

Theme Report 9: Budget Priorities and Impacts

August 2016



Opinions:

Council Tax should be increased to help maintain essential services	46% agree
Public services would be better delivered by volunteers and charities	15% agree
Public services would be better delivered by private businesses	12% agree
Devon County Council had less to spend over the last three years	67% agree

Performance results:

Devon County Council has managed budget decisions well	22% agree	
Reductions to services have had a significant impact on me	33% agree*	
Further reductions to services would not impact on me significantly	17% agree	

(*29% disagree or strongly disagree, the remaining neither agree nor disagree; therefore 67% do not agree with this statement).

Budget decisions and impacts



Inequalities and variations in opinion between groups

Those who reported their physical or mental health was bad were significantly more likely to agree that reductions to services had had an impact on them, and slightly more likely to disagree that further cuts would have no impact on them.

Disabled people whose day-to-day activities were limited a lot, carers and those without use of a car were slightly more likely to agree that reductions to services have had a significant impact on them, but there was little difference for possible future negative impacts.

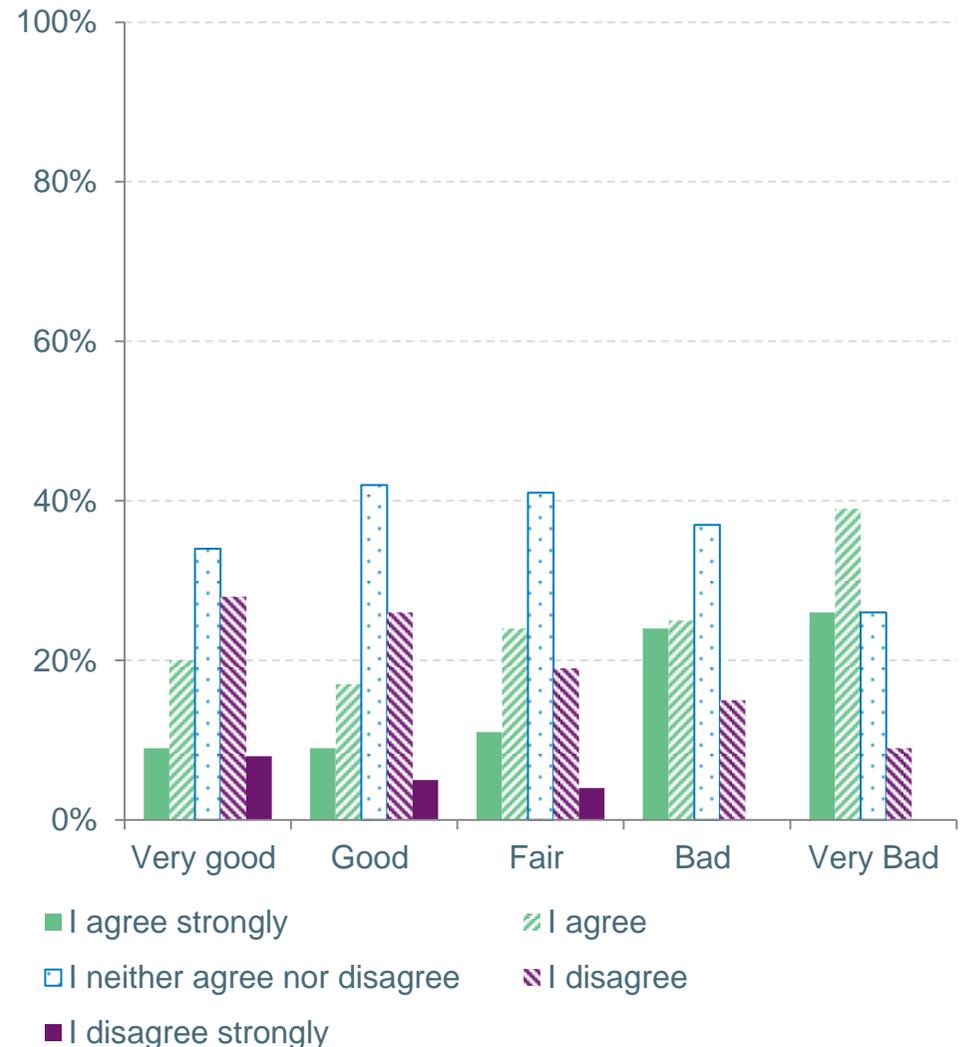
Respondents in the 35 to 64 year old group were slightly more likely to disagree that further reductions would not impact on them significantly. Men slightly disagreed that reductions to services had had a significant impact on them, whereas women slightly agreed.

Women were slightly more likely to disagree that public services would be better delivered by volunteers and charities, and similarly for private businesses.

Disabled people whose day-to-day activities were limited a lot, and those with bad physical or mental health were slightly less likely to disagree that public services would be better delivered by volunteers and charities or that Council Tax should be increased to help maintain essential services.

Disabled people (activities limited a lot) or those in poorer health were less likely to agree that Devon County Council had less to spend over the last three years, and slightly more likely to disagree that the council had managed budget decisions well.

Reductions to services have had a significant impact on me - by mental health



Although no comments section was provided for this area of questioning, comments from previous sections highlighted issues with cuts. Particular concerns were noticeable around public transport and social care:

I have a big concern that when I need social care - due to cuts - very little will be available.

Social care for the elderly is non-existent particularly for those with Alzhiemers and also for young people in care due to horrendous cuts...

Funding cuts have affected a lot of genuinely in need vulnerable people if you have taken away the only access to society and care they have, how are they to cope?

Available services are all being reduced and harder to obtain once the cuts imposed.

Cuts to day services are leaving older people and carers depressed and isolated.

The access to education and social care has been severely restricted by budget cuts.

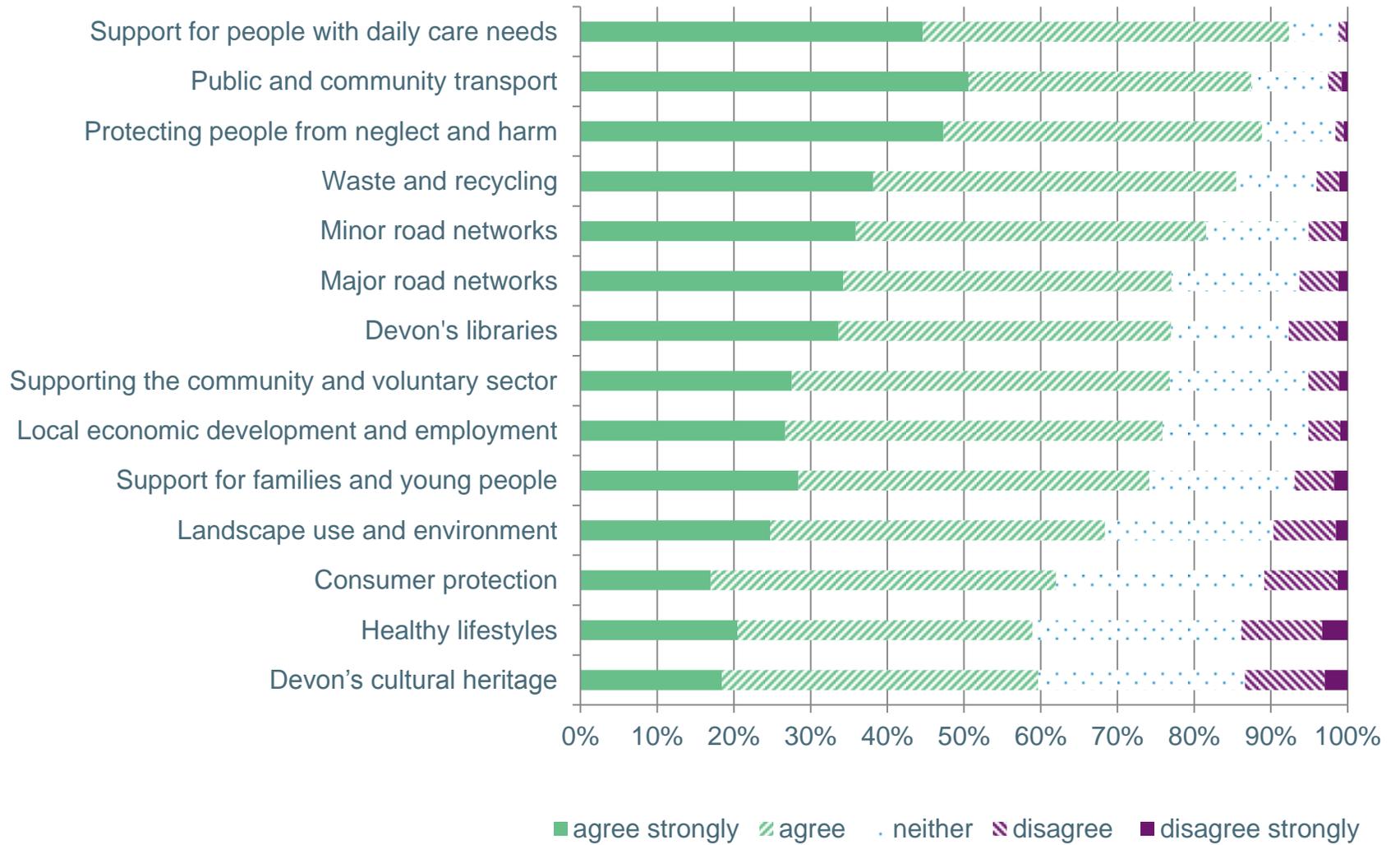
Public transport has been devastated by years of financial cuts, and is now poor in my community.

Our community is now fighting to retain library services and youth club services following the cuts to both.

The impact of government cuts... are having a severe impact on the Third Sector by decreasing our ability to help the Vulnerable and Disadvantaged effectively whilst increasing the demand from those in need.

With budgetary cuts to local council services so severe (and utterly unnecessary) it is very difficult to imagine the future of local services.

Priorities for Devon County Council



Priorities for Devon County Council

More than half of respondents agreed that the service areas highlighted were some form of priority, with around 90% of respondents selecting the top three. The top three priorities were: support for people with daily care needs, public and community transport, and protecting people from neglect and harm. The lowest priorities, still supported by around 60% of respondents, were consumer protection, healthy lifestyles and Devon's cultural heritage.

The top priorities are similar across all groups although there were a few differences within diversity characteristic groups such as gender (comparing men and women) for some service areas:

- Under 35 year olds and those with children placed support for families and young people higher, as did those with mental health problems and Black and Minority Ethnic people.
- Black and Minority Ethnic people and people whose first language was not English placed the environment and landscape higher than White British/English speaking groups.
- Libraries were a higher priority for older people than younger groups, women rated libraries slightly higher than men also. Out of all the areas Exeter, Torridge and urban areas rated libraries higher. Other groups that placed libraries higher were: Black and Minority Ethnic (including 'White other'), people without a car and people whose mental health was very bad or people with mild disability.
- People with bad mental health and disabled people placed support for the voluntary and community sector higher than their comparators.
- Of all the areas, Mid Devon residents viewed waste and recycling as a lower priority.
- Roads appeared to be a slightly higher priority for men than women, as well as it being the highest priority in Torridge. Most areas placed public transport as a higher priority to roads with the exception of Torridge. People with a car still rated public transport as slightly higher importance than roads.