



Mayor's Budget Consultation Results

January 2014

Executive Summary

1. In setting a budget for 2014/15 and beyond, Torbay Council faces an unprecedented challenge. The Council is facing an estimated budget gap of £22 million over the next two financial years and, like all local authorities, has to make difficult decisions about its services. Some services may need to be reduced or delivered in a different way or some may stop altogether.
2. The Mayor asked each Executive Lead and Executive Head to identify budget priorities within their service areas, together possible areas of savings and additional income generation. The draft proposals were then reviewed and prioritised by the Mayor and Conservative Group with the Mayor announcing his proposals for savings for 2014/15 and into 2015/16 in November 2013.
3. Of these proposals, approximately £11 million were identified as “internal” or “efficiency” savings, which means there should be no impact on the services which are delivered to the community. The remainder were categorised as having a “minor” or “major” impact according to the level of community impact or interest whilst also taking account of the impact of those groups with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.
4. The budget proposals for each Business Unit, along with summaries of the services each Business Unit currently provides, are available on the Torbay Council website at www.torbay.gov.uk/budget1415.
5. Public consultation on the proposals started on 21 November 2013 and closed on the 16 January 2014. The proposals were widely communicated to the Torbay community via local newspaper (Herald Express & Western Morning News), local radio (Palm FM, Radio Devon and Heart FM), BBC One Spotlight, Twitter and Facebook and detailed on the Torbay Council website. Emails were sent to key stakeholders and a range of opportunities were provided for people to contribute to the consultation. People were also able to send representations via email and post to Torbay Council.
6. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was prepared for each of the proposals assessed as “major” and those “minor” proposals with a high level of community interest. Each EIA evidences that the Council has fully considered the impact of the proposed changes to services and has carried out appropriate consultation on those changes with the key stakeholders. It enables the Council to make informed decisions about the authority’s budget.
7. In developing the EIA, service specific consultation was undertaken with both users and providers. Consultation took the form of meetings with service providers, client focus groups, letters to current and potential service users and providers, request for representation from local and national organisations and service-based online and paper questionnaires. The general public also had the opportunity to comment on the proposals.
8. The EIAs have been published on the Council website at www.torbay.gov.uk/budget1415 and outline how the consultation process was

undertaken and any positive and negative equality impacts on specific groups. The results of the consultation are appended to each EIA.

9. A further general questionnaire was prepared to supplement the service specific consultations. The questionnaire covered general questions concerning Torbay Council services and any proposals where there was a potential for some impact on the services the Council delivers. It was available online and as a paper questionnaire which was distributed via libraries, Connections offices and at the Mayor's public events. This asked for feedback on the proposals, as well as questions around current services and council tax increase. There has been good response to the consultation with 3,835 unique page views of web information and a total of 2760 respondents via paper and online surveys.
10. Where questions within the general questionnaire related to proposals which were also subject to service specific consultation, the results have been included within appropriate EIA.
11. The results for the non-service specific questions are summarised in Annex 1 to this report. Where written or email representation has been made around the general budget these have been summarised in Annex 2.
12. The Mayor organised two public events at which he was able to discuss the budget and the budget proposals with the public and key stakeholders. Over 270 people attended the events which were held on 2 December 2013 in Torquay and on 9 January 2014 in Paignton. The results are summarised in Annex 3.
13. In accordance with the Constitution, the Mayor's budget proposals were sent to all members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board for consideration. The Board established a Priorities and Resources Review Panel which then considered a number of the specific proposals and received representation from a range of organisations and individuals. The report from that review has been forwarded to the Mayor and is available on the Torbay Council website at www.torbay.gov.uk/completereviews.

Headline Results

14. The response to the general budget questionnaire came from people who are largely representative of the demographic spread of Torbay. Of the 342 who identified their postcode as Torbay, 39% were from Torquay, 33% from Paignton and 12% from Brixham. This is in contrast to 2013 where 68% were from Torquay. The respondent profile is set out in Annex 4.
15. Through consultation the proposals which generated the most public interest were those in relation to:
 - Supporting People
 - Citizens' Advice Bureau
 - Libraries
 - English Riviera Tourism Company

- Acorn Centre

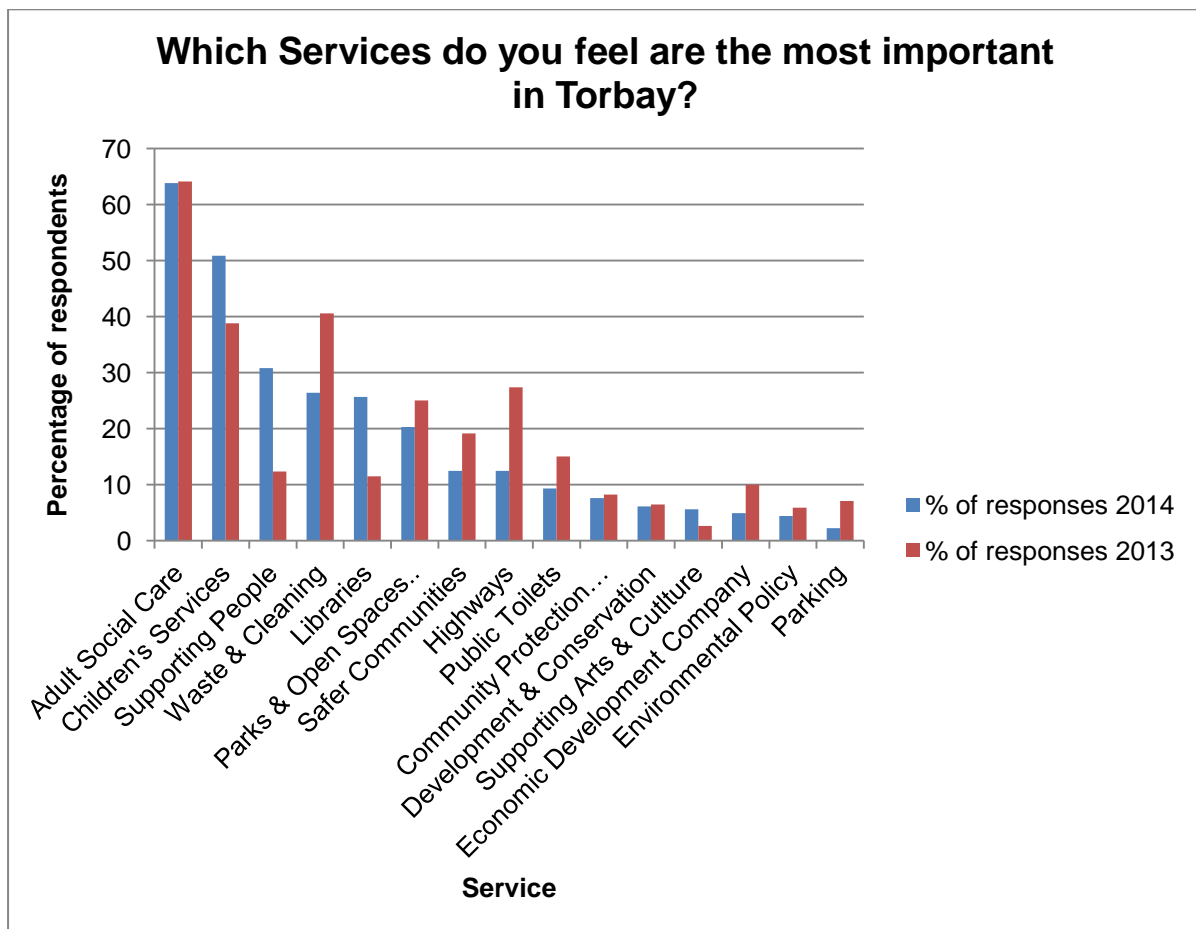
16. In the majority of cases, people were against the proposals put forward for these services. The main themes to emerge concerned the impact of a reduction in services on vulnerable client groups, the increase pressure the proposals may have on statutory services and voluntary sector groups and the short timescales of the introduction of the reductions.
17. From the general questionnaire, the proposals for reducing the maintenance of beaches and highways were not supported and were viewed as having a detrimental effect on tourism in Torbay.
18. Based on the consultation survey results, the majority of respondents were in favour of a Council Tax increase of 2% (56%).

Annex 1 – General Budget Questionnaire Results

The results of those questions specific to a proposal with an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) are included within the EIA. The other results are shown within this Annex.

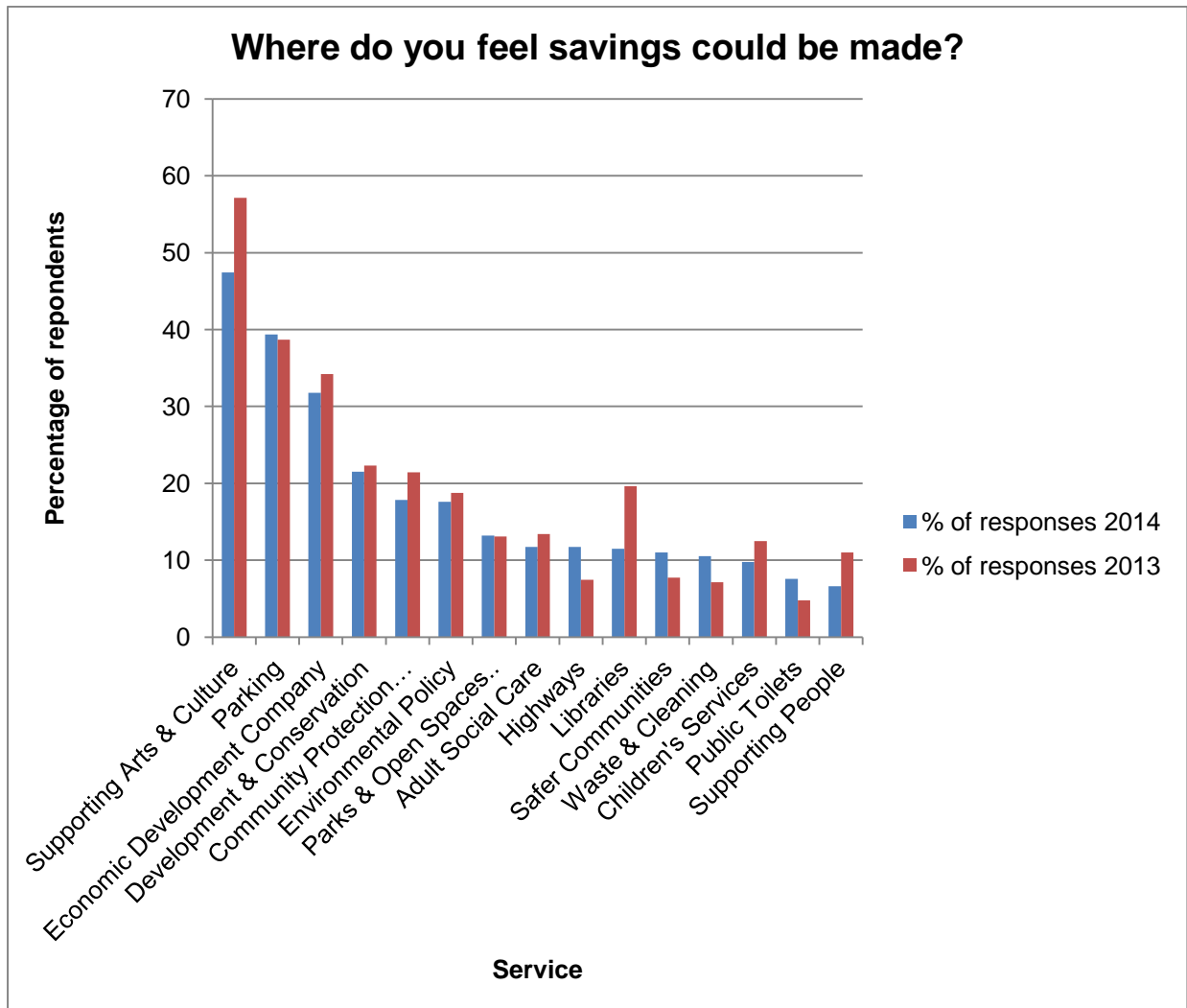
Q1. Of the following services, which three do you feel are the most important in Torbay?

Respondents could select up to three services. Results are shown for 2014 and compared with the same question from the 2013 budget consultation.



Q2. Please tell us the three services where you feel that savings could be made:

Respondents could select up to three services. Results are shown for 2014 and compared with the same question from the 2013 budget consultation.



Q3. How much do you feel we should increase council tax by?

Respondents could select one box.

How much do you feel we should increase council tax by?	Number	Percent
0% increase	160	39.1
2% increase	231	56.5
No response	18	4.4
Total	409	100

Children's Services Proposals

Q6f. Reduction in Neighbourhood Youth Grant

Do you support this proposal?	Number	Percent
Yes	295	72.1
No	70	17.1
No response	44	10.8
Total	409	100.0

Of the 70 respondents who selected 'No' they do not support the proposal, 63 respondents made comments related to the proposal. These have been summarised into themes below:

Category	Examples of comments – where respondents said 'No' above
Positive support to youth	<p><i>"Young people should be encouraged to access youth services - this helps them to develop a good attitude to responsible citizenship."</i></p> <p><i>"With unemployment at high levels it is unwise to withdraw support this kind of support. Our young people need more activities and support to keep them focussed ..."</i></p> <p><i>"Important help for young people."</i></p>
Less cut/no cut	<p><i>"I would support a lesser reduction, youth work is important as a preventative measure."</i></p> <p><i>"A reduction of 15% would seem more reasonable at a time when youth prospect and hope is at an all time low."</i></p>
Other	<p><i>"Neighbourhoods need this grant. Many areas of Torbay need schemes to help young people..."</i></p>

Residents and Visitor Services Budget Proposals

Q8d. Increase income from Beach Huts

Do you support this proposal?	Number	Percent
Yes	350	85.6
No	39	9.5
No response	20	4.9
Total	409	100.0

Of the 39 respondents who selected 'No' they do not support the proposal, 39 respondents made comments related to the proposal. These have been summarised into themes below:

Category	Examples of comments – where respondents said 'No' above
Already expensive	<p><i>"Already too expensive."</i></p> <p><i>"Beach huts are expensive as it is, the people of Torbay should be allowed to enjoy it beaches/huts for a reasonable price."</i></p>
Families	<p><i>"Beach huts need to be more accessible to the local communities to be able to allow children to explore a natural environment which is not available to all communities."</i></p> <p><i>"They are a vital pleasure for older people and families with young children in particular."</i></p>
Other	<p><i>"But only if beach huts are properly maintained..."</i></p> <p><i>"..Provide upgraded huts at higher costs...not to simply increase charges with no upgrade."</i></p>

Q8e. Increase income from concessions at beaches

Do you support this proposal?	Number	Percent
Yes	345	84.4
No	42	10.3
No response	22	5.1
Total	409	100.0

Of the 42 respondents who selected 'No' they do not support the proposal, 42 respondents made comments related to the proposal. These have been summarised into themes below:

Category	Examples of comments – where respondents said 'No' above
Litter	<p><i>“Beaches should be left unspoilt. More catering means more litter and rubbish.”</i></p> <p><i>“Many traders struggle now, to keep going by adding more catering sites etc you will cut these profits and increase litter.”</i></p>
Other	<p><i>“More than enough already.”</i></p>

Q8f. Reduce the maintenance budget for beaches

Do you support this proposal?	Number	Percent
Yes	150	36.7
No	229	56.0
No response	30	7.3
Total	409	100.0

Of the 229 respondents who selected 'No' they do not support the proposal, 207 respondents made comments related to the proposal. These have been summarised into themes below:

Category	Examples of comments – where respondents said 'No' above
Will affect tourism	<p><i>"Nice beaches are a key part of Torbay's visitor offer..."</i></p> <p><i>"One of Torbay's assets is its beaches, to start neglecting them would have a direct impact on tourism."</i></p> <p><i>"The beaches are the heart of our tourism, we need them maintained."</i></p> <p><i>"Tourism is vital to the local economy, the state of beaches and maintenance of bins is important to maintain..."</i></p>
Minimal savings	<p><i>"Minimal saving and visually could have huge impact and affect tourism."</i></p> <p><i>"For the sake of £3k over two years, the negative visual impact to locals and visitors will show we have not prioritised maintaining the fabric of our beautiful coastline which draws so many people each year including locals."</i></p>
Other	<p><i>"Less bins means more rubbish on the streets, beaches need constant maintenance especially in winter."</i></p> <p><i>"We need to keep beaches safe and clean."</i></p>

Q8g. Reduce the budget for cyclical highways maintenance (and remove the Transport Working Party)

Do you support this proposal?	Number	Percent
Yes	161	39.4
No	205	50.1
No response	43	10.5
Total	409	100.0

Of the 205 respondents who selected 'No' they do not support the proposal, 198 respondents made comments related to the proposal. These have been summarised into themes below:

Category	Examples of comments – where respondents said 'No' above
Poor condition of roads	<p><i>“Highway maintenance is already poor.”</i></p> <p><i>“Roads are already in a very poor state and need urgent repairs in many areas.”</i></p> <p><i>“Too many pot holes now, would only get worse.”</i></p>
Will affect tourism	<p><i>“High standards of highway infrastructure maintenance are important to support the vital tourist industry.”</i></p> <p><i>“Maintenance of roads is vital in a tourist area like Torbay which sees increased volumes of traffic both in the summer season and winter ...”</i></p>
Safety	<p><i>“Highway repairs are a safety measure for both pedestrians and drivers.”</i></p> <p><i>“What cost safety! Road users including cyclists could be endangered.”</i></p>

Q8h. Reduce the maintenance budget for car parks

Do you support this proposal?	Number	Percent
Yes	299	73.1
No	78	19.1
No response	32	7.8
Total	409	100.0

Of the 78 respondents who selected 'No' they do not support the proposal, 73 respondents made comments related to the proposal. These have been summarised into themes below:

Category	Examples of comments – where respondents said 'No' above
Will affect tourism	<p><i>“Maintenance of car parks is essential in a tourist area.”</i></p> <p><i>“In a major tourist area like Torbay car parks and the quality and maintenance of them are more important now than ever as they are vital to tourists and local residents alike.”</i></p>
Other	<p><i>“Minimal savings for high visible impact.”</i></p> <p><i>“Reducing maintenance only leads to greater costs in the future.”</i></p>

Q8i. Reduce the budget for arboriculture

Do you support this proposal?	Number	Percent
Yes	279	68.2
No	101	24.7
No response	29	7.1
Total	409	100.0

Of the 101 respondents who selected 'No' they do not support the proposal, 98 respondents made comments related to the proposal. These have been summarised into themes below:

Category	Examples of comments – where respondents said 'No' above
Safety	<p><i>“Non-maintained trees will be a threat to public safety.”</i></p> <p><i>“The area needs regular arboriculture and planned maintenance in order to maintain a safe as well as aesthetic environment for both locals and tourists.”</i></p>
Environmental importance	<p><i>“Torbay trees are an essential ingredient of our healthy environment...”</i></p> <p><i>“.. Trees make both a vital visual and well as environmental contribution in Torbay.”</i></p>
Other	<p><i>“Planned maintenance will help reduce the chance of major work being needed. Reactive maintenance is often more expensive.”</i></p>

Q8j. Reduce the budget for parks and open spaces

Do you support this proposal?	Number	Percent
Yes	201	49.1
No	176	43.0
No response	32	7.8
Total	409	100.0

Of the 176 respondents who selected 'No' they do not support the proposal, 163 respondents made comments related to the proposal. These have been summarised into themes below:

Category	Examples of comments – where respondents said 'No' above
Tourism	<p><i>".. A holiday resort appearance is important and unkempt public areas would send a negative message to holiday makers."</i></p> <p><i>"As long as our open spaces are part of tourist attractions, they must look good."</i></p> <p><i>"Attractive parks and open spaces are beneficial to local residents and visitors. Tourists are most important for the local community."</i></p>
Important service	<p><i>"Maintenance is required to keep up the general appearance and the feeling of well being."</i></p> <p><i>"It's a great pleasure to walk/sit/rest/play in a well maintained public space."</i></p>
Other	<p><i>"...These areas 'sell' our location. Look at more cost effective ways of laying them out, meadows/wild flowers/cutting twice a year etc. Be more efficient and natural in your landscaping to save costs - use your environment to enhance these areas and keep maintenance costs down. Natural planting is much more popular and environmentally friends - not to mention less costly."</i></p>

Q9. Further Comments and Suggestions

Respondents were given the opportunity to make suggestions for where alternative/additional savings could be made or income generated.

Category	Examples of themes
Income generation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Small charge for use of bus pass• Increase council tax• Increase income from waste and recycling
Internal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review internal costs and efficiencies• Combine services and functions• Review Mayoral post
Regeneration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review empty shops• Regenerate town centres
Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More all weather tourist facilities• Explore different tourist markets
Community / volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More community involvement and volunteering• Run services via the voluntary sector, the church
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Protect services for the vulnerable

Annex 2 – Feedback from Correspondence

Correspondence was received from individuals via email and letter.

Categories/themes from all the correspondence received has been summarised in the table below.

Comments relating to specific proposals are included in those consultation results.

Feedback includes representation from the consultation event in Brixham facilitated by the Non-Coalition Group on the Council where 50 people attended.

Category	Example comments made by respondents
Consultation process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve access to consultation. • Need clearer information. • Wider circulation of consultation.
Supporting People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLUSS provides invaluable support and advocacy for people with learning difficulties to access employment. • Brixham Does Care and ACE (Access to Community Education) are a priority service for the town.
Grants and funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sell or remove the grant for Riviera International Conference Centre. • English Riviera Tourism Company – valued resource.
Libraries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relocate other services into libraries.
Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide minimum statutory services. • Higher council tax on holiday and second homes.

Annex 3 – Mayor’s Budget Events

Two public events were held by the Mayor to discuss the budget. The first one was held in Torquay in December 2013 and the second one in Paignton in January 2014.

278 members of the public and stakeholders attended the events. The Mayor introduced the event with the Executive Director of Torbay Council giving a presentation on the Budget process.

Members of the public were then invited to take part in an activity, facilitated discussion and question and answer session around the budget and general themes are collated below:

Category	Examples of themes
Supporting People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services need to be preserved or this will impact on the vulnerable and increase in homelessness. • Need to work together to find alternative sources of funding or will face closures. • Vulnerable people need to be able to have an avenue to voice their opinions. • Could the cuts be spread over a period of years? • Cuts are too high and too fast. • Discussions how this could be funded or run in different ways e.g. support from the church and voluntary sector. • Representatives from the police voiced their concern over the impact of these budget proposals on crime rates and rough sleepers. • These services are extremely important and provide valuable support to vulnerable adults and their families.
Libraries and the arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern about provision/closures
Waste and Recycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase recycling. • Impose fines to increase income.
Licensing hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce licensing hours.

Income generation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through New Homes Bonus.
Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of tourism to the area. • Build on the assets we have, environment, beaches, and parks.
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More jobs for young people. • Focus on getting people back into work. • Cease support to Riviera International Conference Centre/sell building. • Concern about Citizens' Advice Bureau and implications of cuts. • Concern about availability of national grants to community and voluntary groups if local funding not available.
Council Tax	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority of people who took part in the activity at the first budget event were in favour of an increase of 2%. • Additional comments and questions also alluded to a 2% increase
Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross agency/cross local authority services. • Assess council wages, mayoral position. • Use less agency staff. • Ring fence essential services. • Mayor will be meeting with MPs to discuss savings.
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cuts to preventative services will increase pressure on statutory services.

Annex 4 – Respondent Profile

Of the 409 responses received, 58% completed paper copies of the questionnaires and 42% responded online. This is contrary to the previous year where 45% complete paper copies and 55% online, see table below.

Number of respondents	2013 Number	2013 Percent	2014 Number	2014 Percent
Hard copy (Paper)	157	45.4	235	57.5
Online	189	54.6	174	42.5
Total	346	100.0	409	100.0

Of the 342 who identified their postcode as Torbay, 39% were from Torquay, 33% from Paignton and 12% from Brixham. This is in contrast to 2013 where 68% were from Torquay.

Home town of respondents	2013 Number	2013 Percent	2014 Number	2014 Percent
Torquay	227	67.6	159	38.9
Paignton	64	19.0	135	33.0
Brixham	45	13.4	48	11.7
Total	336	100.0	342	83.6

Number of respondents	Number	Percent
Male	171	45.7
Female	203	54.3
Total	374	100.0