

Budget Consultation – 2012/13 Final Report

Methodology

The consultation was based around a simple survey, asking respondents about their spending priorities for 32 identified lines of Council spending. These budget lines are the same as those used in the 2011/12 Budget consultation.

The survey was made available online and as a paper copy. It was promoted by a number of means:

- Express & Echo
- Display in the Customer Service Centre and consultation exercise with Lead Councillors
- Consultation exercise in Bedford Square with Lead Councillors
- Home page of the City Council website
- Social media (Twitter/Facebook)

It was also sent out to the Wavelength panel.

Responses received: **768**

Wavelength: **687**

Standalone survey: **81**

To take account of any inherent bias in the sample (older people are more likely to participate than younger age groups) a simple weighting has been applied to the data. This evens out bias to give a result that is more representative of Exeter's demographic profile.

Results

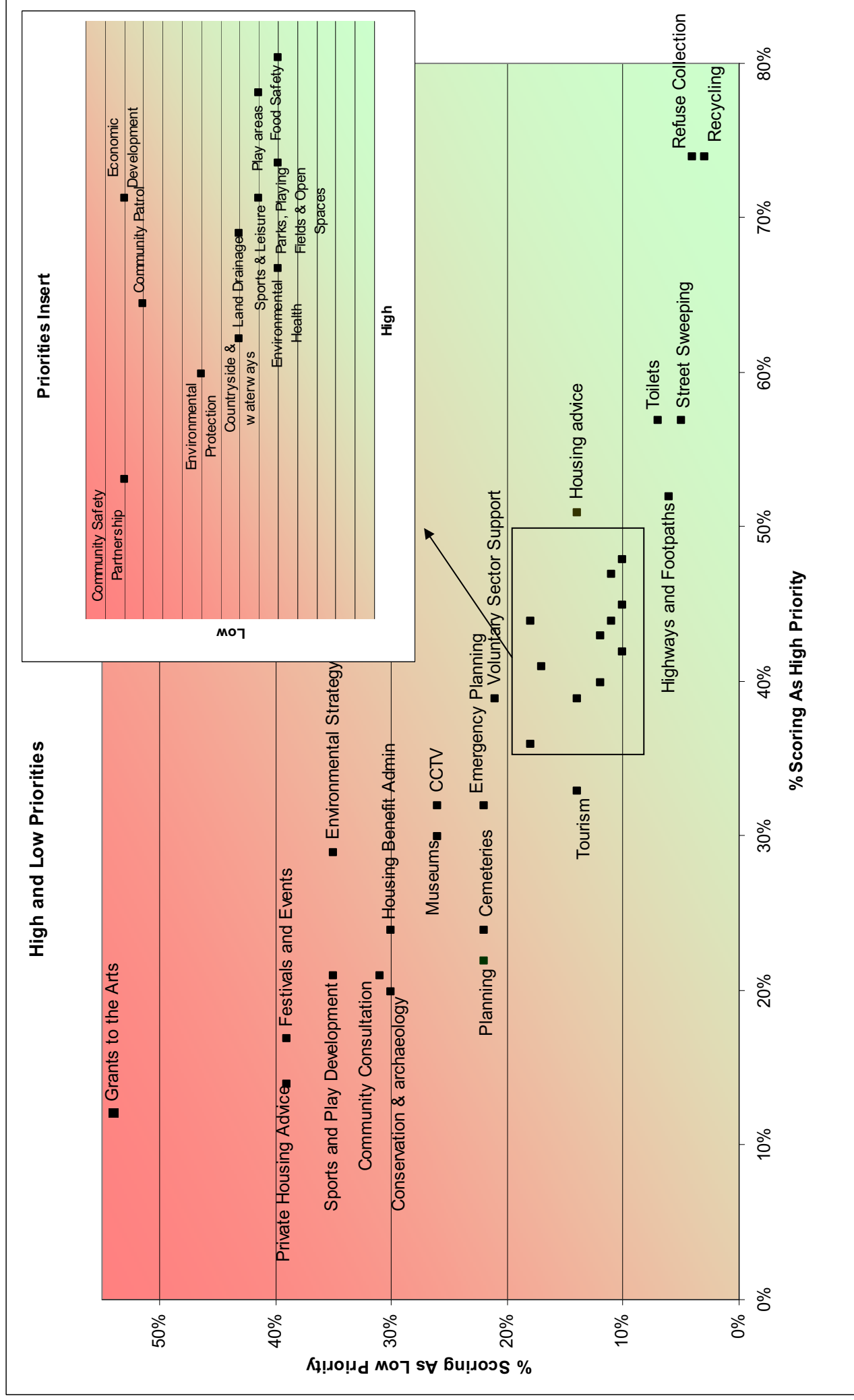
The basic results are reported below in an exact copy of the survey form. Respondents were asked to rate whether each budget area was a High, Medium or Low spending priority.

Service	Spending	Income	Net cost	High	Medium	Low
Museums and heritage						
Museums including the Royal Albert memorial Museum and St Nicholas Priory	2,975,050	952,860	2,022,190	30%	44%	26%
Conservation and archaeology	810,400	611,420	198,980	20%	50%	30%
Arts and Festivals						
Grants to the arts	293,100	0	293,100	12%	34%	54%
Festivals and events	408,070	201,760	206,310	17%	44%	39%
Economy and tourism						
Economic development including support for major projects such as the Science Park, the Skypark and improvements to jctn 29	787,120	147,940	639,180	44%	37%	18%
Tourism including tourist information and the Underground Passages	627,130	184,210	442,920	33%	53%	14%
Leisure and recreation						
Play areas – providing play areas across the city	165,530	0	165,530	47%	42%	11%
Parks, playing fields and open spaces – maintenance and development including skateparks, tennis courts and floral displays	1,744,020	151,140	1,592,880	45%	44%	10%
Sports facilities, leisure centres and swimming pools including Pyramids, Clifton Hill, Northbrook golf course	444,560	320,590	123,970	44%	45%	11%

Countryside and waterways including the valley parks and Exeter canal	658,910	202,480	456,430	40%	48%	12%
Sport and play development	146,740	16,020	130,720	21%	44%	35%
Waste collection and recycling						
Refuse collection – household and business black bin collections	1,601,090	51,450	1,549,640	74%	22%	4%
Recycling – green and brown bin collections, 90 recycling points and collection of clinical waste such as needles	1,182,780	845,180	337,600	74%	23%	3%
Clean and well maintained environment						
Toilets	410,330	15,000	395,330	57%	36%	7%
Street Sweeping	1,284,130	0	1,284,130	57%	39%	5%
Environmental protection						
Litter enforcement, dog wardens and pest control	227,250	97,780	129,470	39%	47%	14%
Food safety – inspections of restaurants and caterers	284,580	600	283,980	48%	42%	10%
Environmental strategy and work to combat climate change	213,600	33,950	179,650	29%	35%	35%
Environmental health – pollution control, air quality, health & safety	349,160	46,650	302,510	42%	48%	10%
Land drainage including flood prevention	123,000	0	123,000	43%	45%	12%
Community safety						
Community patrol	249,960	4,300	245,660	41%	42%	17%
CCTV – providing, maintaining and monitoring CCTV cameras	696,930	95,500	601,430	32%	42%	26%
Community Safety Partnership contribution to providing community safety with police and others	53,650	0	53,650	36%	46%	18%
Emergency Planning – making sure the Council can support the city in an emergency	31,430	0	31,430	32%	46%	22%
Bereavement Services						
Cemeteries – providing and maintaining Higher, Exwick and Topsham cemeteries	541,020	255,370	285,650	24%	54%	22%
Transport and Highways						
Highways and footpaths – maintaining council owned roads and paths	220,390	0	220,390	52%	42%	6%
Planning services						
Planning including planning applications, appeals, conservation and planning for the future	1,650,680	503,720	1,146,960	22%	57%	22%
Housing Services						
Housing advice and enabling including prevention of homelessness	4,383,230	3,145,830	1,237,400	51%	35%	14%
Private sector housing – monitoring and advice to landlords and improvement grants	470,140	122,970	347,170	14%	47%	39%
Housing benefit administration	518,420	0	518,420	24%	46%	30%
Community Support						
Community consultation and involvement Wavelength and community engagement	146,810	0	146,810	21%	49%	31%
Voluntary sector support – including grants to voluntary and community groups such as CAB	268,480	0	268,480	39%	40%	21%

By plotting the High score against the Low score for each area on a chart (see next page) it is possible to see where people's priorities lie. Budget areas in the bottom right corner of the graph have a more positive score than budget areas in the top left.

The chart below shows the balance between the Low Priority and High Priority score for each budget area. The area in the centre is shown as an insert because the labels will not fit on the main chart.



Another way to make sense of the data is to take the Low score away from the High score. This yields a Net Approval score.

	High	Medium	Low	Net approval score
Recycling	74%	44%	3%	71%
Refuse Collection	74%	50%	4%	70%
Street Sweeping	57%	34%	5%	52%
Toilets	57%	44%	7%	50%
Highways and Footpaths *	52%	37%	6%	46%
Food Safety	48%	53%	10%	38%
Housing advice	51%	42%	14%	37%
Play Areas	47%	44%	11%	36%
Parks, Playing Fields & Open Spaces	45%	45%	10%	35%
Sports and Leisure Facilities	44%	48%	11%	33%
Environmental Health	42%	44%	10%	32%
Land Drainage	43%	22%	12%	31%
Countryside and Waterways	40%	23%	12%	28%
Economic Development	44%	36%	18%	26%
Environmental protection	39%	39%	14%	25%
Community Patrol	41%	47%	17%	24%
Tourism	33%	42%	14%	19%
Voluntary Sector Support	39%	35%	21%	18%
Community Safety Partnership	36%	48%	18%	18%
Emergency Planning	32%	45%	22%	10%
CCTV	32%	42%	26%	6%
Museums	30%	42%	26%	4%
Cemeteries	24%	46%	22%	2%
Planning	22%	46%	22%	0%
Environmental Strategy	29%	54%	35%	-6%
Housing Benefit Admin	24%	42%	30%	-6%
Conservation & archaeology	20%	57%	30%	-10%
Community Consultation	21%	35%	31%	-10%
Sports and Play Development	21%	47%	35%	-14%
Festivals and Events	17%	46%	39%	-22%
Private Housing Advice	14%	49%	39%	-25%
Grants to the Arts	12%	40%	54%	-42%

- The budget line refers to 'maintaining council owned roads and footpaths'. There is a strong possibility that respondents are confusing this with the wider road and pavement network which is maintained by Devon County Council.

Key findings

- **Top priority is refuse collection and recycling. This is consistent with previous survey work, including the budget consultation carried out in 2010.**
- **Lowest priority is grants to the arts. This is also consistent with previous survey work.**
- **We cannot draw any conclusions as to why respondents have returned the figures they have.**

Breakdown by gender

The table below shows Net Approval by gender.

	Net approval MALE	Net approval FEMALE	M/F gap	Who values most?
Community Patrol	8%	36%	28	F
Environmental Health	20%	40%	20	F
Land Drainage	21%	40%	19	F
Housing Benefit Admin	-15%	4%	19	F
Environmental Strategy	-16%	2%	18	F
Parks, Playing Fields & Open Spaces	26%	43%	17	F
Housing advice	28%	45%	17	F
Refuse Collection	61%	77%	16	F
CCTV	-3%	13%	16	F
Toilets	41%	56%	15	F
Street Sweeping	44%	59%	15	F
Emergency Planning	3%	18%	15	F
Food Safety	31%	45%	14	F
Community Safety Partnership	10%	24%	14	F
Planning	-8%	6%	14	F
Sports and Leisure Facilities	27%	39%	12	F
Sports and Play Development	-20%	-8%	12	F
Recycling	64%	76%	12	F
Voluntary Sector Support	12%	23%	11	F
Environmental protection	20%	30%	10	F
Cemeteries	-3%	7%	10	F
Highways and Footpaths	42%	52%	10	F
Countryside and Waterways	23%	32%	9	F
Private Housing Advice	-29%	-20%	9	F
Economic Development	30%	22%	8	M
Festivals and Events	-19%	-26%	7	M
Play Areas	31%	38%	7	F
Conservation & archaeology	-8%	-13%	5	M
Community Consultation	-8%	-12%	4	M
Museums	3%	6%	3	F
Tourism	19%	21%	2	F
Grants to the Arts	-42%	-42%	0	=

Key Findings

- Of the 32 budget areas, 27 were more highly valued by women than men. This is consistent with previous budget consultation work
- There were significant gaps between the Net Approval of men and women for the majority of budget areas
- The biggest difference between male and female respondents was over the Community Patrol, where Net Approval by women was 36%, as opposed to 8% for men
- It is difficult to draw any firm conclusions from this data. However, it would be reasonable to infer that female respondents are more likely to value the services provided by ECC

Breakdown by age group

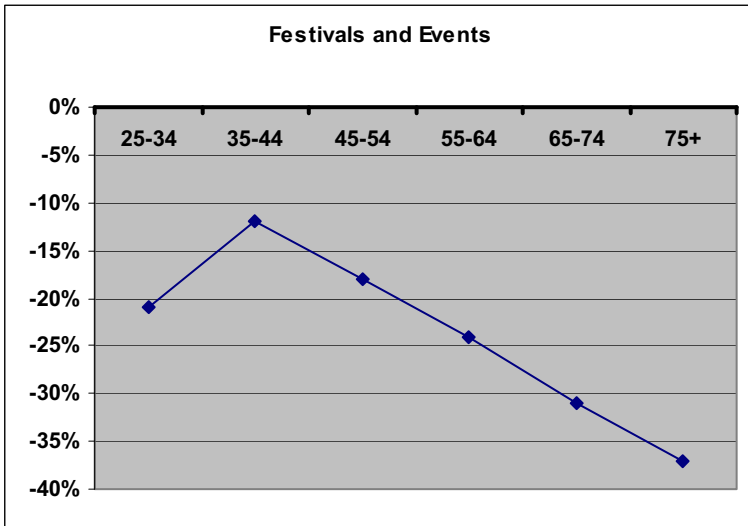
The following table shows the Net Approval for each budget area, broken down by age group. The age group 18-24 has been omitted because there were so few responses returned that it is impossible to provide meaningful analysis.

	Net Approval by age group					
	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
Museums	-6%	4%	18%	8%	-3%	8%
Conservation & archaeology	-4%	-23%	-4%	-3%	-18%	-17%
Grants to the Arts	-49%	-39%	-34%	-41%	-42%	-44%
Festivals and Events	-21%	-12%	-18%	-24%	-31%	-37%
Economic Development	45%	23%	21%	12%	23%	19%
Tourism	23%	29%	14%	18%	13%	12%
Play Areas	21%	56%	35%	39%	35%	23%
Parks, Playing Fields & Open Spaces	29%	43%	41%	38%	37%	28%
Sports and Leisure Facilities	30%	40%	44%	35%	30%	14%
Countryside and Waterways	25%	33%	34%	38%	22%	7%
Sports and Play Development	-27%	-11%	-11%	-6%	-1%	-15%
Refuse Collection	61%	62%	73%	77%	79%	76%
Recycling	69%	67%	70%	76%	73%	70%
Toilets	33%	40%	47%	65%	59%	73%
Street Sweeping	55%	45%	48%	56%	57%	52%
Environmental protection	17%	26%	25%	29%	36%	29%
Food Safety	31%	34%	28%	47%	49%	54%
Environmental Strategy	6%	15%	-11%	-15%	-16%	-27%
Environmental Health	38%	30%	26%	30%	32%	29%
Land Drainage	32%	30%	25%	26%	39%	39%
Community Patrol	12%	29%	16%	38%	30%	24%
CCTV	2%	0%	-6%	14%	14%	20%
Community Safety Partnership	4%	23%	9%	31%	24%	25%
Emergency Planning	-7%	3%	16%	24%	22%	24%
Cemeteries	-19%	-5%	10%	17%	12%	19%
Highways and Footpaths	39%	52%	44%	48%	59%	42%
Planning	-4%	2%	-9%	1%	9%	2%
Housing advice	31%	40%	33%	43%	42%	25%
Private Housing Advice	-31%	-25%	-27%	-13%	-24%	-21%
Housing Benefit Admin	-17%	-10%	-1%	3%	2%	7%
Community Consultation	-29%	-5%	-2%	-4%	-1%	-12%
Voluntary Sector Support	2%	23%	27%	32%	19%	10%

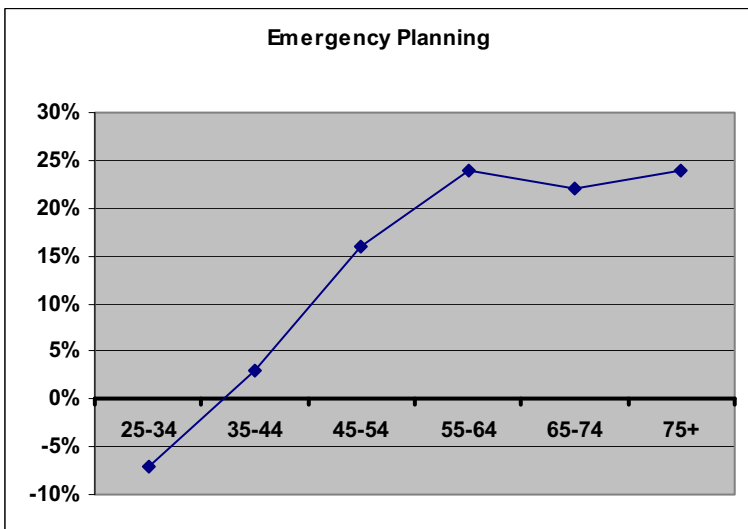
In order to make sense of this information the data has been plotted onto graphs. In many cases there is little variance between age groups. For some budget areas however, there is a clear trend across age groups and these graphs are reproduced below.

The **bold** line across each graph shows the age groups and marks the 0% line. The data points for some budget areas may be entirely below the 0% line, indicating that all age groups returned a negative Net Approval.

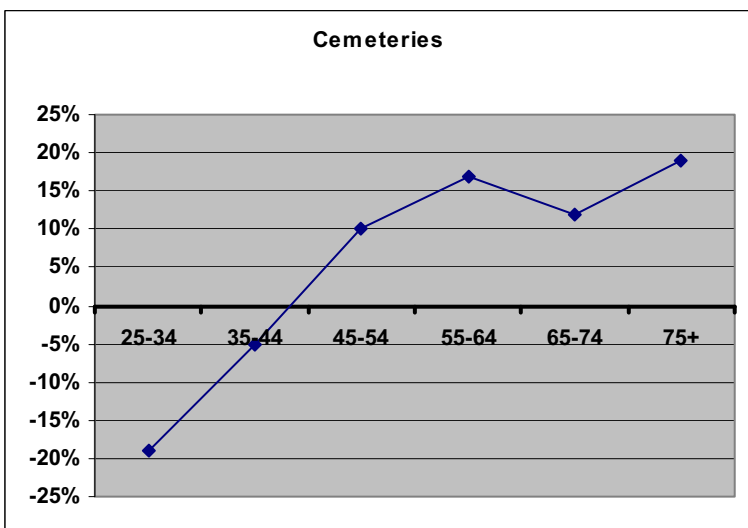
The graph for Festivals & Events shows the clearest possible trend, a straight line down from the 35-44 age group at -12% to the 75+ age group at -37%. The older the respondent, the less likely they are to value this budget area.



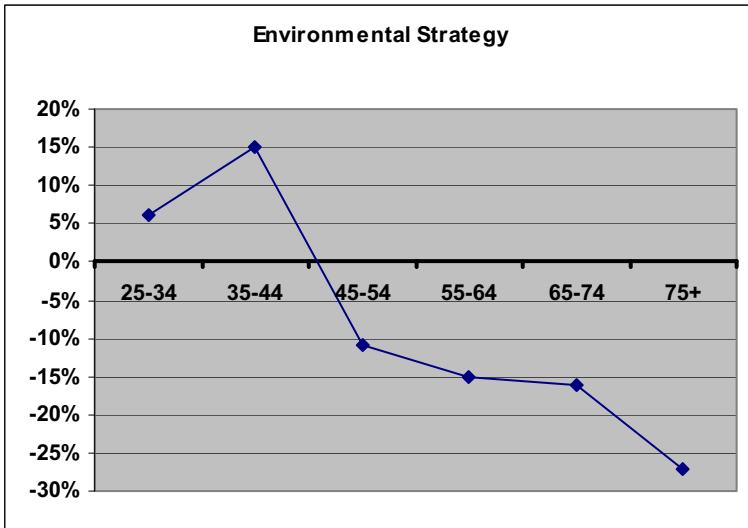
The opposite is true of Emergency Planning. Here the Net Approval goes from -7% among 25-34 year olds up to 24%. The score plateaus, with similar Net Approval scores for the three oldest age groups, but clearly appreciation of Emergency Planning increases with age. There is a huge gap (31 percentage points) between the lowest and highest Net Approval scores.



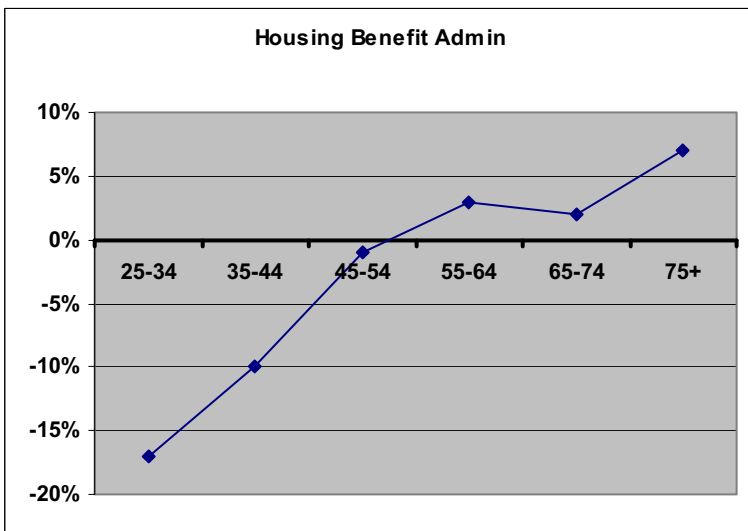
Another service that seems to be appreciated more with age is Cemeteries. Here the Net Approval goes from -19% to 19%, a span of 38 percentage points.



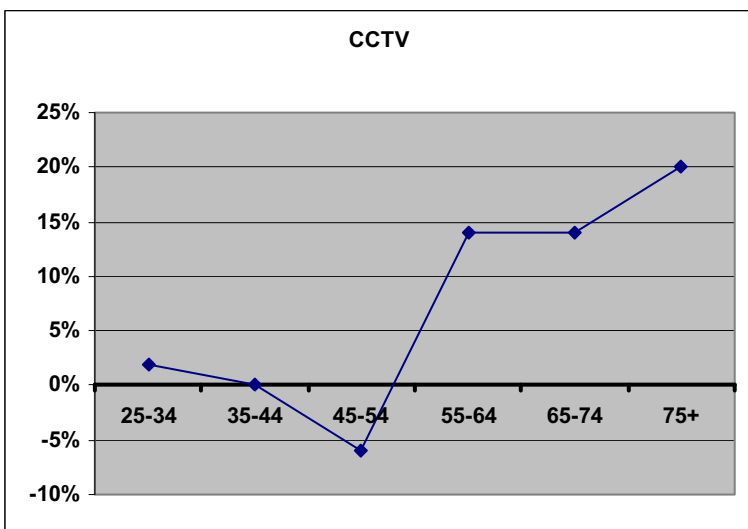
Environmental Strategy shows a clear drop in support with increasing age. The two youngest age groups have a positive Net Approval but this drops sharply and continues down to a low of -27% for the 75+ group.



Housing Benefit Administration shows a steady rise, from -17% to 7%.



Finally, CCTV seems to be appreciated more by older respondents, although there is a noticeable dip in Net Approval by the 45-54 age group.



Although these graphs show interesting trends they don't offer an explanation of the underlying reasons for the trend. For example they don't tell us **why** people have a greater appreciation of Cemeteries and Emergency Planning as they get older. It is tempting to come up with 'common sense' explanations, but these may not be accurate and should be treated with caution.

Comments

A total of **168** comments were received from the Wavelength survey.

The majority of the comments have been put into at least one category if not more. The table below shows the number of comments for each theme.

Theme	Number
Reduce costs	31
Staff	27
Increase charges/revenue	26
Devon County Council functions	26
Invest or maintain spending	20
Reduce arts funding	18
Utilise volunteers or those on community service	16
Positive comments about the Council	10

Reduce costs

Comments around this theme suggested reducing costs in a range of areas as well as reducing the level of service on offer:

- *CCTV budget is disproportionately high*
- *Encourage indoor staff to wear warmer clothes so reduce temperature.*
- *Keep bin collections fortnightly (not for black bags)*
- *Reduce transport fleet*
- *Parks department are still cutting grass and hedges in areas where it would be far better for the environment as well as saving money if left alone.*
- *Reduce the amount that is paid to councillors and also their number*

Staff

There were a range of negative comments about staffing:

- *In the current climate, the trial of Saturday morning opening of the CSC has been wholly inappropriate*
- *Stop gold plated pensions, early retirements on ill health, generous redundancy payments etc*
- *Cut down on bureaucracy & paperwork*
- *Need to reduce sums paid to consultants - don't we have managers with appropriate experience / qualifications able to make decisions*

Respondents encouraged further cuts to management costs and asking staff how to save money.

Increase charges/revenue

Some respondents highlighted opportunities to raise money and involve businesses:

- *As many activities should be made self funding as possible*
- *Revenue should come from the users of the facility*
- *More and bigger fines for littering and fly tipping*
- *Economic development should be paid for by businesses who stand to make a profit by a retrospective levy once they are up and running*
- *Can the fee for planning applications be increased*
- *More traffic enforcement officers*
- *Encourage tourism.*

Invest or maintain

In contrast to those who suggested reduction in costs and service, some suggested maintaining many services or even investing:

- *Don't let the green spaces in the streets be left to overgrow for another year. The image it gives of Exeter is not great*
- *This is essential expenditure rather than savings*
- *The Council must invest in and prioritise projects that maintain or improve employment prospects.*

Reduce arts funding

Although a few opposed cuts to the arts far more were in favour stating:

- *Avoid arts/festival spending, museum spending disgusting - an expensive luxury*
- *Do not buy and install any more 'art' items in the streets*

One of the more constructive suggestions by a few respondents was to have a donation box at RAMM.

Utilise volunteers and those on community service

- *Ask volunteers to maintain cemeteries and parks*
- *Encourage voluntary/community groups to run community projects and facilities*
- *Enforce public spaces cleaning by the offenders who are on community service*
- *People doing community service could clean streets/pavements/footpaths*

Generally positive about the Councils efforts

- *I think the Council are doing a very good job*
- *Council services are still good value for money*
- *By and large you are doing a good job under very difficult circumstances*
- *Congratulations for listening to last Wavelength views /opinions.*

As in the previous consultation, there were a number of comments about Devon County Council functions (26):

- Reduce the hours of street lighting operation
- Reduce the hours that traffic lights operated
- Protect services for older people
- Protect services for younger people
- Highways work is not a priority

Continuing from the last consultation:

- *there is still a view from the public that the City and the County are at loggerheads regularly. This being the case then it must stop and the close cooperation that ensues must make for less wasted time = ££.*

There is divided opinion over the development of the bus station:

- *Bus station gives wrong impression of Exeter. Needs a lick of paint and clean up urgently.*
- *Regeneration of bus station should include contribution from Stagecoach*
- *Shelve the re-development of the bus station*
- *What is wrong with bus station?*

The comments are broadly consistent with those received during last year's budget consultation. However, it would be fair to say that the tone is less hostile and more constructive. In particular some respondents appreciated that the response to last year's consultation had a direct effect on Council operations. However, it should be pointed out that last year's consultation drew in a much larger response. The current consultation relies much more heavily on responses from the Wavelength panel, who are likely to be more engaged with the council and hence more sympathetic.

Key points

- **Although respondents still expressed concern at cuts, there was praise for reacting to the previous consultation.**
- **Specific suggestions include: stopping Saturday opening of CSC, suggested donation at RAMM, increased charges for planning and increasing the involvement of the business and voluntary sectors.**
- **There are respondents who feel the vast majority of services listed are essential and should not be cut.**