



# Living in Lancashire Survey

**Budget consultation 2011**

December 2011

[www.lancashire.gov.uk](http://www.lancashire.gov.uk)



**Rebecca Robinson and Mick Edwardson**

**14 December 2011**

For further information on the work of the Corporate Research and Intelligence Team, please contact us at:

Living in Lancashire

Lancashire County Council

County Hall

Preston

PR1 8XJ

Tel: 0808 1443536

[www.lancashire.gov.uk/profile](http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/profile)

# Contents

<b>1.</b>	<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>1</b>
	Highest priority services for spending in the coming years.....	1
	Lowest spending priorities in the coming years.....	1
	Level of Council Tax increase .....	1
<b>2.</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>RESEARCH OBJECTIVES .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>3</b>
	4.1 Limitations .....	4
<b>5.</b>	<b>MAIN RESEARCH FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>5</b>
	5.1 Priorities for service development.....	5
	5.1.1 <i>Individual services - high priority for spending</i> .....	5
	5.1.2 <i>Individual services - low priority for spending</i> .....	8
	5.2 Opinion on acceptable levels of Council Tax increase .....	10
	<b>APPENDIX 1: SOCIO-ECONOMIC-GROUP DEFINITIONS .....</b>	<b>13</b>
	<b>APPENDIX 2: MARKED UP QUESTIONNAIRE .....</b>	<b>14</b>

## 1. Executive summary

This wave of the Life in Lancashire panel dealt with priorities for the county council budget and acceptable levels of Council Tax increase. The survey was sent by email or by post to all 2,794 members of the panel on 9 November and the fieldwork ended on 2 December 2011. In total 1,619 questionnaires were returned, giving an overall response rate of 58%.

### Highest priority services for spending in the coming years

- **Services for older people, primary and secondary education and repairing roads and bridges** are seen as the highest spending priorities for the coming years (57%, 46% and 39% respectively).

### Lowest spending priorities in the coming years

- As in the 2010 and 2009 surveys, **museums** are seen as the service that should be the lowest priority for spending in the coming years (52%).
- **Country parks, open spaces and picnic sites** and **adult education** are seen as the next lowest priorities (31% and 28%).

### Level of Council Tax increase

- The majority of respondents feel they could not support an increase in Council Tax (87%).
- Only one in twenty respondents feel they could support an increase in Council Tax of 3% or more (6%).

## 2. Introduction

Lancashire County Council has used Living in Lancashire regularly since August 2001 (formerly known as Life in Lancashire). A panel of willing participants is recruited and is approached on a regular basis to seek their views on a range of topics and themes. Panel members are voluntary participants in the research they complete and no incentives are given for completion.

The panel has been designed to be a representative cross-section of the county's population. The results for each survey are weighted in order to reflect the demographic profile of the county's population.

The panel provides access to a sufficiently large sample of the population so that reliable results can be reported at a county wide level. It also provides data at a number of sub-area and sub-group levels.

Each wave of Living in Lancashire is themed. Firstly, it enables sufficient coverage on a particular topic to be able to provide insight into that topic. And secondly, it comes across better to the residents completing the questionnaires if there is a clear theme (or 2-3 clear themes) within each survey.

The panel is refreshed periodically. New members are recruited to the panel and some current members are retired on a random basis. This means that the panel remains fresh and is not subject to conditioning ie the views of panel members become too informed with county council services to be representative of the population as a whole.

## 3. Research objectives

The objectives of this consultation are:

- to obtain an indication of the service areas that residents believe should be budget priorities for the coming years; and
- to obtain an understanding of what residents perceive to be an acceptable level of increase in Council Tax for 2012/2013.

This work follows on from previous yearly budget consultations that have taken place since 2003.

## 4. Methodology

This wave of Living in Lancashire research was sent to 2,794 members of the panel on 9 November with a final closing date of 2 December 2011.

The survey was conducted through a postal questionnaire, and an online version of the same questionnaire being emailed to members who had previously requested to take part online. The postal questionnaire was sent to 1969 members and the online questionnaire was sent to 825 members.

In total 1,619 questionnaires were returned, giving an overall response rate of 58%.

All data are weighted by age, ethnicity and district to reflect the Lancashire overall population, and figures are based on all respondents unless otherwise stated. The weighted responses have been scaled to match the effective response of 1,031, which is the equivalent size of the data if it had not been weighted and was a perfect random sample.

## 4.1 Limitations

The table below shows the sample tolerances that apply to the results in this survey. Sampling tolerances vary with the size of the sample as well as the percentage results.

Number of respondents	50/50 + / -	30/70 + / -	10/90 + / -
50	14%	13%	8%
100	10%	9%	6%
200	7%	6%	4%
500	4%	4%	3%
1000	3%	3%	2%
2000	2%	2%	1%

On a question where 50% of the people in a sample of 1,000 respond with a particular answer, the chances are 95 out of 100 that the answer would be between 47% and 53% (ie +/- 3%), versus a complete coverage of the entire Lancashire population using the same procedure.

The following table shows what the percentage differences between two samples on a statistic must be greater than, to be statistically significant.

Size of sample A	Size of sample B	50/50	70/30	90/10
100	100	14%	13%	8%
100	200	12%	11%	7%
500	1000	5%	5%	3%
2000	2000	3%	3%	2%

(Confidence interval at 95% certainty for a comparison of two samples)

For example, where the size of sample A and sample B is 2,000 responses in each and the percentage result in each group you are comparing is around 50% in each category, the difference in the results needs to be more than 3% to be statistically significant. This is to say that the difference in the results of the two groups of people is not due to chance alone and is a statistically valid difference (eg of opinion, service usage).

For each question in the survey, comparisons have been made between different sub-groups of respondents (eg age, gender, disability, ethnicity, geographic area) to look for statistically significant differences in opinion. Statistically valid differences between sub-groups are described in the main body of the report.

In charts or tables where responses do not add up to 100%, this is due to multiple responses or computer rounding.

## 5. Main research findings

### 5.1 Priorities for service development

The first section of the budget consultation questionnaire gave the proportion of spending and the actual expenditure on a wide range of services Lancashire County Council provides. It gave details on council expenditure in 2011/12 and the sources of council finances. It also informed panel members of the county council plans for the following years.

Panel members were then given a list of county council services and asked which three or four should be the highest spending priorities for the coming years. These priorities are shown on chart one.

**Services for older people** (including care in their own homes and in residential homes), **primary and secondary education** and **repairing roads and bridges** (including emergencies and fixing potholes) are the highest priorities (57%, 46% and 39% respectively).

**Crime prevention** (working with partner organisations to help prevent crime and disorder and reduce fear of crime) and **keeping local bus services running** (protecting vulnerable children) are the next highest priorities (36% and 31% respectively).

The same options were given on the budget questionnaires in 2010 and 2009, enabling the priorities to be compared over time. The current results, including demographic breakdowns, are broadly similar to those in the last three years, showing the public's spending priorities are generally staying the same.

#### 5.1.1 Individual services - high priority for spending

##### Services for older people

Perhaps as might be expected, the priority of services for older people is once again closely related to the age of the panel member. Older people's services are a higher priority for those aged 60 years and over (64%), and are also more important among those aged 45 to 59 (60%) compared to younger respondents.

##### Primary and secondary education

This is the highest priority for those aged 25 to 44 years (57%), as it was in 2010 and 2009. While still a priority, it is less important for those aged 45-59 years (46%) or 60 years or over (34%). Also, where respondents have children in the household it is a higher priority (64%) compared to households without children (38%).



### **Crime prevention**

Crime prevention is an important priority for all respondents, although it is higher for respondents in the lower socio-economic groups (C2 46% and DE 43%). It is also more of a priority for male respondents than female respondents (40% and 33% respectively).

Last year, in 2010, there was a significant difference between BME respondents and white respondents, with BME respondents more likely to choose crime prevention as a priority (BME 64%, white 44%). The difference between the two groups has reduced and is not significant in 2011 (BME 39%, white 36%).

### **Children's social care**

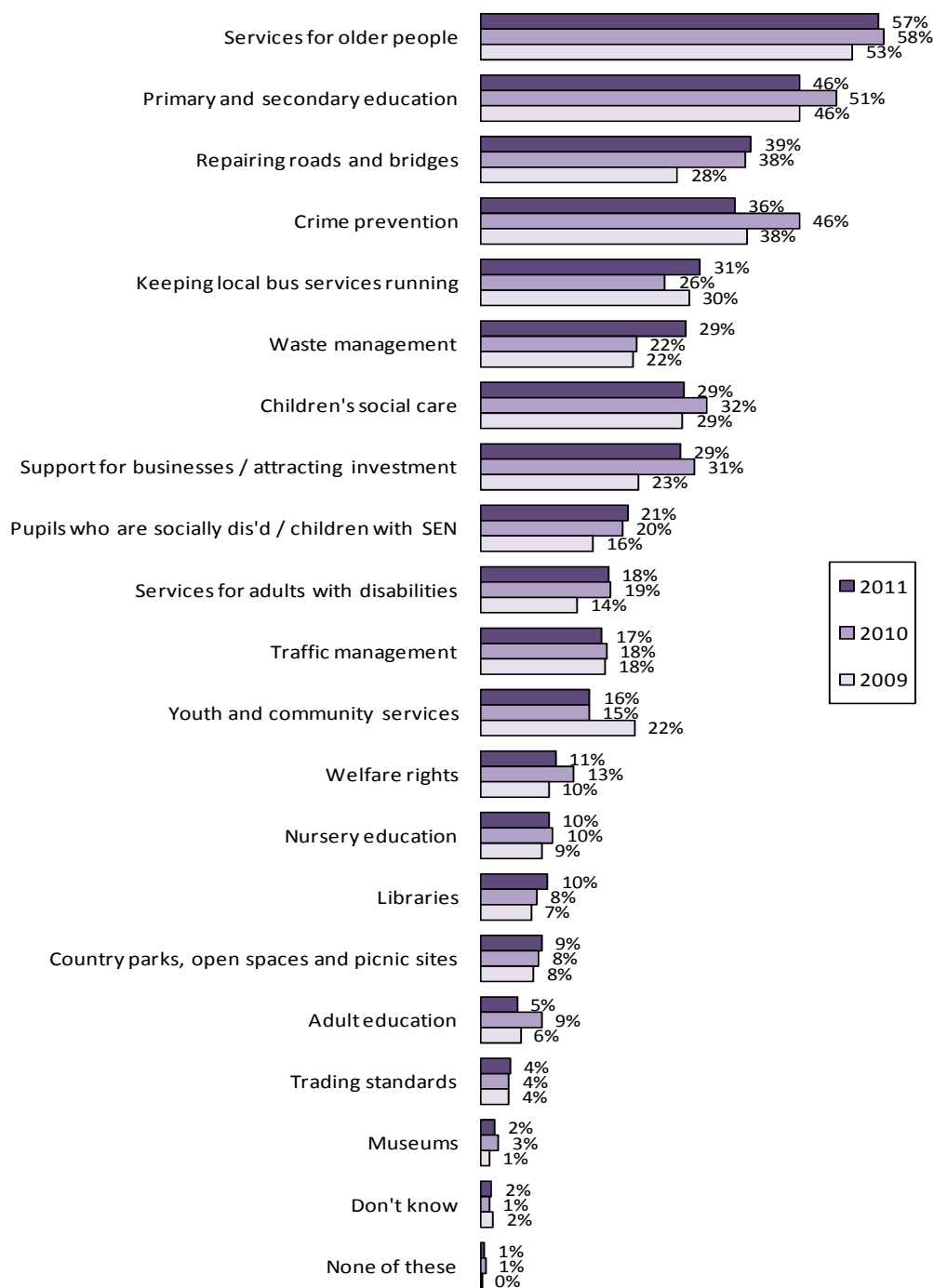
The importance of children's social care is a higher priority among women than men (34% and 29% respectively).

### **Other services**

Keeping local bus services running is more of a priority to respondents aged 60 and over (45%) and disabled respondents (40%). BME respondents and those with a disability are more likely to think services for adults with disabilities are a priority (36% and 28% respectively).

Welfare rights are more likely to be a high priority for respondents from the lowest socio-economic group (DE 17%). Homeowners are less likely to rate welfare rights as a high priority (9%).

Chart 1 - Which three or four of the following should be the highest priority for spending in coming years?



Base: All respondents (unweighted 1590, weighted 1063)

From the same list of county council services, respondents were next asked to name the services that should be the lowest priorities for funding. The lowest priorities are shown on chart two.

As in the 2010 and 2009 surveys, **museums** are seen as the service that should be the lowest priority for spending in the coming years (52%). **Country parks, open spaces and picnic sites** (31%) is the next lowest priority. **Adult education** (28%), **welfare rights** (27%), **trading standards** (27%), and **libraries** (23%) are also seen as relatively low priorities.

### *5.1.2 Individual services - low priority for spending*

#### **Museums**

Museums are consistently mentioned by all the different demographic groups as a low priority for spending.

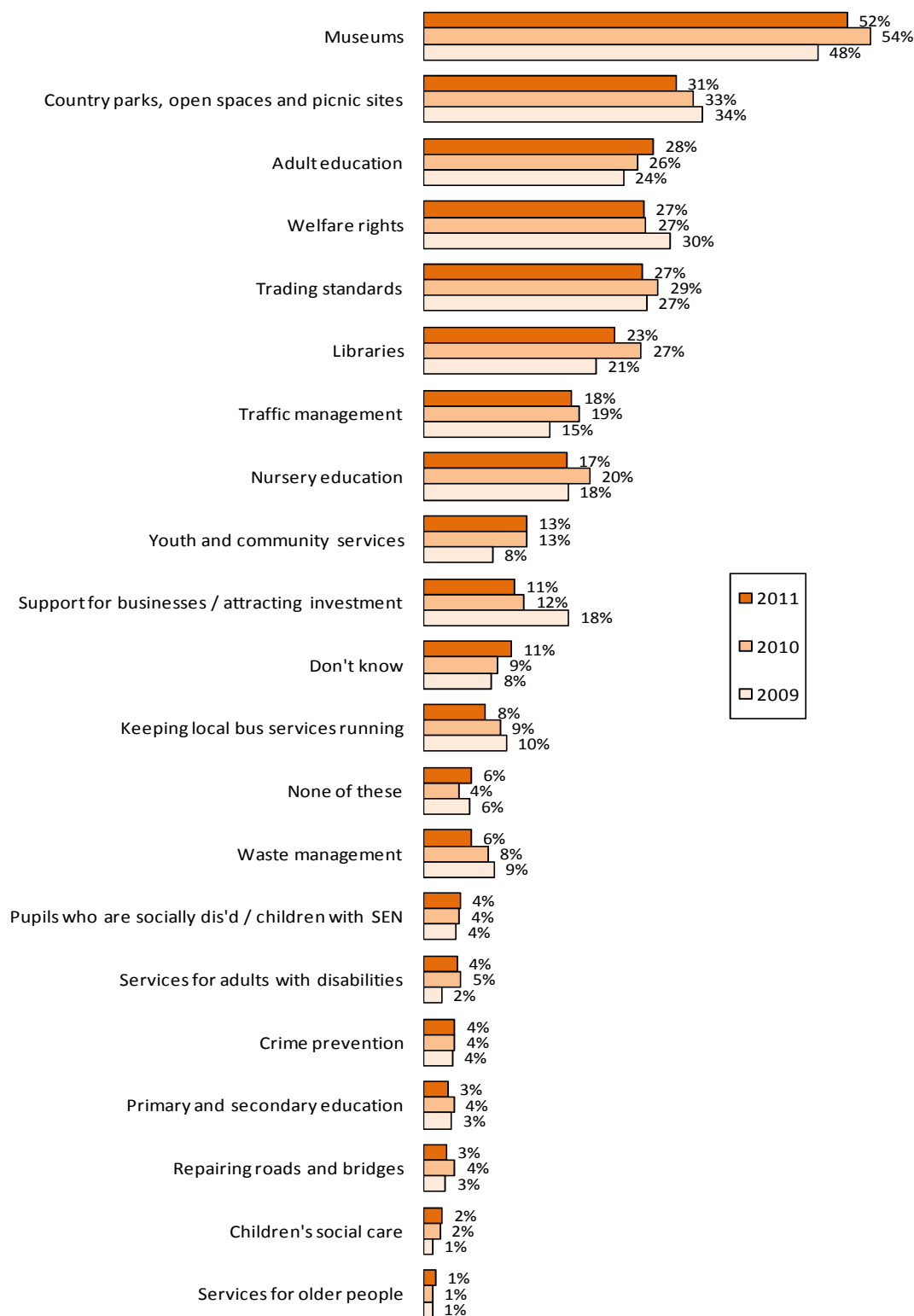
#### **Country parks**

Country parks are seen by all the different demographic groups as a low priority for spending. However, respondents from a BME background (52%) and respondents in socio-economic group DE (41%) are more likely to rate them as a low priority.

#### **Welfare rights**

The respondents who put welfare rights as a low priority are in the highest socio-economic group AB (35%), respondents with children in the household (34%), heavy service users (34%), and respondents in full time employment (32%). Disabled and BME respondents are less likely to choose welfare rights as a low priority (17% and 16% respectively).

**Chart 2 - And which three or four of the following services should be the lowest priorities for spending in coming years?**

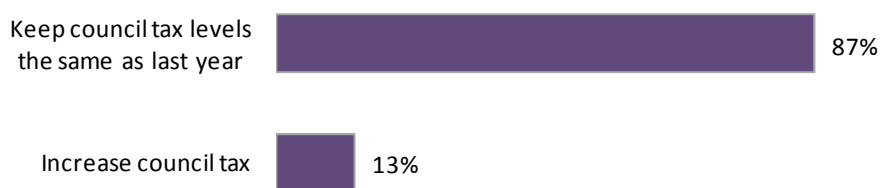


Base: All respondents (unweighted 1476, weighted 988)

## 5.2 Opinion on acceptable levels of Council Tax increase

Panel members were then asked whether the county council should increase Council Tax next year or keep it at the current level. Five sixths of respondents think the county council should **keep Council Tax levels the same as last year** (87%). This has increased from last year's consultation when four fifths of respondents felt that council tax should be kept at the same level (79%).

**Chart 3 - Which of the following most closely matches your opinion on what the council should do about increasing Council Tax next year?**

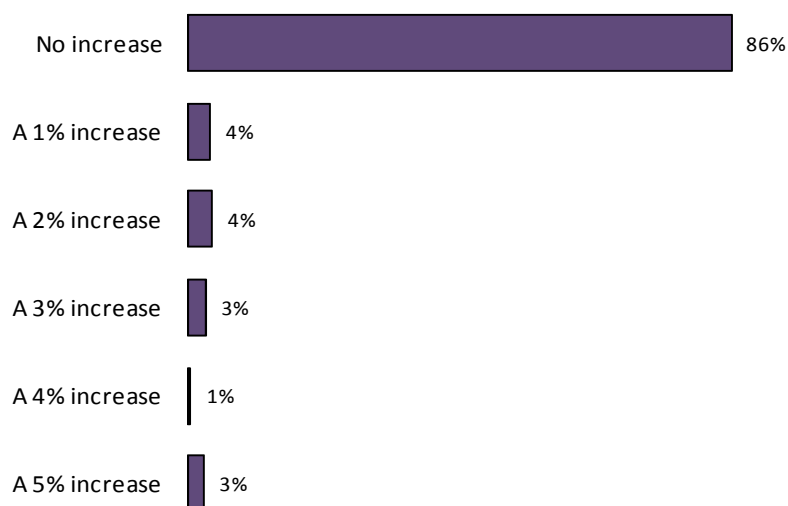


Base: All respondents (unweighted 1527, weighted 1034)

Medium and heavy service users are more likely to think there should be an increase in Council Tax (both 17%).

Respondents who think there should be an increase in Council Tax were asked what level of increase they feel they could support. Chart 4 shows the response to this, with the proportion answering that they would only accept no increase from the previous question to give a clearer picture.

**Chart 4 - What level of Council Tax increase do you feel you could support?**



Base: All respondents (unweighted 1318, weighted 904)

By subgroup for the above measure, those panel members in the lowest socio-economic group (DE) and light/medium service users are less likely to feel they could support a higher increase.

Table 1 shows the proportions of the panel that are prepared to pay each increase option, and the total proportion of the panel who would be prepared to pay each option or more. Only a sixth of the panel feel they could support an increase in council tax (13%).

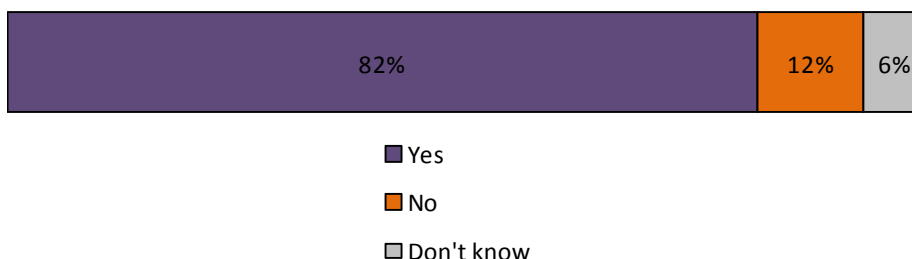
**Table 1 - Proportions of the respondents prepared to pay an increase**

Increase in Council Tax 2012/13	Proportion of all respondents prepared to pay an increase	Cumulative % of all respondents prepared to pay an increase
No increase	86%	100%
1%	4%	14%
2%	4%	10%
3%	3%	6%
4%	1%	3%*
5%	3%	3%

\* Percentage of respondents in support of a 5% increase (2.7%) and percentage of respondents in support of a 4% increase (0.6%)

Every year the county council sends a leaflet out with Council Tax bills explaining how Council Tax is spent. Panel members were asked whether they remember receiving this leaflet. The majority of respondents do remember receiving the leaflet (82%).

**Chart 5 - Do you remember receiving the Council Tax leaflet at the beginning of this year?**

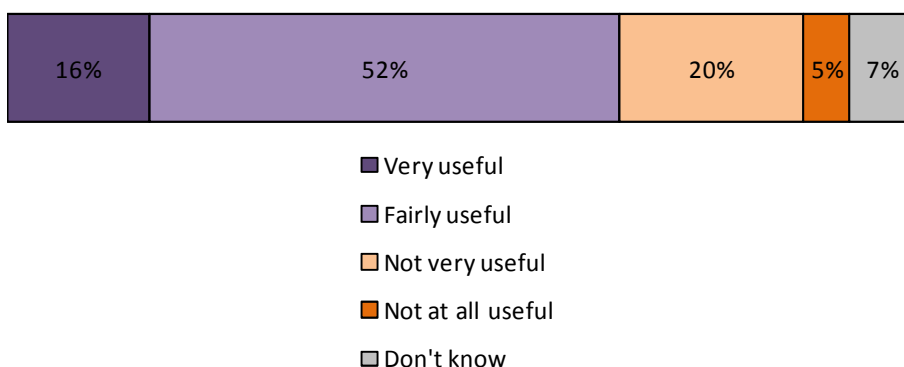


Base: All respondents (unweighted 1603, weighted 1072)

Respondents with a disability were less likely to remember receiving the Council Tax leaflet, compared to respondents without a disability (77% and 84% respectively answered 'yes').

Panel members were then asked how useful they find that type of leaflet at explaining how Council Tax is spent. Around half of respondents find the leaflet fairly useful (52%) but only one in six finds it very useful (16%). Around a quarter of respondents don't find the leaflet useful (25%).

**Chart 6 - And generally, how useful do you find this type of leaflet at explaining how your Council Tax is spent?**



Base: All respondents (unweighted 1600, weighted 1068)

## Appendix 1: Socio-Economic-Group Definitions

These groups are based on Market Research Society definitions and on the respondent. They are graded as A, B, C1, C2, D and E.

### Group A

- Professional people, very senior managers in business or commerce or top-level civil servants
- Retired people, previously grade A, and their widows

### Group B

- Middle management executives in large organisations, with appropriate qualifications
- Principle officers in local government and civil service
- Top management or owners of small business concerns, educational and service establishments
- Retired people, previously grade B, and their widows

### Group C1

- Junior management, owners of small establishments, and all others in non-manual positions
- Jobs in this group have very varied responsibilities and educational requirements
- Retired people, previously grade C1, and their widows

### Group C2

- All skilled manual workers, and those manual workers with responsibility for other people
- Retired people, previously grade C2, with pensions from their job
- Widows, if receiving pensions from their late partner's job

### Group D

- All semi skilled and unskilled manual workers, and apprentices and trainees to skilled workers
- Retired people, previously grade D, with pensions from their late job
- Widows, if receiving pensions from their late partner's job

### Group E

- All those entirely dependent on the state long term, through sickness, unemployment, old age or other reasons
- Those unemployed for a period exceeding six months (otherwise classified on previous occupation)
- Casual workers and those without a regular income



## Appendix 2: marked up questionnaire

Which three or four of the following should be the highest/lowest spending priorities for spending in the coming years?		
	Highest priorities	Lowest priorities
Services for older people (including care in their own homes and in residential homes)	57%	1%
Primary and secondary education	46%	3%
Repairing roads and bridges (including emergencies and fixing potholes)	39%	3%
Crime prevention (working with partner organisations to help prevent crime and disorder and reduce the fear of crime)	36%	4%
Keeping local bus services running	31%	8%
Waste management (household waste disposal and recycling)	29%	6%
Children's social care (protecting vulnerable children)	29%	2%
Support for businesses and attracting investment to Lancashire	29%	11%
Pupils who are socially disadvantaged and children with special educational needs	21%	4%
Services for adults with disabilities	18%	4%
Traffic management (making road travel safer and reducing congestion)	17%	18%
Youth and community services (activities and support for young people)	16%	13%
Welfare rights (helping people get the financial support they are entitled to)	11%	27%
Nursery education	10%	17%
Libraries	10%	23%
Country parks, open spaces and picnic sites	9%	31%
Adult education	5%	28%
Trading standards (consumer protection)	4%	27%
Museums	2%	52%
Don't know	2%	11%
None of these	1%	6%
<b>Unweighted base</b>	<b>1,590</b>	<b>1,476</b>
<b>Weighted base</b>	<b>1,063</b>	<b>988</b>

<b>Which of the following most closely matches your opinion on what the council should do about increasing Council Tax next year?</b>	
Keep Council Tax levels the same as last year	87%
Increase Council Tax	13%
<b>Unweighted base</b>	<b>1,527</b>
<b>Weighted base</b>	<b>1,034</b>

<b>What level of Council Tax increase do you feel you could support?</b>	
1% increase	4%
2% increase	4%
3% increase	3%
4% increase	1%
5% increase	3%
<b>Unweighted base</b>	<b>1,318</b>
<b>Weighted base</b>	<b>904</b>

<b>Every year you receive a leaflet from Lancashire County Council with your Council Tax bill, explaining how your Council Tax is spent. Do you remember receiving this leaflet at the beginning of this year?</b>	
Yes	82%
No	12%
Don't know	6%
<b>Unweighted base</b>	<b>1,603</b>
<b>Weighted base</b>	<b>1,072</b>

<b>And generally, how useful do you find this type of leaflet at explaining how your Council Tax is spent?</b>	
Very useful	16%
Fairly useful	52%
Not very useful	20%
Not at all useful	5%
Don't know	7%
<b>Unweighted base</b>	<b>1,600</b>
<b>Weighted base</b>	<b>1,068</b>