

Appendix 11 – Summary of Response to the Budget Engagement

Report summary

The engagement ran from 17th December 2024 to 16th January 2025.

178 responses were received.

The engagement was promoted via the residents' weekly email, sent to the online citizens' panel and promoted via a number of the Council's working groups and forums.

Results

Should the Council look to increase Council Tax by 2.99% plus 2.00% Adult Social Care precept (an increase of £1.94 per week for a Band D property) to reduce the financial gap for 2025/26?

Yes 60.1% (107 choices)



No 39.3% (70 choices)



No answer 0.6% (1 choice)



Which areas, shown in the list below, would you be **MOST comfortable with the Council reducing spending on, or increasing income from? (Current budget for 2025/26 shown in brackets)**

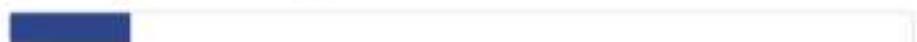
Home to school transport (£3.619 million) 17.7% (78 choices)



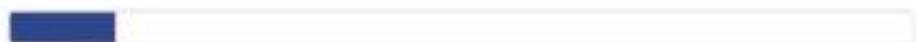
Income from fees and charges (income of £50.751 million) 15% (66 choices)



Voluntary sector funding (£8.173 million) 13.4% (59 choices)



Theatres (£0.353 million) 11.8% (52 choices)



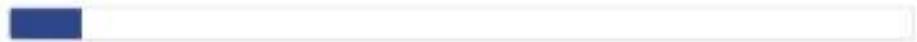
Reading Town Hall and Museum (£0.929 million) 11.3% (50 choices)



Family Hubs (£2.847 million) 10.9% (48 choices)



Street lighting (£1.110 million) 7.9% (35 choices)



Homelessness prevention (£2.258 million) 5.4% (24 choices)



Street cleaning (£1.920 million) 3.4% (15 choices)



Facilities in parks and open spaces (£0.203 million) 2.9% (13 choices)



No answer 0.2% (1 choice)



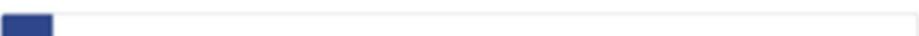
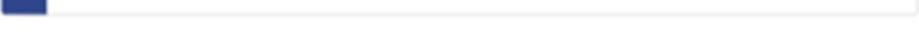
Which areas, shown in the list below, would you be LEAST comfortable with the Council reducing spending on, or increasing income from? (Current budget for 2025/26 shown in brackets)



'Other' Areas Suggested Where the Council Could Consider Reducing Spending Include:

Topic	No of responses
Management/pay	5
Benefits	3
Spend on unnecessary services	2
Areas outside of core delivery - such as equality officers/ back-office functions	2
Road maintenance	2
Consultancy fees	2
Housing illegal immigrants/asylum seekers	2
Sending multiple bin collections to one road/ bin collections generally	2
Expenses on outsourced children's services	1
Net zero team	1
Town centre pedestrian area resurfacing	1
Catering/travel costs	1
Supporting those with substance abuse problem	1
Car park charges	1
Special educational needs and disabilities spaces	1
Verge mowing	1
Religious groups	1
Adult Social Care	1
Pensions	1
Monarchy	1
Events and festivals	1
Public Relations	1
Office costs	1
Translation charges	1
Traffic wardens	1
New buses	1
Trimming trees	1
Bus/cycle lanes	1
Home to school transport – could be sponsored by businesses	1

Listed below are a selection of the capital projects in 2025/26 that are not fully funded by grants from central government. Of the projects in this list, are there any that you would stop or scale back? (2025/26 net funding requirement shown in brackets)

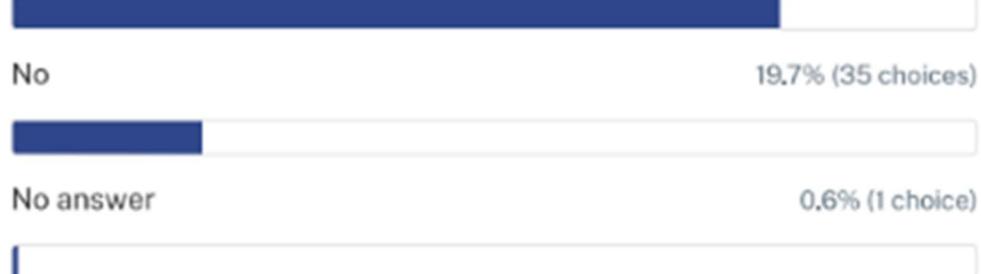
New performance space at the Hexagon Theatre (£3.216 million)	10.2% (78 choices)
	
John Rabson skatepark (£0.280 million)	9.3% (71 choices)
	
Digitised Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) (£0.150 million)	6.3% (48 choices)
	
Harden public open spaces to prevent illegal encampments (£0.025 million)	6% (46 choices)
	
Public sector decarbonisation fund (Salix) (£0.953 million)	6% (46 choices)
	
Corporate and community buildings (£1.000 million)	5.6% (43 choices)
	
Cemetery land acquisition (£0.430 million)	5.5% (42 choices)
	
Town centre street trading infrastructure (£0.070 million)	5.2% (40 choices)
	
Additional burial space (£0.166 million)	5.2% (40 choices)
	
The Heights playing fields permanent site mitigation (£0.078 million)	5% (38 choices)
	
Replacement vehicles (£0.100 million)	4.7% (36 choices)
	



The Government has announced a maximum increase of 2.7% on social housing rents, equivalent to £3.45 per week on the average social housing property. Do you support the Council opting for a 2.7% increase in social housing rents?

Yes

79.8% (142 choices)



No

19.7% (35 choices)

No answer

0.6% (1 choice)

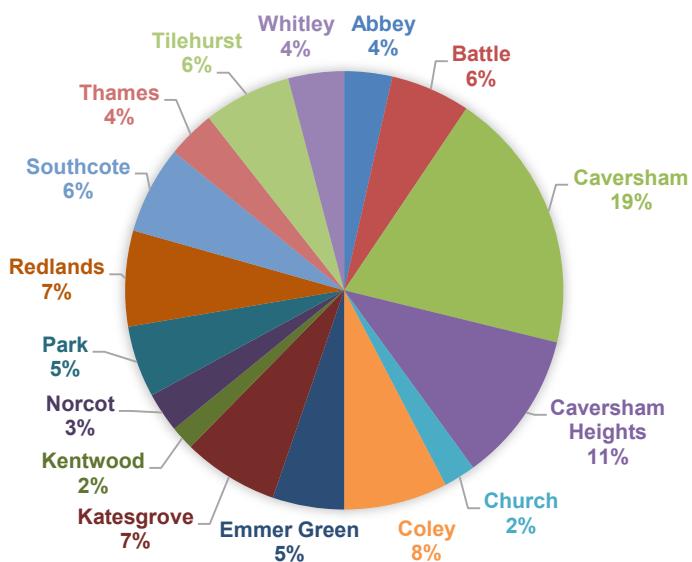
'Further Comments':

Topic	No of responses
Stop increasing/reduce Council Tax	12
Questions hard to understand/ badly worded/not enough info	11
Fix potholes/improve roads & infrastructure	6
Introduce congestion charging	3
Reduce rubbish on streets/fly-tipping	3
Reduce spend in general	2
Invest more in green transport/ public transport	2
Reduce funding/charge for school transport	2
Improve High Street/ Oxford Road environment	2
Lobby Government	2
Focus on most vulnerable	2
Invest in culture to increase tourism	2
Reduce spend on street lighting	2
Spend on services to reduce drug use	2
Tackle homelessness	2
Address root cause of crime/ anti-social behaviour	2
Decrease wages/bonuses/non-important roles (e.g. diversity)	2
Spend on climate measures	2
Amersham Road social housing left to ruin	1
Reduce spend on illegal migrants	1
Spend on school transport	1
Improve town centre safety	1
Reduce private rents	1
Reduce social housing rents	1
Work with business more	1
Open libraries later	1
Decrease social housing support	1
Invest to generate new income streams	1
Reduce outsourcing	1
Reduce IT costs by standardising on one of the major platforms	1
Use the voluntary and community sector better	1
More facilities in town centre for public/young people	1
National planning needs strengthening to mitigate developers avoiding their social obligations	1
Reduce reliance on state provision	1
Merge with other councils	1
Raise income from the wealthy and business	1
Theatre should be self-funding	1
Reduce housing benefit and spend on initiatives to get people into work	1

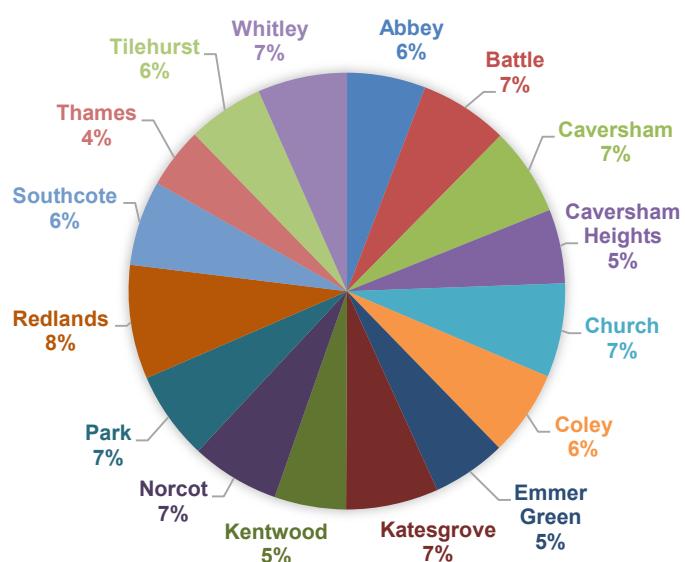
Topic	No of responses
More effective spend on cycle lanes	1
Solar farm at Island Road	1
Reduce need for social care spend	1
Stop subsidies to businesses	1
Asset reallocations	1
Don't spend on Heights playing field	1
Use community volunteering	1
Don't cut cycle lanes	1
Reduce spend on consultants	1
Improve air quality	1
Improve pavements	1
Reduce Adult Social Care	1
Support small businesses	1
Reduce cycle schemes	1
Reduce LGBTQ+ schemes	1
Listen to the voters	1
Review voluntary and community sector spend	1
Reduce spend on Hexagon	1
Increase Council Tax for wealthier residents	1
Stop new house building	1
Build council housing	1
Spend on green spaces	1
Look for partnership opportunities	1
Look for additional funding	1
Close bus/cycle lanes at night	1

Profile of Respondents

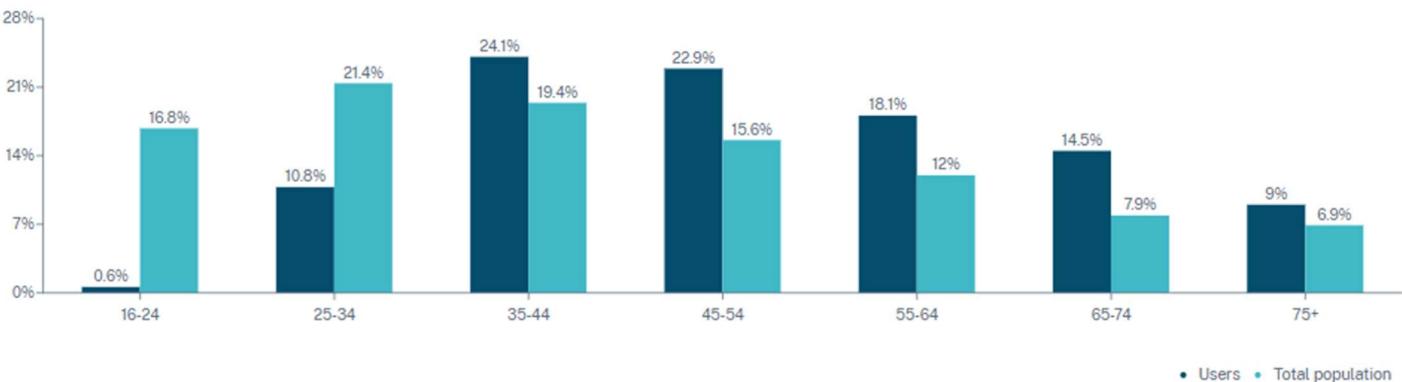
Place of Residence of Respondents



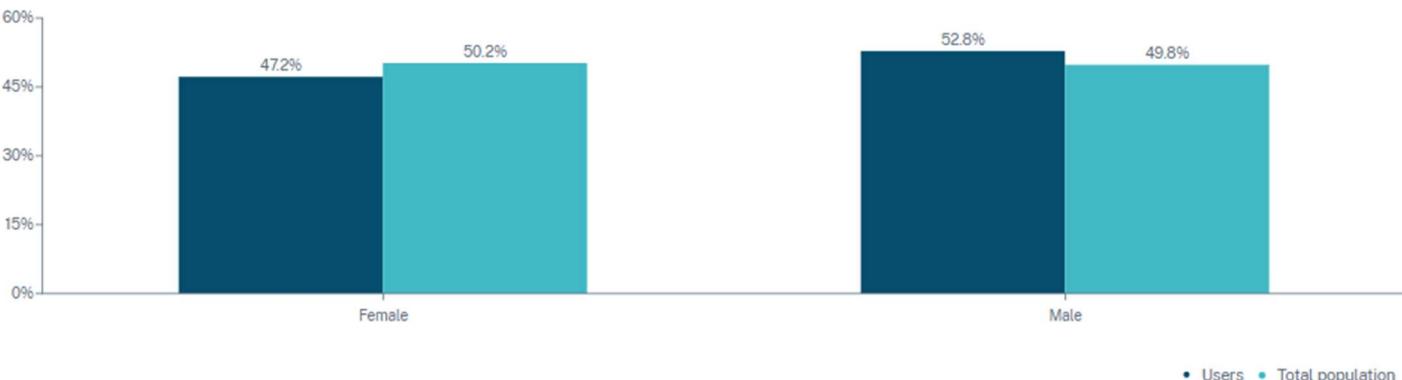
Population of Reading by Ward



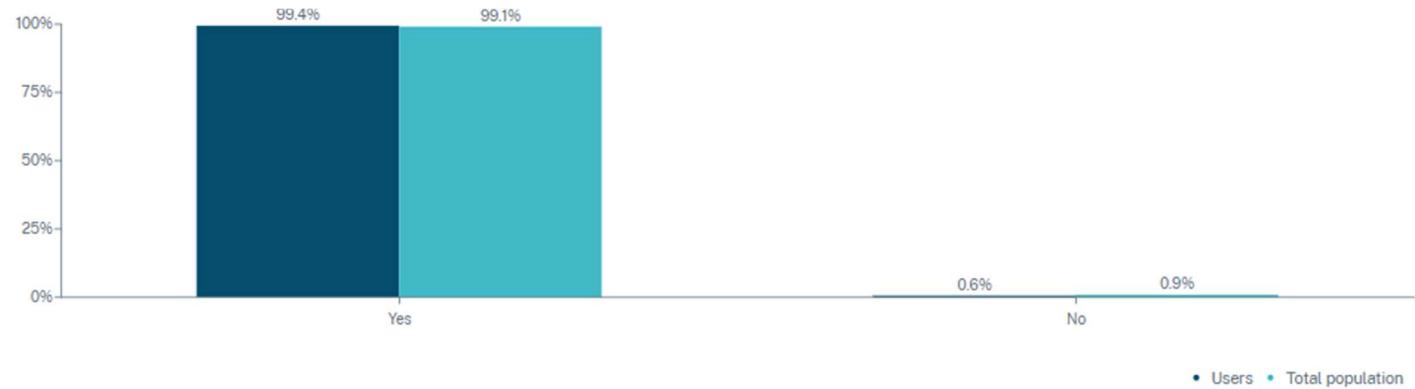
Age of Respondents



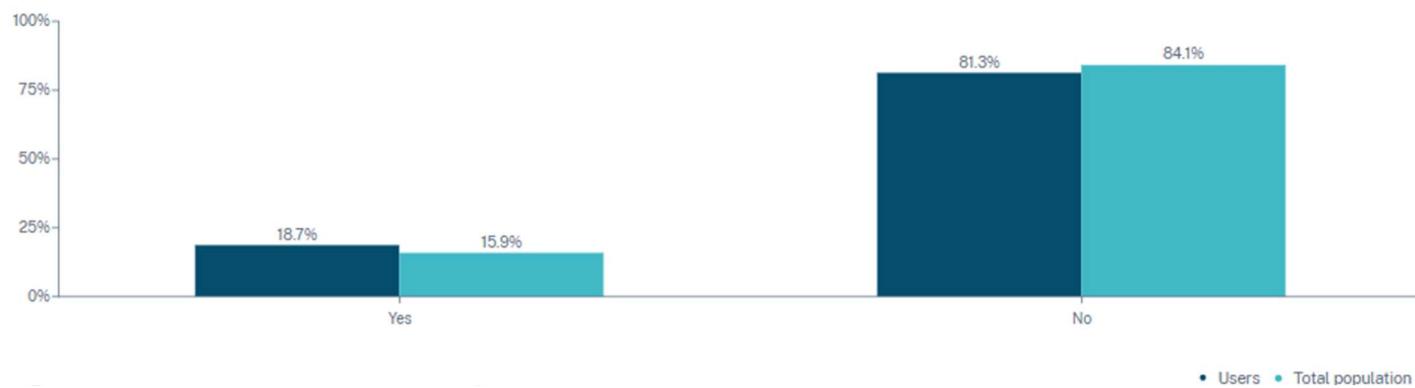
Sex of Respondents



Percentage of Respondents that Answered “Yes” When Asked “Is the Gender You Identify With the Same as Your Sex Registered at Birth?”



Percentage of Respondents that Answered “Yes” When Asked “Do You Have a Disability?”



Ethnic Group of Respondents

