

Caerphilly County Borough Council

The Caerphilly Conversation - November 2022

What matters to you

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Background

Over the last few years, we have been asking our residents, through an ongoing conversation, which council services are most important to them. In turn they have told us which areas they think we should prioritise. These views are helping us:

- Continue focusing our efforts on the issues that most impacted their quality of life
- Shape our programme of 10 council wide ‘corporate reviews’ that aim to make sure the council is as effective as it can be
- Make sure that the services we deliver are in line with what residents most need

Like all councils in Wales and across the UK, we are facing budget pressures. In order that we can protect the things that are most needed and valued, we need our communities to tell us if we are still on the right tracks – and tell us what really matters to them.

The feedback we get will be important in informing council priority setting for the next few years and in turn, making sure we have a balanced budget, which is something we must do.

What we did

The engagement ran from 7th November to 6th December 2022. The engagement was widely promoted to raise awareness via:

- Media release <https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/news/news-bulletin/november-2022/%E2%80%8Bwhat-matters-to-you>
- A dedicated web page linked directly from the home page of the Council’s website
- Regular digital media posts throughout the duration of the consultation period including Facebook, Twitter and NewsOnline (sent to subscribers via e-mail)
- Posters and pull up banners displayed in libraries and other public facing Council venues
- Targeted e-mails to groups and organisations in the borough

Residents were able to get involved and tell us what was important to them in a variety of ways.

Face to face engagement

A series of informal face-to-face drop-in sessions were arranged for residents across the borough. Residents were also spoken with at a number of events. Three online sessions were scheduled. However, no one requested to attend any of the online sessions.

See **Annex 1** for the schedule of planned face-to-face engagement sessions.

The focus of the face-to-face conversation was simply to understand the things that are most important to residents and their families. Comments were collected on a postcard that prompted residents to tell us the things that are most important to them in their life and their family's lives as residents of Caerphilly county borough.

A conversation guide was prepared for colleagues engaging with residents to provide context and prompt questions for initiating conversation (see **Annex 2**).

Survey

A survey was made available on the Council's website. The survey could be completed online or printed if preferred. Copies of the survey were also available from all libraries across the borough and could also be returned via libraries or through the post. The survey contained open ended and closed questions to elicit an understanding of what residents think the council should prioritise as well as what is most important to them and their families. A copy of the survey can be found in **Annex 3**.

Targeted engagement with stakeholders and seldom heard groups

Key individuals, groups and organisations across the borough were contacted directly via e-mail and asked to promote and share details of the engagement with their contacts/members. Where groups felt it was appropriate and were able to accommodate face-to-face conversations within the timescales, these were also arranged. **Annex 4** details resident and stakeholder groups contacted and notes where there was face-to-face engagement.

Key Findings

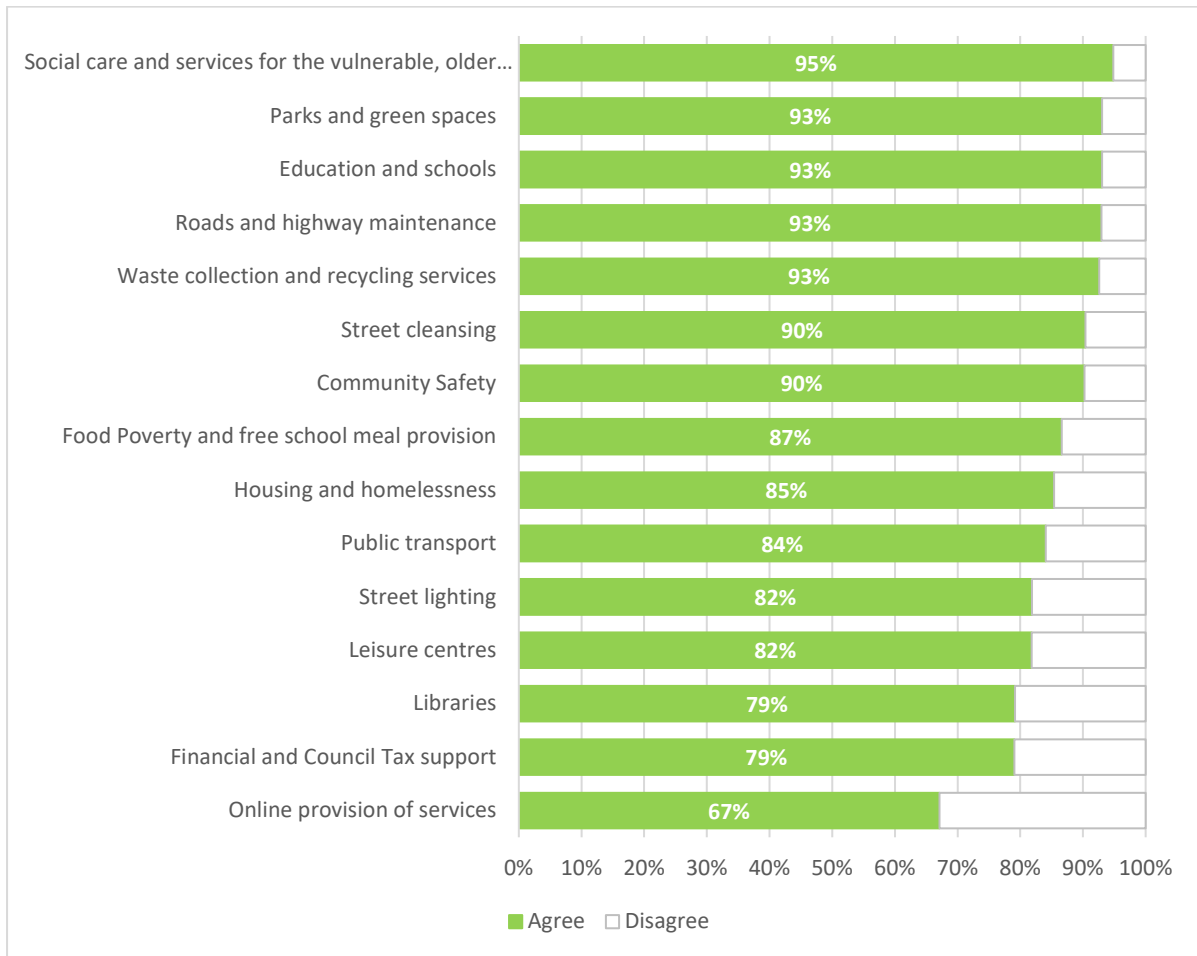
Over **500 comments** and a total of **292 completed surveys** were received by the closing date.

*Note: The statistical data presented within this report relates to full survey responses received online or in paper format. The number of responses received for individual questions may be lower than the total number of completed questionnaires returned. Percentages are therefore based on the number of responses to individual questions (n=number of responses). **For consistency with previous surveys, only those who have expressed a view have been included in the statistical analysis with the exclusion of "don't know" or "prefer not to say" responses.***

Council Priorities

For context, in the borough wide resident survey undertaken in January 2022, **Graph 1** shows a high level of agreement with the list of services that the Council should prioritise.

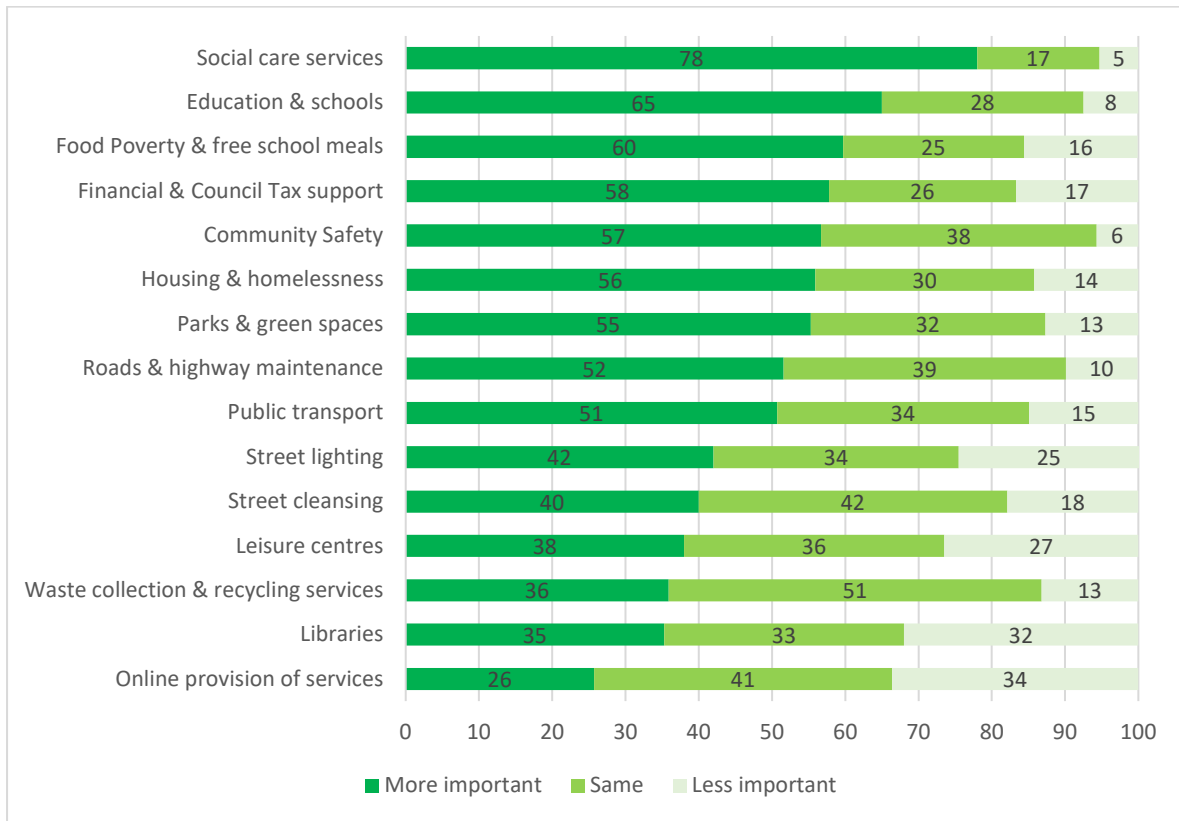
Graph 1: Do you agree or disagree that these are still the areas that the Council should prioritise when planning our services and budgets for 2022/23 and beyond?



In the current survey, respondents were asked to consider whether these services are more important, the same level of importance or less important to them now than a year ago.

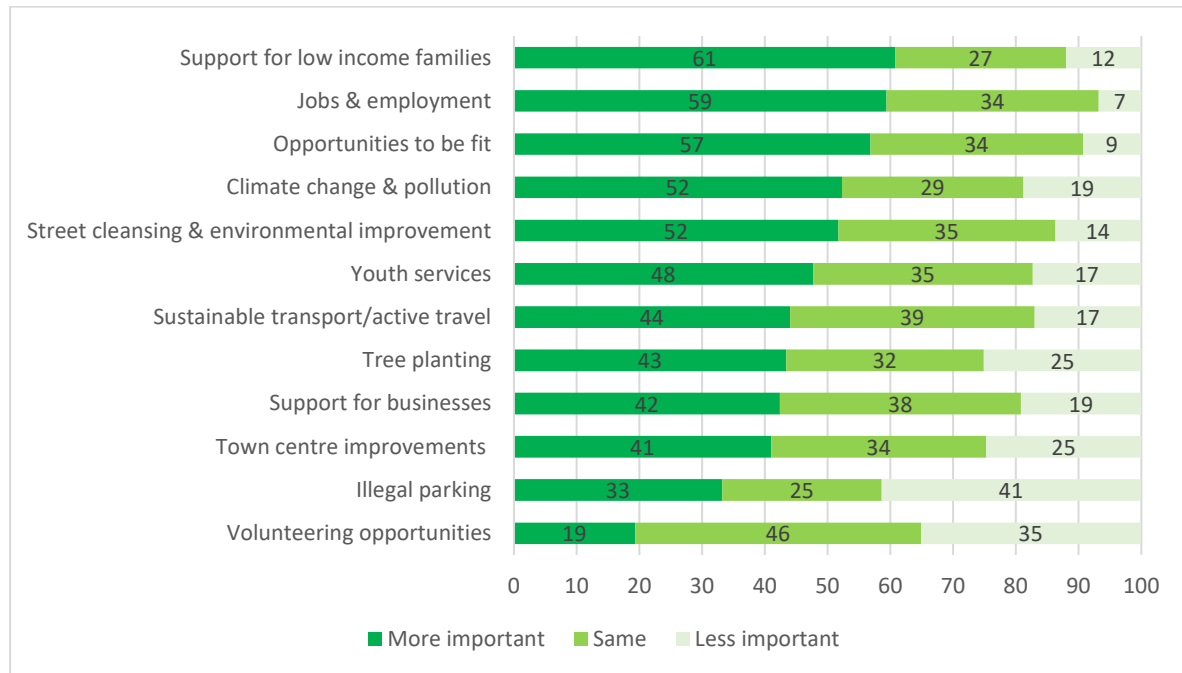
Graph 2 highlights that the priority areas previously identified by our communities are still important to them. In the current survey, 90% or more of those who responded felt that social care services, community safety, education and schools, and roads and highway maintenance were *more important* or *about the same* as they were a year ago by.

Graph 2: Percentage of respondents who felt that the priority areas previously identified by residents are more important, about the same or less important than a year ago.



In the previous survey, we asked residents to tell us if anything was missing from the list of priorities. The open-ended responses were themed and grouped together and the current survey asked residents to tell us whether they still felt these things are important. The list of additional priorities is included in **Graph 3** and again, shows a high level of importance for the priorities previously identified. Over 90% considered jobs and employment and opportunities to be fit *more important* or *the same* as a year ago.

Graph 3: Percentage of respondents who felt that the priority areas previously identified by residents are more important, about the same or less important than a year ago.



What matters to you and why? Is there anything missing from the list of priorities?

The majority of comments received through open-ended survey responses and face-to-face conversations reinforced respondents' agreement that the priorities previously identified are the correct ones.

Key themes that elicited a number of comments include:

- The environment
 - Active travel – should be enabled and encouraged
 - Promoting biodiversity – through planting and less frequent grass cutting
 - Climate change – raising awareness, cleaner public transport
 - Litter and environmental problems – behaviour change
 - Street cleansing
 - Pollution reduction
 - Protection of greenfield sites
- Community safety
 - Anti-social behaviour
 - Street lighting (in particular relation to community safety and road safety)
- Cost of living
 - Tackling homelessness
 - Financial support and support for low-income families in crisis
 - Keeping council tax increase to a minimum

- Food poverty / free school meals
 - Warm hubs (libraries were referenced)
- Customer services – ease of access to services, access to services online but not everyone is digitally enabled
- Education and schools
- Health care
- Housing
 - Ensuring adequate, quality, low cost housing
 - Ensuring supporting infrastructure is in place when building homes
- Jobs and employment – wages not increasing in line with current financial pressures
- Libraries – safe, warm spaces, essential in combating social isolation – as well as the activities on offer and access to books
- Opportunities to be physically and mentally fit
 - Mental health support
 - Prevention of social isolation
 - Leisure centres
 - Parks and green spaces – as a way of supporting mental and physical well-being as well as contributing to
- Support for the third sector and promote volunteering to support vulnerable people
- Public transport
- Roads and highways maintenance
- Road safety
 - Illegal parking (in relation to road safety, issues of accessibility with pavement parking)
- Tourism/events
- Town centre improvements, support for businesses
- Waste collection and recycling – residents are very happy with the current service and appreciate the simplicity of the recycling system in place although there were suggestions for less frequent collections for waste. Missed collections were noted by some.
- Provision of services for young people and children
- Support for vulnerable residents, specifically, children and adults with disabilities and additional learning needs, veterans and those experiencing mental health issues
- The importance of libraries and leisure centres and other local services
- Support for the third sector to enable them to support vulnerable residents

In addition, the following areas were highlighted as ways in which the Council could do things differently:

- Focus on essential services and do the basics well
- Communicate with and listen to residents- the importance of ensuring that residents have their say and that the Council listens and acts on views in decision making
- Inclusion and accessibility to services – including accessible transport
- Local community – the importance of supportive local communities, family and friends,
- Efficiency in provision of services – acting in evidence from service reviews, making the changes. Take a joined up approach.
- Review of middle and senior management, prioritise front-line staff recruitment
- Use of reserves
- Council tax
- Asset rationalisation – reduce the number of buildings and fully utilise those maintained including for community use
- Income generation – charging for services, car parking and penalties for littering, illegal parking etc

A full digest of comments from the survey and face-to-face engagement (redacted) can be found in **Annex 5**.

List of Annexes

Annex 1: Face to face engagement

Annex 2: Conversation guide

Annex 3: Survey

Annex 4: Stakeholder and seldom heard groups

Annex 5: Digest of open-ended survey responses and comments from face-to-face conversations