AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee	**Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee**
Date of Committee	**9 January 2007**
Report Title	**Public Consultation on 2007/08 Budget and Council Tax: Results**
Summary	The report provides members with details of the results from the public consultation on the 2007/08 budget priorities and council tax.

For further information please contact:	David Clarke Strategic Director, Resources Tel: 412003 davidclarketr@warwickshire.gov.uk	Rob Phillips Corporate Accountant Tel: 412860 robertphillips@warwickshire.gov.uk
Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework?	No.	
Background papers	Citizens Panel Surveys 'Community Engagement' and 'Value for Money'	

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:- Details to be specified

Other Committees	☐	....
Local Member(s)	☐	
Other Elected Members	☒	Cllr Booth, Cllr Hicks, Cllr Atkinson - for clearance Cllr Tandy, Cllr Roodhouse - for information
Cabinet Member	☒	Cllr Farnell, Cllr Cockburn for information
Chief Executive	☒	Jim Graham - for information
Legal	☒	Sarah Duxbury - for clearance
Finance	☒	David Clarke - reporting officer
Other Chief Officers	☐	....
District Councils	☐	....
Health Authority	☐	....

Warwickshire County Council

Police ☐ ....

Other Bodies/Individuals ☐ ....

FINAL DECISION   YES

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS: Details to be specified

Further consideration by ☐ ....
this Committee

To Council ☒ *Council will approve the 2007/08 budget at its meeting on 06 02 2007*

To Cabinet ☐ ....

To an O & S Committee ☐ ....

To an Area Committee ☐ ....

Further Consultation ☐ ....

Warwickshire
County Council

Public Consultation on 2007/08 Budget and Council Tax

Executive Summary

This report summarises the results from the consultation exercise on 2007/08 Budget and Council Tax, to assist Members in the budget setting process.

The consultation consisted of two broad strands; surveys to the Citizens Panel and presentations to each of the Area Committees. The report details the feedback received from both strands of the consultation exercise.

The main points from the report state:

- The services which respondents most used/ benefited from are Waste Disposal, Libraries and Country Parks and Rights of Way.
- The services that were felt to be most important to respondents are: Fire and Rescue; Waste Disposal; Schools and Nursery Education; Older Peoples Services and Road Maintenance and Traffic Management.
- Respondents agreed that generally the cost of services and the level of investment in services was about right.
- However, they felt Environment Sustainability had too little investment.
- Around half of respondents would pay more Council Tax for an increase in funding for Environmental Sustainability and Schools and Nursery Education.
- However, for the rest of the Council's services most respondents would not be willing to pay more Council Tax for an increase in funding.
- Respondents felt that services should be available in a subsidised manner, most often free of charge.
- A majority of residents were satisfied with their neighbourhood.
- Half of people felt they could not influence decisions at the Council.
- If respondents could become more involved in Council decisions they would like to be involved in safer communities; environmental issues; access to health services; public transport links and services for older people.

Warwickshire
County Council

Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 11 January 2007

Public Consultation on 2007/08 Budget and Council Tax: Results

Report of the Strategic Director, Resources

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the feedback received from the public about the budget for 2007/08 and commend the information to the political groups for consideration when preparing their 2007/08 budget resolutions.

---

1   Background

1.1   The 2007/08 public budget consultation exercise consisted of two broad strands:

- The use of corporate surveys. This year's Citizen Panel surveys were on 'Community Engagement' and 'Value for Money'. Unfortunately the results from the Best Value Satisfaction survey were not available in time for this report.
- Presentations on the 2007/08 budget to each area committee, where the general public had the opportunity to comment on and ask questions about the presentations.

1.2   This report summarises the results from the consultation exercise to assist Members in the budget setting process.

2   Survey Results

2.1   Overview of Citizen's Panel Surveys

2.1.1   There were two corporate surveys to the Citizens Panel this year, one on Value for Money and the other on Community Engagement. With 1066 responses, (an overall response rate of 49%), the results provide a broad and representative picture of the views of the public.

Warwickshire
County Council

2.2 Value for Money Survey

2.2.1 The Citizens Panel Survey on Value for Money was undertaken by BMG Research Group in July 2006 and its initial findings were available from October 2006.

2.2.2 The survey covered questions on the use and awareness of the services provided by Warwickshire County Council, their importance and what respondents felt should be the funding priorities based on current spending.

2.3 Awareness of Services

2.3.1 Initially, respondents were asked which Warwickshire County Council services they have used or benefited from and which services they have not used but are aware of. Figure 1, overleaf, presents the results.

2.3.2 Awareness of the services provided by the County Council is generally high. The most recognised services are Libraries (95% of respondents) and Waste Disposal Service (94%). Fire and Rescue is the third most recognised service (78%), with Country Parks and Rights of Way, Museums, Archives and Arts Services and Schools and Nursery Education all recognised by 76% of respondents.
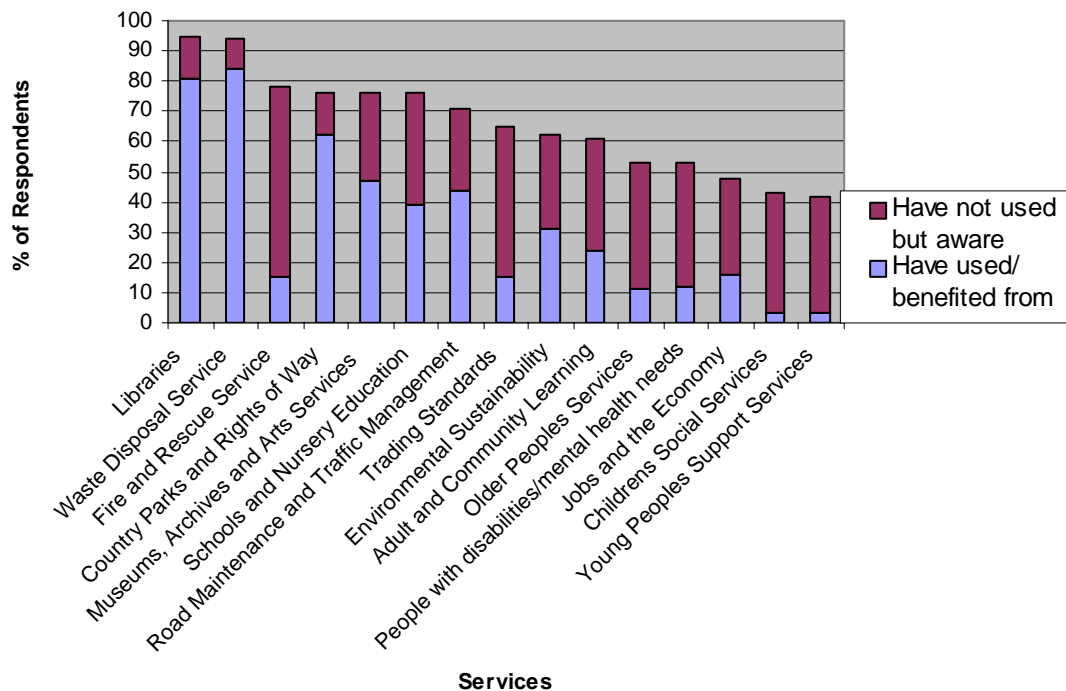
2.3.3 The Warwickshire County Council Services that are least known by respondents were Young People's Support Services (42% of respondents) and Children's Social Services (43%). This is probably because they are aimed at specific groups. Awareness of the Councils involvement in Jobs and the Economy was also less than fifty per cent (48%).

2.3.4 The two services that most Panel members have used or benefited from are the Waste Disposal Service (84%) and Libraries (81%). Country Parks and Rights of Way have also been used by more than half of respondents (62%).

2.3.5 Respondents are least likely to have used or benefited from Children's Social Services and Young Peoples Support Services, which reflect the findings on awareness in paragraph 2.3.2. The other services that respondents were least likely to have used were Older Peoples Services and services for People with Disabilities/ Mental Health Needs. It is not too surprising that Social Services are the least likely to have been used as these services are only used by the most vulnerable members of the community.

2.3.6 It is encouraging that although few respondents had used the Fire and Rescue Service a large majority of people were aware of the service. This is also the case with Trading Standards.

Figure 1: Awareness of Services provided by Warwickshire County Council

Figure 1: Awareness of Services provided by Warwickshire County Council. Stacked bar chart showing % of Respondents (y-axis) for each service (x-axis): Libraries, Waste Disposal Service, Fire and Rescue Service, Country Parks and Rights of Way, Museums, Archives and Arts Services, Schools and Nursery Education, Road Maintenance and Traffic Management, Trading Standards, Environmental Sustainability, Adult and Community Learning, Older Peoples Services, People with disabilities/mental health needs, Jobs and the Economy, Childrens Social Services, Young Peoples Support Services. Categories: "Have not used but aware" and "Have used/ benefited from".

2.4 Most Important Services

2.4.1 The panel were asked to consider which services are the most important to them, either now or in the future. Figure 2, overleaf, indicates the services that respondents considered the most important.

2.4.2 Fire and Rescue was seen to be the most important service to almost half of respondents. Waste Disposal, Schools and Nursery Education and Older Peoples Services were next with around a third of respondents feeling they were the most important service. Road Maintenance and Traffic Management completed the top five of the most important services.

2.4.3 Environmental Sustainability and Libraries were both considered the most important service by over 20% of respondents.

2.4.4 It was interesting to note that the services regarded as important were not always the services that respondents had used. For example only 11% of respondents had used or benefited from Older Peoples Services, yet 31% felt this was important to them either now or in the future. This suggests that respondents like to know that services would be available to them should they ever need to use them.
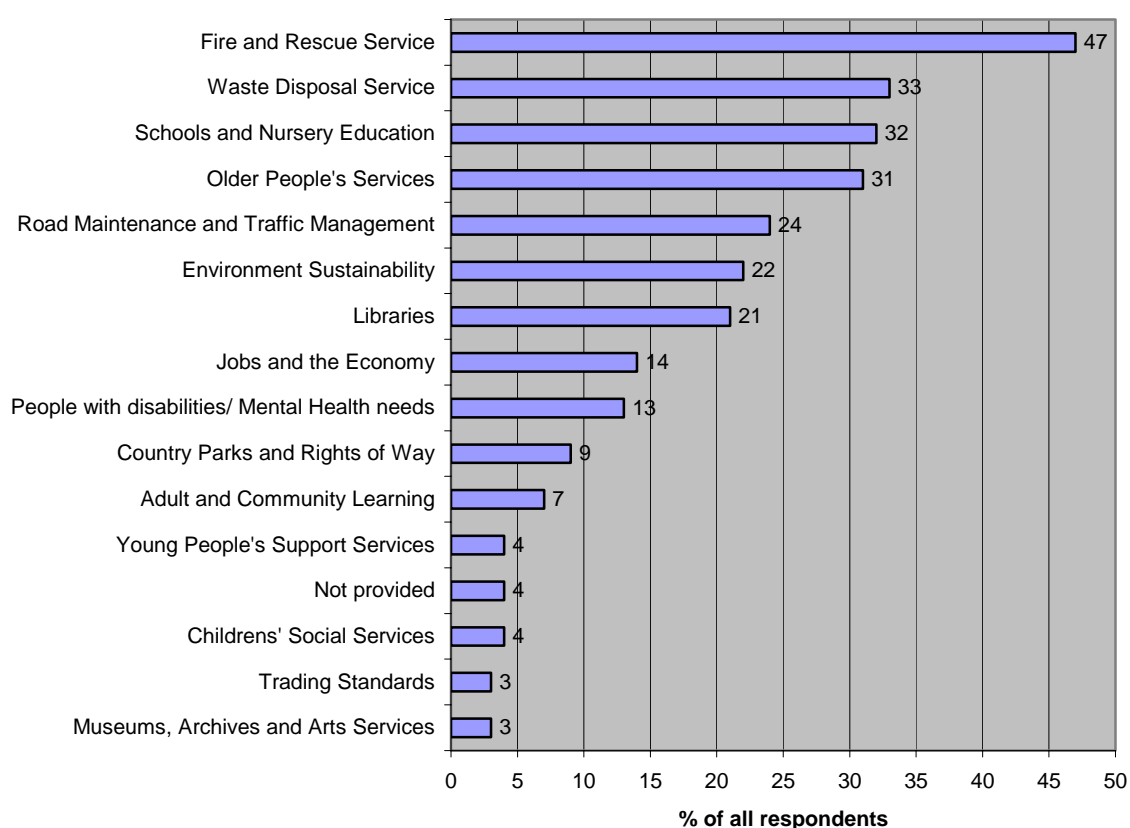
2.4.5 Only 3% of respondents felt that Museums, Archives and Art Services and Trading Standards were the most important services. Children's Social Services and Younger Peoples Support Services were also in the bottom five most important services, perhaps again reflecting the awareness/ use of the service. Adult and Community Learning completed the top five least important

Warwickshire
County Council

services, with only 7% of respondents feeling it was the most important service.

2.4.6 A Citizen's Panel survey in 2005 asked respondents the same question concerning the importance of Warwickshire County Council services. The results were very similar; four out of the top five most important services this year were also regarded as one of the top 5 most important services last year. The only difference being Road Maintenance and Traffic Management moving into the top five important services this year (it came seventh last year), replacing Crime and Disorder that came top last year but was not an option this year.

2.4.7 Three services that feature in the bottom five this year (Adult and Community Learning, Trading Standards and Museums, Archives and Arts services) were also in the bottom five last year with Museums, Archives and Arts Service again being listed as the service deemed least important to respondents.

Figure 2: Services deemed most important or useful to respondents either now or in the future

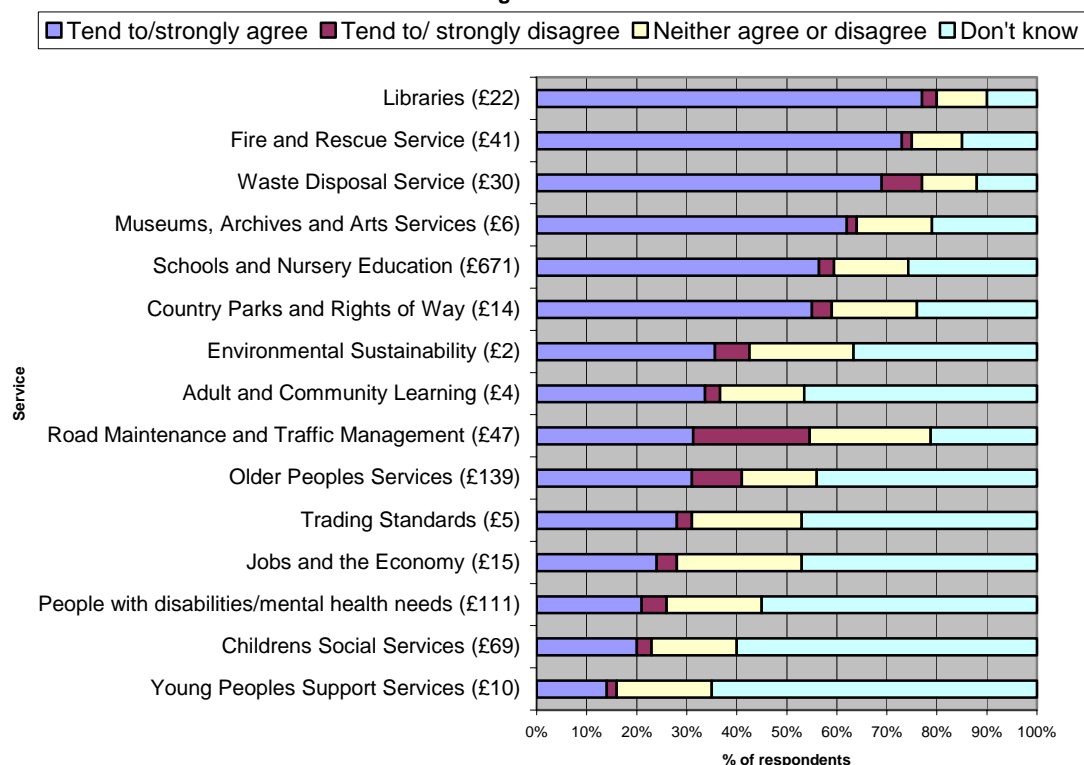| Service	% of all respondents
Fire and Rescue Service	47
Waste Disposal Service	33
Schools and Nursery Education	32
Older People's Services	31
Road Maintenance and Traffic Management	24
Environment Sustainability	22
Libraries	21
Jobs and the Economy	14
People with disabilities/ Mental Health needs	13
Country Parks and Rights of Way	9
Adult and Community Learning	7
Young People's Support Services	4
Not provided	4
Childrens' Social Services	4
Trading Standards	3
Museums, Archives and Arts Services	3

2.5 Services Delivered at the Right Cost

2.5.1 Panel members were given a list of the cost per head of each service and asked if they thought the services were delivered at the right cost. Figure 3, overleaf, shows how respondents felt about the cost of each service. The figures in brackets are the cost per head figure the respondents were given.

2.5.2 A lot of respondents were unsure or didn't know enough about the service to give an opinion. However, of those that did it seems that most felt that the services were provided at the right cost.

2.5.3 One exception to this was the Roads Maintenance and Traffic Management service where approximately 23% of respondents felt they were not delivered at the right cost. This was significantly higher than the other services and may suggest that because Roads Maintenance and Traffic Management has a more direct impact upon the area in which respondents live, for example a road in disrepair or the introduction of traffic calming measures to a street, it can lead to an emotive response.

Figure 3: Extent to which respondents agree/ disagree services are delivered at the right cost

2.6 Level of Investment in Services

2.6.1 Respondents were given the percentage of Council spending for each service as the level of investment and asked to comment upon it. Figure 4, overleaf, shows how respondents felt. The figures in brackets represent the percentage of Council spending on each service.

2.6.2 The majority of services were felt to have about the right level of funding. Environmental Sustainability was the only service that had a larger proportion of respondents stating that the service had too little investment. It should be noted, however that although the majority of respondents felt that the level of

Warwickshire
County Council

investment was about right for Schools and Nursery Education there were still just over a third of respondents who felt there was too little investment.

Figure 4: Proportion of Respondents that feel services receive too little ot too much investment
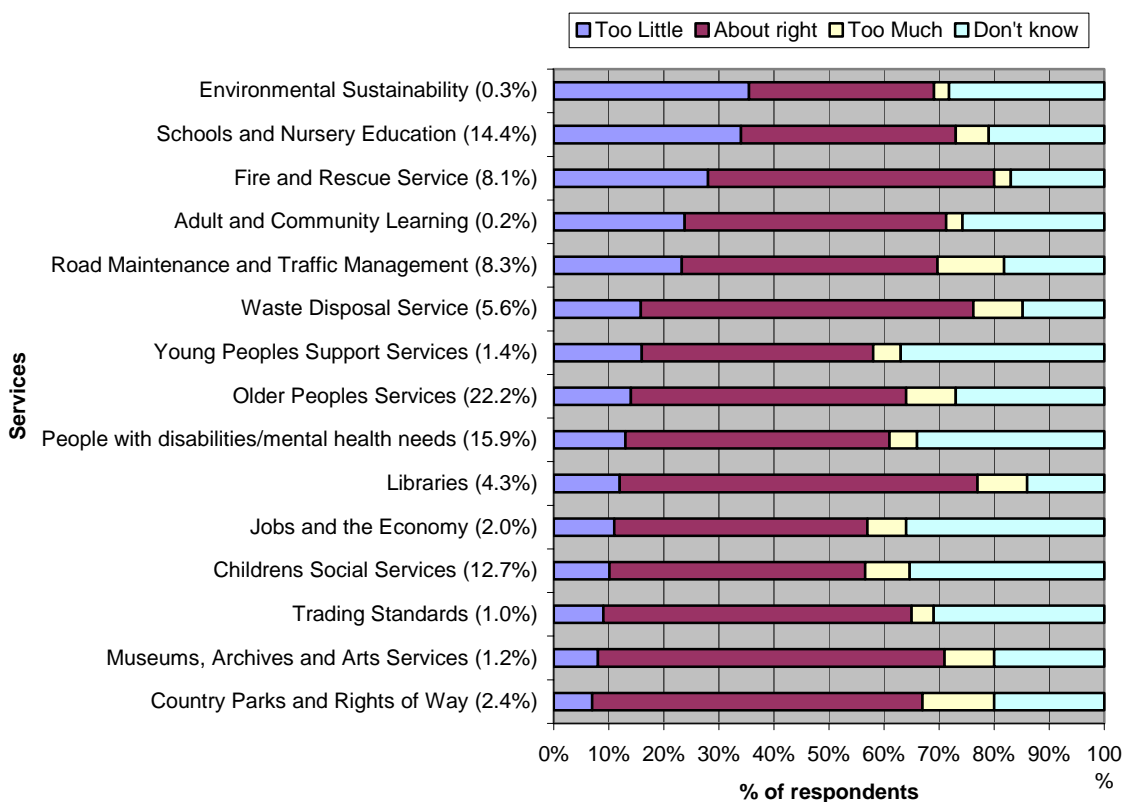
2.7 Increased funding through Council Tax

2.7.1 When asked about their answers on the level of investment in more detail, respondents were asked whether they would be prepared to pay more Council Tax to pay for an increase in funding for that service. Figure 5, overleaf, presents the percentage of respondents who would be willing to pay more Council tax for an increase in funding.

2.7.2 Clearly two services stood out from the rest, with just over half of respondents (52%) saying they would be prepared to pay additional council tax to increase the funding for Environmental Sustainability and just less than half (49%) for Schools and Nursery Education.

2.7.3 However, aside from those two services, the majority of respondents were not prepared to pay additional council tax to increase funding for services. This would suggest they feel resources should be reallocated between services or that funding be found from other sources.

2.7.4 It is interesting to note that the top five services that respondents would be prepared to pay additional Council Tax for were not the top five services they felt were most important.

Warwickshire
County Council

2.7.5 33% of respondents were prepared to pay more Council Tax for Museums, Archives and Arts Services whilst only 3% felt it was one of their top five services. Conversely, Road Traffic and Maintenance was felt to be the most important service by 24% of respondents making it fifth in the table, yet only 14% of respondents would be willing to pay more in Council Tax to increase the funding for the service, the lowest of any of the services.

Figure 5: Percentage of Respondents who would be willing to pay more Council Tax for an increase in funding for that Service
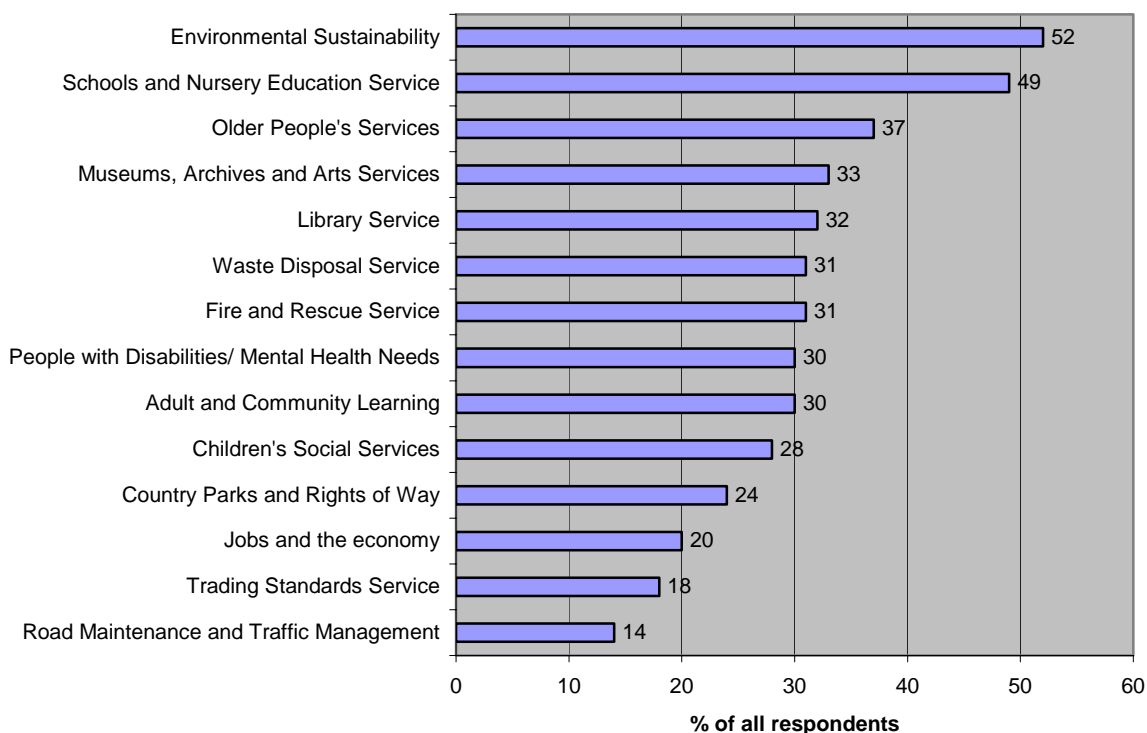
2.8   Subsidising of Services

2.8.1 Panellists were asked whether services should be provided to users free of charge, at a reduced rate or at full cost to the public. Figure 6, overleaf, shows the respondents views.

2.8.2 More than one in five respondents felt that Museums, Archives and Arts Services and Adult and Community Learning should be provided at full cost to their users. However, throughout the other services there was a general feeling that services should be provided either free of charge or at a reduced rate.

Warwickshire County Council

Figure 6: Services Respondents feel should be provided at cost or subsidised
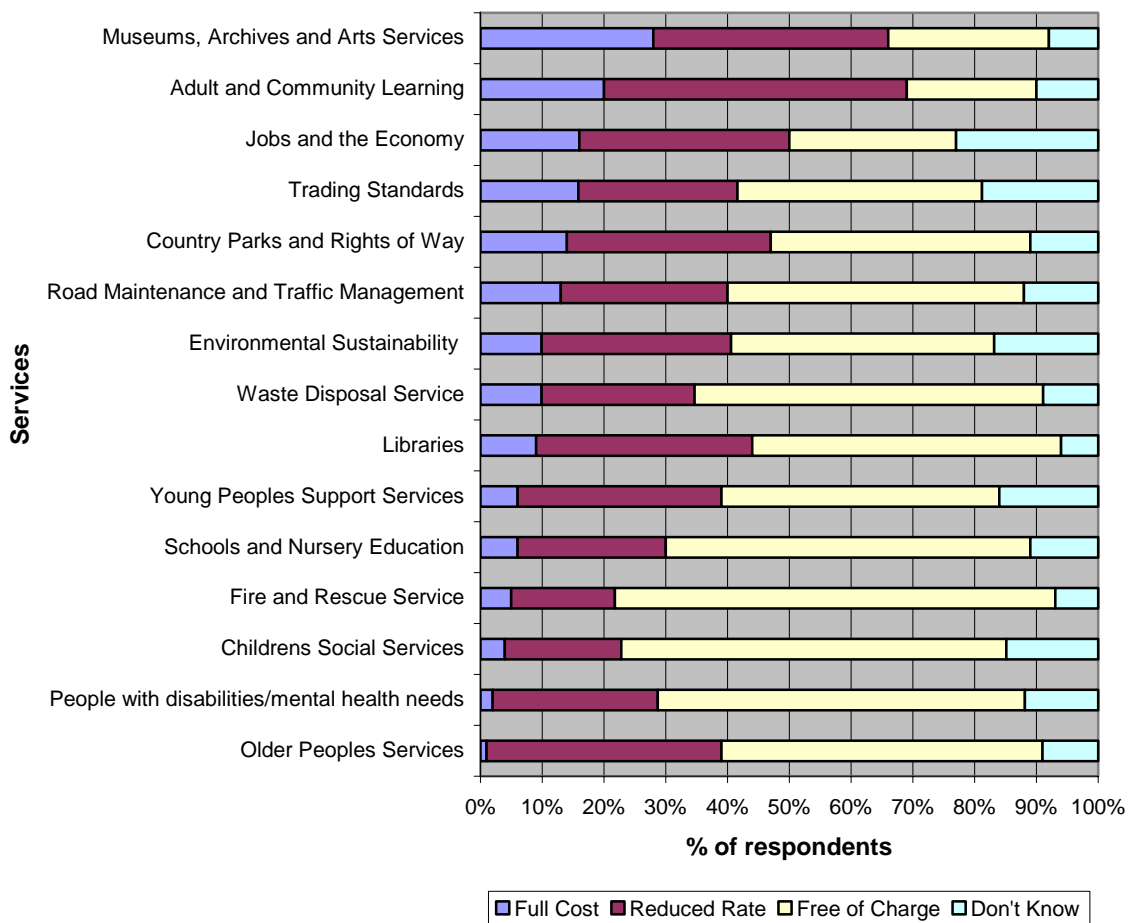
2.9 Community Engagement Survey

2.9.1 The Citizen's Panel survey on Community Engagement was undertaken by BMG in September/ October with the initial findings available in November 2006.

2.9.2 The survey covered questions on the local community, local decision-making, the Voluntary and Community sector, Local Government, Neighbourhood Policing and Emergency Planning.

2.9.3 Although there were no specific budget or council tax questions on the survey, several of the responses are included here to give members a fuller picture when considering the budget.

2.10 Satisfaction with their neighbourhood

2.10.1 Panel members were asked how satisfied or dissatisfied they are with their local neighbourhood. Figure 7, overleaf, shows the results.

2.10.2 85% of Panel members were satisfied with their neighbourhoods, including 41% who were very satisfied, and 44% who were fairly satisfied.

2.10.3 Only 9% of respondents expressed themselves to be either very (2%) or fairly (7%) dissatisfied with their neighbourhood.

Figure 7: Respondents who are satisfied with their Neighbourhood
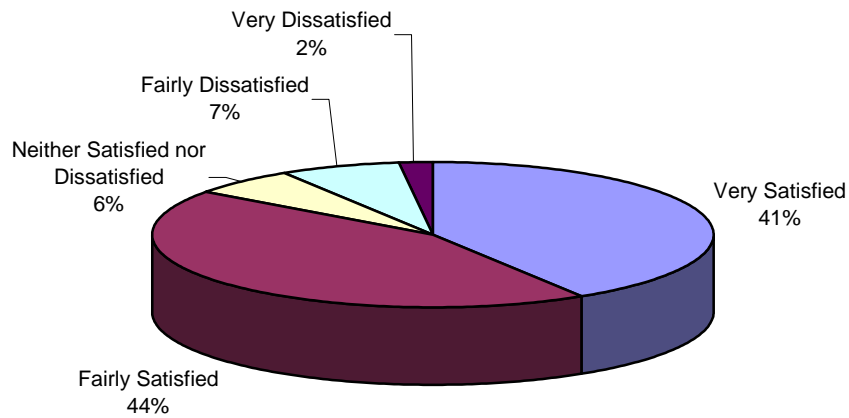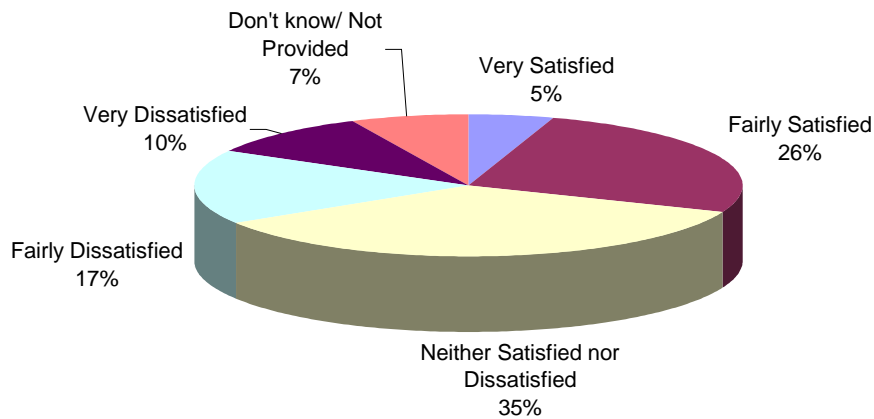

2.11 Participation in Decision making

2.11.1 The Panel members were informed about the opportunities to participate in decision making at Warwickshire County Council. For example through Citizen Panels, forums for older and younger people and consultation exercises. They were asked how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with these opportunities to participate. The results are shown in Figure 8, overleaf.

2.11.2 Approximately one third of respondents (31%) were either very of fairly satisfied with opportunities to participate in decision-making compared to 27% who felt dissatisfied. 35% felt neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and 7% didn't know.

Figure 8: Respondents satisfied with their opportunities to particpation in Decision Making


2.12   Influence on Decisions

2.12.1 Panel Members were then asked to think about their influence on decisions affecting their local neighbourhood. Figure 9 shows the percentage of respondents who fell they can/ cannot influence decisions.

2.12.2 Over half (54%) of all respondents' felt that they could not influence decisions against 39% who felt that they could.
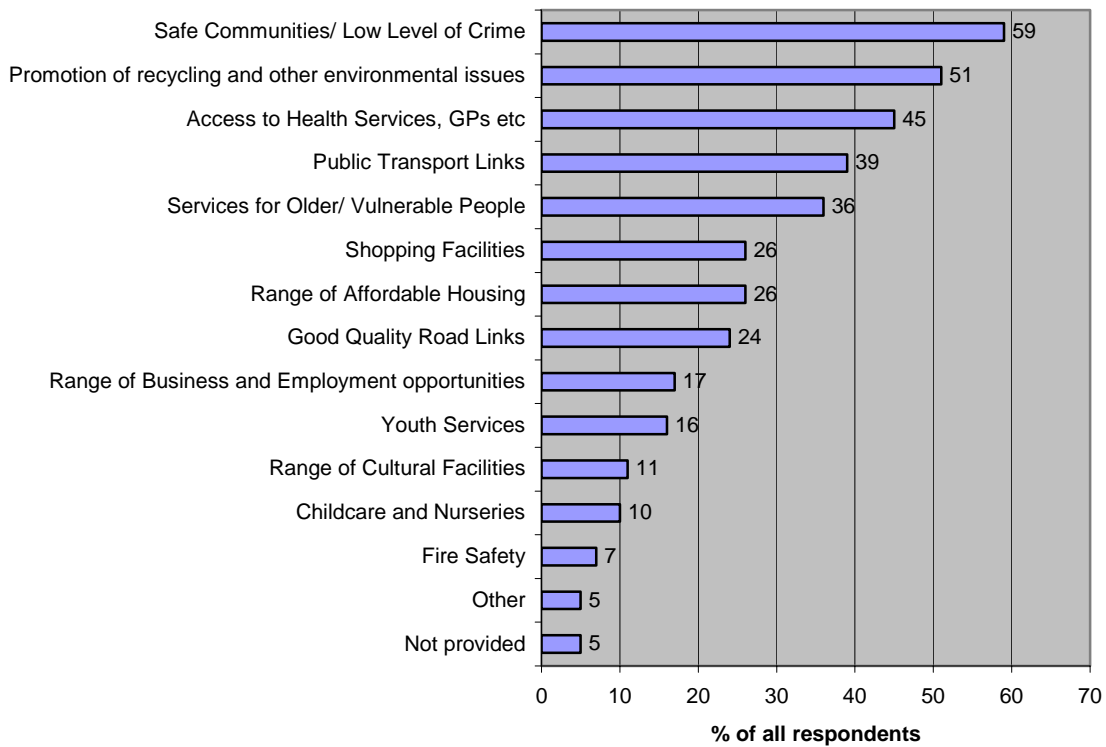
Figure 9: Respondents felt they can influence decisions

Warwickshire
County Council
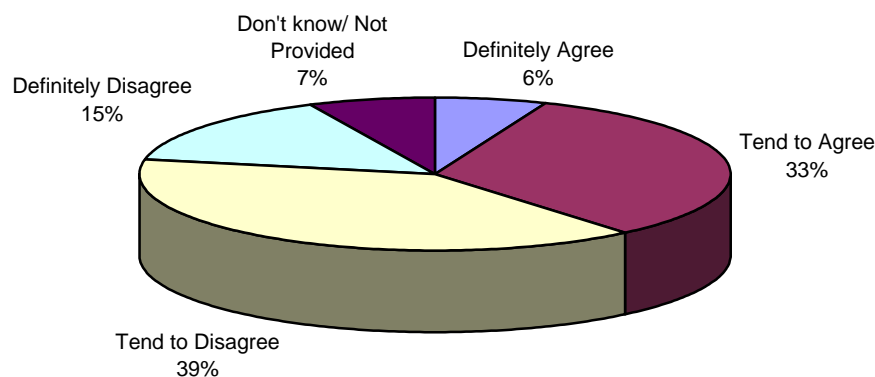
2.13   Involvement in Decision Making

2.13.1 All Panel members were asked would they like to be more involved in decisions by Warwickshire County Council. Approximately 44% agreed that they would like to be more involved while only 4% would not. However, it should be noted that almost half of respondents felt it would depend upon the issue.

2.13.2 Respondents were then given a list of areas and asked which of them they would most like to become more involved in. Figure 10, overleaf, presents the results.

2.13.3 The top five areas where respondents felt they would like to be more involved are; Safer Communities (59%), Promotion of Recycling and other environmental issues (51%), Access to Health Services (45%), Public Transport Links (39%), Services for Older/ Vulnerable People (36%).

2.13.4 Although a direct comparison between surveys is difficult, as both surveys do not deal with the same specific areas, it is interesting to note the similarities and differences between the services regarded as most important to respondents and the services they would most like to be involved in.

2.13.5 Waste Disposal/ Promotion of recycling features highly in both surveys, along with Older People's/Services for Older Vulnerable People and Road Maintenance and Traffic Management/ Public Transport Links. This would suggest that respondents feel that these are important service areas or areas they feel they know a lot about, and would like to contribute, to the decisions made by the Council in those areas.

2.13.6 However, it is interesting to note that despite Fire & Rescue Services and Schools and Nurseries featuring in the top five most important services their corresponding entries are in the bottom five of areas respondents would like to become more involved in. This suggests that whilst important to respondents to have services available they are satisfied to let the Council make the decisions for them.

2.13.7 Museum, Archives and Art Services/ Cultural Services and Young Peoples Support Services/ Youth Services were deemed to be the least important services to respondents and the services that respondents are least likely to want to be involved in the decisions.

Warwickshire
County Council

Figure 10: Areas which respondents felt they would like to be more involved in

| Area	% of all respondents
Safe Communities/ Low Level of Crime	59
Promotion of recycling and other environmental issues	51
Access to Health Services, GPs etc	45
Public Transport Links	39
Services for Older/ Vulnerable People	36
Shopping Facilities	26
Range of Affordable Housing	26
Good Quality Road Links	24
Range of Business and Employment opportunities	17
Youth Services	16
Range of Cultural Facilities	11
Childcare and Nurseries	10
Fire Safety	7
Other	5
Not provided	5

2.14 Methods of Involvement in Decision Making

2.14.1 Following on from that respondents were asked how would they like to become more involved in decision-making. Figure 11, overleaf, shows the various methods and their popularity.

2.14.2 The top three were Information in newspapers (57%), Postal surveys (55%) and local meetings (47%).

2.14.3 This budget and council tax consultation process involves both postal surveys (the citizens panel surveys) and local meetings (through attendance at Area Committees), and would suggest that our process for consultation covers the ways in which the majority of residents would wish to be consulted.

Warwickshire
County Council

Figure 11: Methonds to be involved in Decision Making
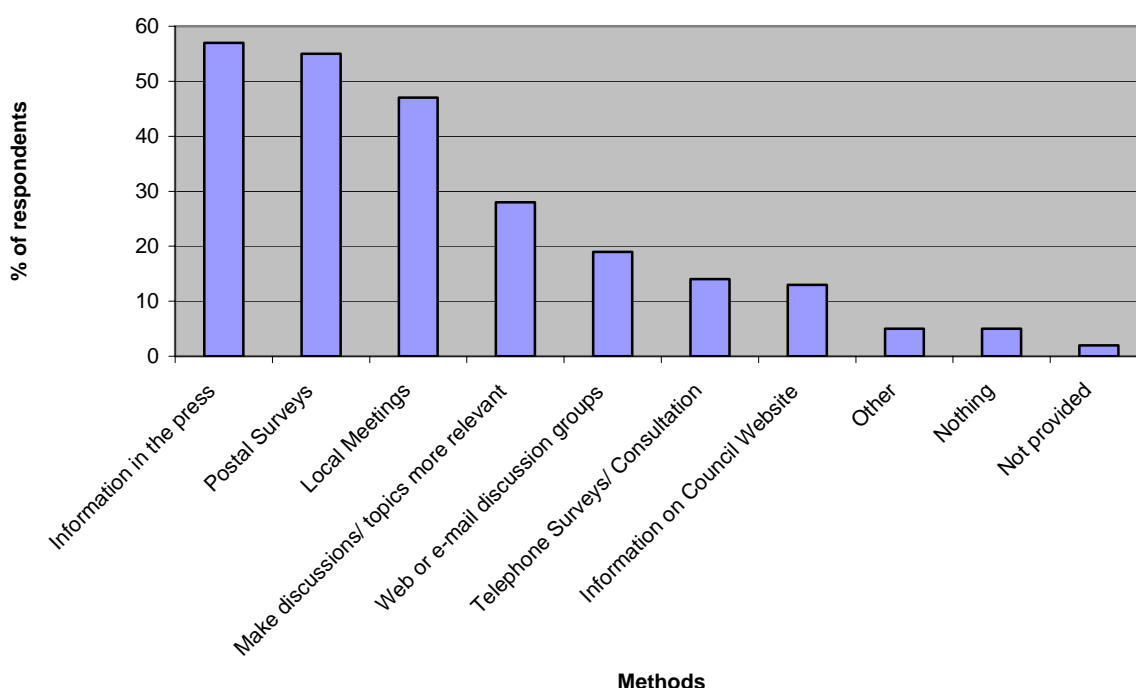
3 Area Committees

3.1 Presentations on the 2007/08 budget were made to each Area Committee towards the end of November 2006. These presentations gave the general public the chance to comment on and ask questions about the presentations.

3.2 The presentations were accepted and attendees took the opportunity to ask several questions.

3.3 In particular, there were questions concerning the Local Government Pension Scheme and the affect of an ageing population on increasing costs to the Council. There was also mention of the Council's Modernisation programme through the rationalisation of posts from restructuring and the greater capacity of the intranet to reduce costs.

3.4 There was some discussion around the need to publicise the presentations to Area Committees as part of the consultation process more widely. This year they were advertised through the publication of the Council's Committee Agenda, it was suggested that the consultation could be advertised through the press for future years.

David Clarke
Strategic Director, Resources
Shire Hall
Warwick
December 2006

Warwickshire
County Council