



monmouthshire
sir fynwy



LET'S **TALK**
**BUDGET AND
PRIORITIES**

**2026/27
CONSULTATION SUMMARY**



CONSULTATION SUMMARY

Introduction

From 22 January to 18 February 2026, the Let's Talk Budget and Priorities 2026-27 consultation allowed residents and stakeholders to share their thoughts on the council's draft budget for the financial year 2026-27.

We provided multiple options for people to give feedback on the draft budget. These options included an online survey, a paper survey, community drop-in sessions, and online Q&A sessions. Additionally, we engaged with targeted stakeholders.

This report brings together the responses we received. It summarises the key themes and highlights areas of agreement and concern.

Throughout the consultation, the survey received 416 responses, across both online and paper copies.

We would like to thank everyone who took the time to participate. Your views are crucial. They help ensure future decisions are based on evidence, shaped by real experiences, and aimed at benefiting our communities the most.





Stakeholder Engagement

Public drop-in sessions

Across the five face-to-face drop-in budget engagement sessions, cabinet members and officers received feedback on a range of issues from potholes to frontline services.

Road surfacing and flood recovery were high on the agenda in the north of the county following the recent storms, with congestion a hot topic in the south.

The proposed increase to council tax received both positive and negative feedback. Some attendees felt it necessary in order to pay for services, with others feeling as though they were not being provided value for money.

All sessions also provided the chance for residents to complete the survey.

Community Groups and Warm Hubs

Across the consultation period, officers attended warm hub spaces to speak to residents and provide them an opportunity to learn more and complete the survey. Attendance from officers was well received across the groups with a number of people taking the opportunity to collect a hard copy of the summary document and survey or scanning the QR code to find out more online.

School Budget Forum

Cllr Ben Callard, Cabinet Member for Resources, provided a presentation of the draft budget to the School Budget Forum. Highlighted as part of the presentation was the proposed increase in education budget, with an additional £1million above the standard inflation costs. Cllr Callard also highlighted the investment in additional learning needs, Welsh language provision and the Inspire programme to support learners stay in school, gain employment or access training. Questions were raised by attendees around how the funding would be distributed, which Cllr Callard provided an answer for.

School Headteachers Budget Meeting

Monmouthshire Schools Headteachers were provided an update on the proposed budget for 2026-27. Following a presentation from Cllr Ben Callard, he and officers provided an opportunity for attendees to ask questions and discuss budgets across Monmouthshire schools.



Stakeholder Engagement

...continued

School Governors Budget Meeting

Cllr Ben Callard, along with officers, provided a comprehensive explanation of Monmouthshire Council's annual budget planning process, highlighting the use of the community and corporate plan, the medium-term financial strategy and the importance of aligning spending with council priorities and resident feedback. Questions were raised around the distribution of the additional funding, the Welsh Government funding settlement process and maintenance and capital projects within primary schools.

Youth Clubs

Cllr Angela Sandles, Cabinet Member for Equalities and Engagement, visited youth clubs to discuss the importance of young people taking part in consultations and how decisions can affect their day-to-day lives. Following the visits, officers noted that conversations continued, fostering a better understanding of the importance of sharing their views.

Online Engagement sessions

Online engagement sessions allowed residents to sign up to hear from the Cllr Ben Callard, Cabinet Member for Resources and the council's Leader, Cllr Mary Ann Brocklesby on the draft budget and priorities. Following a presentation, the session was opened to a Q&A session. Attendees could pre-submit questions or ask them live in the Q&A section of the call. Questions varied and covered topics such as closing the gap in the draft budget, council tax increases, how the council supports Welsh-language education for adults, and staff pay increases.

Town and Community Councils

The engagement session provided an overview of the current proposed draft budget 2026-27 by Cllr Ben Callard and Cllr Mary Ann Brocklesby. Following the presentation, Cllr Callard and Cllr Brocklesby invited attendees to ask questions. Questions varied among attendees and covered topics such as the proposed council tax, road conditions, in particular potholes and drainage, the levies the council pays to partner organisations, and the current school budget situation. Cllr Callard and Cllr Brocklesby responded to all questions. The session closed with a focus on maintaining service resilience and financial sustainability ahead of the next budget cycle.

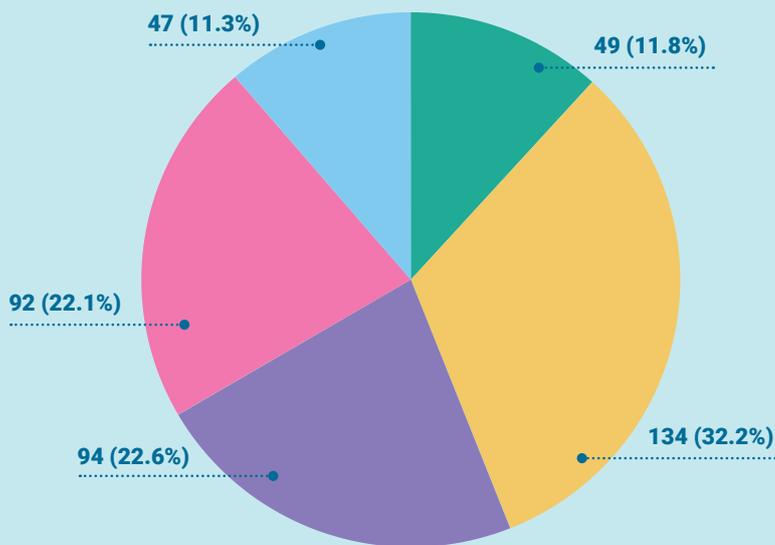


Survey response

Question 1: Do you agree with draft budget set out for 2026-27?

Question options

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree



Question 2: Please feel free to tell us more about why you answered the first question the way you did.

The feedback highlights a general understanding among residents of the council's financial constraints, though it remains a concern for many.

Many respondents express a strong commitment to protecting essential services, such as education, support for additional learning needs, children's services, and adult social care.

The proposed 5.95% increase raises concerns, as respondents note affordability issues for some households.

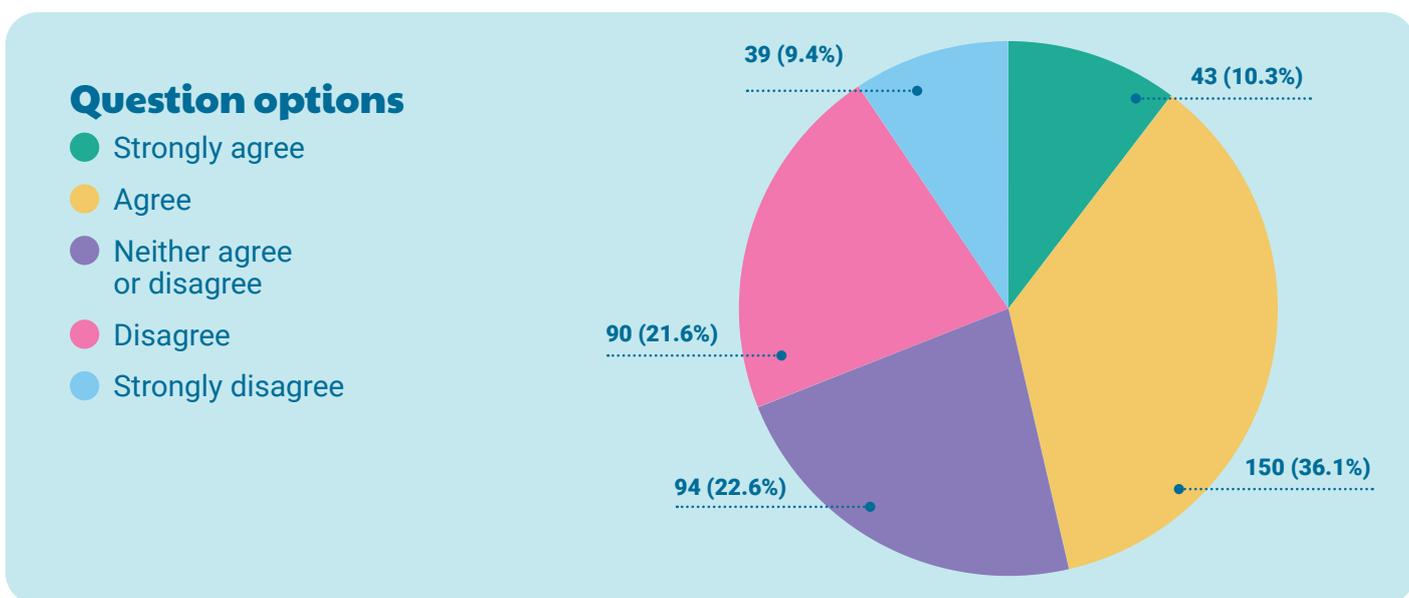
Comments about roads and highways are particularly prominent in responses, with potholes a recurring issue for many in the county.

Respondents do comment favourably on the proposed no reductions in services, with positive comments made around libraries, community hubs, waste and youth services.



Survey response

Question 3: Do you feel the council has struck the right balance in protecting and investing in priority areas, such as care, schools and community infrastructure?



Question 4: Please feel free to tell us more about why you answered the above question the way you did.

Many people support investing in schools, social care, and services for those in need, viewing them as vital community resources. While some comments acknowledge the challenges of balancing the budget in a difficult financial climate, many agreed that the council has made commendable efforts to find a reasonable balance.

There are concerns regarding some priorities. Roads and highways emerged as a significant issue, with many mentioning potholes and the need for better repairs and drainage solutions.

Residents express concerns about flooding and the adequacy of flood-prevention measures. There is also a shared concern about rising council tax and its implications for value for money, community safety, and equitable access to county facilities.

There is a genuine appreciation for the support provided to carers, as well as for schools, libraries, and leisure centres. People also highlight the importance of services that help them maintain their independence and overall well-being.



Survey response

Question 5: 60% of our budget comes from the Welsh Government. The remaining budget is funded by council tax, fees, and charges. To help cover service costs, we are proposing a 5.95% increase in council tax. Do you agree with this?



Question 6: If you do not agree with the proposed council tax increase, where would you make additional savings or service reductions to counter the shortfall this would create?

Many responses acknowledge that an increase in council tax may be necessary to safeguard vital services such as social care, education, and frontline support.

Constructive suggestions have emerged as well, focusing on efficiency-driven approaches such as improved procurement practices, shared services, generating income, and rethinking service delivery rather than implementing broad cuts.

Responders expressed a wish for clearer details on how the funds will be used, along with a hope to see tangible local benefits.

Many people are expressing concerns about the proposed council tax increase, particularly amid ongoing cost-of-living challenges. Respondents have commented on transparency regarding how the budget increases are determined and how additional funds might lead to improvements.



Survey response

Question 7: Would you like to leave any further comments regarding the Draft Budget and Priorities 2026 - 2027?

Common theme across the responses concerns highways and infrastructure. Many individuals have noted issues such as potholes, poor resurfacing, faded road markings, and blocked drains, as well as concerns about flooding risks. They are advocating for more long-term investment and preventative maintenance. Traffic congestion, particularly in areas like Chepstow and Caldicot, has also been highlighted.

Another significant topic is the proposed increase in council tax. Many responses acknowledge that an increase in council tax may be necessary to safeguard vital services such as social care, education, and frontline support, but respondents have opposed the proposed increase due to ongoing cost-of-living challenges. Many feel it's important for the council to demonstrate financial discipline and are encouraging more efficient practices. Some have raised questions about capital spending decisions and expressed concerns about debt repayment costs, calling for greater transparency around senior pay and budget allocation.

Despite these concerns, there are also many positive and supportive responses. Some individuals recognise the challenges of balancing the budget and express trust in the council, accepting that council tax increases may be necessary to maintain essential services. Many have praised the clarity and accessibility of the consultation materials. There is support for investing in areas such as education, youth services, leisure, flood response, and community support, with some sharing personal stories about the positive impacts of these services.

Overall, while there are worries around affordability and infrastructure, many people are also aware of the financial pressures the council faces and the need for thoughtful decision-making. There's a strong desire for constructive dialogue, with suggestions for improvements such as investing in preventive measures, supporting community hubs, and enhancing town centre regeneration, reflecting a collaborative spirit among residents.

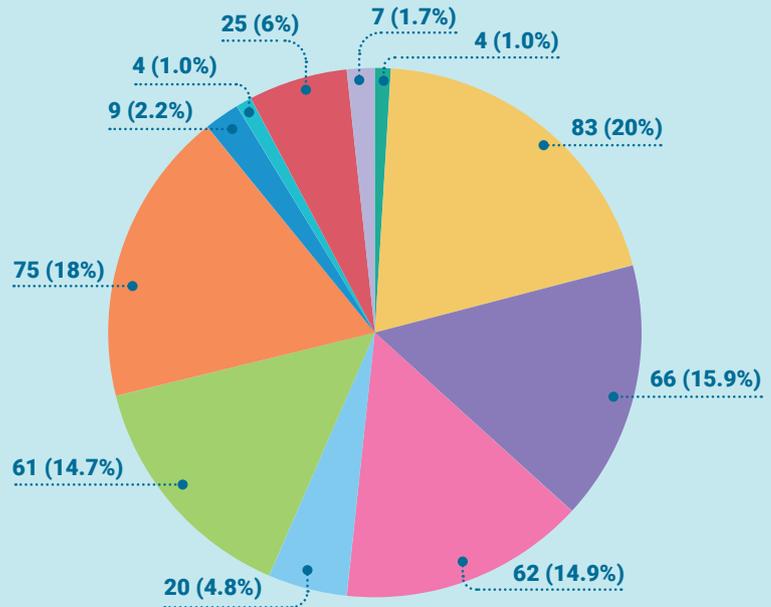


Survey response

Question 8: Please tell us your nearest town or village

Question options

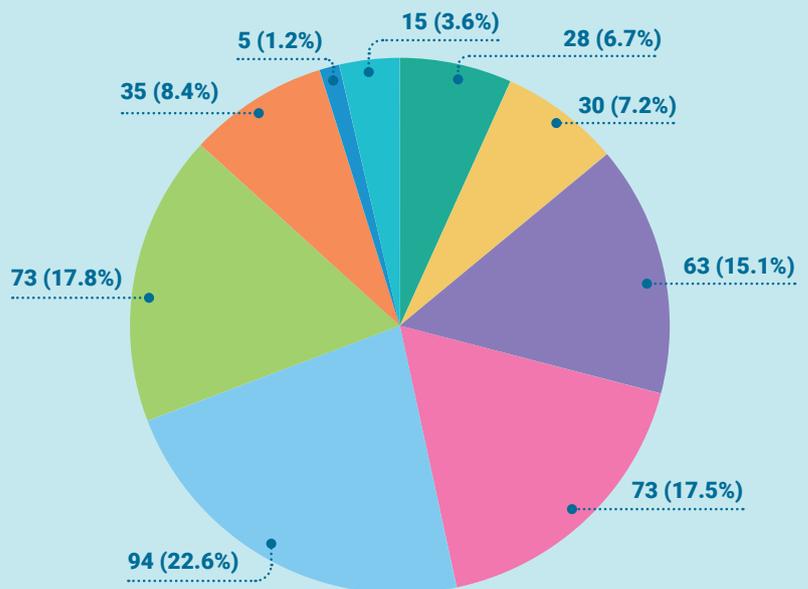
- Other
- Abergavenny
- Caldicot
- Chepstow
- Gilwern
- Magor with Undy
- Monmouth
- Raglan
- Tintern
- Usk
- Prefer not to say



Question 9: Please let us know which age group you fall within

Question options

- 16-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75-84
- 85+
- Prefer not to say



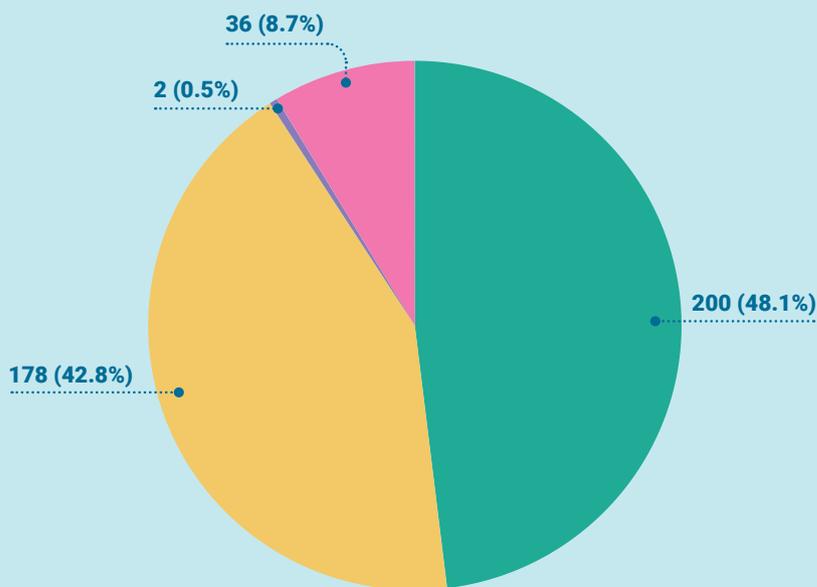


Survey response

Question 10: What gender do you identify as?

Question options

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say

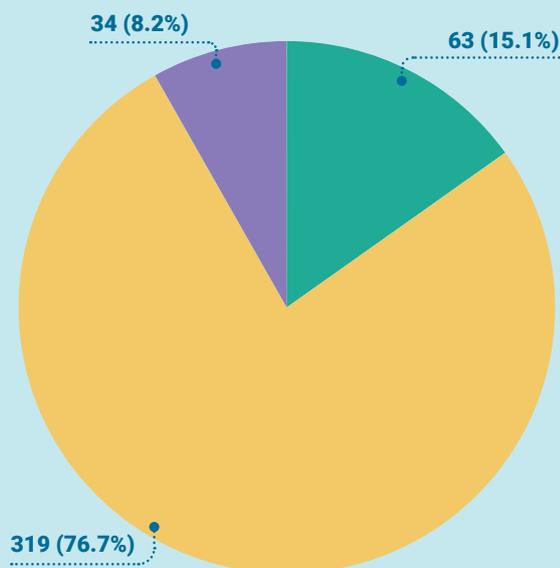


Question 11: Do you consider yourself to have a disability as defined by the Equality Act?

Disability is defined by the Equality Act 2010 as: A physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. The disability could be physical, sensory or mental and must be expected to last at least 12 months.

Question options

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say



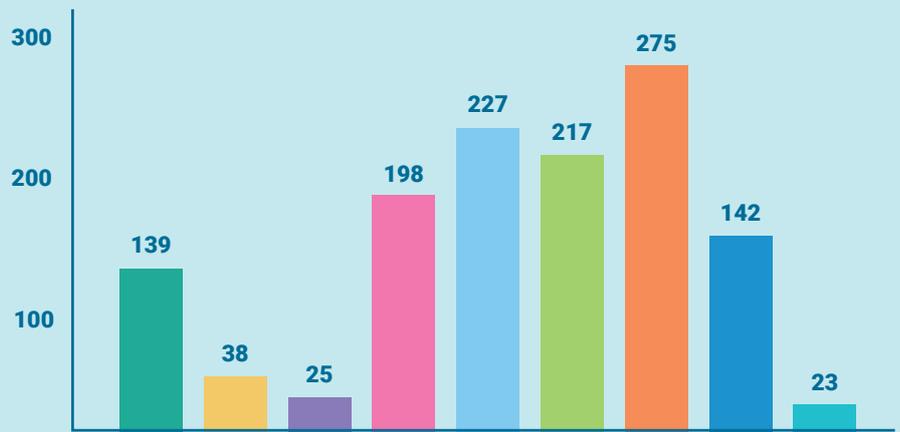


Survey response

Question 12: Do you use any of these Council services on a regular basis?

Question options

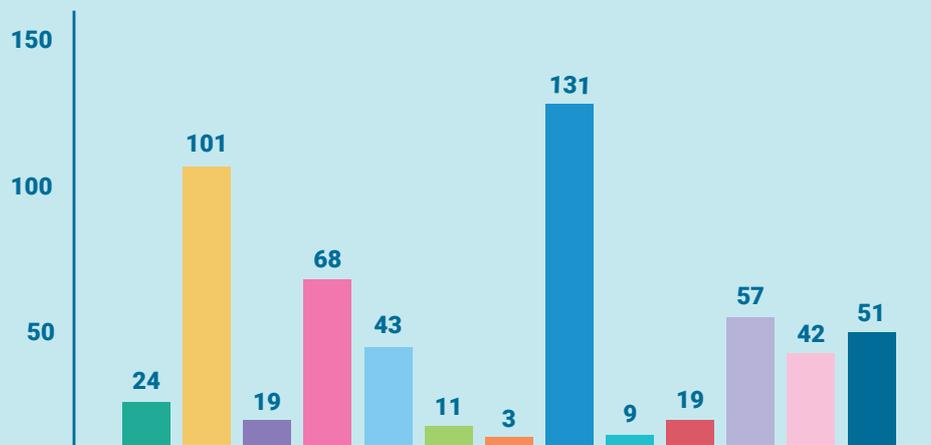
- Schools (yourself or as a parent/guardian)
- Social care (direct care or supported as a carer)
- Youth clubs
- Leisure Centres
- Community Hubs/ Libraries
- Garden Waste Collection
- Recycling Centres
- Heritage & Culture sites
- None of the above



Question 13: Where did you hear about this consultation?

Question options

- Other (please specify)
- Monmouthshire.gov.uk
- Monlife.co.uk
- Via the Let's Talk Monmouthshire website
- Via the Let's Talk Monmouthshire newsletter
- Via My Monmouthshire
- From a newspaper
- On Facebook
- On X (Twitter)
- On Instagram
- In a library or community hub
- Word of mouth
- Via my local councillor





Survey response

Question 14: How easy have you found this survey to complete?

