

Lancaster Residents Survey 2015 Research Report

LANCASTER
CITY COUNCIL

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1 Executive Summary

1.1 Overview of approach

The approach to understand residents' views on Council priorities and their local community comprised of two distinct methods. A robust piece of street interview research captured a **random sample of 600 Lancaster City Council residents**, the findings of which provide a representative view of the population. A supplementary open-access consultation was made available online, using various communication channels, to gather the views and opinions of other interested residents.

The key findings in 1.2 to 1.4 are based on the robust research findings, with any noticeable differences in the response to the online consultation summarised in 1.5.

1.2 Local priorities and Council spending

- Welfare benefits and community support, job prospects and affordable decent housing are most important to residents and the areas where they don't want to see spending reduced reflects this
- Job prospects are most important to residents aged 16 to 44
- Arts funding and museums are universally considered least important and hence the services residents are most willing to see reductions in spending to
- Over half of residents who use the services would pay more for venue hire and to use Salt Ayre Sports Centre
- Parking is the service residents are least willing to pay more for

1.3 The local community

- Around a third of residents might consider taking a more active role in their community but two thirds would not
- The main reason given for not doing so was a lack of time, followed by lack of interest
- Over half of residents aged 65 or over indicated that health reasons prevent them from taking a more active role
- People are most likely to take part in litter picks than any other voluntary activity
- Around three in five residents understand what the role of their local councillor is, but this varies depending on age with younger people less likely to understand than older people

- More residents disagree than agree that their local councillor encourages people to get involved in their local community

1.4 Contacting the Council

- Traditional contact methods, in person or over the telephone, dominate residents' first choice for getting in touch with the Council
- However, online channels become more prominent in second and third choice selections
- Indeed, one in four residents who prefer traditional methods are also willing or able to use online methods of contact as a second or third choice

1.5 Notable findings in the online consultation

- Respondents to the online consultation indicated that waste and recycling was most important to them, whereas it was ranked 8th in the research sample
- Online respondents were most likely to prefer email as a method for contacting the council
- People contributing to the open-access consultation were more willing to play a more active role in their local area, but less likely to be interested in the voluntary activities suggested by the council
- Respondents were more likely to understand the role of their local councillor compared to people interviewed on the street, but they shared a similar level of agreement (or lack of) that councillors encourage people to get involved in their local community

2 Background and Methodology

2.1 Background

Lancaster City Council is facing a bleak financial future and needs to make annual savings of approximately £2 million over the next couple of years and in every year that follows. This is effectively 11% of its Net Revenue Budget of £17 million. The council has saved over £5 million per year, over the last five years (since 2010/11).

To make further savings, it will need to reduce or stop providing even more of the things it does and increase income opportunities, where possible. This means that the council has some very difficult decisions to make.

To help inform these decisions about where limited resources should be targeted, Lancaster City Council commissioned a piece of research and consultation to gather residents' views on Council priorities, the local community and how they prefer to contact the Council.

Specifically, the objective of the research was to understand:

- What is most important and least important to people in their local area
- Services residents think should and should not see reductions in spending
- Services that residents would be willing to pay more for
- Willingness of people to take a more active role in their community
- Specific volunteering activities which interest local people
- Understanding and awareness of the role of local councillors
- Preferred methods when contacting the Council
- Any comments or suggestions about the Council and how it could save money or increase income

2.2 Methodology – Street Research

Two methodological approaches were adopted to meet the objectives outlined above whilst ensuring a balance was achieved between engaging residents of Lancaster and nearby areas and conducting a robust piece of research.

Robust research was undertaken in the form of structured street interviews with residents of Lancaster City Council. The interviews lasted approximately 5 minutes and were undertaken in Lancaster, Carnforth and Morecambe in accordance with the Market Research Society Code of Conduct.

The street interviews were conducted on a range of days, including both weekdays and weekends, to gather a varied spread of resident views and maximise opportunities

to participate in the research. Moreover, on initial approach a screening question was used to ensure the sample comprises of local residents only.

600 interviews were conducted with residents of Lancaster City Council between 9 July and 15 August 2015. 300 were undertaken in Lancaster and 150 in each of Morecambe and Carnforth.

How well the sample represents the population is gauged by two statistics – the confidence interval and confidence level. This is a standard way of reporting representativeness in research. **The research has a confidence level of plus or minus 3.99% at the 95% confidence level** based on a Lancaster City Council population of 138,375 (2011 Census). This means that if the survey was conducted 100 times, the data would be within 3.99 percentage points above or below the percentage reported in 95 of 100 cases.

Figure 2.1: Confidence intervals at 95% confidence level

Sample size	Confidence interval
1000	+/- 3.1
750	+/- 3.6
600	+/- 4.0
500	+/- 4.4
250	+/- 6.2
100	+/- 9.8

**Confidence interval percentage to one decimal place*

However, when sub-samples are analysed such as specific demographic groups this confidence interval will be higher as it is based on a smaller sample size. This has been considered when presenting the findings within this report.

When analysing literal responses (comments made by respondents in their own words, rather than responses which selected from options provided by the researchers), comments were manually grouped into key categories to enable some quantitative analysis, supported by example comments. Any exploration of comments within this report is not necessarily representative of the views of the wider sample.

The data has been weighted by gender, age, disability and ethnicity to ensure the results presented are representative of the Lancaster City Council population. Weighting the data means that the views of over-represented groups do not skew the

findings, while the views of under-represented groups are not under-reported in the analysis. Throughout this report percentages used are based on the weighted data.

2.3 Methodology – Open Access Consultation

An open-access online survey was hosted on the Lancaster City Council website between Monday 6 July and Monday 17 August 2015.

This was actively promoted in the following ways:

- Press releases (page 5 of the Visitor on 8 July 2015 and page 8 of the Lancaster Guardian on 9 July 2015)
- Website presence as the main news story
- Via the Council's Facebook and Twitter social media accounts
- Posters in council buildings and libraries
- Promotion on customer service and library screens
- An article in a CVS bulletin
- Councillors were also made aware of the consultation via the press release

183 responses were received to the online consultation.

As already referred to, these findings have been kept separate from the street interview research sample. The online survey should be considered a consultation whereby anybody interested in having their say could take part. This introduces an element of self-selection bias and often online responses and comments tend to be more vociferous than those expressed through a random research sample approach.

3 Street Research Findings

This section presents the main findings from the street interview research undertaken.

3.1 Who responded?

As outlined in section 2.2, data from the 600 street interviews undertaken has been weighted to ensure the results are representative of the Lancaster City Council population.

Gender, age, disability and ethnicity fields were weighted. Population data used to calculate the weighted results has been taken from the 2011 Census to reflect the actual Lancaster local authority area working-age (16 or over) population breakdowns.

Encouragingly, a good response was achieved from the younger age groups who are usually more difficult to reach using other methods such as postal surveys.

Figure 3.1: Gender, age, disability and ethnicity weighting (base – 600)

	Unweighted		Weighted	
	Count	%	Count	%
Gender				
Male	284	48%	286	48%
Female	313	52%	315	52%
Age				
16 to 24	69	12%	121	20%
25 to 34	69	12%	80	13%
35 to 44	90	15%	89	15%
45 to 54	138	23%	94	16%
55 to 64	120	20%	86	14%
65 or over	111	19%	130	22%
Limiting long-term illness or disability				
Yes, limited a lot	47	8%	55	9%
Yes, limited a little	87	15%	61	10%
No	452	77%	486	81%
Ethnicity				
White	581	97%	575	96%
BME/ Other	17	3%	26	4%

Whilst the respondents' ward area has not been weighted due to the small sample sizes, figure 3.2 overleaf demonstrates the spread of responses achieved from residents across the Borough.

A proportion of residents interviewed were not willing to provide a full postcode, although they did confirm that they lived within the Borough.

Due to the small sub-samples when broken down to this level no analysis will be undertaken by ward area as the findings would not be reliable.

Figure 3.2: Response by ward (base – 600)

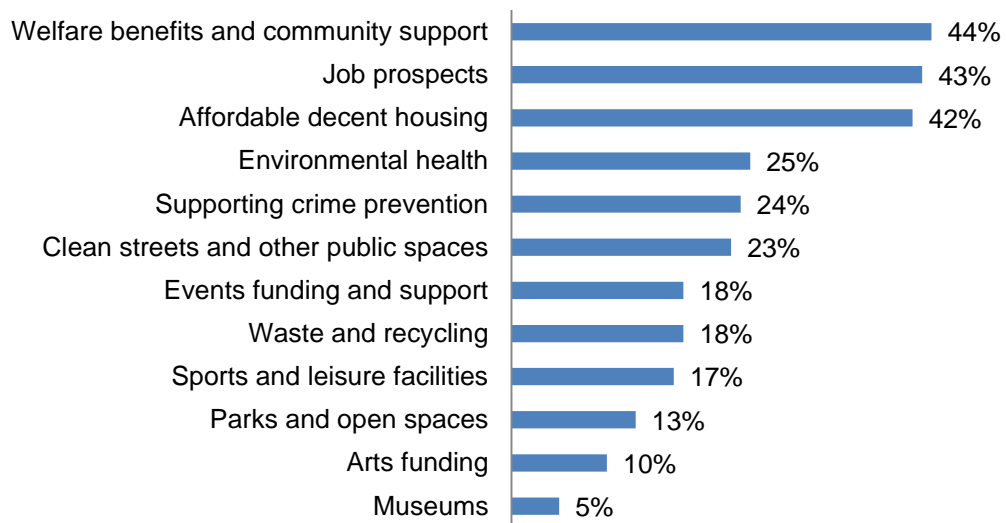
	Count	%
Bare	23	4%
Bolton Le Sands & Slyne with Hest	28	5%
Bulk	23	4%
Carnforth & Millhead	60	10%
Castle	27	5%
Ellel	13	2%
Halton with Aughton	6	1%
Harbour	38	6%
Heysham Central	6	1%
Heysham North	11	2%
Heysham South	32	5%
John O'Gaunt	21	4%
Kellet	9	2%
Lower Lune Valley	10	2%
Marsh	19	3%
Overton	3	1%
Poulton	37	6%
Scotforth East	14	2%
Scotforth West	29	5%
Silverdale	13	2%
Skerton East	29	5%
Skerton West	33	6%
Torrisholme	13	2%
University and Scotforth Rural	3	1%
Upper Lune Valley	5	1%
Warton	13	2%
Westgate	14	2%
Carnforth - no exact postcode	23	4%
Lancaster - no exact postcode	29	5%
Morecambe - no exact postcode	16	3%

3.2 Council Priorities

Q1 – Thinking generally, which of the following do you think are most and least important in your local area?

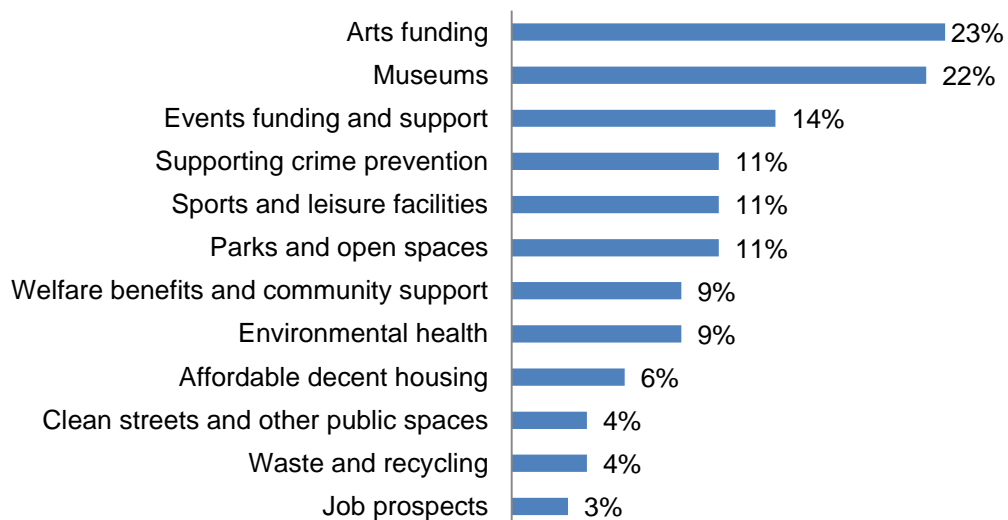
Welfare benefits and community support appear most important to residents of Lancaster City Council, closely followed by job prospects and affordable decent housing.

Figure 3.3: Most important to residents (base – 600)



Conversely, arts funding and museums are considered least important.

Figure 3.4: Least important to residents (base – 600)



There are some differences in local priorities when the results are analysed by demographics, despite the overall top three remaining unchanged throughout.

Job prospects appear particularly important to those residents aged 25 to 34. Indeed, job prospects are most important for all age groups between 16 and 44.

Half of residents aged 65 or over consider affordable decent housing to be an important issue in their local area.

Figure 3.5: Top three priorities by age and gender

	1st	2nd	3rd
Gender			
Male	Job prospects (49%)	Welfare benefits and community support (48%)	Affordable decent housing (43%)
Female	Affordable decent housing (41%)	Welfare benefits and community support (40%)	Job prospects (38%)
Age			
16 to 24	Job prospects (44%)	Affordable decent housing (36%)	Welfare benefits and community support (35%)
25 to 34	Job prospects (60%)	Affordable decent housing (48%)	Welfare benefits and community support (48%)
35 to 44	Job prospects (47%)	Welfare benefits and community support (44%)	Affordable decent housing (42%)
45 to 54	Welfare benefits and community support (53%)	Job prospects (44%)	Affordable decent housing (40%)
55 to 64	Affordable decent housing (37%)	Welfare benefits and community support (37%)	Job prospects (34%)
65 or over	Affordable decent housing (50%)	Welfare benefits and community support (47%)	Job prospects (35%)

Q2 – Please choose three services where you think reductions in spending should be made and three services where reductions in spending should not be made.

Where residents think spending on services should be reduced and where it should be protected very much reflect the priorities they value above. Around a quarter of residents indicated that spending should be reduced on museums and arts funding.

Figure 3.6: Where to reduce spending (base – 600)

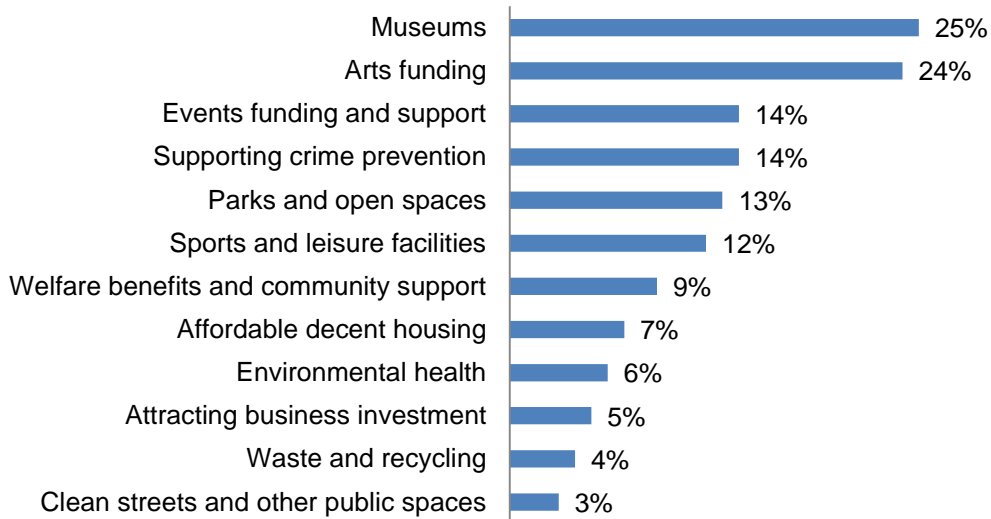
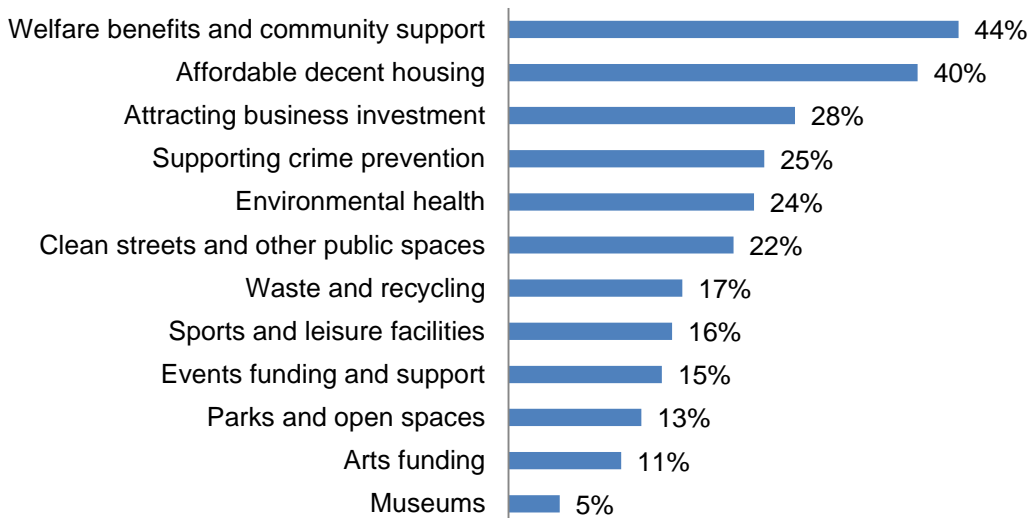


Figure 3.7: Where not to reduce spending (base – 600)



When analysed by gender and age, museums and arts funding are unanimously the top two services where residents indicated spending should be reduced.

However, there is some variation in the third selection. Males would rather see reductions to parks and open spaces, a view shared by the 16 to 24 and 65 or over age groups. Whereas females and residents aged 45 to 54 suggest spending should be reduced in events funding and support. The third highest selection for the 35 to 44 age group was reductions in spending on supporting crime prevention.

Figure 3.8: Top three reductions in spending by age and gender

	1st	2nd	3rd
Gender			
Male	Museums (26%)	Arts funding (24%)	Parks and open spaces (18%)
Female	Arts funding (24%)	Museums (23%)	Events funding and support (14%)
Age			
16 to 24	Museums (23%)	Arts funding (18%)	Parks and open spaces (15%)
25 to 34	Arts funding (36%)	Museums (31%)	Events funding and support (23%)
35 to 44	Arts funding (33%)	Museums (30%)	Supporting crime prevention (20%)
45 to 54	Museums (29%)	Arts funding (24%)	Events funding and support (16%)
55 to 64	Arts funding (21%)	Museums (19%)	-
65 or over	Arts funding (20%)	Museums (19%)	Parks and open spaces (18%)

Q3 – If you use or would use any of the following services, would you be willing to pay a fee or pay more than you currently do?

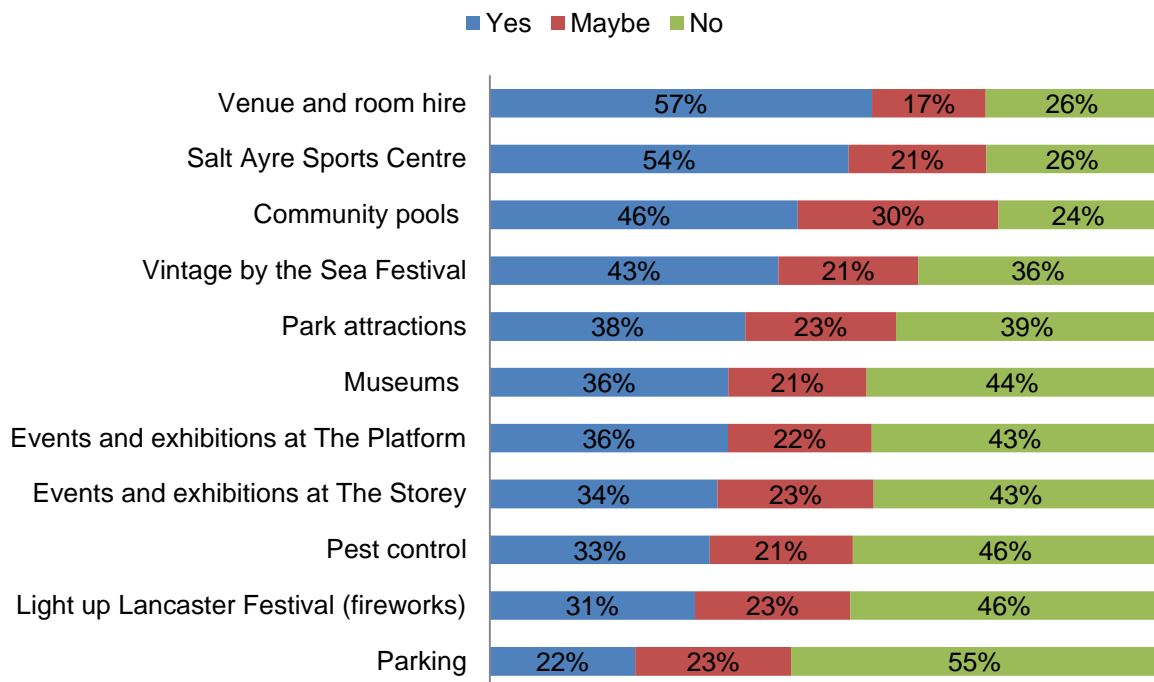
Following on from questions on local area priorities and spending reductions, residents were asked if they would be willing to pay a fee or pay more than they currently do for a range of different services.

The following chart is based on those residents who do or would use the different services offered by Lancaster City Council.

57% of residents indicated that they would be willing to pay a fee, or more than they currently do, for venue and room hire.

Parking is the service residents are least willing to pay more for.

Figure 3.9: Willingness to pay a fee, or more, for services (base – 449 to 541)

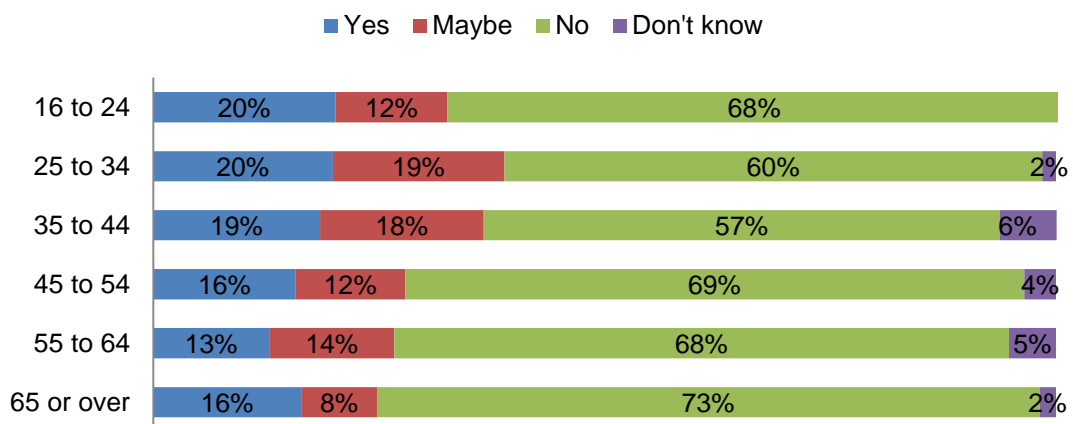


3.3 The Local Community

Q4 – In light of the financial savings that need to be made, the council may need local people to help support some services in future. Would you be willing to consider taking a more active role in your community?

Residents were asked if they would be willing to take a more active role in their community. Overall, 17% of residents would take a more active role and a further 14% might do. However, two thirds would not. It appears that younger residents are more likely to get involved, particularly the 25 to 34 age group.

Figure 3.10: Willingness to take a more active role in the community, by age (base – 599)



Q5 – If not, what is it that would prevent you from doing so?

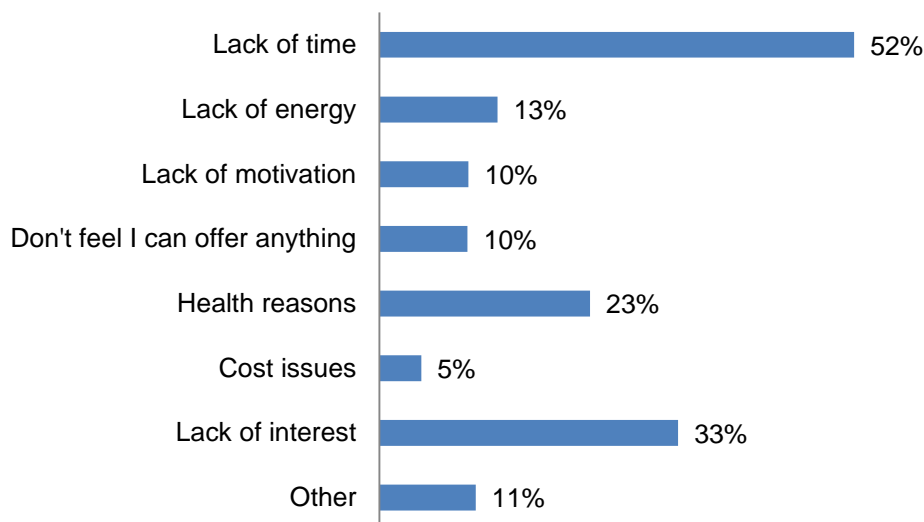
Those who are not willing to take a more active role were asked what is preventing them from doing so.

The main reason given is a lack of time, followed by lack of interest and health reasons. Lack of time was a particular barrier for those aged 25 to 34 (64%) and 35 to 44 (60%).

54% of residents aged 65 or over cited health reasons as stopping them from taking a more active role in the community.

Other reasons given for not being able to take a more active role in the community include residents who already volunteer, a view that local people should be paid to help, childcare and issues with transport.

Figure 3.11: What is preventing residents from taking a more active role in their community (base – 441)

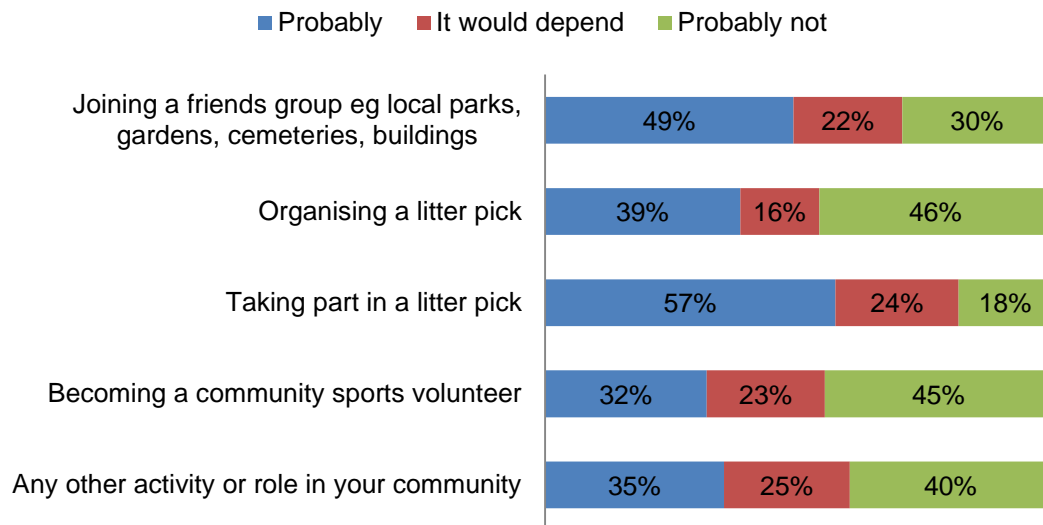


Q6 – If you would be willing to take a more active role, which, if any, of the following activities might you be interested in?

Of those residents who indicated they are or maybe willing to take a more active role in the community were then asked which, if any, of a range of voluntary activities they would be interested in.

57% are probably interested in taking part in a litter pick with a further 24% suggesting it would depend. Interest in organising a litter pick is considerably lower.

Figure 3.12: Voluntary activities residents would be interested in (base – 162)

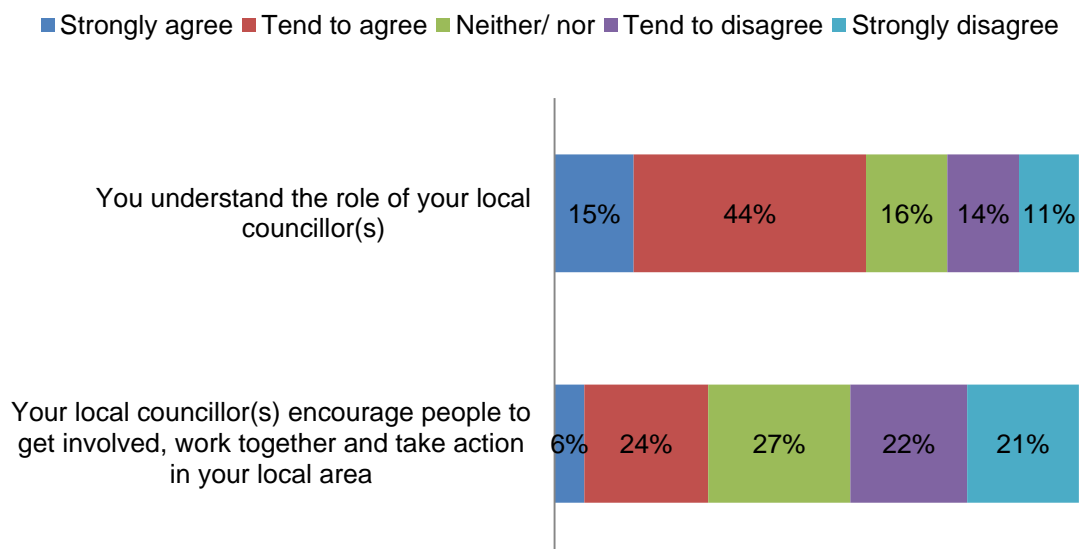


Q8 – To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your local councillor(s)?

59% of residents strongly or tend to agree that they understand the role of their local councillor. 25% tend to or strongly disagree. Understanding is highest amongst residents aged 65 or over (72%) and lowest for those aged 16 to 24 (48%).

43% of residents strongly or tend to disagree that their local councillor encourages people to get involved, work together and take action in their local area.

Figure 3.13: Agreement with local councillor statements (base – 598)



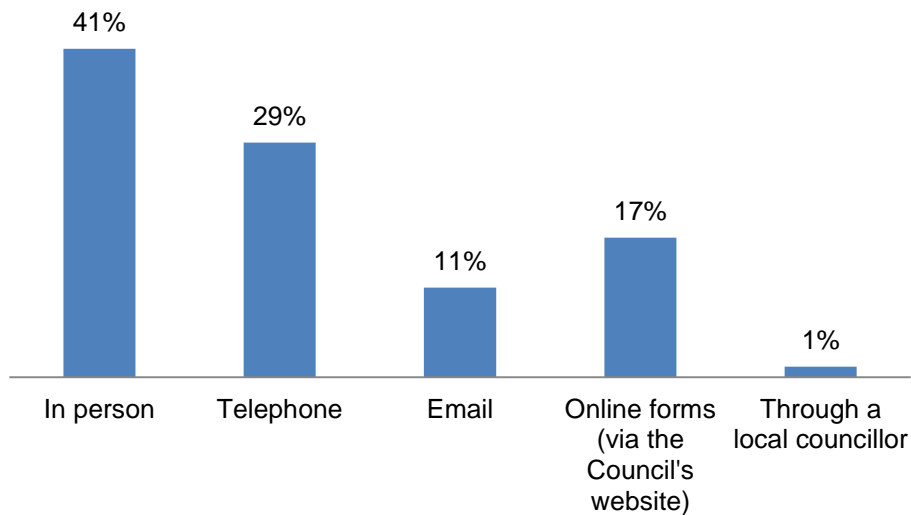
3.4 Contacting the Council

Q9 – Which of the following ways do you/ would you prefer to use to contact the council?

Residents were asked what methods they do or prefer to use to contact the Council and were given the option to provide to first, second and third choice.

Looking at residents' first choice contact method, traditional methods are more popular than online channels.

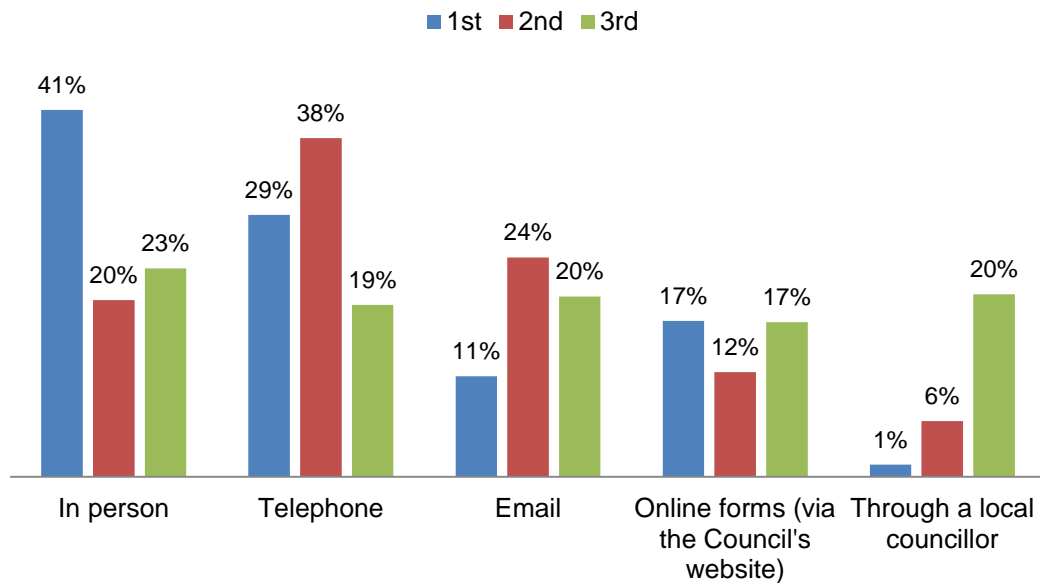
Figure 3.14: First choice method for contacting the Council (base – 599)



Of the 420 residents who identified a traditional method (in person or telephone) as their first choice, 107 selected either email or online forms as their second choice. This suggests that one in four residents who prefer traditional methods of contact are also willing or able to use online methods of contact.

Figure 3.15 overleaf highlights the first, second and third choice contact methods for Lancaster residents. Whilst email is not a popular first choice, residents are more likely to consider it a second or third choice option.

Figure 3.15: First, second and third choice methods for contacting the Council (base – 598, 547 and 417 respectively)



Q10 – Do you have any other comments or suggestions that you would like to make about Lancaster City Council, e.g. ways we could make savings or increase income?

Finally, residents were given the opportunity to make any comments about the Council or suggest ways in which savings could be made or income increased. A variety of comments were made as captured in the below word cloud (the larger the theme, the more it was mentioned).



A number of comments suggested that volunteers or job seekers could help the Council and do more in the community. For example:

- “More council volunteers and public volunteers at events rather than paying for security”
- “Have residents being responsible for cleaning their own areas”
- “Claimants should play a more active role in the council and duties the council puts forward to them”
- “Invest more on utilising the unemployed”

Several comments from residents indicated that reducing parking charges would be welcomed and would also help to stimulate business in the town centres. Comments included:

- “Reduce parking costs to encourage more people into town”
- “Parking should be free for 2 hours in Morecambe”
- “Reduced parking charges at certain times of the day”
- “Reduced parking costs or offers like ‘first hour free’”

Some people indicated that they were prepared to see a small increase in their Council Tax to protect services, although this wasn’t a view shared by all residents.

- “Small Council Tax increase”
- “The Council Tax could be increased within reason to keep things going”
- “Charge students Council Tax”

Generally, the range and mix of comments emphasise the challenge that the Council faces when looking at where to reduce spending. A few comments suggest that all services should be protected and there are various conflicting priorities emerging from the resident feedback, including focus on investment and business.

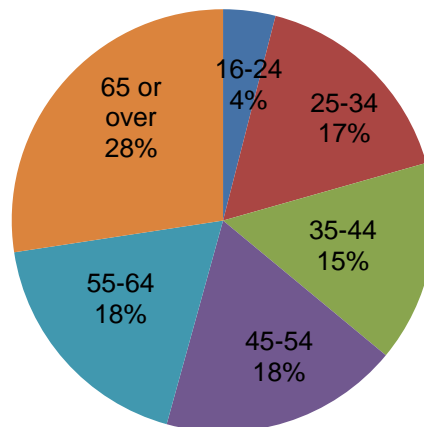
- “Don’t cut any services, arts services really important”
- “Don’t reduce any funding if possible”
- “No cuts to front line services”

4 Open Access Consultation

4.1 Who responded?

Of the 183 respondents to the online consultation, 55% were male, 40% were female and 5% did not indicate their gender. The age profile of consultation respondents is older than the research sample. Of those who indicated the age group they belong to, 28% were aged 65 or over. Just 4% were aged between 16 and 24.

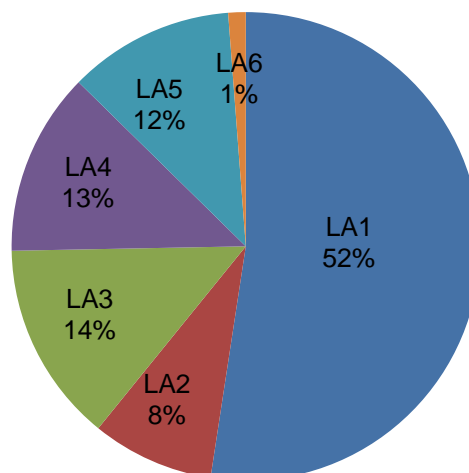
Figure 4.1: Age of online respondents (base – 175)



28% of the online respondents consider themselves to have a limiting long-term illness or disability, although only 6% indicated that it limits them a lot. Like the research sample and the overall Borough population, the majority of respondents were of White ethnicity.

166 home postcodes were provided from the 183 respondents, although a proportion of these were partial postcodes. Over half were from the LA1 area.

Figure 4.2: Postcode area of online respondents (base – 166)

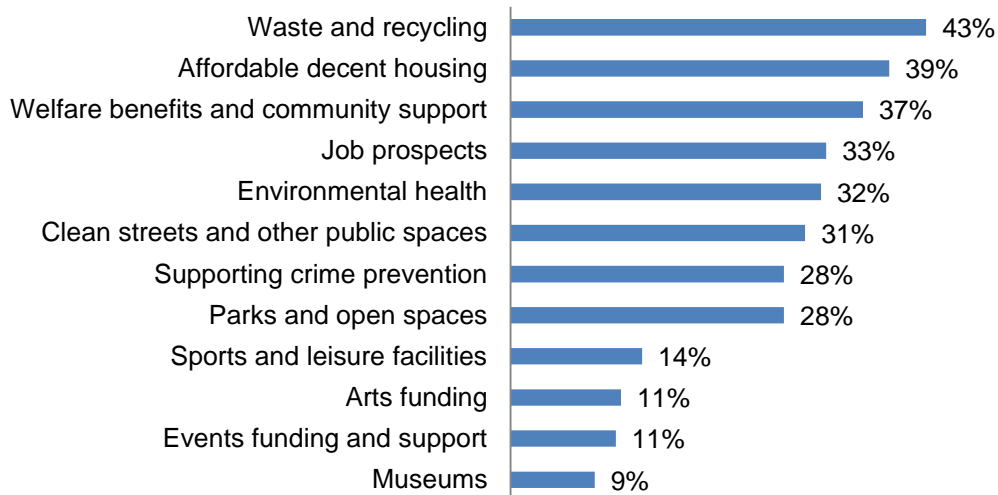


4.2 Council Priorities

Q1 – Thinking generally, which of the following do you think are most and least important in your local area?

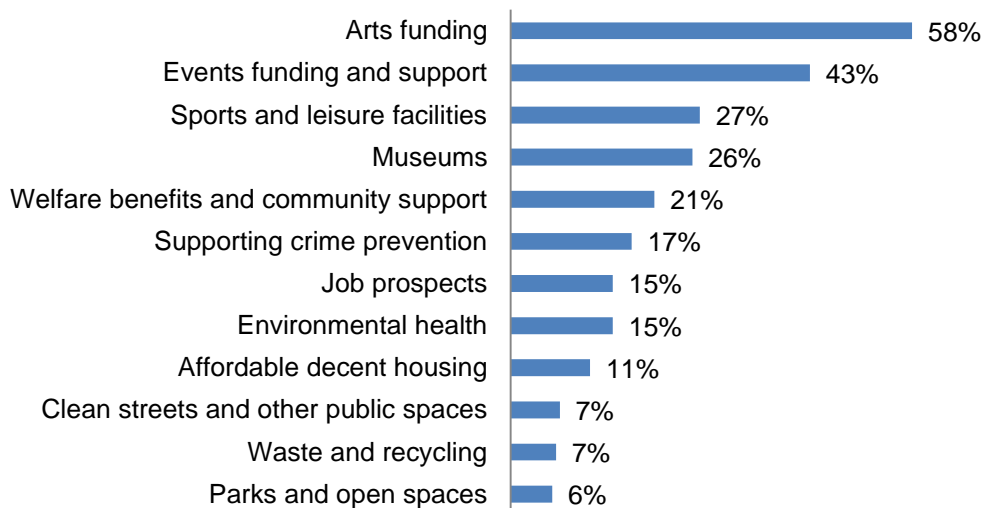
Respondents were asked to select a maximum of three things which are most and least important to them in their local area. Waste and recycling is the most important issue to people responding to the online consultation, followed by affordable decent housing and welfare benefits and community support. Comparatively, waste and recycling was considered the 8th most important thing to people in the research sample.

Figure 4.3: Most important to online respondents (base – 183)



Arts funding and events funding and support are considered least important.

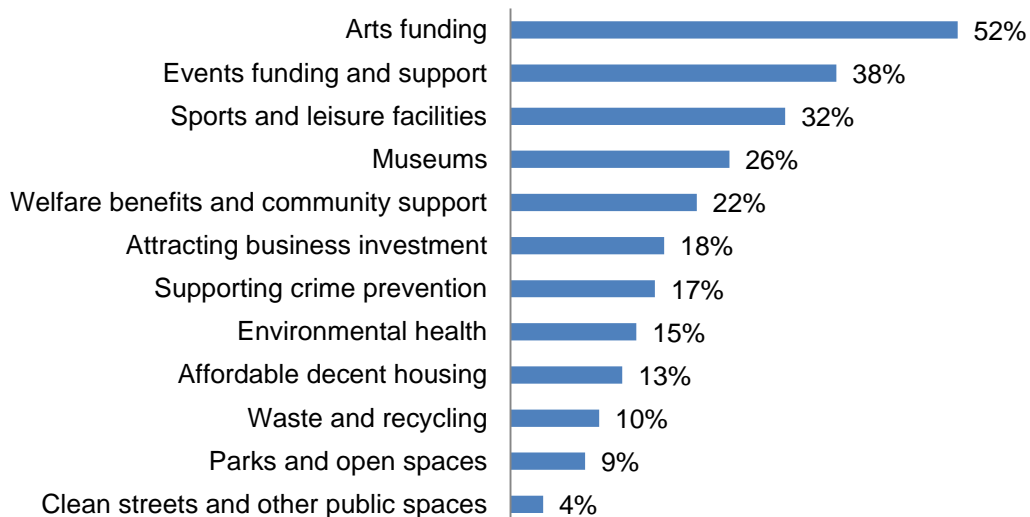
Figure 4.4: Least important to online respondents (base – 183)



Q2 – Please choose three services where you think reductions in spending should be made and three services where reductions in spending should not be made.

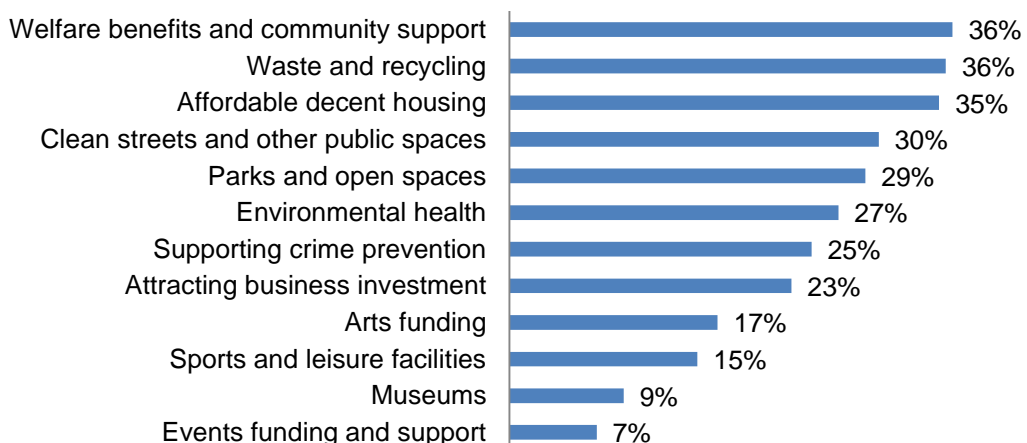
Aligning to what they find least important, over half of online respondents indicated that arts funding should be reduced. Moreover, 38% suggested events funding and support should be reduced and 32% identified sports and leisure facilities as an area where spending should be cut.

Figure 4.5: Services where spending should be reduced (base – 183)



Welfare benefits and community support, waste and recycling and affordable decent housing are the services which online respondents felt should not be reduced.

Figure 4.6: Services where spending should not be reduced (base – 183)

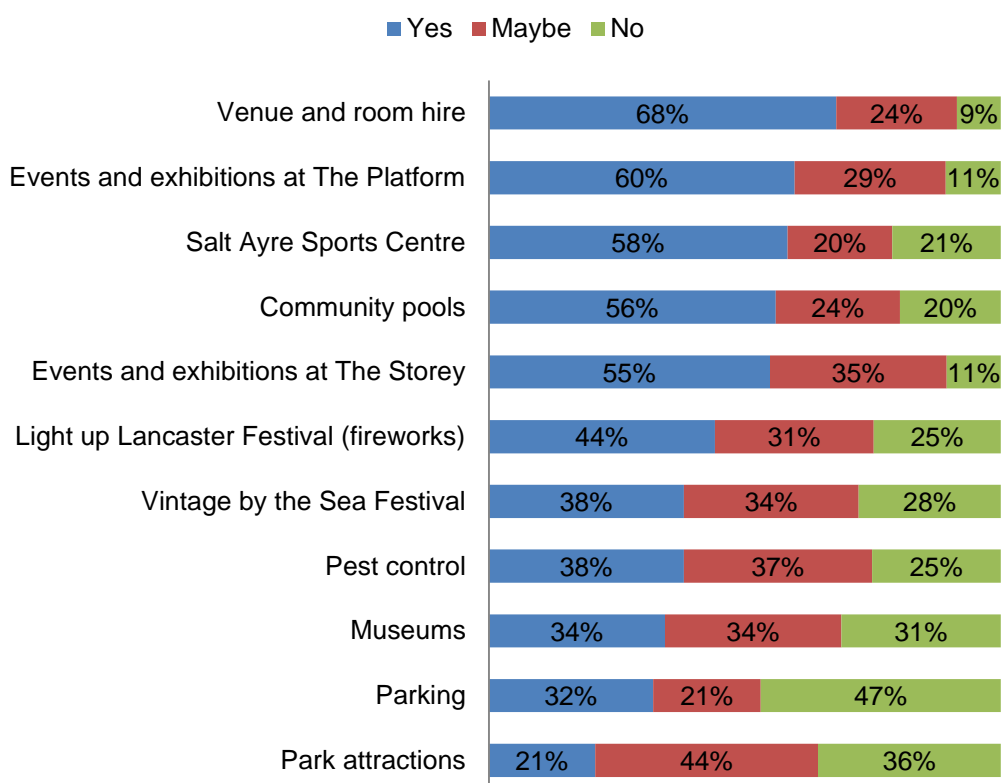


Q3 – *If you use or would use any of the following services, would you be willing to pay a fee or pay more than you currently do?*

Of those that use the range of services listed, generally speaking there is a good level of willingness to pay a fee or more than they currently do. Indeed, nearly seven in ten online respondents would pay more for venue and room hire.

Like the street research, people are least willing to pay more for parking.

Figure 4.7: Willingness to pay for services (base – 126 to 162)



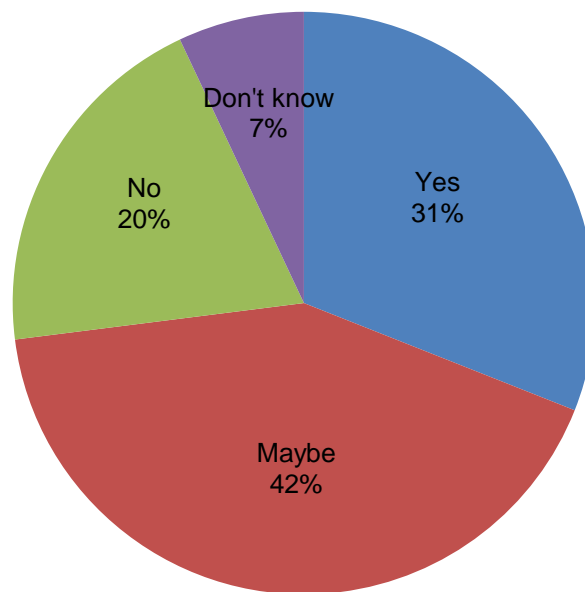
4.3 Local Community

Q4 – *In light of the financial savings that need to be made, the council may need local people to help support some services in future. Would you be willing to consider taking a more active role in your community?*

31% of online respondents indicated that they would be willing to take a more active role in their community. This is higher than the street research sample of 17%.

Moreover, 42% would ‘maybe’ consider taking a more active role.

Figure 4.8: Willingness to take a more active role in the community (base – 178)

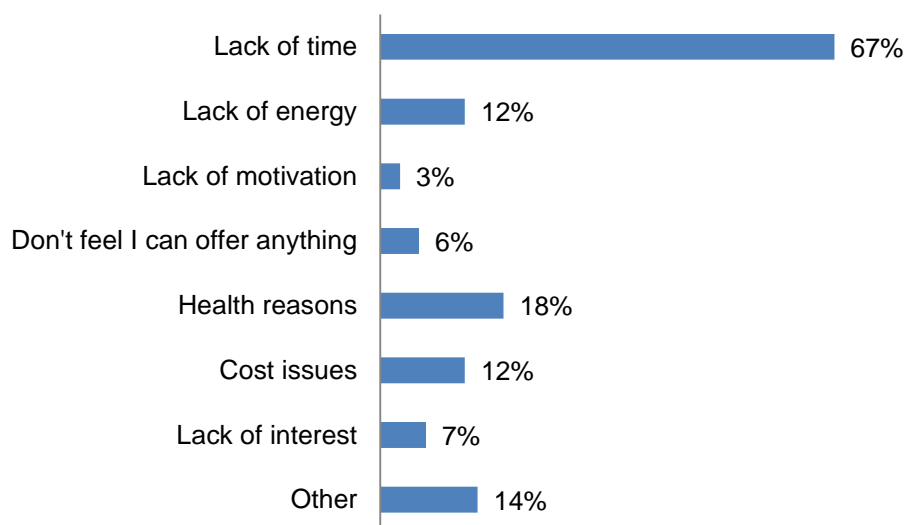


Q5 – If not, what is it that would prevent you from doing so?

Two thirds of those who are not willing to take a more active role indicated that this is due to a lack of time. Only 7% of online respondents suggest that lack of interest is a barrier, compared to 33% of the research sample.

'Other' reasons include already being active in the community and volunteering, a lack of transport/ accessibility and a sense that people should be paid to help.

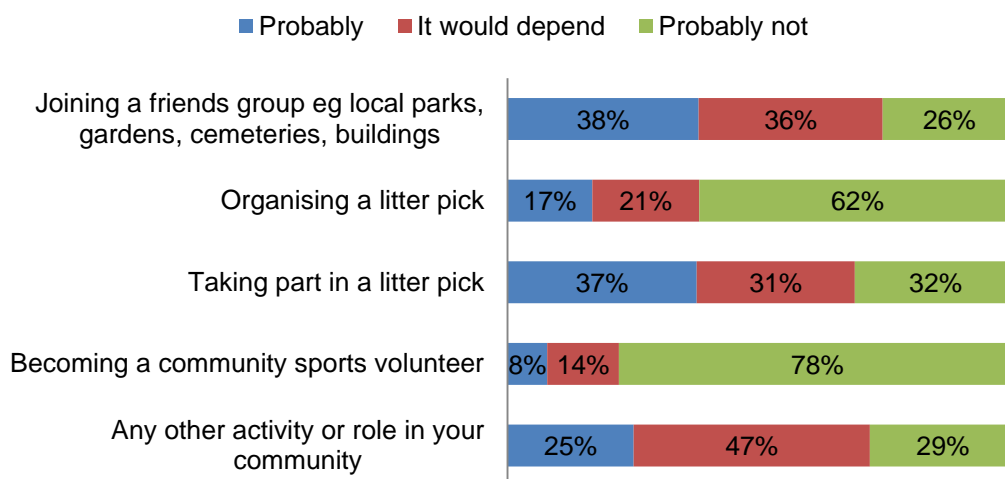
Figure 4.9: Reasons preventing people from taking a more active role (base – 105)



Q6 – If you would be willing to take a more active role, which, if any, of the following activities might you be interested in?

Of those willing to take a more active role, friends groups and litter picks appear to be the most appealing activities. Interest in organising a litter pick and becoming a community sports volunteer is low. Overall, willingness amongst the online respondents is lower than those interested from the street research.

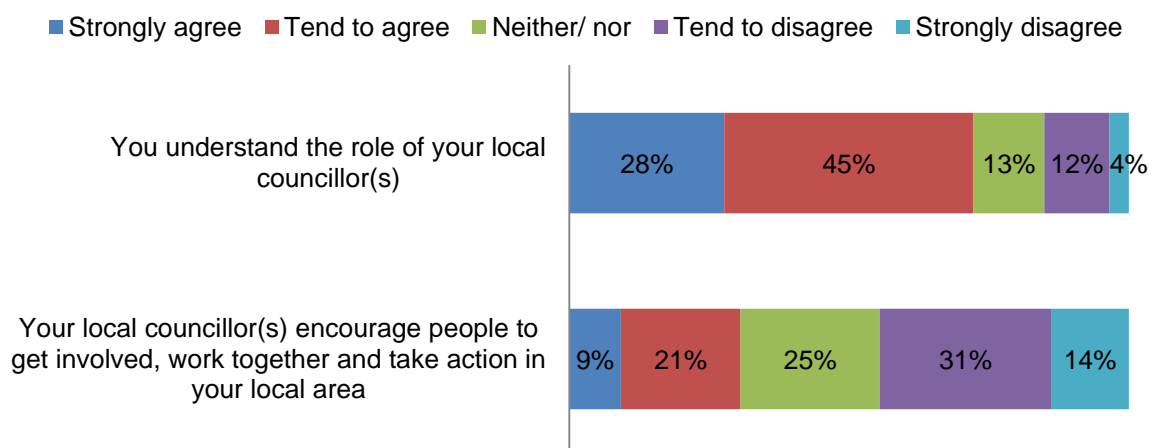
Figure 4.10: Voluntary activities people would be interested in (base – 128 to 149)



Q8 – To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your local councillor(s)?

73% of online respondents strongly or tend to agree that they understand the role of their local councillor. More respondents disagree (45%) than agree (30%) that their local councillor encourages people to get involved in their local area.

Figure 4.11: Agreement statements relating to local councillors (base – 173)

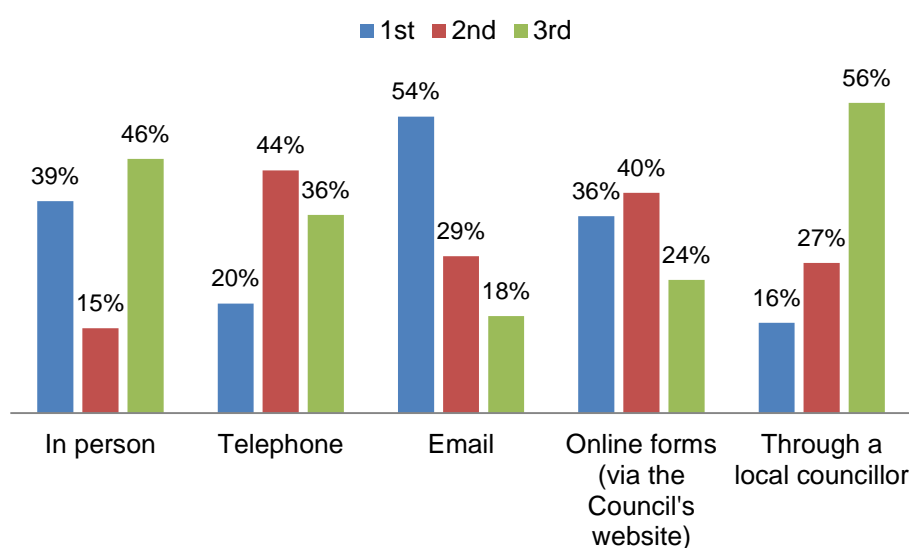


Q9 – Which of the following ways do you/ would you prefer to use to contact the council?

Online respondents were asked what their first, second and third choice communication methods are for contacting the Council.

The most popular contact method for online respondents is email as might be expected given the response method to the survey. Comparatively, just 11% of the research sample identified email as their first choice contact method.

Figure 4.12: Top 3 contact methods (base – 183)



Q10 – Do you have any other comments or suggestions that you would like to make about Lancaster City Council, e.g. ways we could make savings or increase income?

105 online respondents made a comment in the residents survey. Like the face-to-face research, the views expressed were wide ranging but a couple of significant themes emerged.

A number of respondents suggested that the amount of staff and councillors could be looked at or pay and terms and conditions reviewed. Comments included:

- “Too many managers, flexi time being abused”
- “Sack all the officers occupying nonsense jobs created by excessive regulation”
- “Reduce Chief Executive pay or share a Chief Executive”
- “Reduce councillors’ expenses”
- “You could save money by freezing the pay of all council employees earning over £25,000 a year”

Some respondents feel more could be done by the Council when it comes to fining people for anti-social behaviour, particularly in relation to littering and dog fouling:

- “People who do not use the recycling bins should be fined”
- “Zero tolerance on litter and dog mess”
- “Increase penalties for people caught dropping litter, dog fouling”