

Let's Talk Budget 2025/2026 Waste Consultation Report

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1. Introduction

We provide over 800 services to support and improve the lives of residents, businesses, and visitors in Stockport. Our annual budget is £336 million. Every year, we must balance our spend with the income we receive.

The cost of delivering our services is increasing. Alongside the uncertainty at a national level, the budget pressures have been exacerbated, and the financial risks the Council faces have significantly increased, through several different impacts.

Achieving a balanced budget whilst delivering our longer-term ambitions is extremely challenging. We can only achieve this by making difficult decisions, robust prioritisation of our resource, and ambitious changes in the way we work to deliver services if we are to continue to meet the needs of local people today and in the future. The consequences of not achieving this are increasingly visible across the wider local government sector with an increase in government intervention and an increasing number of councils across the country warning of significant financial distress and bankruptcy.

We recently published our Responding to Our Medium-Term Financial Plan¹ update which outlines how we are responding to the financial challenges ahead. As part of this response, we are developing a number of savings proposals. Some of these proposals will have no direct impact on the way we deliver our services, whilst some may lead to a different way of operating or change the way we deliver some of our public facing services. Two of these proposals mean a change in the way we deliver our waste collection services.

¹ MTFP Part B – Responding to our Medium Term Financial Plan – September Cabinet

<https://democracy.stockport.gov.uk/documents/s238430/Part%20B%20Report%20-%20responding%20to%20our%20MTFP.pdf>

Reviewing garden waste collections

We provide a weekly garden and food waste collection service to around 100,000 residential properties with a green wheeled bin.

Garden waste such as grass cuttings, tree and shrub pruning, dead flowers and weeds are collected free of charge every week in the green bin alongside food waste. Councils are not required to provide residents with a collection of garden waste and many councils that do provide this service charge for it.

We recognise this is a service that is valued by residents with gardens and so we are keen to carry on providing it. However, with pressure on council budgets we are proposing to make changes to our waste collection services.

We are proposing to introduce a yearly charge for residents that want their garden waste collecting and to change the frequency of the blue bin collections.

This means that residents will have the following options:

- a) A free, weekly, food-only collection or
- b) a paid for weekly garden waste collection and a free weekly food collection (residents can choose to include their food waste with the garden bin if they prefer to having two separate bins; or a bin and a caddy)

Reviewing the frequency of the blue bin collections

The frequency of the blue bin collection will change from fortnightly to four-weekly.

2. Methodology

The consultation period ran from 21st November – 20th December 2024 (4 weeks). We have sought feedback from our residents, businesses, and other stakeholders. The below methods of communication and engagement were undertaken specifically in relation to the changes proposed to the waste service.

Objectives

- Ensure the consultation is understandable yet includes enough background information for people to give an informed opinion.
- The consultation is undertaken for a reasonable amount of time – 4 weeks.
- Use a mixed methodology approach to ensure a range of stakeholders can give their views.
- Gauge the level of support for making the suggested changes.
- Understand the changes would affect people both positively and negatively.
- Ensure the consultation is advertised widely.
- Results are used to inform Members' decision making at the Cabinet meeting on 4th February 2025.
- There is both a digital and non-digital format for feedback.

Feedback mechanisms

- Online survey – this made sure the consultation is easily accessible, and people can complete it in their own time. This was hosted on our online consultation platform.
- Paper surveys (Appendix A) – paper surveys were available in all libraries for those that prefer this method.
- Alternative formats – Printed, email, alternative language offer, library support was offered as alternative format to participate in the consultation.

In order to reach as many people as possible the consultation has been publicised by a range of different methods including;

- Member engagement through Scrutiny meetings
- Social medial channels,
- **Facebook – across all posts**
 - 23,975 Impressions
 - 19 Shares
 - 53 Comments
 - 66 Likes and reactions
- **X (formally Twitter)**
 - 5,475 impressions
 - 13 comments
 - 9 Likes
 - 5 Shares
 -
- Review Extra Newsletter (distribution over 10K)
- Advertised in libraries across Stockport
- Councils ‘Have Your Say’ consultation page
- Our Internal communication channels
- Partner communications

The proposal has also featured in a number of media outlets including, Manchester Evening News², the Daily Express³ and on BBC Radio Manchester and the Stockport Express.

3. Results

This section details the feedback that has been received from the various mechanisms. The largest part relating to the online public consultation.

²Manchester Evening New article 22.11.2024

<https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/greater-manchester-council-plans-59-30429827>

³ Daily Express 24.11.2024

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/1979917/plan-charge-59-bin-collections>

Through the feedback gained across all methods of engagement and consultation (members, online & paper questionnaire) there were a number of common themes across the proposal including;

Environmental/recycling impacts

- Feedback strongly indicated that a number of residents would dispose of their garden waste and excess blue bin contents in their black bins if the proposals were adopted.
- Concerns were raised about an increase in fly-tipping as a potential impact of the proposals.
- Concerns were expressed about the potential negative impacts on the environment and recycling rates.

Service is already paid for within council tax.

- Numerous responses referenced council tax, specifically arguing that this service should be covered within the existing payments made by residents and that services should remain unchanged.

Affordability/cost of living concerns

- There were concerns regarding the affordability of the proposed charges.

Accessibility

- Residents challenged the proposals on the grounds of accessibility issues, particularly highlighting difficulties for those without access to the tip, having access to a vehicle or having physical impairments making using the tip too difficult.

Alternative options

- Some residents suggested that the frequency of green waste collections should be reduced as an alternative to the proposed charges.
- Several responses suggested that charges should be scaled in accordance with usage (first bin free then charge after that)

Blue Bin frequency specific

- Specifically, regarding the change in the frequency of blue bin collections from fortnightly to every four weeks, residents raised concerns about:
 - The volume of contents in the blue bin and bin capacity, particularly with the increase in bulkier packaging materials such as cardboard
 - The current frequency of collections not meeting the demand.
 - The proposal does not consider the changing nature of consumer behaviour.

Feedback from scrutiny is presented first then results from the wider consultation and engagement follow. The feedback received has been grouped into three categories;

- a) Support
- b) Concerns raised.
- c) Alternative suggestions on how savings can be achieved.

3.1 Scrutiny Committee Feedback November

The *Economy, Regeneration and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee* took place 28th November 2024.

The Cabinet Members for Climate Change & Environment and Economy, Regeneration & Housing submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) outlining the proposed strategic approach in responding to the medium-term financial plan.

The following comments were made/issues raised;

- The Scrutiny Committee were aware of the financial challenges facing the authority and other local authorities across the country
- It was questioned whether the proposals relating to waste would cause an increase in fly-tipping, which was already an issue in the borough. Further, whether people would begin to burn waste, as waste might not be as easily disposable under the new proposals. It was reported that these concerns had not come to fruition in other local authority areas in which the proposals had already been implemented. Evidence from other local authorities enabled to council to learn from experience and best practice
- It was reported that officers had been asked to explore reducing the cost of composting bins, given that composting would be the best option for residents from a biodiversity and environmental perspective
- It was advised that the proposals presented considered the government's forthcoming mandatory implementation of proposals set out in the resources and waste strategy for England, in which local authorities must ensure that food waste was collected for free on a weekly basis by 31 March 2026. The proposed options were to either pay a fee for a garden and food waste collection, or not pay the fee and receive a standalone food waste collection. It was commented that the proposals within the report would facilitate a smoother transition to the government's revised waste collection arrangements to be introduced in March 2026
- It was noted that Stockport had some of the best rates of recycling in Greater Manchester
- It was also noted that waste crews were collecting far less waste than they previously had, given the culture shift and move away from traditional media e.g., newspapers, amongst other factors. Further, residents had the opportunity to purchase a further bin, which meant that households could have greater capacity if they wished
- It was noted that the option to increase collections based on a 'peak season' would not be possible, as this would increase the risk of a part-year service and the potential issues in staff recruitment and retention as a result; the council tried as far as possible to avoid the use of agency staff.
- There was a discount option proposed for people receiving council tax support. There was no evidence of this specific provision being trialled at other local authorities

- In response to a question as to capability to maintain Stockport's good recycling rates, it was noted that the forthcoming government strategy would have a significant impact on recycling rates for the country, as well as the ability to track them. The strategy expected to attach value to plastics in the future to incentivise people to recycle e.g., taking plastics that are unable to be recycled with household recycling to the supermarket. Although this would make it more difficult for the council to track recycling rates, recycling rates would be expected to improve
- It was noted that the larger outdoor food waste caddy held approximately four food bags and was lockable
- The permit for green waste collection would be a sticker that attaches to a bin, which is linked to the property
- It was noted that residents could also arrange a one-off collection for garden waste, if needed
- A concern was raised in relation to people putting garden waste into someone else's bin who did not have a permit and therefore their bin would not be collected. Members were reassured that the council would work with Totally Local Company to address any such issues appropriately
- It was reported that some 'friends of' and church groups who collected green waste currently received a free service. Further consideration would need to be given as to whether this would continue
- Larger or additional bins were available for residents wishing to recycle larger amounts of paper and cardboard. It was advised that companies were attempting to streamline cardboard boxes being delivered
- There was ongoing engagement with trade unions on the matter, and the workforce itself were involved in the shaping of this piece of work. Members were reassured that staff numbers would not be reduced
- Technology in wagons enabled crews to identify those needing assisted waste collections
- It was advised that crew rounds would not take any longer if the proposals were implemented, because crews already checked bins for cross-contamination. Further, less bins would be collected as a result of the proposals
- Good communication with residents around the proposals and next steps was incredibly important

3.2 Email response feedback

There have been a total of 17 emails received.

6 of those requested a paper copy of the consultation to be sent to their home address.

1 sought clarification on why specific questions in the About You section of the questionnaire were asked which was responded to directly.

10 (1 of which from representing an organisation, 1 which was on behalf of the responder and their neighbours), provided feedback which consisted of the below theme

- This should already be covered in council tax/council tax is already high enough.
- Concerns about affordability of the addition of the charge
- The knock-on environmental impact with less residents being willing to help clear leaves of roads and pathways.
- Concern that further cuts to the service will happen if this proposal is allowed to be implemented.
- An alternative suggestion was made to reduce the frequency of the bins rather than to charge for the service.

3.3 Let's Talk Budget public consultation questionnaire

There was a total of 7 questions relating to the proposal (5 relating to garden waste and 2 relating to the change in frequency of blue bins), not including the demographics questions. Respondent were able to answer as many questions as they wanted with only 2 of the consultation questions being mandatory. Those 2 questions were;

- Do you agree with the proposal to charge for garden waste?
- Do you agree with the proposal to alter blue recycling collections to every four weeks?

Questions were either a single tick box answer or multiple choice, there was also a number of free text boxes for respondents to explain/elaborate on their response.

For this report a small selection of comments have been removed from the analysis due to them either not being relevant (comments such as blah blah) or derogatory/discriminatory comments.

In order to monitor the diversity of responses we have an 'About You' section that asks respondents a selection of demographics questions. The initial question is mandatory* and asks respondent to confirm whether or not they are happy to complete this information with no other mandatory questions in this section.

- *About you section – Are you happy to complete the following information?

Of the 8093 responses, 81.33% agreed they were happy to complete the 'About You Section' with 18.62% not wanting to supply this information. More information on this section can be found in section 6 of this report.

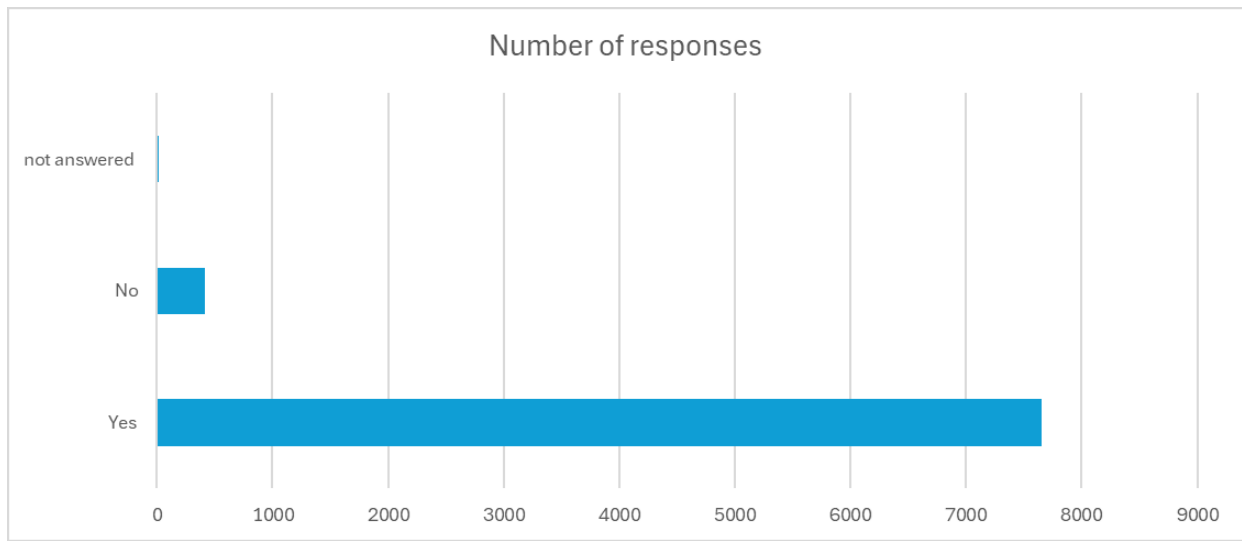
Green waste proposal

This section of the proposal is to introduce a charge for collecting garden waste (such as grass cuttings, tree and shrub pruning's, dead flowers and weeds) from green wheeled bins.

The proposed charge is £59 per green bin per year. This equates to just over £1 per collection. Alternatively, you could compost at home or use the local Household Waste Recycling Centre for your garden waste.

Question 1 (8093 responses)

Do you currently use your green bin to recycle your garden waste?

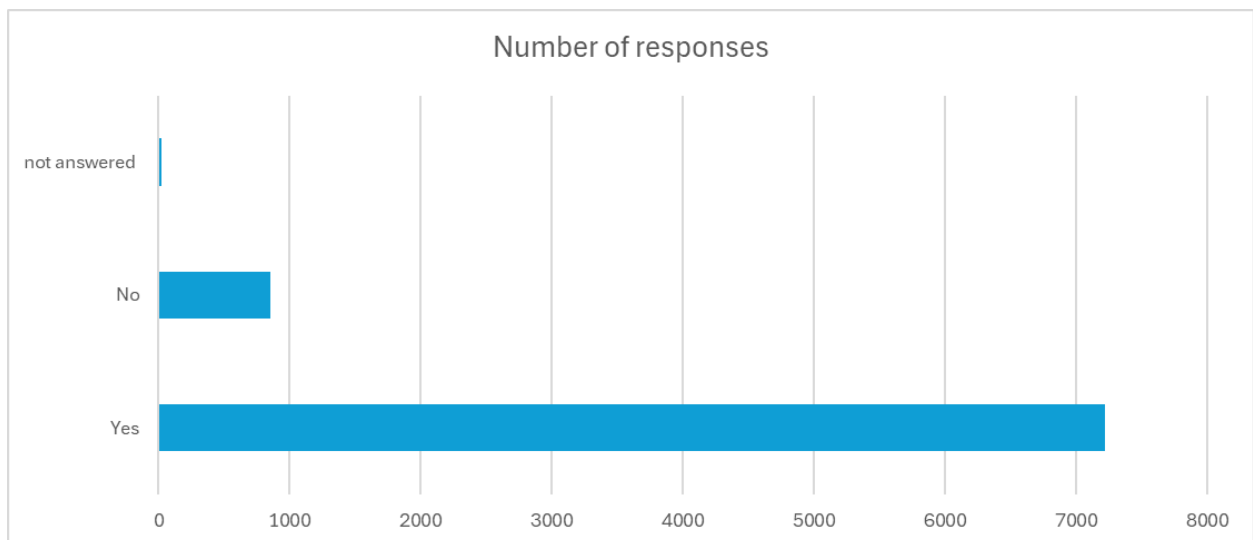


Of the 8093 responses to question 1;

- 94.62% said they do currently use their green bin to recycle garden waste.
- 5.14% said they do not use their green bin for garden waste.
- 0.23% did not answer the question.

Question 2 (8093 responses)

Do you currently use your green bin to recycle your food waste?

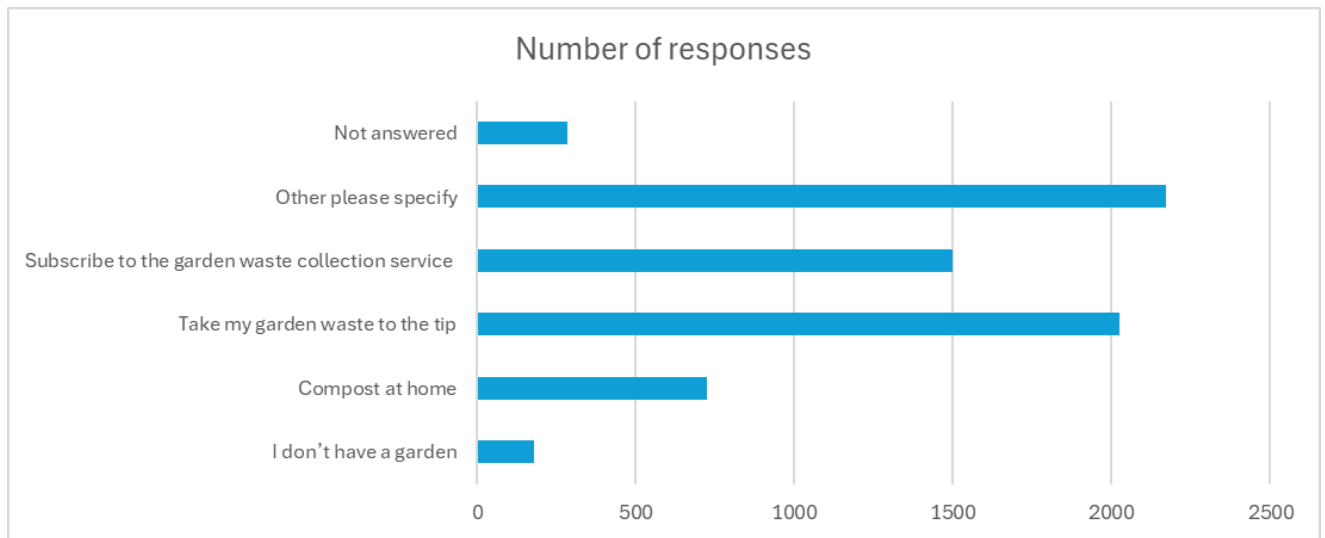


Of the 8093 responses to question 2;

- 89.19% said they do currently use their green bin to recycle food waste.
- 10.53% said they do not use their green bin for food waste.
- 0.28% did not answer the question.

Question 3 (8093 responses)

If the proposal went ahead, how would you choose to dispose of your garden waste?



Respondents were able to choose multiple answers to this question. Of the 8093 responses to question 3 the below are the number of responses to each option:

- 2.85% said they don't have garden waste.
- 12.63% said they would compost at home.
- 34.20% said they would take their garden waste to the tip.
- 25.15% said they would subscribe to the garden waste collection service.
- 4.81% did not answer the question.
- 35.67% of respondents used the 'Other, please specify' option.

There were 3663 comments left in the free text box.

Positive sentiment (83)

From the comments that were left there were very few that were of a positive sentiment some of the comments that were positive were;

- Already compost at home
- "Create wildlife friendly habitat piles of leaves".
- "I already have 2 compost bins at home that I use for Garden waste and some food waste".

Negative sentiment (2284)

The key themes that came through that were of a negative sentiment were in relation to;

- Council Tax
 - "I already pay a very expensive council tax and think it's not only unfair, but it is ridiculous to have to pay for collection of garden waste".
 - "I should not have to pay for a service that I am already charged for within my council tax".

- Concerns this could lead to an increase in fly tipping or burning of waste.
 - “By proposing these plans there will be an increase in fly tipping”.
 - “Would likely result in some burning of garden waste”.
- Concerns around the affordability of the charge in the time of a cost-of-living crisis.

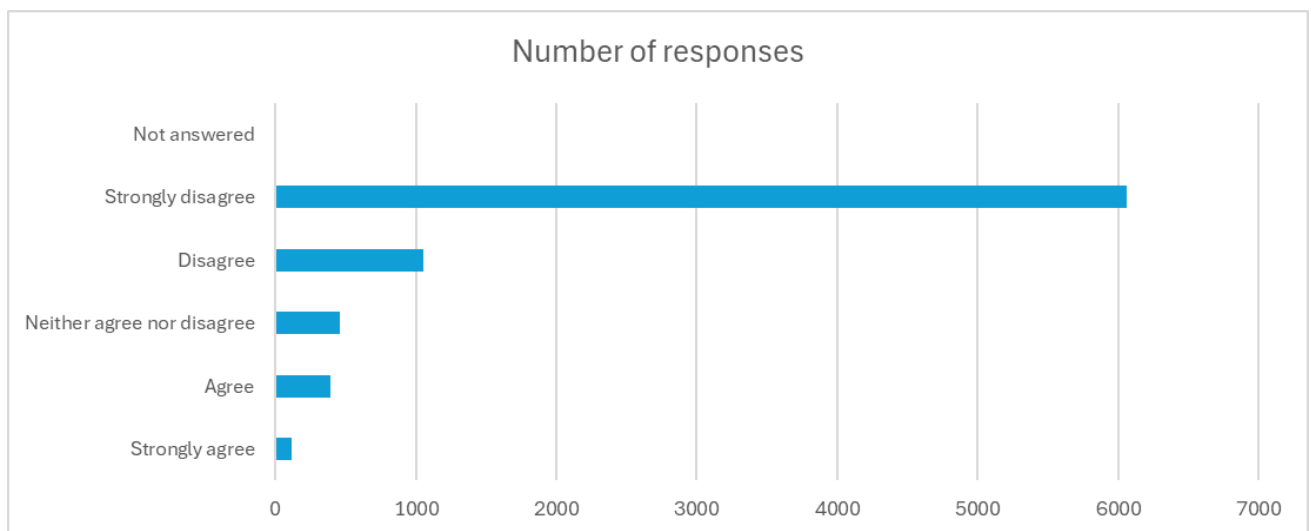
Neutral sentiment (1291)

- Respondents would utilise their black bin for garden waste.
 - “I would put it in my black bin in bin bags”.

Although this statement was considered neutral in response to the question asked, there could be negative impacts from people using their black bin to dispose of garden waste, such as recycling rates decreasing.

Question 4 (8093 responses)

Do you agree with the proposal to charge for garden waste collections?



Of the 8093 responses to question 4;

- 1.40% said they Strongly agree.
- 4.87% said they agree.
- 5.71% said they neither agree nor disagree.
- 13.06% said they disagree.
- 74.87% said they strongly disagree.
- 0.10% of respondents didn't answer this question.

There were 8085 comments left in the free text box that asked respondents to explain their chosen answer.

Positive sentiment (500)

- **310** comments were in support of the proposed changing with some acknowledging that this proposed charge was to ensure that other services were continued to be provided, while other indicating they do not have a garden so would not be impacted by the change;
 - “I don’t think a charge of £59 is over the top”.
 - “Some houses don’t have gardens so shouldn’t have to pay”.
 - “Money spent elsewhere is more worthwhile”.
 - “Yes, I agree. Councils need to maintain essential services”.
- **74** comments specifically mentioned that they understood financial pressure affecting councils, noting rising external costs impacting the delivery of services;
 - “Cost of everything has gone up and the amount of money given to the council by the government has been reduced so a cost increase is necessary”.
 - “I understand that local services are under massive budget restrictions at the moment and are struggling”.

Negative sentiment (6519)

- **3902** comments - the majority of comments that were negative in nature included some relation to council tax and the amount that residents currently pay, paying more for less, in terms of the council tax increasing and the services they receive decreasing, stating that this service should be covered by council tax and that additional charges are unfair;
 - “We already pay a huge amount of council tax, which pays for bin collection services”.
 - “Council tax goes up and service goes down”.
- **1114** comments indicated there would be an increase in fly tipping;
 - “I think implementing this will only cause people to fly tip all over the area, resulting in extra work for the council to clear up”.
- **766** comments raised concerns in relation to the cost-of-living crisis, the winter fuel payment changes and the impacts these could have on affordability of extra charges;
 - “I think the charge cost is too high”.
 - “Cost of living is already putting too much pressure on Stockport residents”.
- **336** comments indicated that garden waste would be disposed of in other bins as a result of these proposals being brought in.

Neutral sentiment (1027)

A large number of comments that came across with a neutral sentiment were more suggesting alternative ideas or indicated they understood the financial pressures of the council;

- “I’d obviously prefer not to pay but understand constraints that the council faces.”

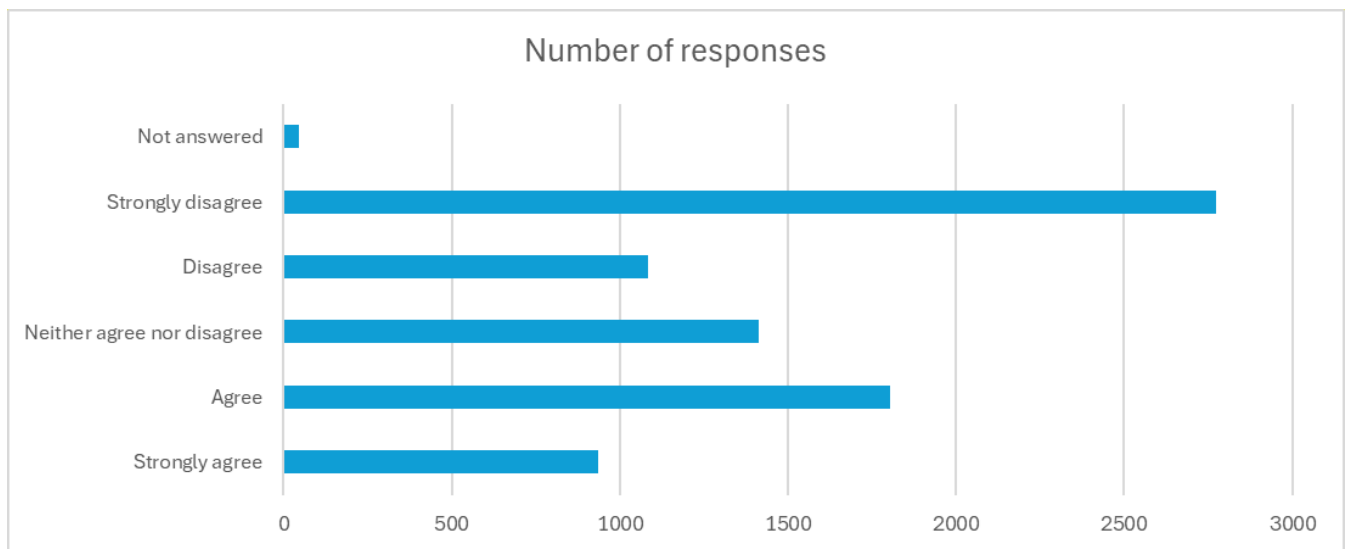
- “Why can't you just cut the green bin collection down and not collect between October and March, that should save some money.”

322 comments indicated that rather than charging for collecting garden there were other ways to make saving within the service such as;

- Reducing collection frequency
- Limiting the collection in the winter months

Question 5 (8093 responses)

Do you agree that properties with large gardens that use multiple green bins should pay for multiple collections?



Of the 8093 responses to question 5;

- 11.57% said they Strongly agree.
- 22.29% said they agree.
- 17.93% said they neither agree nor disagree.
- 13.38% said they disagree.
- 34.28% said they strongly disagree.
- 0.56% of respondents didn't answer this question.

There were 5007 comments made in the free text box provided with this question.

Positive sentiment (1314)

- **803** comments – believed properties with larger gardens should pay for multiple collections and agreed with the assertion of larger gardens should pay more, but the fees should scale with the amount collected or the frequency of collections;
 - “Yes, they should be charged for what they produced and low users should only be charged a proportion of the yearly fee.”

- “Taxes cover a certain ‘free’ service for the majority of users beyond that average sue a cost if reasonable”.

Negative sentiment (2037)

- **855** comments in relation to council tax - residents believed the service should already be covered by the amount of council tax they pay or that the people with larger gardens were paying higher rates of council tax and therefore should not be charged extra;
 - “The size of the garden is already factored into the increase council tax banding.”
- **138** comment - respondents stated that they had no input as to the size of their garden and it is also not reflective of their financial means;
 - “Council tenants don’t choose the size of their gardens, and typically can’t afford to pay extra.”
- **202** comments - respondents were concerned that charging for collections would have negative environmental or social implications such as reducing recycling or increasing carbon emissions;
 - “I think if households have to pay for recycling, we will move away from supporting climate change and global warming.”
- **162** comments stated that the respondent did not agree with the proposition;
 - “Do not agree with the charges.”

Neutral sentiment (1584)

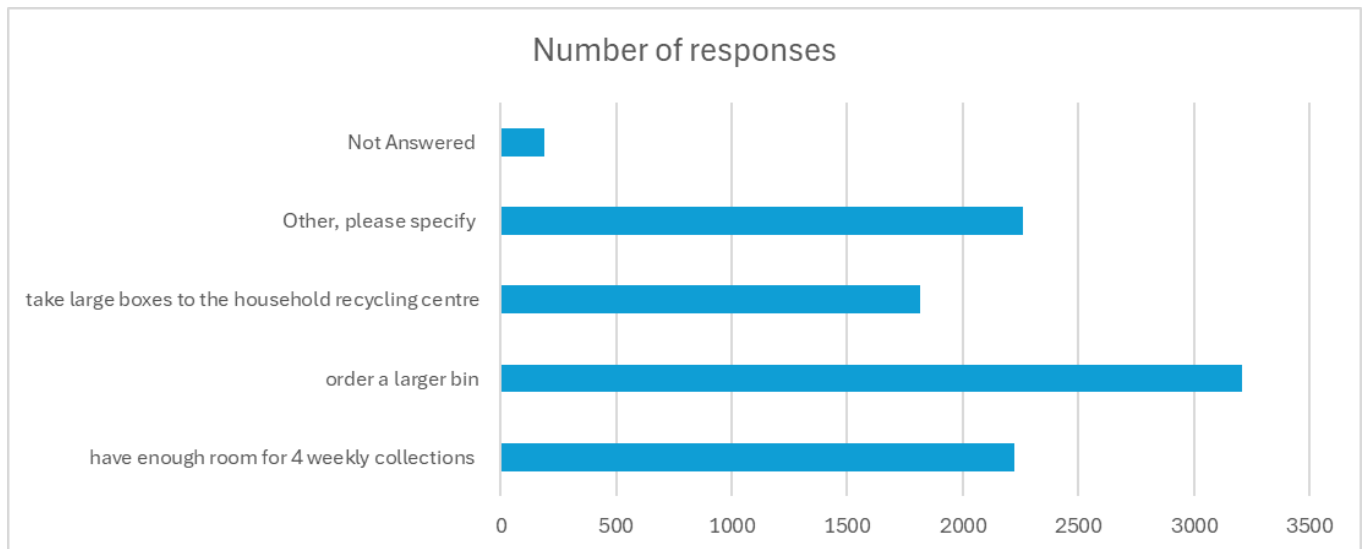
- **519** comments indicated that households should have a single bin with free service with charging introduced for those who order more regardless of size of garden ;
 - "I think 1 bin per household should be free, but extra bins charged for."
- **56** comments stated that given the waste vehicle is due to attend the property each week anyway then why not collect multiple bins;
 - “If your collecting green bins what’s the difference if they have multiple. You’re there anyway.”

Again, environmental impacts and fly tipping were general concerns across responses. There were a few alternative suggestions made;

- Sliding scale for additional bins
- Charge should be pre property not per bin.

Question 6 (8093 responses)

Should the proposal to reduce the frequency of blue bin collections go ahead will your household?



Of the 8093 responses to question 6;

- 27.44% said they Have enough room for 4-weekly collections.
- 39.65% said they would Order a larger blue bin.
- 22.45% said they would Take large boxes to the Household Waste Recycling Centre
- 2.31% did not answer the question.
- 27.94% of the respondents ticked the Other.

In addition to the results above there were 3703 comments made in the Other, please specify free text box.

Positive sentiment (241)

Although there were only **241** comments considered positive in sentiment it should be noted that **2213** respondents selected that they would have enough room in existing bins for a 4-weekly collection and did not leave further comments.

- **174** comments - Many residents believe a four weekly collection is sufficient, and their households would easily manage.
 - “Already thought the blue bin collection was excessive.”
 - “No issues with blue bin going to once a month”.
- **30** comments agreed with the change but with a caveat that they would need to visit the tip over the Christmas period;
 - “There are certain times of the year it is full within two weeks (e.g. Christmas) but generally we would manage 4 weeks.”
- **28** comments felt the proposed changes would be manageable if boxes were folded or collapsed down;
 - “If paper/cardboard is flattened properly it will fit in the bin.”

Negative sentiment (2759)

- **696** comments were made that residents would utilise their black bins for excess paper and cardboard;
 - “I will need a larger bin but will not pay for it that I can't fit in the bin will just go in general waste instead”.
 - 436 comments - Many residents were concerned that they are already at capacity on their blue bin with the current fortnightly collection.
 - “I can fill a blue bin in 2 weeks, and i crush the cardboard down as much as I can, to change it to every 4 weeks wouldn't work for me.”
- **364** comments were made voicing concerns about increases in fly tipping.
 - “Fly tipping will obviously increase!!!!”
 - “Throw it into the park”.
- **334** comments indicated that some residents would burn their excess boxes leading to increase environmental issues.
 - “Burn. Not good for environment.”
 - “We would burn our excess blue bin waste via our in-house log burner, which isn't as environmentally friendly but would save on cost of additional blue bin.”
- **323** comments were made highlighting that residents were not happy with the fact they would need to pay for a larger bin in order to have enough room;
 - “A bigger blue bin but we SHOULD NOT have to pay for it”.
 - “I would happily have a larger bin but I'm not willing to pay for it seen as the only reason I'd need one is because of the changes.”

People believing that the service is already incorporated within their Council tax (or indications that it should be included) (207) along with concerns over the accessibility of tip runs (227) were among some of the top themes.

There were also a number of responses (561) that raised concerns/frustrations with the assumption in the text about a reduction in newspapers has led to reduction in blue bin waste. Respondents made it clear they wanted it to be acknowledged that due to online ordering and changes in packaging there is a lot more cardboard being used even if newspaper usage was declining.

Neutral sentiment (653)

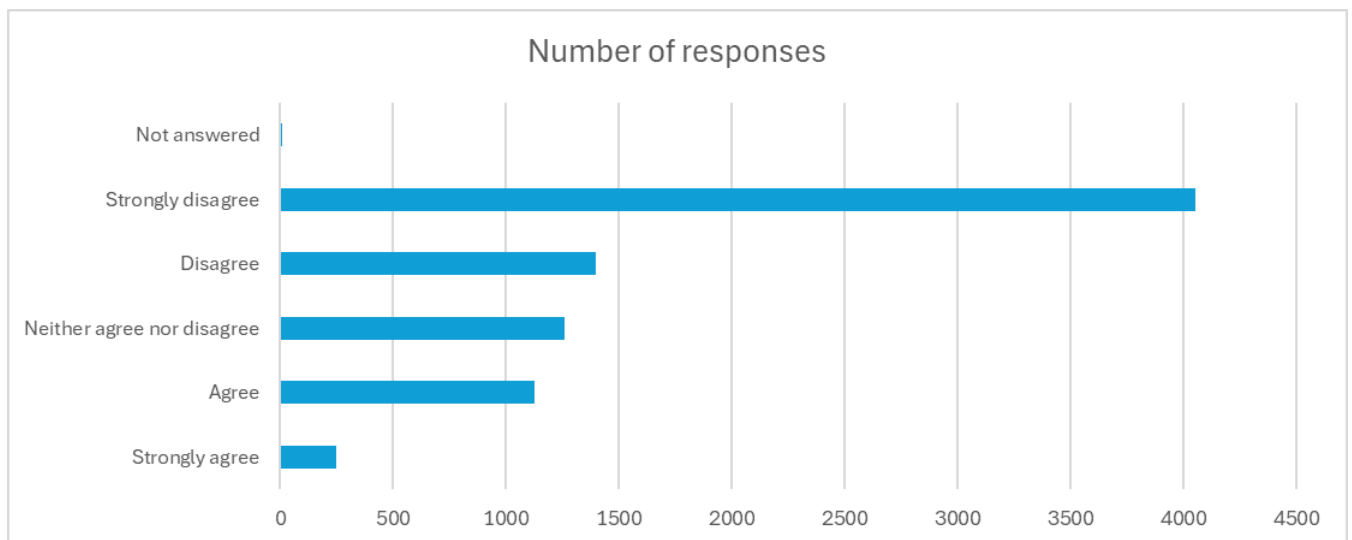
- **149** comments - Residents are considering getting another bin depending on the charge, or feel mixed about the charge without being strongly opposed to it;
 - “I think you should say how much larger bin would be”
 - “Depending on the cost of the new bin would depend on my decision.”

- **40** comments - Some respondents indicated that their bins were nearly full after 2 weeks, but they may be able to cope with the new proposal if they had the bigger bin and boxes were broken down;
 - “My bin is always full after 2 weeks a bigger bin would definitely help to then reduce to 4 weekly collections”.

As an alternative respondents questioned whether a 3 weekly collection cycle was an option or if there was an option for additional collections over Christmas. There was again concern over access to tips, impact on the environment as well as an acknowledgment that larger household may be impacted more due to the proposed changes.

Question 7

Do you agree with the proposal to alter blue recycling collections to every four weeks?



Of the 8093 responses to question 7;

- 3.08% said they Strongly agree
- 13.91% said they agree
- 15.58% said they neither agree or disagree
- 17.26% said they disagree
- 50.07% said they strongly disagree
- 0.10% of respondents didn't answer this question.

Respondents were provided with a free text box to explain their answer or leave any feedback.

8085 comments were left that were a mixture of positive, negative and neutral. There were a number of key themes that came through from the feedback.

Positive sentiment (2221)

- **1022** comments were made that indicated respondents already had enough room in their blue bin or would have enough room in their blue bin if they ordered a larger one;
 - “This is enough for a normal family.”
 - “If a larger bin can be provided, the 4 weekly collections will be fine”.
 - “I usually have room in my blue bin. Probably only put it out once a month anyway.”
- **179** comments were made in relation to respondents believe with proper packaging breakdown the current bin size is capable of managing the change;
 - “This just requires people to collapse packaging before putting into the blue bin.”
- **148** comments stated that respondents would use recycling centres or compost to manage any excess waste;
 - “We already compost most of our garden waste, so the change in blue bin collection won't affect us much.”

Negative sentiment (5329)

- **1488** comments stated that blue bins are already full after 2 weeks so there would be no capacity if the collections were 4 weeks;
 - “Our blue bin is full as it is after 2 weeks as it is, 4 weeks is far too long a frequency.”
- **1140** respondents were concerned about the changes reducing recycling rates or having negative effects on the environment;
 - “You are completely discouraging people from recycling by removing the means. Helping the environment should be easy in order to ensure compliance. You are making things very difficult for residents!”
- **846** comments raised concerned that the changes would lead to an increase in fly tipping or large numbers of people burning their excess waste;
 - “I usually run out of space in my blue bin. People will either start dumping it or burning it.”

Neutral sentiment (304)

- **38** comments suggested residents are not affected by the proposals or are not interested in the outcome;
 - “Whether it's two weeks or four weeks, it doesn't make a big difference to me. I can manage either way.”
- **22** comments were made where respondents believed small households may be fine, but large households could struggle with usage or bin space;
 - “It all depends on how much people need to use it; families would have more need of it than a single person.”

There were a few themes that came through across all positive, negative and neutral sentiments and these were;

- At certain times of the year people may struggle more with this proposal (mainly Christmas) and that there is a lack of understanding/information to make an informed decision
- Many residents were concerned with the ability of elderly residents to manage heavier bins and the logistics of taking waste to the tip. There were concerns about the challenges for disabled residents or those with health conditions who order medication online and have to manage the waste, particularly those without access to a car or with limited mobility.

4. Conclusion

The aim of our consultation and engagement was to obtain feedback on our approach to ensuring a balanced budget for 2025/2026, specifically the change proposals we are developing in relation to introducing a yearly charge for residents that want their garden waste collecting and to change the frequency of the blue bin collections.

Feedback was received from a various channels including Members via Scrutiny Committee meetings, emails received to the consultation inbox and the public questionnaire (available online and in paper format).

Across all channels there was a recognition that there are financial challenges and difficult decisions to be made, however there were a number of concerns raised through all forums, regarding the perceived impacts of the proposed changes.

These main concerns span a number of areas including:

- the service should already be covered in council tax/amount of council tax residents already pay.
- affordability in the current financial climate
- environmental impacts (fly tipping, less recycling, more leaves on the roads)

5. Additional Information

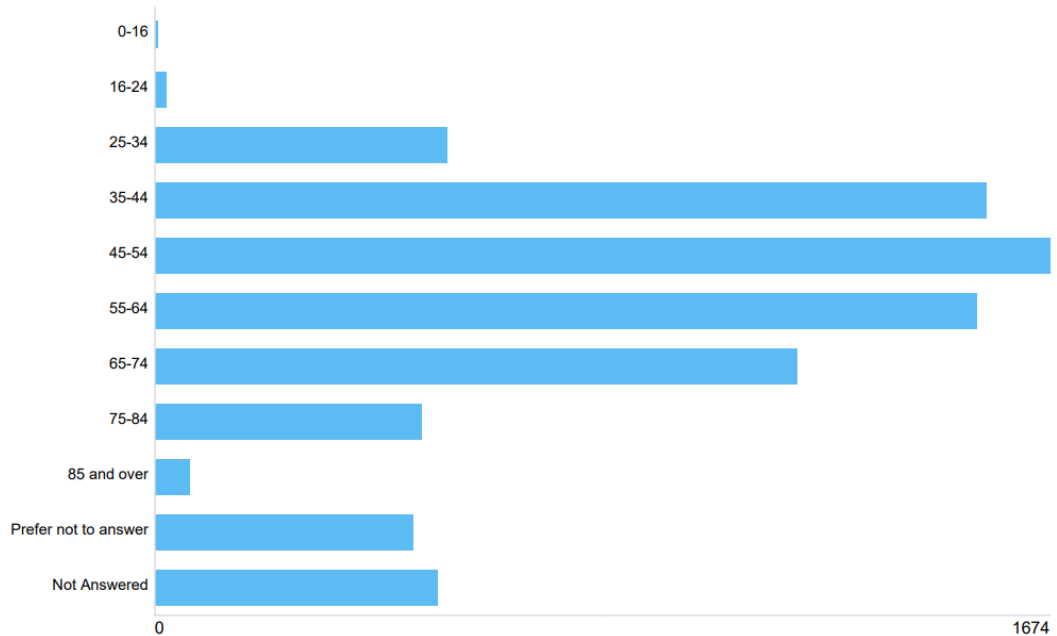
Key Demographics information (full demographic information is provided in the About you section below)

Age

Responses have been received from a wide age range. The largest percentage of respondents are aged 35-44 with 80% of respondents being between 25-74.

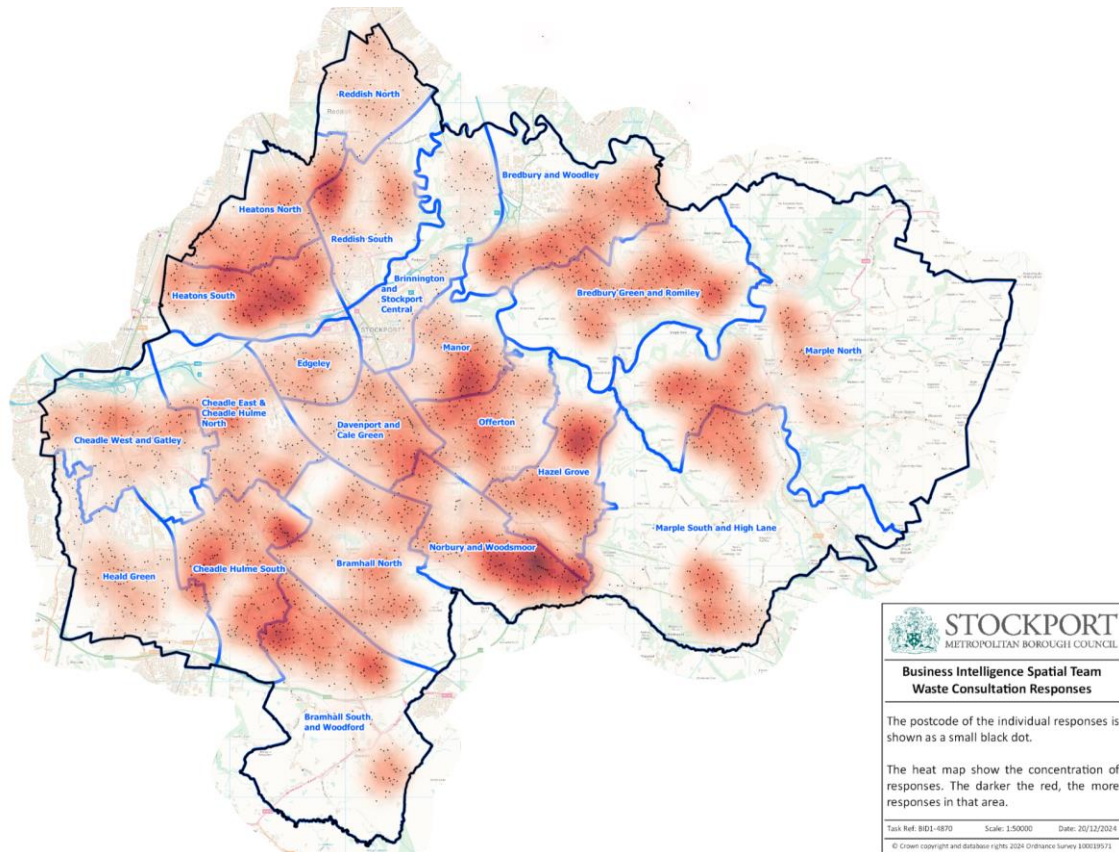
Question 10: What is your age?

Age



Postcode

The map below indicates the postcode data from those who have responded with a valid postcode (1942 were not valid postcodes) to the questionnaire. There is generally a widespread representation from across the Borough with some pockets of increased responses (darker red areas represent more responses).



Impairment, disability or long-term health condition

Of those who responded 16.30% (1319 responses) said that they consider themselves to have an impairment, disability or long-term health condition with 61% responding no to this question and the rest choosing either not to answer or advising they would prefer not to answer.

Of those who said they consider themselves to have an impairment, disability or long terms health condition, **6.7% agreed** there should be a charge for the garden waste collection while **89% disagreed**.

Of the **6.4% that agreed** with the proposal the below reasons were the top give;

- Fairness in relation to those who use it should pay for it.
- Acknowledgment that councils are under pressure financially and certain services should be protected.

Of the **89% that disagreed** with the proposal the below reasons were amongst the top given;

- Should already be covered within council tax.
- Will lead to an increase in fly tipping and reduce recycling rate.
- Adverse financial impact

It is worth noting that 20 comments specifically indicated that respondents did agree and that due to their disability or illness they would find it harder to dispose of their garden waste so would have to sign up to the scheme.

- “I’m disabled and have no other way of disposal, so you would be forcing it on me”.
- “I am not in a position to take garden rubbish to the tip as I am disabled”.

In relation to the change in frequency of Blue Bin collections **18.4% agreed** with the proposal while **66% disagreed** and **16% neither agreed nor disagreed**.

Of those who agreed and neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal the top themes were;

- Already have enough capacity/bin not full/only put it out once a month.
- Could manage with a larger bin.

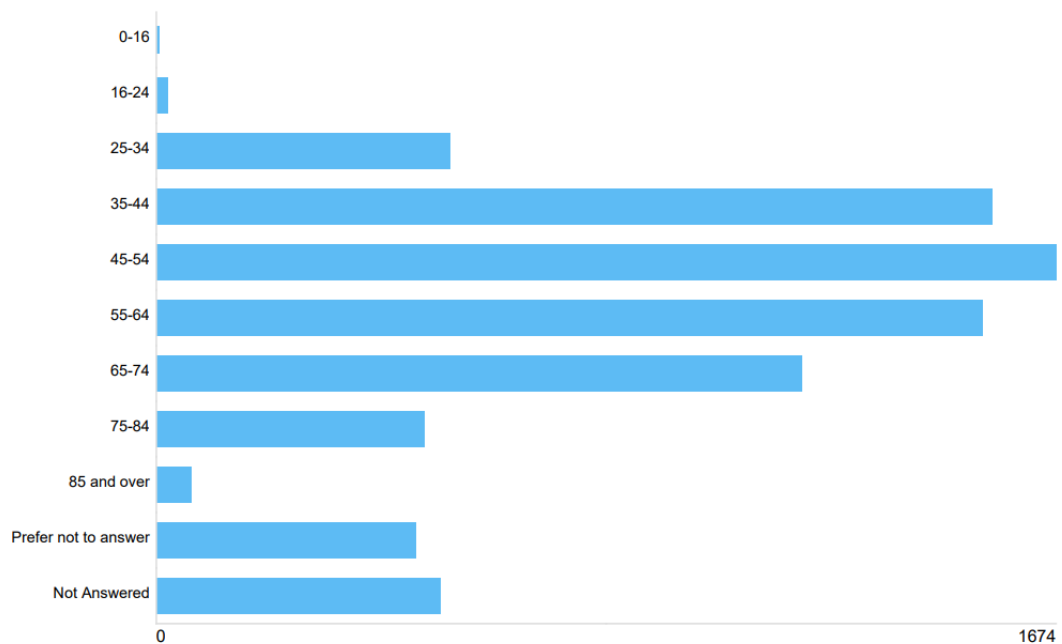
Of those who disagreed to the proposal the top themes were;

- Concerns about environment, recycling rates and fly tipping
- Not being able to easily access the tip

6. About you data

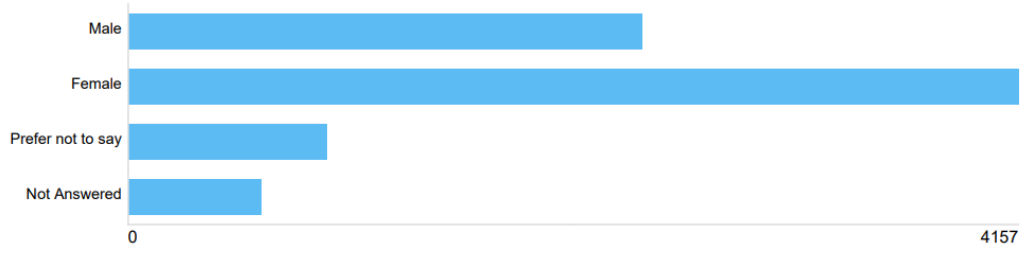
Question 10: What is your age?

Age



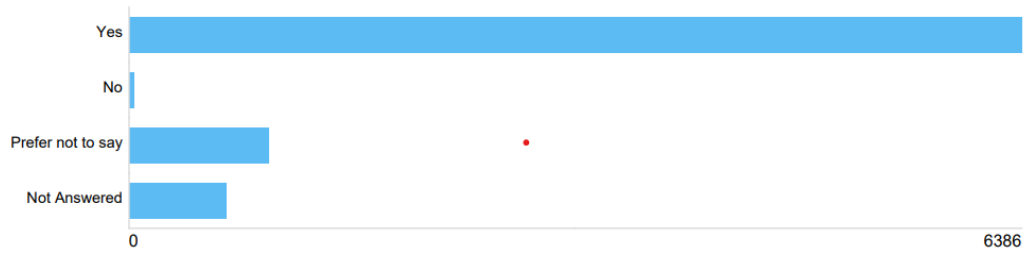
Question 11: What is your sex?

Sex



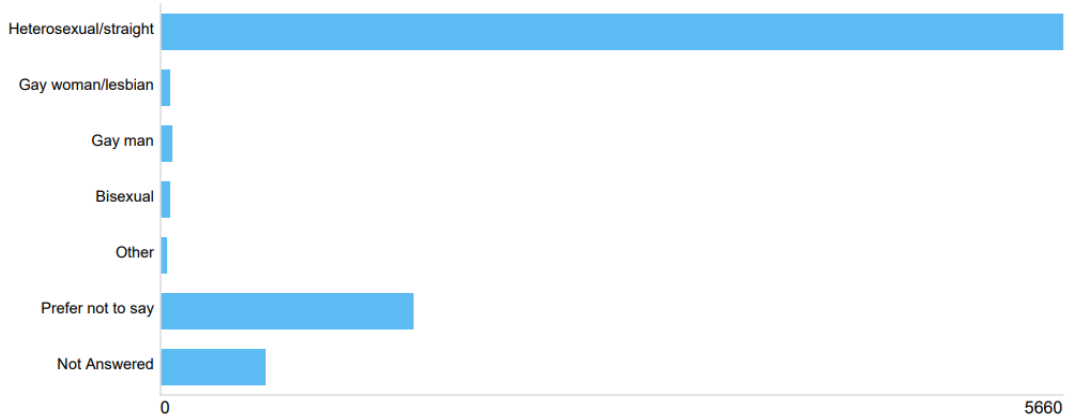
Question 12: Is your gender the same as the one you were assigned at birth? - Is your gender the same as the one you were assigned at birth?

Gender



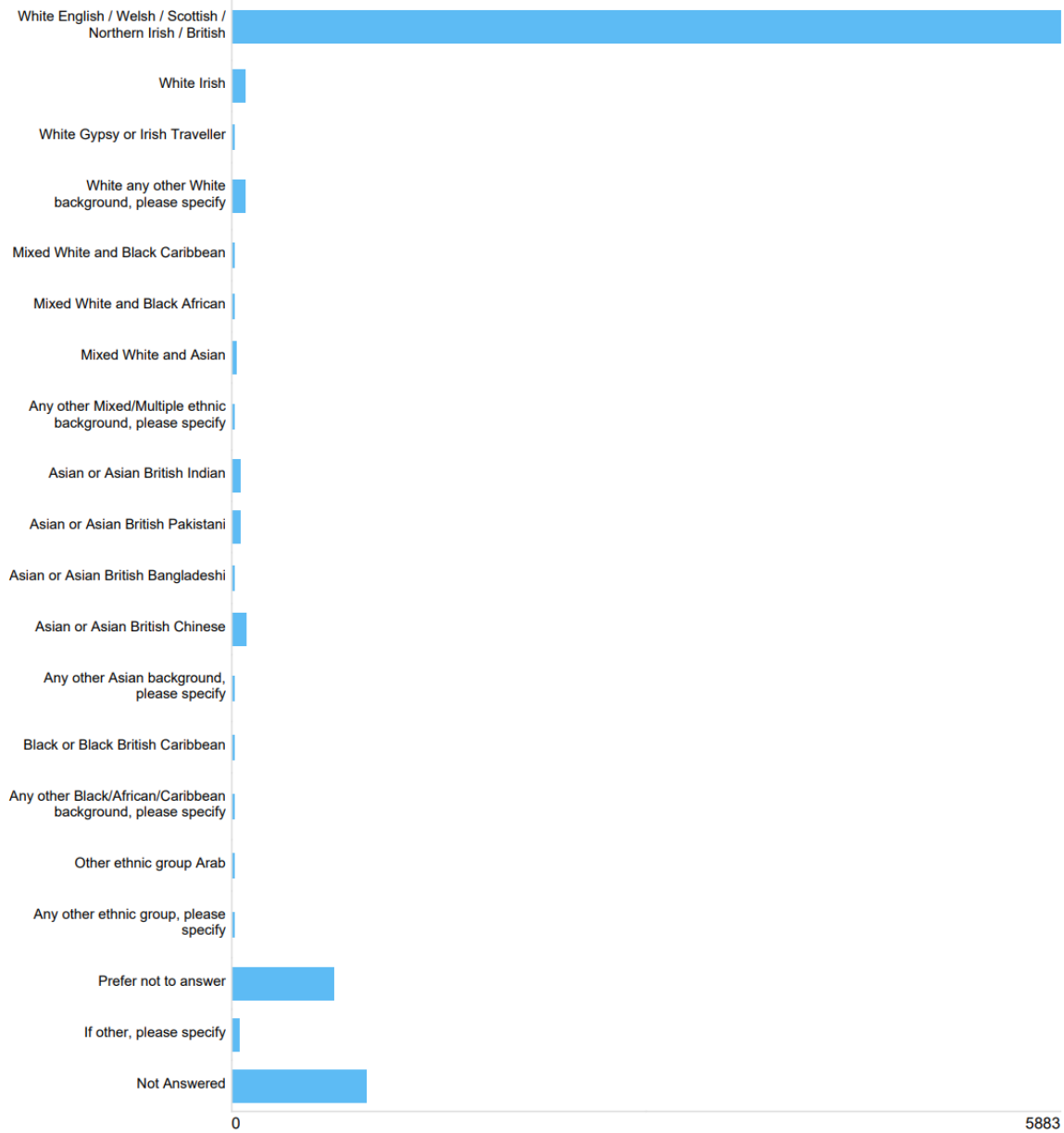
Question 13: Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?

Sexual orientation



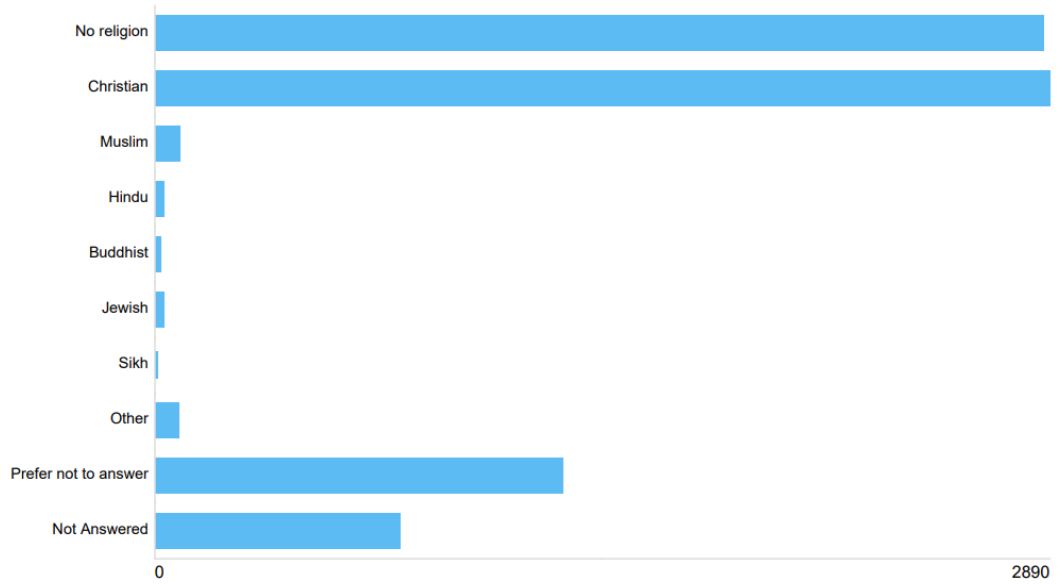
Question 14: How would you define your ethnic group?

How would you define your ethnic group?



Question 15: How would you define your religion or belief?

religion



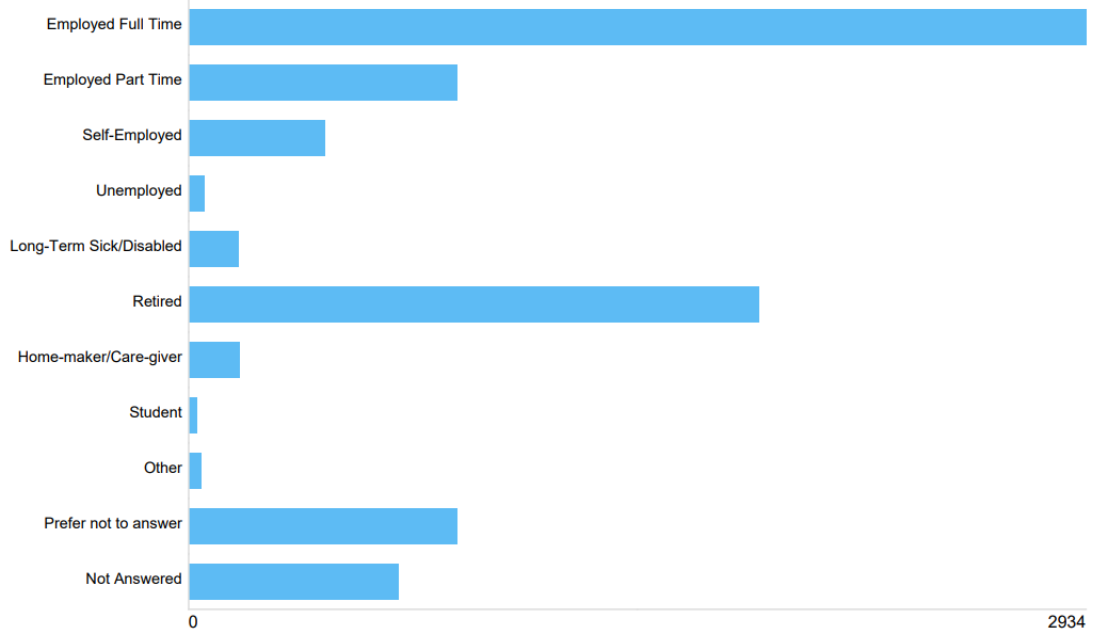
Question 16: Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability that has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months? - Do you consider yourself to have an impairment, disability or long term health condition?

Do you consider yourself to have an impairment, disability or long term health condition?



Question 17: Which of the following best describes your employment status?

Are you...?



Let's Talk Budget 2025/2026

Introduction

Stockport Council provide over 800 services to support and improve the lives of residents, businesses, and visitors in Stockport. Our annual budget is £336 million. Every year, we must balance our spend with the income we receive.

The cost of delivering our services is increasing. Alongside the uncertainty at a national level, the budget pressures have been exacerbated, and the financial risks the Council faces have significantly increased, through:

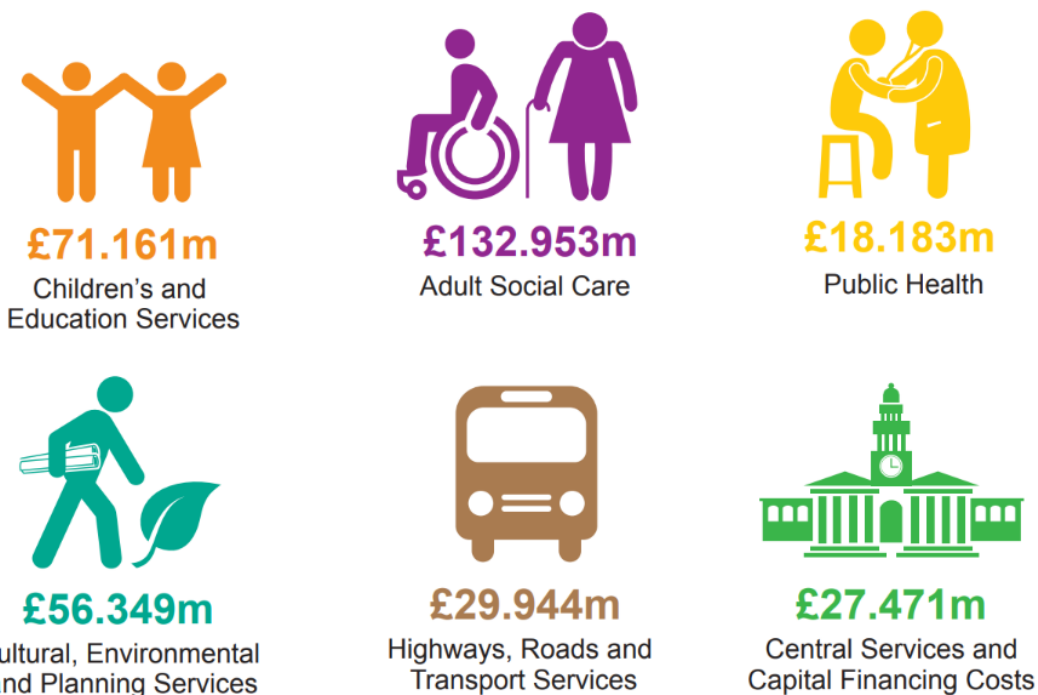
- **Children's and Education services increase in need for support**– driven by increasing need for Looked After Children placements, cost of external placements linked to the complexity of children's needs and resilience of our families.
- **Homelessness** – increasing with an acute shortage of affordable housing and more people needing support and increase in the use of temporary accommodation.
- **Adult Social Care** – financial risk emerging as a result of demand, demographics and costs associated with commissioned packages of care.
- **Increased need for support emerging from the Cost of living crisis** - including increased costs of service provision across social care and preventative services.
- **Ongoing implications of the Covid-19 pandemic** – including longer term implications for Leisure, Children's Services and reductions to commercial income which has not recovered to a pre-pandemic position.
- **Workforce shortages, along with recruitment challenges** within Council services and that of our partners and supply chain affecting the delivery of services or supplies.
- **National Pay Offer** – The employers 2024/25 pay offer has now been agreed and is expected to cost the Council circa £4.2m.

- **Inflationary Pressures** – resulting in increased costs across a range of different areas. Although inflation rates have reduced compared to 2023/24, we are still experiencing an adverse impact on all goods and services bought by the Council.

Achieving a balanced budget whilst delivering our longer-term ambitions is extremely challenging. We can only achieve this by making difficult decisions, robust prioritisation of our resource, and ambitious changes in the way we work to deliver services if we are to continue to meet the needs of local people today and in the future. The consequences of not achieving this are increasingly visible across the wider local government sector with an increase in government intervention and an increasing number of councils across the country warning of significant financial distress and bankruptcy.

In this consultation we are encouraging our residents, businesses and other stakeholders to tell us what you think of our budget proposals, helping us to determine how we can deliver services in the best way.

What we spend our money on: 2024



We need to make changes to our services in order to make savings

We are shaping our budget within an uncertain, unstable, and complex environment. This includes pressures across public services, our supply chains and addressing the increasing need within our communities for support.

Our Medium-term financial plan (MTFP) shows that the money we plan to spend delivering services is more than our income. In 2025/26 we need to find £24.517 million savings with further significant savings needed in the coming years.

Only by operating differently and making significant changes will we be able to balance our budget. Like many councils across the country, we face significant financial challenges, especially in the current climate of government funding not keeping pace with the increasing costs and level of support that our most vulnerable residents need.

Over 70% of the council's budget is used to provide essential services to Stockport's most vulnerable children and adults, at a cost which is increasing year on year at the same time as funding is being reduced year on year.

How we plan to make savings in 2025/26

We recently published our Responding to Our Medium Term Financial Plan⁴ update which outlines how we are responding to the financial challenges ahead. As part of this response, we are developing a number of savings proposals. Some of these proposals will have no direct impact on the way we deliver our services, however others may lead to a different way of operating or delivering some of our public facing services. For those proposals that may lead to a change in service delivery we would like to gather your feedback and thoughts through this consultation.

Alternative formats

⁴MTFP Part B – Responding to our Medium Term Financial Plan – September Cabinet
<https://democracy.stockport.gov.uk/documents/s238430/Part%20B%20Report%20-%20responding%20to%20our%20MTFP.pdf>

Printed Version: You can request alternative formats such as a hard copy, large print.

E-Mail: You can request an email version of the consultation by contacting us at consultation@stockport.gov.uk

Language Support: If English is not your first language and you cannot get support from a friend or family, we can offer language support;

E-Mail: consultation@stockport.gov.uk

The consultation is available in libraries across the borough of Stockport on request.

This consultation runs from **21st November 2024 closing at 12noon on 20th December 2024.**

What happens next

Responses will help to shape the development of these proposals which will return to Scrutiny Committees in January ahead of final sign off at Budget Council in February 2025.

Why your views matter

We must make sure we direct money to where it is most needed and want to find out what people think about our budget proposals.

How to give your views

Complete the survey online.

To request a paper copy of the consultation, write to us at:
Consultation and Engagement
Fred Perry House
Edward Street
Stockport
SK1 3UR

All responses must be submitted before noon on 20th December 2024.

Responses submitted after this date will not be accepted.

Please return this paper version to any one of our libraries across the Borough.

Waste Proposal

Stockport Council provides a weekly garden and food waste collection service to around 100,000 residential properties with a green wheeled bin.

Garden waste such as grass cuttings, tree and shrub pruning, dead flowers and weeds are collected free of charge every week in the green bin alongside food waste. Councils are not required to provide residents with a collection of garden waste and many councils that do provide this service charge for it.

We recognise this is a service that is valued by residents with gardens and so we are keen to carry on providing it. However with pressure on council budgets we are proposing to make changes to our waste collection services.

We are proposing to introduce a yearly charge for residents that want their garden waste collecting and to change the frequency of the blue bin collections.

This means that residents will have the following options:

- a) A free, weekly, food-only collection or
- b) a paid for weekly garden waste collection and a free weekly food collection (residents can choose to include their food waste with the garden bin if they prefer to having two separate bins; or a bin and a caddy)

The frequency of the blue bin collection will also change from fortnightly to four-weekly.

We would like your views on this proposal and the proposed changes.

More information about the proposal is outlined within the questionnaire, should the proposal go ahead a set of FAQs will be produced and more information will be shared.

Your views will be considered alongside other information to help Stockport Council decide whether to go ahead with the proposal.

Garden Waste proposal

We're proposing to introduce an annual charge for collecting garden waste (such as grass cuttings, tree and shrub pruning's, dead flowers and weeds) from green wheeled bins.

If the proposal goes ahead, any household that is eligible for a green wheeled bin for garden waste could choose to pay an annual charge to have their garden waste collected by Stockport Council. The bin could continue to be used for food waste only - which will remain free of charge.

Collections would take place every week (except during December), and your collection day wouldn't change.

The proposed charge is £59 per green bin per year. This equates to just over £1 per collection. Alternatively, you could compost at home or use the local Household Waste Recycling Centre for your garden waste.

Households who are in receipt of council tax support will be charged £39 per year for their garden waste (for one bin).

There will be no limit to the number of Garden Waste bins that a property can use.

Q1. Do you currently use your green bin to recycle your garden waste?

- Yes
- No

Q2. Do you currently use your green bin to recycle your food waste?

- Yes
- No

Q3. If the proposal went ahead, how would you choose to dispose of your garden waste? Please tick all that apply

- I don't have garden waste

- Compost at home
- Take my garden waste to the tip
- Subscribe to the garden waste collection service
- Other, please specify

Q4. How far do you agree with the proposal to charge for garden waste collections? Please tick one of the following

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please use the space below to explain your decision

Q.5 How far do you agree that properties with large gardens that use multiple green bins should pay for multiple collections? Please tick one of the following

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree

- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please use the space below to explain your decision

Blue Bin Proposal

The Council is also considering reducing the frequency of blue bin collections from every two weeks to every four weeks. As residents' habits change there is far less material collected via the blue bins as fewer newspapers and magazines are purchased and recycled. A less frequent service would be more efficient as almost all residents have enough capacity to recycle all their paper and cardboard every 4 weeks. The small number who have a lot of paper or cardboard recycling are able to order larger blue bins.

Q6. Should the proposal to reduce the frequency of blue bin collections go ahead will your household; please tick all that apply

- Have enough room for 4-weekly collections
- Order a larger blue bin
- Take large boxes etc to the Household Waste Recycling Centre
- Other, please specify

Q7. How far do you agree with the proposal to alter blue recycling collections to every four weeks? Please tick one of the following

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please use the space below to explain your decision

About You

We would be grateful if you would complete the following information.

We collect demographic monitoring information to allow us to understand which communities or groups of people you might belong to, so we know the levels of participation across different groups of people in our engagement and research.

We may also use this data to understand if there are any similarities in experiences or opinions of people across different demographic groups. This helps us identify the possible needs of different groups of people or the potential impacts of a proposed change.

Stockport Council adheres to the General Data Protection regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act. This information will remain confidential and completion of this form is entirely voluntary. No identifiable information will be shared in public reports.

You can find out more about how we process your data by visiting our website: <https://www.stockport.gov.uk/topic/data-protection>

Are you happy to complete the following section?

- Yes
- No

Where did you learn about this consultation?

What type of respondent are you?

- An individual making my own response
- A service user
- A service provider
- A business
- Other, please specify

What is your postcode?

We ask this so we can know where responses are received from. Your postcode will not be published.

What is your age?

- 0-16
- 17-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- Prefer not to answer
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75-84
- 85+

What is your sex?

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to answer

Is your gender the same as the one you were assigned at birth?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer

Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?

- Straight or Heterosexual
- Gay or Lesbian
- Gay man
- Bisexual
- Prefer not to answer
- Other, please specify...

How would you define your ethnic group?

- White English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British
- White Irish

- White Gypsy or Irish Traveler
- White any other White background, please specify
- Mixed White and Black Caribbean
- Mixed White and Black African
- Mixed White and Asian
- Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background, please specify
- Asian or Asian British Indian
- Asian or Asian British Pakistani
- Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi
- Asian or Asian British Chinese
- Any other Asian background, please specify
- Black or Black British Caribbean
- Any other Black/African/Caribbean background, please specify
- Other ethnic Arab
- Any other ethnic group, please specify
- Prefer not to answer
- Other, please specify

How would you define your religion or belief?

- No religion
- Christian
- Muslim
- Hindu
- Buddhist
- Jewish
- Sikh
- Prefer not to answer
- Other, please specify...

Are your day to day activities limited because of a health problem or disability that has lasted or is expected to last at least 12 months?

- Yes
- No

Prefer not to answer

Which of the following best describes your employment status?

- Employed Full Time
- Employed Part Time
- Self-Employed
- Unemployed
- Long-Term Sick/Disabled
- Retired
- Home-maker/Care-giver
- Student
- Prefer not to answer
- Other, please specify...