

## **Appendix A**

### **Budget Consultation 2015/16 – Initial Results**

#### **Introduction:**

The St Edmundsbury 2015/16 Budget Questionnaire was sent to a random sample of 3,000 homes in the borough. It was also made available online via the Council's website using the SNAP survey package, allowing other residents of the borough to participate. We invited all residents to participate by advertising the on the Council's website. The consultation was open from 21 July until 22 August 2014.

#### **Response rates and validity:**

In total we received 988 responses with 647 of these being postal responses. This represents a 22% response rate. With a response rate of 988 we can be satisfied that the survey is valid with a 95% confidence level and a 3% confidence interval (i.e. accuracy either side). This is about an acceptable level of 95% confidence level with a 5% confidence interval which is considered an industry norm (this would have been reached with 381 responses).

#### **Response profile:**

The demographic breakdown of the respondents generally reflects the demographic of the borough. The profile of respondents and how that compares with the borough as a whole is set out below:

##### **Sex:**

- 52% male;
- 46% female and
- 2% preferred not to say.

##### **Age:**

- Average age of respondents = 58.4.
- Average age in St Edmundsbury as a whole = 41 years

##### **Household occupants:**

- Average number of people living in a respondent household was 2.25.
- Average household size in St Edmundsbury is 2.4.
- 76% had no under 18 year olds living there.
- UK average was 71% in 2011

##### **Disability:**

- 10% considered themselves to be disabled.

##### **Employment:**

- 43% an employee;
- 45% retired;
- 12% were a mixture from the other categories.

##### **Ethnicity:**

- 96% were white British, this is inline with the population of the borough.

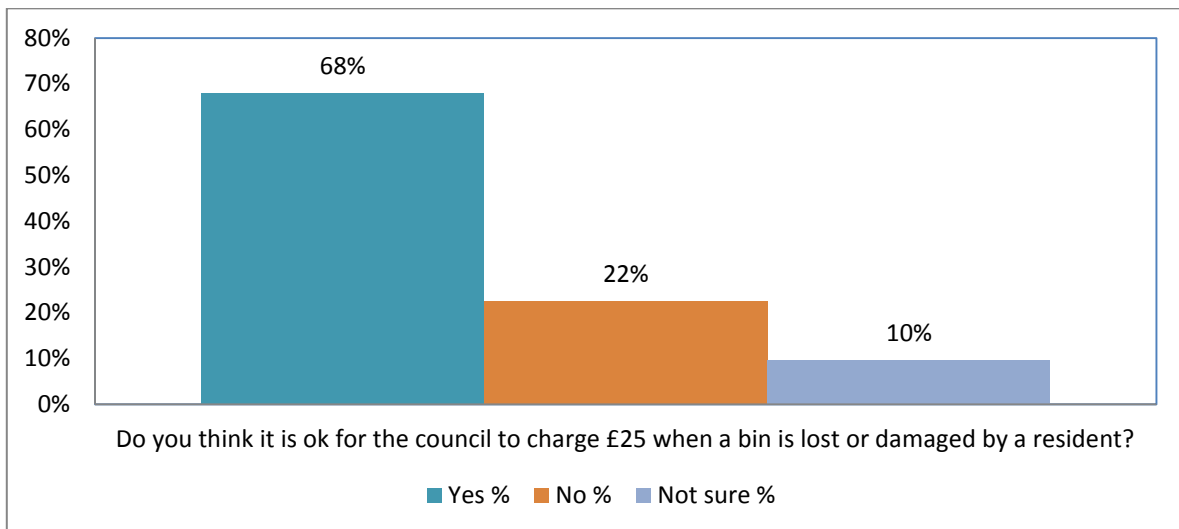
#### **Focus group comments:**

For the purpose of this report anecdotal comment from the public; town and parish council and business focus groups have been included where appropriate to add value or context as necessary.

## Results:

### 1. Charging for replacement bins:

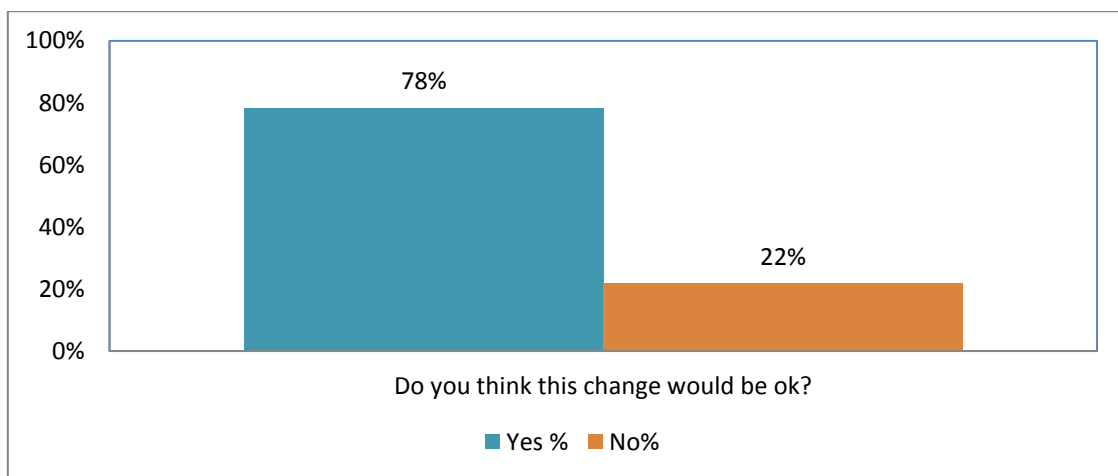
We could charge £25 for a replacement bin once we're clear that the bin damage or loss was caused by the resident. This would save us £10,000 - £15,000 a year.



**Focus group comments:** Concerns that the administration would be overly complicated and with the associated costs could be prohibitive.

### 2. Changing bin collection days:

We could save money by collecting each bin on a different day. Question: Do you think this change would be ok?



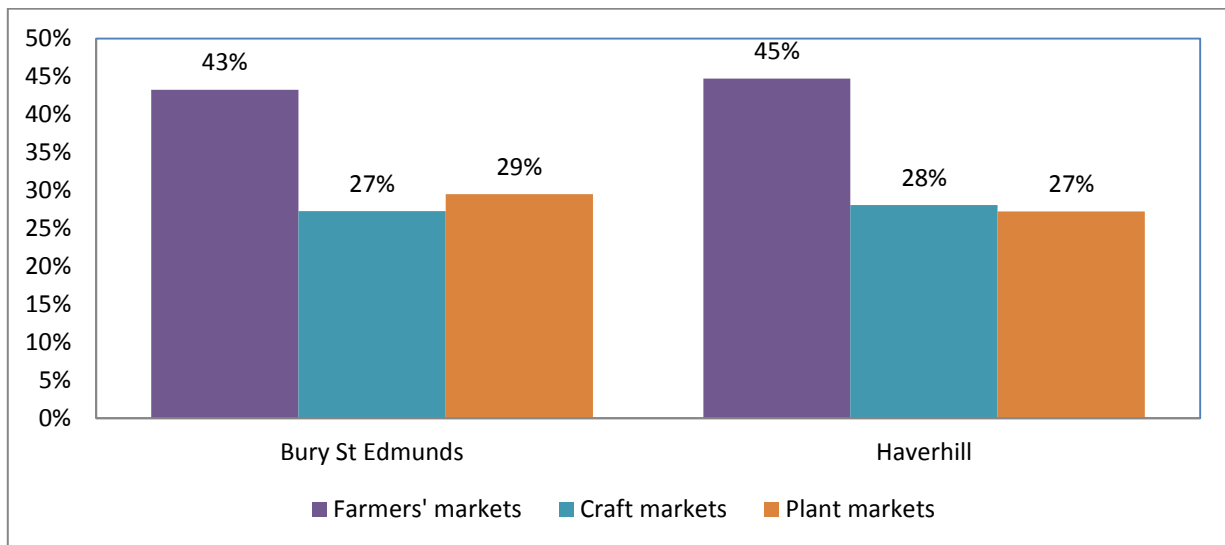
**Residents' comments:** Respondents were given an opportunity to identify any concerns about this possible change. In total there were 190 comments with the majority based on the confusion that changing the bin collection days would cause. The following concerns were also raised by respondents:

- the bins will smell and be unhygienic if left longer without being collected;
- bins out for more than one day a week will be an eye sore;
- the bins should be collected weekly;
- the bins would overflow if collected less frequently;
- the question is confusing, it's not obvious how this change can deliver a saving; and
- there is no need for change.

**Focus group comments:** Communication is key and that a simple calendar is vital to a successful transition. Some town centre residents expressed concerns that "unsightly" bins would be out and blocking pavements on an extra day.

### 3. Local Markets:

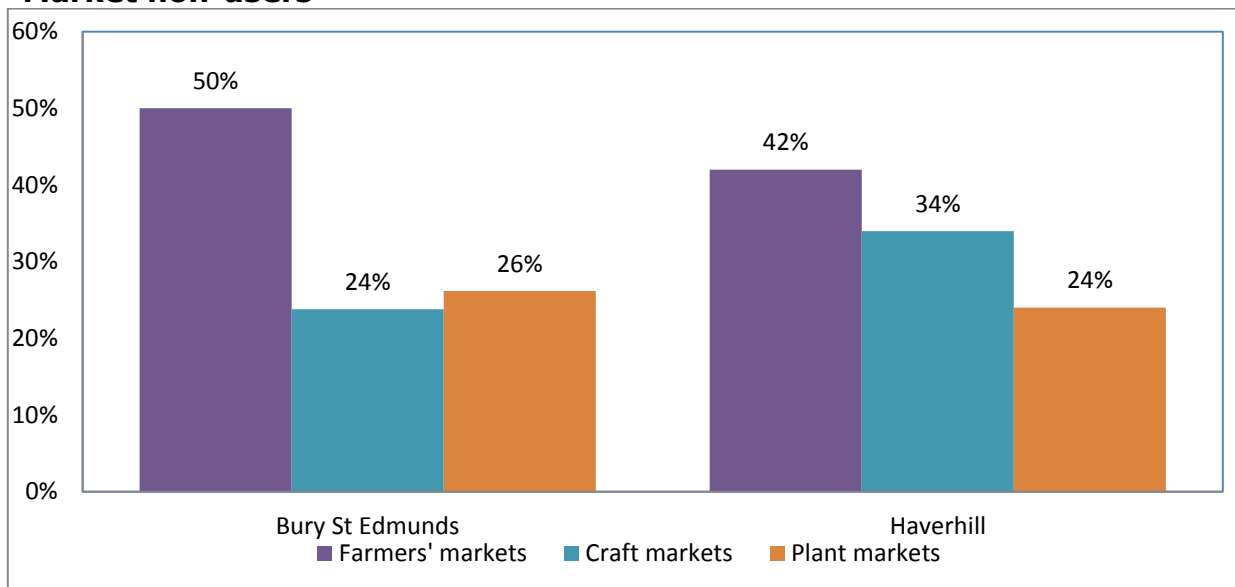
a. The council could arrange separate additional markets on a monthly/quarterly basis. Which would you support?



**Focus group comments:** Markets were part of the identity of the towns, particularly Bury Market. Recognition that it was part of the attraction of Bury on a Saturday and some specifically travelled to Bury on a Saturday for fruit and vegetables market. Most aware of farmers markets in the surrounding area and some travelled some distance to use them.

b. The council could arrange separate additional markets on a monthly/quarterly basis. Which would you support?

#### Market non-users\*

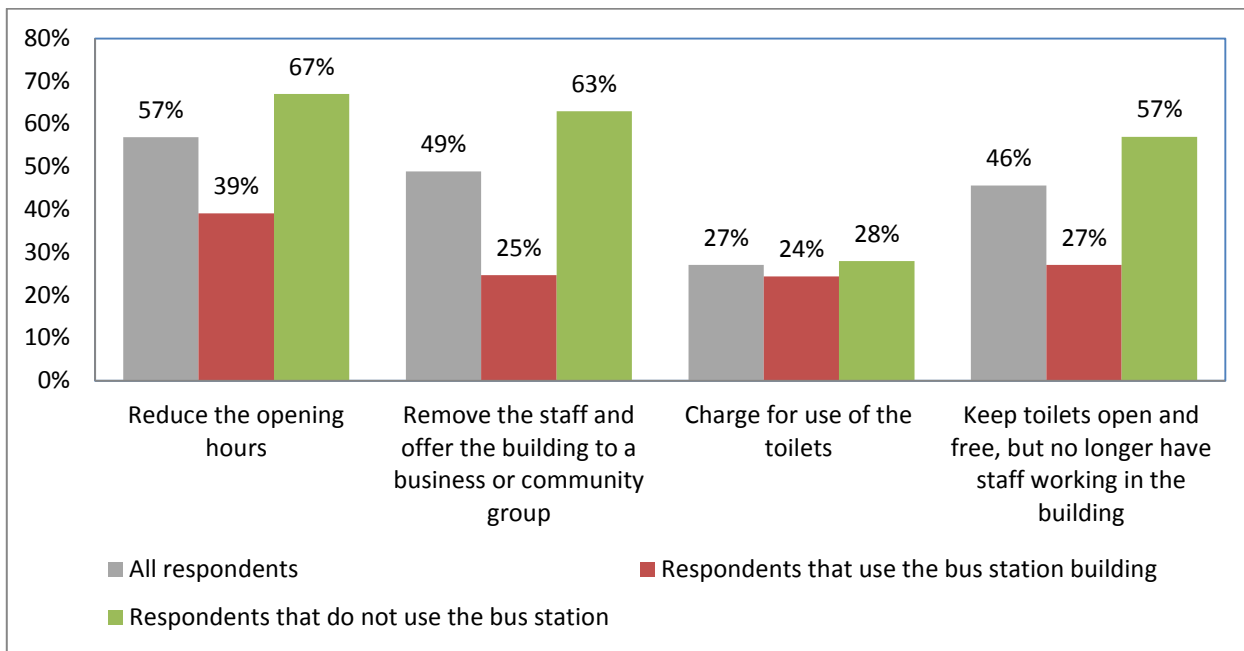


\* The data was analysed by locality using postcodes to separate the opinion of residents that live in Haverhill or Bury St Edmunds and the villages surrounding both towns.

**Focus group comments:** Feeling that most people do visit the Haverhill market, including from outside Haverhill, and then shop elsewhere in the town. General support for specialist markets in Haverhill as these attract different people and higher footfall.

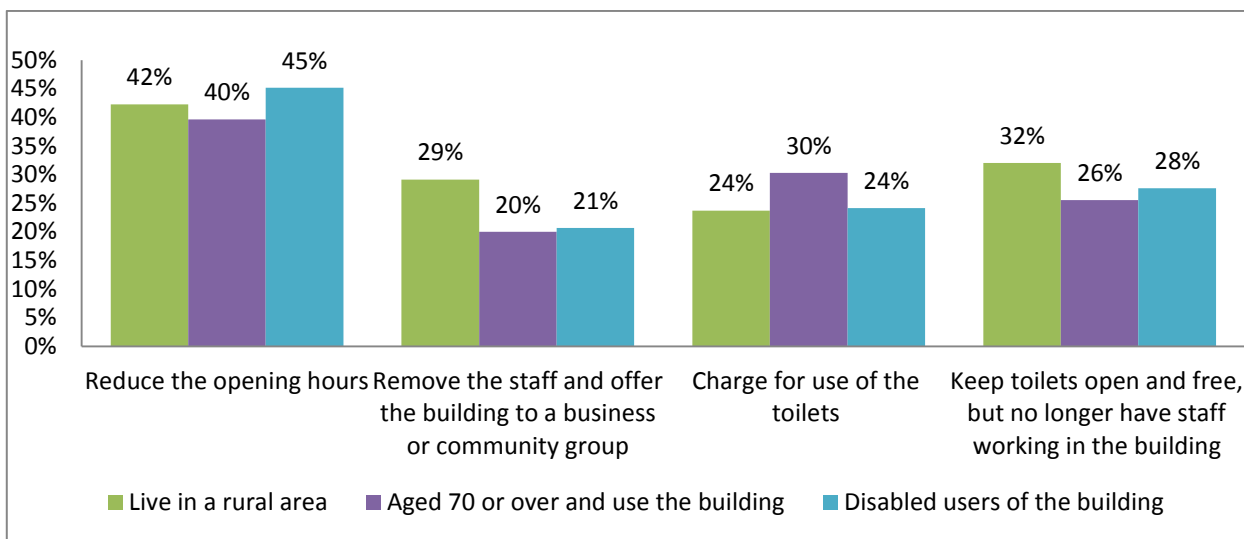
**4. Bus Station Building:**

a. There are a number of options to reduce the cost of the bus station. Which of the following options would you support?



**N.B.** 588 'non-users' answered this question in comparison to 343 users.

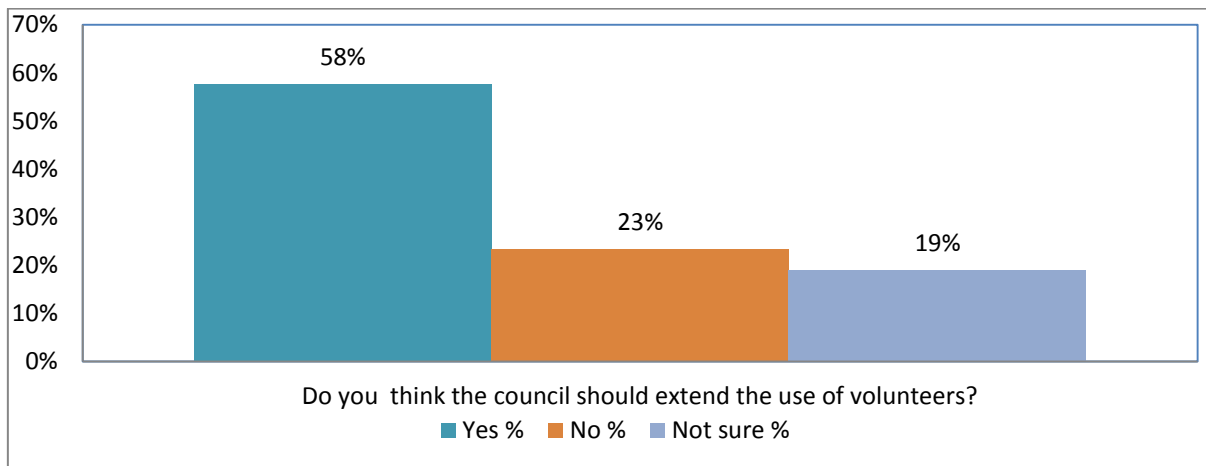
b. Question: There are a number of options to reduce the cost of the bus station. Which of the following options would you support?



**Focus group comments:** There were mixed views. Some felt that the bus stations provided an important service for the elderly and disabled and it was important for local tourism. Others felt that the cost was significant and other towns including Ipswich did not offer such facilities.

## 5. Use of volunteers:

Do you think that the council should extend the use of volunteers?



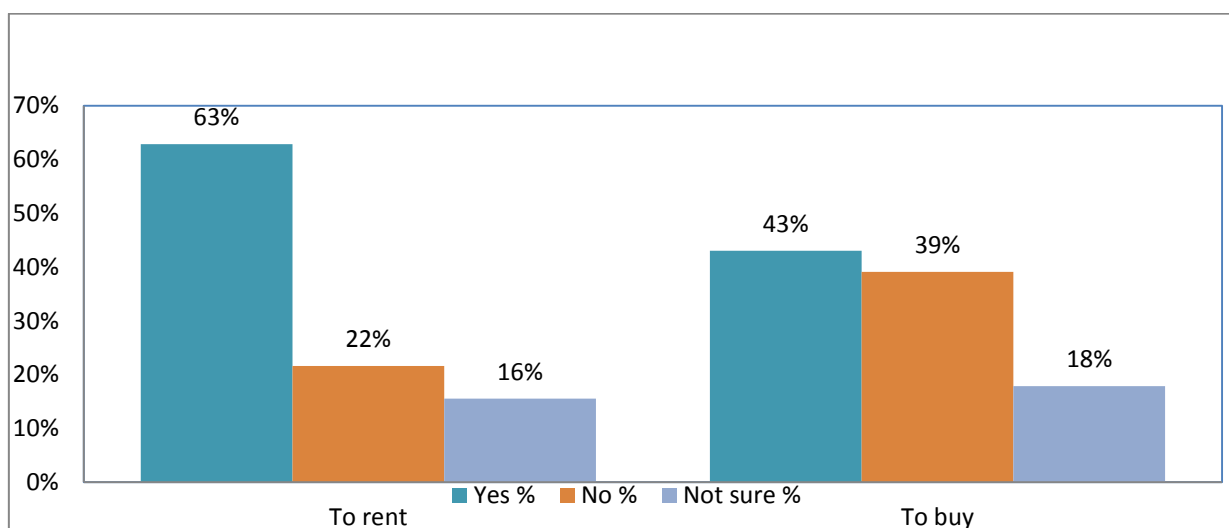
**Residents' comments:** Respondents who answered "No" were invited to state why they did not think the use of volunteers should be extended. In total there were 172 comments and the majority were concerned that using volunteers would take away opportunities for paid employment (albeit that this was not the specific question asked). Further comments were also received for the following areas:

- volunteers are unreliable;
- it's difficult to manage volunteers;
- skilled staff are necessary to deliver the service;
- current staff could be utilised in different ways;
- the council should provide this service;
- senior wages should be cut instead;
- increase council tax instead of being forced to make this change; and
- volunteers are already overstretched and in short supply.

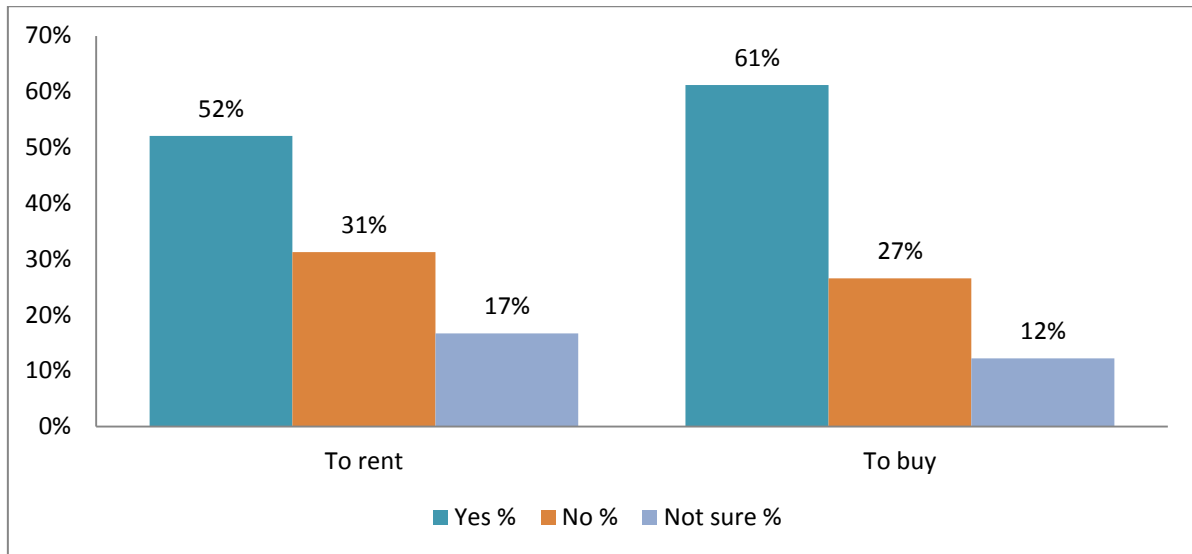
**Focus group comments:** There were mixed views from the Focus Groups, some were aware that other organisations such as the National Trust use volunteers, others concerned that running a team of volunteers could be more difficult than directly employed staff.

## 6. Housing:

a. Do you think the council should borrow money to fund house building?



- b. Question: Do you think the council should borrow money to fund house building?  
*Respondents that were aged 30 and under (average age of the first property buyer)*



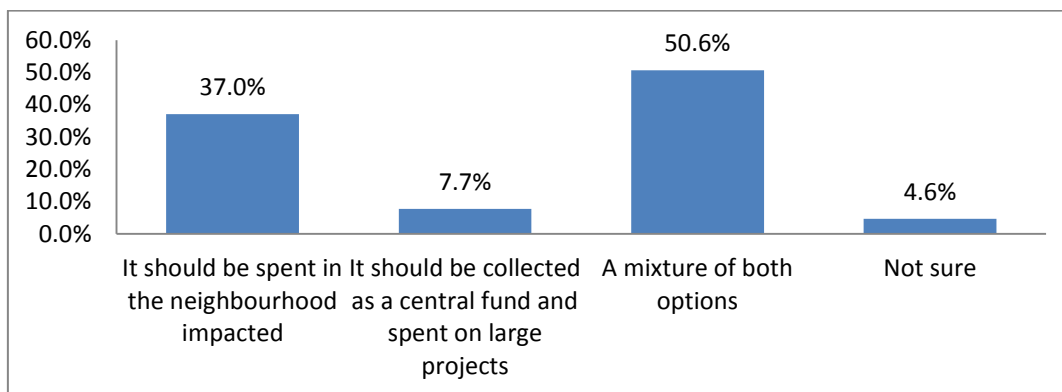
**Residents' comments:** Respondents were invited to comment on the idea of the council borrowing money to fund house building. In total there were 415 comments about this idea from residents. The majority of comments were concerning allocations of housing to those with local connection, building housing that is affordable and building properties to rent instead of to buy. Other categories of comments are included below:

- should council reserves be used before the council starts borrowing money?
- house building is not a market for a local authority;
- housing associations are building houses, why does the council need to do this?;
- this will be a repeat of the 'right to buy' housing scheme and the sale of all council homes to Havebury;
- houses should be built that are affordable for people that are trying to get onto the property ladder;
- the homes should be appropriately sized;
- homes that are coming onto the market could be purchased for rent instead of building new homes; and
- building new homes will require lots of infrastructure and could cause unmanageable traffic in the town centres.

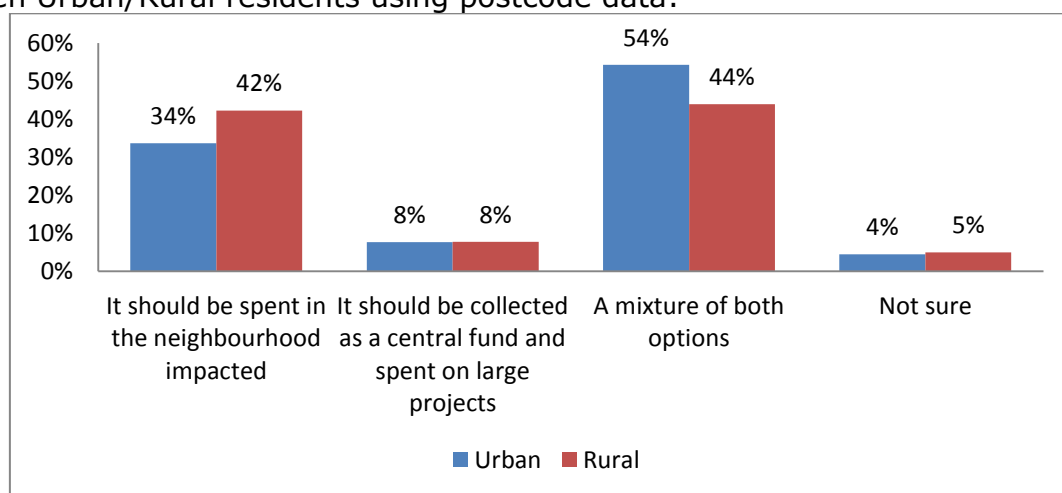
**Focus group comments:** There were mixed views. Many recognised a need for affordable housing and supported the idea in principle. Differing views around whether the properties should be available for rent or purchase. Questions regarding where these homes would be built.

## 7. Money from development:

When it comes to spending the 'no strings attached' money, do you think?



There was a view that the responses could vary depending on whether the respondent lived in a rural or urban area, the graph below shows the variation in response split between Urban/Rural residents using postcode data:



In terms of actual numbers of responses, 607 were from urban areas and 360 from rural. This is consistent with the borough's population which is a 60:40 split between urban and rural.

**Residents' comments:** Respondents were asked if they had any comments about spending the "no strings attached" money. In total there were 188 comments from residents with the majority being concerned about the level of infrastructure that is delivered in the area impacted by development. We also received the following comments and suggestions from residents:

- monies should be spent in the neighbourhood affected and then any spare money used for other projects;
- it is important that money from development in Haverhill is not spent in Bury St Edmunds and vice versa;
- rural areas should also be considered when spending the money;
- use the money more wisely than in the past;
- the money should be used to benefit the whole population not individual areas
- use the money to build more houses;
- the no strings attached money should be used to improve and maintain roads and pavements;
- the money is considered to be a planning bribe and should be more transparent;
- it should be spent in the areas that need it the most; and
- invest the development money in health services.

**Focus group comments:** Views varied depending on awareness of or perceived impact from previous development projects. Many started with the initial view of spending only in the area impacted, and then following consideration suggested a mixture of both options. In Haverhill, there was a feeling that money should be spent where the houses are built and existing residents inconvenienced. There were also comments asking why a village that doesn't want any development should benefit from developments elsewhere?

#### **8. Other ideas for saving money:**

Residents were given the opportunity to give comments or suggestions at the end of the questionnaire as to how the Council could save money.

In total there were 436 comments from residents which could be summarised as falling into the following themes:

**Reducing staff costs** – comments such as; reduce staff salaries, reduce the numbers of managers, stop using consultants and agency staff and stop topping up pension schemes.

**Reducing democratic costs** – comments such as; move to unitary status, reduce the number councillors, reduce councillor's remuneration and reduce the number of committees.

**Increasing charges** – comments such as; increase council tax, increase sports centre charges and charge for using public toilets.

**Raising money** – comments such as; sell the art collection, sell/reduce support to the Apex, use brownfield sites for housing, install solar farms on council land, hold more music festivals, host car boot sales on council car parks and use council reserves.