able to realistically use it to get about, which will in turn impact the sustainability.”* -

Improving public transport, Tackling anti-social behaviour and working with the Police to reduce crime, Promote building homes and new communities with services and infrastructure, Homes for all stages of life, including affordable housing and social housing, Work with the Health Service to increase health service provision

*“Planning is my first priority and it needs to be far reaching to ensure that it is ALL joined up and available before the growth in population is allowed to overrun the existing infrastructure. Special attention needs to be given to improve available transport routes ahead of expansion of the housing stock which must provide for affordable road parking for all new houses and the natural growth of car ownership per household. The same far reaching evaluation of special educational needs is also needed along with the level of Health Service that will be needed, not only for special needs but also for an ageing population.”* - Support for children with special educational needs and disability, Road and pavement repairs, Planning, Parking, Work with the Health Service to increase health service provision

*“The council MUST now concentrate on getting the infrastructure right before even considering new housing .”* - Improving public transport, Parking, Work with the Health Service to increase health service provision

### **Care/provision/lack of services for elderly**

*“our elderly community is growing and suitable care should be the priority to ensure more can remain in their own homes.”* - Providing care services for elderly, Supporting town centres to be vibrant and thriving places, Cultural activities (theatres and the arts), Road and pavement repairs, Initiatives related to climate change and sustainability

*“care services for the elderly because why should elderly people saved all their lives to give it to private care homes in the last years of their life”* - Providing care services for elderly, Supporting town centres to be vibrant and thriving places, Road and pavement repairs, Tackling anti-social behaviour and working with the Police to reduce crime, Homes for all stages of life, including affordable housing and social housing

*“Elderly people are becoming more vulnerable as they are more likely not to have their own transport, unless of course they move away but that is cost restrictive. Example: (Aged 72), yesterday I received a text from doctor to book a blood test at the Lister on line. The faff was ridiculous and probably beyond most people my age (ex computing worker), to have a blood test that would require approx a 4 hour round trip by bus.”* - Activities for teenagers, Supporting

businesses and increasing local jobs, Sports and leisure facilities, Improving public transport, Work with the Health Service to increase health service provision

*“Care services for the elderly needs to be reviewed urgently. There needs to be more respite care facilities to aid elderly partners to get a break when they are the sole or part of a small family who care for a loved one.”* - Providing care services for elderly, Protecting children at risk of harm and supporting families, Support for children with special educational needs and disability, Homes for all stages of life, including affordable housing and social housing, Work with the Health Service to increase health service provision

### **Policing not enough/not visible enough/crime/ not feeling safe**

*“Police and crime - I do not feel safe on streets, even during daytime, we desperately need more police staff.”* - Supporting town centres to be vibrant and thriving places, Maintaining and improving country parks, open spaces and rights of way, Road and pavement repairs, Tackling anti-social behaviour and working with the Police to reduce crime, Initiatives related to climate change and sustainability

*“A town this size (Leighton Buzzard) and no visible police presence.”* - Education provision, Road and pavement repairs, Tackling anti-social behaviour and working with the Police to reduce crime, Promote building homes and new communities with services and infrastructure, Work with the Health Service to increase health service provision

*“we do not have enough police officers tackling major and minor issues in our community.”* - Supporting town centres to be vibrant and thriving places, Cultural activities (theatres and the arts), Road and pavement repairs, Tackling anti-social behaviour and working with the Police to reduce crime, Work with the Health Service to increase health service provision

*“More local Police to keep us safe a deter crime.”* - Providing care services for elderly, Providing care services for adults with a disability, Support for children with special educational needs and disability, Tackling anti-social behaviour and working with the Police to reduce crime, Initiatives related to climate change and sustainability

### **Anti-Social Behaviour is a problem, needs to be more done**

*“I won’t let my children walk through town after school and worry about them being at parks because of antisocial behaviour and nothing being done about it.”* - Education provision, Supporting town centres to be vibrant and thriving places, Road and pavement repairs, Tackling anti-social behaviour and working with the Police to reduce crime, Work with the Health Service to increase health service provision

*“Anti-social behaviour is not acceptable. There needs to be education and a learning of respect for others in place for persons who cause anti-social behaviour.”* - Protecting children at risk of harm and supporting families, Road and pavement repairs, Tackling anti-social behaviour and working with the Police to reduce crime, Public health, Work with the Health Service to increase health service provision

*“Local crimes ASB need more attention, motorbikes with multiple passengers no helmets, its only a matter of time before someone gets seriously injured or worse”* - Supporting businesses and increasing local jobs, Supporting town centres to be



vibrant and thriving places, Road and pavement repairs, Tackling anti-social behaviour and working with the Police to reduce crime, Parking

*“There is not enough being done to tackle antisocial behaviour and low level crime - theft, break-ins, intimidation towards others isn’t dealt with and there is no consequence to this type of crime. People and businesses don’t feel safe when reporting these offences to police aren’t taken seriously.”* - Education provision, Support for children with special educational needs and disability, Tackling anti-social behaviour and working with the Police to reduce crime, Homes for all stages of life, including affordable housing and social housing, Work with the Health Service to increase health service provision

### **Need better support for town centres/ shops**

*“Vibrant town centres are key to providing local jobs and good community spirit, to improve the overall well-being of a community. I believe focusing on these areas will improve wellbeing and prosperity which will have a knock-on impact on the ability to provide other services.”* - Supporting town centres to be vibrant and thriving places, Maintaining and improving country parks, open spaces and rights of way, Homes for all stages of life, including affordable housing and social housing, Initiatives related to climate change and sustainability, Work with the Health Service to increase health service provision

*“Making our town centres vibrant places should also be a focus, too many risk be coming dead zones as national chains close and the opportunity to create thriving arts and cultural spaces and institutions rather than just build flats and increase the problem.”* - Providing care services for elderly, Supporting town centres to be vibrant and thriving places, Cultural activities (theatres and the arts), Homes for all stages of life, including affordable housing and social housing, Initiatives related to climate change and sustainability

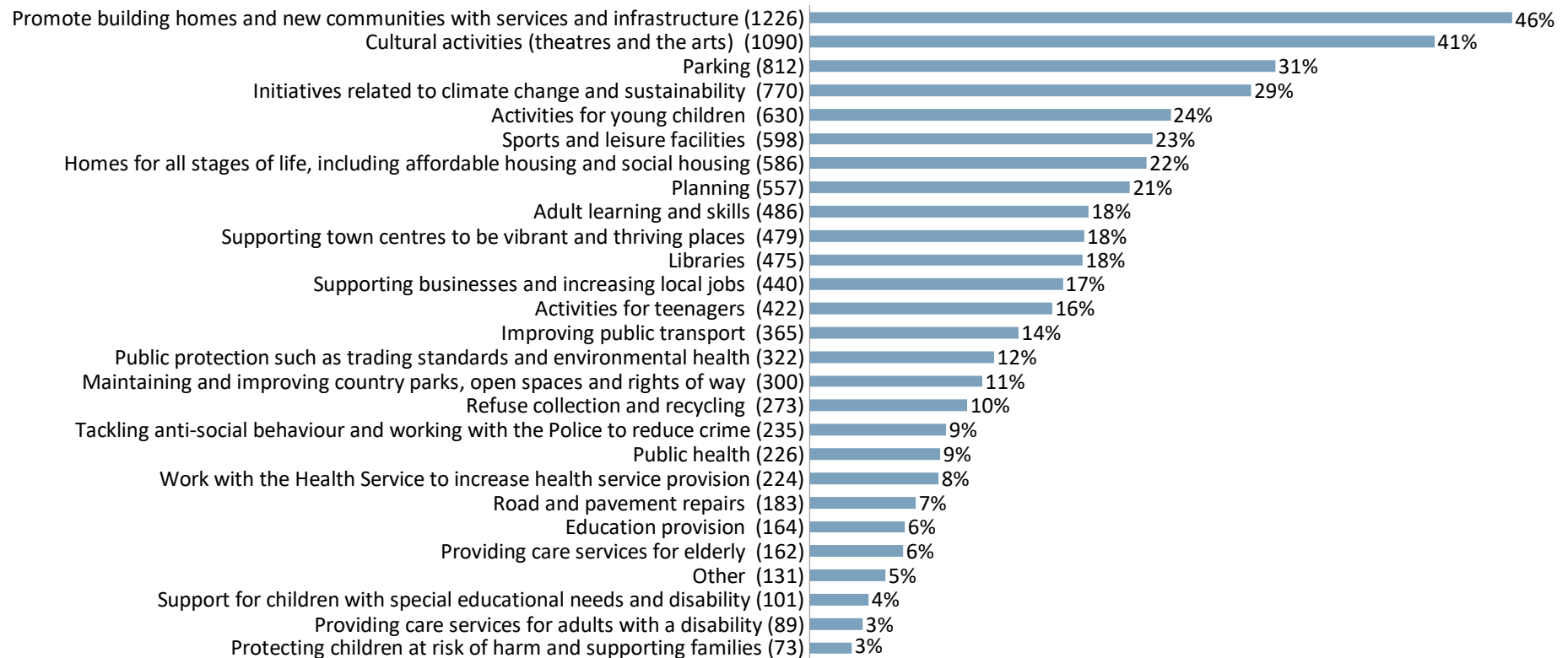
*“Town centres are very important. They provide local shops and services that are required by the community, especially for people, who may not be able to visit supermarkets.”* - Supporting town centres to be vibrant and thriving places ,Tackling anti-social behaviour and working with the Police to reduce crime, Planning, Public health, Work with the Health Service to increase health service provision

*“There is a lack of jobs in Central Bedfordshire and this needs to be improved. The town centre (Dunstable) looks dull with a lot of boarded up shops.”* - Supporting businesses and increasing local jobs, Supporting town centres to be vibrant and thriving places, Road and pavement repairs, Tackling anti-social behaviour and working with the Police to reduce crime, Homes for all stages of life, including affordable housing and social housing

## Services to focus less on

Q3. Respondents were asked, which, of the same list of services, they believed that Central Bedfordshire Council should focus less on

Below is a broad list of services provided by the Council. Please tick the five areas you think the Council should focus less on.



2,655 of the respondents chose to give an answer to this question. 357 respondents chose not to respond to this question.

The top five areas to focus less on were:

- Promoting building homes and new communities with services and infrastructure (46%)
- Cultural activities (theatres and the arts) (41%)
- Parking (31%)
- Initiatives related to climate change and sustainability (29%)
- Activities for young children (24%)

This question also helps us to understand the services that residents selected least often to focus on less. This gives a slightly different perspective on which services residents think the council should protect. These included:

- Protecting children at risk of harm and supporting families (3%)
- Providing care services for adults with a disability (3%)
- Support for children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (4%)
- Providing care service for the elderly (6%)
- Education provision (6%)

Q3a. Of those that answered 'other', 103 chose to provide more information and they have been summarised below.

Respondents were most likely to state that most/all are important.

Theme	No. of comments
Most/all listed are important	32
Limit anti-motorist changes, e.g. new road layouts, speed bumps	6
Initiatives/ vanity projects	6
Comments about green issues / sustainability	5
Stop focusing on diversity	4

Theme	No. of comments
Stop the “woke policies”/ agenda	4
Comments about sports and leisure programs	3
Comments about tree maintenance	3
Stop providing multi-lingual forms / translations	3
Stop wasting money on branding	3
Comments about cycle paths	2
Comments about health provision	2
Comments about Leighton Buzzard	2
Reduce spending on consultants	2
Spend less on Dunstable	2
There is a need for a police presence	2
This is too difficult	2
Other	26

### Demographic differences

This is not a representative sample so we cannot calculate statistical significance, but it’s worth noting that there was some variation in the responses for different groups. Results that were at least five percentage points different to the overall response are noted below.

- Those aged 75+ were more likely to say that the Council should focus less on homes for all stages of life
- Females were more likely to say that the Council should focus less on promoting building homes and new communities with services and infrastructure

- Males were more likely to say that the Council should focus less on initiatives related to climate change and sustainability
- Those not disabled were more likely to say that the Council should focus less on activities for young children

## Comments about services to focus less on

Q4. Respondents were asked to explain why they chose their particular service areas to focus less on.

1,550 chose to provide comments and they have been summarized below.

The most popular comment was how hard it was to choose because all the services and initiatives listed were important.

Comments about too much development were popular (246) and also comments about needing to improve the infrastructure to support the existing population (173). It was also felt that infrastructure should be in place before any more building.

Many people (174) commented they selected services they thought could be run by other organisations or groups (e.g. leisure and cultural activities) leaving the Council to focus on other things they felt were more important. 77 people selected areas they felt should be the responsibility of parents or individuals and not the Council. This tended to include things like activities for young people and children and sport and leisure provision.

Some people (155) selected areas they felt the Council was already doing well in or had been invested in so they felt those areas could afford to have less focus on them.

Theme	No. of comments
*All are important (*the 26 services in the broad list)	264
No more houses / too much development	246
Less/ least important/ impact / not essential	209
Could be run by other groups/ privatised / commercial / outsourced / grants / provided elsewhere	174

Theme	No. of comments
Improve infrastructure / there's not enough infrastructure for existing population	173
Already adequate / well-funded / maintain - no increase in focus needed	155
Difficult to choose	109
Responsibility of parents / the individual	77
Personal opinion / doesn't affect me	73
Parking isn't an issue / stop focusing on it / it's already good	58
Inadequate provision for the taxes paid / waste of money / not value for money	57
Recycling / waste is already good	52
Protect green spaces / countryside	50
Focus on the essential / do the basics right	49
Should be funded/ provided by Central Government	48
Comments about access to GP surgeries / dentist	44
Improve sustainable transport - reduces reliance on cars, improves access to town centres	43
Reduce spending on the arts/ culture / people can't afford culture / it's a nice to have	36
Health CCG / NHS is responsible for health	33
Leave crime/ ASB to police	32
There's enough sports facilities already / leisure / parks are good	32

Theme	No. of comments
Climate change dealt with at a national level/ national/international issue	29
People don't use libraries	28
Focus on roads / pavements	27
Those selected are 'nice to haves' / not essential	26
Businesses should be able to support themselves	25
Concentrate on things that benefit the majority	25
Education is important	23
Focus on people	23
"Climate change is a con"	21
Build the right type of homes (bungalows, affordable)	17
Convert empty shops / brownfield to housing / redevelop existing homes	16
Not enough info to comment	16
Don't focus on planning	15
Find efficiencies / red tape / bureaucracy	15
Town centres are dying – don't waste money trying to support them	14
Don't need / use buses	11
SEND should be main priority	11
Improve towns/ businesses will help other parts	9
Library is good	9

Theme	No. of comments
More for young people might reduce anti-social behaviour	8
Teenagers don't need / won't use council-provided activities	7
Supporting young people will result in improved jobs / town centres / reduce need for adult education	6
What about the villages?	6
Central government has underfunded LAs for years / need more funding	4
Would select all/ more	4
Connectivity / decent internet for all should be important	2
Other	138

Some examples of the top themes, that respondents commented on the service areas to focus on less, are included below:

In addition to the comment we have also listed the service areas chosen to focus less on by that individual, to give an understanding of the range of selections we received.

**\*All are important (\*the 26 services in the broad list) / keep focus**

*"There are no areas listed that need less attention than they already get. Grass cutting could be less frequent. I always have a feeling of regret for the loss of the flowers that spring up between cuts."*

*"I havent chosen any. A lot of these are statutory services. You need to at least maintain services to the required standard. What would be the impact of disinvesting in some of these services? Rather than priorities being focused on services, how about focusing on value for money, using data to improve services, equality, sustainability - themes that straddle all statutory services."*

**No more houses / too much development**

*"My area of the local authority has already seen exponential house building and a rural county is slowly being turned into an urban one all to maximise profit for house builders."* - Supporting businesses and increasing local jobs, supporting



town centres to be vibrant and thriving places, cultural activities (theatres and the arts), promote building homes and new communities with services and infrastructure, parking

*"Stop building and fix what you have"* - Promote building homes and new communities with services and infrastructure, initiatives related to climate change and sustainability

*"So much building across the county has led to increased pressure on parking, facilities at breaking point. Stop building and let the communities adjust to the mass increase in population."* - Public protection such as trading standards and environmental health, planning, promote building homes and new communities with services and infrastructure, homes for all stages of life, including affordable housing and social housing, parking

### **Less/ least important/ impact / not essential**

*"The above are important but not essential ,when money is tight they are marginally less important in my opinion"* - Supporting businesses and increasing local jobs, cultural activities (theatres and the arts), tackling anti-social behaviour and working with the Police to reduce crime, promote building homes and new communities with services and infrastructure

*"I don't believe they are as important and critical compared to everything else on the list."* - Activities for young children, libraries, improving public transport, public protection such as trading standards and environmental health, initiatives related to climate change and sustainability

*"To be honest I think these areas are important but could be lower down the priority list."* - Supporting businesses and increasing local jobs, cultural activities (theatres and the arts), libraries, public protection such as trading standards and environmental health, parking

### **Could be run by other groups/ privatised / commercial / outsourced / grants / provided elsewhere**

*"Difficult choice! Some things are perhaps best left to the private sector."* - Activities for teenagers, cultural activities (theatres and the arts), planning, promote building homes and new communities with services and infrastructure, parking

*"Local council must concentrate on basics - leave nice to haves to central govt / private enterprises"* - Activities for teenagers, activities for young children, supporting businesses and increasing local jobs, cultural activities (theatres and the arts), promote building homes and new communities with services and infrastructure

*"If choices need to be made, Leisure & sports and cultural activities can be provided by private markets. There is no shortage of gyms for example."* - Sports and leisure facilities, maintaining and improving country parks, open spaces and rights of way, cultural activities (theatres and the arts), parking

## **Improve infrastructure / there's not enough infrastructure for existing population**

*"Just pop a pin in building new homes until what is here already is improved or works MUCH better"* - Promote building homes and new communities with services and infrastructure

*"I don't think the infrastructure for existing homes has been adequately addressed so this should be a priority before promoting more building. Sports and leisure facilities can be adequately provided by the private sector or by sporting clubs and associations."* - sports and leisure facilities, promote building homes and new communities with services and infrastructure

*"You are building houses without being able to offer new doctors surgery's and school places"* - Promote building homes and new communities with services and infrastructure, homes for all stages of life, including affordable housing and social housing

## **Already adequate / well-funded / maintain - no increase in focus needed**

*"Difficult to justify any of my choices, except to say the council already does a good job in these areas."* - Supporting town centres to be vibrant and thriving places, refuse collection and recycling, planning, promote building homes and new communities with services and infrastructure, public health

*"I feel the council has already spent many years with these areas at the top of priority list."* - Providing care services for elderly, improving public transport, promote building homes and new communities with services and infrastructure, homes for all stages of life, including affordable housing and social housing, parking

*"It is very difficult to say what should receive less focus as all of these responsibilities are vital and important. I would rather say that my chosen areas either already areas of strength so are perhaps not in need of more focus - sports and leisure, adult learning and activities for young children. Or are areas where maybe CBC has made better progress than other areas so maybe should be the focus for other authorities - planning, new homes"* - Activities for young children, adult learning and skills, sports and leisure facilities, planning, promote building homes and new communities with services and infrastructure"

## **Difficult to choose**

*"Not chosen as it's difficult to decide"*

*"I found it really difficult to choose from the list."* - Activities for young children, cultural activities (theatres and the arts), improving public transport, promote building homes and new communities with services and infrastructure, homes for all stages of life, including affordable housing and social housing

*"Difficult/impossible all are important to sections of community any reduction should be minimal and short term as possible"* - Maintaining and improving country parks, open spaces and rights of way, cultural activities (theatres and the arts), parking, initiatives related to climate change and sustainability

## Responsibility of parents / the individual

*“Parents should take more responsibility for their own children. They chose to have them, why should we pay to keep them”* - Activities for teenagers, activities for young children, sports and leisure facilities, cultural activities (theatres and the arts), promote building homes and new communities with services and infrastructure

*“Areas where people are perfectly capable of providing for themselves, or are luxuries not necessities.”* - Activities for teenagers, activities for young children, sports and leisure facilities, cultural activities (theatres and the arts)

*“These items are not priorities but are areas that should be funded by individuals if required not via the council tax”* - Activities for young children, adult learning and skills, improving public transport, initiatives related to climate change and sustainability, work with the Health Service to increase health service provision

## Personal opinion / doesn't affect me

*“This is almost impossible to do!! Anything I have ticked is because it will not affect me personally i.e. adult learning and skills or activities for children. I don't need the former and no longer have the latter (now adults ) Support for businesses and jobs, I'm retired and neither of my adult children work in areas that received any help during covid and probably wouldn't fit criteria for LA help now”* - Activities for teenagers, activities for young children, adult learning and skills, supporting businesses and increasing local jobs, tackling anti-social behaviour and working with the Police to reduce crime

*“I would not have chosen any of these as there are all important but these are the less relevant to me and my family.”* - Providing care services for elderly, improving public transport, promote building homes and new communities with services and infrastructure, homes for all stages of life, including affordable housing and social housing, parking

## Parking isn't an issue / stop focusing on it / it's already good

*“Parking - disinvest in parking to incentivise a shift away from the dominance of private space (the car) in public space and move away from a car culture”*

*“Why spend money on the likes of Parking when we don't see a visible issue.”*

## Further Comments

Q5. Respondents were asked if they had any other further comments regarding the priorities.

781 chose to respond. The most common topics discussed were those that already featured in earlier questions:

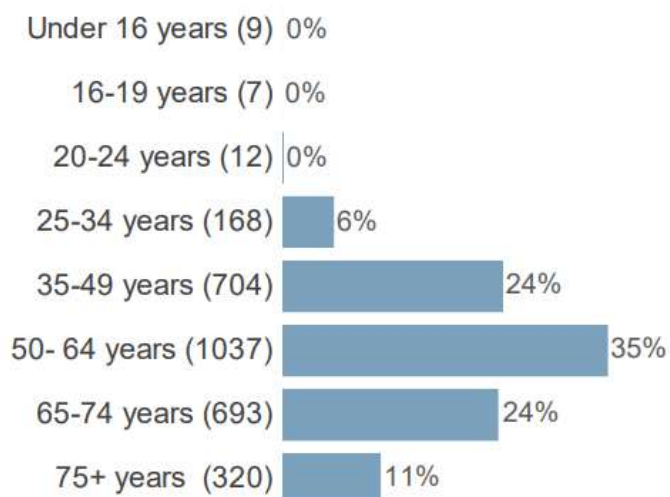
- Improve roads/pavements/traffic – 69 comments

- Invest in infrastructure – 59 comments
- Listen to residents/communicate better/ the survey is a good idea – 58 comments
- Focus on/reduce ASB and crime/increase police presence – 41 comments
- Improve access to health - GP/dentist/hospital – 39 comments

There was also a large number of other topics discussed which had a handful of comments each.

## Demographics

### What is your age?

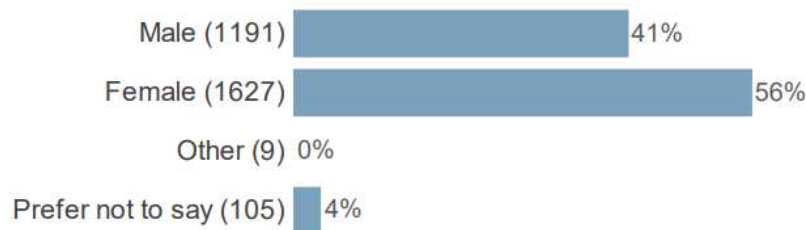


Although 28 responses were received from people under 25 years of age, this age group and those 25-34 are under represented in comparison to the population of Central Bedfordshire. (Under 25 0% (28) in comparison to 20% of the population of Central Bedfordshire, 25-34 year olds 6% in comparison to 13% of the population of Central Bedfordshire).

Respondents aged 65 -74 and 75+ are over represented compared to the Central Bedfordshire population.

This is a pattern of response we would usually expect for surveys or consultations.

### Are you:



Of those that stated 'other', 4 chose to provide details: GNC, Genderfluid, transgender, specifically nonbinary and transmasculine.

Male respondents were under represented in the survey (41% in comparison to the population 49%) and females were slightly over represented (56% in comparison 51%) but this is a pattern of response we would usually expect for surveys or consultations.

### Do you consider yourself disabled?

Under the Equality Act 2010 a person is considered to have a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a sustained and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities.



The profile of respondents in terms of disability is more or less in line with that of the Central Bedfordshire population.

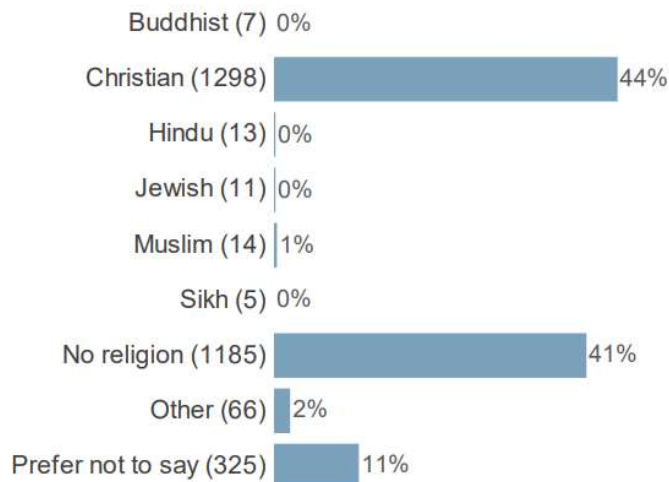
### To which of these groups do you consider you belong?



Of those that stated 'other', 36 provided more information. 8 stated the information was not relevant, 3 were English, 3 European, 2 Chinese, 2 prefer not to say, 2 White English, and the following saw 1 response each: Anglo Irish, Arab, Dutch, half English half Greek, Indian, Irish, Jewish English, Latin American, Mixed, Mixed White, Persian British, Traveller, White, White Irish, White Other, Yahsharal.

White or White British respondents were slightly over represented in the survey response (94%) compared to the population of Central Bedfordshire (90%). Other ethnic backgrounds were slightly under represented in the survey response.

### What is your religion or belief?



Of the other responses, 41 chose to provide more details. Responses were as follows: Pagan (13 responses), Humanist (4 responses), Atheist (3 responses), Orthodox (3 responses), Spiritual (3 responses), Roman Catholic (3 responses), as well as 12 other responses which cannot be categorised.

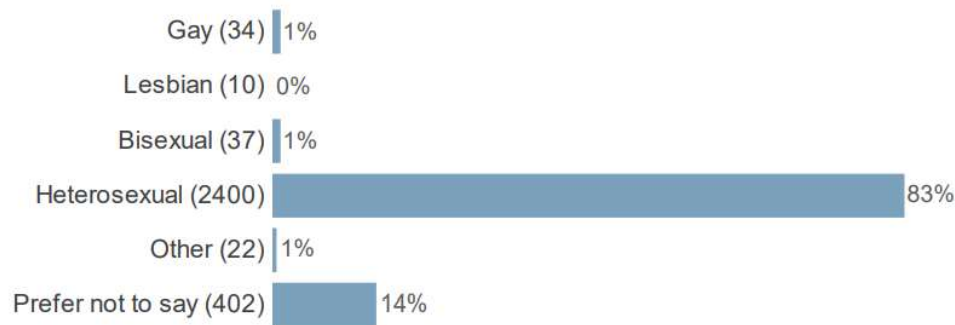
Christian respondents are slightly under represented in the survey (44%) compared to the population of Central Bedfordshire (48%). Respondents who indicated no religion, were Hindu or Jewish were all slightly underrepresented too, this is largely due to the high proportion (11%) of respondents preferring not to say.

### Is your gender identity the same as the gender you were assigned at birth?



The profile of survey respondents in respect of gender identity is more or less in line with that of the Central Bedfordshire population.

### How would you define your sexual orientation?

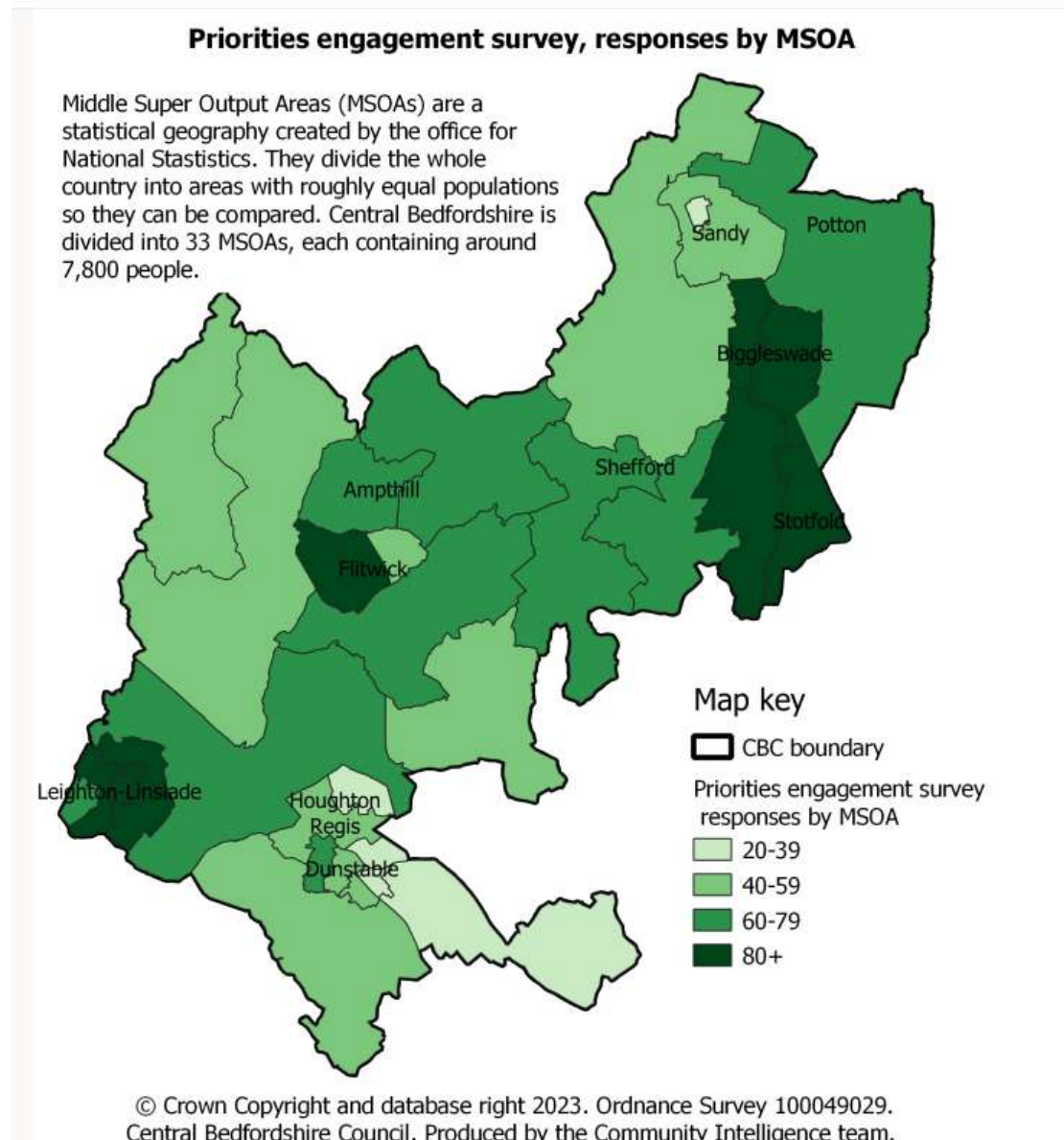


Of those that stated 'other', 11 chose to provide more details and they are provided in full here: Asexual (2 responses), these questions have nothing to do with how you spend the money on keeping this town half decent, Straight (2 responses), GNC, Normal, Aromantic, Cuddly, Pansexual, asexual and aromantic.

Heterosexual respondents are slightly underrepresented (83%) compared to the Central Bedfordshire population (92%). Bisexual, Gay or lesbian respondents are in line with the population of Central Bedfordshire.

## Postcode and Mosaic analysis

By plotting respondent's postcodes we can see that responses were received from across the Central Bedfordshire area, particularly from Biggleswade, Stotfold, Leighton-Linslade and Flitwick.



Mosaic Experian data groups postcodes into groups showing how deprived or affluent they are likely to be. We can use respondents postcodes to compare the profile of respondents to the population of Central Bedfordshire.

Responses were more likely to come from affluent households compared to the makeup of Central Bedfordshire overall. There was a lower response from 'Deprived' households.

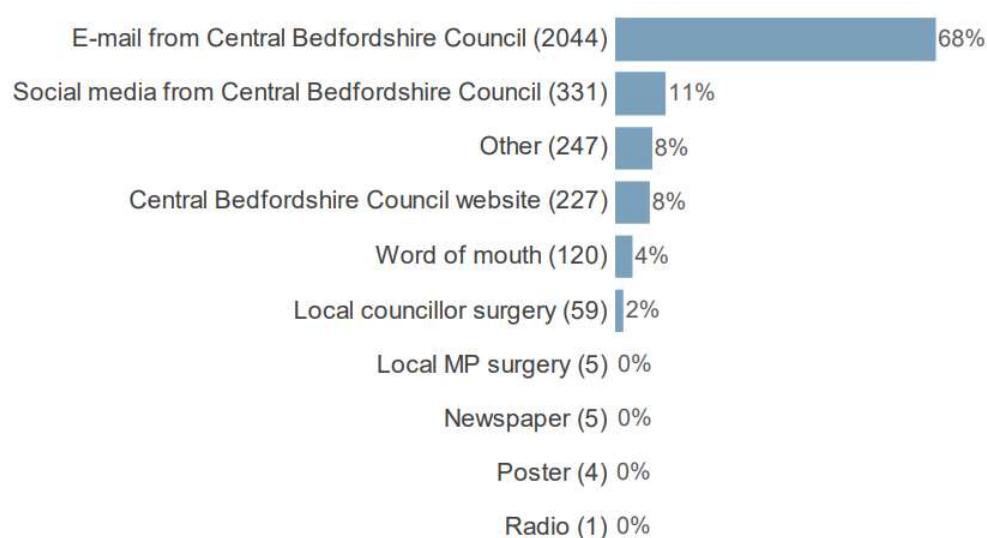


Experian Mosaic Band	Number of responses	% of respondents with a postcode used for analysis	% of all CBC households
Affluent	1287	59%	46%
Middle	723	33%	39%
Deprived	163	8%	15%
<b>Total responses used in postcode analysis</b>	<b>2173</b>	<b>100%</b>	

While we were able to include the majority of responses in the postcode analysis, there were 720 respondents who chose not to leave a postcode and 90 from areas outside of Central Bedfordshire. There are also a small number (29) that are included in the map analysis, but not in the table, as the postcode given did not appear in our database. These are likely to be new build areas.

## Finding out about the survey

### How did you hear about this survey?



Respondents were most likely to hear about the survey through an e-mail from the Council. Those that stated 'other' were most likely to say they heard about it through a local councillor's social media (74 responses), another facebook or social media

post (42 responses) or NextDoor (28 responses). There were also responses stating friends, family, colleagues and other groups.

**If social media, please tell us which one:**



All of those that stated 'other' provided more details. 4 stated email, 1 google, 1 NextDoor and 1 Whatsapp.

We can also see how respondents accessed the questionnaire:

- 1677 (56%) respondents accessed the questionnaire through the mobile version
- 1159 (38%) respondents accessed the questionnaire through a pc/laptop
- 176 (6%) respondents accessed the questionnaire through the tablet version.

## **Conclusion**

The survey had a considerable response with over 3,000 residents giving their views. Younger adults were less well represented in the response so this should be taken into account.

There was strong recognition throughout the survey that all of the services listed are important and respondents found it difficult to make choices. So whilst there were some key areas that were selected as priorities that doesn't mean everything else doesn't have value.

The top five priorities were:

- Road and pavement repairs
- Tackling anti-social behaviour and working with the Police to reduce crime
- Working with the Health Service to increase health service provision
- Providing care services for the elderly

- Supporting town centres to be vibrant and thriving places

The areas where most people felt the Council could focus less were:

- Promoting building homes and new communities with services and infrastructure
- Cultural activities
- Parking
- Initiatives related to climate change and sustainability
- Activities for young children

This question also helps us to understand the services that residents selected least often to focus on less. This gives a slightly different perspective on which services residents think the council should protect. A number of them related to protected characteristics. These included:

- Protecting children at risk of harm and supporting families
- Providing care services for adults with a disability
- Support for children with Special Educational Needs and Disability
- Providing care service for the elderly

There was a running theme throughout the open comments to the survey, relating to the need for infrastructure to be in place before any further building or development commences. Many respondents stated that they did not want any more homes built as the current infrastructure was insufficient. The infrastructure they required included, but was not limited to, in support of the responses that had been given in the quantitative analysis, health provision including health hubs, doctor and dentist, schooling and policing.

Though not a strong theme, there were comments from our residents living in rural areas regarding provision of services and rural isolation, these were around infrequent and limited public transport services, infrastructure, condition of roads and a general feeling of isolation, not feeling considered, there were comments saying some felt ignored or forgotten in comparison to towns.

Although sustainability did not emerge as a priority area, there was a recognition that it was important to consider for future generations, as was education.

If forced to make hard choices and deprioritise some services, some residents felt things like leisure, sport, cultural activities and activities for children or young people were all things that are provided by the private sector and therefore the Council

could do less of this to free up resources for other services that only the Council can provide.

Many respondents commented that it is about finding a balance, in order to deliver all services sufficiently, whilst providing the investment and focus more on a few key priorities.

# **Central Bedfordshire in contact**

**Find us online:** [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

**Call:** 0300 300 8000

**Email:** [consultations@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:consultations@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

**Write to:** Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House,  
Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ