

Moray Council Budget Engagement 2025-26 – Brief Summary

Overview

The survey opened on Thursday 17 October and closed on Sunday 24 November 2024. It was analysed by the following groupings -

1. Overall (All participants who gave a response to individual questions)
2. Sex (Male, Female & Prefer not to say)
3. Geographical area (Buckie, Elgin, Forres, Keith, Lossiemouth, Milne's, Speyside, live outwith Moray)
4. Age groups
5. Council/Non-Council Employee
6. Overall 'Equivalised' (weighting applied to male / female cohort to show a more representative result based upon overall population demographics)

The survey consisted of two elements:

1. Increasing Revenue

Participants were asked to select what they thought was a reasonable increase in Council Tax, between the range of 7% and 15%. Three further questions were asked regarding the increasing of service charges for leisure & sports services, Secondary School meals and garden waste permits. Participants were asked to select their willingness, using a five-point scale between 0 (No change) and 4 (Significant increase).

2. Reduce spending - Reducing the standard / level of service delivery

Fourteen questions regarding areas of Council service provision. Participants were asked to rank the importance, using a five-point scale between 1 (Not important) and 5 (Extremely Important).

Analysis and source tables are held as backing papers to this summary, highlighting key points. Where percentages/proportions are used to express data, these proportions are based on the number of respondents answering each individual question.

Demographics

A total of 718 opened the survey and 552 completed all compulsory closed questions. 249 males took part by opening the survey; 204 (81.9%) completed all survey questions. 422 females took part by opening the survey; 313 (74.2%) completed all survey questions. 47 who preferred not to say took part by opening the survey; 74.5% completed all survey questions.

The Elgin area had the highest proportion of participants completing at least one question (31.1%), higher than Elgin population demographics (29%). The Speyside area had the lowest proportion of participants (4.9%), significantly lower than area population demographics (8.2%). **Table 1** of reference tables provides details of all area demographics.

The 55-64 age group had the highest proportion of participants completing at least one question (26%), followed closely by the 45-54 age group (24.4%), both significantly higher than general population demographics (15.3% & 13.1% respectively).

Uptake by the 0-16, 16-24 and 75+ age groups was limited, with a total of 25 completing the survey (4.5% of all completed responses), therefore results should be treated with caution due to low cohorts where small number changes can impact with large proportional changes. **Table 2** of Reference tables provides details for all age group demographics.

220 survey participants (31.0%) identified as being Moray Council employees. The completion rate for Council employees (77.7%) was higher than non-Council employees (75.6%).

Key Findings – Increasing Revenue

Participants were asked to indicate how much they would be ‘Willing’ to see Council Tax rise, the choice they could make was between 7% and 15% in 1% increments.

- When participants choices were averaged the increase to Council Tax was 9.0%.
- Showing tolerance ranges, respondents were willing to see Council Tax increases of –

7%	46%
8-10%	37%
11-15%	17%

Participants were asked to indicate their willingness to increase Leisure & Sports Services, Secondary School meals and Household Garden Waste Permits charges, the choices they could make were from a five-point scale (0-4, No Change – Significant Increase).

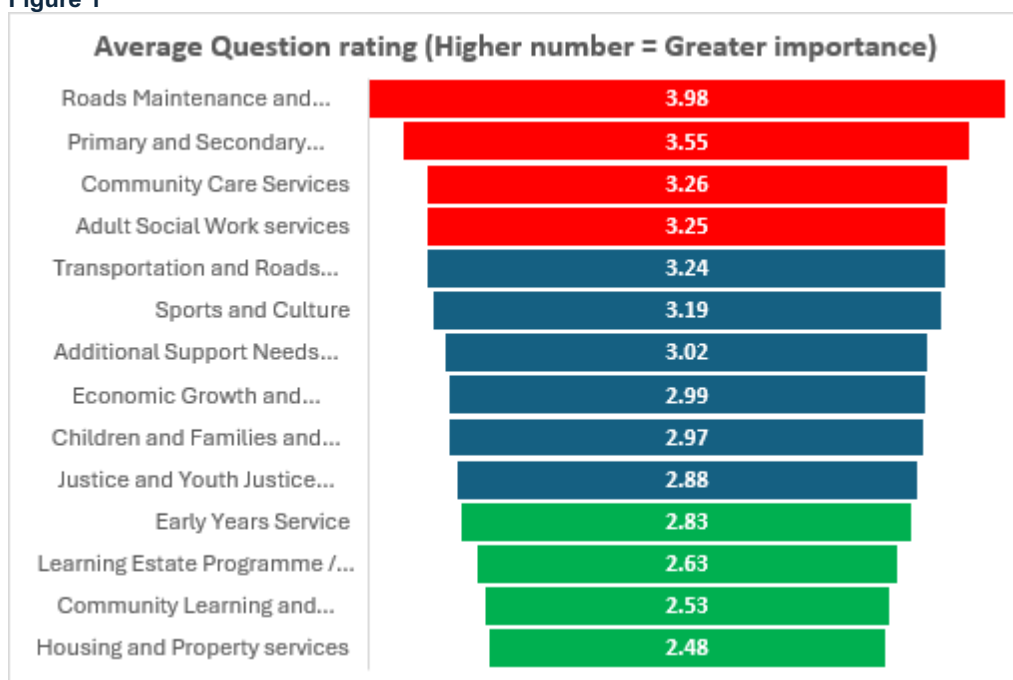
- Respondents indicated an appetite for small-moderate increases in charges for Leisure & Sports (66%) and Secondary School Meals (56%), by choosing a score of 1-3.
- Nearly half (42%) of respondents wanted to see ‘No Change’ to the cost of Household Garden Waste Permits.

Key Findings – Reducing the standard / level of service delivery

Participants were asked to rank the ‘Importance’ of 14 Council Services, the choices they could make were from a five-point scale (1-5, Not Important- Extremely Important).

Analysis is provided by exception; commentary is provided for the four service areas respondents indicated to be most and least important, as detailed in [Figure 1](#). (Red being the most important and green being least important). Details of the level of tolerance to changes in service standard/delivery for all service areas is provided in reference [Table 3](#).

Figure 1



The four service areas ranked least important

1. Housing & Property Services

- 31.4% of all respondents indicated this service to be 'Not Important', with only 12.3% believing it to be 'Extremely Important'.
- Average Importance ranking of **2.48/5**

2. Community Learning & Development

- 29.8% of all respondents indicated this service to be 'Not Important', with only 13.2% believing it to be 'Extremely Important'.
- Average Importance ranking of **2.53/5**

3. Learning Estate Programme / Business Support Administration

- 29.6% of respondents indicated this service to be 'Not Important', with only 14.6% believing in to be 'Extremely Important'.
- Average Importance ranking **2.63/5**

4. Early Years Service

- 28.6% of respondents indicated this service to be 'Not Important', with 21.9% believing in to be 'Extremely Important'.
- Average Importance ranking **2.83/5**

The four service areas ranked most important

1. Roads Maintenance and Environmental Protection

- 45% of respondents indicated that this service area was 'Extremely Important', whereas 3.3% stated it was 'Not Important'.
- Average Importance ranking **3.98/5**

2. Primary & Secondary Education

- 43% of respondents indicated that this service area was 'Extremely Important', whereas 17.1% stated it was 'Not Important'.
- Average Importance ranking **3.55/5**

3. Community Care Services

- 28.3% of respondents indicated that this service area was 'Extremely Important', whereas 13.7% stated it was 'Not Important'.
- Average Importance ranking **3.26/5**

4. Adult Social Work Services

- 27.1% of respondents indicated that this service area was 'Extremely Important', whereas 16% stated it was 'Not Important'.
- Average Importance ranking **3.25/5**

Key Findings – areas of significant Male vs Female differences

Perhaps worth noting were the more significant nuances in how males / females ranked the importance of services -

1. **Economic Growth & Development** - Males placed a greater value on this service ranking it at 10/14 for tolerance of change, where 1 indicates the highest tolerance of change. Females ranked it at 4/14. (Females more tolerant of change)
2. **Adult Social Work Services** – Females placed a greater value on this service ranking it at 12/14, whereas males ranked it as 8/14. (Males more tolerant of change)
3. **Sports & Culture** – Males placed a greater value on this service ranking it at 11/14 in comparison to 8/14 for females. (Females more tolerant of change)
4. **Additional Support Needs** – Females placed a greater value on this service ranking it at 9/14, whereas males placed it at 5/14. (Males more tolerant of change)

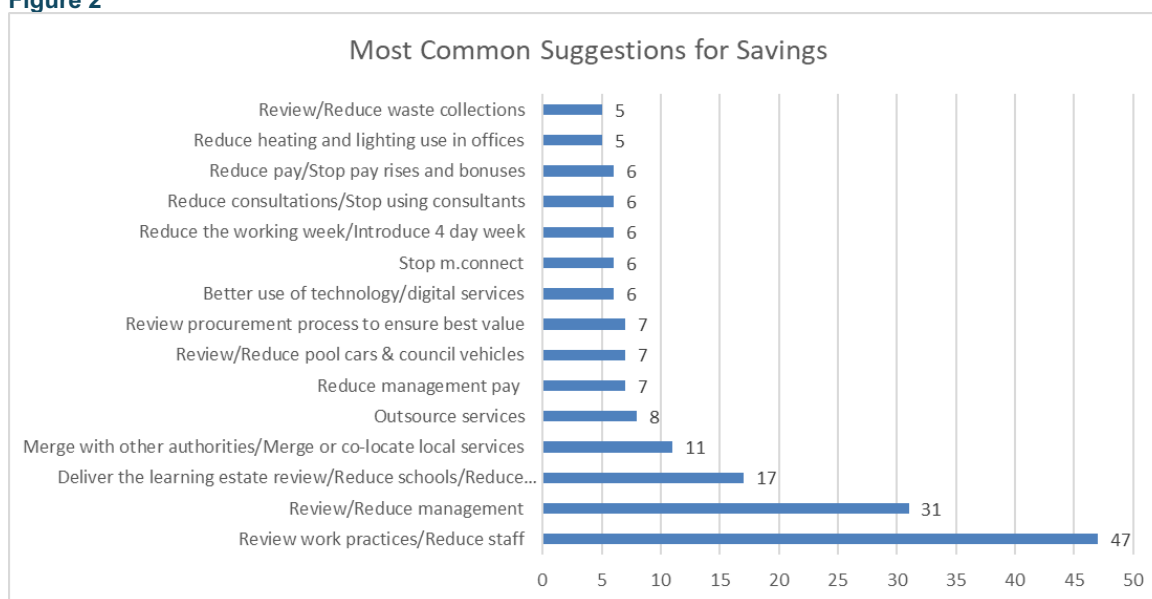
Budget Comments and Suggestions

As part of the survey one open-ended question asked participants for any comments and suggestions that may help Moray Council make savings or increase income. 235 of respondents chose to leave a comment and/or suggestion. From these responses 245 suggestions regarding possible savings and 99 about increasing income were made. Generalised themes emerging from these responses are provided below.

Savings

47 suggestions were around reviewing current work practices, becoming more efficient and reducing staff levels as a result. 31 were similar but focused on reviewing and reducing management. **Figure 2** shows a breakdown of the most commonly occurring themes.

Figure 2

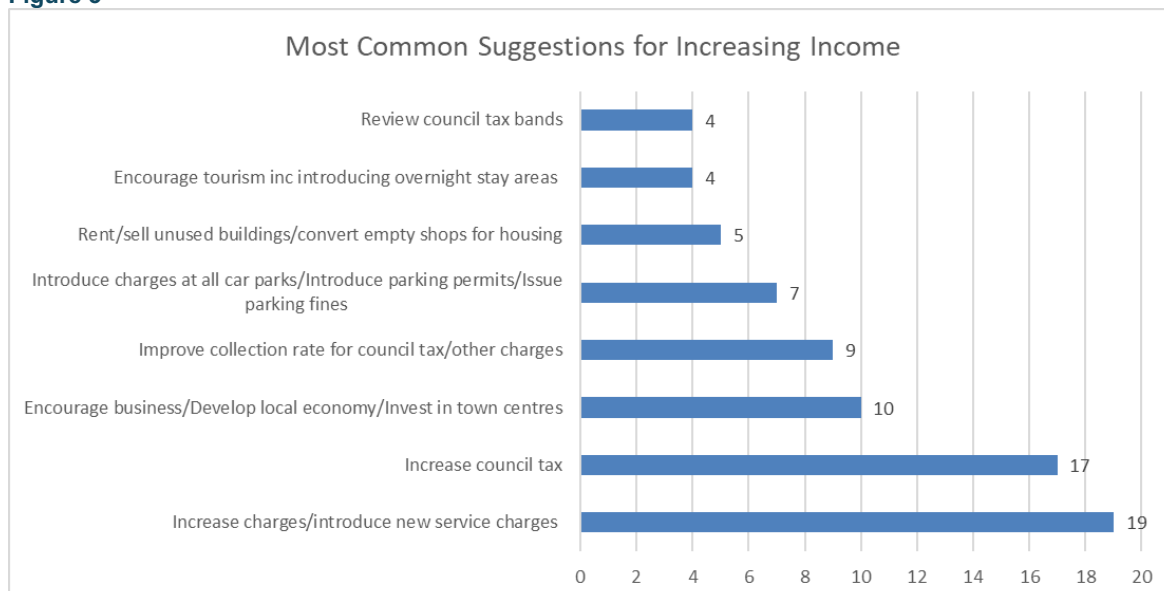


Increased Income

19 suggestions covered increasing either current charges or introducing new charges for services. This included, school transport, recycling centres, library events, day services, housing repairs, public toilets and leisure.

Increasing council tax was the second highest suggestion with several responses stating they would rather pay more than lose or face cuts to frontline services. **Figure 3** shows a breakdown of the most commonly occurring themes.

Figure 3



Other Comments

53 responses provided 'Other Comments'. The most common (15 responses) encouraged longer term spend to save approach, highlighting a preference for investment in libraries, ASN and leisure services. Six responses referenced these services supporting the whole community and further cuts could have a detrimental impact in the years ahead.

Although increasing council tax was the second most common suggestion for increasing income, 4 responses commented the survey question was unfair to start any rise at 7%.

Reference tables

Table 1

GEOGRAPHIC DEMOGRAPHIC - PARTICIPANTS vs POPULATION				
	Population (Mid 2022)		Survey Participants	
	Number	%	Number	%
Buckie Area	14,022	14.9%	142	19.8%
Elgin Area	27,325	29.0%	223	31.1%
Forres Area	16,886	17.9%	84	11.7%
Keith Area	7,520	8.0%	53	7.4%
Lossiemouth Area	12,992	13.8%	93	13.0%
Milne's Area	7,822	8.3%	74	10.3%
Speyside Area	7,733	8.2%	35	4.9%
I don't live in Moray			14	1.9%
Total Population	94,300		718	

Figure 4

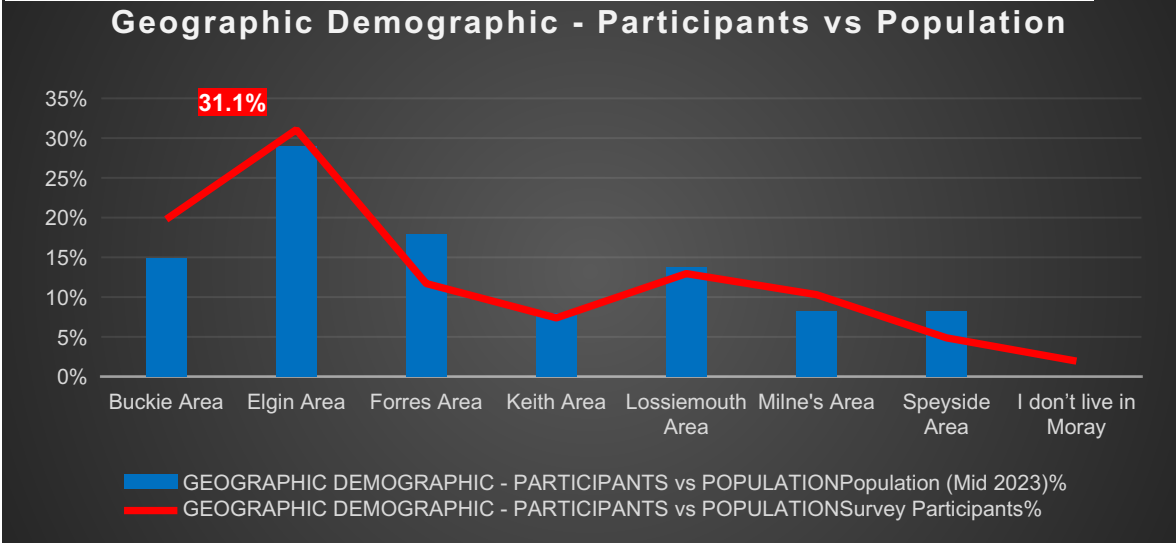


Table 1 shows the geographic demographic of survey participants in comparison with Morays general population. The figures in 'Red' and 'Green' highlighted text show geography areas either significantly higher (Red) or lower (Green) than general population demographics. The Keith and Lossiemouth areas are the only areas that closely match general population data.

In **Figure 4**, where the line is above the column shows geographic areas overrepresented within the survey.

Table 2

AGE GROUP DEMOGRAPHIC - PARTICIPANTS vs POPULATION				
Age Group	Population (Mid 2023)		Survey Participants	
	Number	%	Number	%
Under 16	15,471	16.3%	2	0.3%
16-24	8,650	9.1%	17	2.4%
25-34	10,675	11.3%	78	10.9%
35-44	11,076	11.7%	150	20.9%
45-54	12,401	13.1%	175	24.4%
55-64	14,455	15.3%	187	26.0%
65-74	11,718	12.4%	80	11.1%
75+	10,224	10.8%	18	2.5%
PNTA*			11	1.5%
TOTAL	94,670		718	

*PTNA - Prefer not to answer

Figure 5

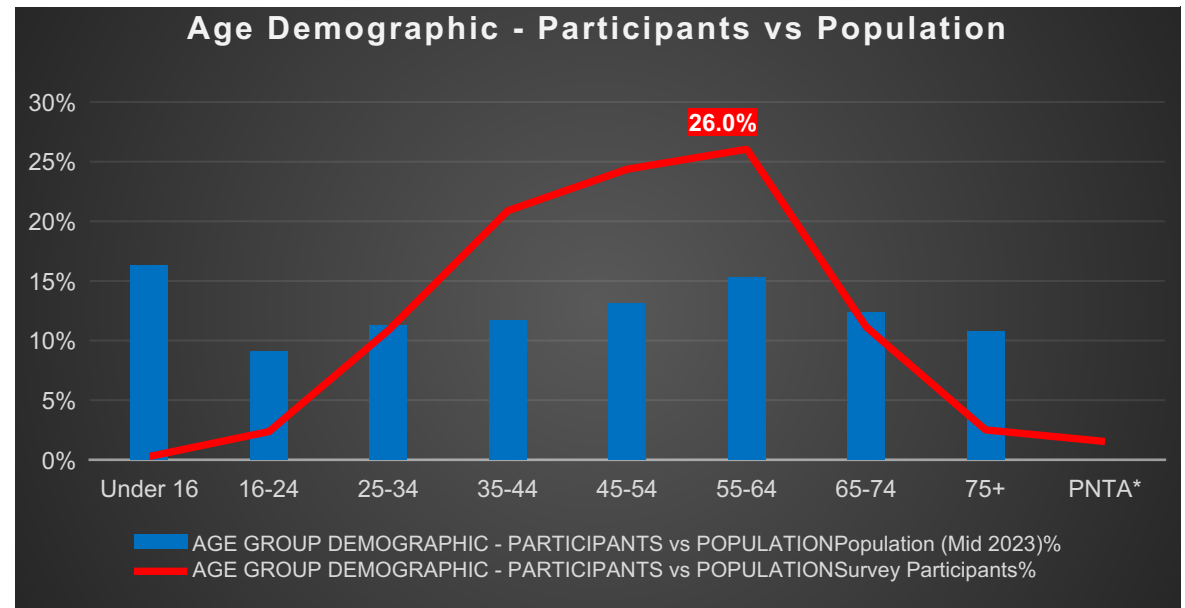


Table 2 shows the age demographic of survey participants in comparison with Morays general population. The figures in 'Red' and 'Green' highlighted text show age groups either significantly higher (Red) or lower (Green) than general population demographics. The 25-34 and 65-74 age groups are the only groups that closely match general population data.

In **Figure 5**, where the line is above the column shows age groups overrepresented within the survey.

Table 3

INCREASING CHARGES	OVERALL - APPETITE FOR INCREASING CHARGES				
		None	Small	Small-Moderate	Moderate - Significant
	Leisure & Sports (Fitlife, Swimming Pool)			✓	
	Secondary School Meals			✓	
Household garden waste permits		✓			

REDUCE SPENDING - REDUCING THE STANDARD / LEVEL OF SERVICE DELIVERY	OVERALL - SERVICE IMPORTANCE					
		Not	Small	Small - Somewhat	Somewhat - Extremely	Extremely
	Children and Families and Placement Services			✓		
	Justice and Youth Justice Services			✓		
	Adult Social Work services				✓	
	Community Care Services				✓	
	Early Years Service			✓		
	Primary and Secondary Education				✓	
	Additional Support Needs services				✓	
	Community Learning and Development			✓		
	Sports and Culture				✓	
	Learning Estate Programme / Business Support Administration			✓		
	Economic Growth and Development			✓		
	Housing and Property services			✓		
Roads Maintenance and Environmental Protection				✓		
Transportation and Roads Consultancy				✓		

INCREASING CHARGES – The ticks in the boxes are representative of the average amount respondents are willing to increase charges

SERVICE IMPORTANCE – The ticks in the boxes are representative of how respondents viewed service importance