



# Budget 2021/22 Survey Results

2<sup>nd</sup> February 2021

Key Points & Summary

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### **1. Introduction**

1.1. The Budget 2021/22 survey was available online via the Council's public website from the 8th December 2021. People were advised to watch a short video that was also available with the survey. The video provided some background to the difficult fiscal conditions facing the Council. The survey remained open for nearly six weeks closing at midnight on the 15th January 2021. A link to the survey was disseminated through the Council's social media channels, by email to South Ayrshire community groups and to SA1000 panel members, and by email to staff through Service Leads and Chief Executive messages.

1.2. The survey consisted of 11 questions. Questions 1 to 4 had options to choose from plus respondents could add further comments. Questions 5 to 8 were all open questions that respondents could only supply comments in reply. Questions 9 to 11 captured three demographics of the respondents: postcode of residence, age group and considered disabled or not.

### **2. Key Points**

- Respondents clearly disagree that the Council should reduce delivery of non-statutory services it provides. 57.3% disagree vs 28.2% agree and 14.5% undecided.
- Respondents clearly agree the Council should charge for non-statutory services it provides. 50.4% agree vs 31.1% disagree and 18.6% undecided.
- Respondents are divided about the Council increasing charges across all services, statutory and non-statutory. 43.7% disagree vs 41.8% agree and 14.5% undecided. While the overall majority disagree with an increase, the majority of respondents living in south side of Ayr, Maybole and Symington areas agree to an increase. The younger the respondent the more likely to disagree with an increase in charges while the older the respondent the more likely to agree. Those with a disability are also more likely to agree with an increase in charges.
- Respondents clearly agree the Council should change the way it delivers services to make them more cost-effective. 66.4% agree vs 20.3% disagree and 13.4% undecided.
- The two most valued assets in South Ayrshire, by a considerable margin, are its beaches and parks.
- The change most people want to see is their town centre made more attractive and transformed into an inviting place to be.
- The most important issue facing South Ayrshire is the decline of town centres.
- Further general comment for the Council to do the basics of keeping town centres clean, tidy, attractive and focus on housing, roads, health and education to make South Ayrshire a great place to live, work and visit.

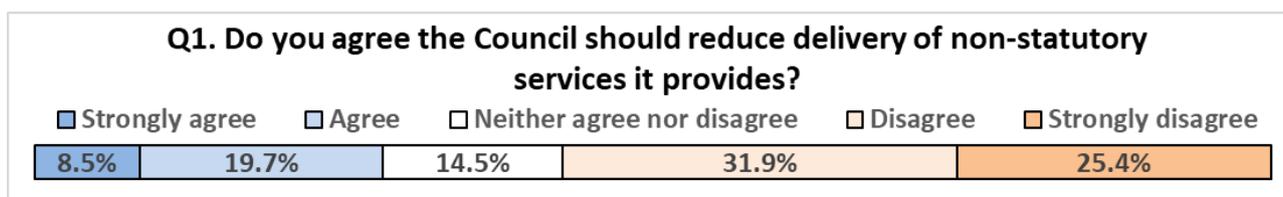
### **3. Summary**

3.1. There were 611 people who responded to the survey. Not all of the 611 responded to each question.

3.2. Responses came from all postcode districts of South Ayrshire with the largest proportion, 30.5%, from KA7 the south side of Ayr. There were responses from all age groups with almost half from the 35 to 54 year age group but very few from young adults. Almost 1 in 12 responses were from people who considered them self to have a disability.

3.3. The overall result to Q1 ‘Do you agree the Council should reduce delivery of non-statutory services it provides?’ was clearly against with twice as many responses disagreeing (57.3%) than agreeing (28.2%). The result is reflected with varying degrees of majority in all postcode districts across South Ayrshire, in all age groups and regardless of the respondent having a disability or not.

3.4. Additional comments to Q1 backed up the result to this question. There were many responses about how non-statutory services bring communities together and that these types of services attract people to the area and stopping them would make South Ayrshire a less desirable place to visit and live. It was commented that many people rely on non-statutory services for their physical and mental wellbeing and this would be particularly important due to the effects of the pandemic. However, there were plenty of comments questioning the need for some non-statutory services, like golf, and why they should be subsidised? Some thought it would be better to stop or reduce non-statutory services to save statutory services. Some would be prepared to pay for non-statutory services and suggest charging or increasing fees or reducing non-statutory services rather than stopping them altogether.

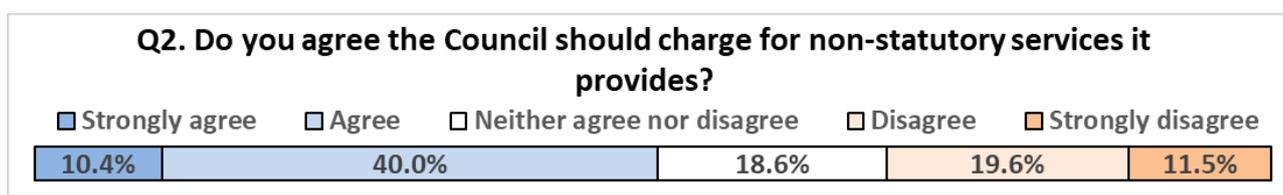


**Chart 1: Overall result to Q1.**

3.5. The overall result to Q2 ‘Do you agree the Council should charge for non-statutory services it provides?’ was clearly agreement with half of responses agreeing (50.4%) and less than a third disagreeing (31.1%).

3.6. The majority agreement was regardless of having a disability or not. However, the majority in the KA2 Dundonald and KA5 Tarbolton, areas and the majority of 25-34 year olds disagreed. These two areas represent 3.5% of total responses and the 25-34 year olds represents 8.9% of total responses.

3.7. Nearly half of the additional comments to Q2 were in agreement there should be charges for non-statutory services. However, comments indicated the amount of charge would depend on which service to be charged, the user’s ability to pay for the service and the benefits the service offered. There was concern that certain parts of the community could be even further marginalised if they could not afford the service and therefore could no longer use the service. Different rates to pay based on ability to pay was suggested. A third of comments were against charging for non-statutory services citing there should be more focus on reducing costs, less wastage, better management of facilities and believe their council tax should cover these sorts of services. Many people wanted to know exactly which non-statutory services might attract charges and that there was insufficient information to answer this question.

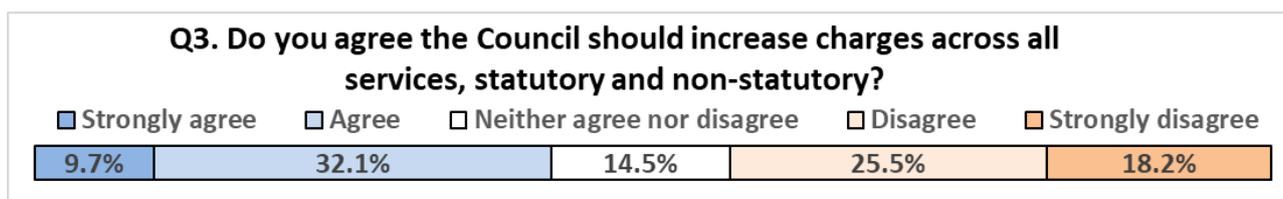


**Chart 2: Overall result to Q2.**

3.8. The overall result to Q3 ‘Do you agree the Council should increase charges across all services, statutory and non-statutory, such as bulky waste uplifts, parking, golf, sport and leisure, lets, licences, etc.?’ is the most controversial and closest result of the survey. A small majority, 43.7%, disagree to an increase in charges while 41.8% agree there should be.

3.9. The overall result was not reflected in all postcode areas, nor all age groups nor regardless of having a disability or not. In KA1 Symington area, KA19 Maybole area, and KA7 south side of Ayr there were small majorities that do agree the Council should increase charges. These areas represent 38.1% of total replies to this question. There is also a small majority in the older age groups that agree the Council should increase charges. These older age groups represent 58.3% of total replies. The majority of those with a disability also agree the Council should increase charges across all services. They represent 7.2% of total replies.

3.10. Half of the additional comments to Q3 said any increase in charges would depend on which service is being charged. For example, charges for leisure and golf could be increased but not waste uplifts. There was a view that statutory services should already be covered by taxes but other discretionary services could be looked at on an individual basis and charged accordingly. People were worried about the consequences of increased charges and cited examples that an increase in parking charges could deter people from going to town centres or a charge for garden waste removal could lead to fly tipping. Other comments showed a concern about the ability for some people to pay increased charges considering the current job and business situation resulting from the pandemic and suggest some will need to be exempt from paying.

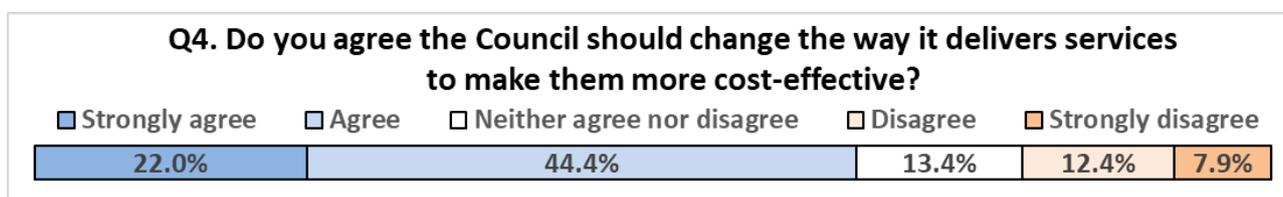


**Chart 3: Overall result to Q3.**

3.11. The overall result to Q4 ‘Do you agree the Council should change the way it delivers services to make them more cost-effective, for example by reducing face-to-face services and providing more online and/or by phone?’ was clearly agreement with two thirds of responses agreeing (66.4%) and one in five disagreeing (20.3%).

3.12. The majority agreement was regardless of age or having a disability or not. Only in KA5, Tarbolton area was the majority against change. Responses from this area represent 1.2% of the total number of responses.

3.13. Additional comments to Q4 agree the Council should deliver services in a more cost-effective way. However, it was pointed out that there is a risk that some groups in the community, like the elderly and poorer groups, could become even more digitally excluded and would need extra support. It was also pointed out that face-to-face contact for some vulnerable groups is the only human interaction they have and would not want to see that completely gone. Some comments reflected that with any changes to service delivery the level of service would need to be maintained and suggested the Council investment in IT/phone system infrastructure and training of staff could be required.



**Chart 4: Overall result to Q4.**

3.14. Question 5 asked **‘What do you value most about South Ayrshire and why?’** By far the two most valued assets are the beaches and parks followed by leisure facilities and historical assets. It’s mainly the natural assets that are the most valued. People say they love having access to the fresh air and open spaces. It gives them the opportunity to exercise, clear their mind and they believe it’s generally good for their health and wellbeing. However, people want better maintenance of these assets. They also suggest that many assets could be enhanced and developed further to attract more people to South Ayrshire.

3.15. Question 6 asked **‘What change would you most like to see in South Ayrshire and why?’** The biggest change people want to see is to do with town centres. People want to see town centres as attractive and inviting places to be and go to. It’s suggested town centres need to be re-purposed to include leisure and living spaces with things to do and see rather than just for shopping. People also want to see changes in the way the Council looks after its employees, the way it operates, the way it handles projects, better road maintenance, free parking and dog owners fined for dog fouling. People also want something done about the poor state of repair many buildings are in, they have differing opinions on moving the Citadel to the town centre. Some respondents suggest the seafront, particularly Ayr’s Low Green, be utilised more and transformed to generate income with attractions like concerts, events, shops, restaurants, cafés like other seaside towns. Many believe the future for South Ayrshire and Ayr is tourism because it’s a seaside town with great assets and more should be done to promote it including advertise on TV.

3.16. Question 7 asked **‘What would you say is the most important issue facing South Ayrshire today and why?’** The most important issue identified in the survey is the decline of their town centre. People are concerned about the lack of shops and overall run down appearance with many empty and derelict properties such as Ayr’s Station Hotel. There were comments about how town centre regeneration, improved transport hubs and free parking would encourage people to towns. People are concerned about reduced funding of Council finances, the perceived poor running of the Council and feel money is often wasted. The impact of the pandemic not just to the Council but to the wider community with job losses, disrupted education, businesses closing, is also of concern. There are also other societal problems which are of concern such as climate change, need for more housing, supporting the vulnerable, better roads maintenance and anti-social behaviour.

3.17. Question 8 asked for **‘Any other comments or suggestions as to how the Council should target its resources?’** The majority of comments were general advice for the Council to do the basics of keeping town centres clean, tidy, attractive and focussing on housing, roads, health and education. Comments suggest more emphasis on making South Ayrshire a great place to live, work and visit. There was advice on running Council operations, cross training staff, investing in services and better dissemination of information to the public. It was suggested the Council should put more effort in to regenerate declining areas with more collaborative partnership working with organisations and local people. There was recognition that families are struggling with home schooling and there needed to be more housing. It was put forward the environment needed to be looked after and that the seafront should be developed and commercialised to attract visitors. There was hesitation over some services being subsidised and car parking in town centres should be free. It was expressed the Council should challenge the Press more often when news stories are extremely inaccurate. There was a call for rural areas not to be forgotten, that everyone is going through tough times and it’s the local people that make the place better to live in.