

Budget 2026/2027 - Consultation Report

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Executive Summary

The Cabinet published draft proposals for the Council's revenue and capital budget for 2026/27 in December 2025 and an online survey was created to gather public views. Paper copies were distributed to the main libraries. The consultation opened on Wednesday 3 December 2025 and closed at midnight on 18 January 2026.

There were 189 responses to the consultation survey, all were completed online. All percentages shown within this report use the number of people that completed the survey as the denominator. All comments within this report are shown as written by the respondent. No written representations or completed paper copies of the survey were received.

During the course of the consultation, residents and stakeholders were encouraged to take part with posts on our Facebook, LinkedIn and Nextdoor pages as well as articles in One Torbay.

A summary of responses to the key questions in the survey is shown in the table below.

| Question | Important/ Support | % | Not Important/ Oppose | % |
|--|-----------------------|--------|--------------------------|--------|
| How important do you think it is for the council to invest in improving play parks and outdoor activity spaces compared to other priorities? | 156 | 82.54% | 29 | 15.34% |
| How important do you think it is for the council to support job creation and local businesses? | 179 | 94.71% | 7 | 3.70% |
| How important do you think it is for the council to increase the skills of those who live in the Bay to improve their aspirations? | 166 | 87.83% | 19 | 10.05% |

| | | | | |
|---|-----|--------|---|-------|
| What are your views on continuing Operation Brighter Bay and its focus in residential areas? | 173 | 91.53% | 9 | 4.76% |
| What are your views on continuing Operation Town Centres to make our town centres more welcoming? | 179 | 94.71% | 3 | 1.59% |

Introduction

The Cabinet published their draft proposals for the Council's revenue and capital budget for 2026/27 in December 2025. An online survey was created to gather the views of the public and paper surveys were available in the main libraries.

The consultation opened on 3 December 2025 and closed at midnight on 18 January 2026.

The audience for this consultation was all those that live in or run a business in one of the three towns of Torbay – Torquay, Paignton and Brixham.

An online consultation was launched, with paper copies available on request and at the libraries in Torquay, Paignton and Brixham.

The consultation was promoted in a number of ways. This included:

- Media briefing
- Members' briefing
- The Council's e-Newsletter One Torbay
- Through regular staff news updates (as the majority of our employees are also Torbay residents)
- Press releases
- Social media
- On the Consultation webpage on the Council's website
- Two press releases were sent out, one at the start of the consultation and another later on in January, encouraging people to take part.

21 social media posts were scheduled in total (16 last year). This was across Facebook, LinkedIn and Nextdoor. Across all the social media channels the posts had a reach of 19,960 (compared to 10,452 last year) and made 33,625 impressions (compared to 16,029 last year). There were 181 clicks on the links to view the budget consultation (126 last year). 45 comments were left on the posts (32 last year), 38 reactions (15 last year) and 12 shares (21 last year).

Eight articles (4 last year) were shared through either the One Torbay or Staff News e-newsletters. In total these articles encouraged 187 subscribers (141 last year) to click on the links to the consultation 201 times (168 last year).

Consultation responses

The total number of responses received overall was 189 (146 last year).

All the 189 responses were completed online, in comparison, 145 were completed the same way last year. No paper surveys were received (1 last year).

The results below show all the responses. The percentages may not always add up to 100% due to rounding, and not all respondents answering all questions. Microsoft CoPilot was used to assist analysis of the themes in the comments.

Responses to individual survey questions

(Question numbers are different to those used in the survey due to introduction statement and data use question)

Question 1

We have been carrying out a review of our play parks and outdoor activity spaces that are used by our children and young people. We know investment will be needed to improve these and have been talking to our children and young people on their views on what they would like. How important do you think it is for the council to invest in improving these spaces compared to other priorities?

| Option | Total | Percent |
|----------------------|-------|---------|
| Very important | 68 | 35.98% |
| Quite important | 88 | 46.56% |
| Not very important | 24 | 12.70% |
| Not important at all | 5 | 2.64% |
| Don't know | 4 | 2.12% |
| Total | 189 | |

Question 2

What do you feel is missing from our play parks and outdoor spaces?

128 comments.

| Theme | Summary |
|--|--|
| Maintenance and condition 94 mentions | Respondents consistently say play parks feel tired and poorly maintained. Broken equipment, mud, graffiti and general wear reduce confidence and usage. Many say that basic upkeep matters more than new features and that neglected parks discourage families and older children from using them. |
| More and better equipment 89 mentions | People want more modern, varied play equipment rather than the same small layouts repeated everywhere. Requests span toddlers to teenagers, with stronger interest in challenging equipment and exercise options. Variety is seen as key to repeat visits and wider appeal. |

| | |
|--|--|
| Facilities for older children and teenagers 67 mentions | Many residents feel older children and teenagers are overlooked. They ask for skate parks, pump tracks, BMX facilities and climbing features. Without these, young people are seen as drifting into streets and town centres instead of using safe, active spaces. |
| Water play, seating and facilities 51 mentions | Splash parks and water play are widely requested, especially on seafront sites. Seating, toilets, shelter and refreshments are also seen as crucial. These facilities allow families to stay longer and use parks in varied weather. |
| Safety, lighting and inclusion 46 mentions | Concerns focus on poor lighting, vandalism and intimidating behaviour. Many also highlight inclusive design, accessible equipment and toilets. Parks should feel safe, welcoming and usable for disabled children and carers. |

Question 3

We want to create the conditions here in the Bay for a strong and sustainable economy that supports a diverse mix of businesses, industries and jobs that inspire. How important do you think it is for the council to support job creation and local businesses?

| Option | Total | Percent |
|----------------------|-------|---------|
| Very important | 136 | 71.96% |
| Quite important | 43 | 22.75% |
| Not very important | 5 | 2.64% |
| Not important at all | 2 | 1.06% |
| Don't know | 3 | 1.59% |
| Total | 189 | |

Question 4

Is there a particular area that you would like us to focus on with regard to creating jobs and supporting local business?

133 comments.

| Theme | Summary |
|---|--|
| Supporting small and independent businesses 104 mentions | Respondents strongly favour local and independent businesses. These are seen as vital to community identity and resilience. Many believe current conditions discourage small traders and allow town centres to hollow out. |

| | |
|---|--|
| Town centre regeneration and empty shops 92 mentions | Residents see town centres as essential to economic recovery but currently unattractive. Empty shops damage confidence and footfall. People support pop-ups, mixed uses, culture and residential conversion. |
| Business rates, rents and affordability 88 mentions | High rents and rates are described as the main reason shops close or never open. Many argue lower income is better than empty units and see affordability as a direct lever the Council can influence. |
| Year-round jobs and job quality 76 mentions | There is frustration with seasonal, low-paid work. Respondents want stable, year-round jobs with progression. Better quality employment is seen as key to retaining young people. |
| Key growth sectors 71 mentions | Hospitality remains important but fragile. Construction, manufacturing, skilled trades and technology are highlighted as offering more stable, better-paid employment. |

Question 5

We want to encourage aspiration among our residents of working age and provide opportunities for everyone, driving training opportunities to empower people to improve their skills. How important do you think it is for the council to increase the skills of those who live in the Bay to improve their aspirations?

| Option | Total | Percent |
|----------------------|-------|---------|
| Very important | 100 | 52.91% |
| Quite important | 66 | 34.92% |
| Not very important | 15 | 7.94% |
| Not important at all | 4 | 2.12% |
| Don't know | 4 | 2.12% |
| Total | 189 | |

Question 6

Are there any particular sectors that we need to be providing better opportunities for training and skill development?

106 comments.

| Theme | Summary |
|--|--|
| Apprenticeships and work experience 88 mentions | Apprenticeships are the most frequently supported solution. Respondents want clear routes from education into work, across many sectors. Work experience is seen as critical for confidence and employability. |
| Skilled trades and construction 72 mentions | Concern is strong about declining trade skills. Training in plumbing, electrical, engineering and construction is viewed as urgent and well matched to local needs. |
| Health and social care skills 64 mentions | Care roles feature heavily due to workforce shortages. Respondents highlight low pay and stress the need for training and progression to make care a sustainable career. |
| Hospitality and service careers 61 mentions | Many want hospitality treated as a serious career. Better training, leadership development and progression routes are seen as necessary for sector stability. |
| Adult learning and inclusion 55 mentions | Adult education, reskilling and basic skills appear frequently. Disabled people, carers and older workers are highlighted as needing flexible and accessible training options. |

Question 7

We are proud of our place, and for the past two years investment has been put into improving our area through Operation Brighter Bay. This has seen line marking re-done, increased grass cutting and more flower displays. We now want to expand this into residential areas. What are your views on continuing this programme and its focus in residential areas?

| Option | Total | Percent |
|------------------|-------|---------|
| Strongly support | 95 | 50.26% |
| Support | 78 | 41.27% |
| Oppose | 6 | 3.17% |
| Strongly oppose | 3 | 1.59% |
| Don't know | 7 | 3.70% |
| Total | 189 | |

Question 8

Are there any other improvements you would like to see in your local area that are not currently part of Operation Brighter Bay?

131 comments.

| Theme | Summary |
|---|--|
| Street cleaning, litter, dog fouling and bins 119 mentions | This is the strongest theme. Residents describe persistent litter, overflowing bins and dog fouling. Cleanliness is directly linked to pride, wellbeing and perceptions of safety. |
| Roads, pavements and potholes 112 mentions | Poor surfaces, potholes and trip hazards dominate comments. Issues especially affect older and disabled residents and are seen as neglected basics. |
| Weeds, hedges and verge maintenance 98 mentions | Overgrown vegetation blocking pavements is a common frustration. Respondents want consistent maintenance and enforcement of responsibilities. |
| Drainage and surface water flooding 63 mentions | Blocked drains and surface water flooding are regularly described. Many feel these problems are avoidable with better routine maintenance. |
| Parking and neighbourhood management 51 mentions | Residential parking pressure, vans and campervans feature strongly. Calls focus on clearer rules and consistent enforcement. |

Question 9

Under Operation Town Centres we have been addressing a range of things including anti-social behaviour. This has included the introduction of Town Centre Officers, Street Marshals, and improvements to CCTV. However, we believe there is more work to be done in making these spaces more welcoming. What are your views on continuing this programme to make our town centres more welcoming?

| Option | Total | Percent |
|------------------|-------|---------|
| Strongly support | 125 | 66.14% |
| Support | 54 | 28.57% |
| Oppose | 1 | 0.53% |
| Strongly oppose | 2 | 1.06% |
| Don't know | 7 | 3.70% |
| Total | 189 | |

Question 10

Are there any other improvements you would like to see in your local town centre that are not currently part of Operation Town Centres?

124 comments.

| Theme | Summary |
|--|---|
| Safety, anti-social behaviour and confidence 127 mentions | Feeling unsafe dominates town centre feedback. Visible drug use and intimidating behaviour reduce visits, particularly for families and older residents. Perception is as important as incidents. |
| Visible policing and enforcement 111 mentions | Respondents want more visible police patrols rather than wardens alone. Presence is seen as key to deterrence and reassurance. |
| Factory Row and related services 96 mentions | Factory Row in Torquay is repeatedly cited as symbolic. Many question the concentration of services in a central location and its effect on safety, dignity and town centre recovery. |
| Empty shops and town centre decline 93 mentions | Vacant units are linked to poor image, reduced footfall and fear. Respondents want active uses to restore life and confidence. |
| Cleanliness, graffiti and appearance 71 mentions | Graffiti, lighting, toilets and general upkeep shape perceptions. Clean, well-maintained spaces are seen as essential to revitalising town centres. |

Demographic questions

Which town do you live in? Select only one

| Option | Total | Percentage |
|----------|-------|------------|
| Torquay | 107 | 56.61% |
| Paignton | 53 | 28.04% |
| Brixham | 21 | 11.11% |

First letters/numbers of postcode

| Option | Total | Percentage |
|--------|-------|------------|
| TQ1 | 62 | 32.80% |
| TQ2 | 43 | 22.75% |
| TQ3 | 24 | 12.70% |
| TQ4 | 30 | 15.87% |
| TQ5 | 20 | 10.58% |
| TQ12 | 2 | 1.06% |

Responding as a resident or business

| Option | Total | Percentage |
|-------------------|-------|------------|
| Resident | 180 | 95.24% |
| Business | 4 | 2.12% |
| Prefer not to say | 5 | 2.64% |

Which of the following age groups applies to you? Tick one only

| Option | Total | Percentage |
|-------------------|-------|------------|
| 0-15 | 0 | 0% |
| 16-24 | 3 | 1.59% |
| 25-34 | 16 | 8.47% |
| 35-44 | 31 | 16.40% |
| 45-54 | 25 | 13.23% |
| 55-64 | 47 | 24.87% |
| 65-74 | 38 | 20.11% |
| 75+ | 18 | 9.52% |
| Prefer not to say | 11 | 5.82% |

What is your gender? Select only one

| Option | Total | Percentage |
|-------------------|-------|------------|
| Male | 75 | 39.68% |
| Female | 103 | 54.50% |
| Prefer not to say | 11 | 5.82% |

Which of the following best describes your ethnic background?

| Option | Total | Percentage |
|------------------------|-------|------------|
| White | 174 | 92.06% |
| Mixed ethnicity | 7 | 3.70% |
| Asian or Asian British | 1 | 0.53% |
| Black or Black British | 3 | 1.59% |
| Chinese | 0 | 0% |
| Prefer not to say | 4 | 2.12% |

Employment Status

| Option | Total | Percentage |
|--------------------------------------|-------|------------|
| Working full-time in Torbay | 47 | 24.87% |
| Working full-time elsewhere in Devon | 11 | 5.82% |
| Working part-time in Torbay | 28 | 14.81% |
| Working part-time elsewhere in Devon | 7 | 3.70% |
| Self-employed – full, or part-time | 13 | 6.88% |
| Student | 1 | 0.53% |
| Looking after Family/Home | 3 | 1.59% |
| Temporary Sick | 0 | 0% |
| Long-Term Sick | 1 | 0.53% |
| Retired | 63 | 33.33% |
| Unemployed | 2 | 1.06% |
| Prefer not to say | 11 | 5.82% |

Do you consider yourself to be disabled in any way?

| Option | Total | Percentage |
|-------------------|-------|------------|
| Yes | 30 | 15.87% |
| No | 144 | 76.19% |
| Prefer not to say | 15 | 7.94% |

If you answered "Yes", please tell us how it affects you.

| Option | Total | Percentage |
|------------------------------|-------|------------|
| It affects my mobility | 19 | 10.05% |
| It affects my vision | 1 | 0.53% |
| It affects my hearing | 2 | 1.06% |
| It affects me in another way | 6 | 3.17% |
| Prefer not to say | 1 | 0.53% |

- Have you spent any time in care?

| Option | Total | Percentage |
|-------------------|-------|------------|
| Yes | 6 | 3.17% |
| No | 172 | 91% |
| Prefer not to say | 10 | 5.29% |