Budget Engagement
Pressures

Respondents were asked five questions through either online survey application SurveyMonkey, or during group conversations.

Q1 ***Have you taken part on any previous budget engagement exercises with Aberdeenshire Council?***

Out of 1,271 people who answered this question only 15.7% (199) said they had previously taken part in a previous budget engagement exercise.

Q2 ***Do you think communities could do more to support one another? For example, residents becoming snow wardens or becoming volunteer drivers to take people to hospital appointments.***

Of the 1,258 people who answered this question, 77.2% (971) answered 'Yes'.

Q3 ***If yes please provide suggestions of how you think communities could achieve this.***

Of the 971 who answered yes, 441 provided a comment. The **key themes** were:

o **Volunteer register** – The most popular suggestion was for the council to set up a volunteer register, covering either the whole of Aberdeenshire or split up in to areas. More than 1 in 5 supported this, with a further 7% suggesting greater use of social media and online tools to encourage volunteering in communities. Another suggestion was for an app where people could list what was required to be done in a community and people could volunteer for that task.
o **Volunteering opportunities** – 19% said they did not know what was happening in their area and requested more information on community groups or opportunities to volunteer in their community.
o **Support for volunteering** – Nearly a quarter of people said Aberdeenshire Council would have to provide some support to volunteers, establish community leaders or set up groups to organise volunteers. 33 people said this was a role for community councils.
o **Volunteering incentives** – 8% said Aberdeenshire Council should provide incentives to encourage people to volunteer, while a further 8% said people should be required to look after the area. Those in support of people to looking after their area cited laws in other countries where people are fined for not clearing snow/litter from outside their property. Others said there would not be enough volunteers without an incentive.
o **Further suggestions** – Other suggestions included increasing the use of unpaid work teams in communities, offering voluntary roles to people who are unemployed in exchange for benefits and teaching more citizenship in schools.

Q4 ***If no, what do you think would prevent communities from doing this?***

There were 291 comments to this question. The **key themes** were as follows:

- **Ability to volunteer** – 30% of respondents said people were either too busy or unable to volunteer due to health reasons.
- **Liability** –23% raised concerns about being held liable if there was an accident or having to cover the cost of insurance as barriers to people volunteering.
- **Lack of numbers** – Another recurring theme was the lack of volunteers, or people feeling it is always comes down to the same few individuals in a community to do everything. A perceived lack of a community spirit or people feeling like they do not belong to a community was another reason why respondents answered 'No'.
- **Responsibility** – 17% of people said services should be delivered by local or national government and that is why they pay their Council Tax.

Q5 *Please provide us with any general comments*

281 respondents submitted general comments on pressures. **Key themes** included:

- **Savings and increases** – 16% of people said efficiencies, savings and tax increases should be considered before cutting services
- **Greater understanding** – 9% of respondents said communities needed more information about the pressures Aberdeenshire Council was facing and the costs of providing various services
- **School transport** – 5% thought the bill for school transport was too high and the policy should be reviewed. This was split between people suggesting higher charges and those who wanted greater restrictions on those entitled to school transport
- **Recycling** – 5% thought Aberdeenshire Council should be doing more to encourage recycling and reduce amount of waste going to landfill.
- **Population** – The increase in population was mentioned by just over 5% of respondents, with slightly more commenting it was a problem rather than being beneficial due to increase in tax revenue it could potentially bring.
- **Staffing** – 4% of people thought there were too many managers and senior employees with high wages.
- **Cutting costs** – 3% of people said the council should cut costs just as private companies and households have had to do. Others said Aberdeenshire Council was trying to do too much and had created an unrealistic expectation amongst the public around the service it should deliver.
- **Staff pressures** – People were concerned about the pressure on employees, especially front line staff.