

**Moray Council**  
**Budget Consultation**  
**2012**

**Summary Findings**

**Craigforth**

**December 2012**

## 1. BACKGROUND

### The Consultation Process

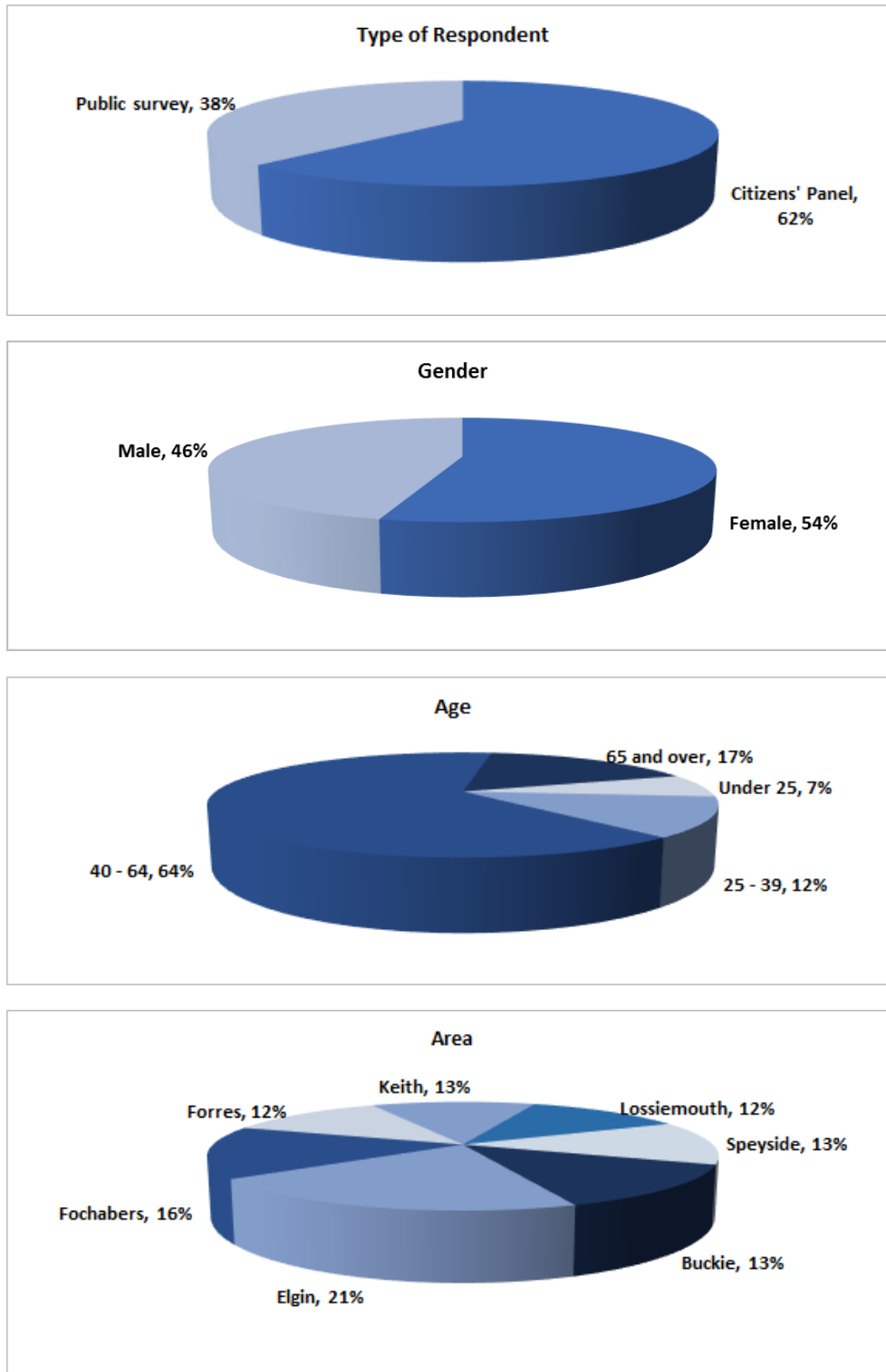
- 1.1. The 2012 Budget Consultation was undertaken to gauge public opinion on the extent to which residents were willing to see reductions to a range of public services – including Council, Police and Fire & Rescue Services.
- 1.2. This consultation was set in the context of Moray Council having to make savings of around £30m over the next 4 years, due to anticipated reduction in government funding and ongoing cost pressures. The consultation questionnaire included summary details on budget pressures to ensure individuals were able to make an informed consultation response.
- 1.3. The consultation comprised three main strands; a direct mailing to all current Moray Citizens' Panel members, an online websurvey open to all members of the public (and promoted across the Council and other websites), and a series of consultation meetings following which attendees were able to complete a consultation questionnaire.
- 1.4. The core consultation question – asking individuals about their willingness to see reductions to a range of Council services - was used across all three consultation strands to ensure that the process produced a robust set of comparable data. In addition, Citizens' Panel members were asked to indicate their willingness to see reductions to a range of Police and Fire & Rescue Services.

### Consultation Responses

- 1.5. The consultation commenced on 1<sup>st</sup> October, and a total of 836 responses had been received by consultation close in early December (including 535 through the Panel survey and 301 through the public survey). This is a very strong level of response, and provides a robust basis for the analysis of consultation responses set out in this report.
- 1.6. Moreover, consultation results have been weighted to minimise any “bias” in the profile of responses (for example resulting from a lower level of response from some demographic groups). Weighting has been conducted on the basis of location and age, to ensure that findings are as representative as possible of all parts of the community in Moray.
- 1.7. This report provides a summary of consultation findings across all strands (Citizens' Panel, public websurvey and consultation meetings). A more detailed report is also being produced which will provide a more comprehensive account of variation in views across specific groups, and a finer grained analysis of the more “qualitative” consultation responses.

1.9. Figure 1 below provides an overview of the profile of consultation respondents.

**Figure 1: Profile of Consultation Respondents**



## 2. SUMMARY FINDINGS

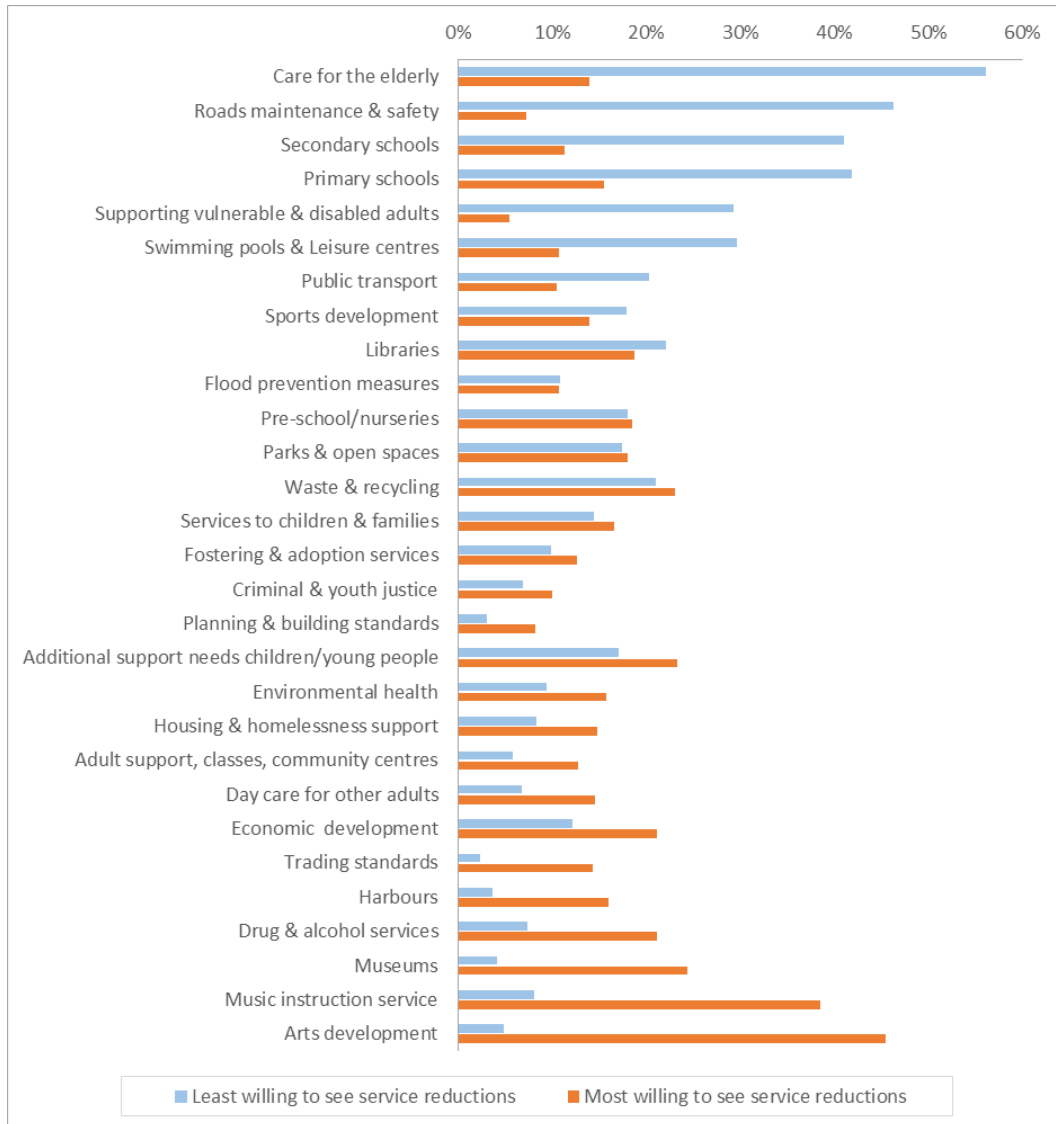
### Council Spending Priorities

- 2.1. The core question of the consultation questionnaire – common across all consultation strands – asked individuals to select up to five Council service areas for service reductions, and also to select up to five services to protect from service reductions. Figure 2 over the page combines these results to provide an overview of views in terms of those services where residents would be most willing to see service reductions, and those where residents would be least willing to see reductions.
- 2.2. Looking across these services, a number of services emerge where the balance of views is clearly against service reductions:
- Care for the elderly - 56% of respondents wish to protect this area from service reductions, and just 14% are willing to see some service reductions;
  - Roads maintenance & safety – 46% wish to protect this area from service reductions, and just 7% are willing to see some service reductions;
  - Secondary schools – 41% wish to protect this area from service reductions, and just 11% are willing to see some service reductions; and
  - Primary schools – 42% wish to protect this area from service reductions, and just 15% are willing to see some service reductions.
- 2.3. These were the service areas where the balance of views was most clearly towards protection from service reductions. However, there were a number of other service areas where those looking to protect services from reductions outnumbered those willing to see some reductions. These services included supporting vulnerable & disabled adults; swimming pools & leisure centres; public transport; sports development; and libraries.
- 2.4. Looking at services where the balance of views suggests that residents are more willing to consider service reductions, again a number of specific service areas stand out. It is notable that these were typically culture and arts-related services:
- Arts development – 45% were willing to see some service reductions here, compared to 5% who chose to include this in the five areas they wished to protect from service reductions;
  - Music instruction service – 39% were willing to see some reductions, compared to 8% who chose to protect this service from reductions; and

- Museums – 24% were willing to see some service reductions, compared to 4% who chose to protect this service from reductions.

2.5. In addition, the following areas emerged as services where those willing to see reductions outnumbered those choosing to protect these areas from reductions: drug & alcohol services; harbours; and trading standards.

**Figure 2: Council services where residents most willing/least willing to see reductions<sup>1</sup>**

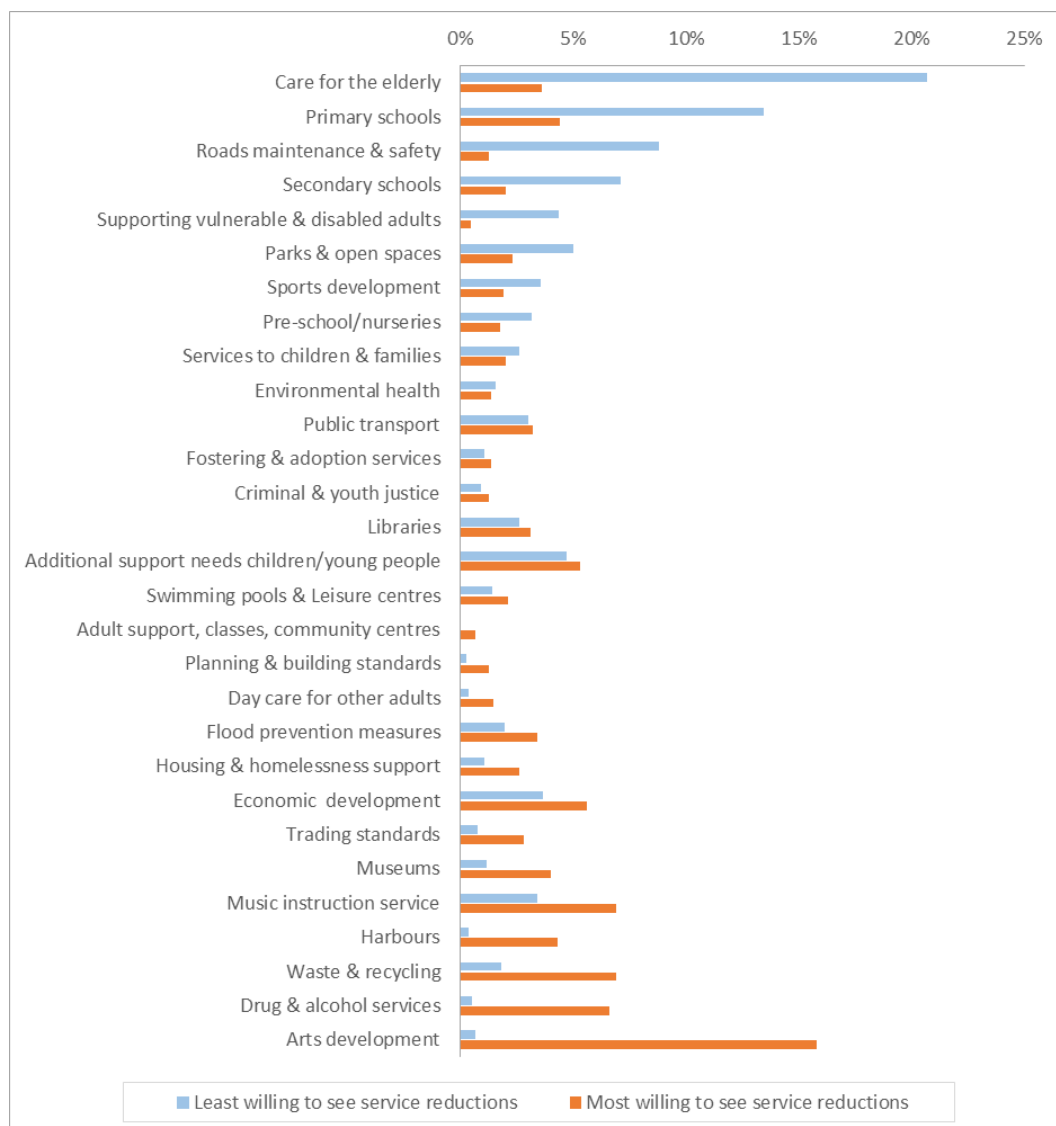


2.6. Figure 2 above provides an overview of views on Council services, based on respondents selecting up to *five* service areas to protect from reductions, and up to five services to select for reductions. Figure 3 over the page presents this analysis on the basis only of residents’ first choices in terms of areas to protect and to select from service reductions.

<sup>1</sup> Based on the following two questions: “Q1a If you had to choose 5 areas for service reductions, which would you choose?” “Q1b If you could protect 5 areas from service reductions, which would you choose?”

- 2.8. Figure 3 suggests that areas where residents are most or least willing to see reductions is broadly consistent when considering only *first* choices. Care for the elderly, roads and schools remain those areas where residents are least willing to see service reductions. Similarly, arts and culture related services are amongst those where residents are most willing to consider service reductions.
- 2.9. Nevertheless, there are some variations in the ranking of services when we consider only first choices. Most notable is that while a substantial proportion of respondents selected swimming pools/leisure centres or waste & recycling amongst the five service areas they would like to protect from reductions, relatively few selected these as their first choice. For example around 1 in 5 respondents included waste & recycling amongst the five areas they wished to protect from service reductions, but this included only 2% who selected this as their first choice area to protect from reductions.

**Figure 3: Council services where most willing/least willing to see reductions – 1st CHOICES<sup>2</sup>**

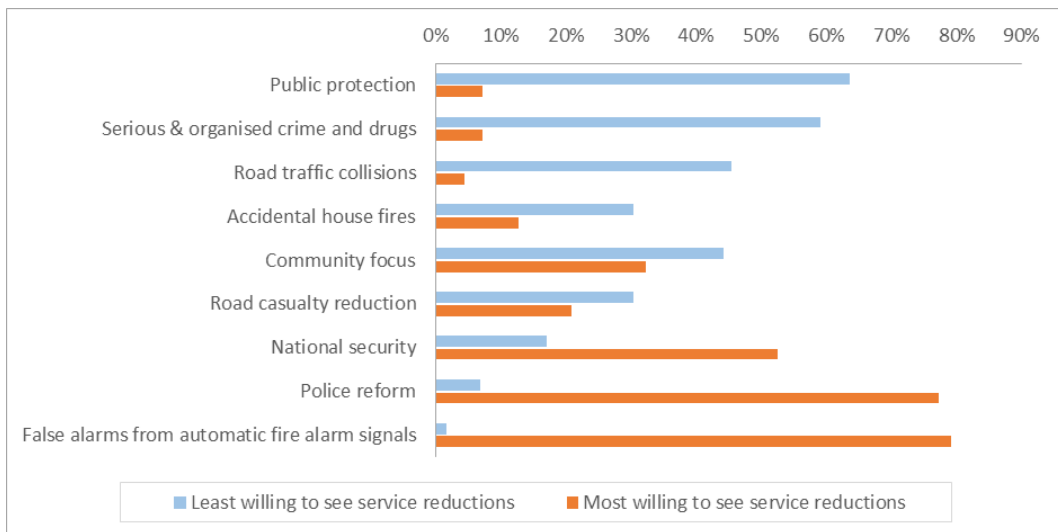


<sup>2</sup> Based only on the first choices indicated against each of the following two questions: "Q1a If you had to choose 5 areas for service reductions, which would you choose?" "Q1b If you could protect 5 areas from service reductions, which would you choose?"

### Police & Fire & Rescue Spending Priorities

- 2.10. In addition to the core question on Council services, Citizens' Panel members were also asked to select the Police and Fire & Rescue Service areas where they would be most or least willing to see reductions. A shorter list of service areas was presented here, with respondents asked to select up to three areas to protect from service reductions, and up to three areas where they would be willing to see service reductions.
- 2.11. As Figure 4 below indicates, a number of areas emerge as those where respondents are least willing to see reductions:
- Public protection – 64% selected this as an area to protect from service reductions, compared to just 7% who chose to select this as an area for reductions;
  - Serious & organised crime and drugs – 59% wish to protect this area from service reductions, compared to just 7% who selected this area for reductions; and
  - Road traffic collisions – 45% wish to protect this area from reductions, compared to just 5% who selected this area for reductions.
- 2.12. It is also notable that the balance of views was in favour of protecting the following areas from service reductions: accidental house fires, community focus, and road casualty reduction.
- 2.13. Respondents identified three service areas where they were most willing to see reductions:
- False alarms from automatic fire alarm signals - 79% willing to see some service reductions here, compared to 2% who chose to include this in the three areas they wished to protect from service reductions
  - Police reform – 77% willing to see some service reductions here, compared to 7% who chose to include this in the three areas they wished to protect from service reductions; and
  - National security – 52% willing to see some service reductions here, compared to 17% who chose to include this in the three areas they wished to protect from service reductions

**Figure 4: Police & FRS services where residents most willing/least willing to see reductions<sup>3</sup>**



\* \_ \* \_ \*

<sup>3</sup> Based on the following two questions: “Q2a If you had to choose 3 areas for service reductions, which would you choose?” “Q2b If you could protect 3 areas from service reductions, which would you choose?”