

# West Lancashire Meeting the Budget Challenge 2017 Consultation - Residents



in:fusion

Report prepared by Tracey Betts  
Infusion Research  
On behalf of West Lancashire Borough Council  
[infusion@blackpool.gov.uk](mailto:infusion@blackpool.gov.uk)  
01253 477217  
[www.infusion.org.uk](http://www.infusion.org.uk)

**Contents**

**1    Executive Summary.....3**

**2    Background and Methodology .....5**

    2.1    Background..... 5

    2.2    Methodology ..... 5

**3    Main Findings .....9**

    3.1    Increasing fees and charges ..... 9

    3.2    Bus station departures ..... 10

    3.3    The Mayor ..... 11

    3.4    Home Care Link..... 13

    3.5    Street Cleaning and Grounds Maintenance Services ..... 15

    3.6    Overall Measures ..... 18

## 1 Executive Summary

**154 responses** were received to the 2017 Meeting the Budget Challenge consultation for residents, of which three were paper responses.

The table below provides a summary of the level of agreement for each proposal in the consultation. (Rounded numbers, presented in tables throughout this report, may not equal the total due to rounding differences).

The proposal with the highest level of agreement is for ending the provision of the civic car and Chauffeur/ Attendant, followed by charging for an additional catering van at Coronation Park and increasing departure fees to bus companies.

The savings proposals with the strongest level of disagreement amongst residents are annual increases to a range of charges including pest control, licensing and Home Care Link, and a review of street cleaning and grounds maintenance services.

Around three quarters of residents agree that they understand the challenges the Council faces to achieve savings and increase income.

**Figure 1.1: Summary agreement levels for savings proposals**

Proposals	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
Increasing the charge for replacement wheelie bins from £23 to £25 to cover the actual cost of providing the bins	64%	35%	1%
Annual increases in line with inflation (currently around 2.9%) to a range of charges including pest control, some licensing fees, and charges for the Home Care Link and lifeline emergency alarm service for elderly and vulnerable residents	46%	51%	4%
Providing, for a fee, advice to parish councils on how to procure high-value contracts with external companies for projects in their areas e.g. environmental improvements, purchase of play equipment	53%	35%	13%
A 6% increase in charges for trade waste collections from April 2018. Our trade waste service is available to business premises; the charge depends on the amount of waste that is collected. The increase would cover the rising	59%	32%	10%

costs of collection and disposal.			
Charging for an additional catering van at Coronation Park, Ormskirk during peak visitor periods	68%	19%	13%
Increase departure fees to bus companies who use Ormskirk station from 7.5p to 50p	65%	25%	10%
End the provision of the civic car and Chauffeur/Attendant	85%	11%	4%
Range of other options to reduce the role of the Mayor	61%	30%	9%
Review of the Home Care Link service to ensure that it breaks even	51%	30%	19%
Review of street cleaning and grounds maintenance services	38%	48%	14%
Understand the challenges the Council faces to achieve savings and increase income	73%	13%	14%

## 2 Background and Methodology

### 2.1 Background

Following on from previous years, West Lancashire Borough Council needs to make savings, efficiencies and increase income in order to balance the budget for 2018/2019.

The Council developed a range of proposals in 2017 which were approved for consultation with residents and organisations in the borough. Residents' views will be considered before any final decisions are made on the Council's budget for 2018/19.

The aim of the consultation is to assess whether residents and organisations agree or disagree with the proposals and understand the impact these may have if implemented. The findings of the consultation will inform the decision-making process on the Council's budget for 2018/2019.

This report focuses on the feedback received from **residents** through the consultation.

### 2.2 Methodology

A consultation survey was developed in both online and postal format for residents in West Lancashire to give their views on proposals around the Council's budget. The six week consultation went live on Monday 24 July 2017 and closed on Sunday 3 September 2017.

The residents' survey was hosted on the Council website and promoted through a range of press releases and social media updates. Residents were also made aware that they could request a paper copy of the survey if desired.

In relation to each of the savings proposals, some facts and figures were provided giving further information including how much money would be saved. Respondents were also invited to give comments about each proposal and any impact it might have.

In total, **154 responses were received from residents**, of which three were paper returns. This is lower than in 2016 when 548 residents responded to the budget consultation. However, this year's response total is still significantly higher than previous consultations, with the 2015 budget consultation having received 32 responses from residents.

The purpose of the consultation was to offer residents the opportunity to give their views on the Council's budget proposals and provide an insight into any impact these could have. Therefore the consultation should not be considered a statistically representative piece of research which represents the views of all residents in the borough. Furthermore, as an

open-access consultation there is the potential for self-selection bias from residents with strong views on particular issues or services.

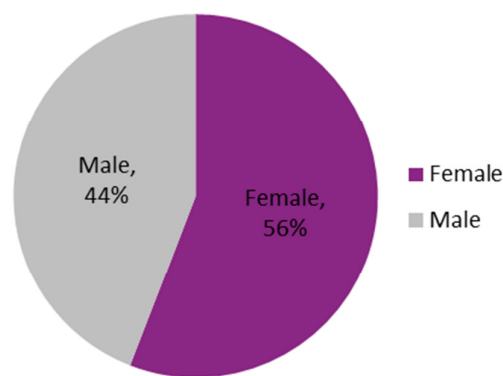
Moreover, whilst demographic information was captured in the survey there will only be cross-tabulation analysis referenced within this report when sample sizes allow and findings are considered noteworthy. For some questions in this report, individual percentage figures may total above 100% due to rounding.

A number of open-ended questions were included in the survey to give people the opportunity to comment on the proposals. As part of the report, these comments have been independently reviewed and summarised into key themes during the analysis process.

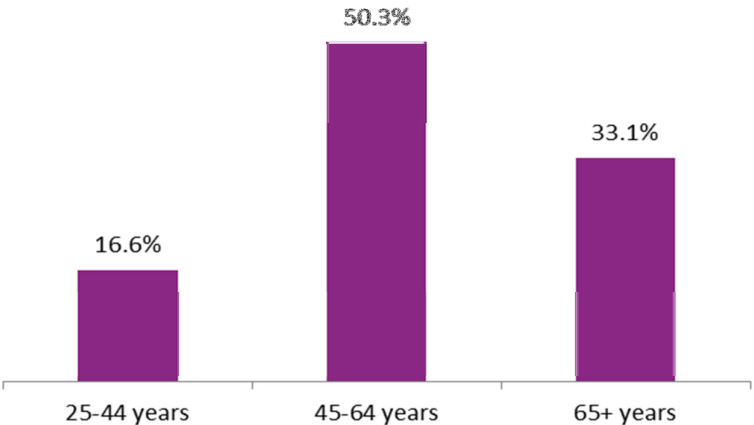
**2.3 Who responded?**

The consultation received slightly more responses from female residents than male. The gender of the borough is relatively balanced overall with 52% of the population identifying as female and 48% as male.

**Figure 2.1: What is your gender? (base – 145)**



**Figure 2.2: What was your age on your last birthday? (base – 145)**

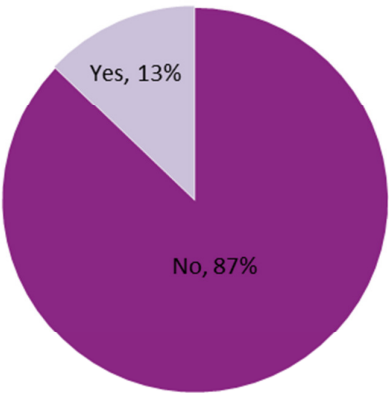


The majority of respondents were aged between 45 and 64 (50%) and a third (33%) of respondents were aged 65 or over. The age categories of the borough, from the census 2011 data, are as follows:

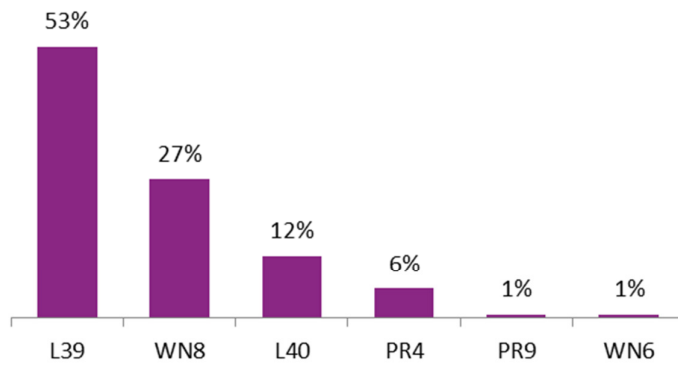
- Age category 25 – 44 years made up 22.8% of the overall population
- Age category 45 – 64 years made up 22.8% of the overall population
- Age category 65+ years made up 18.8% of the overall population

13% of respondents indicated that they have a disability or are deaf.

**Figure 2.3: Are you a deaf person or do you have a disability? (base – 147)**



**Figure 2.4: What is your home postcode? (base – 139)**



Around half of the residents, who provided their postcode, lived towards the South of Ormskirk with just less than a third of residents from the area surrounding Skelmersdale. Fewer responses came from residents who lived North east of Ormskirk (17 responses) and from the area West of Preston (8 responses).

Of the other demographic questions included in the survey:

- 67% of respondents identify themselves as of Christian faith, 16% have no faith and 18% preferred not to say
- 98% are of White British ethnic background and 2% are of either black, mixed or another ethnic background. This is broadly in line with the 2011 census data where less than 1% of residents had a mixed ethnicity.
- 77% of respondents are heterosexual and 20% preferred not to say, four individuals identified as either bisexual or gay
- No respondents identified as transgender, 8% preferred not to say



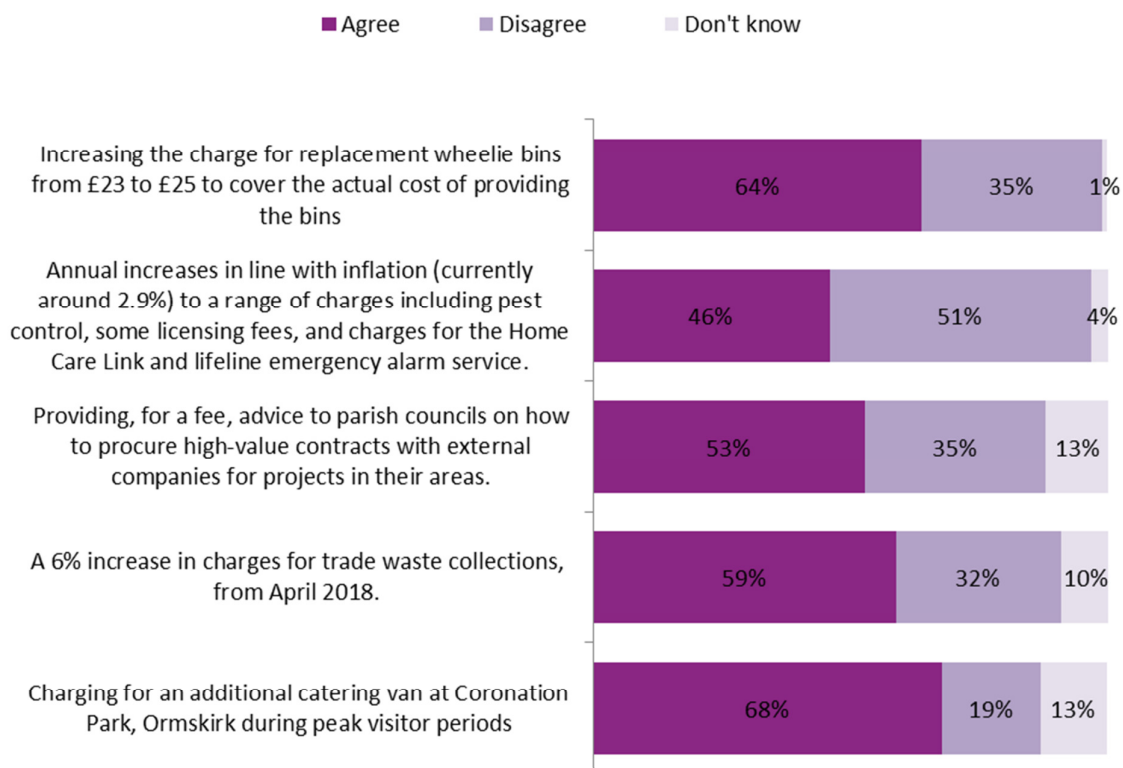
### 3 Main Findings

#### 3.1 Increasing fees and charges

Of the range of proposed areas of additional income identified in the survey, the highest level of agreement amongst residents is for charging for an additional catering van at Coronation Park (68%). Less than half (46%) of residents agree with the proposal to increase a range of charges in line with inflation, including pest control, licensing and charges for Home Care Link.

14 of 19 respondents who indicated that they or an immediate family member uses the Home Care Link service disagree with the proposal to increase a range of charges in line with inflation. Some comments suggested that whilst they agree with increasing charges for services like pest control and licensing, they do not feel charges for Home Care Link should be increased.

**Figure 3.1: Do you agree or disagree with the following proposed areas for additional income? (base – 142 to 145)**

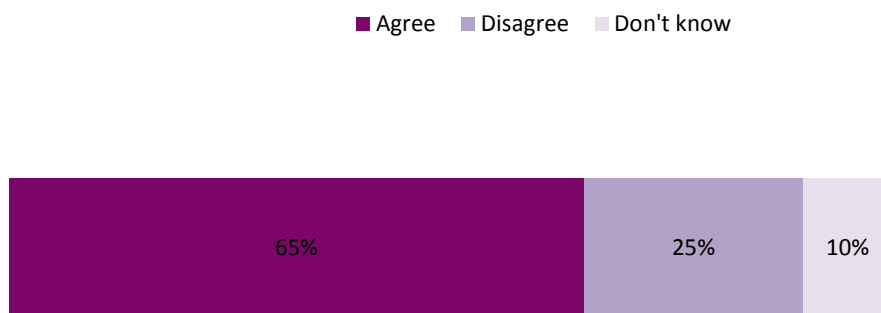


### 3.2 Bus station departures

Currently, the fees that bus companies using Ormskirk bus station pay is set at 7.5p per departure and this amount has not been raised since 1981. The Council is proposing to increase this fee to 50p per departure, bringing West Lancashire in line with other bus stations in the region and generating £24,000 per year.

25% of respondents disagree with the proposal. Those more likely to disagree with the proposed annual charge appear to be residents aged 65 or over (40% disagree compared to 17% of 25 to 44 year olds).

**Figure 3.2: Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to raise the bus station departure fee? (base – 149)**



Within the comments received from residents on the bus service proposals key themes covered:

#### Concerns that the changes may impact on the bus services provided

“Will this lead to a reduced bus services in an area where the bus service is poor anyway?”

“Need to watch that bus companies do not reduce bus services”

**Concerns that the additional costs may be transferred into bus ticket price**

- “Providing it doesn't get passed onto passengers - fares are already too high!  
This will put up the price of a bus journey”
- “The bus companies putting the cost onto travellers fares instead of reducing their profits”

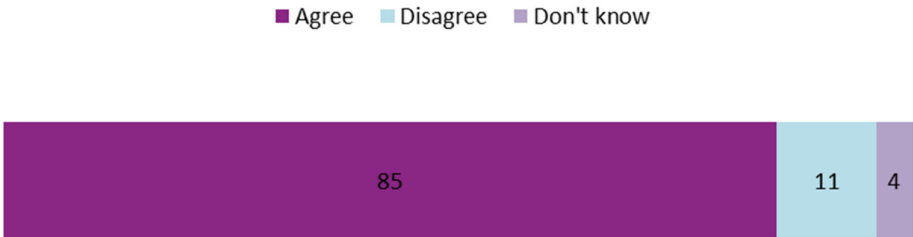
**Increases in charges should be raised gradually**

- “The charge may be increased in increments until the charge is brought in line with  
other bus stations in the region?”
- “Increasing the bus fee so rapidly is bound to cause issues. Any increases should be  
staggered”

**3.3 The Mayor**

In order to make savings, the Council is proposing changes to the mayoral budget. This includes ending the provision of the Mayor’s civic car and chauffeur service. 85% of respondents agreed with the proposal.

**Figure 3.3: Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to end the provision of the Mayor’s civic car and chauffeur/ attendant? (base – 151)**

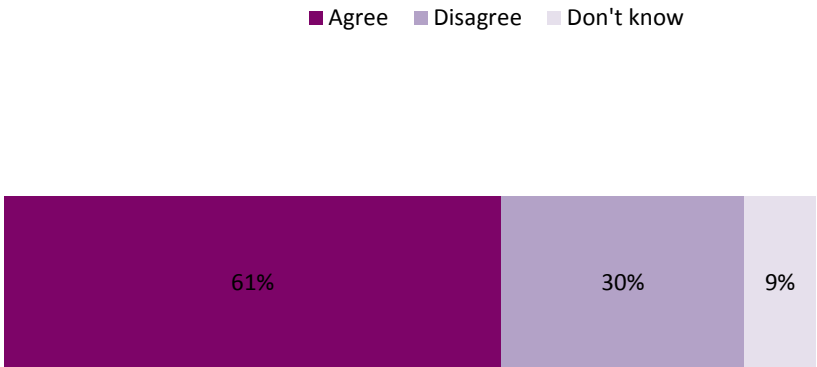


Additional to the termination of the civic car and chauffeur service, the consultation put forward other proposals to reduce the role of the Mayor. These include:

- Ceasing the Mayor’s Charity Committee and associated fundraising activities
- Ceasing visits to local community and voluntary organisations, care home, schools, businesses, etc. and representing the borough at various church services and events outside the area
- Ceasing the hosting of events to promote civic pride, such as honouring individuals or groups to recognise excellence or contribution to the community and engaging with schools and visitors to the area
- Chairing Council meetings only and ceasing all other functions

61% of respondents agreed with these proposals to reduce the role of the Mayor. 67% of those over the age of 65 agree with the proposals compared to 54% of 25 to 44 year olds.

**Figure 3.4: Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to reduce the role of the Mayor? (base – 147)**



Of the comments received on this matter, the key themes included:

**Lack of need for a Mayor**

“Cities require Mayors. Ormskirk does not require a Mayor. This is a total waste of funds.  
It is an income spend that isn't required”

“We do not need a Mayor. Would rather we spend the funds where most needed.”

### **Role of the Mayor is important**

"I think it is important that the Mayor be seen out and about the District at various events as has happened in the past"

"Broadly this is a backwards step, I would argue that West Lancashire Mayor does not do enough publicity for the region and should in effect do much more"

### **At least attend Remembrance Sunday/ ceremonial events**

"It is largely a ceremonial role that incurs high unnecessary costs. Stop the 'nice to do' activity and keep the activities that actually deliver an output. Attendance at Remembrance Sunday and Armed Forces Commemoration should be maintained as this shows civic pride and respect"

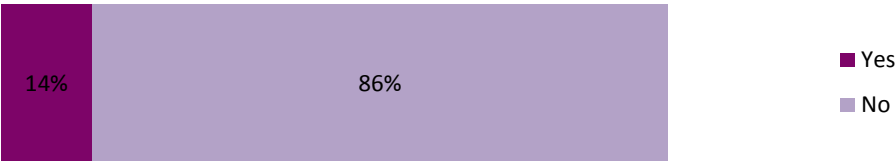
"I think that the role of Mayor should still exist but in a less active role. In order to promote West Lancashire, it is good to have a figurehead such as the mayor, however the role ought to be 'streamlined' to include the Charity Committee and important local events such as Remembrance Day, civic pride events, representation at the High School's award ceremony etc."

### **3.4 Home Care Link**

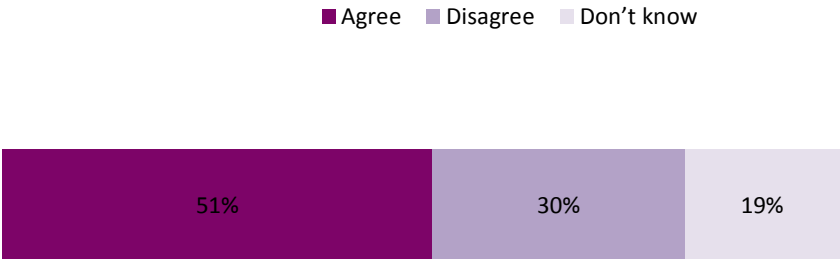
The Home Care Link emergency response system currently provided operates on a deficit of around £70,000 per year. The Council proposes to review the way the service is delivered to ensure that it, at a minimum, breaks even.

14% of respondents either use the Home Care Link or Lifeline Alarm services themselves or have an immediate family member who does.

**Figure 3.5: Do you or any member of your immediate family use the Home Care Link or Lifeline Alarm services? (base – 146)**



**Figure 3.6: Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to review the Home Care Link system (base – 146)**



Key themes from comments received to this proposal covered:

**This system is essential**

“I know what it’s like to care for an elderly vulnerable relative who has since passed away, but any help with care was essential. This service is essential care and should not be reduced or any additional costs to its users”

“I work with families this is a vital link to the many people who live alone with serious health conditions. This cannot be stopped. It should be part of the social services budget or palliative care budget depending on the situation....maybe a contribution from the family can be suggested or a very small increase”

### **Cuts to the most vulnerable groups should be avoided**

“The service is wonderful in the current climate we should be helping the vulnerable”

“It is essential to maintain this service to the elderly and vulnerable in society. Extremely important”

### **Review the service to promote best practice and costs**

“I agree this should be run more business-like and bring income into the Council. This is a very important service for the community of West Lancashire”

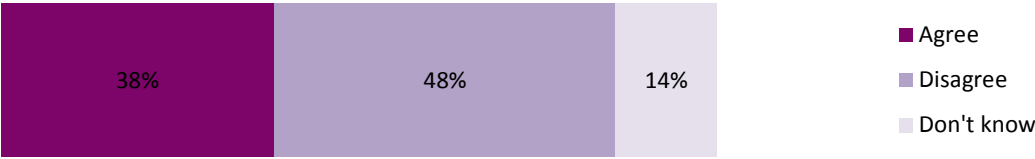
“Home Care Link is a vital & very much valued service for elderly/vulnerable people in West Lancs & surrounding areas As such, all possible ways of improving the efficiency of the service must be examined, proposed & implemented. I very much agree that the service MUST continue efficiently”

## **3.5 Street Cleaning and Grounds Maintenance Services**

The Council proposes to undertake a review of the street cleaning and ground maintenance services currently provided in order to maximise efficiencies and produce a set of core service standards based on the needs of the borough.

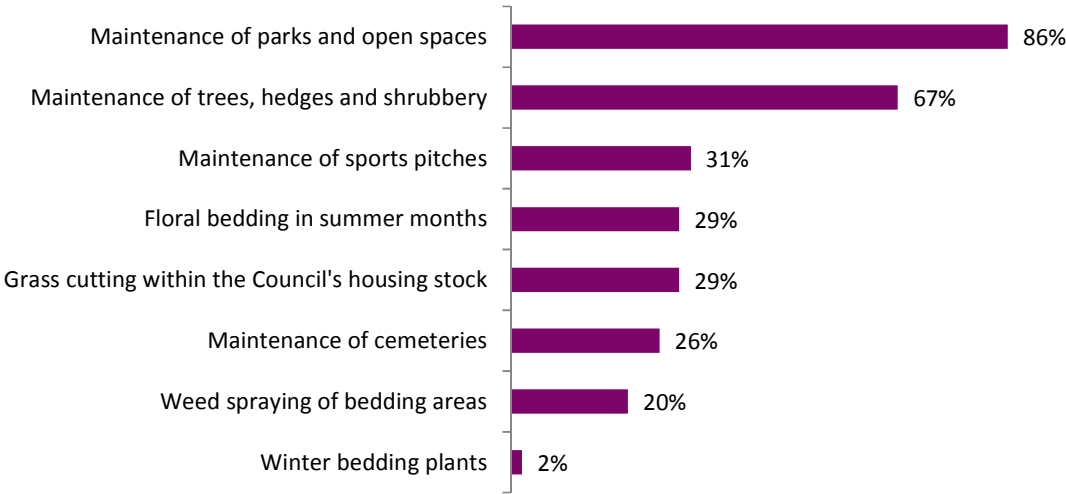
The majority of respondents (48%) disagree with conducting this review.

**Figure 3.7: Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to undertake a review of the street cleaning and grounds maintenance services? (base – 149)**



Maintenance of parks and open spaces was regarded as the most important grounds maintenance service (86%), with maintenance of trees, hedges and shrubbery (67%) and maintenance of sports pitches (31%) following this.

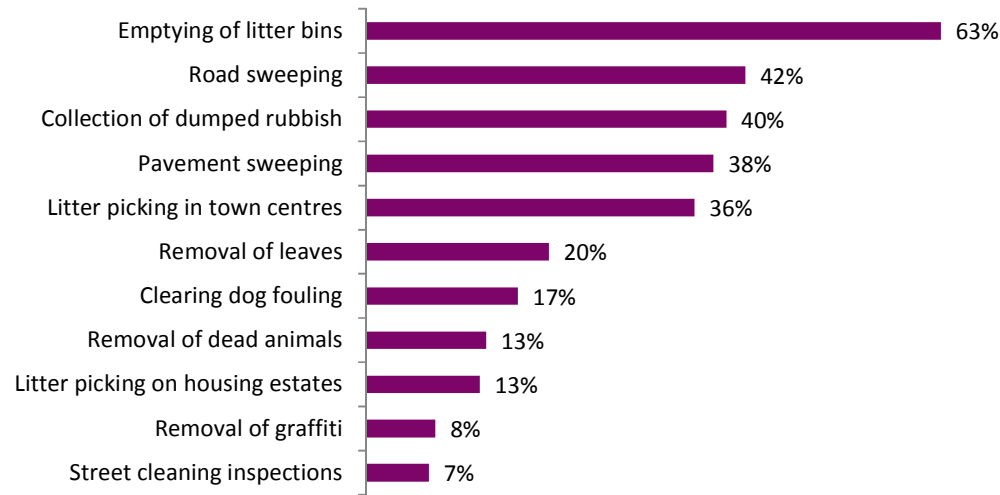
**Figure 3.8: Which of the following grounds maintenance services do you think are most important? (base – 147)**



Emptying of litter bins was regarded as the most important street cleaning service (63%), with road sweeping (42%) and collection of dumped rubbish (40%) following this.



**Figure 3.9: Which of the following street cleaning services do you think are most important? (base – 144)**



Key themes from comments received to this proposal covered:

**Current maintenance services are lacking**

“Making these cuts will affect the impression of the borough which already looks unkempt due to the reduced grass cutting”

**More fines for waste offences (e.g. litter, dog-fouling, bonfire misuse, etc.)**

“Start issuing penalties to people who drop litter, cigarette ends etc.”

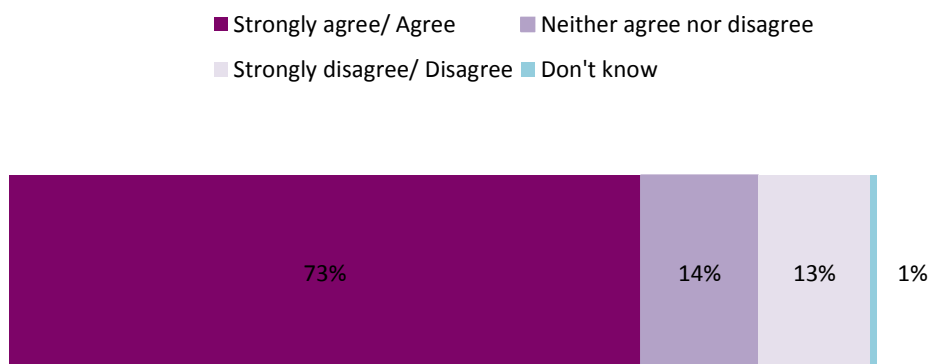
**Maintenance is essential to promote a positive impression for visitors**

“The main arteries into the town are crucial - this is the first impression any visitors to the town have of the place. It is therefore vital that verges are cut regularly, gutters are kept free of weeds”

### 3.6 Overall Measures

73% of respondents to the public consultation strongly agree or agree that they understand the challenges that the Council faces to find new ways of achieving savings and increasing income from the services it delivers.

**Figure 3.10: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement – ‘I understand the challenges that the Council faces to find new ways of achieving savings and increasing income from the services it delivers’? (base – 148)**



Finally, residents were given the opportunity to make any further comments or suggestions about how the Council could make savings or increase income. Comments given included such key themes as:

#### **Less Councillors/ reduce Councillors' allowances**

“Have less Councillors”

“Councillors should only receive their allowance/s if they have attended at least 80% of council meetings, unless they have a serious illness”

### **Review council staffing numbers, wages, and benefits**

“Annual review of staffing needs and salaries”

### **Student service charges**

“I believe the Council should charge students or their landlords council tax for the service they receive they have numerous bins which often are left over flowing”

“A token charge to students for rubbish collection would help”