

2019/20 Precept consultation online surveys

1. Online Survey

- 1.1 The online survey was available from 31 October – 21 December 2018. The consultation period was promoted through our website, press releases, targeted adverts on Facebook and Twitter. An example of the Facebook advert can be found in Appendix A.
- 1.2 In that period a total of **202** responses were received. Of those 202 responses, 149 fully completed the questionnaire and 53 partially completed it. As only five of these responses represented the business sector, the results have not been separated.
- 1.3 This year’s consultation exercise highlighted a significant increase in total number of respondents when compared with the 2018/19 survey of 51 respondents.

This report summarises the main findings from the survey.

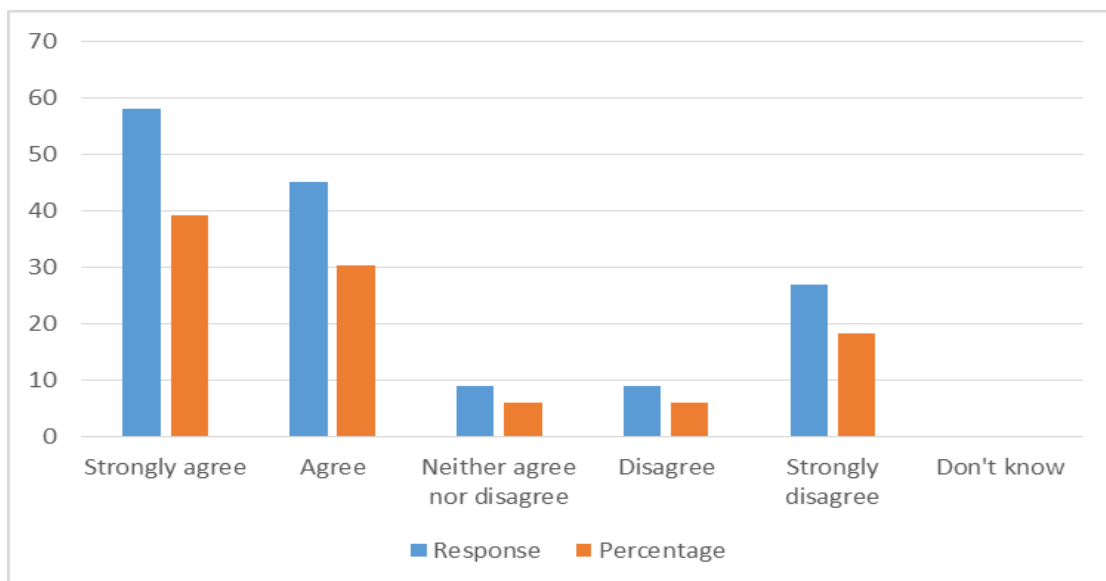
RESULTS

2 Q1. How much do you agree or disagree that it is reasonable for the Authority to consider increasing its council tax charge for 2019/20?

Table 1: Responses to Question 1

Answer Option	Response #	Response %
Strongly agree	58	39.19
Agree	45	30.41
Neither agree nor disagree	9	6.08
Disagree	9	6.08
Strongly disagree	27	18.24
Don't know	0	0.00
Total	148	

Chart 1: Results of agreement to consider increasing the precept



2.1 The results indicate that almost 70% of respondents agree that the Authority should consider increasing its charges.

3 Q2. Of the following options, what increase would you consider is reasonable for the Authority to increase its element of the council tax charge by?

Table 2: Responses to Question 2

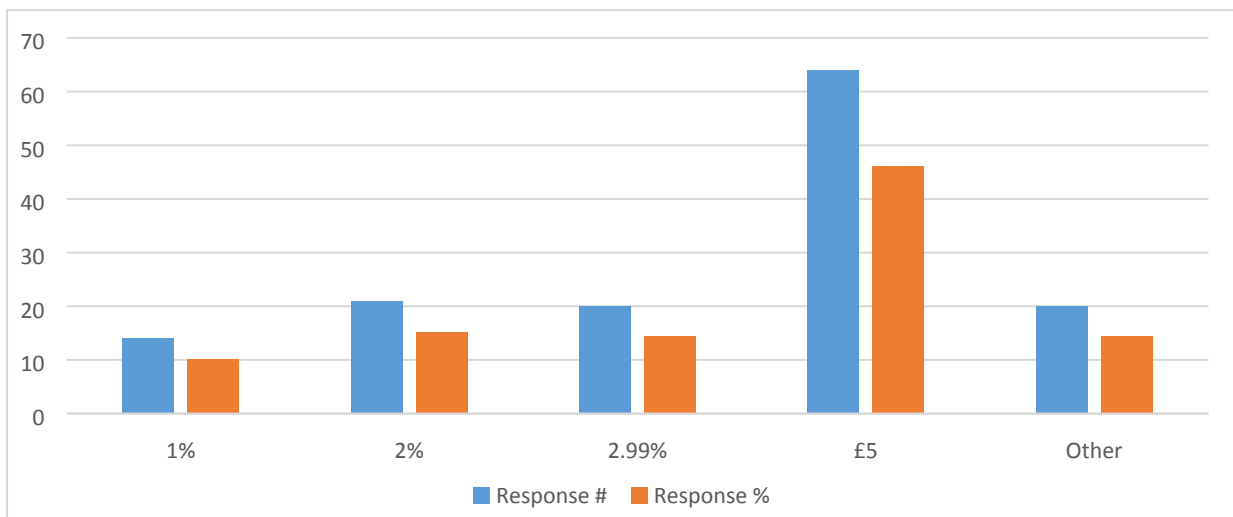
Answer Option	Response #	Response %
1% (An increase of 84p per year for a Band D property, increasing the total charge to £84.85)	14	10.07
2% (An increase of £1.68 per year for a Band D property, increasing the total charge to £85.69)	21	15.11
2.99% (An increase of £2.51 a year for a Band D property, increasing the total charge to £86.52)	20	14.39
£5 (An increase of £5.00 per year for a Band D property (pro rata for other bands), increasing the total charge to £89.01)	64	46.04
Other	20	14.39
Total	139	

3.1 Those respondents who responded ‘Other’ were asked to provide comments. The majority of these comments indicated that no increase should be made.

See below a sample range of comments made by respondents:

- ‘No increase.’
- ‘Whatever is needed to run the services we require simple as that, we need to pay our way, nothing is for free.’
- ‘Services don’t get any better so why pay more?’
- ‘£20 a year is reasonable.’

Chart 2: Results of options to increase the precept



3.2 The results indicate that (46%) of respondents are in support of a £5 increase and that 60.43% of respondents support an increase at 2.99% or above.

4 Q3. If you disagreed with Q1, why do you think it is not reasonable for the Authority to increase its element of the council tax charge?

Those respondents who disagreed that it is reasonable for DSFRS to consider increasing its element of the council tax charge for 2019/20 were asked why they disagreed.

The common emerging themes highlighted by respondents indicated:

- Central Government should provide any additional funding for the service.
- Service should focus on delivering non statutory duties only.
- Making best use of existing funding.
- Not enough evidence of future funding requirements and service plans.
- General consensus that people feel they are already paying too much council tax.
- Current funding cuts and reduction to service delivery yet requesting more funding.
- Unknown impact of Brexit on society.

A sample range of comments made by respondents are listed below:

- *'Because we pay enough for the service already. The council tax is crippling people financially as it, with your average wage not increasing. It is also up to the government to help fund this. We pay enough in our taxes.'*
- *'We are already paying too much council tax, and seeing services shrink. I suggest if the fire service wants an increase, they should reform their working practices...first.'*
- *'This should be funded by central government.'*
- *'I understand fire cover has been cut! And firefighter numbers have been decreasing over a number of years. So you are asking us for more yet provide less for it!!!'*
- *'The FRS should stop carrying out non statutory duties. This would then release funds and so negate the need for any suggested rise..'*
- *'I don't believe you need any increase from us. You have not shown any evidence that you need more money.'*
- *'Because you are not maximising on the money you already have.'*
- *'You are reducing the amount of equipment available to protect the public and firefighters yet want more money for doing so? Stick to your core business and tell the government that all the nice to do peripherals will have to wait until funding permits!'*

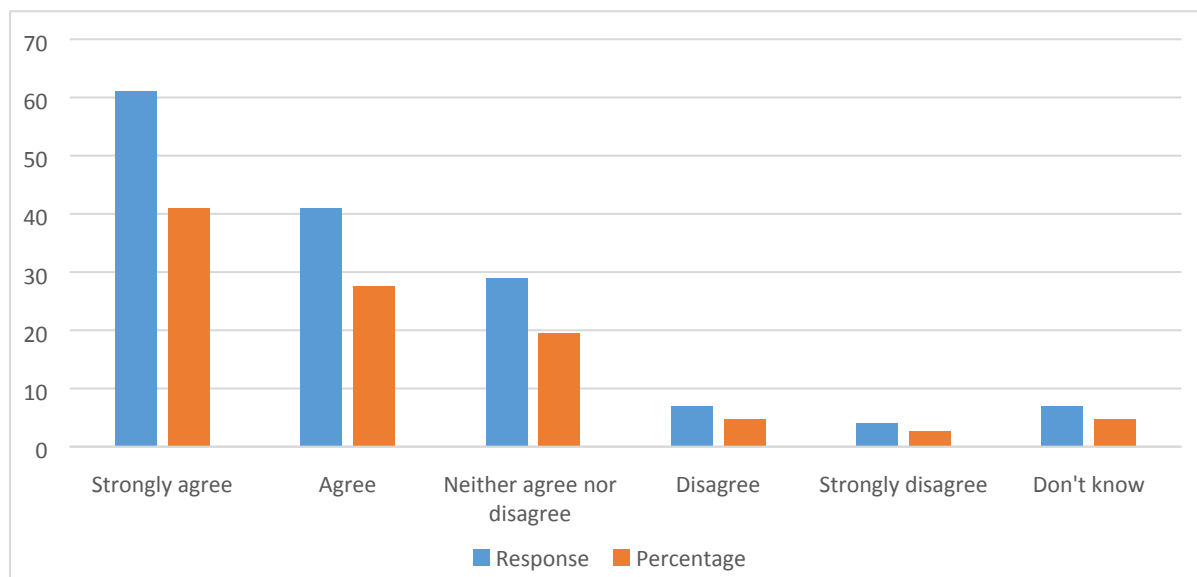
- 'With the unknown outcome of Brexit around the corner, we do not know how this will impact on society and whether after Brexit an increase will be affordable.'

5 Q4. How strongly do you agree or disagree that Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service provides value for money?

Table 3: Responses to Question 4

Answer Option	Response #	Response %
Strongly agree	61	40.94
Agree	41	27.52
Neither agree nor disagree	29	19.46
Disagree	7	4.70
Strongly disagree	4	2.68
Don't know	7	4.70
Total	149	

Chart 3: Results of value for money question



5.1 The results indicate that the majority of respondents almost (69%) agree that the Service provides value for money.

6 Q5. If you disagreed to Q4, why do you feel the Service does not provide value for money?

6.1 Those who disagreed that DSFRS provides value for money were asked why they disagreed.

The common emerging themes from respondents highlighted:

- Need for review of current work practices, including sleeping arrangements, commitment to second jobs and work duties.
- Concerns over retained staff cover arrangements.
- Impact on quality and delivery of service with proposed budget cuts.

A sample range of comments made by respondents are listed below:

- *'The working practice of the fire brigade needs to be overhauled in line with current business practices.....brought into line. How do firefighters find all this time for a second job.....'*
- *'Fire stations do not necessarily need full kitchens/sleeping arrangements. If you are on a night shift, you should be working. I have always worked for the NHS and currently for the ambulance service. Our stations have a basic kitchen (with microwave, no cooker).'*
- *'Stop sleeping, playing pool and cooking up meals on duty.'*
- *'How is possible to provide value for money when you talk about a £7.7 million cut back by government!'*
- *'Due to the lack of funding there are insufficient personnel to crew the fire engines resulting in many not being available on a daily basis. The wait for the next nearest engine could be fatal!'*
- *'All of the firefighters I know seem to spend a lot of time not working. I'm not permitted to sleep at work.'*
- *'Currently yes, however the future proposed cuts to the service will change this.'*
- *'Lack of retained cover during the day. Employs hundreds of on call fire fighters who can only provide evening and weekend cover.'*

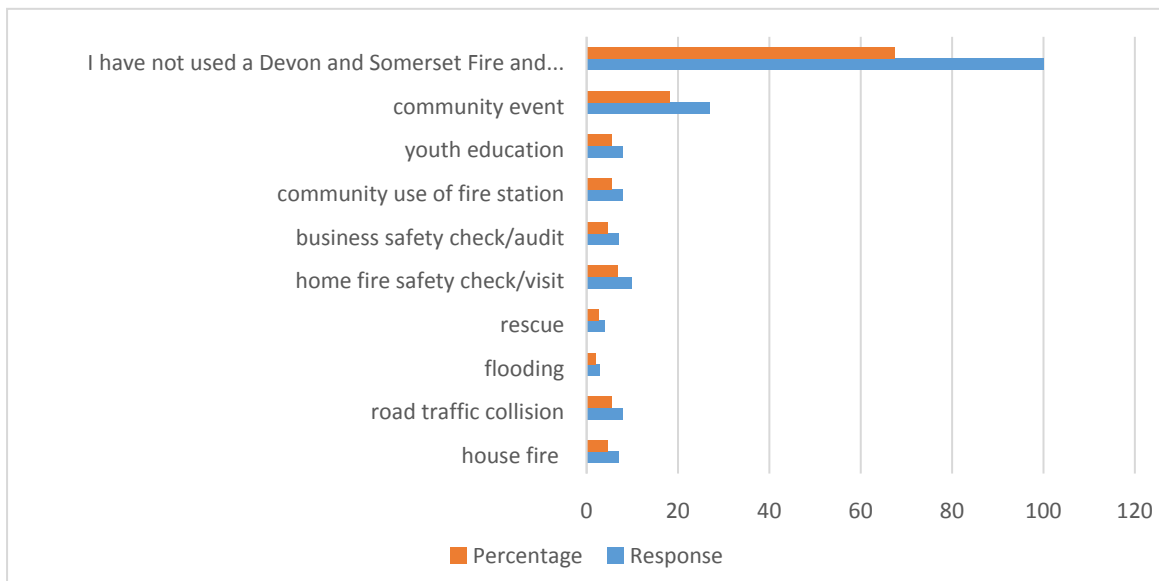
7 Q6. Have you interacted with Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service in the last 12 months?

7.1 To contextualise the findings reported above, all respondents were asked if they had used any of nine specific services provided across Devon and Somerset.

Table 4: Response to Question 6

Answer Option	Response #	Response %
Yes, house fire	7	4.73
Yes, road traffic collision	8	5.41
Yes, flooding	3	2.03
Yes, rescue	4	2.70
Yes, home fire safety check/visit	10	6.76
Yes, business safety check/audit	7	4.73
Yes, community use of fire station	8	5.41
Yes, youth education	8	5.41
Yes, community event	27	18.24
No, I have not used a Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue service	100	67.57
Total	182	

Chart 4: Results of service interaction question



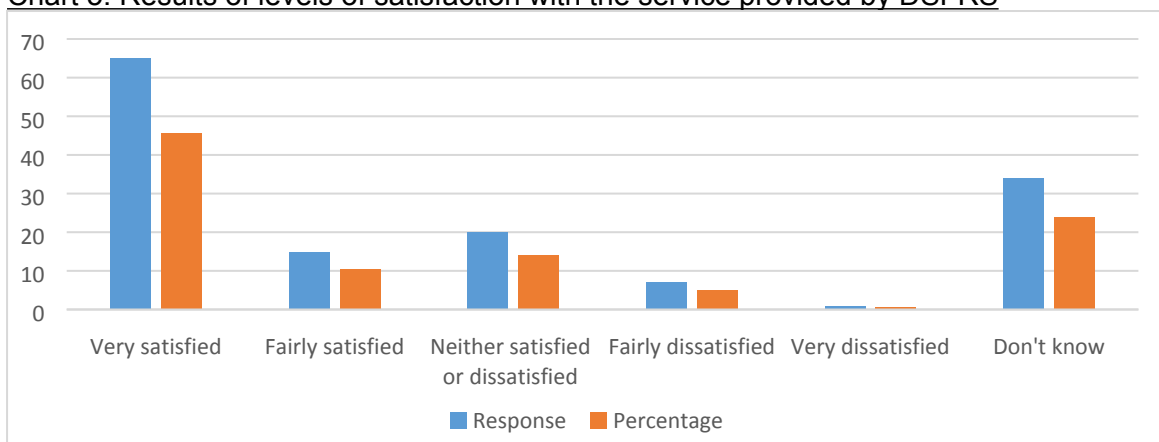
7.2 The results indicate that (67%) of respondents had not interacted with the Service in the last 12 months, however (18%) had attended Community Events and (6%) had received a home fire safety check/visit.

8 Q7. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service provided by Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (DSFRS)?

Table 5: Response to Question 7.

Answer Option	Response #	Response %
Very satisfied	65	45.77
Fairly satisfied	15	10.56
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	20	14.08
Fairly dissatisfied	7	4.93
Very dissatisfied	1	0.70
Don't know	34	23.94
Total	142	

Chart 5: Results of levels of satisfaction with the service provided by DSFRS



8.1 The results indicate that over half of respondents (56%) are satisfied with the level of service received by DSFRS.

9 **Q8. What has influenced how you answered question 7?**

9.1 Respondents were asked to provide comments on what influenced their level of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the service provided by DSFRS. It was evident from the comments received that the majority of respondents comprised of three distinct groups:

- Members of the general public
- Local businesses and
- Existing and previous employees of DSFRS.

There were a range of both positive and negative comments received depending on the respondent's level of satisfaction.

A sample range of comments from respondents who expressed satisfaction with the service included:

- *'Helpful friendly staff.'*
- *'A professional and valued service.'*
- *'These people risk their lives for the general public and I feel that you could not even begin to put a price on what they are worth.'*
- *'The sense of security knowing that they are there if we ever need them.'*
- *'Aware of the work they do in community safety as well as fire and rescue.'*
- *'The quality of service provided.'*
- *'I have had interaction with DSFRS on a professional level.'*
- *'My local station is very proactive.'*
- *'An amazing service from all. If we didn't have a fire service our house would have burnt down completely. This is a LIFE SAVING service and should NOT suffer any MORE cuts!'*
- *'I respect the job that they do and I know that sometimes have to put their own lives at risk to save others. One of my ex pupils led a team at the Grenfell Tower fire. You have my respect and gratitude for the work that you do.'*
- *'You still manage to provide your service in spite of current funding shortfalls.'*

9.2 A sample range of comments from respondents who expressed dissatisfaction with the service included:

- *'Disappointed that our local fire engine is not always available.'*
- *'The local retained station is unable to keep the appliances available 24 hours a day. After learning what they are paid this doesn't surprise me. They need a fair wage that will also attract others to join them!'*

- *'The lack of fire cover being provided, the level of crewing per fire engine that does get to an incident and the service is no longer able to support many community events for the communities it is supposed to be serving.'*
- *'I don't think we see where all our money goes from local council funding and I feel that it's mainly covering government cuts ; where the local tax money should be funding improvements in the community and be decided by the local crews how best to use.'*
- *'You need to modernise.'*

10 Profile of respondents

10.1 The following questions provided an opportunity to gather local intelligence from respondents and ascertain whether a cross section of people had responded to the survey.

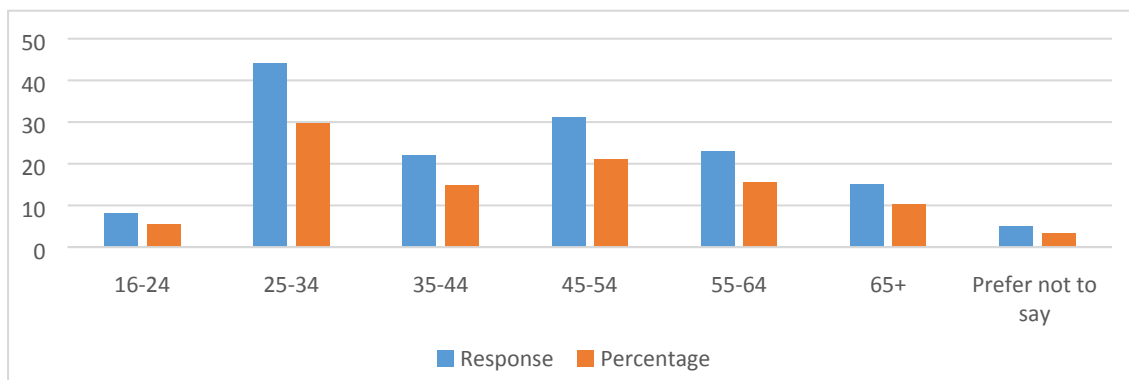
Table 6: Responses to Question 9 – Are you...?

Answer Option	Response #	Response %
A member of the public	143	96.62
Representing a business	5	3.38
Total	148	

Table 7: Responses to Question 10 - regarding age

Answer Option	Response #	Response %
16-24	8	5.41
25-34	44	29.73
35-44	22	14.86
45-54	31	20.95
55-64	23	15.54
65+	15	10.14
Prefer not to say	5	3.38
Total	148	

Chart 6: Results of question regarding age

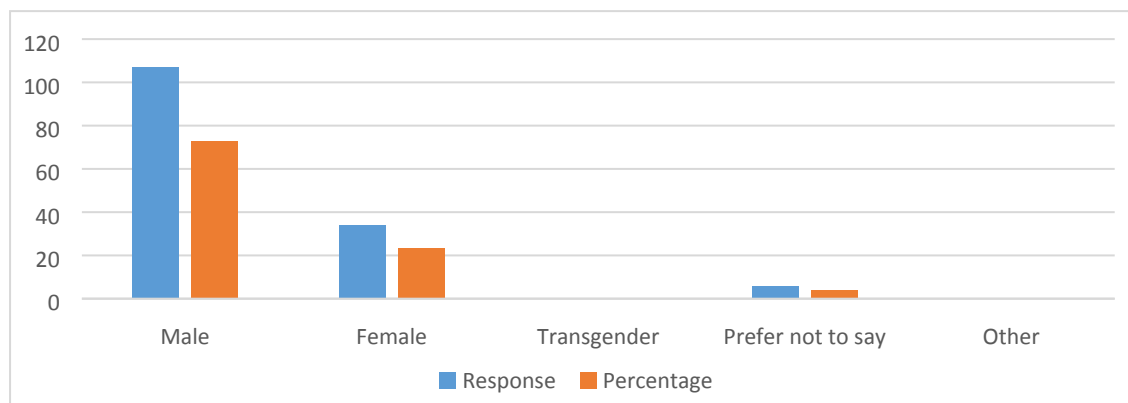


10.2 The results indicate that the majority of respondents (29%) were aged between 25-34 years.

Table 8: Responses to Question 11 - regarding gender

Answer Option	Response #	Response %
Male	107	72.79
Female	34	23.13
Transgender	0	0.00
Prefer not to say	6	4.08
Other	0	0.00
Total	147	

Chart 7: Results of question regarding gender



10.3 The results indicate that the majority of respondents were male (72%).

Table 9: Results of Question 12 - regarding ethnic origin

Answer Option	Response	Response %
White - English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British	130	89.04
White - Irish	1	0.68
White - Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0	0.00
Black or Black British - African	0	0.00
Black or Black British - Caribbean	0	0.00
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0.00
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0.00
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	0	0.00
Asian or Asian British - Chinese	0	0.00
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White and Black Caribbean	0	0.00
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White and Black African	0	0.00
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White and Asian	0	0.00
Other ethnic group - Arab	0	0.00
Prefer not to say	14	9.59
Other	1	0.68
Total	146	

- 10.4 The results indicate that (89%) of respondents stated they were White - English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British.
- 10.5 Respondents were asked this question to ensure we had a cross section of responses from across Devon and Somerset. Of the 202 total respondents, 134 provided a postcode and these have been displayed on the map below and grouped in the four constituent authorities.

Map displaying respondents' postcode areas

