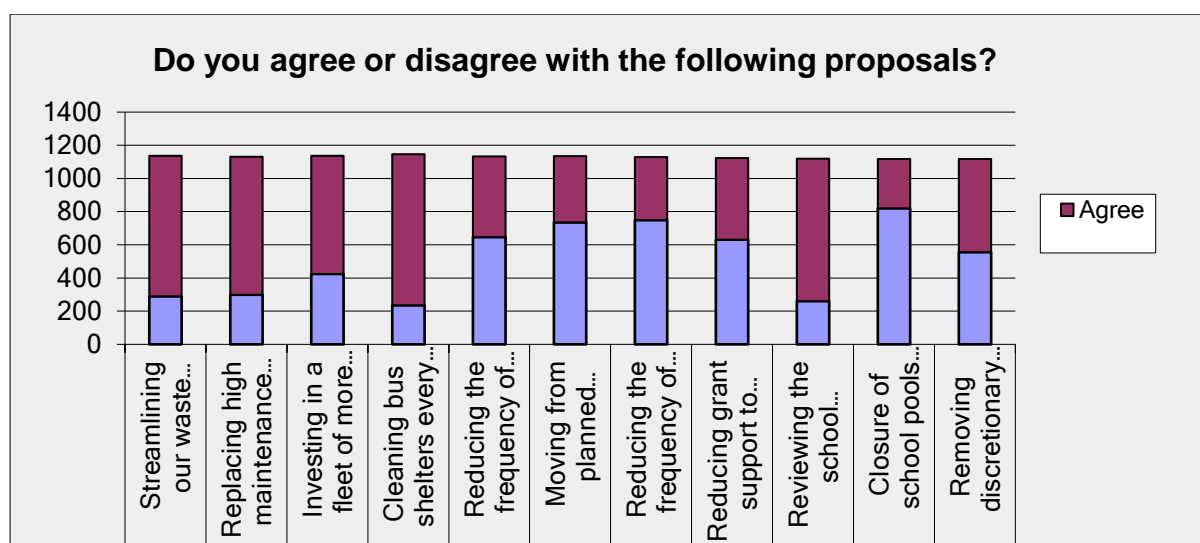


Budget Engagement Savings

Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with 10 suggested budget savings, through either online survey application SurveyMonkey, or during group discussions. Respondents were asked two further questions to more fully explore the reasons they gave for agreeing or disagreeing with the proposals.

Q1 Do you agree or disagree with the following proposals?

There were 1,099 responses to this question, with each suggested budget saving having a response rate of between 1064 and 1079, as per the chart below.



Key themes become more obvious in the follow up questions.

Q2 If you disagreed with any of the proposals, please tell us why?

There were a total of 779 responses to this question, with respondents expanding on the reasons why they had either agreed or disagreed with the proposed savings as outlined in Q1. **Key themes** included:

- **Swimming pools** – 36.2%ⁱ of respondents to Q2 disagreed with the proposed closure of school swimming pools. Respondents felt strongly that with messages from various health bodies and the Scottish Government all pointing towards an obesity problem in children, closing school swimming pools would be counter-productive. It was also felt that the proposed savings of £40,000 were not large enough to justify the loss in facilities and that most school swimming pools were well used, with swimming lessons being provided and community groups using the pools out with school hours. In Q1, a total of 73.4% of 1,066 respondents disagreed with the closure of school swimming pools.
- **Spending on roads** – 67.3%ⁱⁱ felt any reduction in spending on roads would be detrimental. 33% of respondents felt strongly that moving from planned

maintenance of our roads network to a reactive maintenance programme would negatively impact the quality of roads in Aberdeenshire. A further 34.3% of respondents felt that cutting back on the verge trimming programme would be dangerous as visibility would be negatively impacted, particularly on country roads.

These results are broadly reflected in the figures from Q1 of the survey, where 57.1% out of 1,079 disagreed with reducing the frequency of the verge trimming programme and 64.9% out of 1,079 respondents disagreed with moving from planned roads maintenance to a reactive maintenance programme.

- **Frequency of waste collections** – 36.1% felt that reducing the frequency of waste collection would negatively impact on their households. Fears included: an increase in vermin, overflowing bins, lack of facilities, increased dumping of waste in the countryside and fears that large families would be unfairly affected by the changes. There was a feeling that not enough information had been provided as to how the council would be able to increase the length of time between collections, i.e. would bigger bins be provided? Would food waste still be collected weekly?

These results are in line with the results from Q1, where 66.3% of 1,070 respondents disagreed with reducing the frequency of waste collections.

- **Funding of the third sector** – 25.8% felt support of the third sector is vital and provides good value for money. A common theme was that with council budgets and services reducing, the third sector has become even more important in bridging the gap between what the council can continue to provide and what the residents of Aberdeenshire may feel is needed. The areas in which the third sector are seen to be of particular importance is in the provision of youth services and services for those who may be socially isolated.
- Results from Q1 showed 56.2% were in favour of maintaining spending on the third sector, with 1,069 disagreeing with a reduction in grant support to third sector providers.
- **Mobile libraries** – 11% suggested that, rather than saving money by replacing the mobile library fleet with more efficient vehicles, the council should consider cutting the service altogether. Respondents felt that this would represent a greater saving and that digital technology could replace the mobile library service. In contrast, 62% of respondents (1,075) to Q1 supported the proposal to replace the mobile library fleet.

Q3 Please provide us with any general comments about investing in communities or other areas where savings could be made

There were 437 responses to this question. The following **key themes** were identified:

- **Cutting waste and raising revenue** – 41%ⁱⁱⁱ Respondents felt the council has not done enough to cut waste in its delivery of services. 30.7% of respondents felt more could be done to cut administrative costs and wastage, including the closure or amalgamation of small schools. 4.1% felt revenue could be raised by charges for non-essential services, and 6.2% felt the council should sell empty buildings to raise further revenue.

- **Staff and councillor numbers** – 14.4% of respondents felt the council should look to reduce top and middle levels of management before looking to cut services. A number of these respondents also suggesting the number of councillors in Aberdeenshire (and indeed across Scotland) was too high.
- **Volunteering and community empowerment** – 10.8% of respondents felt communities could do more for themselves and that community engagement and volunteering should be supported and encouraged by the council. A strong thread was that communities could potentially take care of their own green spaces or town squares and that this would not only save the council money but would also foster a sense of pride.
- **Review or cut all non-essential spending** – 9.9%^{iv} of respondents felt all non-essential spending should be cut (3.7%) or at the least reviewed (6.2%). Non-essential spending was defined as mobile libraries and arts spending.
- **Miscellaneous responses** – 21.3% of responses were classed as 'miscellaneous' as they were not directly relevant to the savings proposals.

ⁱ 36.2% represents the largest percentage of respondents to Q2

ⁱⁱ 67.3% is calculated by adding the percentages for support for planned maintenance of roads, 33% and support for the continuation of the verge trimming programme, 34.7%

ⁱⁱⁱ 41% is calculated by adding the percentages for Cutting waste 30.7% raising charges for non-essential services 4.1% and selling unused assets 6.2%

^{iv} 9.9% is calculated by adding the percentages for reviewing non-essential spending 6.2% and cut non-essential spending 3.7%