

2016/2017 budget consultation

Summary

Budget Consultation Summary

Methodology

1. As noted in the report to cabinet on 8 December the approach that has taken to budget consultation follows the council's agreed Community Engagement framework. It used both face to face and online to attempt to get as representative a sample of views as possible.
2. The budget report also takes on board the results of the previous extensive spending challenge exercises over the last 4 years where residents gave us their views on which services should be protected. These exercises told us that residents wanted us to be more efficient and find more cost effective ways to deliver services. Residents also told us that we should cut back office costs and protect frontline services especially for the vulnerable and those most in need.
3. The focus for the consultation was through Community Councils commencing at Peckham and Nunhead Community Council on 10 November 2015. This consisted of a short presentation by a Cabinet member followed by a series of questions where the public voted on their responses. Residents could also respond through an online survey.
4. In total 303 people responded to the consultation. Together with those who have responded over the last three years this means that over 1,000 responses have been received in this period.

Summary of Results

5. A summary of the results is as follows:

- An overwhelming majority (94%) of those that responded agreed or strongly agreed that the council should continue to focus on being more efficient, protecting frontline services and directing resources to those most in need. This

is consistent with the budget consultation exercises over the last few years and is also consistent with what is seen in budget consultation exercises across the country.

- People who responded are more likely to agree or strongly agree (84%) that the council should empower residents and communities to do more for themselves where they are able to do so.
- A significant majority (87%) agree or strongly agree that it is right that the council should focus on its priorities of growing the local economy, building new homes and creating more jobs through this period of cutbacks.
- A majority (74%) agree that we should encourage residents and businesses to deal with us online leaving more costly phone and face to face services for the most vulnerable. While in the face to face consultations people were more likely to be undecided than in the online responses this is to be expected and the majority still agreed that this was the right approach.
- A significant majority agree or strongly agree (89%) that we should invest in modernising services now including through use of modern technology to save money later to use in support of frontline services.
- A substantial majority of those who responded agreed we should look at ways of increasing income, for example through continuing to be tough on collecting money we are owed (89%), charging for some services (77%) and delivering services for others where we are able to do so (75%). With regards to charges for those living outside the borough a smaller majority agreed we should charge more (55%) with 23% of respondents being undecided on this issue.
- With regards to continuing to freeze the council tax the results are less conclusive 39% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that council tax should continue to be frozen, 13% were undecided and 48% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Involvement of the VCS

6. As noted in the 8 December cabinet report the VCS have also been involved and informed and this consultation is ongoing as the budget process progresses and implementation takes place. This has included writing to all funded voluntary sector organisations outlining the council's process for decisions on funding for the current year. This correspondence pointed out that:

- over this period the government cuts have meant unprecedented reductions to the funding that the council receives.
- as in previous years, because of the government timescale for notifying us of our settlement for the coming financial year we as yet have no certainty on what our funding will be for 2016/2017.
- work continues to consider a range of savings options that could equate to 25% or more.
- the large scale of the budget gap that we face for the coming year with likely similar gaps in the following two years
- despite the scale of the reduction to the council's budget in the past the impact overall on voluntary sector programmes to date has been significantly less and that while we will do whatever we can to support the VCS, it clearly becomes harder to sustain the current level of support as further cuts begin to bite.

7. The letters also:

- made a commitment to giving 3 months' notice where there are funding reductions from the date the council sets its budget (or when a commissioning decision is taken if this is later than budget setting) to allow VCS organisations to plan for any impact
- point out that while difficult decisions have had to be taken in recent years the council remains committed to continued working with partners at this time of **unprecedented** budget reductions.

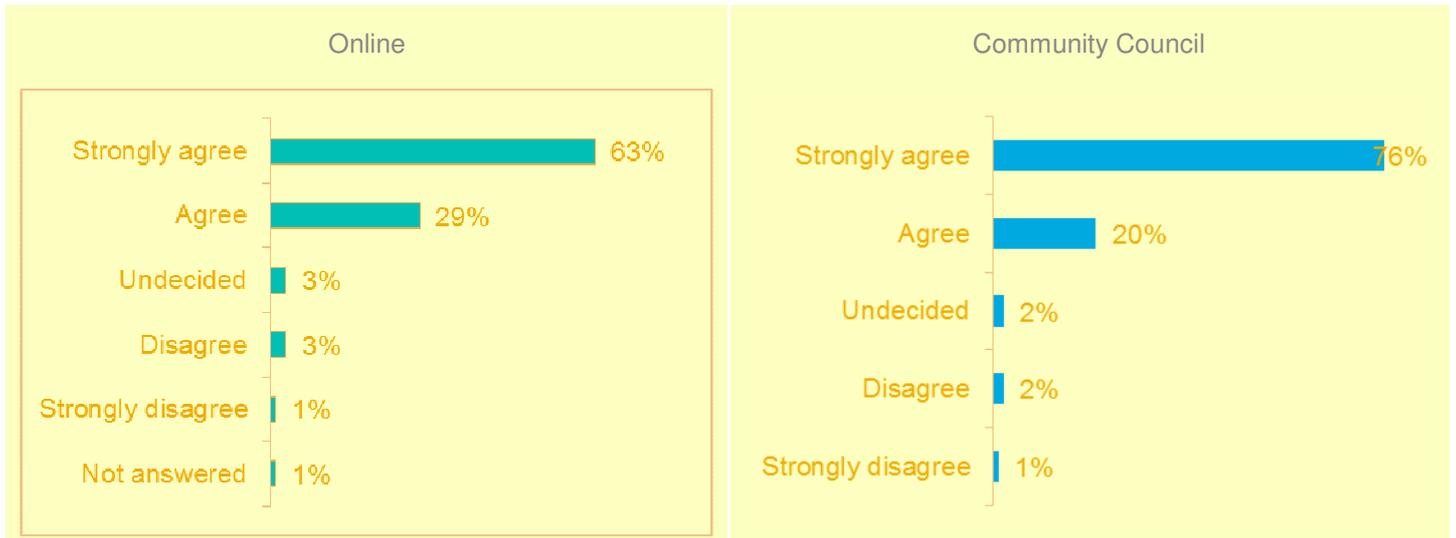
8. As noted above the ongoing consultation process will include:

- Consultation with groups impacted by the proposals, for example groups representing young people.
- Staff consultation in line with the council's policies on reorganisation, redeployment and redundancy.
- Deputations to Cabinet in January 2015.
- Consultation with the Southwark Forum in January 2016 which represents voluntary sector organisations across the borough.
- Overview & Scrutiny Committee scrutinising the proposals on 2 February 2016.

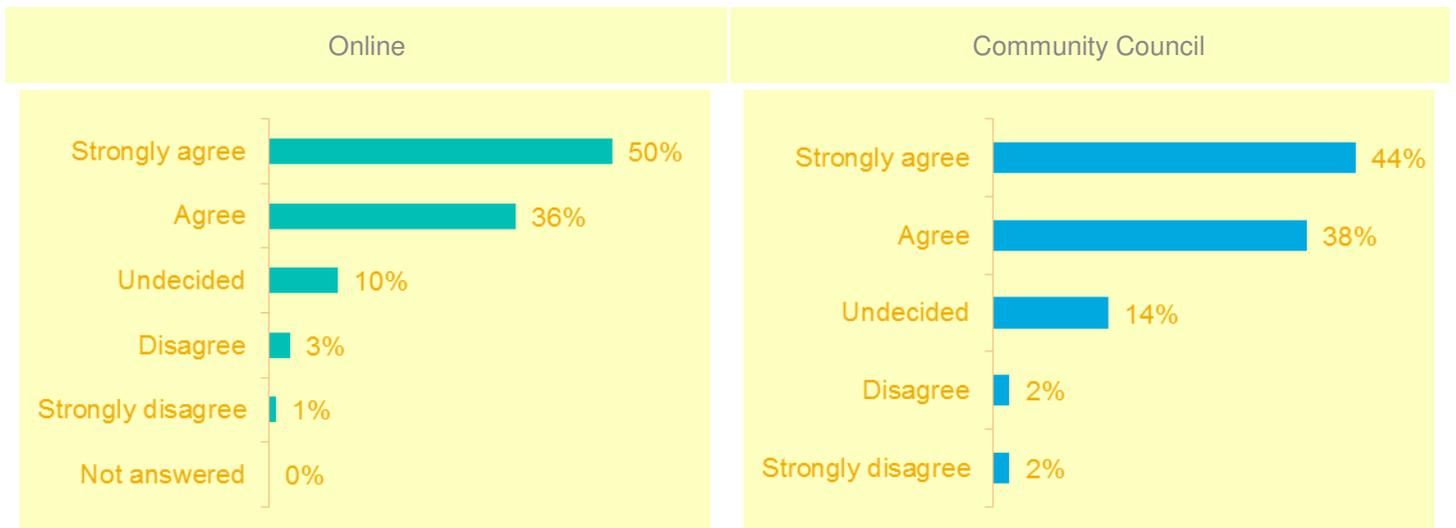
Budget Consultation Summary

Choosing our priorities for this budget

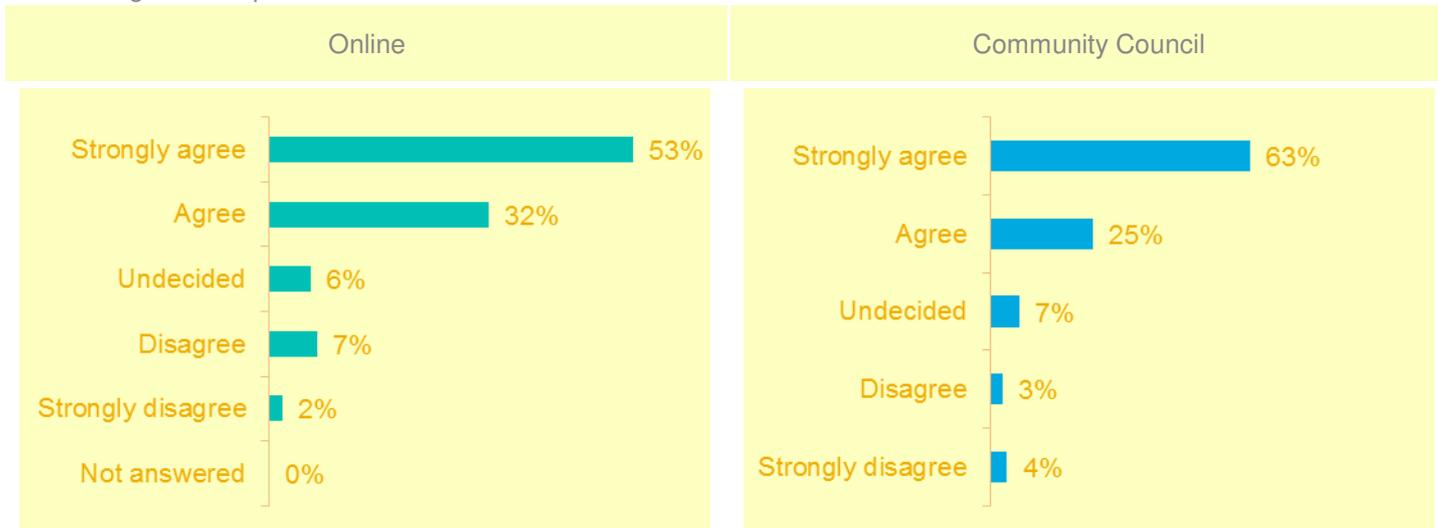
1. Continue to focus on being more efficient, protecting frontline services and directing resources to those most in need



2. Empower residents and communities to do more for themselves – where they are able to do so

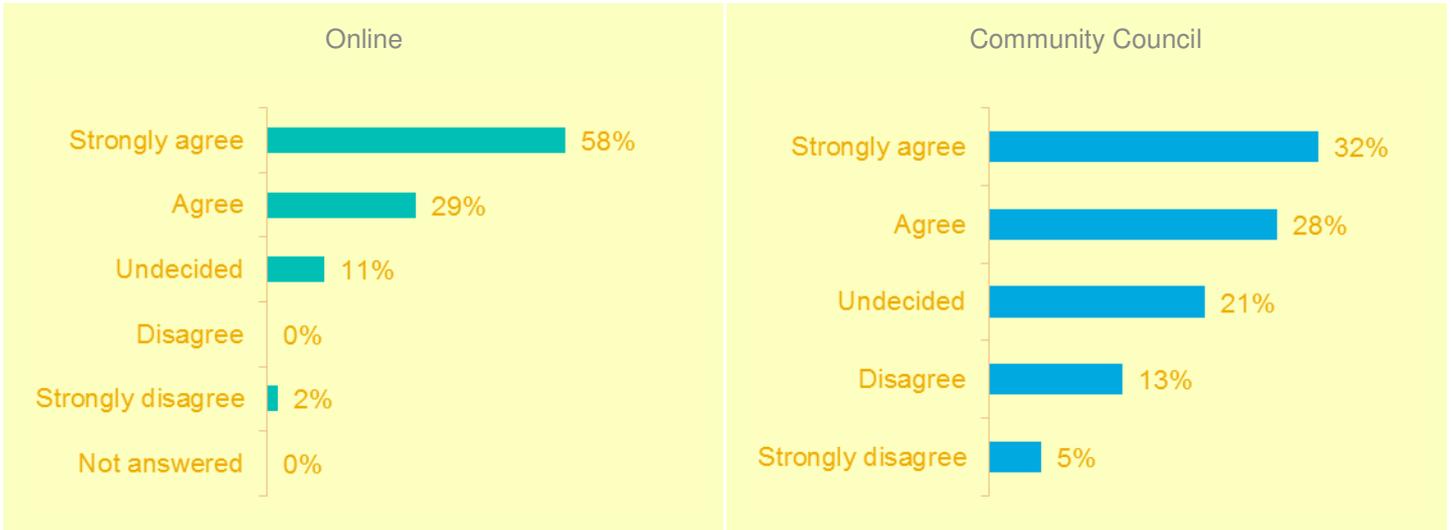


3. Continue to invest in the borough – growing the local economy, building new homes and creating more jobs – throughout this period of cutbacks

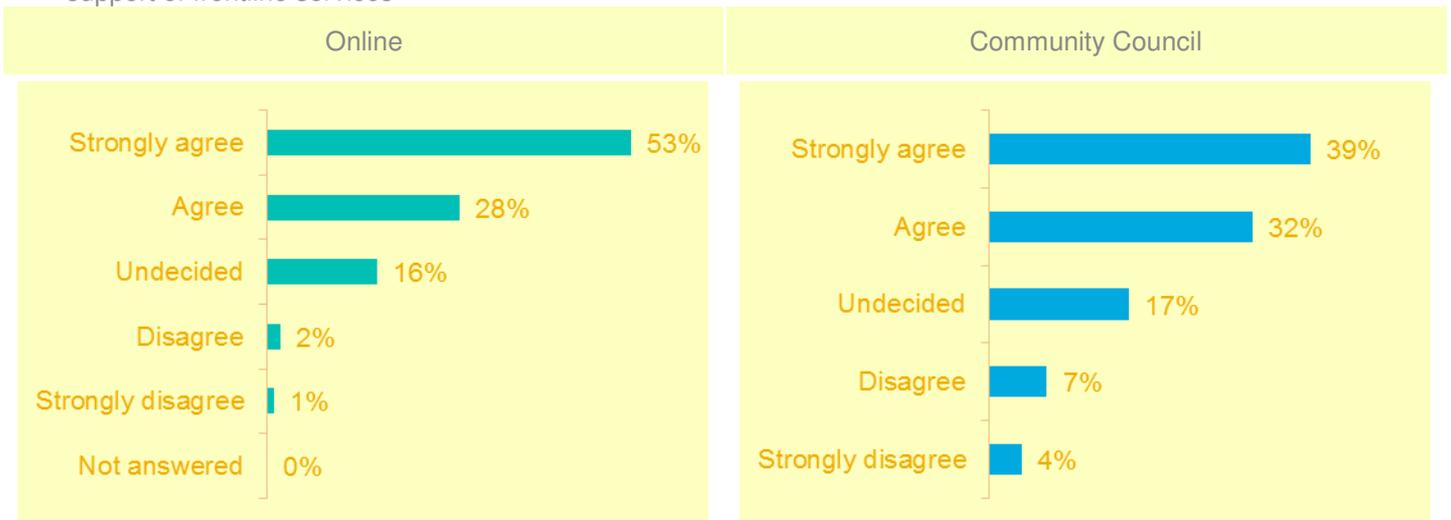


Ways of modernising our services

4. Encourage residents and businesses to deal with us online, leaving more costly phone and face-to-face services for the most vulnerable

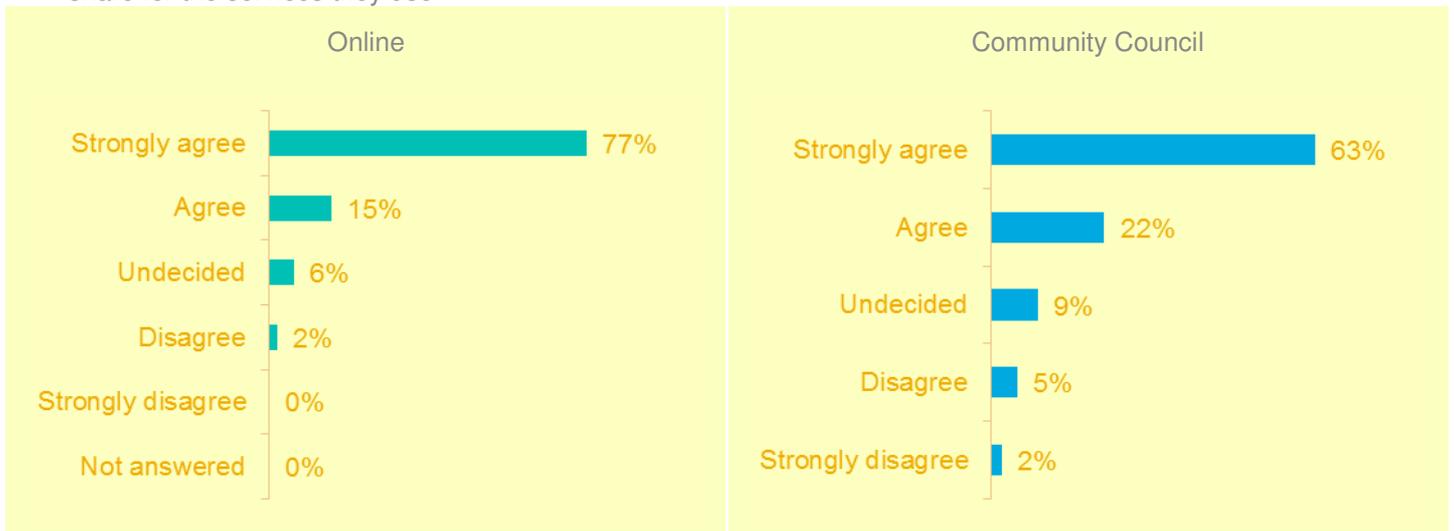


5. Invest in modernising services now (for example better use of new technology) to save money later to use in support of frontline services

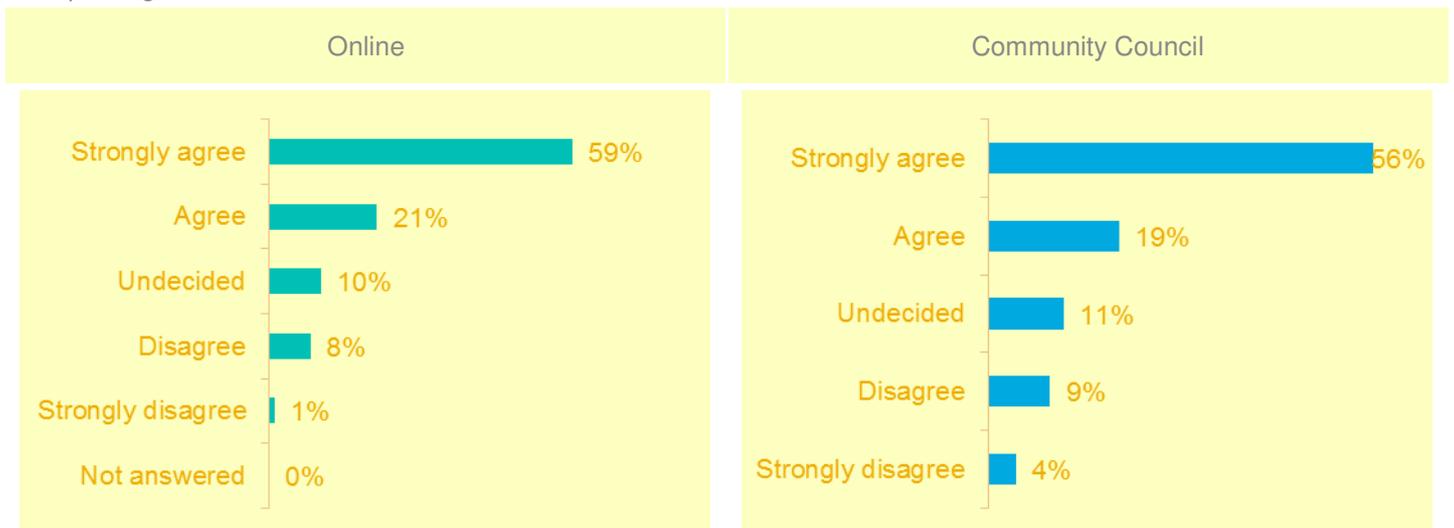


Ways of increasing income

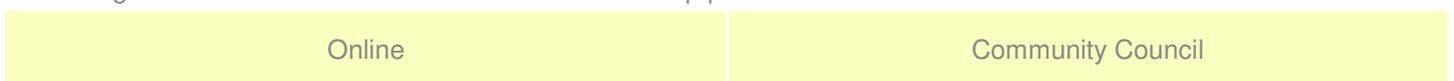
6. Continue to be tough on collecting money we are owed by residents and businesses that haven't paid their fair share for the services they use

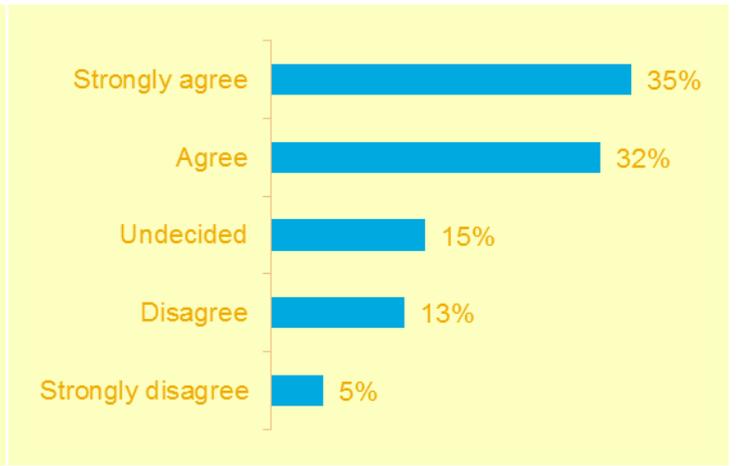
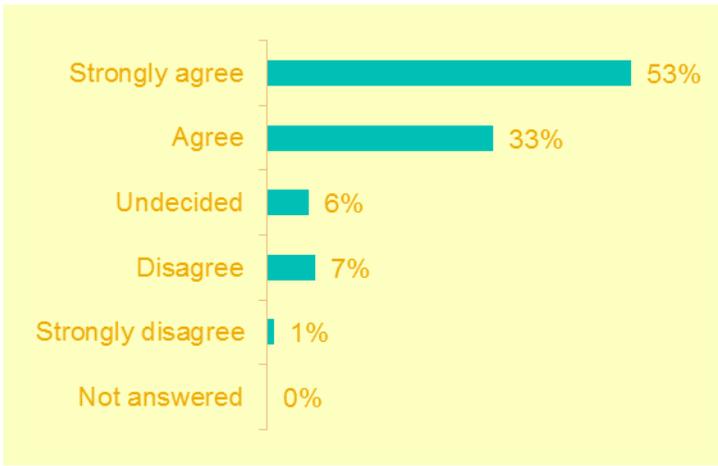


7. Increase fines and charges for those who behave in an anti-social way such as dropping litter, dog fouling or parking violations

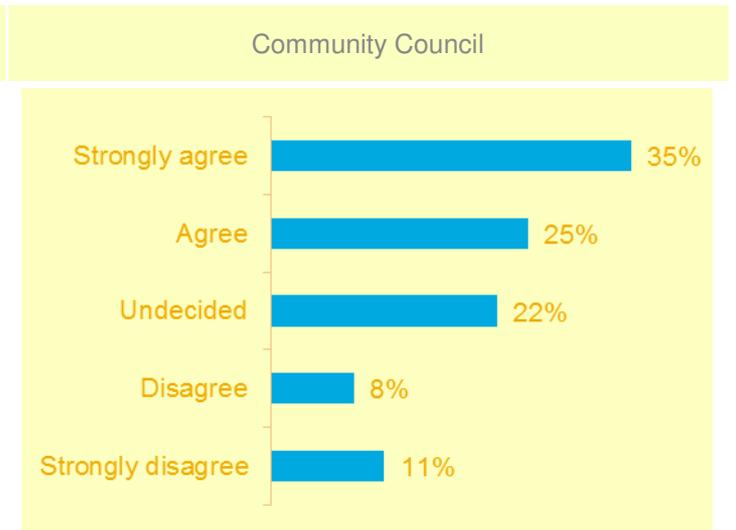
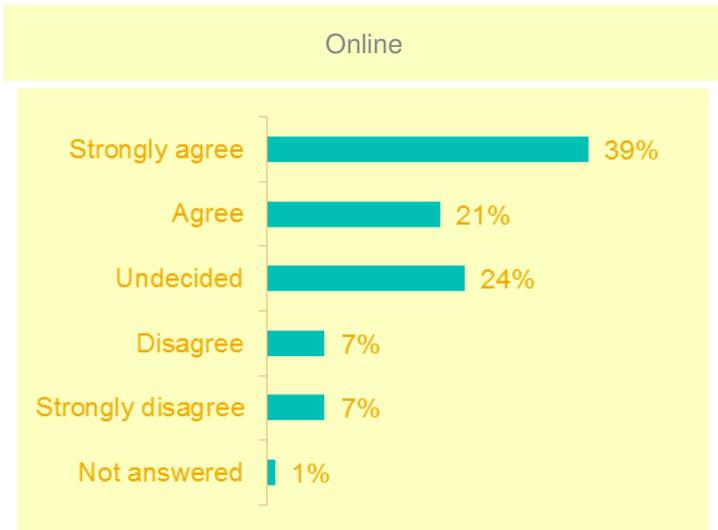


8. Increase charges for some extra, non-statutory services such as preplanning applications and commercial waste to bring them in line with other local authorities and help protect frontline services

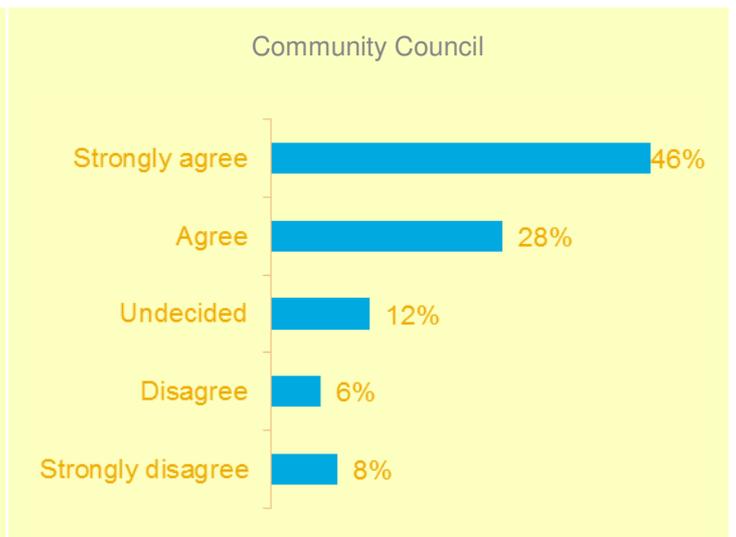
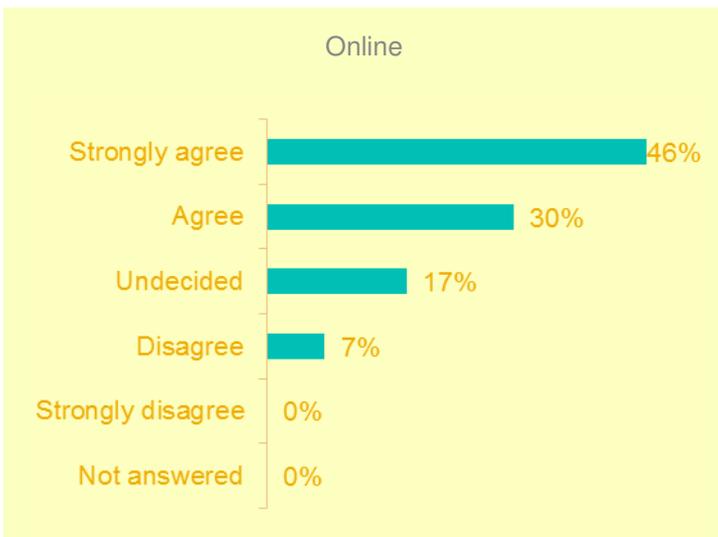




9. Charge people who do not live in the borough more for services than those who do



10. Generate income for Southwark by delivering services to other local authorities and organisations



11. The council committed to freezing council tax because it believes this would hit people hard in tough times. Council Tax should be frozen again in 2016/17



