

APPENDIX 1: BEST VALUE CONSULTATION FINDINGS REPORT

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This document sets out the consultation process and findings for the statutory best value duty consultation on the future delivery model for Redefining Local Services (RLS) services carried out over six weeks from 17 May to 28 June 2021.

2. Background

- 2.1. As a “best value authority” (pursuant to Section 1(1) (a) LGA 1999), where the council is making arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised [...], the council has a duty to consult representatives of the categories of people identified in Section 3(2) LGA 1999 and in Best Value Guidance in respect of those arrangements.
- 2.2. It is understood that this duty applies to those arrangements being made through the RLS programme where the Council is seeking to secure improvement in the exercise of its functions, in particular those strategic decisions on the future delivery model for key Environmental Services from April 2023 onward.
- 2.3. An authority must consult representatives of persons:
- liable to pay any tax, precept or levy to or in respect of the authority
 - liable to pay non-domestic rates in respect of any area within which the authority carries out functions
 - who use or are likely to use services provided by the authority
 - appearing to the authority to have an interest in any area within which the authority carries out functions
- 2.4. For the purposes of Section 3(2) LGA 1999, “representatives” in relation to a group of persons means persons who appear to the authority to be representative of that group.
- 2.5. We also sought to include representatives of local voluntary and community organisations and small businesses in the consultation, in line with the Best Value Statutory Guidance issued in 2015.
- 2.6. The council sought to involve and engage a diverse and range of local people in the decisions about how their local services are to be delivered. In this context, feedback from residents and businesses was considered extremely valuable and would be used to aid decision makers in their considerations around the final delivery model for these services.
- 2.7. Best value consultation also presented an opportunity to convey the strategic benefits of the RLS programme to representative groups of local residents and businesses. Consultation questions were framed against the context of the RLS programme as a whole, its aims and objectives, to aid understanding of what the council is trying to achieve.

3. Consultation Process

Timing

- 3.1. The consultation ran for a period of six weeks from Tuesday 17 May to Monday 28 June 2021.

Communications

- 3.2. To ensure that all representative groups were made aware and had an opportunity to participate in the consultation, we used targeted communications to groups falling into the categories listed at para 2.3 as follows:
- Targeted small businesses (via Town Centre Managers)
 - Local voluntary organisations (via the Brent CVS)
 - Brent-based Residents Associations
 - Brent fora, including: Brent Connects and Multi-Faith Forum
- 3.3. The consultation was also promoted more widely via the core Council channels and channels belonging to our partners:
- Council channels – Brent website and social media accounts, business newsletter, e-news bulletin, community toolkit newsletter, members bulletin
 - Partner channels – Brent CVS newsletter, resident associations' newsletters

Method

- 3.4. Two complementary methods were used:
1. Online consultation, ensuring that all representative groups are invited to participate through targeted communications during the consultation period.
 2. Focus group meetings (online via Zoom) with a selected set of individuals chosen from those expressing an interest to be involved during the consultation period.
- 3.5. The proposed methods were informed by the need to ensure that the consultation is accessible to allow for a diverse range of responses to be received, particularly from those groups who we are required to consult, balanced against the perceived complexity of the subject matter and likely level of engagement. COVID-19 restrictions were also taken into consideration and have informed the primarily online approach on the grounds of public health.

Online Consultation

- 3.6. Consultation information and an online survey was produced which outlined in simple, accessible language the delivery model options considered and sought feedback from respondents on the following:
- Their priorities in relation to the optimum delivery model for local services, and their consideration on whether the RLS programme aims and objectives meet these priorities
 - The suitability of the evaluation criteria used in the assessment of the delivery model options
 - Their consideration on the two options recommended by the council as the favoured competing options for the RLS delivery model and whether these options are correct
 - The delivery model they prefer from all the options considered, bearing in mind the context around cost and impacts to service delivery
 - Their consideration on the opportunity to include in any extension to the Public Realm Contract an option to in-source certain functions after 1 April 2023, if the council's financial position were to improve.
- 3.7. The online consultation was published on the Brent Consultation Portal and closed on Monday 28 June 2021.

Focus Groups

- 3.8. Two online focus group sessions (via Zoom) were carried out over the consultation period with selected representatives of the various "best value duty" groups:
- Residents and Service Users session on Wednesday 16 June 2021, 6:00pm to 8:00pm
 - Businesses and Local Voluntary Sector session on Monday 21 June 2021, 10:00am – 12:00pm
- 3.9. The selection of individuals for the resident and service users' session was carried out by officers in advance from a pool of individuals who had expressed an interest in being involved via an online form (published to the consultation portal). The aim of the selection was to have a final group of attendees that were broadly representative of the diversity of the borough in terms of area of residence, age and ethnicity.
- 3.10. Due to the relatively low number of expressions of interest received from businesses and local voluntary groups, all individuals who had identified themselves as representing these categories were invited to the businesses and local voluntary sector session.
- 3.11. All potential attendees were incentivised to attend with a £20 voucher for the London Designer Outlet, provided upon confirmed attendance at their respective session.

4. Online Consultation Responses

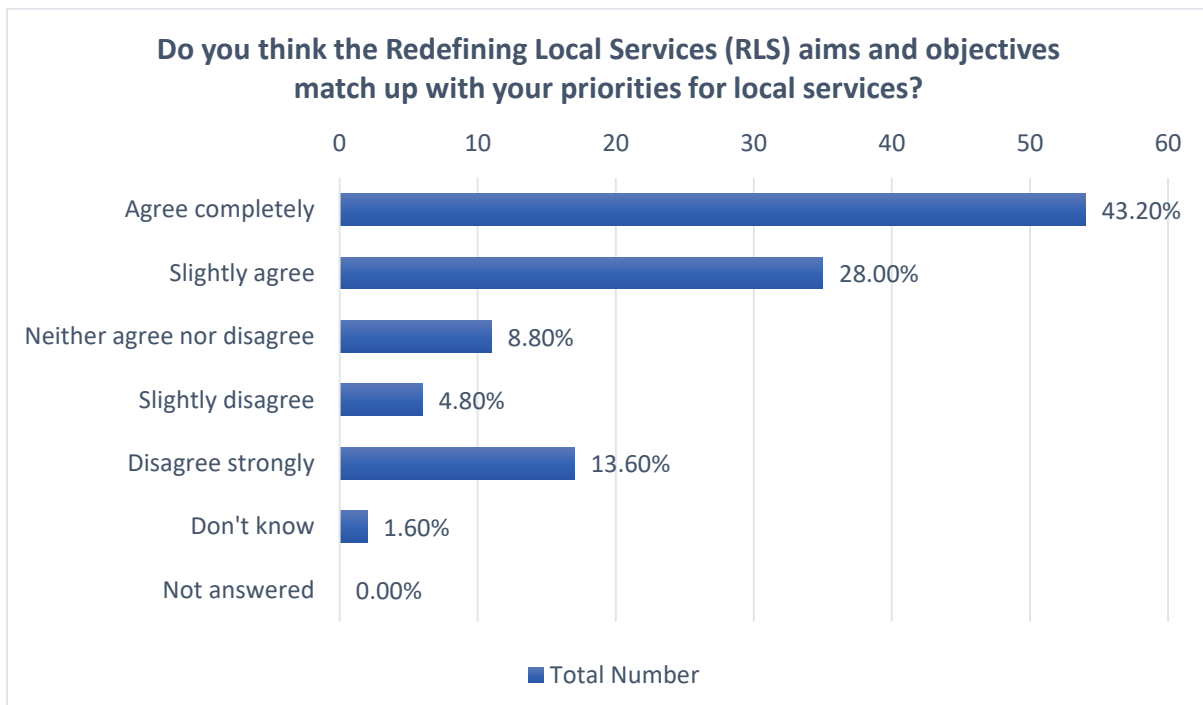
4.1 In total, 125 responses were received via the online consultation portal over the six week consultation period. Of these:

- 90% and 37% identified themselves as representing local taxpayers and service users, respectively. 5%, 10% and 15% identified themselves as representing local rate payers, interested parties and voluntary sector groups, respectively.
- The largest group of respondents by ethnicity were White British (32%) and Indian (19%), although 20% preferred not to state their ethnicity. There was a noted under-representation from Black British and Eastern-European groups for this consultation, with more targeted communications required for these groups in any future consultation exercises.
- The majority of respondents by age were in the 45 years and over categories, accounting for over 62% of respondents. This is compared to 23% of respondents who identified as being in the 44 and under categories.

5. Responses to the Survey Questions

Q: Do you think the Redefining Local Services (RLS) aims and objectives match up with your priorities for local services?

5.1. Respondents mostly agreed (71%) that the RLS aims and objectives aligned with their own priorities in relation to the optimum delivery model for local services.

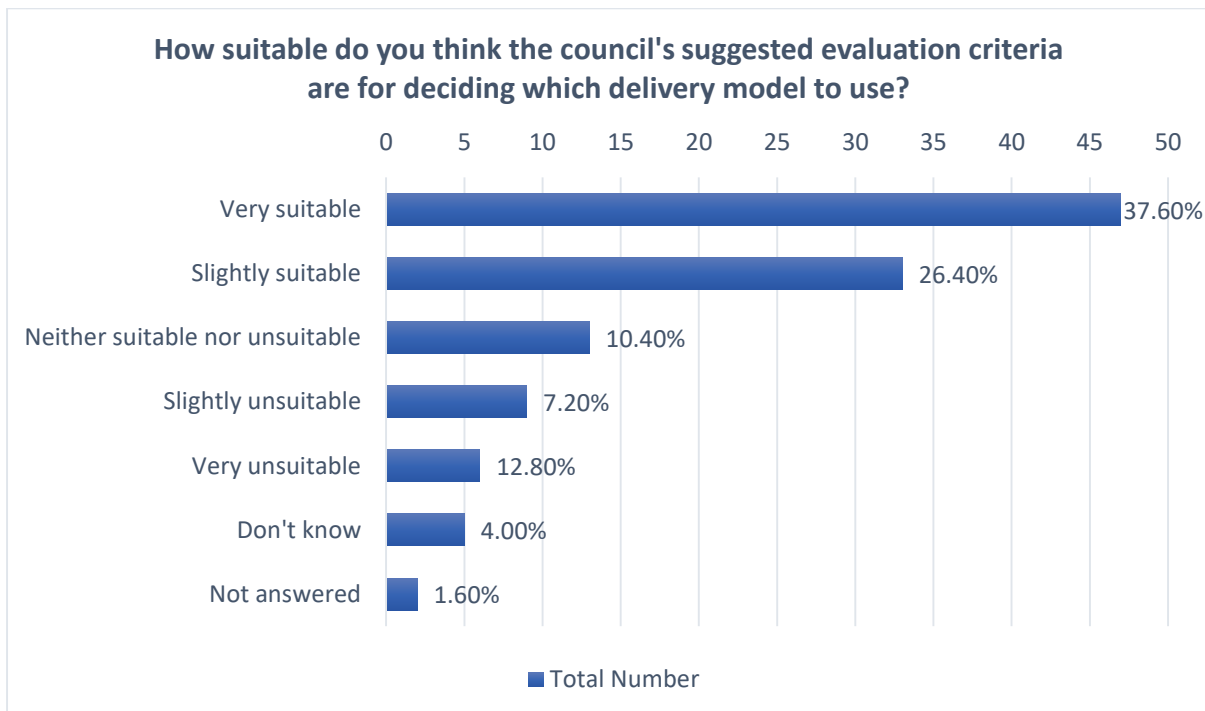


5.2. Respondents were given the opportunity to provide free text comments against this question. 50 responses were provided. The comments received predominantly focused on proposed areas of emphasis within existing RLS aims and objectives. They included the following:

- **Focus on safer neighbourhoods as a key objective**, including: “reduce crime and antisocial behaviour”; “given the current state of affairs [...] this has to be the No.1 priority”; and “this might be implicit in the current objectives, but needs special mention”.
- **A greater focus on the environment**, including: “more focus on ecology”; “focusing on delivering improved green spaces”; and “more emphasis on collective response to the climate emergency”.
- **Other suggested areas for prioritisation**, including: service flexibility (2), financial transparency (2), maximising local job opportunities (2), supporting active travel measures (2), prioritising clean streets (2), enhancing service integration (1), improving service efficiency (1), accountability (1), and building in resident and user involvement in the monitoring of services (1).
- **Additional priorities outside of the existing RLS aims and objectives** including: increasing service frequency (2) and emphasising insourcing of services (1).
- A number of comments **advocated for a more proactive approach to enforcement against environmental crime** including littering and fly-tipping offences.

Q: How suitable do you think the council’s suggested evaluation criteria are for deciding which delivery model to use?

5.3. Respondents mostly agreed (64%) that the evaluation criteria chosen to assess the delivery model options were suitable.

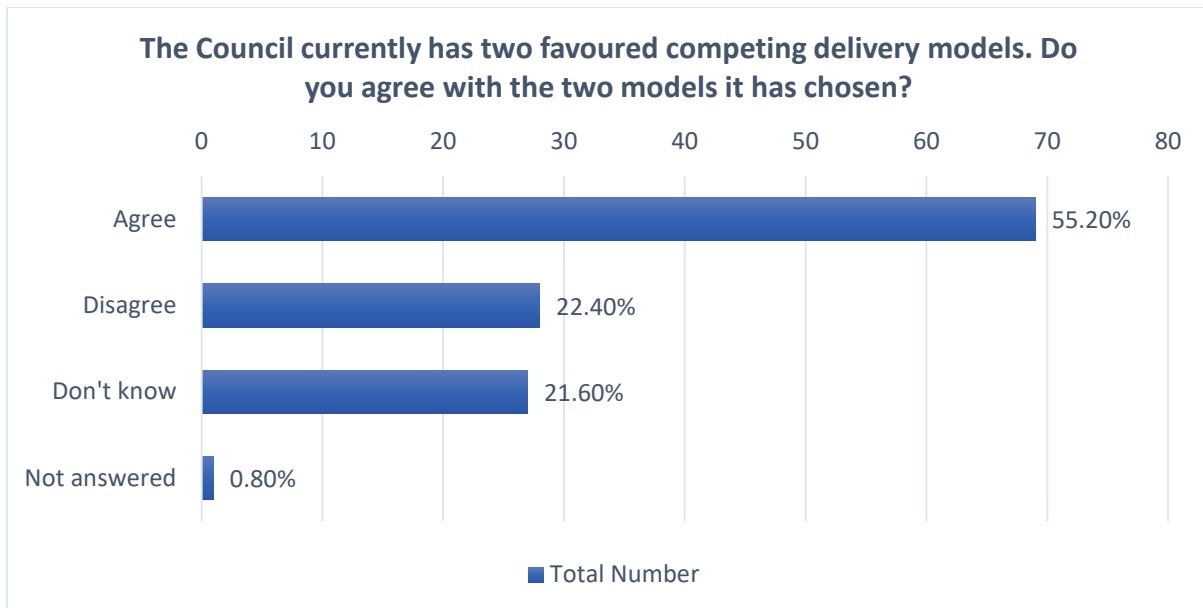


5.4. Respondents were given the opportunity to provide free text comments against this question. 33 responses were provided. The comments received predominantly focused on suggested additions to the existing evaluation criteria. They included the following:

- **The addition of accountability as a key evaluation criteria**, including: “*efficient and professional contract management as opposed to just letting contractors please themselves*”; “*all the failings in the Borough are because no-one is held accountable*”; and “*we are the ones who pay.*”
- **An emphasis on sustainability and contribution to the climate agenda in the evaluation criteria.**
- **Other suggested additions to the existing evaluation criteria**, including: involving residents in the management of their local areas (2), tackling crime and anti-social behaviour linked to littering and fly-tipping (2), employing local residents and businesses as far as is possible (2), using innovation and best practice (1), and the ability to benefit from working with neighbouring boroughs (1).
- Two comments received **suggested that affordability should not be as highly prioritised**, arguing that “*post-Covid financial pressures is not necessarily a constraint*” and that an “*affordable solution seems to equate to poor quality based on Brent’s previous record.*”
- A number of comments **supported a neighbourhood approach to managing localities and advocated for greater resident involvement in decisions relating to the delivery of services in their local area.**

Q: The Council currently has two favoured competing delivery models. Do you agree with the two models it has chosen?

5.5. The majority of respondents (55%) agreed that the council’s two ‘favoured’ delivery model options were the most suitable options.

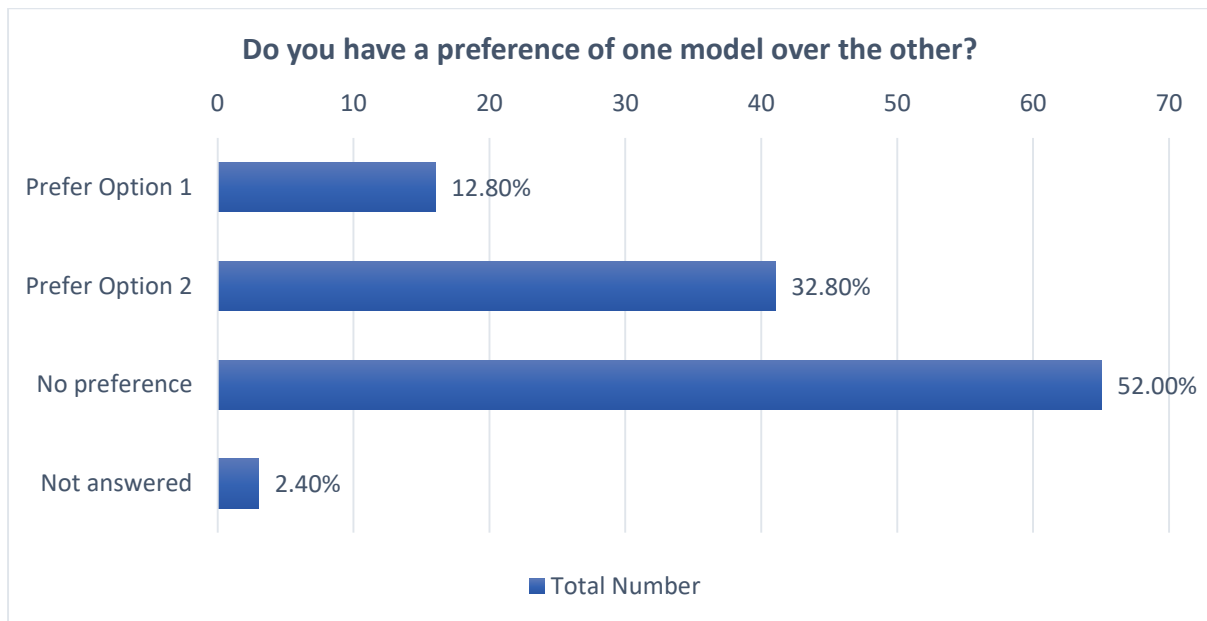


5.6. Respondents were given the opportunity to provide free text comments against this question. 52 responses were provided. The comments received demonstrated an overall strong support for greater insourcing of services. They included the following:

- **Strong support for greater insourcing of services linked to perceived enhancement of flexibility, control and accountability**, including: *“there needs to be more insourcing – local wealth should stay locally”*; *“in-house services are more accountable”*; services need to be *“managed more in-house and at a neighbourhood level to ensure higher quality of work”*; *“increased insourcing would be better for many services [as] the current model is too easily manipulated”*; and *“I want more of a say and real power to hold providers to account when they are not meeting their service obligations.”*
- **Support for the ‘favoured’ delivery model options, particularly Option 2 (moderate insourcing)**, including: *“I agree with option 2 as this will enhance our responsiveness”*; *“option 2 seems the more accurate solution for tackling the biggest issue in the borough – the state of the roads”*; and *“I think option 2 is the better of the two options, but option 1 is also workable.”*
- A number of comments **expressed dissatisfaction with current service delivery**, including one comment that stated, *“while I agree with the options in principle, I don’t believe they go far enough in improving the service the council is currently providing for residents”* and that more information is required on *“how the proposed options will deal with increasing demand.”*
- One comment **advocated for greater consideration of contract management resource requirements**, stating that *“the ‘robustness’ [of contract management] achievable depends on the resource available to the contract management team”* and that *“the decision criteria do not discuss the resource required to manage the delivery methods in enough detail.”*
- One comment **supported the specialist contracts approach**, stating that it is *“important for the council to identify where it lacks the necessary skills and use suitable contracts.”*

Q: The Council currently has two favoured competing delivery models. Do you agree with the two models it has chosen?

5.7. The majority of respondents (52%) did not have a preference between the two 'favoured' options, although for those who had stated a preference there was a skew of 33% to 13% in favour of 'Option 2' that included moderate insourcing (i.e. fully in-sourced highways reactive maintenance function).

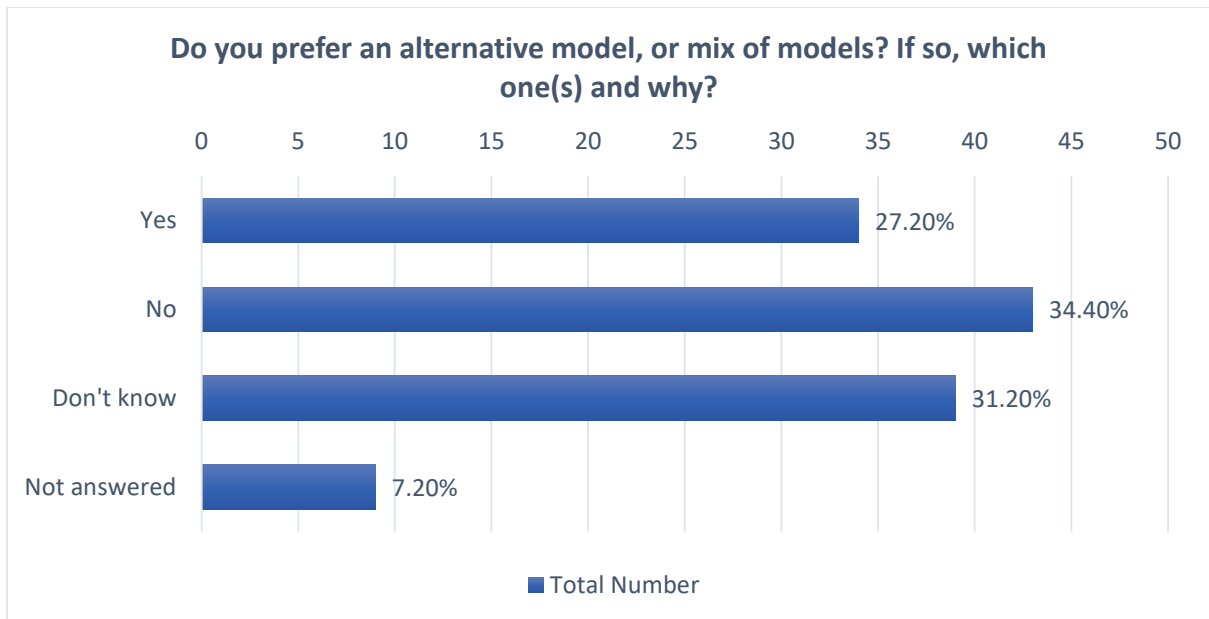


5.8. Respondents were given the opportunity to provide free text comments against this question. 45 responses were provided. The comments received for this question broadly reflected the positions described in the previous section (para. 5.6). They included the following:

- **Strong support for 'Option 2' (moderate insourcing) on the basis that this provides a greater level of insourcing than 'Option 1' (low level insourcing).** As demonstrated by the responses to the previous question, there was a perception that more insourcing would allow for greater control, flexibility and accountability.
- **Support for 'Option 1' primarily on the basis of affordability,** including: "*it is cost effective, providing reasonable services*"; "*low level insourcing saves on the excessively high employer contribution rate*"; and "*option 2 is too expensive.*"

Do you prefer an alternative model, or mix of models? If so, which one(s) and why?

5.9. Respondents were asked if they preferred any alternative delivery model to the two 'favoured' options presented. 27% responded with 'yes', with suggestions broadly favouring either a mixed economy model with varying levels of insourcing and full neighbourhood delivery, or a fully insourced model.

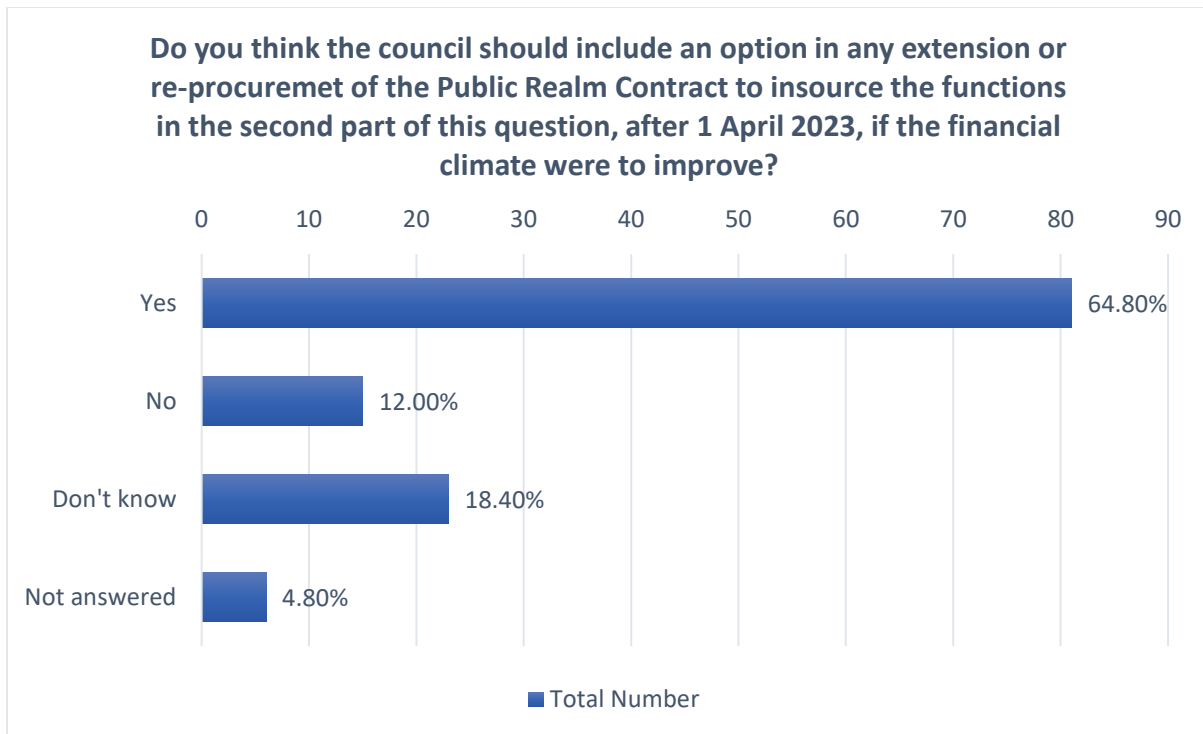


5.10. Respondents were given the opportunity to provide free text comments against this question. 47 responses were provided. The comments received reflected a general preference for insourcing or a mixed economy model with medium to high levels of insourcing, with the addition of a number of comments supporting the ‘favoured’ options set out by the council. They included the following:

- **Support for a mixed economy model with greater neighbourhood delivery**, including: “*mixed economy with full neighbourhood delivery [would provide] a much higher quality service driven by local employees*”; “*Brent would arguable achieve better service levels and quality in line with Policy by insourcing Waste and Highways*”; and “*mixed model that provides greater flexibility with enhanced supervision of outsourced services.*”
- **Support for greater insourcing**, including: “*insourcing removes the extraction of public funds as profits to private corporations*”; “*the more insourced work the better as this keeps control with the council and could provide jobs locally*”; and “*I would prefer an in-house model as they would be more flexible.*”
- A number of comments **supporting the council’s ‘favoured’ options**, including: “*I read through the documentation and agree with the summary and the executive member report findings*”; “*the council has given good reasons for not using any of the ‘not favoured’ options*”; and “*Option 2 seems the best within the financial restraints of the council.*”

Do you think the council should include an option in any extension or re-procurement of the Public Realm Contract to insource the functions in the second part of this question, after April 1 2023, if the financial climate were to improve?

5.11. The majority of respondents (65%) favoured the option to in-source certain public realm functions after 1 April 2023.



5.12. The public realm functions that were included in the second part of the question were as follows, with the brackets indicating the level of support each received for insourcing: grounds maintenance (65%), graffiti and fly-poster removal (70%), public conveniences services (60%), pavement washing (62%), furniture and sign cleansing (59%), emergency call out for cleansing (60%), and a range of other health and safety and public nuisance matters not currently included in the scope of the current contract or team responsibility (60%).

Do you have any other comments you would like to add?

5.13. Respondents were also asked to provide general comments at the end of the online survey. 69 responses were provided. The comments received were wide-ranging and broadly reflective of the themes borne out of the responses to individual questions summarised in the sections above. “It is important to provide jobs for local people and to address the ever increasing service costs that will have a huge impact on the local population”

6. Responses from Focus Groups

6.1. Three individuals (out of 19 invited) attended the residents and service users’ focus group session in the evening of 16 June 2021, which was run by officers and attended by the Cabinet Member for Environment.

6.2. Despite the lower than expected turn-out to the residents’ session, officers felt the outcome was productive, with participants expressing their appreciation for the opportunity to share their views and wishing to be engaged in future decisions.

- 6.3. The response received through the residents' focus group reflected the consensus achieved through the online consultation – i.e. an alignment of residents' own priorities with the RLS aims and objectives, an agreement with the assessment criteria used to assess the delivery models, and an agreement with the two delivery model options chosen by the Council, with a general preference for additional insourcing where financial viable. One resident in particular commented that they understood the conclusions set out by the council and that while their "*heart says everything should be delivered in-house, their head says it should only be whatever is most financially viable*".
- 6.4. Five individuals (out of eight invited) attended a businesses and voluntary sector focus group session in the morning of 21 June 2021, which was run by the same officers and attended by the Cabinet Member for Environment.
- 6.5. As with the residents' session above, the outcome of the session was productive and a consensus was achieved that broadly reflected the outcomes of the online consultation.
- 6.6. The business and voluntary sector group were unsurprisingly vocal about the need to involve the local community in the upkeep of their local areas, and of the need to ensure that changes to delivery are clearly communicated to both residents and businesses to ensure an awareness of any differences in approach between certain areas.